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### **USC Upstate Achieve Success Story**

**Spartanburg, S.C., December 7, 2012** – USC Upstate Achieve congratulates Mr. Aaron Coker on accomplishing his goals.

Aaron Coker enrolled in ACHIEVE in January 2011, referred by a Gaffney High School counselor. Aaron had many obstacles in his life outside of ACHIEVE to overcome while attending, but he has attained his GED and achieved much more than just his credential. Aaron participated in a variety of ACHIEVE's work readiness and leadership skills sessions.

To begin, since Aaron no prior work experience, he performed a six-week work experience at the Business Technology Center in Spartanburg. Through this experience, he not only learned maintenance skills, but most importantly, had the opportunity to practice the soft skills training that he learned while doing 32 hours of pre-employment training at ACHIEVE. The work experience mentor further enhanced the training of responsibility and good work ethic in the workplace.

In April 2011, Aaron completed the Community Emergency Response Team training (CERT) offered at ACHIEVE and taught by the Spartanburg County Emergency Response team. This complimented Aaron's volunteer work at the Goucher-White Plains Fire Department where he volunteered for his duration at ACHIEVE. There were a few mornings where Aaron fought a fire throughout the night and then came to class, tired yet determined.

Next, Aaron was selected to be a part of the eight month inaugural Youth Alliance Leadership, which he successfully completed and graduated from in July 2012. In the Youth Alliance Leadership class, Aaron's favorite class was the Public Service day when the class visited the Greer Fire Department and Aaron felt right at home, being able to contribute some information to the rest of the class.

In September 2011, Aaron was one of ten participants selected to participate in ACHIEVE's Future's Academy, a \$31,867 grant awarded from AdvanceSC Duke Energy. This 30-week session included a seven-week soft skills training course, the Smart Work Ethics Curriculum, taught by a certified instructor; college and plant visits;

22 weeks of NCCER training (National Center for Construction Education and Research) and an Introduction to Welding class taught at Spartanburg Community College. Aaron successfully completed the Future's Academy and received his NCCER certificate in July 2012.

Aaron obtained his ultimate goal at ACHIEVE...his GED...in September 2012. Upon receiving his GED, Aaron immediately enrolled in and is presently attending the Recruit School at the South Carolina Firefighter Academy (Firefighter 2 School) in Columbia, which will make him eligible to be hired as a firefighter.

