



# THE BEACON

A Community Newsletter from the  
Port Washington-Saukville School District

## Welcome to the Beacon!

As we close out 2024 and look toward 2025, I feel a sense of optimism about our district's future. First and foremost, I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to our community and to all the individuals who have contributed to making PWSSD a great place for students to learn and grow. In my conversations with so many of you, one common theme stands out: we are incredibly fortunate to have outstanding students and dedicated staff. Our district is unique—former graduates often return to work alongside the teachers who once inspired them, and alumni choose to live and raise their families in the same community that nurtured their own childhoods. We honor our past, and together, we are building a bright future.



As we look ahead, we are already taking important steps to build that future, including:

- **Building Tomorrow, Today:** The Board of Education is proposing a referendum to build a new elementary school in Saukville and to provide much-needed updates to Dunwiddie Elementary, Lincoln Elementary, Thomas Jefferson Middle School, and Port Washington High School.
- **Strategic Planning:** We are engaging our staff and school board in shaping a strategic plan focused on continuous improvement in teaching and learning.
- **Math Instruction:** After reviewing the school report card outcomes related to math over the past four years, we are implementing changes to our K-12 math curriculum. These shifts will align with the current state standards and best practices in math instruction.
- **Long-Term Fiscal Responsibility:** We are working to create a 10-year fully funded maintenance plan.

As the Superintendent of PWSSD, my focus remains clear: strong communication, fiscal responsibility, and ensuring that our students are ready for their future—whether it's in life, careers, or continued learning. Our mission, "We educate all children to reach their greatest potential," has never been more vital as we work together to ensure long-term success and growth in our district, from our facilities to our teaching practices and opportunities for students.

I encourage you to explore this edition of *The Beacon* and to mark your calendar for one of our upcoming listening sessions, which will focus on our strategic plan and the April 1, 2025 referendum. I also invite you to join us at one of our upcoming events! Great things are happening in the Port Washington-Saukville School District, and we'd love for you to be part of it as we continue to *Build Tomorrow, Today!*

Be Great Today!

Michael McMahon, Superintendent

[www.pwssd.org](http://www.pwssd.org)

## WINTER 2025

### IN THIS ISSUE:

- Referendum Information
- Lambeau Field Career Fair
- Finding Hope After Loss
- Student Car Detailing Business
- Celebrating 50 Days at DES
- Fall Athletics Highlights
- Thank You, Donors!





# Community Connections

## Wisconsin Fast Forward Grant Awarded to PWHS



The Port Washington High School Technology & Engineering Department has been awarded a \$30,000 Fast Forward grant from the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development!

These funds will go toward the purchase of advanced manufacturing equipment, including a Baleigh CNC press brake, an Ellis #1600 portable mitre band saw, a Piranha P65 Ironworker, and 10 Miller Multimatic 220 AC/DC multiprocess welders.

The district will be able to match these funds with an additional \$30,000 from its operating budget. Another \$30,000 will be raised from business partner donations—making a total of \$90,000 available.

Over the next decade alone, more than 2,000 students are expected to use this equipment. Courses like Welding and Fabrication, Welding II, Independent Studies in Welding, and Art Metals will all benefit from the grant funding.

Local businesses and others who are interested in donating toward the matching funds are encouraged to email [Taylor.Last@pwssd.k12.wi.us](mailto:Taylor.Last@pwssd.k12.wi.us).

## Seniors Attend 'Dinner and a Show' Events at PWHS PAC

Senior citizens in the community were treated to a special dress rehearsal showing of "Freaky Friday" (performed by Port Washington High School students) on October 20th, as well as "The Little Mermaid Jr." (performed by Thomas Jefferson Middle School students) on November 20. Both shows took place at the Port Washington High School Performing Arts Center, with dinner served by district food service staff. More than 100 people attended the two performances!



## THANK YOU to Our Generous Donors!

We would like to thank the following organizations and individuals for making charitable contributions to our schools and the students we serve:

- The **Port Washington City Band** donated a Manhasset music stand cart and Djembe drum to the PWHS Music Department.
- The **TJ Music Boosters** donated a Seiler acoustic upright piano and a Yamaha digital piano to the TJMS Music Department.
- **100+ Women Who Care - Ozaukee Chapter** donated \$4,470 and the Richard Schulze Foundation donated \$2,370 toward the purchase of a book vending machine at SES.
- **Gailya Geib** donated \$5,000 to be split equally among our five schools' music departments.
- **Aurora Medical Center - Grafton** donated school supplies for students and baked goods for DES, LES, and SES staff.
- **Be3 (in memory of Mike Kusserow)** donated \$1,000 towards the purchase of a new bass drum for the TJMS Music Department.
- **Engine Power, Inc.** donated 54 new Honda engines (valued at \$400 each) for the PWHS Automotive Program
- **The Dunwiddie Parent Connection** donated \$3,757.10 for an adjustable basketball hoop and an accessible swing at DES.

## 4K Orientation Night: January 21, 2025

Excited about 4K? Join us for an engaging orientation night to discover all PWSSD has to offer!

If your child turns 4 before September 1, 2025, this event is for you. You'll get a sneak peek into the 4K experience, including what a typical day is like. Learn about busing options, community childcare sites for wraparound care, and much more!

Don't miss this opportunity to connect and get all the information you need to start your child's educational journey.

Join us on **Tuesday, January 21, 2025**, from **6:00 to 7:15 p.m.** at **Dunwiddie Elementary School**. See you there!



# Building Tomorrow, TODAY.

CAPITAL REFERENDUM | APRIL 1, 2025

Our schools are a big point of pride in Port Washington and Saukville. At the same time, our facilities have a series of needs that we must address soon to ensure our students continue to have access to top-quality educational experiences.

The district allocates funds each year for routine maintenance. However, the cost of replacing many of the building systems is too expensive to be paid from the annual budget.

## Addressing District-Wide Facility Needs

- Replacing roof sections at Dunwiddie Elementary, Lincoln Elementary, the middle school, and the high school
- Improving ADA accessibility at Dunwiddie Elementary, and Lincoln Elementary
- Replacing exterior doors and windows at Dunwiddie Elementary, Lincoln Elementary, and PWHS
- Updating heating, ventilation, and air conditioning equipment at Dunwiddie Elementary, Lincoln Elementary, and PWHS
- Updating the playgrounds and surrounding areas at Dunwiddie Elementary and Lincoln Elementary
- Installing or replacing emergency generators at Dunwiddie Elementary, and Lincoln Elementary



## Thomas Jefferson Middle School will also require investment soon.

Investing in the safety of TJMS by allocating \$2.1 million for a new roof is the top priority at the middle school. This addresses the most urgent need at TJMS and represents the most fiscally responsible approach at this time. However, the Operations Committee and district facilities studies recommend constructing a new TJMS in the near future.

**The swimming pool at TJMS will also need to be addressed in the coming years.** Built at the middle school in 1985, the pool saw over 4,800 visits last year. The pool is not energy efficient and has exceeded its service life. Due to its age, repairs are complicated and costly. The size and limited surrounding space at the pool site also make accessibility difficult.



## Saukville Elementary School

The Board of Education has determined that Saukville Elementary has the most significant needs at this time.

Built in 1955 and updated in 1989, the school is on a small site and is currently at capacity. The building is aging and some of its systems are failing. Our district's Community Operations Committee and Board do not believe further investment in the facility is a smart use of tax dollars.

Under consideration is a potential new Saukville Elementary School.



## Where We've Been...

In 2015, our community approved a referendum covering additions and renovations at Port Washington High School and Dunwiddie Elementary School. These projects have been critically important to our schools, students, and community—and they have made a real impact on teaching and learning.

The Community Operations Committee (COC), made up of staff, parents, community members, and local business owners, has worked to define which project(s) should be included in the next phase of the district's master facilities plan.

We have taken a thoughtful and comprehensive approach to evaluating our facility needs and exploring potential solutions.

- In February 2021, Bray Architects completed an extensive analysis of PWSSD Elementary, Middle, and High Schools.
- In October 2022, the Community Operations Committee was formed.
- In January 2023, the COC toured neighboring district facilities.
- In March 2023, the COC completed PWSSD facility walkthroughs.
- In August 2023, the Rettler Corporation completed its study of PWSSD outdoor and athletic facilities.
- In March 2024, the COC outlined options, priorities, and potential solutions for district-wide facility needs.
- Since last spring, the COC developed parent/staff/community surveys and held focus groups to help inform district planning.

## Building Tomorrow, TODAY.



## Engaging Our Community

In October 2024, a total of 1,966 community members provided their thoughts and feedback through a community-wide survey. We gained a number of important insights through this process:



**About 67%**

of parents and 51% of community members indicated they support the district-wide facility improvements in the next phase of the district's facility plan.



**About 60%**

of parents and 48% of community members indicated they support replacing Saukville Elementary School as part of the next phase of the facility plan.



A weighted majority of respondents **(51.5%)**

indicated they would support the pursuit of a \$66.7 million capital referendum to fund maintenance needs and the proposed Saukville Elementary project.

*The board carefully reviewed the input provided by our community members through this survey. The amount of the proposed referendum—at \$59.4 million—is \$7.3 million less than the \$66.7 million originally considered and that was included in the survey.*





# PROPOSED SOLUTION

On **Tuesday, April 1, 2025**, our community will vote on a \$59.4 million capital referendum for the Port Washington–Saukville School District.

If the referendum is approved, the district will build a new Saukville Elementary School to replace the current aging building. This school will be built on a different site from where the school currently sits.

District leaders are reviewing options for a potential new school at a site located within the Village of Saukville or directly adjacent to the Village’s boundaries. The new building will provide modern and flexible classrooms and spaces that will allow students to truly engage in 21st century learning.

In addition, the district would be able to use referendum funds to make facility and maintenance improvements across all of our schools.



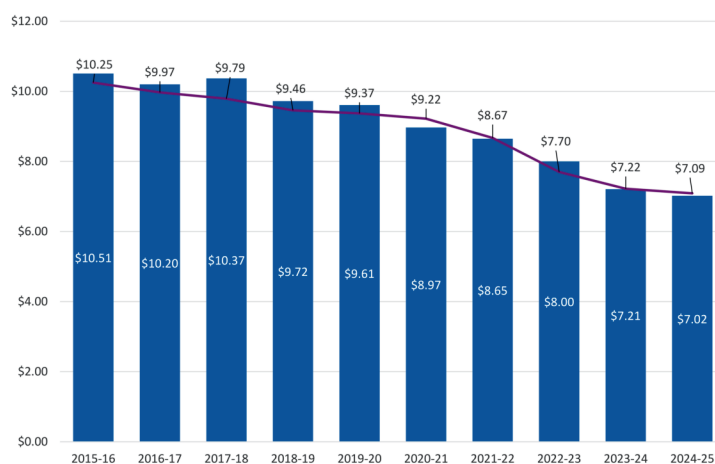
## Property Tax Impact

A voter-approved referendum would have a property tax impact of 26 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value. The owner of a home assessed at \$300,000 would see a property tax impact of about \$78 per year.

It’s worth noting that, even with this increase, the district’s portion of the property tax rate will remain below what it was in the 2022–23 school year.

Port Washington–Saukville School District  
HISTORICAL SCHOOL MILL RATE VS. STATEWIDE K-12 AVERAGE

BAIRD



Source: Department of Public Instruction

Page 11

The district and board understand the needs of our community and have worked to limit the property tax impact of a capital referendum as much as possible.

## Ballot Language:

*Shall the Port Washington–Saukville School District, Ozaukee County, Wisconsin be authorized to issue pursuant to Chapter 67 of the Wisconsin Statutes, general obligation bonds in an amount not to exceed \$59,400,000 for the public purpose of paying the cost of a school building and facility improvement project consisting of: construction of a new Saukville Elementary School and related land acquisition and site improvements; demolition of the current Saukville Elementary School building; renovations, capital maintenance, building infrastructure, safety, security and/or site improvements at Dunwiddie and Lincoln Elementary Schools, the Middle School and the High School; and acquisition of furnishings, fixtures and equipment?*

## Referendum Information Nights

**Thursday, January 30, 2025**  
6:00PM, Saukville Elementary School

**Thursday, February 6, 2025**  
6:00PM, Lincoln Elementary School

**Tuesday, February 18, 2025**  
6:00PM, Dundwiddie Elementary School

**Wednesday, March 5, 2025**  
6:00PM, Port Washington High School

**Wednesday, March 12, 2025**  
6:00PM, Thomas Jefferson Middle School

**Tuesday, March 18, 2025**  
6:00PM, Saukville Elementary School



## Student Spotlight

### Finding Hope After Loss

Port Washington High School Junior Hannah Brecke was one of four keynote speakers for the "One Thing I Wish You Knew" event at Marquette University on November 17. The community mental health event, co-hosted by the Friendship Circle of Wisconsin and REDgen, offered an evening of conversations and authentic connections.

In a heartfelt speech, Hannah shared her emotional journey through grief and mental health struggles after losing her mom. Her story highlighted the importance of seeking help and breaking the silence around mental health.

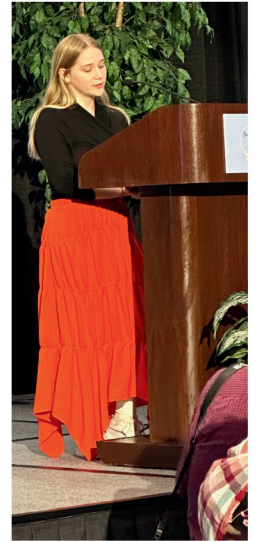
Three years ago, Hannah faced an unimaginable loss. Just as she was starting 8th grade, her mom was hospitalized with COVID-19 and passed away within two weeks.

"After she passed away, I couldn't eat, I couldn't sleep... I didn't know how to survive without her," Hannah said. For two years, she struggled in silence, experiencing intense sadness and isolation.



In her speech, Hannah urged others to break the stigma around mental health and speak openly about their struggles. "It's okay to not be okay," she said. "We need to support each other and create a community where it's safe to ask for help."

Her message was clear: even in the darkest times, healing is possible. Through her vulnerability, Hannah showed that asking for help, sharing your story, and finding hope is the first step toward recovery.



## Students Open Car Detailing Business in School-Based Enterprise

Students at Port Washington High School have taken on the challenge of creating a school-based enterprise that details the interior of cars through dedication and hard work. Although it is a small group of students, they tackle even the biggest jobs!

The business officially started in October 2024 thanks to the support of the Lions Club, Lake Financial Group, Justin Behm, Port Washington State Bank, Kelly Hadacek, Karry Russell, and Tracy Plier.

The business is currently open to district and high school staff members, as the group has been fully booked since word got out about their quality of service. This enterprise allows students a new way to learn, earn credits necessary for graduation, and obtain a new skill by using project-based learning opportunities.

## Highlighting Our Fall Student-Athletes at PWHS

Congratulations to these Port Washington High School athletes for their accomplishments in the fall sports season:

- **Girls Cross Country:** Parker Allen and Ellie Knepfel qualified for the state meet. Parker finished 17th overall and Ellie finished 55th. Parker was named 1st team All Conference, while Ellie was 2nd team All conference.
- **Boys Cross Country** finished 6th overall as a team at state. The group consisted of Alex Anewenter, Jameson Koebel, Alexis Luna, John Dohrwardt, Peter Lotz, Connor Zinuticz, Ezra Meeks. Alex finished 6th overall at state and was 1st team All Conference, while Jameson and Pete were honorable mention All Conference.
- **Boys Soccer:** All Conference honorees were Angel Ramirez (2nd team) and George Pasko (honorable mention).
- Our **Volleyball** All Conference honoree was Nora Merow (2nd team).
- The **Football** team took second place in the East Central Conference, and then lost in level 2 playoffs. Individual awards were:
  - All Conference 1st team offense: Josh Arnold, Hewitt Dekker
  - All Conference 1st team defense: Josh Arnold, Hewitt Dekker, Sam Pasten, Garrett Kawczynski, Izaiah Scheftgen
- All Conference 2nd Team: Caleb Runkel, Kiya Sullivan
- All Conference Honorable Mention: Logan Walker, Ashton Steinert, Colton Struckman, Landon Jankowski, Jayden Lathrop, Bayer White
- ECC Lineman of the Year: Hewitt Dekker
- ECC Linebacker of the Year: Izaiah Scheftgen
- All Region: Garrett Kawczynski, Izaiah Scheftgen, Hewitt Dekker, Sam Pasten
- **Girls Swimming** had two girls break into the PWHS Top 10 times. These records have been held since 1985. Lily Kerbel is 8th in the 100 Back and Laylah Henschel is 10th in the 100 Breaststroke. Five athletes placed in the top 10 at Sectionals: Laylah Henschel in the 100 Breaststroke (6th place), Anna Nisiewicz in the 100 Fly (8th place), Edynn Strube in the 100 Free (9th place), Lily Kerbel in the 100 Back (9th place), Maddie Mellesmoen in diving (9th place).



## Tech Ed Students Create Sign for Ozaukee Food Alliance

Our PWHS tech ed students created a new sign for the Ozaukee Food Alliance this fall! The Alliance reached out to Teacher Taylor Last in spring 2024, with students completing the project in early November.



## SES Staff Prepare Meal for Fellow Community Members

Saukville Elementary School staff came together October 12 to prepare and serve a community meal at the Ozaukee Food Alliance. At the end of the day, SES staff served 137 meals to members in our community.

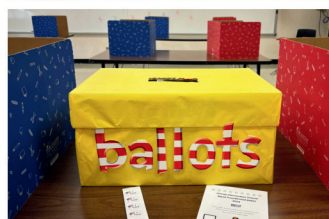
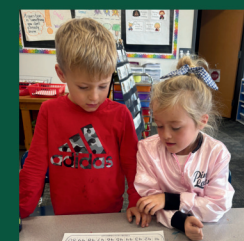
Thank you to all the amazing staff members who donated their time and donated food items. And, a special thank you to Blau's Meats for helping prepare the meat for our meal!



## Celebrating 50 DAYS at Dunwiddie!

On November 13, kindergarteners at Dunwiddie Elementary celebrated the 50th day of school! The students loved experiencing the 50s sock hop, complete with music, dancing, hula hooping, and root beer floats. Kindergarteners and their teachers played the part by dressing up in true 1950s apparel, complete with poodle skirts, pink lady jackets, and a greaser style.

This celebration tied into the class's upcoming literacy unit on past versus present traditions and culture, while providing a hands-on experience to frontload the unit. It also joined the current math practices of counting by ones, fives, and tens, as well as writing numbers to 50.



## Mock Election: Duck or Grace for President?

Ahead of the U.S. elections on November 5, Lincoln Elementary School's Building Leadership Team took the opportunity to teach students about the voting process by holding our very own mock election. Every class read two books to their students: "Grace for President," by Kelly DiPucchio, and "Duck for President," by Doreen Cronin.

Teachers then had developmentally appropriate discussions with their students about the upcoming election. These discussions included what it means to vote, why we vote, and why people may choose one candidate over another. These discussions were tied directly to the characters of Duck and Grace. Students were then able to make their own determinations on which character or candidate would make a better president.

On election day, students were taken with their class to a special polling place to vote for their favorite candidate. Every student was given a ballot and provided a private area separate from other voters to cast their vote. Afterwards, they received their "I Voted," sticker.



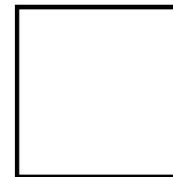
The votes have been tabulated, and the winner is... **Duck!**





## Port Washington-Saukville School District

100 W Monroe Street  
Port Washington, WI 53074



## 6th Graders Visit Lambeau Field CAREER FAIR

Sixth-grade students at Thomas Jefferson Middle School had the opportunity to attend a career fair at the legendary Lambeau Field on November 14. They learned all about the many careers associated with the Packers organization, many of which have little to do with football! After the event, they spent some time at the Packers Hall of Fame.

