



# Community Update

August 2019

## Dates to Remember

- 7/30-8/8** – Online Registration Open
- 8/7** – BRHS Fall Sports Meeting, 6 pm
- 8/8** – PreK-12 Walk-in Registration, at BRHS, 10am -3pm, 4-7:30 pm
- 8/14** – Board Meeting, 7 pm
- 8/16** – K-6 Class Lists Posted, noon
- 8/19** – BRIJHS Open House
- 8/20** – Schneider Open House and BRHS Freshman Fling
- 8/21** – 1st day of student attendance
- 9/4** – Picture Day
- 9/14** – BREF Mother/Son Game Night, 7-9 pm
- 9/23** – School Improvement Day, NO SCHOOL
- 10/4** – Homecoming
- 10/11** – Teacher Institute Day - NO SCHOOL

## Items of Interest

- How to Stay Informed At Blue Ridge:  
<http://5il.co/2oct>
- 2019-2020 School Calendar Dates:  
<http://5il.co/2uv8>
- Registration Information:  
<https://5il.co/80cy>
- 2019-20 Fees:  
<https://5il.co/7bhr>
- 2019-20 Technology Plan:  
<https://5il.co/6n82>
- 2018-19 Blue Ridge Accomplishments:  
<https://5il.co/84u3>

## New Schneider School Circle Drive and John Street Project



In the Spring of 2019, the City of Farmer City passed a proposal for the John St. Renovation Project. As a result of this roadway improvement, Schneider Elementary will be receiving a circle drive to assist in safely dropping off and picking up students in our community. All parking on John St. will be back-in parking. This will be a change for many visitors but research has shown this type of parking is safer than traditional

parking since children getting out of the vehicle can go onto the sidewalk without walking around the car door toward the street. With this project comes changes to our current arrival and dismissal procedures, and we ask you for your patience as we transition to this safer process. We will be sending out detailed information to the public and to families of students closer to the start of school. Stay tuned!

## AdvancED Accreditation – Process is Moving Forward

BR completed the readiness visit to prepare for a full accreditation visit by AdvancED in fall 2018. This involved surveying staff, students, and families, reviewing our strengths and weaknesses, and identifying areas where further growth is needed. We are scheduled for a full review at the end of January 2020. The information from the process will help to inform the next version of the Strategic Plan and the direction of the district.

## Transitional Math Class at BRHS – Partnership with Parkland College

A transitional math course has been added to the high school course catalog. Students may enroll in this course to receive their third math credit for graduation, or they may enroll in this course to earn a portability code on their diploma, allowing them to enroll in a credit-bearing math course at the community college level without taking a placement exam. The class was developed in partnership with Parkland College. For details, go to <https://5il.co/6k6n>

## Poetry Café

Our first graders shared some of their original poetry in April during their Poetry Café. This is such a fun activity, and opportunity for parents to participate in their child's learning.



## Agriculture Education and FFA at Blue Ridge Schools



Blue Ridge Schools has an active and highly successful agriculture and FFA program! Students enrolled in BRHS Agriculture courses and Ag Exploratory at BRIJHS may also participate in FFA at local, section, district, state, and even national levels!

FFA applies classroom learning to the agricultural industry while providing students opportunities to grow as leaders and network with others across the state and nation. Blue Ridge is proud to offer a strong Agriculture program and FFA opportunities for our students! To see all of the Ag/FFA Accomplishments for this past year, go to <https://5il.co/7i2r>

## Acceleration Policy Implemented

BR implemented a policy that allows for acceleration of high achieving students. This may mean starting school early, taking one or more courses in a higher grade, or skipping a grade. If you think your child is a good candidate for acceleration, talk to his/her teacher or principal.

## New Sex Ed Curriculum

The Board approved a new sex education curriculum for grades 4-8 that will begin in 2019-20. For details, go to <https://5il.co/7bb9>

## Verizon Jetpacks



BR will be offering Verizon Jet Packs, a hotspot device, for students who have been issued a Chromebook but do not have Internet at home. Watch for more information on this valuable support.

## Restorative Practices

BRIJHS applied for a grant, and was accepted, to implement "restorative practices". Staff attended multi-day training and received support through the year as they implemented their plan. Here's a link to better explain Restorative Practices <https://www.iirp.edu/what-we-do/what-is-restorative-practices>.

## New Board Members

Congratulations to newly elected BR Board members Chelsie Leffelman and Carlos Burton, and re-elected Board member Dale Schneman. Maureen Gilbert filled the additional vacancy created by Justin Otto's resignation. We are grateful for the service of outgoing Board members, Justin Otto, Curtis Homann, and Matt Althaus! Thank you!

## BR PREK Team Earns GOLD Designation from ISBE

The Illinois State Board of Education awarded the Blue Ridge Prekindergarten the GOLD Circle of Quality in the most recent evaluation of the program based on ExceleRate Illinois standards. Congratulations to the Schneider PreK Team!

ExceleRate Illinois is the state's quality recognition and improvement system for early learning and development programs. ExceleRate unifies all of the state's early learning programs under a common set of high standards across multiple settings to provide families with important information about quality early learning programs in their community.

ExceleRate Illinois is anchored by a set of standards that focus on early learning and development and places a high priority on instructional excellence, family services, staff qualifications, professional development, and program administration. Central to its design is the recognition of multiple forms of evidence to meet the universal standards. For Preschool programs, evidence is obtained through the monitoring visits conducted through ISBE.

To learn more about ExceleRate Illinois, including the specific requirements for each Circle of Quality, visit [www.exceleRateillinoisproviders.com](http://www.exceleRateillinoisproviders.com). A website that provides parents and families with information in making early care and education decisions can be found at [www.exceleRateillinois.com](http://www.exceleRateillinois.com).

## Threat Assessment Teams

Threat Assessment Teams have been developed at each of the BR Schools. Administrators and school personnel participated in trainings to establish and utilize Threat Assessment Teams. The teams, called CARE teams, are made up of the principals, counselors, SRO, and select faculty and

staff. CARE teams review any reports they receive of threats or serious concerns, assesses their severity, and determines the next steps to be taken.

Everyone is reminded that if you see something, say something. Threats may be reported by anyone: school personnel, students, parents, family members, or community members. Blue Ridge has set up an online threat report form called "REPORT IT" at the district website (located at the bottom of the page at [www.blueridge18.org](http://www.blueridge18.org)). Threats may also be reported to the Illinois State Police School Violence Tip Line at 1-800-477-0024. **If something requires immediate attention, please call 9-1-1 first.**

## Central Illinois CEO

CICEO (Central Illinois Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities) is based on the successful program in Effingham, Illinois. The communities served by Clinton, Blue Ridge, Maroa-Forsyth, and Warrensburg-Latham school districts have partnered together to establish CICEO to serve students from their high schools, beginning fall 2019. The CICEO program is funded by business investors, and organized by the CICEO Board which is not part of any school board or school district. It is open to high school juniors and seniors from public and private high schools. Students are selected through a rigorous application process.

Businessmen and women can provide a site for students to visit, can be a guest speaker for the class, or can serve as a mentor to a CICEO student. Any individual, organization, or business can contribute to the ongoing annual expense of the program with a commitment of up to \$1000 per year for 3 years. CICEO now has its website up and running. Lots of great information is posted at <https://www.centralillinoisceo.com/>



The BR Board of Education recognized Sean Halcomb for his significant contributions to the Central Illinois CEO Program.

The BR Board of Education recognized Sean Halcomb for his significant contributions to the Central Illinois CEO Program. Sean quickly saw the potential value of the CEO program to our students and to the economic development of our communities. He served on the initial steering committee, then joined the CEO board. Sean and Monsanto (now Bayer) have provided time and financial support for this valuable program. His efforts have been greatly appreciated.

## Flanigon Trust

What is the Flanigon Trust? Blue Ridge receives approximately \$100,000 annually from the Flanigon Trust. These are proceeds from a section of farmland near Bellflower. The trust was established to provide revenue to the schools in Bellflower, and after consolidation, the funds now come to Blue Ridge. The farm is maintained by Trustees from the Bellflower community. A small part of the acreage is used by the BR FFA. Current Trustees are Lloyd Power, Royal Springer, and Wesley Noe. This is a valued, appreciated, and unique resource within our district.

## Extracurricular Updates

- Did you know the high school sports conference will have a new name next year: Lincoln Prairie? This is a new name to the same group we joined this past year.
- Blue Ridge added two curricular areas this past year: high school bass fishing and junior high softball.
- BRHS Volleyball Won their 6th Straight Regional Championship!



Congratulations to Marty Price for 200 wins in 13 seasons as BRHS Soccer Coach. Marty is shown here (on the left) with fellow coach Todd Crowley. Way to represent!

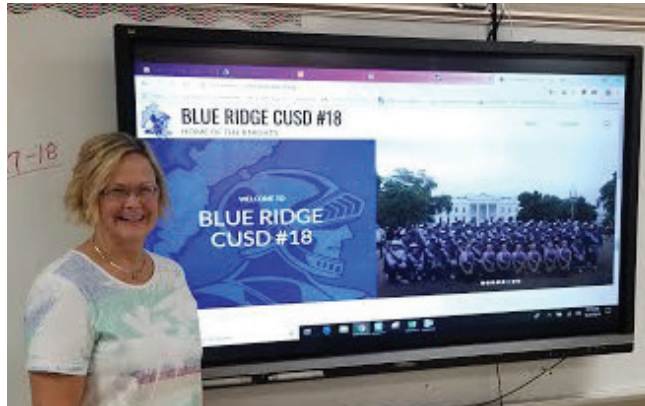


BRHS Volleyball - Regional Champs



# Blue Ridge Educational Foundation Donates Interactive Whiteboard to BRHS and BRIJHS

The Blue Ridge Educational Foundation (BREF) provides grants to teachers to enhance curricula throughout the school district. In September 2018, BREF purchased a new interactive whiteboard for Mrs. Lagle's high school math classes. Mrs. Lagle has been a power-user of smart board technology for many years, and she had worn out her old system. In May 2019, BREF donated a new interactive whiteboard for Mrs. Karisa Yeagle. It will be installed over the summer for her Jr. High English Language Arts Class at BRIJHS. Thanks to BREF for their generosity!



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## Homeless Education

Who is considered to be homeless, under the Federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act? Children who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. Families/ students may share housing with others due to lack of housing or economic hardship; live in cars, motels, camp grounds, or emergency or transitional shelters. Unaccompanied youth who are not in the physical custody of a parent/guardian are also considered homeless.

Homeless children have equal access to the same public education, including preschool, as other children and youth. Homeless children can face barriers to enrollment such as: Screenings required for enrollment, waiting lists, transportation, lack of birth certificates, or lack of immunization or medical records.

Our schools work to address these barriers. Solutions may include enrolling children immediately when parents are obtaining required documents, prioritizing homeless students at the top of the waiting list when there are no openings, and providing help with school supplies and materials.

If you know someone who needs support due homelessness or economic hardship, please call the district office. We will work together to meet the need. For more information, go to <https://5il.co/621q>

## Blue Ridge CONNECT

Approximately 40 people gathered for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Blue Ridge CONNECT in February. Attendees heard from our school resource officer Lara Davis on the implementation of our CARE threat assessment processes for each of our schools, After-School Enrichment Programs, Restorative

Practices at BRIJHS, and the proposed Memorial Plaza project.

Participants were then invited to visit tables where they could have informal conversations with school board members and district administrators and personnel. The evening provided a great opportunity for dialog between the community and the school board and administrative team.

The BR Board of Education discussed the feedback received at BR CONNECT. Many helpful suggestions were made for reaching out to the community more, working on our facilities, and to address curriculum and instruction issues. The Board will be developing specific action plans based on the information received. Thanks to all who came out!

## Bloomington Area Career Center



Congratulations to Rhonda Molle for being selected for the Technical Honor Society at the Bloomington Area Career Center.

# BRHS Memorial Plaza - Track Project

## Memorial Plaza

A committee of community members from all 3 towns met in Fall 2018 to develop a plan for a Memorial Plaza at the entrance to the BRHS Football Field. The Plaza is intended to honor the history of all of the schools that went into making up the current school district, and to highlight and enhance the Kenneth Rittenhouse Memorial Arch so that it's significance is remembered.

The BRHS Ag/Horticulture class developed initial proposals, which were reviewed and developed by the committee. Justin Lamb and Johanna James-Heinz put the plans in final form. Detailed drawings are on the back. A full installation has been estimated at \$62,000, but we hope to greatly reduce costs by using volunteer labor for much of the work.

Committee members included Mary Kay Hammer, Joyce Wells, Bart Lytel, Bob Zimmerman, Donna Wolf-Roberts, Lois Adams, Jane Smith, Evan Miles, and Susan Wilson. Bill and Shirley Rittenhouse were unable to serve on the committee, but were included in the discussion and have approved of the plans.

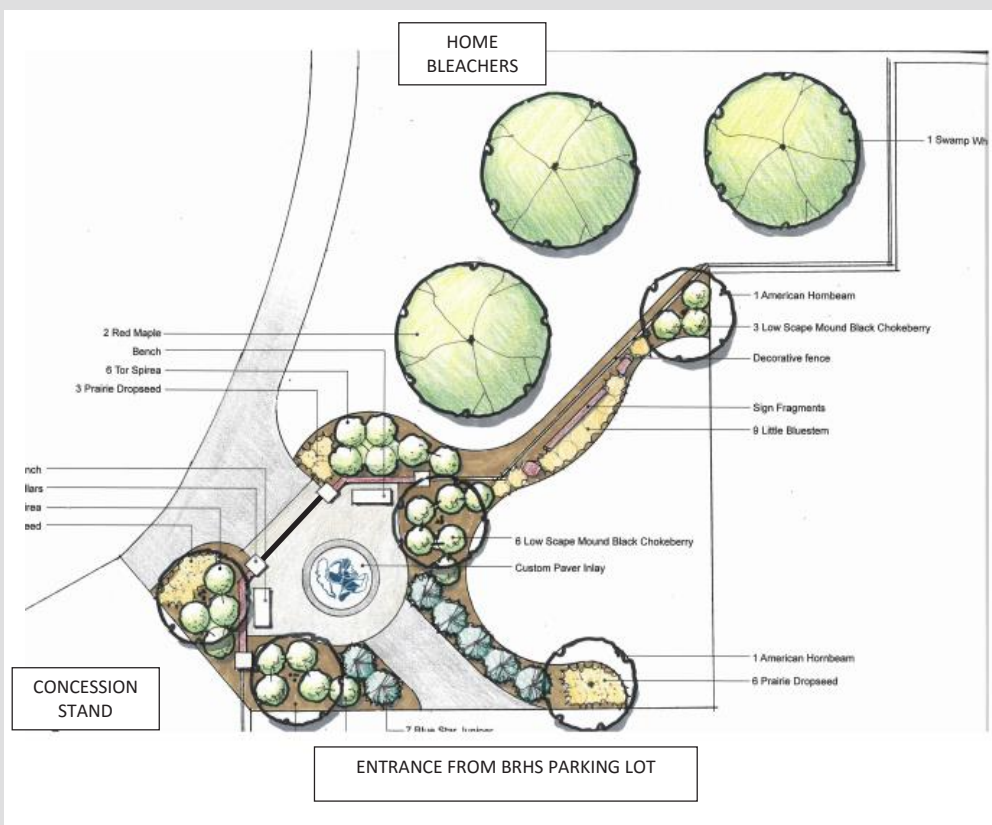
## Restrooms

Mr. Seneca's class will build restrooms on the west side of the concession stand by the football field. The District plans to cover the cost of the restrooms – estimated at \$55,000 - and tackle that part of the project in fall 2020 if it is financially feasible. This will create more convenient facilities for events.

## Track

For years, school and community groups have expressed interest in an all-weather track. The project would benefit

multiple activities - including boys and girls track & field, marching band, football, cheer, and soccer – and allow us to host track meets and band competitions. Community members could utilize the track for exercise. The new track would include 8-lanes, updated lighting, shot and discus area, pole vault, and fencing at an estimated cost of \$1,065,000. A committee has been formed to raise funds for the project. Committee Members include Maureen Gilbert, Debby Reynolds, Pat Drake, John Lawrence, Katie Nichols, Evan Miles, Chris Mitchell, Greg Builta, and Susan Wilson.



## Project Coordination and Fundraising

Completion of the 3 aspects of the project – track, restrooms, and Memorial Plaza - will be coordinated so that we do not have to backtrack on any of the work. We plan to build the restrooms in Fall 2020 using district funds. The track would be installed next, once funds are fully raised. Finally, the Memorial Plaza will be installed when funds are secured.

If you have questions or if you would like to support this effort with time, talent, or money, please call 309-928-9141.



## Kindergarten Financial Literacy Unit

Our Kindergarten students have been taking part in a five-part series of financial literacy activities this fall. These lessons are aligned to the Illinois Learning Standards. By the end, the goal is for students to be able to practice personal economics by considering choices, explain the difference between needs and wants, understand the concept of money, particularly earning and saving, and identify the importance of giving to a worthy cause.

## Students Involved with Technology Conference

40 participants in grades 4-8 attended the Students Involved with Technology Conference. This event is unique as students learn from their peers in each session. Boosters gave \$10 to each student who spent \$30 on a registration fee to participate.



Students Involved with Technology Conference

### *Did You Know?*

Schneider students raised over \$11,500 and BRIJHS students raised over \$4400 for the American Heart Association! Way to go!



## Schneider School Makerspace

A makerspace is a collaborative work space for making, learning, exploring and sharing that uses high tech to no tech tools. Items were paid for with a Blue Ridge Education Foundation grant. This will be an exciting addition to library skills classes.

## Kindergarten/Industrial Tech

Mrs. Parson's Kindergarten group collaborated with Mr. Seneca's students to create a Christmas gift for their parents this month. The Industrial Tech class assisted our Kindergarten students as they completed tasks like measuring, painting, and sanding. The hands-on learning activity was an awesome experience for all involved!



Above: An IT student assists a kindergartener with measuring. The finished project (right).



## Tech 2019

Tech 2019 took place on May 7 in Springfield at the state capitol building. Amy, Kasey, and two grade 4 students were able to meet state legislators and be recognized for their efforts in the classroom using technology to enhance learning.



M. Wills, D. Anton, and S. Wieber at FC Chamber of Commerce Recognition.



Jazz Band at IASB Dinner.



4-H After-school Enrichment Program



Kids' Heart Challenge winner



Jr. high track stars off to State



Retired jerseys of Trooper Ryan Albin



Nick Becker, first Albs Award recipient



Family Dessert Challenge



Alexis Anglin, Brenden Hughes, and Megan Schumacher at FC Chamber of Commerce Recognition

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PRSRT STD  
ECRWSS  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
EDDM RETAIL

Local  
Postal Customer



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