

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**HIGHLAND ELEMENTARY PARTICIPATES IN HISTORIC "HOUR OF CODE"**  
**School Kicks Off Participation With \$10,000 Check From Code.org**

Ridgeland, Miss. – Highland Elementary School (HES), Ridgeland's school for students in third through fifth grade, launched their participation in a weeklong computer science event with the unveiling of a \$10,000 check from Code.org, a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting K-12 computer science education.

Highland Elementary was one of only 13 schools in Mississippi to make the commitment for every student to participate in Hour of Code. Code.org chose one \$10,000 prize to be awarded to a public school in every U.S. state. Highland's full participation made them eligible to become Mississippi's winner.

Hour of Code, held during Computer Science Education Week, December 9-14, is the largest education event in history, with more than 9 million individuals across 167 countries having participated. Code.org aggressively publicized the event with the support of companies like Google, Apple Computer, Facebook and Microsoft.

Highland's event was attended by representatives from the City of Ridgeland, the Madison County School District, the Ridgeland Chamber of Commerce, Innovate Mississippi, HES technology committee members, HES teachers, and third- and fourth-grade students from the school's Pathways gifted program.

Highland principal Marilyn Naron talked about the school's activities leading up to Hour of Code. "We had a graduate student from Mississippi State University come and train our teachers. Mrs. James, our computer teacher, has been teaching coding, and our Pathways students have been learning coding during their classes, too."

Ridgeland Mayor Gene McGee addressed the role technology has played in Ridgeland's economic development, describing how students and communities can benefit from early STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education, such as computer science. "We are exposing our students to skills needed to succeed in high-paying, high-technology careers," said McGee. "We are also encouraging students to use their minds to think in new ways."

Aresia Rhodes, a business analyst with the Mississippi technology company Bomgar, talked about how computer programming classes at the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science prepared her for success at technology companies including Hewlett Packard and Cisco and, upon her return to Mississippi, Bomgar, one of America's fastest-growing private companies. She urged students to make the most of the opportunities given them. "Learning is fun. Using computers is really fun. I challenge you to make use of every opportunity that is given to you," said Rhodes. "You can do anything as long as we give you the tools you need to learn."

The \$10,000 check was presented to Naron by Dr. Ronnie McGehee, Superintendent of Madison County Schools. "I offer my congratulations to Mrs. Naron and the Highland community for this effort," said McGehee. "It's an opportunity for our students to learn how to be creators of content, not just be consumers of it."

Following the check presentation, Highland Pathways students began their Hour of Code with a coding tutorial with characters from the popular games Angry Birds and Plants vs. Zombies. Videos featuring Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates and Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg introduced key programming concepts and offered encouragement for the new coders.

### **About Highland Elementary School**

*Highland Elementary is the third- through fifth-grade school serving the Ridgeland attendance zone of the Madison County school system. The school is located at 330 Brame Road (off Highland Colony Parkway). For more information, please call 601-853-8103 or visit [madison-schools.com/hes](http://madison-schools.com/hes).*

### **About Code.org**

*Code.org is a nonprofit dedicated to growing computer science education by making it available in more schools and increasing participation by women and underrepresented students of color. The organization's vision is that every student in every school should have the opportunity to learn computer programming. Code.org believes computer science should be part of the core curriculum in education, alongside other science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) courses, such as biology, physics, chemistry and algebra. For more information, please visit: [www.code.org](http://www.code.org).*

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Photos included.