



FOUNDATION

## NEWS RELEASE

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### ***Charleston County Parks Foundation launches the McLeod Project***

(CHARLESTON COUNTY) – The Charleston County Park and Recreation Commission’s (CCPRC) nonprofit partner, the Charleston County Parks Foundation, has created a new committee to support the educational and cultural preservation efforts of McLeod Plantation Historic Site.

The McLeod Project Committee recently held its first meeting and is chaired by Charleston County Parks Foundation Board Member Dr. Louester Robinson. The committee will work together to fulfill the goal of “expressing a unified narrative of African American history, culture, heritage and art.”

Dr. Louester Robinson has been a Foundation board member since August of 2019, and has a passion to help tell the story of McLeod Plantation. “I am honored to serve as a leader for the McLeod Project. I look forward to working with our exceptional committee members to act on a profound new framework to develop and execute goals for McLeod Plantation Historic Site,” said Dr. Robinson.

McLeod is one of our nation’s foremost locations for interpreting the African American transition to freedom in Charleston and the American South. Along with Dr. Robinson, several members will serve on the McLeod Project Committee and are working to identify nearly 20 individuals across the Lowcountry, including direct descendants of people once enslaved at the site, to help meet the committee’s goal.

The committee is meeting regularly with an initial focus on three areas:

1. **The Arts at McLeod** is currently being funded by the Foundation in the form of the Ukweli Poetry Series. Ukweli is the Swahili word for Truth. In the series, people of African descent interpret their history, present and future. Channeling a power that fuses arts and memory, the site is transformed into a place where reckoning and reconciliation can begin and healing may occur.
2. **Engaging Descendant Communities** is an important goal for the committee. A “descendant community” includes people whose ancestors were enslaved and/or whose descendants lived at a particular site. A descendant community includes those whose ancestors lived throughout the region, and welcomes all that may be connected to the site.
3. **McLeod’s Sankofa Memorial Garden**, a sacred burial ground for African American ancestors, is one of the oldest and continuously used African and African American cemeteries and burial sites in Charleston. It is estimated to have been in use from around 1770 to 1965, and there are approximately 170 known burials.

CCPRC opened McLeod Plantation Historic Site as a public county park and historic site in 2015. Located on James Island, McLeod Plantation Historic Site is a former sea island cotton plantation and an important 37-acre Gullah-Geechee heritage site carefully preserved in recognition of its cultural and historical significance. After years of careful research and restoration, the historic site today is a living tribute to the men and women who persevered in their efforts to achieve freedom, equality and justice. Visitors embark upon an in-depth exploration of the lives of those people whose stories are essential to understanding Charleston’s complex past and helped shape who we, as a nation, are today. For more information on McLeod Plantation Historic Site, visit [CharlestonCountyParks.com/McLeod](http://CharlestonCountyParks.com/McLeod) or call 843-795-4386.

The Charleston County Parks Foundation is a nonprofit organization formed in 1990 by CCPRC. Its mission is to help ALL residents experience Charleston County Parks and programs. Presently, the foundation is working on four projects: The Genesis Project, the Pass It Forward Project, the SK8 Forward Project and the McLeod Plantation Historic Site Project. The Genesis Project focuses on drowning prevention in the Lowcountry by raising funds to offer aquatic programs in the Johns Island, Awendaw/McClellanville and Ravenel/Hollywood areas. The Pass It Forward Project provides opportunities and scholarships for all members of our community to enjoy parks and programs. The goal of the SK8 Forward Project is to introduce the sport of skateboarding to young people who may encounter barriers accessing proper instruction and equipment. The McLeod Plantation Historic Site Project supports the Charleston County Park & Recreation Commission’s cultural and historical research, preservation, interpretation, and education for diverse audiences with an emphasis on underrepresented histories at this site and throughout Charleston County Parks. For more information on The Charleston County Parks Foundation, call 843-762-2172 or visit [www.CharlestonCountyParksFoundation.org](http://www.CharlestonCountyParksFoundation.org).

The mission of CCPRC is to improve the quality of life in Charleston County by offering a diverse system of park facilities, programs and services. The large park system features over 11,000 acres of property and includes six land parks, three beach parks, four seasonally-lifeguarded beach areas, three dog parks, two landmark fishing piers, a historic plantation site, three waterparks, 19 boat landings, a climbing wall, a challenge course, an interpretive center, an equestrian center, cottages, a campground, a marina, as well as wedding, meeting and event facilities. The park system also offers a wide variety of recreational services – festivals, camps, classes, programs, volunteer opportunities, and more. For more information on CCPRC, call 843-795-4386, download Charleston County Parks’ mobile app, or visit [charlestoncountyparks.com](http://charlestoncountyparks.com).

