



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **South Carolina Director of Special Education Beckie Davis awards 3 charter school Special Education Coordinators with the Special Education Showcase Award**

**COLUMBIA, SC** – South Carolina Department of Education Director of the Office of Special Education Services, Rebecca Davis, surprised Special Education Coordinators from the Charter Institute at Erskine (the Institute)'s 26 schools by attending their Back-to-School Kickoff training. Ms. Davis helped the Institute celebrate 3 exemplar Special Education Coordinators by presenting those coordinators with the Institute's Special Education Showcase Award on Friday, August 6.

The coordinators, who came to the training from the Institute's 26 schools across the state, were just settling in for lunch when Ms. Davis entered the room, surprising everyone and announcing the three winners of the Showcase Award.

Three Coordinators earned the Special Education Showcase award this year: Anna Hightower (Cyber Academy of South Carolina), Kim Ray (Horse Creek Academy Charter School), and Stephanie Gentry (South Carolina Virtual Charter School).

"The whole purpose of Special Education is to ensure all students have equitable access and opportunities," said Ms. Davis. "These coordinators have done a great job of setting the stage for all students."

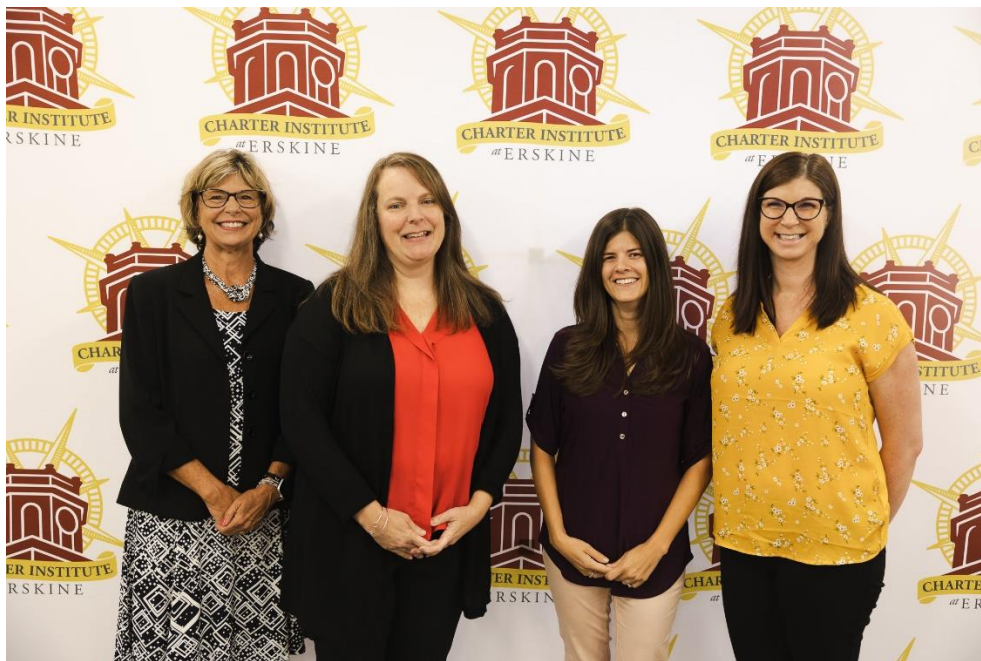
The Special Education Showcase award is granted annually to Special Education Coordinators at schools within the Charter Institute at Erskine's portfolio who have exceeded expectations in developing their special education programs within their schools. The Student Services department at the Institute annually reviews each school's department on the following criteria: how the special education program is innovative, how it is positively impacting outcomes for students with disabilities, and how the school's practices are setting a new industry standard and go beyond minimal compliance. The coordinators and schools that receive a 3/3 for each category are granted Showcase status.

“I had no idea,” said Kim Ray, a Showcase award winner from Horse Creek Academy Charter School. “I love our school, and I love this district. This district supports us and strives for us to be better.”

The school leaders from each of the winners’ schools also surprised the coordinators by appearing at the training and awarding them their prizes - a certificate, trophy, and \$500 stipend.

[Download photos, interviews, and a full media package here.](#)

*The Charter Institute at Erskine is South Carolina’s only higher-education charter school authorizer. Serving 22 schools and 24,000 students across the state, the Charter Institute at Erskine is committed to innovative, creative, high-quality methods of education. The Student Services department at the Institute oversees programming, compliance, and technical assistance to support students with disabilities and school programs. For more information about the Institute, please visit [www.erskinecharters.org](http://www.erskinecharters.org).*



Director Davis and the three Special Education Showcase Winners  
Pictured Left to Right: Director Rebecca Davis, Anna Hightower (Cyber Academy of South Carolina), Kim Ray (Horse Creek Academy Charter School), and Stephanie Gentry (South Carolina Virtual Charter School)