CONNECTION

Fall Edition | ISSUE NO. 29

PARK HILL SCHOOL DISTRICT

75 YEARS

1951 - 2026

In this edition

- Celebrating Our Roots, Embracing Our Future

Park Hill School District

Building Successful Futures • Each Student • Every Day







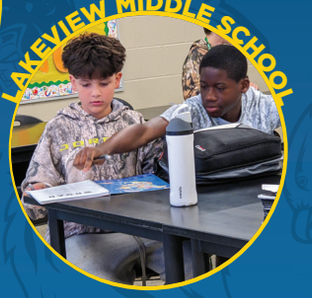












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Building tomorrow together.



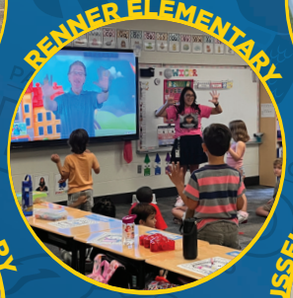






















Welcome to the CONNECTION

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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// Once a Trojan, always a Trojan. Brad Kincheloe (Principal at Park Hill High School and PHHS class of 1972) pictured here at the age of three in 1957.



STRAIGHT FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

We are celebrating 75 years of Park Hill School District! As we've started celebrating this year, we've been digging through stories from our schools, our alumni, our families, our students and our staff. It's been so interesting to hear all the lore and legendary reviews of what's come before us. From a slug bug car mysteriously showing up in Park Hill High School's interior courtyard during senior week, to schools helping with the historic Flood of '93, to construction across the district, this place is special for so many reasons.

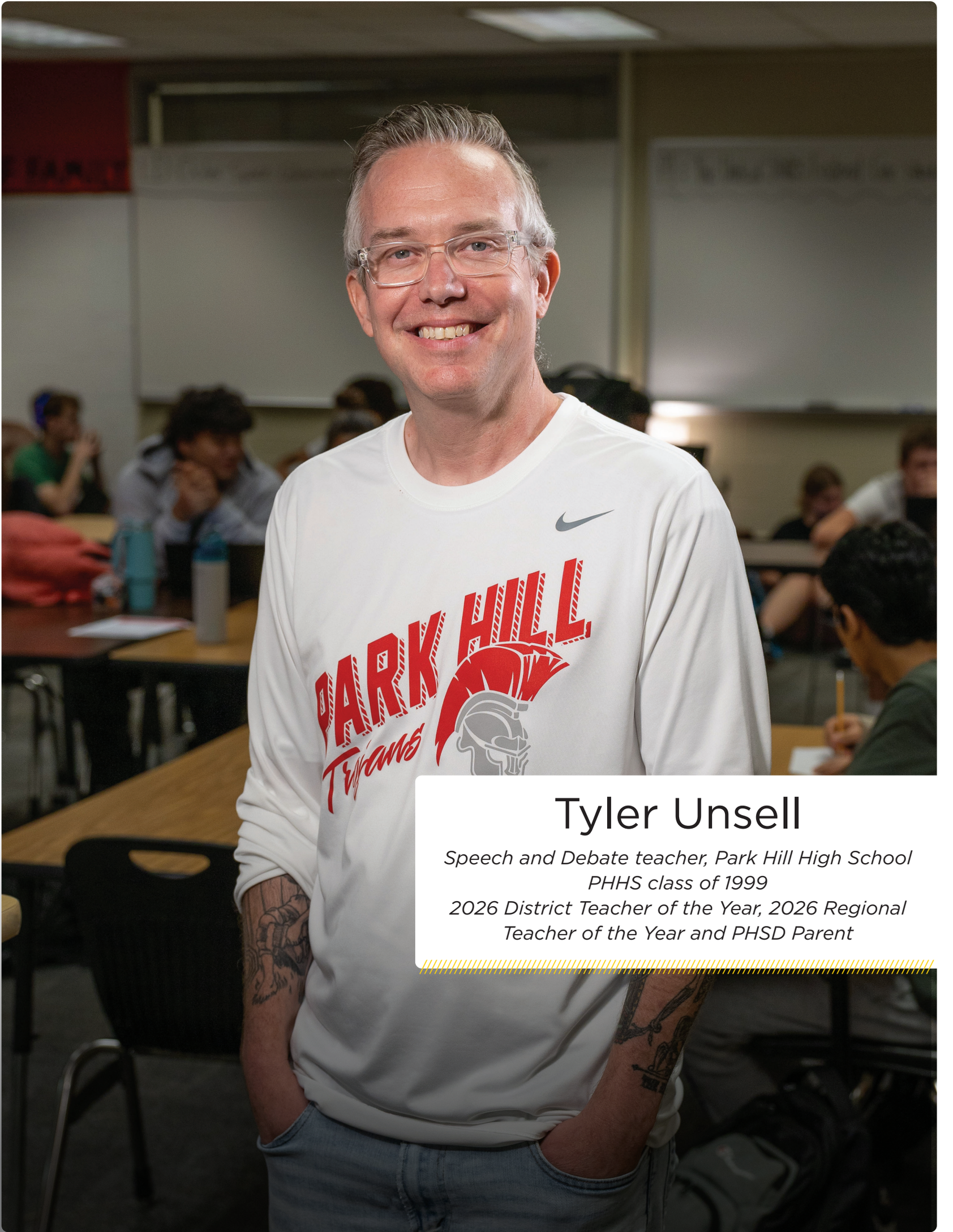
We're going to be celebrating our 75th anniversary throughout the school year. We've got famous alumni shout-outs on our social media accounts, stories from families on our website, videos of our schools throughout our history and more.

As we continue to celebrate our roots and embrace our future, we hope you'll be right along with us. Join us for an athletic event or performing arts show; come support our students in whatever capacity makes sense for you. We appreciate and enjoy the interaction with our community.

So come join us. We look forward to celebrating with you!

Michael J Kimbrel

Dr. Mike Kimbrel
Superintendent



Tyler Unsell

Speech and Debate teacher, Park Hill High School
PHHS class of 1999
2026 District Teacher of the Year, 2026 Regional Teacher of the Year and PHSD Parent

STRAIGHT FROM OUR *Staff*

Q **Growing up in a family of Park Hill graduates, what is your favorite story or memory about the district passed down from your relatives?**

A I was a Trojan before I ever stepped foot in a Park Hill school. There is a photo of me hanging on the wall in my parents' house. In the photo a 5-year-old Tyler is handing out cups of water to Park Hill football players during a game in Jeff City. The photo is fun but the crazy part is that Chad Fette, an English teacher who retired a few years ago from Park Hill, asked me what number the player was in the photo. After confirming which number with my mom and Chad, we realized it was a photo of Chad Fette and I 40 years in the past now both teachers at the school we graduated from.

Q **Having seen Park Hill both as a student and now as an award-winning educator, how have you seen the district evolve over the decades?**

A The district is certainly larger than it was in the 1980s. We are also more diverse and a lot more suburban. There were a lot more pick-up trucks back in the day. Overall though the remarkable thing to me is that the life blood that makes a good district and school remain basically the same. The district was a pillar of the community and support and remains one of the big epicenters of the Northland. People move north to be in the Park Hill School District. That hasn't changed. While we all don't go to Godfather's Pizza after football games, or the Kerry Patch for a quick meal after school, Park Hill and its teachers remain proud servants and members of our communities.

Q **Winning Teacher of the Year during the district's 75th anniversary year is a huge honor. What does this recognition mean to you and your family's Park Hill legacy?**

A I have been pretty open about my journey and my family's journey through the district. Mr. Crabtree saved my life in high school. I suppose my legacy starts by trying to pay that forward. The Teacher of the Year journey allowed me to connect with many of the teachers that have given me so much. It allowed me to reconnect with students (some of whom are now teachers in the district) and families that have been important parts of my life and my journey here. On a macro level I won't lie, it has been tough lately to be a teacher. We have felt more like pawns on a chessboard than educators. On a smaller scale, this district has weathered all of the political and social storms of the last six years with the love and confidence that helped make me who I am today. So many of us here at Park Hill have been around for a long time. I am proud of winning but I am way more proud to call these people my family. What an incredible gift to be given. "Love You...Mean It" always rang true for me.



Q **As we kick off this 75th school year, what are you most looking forward to?**

A More faculty bathrooms. Just kidding (not really). The district has made it a priority as of late to start and support our middle school speech and debate programs. We have incredible coaches at our middle schools and I can't wait to help them in any way I can. We get our first crop of speech kids from those programs this year and they are already impressing the heck out of us. Its going to be a great year either way but I can't wait to see what the future looks like for us. Also you read it here first. We hosted the National Speech and Debate Association National Tournament in 2010. Maybe.....maybe....I want to host it one more time before I retire. That's a big maybe though.



Mila Galoyan

Freshman, Park Hill South High School

STRAIGHT FROM OUR *Students*

Q **What is it like going to school knowing your parents and family members walked similar halls in Park Hill years before you?**

A I haven't really thought about it, but I find it cool that my mom has made all of these memories in high school. It's cool to hear all of the stories about when she was the same age as me. I also think it's super interesting that she's still in the Park Hill district as a teacher now.

Q **Has your family passed down any cool Park Hill traditions or stories?**

A We haven't passed down any traditions, but it isn't just my mom who has been in the district but also my grandparents, my aunts, my uncles and several cousins of mine which I find to be really nice.

"I want to accomplish my goals that help my future. Also, I want to live life to my fullest potential."

Q **A new school year means a fresh start! What classes, clubs or sports are you most excited about this year?**

A I'm super excited to be a part of Student Council and the A+ program. I'm looking forward to joining more activities and clubs like freshman executive and National Honor Society. I also enjoyed participating in track season in the past years so I'm excited to join that for this upcoming season.

Q **If you put an item into a Park Hill 75th Anniversary time capsule to represent student life today, what would you choose and why?**

A If I would put an item into the time capsule, I would put pictures of me and my friends throughout the school years to show all the fun memories we've made together at school.



Q **What is something you hope to accomplish before you become a Park Hill graduate in a few years?**

A I want to be involved in as many things possible at school and outside of school, I want to accomplish my goals that help my future. Also, I want to live life to my fullest potential. Overall make new friends and new memories. One goal I really want to accomplish is to find a job so I can gain more responsibility skills and be prepared for how my everyday life will look like in the future.

The Park Hill Story

Over 75 years, change is inevitable. There's no better way to respect it than by celebrating the past and embracing the future.

So, let's start at the beginning...

Our story begins long before the district itself. In 1845, the first school was built in Parkville, followed by Prairie Point Academy in 1854. The Prairie Point School went from first to eighth grade.

The Banneker School opened in 1885, serving African American students from Parkville and surrounding communities until desegregation in the 1950s.

In 1935, Graden School – where current day Graden still sits – was rebuilt into a modern new two-room building. At the time, it was considered the most modern school of its kind in the state.

A Turning Point

In 1946, Parkville High School principal Russell G. Jones became superintendent. During the next several years, the district introduced school lunches, bus transportation and re-organized for future growth.

On July 17, 1951, the Park Hill School District was officially formed – and growth came quickly.

Four schools were built during this decade, including additions to Graden.

Fun Fact:

The current site of Plaza Middle School was the original Park Hill High School.

In 1955, plans began for a new Park Hill High School and in 1958, students and faculty moved into the new building on Barry Road. The old school (Plaza today) was re-named Park Hill Junior High and the younger students moved in.

Fun Fact:

Beth Hoff, Park Hill High School class of 1966 and now an AVID Tutor at PHHS, was in the sixth-grade class that opened Chinn Elementary.

"The first day they didn't have sidewalks, so we had to walk across wood boards that let us into the building," Beth remembers. She was in the last class Mr. Chinn taught.

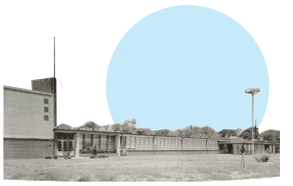
The 1960s brought even more expansion with two new schools and half-day kindergarten.

The 1970s brought changes and school pride.

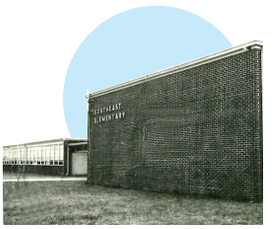
On May 27, 1973, a bulldozer (that had been left on school grounds over the weekend by the contractor who was working on the new football stadium) drove through the library at Park Hill High School, causing thousands of dollars in damage. To this day, no one has come forward about the incident.



1934
Graden Elementary



1952
Plaza Middle School



1954
Southeast Elementary



1958
Park Hill High School



1959
Chinn Elementary



1965
Renner Elementary



1967
Line Creek Elementary



1974
Congress Middle School

Fun Fact:
In 1974, the Board approved a girl's athletic program and girls' basketball began.

The 1980s focused on innovation. Technology entered classrooms and a district computer curriculum began taking form in 1982. During that decade, the district finally installed heating systems and Adventure Club began.

The 1986-87 school year brought change for middle schoolers. The Board decided to move seventh and eighth graders to South Junior High (Plaza) and ninth graders to the high school, incorporating North Junior High into the high school campus. North Junior High – what became known as "Congress Hall," and the high school building became "Barry Hall."

Fun Fact:
There used to be a tunnel between current day Park Hill High School and Congress Middle School.

Brandy Colson Lang, PHHS class of 1994, told us, "I love telling my kids about the walk between Congress and Park Hill High School back in the day. That was wild territory and a welcome bit of fresh air (if outside). The tunnel air was anything but fresh!"

The '90s brought air conditioning to our buildings along with four more schools.

Malinda Jeffries Bartholow, PHHS class of 2001, remembers opening English Landing Elementary. "We started the year with no parking lot and an unfinished school, but between the drilling and pounding, we made the best memories and opened an incredible school."

Fun Fact:
English Landing opened with the intention to pilot year-round education.

But after much research and consideration, there was not enough community support to go ahead with the plan.

During the "Flood of '93" when the Missouri River jumped its banks, Park Hill students and employees came forward to help with sand bagging and cleanup in Parkville and Riverside. The district opened its doors to government agencies and businesses that needed help and space.

Fun Fact:
In the spring of 1993 (during senior week) a Volkswagen bug mysteriously appeared in the center courtyard at Park Hill High School.

Jennifer Steele, PHHS class of 1993 and special education teacher at English Landing, said, "I will



1974
Union Chapel Elementary



1991
Lakeview Middle School



1993
English Landing Elementary



1997
Prairie Point Elementary



1998
Park Hill South High School



2002
Hawthorn Elementary



2008
Gerner Family Education Center



2009
Russell Jones Education Center

never forget the shock on everyone's faces and the wonderings of how students were able to get the car into the courtyard."

The opening of Park Hill South High School brought new energy and a new rivalry to athletics. Lloyd Lapore, PHHS class of 2002 and current PHHS custodian, remembers attending the first-ever Park Hill vs. Park Hill South football game. "The game was the feature story on every local news channel and News Chopper 9 even flew their helicopter to capture the sheer essence of that inaugural matchup." Park Hill squeaked out a 21-16 win against their new biggest rivals in The Northland.

The 2000s and beyond;
continued momentum and enrollment growth

The district's consistent enrollment growth led to many changes, but two major ones stand out. The LEAD Innovation Studio helped to relieve overcrowing at our two high schools. It had a different vision for high schoolers, focusing on personalized and project-based learning. And the opening of Walden meant Plaza would sunset the sixth-grade center and transition into a sixth-eighth grade school.

Fun Fact:
Neither Hopewell Elementary nor Walden could finish their first year in-person due to the pandemic in the spring of 2020.

As the community navigated its way through the end of 2020 and the beginning of the next school year during a pandemic, the district continued moving forward.

In March of 2021, a ransomware attack shut down the district for two days and by 2023, construction began on our newest elementary school.

Most recently, in 2025, Angeline Washington Elementary opened its doors, named after an enslaved woman who gained freedom and built a family and community in Parkville, all while focusing on education for the community's children.

o o o

When Russell Jones became superintendent in 1946, Park Hill had just two schools, 264 students and five high school teachers. Today, Park Hill includes 21 buildings, with nearly 12,000 students, and 2,100 staff members.

For 75 years, generations of educators, students, families and community members have shaped this district together. And while so much has changed, one thing remains the same: We will continue building successful futures — each student, every day.

o o o

2012
Tiffany Ridge Elementary





2019
Hopewell Elementary

2019
Walden Middle School





2020
LEAD Innovation Studio

2025
Angeline Washington Elementary



EMBRACING OUR FUTURE:

Prop O Projects underway at Park Hill and Park Hill South High Schools

As we reflect on 75 years of Park Hill, we are actively laying the groundwork for our next chapter. Thanks to our community's support of the Spring 2025 **Proposition O** ballot initiative, improvements are taking shape across two high schools.

Construction is underway at Park Hill High School on its Phase 1 replacement, which includes relocating the baseball field to make way for the new campus.

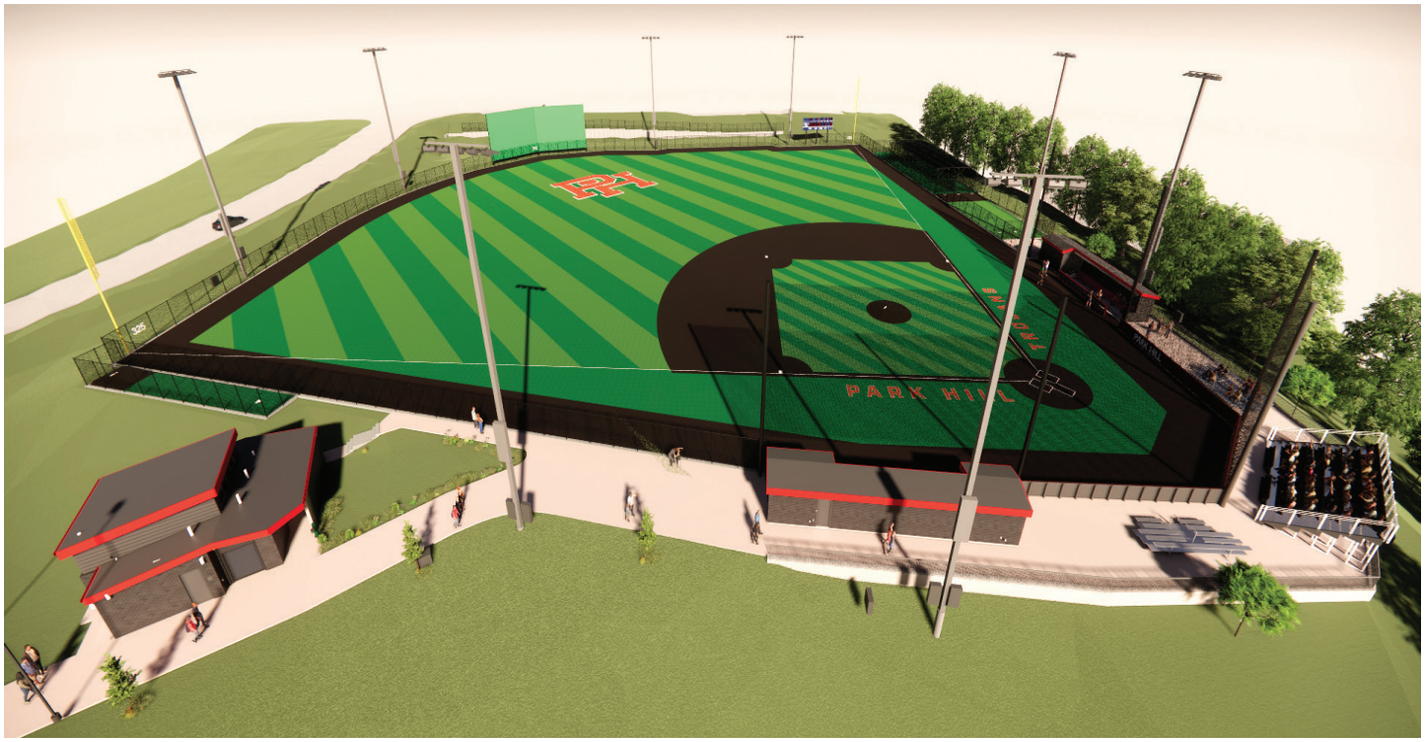
Meanwhile, Park Hill South High School continues to celebrate milestones, including the grand opening and August 31 ribbon-cutting ceremony for its new softball field, with additional baseball and football field and stadium improvements underway.

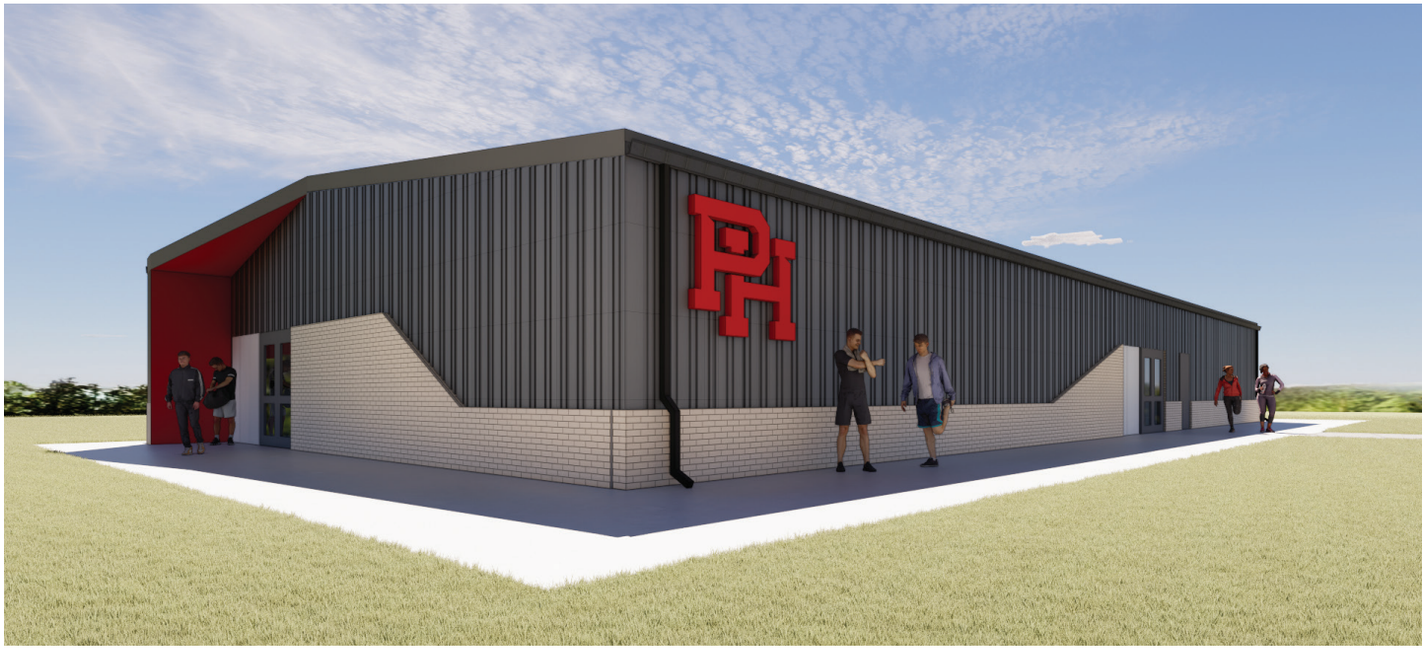
More information can be found on our website, https://tinyurl.com/GOParkHill













Page 11: *Renderings of the new Park Hill High School, courtesy of Hollis + Miller. Photo of the Park Hill High School campus as Phase 1 construction starts.*

Page 12: *Renderings of the new Trojan baseball stadium, courtesy of Hollis + Miller. Rendering of the Preston Field Fieldhouse, courtesy of Hollis + Miller. Photo of the new Park Hill South softball field.*

Page 13: *Rendering of Park Hill South's baseball field, courtesy of Hollis + Miller. Rendering of the new Park Hill South Stadium, courtesy of Hollis + Miller.*



PHS BASEBALL – TURF CONVERSION



PHS STADIUM

WE ARE #ParkHillProud

These are just a few of the awards and accolades Park Hill staff and students have received recently. Visit our website to catch up on the latest honors!

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

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Best High Schools

Congratulations are in order for Park Hill South High School and Park Hill High School! According to *U.S. News & World Report*, they rank as the top two traditional public high schools on the Missouri side of the Kansas City metro area. Statewide, **Park Hill South ranks 11th and Park Hill ranks 14th among Missouri high schools. LEAD Innovation Studio** student performance is included in their home high schools and is reflected in this recognition as well.

Double Honor

We are #ParkHillProud of the 2025-2026 Park Hill High School boys and girls volleyball teams for earning the American Volleyball Coaches Association Team Academic Award for maintaining a 3.3 or higher GPA for the entire school year.







Lesson in Leadership

We're #ParkHillProud of our **Board of Education** for earning the Missouri School Boards' Association (MSBA) 2026 Governance Team Award!

Only 26 districts across the state received this recognition for excellence in governance, leadership and advocacy for students.

Protecting Student Data

We are #ParkHillProud of our Technology Department for successfully renewing its Consortium for School Networking (CoSN) Trusted Learning Environment (TLE) Seal!

The CoSN TLE Seal embodies our commitment to safeguard the privacy of student data. We are one of only 29 districts nationwide to hold this seal, with our certification active through August 2028.



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Join us for the **22nd Annual Community Breakfast** on **October 22, 2026**—a morning of good food, great people, and powerful moments that remind us what community really means.

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PARK HILL *Highlight*

Park Hill School District alumni, families and friends had so much fun at the 75th Anniversary Community Tailgate before the Park Hill vs. Park Hill South football game on Sept. 11. Thank you to everyone who joined us!

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

