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For Release: October 27, 2010

COMMUNITY INVITED TO FREE PREVIEW OF WEST ASHLEY SENIOR CENTER

Web site: <http://seniorcenter.charlestoncounty.org>

Interested seniors are invited to attend a free preview to see what activities a future senior center may offer the West Ashley community. The preview will be held from 2-5 p.m. on Wednesday, Nov. 10. at the Jewish Community Center (1645 Wallenberg Boulevard, off St. Andrews Boulevard and Ashley Hall Road).

More than 500 responses were received from a recent survey, indicating strong support for a multi-faceted center in the West Ashley area. The preview on Nov. 10 will offer the opportunity for seniors and emerging seniors to get excited about a planning process for a new senior center.

Schedule of events for the Nov. 10 preview:

- 2 p.m. Music by Lowcountry Senior Center Chorus
- 2:05 p.m. Opening remarks
 - Colleen Condon, Charleston County Council
 - Aubry Alexander, City of Charleston Council
- 2:10 p.m. Sing-a-long
- 2:30 p.m. Line dancing
- 3 p.m. Tap dancing
- 3:30 p.m. Exercise
- 4 p.m. Refreshments
- 4:15 p.m. Presentation of survey results
- Note: Door prizes will add to the fun, and Trident Area Agency on Aging is providing refreshments.

Through public input including survey responses, the West Ashley Senior Services Coordinating Committee is crafting the vision for the proposed gathering place for adults over age 50. Citizen input helped identify the services, programs and facilities people feel are most vital and what specific opportunities are most popular.

After the Nov. 10 preview, the next step will be to determine funding sources/needs and the best site for the center. No permanent decisions have been made including the location.

Information on the proposed senior center, news and survey results can be found at <http://seniorcenter.charlestoncounty.org>. An informational flier on the preview is available at the Jewish Community Center, (843) 571-6565, and the Lowcountry Senior Center, 865 Riverland Drive on James Island, (843) 762-9555.

Background:

- The West Ashley Senior Services Coordinating Committee was created by citizens meeting since the summer of 2009 at “Coffee with Colleen and Aubry”, a weekly coffee get-together at Sojourn Coffee with County Councilmember Colleen Condon and City Councilmember Aubry Alexander. In addition to the citizens on the committee and County Councilmember Vic Rawl, there are representatives from the Jewish Community Center, St. Andrews Parks and Playground, Roper St. Francis Healthcare, and City and County staff. The anticipation for the center is as a gathering place where activities are offered such as bridge, book clubs, lectures, fitness, and other programs.
- The committee has identified a wealth of senior resources already in the area, but under 10 or more roofs. They include AARP, the Center for Creative Retirement, St. Andrews Parks and Playground and the City of Charleston’s recreation facilities. Seven housing facilities that focus on senior residences are already located in West Ashley. As of the 2000 census, there were 17,000 residents who were age 50 and up. Those 17,000 residents represented 28% of the West Ashley population area in 2000.
- On May 10 and May 17, 2010, the West Ashley Senior Service Coordinating Committee held two forums to hear what seniors and emerging seniors want in the way of programs, services and facilities West of the Ashley.
- Attendees at the May 2010 forums had a chance to learn more about Charleston’s existing senior centers, fill out a survey as to their preferences for the proposed West Ashley senior center and learn about the vision of the committee.
- More than 500 responses were received from a recent survey, indicating strong support for a multi-faceted center in the West Ashley area.

City Councilmember Alexander says, “We provide incredible opportunities for our children in the West Ashley area. Once the funding and the vision is in place, it is time to promote our existing senior opportunities and expand on them through a dedicated senior center.”

County Councilmember Colleen Condon says, “Similar centers in Mount Pleasant and James Island have been extremely successful, and we should do the same in West Ashley. I believe a partnership between Charleston County, the City of Charleston, St. Andrews Parks and Playgrounds, and other agencies can serve this need extremely well.”