



SPORTS

Panthers capture county softball title

By Rose Carpenter
G•R•O•W•L Sports Contributor

For the first time in 13 years, the Powell Middle School softball program emerged from the season as Hernando County champions.

This past May, the Panthers used strong momentum and superb leadership from Coach Blackwell to defeat Parrott Middle School in the championship game, 3-0.

The shutout featured a complete game on the mound from then-seventh grader Kamryn Ross. The scoring was capped by then-seventh grader Isabelle Miller, who hit a double and stole two bases.

After losing two games during the regular season to Challenger K-8 and Parrott, the Panthers made some adjustments before the postseason. These changes paid off when Powell avenged both losses.

"With how good the defenses for both teams were, the most important thing was getting on base," Blackwell said. "We practiced making contact leading up to the games."

Once they were on base, Powell's aggressive running was enough to score runs for the Panthers. From there, the results hinged on the arm of Kamryn. The ace definitely did her part, tossing 69 strikeouts and only five walks all season.

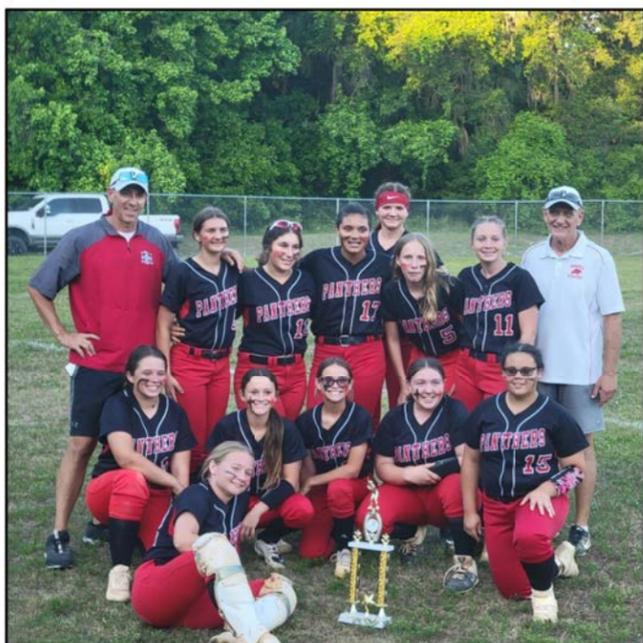
"I was nervous and excited when we started working in the batting cages," then-sixth grader Gabby LaRocca said.

After defeating Challenger K-8 in the semifinal, the team gained confidence in the new strategy, just in time to face Parrott in the biggest game of the season.

"We were very excited as a team because we finally beat Challenger," then-seventh grader Madison Mayon said. "We were a little afraid because (the Parrott pitcher) could throw fast."

Rounding out the championship roster were Ivanna Castro, ElleAnn Cephus, Liliana Klink, Mackenzie Nester, Lilyana Noguez, Hailey Raenke, Miranda Wiemer, and Reagan Wilkie.

Blackwell hopes to return much of last year's roster for the squad this school year. Many of the key players were sixth and seventh graders a season ago.



[Courtesy of Coach Blackwell]



Welcome Back!

Back to School Dance draws in Panthers



[LEFT: Daniella Torres]

[RIGHT: Tristan Wala]

By Madielina Calderon & Gabriella Esposito
G•R•O•W•L Feature Staff

In late August, the Back to School Dance was a way for Powell Middle School to welcome students of all grades back to campus. It was the first dance of its kind since 2019, the year before the COVID pandemic hit.

The fee to get into the dance was \$5 per person, and students were able to pay ahead of time. The dance was the first opportunity for Powell sixth graders to participate in a school-wide activity on campus. The students were able to meet up with others from around the school and cut loose in the cafeteria.

There was some sports decor in the cafeteria, encouraging students to try out for any of the sports offered at school while other students were able to sit down and eat. Everyone had time to relax and dance to the music.

As the dance wore on, people started to create dance battles that were hilarious and fun to watch. The music at the event was an upbeat mix of K-pop and other 2000s hits.

Along with his football teammates, eighth grader Damarion Hall had a great time at the dance.

"It really brings Powell together," he said. "Without Powell Panthers, there wouldn't be a dance."

The students are eagerly awaiting any upcoming dances.

"I like the kids' positivity," eighth grader Cecelia Godsey said.

She admires the connection between all the students and how there was no fighting. She wished there was more seating, but overall, Cecilia was pleased with the dance.

Chaperone Ms. Hart was actually pretty surprised that so many people showed up.

"We sold out of everything in the concession stand," she said.

The concession stand had Coke products, Airheads, Sour Patch Kids, and other snacks. The food was extremely low-priced at only \$1 per item. Students were happy with the opportunity to both dance and eat.

"It's a tradition at Powell to have a dance," Ms. Pastore said, "but it is especially good for sixth graders coming from all different elementary schools and showing some things we do in middle school."

Ms. Pastore, who not only chaperoned but helped organize the dance, was lost for words with how many kids showed up.

"There was more than we expected," she said. "The dance was definitely a good experience to help all the kids meet each other."

The staff was shocked about the student attendance. Many teachers thought it was going to be a no-show and had low expectations for the dance. For the first dance of the year, it turned out that many students were excited for the opportunity, and both teachers and students enjoyed the evening.



WHAT'S INSIDE?



SPORTS



Panthers football, volleyball & cheerleading start their seasons
PAGE 4

ONE-ON-ONE



Mrs. LaRiviere dedicates herself to Powell students and activities.
PAGE 3

KAYAKING



Sixth graders are treated to the annual kayaking field trip on the Weeki Wachee River.
PAGE 3



Curriculum Corner

with Ms. Barthle

♦ Agriculture ♦



By Kamryn Ross & Olivia Caracciolo
G•R•O•W•L Features Staff

For most people, the word agriculture brings about visions of farms, but in its second year at Powell Middle School, Agriculture is an elective class that focuses on learning about living things to understand how the environment works.

Living things, including exotic animals like tarantulas, capybaras, and sugar gliders, and plants like the Venus flytrap, are interesting to students. These creatures only scratch the surface of what Mrs. Barthle will cover in her class, and eventually, the knowledge will pay off with hands-on activities.

The most important evidence of the course's success is how much the enrolled students enjoy it. Students walk away understanding how to improve society and take care of the environment.

"Agriculture is very fun and informative," eighth grader Trisha Nguyen said. "Everyone in the class seems to enjoy it."

While Ms. Barthle continues to teach seventh grade Science as well, her passion for agriculture helped push her to start this class last year. She enjoys a mix of grade levels, and each one seems very excited about their involvement in the course.

"The experience is something that I know will help me later," eighth grader Juliana Finazzo said.

Ms. Barthle has taught for 37 years. She has helped students improve and understand things clearly.

"Things have changed and evolved since I started teaching," Barthle said. "Trying to connect with the kids and make them want to learn versus

making them feel like they have to learn is one of the best parts of teaching."

Agriculture gives her a renewed energy in the classroom.

"Agriculture is part art, part science, and part business," she said. "We work with animals and plants, and things that can help kids with things in the industry."

This is a new journey for her students and even Barthle herself. She has many labs planned for the future, including a main goal of working on the land between the 300 and 400 Buildings on campus. She hopes to make a nice garden and a butterfly sanctuary.

This unique class gives many students at Powell the chance to learn new things and be part of something special.



Ms. Barthle engages her students in class. [Falyn Dorsey]

Families welcomed for Open House



Powell's Chorus and Dance programs highlighted the introduction of families to the school's extracurricular activities. These two groups make up only a small portion of Powell's award-winning Performing Arts program.

[Liberty Weinstein]

By Kylee Kosanke & Yadier Morales
G•R•O•W•L News Staff

Powell Middle School held its annual Open House for parents and students earlier this month.

The event was held for families to familiarize themselves with the school and the teachers.

The night commenced with Powell principal Mr. Dye welcoming the audience to the campus. Following Mr. Dye's speech, the Chorus and Dance programs collaborated on a performance.

"I liked the stunts and flips that the dancers did," seventh grader Alexei Dabila said.

Mrs. Young, the Powell dance instructor, coordinated the choreography for the routine and had been teaching the students the steps since the second week of school.

"We wanted to promote the Performing Arts and show the audience and students at Open House what we can do," Mrs. Young said.

After the performance, parents were sent off to walk through their student's schedule, period by period. Teachers had the opportunity to greet families and inform them what their children have been doing in class and learning so far.

"I came to Open House because I wanted to show my (mother) how amazing all of my teachers are," said sixth grader Alyssa Snyder.

Parents only had four minutes to get from class to class, the same as the passing time the students experience every day. They also spent only 10 minutes in each class listening to the teachers.

When the usual lunch period came, parents were able to get a glimpse of what lunch is like for the students. They also got a chance to purchase some school spirit shirts or jackets.

Students also had the chance to learn about the Impact Club and sign up with Ms. LaBelle, the school counselor who runs it.

The Impact Club had a small booth at Open House in the cafeteria that was promoting the club to new students. Ms. LaBelle was handing out applications with information about the club.

"I wanted to start a club at school to get to know the kids more," said Ms. LaBelle. "The goal is to try to make some positive changes."

Open House was also held to support new students coming to Powell, such as eighth grader Christopher Hager. New to Powell, Christopher had been homeschooled for six years.

"I want to improve on talking to people," Christopher said, "and I think I'm adjusting pretty well."

Once seventh period ended, all guests were dismissed, and the Open House festivities ended.

All-State Chorus

By Cadi Perry
G•R•O•W•L Assistant Editor

Earlier this month, Powell Chorus Director Mr. Pletincks opened auditions for All-State Choir.

The process began for students in his chorus classes with the chance to be selected for the Florida Vocal Association's annual All-State Choir Concert.

Last year, then-seventh grader Lillie Garrett was Powell's lone selection for All-State. Now an eighth grader Lillie is among the students vying to represent Powell again this year.

During the audition, students took a test and sight read, which includes reading a piece of sheet music that the performers had never before seen.

Nine of the students that auditioned passed the test and seven passed the sight reading. This opens the door for the next stage of consideration.

Another round of auditions will be held on Tuesday, Oct. 11 for those who want to participate.

This year's FMEA Professional Conference, where the All-State Concert will take place, is scheduled for January 11-14, 2023.

G•R•O•W•L



Advisor

MR. DEREK J. LaRIVIERE

Editor-in-Chief

LIBERTY WEINSTEIN

Assistant Editor-in-Chief

CADI PERRY

NEWS

Editor

LAUREN LAX

SPORTS

Editor

JAMES THOMPSON

Staff

ARABELLA BRITTON

KYLEE KOSANKE

YADIER MORALES

EMMA ORTIZ

Staff

JAELYN BARROR-FLORES

ELISA BETHKE

TARA BOYD

LOGAN KEPNER

MIRANDA WIEMER

FEATURES

Editor

KAMRYN ROSS

PHOTOGRAPHY

Editor

FALYN DORSEY

Staff

MADIELINA CALDERON

OLIVIA CARACCILO

GABRIELLA ESPOSITO

Staff

ROSE CARPENTER

DANIELLA TORRES

TRISTAN WALA

• Special Thanks •
Powell Administration,
Ms. Michaela Danner
& Ms. Toni Pastore

For helping every step of the way.

Kayaking Down the River

By Lauren Lax
G•R•O•W•L Features Editor

Powell Middle School has held a tradition for many years of taking sixth grade students to kayak on the Weeki Wachee River.

The students have the chance to learn about and understand Florida's environmental system with hands-on learning.

Ms. Cross, a longtime Science teacher at Powell, is now the Art teacher, but she has gone on this field trip for more than a decade. She helped organize this year's trips.

"I think all kids should have this experience at least once," Ms. Cross said.

During this trip, students get the opportunity to go kayaking and look at some organisms under a microscope in the lab. The organisms were collected at Buccaneer Bay, and for some students, this was the best part.

"I liked the lab because we got the chance to find some fish organisms," Janelly Collazo said.

Chaperones oversaw 48 kids a day, splitting them up into two groups for five days. Almost 250 students ended up with the opportunity to experience the unique adventure.

Kayaking up the Weeki Wachee River to Buccaneer Bay was the centerpiece of this trip. This time of year, riverside trees are scattered along the water. This created a relaxing sensation for all the students.

Students got the chance to encounter wildlife such as turtles, coy fish, and even an eagle nest.

"I got to see wildlife and would like to go back," Caleb Joy said.

Ms. Cheryl Paradis is the head instructor at the Springs Coast Environmental Center. Part of her job

is coming up with and preparing most of the activities students do while on their field trip.

One of the things she prepared for the students on this trip was a scavenger hunt, where they looked for insects and other microorganisms in the river waters.

At the beginning of the trip, students were given a test on clickers that is full of questions that the kids will learn answers to throughout the day. At the end of the day students will then take the test once more to see what they have learned.

This trip has made learning fun for students, as it is something educational that new middle schoolers can look forward to every year.



Students study organisms before hitting the river. [Courtesy of Mrs. Kusnierczak]



[Falyn Dorsey]

ONE-ON-ONE with Mrs. LaRiviere

By Kamryn Ross
G•R•O•W•L Features Editor

Mrs. LaRiviere is special to the students of Powell Middle School because she always finds the time to stay involved in her students' lives, both in and out of the classroom.

An English Language Arts (ELA) teacher for the past 11 years, she enjoys her job, especially teaching the younger sixth graders who are just becoming acclimated to middle school. Mrs. LaRiviere is also the co-Chair of Powell's Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS) program, a main part of the student experience for all grades.

Not only does Mrs. LaRiviere help students academically, but she also enjoys the trust she builds with her students. While teaching both grade-level ELA and Advanced ELA, she has done many things to help students the past four years at Powell.

Along the way, Mrs. LaRiviere created her own elective course, Literacy Through Film, which focuses on reading stories of all kinds and connecting them with parallel films that have been made. They cover everything from fantasy to history during the year.

She guides students to understand more advanced books. The classes find these books both interesting and entertaining. In the end, many students are left wanting to read more.

"I've always loved to read," Mrs. LaRiviere said. "It helps me escape the pressures of everyday life and find a special world where nothing can bother me."

The writing aspect of ELA was more challenging for her when she was younger, which led her to wanting to teach the subject to like-minded students.

She decided to come to Powell because of the level of behavior at the school.

"I used to work at other schools that weren't as well behaved as Powell, which convinced me to teach here," she said.

She plans to help implement fun activities for PBIS, as she has done in her past years of teaching.

"Every year I choose one class period to stay for two hours and do sidewalk chalk," she said. "The kids always have a great time beautifying the school sidewalks."

Like many subjects in school, the way the curriculum is taught can have a major effect on how the students learn. Mrs. LaRiviere takes great pride in how her teaching style helps her reach a new batch of sixth graders every year.

Mrs. LaRiviere is excited for the opportunity to make new memories with students, as she has done in the past because of her glowing personality. She is one of the reasons that makes Powell an amazing school to attend.



[Falyn Dorsey]

Memories Over Summer Last Forever

By Yadier Morales & Kylee Kosanke
G•R•O•W•L News Staff

As a new school year begins, students at Powell Middle School look back at the fun experiences they had and memories they made over the summer.

Both in and out of Hernando County, there were a lot of different activities for families to do, from visiting family to spending a week on a cruise.

Seventh grader Cayden McInnes is not a fan of the beach, but his family took a trip to Myrtle Beach in South Carolina for vacation, and he was surprising by the results.

"I decided to take a step out my own box," Cayden said, "and I actually enjoyed the beach."

Many students spent their summer doing something Florida offers many opportunities to do, visiting water parks. Eighth grader Isabella Basso was one of these students as she took time to go to Adventure Island in Tampa.

Adventure Island is very popular and is known for its many water slides. This was not Isabella's first trip to the water park, however. She had been with her family in 2019, and she loved it as much now as she did then.

Although summer is a time away from school, some students still got the chance to learn about the wonders of the world.

Spring Hill offers educational places like the Nature Coast Botanical Garden to learn about caring for plants or the Wildlife Survival Sanctuary where you can learn about caring for animals.

Other options for Hernando County students are the many athletic summer camps that are offered throughout the area. Eighth grader Rose Carpenter attended the volleyball camp organized by Hernando Elite Volleyball at Weeki Wachee High School.

Attending with her friend, Rose spent three days at the camp for six hours a day. The experience was helpful to improving her volleyball skills, something that translated to her making the Powell varsity team this fall.

"It really helped me improve my skills for the

upcoming season," Rose said, "and it was a lot of fun."

Some students were disappointed that a local favorite location, Summit Trampoline Park in Spring Hill, closed its doors over the summer. Many kids scrambled to find new things to do instead, such as spending a day in the sun at a lake.

SunWest Park in Hudson is a beach where families can go to do things such as wakeboarding, water skiing, and play on inflatable trampoline like devices that float on the water.

Another fun place to visit is Strike City Bowling Center in Spring Hill. The bowling center is an ideal place for families to come together and enjoy throwing balls down the lane or snacking on some treats. Strike City also provides an arcade with multiple games as well as prizes.

There are so many places and experiences that students had over the summer, but with the season at end, all that is left are the memories.



Eighth grader Rose Carpenter serves at volleyball camp. [Courtesy of Rose Carpenter]

SPORTS

When it comes to school spirit, Powell cheer leads the way

By Tara Boyd
G•R•O•W•L Sports Staff

Powell Middle School's football game against Fox Chapel earlier this month served as the coming out party for this year's cheer squad.

After working very hard over the summer and in practice, the cheerleaders are officially ready to start supporting Panthers athletics and school spirit. Although many began with no cheer experience, the cheer captains had plenty of advice for these newcomers.

"After I quit gymnastics, I decided to do cheer," eighth grade captain Kinsey Baker said. "I was always good at tumbling."

Kinsey always tries to help other cheerleaders complete the cheer or chant correctly. She has listened and learned, and throughout her cheerleading career, she has taught new cheerleaders what she was.

Fellow captain Saniya Capel has cheered for Powell ever since sixth grade, but she has been cheering for over six years overall. She works very hard, staying confident, dedicated, and always teaching and mentoring her teammates.

While the Panther cheerleaders have had a different coach the past couple of years, Saniya has adjusted along with the other members of the team. This is part of the reason that they felt strongly that she should be a captain.

In her first year, Coach Alex Graves is primed for the opportunity to lead this motivated group.

The support of the squad was evident in the opening football game earlier this month, with the cheerleaders riling up the crowd on the way to a Powell victory.

The roster is rounded out by Kaylynn Arenz, Addison Blevens, Tara Boyd, Avery Chechile, Savannah Colhouer, Kaylee Crima, Bailey Crum, Madison Engle, Addisyn Evans, Adyslen Gonzalez-Bauta, Alaina Hogan, Kaitlynn Johnson, Leilani Lopez, Aalayah Martin, Khloe Melko, Emme Pineda, Giuliana Ri'chard, Kylie Rivero, Alaynah Santiago, Caylin Weston, and Aubrie Williams.

The spirited cheer squad is prepared to give it all this school year, supporting Panthers teams across football, basketball, and more while also pushing the rest of the students to be more spirited during pep rallies and other school events.



[Falyn Dorsey]

Aubrie Williams, Adyslen Gonzalez-Bauta, Bailey Crum, Kaitlynn Johnson, and Kylie Rivero pump up the crowd in Powell's football game against Fox Chapel.

Panthers prepared for big goals



Running back Josiah Maner takes the handoff in Powell's 52-6 opening win over Fox Chapel.

[Rose Carpenter]

By James Thompson & Logan Kepner
G•R•O•W•L Sports Staff

A new season brings new hope, and the Powell Middle School football team showed that positive attitude in the season-opener earlier this month.

Under new head coach Fabian Burnett, the Panthers got off to a great start in the 2022 season by dominating Fox Chapel 52-6 while showing off the team's strengths and potential. With a fresh roster, the Panthers have their sights set on the Hernando County championship.

Eighth grader Dominick Piccariello has played for Powell since sixth grade and has already stood out at wide receiver. Dominick started on the outside and caught a 67-yard spiral from quarterback Aidan Colman to score a touchdown.

Piccariello and fellow eighth grader Elian Vidal-Mangual emerged as the receiving stars in the victory over the Tigers. Watching the performances of these two players shows the ability that Powell has in the passing game.

Eighth grader Colman and seventh grader Ryan Browning showed poise as quarterback with the accuracy of their throws, scrambling, and playmaking.

They are confident in the Panthers' chances of delivering a big season.

"This season Powell has one of the best football teams (in the county)," Ryan said. "We have a lot of heart, strength, and motivation."

One of the surprising performances against Fox Chapel came from a newcomer to the team. Sixth grader Nion Speights looks like he going to do well this season. His play on both sides of the ball, offense and defense, made coaches and the opponents take notice.

At running back, Nion scored a late touchdown, and on defense, he was a force at defensive end. His job at end is to contain the outside running of the other team, and he did that and more in his first varsity game action. He was involved in multiple sacks on the Fox Chapel quarterback.

"My teammates made me feel welcome," Nion said. "We worked together and joined together."

The team is ready for the rest of the season. With heart and dedication, the goals are high. Based on the team's first performance, this could be one of the best years in recent memory for the Panthers and their fans.

Players find special place on court

By Jaelyn Barror-Flores & Miranda Wiemer
G•R•O•W•L Sports Staff

Powell Middle School started the volleyball season in style earlier this month, winning both the varsity and junior varsity matches over Fox Chapel Middle School in the opener.

The varsity Panthers swept the Tigers, while the JV pulled out a victory by winning two of three sets.

While both teams were able to come away with the victories, the players and coaches acknowledge that they still must put in a great deal of work to continue dominating on the court. The sport holds a special place in many of the players' lives, and one particular case shows that.

Seventh grader Tailia Bateman always was interested in volleyball, but it took a tragic event to motivate her to take the court.

"I started volleyball because, in 2016, my grandfather got cancer and (my family's lives felt like they) were falling apart," Tailia said. "So, my parents put me in a lot of sports to take my mind off it."

Volleyball plays a particularly significant role in all girls' lives, but some of them have a more emotional connection to it. Many of the girls' bond during the season as they work together. Practicing, working, and winning games can form strong friendships.

Eighth grader Cecilia Godsey had a much different reason for joining than others. She started because of the camaraderie and excitement.

"I love volleyball because of the experience, the feeling of excitement when you win a game," Cecilia said. "The sisterhood of the whole team together always is there after a game, win or lose."

Like most sports, confidence is key to the team's

ability to perform. For JV players, this is even more true because of their lack of experience.

"When I was serving, I was a little nervous," seventh grader Erica Randazzo said, "but my teammates were incredibly supportive, so I felt better."

Although the teams play separate matches, the supportive attitude carries to both. After JV's win, varsity was the first on the court to congratulate them.

"We are all still a family," Liliana Klink said, "and I feel extremely comfortable and supported by everyone."

There will be many games to come this year, and the Panthers hope, many wins against the other schools. With the leadership of Coach Maria Pastore and Coach Toni Pastore, Powell is primed for a successful 2022 season.



Breonna Lorentsen slides to get under a ball in Powell's opening home win over Fox Chapel.

[Falyn Dorsey]