



UTICA COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

# FOCUS FOR THE COMMUNITY

November 2024

A PUBLICATION FOR THE RESIDENTS OF UTICA COMMUNITY SCHOOLS



From the Superintendent...

Robert S. Monroe

**Positively transforming our future - next steps**

Utica Community Schools is taking the next steps to honor our commitment to voters for the largest and most transformational building program in our history.

The facility improvements allow us to not only reimagine our classrooms, but also to focus on stronger school communities that better serve our neighborhoods.

During the past school year, we worked with input from our Enrollment Distribution Advisory Committee (EDAC) to adjust junior high school attendance areas.

This year, we will again work with the committee – comprised of representatives from each school – to review elementary enrollment patterns for schools that feed into Henry Ford II High School.

This review goes hand in hand with the planning work that is going into the next phase of our facility improvement programs.

Safety is and will continue to be the priority. Other considerations include the age of the facilities and enrollment patterns.

....Continued on page 4

## Legacy of Excellence honorees celebrated for their contributions to Utica Community Schools



More than 700 community members gathered to celebrate the first recipients of the Utica Community Schools Legacy of Excellence Award.

The inductees will be the first to be enshrined in a “Wall of Fame” opening next year in the Administrative Services Center.

The Legacy of Excellence honorees celebrated this year were:

- **Donald Bemis** – Utica Community Schools and Michigan Superintendent
- **Sharon Coil** – Elementary Principal
- **Lillian Demas** – Secondary Principal
- **Steven Domke** – High School Advanced Placement (AP) Social Studies Teacher and Coach for Quiz Bowl and Citizen Bee
- **Cass Franks** – Administrative Assistant for School-Community Relations
- **Bill Harris** – Junior High School Head Custodian
- **Carol Klenow, Ed.D.** – Board of Education President
- **Gene L. Klida** – Board of Education President
- **Ray Lope** – Founding Member of the UCS Foundation for Educational Excellence
- **Susan Meyer** – Director of Secondary Education
- **Jacqueline K. Noonan** – Secondary French and Social Studies Teacher and Mayor of the City of Utica
- **Nancy Searing** – Assistant Director of Secondary Education
- **Robert Van Camp** – Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning

Utica Community Schools was built on a strong foundation of community members – residents, staff, leaders and students – who dedicated their lives to creating opportunities for our students.

UCS is proud to honor the individuals whose legacy we inherited in our school district.



## UCS earns best in Macomb rating for schools, teachers and as a place to teach

A national online education rating service has honored Utica Community Schools as the best in Macomb County.

Niche.com rated Utica Community Schools as the best in Macomb County for its schools, teachers and as a place to teach.

UCS also earned top grades for academics, sports, college prep and administration.

The national online rating service evaluates districts using multiple information sources, including data from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, standardized test results and online reviews.

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# UCS takes next steps to honor bond commitments to voters

Utica Community Schools is moving forward with its commitment to voters to improve safety while reimagining how its schools can better support student success.

This spring, the district will begin work on a series of projects at athletic facilities as part of the largest facility plan in its history.

The improvements follow a summer of major building projects aimed at safety, including providing doors and walls at schools originally built as “open concept” schools, new cafeteria and restroom improvements at the Gene L. Klida Utica Academy for International Studies, and parking lot and playground improvements at elementary schools across the district.

This school year, the district will continue to improve safety through the installation of enhanced door hardware and impact and shatter resistant glass.

In addition, classroom technology will be enhanced through interactive projections and a teacher voice amplification system at secondary schools.



Rendering of Swinehart Field, scheduled to begin construction after spring sports conclude in 2025.

**Safety remains the priority for facility improvement projects promised through the 2023 Safety and Success bond issue overwhelmingly approved by UCS voters. For updated information, please visit [uticak12.org/safetyandsuccess](http://uticak12.org/safetyandsuccess).**



The Crissman Elementary School parking lot was redesigned to improve safety by separating the bus loop from the parent/guardian drop off area. Improvements at Crissman also included the installation of new playgrounds.

Athletic projects will include field improvements at Eisenhower and Henry Ford II high schools, the renovation of Swinehart Field, and new baseball and softball fields and tennis courts for Stevenson High School at the intersection of 16 Mile and Dodge Park Road. Projects are scheduled for completion in spring of 2026.

To ensure that there are no interruptions for athletes, renovations at Runkel Field will occur after the completion of Swinehart Stadium.

The improvements will enhance safety for UCS athletes and foster greater community and school pride.

Additional school projects for summer 2025 will be announced in late spring.

## UCS Foundation awareness campaign focuses on more opportunities for students



**Give Our Kids**  
A Strong Foundation

Utica Community Schools families and staff are being asked to help build an even stronger foundation for our students.

The UCS Foundation for Educational Excellence is asking community members to support its work to improve opportunities for students as part of a campaign that runs through November 18.

Since its inception more than 40 years ago, the Foundation’s work has directly impacted student success:

- Nearly \$800,000 in scholarships have been awarded to graduates since 2010
- The Career Focus Luncheon annually pairs sixth graders with business leaders
- The Foundation has been driving innovation with more than \$10,000 in annual mini grants to teachers and staff

The UCS Foundation is a non-profit community organization of volunteer educators, residents and business leaders.

**For more information on the UCS Foundation’s work and how to support this campaign, please visit [www.ucsfoundation.org](http://www.ucsfoundation.org).**

## Counseling organization honors UCS administrator as best in Michigan

*“Counselors are a dynamic group who hold the heart of their students in their hands.” - Kim Charland, Executive Director of Secondary Curriculum and Programs*

It is this guiding principle in the power of school counseling that has led the Michigan School Counselor Association (MSCA) to award its 2025 Administrator of the Year honor to Charland.

The MSCA annually recognizes a top administrator who demonstrates exceptional leadership and dedication.

“This prestigious recognition is a testament to Mrs. Charland’s outstanding leadership and unwavering support to the school counseling team and the entire school community,” said Amanda



Sayre, awards and recognition chair for MSCA.

Through her work, Charland has led impactful changes to the district’s approach to school counseling and wellness.

These changes have increased the resources available to staff and parents (available at [www.uticak12.org/ucs\\_wellness](http://www.uticak12.org/ucs_wellness)), created additional support to keep

students on track for graduation, enhanced services for English Language Learners and Alternative Learning Center students, and increased professional development and overall support for the district’s 38 counselors.

Charland will be honored by the association at their fall conference.

## Points of Pride

### Three UCS students named among the top 1 percent of nation’s seniors



Pictured left to right: Riley Brimm, Adeline Paul, Julia Myslimaj.

Three Utica Community Schools students are among only 16,000 U.S. seniors to be named 2025 National Merit semifinalists.

UCS semifinalists are: Riley Brimm and Adeline Paul, of the Gene L. Klida Utica Academy for International Studies, and Julia Myslimaj, of Eisenhower High School/ Utica Center for Mathematics, Science and Technology.

National Merit Semi-finalists are among the top one percent of the nation’s high school seniors.

### Henry Ford II student artist honored nationally for photography

A 2024 Henry Ford II graduate has been honored nationally for photography as being among the top eight percent of the entries in this year’s Scholastic Arts and Writing competition.



Jaden Rosenberger earned a silver medal for his work “Fenced,” which

also earned a top award at a regional competition.

Rosenberger’s work is being published in the online gallery at [artwriting.org](http://artwriting.org) and placed in Yearbook 2024, a companion to annual art and writing anthologies published by the Alliance for Young Artists & Writers.

### UCS Bands are Superior



All four Utica Community Schools high school bands have once again taken top honors at a recent regional competition.

Eisenhower, Henry Ford II, Utica, and Stevenson bands received the top Division 1 (Superior) ratings from judges at the annual Michigan School Band & Orchestra Association (MSBOA) District 16 Marching Band Festival.

The adjudicators judged the bands in the categories of marching, music, and general effect.

For more UCS Points of Pride, visit [www.uticak12.org/headlines](http://www.uticak12.org/headlines).

### UCS teacher honored for igniting student passion to pursue post-secondary dreams

A Utica Community Schools teacher has been recognized for her exemplary efforts in inspiring her students and fostering enthusiasm for the opportunities that lie ahead following their graduation.

Kelli McCloud, a Stevenson High School teacher, received the 2024 Spark Award from Detroit Regional Dollars for Scholars (DRDFS) – an organization that prepares students for post-high school success by supporting and empowering them with skills, knowledge and resources.



### Communications efforts honored for excellence

UCS has earned two top honors from the Michigan School Public Relations Association (MSPRA) - the UCS Champions video series was honored with an Excellence Award and the district’s rebranding efforts were recognized with a Merit Award.



The awards recognized Tim McAvoy, Director of School and Community Relations, Jennifer Kane, Public Relations Coordinator and Kevin Coppa, Video Technician.

# 4 FOCUS



**UTICA  
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[uticaK12.org/kindergarten](http://uticaK12.org/kindergarten)

**DISCOVER  
Excellence**

**Registration Begins January 6th!**

**2025 - 2026**

**Kindergarten and Young Fives**

## Positively transforming our future - next steps ....Continued from page 1

As we pursue change, we are committed to giving students opportunities to:

- Pursue excellence in a facility that is up to date, safe and welcoming.
- Live their passion through quality academics, fine arts and athletics at a school where our team empowers them to achieve their potential as they engage in what they love.

• Be where they belong with other students, teachers and staff members who welcome them and help them live and learn collaboratively and enthusiastically.

While enrollment patterns have significantly changed since our schools were first opened, our attendance patterns have stayed relatively the same.

Current attendance areas that divide

neighborhoods result in students being assigned to schools at a great distance from their homes and communities that are split into different elementary and secondary schools.

By reimagining the way we use facilities, we will create a system that serves our families and creates a better sense of belonging for our students.

### Translation Assistance

Persons seeking or needing district-related language assistance, please contact [translations@uticak12.org](mailto:translations@uticak12.org), or:  
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In compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Elliot-Larsen Civil Rights Act and the Persons with Disabilities Civil Rights Act, it is the policy of Utica Community Schools that no person shall, on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin or ancestry, sex, age, disability, height, weight, or marital status be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination during any instructional opportunities, programs, services, job placement assistance, employment or in policies governing student conduct and attendance. Any person suspecting a discriminatory practice should contact Utica Community Schools Human Resources at 11303 Greendale, Sterling Heights, MI 48312 or call (586) 797-1000.



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[WWW.UTICAK12.ORG](http://WWW.UTICAK12.ORG)

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