



Bright Spots and Big Moments in Mapleton

Friday, April 10, 2026

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:

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"!](#)

Bright Spots

9News highlights team teaching at Academy High School

Mapleton welcomed 9News to Academy High School yesterday to showcase its team teaching model in action.



The story highlights how social studies teacher Kristy Vazquez and English teacher Courtney Tinklenberg collaborate to coordinate lessons, combining their expertise in areas like geography, reading and writing to deepen student learning.

The district has expanded its team teaching model to multiple schools over the past few years. By bringing two teachers into the classroom, students benefit from multiple perspectives and more individualized support. The approach also helps teachers

collaborate more closely, share ideas and reduce the sense of isolation that can come with teaching.

[Watch the 9news story here!](#)

Three Mapleton seniors named Daniels Fund, Boettcher Scholars

Three Mapleton seniors are heading to college with some of the most prestigious scholarships available to Colorado students.

Cristian G. of Academy High School was named both a Daniels Fund Scholar and a Boettcher Scholar. Anya F. of York International School earned the Daniels Fund Scholarship, and Madelyn D. of Mapleton Early Career Prep (MEC) received the Boettcher Scholarship.

These scholarships recognize top students for their academic achievement, leadership, and service, and can cover most or all college costs. From engineering to criminal law, each student has big plans for the future and a strong desire to give back to their community.

Read the [full story here, in our “News from the District”](#) section.



Cristian G., Academy High School



Anya F., York International School



Madelyn D., Mapleton Early Career Prep

Academy High School senior accepted to Yale University

Congratulations to Academy High School senior Marley P. for being accepted to Yale University, one of the nation's most prestigious institutions!

Marley learned the news during Spring Break while surrounded by her family. When she opened the email, a celebratory video played and the room quickly filled with cheers and tears.

"I was genuinely in shock," she said. "It was such a mix of excitement and joy, but also the feeling that I actually did it."

Marley is considering studying biomedical engineering and political science, with long-term goals in medicine, law, and public service.

Throughout high school, Marley has built an impressive résumé, including national academic recognitions and success in moot court competitions.

She is still weighing her final decision, but says Yale is currently her top choice.



Record number of Mapleton seniors earn Seal of Biliteracy

A record 32 Mapleton seniors will graduate this year with the Seal of Biliteracy, the highest number in district history.

The Seal of Biliteracy is an official recognition placed on a student's diploma and transcript, signifying proficiency in English and at least one other language. It signals to colleges and

employers that a student has achieved strong academic and language skills in multiple languages. This year's honorees include:

Academy High School: Emily V., Cassandra G., Camila G., Cristian G., Emily B., Axel F., Jorge S., Lezeski N., Abraham M., Manuel M.

Global Leadership Academy: Yaretzi S., Nancy R., Erik T., Lluvia D., Kimberly I.

Mapleton Early Career Prep: Fabiola M., Xitlati R., Maya E.

Mapleton Expeditionary School of the Arts: Valeria D., Christopher U., Jarely H., Mailene J., Yeneisy D.

Performing Arts School on Broadway: Yesenia E.

York International School: Nathalie V., Anya F., Lissania N., Samantha E., Aittza M., Jarim G., Elias P., Mariana M.

Students can earn the Seal by demonstrating proficiency through approved assessments, including AP exams or options like AAPPL, which allows students to show skills in their heritage language. To learn more about the Seal of Biliteracy and approved assessments, visit the [Colorado Department of Education website, here.](#)



SAVE THE DATE

Friday, May 1, 2026 | 5:30 p.m.

Delta Hotels by Marriott (Denver Thornton)
10 E 120th Ave., Northglenn, CO 80233

Celebrating Our Awards for Excellence nominees

Mapleton is proud to recognize this year's **Awards for Excellence** nominees.

Employees were nominated in three categories: Administrator, Classified and Licensed staff. These individuals were selected for their demonstration of Mapleton's Standards of Excellence and commitment to students, colleagues, and the Mapleton community.

Administrator nominees:

- Meghan DeKam
- Danielle Dickson
- Jolene Durrant
- Ryan Fiore
- Dan Jimenez
- Micah Klaver
- Mackenzie Magner
- Lisa Schwartz
- Eriksen Van Etten

Classified nominees:

- Linda Carrasco
- Tara Clemons
- Guadalupe Colmenero
- Lori Domenico
- Bryan Gallegos
- Esther Herrada
- Nestor Justiniano
- Nick Romero
- Rosa Ruiz de Munoz
- Carlee Smith

Licensed nominees:

- Conor Boatright
- Jennifer Connelly
- Josh Hirsch
- Mike Laudico
- Nicole Nemechek
- Jared Powell
- Sherrill Sandstrom
- Layli Schultz
- Adam Scott
- Elizabeth Tarbutton

At our [2025-26 Awards for Excellence Celebration](#), we will honor these nominees, as well as our retirees, and members of our Quarter Century Club.

Retirees:

Michell Ansley - Teaching and Learning Services

Jacqueline Archuleta - Performing Arts School on Broadway

Dianne Bennett - York International School

Eleanor Burns - Assessment

Robert Canter - Adventure Elementary

David Cortez - Transportation Services

Scott Graham - Mapleton Online

Maria Guntle - Operations Services

Domingo Jauregui - Operations Services

Sandra Jenson - Integrated Services
Kimberly Martin - Early Childhood Education
Suzanne Morales - Trailside Academy
Melodie Mull - Business Services
Suzanne Ott - Integrated Services
Michelle Warsinke - York International School
MaryKay Watkins - York International School
Loren Willson - York International School
Cynthia Valdez - Business Services

Quarter Century Club Members:

Lori Domenico - Mapleton Expeditionary School of the Arts
Melissa Gallegos - Meadow Community School
Bernadette Martinez - Transportation Services
Maria Ramirez - Global Primary Academy
Cynthia Valdez - Business Services
Barbara Vallejos - Welcome Center

Event Details

Date: Friday, May 1, 2026

Time: Doors open at 5:30 p.m. | Program at 6:20 p.m.

Location: Delta Hotels Denver Thornton, 10 E 120th Ave, Northglenn, CO 80233

\$25 per person | Dinner will be served | Semi-formal attire

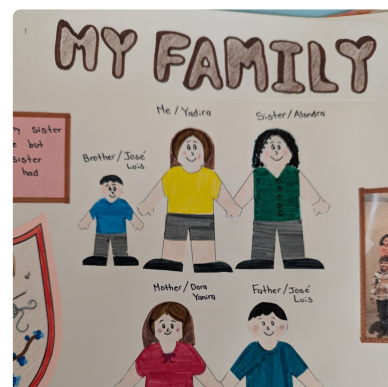
[Purchase Tickets](#)

Big Moments

MESA students build English skills through family project

At Mapleton, we believe in providing equitable, engaging, and rigorous learning environments for multilingual learners, and in helping students stay connected with their family, their culture, and their community. This recent project from Mapleton Expeditionary School of the Arts is a perfect example of that belief in action!

Students in MESA's English Language Development class recently completed a project that gave them a fun and meaningful way to practice English while celebrating



their families. In the unit "My Family," students interviewed relatives and created poster presentations about their families' backgrounds, traditions, and memories, then presented their work to classmates.

For many students who are new to the United States, the project offered a powerful opportunity to reflect on their roots while building their English skills. In Mapleton, the top languages spoken by our students following English include Spanish, Persian (Dari), Vietnamese, Punjabi, and Farsi, a beautiful reflection of the rich diversity in our community.

The class focuses daily on reading, writing, speaking, and listening, with an emphasis on creating a safe space where students can practice and grow with confidence.

"I hope this project helps them appreciate their family and culture, where they came from and who they are, and use that to build their English skills," said teacher Kari Stephens.

We are so proud of these students and the incredible work happening in our classrooms every day!



JROTC cadets explore Nation's Capital

Four Mapleton Air Force JROTC cadets traveled to Washington, D.C., over Spring Break with their instructors as part of an annual trip to learn more about the nation's history and government.

As part of this long-standing tradition, cadets visited sites across the region, from walking the grounds of Gettysburg National Military Park to exploring landmarks near the National Mall, including the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum.

The experience gives cadets the opportunity to see firsthand the places and institutions they study while building memories that will stay with them well beyond the trip.

Throughout the visit, cadets represented Mapleton with professionalism, respect and integrity, earning praise for the way they carried themselves. They were outstanding ambassadors for our schools.

Students find their voice through art at Monterey Community School

Middle school students at Monterey Community School are creating artwork with purpose, voice and creativity in Ms. Sand's art class.

Since January, students have designed their own projects, choosing subjects that reflect their interests and experiences. This choice-



based approach encourages students to take ownership of their work and connect more deeply to the creative process.

Using a self-assessment rubric as their guide, students developed the meaning behind their pieces and selected materials to bring their ideas to life. Students' projects have included acrylic paintings, ceramics, recycled materials and imaginative designs.

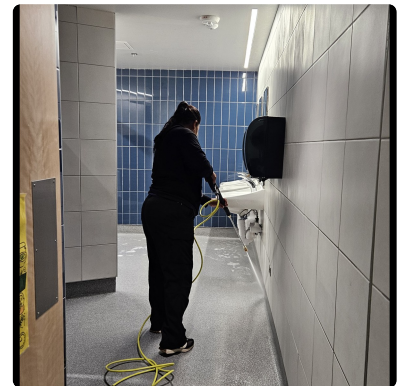
As a Leader in Me school, Monterey empowers students to find their voice, make thoughtful choices and take ownership of their learning.

Behind the Spark

Spring Break? Not for these crews

While students were on Spring Break last week, Mapleton's custodial and maintenance teams were hard at work preparing schools for the final stretch of the year.

The break provided an ideal window to complete projects that are more difficult to tackle during the school day. Crews completed exterior landscape clean-up, HVAC upgrades and plumbing repairs across the district.



Custodial teams also completed deep cleaning, including power washing restrooms, window washing and carpet care.

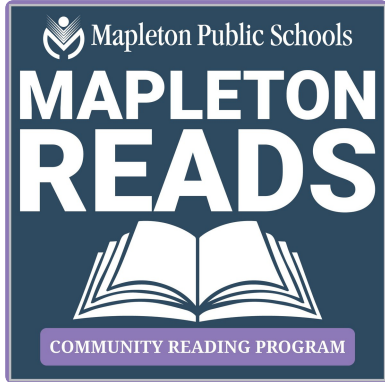
Thank you to our custodial and maintenance staff, along with our partner contractors, for helping keep our schools clean, safe and ready for learning.

Community Connections

Submit your book recommendations for Mapleton Reads

Have a great book to recommend? Mapleton is now accepting submissions for next school year's Mapleton Reads community reading program.

Mapleton Reads, which will celebrate 14 years this fall, brings students, families, staff and neighbors together by reading the same books and engaging in shared conversations. Each year, three books are selected for elementary, intermediate and high school level readers.



Suggested titles should be widely engaging and include themes that resonate with readers at each level. Free copies of selected books will be available at Mapleton school offices, the Mapleton Arts Center, the Administration Building and the Welcome Center on the Skyview Campus.

Mapleton is now accepting recommendations for the next round of Mapleton Reads. [Share your recommendations here by Friday, May 15.](#) Final selections are reviewed by district staff and

approved by the Board of Education in September.

Help us choose the next great reads for our community!

Recommend a title for Mapleton Reads!

A purple poster for a 'Fundraiser Night' event. At the top is the Mapleton Education Foundation logo with the tagline 'The path to great starts here.' Below that is 'MAPLETON PUBLIC SCHOOLS' in small white text, followed by 'FUNDRAISER NIGHT' in large, bold, white capital letters. Underneath is 'BENEFITING | EN BENEFICIO DE THE MAPLETON EDUCATION FOUNDATION' in small white text. The date and time 'WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22 6:40PM' are displayed in large white text. Below this are the logos for the Colorado Rockies (CR) and San Diego State University (SD) in white, separated by 'VS'. At the bottom, it says 'TICKETS STARTING AT BOLETOS A PARTIR DE \$7' in white, with 'Available online only | Disponible solo en línea' in smaller white text below it. The website 'WWW.ROCKIES.COM/MAPLETON' is written in large white text. To the right of the website is a QR code.

High Fives!

Submit a High Five!

High Fives are picking up steam

High Fives are gaining momentum! In the last week, we received 15 submissions, putting us well on our way toward our goal of 50 more before Staff Appreciation Week, May 4-8.

Have you shared a High Five yet?

[High Fives](#) were started almost two years ago as a way to recognize the many difference-makers across Mapleton. Every day, someone steps up, supports a colleague, or makes a positive impact for students, and those moments deserve to be celebrated.

It takes less than 30 seconds to submit a High Five, and they can be shared by staff, students, or family members.

As we head into the final stretch of the school year, giving or receiving a High Five can be a meaningful boost.

Check out our latest submissions below.

Colby Lucy, York International School

"Colby comes to work each day with a positive attitude that rubs off on everyone she interacts with! Her calming presence and unwavering patience encourages the students she works with to grow in their own way and in their own time. She is dedicated, hard working, and committed to seeing each student succeed. It has been an absolute pleasure working with her this year!"

Submitted by Joy Thompson

Alicia Martinez-Holman, Preschool on Poze (PoP)

"Alicia is our IG at PoP. She has been incredibly supportive and such a valuable resource to help me with my classroom instruction, data work, and organization. She has been amazing to work with in a year that has been more difficult than normal for me. I truly appreciate all the work she does and support she has provided me and the team at PoP!"

Submitted by Tanya McCarty

Speech Language Pathologists across the district

"The Speech Language Pathologists across the district are an amazing group of professionals. They are so knowledgeable and each have their own area of expertise. I can get answers to questions about assessment, strategies, behavior, and how to talk with teachers/parents. I am not sure what I would do without this support system."

Submitted by Maureen Russ

Max Tuning, Explore PK-8

"Max joins us for a hour each day, and he makes a huge impact! Despite not teaching first grade, every day, our first graders are excited to see him. He helps to manage that woolly transition from lunch to specials, and he's turned that opportunity into games they love to play. They feel deeply connected to him.

Additionally, in our Explore Talent Show, Max joined two eighth grade orchestra students in a truly wonderful performance. His encouragement, support, and impact is profound within our building, and he's worth celebrating!"

Submitted by Maryalice DeAngelis

Shelby Lewis, Explore PK-8

"Shelby created an opportunity for Explore students to shine. At "Explore's Got Talent" event, students in grades 5-8 danced, sang, and played their instruments on stage. It boosted confidence and connection in our students, and their bravery was a beautiful thing to witness."

Submitted by Maryalice DeAngelis

Sam Erb, Monterey Community School

"Sam has been the absolute best partner I could have asked for this year. She is so knowledgeable in her craft and is incredibly organized. We have been able to do great work together this year even with some odds stacked against us, and I couldn't be more grateful to have her with me."

Submitted by Cadence Litt

Mapleton's Custodial Team

"Huge shout out to our amazing custodial team ☺ Thank you for your hard work, dedication, and kindness every single day. You keep our buildings clean, welcoming, and running smoothly, and it does not go unnoticed. We truly appreciate everything you do for our schools and our community!"

Submitted by Zuleika Leon

Mapleton's Maintenance Team

"Huge shout out to our incredible maintenance team 🛠️ Your problem-solving, reliability, and behind-the-scenes work make a huge difference every day. Whether it's tackling repairs, handling emergencies, or improving our facilities, you help keep everything moving forward. We're grateful for the impact you make and all the effort you put into supporting our schools and community!"

Submitted by Zuleika Leon

Abby Lee, Integrated Services

"Abby has jumped in to help our team while we are short staffed. She has done so much work to support us and she has been amazing to work with! We couldn't get everything done without her!"

Submitted by Laura Nelson

Emily Piper Allen, Global Primary Academy

"Emily has come in to support us while we are short staffed and we really appreciate all of her help! Thanks for being such a great team player!"

Submitted by Laura Nelson

Trish Jeffries, Global Primary Academy

"Trish has been an amazing support to our to our preschool and special education teams. She has taken on things to help our team and it has made a huge difference!"

Peggy Beard, Global Primary Academy

"Peggy always goes above and beyond. She is helpful and encouraging to start and students."

Submitted by Jessica Rodriguez

Maggi Gomez, Mapleton Expeditionary School of the Arts (MESA)

"Maggi is a fabulous person in general, but she puts her entire self into her passion for teaching! She has gone above and beyond her job description to support me in my role. She sincerely cares about the students' success and gives so much of her time to ensure they do succeed. Thank you Maggi! Couldn't have made it this year without you!"

Submitted by Kari Stephens

Rhonda Vigil, MESA

"Rhonda goes above and beyond her job title to help students be successful at MESA. She cares for students deeply and motivates them to get to class on time, and to do their best! She has made me feel extra welcome here this year. MESA isn't MESA without Ms. Vigil!"

Submitted by Kari Stephens

Kristen Halo, Trailside Academy

"Halo is the kind of teacher who goes beyond the classroom, showing up not only for her students but for their families as well. She creates a space where every child feels seen, supported, and encouraged to grow. Parents know they can come to her with anything big or small, and she will listen with care, communicate openly, and work alongside them to find the best path forward. Her dedication, compassion and commitment make a lasting impact on everyone she serves."

Submitted by Meghan Mann

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

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

