

*Dria Earns
Trade
Award*

*Thank You
Coach
Biros!*

*Student
Success
Highlights*

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SPRING 2026

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Celebrating Our Students' Successes



It is always a privilege to share the celebrations of our students, staff, and school district with our community. Our community has come to expect a recap of how we are doing in our three main areas – academics, the arts, and athletics. With the 2025-2026 school year now past the halfway mark, we are looking ahead to spring and celebrating the achievements of our students as we approach graduation. We will honor nearly 500 seniors at commencement at Robert Fife Stadium on May 23 at 5 p.m. as they receive their diplomas.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

The success of our Advance Placement program at Jackson High School was recognized with a Bronze AP Honor Roll Award. That places JHS among just 9% of eligible schools across the country. This award recognizes schools that are expanding access to difficult, college-level coursework and preparing students for successful academic careers.

Congratulations to Brenna Charlick, Warner Parks, Manav Rawal and Josh Walter. These four high school seniors are National Merit semifinalists, placing them among the top academic achievers in the country. While college decisions are fluid this time of year, each National Merit semifinalist is eligible for a significant National Merit Scholarship at select universities – scholarships that collectively are valued at more than \$500,000. These scholarships represent incredible opportunities. Regardless of where they choose to attend, their hard work and academic excellence have opened doors to a bright future.

Jackson High School's Speech & Debate team made a strong showing at the state tournament. We are incredibly proud to congratulate our Jackson High School Speech & Debate team on its outstanding achievement in qualifying for the Ohio Speech & Debate Association Championship Tournament. We wish them all the best as they represent Jackson Local on the state stage. You can read more about them elsewhere in this issue.

ARTS CELEBRATION

The Jackson School for the Arts held its annual Arts Extravaganza last month. This is one of the district's most well-attended events, featuring artwork from students in grades K-12 on display, as well as live performances on two stages.

It was also great to see Jackson's creativity on display in the wider community. Throughout February, student artwork from across our district was featured at the Massillon Museum as part of the Celebration in Art exhibit. In total, 21 Jackson High School students had pieces selected for the show – an impressive honor in an exhibit



that brought together work from 27 school buildings across Stark County and included representation from all six Jackson Local schools.

We also appreciate the hard work and time our students and directors put into our Pep Band at home basketball games. Having this group present adds to the energy and excitement of watching the Polar Bears on the basketball court.

ATHLETIC CELEBRATIONS

Our winter sports season finished with a great deal of postseason success and league championships. Our girls basketball team won the Federal League championship, a district title, and another trip to the Sweet 16. Boys swimming won a league title, and both boys and girls swimming and diving qualified individuals to the state meet.

Our cheerleaders won another state championship. They are the 2026 OASSA/OHSAA Division I Gameday Non-Building State Champions.

Our wheelchair basketball team advanced to the state Final Four for the third season in a row.

These athletic accomplishments put Jackson in the lead in the All-Sports Trophy with the spring season still left to play. We are fortunate to compete in a great league with schools that share our commitment to sportsmanship and our love for competition.

As we celebrate these accomplishments, we remain grateful for the support of our families, staff, and community members who make Jackson Local Schools an extraordinary place to learn and grow.

-- Superintendent Chris DiLoreto

Braving the St. Baldrick's

Jackson Local School District Superintendent Chris DiLoreto gets his head shaved by Strausser Elementary student Landon Richards and barber Joe Ianni during the district's annual St. Baldrick's event. Richards raised more than \$1,400 this year and more than \$8,000 over the past three years for childhood cancer research. This year, Jackson Local students, staff, and community members raised nearly \$70,000, bringing the district's St. Baldrick's total since 2007 to more than \$1.2 million.



Online kindergarten registration for the 2026-2027 school year is now open

Families will begin by creating an account in the district's online registration system. Families who already have a child attending a Jackson school should use their existing username and password to complete the required "First Day Forms."

Parents and guardians with questions are encouraged to contact their child's home school. Families who are unsure which elementary building their child will attend can use the district's school locator tool to search by street address.

To complete the online registration forms and view a list of required support documents, please scan the QR code.





Did You Know ...

Graduating seniors each year complete more than 1,300 hours of community service by participating in Senior Service Day?



JACKSON LOCAL SCHOOLS STUDENT CALENDARS

2025-26

AUGUST

FEBRUARY 2026

AUGUST 2025

S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

13 Gr 6/New Student Orientation, 6-8:00 pm
 14 Gr 9/New Student Orientation 7-8:00 pm
 14 Open House - All Elementaries, 4:30-6:30 pm
 19 1st Day for Students (K-12)
 20 Open House - JMMS, Last Name A-M, 6:00-7:00 pm
 Last Name N-Z, 7:00-8:00 pm
 26 Open House - High School, 5:00-7:00 pm
 29 Professional Development Day - No School (K-12)

SEPTEMBER 2025

SEPTEMBER

MARCH 2026

S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

1 Labor Day - No School (K-12)

OCTOBER

OCTOBER 2025

S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

7 Parent Conferences (K-5) 4:00-8:00 pm
 7 Parent Conferences (Gr 6-12) 4:00-7:00 pm
 9 Parent Conferences (K-5) 4:00-8:00 pm
 10 Professional Development Day - No School (K-12)
 13 Columbus Day - No School (K-12)
 15 Parent Conferences (K-5) 4:00-8:00 pm
 15 Parent Conferences (Gr 6-12) 4:00-7:00 pm
 24 End of 1st Marking Period - 45 Days

NOVEMBER

NOVEMBER 2025

S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

26 Thanksgiving Break Begins
 26 K-12 Conference Exchange Day

DECEMBER

NOVEMBER 2025

S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

2 Classes Resume
 22 Winter Break Begins
 5 Classes Resume
 15 End of 2nd Marking Period - 45 Days
 16 Professional Development Day - No School (K-12)
 19 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day - No School (K-12)

DECEMBER 2025

FEBRUARY

JUNE 2026

S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

12 Parent Conferences (K-12) 4:00-7:00 pm
 13 Professional Development Day - No School (K-12)
 16 Presidents' Day - No School (K-12)
 18 Parent Conferences (K-12) 4:00-7:00 pm
 20 End of 3rd Marking Period - 42 Days
 30 Spring Break Begins

MARCH

JANUARY 2026

S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

6 K-12 Conference Exchange Day - No School (K-12)
 7 Classes Resume
 25 Memorial Day - No School (K-12)
 29 Last Day for Students & Staff
 29 End of 4th Marking Period - 43 Days

APRIL

JANUARY 2026

S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

25 Memorial Day - No School (K-12)
 29 Last Day for Students & Staff
 29 End of 4th Marking Period - 43 Days

JUNE

19 Juneteenth



Did You Know ...

All six Jackson Local school buildings are Purple Star-certified for the district's commitment to serving military-connected families?



Preparing for Career Success

Preparing students for career success after graduation is an important part of our work at Jackson Local Schools. For the past five years, Jackson High School has partnered with MentorStark to provide career readiness and career exploration opportunities through the MentorStark Opportunity Club.

Through this program, students learn the value of building connections – often called “social capital” – and practice essential networking and communication skills in real-world settings. A key part of the experience is participating in field trip opportunities known as Inside Looks. During these visits, students tour local businesses and training or education sites, meet professionals in a variety of roles, and gain a clearer understanding of what different career paths can look like after high school.



Inside Looks are designed to be interactive. Students introduce themselves, share their interests and goals, and learn how to make professional connections that can lead to future opportunities. Students can sign up for the Inside Looks that interest them through SchoolLinks. Past experiences have included manufacturing, engineering, aviation, health care, trade apprenticeships, and the arts – among other high-demand fields.

Participation in MentorStark activities is based on teacher or counselor referral, and the Opportunity Club is advised by Ms. Voytek and Ms. Pitzo.



Families who believe their high school student would benefit from this program are encouraged to have their student speak with their guidance counselor. Local businesses interested in hosting Jackson students for an insider's look during the 2026-2027 school year can contact Laurie Moline at laurie@mentorstark.org.

Jackson Raises No. 35: Kyle Young's Jersey Retired

No. 35 is no longer just a number at Jackson High School – it's now a lasting reminder.

Before the Polar Bears tipped off against Youngstown East on Friday, Feb. 13, Jackson held a jersey retirement ceremony honoring Kyle Young, the former standout whose impact on the program still resonates years after his final game in purple and gold. Young's number now hangs inside the gym, permanently set aside for the player who helped deliver one of the most memorable stretches in school basketball history.



Young becomes only the third Jackson basketball player to receive that distinction, joining Jami Bosley and Taylor Mikesell. Today, his connection to the program continues. Young is a current assistant coach on the Jackson varsity boys basketball coaching staff.

“It's a great honor,” Young told the *Canton Repository*. “I found out a couple months ago. I don't want to say I was in shock, but I just didn't know it could be coming anytime soon. I'm incredibly grateful, thankful and blessed to be in this position.”

Head coach Tim Debevec said the recognition reflects not only Young's resume, but the standard he set for the program.

“It's long overdue,” Debevec told the *Repository*. “He deserves it. You see all the accolades. Three times Federal League Player of the Year. Runner-up Mr. Basketball. First-team all-state two years in a row. Won us a state championship. Three Federal League titles and two districts. He meant a lot to our program.”

Young finished his high school career with 1,582 points, then continued on to Ohio State. The 6-foot-8 forward's Jackson run ended in 2017 with the Polar Bears capturing the program's second Division I state championship.

That title team featured plenty of talent alongside Young, including Logan Hill and Ethan Stanislawski – both of whom later played at Mount Union – as well as a group of standout multi-sport athletes in Dillon Dingler, Kyle Nicolas and Jaret Pallotta. Dingler and Nicolas would go on to reach the major leagues in baseball.

Now, every time fans and students walk through the gym doors, they'll see No. 35 overhead and remember what it represented.



Did You Know ...

U.S. News & World Report ranks all Jackson buildings among the best schools in the nation, and Jackson High School is ranked in the top 5%?



Jackson Educator Roy Dria Honored with Golden Owl Award

Jackson Local Schools is celebrating an honor for one of its own – Roy Dria has been named the Golden Owl Award recipient, recognizing his impact as an agricultural educator and the difference he makes for students every day.

The Golden Owl Award spotlights agricultural teachers who go above and beyond in helping students learn, grow, and prepare for life after graduation. In Dria's classroom, that work is evident through hands-on, real-world learning experiences that help students build practical skills while also developing confidence and meaningful connections.

The Jackson community has come to know the work of Mr. Dria's students in the Horticulture Department's annual flower sale.

Supporters of agricultural education helped make the recognition possible, including FFA, the Ohio Farm Bureau, and Nationwide, which partnered in presenting the award.

With this honor, Dria has also been named one of 10 finalists in Ohio eligible for Ag Educator of the Year, placing him among the top agricultural educators in the state.

Jackson Local Schools congratulates Mr. Dria on this well-earned recognition and thanks him for the dedication he brings to students and to the community.



Roy Dria (lower right) proudly displays his Golden Owl Award with some of his students

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Did You Know ...



Jackson High School has won state championships in boys basketball (2010, 2017), baseball (2014, 2017), and boys cross country (2023)

Thank You Coach Biros!!

OSSCA HALL OF FAME
25 Seasons as Jackson Boys Soccer Head Coach
307 Wins at JHS (363 Career Wins)
Overall Federal League record: 131-11-15, with playoffs 150-14-15
19 Federal League Championships
14 District Championships
10 State Quarter Finals Appearances
1 State Runner-up



After 25 seasons leading the Jackson boys soccer program, Mike Biros – an Ohio Scholastic Soccer Coaches Association (OSSCA) Hall of Fame coach – has announced he is stepping down, closing one of the most successful coaching tenures in school history.

Biros leaves Jackson as the program's all-time winningest coach, compiling 307 victories with the Polar Bears and 363 career wins overall. In Federal League play, his teams produced a remarkable 131-11-15 record. When postseason results are included, that mark becomes even more dominant: 150-14-15.

The Polar Bears were a model of consistency under Biros' leadership, claiming 19 Federal League championships and 14 district titles during his time on the

sideline. Jackson also made a habit of postseason runs, reaching the state quarterfinals 10 times and earning a state runner-up finish – one of the highest achievements in program history.

Biros' impact extended well beyond the scoreboard. Over a quarter-century, he helped shape the identity of Jackson boys soccer, building a culture defined by discipline, competitiveness, and pride in representing the community. His OSSCA Hall of Fame recognition reflects not only the success of his teams, but the respect he earned throughout the state soccer community.

Information regarding the coaching transition and next steps for the program is expected to be shared in the weeks ahead.



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Did You Know ...

Jackson High School houses 7 career and technical programs, including auto technology, CISCO networking, culinary arts, horticulture and more?



Speech & Debate Qualifies for State Championship Tournament



Jackson Local's Speech & Debate team will be represented at the Ohio Speech & Debate Association Championship Tournament, earning a place on the state stage through months of preparation, practice, and persistence.

Qualifying for the championship reflects the team's hard work and commitment to excellence, along with a genuine passion for thoughtful argument and polished performance. The following students have qualified to compete:

Congressional Debate: Corwin Walls Broad, Eashan Sheth, Ranveer Verma, Kayla Stine

Lincoln-Douglas Debate: Sebastian Istnick, Maggie Johnson, Radha Kontamwar, Daniel Bernard

Public Forum Debate: Riley Edmonds & Duncan Hass; Nathan Chen & Isabella Nam; Brooklyn Slater & Sabaha Qureshi; Mervin Owour & Mason Belaney

International Extemporaneous Speaking: Manav Rawal, Rishi Nagubandi, Kahan Patel, Mackenzie Susor

United States Extemporaneous Speaking: Josh Walter, Sofia Rafique

Dramatic Interpretation: Charlotte Raketich, Emily Eldridge, Isabel Tisevich

Congratulations to all of our qualifiers, and best of luck as you represent Jackson Local at the state tournament.



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Did You Know ...

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Jackson JV Girls Basketball Brings Varsity-Level Intensity, Bright Future

By Dan Mucci, Jackson Living Magazine

The following article is being reprinted with permission from Jackson Living Magazine

"This JV group (girls' basketball) plays with an incredible amount of energy, and they are selfless in how they share the ball and go about their business regardless of who is scoring. This group truly embodies playing as one unit and supporting each other, which absolutely is a big part of their success. I would say they can both defend and move the ball at the varsity level," wrote Jackson Girls' Varsity Basketball Coach Mike Coon.

Typically, most of the hype for any high school team is geared toward the varsity team. And, as we previewed in a previous edition, the girls' basketball team is poised again to compete for a Federal League title. But sources in Jackson think the JV team now can compete with—and surpass—the varsity team, quite a feat and statement. Much of the credit for what appears to be a powerful JV team starts in the youth program.

"I believe both our youth program and middle school coaches deserve a lot of credit for the growth and consistency that we've had the last decade," wrote Coon. "We are constantly striving to have the right people lead and be involved in our youth program. We get a lot of support from the families in our community who are willing to give a lot of time, energy, and love to our youth athletes. We are incredibly fortunate to have Matt Holecko and Rich Crossman as our seventh- and eighth-grade coaches. Many districts have a ton of turnover in their middle

school coaching roles, but Matt and Rich are both teachers in the district and have coached at this level for 10+ years. They do a phenomenal job of helping the girls transition from youth basketball to school ball and preparing the girls to take the next step to high school basketball."

That preparation has helped this team push and beat the varsity team in practice, which means this team is mature beyond its years.

"One of the advantages of having a JV team like this is their ability to push and challenge our varsity every day in practice," wrote the mentor of the purple and white. "We are able to practice almost entirely together and compete against each other as one big unit and not always strictly be varsity vs. JV. I don't think there are many programs that can replicate the level of intensity and competition that we have during our high school practices this year. Over the summer, I tried to enter our JV in as many varsity-level games as I could, and they proved quickly that they can compete at that level. I think that experience was something that helped them jump in their maturity and confidence as basketball players."

The JV coaching staff also helped support this team during the summer workouts.

"Our JV coaching staff is truly a group operation," Coon said. "My lead varsity assistant, Jason Zupp, is their head coach, but another one of our varsity assistants, Ricky Delambo, works with them as a

'scout team' when we are preparing the varsity for their next game. We also have Holly Tobin, who works with them quite a bit in practice and stepped in to coach them during many scrimmages when the varsity was playing at the same time. Again, the fact that we practice as one group makes this possible, as every coach on our staff knows the strengths and weaknesses of every player in our program."

Those summer workouts against tougher competition showed in their first game, a 36-3 win. How were they so dominant?

"They utilize a full-court press very effectively," wrote Coon. "When they drop back to half-court defense, they do a great job of keeping the intensity and effort at the same level. This group does like to push the pace at both ends of the court. Their speed and 'motor' are definitely one of their strengths, so they want to play fast and are comfortable doing so."

Coach Coon does see one area of caution for this still-growing team.

"I definitely keep in mind the need to keep them humble and hungry to improve," he wrote. "They still have lots of development that needs to occur for them to have success against high-level varsity teams, which is what they want to be able to do. Being able to compete at a varsity level and being able to win consistently at a varsity level are two very different things, and I think that they are smart enough and experienced enough to recognize that."

Continued on page 10

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Continued from page 7

JV Girls Basketball Bright Future

The success of this year's team rests on these players:

- Amiya Ryba, guard, sophomore
- Lauren Wackerly, guard, sophomore
- Catey Norman, guard, sophomore
- Hope Williams, guard, sophomore
- Reese Brickwood, point guard, freshman
- McKenzie Johnson, guard, freshman
- Delaney Bolon, guard, freshman
- Ayanna Myricks, point guard, freshman
- Leila Ryba, guard, freshman
- Roxy Butterfield, guard, freshman



This group of girls had tremendous success in middle school. They played in three out of a possible four championship games during their time at Jackson Memorial Middle School between the two grades.

The biggest challenge for Coon this year may be keeping this team together without bumping any of them up to varsity so they can continue to gel and grow as a team for an even stronger future.

"The challenge is in keeping them from being discouraged about not playing varsity yet when many of them realize they may be getting those minutes at another program," wrote Coon. "It's a blessing and a curse for them that we returned every girl that played in our main rotation from a varsity group that won 20 games and played in a regional final the previous year. I constantly remind them of where the program is at and that they are a huge part of any success our varsity achieves this year. The advantage for them is that they get to compete against a high-level varsity team every day, and that will continue to prepare them for when their time comes."

Which means the future looks extremely bright for Jackson girls basketball.

"Right now, we have a lot of momentum and a good spread of talent throughout the entire program from our high school down to our youngest youth levels," wrote Coon. "There is nowhere else that I'd rather be a head coach, and I'm excited to continue to do everything I can to make Jackson Girls Basketball one of the most competitive programs in the state."

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Did You Know ...

Jackson Local offers 27 AP courses, and nearly 8 out of 10 students score a 3 or higher in those AP classes to earn transferable college credit?



Student Success Highlights Across Jackson Schools

Jackson Local Schools students are accomplishing great things – in the classroom, in competition, and out in the community. From advanced academic recognition to award-winning art and writing, these recent highlights reflect the opportunities our students have and the dedication of the educators and families who support them.

Jackson High School earns Bronze AP Honor Roll recognition

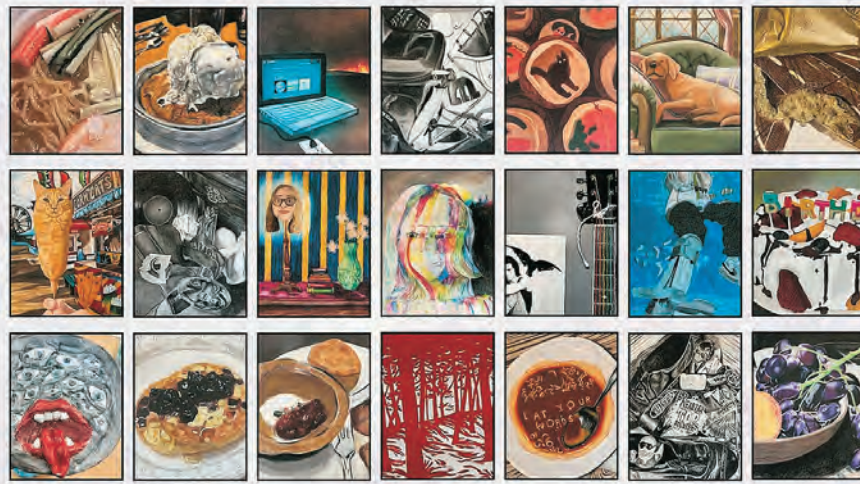
Jackson High School has earned a Bronze AP Honor Roll Award, placing JHS among just 9% of eligible schools nationwide to receive this distinction. The AP/E School Honor Roll recognizes schools that are expanding access to rigorous, college-level coursework while also supporting strong outcomes for students.

Thank you to our teachers, families, and community for helping create opportunities that prepare students for what's next.

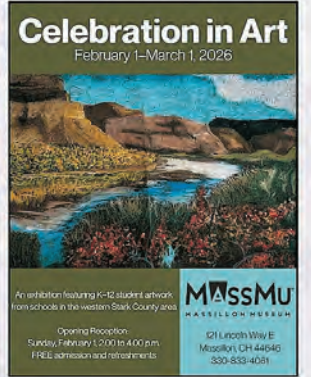
Jackson High School students earn regional Scholastic recognition

Jackson High School students were recognized through the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, earning Gold Key and Silver Key honors and nearly 70 Honorable Mentions – a strong reflection of both student talent and the learning experiences available through our Fine Arts program.

A special congratulations goes to Amelia Nonnamaker, whose Gold Key jewelry portfolio marks Jackson's first jewelry portfolio Gold Key in many years and will advance to national-level judging this spring.



Check out these Jackson High School students in



Student artwork featured at the Massillon Museum

Jackson's student artists were also represented in the community through the Celebration in Art exhibit at the Massillon Museum, on display throughout February. Twenty-one Jackson High School students had artwork featured in the show, which included student work from 27 school buildings across Stark County, including all six Jackson Local Schools.

The exhibit offered students a meaningful opportunity to showcase their learning, celebrate creativity, and represent Jackson proudly beyond the classroom.

JMMS writers shine at Power of the Pen Regionals

At Jackson Memorial Middle School, student writers delivered an outstanding performance at the Power of the Pen Regional Competition, led by Mrs. Cole and a team of 12 writers.

- 7th Grade: Deeksha and Faris placed Top 12 out of 90, and the 7th-grade team earned 1st place overall.
- 8th Grade: Ava placed Top 12 out of 82, and the 8th-grade team earned 1st place overall.

When district and regional scores were combined, JMMS finished 1st out of 33 schools – an impressive accomplishment that highlights both student commitment and strong support from staff.

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Did You Know ...

Jackson High School, Lake Cable Elementary, and Sauder Elementary are distinguished as Blue Ribbon Schools by the U.S. Department of Education?



Polar Bears Gymnastics: A Young Program, a Veteran Core, and Big Goals

By Dan Mucci, Jackson Living Magazine

The following article is being reprinted with permission from Jackson Living Magazine

A polished dance routine. A perfect vault. A tantalizing bar routine. A fine step on the balance beam. And the finest a gymnast can compete and win in the all-around competition.

The Jackson High School gymnastics team is relatively young compared to more seasoned Federal League schools. The Polar Bears did not form a team until the early 1990s. At that time, cheerleaders mostly crossed over and became gymnasts. Today, that is not the case.

"Gymnastics is very popular today," said Head Coach Christy Harp, who graduated from Jackson High School in 2000. "High school gymnastics is unique because gymnasts practice at their 'home gym' during the week and come together as a high school team on the weekends. Girls on the high school team can be at all different levels back at their 'home gyms,' but compete and are judged as Level 8s for the high school meets. We have had everything from Xcel gymnasts, to Level 6s, all the way to Level 10 on our high school team. Seeing them compete all together in purple and gold is really great. We practice at the North Canton YMCA Gymnastics Center. Other schools that practice in North Canton are Lake, Northwest, Louisville, GlenOak, Green, and Hoover. Perry and McKinley also have teams, so that means every school in the Federal League has a team."

At Jackson, most sports have a youth development program. Gymnastics does not.

"We do not have a Jackson-specific youth team," said Harp, who did gymnastics for 12 years and competed all four years for Jackson on bars. "Most youth attend local gyms such as North Canton YMCA, Massillon YMCA, or Gymnastics of Ohio."

Which leads to the question: How does Jackson entice youth to be interested in the sport?

"Older gymnasts set good examples in the gym and help coach as well," said Harp, who graduated from The University of Akron, earning her bachelor's degree in math education. "Young gymnasts look up to them almost like older sisters in the gym and want to be like them."

This year's Polar Bears roster is made up mostly of juniors and seniors. Here is a look at this year's gymnasts, all returning letter winners:

- Natalie Griffith, senior, bars
- Amelia Nonnamaker, senior, vault and bars
- Elysia Truex, senior
- Riley Zagst, senior, strong all-around
- Peyton Rhody, junior, vault and beam
- Kendall Seibert, junior, bars and beam
- Gabby Whalen, junior, all-around, but made it to states on beam
- Elizabeth Henrich, sophomore

The team has two newcomers, including sophomore Bella Speer, who has a cheer background, and Lillian Moore, a freshman.

"The strengths of this year's team are our five seniors," wrote Harp, who teaches Algebra II at Jackson High School. "We have lots of experience competing out there. Maria Cho and Riley Zagst are very strong gymnasts, and Gabby Whalen qualified for states. Cho, Zagst, and Whalen should be a power trio for us with scoring."

Harp did express some concerns. "The whole team staying healthy and injury-free is always a concern in a dangerous sport like gymnastics."

The Federal League race will be competitive as always. GlenOak and Green will provide strong competition for the Bears. Gymnastics is unique, as are cross country, track, swimming, and wrestling. The individual scores of each athlete add to the overall team score to determine the winner. Harp discusses how she coaches the individuals to do their best while also keeping an eye on the team score.

"At big meets, we can only compete six gymnasts per event," wrote Harp, who is married to Nick. They have two kids, Blaine and Maela. "This can be a challenge because you know you have girls who can be competitive in all-

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around, but they can't necessarily compete in every event in order to give everyone else a chance. Luckily, everyone on our team is kind and understanding and has the goal of the team doing well as their top priority."

More than any other sport, gymnastics is a mental challenge. Harp discussed how to keep athletes mentally sharp and avoid some of the issues that Simone Biles faced. "I try not to pressure the athletes too much," said Harp, who enjoys skiing, mountain biking, family RV trips, and working on the family farm. "I allow them to take time returning to the skill that is giving them difficulty. Be supportive."

The district, regional, and state tournament is approaching. "Jackson is in a very tough Northeast Ohio district with Brecksville, which has won 22 consecutive times (a national record)," wrote Harp, who has coached the team for nine years. "We aim to stay competitive and go out and do our best!"



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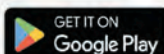
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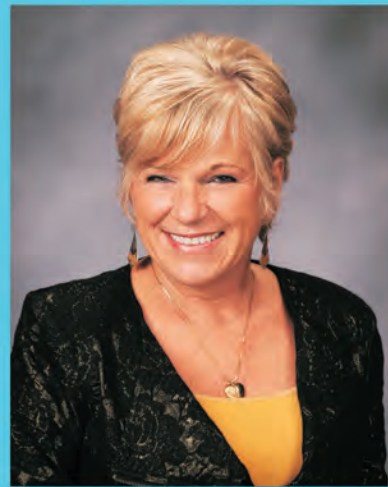
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