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THE HORRY INDEPENDENT



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Anonymous donor promises \$95 million to CCU

FROM STAFF REPORTS
INFO@MYHORRYNEWS.COM

A donor living in Alabama that wished to remain anonymous recently committed to a \$95 million gift to Coastal Carolina University, according to CCU officials.

"This transformational

gift will forever impact Coastal Carolina University," said CCU President Dr. David DeCenzo. "We are extremely grateful for the donor's faith in the University's mission. Without question, this donation will provide tremendous financial support for Coastal Carolina's future growth and

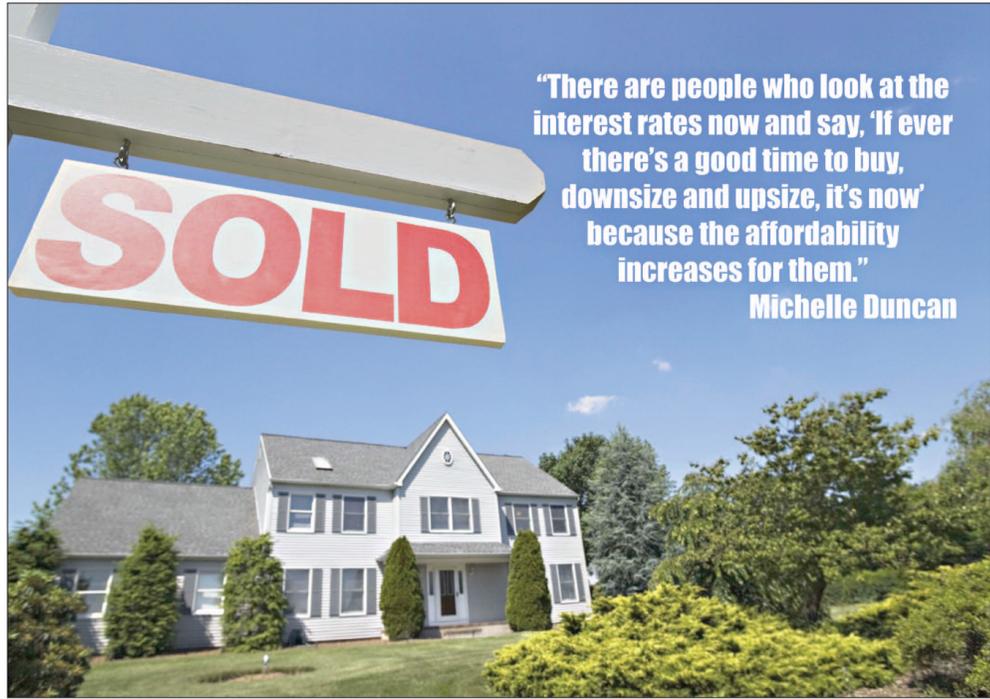
development." A planned gift, according to CCU officials, includes language in a donor's will or trust specifying a gift be made to an individual or organization as part of an estate plan. Planned gifts are most often granted once the donor has passed away, officials said.

According to an email sent to faculty and staff, the donor describes himself as an African American entrepreneur and philanthropist under the age of 30, who lives in Alabama. The email indicated the donor has a background in financial services and agriculture and "is committed

to initiatives in Alabama, including Miles College, one of the nation's historically Black colleges and universities (HBCU)." CCU's Office of Philanthropy has worked diligently with the donor's finance and legal teams, as well as his financial consulting company to finalize the

details of this planned financial commitment. The faculty and staff email said that the donor told CCU officials that he thinks CCU is a school "on the verge of greatness." "During my visit to campus, I was struck by its over-

DONATION, A2



"There are people who look at the interest rates now and say, 'If ever there's a good time to buy, downsize and upsize, it's now' because the affordability increases for them."

Michelle Duncan

STEVE ROBERTSON / THE HORRY INDEPENDENT

The housing market in Conway and the Grand Strand is going stronger than this time last year despite COVID-19.

Local housing market is hot despite COVID-19

BY KATHY ROPP
KATHY.ROPP@MYHORRYNEWS.COM

Even a pandemic can't hurt Conway and the Grand Strand's housing market. The fact is it's going even stronger than this time last year, according to two real estate salesmen and the Coastal Carolina Association of Realtors.

Michelle Duncan, broker with the relatively new Duncan Group located on Laurel Street in Conway, said in June her agency closed on 14 properties that included everything from new construction, to vacant lots, condominiums and single-family homes. They were located primarily in Conway, Little River, Myrtle Beach and Loris.

Things didn't slow down as they headed into July with five immediate sales.

The Multiple Listing Service showed 1,468 units closed in 2019 and 1,557 up to the same point this year.

Duncan and Chris Sansbury, a salesman and partner at Century 21 McAlpine Associates, agree that the interest rates at this time are just too good to pass up.

"There are people who look at the interest rates now and say, 'If ever there's a good time to buy, downsize and upsize, it's now' because the affordability increases for them," Duncan said.

She remembers when she and her husband refinanced

their home and walked away thrilled with a 6.5 percent interest rate.

Compare that to now when people are getting anywhere from 2.7 percent to 3 percent.

She estimates that a person who buys a \$300,000 house at 3.5 percent interest as opposed to a 4.5 percent interest rate saves about \$3,000 a year on mortgage payments.

"As far as sales are concerned," Sansbury said, "you know, we are ahead of schedule from last year, but our biggest problem right now is inventory and the shortage in inventory is driving the prices up. It's not really a problem because the prices are going up, but our interest rates are getting better."

He said interest on a 30-year mortgage can be as low as 3 percent.

"It's like free money," he said.

Sansbury sees the hottest market as anything selling for under \$250,000, but says even the upper end properties are selling. He attributes that to the continued influx of people moving to this area from the Northeast.

"They just want to get out of those highly-populated area. They're just dying to get down here," he said. Single-family homes are his biggest sellers.

"I think the negative to COVID right now is that you do have some people that are potential sellers who are holding back because they are scared of COVID and they're not listing their homes," he said.

He says a lot of his buyers are people who are 60 and over and they don't seem to be letting the virus slow them down.

But, he said, they and many of their buyers are stressing wearing gloves, and masks and making sure they sanitize inside and out.

"We've got a lot of safety measures in place, but, for the most part, it's not slowing them down too much," he said.

He quotes a recent market report that put the number of residential sales in areas with Conway addresses at 822 in June. That's up 3.1 percent from last year, but the number of properties available is actually down 10 percent from the same time last year and stands at 604. A good market has about five to seven months of inventory on the market at one time, he said. The inventory several

HOUSING MARKET, A2



McMaster

Court delays SAFE grants

BY KATIE POWELL
KATIE.POWELL@MYHORRYNEWS.COM

An Orangeburg-based educator was successful this week in temporarily barring S.C. Gov. Henry McMaster from distributing the \$32 million in CARES Act funds to create Safe Access to Flexible Education (SAFE) grants for a one-time private school

tuition grant, saying it is an "unconstitutional distribution of public funds". Attorney Skyler Hutto, on behalf of Dr. Thomasena Adams of Orangeburg, filed a motion for a preliminary injunction in Orangeburg County on July 21.

The injunction prevents the Governor's office from distributing the monies until a hearing on July 29

that will take place at the Orangeburg County Courthouse at 2 p.m., or pending further order of the Court, the paperwork said.

The court papers state that Adams has over 15 years of experience in education and holds a doctorate degree in education as well.

PRIVATE SCHOOL FUNDS, A2

Students returning to Conway Christian School next month

BY CHARLES D. PERRY
CHARLES.PERRY@MYHORRYNEWS.COM

Conway Christian School will welcome back students on Aug. 17.

Although Horry County's public schools are not scheduled to reopen until the following month, officials with the private Christian school said they are taking additional precautions to ensure they protect students while still getting them back into the classroom. Conway Christian officials sent their reopening plan to parents last week.

"The biggest thing, I think, is to reopen the school with the safety of our students, faculty, staff and families as a top priority, but also being able to have our kids here in person so they can have a bet-

ter educational experience," CCS Principal Connie Smith said. "They just need to be here."

Like the public schools, Conway Christian shifted to online-only instruction earlier this year when the COVID-19 pandemic upended education across the country. It's possible that the school may turn to that method again, but CCS leaders plan to continue with in-person education as long as they feel they can do so safely.

"Just getting back to some normalcy," said Victor Crawford, the chairman of the CCS board. "Obviously safety is our primary goal, but the overarching goal is to get kids back on campus as normal as possible."

Their strategy for accomplishing that hinges on the cooperation of faculty,

teachers and students' families. Parents are being asked to sign a liability waiver and a health screening agreement.

"A 'Healthy Only' framework provides the greatest level of 'normalcy' but depends on students and employees remaining at home if they display any COVID-like symptoms or have been in contact with others who are symptomatic," the CCS reopening plan states. "Per our commitment to partnership with our families, personal responsibility is more important than ever to protect the health of our entire school community."

The plan calls for the school's facilities to see increased cleaning and sanitation, and the school will make efforts to group students to prepare for possible contact tracing, the

process of identifying and contacting those who may have been exposed to a disease.

"However, the disruption to typical classroom routines will be minimized to the greatest extent possible in order to support student and staff socio-economic health, as well as best-practices of instruction," the report states.

The school is asking parents to check their children's temperature before coming to school and to keep them home if a child has a fever of 100 degrees or higher. The school will also perform wellness checks and has a designated space for students who display any COVID-19 symptoms while at school. Any absences related to compliance with these policies will be excused.

If school leaders determine the environment is unsafe for daily in-person learning, they could shift to a hybrid model that involves a combination of on-campus and virtual instruction. Groups of students would be at the campus on alternating days. If conditions worsened, the final option would be an all-virtual approach with the goal of returning to campus when conditions are safe.

Flexibility is a key part of the CCS strategy. "We'll continue to have to adjust as things change," Crawford said.

As for masks, those are optional for students and staff inside a classroom unless a teacher requires it because he or she falls into an

CONWAY CHRISTIAN, A2

