



School News

Celebration days

Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) will celebrate bus drivers and attendants on April 28. Bus drivers and attendants can stop by Laurel Springs Park 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. to pick up lunch courtesy of CCPS transportation staff for **Bus Driver and Attendant Appreciation Day**.

School Lunch Hero Day is Friday, May 1. Celebrate CCPS food and nutrition services (FNS) staff for “feeding the future.” The day celebrates FNS staff who nourish students which supports learning.

National Teacher Appreciation Week is May 4 to 8 with Teacher Appreciation Day on Tuesday, May 5. CCPS will have a Teacher Appreciation e-card site available from May 1 to 8 allowing coworkers, students and their families, and others to drop a note to teachers who have made a difference in the life of others.

National School Nurse Appreciation Day is Wednesday, May 6. School nurses ensure students and staff are healthy and well cared for.

Math info sessions

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) has adopted a new math policy that takes effect next school year, 2026-2027.

CCPS is hosting two information sessions for parents, staff, students and the community to provide information about the policy changes. Registration is requested. [Click here to register](#).

An in-person session will be 6-7 p.m., Thursday, April 30, at Westlake High School. The meeting is open to the public. A virtual information session is 6-7 p.m., Monday, May 11, on Zoom. The Zoom link is available on the registration form and the meeting is open to the public.

Ackerman named Community School Champion

Marissa Ackerman has always worked to bring people together. As a teacher, as a mom, as a Community School coordinator.

Her dedication to the coordinator role led to her being named a Community School Champion during last month’s annual convening of the [Maryland Center for Community Schools at Towson University](#) (MCCS).

Community School Champions are coordinators who have helped turn a school into a hub that bring families, communities and partners together. Community schools offer wraparound services — such as access to food and health services— to the families of students which, in turn, aids to remove barriers to learning.

At the March 18 Community Schools conference, five community school coordinators were named a Community School Champion representing different regions in Maryland. Ackerman was the award winner for the Southern region, Christine Frederick and Phi Thach-Seals for central Maryland, Alexis McBean for the Eastern Shore and Megan Knepp for Western Maryland.

“Marissa is a strong, student- and family-centered advocate who consistently works to ensure the needs of the Indian Head community are heard and addressed,” Robynn Mudd, com-



Marissa Ackerman was recently named a Community School Champion by the Maryland Center for Community Schools at Towson University.

munity school coordinator at Glymont Middle School, said. “Her advocacy is both proactive and compassionate, focusing on building trust and long-term relationships.”

New role, more services

Four years ago, when Ackerman took on the role of coordinator, the families of students took a needs assessment to provide feedback on what was missing or sought after in the

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Davenport is Maryland History Day Teacher of the Year

Tori Davenport, a veteran social studies teacher with Charles County Public Schools (CCPS), is the [Maryland Humanities](#) state History Day State Teacher of the Year.

Also named the Charles County History Day Teacher of the Year, Davenport’s contributions to the History Day program are “invaluable,” Allen Hopkins, CCPS content specialist for social studies, said.

“She is a cornerstone of our county’s History Day program and the annual History, Industry, Technology and Science (HITS) Expo,” Hopkins said.

Davenport has spent her 24-year career teaching at John Hanson Middle School — almost all in classroom B3. She became involved in the county’s History Day program by happenstance, introduced to the program while student teaching at Mattawoman Middle School. Davenport was gaining instructional practice in the classroom of Diana Scott, a social studies teacher, when Scott brought her along to a History Day Fair that Davenport ended up judging.



Tori Davenport

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Notebook

On the cover

The Board of Education honored outstanding staff members at its April 14 meeting. From left are Sonia March, Ed.D., academic mentor, Mattawoman Middle School; Lisa Willis, prekindergarten instructional assistant (IA), Early Learning Center, La Plata; and Krystle Duehring, secretary to the principal, Phoenix International School of the Arts (PISO-TA). To read more, visit the Staff page of www.cbboe.com.

School plays

“**Legally Blonde Jr.**,” will be staged at Henry E. Lackey High School April 23 through 25. Shows are 6:30 p.m. April 23 through 25, with a 1:30 p.m. matinee on April 25. For tickets, [visit Lackey's gofan.co page](http://visit.Lackey's.gofan.co.page). “**Fame, the Musical**,” will be performed at Westlake High School with shows at 7 p.m. April 23, 24 and 25, and a 2 p.m. matinee April 26. Tickets are available at westlake.cbboe.com. La Plata High School will stage “**Godspell**,” April 30 through May 3. Shows are 6:30 p.m., April 30 through May 2 and 2:30 p.m. May 3. For tickets, [visit La Plata's Eventbrite.com page](http://visit.La.Plata's.Eventbrite.com.page).

Town hall is May 6

The Board of Education of Charles County and Charles County Public Schools, will host a [virtual Town Hall meeting](http://virtual.Town.Hall.meeting) on Wed., May 6, at 7 p.m. via Zoom. The meeting will be livestreamed at www.cbboe.com, and the topic will be a proposed inclement weather virtual learning plan.

Two-hour early dismissal

A two-hour early dismissal for students is Thursday, May 7.

May 8 is a school day

Friday, May 8, is a school day for students and staff. Previously, schools were closed for students and staff as noted in the printed version of the CCPS Parent Handbook/Calendar. However, because of closures due to weather earlier in the school year, May 8 is being used to make up a day lost to snow. An updated calendar can be found at www.cbboe.com.

St. Charles holds Project Citizen event

Sophomores at St. Charles High School are learning how to be active and contributing citizens by identifying an issue in the community and working on ways to remedy it. The students recently worked in groups of four to seven students on Project Citizen curriculum presenting their findings to a panel of judges during an April 9 showcase.

“This project is totally student owned. There is zero teacher intervention as far as doing the work for them,” Michael Colatruglio, a social studies teacher at St. Charles who teaches local, state and national (LSN), said.

A project through the Center for Civic Education, [Project Citizen](http://Project.Citizen) is a six-step process which the students started in March. The steps include identifying a problem of interest to the group — some examples from the showcase included the lack of sidewalks in neighborhoods, pollution of the Potomac River and the need for more recreational spaces for children and teens in the county.

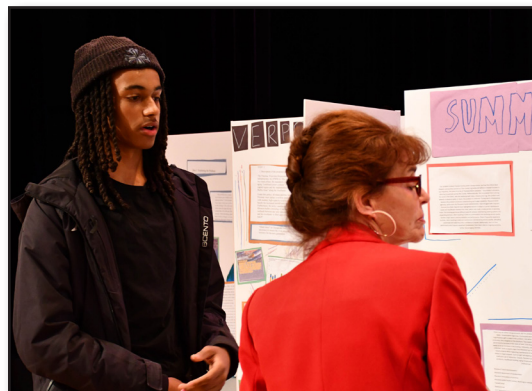
“Students learn to collaborate in a digital environment, they have to learn to view stakeholders beyond themselves, analyze alternative positions and understand why people may oppose their plan or suggest alternatives to it,” Colatruglio said.

For Damon Jenkins Jr., a sophomore who worked on a project focused on the lack of sidewalks in some neighborhoods, the process of getting others on board his team's vision was harder than originally thought. “I think the most challenging part was finding people who would support our cause,” he said. “We had to convince them that it's important to be considerate of all people. This issue affects everyone.”

The project is designed to make teens — on the precipice of reaching voting age and being out in the “real world” — aware of the processes of advocating for changes that benefit members of their communities.

“I think students generally learned a lot about why solutions can't just happen overnight through this project,” Hayley Ressler, a St. Charles social studies teacher, said. “The research on identifying and isolating a specific issue is one task that takes a lot of effort before you even start coming up with ideas.”

The top four teams as rated by the judges



Logan White, left, a sophomore at St. Charles High School, explains an aspect of his team's project to Marcie Taylor-Thoma, Ph.D., director of the Maryland Council for Civic & History Education.

advance to the state's Project Citizen event May 28 in Annapolis.

The following teams advanced to the state Project Citizen program.

- **Potomac River Pollution** — team members are Brooklyn Benfield, Gregory Davis III, Jeriah Proctor and Chase Reynolds.
- **Lack of Sidewalks** — team members are Damon Jenkins Jr., Brianna Julian, Kinleigh Fraser, Jiselle Warren and Ania Robin.
- **Teen First Higher Guarantee Act** — team members are Devin Hall, Ciara Hine, Angelina Busch, Anthony White, Braylon Smith, Karina Urrutia Merren and Khalil Williams.
- **Future Economic Success** — team members are Helena Webb, Logan Perry-Hardin, Tatum Anderson, Kharrri Lee-Corbett, Amira Ligonde, Adrienne Cheatham and Drew Hinson.

The judges for the St. Charles showcase included Marcie Taylor-Thoma, Ph.D., director of the Maryland Council for Civic & History Education which oversees the state's Project Citizen program. She said Project Citizen provides students with hands-on experience in civic participation while strengthening their critical thinking and advocacy skills. “They are developing confidence and agency,” Taylor-Thoma said. “I loved their understanding of policy and levels of government.”

CHAMPION

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community. The results found that access to food and health services, as well as after-school activities for children, were most sought after.

Ackerman got to work developing partnerships and looking for ways to address the concerns churned by the needs assessment. “The first year, my focus was meeting all of our community partners — churches, resource groups, businesses and organizations — that want to give back,” Ackerman said. “Then going about coordinating and plugging in how they can support the school.”

A food pantry was established at the school and operates bi-weekly, manned by volunteers. “The goal is to provide sustainable opportunities for families, so that if my job or funding went away, it will still be able to run,” Ackerman said. “That’s the goal so we aren’t relying on funding, instead we are relying on funds, we are relying on the community.”

It’s a tenant of community schools — the community helping to take care of itself, filling holes and ensuring neighbors aren’t falling through the cracks.

The skill to create and maintain strong relationships is key — it’s a skill that Ackerman has plenty of. “Her ability to build strong community partnerships stand out,” Shane Blandford, principal of Indian Head, said. “Her collaborative approach allows her to work effectively with staff, families and community members, ensuring that supports are aligned and impactful.”

Another need mentioned in the assess-

ment was mental and physical health services in the community. [The Dr. Chinnadurai Devadason School Based Health Center](#) opened earlier this month on the Indian Head campus. The center is open to all CCPS students with services like sick, injury and wellness visits, physicals and school health inventories available.

The third most mentioned need was for afterschool opportunities for students. Ackerman worked with staff to offer afterschool clubs and activities that enhance academic achievement. During this school year, a writing workshop was held in the fall to bolster students’ writing skills and this spring clubs focused on interests like gardening, cheerleading, sports and art are being held. Transportation is provided which allows students to remain after school twice a week to attend clubs.

While ensuring necessary wraparound services are offered, coordinators don’t lose sight of an important aspect of a community school.

“Academic success is always the main goal,” Ackerman said. To boost success, she helped bring tutors to the school to work with students four times a week.

Skills that transfer

Ackerman started her career as a teacher but left the classroom to raise her children. It was around the time that message boards were popping up online connecting people with



Marissa Ackerman

similar interests. Ackerman, then living in North Carolina, started Triangle Mommies, an online forum for parents looking for playdates for their kids, sharing advice and volunteering in the area. The group grew to 4,000 members.

When the family moved back to Maryland — Ackerman and her husband both grew up in Charles County — Ackerman went back into education. She substituted before taking a teaching job at Dr. James Craik Elementary School. She planned to go into school administration. “Then this job popped up,” she said of the role of coordinator. “I read about it and thought it was a really good fit for everything I’ve done over the years and it had an education focus as well.”

Ackerman was the second community school coordinator hired by Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) after Andriell Harris, who was the first coordinator at Dr. Sameul A. Mudd Elementary School. [Harris was honored as a Community School Champion](#) by MCCS last year.

Ackerman is already looking ahead to the next needs assessment and finding ways to continue to help the community and students. “Every day looks different, there’s always something to do,” Ackerman said. “I love coming to work every day. I really love this job.”

School-based health clinic opens in Indian Head

The Town of Indian Head recently gained a much-needed expansion of medical services with the opening of Charles County’s first school-based health center. The center, located on the Indian Head Elementary School campus, held a grand opening earlier this month.

The Dr. Chinnadurai Devadason School Based Health Center is open, with services available for Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) students. The center is located on the Indian Head Elementary School campus, but all CCPS students are eligible to receive services.

The clinic is a joint partnership between Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) and the Charles County Department of Health to expand school health and wellness resources. A school-based health center (SBHC) is a health clinic located right on a school campus. It provides primary, preventive, and urgent care services to help students stay healthy and ready to learn.

The clinic, located at 4202 Indian Head Highway, is open 8 a.m.

to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, and accepts walk-ins or scheduled appointments. To make an appointment, call 301-944-1087. The clinic accepts most insurance plans, including Medicaid, and there is a sliding-scale payment option available for eligible clients.

Clinical services currently available include sick visits, injury visits, wellness visits, physicals (including sports physicals required for CCPS students) and school health inventories.

All CCPS students can enroll to receive health services through the clinic. Parents must complete online forms posted on the clinic website at <https://charlescountyhealth.org/school-based-health-clinic/>. Parents can also complete the forms on site at the clinic or request a packet from their child’s school nurse.

The clinic will be closed on federal holidays, as well as on May 8 and May 11. Read more at www.cboe.com.

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301-932-6610
301-934-7220
Fax: 301-932-6651

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History

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The next year, after graduating from the University of Maryland, College Park, Davenport began her career at Hanson. It also was the year that History Day projects were made mandatory for all sixth and seventh graders to complete. “By default, because I was the only one at the school who knew what History Day was, I became the coordinator as a first-year teacher,” she said. “I had to tell all these established teachers they had to do this project.”

This year, along with other Hanson students, Davenport’s seventh grade honors classes worked on projects. History Day project topics must relate to the program’s annual theme with this year’s being Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History. Maryland Humanities releases [project prompts](#) for students to research if they don’t bring their own to the table.

“It’s a long-term research project,” Davenport said of History Day projects. “It’s a historical investigation. Students are not just spitting back facts. They have to write a thesis statement that they want to prove about their topic. Then there’s more research, making connections between their topic and bigger ideas of the time period.”

Students can present their projects in one of five formats — displayed on a project board, in a documentary, on a website they created, in an historical paper or in a performance.

The projects, which students work on usually

from October to December, require using skills such as tracking down and using primary and secondary sources and determining if the sources are supportive of the thesis. “It’s really good for them to figure out what sources are reliable and useful,” Davenport said. “They can’t just use Google.”

Davenport comes from a long line of educators. Her mother was an elementary school and reading resource teacher. “Most of the females in my family taught in some way, shape or form,” she said.

As a student at Matthew Henson Middle School, Davenport was inspired to go into teaching history by her social studies teacher, the late Chet Foster. “He was pretty phenomenal,” she said. “The way he made history come alive; he was very much a storyteller. He just made it so interesting to see the connection between people, places and events. And I try to do that for my kids now.”

Hanson Principal Ben Kohlhorst called Davenport a “natural educator.”

“She has the ability to design social studies lessons that challenge, engage and support students of all levels,” he said. “Not only do students benefit from having a powerhouse for a teacher, her colleagues do as well through her dedication and innovation as an educator.”

Hopkins agreed. “Quite simply, Charles County’s History Day program would not be what it is today without her dedication and leadership,” he said.

Personnel

Apply for positions online at www.ccboc.com/jobs/currentopenings.php. All teaching positions require a bachelor’s degree and MSDE certification requirements.

Job Openings

Student Data Technician — Benjamin Stoddert Middle School, 12-month position. High school diploma or GED required with experience with Synergy preferred. Apply by April 27.

Building Service Worker — Daniel of St. Thomas Jenifer Elementary School, 12-month position. High school diploma or GED required. Apply by April 28.

Career and Technology Instructional Specialist — Jesse L. Starkey Administration Building, 12-month position. Master’s degree and Advanced Professional Certificate (APC) required. Apply by April 29.

Building Service Worker — St. Charles High School, 12-month position. High school diploma or GED required. Apply by May 1.

Building Service Manager — Dr. Gustavus Brown Elementary School, 12-month position. High school diploma or GED required with one-to-five years of supervisory experience in this or a related field. Apply by May 2.

Building Service Worker — Margaret J. Thornton Elementary School, 12-month position. High school diploma or GED required. Apply by May 2.

Human Resources Supervisor of Employee Services — Starkey, 12-month position. Bachelor’s degree in a relevant field required, master’s degree preferred along with a minimum of five years of supervisory experience

in human resources. Apply by May 3.

Assistive Technology Facilitator — F.B. Gwynn Educational Center, 11-month employee. Master’s degree and a professional training and license/certification in special education, speech language pathology, occupational therapy or physical therapy. Position open until filled.

Music Teacher — North Point High School, 10-month position for the 2026-2027 school year. Bachelor’s degree or higher and meets licensure requirements as established by MSDE. Position open until filled.

Extra Pay Positions

Head Varsity Wrestling Coach — Henry E. Lackey High School.

Head Varsity Cheerleading Coach — Maurice J. McDonough High School.