Vol. 2, Issue 1

BCSD BEACON

BCSD Expands Early Learning Opportunities

The Beaufort County School District is making bold investments in early childhood education, celebrating a renovated library, a traveling preschool bus, and a new observation lab classroom to support young learners and their teachers.

Together, these efforts expand access to high-quality early learning for children across Beaufort County while investing in the educators who guide them.

Traveling PreSchool Bus

The bus will travel throughout Beaufort County, offering hands-on learning experiences for young children and connecting families with books, educational materials and referrals to community services.



“We believe early childhood learning experiences build the foundation for lifelong success and that all children should have access to these experiences,” said Ashley Gould, Director of Readiness.

The bus features interactive play stations and updated technology, including a virtual sand table where children can explore everything from dinosaurs to ocean habitats.





James J. Davis Renovation

James J. Davis Early Learning Center took on a whole new look with a ribbon-cutting and dedication of its renovated library, honoring longtime community advocate Pastor James E. Moore.



“It's an honor to be able to recognize Pastor Moore for his service to not only the community, but to the Beaufort County School District. He is one that is always engaged, always involved, and cares deeply about the children that we serve,” said Superintendent Dr. Frank Rodriguez.

The redesigned space offers literacy, STEAM, and play-based learning opportunities for children from birth through age five. “Education and faith in God make a human being unstoppable in life,” Moore said. “I see our children now have the opportunity to go and be anything they want to be.”

The library features interactive sensory stations, collaborative building areas, and hands-on learning tools to foster curiosity, problem-solving, and language development, said Ashley Gould, Director of Readiness. The dedication was part of the district’s inaugural James J. Davis Day, which included student performances and tours of the new space.









Observation and Lab Classroom

The district has also opened a new early childhood observation and lab classroom in partnership with the University of South Carolina Beaufort and the Community Foundation of the Lowcountry. The classroom allows future and current teachers to observe and practice in a real early learning environment, with a focus on purposeful, play-based instruction.

District leaders say the combined initiatives strengthen support for young learners while investing in high-quality teacher preparation, a commitment to building strong families, schools and a thriving community.

Scan the QR code below to get a first hand look at the new observation and lab classroom.

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Student Spotlight



November Student of the Month

November's Student of the Month for Southern Beaufort County was Sophia Campos Montes, a third grader at Red Cedar Elementary School. Sophia shows gratitude every day by thanking her teachers, using polite words like "please" and "excuse me," and following classroom rules. She demonstrates respect for her teachers and classmates through her kind words and positive behavior. At home and at school, she notices small acts of kindness and always takes time to say thank you or help someone in need. Sophia's respectful and thankful attitude makes her classroom and community a happier place.



December Student of the Month

December's Student of the Month for Southern Beaufort County was Cristian Alveranga, a fourth-grade student at Okatie Elementary School. Cristian consistently shows compassion in the classroom by being patient, respectful, and offering kind words to classmates who may be feeling down. Cristian includes everyone, works well with all classmates, and brightens others' days with friendly greetings and thoughtful compliments. His selflessness, gratitude, and caring heart make him a true role model and an outstanding representative of compassion.



January Student of the Month

January's Student of the Month for Southern Beaufort County was Wren Thrasher, a kindergartener at Okatie Elementary School. Wren demonstrates perseverance every day by facing challenges with confidence, courage, and a bright smile. Wren works hard, rarely gives up, and is always willing to try. Her teachers describe her as determined, resilient, kind, and incredibly independent, never letting obstacles stand in her way. Wren's positive attitude and strong spirit make her a true example of perseverance and an inspiration to everyone around her.

BCSD students earn top regional honors in 2026 Scholastic Art & Writing Awards

Beaufort County School District high school students have earned top regional recognition in the 2026 Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, the nation's longest-running recognition program for creative teens and one of the largest sources of scholarships for young artists and writers.

Gold Key awards — the highest regional honor — were presented to students from Bluffton High School and Hilton Head Island High School for outstanding original work spanning drawing, ceramics, sculpture, mixed media, and experimental photography. Bianca Picasso's Hidden but Homey was also named an American Visions Nominee, a distinction awarded to a select number of regional Gold Key works chosen as the best of the best to represent their region at the national level.

Gold Key recipients now advance to national adjudication, where their work will be considered for national medals and scholarship opportunities.

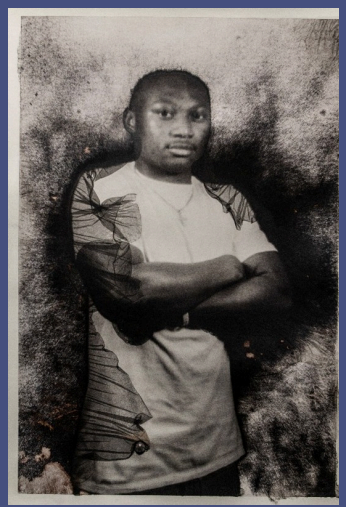
To view the complete list of Beaufort County students who earned Silver Key and Honorable Mention awards, scan the QR code.

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In order from left to right: Bianca Picasso, Hidden but Homey (Drawing) – American Visions Nominee; Sophie Olander, Bloom in Twilight (Mixed Media); Charlotte Hussey, Re-Arranged (Sculpture); Rhett Marshall, Superman (Experimental Photography); Maxima Poletto, Fall Foliage (Ceramics); Sienna Schutz, Transformations of Africa (Drawing)

May River High School Cuts the Ribbon on New CTE Facility Expanding Career Pathways

May River High School marked a major milestone with the ribbon cutting of its new 20,000-square-foot Career & Technical Education (CTE) facility, a significant expansion aimed at advancing hands-on learning and workforce readiness.

The state-of-the-art addition includes approximately 14,000 square feet of classroom and lab space featuring modern welding labs, advanced engineering and technology classrooms, and a fully equipped maker space with industry-relevant tools. Designed to reflect real-world work environments, the facility gives students practical experience and industry-aligned training in high-demand career fields.

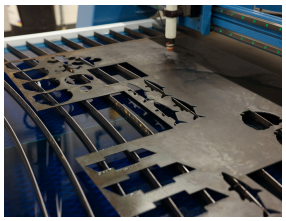
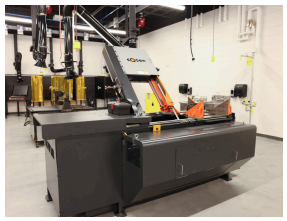
An additional 6,000 square feet is dedicated to the school's JROTC program, providing purpose-built classrooms and support areas that strengthen leadership development and hands-on training.

District leaders say the project highlights continued investment in career pathways across the Beaufort County School District. Funded through the district's 2019 and 2023 bond referendums, the new facility reflects strong community support for expanding technical education opportunities and preparing students for success beyond graduation.

The project was designed by Quackenbush Architects + Planners and built by Thompson Turner Construction.

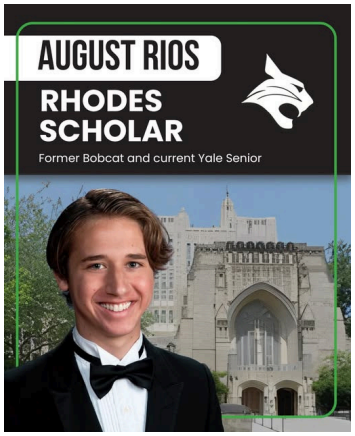




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From Bobcat to Rhodes Scholar



Congratulations to August Rios, a former Bluffton High School Bobcat and current senior at Yale University, for being named a Rhodes Scholar.

He is one of just 32 Americans selected nationwide each year for this prestigious scholarship, which covers all tuition, fees, and living expenses for postgraduate study.

After graduating from Yale, August will attend Oxford University in England, continuing his academic journey at one of the world's top universities.

The Rhodes Scholarship seeks to develop "public-spirited leaders" and promote international understanding and peace.

August's achievement highlights his exceptional leadership, scholarship, and commitment to making a positive impact, and it makes Bluffton proud to see a local alum honored on the global stage.

May River High School Wrestling Back to Back Champs

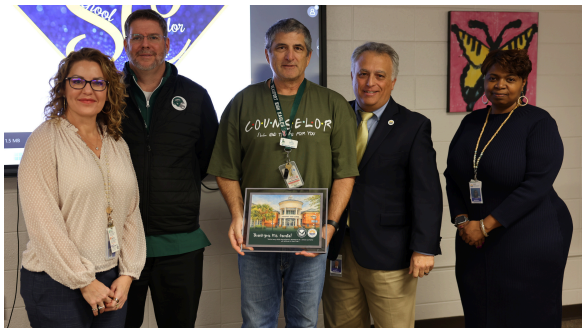


May River High School wrestling has won the state championship for the second year in a row. The Sharks defeated Travelers Rest 31-29 on Wednesday at Gilbert High School to claim the SC High School League Class 4A title. This was May River's fourth appearance in the state championship, and the match featured the top two ranked 4A teams, with May River holding a 27-1 record.

Bluffton High School Girls Cross Country



The Bluffton girls' cross-country team repeated as state champions at Aiken Steeplechase, winning their second straight Class 4A title with 61 points. Four Bluffton runners placed in the top 11 to earn all-state honors: Giada Carge finished fifth (18:44), Kaylee Degirmenci sixth (19:00), Emily Hunt tenth (19:28), and Madelyn Crapps eleventh (19:33). Bishop England finished second with 104 points.



District School Counselor of the Year

Beaufort High School counselor David Favata was recently honored as the Beaufort County School District 2026–2027 School Counselor of the Year.

Superintendent Dr. Frank Rodriguez praised Favata for his unique approach to supporting students. “What truly sets Mr. Favata apart is his ability to combine heart with structure,” Dr. Rodriguez said. “Mr. Favata’s own educational journey shaped his belief that every student deserves a strong advocate and that success is never defined by just one path.”

Favata, who has served as a school counselor for 25, years four of them in Beaufort County, credited his team for much of his success. “I think what I’ve taken the most pride in is building a team,” he said. “And, my team is really why we’re successful.”

He also finds pride in helping students navigate their futures. “I take pride in seeing students achieve their goals - in whatever field in college or trades,” Favata said.

Beaufort High principal Ryan Walsh applauded Favata’s dedication. “Mr. Favata is incredibly deserving of School Counselor of the Year. He works tirelessly for his students, parents, and for the good of the school,” Walsh said. “There’s no work hours for him.”



BCSD Principal Receives Peggy May Inspiration Award

Dr. Kathy Corley, principal of Red Cedar Elementary School, has been honored with the Peggy May Inspiration Award, presented by the Foundation for Educational Excellence.

The Peggy May Inspiration Award recognizes a person, group, or family who demonstrates extraordinary dedication, passion and skill in ways that influence and inspire local students.

District leaders said Dr. Corley’s leadership, commitment to excellence and unwavering support for students and staff make her especially deserving of the recognition.

Under her guidance, Red Cedar Elementary — home of the Foxes — has continued to foster a culture focused on student achievement, strong relationships and high expectations for all learners.

Colleagues say Corley’s steady leadership and daily dedication leave a lasting impact on the school community.

The award celebrates not only her professional accomplishments but also the inspiration she provides to students and educators alike.





BCSD Earns Blue Ribbon Affiliate for Parents as Teachers Program

The Beaufort County School District has earned Blue Ribbon Affiliate status from Parents as Teachers, the organization’s highest recognition for quality and fidelity to its evidence-based home visitation model.

Parents as Teachers is a nationally recognized program that partners with families to support child development and strengthen early learning through personalized home visits and resources.

“This achievement reflects the dedication of our parent educators,” Superintendent Dr. Frank Rodriguez said. “Your partnership is central to this achievement.”

The honor underscores the district’s continued focus on building strong communities, supporting thriving families and preparing children for success in kindergarten and beyond.

The district’s Parents as Teachers program will be formally recognized at the Parents as Teachers International Conference in October 2026 in Portland, Oregon.

Dr. Rebecca Stempel, Coordinator of Early Childhood & Parent Education, and the district’s Parent Educator team were invited to receive the official certificate in recognition of their work.

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Let's Go Public!