

## 2020 JMGBL Awards Application

<b>Submission Date</b>	2020-06-26 13:08:06
<b>This application is for:</b>	Barrett Lawrimore Memorial Regional Cooperation Award
<b>Project Title</b>	Berkeley County Project SEARCH
<b>County/Counties</b>	Berkeley County
<b>Staff Contact</b>	Hannah Moldenhauer
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**Please provide a summary of your entry (no more than 100 words) to be used in a handout for the awards competition and included in press releases/publications. You may either type the summary in the text box or upload it as an attachment below.**

Project SEARCH prepares teens and young adults with special needs for success in employment opportunities. Throughout the school year, these students/interns work in various departments at Berkeley County Government and develop skills and training to prepare them for future jobs. Berkeley County Government works with Berkeley County School District to make this program possible at Berkeley County.

**Presentations may include more than one speaker; however, each speaker should be aware that the 10-minute time limit is strictly enforced. Please list the name, title, and e-mail address of each speaker:**

Name	Title	Email
Josh Whitley	County Council Member	whitleyberkeleycounty@gmail.com

**Please check boxes for attachments you will submit as part of your application**

CHECKED: A concise Project Description to explain the purpose and significance of the entry (up to eight pages). Please follow the prescribed naming convention for your Project Description file.  
CHECKED: Any additional materials needed to support your application (up to five pages).  
CHECKED: Barrett Lawrimore Memorial Regional Cooperation Award applications must include letters of support from the chief administrative officers for each participating political subdivision.  
UNCHECKED: Submissions for The COVID-19 Response and Resiliency Showcase and the J. Mitchell Graham Memorial Award must include a letter of support from the county council chairman or the county chief administrative officer.

**To submit these attachments  
online, please upload  
Microsoft Word or PDF  
documents below.**

[Berkeley County Project Search.BL2020.pdf](#)



I would say that I love y'all.

# The Barrett Lawrimore Memorial Regional Cooperation Award:

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## Project SEARCH



Project | SEARCH



BERKELEY  
COUNTY  
SOUTH CAROLINA



BERKELEY COUNTY  
SCHOOL DISTRICT



# The Barrett Lawrimore Memorial Regional Cooperation Award: Project SEARCH: Berkeley County and Berkeley County School District

## **SUMMARY OF ENTRY**

Project SEARCH prepares teens and young adults with special needs for success in employment opportunities. Throughout the school year, these students/interns work in various departments at Berkeley County Government and develop skills and training to prepare them for future jobs. Berkeley County Government works with Berkeley County School District to make this program possible at Berkeley County.

## **BENEFIT/IMPORTANCE OF PROJECT**

### **1. Why was this project undertaken?**

Berkeley County started discussion for this program in 2017, with adoption in January 2018. Through a partnership with Berkeley County School District, it has grown and improved through the years, with this school year (2019-2020) being the most successful. The goal of the program is to help develop avenues for special needs students to build their success in the future. This, in turn, builds success throughout the County.

The students/interns who go through this program are between the ages of 17-21 and are currently enrolled in a high school within Berkeley County School District. Berkeley County Government and School District leaders recognized the future potential for these students and wanted to help support that path to success. Upon graduation from the Project SEARCH program, these students will be part of the workforce for decades, showcasing their learned skills and achieving success. Berkeley County wants to ensure they have the tools and skillsets to make them ready for the workplace and are considered hireable by employers.

Throughout the school year, these students rotate among different county departments, being exposed to a variety of tasks and scenarios that they might encounter on a future job. The tasks they're given are meant to grow their hard and soft skills for lifelong success.

Departments at the County volunteer to participate in the program; and since Berkeley County started Project SEARCH, a total of 12 County departments have agreed to work with the students. Those departments include: Real Property Services, Auditor's Office, Delinquent Tax, Information Technology, Custodial Services (Facility and Grounds), Library, Clemson Extension, Records Department, Berkeley County Courthouse, Animal Shelter, Administrative Services, and Cypress Gardens.

Outside of a hospital setting, Berkeley County was the first agency/organization to offer Project SEARCH in South Carolina and pioneered the program in the Lowcountry. It has since been emulated at neighboring counties, businesses and municipalities. Berkeley County is one of about 10 government agencies nationwide to have a Project SEARCH program.

The video that will be included in the presentation highlights the benefits and importance of this project.

### **2. What is the significance of this project to your community as a whole?**

The Project SEARCH program is the living, breathing side of the mission of Berkeley County Government. Berkeley County Government's slogan is "Rich History. Bright Future. One

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Berkeley.” County leaders and staff strive to serve all citizens of the County and build a promising future.

This program takes students who might not otherwise have sufficient opportunities for careers and jobs and focuses on making sure they succeed in life. This program is proof that Berkeley County Government is not focused on building and expanding the future for just a select few. Project SEARCH recognizes the value of inclusivity and opportunities for all Berkeley County citizens. It demonstrates that leaders are finding opportunities where others might find excuses. Most importantly, programs like this provide further proof that Berkeley County is focused on building a solid and bright future for everyone in the County.

These students bring an incredible spirit to the workplace, and the public is often filled with joy when they interact with them.

### **How does it relate in importance to the other problems in your community?**

Berkeley County strongly supports expanding career opportunities for all citizens in Berkeley County. Project SEARCH helps meet the needs of the community through job training, and provides existing employers with more qualified workers to fill open positions.

The immense stress on all aspects of society right now is understood. Work environments are feeling the weight of social tensions and concerns over the uncertainty of COVID-19 and budgetary cuts.

Project SEARCH, quite simply, puts life in perspective. These students bring an incredible joy and work ethic to their jobs every day, and they remind County employees and the general public of the beauty of life and the promise in the world. Their work ethic is unmatched, and they don't take their jobs for granted. That level of dedication – frankly – is something we all should strive to achieve.

This program also takes students who might not otherwise have certain job opportunities and provides them with avenues to work and puts them on a path to realizing their potential. These students/interns come from all areas of the County. They're citizens of Berkeley County with motivation to self-empower through their work; helping the County's workforce as a whole.

### **3. How much of the county's population is benefited by the project?**

The students with Project SEARCH have worked in a total of 12 county departments throughout the adoption of the program – most of these departments having public-facing roles. The County's population has indubitably benefitted in a variety of ways – from staff to citizens to business owners to the students' home environment, the program's impact can be felt far and wide. When they are students/interns with Berkeley County Government, they benefit and support thousands of citizens throughout the year, from interaction at the front of buildings to assisting with tasks in County departments. But the differences they make are compounded when their work as a student/intern with Berkeley County Government concludes, and they officially enter the workforce; for that is the time when Project SEARCH truly proves its worth. The hope is that with each Project SEARCH graduate being gainfully employed, the program has earned itself another spokesperson who is able to affirm its value through a job well done.

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**In what specific ways are different groups of citizens within the county better off than before?**

1. Impact on the public. The impact these students have on the public is immeasurable. They work in departments where they often interact with the public, sometimes engaging with hundreds of individuals per day. Specifically, students greet people at entrances to public buildings, help at the animal center and Cypress Gardens (both County facilities regularly frequented by the public), and much more. They exude joy to everyone they meet, and the benefit they provide Berkeley County in general is most evident in their daily work.
2. Impact on employees. Berkeley County staff is positively impacted by the work they do with the students of Project SEARCH. Berkeley County employees teach and guide these students throughout the year, and it substantially benefits each staff member to work with these students. The interactions between County employees and the student helps both parties learn patience, understanding, and empathy, which they exercise during work hours, and ultimately at home within their respective friend, family, and community groups.
3. Impact on home life. The opportunities provided through Project SEARCH translate to learned independence, confidence, and empowerment, and a recognition that we all have abilities to share with our community. Through the experiences they have with Project SEARCH – and those reinforced elsewhere in their lives – they establish a course for their own future. The effects of the training they receive are compounded when parents or caretakers are also able to pursue success in their careers/jobs.
4. Impact on the workforce. Local businesses are often unable to fill open positions because the labor pool lacks specific experiences and skills. In Project SEARCH, students learn the necessary hard and soft skills they need to become gainfully employed in specific fields; thus providing job-ready professionals to the workforce.

**4. What degree of success did the project attain?**

Over the past three years, several of the Project SEARCH students have landed jobs after graduation. The skills, social understanding, and work ethic they develop through the program provides them with the training they need to be successful in their life after school.

Of the students from the 2018-2019 graduating class, 80% are currently employed full-time. Kaitlyn and Dave L. are just two examples:

- Kaitlyn, is employed in the Berkeley County Real Property Services Department and has worked there for more than a year. She was placed in the department during Project SEARCH and demonstrated to County staff her ability to continue working in the department after graduation. The support letter from Wilson Baggett (attached) highlights the appreciation his department has for this program.
- Dave L. works at the Navy Base, where his big personality and willingness to help others makes a significant impact there. He shined brightly during his time at Project SEARCH and is a true success story.

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The success of Project SEARCH is two-fold, in that the program achieves its top goal of building a foundation for lifelong employment of these young adults, and the County benefits from the enormous impact of their helpful roles in its departments.

The program is not currently active over the summer, and its absence is felt throughout the County during the summer break. The atmosphere in the County buildings isn't quite as dynamic without the students' presence.

### **What major objectives were achieved? Provide data where possible.**

Each year, there has been a 100% graduation rate in the program, and last year (school year 2018-2019) 80% of Project SEARCH students were awarded full time jobs after graduation.

Berkeley County was the first to offer this program in the Lowcountry and – outside of a hospital setting – brought the first Project SEARCH program to South Carolina. Twelve departments in Berkeley County Government have participated in Project SEARCH since its full adoption in January 2018.

Berkeley County is one of about 10 government agencies nationwide to offer the Project SEARCH program. The County was one of the first government entities locally to hold this program. It has since been emulated at neighboring counties, business, and municipalities.

Berkeley County's Public Information Office created a video to highlight the work of Project SEARCH. That video was well received and has reached more than 10,000 people since it was posted on May 21, 2020.

### PROJECT EFFORT/DIFFICULTY

#### **1. What did your county have to do to accomplish its objectives?**

Project SEARCH strives to provide positive and effective job training for students with mental and physical disabilities. The objectives of the program are simply to help the students achieve independence through the dignity and power of work. Teachers and job coaches help develop curriculum and training to build a foundation for a respective student's success. They follow a routine schedule in departments around the County, transitioning to several departments throughout the year.

In order to achieve these objectives, Berkeley County leaders encouraged department directors to get involved in the program. Within each department, team leaders took it upon themselves to set an example for the students.

The County developed a strong partnership with the school district, and Project Search had champions on both sides who laid the groundwork for the program to accomplish its objectives.

#### **If your county worked with another local government or consultant, how was the work divided?**

Berkeley County School District provided teachers/job coaches to help lead the program. The students' weeks were split to include both classroom instruction and on-the-job training at different times of the day. During classroom time, students are instructed on situations they often experience in the department. Job coaches ensure the students are accomplishing their

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daily work objectives, and they guide the interns through some of the introductory training. Using classroom time to introduce potential workplace scenarios allows the students time in the departments to focus on their daily tasks.

Berkeley County departments that participate in the Project SEARCH program identify and coordinate the work and tasks that the students will do each day.

Directors of the various participating County departments work hand-in-hand with the job coaches from the School District and communicate often to ensure the objectives of the program are achieved each and every day.

### **2. What challenges occurred during the project? Were there any community concerns?**

The biggest challenge was getting other departments to get onboard with the program. Initially, there was some hesitation and pushback from departments, with concerns that the students/interns could not fully perform the work functions of the intended position.

Additionally, some Berkeley County departments were hesitant to take-part in the program because they thought there was a possibility that the students/interns could impact the productivity of their staff, rather than being an asset to boost morale (which they ultimately became).

Finally, some staff were concerned that the students would not be able to relate to social “norms” within the work environment.

### **3. What were the nature and extent of the county government’s efforts to alleviate the problem(s)? How difficult was it to accomplish the project’s goals and/or objectives?**

Thankfully the departments were able to overcome any and all concerns and instead came to realize and appreciate the value the students added to the workplace. If and when challenges did/do arise, teachers from Berkeley County School District are standing-by to serve as job coaches for the students. This helps mitigate any potential issues.

Additionally, several employees stepped-up to advocate for this program. They helped champion the program’s adoption in the County.

Most recently, with the County administration that began in January 2019, there has been an incredible push for this program directly from the Supervisor’s Office. Berkeley County staff feels the support and encouragement from County leadership and have been eager to join the effort. This helps the students/interns get more opportunities and experience in various County work situations.

The eventual acceptance of the program and eagerness to see it succeed have helped spread the belief that differently-abled young adults with disabilities can be an integrated part of professional workplaces – facing and responding to challenges.

As soon as the program started, it was immediately considered to be positive for the County (and the students), and the goals of the program were accomplished each day without any major challenges.



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**4. Was financing the project an obstacle? Were there any unusual factors inherent in financing the project?**

Financing was not an obstacle due to the partnership that was created between Berkeley County Government and Berkeley County School District. Providing a low student-to-teacher ratio (as this Project SEARCH requires) is often difficult to financially justify, but from the beginning, County and school leaders saw the value of the program.

Space availability in the County building for Project SEARCH's classroom, and transportation for students to the County building were both issues early-on. However, all challenges were quickly resolved. Departments made sacrifices to free-up space in the County building, and the school district worked to provide transportation for the students.

This year (2019-2020 school year), the program expanded to also allow students to work in departments outside of the Berkeley County Administration Building; including, but not limited to, the Berkeley County Animal Center and Cypress Gardens. Transportation to these facilities was imperative to ensuring these new opportunities were sustainably accessible for both staff and students.

**5. Did any agencies, citizen groups, or other organizations assist your county with this project?**

Yes, there were several agencies and non-profits that contributed to this program and continue to play a big role in its success. Project SEARCH in Berkeley County was formed through a partnership between Berkeley County Government and Berkeley County School District. Additionally, the *South Carolina Department of Disabilities, Special Needs, South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation*, and *Berkeley Citizens, Inc.* were involved with the planning and implementation of the program.

**Did their participation pose any particular challenges or offer any unique contributions or benefits?**

The collective advocacy of the program from the beginning showed the support and importance of Project SEARCH. Berkeley County Government strives to promote unity within the community, and its partnership with Berkeley County School District, state agencies, and not-for-profit organizations toward Project SEARCH does just that. It epitomizes and emphasizes the County's commitment to a "One Berkeley" mindset.

**6. Are there any unresolved problems or other goals left to tackle?**

Berkeley County continues to find avenues to make this program even more successful. In the future, the school district and the County hope to increase the intern class size and have more departments participate. There is a larger goal of spreading the enthusiasm of Project SEARCH further within the County, to demonstrate the importance of providing opportunities for people of all capabilities.

**PROJECT ORIGINALITY/INNOVATION**

**1. Justify the uniqueness of this project. What makes it different from other projects designed to achieve the same objective?**

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Berkeley County Government was the first in the Tri-County to offer the Project SEARCH program. At the time Berkeley County started the program with Berkeley County School District, it had only previously been offered in South Carolina hospitals. Berkeley County was the first government agency in South Carolina to join the program.

The one-on-one coaching and training are vital parts of this program's success, in comparison to other programs with similar intent. By getting several agencies and organizations on-board to help, it ensures the program has a strong, reliable support system.

### **2. Do you know of any other similar programs in South Carolina? If so, how is your program different?**

Project SEARCH started at Cincinnati Children's Hospital and is mostly at hospitals across the country.

Berkeley County Government and Berkeley County School District mutually saw an opportunity to bring the program outside of a hospital setting, into the Lowcountry, and continue to build the program each year.

The County worked with the school district to mold the program to ensure its effectiveness for the students, as well as the County as a whole. Students/interns work in departments around the County and are exposed to several different scenarios and work environments.

Since the adoption of Project SEARCH at Berkeley County, other businesses and agencies across the state have emulated the program. This trend further speaks to its success and continues to expand the available opportunities for the young people participating in the program.

### **3. What innovations were required in accomplishing your objectives?**

Berkeley County initially identified and coordinated with a few specific departments – all centrally located in the County Administration Building. This kept the program scope manageable for its initial kick-off.

This year (2019-2020), in its third year, the program has expanded and flourished to additional County departments, at the encouragement of the new administration and department directors and staff. Transportation continues to be provided by Berkeley County School District to ensure the students are experiencing diverse employment opportunities.

The expansion of participation and available resources have helped ensure the program is accomplishing its objectives, while guiding the students toward opportunity and success.

### **4. Who provided the creativity and imagination in your project?**

The success of the Project SEARCH program is thanks to the many people, agencies, and organizations involved. Berkeley County School District: School Superintendent Dr. Eddie Ingram, Dr. Kelly Wulf, Craig Hige (job coach), and Nikita Byrd (job coach). Berkeley County Government: Berkeley County Council, Berkeley County leadership, and participating Berkeley County Departments.

Additionally: Vocational Rehabilitation, South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs, and Berkeley Citizens, Inc. were involved with the planning and implementation of the program.



June 9, 2020

John P. Cribb  
SUPERVISOR

In my nearly two years as Berkeley County Supervisor, my favorite event has been the Project SEARCH graduation. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, there was not a ceremony on the originally scheduled date in May. But, not having a ceremony does not discount the students' incredible hard work; nor does it minimize the impact this program has on our entire County.

I believe strongly in the importance of expanding career opportunities for all citizens in Berkeley County, and especially the young people among us; for they have the greatest potential for positively influencing our communities long into the future.

In my roles in local government – and even as a former educator – I can honestly say that Project SEARCH is unlike any other program I've ever come across. It is encouraging to witness such a successful partnership between a County government and school district.

What makes Project SEARCH unique is its emphasis on providing constructive and empowering job training experiences to teens with mental and physical disabilities. Throughout the timespan of a school year, students carry out internships within different County departments, realizing their vocational potential and developing valuable life and work skills. Project SEARCH opens up job opportunities that students might not otherwise have access to without a formal internship experience. Berkeley County Government wants to “open the door” to long-lasting career opportunities for these young people.

As a whole, Project SEARCH students are an exemplary group. Each year, they've proven themselves to be determined, dedicated and eager to learn as they've carried out a variety of duties – from janitorial to clerical work – across County offices and facilities. They exhibit positive attitudes and exemplary work ethics. Simply put, it is a privilege to have these talented students working alongside County staff, day-in and day-out.

I believe we must never stop investing in our community's younger generations, and that is why I so strongly support the Project SEARCH program. I look forward to seeing its impact grow locally in years to come, and – to the best of my ability – will promote it to other government agencies, school districts and organizations. Showcasing the varied and exceptional abilities of students through Project SEARCH is just one of the ways Berkeley County's “One Berkeley” mindset comes to life. Our differences make us stronger, and Berkeley County government will continue to do our part in introducing young people to the dignity and power of work.

Sincerely,

John P. Cribb  
Berkeley County Supervisor

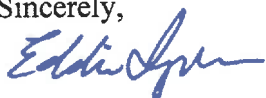
June 5, 2020

On behalf of Berkeley County School District, it is my pleasure to submit a letter of support for the steadfast and continued commitment of Berkeley County Government and Project SEARCH. In addition to pioneering this program in the Lowcountry, we were also the first of our program in South Carolina outside of a hospital setting.

This collaboration began in January 2018. Beginning as a part-time opportunity, the original program included four interns. In the time between the initial implementation to present, this collaboration has grown into two years of a full-time opportunity with six interns participating in each. Of our sixteen Project SEARCH graduates, seven are employed full-time and one former student is employed part-time. Further, we currently have six interns who are actively seeking employment at this time. Berkeley County Government has offered employment to three Berkeley County School District Project SEARCH interns; one intern who was hired currently works in the Real Property Department.

The Berkeley County School District looks forward our continued collaboration into the upcoming 2020-2021 academic year.

Sincerely,



Dr. Eddie Ingram, Superintendent



# BERKELEY COUNTY SC

RICH HISTORY.  
BRIGHT FUTURE.  
*One Berkeley*

BERKELEY COUNTY  
REAL PROPERTY SERVICES (ASSESSOR)  
Wilson Baggett  
Director

June 9, 2020

To: Hannah Moldenhauer  
From: Wilson Baggett  
RE: Project Search

We are writing to show our support for Project SEARCH. When our office was approached to become one of the first to be involved with Project Search we were informed of the purpose and goals of the organization. Without hesitation, we were on board.

Not only is the organization a benefit for the students but it is also a great benefit to our office. The students learn marketable job skills, how to become independent, confident and overcome obstacles that may affect their ability to transition into self-dependence. Our office has the honor of getting to witness these students gaining their self-esteem while learning how to become the independent, self-reliant adult this organization strives to achieve for each one of the students.

Craig Hige and Nikita Byrd are the two Project Search leaders we have worked closely with during our involvement with the organization. They both do an exceptional job with making sure each student has a smooth transition into their position.

Craig and Nikita take the time to learn all the tasks expected of the interns and, in turn, train each student. This allows our office the benefit of pre-trained interns. The interns are monitored by Craig or Nikita to insure they understand and carry out their tasks. Any time we need to introduce a new task, the Project Search team is there to assist. The students have never failed and often exceed our expectations.

Project Search is a much-needed program that helps students get the hands-on experience and skills needed to launch them into the real-world workforce. We fully believe that Project SEARCH is beneficial to Berkeley County and ultimately, statewide. It has been a great pleasure working with the Project Search Team and having the opportunity to get to know and work with the students.

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# Teens with disabilities graduate from Berkeley's inaugural Project SEARCH class

By Jenna-Ley Harrison [jharrison@journalscene.com](mailto:jharrison@journalscene.com)  
May 23, 2019



Berkeley County Sup. Johnny Cribb hands graduate Timothy Johnson his diploma on Thursday. Jenna-Ley Harrison/Journal Scene

When the Limlingans were searching for a new place to call home outside of the Philippines, they were attracted to South Carolina's Southern hospitality and welcoming residents. It was a chance for the couple to seek quality education for their children, including meeting the proper needs for Dave, their son with disabilities.

And after watching the high school senior graduate from Berkeley County's inaugural Project SEARCH class during a special ceremony on Thursday, Belinda Limlingan felt even more pride in the decision her family made five years ago.

"I am very thankful," she said. "This is a blessing."

Dave Limlingan was one of five graduates who filed into the Berkeley County Council Chambers as the traditional Pomp and Circumstance tune played in the background. They were celebrating their successful culmination of the year-long SEARCH program, a partnership among the county, Berkeley County School District, Berkeley Citizens Inc., which serves individuals with intellectual developmental disabilities, and the South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department covering Berkeley and Dorchester counties.

"Not only is it heartwarming after 38 years—it's amazing what county governments and school systems can do when they work together," said Eddie Ingram, BCSD superintendent. "All you have to do is decide to do it; it's not a miracle, but miracles can happen when you do this."

County Supervisor Johnny Cribb also commended the program and characterized the unique event as the career highlight of his elected position up to this point.

"I've only been on the job about five months, and I want to thank you guys for giving me the best day on the job so far," he said.

Each graduate secured a diploma in front of a cheering room of friends and family, county employees and County Council members, all of whom praised the program as an integral part of growing local youth's

confidence and job skills.

"It has been amazing to watch these young adults develop and mature," said Kelly Sieling, area supervisor for Vocational Rehabilitation.

Ingram also promised graduates they would always have the district and county's support.

"Just because you're a graduate doesn't mean you aren't still part of our family," he said, "and we'll continue to do everything we can to support you and love you and help you be productive, happy citizens."

It was Amy Guerry, coordinator of special services for BCSD, who brought the program to the area—the first of its kind in the Lowcountry. She said Charleston and Colleton counties plan to also implement Project SEARCH into their school districts this coming year. Guerry was first introduced to the initiative during a conference she attended in the Upstate—where she said several such programs exist.

"I came back, and I was like, 'We need this in Berkeley County,'" Guerry said.

While the program first took root in the county in 2018, it was only conducted half the year and didn't produce graduates. At the time, program leaders were more interested in establishing business relationships and ironing out any kinks, should they arise.

"You trusted us with a vision of something you had never seen before," Guerry told county officials, "And I appreciate it, because with your support we're able to support the students of our community."

This past year, the program received 10 applications, with officials conducting a rigorous selection process to narrow down the top five seniors. The process included a skills assessment and interviews with each applicant, applicant's parents and teachers, Guerry said. The program also requires students reside in Berkeley County and be at least a high school senior; while they can remain in the program until age 21, that's not the goal.

"Because we don't want them to come back to school," Guerry said. "We want them to leave this (and go) into the world of work."

On the county side, it was the eagerness and take-charge leadership of late Councilman Ken Gunn, who passed away in February, who pushed for the program to start—and start sooner than program officials had planned.

"We wouldn't be here today without him," said Craig Hige, Project SEARCH instructor. "I emailed (him) in a frantic search for a place to have our program at. He responded within five minutes and said, 'We want this program at Berkeley County.' I said, 'We want to start in August of 2018'; he's like, 'Nope, we're going to start it in January 2018.'"

Students enrolled in the program no longer attend their respective high schools; they are removed from the classroom and placed in rotating internships with county government.

Over the last year, students performed cleaning duties and clerical work, among other assignments, in the records, real property and facility services departments. According to graduate Alisha Mungro, the tasks and interactions with county workers and volunteers taught her valuable life skills.

"I am so thankful for the people here for teaching me to be an adult in a

work room," she said.

Fellow graduate Timothy Johnson pointed to work as a public "greeter" at one of the offices as his favorite internship during the program.

"Because I was able to get better at talking to people face-to-face," he said. "I also enjoyed meeting new people. There are so many people in this building that have helped me this year."

County officials said they anticipate more departments joining the program next year, growing its future involvement and impact.

"I think the smallest this program will ever be is today," Cribb said. "This is a worthwhile program."

Cribb also touted the program as a beneficial way to connect local employers with qualified employees and revealed how early in his career, during his days as a school teacher, he, too, worked as a co-op director to find jobs for youth. He explained that while locating quality workforce members has been a recent challenge across the county and state, the program's graduates are helping change that.

"Finding good employees right now is really difficult," Cribb said, "and that's what you guys have been—you've been great employees for the county. We have a lot of need in the county, and you guys are here providing a very valuable service."

And each graduate is ready for the next chapter, ready to start employment and spend that first paycheck—though not on themselves. Dave Limingan told the crowd he'll be sending his paycheck to his grandparents in the Philippines to cover their medication costs. Johnson said he wants to help with household expenses and save for the future.

At least three of the graduates already have employment, many of them working with the Naval Weapons Station in Goose Creek; the other two plan to secure jobs this summer. And to encourage graduates in their next life season, Seiling offered them what she labeled as two vital "tidbits."

"When you start your new job... just two things I want you to remember that you can control every day when you go to work," she said. "One of those is your work ethic, and the other is your attitude." Other graduates included Brittany Swihart and Mikal Shaw, who was awarded the "Most Improved Intern" award.



Graduates with Berkeley County leaders and Berkeley County School District officials

[https://www.postandcourier.com/berkeley-independent/education/teens-with-disabilities-graduate-from-berkeleys-inaugural-project-search-class/article\\_66c1fc8a-cecd-547f-9f83-5a72f642e6c1.html](https://www.postandcourier.com/berkeley-independent/education/teens-with-disabilities-graduate-from-berkeleys-inaugural-project-search-class/article_66c1fc8a-cecd-547f-9f83-5a72f642e6c1.html)



**Berkeley County School District**

*Creating a future we dare to imagine*



Bus Transportation



District Portal



PowerSchool Parent Portal



School Menus

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- Enrollment Info
- Schools
- Students and Parents
- School Board
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### 5 students recognized at Project SEARCH Graduation

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Project SEARCH graduates embrace mentors following the graduation ceremony held at the Berkeley County Administrative Building. [Additional photos](#)

Five students were recognized during the Project SEARCH graduation ceremony on Thursday, May 23, 2019 at the Berkeley County Administrative Building. The ceremony capped the inaugural year of the program that prepares students with intellectual and developmental disabilities for the workforce. In Berkeley County, it is the product of a partnership with BCSD, Berkeley County Government and Berkeley Citizens Inc.

Additional information about the program and this year's graduates can be found in this [article by the Berkeley Independent](#).

# Project SEARCH: Berkeley County Government



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