

# Proof Positive

March 17, 2020  
Board of Trustees Meeting



## Lexington High School student earns prestigious study abroad scholarship

Lexington High School Junior Camille L. Free recently ordered her first passport ahead of a 10-day trip to Ecuador planned for this summer. The 16 year old is one of only 24 students from across the country who earned the prestigious Bertie Green Junior Travel Award from the

American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese. Her love of foreign language began when she was in third grade at Pleasant Hill Elementary School.

“Though I wasn’t in a language immersion program, I loved learning Spanish and studying the cultures of different people and countries,” said Free.

By high school, she was taking advanced Spanish classes and is almost fluent in the world’s fourth most spoken language.

“But to me, it’s not just about speaking another language. My language classes have opened my eyes and my perspectives while helping me gain a global mindset,” said Free.

In mid-July, Free will travel with AATSP on a fully funded trip during which the students will visit historic and popular spots in Quito, Ecuador, before completing a service project at an orphanage. The scholarship is given

to outstanding high school juniors who are members of their school’s chapter of Sociedad Honoraria Hispánica, a Spanish honors society. Free is the LHS chapter’s vice president and the only student from South Carolina to earn the scholarship.

“I’m so excited about this opportunity. I know it will improve my language skills and increase my vocabulary, especially in conversational Spanish. Plus, I’ll be able to see some amazing and beautiful places, and meet some new people. The trip will be a catalyst for my learning, for sure,” Free said.

Free plans to continue using her dual language skills in college and her future career.

“I know I want to study medicine, maybe find a career in neurology or orthopedics. And being able to speak Spanish will certainly help me in those fields.”

Free focused her scholarship application on globalized health care and is considering colleges that have both strong Spanish and health care programs. She credits her language teachers at LHS, Anahi Anaya and Jessica Kelly, for strongly encouraging her to broaden her experiences.

“I’m sure this travel abroad experience will make a huge impact on my life and spark a passion for traveling to other parts of the world in the future,” said Free. “I would not have been able to have this opportunity without this AATSP scholarship and the support of my teachers and family. I’m truly grateful.”

# High school musicians invited to perform at state conference

Two Lexington County School District One bands performed at the 2020 South Carolina Music Educators Association Professional Development Conference in February. The Pelion High School “4:00” Jazz Big Band as well as the White Knoll High School Percussion Ensemble were selected to perform at the prestigious event, an honor only a handful of bands across the state are chosen for each year.



The Pelion High School “4:00” Jazz Big Band, the only jazz group selected, performed to a standing-room-only crowd.

“It was an incredible performance. These students display no fear when performing, and the joy in their music is always evident,” said Otto J. Hage, band director.

The “4:00” Jazz Big Band includes PHS’s Grayson Z. Baker, Cameron M. Blakely, Courtney D. Bouknight, Alexis B. (Lexi) Briggs, Bradley N. Creech, A. Javier De La Luz Aquino, Sydney V. Green, Steven J. Gunter, Anthony M. Holm, Emily M. Iglar, Andrew D. Jeffcoat, Ashton I. Kirk, Dawn I. (Belle) Kneece, Donald M. (Donnie) Leaden, Sydnie R. Meeks, Megan H. Pauline, Johanna Clare Poole, Thelesie E. Post, Stacy L. Ricard, Brooke H. Riley, Hunter J. Rowe, Johnny R. (Trey) Sanders, Bailey E. Sharpe, W. Ethan Summers, Jose Torres and Rachel L. Walters.

WKHS Percussion Ensemble Associate Band Director Benjamin J. Berry says the group impressively performed pieces comparable to a collegiate-level repertoire.

“Our students prepared for this performance all semester, working many hours after school for months to develop the program and improve their skills to assure it was the highest level of performance possible,” said Berry.

The Percussion Ensemble includes WKHS’s Jamison E. Belec, George H. (Jack) Bernard, Elijah F. Blas, Braedyn L. Boyd, Michael T. Bush, Elijah D. Caligiuri, Briana T. Canty-Wright, Shannon K. Davis, Cane C. Elrod, O. Preston Hage, Jabin D. Joyner, Hannah F. Lowman, Jonathan G. Menie, Annah L. Rast, Jasmine M. Rhodes, Elijah J. Skinner, Matthew Andrew Jason (A.J.) St. John, Adam W. Surak, Samuel D. Walburn and Olivia J. Whitfield, as well as Carolina Springs Middle School’s Hayden E. Harbaugh and White Knoll Middle School’s Brayden B. Dulin.





# Undefeated season culminates with conference championship for CSMS

On February 12, the Carolina Springs Middle School Lady Huskies basketball team won the Lexington 10 Conference championship, culminating an undefeated season. The Lady Huskies earned the championship title with a 47–18 victory over Gilbert Middle School. The team finished the season 17–0. Adriana Henderson led the Huskies with 21 points.

“These ladies played with heart and good sportsmanship all season, while remaining humble and striving to build each other up and make each other better,” says Coach Rebecca D.U. Cagle.

Congratulations to Coaches Cagle, Mary Anne Deal, Julie C. Monaco, and D. Michelle Vestal as well as CSMS players Sydni R. Anderson, Dericka M. Blockett, Vanessa N. Borrero Garcia, Alyric C.D. Buckner, Maddyn S. Campbell, Neveah K.K. Cleveland, Shaelyn K. Hayes, Adriana M. Henderson, Bethany L. Hooks, Gracie M. Johnson, M. Riley Knight, Cynthia Morales Rojas, Armoni M. Peterson, Karlee E. Phelps, Aniya M. Roberts, and Bryonna M.C. Watkins.

# Overtime win earns Lexington Middle boys' basketball team conference title

The Lexington Middle School boys' basketball team defeated White Knoll Middle School to win the Lexington 10 Championship, finishing the season with a 13–4 record. Coach Michael Stratton says the players embodied the season's motto “Finish Strong” by overcoming adversity throughout the season.

“Even in the championship game, when the LMS Wildcats were down by five points with two minutes to go in the game, the players worked together as a team. They came back, tied it up, sent the game into overtime and, ultimately, won the game 46–43,” says Stratton.

Congratulations to Coaches Stratton, Jordan Hiller and Matt Thompson, and LMS players Jordan L. Buggs-Davis, Manning S. Burgess, William M. (Will) Burgess, Yasir O. Cromer, Alex J. (AJ) Franklin, Brock B. Godfrey, Forrest C. Green, Beau D. Hollins, Cooper B. Jones, Griffin C. Lindler, William P. (Billy) Mistretta, Daksh D. Patil, Pascal W. (Pac) Pitts, Myles A. Proffitt, Bryson C. Raszewski, Colby G. Reynolds and Benjamin D. (Ben) Willett, as well as Managers Corin B. Crawford and Isaiah L. Smith.





## CyberPatriot Team wins state title, fifth in national competition

Imagine you're working for a small company and tasked with finding and repairing cybersecurity vulnerabilities in the virtual operating systems. Now imagine you're still in high school. That challenge is exactly what eight Lexington Technology Center students faced in the Air Force Association's National Youth Cyber Defense Competition. LTC's CyberPatriot Team successfully completed the competition in February, earning fifth in the nation and first in South Carolina.

More than 6,700 middle and high school teams from across the nation competed for a chance to advance to the national competition in Maryland. In its inaugural year, LTC's CyberPatriot Team consists of students from Gilbert, River Bluff and Lexington high schools. Most of the students take Advanced Placement computer science, as well as computer programming and IT courses at LTC or their home schools.

STEM educator Elizabeth M. Waller leads the team of students including Daniel Q. Baker (RBHS), Andrew C. Bouknight (GHS), Mia Z. Dia (LHS), Braden M. Kroll (RBHS), Lillian R. (Lily) Lamb (LHS), Jared J. Maddison (RBHS), Caleb R. Merckle (GHS) and Ritvik Verma (LHS).

## Two Lexington School District One athletes named Players of the Year

Two Lexington County School District One student athletes were named Players of the Year by the South Carolina Coaches Association of Women's Sports. The association honored Lexington High School golfer Karlee M. Vardas as well as River Bluff High School tennis player Jesse L. Hollins during its annual banquet in February.

Vardas, a junior at LHS, began playing golf six years ago. She won the Class 5A individual state title this year and committed to play for Georgia Southern University after graduation. She was also named the High School Sports Report's 5A Player of the Year.

"My favorite aspect of golf is you never have the same shot twice. You have to expect the unexpected," says Vardas. "Plus I am able to meet new people from across the world."

Hollins, a senior at RBHS, joined the school's tennis team last year after moving to South Carolina from Buffalo, New York. In addition to serving as one of the leaders of the Gator's 2019 5A state championship team, Hollins went 27-0 and won the 4A/5A individual state title. She was also named the High School Sports Report's Miss Tennis.

"I love the competitiveness of the sport. It is what drives me to want to improve," says Hollins. "Tennis has taught me independence, the importance of a positive mindset, patience and many other traits that have impacted me as a student."

Hollins committed to play tennis at Coastal Carolina University in the fall.





## 22 Lexington District One students chosen for SCMEA Elementary Honor Choir

The 2020 South Carolina Elementary Honor Choir includes 22 students from eight schools in Lexington County School District One. The fourth through sixth grade students auditioned and were selected to join the honor choir which performs annually at the South Carolina Music Educators Association's Professional Development Conference.

Honor choir members from within our district include the following students: Deerfield Elementary School's Zoe E. Ahl; Lexington Elementary School's Amilya R. Lux; Lake Murray Elementary School's Hannah K. Dewease, Sullivan R. Sease; Midway Elementary School's Lillian G. Holladay, Taryn A. Kean, Prithika Majumdar, George W. Nesmith, Annabel E. Panarello; New Providence Elementary School's Sophia G. Bates, Noel E. Johnson, Alexandra A. Mitchell, Prisha Sinha, Emma Blair Stenstrom, Camila Urresta; Pleasant Hill Elementary School's Helena B. Mewbourn, La'Yana L. Wideman; Rocky Creek Elementary School's Ella B. Samford; and White Knoll Elementary School's Ty'lasia A. Kitt, Oliver K. Logsdon, Kathleen M. Schnabel, Kinli E. Solomon.

## Pelion Middle Teacher Wins Professional Development Scholarship

Pelion Middle School Educator Laura D. Beckham earned a prestigious scholarship from the Palmetto State Teachers Association to continue her education. Beckham is one of just seven teachers to receive the 2020 Dr. Elizabeth Gressette Professional Development Scholarship. Gressette, a former kindergarten teacher, was the founding member of PSTA in 1976.

To apply for the scholarship, applicants must be a PSTA member for at least three years and currently enrolled in a higher education program. PSTA, the largest professional education association for teachers in the state, provides benefits to members throughout their careers.

Beckham will be recognized during PSTA's annual meeting on March 28 in Charleston, South Carolina. She receives a \$1,500 scholarship to complete her education specialist in literacy degree at Converse College.

In her fifteenth year in education in Lexington County School District One, Beckham currently serves as a digital learning coach at PMS.

"In my role, I support our teachers and students in leveraging technology in transformative ways in their classrooms," says Beckham. "Through my coursework, I am learning more strategies which I can use to support those efforts while also becoming a more well-rounded instructional coach."

Before joining the PMS staff in 2012, Beckham worked as a social studies teacher for seven years at White Knoll Middle School.





## Counseling program shines at Pelion Middle School

The Palmetto State School Counselor Association recently recognized Pelion Middle School’s principal and director of counseling for professional excellence. Principal Kailanya “Kai” Brailey was named the 2020 School Counselor Advocate of the Year and Director of Counseling Clayton W. Henke was honored as the 2020 Middle School Counselor of the Year.

PSSCA is a statewide nonprofit organization that works to advance the profession of school counseling by assisting South Carolina school counselors with guiding their students toward academic achievement, career planning and social/emotional development.

The Counselor Advocate of the Year award recognizes professionals who support school counseling programs in a way that positively impacts counselors and their students at the local, state or national level. Brailey says she believes school counselors are most effective when engaged with students and not encumbered with duties such as testing. She works to ensure staffing to meet the needs of students, includes counselors in the school leadership team and secures funding for professional development opportunities for the counselors.

“Our counselors provide our students with layers of support in which they are seen, heard and provided with opportunities to pursue the best versions of themselves,” says Brailey. “Our counselors serve as a powerful force in our work toward academic achievement, social behavior and wellness.”

The School Counselor of the Year award recognizes professionals who demonstrate their leadership by executing a comprehensive school counseling program which impacts students, the community and other stakeholders.

Henke, who is in his eleventh year as a school counselor, established a system of support throughout the PMS counseling department which provides each student with an advocate.

“Before starting as a school counselor, I was a police officer. I loved my work and giving back to the community, but I felt like I was always too late to make a difference,” says Henke. “So, I entered the field with the hopes that I could have a positive, proactive impact instead of always responding. I really do feel like we are making differences in students’ lives.”

## Teacher honored for improving financial literacy among students



South Carolina Treasurer Curtis Loftis recognized Lexington Technology Center Educator Randall D. Scott as the South Carolina Financial Literacy Master Teacher Program’s Educator of the Month for February. The program provides incentives to K–12 teachers who are experts in the area of financial literacy to teach professional development workshops to other educators in their schools and districts. Participating teachers gain access to specialized training and financial literacy curriculum resources that better enable them to promote financial literacy education.

“We know that financial literacy is an important component of personal financial wellness, and we are passionate about recognizing educators such as Scott who are successfully sharing these important life skills with students,” Treasurer Loftis said. “His experience in the banking and finance industry ignited a passion in him to pursue a career in education so he could help prepare future generations to make better financial decisions.”

Before becoming the leader of LTC’s Personal Finance Program in 2011, Scott spent eight years in the financial industry where he worked as a personal banker and branch manager. The Personal Finance Program started with 16 students in 2011 and has grown to serve nearly 170 students.

“I’m excited to be part of the effort to train more educators to teach personal finance so we can continue to grow the program and serve more students,” Scott said.

LTC was recognized nationally as a Blue Star School by the W!SE Financial Literacy Certification Program, with students achieving an 80% pass rate on the Financial Literacy Certification Test each year since 2012.



## Central Services professional honored for supporting school libraries

On March 6, Lexington County School District One's Coordinator of Reading and Language Arts Dr. Erica K. Bissell was recognized as the 2020 South Carolina Association of School Librarians (SCASL) Administrator of the Year. First presented in 1979, the award recognizes a school administrator who has made a sustained contribution toward furthering the role of the library media center.

More than two dozen librarians from across the district collaborated to nominate Bissell for this prestigious award, citing that, "In three short years, Bissell has helped support a positive change of our profession within our district in every aspect from collaboration to funding. Librarians in our district feel recognized as valued professionals, thanks to Dr. Bissell's encouragement and advocacy on our behalf. Her enthusiasm is contagious, which transfers to the library programs in our individual schools and, ultimately, the impact our libraries have on student learning."

Bissell oversees curriculum, instruction and assessment for literacy. She also supervises literacy coaches and school librarians at the elementary, middle and high school levels, and provides professional learning opportunities for administrators and teachers. For the past five years, she also coordinated the district's annual Summer Reading Camp.

"As the hub of the school, libraries provide a safe space for students to create, share and grow," says Bissell. "I support librarians in developing themselves as leaders, advocates and partners within the school community. It is my hope to build on each librarian's strengths so that he or she can continue to grow as a literacy leader."



## Pelion High band director receives national recognition for teaching

Pelion High School's Band Director Otto J. Hage received the Citation of Excellence for Outstanding Jazz Education from the National Band Association. Hage was recognized during the 2020 South Carolina Music Educators Association's Professional Development Conference in early February.

The award honors exceptional jazz band directors whose ensembles boast a history of distinguished accomplishments as well as educators who've made significant contributions to the field of jazz education.

"Music is a language that resonates with a person's soul," says Hage. "I can't think of a better way to shape the lives of our young people than by enriching their minds and, more importantly, their souls."

This is Hage's third Citation of Excellence from the National Band Association.



# Cooking up recognition for school lunches

The February edition of *Lunchroom Inspiration*, a national school food service magazine, featured the work of several members of the Lexington District One Food Service and Nutrition team. Director Sally Nicholson and 11 staff members worked with the School Nutrition Association, U.S. Schools Cook!, registered dietitians and three chefs to create, test and submit several recipes to the magazine. All recipes met USDA guidelines, could be extended to 50 servings and, most importantly, were taste-tested and approved by students.

Staff members who participated in the project included Katherine M. (Katie) Anderson, Jadith C. Carswell, Danielle L. Dillion, Kimberly A. Guertin, Judy H. Knight, A. Paige Lawson, Paige H. Porter, Heidi L. Storey, L. Ashley Summers, DeAnna C. Weed and Rejeana K. Whitfield.



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The district will use the grievance procedures set forth in policy to process complaints based on alleged violations of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; the Age Discrimination Act of 1975; the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967; the Equal Pay Act of 1963; the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008; and Titles I and II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

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