

## **GREENVILLE TEEN ORGANIZES “FESTIVAL OF FRIENDSHIP” TO BRING TOGETHER THE “ABLED” AND “DIFFERENTLY ABLED” IN OUR COMMUNITY**

Contact: Blanton Newman 846-430-5888 or blantonnewman@gmail.com

*J. L. Mann High School student Blanton Newman participated in the Riley Institute’s Emerging Public Leaders program at Furman University*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GREENVILLE, S.C.—Blanton Newman, a senior at J.L. Mann High School in Greenville, has organized a “Festival of Friendship” to bring together the “abled” and “differently abled” in our community. It will take place Sunday, April 7<sup>th</sup>, 3:00 p.m. -6:00 p.m. at J. L. Mann High School Track (located behind the school) 160 Fairforest Way Greenville, SC 29607.

The event will also be a fundraising carnival with proceeds benefitting the J.L. Mann S.P.E.C.I.A.L.S. program. The festival is open to the public; but it is cash only for tickets to play games, purchase food and drinks. Blanton Newman has organized this festival as part of his service project for his participation in the Emerging Public Leaders program at Furman University’s Riley Institute and his passion for individuals with special needs.

Blanton hopes to raise awareness regarding a large gap he feels exists between the “abled” and “disabled” in our community. Primarily he feels this is due to our citizens’ lack of experience with, exposure to and/or education in regards to our differently abled neighbors. Blanton’s goal is to help bring our community together as a whole to meet, learn more about and befriend one another in an effort to bridge that gap.

The “Festival of Friendship” will be three hours long and is open to all ages of the “abled” and “differently abled” in the upstate. Blanton has teamed up with many local organizations who work with the special needs community that will be there to engage everyone to become involved. Organizations represented will be: Alliance of Therapy Dogs, Best Buddies International, David’s Table, Halter Therapeutic Riding Center, Just Joy, Mauldin Miracle League, Meyer Center for Special Children, Thrive Upstate, UCAN and Young Life Capernaum.

To help fund and promote this fun carnival for all, Blanton has secured Bon Secours as the Premier Presenting Sponsor for the event. Please note additional sponsors who have helped make this event happen. Champion Sponsors are: Christopher Trucks, David's Table and Proforma. Hero Sponsors are: Excel Products, Southern First Bank, The Riley Institute and Wilson Associates Real Estate. Patron Sponsors are: Mr. and Mrs. Jonathan Norwood, Parkside Pediatrics, Periodontics of Greenville and The Torres Family. Friend Sponsors are: Gilbert Dental Group, Meyer Center for Special Children, oobē and Orthodontic Associates of Greenville.

EPL is made possible by generous sponsors including State Farm, Spinx, Walmart, and the Riley Institute at Furman University. For more information, contact Melanie Armstrong at Furman University, 864-921-8367. Learn more about the Riley Institute's Emerging Public Leaders program.