



SUMMER
2025

MIDDLETOWN NOW

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MIDDLETOWN COMES TOGETHER
TO CELEBRATE CHAMPION

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Photo Credit:
Southpaw Studio



MIDDLETOWN, OHIO
Butler & Warren Counties

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www.cityofmiddletown.org

Letter from the City Manager

CITY WARMING UP WITH NEW DEVELOPMENT

Middletown,

The first six months in the City of Middletown have been incredible! Growth, hope, and optimism are on the rise as we witness new developments taking shape throughout the City. From the construction cranes along the I-75 corridor to another newly renovated park set to open in the coming months, Middletown is rapidly becoming a destination for living, working, playing, and investing!

Recently, the City of Middletown and the Middletown Division of Fire celebrated the swearing-in of the new Fire Chief, Brian Wright. The Division of Fire also proudly announced the opening of its first two new fire stations: Station 82 and Fire Headquarters. During the ribbon-cutting ceremonies at these locations, community members were invited to tour the new facilities and learn more about our exceptional Fire and EMS Department. In the upcoming weeks, we will also open the final two fire stations: Station 81, located between Jefferson Avenue and Charles Avenue, and Station 85, situated at the corner of Sophie Avenue and Stoltz Road. Be sure to follow the City of Middletown's social media accounts and check the website for the latest updates on upcoming ribbon-cutting ceremonies and open house events.

Two significant projects along the I-75 corridor are beginning to take shape, thanks to state grants. The Ohio Department of Development has awarded the City two generous grants: one for the cleanup and partial demolition of Towne Mall and another to support infrastructure projects at Renaissance Pointe. The City is currently finalizing a deal with Midland Atlantic Properties for future development at the Towne Mall site, which is expected to generate excitement among residents and attract visitors to Middletown. Additionally, Renaissance Pointe has secured its first residential partner, with nearly 300 new multi-family units being developed by Hallmark Communities. More announcements regarding the Towne Mall redevelopment and Renaissance Pointe are expected in the coming months!

Downtown Middletown is currently undergoing reimagining and revitalization efforts, led by the City to promote community involvement. This initiative enables residents and business owners to actively shape the area's future. The City's Community and Economic Development Department, in collaboration with the Communications Department, has launched a social media series to answer common questions about past Downtown Revitalization efforts and to preview the upcoming Downtown Refresh. In June, the first Downtown Middletown Refresh Working Group was formed, composed of a diverse group of residents and business owners to discuss the future direction of revitalization. Additionally, the City is excited

about the recent partnership with the Butler County Finance Authority (BCFA), which is dedicated to supporting the City's revitalization efforts both downtown and across the City. The Downtown Middletown discussions will continue through the summer as the final vision for the project takes shape. Furthermore, the City Council will meet in August to decide on the Manchester Inn and other historic buildings. Regardless of the outcomes, the City is excited about revitalizing the downtown area for future generations.

Just a few blocks from the Downtown Refresh project on Main Street, across from the City Building, the topping-off of the Combined Sewage Overflow (CSO) Basin is currently underway. This multi-year project is approaching completion, and discussions are in progress about the various amenities and features that will be included in the park being developed on top of the basin. The City anticipates that this new park will become a highlight of the Downtown Middletown area, bringing renewed excitement, fun, and optimism to Main Street. Stay tuned for updates!

The City of Middletown is dedicated to enhancing its more than 30 parks and 330 acres of parkland. The Oakland Park project, part of the Community Development Block Grant program, has been completed and was dedicated in July. This renovated park now features a new basketball court, a pickleball court, a shelter, picnic tables, and fitness equipment. It will serve as a space for residents to build community connections while having fun and enjoying modern amenities.

The Mayor's State of the City Address is fast approaching! It is scheduled for Tuesday, September 23, 2025, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the beautiful Event Center of Middletown. I anticipate that this evening will celebrate all of Middletown's successes and convey optimism for what lies ahead in 2026. We hope you will join us!

As summer settles in, it's the perfect opportunity to reconnect with all the things that make our city special. Whether you're enjoying a concert under the stars, attending a festival, relaxing in one of our beautiful parks, or supporting a local business, this season provides countless chances to come together. Summer is more than just warm weather; it's a celebration of community, a time to create memories, and an opportunity to foster pride in our neighborhoods. I encourage you to get out, explore, and engage in everything our city has to offer. Let's make the most of this vibrant season together.

We hope your summer has been safe, joyful, and memorable!
Sincerely,

Ashley N. Combs



**ASHLEY N.
COMBS**

City Manager

PUBLIC SAFETY

Brian Wright Named New Fire Chief

Middletown City Manager Ashley Combs selected Middletown Division of Fire Deputy Chief Brian Wright to serve as the next Middletown Fire Chief. Chief Wright was officially sworn in and pinned at the City Council meeting on June 17. Wright succeeds Tom Snively, who served in the Middletown Division of Fire for over 30 years.

"I am truly honored and deeply humbled by the opportunity to represent the City of Middletown, our community, and the dedicated men and women of this outstanding organization," Wright said. "I'm excited to lead our department into the future with pride and purpose."

Wright began with the Middletown Division of Fire in 2002, rising through the ranks of squadperson, lieutenant, captain, and deputy chief. Through these roles, he has led as a company officer with a focus on fire suppression and emergency medical services (EMS), later transitioning into a role within EMS Operations. As a captain, Wright oversaw EMS operations budget. Additionally, Wright played a critical role in the Division of Fire receiving the prestigious Ohio State of Life Award for life-saving efforts.

Beyond his professional duties, Wright is deeply committed to the community. He has served on the Middletown Fire Union Local 336 Golf Committee, which has raised and donated over \$30,000 to support the Middie Way Baseball Program, directly benefiting local youth.

Wright earned a degree in fire science from Eastern Gateway Community College, graduating Summa Cum Laude. He is also a graduate of nearby Talawanda High School.



Middletown Fire Recognized for Excellent Care for Heart Patients

The Middletown Division of Fire has received the American Heart Association's Mission: Lifeline® EMS GOLD achievement award for its commitment to offering rapid and research-based care to people experiencing the most severe form of heart attacks and strokes, ultimately saving lives.

Emergency medical services staff can begin treatment when they arrive — up to an hour sooner than if someone goes to the hospital by car. EMS staff are also trained to provide resuscitation efforts to someone whose heart has stopped. People who arrive by ambulance may also receive faster treatment at the hospital.

Mission: Lifeline EMS® is the American Heart Association's national initiative to advance the system of care for patients with high-risk, time-sensitive disease states, such as severe heart attacks and strokes. The Mission: Lifeline EMS achievement award focuses on agencies' on-scene care, bringing to the forefront the collaboration and contributions to patient care for prehospital providers.



National Night Out Another Huge Success!

National Night Out was another huge success in Middletown! Check out some of the photos from all the fun!



COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

REAL ESTATE FORUM

The 2025 Middletown Real Estate Forum was held in May and was a rousing success! Everyone from business owners to developers to real estate agents gathered at the Event Center of Middletown to hear what the City of Middletown is doing to attract new businesses and retain current businesses, while explaining the significance of Middletown's location in the future of real estate.

Middletown is an attractive city to live, learn, work, and play. The Real Estate Forum highlighted the local and regional assets to back that statement up, including the Middletown Regional Airport, the Event Center of Middletown, plenty of developable land, and proximity to I-75, among many others.

The next Middletown Real Estate Forum is scheduled for Thursday, May 7, 2026! And be sure to be on the lookout for the date of the Manufacturing Forum that will happen this fall!



I-75 CORRIDOR REDEVELOPMENT LATEST

The City of Middletown was recently awarded two grants to help with the reimaging and revitalizing of the I-75 corridor from the Ohio Department of Development (ODOD).

The Warren County Port Authority, on behalf of the City, received a \$2.5 million Brownfield Remediation Program grant from ODOD that will go towards the abating asbestos-containing materials and demolish multiple unsafe, deteriorating structures at the Towne Mall site. The abatement and demolition will prepare the 32-acre site for commercial and light industrial redevelopment, addressing known environmental hazards, and enabling future development opportunities.

Earlier this year, the City of Middletown issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for possible development of the Towne Mall. Midland Atlantic was awarded negotiations and an announcement on a final development deal is expected later this year.

ODOD also announced that it is awarding a Roadwork Development Grant in the amount of \$1,875,000 to the



City of Middletown for roadwork to be completed at the Renaissance Pointe development site.

The grant will help with the construction of an addition 1,329 linear feet of Atrium Boulevard, running south from Middle Drive, the continuing west to the Event Promenade. Additionally, 788 linear feet of Event Promenade will be constructed from Middle Drive, continuing south and intersecting with the extension of Atrium Boulevard. The construction of a retaining wall will also be necessary.

The project that will be covered by the grant will create 140 new full-time jobs.

Two projects have already been approved for sites at Renaissance Pointe. One is Sheetz, a fueling station and convenience store, which was approved by City Council and the Middletown Planning Commission earlier in 2025. Additionally, Hallmark Communities has been approved to apply for permits to construct 288 multi-family residential units at Renaissance Pointe.



The City of Middletown wants YOUR feedback!

Take this survey to let the City know what your thoughts on the future of the Manchester Inn and Sonshine Buildings. Scan the QR code or visit www.cityofmiddletown.org to take the survey!

MORE NEWS

Middletown Police Add Flock Camera to Downtown

Middletown Police has added a flock camera at the corner of Broad St. and Central Ave. near Governor's Square to aid in combatting crime in the Downtown business district. The camera is one of 12 that were purchased by Middletown Police after accepting a grant from the 2025 State Violent Crime Reduction funding.

Flock cameras have been added to the fleet of resources used by Middletown Police to increase surveillance of public areas, provide real-time alerts regarding possible incidents, collect evidence, and provide targeted policing.



Callie Fisher hired as next Community Projects Coordinator

Middletown City Council approved the hiring of Callie Fisher, a Middletown native, as the new Community Projects Coordinator at its meeting on July 1.

As community projects coordinator, Callie will take the lead on planning many community events that Middletonians have come to love and enjoy, including Fall Family Fest and Movies in the Park, while bringing introducing new, exciting events! Known for her creativity, hands-on leadership, and deep commitment to community-driven experiences, Callie looks forward to bringing fresh ideas and enthusiasm to Middletown's growing calendar of public events.

Fisher brings over a decade of experience in event coordination, community engagement, and strategic communication to the community projects coordinator position. Most recently, she served as the recreation marketing coordinator for the City of Blue Ash, where she sharpened her eye for detail and love for planning and execution of community-focused events. She also managed cross-departmental collaboration and drove targeted marketing efforts.

Next time you see Callie at an event, make sure to stop by and say hi!



Callie Fisher



September 11 Memorial Ceremony & 5K

September 13, 2025
Woodside Cemetery 8:46am
Check in opens at 8:15am

bit.ly/MiddletownSept11
Register by September 1 for a t-shirt

Proceeds Benefit  Water Station Sponsored By 

Middletown To Host First Annual 9/11 Ceremony and 5K

The City of Middletown will hold a solemn ceremony on Saturday, September 13, at 8:46 a.m. to honor the lives lost and the heroism displayed during the tragic events of September 11, 2001. The ceremony will take place at Woodside Cemetery, in front of the chapel, and is open to the public.

The ceremony will include the Fire Department Honor Guard, a live performance of the National Anthem, and the ceremonial Ringing of the Four Fives, a tradition that honors fallen firefighters and first responders.

Following the ceremony, community members are invited to participate in a 5K walk or run through the grounds. Each participant will have the opportunity to ring the memorial bell upon completion of the course in remembrance and tribute.

Pre-registration is encouraged for those wishing to take part in the 5K. Registered participants will receive a commemorative event t-shirt, walk ups will receive a t-shirt while supplies last. Learn more at bit.ly/MiddletownSept11.



DID YOU KNOW?

The City of Middletown allows community organizations to submit events for the Community Calendar on the website! Go to www.cityofmiddletown.org/calendar and click on "Submit and Event"!

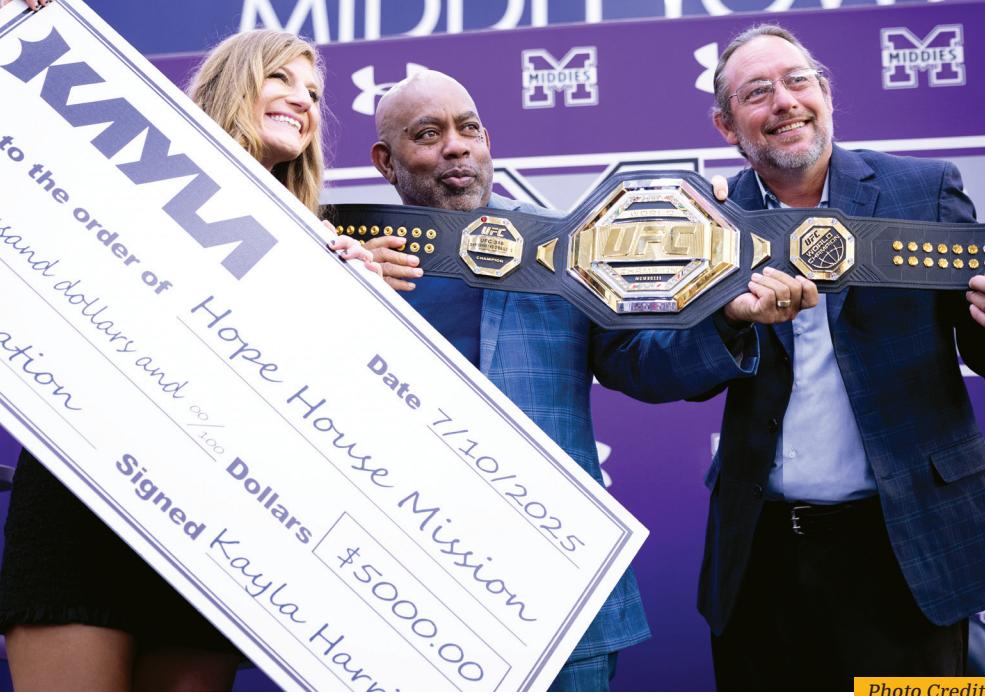


Photo Credit: Southpaw Studio



ETCHED IN HISTORY – KAYLA HARRISON RETURNS HOME WITH UFC BELT

By: Clayton Castle

Middletown has a lot of star-studded people that call the City home. We've celebrated many of them over the past year in light of the election of J.D. Vance to the vice presidency. In recent weeks, however, the City of Middletown has celebrated a couple of its star athletes.

Just in the month of July, Philadelphia Phillies star Kyle Schwarber collected his 1,000th hit (a home run at famed Yankee Stadium), was selected to his third MLB All-Star Game, and earned MLB All-Star MVP honors after hitting three home runs in a "swing-off" to decide the game in favor of the National League.

In a column for the Cincinnati Enquirer in July, Enquirer Opinions Editor and Middletown native Kevin Aldridge debated the "Mount Rushmore of Middletown Sports." Aldridge mentioned NBA Hall of Famer Jerry Lucas, NFL Hall of Famer Cris Carter and Schwarber. As for the fourth, how about two-time Olympic gold medalist and new UFC Champion Kayla Harrison?

Harrison has taken the UFC world by storm in her year-plus in the octagon. She made her debut by beating former champion Holly Holm by a rear-naked choke submission in the second round on April 13, 2024. Just over a year later, Kayla won her first belt by beating reigning champion Julianna Pena on June 7, 2025.

A month later, Kayla returned to Middletown with the belt in tow at a homecoming rally and live episode recording of "The Middletown NOW Podcast" at Wade E. Miller Arena at Middletown High School. Nearly 2,000 people in attendance

heard Harrison's testimony, including the highest of highs and the lowest of lows.

The rally began with words from Mark Kerns, a retired Middletown High School teacher and coach, who Kayla cites as a major influence in her career. Kerns laid out the history and power of Middletown High School's athletic department, referencing Lucas, Carter, Schwarber and Harrison. Kerns also mentioned that Middletown is the school that boasts the fastest 400-meter relay team in history, as well as the fourth-most football players sent to The Ohio State University.

"But who are we here for today," Kerns continued. "Two Olympic gold medals, the UFC Bantamweight champion and the greatest MMA combatant on the face of the Earth."

"Kayla is Middletown and Middletown is Kayla. When you say one, they are synonymous with each other," Kerns said.

After Kerns led the crowd in singing "Happy Birthday" to Kayla, who had just celebrated her 35th birthday days prior to the rally, Kayla entered the arena with the belt before delivering remarks to the crowd, where she shared her work ethic began after joining the cross-country team at Vail Middle School.

"My first year I showed up, I went to my first race and I didn't finish it," Kayla said. "I couldn't finish and I went to my next race and I couldn't finish. And I went to my next race and I think I walked across the finish line dead last. And I gotta tell you, that really ticked me off. So that summer, between seventh and eighth grade, I spent all summer training, running, waking up early, and I came back. I made the varsity team and we got to win a GMC Championship. That is where my work ethic began. Right here on these streets in Middletown."

Kayla then described being sexually abused by her first coach. She told her mom about the abuse when she was

16. Despite moving to Massachusetts, Kayla struggled from post-traumatic stress disorder stemming from the abuse.

"I was alone, I was afraid," Harrison recounted. I felt hopeless and I wanted to quit Judo. I wanted to run away or kill myself. And I'll never forget my poppy called me. I didn't answer because I was too scared to answer and tell him that I wanted to quit. But he left me a voicemail. He said 'Bebop, I love you and I love you no matter what. But I want you to remember something, sweetheart. Quitters never win and winners never quit.'

Kayla has long leaned on her faith in God and openly professes her faith to others. Kayla admits her success didn't happen overnight, but her faith kept her driven. Now, her testimony has been heard by millions across the globe as she thanks God after every match.

"Step by step, God was molding me," she said. "He was shaping me even when I couldn't see it. Even in the losses. And let me tell you, there were a lot of losses. I know everybody sees all the big, shiny stuff. But it takes a lot of heartbreak and a lot of breaking down to get there. And God molded me during those times."

Middletown is a town that raises good people and builds champions, according to Harrison. It's hard to argue that when she speaks in a gym that signifies that long history of championships, with banners from the Lucas-led basketball champions in the 1950's to the Hall of Fame in the hallway with several athletes both in Middletown and national Halls of Fame.

Part of raising champions and building that success comes through overcoming adversity, something that Harrison embodies.

"Her life testimony has been filled with test after test after test after test," Kerns said. "And every time, she attacks that test with more relentlessness and passion than anybody you'll ever, ever see. These tests have become the heart and soul of what she is, not what she does, but who she is as a person."

Following her address to the crowd, Kayla sat down for a live recording of "The Middletown NOW Podcast", where she talked more about her journey from the girl living on Manchester Road to winning two Olympic gold medals to hoisting a UFC belt. She reflected on the journey and how much adversity and self-doubt played a role in that success.



"I still feel like my life is a dream, you know?" Kayla pondered. "To go from that 16-year-old car wreck to being America's first Olympic champion [in Judo]. If you had told

me that was going to happen, I wouldn't have believed you. It is such an honor to go and represent the greatest country on Earth against the best athletes in the world. And to win a gold medal is like, holy crap, I actually did it. But to go and compete and win and be the first to ever do it, it's like I can't believe my life sometimes."

While greatness is often attached to her name now, Kayla Harrison doesn't want any part of that. Because in her mind, she's just beginning.

"I'm not done yet," Kayla said. "I still got a lot more chapters to write. I do believe my purpose in life is to use my platform and to use the gifts God has given me to be a light, to give back, to inspire, and just squeeze the ever-living juice out of life."

Inspire she did and inspire she continues to do. When asked if she had any advice for anyone going through a tough situation, she gave a pointed and poignant response.

"Life is hard and there are no guarantees," Kayla said. "We're always going to have setbacks, we're always going to have roadblocks. We're always going to have obstacles in our way. But if you believe yourself and you surround yourself with people who believe in you, there's nothing you can't accomplish. I'm living proof of that."



Photo Credit: Southpaw Studio

To end the celebration, Kayla's life purpose was on full display in the way of giving back. She presented a \$5,000 check to the Hope House Mission in Middletown. The Hope House Mission is a non-profit that is near and dear to Kayla's heart that helps homeless people and those struggling in life to find new opportunities. Middletown Mayor Elizabeth Slamka then presented a proclamation and key to the city to Harrison, recognizing her outstanding achievements and the impact she has had on the City of Middletown.

Kayla then wanted to give back to her fans. Despite the initial plan of only signing for 90 minutes, Harrison instead wanted to sign autographs for everyone in the gym who wanted one. She signed autographs and took photos with her hometown fans for four and a half hours.

Because Kayla is Middletown and Middletown is Kayla.

The City of Middletown wants to again thank Middletown City Schools, Superintendent Deb Houser, Athletic Director Joe Campolongo, Assistant Athletic Director Megan DeChambeau, Middletown Division of Police, and all of the City and School staff and volunteers who made the Kayla Harrison Homecoming Rally possible.

HEALTH MINUTE

By: Jackie Phillips Carter, Middletown Health Commissioner

STAYING SAFE IS OFTEN A WINNING STRATEGY FOR AN ATHLETE'S HEALTH!

High school Fall sports such as football is just around the corner and most fall athletes either are planning to or have already completed their annual physical as required by the Ohio High School Athletic Association. Some people may consider these appointments a nuisance or waste of time, believe their child is healthy and has no concerning health defects. However, physicals are among the most important activities an athlete will do in a year.

The main purpose of a sports physical is to ensure that a student-athlete is healthy enough to play the sport. These physicals may assess the status of previous injuries and offer new treatment for faster healing. They also may find new health conditions not previously found on past physicals.

During the exam, the doctor may take student-athlete's vitals (blood pressure, heart rate, blood oxygen, etc.), perform an EKG to detect issues with the heart, conduct a baseline concussions test (for contact sports), and other important tests to rule out health conditions that may prevent an athlete from performing at maximum effort. On most occasions, student-athletes will pass their physicals and become eligible to play the sport. On a rare occasion where they don't pass, they could be disqualified from playing the sport until the ailment is treated. Other times, a student-athlete may be cleared to play with restrictions.

Keeping an eye on an athlete's health doesn't just stop at the physical, however.

Sports injuries are incredibly common, particularly in contact sports like football. One of the major topics of concern to health professionals are concussions. A concussion is "a head injury that happens when your brain moves or twists inside your skull," according to the Cleveland Clinic. While concussions are rarely life-threatening, effects can be serious and last for days or weeks.

Concussions are so common in young athletes that, according to the Cleveland Clinic, more than half of emergency room visits for kids ages 5 through 18 every year are due to concussions.

In the NFL, independent neurologists will often pull players off the field if they show signs of a concussion. Those signs and symptoms include: headaches, neck pain, balance problems, lightheadedness, nausea and vomiting, double vision, blurred vision, ringing in ears, and trouble concentrating. If you or someone you know are experiencing any of these symptoms after a traumatic impact to the head, head to the emergency room as soon as possible to make sure other conditions are not happening as a result, such as a brain bleed or skull fracture.

Another concern of health professionals is heart problems. Hank Gathers was a basketball player in the late 1980's and early 1990's for Loyola Marymount. During his senior year, he was diagnosed with an irregular heartbeat after collapsing on the floor. He was put on medication and eventually, the dosage was decreased. Later in the season, he collapsed again and died. It later was revealed that he missed his doctor's appointment before the game and ignored calls from his cardiologist. Heart issues can often be detected in preseason sports physicals.

Other times, heart issues cannot be found until a blunt force trauma. Damar Hamlin's heart stopping on the field at Paycor Stadium in 2023 was unavoidable due to a condition called commotio cordis, which is an extremely rare condition where the heart's rhythm is disrupted by a blow to the chest. To help combat last effects from that condition, trainings in CPR and AED are critical. Trainers on the field that night saved Hamlin's life.

Sports are fun and enjoyable to watch, especially when teams like the Bengals have Super Bowl expectations! But they are even better to watch when the star players like Joe Burrow and Ja'Marr Chase are on the field because they are healthy!

Get those physicals and we'll see you at play!

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