

Home › Local News › Schools & Education › Wynne High School to launch Aspirnaut program in September

Wynne High School to launch Aspirnaut program in September

By **David Owens** August 16, 2024



File photo/Wynne High School.

WYNNE — The Aspirnaut program at Wynne High School is expected to launch in mid-September.

The program was co-founded by Dr. Billy Hudson, the Elliott V. Newman Professor of Medicine at Vanderbilt University Medical Center and an Arkansas native.

His wife, Dr. Julie Hudson is the executive director of the program. She says the roots of the Aspirnaut program began in his hometown of Grapevine, Arkansas.



“He visited the school. He went to a rural school that became a highly consolidated school district, which is now the Sheridan School District, and saw that students had to get on bus rides,” she said. “He said there must be something we can do to help students enhance their education or make use of that time that they have such long commutes. Out of that grew that first project on a school bus where they were equipped with cellular Wi-Fi access and the students were doing online courses and doing some STEM curriculum during their bus rides.”

Hudson said that the program evolved into a community classroom, video conferencing labs, and eventually a summer research internship program at Vanderbilt. One of those student interns helped establish the relationship between the Hudsons and the Wynne School District.

“It’s serendipity,” she said. “We happened to have a high school student from Wynne who applied to our program which was several summers ago – Colton Miller – and he came to the program and he was phenomenal. His counselor Holly Melton said can I visit the program.

“I appreciate that she wanted to make sure the program was legitimate. It was what we said it was and just to see what students were experiencing,” Hudson added. “So she came and visited and then she said why don’t you come meet our school administrators and see what we can collectively do together.”

Hudson said Arkansas State University is also a partner in the program. She said the lessons taught through the program can be applied to a wide range of careers including agriculture and medicine.

“We’re aware that a lot of students want to return to the communities where they came from,” she said. “There is so much infrastructure in that region around the kinds of science that are done at A-State, around the agricultural business, aquaculture. It’s an incredible waterways area as well. There is so much in that region that supports the kinds of careers that students might want to have and stay closer to home.”