The Hawk

Holly Springs, Mississippi Summer-Fall 2026 District Newsletter



Holly Springs High School Class of 2026

‘If you dream it, you can do it’



Valedictorian Christen Gray, salutatorian Keturah Payton, historian Jaidan Hall

The Holly Springs High School Class of 2026 celebrated a milestone in their lives on Friday, May 22, with words to remember from classmates and a successful alumnus.

Valedictorian Christen Gray opened the commencement with a Bible verse, Jeremiah 29:11. “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

She said through every obstacle and setback, the Class of 2026 kept pushing forward.

“Some of us faced struggles people never knew about,” Gray said. “Yet through it all, God gave us the strength to continue.”

She thanked family, friends, administrators, teachers and staff.

“As we leave this chapter behind, I really hope graduation doesn’t turn us into strangers,” she said to her classmates. “Even though most of us are going our separate ways, I’m grateful for every single person who was a part of this chapter of my life.”

See Graduation on Page 5

Holly Springs High School Class of 2026 Graduation



Guest speaker Karvis Jones



Hood new school board member

Fergenia Hood took the oath of office Tuesday evening, June 9, 2026, as the newest member of the Holly Springs School District Board of Trustees. She was appointed to the position by the city board of aldermen, and Mayor Charles Terry conducted the swearing-in ceremony. Family and friends were in attendance for the ceremony, which was held prior to the school board meeting. Hood will complete the unexpired term of the late Dr. Gemma Beckley. The term runs through February 2029.



DeBerry joins school board

Le'Kesha DeBerry was sworn in Tuesday evening, March 17, 2026, as a new member of the Holly Springs School District Board of Trustees. She was appointed to a five-year term by the Holly Springs mayor and board of aldermen. Her parents, Dale and Kendra DeBerry, stood beside her for the oath of office, which was conducted by SaSha Marsh. Other family members were also in attendance for the special occasion. The five-year term runs through February 2031.

Teamwork makes the dreams work



A message from Dr. Irene Walton Turnage, Superintendent of Education

As we begin a new year, it is the perfect time to renew our focus on what matters most: educating our students to EXCEL in the global community. Preparing them to succeed in the workforce, higher education, the military, entrepreneurship, or whatever path they choose is more than our responsibility. It is our mission.

The longer I serve as superintendent, the more deeply I understand that student success requires a unified effort. Parents and families, community members, educators, students, and district and school leaders all have an important role to play. None of us can accomplish this work alone. We must join together as one team to prepare our students to become the next generation of leaders, innovators, and change makers in our community and beyond.

Our students need mentors, encouragers, volunteers, partners, and role models. Whether you give your time, share your expertise, support a school activity, offer a student an internship, celebrate an accomplishment, or simply speak words of encouragement, your involvement can make a lasting difference.

When we work together, we become an unbeatable team—one capable of ensuring that every student has the opportunities, resources, guidance, and support needed to succeed. When our students win, our families win. Our schools and district win. Our employers and community win. Most importantly, our future becomes stronger and brighter.

The hopes and dreams of our community live within the students who walk through our doors every day. It is our shared responsibility to nurture those dreams and help our students EXCEL at the highest levels. Their success cannot be left to chance.

I invite every member of our community to find a way to become part of this important work and join this winning team. Let us take responsibility for our children, invest in their potential, and work together to turn their dreams into realities. Teamwork makes the dreams work.

School boards hold collaborative retreat

The Holly Springs and Marshall County school boards united Monday, June 22, 2026, for their third annual collaborative retreat. The agenda included legislative update, presentation on state education changes impacting school boards, and health and safety advice for schools.

Kim Mayfield, president of the Holly Springs School District Board of Trustees, and Kerry Hale, president of the Marshall County School District Board of Trustees, kicked off the meeting at The Apothecary downtown with a welcome and introductions. Dr. Carrie Skelton, superintendent of the county school district, and Dr. Irene Walton Turnage, superintendent of the city school district, followed with an overview of their respective districts.

Dr. Skelton highlighted the success and growth of the county district's Career and Technical Education program, and in addition she emphasized that student proficiency rates are going up districtwide. She also said the district is maintaining its enrollment level.

Dr. Turnage said a lot of emphasis in the city district is on the strategic plan and the Portrait of a Graduate project. She said the district wants to ensure that its graduates are career ready no matter the field they choose. And in addition to the importance of test scores, a dedicated focus is on "the heart of our children" and stressing the importance of good citizenship.

State Sen. Neil Whaley addressed legislative issues dealing with education and answered questions from leaders of the two districts. He congratulated both districts on their "B" accountability ratings. He said two courses, financial literacy and civics, are returning to public schools in the state, and he thinks these courses are very important for students.

Dr. Denotris Jackson, executive director of the Mississippi School Boards Association, and Dr. Tommye Henderson, superintendent search manager for MSBA, addressed "Signals and Shifts Impacting School Boards." They addressed new, increased cut scores in the Mississippi Department of Education accountability model, which means a district can perform as it did the previous year on state tests, yet its rating will drop.

They also complimented the work of superintendents, principals, teachers, supportive board members and students in Mississippi, as the state is ranked 16th in education nationally, up drastically from 48th in 2014. The top-tier ranking, they said, is based on students' continuous academic gains.



Representatives of the two school districts and guests for the recent education retreat include, front, from left, Rodney Crane, Fergenia Hood, Kerry Hale, Kim Mayfield, Dr. Denotris Jackson; back, from left, Lemon Phelps, Tommye Henderson, Ejeera Dukes, Le'Kesha DeBerry, Dr. Carrie Skelton, Leslie King, Dr. Irene Walton Turnage, Mark Bryson, Monet Bell Autry.





Sen. Neil Whaley (left) and fire chief Rodney Crane speak to members of the two school boards.

Holly Springs Fire Chief Rodney Crane discussed "Health and Safety of a School District," particularly emphasizing the importance of placing automated external defibrillators (AEDs) at every school. He also stressed having employees trained to provide assistance during health-related situations until emergency personnel arrive, and he said his department can provide training to schools in regards to various safety concerns.

The joint meeting of Holly Springs and Marshall County school boards closed with a collaborative planning session that included discussions about shared challenges, emerging opportunities and future collaboration.



From left are school board president Kim Mayfield, superintendent of education Dr. Irene Walton Turnage, retirees Shirley Aldridge, Sherrye Washington, Elvira Crittle, Caldonia Crane and Priscilla Jackson, and assistant superintendent Eileen Dowsing.

School district celebrates lasting legacy of retirees

The Holly Springs School District held its Retirees' Farewell Program on Thursday, May 28, 2026, in the high school cafeteria. The special honorees have a combined 137 years of dedicated service to the school district.

This year's retirees and their years of service are Shirley Aldridge, teacher assistant, 29.25 years; Sherrye Washington, teacher assistant, 23 years; Elvira Crittle, teacher, 20 years (23 years in education); Caldonia Crane, teacher assistant, 27 years; Priscilla Jackson, cafeteria manager, 38 years.

Kim Mayfield, president of the school board, Dr. Irene Walton Turnage, superintendent of education, and Eileen Dowsing, assistant superintendent of education, thanked retirees for their longstanding commitment to education and a lasting legacy that will be remembered. They also urged them to enjoy the next chapter of their lives.

"Your years of dedication and service have helped shape Holly Springs School District into what it is today," Mayfield said. "The seeds you planted in students, colleagues, and this community will continue to grow for years to come. We thank you for your service, your sacrifices and the legacy you leave behind."

"Thank you for your dedication, resilience, compassion and heart," Dowsing said. "You have given your time, your talent and your energy to generations of children, and that kind of service leaves a lasting mark."

Mental Health Awareness Month



From left are school board members Le'Kesha DeBerry, Ejeera Dukes and Kim Mayfield, superintendent of education Dr. Irene Walton Turnage, school board member Lemon Phelps and assistant superintendent Eileen Dowsing.

The Holly Springs School District Board of Trustees recognized Mental Health Awareness Month in May 2026 by highlighting the importance of mental wellness and self-care for students, educators, staff, and the entire community. As schools continued through the testing season, the board emphasized that mental health is just as important as academic success. Testing periods can create added stress and pressure for both youth and educators, making it essential to prioritize rest, encouragement, balance, and emotional well-being. Board members and district staff in attendance were presented with Mental Health Awareness bags filled with thoughtful items designed to encourage self-care, promote wellness, and provide reminders to pause, recharge, and care for themselves as they continue serving and supporting students each day. The district remains committed to fostering an environment where mental health awareness is openly supported and where students and educators alike are reminded that seeking balance, support, and encouragement is a sign of strength.

Graduation

Salutatorian Keturah Payton said graduation day is not just about diplomas and awards, but growth.

“Life isn’t about having all the answers immediately because sometimes growth happens unexpectedly,” she said.

She, too, thanked all those have helped her in her own personal growth.

“To everyone listening today, never let anyone dim your light,” Payton said. “Dream bigger than you fear. Walk confidently into rooms you once thought you didn’t belong in. Take chances. Keep your faith, and never allow temporary failure to make you give up on a permanent dream.”

KaNyjah McAdams, Class of 2026 vice president, welcomed family and friends and other guests. Historian Jaidan Hall gave the invocation. Musical selections were performed by the high school choir. Principal Cravin Turnage recognized the Top 20 Honor Students. Susie Brown, director of the Career and Technical Center, recognized the inaugural Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) program. Semaj Jones, a Hall of Fame inductee, read an inspirational poem.

Guest speaker Karvis Jones, a 1999 graduate of Holly Springs High School and a 2003 graduate of Rust College, delivered “The Principles of M.O.R.E.” This involves a Mission, pursuing Opportunities, handling Responsibilities and Expectations. Jones has achieved great success in his chosen field of communications. He covered the Atlanta Hawks for 20 seasons and the Atlanta Braves for 19 seasons. He has received numerous Southeast Regional Emmy Awards for his work and other honors.

Mission - “If you dream it, you can do it,” he said. “Don’t let anyone stop you from your dreams.”

Opportunities - “Develop a growth mindset. Success begins with believing that you can.”

Responsibility – “Don’t get caught up in the negativity around your environment. Use that negativity to be a positive force of change with the talents that your higher power gave you.”

Expectations – “Set some guided principles that you expect to live by every day. Be kind. Your character matters. Display a confidence everywhere you go.”

Diplomas were awarded by principal Cravin Turnage, assistant principal Brittany Broadwater, CTC director Susie Brown and school board president Kim Mayfield. Dr. Irene Walton Turnage, superintendent of education, conferred the diplomas.

The graduation ceremony closed with the alma mater, remarks from Principal Turnage and Superintendent Turnage and the benediction by honor student Alena Griffin.



Wendie Metty

Metty lead teacher at HSPS

Holly Springs Primary School would like to introduce Wendie Metty as the new lead teacher/instructional coach starting the 2026-2027 school year.

Metty has worked at Holly Springs Primary School since 2020, working as an educator in several grade capacities - kindergarten, first and second. Her latest role has allowed her to demonstrate her leadership abilities as the first grade teacher mentor/grade level chair for the past two years. Metty is originally from Jonesboro, Arkansas; in 2019, she relocated to Mississippi and joined the Holly Springs Primary School (HSPS) community. She earned her Bachelor of Science in education with a focus on early childhood in December 2011 from Arkansas State University. Subsequently, she completed her Master’s Degree in reading literacy in May 2025 from Arkansas State University.

“My tenure at HSPS has been incredibly rewarding, allowing me to serve students across kindergarten, first, and second grades,” Metty said. “While I cherish the unique milestones of every early childhood stage, I discovered a profound passion for the first-grade classroom, where I have dedicated much of my recent teaching.

“Having recently completed my sixth year in the classroom, I am thrilled to transition into my seventh year as a lead teacher and instructional coach. In this new capacity, my primary mission is to support my colleagues in reconnecting with their ‘why’—the foundational purpose that draws us to the field of education. Because I am transitioning directly from the classroom, I deeply understand the daily demands and complexities educators face. My goal is to serve as a reliable, hands-on mentor and a constant advocate for our teaching staff, ensuring they have the support and resources needed to help every student thrive as a lifelong learner.”

Holly Springs Primary School is looking forward to more continued years of success, collaboration and instructional excellence with Metty sharing leadership responsibilities alongside Dr. Casshaunda Davis, HSPS principal.





Dr. Michael Eric Dyson urges students to help shape the world and signs books after his presentation.

Dr. Dyson inspires students

The Holly Springs Career and Technical Center hosted Dr. Michael Eric Dyson for “Inspiring Thought, Dialogue and Change” on Monday, May 18, 2026, in the high school auditorium.

Dr. Dyson is a distinguished professor, gifted author, and prominent media personality. He is widely regarded as one of the nation’s most influential voices in academia and public discourse. He currently serves as Distinguished University Professor of African American and Diaspora Studies and Distinguished University Professor of Ethics and Society at Vanderbilt University. He has also taught at more of the nation’s most prestigious universities, including Princeton, Brown and Georgetown. He has written more than 25 books, including several New York Times bestsellers. Dr. Dyson has won numerous awards for his literary achievements, including the 2020 Langston Hughes Medal, the American Book Award, and two NAACP Image Awards. His books on influential figures such as Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X and Barack Obama have garnered widespread acclaim and sparked important conversations about race in America. In addition to his academic and writing pursuits, he is also a leading public intellectual for his thought-provoking insights on race, social justice, and contemporary culture.

Dr. Dyson was joined at Holly Springs High School by Rev. Royal Todd, a doctoral student at Vanderbilt. Both urged students to choose their purpose.

“You are involved in helping shape your world,” Dr. Dyson said. “Make your contribution to the culture in which you live. Apply your trade. Hone your craft. Your purpose is your goal. Pursue it. It is what you would do if it would not pay you any money.

“I celebrate this great high school, and you getting the knowledge you need. These educators at this school see greatness in you.”

Rev. Todd emphasized, “Don’t chase success; chase purpose.”

“There is no short road to success,” Rev. Todd said. “Stay true to the path. We all have a responsibility to leave the world better than we found it. If you choose purpose, success will chase after you.”

Susie Brown, director of the CTC, thanked the renowned Dr. Dyson for taking time from his extremely busy and demanding schedule to visit Holly Springs High School.

“You are not just our friend, you are now a part of our family,” Brown said.

She also thanked guests for joining the CTC in celebrating excellence, leadership, and future-ready students.

Cravin Turnage, principal of the high school, called it a “glorious day.”

He closed by sharing a quote from Mother Teresa – “Some people come into your life as blessings, and some come into your life to teach you lessons.”

“Today was a great blessing and a great lesson,” Turnage said.

The school district purchased books for each senior, and Dr. Dyson took time out of his busy schedule to sign them. He also donated additional books to students in other grades.





Mock interviews

Holly Springs High School seniors had the opportunity to participate in mock interviews (above) on Wednesday, March 18, 2026. Students answered job-relevant questions, received immediate feedback, and learned how to structure responses effectively. The mock interviews were organized and coordinated by career coach Tanya Smith, with assistance from counselors, administrators and teachers. Business and industry professionals, including representatives of Three Rivers Planning and Development District, conducted the mock interviews and gave the seniors important feedback through the process. Prior to going through mock interviews with the business and industry professionals, Holly Springs High School seniors received training in interview ethics (left) from Nicholas Bobo with Northwest Mississippi Community College.

Holly Springs CTC receives state funds for equipment

Major industrial investments across Mississippi require a larger pipeline of skilled workers prepared for high-demand technical careers. Building that pipeline begins in high school.

To help meet growing workforce demands, Mississippi is strengthening career and technical education programs at 25 high schools and school districts statewide, equipping students with the skills and credentials needed for high-demand industries and postsecondary success.

This year's awards focus on advanced manufacturing and construction, strategically aligning with local industries' workforce needs.

Since 2024, Mississippi has invested more than $4.2 million in 60 recipients statewide through these efforts.

"When students can explore and prepare for careers in high school, they are better positioned for success after graduation," said Dr. Courtney Taylor, executive director of AccelerateMS. "These grants help schools provide learning environments that reflect today's workforce and connect students to opportunities in their communities."

The EquipMS Grant Program, established in 2023 through House Bill 588 as the Mississippi K– 12 Workforce Development Grant Program, provides targeted funding to modernize, replace, or otherwise enhance high school programs aligned with the state's priority occupations and industry sectors.

This year's awards include $138,062.80 to the Holly Springs Career and Technical Center. Holly Springs CTC is expanding and modernizing its Advanced Manufacturing and Industrial Equipment Operations program through the purchase of equipment that provides industry-relevant training in equipment operation, workplace safety, logistics procedures, and industrial maintenance.



From left are Aniyah Jones, Hannah Manning, Ameliya Washington, Angiya Zinn and Jurnee Marion.



From left are Ariana Cowan and Aleeya Milsap

Students win awards

Several Holly Springs Career and Technical Center students were winners in the 2025 HOSA Northern District Competition in November 2025. They were able to go to the 2026 State Leadership Conference in Hattiesburg.

Angiya Zinn was a second-place winner at the State Leadership Conference, and it made her eligible to go to the International Conference in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Winners in the district include Ariana Cowan, first, Biomedical Equipment Technician; Aleeya Milsap, fourth, Surgical Technologist; Aniyah Jones, sixth, Medical Law and Ethics; Hannah Manning, eighth, Nutrition; Ameliyah Washington, ninth, Medical Assisting; Angiya Zinn, ninth, Nutrition; and Jurnee Marion, ninth, Physical Therapy.

Health science instructor Kimberly Fox said she is extremely proud of all of the students.

HOSA's mission is to empower HOSA-Future Health Professionals to become leaders in the global health community, through education, collaboration, and experience.

Lunch and Learn

Maison Smith, admissions counselor with the University of Mississippi, was on the Holly Springs High School campus Thursday, Feb. 26, 2026, to talk with students. As part of the Lunch and Learn program, students were able to visit with Smith and ask questions about Ole Miss and discuss scholarship opportunities. From left are career coach Tanya Smith, Maison Smith, senior Kalisa Tucker and counselor Rhonda Richard.





Opportunities at Rust College

Rust College representatives visited Holly Springs High School on Thursday morning, March 26, 2026, to talk to seniors about the many academic programs and extracurricular activities available at their hometown college. Pictured is Doris Ward, vice president for Academic Affairs. Rust is Mississippi's oldest Historically Black College and University (HBCU) and the second oldest private college in the state. Several Rust administrators, faculty members and students emphasized the smaller class sizes at Rust and the family atmosphere. The high school seniors also learned about various scholarship opportunities available. Seniors were able to ask questions, talk one-on-one to a Rust representative and go through the application process. Tanya Smith, career coach at Holly Springs High School, coordinated the learning session for seniors and welcomed Rust representatives to campus.



Rust College President Dr. Johnny M. Moore emphasizes the importance of partnerships. He was welcomed by CTC Director Susie Brown.

Community partnerships crucial to CTC success

Holly Springs Career and Technical Center held its annual Spring Advisory Meeting on Thursday, April 16, 2026, in the high school auditorium. Susie Brown, director of the CTC, welcomed everyone to the well-attended general session.

CTC occupational programs include Advanced Manufacturing; Business, Marketing and Finance; Educator Prep; Health Science; and Welding. Instructors reviewed each program and provided updates. The benefits of Career and Technical Education include – preparing students for college and/or careers, preparing an educated and trained workforce for each community, and providing students with an integrated curriculum focusing on career and academic skills.

Consultant Mike Mulvihill, via Zoom, talked on the topic of "Partnerships Matter! How Can You Help?" He encouraged a strong community partnership between education, government, and business and industry. He said this "Power of Three" is crucial to the grant application process and in getting those funds approved.

Various business and industry leaders, elected officials and Rust College administrators in the audience had the opportunity to talk to the students and give them important advice as they move forward toward careers. The Holly Springs High School Choir performed a song prior to the meeting adjournment. A to-go lunch was provided by Chelsea Malone of The Chicken Coop.



Instructor Bobby Fowler gives an update on the welding program.

First CNA class provides foundation for future

Holly Springs Career and Technical Center is celebrating a major milestone with the successful completion of its first inaugural Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) class. The accomplishment marks an exciting beginning for the Health Science program and opens new opportunities for students interested in pursuing careers in healthcare.

Fourteen dedicated Health Science students participated in the inaugural CNA class: Kaliyah Edwards, Alena Griffin, Courtney Hines, Chanelle Isom, Aniyah Jones, Hannah Manning, Jurnee Marion, KaNyjah McAdams, Khassidy McKinney, Kayla Phillips, Camiya Robinson, Celiyah Turnage, Ameliya Washington and Angiya Zinn.

Through hard work, dedication, classroom instruction, and hands-on training, all 14 students earned certificates of successful completion of the CNA program. This achievement is especially significant because 10 students went on to take the required examination and two successfully earn their CNA licenses.

A special congratulation goes to Alena Griffin and Ameliya Washington, who successfully earned their Certified Nursing Assistant licenses. Their accomplishment represents not only their individual dedication and perseverance, but also an important milestone for the Health Science program at Holly Springs Career and Technical Center.

Health Science Teacher Kimberly Fox, RN, described the experience as rewarding for both the students and herself. Watching the students develop their healthcare knowledge and skills while preparing for future careers has been an important part of establishing the CNA program. The inaugural class has demonstrated that with determination, support, and opportunity, students can take meaningful steps toward careers in healthcare while still in high school.

The success of the first CNA class provides a strong foundation for future Health Science students at Holly Springs Career and Technical Center.



Students took the CNA certification test to wrap up the school year. Front, Kassidy McKinney, KaNyjah McAdams, Jurnee Marion; back, Courtney Hines, Alena Griffin, Kaliyah Edwards, Ameliya Washington; not pictured, Angiya Zinn, Chanelle Isom, Kayla Phillips.

Thank you for helping graduates

The mission of the Holly Springs School District is to educate students who will EXCEL in the global community. As our graduates prepare for their next chapter, access to technology is an important part of ensuring they are prepared for success in college, the workforce, technical training, the military, entrepreneurship, and beyond.

A laptop is much more than a piece of technology. It is a valuable tool that connects our graduates to countless resources and opportunities, from completing coursework and applying for college, scholarships, and jobs to earning certifications and preparing for careers in an increasingly technology-driven world.

On behalf of the Holly Springs School District, I extend our heartfelt appreciation to the families, staff members, community members, and friends of the district who generously donated laptops to members of the Class of 2026. Your generosity is an investment in our students and their futures.

Each laptop also carries an important message to our graduates: Your community believes in you, supports you, and wants to see you succeed. We are deeply grateful to the donors recognized on this page for helping us provide this meaningful gift to our seniors and for partnering with us as we fulfill our mission.

Thank you for investing in the Class of 2026 and helping our graduates take their next steps prepared to EXCEL!

Irene Walton Turnage
Superintendent of Education
Holly Springs School District
"Excellence in Everything. Everyday."

Laptop Donors 2026

- Dr. Irene Walton Turnage and Cravin Turnage
- The Payton Family in memory of Keisha Payton
- Holly Springs School District Board of Trustees
- Eileen Dowsing and Dr. Cecilia Dowsing Adams in memory of Annie and Lawrence Dowsing Sr., educators
- The Moores, in memory of Clen Moore, educator
- Zeta Upsilon Zeta of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority
- The Brittenums and Marshalls, c/o Clemia Brittenum
- Class of 1982
- Class of 1982
- Eileen Dowsing and Dr. Cecilia Dowsing Adams in memory of Yvonne Dowsing Lucas and Lawrence Dowsing Jr.
- D. Shipp Chapter 338, Order of Eastern Star
- Class of 1978
- Katrina Washington, Southern Eatery
- Dr. Paul and Fannie Lampley
- Attorney Shirley Byers, Marshall County Prosecutor
- H&F Properties, LLC, Henry and Fergenia Hood
- Class of 1977
- Class of 1980, Margaret Faulkner
- Joyce Washington
- The Jackson Family, in memory of Bernice and Jesse Jackson, educators, and c/o Shauneille Pegues
- Class of 1986, Deborah Gulledge
- Class of 1982
- The Brittenums and Marshalls, c/o Clemia Brittenum
- Metroine Stewart, Class of 1988
- Class of 1992
- Kappa Alpha Psi, Oxford Alumni Chapter
- Chicken Coop
- Chelsey Malone
- Class of 2003, Veronica Kimmons
- Picture This Photography, DeUntral Mosley
- Class of 1981, c/o Joe Moody
- Dr. Irene Walton Turnage and Susie Brown in honor of their mothers, Jewell Walton and Carrie Driskell
- Class of 1993
- Patricia Waldrop
- Mayor Charles and Willa Terry
- Terrence and Susie Brown
- Class of 2000, Marquisha Hicks
- Eric Taylor
- Marjean Myatt Head Start Center
- Monet Bell Autry, Marshall County Circuit Clerk, in memory of her father Parker Bell, teacher, board member and board president
- Picture This Photography, DeUntral Mosley
- Phi Beta Sigma Delta Tau Sigma Chapter, c/o Henry Hood
- Eric Taylor
- Class of 2002, Timothy Shead
- Rev. and Mrs. Leon C. Moore Jr., Anderson Chapel CME Church
- Patricia Waldrop
- Anderson Chapel CME Church, Rev. Leon C. Moore Jr., Pastor
- Pegues and Son Barber Shop in honor of Rev. Chester Pegues
- Class of 1974
- Alderwoman Sandra Hodges, Lt. Darryl Bowens, Ms. Jones, Untouchables, Chester Lesueur and Greg Hodges
- Class of 1974
- Class of 1993
- Hudsonville CME Church, Elder Bobby Wilson
- Class of 1972
- Class of 1972
- Class of 1972
- Class of 1972



Front row, Myria Jeffries, Jurnee Marion, Chanelle Isom, Keturah Payton, KaNyjah McAdams, Jaidan Hall; back row, Dr. Irene Walton Turnage, Susie Brown, Khassidy McKinney, Christen Gray, Ameliya Washington, Alena Griffin, Christian Hicks, Taniela Richard, Sahreef Thomas, Joshua Walker, Toniya Seldon, Laikyn Smith, Shirley Byers.

Class of 2026: Sixteen STEM scholars set to soar

The Reverend Charlie E and Cinderella S Taylor Sr Foundation invested in 16 members of the Holly Springs High School Class of 2026, awarding them STEM scholarships as they enter college.

Nelson Mandela declared, “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

As you wield that weapon, carry three charges with you. Persevere with purpose when the work grows hard. Learn, lead, and lift others as you rise. And remember that Holly Springs believes in your brilliance and backs you, because you are “Blessed To Be A Blessing.”



Zeta Phi Beta honors Outstanding Students

Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Incorporated, Zeta Upsilon Zeta Chapter, presented its Outstanding Student Program on Sunday, April 26, 2026, in the Rust College Doxey Auditorium. Chapter president is Joyce James, and event chairperson is Beautye DeBerry. The theme for the event was “Outstanding Students Positioning Themselves for Success.” Holly Springs High School seniors receiving Certificates of Achievement in recognition of outstanding performance include, from left, Chanelle Isom, Sahreef Thomas, Keturah Payton, Joshua Walker, Jurnee Marion, Christen Gray, Kalisa Tucker, Alena Griffin, Khassidy McKinney, Taniela Richard, Christian Hicks, Ameliya Washington and Shaniya Stinson. Not pictured are Jaidan Hall and KaNyjah McAdams.



Man Up presents scholarship

Dr. Patrick Washington, founder and CEO of Man Up Teacher Fellowship, surprised Hannah Manning, a member of the Class of 2026, with a $2,000 scholarship Friday morning, May 8. Her goal is to become a registered dietitian, and she is still considering her college options. Washington said, in addition to the scholarship, Man Up will continue to assist her with her career goals. Also on hand to share the surprise with Manning were principal Cravin Turnage and guidance counselor Rhonda Richard.

Skills That Pay

Kristil Byers, a 2026 graduate of Holly Springs High School, is the recipient of a Skills That Pay $1,000 signing bonus. The award supports her next steps and can be used toward expenses such as training, tools, equipment, transportation or other career-related needs. Byers was recognized by The Skills Foundation of Mississippi in a ceremony at the Itawamba Community College Belden campus on April 16, 2026. She received her Certificate of Excellence and signing bonus. Career coach at Holly Springs High School is Tanya Smith.



Rotary recognition





(Left photo) The Holly Springs Rotary Club honored its Rotary Youth Leadership Awards recipients during its May 13, 2026, meeting at Rust College. Four Holly Springs High School students were recognized for their outstanding leadership potential, school and community involvement, strong moral character and commitment to personal growth. J'Lon Byers, Tacorah Seldon, Makiyah Glover and Andrea Brown attended the RYLA District 6800 program on June 3-6, 2026, at the University of Mississippi in Oxford. At the conference, they built communication and problem-solving skills, discovered strategies for becoming a dynamic leader in their school and community, learned from community leaders and inspirational speakers, and had fun and formed lasting friendships. The young people will grow as leaders through Rotary's spirit of "Service Above Self." (Right photo) Christen Gray, a senior at Holly Springs High School, was selected as a Student of the Year scholarship recipient by the Holly Springs Rotary Club. She was one of five students from Marshall County honored during the club's May 6, 2026, luncheon at Rust College. She was selected after a committee review of applications and essays submitted by Student of the Month awardees in 2025-2026. Committee representative Charlie Farris and club president Mary LeSueur are pictured presenting the award.



Realtors Scholarship winner

Jurnee Marion, a 2026 graduate of Holly Springs High School, is a recipient of the 2026 Northwest Mississippi Realtors Scholarship. This achievement reflects her hard work, dedication, and commitment to academic and personal goals. She was honored at scholarship recognition dinner on Thursday, April 23, 2026. She was one of 15 students to receive the $1,000 scholarship.

NMCRTD honors top two graduates

Valedictorians and salutatorians from high schools in Marshall County were honored Saturday morning, May 16, 2026, during the North Mississippi Community Research Training and Development Inc. Youth Explosion event at Rust College. President of NMCRTD is George Zinn, and executive director is Delia Reid. Holly Springs High School seniors recognized for their outstanding achievements were valedictorian Christen Gray and salutatorian Keturah Payton. They are pictured with Dr. Irene Walton Turnage, superintendent of the Holly Springs School District, and Susie Brown, director of the Holly Springs Career and Technical Center.





Program focuses on healthy lifestyle

April 29, 2026, marked the final meeting of the Mississippi Roses (MS) Chapter's Healthy for Life umbrella program for the 2025-2026 program year. The activity took place at Holly Springs Primary School Activity Center in historic Holly Springs. Dr. Sonya Faulknor, Rust College assistant professor of music and 2025 Mississippi Humanities Teacher of the Year, was the afternoon's presenter.

Throughout the school year, all five facets of the organization have supported the transformational program's goal of promoting healthy habits to prevent obesity and its associated health risks, meeting with a group a fourth graders the last Wednesday of the month. April was International Trends and Services (ITS) facet designated month to present.

ITS Chair Susie Brown introduced Faulknor and, along with facet member Kimberley S. Jones, prepared a colorful table of pineapple, bananas, mangoes, guava juice and coconut water. Attendees had the opportunity to sample snacks native to Jamaica - ginger tea, coconut cookies and plantain chips. Also participating were Programming Co-Chair Darlene Williams Washington and Health and Human Services (HHS) Chair Charisse Brown Harris, who was available to provide valuable information on kidney awareness resources and education, sponsored by the Black Kidney Awareness, Resources and Education (K.A.R.E) program.

In addition to exposure to healthy snacks, students enjoyed an information-packed presentation by Dr.Faulknor, who incorporated music and storytelling to share information and history related to her homeland, Jamaica.

At the conclusion of the program, 4th Grade Ambassadors for Health participants in the Healthy4Life Program, received copies of "My Daddy Needs a Gift." The book was written by Naomi S. DeBerry about her father's kidney transplant journey.

Also supporting the activity were Irene Walton Turnage, president of The Mississippi Roses (MS) Chapter, Cynthia Cole and Fannie Lampley.





‘Educate, Elevate and Empower’

Holly Springs teachers and staff returned from holiday break on Monday, Jan. 5, 2026, for a professional learning day. Teacher and Staff Leadership Academy, Part II, included concurrent training sessions during the morning on the high school campus and additional sessions in the afternoon at individual schools. During the morning sessions, teachers and staff rotated through sessions designed to build their capacity to support students with Tier I Instruction and Behavior Interventions. The training emphasized the importance of using collective leadership at all levels to ensure student success. The theme of the Leadership Academy is “Educate, Elevate and Empower - Empowering Collective Leadership and Excellence on All Levels to Ensure Every Student Learns and Becomes Proficient.” Pictured, Tannya Sanders and Karin Autry, members of the district office staff, make presentations to teachers and answers questions.



Seminar at Intermediate:

‘Your Child, Gun Control, and Bullying’

Officers with the City of Holly Springs Police Department were the presenters for the Holly Springs Intermediate School parent seminar on Tuesday, May 12, 2026. The seminar topic was "Your Child, Gun Control, and Bullying.” Above is police chief Grant Glover. Drawings were held for four $50 gas cards. Winners were Elisha Crumb, donated by Mississippi Roses Chapter of the Links Inc.; Doris Jones, donated by Pegues Barbershop; Celena Lambouths, donated by City of Holly Springs Police Department; and Latandra Watson, donated by Byers Law Firm.



CTC director speaks to Rotarians

Susie Brown, director of the Holly Springs Career and Technical Center, urged members of the Rotary Club to help inspire students in the school district. During the May 13, 2026, meeting, she urged Rotarians to come to the CTC and speak to students, offer job shadowing, and offer unpaid or paid internship opportunities. “We want you to be a part of what we do,” Brown said. “There’s talent in our school district. Let’s build those jobs right here at home and keep our talent here.” She said the CTC is moving toward being a model center with a focus on technology-driven programs. Brown also talked about the Holly Springs School District’s Portrait of a Graduate initiative – “Prepared for Today. Inspired for Tomorrow.” It reflects the knowledge, skills and character that students develop through empowering experiences and supportive relationships.



From left are Rotarians Fergenia Hood and Mary LeSueur and guest speaker Susie Brown.



‘Reaching for the Stars’

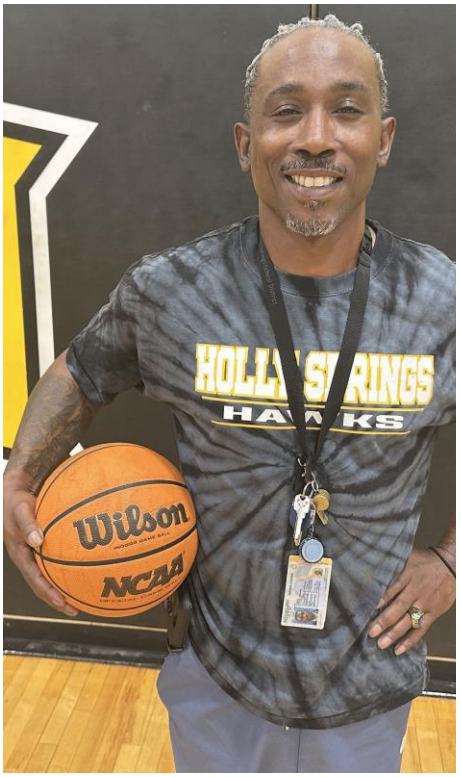
The Dream Team, a group of seventh through 12th grade students in the Holly Springs School District, completed Black History Month projects in February 2026. Teacher Patricia Waldrop based the assignment on each individual student’s interest. The projects were displayed in the classroom, and the students showed great pride and joy in their work. They continue “Reaching for the Stars.” Dream Team members also wore T-shirts in celebration of Black History Month and their enjoyable and successful projects. From left are Myyanna Howell, Arielle Bell, Jeremy Hubbard, Shaniya Stinson, NrKria Williamson, JaMiya Yarbrough, Marchez Blake, Jacob Petty, and teacher assistant Janie Kimbrough.



Striving to excel

Holly Springs High School geared up for continued success in striving to maintain its high performing status. Subject area teachers and school leaders diligently guided their students through informational sessions for review in the spring of 2026. Beyond academic support, the school is fostering a culture of achievement and positive behavior by offering targeted support and incentives to motivate students. Holly Springs High School is poised to empower its students to excel not only on their assessments, but also in their overall educational journey.





New coach of Lady Hawks

Samuel Greer Jr., who returned to his alma mater last school year in coaching and teaching roles, will be adding a new position in 2026-27. The 1995 graduate of Holly Springs High School has been named the new head coach of Lady Hawks varsity basketball. He replaces Morgan Vickery, who left the school for a job outside of the education field. “I am super excited to take over the girls basketball program,” Greer said, “and I look forward to helping these student athletes advance in many ways.” Last season was one of the best ever for the Lady Hawks. They advanced to the state playoffs and finished 21-6. Several players off that talented roster return.



Black History Month

Holly Springs Junior High School chorus, under the direction of Charles Terry Jr., performs during the Black History Month celebration in February 2026.



Behind the Big House tour

Students from Holly Springs Junior High School enjoyed a field trip to Behind the Big House 2026. The program, held April 16-18 at Craft Home (1851) and Quarters (1847) in Holly Springs, focuses on the history and culture of enslaved people in northern Mississippi. Tours are facilitated by experienced historical interpreters.

Promotion ceremony

Holly Springs Junior High School held its Eighth Grade Promotion Ceremony in May 2026. Pictured are Justiss LeSueur, right, and also Justin Garcia, who is being congratulated by principal Gefredia Nash.









Read Across America

Holly Springs Intermediate School hosted Read Across America with community leaders participating and sharing their love of reading. Pictured reading to students are Landry Hearn (far left) and Torris Brown.



Motivational parade prior to state testing

A group of Holly Springs Intermediate School students enjoy the annual motivational parade on Tuesday afternoon, April 28, 2026. As students began state testing, the support from the community helped encourage the students to do their best.

Important Parent Awards

Holly Springs Intermediate School fourth grade teachers presented Important Parent Awards on Friday, May 22, 2026. Recipients were Ellisha Walton and Sharon Gipson. Pictured, at right, are teacher Kathy Mays, student Dacarien Calicutt, Ellisha Walton and teacher Linda Bruce. In back is Lamartravious Lowery. Pictured, at far right, are teacher Linda Bruce, Sharon Gipson and teacher Kathy Mays. Sharon Gipson is the aunt of Jakairen Vereen, a fourth grade student.







End of Year Music Program

Holly Springs Primary School held its End-of-the-Year Music Program on Tuesday, May 19, 2026. Music teacher is Krystal DeBerry.





Kindergarten graduation

Holly Springs Primary School celebrated a special milestone in each school year, kindergarten graduation, on Friday, May 15, 2026. Principal Dr. Casshaunda Davis said she is so proud of the little learners for all they accomplished in year 2025-2026.





Pep rally for state testing

Holly Springs Primary School held a pep rally Monday afternoon, April 13, 2026, to help motivate third-grade students for state testing. Administrators, teachers, staff, and students from other grades urged the third-graders to do their best, and they all enjoyed music and fun times together. Dr. Casshaunda Davis, principal of Holly Springs Primary School, is pictured encouraging the third-graders.

Blood drive at CTC

The Spring Blood Drive at the Holly Springs Career and Technical Center was held Tuesday, March 24, 2026. The CTC thanks everyone, from the school district and the community, who participated in the successful event and gave the gift of life. Pictured giving blood is Breanna Wiseman, a May 2026 graduate of Holly Springs High School.





HOSA International Conference

Angiya Zinn participated in the 2026 HOSA International Leadership Conference in Indianapolis, Indiana. The 2026 graduate of Holly Springs High School took the nutrition test after placing second in the State Leadership Conference for Mississippi. “We didn’t bring home the medal but brought back a wealth of knowledge,” said nurse Kimberly Fox, health science teacher at Holly Springs Career and Technical Center.



Anti-vaping, anti-tobacco campaign

A group of students at the Holly Springs Career and Technical Center participated in an anti-vaping, anti-tobacco campaign. Their project was entitled, “Turn Your Back on Tobacco,” which was submitted in support of the initiative. Counselor LaTonya Burgin assisted.



Dr. Turnage continues service on MASS board

The Mississippi Association of School Superintendents Board of Directors is preparing leaders for new era of public education with a renewed focus on excellence, leadership development and student success for the 2026-27 school year. Dr. Irene Walton Turnage, superintendent of the Holly Springs School District, continues her service on the board. For nearly 60 years, MASS has served as a leading voice for public education, offering year-round training, mentoring and advocacy for school leaders and ensuring Mississippi's educators are equipped to move the state's school systems forward. The association's annual convention was held July 11-15 in Biloxi. Board members represent districts from every region of the state, ensuring diverse input and unified action to advance the future of Mississippi's public schools. Turnage is one of five at-large members on the board. "The challenges facing public education continue to evolve, and our board is committed to ensuring Mississippi's school leaders are prepared to meet them," said Phil Burchfield, executive director of MASS. "This group brings experience, vision and a commitment to excellence that supports students, educators and communities across our state. Together, we will continue to position public education for long-term success."

School district leaders participate in national conference

Leaders from the Holly Springs School District (HSSD) joined education professionals from across the country at the 2026 Consortium of State School Boards Associations (COSSBA) National Conference, held March 13-15, 2026, in Louisville, Kentucky. Representing the district were board president Kim Mayfield, vice-president Ejeera Dukes, and superintendent Dr. Irene Walton Turnage. Their attendance reflects HSSD's continued commitment to strong leadership, effective governance, and student-centered growth.

COSSBA is a national, non-partisan organization dedicated to supporting and strengthening school board governance. Its annual conference provides board members and superintendents with opportunities to collaborate, share best practices, and gain insight into strategies that improve student achievement and district performance.

The 2026 conference, themed "Education Evolution: Transformative Leadership in Changing Times," featured a variety of high-level workshops focused on governance, academic innovation, student well-being, community engagement, and emerging trends such as technology and artificial intelligence in education. Attendees also participated in networking sessions and explored new resources designed to support school districts nationwide.

For HSSD leadership, participation in COSSBA directly supports the district's mission: "To educate students who will EXCEL in the global community." By engaging in professional learning and staying informed on best practices, district leaders are better equipped to make informed decisions that enhance student outcomes and prepare learners for success beyond the classroom.

As board members, Mayfield and Dukes, alongside Dr. Turnage, remain committed to continuous growth and informed leadership. Their goal is to ensure that HSSD remains forward-thinking, responsive, and focused on providing high-quality educational opportunities for all students.





School board members Ejeera Dukes and Kim Mayfield and superintendent Dr. Irene Walton Turnage attended.