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Press Release

Contact: Dr. Marvin J. Howard, Sr. FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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HOLSEY CHAPEL ACADEMY OF EXCELLENCE

FITZGERALD, GEORGIA - FEBRUARY 22, 2009: To the community of Fitzgerald and Ben Hill County. We, the Holsey Chapel Academy of Excellence invite you to come out and hear different professionals, educators, parents, and students speak and answer questions about the petitioned charter school in Ben Hill County. We believe that it is time for a new adventure in our city.

Charter schools are public schools (not private or church schools) funded with public tax dollars. States grant charter schools the right to operate with greater independence and flexibility than most public schools in exchange for assuming greater responsibility for student achievement. Charter schools agree to meet certain educational achievement goals within a fixed period of time. These goals and timeframes become part of the written “charter” that is created when a proposal for a new school is approved. The Academy of Excellence is developing the charter at present. We are soliciting your feedback as we attempt to meet the community’s need.

Admission to the Academy of Excellence will be open to all. Contrary to a popular belief, charter schools cannot “select out” the best and brightest; nor are they “alternative schools” with students assigned from the traditional school. They are an option for parents seeking a

different educational track for their children. Typically, each charter school emphasizes a particular theme or approach, and works with a specific range of ages or grades. We have petitioned the Georgia Department of Education and the Ben Hill County Board of Education to address the needs of kindergarten through eighth grade (K - 8).

Charter schools are new, innovative public schools that are accountable for student results. They are designed to deliver programs tailored to educational excellence and the needs of the communities they serve. Charter schools are one of the fastest and most successful growing reforms in the country. The first charter school opened its doors in St. Paul, Minnesota in 1992 and now, a decade and a half later, more than 4,500 charter schools are serving over 1.3 million children across 40 states and the District of Columbia. Based on the belief that America's public schools should meet standards of excellence and be held accountable, parents are lining up to choose these innovative public schools that are able to meet the individual needs of their children. Our President Barack Obama ran his campaign on a platform that supported charter schools. In his words, "we will double funding for the Federal Charter School Program to support the creation of more successful charter schools."

The Holsey Chapel Academy of Excellence will operate on three basic principles: (1) **CHOICE**: We plan to give families an opportunity to pick the best environment most suitable for their child's educational well-being. Our teachers will create and work at directly shaping the best working and learning environment for their students and themselves. We are hopeful that the Ben Hill County Board of Education will authorize our school to best serve the specific needs of the students in a our community. (2) **ACCOUNTABILITY**: The Academy will be judged on how well it meets the student achievement goals established by our charter contract. We will show that we can perform according to operational standards as defined by the Ben Hill County Board of Education. (3) **FREEDOM**: While charter schools must adhere to the same major laws and regulations as all other public schools, they are freed from the red tape that often diverts a school's energy and resources away from educational excellence. Instead of constantly jumping through procedural hoops, charter school leaders can focus on setting and reaching high academic standards for their students. Some charter school programs focus on the basics—reading, writing and the traditional school subjects that some children struggle with.

Other schools have special arts or music programs. Some charters look just like other public schools. There can be dropout prevention programs, adult education programs, charters that serve Head Start and day care needs, or charters that work with children who want to go to college.

As a charter school in Ben Hill County, we want to empower each child to become the best that he or she can be. **We believe that a child is not a vessel to be filled, but a lamp to be lit.** In support, we will commit to the personal success of each child that walks through our doors. If you will like to hear more, please meet us on Saturday, March 7th at 4:00 p.m. at the Monitor Community Center. Join the challenge towards a better educational future for the children of Ben Hill County. Yes, We Can!

More information is available on the Holsey Chapel website, www.cmefitzgerald.org .

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