

May
2026

The
Eagle Examiner



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

SLIDING INTO SUMMER





MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

It's hard to believe the 2025-2026 school year is almost complete. There have been so many positives worth celebrating. From an academic standpoint, we've created additional career pathways for students to better prepare them for life after high school. Our continued work with local and regional businesses has strengthened our efforts to prepare every Big Walnut student to enlist, enroll, or be employed upon graduation. We adopted new curriculum materials, notably new kindergarten through fifth-grade math resources that will be implemented next school year. I believe that getting these materials in the hands of our educators and students will put our kids in a position to excel academically.

We completed many facility upgrades around the district: parking lot expansions, lighting improvements, playground upgrades, safety and security enhancements, and significant renovations to the 105 Baughman building, which will become the new home to our Early Learning Center.

Our kids enjoyed many field trip opportunities thanks to the great support of our PTOs, and they excelled at the highest levels in athletics as well as the arts. We appreciate the various booster groups that support our students in those areas to provide them with a first-class experience.

I want to thank you all for your support and your part in making Big Walnut a very special place. While I'm sure people experienced bumps along the way, I still believe the positives this year far outweigh the negatives. Thank you for a great school year. As we look ahead to 2026-2027, I am excited about what this community will accomplish together. The best is still to come for Big Walnut Local Schools.

Ryan McLane



Ryan McLane

ENLIST, ENROLL, EMPLOY DAY AT PRAIRIE RUN ELEMENTARY

Prairie Run Elementary had a great day welcoming guests into the building for Enlist, Enroll, Employ Day. This is a fun and engaging way for students to learn about different careers.

Throughout the day, students heard from a variety of speakers who shared what they do and how they got there. We had former and current military members, along with professionals in fields like veterinary care, dog training, photography, architecture, nursing, and more. Classrooms were full of great questions and hands-on learning as students got a closer look at different jobs. Whether it was learning how to train a service dog, hearing about life in the military, or seeing what goes into designing buildings or caring for patients, each visit gave students something new to think about.

It was a great opportunity for our students to start connecting what they're learning in school to the real world. It maybe even sparked an idea about what they want to do someday.

A big thank you to all of our guest speakers for taking the time to be here and share their experiences with our students. We appreciate the impact you made on our Prairie Run Golden Eagles!





CLASS OF 2026



**BIG WALNUT
LOCAL SCHOOLS** | **INSPIRE
& GUIDE**

BIG WALNUT HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

MAY 16, 2026 | 7:00 PM



GRAD WEEK SCHEDULE

FRIDAY, MAY 8	LAST DAY OF CLASSES FOR SENIORS
MONDAY, MAY 11 - WEDNESDAY, MAY 13	SENIOR EXAMS
THURSDAY, MAY 14	EAGLES' LAST FLIGHT <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student-only senior celebration• Seniors wear caps and gowns• Buses throughout district for goodbyes
FRIDAY, MAY 15	SENIOR BREAKFAST & GRADUATION REHEARSAL <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seniors report at 8:00am• Breakfast together• Graduation ceremony rehearsal
SATURDAY, MAY 16	GRADUATION CEREMONY <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students report at 6:00pm for 7:00pm ceremony• Celebrating 331 graduating seniors• Student speakers, choir performance• Military & academic honors recognition• Diploma presentation by district staff

**BIG WALNUT
HIGH SCHOOL**



**BIG WALNUT
LOCAL SCHOOLS**



The Class of 2026 is just days away from turning their tassels! Graduation Week at Big Walnut High School is set to begin on Friday, May 8, and will culminate with the graduation ceremony on Saturday, May 16 at 7:00 PM.

The week includes final exams, senior traditions like the Eagles' Last Flight, and a special Senior Breakfast and Graduation Rehearsal. Each event builds toward a meaningful sendoff for our seniors as they reflect on their journey and prepare for what's ahead.

Graduation evening will bring the community together to celebrate the accomplishments of this year's class. The ceremony will feature student speakers, musical performances, and recognition of academic and military honors, all leading up to the presentation of diplomas.

We're proud of our seniors and can't wait to celebrate everything they've achieved. So grab your caps, gowns, and tissues, it's time to honor the Class of 2026.





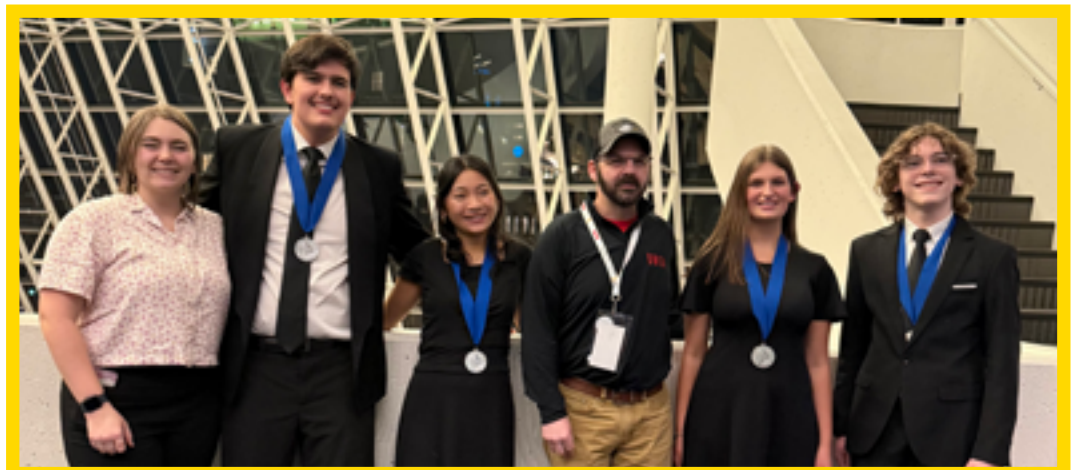
Big Walnut Choirs Hit a High Note in 2025–26

The Big Walnut Choirs had a very eventful and successful 2025-26 school year. We started off in the fall with a concert of Beatles music. It was a great way to get kids using their voices while singing tunes that most people were able to recognize, but with some arrangements that were a little different than the original Beatles recordings. Our Select Choir and Tenor/Bass choir performed at our Veterans Day ceremony in November.

Our December concert included a mix of seasonal favorites and music from our contest selections. The winter is contest season. This year we had 30 registered events for Solo & Ensemble contest which took place in January. This provided students a great opportunity to work on individual growth. We also performed at the OMEA Large Group Adjudicated Event in March, where all three choirs earned superior ratings and qualified for State Contest in May. We are looking forward to continuing our success on May 2nd at State Contest, which will be followed by our Spring concert, a recital for soloists, and graduation.



Throughout the year we also had students participate in special events that take place off campus. In October we had 21 students participate in honor choirs held at Otterbein and Mount Vernon Nazarene Universities. We had four students accepted into All State Choir. Jacoby Hoehn, Hannah Wauben, Nathan Grubb, and Camille Giallombardo auditioned in the Spring of last year and were selected to perform with the All State Choir which sings at the OMEA convention in January. In December our Select Choir was invited to perform in a concert along with Hilliard Davidson, Upper Arlington, and Otterbein University's top choirs. Finally, we were proud to have students representing us at a few different events to provide the National Anthem.



Next year we will continue to strive to provide quality and entertaining choral music for our school district. We will be adding some additional recruitment performances at the middle school, and hope to be able to visit elementary schools in December. We will also be looking for additional opportunities to perform outside of the school, especially for events that allow us to serve our community. Please reach out to Mr. House at the High School if you would like to schedule our students to perform at an event.



COMMON CENTS



Scott Gooding
Interim Treasurer / CFO

Understanding Property Tax Reform in Ohio: What It Means for Big Walnut Local Schools

Understanding property tax reform in Ohio is especially important for communities like Big Walnut, where local support plays a central role in maintaining strong schools. As discussions continue at the state level, it is important to consider how potential changes may affect not only taxpayers, but also the students, families, and staff who rely on stable school funding.

Public school districts in Ohio depend heavily on locally approved property taxes to fund daily operations. While the state contributes to school funding, that support has historically been inconsistent and often does not fully keep pace with rising costs or enrollment growth. For Big Walnut Local Schools, this means that locally approved levies remain a primary and reliable source of funding.

Property taxes support many essential aspects of the school district, including classroom instruction, staffing, student transportation, safety measures, academic programming, extracurricular activities, and the upkeep of school facilities. Because these levies must be approved by voters, they reflect direct community investment in the quality of education provided to local students.

Current conversations around property tax reform are largely focused on providing relief to homeowners, particularly as property values rise. As these discussions continue, it is important to understand how changes to the system could affect school funding at the local level.

For a growing district like Big Walnut, enrollment increases bring additional responsibilities, including staffing, transportation, and long-term facility planning. Local property tax revenue has historically played a key role in helping districts manage that growth and maintain consistent services for students.

Any changes to the structure of property taxes may have downstream effects on how schools are funded. The specifics of those impacts will depend on how reforms are designed and whether alternative funding sources are included.

At the same time, many families are experiencing financial pressures, and those considerations are part of the broader conversation at the state level.

Big Walnut Local Schools has long benefited from strong community support. As discussions about property tax reform continue, staying informed will be important, as decisions made at the state level can influence how schools are funded and operated in the future.

Last Day of School & Early Dismissal

As the school year comes to a close, Big Walnut Local Schools will have a two-hour early dismissal on the final day of school, Thursday, May 21. Buses will run on the adjusted early release schedule.

Families with students at the Early Learning Center should note the following schedule for the day:

AM Session: 9:00 – 10:30 AM

PM Session: 11:35 AM – 1:05 PM

Please make any necessary arrangements for pick-up, drop-off, and childcare ahead of time.

As we wrap up another great school year, thank you for your continued support and partnership. We hope everyone enjoys a wonderful end to May and a fun, relaxing start to summer.



Neighbors Helping Neighbors.

Support local families through the Big Walnut Friends Who Share Program. Every little bit makes a difference.





KIDS EAT FREE!

- No Registration
- Age 18 or Younger

Scan the QR code for more information!



Find meal locations and times near you
education.ohio.gov/KidsEat
866-348-6479



AROUND THE DISTRICT



Lisa House
Big Walnut High School

Big Walnut Staff Spotlight!

At Big Walnut High School, Lisa House is a familiar and trusted presence for students navigating a new language, a new school, and often a new culture. As an English Language Learner (ELL) teacher, Lisa helps students build confidence and find their footing from day one.

Lisa creates an inclusive environment where students' backgrounds are not only recognized, but celebrated. Through culturally relevant instruction and personalized support, she helps her students build confidence as they navigate both their education and their future.

Her impact extends far beyond her classroom. Lisa works closely with students across the building, traveling to support them in other classes and ensuring they have what they need to succeed. She also shares her expertise with staff, offering guidance and strategies to better support ELL students throughout the school.

But what truly sets Lisa apart is the care she brings each day. With a positive attitude and a cheerful demeanor, she builds meaningful connections with both students and colleagues, creating a lasting impact on the Big Walnut community.

Thank you, Lisa, for the difference you make every single day. Your dedication, compassion, and commitment do not go unnoticed!

Big Walnut Robotics Shines at National Robotics Challenge

Big Walnut student engineers turned in an impressive performance at this year's National Robotics Challenge (NRC), with 15 teams competing across five events and seven advancing to the final rounds.

Leading the way, Matthew I. earned a 1st place finish and Gold Award in Additive Manufacturing. His 30-gram design successfully supported 600 pounds of pressure, showcasing his creativity and precision.



In the Antweight Battle Bots division, Big Walnut had nine teams compete, with three finishing in the top nine—an exciting milestone for the program. Justin C. battled back through the bracket to claim 1st place and a Gold Award. Evan C. and Desmond B. placed 6th, while Davey M. and Conner D. finished 7th.

Jakoby H. and Derek B. represented Big Walnut in the Beetleweight division, advancing to the finals and placing 8th.

In the Rescue Robot event, two teams reached the final round, with Lily H., Summer G., Macie M., and Kara A. placing 6th, and Freya V., Arrian K., and Lauren H. finishing 8th.

Big Walnut also competed in Mini-Sumo, gaining valuable experience for future competitions.

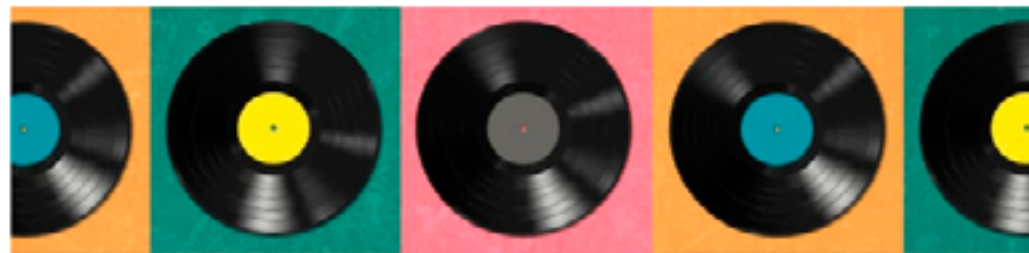
We are incredibly proud of all students who participated and represented Big Walnut with skill and determination.

A special thank you to the Sunbury Fraternal Order of Eagles for their generous support of our robotics program this year.





MIDDLE SCHOOL SERVICE DAY 2026



Rockin' Retirees Dance



*You're
Invited*



Date: Friday May 8th

Time: 10:45 AM - 11:30 AM

Location: Big Walnut Middle School

Come join us for music, dancing,
community and fun.

Refreshments Provided!

"No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted." ~Aesop



Inspire & Guide



Eagle Prides



United Way
of Delaware County



Youth
Changing
the World



In celebration of Global Youth Service Month, Big Walnut Middle School students will participate in the annual Service Day on Friday, May 8. It's a tradition that continues to grow each year.



The day will begin with a morning kickoff before more than 1,000 students and over 100 staff members head out to 50+ service sites across the Big Walnut community. From parks to community organizations, students will spend the morning giving back through hands-on projects and meaningful connections.



Service locations span Sunbury, Galena, and the surrounding area, allowing students to experience the impact of their work both locally and beyond. Whether assisting with outdoor projects, organizing materials, or supporting community partners, students will be putting the district's values of kindness, responsibility, and service into action.

A special highlight will take place back at BWMS with the "Rockin' Retirees Dance." From 10:45 to 11:30 a.m., local seniors are invited to join students in the gym for music, dancing, and refreshments—bringing generations together in a fun and memorable way.

Following their service work, students will return to the building for a celebration of their efforts, including the first-ever "BW's Got Talent Show," featuring performances from both students and staff.



Service Day remains a meaningful tradition at BWMS, giving students the opportunity to make a real impact while building connections and lasting memories.

A special thank you to the BWMS PTO and our Service Day sponsors for their continued support.





BWHS Key Club 2025-2026

Big Walnut High School Key Club is a student-led organization supported by the local Sunbury Kiwanis club. The Club provide service to others, build character, and develop leadership skills. The club has been busy this year with buddy reading at PRE, local events and helping our community.



BUDDY READING **PUMPKIN PAINTING**
HOLIDAY ON THE SQUARE **COMMUNITY GIVING**
STUDENT NIGHT OUT **CLUB FUN** **EARTH DAY CELEBRATION**





AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE PROGRAM

Growing Success: Highlights from the 98th Ohio FFA State Convention

The Big Walnut - DACC FFA members recently joined thousands of students from across the state for the 98th Ohio FFA State Convention. From the convention floor to the awards stage, our students represented our community with excellence. Here are the highlights of our chapter's achievements.

Excellence in Competition



Our chapter proved to be a powerhouse in Career Development Events this year, bringing home four state wins and a 2nd place overall after a tie-breaker. These students spent countless hours studying and practicing to be the best in their respective fields:

1st Place - Food Science and Technology: Gabby Brigham, Ava Debolt, Erin Hoover, and Preston Smith

1st Place - Novice Parliamentary Procedure: Ella Altizer, Claire Anderson, Kensley Fox, Landen Legg, Olivia Poffenbaugh, Benjamin Reckner, Paashv Soni, and Liv Wytzka

1st Place - Milk Quality and Products (Middle School): Victoria Harris, Delaney Legg, Gabriel Lyons, and Benjamin Reckner

1st Place - Small Animal Grooming 1: Gabby Brigham, Ava Debolt, Madi Dible, Morgan Miller



2nd Place - Milk Quality and Products (High School): Gabby Brigham, Austin Chapman, Madi Dible, Paashv Soni

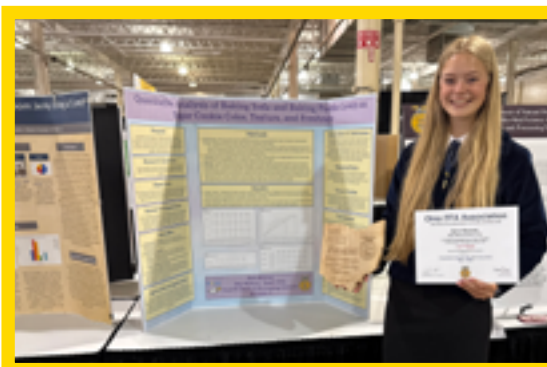
Our Food Science and Technology and our Novice Parliamentary Procedure teams will be representing Ohio at the 99th National FFA Convention in October.

Gold Rated Officers

This year, three of our students were recognized for their exceptional record-keeping and communication. These officers completed comprehensive officer books based on strict state requirements, with each earning the prestigious Gold Rating. Congratulations to our **Gold-Rated Officers:** Rosemary McCaulla, Secretary; Madi Dible, Treasurer; Jasmine Bah, Reporter.

State Degree Recipients

The State FFA Degree is the highest honor a state association can bestow upon its members. It recognizes students who have gone above and beyond in their Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE), maintained high academic standards, and shown a deep commitment to leadership and community service. This degree is awarded to members in 11th grade or higher who have demonstrated significant investment in their agricultural projects. Please join us in congratulating our newest **State Degree recipients:** Ava Anderson, Teagan Bryant, Madi Dible, Brandon Edwards, Erin Hoover, Tyler Irwin, Joshua Schutt, and Lainey Soule.



Agriscience Fair Winner

Innovation is at the heart of modern agriculture, and Erin Hoover proved that in the Agriscience Fair. Erin took home the **1st Place** award in the Food Products and Processing Division 5 category. Her project investigated the Maillard reaction, the chemical reaction between amino acids and reducing sugars that gives browned food its distinctive flavor. Erin will be submitting her project to Nationals this summer.

A Year of Service: State Officer Retirement

A major highlight of the convention was honoring Paris Anderson as she concluded her year of service. Paris has spent the last year traveling the state as a **2025-2026 Ohio FFA State Vice President at Large**.

Reflecting on her experience, Paris shared:

"During my term in state office, I have had the opportunity to travel extensively across the state, visiting FFA chapters that have personally impacted my life. My workshops involve leading topics I'm passionate about, including effective communication, leading with integrity, and the importance of confidence as a leader. Connecting with students, advisors, and communities from across the state has truly been the highlight of my year. The impact these moments have had on me will stay with me long after my position ends, continuing to guide how I lead and serve others."



We are incredibly proud of the impact Paris has made on the lives of FFA members across Ohio and thank her for her dedicated leadership.



HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS



Brian Shelton
Big Walnut High School
Athletic Director

From championship runs to college commitments, Big Walnut High School student-athletes are finishing the spring season on a high note across multiple sports.

As the school year winds down, Big Walnut High School’s spring athletic programs are soaring into the postseason with momentum, accolades, and plenty to celebrate.

Leading the charge, the Boys Varsity Tennis team captured its third consecutive OCC Championship, continuing a dominant run that included 20 straight conference match wins. The Eagles remained undefeated in

OCC play and did not drop a single court in league competition, a testament to both depth and consistency. Head Coach Ryan Balaz and his team have firmly established themselves as one of the area’s premier programs.



On the track, Big Walnut’s Boys and Girls Track & Field teams delivered an impressive performance at the 2026 Red Edwards Golden Eagle Relays, with both squads earning championship titles. Their success highlights the strength, versatility, and determination seen throughout the entire program this season.



Big Walnut Athletics

Beyond team championships, this spring has also been a time of celebration for the future. Big Walnut Athletics will host its College Commitment Ceremony on May 12, recognizing dozens of senior student-athletes who will continue their academic and athletic careers at the collegiate level. The event is a meaningful opportunity to honor years of dedication, perseverance, and growth.

Across all programs, Eagle student-athletes have demonstrated not only competitive excellence, but also sportsmanship and pride in representing Big Walnut. As postseason play continues and final events approach, the district looks forward to cheering on these teams as they finish what has already been a remarkable spring season.

As postseason play continues, there’s more to come. Be sure to check out the June issue of the Eagle Examiner for a full spring sports recap, a look back at the 2025–2026 athletic year, and highlights from Big Walnut’s middle school teams.

Go Eagles!





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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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