**A** **HOUSE RESOLUTION**

TO RECOGNIZE AND HONOR SIXTH‑GRADERS MAKAYLA ARTEAGA, CHRISTIAN HANNA, BETHANY SLAYTON; THEIR COACH, MICHELLE RUTHENBERG; AND THEIR SPONSOR, RIPLEY’S AQUARIUM IN MYRTLE BEACH, AND TO CONGRATULATE THEM FOR WINNING THE $25,000 COLUMBUS FOUNDATION COMMUNITY GRANT IN NATIONAL SCIENCE/COMMUNITY SERVICE COMPETITION.

Whereas, the members of the South Carolina House of Representatives are pleased to learn that students MaKayla Arteaga, Christian Hanna, Bethany Slayton, and their coach, Michelle Ruthenberg, Director of Education of Ripley’s Aquarium in Myrtle Beach, took top honors in the $25,000 Columbus Foundation Community Grant in National Science/Community Service Competition held at Walt Disney World; and

Whereas, dubbed “The River Rangers,” the team focused on a critical problem impacting the Atlantic Ocean, the Intracoastal Waterway, and the Waccamaw River which provide food, water, and transportation while drawing about fourteen million vacationers a year to the region where the students live; and

Whereas, the problem involves abandoned pleasure boats that crowd the waterways, contaminate the water with leaking fuel and other materials that threaten area wildlife and humans, and create an unsafe situation for fishermen, boaters, and swimmers; and

Whereas, after learning that the slumping economy and high unemployment left many boat owners unable to make payments or afford fuel and dock fees, the students launched a website for local residents to report and receive warnings about abandoned boats sighted in the area; and

Whereas, chosen by a panel of community leaders, scientists, and experts in science education from more than seven hundred thirty‑five participating students and coaches nationwide, the Myrtle Beach team and coach won an all‑expense‑paid trip to the Walt Disney World Resort. There they competed in the Christopher Columbus Awards’ National Championship Week and participated in the Christopher Columbus Academy, a custom‑designed educational program conducted by scientists, engineers, and educators; and

Whereas, sponsored by the Christopher Columbus Fellowship Foundation and endorsed by the National Middle School Association, the Christopher Columbus Awards is a nationwide program now in its fifteenth year that challenges teams of middle‑school students to explore and discover opportunities for positive change in their communities, using science and technology; and

Whereas, the members of the South Carolina House of Representatives are grateful for the pride and recognition that MaKayla Arteaga, Christian Hanna, Bethany Slayton, and Michelle Ruthenberg have brought to their community and to the Palmetto State, and express our gratitude to Ripley’s Aquarium in Myrtle Beach for sponsoring this outstanding team. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives:

That the members of the South Carolina House of Representatives, by this resolution, recognize and honor sixth‑graders MaKayla Arteaga, Christian Hanna, Bethany Slayton; their coach, Michelle Ruthenberg; and their sponsor, Ripley’s Aquarium in Myrtle Beach, and congratulate them for winning the $25,000 Columbus Foundation Community Grant in National Science/Community Service Competition.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be provided to MaKayla Arteaga, Christian Hanna, Bethany Slayton, and Michelle Ruthenberg.

‑‑‑‑XX‑‑‑‑