

***For immediate release***

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## **J. Marion Sims Foundation Selects Susan W. DeVenny as President**

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### **Lancaster resident currently leads South Carolina's nationally-recognized First Steps to School Readiness**

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Lancaster, SC, October 13, 2015: The Board of Trustees of the J. Marion Sims Foundation (JMSF) today announced the selection of Susan W. DeVenny as President, effective December 16, 2015. Founded in 1995, JMSF has provided \$50 million to enhance the health and wellness of the citizens of Lancaster County and the communities of Great Falls and Fort Lawn, South Carolina.

Ms. DeVenny was the Board's unanimous choice in a wide-ranging national search that reached over 200 candidates in 19 states. The search committee, led by Board Chair Robert K. Folks, was comprised of board members Polly Jackson, Hugh Mobley, Malcolm Edwards and Jodie Plyler. The committee was advised by [BoardWalk Consulting](#), an Atlanta-based national search firm.

Mr. Folks described the search process as extensive and thorough. "The search committee was pleased that so many qualified individuals were interested. The final slate of candidates included leaders from South Carolina and three other states, several with ties to Lancaster. We interviewed an impressive mix of professionals who shared our aspirations for the community we serve."

Ms. DeVenny has been State Director of First Steps, South Carolina's nationally-recognized early childhood initiative, since 2003. She leads a large, statewide staff, a budget of \$58.8 million and annual grantmaking of \$13 million. She was appointed by Governor Jim Hodges to serve as a founding First Steps board member from 1999-03. Prior to that, Ms. DeVenny founded the local and state chapters of Parents for Public Schools, leading that organization for 11 years and then serving on the national board.

Prior to her career in the education, nonprofit and government sectors, Ms. DeVenny had a successful 14-year career in human resources with Colonial Life/UNUM.

As President of JMSF, Ms. DeVenny succeeds James Morton, who will retire at yearend as previously announced. Mr. Morton has served as President of JMSF since 2000.

Ms. DeVenny moved with her family to Lancaster in 1988. “We selected Lancaster as our home because it represented the small-town, community connectedness we enjoyed as children and value today. We have tremendous pride in our town. Yet,” she added, “for years, my work commitments have taken me out of town, and often out of state. I am excited to align my full-time work with my passion for this community.”

Mr. Folks said, “From our very first meeting with Susan DeVenny, the search committee saw an extraordinary leader who combines demonstrated passion for our region with a record of impact and excellence in all her endeavors. We could not be more excited that she will lead JMSF to its next level of accomplishment on behalf of our community.”

“I am thrilled and humbled by the invitation to become President of J. Marion Sims Foundation,” Ms. DeVenny said. “No other institution has such a pervasive opportunity to enhance the greater good of Lancaster and its surrounding communities. I am excited to work with the strong JMSF Board and staff to define the vision going forward, and to further unleash the power of philanthropy and collaboration to help our whole community thrive and grow stronger.”

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### ***About the J. Marion Sims Foundation***

Founded in 1995, J. Marion Sims Foundation is the largest grantmaking foundation in Lancaster County. The Foundation’s asset base is approximately \$70 million, and over the past two decades JMSF has invested \$50 million in mitigating hardship and enhancing the Lancaster community’s health, education and economic wellbeing.

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