The Eagle's Eye

November 2026 | Homecoming Issue | Volume 40 No. 1













Homecoming Week Goes Wild at ECS

By Parker Barton

Homecoming Week at Evangelical Christian School was nothing short of a blast! Organized by the Student Leadership Council, the celebration featured creative dress-up days, colorful hallway decorations, school spirit and unforgettable memories.

Monday launched the festivities with America Day. Students displayed their patriotism in red, white and blue, transforming the hallways with stars, stripes and American pride.

On Tuesday, students chose between beachwear and professional attire for Beach Bum vs. Business Day.

Some combined both styles, creating outfits that looked equally ready for the boardroom and the beach!

Wednesday brought Holiday Day, which united celebrations from throughout the year. Students wore Easter pastels, Christmas reds and greens, spooky Halloween costumes and outfits inspired by St. Patrick's Day.

For one day, the school practically celebrated an entire year of holidays at once!

The energy continued Thursday with Rock Star vs. Rodeo Day.

Students dressed as their favorite rock stars or embraced their country side with cowboy hats, boots and Western-inspired outfits. Whether they rocked out or shouted "Yeehaw," everyone showcased a unique style.

Friday combined Neon Day with Anything-But-a-Backpack Day.

Seniors wore pink, juniors wore blue, sophomores wore green, and freshmen wore orange, while middle school students selected their own colors. Students also transported their supplies in creative containers, including tractors, coolers and shopping carts. Although the hallways became a traffic jam, students made the most of the chaos!

That afternoon, the pep rally introduced the homecoming court and built excitement for the football game against Hardin County.

The Eagles then delivered an impressive 33–0 victory while the student section roared in Glow Wild-themed colors.

The celebration continued right after the game at the homecoming dance in The Legacy Center. Leopard print, glow sticks, and glowing decorations brought the theme to life. Students danced with friends, enjoyed face painting and indulged in snow cones, occasionally suffering a brain freeze along the way.

From themed outfits and football triumphs to a glowing dance floor, Homecoming Week 2026 united the ECS community.

Thanks to the Student Leadership Council, students enjoyed a week filled with laughter, friendly competition and school spirit. Even after the decorations came down, the memories remained.

Letter from the Editor

The Eagle's Eye Staff

Editor: Evie Johns
Associate Editor:
Braylon Jackson

Staff Writers for this issue:
Parker Barton
Jack Butler
Addison Franks
Braylon Jackson
Ellen Mills
Grace Anne Williams

Fun & Games Page:
Parker Barton

Special thanks also to Tracey Simpson for the use of photographs in this issue.



Dear Readers,

I'm so excited to be kicking off another great year for *The Eagle's Eye*! This edition will mark the 40th year of ECS's favorite newspaper. It has been such a joy working with this year's staff, and I'd like to thank all of the talented journalists, photographers, writers and editors who helped bring this issue together!

I like to think that *The Eagle's Eye* has something for everything, and in this edition, that certainly seems to be the case. We're starting off this issue with an amazing account of the Homecoming Week, as well as news about some recent trips, including Australia and the Senior Retreat to Victory Ranch. Additionally, we have stories about the incredible 24-hour musical and the success of ECS's football team. We also have a food review and, of course, the popular fun and games!

I hope that this paper brightens your day and helps show all of the amazing events that we have going on around campus. Here's to another amazing year of *The Eagle's Eye!*

Happy Reading,
Evie Johns

Star of the Issue: Clayton Varela

by Grace Anne Williams

Q: What is your favorite part of the football program at ECS?
A: I really like the leadership that the upperclassmen and coaches bring to the table. They make even the most difficult practices enjoyable and make me want to get up in the morning just to do it all again.

Q: What are you most looking forward to for basketball season?
A: I'm really looking forward to just experiencing the new type of coaching here at ECS from Freshman Boys Basketball Coach Elliott. We also have a really good group of guys who can hoop.

Q: What is the biggest difference between ECS and the school you were at last year?
A: The biggest difference has to be the community here. Everyone has been so welcoming, and I feel like I've been here for much longer than I actually have.

Q:I know Model UN is going to be a new experience for you this year. What are you planning on accomplishing?
A: Well my mom kinda signed me up for it while I was away. So I don't really know what I'm getting into but Raston Goff, JB. Mac Miller and I are representing the country of Austria. We are excited to get to work, learn more about each other, and make new memories.

Q: What teacher do you feel like has made the biggest impact on your life at ECS?
A: Hands down the greatest teacher that this school has to offer has to be the man, the myth, the legend Logan Harrah. He teaches aviation, and he is the best because he is the most chill teacher I have ever heard of or seen.



Senior Retreat

The Good, The Bad, And The Fun We All Had

by Braylon Jackson



Two bus problems, a nearly two-hour delay, and a whole lot of memories. If there's one thing the Class of 2027 learned during our senior retreat, it's that sometimes the best memories come from the things that don't go according to plan.

On August 21–22, the senior class traveled to Victory Ranch in Bolivar, Tenn., for our annual Senior Retreat. What was supposed to be a weekend of fun, friendship and bonding turned into an adventure before we even arrived. But despite a few unexpected setbacks, the trip gave us exactly what we needed: time together as we kicked off our final year at ECS.

The excitement had been building all week. By Friday afternoon, everyone was ready to leave school behind and get the retreat started. I remember sitting in Bible class, which ended earlier than usual that day, and seeing how eager everyone was to get on the road.

However, our plans quickly took an unexpected turn. After school, we began loading our belongings and boarding the bus and two vans. Just when we thought we were ready to leave, the bus's air conditioning stopped working. Not exactly the ideal way to begin an August road trip in Tennessee.

While repairs were being made, we headed back inside to the Legacy Center lobby. Our class officers—Jules Hope, Samatha Butora, Van Arthur and Field Richardson—made good use of the unexpected downtime by dividing everyone into four teams for the competitions planned later that evening.

Eventually, the air conditioning was fixed, and we were finally on our way. Problem solved, right? Not quite.

About 30 minutes away from Victory Ranch, the bus experienced another breakdown, this time involving a tire.

Meanwhile, the two vans traveling with us had already made it safely to the ranch, but the rest of us found ourselves facing another unexpected delay. Thankfully, with help from Mrs. Brock, several ECS parents and local police officers, we eventually made it to Victory Ranch safely, about two hours later than expected. The journey definitely wasn't what we imagined, but at least we had a story to tell before the retreat even started.

Once we finally arrived, it was time to settle into our cabins and enjoy the retreat. One of the best parts of the experience was getting to bunk with classmates who have become more like family over the years. For many of us, these are the same people we've grown up with, laughed with, studied with and shared countless school memories with. And now, here we were, spending one of our final school retreats together as seniors.

After dinner prepared by the Victory Ranch staff, we headed to the clubhouse for some fun. Between nine square, ping pong, basketball and beach volleyball, there was no shortage of ways to keep ourselves entertained. After everything it took just to get there, I think we had earned a little fun!

Later that evening, we gathered in the chapel, where our class officers revealed our senior class theme: "Called to Lead." They also introduced our class verse, 1 Timothy 4:12, which reminds young people not to let others look down on them because of their age, but instead to set an example through their words, actions, love, faith and purity. For a class preparing to graduate and take the next steps into adulthood, the message couldn't have been more fitting.

Dr. Holler then led us in worship before we headed back to the dining hall for team competitions organized by our class officers. And because no senior retreat would be complete without a little music and dancing, we ended the night with a dance party before returning to our cabins.

The next morning started early, with seniors waking up to catch the sunrise before breakfast and another day of activities. We were given two choices: water activities or laser tag. Most students headed straight for the water, while others decided to test their competitive skills with a few rounds of laser tag before joining their friends. From the zip and dip and the lake to beach volleyball and the pool, there was plenty to do. Students enjoyed swimming, pool basketball, pool volleyball and pool nine square. Whether you were there for the competition or just wanted to relax with friends, there was something for everyone.

After the morning activities, we returned to our cabins to freshen up before gathering in the chapel one final time. Dr. Holler led us in worship, followed by a message from Dr. Grant about our limits and what we carry. We ended the retreat with lunch, packed our belongings, and headed back to ECS—thankfully, without any more unexpected transportation adventures.

Looking back, the Senior Retreat was about much more than games and a weekend away from school. It was about spending time with people who have become a second family. Some of us have known each other for years, while others have joined our class along the way. Regardless of when those friendships began, we've all become part of the Class of 2027's story. And this year, that story is entering its final chapter.

There will be plenty of lasts ahead of us—our last homecoming, last school events, last classes together and eventually, our last walk through the halls of ECS as students. The retreat reminded us to enjoy these moments while we still have them. Sure, the trip started with a broken air conditioner, a tire problem, and a delay none of us expected. But somewhere between the bus drama, late-night laughter, team competitions and time spent with friends, we created memories that will probably come up in conversations long after graduation.

The road to Victory Ranch may have been a little rough, but for the class of 2027, the journey together is what made it worthwhile.

Student Life

Serving, Learning and a Little Elvis Down Under

by Ellen Mills



Six ECS students, two chaperones and one unforgettable week in Australia! A week full of service, environmental impact, new friends, laughs and memories for a lifetime, Round Square and Sydney could not have treated us better.

AB Slater, Sam Butora, Emery Bunch, Cooper Gordon, Jackson Frazier and I represented ECS at Barker College, accompanied by chaperones Mrs. Shorten and Mrs. Greene. We joined approximately 1,200 delegates from more than 150 schools across 30 countries for a week centered on the theme "Visions of the Future from an Ancient Land."

Throughout the conference, we listened to multiple keynote speakers, who all reminded us of the power we hold within ourselves to serve, lead and love well. As Christians, we were able to apply what we learned into our own lives and see the efforts we were called to make are the same ones Christ calls us to. We see service, leadership and most importantly love in Jesus, just as the speakers reminded us to find in ourselves. After listening to the motivation given through the speakers, we were ready to set out into the week with purpose.

We participated in service each day, but a favorite was serving at Hornsby Quarry. There, we learned how a former industrial site is being restored into bushland and a place for the community to enjoy. We helped plant native trees and discover how carefully restoration teams consider soil, water, local plants and wildlife in order to restore the bushland that once was. There was something wonderful about imagining those small trees growing long after our visit had ended. As students later reflected, a tree planted in a few minutes might still be there in 50 or 100 years. Our contribution was small, but its possibilities stretched far into the future.

Leadership was woven throughout the trip in simple and big ways. Whether it was Jackson leading our homeroom through the Urban Adventure around Sydney, or my new friend Megan, from Canada, leading my Baraza in building a winning hat for the competition, there were countless leading opportunities throughout the week to get students involved.



Photos by Ellen Mills

One speaker named Benson Saulo spoke to us about leadership and the ways it has led us to where we are now and how we can propel it forward. He posed a question to the delegates to reflect on whose shoulders we stand on to be where we are today.

For many of us, we stand on the strong foundation of our parents' shoulders, who provide far more for us than we deserve. His speech did not end just at a reflection, but called us to look forward as well. He asked how we will lead in order to hold the door open for the people behind us? With this great call to action, we were able to step into each leadership role with pride, knowing that our actions have the power to benefit those behind us.

The week was not all serious. Adventure and a great deal of fun were instrumental parts as well. The Urban Challenge sent students into Sydney to follow clues, complete tasks, make decisions and explore the city with new friends. Baraza discussions brought together young people whose experiences and perspectives differed widely, but were united through the love to step out of their comfort zone, try new things and meet new friends.

The pin exchange was another highlight of the trip, as the delegates got to deck their lanyards out with bright, colorful and diverse pins. The ECS pin even became a hit! The baraza talent show was a crowd favorite as well as we watched new and old friends dance, sing and laugh together on stage.

Then, on Thursday evening, we ECS delegates brought a little America to the international stage, putting on an incredible show for the Cultural Performance Night! Cooper performed Elvis Presley's "Can't Help Falling in Love," bringing a touch of Memphis to Sydney. Emery introduced delegates to American treats through Little Debbies and Moon Pies, while AB, Jackson and I performed the worm. The presentation was very well received and gave us a joyful opportunity to share our personalities, talents and culture with the wider conference.

While we had so much fun sharing a piece of our culture, it was even more fun to see the diversity across the stage. From authentic Indian and African dances, hearing the beloved French song "Les Champs-Élysées," to a carefree dance from the Bermuda delegates, it was beautiful to see the differences and similarities showcased through cultures oceans apart.

By the closing ceremony, the week had become a collection of shared stories, trees planted, clothes sorted, challenges completed, new friendships formed and moments of leadership, service and love.

We return grateful for our hosts, proud of ourselves, and eager to see how these experiences shape our lives at home. There are friendships to continue, stories to tell and opportunities to serve right here at ECS. We also return with eyes open-open to the ways God has blessed communities, people and countries different from us, but also open to the way God has so graciously blessed us, our school and our country. Somewhere in Sydney, there may still be a delegate talking about Elvis, Moon Pies and the worm, and we sure hope they are!

Restaurant Review

The Eagle's Eye Eats: Is The Pop Spot Worth the Hype?

by Braylon Jackson

Memphis is known for its food scene, but with so many restaurants to choose from, how do you know which ones are actually worth visiting? That's where I come in. Welcome to the first edition of The Eagle's Eye Food Review for the 2026-2027 school year!

Throughout the year, I'll be exploring restaurants, trying different dishes, and giving my honest opinions on everything from the food and atmosphere to the service and overall experience.

For my first review, I headed to East Memphis to check out The Pop Spot, a restaurant that combines classic American favorites with Latin and Venezuelan-inspired flavors. Located at 715 West Brookhaven Circle and owned by Sylvia Leon, The Pop Spot offers a menu featuring everything from burgers and tacos to salads and appetizers.

Walking into The Pop Spot, my first impression wasn't exactly what I expected. The indoor dining area seemed surprisingly empty and lacked much of the energy I usually associate with a popular restaurant. \

However, things changed when I discovered the back patio. The spacious outdoor dining area was filled with customers, decorative lighting and Latin-inspired music that gave the restaurant a lively, welcoming atmosphere. But a great atmosphere can only take a restaurant so far. The real question was whether the food could deliver.

I started with the Fried Steak Eggrolls, served with the restaurant's chipotle comeback sauce. The appetizer included six pieces, accompanied by arugula and peppers. While technically listed as a starter, the portion was generous enough that someone with a smaller appetite could easily turn it into a light meal. The combination of the eggrolls, sauce and fresh vegetables made for a satisfying introduction to the menu. I gave it 4/5 stars.

Next up were the sliders, which I customized to fit my preferences. One of the first things I noticed was the presentation. Instead of traditional buns, the sliders arrived with colorful red, green and yellow buns that immediately caught my attention. Fortunately, they weren't just visually appealing. They were cooked perfectly, and the accompanying shoestring fries were another highlight of the meal. Between the presentation and the taste, these sliders definitely earned their place among my favorite items of the visit. My verdict: a familiar favorite with a colorful twist! 4/5 stars.

For my final entrée, I ordered three different tacos: shrimp, chicken and steak. While all three offered something different, one clearly stood above the rest. The shrimp taco was easily my favorite of the trio. Customers can choose between grilled or fried shrimp, and I decided to go with the fried option. The shrimp paired well with the pickled onions, cilantro slaw, and chipotle comeback sauce. The combination of toppings and flavors made this taco stand out from the others. My verdict: 4/5 stars. If I could recommend only one taco from my visit, this would be it.

After considering the food, atmosphere, service and wait time, I'm giving The Pop Spot an overall rating of 4 out of 5 stars. The restaurant delivered a solid dining experience, with several dishes worth ordering again. The fried shrimp taco was my personal favorite, while the colorful sliders and fried steak eggrolls also made strong impressions. The chicken taco didn't quite measure up to the others, and the indoor dining area could have made a stronger first impression. However, the lively patio, enjoyable food and good service helped make up for those shortcomings. Would I go back? Based on this visit, I certainly wouldn't rule it out- especially for another round of shrimp tacos. If you're looking for a casual East Memphis restaurant with a diverse menu and a lively outdoor atmosphere, The Pop Spot deserves a spot on your list. *Overall Rating - (4/5)*

That's a wrap on the first edition of this year's *The Eagle's Eye* Food Review! Until next time, keep your appetite open and your standards high!



Photos by the Commercial Appeal



Fine Arts

24-Hour Musical

by Addison Franks

The ECS 24-Hour Musical on September 18-19 was a magical and slightly chaotic experience that brought so many students together. The musical allowed for all the students involved to show their own level of creativity. A normal theater production can take months to prepare for, but in our case, we put together a whole musical in just one day! From learning lines and dances to creating costumes and props, each student involved was challenged to work together and bring their own level of creativity. Although the process is very exhausting, it is also very rewarding and an unforgettable experience for all involved.

After school dismissed on Friday, the 24-hour musical was revealed: *High School Musical, Jr.*. Then auditions were held and after a brief break to allow students to go to the football game, the cast list was announced and rehearsals began with the curtain to open at 7pm the next day!

One of the most important parts of the 24-Hour Musical is teamwork. Each person played a vital role in making the musical come to life. Each person must trust one another every step of the way.



As for me, alongside Lilli Dye and Leah Davis under the guidance of Mrs. Florko, we created and put together the costumes for the musical. During the 24 hours we worked to fit each costume to not only the person but also the character.

The 24-Hour Musical taught all of us how to work under pressure efficiently. Whether it be learning lines, decorating the auditorium, or fitting each costume, we all needed to work effectively under pressure. The 24-Hour Musical is also very special to so many students because it provides a space for all who participated to create fun memories. Spending so much time together allowed for such fun and beautiful friendships to develop across many grade levels. Every part of the process becomes very special, including the stressful moments, long hours, little sleep and excitement before the show. Even the most exhausting and stressful parts can turn into life-long memories of fun and laughter.

Overall, the 24-Hour Musical is about much more than the musical itself. It is about building relationships, doing something that is rarely done





and learning how to work under pressure. Although putting on a full musical with costumes and choreography in only 24 hours is challenging, watching all the hard work come to life made it all worthwhile. The 24 Hour Musical is an incredible opportunity for students to try something new, discover new abilities and contribute to something larger than themselves. This musical proves that with a little creativity, hard work and only 24-hours we can accomplish something impressive that few people will ever do!



Tickets are on sale now for the fall show at ecseagles.com.

Sports

Football Enjoys Successful Season Under New Head Coach

by Jack Butler

Football. That's a word that's held in high regard at many programs, and at ECS it's nothing less. There have been some big changes in the program this year, particularly the hiring of Ben Johnson, the head football coach.

Coach Johnson and his methods have been working, as the Eagles finished their regular season undefeated at home. Bo Thompson, a senior who plays tight end and outside linebacker, said he looks forward to the home games the most. In regards to ECS's home field advantage Bo said, "I think the Macon Mafia has done a great job with the student section. The atmosphere is fun to play in, and I think all the players can feel it when they're on the field."

As the Eagles finish out the regular season with a win over St. George's and look to the playoffs, we will need the fans to get loud and support. Coach Johnson said these "really will define our season overall." The focus? "Physicality, execution, and playing with passion."

Coach Johnson is also excited that ECS Athletics has partnered with Nichole Bennett, sports nutritionist. The benefits of implementing the nutrition program have shown. Coach Johnson told me, "I think our athletes have been doing a great job buying into the process of getting better. There are a lot of variables that factor into your performance as an athlete. Our goal is to provide a comprehensive athletic development model for our kids. Mrs. Nicole Bennett, our Sports Nutritionist, has done a great job providing applicable knowledge for our guys as well."

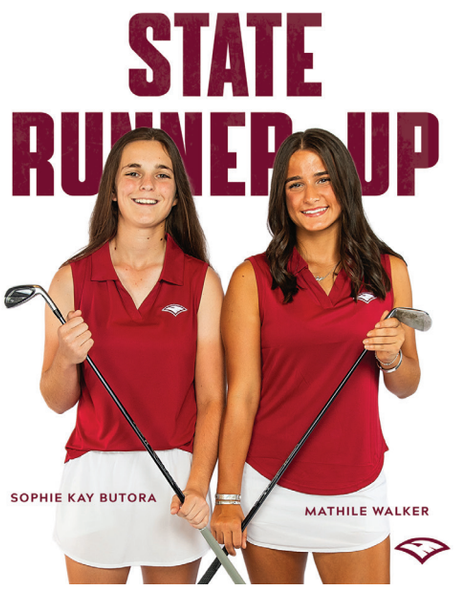
Coach Johnson is no stranger to success. From his playing days as an All-American in college and a brief stint with the Kansas City Chiefs to his coaching career at South Gibson where he led them to their best football finish to date, Coach Johnson does his job well. He says the adjustment to ECS, "has been awesome. It has been great getting to know all of the students as well as the faculty and staff. It's a blessing to be able to work with a multitude of like-minded individuals." Something that most people don't know about Coach Johnson? He has lucky socks.

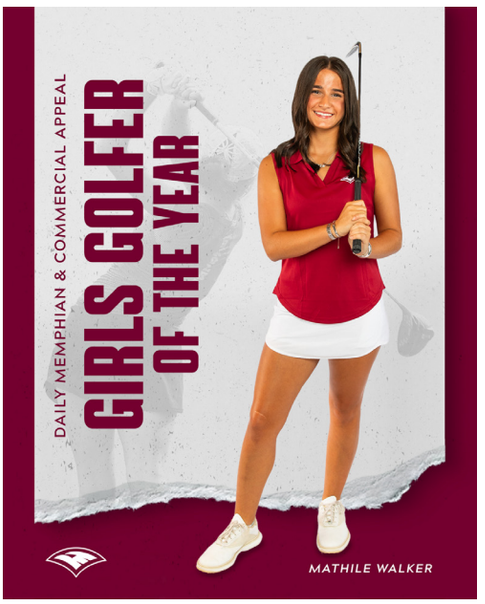


The Eagles head into the postseason with a 7-3 record, the most wins since 2020.

Girls Golf Record Breaking Season







Fun & Games

Submitted by Parker Barton

