

The GMHS Swim Team: Above the Water

Montana Leatherbury

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In 2024, Ross Edgley set the record for the longest non-stop individual swim when he swam 510 km (317 miles) down the Yukon River in 56 hours. While our Cruiser swimmers can't quite do that, our Cruisers remain some of the best swimmers in our region. Even with their region-wide success, you may know very little about this dedicated team. Some appreciation is due to this acclaimed group of aquatic athletes!

Despite being a team, swim competition is more oriented towards personal growth and improving your personal best times, according to GMHS Swim Coach Rachel Owens. When asked to explain what events the swim team participates in, Coach Owens replied, "Swimmers compete in a variety of events like freestyle, backstroke, butterfly, and breaststroke against local schools that also have swim teams." These events range from 50 to 200 meter distances.

The team practices for two hours each day from Monday to Friday, spanning from October to mid-February. "Our focus is always on self-improvement," says Coach Owens. "We typically see a lot of time improvements throughout the season from our new swimmers because they have so much room for growth. Our year-round swimmers are usually chasing their personal bests during championship season."

The GMHS team recently competed on Saturday, January 31, in the Ohio Capital Conference Championships meet against other schools in our conference, where many of the Cruiser swimmers scored personal best times. Taze Owens placed first in both of his individual events, the 50 freestyle and 100 breaststroke. Collin Hart placed second in both of his individual events, the 100 fly and 100 back. Spencer Bray placed third in the 100 free and ninth in the 200 free. Beckham Fulkerson placed sixth in the 100 back. Lynel



Johnson placed ninth in both of his individual events, the 50 free and 100 free. Nathan Lester placed twelfth in the 100 free.

The swim team isn't without its challenges, of course. The GMHS Girls Head Swim Coach Ilana Webber, mentioned, "I struggle with getting our athletes to understand that they need to be hydrating and eating throughout the day so that they can train and be competitive."

A struggle mentioned by both coaches is instilling that the swim team isn't just 'swimming'. "For me, one of the biggest challenges is bridging the gap between 'learning to swim' and training to compete at a varsity level. Because we are a developmental program, we love welcoming new swimmers, but I find it challenging to build the discipline needed for daily practice," says Coach Owens.

"Success in the pool is built on consistency, and I want swimmers to understand that commitment is key to their personal growth." Coach Webber added, "I find it challenging to help our athletes to see that swimming is more than just being able to make it back and forth in a pool."

Sectionals occurred on February 13 and 14, and the swim team continued its success. Collin Hart is advancing to the OHSAA Central District meet in the 50 freestyle, while Taze Owens is advancing in both the 100 butterfly and 100 breaststroke. For the first time ever, GMHS is sending two teams to this competition: the boys medley and freestyle relays, featuring Spencer Bray, Lynel Johnson, Hart, and Owens. Skye Garnes, Amora Kimball, Kei Kei Reed, Ivana Trejo Leon, and Arame Yada all had personal best times at Sectionals as well.

If you see any of the swimmers or the coaches around, tell them you appreciate their hard work representing our school.

Beyond the Protest Signs

Sophia Ring

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Around 1:00 p.m. on February 6, 2026, hundreds of students walked out of Groveport Madison High School to protest recent Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) actions. Students joined a series of other high school protests that occurred at schools across the United States. The walkout lasted roughly half an hour, during which participants gathered on the sidewalk in front of the school. They held handmade signs and chanted messages against ICE.

According to the organizers, freshman Jennifer Aviles and Junior Derrek Russell, a lot of cooperation with GMHS administration went into the walkout to ensure student safety. School staff, security, and local police were present to supervise the event. Jennifer added, “Nobody was going to be punished for partaking in it, and I do not think anybody was at all. A good percentage of the staff were outside.”

Derrek stated, “[A walkout] was the best way to make sure students got their voice heard and were able to talk.”

Jennifer added, “With the turnout, it would undeniably bring attention that couldn't be passed on.”

The purpose of the walkout was to call attention to the impact ICE has on students, families, and communities. Derrek said the cause was personal to him because he has seen friends, families, and the people he loves most affected. He explained that the goal was to speak up for people who feel unable to do so themselves, adding, “I am just so sick and tired of people being scared.”

Jennifer shared that discussions about ICE often create fear within her community. The walkout was meant to raise awareness, encourage empathy, and spark important conversations that need to be had.



The walkout also challenges the idea that students are too young or uninformed to understand current events. Participants emphasized that being students does not mean being unaware of what is happening nationally, especially when those issues affect people they know personally. According to students, the walkout was a way to demonstrate that young people are informed and engaged. A junior who attended the walkout believes, "Just because we are young, [it] does not mean we should not be participating politically. Half of us at the high school are going to be voting in the next election. It is important for young adults to know what is going on in the world. Whether you agree with it or not, the walkout encourages people to do informed thinking. It helps us learn about the government." Another way to take action, encouraged by attendees and organizers, is to call or email your representatives.

Attendees felt the school administration's involvement was necessary for safety, but that it also affected the event's structure. Lorena Lopez stated that while administrators worked to keep students safe, there was disappointment that the walkout ended sooner than expected. She noted, "We walk out; we stay out."

Ghita Ait Raiss, another attendee, shared a similar view. She stated that although permission from administrators reassured students who were worried about consequences, "the protest was meant to be student-led."

Reactions to the walkout were mixed, both during and after the event. Several attendees said they saw strong support from fellow students. Lorena said one of her main takeaways was how she saw "a lot of people came together." She added that she believed it brought "a glimmer of hope to a lot of people."

Ghita similarly stated that the walkout showed what can happen "when communities come together and be outspoken over problems that affect not only our neighbors but our country as a whole."

Attendees acknowledged that the walkout sparked debate among students and within the broader community, especially on social media. There were some negative comments where students were called "morons" or shared how students were too young to even know about this issue. But, overall, supporters choose to think with empathy instead.

Some students chose to remain in the classroom. An anonymous sophomore explained that his commitment to his academics played a significant role in his decision not to attend. He stated, "I personally put school first." He went on to state, "I already knew there would be hundreds of people attending." He also acknowledged how government officials often dismiss student opinions due to our age, stating, "I don't see powerful people listening to kids right now."

The walkout was a learning experience that highlighted student engagement, differing viewpoints, the role of schools in balancing student expression with safety, and the idea that students are aware of and affected by national issues, despite how young we are.

FanDuel Bets on Red & Black

Taze Owens

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Watching the NFL or NBA are some of the most popular pastimes in America. Yet every time you tune in these days, there are always sports betting commercials. These advertisements feature big spectacles with lots of money and bright lights. This glorification of gambling reaches all ages, even our own students at Groveport Madison. While there are laws against gambling under the age of 21, high school students still access these apps and participate in sports betting.

How are students getting access to these apps when the Ohio Revised Code Chapter 3775 requires participants to be 21 or older? This law is to protect young adults from making poor monetary decisions. Teens are naturally impulsive, and that makes gambling very dangerous to them. However, sports betting companies are in the business of making money, not necessarily enforcing the law.

A student who was granted anonymity for his testimony said, "I used my Mom or Dad's social security. I used their information, Mom and Dad, or an older brother; somebody 21 or older."

This was tested. Creating an account on FanDuel, the most popular of many legal gambling platforms, is so simple. Even a five-year-old on an iPad could do it. All it takes is providing an eligible date of birth, then inserting the last four digits of an older person's social security number.

A major reason why this is so simple, and why so many students are willing to drop hundreds of dollars on sports betting, would be due to the glorification of gambling. You can't watch one sports game without a "get involved in the game" sports betting advertisement.

"They're everywhere. They're all on NBA commercials, NFL commercials. They're everywhere, and I have friends that do it too," the student also commented.

One can see that this industry isn't just targeted to adults, even if the companies claim otherwise. Sports viewing is not limited to adults only. When kids see their idols like Rob Gronkowski or Terry Crews in sports betting commercials, they want to be like them, too.

In the end, it's not just the fact that you can't watch a single sports game without seeing a sports betting ad. It's how they portray sports gambling, and how few safeguards are in

place. That portrayal and the weak barrier to entry have reached our own students at GMHS.

Nationwide Children's Teaming Up with Groveport Madison Schools

Aanijah Burrell

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Do you have dental issues, diabetes, asthma, sickle cell, ADHD, or any number of other ailments and conditions? Nationwide Children's Hospital School-Based Health Center, located on Groveport Madison High School campus, is open to students and the Groveport community for primary care from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Dental care is available on select days throughout the week.

Scheduling appointments is simple, and there are several ways to schedule one. You can visit the school-based health center before or after school. Call the number (614) 355-2590, or ask the school nurse to help schedule an appointment. You can also complete a consent form to be called and scheduled. A parent or guardian must provide a consent form.



The school-based health center accepts Medicaid and other insurance. If you don't have insurance, they can provide financial assistance and also help you get back on insurance. They will not deny you if you cannot pay for their services. If you have more questions about the financial services, you can call (614) 722-2070. For dental care, it's mostly the same, but appointments will be during school hours.

Mrs. Morgan Jack, the school health liaison, says, "My job is to make sure that community schools and their families know about our school-based health centers. This one in particular, in Groveport Madison, was opening a new site, so I'm the person who connects the individuals to the centers. The Groveport Madison site that we'll be working out of was previously owned by Primary One. Primary One did run a school-based health center out of that location for a short period of time; when Primary One was unable to keep up

their services, Nationwide Children's Hospital saw this as an opportunity to come in and help Groveport Madison Schools.”

Mrs. Jack continued, “We have done a lot of preparations for our opening at the end of February. Part of that preparation was working with the school board to identify that we were allowed to be on the site to make sure we were offering services to the entire district. The site itself has required some construction, so we have been preparing the building to make sure it is ready to accept patients. And then part of my role has been reaching out to the different schools in the Groveport Madison district, working with the town hall to get information shared on their social media, and connecting with other community partners within Groveport to make sure as many people as possible know about those opportunities for students.”

Regarding accessibility, Mrs. Jack said, “When we open in February, we will not be closing. We will be open just like a normal doctor's office throughout winter and summer break. We will be open potentially during spring break. It kind of depends on the districts and what they identify that they'd like to do, but once we open in February, we will stay open to make sure that we're supporting those students.”

Speaking of the location and logistics of attending the health center, Mrs. Jack stated, “You drive through the high school parking lot all the way back to almost the football stadium. There are new signs that Nationwide Children's has placed throughout the parking lot to help people get there. The center itself offers a lot of different services. It is a primary care center, which means we can help with wellness visits, sick checkups, vaccines, and immunizations. We can also help with sports physicals and physicals for work permits. This particular center in Groveport is very special because it'll also have dental services, so individuals can get their teeth cleaned, and they can have cavities managed. They can also have X-rays done of their teeth. We don't offer orthodontists like braces and things, but we can connect students to that if they need that service. And then lastly, one of the really big features of the Groveport Madison Center is that we are offering mental health services, so if students are working with their families to get diagnoses for ADHD, depression, or anxiety, we can help those students get connected to resources much quicker than a normal wait time.”

If you have any more questions, please reach out to the school nurses or email SchoolHealth@NationwideChildrens.org for more information. You can use the link provided below to sign the consent form:

[Nationwide Children's Hospital School-Based Supplemental Health Services Consent Form](#)

Take Note: Nursing Opportunity Knocks

Henry Mireku

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Juniors and seniors gather in splendor and grandeur. An academic opportunity is forthcoming for those with aspirations of nursing in their future.

Ashland University offers a special summer program: a day of activities with the hospital team, with lots of hands-on experiences on their campus on either the ninth or the tenth of July.

A 12,000 sq. ft. space with 32 hospital beds and multiple advanced patient manikins will be present to provide a state of the art learning environment that nearly perfectly replicates a real-world hospital setting.

Students can learn technical skills, critical thinking, and clinical judgment skills that relate to the nursing field, as well as practice these skills using the full-body patient manikins. The guidance from the Ashland medical instructors will allow students to flourish in a safe, controlled environment that will prepare them for a future career in nursing.

Carrie Keib, the dean of the College of Nursing and Health Sciences at Ashland, said in an interview about the center, “Students come into our simulation center for several purposes. They are in the space to learn how to perform certain skills and to demonstrate competency in specific areas. They are also here in groups with other students who are from their own health profession, learning how to work together and learning how to provide care.”

Nourishment will be provided by the camp, and the experience will conclude mid-afternoon. There is a \$50 fee to attend. For those willing and able, the supplementation of their prospective nursing careers is essentially a guarantee.

Killer Cold at Groveport

Austin Rogols

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There was a massive cold wave in the United States a few weeks ago. The week of January 26, 2026, there was a large amount of snow and temperatures as low as -9°F (-22°C). In Columbus, 11.9 inches of snow fell on the city during the storm days. During the days of the storm, schools were closed down.

Winter storm Fern made a lot of people feel their first freezing weather. Roads froze, sidewalks filled with snow, and it was too cold for people to walk out of their own homes. Serious threats of hypothermia and frostbite existed for anyone who went outside without proper warm clothing. The weather was a threat.

Columbus and Franklin County were declared in a level 3 emergency on January 25. Plows and road crews spent Sunday and Monday clearing roads for travel. The aftermath of the storm closed down schools, including GMS, for the week of January 25 2026. School reopened on February 2, 2026.

Speaking of the cold, Senior Conner Murphy said, "The walks to work felt like the Arctic, my socks were soggy, and it was hard to walk in the snow."

Students were generally happy about not having to go to school, but most disliked the cold, snow, and ice. Others enjoy the cold weather, as well as the break from school.

Teacher Aaron Fenzel mentioned, "It was the most snow that we've had in the last 10 years; it's still in my driveway." He added that he never before had a week of school off from just winter weather.



Having a full week off from school because of the weather is a very rare occurrence. At the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year, Ohio changed the minimum days requirement for schools to minimum hours. The change from days to hours was used so schools have more flexibility with closing schools, makeup times, and cancellations.

Following those rules, after the week off, freshmen have five days before they need to make up hours. Sophomores and juniors have four days before makeup is required, while seniors have two days. Seniors' fewer days is due to graduation happening on Tuesday, May 19, before school ends for other classes on 21. The freshmen have an extra day because they had the first day of school just to themselves.

Since school's been back up and running, the weather still continues to be an issue. Several students reported slipping on a thin layer of ice on the sidewalks going to and from school. As the end of winter approaches, we will see what future weather concerns arise.