

## BOARD AGENDA INFORMATIONAL ITEM

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**DEPARTMENT:** Communications/Public  
Information Department

**TOPIC: GOOD NEWS**

**FOR THE MONTH OF:** October 2023

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1. **Highland School of Technology** is one of only eight schools in North Carolina and 353 in the United States to be chosen as a 2023 National Blue Ribbon School. The official recognition of Highland's outstanding achievement will take place during the National Blue Ribbon Schools awards ceremony on November 16-17 in Washington, D.C.
2. **Gaston County Schools** held a groundbreaking ceremony on October 3 to celebrate the start of construction on the new **Grier Middle School** campus. School representatives, elected officials, and others participated in the program. The school is expected to be ready for the 2025-2026 academic year.
3. **Gaston County Schools** had the opportunity to show off its classic 1950-model school bus at the Touch-A-Truck event at the new Stinger Park in Bessemer City. The bus may have been the most popular "truck" there as its bright orange color scheme attracted plenty of attention and kids (of all ages) enjoy climbing aboard to check out a school bus from years ago. The Touch-A-Truck event coincided with Bessemer City being featured as the spotlight hometown on Queen City News' (Channel 46) afternoon and evening newscasts, and the classic bus even got a mention during the weather segment.
4. The **Ashbrook High School** marching band won the following awards at the Blue Devil Pride Tournament of Bands competition at Maiden High School: first place, drum major; first place, percussion; second place, color guard; first place, music; second place, marching; first place, general effect; and first place overall 1A. **Josh Westbrook** is the school's band director.
5. **Ashbrook High School** teacher **Anna Guzauskas** was selected as the FSIoffice Top 10 Teacher of the Month and is now a finalist to be the overall prize winner, which will be announced in 2024.
6. **Ashbrook High School** received recognition as a Special Olympics National Banner School for its outstanding commitment to promoting inclusion. The honor is granted to only six schools in the state. Ashbrook achieved the prestigious recognition by actively supporting a Unified Champion Schools Club for the past two years. The club's efforts have included organizing various activities such as sports events, social gatherings, school-based sales, games, and academic opportunities that are aimed at fostering inclusion.
7. **Costner Elementary** held a canned food drive and collected 1,473 cans for the Dallas Christian Ministry.

8. Last year, **Belmont Middle School** art teacher **Brianna Beaver**'s eighth-grade students learned about photography from Bea Hart at the Gaston County Museum of Art and History and created a mural with disposable cameras to capture portraits of the special people in their lives. The mural is now on display on the walls of Nellie's Southern Kitchen in downtown Belmont.
9. **Ceniya Powell** was crowned the **Cherryville High School** homecoming queen for 2023. Members of the court included **Laila Davis**, **Lila Grace Sermersheim**, **Briley Wright**, and **Malia Emory**. As part of the homecoming festivities, which included a parade through downtown Cherryville, the five members of the homecoming court had the opportunity to honor their favorite teacher, and they unanimously selected business teacher and assistant football coach **Scott Jenkins** for the recognition.
10. The **Cherryville High School** marching band won the following awards at the Enka Land of the Sky Marching Band Festival: first place, drum major; first place, percussion; second place, colorguard, and second place overall 1AA. **Cole Crawford** is the school's band director.
11. **Cramerton Middle School** collected more than 900 non-perishable items for the **Webb Street School** "One Can Make a Difference" food pantry.
12. **Cramerton Middle School** recognized its incredible custodial staff with a gratitude bulletin board filled with sticky notes of appreciation to show how much the students and staff value the custodians' hard work.
13. The **East Gaston High School** marching band competed in the Blue Devil Pride Tournament of Bands at Maiden High School and received the following awards: first place overall in marching for class A/AA, second place in all other categories, second in Class 2A, and a superior rating. **Brandon Taylor** is the school's band director.
14. **Forestview High School** students **Grayson Aycock** (bricklayer) and **Martin Avalos Cruz** (tender) finished fifth in the Spec Mix Junior Bricklayer 500 competition on October 5. Both students are completing the school's masonry pathway. **Charles Austin** is their teacher.
15. **Grier Middle School** received a donation of softball equipment from the Mount Holly Athletic Association.
16. **Gaston Early College High School** senior **Addison Tran** was certified as a pharmacy technician through her work study at The Pharmacy @ 321. Additionally, senior **Chloe Kennedy** was able to shadow a school counselor at Carr Elementary to gain insight about her career ambition to work as a school counselor. Also, **Crisbel Rodriguez** shadowed in the sterile processing department last semester at CaroMont Health and was invited to participate in a paid internship this past summer. She also earned a certification in sterile processing and will continue as a PRN "as needed" nurse.

17. **Gaston Early College of Medical Sciences** students **Marissa LeMoine, Sadie Morton, Autumn Queen,** and **Afiyah Raja** are student leaders for the school's new Teen Dating Violence Awareness Club. They will work with other students to develop outreach programming with the ultimate goal of educating other Gaston County students about teen dating violence and healthy/unhealthy relationships. The school is partnering with Hope United and Rose Planer (therapist) to launch the club.
18. **Hawks Nest STEAM Academy** collaborated with The Science House from N.C. State University to host a STEAM Night titled "What a Gas!" The students and families participated in an activity to harness "gasses" to produce hovercraft and table girders.
19. **Hawks Nest STEAM Academy** received a grant from the N.C. Arboretum to support STEM education with hands-on outdoor community science programs and projects. Project EXPLORE: (Experiences Promoting Learning Outdoors for Research and Education) will engage students outside the school in two free environmental educator-led science programs based on current science curriculum standards. Students will participate in ongoing data collection at their school and will have opportunities to present and share their findings.
20. **McAdenville Elementary** was selected by Reading is Fundamental and Amazon to receive a generous donation of books and bags for students in kindergarten, first grade, and second grade. Each student was given a drawstring bag and three new books.
21. Promising Pages donated 10 music keyboards to **Lowell Elementary School**. In addition, the organization gave the school more than 1,000 books.
22. The **Lowell Elementary** PTO organized a "Beautification Day" on September 23 with more than 20 volunteers on hand to clean up the school grounds. In addition, Site One donated a truckload of mulch for the beautification effort.
23. Volunteers with Vallen USA and the United Way of Gaston County donated their time to beautify the school grounds at **North Belmont Elementary** and spruce up the school's reading garden.
24. **Page Primary School** raised more than \$42,000 during its recent Dance-a-Thon fundraiser. Family members attended the event and participated in an outdoor luncheon with their children and learned new dances. The funds will be used to help support the music program and other school programs.
25. The **Pleasant Ridge Elementary** PTO held a beautification day at the school that involved students assisting with pruning, weeding, digging, planting, and mulching.
26. The Roaring Panther Band of **Pleasant Ridge Elementary** had the opportunity to perform at a Charlotte Independence soccer game.
27. **Pinewood Elementary** received a cARTwheels grant from the N.C. Arts Council to host an artist for a week-long residency. The school is home to Gaston County Schools' Performing Arts Academy for elementary school students.

28. **Robinson Elementary** kindergarten teacher **Whitney Marr** is **Gaston County Schools'** nominee for the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching (NCCAT) Beginning Teacher of the Year Award.
29. The **South Point High School** girls golf team donated \$1,480 to the Cramer Mountain Club Ladies' Golf Association's "Take a Swing Against Breast Cancer" charity golf event, which was held on September 16.
30. **South Point High School** and **East Gaston High School** held its "Dig Pink" volleyball fundraiser and collected more than \$4,000 for breast cancer awareness and research.
31. Twenty **South Point High School** marching band members joined the Western Carolina University Pride of the Mountains Marching Band for a pregame performance during the Western Carolina-Samford University football game. The performance featured more than 300 high school students. Additionally, 12 **South Point High School** band members participated in the halftime show with the N.C. State University Marching Band during the recent N.C. State-VMI football game. The students were able to enjoy a full game day experience with N.C. State's band.
32. The **South Point High School** marching band participated in the 2023 Jaguar Classic Marching Band Competition and received the following awards and recognitions in Class AA competition: first place colorguard with an excellent rating; first place drum major with a superior rating; second place percussion with a superior rating; first place marching and maneuvering with an excellent rating; first place general effect with an excellent rating; second place music with an excellent rating; first place band in Class 2A, and grand champion in 1A-2A bands. **Tim Hamilton** is the school's band director.
33. Six students were recognized by the Belmont American Legion Post 144 for their involvement in the 2023 N.C. Girls' State and Boys' State programs. **South Point High School** participants included **Lennon Miller**, **Dhruv A. Patel**, **Jacob Echevarria**, and **Eve Ziemer** while **Isaiah Williams** represents **Gaston Early College of Medical Sciences**. In addition, **Addison Gilbert**, a graduate of **Stuart W. Cramer High School**, was recognized for his involvement in the program last year.
34. **Southwest Middle School** received a \$2,000 donation from Dick's Sporting Goods to provide additional resources for the school's athletics department.
35. The **Stuart W. Cramer High School** marching band received a superior rating performance at the Enka Land of the Sky Marching Band Festival. In addition, the band received the following awards in the Class 2AA division: first place overall; first place, music; second place, drum major; second place, percussion; and third place, color guard. **Kameron Radford** is the school's band director.
36. **Webb Street School** nurse **Jamie Welch** was named the National Nurse of the Year for Brightstar Care.
37. **York Chester Middle School** hosted an International Music and Art Festival that showcased the school's band and chorus and included a display of student artwork.