

BOARD AGENDA INFORMATIONAL ITEM

DEPARTMENT: Communications/Public
Information Department

TOPIC: GOOD NEWS

FOR THE MONTH OF: February 2024

1. **Lawrence Martin** of **Cramerton Middle School** won the **Gaston County Schools** Spelling Bee, which was held on January 31 at **Ashbrook High School**. He will compete in March at the Carolina Panthers Spelling Bee. The top four finishers in the regional bee will receive invitations to advance to the Scripps National Spelling Bee. **Cassidy Allen** of **Bessemer City Middle School** was the runner-up.
2. **Kiser Elementary** (partnered with NextGen) won the “Are You Smarter Than a Gaston County Fifth Grader?” competition. **Rankin Elementary** earned second place, and **New Hope Elementary** took third place. Sponsored by the Gaston County Education Foundation, “Are You Smarter” is a popular annual event that pairs businesses and organizations with elementary schools in a fun game show format. Proceeds go toward the Ron L. Ensley grants for teachers to fund innovative classroom lessons and projects.
3. **Giselle Barr** from **Cramerton Middle School** received a Gold Key award at the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards for her piece, “Bartholomew.” **Joyce Zhu** of **Cramerton Middle School** earned an honorable mention for her work, “Chamelieonized Chameleon.” **Isabella Caicedo**, a senior at **Stuart W. Cramer High School**, was recognized with a Silver Key award for her piece, “Acceptance.” Barr and Caicedo will have their artwork showcased in March at the Mint Museum in uptown Charlotte.
4. The following students were named semifinalists for the prestigious University of North Carolina Morhead-Cain Scholarship: **Aissatou Diouf** of **Ashbrook High School** and **Ben Kimmel** of **Hunter Huss High School**.
5. **Gaston County Schools** had more than 140 students participate in the all-county high school band clinic on February 9-10 at **Ashbrook High School**. Students were chosen for the band clinic through an audition process. **Brandon Taylor** from **East Gaston High School** conducted the symphonic band, and Dr. Ben Jones, an **Ashbrook High School** graduate who is teaching at Catawba College, conducted the wind ensemble.
6. Piedmont Lithium provided the following grants to educators in **Gaston County Schools**: **Summer Cheek**, **W.B. Beam Intermediate**, \$1,500; **Wanda Huffstetler**, **Bessemer City High School**, \$2,500; **Amy Crocker**, **Bessemer City High**, \$1,000; **Eric Miller**, **John Chavis Middle**, \$1,250; **Susan Carswell**, **John Chavis Middle**, \$2,378; and **Crystal Christy**, **Cherryville Elementary**, \$1,243.
7. **Stuart W. Cramer High School** senior **Ainsley VanderMeer** is a regional semifinalist for the prestigious Jefferson Scholarship at the University of Virginia.

8. **Stuart W. Cramer High School** hosted the South Central All-District Band Clinic, which featured more than 300 outstanding student musicians from across the Charlotte region. The following students from **Gaston County Schools** were chosen for the all-district band: **Tytianna Lipscomb, York Chester Middle School; Abram Comer, Cramerton Middle School; Cyrus Baltimore, Stanley Middle School; Dennis Lopez, Bessemer City Middle School; Ada Hartge, Belmont Middle School; Sofia Parra, W. C. Friday Middle School; Erick Rodriguez-Hernandez, W. C. Friday Middle School; Kate McDaniel, Belmont Middle School; Catherine Putnam, W. C. Friday Middle School; Ayden Kisby-Jones, Highland School of Technology; Ashleigh Fox, East Gaston High School; Caiden McDaniel, Forestview High School; Akela Taylor, Highland School of Technology; Matthew Loudon, Highland School of Technology; Annabelle Radford, Cramerton Middle School; James Vielkanowitz, Forestview High School; Haley Hazen, Forestview High School; Ryan Hoellein, East Gaston High School; Ethan Snell, Forestview High School; Christopher Funderburk, Ashbrook High School; and Mattie Grace Branham, East Gaston High School.**
9. The following student-athletes signed a National Letter of Intent to play college sports: **Jamir Fox, Ashbrook High School, football, Lenoir-Rhyne University; Trevon Leslie, Ashbrook High School, football, Guilford College; Camryn Massey, Ashbrook High School, track and field, Auburn University; Trent Mitchell, Ashbrook High School, football, North Carolina State University; Rich Wills, Stuart W. Cramer High School, golf, Clemson University; Jaxson Hill, Forestview High School, football, Ferrum College; Nicolas Aguilar, Forestview High School, football, Ferrum College; Brittany Isaac, Forestview High School, volleyball, Cleveland Community College; Blair Riley, Forestview High School, softball, Newberry College; Wyatt Hardin, Highland School of Technology, baseball, Pfeiffer University; Micah Hinton, Highland School of Technology, football, Lawrence University; Bailey Maiers, Highland School of Technology, basketball, Cleveland Community College; Camden Ashe, South Point High School, baseball, Mars Hill University; Charlie Birtwistle, South Point High School, football, North Carolina State University; Johnny Armstrong, South Point High School, football, Hampden-Sydney College; Talon McConnell, South Point High School, baseball, Wingate University, and Ezra Taylor, South Point High School, baseball, Mars Hill University.**
10. **Ashbrook High School** sophomore **Mahogany Spikes** placed first in the girls 500-meter race at the N.C. High School Athletic Association 3A state indoor track and field competition. Senior **Camryn Masey** broke the indoor track and field 3A girls shot put record with an impressive throw of 45 feet, 6.25 inches. Additionally, junior **Amir Goines** placed third in the boys 500-meter event.
11. At **Bessemer City Primary**, more than 60 family members and students joined with **Bessemer City High School** football players to play football and math games at the “Math Super Bowl.”
12. **Drew Cooke** and **Wyatt Smith** of **East Gaston High School** finished second and fourth, respectively, at the N.C. High School Athletic Association 1A/2A diving championship.

13. **East Gaston High School** juniors **Daphne Anorve** and **Pressley Rankin** participated in the 75th annual Mars Hill University Choral Festival.
14. The **Forestview High School** relay team of **William Peyton**, **Andrew Taylor**, **Graham Kines**, and **Beckett Tabor** won the 3A state swimming championship in the 200-yard medley relay. They also placed third in the 400-yard freestyle relay. In addition, **William Peyton** finished second in both the 200-yard individual medley and the 100-yard backstroke, and **Beckett Tabor** placed second in the 100-yard freestyle and fourth in the 50-yard freestyle. As a team, **Forestview** placed fourth at the 3A state championship.
15. **Zach Silverman**, a junior at **Gaston Early College of Medical Sciences**, is working toward earning his Eagle Scout rank by designing pliking stands for Keep Gastonia Beautiful. He is collaborating with both Keep Gastonia Beautiful and Gastonia Parks and Recreation to finalize the design and identify locations for installation.
16. **Gaston Early College of Medical Sciences** YOU-th club will be recognized at the Gaston County Commissioners meeting in February. YOU-th members have spent the school year educating themselves and their peers about healthy relationships. Members will join Hope United in presenting an official proclamation to the commissioners that designates February as National Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month.
17. **Lingerfeldt Elementary** in partnership with The Children’s Oral Health Institute offered the “Lessons in a Lunch Box: Healthy Teeth Essentials and Facts About Snacks” program for second- and third-grade students. Additionally, fifth graders participated in the national STARBASE program in Charlotte. They were engaged in challenging “hands-on, minds-on” activities in aviation, science, technology, engineering, math, and space exploration and also enjoyed a tour of a C-17 aircraft.
18. In December, **McAdenville Elementary** launched its first podcast episode titled “Paw-cast Adventures with the McAdenville Wildcats.” Additionally, three “Stories and Songs” segments were published, which were led by school counselor **Heather Griffin** and featured various students. The podcast can be found on Spotify. It is believed to be the first elementary level podcast in **Gaston County Schools**.
19. **Pleasant Ridge Elementary** student **Faith Bryson** worked on a problem-based learning unit in AIG (academically and intellectually gifted) class about the woes of the black bear population in Florida. As part of the project, she wrote to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners. In reply, she received an informational care package and learned that her ideas are being passed along to the Conservation’s biologists.
20. **South Point High School** senior **Maddon Rollins** was selected to participate in the 75th annual Mars Hill Choral Festival.
21. **South Point High School** freshman **Ila Turner** placed third in the 50-yard freestyle and fourth in the 100-yard freestyle at the 3A state swimming championship. Additionally, senior **Bryson Lomick** placed second in the boys 55-meter event at the 3A state indoor track and field championship, and junior **Rachel Tolbert** placed fourth in the girls 500-meter event.