

Coach Jeremy Wilkinson coached the varsity football Blazers for seventeen years during two different stints as the leader of the program.

## Coach Hangs Up The Clipboard *Several years of Friday Night Lights at KHS*

**After leading the Kalkaska Blazers football program for nearly two decades, Head Coach Jeremy Wilkinson announced his retirement from coaching football to "...walk away and start enjoying life."**

There's a quote that seems fitting for this moment: **"Making a big life change is pretty scary. But, know what's even scarier? Regret."** Jeremy has spent 17 years pouring himself into the program, and now he's choosing to step away before regret becomes part of his story—regret over missed time, missed moments, missed life beyond the sidelines.

For those who know Jeremy, this isn't just the end of a coaching tenure—it's the closing of a significant chapter in Kalkaska athletics. Jeremy and his wife Cheri have been pillars of our community, their influence extending far beyond the football field and into the foundation of what makes Kalkaska sports special.

Seventeen years is a long time to dedicate your Thursday and Friday nights, summers, and countless hours to developing young athletes. Jeremy didn't just coach football—he coached young men. He taught them about preparation, accountability, and what it means to represent something bigger than yourself. Anyone who spent time in the booth on Thursday nights hearing his JV commentary or watched him work the sidelines on Friday nights knows that his passion for the program ran deep.

★ By Jeremy Guggemos, Athletic Director

★ Continued on Page 8

### INSIDE THIS EDITION

#### BULLETIN

Kalkaska Public Schools  
315 S. Coral St.  
Kalkaska, Michigan 49646

PRST STD U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
CADILLAC MI PERMIT #147

BOX HOLDER  
KALKASKA MI 49646

# TAKING FLIGHT

## RCE Students Learn About Local Raptors

Education took wings at RCE in November! We want to extend a huge thank you to the North Sky Raptor Sanctuary for visiting our school to share a passion for birds of prey. Students were captivated as they learned about the unique characteristics of raptors and the essential role they play in our northern Michigan ecosystem. This hands-on experience didn't just teach them about birds; it inspired them to become young stewards of our local environment.

### RCE's Holiday Outreach

At RCE, the true spirit of the holidays is found in how we care for one another. This December, our school community came together to provide care packages

filled with essential items for local families in need. While these bags met physical needs, they served a deeper purpose, modeling the values of empathy and generosity for our students. We are grateful for the compassion shown by our RCE family, proving that small acts of kindness truly make a big difference.

### Christmas Concert

The school was filled with holiday cheer during our Christmas concert, as students shared their talents through music and song, with a few students standing out in their solo performances. Our hallways came alive as parents and students explored our festive door-decorating contest! It was a joyful evening that

captured the spirit of the season through creative displays, holiday music, and of course, plenty of Christmas cookies donated by our PTO.

### Welcomes New Staff Member

RCE is excited to welcome Ms. Harris as our new special education teacher! Ms. Harris brings a passion for supporting all learners and a strong commitment to helping students grow academically, socially, and emotionally. She is dedicated to creating an inclusive, encouraging environment where every child feels supported and valued. Staff and students alike are already enjoying her positive energy and caring approach.



### **LEARNING!**

RCE students have had a great opportunity to learn about local wildlife. In addition, the school celebrated Christmas in December and welcomed a new teacher for the second half of the year.

# Resolution No. 1

## *Develop, keep, and practice great habits!*

Happy New Year! We are so excited to welcome our Blazers back to school after winter break. We hope everyone enjoyed special time with family and friends and are ready for a brand-new year of learning and fun.

January is a great time to practice good habits, try new challenges, and set goals—big or small. At Birch Street Elementary, we will continue to work together to be kind, respectful, and responsible as

we learn and grow. Let's make 2026 a fantastic year full of reading, learning, and Blazer pride!

### Tips for a Great Start

- ★ **Arrive on time every day — learning starts at 8:10 a.m.**
- ★ **Label jackets, lunchboxes, and water bottles**
- ★ **Read at home for 15–20 minutes every night**
- ★ **Ask your child: “What did you**

**learn today?”**

### January Fun Fact & Riddle

- ★ Fun Fact: No two snowflakes are exactly alike!
- ★ Riddle: What can you catch but not throw? (Answer: A cold!)

### **Events**

- ★ February 6 and 9 — No School
- ★ February 16 — No School Staff Professional Development



### **READY TO HAVE FUN!**

Christmas was a time to celebrate for our students at BSE.

# Coding at the upper elementary

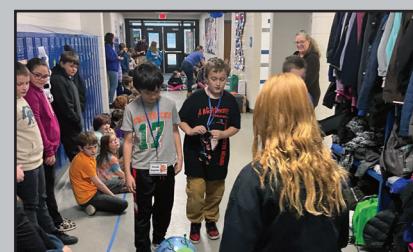
The 5th-grade team invited the local Regional Educational Media Center into the building to work with the students on coding. Students measured the length of the hallway. They then began programming (coding) robots to travel the length of the hallway, navigating the hallway's turn and width. Students showcased their work, planning, and design as a Balloons Over Broadway parade.

## KES Choir

Kalkaska Elementary School debuted the Elementary Choir. This group of 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders met after school for the weeks prior to the Elementary Holiday Concert to develop several unique pieces to perform for the audience. Music teacher Mrs. Muraida wanted to provide an opportunity for students to showcase their talents, and they did not disappoint.

## Holiday Concert

On December 15 the Kalkaska Elementary had its Holiday Concert. Grades 3–5 performed a variety of holiday–themed musical numbers and skits. This was a great opportunity for students to show their musical talents, and many students had solos that were picked from volunteers. Students put hard work into this event, and Muraida worked hard to develop the program, and it sounded great!



## FUN AT THE UE!

The students at Kalkaska Upper Elementary School have been busy learning and having fun. Who knew you could learn and have fun at the same time?

# A December to Remember

Last December, KMS was full of holiday spirit and excitement as students and staff came together to celebrate the season in fun and creative ways. The month kicked off with Spirit Week, which featured several themed dress-up days that brought energy and laughter to the hallways.

One favorite was Throwback Day, when students dressed in styles from the 1960s, 70s, and 80s. Another highlight was Anything but a Backpack Day, where students showed off their creativity by carrying books and supplies in unusual

items ranging from laundry baskets and Rubbermaid containers to, in one memorable case, a shopping cart.

December also featured a special treat for the school's VIP students. Each month, teachers and staff select students who demonstrate positive behavior, good manners, and extra effort both in and out of the classroom. Our VIPs enjoyed a festive cookie decorating activity, complete with cookies, frosting, sprinkles, and candies—allowing students to design and enjoy their own delicious creations. Adding to the holiday cheer,

every KMS classroom participated in a door-decorating contest. Students worked together to transform their classroom doors with unique and colorful holiday designs, competing for the title of best decorated door. After much schoolwide admiration, the winning entry was Mrs. Besselsen's class, whose creative Snoopy-themed door stood out from the rest.

Overall, December was a memorable month at KMS, filled with creativity, school spirit, and festive fun that brought the entire school community together.



## KMS IN ACTION

Students at the middle school have been engaged in many activities, including some fun thematic days as well as Christmas!

# HOW TO SHARE BOOKS WITH YOUR PRESCHOOLER



**KALKASKA COUNTY  
LIBRARY**

**247 S. Cedar St  
Kalkaska**

**(231) 258-9411  
kalkaskalibrary.org**

- Set aside **20-30 minutes** with TV and smartphones off for sharing books as part of your regular bedtime routine.
- Find a quiet, **comfortable**, and relaxing space for book sharing.
- **Ask your child** what they think about the pictures and the story.
- Respond with **enthusiasm** to your child's questions and comments.
- Ask your child to show you all the things in a picture that are **alike** in some way. You can say: "*Can you find all the blue things?*" or "*Show me all the things that can fly.*"
- Point out **colors, shapes, numbers, and letters** in their books.
- Take your child to your **local public library** to borrow books or to enjoy weekly story times!





## TEEN HEALTH CORNER

Medical and Counseling services  
for ages 5-21

- Same Day & Walk-in Appointments
- Wellness and Sports Physicals
- Illness & Minor Injury Care
- Lab Tests
- Immunizations
- Concussion Clearance
- Specialty Referrals
- Mental Health
- And Other Concerns like: Acne, Nutrition, Asthma + more

Sliding Fee \$10-\$25 if Uninsured

Medicaid Application Assistance

See an Experienced Provider in a Convenient Location At/Near School

Open Year Round (including breaks)



### CONTACT US:

**〔231〕 258-7791**

Kalkaska

419 South Coral St

Open Mon-Fri

**〔231〕 258-7922**

**KMS-E3  
Behavior Health  
services ONLY**

Kalkaska Middle School

1700 West Kalkaska St

Open Mon-Fri

**〔231〕 369-2000**

**Forest Area HS/MS**

7741 Shippy Rd

Open Mon, Wed, Thurs

# KPS seeks school bus drivers

KPS is looking for parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc. who would like to drive children to school and home safely.

## AND GET PAID TO DO IT!

If you are interested, please contact the Kalkaska Public School Bus Garage at (231) 564-1518 and ask for Anastasia Weatherholt. We will help you get your license to be able to drive a school bus!

# KALKASKA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

### Board of Education

Rachael Birgy	—	President
Steve Ordway	—	Vice President
Wendy Watson	—	Secretary
Mary Scobey	—	Treasurer
Richard Hodgman	—	Trustee
Chase Stevenson	—	Trustee
Mitchell Saxton	—	Trustee

### Central Business Office — 258-9109

Rick Heitmeyer, Superintendent	1120
Cari Jo Roberts, Executive Assistant	1101
Jeffrey Scroggins, Director of Finance	1104
David Tucker, Human Resources Director	1116

### Senior High — 258-9167

Staci Short, Principal	2103
Aaron Ostrander, Assistant Principal	2170
Mary Deb Rabourn, Secretary	2102
Monica Crawford, Secretary	2173

### Kalkaska Alternative Program — 258-2777

Josh England, Dean of Students

### Blazer Bulletin

Published by KPS

Superintendent: Rick Heitmeyer

The Blazer Bulletin is published during the school year from September—June. If you have any suggestions, or questions, please contact the office at (231) 258-9109 between the hours of 8 a.m.—4 p.m. Editorial assistance provided by Kalkaska County Library Director John P. Roberts.

All content copyright © MMXXVI by Kalkaska Public Schools

### Middle — 258-4040

Laura Gehman, Principal	3205
Daryl Dimon, Dean of Students	3208
Nickey Torrey, Secretary	3201
Sandra Kittle, Secretary	3203

### Birch Street Elementary — 258-8629

Arica Zenner, Principal	4204
Tracy Dimon, Secretary	4200
Melissa Patnode, Secretary	4202

### Early Childhood Learning Center — 258-0257

Arica Zenner, Director

### Kalkaska Upper Elementary — 258-9146

Ryan Moore, Principal	5106
Sue Woodruff, Secretary	5107

### Rapid City Elementary — 331-6121

Kevin Malbouef, Dean of Students	6103
Robyn Czuk, Secretary	6101

### Athletics — 258-9167

Jeremy Guggemos, Athletic Director	2236
Linda Colvin, Secretary	2185

**BLAZERS**

# ONCE A BLAZER ALWAYS A BLAZER

## ★ Continued from Page 1

"There are many high points that have taken place during my time as head coach that I will never forget," Jeremy wrote in his resignation letter. For those of us who witnessed those moments—the hard-fought victories, the character-building losses, the growth of young athletes into leaders—we won't forget them either.

What stands out most about Jeremy's retirement isn't just what he accomplished, but how he's approaching his departure. True to form, he's thinking about what's best for the program. He's offered to help select his replacement, ensure all equipment is properly stored, and continue supporting our student-athletes however he can. That's the kind of person Jeremy is—organized, thoughtful, and committed to seeing Kalkaska football continue to succeed.

As our new athletic director, I can tell you that finding Jeremy's replacement is a tall task. His meticulous record-keeping, his institutional knowledge, and his presence on game nights aren't easily replaced. But perhaps the best testament to his leadership is that he's built something worth continuing—a program with a foundation strong enough to keep moving forward.

**To Jeremy: Thank you for 17 years of Friday nights, for the example you set for our young athletes, and for everything you, Cheri, and your family have contributed to Kalkaska athletics. You've earned the right to enjoy life a little more. We'll miss seeing you on the sidelines, but we're grateful for the legacy you're leaving behind.**



The Varsity Football Head Coach position is posted and anyone interested in continuing the tradition Jeremy built should check [kpschools.com](http://kpschools.com) for the application process.



## CHRISTMAS AT KUE

Students at the UE engaged the community in a wonderful Christmas concert just prior to break. The community celebrated with our KUE students!