



FOUNDATION *for* SPRINGFIELD
PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Celebrate SPS

An evening honoring public
education in our community!

Presenting Sponsor:



NABHOLZ

Foundation for Springfield Public Schools

The Foundation for Springfield Public Schools (FSPS) began in 1990, as a volunteer organization to provide financial resources for educational enrichment beyond the daily operational needs of the school district.

Through our programs like the Back to School grant program, scholarships, #supportSPS peer to peer fundraising and our Pick-a-Project platform, the FSPS provides financial support to teachers and students across the district.

The FSPS is governed by a 21-person board of directors, employs two full-time employees and one part-time employee. To date, the FSPS has awarded over \$20 million to Springfield Public Schools and currently manages 141 funds and scholarships.

The FSPS relies on community support to continue to provide resources to promote educational excellence in the classroom.

To learn more about the FSPS or to make a contribution to support our schools, visit supportSPS.org

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How Celebrate SPS Began

Celebrate SPS first took place in 1994. It was known as the Teacher Appreciation Banquet and was sponsored by the Foundation for Springfield Public Schools, Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce, the Springfield Council of PTA's and spear-headed by David Harrison. The event recognized educators for their continued commitment to our kids and our community. The whole idea behind this evening of celebration and thanks came from the realization that the community and our educators need to come together.

For 30 years, educators have been honored, supported and thanked through the banquet. Without the support of our whole community, the Celebrate SPS Banquet would not be possible. Without the amazing educators and staff in our district, there would be no need for this event.

A Message from David Harrison...

"In 1994 when I asked Nancy Graff to help me create this event, my goal was to hold at least 13 annual banquets so that children starting kindergarten that year would hear how much their teachers are respected every year of their school careers. I was your emcee for the first ten years and now others have continued the tradition through today. I'm proud of you all and feel blessed to live in a community where so many incredible educators and staff work with our children. Thank you for all you do."

- David Harrison

Advocate for Education, Matthew Simpson

Matthew "Matt" Simpson is a past FSPS board president, a longtime donor and supporter of public education in our community. He has been one of the Foundation's biggest cheerleaders and constantly advocates for Springfield Public Schools.



Matt is the Chief Research and Governmental Affairs Officer for Ozarks Technical Community College, husband to Teresa, father of two boys and a 2003 graduate from Kickapoo High School. In addition, Matt serves as a Zone 4 Councilman and Mayor Pro Tem for the City of Springfield.

The Advocate for Education is someone who has given both financial support to Springfield Public Schools through the Foundation and made a time commitment of significant impact.



Rookie of the Year

Alexis Cooper, Williams Elementary



Alexis is a 5th grade educator at Williams Elementary. She has had a positive impact on the culture in the building by building relationships with students, families and the Williams team.

She works hard to help her students succeed. She spends time looking at standards, building students' confidence about what they can do and supports them throughout the lesson. She meets with students 1-1 and in small groups to support them if they are struggling. Through this intentionality, her students are confident in what they are doing because they know with her help they'll be successful.

The Rookie of the Year award was established in honor of Malori McGhee, an outstanding beginning teacher who tragically lost her life during her first year. The purpose of this award is to honor a beginning teacher (first through third year) who demonstrates and exemplifies the skill of building meaningful connections with students, connects students to their learning, collaborates with peers and grows their skillset and capacity to exemplary levels, and believes that relationships and education are the keys to opening opportunities now and in the future.

Linda Luke Librarian of the Year Jill Norman, Cowden Elementary

The Linda Luke Librarian of the Year Award was established in 1997 by the family and friends of the late Linda Luke, a librarian at Hickory Hills and Disney Elementary schools at the time of her death.



This year, the Linda Luke Librarian of the year is library media specialist at Cowden Elementary, Jill Norman.

“Years ago, this dynamic teacher sparked all kinds of interest in literacy and now she is working in the library at Cowden.” said an individual that nominated Norman. “Jill Norman is a memorable teacher who challenges your thinking and pours herself into everything that surrounds her.”

The Linda Luke Award is designed to recognize librarians who are carrying out Linda's legacy of dedication and commitment to excellence. It is given out each year to one librarian in the district who makes an outstanding, positive impact on students. The award includes a \$1,000 cash prize to the librarian chosen.

Counselor of the Year

Phil Jones, Weller Elementary



Phil Jones is the Springfield Public Schools Counselor of the Year.

Weller Elementary School's counselor does whatever it takes.

And on April 4, SPS leaders celebrated his spirit of service and care with a special visit during an all staff meeting at Weller Elementary.

In front of the Weller team, director of Counseling Services Alison Roffers read accolades from nomination forms for Mr. Jones.

"If you were to follow Phil Jones through his day as he navigates response after response, the depth of compassion you would see, it would leave you wondering how deep could one person's well really run?" she read. "His skillset not only supported our students, but also supported our staff in building their own trauma-informed toolbox."

Prior to working as a school counselor at Weller, Jones was an art teacher at York and Bissett elementary schools. In 2023-2024, he will serve as Reed Academy's school counselor.

Turner Reading Award Recipients

The Turner Reading Award fund was established in 2002 by the Turner Family. The purpose of this award is to recognize five outstanding reading teachers who demonstrate excellence in teaching reading and instills a love of learning to read in children.

This year, the five recipients are:



Bobbi Beard, Weller Elementary

Bobbi has spent 37 years in education, 16 of those with SPS. Her greatest influence to become a teacher was her mother, an educator herself. Bobbi pursued a degree in education

from Missouri State University because she loved learning and wanted to share that experience with other learners.

Jill Norman, Cowden Elementary

Jill received her bachelors degree from Missouri State University and her masters from William Woods University. She started her career in education 22 years ago in Springfield Public Schools.



"If I could tell myself something as a new teachers it would be to never run with the crowd or accept 'good enough' as a standard. Always look for ways to be more innovative, more engaging, and more student-centered than the norm."

Turner Reading Award Recipients



Krista Payne, Disney Elementary

Krista always knew she wanted to get into teaching because she loved working with children. After receiving her bachelor and masters degree from Missouri State University,

she began her teaching career at Horace Mann (6 years) and then moved to Disney (12 years).

"Nothing is more important than building relationships with students. Never underestimate the power of positive, encouraging words"

Jodi Pitts, Central High

After received her BA in English Literacy from Missouri State University before deciding to pursue a certificate in teaching. Since then, she has been in education for 23 years and with SPS for 10 years.



"As a new teacher, I would have loved to know how fast it would all go. I would tell myself to look for the good and enjoy each day."



Claire Spence, Glendale High

Claire's greatest influence to become a teacher was her 2nd grade reading teacher, Mrs. Coday. "She taught me a love for reading and allowed me to work ahead of my other classmates.

I flourished as a reader that year, and have never forgotten how much she cared about me. I take that experience to the students whom I teach." (14 years with SPS)

Claire received her undergraduate degree in English and a Masters of Arts in Teaching from Austin College.

Corporate Partner of the Year

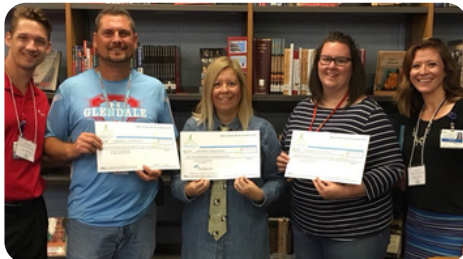
CoxHealth

The Corporate Partner of the Year is an organization that has provided significant financial support to Springfield Public Schools through the Foundation and made a time commitment of significant impact.



"CoxHealth is a long-time community partner to the Foundation! Through their support of our Back to School grant program, they have supported countless students, providing opportunities in science and health. We are so grateful to have organizations like CoxHealth!" said executive director Natalie Murdock.

CoxHealth has supported the Foundation for Springfield Public Schools since our inception through donations and by providing volunteers for events like Grant Delivery Day.



2022-2023 Teacher of the Year & Keynote Speaker **Nathan Cook, Parkview High**



Nathan is the choir director at Parkview High School and is a proud product of Springfield Public Schools, having attended Horace Mann Elementary, Carver Middle School, and Kickapoo High School. Throughout his time as a student at SPS, Nathan was inspired by phenomenal

teachers who cared for and challenged him to grow. He saw the unique opportunity a teacher has to make a positive difference in the life of a student, which led to his pursuit of music education.

Nathan attended the University of Arkansas, where he earned a Bachelor's Degree in Music Education, with an emphasis in Choral Conducting. He student taught in Springfield at Parkview High School, and then traveled across the world to teach music at Grace International School in Chiang Mai, Thailand where he founded and conducted the Grace Children's Choir and the Grace Community Choir. Nathan later continued his study of choral conducting in Vancouver, Canada at the University of British Columbia and received his Master's Degree in Choral Conducting from Missouri State University. At Parkview since 2016, Nathan directs 5 choirs, teaches AP music theory, and co-developed the first high school musical theatre course in SW Missouri. Nathan is active as a clinician, music director, and accompanist in the area.

Cook shared, "A teacher must be an innovative includer; diligently and creatively working to build unity within a classroom. By loving one another and by pursuing excellence in our classrooms, we allow our students the opportunity to learn to do the same."

2023-2024 Teacher of the Year Finalists

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Josh Cantrell, Central High

Josh decided to become a teacher to make a difference and be an active part in the lives of young people. His father was one of the greatest teachers he knew. He was able to see the positive impact that he had on his students and school community.

He received his bachelors of science in English education from Missouri State University. A masters of education in media from Drury University and is currently pursuing his PhD in film studies from Angelia Ruskin University, Cambridge England. He has been teaching in SPS for 10 years.

Robin Davidson, Wanda Gray

Robin decided to become a teacher because of his love for children. He loves the hope and promise just waiting to blossom in every child. What a noble calling to help a child tap into their potential. His faith and family have instilled a sense of responsibility to use his strength and



talents in a venue that would impact and positively influence the people of his community. His desire is to leave those whom he encounters along the way better off because of their meeting.

He received his teaching degree from Drury University and has been teaching in SPS for 24 years.



Rachel Hoing, Sequiota Elementary

Rachel wanted to get into teaching because she always loved the "littles". Their curiosity, eagerness and wonder about the world around them made her want to help them create a safe and inviting place for them to learn.

She received her degrees from Evangel University, bachelors in early childhood education and a masters in literacy. Since graduating, she has spent her entire career in education at Springfield Public Schools (13 years).

Tiffany Lynch, Pipkin Middle

As a teenager, Tiffany knew she wanted to work with children in some capacity; however, she was not completely sure she wanted to be a teacher. After changing her college major several times, she decided on elementary education and special special education. It was during her first practicum in a special education classroom that she knew she had found her passion and purpose.



Tiffany received her Bachelor's Degree from Evangel University and her Master's Degree from Drury University. She has taught in SPS for 24 years – all of them at Pipkin Middle School.



Sam Shelton, Central High

After receiving his degree from Missouri State University, Sam started his 12-year career in education with SPS at Central High.

His greatest influence to become an educator was his wife, Ashley. "I was working as a contractor in 2008 when the "housing bubble" burst and the economy collapsed. Since there were no more houses being built (and I built houses) I had to make a lasting decision on how I would proceed. My wife had already been teaching for several years at this point. She convinced me to use my newly found unemployment to go back to school, get my teaching degree, and fulfill an idea I'd been tossing around for years."

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