

VOICE OF THE VALLEY

THE RIVER VALLEY LOCAL SCHOOLS NEWSLETTER

2026 BACK TO SCHOOL ISSUE



**YOUR FAMILY
YOUR SCHOOLS
YOUR COMMUNITY**

RVK12.ORG

WELCOME BACK!

A LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

The summer months always seem to go by so quickly, and this year was no exception. It is hard to believe the start of a new school year is just around the corner. We are excited to share with our community this "Back to School" edition of the Voice of the Valley. As you can see, we have adopted a new layout and have worked to include more pictures of our students and staff.

Our intent with every edition of the Voice of the Valley is to provide our community with recaps and updates on what is happening in YOUR district. Even if you do not have children or grandchildren in the district, these schools and the responsibility to educate our children belong to our community. River Valley continually strives to be good stewards of the resources entrusted to us by our community, including not only the financial resources, but most importantly, the children of our community.

I believe our young people and our staff are a worthy investment of your tax dollars, and I ask you to take a few minutes to review this Voice of the Valley (VOTV), to celebrate what is happening in YOUR schools.

In this issue, you will see articles from each of our buildings as well as articles on the following:

- A recap of the 2025-26 Athletic and Extracurricular Accomplishments of our Student-Athletes
- An introduction to our new Treasurer: Ethan Enders
- An introduction to our new School Resource Officer: Kai Albright
- Career Pathways for our students, including two new options for the 2026-27 school year
- Safety and Security overview

As our VOTV front cover states: Your Family, Your Schools, Your Community. We hope you enjoy this edition of the Voice of the Valley, we truly appreciate the support of our community!

Go Vikings!

Adam Wickham

Adam Wickham
Superintendent

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GET TO KNOW OUR NEW TREASURER



Mr. Ethan Enders joined the administration team at River Valley Local Schools as Associate Treasurer in May of 2026 and transitioned to Treasurer on July 1st, 2026, with the resignation of our former Treasurer, Mrs. Brittany Keller. During those two months, Mr. Enders worked with Mrs. Keller to ensure a smooth change over for the business office and our community.

We spent a few minutes with Ethan to help you get to know him a little better, as he takes the helm for managing the fiscal health of our school system.

Q: Can you tell us a little bit about your background?

A: I actually grew up in Marion, Ohio, and was a 2021 graduate of Pleasant High School. After high school, I went to Ashland University, where I played football and learned the importance of teamwork, discipline, and preparation. In addition to my time

on the football field, I also worked at The Scotts Miracle-Gro Company. I completed my Treasurer internship at Lucas Local Schools, where I developed a strong appreciation for the importance of transparency, accountability, and collaboration. These experiences helped me develop those values that continue to shape my leadership style today. I believe the Treasurer's Office provides the financial foundation that allows our teachers and staff to focus on what matters most: educating students.

Q: What do you see as your priorities as a School Treasurer?

A: One of my top priorities as Treasurer is maintaining open communication with our Board of Education, staff, families, and community members. School finance can often seem complex, but I believe it should also be understandable and accessible.

As we prepare for another successful school year, the Treasurer's Office remains focused on responsible financial stewardship. Thoughtful budgeting today helps ensure River Valley Local Schools remain financially stable while continuing to provide exceptional opportunities for our students.

Like many districts across Ohio, River Valley continues to navigate changes and challenges in state funding, inflationary pressures, and rising operational costs. While these challenges require careful planning, we remain committed to giving our students the best opportunities.

Q: What do you like to do outside of your work as our Treasurer?

A: Outside of work, family is incredibly important to me. I enjoy spending time with my family and friends, and I was blessed to marry my wife, Maddie, in March. We are excited to build our life together in the community and look forward to becoming active members of the River Valley family.

Q: Do you have anything else you'd like to share with our RV community?

A: As someone who grew up in Marion, it is incredibly rewarding to have the opportunity to serve the students, staff, and families of River Valley. I look forward to earning your trust and working alongside our Board of Education, administrators, staff, and community to ensure our district remains financially strong while providing outstanding opportunities for

every student. With the continued support of our students, families, staff, and community members, I am excited to contribute to the continued success of River Valley Local Schools.

Thank you for the warm welcome I have already received; it is truly a privilege to serve as your Treasurer.



MR. ETHAN ENDERS - TREASURER
RIVER VALLEY VALLEY LOCAL SCHOOLS

TO CONTACT TREASURER ENDERS WITH ANY QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS, PLEASE VIEW THE BUSINESS OFFICE SECTION OF OUR WEBSITE: WWW.RVK12.ORG/DEPARTMENTS/TREASURER

RIVER VALLEY LOCAL SCHOOLS WELCOMES
OUR NEW SCHOOL TREASURER,
MR. ETHAN ENDERS

ALL IN WITH CAREER TECH

CREATING TOMORROW'S LEADERS!



RV STUDENTS CELEBRATE SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING THEIR COMPETENCIES FOR THE STNA EXAM.

Education provides many benefits for individuals, including social-emotional development in areas such as conflict resolution, developing empathy, cognitive skills in literacy and numeracy, civic responsibility, plus items as critical as time management and organization skills. Over the past five years, River Valley Local Schools has also explored new opportunities to enhance one additional area of the educational experience we are providing: career exploration and development.

RV was fortunate to receive a \$2.5 million grant from the state of Ohio in 2024 that helped us expand our agricultural science and construction education lab spaces. We also added a classroom dedicated to a new healthcare pathway, allowing our students to earn their State-Tested Nursing Assistant (STNA) license before graduation.

With the success of these programs and our commitment to making sure every student who graduates from River Valley Local Schools is prepared to enter the workforce, we are now moving beyond our current programs to offer additional opportunities for our students. By being creative and with the cooperation of our dedicated teaching staff, we are planning to add two additional career pathways and expand another.

Our two new pathways are Programming and Software Development and Teaching Professions. Both of these pathways will not only offer great opportunities for students to gain valuable skills in the respective career fields, but will also include the option to earn college credit in these areas.

Mr. Aurel Toska will be the instructor for the Programming and Software Development pathway. To help launch this program Mr. Toska applied and was accepted into the Ohio Code Scholar program from Southern State Community College (www.sccc.edu/codescholar), which will provide equipment, curriculum, and professional development to help start the RV program. This partnership will also allow our students to earn college credit for these courses.

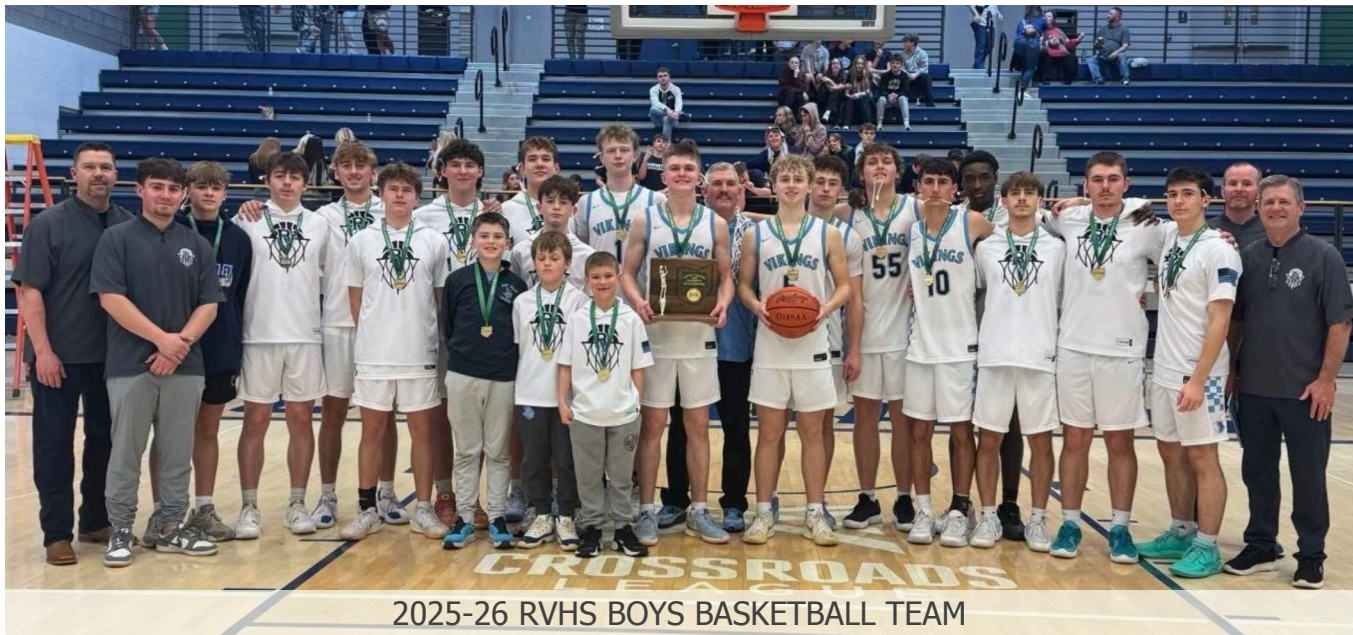
In partnership with The Ohio State University at Marion, River Valley teacher Brooke Scheff will provide students the opportunity to begin taking coursework that can be applied to a future career in education. Offering this pathway at our school will also provide a unique opportunity for these future educators to shadow our amazing staff and engage in many classroom experiences to try their hand at the life-changing career of being a professional educator, while also earning college credit to jumpstart their learning journey.

The final pathway we are expanding for 2026-27 is our Performing Arts program. For the past two years, Mrs. Brea Turner has taught one class per day to our RVHS students interested in a career in the performing arts. We are now excited to offer these students opportunities to complete more courses in this pathway with our other performing arts educators, Ms. Heather Ulsh, Mr. Josh Neff, and Mr. Ian Keller. These new courses will add more career-applicable lessons and activities to our already tremendous choir, orchestra, and band programs.

These programs, plus our existing Career-Based Intervention, Engineering, Art, and Air Transportation programs, position River Valley to continue providing a broad range of educational options for our students without adding staff. This focus means providing early exposure to career opportunities along the four E's: Employed - directly into the workforce; Enrolled - attending college for a 2- or 4-year program; Enlisted - into the military; and Entrepreneur - operating your own business. Pairing these career pathways with our already existing academic classes is helping RV meet our great purpose of "Creating Tomorrow's Leaders!"



A YEAR TO REMEMBER FOR RV ATHLETICS



THE 2025-26 SCHOOL YEAR WILL BE REMEMBERED AS ONE OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL YEARS IN RIVER VALLEY ATHLETICS HISTORY!

Across every season, Viking student-athletes showcased dedication, perseverance, and a commitment to excellence that resulted in conference championships, district titles, state appearances, and unforgettable moments for our school community.

What made this year especially memorable wasn't just the number of championships won—it was the success achieved across every season and nearly every corner of our athletic department. From

first-time milestones and repeat conference champions to state qualifiers and record-breaking performances, Viking student-athletes gave our community countless reasons to celebrate.

Softball Makes History

The River Valley softball team delivered one of the most memorable seasons in program history. Under the leadership of first-year head coach Ryan Murphy, the Vikings finished the season with an impressive 19-8 record, captured a second consecutive Mid-Ohio Athletic Conference (MOAC) championship, and earned the program's first district championship in 25 years.

The Vikings advanced to the regional semifinals, where they battled Taylor High School in a thrilling 10-9 contest. Although the season ended just short of the regional championship game, this team helped write a new chapter in River Valley softball history, setting the stage for continued success in the years ahead.

Championship Success Across River Valley Athletics

Softball was just one of many success stories throughout the 2025-26 school year. Viking teams and individuals earned championships across multiple sports, showcasing the strength and depth of River Valley Athletics.

MOAC Champions

- Boys Golf - First MOAC Championship since 2015
- Boys Basketball - Back-to-back MOAC Champions
- Boys Bowling - MOAC Champions
- Softball - Back-to-back MOAC Champions
- Drew Goldberg - Wrestling
- Finley Blevins - Pole Vault

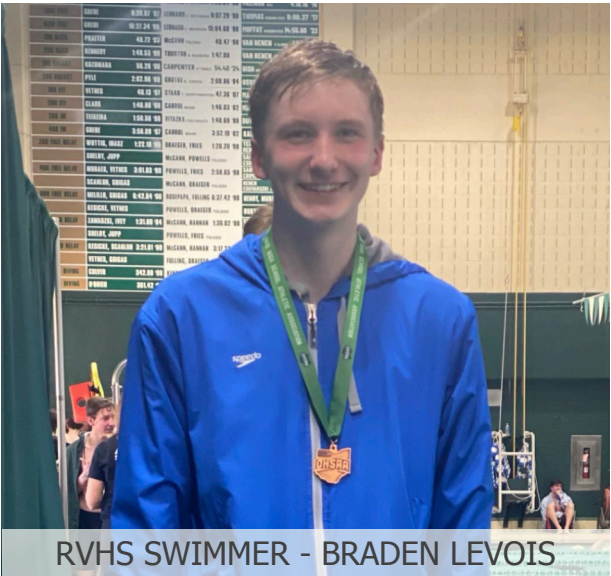
MOAC Players of the Year

- Asher Gates (freshman) - Boys Golf
- Carter Myers - Boys Basketball
- Kylie Eastep - Softball

District Champions

- Boys Basketball - Back-to-back District Champions
- Softball - First District Championship since 2001
- Val Riegel - Wrestling
- Finley Blevins - Pole Vault
- Erica Mason - 800-Meter Run

The year also featured several remarkable individual performances. Braden LeVois capped off a record-breaking swimming season by qualifying for the OHSAA Division II State Champi-



onships in both the 500 Freestyle and 100 Backstroke. Along the way, he set multiple individual school records, helped establish a new relay school record, and became River Valley's first state swimming qualifier since 2020.

State Qualifiers

- Erica Mason - Cross Country
- Braden LeVois - Swimming
- Drew Goldberg - Wrestling
- Val Riegel - Wrestling
- Kylee Sardina - Wrestling
- Finley Blevins - Pole Vault
- Colt Craig - Pole Vault

The success of the boys basketball program was also recognized on the sidelines, as head coach Rodney Brown was named both MOAC Coach of the Year and District 11 Coach of the Year.

Success Begins Early

The future of Viking Athletics is bright, and this year's middle school accomplishments showed that the next generation of Vikings is ready to continue that tradition.

Middle School Highlights

- 8th Grade Girls Volleyball - MOAC Champions
- 8th Grade Girls Basketball - MOAC Champions
- Audrey Blevins - State Pole Vault Participant
- Eden Schertzer - State Shot Put & Discus Participant
- Jackson Osborne - State 200 Meter Hurdles Participant

These accomplishments are a reminder that the foundation for future success is already being built. The future of Viking Athletics is bright, and the tradition of excellence continues.



A GENTLE START

To ensure every preschool and kindergarten child steps into the school year feeling confident, safe, and supported, we use a gentle start schedule (also known as a staggered entry). During the first three days of school, we bring in one-third of the class each day. This intentional, gradual transition gives our newest students the dedicated space and time they need to ease into their new environment. Early childhood research shows that a smooth transition into school significantly boosts a child’s long-term social, emotional, and academic success. In a smaller group setting, teachers can give each child individualized attention right from day one.

Instead of navigating a busy room of 15 to 20 classmates all at once, your child gets to explore the classroom, learn lunchroom and playground routines, and get to know their teacher in a calmer, low-stress environment. This smaller teacher-to-student ratio helps alleviate first-day jitters and gives children the space to ask questions and build immediate comfort. By learning school routines—like finding their cubby, navigating the hallways, and practicing active listening in a smaller group students quickly master the flow of the school day. When the entire class combines on the fourth day, every child returns already knowing where to go, what to do, and who to ask for help.

For 2026-27, we'll follow the schedule below for kindergarten and preschool students.

- Tuesday, August 18 - Student last names A-G
- Wednesday, August 19th - Student last names H-N
- Thursday, August 20th - Student last names O-Z
- Friday, August 21st - All Students Attend

We know that adjusting family schedules during this week takes coordination, and we deeply appreciate that! By investing in a slow and thoughtful start, we are laying a strong foundation that helps our youngest students feel secure, enthusiastic, and ready to thrive all year long!

As we get ready to throw open our doors for the new school year, we are thrilled to welcome our youngest learners—our preschool and kindergarten students! Starting school or moving into a big new classroom is a milestone filled with excitement, but it can also feel overwhelming for young children.

2026-27 DISTRICT CALENDAR

River Valley Local Schools

4

Independence Day

12

Teacher Workday

13

All Staff Workday (1/2)

14

Teacher Workday (Classroom)

17

All Staff Workday

18

FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

21

1 Hr. Early Dismissal (Viking Bash)

7

Labor Day - No School

11

2-Hour Delay - Prime Time

25

All Staff Workday

9

2-Hour Delay - Prime Time

16

End of Grading Period

21

Teacher Workday - Ohio Educator Summit

20

2-Hour Delay - Prime Time

25

No School - Conf. Exchange Day

26-27

Thanksgiving Break - No School

30

Thanksgiving Break - No School

18

2 Hour Early Dismissal End of the First Semester

21-31

Winter Break

July 2026

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			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	

August 2026

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						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					

September 2026

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		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			

October 2026

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				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

November 2026

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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					

December 2026

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		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		

Grading Periods

1st	42 Days
2nd	40 Days
3rd	48 Days
4th	43 Days

January 2027

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					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						

February 2027

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	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						

March 2027

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	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			

April 2027

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				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	

May 2027

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						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					

June 2027

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		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			

Semester Days

1st	82
2nd	91
	11 Non-Inst.
	184 Work Days

1

Winter Break

4

School Resumes

15

2-Hour Delay - Prime Time

18

M.L.King, Jr. Day - No School

12

2-Hour Delay - Prime Time

15

Presidents' Day - No School

26

2-Hour Delay - Prime Time

12

End of Grading Period AND 2-Hour Delay - Prime Time

22-26

Spring Break - No School

29

No School - Conf. Exchange Day

16

2-Hour Delay - Prime Time

7

K, 5, 8 Orientation Day

20

2 Hr. Early Dismissal AND Last Day of School

21

Graduation

21

All Staff Workday (1/2)

24-26

All Staff Workday

31

Memorial Day

18

Juneteenth Observed

Calamity Days

Specific make-up days, if needed, will be determined at a later date.

2026-27

BOE Approved: 01-09-2025
Updated: 04-09-2026

MATH UPDATES

River Valley Local Schools is changing how math is taught. Starting this year, students in grades 6-12 will use the enVision Mathematics program. This new approach moves away from just memorizing formulas and instead focuses on using math to solve real-world problems.

The program includes several new features to help students and families:

Real-World Connections: Instead of asking, "When will I ever use this?", students will use "3-Act Math" activities. These lessons show how math applies to daily life and solve actual problems.

Teamwork and Problem-Solving: Every lesson begins with a challenge. Students work together to find solutions and share their ideas, which helps build critical thinking and communication skills.

Smart Digital Tools: The program's digital platform adjusts to each student. It provides extra help when a concept is difficult and offers more advanced challenges for students who are ready to move ahead.

Resources for Families: To help parents support their children at home, every lesson includes simple overviews and vocabulary guides.

By adopting enVision Mathematics, River Valley is working to prepare students for college and future careers. We are excited to see how students respond to this new way of learning.



ENVISION PUTS STUDENTS AT THE CENTER OF LEARNING, ENCOURAGING ACTIVE EXPLORATION AND DISCOVERY TO HELP THEM SEE HOW MATH CONNECTS TO THEIR WORLD.

Our volleyball team conducted their annual summer camp and had a fantastic turnout. The girls learned basic skills like passing, setting, and hitting while also learning how to work as a team. Our high school players joined in on the fun, helping the younger students learn these skills. Thanks to Coach Comstock and the volleyball program for their work in helping develop the next generation of Viking Volleyball Student Athletes.



OPEN HOUSE SCHEDULE

Stop in and meet your teacher, tour the classroom, and drop off your school supplies.

HERITAGE & LIBERTY ELEMENTARY
Monday, August 17, 2026
5:00 PM - 6:30 PM

HIGH SCHOOL & MIDDLE SCHOOL
Monday, August 17, 2026
4:00 PM - 5:30 PM

Supply Lists:
www.rvk12.org/supplies



COOL CARS, GOOD CAUSE!



On Sunday, July 19, the River Valley High School parking lot was transformed into an automotive showcase. Gleaming chrome, rumbling engines, and the excited chatter of our student-athletes filled the air for the annual River Valley Athletic Boosters Car Show.

Behind the scenes of this massive community event is organizer Jessie Rowe, who has spent the last six years turning a simple fundraising idea into a highly anticipated summer tradition. Since its inception, the car show has raised a staggering \$70,000 for River Valley athletics. We sat down with Jessie to get the inside scoop on how this event came to be, what makes it so special, and what we can look forward to next year.

The Spark of an Idea

The River Valley Athletic Boosters Car Show was born out of a very relatable parent experience: a sports meeting.

"In 2020, while my son was playing baseball, we were all talking about fundraising during the parents' meeting," Jessie recalls. "I had the idea that a car show was an easy way to generate funds—which was definitely an understatement! But that kicked off our first car show."

Since that first event, the show has grown exponentially. While many towns host summer car shows, Jessie intentionally designs the River Valley event to stand out from the pack. Aside from the welcome amenities—like having the concession stands open for breakfast and lunch and providing actual restrooms—the true differentiator is the heavy involvement of the student-athletes.

Bridging Generations: The Kids Make the Show

If you ask Jessie what keeps her motivated through a full year of planning, her answer always comes back to the kids.

"The most enjoyable part of the show is watching the kids come and pick their favorite cars, trucks, and bikes. I hear most of them say, 'I would love to have one of those,' or in teenage language, 'That's fire!'"

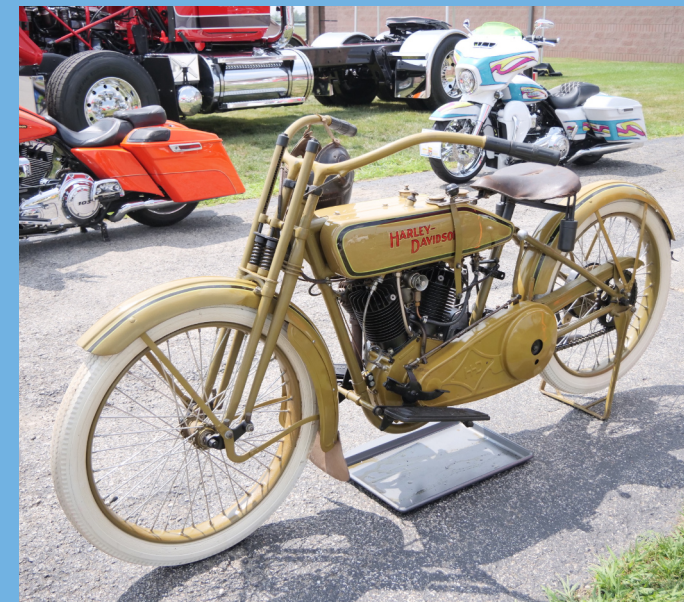
This intergenerational mingling is a massive hit with the car owners. Jessie frequently receives compliments about how respectful the River Valley students are and how refreshing it is to see young adults engaging with the car show community. "I hear how having the kids involved is what makes my show different from the other shows," she says. "Which is the number one reason why I do this show every year."

Daring to Be Different: Trophies and Tributes

Another major draw for car enthusiasts? The awards. Jessie takes pride in avoiding standard, run-of-the-mill trophies.

"I always dare to be different with awards," she explains. "Most shows have those basic awards, and I like to be that person who has amazing, unique awards to give out. I just don't want it to be normal."

She also takes a unique approach to judging by empowering the event's sponsors. On the day of the show, sponsors get to walk the lot, pick their favorites, and personally interact with the student-athletes they are supporting. However, there is one award that Jessie reserves the right to pick herself. In memory of her dad, she chooses one "big" award winner. That winning vehicle then becomes the face of the car show, featured on all the shirts and banners for the following year. For



THE RV BOOSTERS CAR SHOW HAS RAISED A STAGGERING \$70,000 FOR RIVER VALLEY ATHLETICS

those already anticipating the 2027 merchandise, you can expect to see a beautiful 1955 Chevy Bel-Air gracing the promotional materials.

It Takes a Village

Pulling off an event of this magnitude requires a small army, and Jessie is quick to share the credit with the community that makes it possible. She extends her deepest thanks to the RV Athletic Boosters, Rod Knocker Car Club, the event volunteers, and all the award sponsors.

Looking Ahead to 2027

If you missed this year's show, mark your calendars now. The River Valley Athletic Boosters Car Show is officially slated for the third Sunday in July 2027, capping off a massive "Car Show Weekend" immediately following the Waldo Summer Fest on Saturday.

Want to Get Involved?

The show relies on local businesses and community members to keep the momentum going. If you are an individual or company interested in sponsoring the 2027 event or its awards, please get in touch with Jessie Rowe directly by calling or texting 740-225-4349.





FOOD & NUTRITION

Our amazing summer food staff served over 85,000 meals this summer. It was great to see our local families come out and participate in the program.

Because of the continued success of our year-round food service programs, we are pleased to announce that River Valley Local Schools will once again provide free breakfast and lunch to every enrolled K-12 student. We remain committed to meeting our students' nutritional needs while making healthy meals and snacks even more accessible.

This school year, you will notice several exciting additions:

Second Chance Breakfast at the High School – Students who were unable to eat breakfast before school will have another opportunity to enjoy a nutritious breakfast after first period. Students may also purchase approved snack items to help keep them energized until lunch.

Expanded Lunch Options at the Elementary – Fourth- and fifth-grade students will have additional meal portions and à la carte items available for purchase during lunch, in addition to their free meal.

You will also find some exciting updates to our online school menus. Every menu item now includes detailed nutritional information that can be viewed with a simple click. In addition, you may see a few new menu items as we continue to adjust recipes to meet USDA nutritional guidelines while offering meals that students enjoy.

As we begin another school year, our food service department remains committed to serving nutritious, high-quality meals while creating opportunities for students to learn where their food comes from. We look forward to another year of feeding, educating, and serving our River Valley community.



The RV FARM continues to thrive after recovering from the wind damage we experienced through the winter months. We have a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables that will be ready for harvest in late August and early September—just in time for our students' return to campus. As always, this locally grown produce will be incorporated directly into our school meals, providing students with the freshest ingredients possible.

We are also excited to announce a new partnership with The Ohio State University at Marion. Beginning this fall, as the campus launches its new composting initiative, they will provide composted material to the RV FARM. This partnership will help us maintain healthy, nutrient-rich soil, support sustainable farming practices, and continue growing fresh produce for our students while teaching the importance of environmental stewardship.

CHILD FIND

EARLY SUPPORT,
LIFELONG IMPACT.
FINDING CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS.

River Valley Local Schools offers Preschool Child Find screenings as a resource for parents with concerns regarding their child's development. Residents of the River Valley Local School District with children between the ages of 3 and 5 are eligible for these free screenings.

Preschool Child Find provides information on a child's development in the following areas:

- Motor Skills
- Language and Speech
- Concept Development
- Self-Help Skills
- Social-Emotional Development
- Screening Details

Location:

River Valley Liberty Elementary School - 1932 Whetstone River Road N, Caledonia, OH 43314

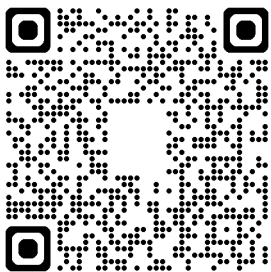
Schedule: Held from August through May

Staff: Conducted by our special needs preschool team

Duration: Approximately 30 to 45 minutes

Note: A parent must be present during the screening.

To schedule a screening,
please complete this questionnaire.



NEW SRO @ RV

For Deputy Kai Albright, stepping into the role of River Valley's new School Resource Officer (SRO) isn't just a new assignment—it's a homecoming.

A 2013 graduate of River Valley and Tri-Rivers, Albright is returning to the halls where her journey began. She brings with her over a decade of law enforcement and military experience, paired with a deep-seated passion for the community she calls home.

Over the past 13 years, Albright has built a distinguished career with the Marion County Sheriff's Office. She spent her first three years as a dispatcher—learning the critical, behind-the-scenes operations of emergency response—before transitioning to the role of Deputy for the last decade. Parallel to her local

law enforcement career, she also dedicated eight years to the United States Navy Reserves, serving as a Master-at-Arms.

Despite her extensive tactical and operational training, Albright says the core of her work has always been about connection. "Throughout my career with both the Sheriff's Office and the Navy, I realized that the most rewarding experiences for me are helping my community and the people I serve," Albright shared. "I'm fortunate to have a career where I can be a defender and friendly face, to those who may need both."

When she takes off the uniform, Albright's focus shifts entirely to her own River Valley family. She and her husband, Ben, have three children currently attending RV—Gabe, Connor, and Parker. Unsurprisingly, with three kids in the district, Albright notes that there is rarely a dull moment in their household. The family loves soaking up quality time together, with family movie nights being a particular favorite.

As she settles into her new role, Albright is eager to blend her professional expertise with her love for the district. She looks forward to bringing her passion for serving others to the students, staff, and families of the River Valley Community.

Please join us in welcoming Deputy Kai Albright back to River Valley! If you see her in the halls or at a school event, be sure to give her a warm welcome.

DRIVING SUCCESS

RIVER VALLEY'S DRIVER'S EDUCATION PROGRAM ENTERS ITS THIRD YEAR

Getting a driver's license is a major milestone for any high school student, but for many families, the logistics and cost of traditional driving schools can feel like a roadblock. Three years ago, River Valley set out to change that—and the results have been "steering" students toward success ever since.

Now entering its third year, River Valley's in-house Driver's Education program has proven to be a game-changer for the community. To date, nearly 140 students and their families have benefited from the initiative, taking advantage of a significantly more affordable and convenient path to hitting the open road.

Getting the program in gear required collaboration, access to funding, and a commitment to student success. The initiative was made possible through a strategic partnership between River Valley and the MOV ESC Driving School, backed by a grant from the State of Ohio.

The district utilized \$20,000 in grant funds to purchase its first dedicated driver's education vehicle. Recognizing the immediate demand and the immense value it provided to families, the district took things a step further, allocating Permanent Improvement funds to secure a second vehicle for the fleet.

Superintendent Adam Wickham said, "The Driver's Education program at River Valley High School has proven to be a valuable asset to our families by offering a more affordable and convenient option for our students to receive their driver's license."

Perhaps the most unique aspect of the program is the instruction itself. Instead of navigating an unfamiliar driving school across town, River Valley students learn the rules of the road from familiar faces. The district currently has four of its own staff members who have been specially trained and certified to provide the required in-car driving instruction.

By removing financial barriers and the hassle of commuting to outside driving academies, the program continues to deliver on its core promise: offering an accessible, top-tier educational experience that extends well beyond the classroom walls. As we buckle up for year three, River Valley is proud to keep our students moving safely down the road to independence.

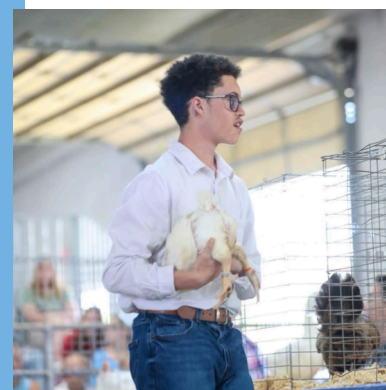


FFA AT THE FAIR



We are incredibly proud of two River Valley FFA members who are representing our chapter as the Marion County Fair King and Queen. We know you'll represent our chapter and the Marion County Fair with pride! Congratulations, Jorden Buckland and Anna LaBarge!

RV FFA Member, Zane Fitsko demonstrated hard work, responsibility, and success with his dairy feeder at the Marion County Fair! Congratulations to Zane on his success in the show ring!



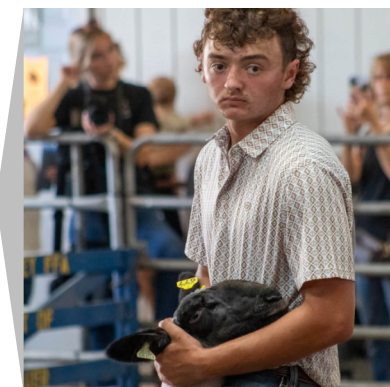
Congratulations to RV FFA member, Josiah Dawson on a great year with his market chickens! As part of his Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) project, Josiah raises his chicks from a young age and proudly exhibits them at the county fair.

River Valley FFA member, Aidan Jordan had a great run with his market pigs at the fair! We are super proud of all his work!



Congratulations to FFA member, Avery Stafford on an outstanding year at the fair! Avery had great success with both her market goats and market hogs, and her hard work and dedication truly paid off.

Congratulations to River Valley FFA member Austin Sharp on a successful day in the show ring! Austin found success not only with his lambs, but also with his beef feeders.



LAYERS OF SCHOOL SAFETY FIRST

Protecting our students and staff is our highest priority. At River Valley Local Schools, protecting our students and staff is our highest priority. We take a multi-layered approach to safety in our district, and we continue to evaluate our safety protocols, identify areas where upgrades are needed, and propose future safety programs to protect our students and staff.

School Safety Plans and Safety Drills

The School Safety Plans (or Emergency Operation Plans) are at the heart of our safety-driven mindset at River Valley Schools. These are updated every three years, most recently in 2025, and are reviewed annually.

Every building in the district practices monthly safety drills focusing on one or more of the following ALICE principles: Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, and Evacuate. ALICE focuses on options-based decision-making and for younger students, we use the more simple phrase: “Run, Hide, Fight.” Depending on the situation, different actions can be taken by staff or students to protect themselves.

OpenGate Weapon Detectors

The use of OpenGate Detectors was rolled out during the 2025-26 school year in our district, first at the Middle and High Schools and then at our Elementary Schools. For the 2026-27 School Year, all schools will start the year with the OpenGate Detectors in use each day.

These OpenGate Detectors are the same devices used for entry into many stadiums and amusement parks, including Cedar Point, the Ohio State Fair, and Great American Ballpark in Cincinnati. They are designed to handle large numbers of people going through in a short period of time and are also used in several schools across the state. These detectors can be calibrated to find prohibited items such as: firearms, knives, and other weapons.

Incorporating these devices into our schools provides an additional layer of safety for our students and staff, and is intended to reduce the potential of a firearm or weapon being brought into our schools. The cost for these detectors did not use any

local taxpayer dollars and was instead covered by Disadvantaged Pupil Impact Aid (DPIA) funds.

Cameras and Two-Way Radios

Video cameras are also placed throughout all buildings. These cameras are also accessible by the Marion County Sheriff’s Office, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week with live access to the video feed.

Two-way radios were also upgraded using an Ohio Bureau of Workers Compensation grant to bring all buses and buildings under one system where communication can occur.

School Resource Officer

River Valley Schools partners with the Marion County Sheriff’s Office to provide a School Resource Officer (SRO) for our district. Our SRO is Deputy Kai Albright, a graduate of River Valley High School. She works to provide ALICE training and oversee our safety drills and other related training.

Armed Staff

In January of 2023, the River Valley Local Board of Education approved the use of armed staff in the district. House Bill 99 (HB 99) allows districts to give written authorization for the use of armed staff in Ohio school districts.

Authorized staff must complete 24 hours of initial training on Active Shooter Response, firearms training, and school safety as detailed in HB 99. Training can be provided by the Ohio School Safety Center or an OSSC-approved trainer; hold a valid Concealed Handgun License, and complete a Background Records Check; plus an 8-hour annual requalification training. Our staff at River Valley receive training above the state minimum requirements.

While utilizing armed staff may be considered controversial to some, the two main reasons for adopting this program are:

- Our schools will no longer be soft targets and unprotected.
- In the case of a deadly threat, having armed staff provides a more immediate, localized response. As in most rural

areas, the response times can often be minutes away for law enforcement.

Layered Approach to Safety

As you can see in the graphic below, River Valley Schools takes a multi-faceted approach to safety, utilizing several layers. Everything from Social Emotional Learning (SEL) services, to hardened security measures for our buildings, to safety drills. There is no panacea for safety, but all components work together to provide crucial elements of protection for our staff and students. As mentioned above, the use of armed staff, is meant to be just one layer of a comprehensive safety plan. If all 15 layers in the graphic above fail to prevent an active shooter, armed staff are in place to respond to the threat. While all of the above layers can work to provide a safer school, our community itself has a significant role in keeping our schools safe.

RV LAYERS OF SAFETY	
1	School Safety Plans - Updated every three years
2	Safety Drills & Rapid Release Practice
3	ALICE (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate) or (Run, Hide, Fight)
4	Weapons Detectors
5	Secured Entrances
6	Cameras
7	Two-Way Radios (Bus to Building and Building to Building)
8	School Resource Office (SRO)
9	Safety Detectors (MS/HS) - HALO devices in Restrooms
10	Bus Seat Belts, Cameras & Bus Driver Safety Training
11	Window Film (Exterior Doors)
12	Keys and Key Card Access for Staff
13	“See Something, Say Something”
14	Behavioral Threat Assessment (6-12)
15	SEL/Mental Health Services
16	Armed Staff

Staff, Students, Parents, and Community all play a role

While many of the above items can potentially reduce the risk of harm to our students and staff, our greatest tool for safety are our staff, students, parents, and community members. We especially encourage parents, guardians, and grandparents to talk with their children about sharing safety concerns with a trusted adult in order to make our schools a safe place for all.

One way to help our schools be more safe is to use the Safer Ohio Schools Tipline (1-844-SAFER OH), which River Valley utilizes. This tipline is operated by the Ohio Dept. of Homeland Security and anyone can anonymously call or text, 24 hours a day, about a safety threat to a school or individual.

We also encourage all students, parents, and community members to contact the building principal or the district office to share safety concerns. If there is an imminent safety concern that occurs outside of school hours, we ask you to immediately contact law enforcement by calling 911. Remember the phrase: "See Something, Say Something."

Every safety measure we have in place at River Valley, including the use of armed staff, is an attempt to ensure our staff and students can go home safely to their families and loved ones. With the support of our community, River Valley will continue to ensure their safety is our highest priority each and every day.

RIVER VALLEY LOCAL SCHOOLS



Board of Education Members

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VICE PRESIDENT- BEN ALBRIGHT

ROBERT STUMP

CHERYL BEINEKE

NATHAN SMITH

"Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire."

- William Butler Yeats