

THE BLACKSONIAN

Reporting the News at Blacksburg High School Since 1927

BHS Teacher Is District Teacher of the Year

By: David Love

Blacksburg High School English teacher Jessica Vaughn was named Cherokee County School District Teacher of the Year on Wednesday, August 5, 2026. Mrs. Vaughn got the award for being excellent at teaching, helping students succeed, supporting her school and community, and showing strong leadership and dedication.

What really drew Mrs. Vaughn to teaching was the opportunity to make a difference for kids who may not always see themselves as "good students." She loves English, reading, and writing, but the longer she teaches, the more she realizes that the subject matter is only part of the job. She says she wanted a career where what she did mattered, and teaching definitely gives her that.

Mrs. Vaughn stated that she didn't get this award on her own. There were and are many other educators and people in her life who made this possible. What she does in her classroom isn't really any different from what other teachers are doing. What helped her stand out was the support she received from her administrators and her coworkers, as well as the trust her students gave her.

Mrs. Vaughn is a high-energy teacher. Every day there's something a little different happening in her room. As a former student, what made the class amazing was the way she made every day positive. She made sure everyone knew what she expected from them, but she also cared about what happened to us outside of the classroom. She wanted to help us prepare for our futures. We are lucky to have her at Blacksburg High School. We wish her the best of luck in the State Teacher of the Year competition.

Blacksburg Faculty & Staff are Simply the Best

By: Lucy Nenonen

Blacksburg sweeps the district for the first time in history! At this year's convocation, faculty and staff from around the district celebrated the District Teacher of the Year - our very own Mrs. Vaughn, the District First Year Teacher of the Year, and the District Support Staff of the Year. All three amazing women work in the Blacksburg schools!

In addition to Mrs. Vaughn's win as District Teacher of the Year, Hannah Pennington, alumni of BHS and preschool teacher at Blacksburg Primary School, won Cherokee County School District First Year Teacher of the Year. The 2025-2026 school year was Ms. Pennington's first year teaching. She teaches 4k students who are just now getting the experience of school. She feels very blessed and honored to have this award. This award shows the love, time, and effort she puts into this job. One of her favorite memories with the



students is when she and her teaching partner Mrs. Fall had a fun surprise for the kids while they were in a special area. They dressed up as Glinda and Elphaba from *Wicked*. This filled the kids with joy and laughter for the rest of the day. The students continue to bring this moment back to life throughout the year. She cannot wait to see the love, laughter, and challenges ahead of her in the next school year.

Finally, the Cherokee County District Support Staff of the Year was awarded to Mrs. Dawne Collins who works in Blacksburg's school transportation department. Mrs. Collins has spent more than 28 years serving students and families of the Cherokee County School District. She loves to make a difference in the lives of children. Mrs. Collins is a dependable, patient, and caring person who believes you should treat others the way you want to be treated. The parents of Cherokee County truly appreciate her for all the love she has given. Mrs. Collins said her favorite memory is when the parents made her a basket while picking up some students. She has had a lot of supporters on her journey, but she says her number one supporter is Jesus! Mrs. Collins can't wait to see what the future holds for her.

The 2026 Cherokee County School District Convocation will certainly go down in history as this was the first time faculty and staff from Blacksburg won all three categories. We think it's a pretty fitting end to our 100 year celebration that began this time last year! While Blacksburg is an incredible place to grow and learn, one can certainly tell that CCSD has a wealth of talented, caring, and outstanding faculty and staff members in all schools and locations. All of our staff and faculty make a difference in children's lives each day, and we are incredibly thankful for all of the amazing faculty and staff in CCSD!

ACTIVITIES

Volleyball Makes Team History

By: Brantlee Hughey

Wildcats rise to the top! On Friday August 15th, the Blacksburg Wildcats Girls Varsity Volleyball Team won their first home game against Thomas Jefferson's Girls Volleyball Team with a score of 25-20 in the last set. For the first time in program history the team had a clean sweep winning in just 3 sets!

Assistant Coach Mollie Dixon compares the start of this season to the start of the 2025 season. "To me the biggest difference I've noticed and seen in the match from this season compared to last season was how much they've grown into a habit for using team work skills, and the way all the girls bonded as a team overall. Not only did they use great communication on the court, but also how they cheered each other on during the game." Varsity player Cherysh Gomez says that the win for the team was a fresh start and a new beginning for the Blacksburg Wildcat Volleyball program. Cherysh can't wait to see what the rest of her senior season has in store for her and others. When player Madison Dixon was asked what does this win mean for the team? Madison stated, "It shows that we have a lot of potential for this season, as well as a lot of determination that will definitely be shown throughout this season."

The win was a huge confidence booster not only for the team but also the school. Many of the players state that they are confident that this is the year that they are going to dominate in volleyball. We look forward to seeing all that they accomplish this season. Best of luck Wildcats!

BHS Football: A New Season, A New Resolve

By: Essence Rodgers

As the football season slowly but surely gets closer, there are a lot of things for the team to work on. The coaches have been asked about the upcoming season and what they are hoping to see from their players. Their answers have shown that having a good team is more than just winning a few games.

One of the biggest goals that the coaches talked about is for the season to have success on the scoreboard. The coaches also explained that this year's team is different from last year because of the way that the players treat each other with good sportsmanship and the experience the players have had while practicing. They believe one of the team's biggest strengths right now is the commitment they have for this sport, not only getting it from the players **but** also the coaches. Preparing mentally for a big game has been a great part of how they've been growing altogether as a team. The coaches want to make sure the players are confident and ready when the pressure gets high. The coaches believe that the players need to stay focused and remember that they have prepared for these moments with many practices and by looking over past plays. One game the coaches are especially looking forward to is the game against one of Blacksburg's biggest rivals, the Landrum Cardinals. The rivalry is something they look forward to. But win or lose, the Wildcats plan to keep the good sportsmanship. The biggest message the coaches want the team to remember is, "don't have any regrets." This means working hard, practicing, learning from mistakes, and continuing to move forward, no matter what happens.

Overall, the season is about improving, staying committed, and making the most of every opportunity. So let's cheer on these Cats as the season begins. Good luck to our Wildcats as they take on their foes this season.

Student Athlete Spotlight: Cooper Bridges

By: Tynl Badger

Our Student Athlete Spotlight this issue is Cooper Bridges; he is a part of the Blacksburg Varsity Football Team. We chose to spotlight Cooper because he always puts forth his best effort, both on the field and off of it. Cooper enjoys interacting with his teammates and building connections with each player he meets.

Cooper is an extremely hard-working athlete. He lets nothing stop him from giving his all while he plays. No matter the obstacle, he keeps working harder and getting better with each practice. He is the type of guy that works hard for his teammates and helps people when they need it.

Cooper's favorite thing is football. He enjoys getting in the weight room to work on his strengths and build up from his weaknesses. His favorite thing about football is learning and studying the plays; he gets



switched between linebacker and wide receiver as needed. Cooper has shown his determination with his medical issues. He had to have surgery on his skull. His recovery was long, but he gave his trust to God and worked long and hard to come back from his surgery.

Cooper is a very responsible student. He is a leader in the classroom as well as a self-motivated player on the field and makes the most of his time well spent when studying and hanging out with friends and family. He is a team player, and everyone enjoys his positive attitude as a friend and a student.

Good luck to Cooper and all of our student athletes this season!

ACADEMICS

Class Spotlight: Intro to US History

By: Vinnie Wylie

This year at Blacksburg High, we have a new class called "Intro to US History." I interviewed one of the teachers who is teaching it this year, along with a student teacher.

I asked Mr. Scruggs and Ms. McGeehan what made them want to teach "Intro to US History." Mr. Scruggs stated "I love the content, and I like dealing with teenagers." Meanwhile Ms. McGeehan replied, "I had an inspiration from past teachers, and I like history."

Why is learning US history important? If we don't ever learn about our past, we often repeat it. This is Mr. Scruggs' belief, but Ms. McGeehan believes it is important because it's the story of our ancestors' lives and how we got to where we are today.

This year, Mr. Scruggs is excited to have his "Intro to US History" class in the fall coupled with his US History class in the spring. This gives him time all year with these students which gives him more time to teach them the content. As a student teacher, Ms. McGeehan is excited to learn and refine her skills since it's her first time "really" teaching.

Mr. Scruggs and Ms. McGeehan both hope that the students this year will gain a stronger understanding of US History, but they also hope to build relationships with our kids and help them become better citizens.

Mr. Scruggs believes that he will have a higher passing rate on the US History EOC this year. Hopefully this school year will be full of surprises, and students will learn so much more about US History.

Teacher Spotlight: Ms. Price

By: Dez Means



Ms. Sarah Price is a Blacksburg High School alumna and our newest math teacher, having just

returned to the Home of the Wildcats this year. She is the oldest of her four siblings, three brothers and one sister.

As a former Wildcat, she has quite the history with BHS. Back when she was walking among these halls as a student, she served many roles. She was an editor on the yearbook staff, a member of Beta Club, the Varsity Volleyball team, and the Junior Leadership Program. Mrs. Price was also a trumpet player in the marching band for a brief while before dropping it to join the choir.

Two of the teachers who most greatly influenced her career choice and who she is in general were Mr. Davis and Mrs. Hughes. Mr. Davis made math fun and enjoyable for her, and Mrs. Hughes was like a mom to her and the yearbook staff to the point of being nicknamed "Mama Yerd".

After her high school memories, Ms. Price went to Clemson to earn her bachelor's degree in mathematics and a master's in secondary education. She did her student teaching at Pendleton and a year of teaching at West Side in Anderson before she came back to BHS.

In Ms. Price's free time, she is a vocal member of Buffalo Baptist Church who loves *The Lion King*, and who can say the alphabet backwards. One interesting fact about Ms. Price is that she is hard of hearing and uses hearing aids to stop everything from sounding like it's under water. Hopefully she enjoys teaching the next generation just as much as she enjoyed learning to get here. Keep rocking, Ms. Price, and welcome home!

New and Exciting I2 Classes

By: Chrissi Snuggs

Calling all Media & Technology enthusiasts...Are you interested in taking technology classes at the Institute of Innovation? The Institute of Innovation for Cherokee County high school students has added two new classes. Both classes give you the opportunity to learn more about technology. The classes are Introduction to Artificial Intelligence and Media Technology one and two.

When taking Introduction to Artificial Intelligence, you will be introduced to different AI concepts, and it will prepare you to take on real-world problems to comprehend common applications and also be able to develop solutions using complex technologies. You will use mathematical reasoning and creative problem-solving when taking the class. When you have completed this course, you will earn 1 high school elective credit. The class's prerequisite is a basic computer science course, Algebra 1, or a teacher recommendation.

When taking Media Technology 1 and 2, you will learn about the general field of communications. This class has a hands-on experience where you'll be able to experience the basic production techniques for both audio and video. In Media Technology 1 and 2, you will learn special effects, graphic design, animation, etc. You will be able to work with professional software and equipment, and learn safety.

The Institute of Innovation will be adding both Media Technology 3 and 4 next year in the 2027-2028 school year. With every course you complete each semester, you'll gain one elective credit. When taking courses at I2, you will have the opportunity to get an industry-recognized safety certificate, and in addition, you can meet those graduation requirements of being career and college certified.

LIFESTYLES

The Effects of Music

By: Makenzie Rawlison

In today's world, many people listen to all kinds of music. Some listen to it while studying or doing various tasks. However, does music actually make students more productive? It has great potential to enhance a student's academic abilities.

According to studies, listening to music during tasks improves concentration, memory, attention span, and behavioral augmentation. In a way, it acts as a cognitive stimulant. Sometimes studying can be boring and seem like a chore, but also very necessary. Music could be the solution to this problem. It adds a pleasant background layer to your environment, making studying feel less tedious. It turns a quiet, uninteresting, and dull study session into a more engaging experience.

If you want to take advantage of this method you could try creating specific playlists that connect with different subjects and songs that help you, select music that enhances your emotional state.

There is also a theory called the "Mozart effect" which is the belief that music, typically classical, can make people smarter. Although science shows that music cannot boost overall intelligence, it is a great way to enter your flow. Music with no lyrics is typically more beneficial and less distracting than those with lyrics, although this depends on the situation. There are multiple factors to consider when examining the effects of music on performance, such as the genre, when it is played, and how it affects one's mental and physical performance. If you are writing an essay or preparing a presentation, music with words can be heavily distracting; whereas, if you are working on a creative project, lyrics can provide insightful ideas and encouragement that can benefit your work. If you are working on a more difficult task, taking breaks and listening to music can be rewarding before returning to work.

Retro Fashion Returns

By: Nick Lowery

Retro fashion, such as the clothing styles known as Y2K, Grunge, Emo, Alt, and many more, has resurfaced and has overall swept over Blacksburg High School. Swarms of dyed hair, black clothing, skulls, dead roses, and bands such as Deftones, Blink-182, Slipknot, Nirvana, and Green Day fill the hallways day by day. But where did all these "dead" styles start, and what do the "older" teachers think about seeing the clothes they grew up with come back?

Y2K, short for "Year 2000," originally reflected the excitement and uncertainty surrounding the turn of the millennium. Celebrities, music videos, movies, and the growing popularity of the internet heavily influenced fashion during this period. Bright colors, metallic fabrics, denim, crop tops, and statement accessories became recognizable parts of the era's style, not to mention baggy jeans, shorts, big heavy shoes, and loose graphic tees took over schools in the late 2000's and early 1990's.

When asked if some of the students who dress this way are doing so because they fear missing out or not, Mrs. Green answered, "I think that a lot of students experiment with styles to see what suits their own unique personality. Teenage brains are in the process of growing and learning at an alarming rate. I think it is healthy to not want to be exactly like someone else. Fashion has always been pretty cyclical, so it's fun seeing students take older styles and make them their own." When I asked Coach Higginbotham, "How do you think this is impacting students at BHS?" He gave me the answer: "They are discovering things that I really grew up with, and I would like to say it is an easier way to talk or connect to them and for them to connect to each other."

Spiderman: Brand New Day

By: Maranda Lee

After years of waiting for action-packed adventures, Spider-Man is back in theaters in *Brand New Day*.

Four years since *No Way Home*, Peter Parker is on his own. Nobody remembers Peter Parker, including everyone he cared for and loved. Now all he can do is focus entirely on being Spider-Man, his alter ego. Even though MJ has completely forgotten about Peter Parker, he has not forgotten about her.

Peter begins dealing with crimes in New York. At the same time, Peter starts experiencing weird changes that are connected to his Spider-Man powers. Peter realizes the strange crimes happening in New York are not just a coincidence.

Spider-Man can't even identify what is going on with all these strange things that are happening. Peter Parker feels all this pressure to protect New York City, and his powers start undergoing changes that he does not know how to control.

Peter's feelings for MJ are still very strong, and he wants to protect her from the terrible danger without trying to push her back into his life. The obscure villain becomes a big threat to the people of New York. Peter realizes that to defend the people, he has to accept his new powers and learn how to control them. The end of the movie leaves Peter as Spider-Man, who has saved New York once again. The end of the movie leaves Peter Parker and MJ's relationship as a mystery for what's to come.



ENTERTAINMENT

Back to School

By : Shanice Ross

Back to school

The blare of the alarm clock

Dread fills your body

Surely this day has not come so soon

Back to school

Hop out of bed

Brush your teeth and wash your face

No moving slow or you might be late

Get dressed in your new clothes

soon it will be time to go

As you put on your socks and shoes

You try to shake the first day blues

Telling yourself "Today will be great!"

While your mom is yelling "Hurry up!

School starts at 8."

Back to school.



Mad Libs: First Day Back

By : Alyssa Jackson

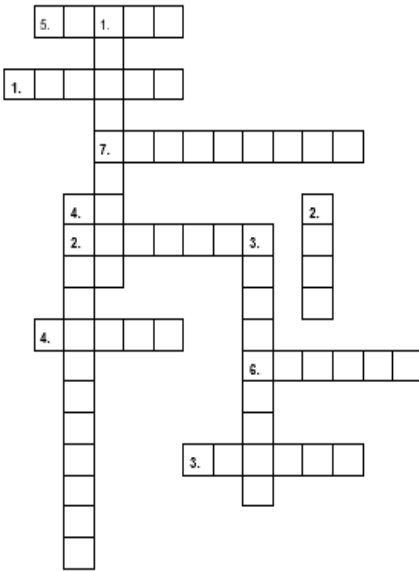
A new school year has officially begun, bringing a (1) (adj)_____ feeling to the hallways. For many students, the first day is a chance to see old friends, meet new people, and begin working towards new goals. Other students are already counting (2) (Noun)_____ till summer break. (3) (Pronoun)_____ walked into school carrying a (4) (Noun)_____ and feeling ready to (5) (Verb)_____. The hallways were filled with students talking about their summer and making plans for the year ahead. The first class of the day was (6) (Verb)_____, taught by (7) (Noun)_____. The teacher welcomed everyone and gave the class (8) (Adj)_____ minutes to introduce themselves. Although some students felt (9) (Adj)_____, most were excited to get started.

During lunch, students gathered at (10) (Noun)_____ and enjoyed (11) (Noun)_____ while (12) (Verb)_____ with their friends. For many students, lunch is one of the best opportunities to catch up and meet people they haven't seen since the previous school year. As the day continued, students learned about upcoming events, clubs, sports, and other activities. A (13) (Adj)_____ announcement reminded everyone that the school year would be full of (14) (Adj)_____ opportunities. One of the most exciting parts of the year will be (15) (Noun)_____. Students will have the chance to (16) (Verb)_____, make memories, and become more involved in their school community.

With (17) (Adj)_____ months of school ahead, there is plenty of time to set goals and try something new. Whether students are focused on academics, friendships, sports, or other activities, this year can be a (18) (Adj)_____ experience. Every student has a different (19) (Noun)_____ for the school year, but everyone has the opportunity to make it a year to remember. As the first week comes to an end, students can look forward to everything the new school year has to offer and (20) (Verb)_____ toward a successful year!

Journalism

By: Landyn Mergott



- Across
- 1. A person who writes news stories (6)
 - 2. The title of a news story (8)
 - 3. A person who answers questions for a story (5)
 - 4. Information collected by a reporter (6)
 - 5. A news story that is not published (5)
 - 6. A newspaper or magazine article (5)
 - 7. A person who reports the news (8)
- Down
- 1. A conversation used to gather information for a story
 - 2. The most important facts at the beginning of a news
 - 3. A publication that comes out daily or weekly (9)
 - 4. A person who takes pictures for the news (12)

EDITORIAL

The Beauty of Summer Break

In the past when I began a school year, I looked at my rosters and saw familiar names; however, this year was different to any other year for the last 16 years. I had not taught a single student before except for four students in our Journalism class.

See, in years past, I had taught English II, and then I'd have either AVID, AP Language, Journalism, or English III, and in those classes, I would find lots of students I had taught the year before in English II. Some years I was blessed enough to "roll" with my students. I taught them for English II and then had the same class again in English III. But this year was different.

This year as I looked at my rosters, I didn't know anyone. I saw the last names of siblings I had taught in previous years. I saw names I had seen in passing through school news. I saw names I had seen come across email. But I realized that save those *four* students, I didn't know a single student, not really. And I was excited!

I was excited because that meant it was a fresh start - for students and for me. You see at BHS we get out for a two month summer break. And during that very short time, miracles occur. People change. People grow. People make resolutions to be the best version of themselves. People work on themselves. People move out of toxic relationships and friendships. People gain jobs and hobbies. People cease being who they had been labeled as the year before, teachers and students alike.

So when I began my classes this year, I explained that concept to my students. There is a beauty in summer break, and it offers us a clean slate when we return in August. I don't know them and they don't know me, and we have the opportunity to be any kind of person we want this year. If we so choose, we can embrace that idea and make this an amazing new year, but it is truly up to each of us - students and adults alike. We can choose to be the same as we were last year, or we can choose to be better.

So I challenge each person out there to do the same. Be the best version of you that you can be, and let's make this the best year at BHS!

- Ms. McAfee

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