

April
2026

The
Eagle Examiner



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





MESSAGE from the SUPERINTENDENT

Welcome back, Eagles! We hope your Spring Break was restful and full of memories. The "homestretch" of the school year is officially underway.

Our students continue to excel in and out of the classroom. Our high school drama students put on an incredible performance of *Rock of Ages: Teen Edition*, and our concert band, choir, and orchestra had strong showings at OMEA events at both the middle school and high school levels. We were able to recognize many of our elementary and intermediate art students for their work that was on display at regional and state competitions.

Work continues at 105 Baughman Street, the new location of the Early Learning Center, which is set to open in the Fall of 2026. The roof is being replaced, and the south wing is being renovated, ensuring our youngest Eagles have a modern, accessible space to grow. Read on for more information on the move to Baughman and a celebration of 100 years at the current building on Harrison Street.

As we move into the final quarter of the school year, I encourage families to stay connected with your student's teachers. State testing is right around the corner, and I am sure our kids will perform their very best. Your encouragement to them to do their best will do wonders for them.

Ryan McLane



Ryan McLane

COMMON CENTS

Strong Financial Position Supports Big Walnut's Future

Big Walnut Local Schools is in a strong financial position. So far this year, revenues are about \$6.4 million higher than expected, mainly because of strong property tax collections. Spending is a little below budget, and the district's cash balance is \$39.35 million, which is well above the projected \$32.63 million.

The Board of Education also heard good news about the district's recent bond sale. On February 18, the district sold \$27.055 million in bonds, with investor demand more than three times what was needed. Part of the sale refinanced existing debt, saving taxpayers over \$688,000. Another \$19 million in Library Facilities Bonds will help expand the Big Walnut Community Library.

Several new facility and capital improvement projects were also approved. These include moving the Harrison Street playground to the new Early Learning Center at 105 Baughman Street, adding more visitor bleachers at the high school stadium, and upgrading lighting at the Transportation Facility.

These investments show the district's ongoing commitment to managing finances responsibly and improving opportunities and resources for students and the Big Walnut community.



Big Walnut Announces 2026 Asphalt Improvements Project

Big Walnut Local Schools has officially issued a public notice for its 2026 Asphalt Improvements Project, an initiative aimed at maintaining and enhancing district facilities.

The district is currently accepting sealed bids from qualified contractors. Bids are due by 2:00 p.m. on April 15, 2026, and will be opened publicly shortly after the deadline.

A pre-bid meeting will be held on April 7, 2026, at 11:00 a.m. at Big Walnut High School for interested vendors to learn more about the project and requirements.

Contract documents and additional details are available through the district's Facilities Department.

This project reflects Big Walnut's continued commitment to providing safe, well-maintained spaces for students, staff, and the community.



Early Learning Center Moving to Baughman St.

In case you haven't heard already, Big Walnut's youngest learners are getting a new home! This new space is full of both history and opportunity.

Starting in the 2026-27 school year, the Big Walnut Early Learning Center (ELC) will move from 70 Harrison Street to 105 Baughman Street. This change is an exciting step for early childhood education in our district, bringing modern updates and room to grow. This move comes at a special time. The Harrison Street building, one of Sunbury's



original schools, turned 100 years old this year. On April 16, we'll celebrate with a Touch-a-Truck event. For generations, this building has served Big Walnut students and families and is an important part of Big Walnut's story. If you have any memories of time spent at the Harrison St. building, regardless of age or grade, please share your stories [HERE](#) and your photos [HERE](#).



The Baughman Street building also has a long history. Built in 1951 as Big Walnut High School, it later became the Middle School, and then the Intermediate building. It has been empty since 2021, after the current High School was built, which led to several grade levels shifting buildings. Now, it will welcome students again, this time our youngest Golden Eagles.

Moving to Baughman Street means the building's south side will be fully renovated. The new space will be

welcoming and designed just for early learners. The updated facility will include:

- Additional classrooms to support future growth
- A fully ADA-compliant environment, improving accessibility for all students and families
- Use of the most recent main entrance, facing the BWMS stadium, for easier access and navigation

One of the best parts of this move is something students already know and love. The new ADA-accessible playground at Harrison Street will be moved and set up at Baughman Street this summer. This way, students can continue to enjoy the same playground, and everyone will have access to it.

Construction is going well, and the project should be finished this summer as planned. The district is paying for the project with existing funds, so no new bond issue is needed.

As we get ready to say goodbye to Harrison Street and start fresh at Baughman Street, this move is more than just a new address. It's an investment in our future, giving our youngest learners a place to explore, grow, and begin their Big Walnut journey in a space made just for them.





AROUND THE DISTRICT



Ryan Balaz
Big Walnut Middle School

Big Walnut Staff Spotlight!

If you step into Mr. Ryan Balaz's 8th grade American History classroom at Big Walnut Middle School, you won't just find students memorizing dates. You'll find them thinking like historians. Known for his high energy and thoughtful teaching style, Mr. Balaz makes American History come alive through simulations, inquiry-based lessons, and project-based learning. His students explore the founding principles, major conflicts, and diverse perspectives that shaped our nation while making meaningful connections between the past and present.

Leadership at BWMS

Mr. Balaz's impact reaches far beyond his classroom. As a member of both his interdisciplinary team and the Building Leadership Team, he works with colleagues to strengthen instruction and support student success. He also continues to support Big Walnut's high school tennis program each year. His professionalism, work ethic, and student-centered approach make him a valued leader in the building.

Did You Know?

Mr. Balaz was recently recommended to the Ohio Society of the Sons of the American Revolution for consideration for the American History Teacher Award at the state level. We are proud to have him at Big Walnut and grateful for the example he sets for our students every day.



Spring Fling Brings Fun and Smiles to GRE

General Rosecrans Elementary students recently spent an afternoon filled with laughter, movement, and sweet treats at the annual Spring Fling, hosted by the Fun Club.

The event included four fun stations that kept students moving and smiling as they tried each activity. At one station, students could "taste the rainbow" by picking Skittles or M&M's, along with



some popcorn.

At another station, students teamed up with a giant parachute, working together to bounce balls and keep them moving. Nearby, GRE's custodian, Adam, read a spring-themed story that quickly became a crowd favorite.

To finish, students joined a movement station that got everyone up, active, and having fun.

With sweet treats, shared stories, and



lots of active play, the Spring Fling was a memorable day for everyone. It showed that some of the best learning happens when there's joy, laughter, and a bit of springtime fun.





AROUND THE DISTRICT

Read Across America Week Celebrated Across Big Walnut

Students across Big Walnut celebrated Read Across America Week with fun, book-filled activities that brought stories to life.

Elementary schools hosted Book Swap Shops and Exchanges, giving students the chance to trade books and discover new favorites. Author visits gave students a behind-the-scenes look at writing and illustrating, while guest readers at the Early Learning Center shared stories with young learners.

At Big Walnut Elementary, Masked Mystery Readers added excitement as students tried to guess which staff member was reading aloud in disguise.

From new books to special visitors, the week helped spark a love of reading across the district.



CLASS OF 2026 SCHOLARS' DINNER CELEBRATES ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Big Walnut High School recently held its eighth annual Scholars' Dinner to honor the Class of 2026 Honor Court. These students earned a cumulative GPA of 4.1 or higher. On Wednesday, March 18, students, families, and staff gathered in the BWHS Academic Commons to celebrate their achievement.

Principal Dr. Nicole Carter welcomed everyone and recognized the students. The evening also featured a speech by BWHS math teacher Mr. Michael McDonough, who was chosen by the students to speak.

The event was more than a dinner. The evening celebrated perseverance, curiosity, and a strong commitment to academics. Honor Court students show the best of Big Walnut by balancing tough classes with activities, leadership, and service.

These seniors will graduate as summa cum laude members of the Class of 2026. Their future plans cover many interests, including medicine, engineering, education, business, aviation, and the arts.

As families and staff came together to celebrate these achievements, it was clear that the future is in good hands.

Big Walnut is proud to honor the Class of 2026 Honor Court and looks forward to seeing what they achieve in the future.





Big Walnut Heading to Spain for Spring Break 2027?

Big Walnut Local Schools is considering a special trip to Spain for World Language students during Spring Break 2027. This opportunity depends on approval from the Board of Education.

We will hold a parent information meeting on Tuesday, April 21 at 6:30 PM in Room 2602 at Big Walnut High School. [RSVP HERE!](#)

If approved, the trip will include visits to famous places like Barcelona and Madrid. Students will get to experience Spanish culture, history, and language through tours, activities, and hands-on learning.

At the meeting, families will learn about the trip schedule, safety and supervision, costs, payment options, and ways to help with fundraising.

This meeting is a chance to find out more and ask any questions. You do not need to commit to anything right now.



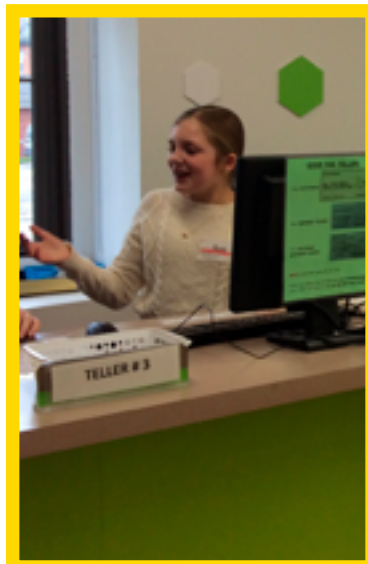
Big Walnut Fifth Graders Take Over BizTown

Fifth graders from Big Walnut Intermediate recently experienced the real world at JA BizTown. They did more than visit; they took charge and ran the town.

Students took on roles like CEO, bank teller, and business leader, working together to run a simulated town. They earned paychecks, managed bank accounts, made purchases, and kept their businesses running smoothly all day.

This experience brought classroom lessons to life by giving students hands-on practice with financial literacy, teamwork, and responsibility. Whether balancing budgets or working with classmates, our fifth graders rose to the challenge and made their city a success.

The day was full of learning, leadership, and a glimpse into what the future could hold for our Big Walnut Eagles.





ASL Students Experience Deaf Culture Firsthand

Recently, students in Big Walnut High School's American Sign Language (ASL) program had a special chance to learn more about both the language and its culture.

As they learn ASL, students also discover Deaf culture, which is often overlooked and has its own unique norms, traditions, and ways of expressing ideas. ASL is a full language with its own grammar and structure.

To make these ideas more real, BWHS invited Deaf educators Paige Stafford and Angela Moore from the Ohio School for the Deaf on March 23. They visited ASL 1–3 classes, introduced themselves using only ASL, and led students in hands-on activities.



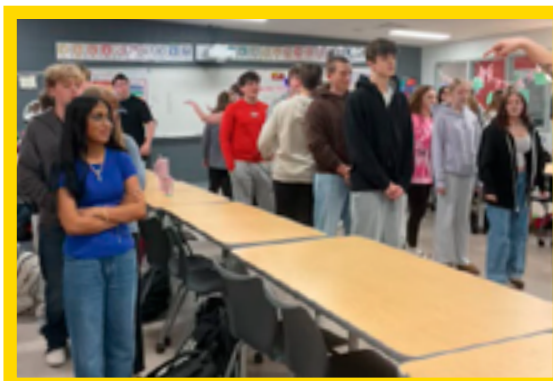
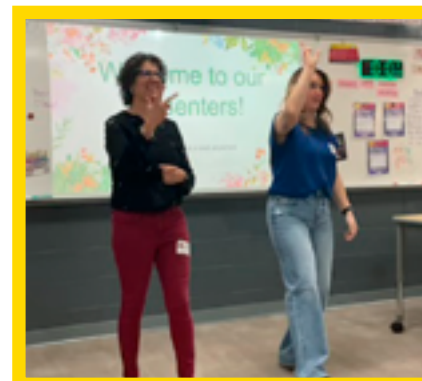
Olivia Sturtevant
Big Walnut High School
ASL Teacher



Students practiced fingerspelling, learned about name signs, and took part in a Q&A session using their ASL skills. The classrooms were set up in a U-shape so everyone could see and communicate easily, following Deaf cultural traditions.

A game of "ASL telephone" made the class lively and showed how communication can be challenging in a world where most people hear. Students also learned how interpreters help with conversations and how not having enough access to ASL can affect daily life for Deaf people.

The visit inspired students to keep improving their ASL skills and to help make the community more welcoming for everyone.



Staff Volleyball League Serves Up Fun in First Season

The inaugural Big Walnut staff volleyball league proved to be a smashing success. Over the course of two months, staff from across the district gathered on Tuesday and Thursday evenings at Big Walnut Intermediate for some friendly competition.

While the volleyball ranged from impressive to... enthusiastic, the real highlight was the camaraderie and fun shared by all.

Congratulations to the Hylen Souders and Central Office team, who earned bragging rights as the league's first-ever champions!





Fall Tailgate



Fall Tailgate



Fall Tailgate

BW PURPLE STAR 2025-2026



Winter Dinner



Winter Dinner



Purple Star Party



Purple Star Grants



Purple Star Party

The 2025-2026 school year has been full of impactful events for our Big Walnut Purple Star Families. We enjoyed a Fall Tailgate in September that included a visit from the Varsity Football Players and a January Winter Dinner Bingo Night prior to the Boys Varsity Basketball Game. Additionally, our kiddos continue to get together each quarter with their PS peers and we just awarded \$2000 worth of grants to graduating Purple Star Seniors. We look forward to a great celebration during April, the month of the Military Child, which will bring personalized gifts to our students and an opportunity for families to attend a BW Lacrosse Game.



AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE PROGRAM

Spring Skills Career Development Events

Our students have been busy representing our program with incredible skill and dedication across three recent Career Development Events. In the Livestock Judging competition, a group of five high school and four middle school students put their evaluation skills to the test. They spent the day analyzing cattle, goats, sheep, and hogs across market and breeding classes, while also tackling complex tasks like market grids and female selection. The high school team placed 112 out of 196 teams. The middle school team placed 8th out of 47 teams.



The momentum continued with our Equine team, where two of our high schoolers demonstrated their expertise in horse conformation and performance. From judging halter classes to evaluating hay based on specific feeding scenarios, these students showed a deep understanding of the industry. We are proud to announce that they individually placed 47th and 52nd out of 306 individuals.

Finally, our Milk Quality and Products teams, consisting of five high school and four middle school students, took a "sensory" approach to agriscience. This unique event challenges students to identify cheeses by texture and taste, detect off-flavors in fluid milk, and master the food safety standards that protect the dairy industry. It's easily one of the most entertaining (and delicious) ways our students demonstrate their knowledge of food science. The high school team placed 2nd out of 27 teams. The middle school team placed 1st out of 8 teams.



Agriscience Fair

For the third year in a row, our students have tackled the rigorous Agriscience Fair, and we are thrilled to announce that, for the second consecutive year, we have state finalists! All three of our participating students have placed in the Top 4 for their respective divisions. These students conducted self-directed experiments and authored academic reports on their findings.

Erin H. is a Division 5 finalist in Food Products and Processing Systems; her research looked into the Maillard reaction, comparing how baking soda versus baking powder affects the perfect cookie. She found that baking powder produced superior color and texture in the sugar cookies!

In Division 6 of the same category, the duo of Ali D. and Tyler I. researched methods to reduce blueberry spoilage through various packaging techniques, providing insights into how the right environment can significantly extend the shelf life of fresh fruit. Ali and Tyler found that using a plastic bag prevented the blueberries from spoiling the fastest.

All three students are now preparing for virtual interviews on March 31, and we will learn their final state rankings during the Ohio FFA State Convention on May 1. We also want to extend a special thank you to Dr. Mary Kay Pohlschneider for her invaluable mentorship and for helping our students navigate the complexities of food science research. Good luck, everyone!





High School Sports



Brian Shelton
Big Walnut High School
Athletic Director

Big Walnut High School Athletics has had an exciting season, with postseason wins, individual awards, and new chances for future Eagles to join in.

The Girls Basketball team had a standout season, winning the Division II Regional Championship and reaching the State Final Four for the second year in a row. The Eagles ended the year with a strong 23–4 record, showing resilience, teamwork, and top-level play during the tournament.

Junior Sydney Mobley made the season even more special by being named 2026 Ohio Ms. Basketball, one of the top honors in the state. She averaged 20.5 points, 9 rebounds, 1.9 assists, and 2.5 steals per game, helping



lead the Eagles deep into the playoffs. Mobley also earned All-Ohio Player of the Year and First Team honors, showing her strong impact on both offense and defense.

The Girls Basketball team received more honors as Remy Largent was named Second Team All-Ohio and Ryleigh Thrapp earned Honorable Mention All-Ohio.

The Boys Basketball team also had state-level success. Carson Scholl was named Division II Second Team All-Ohio, and Eli Stumpf received Honorable Mention All-Ohio. Both players have become key contributors and show promise for the program's future.

In wrestling, Katelyn Norris represented Big Walnut at the OHSAA State Wrestling Championships. This is a great achievement and shows her hard work and dedication.



Coaching was recognized as well, with Head Boys Wrestling Coach Aaron Renner named Ohio Capital Conference Coach of the Year after leading the Eagles to an OCC Championship.

The Big Walnut community is invited to celebrate one of its most important track and field leaders. The Red Run takes place on Friday, April 10, and the 48th Annual Red Edwards' Golden Eagle Relays are on Saturday, April 11. These events honor Coach Don "Red" Edwards, whose 65-year career shaped track and field and cross country at Big Walnut and beyond.



Big Walnut Athletics

Register below to participate in the 3rd Annual Red Run!

Registration is now open for Big Walnut Youth Summer Camps. Students can train, compete, and build skills in sports such as football, volleyball, tennis, track, soccer, and gymnastics. These camps are a great way for young athletes to meet coaches and join the Big Walnut athletic community. [Registration for these summer youth camps is available HERE!](#)

From championships to individual awards and new chances for young athletes, it has been a remarkable season for Big Walnut Athletics, with more to come.



3RD ANNUAL RED RUN

The 3rd Annual Red Edwards Run will take place on April 10 at 6:00 p.m., honoring Coach Red Edwards and his 65 years of dedication to Big Walnut Cross Country and Track. Coach Edwards poured time, care, and relentless attention to detail into generations of student-athletes, and this event continues his legacy while supporting the Red Edwards Scholarship. The scholarship is open to senior members of the track program, both male and female.

The evening features a 2-mile course that includes track, road, and grass, symbolizing a true commitment to running. A 400-meter Red Run for children and a 400-meter adult option are also available for those who prefer a shorter distance. [Register for the race HERE!](#)





HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS



COACH DON "RED" EDWARDS April 8, 1938 - September 28, 2023

Big Walnut Track & Field, Cross Country Coach 1957-2023

In 1957, Red Edwards began his coaching career at his alma mater, Big Walnut High School, leaving an enduring mark on Track and Field and Cross Country for an astounding 65 years. He pioneered the girls' track and field program in 1974, after several years coaching the women's division of the Ohio Track Club in Central Ohio. He was the founder of the Sunbury Track Club. He initiated the boys' cross-country team in 1967 and the girls' cross-country program in 1978. He introduced both boys' and girls' middle school cross-country programs in 1985. In 1978, Red created the Golden Eagle Relays which now proudly displays his name as the Red Edwards' Golden Eagle Relays - a testament to his enduring legacy in the sport.

During his illustrious career, Red received many awards and recognitions from around the state: 1979 Cross Country Central District Coach of the Year, 2002 OATCCC Distinguished Service Award; in 2012, he received the "Ed Barker Award" for his outstanding contributions to track and field; he was the first inductee into the Big Walnut Wall of Fame in 2002; and Red was inducted into the Ohio Capital Conference Hall of Fame in 2016.

Beyond his coaching contributions, Red assumed the roles of owner and curator of the Big Walnut Track and Field Museum. Items from his extensive collection are proudly displayed at Big Walnut. For over two decades, Red served as Ohio's Track and Field historian, where he showcased his collection at the annual OATCCC coaches' clinic; and inspired coaches from Big Walnut and around the state to begin their own record books.



BIG WALNUT HIGH SCHOOL



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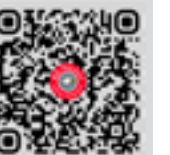
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