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**Saluda County Pledges its Commitment to Workforce and Economic Growth;
Certified as Palmetto State's Fourth Work Ready Community**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Saluda-- Saluda County today became the state's fourth county to receive the South Carolina Work Ready Community designation through ACT. This means it has met all its workforce and education goals that demonstrate to businesses its strong workforce and commitment to economic growth.

"Our ability to attract new businesses and expand the ones we already have is in no small part due to our state's world-class workforce and why making sure they have the training and experience to take advantage of the record economic success we have seen is so important," said Governor Nikki Haley. "Saluda being the fourth county in our state to become a Certified Work Ready Community is a big deal and we thank them for their commitment to making Team South Carolina the best it can be."

Led by ACT, the initiative provides a framework for states to strengthen economic development using a community-based approach grounded in certifying counties as work ready. To earn a South Carolina Certified Work Ready Community designation, counties have to reach goals in earning National Career Readiness Certificates, meet or exceed the three-year graduation rate average or improvement percentage, meet goals in soft skills assessments and engage business support.

"South Carolina has become the 'it' state in economic development largely because of its skilled workforce. It speaks volumes that Saluda and three other counties have earned this national recognition, and as more counties earn the Certified Work Ready Community designation, it further reinforces the fact that South Carolina is committed to having the best business environment possible," said Lewis F. Gossett, President and CEO, South Carolina Manufacturers Alliance.

"This is a joint effort by several agencies within Saluda County to include local businesses, educators, as well as local government to make Saluda County more competitive in attracting new industry and supporting existing businesses in the county," said Donald E. Hancock, chair, Saluda County Council. "The help received from SC Works, the Department of Commerce, Upper Savannah Council of Governments, Upper Savannah Regional Education Center, Piedmont Technical College, among others, was critical to reaching this milestone."

Saluda County joins the ranks of Clarendon, McCormick and Colleton counties that have previously received the South Carolina Certified Work Ready Community designation.

South Carolina was one of four pilot states selected to participate in the ACT Certified Work Ready Community program. For additional information, please visit www.scworkready.org.

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