

The Hawk

Holly Springs, Mississippi

Winter-Spring 2025-26

District Newsletter



Seated are Dr. Irene Walton Turnage, superintendent of education, and Dr. Johnny Moore, president of Rust College. Standing, from left, are Dr. Damien Williams, chief of staff, Rust; Ferrell Barksdale, owner of Vitality Institute of Allied Health; Joy Traylor, director of Health Connect of Byhalia; Dr. April Stampley, executive director of Upward Bound, Rust; Susie Brown, director of Holly Springs CTC; Dr. Venecca Green, compliance officer and head tennis coach, Rust; Rhonda Richard, counselor, Holly Springs High School; Kamisha Hicks, parent; and Pat Brady, career coach at Horn Lake High School.

School district, Rust build partnership

Holly Springs Career and Technical Center held its Fall Advisory Meeting on November 20 highlighted by an update on programs from director Susie Brown and a discussion with Rust College administrators and other community members about building a strong partnership.

The mission of the CTC is to educate students who will soar in their chosen careers as they excel in the global community. The vision is to prepare innovative students in a visionary community of excellence.

Occupational programs offered at the CTC include health science; business, marketing and finance; advanced manufacturing; educator prep; and welding. Non-occupational programs included computer science and engineering and Cyber Foundation I.



See **PARTNERSHIP** page 3

From left are Joy Traylor, Dr. Damien Williams and Dr. Johnny Moore.



Dr. Gemma Beckley

Her legacy is woven into the very fabric of our schools.

In memory of our beloved board member

Dr. Gemma Beckley served the Holly Springs School District with unwavering commitment, integrity, and grace.

Throughout her four terms on the Holly Springs School District Board of Trustees, Dr. Beckley served faithfully in multiple leadership roles, including president. She also proudly represented Holly Springs on the state stage as a past president of the Board of Directors for the Mississippi School Boards Association (MSBA) and most recently, reappointed to the MSBA Board of Directors for the 2025-2026 school year. In each capacity, she led with wisdom, thoughtfulness, and a collaborative spirit that strengthened our board and our district.

Dr. Beckley's impact on our district is immeasurable. The policies she helped shape, the initiatives she supported, and the countless lives she touched will continue to influence the success and growth of the Holly Springs School District for years to come. Her legacy is woven into the very fabric of our schools.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees and the administration of the Holly Springs School District, we extend our deepest and most heartfelt condolences to the family of Dr. Gemma Beckley, and to all who had the privilege of knowing and loving her. We honor her life, her service, and her enduring commitment to the children and community of Holly Springs.

She will be deeply missed, but her legacy will live on in the students she championed and the district she so faithfully served.





Board of Merit Award

The Mississippi School Boards Association presents awards to school boards, board members and superintendents for their diligence in earning school governance training hours during the school year. The Center for Board Development Honors Program is designed to recognize school board members who obtain additional continuing education credit hours over and beyond the six hours required by the State of Mississippi. The Holly Springs School District Board of Trustees was recognized with a Board of Merit Award during the MSBA Fall Leadership Conference for earning 185 training hours during the 2024-2025 school year. Each individual board member and the superintendent also received recognition for their hours leading to the whole board award. From left are Charisse Harris, Kim Mayfield, Dr. Irene Walton Turnage, Dr. Gemma Beckley and Lemon Phelps. Training sessions at the conference included Ready to Work, Ready to Lead - Strengthening CTC Progress; Educators Leading the AI Shift - Stories from the Frontline; Mindset Matters - Cultivating a Positive Mindset to Strengthen School District Leadership; and It Takes a Community - Building Trust, Creating Connections. Not pictured is board member Ejeera Dukes, who participated in the conference virtually.

Partnership

Benefits of career and technical education are preparing students for college and/or career, preparing an educated and trained workforce, and providing students with an integrated curriculum focusing on career and academic skills. Other benefits are providing students with real-world exposure through job shadowing, work-based learning and internships; providing students with opportunities to strengthen employability, leadership and teamwork skills; and providing students with knowledge and skills needed to earn state and national credentials.

Industry national certifications through the Holly Springs CTC include Advanced Manufacturing – National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER); and Business, Finance and Marketing. In data from last school year, 100 percent of CTC students in the welding program obtained National Certification. For the Business, Finance and Marketing Program, 100 percent received National Certification in Small Business. CTC students are successful in the important areas of ACT Workkeys and Workforce Readiness – 87.5 percent graduated last year with silver or above on Workkeys; district acceleration rate, which includes the percentage of students taking dual credit courses and obtaining national industry certification, 80 percent; and in the areas included in Workbase Embedded Learning, such as Health Science and Educator Prep, 100 percent met required goals.

Representatives of Rust College, including new president Dr. Johnny Moore, were participants in a roundtable discussion with Holly Springs School District personnel, other community representatives and student leadership. Each CTC pathway also has an advisory committee specifically for its area. Advisory members for each area met in individual classrooms to dialogue and provide feedback.

“We want to reengage with our community,” Moore said. “We have to be out and about in the community.”

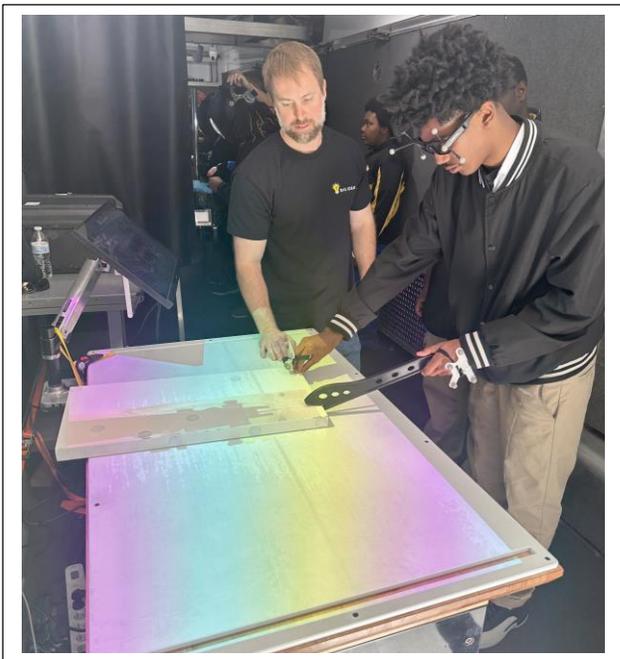
He said one of the keys to Rust College’s success is its ability to collaborate with the Holly Springs School District.

“We have to bridge the gap and connect to meet the needs of students,” Moore said. “We have to demonstrate that commitment.”

Brown said, “Together, we are so much stronger. I am so excited about the possibilities.”

Dr. Irene Walton Turnage, superintendent of education and a Rust College graduate, said she wants students in the Holly Springs School District to know that Rust is a “jewel in our community.”

“We have a lot of wonderful students who need this opportunity,” she said. “I am really, really happy about this partnership. With all the energy in this room, let’s make great things happen.”



Above and below, Holly Springs High School students get hands-on experience in the Big Ideas Mobile Learning Lab and in the classroom.

Big Ideas Mobile Learning Lab visits Holly Springs CTC

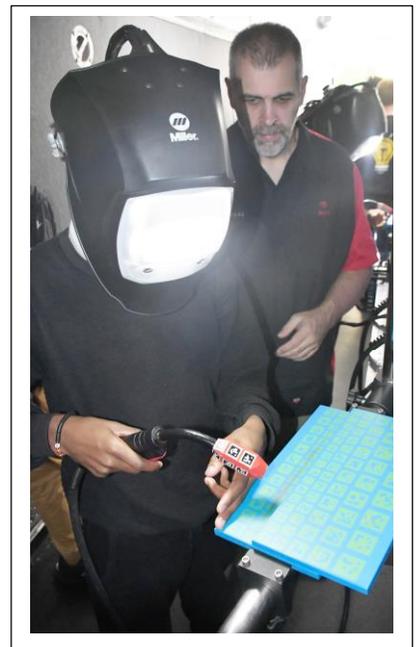
Students at the Holly Springs School District Career and Technical Center got to experience one-on-one, hands-on instruction from a team of passionate trades professionals Monday, Nov. 3.

The Big Ideas Mobile Learning Lab is loaded with high-end skills trade simulators to help learners to uncover new opportunities and natural abilities they've never tapped into before. The technology in the lab helps make the experience fun and engaging, while dedicated staff members go the extra mile to provide individualized mentorship and advice.

The 3-D projection carpentry table is designed to help learners test their skills on the table saw, jointer and router. The state-of-the-art heavy equipment simulator, developed by Caterpillar, puts learners directly in the operator's seat of a high-end excavator. The augmented-reality welding simulator helps learners see firsthand the physical mechanics and precision that go into the job, complete with a scoring system and through-the-helmet feedback.

Big Ideas' visit to Mississippi is a project of the CREATE Foundation and Toyota Wellspring Education Fund team, in partnership with Toyota Motor Manufacturing and the Tennessee Valley Authority.

The learning lab strives to open young peoples' minds to the true impact they can have with a career in skilled trades.



School district welcomes new administrators



Gefredia Nash

Junior high school principal

Gefredia Nash brings 22 years of experience in education to her new job as principal of Holly Springs Junior High School.

"I am passionate about positively impacting and promoting student achievement through service and strong commitment," the veteran educator said.

In her extensive educational career, Nash has served as a teacher, consultant, curriculum specialist, lead teacher, academic science coach, assistant principal, principal and federal programs coordinator. She holds a B.S. in biology/chemistry and a M.S. in environmental health from Mississippi Valley State University, teacher certification from Belhaven University, and Ed.S. in supervision and administration from Delta State University.

She was born in Vicksburg and grew in Clarksdale. She is the mother of four children, Kenneth Jr., Jaylen, Dorian and Nattalie. She comes to Holly Springs from the McComb School District, and prior to that she worked in the Durant School District.

Nash strives to serve, empower and provide support to all stakeholders by ensuring a productive and positive school climate.

"My concentration is on high-level engagement in instruction, facilitating collaboration and professional learning communities, and strategically managing personnel and resources," she said.

Nash strongly believes in establishing and articulating an instructional vision that includes problem solving, critical thinking, collaboration, effective communication, adaptability and initiative.

"This is the foundation and what should be valued instructionally at a school," she said.

Nash is an advocate for students' growth and addressing the needs of the whole child.

"The focus is on success inside the classroom, the social and emotional well-being of students, and activities that enhance the educational experiences of the students," she said.

High school assistant principal

Brittney Broadwater, the new assistant principal at Holly Springs High School, uses words like encourager and highly-motivated to describe herself.

"I am so happy to be here," she said. "I believe there are so many things I can bring to the table. It's going to be a fantastic school year. I'm ready to build up teachers and build up students."

Broadwater is a native of Jackson. She graduated as valedictorian from Callaway High School and then received her bachelor's degree in secondary English education at Alcorn State University. She later attained a master's in education leadership and administration online via Walden University. Her career started at Forest Hill High School in Jackson and carried her to Hattiesburg, McComb, Evans, Ga., and then back to McComb. Broadwater was named Teacher of the Year at both Hattiesburg and McComb, and also District Teacher of the Year at McComb. She served in various leadership roles in all the school districts, including English Department chair, head of the Arts and Humanities Academy, teacher leader and assistant principal. She has also done consulting work, and she's an author.

Broadwater said high school is her passion, and it's where she believes she can make the biggest impact.

Making the long distance move from McComb to Holly Springs is just fine with her. She calls it a "faith walk."

"I prayed about it, and I talked to several people who I hold in high esteem," Broadwater said. "I know this is a God-thing."

She has a sister in Memphis, Tenn., and another in Arlington, Texas. Her parents live in Jackson. She also has three nieces and two nephews.

She's excited about her new job in a new place.

"I'm an encourager, I'm highly-motivated, and I value excellence," Broadwater said, "I believe there are many areas where I can be a positive influence - in the school, in the district and in the community."



Brittney Broadwater



From left are Karin Autry, special services director; Susie Brown, career and technical center director; Vikki Marion, intermediate school principal; Dr. Irene Walton Turnage, superintendent of education; Gefredia Nash, junior high school principal; Tannya Sanders, transitional coordinator and grades 6-12 interventionist; Brian Mullinix, technology director; Dr. Sherna Jones, early learning collaborative coordinator; LeTashia White, district testing coordinator; Terrica Cooks, primary school lead teacher; Cravin Turnage, high school principal; Tywana Hunt, intermediate school lead teacher; Laketia Petty, junior high school assistant principal; Casshaunda Davis, primary school principal; and Brittney Broadwater, high school assistant principal.

Superintendent emphasizes collective leadership



Dr. Casshaunda Davis

Administrators in the Holly Springs School District united on Tuesday and Wednesday, July 22-23, to kick off their start to a new school year. The two-day Leadership Summit session included evaluation of year 2024-2025 and plans for 2025-2026. Students returned to school on Wednesday, Aug. 6.

Dr. Irene Walton Turnage, superintendent of education, emphasized the importance of collective educational leadership within the district. She referred to a quote from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. – “I think it’s absolutely necessary for the leadership to be united in order to make the revolution effective.” Turnage shared that education is going through a revolution, or marked change, as a result of technology, a new state accountability system, and increased focus on career readiness.



Cravin Turnage

The theme for this school year is Empowering Collective Leadership to Ensure Every Student Learns, Grows and Becomes Proficient. The theme emphasizes the importance of collective leadership on all levels, including parent leadership, student leadership, community leadership, teacher leadership, and school and district leadership.

Turnage said a new year brings a new opportunity to increase the number one priority, student achievement, higher than it has ever been.

“Student achievement must be strategic and focused; in other words, it must be planned, executed and evaluated consistently and continuously,” she said. “Increased student achievement is not easy and cannot be done in isolation. It will take shared and collective leadership to ensure that it continues to increase.”



New Leadership Academy

The Holly Springs School District conducted its New Leadership Academy July 30-31 and August 1. The new teachers (pictured) attended orientations at their respective schools the first two days, participated in a district technology session with technology director Brian Mullinix, and then came together at the high school library on Friday for a session led by superintendent Dr. Irene Walton Turnage. She welcomed the new teachers and said, "You have chosen the right district," and she said she has high expectations of them. "We are here to provide support and assistance," Turnage said. A focus for the 2025-26 school year is collective leadership. She urged the new educators to own their leadership role in the district and make students the priority.

District focuses on learner profile

The Holly Springs School District is continuing to develop its all-important learner profile for the Portrait of a Graduate with assistance from National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE) facilitators.

NCEE representatives Dr. Susan Rucker and Dr. Cederick Ellis visited recently to keep the momentum going with the plan. The Portrait of a Graduate is a collective vision articulating the community's hopes and dreams for its students. It is all about instilling important soft skills, from an early age, that will help prepare a new generation of students for ever-changing career opportunities.

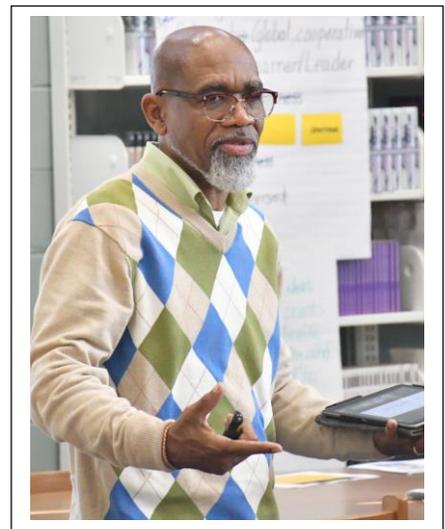
The focus this year is to determine what the learner profile looks like in each grade level or grade bands and how district and school staff, along with stakeholders, will strategically teach and embed the competencies so that students will have a deep understanding by the time they graduate.

The goal is to tie the mission of the school district - to educate students who can excel in the global community – with the Portrait of a Graduate.

"Our mission has to be tied in with all that we do," said superintendent Dr. Irene Walton Turnage.

The competencies at the heart of the Portrait of a Graduate for Holly Springs School District include:

- 1) Thinkers – Future-ready thinkers analyze problems deeply and think outside the box.
- 2) Citizens – Future-ready citizens actively and responsibly participate in an interconnected, rapidly-changing world.
- 3) Life-long learners and leaders – Future-ready students take ownership of their learning journey and lead with integrity, transparency and accountability.
- 4) Social Awareness – Future-ready, socially-aware students are empathetic and community-minded; they understand and respect the feelings, perspectives and experiences of others.
- 5) Resilient – Future-ready resilient students face challenges with courage, bounce back from setbacks and grow stronger through adversity.
- 6) Self-awareness – Future-ready, self-aware students understand their own thoughts, emotions, strengths and areas for growth.



Dr. Cederick Ellis



Dr. Irene Walton Turnage

Wings, burritos, stir fry, pizza and more

Serving up wings at the high school cafeteria are front, Dianne Thomas, and back, Marie Miller and Alfred Walker.



Menu changes in works to increase student participation

The Holly Springs School District is working with Walker Quality Services to provide new menu items in school cafeterias.

The goal of the program for the district is to provide quality foods that students enjoy, increase participation to support the food service program, and ultimately increase student achievement because students will have more energy and be ready to learn.

Alfred Walker, president of Walker Quality Services, teamed up with Frederick Prowell, food services director for the school district, and cafeteria staff members to roll out a sampling the first week of December.

“We did a survey of the students, asking what they wanted, and wings were at the top of the list,” Walker said. “So, we started with the wing bar, giving them choices of several different flavors.”

The wing offerings included sweet/hot wings, barbecue wings, lemon pepper wings and Buffalo wings. The food bar also included seasoned fries, baked beans, celery and carrots, and fruit.

He said during the trial run December 4 students were able to purchase extra wings and more teachers also ate in the cafeterias.

“Getting more to eat benefits the school district,” Walker said. “We want to make an impact on the kids in a positive way.”

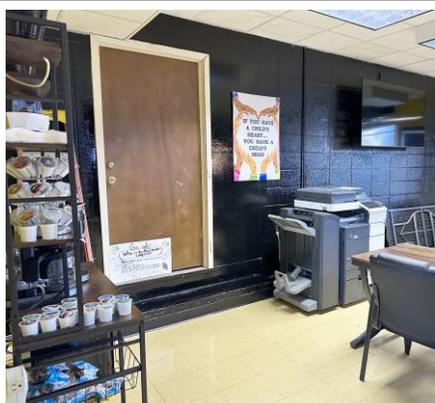
The complete menu will go into full swing in early 2026. Some additional equipment is on its way, Walker said, to accommodate the changes, plus there will be additional staff training prior to the kickoff date.

Additional food bars coming in the new year will include burritos, stir fry, and pizza, plus others.

“We want to get the students to try new and different things,” Walker said. “The goal is to get more participation and to get the kids excited about food services. We want them to be happy.”

Walker, who is originally from Columbus, said his company works with other school districts in Mississippi, plus several in other states, including Illinois, Texas and Louisiana.

New teachers' lounge at Holly Springs Junior High School





High School Honors Breakfast

Holly Springs High School held its Honors Breakfast on Thursday morning, Nov. 13, recognizing students who achieved Honor Roll status during the first nine weeks of the 2025-26 school year. Honor students are pictured with their certificates after enjoying breakfast, fellowship and the awards ceremony. Front row - Ameliya Washington, Christen Gray, Ajah Shelton, Khloe Lewis, Jeremiah Jefferson; Next - Jaidan Hall, Logan Craig, Kanyjah McAdams, Christian Hicks, Jlon Byers; Next- Sahreef Thomas, Makenzie Mitchell, Cloey Walters, Kelsey Randle, Ariana Cowan, Joshua Walker; Next - Demontrell Cochran, Kalisa Tucker, Chanelle Isom, Keturah Payton, Aniyah Jones, Toniya Seldon; Last row - Laikyn Smith, Nakia Martin, Nakirya Martin, Breanna Wiseman, Khassidy McKinney, Jaylen Cassidy, Kyson Isom, Braylon Robinson. Not pictured are Markiyah Glover, Moriah Hubbard, Michael Hughes, Zariyah Martin, Jordan Williams, Taurus Bryant, Zayriah Farrow, Jamal Moyo, Courtney Hines, Jurnee Marion, Taniela Richard and Cedkyia Hampton.

'When We All Vote' campaign

On Wednesday, Sept. 24, the strength of collaboration was witnessed as Holly Springs High School joined forces with Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated-Omicron Alpha Omega Chapter, the Mississippi Roses (MS) Chapter of The Links, Incorporated, and Marshall County Circuit Clerk Monet Autry. Together, as part of the "When We All Vote" campaign, they registered 72 new Marshall County voters. Pictured presenting to the high school seniors is attorney Shirley Byers.



Holly Springs Primary Hospital

Second-grade classrooms at Holly Springs Primary School were recently transformed into operating rooms. The students, dressed as future doctors, operated on various problems in preparation for upcoming tests. The Holly Springs Primary Memorial Hospital was open from 8 to 11:30 a.m. on Friday, Dec. 5.



National Technical Honor Society

The Holly Springs Career and Technical Center held its National Technical Honor Society (NTHS) induction ceremony on Thursday, Dec. 11, 2025, in the high school auditorium. CTC director is Susie Brown. NTHS advisor is LaTonya Burgin. On the floor, from left, are Tristan Joiner, Karlo Strickland, Arthur Denton, Aniyah Jones, Caleb Jones, Kalisa Tucker, Hannah Manning, Corey Hines, Fra'Nyla Lane, Sahreef Thomas, Demontrell Cochran, Shamariun Echols, Laikyn Smith, Tayler Joiner. On the stage, from left, are Celiyah Turnage, Zy'quez Malone, Cedkyia Hampton, Myria Jeffries, Tealon Warren, Dijmon Jackson, Ameliya Washington, Carlos Jones, Taurus Bryant, Christen Gray, Jurnee Marion, Jayla Sharp, Courtney Hines. Not pictured are Chanelle Isom, Kaliyah Edwards, Travis White Jr. and Davon Johnson.



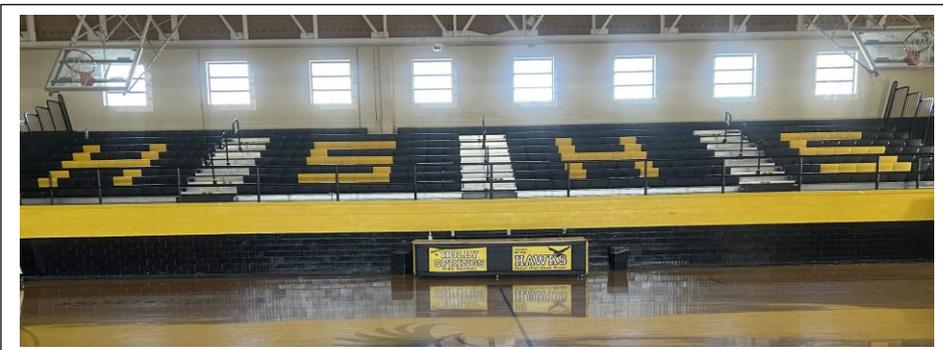
Delivering Christmas gifts

Prior to the holiday break, the seniors of Holly Springs High School surprised the pre-k, kindergarten and first grade classes of Holly Springs Primary School with Christmas gifts.



Proper handwashing

On Wednesday, September 3, Health Science students from the Holly Springs Career and Technical Center visited some classes at the Primary School to teach the importance of proper handwashing. They demonstrated the correct steps using soap and water, explained how germs spread, and highlighted why clean hands help keep everyone healthy. The younger students were actively engaged, practicing the technique alongside the Health Science students in a fun and interactive way. This activity not only reinforced healthy habits for the children but also gave the Health Science students valuable teaching and leadership experience. Pictured are Makayla Whitelaw and Kanya Thomas.



New bleachers

New bleachers were installed in the Holly Springs High School gym prior to the 2025-26 school year.



Family Advisory and Community Engagement Committee

Holly Springs Intermediate School recently held its Family Advisory and Community Engagement (FACE) committee meeting. Beverly Phillips gave an overview of the events sponsored by FACE. The meeting also included suggestions from the committee and remarks from principal Vikki Marion. Snacks were enjoyed by everyone. Committee members completed surveys addressing questions, concerns and further suggestions. From left are assistant police chief Dwight Harris, Beverly Phillips, Sasha Marsh, Laketia Petty, Linda Bruce, Jannie Luellen, Caryn Swanson, principal Vikki Marion, Kim Carter, LaTonya Burgin and chief of police Grant Glover.



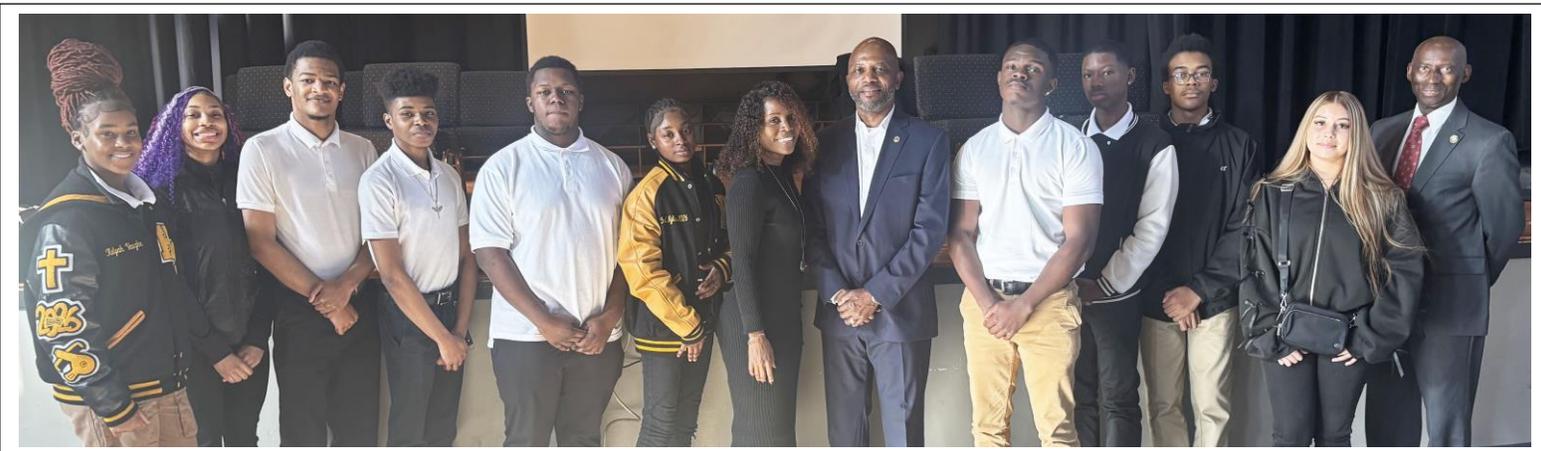
Field trip

Eighth graders at Holly Springs Junior High School enjoyed a field trip Thursday, Oct. 23, to the University of Mississippi Field Station. Students examined specimens, petted and held snakes, and used electricity to stun fish and frogs for collection. Dr. Scott Knight, director of the UM Field Station, used specimen collections to illustrate natural selection in species. Students are studying Natural Selection and Adaptations in class.



Grandparents Day

Holly Springs Intermediate School and Holly Springs Primary both hosted Grandparents Day activities. In the top photo, enjoying lunch together, are Barbara Moore and Javonta Moore at the Intermediate School. In the bottom photo, reading together at the Primary School, are William Payton Sr. and Montravius Payton.



From left are Kaliyah Vaughn, Shyia Spencer, Davon Johnson, Corey Jones, LeeAnthony Stephens, Fra’Nyla Lane, Susie Brown, Captain Jerome R. White (USN-Retired), Lasean Rooks Jr., Taurus Bryant, Sahreef Thomas, Janett Lunares and Rev. Johnny Poole.

Message to students – ‘Create a good life story’



From left are Rev. Johnny Poole, Susie Brown, Dr. Irene Walton Turnage, Captain Jerome R. White (USN-Retired) and LaTonya Burgin.



At left, Captain Jerome R. White (USN-Retired) talks with student Lasean Rooks Jr. about the senior’s future plans, and at right, White delivers his inspiring words to the group.



Holly Springs High School seniors heard an inspiring message Friday, Jan. 16, from a retired United States Navy officer as part of the Portrait of a Graduate Career and Readiness Program. Captain Jerome R. White’s key takeaway for students was “live well; love well; leave well.”

He urged them to lead a full and content life, stay grounded, live truthfully and not for applause, and to do work that matters.

“Keep growing mentally, spiritually and professionally,” White said. “Be authentic. Create a good life story. Impact others, and your fingerprint will remain because of the lives you touched.”

The program was coordinated by the CC Taylor Foundation, a strong community supporter of the Holly Springs School District. Captain White, with more than three decades of public service in the military’s complex operational framework, was the guest of Rev. Johnny Poole with the CC Taylor Foundation.

He told the seniors that he was once in their shoes and thought he knew all that he needed to know. But he said he wanted to be something, and the school guidance counselor pointed him in the right direction.

“I embarked on it (the professional path his counselor envisioned), and I later found that she was setting me up for a great life,” said White, a native of Charleston, S.C., and graduate of The Citadel.

“The world is your classroom. Be a lifelong learner and reader. I want to inspire you to achieve the American dream. The only limits are the ones you place on yourself.”

He is also an accomplished philanthropist, involved in various community, social, leadership development, alumni, and advocacy organizations throughout the U.S. He is an officer and board member for the CC Taylor Foundation. He holds multiple master’s degrees from various universities.



Omicron Alpha Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority members are pictured with school district representatives.

Partnership targets childhood hunger

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated® - Omicron Alpha Omega Chapter Partners with Holly Springs Primary School to Target Childhood Hunger.

The Omicron Alpha Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Incorporated® maintains its partnership with Holly Springs Primary School to provide meals and snacks for food-insecure students as part of the organization's national initiative, Empower Our Families.

The chapter continues its support to address food insecurity among students. Empower Our Families is one of five national program initiatives of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Incorporated®, and childhood hunger is a focal point of that program. The Childhood Hunger Initiative Power Pack (CHIPP™) provides weekend and holiday meals for children in local communities.

Currently, the Omicron Alpha Omega Chapter, led by chapter president Attorney Shirley Byers and initiative chairman Amanda Billups-Smith, serves 10 students at Holly Springs Primary School. The collaboration is in its third year, with 434 CHIPP™ bags distributed to date.

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Incorporated® (AKA) is an international service organization founded on the campus of Howard University in Washington, D.C., in 1908. It is the oldest Greek-letter organization established by African American college-educated women. Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Incorporated® has over 360,000 initiated members across graduate and undergraduate chapters in 12 nations and territories, including the United States, Bahamas, Bermuda, Canada, United Arab Emirates, Germany, Japan, Liberia, Nigeria, South Korea, South Africa, England, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The Omicron Alpha Omega Chapter was chartered in Holly Springs, on December 11, 1983. It is one of 122 chapters in the South Eastern Region and is led by the South Eastern Regional director, Dr. Tracy Morant Adams. The chapter currently has 93 members who serve the Holly Springs and Marshall County community.



Chapter president Shirley Byers and school district superintendent Dr. Irene Walton Turnage work together on the Empower Our Families initiatives.



Crittle donates suits to young men at high school

John W. Crittle III of Crittle Financial Inc. donated a wide selection of designer suits for young men at Holly Springs High School. He also donated shirts and ties. A few of the young men receiving suits are pictured with principal Cravin Turnage. They are Jlon Byers, Michael Williams, Jordan Williams, Braylyn Alexander and Nicketris Smith. Principal Turnage and the students say, "Thank you, Mr. Crittle!"



From left are Greg Bagley, Charles Glover, Tarry Martin and Sam Mayes.

Motorcycle Club donates toys

The Unstoppables Motorcycle Club made a generous Toy Drive donation to Holly Springs Primary School during the holiday season.

The students and staff at the school extend heartfelt thanks to club members for their donation.

"Your kindness brought joy, excitement, and big smiles to our children, and we are deeply grateful," said Tarry Martin, counselor at Holly Springs Primary School. "Your support shows our students that they are cared for by their community. Gestures like yours help build confidence, encourage kindness, and make the holiday season brighter for families who truly appreciate it."

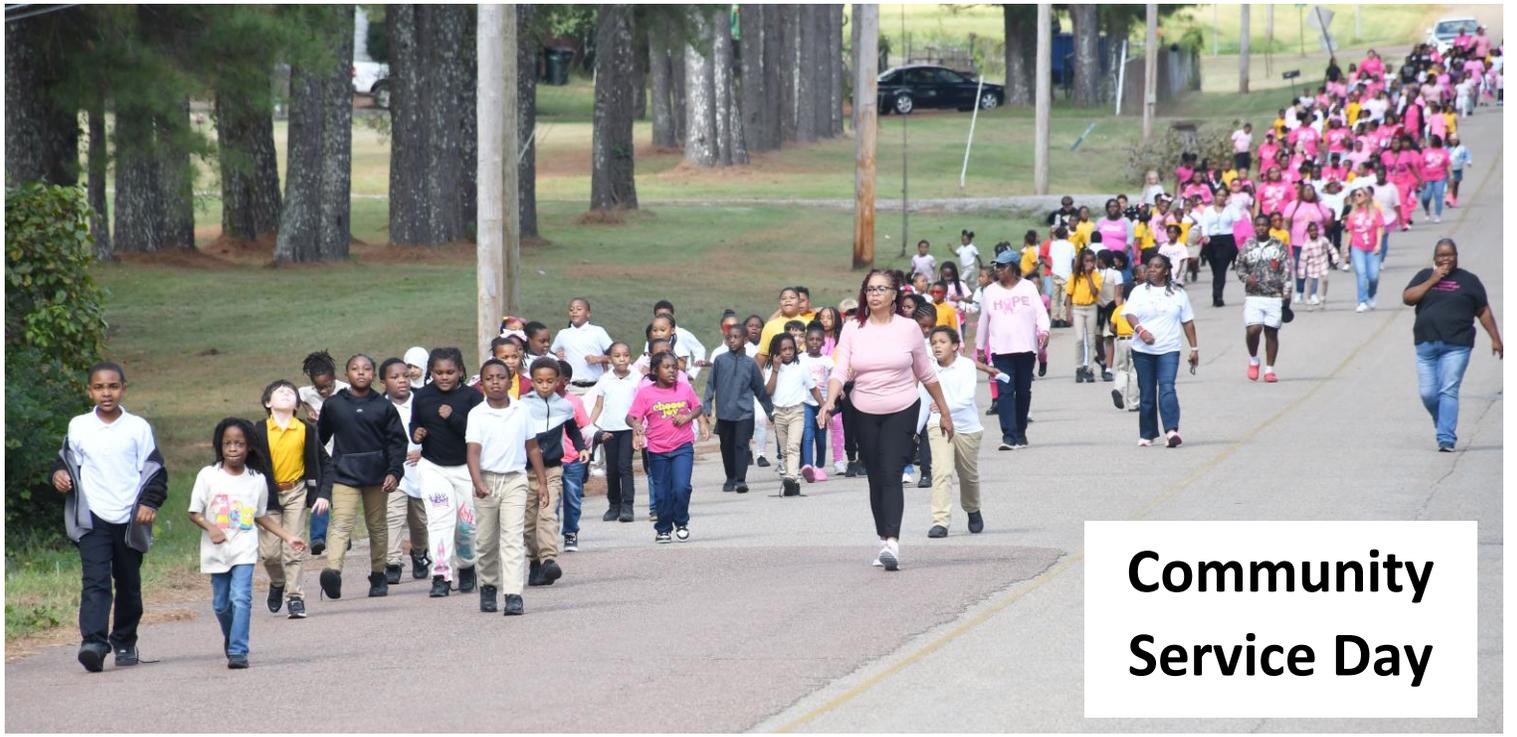
Martin expressed a special "thank you" to club president Sam Mayes for leading the effort and for a continued commitment to giving back to Holly Springs.

"We appreciate your generosity and the positive example you set," she said. "Please know that your gift made a meaningful difference for our students."



Rotary Club honorees

The Holly Springs Rotary presents Extraordinary Effort Awards and also recognizes Students of the Month. The first Holly Springs High School recipients of the 2025-26 school year were, top photo, Jurnee Marion, Extraordinary Effort; and bottom photo, Christen Gray, Student of the Month. Also pictured are club president Mary LeSueur and Rotarians Barry Burlison, top photo, and Charlie Farris, bottom photo.



Community Service Day



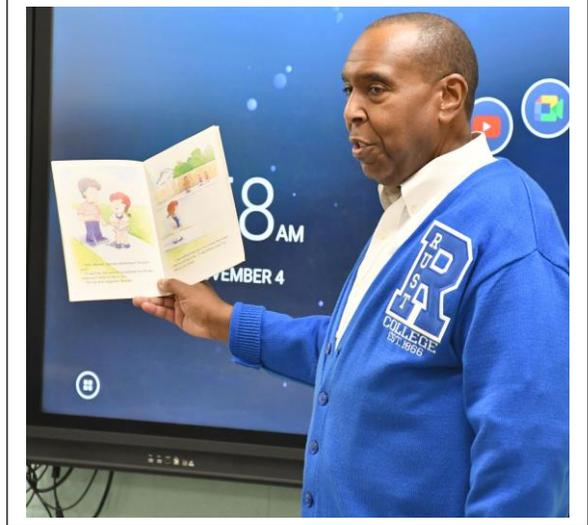
October 10 was Community Service Day for the Holly Springs School District, a day set aside to give back to the community each year. Community Service Day was established by the school district after the Holly Springs Board of Aldermen made October 10 Dr. Irene Walton Turnage Day in honor of the district's historic rise to a B rating in 2023. Community service activities for the 2025-2026 school year included a Domestic Violence Awareness Program, a Cancer Awareness Walk and recognition of community supporters.



Lunch and Learn

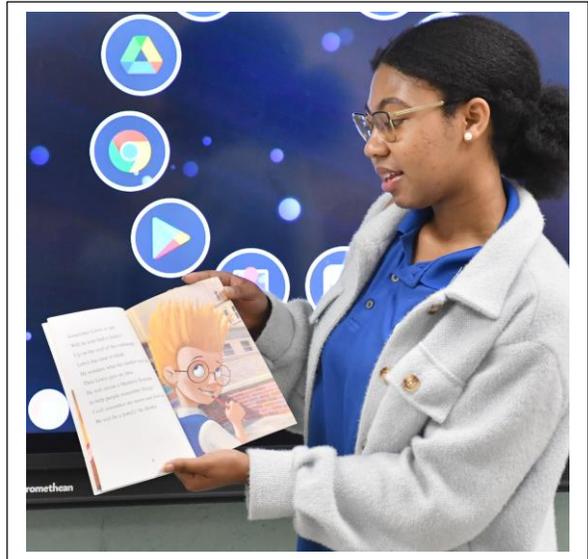


Holly Springs High School held its first Lunch and Learn of the new year on Thursday, Jan. 8. The guest was Navy recruiter Toddriquez Jones. He visited with students in the foyer outside the lunchroom and spoke to seniors in classroom settings. Jones informed students about the many benefits of joining the Navy, including the various job opportunities, and he also held question-and-answer sessions. Jones is pictured talking with student Janett Lunares. Lunch and Learn activities are coordinated by career coach Tanya Smith and counselors.



Rust College readers

Rust College students and staff visited some Holly Springs School District classrooms on Tuesday, Nov. 4, as part of their Adopt-A-School Reading Project. Dr. Michael Harpe, vice president for student engagement, and Rust student Allison Smith are pictured reading to students at Holly Springs Intermediate School. The Rust College readers also inspired young minds at Holly Springs Primary School.



Donating canned goods to Care Now

Tiffany Elzie's class at Holly Springs High School collected more 100 canned good items to donate to Care Now Food Pantry. Pictured with some of the canned goods are, from left, Bruce Streeter, LeeAnthony Stephens and Demontrell Cochran.



Favorite books

B.L.A.C.K 2 Life, with assistance from other groups and organizations, hosted an afternoon full of reading, literacy and fun at Holly Springs Primary School Friday, Nov. 7. Students were excited as guests read to them in their classrooms, and then they enjoyed picking out a favorite book at the Book Fair in the library. Snacks were also available for the children.



DeBerrys donates coats for students

Hats off to Melvin and Eula DeBerry for donating around 50 coats to both Holly Springs Primary School and Holly Springs Intermediate School for students who needed them in cold weather. Left photo, the DeBerrys are pictured with Primary school representatives, counselor Tarry Martin, principal Casshaunda Davis and parent liaison Tanisha Lawrence. Right photo, the DeBerrys are pictured with Vikki Marion, principal at the Intermediate School.



Food drive participation

Holly Springs Intermediate School recently received a \$1,000 check for participation in the Mid-South Community Food Drive. Dr. Patrick Washington, who made the presentation on Wednesday, Dec. 3, said volunteers fed more than 300 families in six different communities Thanksgiving week. Vikki Marion (right), principal at the Intermediate School, said all students participated in the successful food drive. Also pictured are a group of happy fourth-grade students and Vicki Washington (left), social worker at the Intermediate School and wife of Dr. Washington. "The students at Holly Springs Intermediate School are phenomenal and gave back to their community," he said.

Donation from alumni games

Darrel Thomas (left), with the TPC Foundation, presents a \$5,000 check to Cravin Turnage, principal of Holly Springs High School. Alumni Basketball Games versus H.W. Byers were held Saturday, Sept. 27, with again outstanding attendance and participation. Thomas has organized and implemented alumni games the past three years with proceeds going to support athletics and academics in the Holly Springs School District. Thomas thanks the sponsors of the 2025 alumni basketball games - Holly Springs Tourism, Marshall County Chancery Clerk Nicole Phelps, Copper Kettle #2, J.F. Brittenum & Son Funeral Home, Jumping Jack Fitness, Carlisle's Cash Saver and Bank of Holly Springs. A "thank you" goes to Holly Springs High School for assistance and support of the event, and thanks to all for their support of the games and fund-raising efforts.



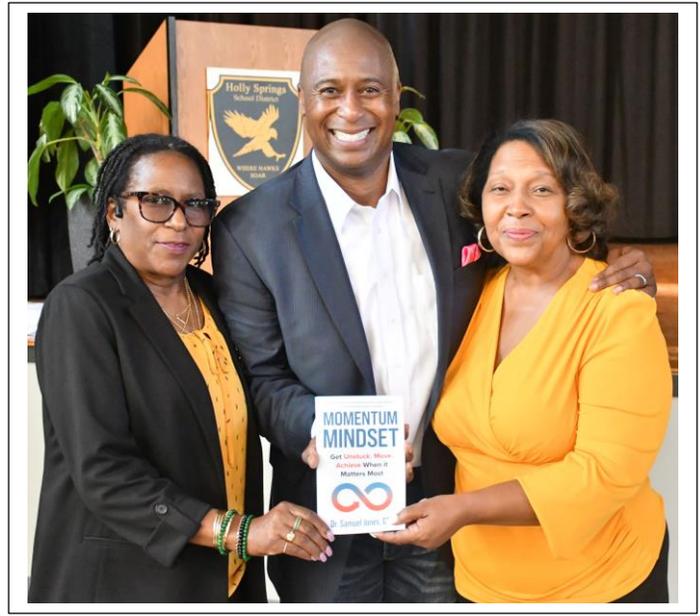
Message

Mistress of ceremony for the program, held in the high school auditorium, was Brittney Broadwater, assistant principal. Students Shyia Spencer and Kaliyah Vaughn gave the welcome and the prayer, respectively. Susie Brown, director of the Holly Springs Career and Technical Center, presented the occasion on "What is a Portrait of a Graduate?" Reverend Poole introduced the speaker.

LaTonya Burgin, counselor at the Career and Technical Center, led the Pledge of Excellence.

"We pledge to strive for competence and excellence, to think creatively and critically, and to act as global, collaborative, and cooperative citizens. We commit to being lifelong learners and leaders, growing in self-awareness, social awareness, and resilience, while contributing positively to our world."

Captain White also held question-and-answer sessions with smaller groups of students and met with school district administrators, including Superintendent of Education Dr. Irene Walton Turnage, during the afternoon portion of his visit to Holly Springs.



Left photo, Dr. Samuel Jones delivers his inspirational message. From left, in the photo at right, are Eileen Dowsing, assistant superintendent of education; Dr. Samuel Jones, momentum speaker; and Dr. Irene Walton Turnage, superintendent of education.

‘Momentum Mindset’ – Jones says, ‘You have influence’

Holly Springs School District teachers, administrators and staff were challenged to “elevate their leadership with the Momentum Mindset” as the second nine weeks kicked off October 14.

Guest speaker for HSSD Leadership Academy and Professional Learning Communities Part II was Dr. Samuel Jones, retired educator, momentum speaker, pastor and author. His inspirational words focused on his book, “Momentum Mindset.” Each attendee received a free copy, compliments of the school district.

The book is dedicated to his grandmother, Melissa “Madea” Shelton, who raised him in the Mississippi Delta. His presentation included a photo of the small house where he lived.

“Through her joy, determination, and unshakable purpose, she taught me the value of commitment and the power of living with intention,” he writes in the intro to the book.

Jones urged those in attendance to open their minds and “be comfortable being uncomfortable.”

“As expectations rise,” he said, “you must go deeper in your purpose. Your students must have a vision. “It takes moments to build momentum. Master the moment.”

He said every person is a leader because “you have influence.”

“Dominate your purpose,” Jones said. “Your purpose is an answer to someone’s problems.”

In his book, he writes, “Momentum isn’t an external force. It’s something you can cultivate internally once you learn how it becomes a force that propels you forward in all areas of life.”

Leadership Academy Part II also included sessions at individual schools on empowering collective leadership on all levels through data analysis and empowering collective leadership on all levels to increase student achievement.

Prior to Jones’ “Momentum Mindset” presentation, superintendent of education Dr. Irene Walton Turnage gave her “State of the District” address and talked about expectations, practices and procedures for increased student achievement.

“What leadership role are you playing?” she asked. “How are you leading in what you are doing? It takes collective leadership to achieve our mission – to educate students who will EXCEL in the global community. Our mission is why we exist.”

Turnage reviewed the recently released accountability ratings based on school year 2024-2025His. The district remains high performing but dropped from an A rating to a B. She reviewed the positive areas of growth in the accountability report, including the graduation rate and college and career readiness, and those areas that need work. Two individual schools, primary and the high school, were high performing.

“We are doing innovative things to help our kids be successful, and this is an opportunity for us to get back up (to an A), and this time stay up,” she said.



Buffy "Mr. Magic" Coleman and Holly Springs Primary School student Janiyah Brown

Mr. Magic' shares basketball and words of inspiration

Buffy "Mr. Magic" Coleman brought his one-man traveling basketball show — and a powerful dose of inspiration — to every student in the Holly Springs School District on Wednesday and Thursday, Nov. 12-13. He visited Holly Springs Primary School and Holly Springs Intermediate School on November 12, followed by Holly Springs Junior High School and Holly Springs High School on November 13.

This is his farewell tour after visiting approximately 5,000 schools nationwide in 26 years. Coleman once played and entertained with the Harlem Wizards and then embarked on a career of motivational speaking. He combines his words of wisdom with his dazzling basketball skills to capture the attention of young people.

Coleman's message to students includes anti-bullying, staying drug-free, self-discipline, good behavior, being respectful to all, having a good attitude, making the right choices, and working hard without giving up.

He was invited to share his basketball skills and motivational words with students in the Holly Springs School District by assistant superintendent of education Eileen Dowsing, who he says invited him for the first time in 2006. Over the years, the two have built a friendship, and Coleman shared that returning to Holly Springs is always meaningful for him. He said, "The Holly Springs School District holds a special place in my heart."

Spanish class project

In Spanish I class at Holly Springs High School, a recent activity consisted of students participating in a gallery walk where they recorded facts in Spanish about authentic dishes from different countries in the Spanish-speaking world. The students were exploring a unit on "El sabor latino en la dieta Americana." Pictured participating in the project is Christian Hicks. Teacher for the class is Stephanie Benitez-Bernal.



Science activity

Eighth grade science students and teachers at Holly Springs Junior High School are using a STEMscopes explore activity, "Surviving with Hops and Ears," to recreate or model a desert ecosystem. They are studying how predator and prey presence and removal impact the ecosystem. The activity focuses on Common Ancestry and Adaptation and Diversity. Eighth grade science teachers are Bradley Knight and Sharetha Kimbrough.



New playground equipment for Pre-K

Students and staff in Holly Springs Early Learning Collaborative's Pre-K program are overjoyed with their new playground equipment. A generous donation was made to the collaborative by Brentwood Acquisition Inc. Individuals and corporations contributing to approved Mississippi Early Learning Collaboratives can receive a 1:1 tax credit. This year partners Holly Springs Primary School and Marjean Taylor-Myatt Head Start decided to use donated funds to install the playset at Holly Springs Primary. The children are enjoying their brand-new space for fun, play and learning. Unstructured play outside encourages creativity, problem-solving and collaboration as children interact with one another and the natural world. The new playset will be an invaluable tool for helping these young learners grow and thrive. In front, from left, are Pre-K students Caislyn Jenkins, Jeremiah Brown, Kizzy Kinkle, Jahliil Branton, Kashton Wilbourn, Troy Douglas Jr., Grayson Byers, D'sany Pegues and Travon Delbert. In back, from left, are assistant teacher Tiara Corbitt, collaborative program coordinator Dr. Sherna Jones and teacher Lillian Campbell. Not pictured is assistant teacher Kedra Malone. Donations to the Early Learning Collaborative are encouraged, and they are tax deductible.

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