



Bright Spots and Big Moments in Mapleton

Thursday, Oct. 23, 2025

Welcome to **Spark! Bright Spots and Big Moments**, your biweekly roundup of feel-good stories, standout moments, and celebrations from around Mapleton. From student achievements to staff highlights, this community newsletter is all about what makes Mapleton shine.

Spark stories are organized by:

Bright Spots – shout-outs and recognitions

Big Moments – experiences, milestones, and celebrations

Behind the Spark – staff profiles or features

Community Connections – events, partnerships, family highlights
High Fives!

[Share your good news!](#)

[Send a "High Five"!](#)

Past issues of all our employee newsletters are available [on our website](#).

York's attendance success highlighted in CDE "Commissioner Chat"

York International School leaders recently shared their attendance success story with Colorado Education Commissioner Susana Córdova in her "Commissioner Chat" virtual series.

Over the past three years, York has reduced chronic absenteeism by seven percentage points by focusing on compassion, connection, and belonging. Attendance is embedded in all aspects of the school culture, with a shared sense of responsibility and commitment to students.

"The heart of who we are and what we do is all about family and really having a sense of community," said York School Director Eriksen Van Etten.

Watch [this short clip](#) or [the full conversation](#) to hear how York is improving attendance and strengthening student connections.



North Valley School for Young Adults senior makes history with athletic scholarship

On Friday, Oct. 10, senior **Shayla G.** became **North Valley School for Young Adults'** first-ever athletic scholarship recipient, a milestone celebrated with a special signing day ceremony during the school's community meeting.

Shayla, a Skyview Wolverines wrestler, is graduating this month and heading to Fort Hays State University in Kansas on an athletic scholarship, an achievement earned by only about 2% of student-athletes nationwide. She will compete at the 124-pound level and is only the second women's wrestler in Skyview history to earn an athletic scholarship.

"I'm super proud of Shayla," said Skyview Wrestling Coach Fienz Rodriguez. "She has overcome so much to get here. They really have a diamond in the rough."

Congratulations to the 2025-26 Marchi Mini Grant winners!

Mapleton Education Foundation is deeply appreciative of the innovative projects teachers are willing to implement in their classrooms. Established in 2013, the Marchi Mini Grant program honors Lisa Marchi, a Mapleton teacher and principal who poured her heart into helping teachers and students thrive. Lisa believed that great teaching changes lives, and her spirit continues in every bold idea Mapleton teachers bring to life through this program.

Congratulations to the 2025-26 Marchi Mini Grant recipients:

Joyce Martinez, Explore PK-8

Math Ready: Support Early Number Sense

Amber Wilcox, Global Intermediate Academy

Barbie's Bivariate Bungee Data

Lorraine Garrison, Clayton Partnership School

Cougar Challenge: Team Building for Stronger Students

Maureen Russ, Meadow Community School

Let's Talk About Cooking

Brian Touher, North Valley School for Young Adults

End the Year Strong! Stem Credit Recovery Intensive

Tia Nevil, Welby Community School of the Arts

Powering Creativity: Safe Tools for the Next Generation of Innovators

Melissa Pfaff, Academy High School

Biotech in Action: Equipping Students with Tomorrow's Tool

Nicholas Sabri, Mapleton Early Career Prep

Creating a Flexible, Inclusive Classroom Environment

Rebecca Jessie, Achieve Academy

Innovation and Individual Support

Bailey Humphrey, Global Leadership Academy

Classroom Library Makeover

Erica Wernsmann, Mapleton Expeditionary School of the Arts

Turn on the Light!

Big Moments

Three Mapleton seniors become district's first fifth-year JROTC cadets

Three Mapleton seniors are making JROTC history as the first fifth-year cadets in the district's Air Force Junior ROTC Raider Squadron, and possibly the first in Colorado.

Aleya R. and Joshua R., from **Mapleton Expeditionary School of the Arts**, and Xitlalli R., from **Mapleton Early Career Prep**, joined the program as eighth graders in 2021, when the Air Force allowed younger students to enroll if they could walk to the program site on Skyview Campus.



Starting early gave them a unique opportunity to grow as leaders and mentors to younger cadets. Today, they serve as squadron leaders, setting the standard for discipline, leadership and perseverance.

Read their story and learn how five years in JROTC helped them build confidence, resilience, and purpose in [our "Where is Mapleton?" page](#).

Read the full story here!

High school juniors explore postsecondary pathways at District College Fair

Last week, high school juniors from across Mapleton gathered at the Skyview Campus for the district's annual College Fair, hosted by the Colorado Council on High School & College Relations. The event connected students with college admission representatives and Mapleton's Post-Secondary Options Coaches to help them explore a variety of future pathways.



More than 20 colleges and universities participated, including in-state schools such as Colorado State University, the University of Northern Colorado, Colorado State University Pueblo, and the University of Denver, as well as out-of-state options from Ohio, Arizona, Nebraska, and beyond.

Students learned about tuition, campus life, academic programs, and more, taking meaningful steps toward their postsecondary goals.



Opening doors through college application lock-ins

Mapleton high school seniors were busy earlier this month applying to colleges during **Colorado Free Application Days**, held Oct. 7–9. Six Mapleton high schools hosted special lock-in events to help students focus, apply and celebrate this important milestone together.

With support from teachers, staff and college representatives, seniors submitted **more than 1,500 college applications in just three days**. The events are part of Mapleton’s commitment to helping students confidently take their next step after graduation.

Read the full story in the “**News from the District**” section [on Mapleton’s website](#).

Mapleton Early Career Prep students build career connections at Guest Expert Day

About 150 students at Mapleton Early Career Prep (MEC) connected with community professionals on Tuesday, Oct. 14, during the school’s annual Fall Guest Expert Day. The career-fair style event featured 35 speakers from industries including medical, culinary, transportation, and community service.

Representatives from organizations like **Clinica Colorado**, **Thornton Area Chamber of Commerce**, and the **Colorado Department of Transportation** shared their career journeys and answered students’ questions.



New this year, students brought résumés to practice professional networking and explore potential internships. “This event is all about helping students take the next step,” said Lisa Hollingsworth, MEC’s Internship Coordinator. “It’s exciting to see them make real connections, and we’re grateful for how supportive our community has been.”

Celebrity stylist inspires Global Intermediate Academy fashion students

On Thursday, Oct. 9, students in Ms. Dusenbery's middle school fashion class at Global Intermediate Academy welcomed **Fresh Sam**, a Denver-based sustainable fashion designer and celebrity stylist.

Fresh Sam has worked with artists like **The Pharcyde**, **Ashanti**, and **Smino**, and collaborated with major brands including **Netflix**, the GRAMMYs, and **Puma**.



During her visit, students shared their own sketches, asked questions, and learned how to design mood boards and work with fabrics. Sam encouraged them to explore sustainability and express their creativity through fashion.

The fashion class, part of Mapleton's Career and Technical Education (CTE) program, introduces students to the fundamentals of the fashion world, from sketching and draping to problem-solving, communication, and measuring skills.

Behind the Spark

York valedictorian discovers passion for engineering through CTE program

When 2025 York International School valedictorian Hendrick Weber Leon discovered York's Engineering and Technology career and technical education pathway, he found his true passion for engineering. Over a couple years, he gained hands-on experience, strong mentorship, and the confidence to pursue his dreams. Now a freshman at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, Hendrick is one of just 10 students nationwide selected for the prestigious Kiewit Scholars Program.



Read how Mapleton helped him engineer his future!

[Read the full story here!](#)



Mapleton strengthens cybersecurity with new tools and training

A single absent-minded click on a suspicious email can lead to stolen paychecks, compromised accounts or even districtwide disruptions. That's why earlier this month, Mapleton rolled out some **cybersecurity initiatives** to help keep staff and systems safe: two mandatory staff training courses and a new **Phish Alert Button (PAB)** in Outlook.

Staff have about a week left to complete the required training, which covers practical strategies such as checking sender addresses, watching for urgent or unusual language, and pausing before clicking unfamiliar links. Staff are also encouraged to share these tips with their families to help keep home accounts safe.

The PAB allows staff to quickly and securely report suspicious emails directly from Outlook, helping protect the entire district. The rollout aligns with **Cybersecurity Awareness Month**, a reminder that small actions can help prevent big problems.

Read more in the "**News from the District**" section [on Mapleton's website](#).

Community Connections

Mapleton Reads kicks off its 13th year

Mapleton's annual community reading initiative, **Mapleton Reads**, is back for its 13th year, uniting students, families, and neighbors through a shared love of reading. From **October 2025 through**

January 2026, readers across the district will explore this year's selected titles, sparking conversation and connection throughout the community.

"All the Books," by Hayley Rocco and Caldecott Honoree John Rocco (*K-3rd Grade*)

"All the Books" introduces us to Piper Waterstone—a charming, book-obsessed little chipmunk who treasures her collection of books so much she refuses to share it. She takes her beloved books everywhere, hauling them through every season, until the burden of her growing pile becomes truly cumbersome. After a mishap—in the rain, of all places—she's gently guided into a grand, welcoming library by a kindly mole (the librarian), who shows her that she can enjoy all the books she wants... as long as she's willing to share them with her neighbors

"All Thirteen," by Christina Soontornvat (*4th-8th Grade*)

"All Thirteen: The Incredible Cave Rescue of the Thai Boys' Soccer Team" tells the gripping true story of the 2018 Tham Luang cave rescue in Thailand. When twelve young soccer players and their coach became trapped deep underground by sudden flooding, the world watched in suspense as an international team of divers, engineers, and volunteers raced against time to bring them out safely.

Through vivid storytelling, photographs, and firsthand accounts, we learn about the boys' courage, the dedication of their rescuers, and the global cooperation that made the seemingly impossible rescue possible. This inspiring account of this story shows the power of hope, teamwork, and resilience.

"A Monster Calls," by Patrick Ness (*9th-12th Grade*)

"A Monster Calls" is a captivating and beautifully told story about love, loss, and the courage it takes to face the truth. Every night since his mother fell ill, Conor has been visited by nightmares. But one night, when the clock strikes 12:07, something different comes—something ancient, wild, and elemental. A monster arrives at his window, not to scare him, but to tell him three stories. In return, Conor must tell his own: the truth he has been hiding, the one he cannot bear to say out loud. Woven with myth, tenderness, and deep compassion, "A Monster Calls" is a powerful exploration of grief, healing, and hope.

Pick up copies of each title at any Mapleton school or the Administration Building and read along with us!

Join DAAC!

Mapleton Public Schools is seeking parents and guardians to serve on our **District Accountability Advisory Committee (DAAC)**. This is an important opportunity to make a real impact on the future of our schools and community.

As a member of DAAC, you will:

- Collaborate with district leaders on key decisions that affect students, staff, and schools.

- Review and provide feedback on topics such as the **district budget**, **school improvement plans**, and the **student discipline code**.
- Help ensure transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement in Mapleton Public Schools.

Meetings are held monthly online and are available in **English and Spanish**. Your perspective matters. Join us in building a strong, successful future for every Mapleton student.

Complete this [brief form](#) to join DAAC today!

DAAC Interest Form

High Fives!

Submit a High Five!



“High Fives” are a quick and fun way to celebrate the people who make Mapleton shine. From kind gestures and creative ideas to everyday excellence, these shout-outs recognize those who go above and beyond and remind us of the many ways our community makes a difference.

[If you know someone who deserves a "High Five", submit your appreciation using this form.](#)

Kim Lewis, Global Leadership Academy

"We're sending a big high five to Kim Lewis for her incredible contributions to this year's Gala! Kim gathered more than \$1,600 in donations from businesses and supporters across the metro area, all on behalf of Global Leadership Academy.

Her efforts made it possible for us to create six beautiful baskets and add several bottles to our popular wine pull — a huge boost to the evening's success. Kim's pride in this accomplishment was well-deserved. Her enthusiasm, persistence, and community connections truly made a difference.

Thank you, Kim, for your generosity, your leadership, and for reminding us what's possible when we all work together for Mapleton students!"

Submitted by the Mapleton Education Foundation

All Mapleton staff who attended the Mapleton Education Foundation Gala

"A heartfelt thank-you to everyone who joined us for the 21st Annual Mapleton Education Foundation Gala! Your generosity, energy, and good spirit made the evening an unforgettable celebration of community and support for Mapleton students.

Because of you, we're one step closer to ensuring that every Mapleton student has access to the opportunities and experiences that help them thrive. Your contributions truly made the night a success — and your impact will last far beyond it.

Thank you for believing in our mission, celebrating with us, and continuing to make a difference for our kids and our schools!"

Submitted by the Mapleton Education Foundation

Ivette Alvarado, Academy High School

"Ivette just started this year as a secretary at Academy, and you would think she has been here five years with how quickly she has acclimated herself to her job and how well she fits in! We are very lucky to have her here!"

Submitted by Academy Office Staff

Josh Krooneberg, Explore PK-8

"Josh is constantly giving up his space and time to help out with other staff and students. Whenever the staff asks to use the gym, he is always willing to share his space and never complains. He is constantly positive and willing to help out. Thank you, Coach K. Your generosity leaves an impact on our school!"

Submitted by Zach Page

Submit a High Five!

Spark! Bright Spots and Big Moments – Call for Submissions

Do you have a bright spot or big moment to share? Email communications@mapleton.us, or call 303.853.1020 to share your ideas!





Mapleton Public Schools

www.mapleton.us

Contact

