BELCHER CREDITS COLUMBIA VOTERS WITH TRUST FOR CPS

The voters of Columbia once again put their faith in the Columbia Public School District, passing both the levy and bond issues that were on the April ballot. These measures will allow the district to, among many things, add back some previously cut positions, build a new elementary school and remove more trailers from the current elementary schools.

“What we are doing is all based on the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP),” said Chris Belcher, superintendent of the Columbia Public School District. “Everything is based on the planning we did, what the community said they wanted. The day after the levy passed we had a finance committee meeting, identifying the add-back positions for teachers and other staff. We had to cut 250 staff members in the last four years. We will add back probably 35 associated with the levy and 15 associated with growth.”

Most of those positions will be classroom teachers for the elementary and secondary levels for this fall. Additionally, $2 million from the levy will go toward instructional technology with the other $4 million marked to fill budget gaps from the state level.

“Each year we have had more and more stress entering into our system. When you cut 250 people and grow by 500 students - we are at that tipping point. This will start the teeter-totter back in the other direction,” said Belcher. “Next year, we will have a balanced budget. We might even come out a little ahead. The next year we will spend some balances down as we open Battle High School. After that, our growth and economy will have us in good shape.”

The bond issue passed by the voters will deal mostly with capacity issues, including trailers at the elementary schools.

“The bond issue was a great success. Step one of five to get rid of trailers at the elementary level. But we will not see indications of that for about 18 months because we cannot sell the bonds until 2014,” said Belcher. “The approval allows us to look for property, 32-plus acres south of west of town, for a new elementary school. Designs will be done to expand West Boulevard and Shepard Boulevard to get rid of the trailers there. We will start design on an early childhood center at Lange Middle School. The design phase will be about 18 months. Once the bonds sell, we will release bids.”

“The bond and levy issues for a large school district are a vote of trust. We are a quarter of a billion dollar business 2 years here. They trust their schools. Most parents say they have had good experiences with CPS, but 80 percent of voters do not have children in our schools. We have to make sure the whole community understands the value of education to them, not just parents. That is something we have done very well for three years.”

Belcher reiterated that the progress from the April bond issue will take some time to be visible progress, and another ballot issue will be before the public in two years.

“The bond issue is visionary. The next bond will come to them probably before they see much come out of the ground on this bond issue. We have been forthright that this is a big deal. We got over the big hurdle first. We knew this was a big one, a huge vote, maybe the biggest we have had in a long, long time.”

COLUMBIA FUND FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE WINNERS

Amy Watkins, in her fourth year as principal at Parkade Elementary School, was the winner of the Outstanding Administrator of the Year from CFAE, Columbia Fund for Academic Excellence (see list of winners inside).

“I was just absolutely in shock, especially because of the way they announced it,” Watkins said.

That way was via deception, as Watkins was “kidnapped” into a meeting while her entire school gathered in the gym.

“I heard music playing in the gym; poked my nose in and there was everybody, my husband, Dr. Belcher, everybody.”

Watkins is humbled by the recognition, but sees it as recognition of more than just herself. “I consider it recognition of everyone in this building. I work with the most amazing people and the most amazing kids. I feel fortunate to be principal here. I am very overwhelmed.”

Dolores Obergren teaches English at Hickman High School and was the winner of the Outstanding Beginning Teacher award. She says she has enjoyed her first year in the district, especially when compared to her previous employment.

“I love CPS,” Obergren said. “I taught at a district in San Antonio and they did not have the resources we have in this district. I am 100 percent supported by the administration.”

Obergren calls her teaching style “not traditional,” very outgoing and energetic, hopping around the classroom and rewarding her students with “silly” things like stickers. “You would be amazed how much a high school student loves stickers,” she said.

She sees results from her style. Her students respond, doing their work, and are motivated to do better. “I had a kid who hates writing revise a paper 12 times until it was perfect. Kids can be successful with the right motivation and the right environment.”

On winning the award and being surprised with the notification of her win, Obergren called it “probably the biggest surprise I have ever had. I was in shock, but it felt really nice. It felt like I was doing something right. It is nice to know I’m making a difference.”

Amy Watkins, principal at Parkade Elementary
COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
TEACH IN CHINA

A part of the Teach In China program, retired Columbia Public Schools teacher Cheryl Miller and three current CPS teachers spent over a month in China, starting July 2 of 2011. They were in the country to help China's teachers with their English skills.

Miller worked at Douglass High School for 20 years before retiring in 2010. Joining her on the China trip were Anita Chester, an ELL (English Language Learner) teacher at Hickman; Becca Stock, an ELL teacher at Smithton; and Becky Miller, an ELL teacher at Lange Middle School and Oakland Junior High School. They accompanied Miller on the trip and were able to stick together as a quartet throughout the teaching stops.

"When still in the states, we received lesson plan outlines, things to focus on that we could put together as we wished," Miller said. "The four of us got together, worked on lesson plans, strategies and activities and felt very prepared. One of the administrators told us ‘you are so special, our group from Columbia.’ They never had four teachers from an area before.”

At their teaching stops the Columbia quartet were teaching Chinese teachers. Over their five weeks in China they taught in Nan Jing, the capital of the Guangzhou province, and then in Tukon. They spent two weeks in each place, and were able to enjoy some time for sightseeing.

"We liked going out into the town, seeing the little shops and meeting people on the streets. Young kids, seven-eight year olds, would come up and say ‘hello, hello.’ The youth speak much better English than the older people do. They are teaching English in third grade now.”

"We went to Beijing, saw the forbidden city and the Olympic stadium area. We were able to take a 12-hour night train from Beijing to Xian to see the terra cotta soldiers, which was an incredible thing to see. It was vast, huge.”

Miller and her three CPS cohorts saw their teachers pupils open up as they worked together. One activity that helped was having the students act out fairy tales, both English and Chinese fairy tales.

"China is bursting into the 21st century like a bit of hell. They have a growing middle class. It was just amazing. There were so many contrasts. You would see 20-story high-rises and right in front there would be what looked like small fishing huts with a tile roof. There is a push to the future and then older people that were living back in the 1940s and 50s. They are moving forward. More people should get a true perspective on how China is moving forward so rapidly. We have so many misconceptions about China and China has so many misconceptions about the U.S. The people there are so warm and welcoming.”

2010 BOND PROGRESS UPDATE

The citizens of Columbia passed a bond and levy issue in April, but the district’s 2010 voter-approved bond continues to fund improvements and additions across the district.

Progress on Battle High School continues at a rapid pace, as work is now being done on both the inside and outside of the building. Inside work includes getting the building sealed so that finishing work can start, and the outside efforts will see concrete and asphalt work this summer on parking lots and other items.

Battle is over 70 percent completed, with around $41 million of its $63.6 million construction budget spent. The total budget, including fixtures, technology and everything else, is $75.9 million.

"It is definitely on schedule,” said Nick Boren, the district’s deputy superintendent. "We’re making great progress and are on schedule for the August 2013 opening." Boren also said that small groups have been touring the Battle site, seeing it as it develops.

The gyms at Hickman and Rock Bridge high schools are also moving along, with block work being done at both sites. The Rock Bridge gym will be under roof by mid-August and work at Hickman will be far enough along by late August that the bleachers at the football/soccer field will be ready for use.

HVAC and window work continues at Grant, Lee, Midway Heights, Ridgeway and Two Mile Prairie elementary schools, with installation at all schools slated to begin May 29.

The district is also starting preliminary work on two new elementary schools. Advertisements were placed asking for proposals for sites, preferably on the southwest side of town for one school, and the district hopes to close on land for a second school near Battle High School by the summer.

NEW BOARD MEMBER, PAUL CUSHING

Paul Cushing is the newest member of the Board of Education, and once he decided to run, the research he did changed his mind on one of the biggest issues facing the district.

"The bond and levy were really the impetus for my running,” Cushing said. "I was against them when I jumped into the ring. Then I went to the schools and attended the meetings. I talked to teachers, parents and administrators. I could then see that there was a problem with a lack of space and the bond would help with that. The levy was needed to add back some of the positions that had been cut." Cushing, a Columbia resident of about 11 years who describes himself as a tech person, also noted that there was no line item in the budget to replace aging computer hardware, another item addressed by the April ballot initiatives.

"What a wonderful job this district is doing. I knew nothing about schools about two months ago, but now I see what a great job everybody is doing, from the top down. They work long hours and are amazing.”
# Partners in Education: Partner Anniversaries

## 10 Years: Hy-Vee Grocery with Paxton Keeley and Fairview Elementary Schools

The West Broadway Hy-Vee grocery store collaborates with both Paxton Keeley and Fairview elementary schools, a PIE relationship that is celebrating its tenth anniversary.

Fairview's principal Diana DeMoss loves the support the school receives from Hy-Vee. "They supply us with food donations for several events throughout the year. We have a monthly group of dads that get together and have "Dad's With Dads." Hy-Vee provides the donuts, coffee, juice and milk for those events. We also have walking to school events and they donate items such as bagels, fruit, juice and milk. They have been amazing - always willing to give their support. Occasionally they will offer events like coloring contests. They are so open and willing to do anything. It is a really good partnership."

Elaine Hassemer, Paxton Keeley's principal, saw fruits from their relationship with Hy-Vee right from the store's creation. "They are an outstanding partner, super supportive. To start, they were responsible for the stoplight at the corner when they moved in. It was amazing that they were able to do that and through the years they have been very supportive, helping in any way they can with our fundraisers and carnivals. They have displayed student artwork in the store, giving them an audience. We are also getting ready to work together on a garden. They have been supportive in many things, especially if we have needs for children. They have provided opportunities for us to take kids over for field trips. They are very supportive of the community and always willing to do whatever they can."

## 10 Years: Missouri Symphony Society with Lee Elementary School

Lee Elementary School has been a Partner in Education with the Missouri Symphony Society for 10 years. Their partnership allows for Lee students and family to partake in the society's summer presentations.

"We are offered many chances for our students, faculty and staff to have free tickets to some of their events," said Karen Burger, principal at Lee. "That allows students the chance to experience the symphony at the theatre. They had three or four events opened up to families. And we anticipate even more involvement with the symphony once they get everything worked out with the university taking it over."

Carole Sue DeLaitre, president of the Missouri Symphony Society, agreed that access was the key in the relationship between her group and Lee. "For a number of years, the partnership involved the use of the Missouri Theatre. Lee was able to hold many events in the theater and it also included tickets to performances, which we have continued to do. We provide tickets, particularly to our family series shows, for Lee families. Also, there are a considerable number of Lee students who participate in our orchestra program. The primary relationship is to offer opportunities to Lee families to share in the fine music produced by the Missouri Symphony Orchestra and Conservatory ensemble."

## 15 Years: Food Bank for Central & Northeast Missouri with Columbia Public School District

The district as a whole is celebrating 15 years as a Partner in Education with the Food Bank for Central and Northeast Missouri. The Food Bank's executive director, Peggy Kirkpatrick, has seen the relationship expand since its onset.

"It has been a growing partnership. We partnered district-wide as opposed to with just one school. The Buddy Pack program started in Columbia in 2005, after a student did not want to go home because there was no food at the house. The Buddy Pack program is huge in helping us understand the need for those kinds of collaborative efforts. We work together to try and quantify the impact food might have on keeping a child in school."

The Buddy Pack program is in 24 schools and helps 1,335 students each week. Kirkpatrick also sees the help the food bank receives from the district, largely in the form of volunteers. "We are inundated with volunteers from the school district. We have entire classes come and volunteer in various ways. We are exceptionally blessed; they have helped in so many ways."

Schools also participate in the "Make a Difference Day Food Drive" in October, a drive where all the food and funds raised stay in Columbia.

## 25 Years: Stephens College with Lee Elementary School

Stephens College, more specifically its theatre department, has a 25-year relationship with Lee Elementary School, the district's expressive arts school.

Lee's principal, Karen Burger, said of Stephens, "They have done a whole lot. We have gotten quite a few student teachers from there. They have students come over, like singing groups, and perform while kids eat lunch. They allow us to use their facilities, like Windsor Auditorium, without a charge for events like our silent film fundraiser auction. I think it is wonderful, especially the exchange of information. We are excited about the prospect of more Stephens performers and maybe expanding some of the relationships with Stephens' theatre department."

Rob Doyen with Stephens' theatre department said, "Over the years we have shared talent with Lee. They have a great appreciation for the arts at Lee School, as everyone knows. We are always anxious for us to put our talents together, like if we have students who can help them with makeup or help them get a show together. And we always invite them to our dress rehearsals for our family shows. We have a wonderful relationship with Lee School and we hope it continues."
CPS SAYS FAREWELL TO DR. BROWN AFTER 33 YEARS

Columbia Public Schools’ Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education, Dr. Wanda Brown, is closing out her 33-year career with the district, heading into retirement with fond memories of her time in Columbia. “Columbia Public Schools is not just where I worked; it is a huge part of who I am. The district has done so much for me.”

Brown began working for the district right out of college, teaching language arts and poetry at Hickman High School after completing undergraduate work at William Woods University and her graduate degree at the University of Missouri - Columbia. She quickly moved into the district’s administration, but that was not her goal.

“There was never a plan to get into administration. Dr. Kenneth Clark, principal then at Hickman, asked me if I had thought about it. That summer I was already going to start work on my masters, so I took a class in education administration and loved it. I got my masters in education administration, my specialists in educational leadership and a doctorate in the same.”

After a year away from the district working for the University of Missouri, Brown came back to the district as assistant principal at Hickman, the first female assistant principal at the school. She worked there for five years before moving to Gentry Middle School and then the about-to-be-built Smithton Middle School, where she was principal.

“Smithton did not open on time in August of ’95. It was not ready until November, so I spent those months going to the seven campuses where our students were housed. I found an amazing faculty. We gave the kids the very best experience we could give them. I’m proud to share that with Smithton’s faculty and parents.”

After five years at Smithton, the principal position at Hickman opened up. Brown felt a calling back to the school she called “my school.”

After five years as the first African-American principal at Hickman, she entered into her current position, where she sees her role as providing the resources principals need to be more successful. She has been in the job for seven years, and points to the district’s secondary reorganization project as a highlight of her work.

“I feel good to have been a part of that. It will be amazing for the kids, reducing the transitions. We were fortunate to have teachers, parents, students and a community who supported the concept.”

Brown said she will miss the graduations. “To see them walk across that stage, to see the excitement in their faces. I will miss that tremendously. I will also miss the people I work with. CPS has great teachers and administrators. The central office is dedicated to many issues. Our superintendent will close that achievement gap.”

In retirement she will spend time with her son, an art teacher in Atlanta, where she could see herself moving in a few years. “It will be a new adventure. I’m not sure what it will be. I’d love to work with first-generation college students at some level.”

RETIRING CPS ADMINISTRATORS

Shepard Boulevard Elementary School’s JoNetta Weaver is retiring after more than 25 years as part of the school’s family. JoNetta has taught 26 years, all at Shepard, beginning with teaching first, second and third grades before becoming a mentor and then joining the administration ranks.

While at Shepard, Weaver points to “The Leader in Me” program as a point of pride to have been a part of. The program is an innovative, school-wide model that emphasizes a culture of student empowerment and helps unleash each child’s full potential. “It is great work we have been doing, giving us a focus,” Weaver said of the program, which the school has been running for the last four years.

“Shepard is a community school, family friendly. It is really a slice of America. We get a lot of great parent support.”

As for retirement, Weaver is not sure what the next step will be for her. She is looking forward to spending time with her grandchildren as well as some kind of employment. “I will work - I’m just not sure at what. I look at this as a new adventure for me to do other things, to contribute in different ways. It will be exciting and I won’t be sitting still very long.”

Mill Creek Elementary School’s principal, Mary Sue Gibson, will be ending her 33-year educational career at the end of the year, but she will not be going too far away from the environment she has worked in for so many years.

“I’ll be mentoring new and second-year principals for the district and also for the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. I’ll also be teaching an educational measurement class, a course at William Woods. I’ve acquired a lot of knowledge and it is a great opportunity to share what I have gained.”

Gibson acquired that knowledge through times spent at West Boulevard, Blue Ridge, Ridgeway, Derby Ridge and Mill Creek elementary schools.

“I have nothing but fond memories of the district. So much gratification for CPS, where I always felt very supported both as a teacher and an administrator.”
HICKMAN STUDENT WINS WRESTLING CHAMPIONSHIP
Hickman High School junior J'den Cox won the National High School Coaches Association National Wrestling Championship at Virginia in April. Cox also won his third straight high school state title in February.

HEALTH OCCUPATIONS STUDENTS HEAD TO NATIONALS
Three students studying health occupations at the Columbia Area Career Center qualified for nationals at the Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA) state competition. State results: Michael Pisano—Gold Medal in Biotechnology; Jennifer Zulovich—Gold Medal in Medical Math; and Olivia Zhang—Silver Medal in Medical Terminology. The national competition will be held in Orlando, Florida, in June.

CULINARY ARTS STUDENTS WIN STATE COMPETITION, HEAD TO NATIONALS
Four Columbia Area Career Center students competed and placed in the top three in their categories at the Missouri Skills USA State competition. This is the tenth consecutive year that the Career Center has had a state champion in Culinary Arts. The winners: Will Kinney—First place Culinary Arts (RHHS, Senior); Mallory Barnes—First place Commercial Baking (RHHS, Junior); Hailey King—Second place Culinary Arts (RHHS, Junior) and Ashleigh Johnson—Third place Commercial Baking (RHHS, Senior). Will and Mallory will compete at the Skills USA National Convention in June for their shot at the national title.

STUDENTS TAKE FIRST, SECOND IN STATE FOR 3-D AND ANIMATION
Columbia Area Career Center students competed and placed in the top two in 3-D Visualization and Animation at the Missouri Skills USA State competition. 3-D Visualization & Animation, Team 1: Carl Baldwin—First place and Cameron Weber—First place, Team 2: Samuel Kloepfer—Second place and Richard Shanks—Second place; Electronics Technology, Ezekiel Rachow—First place.

MILL CREEK ELEMENTARY STAFF MEMBERS HONORED
Mary Smith, an instructional assistant at Mill Creek Elementary School, has been named the Missouri Paraprofessional of the Year by the Missouri Council for Exceptional Children (MO CEC).

Grace Carmichael, an art teacher at Mill Creek Elementary School, won the Partners In Education Award given by the Missouri Council for Exceptional Children (MO CEC).

HICKMAN SCIENCE STUDENTS EARN TOP HONORS
Hickman High School student Mingu Kim took top honors in the regional Intel Science and Engineering Fair. He will be going to International Intel science and engineering fair (ISEF) this May. Adam Suppes was named a semifinalist in the USA Biology Olympiad exam competition. He was one of only four Missouri students to be named a semifinalist.

ROCK BRIDGE ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL RECEIVES LEADERSHIP AWARD
Lisa Nieuwenhuizen, an assistant principal at Rock Bridge High School, has been awarded the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) Excellence in Educational Leadership Award by the MU College of Education. The Excellence in Educational Leadership Award is an annual recognition for practicing school administrators who have made significant contributions to the improvement of administration preparation.

PARKADE ELEMENTARY RECOGNIZED FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING TEAM
Parkade Elementary School has been awarded the Outstanding Professional Learning Team Award from the Missouri Staff Development Council. This award was presented for its work with the co-teaching model within the student-teaching experience. Parkade’s staff exemplifies the concept of working and learning together, sharing collective responsibility so that each individual and team contributes to the success of all students within the school.

ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT RECEIVES COMMUNITY RECOGNITIONS
Congratulations to Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education Wanda Brown who was honored by the Columbia African American Association with a Lifetime Achievement Award in appreciation of her outstanding leadership and dedicated service to the community. In March, Brown also received the “Shot Caller Award” at the annual Black Women Rock! Awards Ceremony sponsored by The Chancellors Diversity Initiative and the MU Black History Month Committee.

CPS STUDENTS EARN FIRST PLACE AT SCIENCE, ENGINEERING, AND HUMANITIES SYMPOSIUM
The Columbia Area Career Center took 10 Rock Bridge High School students, coached by laboratory technician-instructor Christine Robertson, to compete in the Junior Science, Engineering and Humanities Symposium (JSEHS) at the University of Missouri St. Louis. In the presentation section, seniors Michael Pisano took first and senior Walter Wang took second, both in general biology, one of six categories. Pisano will have the opportunity to present at the National Symposium in May in Bethesda, Maryland.

Four students, Pisano, Abby Thompson, Micah Fletcher and Nickhil Shah, also competed in a debate. The team took first place against the defending champion Parkway West.

ROCK BRIDGE JV SCHOLAR BOWL TEAMS PLACE AT STATE
The Junior Varsity Scholar Bowl teams earned second and third place at the junior varsity state competition. The second place team consisted of Ryan Tray, Dima Rozenblat, Salah Daghal and Jonathan Ackmann. The third place team was made up of Monica Greenleaf, Jacob Freyermuth, Daniel Shapiro, Charles Shang and Jenny Zulovich. Greenleaf also earned All-State Honors.

COLUMBIA FUND FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE 2012 WINNERS

OUTSTANDING ELEMENTARY EDUCATOR
Gradoe Pre-K
Tara Gutshall
Paxton Keeley Elementary School

OUTSTANDING ELEMENTARY EDUCATOR
Grades 3-5
Greg Colman
Ridgeway Elementary School

OUTSTANDING SENIOR HIGH EDUCATOR
Jannia Fick
Hickman High School

OUTSTANDING BEGINNING TEACHER
Dolores Obregen
Hickman High School

OUTSTANDING MIDDLE/JUNIOR HIGH EDUCATOR
Pam Didur
Oakland Junior High School

OUTSTANDING EDUCATOR IN A SPECIALIZED AREA
Mary Grube
Rock Bridge High School
2012-2013
SCHOOL YEAR CALENDAR (K-12)

August 15
First day of classes

September 3
Labor Day: school not in session

September 24
Teacher Collaboration Day: school not in session

November 6
Teacher Collaboration Day: school not in session

November 9
End of first trimester

November 16
Conferences in elementary schools: school not in session

November 21-23
Thanksgiving vacation: school not in session

December 24--
Winter recess: school not in session

January 1
Teacher Collaboration Day: school not in session

January 21
Martin Luther King’s birthday: school not in session

January 30
Early dismissal for staff planning & collaboration

February 14
End of second trimester

February 15
Teacher Collaboration Day: school not in session

February 18
Presidents’ Day: school not in session

March 1
Teacher Collaboration Day: school not in session

March 25-29
Spring recess: school not in session

May 27
Memorial Day: school not in session

May 29
Last day of classes

May 30
Eary dismissal for staff planning & collaboration

June 3
Teacher Collaboration Day: school not in session

June 28
First day of summer school 2013

Last day of summer school 2013

Six snow days are built into the calendar (May 21-24, 28-29). If the district uses fewer than six inclement weather days during the year, the unused days will be removed from the end of the school year. If the district uses exactly zero or exactly five inclement weather days, the district will consider taking May 3 as a holiday, so that the final day of school will not be a single early release day following the weekend.

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Quarterly Report
Summer 2012

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