

COLUMBIA ACADEMY

COMMUNICATOR

Forty-Seventh Year | Volume 27 | 2026



CA NAMED NCSA 2025 SCHOOL OF THE YEAR

- » A SEASON OF GROWTH AND MOMENTUM
- » YONDR POUCHES SUPPORT STUDENT FOCUS
- » ALUMNI RETURN AS FACULTY AND STAFF

FROM THE PRESIDENT



**"AND LET US NOT GROW WEARY
OF DOING GOOD, FOR IN DUE
SEASON WE WILL REAP, IF WE
DO NOT GIVE UP. SO THEN, AS
WE HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY,
LET US DO GOOD TO
EVERYONE, AND ESPECIALLY
TO THOSE WHO ARE OF THE
HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH."**

GALATIANS 6:9-10

Our theme verse from the 2025-26 school year encourages us to never give up, and to do good to all. These are two important lessons that were shared with our students throughout the year. As Columbia Academy strives to accomplish its mission of helping students develop "skills, knowledge, and character appropriate for them and their future," there are many Biblical truths shared with students at every age to help them become all that God wants them to be.

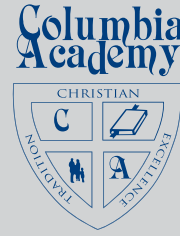
Sometimes those lessons come through difficulties and failures, and sometimes they come through God's blessings and success. Like every year, this year provided both of those opportunities. In November we celebrated a wonderful and historic honor of being named (out of over 70 schools) the National Christian School Association "School of the Year." Only a few weeks later, we grieved the loss of one of our 6th grade students, Maddie Longo.

Even in difficult times, **God remains faithful.** He has blessed our school throughout its 47 years, and He has continued to pour out His blessings. The sixty-six members of the class of 2026 left a legacy of which we all can be proud. They had the highest average ACT since 2020 and 97% of them qualified for the Tennessee HOPE scholarship. They completed thousands of hours of community service throughout their high school careers, acting on the command in our theme verse of doing good to all. Ultimately, we saw the school's mission being accomplished in their lives as they became more "Christlike in attitude and behavior."

Whether it's on the track, in the band room, in the classroom, or on the stage, our students are being constantly challenged to grow in every way – physically, socially, intellectually, and spiritually. They are guided by dedicated faculty and staff who believe in this mission and are committed to serving students. We know that our school and our mission changes lives. I was reminded of that recently by a graduate who told me as she accepted her diploma, **"this school changed my life."** What a blessing for each of us to get to be part of a mission like this!

Thank you for your support of this mission and our students. Please keep the school in your daily prayers. I hope you enjoy this issue of the "Communicator."

James A. Thomas, Ed.D.
President



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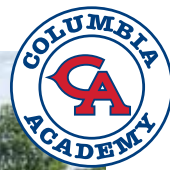
**BEST
SCHOOL**
SPRING HILL
CAMPUS



**BEST
PRESCHOOL**
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CAMPUS

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SHINE BRIGHT

ACADEMIC AWARDS



Summa Cum Laude

Front Row: Alessia Lombardi, Mikayla Wagoner, Lyli Whitfield, Leigha Picard, Sarah Isenberg

2nd Row: Ty Withrow, Luke Thomas, Gabriel Karkau, Thomas Gaines, Carden Venable, Jacob Helms

3rd Row: Reed Butt, Gunner Skelton, Matthew Thomas, Cooper Estep, Jax Hickerson, Jay Coleman



Magna Cum Laude

Front Row: Maren Kitchen, Allie Cox, Carson Wright, Maya Keeton, Sophie Boutis, Francie McDonald, Anzly Greene, Haley Collins

2nd Row: Jackson Curry, Frazier Isenberg, Luke Phillips, Cole Park, Jackson Usherwood, Madeline Hale, Karmen Harris



Cum Laude

(L-R) Julie Isenberg, Makayla Townsend, Lillie Baker, Mary Catharyn Hopkins, Margaret Lehner, Reese Shirley, Colton Robbins

Not pictured: Whitney Walker, Shep Patterson, Drew Wooldridge

Columbia Academy Named National Christian School Association 2025 School of the Year

We were proud to have been named the National Christian School Association (NCSA) School of the Year for 2025, a recognition that reflects the school's exceptional commitment to academic excellence, faith-based education, and community engagement. This announcement was made on November 21, 2025, during an assembly attended by the entire Columbia campus student body and staff.

Regarding the school, NCSA President Dr. Andrew Baker says, "What shines brightest at Columbia Academy is not simply their academic achievement or impressive growth, but their unwavering commitment to forming students who reflect the heart of Jesus. This award is well-deserved, and the entire NCSA family celebrates with them. Their story is a testimony to what faithful teachers, engaged families, and mission-driven leadership can accomplish together."

The NCSA, which represents over 70 schools nationwide, opened nominations for the award in April 2025, with voting taking place in May. The School of the Year title was determined by a vote from member schools within the association, making this recognition particularly significant as it reflects the support and admiration of Columbia Academy's peers nationwide.

"We are deeply humbled and incredibly honored to receive this recognition from our fellow schools within the National Christian School Association," said CA President Dr. James A. Thomas. "This achievement is a testament to the hard work, dedication, and unwavering faith of our faculty, staff, students, and families."

Our journey to receiving this award has been marked by a continued dedication to providing an environment where students grow academically, physically, socially, and spiritually.



2026 NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY INDUCTEES



In May, the annual National Honor Society induction ceremony was held to introduce new juniors and seniors entering the program and presented the existing seniors with gold cords. These students pledged to take on the four pillars of the program: **Scholarship, Service, Leadership, and Character.**

Front Row: Ava Buckley, Olivia Coonradt, Cora Geiss, Scarlett Burton, Hayden Hood, Emma Bookout, Janie Reames, Haley Collins, Anzly Greene, Paige Andrews, Kennedy Jones

2nd Row: Andreanna Carroll, Sarah Isenberg

3rd Row: Ava Codling, Karmen Harris, Maren Kitchen, Francie McDonald, Cole Park, Sophia Boutis, Lillie Baker, Lyli Whitfield

4th Row: Donovan Len, Hutson Cofer, Gunner Skelton, Levi Love, Carden Venable, Jackson Beasley

Back Row: Nixon Love, Taylor Sims, Eli Rhodes, Reed Butt, Jay Winchester

CA CLASS OF '26

MR. & MISS COLUMBIA ACADEMY



At the conclusion of each school year, Columbia Academy upper school faculty select Mr. and Miss Columbia Academy. This is a high honor bestowed upon two students who best exemplify character and attributes consistent with the Columbia Academy mission.

Mr. CA is **Jay Coleman**. He is the grandson of John and Debbie Coleman and has been a student at CA for six years. He was named to the

all-area golf team in 2025 and is the recipient of Columbia Academy's Top Dawg Award, which is selected from the entire student body and awarded to the student who exemplifies the highest Christian character and morals, while maintaining high academic standards.

Coleman served as captain of the Columbia Academy golf team during his junior and senior seasons and is a five-year letterman. He has also served as class president for two years. He has been active in organizations such as Best Buddies, Student Ambassadors, Beta Club, Bulldogs United Student Committee, Youth Leadership Maury, Boys State delegate, Governor's Cabinet Boys State, National Honor

Society, Columbia Mayor's Youth Council, and the ACT 30+ Club. He is also a small group leader, boys split chapel leader and was named the Columbia Noon Rotary Four-Way Test speech winner.

Coleman is an active member of the South Gate Church of Christ, where he frequently participates in leading worship services. He has also been asked to deliver sermons at his home congregation as well as other churches throughout Columbia, and preaches monthly at Shoals Branch Church of Christ. After graduation, he plans to play golf for Freed-Hardeman University, where he will double-major in law and politics, and Bible.

Miss CA is **Francie McDonald**. She is the daughter of Kelly and Sheila McDonald and has been a student at CA for four years. She has participated in cross country, golf, basketball, tennis, and track, serving as captain of the girls' golf team during her senior year and qualifying for regionals for two years.

McDonald has been active in organizations such as Best Buddies and Academy Girls Society, where she serves as spiritual emphasis coordinator. She is involved with the Science Club, Pep Club, Key Club, Spanish Club, REACH, HOSA, Theatre, and Youth Leadership Maury. She is an American Legion Auxiliary Girls State delegate, a small group leader, a split chapel leader, and a member of the ACT 30+ Club.

She has also participated in Lads to Leaders and is an active member of the West Seventh Church of Christ youth group. McDonald will attend Freed-Hardeman University in the fall, where she will play on the inaugural women's flag football team on scholarship. She plans to study business or pre-med.

Columbia Academy congratulates these students on this honor and their many accomplishments.

2026 COLUMBIA MILITARY ACADEMY SCHOLARSHIP

The 2026 Columbia Military Academy Scholarship has been awarded to **Lucy Pink Carnahan**, daughter of John and Carol Carnahan. Throughout her time at CA, Lucy has been actively involved in numerous school activities, including the Best Buddies Club, where she served as a senior officer, as well as HOSA, the International Thespian Society, Pep Club, and as a CA student ambassador. She was also a member of the CA varsity cheer team, and the CA performance competition and gameday competition cheer squads.

In addition to her school involvement, Lucy is an active participant in her youth



group at West 7th Church of Christ and has taken part in numerous mission trips. She comes from an impressive legacy of CMA alumni, representing eleven relatives: Jerry Ray Parks, Joe Houston Parks, Robert Seay Parks, William Alexander Thomas, William Benjamin Thomas, William Locke Thomas, Harry Web Williams, Lee Clement Williams, Carl Nicks Williams, Dr. John Orlando Williams Jr., and John Orlando Williams III.

In the fall, Lucy will attend the University of North Alabama, where she plans to major in elementary education.

VALEDICTORIAN & SALUTATORIAN



Representing the Columbia Academy senior class of 2026, the valedictorian is Jacob Helms, son of Josh and Lindsey Helms of Spring Hill (on the right). The salutatorian is Luke Thomas, son of Dr. James and Jennifer Thomas of Columbia (on the left).

Jacob Helms has been a student at CA for 4 years. He is a member of the ACT 30+ Club and has served in numerous leadership roles, including student body president, National Honor Society president, National Beta Club president, and Science Club president. On the field, he was the starting quarterback and a senior captain for the football team, earning recognition on the All-Region Academic Team and receiving the Daniel Thomas Award. He plans to attend the University of Alabama in the fall to study mechanical engineering.

Luke Thomas has been a student at CA for 14 years. A member of the ACT 30+ Club, Luke has earned top scholar honors four consecutive years. He is the recipient of the John Philip Sousa band award and the Rotary "Service Above Self" award. Luke has been actively involved in concert and marching band, track and field, theater, Best Buddies Club, National Beta Club, the REACH academic program, National Honor Society, and the International Thespian Society. In recognition of his accomplishments, he has been awarded the Trustees' Scholarship and the Honors Competition Scholarship at Freed-Hardeman University where he plans to attend in the fall to major in art with an emphasis in graphic design.

CLASS OF 2026 STATISTICS

COLLEGE/DUAL ENROLLMENT



861 hours of college credit hours earned through Dual Enrollment - Averaging **13** hours per student



Students will attend **23** different colleges, universities and trade schools across the United States

ACT AND SCHOLARSHIP MONEY

Class average ACT score - 24

33

Highest ACT Composite Score
33
Athletic scholarships accepted
7



Total scholarship money offered:
\$7,911,273
Average scholarship award:
\$119,867

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS...



Took a dual enrollment course



Offered a scholarship



Graduated with honors

8,290 service hours completed during high school



Total number of graduates: **66**

SPIRITUAL LIFE

AT COLUMBIA ACADEMY

BY: BEN DILES, DIRECTOR OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

⁹ And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. ¹⁰ So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Galatians 6:9-10

These words were inspired by God's Holy Spirit and written by the apostle Paul to first century Christians facing a world hostile to faith and division within the Christian community. In the 2000 years since they were written the specific problems have changed, but the encouragement to continue to do good, in spite of how weary we become, is just as needed today as it was then.

This year was a wonderful and a challenging year at Columbia Academy. Please continue to pray for good to come from painful situations. Bright spots of the year included the success of the canned food drive, more than 20 students being baptized into Christ, and new mission trips bringing hope and joy to communities in Nicaragua and Thailand. Only by relying on God in faith, can we as a school experience tremendous highs in His service and endure the lows that this world so often brings.

At Columbia Academy, we seek to model and teach the Christian lifestyle in all that we do. We seek to serve those in need, explore the depths of God's word, and share God's love, the gospel, and our material blessings with those around us. We believe each of our students is designed and made by God to seek and reflect His glory. We strive to lead them to know Him better by the daily study of His word, prayer, and serving Him by serving others.

Our students come to know God better through daily Bible instruction, regular periods of worship on all campuses, in student-led small group discussions, and multiple service opportunities like these listed below:

- Best Buddies club where our students partner with students with special needs all through the year.
- Annual Thanksgiving canned food drive raising over 100,000 cans worth of food this year.
- Yearly Walk4Water raised over \$12,000 this year to dig wells for communities without a clean water source.
- Weekly service at the People's Table meal service and food distribution at the Well in Mount Pleasant.
- Students participating in school mission trips to Nicaragua Christian School and Udon-Thani, Thailand and joining with the Graymere congregation in Lima, Peru.



- Additionally we help with area assisted living homes, Healing Hands in the MAGI project, the community Christmas program through the Family Center, and joint classes at King's Daughters' School.

In addition to helping our students at school, we hope to encourage our parents to engage in spiritual discussions with their children as a part of their family's daily routine. All research indicates that spiritual formation takes place primarily within the home, and we want our families and students to thrive in faith this year.

In the 2026-27 school year we will be offering a Godly Parenting and a Marriage Support Classes, having a first week prayer walk before school begins, and renewing a group of mothers who meet to pray for the school. We hope you will partner with us to help our children overcome the darkness present in the world by relying on God in faith and walking in His light. Thank you for your support and let me know if I can help you in any way. To God be all the Glory!

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE SPRING HILL CAMPUS



BY: NATHAN HIXSON,
SPRING HILL CAMPUS
PRINCIPAL

God's Word speaks of the power of community (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12), and this year, we had a front-row seat to a sweet bond forming between some of our youngest and oldest Bulldogs.

While it has always been a tradition for our 6th graders to help the kindergarteners occasionally, this past year took things to a whole new level. In August, teachers paired students up based on their personalities to establish "Book Buddies," and the plan quickly blossomed into something much bigger! Through weekly visits, the students read together and deepened their connections. In December, they even went caroling together at a local rest home, and they capped off a successful year with a collaborative picnic lunch in the park.

You might assume the kindergarteners loved it while the sixth graders simply tolerated it—but that couldn't be further from the truth! The older students enjoyed the experience just as much, if not more, than their younger counterparts.

Mrs. Hardison, our sixth-grade teacher, shared, "It's a nice break for us and a good learning experience for kindergarten." Our kindergarten teacher, Mrs. Stout, echoed that sentiment, calling the meet-ups "precious." She also noted that it's incredibly common for her students to give high-fives in the hallways and hugs on the playground when their paths cross. The kindergarteners themselves proudly report that the sixth graders are "cool" and "read really well."

The sixth graders truly embraced their status as role models, eagerly looking forward to connecting with their kids every week. One sixth grader, Channing Church, was especially thrilled when his name made the kindergarten classroom's anchor chart during their lesson on the "Ch-" digraph. Channing described his relationship with the "littles" as simply "amazing."

The sense of community on the Spring Hill campus is palpable. You can feel it in the family atmosphere, the energy in the building, the drive to excel, and the genuine relationships. While Book Buddies is a structured effort, I'm proud to share that this culture of care goes far beyond those classrooms. Our After Care program is further evidence of growing multi-age friendships. Preschoolers love chasing the 1st graders on the playground, while the 4th, 5th, and 6th graders organize fierce football and soccer games. While competitive sparks fly on occasion, games almost always end with praise and encouragement. These kids are realizing at a young age what's truly important beyond the final score.



Some might say the Spring Hill campus is too small, but for us, its size is its greatest strength: it allows us to know everyone in the building, and know them well. The older students wave to the little ones through the big cafeteria windows, kids frequently return to hug their former teachers after chapel services, and big kids happily sit with their little buddies during Circle of Friends. Our students know peers across different grade levels, every student knows the adults, and there's a wonderful tightness to our culture. There will be a time for them to move on to a larger campus and do big things, but for now, we're savoring these memorable, small-school moments.

As in past years, we are abundantly blessed by a wonderful Heavenly Father. To Him be all the glory!

FINE ARTS AT CA



CA THEATRE DELIVERS ANOTHER *Outstanding Season*

The Columbia Academy Theatre Department wrapped up an exceptional 2025-26 season, showcasing the talents of more than 100 students in grades 3-12 through three memorable productions. From challenging technical performances to sold-out audiences, the year highlighted the creativity and teamwork that define the theatre program.

The season opened with *Little Shop of Horrors*, proving that a small cast can deliver big talent. Students performed using the 2003 Broadway touring set and puppets, creating an authentic theatrical experience unlike any previous CA production. The show featured an expanded technical crew to operate "Audrey II", with Reed Butt providing the voice entirely offstage while puppeteers brought the famous plant to life. Because the voice actor and puppeteers could not see one another, the role required exceptional timing and coordination. Students had just a week and a half to learn the complex puppetry and staging. The production was also adjudicated for musical theater awards. Student stage manager Ruth Derryberry provided impeccable leadership from the booth, helping every performance run seamlessly.

The spring production of *High School Musical* featured one of the most diverse casts the department has assembled, with students representing all areas of campus. Audiences packed the Cherry Theatre for sold-out performances, enjoying the show's infectious energy, memorable songs and lively choreography. The production faced an unexpected challenge when the Cherry Theatre flooded after rehearsals had already begun. During the final weekend before opening, rehearsals had to move out of the theater, and the cast had only a few days to adjust to performing on a set they had barely used.



Despite the setback, the students rose to the occasion and delivered an outstanding production filled with enthusiasm and unforgettable performances.

The elementary production of *The Little Mermaid* closed the season in spectacular fashion. Interest in participating was so great that the production had to limit participation to fewer grade levels. It became the largest and most technically demanding elementary production in school history, featuring elaborate staging, colorful scenery and standout costumes designed by CA parent Stephanie Cofer. Upper school theatre students also played an important role by working backstage and in the booth, helping run the production while mentoring younger performers.

The season marked the final year for music director and teacher, Jessica Fonville, whose creativity and passion has left a lasting impact on Columbia Academy's theatre program. Her unique talents will be greatly missed.

Looking ahead, the theatre department is already preparing for another exciting year. While the fall production has not



yet been announced after the department was unable to secure the rights to its original selection, excitement is already building for the spring's full-school musical, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. We hope to see you there!

CA BAND YEAR IN REVIEW

This was another great year for the band program at Columbia Academy. In addition to performing in the stands for the home football games and many away games, we resumed our marching band this year. The halftime show theme was Classic James Bond. Featured tunes included "James Bond Theme," "Goldfinger," "Live and Let Die," and "For Your Eyes Only."

The band took part in a number of annual events during the spring semester. Sarah Isenberg, Gabe Burkhead, Joseph Isenberg, and Caroline Hulsey performed in All-County Band with students from all of the other Maury County high school bands. The CA high school band participated in Concert Performance Assessment, organized by the Middle Tennessee School Band and Orchestra Association. The band received a rating of Excellent on their prepared pieces and a Superior for their sight-reading performance. The band received another Excellent rating at the Music in the Parks Festival as part of their annual trip to Dollywood.

There were two graduating seniors in the band this year: Luke Thomas and Sarah Isenberg. Luke received the John Philip Sousa Award and Sarah received the High School Band Award. Sarah also received a scholarship to perform in the band at Freed-Hardeman next year.





BULLDOG ATHLETICS —

The 2025-26 school year was another great year for Columbia Academy athletics. Across all sports, Bulldog student-athletes worked hard and grew as players and teammates.

The GunDawgs capped off their season with an exceptional performance at the Tennessee SCTP State Tournament, where 15 athletes competed across seven disciplines and earned numerous individual and team honors. The week was highlighted by Taylor Sims capturing both the men's varsity/senior high overall main event championship and the high all around title, while the GunDawgs also claimed a state championship in high school skeet and multiple top-five team finishes.

This swim season was one for the record books. With a program-record 31 swimmers, the team achieved historic success at every level. The high school team earned Division 2 Runner-Up honors for the first time in school history, while the middle school team captured its second consecutive Division 2 Championship. These accomplishments reflect the hard work, dedication, and growth of our athletes, and with so much young talent in the program, the future is incredibly bright.

The golf program concluded its season with an impressive postseason showing, as seniors Jay Coleman and Francie McDonald, junior Ava Codling, and freshman Annie Hill

advanced to the regional tournament. As Columbia Academy looks ahead, both the boys and girls teams boast impressive rosters, and the program enters an exciting new chapter under head coach Jeff Loveless following Russell Smith's five-year tenure.

On the softball field, the Lady Bulldogs experienced a season defined by growth and unity. With a young roster, the team steadily improved throughout the year, embodying the message of Galatians 6:9-10. The team has laid a solid foundation for future success and is excited to begin training for the 2026-27 season. Likewise, middle school softball posted a strong 13-8 record, showing significant improvement over past years.

The middle school girls basketball team delivered a historic season, finishing with a 21-4 record — the winningest in program history. The team captured the Lewis County Christmas Tournament title and finished as first runner-up in the James C. Haile State Tournament.

The high school Lady Bulldog basketball players look to come into the 26-27 season with renewed energy. Though six seniors have graduated, the team welcomes new members onto the team. These young ladies are hungry, ready to compete, and will look to capitalize on the success and the foundation laid by previous teams.

The varsity boys basketball team competed in a challenging Division II-A District 3 schedule, finishing with an 11-15 record.





The Bulldogs earned notable victories over Zion Christian Academy and Middle Tennessee Christian School. Led by all-district senior Cooper Estep and supported by a strong returning core, the program is positioned for an even better season to come.

Volleyball, at both the middle school and high school levels, showed steady improvement and promise. The high school team navigated the graduation of several seniors while continuing to develop a young group of talented athletes. Similarly, the middle school program continues to strengthen, with an impressive rising class.

The middle school football team finished the 2025 season with a 4-4 record, highlighted by wins over Grace Christian (32-0) and Richland (46-18). With 62 players on the roster, this was the largest middle school football team in program history.

Varsity football welcomed a new head coach this year. We are excited to have Rob Phillips and look forward to this fall's Friday night lights as he brings a fresh perspective to our football program.

The boys varsity soccer team showed great chemistry early on. Together, they showed grit and determination throughout a tough season! Coach Watkins said he is very proud of this team.

The middle school boys soccer team also had an outstanding season, finishing 9-1 and outscoring opponents 48-13. The

season was led by eighth grader Rylan Lewis, who scored 22 goals. This group of eighth graders completed their final two seasons with just one loss.

The girls soccer team made history this year under new head coach Ellie Butterfield. They were short-gamed in the first half by the team they played in the third round of the regional tournament. They lost by only one goal, but Ellie said that she's never seen this team play harder. She emphasized that they brought "Jesus to the soccer field" this year in their demeanor and attitude.

The bowling team had a fantastic season with a record of 14-2. The bowling Bulldogs won the regional team championship and finished runner-up at the state tournament.

The cross-country and track programs experienced exceptional success across both middle school and high school levels. Middle school cross country teams advanced to the state meet, with numerous athletes achieving personal records along the way. The middle school track program also saw tremendous growth, setting multiple school records and expanding into new events.

At the high school level, both boys and girls cross country teams advanced to the state championship. The boys team placed fifth in the state, while the girls team followed up their 2024 state championship with an outstanding state runner-up finish. Track and field continued that momentum, with

BULLDOG ATHLETICS

multiple athletes and relay teams earning all-state honors and competing at the highest level.

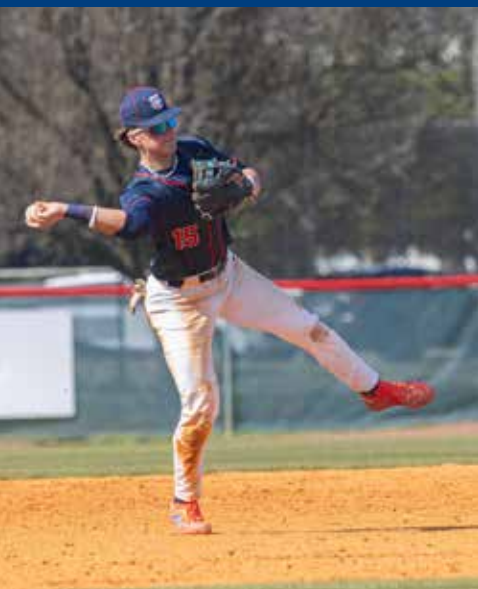
The cheerleading program also reached new heights this year. The gameday team made its first appearance at the TSSAA State Cheerleading Championship, finishing as first runner-up, and went on to place fifth out of 80 teams at the UCA National High School Cheerleading Championship.

Baseball enjoyed a standout season, finishing with a 30-12 record, earning district championship honors, and advancing to the final eight in the state tournament. The middle school baseball team also had an impressive year, finishing as regular-season champions with a 14-5 record.

The tennis program also thrived, with both boys and girls middle school teams finishing 7-1, demonstrating continued skill development.

Columbia Academy's bass fishing teams represented the school well, competing across multiple challenging venues throughout the season. Anglers endured bitter cold through miserably hot weather, yet they never gave up. Beyond their performance, the anglers exemplified Christlike conduct in all circumstances.

In addition to the success of our sports teams, Columbia Academy athletics was strengthened by the addition of Shelby Johnson as athletic director assistant. Her support has been invaluable in the continued organization of our programs. We also look forward to welcoming Drew Pirtle as our new athletic director. As a 2006 Columbia Academy alumnus, Drew brings a deep understanding of our school's mission and traditions, and we are excited for the future of Bulldog athletics under his leadership.





SPORTS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES



We are proud to announce the induction of two legendary coaches into the Columbia Academy Dr. Bill Thrasher Hall of Fame!

Coach Christy Thrasher dedicated nearly two decades to Columbia Academy, coaching volleyball from 1999 to 2016 and tennis from 2000 to 2017. She earned 258 career volleyball wins, led teams to multiple district and region championships, and was named District Coach of the Year three times. On the tennis courts, she built a championship program with six district championships, three region championships, and numerous state appearances. She also played a key role in starting Columbia Academy's middle school volleyball program.

Joining her is Coach Marty DeJarnette, who spent 26 years coaching, including 23 at Columbia Academy, where he became the all-time winningest coach in school history. He recorded 512 career wins, led CA to seven state tournament appearances, and captured the 2019 state championship. His leadership earned him the Don Meyer Award in 2018 and National Christian School Association Coach of the Year honors in 2020.

Please join us in congratulating these two coaches whose commitment and leadership have shaped hundreds of CA athletes!

PLAYING AT THE NEXT LEVEL —



Jay Coleman

JAY COLEMAN
FREED-HARDEMAN UNIVERSITY
GOLF



Gunner Skelton 15

GUNNER SKELTON
VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY
BASEBALL



Allie Cox

ALLIE COX
MOREHEAD STATE UNIVERSITY
CHEER



Luke Phillips

LUKE PHILLIPS
FREED-HARDEMAN UNIVERSITY
CROSS-COUNTRY
TRACK & FIELD





Francie McDonald

FRANCIE MCDONALD
FREED-HARDEMAN UNIVERSITY
WOMEN'S FLAG FOOTBALL



Reese Shirley

REESE SHIRLEY
UNIVERSITY OF MONTEVALLO
BASKETBALL



Jayden Massey

JAYDEN MASSEY
FREED-HARDEMAN UNIVERSITY
WOMEN'S FLAG FOOTBALL



Go Bulldogs!



FOSTERING ENERGY AWARENESS ACROSS OUR CAMPUSES

Both the Columbia campus—elementary and upper school—and our Spring Hill campus participated in the TVA EnergyRight Program, designed to raise student awareness of energy usage and promote responsible habits. Each campus had an Energy Champion and energy teams who led efforts to inspire their peers.

The schools competed with public and private schools across the state for grant funding.

To earn the \$10,000 grant, our campuses:

- Partnered with a program engineer to identify ways to save energy and implemented at least three recommendations
- The Energy Champions attend monthly meetings with a coach and five workshops
- They also organized student engagement activities focused on energy education

Our schools also competed for a \$25,000 award by expanding engagement activities and including the community in our energy education process. Each school has done this in different ways depending on the age of the students.

The Columbia lower school started off with a poster contest to create excitement. Some other activities included STEM and Art Night that focused on energy, wearing sweatpants and lowering the thermostats two degrees, having 6th grade writing encouraging notes to the lower grades, and even our county and city mayors were part of the excitement by hearing us speak and giving us encouraging words.

We were thrilled with the impact this program had, combining education, teamwork, and real-world action to help students develop responsible energy habits and leadership skills.

CA RE-ACCREDITED BY NCSA AND COGNIA



Columbia Academy is proud to be re-accredited through COGNIA and the National Christian School Association (NSCA). This certification reflects the school's unwavering commitment to academic excellence, spiritual growth, and a strong, unified school culture.

Throughout the accreditation process, evaluators noted Columbia Academy's deep sense of shared purpose and community. Faculty, staff, students, and families consistently demonstrated a clear understanding of the school's mission. This mission-centered focus is evident not only in the classroom but also in the relationships that define the school environment.

Columbia Academy is dedicated to serve students so they master vital skills, knowledge, and character while developing a Christlike attitude.

Parents and families played an important role in affirming the school's impact. One parent shared that after just two years at Columbia Academy, their child's confidence has "skyrocketed." Another family even relocated back to the area specifically so their children could attend CA, a powerful testimony to the lasting impression our school leaves on its community.

The review also highlighted the strength of relationships across campus. Families feel welcomed and encouraged, teachers report feeling fully supported, and leadership is described as highly approachable and engaged. This supportive environment extends to faculty as well, where committed Christian educators work alongside and mentor non-certified teachers, fostering growth and unity within the staff.

Even in the face of challenges, the CA community remains resilient, facing difficulties together with faith and determination. At the same time, the school continues to strengthen academic rigor, encouraging students to think more deeply and engage more meaningfully in their learning.

This re-accreditation affirms that our beloved school not only meets rigorous national standards but also remains steadfast in its mission to develop students academically, spiritually, and socially. The school looks forward to building on this momentum as it continues to serve families and prepare students for success in college, career, and life, grounded in a strong Christian foundation.

JULIE THOMASON RETIRING

A CA favorite is retiring this year, and while our students and staff couldn't be more thrilled for her, all are equally saddened to not see her around campus as often. For more than four decades, Ms. Julie Thomason has been a cornerstone of the Columbia Academy community, dedicating 42 years to shaping young minds as a fifth grade teacher. In 1999 she was awarded the Lower School Teacher of the Year award at the annual Staff Appreciation Dinner.

Since beginning her career at Columbia Academy in 1984, she has faithfully remained in the fifth grade classroom, where her passion for education has impacted nearly 2,000 students. Known for her dedication, encouragement, and commitment to excellence, Ms. Thomason has created an environment where students are both challenged and inspired to grow.

Her influence reaches beyond the classroom, as many of her former students have gone on to work successful careers, including Columbia Academy's current President, Dr. James Thomas, who once sat in her classroom as a fifth grader. In recognition of her extraordinary career, the City of Columbia proclaimed Tuesday, May 12, 2026, as "Ms. Julie Thomason Day," honoring her 42 years of service in education and the profound difference she has made in the education community.

Dr. Thomas stated, "Ms. Thomason has been a tower of goodness in our school community for many years. As part of her first fifth grade class, I remember her making learning



fun, but also keeping us on the right path. She has always had a good sense of humor, which is so helpful when teaching. Ultimately, she has always loved all of her students, and she loves our school and its mission. We will miss her positive presence and wish her the happiest retirement."

Columbia Academy is deeply grateful for her commitment to our school, community, and students throughout the years. She is deeply loved and will be missed.

SPOTLIGHT ON ERIC BRYANT

When Eric Bryant and his wife, Melissa, attended an art show at Harding University back in 1999, they didn't realize they were walking toward their next calling. While celebrating one of Eric's art students, they discovered that Columbia Academy was looking to launch a brand-new art program. Seeing the hand of God at work in the timing, Eric reached out, scheduled an interview, and by August 1999, he was officially helping CA build its art curriculum from the ground up.

After celebrating his 27th year at Columbia Academy this past school year, Eric is finally joining Melissa in retirement. He spent years shaping the upper school art program, teaching digital skills, AP computer science, and various advanced computer courses over the years. He worked on big projects over his years, including the annual Communicator and fundraising videos. He also coached the robotics team and organized our yearbook. Whether he was guiding students through complex coding logic or pushing runners to give their all as the cross country coach, Eric has been a steady, versatile anchor for the CA community, and he will be greatly missed on campus!



CLUBS & EXTRACURRICULARS

BEST BUDDIES

In its 13th year of existence, the Columbia Academy Best Buddies Chapter enjoyed another record enrollment of over 240 students in grades 9-12. Led by President Lucy Pink Carnahan, Vice President Annie Endsley, and Treasurer Wyatt Duke the chapter produced one of the most amazing years in its history.

The year began in July when Lucy Pink and Annie attended the Best Buddies Conference at Indiana University. This is a major event where chapters connect with individuals with intellectual disabilities and discuss strategies for the upcoming school year. Events the chapter participated in included "My Day at the Fair" in August at the Maury County Fair. They also hosted Best Buddies nights at a football and basketball game. Members volunteered at the Tennessee State Special Olympic Bowling Championships in Smyrna and the Maury County Special Olympics Bowling event at Tenn Pin Alley in November. In March, Columbia Academy hosted the Maury County Spring Games. Over 250 athletes across Maury County elementary, middle and high schools along with students from King's Daughters School competed.



This year, the chapter raised over \$12,000. For the second consecutive year, CA's chapter was the leading fundraising school for the Best Buddies Friendship Walk, contributing a total of \$5,000. In addition, they provided \$6,000 to King's Daughters School for Special Olympics Summer Games t-shirts and travel expenses, tuxedo rental for the King's Daughters prom and music instruments and gardening supplies for KDS's new club programs.



ROBOTICS

The robotics club (RoboDawgs), are part of the VEX nation. VEX competitions utilize the motivational power of robotics and challenges to help students cultivate an identity as a STEM learner. Beyond technical aptitude, VEX also provides a fun and authentic environment for students to develop essential soft skills like communication, collaboration, and time-management. During the year, students design, build and program a robot to perform tasks during competitions. Each team may take different approaches to solve the challenges but all share in the experience of an environment that fosters creativity and innovation. This year the club had four teams, three of which competed multiple times around the mid-state.

HOSA

Members of the HOSA (Future Health Professionals) chapter have advanced to the International Leadership Conference (ILC), continuing

a tradition of excellence and achievement in healthcare education and leadership. The conference will be held in June in Indianapolis. Only the top three competitors from each state advance to the international level in their respective events. Since the chapter's inception in 2017, at least one participant has qualified for the ILC each year in a chosen competition category.



This year, freshmen California Hill (pictured right) and Addisyn Yarbrough (pictured left) earned the opportunity to compete at the international level after advancing through both regional and state competition in the Health Career Display event. This accomplishment is especially significant for ninth-grade students, as the competition now includes all four high school grade levels. This particular event requires competitors to conduct extensive career research, develop a digital portfolio, and deliver an oral presentation. Their achievement reflects a strong commitment to HOSA, collaboration with peers, and determination to explore the healthcare field.

REACH

As another school year wraps up, we celebrate the incredible achievements of REACH, our program for academically gifted students. Over the past nine months, these bright minds have pushed boundaries, explored the cosmos, and redefined teamwork.

Once a month, REACH students gathered to tackle a massive challenge: simulating the planning of a large-scale expo for gifted students. Working in competitive, dynamic teams, they took on roles from project managers to marketers, learning firsthand how to navigate complex logistics, make compromises, and execute a shared vision from the ground up.

Learning went beyond the classroom with an unforgettable field trip to Chattanooga. At the Tennessee Aquarium, students explored diverse marine ecosystems. The adventure then shifted to the University of Tennessee's Challenger Program, where science and mathematics skills were put to the test. Students built operational remotely



operated vehicles (ROVs) and worked under pressure to successfully navigate a high-stakes Mars simulation.

To cap off the year, students dove into advanced independent research. Moving beyond textbooks, they identified and interviewed real-world experts in their chosen fields. The culmination of their hard work was a series of sophisticated final presentations that showcased their deep analytical skills and professional communication.

Through these intense projects, REACH students didn't just showcase their exceptional cognitive skills and leadership abilities, they mastered the art of collaboration and organization.

Congratulations to all REACH students on a phenomenal year!

SCIENCE CLUB

The Science Club was created for students who have an interest in science or who are thinking about a career in a science field. The club met during the year for their own chapel period with a meeting to follow. Dr. Vishwas Bedeker, a professor of engineering at MTSU, visited CA making an online presentation to describe engineering to students. Furthermore, other presenters have included Dr. Tara Fortier, a quantum physicist with the National Institute for Science and Technology (NIST) and Dr. Jacob Walker, with DeepMinds, spoke about visual artificial intelligence. These two presenters were also virtual visitors (from Paris, France and from London, England respectively). In the past, the club has had virtual visits from scientists as far as the South Pole to talk to students about their research.

The club conducts science after school programs where elementary students, for a nominal fee, spend an hour or more after school doing things in the laboratory. This year they hosted two science nights - one in October and one in March. The one in October featured Dr. Jonathan Moore, an archaeologist and a podiatrist speaking about the unlikely possibility of the shroud of Turin being the burial cloth of Jesus. In March, Dr. Ming Wang, an internationally-recognized ophthalmologist, explained a procedure which has successfully restored eyesight to many blind people. They are pleased to announce that in October of 2026, Dr. Phillip Allen, a CA graduate, will speak about his work at NASA. The public is invited to attend these lectures.

The year ended with a campout at Dr. Farris's farm. This is a highlight of each year. At this event, students enjoyed a campfire, making s'mores, playing guitars, wandering in the woods by flashlight looking for hidden goodies, running through a maze mowed in a field, viewing the magnificent night sky, and taking some time for a period of devotion to God before bedtime.

Interested students (or parents who would like to help in some way) should contact Dr. Barry Farris (barry.farris@cabulldogs.org) to find out more. We'd love to have you!



BETA CLUB

The 2025-2026 school year was one of growth and achievement for the Columbia Academy Senior Beta Club. With an active roster of **193 active members** and **8 dedicated officers**, our club continued to uphold the four pillars of the National Beta Club: Achievement, Character, Leadership, and Service.

We kicked off the year with our "Back to School Bash,"

followed by the highly anticipated 2nd Annual Trivia Night in February. These events have become staples of the upper school experience, providing opportunities for students to connect through fun and fellowship outside the classroom.

In the fall, our members represented Columbia Academy on the big stage at the State Beta Convention at the Gaylord Opryland Hotel and Convention Center. Between leadership sessions and meeting Betas from other states, our students gave it their all in their competitions.

We are incredibly proud of the following students for their hard work and participation:

- **Academics:** Deborah Zheng & Jacob Helms (math); Luke Phillips, Jackson Usherwood, & Jacob Helms (Quiz Bowl).
- **STEM & Design:** Wyatt Poynor, TJ Sanders, & Ryder Jones (engineering); Luke Phillips, Anzly Greene, & Deborah Zheng (trading pin design).
- **Arts & Communication:** Tori Lonie (creative writing); Lakelyn Haley (digital art); Deborah Zheng (drawing).
- **Leadership & Marketing:** Colton Flowers, Ryder Jones, Joseph Isenberg, & Hunter Wilson (marketing & communications team); Luke Phillips (speech).

A special highlight of this year's convention belongs to **Deborah Zheng** (pictured above), who demonstrated exceptional academic success by placing **4th in the nation** on the math test!

WE APPRECIATE YOU!

2026 FACULTY & STAFF APPRECIATION



UPPER SCHOOL TEACHER OF THE YEAR
Jonathan Jones



STAFF MEMBER OF THE YEAR
Andrew Williams



LOWER SCHOOL TEACHER OF THE YEAR
Kennedy Jackson



COLUMBIA VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR
Klaire Strickland



PRESCHOOL TEACHER OF THE YEAR
Becky England



SPRING HILL VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR
Brent Ciesliga



SPRING HILL TEACHER OF THE YEAR
Ella Newkirk

SERVICE AWARDS

45 YEARS



Sally Craig

30 YEARS



Marty DeJarnette

20 YEARS



Emily Voss

15 YEARS



Eric Karkau, Hannah Irish, Lori Hill

10 YEARS



(L-R) Sarah Tatom, Brittany Smith, Kevin Chiddister, Carrie McCullough, Jacob Eastep, Trent Thomason *Not Pictured: Ella Newkirk, Andrea Roberson, Pernell Knox

5 YEARS



(Back Row L-R) Ben Meade, Erin Johnson, Rebecca Williams, Becky Loveless, Suzanne Mason, Sarah Gering, Monica Hayes, Haley Schmidt, David Fagan; (Front Row L-R) Kennedy Jackson, Danae Elder, Jessica Fonville

DUNCAN FELLOW



Zach Scott

GLENN HULEN AWARD



Alan Thomason

TUESDAY CREW MEMBER OF THE YEAR



Tommy McEwen

FROM THE DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

A SEASON OF GROWTH AND MOMENTUM

BY: MONICA HAYES, DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR

This has been a remarkable season of growth for Columbia Academy's development efforts, fueled by record-setting success and an exciting momentum felt across every campus.

The ALL IN Campaign & Building in Faith

The ALL IN campaign serves as an annual cornerstone for the Building in Faith Capital Campaign, which launched in 2021 to fund expansive instructional projects. To date, this multi-year initiative has successfully delivered the Vest Hall expansion, the Spring Hill campus addition, and the new preschool wing. Beyond the classroom, the campaign also funded the new Thrasher Tennis Complex, which officially opened this past spring.

The primary focus of this year's ALL IN efforts was the complete restoration of the second floor of Academy Hall. Built in 1891, this historic gem had remained largely untouched since 1979. The project successfully honored the building's historic integrity while breathing new life into its halls. Academy Hall now boasts:

- five modern offices
- three new bathrooms
- a dedicated conference room

This restoration allowed the business offices and staff to relocate to the first floor, bringing more administration under one roof. Following this, the second phase transformed the former business office—fondly remembered as Ragsdale Hall—into a dedicated upper school space. This revitalized

area now houses the upper school library, administrative offices, and a flexible student center designed for independent study and collaboration.

Celebrating Our Community

The energy on campus was unmistakable during the CARE Dinner in February. This year's circus theme, "The Greatest Night," lived up to its name, resulting in a record-breaking evening of fellowship and philanthropy. Between the silent and live auctions, the event served as a profound testament to the community's shared commitment to the CA mission.

Additionally, this spring marked the inaugural President's Brunch. This gathering brought Partner Level supporters to campus for an intimate morning with President Dr. James Thomas. It served as a wonderful opportunity to celebrate current successes and share the vision for the exciting chapters ahead.

Our Shared Mission

Columbia Academy is truly blessed to have the resources and support necessary to improve this campus and grow this community. While every family has a unique story that led them to CA, a vital goal remains constant: ensuring a mission of exceptional Christian education continues to thrive for generations to come.

It truly takes us all.

COLUMBIA ACADEMY INTRODUCES YONDR POUCHES TO SUPPORT STUDENT FOCUS

This year, the upper school implemented Yondr Pouches for all students who own cellphones. Upon entering the building each morning, students are required to lock their phones inside their Yondr Pouches, which remain with them throughout the school day. Phones can be unlocked only after the dismissal bell using designated unlocking magnets located near the entrance of each school building. This system allows students to keep possession of their devices while eliminating distractions during instructional time.

The decision to adopt Yondr Pouches was guided by growing research on their positive impact in educational settings. Studies show that schools using Yondr report significant improvements in student engagement, classroom focus, and mental health. Yondr reports that 70% of school staff report a noticeable reduction in student distraction. The program has been implemented in schools across 41 states to combat social media-driven conflicts and academic disruption, leading to fewer discipline incidents and increased face-to-face social interaction among students.

At Columbia Academy, teachers have already witnessed the benefits firsthand. Many have expressed how much more

focused and engaged students are during class now that phones are no longer a constant interruption. Class discussions are more active, students are more present, and learning environments feel more productive.

While the transition was not easy for everyone at first, student attitudes have shifted over time. Although many students were initially unhappy with the new policy, they have gradually grown accustomed to using Yondr Pouches and are beginning to recognize the benefits. Several students have shared positive feedback, noting improved concentration and stronger social connections throughout the school day. Overall, the implementation of Yondr Pouches has proven to be a meaningful step toward fostering a healthier, more focused learning environment at Columbia Academy.



FULL CIRCLE MOMENT

DR. JIM MARSHALL AND DR. DAVID CRAIG

At Columbia Academy, the legacy of faith and family often comes full circle. Few stories capture that better than those of Dr. Jim Marshall and Dr. David Craig, who are now back on campus, investing in a new generation as coaches.

Dr. Jim Marshall, a former board member, has seen Columbia Academy through many important years. Both of his daughters, Christy ('04) and Jaclyn ('09), attended CA and were members of the tennis team. Today, that legacy continues through five grandchildren enrolled at the school: Forrest Brown, Fletcher Brown, Fields Brown, McClain Simpson, and Palmer Simpson.

"Our experience has been exceptional in every way," Dr. Marshall shares. "The education at CA has always been excellent, but the personal interest that the teachers and coaches placed in their students, to excel in academics, sports, and as Christ-like people, is unparalleled."

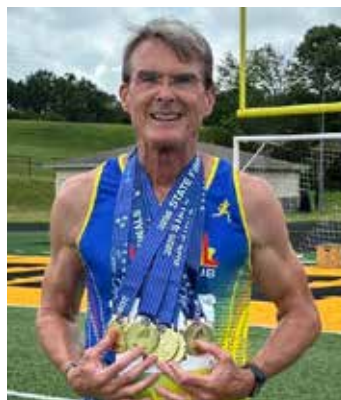
That family atmosphere was especially evident on the tennis courts. His daughters thrived under caring and supportive coaches who emphasized both character and competition. He sees that same spirit continuing today under Coach Steaphnie Butterfield, who has maintained the strong relational foundation that defines the program.

After serving faithfully on the CA Board and completing a long career in medicine, Dr. Marshall found a meaningful way to give back. Tennis, a lifelong passion that has blessed him both physically and mentally, became the avenue. "After retirement from medicine, my hobby became a way to give back to the school that has meant so much," he says.

To better serve the program, Dr. Marshall earned Level 2 teaching certification from the USPTA, equipping himself with advanced training to mentor student-athletes. Now in his second year coaching the tennis team, he describes the experience as deeply rewarding. "It has been a wonderful opportunity to work with such exceptional students whose desire to learn and improve as athletes and as people is very rewarding."

His return is not simply about tennis instruction, it's about continuing a tradition of investment in young lives, just as others once invested in his own daughters.

Dr. David Craig's history at Columbia Academy spans decades. From 1983 to 2007, he served as Guidance Counselor, Bible teacher, and for a time, interim high school principal. His impact on students during those years helped shape the school community into what it is today.



Now, after retirement from another organization, he has returned to campus in a new role as an assistant coach of track and cross country. "This is my third year to officially coach," he says, "though I helped for a couple of years before that. They needed a bus driver."

That willingness to step in wherever needed reflects the heart behind his coaching. "My favorite things about

coaching are being with the kids and the other coaches. We all have a good time, and it's so rewarding to see the kids improve and accomplish goals."

For Dr. Craig, coaching is about more than races and personal records. It's about helping students discover what they're capable of. "I love getting to see them realize what they can accomplish if they dedicate themselves and put in the work."

A lifelong runner himself, Dr. Craig still trains and competes, even earning awards such as National Masters Champion. His own continued participation reinforces a powerful message to his athletes: running is not just a season, it can be a lifelong pursuit. "I really get as much reward from the students' accomplishments as any I may have at this point," he says. "Plus, I hope to inspire them that running can be a lifelong sport."

Today, his connection is especially meaningful through his wife, Sally, who teaches at the school. "It's fun to coach the same students she teaches or has previously taught," he says, another reminder of the tight-knit, family-centered culture that defines Columbia Academy.

Both Dr. Marshall and Dr. Craig represent something unique: individuals who believe so deeply in the mission of Columbia Academy that they have returned to serve once again.

They once entrusted the school with their own children. Now, they are helping guide the children of other families, and in Dr. Marshall's case, even his own grandchildren.

Their stories reflect the heart of Columbia Academy: a place where excellence in academics and athletics is pursued alongside spiritual growth; where teachers and coaches take personal interest in students; and where relationships last for generations.

In coming back to coach, Dr. Marshall and Dr. Craig are not just filling roles on the sidelines. They are continuing a legacy of faith, dedication, mentorship, and a deep belief that the lessons learned on the court and on the course shape students for life.

HOMECOMING '25



Homecoming Queen: Maren Kitchen

The 2025 Homecoming Queen is Miss Maren Kitchen. Maren is the daughter of Jimmy and Maureen Kitchen. She is involved in varsity sideline cheer, Beta Club, Science Club, Academy Girls Society, Theatre, Pep Club, and Best Buddies. She is a wonderful representation of Columbia Academy!



Homecoming Court: (L-R): Ryan Shirley (7th), Reece Andrews (9th), Ava Codling (11th), Lillie Baker (12th), Maren Kitchen (12th), Carson Wright (12th), Marley Ayers (10th), Ella Norrie (8th)



1. The student section was fired up and ready for a great game!
2. Crowning of the Homecoming Queen by the 2024 Queen, Carolina Johnson!
3. Kindergarten boys led the football team onto the field!
4. Homecoming court convertible parade
5. Presentation of the kindergarten girls

ALUMNI UPDATES

ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR, ROBIN SMITH ('88)



Robin is the principal of Baker Elementary School in Maury County. A member of the Class of 1988 at Columbia Academy, Robin was known for her leadership on the basketball team and her sense of humor. After earning her degrees and certifications, she has served in multiple educational roles over the last 23 years, including as a school counselor at CA and assistant principal at Baker Elementary.

— ACCEPTING NOMINATIONS —

NOW ACCEPTING NOMINATIONS FOR COLUMBIA ACADEMY'S 2026 ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR!

Do you know an alumnus of Columbia Academy that deserves special recognition? Nominate an alumnus to receive this award by sending in the name and brief description. Nominations must be received no later than Friday, August 21.

The Columbia Academy Alumnus of the Year is a person who is respected and successful in all walks of life. With a strong love for God and Columbia Academy, this person is valued in his/her community and profession, demonstrating on a daily basis his or her faith in God and love for family and community. This person represents Columbia Academy well by demonstrating values consistent with its mission.

Please email nomination along with a brief description to jill.jones@cabulldogs.org.

The 2026 Columbia Academy Alumnus of the Year will be announced during half-time activities of the homecoming game on Friday, September 25.

THE NEXT GENERATION OF CA

ALUMNI RETURNING TO COLUMBIA ACADEMY



Ella Pollard



Drew Logsdon



Logan Prentice



Linley Hill



Abby Ballard



Josie Prentice



Annabeth Graham

Returning to Columbia Academy as faculty and staff members, several recent alumni are making an impact in the very place that helped shape them during their kindergarten through 12th grade years.

Ella (Johnson) Pollard ('22) serves as an upper school science teacher, alongside Drew Logsdon ('19), who also teaches science and serves as an assistant coach for baseball and basketball. Logan Prentice ('19) is an admissions coordinator and 6th grade teacher while assisting with the football program.

Linley Hill ('22) and Abby Ballard ('23) are working with the youngest Bulldogs. Hill is a junior kindergarten teacher, while Ballard is a junior

kindergarten aide. Josie (Harrelson) Prentice ('18) guides young learners as a first-grade teacher.

Annabeth (Marlin) Graham ('17) is the new school counselor. She will work primarily with grades K-8, while being a resource for the high school as well.

Together, these alumni represent the full-circle spirit of Columbia Academy, returning not only to work, but to give back, lead, and invest in the school's future. Columbia Academy appreciates every alumnus who returns to serve current students!

ALUMNI UPDATES

CLASS OF 1986



Kim (Churchwell) Dickinson and husband, James, welcomed their sixth, seventh, and eighth grandchildren in April of 2026. Two joined the family through adoption, and one through birth.



Angie Baker Roberts is married to Jeff Roberts. They have four children, Remi (8th grade at CA), Ritz (6th grade at CA), Ansley, and Chance. The two also have a sweet grandchild, Fisher Rosson.

CLASS OF 1993



Dr. Phillip Allen is a follower of Christ, husband, father, and the program deputy chief engineer for NASA's SLS (Space Launch System) Program, managed at NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama. Alongside the SLS chief engineer, as deputy chief engineer for the entire SLS rocket, Dr. Allen directs the efforts of approximately 5,000 engineers across the country. His work entails critical technical decisions and technical integration, bringing together the rocket, Orion capsule, and ground launch systems to ensure mission success from rollout to in-space capsule separation.

On launch day, the chief engineer and Dr. Allen led hundreds of engineers, working in real-time to resolve challenges and ultimately give the "go" for launch readiness. In addition, he is the supervisor for all the NASA SLS chief engineers for each of the individual elements of the launch vehicle (core stage, solid rocket boosters, liquid engines, and upper stage).

Dr. Allen attended Columbia Academy from the 2nd through 12th grade, graduating as Valedictorian of the class of 1993. He then attended Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tennessee, and met his to-be wife, Shannon Hays Allen, before finishing his undergraduate degree in mechanical engineering at the University of Memphis. He then earned a master's degree and Ph.D. in mechanical engineering from Tennessee Technological University in Cookeville. He has worked for NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center since 2003, holding positions of structural analyst, assistant division chief for the Materials Analysis and Test Division, deputy chief engineer for SLS liquid engines office, deputy chief engineer for SLS stages office, and now SLS Program deputy chief engineer.

Notable awards include 2015 Columbia Academy Alumnus of the Year, NASA Silver Snoopy Award, NASA Software of the Year Award, NASA Exceptional Engineering Achievement Medal, and the ASTM Award of Merit, along with the title of ASTM Fellow.

Dr. Allen lives in Huntsville, Alabama, with his wife of 29 years, Shannon, and 18-year-old daughter, Leah, who will be heading to Harding University in the fall. His 22-year-old son, Andrew, is pursuing a master's degree in mechanical engineering at the University of Colorado, Boulder.



Richie Estep celebrated 300+ career wins as a Columbia Academy baseball head coach this year!

CLASS OF 2002



Breanna (Bone) Bast - My husband, Chief MST Danny Bast, is in the United States Coast Guard. We have three precious children. We have spent the last 15 years on a pilgrimage from the Lord through the USCG with our prayer to be His light wherever He places us. What a journey of adventure it has been. Currently we are stationed in St. Louis, Missouri but living in O'Fallon, Illinois. We should be here for the next 3-4 years. I am so grateful for your time and I forever have immense gratitude for the foundation of Christ that Columbia Academy and the devoted staff planted in my heart so many, many years ago. God continues to use it for His glory. I pray the Lord's blessings upon you and may you get caught up in His beauty today and always.



Mandy Singleton married Blake Peterman in a private, surprise New Year's Eve wedding. The couple lives in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, where Mandy works for the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation and Blake is a registered nurse.

CLASS OF 2009



Doug Taylor and his wife, Danica, welcomed precious Allie on March 3, 2026. Anniston, Collins, and Luke are the proud big siblings!

CLASS OF 2011

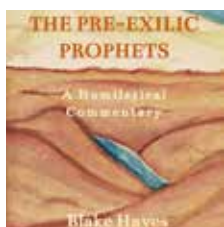


Lauren (Lomax) Ritchie and husband, Jamie, welcomed Callum into the world on November 26, 2025.



Alex Huey was named head baseball coach of Middle Tennessee Christian School in May.

CLASS OF 2014



Blake Hayes released a new book with Heritage Christian University Press, *The Pre-Exilic Prophets: A Homiletic Commentary* (2026). Designed to be read alongside the Bible, this 166-page study guide helps readers navigate some of Scripture's most challenging books by placing the pre-exilic prophets in chronological order and grounding them in their political and historical context. Blake's work highlights the prophets as urgent voices speaking into national drift, corrupt leadership, and hollow worship—inviting readers to better understand both the ancient message and its relevance today.



Lake Lomax proposed to Rheanna Patterson in the summer of 2026. He graduated from medical school and is currently working as a second year internal medicine resident with the goal of becoming a cardiologist. His fiancée is also a second year resident in emergency medicine at the same program.



Sutherland (Shrader) and Tommy Archibald are the proud new parents of Henry York Archibald, born May 15, 2026 at 8lbs and 11oz.



Hardin Johnson and his wife, Ashley Caroline, welcomed their first baby, Haynes Taylor Johnson, on February 21, 2026. Hardin graduated from medical school in May and has begun his first year of residency at the University of Mississippi Medical Center in internal medicine. They reside in Flowood, Mississippi.

CLASS OF 2019



Mariah Kittrell completed her doctoral degree in physical therapy with honors from the University of St. Augustine, St. Augustine, Florida. Her field of specialty is neurological disorders, and she will be working as a travel DPT. Mariah is the daughter of **Zack ('81)** and **Allison Pilkinton ('89) Kittrell**.

Faith McGinn holds an AAS in Dental Hygiene from Wallace State Community College. She is presently employed by Aspen Dental in Spring Hill, Tennessee as a dental hygienist.

Isaac McGinn holds a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from the University of Alabama in Huntsville, as well as a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (accelerated 2nd-degree) from Tennessee Tech. He is presently employed by CommonSpirit Memorial Hospital Chattanooga as CSDU nurse.

CLASS OF 2020



Hannah Diles graduated with a Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership with an emphasis in ministry and theological leadership from Harding University.

CLASS OF 2017

Noah Brock graduated from Columbia State Community College with his certification to begin work as a Maury County emergency medical technician.

CLASS OF 2018



Carson Deyo graduated with his doctorate in occupational therapy from Rocky Mountain College in December 2025 and has started as a pediatric OT at Dream Big Therapy in Franklin, Tennessee. He and his wife, **Jessica Heffington**, welcomed their firstborn son, Seth Deyo, in September of 2025.

CLASS OF 2021



Olivia Mastalerz got engaged to Jake Moonen in June of 2026.

Benjamin McGinn holds a Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering from Tennessee Tech. He is presently employed by Consolidated Nuclear Security in Oak Ridge, Tennessee

ALUMNI UPDATES

CLASS OF 2022



After graduating from the Air Force Academy in May, **Harrison Diles** is now a commissioned 2nd lieutenant in the United States Air Force. He will next report to pilot training to Ft. Laughlin in Del Rio, Texas.



Ella Fuller graduated from Harding University with a Bachelor of Science in Biochemistry. She will be attending Harding University College of Pharmacy in pursuit of a Doctor of Pharmacy and a Master of Business Administration.



Caroline Graham obtained her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Freed-Hardeman University in May. In June, she began her career as a nurse at Jackson General Hospital in Jackson, Tenn. She will marry her fiancé, Landon Mobley, in October.



Myleah Hardy graduated from Freed-Hardeman University with a Bachelor of Science in Communication Sciences and Disorders. She will be attending Faulkner University's online master's program for speech pathology this fall along and will be getting married in October.



Connor Henson graduated from the University of Mississippi with a Bachelor of Business Administration degree. He will return in the fall to pursue his master's degree while completing his last year of track eligibility.



In May 2025, **Mary-Grace (Karkau)** married Andy Weatherford, and the two currently reside in Searcy, Arkansas. They both graduated this year from Harding University, and Andy is an IT solutions analyst. Mary-Grace is a third-grade teacher.



Libby (Love) Pike graduated from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville with a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education with a minor in psychology. She has accepted a first grade teaching position at Lake Forest Elementary in Atlanta, Georgia. Libby was also married to Will Pike in June.



Caylea Savage graduated from Tennessee Tech with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration in Business Management and a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration in Marketing.



Ava Zientak graduated from the University of North Alabama with a Bachelor of Science in Communications and Public Relations with a minor in marketing. She has accepted a job with the marketing department at TOA in Brentwood, Tenn.

CLASS OF 2023



Anna Claire Butt was named Miss Freed-Hardeman University in May.



Emma Sieloff was married to Coleton Flick on March 15, 2026. She is currently going to nursing school at the University of North Alabama.

CLASS OF 2024



Mikayla Worley graduated from Volunteer State Community College on May 9, 2026, with an AAS degree. She has accepted a job with NHC Maury Regional, where she will be working as a licensed physical therapist assistant.

CLASS OF 2025



Lincoln Montgomery obtained his private pilot's license and received his instrument rating on his way to becoming a commercial pilot.



JOHN THOMAS SERVES AS 2026 COMMENCEMENT SPEAKER

John Thomas, pulpit minister at the South Gate church of Christ, spoke at the 47th annual commencement exercises of Columbia Academy. The class of 2026 graduation ceremony was held on May 16.

A 1994 graduate of Columbia Academy, Thomas has devoted his life to Christian education and ministry. After completing his undergraduate studies at Freed-Hardeman University, where he earned degrees in Bible and kinesiology as well as a master's degree in education, he returned with his wife to their home community.

Thomas worked full-time at Columbia Academy for 17 years as a Bible instructor, coach, and the school's first campus minister. In 2015, he left the school to become the pulpit minister for the South Gate church of Christ in Columbia. He is the brother of CA president, Dr. James Thomas.

Throughout his years of service, Thomas has been dedicated to guiding students in both their academic and spiritual growth, leaving a lasting impact on the Columbia Academy community.

Thomas and his wife, Natalie (Porter), a 1993 graduate of Columbia Academy, are the proud parents of four sons, all of whom have graduated from Columbia Academy. Their youngest son, Matthew, is a member of the class of 2026.

IN MEMORIAM



Joe Hoover Delk
d. Feb. 22, 2026
Founding Board Member



Senator Jim Tracy
Oct. 9, 1956 – July 3, 2026
Former CA Teacher and Coach



Lindsey Brooke Marshall Terry
Dec. 24, 1988 — July 30, 2025
Class of 2007



Madeline (Maddie) Longo
Nov. 18, 2013 – Jan. 1, 2026
Class of 2032

COLUMBIA ACADEMY ANNUAL GIVING REPORT

Columbia Academy is truly blessed with generous supporters like you. During the 2025-26 school year, you came through in a huge way. Thank you for sharing the blessings that God has given your family to make a lasting impact on our school and our students.

Because we do not receive government funding, we rely solely on our supporters to help us fulfill our mission. While we will never achieve perfection, we are grateful to our supporters who understand our mission and love our school. Generous donors enable us to focus on teaching our students about Jesus and how to be more like him every day. Thank you to our families and supporters who helped us this year. Thank you for believing in and showing your support for the important work we do at Columbia Academy.

Your support of Columbia Academy allows us to continue to fulfill our mission:

- Our students are led by dedicated Christians inside and outside the classroom.
- Our students attend a Bible class daily.
- Our students have multiple opportunities to worship the Lord each week.
- Our students are equipped academically and spiritually so they can be successful in all aspects of their lives.

As we begin our 47th school year, we trust that God will continue to bless us as we honor Him and serve our young people and their families. Thank you again for your investment in Columbia Academy. We ask for you to continually keep CA in your prayers. The following Annual Giving Report is for the fiscal year ending May 31, 2026.

ENDOWMENT FUNDS

Since December 1984, families have invested in the future of Columbia Academy by establishing endowments or supporting endowments by giving to them. The intent is for the principal to remain for perpetuity with only the growth and interest gained to be used for current needs.

Most of Columbia Academy's endowed funds were created to provide need-based financial assistance for students. Thank you to the many generous donors who have helped grow the CA endowment, knowing that these funds will continually serve to provide needy students with an opportunity to learn in a Christian environment.

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1988

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1989

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1990

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Chad and Shelly Estep
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 Mr. & Mrs. Jared Sweeney
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 Tennessee Aluminum
 Processors, Inc.
 Terry Johnson Insurance
 Agency, Inc.
 The Art of Dentistry
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 Mrs. Myra Thomas
 Mr. Steven Thomas
 Mr. & Mrs. Alan Thomason
 Mr. & Mrs. Matthew Thomason
 Mr. & Mrs. Ryan Thomley
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BIBLE DEPARTMENT DONORS

Beech Grove church of Christ
 Cathey's Creek church of Christ
 Graymere church of Christ
 Greenfield Bend church of Christ
 Highland church of Christ
 New Lasea church of Christ
 North View church of Christ
 South Gate church of Christ
 Spring Meadows church of Christ
 West 7th Street church of Christ



SNAPSHOTS



Columbia Police Department visited our kindergarten



Our cafeteria crew having fun on dress up days



The lower school STEPS (3rd-6th) classes visited the TBI building in Nashville



Field day fun



Jax and Emma Newton fishing with Mr. Bennett

COLUMBIA ACADEMY Legacy SOCIETY

WHAT WILL YOUR LEGACY BE?

The sustainability of our Christian school is dependent on generous supporters who believe in our mission and give. Legacy gifts ensure the long-term health of Columbia Academy and our mission. Your estate will be your single, largest opportunity to bless organizations that you believe in. Christian education is needed more than ever for our young people and the future of our society.

What kind of legacy do you want to leave? Here are some things to consider:

- It's easy – You simply need a few sentences in your will or trust to complete your gift. You could give specific property, a fixed amount or even a residual gift after other monies have been distributed.
- Your gift has an increased impact to CA – As a 501(c)(3), CA doesn't pay income tax when gifts are received.

Anyone can be part of the CA Legacy Society regardless of the size of your gift or estate. The best way to give depends on your situation and should be discussed with your attorney, accountant and/or financial advisor. We have an attorney who specializes in estates who can

confidentially help you define how you want to allocate your estate. If you are interested in becoming part of The CA Legacy Society and would like to meet with our attorney, feel free to contact Monica Hayes, monica.hayes@cabulldogs.org /931-398-5357.

Please consider leaving a gift to Columbia Academy after your lifetime through your will or revocable living trust and join these CA Legacy Society members.

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MS. MARY EVELYN ATKERSON
MR. & MRS. EARL BAKER
MR. & MRS. BILL BROWN
MRS. RUBY BROWN
MR. TOM CARR
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MR. & MRS. PHILLIP YOUNG, JR.

2026/2027 CALENDAR

COLUMBIA ACADEMY
1101 WEST 7TH ST.
COLUMBIA, TN 38401
PHONE (931) 388-5363
FAX (931) 398-5359
CABULLDOGS.ORG

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September

- 7 Labor Day - *No School*
- 8 Parent/Teacher Conferences -
No School
- 25 Homecoming

October

- 2 Grandparents' Day - *Early Dismissal*
- 5-9 Fall Break

November

- 2 Christian School Inservice -
No School
- 23-27 Thanksgiving Break

December

- 17 Early Dismissal
- 18-31 Christmas Break

January

- 1 Christmas Break
- 4 Teacher Inservice - *No School*
- 18 MLK Jr. Day - *No School*

February

- 5 C.A.R.E. Dinner
- 15 Presidents' Day - *No School*
- 16 Parent/Teacher Conferences -
No School

March

- 16 Appreciation Dinner
- 25 Junior/Senior Banquet
- 26 Good Friday - *No School*
- 29-31 Spring Break

April

- 1-9 Spring Break
- 15 Teacher Collaborative Day -
Early Dismissal
- 22 Academic Banquet

May

- 13 Teacher Collaborative Day -
Early Dismissal
- 22 Graduation
- 27 Last Day of School - *Early Dismissal*



The CA photography class worked its Photoshop magic to create a photo focused on levitation!