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## **First Steps Honors Leaders in Early Education**

**Columbia, SC** – South Carolina First Steps today honored an individual and an organization for their commitment to quality early childhood education in South Carolina. The award winners are as follows:

**2005 Jesse Coles Early Childhood Education Award:** This award is named in memory of the contributions of Dr. Jesse A. Coles, Jr., a strong advocate for children and education in South Carolina. He was president of the PSARAS Foundation and had served as Deputy State Superintendent of Education and Executive Director of the State Budget and Control Board in South Carolina. The award is given to the individual that has consistently demonstrated extraordinary support and leadership for quality early education. This is the second year of this award.

**Winner:**

**Kay Newsome, Beaufort, SC**

Kay is the administrator for Early Childhood at the offices of Family, Adult & Children Educational Services (FACES). She is a certified Parents As Teachers (PAT) Supervisor and has implemented this program in three of the district clusters serving more than 150 families. She's been involved with PAT for more than 15 years. She also supervises the Adult Literacy Programs, which provides GED instruction and child care for infants/toddlers at four elementary school sites.

Other services Kay is instrumental in providing through her office are: the book and toy lending library, monthly newsletter distribution, Born to Read referrals from the hospital, dental health curriculum for pre-k teachers during the month of February which include toothbrushes and literature for the families, developmental screening for children birth to 5 with follow up, and assistance with early childhood educational placement and Child Find – Pre-k assessment (screening for vision and hearing, and registration for Pre-k and Kindergarten)

Kay has been instrumental in establishing Preschool Club meetings at all elementary schools in Beaufort County, where parents with children up to 5 years old can take part in parenting discussions with emphasis on child development and No Child Left Behind. In working toward closing the achievement gap in Beaufort County Schools, Kay initiated a program called "Jump Start" in the summer of 2004. In this program, 133 kindergartners attended a four-week, intense and personalized instruction at five elementary sites.

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**(First Steps Awards, page two)**

Kay has received numerous awards including: United Way of Beaufort County Early Childhood Coalition Award, South Carolina Association for the Education of Young Children Award, "Communities Can" Award/Congressional Recognition Georgetown University, Bureau of Maternal & Child Health Award/SC Department of Health and Environmental Control, and Beaufort County Community Award for Children.

Kay is involved in her community and collaborates with a number of organizations including: Healthy Families of America/Advisory Board, Beaufort County United Way/Success By 6 Task Force, Parent Information Resource Center Parentwise/Director Network, East Coast Migrant/Advisory Committee, Born to Read/Steering Committee and Beaufort County Early Childhood Coalition.

**2005 SC First Steps to School Readiness Leadership for Children Award:** This award is given to the business or organization that has demonstrated strong support for early care and education through financial contributions (cash and/or in-kind), employee involvement and otherwise.

**Winner:**  
**Miss South Carolina Organization**

SC First Steps is proud to recognize the Miss South Carolina Organization with the 2005 Leadership for Children Award. First Steps celebrates the leadership of the Miss South Carolina Organization in its first-ever statewide service project focused on early literacy. Working in partnership with local First Steps programs, the Miss South Carolina contestants from across the state have assisted in raising over \$215,000 in private dollars to support the Dolly Parton Imagination Library program this year alone. This commitment has helped make it possible for more than 19,000 children in South Carolina under the age of five to receive a high quality, age-appropriate book each month mailed directly to their home.

"I strongly encourage reading both through my role as Miss South Carolina and in the Echelon success initiative program I conduct because reading builds vocabulary and strengthens performance in school. A love of reading develops early in life, which is why the First Steps and Imagination Library Programs are so valuable for our students, " said Miss South Carolina, Ashley Wood.

"Dolly is honored that two such exceptional organizations would join forces with her to bring the magic of books to so many children, " said David Dotson, Executive Director of the Dollywood Foundation. "Whenever I am asked to highlight a state where great things are happening for children, I always emphasize the creative work of First Steps and the Miss South Carolina Organization."

The awards event was held in conjunction with the "Building the Future Now: The Economics of Child Care" banquet and the 2005 SC Family Friendly Workplace Awards sponsored by SC First Steps, Coastal Cluster SCAEYC, Horry and Georgetown County First Steps, the Family Friendly Business Initiative and other organizations. More than 125 community leaders and early education advocates heard a panel of experts discuss the economics of child care and celebrated those who are committed to early childhood education.

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