CONNECTION

Summer Edition | ISSUE NO. 28



In this edition

Congratulations Class of 2026!

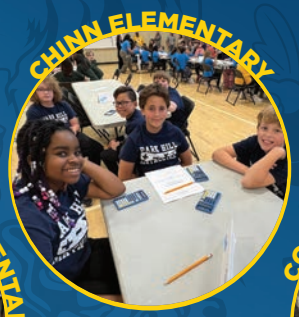
Park Hill Voices

Celebrations

// Simone Brooks-Woolworth graduates from Park Hill High School as part of the Class of 2026

Park Hill School District

Building Successful Futures • Each Student • Every Day















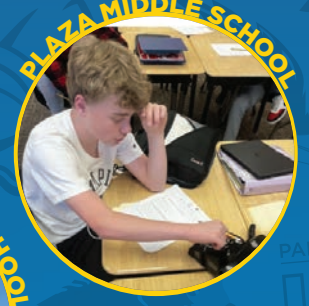




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Building tomorrow together









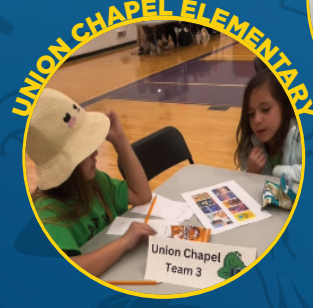














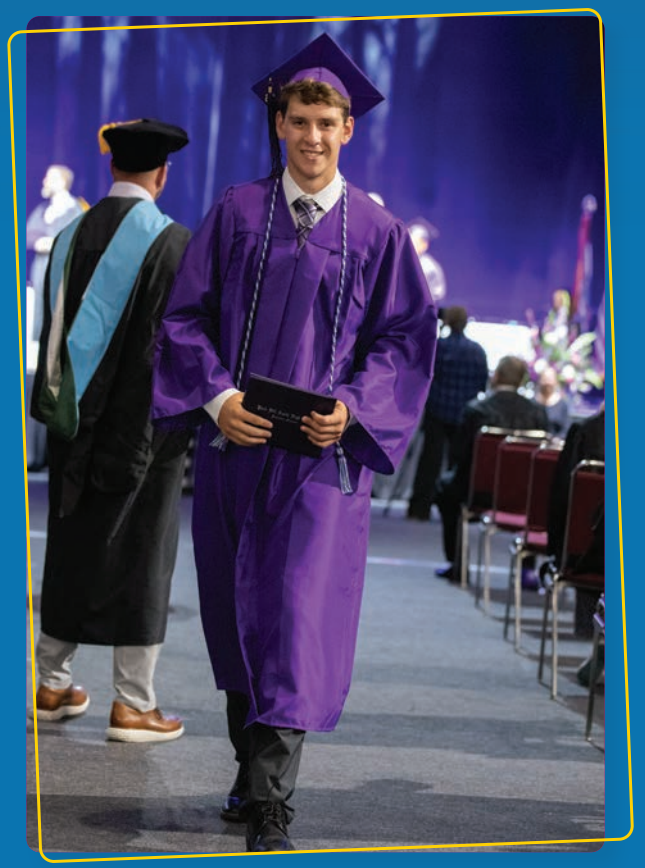


Welcome to the CONNECTION

Connection is a publication of the Park Hill School District, distributed quarterly without charge, to every household within the Park Hill School District boundaries. Thank you for your support of our community schools.

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// Park Hill South High School graduates participated in their ceremony on May 18.



STRAIGHT FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Happy Graduation Season! This time of year always reminds me how fortunate we are to be in public education and celebrate the culmination of 13 years of academic growth and achievement.

I'm always amazed at the sheer dedication it has taken our students to meet this milestone in their lives. With this, we as educators have an important role (and oftentimes front row seat) in helping raise our community's kids. It's an awe-inspiring responsibility.

This summer while some of our teachers and staff are away, we will be working on several projects, including projects from our 2025 GO Park Hill bond campaign. We will be breaking ground on the new Park Hill High School phase this summer. Renderings of this beautiful new phase will be ready soon and we can't wait to share those with our community. We also have several other summer projects happening at our schools to ensure equitable facilities throughout the district. Stadium improvements, district-wide security updates, HVAC upgrades and outdoor projects are all complete or underway, and we will design additions to Chinn Elementary, Southeast Elementary and Line Creek Elementary this next year.

Thanks for continuing to be part of our Park Hill community. Enjoy these summer months – we'll be here taking care of Park Hill and getting ready for the 2026-2027 school year.

Michael J Kimbrel

Dr. Mike Kimbrel
Superintendent



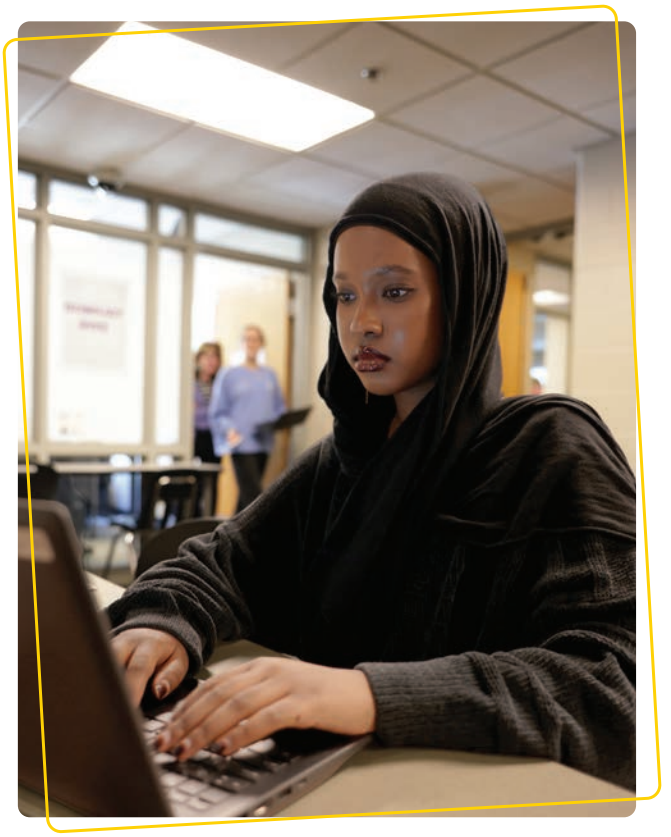
Khadra Ahmed

Senior, Park Hill South High School

STRAIGHT FROM OUR *Seniors*

Q **If you had to pick one memory that sums up your high school experience, what would it be?**

A One memory that really sums up my high school experience is the "Faces of South" Cultural Fair, representing thirty countries with 450 people in attendance. I remember the first year I participated, I never expected that many people would show up. Seeing the room filled with students, all coming together to listen and support one another, was something that was truly inspiring and made me look forward to the years to come. It showed me how powerful it is when people share their stories and when a community comes together.



Q **What's something about high school that totally surprised you?**

A Something that surprised me was how easy it was to make friends. I never would have expected that the people I am closest to now would impact my life so greatly. A lot of those friendships came from moments where I decided to step outside of my comfort zone and take a risk and reach out to new people. It taught me that putting yourself out there can lead to some of the best and most meaningful connections.

Q **What was your absolute favorite school tradition?**

A My favorite school tradition was assemblies. They were always the funniest because you got to be with your friends and just enjoy the moment together. It was a break from the usual routine and a time where everyone could relax, laugh and feel connected. Honestly, those moments were some of the most fun and memorable parts of high school for me, even as a freshman looking forward to becoming a senior and finally winning the spirit stick.

Q **What are you most looking forward to as you start your next chapter?**

A I am looking forward to discovering more about what impact I will make as a future medical professional, building a community. I am also excited to find new opportunities, explore international medical opportunities, and learn about new cultures, first that allow me to grow and challenge myself. Most importantly, I look forward to continuing to help others and making a positive impact in the path I take.

Q **Finally, we want to recognize everyone's unique path. Please share your post-grad plans with us.**

A After graduation, I will be attending Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota, on a full-ride scholarship through the QuestBridge program, where I will major in biology on the pre-med track. I plan to become a pediatrician in the future.





Katelyn Brown

Senior, LEAD Innovation Studio

STRAIGHT FROM OUR *Seniors*

Q **If you had to pick one memory that sums up your high school experience, what would it be?**

A Everyone goes to school, but not everyone remembers the little things that make it feel like more than just classes and homework. If I had to pick one memory that sums up my high school experience, it would honestly be Wednesday nights at Young Life. Every week, no matter how stressful school or life got, it was the one place where my friends and I could take a breather, talk about our week, and just be ourselves. It was also a comfortable setting to slowly learn more about faith without feeling pressured, which made those nights even more meaningful to me.

Somehow, the night never ended there — it usually turned into a Culver's run. Sitting in the booths with fries spread across the table, playing Imposter and Wavelength, replaying the night, and staying out later than we probably should have, became such a simple but important part of high school for me. When I look back, I probably won't remember most assignments or tests, but I'll definitely remember those Wednesday nights and the people I shared them with.

Q **What's something about high school that totally surprised you?**

A In my freshman year, I chose to attend LEAD Innovation Studio. What started off as a way to go to school with friends has slowly turned into a love for not only the community, but also the environment and innovative style of learning. LEAD offers a unique community comprised of both Park Hill High School and Park Hill South High School students, creating a blended atmosphere.

Four years down the road, I can't tell you the number of times I've been to both Park Hill and Park Hill South activities to support friends. Whether it was football games, musical performances or school events, it never really mattered which school someone came from. LEAD has given me the chance to meet people I never would have known otherwise, and those friendships have become one of the most meaningful parts of my high school experience.

Q **What was your absolute favorite school tradition?**

A One of my favorite school traditions is the Bags Boo Bash hosted by LEAD Innovation Studio. It's one that people genuinely look forward to every year because it gives everyone a chance to just enjoy being together outside of normal school days. The event is Halloween-themed and centered around a bags, or cornhole, tournament, but it has become much more than just a competition. It's brought students, teachers and families together in a way that makes our school community feel connected. What started as a simple event has continued to grow over the years, especially through the work of our LEADership council. Each year, they add new ideas and improve the experience, making it more engaging and memorable for all.

The last two years, my partner and I have competed in the tournament and ended up winning the novice bracket both times. Competing, versus just attending, has made the tradition even more meaningful to me, and it's something I'll always remember when I think about LEAD.

Q **What are you most looking forward to as you start your next chapter?**

A As I prepare for college, I look forward to new challenges, exploring my passions and continuing to build meaningful friendships. Most importantly, I am excited to take everything I have learned academically and about myself during high school and use it as a foundation for continued growth in this next stage of my life.

Q **Finally, we want to recognize everyone's unique path. Please share your post-grad plans with us.**

A This fall, I will begin my studies at Kansas State University, pursuing a degree in Business while participating in the honors cohort. To maintain a balanced experience, I am also excited to become involved in student organizations centered on leadership, service and faith. And attend a lot of football games at the Bill Snyder Family Stadium!



Katherine & Kyle McClaflin

Seniors, Park Hill High School

STRAIGHT FROM OUR *Seniors*

Q If you had to pick one memory that sums up your high school experience, what would it be?

A **Kyle:** One memory to sum up my entire high school experience is playing poker in the garage with my friends. We try to get together every week and play games in the garage. We have celebrated multiple birthdays, played tons of games, and made lots of memories. I think looking back at high school, that will be the thing I will remember the most.

A **Katherine:** The memory that sums up my high school experience was my senior night for basketball. Basketball was a really big part of my high school experience. As an underclassman, I experienced senior night, and I always loved the night. As a senior, all of the traditions and festivities were so worth it. The celebration of the night was so full circle for me.

Q What's something about high school that totally surprised you?

A **Kyle:** The thing that surprised me the most in high school was how everyone played a part in my experience. When I first came into high school as a freshman, I didn't know most of the people in my classes. But looking back on those early classes, I'm thankful of whoever made my schedule because I met lots of amazing people. High school helped me branch out and meet tons of new people. Even in classes I didn't think I would like, some of those teachers are now my favorite teachers I've ever had.

A **Katherine:** The thing that surprised me most about high school is the diversity of the available pathways and trajectories. There are so many different clubs, sports and activities. Coming into high school, I didn't know what I wanted to do. The variety of classes and internships helped me to find my interests. This was an amazing positive and something that I never expected to happen.

Q What was your absolute favorite school tradition?

A **Kyle:** My favorite high school tradition has to be singing the alma mater. At every assembly we would all hold each other and sing the alma mater. After every home football game we would sing it as the team came over in front of the student section. I especially liked doing it on the bus after a baseball game. After every away game, when we were just close enough to the school, we would sing the alma mater so we would end right as we pulled into the school parking lot.

A **Katherine:** My favorite school tradition was toga day. The seniors wear togas to school on the day of the homecoming football game. As an underclassman, I didn't know what to expect, but seeing all of the seniors being so excited created an amazing energy in the school. As a senior, the day was so exciting, and finally being able to participate was so worth it!

Q Finally, we want to recognize everyone's unique path. Please share your post-grad plans with us.

A **Kyle:** My plans after graduation are to go to Kansas State University. I am going to study architecture and do the 5-year master's program.

A **Katherine:** I am attending Kansas State University to study kinesiology on the pre-physical therapy track.





THE CLASS OF 2026

STANDING ON THE EDGE OF "NEXT"

Every high school memory starts with a single, sometimes scary, first step. The connection between looking back and leaping forward defined the commencement ceremonies for the more than 900 graduates from Park Hill and Park Hill South High Schools.

Park Hill High School

A lot can happen in four years. For the Park Hill High School Class of 2026, the twin themes of memories and moments defined their graduation ceremony on May 16.

Before diplomas were handed out, student speakers shared their reflections on the journey behind them and the next chapter ahead. Mariah Hunter-Banks spoke first, highlighting the unique paths each student took to reach the stage. Through laughter, loss and resilience, she noted, the class grew stronger by leaning on one another. “We made it here,” Hunter-Banks said. “We earned this moment, and we did it our way.”

Valedictorian Andrew Ampon then shared how he and his friends compiled a massive album of 4,000 photos over the 2025–2026 school year — a collection of the little moments that summarized their high school careers. To cap off his speech, he took one last selfie with his classmates from the stage. “These happy little moments become happy little memories,” he said.

After the presentation of diplomas, Senior Class President Olivia Hoskins reminded her classmates that while they should always strive to be extraordinary, it’s often the everyday experiences they will carry with them forever. “Ordinary moments make life worth living,” Hoskins said.

Principal Dr. Brad Kincheloe also recognized the class’s hard work, recognizing several major academic milestones. Among the graduates were 15 students receiving the district’s first Missouri Seal of Biliteracy, 83 students who earned a 4.0 or higher GPA during their senior year and 22 students who maintained straight A’s for all four years.





Park Hill South High School

Graduation is a leap into the unknown, a truth that took center stage at Park Hill South's commencement ceremony on May 18. For this graduating class, the final lesson of high school was simple: the greatest reward requires taking a risk.

Four student speakers shared their reflections on the topic. Roberto Shepherd kicked things off by encouraging his classmates to choose discomfort and embrace the harder path. Valedictorian Henry Van Asselt followed, sharing that the greatest stories are written when you choose risk over the world's expectations.

Peter Ensminger suggested three specific risks to take moving forward: being present, being vulnerable and seeking out the new to challenge what we already know. Finally, Eman Zahra, who arrived in the U.S. four years ago unable to speak English, shared how taking risks led her all the way to the graduation podium, proving that the ability to take risks is a privilege.

The Class of 2026 chose Andrew Garnatz as their faculty speaker. Garnatz, who joined the school's cafe staff in 2021, recalled realizing that he had a unique opportunity to make a difference in students' lives — a kindness he said the students repaid. "On your day, you chose to recognize me," he told the class. Reflecting on his own winding path to PHS, Garnatz reminded graduates to always offer a kind word, take the risk to reach out to others and follow their own dreams rather than the expectations of others.

Principal Dr. Corey Willich recognized the class's hard work spotlighting 25 students who maintained straight A's over four years and 71 students who earned a 4.0 GPA during their senior year. Additionally, Reese Dugan received the Citizenship Award for her positive encouragement and lasting impact, while Kate Sloan was recognized for designing the 2026 class flag.

As our graduates start their next adventures, they take that next step with four years of unforgettable memories and the courage to face the road ahead. We could not be more #ParkHillProud.



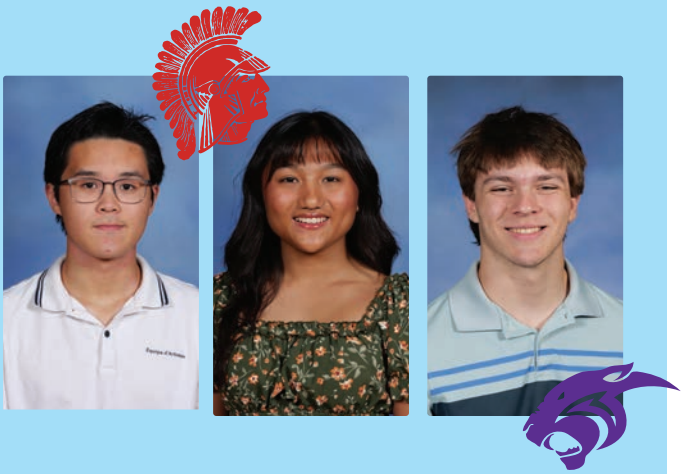



CONGRATULATIONS!

WE ARE #ParkHillProud

These are just a few of the awards and accolades Park Hill staff and students have received recently.

Visit
www.parkhill.k12.mo.us/news-and-stories
to catch up on the latest honors!



We are #ParkHillProud of seniors **Kai Soo** (PHHS), **Angela Villamayor** (PHHS) **and Jonah Hicks** (PHS)! They were recently named to the 32nd annual Missouri Scholars 100, a program honoring the top academic students in the Class of 2026. Selection is rigorous and based on ACT or SAT scores, GPA and Academic Decathlon performance.

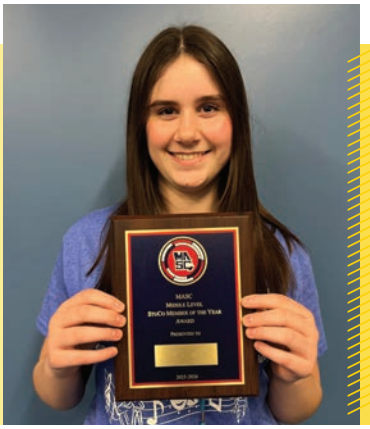


Big news from Park Hill South! The South Side Scoop has been named a Student Pillar of Excellence Winner by the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences (NATAS) in Newscast and in Craft Talent. We are #ParkHillProud of:
Winner: Newscast – The Scoop (Sept. 25) | Exec. Producer: **Lexi Grimm**
Winner: Talent News/Sports – **Lexi Grimm** (Anchor/Reporter)
Honorable Mention: Feature News – Capabilities Shine at Skate Park | **Lexi Grimm and Maeve McGonigle**

2026 BEST Communities for MUSIC EDUCATION
Brought to you by The NAMM Foundation

Celebrating five years of excellence! Park Hill School District has earned recognition as one of the Best Communities for Music Education! Join us in celebrating our commitment to ensuring every student has access to music education. This honor reflects the dedication of our students, educators, administrators and community. Case in point: our **band, choir and orchestra** students had outstanding performances at the State Solo and Small Ensemble Festival this spring. Check out the lists of winners on our website.

Congratulations are in order for both **Park Hill High School and Park Hill South**! Both schools have received the Missouri Association of Student Councils (MASC) Honor Council Gold Award. Only 81 student councils in the state met the rigorous criteria this year. Our students were recognized for leading the way at the local, district and state levels.



We are #ParkHillProud of Walden Middle School student, **Hattie McCabe**. She was recognized as the top middle school Student Council Member in the state! Hattie received the honor at the MASC - Missouri Association of Student Councils State Convention.



Park Hill High School DECA took on the world in Atlanta and won! Congratulations to our students for their outstanding achievements at the International Career Development Conference (ICDC). We are #ParkHillProud of ICDC Champions **Caelin Bradford** and **Drew Miller**, who brought home 1st Place in the Integrated Marketing Campaign competition! Competing against more than 200 international teams, Caelin and Drew secured the first 1st-place ICDC trophy for the Trojans in over a quarter of a century.

PLTW

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2025-26

We're proud to announce **our four middle schools** have been named Project Lead the Way (PLTW) 2025-26 Distinguished Gateway Schools for their commitment to increasing student access, engagement and achievement in their PLTW programs.

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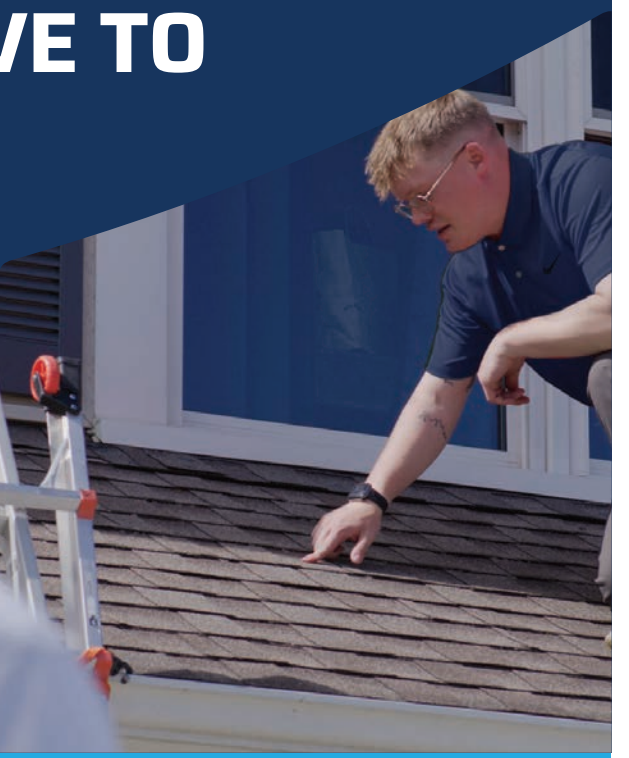
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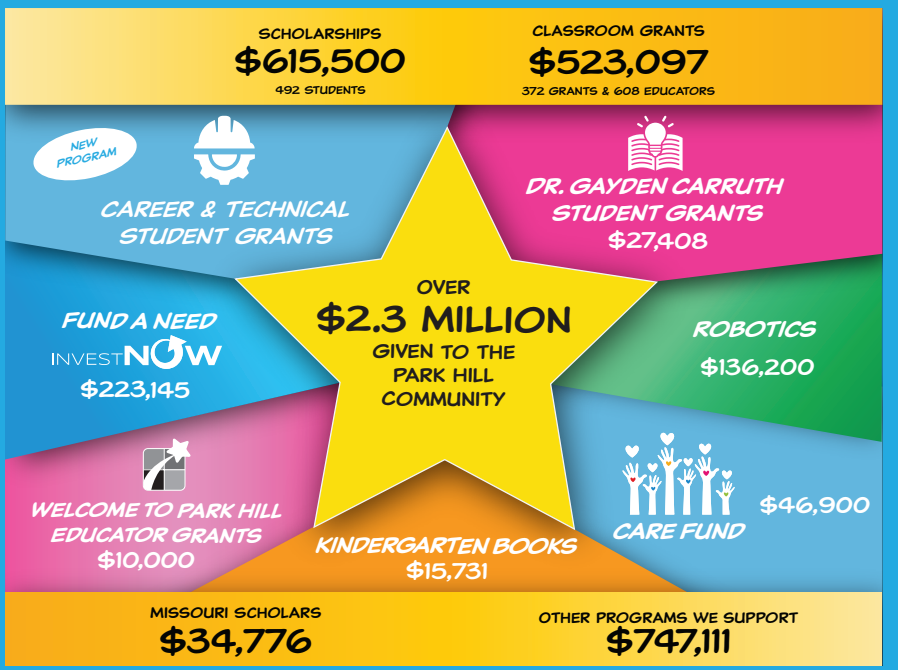
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What an incredible year!

Together, we celebrated historic milestones by awarding the **largest amount ever in Shining Star Grants**, funding innovative ideas across our schools, and providing **more scholarships than at any other time in Foundation history!**

These achievements are only possible because of you.

As we look ahead, we invite you to continue to Be the Spark! We couldn't do this without your support all year long—**thank you for being part of it.**

Spark Someones Future Today!

parkhillfoundation.org
parkhillfoundation@parkhill.k12.mo.us

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OCT. 22, 2026
COMMUNITY BREAKFAST
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PARK HILL Highlight

Heart hands for three of our students who were each selected to design a heart for the 2026 Parade of Hearts.

English Landing Elementary School fourth grader Sofia Wells shared her heart titled, “ADHD - A loving heart, a colorful mind!”

Sisters Jade and London Jiskra from Walden Middle School also had a chance to show off their heart called “Sweethearts.”

Be sure to look for Sofia, Jade and London’s hearts along with 150 other sculptures placed around the Kansas City region.

For more moments like this, be sure to follow our social media channels on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter (X) and YouTube.



