Vol. 1, Issue 2

BCSD BEACON

Congratulations Class of 2025!

The Beaufort County School District is proud to announce the remarkable accomplishments of its graduating class of 2025. With a total of 1,530 graduates, this year's cohort is set to make significant strides in various fields.

College Destinations
Graduates are heading to prestigious institutions across the nation, including:

- Duke University
- Harvard University
- Yale University
- Columbia University
- Emory University
- Belmont University
- University of Florida
- Ohio State University
- Middlebury College
- Clemson University
- University of South Carolina
- University of South Carolina Beaufort
- Technical College of the Lowcountry
- Georgia Southern University
- College of Charleston
- South Carolina State University
- University of South Carolina Upstate
- Lander University
- Benedict College

Scholarship Success
The achievements of this class extend beyond college admissions. Students have collectively received an impressive **$35,179,567** in scholarships, highlighting their hard work and dedication.

Career Pathways
Among the graduates, 220 students will be entering the workforce directly, embarking on various career pathways that will contribute to the local economy. Some of these pathways include welding, cosmetology, and firefighting among many others.

Military Commitment
The class also boasts 71 graduates who have chosen to enlist in the military, demonstrating their commitment to serving the country.

Academic Honors
In addition to college and career readiness, the district celebrates the academic excellence of its students:

- 1 National Merit Finalist
- 64 AP Capstone students
- 35 IB Diplomas
- 20 Associate Degrees
- 53 College Certificates from Technical College of the Lowcountry

The Beaufort County School District congratulates the Class of 2025 on their outstanding achievements and wishes them success in their future endeavors.











National Merit Scholar from Bluffton High

Ava Elizabeth Rios, a Bluffton High School student, has been named a winner of the prestigious National Merit Scholarship. She is one of 2,500 high school seniors nationwide to receive the $2,500 award, based on her accomplishments, skills, and potential for success in college studies.

Rios, who will attend Yale University this fall to major in Neuroscience, aims to attend medical school and become a physician. She is also passionate about conservation, volunteering with the Hilton Head Audubon Society and the Coastal Discovery Museum to protect the Lowcountry's wildlife.



Superintendent Frank Rodriguez praised Rios' achievement, highlighting the district's strong academic programs and supportive learning environment. "This is a great accomplishment for Ava and our district," said Superintendent Frank Rodriguez.

"It speaks to the academic rigor we offer, and the superb instructional environment provided by our educators and staff in support of student achievement.

This year's National Merit Scholarship Program started with the October 2023 PSAT/NMSQT, which screened entrants, recognizing less than one percent of high school seniors nationwide. The number of winners in each state is proportional to its share of the nation's graduating seniors.

Let's Go Public!



March STOM

March's character trait was "self-control."

The March student of the month for Southern Beaufort County was Ella Cooler, a fourth-grade student at Okatie Elementary School.

Ella Cooler, a 4th grader at Okatie Elementary, is a true role model of self-control. She approaches every task with focus, kindness, and responsibility—whether in class, with friends, or in extracurriculars. Teachers praise her maturity, patience, and ability to stay composed, even in challenging situations. Ella leads by example, always making thoughtful choices and encouraging others to do the same. Her integrity and calm presence make her a standout student and an excellent representative of this character trait.



April STOM

April's character trait was "forgiveness." .

The April student of the month for Southern Beaufort County was Storm Scheriff, a second-grade student at M.C. Riley Elementary School.

Storm is a kind, respectful, and dedicated 2nd grade student who approaches each day with a positive attitude. He builds strong relationships with peers and teachers, consistently demonstrating excellent manners, responsibility, and teamwork. Storm shows remarkable empathy and forgiveness—once calmly expressing his feelings after a peer made a negative comment, accepting the apology, and choosing to move forward with kindness. His compassion and integrity make him a role model in the classroom.



May STOM

May's character trait was "Responsibility/ Cooperation."

The May student of the month for Southern Beaufort County was Yelsy Funez Perez, a first-grade student at Red Cedar Elementary School.

Yelsy consistently demonstrates exceptional responsibility and cooperation in the classroom. She comes prepared each day, completes assignments on time, and follows routines independently—even when transitioning in and out of class for additional services. She quickly refocuses and takes initiative to complete missed work without complaint. Yelsy also works well with peers, showing kindness, encouragement, and strong teamwork during group activities. Her positive attitude and dedication make her a strong role model and a deserving Student of the Month.

May River High School Silver Sound Band Wins Prestigious State Award

Congratulations to the May River High School Silver Sound Band on receiving the Outstanding Performance Award (OPA)—the highest honor a band program can earn in the state of South Carolina!

This incredible achievement marks only the second time in 50 years that a band from Beaufort County has received this prestigious recognition. The OPA honors excellence across the entire school year, reflecting superior performances in State Marching Band Championships, Concert Performance Assessment (CPA), Region Honor Band, and the Solo & Ensemble Festival.

To qualify, band programs must earn at least 90 out of 100 points, accumulated through student participation and achievement in these events. At the SC Solo & Ensemble Festival, 10 student soloists and groups from May River received the highest "Superior" rating, securing the final points needed to bring home the award.





Hilton Head Island Middle School

Hilton Head Island Middle School received the Championship Circle Award for the 2024-2025 school year! This award acknowledges excellence and superior performance within our Beaufort County Middle School League.

In addition to the Championship Circle Award, several of their student athletes and one of their coaches were recognized by the district.

Mrs. Haleigh Edwards was named as the BCSD Coach of the Year for Track and Field. Student Ke'lidre Frost received the BCSD Track and Field Athlete of the Year award; and lastly Yasmeen Kuyper received the BCSD 2025 Girls' Soccer Player of the Year award!







Graduating into Healthcare

Thirteen seniors from four District high schools were honored at a special graduation ceremony, graduating as the inaugural Beaufort Memorial Hospital PATH program cohort. Since January, students trained on the hospital campus to become certified patient care technicians or clinical medical assistants, gaining real-world experience and healthcare credentials to jumpstart their medical careers. Several students plan to enter the workforce immediately—including five who will begin working at Beaufort Memorial—while others will continue their education in nursing programs or medical school.



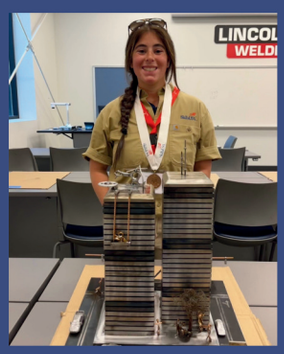
Lowcountry Technology Champion Award

Morgan Wegard, a senior at May River High School, has been named the South Carolina Low Country Technology Champion by the SC Department of Education, recognizing her excellence in Career and Technical Education (CTE).
“I was super excited to win it! It really showed me that all my hard work has paid off,” Morgan shared. Throughout her high school years, Morgan dedicated herself to CTE courses like accounting, welding, and general management, earning completer certifications in both welding and accounting.
She appreciates the hands-on learning CTE offers, saying, “It's not just regular school. You're doing something you'll actually use in the future—whether it’s a job or a hobby.”

Morgan's teachers are proud of her achievements. Brad Childress, her welding teacher, called her an outstanding leader, while accounting teacher Vanessa Mitchell praised her work ethic and versatility, noting that Morgan's commitment to multiple disciplines is preparing her for a successful future.
This fall, Morgan plans to attend Georgetown University as an education major, where she hopes to apply the skills learned through CTE courses. "They’ve taught me how to build relationships and make courses fun and hands-on," she said.
Morgan is one of 12 students statewide to receive the award, and as part of the honor, she will receive a trophy and a $350 scholarship. Her recognition is a reflection of the high-quality CTE programs at May River High School.









Bulldogs Win Championship

The H.E. McCracken Bulldogs capped off a stellar season with an 11–2 win in the title game, showcasing their offensive power and pitching depth. The team posted an impressive .448 batting average in the championship, tallying 13 hits, including a home run.

Nate Fulton led the offensive charge, going a perfect 2-for-2 at the plate with a double, a home run, two walks, and four RBIs. On the mound, Nick Carpentar delivered a strong performance, pitching four innings without allowing an earned run. He gave up just one walk and struck out three.

This marks the second championship for the program under Athletic Director William Murray, with the first coming in the 2021–2022 season. Both titles have been won under the leadership of Coach Grissom, who has built a consistently strong program. Grissom was also named the 2025 Coach of the Year for Beaufort County School District.

The team finished the season with an outstanding record of 9 wins, 1 tie, and just 1 loss.





New Principals at five Beaufort County Schools

Beaufort County School District is pleased to announce new principals for the 2025-2026 school year at four schools.

Michelle de Bruin, formerly Assistant Principal at Beaufort Elementary, will assume the principal role, succeeding Michelle Sackman, who has transitioned to the District Office. De Bruin brings extensive district experience and plans to enhance STEM initiatives and family engagement.

At Coosa Elementary, Kelly Goudy will take over as principal, replacing Melissa Pender, who now serves as a district Executive Director. Goudy offers strong leadership experience and is pursuing a doctorate in educational innovation.

Dr. Elandee Thompson, previously principal of Beaufort Middle, will become principal at Battery Creek High School, succeeding Denise Lessard, who has moved to the District Office's student services division. Thompson has 28 years of experience in BCSD as both teacher and administrator and holds a doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction.

Freda McCanick, assistant principal at Whale Branch Early College High School, will step into the principal role following Dr. Sonji Leach's move to the District Office. McCanick has a solid background in literacy and educational leadership.

At Bluffton Elementary, Dr. Brandi Bullock will replace Paula Brown, who is retiring after 28 years with BCSD. Bullock served as the district's Director of Teaching and Learning and brings broad experience in instructional leadership and school administration.



SCASA Honors Alice Walton with 2025 Lifetime Achievement Award

The South Carolina Association of School Administrators (SCASA) annually honors up to three veteran education leaders with its Lifetime Achievement Award. This year, Ms. Alice Walton, Chief Administrative & Human Resources Officer for the Beaufort County School District, is a proud recipient.

For over a decade, Ms. Walton has led key initiatives like the Substitute Blitz, Job Fair, International Nights, salary compensation study, and the district's COVID-19 response. Her leadership ensures the district hires and supports educators effectively across all areas.

Beyond her expertise, she challenges those around her to perform their best—a true mark of exceptional leadership.

Beaufort County School District congratulates Ms. Walton on this well-deserved honor recognizing her lifelong dedication and impact.

Back to School Expo

Beaufort County School District's Back to School Expo will be held on Saturday, July 26, 2025, at Battery Creek High School, from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM. This event presents the opportunity for parents, students, educators, and community members to connect with education, health, and community business partners in person.

The expo will also offer a free boxed lunch for all participants, door prizes, and school supplies for students.

Scan the QR code below to register for this event!



