



Students Communicate with Astronaut in Space

Rock Bridge Elementary School is a long way from the International Space Station. But with the help of local ham radio operators, that distance was lessened this spring, as students were able to communicate with Missouri-born astronaut Mike Hopkins. Students and astronaut linked up for about nine and a half minutes on March 5 in the school library.

"It came in really clear," said Loretta Schouten, Rock Bridge's PTA president, complimenting the work of the Central Missouri Radio Association (CMRA), who set up the radio contact. "We had 13 students asking questions and we had enough time to get through all of their questions and to hear all of the answers."

The CMRA came to the school prior to the event and walked the students through how their ham radio gear works. The operators also demonstrated how they are able to track space station orbits and satellites in the sky.

In conjunction with the NASA link-up, the school hosted Linda Godwin, a former astronaut and professor at the University of Missouri, to take part in a Q and A session following the broadcast. The school also held, prior to the link-up, an event called "Moon Landing," which was an after-school science-themed event.

"We had a lot of science stuff that night,"

Schouten said. "a lot of neat, unique activities that highlighted science and math. All of the kids who were interested

in asking a question that evening filled out a form, and we then held a random drawing to pick the 13 students who got to ask the questions."

The questions, which had to be submitted to NASA prior to the link-up, ranged from what the food is like, to the view from space, to the differences in wearing their suits on Earth versus in space. "One of the neatest questions," Schouten said, "was when a student asked the astronaut what the first thing he would do was when he got back to Earth. The answer was to take a shower."

And it wasn't much longer Hopkins had to wait to do so. The Monday after the link-up, the astronaut returned to Earth, as some of the students got to watch via NASA TV.

Chris Belcher, Columbia Public Schools superintendent, said, "It is a great example of how each school can use their network of people to create opportunities for students. People can take a conversation on a topic and formulate from it a way to benefit the students."

Schouten says she was impressed by how clear the communication was. "It was just amazing," She said. "It went about as well as we could have ever hoped."

It is a great example of how each school can use their network of people to create opportunities for students.

- Chris Belcher

Dr. Chris Belcher Retires

Columbia Public Schools will say goodbye to Superintendent Chris Belcher, who will retire at the end of the school year. His retirement will open a new chapter for Belcher that will include staying in education and staying in Columbia.

Now in his 32nd year as an educator, Belcher thought he would get to the end of 33 years and retire then, allowing him to see the first graduating class of Battle High School. His thinking changed, however, when the University of Missouri posted a teaching professor position, seeking a candidate with administrative experience to work with principals and superintendent certification candidates.

"It was the perfect thing for after retirement," Belcher said of the position, which he starts in the fall. "We get to stay in Columbia, as we have become very attached, and many of the teachers in my courses will be Columbia Public School District teachers."

Belcher sees one of the biggest changes to CPS that he presided over as the secondary reorganization. "There were so many moving parts," he said. "Faculty, staff, bus schedules, student schedules, school culture. We had to coordinate it all. I am proud of my staff who did all of that. And then in the middle of it the recession got worse and we asked for the levy and bond issues. The community stepped up to the plate and we were able to keep staffing at appropriate levels, which led us to the success of the reorganization."

The 10-year building plan is another aspect of his legacy that Belcher will note with pride. "We are getting out of the trailers and the community likes where we are headed, because we did not just ask for the bond and levy, we said 'here is the plan.'"

When asked about his leadership as superintendent, Belcher says he feels he had some control over the culture of the organization, and that he "managed the culture of Columbia Public Schools to be more

customer service oriented, respectful." Belcher goes on to say he focused on being accessible. "There were no barriers to the community, staff or parents. I think the community appreciated my leadership style and transparency."

Belcher attributes his many positions in school administration as that which equipped him to serve as superintendent. "I have done every job in central office administration and that helped me to manage this group. I did not micromanage the staff, I trusted them. We talked about goals and objectives and then I trusted them to figure out the how."

As Belcher looks back at his CPS career, he says "When I first got here, we needed to get our mojo back. I think we have gotten it back."

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- Chris Belcher



13-14 Retiring Administration

Dr. Nick Boren - Deputy Superintendent

Mary Korth-Lloyd - Principal, Rock Bridge Elementary School

Dr. Tracey Conrad - Principal, Hickman High School

Linda Rawlings - Director, Columbia Area Career Center

Dr. Sally Beth Lyon - Chief Academic Officer

Dr. Chris Belcher - Superintendent

CPS District School Board

April 8, 2014 election:

Re-elected: Helen Wade and Jonathan Sessions

Paul Cushing, who served on the board in 2012 before moving and vacating his seat was selected.

Dr. Sally Beth Lyon Retires

After seven years as chief academic officer and 20 years overall in Columbia Public Schools, Dr. Sally Beth Lyon has decided to retire. She will, however, remain deeply involved in the educational community.

"I thought about it in the fall," Lyon said of retirement. "I was ready for a change and I feel very confident the district is headed in a really good direction."

Lyon knew she did not want to retire and not be involved in education in some capacity. At the time she decided to retire from Columbia Public Schools, that capacity was not clear. It soon became clear as a position at St. Louis University in the Department of Educational Leadership was posted. Lyon found the position intriguing, applied and was hired.

"I will be working with masters and graduate students," she said, "educators seeking their doctorate degrees and superintendent certifications." Lyon will still live in Columbia, where she hopes to stay very involved in the community.

Lyon has spent 20 years in Columbia Public Schools, coming from IBM in 1993 to teach at Mill Creek Elementary School. She later earned positions as assistant principal at Gentry Middle School and director of research, assessment and accountability as well as her current post as chief academic officer.

Equity is a topic of interest for Lyon and she has been very involved in the district's work on narrowing the achievement gap. She has also served on the Minority Student Achievement Coalition, a national coalition of school districts.

"I have had every job you can have in education," Lyon said. "I always believed teaching was the best. I have deep respect for teachers and it was the most intellectually challenging job I ever had. Before education I worked at IBM and felt the need to do philanthropy on the side. Since I have been in education, I feel like my work has been my service to the community."



New Superintendent for Columbia Public Schools



With the retirement of Superintendent Chris Belcher, Columbia Public Schools' conducted an extensive search for a replacement. The ideal candidate, however, was found just down the hall from Belcher, as Dr. Peter Stiepleman, the district's current assistant superintendent for elementary education, will take the post on July 1.

"When I began teaching, I began to aspire to be a building leader. When I was hired to be assistant superintendent, I was put in a position to be a leader of a district, Columbia Public Schools or otherwise," Stiepleman said. "Dr. Belcher spent a lot

of time prepping me to be a superintendent. I'm not sure assistant superintendents in other districts lead boundary meetings with the public or are as involved in community groups. I was given the ability to redefine the role of assistant superintendent and that suggested to me that I was capable of leading a district."

Stiepleman has served as a Spanish and English teacher as well as assistant principal in Oakland, Calif. and has, for Columbia Public Schools, been a third grade teacher, assistant principal and principal in addition to his current role.

The urbanization of Columbia is a major topic for Stiepleman, as he points to a 46 percent free-or-reduced lunch rate (up from around 25 percent when he arrived in the district four years ago), a 20 percent mobility rate (up to 32 percent at some schools) and an ELL (English Language Learners) community that has grown from 660 to 950 in the last four years, largely due to an influx of refugees to the area.

"Coming from Oakland (California) Public Schools, where my school was 100 percent free-or-reduced lunch, I have been in urban schools with large ELL populations. Our goals are simple: enrichment, opportunity and achievement. Enrichment means access to world language, performing arts and athletics. Opportunity is access to school, attendance and discipline (big parts of that) and achievement for all kids, particularly kids from fragile families."

Outgoing Superintendent Chris Belcher said of Stiepleman, "When I hired him four years ago, I was impressed with his intellect and leadership style. He is able to communicate with kids with respect. When he applied for the superintendent position, I saw him as someone who had leadership experience in the district, so I know it will be a seamless transition. I did it my way and he should put his own signature on the job - he will add to the mix. You change the leader, not the organization."

Stiepleman notes the road ahead will still be tough, citing enrollment boundary changes, new elementary schools and an early childhood center. In addition, there are discussions about adding on to a middle school - all topics either at the forefront or soon to be there.

"Most superintendents come to the job near the end of a career," Stiepleman said. "I'm fairly young and I hope to be here for a while."

Dr. Belcher spent a lot of time prepping me to be a superintendent.

- Peter Stiepleman

Columbia Voters Approve Bond Issue

"It was huge," Superintendent Chris Belcher said of the April 8, voter-approved \$50 million bond issue. "We have a long-term facilities plan and we have been pretty straightforward with the community. Happily, the message was heard. People in the community have been big supporters of the ballot in support of the school district."

The district will sell the bonds in 2016 and when combined with the portion of the previous bond issue left to be spent, Columbia Public Schools will be adding a lot more than education to the community.

"We have only sold \$9 million of the last \$50 million bond issue,"

Belcher said. "Add that to this bond and we will have \$91 million to put into the market in the next three years."

The 2014-approved bond funds will go mainly toward a new elementary school in east Columbia, building improvements across the district and technology needs.

"Since I have been here," Belcher said, "we have received \$220 million of voter-approved money. That is quite a measure of trust and support for Columbia Public Schools and I think we have earned that by doing things well."

Columbia Fund for Academic Excellence 2014 Winners

The Columbia Fund for Academic Excellence held its annual “prize patrol” on April Fool’s Day again this year, but it did not pull pranks or hand out peanut cans with exploding snakes. Rather, they traveled to seven different schools and district buildings to honor the fund’s 2013-14 award winners.

The Columbia Fund for Academic Excellence began in the 1979-80 school year and has recognized more than 200 educators, who are nominated by their peers and district parents. The fund was founded by Ray and Jeanne Lewis through an initial contribution and fundraising. The late Mr. Lewis was a local attorney and former Board of Education member. Mrs. Lewis, who accompanies the prize patrol on its yearly visits, is a former teacher.

“I have the best job,” Superintendent Chris Belcher said as he spoke to one of the honorees. “This is the best day of the year for me.”

On April 10 the seven honorees and their families attended the Columbia Fund for Academic Excellence banquet where they each received a \$1,500 cash award and an engraved silver tray.

THIS YEAR’S HONOREES ARE:

Outstanding Elementary Educator, Grades Pre-K - 2
Amy Schirmer, Alpha Hart Lewis Elementary School

Outstanding Elementary Educator, Grades 3-5
Becky Bond, Cedar Ridge Elementary School

Outstanding Middle School Educator
Kelsey Lock, Gentry Middle School

Outstanding Senior High Educator
Daniel Gammon, Battle High School

Outstanding Educator in a Specialized Area
Ann Baker, Smithton Middle School

Outstanding Beginning Teacher
Julie Ronzio, Paxton Keeley Elementary School

Outstanding Administrator
Chris Diggs, Director of Technology Services



Partners in Education: 30 Years of Partnerships



What started 30 years ago in Columbia Public Schools with nine charter business partners has grown to more than 250 businesses, as the district’s Partners in Education program continues to enrich the educational experiences of what is now generations of Columbia school children.

“The school district did not want it to be about hand-outs,” said Michelle Baumstark, Columbia Public Schools’ director of community relations. “It is a sharing of resources between schools and businesses. We tailor each partnership to the needs of the school and the business. There is no one-size-fits-all partnership.”

The program serves a five-fold purpose: To foster a better understanding of the public school system within the Columbia community; to strengthen and enhance the district’s programs; to create a climate

of involvement and interaction between organizations, businesses and schools; to provide students opportunities to develop attitudes and skills that enhance their success in the world of work and to improve achievement for all students.

Partnerships can range from community members coming to a school and interacting with students to students getting hands-on experience at a partner business.

“We have service projects and job shadowing that get the students out into the community,” Baumstark said. “Douglass High School has an on-site classroom at the Harry S. Truman Memorial Veterans’ Hospital where students can work for half a day and have half a day of class as well.”

The Roots N Blues N BBQ Blues in the Schools Foundation grew out of a partnership Grant Elementary School has with Boone County National Bank. When the bank was planning a recent anniversary celebration (which grew into the Roots’ N Blues’ N BBQ event) they worked with its Partner in Education, Grant, to bring blues music education into the school in conjunction with the event. The success of that program has spawned the foundation and now blues education is being extended to more schools across the district.

The nine charter members of the Partners in Education program are still involved, which “speaks to the longevity and benefits of the program” Baumstark believes. Those charter partners are: Landmark Bank, CenturyLink, Boone County National Bank, KOMU 8, Boone Hospital Center, MFA Inc., Commerce Bank, State Farm and Shelter Insurance. These and all Partners in Education were honored during the annual Partners In Education Week, May 5 – May 9.

COLUMBIA AREA CAREER CENTER'S CYBERPATRIOT TEAM PLACES FIRST IN MISSOURI

The team of **Michael Vu**, **Carson Vance**, **Justus Palmer**, **Fred Luetkemeier** and **Nishant Sinya** are the Missouri State Champions for the CyberPatriot Open Division competition. CyberPatriot is a national high school cyber defense competition designed to give hands-on exposure to the foundations of cybersecurity. Created by the Air Force Association to excite high school students about science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education, CyberPatriot teaches defensive means of fixing online vulnerabilities and hardening systems to cyberattack. The team is coached by **David Hopkins** at the Columbia Area Career Center.

RBHS SCIENCE OLYMPIAD TEAM TAKES FIRST PLACE AT REGIONALS

Congratulations to the Rock Bridge High School Science Olympiad team on its first-place finish at Regionals. Rock Bridge had two teams compete, and each team competed against five other high schools from Mid-Missouri. The RBHS "Gold" team took first-place and the "Green" team took fourth at the event. The RBHS Science Olympiad Team is coached by RBHS Chemistry teacher **Stephanie Harman**.

ROCK BRIDGE BASKETBALL COACH NAMED COACH OF THE YEAR

Rock Bridge High School girls' basketball coach **Jill Nagel** has been named the 2014 Russell Athletic/WBCA High School District Coach of the Year for District 5 by the Women's Basketball Coaches Association (WBCA). The announcement also names her as a finalist for the 2014 Russell Athletic/WBCA High School National Coach of the Year.

HOSA STATE LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE RESULTS

The 2014 Missouri HOSA (Health Occupations Students of America) State Leadership Conference was held on March 25 in Union, MO. Thirteen students from the Columbia Area Career Center HOSA Chapter qualified to compete at the National HOSA Leadership Conference to be held in Orlando, FL. To qualify, students had to place in the top three positions of their respective competition. Gold Medal winners are **Jenny Yao**/Medical Math, **Emma Briggs**/Medical Reading, **Marilise Stamps**/Nutrition, **Jack Gabel** / Transcultural Health Care, **Alex Komes**/Forensic Medicine and **Julia Hill**/Forensic Medicine. Silver Medal winners are **Jenna Liu**/Medical Spelling, **Danielle West**/Medical Reading, **Lisa Zhuang**/Healthy Lifestyles and **Jenny Zulovich**/Biotechnology. Bronze Medical winners are **Izzy Harrison**/Medical Reading, **Haley Benson**/EMT and **Hayley Johnson**/EMT.

CAREER CENTER STUDENTS RECOGNIZED

Jacob Taylor, a second-year Columbia Area Career Center (CACC) Construction Technology student and Hickman High School senior, was recently named Northeast/Central Missouri Region Career and Technical (CTE) Student of the Year. He was selected Regional Student of the Year from among all candidates nominated by public Missouri Career and Technology Centers throughout Northeast and Central Missouri. Senior CACC and Rock Bridge High School Digital Media student **Kristen Buster** and CACC and Hickman High School Marketing student **Kalei Wilson** were recognized as regional Exceptional CTE Students during the same award recognition process.

The regional CTE Student of the Year award process recognizes outstanding career and technical students for proven commitment to academics, career path and community. The purpose is to commend outstanding students who are pacesetters in their classes, student organizations, their communities and who exhibit personal character.

HICKMAN STUDENT WINS NATIONAL ORATORICAL COMPETITION

Ashwath Kumar, a senior at Hickman High School was named The American Legion's 77th National Oratorical Contest champion. He was awarded an \$18,000 college scholarship for his winning oration titled, "This Great House." Kumar competed against 53 contestants from across the country

and advanced through three rounds of intense competition to become crowned the 2014 Oratorical champion.

SMITHTON STUDENT NAMED GEOGRAPHIC BEE SEMIFINALIST

Tejazaditya Ajitkumar, an eighth grade student at Smithton Middle School, has been named a semifinalist in the 2014 Missouri Geographic Bee by the National Geographic Society. Tejazaditya earned his spot after competing at the school level and then taking a qualifying test, which was submitted to the National Geographic Society. Students with the top 100 scores in each state were invited to compete at the state level.

HICKMAN TEAM TAKES THIRD IN NATIONAL ETHICS COMPETITION

The Hickman High School Ethics Bowl Team, made up of students **Ben Zars**, **Eli Byerly-Duke** and **Dylan Hosmer-Quint**, placed third in the National High School Ethics Bowl competition. The competition, held on the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill campus, included a field of 18 regional winners from across the country. The National High School Ethics Bowl competition provides students with an ethical dilemma and challenges them to use critical thinking, civil discourse, collaboration and teamwork to develop a solution or ethical conclusion.

COLUMBIA STUDENTS SHOW OFF CULINARY SKILLS AT MISSOURI SKILLSUSA

Four Columbia Area Career Center culinary arts students shined at the recent state SkillsUSA competition. Results are: **Chormaic Sullivan** – 1st place Culinary Arts (RBHS Senior); **Austin Scoles** – 1st place Commercial Baking (RBHS Senior); **Bailey Lawson** – 2nd place Commercial Baking (RBHS Junior); **Jacob Ventrillo** – 5th place Culinary Arts (RBHS Junior). As first place finishers in their respective categories, Chormaic and Austin will go on to compete at the National SkillsUSA in June.

HICKMAN STUDENT EARNS PERFECT ACT SCORE

Wenzer Qin, a junior at Hickman High School, has earned a perfect 36 on her ACT exam. Out of 1.8 million students tested in 2013, only 1,162 earned the top score on the exam.

Dr. Nick Boren Retires



Dr. Nick Boren is joining a group of administrators who have announced their retirement at the end of the school year, as he will leave his post as Deputy Superintendent for Administration at the end of June.

After about 20 years spent at the South Callaway R-II School District, where he began as an agricultural instructor and left as superintendent, Boren came to Columbia Public Schools in 2007. His educational career lasted 29 years.

Boren's role as Deputy Superintendent for Administration saw him oversee the district's long-range facilities plan as well as nearly \$250 million in school and district improvements. He was also largely involved in transportation department safety and their transition to the three-tier bell schedule.

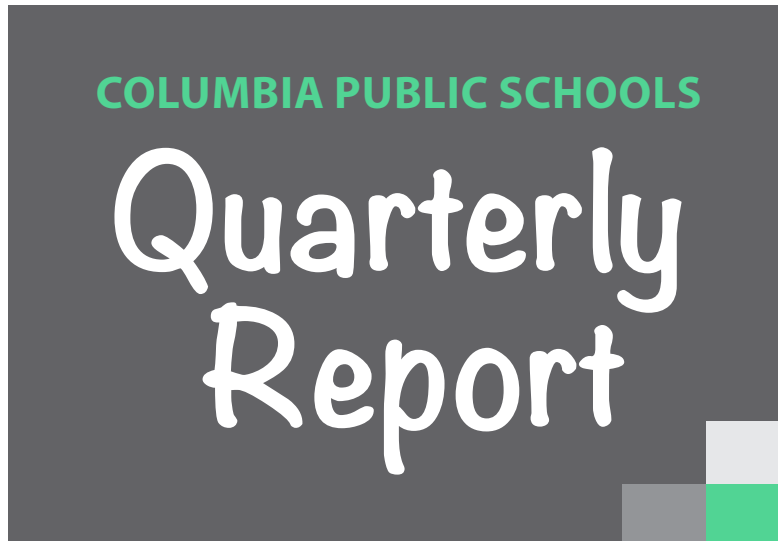
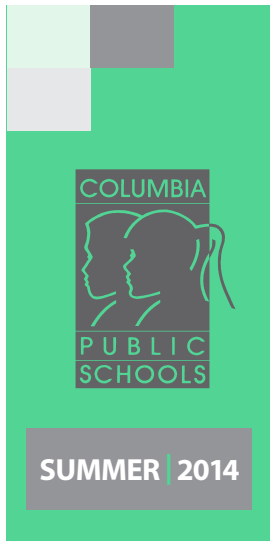
"It has been my distinct privilege to serve the students, faculty, staff and parents of this school district," Boren said.

Boren retires to his wife, Cynthia, sons Joshua and Zackary and daughter Chelsea.

2014-2015 School Year Calendar (K-12)

August 19	First day of classes: grades 1-12	January 28	Early dismissal for staff planning & collaboration
August 21	First day of classes for kindergarten	February 12	End of second trimester
September 1	Labor Day: school not in session	February 13	Teacher Collaboration Day: school not in session
September 29	Teacher Collaboration Day: school not in session	February 16	Presidents' Day: school not in session
November 4	Teacher Collaboration Day: school not in session	February 27	Parent/teacher conferences, school not in session
November 7	End of first trimester	March 23-27	Spring recess: school not in session
November 14	Parent/teacher conferences, school not in session	May 25	Memorial Day: school not in session
November 26-28	Thanksgiving vacation: school not in session	May 26	Early dismissal for staff planning & collaboration
December 19	End of first semester	June 3	Last day of classes
December 22-	Winter recess: school not in session		Early dismissal for staff planning & collaboration
January 1		June 8	First day of summer school 2015
January 2	Teacher Collaboration Day: school not in session	July 2	Last day of summer school 2015
January 19	Martin Luther King's birthday: school not in session		

Six snow days are built into the calendar (May 26-June 2). If the district uses fewer than six inclement weather days during the year, the unused days will be removed from the end of the school year. If the district uses exactly zero or exactly four inclement weather days, the district will consider taking May 2 as a holiday, so that the final day of school will not be a single early release day following the weekend.



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- STUDENTS COMMUNICATE WITH ASTRONAUT IN SPACE
- DR. CHRIS BELCHER RETIRES
- DR. SALLY BATH LYON RETIRES
- NEW SUPERINTENDENT FOR COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
- COLUMBIA VOTERS APPROVE BOND ISSUE
- COLUMBIA FUND FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE 2014 WINNERS
- PARTNERS IN EDUCATION: 30 YEARS OF PARTNERSHIPS
- NEWS YOU CAN USE
- DR. NICK BOREN RETIRES
- 2014-2015 SCHOOL YEAR CALENDAR

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