

What YOUth Can Do organizes rally

Noemi Gilbert
staff writer

Over 200 students, parents, teachers, and community members gathered at Central on July 11 to demand that OPS cancel its contract with the Omaha police department, focus on prevention instead of reaction for school safety, diversify upper level classes, have more mental health resources for students and have Black history emphasized in the curriculum.

The rally was organized by What Youth Can Do, an organization made up of several current and former OPS students. It

began with the organizers giving speeches about each demand. "It is and will continue to be exhausting to be a Black student in honors and advanced placement classes," What Youth Can Do member and South High graduate Jadriane Saunders said in his speech. "If we do not acknowledge and proactively address the huge gap in representation between minority students and white students.

The speakers emphasized the importance of counseling and mental health services for students. In Nebraska, the ratio of school counselors to students is 347:1. The recommended ratio is

250:1. Counselors increase school safety by providing school and emotional support to students. More counseling and mental health services for students is also part of the demand for prevention instead of reaction.

After the speeches, participants lined up on the sidewalk facing Dodge street carrying signs. Some were homemade, such as Burke sophomore Montaija Williford's which read: "5 times more likely to get suspended than my white counterparts. (My school's name is linked to a racist Harry A. Burke)." Signs were also handed out at the rally. (cont. pg 5)



JAMIE REIFF | The O-Book



Mekhi Mitchell, a 2020 graduate, speaks at the What YOUth Can Do rally in front of Central. The rally focused on mental health concerns and diversity in schools.

Governor vetoes hair discrimination bill

Cecilia Zahm
staff writer

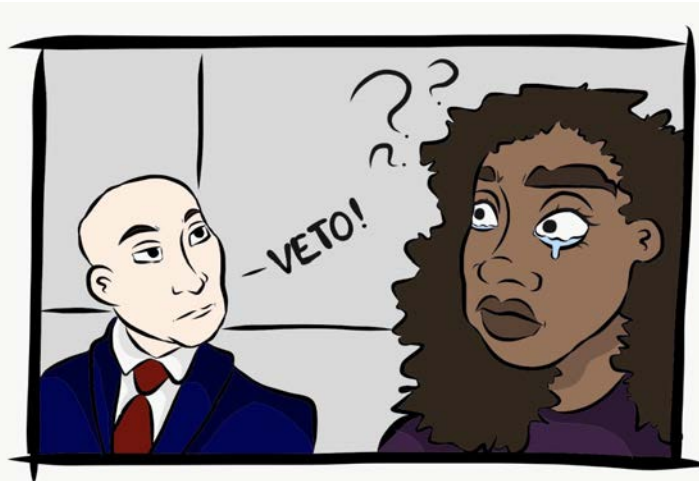
Legislative bill 1060 was introduced to the Unicameral in January by state senator Machaela Cavanaugh. According to the Introducer's Statement of Intent, the bill would "Expand the definition of race for the purposes of employment discrimination to include traits historically associated with race, such as hair texture and styles."

Hair discrimination, which the bill aims to stop, is discrimination that largely affects Black people with textured hair or hair in styles like braids or locks.

LB 1060 passed in the Unicameral, but when it went to Governor Pete Ricketts' desk to be signed, he vetoed the bill. One of the points made in his official statement is that "Under LB 1060, an employer would be unable to uniformly apply its grooming policies without fear of violating the Nebraska Fair Employment Practice Act." Ricketts also said while he agrees with trying to protect people against racial discrimination, the hair styles mentioned can be worn by any race.

"I think that they're ill-informed of the legislation," Cavanaugh said in response to the veto. "There are already workplace protections in place, and this bill does not preempt them. For example, if you are working in a food processing plant and you are required to wear a hair net, as long as that policy is applied to everyone equally, this does not preempt that."

Hair discrimination is an issue that affects many Nebraskans. Back in February when the bill was being heard, about 15



ABBEY PELOWSKI | Contributing Cartoonist

people came to testify and share their experiences. "It ranges from being asked if their hair is dirty, if they could straighten their hair because the employer didn't like that it was curly and kinky, and even being fired or not getting promotions if they didn't comply," Cavanaugh said.

Currently, seven states have passed a law against hair discrimination, which is called the CROWN Act. The organization that is pushing this law on a nation-wide scale is called the CROWN Coali-

tion. Their goal, which is also the acronym CROWN, is to "Create a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair." According to them, black women's hair is over three times more likely to be perceived as unprofessional in the workplace.

In regard to LB 1060, many Nebraskans have been voicing their disagreement with the veto, and State Senator Ernie Chambers is among them. He protested with a sign that read, "Pete Ricketts has exposed his racism." In an interview with Omaha World Herald, Chambers said that Ricketts's veto, "showed that he was doing it based on racism, because it was a bill designed to protect black people."

LB 1060 aims to combat racial discrimination, which is what Black Lives Matter protests across the country have been addressing this summer. "At this moment in our culture with racial injustice being brought to the forefront so loudly, strongly and passionately, I think that it is tone-deaf for Ricketts to have vetoed this bill," explained Cavanaugh.

There were calls for a special legislative session to address racial and social issues, but not enough state senators signed on. Therefore, LB 1060 will have to wait until this upcoming January, where Cavanaugh says she will continue to sponsor the bill and reintroduce it until it is passed



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New housing for homeless veterans opened downtown

Grace Ridgley
staff writer

In September, a new housing unit for homeless veterans was opened in downtown Omaha. The ribbon cutting ceremony was held on Sept. 18, and nearly 200 people attended, all with masks. Homelessness has been a crisis among veterans for years, and this new complex is a major way to give back to the community.

The new housing is called Victory II and was formerly a building belonging to Grace University. It was funded and headed by the Burlington company. The Victory apartments, built in 2013, are right next to the new addition. The apartments cost 8.2 million to build, and the project has been happening for over a year.

Not only does the complex provide housing for homeless vets, but it also offers rehabilitation and help for acquiring jobs. While most shelters offer some of the same options, the specific struggles related to veterans finding work will be the focus at the Victory II apartments.

Lisa Roskens, the Chief Executive

Officer at Burlington, spoke during the ribbon cutting ceremony about the amenities offered.

"Nationwide more than 40,000 veterans are homeless. At Burlington Capital, we want to make sure veterans receive the housing and services they deserve. Our apartments are 'permanent, supportive housing,' which means that the veterans are part of a community, and that they receive needed services for health and wellness in addition to job-readiness training skills," said Roskens. ("Veterans Come Home to Victory II Apartments" | Burlington).

Getting veterans back on their feet is the goal of this organization. Many veterans struggle with alcohol abuse or drug addiction because of PTSD or other mental illnesses.

The opening of this apartment complex is a win for those in need. Rather than living on the street or under a bridge, as described by one of the new residents in an interview with KETV, vets will have a safe environment for improving their lives.



PAIGE TERRY | The Register

Victory II houses homeless veterans and provides rehabilitation and job help. The building used to belong to Grace University and was built in 2013.

Student group organizes climate change protest

Noemi Gilbert
staff writer

Students from all across Omaha came together at the city courthouse on Sept. 25 to protest climate change. The rally was organized by the environmental group Students For Sustainability and featured speakers from organizations across the city.

"We are the next generation, so if we want change, we had better start now." Westside senior Camille Beaulieu said. She is the president of Students For Sustainability. "For climate change specifically, we do not have time to waste."

Speakers at the event spoke about the different aspects of climate change. Bear Alexander from the racial justice organization ProBLAC spoke about how climate change disproportionately affects people of color. Brent Crampton from Hillside Solutions, a waste and composting company, talked about the importance of reducing waste and composting. Lastly, at the end of the event, there was space for students to speak about topics such as veganism, contacting

representatives, and how to not get burnt out as a youth activist.

Beaulieu is happy with the turnout of the rally. "Our crowd was small but mighty and passionate," she said. "Everyone was very supportive." Students who were not able to come to the rally in person could post a photo of themselves and participate virtually. "It takes a village and we pulled it off," Beaulieu said.

Senior Willa Rauch enjoyed attending the rally. "It's important that students organize in order to set up a real future for the generations after us," she said. "Bonding together to let our voices be heard is a powerful thing."

Both Rauch and Beaulieu hope that city and state officials can pass legislation protecting the climate, such as a plastic bag ban. "Nebraska is a beautiful state that deserves to be preserved and protected," Rauch said.

"The older generations have already wasted the time we had," Beaulieu said. "If they aren't going to push for climate action, then that leaves us."

New club aims to increase sustainability efforts

Shyla Youngs
staff writer

Students for Sustainability is relatively new to schools across Omaha. Just last year, the organization was created by a student at Mercy High school.

This led to more students joining the club and it became more well-known across Omaha. The mission of the organization is "trying to expose the Omaha community to more sustainable practices."

With this in mind, the student run organization decided to gear their efforts to spread awareness to the citizens of Omaha. They focus on getting the attention of citizens and the local government. Camille Beaulieu, the president of Students for Sustainability explains the club further saying, "We want to inform people that every effort towards change matters," Beaulieu said. "Whether that be individual changes like composting, or larger changes like our upcoming climate strike."

As president, Camille hosts organization meetings, oversees and helps plan events and activities for members. Some events Students for Sustainability has previously held are climate strikes, and a Cookies+Compost event with Hillside Solutions.

The organization does have an exciting event coming up, their annual climate strike. The strike will be held Friday, September 25 in front of the Douglas County Courthouse. Everyone is welcome to come show their support. If you are interested, the organization also has an Instagram account and a website, so you can stay informed on upcoming events and meetings.

The organization has high hopes for this year's climate strike, after the success of last years. However, with the pandemic occurring, they have not been able to meet in person to discuss things as a group. Before the pandemic, the organization would meet for an hour each week. Now, they meet via zoom every Sunday.

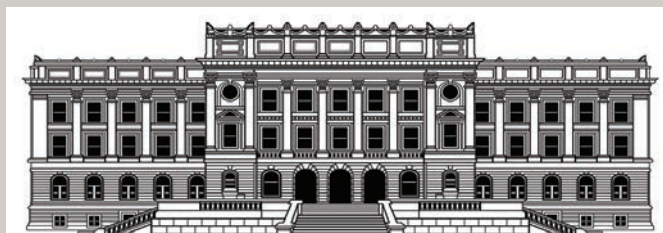
"Going all virtual definitely is a big change but we try to embrace it as much as we can," Beaulieu said. "Zoom meetings can range from updates on events and planning events, to brainstorming things to do in the community to spread awareness and make change."

Beaulieu explains that you can find information to join via social media. They have students who are members that attend Central, Westside, Burke, Benson, and more spread out across the community.

"It's a good way to meet new people your age who are interested and care about the same things you do. You can be informed and fight for something in your own community that matters."

Students for Sustainability is excited that they are doing good in the community, not only with the youth, but they also have an impact among adult and local government officials.

"We are a group of generally high schoolers who have a common goal of making Omaha a better place," Beaulieu says. "We do that in a variety of activities, but we all do it together. It is a good way to make positive change and friends."



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It is the goal of the Central High Register to represent the student body in issues affecting their lives as young people and students. If you feel that we are not covering an issue that is important to you, we welcome contributing writers who bring fresh ideas to the issues. If you would like to write a story for your student newspaper, please contact Hillary Blayney at hillary.blayney@ops.org or come to room 029 to discuss your idea.

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DCC makes COVID changes

Lily Labs
staff writer

Prisons around the world have made many alterations due to the coronavirus, and the Douglas County Correctional Center is one of them.

Ted Swircek has worked at the Douglas County Correctional Center for 17 years. Swircek has been in different positions during his time at his job, but he currently works in a supervisory position as a lieutenant.

DCC started Covid-19 related changes back in January. Due to the early preparation and detailed planning, when the first Covid-19 was confirmed, the facility was very prepared.

“The protocols for other contagious viruses are very similar to our Covid protocols and provided the blueprint for our Coronavirus response plan,” Swircek said. Flu and chicken pox outbreaks are examples of circumstances that The Correctional Center got inspiration from regarding their response to Covid-19. “The main differences between the plans are the length of time that a unit or infected inmates must isolate, and the need for a biocontainment unit due to the higher level of contagiousness of Covid-19,” he said.

The Correctional Center began acquiring mass amounts of personal protective equipment (PPE) and had their administration and labor union work with a group of virus specialists from UNMC. They made many changes such as transforming an existing celled housing unit into a biocontainment unit, including areas for staff and detainees to decontaminate.

“The biocontainment unit is capable of housing inmates (detainees) with confirmed cases of Covid-19,” Swircek said. “This area is staffed with officers that have received training in virus containment and proper donning and doffing of personal protective equipment.”

Alongside the physical changes to the building, daily operations for staff and detainees have been altered as well.

“As officers and other staff arrive to work, they have their temperature taken and are subject to the standard Covid-19 medical screening questions about potential symptoms,” Swircek said. “Any officers that are symptomatic are sent home and advised to get tested for Covid-19.”

Swircek also said that N-95 masks, gloves and eye protection are provided to all staff, and face shields and medical gowns are supplied to specialized staff who work in the biocontainment unit. Detainees are also provided with equipment, such as two cloth face masks, which are washed at least once a day, along with access to the cleaning products that are normally available.

“When our officers first began wearing masks on duty, we had several inmates complain that they were not being provided with masks,” he said. When complaints were made, two masks were distributed to the detainees, but says that after that there were different complaints that the masks were required.

“The level of resistance from the detainee population when the detainee masks were first implemented was like nothing I have seen here in my 17-plus years of experience. It has been by far my most difficult year in Corrections,” Swircek admitted. “Thankfully, things have mellowed quite a bit over the past couple of months and the masks are fairly well accepted now.”

When a detainee enters the building, they are subject to the same screenings as staff are. New detainees showing symptoms will be housed in the infirmary units or the biocontainment unit. Groups of detainees who do not exhibit symptoms who have arrived on the same day are isolated from the general population for 14 days to ensure they do not develop symptoms, they are then transferred to the general population when the 14 days



PAIGE TERRY | The Register

DCC works with virus specialists and houses a biocontainment unit due to the pandemic.

are up.

“Arrangements have been made to ensure that even those inmates that are medically isolated have access to phones, visits via video, showers, etc., ensuring that their rights are not violated,” Swircek said.

“Approximately one-third of our staff, about 120 officers, have tested positive for Covid-19 over the past several months, myself being one of them,” Swircek said. Because of most cases being mildly symptomatic or completely non-symptomatic, many cases would have been missed if contact tracing wasn’t used. Officers who have tested positive must stay home from work for at least ten days. Officers identified through contact tracing that may have been exposed to others who have tested positive are urged to get tested. “We did end up having a handful of officers hospitalized due to the severity of their symptoms, all have since recovered,” he said.

“If a detainee tests positive for Covid-19, they will be placed in our biocontainment unit or in our infirmary based on their medical needs,” Swircek said. Detainees can also be sent to the hospital if it is medically necessary. Contact tracing is also used regarding the detainees. “The area or areas the infected

detainee was housed in will be isolated from the rest of the detainee population for a period of 14 days while we monitor the remaining detainees for symptoms,” he said. If other detainees develop symptoms, the isolation period may be extended.

“We have had no less than 66 detainees test positive for Covid-19,” Swircek said. “The majority of those cases were mild, with only a couple of cases requiring hospitalization.”

DCC has one medical clinic and two infirmary units. “These areas are staffed 24 hours, seven days a week with medical professionals. We have a doctor, physicians assistants, nurse practitioners and licensed practical nurses, and registered nurses among our medical staff,” Swircek said.

A psychiatrist and a group of licensed medical healthcare providers are also part of the staff and are available to the detainees free of charge.

“Our medical clinic and infirmary are always busy, treating dozens of inmates every day for a wide variety of medical issues,” Swircek said. “Medical care for our inmate population is definitely a priority, despite their current circumstances, the detainees in our care are human beings and have rights.”

Teacher receives transplant, transfers to Central

Daisy Friedman
editor in chief

English teacher Tara Obner says the disease that breaks down the tissue in the heart is so widespread in her family, Harvard medical research center named it after them: Schlimgen disease.

“My dad’s family, 50 percent of them have this heart disease. I was one of the 50 percent. It causes a breakdown of the muscle of the heart,” Obner said. “Eventually you’ll have congestive heart failure, which I went into in 2018.”

Obner went through many steps before getting put on the transplant list. “The first thing they did is they gave me heart pump, which is called a Left Ventricular Assistant Device,” she said. “They went in and drilled a hole and hooked a chord up to my aorta that came up to my belly and hooks up to a battery. I had that for 8 months while I waited for a heart. I got one on Jan. 11, 2020.”

After receiving her transplant, she said there was a lot of fear that the organ would reject her body. She did have some rejection in the beginning, but by what she calls a miracle of miracles, her body was able to overcome it.

“In the beginning it was scary, and I was anxious,” Obner said. “When you reject a heart, you don’t automatically get a new one. I’m still working up my stamina. I’m a lot better than I was before.”

She explained that she isn’t yet in contact with the family of the individual who gave her the heart. She said after a year, she’ll be allowed to write them a letter and they can write back if they so choose. Having been sick for a large part of her life, she is excited to get to experience what it’s like to be healthy.

“It’s exciting, and I wish I was less lazy than I am,” she said. “Now that I’m back at work it’s exciting to be able to go up a flight of stairs. It’s nice to be able to come to the building and do what I have to do.”

During the pandemic, Obner has had to take extra precautions to ensure she stays healthy. She said she was already quarantining when COVID hit. Earlier in the spring, she got permission to stay in a cabin at Mahoney State Park with her kids. Other than that, she said she did not leave the house again until the summer, except to go to doctor’s appointments. “The only one leaving was my partner who works at the VA hospital,” Obner said. When she came home, she had to throw all her clothes in the washing machine and take a shower. “Now I just wash my hands and wear a mask like everyone else.”

In terms of being at school, Obner said OPS has been very considerate of her medical needs and has been taking care of her. “They got me a classroom in the basement right by the journalism room,” she said. There’s a bathroom right across the hallway. “I’ve felt really comfortable, and Central is really taking care of me. I’m both bummed and relieved that kids aren’t in the building. It’s hard to stay healthy when there are so many people in the building.”

Obner also said she understands people’s fears about having a transplant but is still a strong advocate in favor of them.

“I know a lot of people are afraid to have a transplant,” she said. “My dad had a transplant twenty years ago and he’s still kicking at 84. Don’t be afraid to get yourself healthy, go get that transplant and be brave.”

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In-Depth: Omaha

Systemic racism exists, proof in education system

Elena Correa
section editor

Systemic racism has been a hot topic of discussion since the beginning of the protests in the name of the Black Lives Matter movement. Now, white Americans are questioning “Does systemic racism exist?” “Has racism gone away?” While it’s understandable why white Americans would think it has, the answer is no, it has not.

Systemic racism is defined as “a form of racism that is embedded as normal practice within society or an organization”. When people discuss racism in a way that is systemic, they are not referring to outright racism such as slurs or proud hate speech.

Systemic racism refers to racism that is unconscious or imbedded in societal structures, so it is more difficult to detect, especially as a white person, who has never been negatively affected by these systems.

One example of an institution that systemic racism is imbedded in is education. This starts as early as preschool, with black students making up only 18 percent of enrolled preschoolers and 50 percent of preschool suspensions. This differs from their white counterparts, with white children making up 43 percent of enrolled preschoolers and only 26 percent of suspensions. A study showed black boys at the age of only ten were perceived to be older and less innocent than white ten-year-old boys.

As black students get older, they are suspended and expelled at three times the rates for the same misdemeanors committed by white students. Higher rates of suspensions and expulsions lead to higher drop out rates, which result in continued cycles of poverty.

We quickly start to see what is called “suspicion of guilt” that is said to follow students of color throughout their lives. Perhaps black children are judged much harsher than their white classmates? If so, what racial biases are perpetuated by non-black people that do not allow them to see black children as children, but rather aggressive discipline issues?

The most recognized systemic race issue when it comes to education is the school-to-prison pipeline. The school-to-prison pipeline is defined as “a process through which students are pushed out of schools and into prisons.” In other words, “it is a process of criminalizing youth that is carried out by disciplinary policies and practices within schools that put students into contact with law enforcement.”

Black students make up 16 percent of student enrollment, but 27 percent of students are referred to law enforcement and 31 percent are arrested. White students make up 51 percent, but 41 percent of students are referred to law enforcement, and 39 percent of students are arrested.

Public schools are also extremely segregated, as students attend school by district and each district tends to have a different racial demographic. These different demographics can be attributed to desires for cultural relatability and safety, redlining and/or housing discrimination. Public schools are funded through property taxes and when poor kids are usually also brown kids, it means that these school become extremely underfunded. This results in lower graduation rates, poorer education, and underqualified staff and teachers.

Racial bias in education does not disappear in college. Whether it comes to colleges accepting applicants at higher rates with “white sounding” names, or a study showing that college professors tend to neglect students who do not have “white sounding” names, it is necessary to confront the obvious and unobvious bias authority figures hold in the education system.

The racial wealth gap also become apparent in the debt black college students accumulate. Black students tend to take on more debt than white students, because of the money available for education to begin with. This makes it even harder for black Americans to accumulate wealth in the future.



FLORA GRIFFITH | Contributing Cartoonist

Black graduates also are likely to be unemployed at twice the rate of white graduates, even in high demand fields. A popular study has shown that you are fifty percent less likely to get an interview if you have a “black sounding” name.

It is important to keep in mind that the data presented has only discussed one major institution in the United States and only mentioned surface issues in little detail. Systemic racism is prevalent throughout every institution in our country and it is a complex issue interwoven into our society.

White and other non-black people must be prepared to face their racial biases and evaluate how they perpetuate racism in their daily lives, if any change can occur. I encourage everyone to learn and seek anti-racist resources and to research these issues on their own in order to educate themselves.



DILLON GALLOWAY | The Register

Was there ever a time before racism?

Daisy Friedman
editor-in-chief

“Was there ever a time before racism?” I remember saying to my dad one day after he drove us home from school.

I just learned about the civil rights movement for the first time, and my young, inquisitive mind didn’t leave my curiosity in the classroom. My dad’s eyes widened as he looked at me through the rearview mirror. He looked as if I had just asked him where babies came from.

“I don’t know,” he said. “Maybe, but it hasn’t been for a long time.”

“Why,” I said.

“Because people are scared of things they don’t understand,” he said.

Although I didn’t understand what he meant then, it was exactly the right thing to say.

Flash forward five years and there we are again in the same car, talking about the same issue, but this time, the world was in conversation with us. I was 17 when the protests surrounding the murder of unarmed black man George Floyd by a police officer erupted nationwide. In Omaha, where I grew up, you could hear the sounds of sirens, helicopters, or people chanting “hands up, don’t shoot” on nearly every street corner for a week.

My dad and I found ourselves at the busiest intersection

in Omaha on day two of the protests. We were sandwiched between two cars, whose occupants were screaming at each other. One car held two young black men no older than 18, and the other held a middle-aged white man with a beard that touched the steering wheel.

“Go back to Africa,” the white man said. “Go back to Obama.”

“F*** you man,” the black man said, as he stuck his head out the passenger’s side window.

“Shut your mouth and stop complaining all the time,” the white man spat back.

“You don’t know what it’s like,” the black boy screamed as he flipped the older man the bird and sped away.

I sat there dumbfounded for a moment. The black men were right, this old white guy had no idea what it was like for them. Then again, neither did I. Did that make me the same as him? It then dawned on me the significance of the position of our car. We were sitting in the middle of these two ideologies, bigotry and oppression. I began to think, “If I do not fall into either category, then as a white person, where does that leave me?” It leaves me facing the facts. I am someone who is practicing how to be a non-racist person while growing up in a systemically racist society.

The path of rewriting the wrongs of history starts with understanding our piece in it. We are a euro-centric culture whose white people are accustomed to being at the center of that history, so how do we change that? How can you understand a story without taking it on as your narrative to tell if that’s all you’ve ever known? You listen. You take the time to educate yourself about people, places, and concepts that are outside your sheltered bubble of white privilege. Take the time to recognize that privilege, and use it as a tool to protect those who have been killed for protecting themselves.

In a country that spends more money on riot gear than PPE, we start to deduce that maybe “liberty and justice for all” should have been written as “liberty and justice for some.”

When I grow up, I want my children to come into a world where if they ask me “Was there ever a time before racism?” I can look at them, smile, and say, “A time before racism was a very long time ago, but time after racism, you’re living in it.”

activated



Photo Courtesy of BRIA GILMORE

2019 Central graduate Desia Griffin, models as a participant in the “Beauty in Color” event hosted by The Grassroots Initiative on Oct. 18.

The Grassroots Initiative

Olivia Gilbreath
editor-in-chief

Desiuanna Griffin and Bria Gilmore are two 2019 Central graduates with a passion for strengthening the Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) community. After a discussion about Gilmore’s interest in photography, Griffin brainstormed the idea to use Gilmore’s photography skills to raise money for Black Lives Matter organizations. The two roommates quickly contacted other local artists and stylists, excited to collaborate with other passionate BIPOC people and allies. Gilmore states, “We know so many creative and talented people in Omaha so we were like, ‘why couldn’t this be a multifaceted project with other people who are talented contributing?’”

With the current state of the world, The Grassroots Initiative acknowledges the importance of paying attention to what is happening in the BIPOC community. Evaluating the inequality and social injustice faced by the community is necessary to help society grow in support of all types of people, regardless of skin color. Griffin identifies the group’s objective when disclosing, “The goal of the initiative is to breakdown beauty standards and to lift up BIPOC people in the community and allies that support Black Lives Matter and other BIPOC issues.”

The duo titled the project “The Grassroots Initiative” to celebrate the origins of creativity in the community. Grassroots describe base level/the beginning of an activity or organization. One example of grassroots Gilmore mentioned was the start of the Black Lives Matter movement. She reflected on the evolution of the movement and its beginning as a small group of people working together to make something bigger than themselves. It was important for Griffin to match grassroots with the word ‘initiative’ to show the intent behind their project, they want to advocate for Black Lives Matter issues while making room for creativity in the community. “I was drawn to the word roots because it made me think about hair and where you come from,” Gilmore recalls, “I decided to research words associated with roots. I came upon

‘grassroots’ and it was perfect- it’s all about working together and beginnings of great things.”

As a new group, The Grassroots Initiative would like to increase their recognition and the involvement of community members in their events. They have an Instagram showcases the members of their group, informational flyers and photos from their shoots so far. Participation in an event means getting makeup and hair done by event artists, getting styled and photographed with access to the photos that were taken. Pricing ranges, but they believe they will charge thirty dollars per person. A percentage of the profits will go to Black Lives Matter Organizations chosen by the group (suggestions can be given through Instagram DM).

Gilmore delves into the Black Lives Matter movement during the pandemic stating, “This is nothing new for the black community, white people may be surprised by the actions of the police coming into light, but this is nothing new.” With phones and social media, it is easier for people to show the injustices the black community has faced for hundreds of years, Gilmore touches on the importance of continued support and affirmative action in being proactively anti-racism. The pandemic has disproportionately affected the black/BIPOC communities and has created a greater need for art in these communities. Art is a form of expression and storytelling, essential to maintain the connections shared in a culture. “The disruption of the arts in the black community as a result of the pandemic has been devastating,” Gilmore urges, “we need to support black artists now more than ever.”

The Grassroots Initiative hopes to revive the arts in the BIPOC community and reinforce the appreciation of black and BIPOC artists. Artists in these communities can be discouraged by their peers and members of their community while already facing hatred from non-BIPOC and non-progressive communities. Griffin addresses this issue asserting, “Creativity and artists and stylists aren’t celebrated as much or enough in the black community and I just think it’s good to bring that part of our community to life.”

Understanding the lack of students of color in journalism

Elena Correa
section editor

The first time I entered Central High’s newsroom a year ago I was a wide-eyed freshman with bubbling aspirations. Room 029 was where I wanted to be, telling the stories that no one was listening to and closing the gaps between different perspectives. Writing had always been my refuge and my best way to communicate. I was sure I’d find things in common with other journalists and, in that way, people who shared my passion for truth and mutual understanding.

After I became a staff member, I honestly didn’t notice the obvious lack of diversity in the newsroom. The environment had been like any other I’d grown up in my whole life: white and full of overachievers. It was because of this experience that I usually never felt out of place with any of my peers. After all, I grew up as a light skinned biracial kid surrounded by white culture and white people. But as my freshman year went on, I couldn’t help but develop a feeling of disconnect.

No one on staff looked like me and no one grew up with the same cultural background. I was the only student of color on staff. And although this never happened, I couldn’t help but feel that at some point I would be misunderstood or judged because another white student wouldn’t have the experience to understand my perspective. I began feeling a desperation for commonality and, on top of that, a deep sadness that other students of color were not occupying the same spaces I was.

Was this because they didn’t want to or because they couldn’t?

This question has been ruminating in my mind for over a year now. It truly begs the question of whether students of color do not have the same opportunities to be present in journalistic spaces, or if they simply do not want to. And if they don’t, why do white students? The way to get to the bot-

tom of this is by asking what allows students to participate in extracurricular activities, and if each student has equal access to these resources.

In order to participate in extracurricular activities, a student must first have the time and money to do so. Let’s take into account the demographics of people living below the poverty line in the United States. Black Americans make up a little over 13 percent of the population yet make up almost 19 percent of Americans living in poverty. The same goes for Hispanics and Latinos who make up 18.5 percent of the population and 15.7 percent of those in poverty as well as Asian Americans who make up almost six percent of the population but over seven percent of those in poverty. In contrast, white Americans make up 60.1 percent of the population and just over seven percent of those living in poverty.

Money goes hand in hand with time. One of my parents has a good paying job with flexible hours, which meant as a kid I could always get dropped off at school early and leave school after extra activities and meetings. I also had extra money for things like school trips or club admissions. But for kids living in poverty, which we know are predominantly Black and Latino, they may have to take the bus everywhere or work to support their families and pay for college. Without these resources, it can be very difficult to engage in after school activities.

Minority students also tend to have concentrated populations in underfunded schools with less qualified staff and high law enforcement presence. This is because of historical racial redlining and the result of school funding through property taxes. Children who are people of color are less likely to receive adequate education because of this and in turn less likely to have access to college preparatory courses. Black students are suspended, expelled, referred to law enforcement and sent out

of class at higher rates than other students. This leads to less in-class instruction.

All these factors contribute to Black and Latino students making up only 29 percent of the students enrolled in at least one AP course, and are a small fraction of students in higher level classes. Teachers who teach these students do not want to recommend AP courses to their students for many reasons: a student’s GPA might drop, they are not prepared for the course, systemic bias amongst teachers resulting in lower expectations for minority students, etc.

Lack of education and encouragement end up negatively impacting students of color in tremendous ways. College programs and extracurricular organizations, like newspaper and journalism, advertise in honors and AP classes because they have high expectations for the students. If you aren’t introduced to journalism, why would you consider it an option?

We could also speculate that students of color just aren’t confident in their ability to write at a journalistic level given that many kids receive a subpar education growing up. They may also shy away from journalism because most of the students who participate are white. Usually, so is the teacher. The disconnect between peers that I mentioned before may be more prevalent for certain students.

It is also a possibility that many students of color just simply aren’t interested in journalism, which could be a combination of cultural influences on personal interests. But, given the high percentage of white students who are willing to participate in journalism, lacking students of color cannot be completely attributed to disinterest. Action must be taken in order to remedy these opportunity-based differences if more diversity in newsrooms can ever hope to be achieved.

What Youth Can Do organizes rally (continued from page 1)

These had messages including: “BIPOC Students Matter,” “Black Lives Matter,” “No Cops In Schools,” and “Black History Matters.” Chants of “Black lives matter,” “We the youth are the change” and “Defund OPD, fund our schools” filled the area outside Central as cars, motorcycles and an ice cream truck drove by and honked in support.

The rally ended early and peacefully. What Youth Can Do spoke at the July 13 school board meeting, and presented their demands and the data they collected from a survey.

“We demand that OPS understands Black lives matter,” said Central graduate Simret Habte in her speech. “Not only when we’re killed, but when we are alive and learning in our schools.”

arts & style



Cartoons Courtesy of JEFF KOTERBA

CARTOONIST SHARES PASSION FOR ART

Political cartoonist Jeff Koterba opens up about passion for art, describes fluctuating relationship with technology

Livia Ziskey
section editor

Cartoons can be found in publications across the globe and add a sophisticated touch to any newspaper. Without talented artists, many of these entertaining drawings would not exist. Jeff Koterba is an editorial cartoonist, who has resided and worked in Omaha for many years.

Koterba drew cartoons for the Omaha South High Tooter, but his passion for art began in his childhood. He believes that his love for art is not uncommon to find in young minds.

"When I was a kid I loved to draw, but I think most kids love to draw and do creative stuff. I just felt like I had a calling to do something with art. From the age of 5 or 6 I had no doubt that that is what I wanted to do," Koterba said.

He even designed his own newspapers at home for his family, filled with cartoons and imaginative stories. When he thinks back on it, Koterba was creating fake news.

"It was like a front page story about a fictitious tornado that wiped out South Omaha, and the entirety of the rest of the newspaper would just be cartoons," Koterba said.

He did not have a set plan for how to turn his love of art into a career, but he trusted his instincts. Koterba feels lucky to have found a career that works for him.

After high school, Koterba attended University of Nebraska Omaha, where he drew cartoons for the student newspaper. He studied art and journalism as a double major, but took a break to freelance. He sees cartooning as a unique career that is not clearly represented in colleges.

"To do what I do, there really wasn't—and isn't—any place to go to school for it. It's sort of 'create your own education', and maybe that is going to college or going to art school," Koterba said.

He loves all types of art, including abstract painting and sculpting, but he considers himself to be a journalist before an artist.

"The key to doing an editorial cartoon is to adhere to journalistic ethics and practices. Even though I give my opinion in my cartoons, I still adhere to journalism," Koterba said.

He thinks that basic journalism should be required in all high schools, because everyone uses it in some form.

"Whether you're posting on social media or consuming other people's posts, it gives you a sense to be able to determine what's real and what isn't," Koterba said.

Koterba started his own syndication in Nebraska and sent cartoons to Nebraska newspapers. He also drew sports cartoons for the Kansas City Star. Koterba's work has been featured in the New York Times and Washington Post, among other popular newspapers.

His cartoons do not take nearly as much time to draw as it takes to come up with the idea for the cartoon. He uses technology to his advantage to speed up the process, as he draws all of cartoons on an iPad.

"I will spend far more time doing research, reading the news, thinking, drinking coffee, walking around, sketching-sketching-sketching, thinking...That takes several hours. The drawing itself takes two to three hours," Koterba said. "If I'm taking more than three hours on a drawing I'm probably over-working it."

Koterba worked for the Omaha World Herald for 31 years, and recently wrapped up his career there, being one of around 20 fully employed cartoon artists remaining in the country.

"I loved being in that environment. Before there were lay-offs and cut backs we had a really big staff. I remember the bustle and all the activity. When we were in the old building you could hear the rumble of the presses beneath your feet in the coffee room, you could smell the ink of the paper. There was something really beautiful and grand about it," Koterba said.

He stands by journalism as an extremely honorable profession, and is hurt by the way people criticize journalism today.

"I get really frustrated when people trash journalists. Sure, there are some bad journalists, but there are bad seeds in every profession. There are so many great people still at the World Herald who are working hard and it breaks my heart that I don't get to work with them anymore," Koterba said.

While he loves everything technology has to offer, Koterba finds a special quality in physical newspapers that an online copy cannot offer.

"When I'm on a train in Europe or sitting at a café in Paris, I love holding a copy of the International New York Times. There's just something special about it," Koterba said.

He does owe technology the memorable opportunity of being able to work in Austria for two years while working for the Omaha World Herald.

"I was able to look at the Alps from my window and draw for the Omaha World Herald. That experience is mainly what shifted my perspective on technology," Koterba said.

He still believes that there are a plethora of opportunities for young artists and journalists. Working on one's craft every day, even for five minutes, is important for the creative mind.

"If you let your muse, whether it's your unconscious mind, the universe, God, or whatever it may be...If you let your muse know that you're really serious about it, your muse will come find you, your muse will meet you, your muse will help you out," Koterba said. "Think about how you can serve others with your art, and be poignant and unique and different in a good way that helps humanity."

Quarantivities: Letterboxd movie reviews

Olivia Gilbreath
co-editor-in-chief

During quarantine- and since the beginning of the pandemic- boredom has been very common for all age groups. Not being able to participate in regular extracurriculars throughout the summer and beginning of the school year has inspired many students to learn new skills and develop hobbies. Students' growing interest in new activities has made the pandemic more bearable.

Senior Cole Kreber began watching movies and logging them in an app called Letterboxd. The app includes "all" movies, short films, and comedy specials. Kreber has seen 573 of the films/specials on the app- 39 of which he watched during quarantine.

After becoming obsessed with watching movies and forming his own opinions on his watching experience, Kreber began logging and reviewing movies in the app. Kreber found the app in January of this year, shortly before quarantine in March.

Concerning his initial encounter with the app, he says, "I discovered Letterboxd when I was on Twitter and I found this account called

@insaneletterboxreviews and I thought, 'I need to get this app,' so I downloaded it."

Kreber has always enjoyed watching movies, but his interest really sparked in the eighth grade after watching *The Florida Project* on a pirated site. "The Florida Project was the first artsy-indie film I watched," Kreber recalls, "I started really liking movies when my mom took my family to see *It's a Wonderful Life* around Christmas, that's my favorite movie."

Letterboxd has various features its users find attractive. In the AppStore it is rated 4.8 stars by 38000 people. Users praise the app's watchlist, diary entries, easy operation, and the ability to log where and when a user watches a film.

The app allows users to create multiple lists. Kreber has lists for friends to watch, seasons, most loved movies and specific categories including: "Need to read the book then watch" and "Movies I saw on the big screen." "I mostly use the app for the diary entries and all my entries are from the movies I've watched most recently. I took the app really seriously at first, for some reason, but now I just write about what I liked or didn't

like," he says.

Commenting on how the app works, Kreber states, "It [Letterboxd] has a sort of Netflix layout but, instead of being able to watch the movie, you can look at the synopsis, trailer, reviews/ratings and other details."

When rating movies, Kreber's criteria varies. For a film to earn four stars he simply must enjoy it without disruption, but a four-star film does not overwhelm him with emotion. A film earning two or three stars would be a film that is decent; these films may be used as background while scrolling through social media or being preoccupied in some way.

Films with one star or less earn this rating by either being terrible or unbelievably cringeworthy (to the point where one must shut the movie off).

Kreber's criteria for five-star films is more thought-provoking than the others: "If I watch a movie and it sits with me for a long time and challenges the way I make decisions or view life or it's a cathartic experience that makes me elicit a lot of emotions, it gets a five-star review."



Photo Courtesy of LETTERBOXD
Curated list of movie reviews on Letterboxd

Top 5 trails to hike in Omaha

Mackenzie Coughlin
staff writer

1 First on the list is Big Papio Trail which spans across a large portion of Omaha. Extending from Hefflinger Park in Northwest Omaha all the way to Seymour Smith Park in Ralston, this trail is 9.88 miles long. It is perfect for bike riding due to its flat, concrete surface and city view. This trail passes through city life as well as quieter sections of Omaha, so it is perfect for someone looking to go for a long walk right in the middle of the City.

2 Zorinsky Lake Trail is a large trail that is split up into multiple shorter trails, but the full loop around the lake itself is 7.8 miles long, ranging from tree covered woodland areas to the edge of 168th Street. The trail and lake offer many different activities from paddle boarding to fishing to running.

3 The Flanagan Lake Trail surrounds a new man-made lake located at 168th and Fort. The trail is 5.2 miles long and although is near a busy part of the city, is pretty secluded and quiet. This trail and lake are similar to Zorinsky due to its range of activities and people. The trail loops around the entire lake for easy access and no backtracking.

4 The trails at Neale Woods Nature Center span 3.2 miles with a 551 feet elevation gain. These trails are great for hiking with steep inclines and gorgeous views of the Missouri River, downtown Omaha, and Nebraska/Iowa plains. The trails also have varying difficulties and scenery, with some being completely wooded and others open to the prairie.

5 At 14.8 miles long, the Omaha Riverfront Trail is the longest on the list. The trail's endpoints are near the Omaha airport at 13th and East Locust Street and County Road 34 in Fort Calhoun. Omaha Riverfront Trail passes by many stopping points along the way like the Pedestrian Bridge, Mormon Bridge, N.P. Dodge Park, Neale Woods, and Boyer Chute National Refuge. There is an amazing view of the Missouri River for much of the trail. The trail is fairly flat, with more inclines heading North.



PAIGE TERRY | The Register

Formal Central student starts at-home baking business

Ella Novak
staff writer

Over quarantine, 2019 Omaha South High School graduate Xitlaly Valdez decided that she would turn her long-time interest in baking into an at-home small business.

On Aug. 22, Valdez started her at-home baking business called Estrella's sweets where she makes all sorts of desserts. "I basically make everything," Valdez said. "I make cakes, cupcakes, cheesecake, pies, cookies, brownies and churro cheesecakes."

For Valdez, baking isn't just a new hobby that she picked up over quarantine. "I have always loved baking. When I was in my freshman year, I wanted to be a pastry chef and during quarantine

I just started baking again. I have a love for it, so I decided to turn it into a small business," Valdez said.

Founding her business has expanded Valdez's horizons. "My favorite part of owning a small business is the people I interact with. All of my supporters and clients are all really nice and understanding," she explained.

Valdez uses both Instagram and Facebook for pictures and to communicate with her customers: "I promote my business by posting my work on my social media for everybody to see. My friends and family do this as well to spread the word."

When it comes to buying the beautiful desserts, "I sell to anybody! All you have to do is message me on my social media accounts @estrellassweets and

I will reply," exclaimed Valdez, "Everything is a different price. For example, a dozen strawberries are \$30. A cake is usually \$70."

Valdez is taking culinary classes while running her business as well as planning to take some more in the fall. "I am currently studying at Metropolitan Community College for my degree in culinary arts."

This upcoming fall quarter I will be taking the courses baking basics, intro to professional cooking, and sanitation," Valdez said.

"If you want to start a small business, just go for it. At first I was nervous, and I didn't think I'd get the support that I do now," Valdez said. "If you love what you do it will come easy."



Photo Courtesy of XITALY VALDEZ

Record store adapts to Covid-19

Jack Drobny
staff writer

Small business owners and employees have been hit hard by this devastating worldwide pandemic. Countless shops have closed, and unemployment was at a record high. Homer's, a famous downtown record store and historical landmark, is adapting in these hard times to survive.

Early into the pandemic, fears were running high and the future was uncertain. As Covid 19 started to ravage coastal cities in the United States, Homer's Employee, Olivia Drobny said "it didn't feel real at first. We were all scared, but long-term employees and people with other jobs were less worried." Tensions and stress increased as the long spring progressed.

Around two weeks into the pandemic reaching critical status in the United States, Homer's made a tough decision. "We shut down on March 14 and the managers called all of the employees to tell them they were being temporarily let go," she said. "We were all given the opportunity to apply for unemployment while the store was shut down."

This was beneficial to many of the employees who worked full time at the establishment. Stimulus checks, savings and other jobs carried them through the rest of the shutdown period.

Months later, Homer's was forced to reopen due to new legislation. "Governor Ricketts threatened to stop helping small businesses unless they started offering employees to come back

to work," Drobny said.

With increasing coronavirus patients in Omaha as stores started opening, workers were skeptical that the safety conditions were improving. "We didn't know how long it was going to last," despite their continued period of being open.

The reopening of the store proved surprisingly successful, especially when social distancing and quarantining was encouraged. "When we first opened up, there were not many customers, but it had started to pick up over the summer," Drobny said.

The environment of the shop changed greatly over the stages of the pandemic. The once welcoming and comforting atmosphere has morphed into a darker and quieter state. "All customers talk about now is coronavirus," Drobny said.

In reopening of Homer's, a lot of new rules and precautions were put in place in order to ensure safety for the customers and employees. "We have a mask requirement, hand sanitizer that customers are required to use, a customer capacity of 10, and employees are required to use a mask too," Drobny said.

All these policies are listed on the outside of the establishment as well. With the implementation of these rules, some customers show some resistance. "Customers try to fight us on our policies all the time," Drobny said.

"We have dealt with customers who refuse to use the hand sanitizer, refuse to wear a mask, wear a mask under their nose, and people that pull their mask down to talk to us," she said.



PAIGE TERRY | The Register

REGISTER REVIEWS



Finding Omaha's best bubble tea

Cecilia Zahm
staff writer

Bubble tea started becoming trendy in the U.S. in the 2010s, and it's remained popular ever since.

Thankfully for me, it seems Omaha has wholeheartedly embraced bubble tea, with several different shops around the city specializing in the drink. I wanted to find out which tea places in Omaha lived up to the hype, so here's what I found...

The first place I tried was Thirst Tea Cafe, which has locations in both Midtown Crossing and near 76th and Dodge. Thirst Tea has a broad assortment of teas on their menu, along with a couple of snacks like eggrolls and edamame. The prices of teas are pretty reasonable. It's about \$3.50 to \$4.50 depending on the drink.

My favorite drink from Thirst Tea is their coconut milk tea with tapioca boba. It's super flavorful, and if you like coconut then you'll love this. You can't go wrong with ordering a milk tea here; they're all super smooth with a nice amount of sweetness from the boba, which has the perfect chewy texture.

Another drink I enjoyed is called the "Bruce Lee." It features a combination of blueberry and lychee teas with lychee jelly pieces at the bottom. This drink has both unique flavors and textures in it, and I would recommend it to someone who wants to try something more uncommon.

The one drink I didn't like here was the pineapple slush, which was so sweet I couldn't even finish it. But overall, Thirst Tea gets the stamp of approval. This place has good prices and delicious bubble teas, which make it the ideal spot to go with friends.

Next, I visited The Tea Smith. The Tea Smith has a homey feel, and the service was very helpful. The shop sells teas and treats from

You can't go wrong with ordering a milk tea here; they're all super smooth with a nice amount of sweetness from the boba, which has the perfect chewy texture.

a large menu, and it also has a bunch of tea supplies for sale. It is a bit pricy; my drink was normal with nothing crazy and the total came out to \$6.50, which is way too much.

I had high hopes for The Tea Smith's bubble teas, and I was kind of disappointed to be honest. I ordered the taro milk tea with boba. The actual tea was amazing. Taro tastes like a sweet starch. The part I really didn't like was the boba; tapioca boba should be a bit chewy, but these were just undercooked and very unpleasant to eat. If I went back, I would only order teas with no boba.

The last place on my tea journey through Omaha was Yumchaa. The atmosphere here was very relaxing and the prices are fair. One aspect I appreciate about Yumchaa is how the customer can person-

alize their whole drink. At other tea places you can certainly change things around to get the perfect drink, but the menu here is designed to be customizable. It has a list of teas and toppings, and even has sweetness level and ice level options.

The first drink I tried was the matcha milk tea with boba. I've always been a bit apprehensive to try anything with matcha because it's often described as tasting like lawn clippings, but

I think this drink converted me. The matcha has a real mellow tea flavor that does have a hint of grass, but it's surprisingly good and the sweetness from the boba compliments it very well.

The other drink I tasted was a peach fruit tea with blueberry popping boba and lychee jellies. This might have been my favorite out of everything. All the different flavors and strange textures from the toppings combined to make one interesting tea, which somehow managed not to be overly sweet. I'm definitely going back to Yumchaa; it's a bit of a hidden gem. I liked everything about this place from the cute décor to the inventive teas.



Top to Bottom: Yumchaa, Thirst Tea, The Tea Smith
Cecilia Zahm | The Register

Phoebe Bridgers album incorporates thematic song writing, diversity of sound

Grace Ridgley
staff writer

Emotional, thematic, and artful are all words that can be used to describe Punisher: Phoebe Bridgers' second studio album. It was released on June 18, 2020 and was highly anticipated. This alternative folk album showcases Bridgers' talent in both her singing and songwriting.

Since releasing her first album back in 2017, Bridgers has spent the last three years building her reputation by working on separate projects with various artists.

This includes Better Oblivion Community Center with Omaha native, Conor Oberst.

She has been working on her newest album over the past five years with the help of Oberst, and although he helped create some of the tracks, the album is purely her vision.

Punisher incorporates all her recent projects and her development as a musician into one album.

When asked about the theme and sound of her new album on an interview with NPR, Bridgers states, "I think I'm just discovering how to reference a hundred things at once that I've always loved, like genre-wise just leaning in really hard and making intense references to other music," she continued, "There's nothing avant-garde about it: it's a singer-songwriter record, even though there's kind of a metal section. I think I'm pulling from a lot of different places, stealing from a lot of different people."



Punisher's sound is a perfect mix of the people Bridgers admires and looks up to, but with a flare of her own. While the entire album is extremely well done, there are a few tracks which stand out more than others.

The first is "I Know the End." This track incorporates many different sounds and styles into just five minutes. The beginning is slow, but it builds into a crescendo of instrumentals and even screaming.

The lyrics are also both haunting and uplifting. This track was made to be listened to with the windows down and the volume all the way up.

The second track, and the second to be released two months before the album drop, is "Kyoto." The beat is catchy, and the chorus will make everyone who listens want to get up and dance.

While the beat and instrumentals are happy and bright, the lyrics themselves are actually about Bridgers and her rocky relationship with her father.

Unlike her first album, Bridgers mentioned that her new record is her way of graduating from the resentment.

The overall consensus for Punisher from both critics and fans is that Bridgers met every mark she was expected to. This record is proof that Bridgers will continue to be part of the indie music scene for years to come. Punisher was a breath of fresh air everyone needed during a dark time.

Netflix series 'Grand Army' authentic, realistic, depicts teen life well

Olivia Gilbreath
co-editor-in-chief

Released on Oct. 16 2020, Netflix's new original series Grand Army is a must-watch. Grand Army is a high school drama set in Brooklyn, New York. A bombing takes place in the first episode, setting off a chain of events paving the way for the plot of the season. The first episode segues into the discussion of racism, sexual harassment, identity, sexuality, and familial ties from the perspective of teenagers.

Normally, I do not watch high school dramas expecting them to be relatable, but Grand Army is an excellent depiction of the life of a current American teenager. Unlike Riverdale or Euphoria, Grand Army is not a subject of overproduction and the cast looks like they are sixteen years old rather than twenty-six. The actors who play the show's main characters are ages eighteen to twenty-four, giving them a closer connection to teens and their own years as teenagers.

Each of the five main characters experiences a unique challenge as well as character development teaching them sympathy and consideration for their peers.

Joey is a girl who is body shamed by her peers and educators- she claims to be focused on social justice but gets hate for only discussing the Free the Nips "movement." After being sexually assaulted, Joey loses the confidence that she normally carries herself with. Joey becomes more considerate of her peers and the issues discussed involving racism in the show as the season moves on.

Jayson and his best friend, Owen, are musical prodigies who are harshly punished for messing around during the bombing in the first episode. Owen is suspended and sent to a public school lacking educational resources where he faces physical violence and loses his opportunity to perform in the All-State music competition. The Black Student Union at Grand Army gathers and begins looking for ways to demand reform in the school and justice for Owen.

Dom is a hardworking AP student who is forced to make some tough decisions when her sister sustains a back injury and can no longer work to provide for their family. With a six-person household, the responsibility to find a solution for the economic hardship fell to Dom, the oldest child in the house after her sister. Dom is faced with the choice of making up the money herself or marrying someone from her mother's home country to give him citizenship. Dom's character shows the struggle of first-generation students in the US and she illustrates cultural differences in American society.

The character Sid shows the struggle of accepting one's identity as a member of the LGBTQ+ community. With immigrant parents who are homophobic, it is difficult for Sid to accept himself for who he is. After writing a college essay about his sexuality, Sid finally accepts himself as a gay man. Sid continues to hide his identity from his peers because his membership on the swim team puts him in a prime position for discrimination

(cont. pg 10)

opinion

The Return to School

Students should not return to school

Makenna Anderson
staff writer

With Nebraska out of the red zone, it may give a false sense of security to the leaders in OPS and parents choosing to send kids back to school. Returning to in-person schooling is a mistake.

Looking at other schools and districts, the number of cases may not seem that troubling. For instance, .18 percent of Millard district's body have reported active cases (not including past cases). However, Omaha Public Schools is the largest district in Nebraska. There are double the students at OPS than Millard, with over 53,000 children enrolled- not including teachers and staff.

Obviously, the district has taken the utmost precautions, but at the end of the day, they can't control the virus and its effect on people's lives after they have gotten it. This is why it's best to not attend in person at all.

Not only are students have more of a risk of contracting COVID-19, returning to school also has negative impacts for those who can't attend with their friends. Because of the spilt attendance days, some kids have no friends with their same last name. During a pandemic, students are unable to socialize as much and being further apart, so making new friends is difficult.

Where students were once all together in the virtual madness, they are now separated by the return to in-person and can't communicate with one another on questions in class.

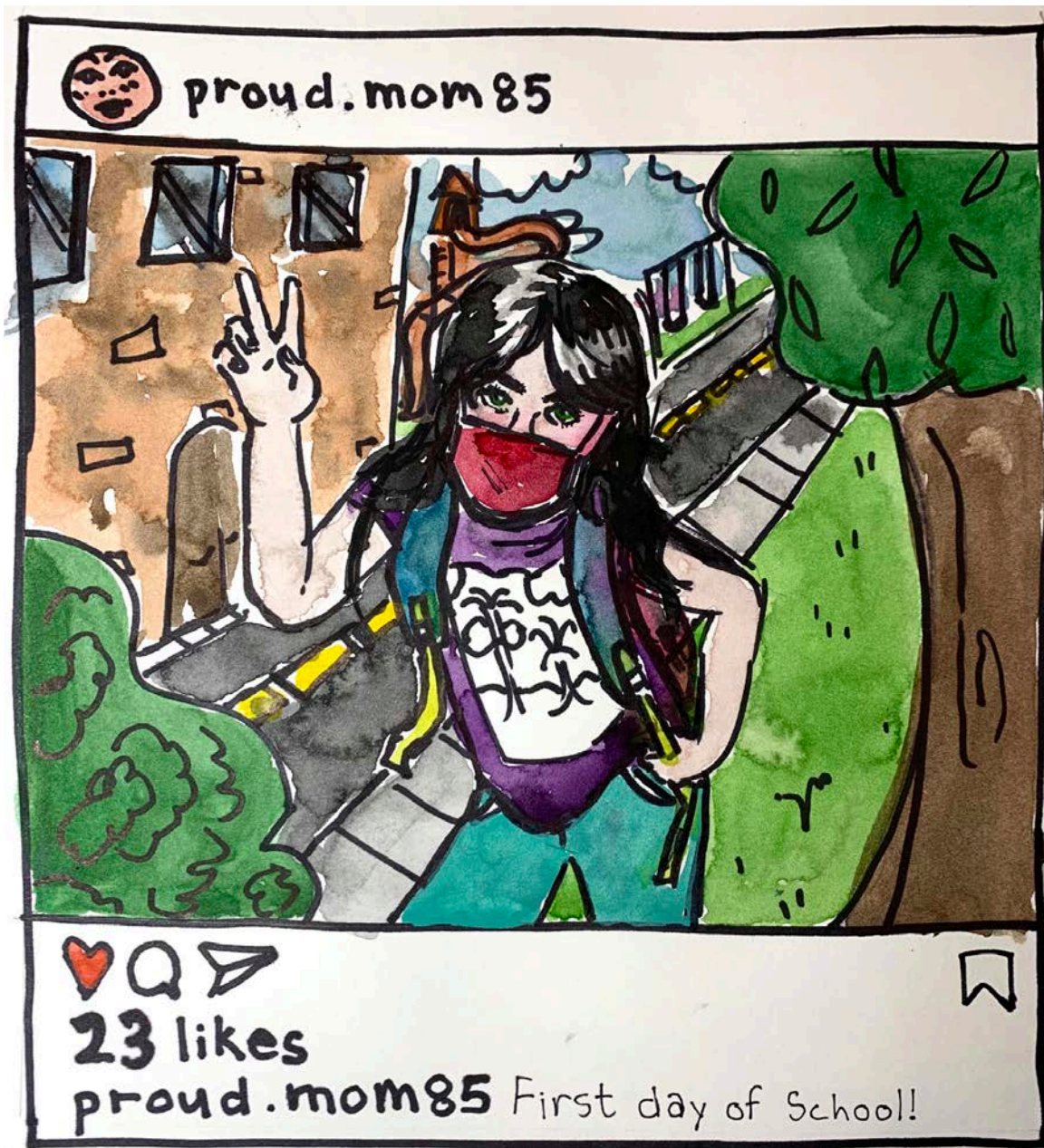
One study done by the High School of Economics found that friends are important for academic success. According to their website, "students' academic successes are largely influenced by the people around them - friends and high-achieving classmates, they consult about their studies."

With students being separated from friends and not able to connect instantaneously like they were able to virtually, kids might not do as well in the classroom.

Overall, the biggest prohibitor of returning to school should be the fact that there is still a pandemic occurring and people's lives are at stake. In September, children made up 10 percent of the United States' Covid cases compared to the two percent back in April, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics. This is due to the reopening of schools and daycares. While kids may suffer milder symptoms than adults, they can easily transmit the virus to more at risk people. Schools aren't just made of children- they also have teachers and older adults who could get the virus. These risks are too large to ignore.

Life and school cannot return to normal. Nothing can return to normal until the virus has been eradicated, so why is everyone so eager to put people's lives at risk? What can in-school learning do with masks on at all times, social distancing enforced, and less students in the school that learning virtually can't?

Returning to in-person school is not worth someone's life.



HANNAH HOUGH | Contributing Cartoonist

OPS made right choice with 3/2 model

Alexis Radke-Chism
staff writer

On Oct. 19 Central High School returned to school via the 3/2 model. Based on your last name you go to school on the beginning or the end of the week, switching every other Wednesday. There are many opinions on whether this is the right thing to do during the current global pandemic going on. Here is why I think ops is making the best decision.

Online learning has been a roller coaster experience for both students and teachers. There are multiple studies that prove how difficult it is for students to benefit and learn in the online school environment. By going back to school, even if for only have the week, students will be able to learn the material better and not fall behind in the next years. OPS needed to work out a system for students to return to the school building, just as so many other schools in Nebraska have. Most students already have a

difficult time paying attention in classes, so how more difficult would that be in a home environment. Without being in that school environment how are students supposed to focus and not be distracted by other things.

COVID is still a serious issue, and the cases rise more and more every day, given the country seems to be being hit by a second wave. While it's important to consider lives lost and lives in danger, education is very important and there is still a safe way to make sure kids are getting that education. For students who think it's too dangerous to return to school, they have the option to stay remote. Either way I believe this plan allows for everyone to benefit and do what they feel is the safest.

The schools will be at 50 percent, everyone will have to wear a mask, and stay 6 feet away from everyone. OPS is taking all of the precautions while still allowing students to return to the classroom.

Wear a mask

Callan Maher
staff writer

With Covid-19 cases still rising, I would think that people would want to do anything and everything to protect themselves from the virus. I guess I was wrong. The World Health Organization and the Center of Disease Control and Prevention have both released statements advising people to wear masks when they are in public. The WHO and CDC released these statements because they had the facts to prove that wearing a mask helps prevent the spread of the coronavirus yet some people are still refusing to wear a mask.

Wearing a mask for a long period of time can be annoying, but so can wearing pants and people still wear those. The more people wear masks, the less Covid-19 spreads and the faster life can get back to normal. It takes more energy to fight with

someone when asked to put a mask on then the act of putting one on itself, so just wear a mask.

This is not the first pandemic. During 1918 and the Spanish flu, also known as the 1918 flu pandemic, people used masks to slow the spread. If people in 1918 can put up with wearing a mask, then people in 2020 can also.

Wearing a mask can save a lot of lives and slow the spread of Covid-19. I don't think I will ever understand why people who have access to the facts will still put up a fight when asked to wear a mask. Wearing a mask shows that you care about the people in your city, state, and country. Not wearing a mask is not only unsafe to the people choosing not to wear one, but also unsafe to the people around them. This is a global pandemic, and everyone needs to do their part if they want to beat this virus.



CARTER SMITH
Contributing Photographer

Prisoners should be allowed to vote

Cecilia Zahm
staff writer

With the presidential election coming up, the topic of voting rights, specifically disenfranchisement, has been in the news lately. Many of these news stories are about felons gaining back their right to vote after getting out of prison. But we should question why these prisoners have had their right to vote taken away in the first place. Every U.S. citizen over the age of eighteen should be able to vote, even if they are incarcerated.

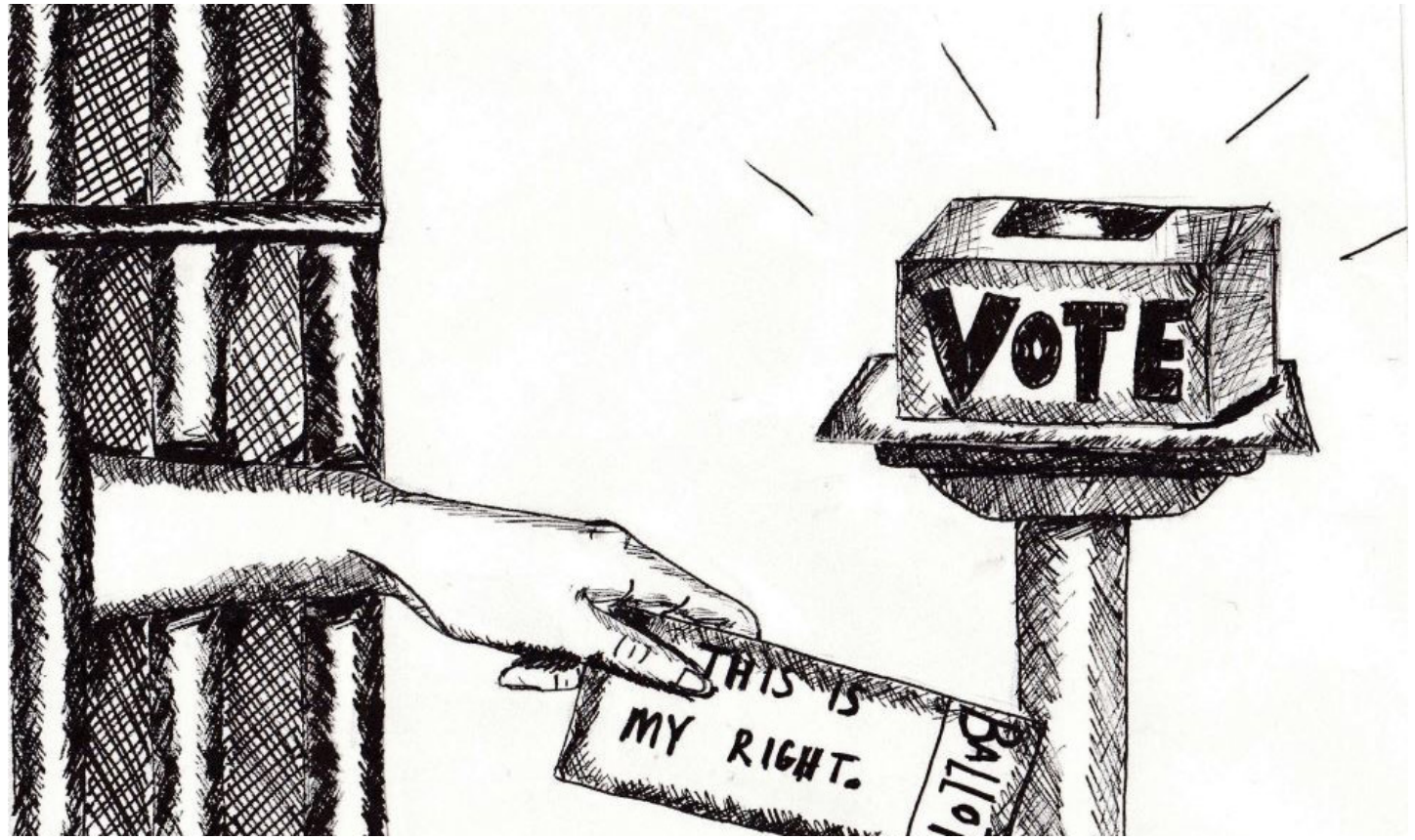
The idea of prisoners being allowed to cast a ballot may seem far-fetched to many Americans, but it's actually the standard in many parts of the world. This includes much of Europe, Kenya, Indonesia, Canada and dozens more countries.

Currently in the United States, prisoners are disenfranchised in all states but two. Vermont and Maine are the only places in the U.S. where prisoners can vote regardless of their crime.

There is a plethora of reasons why prisoners should be able to vote. One is that they are still American citizens. Being behind bars doesn't change that. Representatives make laws that effect prisoners just as much as every other citizen. It only makes sense that inmates should get a say in choosing who their representatives are.

Inmates also need to be able to have a voice to advocate for themselves, which voting would provide. Prison conditions in the U.S. are inhumane and overcrowded. If inmates could vote, that could give politicians incentive to care more about fixing our prisons and making them about rehabilitation rather than profit.

The only big voice in American politics that has called for prisoner voting rights recently is Bernie Sanders. Last year at a CNN town hall, Sanders affirmed that he supports



SAMANTHA SHAW | Contributing Cartoonist

allowing incarcerated people to vote. In a follow up op-ed, he also touched on felons in the U.S. being disenfranchised. He wrote, "Our present-day crisis of mass incarceration has become a tool of voter suppression. Today, over 4.5 million Americans — disproportionately people of color — have lost their right to vote because they have served time in jail or prison for a felony conviction."

One common argument against felons and prisoners voting seems to be picking the worst incarcerated people and then asking if they should be able to vote. Politicians against prisoner voting often ask if people like the Boston bomber should be able to vote. But the answer is yes, even horrible people should

retain voting rights; that's what voting is — a right, not a privilege.

The government should never get to pick and choose who can vote based on whether they're deemed a good person or not. If they do so, then the elections can never be fully free because of their influence. Additionally, there are plenty of awful people who aren't imprisoned, and they are still able to vote.

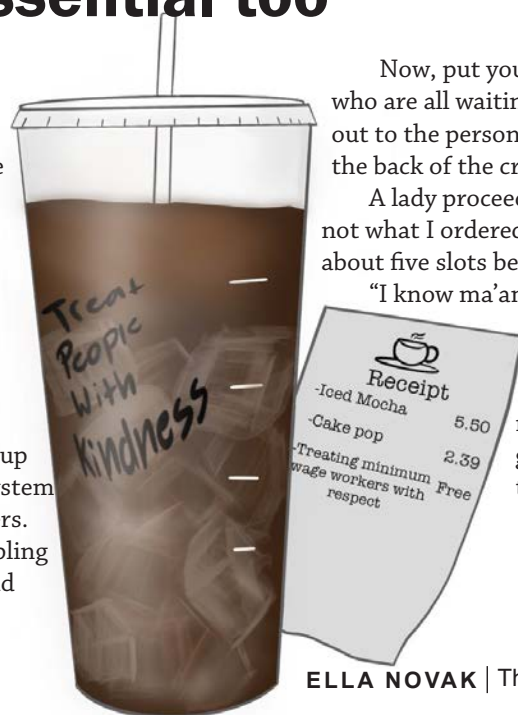
The U.S. claims to value democracy, but if they truly do then all citizens over the age of 18 should be allowed to vote. Anything less is voter suppression.

Service industry workers essential too

Mackenzie Coughlin
staff writer

When looking for a first job or a job that does not require experience or a degree, many turn to the service industry where employees get paid minimum wage to deal with cranky customers all day. I have had my fair share of rude customer encounters from working at a chain coffee drive-thru (which shall not be named) and would like to shed light on the idea to be kind to everyone you meet. In honor of that, here is one of my favorite rude customer encounters over the past year and a half.

It was a busy Saturday afternoon at said coffee shop and the 2-3 p.m. rush was in high gear as about 20 people were standing at the pick-up window eager to receive their drinks. My co-workers and I had a good system going, one on register, one on hot and iced drinks, and myself on blenders. The line seemed like it was never going to stop as giant orders kept tumbling in. It was obvious from the outside of the store that we were stressed and rushed.



ELLA NOVAK | The Register

Now, put yourself in the shoes of a customer, standing around a crowd of 20 people who are all waiting for the same reason you are. Here comes me, holding a drink to hand out to the person who ordered it. "I have a large blended mocha latte," I yelled so that even the back of the crowd could hear.

A lady proceeds to interrupt me by saying in a condescending tone, "Oh, I'm sorry that's not what I ordered actually...". She then relays her entire 30-dollar order to me which is about five slots behind the current drink I was handing out.

"I know ma'am, this is not your drink, it's someone else's, yours will be right out," I explained in a gentle and kind voice. This same scenario repeated itself all the way up until the lady's order was made, with every single drink that was brought out before hers. If you ever order from a fast-food restaurant or a business in the service industry, remember that they are giving you their service for close to minimum wage and are doing the best that they can.

Sincerely,
A service industry worker

Teen drama addresses common issues (continued from page 8)

from fellow jocks.

Leila is new to Grand Army and seeks opportunities to fit in and be recognized. I consider Leila a narcissist because of her actions in the show and the lack of empathy and compassion she shows for people other than herself. Leila starts her career at Grand Army with her best friend, and after being put on the swim team's Instagram account where they objectify women, Leila reevaluates her perception of high school. Being an Asian

girl adopted by white Jewish parents, Leila believes she is not enough of one thing or another to determine her belonging in a certain group.

Grand Army evaluates real issues teenagers face from all types of backgrounds and the characters react realistically. This show is authentic and relatable to me and other teens I have spoken to. The actors and actresses capture the true emotions of high schoolers and do an awesome job at showing the variety

of concerns- trivial and serious- teens deal with daily. Not only does the show do a phenomenal job depicting teens, but it also represents relationships between teens and the rest of society well. I consider Grand Army to be the best high school drama out right now and I look forward to the coming seasons.

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sports & leisure

KICKIN' IT WITH THE BOYS

Junior athlete Marley Dodenhof uses her skills on the gridiron as well as the soccer field.

Makenna Anderson
staff writer

Football is usually portrayed in the United States as a male-only sport. However, one girl at Central is hoping to change the narrative.

Marley Dodenhof decided she wanted to try out as a kicker for the football team this past summer. "I really just wanted to do this," she said. "A little bit was about breaking boundaries, but I just did it for myself."

Her journey started with a tee and lots of practice, and soon Dodenhof was able to kick a 45-yard field goal. "Starting off, my stepdad helped me a lot," the junior said, "and the coaches at Central helped me, which was really nice."

The reaction from her family on her trying out was split. "At first, my stepdad and my dad were both worried that I was going to get hurt, but my mom was in full support [of it]," Dodenhof said. "My stepdad ended up helping me a lot, and my dad ended up helping me a little at the end."

The boys trying out also needed a little time to warm up to Dodenhof being one of the few girls there. "The first day in the weight training room, the guys were kind of weird about it," she said, "but after they saw me kick for the first time everybody was so nice."

Once her family and peers supported her resolve to become kicker, the next question was that of physicality. "Personally, I am not [worried]. During weight training, I know I'll get stronger," Dodenhof said. "Physically, against a 300-pound linebacker, it's not reasonable, [but] that's one of the reasons I wanted to be kicker, because you don't get tackled as much."

Dodenhof isn't new to aggression in sports. She also plays soccer, which is where all her experience in kicking lies. "I don't have any background in football, except for playing with my cousins," she laughed.

With Covid-19, the football season ended up cancelled, but that isn't deterring the junior. "It was really disappointing, but I think it gives me time to really prepare," she said.

In addition to soccer and football, Dodenhof also participates in cross country and plans on doing powerlifting, depending on the school's policy with winter sports during the pandemic.

The head coach has officially stated that no teams had been made yet, but Dodenhof did receive a jersey and was orally informed she had made the team before the season ended.

Two other girls tried out for the team.



Photo Courtesy of **MARLEY DODENHOF**

Marley Dodenhof practices her kicking for the football season. After trial and error, Dodenhof was able to kick a 45-yard field goal.



Students participate in weight lifting during PE class. Weight training classes have found new ways to adjust to remote learning.

Gym classes adapt to remote learning

Sophia Sgourakis
section editor

Having to learn 100 percent remotely is a struggle for many. However, online PE class deals with a different set of struggles. A class that either consists of lifting weights, playing teams sports, or running laps on a track, is now all done through a screen.

Teachers this year are making sure every student is participating and still learning while only engaging through an hour-long video call every other day. PE teacher Angela Thorn broke down the standards of what PE teachers are using to grade this year: the student demonstrates competency in motor skills/movement patterns, obtains knowledge to maintain a healthy level of fitness and activity, and recognizes the benefits of physical activity. "We are working and adapting day by day to evaluate our students using all the standards," Thorn said.

PE classes offered at Central consist of team sports, weight training, aerobics, and lifetime sports. All of these either involve using equipment or needing a team of people. Therefore, performing these classes online can be a struggle because neither can be provided. Weight training classes are specifically finding new ways to adapt to remote learning while still getting stronger.



COLIN LESLIE | The O-Book

"Weight training classes are teaching more body weight activities. However, we are giving them ideas of how to adapt with things around the house," Thorn said.

Many OPS students are still without technology or internet access. The grade given in PE is almost completely based off participation. Students who are taking a PE class without access to technology are having to get creative. "It has been a learning experience for all," Thorn said.

Senior Kallie Baker explained what a typical online PE class consists of. After attendance is taken, PE teachers will play a walking video, which is a creative way to get students engaged in walking in place for two miles. Once that is finished, students are expected to complete bodyweight exercises (pushups, sit-ups, lunges). As everyone starts to adapt more to online class, a normal day in PE class might change.

Typically, PE classes at Central range anywhere from 15 to 40 kids. Once school resumes, these classes will have to be adjusted in order to be safer for everyone and follow health guidelines. Thorn is unsure of what these changes will consist of, but says, "As of now, we hope that we have set them up to transition seamlessly into activity in the building."

We are giving them ideas of how to adapt with things around the house.

ANGELA THORN
teacher

Long-term symptoms of COVID, could affect athletes

Conor Harley
staff writer

The corona virus has become an intimate part of everyone's life. The world of sports is not an exception to that, and the student athletes of Omaha Public Schools are feeling the effect after the cancellation of fall sports.

The effects of this virus on the body are still widely unknown, especially the long term effects. The lack of knowledge of how this could affect someone down the line led to the cancellation of fall sports for OPS, but there are some studies showing that COVID-19 can have detrimental effects on an athlete.

The virus has affected Omaha less than most other cities of its size, but Omaha still has had nearly 40,000 cases. Many of the cases are from south Omaha, which is predominantly OPS.

OPS superintendent Dr. Cheryl Logan had a tough choice to make, but many aided in the making of the decision.

"We work with the University of Nebraska Medical Center, they are our major partner," Logan said. "We also consulted epidemiologists and physicians."

These experts more than likely warned her of the many unknowns surrounding the virus, and the potential affects on students.

One of the most talked about diseases linked to the corona virus is myocarditis. Myocarditis is classified as an intense swelling of the heart that can lead to irregular heartbeat rhythms. A study from

Ohio State found that roughly 15 percent of football players who contract COVID-19 have findings of heart swelling that can be attributed to myocarditis.

Myocarditis can lead to death in many cases and in many other cases can lead to hospitalization. It is estimated that 7-33 percent of people experience some form of cardiac injury by Dr. Dermot Phelan of Atrium Health's Sanger Heart and Vascular Institute.

To further add to the data supporting COVID-19 having damaging effects to the heart, the University of Frankfurt in Germany preformed a study on survivors of the corona virus, and 75 percent of the patients had heart abnormalities of some degree.

Another health issue linked to the virus is damage to the brain and spine. Guilliani-Barre Syndrome is something that can develop from the virus, causing temporary paralysis. Simple brain functions can also be compromised, like thinking ability, not to mention the increased chance of having a seizure or stroke. There is also reason to believe that down the line, having had COVID-19 can increase the chance of having Parkinson's and Alzheimer's disease.

It is also important to know that the body does not have to show symptoms to be affected by the virus. Many people who contracted the virus had heart inflammation to some degree. Heart inflammation is enough to end some athletes' careers if it is severe enough.

TAKE A RIDE

MAURA DURFEE-OBRIEN | The O-Book

GRACE HODGES | The O-Book

LISA ELLIS | emspace

A ribbon-cutting took place for Omaha's new mass transit system, ORBT on Nov. 17. Mayor Jean Stothert cut the ribbon. The project cost 37 million dollars and the first four months, students will be able to ride for free.

