



THE Powell G•R•O•W•L

The source for Powell Middle School news, sports, and more.

Est. 2023

ONE-ON-ONE with Mr. Merschbach

By Kendra Ziccardy
G•R•O•W•L Features Staff

One of Powell Middle School's new assistant principals, Mr. Merschbach, has been teaching with the Hernando County School District for 18 years. He is excited to be working at Powell.

Mr. Merschbach was impressed with the layout of the Powell campus and loves the way things are run. He is happy to be a part of it.

"I see a lot of stuff here at Powell I would like to emulate," Mr. Merschbach said.

Teaching has always been a goal of his since he was in high school. It was then that he started to think about education. He took a class during that time where he got to go to different schools and assist the teachers. When he saw the kids' faces after they learned something new, that really made him want to pursue teaching for the rest of his life.

Mr. Merschbach attended Northern Kentucky University for his undergraduate work and earned his Master's degree at Western Governors University in Utah.

He and his wife met while working together as teachers. The couple has two daughters, one of which is in seventh grade and is a Panther at Powell named Mackenzie. Mr. Merschbach is happy that his oldest daughter Mackenzie attends Powell.

"I'm excited for it," he said, "but I'm probably more excited for it than she is."

Problem solving is one of Mr. Merschbach's favorite parts about being an assistant principal. He loves to figure out ways to find solutions. He goes out of his way to help students, staff, and teachers.

Mr. Merschbach is also a big fan of sports, including baseball, football, and pickleball. He has coached and played baseball his entire life. When winter rolls around, football is always on his television. He even likes to play pickleball whenever he gets the chance.

"I'm not averse to playing some video games now and then too," Mr. Merschbach said.

Prior to Powell, Mr. Merschbach was an assistant principal at Hernando High School in Brooksville for two years. He taught at Central High School in Brooksville for 10 years, Springstead High School for one year, and three years at J.D. Floyd, when it used to be a K-8 school.

Among his responsibilities is control over the social media presence for Powell online. Mr. Merschbach has really enjoyed creating graphics on the computer that highlight the interesting events and experiences that go on at Powell.

Mr. Merschbach is proud to be a part of the Powell administrative team and does not plan on leaving any time soon.



Mr. Merschbach has many responsibilities as the new assistant principal. [Giuliana Richard]



Back To School



Principal Mrs. Rastatter explains the rules and expectations at Powell Middle School to new sixth grade students as they begin the new school year. [Elliana Vaughan]

By Minh Trieu
G•R•O•W•L News Staff

In the middle of August, kids across Hernando County all went back to school, including the students at Powell Middle School.

With all the students coming back after summer break, there were many things to look forward to and adjust to.

For example, Owen Stockton is a sixth grader and is struggling with the transition from elementary school to middle school. Owen attended Suncoast Elementary and now attends Powell Middle School.

"I feel good about coming into middle school, better than elementary school," Owen said. "It's a new school with new experiences."

It is always good to have a favorite class and something to look forward to during the day.

"I like my classes, my teachers, and my classmates," Owen said. "My favorite class must be my second period because I like my teacher Mr. Takyi, and science is my favorite subject."

The switch from vacation to school again can be tough. Schedules must change to fit in with school. Waking up early and going to bed early can be hard to get used to, especially on the first day back to school.

Seventh grader Sophia Lake is in her second year at Powell.

"Coming back to school was honestly quite

rough, because I felt that I wasn't ready for the summer to end," Sophia said. "The shift in my sleep schedule was definitely a change of pace."

With the anxiousness of coming back to school, getting to classes on the first day can be challenging. Finding new rooms on your schedule can be difficult. Meeting teachers and classmates can also be nerve-racking.

"I felt good about the first day, meeting my teachers and getting to know my classmates was nice," Sophia said, "but I did feel slightly nervous about it."

There will be a bunch of things to look forward to this school year as well. Events, clubs, and sports are just a few of the new experiences that students might be excited about.

Eighth grader Bradford Ball is attending Powell for his third year.

Bradford started playing football at age 6, but he did not join a team until sixth grade with the Panthers. He has been working hard over the summer to better his physique and athletic skills.

"I was excited about coming back to school to meet my teachers and see my friends again," Bradford said, "but I am especially excited about football tryouts."

There are many things in store for students this school year: things to look forward to, things to get used to, but more than anything else, things that will make this year one to remember.

WHAT'S INSIDE?

MOVIE CORNER



McKenna Williams reviews the hit summer movie *Barbie*.
PAGE 2

FOOTBALL



Panthers get back on the field with a championship on their minds.
PAGE 3

CELL PHONES



New state law tightens the cell phone policy for students at Powell.
PAGE 4

Curriculum Corner
6th Grade Kayaking



Ms. Cheryl Paradis teaches Powell students some safety tips before getting in their kayaks. [Courtesy of Ms. Cross]

By Tara Boyd
G•R•O•W•L News Editor

Each year the sixth graders at Powell Middle School attend their annual kayaking field trip at the Springs Coast Environmental Center in Weeki Wachee.

Ms. Cross, Powell's art teacher, organized this year's event, her 10th year leading the trip.

"I like going to the environmental center with them," Ms. Cross said. "I like watching the kids learn and get excited going down the river seeing all sorts of bugs and other river creatures."

Ms. Cheryl Paradis heads up the environmental center program and has been an educator for many years, teaching kids that are in different grade levels about the environment. She enjoys making it fun for them while still learning.

The field trip agenda starts when the sixth-grade students leave Powell on a bus at around 9:30 in the morning heading to the environmental center.

Ms. Cheryl, as the students call her, splits the sixth graders into two groups, one going down the river with her and the other staying at the center with an assistant educator. The group that stays

behind learns about the animals and plants on the Weeki Wachee River and plays a few games.

After all of this, they eat lunch and switch so that both groups get plenty of time to kayak on the river. Ms. Cheryl ends the day by giving the students a test on her devices. They receive scores based on what they have learned.

Sixth grader Roman Keister attended this year's trip. He loved seeing all of the wildlife, greenery, and the overall experience.

"I saw a bald eagle while I was kayaking which was cool," Roman said. "Seeing it in the trees making its nest out of sticks and grass was pretty interesting."

There were some things he and some other sixth graders never knew about different animals and plants. Once they learned about all of it, they were interested in learning more about the environment.

Every year sixth graders are excited to go onto the trip and see all the wonders of wildlife that is right here in Hernando County for everyone to experience. These students learn about it all and have some nice stories to share.

MIDDLE SCHOOL MOVIE CORNER
with McKenna Williams
Barbie

4 out of ★★★★★

In late July, Warner Brothers Pictures released Barbie in theaters for everyone to see.

The movie was good because the meaning behind the story was important. The message sent by the screenwriters was that people should not worry about the approval of others. Ken relied on Barbie for approval, and he learned that he had his own identity in the end.

It was nice to see a film that empowered women while also showing that people and dolls are not the same. Finding your own identity is a good message.

Rated PG-13, Barbie is a live action film. The director used real actors instead of animation like prior Barbie-inspired projects. The rating of PG-13 was due to some suggestive references and minor bad language during some scenes.

Because of the content, Barbie was controversial with some audiences. Because Barbie is a toy that has influenced many children over the years, many parents did not realize that the movie would not be more kid friendly.

The original creator of the Barbie doll is Ruth Handler, and her inspiration for Barbie came from watching her daughter project her dreams and aspirations onto paper dolls. Since then, the doll has had a significant impact on younger children.

The movie starts off with Barbie, the original version of the doll and the most popular, feeling lost and having a crisis about her life. She finds out that she must travel from her "Barbie Land," which is run by all different versions of Barbie, to the real world to fix her problems.

While Barbie is trying find a solution, her boyfriend Ken also has a problem of his own: He feels that, without Barbie, he is nothing.

Margot Robbie stars as Barbie, and Ryan Gosling takes on the role of Ken. The performances and acting they did in the movie were very good as well as they had some chemistry you could feel through the screen.

Barbie shows the importance of feminism in society and shines a light on the fact that being a Barbie is not perfect. It also shows how important self-esteem is to everyone. The movie overall was amusing and fun to watch, especially with all the important messages that were sent to the audience.

If you are interested in female empowerment and finding who you are, Barbie is a film you will want to see.



[Courtesy of Getty Images]

Powell Panthers
Fun Facts ??

In 2024, the end of this school year, Powell Middle School will celebrate its 40th anniversary. The current class of students is the 40th group since Powell opened its doors in 1984.



G•R•O•W•L



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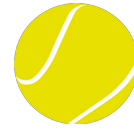
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SPORTS



Powell hopes for repeat success on the links

By Yoselin Nodarse Garcia
G•R•O•W•L Sports Staff

The Powell Middle School golf team is coming off of a 2022 season where the boys won the Hernando County Championship. New coach Luke Albert is ready to guide this experienced group to victory for the second season in a row.

Coach Albert hopes to win another championship for the Panthers to honor the previous coach, Paul Duncan. Coach Duncan has had some recent health issues and has not been at Powell since the middle of last school year. He was an inspiration to the players because of his passion for the sport.

"The biggest goal is always to win," Coach Albert said.

Eighth grader William Tipton is coming back again this season as one of the leaders. He has been playing golf for four years. He started playing with and learning from his father. Last year he focused on improving his putting.

"He will be going for that win," Coach Albert said. "William is one of the best players I have seen on the team."

Knowing the success that Powell has already had, Coach Albert is mostly focused on having fun and staying positive. He is extremely excited to be teaching the new golfers.

William agreed with his other teammates that winning is always the biggest goal.

"My biggest goal was always to get the lowest score," he said.

Winning the championship last season made William feel immensely proud of himself and the team. The team was overcome with emotion when they won the trophy for Powell's collection. He still feels emotional when he thinks about Coach Duncan's recent struggles.

The team has been working hard at practice with their sights set on the season-opening match at Oak Hills Golf Course in Spring Hill on September 14. The Panthers will be teeing off against Parrott and West Hernando.

Coach Albert's team will surely be trying to repeat previous success, but a new season brings about new opportunities and new challenges. While they won every single one of their matches last year, including the championship, victory this year would be a new high for everyone involved.

With a new coach and renewed set of goals, the Powell golfers are looking forward to doing their best on the course.



Eighth grader William Tipton putts while sixth grader Daelen Vaught looks on. [David Henriquez Arguelli]

Panthers ready for gridiron glory



Assistant coach Fabian Burnett Jr. huddles up the offense in practice. [Guiliana Ri'chard]

By Emilyn Newton & Abigail Olding
G•R•O•W•L Sports Staff

The Powell Middle School football team ended the 2022 season with a record of 7-1, and the only loss happened in the Hernando County Championship. Falling to Parrott Middle School hit the team hard, and the Panthers are hoping to bounce back this season.

The team returns stronger than ever, with more than 20 players coming back from last year's roster. The Panthers are ready to put up a fight with their sights set on an undefeated season.

Head coach Fabian Burnett also returns with the aid of assistant coaches Ben Davis and Fabian Burnett Jr.

Among the fresh players that should make an

impact is placekicker Logan Kepner. Powell did not have a kicker on the team last season, and the addition of Logan could help in close games.

One of the outstanding players that is coming back is Ryan Browning. Now in eighth grade, Ryan has been one of the team's quarterbacks since he was in sixth grade.

Coach Fabian, as the players call him, has been the head coach for the past two years, but he has been coaching youth football for the past 20 years.

"I have a real passion for football," Coach Fabian said.

He looks for specific qualities in each player. He prefers students who are courteous to their peers and administration. Fabian also looks for students who have a certain attitude in life and on the field.

"I look for character that can take them places," Coach said.

Logan gives Powell an advantage because he is such a talented player and teammate. His main goal is to help get his team to the championship game. Logan is an admirable player due to the way he plays. He is also a supportive teammate.

"The way I operate, I try to hype up my teammates," he said.

Ryan looks up to stars at his position like Tom Brady and Patrick Mahomes, who are famous NFL football quarterbacks. He tries to take a page out of their book, to try and be a better quarterback. His coaches have given him many motivational speeches, one of which has stuck with him through the years.

"Never back down, never give up," he said.

This is a message that Ryan wants to pass on to his teammates as one of the team's leaders this year.

The sport of football requires skill, enthusiasm, and teamwork. The Panthers strive to reach each of these benchmarks. Heading into the 2023 season, the team seems ready to take on anything.

Serving Up Success Powell volleyball eyes a winning season

By Addisyn Evans
G•R•O•W•L Sports Staff

The Powell Middle School volleyball team is going into this new season with a strong mindset, preparing for another successful run like the Panthers had a year ago.

Longtime junior varsity coach Toni Pastore is returning in her first season as the varsity coach. She is joined by Coach Gary Burns in his first season as the head of the JV.

Talia Bateman is one of the returning varsity players from last year's Hernando County Championship match appearance, where the Panthers finished as runners up to Parrott for the title. She is a vocal leader for the Panthers and has been competing in volleyball for seven years.

Talia enjoys volleyball a great deal, but she has one aspect in particular that she likes the most.

"(I love that) I can hang out with my friends and have fun," she said.

Eighth grader Gabrielle LaRocca is another one of the returning varsity players from last year's team. She has played all three seasons at Powell and feels supported by her teammates.

As the team's libero, a back row position where she must be very versatile, she has worked very hard to get better.

"I am very good at defense," Gabrielle said, "so that is definitely my favorite."

Always looking to improve on the court, Gabrielle has one skill she is focusing on right now.

"The biggest thing I have to work on is positioning my body," she said. "When the other team is spiking, (I have to) figure out where they are going to hit it and get better position on the ball."

The JV Panthers have a solid group as well. Coach Burns leads a group of new players in Powell uniforms, but there are some returners, including seventh grader Janelly Collazo. Playing the middle hitter position, Janelly has been dedicating herself to improving over the past year.

"I played (with) 19 (Sports) last year, and it seemed fun," she said. "I felt supported by my teammates because they helped me all the way through."

Although they came up just short a year ago, the volleyball team is looking forward to completing a championship run this time around. With the experience and talent of this roster, that goal is in their sights.



Coach Pastore leads a cheer after Powell's victory over Challenger K-8. [Guiliana Ri'chard]

State law intensifies school cell phone policy

By Alexander Snyder
G•R•O•W•L Features Staff

A new school year starts in Florida, and with it comes a new cell phone law for schools.

Teachers and administrators are now enforcing the new law which prohibits students from using cell phones and other devices such as Apple AirPods during instructional time. Hernando County policy is that students must have their phones in their backpack and powered off.

Devices should not be brought out during instructional time unless told by an educator.

Teachers think the law is beneficial because phones can be distracting in school and take away focus from what is being taught.

Mr. Lawless is a sixth grade English Language Arts teacher at Powell. He believes that the new law will help students focus.

"I think it's good because phones can be a distraction in class, with students going on and doing things rather than their (schoolwork) in class," he said.

The law does allow students to have their phone on campus, and it can be used for communication with parents before and after school, with permission. Schools also have the choice on whether they will allow students to use their phones at lunch. This is an option that Powell does not allow.

Mrs. Elswick, who teaches sixth and seventh grade Advanced Math, also agrees with this new law. Throughout her years at Powell, no phones have been a policy of hers while teaching.

"I don't mind it," she said. "It will make it easier to hold up my regular curriculum."

Students, on the other hand, have mixed reactions about the new policy. Seventh grader Tyler Yost is one of many students that have mixed

feelings on this new policy.

"I don't think it's really fair," Tyler said. "(I get it) if (it's) used incorrectly and you go on social media, but I would change it, so like when the teacher says that we can have free time, we can go on our phones."

Eighth grader Joey Dushkewich II, does not think phones are a distraction. He thinks students should be able to use phones.

"Like (for) playing games on my phone in class," Joey said.

These are some of the mixed reactions from teachers and students. Although not everyone has the same opinion, they all have to deal with the reality of the same law.



With laptops, cell phones are less necessary, as seventh grader Curtis Robinson shows. [Rachel Sheppard]

Yearbook course gives students more input

By Kylee Kosanke
G•R•O•W•L News Staff

As Powell Middle School's new year kicks off, there are some new classes being introduced to the students. One of these classes is a course dedicated specifically to designing and publishing the yearbook.

Yearbook is a class consisting of only eighth grade students that are responsible for the content and ideas that will go into the 2024 Powell Yearbook.

Last year, the students who helped designed the yearbook were doing so in combination with publication of The Powell G•R•O•W•L. Yearbook advisor Mr. LaRiviere and administration decided a separate class would work more efficiently and give the students a special opportunity to make this year's yearbook memorable.

Yearbook consists of five departments: Staff & Students, Photography, Extracurricular Activities, Performing Arts, and Athletics. Each department or section is headed up by a responsible student editor.

The responsibility of the editor is to keep the staff members in their department on task and focused.

Zorielle DiGiorgio is the Photography Editor. The Photography Department captures all of Powell's events and activities going on at school. Zorielle has prior experience with editing photos, an activity she learned working with her aunt.

"I know all the software and how to touch up the photos," she said.

She wants to also try to bring more attention to things that are usually overlooked in the yearbook like specific extracurricular activities.

"I just want to show everybody how good of a school this is," Zorielle said.

Instead of the class being primarily run by teacher and advisor Mr. LaRiviere, much of the leadership falls on the shoulders of Savannah Inmon, the Editor-in-Chief.

The role requires that Savannah keeps everyone on task and working. Additionally, she has one of the final approvals on the layout of the pages.

"It's a lot of work," Savannah said. "More than I

expected, but it's still fun."

Savannah was inspired by past year's yearbooks for ideas, like teacher quotes and achievements from students.

"I want to make it special for all eighth graders, because it's our last year," she said.

To help advertise the yearbook to the students, parents, and staff, the staff also has a Business Manager, a position unique to this class. The student tasked with this is Kylie Donlon.

Unlike other editors, Kylie does not have a group of students that she oversees. Instead, she works with Savannah for marketing and advertising ideas.

One of the new ideas includes personalized student advertisements designed by parents. These quarter-page ads are already on sale online. Kylie hopes to push more information on social media, the school website, announcements, and other forms of communication.

"I really hope this ends up being the best yearbook ever," Kylie said.

This year's students are thrilled to be a part of the new yearbook class and look forward to creating the 2024 Powell Yearbook.



Eighth grader Ava Perrigan edits a page in the Clubs section of the upcoming yearbook. [Zachary Schuster]

Powell cheerleaders ready to fly high

By Liliana Klink
G•R•O•W•L Sports Editor

The Powell Middle School cheer team is coming into the new season with high hopes for this year. They are excited for their first appearance coming up on Tuesday, September 12. Powell cheerleaders will be representing the Panther football team in their first game against Challenger K-8.

Kierra Greene is Powell's new cheer coach and it is her first year coaching school cheer. She has previously coached club cheer and cheered herself for ten years in elementary, middle, and high school. She is looking forward to the season & building a strong team.

The team has several girls returning this year who are excited for the upcoming season. Addison Blevins is one of the many eighth graders coming back this year. Addison has also cheered for the Hudson Cobras.

"I've been cheering for seven or eight years," she said, "and I would love to continue in the future."

Addison credits her mom for being her biggest supporter. Coach Greene wants athletes like Addison, who show leadership on campus, to be the heart of the squad.

"I would like a team of student athletes and leaders around the school," Coach Greene said. "I want to build a strong team of sixth and seventh graders so I have girls to come back next year."

Kaylee Crima is a seventh-grader returning from last year. She has cheered for Coastal Cheer Athletics.

"I have been cheering for 1 year and I would love to cheer at All-Star Cheer."

Last year the cheer team went to various competitions and succeeded in many of them.

"I would love to compete in competitions again," Coach Greene said.

Addison and Kaylee are in agreement that Saniya Capel was a great leader on the team last year. They also both say that football was their favorite sport to cheer for. Both girls have found things that they can improve on and would like to work on them this year.

These Powell Panther Cheerleaders are ready to fly high this season and will be ready to support all of the Powell teams this year. They are ready to take on any challenge thrown their way at competitions this year as well.



Seventh grader Kaylee Crima shows off her cheer skills and Powell spirit during tryouts. [Guiliana Ri'chard]