

June
2026

The
Eagle Examiner



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





MESSAGE from the SUPERINTENDENT

Well, another school year is in the books! I want to start by congratulating and thanking the Class of 2026. As I said at graduation, you are a special group, and I have no doubt that the experiences you had here at Big Walnut have prepared you well for whatever comes next. I wish you all the best in your future endeavors and look forward to seeing what you accomplish.

I also want to thank our amazing staff. Your dedication to our students and community doesn't go unnoticed. You continue to show up for our kids, and this year was no exception. We are lucky to have great people working in Big Walnut.

This past year, eliminating many student fees, as well as the Pay to Participate fee for athletics and band, was a game-changer. More kids were able to join teams and shows, boosting the overall success of our programs. Scott Gooding has some more details on that in his Common Cents article.

Finally, I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to the Big Walnut community for your ongoing support. None of what we do is possible without you working with us, and we do not take that for granted.

I hope you all enjoy a well-deserved summer break with your families. We look forward to seeing everyone back in August.



Ryan McLane

Ryan McLane

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

ALL THE IMPORTANT HAPPENINGS AROUND BIG WALNUT IN THE FIRST TWO WEEKS OF SCHOOL!

MONDAY 17	EAGLES' FIRST FLIGHT High School Freshmen get their first taste of BWHS	FRIDAY 21	STAGGERED START (L-Z) First day of classes for the other half of our students
TUESDAY 18	OPEN HOUSE 4:30-6:00 pm - BWMS, BWI, & ELC	MONDAY 24	FIRST DAY - ALL STUDENTS First day that all students PreK-12 attend school together
TUESDAY 18	OPEN HOUSE 5:00-6:30 PM - BWE, GRE, PRE, & SOU	WEDNESDAY 26	BWHS CURRICULUM NIGHT High School parents have a chance to walk the halls
THURSDAY 20	STAGGERED START (A-K) First day of classes for half of our students		

BIG WALNUT
LOCAL SCHOOLS



HAPPY RETIREMENT!



Cathy Curtin
Big Walnut Transportation
Bus Driver
26 Years



Lisa Danne
Big Walnut High School
Business & Technology
25 Years



Penny Desormeaux
Prairie Run Elementary
STEM
30 Years



Denise Duncan
Big Walnut High School
French Teacher
35 Years



Joe Evener
Big Walnut High School
Social Studies Teacher
13 Years



Alan Frank
Big Walnut High School
Industrial Technology
18 Years



Lisa Moran
Big Walnut High School
Educational Assistant
22 Years



Eric Myers
Big Walnut Middle School
Skills for Success
27 Years



Shelly Olson
General Rosecrans Elem.
Kindergarten Teacher
26 Years



Craig Porter
Big Walnut High School
Band Director
24 Years



Maria Tarney
Hulen Souders Elementary
Kindergarten Teacher
28 Years



Jill Watson
Big Walnut Elementary
Attendance Secretary
26 Years



Kim White
Big Walnut Middle School
Physical Education Teacher
30 Years



Thank you for your years of service to our Big Walnut students!
We appreciate everything you've done to Inspire and Guide each student to their maximum potential!



CONGRATS CLASS OF 2026!







COMMON CENTS



Scott Gooding
Interim Treasurer / CFO

What Has Been the Impact of Eliminating Student Fees?

Beginning with the 2025-2026 school year, Big Walnut Local Schools eliminated all instructional fees and participation fees for athletics, band, choir, and extracurricular activities. This decision represents a direct investment in students and families while reinforcing the district’s commitment to accessibility, opportunity, and educational excellence.

Supporting Student Participation

Extracurricular involvement remains a major part of the Big Walnut student experience.

These numbers reflect the importance of athletics and activities in helping students build leadership, teamwork, resilience, and lifelong relationships. They also demonstrate how participation fees can quickly become a financial burden for families with multiple students or students involved in several activities throughout the year.

Under the previous fee structure, a high school student participating in three sports could pay up to \$350 annually, while many families reached the yearly family cap. Eliminating these fees makes participation more affordable and accessible for every student.

During the most recent school year:

- 692 high school students participated in 1,071 athletic experiences
- 381 middle school students participated in athletics

At BWHS:

- 416 students participated in one sport
- 180 participated in two sports
- 96 students participated in three or more sports

At BWMS:

- 165 students participated in one sport
- 138 participated in two sports
- 78 students participated in three or more sports

Meaningful Relief for Families

Families will no longer pay instructional fees, athletic participation fees, or band and choir fees. A family with multiple students involved in athletics or extracurricular activities could save hundreds of dollars each year.

Removing these costs allows students to focus on exploring interests, developing talents, and becoming involved in school life without financial barriers limiting opportunities.

Expanding Access and Opportunity

Research consistently shows students involved in extracurricular activities demonstrate stronger academic performance, better attendance, higher graduation rates, and greater social and emotional development.

The Board of Education believes athletics, arts, clubs, and extracurricular activities are not extras. They are an essential part of the educational experience, and every student should have the opportunity to participate regardless of financial circumstances.

An Investment in Students and Community

Eliminating student fees represents more than financial relief. It is a strategic investment in student success and community well-being.

The district estimates approximately \$242,000 in reduced General Fund revenue and an annual transfer of approximately \$164,800 to support athletics. These investments remain manageable within the district’s financial plan and reflect a direct investment in students and families.

As Big Walnut prepares for the 2026-2027 school year, the district looks forward to seeing even more students take advantage of the outstanding opportunities available throughout our schools. By removing fees, Big Walnut is opening doors, expanding access, and reinforcing a simple belief: every student should have the opportunity to participate, belong, and succeed.



READING BETWEEN THE LINES

Reflecting on Our First Year with CKLA

The end of this school year marks the end of our first year with Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) as our new K-5 reading resource. CKLA has been a great addition to our schools for both teachers and students.

To understand what CKLA does, it is helpful to have a little background in what is known as the “simple view of reading”. Essentially, reading comes down to two things: word recognition and language comprehension. In order to read, you must first be able to sound out or “decode” the letters on the page to form the word. That’s word recognition. Then you use your language comprehension to understand what that word means in the context of the sentence you are trying to read. We’ve used the program Foundations for years in the district to support word recognition, but we didn’t have a comprehensive program to more formally and systemically support language comprehension. That’s where CKLA comes in.

Language comprehension isn’t one skill but a combination of skills that come together to help you understand what you are reading. You need vocabulary to know the meaning of the words you read and an understanding of syntax and grammar to know how that meaning can change in the context of the sentence. You need verbal reasoning to ask yourself questions as you read and an understanding of different forms of writing (poetry, novels, newspaper articles, etc.). You also need background knowledge about the topic or setting you are reading about to help make sense of the text.

CKLA is a program that helps create a more common and aligned approach to helping students build all those components of language comprehension to become stronger and better readers. Each unit in CKLA is centered around topics like plants and animals, presidents and American symbols, space, sound, and poetry. Within each unit, students are learning vocabulary and building their background knowledge within that topic, as well as receiving lessons on grammar and other reading skills that help them grow

Over the first year, many teachers and parents have shared that they are surprised by how engaged students are in learning about these topics. I’ve heard stories of elementary students sharing what they learned about Greek mythology over the dinner table or bringing up facts about space exploration or Native Americans. Teachers have noticed that students are building their stamina for reading and writing, and our most recent state assessment data has shown some promising positive trends as a result.

As we head into next year, we will be bringing in CKLA Skills to replace Foundations for our K-2 students to go along with CKLA. CKLA Skills teaches the same concepts for word recognition as Foundations, but better aligns with CKLA to create a more cohesive experience for teachers and students.

I am so thankful for the hard work of our curriculum adoption teams that spent months exploring different programs to find the right one for our district, and to the teachers who have done an exemplary job in implementing this new resource without skipping a beat for our kids. I’m excited for what the future holds for reading in Big Walnut.



Mike Robertson
Director of
Academic Achievement



2026-27 TRANSPORTATION REQUEST FORM

Planning to use bus transportation next school year to or from Genoa Christian, St. Paul, DACC, or an alternate address?

You must submit a Transportation Request Form.

- ➔ Need to make changes to your current transportation? Please submit a new request.
- ✓ No changes? No action is needed.

DEADLINE: JULY 15, 2026

Late submissions may cause delays at the start of school.

🔗 **Click to Access the Form**

Thank you for helping us plan for a safe and efficient start to 2026-27!



BIG WALNUT'S BACK TO SCHOOL HQ

While we're still celebrating another incredible school year and honoring the Class of 2026, we know many Big Walnut families are already looking ahead to August. Whether you are a calendar planner, a school supply shopper, or just someone who likes to stay one step ahead, our new Back to School HQ is here to help.

The Back to School HQ page on our new district website will serve as a central location for important information families need as we prepare for the 2026-2027 school year. Over the summer, the page will continue to grow with updated resources, links, dates, forms, supply lists, transportation information, open house details, schedules, and more.

Instead of searching across multiple pages and websites, families will be able to visit one convenient location for back-to-school information throughout the summer.

You can visit the Back-to-School HQ here: www.bwls.net/backtoschoolhq

We're excited for a summer full of preparation, planning, camps, activities, and community events before welcoming students back for another great year at Big Walnut Local Schools.



SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM

We are thrilled to announce the Ohio Department of Education & Workforce's Summer Food Service Program: SUN Meals! This vital program ensures no child goes hungry during the summer months.

Who is Eligible?

- **Children Ages 1-18:** All children in this age group are eligible to receive free meals.
- **Young Adults Ages 19-21:** Individuals who have been identified as having mental or physical disabilities and are following Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) through their current enrollment in educational programs are also eligible for free meals.

How to Participate:

Participating in the SUN meals program is easy! Simply visit a participating program site during meal times to receive a free, nutritious meal.

If you have any questions or need more information, please call **1-866-3-HUNGRY (486479)**.

If you find a meal site listed that is not operating as expected, please contact the Office of Nutrition at:

Phone: (614) 466-2945 or (800) 808-6325

Email: Child.Nutrition@education.ohio.gov

Let's ensure every child and eligible young adult in our community has access to the nutrition they need this summer. Spread the word about SUN meals and help us make a difference!

KIDS EAT FREE!

- No Registration
- Age 18 or Younger

education.ohio.gov/KidsEat

866-348-6479

SUN MEALS

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.



 **BIG WALNUT
LOCAL SCHOOLS**

WE'RE HIRING

Apply online!
bwls.net/EmploymentOpportunities





AROUND THE DISTRICT

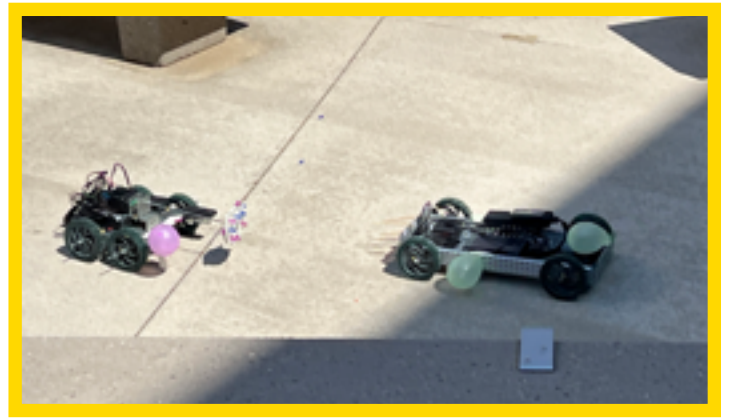
Mario Kart Meets Engineering

Students in Big Walnut High School’s Principles of Engineering class recently put their creativity and problem-solving skills to the test with a real-life “Mario Kart Balloon Battle” challenge.

Using VEX robotics components, students designed, built, and programmed their own robotic karts before competing in a balloon-popping showdown. The goal? Outsmart opponents, protect their own balloons, and be the last kart rolling.

The project combined engineering design, teamwork, coding, and a little friendly competition into one engaging hands-on learning experience. From testing strategies to making adjustments between battles, students experienced the same type of design process used by real engineers.

It was a fun and exciting way to bring STEM learning to life while proving that engineering class can sometimes feel a little like game day.



BWHS Student Earns Top Honors at the Delaware Art Festival

Big Walnut High School art students recently participated in the Delaware Art Festival Student Show, where artwork from high schools across Delaware County was displayed at the Delaware County Library.

Among the talented student artists recognized was Big Walnut senior Pavlina Nier, who earned Third Place in Drawing, along with the prestigious “Best of School” award for her outstanding artwork.

The annual show celebrates creativity and artistic achievement from students throughout the county, and Pavlina’s recognition highlights the incredible talent and dedication found within Big Walnut’s art program. Congratulations to Pavlina on this impressive accomplishment!



BWE 3rd Graders Celebrate with Beach Day

Big Walnut Elementary third graders wrapped up the school year with a fun-filled “Beach Day” celebration.

Students headed outside with towels and books in hand to enjoy a relaxing afternoon in the sunshine. As part of the event, students listened to a read-aloud while enjoying “beach in a cup,” a sweet treat made with blue Jell-O and fun toppings inspired by the ocean.

The beach-themed fun continued with a directed drawing activity where students created colorful sandcastle artwork to celebrate the start of summer break.

It was a perfect way to celebrate a successful school year and soak in a little sunshine before summer officially begins!





AROUND THE DISTRICT

Big Walnut DACC Agricultural Science Program Celebrates Record-Breaking Year

As the 2025-2026 school year comes to a close, the Big Walnut DACC Agricultural Science Program is celebrating an incredible year filled with achievement, growth, and opportunity for students.

The program continued its upward momentum by providing students with hands-on experiences both inside and outside the classroom. Students logged an impressive 7,693 hours in work-based learning programs while also earning more than \$14,000 in scholarships, prizes, and cash awards recognizing their accomplishments.

This year's success included 14 major competition placements and recognitions, highlighted by a National Championship in Food Science & Technology, multiple State Championships, and numerous state-level qualifiers and award winners. In the classroom, 113 students earned college credit through CTAG courses, while students also achieved outstanding success on industry-recognized credential exams.

The Agricultural Science Program currently serves 151 students at Big Walnut High School and 95 students at Big Walnut Middle School, continuing to grow year after year as more students discover opportunities in agriculture, leadership, science, business, and skilled trades.

Students interested in exciting competitions, hands-on learning, leadership opportunities, and career exploration are encouraged to consider joining the program next school year at either the middle school or high school level.

To learn more about the BW DACC Agricultural Science Program, contact Christine Febes at christinefeb@bwls.net.

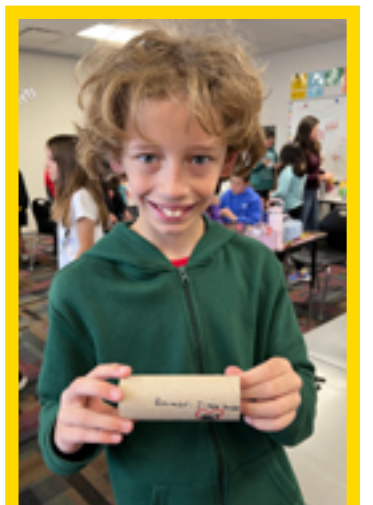


BWI Students Give Back to Local Animal Shelter

On the final day of school, students in Ms. Valenzuela's and Mrs. Krumholz's advisory classes at Big Walnut Intermediate teamed up for a special service project benefiting CHA Animal Shelter.

Students worked together to create handmade cat and dog toys using recycled materials and fabric, combining creativity, teamwork, and compassion to support local shelter animals in need.

The activity gave students a fun and meaningful way to end the school year while making a positive impact in the community. Their thoughtful donations will help bring comfort and enrichment to animals waiting for their forever homes.





AROUND THE DISTRICT

8th Grade Students Explore History in Washington, D.C.

As the 2025-2026 school year came to a close, Big Walnut Middle School’s 8th grade students took part in one of the district’s most memorable traditions: the annual trip to Washington, D.C.

The trip provided students with an incredible opportunity to connect classroom learning with real-world history as they explored our nation’s capital. Throughout the experience, students visited many of the country’s most iconic landmarks, monuments, museums, and memorials while learning more about the people and events that shaped the United States.

This year’s itinerary included stops at the Lincoln Memorial, Korean and Vietnam War Memorials, Arlington National Cemetery, the U.S. Capitol, and several Smithsonian Museums. Students also had the opportunity to reflect at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and experience the powerful atmosphere of standing in places they had previously only read about in class.

One of the highlights of the trip for many students was experiencing the energy and excitement of Washington, D.C. firsthand. From walking the National Mall to exploring historic buildings and monuments up close, students were able to see history come alive in a way that simply cannot be replicated in a classroom setting. The experience created meaningful moments of curiosity, reflection, and appreciation that students will carry with them long after middle school.

Beyond the educational experiences, the trip also gave students time to strengthen friendships, make lasting memories, and celebrate the end of their middle school journey together before heading off to high school.

Thank you to the staff members, parent chaperones, and the entire Big Walnut community for continuing to support this meaningful experience for our students year after year.





MIDDLE SCHOOL SPORTS

Another Outstanding Year for BWMS Athletics

It's always bittersweet when we reach the end of another year at Big Walnut Middle School. While everyone involved in education is excited about the time to unwind and enjoy the summer, I find myself reflecting on how amazing our coaches and student-athletes represented our school and community and wishing we had just a few more games to watch.

Picking out highlights from the 2025-26 athletic seasons is one of the hardest things I have to do because all of our teams competed brilliantly and grew so much. I could write an article about each team and still not do them justice. With that being said, I do want to mention the success of our cross-country (Jen White) and track teams (Coach Whiteside) who brought home multiple championships at the various invationals they

attended. Our wrestling team (Ryan Coletta) completed an undefeated season during the winter, winning all duals, tris and invationals on their schedule. And the cheer squad (Kaylee Demidovich/Brianna Lawless) brought home the OAC Cheer State Championship. Again, I could go on and on about the success our teams had this past year, but I'm only allotted a certain amount of space in the Eagle Examiner, so I have to limit my celebration for all they achieved.



Joe Rucker
Big Walnut Middle School
Athletic Director



One more thing I want to highlight is that Big Walnut hosted the Archie Griffin Sportsmanship Award ceremony on June 3rd in the BWHS cafeteria and PAC. Thank you to everyone who kicked in to make this event possible. It was an outstanding evening where over 100 student-athletes from all central Ohio were honored for their efforts both inside and outside the competitive arena. I am privileged to share that Abby Hershberger and Grant Harris were the deserving winners from Big Walnut Middle School. Both are multiple sport competitors, excel in the classroom and have displayed a great amount of leadership. Please congratulate these impressive youngsters if you see them over the summer. They deserve all the recognition you can give!

Finally, I want to say a huge THANK YOU to everyone who makes BWMS Athletics possible. From the support we get from our Central Office, to the maintenance and custodial crews, transportation department and bus drivers, parent volunteers who work events and host team meals, site managers, announcers and scoreboard operators, etc... it truly takes a village to make things possible. I hope everyone has a great summer and we are already looking forward to the 2026-27 school year. GO EAGLES!!!





HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS



The NEW Big Walnut Athletics Website

BWHS Athletics Closes Another Incredible Year

As the 2025-2026 school year comes to a close, Big Walnut Athletics once again proved why the Golden Eagles continue to be one of the premier athletic programs in Ohio. From conference championships and state qualifiers to record-breaking performances and unforgettable postseason moments, student-athletes across nearly every program gave Big Walnut fans plenty to celebrate this year.

One of the biggest accomplishments came as BWHS captured the prestigious Ralph Young All-Sports Award for the fifth time in six years and third consecutive season. The award recognizes the top overall athletic program in the OCC Capital Division based on league-wide success across all sports. Eight Big Walnut teams earned OCC Championships this year, including Football, Girls Golf, Girls Cross Country, Girls Basketball, Boys Wrestling, Boys Track & Field, Girls Track & Field, and Boys Tennis.



Spring sports season brought another wave of excitement and postseason success. Both the boys and girls track and field teams claimed Division II Regional Championships and



BIG WALNUT
HIGH SCHOOL
★ WINS THE ★
RALPH YOUNG
ALL-SPORTS AWARD
FIFTH TIME IN SIX YEARS
AND
THIRD STRAIGHT YEAR!

BIG WALNUT AVERAGE FINISH
2.308

THE GOLDEN EAGLES
FINISHED AHEAD TO CLAIM
THE TOP SPOT IN THE
OCC CAPITAL DIVISION!

8 OCC CHAMPIONSHIPS

FOOTBALL	GIRLS GOLF	GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY	GIRLS BASKETBALL
BOYS WRESTLING	BOYS TRACK & FIELD	GIRLS TRACK & FIELD	BOYS TENNIS

5 IN 6 YEARS

9 TEAMS FINISHED SECOND

GIRLS VOLLEYBALL	BOYS GOLF	GIRLS WRESTLING
BOYS SOCCER	BOYS BOWLING	BASEBALL
GIRLS TENNIS	GIRLS BOWLING	SOFTBALL

ONE TOWN. ONE TEAM

@BIGWALNUTATHLETICS | BIG WALNUT ATHLETICS



are sending a large group of athletes to the OHSAA State Championships this weekend. The girls 4x800 relay team captured a regional title while setting a new regional record, while standout performances from Lindsey Cochran and Jamier Brown helped place Big Walnut among the state's elite programs. Brown delivered one of the most remarkable sprint performances in Ohio history by breaking Division II state records in both the 100m and 200m at regionals. On the courts, Boys Tennis continued its run of dominance under Head Coach Ryan Balaz, earning a



third consecutive OCC Championship. Owen Davis was named OCC Player of the Year, while Coach Balaz earned OCC Coach of the Year honors after another outstanding season leading the Golden Eagles.

Softball captured the program's first district championship since 2014. This senior class was just finishing kindergarten the last time the Golden Eagles brought home a district title.



Baseball added another strong postseason run of its own, finishing as Regional Finalists and continuing the program's recent success on the diamond by advancing one step further than last year.



As another memorable year comes to an end, Big Walnut Athletics would like to thank the coaches, families, staff members, volunteers, athletic boosters, and community supporters who help make these accomplishments possible. The dedication, pride, and support shown throughout the year continue to make Big Walnut a special place for student-athletes to grow and compete.

GO EAGLES!



BIG WALNUT HIGH SCHOOL



Office: 740.965.3766 713 N Miller Dr
Fax: 740.965.1954 Sunbury, OH
Guidance: 740.965.2243 43074



BIG WALNUT MIDDLE SCHOOL



555 S Old 3C Hwy Office: 740.965.3006
Sunbury, OH Fax: 740.965.6471
43074



BIG WALNUT INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL



Office: 740.965.7800 777 Cheshire Rd
Fax: 740.965.7801 Sunbury, OH
43074



BIG WALNUT ELEMENTARY



940 S Old 3C Hwy Office: 740.965.3902
Sunbury, OH Fax: 740.965.3168
43074



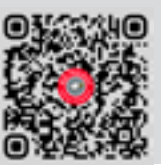
GENERAL ROSECRANS ELEMENTARY



Office: 740.965.8900 301 S Miller Dr
Fax: 740.965.8993 Sunbury, OH
43074



HYLEN SOUDERS ELEMENTARY



4121 Miller Paul Rd Office: 740.965.3200
Galena, OH Fax: 740.965.3986
43021



PRAIRIE RUN ELEMENTARY



Office: 740.965.7850 701 N Miller Dr
Fax: 740.965.7851 Sunbury, OH
43074



EARLY LEARNING CENTER AT HARRISON STREET



70 Harrison St Office: 740.965.7862
Sunbury, OH
43074