News Release

OFFICE OF ATTORNEY GENERAL HENRY MCMASTER
STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

For Immediate Release
June 20, 2006

Contact: Mark Plowden
803-734-3670
mplowden@ag.state.sc.us

McMaster Honors Deputy Sheriff Who Risked His Life for S.C. Students' Safety

Columbia, S.C. – South Carolina Attorney General Henry McMaster, Richland County Sheriff Leon Lott, and representatives from Lexington-Richland School District Five presented Richland County Deputy Sheriff Rony Maurice an award for heroism today at the Attorney General's Office in Columbia.

On Monday, May 22, Richland County Sheriff's Deputy Rony Maurice, the School Resource Officer (SRO) at Dutch Fork High School, performed decisively and heroically in the face of danger, averting a potential disaster at the school. At approximately 10:15 a.m., a man with a loaded gun arrived on the school grounds while school was in session. The man's intent was to harm a female Dutch Fork student who he threatened to kill the previous night.

Deputy Maurice intercepted the man in the parking lot, firing a shot at the suspect after the man pointed his weapon at Deputy Maurice. Deputy Maurice then apprehended the suspect and recovered the suspect's weapon. Fortunately, no one was injured in the altercation and the school day continued with minimal interruption.

Deputy Maurice's actions were the culmination of the groundwork that he has laid for the past four years as Dutch Fork's School Resource Officer. The female student was in fear for her life when she arrived at school on that Monday morning. She went directly to Deputy Maurice's office and reported the threat to him. She came to him because she trusted him, and knew that he would protect her. It is that type of relationship that Deputy Maurice has established with all of his students.

"Deputy Maurice's quick thinking and heroic actions probably prevented an unspeakable tragedy from occurring that day at Dutch Fork High School," said McMaster. "On that day, Rony Maurice stood tall as South Carolina's finest. We are lucky to have him."

"The course of events that morning at Dutch Fork High School are a true indicator of just how important and effective the School Resource Officer program is," Richland County Sheriff Leon Lott said. "Deputy Maurice's actions were an extension of the tremendous job he performs at the school as a police officer, a counselor, and a mentor. We are all very proud of him."

"These events should put to rest any question about the need, or importance, of school resource officers on our school campuses," said District Five Interim Superintendent T.E.C. Dowling. "A tragedy was averted on May 22nd thanks to Deputy Maurice's quick action -- all of School District Five is grateful."

Deputy Maurice joined the Richland County Sheriff's Department in July of 2000. Rony was with the Lexington County Sheriff's Department for two (2) years prior to coming to joining the Richland County Sheriff's Department. Deputy Maurice started in 2000 as the School Resource Officer at Dutch Fork Middle School and was assigned there two (2) years. He has been the SRO at Dutch Fork High School for four (4) years.

# # #