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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**The South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Recognizes First Graduating Class of Community Health Workers Today**  
*Implementation of initiative to improve health in South Carolina*

**COLUMBIA, S.C.** — The South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (SCDHHS) recognized the first graduating class of the Community Health Worker (CHW) program at a ceremony this morning at the Midlands Technical College Airport Campus. The CHW program is a component of the SCDHHS Health Access at the Right Time (HeART) initiative that identifies innovative methods and providers of health care delivery to reduce challenges Medicaid beneficiaries face in accessing efficient and quality health care.

“CHWs can make a valuable contribution to statewide health outcomes by improving access and coverage in our communities, especially those underserved areas, ultimately leading to a reduction in health disparities in South Carolina,” said SCDHHS Director Tony Keck.

These 18 CHWs from 14 primary care practices across the state will serve as a liaison between the clinical practice and the community where they reside. As integral members of the health care teams at their primary care practice, CHWs will assist Medicaid individuals within their community manage their own health by encouraging participation in health screenings, attendance at medical appointments and adherence to medication and treatment. They will further assist patients in navigating the health care system, improving patients’ health knowledge, understanding their health condition(s) and developing strategies to improve their overall health and well-being.

Graduates of SCDHHS’ CHW program include: Mary Jo Motier, AnMed, Anderson; Sandy S. Miller, AnMed, Williamston; Sharon L. Robinson, CareSouth Carolina, Cheraw; Elaine H. McCafferty, Carolina Pediatrics, Columbia; Joanne K. Mubarak, Carolina Pediatrics, Columbia; Mareka Stevens, Center for Family Medicine, Spartanburg; Kimberly D. Browning, Colonial Family Practice, Sumter; Kasey P. McCarty, Fairfield Medical Associates, Winnsboro; Michelle Durham, Fairfield Medical Associates, Winnsboro; Deysi Pérez, Greenville Health System OB/GYN Center, Greenville; William Hardy, Lakeview Family Medicine, Lexington; Izmira I. Palomares, Little River Medical Center, Little River; Martha Lucia Gomez, Medical University of South Carolina Children’s Network, Charleston; Sharice C. Milton, Palmetto Family Medicine Center, Columbia; Amber Renee Gillespie, Palmetto Primary Care Physicians, Kingstree; Eric J. Cooper, Palmetto Primary Care Physicians, Lake City; Kiera Teasley, Senior Solutions, Anderson ; Marlon Vasante Williams, Senior Solutions, Anderson.

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All of the CHWs successfully completed a six-week skills-based training program and certification exam administered by Midlands Technical College to receive their program certification. The course included classroom, office and community curriculum covering the South Carolina recognized core competencies such as communication, interpersonal skills, health coaching and basic medical knowledge. SCDHHS provided a \$6,000 grant per practice to cover education and training costs for their CHWs, as well as administrative costs for the first year.

**About the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services**

*The South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services provides health care benefits to more than 1.1 million South Carolinians. Its mission is to purchase the most health for our citizens in need at the least possible cost to the taxpayer.*