

February
2026

The
Eagle Examiner



Our mission is to inspire and guide each student to his or her maximum potential

~~SNOW DAY!~~ SNOW WEEK!





MESSAGE from the SUPERINTENDENT

Once again, Buckeye Chuck and Punxsutawney Phil made opposite predictions on Monday about whether spring will be here soon. Based on last week, I have a hard time believing we will see an early spring.

As a district, when we have to make a decision on a weather delay, we try to do it as early as possible. We have various members of our team who are out driving the roads between 4:15 and 5:00 AM. We monitor conditions for snow, ice, fog, and wind chill. Generally, we aim to make a decision on a delay or closure by 5:30 AM, and we try to make it earlier if possible.

Last week’s weather conditions were not what we normally see in this part of Ohio, and it was not just one factor that led us and many surrounding districts to make the decision to close. While the main roads were clear by Wednesday, many of the back roads were not, and I had difficulty envisioning a school bus and another vehicle sharing the same road without one vehicle having to ride the edge.

To date, we have used seven calamity days and had one 2-hour delay. The state previously allocated five calamity days to each school district, but that is no longer the case. It is now based on meeting a required number of hours per year, and we are currently above that threshold. We are not at the point where I anticipate us having to make up any student days, but if Punxsutawney Phil’s prediction of a long winter proves accurate, that could change.



Ryan McLane

NATIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELING WEEK

This week, we proudly celebrate National School Counseling Week, a time to recognize the incredible impact our school counselors have on students across Big Walnut Local Schools.

School counselors are champions for the whole child. They help students navigate academic planning, social and emotional challenges, peer relationships, future career paths, and everything in between. Whether it’s a quick check-in, a calming conversation on a tough day, help building a class schedule, or guidance through big life decisions, our counselors are there — steady, supportive, and student-centered.

At every grade level, our counselors play a vital role in creating safe, welcoming schools where students feel seen, heard, and supported. They collaborate with teachers, families, and administrators to remove barriers to learning and to help every student reach their full potential. From kindergarten classrooms to senior year milestones, their influence stretches far beyond the office door.

These dedicated professionals make a lasting difference in the lives of our students every single day. Their compassion, expertise, and commitment help ensure that Big Walnut students are not only prepared academically, but supported socially and emotionally as well. Please join us in thanking our school counselors for the care, guidance, and encouragement they provide to Eagle Nation all year long.

- Big Walnut Elementary**
Erin Gryvalski
- General Rosecrans Elementary**
Ashley Nussen
- Hylen Souders Elementary**
Christi Walker
- Prairie Run Elementary**
Whitney Hoge
- Big Walnut Intermediate**
Molly Fortune
Lauren Galloway
- Big Walnut Middle School**
Megan Burden
Anne Dennis
Lauren Greenspan
- Big Walnut High School**
Jeanne Collett
Tammi Jordan
Anna Laux
Caleigh Moats
Meghan Paul





COMMON CENTS



Scott Gooding
Executive Director of
Financial Services

Ohio School District Bond Refundings and Library Bond Issues

Ohio school districts regularly use long-term debt instruments to finance major capital investments while managing the overall tax impact on local taxpayers. Two common and complementary tools are bond refundings and library bond issues, each serving distinct but important financial and community purposes.

Bond refundings function much like refinancing a home mortgage. A district issues new bonds at lower interest rates and uses the proceeds to retire previously issued bonds. This transaction occurs entirely within the district's debt service fund, which is legally separate from operating funds used for salaries, supplies, and daily instructional costs.

Because of this separation, bond refundings do not generate new operating revenue and cannot be used to offset general fund expenditures. Instead, their primary benefit is interest cost savings over the remaining life of the debt, which typically results in reduced future debt service payments and, in many cases, a lower property tax rate for taxpayers.

The 2026 Refunding Bond Resolution for Big Walnut Local School District authorizes the refinancing of a portion of the district's outstanding bonded indebtedness to take advantage of favorable market conditions. The resolution provides flexibility on final bond terms while establishing clear parameters around maximum principal amounts and interest rates, ensuring fiscal prudence and compliance with Ohio law. The intent is to preserve prior voter approvals while improving the overall efficiency of the district's long-term debt structure, producing savings without extending the original maturity schedule or increasing taxes beyond what voters previously authorized.

In parallel, library bond issues represent a strategic investment in shared community infrastructure. Under Ohio law, school districts may issue bonds on behalf of public libraries, with debt service supported by voter-approved library tax levies. The 2026 Library Bond Resolution for Big Walnut Local School District authorizes the issuance of bonds in the amount of \$19,000,000 to support capital improvements for the district's public library system. These bonds are secured by a dedicated library levy and do not affect the school district's operating budget or classroom funding. While the school district serves as the issuing authority, the financial obligation is borne by the library levy, ensuring transparency and accountability to voters.

Taken together, bond refundings and library bond issues demonstrate responsible financial stewardship. Refunding bonds help districts reduce long-term borrowing costs and manage tax rates more efficiently, while library bonds enable targeted capital investment in community resources without diverting funds from instructional priorities. Both mechanisms reflect Ohio school districts' commitment to honoring voter intent, maintaining legal fund separation, and maximizing the value of public dollars over time.

Big Walnut High School Brings Rock of Ages: Teen Edition to the Stage

The Big Walnut High School Performing Arts Department is turning the volume all the way up with *Rock of Ages: Teen Edition*. Packed with big hair, bigger dreams, and classic rock anthems, this high-energy show delivers nonstop laughs, powerhouse vocals, and a whole lot of '80s attitude.

Set on the legendary Sunset Strip, the story follows dreamers chasing stardom while a beloved rock club fights to survive. Along the way, audiences will hear familiar hits, meet unforgettable characters, and enjoy a show that balances big comedy with heartfelt moments. It is a fast paced, feel good night of live theater led by an incredibly talented cast and crew of Big Walnut students.

Showtimes:

- Thursday, March 12 – 7:00 PM
- Friday, March 13 – 7:00 PM
- Saturday, March 14 – 7:00 PM

Location: Big Walnut High School Performing Arts Center



BIG WALNUT LOVE STORIES

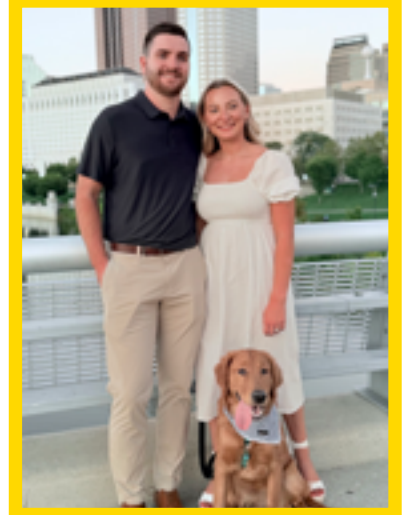
Love is in the air at Big Walnut, and some of the sweetest stories started right in our own hallways. From classroom crushes to coworkers who became lifelong partners, Eagle Country has been the backdrop for more than just learning. It has been the starting line for lasting relationships, shared dreams, and growing families.

We are excited to share a few Big Walnut Love Stories sent in by couples whose journeys began right here in our schools. These stories are full of nostalgia, laughter, and heart, and they remind us that the connections formed at Big Walnut can truly last a lifetime. These stories are in their own words of how their love started at Big Walnut.



Jackson Seiple (Class of 2018) and Gabby Truax (Class of 2019)

First crossed paths at a Big Walnut basketball game in 2016. Although they already knew of each other, Jackson found a very memorable way to get Gabby's attention—by messing with sweatshirt as he sat behind her at the game. That playful (aka annoying) move sparked a conversation later on Snapchat, and before long, the two were officially "talking." By the spring of 2016, Jackson and Gabby began dating, and what started in the halls and bleachers of Big Walnut quickly grew into something lasting. They supported each other through the rest of high school, long-distance college years, and countless milestones along the way. Jackson went on to graduate from the University of Cincinnati with a degree in civil engineering, while Gabby earned her degree in elementary education from The Ohio State University. Today, Gabby is a third-grade teacher at Hylan Souders Elementary.



In September, Jackson proposed, and the two are excited to begin their next chapter together when they are married on July 2, 2027. Big Walnut will always hold a special place in their hearts—not just as the place they went to school, but as the place where a little annoying a girl during a game turned into a lifelong love story.



Joe Evener (Class of 1982) and Bronwen Huffer (Class of 1981)

It was February 1981, my junior year, I was invited to the old Sadie Hawkins dance (for those of you too young to know what that is, it's when a girl invites a guy to the dance). After the dance, I was planning to spend the night at my best friend Lloyd's house, so I stopped by to drop off my clothes for the next morning. While there and before the dance, I asked his older sister, Bronwen, to teach me how to dance. She graciously agreed. I went to the dance. I don't remember the girl's name, but we had an okay time. Unfortunately for the girl, I couldn't get Bronwen off my mind. Fast forward to the following morning, Lloyd and I woke to a full breakfast prepared by Bronwen. It looked and smelled delicious. One small problem, she didn't give us silverware to eat with. I simply asked, "Can I have a fork, please?" And, got a cup of water thrown on me.



After that incident, I spent a lot of time "visiting" Lloyd as an excuse to see Bronwen.

We began dating a few months later, using Lloyd as our personal delivery service to pass notes back and forth, which I'm sure he detested.

That was 45 years ago. Bronwen and I have been married for 43 years, with two grown sons and two grown grandsons.

We are preparing for our retirement this summer and spending the rest of our lives traveling and driving each other crazy.

If you weren't aware, Lloyd is Mr. Huffer; we are still very good friends, but Mr. Huffer thinks "best friends don't marry your sister."

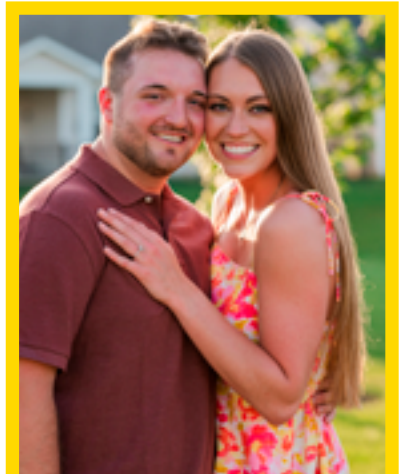


Kassie Bowmar (Class of 2020) and Tyler Shuster (Class of 2018)

Kassie and Tyler's story is rooted deep in Big Walnut. Long before they started dating, their families shared Sunbury connections, even their grandparents were friends. They officially began dating during Kassie's freshman year in 2017 and stayed strong through the busy years of high school, graduation, and college.

Tyler went on to study Early Education and play football at Ohio Wesleyan University, while Kassie studied Healthcare Business and played volleyball at Ohio Northern University. Even while building their futures, Big Walnut always felt like home.

After college, both returned to Big Walnut to give back as coaches, pouring into the next generation of student athletes just like their own coaches once did for them. Tyler now coaches high school basketball and football, and



Kassie coaches 7th grade volleyball, staying connected to the schools and community that first brought them together.

The couple got engaged in May 2024 and will be married on June 5 of this year, proving that sometimes the best love stories really do begin right here at Big Walnut.



(MORE) BIG WALNUT LOVE STORIES



Justin Băby (Class of 1996) and Kara Thompson (Class of 1999)

Justin and Kara's love story began in the summer of 1995 at Big Walnut band camp. Justin was a senior in the band and Kara was a freshman on the drill team. What started as casual conversations and time spent together at football games quickly turned into something more. Justin took Kara home from a dance and later asked her to Fall Homecoming in 1995, and they have been together ever since.

Their relationship stayed strong even after Justin graduated and left for Eastern Michigan University while Kara finished high school at Big Walnut. Kara later attended Bowling Green State University, where she earned her nursing degree. No matter where life took them, their connection to each other and to Big Walnut remained constant.

Justin and Kara were married in June 2003 and moved back to Galena in 2005 so that, when the time came, their children could attend Big Walnut



just like they did. Now together for more than 30 years, married for over 22 years, and proud parents of two children, their story is a true Big Walnut love story that started right in the halls of BWHS.



Jennifer Schwartz (Class of 2001) and Aaron Dickison (Class of 2003)

Our story began in the fall of 1999, inside the familiar halls of Big Walnut High School. It was wrestling season, and while I wasn't on the mat, I was still part of the action as a wrestling stat. My husband was a wrestler, and our very first conversation, believe it or not, was about cowboy hats. That small, silly exchange quickly turned into flirting... and then into dating.

Like many Sunbury teens, some of our favorite early dates were spent at the Big Walnut Skate Club. It was owned by Ed and Bobbie Herd, who were absolutely fabulous and had a gift for making the rink a place that felt fun, safe, and welcoming to kids; the kind of place where memories naturally formed. Those evenings skating in circles, music playing, and laughter echoing are memories we still treasure.

I stayed busy with marching band, cross country, and track. My husband

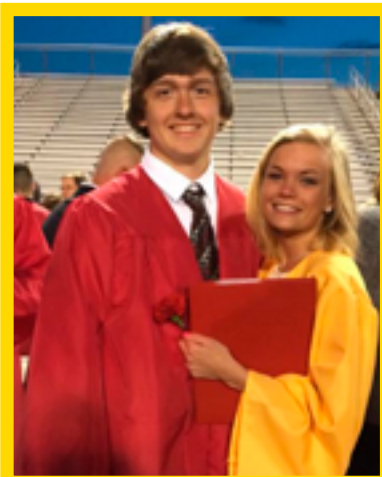


has never loved running, but he joined the cross country team anyway just so we could spend more time together. Whenever he could, he showed up to football games, just to watch me in the halftime show.

After four years together, we did what many young love stories include...we went our separate ways. We headed off to college, figured ourselves out, and did some growing up. Five years later, our paths crossed again, and it didn't take long to realize that the love was still there. More importantly, we still preferred each other's company over anyone else's.

Now, after 16 years of marriage, we're raising two amazing, wonderfully unique kids who attend Big Walnut's Intermediate and Middle Schools. The current middle school used to be our high school, and it's been a special kind of joy to walk those familiar hallways again...this time with our children. We've traded Friday night lights for homework schedules and family routines. He's still my best friend, and the person I feel most at home with, no matter where we are.

From high school hallways to building a life together, our story has come full circle in a community that has always felt like home.



Annika Lieurance (Class of 2014) and Jhordan Lang (Class of 2014)

Annika's story with Big Walnut feels like a full-circle moment.

Annika and her husband, Jhordan, both graduated from Big Walnut High School in 2014. They grew up in the same schools and community, and it feels especially meaningful knowing their story began in the same place their daughter will one day attend.

After high school, they both headed to Wilmington College, where they attended from 2014 to 2018 and continued building their lives together. They were married in 2020 and soon after knew exactly where they wanted to settle down. In 2021, they moved back home to Sunbury, and it truly felt like coming back to where they belong.

Now they are raising their three-year-old daughter, Josie, in the same community that shaped them. Getting to experience Big Walnut again, this



time as parents, has been incredibly meaningful.

For Annika, it feels even more special because she returned not just as a parent, but as a teacher. She now teaches kindergarten at Hylen Souders Elementary School and loves welcoming our youngest learners as they begin their own Big Walnut journeys. When she thinks back to her own early school days here, it is a joy to now be part of creating those first memories for a new generation of Eagles.

Big Walnut will always be more than just the place Annika and Jhordan went to school. It is where their story began, where they chose to build their life, and where their family now calls home.



AROUND THE DISTRICT



Dawn Norris
Big Walnut Elementary

Big Walnut Staff Spotlight!

Ms. Norris creates an art room where students can explore a variety of activities based on their interests. When you walk in to her classroom you can see origami, clay, lightbox tracing/drawing, collaging, sewing...the list goes on.

She is also very active in the art educator community speaking at and attending many conferences. This year she was chosen to participate in the inaugural National Elementary Art Honor Society (NEAHS) Pilot Program for the 2025–2026 school year! And she has implemented that for our third graders.

She is always willing to lend a hand and is always looking for ways to better her community.



NATIONAL SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER APPRECIATION DAY

We want to take a moment to shine a well-deserved spotlight on a special day coming up later this month. February 15 is National School Resource Officer Appreciation Day, and it is the perfect time to recognize the incredible officers who serve Big Walnut Local Schools with care, professionalism, and heart.

Our School Resource Officers are far more than a friendly face in the hallway or a badge at the front door. They build meaningful relationships with students, mentor young people, support staff, and help ensure our schools remain safe, welcoming places to learn and grow. Whether they are greeting students in the morning, lending a listening ear, or jumping in to help during an unexpected situation, their impact is felt across our district every single day.

We are proud to have four outstanding SROs serving our school community:

Deputy Dave Snyder – Delaware County Sheriff’s Office (Big Walnut High School, Prairie Run Elementary, Early Learning Center)

Deputy Matt Roy – Delaware County Sheriff’s Office (Hysten Souders Elementary, Prairie Run Elementary)

Officer Justin Whiteside – Sunbury Police Department (Big Walnut Elementary, Big Walnut Middle School)

Officer Maya Belcher – Sunbury Police Department (Big Walnut Intermediate, General Rosecrans Elementary)



These dedicated officers go above and beyond to support students, staff, and families, helping create an environment where learning can thrive. Their presence brings not only safety, but also trust, guidance, and connection.

We invite our Big Walnut community to join us in thanking our School Resource Officers for all they do. A simple wave, a kind word, or a note of appreciation goes a long way in recognizing the important role they play in Eagle Nation.



AROUND THE DISTRICT

Building Creativity One Sculpture at a Time

Right before winter decided to bury us in snow, Mrs. Swonger's third-grade artists at Hylen Souders Elementary were diving into an exciting new clay unit. For many students, this was their first time working with clay, and the room quickly filled with focused faces, busy hands, and growing confidence.

Students learned foundational clay techniques like rolling, pinching, shaping, and smoothing as they began turning simple lumps of clay into unique creations. Working with clay not only sparks creativity, but also strengthens fine motor skills and patience. Every project required students to slow down, problem solve, and think in three dimensions.



Mrs. Swonger continues to give Souders students an incredible start to their art education. Her classroom is a place where imagination is encouraged, effort is celebrated, and every student walks away proud of what they have created with their own two hands.



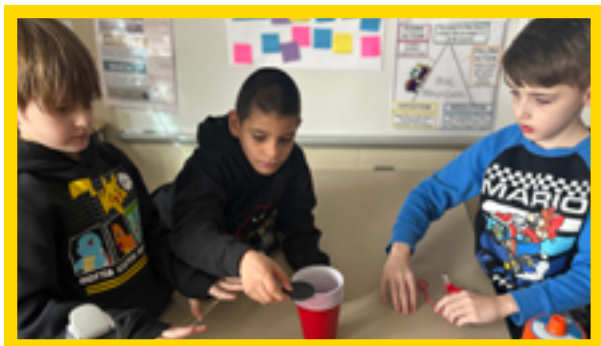
GROWING TOGETHER THROUGH TEAMWORK AT GRE



Coming back from our *scheduled* winter break can take a little time mentally, so Ms. Nussen kicked off the new year with a hands-on growth mindset activity that had students laughing, thinking, and working together.

Students were challenged to stack cups using only strings. But there was one important rule: they could not touch the cups with their hands. Working in teams, students had to communicate clearly, stay patient, and try different strategies when things didn't go as planned. There were plenty of moments of "Wait, try this!" and lots of cheering when a stack finally stood tall.

Beyond the fun, the activity reinforced powerful lessons about teamwork, perseverance, and learning from mistakes. It was a perfect way to rebuild classroom community after break and remind students that challenges are easier (and a lot more fun) when you tackle them together.





AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE PROGRAM

Nine-Year Streak: Food Science and Technology Team Heads to Nationals

For the ninth consecutive year, the Big Walnut - DACC Food Science and Technology team has captured the first place title in Ohio. Over 1,000 students in the state of Ohio participated in the Food Science and Technology CDE making this one of the most competitive career development events in the state! Ava D. was the first place individual and will receive a \$5,000 scholarship to the Ohio State University. Gabby B. placed 4th overall and will also receive a scholarship of \$1,000 to the Ohio State University. Preston S. placed 8th overall and Erin H. placed 17th overall. This incredible victory ensures that Gabby B., Ava D., Erin H., and Preston S. will represent the state at the National Career Development Event in Indianapolis this October.

The competition tested the students' expertise through rigorous practicums including food safety, aroma identification, and technical problem solving. A major highlight was the product development challenge, where the team collaborated to design a new aseptic beverage that adhered to strict FDA guidelines for shelf stable packaging.

By excelling in these professional level simulations, Gabby, Ava, Erin, and Preston have maintained the program's long standing tradition of excellence. We would like to take a moment to thank our sponsor Bachman Ag Service Inc. and our wonderful coaching team of Madi D., Josh S., and Dr. Mary Kay Pohlschneider!

Congratulations to our state champions on this historic achievement!



Christine Febes
Agricultural Sciences Instructor



National Champions Explore Food Careers at IPPE

This January, our 2025 National Winning Food Science Team traveled to Atlanta, Georgia, for an immersive look at the future of the food industry. This incredible opportunity was made possible by the U.S. Poultry & Egg Association, whose generous sponsorship provided our students with an all-expense-paid trip to the International Production and Processing Expo (IPPE).

While at the expo, the team explored the massive trade show floor, which showcased the latest innovations from the U.S. Poultry Association, The American Meat Institute, and the American Feed Industry Association. The students gained unique perspectives through specialized educational sessions, including a presentation from a teacher who successfully implemented a meat processing program in a high school setting. Additionally, a representative from Perdue Farms spoke to the group about the diverse and rewarding career paths available within the poultry industry.

The students also participated in national social media contests for FFA members, networking with peers from across the country. By walking the floor and connecting with professionals, the team gained a firsthand understanding of the technology and global scale of modern food production.





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HYLEN SOUDERS ELEMENTARY



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PRAIRIE RUN ELEMENTARY



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EARLY LEARNING CENTER AT HARRISON STREET



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