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★ SUMMER 2024 ★

## QUARTERLY CONNECTION

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# Solar eclipse event makes science fun

More than 250 people descended on Bethel Park on April 8th to witness the solar eclipse and enjoy fun learning activities organized by Columbia Public Schools' Columbia Aeronautics and Space Association (CASA).

CASA is a student-led, project-driven student organization through the Columbia Area Career Center with its learning space located at Hickman High School. Students fill leadership roles within the association as part of the program that replicates NASA technologies and experiments.

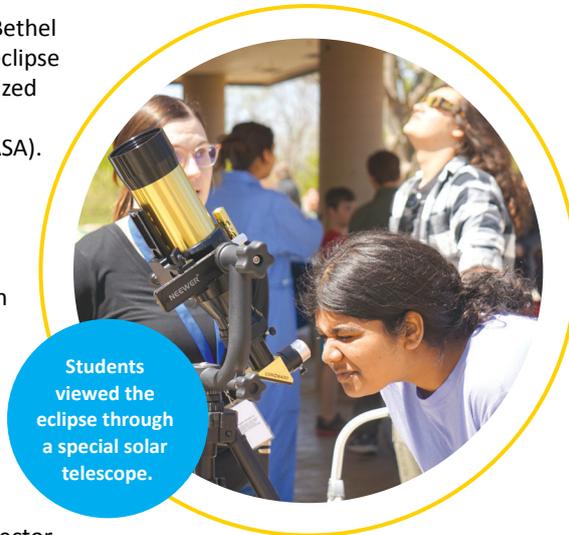
Hickman High School senior Alex Renoe, CASA mission director, and Hickman junior Nate Knarr, student director of CASA, organized the STEAM-focused event.

The event featured five learning stations all focused on STEAM activities, such as a strawberry DNA extraction experiment, making and launching rockets, programmable robotic dogs and of course, eclipse viewing.

The idea to host an event started with CASA Teacher Michael Merz who was excited about the pending eclipse and wanted to encourage students to plan something. He had come across a competition hosted by a St. Louis engineering and construction management firm, S. M. Wilson, designed to encourage community STEM events. Merz says he presented the opportunity to his students and Renoe, along with Knarr, stepped up to enter the contest. Their project was selected as one of the winners and they received funding to organize their eclipse STEAM event. Their goal was two-fold: to spread awareness of the CASA program throughout the community and to provide a fun, activity-driven way for students and the community to experience the solar eclipse.

Leading up to the event, teachers had the opportunity to learn about the eclipse and corresponding teaching resources during professional development sessions led by CPS Planetarium Director Meaghan Staelting.

"I led professional development sessions for teachers about eclipse resources they could use in the classroom," Staelting said, "such as the NASA Citizens Science Project, which enables collaborations between scientists and interested members of the public."



## NEW BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS

**Jeanne Snodgrass** has been re-elected and **Alvin Cobbins** has been elected to fill two seats on the Columbia Board of Education. This will be Snodgrass' second three-year term and Cobbins' first. Snodgrass says she is excited to continue the work that has been started. Cobbins says his focus will be on early childhood literacy and getting more parents and community members involved in the success of students.

The Board of Education also thanked **Karen Hayes** for her service. Hayes was selected in June 2023 to fill a one-year open seat on the board.



# Eclipse event continued

The NASA Citizens Science Project had several eclipse projects that students and the community could be involved with and was just one of the resources Stoelting shared.

In addition, Stoelting worked with middle and high school teachers to help them coordinate their classroom eclipse projects and says she also tailored many of the programs at the Planetarium this year to coincide with eclipse learning.

“Our fifth-grade planetarium show this year is all about the Sun-Earth-Moon relationship, including eclipses and phases of the moon,” Stoelting said. “This is part of 5th grade curriculum anyway, so tying in the eclipse was a natural fit.”

In fact, all classes that visited the planetarium this year got to learn more about the eclipse, as Stoelting included information and shows specific to the eclipse for all grade levels.

CASA students also engaged in specialized learning leading up the event, including a visit with Dr. Hussein Nassar, an engineer at the University of Missouri, to learn how origami and science connect. Specifically, Nassar taught CASA students how origami was used to fold up the James Webb telescope so it could fit inside a rocket.

Merz says the event was a success.

“We heard a lot of ‘wows and whoas’ as kids visited the different booths throughout the day,” said Knarr. “It was great seeing them learning science and having fun.”

“Not many people look at the sun through a telescope,” Stoelting said. “With a solar telescope, everything is black except the sun which is bright red. It was really awesome to get their reactions to the fact that they are actually viewing the sun.”

Renoë said her favorite thing about the event was the chance to engage kids, especially younger ones, in science. She describes seeing kids get excited about science and engineering as “very fulfilling”.

Knarr said striking a balance between education and fun was a highlight for him. “I hope they took away great memories of the eclipse and enjoyed the different science activities and eclipse learning.”



Students were excited and engaged during the event.



Students viewed the eclipse through specialty glasses provided by CASA.

**“ With a solar telescope, everything is black except the sun which is bright red. It was really awesome to get their reactions to the fact that they are actually viewing the sun. ”**

**Meaghann Stoelting, CPS Planetarium Director**

## PERFECT ACT SCORES

**Paris Fang**, Rock Bridge High School  
**Shubha Gautam**, Rock Bridge High School

## 2023 NATIONAL MERIT FINALISTS

**Catherine Fajen**, Hickman High School  
**Saathvik Kannan**, Hickman High School  
**Augustus Lookingbill**, Hickman High School  
**Charlotte Struckhoff**, Hickman High School

## MISSOURI SCHOLARS 100

**Paris Fang**, Rock Bridge High School  
**Shubha Gautam**, Rock Bridge High School  
**Saathvik Kannan**, Hickman High School  
**Charlotte Struckhoff**, Hickman High School  
**Annaliese Ferguson**, Battle High School (*Honorable Mention*)  
**Annaliese Wright**, Battle High School (*Honorable Mention*)

# News you can use



Hank Benter (left) & Luke Hayden (right) on the winners podiums at the MSHSAA State Wrestling Championships

## MSHSAA STATE WRESTLING CHAMPIONSHIPS

Junior **Hank Benter** (Hickman High School) won the MSHSAA Class 4 Individual Wrestling State Champion in the 113 lb. weight class. This is the third championship Benter has won. He won a state title last year in the 113 lb. weight class and two years ago in the 106 lb. weight class. Freshman **Luke Hayden** (Hickman High School) won the MSHSAA Class 4 Individual Wrestling State Champion in the 165 lb. weight class.

## MSHSAA STATE SWIMMING CHAMPION

**Macey Hansen** (Battle High School) won the MSHSAA Class 2 State Championship in the 500-yard freestyle. She swam the event in 4:51.43. During the preliminary competition held the day before the championship, she swam the 500 Freestyle in 4:50.71 which set a new state record.

## 2024 SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST OF THE YEAR

The Missouri Association of School Psychologists (MASP) named **Kristy Hayward**, school psychologist for New Haven and Cedar Ridge elementary schools, as the 2024 School Psychologist of the Year.



## NATIONAL AWARD RECOGNITION

**Midway Heights Elementary School** received national recognition for its model counseling program by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA). The school is one of 138 schools nationwide to be awarded the Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) designation for 2024.

## CERTIFICATE OF EXCELLENCE IN FINANCIAL REPORTING

**Columbia Public Schools** has been recognized for financial reporting excellence and transparency by the Association of School Business

Officials International's (ASBO). The district has been awarded the Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting Award (COE) for its 2023 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report. This award represents a significant achievement and reflects the district's commitment to transparency and high-quality financial reporting.

## U.S. PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLAR

Shubha Gautam (Rock Bridge High School) has been selected as a U.S. Presidential Scholar. Columbia Public Schools has one of the highest number of U.S. Presidential Scholars in the nation, with 24 students being selected for this honor to date. This year five CPS scholars were named candidates by the U.S. Department of Education based on specific criteria. Candidates were **Paris Fang**, **Shubha Gautam** and **Julia Kim Fang** of Rock Bridge High School and **Saathvik Kannan** and **Augustus Lookingbill** of Hickman High School.

## NATIONAL HISTORY DAY COMPETITION

Freshman **Janaija Kimbrough** (Battle High School) was invited by The State Historical Society of Missouri to showcase her National History Day project at the Missouri State Capitol in Jefferson City. Kimbrough won first place in the Missouri History Day competition last year as an 8th-grade EEE student at Lange Middle School, advancing her project to the National History Day competition held in Washington, D.C. in June 2023. Her exhibit highlighted the accomplishments of Dr. Daniel Hale Williams, the first Black American cardiologist, who performed one of the earliest successful open-heart surgeries, founded Provident Hospital in 1891, and co-founded the National Medical Association.



Janaija with her family and Representative David Tyson Smith



Janaija at the Missouri Senate podium with her family and teacher, Vanessa Kline

# Columbia Fund for Academic Excellence outstanding educator honorees

The Columbia Fund for Academic Excellence (CFAE) recognized seven Columbia Public Schools' educators for their outstanding teaching, leadership, and support for students.

This year's recipients join more than 250 CPS educators who have been recognized by CFAE since its inception in the 1979-80 school year. Each year, educators are selected from nominations submitted by parents and peers.

All honorees receive a cash award of \$1,500 as well as an engraved silver tray commemorating their achievement.

The fund, started by the late Ray and Jeanne Lewis, with a single contribution and has grown through extensive fundraising efforts. Ray Lewis was an attorney and served as a Board of Education member, and Jeanne Lewis was a teacher. Thanks to their initial efforts and the ongoing work of individuals, businesses and organizations, Columbia's best educators continue to be recognized annually for their contributions to young people.

## HICKMAN HIGH SCHOOL TEAM WINS NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL ETHICS BOWL

Hickman High School won the 11th Annual National High School Ethics Bowl (NHSEB). The NHSEB inspires and challenges high school students across the country to develop their ethical reasoning skills and engage in productive dialogue about complex ethical issues.



After winning the state championship in February, the Hickman team traveled to the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill to compete in the national competition. More than 4,000 students from nearly 400 schools across the country in (44) regional and (4) divisional competitions competed for a coveted seat at NHSEB's National Championship.

Team members are **Alex Fajen** (senior), **Clementine Buehler** (junior), **Surya Raghu** (junior), **Carly Christiansen** (sophomore), **Lorelei Hardin** (sophomore), **Bailey Moore** (sophomore), and **Atticus Radcliffe** (sophomore). Coaches are **Caysea Dachroeden** and **Lou Kraxberger**.



**Alyssa Mincke**  
Ridgeway Elementary School  
*Outstanding Elementary Educator*  
Grades PreK-2

**Amanda Kinkead**  
Cedar Ridge Elementary School  
*Outstanding Elementary Educator*  
Grades 3-5



**Cathy Ferrell**  
Lange Middle School  
*Outstanding Middle School Educator*

**Hannah Nandor**  
Battle High School  
*Outstanding High School Educator*



**Shelly Fair**  
Director of English Learners & Migrant Education  
*Outstanding Administrator*

**Beau Roseblock**  
Jefferson Middle School  
*Outstanding Beginning Teacher*



**Hannah Vonder Haar**  
West Boulevard Elementary School  
*Outstanding Educator in a Specialized Area*

# School Year Calendar

## AUGUST 19

Jump Start Day (grades 6 & 9)

## AUGUST 20

First Day of School (grades PreK-12)



## SEPTEMBER 2

Labor Day (school not in session)

## SEPTEMBER 23

Teacher Work Day (school not in session)

## OCTOBER 2-4

Teacher Work Days (school not in session)

## NOVEMBER 1, 4-5

Teacher Work Days (school not in session)

## NOVEMBER 15

Teacher Work Day (school not in session)  
End of Parent-Teacher conferences (elementary/middle school)

## NOVEMBER 27 - 29

Thanksgiving Break (school not in session)

## DECEMBER 23 - JANUARY 2

Winter Break (school not in session)

## JANUARY 3

Teacher Work Day (school not in session)

## JANUARY 20

Martin Luther King Jr. Day (school not in session)

## FEBRUARY 14

Teacher Work Day (school not in session)

## FEBRUARY 17

President's Day (school not in session)

## FEBRUARY 28

Teacher Work Day (school not in session)  
End of Parent-Teacher conferences (elementary/middle school)

## MARCH 24 - 28

Spring Break (school not in session)

## APRIL 11

Teacher Work Day (school not in session)

## MAY 23

Last Day of School (2.5 hour early dismissal)

## MAY 23

Douglass High School Graduation (A.M.)  
Battle High School Graduation (P.M.)

## MAY 24

Rock Bridge High School Graduation (A.M.)  
Hickman High School Graduation (P.M.)

## JUNE 2-27

Summer School

## JUNE 19

Juneteenth (summer school not in session)

# Construction updates

## NEW SOUTHWEST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The design phase of the new elementary school on the southwest side of Columbia is now complete. Construction is scheduled to start this summer. The project is expected to be completed in time to welcome students in the fall of 2026.

## RUSSELL BOULEVARD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The new wing at Russell Boulevard Elementary school is scheduled for completion in the fall of 2024. This additional space will bring the school's total student capacity up to 650 students.

## BOONE COUNTY NATURE SCHOOL

The new learning center at the Boone County Nature School is nearing completion as builders work through the final punch list. The space contains four classrooms as well as common areas and is scheduled for completion in June, with a dedication planned for August.

## COLUMBIA AREA CAREER CENTER

The Columbia Area Career Center renovation and addition is ongoing. Scheduled completion is fall of 2025 and will provide approximately 15,000 square feet of additional space. As part of the project, each classroom will see some sort of upgrade, such as fresh paint and new flooring, while a significant amount of the building will be brand new space. The new modern design includes student enterprise zones, enabling students to engage in commercial endeavors that align with their curriculum.



Russell Boulevard Elementary School