

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 10, 2007

For more information, contact:
Lynn Norman-Teck 305-216-6208

CHARTER SCHOOL OKAY TO OPEN SAYS JUDGE

***Citing a 2006 statute, judge clears way for
Sarasota Suncoast Academy Charter School to open***

SARASOTA COUNTY, FL – AUG. 10, 2007 – It's official, Sarasota Suncoast Academy Charter School has a new home. On August 20th, approximately 300 students, grades K – 5, will report to school at a beautiful new facility at 8084 Hawkins Road on the grounds of Suncoast Community Church.

For months, Sarasota Suncoast Academy leaders cited HB 7103 – a 2006 statute that allows library, community service, museum, performing arts, theatre, cinema, church, community college, college, and university facilities to provide space to charter schools within their facilities under their preexisting zoning and land use designations – as proof that the school was permitted to use a facility leased from the Suncoast Community Church. All negotiations between the school and Sarasota County were put to rest on Thursday, August 9th when Circuit Court Judge Mark Singer, citing that statute, granted a temporary injunction against county officials who were trying to keep the school from opening.

“The court decision supporting Suncoast Academy is important to all charter schools,” explains Robert Haag, president of the Florida Consortium of Public Charter Schools. “Public charter schools in Florida consistently rank locating adequate facilities as one of the major barriers to opening and operating a school. The 2006 statute gives all charter schools facility options that are critical to their success, and their ability to serve children.”

Charter schools are public schools that are operated by individuals or groups under contract with their sponsor – usually a local public school district. They are required to participate in federal and state accountability programs, such as FCAT and No Child Left Behind, and are held strictly accountable for both academic and financial performance. There are currently 355 public charter schools in the state of Florida serving more than 99,000 students in grades K through 12.

###