



BUS RIDERS OF THE MONTH — The Bethlehem Elementary School Bus Riders of the Month for May 2026 are shown above, left to right: front row – Noah Vang; second row – Mayiah Wilson, Lola Tester, Mia Antal, and Raelyn Daughday; third row – Braylon Settlemlyre, Rose Vodek, and Hannah Guthrie.

Bethlehem School teacher receives NCCAT Honored Educator Award

A teacher from Bethlehem Elementary School has received recognition from a statewide teacher professional development center.

M. Brock Womble, Executive Director of NCCAT and former Alexander County Schools Superintendent, notified Ms. Danielle Ortiz that she has been named the R. Phillip Haire Honored Educator Scholar for 2026-2027. As a result, the costs for Ortiz to attend an NCCAT professional development program are paid by the scholarship through the Development Foundation of the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching Inc. (NCCAT).

This scholarship was established to pay tribute to The Honorable R. Phillip Haire, who served Western North Carolina as a member of the House of Representatives in the General Assembly for fourteen years. His dedication to education is evidenced by his twelve-year service on the UNC Board of Governors and on the Board of Trustees of Western Carolina University. One of Representative Haire's significant service contributions was in the area of education. As an appointed member of the Public Education Commission, Representative Haire was instrumental in the Commission's study and



ORTIZ

research that resulted in the establishment of NCCAT.

Each year, the R. Phillip Haire Honored Educator Scholarship provides funds for a teacher from North Carolina to attend an NCCAT program of his or her choice. The scholarship covers all costs associated with a teacher's participation in the program including: instruction, food and lodging, travel to and from the campus from the educator's home (which includes ferry expenses if applicable), program materials, and payment for the educator's substitute teacher while in attendance at NCCAT. Moreover, the Haire Scholar receives \$250 for use in the classroom.

Ortiz told *The Times* she is first on a wait list to attend a week-long course in Ocracoke called "Cooperative Learning in the

Science Classroom" in the beginning of October.



TERRIFIC KIDS FOR MAY 2026 — Bethlehem Elementary Terrific Kids for May 2026 are shown above: Cole Southard, Braxten Benfield, Sawyer Beard, Gabriel Hurley, Bailey Cox, Lola Tester, Micah Gaines, Luke Evans, Sebastian Caballero, Ella Chamberd, Samuel Hefner, Wilder Geogue, Nolan Reece, Axel Whitener, Jada Wilson, Piper Fay, Sadie Lee, Tegan Weaver, and Ellie Ortiz. Not pictured: Paris Gay.

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Community Vacation Bible School planned for July 26

Mt. Bethel Methodist Church in Bethlehem, in partnership with Community Christian Fellowship, will host a Community Vacation Bible School on Sunday, July 26, from 3:00 to 6:30 p.m. The theme is "Let's Party!" and the event will offer activities and classes for all ages, including an adult VBS class taught by Pastor Neil Bowman.

A free meal will be served beginning around

5:00 p.m. Families and adults are encouraged to register in advance through the Facebook Event on Mt. Bethel Methodist to help organizers plan for food and materials. School supplies will also be available for children attending the event.

The churches look forward to working together to provide an enjoyable and meaningful event for the entire community.



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