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Contact: Beth Hopewell, Director of Administration, 662-8134 or bhopewell@aseds.com

Joan A. Pennstrom, Headmaster of All Saints' Episcopal Day School, was recently selected as the 2011 recipient of the Dr. Charles Aimar Educational Leadership Award by the South Carolina Independent School Association (SCISA). Larry Watt, Executive Director of SCISA, presented the award at the annual fall headmasters' meeting and then made a surprise visit to the school to honor her during the Tuesday morning Chapel program in front of the students, teachers, several School Board and Parent Guild volunteers and members of the Pennstrom family.

"It is truly a pleasure to be here this morning for such a special occasion, to honor an extraordinary person who I have known for many years. I am very proud to recognize Joan Pennstrom's outstanding leadership as the headmaster of All Saints' for the past 16 years. She has created innovative academic and campus programs with a keen focus on the preparation of each student for success. Her leadership has made All Saints' an exceptional independent kindergarten and elementary school in South Carolina and in the southeast. As a representative of SCISA, an organization of over 100 independent schools, we are pleased to recognize her efforts, enthusiasm, and significant accomplishments. This is the highest award given by SCISA each year," he said.

"Joan Pennstrom has led All Saints' through an ambitious campus construction program in the midst of challenging economic times, and has maintained full enrollment," he continued. "This is extraordinary. Joan does not consider her work a job, but a passion. I am delighted to be a part of recognizing her dynamic leadership."

Watt explained that The Dr. Charles Aimar Educational Leadership Award was created in honor of one of the outstanding founders of the SC Independent School Association. Joan is the 25th recipient of this award.

Dr. Fred Carter, President of Francis Marion University and former All Saints' School Board Chairman was present. He said, "I've met very few people more competent administratively and instructionally than Joan Pennstrom. Through her leadership and advocacy, All Saints' has become the standard of exemplary education across South Carolina. Of course, Joan has accomplished far more than build an exceptional school; her true legacy is nurturing generations of students who love to learn and aspire to serve. She is undeniably the most adept and accomplished headmaster I have ever known," he concluded.

Cecily Lilly, Vice-chairman of the School Board, said that she agreed heartily with Dr. Carter and was proud to be a parent and part of the school's governing body. She asked the audience, "How many of us know without a doubt that Joan is available to each of us, every day? She is amazing in her vision and her ability to challenge each of us to be our best!"

Jonathan Burnett, Board Chairman, who could not be present wrote: "Joan truly epitomizes the traits of an excellent leader on all levels. She has been a role model for students, parents, and is highly respected within the Florence community. When my wife and I first visited the school, a new campus was under construction. The atmosphere was and has continued to be nurturing for each child. Joan has an incredible ability to manage people and resources. Her efficiency and effectiveness allow the Board to remain focused on the 'big picture' perspective of providing her with the long term resources necessary to lead the school."

All Saints' Episcopal Day School was founded in 1960 as a kindergarten for around 40 students. It has grown into a 3K-6th grade school with 344 students, 50 faculty and staff members, an active Parent Guild, community volunteers, and alumni. A new campus was constructed on the original site a few years ago, bringing 23 spacious classrooms under one roof, adding a multi-purpose building with a

cafeteria, gym, and performance stage, a covered pavilion, the Teaching Garden and an outdoor classroom. There are two playgrounds.

A significant technology upgrade was completed this summer, adding all new computers and software. There are 15 Promethean boards, with at least one in all of the 3K-6th grade levels. Classroom teachers are required to be state certified, and over half have a master's degree. The average student retention is 94% and 99% for teachers.

Mindy Saverance, President of the Parent Guild made another presentation to Mrs. Pennstrom. "I am honored to present this orchid to you, from the Parent Guild, to plant at school or at your home as a reminder of our love and respect for you," she said.

"I met Joan Pennstrom eight years ago when my family joined the All Saints' School community. We came at a time when the new classroom building was completed and everyone was so enthusiastic! This enthusiasm has only increased, in large part because of Joan's leadership."

"Her love for the students is obvious, and she works every day to see that each student is academically challenged and nurtured in a Christian atmosphere. I am at the school a great deal, and I see the children coming into school smiling, becoming well rounded, and considerate. We will be forever grateful for all that Joan and her wonderful faculty and staff have done for our family and so many others who have chosen All Saints' Day School," she concluded.

Joan Pennstrom received a standing ovation. She said, "This is not about me. It is about all of you! I cannot imagine being anywhere else. Thank you Larry, all of the students and faculty here today, the parents, School Board members, and also to my family for their enormous support and involvement in this wonderful school. I am so grateful to receive this award. I know how important it is that we start each day trying to follow the Golden Rule, working to do our best, and counting our blessings. All Saints' has been a blessing to me for many years, and I am eager to continue our progress!" she said.

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