

## Local Schools



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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.

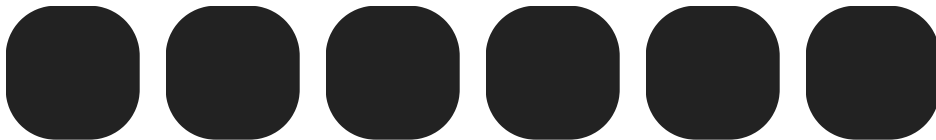
(Left to right) PBJHS teacher Kathy Pattillo, Principal Candace Warren, teacher Melinda Moncier, St. Vincent volunteer Merlin DeWitt, and teachers Lyndsee Moon, Emily Padilla, Aaron Duncan and Josh Wesemann pose beside the trailer.

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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## Cerda and Spence Awarded \$10K rootEd Scholarships

OCTOBER 08TH 2020 BY DEE LOFLIN

[Cerda and Spence Awarded \\$10K rootEd Scholarships](#)

A pair of Poplar Bluff High School graduates of the Class of 2020 were recently awarded the rootEd Undergraduate Scholarships, valued at \$10,000 per year, renewable up to 10 semesters toward a bachelor’s degree.

Award recipient Nayeli Cerda is pursuing a law degree from Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, and Khelie Spence is majoring in health sciences with an emphasis in pre-dental at the University of Missouri in Columbia, according to PBHS counselor Sara Woodard.

“...Over the past two years, rootEd Alliance has provided dedicated support to students from rural areas and small towns across Missouri as they pursue their education beyond high school,” wrote program representative Lisa MacDougall in an announcement dated

Monday, Sept. 28. “This year, in partnership with the Scholarship Foundation of St. Louis, rootEd will distribute over \$275,000 in ‘last-dollar’ scholarships to 31 undergraduate and transfer students from rural Missouri, filling critical gaps in students’ financial aid packages to help ensure they graduate debt-free.”

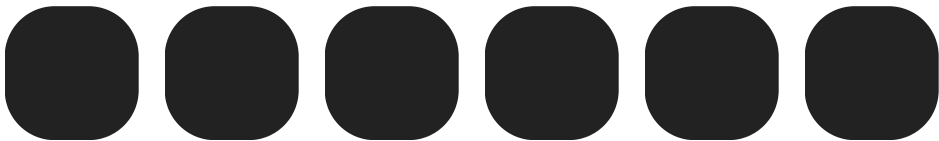
Administered by the Scholarship Foundation, the rootEd Alliance program was launched in 2018 to improve postsecondary education opportunities for high school seniors from 14 specific Missouri communities, according to its website. The mission of the philanthropic endeavor is to “clear a path to a stronger future for students in rural America.” The application for next year’s rootEd Alliance Scholarship will open in January.

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

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## Free School Meals for Children Through Fall

OCTOBER 04TH 2020 BY DEE LOFLIN

## Free School Meals for Children Through Fall

Poplar Bluff, MO - The Poplar Bluff R-I School District, in partnership with Chartwells, is excited to announce that school meals will be free to all students through the end of the semester on Friday, Dec. 18, or longer, as Congressionally appropriated funding is made available.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture publicized the waiver extension for operators of the summer food service program on Monday, Aug. 31, in response to the public health emergency.

“We appreciate the incredible efforts by our school food service professionals year in and year out, but this year we have an unprecedented situation,” stated U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue in a press release. “This extension of the summer program authority will employ summer program sponsors to ensure meals are reaching all children – whether they are learning in the classroom or virtually – so they are fed and ready to learn, even in new and ever-changing learning environments.”

Meals were previously available at no cost to students, grades pre-K through third, under the Community Eligibility Program. Now—funded through the federal nutrition assistance program—the Middle School, Junior High and High School students can also enjoy free school meals, including breakfast and lunch, and soon dinner to-go.

“These waivers will allow school nutrition professionals to focus on nourishing hungry children for success, rather than scrambling to process paperwork and verify eligibility in the midst of a pandemic,” added Reggie Ross, president of the School Nutrition Association.

Reimbursements will be processed on student accounts for meals paid for out-of-pocket dating back to the beginning of the program this school year.

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

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