



[TOP](#)

# Poplar Bluff Student Winners Named in Earth Day Contest

APRIL 06TH 2020 BY DEE LOFLIN

## Poplar Bluff Student Winners Named in Earth Day Contest

Please note photo was taken on March 12th - Poplar Bluff Junior High and Technical Career Center students were recently awarded for placing in a T-shirt design contest initiated to promote the 50th anniversary of Earth Day.

On Thursday, March 12, top students received \$50 gift cards and trophies, sponsored by Ozark Federal Credit Union. Winners in the PBJHS category were: Cailin Pratt placing first, Carli Pundsack placing second, and Wyatt Meurlott-Luebben – third. TCC winners were: Jessica Paulin placing first, Jaden Jordan – second place, and Alayna Stokan – third.

The overall winner of the design chosen by way of committee was Jon Daniels, an area art teacher, who entered the adult category through the Margaret Harwell Art Museum, and received \$100. T-shirts are available for purchase at the art museum, with proceeds supporting the operation

“I chose the Junior High and Senior High levels for the T-shirt design contest since we love for students to be a part of the art museum,” stated Terena Whitworth, event organizer, whose husband Steve serves as museum director. “This was a way to make them aware of the 50th anniversary of Earth Day and the Margaret Harwell Art Museum at the same time.”

Terena Whitworth, a retired educator, said she can recall celebrating the 40th anniversary as a teacher at the former Poplar Bluff 5th and 6th Grade Center, and the 30th anniversary

at O’Neal Elementary School. “My goal is for the whole community to become more aware of saving our planet and to celebrate Earth Day some time in April,” she continued.

The Margaret Harwell Art Museum is planning an ‘edible landfill’ and ‘junk sculpture’ activities free for children, ages 5-12, tentatively scheduled for 1:30-3:30 p.m. Saturday, April 18, at 421 N. Main St. For more information, contact Terena Whitworth at 573-785-3332.

(Left to right) PBJHS teacher Brandon Francis; organizer Terena Whitworth; students Cailin Pratt, Carli Pundsack and Wyatt Meurlott-Luebben; Ozark FCU representative Meagan Bader; and Margaret Harwell Art Museum Director Steve Whitworth.

Photo and article by Tim Krakowiak, Communications/Marketing Director, Poplar Bluff R-I School District

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[Go to post](#)



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[TOP](#)

# Corey Jameson to Lead New Mark Twain School

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## Corey Jameson to Lead New Mark Twain School

Poplar Bluff, MO - An educator with 20 years of experience working with at-risk students has been hired to lead the planned Mark Twain School on North Main Street.

Corey Jameson, lead instructor of the Poplar Bluff Graduation Center, has accepted the position of principal of the alternative educational facility set to serve grades 7-12 beginning in the fall.

“From my perspective, Mr. Jameson took an indirect path to public education, but on his journey he was always focused on a population of students who needed something a little different than what was offered via conventional methods,” commented Dr. Scott Dill, R-I superintendent. “I genuinely believe Mr. Jameson sees it as a place of opportunities for students who have experienced trouble with the system, and he has the skill set to recognize what the students need from us to be successful, whether that’s extra support or really just us getting out of the way.”

Jameson earned his master's degree in secondary administration from Southeast Missouri State University in Cape Girardeau in 2018. He started his undergraduate education at Three Rivers College and went on to receive his bachelor's in organizational management from Hannibal LaGrange College, and later his teaching certificate from Central Methodist University in Fayette.

Before joining the R-I school district in 2015, Jameson served at Sears Youth Center in various capacities including special education teacher, group leader, youth specialist and service coordinator beginning in 2002, and two years prior to that when counting his part-time work.

“My entire career has centered around helping students who have had barriers to success, and helping get them past those barriers,” Jameson said. “That’s what I’ve done for a long time, since I was about 18 years old.”

The nontraditional school will provide services on site through FCC Behavioral Health plus become the district’s headquarter for its social workers and attendance office. According to Jameson, a district as large as Poplar Bluff needs to have an alternative pathway for students who may have “slipped through the cracks” due to various life circumstances, yet have found the self-motivation to earn their diplomas.

“These students got themselves up, caught a bus and came to school,” Jameson continued. “That’s when an individual becomes most successful, when they’ve decided to do it for

themselves. Because the bottom line is they see their value.”

Filling the top position was accelerated so that the principal can be part of the programming process as well as staffing, which will include reallocation of faculty as well as additional posts approved by the Board of Education in February.

The Mark Twain building, to be retrofitted once the Early Childhood Center moves to the Kindergarten Center campus over the summer, will absorb the district’s credit recovery services and RISE Transition Center long-term suspensions, as well as become the home of the future Jobs for America’s Graduates (JAG) program. Education officials are also in discussions with higher education partners about college credit offerings

“Everything is on the table at this point,” Dill explained. “We’re crafting programs to address the needs of learners for whom the traditional brick and mortar school is not meeting – on both sides of the spectrum.”

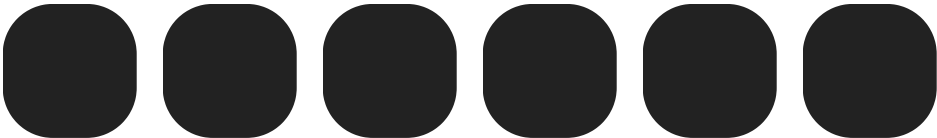
The grand openings of the new Early Childhood Center and Mark Twain School later this year will mark the completion of the second and final phase of the long-range plan financed in a single levy measure approved by voters in 2014.

Photo and article submitted by Tim Krakowiak, Communications/Marketing Director, Poplar Bluff R-I School District

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# Dr. Owings Honored Regionally by Principal Association

MARCH 12TH 2020 BY DEE LOFLIN

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## Dr. Owings Honored Regionally by Principal Association

Poplar Bluff, MO - Poplar Bluff Middle School Principal Dr. Brad Owings was named ‘distinguished principal’ of the Southeast Region during the 31st annual conference of the Missouri Association of Elementary School Principals held Saturday, Feb. 29, at Osage Beach.

A principal of 17 years, Owings was hired in Poplar Bluff in 2015 at the former 5th and 6th Grade Center, and led the transition the following year to the Middle School which—with 1,200 students at the time—was the largest upper elementary school in the state, according to education officials.

The move to the former High School campus involved bringing fourth grade teachers in from the district’s lower elementaries, helping to develop procedures and schedules for the reconfigured grade span and planning the logistics of traffic patterns for parents, all the while having hired 15 first-year educators.

“I have often been amazed at the number of students Dr. Owings knows by name” and frequently “knows their story,” wrote Middle School intervention teacher Kris Sittig in a nomination letter for the award. She continued: Owings shows the “same respect to his secretarial, maintenance and school cafeteria staff” as he does faculty.

Cultivating a positive climate is the most important job of a building administrator, wrote Owings in his nomination essay, and a leader does so by providing teachers with “autonomy, mastery and purpose,” he stated. His personal mission, he went on, is to equip staff members with “everything they need to be the best version of themselves,” and create a “culture of continuous learning for adults.”

“It’s so easy to get caught up in the ‘busy-ness’ of being a principal that we lose sight of the real work,” which is relationship-building, Owings noted as a professional challenge.

“Dr. Owings possesses a broad working knowledge of both the pedagogy and the business of education,” said R-I Superintendent Dr. Scott Dill in a letter of support, adding that Owings is an “asset to the profession” and believes in students “at his core.” The superintendent elaborated: “He believes in their potential and sees for them a future brighter than they, themselves, can often envision.”

On a personal note, Owings is married to sixth grade Middle School teacher Holly, and together they have four children. Dave Elledge, co-pastor of The Bluff Church, where the family attends, stated that Owings “seems to have found a wonderful balance” between home life and his career. “Dr. Owings is seen in our community as an administrator who truly cares for his students, his teachers and staff, and the Poplar Bluff community,” Elledge commented.

While Owings has recently accepted a job offering in Southwest Missouri for the 2020/21 school year, his successor—to be recommended for approval by the Board of Education during the next monthly meeting—will be left with a solid foundation once he or she takes the reins in July. Gains were made in both English language arts and mathematics, along with all subgroups on state assessments from 2018 to 2019 at the Middle School.

The three best practices that the outgoing principal—who received his doctorate in 2010 from the University of Missouri at Columbia—listed are vital in helping all students find success are: School-wide Positive Behavior Support, Response to Intervention and Professional Learning Communities.

Over the past few years, the Middle School has ‘rebooted’ its PLC model, collaborating in teams to track data on student progress using common formative assessments; established common RTI time so each grade level can provide differentiated instruction for students struggling or in need of extension activities; and started the SW-PBS process, reinforcing student expectations.

Pictured: Dr. Brad Owings, Middle School principal, is recognized among colleagues on Saturday, Feb. 29, during the MAESP Distinguished Principal banquet at Osage Beach.

Photo and article by Tim Krakowiak, Communications/Marketing Director, Poplar Bluff R-I School District

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## Over 100 Books Given Away at Book Bingo

MARCH 11TH 2020 BY DEE LOFLIN

### Over 100 Books Given Away at Book Bingo

Poplar Bluff, MO - More than 100 children's books were given away to students participating in the fourth annual Book Bingo hosted during Read Across America week on Thursday, March 5, at O'Neal Elementary School.

"Every kid leaves with a book," noted Ashley Robertson, O'Neal librarian, who helped organize the event. The books were paid for by Mossy Oak Properties/Mozark Realty, which also supplied a free Mules T-Shirt for each participant. Chartwells provided the snacks and beverages.

This year's grand prize winner during the final blackout round of bingo was second grader Elena Butler, who received an eight-book hardcover series of "Dog Man" by Dav Pikey, creator of "Captain Underpants."

Book Bingo, along with the elementary school's popular Movie Night, was established by the Bright Futures Site Council during the 2016/17 school year in an effort to put on additional functions for families to participate in, according to Principal Dr. Amy Dill.

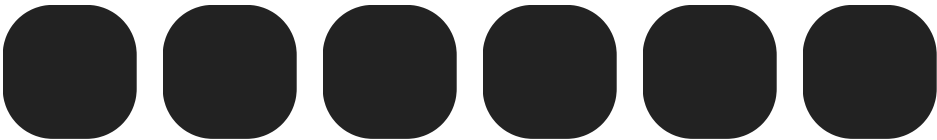
Pictured: The team at Mossy Oak, led by broker Lucas Edington (green shirt), pose with their various family ties to the school during Book Bingo night.

Photo and article by Tim Krakowiak, Communications/Marketing Director, Poplar Bluff R-I School District

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# PB Alumnus Returns for Black History Month Assembly

MARCH 06TH 2020 BY DEE LOFLIN

PB Alumnus Returns for Black History Month Assembly

Poplar Bluff, MO - A Poplar Bluff alumnus who leads intercity youth development training throughout the country shared his “tips for a successful life” on Thursday, Feb.



27, during an assembly observing Black History Month at Junior High.

“Get connected,” “stay away from messy people” and remember that “you have value,” stated Cortez Higgs, founder of The Catalyst Effect, to the seventh and eighth grade audience in the gymnasium.

The first piece of encouragement from Higgs pertained to students participating in activities outside of the school day, whether it is athletics, band or another extracurricular club

“A lot of you, if you don’t get connected or engaged, you’re going to live inside a box,” the PBHS Class of 1996 graduate said. “...You only have so much room to go inside the box before you hit the wall.

His next piece of advice was a cautionary tale about associating with the wrong crowd, and how succumbing to peer pressure can ruin one’s chances for a hopeful future.

Higgs used \$5 from his wallet to demonstrate his final lesson of the day. He captured the reaction of a group of volunteers after dropping the bill on the ground and stomping on it.

When asked if Zoe Freeman would accept the money even though he proceeded to “call it names,” the student replied affirmatively, explaining that it still “has value.” Higgs rewarded the student with \$10 for providing such an astute answer.

“Just like this money, no matter what anyone says or does to you, what they say or do to you does not determine your value,” Higgs concluded. “In spite of the mistakes you make, in spite of the issues or the families you’re with, in spite of what clothes you have, where you live – you have value.”

At the beginning of his lecture, Higgs noted that he grew up in poverty and was the child of a teenaged mother. Despite having experienced some trauma in life, he said, he went on to become an ordained minister, having studied biblical theology at Bethel College, and served as a petty officer in the U.S. Navy, among other feats.

Higgs currently resides in Newport News, Va., with a wife and four children. He has traveled to 45 schools across the country through the Department of Justice, discussing race relations and gang violence prevention.

The schoolwide assembly was spearheaded last year by paraprofessional LaRonda Mack and co-teacher Courtney Rutledge of the Life Skills class. Rutledge graduated with Higgs, and helped arrange for the visit this year. For the remainder of the program, a planning committee was formed that also had student representation.

Other features of the annual event included a performance of “Lift Ev’ry Voice and Sing,” known as the Black National Anthem, led by student Leara Hopson; a special tribute to the late Kobe Bryant; a living museum featuring the depiction of 30 black inventors by students; and a mural contest. The Life Skills students prepared a lunch for the invited guests.

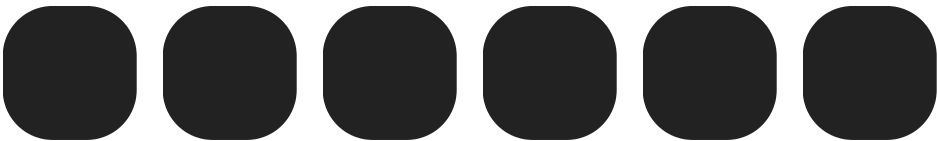
Pictured: Poplar Bluff native Cortez Higgs of The Catalyst Effect receives an ovation from the audience following his Black History Month speech.

Article and photo by Tim Krakowiak, Communications/Marketing Director, Poplar Bluff R-I School District

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