Seneca Daily Journal

Gift of $3 million given to Clemson

FOR THE JOURNAL

CLEMSON — Clemson University President James F. Barker on Tuesday announced a major gift that expands the school's relationship with an Upstate development company to support a program aimed at improving the health and wellness of children across the Carolinas.

The Cliffs Communities and its foundations, led by founder and CEO Jim Anthony, made a $3 million pledge and gave all rights to the Zest Quest program and name to Clemson University.

The Youth Learning Institute (YLI), a unit of Clemson Public Service Activities based in Pickens, will manage the program.



JESSICA NELMS | STAFF

Clemson University President James Barker, left, presents an engraved vase to The Cliffs Communities founder and CEO Jim Anthony on Tuesday morning.

Created by The Cliffs in 2004, Zest Quest employs and assigns full-time

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wellness coaches to work at partnering schools. The coaches educate and encourage children, teachers and their families to develop "healthy choice" lifestyles by adopting better diet and exercise habits. Zest Quest now serves 5,500 students in 12 elementary schools — 11 in South Carolina and one in Asheville, N.C.

"Clemson is very grateful to Jim Anthony for his vision, generosity and commitment to the people of South Carolina and his faith in this institution," Barker said. "Zest Quest fits perfectly with Clemson's historical role as a land-grant university engaged in outreach and extension work with local communities and young people."

Anthony's primary expectation with the gift of Zest Quest to Clemson is the program's expansion to elementary schools and through other venues.

"These are exciting days as we launch the Zest Quest program to new heights, striving to reach the goal of raising more health-conscious, vibrant young people who have the prospect of living longer, better lives," said Anthony. "The Youth Learning Institute's passion for kids and its statewide influence and operational channels in every county make it not only a logical choice, but more importantly, the right choice to take the Zest Quest program to the next level."

"YLI is humbled to be Mr. Anthony's chosen steward for such an awesome gift. Programs like Zest Quest are critically needed to respond to the growing rate of serious health issues, such as diabetes, heart disease and obesity, among children in South Carolina and throughout the nation," said Youth Learning Institute Executive Director Jorge Calzadilla.

The Youth Learning Institute will establish the Center for Healthy Living, directed by professor Katherine Cason of Clemson's food science and human nutrition department. The Center's purpose is to ensure the effective collaboration of all health and wellness initiatives and resources managed by the institute.