



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Charles Johnson Foundation Emphasizes Education at 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Sports Academy & Community Weekend**

*The foundation doubled its scholarship program this year and presented four \$20,000 college scholarships.*

**HAWKINSVILLE, Ga., July 5, 2016** – Carolina Panthers Defensive End Charles Johnson hosted more than 1,000 attendees and 12 guests from the NFL at his foundation's 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Sports Academy & Community Weekend June 17-18 in his hometown, Hawkinsville, GA. The two-day event emphasized the benefit of both sports and education for local students in grades 1-12.

The free of charge event included clinics in football, basketball, dance, tennis, cheer and STEM. Clinics were led by Johnson, community leaders, local coaches and professional instructors, and many of Johnson's friends from the NFL, including: Mario Addison (Carolina Panthers), Chas Alecixh (Carolina Panthers), Kony Ealy (Carolina Panthers), Dwan Edwards (Free Agent), Tedd Ginn (Carolina Panthers), Justin Houston (Kansas City Chiefs), Frank Kears (New England Patriots), Kyle Love (Carolina Panthers), Kawann Short (Carolina Panthers) and Fernando Velasco (Buffalo Bills). Carolina Panthers coaches Sam Mills and Richard Rodgers, along with NFL agent Drew Rosenhaus, also assisted with the event.

"I'm so proud to see this event continue to grow to new heights," Johnson said. "I hope that presenting four college scholarships to deserving students this year, and providing athletic shoes to the participants with the generous help of Hibbett Sports, helps continue to motivate the Hawkinsville and Middle Georgia community. My foundation's goal is to go beyond the basics to offer a unique experience for my community. I am truly grateful to everyone who continues to support this event."

For the first time in its five-year history, the Charles Johnson Foundation expanded its scholarship program and presented four \$20,000 college scholarships to local senior student-athletes at the event. This expansion doubled the number of recipients and amount bestowed in previous years, and increased the total to 12 students that the foundation has supported through college. The four 2016 recipients include:

- Sylandi Brown: From Hawkinsville High School, will attend Valdosta State University

- Matthew Money: From Hawkinsville High School, will attend Armstrong Atlantic State University
- Ana Claire Gordon: From Wilcox County High School, will attend Mercer University
- Taylor Harrell: From Bleckley County High School, will attend the University of Georgia

Also unique to this year's event, the foundation hosted the first Charles Johnson Huddle for 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders, emphasizing the importance of education. In addition to Johnson, the panel discussion included Dwan Edwards; Johnson's business partner, Reggie Barner; President of the Atlanta Riot, Kaley McCloskey; and Technical Sergeant Aaron Torres. L.I.F.E. League's Jeff Tarver moderated the panel asking participants about when they decided to continue their education after high school, who mentored and inspired them, and what they wish they had done differently to prepare for life after high school. In the same theme of education, the foundation introduced STEM Clinics for 1<sup>st</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> graders to this year's program. The clinics were run by Real I.M.P.A.C.T. Center, Inc., a non-profit organization that focuses on STEM and literacy for youth. The kids learned basic procedures and techniques while extracting DNA from strawberries.

Many generous sponsors and devoted volunteers donated their time and efforts and helped the foundation continue to hold the Sports Academy and Community Weekend free of charge for all participants. Gold level sponsors for the event included: L.I.F.E. League and Qixie 103.9. Silver level sponsors included: Abell Images/Paul Abell Photographer, dj LP, Happy Hour Service Center, HawkGrips, KIND Bars, Macon Productions, Taylor Health Care Group, The Target Group and Wendy's. Bronze level sponsors included: Denitra "Dee" Dumas, Middle Georgia Tennis Center and SunMark Community Bank. Food in-kind sponsors included: Body Armor, Dairy Queen Grill and Chill of Hawkinsville and Honest Tea.

Additional supporters included: the Carolina Panthers, Chamire Holdings LLC, the Greater Bethel AME Church, the Greater St. James AME Church, Jan-Pro Columbia, KMW Builders, My-T Sharp Holdings – SuperCuts, Once Upon A Child (Charlotte, NC and Matthews, NC), PerryManCo. Inc – FedEx Groud, Plato's Closet ( Mooresville, NC), Style Encore (Mooresville, NC), Sunset Tax Services, TFJ Construction and YMOG (Young Men of God).

A long-time goal of Johnson's, the foundation provided new athletic shoes to participants at the event with the support of local sports merchandise retailer Hibbett Sports. The foundation also thanks the Roaring Riot Carolina Panthers fan club and their volunteers, as well as Cam Newton and his support of the foundation with Under Armour.

To learn more about the Charles Johnson Foundation, visit [charlesjohnsonfoundation.org](http://charlesjohnsonfoundation.org). With questions or media requests, please contact Meredith Geisler at [mgeisler@tandemse.com](mailto:mgeisler@tandemse.com) or (703) 740-5015.

### **ABOUT CHARLES JOHNSON & THE CHARLES JOHNSON FOUNDATION**

Charles Johnson is a native of Hawkinsville, GA, and a proud alumnus of Hawkinsville High School. After attending the University of Georgia where he starred at defensive end, Charles was drafted by the Carolina Panthers of the NFL in 2007 and has served as a captain of the team for three seasons.

Through nine professional seasons, Charles has received All-Pro recognition on the strength of 63.5 career sacks, placing him among the premier pass-rushers in the league. Charles ranks second on the Panthers' all-time sacks list. He helped Carolina win the NFC Championship and earn a spot in the 2016 Super Bowl.

In 2012, Charles' passion for philanthropy and loyalty to Middle Georgia led him to launch the Charles Johnson Foundation. A non-profit organization, the Charles Johnson Foundation is dedicated to fulfilling a two-fold mission:

- Providing opportunities for under-served youth to reach their full potential through athletic, recreational, and educational programs and initiatives; and
- Providing support for single African American mothers through proven programs and initiatives.

The Charles Johnson Foundation Sports Academy and Community Weekend is the flagship annual event for the Charles Johnson Foundation, combining his efforts to advance education with free sports clinics in football, basketball, tennis, dance and cheer.

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