



**ORTON FAMILY
FOUNDATION**

— Community —
Heart & Soul™

J. MARION SIMS
Foundation

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

COMMUNITY LEADERS SEEK TO EMPOWER COMMUNITY VOICE

The J. Marion Sims Foundation welcomes national initiative to the region

LANCASTER, SOUTH CAROLINA, March 16, 2017— On March 15, 2017, more than 150 members of the Lancaster County, Great Falls, and Fort Lawn communities gathered at the University of South Carolina Lancaster to learn about an opportunity to increase and empower community voice in decision-making. The J. Marion Sims Foundation brings Community Heart & Soul® and the Orton Family Foundation to the region as part of its commitment to supporting and building a healthy community.

Participants from Lancaster and Chester counties learned about the Community Heart & Soul model and guiding principles, which involves the participation of all community members and applies a story gathering method to learn and share what matters most for each community. During the session, participants also heard from Heart & Soul leaders who have implemented the approach across the country.

Sherri Gregory, J. Marion Sims Foundation trustee, says, “We are thrilled to bring Community Heart & Soul to our region. Community Heart & Soul is a proven framework that will help us better understand and elevate our community’s assets and use a positive approach to creating our collective future.”

“Community Heart & Soul has been called a ‘positive disruptive force’ in the communities across the country that have engaged in the project,” said David Leckey, Executive Director of Orton Family Foundation. “While Orton Family Foundation has developed and tested the method, the credit for its success in any given town goes to the residents, including those whose voices are often missing, who bring each project to fruition. By recognizing both the

deep emotional connection people have to where they live and the unique character of each place, Community Heart & Soul creates a roadmap for towns based on what truly matters most to residents, and that leads to towns that are stronger, healthier, and more economically vibrant.”

“We heard from 1400 individuals last year during the Foundation’s initial community engagement initiative,” said Susan DeVenny, President & CEO. “We believe that our future can be informed by going deeper, to hear from all who live, play, work, or learn here. Orton’s Community Heart & Soul framework provides a tested model of decision-making and planning that is based on authentic resident engagement. We are delighted to partner with an organization dedicated similarly to lifting all voices.”

For additional information about the workshop, please visit www.jmsims.org or contact the Foundation at (803) 286-8772. More information about the Community Heart & Soul model will be presented in an additional workshop in May. Community members who are interested in leading this process for their communities are required to participate in the May workshop.

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About Community Heart & Soul: Community Heart & Soul is a community development method that builds stronger, healthier, and more economically vibrant small cities and towns. This resident-driven method makes positive change by: actively seeking the collective wisdom of all residents, including those whose voices are often missing; taking into account the unique character of a town; recognizing the deep emotional connection of the people who live there; and gathering insights into what truly matters most to decision-making.

About the Orton Family Foundation: The Orton Family Foundation is focused on building stronger, healthier, and more economically vibrant small cities and towns across America. Founded in Vermont in 1995, the foundation devoted more than a decade to working with small towns to develop a community planning and development method that empowers residents to shape the future of their communities. Community Heart & Soul projects are underway across the country creating positive change that is resident-driven and recognizes the value in the unique character of each place and the deep emotional connection of the people who live there. For more information visit www.orton.org

About the J. Marion Sims Foundation: The J. Marion Sims Foundation is entering its third decade of service to the community, with a focus on transforming the health and wellness of Lancaster, Fort Lawn, and Great Falls, SC. For information about the Foundation, please visit www.jmsims.org or contact the Foundation at (803) 286-8772.