



district five

OF LEXINGTON & RICHLAND COUNTIES

Media Release

Contact: Derek Phillips  
Public Information Specialist  
1020 Dutch Fork Road  
Irmo, SC 29063  
476-8178 office, 609-9565 cell  
[Facebook](#) / [Twitter](#)

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**Irmo Elementary School wins District Five’s fifth annual ‘Chopped’ competition**

IRMO – Teams representing five elementary schools and an intermediate school from Lexington-Richland School District Five all waited anxiously to hear who was crowned champion of the 2017 District Five “Chopped” competition held on April 26 at the Center for Advanced Technical Studies (The Center).

In a dramatic moment, District Five Director of Student Nutrition Todd A. Bedenbaugh unveiled the winning dish of sautéed chicken, kale pasta and fruit salad created by Irmo Elementary School. The team consisted of Caroline Calore, Addi Helms and Kaleb McNeil. Assisting the team in the kitchen was culinary student mentor Courtney Evans from The Center. Irmo Elementary was advised by the school’s student nutrition manager Jill Christian.

“I am speechless,” Calore said. “I can’t believe we just won Chopped!”

McNeil added, “We worked so hard as a team and it is such a great feeling to win!”

Irmo Elementary battled it out for 45 minutes in the kitchen with Chapin Elementary, Chapin Intermediate, Lake Murray Elementary, Leaphart Elementary and Oak Pointe Elementary. Teams were given four mystery ingredients to utilize in their dish. Chicken, cilantro, kale and apples had to be incorporated into each team’s plate. Teams also had access to a pantry with other ingredients.

Upon completing their meals, teams presented them to a panel of guest judges who scored them on food safety and sanitation, creativity, team work, taste and presentation. The judges included: Brian McConchie, news anchor at WACH Fox; Trish Larkin, District Five office staff member; and Chef Patrick Duggan from The Center.

“Overall, I was extremely impressed with how well each team worked with each other,” McConchie said. “When the mystery ingredients were given, there was no panic from these students. They all immediately seemed to have an idea of what they wanted to cook, and I can tell you, the deliberations were not easy for us at all. Congratulations to Irmo Elementary and all the contestants on a job well done!”

Bedenbaugh was nearly speechless after the competition was finished. “When we started this event a few years ago, we never could have imagined how far it has come,” Bedenbaugh said. “It is amazing to see how advanced our young students are and how knowledgeable they already are about working with food in the kitchen. I am so thankful to all of our supporters in District Five, especially Dr. Bob Couch at The Center who allows us to use their facilities. And this all would not even be possible without our café managers, our student culinary mentors and of course all the wonderful parents in our community!”

