



Missouri Governor — Michael L. Parson

Office of Communications

2023 STATE OF THE STATE SPECIAL GUESTS

During the 2023 State of the State Address, Governor Mike Parson recognized a group of special guests for their achievements and commitment to the people of Missouri. Photos of special guests can be found on [Flickr](#).

Meadville R-IV School District Teacher Mrs. Emily Fluckey

Governor Parson recognized Meadville R-IV School District teacher Mrs. Emily Fluckey, one of more than 6,000 Missouri's educators that received a salary increase following implementation of the Governor's Teacher Baseline Salary Grant Program. Mrs. Fluckey received a \$7,000 pay increase thanks to the program and was able to move out of her parents' house, get married, and begin pursuing a master's degree. This year, again fully funding the foundation formula, increasing contributions to the Career Ladder Program, and continuing the Baseline Salary Grant Program, Governor Parson is supporting Missouri educators so that children across the state are afforded a meaningful education.

Growing up in Meadville, Missouri, Mrs. Fluckey was shaped by her community and has answered her calling to give back to the children that sit in the same seats that she once did. A 2017 graduate of Meadville High school, Emily went on to receive her Bachelor of Science in early childhood education from Northwest Missouri State University. After graduating in 2021, she returned home to Meadville to teach 1st grade in the Meadville R-IV School District. Now in her second year of teaching, Emily is working toward her master's degree in educational leadership through Northwest Missouri State University with plans to graduate this December.

The Discovery Place Director Sharon Winton

Governor Parson recognized students from Discovery Place Daycare, a Jefferson City based childcare facility that provides service to children from 6 weeks to 6 years old. Proposing three new child care tax credit programs and a historic increase in child care subsidy rates, Governor Parson is committed to supporting Missourians like Mrs. Winton and Discovery Place to ensure more Missouri families have access to critical childcare.

Established in 1990, Discovery Place is a trusted daycare and preschool center serving children from Jefferson City, Missouri, and surrounding areas. The daycare has 8 classrooms; each serves a different age group. Additional large, shared spaces allow for mixed-age play twice per day. Ms. Sharon Winton is the Director at Discovery place and has led the charge in the transformation of the daycare's facilities and services. Through hard times, facing declining enrollment and falling revenues, Ms. Sharon has persisted to help Discovery Place grow from its humble roots in the Truman Building in 1990 to its new, larger facility in central Jefferson City. Ms. Sharon adores all of the children and spends most of her time teaching in the 4-6 year-old room and preparing kids for kindergarten.

I-270 Project Pave Students

Governor Parson recognized students from the I-270 Project Pave, a Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Program that mentors and teaches students attending targeted North St. Louis County high schools. By prioritizing investments in Missouri's infrastructure along the I-70 corridor Governor Parson is not only making Missouri more accessible, but supporting the future of Missouri and its people.

The goal of Project Pave is to stimulate an interest in and pursuit of heavy highway design, engineering, and construction careers. MoDOT and its contracting team leads, Millstone Weber and Parsons Transportation Group, are investing in the futures of area high school students near the project boundaries.

Project Pave Students

- Christian Malloyd - was an intern with Project Pave and secured full-time employment with Millstone Weber as an IT Technician directly out of high school.
- Jaydin Thomas
- Savanna Jones
- Desiya Pace
- Sophia Luraschi
- Destinee Oglesby
- Kayla Stewart
- Vivian Martin

Department of Mental Health Youth Behavioral Health Liaison Phallin Thornton

Governor Parson recognized Department of Mental Health Youth Behavioral Health Liaison (YBHL) Phallin Thornton for her work in providing critical mental health services to Missouri's youth. The goal of YBHLs is to form better community partnerships between Community Mental Health Centers, law enforcement, and courts to save valuable resources that might otherwise be expended on unnecessary jail, prison, and hospital stays and to improve outcomes for individuals with behavioral health issues. Liaisons also follow-up with Missourians referred to them in order to track progress and ensure success.

The story of Phallin Thornton, Leah Crawford, and Leah's daughter Jewel, is one that demonstrates why the Department of Mental Health's youth behavioral health liaisons are critical to supporting Missouri's youth from all across the state. Last year, Leah began to notice changes in Jewel's behavior. The daughter she loves and cares for became angry and hateful, carrying burdens that no child should have to suffer through. Recognizing that action needed to be taken, Leah reached out to the Department of Mental Health and was able to connect Jewel with Phallin, one of the departments youth behavioral health liaisons. After spending time with Phallin, Leah noticed that Jewel was finally able to open up and make changes for the better, returning to the happy, smiling, and laughing child that she was before and deserves to be.

Missouri Blue Scholarship Recipients

Governor Parson recognized two recipients of the Missouri Blue Scholarship, a \$1 million fund to help attract more Missourians to law enforcement careers and address officer shortages in law enforcement agencies across Missouri. The Missouri Blue Scholarship pays \$5,000 toward the cost of a Missouri resident attending a law enforcement academy in the state.

Rachel Kelley

Since she was a young girl, Officer Rachel Kelly has wanted to be a police officer. As she grew older, "life got in the way" and Officer Kelley was forced to take a different path. For years, she owned and operated a restaurant to support herself and her family, but the pandemic forced her to close the doors on the business she had worked so hard to build. Facing this challenge, Officer Kelley made the decision to revisit her childhood dream with a specific goal in mind – to become a career detective. Using the Missouri Blue Scholarship program, Officer Kelley has completed her law enforcement education at Missouri Western State University's Regional Law Enforcement Academy and is living out that childhood dream of being a law enforcement officer with plans to continue to grow in her new career field.

Samuel Altom

Officer Samuel Altom recently decided to answer the call to service in law enforcement after noticing a cultural shift in the relationship between law enforcement officers and the public. While serving Kansas City Kansas Public Schools, Officer Altom recognized a lack of connection and distrust of police officers from younger generations and wanted to be a part of the solution. Having already graduated college, earning a bachelor's degree in Intercultural Studies, Officer Altom was facing the challenge of putting himself through the Metropolitan Community College – Blue River Public Safety Institute. Thanks to the Missouri Blue Scholarship program, Officer Altom has successfully completed his law enforcement academy training and is now serving with the City of Grandview Police Department where he continues to pursue his dream of joining a SWAT team and eventually becoming an instructor for new recruits.

Students and Leadership from Missouri's Seven Gold Star and National Blue Ribbon Schools

Governor Parson recognized students and leadership from Missouri's 2022 Gold Star and Blue Ribbon schools from across the state to highlight the importance of continuing to support student development and the opportunities of tomorrow.

[Blair Oaks Elementary School](#)

- Emmerson Hilty – Student
- Preston Snitker – Student
- Tara Bishop – Principal
- Mark Harvey – Interim Superintendent

[Chapel Lakes Elementary School](#)

- Cooper Minks – Student
- Skylaur James – Student
- Lizabeth White – Principal
- Dr. Bob Jerome – Superintendent

[Dewey Elementary School](#)

- Mahlia Wahid – Student
- Decker Rardon – Student
- Melanie Rucker – Principal
- Dr. Daniel Wiebers – Superintendent

[EPiC Elementary School](#)

- Henley Ricklefs – Student
- Sawyer Burch – Student
- Dr. Michelle Schmitz – Principal
- Dr. Jeremy Tucker – Superintendent

[Eugene Field Elementary School](#)

- Carson DeFazio – Student
- Rosalind Martin – Student
- Dusty Allen – Principal
- Dr. Anthony Rossetti – Superintendent

[Kirkwood Senior High School](#)

- Ben Herwick – Student
- Julia McDonald – Student
- Dr. Michael Havener – Principal
- Dr. David Ulrich – Superintendent

[Nixa High School](#)

- Meghana Nakkanti – Student
- Gideon Carter – Student
- Dr. David Kelly – Principal
- Dr. Gearl Loden – Superintendent