



The Palmetto



**SOUTH
CAROLINA**

FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Stronger Together!

BY BETH TUTEN, SCCEC PRESIDENT



This year has shown me that we are, indeed, Stronger Together!

The SCCEC Executive Committee came together to plan and host our first ever virtual Representative Assembly (RA). I will admit, when we initially decided that RA was going to be virtual, I was a bit nervous. We had several logistical challenges that needed to be worked around, but I am here to tell you that our team worked together, and we had one of our most well attended RAs in recent history. Thank you to everyone who was a part of RA 2021! I especially

enjoyed hearing all of the updates from our active chapters and subdivisions! Thanks to them, there are some really creative and inspiring activities happening across the state that benefit special education professionals and persons with disabilities; there are multiple mini-grants being offered to special education teachers, summer scholarships for students with disabilities, professional development opportunities, and fun social offerings for both professionals and students.

SCCEC also produced a FREE online professional development conference drive this year. Although we were not able to have our typical in-person professional development conference, we still wanted to provide you with some much-needed resources. The drive is FREE to access and can be accessed 24/7 as many times as you'd like. In the drive you can find presentations on a variety of topics including behavioral interventions, positive mental health strategies, virtual IEP meetings, and legal updates related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Take some time and check out the offerings at this link: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1b1SHqOMp0c4DnJus5zMqdfcgQuO5a_rj?usp=sharing. Thank you to Ann Marie Taylor and her Conference Committee who worked to put the resource drive together.

Congratulations to our newly elected officers: Jamia Thomas-Richmond as Vice-President and Nena Barnett as our new Treasurer-Elect. Jamia and Nena will take office on July 1, 2021. We are very excited to have these ladies join the SCCEC Executive Committee!

Mark your calendars for the 2022 SCCEC Annual Conference, February 24-26 at the Embassy Suites in Myrtle Beach! You will not want to miss the next installment of special education updates, professional development, and networking in store for you, and we can't wait to see you again! **We are Stronger Together!** ■

Election results

BY AMANDA WALKUP, SCCEC PUBLICATION CHAIR

Congratulations to SCCEC's new officers!

DR. JAMIA THOMAS-RICHMOND — VICE PRESIDENT



Jamia Thomas-Richmond obtained a Doctorate of Philosophy in Education with a specialization in Exceptional Student Education from the University of Central Florida in the spring of 2004. She has developed research interests around areas that can positively and significantly impact the quality of life of people of diverse cultural backgrounds. Consequently, her research has focused on working with

culturally diverse exceptional students and their families.

Other areas of interest include parental involvement in education, collaboration among teachers and families, and recruitment and retention of minority students in teacher education programs. In 2008, Dr. Jamia Thomas-Richmond launched a business, Richmond Educational Center for Exceptional Students and Supports

(R.E.C.E.S.S.), which focused on meeting the needs of exceptional students, their families, and the schools in which they are served.

Currently, Dr. Richmond is an Associate Professor in the Spadoni College of Education at Coastal Carolina University, teaching special education courses. She is the program coordinator for undergraduate and graduate special education programs and Department Chair for Foundations, Curriculum, and Instruction. Additionally, she serves as the CREATE director for CCU and the International Programs Liaison for the College of Education.

Dr. Richmond has served as President for the South Carolina chapter of TED and is currently serving as Past-President. She has been involved with TED since her days as a graduate student.

NENA BARNETT — TREASURER-ELECT

In 2001, Nena Barnett began her teaching career in an Intellectual Disabled Classroom with eight students of different ability levels. In 2008, she worked with Learning Disabled Students with deficits in Reading and Math. She has taught several disabilities in her 19 years of teaching.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE ►

Election results CONTINUED

She says she has only taught in the middle school setting, but did a practicum in elementary school and worked in high school for 10 years as first an EMD aide and then In-School-Suspension Supervisor until she received her degree in teaching.

Nena has been working at Greer Middle School since 2008 as a resource teacher. Four years ago, her school district began a reading program called System 44/Read 180 Program. She has four reading classes this year along with two co-taught English classes.

Nena and her husband, Randy, and live in Greer, SC. They have six children, five in-laws, and 14 grandchildren (ages four months through 14 years old). She says they are very fortunate to have all

of them near them except for one set who live in California. Their family is a big part of their lives and they enjoy celebrating birthdays, holidays, and vacations together.

Nena says thank you for your consideration for the position of Treasurer on the South Carolina Council for Exceptional Children's Executive Committee.



It's not a recruitment issue, it's a leadership issue

BY DR. ANN MARIE TAYLOR, SCCEC PRESIDENT-ELECT



According to a recent article in The State, South Carolina teacher vacancies jumped 26% since the COVID-19 pandemic began. "This data should set off alarm bells," said Patrick Kelly from Palmetto State Teachers Association in the article mentioned above. I am a former State Teacher of the Year, held leadership positions at several traditional school districts and am a current School Leader at Horse Creek Academy Public Charter School in

Aiken, SC serving 830 students. For me, the bells have been ringing for years. I have been screaming from the rooftops that we need to do something different. We are bleeding teachers — is anyone paying attention?

Very few college students are going into teaching, and new South Carolina teachers do not stay in the profession. Veteran teachers are burnt out and frustrated. Teachers want a voice and a choice. They want to have a say in what happens in their building and district. When I traveled the state a few years back with PSTA, teachers all over SC told me that the reason they leave is lack of administrative support. How long must we wait to offer real solutions? I have spent the last 10 years of my professional career learning how to support teachers in a meaningful way. Once I was able to make real change in a school building, I did. These new strategies are not only keeping my teachers in the classroom, but it is allowing me to recruit the best and the brightest teachers. Dr. Brandee Green is a school teacher of the year and finalist for District Teacher of the Year who made HCA her new home this year. "Having served South Carolina in various positions spanning the past 20 years, I can tell you with certainty that what has previously been done in education in our state isn't working for the vast majority of our students or teachers. Horse Creek Academy is not stuck on doing things in the same old ways. Horse Creek Academy is thinking outside of the box, and it's working!" says Dr. Green.

Horse Creek is expanding, and because of the expansion, we needed about 15 new teachers for next fall. We began to post

the new positions on our social media page, and we had over 150 professionals apply for the 15 positions. There are teachers out there — they just want something different. WE have them applying. Here is what we are doing differently:

■ **LOVE FIRST, LEAD SECOND** Just like when I was a classroom teacher working with elementary students with disabilities, I put relationships with my students above all else. I knew then that my students came to my classroom with all sorts of hurts and hang ups, and I needed to address their social-emotional needs before their academic needs. It is the same with leading teachers. Love them first, before all else. This works. People want to feel heard and trusted. We believe in inclusivity and acceptance. Another HCA award-winning teacher Lindzee Ritz says, "After only five years of teaching, the 'burn-out' was already becoming real, moving to Horse Creek Academy was a choice that rejuvenated my love for teaching. Knowing my students and I have a voice inside our school and it will be heard makes the journey to stay a lifelong learner an easy one. The school has allowed me to take on leadership roles I never knew I could, even when I wasn't sure of myself. I know it is a place I am safe, loved, and supported."

■ **RE-DEFINE TEACHER LEADERSHIP** Create leadership opportunities for teachers and compensate them for it. This year we partnered with the SC State Department of Education and became a Collective Leadership School where we work daily to create a culture and climate where teachers lead right from the classroom. This year we had over five teachers in hybrid roles, both teaching and leading throughout the school day. Teachers are compensated in addition to their yearly salary for this leadership too! Emilee Meek currently serves in a hybrid role this year at HCA coming from serving as her district's Teacher of the Year. Emilee states, "As an eighth-year teacher who moved from a very traditional school system, I was beginning to feel burnt out and overwhelmed by the typical public school setting's restrictions. I came to Horse Creek Academy to reignite my passion for education and was able to do exactly that. One should not settle for complacency in a clearly ineffective system that struggles to maintain teachers, which is directly related to student success. At Horse Creek Academy, I am empowered daily and encouraged to share my voice to make

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE ►

Leadership issue CONTINUED

decisions that directly impact my students. It is relieving to serve under a leader who just 'gets it' and is willing to fight to change the face of education."

■ **RE-DEFINE ADMINISTRATIVE ROLES** At HCA, all administrators teach daily. For example, as the School Leader (HCA Lead Learner), I teach both a period of 8th grade Social Studies and a period of Criminology each day. While teaching takes a lot of time out of my day, it allows me to feel connected to both the students and the teachers since I am very aware of their daily struggles. "Something I often hear from teachers is that once a teacher goes into administrative or district level jobs, there's a disconnect. The farther removed from the classroom a leader is, the less empathetic and understanding they become. Teaching every day allows me to continue my original passion and craft it while keeping connected to the barriers and successes seen in the classroom," says HCA Elementary Lead Learner, Cassandra Luttrull.

■ **BLOCK THE RED TAPE AND BUREAUCRACY FROM OUR TEACHERS** Aside from lack of administrative support, teachers find the red tape and constant change in initiatives overwhelming. As a School Leader, I work daily to block constant changing initiatives and I make every decision in the building with teachers around the table. There is never a time when I do not think about how my decisions impact the classroom. "I had taught in South Carolina public schools for 16 years. What once had been my passion and

my happy place became the single largest stressor in my life. My passion for teaching had died and the pressures of constantly changing initiatives as well as not being supported were taking an immense toll on my health. I decided I had to try something different. I either had to give up my calling and leave education or find somewhere that was completely different. Once I began teaching at HCA, I felt my joy and passion return and grow! I am trusted as a professional to teach. I finally have a voice and I finally feel valued," stated Angela Moore, a stellar fourth grade teacher at Horse Creek Academy.

While I realize I do not have all the answers, it does seem as though our methods for recruiting and retaining South Carolina teachers is working. Happy teachers with high personal efficacy make the most academic difference for students. Let's re-define how we lead South Carolina teachers together!

■ **BOTTOM LINE:** Happy, fulfilled teachers make the most positive difference for students.

Horse Creek Academy Public Charter School is located in rural Aiken County serving over 800 students PK through 10th grade and expanding over the next few years to include 10th through 12th grades as well as an onsite career center. For tours, email Dr. Taylor at ataylor@hcacs.net to set up a time to meet the HCA family.

New By-Laws

BY AMANDA WALKUP, PUBLICATION CHAIR

Updated by-laws were approved at the Representative Assembly meeting on February 20th. The new version is available at <https://community.cec.sped.org/sc/new-item>.

New website

BY AMANDA WALKUP, PUBLICATION CHAIR

SCCEC will be getting a new website soon! National CEC is migrating all state websites to their new platform, and ours is almost ready. Stay tuned for the new link!

2021 virtual conference: "Stronger Together"

BY DR. ANN MARIE TAYLOR, SCCEC CONFERENCE CHAIR

2021 SCCEC CONFERENCE FEBRUARY 2021 VIRTUAL, AND FREE!

The 2021 Conference is FREE and will be all online. We will have a drive available all year long that you can access after the conference launches on February 20, 2021. It will be full of great presentations.

2021 Conference Materials:

Google folder (https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1b1SHqOMp0c4DnJus5zMqdfcgQuO5a_rj?usp=sharing)

If you have questions about the conference, email Dr. Ann Marie Taylor at sped.rockstar@gmail.com

CONNECT WITH US ONLINE!



SCCEC WEBSITE:
<http://community.cec.sped.org/sc/home>



SCCEC FACEBOOK:
<https://www.facebook.com/SouthCarolinaCEC/>



SCCEC TWITTER:
[@MySCCEC](https://twitter.com/MySCCEC)



Spreading a little love on Valentine's Day

BY GRACE CORBIN, COASTAL CAROLINA

In a time when a pandemic is holding us back from seeing the ones we love, we must remind ourselves that this shouldn't stop us from spreading the love this Valentine's Day. There are still many ways to show the ones we care about that they are loved and appreciated.

The CEC chapter at Coastal Carolina University partnered with the school's LIFE program to create Valentine's Day cards for the residents at the Horry County Disability residential program to remind them that "they are heard, cared for, and seen," says President, Sarah Spears.

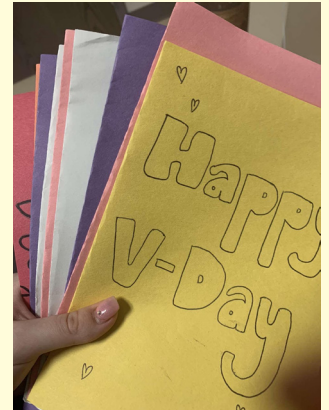
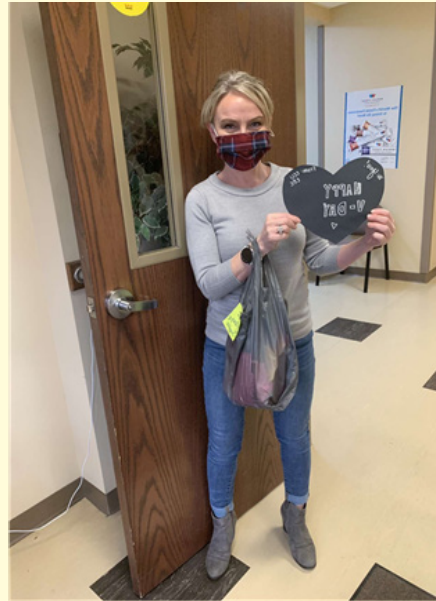
Since meetings cannot be held in person, the two groups met over Zoom on Wednesday, February 10, 2021. Amongst the excitement of creating the cards, the meeting members chatted about the importance of spreading the love amongst the COVID pandemic. "You never expect there to come a time when you cannot hug your family members.

So, I thought it was a great idea that our two clubs made cards for the residents. Even if it is such a small act, I enjoyed making the cards and showing that a pandemic cannot stop us from telling the ones we care about that we love and appreciate them," says Grace Corbin, the social media chair for CEC at Coastal Carolina.

Haleigh Miller, one of CEC's members, agreed and said that "when we show our love to people, even if it is as simple as sending a letter, it reminds people that there are others out there who care about them and still want to be with them during such troubling times."

On Friday, February 12, 2021, CEC's president, Sarah Beth Spears, took the cards over to the residents. In total, there were over 75 cards!

The Horry County Disability residential program was very thankful for the cards and said the residents enjoyed them very much.



Making a difference in our community

BY DR. JAMIA THOMAS-RICHMOND, ADVISOR, COASTAL CAROLINA

Even in the midst of the pandemic, the Coastal Carolina University's student CEC club has been active. The student-led organization meets weekly via Zoom to discuss topics like health care for individuals with autism, perspectives on co-teaching, and how special education may be impacted by the new administration.

The organization isn't all talk, though. The students actively participate in fundraisers to raise money for organization with a focus on students with disabilities; they also reach out to the surrounding community.

Last month for Valentine's Day, CCU CEC made hand-made cards for the Horry county Disability Residential program.

They've hosted movie nights with a focus on disability awareness, as well. If you're in the Horry/Georgetown area and would like to connect with the organization, please reach out. CCU's CEC chapter would love to interact with you!

Here are some of our upcoming events:

■ **MARCH 3RD, 7PM VIA ZOOM** Kelly Davis, our vice president, will be a guest speaker and sharing her experiences as a person with hearing loss. This will be in collaboration with Kutztown University in Pennsylvania.

■ **MARCH 24TH, 5PM VIA ZOOM** Dr. Hagan, one of CCU's own professors will be sharing how the recently elected administration

affects special education.

■ **MARCH 31ST, 7PM VIA ZOOM** This will be College Night! Several other chapters have been invited and this will be a chance for chapters across the country to get to know each other.

■ **APRIL 21ST, 5PM VIA ZOOM** Dakota, a girl who has Tourette's will be the guest speaker.

For more information on how you can get involved with Chapter 1197/201, please contact Dr. Jamia Thomas-Richmond at 843-349-6578 or Sarah Beth Spears at sespears@coastal.edu. You can follow us on Instagram/Twitter at @coastal_cec or FB Coastal Carolina CEC.



Make a Fashion Statement!

Are you interested in supporting SCCEC? If so, we are selling the "Stronger Together" t-shirts on Bonfire. You could be sporting one of these t-shirts while supporting our great organization! Click here to support: <https://www.bonfire.com/2021-sc-cec-t-shirt/>

Congratulations to the 2020-2021 SCCEC award winners

BY LISA HALTER, SCCEC AWARDS CHAIR

Although we did not get to celebrate in person this year, we are so excited to announce our award recipients. Congratulations to those who won, as well as those who were nominated. We are so proud of your dedication to our organization and to persons with exceptionalities.

SCCEC Student Member of the Year

EMILEE FERTICK



"Ms. Fertick is an excellent student and an outstanding individual. She exemplifies the positive attributes of hard work, responsibility, and goal attainment; and she continually meets or exceeds each of the requirements of our rigorous professional program and thus, she is worthy of this honor. As a special education major, her responsibilities and professional program requirements are numerous. Active involvement in campus activities, service in leadership roles, dynamic academic accomplishments, and assisting fellow students while continually managing her time with challenging coursework and professional obligations are just a few of the amazing qualities of this exceptional student-leader." -Dr. Susan Fernandez, Lander University

"Through her work with our Lander Council for Exceptional Children, Emilee has demonstrated her commitment to the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and has had a great impact on children with exceptionalities. Emilee, an active member of CEC, is deserving of this award. Emilee has served as an officer in our Lander University CEC for the last two years. As president this year, she has worked hard to ensure our chapter is active and is making an impact on the wellness of children with exceptionalities. She has collaborated with the executive committee to organize monthly meetings and some events. Emilee Fertick has demonstrated her commitment to CEC and to children with exceptionalities. She exemplifies the qualities of leadership and involvement expected for the SCCEC Student Member of the Year for 2020-2021." -Carol Hoyle, Lander University

SCCEC Para-Educator of the Year

DARLENE MONTES



"Above and beyond" are the words that come to my mind when I think of Darlene Montes. Both inside and outside the classroom, in summer camp, Darlene has given 100% of herself in the past and present for our students with special needs. She doesn't stop there. She makes sure that students without documented needs and start as happy, healthy, and progressing in their development too. Darlene has been the Instructional Assistant in the 4-year-old self-contained classroom as well as the 4K inclusion classroom and has been an asset in both. She arrives at work about an hour early each day to prepare the classroom. She notices even the smallest of details to organize the classroom and motivate the students. She doesn't sit down unless it is necessary for the students. Darlene makes sure the extra duties are filled each day and will fit them if someone is absent without being asked or without complaint. Darlene pays for materials from her own pocket and contributes time outside of school frequently to ensure that the classroom is organized, attractive, and that the students have extra special moments while they are at school. Darlene really goes above and beyond." -Dana Bennett, 4K Inclusion Teacher

"Affectionately known as Darlene, Mrs. Montes exemplifies every great characteristic of a paraprofessional educator. Mrs. Montes goes over and beyond every single day for students big and small to help meet their needs. Often known for her amazing ability to anticipate student needs and anxieties before they even manifest, Mrs. Montes works extremely hard to ensure that no detail goes unnoticed. Each and every day, Mrs. Montes arrives early, prepares the learning environment, and greets students as they exit the bus or car with a smile. She works hard with her classroom teacher to assist and lead small group lessons in the classroom with students. Mrs. Montes' relationship with her students is nearly indescribable. Students know Mrs. Montes loves and cares for them, she takes interest in their interests and incorporates it into lessons and gently helps them to make good choices and redirects them when needed." -Melanie Harris, Assistant Principal

SCCEC Rookie Teacher of the Year

RACHEL SIMMONS



"As her co-teacher, I have thoroughly enjoyed having her be a part of my journey teaching English Language Arts to 8th graders at Immo Middle School. My students have embraced Rachel, and they truly see us as co-teachers. She's a natural leader and has the willingness that all new teachers need in order to be successful. She's brought so many contributions to our classroom. Since Rachel has created such a powerful and uplifting classroom atmosphere, it has allowed her to branch out and create new and inspiring lesson plans unique to our students. She takes our students' strengths, needs, and confidence, and plays to each." -Diana Schwartz, Immo Middle School, 8th Grade English Language Arts

"Rachel Simmons is an educator beyond her years. She is very mature for her age, and it shows in her IEP meetings, meetings with colleagues, and with her students. No one at our school knew she was a first year teacher last year unless she told them. She has a sense of classroom management that it takes many teachers decades to perfect. Above that, her students love her and many students without IEPs often ask how they can be in her learning strategies elective. What makes Rachel such an amazing Rookie teacher is her ability and fearlessness to ask questions. She asks the students how they feel and what they need. She asks fellow teachers about the standards and their teaching practices. She gives up countless planning periods to meet and talk to other teachers and experts in the field to better herself. We need more Rachel Simmons in the special education world." -Allison Babb, Placement Chair, Immo Middle School

SCCEC Principal of the Year

JEANEEN TUCKER



"Ms. Tucker is exceptional in every way! She has been the principal at Round Top Elementary since its opening 18 years ago and has created a culture of absolute excellence, inclusion, and innovation for ALL students, teachers and their families that is unrivaled. Her personal leadership motto has always been "we do what is best for children, period." In spite of the demanding role of being a Principal, she has always created time to collaborate and allow innovation at Round Top to advocate and better serve ALL students, particularly those with special needs. The school focuses on student leadership, immersive and authentic learning experiences, teacher support and training, and family training and support." -Cindy Charles Sears, Professor of Occupational Therapy, Lenoir Rhyne University

"One only has to meet Ms. Tucker to feel her passion for all children. When it comes to her special education population, she is supportive, caring, and promotes community on a daily basis with all of her students, teachers, staff, and parents. When Round Top Elementary opened 18 years ago, Ms. Tucker was selected as their first Principal. From day one her expectations of inclusion for all children has created a culture that has resulted in the school being selected for many awards, to include a National School of Character, Palmetto's Finest and a Leader in McLight House School of Academic Distinction. In Round Top's second year Ms. Tucker was assigned the task of helping to create the first inclusion class for students with High Functioning Autism. This program proved to be hugely successful and has served as a model program emulated by neighboring school districts. Ms. Tucker deeply cares about each and every student at Round Top Elementary, and holds an extra special space in her heart for students with disabilities. During the COVID closures she has made numerous trips to the homes of special needs students to deliver materials. Her cell phone number is published and she is known to have regular text conversations with a foster parent of one of her Behavior Support students who was assigned to Round Top only one week before the COVID closure. She is truly one of a kind, and I cannot imagine a more deserving candidate for the Principal of the Year Award." -Denise Webster

SCCEC Advocate of the Year

CAROLYN SHORTT



"In the years that I have known Carolyn, she has emerged as a tireless, passionate state leader who demonstrates a strong commitment to promoting positive post-school outcomes for children with disabilities. From her service in a local education agency, to collaborative work with community and state partners, to her leadership on the board of the South Carolina Division on Career Development and Transition and Francis Marion University, Carolyn has continually served as a state and local leader in developing strong programming, advocating for systems change and improving policies and practices that have had a positive impact on youth who are preparing for meaningful post-school lives. Carolyn has been a valued consultant for the Transition Alliance of South Carolina as well. She has served as a mentor and technical assistance provider to multiple communities including Spartanburg, Clinton and Calhoun. She is a state leader in the development and sustainability of local interagency initiatives and she is president of the Laurens County Museum where she works tirelessly to improve building accessibility for individuals with disabilities." -Joy Ivester, Program Director, Transition Alliance of South Carolina

"As the Laurens County School District #55's Transition Coordinator, Mrs. Shortt helps students receive the services transition provides through advocacy and collaboration at the district, community, and state levels. She continuously serves as a liaison with community agencies, businesses, churches, and organizations to communicate student needs and to build lasting partnerships to broaden the possibilities for transition services for students in Laurens County. Mrs. Shortt is an active member of SCCEC, DODT, and SC TASK and she has presented at the local, state, and national levels to share her passion for transition and for serving students with disabilities." -Dr. Sara-Frances C. Lail, Laurens County School District #55 Director of the Office of Special Education Services

SCCEC Member of the Year

KAREN MCKINNEY



"Mrs. McKinney joined the Tri-County Chapter 451 in 1990, where she serves in the position of Secretary and Treasurer. Mrs. McKinney worked alongside the Chapter President to help recruit and retain members for Chapter 451. She has also served on the Scholarship committee to help raise college tuition funds for students with disabilities. Additionally, she helps organize Chapter 451 quarterly meetings. Mrs. McKinney joined the Federation of South Carolina in 1997 and has served in various capacities. She currently serves as the Archives Chairperson, and has previously served as the Awards Chairperson for Yes! I Can, Chairperson for Para Educator of the Year, Chairperson for Principal of the Year, and as a member for the SCCEC Nominations Committee. During the South Carolina Council of Exceptional Children Conferences, Mrs. McKinney lends a helping hand wherever she is needed. She assists with the Silent Auction annually, assist with registration, serves as facilitator for break-out sessions during the annual conferences, and attends Representative Assembly each year to represent the Tri-County Chapter 451. Mrs. McKinney also, helps set up for conference annually and assist with breaking down stations at the end of the conference. She takes initiative to go above and beyond the call of duty; if there is a need that is not met, you do not have to ask. She steps right in." -Mrs. Constance Y. Mays, Director of Student Services

"Ms. McKinney has all the qualities for being a powerful and inspiring leader and yet she is very humble. She is very communicative and takes time to explain things to her co-workers. Ms. McKinney has great impact on her co-workers by being very knowledgeable about her co-worker's family and personal needs. She is always there professionally and as a moral strength. Ms. McKinney is an epitome of dedication. She has a very special spark and I trust that she will go above and beyond in making a difference in what has been given to her. I have had the privilege of working under Ms. McKinney from 2012-2017 at Allendale County Schools. During my time with her as a Compliance Specialist she has inspired me to learn more in my career as a Special Education Teacher. She is well versed in what she does and researches and verifies information. Ms. McKinney is well known to be up to date in her field of work. Ms. McKinney is highly respected by all her co-workers for her dedication to the students and her willingness to help her co-workers." -Mrs. Gigi Varghese

SCCEC Exceptional Educator of the Year

KARAN BUNDRICK



"Karan exemplifies numerous exemplary traits in her professionalism and dedication to the exceptional students in our district. When I first met Karan, I recognized her genuine enjoyment of her position as a special education classroom teacher. Her students adore her and for good reason: she is funny, genuine, creative, persistent, and knowledgeable. Karan does not hesitate to implement new ideas and is open and flexible to different approaches to curriculum and interventions. This positivity and open-mindedness is such a benefit to her students. Even when a new program or curriculum may pose additional work or time commitments, Karan commits with fidelity in order to ensure her students have appropriate access to whatever services may benefit them. I continue to work with Karan in her most recent position as a district job coach. Her creativity, outgoing nature, and professional/leadership have served her well in this post. She's been able to successfully champion such programs as the BOCOM partnership with Midlands Tech, as well as new community-based training opportunities for our local high schools. Most recently as COVID-19 restrictions have disrupted access to community training options, without hesitation Karan transitioned back to a classroom teacher role to best support students during the first semester. Her dedication to students continued to show as she maintained focus on the programs and the present needs, even when I meant temporarily moving from the job coach role which she had so valued and enjoyed." -Elizabeth Magee, PhD, Project SEARCH Instructor

"Mrs. Bundrick taught me how to organize the racks at the Salvation Army Thrift store. She also taught me how to bus a table at Eggs Up Grill. And one more thing she taught me how to be confident in myself and never give up." -Student

"There are many reasons why Mrs. Bundrick should be named Exceptional Teacher of the Year. She consistently goes above and beyond to serve her students and teachers as District Five's job coach. She has also shared her knowledge through presentations at the state and national level. When considering the implementation of best practices in the area of post-secondary transition, she hits them all. She has worked extensively with community businesses and agency partners to expand job placements and hires. She has systems in place to facilitate transportation for students to be in the community consistently. She even has the vans named to keep things light and easy to remember! She works closely with families and students to help educate them on services available. She was also one of the first teachers to embrace teaching self-advocacy and student-led IEP meetings." -Angie Statton, PhD, Director of Special Services

GET
INVOLVED!
in SCCEC