



# Blackcat News

**Mission Statement:**  
**"Educating Today for a Better Tomorrow"**

VOLUME 25

ISSUE 82

SCHOOL YEAR 2020-2021

April 29, 2021



## Taylor Expansion Repurposing Space Within the Building



**Taylor's teachers and staff**

needed will be paid for by the state. The complexities of the funding sources to allow additional personnel are beyond the scope of this article. There will be expenses related to repurposing space within the building.

Willis says, "You can have a kid that excels in one area but has a deficit in another area. Well, if we can catch that deficit when they are younger, they are more likely to be successful as they get older." Conversely, a student who falls behind requires additional attention and there can be behavioral issues that surface because of their frustration. That's why Willis believes this expansion will have a huge impact. He says, "In my 20 years in education, this will be the biggest accomplishment I've ever been a part of for kids. It's the top priority for next year."

Part of Taylor's mission is the education of special needs students in the Dunklin, Festus, and Jefferson school districts. Taylor has excelled in this area. The building is like an umbrella providing a safe, loving environment. Inside, teachers and paraprofessionals customize the lessons to engage the students and make progress toward their goals. Taylor receives state and federal funding to help cover the costs of their education, but any time a student with special needs in southeast Jefferson County turns 3 years old, Taylor must make space for them. As a result, other students can end up on a waiting list. Administrators want to cut the wait by adding two additional classrooms in August. Director Charissa Kappler says, "This fall we'll have 58 students going to Pevely Elementary School. With the extra space, we project 84 will go to Pevely the following year."

Taylor started off with only 40 students in three classrooms. A decade later the center is educating 194 students. There are several factors that play into the positive growth rate. Students are getting exemplary teachers for only 125 dollars a week. The school's reputation goes beyond our district's boundaries. Director Tom Moreland says, "We get a lot of referrals from family physicians." However, most of the demand for services comes from parents like Jessika Swapp talking to other moms. She says, "We absolutely love Taylor. My little girl Savana loves Miss Katie and Miss Robin. She has definitely blossomed, she's counting all the way up to 20, she's writing her name, she spells her name, she knows her address and phone number. I have nothing but positive things to say."

Plans are being finalized to accept more students at Taylor Early Childhood Center. There's a waiting list of 120 students to attend the award-winning preschool, but there are several hurdles to increasing enrollment. Assistant Superintendent Joe Willis says, "The building isn't large enough, we need additional staff, and we need to change the way it's funded."

The goal is to have space for every 3- to 5-year old Dunklin student who wants to attend Taylor. Willis says, "For every dollar you spend on the front end with early childhood, you save eight dollars on the back end as far as remediation." However, the investment will be minimal because

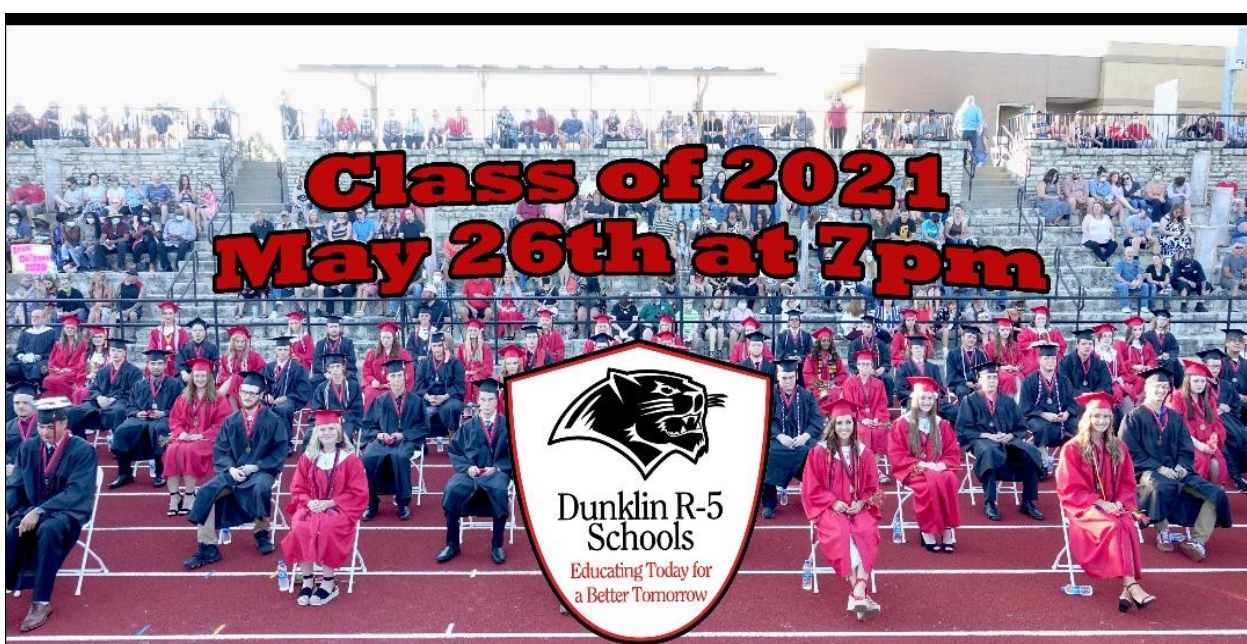
the  
extra  
staff



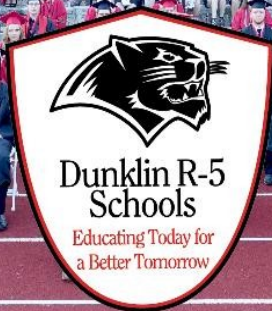
**Savana Swapp**

### Prom Time

Over 100 students donned their suits and gowns for this spring's prom at Oak Valley Golf Course and Resort in Pevely. The venue catered to the upperclassmen with a beautiful spread and lively dance floor. When the votes were counted, the prom king and queen were Chris Courtwright and Mekynzi Endermuhle (pictured). The other seniors in the court were Kyle Wooley, Mya Price-Hewitt, Gavin Barnaby, and Hailey Pilliard.



**Class of 2021  
May 26th at 7pm**



**The graduation ceremony for Herculanum High School's Class of 2021 will be on the football field at 7pm on 5/26/21. If there is rain, the ceremony will be moved to Jefferson College. It will be the same date and time.**





# Message from the Superintendent

Blackcat Community:

I want to start this Blackcat News article with a heartfelt THANK YOU!! The 2020-2021 school year was not a lost year. Was it different? Yes! But lost? Not at all. Our schools are learning organizations, and what we have learned over this last year is that our teachers are incredible, and our parents are extremely supportive. We have also learned that our kids need their peers and social interactions (even if it is at a distance). I am constantly reminded about what an



incredible place the Dunklin R-5 School District is to work and educate kids. In the midst of COVID-19, the district was able to offer awesome opportunities for students each day.

During a recent conversation, I began to think about everything that has been accomplished during the 2020-2021 school year for our students to have a great experience. It truly is amazing. I could not be more excited to serve as your superintendent of schools. So thank you for a great first year.

In closing, I have heard on more than one occasion that "Credibility is the Currency of Leadership!" and my hope is

that each of our community members find our leadership team working to build credibility. This administration team is looking forward to continued partnerships with our parents and community. We can't wait to see our students at our Summer Journey as well as in August to start our 2021-2022 school year.

Please visit our website at [www.dunklin.k12.mo.us](http://www.dunklin.k12.mo.us) for the latest updated information.

Dr. Clint Freeman, Superintendent of Schools

## Message from the Board President

Hello Blackcat Community!

As the school year is winding down, the Board of Education and school administration are reflecting on this year and making plans for the 2021-2022 school year. Seems like each year we always talk about change and flexibility. However, this school year has been 100% just that: change and flexibility.

We went from a previous school year which had been shut down abruptly by the pandemic with everyone doing school remotely; to our current school year with a planned alternative method of instruction (AMI) and having some students attending in person with others attending virtually. In some areas there are teachers teaching all in-person students, some teaching all virtual students and many pulling double duty and teaching both in person and virtual. It has been challenging for teachers, students and parents, and we very much appreciate everyone's patience, understanding and hard work. Our administrative team, teachers and staff have really stepped up and worked extremely hard to ensure that all students, whether in person or virtual, are getting the best education possible. I have heard Dr. Freeman state on numerous occasions that we have the best staff around, which is very true. Our Blackcat team is amazing. The Board and I appreciate everything they do. In addition, all of our Blackcat families have been really supportive of the administration's plans and work. We appreciate that very much as well. Dunklin R-5's administration truly cares about staff, students and the community and works very hard to ensure that the decisions they make are what is best for kids. Sometimes those decisions are not always the popular ones, but they are what works and makes the most sense to accomplish our mission of "Educating Today for a Better Tomorrow".

Since our last newsletter, a lot of things have been accomplished. We completed many of our construction projects, inducted a new student board representative, approved IT purchases of Chromebooks and other electronic devices to ensure our staff and students have what they need. We also approved being a POW/MIA Campus which will be led by our high school JAG students. Spring sports are in full swing, and graduation is right around the corner. Kindergarten registration is complete, and we are thrilled to be welcoming a new group of Blackcats to our district. So many exciting things are happening.

The Board of Education meets each month in person on the third Tuesday of the month at 7:00 pm. In the past several months, we have moved the meeting around the district to try and find a good space which allows for public attendance and presentations while remaining socially distanced. Currently we have been meeting at Pevly Elementary. If you are interested in attending to hear more about what is happening around Dunklin R-5, the meeting agenda, which includes the location, is posted at least 24 hours or more in advance of the meeting in order to abide by the Missouri Sunshine Law. This information is posted to our website and also at our central office. Please note that masks are required at these meetings.

Thank you again Blackcat Community for your support. We appreciate you all very much!

Sincerely, Dawn M. Warner,  
President, Dunklin R-5 Board of Education

### DUNKLIN R-5 SCHOOL DISTRICT

497 Joachim Avenue ▪ Herculanum, MO 63048 ▪ (636) 479-5200  
Dr. Clint Freeman, Superintendent Mr. Joe Willis, Assistant Superintendent

#### BOARD OF EDUCATION

Dawn Warner, President Tammy Heidland, Vice President  
Cheryl Aylesworth, Susan Hartmann, Michael Hicks, Jim Kasten, John Maddox

#### HERCULANEUM HIGH SCHOOL ext. 3

Stephanie Dix, Principal  
Jason Gillman, Asst. Prin./AD  
Renee Richardson, Guidance Counselor,  
grades 11-12  
Chelsey Dickerman, Guidance Counselor,  
grades 9-10 and A+  
Connie Ward, Nurse

#### SENN-THOMAS MIDDLE SCHOOL ext. 2

Tracy Lewis, Principal  
Trent Sauer, Dean of Students  
Stephanie Strohm, Guidance Counselor  
Heather Shadowens, Nurse  
Joycie Gonzalez-Meyer,  
School-Family Liaison

#### PEVELY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ext. 1

Katie Dunlap, Principal  
Adam Dixon, Asst. Principal  
Thomas Robins, Guidance Counselor  
Jessica Rekate, Guidance Counselor  
Heather Engelbach, Nurse

#### TAYLOR EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER ext. 5

Charissa Kappler, Director  
Christina Meyer, Nurse

#### DIRECTORS

Nichole Arnold, Director of Food Service  
Steve Copeland, Director of Maintenance  
Tom Jordan, Director of Technology  
Matt Lichtenstein, Communications Director  
Tom Moreland, Director of Special Services  
Sue Sharp, Director of Transportation

#### Board Meetings are Open to the Public

The Dunklin R-5 Board of Education meets on a regular basis on the third Tuesday of each month. The meetings are held at 7:00 pm in the library at Pevly Elementary School. The meetings are open to the public. Patrons may view agendas and items from the meetings by going to our website [www.dunklin.k12.mo.us](http://www.dunklin.k12.mo.us), clicking on the District tab and clicking on "Paperless Board Meetings."

**Dunklin R-5 School District is an equal opportunity employer**





# Vaccinating School Employees

Over 2,000 employees of Jefferson County schools received their second vaccination the weekend after Easter. It was a mammoth effort to coordinate clinics at three locations, and at the center of it all was the Dunklin School District. The story started with a conference call that included local superintendents and the Jefferson County Health Department.

In March, teachers became eligible to get a vaccination for COVID-19. Naturally, our superintendents wanted to know how the health department was planning to vaccinate educators. They learned about the limitations of the health department's staff, facilities, funding, and the difficulty getting the vaccine. Since August, Jefferson County teachers have been in class, and delaying the security offered by a vaccine was unacceptable to Dr. Clint Freeman. By the time the call concluded, Freeman and the Fox superintendent were asked by the others to provide clinics for all Jefferson County school district employees.

It took those of us in Dunklin's Central Office a day or so to comprehend the vastness of the commitment. We had a lot to learn, and the stakes were high. The effort started with Dr. Nisha Patel at Fox writing an application to the state requesting a vaccine shipment. Before that was sent off, the county health department said they could provide over 1,000 doses from Pfizer. Superintendents decided there would be clinics at Rickman Auditorium in Arnold, Northwest High School, and Pevely Elementary School. Then a pharmacy told Fox they could provide 650 doses of the Moderna vaccine. The next challenge was scheduling appointments for over 1,700 people. That became the responsibility of Laura Campbell in Dunklin's Central Office. Having never seen the program "Sign Up Genius," she effectively used the software to allow employees to pick a time and push out the required paperwork. At the Pevely location, we had six appointments every four minutes for over seven hours.

Organizers were concerned that there wouldn't be enough vaccine to cover all public and private school district employees, but that wasn't the case. Jefferson County superintendents were now being contacted by independent pharmacies that wanted to provide mini-clinics in their district. Some agreed, which pushed the total to over 2,000 for that weekend. We learned a surprising number of district employees had already gotten their first shot at one of several rural locations. Still, others turned down the opportunity because they were pregnant or breastfeeding, or recently had the virus. They plan on getting vaccinated this summer when shots are widely available.

The Medicine Shoppe in Pevely was at the core of our clinic site. Pharmacist Jason Wang had to overcome several bureaucratic challenges and gather enough qualified personnel, which were covered under the proper insurance, to give the vaccinations. The next issue was drawing the vaccine in the proper time window. The ultra-cold medication can't be placed at room temperature for more than a couple of hours. In stepped Dunklin's Tonya Goodwin and the rest of the nursing staff. They were trained on the procedure at the Medicine Shoppe. Goodwin says, "The Pfizer vaccine is the more labor intensive vaccine to prepare." With the pace of appointments, it was critical that our nurses, and those on loan from Jefferson R7, paced the draws to the appointments.

Dr. Freeman reached out to our community partners at the Herculanum Fire Department and the Joachim-Plattin Ambulance District. Both agencies provided volunteers at the entrance and exit points. Emergency services were never needed at Pevely, but their presence was reassuring to our customers, which included a few area residents. They were on a waiting list at the



Back: Pharmacist Jason Wang, Laura Campbell, Omero McKnight, Lee Kohler. Center: Pam Cullen, Nurse Connie Ward, Nurse Heather Shadowens, Kristin Shelton, Angie Baiter. Front: Nurse Christina Meyer, Nurse Tonya Goodwin, Nurse Heather Engelbach, Barb Hedge.

Medicine Shoppe and filled any openings in our schedule. Goodwin says, "...they were so grateful to get it done close to home."

Everyone at Dunklin took ownership of the clinic. Board of Education members made sure people had the required forms. Secretaries checked the paperwork with a smile. Administrators took turns directing people to the available vaccinators. The custodial employees prepared the building and cleaned the waiting area after each person left. On the way out, customers got a vaccination sticker and a chance to take a picture with a giant toy syringe.

We have received thanks from many of our area's dedicated educators. Dr. Freeman says, "There was a sense of relief for those that have been coming and giving their all every day." The Jefferson County Health Department made tremendous strides during this same time frame. They have rented the old Shop-n-Save on North Truman to offer walk-in vaccinations. Recently, Jefferson College decided to organize their own vaccination clinic and sought advice from local health officials. In perhaps the greatest compliment of all, the Jefferson County Health Department referred them to the Dunklin School District.





# University Recruits Payne

Wrestler Aaron Payne signed with Hannibal-LaGrange University. The Payne family moved back to Missouri for Aaron to start wrestling in his junior year. He needed some encouragement from Dad to embrace the sport, but he quickly gained strength and agility. His father, Brian Payne, was a Herculaneum wrestler when the program started in 1995-96.

Aaron Payne says, "It's great that I am actually getting to play a sport in college because most kids don't get to be a collegiate athlete." He knows this path will require commitment. University Coach Daniel Capp says the first year is always a learning year. Athletes need to adjust to the speed and power of the 20- and 21-year-olds. Payne's long-term goal is to get a degree in criminal justice and work for a federal agency.

This may be the first time a Herculaneum grappler moved on to the next level since Andrew Waites, who graduated in 2009. Next season, there might not be any seniors on the roster, but Coach Cody Hunter is building for the future. One way of doing that is inviting elementary and middle school students to weekly Open Mat Nights. The response has been great, with over 50 students participating. The little Blackcats will stretch, run, and learn some basic moves. Coaches get assistance from high school wrestlers who put on slow-motion demonstrations and encourage for those new to the sport.

High school wrestler Eddyson Reeves (9th) is teaching Paxton Winebaugh (3rd) how to move forward for a takedown.



Back Row: Chase Payne (9th), University Coach Daniel Capp, Herculaneum Coach Cody Hunter, Marissa Payne (12th). Front Row: Carrie Payne, Aaron Payne, and Brian Payne.

**"Go  
Blackcats"**



## STMS Cheerleading Tryouts

**May 3rd- 6th**

**STMS Gym from 2:30-5 pm**

**Please come with completed application, current physical, and signed parent waiver!**

**All tryout candidates must wear appropriate athletic clothing & footwear (t-shirts, shorts, sneakers) Make sure hair is up and out of eyes.**

**THIS IS FOR BOTH FOOTBALL & BASKETBALL SEASONS!!**

**Contact Miss Wichmann ([mwichmann@dunklin.k12.mo.us](mailto:mwichmann@dunklin.k12.mo.us)) with any questions!**



# Polar Plunge

Every year teachers Caitlin Polley and Maria Stout take a handful of students to Maryland Heights, where they run into an icy lake in the middle of winter. The absurd nature of the activity, called the Polar Plunge, demonstrates their commitment. They are raising money for the Special Olympics. The money supports events for local athletes and other services like health screenings and leadership opportunities.

The Senn-Thomas Middle School Student Council is at the center of the fundraising effort, with guidance from their sponsors Polley and Stout. The participants solicit funds from other students, district employees, and their parents. This year had a cool Jurassic theme and a frigid water temperature of 33

degrees. The Blackcats bravely charged the lake and came out with smiles. It was the third year for Riley Cox and the second time for Trent Egan. Haley Morgan lost a sandal, but a diver grabbed it and she laughed it off. At the end of the day on February 27<sup>th</sup>, Senn-Thomas StuCo raised 1,075 dollars. With only seven participants, they placed third among schools. Overall this year, the Polar Plunge raised 77,355 dollars for Missouri's Special Olympics.



The Arctic Blackcats included Riley Cox, Natalia Garrett, Trent Egan, Haley Morgan, and Evan Bill, as well as Ms. Caitlin Polley and Ms. Maria Stout.

## Spanish Blackcat Wins Award

The International Cultural Exchange Service has named 15-year-old Jaime Barea Valez the Student of the Month for March. The upbeat Valez was chosen from over 600 exchange students and will receive a \$100 VISA gift card and a letter of commendation from the organization's president.

Valez lives with the Tucker family in Pevely and attends Herculaneum High School. He says, "It's totally different from school in Spain. It's another planet." In Spain, teachers are more likely to use lectures as a way of presenting the information. At Herculaneum, there are more hands-on activities like science experiments, and he loves having elective courses. Students go home for lunch in his hometown and eating in a school cafeteria has been a new experience. Valez played hockey and soccer year-round in Spain but wasn't afraid of joining the Herculaneum football, basketball, and track teams.

Students have welcomed the newcomer with open arms. When players on the basketball team found out he didn't have the proper footwear, they surprised him by buying him a pair of



Nike basketball shoes. Valez says, "My teammates are incredible. We are one."

The Spaniard has the greatest praise for his host family, and the feeling is mutual. Quentin Tucker says, "We are so grateful to have Jaime as part of our family. He is always being silly and keeping things light. And yet, when someone is sad or struggling, Jaime is the first to ask if you're OK, and offer a hug." With the addition of Valez, the Tuckers have five boys bouncing around their home this year.





# Blackcat Babies

It's a special moment when one of our employees, or their spouse, brings home a new baby. On average, it happens three to four times a year. However, this hasn't been a typical year. Going back to May, we couldn't be prouder to welcome seven new Blackcats to our family (as of press time). Another nine employees (or their spouses) are expecting in this calendar year.

The district shut down in March of last year, and a two months later Holly Dow brought Liam Craig into the world. In December, Sierra Callahan gave us Nolan and Katie Lott added a little girl to the family, Leddie Laine. In February, Haley Webery got us started with her baby Sutton Wayne. Then Elizabeth Mattingly's Delano Harvey and Sarah Brotherton's Leo blessed us on the same day. In March, Christina Kasmarzik had her baby girl Ada Mae, and earlier this month Alyssa Gallion delivered Penelope.

The list of expecting parents includes Mariah Crowley, who is due this month. Jamie Moore is



due at the end of May. Chris O'Connell's wife has a July due date. Danielle Temperato will have a September baby. Then the families will grow for Hallie Kappler in October and Jason Jarvis in November.

## Parenting Class Uses High Tech Dolls



Pictured from the left: Sophomores Raven Vance, Rylee Eckert, Paige Ruder, Camila Moore, Tori Glaze, and Kylie Aubuchon.

The new babies in Mrs. Lefler's parenting class arrived on March 31st. She says, "It's the nearest experience that you can get to caring for a real baby." Students are given a bracelet with a sensor that identifies them as the caregiver to an electronic doll. Other sensors record diaper changes or if the baby is being fed or burped. Sometimes the babies just want to be held. They are placed in daycare mode at school, but sophomore Raven Vance says, "It's really annoying during the night." Information from the infant simulators is uploaded to the teacher, so ignoring the doll isn't an option. After having a baby for a couple of nights, Kylie Aubuchon said, "My favorite thing to do is sleep. I can no longer sleep. It just cries and cries and cries. I fed it one time last night for a half-hour, and then I burped it for a half-hour, and then I fed it again, and then it burped again, and then I changed its diaper, and then I went to bed, and then I woke up again because it was crying." Rylee Eckert summed it up for her sleep-deprived classmates by saying, "Don't have kids as a teenager."

**WE WANT TO THANK THE 800 PEOPLE WHO SUPPORTED OUR FUNDRAISER. WE PLANTED 610 SPINNING FLOWERS AT TAYLOR AND RAISED OVER \$12,000.**





The Senn-Thomas Middle School Student Council was recognized at the virtual state convention in March for earning the Honor Council Award. It is the highest recognition that can be earned by student councils. Across Missouri, only 59 schools received the prestigious gold award this year. Congratulations, Blackcats!

# Mile Run Encouraged by Police

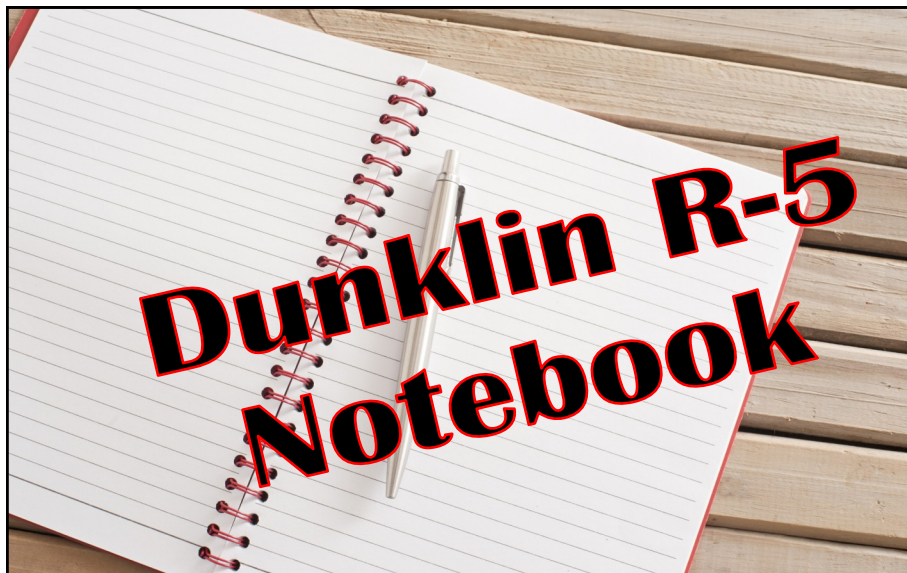
When it was time for 5th grade students to run a mile for gym class, they were cheered on by local police officers. Dunklin Officer Bradley Tavener and Pevely Officer Matthew Lockett didn't stay on the sidelines but ran with the students and offered them words of encouragement.



Pictured is Officer Lockett with Isaiah Largent running in the park next to the elementary school.







The last day of school is Wednesday, May 26, and it's an early release day. We didn't use all of the built-in snow days on the original calendar.

Blackcats Give Back Day is May 1. Students will spend that Saturday performing service projects throughout the community.

Summer school is June 3rd-30th for students going into 1st-12th grades. Incoming kindergarten students will have summer school from August 2nd-13th this year. We wanted to give the little ones the building all to themselves.

Our Pevely 5th graders have been invited to sing the National Anthem for the St. Louis Cardinals' game on May 9! A note was sent home with them. Questions? Contact Ms. Fleschner [ffleschner@dunklin.k12.mo.us](mailto:ffleschner@dunklin.k12.mo.us)

STMS cheer tryouts are May 3rd-6th from 2:30 - 5:00 p.m. in the STMS Gym!

**FREE and REDUCED Lunch Forms:** Please take a couple of minutes to complete the Free and Reduced Lunch Form. If you need assistance, please



**Summer Journey for 1st-8th grade students will be June 3rd through June 30th. Incoming kindergarten students will attend August 2nd through August 13th. This program is free for all students.**

**K-5th will attend Pevely Elementary School and 6th-12th grades will be at Herculanum High School.**

contact Nichole Arnold, Food Service Director, at [narnold@dunklin.k12.mo.us](mailto:narnold@dunklin.k12.mo.us). By supplying the district with your Free & Reduced applications, it helps aid the school district in qualifying for the Pandemic Relief Waivers as well as making sure that your child receives the nutritional meal they deserve each and every day. These waivers will end in September 2021. So please make sure to complete the form as soon as possible.

**High School Seniors: Finals are May 20th and 21st.**

**Graduation Week Kick-Off Parade is May 23 at 6 pm.**

**Senior awards and BBQ is May 25.**

**Graduation is at 7:00 p.m. on May 26 on the football field.**

Lending Libraries have been refurbished and will soon be filled with books. They are located outside Taylor Early Childhood Center and Pevely Elementary School.

Congratulations to the varsity boys and girls track teams. They both won at the Grandview Invitational.

The STMS boys track team broke three school records. Nate Wright, Liam Piet, Braiden Schenewerk, and Brandon Marshall set a new distance medley record of 8:31.30.

Mason Morton, Anthony Gallina, Colton Fowler, and Nikolas Palmer set a new sprint medley record of 1:52.67.

Nate Wright, Anthony Gallina, Colton Fowler, and Luke Brice set a new mile medley record of 4:09.36.

Thanks to everyone who participated in McTeacher Night at the Pevely McDonalds. We made \$1,160.

Boys Basketball – Open Gyms for 3rd-5th grade students are Wednesday afternoons from 3:45 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. Contact Coach Jarvis for more information. [jjarvis@dunklin.k12.mo.us](mailto:jjarvis@dunklin.k12.mo.us)

Nurse Ward says, "I want to remind everyone to continue to practice social distance, wash your hands, and continue to wear masks. Numbers have declined, but COVID is still out there, so take precautions. No one wants to miss end-of-year activities or graduation. Stay safe!"



## Student Council Blood Drive

The Herculanum Student Council exceeded their goal of 52 units for their Red Cross Blood Drive in March. There were 63 donors, and they ended the day with 58 units of blood. Twelve of them were first time donors like Lucas Bach. His donation started as a typical sequence of steps, including giving him a ball to squeeze. The athlete compressed the ball repeatedly. He says, "I had no idea what my arm was doing because I was so focused on not thinking about my arm." A Red Cross worker saw the bag filling up very quickly, asked Bach if he was ok, and encouraged him to slow down. The sophomore was lightheaded, but that's common because of the temporary lowering of blood pressure. Bach recovered quickly and plans to give the gift of life again in the future. The Red Cross was pleased with the results and donated 500 dollars for scholarships at Herculanum High School.

