

# COMMUNITY NEWS

## Hazelwood Opportunity Center helps 78 students graduate in its inaugural year



More than 75 students from the Opportunity Center, in the Hazelwood School District, were recognized at the first ever opportunity center senior recognition program.

Last year, the Hazelwood School District Board of Education approved the move of all alternative education programs to the former Hazelwood East Middle School. The building was renamed Hazelwood Opportunity Center. The alternative education program offers five programs; Hazelwood success academy, Missouri option program, alternative support center, short-term suspension and positive choice.

“The Opportunity Center gives students who do not perform well in a traditional classroom setting, another chance to be successful,” said Dr. Darrell Strong, director of alternative education.

“This serves as a reminder for educators on why we do what we do, to help prepare students to be college ready or equipped for whatever path they choose after high school,” said Dr. Collins-Hart, Hazelwood school district superintendent.

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## Hazelwood School District Custodial Director by day is a magician by night

When Hazelwood School District Custodial Director Christopher Carpunky is not managing district buildings, he spends time entertaining children with magic tricks. He has performed hundreds of magic shows at libraries, schools, family reunions, churches, festivals and birthday parties.

Carpunky found himself inspired after watching a David Copperfield magic show on television. The

same night he found himself at a local library checking out several books on magic.

He started teaching magic to individuals of all ages at Southern Illinois University of Edwardsville and at the time was the second youngest magician to teach magic at a university.

He is also one of the top performers in the St. Louis and Riverbend Area having more documented five star reviews than any other magician in the entire St. Louis Metro area.

In 2010, Carpunky was asked by the NBC Network to audition on "America's Got Talent"



in St. Louis and was offered to be one of the first five auditions when the network came to St. Louis. However, a month prior, his wife had been diagnosed with a very rare stomach cancer and so he declined the offer to take care of his wife.

Carpunky has advice for aspiring magicians, "Practice, practice, practice because that's the most important thing in magic," said Carpunky.

Carpunky can be found on his social media page on Facebook, where he has over 1,500 followers, at Magician Chris Carpunky.