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MURRAY L. VINCENT AWARDED TO DARNELL MCPHERSON

Columbia, S.C.- Darlington County First Steps (DCFS) Executive Director, Darnell McPherson, was awarded the Murray L. Vincent Outstanding Prevention Professional Award in Columbia, SC, at the South Carolina Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy's 2015 Summer Institute on June 11th.

During the luncheon portion of the Summer Institute, Doug Taylor, Chief of Programs for the Campaign, announced McPherson as the recipient of the Murray L. Vincent Award which was surely a surprise to her.

According to the Campaign, The Murray L. Vincent Award is the highest and most distinguished award given by the Campaign. The award recognizes an individual who has significantly impacted the prevention of adolescent pregnancy in South Carolina. McPherson was not only recognized for her accomplishments and hard work in prevention, but also received a \$500 stipend to continue prevention work and a lifetime scholarship to the Campaign's Summer Institute.

Taken back by tears and the profound realization that her husband, children, and grandchildren were approaching to join her on stage, led to an emotional acceptance speech, "I thank the Campaign for the work that you all do across the state and my staff. I am very fortunate to have such a great staff" said McPherson. "We will continue to extend our work in Darlington County. We are halfway there and we still have work to do."

According to the Campaign's most recent data, Darlington County is ranked 14th in the state for teen birth rates. Under McPherson's leadership, DCFS has acquired two federal grants that provides services designed to prevent teen pregnancy: Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP) and Parents Are First (PAF).

With McPherson's guidance, DCFS has hosted several meetings locally and attended meetings statewide to spread awareness of the Campaign's mission, which is to improve health and the economic well-being of individuals, communities and the state of South Carolina by preventing teen pregnancy.

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McPherson has served as the Executive Director of DCFS since 2008 and has expanded the range of services. During her tenure, she has secured funding and maintained relationships with the South Carolina Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, United Way of Hartsville, Eastern Carolina Community Foundation, Hootie & The Blowfish Foundation, Byerly Foundation, Children's Trust Fund of South Carolina, Duke Energy Foundation, Bi-Lo and Belk Charites.

DCFS serves children and families in Darlington County. The office of DCFS is located on 437 W. Carolina Ave., Building 1 in Hartsville, SC. For more information on services offered, visit www.darlingtoncountyfirststeps.org.