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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New Grants Awarded to Darlington County First Steps' Programs

HARTSVILLE, S.C., November 4, 2014—Darlington County First Steps' programs, Countdown to Kindergarten and Making Proud Choices, were allotted large funds from The Hootie and the Blowfish Foundation, The Byerly Foundation and South Carolina Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.

The Trustees of the Byerly Foundation approved Darlington County First Steps (DCFS) with a grant of \$16,350 for the Countdown to Kindergarten program. Countdown to Kindergarten is a six week summer home visitation program which pairs a certified kindergarten teacher with a child and addresses the learning gaps which occur over the summer months.

Dr. Alvin T. Heatley who is the Board Chair of DCFS Partnership Board and a member of The Byerly Foundation Board stated, "The grant will greatly help DCFS with the purchasing of appropriate books, tools to develop fine motor skills, floor puzzles and other materials necessary for the children to reach the goals that have been set for all Countdown to Kindergarten students."

The Byerly Foundation has supported DCFS, in the past, with the Childcare Program which provided services for children in the evenings. The Byerly Foundation Grant will provide services for two years. The Hootie and The Blowfish Foundation will also be funding Countdown to Kindergarten, as they awarded DCFS with \$1,000.

South Carolina Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy granted DCFS with \$30,000 for the Making Proud Choices program. *Making Proud Choices! A Safer Sex Approach to STDs, Teen Pregnancy, and HIV* focuses on providing young adolescents with the information, courage and skills that will reduce the chances of risky behaviors that lead to underage and unplanned pregnancies, STDs/STIs and HIV. While informing the youth about ways to prevent these actions, facilitators emphasize that abstinence is the safest approach of any contraceptive method. Darlington County will serve up to 200 youth.

SC Campaign to Prevent Teen pregnancy has funded the Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP) for two years and this will also be the second year of funding for the Making Proud Choices Program by the Campaign.

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Darlington County First Steps' mission is to provide the information, support and encouragement parents need to help their children develop optimally during the crucial early years of life.