

# School News



Where success is measured one student at a time

November 21, 2008

R-307



Thomas Stone High School seniors Matthew Turner, left, and Emily Trefry, right, play their bassoon and trombone with the Thomas Stone High School marching band during the annual "Salute to Veterans" parade and ceremony held Sunday, Nov. 9, in downtown La Plata. Students from other county high school bands and JROTC units participated.

## School system meets Adequate Yearly Progress

All six Charles County public high schools met their Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) school performance benchmarks for 2008. Charles County Public Schools, as a system, also met AYP at each level -- elementary, middle and high school -- for the 2007-08 school year.

The Maryland State Department of Education released results Friday. The high school AYP is based on the results of grade 11 students' scores on the Maryland High School Assessments. Information released

Nov. 14 is only for high schools; the state released AYP data for middle and elementary schools in August.

AYP is the gain that schools, school systems, and states must make each year in the proportion of students achieving proficiency in reading and math. To make AYP, schools and school systems must improve in reading and mathematics for all students as well as for nine student subgroups including each of five racial/ethnic groups, students receiving

See AYP, Page 2

### *Inclement weather change*

Four emergency closing days are built into the calendar. If the days are not used, they will be deducted from the June closing date. A change has been made in the dates added to spring break in the event of harsh weather conditions. The addition of days is now April 6, 7, 8 and 9. Please make a note of this change on page 10 of the 2008-09 Parent Handbook/Calendar.

### *Christmas tree sale*

The Maurice J. McDonough High School students and band boosters annual Christmas tree sale begins next Friday, Nov. 28. The tree lot is located at the Wawa gas station in White Plains. The sale will run Monday through Friday, from 5 - 9 p.m., and Saturdays and Sundays, from 9 a.m. - 9 p.m.

The trees will be priced from \$25 to \$125. CCPS employees are eligible for a \$10 discount if they present their identification badge at the time of their purchase. Visit the band boosters Web site, [www.mhsramsband.com](http://www.mhsramsband.com), for additional information.

### *Kennedy Center Art award*

The Arts Education in Maryland Schools Alliance is seeking nominations for the 2008-2009 John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts School of Excellence Award for Outstanding Achievement in Arts Education. The awards program recognizes and honors individual public schools for their excellent arts education programs and for outstanding accomplishments in making the arts an essential part of education in their district. Nomination forms are due Feb. 1, 2009. Visit <http://www.aems-edu.org/news1.php> for nomination materials and more information.

## Notebook

### Thanksgiving closures

Schools and offices are closed Nov. 26-28 for the Thanksgiving holiday.

### Just a reminder

Nominations for the Charles County Public Schools 2009 Principal of the Year and the *Washington Post* Distinguished Educational Leadership Award are due by Friday, Dec. 12, to John Felicitas, personnel specialist for CCPS. Nominations must include a minimum of four statements of support; a brief career summary; and a description of contributions in each of the nomination criteria categories.

Nomination criteria categories are located in the staff services section of the school system Web site, [www.ccboc.com](http://www.ccboc.com).

### Agnes Meyer award

Nominations for the *Washington Post's* 2009 Agnes Meyer Outstanding Teacher of the Year award are due by Friday, Dec. 12, to Barbara Palko, staff development resource teacher for CCPS. Nominations must include a minimum of four statements of support; a brief career summary; and a description of contributions in each of the nomination criteria categories.

For the nomination criteria categories, and more information, visit the press releases section of the school system Web site at [www.ccboc.com/pr](http://www.ccboc.com/pr).

### On the cover

Pictured on the front cover are employees from the Jesse L. Starkey Administration Building warehouse. Pictured, from left, are: Vincent McKinney, warehouse truck driver; Brian Richard, assistant warehouse foreman; and Justin Taylor, warehouse/food service truck driver.



### Turkey and stuffing anyone?

Mt. Hope/Nanjemoy Elementary School held its annual Thanksgiving Holiday dinner for students, staff and the Nanjemoy community on Friday, Nov. 14. Volunteers, staff and North Point High School culinary arts students prepared food for more than 250 attendees, including school system staff and members of the Charles County Board of Education. Members of the Mt. Hope/Nanjemoy fifth-grade class also performed songs and skits for guests. Staff and volunteers helped serve guests pictured on the left, and included Kirstie Olson, left, Krista Vermillion, second from left, Mt. Hope/Nanjemoy Elementary School Vice Principal David Hoogerheide, second from right, and Candice Bowie, right.

### Board changes calendar; closes schools on inauguration day

Charles County Public Schools will be closed for students on Jan. 20, 2009, for the presidential inauguration. The Board of Education on Nov. 18 agreed to change the school calendar, moving the semester break for students from Friday, Jan. 23 to Jan. 20. Teachers and staff will be allowed to take liberal leave. Schools are now open on Jan. 23.

The unanimous action by the Board changes the January calendar to the following:

- Jan. 19 – Schools and offices closed, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday observed;
- Jan. 20 – Semester break, moved from Jan.

23. Schools closed for students; staff allowed liberal leave;

- Jan. 21 – School in session for students and teachers; High School Assessment, government makeup;
- Jan. 22 – School in session; High School Assessment English makeup; and
- Jan. 23 – School in session

The end of the second marking period is moved from Jan. 22 to Jan. 16. Report cards will be issued to elementary school students and mailed home to middle and high school students on Tuesday, Jan. 27.

### AYP

special education services, Limited English Proficiency services and Free and Reduced Meals services (FARMS). AYP also includes graduation rates for high school and attendance in elementary and middle school. A high school's AYP status is based on its performance on the English and Algebra/Data Analysis 2008 High School Assessments (HSAs), the school's participation rate in the assessments and its graduation rate.

"This is great news for our county, and I am very proud of the work that our students, our teachers and administrators, all our

employees, and our parents have put in to make this happen," Superintendent James E. Richmond said. "We are moving forward, and our schools and students are making progress. As with every round of testing results, we take this information and use it to address areas where improvement is needed and build upon our successes."

The Maryland School Assessment (MSA) exams are given in the spring to third through eighth grade students in reading and mathematics. High school students take the HSA in May.

### Continued from Page 1

## County science teachers lose weight, gravity on airplane flight

Henry E. Lackey High School science teacher Thomas Fawcett says he had “a once in a life time experience,” on Tuesday, Oct. 21.

“To be able to experience this first hand is something I will never be able to explain completely,” he said. He was talking about his participation in the Northrop Grumman Weightless Flights of Discovery Program as he, along with Jennifer L. Davis of Benjamin Stoddert Middle School and Charles “CJ” Newcomb of Westlake High School, experienced zero gravity and weightlessness.

The program sponsored four flights last month in Chicago out of O’Hare International Airport. Davis, Fawcett and Newcomb flew with 57 other mathematics and science teachers from across the country who had also been accepted to participate in the program. Fawcett said he learned about the offering through his participation in the Space Foundation Institute courses offered this summer through Charles County Public Schools partnership with the National Space Foundation.

“We learned about the flights through the Space Foundation classes Charles County offers during the summer. Our instructors participated in the flight last year and showed us a video from their flight,” Fawcett said. Seeing and hearing their first hand experiences encouraged all three teachers to apply for the flight.

Program participants experienced zero-gravity flights, operated by the Zero Gravity Corporation, which are performed in a specially modified Boeing airplane approved by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). The flights are conducted in dedicated airspace that ranges from 100 miles long by 10 miles wide. Specially trained pilots fly the airplane in a series of maneuvers called parabolas, or arcs, between the altitudes of 24,000 and 32,000 feet.

At the beginning of each parabola, the airplane climbs at a 45-degree angle. At the “top” of the parabola, the aircraft is “pushed over” into a controlled descent that creates a temporary zero-gravity environment. The flights include approximately 15 parabolas ranging from low-gravity environments typical of the moon or Mars to complete weightlessness. At the end of each “weightless” period, which lasts about 30 seconds, the airplane is gradually pulled out of the descent, reestablishing a more normal gravity environment inside the plane.

Davis said participants attended training sessions to introduce them to the experience and were given special flight suits, which they were able to keep. Davis also said participants were required to

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**“... It was very difficult to control our movements and we hit the ceiling numerous times. One second you are stuck to the floor and the next, you are weightlessly floating,”**

**-- Jennifer L. Davis**

Benjamin Stoddert Middle School Science Teacher

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watch a security video, which made her nervous to the point where she “almost chickened out.” She agreed with Fawcett that the zero gravity experience is unlike anything she has ever experienced before.

“During zero gravity, we were able to float freely around our flying zone. It was very difficult to control our movements and we hit the ceiling numerous times. One second you are stuck to the floor and the next, you are weightlessly floating,” Davis added.

All three teachers said they have shared their experience with their students and would definitely recommend the program to other mathematics and science teachers.

Newcomb said his students saw the excitement he brought back to the classroom from his experience through pictures. His students at Westlake had “many questions for me and were eager to hear about what happened. Most of what I will incorporate into my lessons focuses on the concept of mass versus weight and Newton’s Laws of Motion,” Newcomb said.

He has also encouraged fellow staff members to apply for the program. “I have already been talking it up to teachers at my school! The entire experience was amazing... from the training to the actual flight. It gives teachers the ability to show concepts like weight and mass in a real-world application,” Newcomb said.

Teachers apply for acceptance in the program, which is geared toward middle and high school mathematics and science teachers. The program is also offered at no cost to participants and a maximum of 60 teachers are chosen per flight

In 2006, Zero Gravity Corporation partnered with Northrop Grumman in 2006 to offer the weightless flight experience to teachers. The flights are open to the public and cost about \$4,950 per seat.

For more information about the program, visit [www.northrop-grumman.com/teachers](http://www.northrop-grumman.com/teachers).



**Left photo: Jennifer L. Davis, left, a Benjamin Stoddert Middle School science teacher, experiences zero gravity with Westlake High School science teacher Charles “CJ” Newcomb, right, aboard a zero-gravity flight Oct. 21 sponsored by Northrop Grumman and the Zero Gravity Corporation.**



**Right photo: Henry E. Lackey High School science teacher Thomas Fawcett experiences what it feels like to be in space aboard a zero-gravity flight on Oct. 21.**

## Personnel

Apply for positions at [www.cchoe.com/hur](http://www.cchoe.com/hur), or in writing to the personnel office. Positions are open until filled unless otherwise noted. All teaching positions require a bachelor's degree and MSDE certification requirements.

### Job openings

**Coordinator of Autism Services** – Jesse L. Starkey Administration Building, 12-month position. Candidates must have three years of experience with autism at the system level and must be pursuing a master's degree.

**Instructional Specialist** – Location(s) to be determined; 10-month position.

**Certified school psychologist** – Jesse L. Starkey Administration Building, 10.5-month position. Candidates must be eligible for MSDE certification.

**Behavior Specialist, support** – Openings at all levels; 10-month position.

**Behavior Specialist, certificated** – Openings at all levels; 10-month position.

**Meeting in the Middle Instructional Assistant** – Matthew Henson Middle School, 10-month position. Apply by Nov. 21.

**Student Data Accounting Clerk** – Robert D. Stethem Educational Center, 12-month position. Apply by Nov. 21.

**Special Education Teacher** – General Smallwood Middle School; 10-month position.

**Fifth-grade teacher** – William A. Diggs Elementary School; 10-month position.

**Third-grade teacher** – William A. Diggs Elementary School; 10-month position.

**Kindergarten Teacher** – Dr. Gustavus Brown Elementary School.

**Language Arts Teacher** – Robert D. Stethem Educational Center; 10-month position.

**Special Education Teachers** – Elementary School level; 10-month positions.

**Special Education Teacher for Science** – La Plata High School; 10-month position.

**Special Education Teachers for Inclusion and Resource** – Future high school openings; 10-month positions.

**Special Education Teacher of the Emotionally Disturbed** – High-school level; 10-month position.

**Special Education Teacher for Inclusion** – High-school level; 10-month position.

**Life Skills Teachers for Severe and Profound** – William A. Diggs Elementary and Henry E. Lackey High schools; 10-month positions.

**NJROTC Instructor** – Westlake High School; 10-month position.

**IEP Facilitators** – Openings at middle-school level; 10-month positions.

**Special Education Teacher** – Robert D. Stethem Educational Center; 10-month position.

**Mathematics Teacher** – Mattawoman Middle School; 10-month position.

### Extra pay positions

**Westlake High School** has the following opening:

- Head varsity tennis coach

Call Principal Chrystal Benson, 301-753-1758, to apply.

### Payroll announcements

Employees who receive actual paychecks will receive a direct deposit authorization form and flyer with today's check. Payroll is encouraging employees to take advantage of direct deposit.

A pay date also falls during winter break, on Friday, Jan. 2, and checks for that date will be mailed Dec. 31 to home addresses on file with payroll. Direct deposit vouchers will be delivered to schools and centers on Monday, Jan. 5. Verify that your address is correct on your paycheck and your direct deposit voucher.

### Communications staff earn top awards

Charles County Public Schools communications staff received three awards from the Chesapeake Chapter of the National School Public Relations Association (CHESPR). The *School News* newsletter received an Award of Merit; a Channel 96 Rain Gardens video program received an Award of Excellence; and an SAT/ACT Podcast received an Award of Excellence.

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Charles County Public Schools  
301-932-6610  
301-934-7220  
Fax: 301-932-6651

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La Plata, Maryland 20646  
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