

*It's All About  
Teaching and  
Learning.*



*Charles County Public Schools*

# School News

## Important Dates Coming Soon

### Aley receives award

Educational Systems Federal Credit Union recently honored Benjamin Stoddert Middle School physical education teacher Brittany Aley with a professional development award.



**Brittany Aley**

Aley received the \$1,000 Maurice Erly Professional Development Award.

She is in her third year of teaching at Stoddert, and plans to use the award to attend the next SHAPE Maryland conference. "I was certainly excited to get the award. I had hoped to use it to get to the state and/or national SHAPE conference but they will be virtual this fall. If they have a spring event in person, I will use the funds toward that," Aley said. Aley is the physical education department chair at Stoddert and adjunct faculty member at the College of Southern Maryland (CSM). To support both her students and colleagues during virtual learning, Aley meets regularly with other physical education teachers to plan.

### Schools closed Nov. 3

School is closed for students and staff on Nov. 3, Election Day.

### Vaccination, flu clinic

The last drive-thru vaccination clinic is Wednesday, Nov. 4 at General Smallwood Middle School. The Charles County Department of Health and Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) teamed up to provide childhood vaccinations and flu shots to children and adults who made an appointment at [www.marylandvax.org](http://www.marylandvax.org). To make an appointment for the Nov. 4 clinic, go to [www.marylandvax.org](http://www.marylandvax.org) and search "Charles County Health Department."



### Celebrating Halloween

At Dr. Thomas L. Higdon and J.P. Ryon elementary schools Wednesday, staff held distribution events with a Halloween twist. Top, Higdon pre-kindergarten teacher, Meagan Humbert, left, and Judith Wray, a prekindergarten instructional assistant, represent the animal kingdom with their costumes. Right, Rhianna Alexander, a second-grade teacher at Ryon, goes a little batty for a glittery headband.



## Board honors CCPS supporting staff members

Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) annually honors outstanding support services personnel in the areas of maintenance, information technology, secretary, central office support, food service, building services and instructional assistant. The awards program was established to recognize the roles support personnel have in maintaining the effective and efficient operations of the school system.

Honorees for 2020 include Gary Cook, a building controls system technician in the CCPS maintenance shop; Richard Day, a computer analyst III at North Point High School; Carol Jewell, secretary to the principal at North Point; Annemarie Murphy, secretary to the assistants in school administration at the Starkey building; Dana Steffe, food service manager at Walter J. Mitchell Elementary School; James "Earl" Swann, building service manager at La Plata High School; and Lisa Willis, a kindergarten instructional assistant at Mary B. Neal Elementary School.

#### Outstanding Maintenance Employee

Cook started his career as a steamfitter with Honeywell and was with the company for 30 years before coming to CCPS in 2002 as a building systems control technician. His primary job duties are associated with the HVAC temperature control systems in all CCPS facilities. But his expertise is not limited to his job title. "Mr. Cook is always willing to work beyond

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## Open enrollment is Nov. 3 to Nov. 20

Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) is holding open enrollment for health insurance benefits and supplemental plans offered by Aflac, from Tuesday, Nov. 3, to Friday, Nov. 20.

Open enrollment provides employees the opportunity to modify benefit choices, elect medical benefits and life insurance, and re-enroll in Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA).

All changes made during open enrollment are effective Jan. 1, 2021. The health care plan calendar year is Jan. 1, 2021, through Dec. 31, 2021.

To make changes or to enroll, go to <https://ccboe.hrntouch.com/>. Enrollment instructions are posted on the CCPS employee-only website, MyCCPS. Click the Benefits & Pay tab at the top of the page, then Benefits in the dropdown menu to access the instructions.

CCPS offers eligible employees a self-insured group health plan through CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield. Benefits include medical, dental, pharmacy and vision services.

Employees enrolled in the health plans pay 25 percent of their total monthly premium through payroll deduction, and the Board of Education covers the remaining 75 percent.

The plan options for employees are CareFirst Preferred Provider Plan (PPO/PPN) and Blue Choice Opt-Out Open Access. There are no changes to doctor's office co-pays for 2021.

Premium rates for 2021 have increased by 3 percent and are as follows:

**PPO/PPN plan** — individual, \$210 per month (bi-weekly, \$105) — increase of \$6; family, \$562 per month (bi-weekly, \$281) — increase of \$16

**Open Access** — individual, \$155 per month (bi-weekly, \$77.50) — increase of \$5; family, \$445 per month (bi-weekly, \$222.50) — increase of \$13

Employees who are eligible for health coverage through CCPS but waive the

benefits are required to complete an election waiver form, also posted on MyCCPS [under the Documents section](#) of the Benefits page. The waiver will also be mailed to employees.

In past years, Aflac representatives have met one-on-one with CCPS employees. This year, due to COVID-19 guidelines, Aflac representatives will be available to meet virtually via Zoom. To schedule a one-on-one virtual meeting using Calendly, [click here to meet with Jennifer Tench](#) or [click here to meet with Jacquie Brawer](#).

If the event dates and times allotted do not work for your schedule, call Tench at 804-516-4286.

Flexible Spending Account (FSA) plans will be offered at <https://ccboe.hrntouch.com>. Employees who participate must make a new FSA election each year.

### Medical FSA

Employees can set aside up to \$2,400 from their salary per year to pay for qualified medical expenses.

### Dependent Care FSA

This type of FSA is not for medical care reimbursement. Plan participants may set aside up to a combined family maximum of \$5,000 per year on a pretax basis to pay for qualified dependent daycare expenses.

Staff is required to keep documentation (receipts) to substantiate all FSA claims, whether paid through paper submissions or with a FSA debit card.

Documentation must be submitted upon request, and all expenditures are subject to audit per Internal Revenue Service regulations.

The FSA debit card for 2021 includes a feature allowing immediate access to funds in medical FSA accounts for all eligible expenses. The FSA debit card is valid for three consecutive years.

For more information, contact the Office of Fiscal Services — Employee Benefits at 301-934-7289 or email at [EmployeeBenefits@ccboe.com](mailto:EmployeeBenefits@ccboe.com).

### Redistricting information

Stay up-to-date with the middle school redistricting process at the Redistricting webpage at <https://www.ccboe.com/index.php/redistricting-middle-school-ql>.

## On the cover

The Board of Education of Charles County honored outstanding employees at its October meeting including Renee Hamilton, food service manager, Dr. Samuel A. Mudd Elementary School; and Stephanie Lloyd, kindergarten instructional assistant, Daniel of St. Thomas Middle School.

## Page program for seniors

CCPS is accepting applications from high school seniors interested in participating in the Maryland General Assembly Student Page Program. Students must apply for program consideration by completing an official application, and an essay. For forms, email [llove@ccboe.com](mailto:llove@ccboe.com), call 301-934-7389 or at <https://tinyurl.com/y4qnnf49>. Documents must be submitted by email to [llove@ccboe.com](mailto:llove@ccboe.com) on or before 3 p.m. on Nov. 12.

## Phase 2 begins

CCPS is set to begin Phase 2 on Monday, Nov. 9 with instructional changes made starting Nov. 2.

**Monday, Nov. 2:** All CCPS staff report to school and teachers work in their classrooms to prepare for student's return in a hybrid setting. Students will have an asynchronous day, meaning teachers will provide assignments for students to complete at home.

**Tuesday, Nov. 3:** Election Day — schools are closed for students and teachers.

**Wednesday, Nov. 4:** Regular asynchronous day. Students will complete assigned work at home.

**Thursday, Nov. 5 and Friday, Nov. 6:** Students will participate in live virtual instruction through StudentVue and Zoom.

**Monday, Nov. 9:** Phase 2 begins. Online learning schedules for virtual instruction will begin later than normal. A student's first online meeting for Nov. 9 may be up to TWO hours later than normal. This change will allow schools extra time for in-person students to arrive and review safety protocols.

## Board meeting Nov. 10

The Board of Education of Charles County will meet 1 p.m. Nov. 10. Questions and comments can be submitted for public forum via [boardmail@ccboe.com](mailto:boardmail@ccboe.com).





**Gary Cook**



**Richard Day**



**Carol Jewell**



**Annemarie  
Murphy**



**Dana Steffe**



**James "Earl"  
Swann**



**Lisa Willis**

## SUPPORT STAFF

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his assigned duties to assist HVAC mechanics with any issues needing attention," Brian Ball, administrator of the CCPS energy/building automation systems, said in a nomination letter. "He has an outstanding work ethic coupled with a great sense of humor that contributes to the overall morale of our department."

Cook shares his knowledge with colleagues and is often called upon to offer his advice or opinion. "He works remarkably well within the system which makes him highly productive and an excellent role model," Laurence Budd, foreman of the operations center group, wrote. "No job is too challenging for him," wrote Ernest Downs, foreman of the electrical/mechanical department.

### **Outstanding Information Technology Employee**

Since starting with CCPS in 2010 as a computer intern, Day has risen to become a computer analyst III. After spending a couple of months at the central office, Day moved to North Point where he continues to work. "For a school that prides itself as a 'technology school,' a computer analyst is essential to the successful function of our organization," North Point Principal Daniel Kaple wrote in a nomination letter.

"When we have a technology need or issue, Rick is always ready to save the day. This has earned him the reputation as North Point's own Superman."

"He works hard to make our lives easier," wrote Cary Smith, a North Point English teacher and yearbook advisor. Day is a colleague everyone at the school appreciates, Smith said. "He is always going a mile a minute, popping in and out of classrooms, fixing any technology issue that we may have. ... I cannot imagine this building running without him."

### **Outstanding Secretary**

Jewell started at North Point as a main office secretary in 2007 before becoming the principal's secretary in July 2013 when Michael Simms was principal. Now she works with Principal Daniel Kaple, who calls her his "right hand and most valued advisor."

"No task is too small or too large for her to take on and successfully execute," he wrote in a nomination letter. "She is dependable and hard working. She is able to conduct the diplomacy and provide the discretion needed for the effective functioning of the principal's office. Her honesty, loyalty and disposition make her the ideal person to support a school principal." Jewell's professionalism and kind manner resonate with parents and students, as well.

Holly Dolan, high school resource teacher, agreed. "Throughout the school, Ms. Jewell is viewed as both 'the lady with the answers' and someone who wholeheartedly cares for those with whom she works," Dolan wrote. "Simply put, Ms. Jewell is a cornerstone of North Point High School."

### **Outstanding Central Office Employee**

Murphy was an airman in the U.S. Air Force for four years before transitioning to civilian life and working as an administrative assistant. In 2010 she started with CCPS as a temporary secretary before becoming a secretary in School Administration for the school system.

Murphy is on the frontline when it comes to receiving calls from parents and community members who have a concern or questions. "She is on the ready to determine where or to whom the calls should be directed, but more importantly, she takes the time to hear the concerns of those who need assistance, and is able to reassure them that their voices will be

heard," Kathy Kiessling, director of student services, wrote in a nomination letter.

Murphy not only directs people to an appropriate staff member who can help, she collaborates with them to come up with a solution.

"Mrs. Murphy is very proactive and forward-thinking as it relates to anticipating potential challenges," Marvin Jones, executive director of schools, wrote. "Annemarie is unflappable and unflustered; she takes the day's events in stride as they occur, no matter how unusual they may seem," Linda Gill, Ed.D. executive director of schools, wrote.

### **Outstanding Food Service Employee**

Steffe's career in CCPS food and nutrition service has come full circle since she started in 2002 as a food service worker at Mitchell.

Before landing in her current position as Mitchell's food service manager, Steffe was an assistant food service manager at La Plata High School and Mary B. Neal Elementary School. At Mitchell she is known for her commitment and ability to teach her staff how to juggle multiple demands — a vital skill when working with elementary school students, Principal Nick Adam wrote in a nomination letter.

Though they might be young, students recognize the work Steffe puts in as the food service manager. "[She] deserves a lot of thanks," fifth grader Sofia Ortiz-Camacho wrote. "I bet it's hard to run everything with school lunches."

### **Outstanding Building Service Employee**

At La Plata High School, where he has been the building service manager since 2002, Swann fills many roles. "His badge says that he is a building service manager, but he does so much more for us here at La Plata," Principal Douglass Dolan wrote in a nomination

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CCPS provides nondiscriminatory equal access to school facilities in accordance with its Use of Facilities rules to designated youth groups (including, but not limited to, the Boy Scouts).

## OUTSTANDING

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letter. "He has been a teacher, coach and mentor to many people who have walked through the school doors."

Swann began his career with CCPS in 1986 as a building service worker at Thomas Stone High School and Dr. James Craik Elementary School. He has served as building service manager at Craik, and Benjamin Stoddert and Mattawoman middle schools before starting at La Plata.

While he has built friendships with staff members that span decades, Swann also makes new teachers feel welcome. "As a first year (and second year) teacher, I have made a lot of 'dumb rookie' mistakes," Kate Sellers, instrumental music teacher, wrote. "Mr. Swann, every time I would make a mistake (big or small) would usually smile, say something encouraging and then give me the tools and assistance I needed to fix it."

He offers the same assistance and encouragement to students. "Students feel comfortable asking him for assistance with their locker, how to get to a class or getting free throw shooting tips,"

Stephanie Barry, a special education teacher, wrote. Swann has also taken on the role of coach for Unified teams and other sports throughout the years.

#### Outstanding Instructional Assistant

Willis has worked with young children in CCPS

since 2006 — first as a substitute teacher then as an instructional assistant (IA) at Mitchell. She has been an IA at Neal since 2009 when the school opened. Willis works with kindergarten teacher Michelle Theders who said the two are a team. "We help the students learn and grow together. We plan together and we teach together," she said. "She always keeps it positive, even discussing negative behaviors. There was always hope and we were always a team."

Former students, who have since been promoted to first grade, applaud Willis. "I love Ms. Willis because she is nice and always helps people learn and follow directions," Meagan Jones wrote in a nomination letter.

Michell Cuellar, the mother of a former student of Willis, has nothing but good things to say about her. "Mrs. Willis is not just an instructional assistant; she wears different hats throughout the school day. Mrs. Willis is a nurse, a second mom, a friend and a teacher," Cuellar wrote. "My child comes home almost every day and tells me she wants to be just like Mrs. Theders and Mrs. Willis. That speaks volumes about the influence that she has."

"Mrs. Willis is someone who makes me proud to be an educator," Principal Deborah Brown wrote. "She is firm and fair, and loves the children she teaches."

## Personnel

Apply for positions online at [www.ccboe.com/jobs/currentopenings.php](http://www.ccboe.com/jobs/currentopenings.php). All teaching positions require a bachelor's degree and MSDE certification requirements.

#### Job Openings

**Attendance Secretary** — J.C. Parks Elementary School, 11-month position. A high school diploma is required. Good computer literacy skills, such as proficiency in Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint preferred. Apply by Nov. 2.

**Switchboard/Mailroom/Communications Clerk** — Jesse L. Starkey Administration Building, 12-month position. Performs clerical work for the Communications Office and serves as the switchboard operator to receive and route phone calls to Starkey and schools. Serves as a backup to the mail room. A high school diploma is required with experience operating a public switchboard preferred. Apply by Nov. 4.

**Environmental Education Assistant** — Nanjemoy Creek Environmental Education Center, 11-month position. A bachelor's degree in environmental science, environmental studies, natural science, science education, natural resource management or equivalent is required with teaching experience in environmental education in an outdoor setting preferred. Preferred experience in grant writing, coordinating group dynamics and teaching/working with adolescents. The ability to work in a variety of weather conditions preferred. Apply by Nov. 5.

**Reading Interventionist** — Piccowaxen Middle School, 10-month position. A bachelor's degree is required and applicants must meet certification requirements as established by the Maryland State Department of Education. An advanced professional certificate and reading specialist certification are preferred. Apply by Nov. 11.

**School Psychologist** — Jesse L. Starkey Administration Building, 10.5-month position. Applicants must have or be able to obtain a School Psychology Certification in Maryland with a Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP) credential preferred. Apply by Dec. 31.

**Technology Facilitator** — Location to be determined, 10-month position. A high school diploma and associate of arts degree, or a pass on the ParaPro Assessment are required. Strong computer literacy skills are necessary and an understanding of Microsoft Office Suite and instructional software, and the ability to learn new software programs as required are preferred. Position open until filled.

**New Teacher Mentor - Elementary** — Part-time position. Seven years experience of successful prekindergarten to 12th grade teaching with four or more years in a leadership role preferred. Position open until filled.