Columbia Fund for Academic Excellence Awards

Columbia, MO—At 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 21, seven Columbia Public School District educators will be recognized as this year’s Columbia Fund for Academic Excellence honorees.

The honorees will be recognized at the annual Columbia Fund for Academic Excellence banquet, to be held at the University Club of MU in Columbia. Mr. Harold D. Logan, IBM executive and graduate of the Douglass High School Class of 1957, will bring remarks to the recipients and guests in attendance.

Since its inception in the 1979-80 school year, the Columbia Fund for Academic Excellence has served to recognize more than 250 educators in the Columbia Public School District. Each year, educators are selected from nominations submitted by parents and peers as outstanding educators. This year’s honorees and their respective categories are:

- **Outstanding Elementary Educator, Grades Pre-K–2**
  - Molly Welker
  - Parkade Elementary School 2nd grade teacher

- **Outstanding Elementary Educator, Grades 3–5**
  - Nicole Burks
  - Paxton Keeley Elementary School 4th grade teacher

- **Outstanding Middle School Educator**
  - Taylor Drennan
  - Gentry Middle School English and AVID teacher

- **Outstanding High School Educator**
  - Michelle Ebberts
  - Rock Bridge High School mathematics teacher

- **Outstanding Educator in a Specialized Area**
  - Anne Schoelz
  - Russell Boulevard Elementary School media specialist

- **Outstanding Beginning Teacher**
  - Dan Braun
  - Hickman High School learning specialist

- **Outstanding Administrator**
  - Dana Clippard
  - Deputy Superintendent

Honorees receive a $1,500 cash award and an engraved silver tray.

The fund began through the work of Ray and Jeanne Lewis, with an initial contribution and extensive fundraising efforts. The late Mr. Lewis was a local attorney and former Board of Education member. Mrs. Lewis is a former teacher and has actively served our community in a number of ways.

We believe that communities with the best schools win, and the fund has come to exemplify excellence in our schools and in the Columbia community. Thanks to the contributions and support from individuals, businesses, and organizations each year in the school district, Columbia’s best are recognized for their contributions to young people.