Dunklin R-5 Schools
Educating Today for a Better Tomorrow

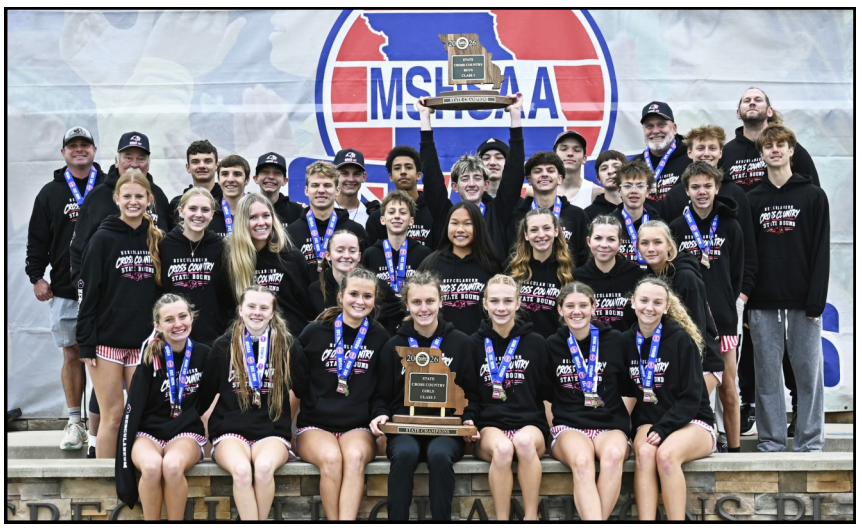
Blackcat News

Mission Statement:
"Educating Today for a Better Tomorrow"

VOLUME 31 ISSUE 95 SCHOOL YEAR 2026-2027 November 19, 2026

Double the Champions - Double the Pride

They did it. Both the varsity boys' and varsity girls' cross-country teams are Class 3 State Champions! The teams left all they had at Gans Creek, Mizzou's home course, and that's exactly what it took to win.



It stayed in the 50s that soggy morning in Columbia. The wind punished those without winter hats or layered clothing. None of it mattered to the focused Blackcats. They knew their teams were good, but high expectations from predictive computer models have burned them in the past. This time, they weren't playing the expectations game. They were ready to forge their own destiny and live with the results. What happened that day on that course would be the true measure of the season.

The girls raced first. Ideally, you want your top runners to be at their strongest at State. Unfortunately, the Cats' number two runner was nursing an injury and hadn't practiced in a week. Emerson Reeves raced anyway. Coach Davis says, "She's tough as nails and a cutthroat competitor." With the memory of last year's disappointing third-place finish, Aubri Shadowens decided this would be her best race. She had never broken 20 minutes until Districts, where she ran 19:36. She followed that up at State with 19:30 and was the second Blackcat to finish behind Adysynn Gonzalez. The order for Herculaneum was Gonzalez, Shadowens, Brylee Wishard, Amaya Ferguson, Reeves, Khloe Black, and Kate Kasten. Coach Steve Davis says, "They destroyed it. I mean, they weren't going to be denied. It was crazy." Davis noticed a change in this year's team before the race. He says there's always a team meeting the night before, and it is usually talkative and emotional for the seniors. The girls cut the meeting short, saying they knew what to do tomorrow, so let's get some sleep and attack this thing. On race day, the group ran with such consistency and speed; the second-place team wasn't even close.

Those feeling nervous for the Lady Cats were holding their breath watching the boys. If any of the top five let just one runner pass them down the stretch, they would be second best. As it turned out, they tied with Maplewood-Richmond Heights. Herculaneum's Noah Fitzgerald came in 6th, followed by Preston Wallman 20th, Sam Laupp 29th, Owen Davis 31st, and Victor White 35th. Adding up all those finishes gave Herky a score of 121, the same as the St. Louis County team. The tiebreaker came down to the sixth man. For Herculaneum, that was Austin Baer, who was dogged by injuries during the season but fought back to compete at State. He finished 46th among the team runners, well ahead of Maplewood's 6th man. If you study the numbers, Baer did something else to help Herculaneum secure the victory. He passed Maplewood's 5th man on the way to the finish line, bumping the competitors' finish by one spot, or one point. Otherwise, Maplewood would have finished with 120 and secured the victory. Instead of basking in his accomplishments, Baer turned the spotlight on his teammates. He said, "Everyone else had to do their job to put us in that situation. We all executed and pulled off the championship." The only senior on the team was Preston Wallman, who set a personal record. Coach Steve Davis says, "Hands down, his best cross-country race ever. I mean, it couldn't have come at a better time."

Coach Davis saw the score was tied, but the digital billboard was always updating as more runners crossed and they checked the video. Herculaneum was listed first and it held. When Maplewood's 6th man finished the race, Davis finally accepted the victory. The candy-striped runners stood in a crowd of supporters when it was announced. With little room to move, they started bouncing up and down like they were on pogo sticks. The exuberance was well deserved. Both teams earned itl

Having both teams win State was a first for Coach Davis. It was the sixth time in school history, but the last time was in 2011. Davis took over the program in 2012. However, the future looks bright. Preston Wallman says, "I think they can go back next year and win again. They have a couple of good kids coming up, and I'm the only one leaving." On the girls' team, Reeves is the only senior, and their number one finisher, Gonzalez, is a freshman.

Before the state championships, we learned that Coach Kyle Davis was nominated for and approved as the newest member of the Missouri Track and Cross Country Coaches Association Hall of Fame. The ceremony will be next month.

Go Blackcats!

Message From Board President

Dear Members of Our Community,

As the leaves begin to change and the crisp days of fall settle in, I am pleased to welcome everyone to a new season filled with opportunities for connection, participation, and shared accomplishments. This time of year reminds us of the strength of our community and the importance of coming together to support one another while looking ahead with optimism.

Our fall sports teams gave us plenty of reasons to cheer, and we are proud of their accomplishments throughout the season. As we turn our attention to winter, we look forward to basketball, wrestling, and cheerleading, along with an exciting lineup of concerts, performances, and other activities. I encourage everyone to attend these events, support our students, and recognize the dedication of the coaches, teachers, families, volunteers, and supporters who make these experiences possible.

So much is happening beyond the athletic arena, too. Our schools offer a variety of programs, activities, and community events that bring people together and create lasting memories. Whether you attend an event, volunteer your time, or simply show your support, your involvement makes a difference. Through these shared experiences and connections, we continue to build a strong, welcoming community where everyone feels valued and included.



On behalf of the Board of Education, thank you for your continued support and commitment to our schools and community. I wish you and your families a safe, enjoyable, and memorable fall season. I look forward to seeing you at an upcoming sporting event, performance, or community gathering!

Tammy Heidland
Board President, Dunklin R-5



Dr. Freeman's Message

Blackcat Community:

There is no better job in the state of Missouri than serving as the Superintendent of the Dunklin R-5 School District. We have some of the most talented faculty and staff in the business working with the most amazing students in public education. This has been highlighted recently by so many accolades of our students and staff.

Congratulations to Mr. Matt Cheney was recognized as the Dunklin R-5 Emerson Teacher of the Year.

Congratulations to Mr. Kyle Davis, who is being inducted into the Missouri Track and Cross Country Association Hall of Fame.

Recently, our School Counselors won the Geysburg Award. This prestigious award is recognized by the School Counseling Section of the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). This recognition reflects their outstanding commitment to implementing a comprehensive school counseling program that supports the academic, career, and social-emotional development of all students.

Finally, Jefferson County school districts are projected to receive approximately $11 million less in state funding for the 2026–2027 school year than they would receive if Missouri fully funded its school funding formula.

These estimated funding shortfalls affect public school districts throughout Jefferson County and represent revenue that would otherwise be available to support educational programs, staffing, student services, and daily school operations. Dunklin R-5 will have a $746,000 shortfall this year.

Despite these funding shortfalls, the Dunklin R-5 School District is committed to providing as many opportunities for our students as possible.

Visit our website at www.dunklin.k12.mo.us for the latest information. You can also follow us on Facebook at Dunklin R5 School District and me on “X” at @DrClintFreeman.
I am wishing you a safe, joyful, and restful holiday season. May it be filled with laughter, peace, and quality time with loved ones. Happy holidays!

Dr. Clint Freeman
Superintendent of Schools



Inclement Weather Advisories

In the event of school closing or early dismissal due to ice or snow we will contact the following TV stations:
KTVI (Channel 2), KMOV (Channel 4), KSDK (Channel 5).

Parents and guardians will also receive a voicemail.

DUNKLIN R-5 SCHOOL DISTRICT

497 Joachim Avenue ▪ Herculaneum, MO 63048 ▪ (636) 479-5200

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Dr. Joe Willis, Assistant Superintendent

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GO BLACKCATS!

Board Meetings are Open to the Public

The Dunklin R-5 Board of Education meets on a regular basis on the third Tuesday of each month. The meetings are held at 7:00 pm. Check the website for the location. The meetings are open to the public. Patrons may view agendas and items from the meetings by going to our website **www.dunklin.k12.mo.us**, and clicking on the Board of Education tab.

Dunklin R-5 School District is an equal opportunity employer

Dunklin R-5 Counselors Earn Prestigious Gysbers Award

Every student needs someone in their corner, someone who understands that success in school involves much more than what happens inside a classroom. At Dunklin R-5, school counselors work every day to support students academically, socially, emotionally, and as they begin preparing for life beyond graduation. That commitment has now earned statewide recognition.

All three counselor-staffed buildings in Dunklin R-5 have received the Missouri Gysbers Comprehensive School Counseling Program Award, recently presented at the Missouri School Counselors Association's banquet. The trophies went to Herculaneum High School, Senn-Thomas Middle School, and Pevely Elementary School. The award recognizes comprehensive school counseling programs that address the academic, career, and social-emotional development of all students. Earning the distinction represents three years of dedicated work by the district's counseling staff to evaluate, strengthen, and fully implement their programs.

Pevely Elementary Counselor Cathie Holdenried says, "It is definitely an honor to achieve this award. As a school counselor, our goal is to fully implement our comprehensive guidance program." But the award didn't come easy, according to Herculaneum High School Counselor Chelsey Dickerman. She says, "We've been working hard on it during the past three years and have made a lot of good gains, but once you're done, it feels so good."

Senn-Thomas Middle School Counselor Tiffany Bungenstock sees the award as both a celebration of the work already accomplished and a starting point for continued growth. She says, "Receiving the Gysbers Award is an accomplishment that has been three years in the making through dedication, collaboration, and doing the work each and every day. While this recognition celebrates how far our programs have come, it also represents our commitment to continued growth over the next five years." Pevely Counselor Nick Streb agrees it's not a destination. He says, "Going through the process helps us identify our strengths and weaknesses and how we can continue to grow."

While the award recognizes program quality, High School Counselor



Pictured: Laura Asinger, Chelsey Dickerman, Tiffany Bungenstock, Cathie Holdenried, and Nick Streb.

Laura Asinger believes its greatest significance is what it represents for students. She says, "It confirms we are doing what's best for kids. While it is an honor, it is what our kids deserve!"

From helping young students navigate friendships and emotions to guiding high school students through decisions about college, careers, and their futures, school counselors play an important role at every stage of a student's education. Asinger appreciates the support counselors receive in the Dunklin R-5 School District. She says, "I've been a counselor for a long time, and the most successful schools allow counselors to do what they are trained to do, not the miscellaneous tasks that they don't know how to staff."

Having all three counselor-staffed buildings earn the Gysbers Award is a significant accomplishment for Dunklin R-5. More importantly, it reflects a shared commitment to making sure students have the guidance, encouragement, and support they need to succeed—not just in school, but in life.



Grandparents are greeting students at Herculaneum High School. Students look forward to the Friday morning routine, especially since the greeters usually have candy. If you would like to participate, call the office at (636) 479-5200 extension 7004.

Canned Food Drive: Pevely Elementary has collected about 1,300 items that will be distributed to local food pantries. The final count was taken after press time.

Pevely Elementary Choir Concerts: First, third, and fifth-grade students will perform in the high school theater on Dec. 1st at 5:15 pm, 6:00 pm, and 6:45 pm, respectively.

Dental Bus: Compass Health will visit our schools on the following dates: PES Nov. 19th, 20th, and 24th; STMS Dec. 1st and 2nd; and HHS Dec. 3rd and 4th.

- The Winter Band Concert is Dec. 13th at 5 pm.
- The Choir Concert is Dec. 10th, with STMS performing at 7 pm and HHS at 8 pm.

Congratulations to Kyle Davis, who will be inducted next month into the Missouri Track & Cross Country Coaches Association Hall of Fame.

Matt Lichtenstein
Communications Director
Office: (636) 479-5200 ext. 1010



STMS Girls' Cross Country



Pictured: Natalie Jones (7th), Scarlett Fitzgerald (7th), Zoe Hubbard (8th), Alaina Baer (8th), Debbie Rich (8th), Lydia Davis (7th), and Aliciya Hughes (8th)

Season of Determination and a Finish to Remember

The Senn-Thomas Middle School girls cross-country team began its season with a close contest against Festus. The teams tied, leaving the sixth runner on each team to serve as the tiebreaker. Festus won, edging the Blackcats by one point. Rather than letting the narrow loss discourage them, the girls used it as motivation. They bounced back at their next meet with a victory, launching a winning streak that carried them through the season.

For Alaina Baer, one highlight was watching the team grow and succeed together. “It was exciting the whole year because we were doing so well. Our team this year is great. There are a lot of different personalities that go together well,” she said. Teammate Debbie Rich also saw personal growth throughout the season. Although she didn't perform as well as she had hoped early on, consistent practice and determination helped her steadily improve her times.

Cross-country is a sport that rewards grit, perseverance, and a willingness to push through discomfort. Natural ability can provide a starting point, but success comes from the work athletes put in day after day. Rich has an interesting way of describing the experience. “It's type two fun. You can have type one fun, like going to an arcade or watching a movie. Type two fun sucks in the moment, but once you're done, it feels so good.”

Zoey Hubbard sees another benefit to the challenges of running: the friendships built along the way. “It is hard, but I've met so many people along the way of my journey of running, and a lot of them are still my friends and will be my friends for a while,” she said. Through countless practices, challenging workouts, and races, the girls developed more than endurance. They developed a bond that helped carry them toward the season's biggest challenge.

That challenge came at the conference meet at Crites Memorial Park, the home course of the Festus cross-country teams. Festus has twice the student population of Dunklin, giving them a larger pool of athletes, but it still comes down to each runner's preparation and determination.

Before the race, the Blackcats went through their familiar pre-race routines. Coach Lance Hyde tapped each runner with Thor's Hammer and reminded them to run fast. The plastic hammer may look like something purchased at a Halloween store, but the team wasn't about to question a good-luck tradition that had accompanied such a successful season.

As the starting pistol echoed across the course, the Blackcats quickly made their presence known. Debbie Rich, Alaina Baer, and Zoey Hubbard led the way, finishing first, second, and third. It was an incredible start, but cross-country team scoring depends on the top five finishers, and the battle for the conference title was far from over.

Festus runners began crossing the finish line in fourth and fifth place, followed by an R7 runner. Two more Festus athletes finished in seventh and eighth, while Blackcat Scarlett Fitzgerald secured ninth place. After several more runners crossed, Festus added an 11th-place finish, bringing its top-five score to 35 points.

The Blackcats still needed one more strong finish to secure the title. All eyes turned toward Lydia Davis, who was returning from an injury unrelated to running. With only two practices under her belt before the conference race, Davis faced an especially challenging assignment. After two more Festus runners finished, Davis crossed the line in 18th place. That finish made all the difference.

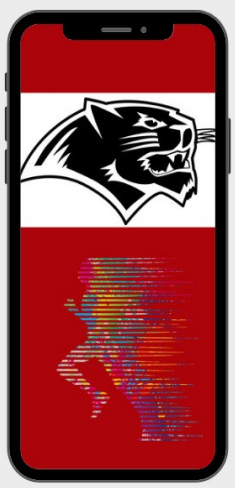
The Blackcats' top five finishers were Rich in first, Baer in second, Hubbard in third, Fitzgerald in ninth, and Davis in 18th. Their combined score of 33 points edged out Festus, which finished with 35. In a sport where every place matters, the Blackcats had earned the conference championship by just two points!

Our other cross country teams also showed their speed that Saturday. The varsity boys took second at the conference meet, and the varsity girls won their race. The JV boys and girls both took second place, and the Senn-Thomas boys finished fourth.

While the conference championship gave the Senn-Thomas girls a storybook ending, the season's success also sets the stage for the future. Next year, seventh-graders Lydia Davis, Natalie Jones, and Scarlett Fitzgerald will help lead the program. Eighth-grade runners, including Aliciya Hughes, will move on to high school, taking with them the experience and lessons they gained at Senn-Thomas. Baer understands that the challenges won't disappear with another year of experience. “Races won't get easier because you're always trying your hardest. It's always going to hurt in a race, but once you cross the finish line, all the pain goes away.”

For the Senn-Thomas girls, this season was about much more than fast times and medals. It was about learning to persevere, supporting one another, building lasting friendships, and discovering what a determined team can accomplish.

NO CELL PHONES DURING SCHOOL HOURS



Missouri Senate Bill 68 has banned students from displaying or using any electronic personal communication devices from the first bell to the last bell.

This applies to all areas of the school, including classrooms, hallways, cafeterias, and restrooms. There are exceptions for emergencies, medical purposes, and 504/IEP.

WE ARE ASKING FOR YOUR HELP TO FOLLOW THE LAW.

Devices include Cell Phones, Smart Watches, Earbuds/Headphones, Tablets, and Personal Laptops.

Celebrating Veterans



Dunklin R5 welcomed an impressive group of veterans to our celebration this year. Dozens of community members, many with children or grandchildren in the district, joined us for breakfast, a reverse parade, and a high school assembly. Senn-Thomas hosted the 9 am breakfast, which was the parade's starting point. The procession circled Pevely Elementary School to see the children lining the driveway with signs supporting our military. The vets ended their route on Blackcat Drive, where they saw high school students and the preschool children at Taylor. The assembly included readings and performances from the band, choir, and Pevely's Select Choir. There were heavy moments, like remembering the Blackcats who gave their lives for this country and playing Taps. However, when the elementary kids started singing This Land Is Your Land, smiles were abundant. When Superintendent Freeman has a bad day, he'll spend time with students, and that same medicine was shared with our community. Thank You Veterans!



Pictured: Brylee Wishard, Amaya Ferguson, Emerson Reeves, Aubri Shadowens, and Adysynn Gonzalez.

No One Left Behind

The girls won State decisively; all of their hard work paid off. A few feet past the finish line is a covered structure where runners can catch their breath and drink some water before exiting the far side and walking down a small embankment to their supportive coaches, loving families, and cheering alumni. Completely exhausted, it's the kind of support every runner seeks. However, something more important than celebrating a state championship delayed the embrace of loved ones.

The early finishers were in sight of their fans but turned around. Junior Brylee Wishard says, "I realized we were missing one, so we went back." They found Emerson Reeves sitting with her back against a pier with tears in her eyes. As one of Missouri's top wrestlers, pain is an afterthought; never the focus. She had to be hurt. The leg she rested for a week prior to State shot pain to her core. The girls got her up, and Reeves used them to support her weight as they made their way to the crowd below. It was symbolic to see them come down the embankment together. Wishard says, "If we're doing it as a team, we need to celebrate as a team, and we can't leave anybody behind."

It was an unexpected show of character, a quality we hope to instill but rarely see so dramatically on display. After these girls pushed themselves to the limit and should be rightfully self-absorbed in their recovery, they still had the empathy to care for one another.

After carrying Reeves to the team's tent, Coach Kyle Davis asked her if she would have raced today, knowing how much pain she would be in when it was over. He said, "She looked at me like I was crazy. Of course she would have raced." Despite her injury and not running for a week, the senior finished 36th overall among the 172 runners who qualified for state.



Taylor's Fall Festival

Over 500 people attended the Fall Festival at the early childhood center. The attractions included a Trunk or Treat, bounce houses, and a dance party. Next to the building was the pumpkin patch where kids could pick out a small gourd and take it home. The preschoolers enjoyed climbing into a fire truck, and Herculaneum firefighters answered all their questions. There was free popcorn, juice boxes, and high school students in blow-up costumes. Director Charissa Kappler wants to thank Parents as Teachers, Orlando's Seafood and Produce, Pit Stop Party Rentals, Martin Dairy Farms, and the NHS Members at Herculaneum High School.



A Slice of Learning at Joe's Pizza

Fifth graders recently traded their usual lunch routine for a hands-on experience at Joe's Pizza, where they made their own personal pizzas! The field trip is a student favorite, especially for those whose closest experience with making pizza usually involves sliding a frozen pie into the oven.

The process began with students decorating their individual pizza boxes before heading into the kitchen in small groups. After washing their hands, each student received sheeted dough and started decorating. With no restrictions on toppings, the young chefs could let their imaginations run wild, though most kept their creations fairly simple.

Scarlett Metz chose bacon, cheese, and pepperoni for her 8-inch pizza. Julia Willis called it "one of my favorite field trips" while reaching for the chicken. Only one student opted for a traditional cheese pizza, while nearly everyone else added at least one meat topping. Vegetables, meanwhile, were mostly left alone.

Sanna Trupiano and her brother Joey operate the Herculaneum franchise. They are the grandchildren of the company's founder, Joe, who opened the first location in 1972. Sanna remembers taking a similar field trip to her family's pizza business when she was a student. Now, she enjoys giving today's students the same opportunity. "We would love to show them how we make the dough and sauce and shred the cheese, but there just isn't enough time," she explained.

Once the students finished building their pizzas, their creations traveled along the oven's conveyor belt before being retrieved and placed in their decorated boxes. The pizzas were then transported back to school and kept warm until lunchtime. The school district pays a fee for the experience and receives a significant discount from regular retail prices.

Teacher Sarah Kennebeck appreciates both the experience and the relationship with the local business. "It was super easy to work with Joe's; we absolutely love it. It's a fun experience for them to get out in the community and see businesses like this, and watching them at lunch is great as well," she said. Perhaps the best review came from fifth-grader Lucas Hixon after enjoying his bacon and pepperoni pizza. "It's so good. It was really good. I just wish the pizza was bigger."



Pictured: Lucas Hixon

A Little Goes a Long Way: NHS Blood Drive Exceeds Its Goal



Pictured: Bradly Gorman and Kay Graf

The National Honor Society's fall blood drive was a success, exceeding its goal of 30 units by collecting 31. While every donation made a difference, one first-time donor helped make reaching that goal possible.

Senior Bradly Gorman stepped up to donate through a Power Red procedure, which allows a donor to give two units of red blood cells during a single appointment. During the process, a machine separates the blood components, collects the red blood cells, and returns the plasma, platelets, and a saline solution to the donor.

Gorman seemed unfazed by the experience, offering a simple description of the procedure: "Just a pinch and a poke and we're good." His motivation went beyond helping those in need. "My girlfriend was working the event," he explained with a smile. NHS President Kay Graf didn't push him to donate, but she did appreciate his efforts. Graf says, "He handled it like a champ."

Beyond the immediate impact of the donations, the blood drive also benefits Herculaneum High School. According to NHS Sponsor Caitlynn Ward, the American Red Cross provides funds to the school to host the event, and the money will support student scholarships.

Whether it's a first-time donor giving two units or a returning donor giving one, every contribution matters. Thanks to the generosity of those who participated, the NHS blood drive made a difference for those in need while also helping future Blackcats pursue their educational goals.



The Emerson Goes to Cheney!

The Emerson Goes to Cheney!“They 100 percent caught me by surprise,” said Matt Cheney. The Herculaneum High School teacher continued, “My wife knew about it three weeks before that, but I had no idea.”

It’s not unusual for Superintendent Dr. Clint Freeman to address teachers at the beginning of a professional development day. Educators gathered in the high school library, finding seats and making room for laptops and morning beverages. Freeman casually reviewed a few bullet points, then shifted from the day's expectations to something much more exciting: announcing a prestigious teaching award.

Each St. Louis-area school district selects one educator to receive the Emerson Excellence in Teaching Award. This year, Dunklin R-5's honoree is Matt Cheney. After announcing the recipient, Freeman invited Cheney to the front of the room. As Cheney turned around, Freeman added, “I think you have some people in the back of the room.” Cheney's composure gave way to emotion as he spotted his wife, Hallie Cheney, a teacher at Pevely Elementary School, and his mother-in-law, Charissa Kappler, director of Taylor Early Childhood Center. His daughter, Magnolia, was there, too, standing in front of him. Cheney had unknowingly been enlisted in the surprise earlier that morning when he brought Magnolia to work, thinking his mother was coming to pick her up.

Herculaneum High School Principal Stephanie Dix says Cheney's selection reflects the impact he makes throughout the school. “Matt Cheney is dedicated, innovative, leadership-driven, and focused on the success and well-being of every student at HHS,” she said. His influence extends well beyond the business classroom. Cheney makes a point of building relationships with students, encouraging them, and helping them feel connected. Dix also recognizes his commitment to building a culture of belonging, mentoring fellow teachers, and ensuring every student and staff member feels like an important part of the school community.

For Cheney, the recognition is especially meaningful. He says receiving the award makes him feel valued and loved. He enjoys being available to students, whether as a business teacher or as the advisor for Yearbook and Future Business Leaders of America. He's happy to give his time, but he also recognizes that every commitment comes with a sacrifice. As he explains, every time he says yes to something at school, he's saying no to spending that time with his family at home. That's why Cheney is quick to share the credit with his wife. He recognizes how much she has done to support him. “She has done a ton to help me be successful and support my vision.” Last Saturday, Mr. and Mrs. Cheney attended Emerson’s recognition banquet at the Ritz-Carlton in St. Louis.



Pictured: Hallie Cheney, Matt Cheney, Charissa Kappler, and Magnolia



Pictured: Natalie and Chase Goodwin

A Royal Pair: Twins Take Homecoming Crowns

For the first time in Herculaneum High School history, the Homecoming King and Queen are siblings! Fraternal twins Chase and Natalie Goodwin earned the honors, creating a memorable moment for Blackcats. While many students joked about “voting for the twins,” both have strong connections throughout the student body and may have earned the crowns regardless of their family ties.

Chase plays football and baseball and serves on the Student Council, while Natalie serves as Student Council president, National Honor Society secretary, and a member of the prom committee. She also cheers and plays golf. Both are well known and well liked among their peers. After the announcement and the crowning, Chase hugged his sister, drawing a tender sigh from the audience.

The king and queen are the children of former Physical Education Teacher Shawn Goodwin and former School Nurse Tonya Goodwin. As parents, they discussed what would happen if one won and the other didn’t, but it was for naught. Shawn Goodwin says, “The whole thing was just crazy.”

Small Steps, Big Strides



Pictured: Pevely's inaugural Boys Running Club

Elementary boys are waking up early to participate in the new running club at Pevely. Led by Coach Jim Kasten and supported by high school volunteers, the young athletes are learning running fundamentals while building speed, strength, and endurance. Each session includes stretching and drills designed to help them become stronger, faster runners.

Every student has his own reason for joining. Third-grader Carson Thole wants to make the most of his natural ability. “In kindergarten, I was one of the fastest kids in my class,” he said. Fifth-grader Watson Spencer hopes the extra training will give him an edge in other sports. “Normally, playing baseball, I get out if it’s a ground ball hit to the shortstop, so I’m trying to get faster,” he explained. For fifth-grader Dakotah Curtis, the club is about the camaraderie. He enjoys the friendships and shared experience. “It’s fun, a lot of people I know are here, and I really love running,” he said. Coach Kasten hopes the skills and enthusiasm developed through the program will carry over into the future, and that he will see many of these young runners on the middle school cross country team.

Pevely Elementary School introduced a girls' running club years ago and was once a member of the Girls on the Run program. Although the school is no longer affiliated with the nonprofit organization, the running club tradition continues. Today, boys and girls can enjoy the benefits of running, build confidence, and encourage one another.

Both clubs will celebrate the conclusion of this semester's sessions with a two-mile fun run on November 21st at Pevely Park.



