



# School News

## Important Dates Coming Soon

### *Come to the 'Cabaret'*

La Plata High School's production of "Cabaret" is set to take the stage 6:30 p.m. April 25 to 27. A 2:30 p.m. show is April 27. The plot sets stage in Germany during the early 1930s when the Nazi party begins to build political power. The play follows characters at the Kit Kat Club and their struggles to find love. It is rated PG-13 and is not suited for a younger audience.

### *Last day announced*

The last days of work for Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) employees have been announced. The last day of school for certificated teachers who are 10-month employees is June 13; 10.5-month certificated teachers have a last day of June 20; June 25 is the last day for 11-month certificated employees; and June 24 is the last day for 12-month teachers. Support staff who are 11-month employees are out on June 25; 10.5-month support staff call June 26 their last day; 10-month support staff get out on June 14; and instructional assistants who work 10 months are out on June 13. The last day for 10-month food service managers and assistant managers is June 17; and food service workers who are 10-month employees are out on June 13.

### *Power to the people*

St. Charles High School's We the People team is competing in the national competition this weekend — April 26 to 29 — in Leesburg, Va. St. Charles social studies teachers Michael Colatruglio and Hayley Ressler coach the team made up of sophomores, juniors and seniors. At the national finals, students test their knowledge of government and the Constitution by participating in simulated congressional hearings. Acting as constitutional experts, students must testify before a panel of judges on the six units in the "We the People: The Citizen & the Constitution" textbook.



## Competition with a view

Teams of high school students competed in the Charles County Envirothon April 16 at Gilbert Run Park. The North Point High School team of junior Amber Wachowski, left, senior Carl Wachowski, sophomore Sara Jarboe and junior Valerie Tsitsiwu work on the aquatics portion. Westlake High School's team took first place, a team from Maurice J. McDonough High School came in second and a team from North Point High School placed third. The academic competition is the culmination of lessons learned during seasonal trainings at the Charles Soil Conservation District. Students answer questions in five categories — aquatics, forestry, soils, wildlife and a topic that changes each year. This year the fifth topic is Agriculture and the Environment: Knowledge & Technology to Feed the World.

## Wright named 2019 CCPS Teacher of the Year

Joyful. Loyal. Amazing. That's how students and staff at Mt. Hope/Nanjemoy Elementary School describe second-grade teacher Melinda Wright.

Wright is a longtime staple in the Mt. Hope/Nanjemoy community, having taught at the school for the past 26 years. She is one of the most requested teachers at Mt. Hope, by both students and parents, and community members speak with pride in the fact that Wright was once their teacher. Her kind demeanor and positive impact has a lasting effect in the community. Wright's impact will go further this year as she was recently honored as the 2019 Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) Teacher of the Year.

As the CCPS Teacher of the Year, Wright

is a finalist in the Maryland Teacher of the Year awards program. She was surprised by Superintendent Kimberly Hill with the news during a schoolwide assembly held Friday, April 12 at school. Hill asked Wright's colleagues to describe her in one word, in which words such as "humble" "remarkable" and "inspirational" were shared. Mt. Hope/Nanjemoy students agree and said Wright is helpful and the best teacher at the school.

Earlier this year, the school system honored Teacher of the Year award nominees from every school and announced five finalists, including Wright. Wright said she is honored just to be recognized for doing something she loves. "I am speechless ... I am very honored. This is a big honor. I hope I

See WRIGHT, Page 3

## New backpack rule for middle, high schools

A new Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) requirement regarding the use of backpacks in middle and high schools took effect April 24, making the rule consistent across the school system.

When they returned from spring break, middle and high school students were asked to store their backpacks in their lockers during the school day.

Principals and administrators will work with students to ensure there is enough time allotted between classes to go to their lockers. Students will be allowed to carry a small, personal bag no larger than a standard adult hand throughout the day.

The backpack rule is not a new one to CCPS. Prior to April 24, five middle and high schools already required students to store their book bags in their lockers. While the new requirement sets a consistent rule for middle and high schools, it also strengthens school safety.

The change is in response to recent issues where backpacks have been used to conceal items that threaten school safety.

"We are continuously looking at procedures to improve and enhance school safety, and I understand this change will take some getting used to," Kimberly Hill, superintendent of schools, said. "We believe this rule is a piece of the bigger picture in keeping our schools a safe place to work and learn."

"The change is not the entire solution. There is no one thing that can solve all school safety issues," said Jason Stoddard, director of school safety and security. "This requirement is another layer in keeping concealed weapons out of our schools."

In the realm of school safety, the best way to keep staff and students safe is



through building relationships which bolster the school system's See Something, Say Something initiative.

"Students and staff at a school know their building and the people in it better than anyone," Stoddard said. "We have been able to bring about peaceful conclusions to potential safety threats thanks to students and staff members who heard or saw something that didn't seem right. They reported these incidents, they kept their school safe. The model of See Something, Say Something works."

CCPS has adopted a number of new safety rules in light of recent attacks made on schools around the country, including one in neighboring St. Mary's County in 2018.

The school system has created an anonymous safety reporting tool on the CCPS website, added more emergency training for staff and increased background checks and training for substitutes, volunteers and temporary and new employees.

To learn more about CCPS's school safety enhancements, go to the school security webpage at <https://www.ccboe.com/index.php/safety-and-security>.

## Financial planning seminars set

Financial planning seminars are being hosted by Prudential Pathways in the coming months. The sessions will focus on the fundamentals of financial wellness.

The first seminar is 4 to 5 p.m. April 29 in the media center of St. Charles High School with the topic of Is Your Financial House in Order?

A budget and debt management session is 4 to 5 p.m. May 2 in the auditorium of La Plata High School.

The importance of estate planning will be discussed at a seminar held 5 to 6 p.m. June 3 in the media center of Daniel of St. Thomas Jenifer Elementary School.

To register, go to <https://tinyurl.com/y2abt7ly>. Email RetirementPathways@Prudential.com or call 800-987-5592 with questions.

## Notebook

### On the cover

Pictured on the cover are Shellia Soderstrom, the reading resource teacher at Dr. Samuel A. Mudd Elementary School, left; and Alexandra Anderson, a fourth-grade teacher at Daniel of St. Thomas Jenifer Elementary School. They were honored by the Board during its April 9 meeting. Nathan Mouli, social studies teacher at Maurice J. McDonough High School is also pictured. He is McDonough's nominee for the Charles County Teacher of the Year and the *Washington Post's* Teacher of the Year programs.

### Support Staff Town Hall set

A Support Staff Town Hall is scheduled for 4:15-5:45 p.m., Monday April 29 in the staff development room at the Jesse L. Starkey Administration Building. The meeting is open to the public, but will not be televised or streamed live online. The Town Hall provides support staff a platform to ask questions and discuss topics with the Board. Staff set to participate in the meeting signed up by email in advance. Additional questions can be sent to [boardmail@ccboe.com](mailto:boardmail@ccboe.com).

### Board sets work session

The Board of Education is holding a work session at 6 p.m. Monday, April 29 in the boardroom at the Jesse L. Starkey Administration Building. The meeting will be televised live on the Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) website, [ccboe.com](http://ccboe.com), and on Comcast channel 96 and Verizon FiOS channel 12. The meeting starts at 6 p.m. with a work session to follow. Subjects slated to be discussed include Waldorf opportunity zones presented by the Charles County Government Planning and Growth Committee and an information item regarding the Discipline Review Committee suggestions. The agenda is subject to change.

### Summer camp registration open

CCPS is sponsoring summer enrichment camps for students in kindergarten through Grade 9. Camps begin the week of June 24 and run through the week ending on Aug. 2. To register, go to <https://www.ccboe.com/index.php/summer-camps-2019>. Cost is \$90 per camp session. Walk-in registration is set for Thursday, May 9 from 3 to 7 p.m. at the Jesse L. Starkey Administration Building.



## WRIGHT

continued from page 1

represent you well,” Wright said to her colleagues and students during the assembly.

Wright said she knew from the time she was in elementary school that she wanted to be a teacher. Her first-grade teacher, Sister Nancy, inspired her love of learning. Wright said it was Sister Nancy’s ability to build relationships and connect with students that shaped Wright’s desire at a young age to become a teacher. “Sister Nancy was fresh out of the convent and made us all feel special. My connection with her inspired me to become a teacher. She always had a way of making us feel supported and loved, and I knew I wanted to be the same,” Wright said.

Wright is known in the Mt. Hope/Nanjemoy community as a role model teacher who is compassionate and kind. She puts others first and does whatever it takes to make sure her students feel successful in their learning. Wright is the first teacher to try a new instructional strategy in the classroom and seeks advice from her colleagues to help grow her knowledge base. She advocates for her students and incorporates different instructional methods to ensure students of all learning abilities achieve success.

Wright has taught first-, second- and third-grade classes at Mt. Hope/Nanjemoy.

Since she began her career with CCPS, Wright has worked at Mt. Hope/Nanjemoy and taught the inclusion class for her grade level. She is an expert at differentiation, an instructional strategy used by teachers when working with students with different needs, and often uses a team-teaching approach.

She is a model instructor for Project Lead the Way and the implementation of STEAM education, which stands for science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics.

“Mrs. Wright is able to guide each student in her class towards their maximum potential. She has embraced the use of learning targets and success criteria in her daily instruction, which has resulted in her students taking ownership of their learning,” Mt. Hope/Nanjemoy Principal William Miller said.

Brielle Swor is a second grader at Mt. Hope/Nanjemoy and is in Wright’s class. Swor said what makes her teacher awesome is how she explains learning targets. “I love how she makes us understand our learning targets. She takes something and breaks it down step by step and helps us to learn about our goal. When she shows it, we learn it,” Swor said.

Swor’s classmate, second grader James Simms, agrees.

“Whenever I am stuck, she helps us. Instead of telling us what we have to learn, she gives us learning targets and breaks them down into steps. We use them with math, writing, social studies. It makes learning so much more fun,” Simms said.

Wright holds National Board Certification in the area of generalist/middle childhood, a designation she earned nearly 14 years ago. She has since renewed her certification and models a growth mindset for herself, her colleagues and her students.

During her tenure at Mt. Hope/Nanjemoy, Wright has served in many capacities from team leader, new teacher mentor and Destination Imagination (DI) coach to member of the school improvement team, curriculum writer, gifted education and team teacher. But, she is most recognized for her ability to connect with students.



**Melinda Wright, back left, has been teaching at Mt. Hope/Nanjemoy Elementary School for 26 years. She was named the 2019 Charles County Public Schools Teacher of the Year. Her selection was announced at a recent assembly where she celebrated with colleagues and students.**

Wright has taught both of Jennifer Brown’s children. Brown’s oldest child is now in high school and still talks about the impact Wright made in her learning. “My oldest daughter still talks about the difference Mrs. Wright made on her. She made her feel comfortable and I believe it was due to her patience. She has taught my children to have fun, be creative, always smile, be appreciative and always stay positive. She has the ability to connect to every student and has truly made a difference,” Brown wrote in a letter of support for Wright’s nomination.

To Wright, her recognition as Teacher of the Year is an award that is as much about Mt. Hope/Nanjemoy as it is herself. “I love everything about our school... being a part of the community. This is for you,” Wright said to her colleagues and students at the school assembly.

As the Charles County Teacher of the Year, Wright is one of 24 state finalists eligible for the Maryland Teacher of the Year Award. The Maryland State Department of Education will select and announce the Maryland Teacher of the Year later this year. Wright will be honored by the Board of Education at its June 11 meeting.

Wright has a bachelor’s degree in early childhood and elementary education from Frostburg State University, and a master’s degree in curriculum and design from Loyola College.

***“Whenever I am stuck, she helps us. Instead of telling us what we have to learn, she gives us learning targets and breaks them down into steps. We use them with math, writing, social studies. It makes learning so much more fun.”***

*James Simms, student*

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Charles County Public Schools  
301-932-6610  
301-934-7220  
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**Editor/Writers**  
Katie O'Malley-Simpson  
Shelley Mackey  
Sara K. Taylor

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## Ladies who lunch

Earlier this year, Mary B. Neal Elementary School held an appreciation lunch for its food service workers. Pictured from left is Derusha Dixon, Letessa Jackson, LaTonya Dyson, Dawn Lynch and Patricia Arnold.

*Submitted by Neal PR Liaison Katrina Garvey.*



## Sunny outlooks at Diggs Elementary

Staff and students show their support for Read Across America spirit week on Sneetchy yellow day in honor of Dr. Seuss's "The Sneetches and Other Stories." Fifth-grade teacher Melynn Readmond, left, administrative instructional assistant (IA) Lisa Cooper and reading resource teacher Melinda Jackowski are pictured with students.

*Submitted by Diggs PR Liaison Lisa Wehausen.*

## 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.*

**ESOL Newcomer Interventionist** — Jesse L. Starkey Administration Building, 10-month part-time position. A bachelor's degree is required and applicants must meet certification requirements as established by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) for certification. Apply by April 30.

**Registration Secretary** — Billingsley Elementary School, 11-month position. Computer literacy skills, including familiarity with Microsoft programs, is required. Apply by May 1.

**Mail Room, Switchboard and Communications Clerk** — Jesse L. Starkey Administration Building, 12-month position. High school degree required, mail room experience preferred. Ability to lift 40 pounds, operate mail

room equipment, quickly learn new software and a Maryland Class C driver's licence are required. Apply by May 1.

**Building Service Assistant Manager** — Billingsley Elementary School, 12-month position. A high school diploma desirable or sufficient education to have basic skills in reading, record keeping and math. Apply by May 1.

**School Psychology Internship** — Jesse L. Starkey Administration Building, 10-month position. Applicants must be certified by an accredited university training program as being eligible to complete the internship. Apply by June 1.

**Food Nutrition Services Culinary Development and Training Specialist** — Jesse L. Starkey Administration Building, 12-month position. An associate's degree in culinary arts, with minimum five years of experience preferred. Position open until filled.

**Building Service Worker Floater** — Location to be determined, temporary position. High school diploma required. Applicants must have a willingness to work overtime when necessary. Position open until filled.

**Food Service Substitute** — Location to be determined, temporary position. A high school diploma desirable or sufficient education to have basic skills in reading, record keeping and math. Position open until filled.

**Building Service Worker** (four hours) — Thomas Stone High School, 12-month position. High school diploma required. Applicants must have a willingness to work overtime when necessary. Position open until filled.

**Building Service Worker** — Location to be determined, 12-month position. High school diploma required. Applicants must have a willingness to work overtime when necessary. Position open until filled.