

Ritenour NEWS

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Ritenour Celebrates Grand Opening of the New Ritenour Center for Educational Excellence

Hundreds of students, parents, faculty, civic leaders and community members attended the grand opening celebration and ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new Ritenour Center for Educational Excellence (RCEE) on Aug. 7.

The event also welcomed friends and family of Julie Hahn and Janine Milam-Haynes, the namesakes of the Julie Hahn Center for International and Gifted Learners and the Janine Milam-Haynes Early Childhood Annex on the RCEE campus.

The district closed in August 2024 on the 3.92-acre site, located at 10901 St. Henry Lane in St. Ann. The purchase price was \$1 million. The campus was formerly known as St. Kevin Parish and School, and Holy Trinity Parish and School. The property features 30,000 square feet of space, including a main school building that houses the Hahn Center with two wings of classrooms and a cafeteria, and the Janine Milam-Haynes Early Childhood Annex that provides five additional classrooms, a multipurpose room and several spaces for individual or small group learning.

The Ritenour Center for Educational Excellence serves as a cornerstone for expanded educational programs and support services for the Ritenour School District community.

At the ribbon-cutting ceremony, powerful speeches shared by Julie Hahn, assistant superintendent for data, interventions and student support, and family members of Janine Milam-Haynes, inspired the audience. Milam-Haynes, a 28-year

Ritenour educator at Marion Elementary School, passed away two years ago.

Hahn said she is excited to watch how the center serves Ritenour students who are rooted in potential, purpose and promise.

"The beauty of this center is in its mission - a place where we're going to nurture talent, protect dreams and where every child will be seen for the strengths that they bring in here," said Hahn. "This center tells you that our students belong here, that they matter here and that they will grow here."

The campus currently serves approximately 270 Ritenour students in preschool through grade 12.

Rod Milam, the brother of the late Janine Milam-Haynes, said he was proud to see his sister's name on a building where students will be nurtured because it reflects the work ethic and passion she had for students throughout her career in Ritenour.

"Her name is there, but the work goes on," said Milam. "The children will keep coming, and the work keeps coming...the students who come through this center will earn their place in this school, in this community, in this country and in this world."

(Top) The Ritenour community celebrates the grand opening of the new Ritenour Center for Educational Excellence (RCEE) on Aug. 7.

(Middle and bottom) Ritenour's youngest learners enjoy their new classrooms at the Janine Milam-Haynes Early Childhood Annex on the RCEE campus.



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Communications Devices and Learning: How Ritenour Supports Student Success

Superintendent Dr. Chris Kilbride



As leaders, we must always be prepared to share the “why” behind the decisions we make. In the absence of that understanding, assumptions can take root that are often inaccurate or negative.

The “why” behind our district’s decision to restrict the use of cell phones and personal communication devices in our schools aligns with a new Missouri law that went into effect this summer. The law requires school districts across the state to establish policies limiting the use of electronic communication devices during the school day. Our Board of Education approved Ritenour’s new policy in August.

To ensure Ritenour’s policy was both supportive and practical, Ritenour convened a districtwide committee this summer that included administrators, teachers, staff, students and family members. The committee’s goal was to shape an approach that reflects the values of the community and supports student success.

I’m proud to share that so far this year, our elementary and middle schools have done an outstanding job in implementing this policy. I have not seen a single cell phone or personal communication device in use during the school day. Students, staff and families are following expectations and benefitting from classrooms that are more focused, engaged and free from the distractions of

constant digital access. Thank you to all who have contributed to this positive shift.

At Ritenour High School, progress continues, but there is still work to do. While cell phones have largely disappeared from classrooms, they remain present in hallways and common areas. Our high school staff has worked diligently to establish and reinforce the expectation that RHS be a device and cell phone-free environment from morning arrival until the end of the school day. However, this expectation has not yet been fully achieved.

The purpose behind this policy and our continued focus on implementation is simple: to put student learning first. When educators must compete with cell phones and social media for student attention, educators lose, and ultimately, students lose. While the state law set the stage for this change, we fully support and embrace it because it is the right thing to do for our students’ success.

We need the ongoing partnership and support of our parents and families, especially at the high school level, to help reinforce these expectations. This is not about punishment or consequence, but rather about ensuring that every Ritenour student has the best opportunity to learn, grow, and achieve without unnecessary distractions.

Thank you for your continued trust, support, and commitment to our staff, students and schools.

Filing Information for Ritenour School Board Election; Pre-Candidate Information Session on Dec. 4

Ritenour residents interested in running for the April 7, 2026, Ritenour Board of Education election will need to file for candidacy at the St. Louis County Board of Elections, 725 Northwest Plaza Drive in St. Ann.

The filing period for the April 7 election opens Tuesday, Dec. 9, and closes at 5 p.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 30. Three positions will be on the ballot, as the three-year terms of Penny Degardin, Rob Eaton and Dr. Brad Thomas expire in April 2026.

Missouri law requires a person to be a U.S. citizen, at least 24 years old, a resident taxpayer of the district and to have resided in Missouri for one year immediately preceding the election.

The Ritenour School District is hosting a pre-candidate information session at 5 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 4 at the Administrative Center, 2420 Woodson Road, for anyone who is considering running for the school board. Those interested in attending the information session should RSVP by calling (314) 493-6050.

“Thank you for your continued trust, support, and commitment to our staff, students and schools.”

-Dr. Chris Kilbride

RITENOUR Board of Education



Dr. Brad Thomas
President



Jennifer Lohnes
Vice President



Dr. M. Stacey
Albin-Wilson
Director



Penny Degardin
Director



Rob Eaton
Director



Lisa Glover-Jones
Director



Vanessa
Henriquez-Pimblott
Director

Dr. Chris Kilbride—Superintendent | **DeQuinda Woods**—Secretary | **Dr. Phil Pusateri**—Treasurer | **Reagan Beverly**—Student Representative

Ritenour Board of Education Sets 2025 Tax Rates

The Ritenour Board of Education set the district’s new tax rates on Sept. 18. The district decreased the residential real estate rate by 51 cents per \$100 of assessed value and decreased the commercial real estate rate by 41 cents. The district’s personal property tax rate remains unchanged from the previous year.

The decrease in the residential and commercial rates is largely due to the increase in assessed value in residential and commercial real estate in our Ritenour community, said Chief Financial Officer Dr. Phillip Pusateri.

“The combination of increased overall assessed valuation from the prior year led to an overall decrease in tax rates of about 12% for residential property and about 9% for commercial property,

with no increase in rates for personal property,” said Pusateri. “Ritenour has a long history of being good stewards of our taxpayers’ money, and we will continue to do so to ensure that our students have the resources they need to learn and grow.”

St. Louis County reassesses property values every two years, and 2025 is a reassessment year.

Ritenour has received national awards for its budgeting and financial management practices. For 24 of the past 25 years, Ritenour has received the Meritorious Budget Award for excellence in the preparation and management of its annual budget.

Ritenour School District 2025 Tax Rates			
	2025 Tax Rates*	2024 Tax Rates*	Change
Residential Real Estate	\$3.72	\$4.23	-\$0.51
Commercial Real Estate	\$4.45	\$4.86	-\$0.41
Personal Property	\$5.24	\$5.24	\$0.00

* Tax rates are per \$100 of assessed value.

Iveland Teacher Named 2025 Emerson Excellence in Teaching Award Winner

Ritenour’s prize patrol made its way to the Iveland Elementary music room on Oct. 6 to celebrate Logan Felder as the district’s 2025 Emerson Excellence in Teaching Award recipient.

Felder, who is Iveland’s 2025 Diamond Circle teacher, joined the school in August 2022 and quickly became known for her positive outlook and energy in the classroom. With 11 years of teaching experience, including four in Ritenour, she is known for her strong connections with students and colleagues while leading efforts to expand music opportunities across the district.

Iveland Principal Amanda Connelly said Felder brings so much dedication to music education.

“Ms. Felder incorporates creativity and movement to help students not only learn music, but also develop important skills such as communication, empathy and teamwork,” said Connelly. “She is wonderful at creating a culture where students from many different backgrounds feel represented and engaged.”

Each spring, Felder organizes and directs the districtwide elementary strings concert, which continues to grow under her guidance and has become a highlight for young musicians and their families.

Felder is also a leader in curriculum work, having helped lead professional learning sessions for her fellow music educators as the district transitioned to competency-based education.

Felder holds a bachelor’s degree in music education from the University of Missouri-Columbia, a master’s degree in education from the University of Illinois and certification in Orff Schulwerk.

The Emerson Excellence in Teaching Awards program annually recognizes K-12 and college educators in the St. Louis metropolitan area who exemplify excellence in their field. As an Emerson Award recipient, Felder is eligible to apply for grant funding provided by Emerson to support her curriculum and instruction. She also receives a crystal apple from Emerson.



Iveland Elementary music teacher Logan Felder is the Ritenour School District 2025 Emerson Excellence in Teaching Award recipient.

Notices and Policies

Each year, the Ritenour School District provides parents, students and community members with important information about federal and state regulations. The notices are related to students’ rights and privacy, district policies and other educational procedures.

These notices are published on the Ritenour School District website, www.ritenourschools.org, and are available in all school offices and in the district Parent-Student Handbook.

Notices and Policies:

- Anti-Discrimination Notices (American with Disabilities Act/ Section 504, Sexual Harassment/Title IX and Age Discrimination Act of 1975/Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964)
- Asbestos Notice

- Complaint Resolution Procedures
 - Homeless Rights Notice
 - Parent & Family Engagement Policy
 - Parents Right to Know Notice
 - Protection of Pupils Rights Amendment (PPRA)
 - Safe Schools Act
 - Services and Rights for Students with Disabilities
 - Student Records/Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) Notice
- For copies of these notices or more information, please visit the Ritenour website at www.ritenourschools.org or call (314) 493-6055.

A Weekend of School Spirit and Hollywood

2025 Ritenour

Ritenour's 2025 Homecoming weekend was nothing short of spectacular, uniting the community in a celebration of community pride under the dazzling theme "Hollywood Huskies."

The festivities began on Sept. 26 with the Ritenour Hall of Fame induction ceremony, where alumni Suzy Fortune (Class of 1981), Tavonda Palmer Harvey (Class of 2000) and Dr. David A. Smith (Class of 1981) were honored for their accomplishments. In addition, retired Ritenour Superintendent Dr. Paul Doerrer received the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award. Their stories of excellence and impact set an inspiring tone for the weekend.

The excitement continued on Sept. 27 as hundreds of spectators lined the three-mile parade route, cheering on floats and walking groups that handed out candy and brought the Hollywood Husky theme to life with creativity and flair. Competition was exciting, with the Junior Class of 2027 taking first place in the class floats category. The New Era Dance Company earned top honors in community floats, while the Ritenour School for Early Childhood Education proudly claimed first in the organization/club division.



(Above) Ritenour Middle School students and staff proudly represented their school in the parade, celebrating this year's theme, "Hollywood Huskies."

(Below-l to r) Hundreds of Ritenour students and staff showed their Husky pride - marching in the parade or cheering along the route on a beautiful September morning!



Wood Style Elegance

Homecoming

Under beautiful sunny skies at Moore Field, the Huskies gave fans even more to celebrate, delivering a commanding 41 - 3 victory over the Lindbergh Flyers. Halftime entertainment showcased the incredible talents of the marching band, cheerleaders and Rhythmettes, filling the stadium with energy and applause.

The spotlight then turned to the naming of the Homecoming Court. The crowning of Homecoming Royalty, Maddie Miller and Aniyah Henderson, brought a wave of cheers and applause from the crowd.

The weekend wrapped up with a night of food, music, and dancing as students filled the auditorium lobby and Costillow Gym for the traditional Homecoming dinner and dance, an unforgettable finale to a weekend brimming with spirit, tradition and Husky pride.



On a picture-perfect day at Moore Field, the Ritenour Huskies delivered a commanding performance, defeating Lindbergh High School 41-3.

The Ritenour Marching Huskies, led by drum major Reagan Beverly (left), energized the crowd at Moore Field with an inspiring halftime performance.

During halftime, RHS seniors Maddie Miller (bottom left) and Aniyah Henderson were crowned 2025 Homecoming Royalty, earning cheers from their classmates and the crowd.



Visit this QR code to view photos and videos from Homecoming weekend.



Ritenour Schools Celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month

Iveland Elementary students had fun creating their own erupting volcanoes as they learn about El Salvador during a Hispanic Heritage family event in early October. The activity was one of many hands-on learning experiences as students across the district celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month.



Ritenour School District joined communities nationwide in celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month from Sept. 15 to Oct. 15, honoring the rich cultures and contributions of Hispanic and Latino Americans. About 33% of Ritenour students identify as Hispanic, making the observance especially meaningful for the district.

Established in 1968 as a weeklong observance and expanded in 1988 to a month, Hispanic Heritage Month recognizes the independence days of several Latin American countries and Mexico's historic Cry of Dolores on Sept. 15, 1810.

Throughout the month, Ritenour schools highlighted Hispanic history, art, music and traditions through lessons, assemblies and family events.

At the Ritenour School for Early Childhood Education, families created colorful flags representing Latin American countries. Elementary schools across the district celebrated with a range of activities that showcased Hispanic culture, including student musical and dance performances, cultural festivals, family nights, art projects, classroom lessons about Hispanic

leaders and traditions, and authentic foods that reflected the diverse backgrounds of Ritenour's Hispanic community.

At the middle schools, Hoech students created posters highlighting Latin American countries and shared their research throughout the school, while Ritenour Middle students tested their knowledge of Hispanic trailblazers through trivia and explored cultural artifacts on display.

At the Hahn Center for International and Gifted Learners, student committees led the way in organizing creative events that included games, cook-offs, art projects and shirt printing. The celebrations concluded with visits from Latinx professionals who shared their personal journeys and career opportunities, inspiring students to dream big.

Ritenour Offers Free Parents as Teachers Program for Families with Young Children



Ritenour Parent Educator Jessica Friedman (left) enjoys sharing developmental activities with a toddler and parent during a monthly Parents as Teachers session.

The Ritenour School District continues its long-standing commitment to families through its free Parents as Teachers (PAT) program, serving families with children birth through PreK-5.

The program, which has been part of the district for more than three decades, helps parents and caregivers understand what to expect at each stage of a child's development and provides practical ways to support learning during the crucial early years. Certified parent educators work alongside families to strengthen skills, offer developmental screenings and connect them to valuable community resources.

"Parents are their children's first and most important teachers," said Mike Aitken, coordinator of Ritenour Parents as Teachers. "PAT allows families to get a jump start on their child's development. Children who participate are better prepared for preschool and kindergarten, and parents receive

support and resources they can use every day."

Ritenour's program has eight certified parent educators, including one bilingual educator, who together serve more than 90 families and more than 110 babies, toddlers and preschoolers. Parent educators visit with parents and their young children once or twice monthly and provide developmental, vision and hearing screenings, parent-child workshops and special education referrals when needed.

Families also receive guidance on navigating both the challenges and celebrations of early childhood development, as well as help finding resources like diapers, child care and preschool.

Ritenour resident Alaa Alshalabi said she and her 22-month-old son always enjoy monthly visits with Ritenour parent educator Jessica Friedman and the reassurance that her toddler is on track with his developmental milestones.

"The sessions are very, very helpful," said Alshalabi. "I always learn something new."

The program emphasizes the importance of the years before kindergarten as the foundation for school and life success.

Since its beginning, Ritenour's PAT has grown to meet changing needs, but its mission has remained constant: empowering parents to be their child's strongest advocate and most influential teacher.

Families interested in joining PAT can learn more by calling (314) 493-6240. Enrollment is free and open to all Ritenour families with children from birth through age PreK-5, as well as supporting parents throughout their pregnancy.

Scan the QR code (right) for more information about the Ritenour Parents as Teachers program.



Ritenour Inducts New Hall of Fame Members

Three outstanding Ritenour alumni and one Lifetime Achievement Award recipient were inducted into the Ritenour Hall of Fame during Homecoming weekend on Sept. 26, in Ritenour Auditorium. Nearly 200 friends, family members, teachers, staff members and current and former Ritenour administrators and students attended the celebration.

The Ritenour Hall of Fame Class of 2025 included:

- **Suzy Fortune** | Class of 1981, an award-winning athlete, coach and educator, Fortune was a college hall of fame athlete before serving more than 28 years as a teacher and coach at Ritenour High School, retiring in 2021.
- **Tavonda Palmer Harvey** | Class of 2000, a celebrated Ritenour educator, Palmer Harvey has received numerous local, state and national awards, and serves as director of Ritenour Husky Academy.
- **Dr. David A. Smith** | Class of 1981, a decorated retired U.S. Air Force veteran, Dr. Smith serves as an administrative judge with the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission.
- **Dr. Paul Doerrer** | Lifetime Achievement Award, a dedicated leader who served Ritenour for 24 years, including 11 years as superintendent, Dr. Doerrer is recognized for his long-standing and transformative contributions to the district.

Ritenour Hall of Fame honoree Mike Stewart, Class of 1978, served as the emcee for this year's celebration. Following the

unveiling of the inductees' portraits on the Hall of Fame wall in the Ritenour Auditorium lobby and dinner, the ceremony highlighted their accomplishments as Huskies, their professional achievements, and their dedication to family and community.

The Ritenour Hall of Fame was established in 1997 to honor graduates who have demonstrated outstanding professional accomplishments, civic involvement and community service. The portraits of the 111 Hall of Fame members and 13 Lifetime Achievement Award recipients are proudly displayed in the lobby of the Auditorium at Ritenour High School.

Nomination forms for the 2026 Hall of Fame ceremony are now available. The deadline for submission is March 1, 2026. More information and nomination forms are available at www.ritenourschools.org.



The newest Ritenour Hall of Fame inductees include (l to r) Dr. David A. Smith (class of 1981), Suzy Fortune (class of 1981), Tavonda Palmer Harvey (class of 2000), and Dr. Paul Doerrer (Lifetime Achievement Award recipient).

Information for the Ritenour Community: Federal Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA)

The Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) is a federal program that offers financial assistance to individuals—or their families—who developed certain illnesses after being exposed to radiation from the U.S. nuclear weapons program.

To qualify, applicants must provide medical documentation and proof of living or working in specific locations during designated time periods - this includes zip codes within the Ritenour School District.

The deadline to file claims under federal law is Dec. 31, 2027. Claim forms are currently available on the U.S. Department of Justice website: <https://www.justice.gov/civil/reca>

If you need records from the Ritenour School District to support your application, please complete the RECA Information Request Form on our website: <https://www.ritenourschools.org>

- Ensure your contact information is accurate when completing the form.
- Please allow 4–6 weeks for processing.
- Additional documents may be required if you're requesting records for a deceased family member or applying on some one's behalf.

Ritenour's Adult Education & Literacy Program Offers Free Classes

Ritenour's Adult Education & Literacy (AEL) program offers free classes and services to help adults 18 and older so they can:

- Earn a High School Equivalency (HSE) certificate
- Improve English skills
- Prepare for college or the workforce

Morning and evening classes are held at the Adult Learning Center, located in the north wing of Hoech Middle School, 3312 Ashby Road. Enrollment is underway, and students for this program do not need to be residents of Ritenour.

Call (314) 684-0125 to learn more, or visit the Ritenour website at www.ritenourschools.org.



Scan the QR code (above) for more information about the Adult Education and Literacy program.

Ritenour School District 2025 Fall Food Drive

Join us in supporting the Ritenour Co-Care Food Pantry during our annual food drive this November! Together, we can help provide much-needed food for families in our community this holiday season.

Donation Dates: November 5–21, 2025
Drop-Off Location: Ritenour Administrative Center – 2420 Woodson Road

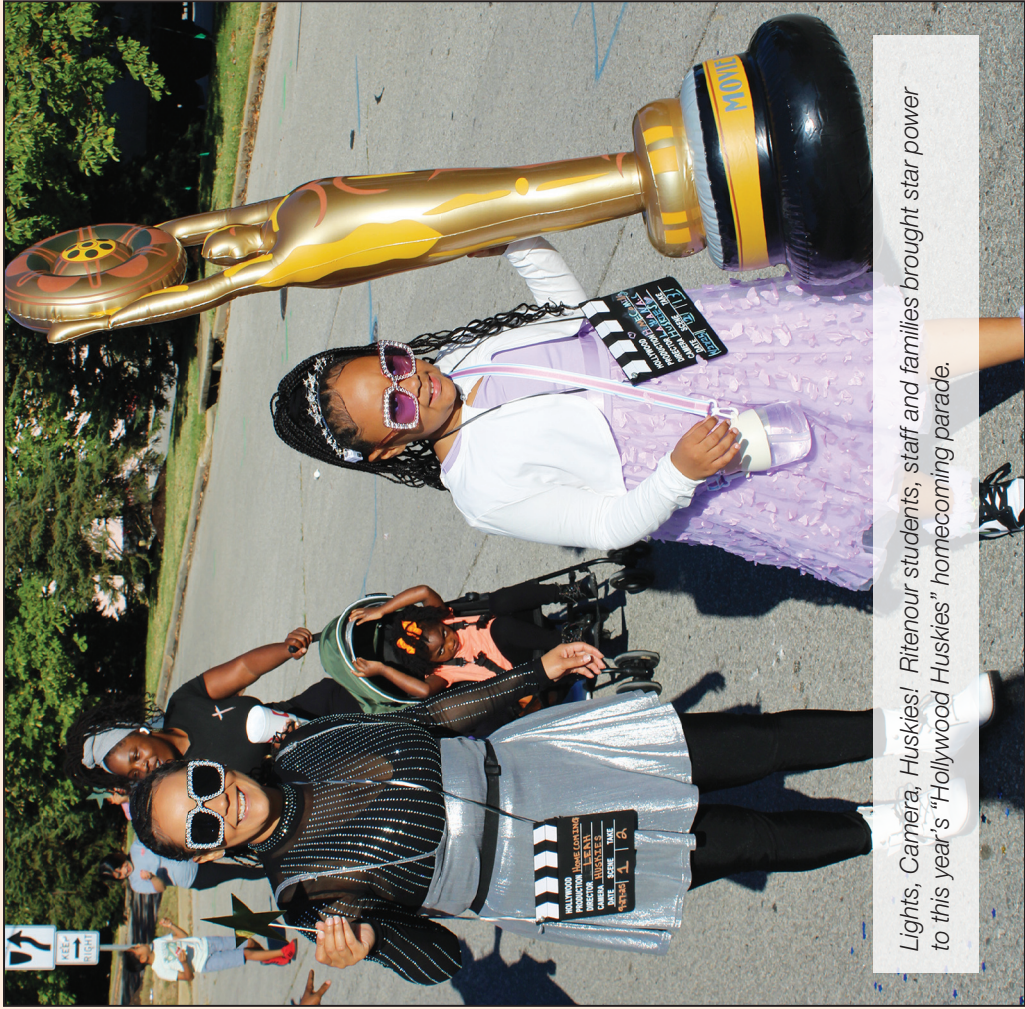
Additional Donation Options: You can also donate food directly to the Ritenour Co-Care Food Pantry (9303 Midland Blvd.) during these hours:

- Monday, Wednesday, Friday: 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.
- Wednesday evening: 5 – 7 p.m.

Entrance and parking are located in the back of the building.
Monetary donations for the Ritenour Co-Care Food Pantry are also welcome.
For more information, call (314) 493-6080 or visit www.rccfoodpantry.org.

Most Needed Items:

- ☐ Breakfast Items: cereal, instant oatmeal, pancake mix, syrup
- ☐ Jelly
- ☐ Hamburger Helper & Meal Kits
- ☐ Canned Pasta (Chef Boyardee, SpaghettiO's)
- ☐ Personal Care Items
- ☐ Crackers
- ☐ Pasta & pasta sauce



Lights, Camera, Huskies! Ritenour students, staff and families brought star power to this year's "Hollywood Huskies" homecoming parade.

Ritenour Celebrates “Hollywood Huskies” During Homecoming Weekend