

THE CLASS OF 2026

“Show Up, Commit, and Persist”

The Class of 2026 met at Kalkaska High School for the final time on Thursday May 21 for a 7 o'clock graduation ceremony. By 8 o'clock all of them had walked across the stage and Principal Staci Short had officially recognized and presented the Class of 2026.



The Board of Education joined the teaching and administrative staff back in the auditorium prior to the ceremony. Board President Rachael Birgy and trustee Chase Stevenson handed out diplomas while KHS assistant principal Aaron

Valedictorian Coltrane Paryani and Salutatorian Abigail Minion both spoke and offered words of encouragement and advice to their classmates. The KPS band performed under the direction of Ms. Samantha Ward.

High school teacher and 2017 alumnus Zach Ingersoll was the students' choice for commencement speaker and he shared words of wisdom for the Class of 2026.

The day began with the annual Senior Breakfast where the seniors and their parents and grandparents enjoyed a wonderful breakfast prepared by KPS's food service department. The Senior Video followed in the auditorium — such great memories were elicited! Principal Staci Short delivered some final words and some direction for the remainder of the day and then our seniors left the room to go their various ways for a few hours, each one mentally rehearsing how to say goodbye.

Ostrander pronounced the graduates' names as they proudly walked across the graduation stage.

The Class of 2026 were sixth graders just prior to the pandemic, and Mrs. Short was the KMS principal. In her graduation speech, she encouraged our graduates to show up, to commit, and to persist. The Class of 2026 is a wonderful group of men and women ready to do those things and conquer the world!



INSIDE THIS EDITION

BULLETIN

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

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Students visit Grass River and more

Ms. Schwab's second and third-grade class spent time learning about Williams Syndrome to better understand and celebrate their amazing classmate who truly is 1 in 10,000! Students learned about kindness, inclusion, and how our differences make each of us special. They also created heartfelt drawings to show love and support for their friend Rocky. We are so proud of the compassion and empathy our students show every day!

Raven Hill

Mrs. Wodehouse's kindergarteners had a spectacular time visiting the Raven Hill Discovery Center. The class explored hands-on exhibits that connected science, history, and art in fun and exciting ways. From discovering interactive activities in



the main museum to getting an up-close look at reptiles in the animal room, our young learners were engaged, curious, and full of excitement all day. Thank you to Raven Hill Discovery Center for providing such a memorable learning experience for our kiddos.

Tiny Feet Big Adventures

Mrs. Steinhoff's first grade class visited Grass River this past week. Students explored nature through hands-on learning, discovering local plants, wildlife, and the importance of protecting our environment. From hiking the boardwalk trails to exploring the river, the day was filled with curiosity and teamwork. Experiences like these help bring learning to life and connect our students to the beautiful ecosystem around them.

Planting Seeds For The Future

Our fourth and fifth grade class had an opportunity to put in some work at the Alden Depot and help plant over 1,000 native flowers! Students worked together to beautify the community while learning the importance of caring for our environment and taking pride in

the places around us. **This hands-on experience connects directly to our school's new vision by creating meaningful, place-based learning opportunities that teach students stewardship, sustainability, and community involvement.** We are so proud of our students for making a positive impact and helping our community bloom. RCE wants to give a big shout-out to Paul from AuSable Institute for working alongside our students this school year!



Watch out for the slide

Students can lose up to two months of reading skills!

What an absolutely incredible school year it has been! From the very first day of school to our final countdown, we are incredibly proud of the growth, resilience, and joy our students have shown.

We watched our kindergarteners become confident readers, our older students step up as school leaders, and everyone come together to make this a truly unforgettable year. A massive thank you to our phenomenal teachers, staff, and families—we couldn't do this without your endless support.

Keep the "Summer Slide" Away!

Did you know your children can lose up to two months of reading skills over the summer? Keep them sharp by joining the

Kalkaska Library's Summer Reading Program. Just 20 minutes of reading a day makes a massive difference!

Looking Ahead

While summer is just beginning, here are a few quick notes for the fall:

- ★ School Supply Lists: Posted on the school Facebook page.
- ★ Blazer Bash: August 20, watch Facebook for the times your child's school will be open!
- ★ First Day of School: See you back on August 25!

Wishing you a safe, relaxing, and sun-filled summer break. Keep reading, keep exploring, and we will see you in August!



Choir, Field Day, Seniors

The Kalkaska Upper Elementary Choir has been busy this spring. They opened one of our last track meets with The Star-Spangled Banner. This was the first time they had tried such a performance, but they nailed it!

On May 26, they had a concert for the community with the Kalkaska Middle School Choir. It was a great night to celebrate all of the work the kids have put into singing. We are excited to see what this group can do in the future.

Field Day

The UE had Field Day for the 4th and 5th graders. Students participated in a multitude of events that tested their mental and physical stamina ... and their ability to tolerate water! Students and staff had a great time cheering kids on and enjoying the amazing weather.

Market Day

Fourth grade students applied what they learned in their economics units to real life. Students identified a “need” that their peers would potentially buy. The “need” gets created, and students had a chance to sell their wares at the Market Day event. This draws in the entire 4th grade student body and any adult (teachers, paraprofessionals, secretaries, and principals) who happens to be free during the event. Students created advertisements and displayed their “permit” to show they could legally sell their crafts. Don’t worry, parents, all money that is exchanged is fake. Students then reflected on the event and analyzed successes, failures, and how they can improve their products.

Senior Walkthrough

On May 21, the graduating seniors completed their annual walkthrough of the Kalkaska Elementary School. This event allowed the elementary students to

flood the halls to send off our graduates. Music played as the Senior Class walked through the halls and gave high-fives or knuckle-bumps to the elementary students. It is a great time for celebration! Go Blazers!

Peer to Peer

The KUE, through the lower elementary counselor and intermediate school supports, has had a Peer to Peer (P2P) group meet throughout the year. This group pairs students who struggle socially with peers who help them understand social interactions. As a culminating activity, all students involved traveled to Crossroad Farms for pizza and bowling. They also traveled to McDonald’s, where Mr. Holka gave them a tour and showed them how to make sundaes with the ice cream machine. The students had a great time and helped build friendships along the way.





Kayla Alexander



Ryley Allen



Kali Anderson



Jackson Arnold



Devon Bachelor



Jerzie Barkovich



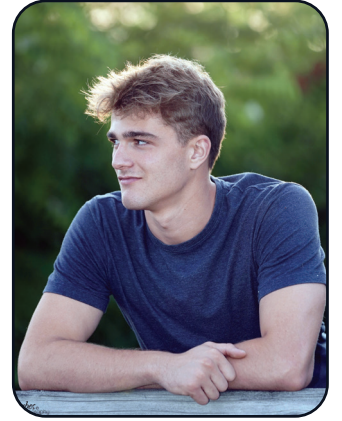
Melanie Barrett



Alex Bishop



Sebastian Bogart



Alex Bontrager



Zikiyah Brammer



Tre Bromley



Matteo Bruni



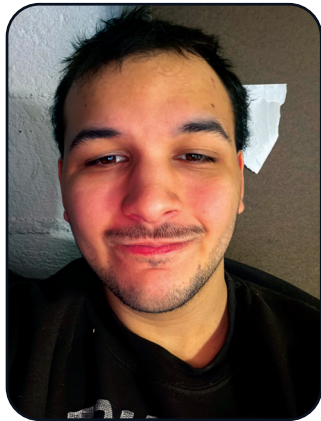
Spencer Burke



Ashlynn Coates-Conway



Donovan Cole



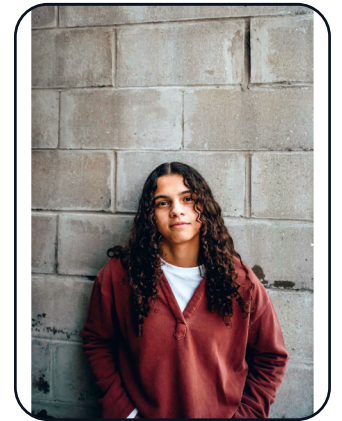
Michael Corbello



Matthew Cox



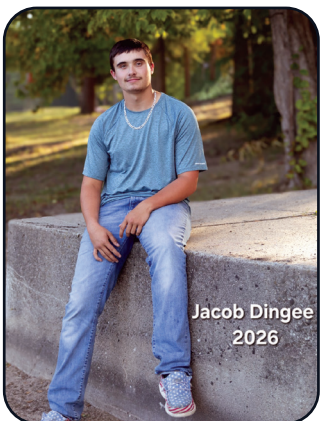
Grace Crawford



Keira Curry



Miles Deaton



Jacob Dingee



Kailey Dougherty



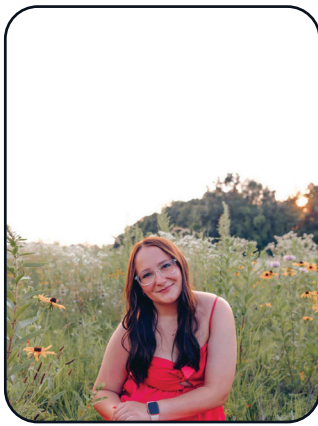
Austin Douglas



Aiden Flory



Camron Fukino



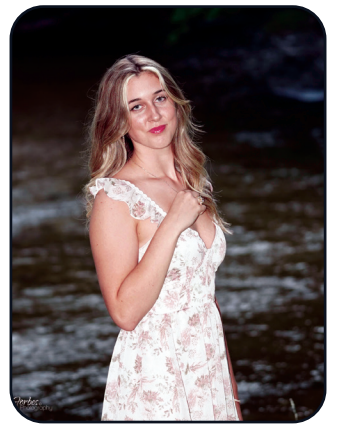
Ellie Garcia



Madison Gothrup



Abigail Grames



Carly Griffith



Morgan Gustafson



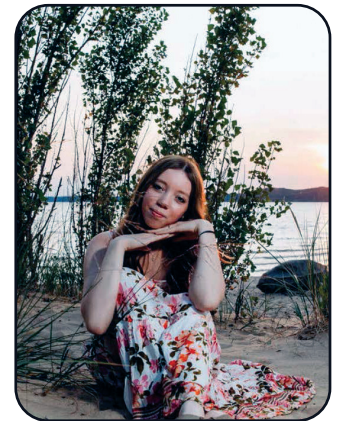
Abigail Hampton



Joshua Hartsoe



Max Holka



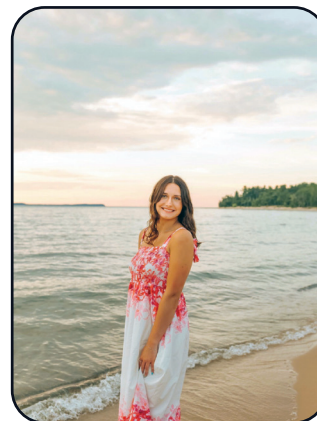
Lily Jenema



Daniel Jenkins



Cohl Jennings



Samantha Kelly



Cierra Laukhart



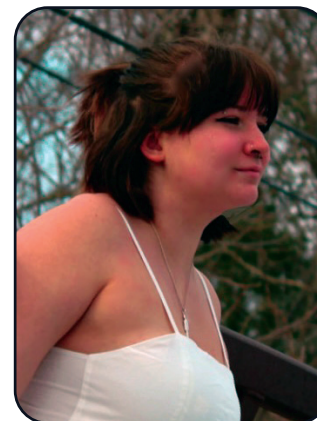
Myah Little



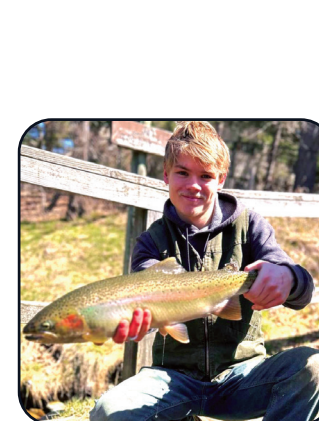
Willow Lund



Anna Martin



Elizabeth Marvin



Elijah Matley



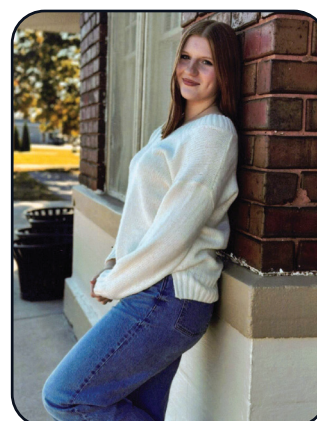
Isac May



Thomas McKee



Brooke Meredith



Jenna Mexico



Damien Miller



Kole Miller



Abigail Minion



Danielle Mitchell



Devin Mitchell



Anastasia Morris



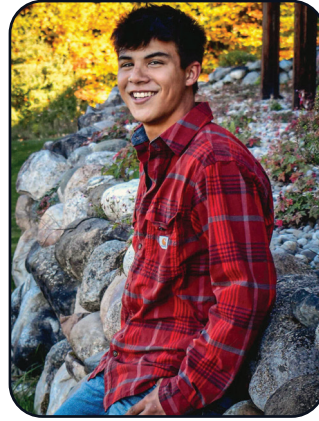
Carlos Morton-Clark



Jason Neubecker



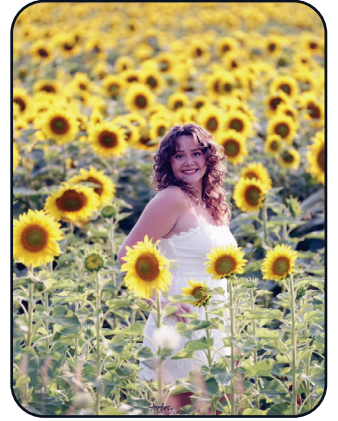
Hunter Newell



Jack Ngirarsaol



James Nichols



Addison Novath



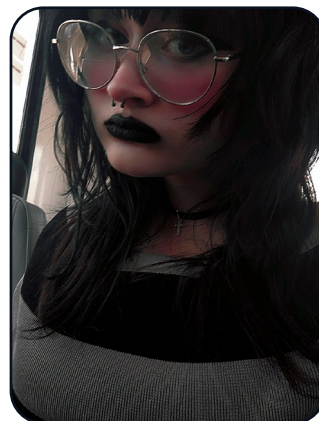
Madeline Palacios



Coltrane Paryani



Lacy Patnode



Mathis Patterson



Autumn Peck



Brendan Piechocki



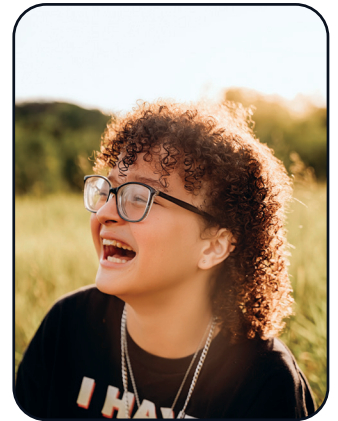
Sophia Plumb



Cade Ponstein



Zachary Porter



Aubrey Redman



Kylie Robinson



Charlie Sanchez



Emily Sanchez



Stephen Saunders



Ava Schoech



Morgan Schoech



Kaylynn Sebright



Jackson Shetler



Curtis Skaggs



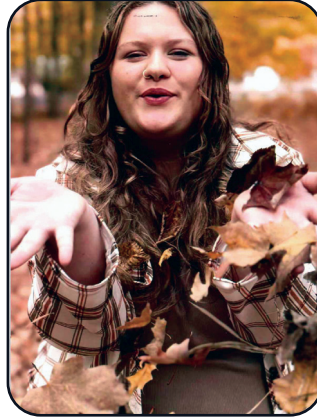
Tyler Smith



Maya Snyder



Bradley Sparks-Boone



Kaitlyn Stoops



Jaykob Strait



Samantha Tack



Carmen Tillman



Lillian Trumble



Domanic Underwood



Alyssa Vanduzen



Jonah Weaver



Addison White

Foreign Exchange Student - Matteo
Bruni. Not Pictured - Olivia Kelley

Class of 2026

Valedictorian and Class President - Coltrane Paryani
Salutatorian and Student Council President - Abigail Minion
Class Vice-President - Kayla Alexander
Class Secretary - Brooke Meredith
Class Treasurer - Tre Bromley

Class Motto - "If you can't look back at your life and be at peace, change how you live it."

Class Colors - Blue and White

Class Song - "Good Riddance (Time of your Life)" by Green Day

Class Flower - Hibiscus



Hunter Wilkinson

KALKASKA HIGH SCHOOL THE CLASS OF 2026

Eighth graders reflect on KMS memories, future

As the final bell of the school year approaches, our outgoing 8th-grade class is preparing to say goodbye to middle school. To capture the mood of the graduating class, we reviewed end-of-the-year questionnaires from several students. Their answers reveal a mix of humor, wisdom, and classic end-of-the-year honesty.

Carter McKinnon

- ★ Middle School in One Word: Interesting
- ★ Advice for Next Year's 8th Graders: "Do your homework"
- ★ Most Influential Staff Member: Mr. Brown — "He's always happy"
- ★ First Summer Action: "Sleep in"
- ★ Most Looking Forward to in High School: "Hanging out with my upperclassman buddies"



Brynn Foerster

- ★ One Word: Memorable
- ★ Advice: "Respect your teachers, they do so much for you."



- ★ Influential: Mrs. Stapleton — "Because she always has a positive outlook on everything and everyone."
- ★ Summer Action: "I am definitely going to go tanning."
- ★ High School: "I am looking forward to more opportunities and getting to have cooler spirit days."

Taylor Giganti

- ★ One Word: Chaotic
- ★ Advice: "Please be respectful as much as your teachers respect you."
- ★ Influential: Mr. Karazia — "Is the most influential to me because he answers the wackiest questions, off and on topic."
- ★ Summer Action: "I'm going to do absolutely NOTHING and pull all nighters while gaming with friends."
- ★ High School: "I'm looking forward to meeting more mature people my age and meeting new teachers!"



Tally Kaiser

- ★ One Word: Mindful
- ★ Advice: "Don't spend your whole year stressing about what others think."

- ★ Influential: Mrs. Shyenne — "...Because, she has never judged, and is always there if you need to talk."



- ★ Summer Action: "Say good bye to everyone and go to my friend's house."
- ★ High School: "School dances and being with my older friends."

Michael Medsker

- ★ One Word: cool
- ★ Advice: "Don't do things stupid"
- ★ Influential: Ms. Sandy — "She helps with everything, never loses her temper"
- ★ Summer Action: "Sadly summer school"
- ★ High School: "Nothing"



Good luck to all of our departing 8th graders as they head off to high school next year!

This page produced by the KHS journalism class under the leadership of Ms. Gina Dellate.



Jackson Arnold and Samantha Tack, members of this year's Prom Court, prepare to party in front of Ellakay Begg's artwork.

A Night in Rio Brings the Heat



Prom is always an anticipated event at any high school, but the class of 2026 arrived to this year's event in particularly high spirits, ready to celebrate with a tropical flair at their special evening. Ticket sales soared past 100 long before prom night, 5/9.

Attendees were treated to a themed photo booth, a flip flop station and an array of small favors to commemorate the night. DJ Darrell Boger kept the music thumping, and the dance floor was full from start to finish..



Dan Jenkins, Courtney Borden, Tre Bromley, Ms. Walter, Aubrey Manchester, parent Sarah Manchester, Marissa Manchester and Easton Stumm take full advantage of the photo booth.

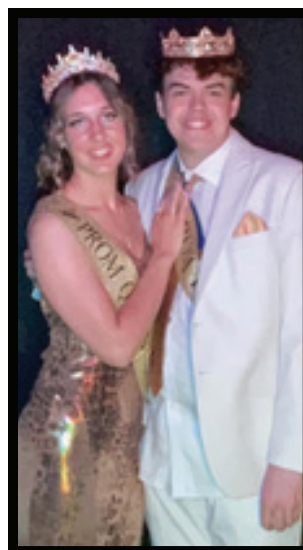
The "Night in Rio" atmosphere, hosted at the Mill Pond Event Center by the class of 2027 who shared in the festivities, was on full display: bright colors, tropical birds and multicolor balloons punctuated the decor. The theme was carried through the food and drink, with plentiful fruit and "dirty" drinks among the offerings.



Mrs. Crambell, high school art teacher extraordinaire enjoys interacting with students at every event, including Maria Montis Quijada, who is a Spanish exchange student.



Hannah Newell, Adrianah Hahnenberg, Naomi Wilke, Kiera Udell and Raelynn David were a few of the juniors in attendance.




Crown Jewel of the Evening

If you ask anyone who attended KHS Prom 2026 what the sweetest and most heartwarming moment of prom was, it is likely that there would be a single standout answer: the crowning of Cohl Jennings and Carly Griffith as Prom King and Queen.

These two seniors, already known for their good nature and positive energy, were so joyful in celebrating their win that the energy was contagious. "We didn't expect this," Cohl gushed. "We're just so grateful."



TEEN HEALTH CORNER



Congratulations Class of 2026!

Even after you graduate, you are still eligible to use the Teen Health Corner until you are 22 years of age.

We are here to help with:


- Routine check ups
- Immunizations for College
- Mental Health support
- Referrals and wellness resources
- Medicaid application assistance, if needed

Take care of yourself as you begin your next chapter of life.

Current students, get your Sports Physical/Well Child NOW, do not wait until August! We are here all summer. Call us make an appointment today!

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




VISIT THE NEW KALKASKA COUNTY LIBRARY BOOK SHED

Dear KPS Parents and Caregivers,

If you hadn't heard, the library's basement flooded this-past April, meaning we had to relocate our kids and teen books while we make repairs.

Our temporary location is the large, brown storage shed next to the existing library. We appreciate your patience while we get the flooding damage cleaned up and fixed, and we hope to see you and the kids regularly over the summer!

JUNE SHED HOURS

Tuesday.....12pm - 2pm
Thursday.....3pm- 5pm

Questions? Contact us!
(231) 258 - 9411
info@kalkaskalibrary.org

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BECOME A **KALKASKA BLAZERS** - ATHLETIC BOOSTERS - MEMBER!




YOUR SUPPORT. THEIR SUCCESS.

- SUPPORT ALL ATHLETES**
Your membership helps provide resources, equipment and opportunities for ALL Kalkaska student-athletes.
- BUILD PRIDE**
Stronger teams. Stronger community. Stronger KALKASKA.
- MAKE AN IMPACT**
Every membership makes a difference on and off the field, court and track.
- BE PART OF SOMETHING BIGGER**
Join a passionate group of Blazer fans who believe in our schools and our kids.

JOIN TODAY!

★ TOGETHER, WE ARE BLAZER STRONG! ★

YOUR MEMBERSHIP MAKES A DIFFERENCE. FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK @KalkaskaSportsBoosters



The Kalkaska Area Educational Foundation

Supports Kalkaska Public Schools by awarding Senior Scholarships and Teacher Grants

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Mary Deb Rabourn, Secretary	2102
Monica Crawford, Secretary	2173

Kalkaska Alternative Program – 258-2777	
Josh England, Dean of Students	

BLAZERS

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.

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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	

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Linda Colvin, Secretary	2185

ONCE A BLAZER

ALWAYS A BLAZER

Bringing the Heat this Spring

KHS student-athletes compete for championships

Spring Sports

Spring sports are wrapping up on a high note. Girls soccer finished their inaugural season with strong numbers and a core group of athletes ready to come back even stronger. Boys golf saw high participation under new coach Matt Olds, who also leads the girls program. Coach Olds has created excitement among Kalkaska golfers and continues to grow both rosters.

Ten track & field athletes competed at the Division 3 State Finals on May 30 at Kent City — a tremendous achievement and a great send-off to the season. Softball finished with a 20-16 record before falling to Kingsley in their District game May 29. Baseball capped a dominant regular season with a pre-district win on May 26, pushing their record to 20-9. The Blazers beat Traverse City Christian in the District opener before falling to Traverse City St. Francis in the District final on Saturday, May 30.

Most notably, the baseball team claimed the Northern Shores Co-Conference Championship — shared with Harbor Springs — marking the program's first conference title since 2011. Congratulations to Coach Mason Moses, his staff, and the entire Blazer baseball program.

A Final "Thank You"

As the year comes to a close, the athletic department extends a heartfelt *thank you* to everyone who made the year special. From the volunteers who gave time at track meets to the athletic boosters who kept the concession stands running — it all matters, and it does not go unnoticed.

To our student-athletes and their families: thank you for your commitment, your sacrifice, and your pride in representing Kalkaska. We love supporting you and never take for granted the opportunity to watch you compete for the name on the front of your jersey.

Way to **BRING THE HEAT**, Blazers!!!

