

JACES students explore science through pig heart dissection

Special To The Enterprise

James A. Cawood Elementary School students recently engaged in hands-on learning by dissecting pig hearts in the school's science lab.

The activity was led by science teacher Ben Johnson, whose passion for experiential learning continues to inspire students to explore careers in science, particularly in the medical field.

Johnson also leads the school's Medical Explorers program in partnership with Harlan ARH Hospital, where students are provided with a variety of opportunities focused on career awareness and real-world, hands-on experiences.

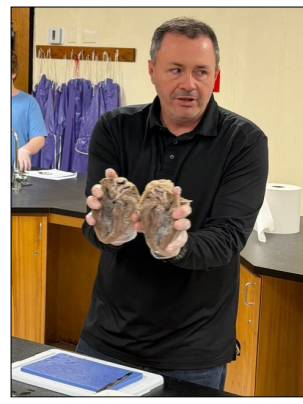
"Hands-on experiences like the pig heart dissection give students a deeper understanding of how the human body works," said Johnson. "When they can see and touch real structures, the learning becomes meaningful and sticks with them."

Pig heart dissection is a common and effective activity in middle school science, particularly in life science units focused on the human body. Because a pig's heart is similar in size, structure, and function to a human heart, it serves as an excellent model for student learning.

During the lab, students identified key parts of the heart, including the atria, ventricles, valves, and major blood vessels. They also traced the path of blood flow and observed differences in heart wall thickness to better understand how the heart functions.

"Our students learn best by doing," Johnson said. "Activities like dissections allow them to explore science in a way that textbooks simply can't replicate."

Johnson noted that hands-on labs like this not only reinforce classroom instruction but also help students develop impor-



PHOTOS SUBMITTED

James A. Cawood Elementary School science teacher Ben Johnson (above) worked with students on a lab project. Science students Samuel Escandon (above right, from left), Mark Sargent, Leah Collins, Alysia Johnson and Chelsi Clem took part in identifying key parts of the heart, including the atria, ventricles, valves and major blood vessels.



Students Mason Rhymer and Colton Whitehead dissect a pig heart.

tant scientific skills such as observation, critical thinking, and inquiry.

Prior to the dissection, students were provided with clear expectations, safety instruction and guidance on showing respect for the specimen.

"The focus is always educational and age-appropriate," Johnson said.

Johnson added that experiences like this are among his favorite parts of teaching.

"Science comes alive in the classroom when students are actively involved," he said. "From sharks to pig hearts, these experiences spark curiosity and help students make real-world connections."

Principal John Carter praised Johnson's dedication to providing meaningful learning opportunities.

"Mr. Johnson has always utilized our science labs by allowing students hands-on opportunities—whether through dissecting, experimenting or exploring medical procedures," Carter said. "I'm proud of his initiative and commitment to giving our students experiences that many middle school students may not have."

Students also shared their thoughts on the experience.

Eighth grade student Hailey Collins said, "It was a great opportunity to see things in person that we would normally only see in books."

Sixth grader Mason Rhymer said the dissection did not bother him.

"I see that type of thing all the time," said Rhymer, noting that his family members are avid hunters. "I've learned how it's done and about the different parts of the heart, like where blood enters and exits and how the valves work."

He also referenced recent medical advancements, noting that the first successful transplant of a genetically modified pig heart into a human took place in 2022 at the University of Maryland

Medical Center, with the recipient surviving for about 60 days.

As part of the Medical Explorers program, students have also participated in visits to Harlan ARH Hospital, including the lab, morgue and emergency room, as well as Southeast Kentucky Community and Technical College health career facilities.

Officials work to find source of gas leak

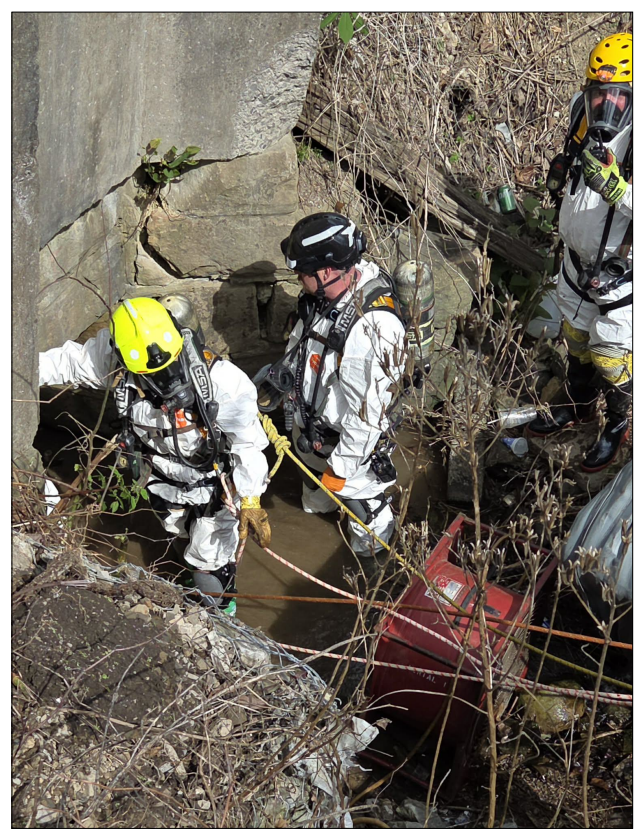


PHOTO SUBMITTED

State and local officials worked Saturday inspecting an area on South Main Street/KY 72. They traveled under the road way to inspect drainage lines to find out how gasoline is getting into the Martins Fork River. Those involved included the Kentucky Emergency Response Team, Harlan County Emergency Management and the Harlan City Fire Department.

GASOLINE

Continued from 1A

the culvert," Billings said. The gasoline could be coming from an old gas station near the end of South Main Street, but Billings wasn't certain.

Eight members of the Harlan City Fire Department and Harlan County Emergency Management all responded.

The plaza is home of Huffman & Huffman, World Finance and Harlan

Check Exchange. According to Billings, Huffman & Huffman closed due to the situation. Exhaust fans were used inside Sazon early this morning.

"We're working as fast as we can get find it," he added. "EPA's been notified. ERTs are on the way from Prestonsburg."

Officials will continue investigating.

"It's just a waiting game and keeping everything contained as much as we can," Billings said.

CITY

Continued from 1A

from drug abuse. The CCF's ultimate goal is to improve the lives of struggling families and help place affected children on the path to success despite these domestic hurdles.

The second application in association with FRYSC is for the Parent Café Grant through the Harlan Agency for Substance Abuse Policy (ASAP) board, which totals \$2,000 in funds. In a similar vein to Landing On Our Feet, this grant also serves to aid children and families of households in which one

or more parents is struggling with a substance abuse disorder. According to Superintendent Jennifer Parsons, Harlan Independent has been approved for both of these grants in years past; therefore, the district is still likely to qualify under the same criteria.

It was also confirmed that the city school district will no longer have to do away with its third bus route as expected, which would have posed an inconvenience to students in need of morning and

afternoon transportation. Since news about this potential route closure became widespread, Harlan Independent has been able to secure a replacement bus driver.

"That was a big hire for us and an answered prayer for us, honestly, just to be able to continue with that route for our students," said Parsons.

In other news, Harlan Independent board member Joe Burkhart was named as a new member of the local planning committee. Finally, the board will begin accepting bids on the following:

- Student insurance
- Workers Comp property and liability

- Student drug testing
- Office/teaching/library supplies
- Copier paper
- Custodial supplies and equipment
- Maintenance supplies and equipment
- Diesel fuel
- Propane gas
- Fire alarm inspection and maintenance services
- Boiler inspection
- Pest control
- Yearbook
- Lawn care
- Pizza
- Entities interested in placing a competitively-priced bid may reach out to the Harlan Independent Board of Education for more information.

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