

the   
village group  
*Celebrating 10 Years*

Georgetown, SC

October 2015, Vol. 2



These girls are students in the Plantersville Summer Academy, 2015 edition. From left, they are Angel Johnson, Alivia Gillgard and Daj'Honna Mitchell.

*Commemorative  
Journal*

Rashaud Brown  
grew up with  
The Village  
Group and helps  
celebrate its 10-  
year anniversary  
— Page 10





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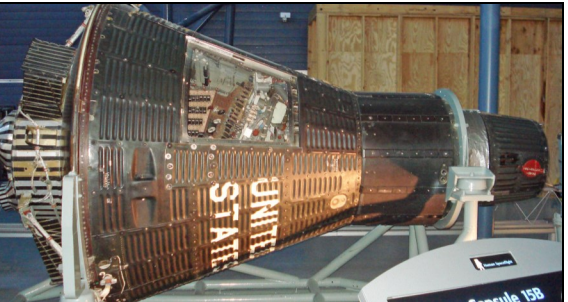
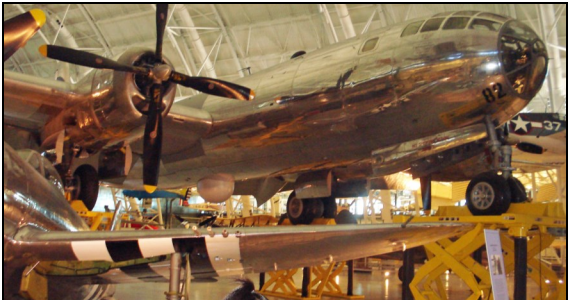
# the village group

## Commemorative Journal

Georgetown, SC — October 2015

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**Adventure trips help make learning fun. A group of young people and their parents went to the National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C. in March 2010.**

**Members of the  
10th Anniversary Gala Committee**

Ray Funnye, Whittany Johnson, Brittany Johnson, Anna Lovell, Fedrick Cohens, Jacqueline Geathers, Alice Barron, Tommy Howard, Pam Holmes, Randy Walker, Richard Preedom, Beth Stedman, Talicia McCants, Ashley Nelson, Eileen Patonay, Hope Watson, Edrick Alston, Shakeema Smalls

**NOTE:** Some of the stories and photos appearing in the Journal commemorating 10 years for The Village Group were originally published in the Georgetown Times. They are reprinted here by permission.

Tommy Howard served as editor for this Journal. He retired in March 2014 as editor of the Georgetown Times and the other members of the South Strand News group.



## Letter from the Director...

It is with great joy and immense pride that I can say that The Village Group is celebrating its 10-year anniversary!

Looking back at our humble beginnings as a grassroots community effort I am reminded of what amazing things can come about when a community of hearts and minds pulls together. Not only did we start together; we have stayed together and grown stronger over time. As Henry Ford once said, "Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success." I am honored to say that The Village Group is a success. We are successful in our efforts to improve the development of our community, in our commitment to educational development and literacy enrichment, and in achieving our ultimate goal, investing in the future of our community, our children.

The Village Group's successes would not have been possible without the help of our benefactors, community leaders parents, elders, concerned citizens and, most of all, our many invaluable volunteers. Our volunteers are a priceless commodity. Through watching their efforts we have learned that the best way to truly find yourself is to lose yourself in service to others around you. I, personally, thank them all for their dedication, hard work and true acts of charity that have helped The Village Group grow into the great organization it has become.

With all of our successes the past 10 years, I ask myself, where do we go from here? We keep moving forward. The Village Group will continue to grow and to provide a stepping-stone for our youth to move to a brighter future. Our belief is that if we care for our youth, they will give back to the community in the future. We must continue forward if we want to see that belief realized. We need to grasp this momentum that we have built up these past 10 years and keep moving forward, pressing harder, setting new goals and remembering that we can reach our expectations if we continue working together.

So what of the future of The Village Group? Remember, the best way to tell the future is to create it. Let's join together to make the next 10 years even better. Let's create a future for our youth even brighter than we ever imagined. Together I know we can!



the  
village group

# Village Group started with a small idea



By Tommy Howard  
For the Journal

It's a simple thing, really. Toss a baseball to your kid when he's little. Then move up to pitching to him in the front yard.

That can be a lot of fun for a dad and his boy, and it was for Ray Funnye and his son Stephon

Another simple idea is go outside and away from your own neighborhood, your own village, and see what else there is in the world both near and far.

Ray and Stephon tossed the ball in the neighborhood. Other kids saw that and thought it was fun. Then the dads and the moms came over, and before long the ball games got more people involved.

On a fall day in 2006, Ray and Stephon, joined by wife Queen and younger son Tyree ventured about six miles as the crow flies, but as the man drives his kid, it was about 33 miles by road to Brookgreen Gardens.

Along with a lot of world-renowned outdoor statuary, Brookgreen Gardens has a Lowcountry wildlife exhibit. Stephon and Tyree were enthusiastic about the presence of a 10-foot alligator.

From small beginnings such as this, The Village Group started promoting heritage, family and neighborhood activities, and more.

Over the past decade, those pick-up ball games in the yard have continued. Along with that, however, there have been

hundreds of people who came out for about eight years for the annual Plantersville Heritage Festival in July. People enjoyed the festivals, but another experiment was even more interesting.

The Plantersville Summer Academy was established to help kids work on some of their basic academic skills, including reading and writing, math and science. PSA has grown so much that members of The Village Group changed their focus from a big festival to devoting time, energy and dollars to an expanded summer program.

There are local, regional and national trips that kids and parents have taken to Atlanta, to the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C., the Martin Luther

King Jr. Museum, Civil Rights Museum and several trips to aviation centers.

Heritage, literacy, aviation and other activities will help build the kids of today into the leaders of tomorrow. They will make The Village Group an integral part of the entire Georgetown County population as it expands from the local area and grows to reach even more people.



Queen and Ray Funnye and their boys enjoyed a trip to Brookgreen Gardens in September 2006. The alligator was a surprise!

# Ray Funnye, Chieftain



Ray Funnye, center, joins in the dancing at the 2006 Plantersville Heritage Festival. The summer event was held for about eight years.

By Tommy Howard  
[thoward@towntimes.com](mailto:thoward@towntimes.com)

*This article first appeared in the Georgetown Times on February 16, 2007.*

*Since this article was published, county government subsequently moved Recreation and Leisure Services and Aging Services back into a separate department. Also, Dr. Arthur Lance retired as principal of Plantersville Elementary School, and is now a member of the Georgetown County School Board.*

A target, sometimes, of slings and arrows and spear thrusts when things don't go as well as he would like, Ray Funnye can feel like a chieftain in tribal warfare. However, he is chieftain of The Village Group in the Plantersville area of

Georgetown County. Funnye's daytime job — which often runs well past eight hours a day — is director of the Georgetown County Public Services Department. In that work, Funnye oversees about 100 full-time employees in a multitude of divisions. There's Public Works, the county landfill, environmental education, mosquito, beaver and other nuisance pests, facility services, Recreation and Leisure Services Division, the Bureau of Aging Services and airport operations. Special projects come under Funnye's direction, including boat landings, parks, ditch drainage, stormwater and engineering, paving roads and a slew of others. When Funnye completed a B.S. degree in Civil Engineering Technology from Savannah State University, he went to work for an engineering firm in Atlanta. After seven years there, he worked

for several other companies in that area in engineering, construction, transit and other fields. He also worked in the U.S. Virgin Islands for a period of time. He came back home to Georgetown County in 1992 and became director of the Public Works Department two years later. At the time, he had 20 people whom he supervised and a budget of \$800,000. In 2002, after a reorganization within county government, he became director of the Public Services Department. He now manages about 100 people and oversees a \$12.2 million operating budget and \$10.4 million capital improvement budget. Funnye earned a Master of Arts degree in Management from Webster University in 2003, and has taken other leadership courses through the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. Funnye has a sense of worth, of the

need for leadership and for improving himself.

“I’ve come a long way” since 1994, Funnye told *The Times*. “I’ve grown a great deal, personally, professionally and spiritually. I believe I’ve grown because I may have done something right, by living right, or at least I’m headed in the right direction.”

### More than meets the eye

In his time off from his paid duties, however, there’s a lot more to the man than meets the eye.

Both Funnye and his wife, the former Queen Dease, grew up in communities in Plantersville. They knew one another as little kids, but Funnye and Queen didn’t get too serious until he started noticing girls.

“She was in St. Paul’s, and I was in Jackson Village,” he said.

The couple started dating in 1973, in their sophomore and junior years in high school. “That was when we started noticing each other.”

To both Ray and Queen Funnye, family is important.

He had four brothers and three sisters, and another brother who died when he was just 7 years old.

Queen Dease Funnye had two sisters and six brothers.

In all they do, they both keep their family involved.

### Keeping heritage alive

That “chieftain” symbolism comes both from Funnye’s job duties and from his leadership in The Village Group and a wide-ranging variety of other roles he plays in the community.

The Village Group is a direct outgrowth of Funnye’s desire to do father-son things with his boys, Stephon, now 11, and Tyree, who turns 5 in March [2007].

Because he wants his own children and others to be aware of their heritage, Funnye started the community organization.



**Ray and Queen Funnye and their sons Tyree and Stephon keep busy as a family. Ray calls his wife Queen the spark plug who keeps The Village Group going.**

Many Africans who were captured by members of other tribes were enslaved, transported by Africans or Arabs to coastal areas of the African continent, sold as human property and shipped to North America, the Caribbean Islands and Central and South America. People growing up in Africa cultivated rice for centuries. When white plantation owners learned about rice production, they also learned to specify that they wanted people from certain areas of Africa to come to handle the ricefields.

It was vitally important to the Africans brought to a strange land to keep up their own family ties. When they lived on plantations, there were settlements or “villages” established as community or family groups.

In Africa, in the American West and in society in general, groups of people — often called tribes — would have a leader, head man or chieftain. As a part of that heritage, the leader of The Village Group is called chieftain. [Funnye’s

*title now is Executive Director.]*

The communities of St. Paul’s, Jackson Village, Annie Village and others recall that earlier heritage.

While Funnye and other members of The Village Group honor their African heritage through festivals, occasional wearing of African clothing and the appreciation of arts and crafts, they’re as All-American as baseball and apple pie.

It was baseball, in fact, that led him to organize the group.

As Stephon grew in his abilities, Ray Funnye would play a little ball with his kid. Soon, other neighborhood kids would meander over to the yard and join in. Dads would come along, the wives saw the fun they were having, and before too long, there was the nucleus of The Village Group.

### The Village Group

“When I pitch badly, he hits the ball further now,” Funnye joked of

Stephon's increasing baseball skills. Beyond the ball-playing and fellowship, The Village Group is involved in after-school reading and tutoring programs, visiting with senior citizens and caring for the bereaved.

Last summer [2006], the group hosted a heritage festival in Plantersville with several hundred people enjoying food, games, Gospel singing, worship services and heritage activities and exhibits. "We really encourage literacy programs," he said.

Funnye recently received a grant from the International Paper Co. Foundation to help provide dictionaries and other books and journals for some fifth-grade children in the Plantersville area, to help them improve their reading skills.

"We looked at student testing and identified critical areas where we could help them improve," he said.

"We provide kids an opportunity to read more, comprehend better and also provide them with documents."

The key to the program is parental involvement, he added.

"For any program in the school district to work effectively, it's important for the parents to be actively involved in the process."

The program The Village Group runs has the kids working independently, but the parents are involved in reviewing and critiquing their work.

"Reading is so fundamental. Kids will perform better in math and science classes if they can read better," Funnye said.

Dr. Arthur Lance, then-principal of Plantersville Elementary School, is in full support of the efforts by The Village Group, Funnye said.

He and others with the group want to follow the kids, teach them and see if there is improvement in test scores over the next months and years.

Another sort of activity is enrichment for kids and adults.

"We took 81 people last year to the annual heritage festival in Beaufort. An

African troupe from South Africa, the Zulu tribe, participated in the festival." "We do things to enrich people's lives," Funnye said.

### Georgetown is special

Although he worked in the Atlanta area for the better part of 14 years, Funnye and his then-fiancée Queen Dease always felt their roots pulling them back home.

Queen left Atlanta to come back to Georgetown to take care of her mother. In 1992, a sad occasion brought Funnye back home. One of his older brothers passed away and he returned to South Carolina for the home-going ceremony.

"I spent about 10 days here, and ran into an old friend who introduced me to the county administrator," he said. His fiancée wanted to stay in Georgetown. She is an entrepreneur and had her own salon for her work as a hair stylist, and nudged Funnye into staying.

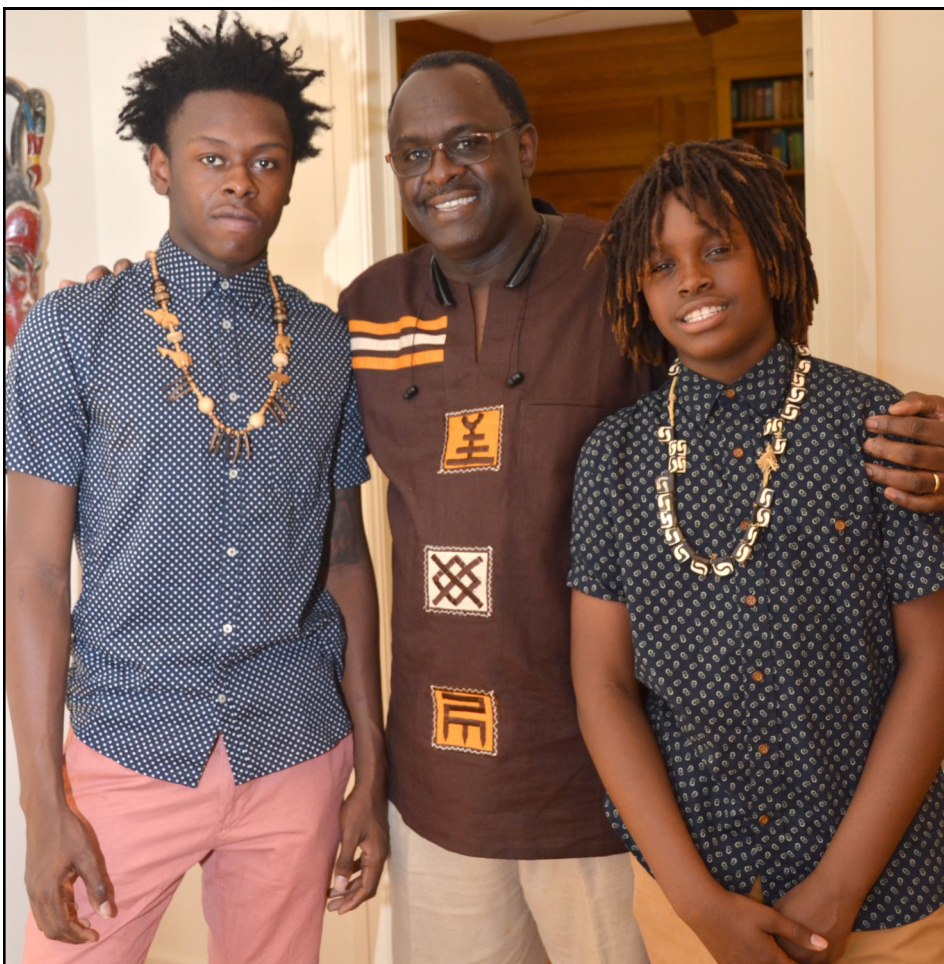
"It's been wonderful in every conceivable way. Fantastic," he said.

Since their marriage and the births of their sons, Ray and Queen Funnye have worked hard at raising their boys. "We allow them to grow, and yet keep reins on them to help them go in the direction we want them to go in."

The Funnyes are members of Bethel AME Church in Plantersville. His father, R.B. Funnye, is a minister and retired about three years ago.

Ray Funnye serves as a trustee and treasurer for the trustee board. He's also president of the lay organization at the church.

"The pastor created a new position for me, 'church coordinator.' I coordinate all activities of the church and give consultation and advice to the pastor and church members." Funnye is also a member of the Sons of Allen, the men's organization of the AME Church. He recently completed a two-year term on the board of the Georgetown Coun-





ty Family YMCA, and is currently on the community advisory group for International Paper Co. He and others talk with IP representatives about issues in the community relative to IP. Another of Funnye's roles in the community is service on the Georgetown County School District Career and Technology Advisory Council. He and others meet with the director at the Career Center. "We try to understand the challenges he has, and give ideas and insights from our perspective as professionals in the community."

### **Professional memberships**

One of the organizations Funnye participates in is the American Public Works Association (APW). He's past president and secretary of the South Carolina chapter, and served on the national Government Affairs Committee.

Funnye is a member of the Solid Waste Association of North America, the International City/County Management Association and the South Carolina and National Parks & Recreation Associations.

### **Time is of the essence**

How do you do so many things? Funnye is asked.

"You've got to be passionate about what you're doing," he replied. "I'm very passionate about being a father. I'm passionate about being a husband. I have a supportive family, a great job and a host of responsibilities."

"I have to be passionate about what I'm doing. I like to help others, put things together.

"I feel I've got to put things back in the community. I've been given so many great opportunities. I have to give back," he said.

"Sometimes, when I feel a little overwhelmed, I have to sit back and say a prayer. It helps me put things in perspective, put God in my life, and get on

the right path."

"Time management is a key to this situation. I use my Blackberry a lot. You've got to manage your time."

### **Counsel for others**

As far as suggestions for others to living a good life, Funnye has a few ideas to offer.

"You need to be grounded. Have good manners. That comes from good parental support.

"With good guidance, kids can do good things."

It's also important to put things in perspective.

Stephon, whom Funnye credits as being co-founder with him of The Village Group, has an agreement with his dad. Each one of them has a job, he tells Stephon.

"My job is to take care of you and support you. Your job is to have good manners, study hard." Each one agrees to be supportive of the other.

"It's so important to talk with kids," he said. "We talk about those things. Sex. Drugs. We have candid talks. I talk with my son about social issues he will be confronted with in society.

"I tell him the choice is his, but look at the consequences. You can do drugs, but look what can happen if you become addicted."

One of the questions he's asked Stephon is, "Do you really want to have a baby when you are young? Look at the consequences."

### **Surprise, surprise**

When asked what may surprise other people to learn about Ray Funnye, he paused, then said "That I'm actually a nice fellow, contrary to popular opinion. We can have a nice conversation. I'm busy, but we can have a good conversation," he said.

### **Outside interests**



When he's not busy with the demands of family, work and church and community activities, Funnye enjoys travel, reading, gardening and photography.

On the rare occasions when he has some free time, "I really enjoy driving and operating my John Deere lawn mower. I have a two-acre lawn, and cutting the grass is good." It takes about two hours.

"I don't have to think of anything. It's really relaxing."

"When I'm not doing that, I try to read something. I do read papers a lot for work, but it's just relaxing to read" at home.

"I do find a lot of comfort in just driving my lawn mower."

Even though being a father and husband claims a lot of time and effort, Funnye says "I also like to spend time with my sons and my wife. I give them the guidance they need to have. I take them to the movies, a ball game, and just playing with them in the yard, teaching them small things, the fundamentals of work."

"By far, the main priority right now is to develop those guys to be good citizens," he said. "Yet, I want them to have room to do things with other kids."

Speaking of all adults generally and parents in particular, Funnye says, "We have to do more, reach out, help these youngsters do more and do better."

# The Village Group helps Rashaud Brown grow up to teach in elementary school

By Tommy Howard

*For the Journal*

Kids are pretty smart. Even young kids who are just 11 or 12 years old will recognize a good thing and latch on to it.

For Rashaud Brown, The Village Group and its many activities helped shape him as a person and a young but involved kid.

He was a member of the first session of the Plantersville Summer Academy. He enjoyed working on reading, language arts, math skills, field trips and more.

During the first few years of the PSA, Brown was one of a bunch of kids who came out each week and each year. He credits Queen and Ray Funnye with challenging him. They asked him to do more and more things like working with the other kids attending PSA. He would help the others if they had a

tough reading assignment or a difficult math problem.

As he got older and met those challenges, Rashaud took on more responsibility. He began helping in a more structured way as a volunteer counselor.

Later, during summer sessions he was an assistant counselor or staff member, grew into becoming more vital to the program and worked as a paid staff member.

Even after graduating from Carvers Bay High School, Rashaud worked in the summers as a staff member for PSA. He believes this key program feature of The Village Group can help other kids and adults in Plantersville and



throughout Georgetown County grow in their person and in being a productive part of the community.

Rashaud went on to become an elementary school teacher. He is now teaching second grade at Forest Heights Elementary School in Columbia.

As outlined in the final story of this

*Journal*, Rashaud wants others to know that The Village Group programs will help people learn more and be more involved.

Now 22 years old, Brown knows the program has benefitted him personally and expects it will continue to have an impact on the whole community.



Rashaud Brown and others listen to Lee Brockington during an April fundraising event at Hasty Point Plantation. Brown grew up in The Village Group and is now a second grade teacher in Columbia. ABOVE, Brown confers with another staff member during the summer program.

# PSA = Plantersville Summer Academy

2A - Georgetown Times, Georgetown, S.C. Friday, July 15, 2011

## SUMMER PROGRAM WELCOMES PARENTS



CLAYTON STAIRS/TIMES

**Donna Britton, center, looks at arts and crafts created by her sons and other students. From left are 9-year-old Matthew McCants, holding a pair of ear rings he made, and her 10-year-old twins Dashon and Dawuan Britton.**

**BY CLAYTON STAIRS**  
*cstairs@gtowntimes.com*

Organizers for a summer program for about 50 local students invited parents and grandparents to come share in the students' success Wednesday.

Plantersville Summer Academy, in its third year at Plantersville Elementary School, is winding down after an eventful and creative summer, said Queen Funnye, director of the program.

"Our goal is to motivate and encourage students to reach their fullest potential academically as well as socially," Funnye said. "This program serves as a catalyst in assisting students to retain old as well as explore new levels in math and reading."

The program is sponsored by The Village Group, a non-profit organization providing a brighter future for the

youth of our community.

This year, the children traveled to several places including the Chapin Art Museum, Brookgreen Gardens, Huntington Beach State Park, Bodies Revealed and Fun Warehouse, Funnye said.

Parents and grandparents had a chance to see their student's artwork, including box dioramas, sand bottles, tie-dye T-shirts, Egyptian rattles, hand-made pillows and more.

These items were judged and winners were awarded cash prizes during the event.

There was also entertainment for the parents and grandparents.

After two interpretive dance performances by Donna Britton, and a moving rendition of "He'll See You Through" by Alex Bromell, Richard Neal, principal of Carvers Bay High School, was the featured speaker.

A former student of Plantersville Elementary, Neal told attendees to remember that young people are our future.

"We have the obligation to make sure we are doing what is best for these children," Neal said. "We need to put a value on our youth because they are our replacements."

He spoke of teaching children about opportunities, responsibility and contributing to the community.

"We need to hold them accountable and teach them how to respond to people when they are spoken to," Neal said. "If kids learn to give back to their community, that will solve a lot of our social problems."

He also thanked the parents and grandparents in attendance.

"What you do really makes a difference in children's lives," he said.

# PSA equals learning, for life

By Tommy Howard

For the Journal

Success in life takes many ingredients. In today's world, people who achieve a lot need good knowledge of English, math and science.

The old three R's of "Reading, Riting and Rithmetic" are key ingredients, to be sure. Beyond that, however, there are many other ingredients. Any chicken pileau will have rice, chicken and sausage. But to make it really good, flavorful, nutritious and a "hit" with those who dig in, the cook will add more ingredients, spices and flavorings. It becomes his or her own.

In a similar way, one of the early goals of The Village Group is to help children do better in school year-round. The Plantersville Summer Academy started in 2008 with initial efforts towards those main academic goals. But to en-

hance the "flavor" of the experience, the staff of PSA added in games, fun learning styles, field trips and exposure to much more than can be readily found in their immediate neighborhood or village.

As the story on the previous page, written by Clayton Stairs of the *Georgetown Times* in 2011 indicates, the enrollment that year was about 50 kids.

Word has spread. For several years, there has been a cap on enrollment because the success of the program is evident. Performance on tests in local schools has improved. Kids enjoy the varied activities. They get to hang out with their friends. There's travel to the ocean, amusement areas, hands-on science and much more.

One of the key ingredients to the success of the Plantersville Summer Academy and efforts by The Village Group is to have the necessary funds to bring



the program's benefits to even more children. Another ingredient is to find ways to take more outings to places like airline hubs in Dallas, the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., Penn Center at St. Helena Island near Beaufort and others.

People involved in The Village Group through the years are all volunteers. It still takes money, though, to pay for supplies, transportation, admissions and more.

And another benefit – stirred into the pot of academic learning is the expectation that the children will have good manners, be helpful, listen and actively participate.

Taken all together, this description fits not just a memorable pot of delicious, savory chicken pileau but also young people who will remember what they learned and how they learned. Those life lessons go a long way to preparing them for the future.







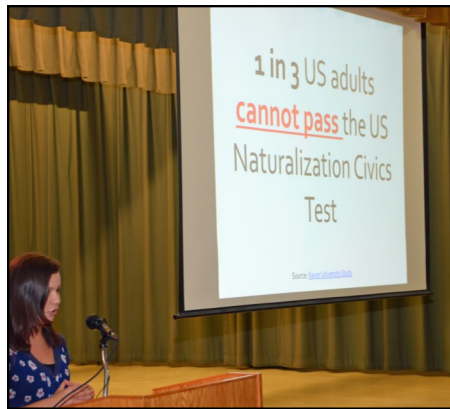
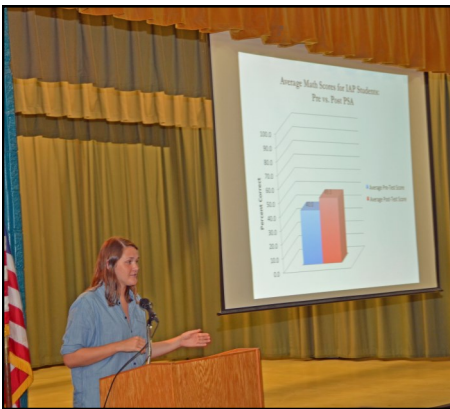
# Students show their stuff at PSA Parents Day



Students in the Plantersville Summer Academy showed some of their activities to parents and other family members on July 21, 2015.

Staff shared insights with parents on what PSA can help their students accomplish.







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# Plantersville Summer Academy inaugural program starts off with a blast

Plantersville Summer Academy opened its doors to nearly 100 youth in June 2009 at Plantersville Elementary School where Mr. Shawn Johnson is the principal.

The youths were met with cheers and balloons by nine senior and junior camp counselors, six staff, and 14 volunteers.

Transportation was provided with eight scheduled pickup sites within the community.

The program director, Ms. Ellen Gerald, utilized an education/school enrichment program designed similar to a program created by the Civil Air Patrol where participants are involved with hands-on and minds-on educational activities.

Breakfast, lunch and afternoon snacks were served.

The six-week program operated from June 8 to July 16 for grades 1 to 12, Mondays through Thursdays from 9-5 p.m.

Program activities included Gullah arts and craft, business and dining etiquette, life skills development, finance/ banking, environmental education, career development, art appreciation, creative writing, and lots more.

The Academy also offers mini camps for swimming and basketball.

It was organized through the collaborative efforts of several community non-profit organizations with a common goal of serving the community's youth.

The Plantersville Alliance group met regularly for five months under guidance of Bunnelle Foundation representative, Nancy Bracken, to help facilitate this cooperative effort.

The following organizations sponsored the program:

Plantersville Tri-Community Project, Soul Winner Ministries, The Village Group, Plantersville Elementary School, Plantersville Community Development Service Project and the Bunnelle Foundation.

Other sponsors were Georgetown County School District, Workforce Investment Act Youth Council, Georgetown County Cultural Council, OTD of South Carolina, Civil Air Patrol, Your Day Your Way, and the Department of Social Services.

To make a financial contribution toward this community effort, make checks payable to Plantersville Summer Academy, 1668 Exodus Drive Georgetown, SC 29440.

— From June 2009

## Thank You

*Thank you for all those who helped make The Village Group 10 Year Anniversary Gala a success.*

Host Planning Committee

Georgetown Times

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A List Affairs

Black River United Way

# Village Group honors its volunteers

By Tommy Howard

thoward@gtowntimes.com

*NOTE: This story first appeared in the Georgetown Times in December 2006. While it is from this specific appreciation banquet, it's representative of the many people who volunteer to help The Village Group serve their community.*

Saying "Thank you" is a simple thing, but one that is too often neglected.

The members of The Village Group in the Plantersville area made sure they thanked members of their new organization at their recent (December 2006) volunteer appreciation banquet.

A native of Plantersville in Georgetown County, John Funny served as guest speaker. He's president of Grice and Associates in Atlanta, Ga. and is active in a multitude of civic and charitable groups.

"God is the architect for my life. Being an engineer, I follow the plans," Funny said.

His cousin Cheryl Brown introduced him, reading out a long list of organi-



zations where he helps people and causes.

"Those things, they are all volunteer. When I give, it comes back ten-fold," Funny said.

"From my upbringing in this area," he said at the banquet at Plantersville Elementary School, "I've taken that with me. That's what I do."

Ray Funnye, chieftain of The Village Group, is another first cousin. When he called his Atlanta relative and shared his thoughts about forming The Village Group, "I shared his vision. This is my community. It's where I grew up."

John Funny serves on the board of the group, even though he lives in another state. He provided a large part of the funding for the community festival held during the summer, and supports other financial needs. He's also set up





two scholarships for students from the Plantersville community.

There are good people in the area, he told the 150 or so people in attendance at the banquet.

### Three things

There are three things that are important for these young people: education, education, education.

“With God at the steering wheel, they can go a long way,” Funny said.

“God ordained for me to be here. I say Merry Christmas, because I believe in Jesus Christ.”



*“God is the architect for my life. Being an engineer, I follow the plans.”*

— JOHN FUNNY

He and Ray Funnye talked several times about what date would work for him to come back to Plantersville. It just worked out — and not by coincidence, John Funny said — that Friday, Dec. 15, was free in his calendar. He had to leave at 6 a.m. Saturday to fly to New Orleans for a conference of black mayors, and then go on that night to Miami for another engagement. He was to return to Atlanta Sunday night so he could be at work on Monday morning. All that travel was for volunteer efforts, he said.

“I do volunteer work because I want people to know, when you have health and strength in a particular area, you should do that.”

“There are not a lot of African American engineering firms, so I travel a lot to show you can have your own firm and contribute back to society,” he said.

He shared thanks for many people who have been important in his life: his late cousin Maggie Jane Wearing for church; Abie Ladson for the Boy Scouts; Mary Ellen Green, a French teacher who told him he could do anything with his life; Fostina Shubrick, English teacher; Mr. Davis, bus driver supervisor who gave him his first job; Jerome Grate who taught him how to drive a bus; Mary Bonds, the former principal at Plantersville Elementary School; and the late Mr. Alvin McKenzie. “These are all people who helped me and helped the area,” he said.

Funny also praised The Village Group for its outstanding service to the community. Members have a bereavement committee that helps when someone passes away. They provide recreational activities, promote learning about Gullah heritage and culture, serve as men-

tors for young people and assist the elderly.

As with The Village Group, Funny said he tells his staff they can do more by working together as a team than by working separately.

“We want the community to do good with the issues facing the community,” he said.

### Volunteers and leadership

In the dictionary, there are many connections between “volunteer” and “leadership.”

“Leaders are the ones who get to challenge the volunteers,” Funny said.

“They bring out the bright ideas from one another.”

A volunteer is a person who voluntarily expresses a willingness to undertake something or do a service.

A leader should be a person of good integrity.



“When you volunteer, you often find yourself leading,” Funny said.

The leader faces conflicting elements and has to build a consensus, reaching a compromise that everyone can live with.

“There are two sides to a story — exceptional and mediocre. I tell my staff,

you’ve gotta be better than average. That’s when you are recognized.

“You have the power to overcome any negative power the devil may put in front of you, with the power of God,” Funny said.

A good leader has to have passion, be willing to listen and have understanding and compassion.

“Put yourself in their position. Then, things begin to happen. Position yourself mentally so you can help someone get out of a difficulty,” Funny suggested.

“The Village Group has a passion for the Plantersville community. It wants to do things for people in the area.”

“Leadership is hard work,” he continued. “It’s not easy. You are going to have to step up to the plate and do things. People are going to be counting on you.”

Looking out at the audience made up of friends and family, Funny said “You have set good precedents in the community.

“Leadership is not for those who have nothing to do. It’s not for the faint of heart. You are going to have to be strong.”





It's important to support people in all walks of life, and The Village Group does that. Members are reaching out to the bereaved, held their summer heritage festival and work with youth.

### **Scary George Jefferson**

"What scares me the most is George Jefferson. 'Moving on up'" was the long-running TV series (1975-1985) where Sherman Hemsley portrayed a rich black man who moved out of the poor neighborhood and into a penthouse.

"He scares me," Funny said to an almost all-black audience, "because he moved on up and he didn't take anyone with him."

"Be able to make an impact on the community. You should be able to share with others."

"We need leaders and volunteers who know what they stand for, and not what others say."

There are many diseases facing society in general and black people in particular, Funny said. Among them are sickness of the body, a high drop-out rate from school, AIDS, teen pregnancy and jail.

"But, with the help of The Village Group, we are bringing them out in the open and dealing with them."

Ministers need to be leaders in the community, and Funny recognized several who were present for the appreciation banquet.

"In the Bible, the book of Matthew tells us to love our neighbors, and our enemies as well."

At his office in Atlanta, Funny has a prayer closet. He uses that room to pray, and prays with his Christian employees as well.

### **Comes back ten-fold**

In his professional life, Funny said, he works hard and competes against many other transportation and engineering firms for business. He related how he got a call to partner with a large, prestigious firm on a big project. He put forth the effort, but the company decided not to use his company in bidding on the project.

However, another company learned about Funny's firm through that process. The two businesses partnered, got the contract for the project, and have since worked on several other projects together.

“It’s important that you lift a helping hand, and portray what Jesus would do,” Funny said. As he mentioned earlier, by giving of himself and his firm, he received even more business from the second partnership than he would have from the first.

### **Find the lost sheep**

“I think the calling for The Village Group is to go and find the lost sheep.” Give people an encouraging word, Funny admonished. Help the elderly and the young. Go the extra mile.

“Which one of you will go to the bereaved family? Tutor a young person? Teach young girls and guys how to dress?”

“We have to face up to youth. Be strong. Give them values.

“I often tell youth, you’ve got to picture yourself and what you are doing.”

Continuing, Funny said, “The gift of volunteering is truly a gift of God.”

*“The gift of volunteering is truly a gift of God.”*

— JOHN FUNNY

“It could be something simple, like a call on the phone. If you can do more, you should.”

It’s important to take volunteerism and its method out into the streets of the community. By doing that, “You see what’s going on. Put yourself in that position, and see how you can help that person get out of a situation.”

There are many people facing difficulties in their lives. They are unemployed, on drugs, homeless or in trouble with the law.

“Everyone is not lost because they want to be. It may be that they just had the wrong leader.

“It takes everyone to make Plantersville be a model community,” Funny said.

He took a mission trip to South Africa and saw how the people are living. “My church in Atlanta is building a hospital to provide healthcare. They need help.”

### **Model the behavior**

“I don’t see anything wrong with Plantersville planting and growing the seed into a national model” of volunteerism, Funny said.

“Which one of you? What is your calling?”

“What are you going to do to help your community? There’s a fabric here, a continuity. We have to make sure we join up with others in the community.”

Funny’s dad James Funny has done that. He was to turn 85 years old the next day. “I thank God for my family.”





Ray Funnye thanked his cousin for his talk, and for his service on the board of directors of The Village Group. He funded the first community festival the group had in Plantersville. John Funny

came back home later and served as a facilitator for a community needs assessment. “He helped us find what’s ailing our community.”

**Extraordinary things**

Speaking of the members and supporters of The Village Group, Ray Funnye said, “We are ordinary people doing extraordinary things. We are volunteers. No one is paid. We give our time and our money to help others.”

Following those comments, Ray Funnye recognized “Big John” Wright with the Community Service Award.

Yvette Smalls received the Volunteer of the Year Award.

Lucinda Milton received the Leadership Award.

Others who play a key role in providing leadership of The Village Group were also recognized for their service.

One of the ladies, Helen Dease, said “Ray is a go-getter. He knows how to tell you what to go and get.”

**Wind beneath our wings**

At the end of the banquet, Russell Bromell asked the core group of leaders to rise. Standing at one end of their lines, Bromell thanked them for their work in the Plantersville community. He sang the Bette Midler song, “You are the wind beneath our wings. Each one lifts another up.

“Do you ever know that you’re my hero? You’re everything I would like to be.”

**Many hands help lighten the load**

Again, this story relates just one appreciation banquet, soon after The Village Group began offering programs.

Throughout the decade of its existence, TVG has depended on the help of many people from around Georgetown County and beyond.

This story helps reflect the first years of The Village Group. Many of these same people continue their efforts today. New people have brought their own skills.

Throughout the past 10 years, the many hands working to deliver the programs to the children are helping to shape the future of these young people. They will interact with countless others with a positive impact.

**Members of the 10th Anniversary Gala Committee**

A diverse, wide-ranging group of people helped plan the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala. They came from throughout Georgetown County. Their goal was to help celebrate the first decade of The

Village Group and to offer a view to the future.

Committee members included:

Ray Funnye, Whittany Johnson, Brittaney Johnson, Anna Lovell, Fedrick Co-

hens, Jacqueline Geathers, Alice Barron, Tommy Howard, Pam Holmes, Randy Walker, Richard Preedom, Beth Stedman, Talicia McCants, Ashley Nelson, Eileen Patonay, Hope Watson, Edrick Alston, Shakeema Smalls.



*The Village Group*  
*10 Year Anniversary Gala Program*

*Introduction of Mistress of Ceremonies*

Mr. Fedrick Cohens

*Mistress of Ceremonies*

Meghan Miller  
Anchor, WBTW News 13

*Greetings*

Mr. Jim Dumm

Chairman, Georgetown County School District

Mr. Edrick Alston

The Village Group Board Member

*Occasion and Remarks*

D. Hope Watson, Esq  
The Village Group Board Member

*Invocation*

Rev. Brian Swinton  
Pastor, St. Mary AME Church

*~ Dinner ~*

*Sponsor Recognition*

Mrs. Eilleen Patonay  
The Village Group Board Member



*Introduction of the Speaker*

Rep. Carl L. Anderson

*Keynote Speaker*

Mrs. Molly M. Spearman  
State Superintendent of Education

*2015 Village Group Awards Presentations*

Mr. Ray C. Funnye & Ms. Monique Williams

*The Village Group 2015 Honorees*

Mrs. Lisa P. Burrage– Executive Director’s Award

Mr. Robert “Bob” Schofield– Humanitarian Award

Evangelist Evelyn Murray Drayton– The Village Award

Dr. H. Randall Dozier– Dr. H. Randall Dozier Education  
Award

Dr. Floyd L. Keels– Dr. Floyd L. Keels Public Service Award

*Closing Remarks*

Mr. Ray C. Funnye  
Executive Director



# Molly Spearman

## Keynote Speaker

### Superintendent of Education: Molly Spearman

Her entire career and personal life has prepared her for the role of leading the state's public education system. Growing up on a dairy farm in the rolling hills of Saluda County and graduating from the rural Hollywood High School, she learned the importance of hard work and an appreciation of the skill set needed for a successful career.

She received a B.A. in Music Education from Lander College where she served as President of the Student Government. Her studies also included a Masters of Arts in Education Supervision from George Washington University, and an Education Specialist Degree from the University of South Carolina.

For over 18 years she served as a classroom music teacher and an assistant principal. She was elected to four terms as a member of the South Carolina House of Representatives representing Saluda County and portions of Lexington County (House District 39). While there she championed education and children's issues and was named Legislator of the Year by the American Legion and the Department of Health and Environmental Control. She served on the Agriculture, Education and Ways and Means Committees.

In 1998, she became the Deputy Superintendent of Education for the South Carolina Department of Education and worked with educators, legislators, and the business community to pass the Education and Economic Development Act, the National Board Certification for teachers, and other progressive education reforms. From 2004 - 2014, she served as the Executive Director of the South Carolina Association of School Administrators, a professional organization representing over 3800 school and district leaders. Her understanding of the importance of strong school principals who support effective teachers will be a focus of her administration.

Married to Bill Spearman for over 38 years, they are the proud parents of Mitchell, Franklin (deceased) and Katie Spearman Cornwell (Lee). She is the former President of the South Carolina American Legion Auxiliary, National Chairman of Girls State Committee and Director of Girls Nation. She has participated in Palmetto Girls State since attending as a high school senior. On Sunday mornings you will find her serving as the organist at her small country church.

Her priorities as Superintendent of Education are ensuring school safety and a system of instruction that will prepare every graduate for successful life after high school. The foundation for that instruction is effective classroom teachers and principals who facilitate personalized learning for every student, every day.



# Lisa Burrage

## Executive Director Award

Lisa Burrage is the second oldest child of Mr. Sammie and Mildred Pyatt Sr. She is a hard worker who contributes that motivation to her parent's teachings of Christianity, family and love. She says that those teachings are what shaped and molded her from youth to adulthood.

Growing up, she loved church, volunteering to teach Sunday school classes and singing on the choir, eventually becoming a member of Bethel AME in Plantersville. She actively volunteered as Sunday School Secretary when needed. Due to her committed service, she was officially appointed as Secretary of Sunday School from 1986-1996. Lisa enjoyed working with the children of her church. She spearheaded many holiday programs. She said her fulfillment came from two scriptures in the bible; words she began to live by:

Proverbs 22:6

<sup>6</sup> Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.

Matthew 7:12

<sup>12</sup> So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

Once those words were instilled in her heart she wanted to discover what God had planned for her.

Lisa received her first years of education from Plantersville Elementary. She went on to Choppee High School, during which she was as a member of the National Honor Society, Beta Club and Choir. In 1988 she graduated from high school with honors. Soon after graduation she became a student at Horry Georgetown Technical College. There she stood out amongst her classmates; being the only female who was an African-American. However, it did not discourage her. Her academic excellence was noted. For two consecutive years she remained on the Dean's List. She was inducted into the PHI Theta Kappa Honor Society. In 1990 she graduated with honors from Horry Georgetown Technical College. She earned an Associate Degree in Engineering Technology. She was also listed in the Who's Who among American Students in Colleges and Universities

publication soon after.

Upon graduation she accepted a position at Santee Cooper of Myrtle Beach as a Metering Technician. She is still an employee there after 25 years of dedicated service. She actively supports the organization's functions and various charities such as the March of Dimes and United Way.



Lisa believes that the support of family helped her with her success. She makes special note to her husband Mr. Charles Burrage Jr. and her two sons Christopher and Michael. She teaches her sons that "Afro-American males should strive to do positive things in their lives and within the community." So far they have made her a very proud mom. Christopher, the eldest is a recent 2015 Honors Graduate of Carver's Bay High School and now attends the University of South Carolina. Michael is currently a 7th Grade Honor Student at Carvers Bay Middle School.

Lisa still works hard to remain a prominent figure in the church and community. She provides assistance to the program directors for the YPDER's, Church Sexton, Stewardesses and Trustees. She is a member of the Women's Missionary Society and actively supports the Village Group, PTO and school fund raisers and events. Recently she was appointed Vice President of Student Improvement Council (SIC) for 2015-2016.

Lisa believes her purpose in life is giving; whether it's her time or money. If you meet her you will know she does not brag or boast, speaks her mind and believes in treating people with kindness. She says every day is a blessing and she thanks God for the opportunity she has been given to enjoy it.

# Bob Schofield

## Humanitarian Award

Bob Schofield is a graduate of Davidson College and holds a Master of Arts in Business degree from Emory University. He lived in Atlanta, Georgia for about 14 years, then returned to Georgetown.

He's worked with his late father in importing for a mill supply business. Schofield also worked in the family-owned Schofield Hardware in Georgetown for a number of years.

Now Schofield farms his Hasty Point Plantation that has been along Plantersville Road for almost 300 years. He sells pine trees for pulpwood.

Schofield said the thing he is proudest of in life is his conservation work.

After moving back to Georgetown from Atlanta, Schofield worked to beautify Hasty Point Plantation.

About that same time, efforts were under way to build I-73 in North and South Carolina, and a developer had plans to build a private bridge to Sandy Island.

"I realized Hasty Point was not in a vacuum," he said. Schofield joined the board of the South Carolina Coastal Conservation League. Later, he became a member of the board of the South Carolina Environmental Law Project.

With those organizations and other conservation activities, Schofield said he endeavors to protect the planet for future generations.

"It's ugly to destroy something that took four billion years to create."

He was a part of the group that stopped the Sandy Island deal, where the developer's bridge would not even have been open to residents of the island.

For the last 20 years or so, his endeavors have been in conservation.

Schofield has hosted several fundraisers for The Village Group. "I'm very proud of what Ray (Funnyc) and others have done for the community."

"Nothing is more important than educating people in the ways of the world," he said. "Ray is wonderful for the villages. Everyone around here should be concerned about the future."



# Dr. Evelyn Drayton

## Village Award

*Evangelist Evelyn Murray Drayton* holds a doctorate degree in Christian Counseling and is an ordained minister of potential and possibilities. She is an acclaimed published author of seven books, an inspirational speaker, a recording artist, wife, mother of two boys, and a woman of character and integrity. Having survived a recent near-death experience, she is now a compelling advocate for spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical encouragement to help you overcome adversities and challenges in life. She inspires, encourages, and empowers others to first seek Christ and reach their full potential and pursue possibilities.

Evelyn is featured on various television programs and conducts various live radio and blogtalk internet interviews. Her excellent leadership has helped to catapult other ministries to the forefront. Her prolific words are soothing-but-powerful, and have captured the hearts of many. She counts it a privilege and an honor to share the Gospel using the Bible, her writing, and her music to help implement and accomplish goals.

Evelyn enjoys Bible teaching and studies, reading, writing and helping others. In addition to her biblical quotes, she loves the words of Oprah Winfrey: "Do the thing you cannot do. Fail at it. Try again. Do better the second time."

Reared in Clarendon County, Evelyn is happily married to Russell Drayton for over 25 year and is proud to be a part of the Plantersville Community of Georgetown, SC. They are proud of their two sons Justin and Nicholas.



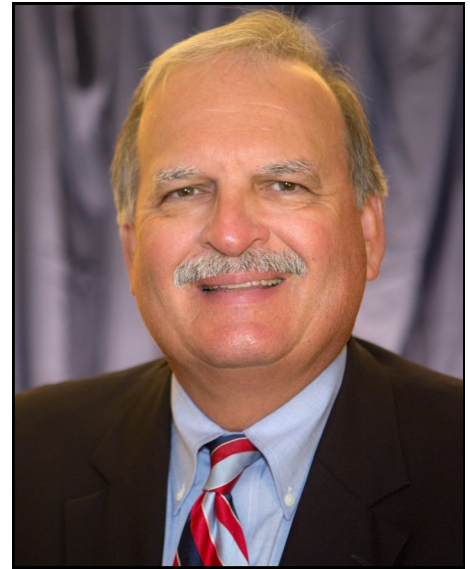
# **Dr. Randy Dozier**

## **Education Award**

Dr. H. Randall Dozier graduated from Francis Marion University in 1977 with a Bachelor Degree in Political Science. He also graduated from the University of South Carolina where he earned a Master's Degree in Education in 1980, Education Specialist in 1985, and a Ph.D. in 1995.

He has served as a teacher, assistant principal, and principal of two high schools, Assistant Superintendent, Associate Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent and Superintendent of Georgetown County School District from July 2004 to present. He also has been a member of the Board of Trustees of Francis Marion University since 1991 and currently serves on the Board of Visitors at Coastal Carolina University.

Dr. Dozier is married to Susan Rogers Dozier, a native of South Carolina from Pamplico. Mrs. Dozier is employed by Elizabeth Taylor Satterfield Interior Design in Pawleys Island. The Doziers have two children, a son Joseph Andrew, a 2002 Waccamaw High School graduate and a 2006 College of Charleston graduate. Drew is residing in Charleston and is in hotel management at the Planters Inn. They also have a daughter, Catherine Claire, who attended Waccamaw High School, finishing in 2011.



# Floyd Keels

## Public Service Award

Floyd L. Keels

Floyd Keels is a retired electric utility executive who served more than 40 years in the power industry. Keels last served as president and chief executive officer for Santee Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Santee Electric is the power provider for Clarendon, Florence, Georgetown and Williamsburg Counties representing the largest geographic footprint among South Carolina electric cooperatives.

Keels joined Santee Electric in April 1998 as the assistant general manager with more than 25 years of responsible experience in operations, management and leadership positions from Duke Energy's predecessor, Carolina Power & Light. He assumed responsibilities as president and chief executive officer for Santee Electric in May 1999.

Keels is an active community leader and currently serves as a board member of First Citizens BancShares, Inc., Francis Marion University, Greater Lake City Community Development Office, William Penn Harrison Scholarship Foundation, Jehovah Missionary Baptist Church of Sumter, SC and other community and charitable organizations. He is a former board member of Central Electric Power Cooperative, First Citizens Bancorporation of South Carolina, the Electric Cooperatives of South Carolina, Rotary Club of Lake City Paul Harris Fellow, Lake City Boys and Girls Club, the Coker College Board of Trustees, Exchange Bank of South Carolina, the North Eastern Strategic Alliance, Williamsburg Regional Hospital, Francis Marion University Foundation, NRECA Cooperative Research Council Institute, Lower Florence County Hospital, Southern Pines Rotary Club, and served as Adjunct Instructor for Florence-Darlington Technical College and Central Carolina Technical College. In 2003, Keels was appointed by Governor Mark Sanford to serve on his Commission on Management, Accountability and Performance.

A native of South Carolina, Keels attended the University of Wisconsin, Sumter Area Technical College, the University of South Carolina and earned Bachelor of Business Management and Master of Business Administration degrees with honors from Golden Gate University. He received an honorary doctorate of humanities degree from Francis Marion University in 2012 and Central Carolina Technical College's Distinguished Alumni Award in 2013. On May 15, 2015, Keels was awarded (South Carolina's highest award) the Order of The Palmetto by Governor Nikki Haley.

Keels is also a decorated military veteran with a Bronze Star Metal and other combat awards. He is married to the former Bessie Jerry of Darlington, South Carolina. Their son Antonio and his wife Shala have three children.



# Local nonprofit receives memorial gift

*NOTE: This article appeared in the Georgetown Times on Wednesday, March 11, 2015.*

The Village Group, a Georgetown County-based nonprofit dedicated to making positive changes in the community, has received a \$5,000 donation from Rickie and Anne B. LeMay of Myrtle Beach in memory of past employees Willie Ben and Julia Grate of Plantersville.

“We believe that successful, thriving communities are built by educated families with good jobs,” said Ray C. Funnye, Village Group executive director. “To achieve this vision, high school graduation rates must increase dramatically.”

The Village Group began the SOAR (Summer Opportunities with Academic Results) project in the summer of 2009 to help students meet or surpass math and reading standards and improve standardized test scores, leading to higher graduation rates.

The Village Group is committed to providing high quality summer and after-school enrichment programs that support children and families. In 2014, the Village Group served more than 198 youths at its Plantersville Summer Academy (at Plantersville Elementary School, an increase of 46 percent over 2013. The cost per pupil is less than \$78 per week.

Also in 2014, the Village Group partnered with the Duke University-BN Duke Scholars program and the Coastal Carolina University School of Education to supplement its program.

Along with the high-energy scholars from Duke, CCU, and nine S.C. state certified teachers, The Village Group uses curriculum based programming



**Ray C. Funnye, Village Group executive director, left, accepts a \$5,000 donation from Anne B. and Rickie LeMay of Myrtle Beach.**

and Kahn Academy, a web-based educational program. Early registration for PSA 2015 started in late April. More than 230 youths participated this year in the Plantersville Summer Academy. For more information you can reach us at [thevil-lagegroup@frontier.com](mailto:thevil-lagegroup@frontier.com).

The Village Group relies on the generosity of its volunteers, supporters and

donors, like the LeMays, to continue to provide quality programming.

## ***Just a sampling ...***

Please note, as with all items in this *Journal*, these are just a few samples of donations supporting The Village Group. We are grateful for all gifts that help the children's future.



# Native Georgetownian donates national appreciation to local charity

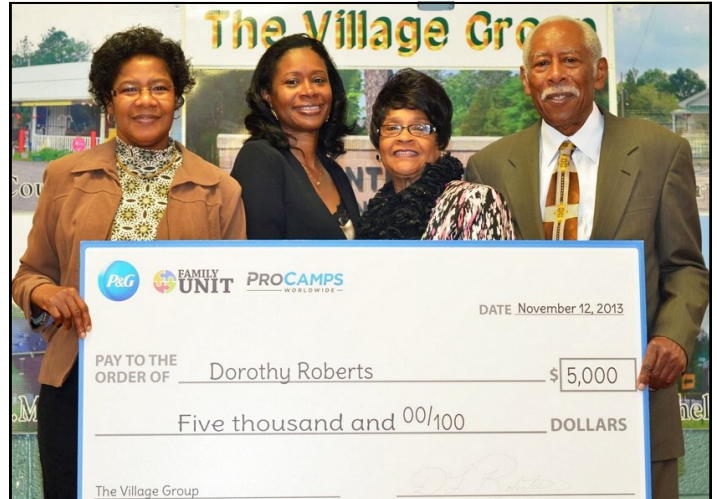
*NOTE: This article appeared in the Georgetown Times on Wednesday, March 19, 2014.*

In appreciation of a Georgetown native's participation in Procter & Gamble's Salute to Military Moms campaign, a \$5,000 donation to The Village Group was made in the name of Dorothy Roberts by Procter & Gamble and Pro-Camps partnership.

Roberts participated in a photo shoot for use in marketing to promote ProCamps which involves professional athletes volunteering at athletic camps held at military installations throughout the United States and overseas.

"We selected The Village Group because I wanted to give back to the community where I grew up," Roberts said at the check presentation on March 8 (2014). "The Village Group works to promote and achieve youth development, literacy enrichment, recreation enhancements and community improvements so I wanted to help them live their mission."

Roberts added, "ProCamps helps children dream big and in addition to teaching them football skills, also instills teamwork and the importance of education. I believe The Village Group does similar things and that is why we wanted to help today's youth become tomorrow's successful leaders."



**QRST Photography. Left to right: Coretha Grate, TVG Board Member and Treasurer; Dorothy Ford Roberts; her parents Rev. and Mrs. Robert Ford.**

Roberts is a supervisor at the trainee/student processing work center/directorate of human resources at Fort Jackson in Columbia. She is the daughter of Rev. and Mrs. Robert Ford, Jr of Plantersville.

For more information about The Village Group please call 843-240-0543.



## TVG gets \$1,000 check

CLAYTON STAIRS/SOUTH STRAND NEWS

Ray Funnye, director of The Village Group, accepted a check for \$1,000 in July 2015 from former Plantersville Elementary School Principal Beverly Gardner-Grate. The school has been the base for the Village Group's after-school program and its summer program for the last 10 years. Gardner-Grate said she wanted to donate to the organization because she has seen the "beauty of what they do."



## International Paper gives \$55k in grants

Taylor Griffith/South Strand News

International Paper's Georgetown Mill awarded \$55,000 in grants on Dec. 9, 2014 to 27 community organizations doing work with environmental education, literacy and IP employees.

Christmas came early for 27 local organizations on Dec. 9 when representatives from the groups gathered at the main office of the International Paper Georgetown Mill and received grants funded by the International Paper Foundation totaling \$55,000.

"This is my favorite day of the year," said Jeannine Siembida, Georgetown Mill manager. "This is my fifth year doing this,

and we've given away a quarter of a million dollars in those last five years."

She explained the recipients had to apply for the grant.

"There are criteria the applicants have to meet, so we try to work with them to make sure they meet all of the qualifications," Siembida said.

"Giving the money is easy," said Siembida. "What you do is hard and it goes such a long way."

Among the grants was The Village Group. It received a literacy grant to purchase books and supplies for the Summer Academy, Saturday Academy, and the Back to School Rally.

# Aviation interests are focus of TVG



By Tommy Howard

For the TVG Journal

Take off and fly. That's often a dream for people young and old. For young people involved in the programs sponsored by The Village Group, many opportunities exist to learn about aviation.

During the Plantersville Summer Academy, routinely throughout the year, and on special overnight trips the young people have gone to many places.

During the 2015 Plantersville Summer Academy, a Parents Day program shared information on many of the activities of The Village Group. Tours to the Pittsburgh Institute of Aeronautics, Delta, the Smithsonian's Air and Space Museum and more gather interest from young people.

**BELOW**, the Georgetown County Airport serves many types of aircraft and has a lot of personal and corporate traffic every month.



The two Georgetown County airports – in Georgetown and in Andrews – provide exposure to personal single and twin-engine planes, some corporate jets, helicopters and more.

Aviation interests include flying, maintenance, mechanics, engineering and numerous other fields.

Trips have included Delta's hub in the Atlanta area, the Smithsonian's Air and Space Museum in Washington and other places.

One highlight activity several years ago was a visit by two of the Tuskegee Airmen of World War II fame. These pilots were part of an all-black squadron of successful pilots who fought in the European Theater. There's more about their visit in the following pages.

Some of the activities of The Village Group are modeled after programs of the Civil Air Patrol.

Boeing has a plant in North Charleston and numerous allied industries supply

the airliner manufacturer. There are local community college programs in Georgetown and Horry counties.

Several local businesses serve needs of individuals and corporations for their aviation assets. Many of them work well with youth from TVG and other local children and teens.

# ROTOR



# BLADE

# County Airport hosts Aviation Week event

By Clayton Stairs  
cstairs@southstrandnews.com

*NOTE: This story was published in the Georgetown Times on Wednesday, August 20, 2014.*

The Georgetown County Airport, located south of Georgetown city limits on US 17, generates \$3.4 million in total economic output, according to the S.C. Department of Commerce.

Aviation Week in Georgetown County is in full swing. In late August 2014 residents were encouraged to recognize the many contributions aviation makes to the economic stability of South Carolina and the quality of life of residents here.

Georgetown County Council proclaimed this week Aviation Week in the county.

The public was invited to the Georgetown County Airport, located at 129 Airport Rd., south of Georgetown city limits on US 17, for a celebration of Aviation.

Howie Franklin, former Air Force One steward was guest speaker. He is the only flight attendant to ever serve five U.S. presidents consecutively.

County Administrator Sel Hemingway reported to the council that "aviation has been a part of Georgetown County life since the first airplane landed near Willowbank in 1911."

"The county's two airports are active in the support of businesses as well as the growing population and tourist industry; and the two airports create 47 jobs, house more than 40 aircraft and create an economic impact on the county in excess of \$3 million." He added that businesses and tourists depend on the general aviation airports of this county to transport people and goods to all parts of the country.

"Our airports support and assist Georgetown County, the State of South Carolina and even the United States by providing service to the military, medical transport, accommodating agricultural spraying and providing access to emergency equipment in time of disaster," Hemingway stated.

## Georgetown airport

Richard Westfall, airport manager for both Georgetown County airports, said, "A lot of people don't realize how much money the airport brings into the county. It is part of our infrastructure."



Including a multiplier effect, the airport tenants and visitors at the Georgetown County Airport generate \$3.4 million in total economic output, according to the S.C. Department of Commerce.

Of that amount, \$1.2 million in payroll is paid to 47 full-time employees.

"As direct and indirect impacts are released into the local, regional and statewide economies, additional multiplier impacts are created," the S.C. Department of Commerce explained in a brochure about the economic impacts of the airport.

"Multipliers that are specific to South Carolina were used to complete the economic analysis."

Westfall said that people don't realize the number of corporate airplanes flying in and out of the airport.

"Seventy-five percent of our traffic comes from jets and turbo planes," Westfall said.

"You'd be surprised by the big-named individuals who come through the airport. If the airport wasn't here these people who own homes and businesses here would own homes and businesses somewhere else. They want airport access."

The Georgetown County Airport currently has 51 based aircraft.

It has recently had renovations in several areas, Westfall said.

The airport now has a new terminal building, a 6,000-foot runway, a new hangar for corporate aircraft, a new taxiway, with run lights, that runs parallel to the runway from end to end, new instrument approaches

which enable airplanes to land with lower ceilings and lower visibility, and a new parking area.

They are also working to add new hangars to store more planes and setting up the whole airport to run off generators so it can continue operating in case of a hurricane or other natural disaster.

"If we do have a Category 3 or 4 hurricane, supplies for the area can come in by plane," said Barry Brock, fixed base operator with Seven Rivers Aviation at the Georgetown County Airport.

The airport offers a staging area for military exercises such as hurricane simulations, he said.

The airport hosts the Young Eagles program, which allows teens interested in flying the chance to go up in a plane, and the Angel Flight program which allows people with severe illnesses to be transported by plane for treatment.

It also participates in a dog rescue program called Pilots and Pets.

Westfall said the U.S. Coast Guard refuels at the airport during training exercises in Winyah Bay every week.

The county's other airport is Robert F. Swinnie Airport, located at 11920 Gapway Rd. in Andrews.

To find out more about the Airport, call 843-545-3526, or visit [www.georgetowncountyairport.com](http://www.georgetowncountyairport.com).

# Georgetown Tuskegee Airmen fly-in boosts SC education

By Lloyd Mackall

From YouTube video

Published on Nov 5, 2012

Personal stories told by two Tuskegee Airmen were well received by a crowd of 700 gathered to honor these black war heroes Saturday, Nov. 3, 2012 at Georgetown County Airport.

Recognized were Tuskegee Airmen Lieutenant Colonel George E. Hardy, 87, from Philadelphia, PA, and Lieutenant Colonel Hiram E. Mann, 91, who grew up in Cleveland, OH. They have known each other for 70 years, having met as members of an all African-American pursuit squadron during World War II. Both live in Florida today.

An audience member asked them what advice they'd have for the younger generation today. Colonel Hardy said the one thing all Tuskegee Airmen had was education. "We loved going to school and we applied ourselves to any task," Hardy said. "I grew up in the military and I hit some obstacles and tried to go around them. Just be persistent."

"The military has been good to me," Hardy said. "I went into the service at age 18 with a high school education and came back with a masters degree in engineering. There are other aviation opportunities in addition to flying in the Air Force, such as maintenance and air traffic control. We tell youngsters anyone can do these things through education."

Colonel Mann's advice was to persevere. "When someone tells you can't do something, prove them that you can do it," he said. "Don't apply for a job you can't do. Don't apply for something you're not qualified for. Educate yourself and be prepared when you ask for a position." World War II history of Georgetown County and its airport is presented by Lee Brockington, historian. She represents the Belle W. Baruch Foundation, owner of the 17,500-acre wildlife refuge, Hobcaw Barony. It became the winter residence of Wall Street millionaire and presidential adviser Bernard Baruch whose daughter, Belle, turned over the land to the military during WW II. President Franklin Roosevelt stayed there for rest and rehabilitation for a number of weeks.

Dedicated to these two Tuskegee Airmen who are telling their story and inspiring youngsters to read, learn and work to achieve their goals.



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The Georgetown County Chronicle

## PHOTO CORNER



### 'Red Tails' event a hit!

An event last month that honored original members of the Tuskegee Airmen attracted about 700 people to the Georgetown County Airport. The county was honored to have retired Lt. Cols. George Hardy and Hiram Mann, pictured at left, as the guests of honor. Attendees lined up to meet and get autographs from the original 'Red Tails,' as pictured below. At bottom left, Morgan Hinkleman opens the event with the National Anthem. See more photos at Facebook.com



# Plantersville Heritage Festival, 2007

By Tommy Howard

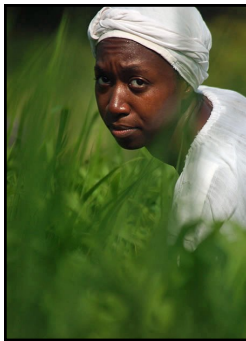
thoward@gtowntimes.com

*NOTE: This article was originally published in the Georgetown Times in July 2007.*

Plantersville residents will celebrate their roots this Friday and Saturday with the annual Plantersville Heritage Festival.

Queen Quet, Marquetta L. Goodwine, is the chieftess of the Gullah/Geechee Nation. She will talk Saturday during a 5 p.m. segment of the festival about the Gullah heritage of many residents of Plantersville and Georgetown County.

The festival is sponsored by The Village Group and other partner organizations and businesses, and is open to anyone who would like to



Photos shown here are from the 2006 Heritage Festival.

come to the weekend's festivities at the community park behind Plantersville Elementary School at Exodus Road.

Along with Queen Quet and her historical presentation, other elements of the heritage and culture of the people of Plantersville will include music by the Morrisville Brass Band, and Terry Cox and Shana Cox-Woodberry.

Gullah storyteller Gloria Barr Ford will relate some of the folklore of the people. That block of the day's festivities begins at 5 p.m.

The festival actually starts off Friday at 7 p.m. with the Plantersville Community World Series Softball Game at the

Community Park behind Plantersville Elementary School.



Bright and early Saturday morning there will be a Senior Citizens Fish and Grits Breakfast Fundraiser at 8 a.m. at the Community Center.

The Festival Gate opens at 1:30 p.m. at the park behind the school.

Participants can register for door prizes. There will also be arts and crafts on display.

The opening ceremony is at 2 p.m.

Youth activities start at 2:15 p.m., and the food court opens at 2:30 p.m.

The second part of the youth segment includes karaoke and a watermelon-eating contest at 4 p.m.

Following the 5 p.m. heritage and cultural segment mentioned above, Nia Productions of North Charleston will perform African drumming.

As night falls there will be a fireworks display.

There is no cost to participate.

Queen Quet will be coming to Plantersville on her way home from Eng-



land. She grew up on St. Helena Island in Beaufort County, South Carolina. During her childhood she learned the stories and folklore of her Gullah and Geechee culture. Over time, she has shared those stories with countless others in South Carolina and around the world.

Several years ago, Queen Quet was a consultant for a PBS series on slavery and the Gullah culture. She's worked with U.S. Rep. Jim Clyburn and many others to help secure Congressional approval for the Gullah/Geechee Heritage Corridor that was recently approved.

As part of the PBS series, Queen Quet was among a group of people filmed working in rice fields at Middleton Place near Charleston.

"In my community we say, "Hunnuh ain gwine kno wey hunnuh duh gwine ef hunnuh ain kno wey hunnuh dey frum."

"This amounts to: "You won't know where you are going, if you do not know where you are from." This for me is the epitome of what my traditions mean to my community. I want the world to realize the existence of these traditions and to help us continue to have them be practiced at home on the Sea Islands.



"We have no community if we do not have our land, our family, our songs, our arts, our crafts, our skills, and most of all, our connection to the Creator."

Ancestors of many of the people known today as Gullah and Geechee were brought to the American colonies as slaves to work in the rice and indigo fields, on cotton and tobacco plantations and in other ways in the years before the American Revolution.

The importation of slaves ended in 1808, though the internal slave trade continued until the end of the Civil War.

Queen Quet relates much of the heritage of the Africans who were sold into slavery and of their subsequent life in America.

The Gullah/Geechee language is a "creole" language, one that developed from unrelated sources. It's a combination of the speech of people from various African tribes, Elizabethan English and the derivatives that developed in the coastal regions of the Carolina, Georgia and northern Florida.

For more information, visit the website [www.thevillagegroup.org](http://www.thevillagegroup.org) or call Chief-tain Ray Funnyne at 546-3734.



# Memoirs of Plantersville come alive

By Tommy Howard

tjhowardsr@aol.com

The Village Group and friends celebrated the 10-year anniversary of the community group in Plantersville on Saturday, April 18, 2015. About 75 people honored their collective memories, the people who have gone before and the work being done today by volunteer staff and community members.

While the celebration of heritage is important, building for the future is key to the viability of the community and the people who call it home. That's been the message of the group since it began in 2005.

The day of heritage, art, pleasant kids, hardworking folks and music included



friendly handshakes, hugs and nods to heritage as well as looking ahead.

Ray Funnye is executive director

of The Village Group. His wife Queen is the sparkplug who works with



him and many other volunteers who create the future.

Bob Schofield owns Hasty Point Plantation, one of a string of former rice plantations lining the curvy pinewoods forest along the Plantersville Scenic Highway north of Georgetown. He hosted the event at his plantation. He was joined by several other major supporters.

Jamie and Marcia Constance, owners of the nearby Chicora Wood Plantation, came out to celebrate the fruition of the idea she helped develop years ago with another effort. Youth Enrichment Adventures offered activities in the summer for children in the area.







Also on hand was Ann Brittain LeMay, another financial supporter of The Village Group. Julia Grate of Plantersville had been a family friend who worked at a motel owned by LeMay. She felt drawn to help the community that meant so much to Grate.

Funnye's dad, retired preacher Rev. Richard B. Funnye gave an invocation and blessed the food and his wife Beatrice and sister-in-law Mary Lou Cottman shared memories of life on Hasty Point when they were kids. Beatrice Funnye joked that she worked in the house and her future husband worked outside, and she didn't like him much when they were little. The couple has been married now, however, for almost 70 years.



Lee Brockington, a natural-born storyteller and senior interpreter at Hobcaw Barony, shared history, debunked a few myths and rejoiced in the heritage of the people of all races who help

make Plantersville and Georgetown County such a special place.

In the way-back days, Indians – native Americans – peopled this land, Brockington said. Charleston was settled in 1670, and a scant 46 years later William Waties Sr. and his son established an Indian trading post at what we now call the Yauhannah community. Trade among the Indians and the white settlers, and enslaved Africans who primarily worked the land, made for interracial and intercultural peoples.

Brockington outlined the areas of Africa that were the ancestral homes of many of the blacks. Often, she said, their names indicated the part of Africa where they or their parents were enslaved, such as Angola, and later the





trades such as miller, coachman, carpenter and more reflected that heritage in their names.

She related that in the earlier days of the slave trade, five human souls could be purchased with one bar of iron.

Despite the tragedies of families being uprooted and taken from their homes in Africa, and making the long voyage to America, the people who came to work the land as property kept their sense of family and sense of a people.

The tragedies of the Civil War resulted in freedom for the enslaved peoples,

but that didn't mean troubles were over. Far from it, Brockington said. But she went on to relate that the planters who formerly owned the land and the people worked together with the newly freed men and women to farm the land, to grow food and crops and to operate stores and provide wages for those who had been slaves.



As practical people, these neighbors – black and white – came to rely on and in fact nourish one another in their connectedness and interdependence, Brockington said.





The Village Group was organized to foster the sense of connection with one another. It provides fun through learning, field trips and excursions, an after-school program during the academic

year and the Plantersville Summer Academy.

Rashud Brown also spoke to the crowd.

A young man at 22, he was among the first group of kids in the village who had his spark of light nourished, fed and grown over the past decade.



He was involved that first year and for the years since. He always looked up to Ray and Queen Funnye and others who worked hard to make The Village Group thrive. Both Funnys would challenge and encourage him. In high school, he became a counselor for the Plantersville Summer Academy. When he graduated from high school and went to college, he came back to PSA for work in the summer as a helper for the teachers, and then went on to becoming one of the teachers.

Brown made the familiar trip from Columbia to Georgetown on that Saturday to help celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of The Village Group and the Plantersville Summer Academy.

He wanted the adults present, as well as the kids who are members of Service Over Self, to know the importance of the work done by PSA. He is now teaching second grade at Forest Heights Elementary School in Columbia, due in no small part to the challenges and the opportunities he found



and took to heart through The Village Group.

After the talks and input from the group, people were able to enjoy music by Egbe Kilimanjaro. They could also enjoy the heritage that is part of the fabric of their lives and of Hasty Point Plantation. Canvas artist Whittany Johnson worked to create a painting commemorating the decade of service

by The Village Group. She was assisted by her sister and business manager Brittany Johnson. Bunny Rodrigues, well-known throughout the area, displayed a quilt she made honoring Michelle Obama and her Georgetown County roots. Rodrigues also displayed other elements of Gullah heritage. And the old rice barn adjacent to Schofield's home was open for visiting.





Before breaking for refreshments, Ray Funnye made sure to do one more thing.

He outlined the need for financial support to make the programs of The Village Group a reality.

It took close to \$90,000 to provide the learning experience, the summer academy and field trips, the fun times and the various heritage festivals and events in 2014.

That year, the PSA worked with almost 200 kids. Other events brought even more youngsters and members of the public in contact with The Village Group and its programs.

At the end of Saturday's program, both Funnys agreed that they don't need accolades. They do what they've been doing over the past 10 years for the kids and for the future.

Ray Funnye noted that the children of today will be the leaders of tomorrow. The future will be in their hands, he said, and he asked people to donate, to volunteer and to support the effort to help make the future better.

For more information or to donate directly, visit their Web site [www.thevillagegroup.org](http://www.thevillagegroup.org)

or the Facebook page The Village Group.





*Award Presenters - Monique Williams & Ray Fumye*



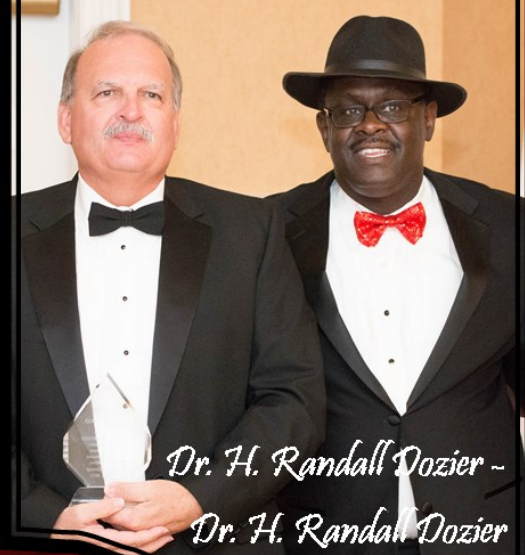
*Floyd Keels - Dr. Floyd L. Keels  
Public Service Award*



*Lisa Burrage - Executive  
Director's Award*



*Robert Schofield - Humanitarian Award  
Evelyn Murray Drayton - The Village Award*



*Dr. H. Randall Dozier -  
Dr. H. Randall Dozier  
Education Award*



*Jim Dumm - Chairman,  
Georgetown County School District*



*Molly Spearman - State Superintendent of Education  
& her spouse, Bill Spearman*

# Congratulations

on your 10 Year Anniversary

“You are a great inspiration and we appreciate the care and concern you have shown for South Carolina and it's greatest resource, its young people.”

- Ann Brittain LeMay

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