



# TRIBUNE-COURIER

RICHLAND COUNTY'S ONLY LOCALLY-OWNED NEWSPAPER • SINCE 1961

news@tribune-courier.com

08.07.25



Photos By Jenna Wolford

**THE ST. MARY OF THE SNOWS FAMILY FESTIVAL** was held Sunday, Aug. 3, from noon to 5 pm. The day included a BBQ chicken dinner, raffles, games, a cake wheel and the Kid Zone. Children were able to play games, have their face painted, make crafts and win prizes. The festival was held at the church and school, 1630 Ashland Rd., Madison area. (More photos on Page 6)

## Madison finalizing levy details

The Madison Local School District Board of Education met for a special meeting July 30 at the Madison Board of Education.

The board approved a resolution further cementing their bid for an additional school levy. This tax would be on the earned income of township residents.

At the July 16 meeting, a resolution determined the necessity of raising an additional \$6,271,368 per year for school district purposes, specifically, current expenses of the school district.

The Tax Commissioner of the Ohio Department of Taxation was contacted to estimate the property tax rate that would have to be imposed by the district to produce the additional annual amount and also estimate the income tax rate that would have had to have been in effect for the current year as a school district income tax to produce the additional annual amount.

The tax commissioner estimated that the property tax rate that would have to be imposed by the district in the current year to produce the additional annual amount of revenue is 12.41 mills (based upon valuation of 2024) and that the estimated income tax rate that would have had to have been in effect for the current year as a school district income tax to produce the additional annual amount is 1.50% per annum.

The five-year levy will go to the voters on the Nov. 4 ballot as an income tax of 1.50 percent. If approved, the levy will go into effect Jan. 1, 2026.

Treasurer Bradd Stevens recommended that the board approve the Precaution Written Plan to eliminate forecast deficits submitted to ODEW prior to July 31, 2025.

Stephanie Zigmund was hired as a preschool itinerant teacher for the upcoming school year.

The board approved school meal prices for the 2025-'26 school year including lunch (grades K-8), \$3.50; lunch (grades 9-12), \$3.75; breakfast (grades K-12), \$2.25; lunch (adults), \$4.75; and breakfast (adults), \$3.

## Fair attendees invited to Nature Park

The Richland County Fair continues through Saturday and activities are planned at the Nature Park for the remainder of the week.

The Nature Park provides live music, contests and learning from Richland Soil and Water Conservation District (Richland SWCD) and other organizations. The exhibit space behind the Nature Park stage will be open during the fair from 11 am to 7 pm.

Fairgoers can visit Richland SWCD, Richland County Solid Waste Management Authority, Richland County Master Gardeners, Richland County Park District, Mansfield Litter Prevention and the Richland Area Beekeepers to learn about stormwater management, beekeeping, litter prevention, native plants and wildlife.

For a chance to win a rain barrel or planter of native plants, enter the Raindrop Contest.

Snakes of Ohio will be featured on the stage Wednesday at 3 pm.

# MACC

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## FORWARD

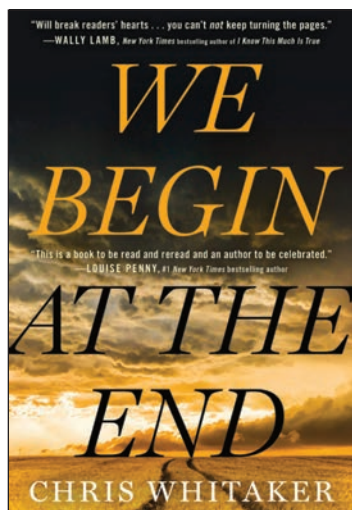
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## LOST IN A BOOK



A Book Review  
By Mandy Belczak Gurney



*We Begin at the End* by Chris Whitaker centers around Duchess, a young teen who is more of a parent than her own mother to her young brother Robin.

Walk, the local police officer, is rooted in the town and it's hard histories. He centers his life around righting wrongs and looking out for Duchess.

It's a beautiful coastal California small town that is on the brink of being bought up and developed, but Duchess and Walk both know the dark stories the town has to hide.

Vincent King, Walks childhood friend, has served his time and is getting out of jail. Soon, the town gets caught in a mess, a mystery and a struggle to care for these children.

In so many ways this story is like the female version of *Demon Copperhead* by Barbara Kingsolver.

We follow Duchess and watch tragedy shape her, make her hard and we keep reading, longing for her redemption. I chose this book because Chris Whitaker's book, *All the Colors of the Dark*, is one of the most original and interesting stories I've ever read.

*We Begin at the End* was not as good, a bit slow sometimes with lots of characters to keep track of, but still is exceptional writing.

My rating: ★★★★★

Follow my blog at [GreenGurneys.com](http://GreenGurneys.com)

## Monthly book sale opens this week

The Mansfield/Richland County Public Library (MRCPL) Evergreen Bookshop will be open for the monthly Friends' Used Book Sale on Friday, Aug. 8, from noon to 5 pm and Saturday, Aug. 9, from 10 am to 3 pm.

A preview sale will be held for Friends of the Library members on Thursday, Aug. 7, noon to 5 pm. Memberships may be purchased at Thursday's Preview Sale (\$3 per year for individuals).

Materials (adult, teen and juvenile items) are library discards and public donations offered for sale at extremely low prices. The bookshop is stocked with "new to the store" items each month. All proceeds from the monthly sales sponsor enrichment activities provided by the MRCPL Main Library and its eight branches in Richland County.

The Evergreen Bookshop is staffed exclusively by volunteers in downtown Mansfield at 37 N. Walnut St. (near the corner of W. Third St. & N. Walnut St., next to the main library). For information call 419-526-4652.



## THE ENTERTAINMENT EXAMINER

— By Ian Stumbo —

One of my all-time favorite comedy series is *The Naked Gun* trilogy.

As Lt. Frank Drebin, the late great Leslie Nielsen brought these film noir style gag-a-minute comedies to life. These type of spoof movies have been out of favor for a long time, though director Akiva Schaffer and producer Seth McFarlane have brought them back to life in the movie simply titled *The Naked Gun*.

Frank Drebin Jr. (Liam Neeson) is doing his day by day job at police squad along with his partner played by Paul Walter Hauser.

Soon, an evil plot takes place to turn everybody in the world against each other and Drebin must somehow stop it before everyone attacks each other.

How refreshing this movie is. This is the exact way to do a legacy sequel. It pays homage to the original while also bringing its own brand of humor. Neeson is absolutely perfect in the

role and nails the comedy in this movie. Also, very impressive,

is Pamela Anderson as Drebin's love interest. She is great in this movie especially a scene where she has to scat sing and distract the main villain (a great Jack Huston) while Drebin sneaks into a back room.

This movie is simply hilarious and I was personally laughing the whole time. There

is some absurdity and not everything works but what does work is extremely memorable.

*The Naked Gun* is a movie that I really, really hope everyone can get out and see. Neeson and the whole cast deliver, the vast majority of the jokes land and there is something for everyone. Its been a long time since there has been a movie like this in the theater that was so laugh out loud funny so definitely check this one out.



## Men's Garden Club will host 70th Annual Fall Harvest Show

The Mansfield Men's Garden Club will hold its 70th Annual Fall Harvest Show Saturday, Aug. 23 and Sunday, Aug. 24, in the King Ballroom at Kingwood Center Gardens.

This year's show theme is "70 Years of Highlights" celebrating the 70 years of the Mansfield Men's Garden Club providing a showcase for local gardeners and floral designers.

The public is invited to enter their horticultural achievements and artistic designs in the many categories for the show. Official Harvest Show booklets listing all categories for plants, vegetables and artistic design are available at area garden centers, florists, greenhouses and at the Kingwood Center Gateway Center.

Entries will be accepted on Saturday from 9 am to noon with the show opening at 2 pm. All entries should be taken to the receiving area of the Kingwood Gateway Center located on the west side of the building. The show opens at 10 am on Sunday.

For more information about the show or the club contact Ed Pickens at [edpickens48@gmail.com](mailto:edpickens48@gmail.com).

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## Tribune-Courier



Serving Ontario, Lexington, Madison, Bellville and Butler Communities in Madison, Mifflin, Springfield, Troy, Washington and Jefferson Townships

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# News Briefs

A special meeting of the Lexington Board of Education will be held Monday, Aug. 11, at 6 pm in the Robert H. Whitney Performing Arts Center. The purpose of the meeting is to continue the Tax Policy discussion with David Conley from Rockmill Financial.

Nonprofit Vitalant will give donors a \$10 gift card to anyone who gives Aug. 1-28 and are opted in to Vitalant Donor Rewards. They will also be entered for a chance to win one of three \$10,000 gift cards. View eligibility requirements and make an appointment at vitalant.org, download and use the Vitalant app or call 877-258-4825.

A bloodmobile will be held Wednesday, Aug. 27, at Planktown Market, 1921 Free Rd., Shiloh, from 3-6 pm.

First English Lutheran Church, 53 Park Ave. West, Mansfield, offers a free produce distribution the second Tuesday of each month, April through November in the west parking lot.

The next free produce distribution will be Tuesday, Aug. 12, from 10:30 am to 12:30 pm. The church receives over 6,000 lbs. of fresh produce. This is open to lower income households, please bring a state ID, driver's license or proof of residence.

This is a drive through distribution in the west parking lot. Volunteers will load the produce into trunks or the back of vehicles. Please have vehicle empty and ready for loading. For information call the church at 419-522-0662.

The City of Ontario will host Concerts in the Park at Marshall Park's band shell from 6 to 8 pm this summer.

Remaining concerts are scheduled for Aug. 12, Soul Town Live; and Aug. 26, Oolong Gurus.

All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church of Bellville, 25 Church St., Bellville, will welcome Rev. Joan VanBecelare on Sunday, Aug. 10, at 10:30 am. The subject will be "Reflections on Matthew Chapter 25."

For information visit [www.allsoulsuohio.org](http://www.allsoulsuohio.org).

Kingwood Walks, hosted By Ohio District 5 Area Agency on Aging, will be held Aug. 12, at Kingwood, 50 N. Trimble Rd., Mansfield, from 10-11:30 am.

No registration is required for this Mobility Steps event and gates open at 10 am. Check-in is at the welcome desk and admission is free if participating in the walk. Learn For more information on the walk contact Randy Hutchinson at 567-247-6483.

Mobility Steps meets at The Ontario Center (formerly Richland Mall) from 10 am to noon on the first and third Wednesday of every month (excluding holidays). Walkers meet at the Center Mall anytime between 10 am and 12 pm.

The Lexington Area Senior Citizens Inc., invites those 55 and older to attend meetings the third Wednesday of every month at 11:30 am. February through May, the group will meet at New Life Church of Christ (NLC of C), 195 W. Durbin, Bellville. Cost is \$17 for the meal.

Meetings June through December will be held at Der Dutchman, Rt. 96, Bellville. Meals are \$16, with an additional \$2 for pie.

The next meal will be Aug. 20, with turkey and entertainment from Olivia Rayburn, music therapist and piano player.

For information visit [www.lexasc.org](http://www.lexasc.org). Dues are \$10 per year.

A recycling trailer will be in the parking lot at Ontario United Methodist Church, 3540 Park Avenue West, Aug. 23 and 24. Acceptable items include steel and aluminum cans, crushed milk jugs, detergent bottles, plastic bottles with number 1 or 2 on the bottom, broken down cardboard, all papers included with the newspaper but no other magazines or paper.

Trinity Grace Fellowship church, 1592 Grace St., Mansfield, will hold community prayer meetings from 6:30-7:30 pm, Oct. 12 and 19. The public is invited.

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State Farm County Mutual Insurance Company of Texas, State Farm Lloyds, Richardson, TX

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**WALK TO END ALZHEIMER'S**  
ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION

## FIGHTING FOR A DIFFERENT FUTURE

SAVE THE DATE : 2025 Walk to End Alzheimer's - Saturday, September 13

SCAN ME!



[alz.org/nw ohio/walk](http://alz.org/nw ohio/walk)



Richland Carrousel Park 75 N. Main Street, Mansfield

Event Details : Check in 9:00 am | Ceremony / Walk at 10:00 am



# Church Directory

## Clay Memorial Lutheran Church

1601 Amoy East Rd., Mansfield  
419-747-6882

Pastor Carol Kilgore

Sunday School 9:15 am • Sunday Worship 10:30 am

## Clear Fork Alliance Church

1008 State Route 97, Bellville

419-886-4333 • [www.clearforkalliance.org](http://www.clearforkalliance.org)

Rev. Matt Merendino

Rev. Mike Stine, Associate Pastor

9 am Sunday School • 10 am Sunday Worship

Sunday Evening 6 pm Home Groups

Monday Men's Group 7:30 pm

Wednesday evenings: 6:45 pm, Prayer Meeting

6:30-8 pm and TeamKID and Youth Group

## First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

200 West Third St., Mansfield

419-524-4813 • [mansfield1stcc1833@gmail.com](mailto:mansfield1stcc1833@gmail.com)

Rev. David Zerby

Office Hours: Tu., W., Th. 9 am to 1 pm

10:30 am Sunday Worship

Christian Builders, Sunday, 9:30 am

[www.FirstChristianChurchMansfield.com](http://www.FirstChristianChurchMansfield.com)

FB: FirstChristianChurchMansfield, Ohio

## First Congregational Church

640 Millsboro Rd., Mansfield

419-756-3046 • [www.mansfieldfcc.com](http://www.mansfieldfcc.com)

Pastor Brad Bunn

8:30 am Chapel • 10:30 am Sanctuary

10:30 am Sunday School (nursery-high school)

10:30 am Monday Morning Bible Study

7:30 am Wednesday Men's Breakfast

## First English Lutheran Church

53 Park Avenue West, Mansfield

419-522-0662 • [www.felc-mansfield.org](http://www.felc-mansfield.org)

Pastor Jay Jackson

9 am Sunday School • 10 am Sunday Worship

Call about Prayer Groups, Small Groups, Bible Studies, Book Clubs, Pub Theology, Community Meals, Free Produce distribution and Senior Boxes.

## Grace Episcopal Church

41 Bowman Street, Mansfield

419-524-2661

Rev. Christopher D. Hofer, Priest-in-Charge

Rev. Daniel Orr, Associate Priest

Worship: Sundays, 8 am and 10:15 am

Christian Formation for All Ages: Sundays, 9:15 am

Food Pantry: Thursdays, 9-11 am

2nd and 4th Wednesdays, 4-6 pm

[gracemansfield.org](http://gracemansfield.org) • [facebook.com/GraceChurchMansfield](https://facebook.com/GraceChurchMansfield)

## G & M Body & Paint Shop

1689 West Fourth St., Ontario • 419-529-2747

## Wappner Funeral Home

Mansfield • Ontario • Ashland • 419-522-5211

## Lexington Church of Christ

230 Delaware Ave., Lexington

419-884-1532 • [www.lccoh.com](http://www.lccoh.com)

Lead Minister Brandon Bogue

9 am Sunday School • 10 am Sunday Worship

## Lexington Presbyterian Church

35 Church St. West, Lexington

419-884-1330

Pastor Denny Nezrick

10:30 am Sunday Worship

<https://www.facebook.com/Lexington-Presbyterian-Church-117768414915815>

## Mansfield 1st Presbyterian Church

399 Trimble Rd., Mansfield

419-756-7066 • [www.mansfield1st.com](http://www.mansfield1st.com)

Rev. Joseph Yerger

9 am Adult & Youth Sunday School

10 am Traditional Sunday Worship

ADA Accessible Nursery & Children's Programming

## Mansfield Baptist Temple

752 N. Stewart Rd., Mansfield

419-589-5413 • [www.mbt.org](http://www.mbt.org)

Pastor Rob Kurtz

9:30 am Sunday School

10:30 am & 5:30 pm Sunday Worship

7 pm Wednesday Service

## Oakland Lutheran Church

2045 Olivesburg Rd., Mansfield

419-571-9920

Pastor Paul Lintern

9 am Sunday Worship

## Ontario United Methodist Church

3540 Park Avenue West., Ontario

419-529-4345 • [ontarioumc.com](http://ontarioumc.com)

Rev. J.P. Snyder

9:30 am Grace & Eggs

11 am Sunday Worship and Kingdom Kids

## St. John's United Church of Christ

68 Park Avenue East, Mansfield

419-522-2813 • [www.stjohnsmansfield.org](http://www.stjohnsmansfield.org)

Pastor Faith Proietti

10 am Sunday Worship

Office hours: Mon-Fri 9 am to 1 pm

AA Meetings M & F 10 am & noon;

Wed. noon Brown Bag and Sat. 6 pm

Clothing Ministry by appt: 419-512-9817

## Southside Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

2055 Middle-Bellville Rd., Mansfield

419-756-3436

Pastor Paul Lintern

10:45 am Sunday Worship

## Trinity Grace Fellowship

1592 Grace St., Mansfield

419-589-5890 • [trinitygracefellowship.org](http://trinitygracefellowship.org)

Pastor Larry Carnes

9:30 am Sunday Worship • 11 am Sunday School

Bible Study Mondays 2 pm

## Veterans event planned at Ashland Airport

The Ashland County Airport has announced a special Veterans Appreciation Day on Saturday, Aug. 9, from 10 am to 10 pm, dedicated to celebrating and supporting veterans and their families.

This community-wide event will feature a full day of complimentary activities, live entertainment and tributes to the men and women who have served our country.

Event highlights include a formal opening featuring local military honors, flag raising and heartfelt speeches; Veterans group picture taken right after opening ceremonies; performances by bands and artists throughout the day; an historic aircraft display with L5, PT26, BC12D, Stinson 10, T6 and a TBM Avenger.

There will also be face painting, bounce houses, a foam bash for children of all ages, food trucks, vendors and booths from veteran service organizations offering support and networking opportunities.

Huey and Cobra rides will be available and free haircuts will be available for veterans from 1-3 pm.

Three hundred drones will take the air at 9:30 pm.

The event will be held at Ashland County Airport 700 TR 1102, Ashland. Admission is free for everyone. Visit <https://www.facebook.com/A.C.V.A.D> for more information.

## Grant deadline is September 1

The Women's Fund of the Richland County Foundation is accepting grant applications from nonprofit organizations for programs that support women and girls.

For information about the process or guidelines, contact Foundation Community Investment Officer Bobby Rhea at [brhea@rcfoundation.org](mailto:brhea@rcfoundation.org) or call 419-525-3020 to assure a program complies with the focus and guidelines.

Programs must occur between Dec. 1, 2025, and Aug. 31, 2026. The deadline for submitting an online application is Sept. 1.

Applications are available at [richlandcountyfoundation.org](http://richlandcountyfoundation.org).



**AN ONTARIO STUFF THE BUS** event was held at Buckeye Express Car Wash, 616 N. Lexington-Springmill Rd., on Saturday, Aug. 2. Buckeye Express provided free car washes and Texas Roadhouse donated free appetizer cards to those who donated. Ontario Police department and Junior Miss Ontario Kenley Scott assisted with the event.

## Tackett named Richland County Park District Executive Director

The Richland County Park District Board of Commissioners has announced the appointment of Jordan Tackett as the new executive director following a comprehensive search process.

The board extended its gratitude to the dedicated members of the search committee: Jean Taddie, Anthony Wheaton, Siera Marth May and Louie Andres. The committee reviewed 30 applicants, conducted interviews and ultimately recommended two candidates for the board's consideration.

Jordan Tackett was selected for several compelling reasons including his institutional knowledge, community partnerships, his local roots and passion and his leadership experience.

With five years of experience within the park district, Tackett brings deep familiarity with its properties, projects, and operations.

He has cultivated strong relationships with local organizations and conservation partners, positioning the district for immediate progress on pending initiatives.

A Richland County native, Tackett views this role as his "Life's Work" — a reflection of his enduring commitment to the community and its natural resources. His service in the U.S. Air Force has equipped him with strong leadership skills and a sense of duty that will guide the district into a new era.

The board is confident that Jordan Tackett's vision and dedication will advance the park district's mission of conservation and recreation, enriching the lives of residents across North Central Ohio.

## 9th Annual American Heritage Days coming to Southpark this October

Richland Early American Center for History will host the 9th Annual American Heritage Days at Southpark, 100 Brinkerhoff Ave, Mansfield, Oct. 4 and 5, from 10 am to 4 pm.

Living history reenactors will demonstrate life in America in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Throughout the day there will be crafts, trades, demonstrations and activities, including blacksmithing, games and children's activities, open hearth cooking demonstrations and civilian and military reenactments.

Admission and parking are free to the public. A food truck will be on-site.

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**helpmepat.org**

### Obituary Listings for Wappner Funeral Directors

Stephen Jeffrey Craft, July 25

Andy Francis Simonin, July 27

Edwin A. Smith, July 28

Carl Roderick Steward Sr., July 30

Charles Douglas Riddle, July 31

Robert Bradley Zettler, July 31

**View Full Obituaries at [www.dignitymemorial.com](http://www.dignitymemorial.com)**

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[www.wappner.com](http://www.wappner.com)



# St. Mary of the Snows Family Festival • Aug. 3



Photos By Jenna Wolford



# Community comes together at 5th Annual Third Street Block Party

Photos and Article By Traci Little

Music, laughter and a spirit of togetherness filled the air on Saturday, Aug. 2, as Third Street Family Health Services hosted its fifth annual Block Party at Malabar Intermediate School's Mehock Field.

The event, held from noon to 3 pm, welcomed families and individuals from across Mansfield for an afternoon of free food, family-friendly activities, and valuable community resources. Now in its fifth year, the block party has become a favorite summer tradition designed to promote wellness, celebrate unity, and connect residents with local support services.

"This is all about meeting people where they are and letting them know they're not alone," said Alex Goff from Third Street Family Health Services. "We're here to build bridges — to care for both health and community."

Highlights of the event included free lunch and refreshments, games and activities for kids, music by a live DJ, health screenings provided by Malabar Care Connect and dozens of booths from local nonprofits, health providers and service agencies.

With exciting inflatables and raffle prizes, there was something for every age group. Families wandered from station to station, enjoying the festive atmosphere while gathering information on everything from back-to-school resources to affordable healthcare.

Third Street Family Health Services partnered with numerous local organizations to make the event possible, underscoring their continued commitment to improving health outcomes and access in the Mansfield area.

The event drew a strong turnout and created lasting memories for attendees, many of whom expressed appreciation for the chance to reconnect with neighbors, learn about available services, and simply enjoy a day outdoors.

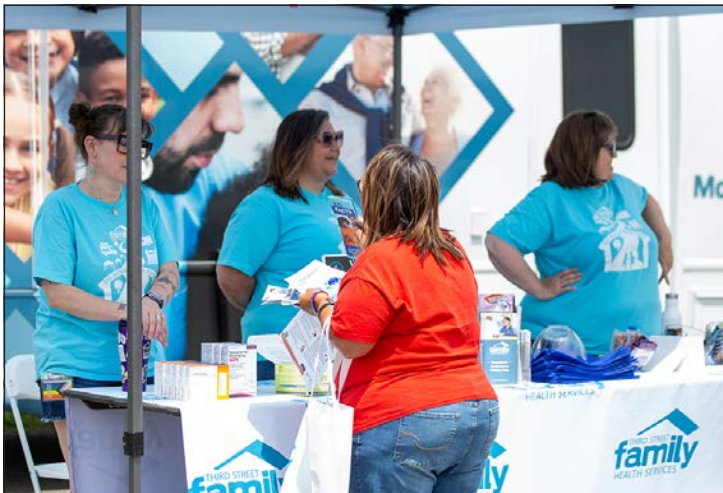
As the music faded and booths packed up, one thing was clear — Third Street's Block Party had once again fulfilled its mission of

bringing the community together, one smile at a time.

Third Street Family Health Services was founded in 1994. They are a non-profit community health center that focuses on improving the health of the greater community and removing barriers to wellness.

Its mission is to deliver comprehensive health and wellness care that is accessible to all, providing behavioral health, community health worker, dental, medical, medication-assisted treatment, OB/GYN, pediatric, and podiatry services across 11 locations in northcentral Ohio.

For more information visit [www.thirdstreetfamily.org](http://www.thirdstreetfamily.org).





# Rail bikes bring fun to relaxing, scenic ride

Photos and Article By Jenna Wolford

This week concludes our summer vacation series. Our destination today is a brand new adventure for my family — rail biking.

Although rail bikes date back to the late 1850s with railway maintenance workers, these modern-day bikes offer a more enjoyable, easy and comfortable ride.

Modern rail bikes are pedal-powered vehicles ridden on rail tracks of discontinued railway systems. Rail Explorers' commercial grade bikes are the global leader in safety, design, performance and ease of operation. Rail Explorers developed the REX Propulsion System, a custom built electric assist motor which makes operating them easy for all athletic abilities.

Rail Explorers' Bluegrass Division location can be found in Versailles, Kentucky, near the City of Lexington. It operates with the Bluegrass Scenic Railroad & Museum to offer a ten-mile round trip. Tours run on the Louisville Southern Railroad built in the 1880s.

After checking-in, the groups of travelers were given operation instructions and introduced to their new rides. Two and four-seater bikes lined the train tracks and guests' departures were spaced so that bikes wouldn't get too close together. Tour guides lead on the first bike out and others follow on the last bike.

Once our journey began, we realized how easy it was to power these bikes. Although there were pedals for everyone, the propulsion system let most of us get a "free ride." My husband's seat had the speed and brake control. We did challenge ourselves and had him quit pedalling so we could see what it would be like if we were riding on our own power. Let's just say I'm glad we didn't have to actually do that for the trip.

The two-hour tour cuts through the countryside of Lexington, KY, the horse capital of the world. Along the way we saw horses in beautifully maintained fields and passed by old railway cars and equipment. The tracks ran through limestone cutaways and over small bridges which create a picturesque setting.

Built in 1888, this section of the Louisville Southern Railroad once carried passengers from Lawrenceburg to Versailles and Lexington.

When we reached the end of the line, representing the halfway mark, we exited our bike as our guides worked to bring everyone

in safely and use a mechanism to turn the bikes around to prepare for our return.

At this stop we were able to view and read about Young's High Bridge. Built in 1889 by the Louisville Southern Railroad, it spans 1,659 feet across and is 285 feet above the Kentucky River.

The bridge was named after Bennet H. Young, who was president of the Louisville Southern Railroad when the bridge was being built.

Across the river we could see the Wild Turkey bourbon distillery and storage buildings where the bourbon is aged.

After some time to relax and sightsee, we loaded our rail cars for our return trip.

The recreational activity of rail biking has gained popularity all over the country the past 15 years. Rail Explorers' first location was opened in 2015 in New York's Adirondacks by Mary Joy Lu and Alex Catchpole. The Kentucky location opened in 2023.

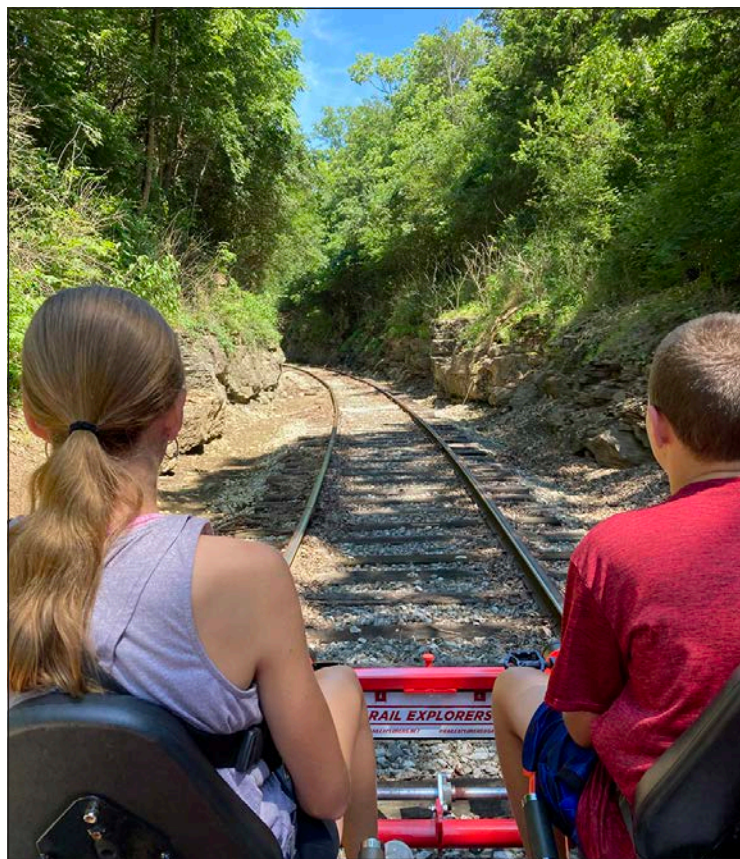
In addition to the regular day tour, excursions include a Kentucky River Twilight Run, the Kentucky River Rambler Lantern Tour and Fireside in the Fall.

Rail Explorers is committed to making rail biking accessible to all. The bikes are engineered so that riders of all ages and all physical ability levels can participate. The company works to provide an accessible experience and strives to accommodate 100% of visitors.

Baskets are provided for bringing backpacks and coolers and seat belts help to maintain safety. Toddler harnesses are available for additional security. Dogs are also permitted to ride along.

Rail Explorers operate rain or shine, provided it is safe to do so.

(Continued on Page 9)







## •Rail bikes bring fun to scenic ride

*(Continued from Page 8)*

Tours will run in light rain or showers, but will not run in heavy rain that is unlikely to stop or if threatening weather appears imminent. An umbrella is provided on each rail bike to block sun or rain.

The Kentucky tour office is located at 175 Beasley Rd., Versailles, KY. The Kentucky route is one of seven locations. Rail tours are also available in Amador, CA; Rhode Island; Elk River, WV; The Catskills, NY; Boone, IA and Cooperstown, NY.

For more information or to schedule a reservation visit [www.railexplorers.net](http://www.railexplorers.net), call 1-877-833-8588, email [info@railexplorers.net](mailto:info@railexplorers.net) or visit the Facebook page at RailExplorersUSA.

## HEAP applications being accepted

The Ohio Department of Development and Ohio District 5 Area Agency on Aging, Inc. are offering assistance to help Ohio's families stay cool during the hot summer months.

From July 1 through Sept. 30, income-eligible Ohioans can receive assistance in paying electric bills, purchasing an air conditioner or fan or making repairs to a central air conditioning unit through the Ohio Department of Development's Home Energy Assistance Summer Crisis Program (HEAP).

"We're proud to partner with community action agencies across the state to deliver this critical support during the hottest months of the year," said Lydia Mihalik, director of the Ohio Department of Development, which administers the program.

The program assists low-income households or those that have a disconnection notice, have been shut off, are trying to establish new service, require air conditioning or those with a person 60 years or older living in the home with physician documentation that cooling assistance is needed. Qualifying medical conditions include lung disease, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease and asthma.

To qualify, Ohioans must have a gross income at or below 175 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines for a family of up to eight members, and 60 percent of the state median income for a family of nine or more members. For a family of four, the annual income must be at or below \$56,262.50.

Registration can be completed at [energyhelp.ohio.gov](http://energyhelp.ohio.gov). Click "Log into the EA portal," then click "Create an OHID," and follow the six-step account creation process.

To apply, clients are required to schedule an appointment with the local County Community Action Commission. Documents needed at the appointment include most recent energy bills, a list of all household members and proof of income for the last 30 days or 12 months for each member, proof of U.S. citizenship or legal residency for all household members, proof of disability (if applicable) and physician documentation that cooling assistance is needed for a household member's health. For more information call 419-524-4144.



## Schedule of Events

### Saturday, August 9

Miss Blueberry Pageants at Heartland Church, 9:00 am - 5:00 pm, sponsored by the Lexington Kiwanis

### Wednesday, August 13

Vendor Setup, 8:00 am - 8:00 pm  
Food Vendor Setup, Noon - 3:00 pm

### Thursday, August 14

23rd ANNUAL FESTIVAL begins at 4:00 pm (Lexington Community Park)  
Rides, Attractions, Food, 4:00 - 11:00 pm  
Ricky Mitchell 5:00 - 6:15 pm  
Pageant Crowning - Emcee - Kylie Gottman 6:30 - 8:00 pm  
Blue Lights and Bubbles Parade - 8:45 pm  
Meet the Teams - Lexington Fall Sports Athletes, 9:15-9:45 pm  
CosmicWheels, 9:45 - 10:45 pm

### Friday, August 15

Rides, Attractions, Food, 4:00 - 11:00 pm  
Car & Bike Show, 6:00 - 9:00 pm  
Sara Goff, 4:30 - 5:45 pm  
SOFTBALL, Ohio Social Sports - Home Run Derby  
First pitch at 6 pm  
Seventy 80, 6:30 - 8:00 pm  
Recess, 8:45 - 10:45 pm

### Saturday, August 16

VOLLEYBALL, Ohio Social Sports - King of the Court  
Sand Volleyball Tournament - Starts at 9:00 am  
Rides, Attractions, Food 12:00 Noon - 11:00 pm  
Jevan Cole Band, 11:30 am - 1:00 pm  
Park National Bank Children's Coin Drop, 1:00 - 1:30 pm  
Blueberry Bash - Presented by Appleseed  
Valley Cleark Fork Veterinary, 1:30 - 2:30 pm  
Big Wheel Race, 2:30 pm  
GYMGUYZ - #1 In Home Personal Trainer, 2:45 - 3:30 pm  
Crazy Gringos, 4:15 - 5:45 pm

### Saturday continued . . .

Shout At the Metal, 6:30 - 8:00 pm  
Tracy Reese, 8:45 - 9:45 pm  
Fireworks Presented by Charter Next Generation, 10:10:20 pm  
Tracy Reese, 10:25 - 11 pm

### Sunday, August 17

8th Queens' Luncheon (Invitation Only), 9:30 am - 12:00 pm  
(The Blueberry Patch, 1285 W. Hanley Road)  
CHURCH SERVICE - Berean Baptist Church, (Main Stage) 11:30 am - 12:30 pm  
Rides, Attractions, Food, Noon - 6:00 pm  
The Celtic Sisters, 12:45 - 2:45 pm  
Sunday Funday Celebration Parade - 1:00 - 2:30 pm  
Visiting Royalty, 3:00 - 4:00 pm  
Sorelle, 4:00 - 5:30 pm



**23rd ANNUAL FESTIVAL ENDS AT 6:00 PM  
ON SUNDAY, AUGUST 17 - THANK YOU ALL FOR COMING!**



# Walker Flower Farm in Lexington — A beautiful escape

Photos and Article By Traci Little

In a world that often moves too fast, Walker Flower Farm offers a refreshing pause. Hidden away just outside of Lexington on Hanley Road, this family-run U-Pick flower farm invites visitors to breathe deeply, wander slowly and savor the simple beauty of fresh, locally grown blooms.

Founded with a heart for hospitality and a love for nature, Walker Flower Farm isn't just a place to pick flowers — it's a destination for connection, creativity and calm. Whether you're building your own bouquet, booking a golden-hour photo session, taking some fun pictures in front of beautiful painted photo-op backgrounds, or just enjoying a stroll through rows of vibrant petals, there's a kind of peace here that only a field full of flowers can offer.

## How It Works: U-Pick the Joy

The process is super simple. For just \$20, guests receive a souvenir cup and a pair of scissors, then they are free to explore the flower fields and fill their cup with as many blooms as will fit. Choose from bold sunflowers and fluttery cosmos to charming zinnias, snapdragons and marigolds, the floral variety changes throughout the season — typically blooming from early July through the fall.

After your floral adventure, you'll return your scissors, pick up a packet of flower food to keep your bouquet fresh, and can even browse some charming farm merchandise to remember your visit.

The experience is open to all ages. Families with children are especially welcome, and while pets must stay home for safety reasons, service animals are permitted. The farm remains open in light weather — just bring an umbrella and your sense of adventure.

## Capture the Beauty

The farm's natural beauty has caught the eye of many local photographers, turning it into a picturesque backdrop for family portraits, senior photos, engagement shoots and more. While casual photos are encouraged during public hours, professional photographers must schedule sessions in advance and follow a few simple guidelines to protect the land and flowers.

For inspiration, the farm even features a Photographer Showcase on their website — highlighting some of the stunning images captured across their flower-filled canvas.

## Bloom & Flow: Yoga in the Flowers

Looking for something even more creative? Don't miss Wildflower Flow Yoga, a special evening session among the blossoms in partnership with Down Dog Yoga Studio. This unique class blends the tranquility of yoga with the serenity of nature, creating a one-of-a-kind wellness experience. The next session takes place on Aug. 13 at 7 pm — just bring your mat, a friend, and your love for the outdoors. There is also a session on Saturday, Aug. 16 at 9:30 am.

## Upcoming U-Pick Days

If you're planning a visit soon, here are the next chances to fill your cup:

- Aug. 6, 9 am to 6 pm

- Aug. 9, 9 am to 6 pm

- Aug. 13, 9 am to 7 pm

Keep an eye on Walker Flower Farm's facebook page for weather updates, surprise treats (like lemon shake-ups from Ibby's) and future events — including fall favorites like pumpkins and seasonal decorations.

## A Farm with Heart

What makes Walker Flower Farm truly special isn't just the flowers — it's the heart behind the blooms. Every petal picked supports a dream rooted in family, community, and a passion for creating something beautiful for others to enjoy.

From romantic date days to peaceful solo strolls and joyful family outings, Walker Flower Farm continues to grow not just flowers, but memories.

Walker Flower Farm is located at 1861 Hanley Rd., W, Lexington, and is open Wednesdays and Saturdays, from 9 am to 6 pm. Visit [walkerflowerfarm.com](http://walkerflowerfarm.com), email [walkerflowerfarm@gmail.com](mailto:walkerflowerfarm@gmail.com) or visit Instagram @walkerflowerfarmohio or Facebook Walk Flower Farm - <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61550730984605> for more information.

Come wander the fields, snip a bouquet, and see what's blooming next.





# Hickory Vines Winery & Venue Blends community, wine and local talent at August Sip & Shop

Photos and Article By Traci Little

In the heart of Richland County, where quiet countryside meets warm hospitality, Hickory Vines Winery & Venue is quickly becoming a favorite escape for locals and visitors alike. Just outside Mansfield, this hidden gem is tucked away amid 30 acres of peaceful serenity! It's one of the area's most inviting new destinations for wine lovers, eventgoers, live music enthusiasts and community-minded families. This past weekend, co-owners Rich and Sonja Parron hosted their second "Sip & Shop" vendor fair—welcoming guests for a full day of local shopping, food, and fellowship on Saturday, Aug. 2.

Open since November 2023, Hickory Vines was created from the ground up with a mission rooted in hospitality and inclusiveness. "When somebody walks in our door, we're grateful," shared Rich Parron, a U.S. Marine Corps veteran and longtime manufacturing professional who transitioned into winemaking and entrepreneurship alongside his wife, Sonja, a former physical therapist and longtime Avon representative. The couple's shared dream came to life through hard work, vision, and a heartfelt passion for bringing people together.

The Sip & Shop event featured more than two dozen vendors, offering everything from handcrafted jewelry, soaps, and baked goods to macrame, charcuterie boards, and even crocheted vests. Participating small businesses included Olive & Oak Clothing Company, Live Simple Soap Company, Queen B Macrame, Pedal and Stem Greenhouse, Brickhouse Spices & Rubs, Seven Loaves Bread Company, and many more. Guests were also treated to a selection of spa items, candles, woodworking creations, dog treats, and boutique finds—all while enjoying local wines and food.

Catering for the event was provided by Cub Country BBQ, with additional sweet treats from Frosted Ice Cream and Cupcakes. As the afternoon wrapped up, Nonno Nick's Wood Fired Pizza arrived to continue serving guests into the evening.

"We really want this to be a place where people can relax, celebrate, and connect," said Rich Parron. "It's not just about wine—it's about making memories. We want this to be a place for everyone to feel welcome and accepted. There are plenty of non-alcoholic drinks available as well."



Hickory Vines offers a rotating portfolio of 27 wines, including in-house favorites like blueberry, cherry, and their best-selling Sonja's Sangria. Visitors can enjoy vineyard views, scenic wagon rides, an orchard, a fishing pond, and a growing list of seasonal events like karaoke, wine tastings, and "Taste the Locals" nights spotlighting regional wineries and food trucks.

Rich and Sonja are focused on scaling while preserving their trademark atmosphere of blue-collar charm and warm hospitality. Future plans also include enhancing the campground, orchard trails, and outdoor spaces to create a true destination for weddings, reunions, and community gatherings.

"We built this to be more than just a winery," said Rich. "It's a place for everyone."

For those interested in becoming a vendor, booking an event, or simply sipping and strolling through their next community fair, Hickory Vines welcomes all. Upcoming events and contact info can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/hickoryvines> or by calling 419-571-0475.

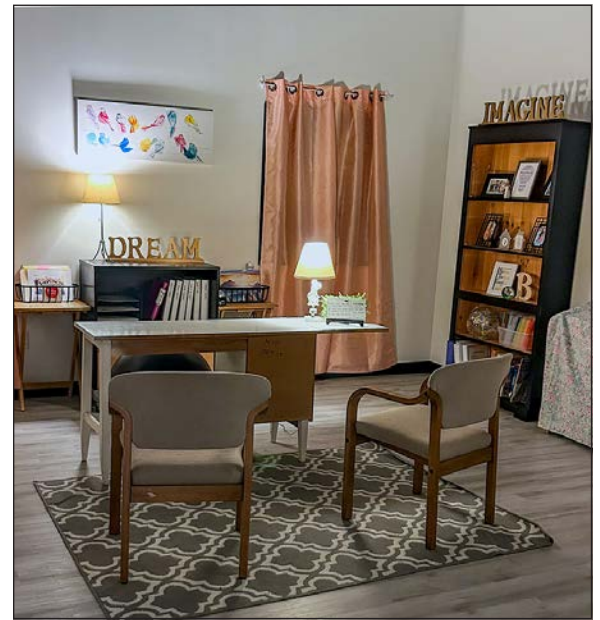


**THE CUB COUNTRY BBQ** food truck is available at the winery often.



Jenn, Kathy and Susan of Mansfield enjoy girl time at Hickory Vines Winery.





## Inspirations Academy celebrates grand reopening

Photos and Article By Traci Little

On Friday, Aug. 1, Inspirations Academy marked an exciting new chapter with a grand reopening celebration at its new home inside Storyside Church, located at 541 State Route 97 W. in Bellville.

The 10 am debut brought together families, staff, and supporters to celebrate the academy's fresh start in a space that reflects its mission to serve students of all ages and abilities. As a unique homeschool enrichment program, Inspirations Academy partners closely with families to offer personalized curriculum options tailored to each student's learning style and goals.

Jennifer Wagner, representing the Richland Area Chamber & Economic Development, warmly welcomed guests on the beautiful Friday morning and expressed sincere appreciation for the academy's mission and impact. She also presented a proclamation on behalf of Ohio Senator Mark Romanchuk, commending Inspirations Academy for its dedication to promoting literacy, decency, good citizenship, and strong moral values.

Richland County Commissioner Derryl Banks shared heartfelt remarks, expressing admiration for the academy's contributions. "We're very pleased with what they've accomplished — and excited about what's to come," he said. "I've known the Black family since first grade with his father, and we're incredibly proud of everything they've done. We're so glad they're here in Bellville."

Reverend El Akuchie — a longtime Mansfield resident, local pastor, and 3rd Ward representative on Mansfield City Council — offered words of encouragement and closed the ceremony with a prayer, blessing the day and the continued work of Inspirations Academy.

The academy was founded in 2022 by Jason and Haley Black, who were inspired by their own daughter's transformative learning experience during the COVID-19 pandemic. After witnessing the benefits of customized, hands-on education at home, the couple launched Inspirations Academy from their basement with just five students. Today, Jason serves as Executive Director, drawing on his background in education, business, and social services, while Haley brings over 20 years of teaching experience as Director of Education. Together, they lead a growing team committed to supporting families outside the traditional school system.

Rooted in purposeful, experiential learning, Inspirations Academy fosters a lifelong love of learning through creativity, exploration, and community. Whether through academic support or enrichment opportunities, the program creates an inclusive environment that celebrates every learner's journey.

Following the ceremony, guests enjoyed refreshments and toured the new facility — an inspiring space filled with possibility for the upcoming school year. As I spoke with parents, children, and grand-

parents, they all shared glowing feedback about the academy, praising it as a place where students thrive in a smaller, more inviting setting.

"Homeschool with a kick," they call it — offering families a God-centered, family-focused learning environment with customized education programs that encourage faith, energy, curiosity, and innovation. Programs are available in 1-day, 3-day, and 4-day hybrid homeschool options for ages 5–18.

To learn more, visit [www.inspirationsecc.org](http://www.inspirationsecc.org), call 419-506-5656 or email [info@inspirationsecc.org](mailto:info@inspirationsecc.org).







Photo By Mark Shutt

## Election day polling locations change in Richland County

The Richland County Board of Elections has announced important changes to three voting locations for the upcoming General Election on Nov. 4, 2025, and all future elections.

The first change affects voters in MAN 5A & 6B precincts. The old location was SC Events Center, 417 Orange St., Mansfield and the new location is the Eastbrook Center-Ram Booster Bingo Hall, 720 5th Ave., rear, Mansfield.

Voters in the MAD D precinct who voted at McElroy Road Church of Christ, 297 N. McElroy Rd., Mansfield, will now vote at the Eastbrook Center-Ram Booster Bingo Hall, 720 5th Ave., rear, Mansfield.

Voters in the MAD I precinct who previously voted at Lincoln Heights Baptist Church, 512 N. Stewart Rd., Mansfield, will now vote at McElroy Road Church of Christ, 297 N. McElroy Rd., Mansfield.

MAD E & MAD O precincts who voted at Lincoln Heights Baptist Church, 512 N. Stewart Rd., Mansfield, will now vote at the Eastbrook Center-Ram Booster Bingo Hall, 720 5th Ave., rear, Mansfield.

Voters in these precincts will receive notification by mail regarding their new polling location name and address.

All voters are encouraged to take advantage of Ohio's early voting opportunities.

The absentee ballot request deadline is 8:30 pm on Tuesday, Oct. 28. Completed absentee ballots must be postmarked by Nov. 3 or dropped off at the Richland County Board of Elections, 1495 W. Longview Ave., Suite 101 in Mansfield or in the secure dropbox at the rear, lower-level parking area of the Longview Center. Mail-in ballots should be submitted as early as possible.

Early in-person voting begins on Oct. 7, at 1495 W. Longview Ave., lower-level. This is also when absentee/mail ballots will begin to be mailed out. Early in-person voting concludes on Sunday, Nov. 2, at 5 pm. On election day, Nov. 4, polls will be open from 6:30 am to 7:30 pm.

For additional information regarding these polling place changes, contact the Richland County Board of Elections at 419-774-5530.

## Local students graduate from Miami University

Miami University in Oxford, OH, awarded degrees to students during spring commencement of 2025.

Local graduates are Jenah Calderhead of Mansfield, Will Bennett of Mansfield, Jake Kmetz of Ontario, Owen Sainiak of Mansfield, Tucker Schurig of Mansfield, Emma Shaffer of Ontario and Isaac Swogger of Ontario.

## Richland Gives registration is open

Registration for Richland Gives, an online giving event hosted by the Richland County Foundation (RCF), opens August 1. It is free; however, Richland County based nonprofits must register each year.

Thanks to the generosity of donors of the Foundation, \$80,000 in incentives will be awarded as grants to participating organizations, beyond what they raise from online donations.

Richland Gives is designed to encourage people to contribute to local nonprofits they care about through a single giving website. The Foundation hosts the day to build capacity, grow philanthropy and make the community stronger.

Each organization will have an individualized web page to promote their cause. The success of the event will depend on our collective enthusiasm and implementation.

Leading up to the event, the Foundation provides an online toolkit, education, mass media and social media coverage to make it easier for nonprofit organizations to participate.

The Richland Gives donation period is from Nov. 17 at 7 am through Dec. 2 at 7 pm.

For more details or to donate go to [richlandgives.org](http://richlandgives.org).

The Richland County Foundation, a not-for-profit 501c3, was established in 1945 as a way for individuals to pool and invest their gifts for the long-term good of Richland County and its residents.

The foundation helps people in Richland County give back to their community by investing their gifts wisely so that grants can be made to improve the quality of life for all the county's citizens. Working together with donors, the foundation meets important needs today and plans for a strong future.



**SPRINGFIELD TOWNSHIP FIRE DEPARTMENT** attended the Ontario Safety Town to teach fire safety to some of the youngest members of the community on July 30.



## Tribune-Courier Sports Highlights

### CLEAR FORK VS WOOSTER GIRLS VARSITY SOCCER SCRIMMAGE · AUG. 2 PHOTOS BY JEFF HOFFER





## Tribune-Courier Sports Highlights

## OHSAA sanctions girls high school flag football

By Kris Leiter

Let's give the girls some press time this week and update you on another fast-growing high school sport for female athletes. We've reached the milestone of adding girls high school flag football right here in the Buckeye State.

Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA) Executive Director Doug Ute and staff have been meeting with Ohio flag football leaders for several years.

The OHSAA, Ohio's governing body for high school sports in Ohio, just recently had a press conference in Canton at the Pro Football Hall of Fame. This meeting was in conjunction with the National Football League, Cleveland Browns, Cincinnati Bengals and the Pro Football Hall of Fame during the NFL FLAG Championships presented by Toyota.

The growth of girls flag football began in 2021 with the creation of the first girls high school flag football division in Northeast Ohio, led by the Cleveland Browns. That number has grown from 20 schools three years ago to the current 80 and growing.

"We are pleased that the OHSAA Board has approved the sanctioning of girls flag football as an OHSAA sponsored championship event," said Ute.

"Flag football is growing rapidly and we look forward to working closer with teams, coaches and schools. The Browns, Bengals and NFL have already put in so much work to promote the game and bring us to this moment."

In 2024, the Browns met with the OHSAA about adding a division for girls flag football. The coaches association officially included the sport by adding a new region, Region 18. The Cleveland Browns are the only NFL club that sits on a board for a high school football coaches association.

The Cincinnati Bengals also worked with schools to create a girls high school flag football division in Greater Cincinnati.

In addition to high school, Flag football has been added by 100 college club and varsity programs. It now has 17 high school state associations, and has sanctioned the sport with a state tournament. It will be included in the 2028 Olympic Games in Los Angeles.

Girls flag football will continue to be a spring sport. The Browns

and Bengals hosted the inaugural Girls High School Flag Football State Championship title at Paul Brown Tiger Stadium in Massillon this past May. The top four teams from the Browns and Bengals divisions competed. Hamilton Badin High School won over Willoughby South High School.

"Ohio is becoming the latest state to sanction the sport. It is a testament to the growth and appeal of the sport," said Stephanie Kwok, NFL Vice President, Head of Flag Football. "This is an exciting time, with 17 states having sanctioned girls flag football. We're thankful to the Browns, Bengals and OHSAA for their support."

"The decision to sanction girls' flag football in Ohio is an important moment. This being not just for the Browns, but for the entire state of Ohio and the game we love," said Cleveland Browns Managing and Principal Partners Dee and Jimmy Haslam.

"We have seen how powerful the game can be. It has been to known to shape confidence, leadership, and community. We are proud that more young women will have the chance to experience this growth. When we launched our Girls High School Flag Football League in 2021, the goal was to get to this day.

"It wouldn't have been possible without the continuous work of athletes, coaches, administrators, and parents. They all believed in this sport. We want to thank OHSAA, Cincinnati Bengals and the NFL for their partnership on bringing this to life as we continue to grow the game for girls across the state."

"This is an incredible day for the state of Ohio, the sport of football and most importantly the young women who have dreamed of this moment, said Bengals Director of Strategy and Engagement Elizabeth Blackburn."

"On behalf of the Cincinnati Bengals, I want to thank the OHSAA, athletic directors, players, coaches, referees and every advocate who helped make this possible. Flag football is more than a sport: it's a platform for teamwork, leadership, development and community. The Bengals are proud to support this growth and celebrate this historic milestone."

Dates for competition and the 2026 state tournament will be determined in the near future.



Photos By Jeff Hoffer

**THE OHIO SOCIAL SPORTS SAND VOLLEYBALL CHAMPIONSHIP** was held at the Mansfield Y on July 29. The winning team was presented the trophy by Dr. Julie Chaya, commissioner of the Richland County Health Department.



## North End Farmers Market to host special community celebration

North End Community Improvement Collaborative (NECIC) and the North End Farmers Market invite the community to a special celebration in honor of National Farmers Market Week, taking place on Thursday, Aug. 7, from 4–7 pm, at 311 Bowman St., Mansfield, on the NECIC Urban Farm.

This special event is sponsored by Mechanics Bank, the Benko-Scruggs family and Buckeye Imagination Museum, and will offer an exciting mix of activities, giveaways, and family fun for all ages.

The North End Farmers Market will be filled with its usual wide array of local vendors offering fresh produce, baked goods, organic meats, flowers, plants, handmade items and more.

In addition to shopping local, attendees can enjoy a free farmers market gift and cotton candy for the first 50 children, a coloring contest with prizes of 4-day passes to Buckeye Imagination Museum, a

scavenger hunt for all with a chance to win \$100 in market bucks on the line, cooking demos highlighting fresh ingredients from the market and free face painting and other fun surprises.

As always, the North End Farmers Market is free to attend and open to everyone. The market accepts cash and credit/debit cards, SNAP/EBT with a match of up to \$25, WIC, the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program and Richland County Bucks.

National Farmers Market Week is a time to celebrate the vital role that farmers markets play in supporting local agriculture, improving access to fresh food, and strengthening community connections. NECIC invites the entire community to take part in the celebration and experience everything the North End Farmers Market has to offer.

For more details and updates, follow the North End Farmers Market on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/nefm2014/>

## Greater Cleveland Aquarium offers free admission to classroom educators

Back-To-Schooling September will be celebrated at Greater Cleveland Aquarium, Flats West Bank, 2000 Sycamore St., Cleveland, Sept. 1–30, from 10 am to 5 pm.

Beyond the regular schedule of scuba diver Q&As, narrated habitat feedings and animal encounters, the aquarium is adding special educational fun for learners of all ages.

There will be a superlatives scavenger hunt to discover which fish, reptiles, amphibians or birds were named “Best Dressed” or “Most Likely to Make a Splash.”

There will also be special quizzes, games and more.

To celebrate students’ return to the classroom, the aquarium is also offering free admission, freeparking and a special “sea” star of academia button to all classroom educators throughout September. This limited time offer applies solely to the educator and is not available online.

To access free admission during Back-to-Schooling September, pre-K/elementary/middle/high school teachers and college professors must present proof of employment at the front ticket counter the day of their visit.

“We know things can get a little hectic when the school year kicks off, so why not take some time to drift leisurely by native waterways and faraway oceans?” asks Debelak.

“When teachers explore our fresh and saltwater aquatic habitats, they might witness the gripping power of a dart frog’s toe pads or see an octopus’s color-changing chromatophores in action. This also allows them to preview the STEM learning opportunities the Aquarium offers their students through curriculum-based programs and field trips,” Debelak explains. “An Aquarium visit can truly deepen students’ grasp of vital concepts like food webs, ecosystems, and animal adaptations.”

## Farmers market program available

The Ohio District 5 Area Agency on Aging, Inc., in partnership with the Ohio Department of Aging, has announced the return of the Senior Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) for income-eligible older adult residents of Ashland, Crawford, Huron, Knox, Marion, Morrow, Richland, Seneca and Wyandot counties.

The program provides income-eligible seniors with \$50 in vouchers to purchase locally grown fruits, vegetables, herbs, and honey at participating farmers’ markets and roadside stands.

All new applicants and past participants must apply online at <https://www.aaa5ohio.org/services/sfmnp-1/>

The fastest and most convenient way to apply for the SFMNP program is through the online application form.

An email address is required to complete the electronic form. Applicants in Ohio who register with an email address will receive a confirmation email once approved and can begin using their \$50 benefit beginning May 15.

For application assistance call 567-247-7101. The Ohio District 5 Area Agency on Aging, Inc., located in Ontario, Ohio provides leadership, collaboration, coordination and services to older adults, people with disabilities, their caregivers and resource networks that support individual choice, independence and dignity.

In addition to free admission and parking (with validation), classroom educators visiting in September are eligible for the chance to win a Back-to-Schooling prize pack that includes a one-year Greater Cleveland Aquarium membership (\$130 value), branded sweatshirt (\$50 value), Visible Voice Books gift certificate (\$50 value), Ready Set! Coffee gift card (\$25) and \$100 Staples® gift card courtesy of the Greater Cleveland Aquarium Splash Fund to help with student or office supplies.

Educators for grades 6–12 who want to plumb the depths of aquatic knowledge even further can register for “Exploring the Deep Ocean with NOAA” on Saturday, Sept. 27 from 8:30 am to 4 pm. The free, daylong professional development workshop focused on why ocean exploration is important and how tools and technologies enable expeditions in some of the most remote places on the planet includes breakfast, lunch and a \$100 classroom stipend for participants.

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