

# School News



## Notebook



### Top CCPS math team

The team from Henry E. Lackey High School took first prize in the Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) high school math competition. This the third consecutive year that the Chargers placed first.

The team is made up of seniors Kaylee Alvey, Ray Guzzone, Blake Hancock, Cenia Sims and Evann Yake. The team's sponsors are math teachers Hunter Langel and Joanna Olson. The high school math competition is a virtual contest for CCPS high school students that spans five months with a monthly meet. Students must complete individual, team and relay questions to earn points for their teams and at the end of the five months a county champion is crowned. Pictured above from left are Laura Buzzell, CCPS mathematics content specialist, Hunter Langel, math team co-sponsor and math teacher, seniors Ray Guzzone, Kaylee Alvey, Evann Yake, Cenia Sims and Kevin Lowdnes, CCPS chief of Teaching and Learning.

### SLP Day is May 17

It's National Speech Language Pathologist Day on Wednesday, May 17. SLPs with the school system work in the special education office and — according to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association — treat those who have communication and swallowing problems.



Left, William B. Wade Elementary School second-grade teacher, Stephanie Shanholtzer, shows students how to prepare a plant for planting. Top right, fifth grade student Elijah Duckett weeds an interior courtyard. Bottom right, fourth grader Kylie Stewart makes a wish.

## Wading into beautification projects

Students at William B. Wade Elementary School were in the weeds last month and they were happy about it. To celebrate Earth Day last month, staff and students organized a week full of beautification activities and projects around the school. Students and staff from prekindergarten to fifth grade rolled up their sleeves and got to work.

During Wade Beautification Days held April 17 to 28, students and staff set aside time to pull and dig up weeds, pick up trash, rake leaves, plant flowers and create garden beds. The school is known for its dedication to environmental initiatives and has been named a Maryland Green School by the Maryland Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education (MAEOE).

The school held a pep rally with a song release and live performance of [Pick it Up! — Go Green 2023](#) by Christian music artist Dante James. James is a graduate of Charles County Public Schools and son of Roshanda James, a first-grade teacher at Wade and member of the school's Go Green Team. The song was put together with the help of James' sister, Dondre'ana James, a reading interventionist IA at Theodore G. Davis Middle School, and friend Thomas Jasmine. The song's video, featuring Wade students and staff, debuted on YouTube and is housed on the [Wade Elementary Go Green Team's channel](#). The Go Green Team is a club dedicated to recycling and other environmentally friendly initiatives.

Joy Fisher, a special education instructional assistant, said the school celebrates Earth Day each year, but when a member of the Go Green Team suggested a beautification project this year the day ex-



Fourth grade teacher Nicole Brock, left, and fourth grader Emily Miller collect litter from the Wade playground. Miller and Brock are members of the school's Go Green Team.

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## CCPS celebrates years of service of staff

■ Employees are honored for 25 or more years at ceremony

The Board of Education and Superintendent of Schools Maria Navarro, Ed.D., honored several Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) employees on March 23 for their years of service to the school system and commitment to education during a ceremony held at North Point High School. Honored were employees with careers that span a period of 45, 40, 35, 30 and 25 years.

Marcellus Pailen was honored for 45 years of service as an instrumental music teacher.

Pailen started his career at Henry E. Lackey High School as the instrumental music teacher after being referred to CCPS by a colleague. "I had never heard of Charles County before teaching down here," Pailen said.

He is a Washington D.C., native and hadn't heard of the county before coming here for work. He was at Lackey for 13 years and then moved to Matthew Henson Middle School. Pailen has been the instrumental music teacher at Henson for nearly 32 years.

Pailen's music interest came from his father's music background. "My father was a postman with a small music background," he said. Pailen took private lessons when he was in middle school and developed a love for various instruments, enough to become an instrumental music teacher. "I did not come from a long line of family members that were in education," he said. He became the first one in his family to enter the field.



**Superintendent Maria V. Navarro, Ed.D., right, congratulates Phyllis Whalen, assistant building service manager at William B. Wade Elementary School. Whalen has 35 years of service, and was the longest serving CCPS employee who attended the recent ceremony.**

When asked why he has continued on as an educator for the extended time that he has, he said that he enjoys the "challenge to help students to improve." He mentioned that it is rewarding to see students go from a basic knowledge of instruments to a more advanced one. Pailen has had a successful career in that students that he has taught long ago have now become important figures in the music world.

In addition to Pailen, the Board and Navarro honored 34 employees with 35, 30 and 25 years of service.

For a full list of CCPS employees honored at the recent years of service ceremony, [click here](#).

## CCPS announces two principal appointments

Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) today announces two new administrative appointments for the 2023-2024 school year. The appointments include a new principal for Henry E. Lackey High School and the selection of a principal for the new public charter school PISOTA – Phoenix International School of the Arts.

The Board of Education of Charles County approved the appointment of Cheryl Davis, a current assistant principal at North Point High School, as principal of

Henry E. Lackey High School effective July 1.

Davis will take over the principalship role from Kathy Perriello, longtime principal at Lackey who recently announced her retirement from CCPS at the end of the school year. Perriello has spent her entire career in education with CCPS and retires after 34 years as a teacher, teacher mentor, assistant principal and principal.

Davis started her career in education

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### Notebook

#### On the cover

Employees honored April 11 by the Board of Education include Mary Bailey, reading recovery teacher, Dr. Thomas L. Higdon Elementary School, and Courtney Swann, fourth-grade teacher, Berry Elementary School. [Click here](#) to read more.

#### Thank you cards

As of Friday afternoon, more than 425 e-cards have been delivered to CCPS teachers and staff during Teacher Appreciation Week. The inaugural Teacher Appreciation Week card program allows students, staff, families and community members to send a note to CCPS teachers who make positive impacts in the lives of others. The form to send an e-card closes 3 p.m., Saturday, May 13. To send a card before the site closes, [click here](#). And thanks to everyone who used the site to send a "thank you."

#### Survey closes May 19

Parents of students ages 3 to 21 who receive special education services can take the [Maryland Special Education Parent Involvement Survey](#) by May 19.

#### Tickets for Baseball Bash

The 2023 Back-to-School Baseball Bash is set for Aug. 26 at Regency Furniture Stadium. Sponsored by the Education Association of Charles County (EACC), CCPS and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), the event is open to all CCPS employees and their families. Tickets are \$10 each for the picnic pavilion which includes an all-you-can-eat buffet from 6 to 8 p.m. Only 350 pavilion tickets will be sold and are on a first-come, first-served basis. General stadium seating is \$10 per ticket (food is not included in the ticket price). Tickets are available for purchase through Aug. 1. To purchase tickets to the Baseball Bash, [click here](#).

# State school librarian association honors Gerding, Ferruzza

Each year, the Maryland Association of School Librarians (MASL) names one school librarian as its School Librarian of the Year for exemplary service and achievements in the field. Nominees and finalists for the award are divided and categorized by each county in Maryland.

This year, two Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) media specialists were honored — Karen Ferruzza of Arthur Middleton Elementary School and Jacob Gerding of Dr. Thomas L. Higdon Elementary School. Gerding was named one of the 15 finalists for the award.

Berry Elementary School, then in his current role at Higdon.

Gerding said that being a media specialist fuses his main interests together, reading and technology. “This role gives me a lot of opportunities to be creative,” he said.

Gerding is the VEX Robotics coach at the school and has led his team in victory twice to the VEX World Championship in Dallas. “I like to bring big school opportunities to smaller schools where the opportunities may not be readily available,” he said.

When he was named a nominee for the MASL School Librarian of the Year Award, the first thing he did was post on Facebook. Gerding said that the post read something to the nature of “I don’t know who nominated me, but I needed it. So, thank you.”

Gerding was told that he would hear back in two weeks time to see if he was named a finalist for the award. After the estimated time had passed, he made up in his mind that he was not a finalist so he “let it go.” In week three he learned that he was named a finalist for the award. “I was not the ultimate winner, but it was a fantastic librarian who deserved it all the way from Montgomery County,” he said.

He received a plaque in honor of his success in being named a MASL Maryland School Librarian of the Year finalist.

## Karen Ferruzza

Ferruzza has been the media specialist at Middleton for nearly 20 years. She earned a Bachelor of Science in elementary education from Salisbury University and a master’s in technology for educators from Johns Hopkins University. She received a library certificate from the College of Notre Dame of Maryland. Before her career as a media specialist, Ferruzza was a teacher at Malcolm Elementary School in 1997, worked for an education software company and then became a teacher at Middleton teaching fifth grade.

When the media specialist position opened at the school, “Everyone said that I should fill the role,” Ferruzza said.

“I liked how technology was integrated



**Karen Ferruzza was nominated for the MASL award. She has been a school librarian for nearly 20 years. She’s taught in elementary schools before becoming a school librarian.**

with reading,” she said. “I enjoy watching the students at the school grow as a person and in their reading abilities.” When a student struggles with reading, Ferruzza is the one to give them hope to continue. She said to these students “You just haven’t found the right book yet.” She said that students need to find what interests them to help improve their reading abilities and desire to read.

When Ferruzza learned that she was named a nominee for the award she said she was “taken aback and surprised.” The reason why she is so passionate about her job is because of the students. “I would not be here every day if it wasn’t for them,” she said.

Sponsored by the American Library Association (ALA) and libraries across the United States, CCPS celebrates National School Library Week, April 23-29, 2023. The week encourages the importance of reading in schools and recognizes the unique contribution that media specialists have on students.

Sponsored by the American Library Association (ALA), National Library Week is April 23-29, 2023.

Libraries across the United States and Charles County celebrate the week to recognize the opportunities that are provided to help others to read. CCPS school librarians are also recognized for their motivation and dedication to bring reading to students.



**Jacob Gerding, the school librarian at Dr. Thomas L. Higdon Elementary School, was named a finalist for the School Librarian of the Year award from the School Librarian of the Year in the Maryland Association.**

## Jacob Gerding

“When I was little, I wanted to be the president of the United States of America,” Gerding said. “I did not think about pursuing a career in education at all.” He has been a media specialist at Higdon for four years, starting his career as a media specialist in Prince George’s County in 2014. After graduating from McDaniel College, Gerding taught social studies for 10 years in Texas, New York and then Suitland. He eventually made his way to Charles County in 2015 as a media specialist, first at

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**Second grader Belle Land plants pansies in front of the school during a school-wide beautification project.**

## WADE

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panded into much more. It helps that the staff is on board too. "We have really good supportive teachers who will support a lot of things we do at school," Fisher said.

Stephanie Shanholtzer, a second-grade teacher, asked a representative of Lowe's if the store would offer a discount for plants. They told her no — she could just have them. The school already had gardening equipment and other supplies needed for the project and plenty of hands on deck ready to work.

Each grade was assigned a different outdoor area like Katrina Flores' fifth graders who took over an interior courtyard one afternoon. Fifth graders Nadia Thomas and Mackenzie Davis didn't mind the dirt and rehoming the occasional worm to another part of the courtyard if it meant getting the project completed.

"It helps us live better and to have a better Earth," said Thomas about the importance of caring for the environment. "I mean, there's only one Earth," Davis added. "We have to protect it."

## PRINCIPALS con't from Page 2

with CCPS as a family and consumer science teacher at Lackey, a position she held for 17 years. In 2007, Davis pursued a career in administration and was named as a vice principal at John Hanson Middle School. In 2011, Davis moved to a vice principal role at Westlake High School and has served as an assistant principal at North Point since 2014.

The Board also approved the appointment of Roy Demetri Sermons, Ed.D., as principal at PISOTA. His appointment takes effect June 1 and PISOTA will open in August at the start of the 2023-2024 school year.

Dr. Sermons is currently serving as a principal with Providence Public Schools in Rhode Island. He previously served as a principal with Richmond Public Schools in Virginia, principal with Vision Academies, EastSide Charter School in Wilmington, Del., and with District of Columbia Public Schools as an assistant principal of literacy. Dr. Sermons also has educational experience with school systems in Georgia and started his career in education as an English language arts teacher in Alabama.

PISOTA opens in August as the county's first public charter school with 175 students enrolled in Grades 6-8.

At the May 9 Board meeting, Angelica Jackson, co-founder and chief executive officer of PISOTA, joined CCPS staff to provide an update to the Board on the opening of PISOTA. [The update is posted to the CCPS website here.](#)

## 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

**Internal Affairs Investigator** — Jesse L. Starkey Administration Building, 12-month position. Bachelor's degree in criminal justice, human resources or related field, and at least three years of experience as an investigator. Apply by May 17.

**Secretary to the Principal** — Milton M. Somers Middle School, 12-month position. A high school diploma or GED required with a minimum of two years of experience in bookkeeping or office management. Apply by May

17.

**Food and Nutritional Service Manager** — Early Learning Center, 10-month position. A high school diploma or equivalent required, along with a minimum of three years of experience in food service management. Applicants must be ServSafe certified within 12 months of assuming position. Apply by May 19.

**Food Service Worker** — Early Learning Center, 10-month position. A high school diploma is required. Apply by May 19.

**Secretary to the Principal** — PISOTA, 12-month position. A high school diploma or GED required with a minimum of two years of experience in bookkeeping or office manage-

ment. Apply by May 19.

**Food and Nutritional Service Manager** — Phoenix International School of the Arts (PISOTA), 10-month position. A high school diploma or equivalent is required. Applicants must be ServSafe certified within 12 months of assuming position. Apply by May 22.

**Executive Director of Schools** — Jesse L. Starkey Administration Building, 12-month position. Applicants must have a master's degree and certification as a principal (Administrator II) from the state, and a minimum of five years of experience preferred as a building principal in a comprehensive school preferred. Apply by May 22.