

## Local Schools



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# Pavilion, Walking Track Added to Middle School Campus Through Partnership

DECEMBER 26TH 2020 BY DEE LOFLIN

## Pavilion, Walking Track Added to Middle School Campus Through Partnership

A pavilion has recently been constructed in front of the Poplar Bluff Middle School, connected to an ADA-compliant walking track installed last school year so that students can have expanded recreational space for recess.

The Parent Teacher Organization is responsible for financing the bulk of the project through fundraising efforts over the past few years, mostly from student-led candy bar sales, while the PBHS Class of 1972 made a substantial donation toward the completion.

“It’s been a coordinated effort to enhance safety and accessibility for our students, and the group continues to look at other options to be made available to our kids through this wonderful partnership,” said Dr. Amy Jackson, R-I assistant superintendent of business. “We appreciate the lasting contributions to the Poplar Bluff Middle School.”

The campus has a separate enclosed, outdoor playground, but the concrete surface makes it best suited for basketball, according to Middle School Principal Dr. Josh Teeter. The fenced-in green space out front will allow students to run around, he said. Previously they were walking to the nearby Kiwanis Bacon Memorial Park for special activities.

Future plans include replacing the soccer goals, according to PTO members Kera Hoffman and Candis Maurer, who are credited for initiating the project and seeing it through until the end. The acreage formerly served as Strenfel Field before the Middle School and the High School swapped locations in 2016.

“This is our old high school baseball field, so it was the perfect opportunity for us to get behind,” said alumnus Rick Berry, on behalf of the Class of 1972. Berry reached out to Jackson, who initially brought the project to his attention. R-I Maintenance Supervisor Colt Sievers led the effort to save the district thousands of dollars with purchasing power and in-kind labor.

Pictured: Donors, school officials and student representatives gather on Tuesday, Dec. 15, under the new pavilion connected to the walking track at PBMS.

Article and photo submitted by Tim Krakowiak, Communications/Marketing Director, Poplar Bluff R-I School District

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# U.S. Army STEM Trailer Visits PBHS

DECEMBER 09TH 2020 BY DEE LOFLIN

## U.S. Army STEM Trailer Visits PBHS

Poplar Bluff High School students recently learned about STEM opportunities available through the U.S. Army during a special visit from the Mobile Exhibit Company.

JROTC cadets as well as other classes were led through situation, mission, and the research and development rooms of the trailer, called ‘Adventure Semi 7,’ as they were informed about the Army’s role in medical innovations and navigation technology.

Examples of such technologies originally developed for or by the armed forces used by civilians today “for the betterment of society,” according to recruiters, include tissue regeneration, yellow fever vaccination and GPS for services like Google Maps.

“One constant in the Army, and military across the board for that matter, is technological advancements,” stated Maj. Greg Crites, PBHS senior Army instructor. “We’ve been on the forefront over the last 25 plus years, dating back to Desert Shield/Desert Storm in the 1990s really.”

Students learned about a robot that will be capable of leaping known as SARAH, or search and rescue autonomous hardware, with a hover drone attached to it so soldiers can avoid entering certain hazardous situations. Finally the high schoolers had a chance to complete a simulated mission utilizing components of science, technology, engineering and math.

The U.S. Army Mission Support Battalion typically visits larger urban population centers, but since some schools are learning virtually because of the pandemic, PBHS was able to sign up, according to organizers.

Pictured: Students play a video game navigating SARAH through a simulated disaster on Tuesday, Nov. 24, in the JROTC wing of PBHS.

Article and photo submitted by Tim Krakowiak, Communications/Marketing Director, Poplar Bluff R-I School District

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## PBJHS Donates Over 9K Cans to Food Pantry

DECEMBER 08TH 2020 BY DEE LOFLIN

### PBJHS Donates Over 9K Cans to Food Pantry

Poplar Bluff Junior High generated 9,025 canned goods last month for St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry, helping to sustain the nonprofit for the entire year, volunteers say.

While the food drive predates the school's house system, community service projects have become more competitive under the recent structure, according to Principal Candace Warren, who made note that each student brought in an average of 13 non-perishables.

Named after the legendary Three Rivers College Raiders Basketball coach Gene Bess, returning victor House Bess brought in the most cans with 3,347, followed by 3,090 items raised by House Giambelluca, in honor of Poplar Bluff Sports Hall of Fame founder Sam Giambelluca.

Asked if the faculty members have been working to outdo one another, House Bess representative Aaron Duncan replied: "They've gotten competitive. We've been busy winning." The key to success, explained the social studies teacher, is a high participation rate, with 72 percent of his students contributing, or 83 out of 115

"I always tell them that we win with humility and we lose with integrity, because the cause is bigger here," said Duncan, in all seriousness. "No one's losing anything, because [regardless], we're gonna feed someone who needs, say, vegetables."

St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry distributes 12,000 non-perishable food items to Butler County residents in need each year, according to volunteer Merlin DeWitt. The school’s friendly competition has led to the operation’s largest single donation “by far,” he commented.

Last year, Junior High donated 6,677 non-perishables and in 2018 – 5,700. The top two houses of six will receive pizza parties, and the total points earned go toward an end-of-the-semester field trip for the overall winner

The canned food drive is organized by the PBJHS social studies department, under the lead of Melinda Moncier, who is a member of Sacred Heart Catholic Church, which oversees the food pantry. Located on Broadway Street, St. Vincent de Paul also runs a thrift store.

Eighth grader David Williams joins his schoolmates in loading up canned goods for St. Vincent de Paul on Tuesday, Dec. 1, at PBJHS.

(Left to right) PBJHS teacher Kathy Pattillo, Principal Candace Warren, teacher Melinda Moncier, St. Vincent volunteer Merlin DeWitt, and teachers Lyndsee Moon, Emily Padilla, Aaron Duncan and Josh Wesemann pose beside the trailer.

Photo and article submitted by Tim Krakowiak, Communications/Marketing Director, Poplar Bluff R-I School District

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# Mules Booster Club has Named October Athletes of the Month

NOVEMBER 19TH 2020 BY DEE LOFLIN

## Mules Booster Club has Named October Athletes of the Month

The Mules Booster Club has named Audrey Rahlmann-Lack and Jacob Baller the October Athletes of the Month, presented by Academy Sports and Outdoors.

Jacob Baller, a junior football player, ended the 2020 season with 24 catches for 395 yards and four touchdowns. A two-way starter, he also had 48 tackles, tying for third highest on the team. According to his coach David Sievers, he had “numerous big plays” and “big games” against Sikeston, Cape Girardeau and Jackson. While he was nominated for football, Jacob is a clutch baseball player as well.

“On offense, he led the team in receiving yardage but also made numerous highlight film catches,” said Sievers, noting that as an underclassman Jacob was both an excellent leader on the field as well as academically. “On defense, he was one of our team leaders, and asked to play several positions.”

Audrey, a senior softball player, had a .390 batting average, 17 singles, nine doubles, six triples (the second highest on the team), 14 RBIs, 32 runs (the highest), 23 out of 24 steals (the highest), an on-base percentage of .425, a slugging percentage of .646 and a fielding percentage of .868, with 90 total chances, 77 putouts and two double-plays during the 2019 season. A four-year letterman, she was named All-District second team and All-Conference first team this season. In the classroom, she maintains an 11.14 grade point average, and is a member of the National Honor Society.

"Audrey is a fantastic athlete, but even more [importantly] she is a great leader and role model for the underclassmen in our program," said her coach Joel McDuffey, adding that she was the team's most positive, vocal leader. "Her constant positive attitude and effort embodies the culture we, as a team, worked toward this year. She will be missed next season and we wish her all the success as she joins the Three Rivers Softball program next year."

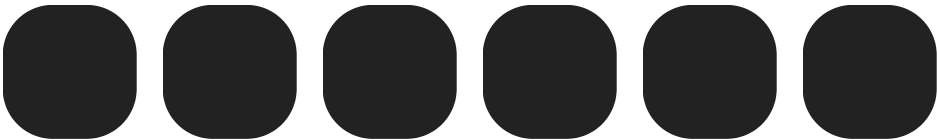
Pictured from left to right: Jacob Baller and Audrey Rahlmann-Lack are presented the AOM awards by Mules Booster Club vice president Brian Taylor on Tuesday, Nov. 10.

Photo and article by Tim Krakowiak, Communications/Marketing Director, Poplar Bluff R-I School District

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# Dinner Offered for FREE to Students at all School Sites

OCTOBER 23RD 2020 BY DEE LOFLIN

Dinner Offered for FREE to Students at all School Sites

Poplar Bluff, MO - Free dinner meals are being served either to go or on-site after school beginning today, in a district-led food service effort to reach more students.

Poplar Bluff's food service director, Dixie Harden of Chartwells, has been making arrangements with principals since September in order for her staff to accommodate the specific needs of each building.

Early Childhood, Eugene Field, Lake Road, Oak Grove and Junior High students will receive bagged meals to go, while students participating in after-school activities such as clubs, sports or latch-key at Kindergarten, O'Neal, Middle School and High School will have an option to eat their meals on-site.

"Meal participation rates have been down tremendously, and this is a way to meet a need for both our students and the community," stated Dr. Amy Jackson, R-I assistant superintendent of business

The district's participation rate has been impacted by students quarantined due to contact tracing. In addition, about 15 percent of the population had enrolled in the Poplar Bluff Virtual Academy for the first quarter. The virtual learners have also been given the option to pick up meals at one of the district's three curbside sites: O'Neal, Middle School or the High School.

The United States Department of Agriculture has issued a series of waivers under the federal nutrition assistance program, and recently announced that free meals for students, grades preK-12, will be extended through the end of the school year to help combat hunger during the public health emergency.

"There are a lot of people still struggling, I mean really struggling, and I don't want our kids to go hungry, basically," Harden explained. "Amy's helped and Dr. Scott Dill," superintendent, "is always on board, when it comes to feeding kids; it's just imperative that we do."

For more information about dinner services, contact the individual school building, or call Chartwells at 573-785-0486.

Pictured: O'Neal Elementary students participating in Boys and Girls Club or latch-key line up for dinner when the after-school meal service was first introduced at select sites one year ago.

Photo and article by Tim Krakowiak, Communications/Marketing Director, Poplar Bluff R-I School District



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