



# PRESS NOTICE

**BILL NETTLES**  
**UNITED STATES ATTORNEY**  
**DISTRICT OF SOUTH CAROLINA**  
1441 Main Street, Suite 500 \* Columbia, SC 29201 \* (803) 929-3000

May 2, 2012

Columbia, SC -----In recognition of Public Service Week, May 6-12, and as part of the local implementation of the Department of Justice Anti-Violence Initiative, U.S. Attorney Bill Nettles announced today an alliance with the Prosperity Project. The Prosperity Project is a non-profit organization working out of the Gonzales Gardens Housing Project here in Columbia. The Prosperity Project is a volunteer program that offers tutoring and other after-school programs to children pre-school through fifth grade. To find out more on the Prosperity Project, go to [www.ProperityProjectSC.org](http://www.ProperityProjectSC.org).

U.S. Attorney Nettles stated, "There are many ways to combat crime. The most effective and inexpensive way is prevention. Initiatives such as the Prosperity Project will prevent crime at a fraction of the cost of incarceration. The Prosperity Project provides crucial support to our children, ensuring that they have a stronger hold on the fundamentals of early and elementary education, while also providing valuable life skills. This is a terrific program which will have a long-lasting positive impact on our community and we are proud to be a part of it." Mr. Nettles recognized the correlation between the high-school drop-out rate and crime, and added, "The most effective way to reduce crime in South Carolina is for us all to do what we can to decrease our high school drop-out rate. The U.S. Attorney's Office in South Carolina recognizes that citizens that give back to their community are a key player in combating crime. What we do for today's youth, today, makes for a stronger, safer and more competitive South Carolina tomorrow."

*See the Prosperity Project press release, below.*



## *Giving Children a Chance*

### **For Immediate Release**

(May 1, 2012) Prosperity Project is hosting an OPEN HOUSE May 15 from 3-5 p.m. at its facility at #J3 at the Gonzales Gardens Housing Project on Forest Drive. Visitors to the OPEN HOUSE will have a chance to see Prosperity Project in action.

A little over two years ago, a group of homeschool moms began teaching Bible stories and playing games with some preschool children in a field across from one of the worst housing projects in Columbia – Gonzales Gardens. More than 300 units are home to multiple children households and most are headed by single moms. There are few two-parent households, drug and alcohol use is rampant, and gang activity is commonplace.

Yet, when one of the homeschool moms, Michelle James, took the baton and decided that these children were hungry for attention, guidance, and knowledge, her efforts resulted in a full-fledged ministry called Prosperity Project, a Christ Central Ministry. Some of the siblings of those original preschool children, as well as other children in the community, are involved in a twice-a-week tutoring program that takes place in one of the apartments in Gonzales Gardens that is being offered by the Columbia Housing Authority. There are 20 children in the program from grades kindergarten to fifth grade.

Most recently, the tutoring program's success resulted in:

- 50 % brought three subjects up a letter grade
- 75% brought one subject up a letter grade
- two students maintained AB averages
- there is a 92% attendance rate

Prosperity Project's effectiveness has garnered attention from representatives within the political, business, and criminal justice arenas in Columbia. In fact, as part of the local implementation of the Department of Justice Anti-Violence Initiative, U.S. Attorney Bill Nettles recently announced an alliance with Prosperity Project.

U.S. Attorney Nettles stated, "There are many ways to combat crime. The most effective and inexpensive way is prevention. Initiatives such as the Prosperity Project will prevent crime at a fraction of the cost of incarceration. The Prosperity Project provides crucial support to our children, ensuring that they have a stronger hold on the fundamentals of early and elementary education, while also providing valuable life

skills. This is a terrific program which will have a long-lasting positive impact on our community and we are proud to be a part of it.”

Students who achieve success with their grades are treated to field trips and other special activities. Besides tutoring, students have an opportunity to learn how to cook and garden, plus there is a Bible lesson and time of devotion. They learn self-control and respect in an environment where there are no boundaries.

This summer Prosperity Project is offering three on-site camps, which will include a Child Evangelism Camp, a music camp hosted by youth directors and youth at First Presbyterian Church, and a camp sponsored by Healing Species. There is also an opportunity for 10 of the rising third through fifth grade students in the tutoring center to attend Bonclarken summer camp in Flat Rock, N.C. for a week, July 15-20. The camp offered Prosperity Project a drastically reduced rate; however - \$875 of the \$3,000 still needs to be raised.

Prosperity Project has many future goals to continue to adhere to its vision statement, which is:

***We exist to aid in spiritual and educational development of children that live in the inner city of Columbia.***

Some of those goals include:

- offering tutoring five days a week instead of two;
- increasing the base of dedicated volunteers;
- eventually possibly offering tutoring for middle school students through high school;
- offering continuing education, such as GED, and life skills to parents;
- ultimately offering a school for these children.

Prosperity Project is a 501(c) 3 ministry and one of Christ Central Ministry’s 38 mission stations. Christ Central provides support and training to all stations. Prosperity Project is strictly volunteer run; no one is paid a salary. Check out the website to learn more about Prosperity Project, and to see volunteers and photos etc. at [www.ProspertyProjectSC.org](http://www.ProspertyProjectSC.org).

For more information about the May 15<sup>th</sup> OPEN HOUSE, call Director Michelle James at 318-2497.

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