Teasley’s Dr. Zinkil Chosen as Georgia’s ‘Middle School Principal of the Year’

Teasley Middle School Principal Dr. Susan Zinkil was named Georgia Middle School Principal of the Year in a surprise announcement at the school on February 12. Dr. Zinkil was one of six finalists selected by the Georgia Association of Secondary School Principals (GASSP) from a large, statewide pool of applications. The Principal of the Year program recognizes principals who excel in educational leadership, resolving complex problems, developing self and others and community service.

Dr. Zinkil was appointed the Principal of Teasley MS in 2010. Under her leadership, Teasley MS has been recognized as: a “Distinguished Breakout Middle School” by GASSP in 2013, a finalist for the Georgia Family Friendly Partnership Award in 2014 and a Title I Reward School in 2012 and 2015 by the Georgia Department of Education. Additionally, the Technology Association of Georgia named Teasley MS as a finalist in its State STEM Awards in 2015.

Dr. Zinkil was surprised with the award by representatives from GASSP, as well as Superintendent of Schools Dr. Brian V. Hightower and members of her family in front of the Teasley faculty at the end of the school day. Melton Callahan, Executive Director of GASSP, and JoAnn Bartolletti, Executive Director of NASSP, commended Dr. Zinkil and her fellow finalists as “outstanding school principals who personify excellence in providing quality leadership to their school communities.”

Clark Creek STEM Academy Is County’s First State STEM Certified School

Clark Creek Elementary School STEM Academy has made history by being the first in the Cherokee County School District to earn prestigious State STEM Certification.

The State STEM certification process is complex and has 15 specific components the State reviews, including: teacher collaboration, technology integration, STEM competitions, math and science instruction and community partnerships. The process takes three years to complete successfully, and Clark Creek ES is one of only 11 elementary schools in Georgia to achieve it the designation.

Clark Creek ES STEM Academy is one of four STEM Academies launched in CCSD during the 2012-13 school year and was selected as CCSD’s pilot school for pursuing the State certification.
Dr. Brian V. Hightower Takes Office as CCSD Superintendent

CCSD’s new Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Brian V. Hightower, hit the ground running on Monday, February 1, with multiple school visits and community speaking engagements in his first week at the helm of Georgia’s ninth-largest school district. CCSD is looking ahead to a bright future with Dr. Hightower continuing a strong tradition of academic excellence!
Etowah High School Athletic Director Robert “Bob” Van Alstyne was named the Georgia AAAAA Athletic Director of the Year by the Georgia Athletic Director’s Association in February.

Coach Van Alstyne was named the Region 5-AAAAAA AD of the Year for the current year and 2014. He also received the 2013-14 Georgia High School Association Cooperative Spirit Sportsmanship Award. Coach Van Alstyne is in his 13th year with the Cherokee County School District and his fifth year as the Athletic Director and an Assistant Principal at Etowah HS.

Coach Van Alstyne’s previous roles with CCSD have included Assistant Principal for Hickory Flat ES, Administrator for Polaris Evening School – North Campus and a health and PE teacher and coach for Cherokee HS. His coaching roles at Cherokee HS included Head Coach for Varsity Boys Golf and Assistant Coach for Varsity Football and Basketball. Prior to joining CCSD, Coach Van Alstyne taught and coached at Sprayberry HS in Marietta, where he served in the same coaching roles as he later did at Cherokee HS; he also started Sprayberry’s Varsity Girls Golf program. He began his coaching career as the Assistant Men’s Basketball Coach at Oswego State University in New York.

He earned his Bachelor of Science in Physical Education degree at State University of New York at Brockport, his Master of Science in Health Studies degree at the University of Alabama and his Educational Specialist in Educational Leadership degree from Lincoln (Tenn.) Memorial University.

3 CCSD Seniors Earn Nat’l Merit Semi-Finalist Honors for PSAT
Three Cherokee County School District seniors were named semifinalists in the 2016 National Merit Scholarship Program.

Matthew S. Wang of River Ridge HS, Mackenzie R. Joy of Sequoyah HS and Paula M. Ruiz of Woodstock HS join academically talented high school seniors from across the country in competing for 7,400 in scholarships worth more than $32 million that will be awarded in the spring.

About 1.5 million juniors entered the 2016 National Merit Scholarship Program by taking the 2014 PSAT; the nationwide pool of 16,000 semifinalists, representing less than 1 percent of U.S. high school seniors, includes the highest-scoring entrants in each state. For the next step of the competition, semifinalists submit an application including their academic record, participation in school and community activities, demonstrated leadership abilities, employment, and honors and awards received, as well as an essay.

Teacher Thanked as LifeSaver
Teasley MS student Victoria Cantrell, left, presents teacher Nick Garcia with a ‘LifeSaver Award’ to thank him for saving her life at the school in early February. During lunch, Mr. Garcia stepped in and quickly performed the Heimlich maneuver on Victoria when she began choking on a bite of food. Victoria and her mother surprised Mr. Garcia with the presentation at a recent faculty meeting.
CCSD Student-Athletes Sign Letters of Intent for College Scholarships

Fifty-seven Cherokee County School District student-athletes were recognized at the CCSD National Signing Day ceremony for signing scholarship commitment letters to compete at the college level, including two sets of twin girls (one set signing for tennis and the other in volleyball).

Sponsored by Credit Union of Georgia and coordinated by the CCSD Office of School Operations, the students, along with their parents, coaches, athletic directors and principals, were honored at a brunch February 3 at the Northside Hospital-Cherokee Conference Center in Canton for making their college choices for a variety of sports on National Signing Day, which is the earliest day on which high school seniors can sign a binding commitment to play football for a college.

While football draws most of the attention on this date, lacrosse scholarships were the most prevalent, with 12 students signing with colleges to play one of the most recent sports added to CCSD high schools.

Cherokee County students also were recognized for commitments to play baseball, basketball, cross country, softball, golf lacrosse, tennis, volleyball (and beach volleyball) and swimming.
CCSD Robotics Teams Take First Place Honors in Regional Competition

Three Cherokee County School District teams won first place in the Super Regional First Lego League (FLL) Robotics competition at Clayton State University.

Clark Creek ES STEM Academy won the first-place Champions Award; Woodstock ES won first place in Project Presentation; and Canton ES STEM Academy won first place in programming.

The teams qualified for the regional competition at the Cherokee County FLL Regional Tournament at which 23 teams competed in Core Values, Robot Design, Research and Robot Missions. Clark Creek STEM Academy’s Robotics Team, the BrickMasters, was the overall winner and earned the first-place Champions Trophy. Woodstock ES placed second and Canton ES STEM Academy placed third.

First Lego League is a robotics program for students that is designed to excite youth about science and technology and teach them valuable employment and life skills. Students program an autonomous robot to score points on a thematic playing surface, creating an innovative solution to a problem as part of their project all while being guided by the FLL Core Values.

River Ridge HS Nursing Students Move from Classroom to Community

River Ridge High School Nursing Assistant Program students are working in clinical settings in the community as part of a healthcare industry certification program. After practicing patient care skills in the classroom and school lab, students gain real-life experience caring for residents at Woodstock Nursing and Rehab Center. The hands-on experience these students receive in community facilities each year is an essential part of becoming a certified nursing assistant and important for determining career choices.

“This program uses real-life experiences to prepare you for what to expect,” junior Taylor Casey said. “I’m excited to be able to go to a nursing home to see everything in motion and put what I have learned to good use.”

The River Ridge HS Nursing Assistant Program, which was established in 2011, is one of two of its kind in the Cherokee County School District; the other is at Cherokee HS. “My favorite part of the class is the labs because I enjoy the experience and being able to learn from them,” junior Rebecca Slayton said.

Once students complete the required classroom, lab and clinical hours, they are eligible to take the Certified Nursing Assistant State Test. Most CCSD students who earn the certification, continue their education with some type of medical school.
CCSD Graduation Rate Continues to Climb, All High Schools Show Increases

The Cherokee County School District's four-year graduation rate increased for the Class of 2015 and continues to exceed State averages.

The School District's four-year graduation rate of 86% for 2015, up from 82% for 2014, made it the third-highest ranked metro Atlanta county school system, according to data released by the Georgia Department of Education in November. This rate also exceeds the State four-year rate of 79%.

In addition to CCSD's four-year graduation rate increasing by four points, each of CCSD's high schools saw gains: Cherokee HS up to 77% from 72%, Creekview HS up to 91% from 89%, Etowah HS up to 89.5% from 83%, River Ridge HS up to 92% from 91%, Sequoyah HS up to 89% from 87% and Woodstock HS up to 83% from 81%.

The increase in the CCSD and individual school graduation rates shows further evidence as to why CCSD's local programs are vital to ensuring on-time graduation; these programs include, but are not limited to: ACE Academy, Polaris Evening School, online C3 Academy and credit recovery courses, the District-wide Graduation Coach and the CHOICES special education program.

The School District also will continue to share "best practices" among high school Principals and counselors, as the graduation rate is an important component of School Improvement Plans and Innovation Zone initiatives.

CCSD Students Earn Third-Highest Passage Rate in State on AP Exams

Cherokee County School District high school students not only continue to exceed State and National averages on rigorous Advance Placement (AP) exams, but the school system has also garnered national recognition for its AP achievement for the third consecutive year.

CCSD has earned the third-highest AP exam passage rate in Georgia in 2015, as well as being named to the College Board’s AP Honor Roll. Only six school districts in Georgia were named to the AP Honor Roll for 2015, and this was CCSD’s third consecutive year to earn the distinction.

The School District, with a passage rate of 73% among the 4,125 tests administered in the spring of 2015, ranks third out of Georgia’s 180 school systems and exceeds the State average of 55% and the National average of 58%.

The AP program has grown significantly in CCSD, with AP courses and exams currently offered in 26 subjects. The number of exams taken by CCSD students has increased 83% in the last five years.

Selection for the 6th Annual AP District Honor Roll is based on the examination of three years of AP data (from 2013 to 2015), looking across 34 AP Exams, including world language and culture.

All of CCSD’s high schools additionally have been named Georgia AP STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) or AP STEM Achievement High Schools in recognition of outstanding student passage and participation levels and the variety of course offerings.

Georgia ranks 13th in the Nation in AP exam passage rates.
CCSD Teams Advance to Divisional Reading Bowl Competition

Cherokee County School District teams placed at the Regional Helen Ruffin Reading Bowl and now are headed to the Divisional competition.

Placing at the North Region event held on Feb. 6 were: at the high school level, Creekview HS, first place; middle school level, Creekland MS, first place, and Mill Creek MS, second place; and elementary school level, Avery ES, second place. The Divisional competition is on Feb. 27; the next level of competition is the State championship.

Teams qualified for the Regional event by placing first or second at the CCSD Bowl. Those winners were: high school level, Creekview HS, first place, and Etowah HS, second place; middle school level, Mill Creek MS, first place, and Creekland MS, second place; and elementary school level, Avery ES, first place, and Little River ES, second place.

Creekland MS (top photo, right): from left, Coach Anne Benton, Gabrielle Etienne, Abbi Gallagher, Grace Godwin, Kate McConnell and Carson Miller.

Creekview HS (right): from left, Alex Kaye, Kelsey Henson, Alyssa Auten, Emily McGhee, Alexis Schopmann, Natalie Thackray; back row: Coach Liana Howard, Caitlyn Bergey, Anika Duff, Caitlin Canfield, Alyssa Powell, Megan Halverson, Tori Padgett, Hannah Oliver, Amber Kidd and Coach Anne Thiers.

Woodstock ES Students Compete at 4-H Event

Woodstock Elementary School students recently competed at the 4-H Cloverleaf District Project Achievement for fourth- through sixth-graders, and two students earned second place in the public speaking competition.

Sydney Eidson earned second place for her presentation on safety, and Delilah Glorio placed second for her project on cat care; and Geo Acosta spoke on computer information technology. Forty-eight students presented projects for the competition.

From left to right, Geo Acosta, Delilah Glorio and Sydney Eidson.
CCSD High Schools Celebrate National Girls and Women in Sports Day

More than 650 female athletes from the Cherokee County School District’s six high schools participated in CCSD’s annual celebration of National Girls and Women in Sports Day (NGWSD). The Day recognizes the contributions female athletes have made in their sports, acknowledges the challenges they have overcome, and celebrates the positive influence of sports participation for girls and women everywhere.

“This year marks the 30th Annual National Girls and Women in Sports Day,” said Tonya Sebring, athletic director at Woodstock HS, who coordinated the event held February 1 at River Ridge High School. “This year's theme, ‘Leading the Way,’ is a nod to all those athletes who have overcome barriers, to coaches who challenge their girls to succeed, to girls who have faith in their own potential and to all those who continue to use the power of example to inspire greatness.”

The program honors a coach each year for his/her contributions and support of female athletes. This year’s recipient was Sequoyah High School softball coach Todd Morrissey, who led his team to the State championship in 2006, and has since made seven return trips to the State playoffs with the Sequoyah Lady Chiefs.

NGWSD Recognized Alumna and Athletes:

- Cherokee HS Alumna Kelsey Achin presented the CHS Perseverance Award to Madalyn Townsend
- Creekview HS Alumna Lindsay Higgins presented the CVHS Drive and Determination Award to Doraly Blanton
- Etowah HS Alumna Tagan Berglund presented the EHS Committed Athlete Award to Jaclyn Regnery
- River Ridge HS Alumna Shannon Driscoll presented the RRHS Courageous Athlete Award to Zia Yurchuck.
- Sequoyah HS Alumna Victoria Carter presented the SHS Confident Athlete Award to Lauren Hartman.
- Woodstock HS Alumna Ashley Saville presented the WHS Disciplined Athlete award to Ashton Sutton.
RRHS Senior Named A Top Youth Leader in Georgia

River Ridge High School senior Allie Robbins has been named one of the top 20 youth leaders in Georgia.

Allie will be honored by the 21st Century Leaders (21CL) nonprofit youth leadership program at its Eighth Annual Georgia Youth Leadership Awards on Saturday, March 5, 2016 at the College Football Hall of Fame in Atlanta.

The annual awards recognize 20 “outstanding high school students throughout Georgia who have made a significant impact on their schools, communities and beyond,” according to 21CL.

Allie is being recognized for her work to develop the first countywide Challenger Basketball program for special needs students.

The honorees are chosen by a member selection committee made up of Atlanta Business Chronicle “40 under 40” members and 21CL Board of Directors, alumni and student peers.

Each honoree will be presented with a $250 mini-grant; one student at the event also will be presented with the top award of the Turner Voices Innovative Leadership Award, which includes a $1,000 grant from sponsor, Turner Broadcasting.

Creekland MS Academic Bowl Teams Qualify for National Tournament

Two Creekland Middle School Academic Bowl teams have qualified for the National Academic Quiz Tournament to be held in Atlanta in May.

The Creekland MS teams earned records of 9-1 and 8-2 among the 32 teams from Georgia, Florida and Alabama that competed in the recent Sixth Annual Tri-State National Academic Quiz Tournament qualifier held in Bainbridge.

Photo: The teams celebrate their success: from left to right, front row: Jordan Moyel, Eril Moyel, Cian Flynn, Jack Pace, Austin Huguenard, Jack Eno, Tera Yeager; back row: Coach Mark Nazemzadeh, Matt Thompson, Jack Wallace, Joseph Satterfield, Coach Eli Rollman, Hampton Barrineau and Coach Cindy Satterfield.

WHS Teacher Honored As Society’s 2015 Outstanding American History Teacher

Woodstock High School teacher Dr. Krista Webb has been named the Georgia State Society’s 2015 Outstanding American History Teacher. Dr. Webb was nominated by the Thomas Johnson Chapter of the National Society Colonial Dames XVII Century. Dr. Webb, who teaches Advanced Placement (AP) U.S. History and AP World History and is the school’s Social Studies Department Head, previously was named the 2011 Cherokee County School District Teacher of the Year and an AP Master Teacher among other honors and recognitions.

Kindergarten Registration: April 28 and 29

All CCSD elementary schools will hold kindergarten registration on Thursday, April 28, from 3:30 to 6 pm and Friday, April 29, from 9 am to 12 noon. Enrollment details can be found on the CCSD website here.
CCSD Transportation Department Earns National Seal of Excellence

The CCSD Transportation Department earned the prestigious National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) Blue Seal of Excellence earlier this year, becoming one of the first school systems in the State to obtain this level of certification.

This recognition program is the National standard for outstanding transportation maintenance departments and companies; ASE is an independent non-profit organization that since 1972 has worked to improve the quality of vehicle repair and service by testing and certifying automotive professionals.

This recognition for CCSD was achieved following a two-year joint initiative by the Transportation and Personnel Management departments. In order to earn this recognition, at least 75 percent of the organization’s service staff must be ASE certified, and each area of service must be overseen by at least one ASE-certified professional.

In addition to passing an ASE Certification test, automotive technicians must have two years of on the job training or one year of on the job training and a two-year degree in automotive repair to qualify for certification. To remain ASE certified, professionals must be retested every five years to keep up with ever advancing automotive technology.

Hickory Flat ES Named a 2015-2017 National PTA School of Excellence

The National PTA recognized Hickory Flat ES for its significant progress to welcome and empower families to support student success and school improvements during the course of the 2014-15 school year.

The past school year’s accomplishments that led to this recognition included, but are not limited to: launching the school-wide and community-wide #BeKind initiative; achieving 100% PTA membership; establishing a new PTA Welcoming Committee; and hosting community events including a new Veterans Day Appreciation Ceremony and a Back to School Picnic.

“To say that I am excited about this award is an understatement!” Principal Whitney Nolan said. “What an honor to be one of the 124 schools chosen nationwide!”
CCSD Honors Outstanding Teachers at Annual TOTY Banquet

The Cherokee County School District celebrated outstanding educators with an elegant dinner, tributes and gifts at the CCSD 2016 Teacher of the Year Recognition Banquet, thanks to the support of community partners. The annual dinner for the CCSD Teacher of the Year and school-level Teachers of the Year was co-hosted by Credit Union of Georgia and Northside Hospital-Cherokee in December at the Northside Hospital-Cherokee Conference Center in Canton.

CCSD’s Teacher of the Year, Jeremy Law of Teasley MS, was selected by a panel of community leaders who evaluate applications from each school. He teaches special education students at Teasley MS and coaches football at Sequoyah HS. Mr. Law is also a product of CCSD schools— he is a graduate of Etowah HS.

Jon Oliver, one of Mr. Law’s former students, spoke at the dinner about how Mr. Law encouraged him to never give up on himself. Mr. Law, in his application and in again in remarks that evening, spoke about his desire to make a difference in the lives of his students, noting how many face significant challenges.

“Due to circumstances beyond their control, many students enter our classrooms each day without hope,” Coach Law said. “In spite of the grim situations some of our students are surrounded by, we must make an effort to go above and beyond our normal teaching duties to give our students hope. We must help them see a reason for tomorrow.”

Teacher of the Year school winners received a $100 Visa Gift Card, a portrait by Lifetouch Portrait Studio, an engraved plaque and a tote bag filled with supplies and gifts. Mr. Law additionally received a laptop computer, iPad mini, as well as assorted gift baskets and gift cards. Sponsors who made all of these gifts possible: Presenting Sponsors, Credit Union of Georgia and Northside Hospital-Cherokee; Gold Sponsors, Dell, Fforg, Inc., Hewlett Packard, Lifetouch Portrait Studio, Poole’s Insulation; Silver Sponsors, Cobb EMC, Path & Post - a Becky Babcock Team, Pearson, Quia; Bronze Sponsors, Chick-fil-A, Roly Poly; Friends of CCSD Sponsors, Cherokee County Council PTA, Knovation, Multimedia Systems and State Farm, Jan Rooney Agency.

2015-16 TEACHERS OF THE YEAR

ACE Academy                      Hickory Flat ES
Mark Corson                      Amanda Collins
Arnold Mill ES                   Holly Springs ES STEM
Allison Fuss                     Academy
Avery ES                         Kimberly Forrester
Trayce Williams                  Indian Knoll ES
Ball Ground ES STEM              Mollie Guy
Academy                          Johnston ES
Cortnie Freeman                  Cameron Johnston
Bascomb ES                       Knox ES
Dawn Barrett                     Sandra Moore
Boston ES                        Liberty ES
Jennifer Martin                  Brandy Thierry
CCSD Preschool Centers          Little River ES
Lori Rich                        Debbie Brown
Canton ES STEM                   Macedonia ES
Academy                          Laura Latham
Pam Davis                        Mill Creek MS
Carmel ES                        Becky Stodola
Audrey Craig                     Mountain Road ES
Cherokee HS                      Rebecca Spears
Robin Roper                      Oak Grove ES Fine Arts
Clark Creek ES STEM              Academy
Academy                          Carli O’Connell
Jennifer McIntosh                R.M. Moore ES
Clayton ES                       Allison Evans
Sandy McPherson                  River Ridge HS
Creekland MS                     Henley Sawicki
Denise Shaw                      Sequoyah HS
Creekview HS                     Christy Flynn
Stephanie Norris                 Sixes ES
Dean Rusk MS                     Tracy Cavallaro
Stacy W. Kennedy                 Teasley MS
E.T. Booth MS                    Jeremy Law
Angela Mentzel                   Tippens Education Center
Etowah HS                        Jamie Horton
Dr. Brian Heglund                Woodstock ES
Free Home ES                     Amy VanFossen
Cindy Satterfield                Woodstock HS
Freedom MS                       Loretta Cameron
Rollins Caglioni                 Woodstock MS
Hasty ES Fine Arts               Brandi Miller
Academy                          Sarah Weiss
Woodstock ES Super Speller Wins County Bee, Heads to District

Woodstock Elementary School fifth-grader James Sow won the Cherokee County School District Spelling Bee for 2016, besting a stage full of school champion spellers from CCSD’s elementary and middle schools.

The final round of the competition at Woodstock High School pitted James against two middle school students, but the youngest of the three prevailed, and both seventh-graders congratulated James on his win. Jacob Tate, E.T. Booth MS, placed second in the contest, and Callie Goins, Mill Creek MS, placed third. The CCSD finalists will compete in the Georgia Association of Educators (GAE) District Spelling Bee on Feb. 27 in Cobb County. Shelby Rhoades, an eighth-grader from Woodstock MS, placed fourth and will serve as alternate for the District bee.

Thirty-one Cherokee County students put their spelling skills to the test in annual competition, sponsored by GAE and the Cherokee Association of Educators. More than 80 words were attempted during the competition, including tricky terms like “idiosyncratic,” “eleemosynary,” “force majeure” and “nunchaku.”

Each elementary and middle school sent its school-level winner to the CCSD Spelling Bee in hopes of taking home the title and a chance to advance to the district competition. Students in grades 4-8 are eligible for the competition. The group of spellers went through six rounds of words before a champion was declared in the event.

Jane Bates welcomed the audience and spellers on behalf of GAE; Sylvia Gaillard served as caller of the words; Nancy Mohn, Peta Murray and Susan Newman were judges for the event; others assisting were Paula Pelusi, Katherine Smithyman, Barbara Garmon, Cassie Black and Letitia Cline. Judy Withey, Curriculum Coordinator for Social Studies and Language Arts, coordinated the event for CCSD.

Mill Creek MS Student Writes Winning Essay about Stormwater

Mill Creek Middle School sixth-grader Rachel Kim is the Cherokee County winner in the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District's 2015 Water Essay Contest.

More than 1,900 middle school students from metro Atlanta entered the annual contest that challenges students to think critically about the region's water resources and raises awareness for conservation and preservation of water quality. Students are asked to answer a question in 500 words or less; the 2015 question was: “Why is stormwater pollution a problem and what can you do to prevent it?”

One winner was selected for each of the Water Planning District's 15 counties. An awards reception was held in December at the Georgia State Capitol.
Holly Springs Elementary School STEM Academy is being recognized as a global leader in successful integration of technology with teaching and learning.

The school has been selected by Microsoft as a 2015-2016 Microsoft Showcase School in recognition of excellence in transforming its learning environment to deliver more personalized education to students, effectively using mobile and cloud technology and better preparing students for success in the workplace. Only 400 schools worldwide have earned this recognition.

“Being selected as a Microsoft Showcase School is an amazing honor and recognition of the passion our teachers and staff have for creating the best learning environments possible,” Principal Dr. Dianne Steinbeck said. “We look forward to sharing our experiences with other schools in our community and the world to continue finding innovative ways to equip our students with the proper tools needed for success inside and outside of the classroom.”

Last school year, Holly Springs ES STEM Academy became the first whole school ever to be Microsoft Innovative Educator (MIE) certified. As a Showcase School, Holly Springs ES STEM Academy will work closely with Microsoft to lead innovation in education and communicate a vision for education enabled by technology through the hosting and mentoring of other schools in the community on transformational educational practices.

“Microsoft Showcase Schools are shining examples of those applying purpose driven innovation in a variety of ways to build connection, motivate students and to create community in and out of school,” said Anthony Salcito, Vice President of Worldwide Education for Microsoft. “These schools are truly transforming learning and providing more personalized education to students empowering them to achieve more.”

Johnston Elementary School recently was recognized by the American Heart Association as a Platinum-Level Fit Friendly School... making it the first school in the Cherokee County School District to earn this top National recognition.

The Fit Friendly Program recognizes schools and companies that champion the health of their faculty/staff/employees and work to create a culture of physical activity and health in the workplace. In order to earn recognition, employers must demonstrate adoption of various required physical activity criteria, nutrition criteria and culture criteria; to earn the higher Platinum recognition, employers must also show positive results such as behavior changes.

Johnston ES had previously earned the Association’s Gold-Level National recognition, along with Avery ES, Creekland MS, Holly Springs ES and Woodstock ES. Five more CCSD schools recently were awarded this status: Bascomb ES, Boston ES, Indian Knoll ES, Liberty ES and Macedonia ES. The Principal of Johnston ES is Amy Graham, PE teachers are Coaches Michael L’Esperance and Joshua Philpot.
15 CCSD Teachers Win ‘Bright Idea’ Grants from Amicalola EMC

Cherokee County School District teachers won $11,168 in Bright Ideas grants from Amicalola EMC. The competitive grants will allow 15 CCSD teachers to pursue innovative ideas in their classrooms and schools. The winners are:

**Ball Ground ES STEM Academy**
- Mollie Dunn, “Makerspace: Building Bridges to A Better Future,” $1,000

**Cherokee HS**
- Dr. Jodi Burn, “Set Design,” $250
- Diana Haslick, “Project Independence,” $1,000
- Dawn P Townsend, “Operation Read,” $250

**Clayton ES**
- Katie Taylor, “iPads for Active Learning,” $976
- Susie Weatherby, “Parent Resource Center,” $724

**Hasty ES Fine Arts Academy**
- Catherine Shaw, “Reading Eggs,” $1,000
- Sarah Weiss, “Happily Ever Learning - A Cinderella Story,” $500

**R.M. Moore ES**
- Vanessa Ann Green, “I Love Reading,” $1,000
- Emily Ingram, “iPads in the Classroom,” $976
- Ada Rogers, “iPad Learning Center,” $1,000

**Teasley MS**
- Lindsay Bowley, “Shark Tank Unit,” $200
- Scott Reece, “Intro to STEM - Simple Machines,” $992

Celebrating at R.M. Moore Elementary School are, from left to right: Stacey Fields, Director of Public Relations, Amicalola EMC; Travis Cline, Amicalola EMC Board of Directors; Bright Ideas Grant winner teacher Emily Ingram; Principal Jan Adamson; and John Bennett, Amicalola EMC Board Vice Chairman.

Adaptive PE Teacher Named A State ‘Triumph of the Human Spirit’ Award Winner

Cherokee County School District Adaptive Physical Education teacher Amy Aenchbacher won a State award for her outstanding service to special needs students. She is one of 20 winners statewide of the 2015 BlazeSports ‘Triumph of the Human Spirit’ Award, previously named the Georgia Disability Sports Awards, which honors significant impacts made in Georgia through adaptive sport and recreation. These awards pay tribute to individuals, groups and organizations that demonstrate qualities beyond athletic achievement, such as leadership, a positive attitude and who inspire, motivate and truly epitomize the “Triumph of the Human Spirit.” A lifelong advocate and educator of quality physical education programs for children with disabilities in Georgia, Ms. Aenchbacher has served as Co-Coordinator of the Cherokee County Special Olympics for more than a decade.
CCSD Celebrates 20 Years of Lottery-Funded Pre-K in Schools

The Lottery funded Georgia Pre-K program made its appearance in Cherokee County schools 20 years ago, and in that time, more than 1,900 children have attended Pre-K in a CCSD school. The school district has increased its classrooms and locations steadily ever since the first 4-year-old students arrived on campus at R.M. Moore ES and Ball Ground ES in 1995. The two schools were the first selected to add pre-K classrooms because of the scarcity of preschool programs on the north end of the county.

Laurie Carroll was the first Pre-K teacher at the new program on the original R.M. Moore ES campus in Waleska, when the school was housed in an antiquated facility built in the 1940s.

“I remember people being skeptical about having 4-year-olds in the school setting-- and I was too, when I first saw the old R.M. Moore building,” laughed Ms. Carroll, who still teaches at R.M. Moore ES. “One year later, we moved into our new building, and two years later, we made national news when TIME magazine came to take pictures of us. The pictures were published in an article about the success of pre-kindergarten programs in Georgia and around the country.”

CCSD strives to offer the free program at many of its Title I school campuses to ensure economically disadvantaged students have access to a proven resource for school readiness.

In 2011, the Georgia General Assembly authorized an evaluation of Georgia’s Pre-K Program, and the resulting research conducted by the FPG Child Development Institute at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill showed that Georgia Pre-K participants exhibited “significant growth across all domains of learning,” including language and literacy skills, math skills, general knowledge and behavioral skills.

Today CCSD operates Georgia Pre-K Program sites at R.M. Moore ES, Ball Ground ES STEM Academy, Hasty ES Fine Arts Academy, Canton ES STEM Academy, Johnston ES, and Oak Grove ES Fine Arts Academy, and almost every classroom has a waitlist. About 100 Pre-K slots were still available in Cherokee County in mid-September, mostly through private childcare centers. Parents interested in enrolling their child (who must have turned 4 years old on or before September 1) can search for available openings online at this link.
Community Partners Make A Difference in CCSD Schools

Healthy Partners: Cherokee HS healthcare science students are benefitting from a new donation from Northside Hospital-Cherokee. The hospital, a CCSD Partner, has made numerous donations to the school’s Career Pathways healthcare science program through which students can earn Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) licenses. The latest donation is a neonatal incubator, which program instructor Dianne Argonis-Basto said will be very beneficial, as many students aspire to pursue additional certification and degrees to become nurses and doctors.

Sweet Reward: A class at E.T. Booth Middle School recently enjoyed a sweet reward from a community partner. As part of an ongoing partnership with the school, the Waffle House on Highway 92 at Interstate 575 provides a free breakfast during school to the class with the highest percentage of daily attendance for the month. An employee of the restaurant sets up in the classroom to demonstrate how the signature waffles are made. Increasing attendance is part of the school’s annual School Improvement Plan. Seventh-graders in Joe Lemmo’s class were the most recent winners of the prize.

Scholarships for College: Several CCSD partners offer college scholarships for students. Applications are posted online now for scholarships offered by Aramark Management Services, Oak Leaf Church and the Service League of Cherokee County. Check the CCSD website’s Virtual Bulletin Board under Parent Information, at this link.

Safety Programs: Boston Elementary School students continue to benefit from longtime Partner in Education, Cobb EMC, which recently presented a grant to the school, as well as a program for fifth-graders on electricity and electrical safety.

The $500 grant will be used for Study Island, a self-paced and individualized computer program that offers games and assessments for students across the curriculum, including reading, math, science and social studies.

Boston fifth-graders in the photo above are enjoying a program on electricity, insulators, conductors, and electrical safety provided by Cobb EMC.
Off to a Great Start: Georgia Power Awards First-Year Teacher Grants

Two Cherokee County School District first-year teachers were surprised in December with $1,000 grants from Georgia Power Company.

Creekland Middle School science teacher Derek Tobin and Hasty Elementary School Fine Arts Academy second-grade teacher Taylor Johnson were visited in their classrooms on Tuesday by Georgia Power Area Manager Rod Drake, who presented them with New Teacher Assistance grants from the utility company. The grants started 12 years ago to recognize outstanding first-year teachers and encourage them in their choice of profession.

Both Mr. Tobin and Ms. Johnson are graduates of Kennesaw State University, and are two of the 41 teachers across Georgia selected for this year’s awards from Georgia Power. Candidates for the grants are submitted by the deans of the state’s public teacher colleges and must be in the top 25 percent of their class academically, possess an aptitude for teaching, and be recommended by education faculty members.

In addition to the $1,000 grant for projects in their classrooms, winning teachers also receive a scale-model Georgia Power bucket truck. Ms. Johnson said the award is especially meaningful to her, as her grandfather worked as a lineman and foreman for the company. Mr. Tobin said the presentation is quite timely for his students, as he is covering a unit on electricity in his science classes.

Sequoyah HS Marching Band of Chiefs Wins Grand Champion Award

The award-winning Sequoyah High School Marching Band of Chiefs has added another top honor to its list of accomplishments.

The Band of Chiefs, led by Director of Bands Casey Eubanks, won the Grand Champion Award at the CMI Marching Invitational held earlier this month in Douglas. The band received all Superior ratings, as well as first-place awards in drum major, color guard, percussion and band categories. The Grand Champion Award is given to the highest-scoring marching band in attendance regardless of its classification.
Sequoyah Air Force Junior ROTC Scores Highest Rating in 2016 Evaluation

The Sequoyah High School Air Force Junior ROTC instructors and cadets have earned an overall unit assessment score of “Exceeds Standards” -- the highest rating attainable. The cadets performed exceptionally well during the unit evaluation held on Jan. 27, 2016 and took great pride in leading and accomplishing their unit goals, according to teachers Lt. Col. Ronald Whittle and Chief Master Sergeant John Futral, who lead the school’s program.

“They have created a dynamic and supportive learning environment coupled with an excellent community outreach program,” Principal Elliott Berman said of the program’s teachers. “In addition, they provide outstanding leadership in administering the cadet-centered citizenship program.”

Cadets Kylie Nowokunski and Emily Stump were recognized as the Top Performers by Col. (Ret.) Scott Lewis of Air Force Junior ROTC Headquarters, for their outstanding leadership in preparing for the inspection. This award is only presented to the top 2 percent of cadets in the AFJROTC Program.

Creekview Army Junior ROTC Wins Region Championship for Fitness

The Creekview High School Army Junior ROTC Raider Team was named Region Champion at the JROTC Region 3 Athletic Raider Challenge Competition.

The team won both the Male and Female divisions in the recent competition of physical fitness tests against teams from 10 other high schools.

“These young people are now probably in the best shape of their young lives, and they are learning to live healthy, train aggressively, and compete enthusiastically to win,” said First Sgt. (Ret.) Greg A. Anderson, who oversees the program at Creekview HS. “My goal is for them to live a healthy and physically active lifestyle after high school and teach others to do the same... and win some competitions along the way!”

Presidential Commendation

The River Ridge High School Crusading Knights Service organization recently received a commendation from President Barack Obama for its efforts in completing more than 10,000 hours of school-sponsored and organized community service activities. Along with the letter of recognition, River Ridge HS received a Gold Medal to display in the school. The organization is sponsored by Counselor Jeff Bennett.

Holly Springs Teacher Wins Media Award

Holly Springs Elementary School STEM Academy teacher Carolyn Mathews, right, recently was recognized by the Georgia School Nutrition Association with a Media Award for her reporting last year while employed as an editor with the Cherokee Ledger News. Tonya Cannon of the Cherokee County School Nutrition Association, center, presented Ms. Mathews with the certificate and flowers in appreciation for Ms. Mathews’ coverage of the Association.
County Education Foundation Awards $25,000 in Teacher Grants

The Cherokee County Educational Foundation on Friday, Feb. 12, 2016 surprised Cherokee County School District teachers and students with a record total of $25,000 awarded through its third annual round of competitive IMPACT Grants.

The grants, which represent a significant increase from the $15,000 awarded last school year, will fund 13 innovative projects ranging from a desktop mill so high school students can machine parts for robots they design to a writing program for elementary school students that uses Lego block sets to spark creative storytelling.

Cherokee County Educational Foundation Board Secretary Amanda Arnold said the day of surprise "Prize Patrol"-style grant presentations with oversized checks, balloons, bouquets of flowers and cheering crowds of students is the "highlight of the year" for the Board.

"Every year around Valentine's Day, our hearts are filled, as we show CCSD schools, teachers and students how much the community loves them," said Ms. Arnold, who represents Credit Union of Georgia on the Board. "We received more than 40 outstanding applications this year, and each one was inspiring, as they illustrated how much more teachers would do in their classrooms if additional grant funding was available."

Since 2013, the Foundation has awarded more than $115,000 in grants to CCSD schools, teachers and students. The Foundation's mission is to raise awareness, funding and resources to enrich CCSD schools in areas not fully funded in the regular school program.

The 2016 IMPACT Grants Recipients:

- Arnold Mill ES – “Learning in Action” – $664.69, Teacher Deb Havens
- Boston ES – “A Makerspace Can Produce Future Leaders” – $1,941.45, Teacher Susan Stringfellow
- Canton ES STEM Academy – “Code and Play the Sphero Way” – $2,379.80, Teachers David Cornn and Dr. Judy Wright
- Canton ES STEM Academy – “Readers Workshop Books” – $2,500, Teacher Heather Eastridge
- Etowah HS – “Desktop CNC Mill for Robotics” – $2,199, Teacher Josh Farrell
- Holly Springs ES STEM Academy – “Going Digital – Transitioning from Paper to Digital” – $2,500, Teacher Lauren Pittman
- Indian Knoll ES – “Lego Storytellers” – $1,364.95, Teacher Marissa Williams
- Oak Grove ES Fine Arts Academy – “Kindling a Bright Future” – $2,159.78, Teachers Jenny Bickerstaff and Lindsay White
- Oak Grove ES Fine Arts Academy – “Homework Help Kindle Project” – $290.33, Teacher Lisa Reidy
- Teasley MS – “Camp Teasley” – $1,500, Assistant Principal Dr. Chris Garity
- Woodstock ES – “Active Students Are Engaged Students” – $2,500, Teacher Kristy Gibbs
- Woodstock MS – “WOLF – Working on Literacy Fundamentals” – $2,500, Teacher Rosa Frederick

Marissa Williams at Indian Knoll ES reacts in joyful surprise when greeted by the “Prize Patrol” with her classroom grant.

Lindsay White and Jennifer Bickerstaff at Oak Grove ES celebrate the news about their grant.
Teasley MS Wins National Red Ribbon Campaign Photo Contest

Teasley Middle School won the 2015 National Family Partnership’s Red Ribbon Campaign photo contest and $1,000 prize! The school’s PE teachers coordinated participation in the contest, which included submitting a creative photo celebrating this year’s Red Ribbon Week theme: “Respect Yourself. Be Drug Free!” Teasley’s entry included this photo taken in October of the entire student body spelling out “Respect Ur Self.”