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## ‘Every store has a different vibe’



Porter's Coffee House and Bakery owner Crystal Alward stands in the hallway, surrounded by coffee signage and memorabilia, inside of Porter's Coffee House and Bakery on Aug. 20 in Pickerington. TY WRIGHT/EAGLE-GAZETTE

## Porter's Coffee House and Bakery expands beyond Pickerington

Jeff Barron  
Lancaster Eagle-Gazette  
USA TODAY NETWORK

PICKERINGTON – What started as one is now three. Crystal Alward opened the first Porter's Coffee House & Bakery location in 2019 at 194 W. Church St. in Pickerington, followed by a second location at 201 Clint Drive, Suite 100, also in Pickerington. She opened her third location in December at 36 E. Depot St. in Pataskala.

Alward also operates a coffee truck. “Every store has a different vibe,” Alward said. “They all look a little bit different, with some common elements. The interior is a little bit different at each store.” For example, the original Church Street location is in a building that was once a house. The Clint Drive store has a more modern look and the Pataskala store has what Alward said has a Gatsby, coastal-like vibe. All three serve various coffee drinks and baked goods, with most baked good

made in-house. Porter's also serves sandwiches. “We have some known items that people come for a lot,” Alward said. “Our cinnamon rolls are super popular. Our blueberry muffins and our chicken salad are some of the top-selling items. We also carry pepperoni rolls. And also our custom drinks.” Those drinks include different coffee drinks on the menu every season, along with house-made syrups Alward

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Dr. Amy Acton speaks to the Ohio State University College Dems club at Page Hall on Sept. 3 in Columbus. Acton is running for governor as a Democrat. SAMANTHA MADAR/COLUMBUS DISPATCH

## With Brown out, Acton makes pitch for governor

Jessie Balmert  
State Bureau  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Former Ohio Sen. Sherrod Brown never jumped into the 2026 governor's race. But the possibility that he would loomed large over the Democratic field. Big donors waited to write checks. Elected Democratic leaders held off on endorsements. Political talk shows debated whether Brown would be a better candidate for governor or the Senate. But now Brown is out of the gubernatorial picture after he officially launched a bid on Aug. 18 to try to unseat GOP Sen. Jon Husted. Former Ohio Department of Health Director Dr. Amy Acton is making the case why she's the right Democrat to challenge President Donald Trump-backed Republican candidate Vivek Ramaswamy for governor. The 2026 race will decide who replaces GOP Gov. Mike DeWine, who cannot run again due to term limits. Acton, who experienced neglect and homelessness as a child, is pitching her compassion, her support of public education – which she says saved her life during those tough times – and her respect for science as strengths against better-known or better-funded foes. “People in the state are struggling. They're working hard. They feel like they're doing everything right, but special interests and billionaires keep taking this state in the wrong direction on nearly every measure,” Acton told Delaware County Democrats gathered at the Little Bear Golf Club in late August. “It's time for a change.” Meanwhile, former U.S. Rep. Tim Ryan is seriously considering jumping into the race. He will make a decision by

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### LICKING COUNTY

## Library's new branch set to open in October

Josué Perez  
Newark Advocate  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Licking County Library is planning to open its new Lakewood branch in October, moving it one step closer to completing a merger that combines the or-

ganization's Buckeye Lake and Hebron branches. Julia Walden, executive director of the Licking County Library, told The Advocate the library expects to open the new branch, 620 E. Main St., in the Arrowhead Shopping Plaza in Hebron, in early- to mid-October. It has not set an

official date yet, with construction ongoing, but anticipates releasing one in the coming weeks. The library closed its Buckeye Lake location Aug. 30, according to its website. It remains unclear when it will

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