GREAT THINGS ARE HAPPENING IN THE RIVER VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT!

THE RIVER VALLEY NEWS

May 2025

Fifth Grade Students Get a Preview of Middle School Life on Move Up Day

Move Up Day gave fifth grade students from Saltsburg and Blairsville Elementary Schools a chance to explore what life will be like as sixth graders at River Valley Middle School. The special visit was designed to ease the transition and help students feel more confident and prepared for the next step in their education.



Students toured the building, including both floors of the middle school, the cafeteria, the nurse's office, the guidance office, and the main office. Along the way, they met teachers, learned what a typical middle school schedule looks like, and got a feel for the daily routines.

To help students build connections with new classmates, they were grouped with peers from both elementary schools. One of the highlights of the morning was an icebreaker activity called "Find Someone Who." Students received a list of prompts, like "find someone who plays an instrument," or "find someone who has a sibling at the middle school." While music played, they moved around the room, talking with their peers to find classmates who could answer each question. It was a fun way for students to learn about each other and start building friendships across both elementary schools.

During the "Question Bag" activity, students wrote down their questions about middle school life and dropped them into a bag. Volunteer students from the middle and high school pulled questions from the bag and answered each one, offering helpful insights from their own experiences. By the end of the visit, our rising



sixth graders had a better understanding of the middle school building, schedule, and what to expect next year!

"Move Up Day is a special opportunity for our 5th graders to get excited about the transition to middle school. It gives them a chance to explore their new environment, meet some of their future teachers, and connect with older students who can help ease any nerves. Our goal is to make this next step feel welcoming and exciting, so they walk into 6th grade feeling confident and prepared."

- Ms. Tammy Buffone, Middle School Counselor



Cool Beans Cafe Offers Inclusive, Real-World Learning

On Fridays throughout the year, staff at BES enjoy a special treat, not just coffee, but the opportunity to support the student-run Cool Beans Cafe, which has become a popular part of the school community.

The cafe is run by Mr. Bailey's students, alongside fifth grade students of the month. Together, they take orders, prepare drinks, deliver to classrooms, and manage money. Students rotate through all the jobs throughout the year, giving everyone the opportunity to try different tasks–from labeling cups and scooping ingredients, to counting change and making drinks. The cafe ties to career readiness using the RIASEC framework as a guide to help students explore what they enjoy and do well.

One of the most popular parts of the experience is delivering orders. Students love visiting classrooms and interacting with teachers and staff. The fifth grade helpers are PBIS students of the month, and helping out in the cafe has become one of the most requested rewards.

The students place menus in teacher mailboxes each week. Iced and hot coffee are the most popular items, made using beans sourced from local coffee shops. All proceeds from the cafe go directly back into supporting student activities, such as classroom projects and field trips.

"When students with disabilities run a cafe, they're not just serving coffee-they're brewing confidence, building skills, and creating a space where community and inclusiveness are part of every order."
- Mr. Jared Bailey, Student Services Educator



Mrs. Fogel, the district's occupational therapist, helps the students develop fine motor skills through tasks like scooping, pouring, and preparing ingredients. Speech pathologists Mrs. Fatula and Mrs. Wallace created communication devices that help students take orders more independently. It's a collaborative project that gives students hands-on experience and builds a sense of belonging and accomplishment one cup at a time.



Congratulations to this year's Indiana County Chamber of Commerce Excellence in Education Awards winners!



Teacher of the Year Nominee, Mrs. Jessica George, Lilly Buckles, Ava Persichetti, Holden Fridley, Sam Yanits, Giavanna Previte, Merreck Smith, Gavin Burkhart (not pictured: Luke Prohaska)

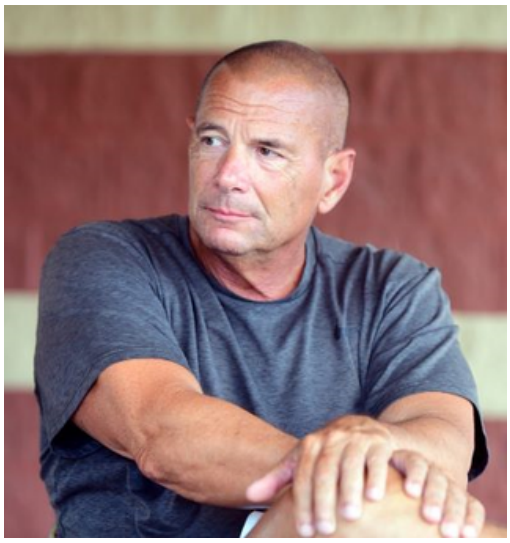


Gia Previte, a senior in the Culinary Arts program at ICTC, was named this year's Excellence in Education Award recipient! She won a brand new car from Colonial Motors! Congratulations!

Meet the Coach

A Conversation With Coach Ed Dalton About Football, Mindset, and What's Ahead

Q: What do you want to bring to River Valley?



I think what I want is an opportunity to make the program elite. Elite means doing ordinary things in an extraordinary way. Elite culture - from what our lockers look like, how we dress, to how we play. It means we want to be good community members. If I can't brag about you, I don't really want you on the team.

Q: What are you most excited about and looking forward to?

I finally got my face in front of the kids. I tried to explain to them that I chose them. They didn't choose me. That faith is believing without evidence. My job is to give the athletes everything they need—physically and mentally—so we can build the right mindset together.

Q: What's your goal for the 2025 season?

My goal is to be process-driven. The best example would be your PR in track—you might not win, but you were 30 seconds better, so that's a success. It's focusing on the process of showing up every day to improve.

Let's see if we can develop ourselves physically, mentally, and in our attitude, and then let's get to the season. Looking at the players, and coming from a AA school, I can tell you we're pretty big and we're athletic, so for right now I think we have what we need. I graded every play the underclassmen ran last year - 18,000 plays scored. I have a good idea who they were last year, and I know the opponents. That's where we'll start.

Q: You've said you encourage your athletes to play multiple sports. Can you share your philosophy on that?

There's so much you get from playing other sports. Take basketball—how many times do you stop, change direction, react? All of that translates. You might need to make a big play, a big tackle, or a big catch–those movements matter. Baseball is such a mental game. When the ball's hit to you, what's the situation? What's the score? Where are the runners? In my era, if you weren't on the baseball team, you had to run track if you were a football player. Why wouldn't you want to be faster or throw?

I'm a big fan of kids playing multiple sports. They build relationships, and the greatest teams go eat together, hang together, cry together, and laugh together. The scoreboard won't be the memory quite as much as all the time together.

Q: What advice would you give younger athletes who aren't yet at the varsity level?

There's a lot of knowledge out there, and it isn't all good. I remember we used to wear ankle weights all day, and couldn't figure out why our knees were killing us. Physical training doesn't have to be lifting weights. If you never go out of season with your training, you're going to see big changes. So, a fifth grader might be doing push-ups, pull-ups, chin-ups, and squats. The weather shouldn't dictate your training. Have fun—but there's more. There are a lot of ways to have fun. I think that's it. I just think—have fun, listen to your coaches, but understand there's a lot of knowledge out there.



Q: What do you like to do outside of football?

I like to work out. I'm not a blur anymore, but in the summer, I'm probably a 12-15 mile a week runner. I try to lift weights every day. I like HIIT training. I love to spend time with my grandkids and hang out with them.

Don't miss the 25-26 Football Season Home Opener! The Panthers will host Penns Manor on Friday, August 22!

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Celebrating the Arts at SES

From performances to paintbrushes, Saltsburg Elementary students have been busy showcasing their creativity this year.



Each grade participated in a PTA-sponsored Cookies and Canvas event led by art teacher Ms. Scalamogna, where students enjoyed sweet treats and a guided painting session. Fourth graders rocked bold, Picasso-inspired guitars. First-grade students painted colorful balloon scenes, while kindergarteners designed beautiful butterflies. Even our youngest artists in Pre-K stepped up to the easels to paint cheerful trucks. Each student left with a piece of art they created themselves!

The annual PTA Talent Show, a student favorite, gave performers a chance to step into the spotlight. With singing, dancing, instrumental music, and more, participants shared their gifts with classmates and families. This tradition is a fun celebration of the many talents that make our school community special.

Student artwork was featured during the Inspirations Art Show, supported by the PTA. Families and guests admired original projects from students across grade levels. Beyond the art show, families can view an ongoing collection of student creations on Artsonia, our digital gallery curated by Mrs. Scalamogna.

The music program hit a high note this year with a record number of students participating in both band and chorus. The school year began with 34 students–the largest group since Mrs. Staymates began teaching elementary band, when she had just eight! So many signed up that the school ran out of instruments! Mrs. Richards helped get a few that weren't in playing condition repaired. Chorus also had a fantastic turnout this year, with 28 students, the highest in recent years.

"There's something really special about music at Saltsburg Elementary! From general music classes to band and chorus, our students love making music together. They work hard, support each other, and practice on their own time. Band and chorus takes place during recess, so those kids get extra kudos for dedication. With a great group of kids and a supportive school community, it's a joy to teach here-and an even bigger joy to watch our students grow through music."
- Mrs. Amanda Staymates, Music Teacher

Students also enjoyed two exciting field trips that brought the arts to life. Third graders traveled to the Byham Theater for 360 ALLSTARS, a high-energy show featuring breakdancing, drumming, acrobatics, and BMX stunts. Band and chorus students visited Heinz Hall for Made in the USA, a concert that explored American innovation through music. Both trips gave students a deeper appreciation for creativity and live performance.

UPCOMING EVENTS

MEMORIAL DAY NO SCHOOL	MAY 26
LAST DAY OF SCHOOL & GRADUATION	MAY 30
SUMMER BREAK BEGINS	MAY 31
OPEN HOUSE: RVHS & RVMS	AUG 18
OPEN HOUSE: BES & SES	AUG 19
WELCOME BACK! FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL	AUG 20

2025-2026 SCHOOL CALENDAR

