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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Central Carolina Community Foundation grants \$335,770 to 11 Midlands Charities to Launch Innovative Projects**

*Fourth year of Connected Communities grants fund innovative projects to advance Midlands citizens' engagement with the community*

**March 14, 2018 (Columbia, S.C.)** - Central Carolina Community Foundation – the Midlands' expert on philanthropy – is pleased to announce the eleven local nonprofits that will launch new projects to enrich the Midlands region with \$335,770 in funding from the Foundation's fourth annual Connected Communities grants. A video showcasing the grant recipients can be viewed at [www.yourfoundation.org/connectedcommunities](http://www.yourfoundation.org/connectedcommunities).

The Connected Communities grant initiative aims to answer the questions, "What makes residents love where they live?" and "What draws them in and keeps them there?" Through this grant program, the Foundation funds philanthropic projects – spearheaded by Midlands nonprofits – based on these answers, with the common goal of further connecting residents to the community and knitting the Midlands region together. Since inception, the initiative has granted almost \$1.5 million to local projects.

The nonprofit grant recipients presented innovative ideas to the Foundation that embrace one or more of the following three focus areas, identified by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and Gallup as the three most important elements of an attractive community: *Welcoming Community*, which promotes and encourages open and inclusive activities and programs; *Vibrant Social Offerings*, which support the availability of community events, arts and culture opportunities; and *Superb Public Spaces*, which enhance the beauty and physical setting of the Midlands community.

Through the Connected Communities grant initiative, the Foundation seeks to strengthen our region by investing in our community's assets. Each selected project encourages citizen involvement and community-wide collaboration.

"Selected from 57 submitted Letters of Intent, these eleven projects are part of a creative group of organizations that are working to enrich our community in meaningful ways." says JoAnn Turnquist, President & CEO of Central Carolina Community Foundation. "The initiatives and



programs that will be launched will engage community members and increase our region's livability. It's an honor to support this work."

Connected Communities grants are funded by the Foundation's Community Impact Endowment (CIE) and Field of Interest funds for the arts. These funds are comprised of generous gifts from visionary donors who knew that their unrestricted gifts would allow the Community Foundation to respond to the ever-changing needs and opportunities in our community for generations to come. These gifts have allowed the Foundation to create the Connected Communities grant initiative and projects like Midlands Gives. This year's grant awards total \$335,770 and recipients are located in Kershaw, Lexington, Orangeburg, Richland, and Sumter counties.

Through these Connected Communities grants, the Foundation and its donors can leverage philanthropy to positively impact the attractiveness of the Midlands community, ensuring that residents of our region "love where they live."

### ***2018 Connected Communities Grant Recipients***

The following projects have been approved by the Foundation and will be funded by Connected Communities grants:

- *Acercamiento Hispano de Carolina del Sur/South Carolina Hispanic Outreach; La Vida Sana (The Healthy Life)* – A program to promote community engagement, healthy eating, and active lifestyles through the revitalization of a moribund garden in West Columbia as well as the development of a garden in Northeast and North Columbia.
- *Cola Town Bike Collective; Columbia Cycling Transportation Network* – The Cola Town Bike Collective will build a modular, scalable network that provides visitors and residents access to the region's public green-ways, business centers, and recreational parks. The information will be accessible through a comprehensive web-based app as well as promotions at the Soda City Market and public work stands throughout the city center.
- *Columbia City Ballet; Lexington Amphitheater Performances* – Performances at the Ice House Amphitheater in Lexington, SC will delight audiences and provide educational opportunities for families.
- *Columbia (SC) Chapter, The Links, Inc.; Links to a Healthy Lifestyle* – An expansion of the exercise fitness trail at Burton Pack Elementary School will place kid-friendly activity signage and park benches along the trail.



- Edisto Habitat for Humanity; *The Michael G. Salley Community Park* – The development of a new community park in the area of Kings Road, Orangeburg, SC.
- Historic Camden Foundation; *Redoubt Revitalization at Historic Camden* – Historic Camden will rebuild and reinterpret their redoubt, an earthen fort used by British soldiers in the American Revolution. The completed historic project will serve as an education and event space for the community.
- Keep the Midlands Beautiful; *Gervais Street Train Bridge Beautification* – A timeless and iconic image will be painted on the Gervais Street train bridge, owned by Norfolk Southern.
- Sumter Cultural Center; *Sumter Yarn Explosion* – More than just “wrapping year around trees,” this project will leave a lasting, visual asset that sparks interest and conversation in the Sumter community.
- Richland Library; *My Life Experience* – Richland Library will cultivate a more open and inclusive community through a mobile Virtual Reality (VR) simulation lab designed for the user to personally step into the shoes of society’s most vulnerable people.
- Town of North; *Beautification of 178 & 321 Intersection* – The Town of North will landscape and beautify the southwest corner at the intersection of Highways 321 and 178 with rose plantings and a utility box wrap.
- West Columbia Beautification Foundation; *West Columbia Enabling Park* – An all-inclusive enabling park for children and individuals of all capabilities will afford everyone the opportunity to feel welcome and part of the community.

For more information about Connected Communities grants, visit

[www.yourfoundation.org/community-impact/connected-communities](http://www.yourfoundation.org/community-impact/connected-communities) or call 803.254.5601.

***About Central Carolina Community Foundation:***

*Central Carolina Community Foundation – the Midlands’ expert on philanthropy – is a nonprofit organization serving 11 counties in the Midlands by distributing grants and scholarships and linking the resources of donors, nonprofits and area leaders to communities in need. Major initiatives include the Midlands Gives 24-hour giving challenge, Connected Communities grants, the One SC Fund, the Best of Philanthropy Awards, annual scholarships and more. For more information about the Foundation, visit <http://www.yourfoundation.org> or call 803.254.5601.*

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