

News Release – For Immediate Release

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Ben and Kelly Navarro Launch Groundbreaking New Scholarship Fund

CHARLESTON, S.C., Dec. 16, 2020 – Charleston businessman Ben Navarro and his wife Kelly announced today a new college scholarship fund that will open the door for Charleston County School District students with a strong academic record and financial need to attend college. The scholarship will fill the funding gap that prevents many under-resourced students from pursuing and attaining a college degree.

“We want any student with real academic commitment to go to college. The Meeting Street Scholarship Fund, alongside existing sources of state and federal financial aid, can make college graduation a realistic goal for thousands of Charleston County students over time,” said Ben Navarro in announcing the new scholarship. “Removing financial barriers to higher education is critical to developing our community and South Carolina’s future leaders,” he added.

Scholarship recipients will be awarded up to \$10,000 per year, for a total of \$40,000 over four years, to pay for tuition at South Carolina’s leading colleges and universities. This year’s high school seniors are eligible to apply, with the application opening after the new year.

Based on the most recent data, the Meeting Street Scholarship Fund will initially support roughly 500 students by 2024, providing approximately \$5 million annually. But the Navarros’ hope is that, over time, many more students will achieve the academic results needed to qualify for the scholarship.

“We hope this creates a strong incentive for the Charleston County School District to help students qualify for Meeting Street Scholarship dollars,” Kelly Navarro stated. “Our dream is to support thousands of young people in achieving their full potential through the Meeting Street Scholarship Fund.”

To qualify, students must meet specific eligibility criteria, including:

- Graduating from a public high school in the Charleston County School District
- Earning either the LIFE or Palmetto Fellows state-provided scholarship
- Qualifying for the Federal Pell Grant, which provides assistance to families with limited means to pay for college
- Gaining acceptance to a four-year South Carolina college or university with a six-year graduation rate of 50% or higher
- Continuing each year at that university in good academic standing

The Navarros are long term supporters of educational opportunity, most notably as the Founders of Meeting Street Schools. Through its three public schools and one private academy, Meeting Street Schools has already touched the lives of 2,000 students. The schools support every student on a 20-year journey, beginning with strong early childhood education for three and four year-olds and continuing through elementary education and college counseling.

“Meeting Street Schools is committed to raising the bar in public education by implementing best practices and showing what’s possible in educating students from under-resourced families,” Ben Navarro explained. “The Meeting Street Scholarship Fund extends that commitment and builds on the belief that college should be available to all students, no matter their family income or ability to pay.”

Several state and community leaders celebrated the announcement and the impact it will have on the Charleston community:

- “For more than fifteen years, Ben and Kelly Navarro have invested their time, energy, and resources to help young people achieve their full potential. The Meeting Street Scholarship Fund will create a lasting impact by providing incredible opportunities to earn a college degree to many who might otherwise not be able to afford it.” --*United States Senator Tim Scott*
- “Every student deserves access to a quality education and the opportunity to succeed. Now, with the creation of the Meeting Street Scholarship Fund, the dream of attending college will become a reality for thousands of students throughout Charleston County. Ben and Kelly Navarro’s remarkable act of generosity will benefit local students and their families for generations to come.” --*Charleston Mayor John Tecklenburg*
- “This scholarship fund provides a tremendous opportunity for more Charleston County School District students to fulfill their goal of earning a college degree. Hopefully, this will allow students who previously thought college was unattainable to now see it as a viable option for them.” -- *Charleston County School District Superintendent Gerrita Postlewait*
- "Today's Meeting Street Scholarship Fund announcement represents a major milestone for public education in Charleston County. Every student in our schools deserves this path-changing opportunity. It is our responsibility to make sure more students are college-ready and scholarship eligible. Our schools and educators will rise to the challenge." -- *Charleston County School District Board of Trustees Chair Rev. Eric Mack*
- “Students in Charleston County now have new reason to dream of attending and graduating from the state’s top colleges and the opportunities. I am thankful for the Meeting Street Scholarship Fund’s remarkable commitment to provide access to a quality education for every single deserving child, regardless of their background.” -- *Charleston County NAACP President Dot Scott*

To learn more about the Meeting Street Scholarship Fund, including information about application dates and scholarship award timeline, visit www.meetingstreetscholarshipfund.org. To learn more about how Meeting Street Schools is impacting students in South Carolina, please visit www.meetingstreetschools.org.

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