

CONNECTION

Summer Edition | ISSUE NO. 24

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Park Hill School District

Park Hill *CONNECTION* goes to every household in the Park Hill School District.

Thank you for your support of our community schools.

On the cover:

Lilliana Beyer (LEAD) receiving her diploma at Park Hill South High School graduation ceremony



This year, we've tackled some big tasks that include instituting new electronic personal device practices, adding school protection specialists at our elementary schools, opening a new elementary school and opening two beautiful athletic, band, theater and common space facilities at both Park Hill High School and Park Hill South High School. We have more facility upgrades and competitive staff salaries coming in the future thanks to the passing of Propositions G+O in April. Gratitude abounds!

I hope you take some time this summer to rest and recharge. We'll be preparing our schools for our students and staff returning in the fall. And we'll be continuing to feel gratitude for all that we get to do in serving our community.

Straight from the Superintendent

What a school year! So many accomplishments to celebrate! As we've celebrated nearly 900 high school graduates this school year, we've gotten to see debate winners, a senior getting her pilot's license, state champions, our first ever girls flag football team, our first ever boys high school volleyball teams, business and marketing student leaders, student internships across our city, aspiring educators from our high school student cohorts coming back to teach in Park Hill after their college graduations and more.

Each year I have the privilege of helping send our graduates off to their next adventures after high school. As I shake hands on stage with our graduates, I see their accomplishments and their hope for the future. I know we have prepared them well.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael J. Kimbrel". The script is fluid and cursive.

Dr. Mike Kimbrel
Superintendent

Welcome to the Connection!

Connection is a publication of the Park Hill School District, distributed quarterly, without charge, to patrons within the Park Hill School District boundaries.

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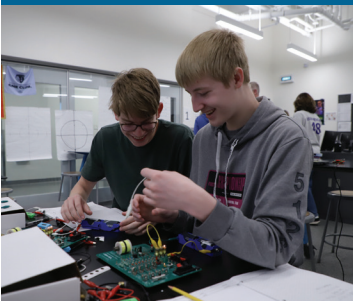
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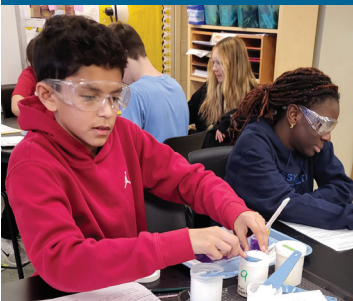
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WALDEN MIDDLE SCHOOL



Graduation

2025

The world was still off balance when the Class of 2025 entered high school. They learned to navigate new expectations, shifting routines and a high school experience that looked different from what they imagined. But over time, they found their rhythm. They grew in confidence, and just as importantly, they grew in character

— learning what it means to show up, adapt and stay true to themselves.

As our nearly 900 graduates start their next adventures, they're stepping forward with a sense of purpose and identity, ready to take on what's next, on their own terms. We could not be more #ParkHillProud of them.

Park Hill High School

The Park Hill High School Class of 2025 graduated at Hy-Vee Arena on May 17. From uncertain beginnings in 2021 to the confident voices at graduation, the class showed resilience, determination and growth.

Foreign exchange students Safiria Acanfora and Laiva Arthiyatri led the Pledge of Allegiance, embodying courage and adaptability. Student speakers Maryam Altaie and Karis Barton reflected on lessons learned — not just from textbooks, but from the journey itself. Class Valedictorian Emaan Arshad reminded classmates to be patient with themselves, noting how far they've come since 2021. Class President Brooklyn Bronston-Byrd reminded her classmates that the journey from childhood to adulthood isn't always easy. Still, you always end up at the right destination.



Principal Dr. Brad Kincheloe spoke of the many decisions — both large and small — that brought these students to graduation day, and the many more decisions ahead. “This is an outstanding class,” Kincheloe said. “They are great friends, great students and great Trojans.”

Throughout the ceremony, students were recognized for achievements in music, art, drama, debate, athletics and more. This was clearly a class of talent and tenacity.

As they enter the next chapter, their shared story remains one of character, courage and the promise of what's next.

Park Hill South High School

On May 19, Park Hill South's Class of 2025 was reminded that life is made up of chapters — and every moment, big or small, helps write the story of who they are.

Senior Class Vice President Macy Strobel encouraged her classmates to slow down and find meaning in the small things while STUCO President Jaelyn Woodley



reminded her classmates that they are the authors of their future and every chapter matters.

National Merit Scholar Avery Swanson spoke of navigating challenges and embracing change while Senior Class Secretary Rose Lagergren reminded the class to learn, fail, grow and keep moving forward.

The Class of 2025 chose Kirk Henry as the faculty speaker, and Coach Henry brought humor and heartfelt advice, sharing his top 10 lessons for life. Most importantly, he assured graduates that they will be remembered and loved — especially in their corner of Platte County, home of Park Hill South.

Celebrating his first graduation at Park Hill South, Principal Dr. Corey Willich praised the class for their kindness. “Chase your opportunities boldly,” he said, “and remember it matters how you treat people along the way. The world is waiting for you. It needs your kindness and humility.”



Throughout the evening, many achievements were celebrated across academics, extracurriculars and athletics, including the presentation of the valedictorian's medal to Derek Wurzer, the class flag designed by Eva Broksas and recognition of the class artwork that reflected the spirit of the graduating class.

As South's Class of 2025 closes this chapter, they are ready to write the next — boldly, kindly and with the promise of many new stories to come.



PH: What's going through your mind as your high school career ends?

Karis: I am definitely feeling all the different emotions as the year is coming to an end. I am sad to be leaving my friends and teachers that I became really close with these past four years. I will definitely miss eating lunch outside on the nice days, being with my Community Time Mentor for an hour every day, and seeing my friends. But I am also excited for the next chapter in my life and all of the new people I will get to meet and the new opportunities that will be presented to me.

PH: What's something about high school that totally surprised you — in a good way or not?

K: I was very surprised about all of the off campus learning opportunities I was able to participate in. Whether it was a class field trip, being a Park Hill student ambassador at Real World Learning or even attending different internships, I was out of the traditional classroom more than I thought I would have been. There were many opportunities I got to do especially my Junior and Senior year.

PH: Were there any activities or clubs outside the classroom that helped shape who you are today?

K: I was a three-sport athlete every year throughout high school. I participated in volleyball in the fall, swim in the winter, and soccer in the spring. Each of these sports helped shape me into the person I am today. These sports help me develop my leadership skills through camps, working with my teammates and pushing myself harder. They also showed me what I was capable of. There were many days that I felt I couldn't accomplish what my coaches were asking of me but through hard work and trust put into my coaches, I was able to accomplish anything my coaches asked of me and kept getting better. I also participated in LEADership, the Student Council at LEAD, where I was fortunate to hold an executive position sophomore through senior year. Being a member of LEADership allowed me to go and talk to eighth graders when they were deciding which high school they wanted to attend, help plan and participate in our annual Bags Boo Bash (cornhole tournament) and show new families around the building. These opportunities developed my public speaking and teamwork skills.

PH: If you could go back in time and give your freshman-year self one piece of advice, what would it be?

K: I would tell freshman me to trust the process. Between sports, difficult classes and other clubs, trusting the process will make it all worth it in the end. There will be days where you want to give up and stop trying but those are the days you have to try harder and trust more. It might seem glum that the opportunity will get better but, if you trust in the process it will work out the way it is supposed to.

PH: What's next for you — and how do you feel about stepping into that next chapter?

K: I am very excited to be in the honors college next year at the University of Arkansas where I will be studying supply chain management in the Walton College of Business. I feel ready for the next step in my life. I know that my teachers and parents have taught me all I need to know to be able to succeed in what's coming next.



PH: What's going through your mind as your high school career ends?

Boston: As my high school career comes to an end, I feel a mix of excitement, nostalgia and nervousness. I'm proud of everything I've accomplished and grateful for the memories and friendships I've made. At the same time, I'm looking ahead, ready to face new challenges, meet new people and start the next chapter of my life.

PH: What's something about high school that totally surprised you — in a good way or not?

B: Something that totally surprised me about high school was how quickly time passed. At first, it felt like four years would last forever, but looking back, it flew by. I didn't expect to grow so much as a person or to form such strong connections with people I hadn't even noticed in freshman year.

PH: Were there any activities or clubs outside the classroom that helped shape who you are today?

B: Being on the basketball, volleyball and the new flag football team this year helped me grow as a teammate, leader and athlete. Each sport challenged me in different ways, teaching me discipline, resilience and how to support others on and off the court or field. These sports teams also introduced me to so many amazing girls, many of whom have become close friends. Outside of sports, being involved in TARKUS, NHS and the A+ program allowed me to build school spirit, give back to my community and stay committed to academics and service—shaping me into a more well-rounded and responsible person.

PH: If you could go back in time and give your freshman-year self one piece of advice, what would it be?

B: If I could go back and give my freshman-year self one piece of advice, it would be to take more risks and not be afraid to step out of my comfort zone. Some of my best experiences came from trying something new, even when it felt intimidating at first. Taking those chances helped me grow, build confidence and create memories I'll never forget.

PH: What's next for you — and how do you feel about stepping into that next chapter?

K: Next, I'm heading to Northwest Missouri State University to play basketball, which I am very excited about. I'm still deciding between studying business or becoming a speech therapist, but I'm looking forward to exploring both fields and finding the path that feels right for me. I'm excited for this new chapter, knowing it will challenge me both academically and athletically, and I can't wait to see where it leads!



PH: What's going through your mind as your high school career ends?

Bekale: As my high school career ends, one thing I can't stop thinking about is how fast it all went. All those late nights, the laughs in the hallways, those moments when I thought it would never end. In the end, I'm proud of who I've become, but in the back of my mind there's a quiet little fear of leaving behind everything that's been familiar for so long. More than anything, I will be holding onto the people and memories that made it feel like home.

PH: What's something about high school that totally surprised you — in a good way or not?

B: Something that totally surprised me about high school was how much I changed. Not just my interests and styles, but how I see the world. High school is filled with different perspectives of the world. I came in thinking I had everything figured out, but throughout my time in high school, the experiences, challenges, friends, and even failures, pushed me to grow in ways I never expected.

PH: Were there any activities or clubs outside the classroom that helped shape who you are today?

B: Yes, I did a couple of sports, soccer, track and a little bit of basketball. Even though I stopped playing, they taught me a lot—discipline, accountability and teamwork. It taught me how to balance everything with school, sports, work, friends and family. It wasn't always easy, but those everyday moments taught me a lot.

PH: If you could go back in time and give your freshman-year self one piece of advice, what would it be?

B: If I could go back in time, I'd tell my freshman self to never stress about anything that is out of his control. To not stress about fitting in and focus more on being myself. The right people will come, and the pressure you feel now won't matter as much as you think. Just be kind to others and especially yourself. You're growing more than you even realize.

PH: What's next for you — and how do you feel about stepping into that next chapter?

K: My next step is college! Committed to Missouri State University to study civil engineering. To be honest, I'm excited, but I'm also a little scared. I mean, who wouldn't be? There's this sense of freedom and possibility, but also with that comes responsibility. Still, I know that I've made it this far with similar fears before. I'm hopeful and open to whatever comes next, because I know God's got me.



Superintendent's Student Advisory Council: Student Voice in Action

Over the past three years, the Superintendent's Student Advisory Council has played a critical role in shaping school policy and priorities in Park Hill. These student leaders from our middle and high schools have provided valuable input on everything from academics and school culture to safety and facility design.

Academic Growth:

Students analyzed 2023-2024 academic data and shared reflections on strengths and areas for growth. Their insights gave administrators a clearer picture of how students interpret their own achievement data.

Cell Phone Use:

Middle and high school students explored the pros and cons of phone-free schools. After reviewing current policies and national research, they led discussions around what's working and what needs to change. Their feedback contributed to the formation of a formal committee now reviewing high school policies.

Belonging and Safety:

Students studied survey data about belonging and school culture, using those results to open conversations about school safety and ways to foster inclusive, supportive environments.

Park Hill 2034 Planning:

As part of the district's long-range facilities plan, students reviewed community feedback and collaborated directly with architects on design elements for both high schools. Their suggestions led to real design changes in key areas like gymnasiums, weight rooms, atriums and entryways. They also helped prioritize projects for the next decade — ensuring student voices are reflected in future plans.

In Park Hill, student input is more than welcome — it's part of the process. Know a middle or high school student who wants to share their voice? We'll be opening the application process in August on our website. Scan the QR code to learn more.





ANGELINE WASHINGTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

R I B B O N C U T T I N G C E R E M O N Y

Students and their families joined staff at our newest elementary school, Angeline Washington Elementary, for a celebratory ribbon cutting in May! Families and guests then had the opportunity to tour the school, meet the staff and explore the amenities. Welcome home, Owls!



Park Hill Celebrates Success Around our District

These are just a few of the awards and accolades Park Hill staff and students have received recently. Visit our website to catch up on the latest honors.

ALA Emerging Leader

We are #ParkHillProud of Jessica Grider, library media specialist at Park Hill High School, who was accepted into the prestigious American Library Association Emerging Leaders program. This highly competitive leadership program connects library professionals from across the United States and Canada, fostering collaboration, networking and engagement in library advocacy.



Girls Swim and Dive State Champions - Again!



We are #ParkHillProud of Park Hill South's Girls Swim and Dive Team who won back-to-back state championships! The girls were also the first team to win all three relays since 2008. The 200 freestyle relay set the all-time state record with a time of 1:36.08.

Along with the state champion relays, they had three individual state champions with Natalie Dunaway winning the 50 and 100 Freestyle races and Lizzie Landuyt winning the 100 backstroke.

National Merit Finalists

Congratulations to our six National Merit Finalists! We are #ParkHillProud of recent Park Hill High School graduates Tristan Erickson and Collin Peterson and Park Hill South recent graduates Gavin Fritts, Zachary Hilzinger, Alex Smith and Avery Swanson!

They are among 15,000 finalists eligible for nearly \$26 million in National Merit Scholarships to be awarded.





Academic All-Americans

Congratulations to the outstanding students from both Park Hill and Park Hill South who earned Academic All-American honors from the National Speech and Debate Association—an achievement awarded to fewer than 1% of students nationwide.

From Park Hill High School's Talking Trojans: Juniors Olivia Kennedy and Tasha Sherman, and recent graduate Jack Unsell.

From Park Hill South: Juniors Benjamin Cat, Jonah Hicks, Roberto Shepherd, Henry VanAsselt and recent graduate Avery Swanson.

Missouri Scholars 100 Class of 2025

We are #ParkHillProud of Avyam Bansal and Leah Helm from Park Hill High School, and Hannah Petersen and Zachary Hilzinger from Park Hill South! These four outstanding students earned spots in the Missouri Scholars 100 Class of 2025, recognized for their academic excellence, leadership and impact on their school communities.



Middle Level StuCo Member of the Year

Congratulations to Walden Middle School's Ben Turley! He received the 2024-2025 Middle Level StuCo Member of the Year Award from the Missouri Association of Student Councils (MASC).



Schools of Excellence

We are #ParkHillProud of English Landing Elementary and Lakeview Middle Schools for being recognized as AVID Schools of Excellence. Out of 8,000 schools nationwide, only 45 earned this honor — and two of them are right here in Park Hill!

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Park Hill Highlight

A tree that traveled aboard the Orion spacecraft in 2022 is now taking root at Lakeview Middle School. The Artemis Moon Tree arrived thanks to Seventh Grade Science Teacher Kari Rich, who led a two-year application process to bring the tree to the Northland.

For more moments like this, be sure to follow our social media channels on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter (X) and YouTube.

