Georgetown County Government

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Georgetown County launches #GtCountyCounts campaign in an effort to increase local census participation

GEORGETOWN COUNTY, S.C. – Across South Carolina, census participation numbers have been disappointing. Totals reported by the Census Bureau this month show that only 49 percent of households in the Palmetto State have completed the census, and the totals are even lower in Georgetown County.

South Carolina ranks 40th in the nation for census participation, and Georgetown County ranks 39th in the state. Figures show less than 40 percent of households have completed the census in Georgetown County. The number is just slightly higher in the City of Georgetown at 40.4 percent, but is only 33.6 percent in the Town of Andrews.

"Data from the 2020 census can have a huge impact on our community, and communities across the nation," said Angela Christian, Georgetown County Administrator. "For the next decade, these numbers will impact the amount of federal funding we receive, how much representation we have in government at the state and national levels, and even where businesses choose to locate. It is imperative that every resident in Georgetown County be counted."

Recognizing the importance of an accurate census count, Georgetown County will launch the "Georgetown County Counts" initiative on Friday, May 1. This coincides with a national campaign the Census Bureau is having May 1-3 to encourage people to complete the census online.

Georgetown County Counts is an online campaign to encourage residents to complete the census for their household, and also become census advocates in their community. Residents are encouraged to take selfies with signs letting friends know they have been

counted, and post them on social media with the hashtag GtCountyCounts. Residents can make their own signs or download one at gtcounty.org/census.

The county is also asking residents to record a short video explaining why the census is important to them and upload it at gtcounty.org/census for inclusion in a larger countywide video that county's staff plans to create.

As part of the campaign kickoff, county employees will be posting their selfies beginning May 1 on the county's social media accounts, and county officials are encouraging local businesses, agencies and residents to start posting on their accounts too.

"The 2020 Census is an opportunity to create a better future for our communities and the next generation by providing an up-to-date count of our population," said Vermelle Simmons, a regional census partnership specialist assigned to Georgetown County. "The data collected will help determine how over $675 billion in federal funding is distributed each year for things like housing assistance, infrastructure, and public transportation to name just a few. A complete count also determines the number of seats each state will have in the House of Representatives... Whatever number of responses we get in 2020, we only get that portion of our funding and it's locked in for 10 years."

Completing the census only takes a few minutes, Christian added. And while most residents should have received their census form in the mail last month, those who didn't receive the form can still complete the census online or by phone. Learn how at gtcounty.org/census.

Residents are reminded that information provided in the census, including immigration status, is confidential and protected by federal law. This information can only be used to produce statistics, and cannot be shared with law enforcement or immigration enforcement agencies, or to determine eligibility for government benefits. Additionally, the census only asks questions about who lives in your home and their age, gender and race. Census documents – and door-to-door census takers – should **NEVER** ask for Social Security numbers, bank or credit card numbers, money or donations, or anything related to political parties.

For more information, visit gtcounty.org/census or call 1-844-330-2020.

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