

Margaretta Local Schools

Spring 2025 District Newsletter



BACK ON SCHEDULE

THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT!

Superintendent Kurt is excited to announce the restart of construction on our groundbreaking PK-12 facility, and reveals the exciting new timeline for its completion. Get ready to witness progress!

MORE ON PAGES 6-7



**IN THIS
ISSUE**

FOOD SERVICES
YEAR-IN-REVIEW

NEW TREASURER
INTRODUCTION

2024-2025 SPORTS
SEASON RECAP



MARGARETTA LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Transportation Department

Mr. Chris Leibacher, Transportation Supervisor

In the 2024-2025 school year, the Margaretta Transportation Department has transported over 1,000 students. Currently, we transport Margaretta residents who attend our local vocational and parochial schools along with midday routes for Townsend Community School. We are currently running 15 morning routes, 7 midday routes, and 15 afternoon routes. We also have been able to transport students safely to all of their midday and after school extracurricular activities. With this year coming to an end, we look forward to a fun and safe summer break and setting our routes for the 2025-2026 school year!

Looking ahead at next year's transportation needs, we will be sending out emails to request any transportation needs and changes for the upcoming school year. One thing we have changed going into the next school year is using our existing platforms to communicate and create bus routes. We expect this to lead to a cost savings and a more efficient routing process for our students and parents. As many might have noticed this year, we have implemented our Final Forms texting feature, which gives us the ability to communicate in real time with parents on any bussing information. We are very excited about these changes and our ability to communicate and become more efficient in our routing process. Once again, as we head toward the end of the school year and into the summer break, be on the lookout for emails asking for any changes to your transportation needs. If you have any questions and/or concerns, feel free to contact the bus garage at (419) 684-7714 or email me at cleibacher@margarettaschooldistrict.com.

One concerning trend our district is facing, along with many districts in the state of Ohio, is the lack of bus drivers. With this shortage comes tough decisions on transporting our students. We are always looking for bus drivers and we will train anyone interested in a career as a bus driver. Margaretta offers a very competitive benefits package and schedule for anyone interested in pursuing a career as a full time, part time, or sub bus driver. Please reach out to get more information.

Once again, thank you for a great school year, and we are looking forward to summer break and planning transportation for next year!

PK-12 New School Facility: Project Restart & Community Update

Mr. Keegan Hall, District Treasurer

We're excited to share an important update on the Margaretta PK-12 New School Facility project: construction is officially scheduled to restart by the end of May 2025, with the goal of completing the project by December 2026.



This progress comes after multiple years of hard work, planning, and persistence. Despite numerous setbacks — including legal delays and rising costs — our commitment to delivering a modern, high-quality educational facility for our students has never wavered.

What's Happening Now

The construction schedule has been re-established, bids are in, and all systems are go. We've moved through the necessary pre-construction steps and are ready to get back to work.

We're also pleased to continue collaborating with the Ohio School Facilities Commission (OSFC), which is funding 38% of the project — a vital

contribution to keeping the project on track financially.

Project Timeline Highlights

- **March 2023:** Construction was paused after the tax appeal by the Lorain County Auditor that challenged the Nexus pipeline tax settlement, our primary project funding source.
- **August 2024:** The Ohio Supreme Court ruled 4-3 to uphold the original Nexus tax agreement, allowing us to resume the project.

- **February 2020 to Now:** Inflation has raised our total project cost from \$40 million to approximately \$67 million. The OSFC has verbally agreed to cover their share of the increased cost, with formal approval expected in July 2025.

Construction & Financing Progress

- **GMP Bids Received:** Preliminary bids received from Mosser, our Construction Manager at Risk (CMR), places the total construction cost at \$66.9 million, aligned with today's market conditions.
- **Financing Secured:** The Certificates of Participation (COPs) financing process is complete, securing \$56.8 million (representing the preliminary GMP bid less the amount already spent and utilizing some of our new facility reserve cash on hand).
- **Next Steps:** Final board approvals, including steel bids and material planning, are underway to lock in pricing and minimize risk.

Why This Matters

Our current buildings, constructed in 1913 and 1922, have served generations of students — but they no longer meet the needs of today's learners. This new facility will:

- Bring all grade levels under one roof
- Provide flexible, safe, and modern spaces for teaching and learning
- Serve as a lasting community asset for decades to come

Thank You

Your continued support and patience have carried us through a complex journey — and now, we're on the cusp of building something truly transformative. We look forward to sharing progress updates with you as construction resumes and our vision for a stronger future becomes reality.



Margaretta Food Service Standing Strong Against Critical Challenges

Mrs. Carrie Keller, Food Service Director

The 2024-2025 school year has been yet another year of facing challenges in several areas of school nutrition. Throughout the last few years, we have had supply chain disruptions, the abrupt loss of the DoD Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Program in December 2023, rising food costs, and the nationwide ½ pint milk carton shortage/changes in 2024, just to name a few. These difficult and most often unexpected situations make it that much more problematic to meet requirements and get the job done. School meal programs are held within tight budgets and restrictions, all while being expected to be self-sustaining. Our food service staff remain unsung heroes and keep their eyes on the prize — feeding our students to support their health and academic achievement, all while helping to improve their diets and combating hunger.

Margaretta Schools participates in the National School Lunch Program; therefore, state requirements must be met to receive funding. During the 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years, the state viewed any student qualifying for a reduced-priced meal the same as a free student. This means that qualifying reduced-price students do not pay for their breakfast or lunch meal, and the state would not only reimburse the \$.30 breakfast and \$.40 lunch meal price, but in addition, they would also compensate the school with the state reimbursement amount for the reduced-price students. We offer a free or reduced-price meal application to all families and encourage every family to complete this form, which can be found online via the PaySchools parent account at www.payschoolscentral.com. For more information, please see the application or contact me. Breakfast and lunch are offered daily at both buildings. Visit our website, www.margarettaschooldistrict.com, for menus and more!

Though there were times of uncertainty and confusion, we never lost sight of our purpose and goals. Our students, staff, and community will always come first. We took more of an initiative in controlling waste, starting with introducing the Polar Bear Share Tables in both cafeterias last school year. We also did away with the foam food containers and went back to reusable/washable trays in the middle/high school. This helped in many ways by making a conscious effort to avoid unnecessary waste in our landfills and helped to cut costs by no longer purchasing the disposable containers and washing the trays without adding any additional labor. We have also introduced some new favorites with housemade salads, pudding cups, a wide selection of zero sugar/low calorie beverages, and a 100% fruit juice Slush Puppie machine! Our staff also gets in on the action with our specialized holiday meals and treats like the mouth-watering reuben and chips special and peanut butter bar sale.

Adversity and change are impossible to avoid, but those times prove to be learning opportunities and help us grow. Our food service staff has the most dedicated mindset and puts nothing but their best efforts forward every day. We are resilient and strong, and we press on. We thank you, Margaretta families and our community, for your support as we continue to strive for the very best!



Our kitchen staff celebrating National School Lunch Week 2024.





MES Update

Mr. Keven Wise, Margaretta Elementary Principal

There's been a lot of positive activity at Margaretta Elementary this year. Our Specials programs have been a big highlight — students have taken part in concerts, art shows, culminating with Specials Day. That event included an art display, a student dance, frisbee golf in PE, robotics, and Spanish portfolios. It's a great way to showcase what students are doing across the building.



We're also proud to highlight the success of the Margaretta Polarbots Robotics Team, which had a fantastic season. Several of our students qualified for the State Meet in Dayton, showing great teamwork, creativity, and problem-solving skills. Their hard work and dedication truly paid off, and we're excited to continue growing the program.

Our music program has also had a strong year with several grade-level performances. Our second graders honored veterans in November with a Veterans Day Program. Kindergarten students took

the stage for a fun-filled concert that highlighted their growth and enthusiasm. And coming up soon, our fifth graders will cap off their elementary music journey with a final performance on May 21. These events are a great reflection of the talent and effort of our students and staff.

We've also continued to build up our PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports) efforts. A new school store is now up and running, and students are rewarded for their positive behaviors by earning points they can spend at the store. We've also put together a teacher-based PBIS team to help guide our next steps and keep the program growing. Recently,

several team members attended the Social Emotional Learning and Mental Wellness Symposium in Port Clinton. This experience helped strengthen our understanding of student needs and gave us valuable tools to bring back to our school.

Our students have also had some great opportunities to learn outside the classroom this spring. Fifth grade visited Stone Lab, where they participated in a fish dissection and went out on Lake Erie for several hands-on water labs. They also attended a performance of The Nutcracker ballet in Toledo — a memorable experience that combined music, movement, and storytelling.

Fourth grade traveled to the Cleveland Museum of Art, where students explored a wide range of artwork from different time periods and cultures. Third grade enjoyed an exciting day at the Cleveland Aquarium, where they learned about aquatic life and conservation. Second grade stepped back in time with a visit to Lyme Village to learn about how families in the 1800s lived.

These trips — and so many of our activities — would not be possible without the support of our PTO. In addition to sponsoring many of our field trips, our PTO also organizes our Book Fairs and Holiday Shop, and helps provide special snacks and treats throughout the year. Their time and effort make a huge difference in creating memorable experiences for our students.

Family involvement has also been strong this spring. Our Doughnuts with Grownups events in first and third grades were a big hit, and it was great to see so many families join us. Looking ahead, we'll be kicking off One School, One Book in May, and this year's pick is ***The World According to Humphrey***.

We appreciate the continued support from our families and community as we finish the year.



Polarbots Robotics



Cleveland Museum of Art



Teaching with Purpose, Preparing for the Future, and Building Community at Margareta

Dr. Jennifer Theis, Middle/High School Principal

Greetings Margareta Families,

It has been three amazing years of transformation at Margareta Middle & High School. Over this time, we've focused on strengthening adolescent literacy, integrating evidence-based instructional strategies, expanding career readiness opportunities, increasing in-house College Credit Plus (CCP) courses, and creating an inclusive learning environment for all students. Our goal is to provide every student with a high quality education and equip them with the skills and knowledge to navigate life beyond Margareta.

Our teachers have continued to grow their instructional practices through high quality professional development provided by the district. Over the past three years, they've worked closely with adolescent literacy specialist Rachel Daniels from the Central Ohio Educational Service Center. Mrs. Daniels consistently praises our staff for their openness to learning and improving their craft. Through this collaboration, our teachers developed the **Margareta Instructional Foundations**, a set of core instructional strategies focused on classroom culture, lesson structure and delivery, explicit instruction, reading, writing, discourse, and vocabulary.



During recent peer observations, it has been exciting to see these strategies being implemented with fidelity across

classrooms. In addition to our work with Mrs. Daniels, Margareta teachers have also learned from nationally recognized reading specialist Dr. Mitchell Brookins. It has been incredible to provide our teachers with such top notch professional development that directly benefits student learning.

Career development has also been a major area of focus. Our goal is to build a clear career pathway for students from grades 6 through 12. One of the key tools in this effort is YouScience, an assessment all students take twice during their time at Margareta. It helps them discover their

natural aptitudes and aligns those strengths with career pathways that are personally meaningful and relevant.

Beginning in 6th grade, students take part in courses that help build essential life and career skills. We've also expanded real-world experiences through job shadowing and our Polar Nation Academy internship program. These opportunities help students learn not only what interests them, but also which careers might not be a good fit. When students have a clearer sense of their career goals, they are better able to select high school courses that align with their dreams for the future.

Expanding College Credit Plus (CCP) opportunities has also been a priority. Many of our students want to challenge themselves and begin exploring college level coursework. Currently, we offer 11 CCP courses taught right here at Margareta. This allows students to earn college credit while receiving high quality instruction from our own teachers, all while still enjoying the full high school experience. We are actively working to expand these offerings in the future.

One of my personal goals has been to ensure every student is involved in something meaningful at school. This year, we launched a new initiative called The Chill Zone. Teachers identified passions and interests they wanted to share with students, and students selected three possible activities they'd like to participate in throughout the year. Once a month, we pause the regular schedule to give students an hour to engage in these activities. Whether it's art, games, crochet, sewing, fishing, or yoga, The Chill Zone has created opportunities for students and teachers to connect, build relationships, and have fun. It has been a huge success, and we look forward to continuing it for years to come.

Margareta Middle & High School continues to be a place where students grow, explore, and thrive. Whether it's through engaging, research based instruction, discovering career paths, earning college credit, or building relationships through shared interests, our students are at the center of everything we do. We are proud of the transformation taking place and remain committed to providing a high quality education in a caring and safe environment where every student can find success and be prepared for the future.



High school music students' spring trip to Chicago



MAKING PROGRESS

NEW SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION TO RESUME END OF MAY 2025

We are thrilled to announce that the construction schedule for our new PK-12 facility is set to restart end of May 2025. This marks an important step forward in our commitment to providing our students with modern and effective learning environments.

The completion date for the construction project is projected for the end of December 2026. We have assembled a strong construction team to ensure the success of this project. Our architects, Fanning & Howey, along with the Mosser Construction team as our Construction Managers, are dedicated to bringing this vision to life. Our Owner Representatives, Ted Kastor and Mike Mendenhall, are closely overseeing the project to ensure it meets our community's needs.

We are pleased to collaborate with the Ohio School Facility Commission which is funding 38% of the project, helping us to alleviate some of the financial burdens associated with this

major undertaking.

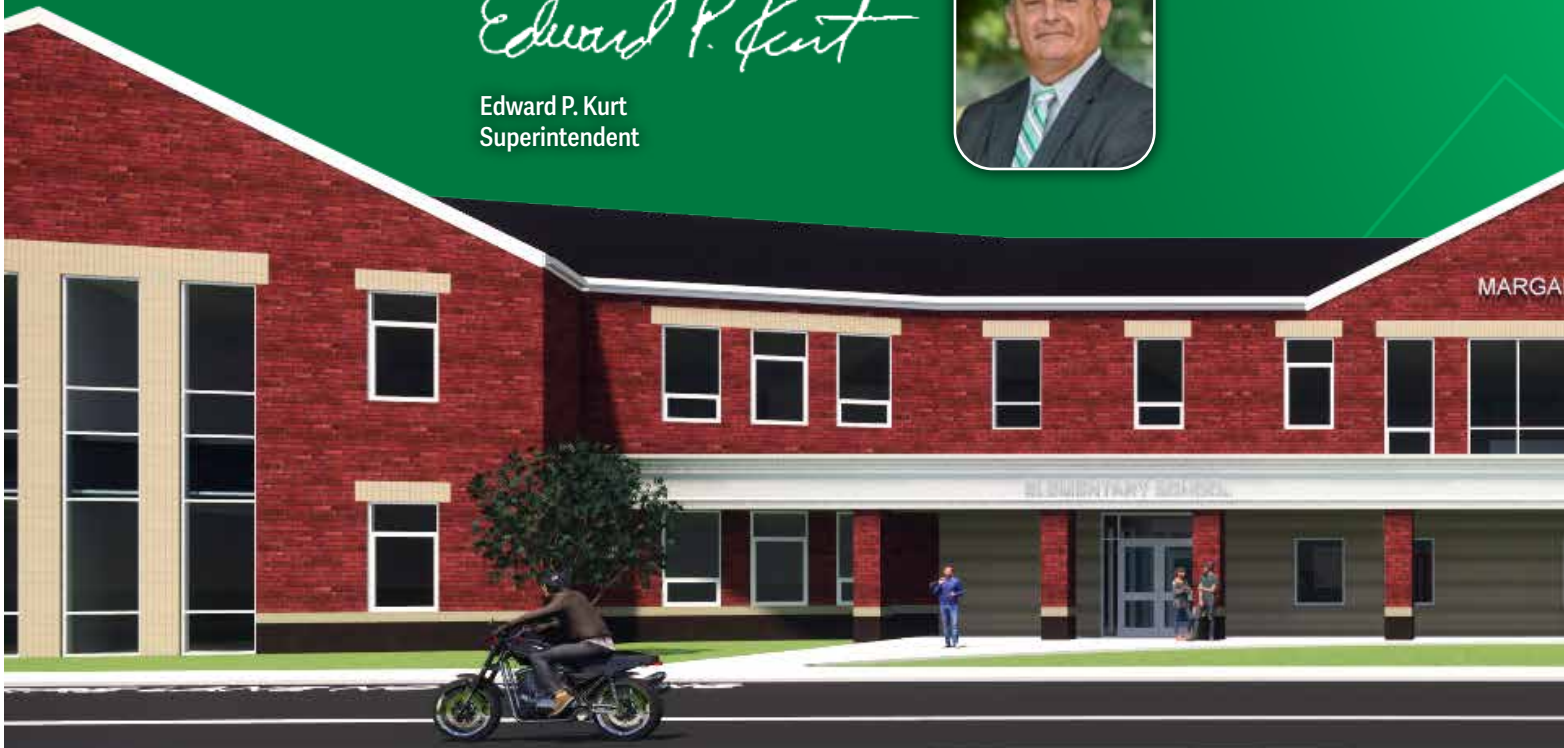
However, we must acknowledge the challenges we have faced. Appeals by the Lorain County Auditor have resulted in a three-year delay for the project. Additionally, inflationary costs have increased the project budget by 37%, putting pressure on our funding sources. Currently, our project costs are closely aligned with Nexus pipeline revenues, making project funding extremely tight.

Despite these challenges, we are excited to address the facility issues in our buildings, which were constructed in 1913 and 1922. This new facility will not only enhance the learning experience for our students but also serve as a vital resource for our entire community!

Thank you for your continued support as we move forward with this significant project. We look forward to sharing more updates with you in the coming months!

Edward P. Kurt

Edward P. Kurt
Superintendent





Schoolhouse and school in 1915



Front Desk



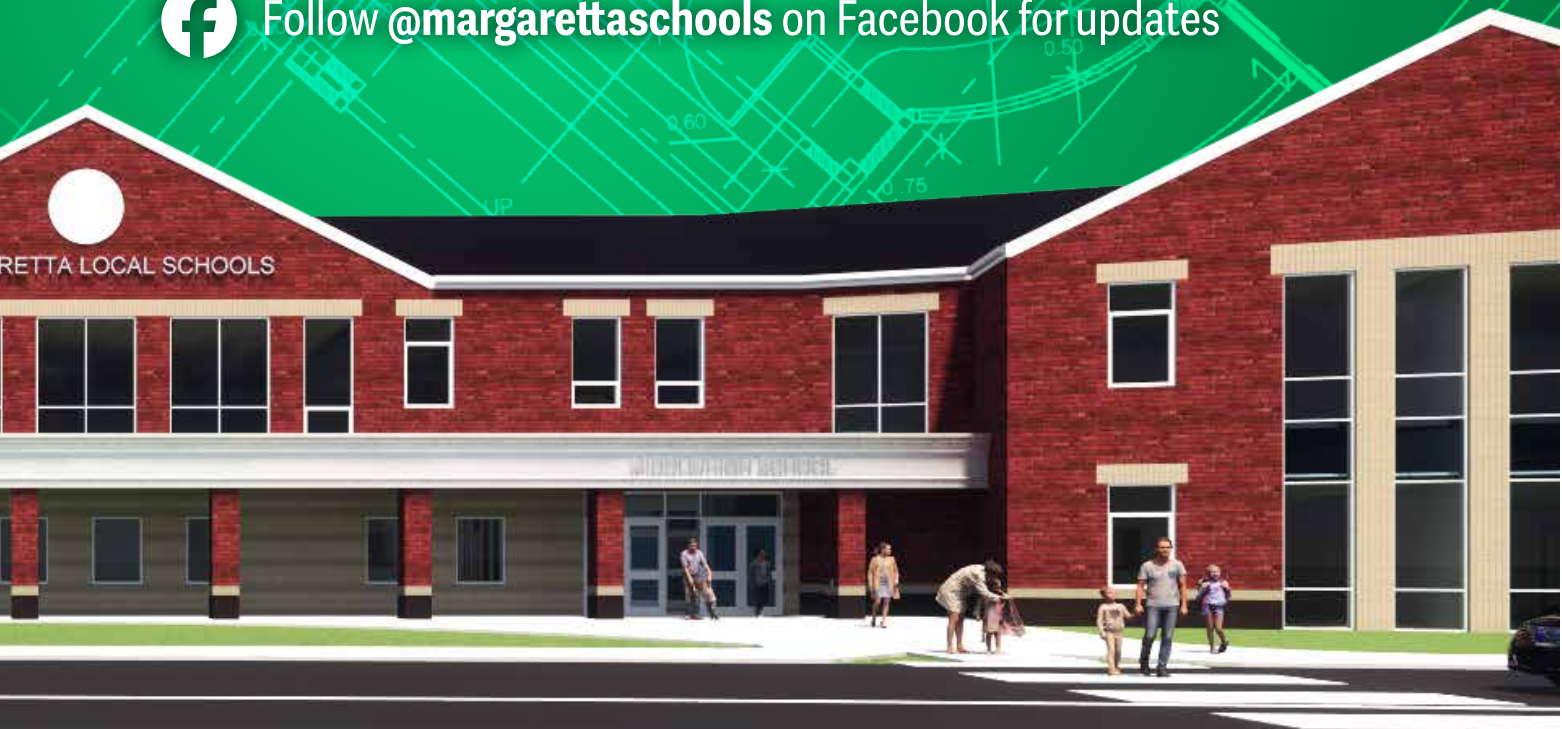
New Cafeteria



New Gymnasium



Follow @margarettaschools on Facebook for updates





Curriculum and Instruction

Heather Campana, Curriculum Director

There's so much great work happening at Margareta Local Schools, and we want to give our families and community a closer look at what's going on behind the scenes to support student learning. As the district's Curriculum and Instruction Director, I have the privilege of seeing the amazing things our teachers are doing for students every single day. Whether they're planning lessons, collaborating with colleagues, or finding new ways to reach every learner, our teachers go above and beyond to make sure kids feel supported, challenged, and successful.



Our teachers are committed to continuous improvement. Whether they're analyzing classroom data to adjust instruction, diving into current research, or attending professional development sessions, they are constantly working to refine their craft so students receive the highest-quality learning experiences. A great example of this is our continued focus on literacy. We remain committed to the Science of Reading and are moving forward with our district-wide literacy initiative, making sure our students build strong reading foundations with evidence-based strategies. Our teachers are learning, planning, and teaching with purpose — and it's making a real difference.

One of the most impactful strategies we've embraced is encouraging peer observations and collaborative team meetings. Teachers are opening their

classrooms to one another, offering a "behind-the-scenes" look at lessons, student engagement strategies, and learning environments. These opportunities allow teachers to learn from each other, share ideas, and grow together in real, practical ways. Professional conversations — both formal and informal — are key to building a strong learning culture. From structured sessions during professional development days to quick hallway chats and co-planning during conference time, our staff are finding creative ways to share what they're learning. These conversations lead to stronger lessons, deeper student understanding, and a more unified approach to teaching across grade levels and buildings.

Another big part of helping our students succeed is making sure we're using the right tools in the classroom. Teams of teachers have worked together to pick resources that are high-quality, research-based, and a good fit for our students. These materials also include built-in assessments that give teachers helpful information about how students are doing. That way, they can adjust their teaching to meet students' needs. And because good tools are only as strong as the people using them, our teachers receive ongoing training and support to make sure they feel confident and prepared to use everything effectively.

We want to make sure every student in our district is learning in a classroom grounded in research-based practices, supported by thoughtful planning, and led by a teacher who is actively growing in their profession. We are proud of the work our teachers are doing.



Adam Reardon's band students showcasing their skills in Jen Coffman's ELA class.



Margareta High School staff members learning about PBIS (positive behavior intervention system).



Teachers showcasing juggling skills, focusing on the need to differentiate for all different abilities.



POLAR BEAR *Nation*



Margaretta Athletics

Mr. Drew Grahl, Athletic Director

The Margaretta Schools community continues to come out in force to support their Polar Bears each and every season. We sincerely appreciate the passion and dedication to which our athletic teams are supported year-round by the parents, families, and community members of Polar Bear Nation. The 2024-2025 school year has been another great year for our Margaretta Athletic programs. We are proud of the experiences that our student-athletes have at Margaretta and of the way those students represent our school and community. Margaretta is a special place and the sports teams help to prove that year in and year out.

CROSS COUNTRY

The fall season was highlighted by a return to the State Cross Country meet for senior Caiden Fultz. Caiden completed an incredible high school cross country career by finishing 17th overall at the state meet, earning him 1st Team All-Ohio honors while also breaking the school record by running a 15:54! This was Fultz's second consecutive trip to the State Cross Country meet as he added 1st Team SBC, 1st Team All-District, and 1st Team All-Region to his resume as well in his senior season. Fultz will move on to Gannon University next fall to continue his academic and running career. Both the boys and girls cross country teams look to have a promising future! Both teams had several freshman and sophomore class runners who made drastic improvement during the season and look to continue hard work this summer and in to next fall.

FOOTBALL

The Margaretta football team made their third consecutive trip to the state playoffs with just three seniors on the team, creating some excitement for the 2025 campaign. The Polar Bears were led by 1st Team All-SBC Defensive Back Judah Keller along with fellow junior Brett Miller who earned 2nd Team All-SBC Linebacker. Joining Miller on 2nd Team All-SBC was sophomore Landon Weyer who earned 2nd team for both offensive and defensive tackle, sophomore Kale Bailey at receiver, and senior Ben Coffman at the center position. The Polar Bears will be at Vermilion on August 22nd to kickoff their season next fall.

GOLF

Both Margaretta Golf teams had great seasons in 2024. The Lady Bears earned their first SBC Championship in school history led by seniors Mattie Kovalaske, Grace Paseka, and Erica Miller! The team also advanced to Districts in Findlay to end their season. Several records were set on the girls side in golf as junior Ellyse Schaefer tied the school mark for lowest 9 hole round with a 38 and 18 hole round with 83. Senior Erica Miller tied Schaefer with the 18 hole score of 83 to earn her share of the school record. The pair also teamed up with Grace Paseka and Mattie Kovalaske to break the 18 hole low team score record when they shot a combined 361. Great season for the Lady Bears. Boys Golf was led by their lone senior, Max Hartman, who qualified for Districts in Bowling Green.

CONTINUED ON **PAGE 10**



VOLLEYBALL

Volleyball was paced by seniors Raegan Heck, Ava Dickman, and Julia Berg. The team was competitive night in and night out and had many players show vast improvement throughout the year. The team will return 8 letter winners next fall. Kenadie Saylor is one of those returners. She was named Honorable Mention All-SBC and 3rd Team All-District while fellow junior Lillian Belak earned Honorable Mention All-District.



SWIMMING & DIVING

It seems as though the Winter season has been a lot of fun for Polar Bear fans in recent years and this past Winter was no different. The Swim/Dive program continues to build on their success. It was the Girls Swim/Dive team's turn to win their first Sandusky Bay Conference title this year, one year after Boys Swim/Dive won their first league title. An incredible 14 student-athletes qualified for District Swimming/Diving for Margaretta this year. Seniors Carson Miller and Alayna Biehl would lead the pack as both qualified for the State Swim Meet in the 50 and 100 freestyle events. This was Miller's second consecutive trip to State in swim while Biehl made her third straight trip. Alayna Biehl ended up with a podium finish this year earning her 1st Team All-Ohio honors. Biehl set a new school record in the 50 freestyle with a 24.2 and 100 freestyle with a 53.95. She also teamed up with Savannah Suto, Kylee Aceto, and Kayla Aceto to set a new school record in the 400 free relay with a time of 3:52.35. Miller also broke the boys 50 freestyle school record with a 21.89, the 100 freestyle record with a 48.95 while he then broke the school record in the 200 free relay with Jace Berg, Eli Conner, and Lucan White.



CONTINUED ON **PAGE 11**



GIRLS BASKETBALL

Basketball continues to be a staple of Margaretta Athletics. The Margaretta Lady Bears completed their fourth consecutive year undefeated in the SBC Bay Division on their way to the sixth consecutive league championship — 22nd in school history. Tournament time was equally as fun for our girls basketball team as they once again advanced to Regionals. This was their fourth consecutive trip to Regionals and 19th in school history. The team battled hard and got the attention of people across the state as evidenced by senior Raegan Heck and junior Cassidy Lane both earning Special Mention All-Ohio honors. The pair also earned 1st Team All-SBC and 1st Team All-District. Junior Kendadie Saylor was recognized as 2nd Team All-SBC and 2nd Team All-District while Ellyse Schaefer was named Honorable Mention All-SBC.

BOYS BASKETBALL

Not to be outdone, the Margaretta Boys Basketball team supplied all kinds of excitement to Polar Bear fans with an incredible season. The Bears were outright Sandusky Bay Conference Bay Division Champions, their 3rd in four years and fifth in school history. They too continued to play excellent basketball in to the tournament where they would get back to Regionals for the 2nd straight season and 3rd time in four years. This was Margaretta's fifth trip in school history to the Regional round of the state playoffs. Margaretta was led by junior phenom Julian Washington. Washington became Margaretta High School's first ever boys basketball player to earn 1st Team All-Ohio honors! Along with All-Ohio, Julian also earned 1st Team All-SBC and 1st Team All-District honors for his efforts this year. Along the way, Julian broke two school records. He broke the school mark for best 2 point field goal percentage for a season with a crazy 73.89% season. Julian also put his name solidly in to the record books by scoring a school best 570 points for the season. Fellow junior Judah Keller also received high praise across the state as he was recognized as Special Mention All-Ohio, 1st Team All-District, and 1st Team All-SBC. These two along with the return of 3 other varsity letter winners has our community excited for next year! Senior Nolan Wiley broke two school records this season! First, Wiley broke the record for most 3-point goals in a game when he hit 9 against Edison in mid-December. He also set a new mark for best 3 point field goal percentage for the season with a staggering 53.76%. Nolan's efforts were rewarded with a 2nd Team All-SBC and 2nd Team All-District selections. Joining in on the league honors were senior Tate Bailey and sophomore Tyson Bailey, both who took home All-SBC Honorable Mention awards.

WRESTLING

Margaretta Wrestling put together a fine season and has everyone returning for next season! Juniors Cohen Gahler and Evan Starr earned their 3rd year varsity awards while sophomore Trace Wilson and freshman Fernando Gonzales both

qualified for Districts. Along with these four wrestlers, the team will bring back four other varsity letter winners plus some promising up and coming 8th graders that will get their taste of high school action next year as freshmen.

BOWLING

One of Margaretta's fastest growing programs in the newly established Bowling team! For the first time in program history, the bowling team had enough members to have both a full boys and girls squad. Our Girls Bowling team was highly competitive and led by sophomore Brooke Hastings. Brooke earned her second varsity letter while also setting two new school records this year; best season average with a 186.4 and highest girls series with a 430. Senior Erica Miller was honored as All-SBC Honorable Mention for her efforts during the season. The Boys Bowling team has some young, promising members who will look to make a splash in SBC play next winter.

CHEERLEADING

As we end our winter summary of athletics, we would like to point out the phenomenal job that our cheer program does during both the Fall and Winter seasons at Margaretta. Their school spirit and enthusiasm are contagious and we are very appreciate of all of the time and talents that they dedicate to all of our sports teams each and every year.

SPRING SPORTS

The Spring season is just underway at print time of this article. The Boys and Girls Track and Field teams look to continue to be at the top of the leaderboard in both league and state tournament action. The girls team has some very talented returners leading the way with seven seniors! The boys team looks to really raise some eyebrows this year as they have nine seniors leading the way for them.

It has been a miserably cold start of the season for baseball and softball this Spring, but the team hopes to get hotter on their Spring Break trips to Beckley, West Virginia. Once they return, the SBC Bay Division will be a great test for both programs. Six seniors will help guide the baseball team. Head Coach Ray Neill also earned his 500 career baseball coaching victory with an early season win over Lakota. Softball has just two seniors this year as Mattie Kovalaske and Lilah Deeks will lead the way. Be sure to check out some baseball and softball action at Lion's Park this year.

As always, we'd like to thank the entire community for their support and dedication to Margaretta Athletics.

2024-2025 *Polar Pride*

