



**For Immediate Release**

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## Media Release

### ***In the Whorl of Time – Centennial celebrations for James Simons planned***

**James Simons Elementary School**

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Superintendent of Schools

**Cynthia Ambrose**  
Deputy Superintendent of Learning Services

**Michelle Simmons**  
Executive Director of Elementary School Learning Committee

**Chris Ryan**  
Principal

**Charleston, SC** –The week of September 9-13, 2019 marked 100 years since James Simons Elementary School opened its doors. A pivotal part of Charleston's rich history, school leaders say James Simons has always been a place that represents hope, family, and community.

For example, it was one of the first schools in Charleston to desegregate. Five years ago, the first African-American children to desegregate a Charleston school, Oveta Glover and Barbara Ford Morrison returned to James Simons to officially dedicate the new building.

The new building was renovated to include the original, historical staircase that goes out to Moultrie Street, once again paying homage to the roots of James Simons.

Alumni and present students of James Simons alike have been very proud of the history there. This school has always honored the past while looking to the future.

To mark the centennial of James Simons, students, parents, teachers, and community members have planned several events to celebrate this historical milestone.

The school has recently partnered with [conNECKtedTOO](#), a group of artists, educators, activists working with and for [TINY Businesses](#), to create a spiraled mandala *In the Whorl of Time*, that is being showcased in the historical entrance of the school.

The 1200 pieces have been created under the leadership of artist Sonia Osio and educator Pamella Gibbs. Students and educators have been working on these pieces for the past year. The individual mandalas were created by classes at James Simons as well as a school in Ecuador and another school in Georgia. This collaborative effort came together to represent 1919-2019, the historical timeline of the school, race relationships, field trips to neighborhood TINY businesses by the middle school entrepreneurship class, family stories, and wishes for the future.

"Our school's history is something that should be celebrated and honored," said Principal Chris Ryan. "School is a place where hope is fostered and dreams are realized. We have to see ourselves as part of something bigger than ourselves and this exhibit gives us the opportunity to do so."

James Simons is inviting families and community members into the school for tours during our regularly scheduled school tours on the first and third Wednesday of every month.

"*In the Whorl of Time* is an example of a vision being realized and is a gift to our school, our community, and most importantly to our students in so many ways," Ryan added.

If you are interested in touring James Simons, please contact Michelle Kraft [michelle\\_kraft@charleston.k12.sc.us](mailto:michelle_kraft@charleston.k12.sc.us).

Additionally James Simons alumni will be invited as special guests to be interviewed by current students October 15-16, 2019. Interested alumni should contact Jennifer Savage [jennifer\\_savage@charleston.k12.sc.us](mailto:jennifer_savage@charleston.k12.sc.us).

The goal is to foster intergenerational conversations and to build community. Students will have the opportunity to create authentic informative writing samples as they capture first-hand accounts of their school's history.

The Centennial Celebration will culminate in May with the performance *James Simons Through the Decades* by Lauren Martin and the school's music students.

If you are interested in learning more about James Simons's Centennial Celebration, check out [We Are James Simons Centennial](#) on Facebook.

For more information contact the Office of Strategy and Communications at (843) 937-6303.

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#### **About the Charleston County School District**

Charleston County School District (CCSD) is the second largest school system in South Carolina representing a unique blend of urban, suburban, and rural schools that span 1,000 square miles along the coast. CCSD serves more than 50,000 students in 87 schools and specialized programs. With approximately 6,100 employees district-wide, CCSD is the fourth largest employer in the region.

CCSD offers a diverse, expanding portfolio of options and specialized programs, delivered through neighborhood, charter, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), and Montessori schools, and is divided into three Learning Communities. Options include specialized programs in science, engineering and mathematics; liberal arts; music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; and military and other public service enterprises.

