Vol. 1, Issue 1

BCSD BEACON

Budget Forums



Two public forums are scheduled for educators, parents, and community members to learn more about the school district budget being developed by the Beaufort County Board of Education for the 2025-26 school year.

The first forum will be Bluffton High School at 6 p.m., Wednesday, April 30. The second will be at Beaufort High School at 6 p.m., Thursday, May 1.

Participants at each forum will hear a presentation on the budget and have a chance to work in small groups to explore various areas of the budget. Participants will be able to share their discussions and suggestions.

"We recognize that input from our key stakeholders is an important part of the budget process," said Superintendent Frank Rodriguez. "We look forward to hearing from our community members, parents, and employees at our public budget forums."

NEW BOE Members

The Beaufort County Board of Education welcomed its new members in January.
Representing District 9, Beaufort County native Leah Frazier is a former educator with over a decade of teaching experience. She holds advanced degrees in education from the University of South Carolina and The Citadel.

Representing District 1, Pastor Issac Gordon is a community advocate with a career in transportation, having served as a bus transportation area supervisor in Bluffton and safety officer in Summerville. He most recently served the students of Beaufort County as a bus driver.

Representing District 6, Alphonso Small Jr. is self-employed and a former law enforcement officer who grew up in Hampton, SC. He holds a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice/Sociology from Claflin University.



In addition to the three new Board members, reelected member Ingrid Boatright was sworn in for a new term.

Representing District 7, a relatively new member, Dr. David Carr was sworn in to the BCSD Board late last year when former Board member Dr. Rachel Wisnefski left the district. Currently a lecturer at Georgia Southern University, Carr had a 26-year teaching career at Ohio University and holds advanced degrees in education from Marshall and Virginia Tech universities.

The Board also elected its officers for 2025: Col. Richard Geier as chair, Carlton Dallas as vice chair, and Ingrid Boatright as secretary.



May River High School CTE Addition Groundbreaking

School officials, students, Board of Education members, and community supporters celebrated the beginning of construction on a new Career and Technology Education (CTE) addition, one of the district's construction projects funded through the bond referendum approved by county voters in November 2023.

The 20,000 square foot addition extends the existing CTE wing to the east, doubling the footprint. In addition to three classrooms for future emerging technologies, new labs include advanced automotive, welding and advanced welding and are infused with innovative robotic technologies. The Air Force JROTC portion of the addition includes two connected classrooms and storage. The existing courtyard will be renovated to provide a concrete marching area for the JROTC program.

"This project is made possible from the referendum approved by voters in November of 2023," said Superintendent Frank Rodriguez. He expressed gratitude for having significant community support in support of students. "This new addition will support expanding CTE programs such as welding, automotive, nursing, and robotics to provide students the tools and skills needed to succeed in the modern workforce."

Sumpter, S.C. based Thompson Turner is the contractor for the renovations and the designer of record is Quackenbush Architects based in Columbia, S.C.

All referendum projects and expenditures are being independently monitored by the Citizen-Led Oversight Committee.

BCSD Board members, administrators, and students break ground on the new May River High School CTE addition. Supporting video footage: https://youtu.be/X6juLLeKFzQ



January STOM

January's Student of the Month character trait was "perseverance". Perseverance is defined as pursuing worthy objectives with determination and patience while exhibiting fortitude when confronted with failure. For southern Beaufort County, the January student of the month was Liah Sada Ortiz, a first-grade student at Hilton Head Island School for the Creative Arts.

Liah was nominated by her teacher, Ms. Schmit, who shared that Liah is new to the country this year and always preserves to do her best and try English while learning new subjects and social interactions. She went from knowing no English and only speaking in Spanish to now always speaking in English. She has worked so hard and always tries her best.



February STOM

February's Student of the Month traits were "honesty" and "integrity".
Honesty is defined as telling the truth, admitting wrongdoing. Integrity is defined as a firm adherence to a code of especially moral or artistic values.

For southern Beaufort County, the February student of the month was Riley Quinn, a fourth-grade student at Daufuskie Island Elementary. Riley was nominated by her teacher, Ms. Engram.

Ms. Engram shared that Riley is the type of student that exemplifies the character trait of integrity by always allowing her conscience to be her guide both in the classroom and with her peers. Her ability to choose what is right over what is easy can be seen through her actions each day. Riley's true and honest efforts are given to her teachers along with every assignment she turns in. She works each day to do what she knows is right, even when no one is watching.

Career & Technical Education

Students from Beaufort Jasper Academy for Career Excellence (ACE) recently participated in the annual SkillsUSA competition, bringing home several awards.

The SkillsUSA Championships is a national competition that showcases the technical skills and career readiness of students in Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. It is the largest skill-based competition in the country, bringing together thousands of students from across the U.S. to compete in hands-on challenges that reflect real-world job scenarios.

Students participate in over 100 skill-based events across industries such as automotive technology, welding, healthcare, cybersecurity, culinary arts, robotics, and more. Competitions start at the local and state levels, with top performers advancing to the National Leadership & Skills Conference (NLSC), held annually in June.

SCAN ME! »

Hilton Head Island High School "Topping Out" Ceremony







Hilton Head Island High School recently celebrated a key milestone with a topping out ceremony, marking the completion of the building's structural framework. A symbolic tree was placed atop the highest point, signifying the project's safe progress, prosperity, and good fortune.

Construction workers, project stakeholders, BCSD Board members, staff, students, and, administrators signed a steel beam, celebrating the collective effort behind the project. The ceremony is a traditional cause for celebration, as the school prepares to open its doors in August 2026, bringing a new educational space to the Hilton Head Island community.

Scholastic Arts & Writing Awards

Founded in 1923, the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards are the nation's longest-running, most prestigious educational initiative supporting student achievement in the visual and literary arts. The program has an impressive legacy of being the first to acknowledge creative talent and is today's largest source of scholarships for creative teens. The district's top award-winners – Gold Key recipients – advance to judging at the national level. Silver Key works are judged to demonstrate exceptional ability, and Honorable Mention works are judged to show great skill and potential.

Gold Key winners from Bluffton High were Alice Alexander for "Sculpting Girlhood" (portfolio-art) and Kaia Duffy for "Spanish Moss Forest" (drawing and illustration).



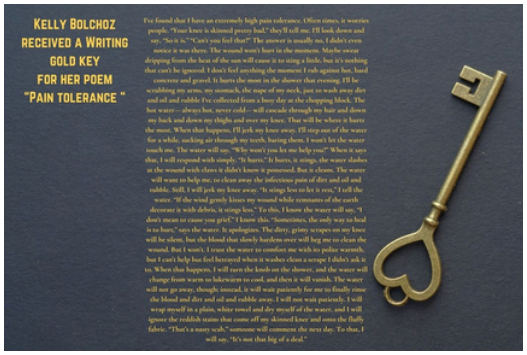
Kaia Duffy, BLHS *Spanish Moss Forest*

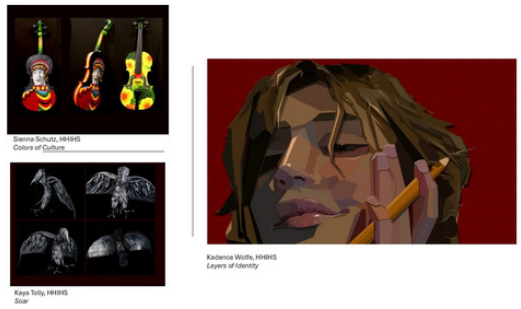
Alice Alexander, *Sculpting Girlhood*

Gold Key winners from Hilton Head High were Maeve Dolan for "Fading" (drawing and illustration); Charlotte Hussey for "The Look" (photography); Abbey Pratt for "Dancing Through Life" (photography); Suleimy Santos for "Rosa Con Vida" (fashion); Sienna Schutz for "Colors of Culture" (mixed media); Kaya Tolly for "Industry's Steel Grasp" (mixed media) and "Soar" (sculpture); Kadence Wolfe for "Layers of Identity" (digital art); and Kelly Bolchoz for her poem "Pain Tolerance".



Suleimy Santos, HHIHS
Rosa Con Vida

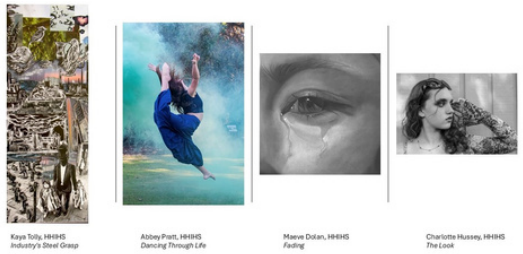




Sienna Schutz, HHIHS
Colors of Culture

Kaya Tolly, HHIHS
Soar

Kadence Wolfe, HHIHS
Layers of Identity



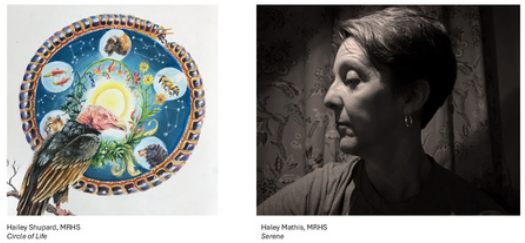
Kaya Tolly, HHIHS
Industry's Steel Grasp

Abbey Pratt, HHIHS
Dancing Through Life

Maeve Dolan, HHIHS
Fading

Charlotte Hussey, HHIHS
The Look

Gold Key winners from May River High were Haley Mathis for "Serene" (photography) and Hailey Shupard for "The Circle of Life" (painting).



Hailey Shupard, MRHS
Circle of Life

Haley Mathis, MRHS
Serene

Youth in Government





Beaufort County School District schools traditionally have an excellent Youth in Government extracurricular program, and each year those students make a strong showing at the annual Youth in Government Conference in Columbia.

Bluffton High School YIG brought home the following awards:

- Brendan Halas-elected 2025 Speaker of the House
- William Zendzian- 2025 Secretary of State
- House Bill 1: "An Act to Incentivize Grocery Stores to Carry More Locally Grown Products" written by Luke Hirota, Kevin Rivas, and Joseph Doan won Outstanding Bill AND were successful in overriding the governor's veto.
- Warren Facenda was awarded Outstanding Statesmen in the House of Representatives
- Chloe Wheeler was awarded Outstanding Lobbyist

Several bills were passed and signed by the governor proposed by the following students:

- Tommy Cleveland and Graydon Arnold
- Jack Marshall and Wyatt Sigg
- Tamyra Bolden and Ellis Middleton
- Emma McCullom and Alexis Johns

May River High School's Braeden Mancini won Outstanding Lobbyist at the conference.

Athletics and Winter Sports Awards



May River High School Girls golf team are State Champions!



Bluffton High School's Boys and Girls track teams at Bluffton High School were crowned the 2024 Class 4A State Champions.



May River High School Wrestling State Champ



Over the summer, H.E. McCracken Middle School Wrestling Coach George Dixon was inducted into the National Wrestling Hall of Fame for a "Lifetime of Service". The Lifetime of Service award is given in recognition of years of dedication to the development of leadership and citizenship in the youth through the sport of wrestling.



Bailee Gibson received the middle school grl's Basketball Player of the Year award. Gibson plays for Bluffton Middle School.



Abraham "Tony" Bruin received the middle school Boys Basketball Coach of the Year award. Bruin coaches for Bluffton Middle School.



Joann Doctor received the middle school Girls basketball Coach of the Year award. Doctor coaches for Bluffton Middle School.



Blake Bishop received the middle school Girls Basketball Coaches Choice Coach of the Year award. Bishop coaches at River Ridge Academy.



Terrius Dawson received the middle school Boys basketball Player of the Year award. Dawson plays basketball for Bluffton Middle School.

Middle School Girls Basketball:

- **Coach of the Year: Joann Doctor – Bluffton Middle School**
- **Player of the Year: Bailee Gibson – Bluffton Middle School**
- **Coaches Choice Coach of the Year: Blake Bishop – River Ridge Academy**

Middle School Boys Basketball:

- **Coach of the Year: Abraham "Tony" Bruin – Bluffton Middle School**
- **Player of the Year: Terrius Dawson – Bluffton Middle School**
- **Coaches Choice Coach of the Year: Gerald Wright – Whale Branch Middle School**



Gerald White received the middle school Boys Basketball Coaches Choice Coach of the Year award. White coaches for Whale Branch Middle School.