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Seniors give Northwest a lift over Alliance

SPORTS, 1B

Sebring Local students return to 'strong cultures'

Sebring McKinley Jr./Sr. High School staff, teachers and student leaders welcome students back to school Aug. 20 with a hallway celebration. PROVIDED BY KOLLIN CHUPA

Benjamin Duer
Canton Repository
USA TODAY NETWORK

SEBRING – The first few days of school often include nerves and unease among students. At Sebring McKinley Jr./Sr. High School, administrators take a different approach.

Rather than jumping immediately into classroom work, students spend the first two days of the academic year settling in and building relationships to get more comfortable.

The two-day transition – which this year was Aug. 20-21 – gave students an opportunity to work together on a variety of activities.

Each year, the program theme involves a movie suggested by students. This year it was "Zootopia," with a message of "Expect more. Become more."

The program helps returning students get back into the groove and helps news students learn the school's culture through team-building activities, said principal Brian Clark.

Enrollment at Sebring McKinley for 2026-27 year is 145 students, with 31 in the senior class.

"We bring them in, give them tons of energy, put them in groups so that they get to know one another," Clark said Aug. 20.

Nicole Mathias, who teaches language arts to 10th to 12th graders at McKinley, led some of the activities in the student lounge. She said there were various stations and activities for students to be "with each other, again" and have time with teachers.

"Everybody's nervous about the first day of school, and we're just trying to set their minds at ease and have a warm face," said Scott Cassidy, Sebring Local's new superintendent. "The atmosphere has been outstanding and welcoming. The whole staff lined up at the doors as the kids came in."

Clark said the transition program also included reviewing the district's behavioral expectations.

"As the kids travel, they're also learning all our traditions, our customs and our expected behaviors while we're here, and we've found that it's a fast, fun and energetic way to really get us off on a good start and kind make kids proud to be Trojans," he said.

"We have a lot of strong cultures that have been proven to be successful the last few years."

B.L. Elementary School students, meanwhile, follow a more traditional start to the school year because, district officials said, the younger students need a familiar "routine."

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Stark leaders discuss housing crisis

Abreanna Blose
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USA TODAY NETWORK

CANTON – What comes to mind when you think of home?

Amy Riegel posed the question to a room of roughly 20 community leaders, housing advocates and elected officials at the Stark Library.

Safety. Love. Security, some said.

But discussions showed that feeling of home has become increasingly difficult to find for many Ohioans.

Riegel, executive director of the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio, said finding affordable housing is a lot like playing a game of musical chairs.

For every 100 extremely low-income individuals looking for housing in Ohio, only 37 will be successful in finding it, according to a recent report released by the National Low Income Housing Coalition.

That shortage, its causes and consequences, were among topics discussed during an Aug. 20 roundtable co-hosted by COHHIO and U.S. Rep. Emilia Sykes, D-Akron. Local leaders examined challenges in Stark County and potential solutions.

Here are four things to know from the discussion:

Rent is outpacing wages

To rent a modest two-bedroom apartment in the Canton-Massillon area, a person must earn a minimum wage of $20.88 an hour, about $43,440 a year, according to a recent report released by the National Low Income Housing Coalition.

Meanwhile, the median renter income in the area falls short at $40,906.

The minimum wage in the area remains at $11 an hour. The report shows only four out of Ohio's 15 most common jobs pay employees more than the two-bedroom housing wage.

"That number has gone up, the amount that employees are earning, but what's gone up faster is the amount they have to pay for housing," Riegel said.

She ties the growing issue back to the lack of affordable housing in the area. As demand increases, so does the cost of rent.

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Spike in school supply costs hits parents

Brands cite higher prices from gas, import duties

Christopher Cann, Clayton Park and Erick Trevino
USA TODAY NETWORK

Brandi McGrath usually buys quality, long-lasting school supplies for her 9-year-old son and his teachers. But sharp increases in the cost of folders, pencils and other products have forced her to cut back and search for cheaper alternatives.

"It's insane how expensive things have gotten," said McGrath, 48, of Salt Lake City. "I'm looking for every sale I can."

In Daytona Beach, Florida, Karin Kaiser was similarly struck by the cost of back-to-school shopping this year.

"It is crazy," she said, estimating that she and her husband spent over $100 on just notebooks and loose-leaf paper for their two daughters. "That's not counting what we had to pay for back-to-school clothes, shoes, haircuts."

The cost of a typical school supply list – including notebooks, paper, pencils and glue sticks – is nearly $175, almost 8% higher than in 2025, according to an analysis by the Groundwork Collaborative and The Century Foundation, two progressive think tanks.

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