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QUARTERLY CONNECTION
SUMMER 2026



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Columbia Fund for Academic
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educator honorees
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INSIDE ISSUE:



QUARTERLY CONNECTION



Fifth graders visit the National Churchill Museum



This spring, hundreds of fifth-grade students across Columbia Public Schools stepped outside the classroom and into history.

The destination was the National Churchill Museum, located on the campus of Westminster College in Fulton, Mo —a place where one of the most famous speeches of the 20th century helped shape the course of world history.

The field trip experience is designed to give students a deeper understanding of both the life of Winston Churchill and the global events surrounding World War II and the Cold War. During their visit, students rotate through four learning stations, each led by a docent from the museum. Groups spend about 30 minutes at each stop, allowing them to explore the museum and its stories in manageable, engaging segments.

Two of the stations are inside the museum itself. The exhibits are divided into two sections using World War II as the timeline marker, helping students understand how events before the war shaped the world and how the aftermath

influenced global politics for decades to come.

Another station focuses on the historic church on the Westminster College campus and the nearby sculpture made from a portion of the Berlin Wall, providing a visual reminder of the divide that once separated East and West.

The final station features a rotating temporary exhibit. This year, students explored a detailed replica model of Blenheim Palace, the grand estate where Churchill was born. Beyond being a statesman and wartime leader, Churchill was also an accomplished artist who found solace and creativity through painting.

The idea for the trip originated with CPS K-12 Social Studies Coordinator Joy Bess. Bess remembers taking her seventh graders to the museum when she was teaching social studies back in the 2010s. At that time, World War II was part of the seventh grade curriculum, so it was an ideal match. But when curriculum changes moved the topic to high school, the visits became harder to coordinate.

“Courage is going from failure to failure without losing enthusiasm.”

Winston Churchill



National Churchill Museum

continued



Bess, recognizing the importance of such a monumental museum being so close, sought a new fit for the trips and found it in the fifth-grade curriculum. While their coursework focuses on the 1800s and more modern history, the trip offers students a meaningful way to connect classroom learning with real-world historical sites.

Last year, Bess enlisted three schools to pilot the experience and received valuable feedback on logistics and learning opportunities. This year, she extended the trip to every fifth-grade class in the district. Over the course of 22 trips, more than 1,300 students, representing 62 class groups, made the journey to Fulton.

Coordinating a district-wide experience of this scale requires careful planning. Transportation, scheduling with the museum, and aligning the visit with classroom instruction all take significant collaboration. To prepare teachers, in the fall of 2025, Bess invited representatives from each elementary school to experience the trip exactly as their students would. That preview helped teachers understand how the visit connects to the curriculum and allowed them to build relevant lessons.

Students were enthusiastic about the experience. After each visit, groups complete a short survey about their favorite parts of the day.

The clear student favorite is the church and Berlin Wall display. The museum's interactive exhibitions are also a favorite.

The church itself carries a remarkable story of resilience. Originally built in London in the 17th century, it survived the Great Fire of London, was rebuilt, and later suffered heavy damage during The Blitz. Rather than demolish the ruins after the war, the church was carefully dismantled, its bricks numbered and shipped to Missouri, where it was rebuilt beside the site of Churchill's famous speech. Inside, a phoenix symbolizes rebirth—a fitting image for both the building and the man whose legacy it represents.

For many students, the visit leaves a lasting impression, and Bess says she hopes one takeaway will be that of Churchill's resilience and the theme to "never give up." She says Churchill's story reminds them that even great leaders faced setbacks. He struggled in school, lost political positions, and endured criticism throughout his career. Yet he continued to persevere.

One of Churchill's most famous quotes captures the lesson educators hope students carry with them: "Courage is going from failure to failure without losing enthusiasm."



Columbia Fund for Academic Excellence

outstanding educator honorees

Since its inception in the 1979-80 school year, the Columbia Fund for Academic Excellence has recognized more than 250 educators in Columbia Public Schools for their outstanding teaching, leadership, and support of students. Each year, educators are selected from nominations submitted by parents and peers as outstanding educators. This year, seven CPS educators have been selected as honorees and will receive a \$1,500 cash award and an engraved silver tray.

The fund began through the work of the late Ray and Jeanne Lewis, with an initial contribution and extensive fundraising efforts. The late Mr. Lewis was a local attorney and former Board of Education member. The late Mrs. Lewis was a former teacher. Thanks to the contributions and support from individuals, businesses and organizations, Columbia's best educators continued to be recognized each year for their contributions to young people.



Danielle Maddalone
Mill Creek Elementary School
Outstanding Elementary Educator
Grades PreK-2



Meg Tummons
Locust Street Expressive Arts
Elementary School
Outstanding Elementary Educator
Grades 3-5



Amanda Montgomery
Oakland Middle School
Outstanding Middle School Educator



Brook Harlan
Columbia Area Career Center
Outstanding High School Educator



Laura Kuhrts
Blue Ridge Elementary School
Outstanding Educator in a
Specialized Area

London Redstone
Gentry Middle School
Outstanding Beginning Teacher



Dr. Dominique Falls
Lange Middle School
Outstanding Administrator



BOARD OF EDUCATION SWEARING IN



Board of Education member **April Ferrao** has been re-elected. This will be Ferrao's second three-year term.



Board of Education member **Paul Harper** has been re-elected. This will be Harper's second three-year term.



Board of Education member **John Lyman** has been re-elected. This will be Lyman's second three-year term.

The Board of Education also elected **John Lyman** as president and **Suzette Waters** as vice president.



Elizabeth "Lizzy" Brown



Grayson Lea



Eagle Bluffs Elementary
School Progress



Eagle Bluffs Elementary
School Progress



NEWS YOU CAN USE

HOSA REGIONAL WINNERS ADVANCE TO STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

Columbia Area Career Center (CACC) students have qualified for the HOSA State Leadership Conference after earning top honors at the regional competition. HOSA – Future Health Professionals is a global student organization that promotes career opportunities in the healthcare industry. The following students have advanced to the HOSA State Leadership Conference: *Biomedical Debate* - Alvi Ahnaf, Mihir Bhalla, Aayan Behura, Hashir Bariz, Jianan (Ethan) Fu, Emily Ye, Sarah Yang, and Rhea Jha; *Biotechnology* - Lauren Miyamoto; *Health Career Display* - Moiz Osman and Michal Osman; *HOSA Bowl* - Nikhil Karuparthi, Mira Tosh, Sahasra Mettu, Rithvik Mettu, Aanya Shetty, Ziji (Max) Qi, Allison Shen, and Kavin Senthilnathan; *Medical Mat* - Shirish Arora; *Nutrition* - Mahika Datta; *Pathophysiology* - Ellen Jin and Satvik Rachagani; *Pharmacology* - Benjamin Gizer and Austin Hamilton; *Prepared Speaking* - Giang (Bella) Nguyen; and *World Health & Disparities* - Aishin Gabriel Sepulvida.

HICKMAN GRADUATE LEADS WORLD-CHAMPION MARS ROVER TEAM AT MISSOURI S&T

Chase Stem, a graduate of Hickman High School, is a senior in aerospace engineering at the University of Missouri - Science and Technology and serves as CEO of the university's student-led Mars Rover Design Team. The team won the 2025 University Rover Challenge, an international competition where students design and build rover systems capable of performing tasks like real missions on Mars.

ROCK BRIDGE GRADUATE SELECTED TO REPRESENT U.S. IN INTERNATIONAL CULINARY COMPETITION

Elizabeth "Lizzy" Brown, a 2023 graduate of Rock Bridge High School, has been selected by SkillsUSA as the official U.S. competitor in Cooking for the WorldSkills Competition 2026. The competition will take place in Shanghai this September and will bring together top competitors from around the world to demonstrate excellence in skilled trades and technical careers. Brown's success highlights the value of hands-on learning and career preparation programs.

GENTRY STUDENT EARNS FIRST PLACE IN STATEWIDE MUSIC COMPOSITION COMPETITION

Gentry Middle School seventh grader Grayson Lea earned first place in the middle school electronic division of the Creating Original Music Project (COMP) Festival, which recognizes Missouri K-12 student composers. His original piece will be performed at the COMP Festival concert at the University of Missouri.



CPS CELEBRATES MOSOC PROGRAM GRADUATION

Columbia Public Schools recently celebrated eight graduates of the Missouri Security Operations Technology Certification (MOSOC) program, including three current students and five alumni: Brynn Bynum, Ricky Bell, Trey Byrd, Herman Clifton, Trey Kiesling, Kiera McLain, Jayce Nistendirk, Michael Ray, and Kimiyante Williams-Carthon. The workforce-focused pilot, sponsored by the Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development in partnership with CPS, provides hands-on training, skills recognized by industry, and exposure to high-demand careers.

CPS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR RECEIVES GUBERNATORIAL APPOINTMENT

Columbia Public Schools Director of Workforce Development Katie Siegel has been appointed to the Missouri Workforce Development Board by Governor Mike Kehoe. Dr. Siegel has played a key role in advancing career and technical education for CPS students, strengthening connections between education and the workforce.

In her current role, she leads efforts to expand career pathways, support student transitions, and build partnerships with local businesses and industry leaders. The Missouri Workforce Development Board supports statewide efforts to align education, training, and employment opportunities with workforce needs.

CONSTRUCTION PROGRESS AT EAGLE BLUFFS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Flooring installation is complete in classrooms, collaboration areas, and the general space. Final paint coats have been applied, acoustic ceiling tiles dropped, and room signage installed, with final cleaning completed. Light fixtures are in place in the reception area, where primer and the first coat of paint have been applied, and installation of the Innovation Lab storefront is underway. Punch list items are ongoing, while site irrigation is complete and planting has begun.



2026 - 2027



School year calendar

AUGUST 24
Jump Start Day
(grades 6 & 9)

AUGUST 25
First Day of School
(grades PreK-12)

SEPTEMBER 7
Labor Day
(school not in session)

SEPTEMBER 30
Early Release
(2.5 hour early dismissal)

OCTOBER 16
Teacher Work Day
(school not in session)

OCTOBER 30
Teacher Work Day
(school not in session)

NOVEMBER 2
Teacher Work Day
(school not in session)

NOVEMBER 3
Elections
(school not in session)

NOVEMBER 25 – 27
Thanksgiving Break
(school not in session)

DECEMBER 23 – JANUARY 1
Winter Break
(school not in session)

JANUARY 4
Teacher Work Day
(school not in session)

JANUARY 18
Martin Luther King Jr. Day
(school not in session)

FEBRUARY 12
Teacher Work Day
(school not in session)

FEBRUARY 15
President's Day
(school not in session)

FEBRUARY 26
Teacher Work Day
(school not in session)

MARCH 17
Early Release
(2.5 hour early dismissal)

MARCH 29 – APRIL 2
Spring Break
(school not in session)

APRIL 30
Teacher Work Day
(school not in session)

MAY 21
Douglass High School
Graduation (A.M.)

Rock Bridge High School
Graduation (P.M.)

MAY 22
Hickman High School
Graduation (A.M.)

Battle High School
Graduation (P.M.)

MAY 27
Last Day of School
(2.5 hour early dismissal)

JUNE 3 – 30
Summer School

JUNE 18
Juneteenth
(summer school not in session)

MU Health Care and Hickman High

School celebrate 40-year partnership

For four decades, the partnership between MU Health Care and Hickman High School has demonstrated what can happen when education and community work hand in hand.

What began as a way to introduce students to careers in medicine has evolved into a dynamic relationship focused on workforce development, career exploration and investing in the future of mid-Missouri.

One of the original components of the partnership was the establishment of a Health Sciences Club, which afforded students hands-on experience inside the hospital setting. Initially designed to connect students with physicians, the program expanded to include a broad range of health care professions. Over the years, countless Hickman students have gained valuable insight into health care careers through hospital tours, mentorship opportunities and immersive learning experiences.

Today, students explore careers through guest speakers, classroom visits, career expos and the satellite program offered through MU Health Care. This program allows students to split their day between classroom instruction and real-world work experience.

"This anniversary gives us an opportunity to recognize the lasting impact that has resulted from this sustained relationship," said Nikki Carter, director of belonging and community impact for MU Health Care.

One of the most visible examples of the partnership is MU Health Care's annual career expo. Open to students from across mid-Missouri, the event features immersive, hands-on exhibits showcasing a variety of healthcare careers. MU Health Care brings a smaller version of the expo directly to Hickman each year during their 'We Are Hickman' celebration.

For MU Health Care, introducing students to healthcare careers early helps cultivate future employees. For Hickman, the relationship gives students meaningful opportunities to explore their interests and envision successful futures.

"We are intentional about collaboration and about creating opportunities for youth," Carter said.

