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New Outreach Program Engages Students at Lincoln Middle-High School through Job Readiness and Empowerment Opportunities

Charleston, S.C. (April 7, 2015): In September 2014, East Cooper Community Outreach (ECCO) embarked on a new community outreach project with McClellanville's Lincoln Middle-High School. The program teaches essential skills such as goal-setting, budgeting, time management, and self-reflection, while helping the students to learn about communicating and negotiating in the workplace at an early age. The goal is for the students to gain confidence and real-world knowledge to allow them to succeed in whatever path they choose for the future.

Sheila Russell, Education Specialist at ECCO, has since been working at the school with members of the senior class and recently organized a fieldtrip to the organization's facility in Mount Pleasant. Students visited ECCO on March 20 and spent the day shadowing staff and volunteers. Russell said, "It was good for the students to gain exposure to a nonprofit work environment. There were careers the students had never considered before, and now they have an increased awareness of their opportunities in life."

This hands-on experience reinforced the information that the students are learning with Russell, and allowed them to put it all into practice. ECCO's Director of Empowerment, Djuanna Brockington said, "The students had a unique opportunity to learn about a nonprofit organization from the inside out with their visit to ECCO." Brockington continued, "They were surprised by the extensive range of services that we provide, as well as the diverse composition of our staff. They learned that there is no 'one track' to a career in the profession of helping people, and that having a passion for philanthropy is an important trait." Following the fieldtrip, ECCO participated in the school's Spring Job Fair on March 26, which provided another outlet for student engagement.

ECCO is dedicated to educating the community and providing the necessary resources and tools to help individuals and families in poverty achieve self-sufficiency. The organization's Empowerment programs include Getting Ahead for single mothers, ECCO Works for underemployed and unemployed job seekers, additional employment services, and a series of classes and workshops that provide training in money management, budgeting, computer and typing skills, and job preparedness.

East Cooper Community Outreach

The mission of East Cooper Community Outreach (ECCO) is to provide safety net services to our low-income neighbors, while empowering them to create better lives for themselves, their families, and their communities. Founded in 1989 as an emergency relief effort after the devastation from Hurricane Hugo, ECCO strives to eliminate poverty in the East Cooper region, and focuses on three main program areas: Basic Needs, Health Services, and Empowerment. More than 4,500 households a year receive emergency assistance for food, clothing, household goods, and financial aid, and have access to dental care, medical care with MUSC nurse practitioners, prescription assistance, health education, counseling, financial literacy classes, job readiness training, and other employment services. ECCO is celebrating a special anniversary after 25 years of serving the community and its neighbors in need. For more information, visit www.ECCOcharleston.org

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