

BOARD AGENDA INFORMATIONAL ITEM

DEPARTMENT: Communications/Public
Information Department

TOPIC: GOOD NEWS

FOR THE MONTH OF: December 2024

1. **Gaston County Schools** launched the “Nickels for Neighbors” campaign to raise money for seniors in the Class of 2025 in Mitchell County Schools. The Principals Leadership Team coordinated the fundraising effort with help from the Superintendent’s Student Advisory Council and set a goal of collecting \$25,000 to help students affected by Hurricane Helene.
2. **Gaston County Schools** has three students in the Class of 2025 who were named QuestBridge Scholars: **Ayana Bigger, North Gaston High School**, Amherst College; **Joshua Mendoza Vargas, Highland School of Technology**, Boston University; and **Julien Boyce, Highland School of Technology**, University of Notre Dame. QuestBridge Scholars are matched with a college/university and awarded a full scholarship to attend the school.
3. The following students were recognized as overall school winners in the City of Gastonia’s art show: **Richard Church, York Chester Middle School**; **Camila Trejo, Highland School of Technology**; and **Hannah Szymborski, Hunter Huss High School**. The students’ artwork is currently on display at The Schiele Museum.
4. Former **Gaston County Board of Education** member **Dot Guthrie** received the Duke Energy Citizenship and Service Award. The prestigious award recognizes individuals who inspire through volunteer service and civic engagement and create a positive and lasting influence in their communities.
5. **Gaston County Schools** received a check in the amount of \$16,000 from the Gaston County Education Foundation, through a partnership with the Gaston County Community Foundation, to support students who are multilingual learners.
6. The **Gaston County Schools** Human Resources Department collected more than 2,000 canned goods and non-perishable items to benefit the “One Can Make A Difference” food pantry at **Webb Street School**.
7. A generous donor partnered with the Belmont Bookshop to provide a copy of “Kisses from Space” to every elementary school in **Gaston County Schools**.
8. Thanks to Gaston County Farm Bureau, **Gaston County Schools** received a copy of “Pick a Pine Tree” by Patricia Toht for each elementary school’s media center.

9. The Gaston Regional Science and Engineering Fair was held over three days at The Schiele Museum. In the high school category, **Sofia Jimenez Beltran, Inari Joseph, and Hayden Trinh** of **Gaston Early College High School** placed first overall; **Lauren Campbell, Olive Campbell, and Charlotte Hearne** from **Gaston Early College High School** placed first in the Biological Sciences A category, followed by **Betany McSwain** and **Michael Gray**, both from **East Gaston High School**. In the Biological Sciences B category, **Reese Sexton** of **East Gaston High School** placed first, followed by **Alexa Cloninger** and **Peyton Safrit** of **East Gaston High School**, and **Aylin Prado** of **Stuart W. Cramer High School**. In the Chemistry category, **Sophia Jimenez Beltra, Inari Joseph, and Hayden Trinh** of **Gaston Early College High School** placed first, followed by **Mahi Patel**, of **Gaston Early College of Medical Sciences**, and **Lillian Moore** and **Peyton Fredrick** of **Gaston Early College of Medical Sciences**. In the Earth and Environmental Sciences category, **Jordan Reeves** of **East Gaston High School** placed first, followed by **Caroline Cox** of **East Gaston High School**, and **Carmello Buntyn** and **Natalie Sanchez** of **Hunter Huss High School**. In the Mathematics and Physics category, **William McClelland** of **Stuart W. Cramer High School** placed first followed by **Gorbin Fortenberry** of **Gaston Early College of Medical Sciences**, and **Ellaina Elcock** of **Gaston Early College of Medical Sciences**. In the Engineering category, **Aubree Huffstickler** of **Gaston Early College High School** placed first, followed by **Caiden Buckner** and **Jayden Sullivan** of **Gaston Early College High School**, and **Lucas Moretz** and **Aydan Wynn** of **Gaston Early College High School**. In the Technology category, **Taylor Klinkiewicz, Maya Martin, and Alyssa Mullis** of **Gaston Early College High School** placed first. **Alyssa McEntire** of **Highland School of Technology** was the recipient of the Naval Science Award, and **Bethany McSwain** of **East Gaston High School** was the recipient of the SPARC3 of Genius Award from Gaston College with **Karlee Reid** of **East Gaston High School** receiving honorable mention.

10. The following middle school students received awards at the Gaston Regional Science and Engineering Fair: **Kelvin Aguilar Gonzalez** and **Sebastian Caro** of **Grier Middle School** were the overall winners. In the Biological Sciences A category, **Elizabeth Briand** of **Chavis Middle School** received first place followed by **Alex Bocchino** of **Belmont Middle School** and **Waylon Hensley** of **Belmont Middle School**. In the Biological Sciences B category, **Selah Rose Smith** of **Belmont Middle School** placed first, followed by **Addilyn Gardner, Madelyn Salter, and Adelyn White** of **Chavis Middle School** and **Jacob Greene, Sofia Young, and Brissa Vidales** of **Chavis Middle School**. In the Chemistry category, **Emma McGinnis** of **Belmont Middle School** placed first, followed by **Peyton Weaver** and **Donte Hall** of **Grier Middle School**, and **Zayden Guinn** of **Holbrook Middle School**. In the Earth and Environmental Sciences category, **Tyler Koket** of **Belmont Middle School** placed first, followed by **Elizabeth Shires** of **Belmont Middle School**, and **Eileen Vasquez** and **Londyn Sanders** of **Stanley Middle School**. In the Physics and Mathematics category, **Aidan Wood** of **Belmont Middle School** placed first, followed by **Avery Price, Sofia Edwards, and Bailey Safrit** of **Stanley Middle School**, and **Mason Black** and **McKinley Ward** of **Chavis Middle School**. In the Technology category, **Case Conner, Iain Brown, and Cash Anderson** of **Stanley Middle School** place first, followed by **Kane Navey** and **Jaxon Vernitsky** of **Stanley Middle School**, and **Caleb Porter** of **W.C. Friday Middle School**. In the

Engineering category, **Caitlyn Leonard** of **Belmont Middle School** placed first, followed by **Owen Goryl** of **Belmont Middle School**, and **Gaven Hoke**, **Navy Roberts**, and **Aaron Hollis** of **Grier Middle School**. The following students received the Navy Science Award: **Marlow Morris** of **Stanley Middle School** and **Elijah Hartman** of **Belmont Middle School**.

11. The Gaston Regional Science and Engineering Fair elementary awards were presented over two days. On the first day of the event, **Jax Jenkins** and **Connor Pursley** of **North Belmont Elementary** were the overall winners. **Schafer Nunn**, **Anderson Hammond**, and **Karson McDonald** of **McAdenville Elementary** placed first in the Biological Sciences category; **Jameson Patterson** of **Tryon Elementary** placed second, and **Audrey Sullivan** of **W.B. Beam Intermediate** placed third. In the Chemistry category, **Artemis Shuford** of **W.B. Beam Intermediate** placed first; **Sydney Huffstetler** of **Catawba Heights Elementary** placed second; and **Breonna Nelson** of **Gardner Park Elementary** placed third. In the Earth and Environmental Sciences category, **Ava Satterfield**, **Madison Bell**, **Ryleigh McLean**, **Mason Melton**, and **Bethany Lazenby** of **Chapel Grove Elementary** placed first; **Luke Parton** and **Gabriel Parton** of **McAdenville Elementary** placed second; and **Addyson Powers** of **Catawba Heights Elementary** placed third. In the Physics and Mathematics category, **Landon Satterfield**, **Duane Byers**, **Aidan Rhoten**, **Marek Chase**, **Nolan Barber**, and **Addilynn Brannon** of **Chapel Grove Elementary** placed first; **Sky Youmans** of **Catawba Heights Elementary** placed second, and **Annie Glover**, **Myles Glenn**, and **Neil Glenn** of **Tryon Elementary** placed third. In the Engineering and Technology category, **Amariah Henderson**, **Camari McBryant**, **Jace Whitehead**, and **Zaiden Wallace** of **Brookside Elementary** placed first; **Parker Wellman** and **Jordan Heaton** of **Bessemer City Central Elementary** placed second; and **Anthony Teofilo**, **Madrid Oliver**, **Ellis Beaty**, **Abigail Trainor**, and **Jeremiah Everette** of **Chapel Grove Elementary** placed third. **Emma Pruitt** of **W.B. Beam Intermediate** received the Schiele Award. On the second day of the event, **Matthew Wilcox** of **Kiser Elementary** was the overall winner. **Will McLean** of **Hawks Nest STEAM Academy** placed first in the Biological Sciences category; **Parker McCradden** of **New Hope Elementary** placed second, and **Taylor Allen** of **Kiser Elementary** placed third. In the Chemistry category, **Luisanna Surez** of **Pinewood Elementary** placed first; **Jimbo Anderson** and **Jude Fann** of **Belmont Central Elementary** placed second; and **Harper Hall** of **Costner Elementary** placed third. In the Earth and Environmental Sciences category, **Blythe Sipe** of **Hawks Nest STEAM Academy** placed first; **Olivia Powers** of **New Hope Elementary** placed second; and **Amelia Memrick** and **Annalise Halfhill** of **Belmont Central Elementary** placed third. In the Physics and Mathematics category, **Ben Cherry**, **Hayes Howvis**, and **Will Trogdon** of **W.A. Bess Elementary** placed first; **Jericho Martin** of **Pleasant Ridge Elementary** placed second; and **Truett Blackwell** of **Pinewood Elementary** placed third. In the Engineering and Technology category, **Henry Markwith** of **Hawks Nest STEAM Academy** placed first; **Marcus Willie** of **Costner Elementary** placed second; and **Braxton Allen** of **Belmont Central Elementary** placed third. **Elle Lee** of **Robinson Elementary** won The Schiele Award.
12. The following schools won county sports championships: **Cramerton Middle**, boys soccer; **Belmont Middle**, volleyball; and **Holbrook Middle**, wrestling.

13. Zaxby's presented "Big Zax Snak Meal" gift cards to the school and central-level employees who served as campaign coordinators for **Gaston County Schools'** annual fundraising efforts for the United Way of Gaston County.
14. The **Ashbrook High School** cheerleading team placed third in the Junior Varsity Game Day Non-Tumbling-D1 division at the state cheerleading championships in Raleigh.
15. **Ashbrook High School** cheerleader **Chaydon June** was selected to represent her school on the West team at the 2024 Queen City Senior Bowl.
16. **Ashbrook High School** students **Jonathan Moore, Martino Smith, John Gordon, Caleb Gordon, Chloe Morales, Andi Ballard, and Charlye Floyd** were selected to attend the prestigious Youth Leadership Conference at the Charlotte Touchdown Club.
17. **H.H. Beam Elementary**, in partnership with Second Harvest Metrolina and volunteers from the Rotary Club of Gastonia, packed and handed out nearly 300 meals to families prior to the Thanksgiving holiday.
18. Throughout November, **H.H. Beam Elementary** and **Hunter Huss High School** collected and delivered more than 1,000 Thanksgiving meal items to students and families at Freedom Trail Elementary and Cranberry Middle School in Elk Park, N.C.
19. Since September, more than 50 students have been inducted into the Bulldog Club, a new recognition program at **H.H. Beam Elementary** that honors students for their excellent character, strong work habits, and academic growth. Each month, inductees are celebrated at a special ceremony sponsored by the Rotary Club of Gastonia.
20. **W.B. Beam Intermediate** media specialist **Melanie Sherrill** received a \$999.52 grant from Rutherford Electric Membership Corporation for her project titled "Listening to Read," which will be used to purchase audiobooks.
21. **Belmont Central Elementary School** organized a collection drive to benefit the Gaston County animal shelter.
22. The **W.A. Bess Elementary** "Bulldog Spotlight Players" hosted "An Evening of Holiday Stories." The Bulldog Spotlight Players consisted of third, fourth, and fifth-grade students who auditioned to be part of this theater group and had been practicing diligently since September. They were ready to showcase their acting skills.
23. **Tionna Pettus** of **Bessemer City High School** set a new Gaston County single-game scoring record with 65 points in a win over **North Gaston High School**.
24. **Bessemer City High School** students participated in the Charlotte Auto Show poster contest and claimed the top three spots. **Nicole Saldana** won first place, **Payton Thompson** took second, and **Jaiden McDaniel** finished third.

25. **Bessemer City High School** football coach **Shane Short** was named the Southern Piedmont 1A/2A Coach of the Year.
26. **Carr Elementary** students created ornaments, crafted button trees, and illustrated Christmas scenes on wooden discs that were used in the garland at the historic Dallas Square gazebo. Teachers **Elizabeth Perkins** and **Angela Newton** assisted in the decorating.
27. Both the **Carr Elementary** and **Chapel Grove Elementary** cafeteria staffs scored a 100 on their sanitation rating.
28. Eighth grade students at **John Chavis Middle School** wrote 82 cards to a nursing home in Fletcher, N.C. that was affected by Hurricane Helene. Teacher **Summer Self** organized the activity.
29. The **Cherryville High School** cheerleading team received several awards at the North Carolina High School Athletic Association state championship: Junior Varsity Performance Non-Tumbling-D2; Varsity Game Day Small-D2; and Varsity Performance Small-D2.
30. **Avery Beam** of **Cherryville High School** received the Cheerleader Spirit Scholarship Award during the North Carolina High School Athletic Association cheerleading competition.
31. **Emily Allen** of **Cherryville High School** was named to the North Carolina Volleyball Coaches Association all-state second team.
32. **Justin Willyoung**, who previously worked as a school counselor and track coach at **Cherryville High School**, has written an inspirational book titled “Iron and Thunder” that recounts his time working at the school and with young people. It also highlights the importance of teachers and coaches in the lives of students.
33. The **Stuart W. Cramer High School** Chick-fil-A Leadership Academy collected toys that were purchased with donations from the school’s powder puff game. The toys were delivered to Big Meadows Baptist Church in western North Carolina for families affected by Hurricane Helene.
34. **East Gaston High School** science teacher **Brian Johnson** earned the District Six High School Outstanding Science Teacher Award. The award honors his hard work and creative teaching in science. Johnson was nominated by his peers and school leaders for inspiring students, using new ideas in the classroom, and connecting science to other subjects. Additionally, Johnson’s Honors Research Methods II class presented their research projects at the annual East Gaston High School Science Symposium. In collaboration with Instructional Technology Facilitator **Krystal Strader**, the students developed an app that allowed symposium attendees to learn more about the event and provide constructive feedback on the students’ projects and presentations.

35. The **East Gaston High School** Tri-M Music Society performed Christmas carols for the residents of Stanley Total Living.
36. The **East Gaston High School** cheerleading team placed second at the North Carolina High School Athletic Association championship in the Varsity Game Day Medium/Large-D2 category.
37. **Forestview High School** senior **Ford Poag** was selected to participate in the UNC-Charlotte Honors Band.
38. LifeShare Carolinas visited **Forestview High School's** Health Science II class to educate students about organ donation and transplantation. The students enjoyed learning about the donation process and participated in an exciting, hands-on opportunity to examine human organs, including the liver, lungs, and kidneys.
39. The **W.C. Friday Middle School** band participated in the annual McAdenville tree lighting ceremony on December 2. Band director **Cindy Owens** was honored for her faithful 10 years of providing holiday music for the event with her band students. Owens was recognized by Pharr McAdenville Corporation with flowers and an introduction that highlighted her contributions to the event over the years. Additionally, Pharr made a donation of \$200 to the band program.
40. **W.C. Friday Middle School** in collaboration with the Project Unify Club, hosted the Special Olympics of Gaston County Young Athletes Day. Special recognition goes to **Angela Collett**, exceptional children classroom teacher and department chair, as well as physical education teachers **Amy Brown** and **Jake McDaniel** for their efforts in making the event a success.
41. **Gaston Early College of Medical Sciences** students **Sadie Morton** and **Autumn Queen** are both UNC-Chapel Hill Morehead-Cain Scholarship semifinalists.
42. The following **Gaston Early College High School of Medical Sciences** students earned a perfect score on the Pre-ACT: **Libby Carter** and **Cooper Hamrick** in science and **Sophie Hoerst** in science, reading, and STEM.
43. **Gaston Early College High School of Medical Sciences** senior **Andrea Padilla** is a semifinalist for the Tucker Scholarship at Gardner-Webb University. The Tucker Heart, Soul, Mind, and Strength Scholarship is a full-tuition and room and board scholarship that is awarded to one high school student who exemplifies the principles and values of the Gardner-Webb community.
44. **Gaston Early College of Medical Sciences** sophomore **Mariam Raja** participated in the PATCH Regional Program, which is a pathway initiative designed for high school students from underrepresented backgrounds. The program offers exposure to various health professions and is a collaboration between Atrium Health Medical Education, Wake Forest University School of Medicine, and Workforce Development.

45. **Gaston Early College of Medical Sciences** sophomore **Jayleigh Whisnant** was selected to participate in the Wake Forest Summer Immersion Program. This summer, she will spend a week at Wake Forest, gaining hands-on experience in the medical field and exploring various career opportunities. During the program, she will visit healthcare facilities, participate in simulations and labs, and learn essential skills such as taking blood pressure and suturing.
46. National Honor Society students at **Gaston Early College of Medical Sciences** made blankets for patients at the CaroMont Health Cancer Center.
47. The **Highland School of Technology** student council hosted a canned food and non-perishable food collection drive to benefit Second Harvest Food Bank, Crisis Assistance Ministry, and Cancer Services of Gaston County.
48. Nineteen **Highland School of Technology** HOSA members attended the Regional Learning Conference in Shelby. **Menaal Shaikh** placed first in Health Informatics; **Zuha Shaikh** placed first in Health Career Photography; **Katie Fangman** and **Joshua Mendoza** placed second in Dental Science; and **Abigail Anderson** placed third in Dental Terminology.
49. **Madison Darnell** of **Highland School of Technology** was named to the 2024 North Carolina High School Tennis Coaches Association's all-state team.
50. **Madison Thompson** and **Alise Mayers** of **Highland School of Technology** were named to the North Carolina Volleyball Coaches Association's all-state team.
51. The **Hunter Huss High School** cafeteria staff earned a score of 100 on its sanitation inspection.
52. **Kiser Elementary** collected more than 2,200 non-perishable food items for the **Webb Street School** "One Can Make A Difference" food pantry.
53. The **Lingerfeldt Elementary School** cafeteria staff earned a score of 100 on its sanitation inspection.
54. Students in the Leadership Academy at **North Gaston High School** collected 245 toys for children in Burnsville, N.C., who were impacted by Hurricane Helene.
55. The **North Gaston High School** FCA club packed boxes for Operation Christmas Child. Thanks to the incredible generosity of students, staff, and community families, the school assembled 50 boxes to spread joy to children around the world for the holiday season.
56. **North Gaston High School** teacher **Kyle Haywood** has been selected to serve as a side judge in one of the four North Carolina High School Athletic Association state football championships.
57. **Logan McKnight**, **Ruby Ruiz-Vargas**, **Mikaili Small**, and **Ronald Tovilla-Pablo** of **North Gaston High School** were selected to participate in the UNC-Charlotte

Invitational Honor Band Clinic. Logan and Ruby earned first chair positions in the top band, while Ronald earned third chair in the same band. Additionally, the **North Gaston High School** Marching Wildcats performed at the annual Carols on the Square event in Dallas on Friday, December 6. Several band members are also playing for the Christmas Eve services at City Church in Gastonia.

58. **Pinewood Elementary** received a \$25,000 donation from National Gypsum company. The check presentation ceremony featured a performance by the school's fifth grade show choir.
59. The **Pinewood Elementary** cafeteria staff earned a score of 100 on its sanitation inspection.
60. **South Point High School** senior **Asher Dover** is a semifinalist for the UNC Chapel Hill Morehead-Cain Scholarship.
61. **South Point High School** senior **James Dover**, who is the recipient of the Calvin Coolidge Scholarship, attended the 2024 Winter Gala in New York City and was able to spend time with writer George Will.
62. The **South Point High School** marching band received several awards at recent competitions. At the North Lincoln Roundtable Tournament of Bands, the band took home the Class 1A first place band award, as well as first place in music performance, visual performance, and general effect. They also earned second place in colorguard and first place in percussion. At the North Gaston Wildcat Invitational, the band continued its success with the Class 1A first place band award and first place in music performance, visual performance, general effect, drum major, and percussion, along with the CJ Hill Prop/Pit Crew Award. Additionally, they secured second place in colorguard. At the Porter Ridge High School Pirates' Cove Classic, the band achieved the Class 1A second place band award, third place in music performance, second place in visual performance, general effect, colorguard, and percussion, and first place for drum major.
63. The **South Point High School** cheerleading team placed first in the Super D1 category at the North Carolina High School Athletic Association state cheerleading championship. They also placed first in the Super Varsity Division at the UCA Piedmont Prestate Competition at Cox Mill High School and the Mav Classic at Marvin Ridge High School.
64. The **South Point High School** Environmental Club in partnership with Keep Belmont Beautiful cleaned up areas in and around Belmont.
65. The **Tryon Elementary** student council organized a canned food collection drive, collecting more than 1,300 cans for the **Webb Street School** "One Can Make A Difference" food pantry.
66. The **Webb Street School** cafeteria staff earned a 100 sanitation rating.