Columbia Public Schools

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News For Immediate Release

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Columbia Fund for Academic Excellence Awards Announced

Columbia, MO -- Seven Columbia Public School District educators have been selected as this year’s Columbia Fund for Academic Excellence honorees.

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 PreK-2**
Shaina Cox
Parkade Elementary School second grade teacher

**Outstanding Elementary Educator, Grades 3-5**
Matthew Kuensting
Grant Elementary School fifth grade teacher

**Outstanding Middle School Educator**
Brian York
West Middle School math teacher

**Outstanding High School Educator**
Amy McKenzie
Rock Bridge High School health teacher

**Outstanding Educator in a Specialized Area**
Sharon Salmons
Shepard Boulevard Elementary School media specialist

**Outstanding Beginning Teacher**
Nokomis LaTasha Tilford
Hickman High School learning specialist

**Outstanding Administrator**
Ryan Link
Rock Bridge Elementary School principal

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. The late Mrs. Lewis was a former teacher and 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.

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