Spring 2025

the Buzz

Highlights from SCSDB Hornet's Nest



Their joyous faces look up, as graduates sail their caps upward to the family members and SCSDB staff watching from the balcony above in Walker Hall. This is a beloved and much anticipated tradition.

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Zoey Blackman (6th grade), Cammie Lowe (10th grade), Kendriyana Brown (senior), Zeaveon Washington (8th grade), and Kenzie Childress (7th grade) at Dorm Wars.

Distributed to the parents of students currently enrolled at SCSDB, parents of students receiving outreach services, the SCSDB Board of Commissioners, and the SCSDB Foundation Board of Trustees.

Editor:
Dorothy Bevill

Editor/Photographer:
Logen Belmont

Graphics Manager/Photographer:
Jeannie Harmon

Special thanks to **Kaylee Ellison (11th grade)**, **Yakera Martin (11th grade)**, **Cammie Lowe (10th grade)** and each department for photographs.

School for the Deaf and the Blind

www.scsdb.org
864-585-7777 • 1-888-447-2732
info@scsdb.org
355 Cedar Springs Road,
Spartanburg, SC 29302-4699

South Carolina School for the Deaf and the Blind

Dear Friends,

We began our year with a focus on presuming competence—the intrinsic belief that our students are highly capable individuals who will grow and thrive with the appropriate supports. Throughout the year, the Buzz has highlighted countless examples of student achievement in academics, clubs, fine arts, athletics, employability/work skills, and social-emotional learning. I hope you have enjoyed learning about our students and programs!

As we close out this year and prepare for 2025-2026, I wanted to share some important leadership changes that directly impact our campus schools and students. Mrs. Kristi Harding, director of education programs, is retiring after a long career in special education. She is looking forward to living in Travelers Rest and spending time with her husband, children, and 13 grandchildren!

Valerie Feiling, current principal at the School for the Blind, will be starting her new role as Executive Director of Education Programs. Mrs. Feiling will provide oversight to the three schools on campus and the Applied Academic Center and will remain very much present for all of our students and staff.

Tiffany Hopkins is joining SCSDB as our new Director of Special Education Services. Ms. Hopkins has served as a special education teacher, assistant principal, and most recently as the Director of Special Services in Anderson County. She brings a strong understanding of advocacy, special education compliance, and instructional practices—we are thrilled to have her join our team!

Peter Kosko Ocampo is the new Principal of the School for the Blind. Mr. Kosko Ocampo has served as a classroom teacher, building administrator, and most recently as the Director of Exceptional Student Education in Rock Hill. He demonstrates a strong focus on equity, instructional excellence, and building meaningful partnerships with students, families, staff, and community members. Welcome, Mr. Kosko Ocampo!

Finally, please enjoy this very special edition of the Buzz, in which we celebrate our 2025 graduates—we are so excited to see what the future holds for each of them!

My best,

Jolene Madison

Jolene L. Madison
President, SCSDB





ROV Competition

The 4th Annual ROV Underwater Robotics Competition: Mission Coral Restoration was held at SCSDB in March.

Left photo: Seven Franklin (10th grade) and Manny Geronimo Marcos (10th grade) preparing to submerge their ROV into the pool during competition.

Right photo: We're so proud of Azaria Chalk (8th grade) and Victoria Raleigh (11th grade) who received the Sportsmanship Award! The duo works together on setting up their ROV to compete.



School for the Blind GRADUATES



Felipe Canabal-Martinez • Greenville

Felipe earned his Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) certificate through SCSDB's Applied Academic Center (AAC). He plans to attend Greenville Technical College. Felipe is inspired by the words of John Locke who said, "Happiness is a capacity of the mind and not a condition of circumstances," highlighting Felipe's belief in the power of mindset and determination.



Iris Hare • Columbia

Iris received the School for the Blind Athlete of the Year Award. During her time at SCSDB, she was a valued member of the varsity goalball, basketball, and cheer teams. Additionally, Iris served with the Leo Club, demonstrating her commitment to community service and leadership. She plans to pursue a career in manufacturing.

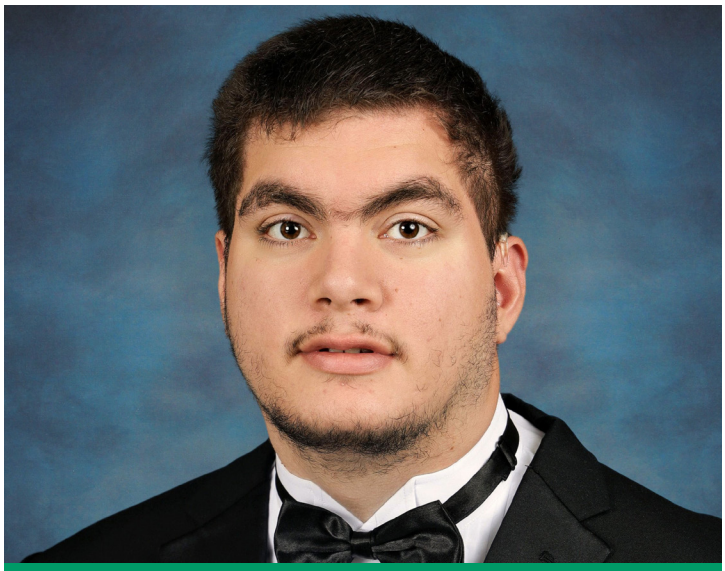


Akeylah Howard • Irmo

Akeylah received the Outstanding Senior Award, Applied Academic Student of the Year recognition, the Spartanburg Civitan Club Award, the Norman Pulliam Scholarship, the Dunbar Scholarship, and the Academic Achievement Award. During her time at SCSDB, Akeylah was a valued member of the goalball, basketball, and cheer teams. Akeylah plans to further her education at Midlands Technical College, where she will study to become a Certified Nursing Assistant.



School for the Deaf GRADUATES



Juan Carlos Caudillo • Orangeburg

Juan Carlos Caudillo received the American Legion Award. The American Legion Award recognizes a junior or senior who is characterized by courage, honor, patriotism, leadership, scholarship, and service. Carlos' fondest memory from SCSDB is his time spent at the Applied Academic Center (AAC), where he had the opportunity to take classes in agriculture, carpentry, welding, and small engine repair. Looking ahead, he aspires to pursue a career in welding.



Dacorion Horton • Cheraw

Dacorion received the Fine Arts Student of the Year award, Applied Academic Student of the Year award, Academic Achievement award, and the prestigious McAlister Scholarship. At SCSDB, Dacorion received training in Adobe InDesign, Adobe Photoshop, and photography. He was a valued member of the Yearbook Club and Student Council. He will be attending Winthrop University in the fall to study graphic design.



James Myers • Columbia

James balanced school with two jobs—one in maintenance and the other at Chick-fil-A—and also took on the role of manager for the football and basketball teams, earning himself the nickname "Coach." His most cherished memory is the hard work he put in to reach his goal of graduating.



Christian Washington • Conway

On Awards Day, Christian Washington received the Norman Pulliam Award, Bobby Dobson Memorial Scholarship, and the William B. Ferguson Civitan Scholarship. Christian was a valued member of the SCSD Student Council, and the Academic Bowl, varsity basketball, and track and field teams. Christian will miss playing football against other southeastern Schools for the Deaf. He plans to attend the Rochester Institute of Technology this fall.



Cedar Springs Academy GRADUATES



Elliot-Wayne Germany • Gaston

Elliot wants to work in a restaurant where he can assist staff in kitchen cleaning, as a result of his job training experience at the Marriott Hotel in Spartanburg. He's also worked with Vocational Rehabilitation Services in Spartanburg, the Spartanburg Food Bank, and with a local horticulture company. Elliot's SCSDB activities included: Special Olympics bowling, basketball, volleyball, cheer, and track and field; Chorus; and serving as a School Ambassador.



Melanie Gomez • Duncan

Melanie received the Fine Arts Student of the Year award. She had the honor of showcasing her musical talents at the South Carolina State House each year, and also shared performances on piano at local nursing homes. Melanie is excited to continue her passion for music. At SCSDB, Melanie received career training, developed strong Braille literacy skills, and participated in work-based learning experiences that helped shape her personal and professional growth.



Hailey Gundling • Pawleys Island

Hailey has been a valued member of the SCSDB Special Olympics bowling, cheer, and track and field teams. She won Miss Congeniality at this year's SCSDB Pageant and received the Residential Life Services Student of the Year award and the CSA Outstanding Senior Award. At SCSDB, she gained work experience caring for the cat and birds at a nearby nursing home, as well as helping at a Spartanburg animal shelter.



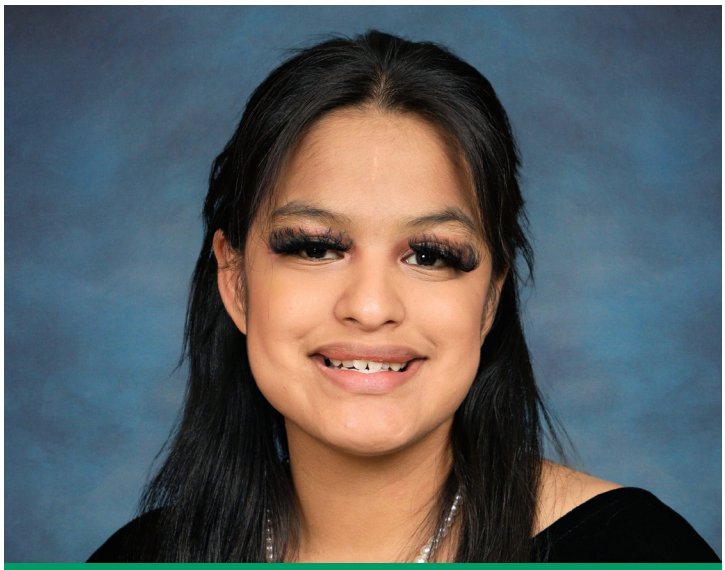
Jacob Jackson • Roebuck

Jacob was awarded the Bill and Valerie Barnet Scholarship. He received career training in hospitality and tourism while at CSA. He participated in Special Olympics bowling and track and field. Jacob plans to spend more time with family. His favorite memory from SCSDB is, "I graduate." Jacob was happy when he was crowned Homecoming King, and he was very excited to graduate!



Jennifer Jaime-Cruz • Simpsonville

Jennifer's favorite SCSDB memory was P.E. class with Coach Aly Davis. She received the Robert & Ruth Joan Millard Memorial Award that recognizes a student who has overcome challenges, shown significant improvement, and has worked to develop their potential despite the obstacles that might have been set before them. Jennifer received career training in hospitality and tourism while at CSA. She plans to spend time with family.



Brandy Mezquite-Reyes • Georgetown

Brandy was recognized as the Special Olympics Athlete of the Year. She competed in bowling, basketball, volleyball, cheer, and track and field. Brandy was also part of the Yearbook Class. She worked at Vocational Rehabilitation Services in Spartanburg, in the Walker Hall cafeteria, and at McDonald's. Brandy wants to work with her father in landscaping. Her favorite school memory is traveling to Myrtle Beach for a Special Olympics tournament and playing in the ocean.

Fun with Friends



Lucas Coates (7th grade) shines a blacklight on mysterious fingerprints.

Spy Camp

At summer camp, our adventurers embarked on a journey that sparked their imaginations and honed their detective skills. Our mascot, Buzz, found himself in a bit of a pickle, and it was up to our campers to save him. Campers participated in a thrilling multi-day spy mission to find Buzz and solve mysteries across campus.

Each day, campers set off on a QR code scavenger hunt, where every scanned code led them to new locations and challenges. These hunts were designed to engage their problem-solving skills and teamwork as they decoded secret messages and pieced together the clues needed to rescue Buzz. Some of the camp activities included, creating cipher wheels, using invisible ink, building periscopes, analyzing fingerprints, digital puzzle-making, and creating spy murals.

Don't miss out on the chance to be part of another epic adventure—join us next summer for camp!



A group finds a clue in the cafeteria during a scavenger hunt across campus.



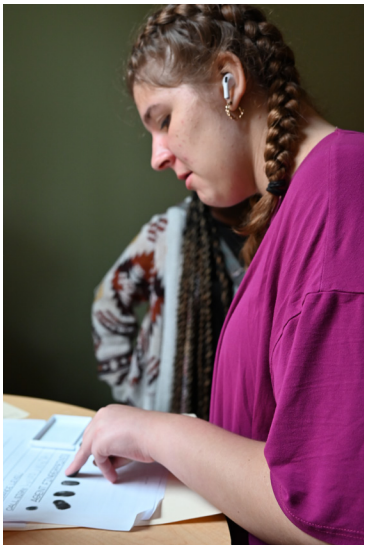
Leah Palma-Escobar (3rd grade) wears a bright yellow spy hat.



Isiah Pasha (7th grade) shows off his handmade periscope.



Emily Hernandez (7th grade) finds a potato in the garden.



Ellie Horton (9th grade) records her own fingerprints in ink.

Field Day



Koretta Parker and Tazmin Hill (9th grade) add flavor to their snow cones.



Jaka'i Coakley (9th grade) cools off in the campus pool.



Zoey Blackman (6th grade) races to stack cups.



Brayden Potter (3rd grade) jumps in a classic sack race.

Dorm Wars



Students play 9-square in the Civitan Activity Center at CSA.



Middle school girls compete in beach ball volleyball in Voss Gym.



Azael Cruz (8th grade) balances a large plastic egg on a paddle.



Kendriyana Brown (senior), Ryleigh Rabon (11th grade), Dayana Orellana (11th grade), and Lor'reyel McClinton (9th grade) get ready to play tug-of-war.



Didier Lorenzo (6th grade) huddles inside an inflatable bumper ball.



Students and staff represent their dorms in different colored shirts.

Fine Arts



Isabella Collins (9th grade), Aaliyah Zimmerman (6th grade), Piper Graham (11th grade), and Reniece Vassell (10th grade) enjoy some time at the beach.



The project was made possible by the South Carolina Arts in the Basic Curriculum Institute and the SC School for the Deaf and the Blind Foundation.

Above: The 9-foot-tall sculpture was created by Bob Doster, a renowned artist from Lancaster County, with the help of students from SCSDB.

Right: Bob Doster, Piper Graham (11th grade), President Jolene Madison, Director of Visual Language Services Catherine Davary, Christian Washington (senior), and Myrtle Beach Mayor Brenda Bethune cut the ribbon for the sculpture dedication.

Myrtle Beach gains ASL "I Love You" sculpture

A new ASL "I Love You" sculpture was dedicated April 15 in downtown Myrtle Beach at 506 9th Ave. North which is part of Myrtle Beach's Arts & Innovation District.

The sculpture, a collaboration between SCSDB and renowned artist-in-residence Bob Doster, is a testament to the beauty of communication and the celebration of art, education, and community. It featured the hands of fine arts students, school staff, and Spartanburg community members.

In addition to the unveiling, attendees were treated to a special performance by the SCSDB Chorus. The ceremony was attended by local leaders and members of the SCSDB family.

The SCSDB Chorus members had a blast! They ate some yummy ice cream, chilled out at the beach, and wrapped up their day with dinner at Lizard's Thicket in Columbia.



Athletic Awards

Hornet athletes in all varsity sports honored at a ceremony and banquet



Cheer



Football



Volleyball



Track and Field



Boys Basketball



Girls Goalball



Boys Goalball



Girls Basketball

Residential Life



Olivia instructs students on different adaptive dances in the Civitan Activity Center.

Scout instructs adaptive dance just in time for Prom

Olivia Lawson, a 15-year-old member of Scouting America, Troop 413G from Boiling Springs, embarked on an inspiring journey to share her love for dance with SCSDB students.

Olivia, who has been a dancer since she was 3 years old, is currently preparing for her Eagle Scout project—the highest achievement in the Scouting America program, which has been open to girls since 2018. Her project involved partnering with Dance Collaborative to lead adaptive dance lessons for SCSDB students.

Working alongside dance instructor, Stephanie Cureton, Olivia helped students feel the rhythm and follow a partner through adaptive dance techniques. Olivia and Stephanie focused on popular dances such as the Macarena, Cha Cha Slide, Boots on the Ground (also known as the Fan Dance), and the Church Clap. The sessions ended with an improv dance segment, allowing students to express themselves creatively.



Olivia Lawson gives the Scout sign while standing by the SCSDB front gate.

"My Scouting America project is different than other Eagle Projects," said Olivia. "I was honored to work with Dance Collaborative to bring something that I love, dance, to the SCSDB students, especially before their Prom."



Pam Boggs and Cynica Middleton partnered with Successful Transitions for etiquette classes every Tuesday. During this lesson, the students learned etiquette for dining with potential employers.

Left: Students enjoy a meal while practicing their etiquette skills.

Prom

On April 17, students celebrated prom in style at the 1881 Event Hall in Spartanburg. The theme for this year's prom was "Make a Move, A Night of Games."

Cedar Springs Academy
Queen: Melanie Gomez
King: Jacob Jackson

School for the Deaf
Queen: Yakera Martin
King: Dacorion Horton

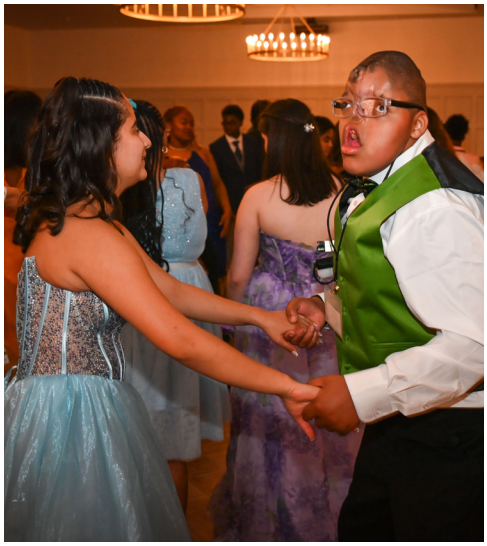
School for the Blind
Queen: Iris Hare
King: Evan Gimmaka



The 2025 prom kings and queens from each school are recognized together.



Ryleigh Rabon (11th grade) and Kaylee Ellison (11th grade) show off their dance moves.



Melanie Gomez (senior) and Ke'Mareon Turner (11th grade) dance together.



Seniors James Myers, Dacorion Horton, and Christian Washington take a photo with teacher Heather Moffett.



Jonathan Perez-Gomez (11th grade), Brandy Mezquite Reyes (senior), and Elliot Germany (senior) smile for a picture on the dance floor.



Iris Hare (senior) laughs with friend Akeylah Howard (senior).



Bus driver Shannon White and Kaitland Davis (senior) enjoy the music together.

SCSDB Foundation



Hannah Fox (4th grade) sits on a blue bean bag chair in the School for the Deaf's sensory room.

Sensory Rooms and Spaces enhance learning

A fresh chapter in creating personalized sensory spaces across all three schools, specially designed to support students' unique learning needs, was celebrated with a ribbon cutting ceremony on March 31.

The sensory rooms are tailored environments that offer students a diverse range of sensory experiences. These spaces include items like tactile panels, sensory bins, interactive wall panels, and comfortable seating. The soothing atmosphere of a sensory room can help create a calming and stimulating environment that benefits students by enhancing focus, reducing anxiety, and supporting emotional regulation.

"This is our first opportunity to introduce the Sensory Rooms and Spaces program to the community, and we are thrilled to showcase the positive changes it brings to our students' educational journey," said Sam Hook, SCSDB Foundation executive director.

The generous sponsors of the program were Ball4Good, Barbara Stone Foundation, International Paper Foundation, Rotary Club of Spartanburg, and SC Appellate Judges Association.



A shelf in the School for the Deaf sensory room displays items, including a teal and pink sequin canvas, an hourglass with orange sand, and colorful gel mazes.



A sensory wall with interactive panels in the School for the Blind's sensory room



Ashton Jackson (6th grade) and Aaliyah Zimmerman (6th grade) create patterns in the sand.

Car, Truck, and Motorcycle Show rolls onto campus

Sweet rides entered in the SCSDB Foundation's second Car, Truck, and Motorcycle Show numbered 49. Owners braved May 17's rainy early morning to stage their wheels on the SCSDB campus.

The sun shined and everything from true antiques to vintage muscle cars, alongside sleek modern machines and a convoy from Harley Davidson of Greenville, greeted admiring spectators who had free admission. Raffles for great prizes, food trucks, and bouncy houses offered fun for all ages.

The Foundation raised over $27,000 to support the students of SCSDB. The date for next year's event is May 16.



A show participant discusses what's under the hood of his 1971 Mercury Cougar with a spectator.



Two judges carefully examine a car and make their notes on clipboards.



The shiny red of a 1954 Chevrolet 3100 truck draws visitors in for a closer look and also earned the "Best Truck" award.



The owner of a light yellow 1929 Ford Model A allows a spectator to sit in the covered driver's seat.



A woman with two young children snaps a photo with her phone of a Chevrolet Camaro with a "'Merica" image on the inside of its hood.



The bright orange paint job on a 1950s Chevrolet car attracts the attention of two men.

School for the Deaf and the Blind

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

We want to meet your family!

SCSDB campus programs are always accepting applications for new students. Our online application can be accessed at **www.scsdb.org/apply**. Please contact **Angela Fordyce** at **864-577-7506** or **afordyce@scsdb.org** for more information about the application and enrollment process and/or to schedule a campus tour.

Come and see what SCSDB can do for you in your area of the state! The **SCSDB division of outreach services** provides a menu of options for parents, families, and the professionals who serve them that include and are not limited to, specialized early intervention services, school district educational services, sign language interpreting, and ASL classes! For more information on our statewide outreach services available in your area, please contact **Scott A. Falcone** at **sfalcone@scsdb.org** or **1-800-984-4357**.