

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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THREE TOWNS ADVANCE IN THE COMMUNITY HEART & SOUL[®] INITIATIVE

LANCASTER, SOUTH CAROLINA, September 7, 2017 –The J. Marion Sims Foundation is pleased to announce three communities have been invited to develop full proposals in the 2017 regional Community Heart & Soul initiative. The Town of Kershaw, the Town of Fort Lawn, and the City of Lancaster (with Promise Neighborhood) all successfully demonstrated indicators of readiness in their letters of intent over the summer.

“We are excited about what these towns are already doing and see great promise in the Heart & Soul initiative,” said Robert Folks, Board Chair, J. Marion Sims Board of Trustees. “We fully support the kind of all-resident collaboration that builds capacity in our towns and cities.”

Community Heart & Soul is a community development model created by the Orton Family Foundation that brings people together to build stronger, healthier and more economically vibrant communities. The resident-driven model helps build trust while taking into account the unique character of a town and the deep emotional connection of the people who live there—a town’s “Heart & Soul[®].” These collective insights into what truly matters most guide a community in making the best decisions about its future.

The initiative is a part of the J. Marion Sims Foundation’s commitment to community engagement. The partnership is Orton’s first in the Southeastern United States.

“Community Heart & Soul works because the community works together to make it happen,” said David Leckey, Executive Director, Orton Family Foundation. “The Orton Family Foundation and J. Marion Sims Foundation share a dedication to renewing the vibrancy of small towns. We are looking forward to a partnership that makes a lasting, positive impact in South Carolina towns through Community Heart & Soul.”

What the Communities Are Saying

Mitch Lucas, Town Administrator of Kershaw, SC: *"We are incredibly excited for the process and effects of Community Heart & Soul if selected to participate. As residents, it is so important for our community to have a shared vision, understanding and identity for the town as a whole."*

Sarah Stallings, former Chair of the Board of Directors, Fort Lawn Community Center and current Emeriti Board member of the Center: *"Many of the residents in Fort Lawn and the surrounding community remember when Fort Lawn was a bustling small town that's center was the Fort Lawn School. They also remember when jobs were plentiful. They now envision living in an area that has more to offer their families. All of the residents invited to discuss the possibility of the grant are willing to be a part of the movement that can bring more life to this area and increase its sense of community. We are confident that if the Fort Lawn area receives the grant, positive outcomes will result. We are most excited that we can have a community-wide effort to improve our community."*

Stephen "Flip" Hutfles, City Administrator of Lancaster, SC: *"Generous community minded individuals and organizations see the value in working together for the betterment of our community and can appreciate the good that comes from collaboration. The invitation from J. Marion Sims to proceed in the Heart & Soul process with Promise Neighborhood is a reflection of this growing belief, and the City is very proud and honor that our partnership with Promise Neighborhood will continue to grow through Heart & Soul. The true power to make a difference by the City, Promise Neighborhood and J. Marion Sims Foundation comes from our shared vision of improving and strengthening our social, cultural and economic vibrancy and understanding that partnership, along with tapping into the unheard voices is the key for betterment of the entire community. We are truly looking forward to our collaborating partnership with the J. Marion Sims Foundation and the Orton Family Foundation."*

Sharon Novinger, Executive Director of Lancaster County Partners for Youth: *"Lancaster Promise Neighborhood is humbled and flattered by the invitation to proceed in the Heart & Soul process by partnering with the City of Lancaster. We value collaborating with all community members in order to increase the quality of life for our residents and see this as an avenue to achieve these goals. We definitely look forward to the community engagement guidance that the J Marion Sims Foundation and Orton Family Foundation will provide."*

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About J. Marion Sims Foundation: The J. Marion Sims Foundation is entering its third decade of service to the community, with a focus on transforming the health and wellness of Lancaster, Fort Lawn, and Great Falls, SC. For information about Community Heart & Soul and other programs, please see www.jmsims.org or contact the Foundation at (803) 286-8772.

About the Orton Family Foundation: The Orton Family Foundation is focused on building stronger, healthier and more economically vibrant small cities and towns across America. Founded in Vermont in 1995, the foundation devoted more than a decade to working with small towns to create a community development model that helps build trust and empowers residents to shape the future of their communities. Community Heart & Soul® projects are underway across the country creating positive change that is resident-driven and recognizes the value in the unique character of each place and the deep emotional connection of the people who live there.