



# the REGISTER

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## SENIORS REPRESENT CENTRAL

Joshua King and Holden Fershee participated in prestigious mock government program Boys State. Fershee went on to represent Nebraska at Boys Nation.

**Chloe Johnson**  
staff writer

Last summer, seniors Holden Fershee and Joshua King were two of 200 boys chosen for Nebraska Boys State. Fershee was later chosen to represent Nebraska at Boys Nation.

Central has a history of doing well at Boys State and Boys Nation, due to the school's diversity preparing students to get along with all types of people. Keeping that tradition of Central excellence going, Fershee and Joshua King were a part of the 200 students chosen for Nebraska Boys State.

Boys Nation and Boys State may sound like a middle school guys group chat, but they are prestigious American Legion programs. Founded in 1946 to combat socialism, Boys Nation is a way for high school boys to learn about government through becoming the government itself. (There also exists a Girls Nation program for high school girls.) At the state level, hundreds of juniors in high school get to spend a week in June in their state's capital, running for government positions in the judicial, executive and legislative pathways at the city and state level. They stay overnight in dorms with all expenses and meals paid for by the local American Legion chapter.

"We would be up at 6:30, breakfast done by 7 and lined up for flag at 8, then go to court proceedings," described Fershee. Then students act as senators and run for positions at the national level, Boys Nation, in Washington D.C.

"We have a lot of Central students that go down there, do executive, legislative, or judicial route and all end up going to good colleges," Fershee said.

The boys learned quickly that being charismatic is at least as much a part of winning votes as one's ideas. Each student receives \$5,000 of fake currency, of which they can only spend \$1,500 on a certain campaign, so relationship building is huge to earn campaign funding.

"I was able to meet people from all over the state and grow lasting relationships," said King, elected city mayor and outstanding citizen. King also made it farther than any African American Nebraskan in governor primaries.



Left: Holden Fershee meets Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi. Right: King presents at Cornhusker Boys State.

Fershee also represented Central exceptionally well. He was chosen to represent Nebraska as one of two senators to go forward from Boys State to Boys Nation. Despite initially losing an election for Supreme Court chief justice, he earned the position because it was determined that he controlled the courtroom better than the chosen chief justice. He also wrote up two of the court decisions himself. Boys Nation flew him out to Washington D.C. for free.

Once there, the 100 boys were separated into two random parties, Federalist and Nationalist, which must agree on a party platform. Each platform then elected a party president and

secretary, as well as a common president, vice president and president pro tempore, or the highest ranking senator. Finally, each senator proposed a bill or resolution to be voted on by the others. Fershee proposed the standardization of USB charger on phones.

"They charge faster, and the EU just moved to them to reduce e-waste and reduce consumer cost," he explained.

Fershee suggests Boys or Girls State to anyone remotely interested in any branch of government. However, Fershee recommends going in with an open mind because, "There

were kids at Boys State who had graduated classes of eight," he said. He also suggested talking to people before one tries to represent them. If accepted, Fershee's final advice is, "Don't start at Boys State with sacrificing your beliefs."

It would be impossible to walk away from this experience without learning an immense amount about government, but Fershee also learned a good deal about himself. "It definitely made me more interested in law, but I'm not very interested in running for things," he noted. He also reflected, "It reshaped my view on why people are proud to be American."

## Bellevue lacks authority to ban abortion, ACLU of Nebraska says

**Charlie Yale**  
web editor

Senior Legal Policy Counsel at the ACLU of Nebraska, Scout Richters, said that even if the Bellevue city council were to ban abortion in the municipality, the city would not have the ability to enforce the law.

"The bottom line is that these are designed to confuse residents, muddy the waters in respects to abortion care and really stigmatize abortion

care," Richters explained. "The gist of that, bans that conflict with state law are not enforceable."

Multiple municipalities in Nebraska have already passed ordinances banning abortion, the latest posed ban being from Bellevue. Blue Hill, Hayes Center, and Stapleton—all with populations under 1000 and the latter two both hovering around 200—have passed ordinances in their respective municipalities banning abortion.

Richters said that since the state is who controls abortion law, municipalities who create

their own ordinances banning abortion don't hold any weight legally. "The general rule [is] that state law is what covers access to abortion care, regardless of what happened in the Dobbs decision," Richters stated. "By [proposing] to ban abortion in different places, it's designed to confuse people and prevent them from seeking care because maybe it's not clear to everyone, the idea that abortion is regulated by the state. It's designed to create confusion."

If the Bellevue ordinance passes, it will be-

come the largest city in the state to have passed this sort of ordinance and the only with a clinic that provides abortion care. The Bellevue initiative, which was launched at the start of August, would need to collect signatures from 20% of qualified electors within 6 weeks of Aug. 1 to appear in front of the city council. If the petition makes it in front of the city council, it will require a simple majority vote of the council to pass the ordinance.

According to Richters, the abortion clinic

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# Gretna policy restricts use of students' preferred names, pronouns

Jane McGill  
staff writer

Transgender and gender-expansive students at Gretna Public Schools may not have their preferred name and pronouns used by district staff under current policies in place at the school district.

Gretna Public Schools staff were instructed not to use the preferred names and pronouns of students unless given parental consent under the district's policy, and will face consequences if they do so, including being written up, fired and denied legal assistance from the district if they are sued by parents, the Register has learned.

The policy, which was made with input from the district's legal counsel, was implemented prior to the 2021-2022 school year and reiterated to staff by their school principals during meetings before the beginning of the current school year. The policy states that teachers must direct all student requests to be called by their preferred name or pronouns to school administration. It also instructs teachers not to discuss a student's preferred name or pronouns with their parents without the student's prior consent.

Documents obtained by the Register show teachers would be disciplined if they violated the policy. On Sept. 7, 2021, Gretna High School staff were told that if they violated the policy once, they would be written up for insubordination, according to a document obtained by the Register. On their second violation of the policy, the document states they would be removed from their teaching position.

Gretna High School staff also were forbidden from distributing surveys asking students for their preferred pronouns and from having their own pronouns included in their school emails and correspondence.

Teachers who spoke to the Register said that at the beginning of the current school year, they were told by school administrators that if they violated the policy and were sued by parents, they would receive no legal assistance from the district.

The policy has not been included in the teacher's handbook and has not been approved by the Gretna Board of Education. The Gretna Public Schools and Daniel Gulizia, the Gretna Public Schools Board of Education president, did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Speaking on the effect that the policy has had on LGBTQ+ students attending Gretna schools, a teacher said, "It has affected them negatively quite a bit. A lot of them don't feel supported, it's very upsetting, and they don't necessarily feel safe in all of their classrooms."

Gretna Public Schools teachers spoke to the Register about their experiences with the district's policy on the condition of anonymity, citing fears of being fired or sued for sharing their stories openly.

"I want to support the kid and I want to make it so the kid doesn't kill themselves because they don't feel that they are the person inside that their parents are trying to force me to be," said a Gretna educator on their frustration with the policy. The educator said they had experiences in the past with transgender students who they believe would have suffered severe distress if their preferred name or pronouns had not been respected. "Ever since the policy was announced, I have been really upset and just trying to do what's right for kids and getting legal representation if we get sued."

Speculating on the rationale behind not including the policy



Noemi Gilbert | The Register

in publicly available documents, a teacher said, "Gretna as a district has an unspoken rule that says if we kind of brush this under the rug it'll go away. They are trying to hide what the school policy is and not write it down for the general public to see because then it's going to offend someone and turn into a much bigger battle and that's what they're trying to avoid. This is a don't-make-waves district."

"Most people just call students by their names," said the teacher. "We don't call parents for permission for nicknames, so why do we have to call them for this? I had already had kids come up to me and said they prefer different pronouns, or a different name and it was kind of really embarrassing to go up and tell them that I was told that I couldn't do that after I told them I would. I was almost in tears at this point because that is what I wanted to do but [the district] tied my hands for no reason besides the district was uncomfortable."

Gretna's policy appears to contradict the suicide prevention training the state requires all public school employees to undergo. In an Aug. 17 email obtained by the Register, Gretna Public Schools provided its employees with courses on suicide prevention. The training included a course instructing teachers on how to prevent suicide among LGBTQ+ youth.

The course repeatedly instructs teachers to call students by their preferred names and pronouns, citing its effect upon transgender student's well-being. Below the link to the course in the email was written, "This course instructs schools to call

students by their preferred names. Please remember, our District policy requires parent permission to call students by their preferred names."

Research has shown that not using a transgender student's preferred name and pronouns can be detrimental to their well-being. A 2018 study by the Journal of Adolescent Health found that transgender students who were referred to by their preferred name and pronouns experienced 71% fewer symptoms of severe depression, a 34% drop in reported suicidal thoughts, and a 65% decrease in suicide attempts. Due to this research, The National Education Association, the Council on Social Work Education, and the American Psychological Association all support the use of a student's preferred name and pronouns in school settings.

One Gretna Public Schools teacher said colleagues at their school have found a loophole in the policy by allowing transgender students to correct other students when they are deadname or misgender them without the teacher themselves participating in the discussion. Deadnaming refers to calling students by the name they were assigned at birth, not their chosen name.

"The kids and the teachers for the most part are like, 'What's the big deal?'" the teacher said. "Nobody in that class complained about it, everyone was just like, 'Ok that's what they go by. Ok, moving on,' and I think that's fantastic, but it should always be that way."

I am thrilled to present the first issue of The Register for the 2022-2023 school year. I look forward to informing readers through the documentation of remarkable stories, and graphics.

As Editor-in-Chief, I am confident in the work the staff has produced over the past month, and I am proud of the final presentation. My hope is that our love for journalism shines through this issue.

I hope you find The Register compelling, informative, and welcoming. Make sure to check out our website, omahacentralregister.com, to keep up with current stories and events. We are also active on instagram at @chs.register and twitter at @chsregister. Thank you for your continued support and reading of The Register.

Shyla Youngs  
Editor-in-Chief



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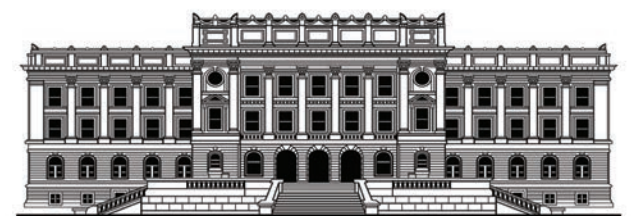
124 N. 20th Street  
Omaha, Neb. 68102

Phone: 531-299-5611

[central.register@ops.org](mailto:central.register@ops.org)  
[omahacentralregister.com](http://omahacentralregister.com)

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 Broderick Hilgenkamp at [broderick.hilgenkamp@ops.org](mailto:broderick.hilgenkamp@ops.org) or come to room 029 to discuss your idea.



**THE REGISTER**

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*the* REGISTER *staff*

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E Dona-Munoz

## Nonprofit cafe rebrands

Noemi Gilbert  
news editor

Though “Astute Coffee” may be an unfamiliar name to Central students, the coffee shop at 19th and Dodge remains a comfortable and popular spot for students’ afternoon coffee. The store, formerly known as The Bike Union and Coffee, closed its bike shop to focus solely on its mission of offering support to young adults impacted by the foster care system.

“We closed down the bike shop because it was so busy, it was taking away our capacity to do our mission, to do our nonprofit programming,” said Curtis Wilson, Astute coffee operations manager. “We decided from a mission-based perspective that keeping the bike shop open didn’t make sense any longer.”

Astute Coffee is a nonprofit organization as well as a coffee shop. Through employment at Astute Coffee, young adults impacted by foster care receive workforce development programming and a variety of other workshops, including meditation, cooking, and financial literacy.

For Astute Coffee’s program participants, the positive effects are numerous. “We’ve had a number of first-generation college students, a number of folks who were disconnected from the traditional school system graduate with high school diplomas or get their GEDs,” Wilson said. “We have folks who were home-

less become housed and maintain housing after the program has ended. We have folks who go from not being able to hold a job to working steadily and consistently.”

By closing the bike shop, Wilson said, the organization has space to widen its operations and support more people. Since closing the bike shop, they have the capacity to deepen their existing programming, add additional programming, and employ more program participants.

Though some were in disbelief that the bike shop closed due to being too busy, Astute Coffee customers have been supportive and excited about the shift.

“Our customers are excited because we’re in the process of remodeling. That makes it a nicer place to come and spend an afternoon here,” Wilson said. “Our staff are excited about it because it frees up our time and capacity and makes the environment less chaotic than it was before.”

Their new name was inspired by their mission. To be “astute” means to be able to assess a situation well and notice and understand details, qualities that Astute Coffee’s program participants embody.

“We’re excited to be able to take a deeper dive into our programming,” Wilson said. “We’re grateful and happy to have more people in our program than we’ve ever had before, and we’re excited about the future.”



Noemi Gilbert | The Register

## Braiding entrepreneurs

Chloe Johnson  
staff writer

A few talented Black girls at Central have found a high school job that defies the stereotypes of a fast-food job that pays near minimum wage plus tips that are typical of teenage workplaces.

However, some girls have rejected this norm to become entrepreneurs while still in high school. These are the girls who, “Do hair or do the highly technical and time-consuming work of braiding or twisting Black hair. Not just anyone with Black hair can do this work. You have to really care about it,” said sophomore and cheerleader Jaelyn Carter, who is known for crafting beautiful locks.

Ranging in age from 15 to 18, these girls started their businesses for largely the same reason – they did not want to pay the high prices of having their hair done. When asked how long she had been doing hair, senior Shalee Marion replied, “Since I’ve had baby dolls.”

Whether through watching a family member or YouTube, they learned to do their own hair. Other people, complimenting the quality work on their heads, became their first customers. As their skills grew, so did their clientele and their price rates. “I have five to six clients a week now,” Marion said.

Many of these young entrepreneurs are now making about as much as many of their teachers at about \$25 an hour. They can make the same amount of money in a single four-hour shift as three days of six-hour shifts. Some, like Carter, choose to keep prices affordable. “I don’t want people to feel like they can’t come to me.”

Expenses are minimal as clients come to their homes and bring their own added hair if pricey. “I charge by the style and the length,” Carter said.

Home salons also save huge amounts of money. “I have this mirror and then my parents got me this pink salon chair, and then I have a rack for my hair, like it’s a whole thing,” described senior Veda Blackman.

These clients are found through social media, which they navigate with teenage dexterity, one of numerous advantages they have over older hair braiders. “Clients will comment in the group chat, ‘Oh I want this style done,’ and you will comment a link to your page, showing your work and how much it costs,” Marion said. “If you are not known or you don’t have like 1,000-plus followers, people are not going to see, ‘Oh, she

does hair.”

Another benefit to teenage stylists is knowing what is trendy. “I am also young, I know what is in style,” quipped Marion. Finally, the teens also have easier conversations with their teenage clients during the hours-long process.

At a school that is 30% Black, demand is high not just for people who can do hair, but do hair in a trendy and artistic way. Each stylist has a different specialty. “I do locks, so soft locks, faux locks, butterfly locks, and dreads,” Carter said. Because of this, doing hair is so much more than simply copying a pattern. “It’s definitely an art,” said Carter.

Because it is an art, some girls even leave a signature on their client’s heads. “If you get your hair done by me, it just has to have a heart, you know?” Blackman said. Most girls with Black hair get their hair done regularly, some even twice a month, but few can braid themselves. This keeps it a specialty trade, run by girls with a particular mix of creativity, craftsmanship, good social skills and industriousness.

Owning a business in high school is no small feat, so it is no surprise that these girls are high achievers in other areas as well. Even though they make good money doing hair, most still plan on going to college and pursuing other careers. “I’ve always wanted to be a teacher. Kids love, love, love me,” said Blackman.

This is comforting, as doing hair as a career can take a real strain on the body. Full time stylists often develop arthritis or other complications from long term hair styling. “My mom has to wear a brace when she does hair now,” said Blackman. However, hair and the life skills gained in the process will always be there when and if needed.

Another way that braiding is different than the average high school job is the real impact it has on people. Self-esteem improves following a good hair session. Not just the flattering final effect, but the therapeutic effect of undivided attention to oneself, combined with the talk therapy session that always seems to come with getting any type of hair done.

“I’ll do someone’s hair and they’ll open up to me, and it’s like, This is my first time meeting you, but I’ll listen,” said Carter. Talented braiders, like these Central girls, leave clients walking away able to appreciate their own beauty in a new way.

## Abortion ban unenforceable

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pass the ordinance.

According to Richters, the abortion clinic that is currently operating in Bellevue could stay open even if the ordinance was passed, but a legal challenge against it may cause problems. “It would depend upon what would happen with respect to it passing, and then someone potentially trying to enforce it, but bottom line, they can’t. A municipality can’t pass an ordinance that is conflicting with state law, especially in an area like abortion.”

Mark Lee Dickson, an anti-abortion advocate and Texas native who is leading the charge in Bellevue has spearheaded dozens of similar initiatives across multiple states. Dickson was quoted in the Omaha World Herald saying that “If we can’t do it in the Legislature ... the people have got to stand up,” and he hopes that his initiative in Bellevue “lights a fire” for lawmakers.

Dickson said the proposed Bellevue ordinance includes a “dual enforcement” policy, according to the Omaha World Herald. The proposed punishment would be a \$1,000 fine along with “private enforcement,” allowing residents to sue if a suspected abortion was performed.

Dickson’s website and initiative “Sanctuary Cities for the Unborn” explained that 51 cities in the US have passed ordinances banning abortions within city limits. The Sanctuary Cities website touched on the possibility of litigation, stating “For this reason we like to

provide the ordinance language for each city which is considering outlawing abortion, along with a letter from an attorney which is willing to stand behind them if any litigation comes as a result of the passing of that particular ordinance.” The ordinance would presumably be litigated against immediately by groups like Planned Parenthood or the ACLU of Nebraska.

Dickson made an argument that this action is in fact legal and does not go against state law because it protects the health and safety of citizens. “Abortion, we believe,” Dickson said, “hurts women.”

Richters explained that even though these attempts at banning abortion may not be enforceable, the damage that they may cause is not to be understated. “When a town does this, it stigmatizes people who need to seek that care further,” she said. “Without Roe v. Wade as a backstop, anti-abortion politicians and activists are just more emboldened to try anything to push care out of reach.”

Richters emphasized that abortion, at the state level, is still legal in Nebraska, in turn keeping it legal throughout all of Nebraska unless there is further legislation. “In polling from this last spring, we know that the majority of Nebraskans don’t want to see these bans and they want abortion to remain legal in Nebraska,” she said. “The bottom line is that abortion is legal in Nebraska and Nebraskans are engaged on this issue like never before.”

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# Youth Poet Laureate finalist performs at Maha festival

Hadley Forson-Yepes  
staff writer

After dabbling in poetry as a kid, senior Isabella Mitchell decided to join Central's slam poetry club last year. Ever since, she has flourished as a writer. Mitchell is now an accomplished slam poet and Nebraska's Youth Poet Laureate runner-up.

Mitchell has two different approaches to writing poetry. For slam, she writes to touch the audience she must perform for, making her words rhythmic and digestible for her listeners. She usually begins preparing for a competition the day before. "In the Louder Than A Bomb club, I was known as the person who could create poems really quickly," Mitchell said. (After the interview, the club's name was changed to All Writes Reserved).

When discussing how she begins writing poetry for herself, Mitchell explained, "Usually, it starts with me sitting somewhere, observing some scene, feeling some emotion—something has to happen." When Mitchell is in nature, she is often moved to write down what she sees and turn it into something symbolic and emotional. She thinks that poetry is a healthy way to get her thoughts out, and it serves as a good distraction from the stresses of life. After coming up with a phrase, the words magically flow from her pen, or in most instances, her phone's Notes app.

As a self-proclaimed perfectionist, Mitchell appreciates the fluidity of poetry. With other art forms, it is difficult to cover up flaws, but Mitchell can shift her poems around if she is unsatisfied with how they turn out. Poetry also comes more naturally to her than other forms of expression.

Around the end of her junior year, Mitchell decided to apply to the Nebraska Youth Poet Laureate competition, which is held yearly by the Nebraska Writers Collective. She applied because the competition was something she could see herself succeeding in and she wanted to put herself out into the community. After submitting a portfolio of five poems, a resume, and an essay explaining why she was a change-maker, the Nebraska Writers Collective named Mitchell one of five finalists. At the Nebraska Youth Poet Laureate ceremony, she was announced as the runner-up of the competition and was awarded a plaque and a box of Pop-Tarts (arguably one of the greatest prizes ever given).

When asked what the title of Nebraska Youth Poet Laureate runner-up means to her, Mitchell said, "It symbolizes for me a love of poetry and a commitment to the stylistics of it, the composition . . . all of the work that you put into creating an amazing poem." Mitchell is extremely grateful for the respect and admiration she has earned as a poet because of the competition, and she appreciates how Youth Poet Laureate shows that poetry can be recognized at a competitive level.

Once Mitchell won runner-up, she expected her Youth Poet Laureate journey to end, so it came as a shock when she received an email over the summer inviting her to speak at Omaha's Maha Festival. This would require her to perform an original piece of poetry, and because Mitchell has never performed the same poem twice, she needed to write a new one.

She created a poem but ended up scrapping it two weeks before the deadline. Then, she waited for her mind to naturally start forming a new poem. Finally, it came to her while she was waiting for her shower water to heat

up. "I have an idea of what I want to write and the theme that I want it (to convey), but I kind of let it develop on its own," she said when discussing her writing process.

Mitchell got to the festival an hour before she was set to perform. She hung out in the Artist's Lounge, talked to other performers, and took photos with members of the Nebraska Writers Collective. After waiting longer than expected due to the festival running behind schedule, it was finally time for her to speak.

She describes standing on stage as, "Horrible, completely horrible." The scariest part for her was hearing audience members having side conversations while she was speaking. Despite the nerves and distractions, Mitchell successfully performed her poem at Maha. Reflecting on her performance, she said that she thinks she did well.

Mitchell believes poetry slam prepared her for the public reading. "I think having the prior experience of standing in front of a stage, being super nervous but still speaking and still having the power of words was necessary for me to be so confident up there," she said.

Mitchell never wants to let poetry go. While she wants to pursue a career in the medical field, whether it be doctoring or academia, she will continue to write poetry on the side. Mitchell is not opposed to publishing books in the future, but writing would not be her main focus. "Poetry is such a big part of my sanity, I guess, and I feel like if I didn't write poetry, I'd become crazy," she said.

"Definitely join (All Writes Reserved) poetry team here at Central," Mitchell said, addressing her fellow Eagles. "It's great, (Central English teacher Jonathan) Flanagan's great, everybody's great. It's super fun." She said it is an environment where everyone is united under one shared art form.

"Don't let your voice go to waste," Mitchell said.

Excerpt from "You are only as strong as your bloodline" by Isabella Mitchell

*You run—*

*Like they did years ago.*

*Scared of who you are, that*

*Reflection you share, with the*

*Hardened palms and*

*Calloused feet of*

*Your grandfather's grandfather—*

*The pressure built from a single wave that*

*Pours down like a monsoon,*

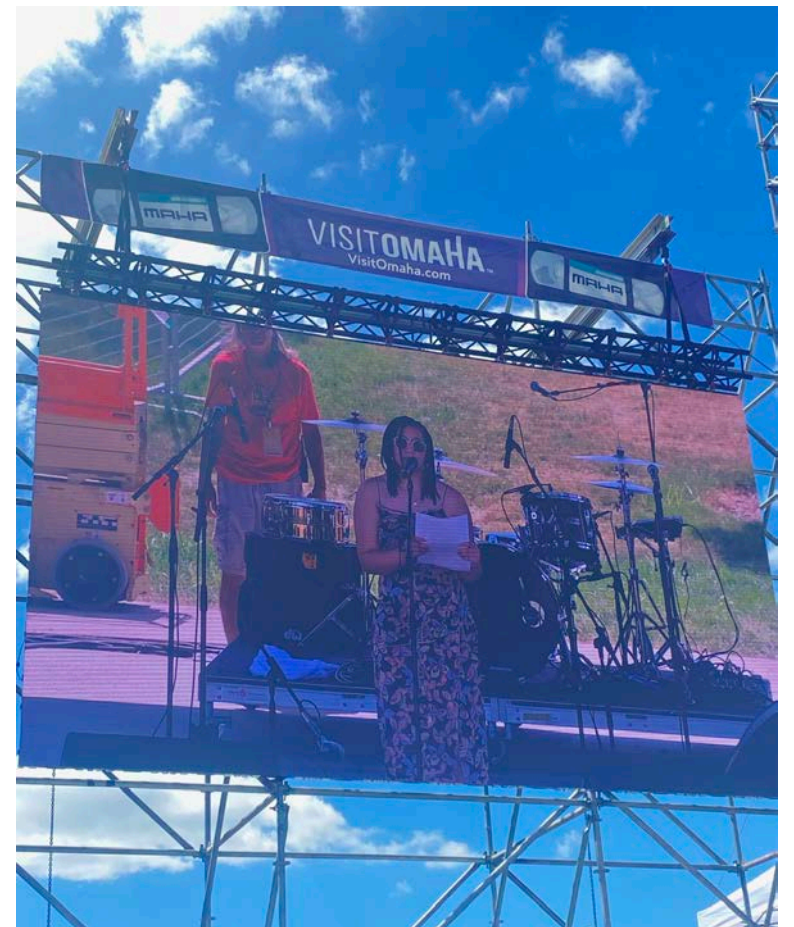
*It crushes your shoulders, little one,*

*And it suffocates those brilliant dreams of*

*Boats and planes, circumnavigating space,*

*That spring from your forehead*

*In this rickety place.*



Top: Mitchell is awarded at the Youth Poet Laureate ceremony. Bottom: Mitchell performs at Maha Music Festival. Photos courtesy of Isabella Mitchell

# Environmental group organizes clothes swap, fights fast fashion

Noemi Gilbert  
news editor

Environmental group Omaha Students for Sustainability held a clothing swap and picnic on Sep. 5. Students from across the Omaha area exchanged clothing to reduce pollution and promote mindful consumption.

At the Gene Leahy Mall, picnic tables were piled high with donated shirts, pants, shoes, and shorts. Next to the clothing, fruit, bars and vegan cookies were offered to attendees. Students perused the piles, selecting items to add to their wardrobes and donating items to the stacks. By wearing secondhand clothing, they hope to reduce their negative environmental and economic impacts.

"Clothes make up a huge part of waste," said senior Chloe Johnson, a board member of Students for Sustainability. "Not only is it going to landfills, but so much of it is made with plastics and chemicals, it takes a really long time to biodegrade. There's a lot of pollution."

According to the Columbia Climate School, the fashion industry causes 10% of global greenhouse gas emissions and 20% of



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global wastewater. The chemicals used in the dyeing process are responsible for an estimated 17-20% of industrial water pollution.

Students for Sustainability is an organization made up of high school students across

Omaha. They organize a variety of environmental justice efforts, including weekly park cleanups and protests for climate action. They are also working on introducing composting to Omaha area schools.

This year, Students for Sustainability is focused on empowering teenagers to make environmental impact. They believe that even when teenagers can't vote, they can use resources of knowledge, money, and time to show their values. Students for Sustainability also makes connections between young people in need of service hours and organizations doing environmental work.

For Johnson, the importance of shopping secondhand goes beyond the environmental effects and implications.

"There's not being enough done to regulate fast fashion," Johnson said. "When clothes are being produced that cheaply, people are being exploited."

Through the clothing swap, Johnson hopes that attendees take a sense of pride in wearing secondhand clothing and the knowledge that their actions are making an environmental difference.

"There's a feeling of empowerment," Johnson said. "You're doing something to shift the tides, shift the norms, shift the economic drive to secondhand clothing."

# opinion

## SOCKS VS. NO SOCKS

Two students share their contrasting takes on sleeping with or without socks. This debate has severed friendships. Tensions are high in room 029.

### Socks on! #sleepsmart

Hadley Forsen-Yepes  
staff writer

For as long as I can remember, I have worn socks to bed, but it took me getting older to realize that it is more uncommon than I thought. When people discover this fact about me, they do not refrain from calling me a psycho and the entire act gross, but I will continue to stand by my decision. To my fellow wearers of socks during sleep, you are not alone, and you are going about your slumber in a smarter way than you might even realize.

Wearing socks to bed is more comfortable than going barefoot. I am not ready to sleep at night until I have a soft, cozy pair of them on. Some people do not like the sensation of having socks on under their sheets and I respect that, but comfort is the reason me and most others wear our stockings to bed in the first place.

Wearing socks to bed has been proven to improve sleep. According to the National Library of Medicine, socks open up the blood vessels in our feet, which increases blood circulation and lowers our core temperature. Our bodies already cool themselves at night thanks to our circadian rhythms, but socks can quicken the process. A 2018 study from Seoul National University informs us that six male subjects slept longer, took less time falling asleep, and woke up less when wearing socks to bed compared to sleeping barefoot. Data from the study proves that by wearing socks to bed, the core temperature lowers faster, thus the sock wearer will fall asleep sooner. While many people choose to go barefoot to bed because they do not like having warm feet, it is actually warm feet that could make their sleep more efficient.

It interests me that people suddenly become concerned about foot fungal infections when it comes to wearing socks at night, but not when they wear their socks all day long. Many believe that wearing socks to sleep is unsanitary, but if you do it the right way, it is not. According to the Sleep Foundation, wearing a breathable, clean pair of socks made of natural materials over clean feet to bed should not cause any health problems. When socks are made of synthetic materials and are compressed, bacterial issues are more likely to arise. Also, the most common foot fungal infection is athlete's foot, which is contagious. According to Cleveland Clinic, the only way you would be able to contract the infection through socks is if the socks you are wearing have already been worn by someone with the infection. Transmission of athlete's foot in this way could happen day or night, and you should not be sharing used socks with others anyway.

While wearing socks to bed effectively has many requirements that going barefoot does not, something I will not deny, it scientifically improves sleep and makes the wearer more snug and secure. The many health and comfort benefits of sleeping with socks make it the superior way to snooze. #sleepsmart



CHLOE JOHNSON | The Register

### Socks off! #freethefeet

Chloe Johnson  
staff writer

No air. No light. High, unbearable, humidity for hours on hours. This is the struggle of your feet each day. Suffocating in socks stuffed into Adidas, Air forces, Vans, and Reeboks. Finally, you arrive at home and the shoes come off, letting a light breeze in. Now all they are asking for is a night, half the day to breathe freely, to move unrestricted. Your feet do so much for you and they don't want-- they desperately need you to sleep with socks off.

When you sleep with socks on, your feet are in a continual state of humidity. Separate from simply being disgusting, this humidity is downright dangerous. According to webmd.com, socks while sleeping creates perfect breeding ground for Athlete's Foot as, "The fungus that causes athlete's foot thrives in dark damp places." Athlete's foot results in red, burning infections sometimes accompanied by blisters or crumbling nail beds. This painful infection can easily be avoided by simply allowing one's feet the night to breathe.

One central junior, Isabel Hoiberg, experienced this danger firsthand. "As a child I hated sleeping with a blanket so I always slept with socks on because I had really cold feet. I always

slept with socks, preferably fuzzy socks, because I had such cold feet, but I didn't realize I had particularly sweaty feet. The mix of sweat and socks created Athlete's foot. I had really itchy feet. I was scratching until my skin was completely raw, which has left me scared. I will never sleep with socks on ever again."

Another scientific reason to skip the socks is that humans sleep better when they are cold. Trapping heat in one's feet prevents this natural sleeping habitat. When unable to sleep at a comfortable temperature, the quality of sleep is disrupted, and we are prevented from reaching the REM stage where true recovery occurs. By sleeping with socks on you are choosing to increase their risk of eyebags, fatigue, and irritability.

Sleeping without socks is in fact how humans were designed to sleep. We were born without socks on with good reason. Our bodies, including our feet, will take care of us if we just listen to them. The modern world of hot concrete and broken Modelo bottles may require wearing socks and sneakers for protection during the day, but there is nothing to be protected from in our soft beds at night, there is only suffering to come. When we sleep barefoot we sleep better— we avoid bad hygiene and dangerous infection barefoot. Choose to be your best self and take off the socks. #freethefeet



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CHLOE JOHN - The Register

## Reflecting on my freshman self

Alice Larson  
copy editor

Your last year of high school very rarely has any similarities to your first—and maybe that’s a good thing.

If someone had told me four years ago that my senior self would have dyed black and bleached hair, a nose piercing, regularly see a therapist, work out maybe once a week, and have goals to travel and pursue a life centered on making my Pinterest boards a reality, I wouldn’t have wanted to believed them. I admire who I was freshman year, I really do. I had so much drive and accountability for myself, never turning in assignments late, going from school to cross country practice to another three hours at dance, and working toward goals of attending a top college and becoming a surgeon. While I have experienced many obvious changes since freshman year – I no longer straighten my hair on a daily basis, I now understand the Unit Circle, and I learned how to drive a car – the change I’m happiest I went through these past four years is repairing my relationship with myself.

I am so grateful that I no longer feel like I have to work out six hours

a day, maintain an unwavering daily schedule, and that I am able to earn under an A on a test without feeling like a worthless person. Coming to terms with my perfectionism has been so beneficial to so many aspects of my life, and I am proud to say as a senior, through self reflection and therapy, my happiness no longer revolves around a test score, my ability to make it through a day eating as little as possible, or solely other people’s opinions of me. While I certainly have days where I can be own worst enemy and my old habits try to creep back in, it is because of the changes and lessons I’ve learned through the past three years that make me better equipped to handle them.

I’ve grown a lot over these past three years and while I’m not sure I’ll look back on them as the best four of my life, they have been a lot of fun, and I am truly looking forward to my last year as an Eagle. I am hopeful this year, which may be the most normal year of high school I’ll experience, will be filled with many more changes that will improve my life for the better and memories that I will cherish even after I fly away from the Nest in the spring.

## Sex Ed more important now

Charlie Yale  
web editor

For students at Central High School, it’s commonplace to graduate without ever stepping foot into a sex education or human growth class. It seems like a no-brainer: skip a “useless” class and free up space for an elective or a more rigorous International Baccalaureate or Advanced Placement class. Who wouldn’t want to skip out on the awkward sex talks and banana condom demonstrations with their health teacher?

But there’s a problem with this mindset. After the overturning of Roe v. Wade, especially in states like Nebraska that may be looking to ban abortion, sex ed is more important than ever.

Sex ed and/or HIV/AIDS prevention programs are required, in some form, in 39 states plus DC (spell out?) in the U.S. But, only 17 of these states require sex ed to be “medically accurate,” according to the Guttmacher Institute.

That term is as vague as it sounds. It doesn’t specify the content of the course, except for the fact that the educational material must be supported by “the weight of research conducted in compliance with accepted scientific methods,” according to a sample piece of legislation from the Public Leadership Institute.

Five of the ten states with the highest teen pregnancy rates don’t mandate any sex ed, as reported by World Population Review. All of them are poised to ban or limit abortion in some capacity. That means to me one thing: the U.S. needs comprehensive sex education for all students, post-Roe, to limit teenage pregnancy.

The US is notoriously bad at sex ed. A study conducted in PLOS ONE, a medical journal, reported that out of the 35 most developed nations, the US ranks first in teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. But, a comprehensive, community-based and mandatory sex ed curriculum nationwide will be more effective at preventing teen pregnancy and STIs, especially for African American and Hispanic individuals in their teenage years, as stated in the CDC’s Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report.

SIECUS, a sex ed advocacy group, reports that 18 states don’t mandate sex ed. Nebraska is one of them. While my school does offer a sex ed curriculum, students have the option to opt out of it entirely. Because I wanted to take an elective that I missed when we went remote due to the pandemic, I was one of the students who opted out of sex ed.

But learning how to be sexually literate is a basic component of being a young adult in today’s world. I should not have been able to opt out of sex ed as easily as I was able to; it is a class that holds

equal importance to any other class a student takes during high school. But, unlike other classes, sex ed remains separate because the consequences of a bad sex ed system can be detrimental, and sometimes, permanent.

The structure and premise of high school, as a whole, is to prepare young adults for the real world. There is almost nothing more “real-world” than becoming sexually literate, especially in a time where the reproductive rights of those with uterus have been taken away.

Denying abortions to people who need them creates a larger risk of experiencing poverty and job loss, possibly increases levels of abuse and raises rates of single parenthood, according to a study at the University of California San Francisco. An article published in American Journal of Public Health goes as far as saying that “Laws that restrict access to abortion may result in worsened economic outcomes for women.” Abortion is a valuable family planning method. Sex ed is important and it will always remain important because family planning is always relevant. The main opponents to a complete and comprehensive sex ed curriculum in the United States are generally those in favor of the overturning of Roe: the religious right.

Both sex ed and abortion have been marker issues for the religious right for over 60 years, according to People for the American Way and The Guardian. It is ironic that the religious right chooses to make these contradictory stances their primary issues. If conservatives wanted to limit teen pregnancy, and therefore abortions, they would teach comprehensive sex ed.

It has been proven many times that comprehensive sex ed is better at preventing teen pregnancy than abstinence-only programs or situations where sex ed isn’t mandated. A Washington University study found that teens who received comprehensive sex ed were 60 percent less likely to get pregnant or impregnate someone than teens who received no sex ed and 30 percent less likely than their peers who received abstinence-only sex ed.

The right to abortion and a comprehensive sex ed shouldn’t be a trade-off; but to support abortion bans and neglect comprehensive and accessible sex ed is completely contradictory.

Some states have excellent templates for comprehensive sex ed. It is impossible to create a “one size fits all” program for the whole country. But all factors point towards the need for every single state to adopt a comprehensive sex ed program.

We need to do this for our youth. And for the future of our nation.

# Dinkers Bar and Grill



2368 S 29th St



## Stories from the trail

Charlie Yale

web editor

I spent a month of my life completely outdoors. For 22 days, spanning from July 21 to August 13, I was quite literally outside for all hours of the day except for those spent in my tent. During this time, I hiked approximately 200 miles across the Appalachian Trail (AT), through the state of Maine.

While this doesn't even scratch 10% of the entire AT—which spans 2,200 miles along the east coast from Georgia to Maine—what I experienced was life changing and I come back to civilization with anecdotes, accounts and advice from the trail.

### Margaritaville

Hiking the AT—the holy grail for backpackers, mountaineers and outdoorsmen—you are bound to encounter a multitude of personalities at every stopping point. As one of my group members liked to say, “you have to be at least a little weird to hike the AT.” An interaction that stuck out to me was a conversation I had with two northbound Thru Hikers (hikers that hike the entire AT).

The pair of hikers, Colton and Margaritaville, were on the home stretch of their over 2,100-mile hike. Margaritaville, a North Carolina native, was entering graduate school to eventually become a school counselor. Her entire summer was planned around hiking the AT.

To non-thru hikers, the name Margaritaville may sound outlandish, even insulting. Margaritaville is a trail name—an alias that hikers “earn” through their hiking experiences on long trips. While our conversation stretched long past my planned 8:30 P.M. bedtime, I never found out the story behind Margaritaville's trail name.

Further along in my trip I met Speedbump. Speedbump was a Florida native, hoping to hike all the way from the summit of Katahdin at the end of the A.T. in Georgia, then back to his hometown, Tampa Bay.

He explained that his name was bestowed upon him because he was the slowest member of his hiking group, a “speedbump.” He didn't seem to care all too much. Through puffs of a hand-rolled cigarette, Speedbump explained to me, “It's your hike. It doesn't matter what anyone else thinks.”

I earned my trail name on the sixth day of my trip. This

was the day we were set out to hike to Baxter Peak on top of Katahdin, the tallest peak in the state of Maine. It stands at 5,269 feet, 11 feet off a mile high. As one of the slower hikers in my group, especially on the uphill, I was at the back of the line with my counselor, Jimbo.

About a third of the way up, Jimbo fell violently ill from dehydration, and was forced to throw in the towel. He gave me the med-kit, InReach (satellite phone) and a caffeinated water-enhancer and sent me up the mountain on my merry way. I reunited with my group a mile off the summit, to all of their surprise.

The trail name “Solo” was bestowed upon me because I hiked one of the most technical days of the trip completely by my lonesome.

### Surviving is hard

Being reduced to my most basic needs while hiking the A.T., I learned how truly marvelous the act of surviving is. For 22 days and nights, I had nothing else to focus on besides walking, getting myself water, getting a tent set up and sleeping. And, as simple as it may seem, these tasks are extremely strenuous.

My largest roadblock was my mental health. From the start of the trip to about two thirds of the way through, I truly believed that I couldn't and wouldn't finish the trip. Something that had seemed so freeing, so far-out when I signed up for it had finally arrived, and I seemingly wasn't prepared to deal with it.

This negatively affected my mindset for most of the trip, I was not allowing myself to have a good time. But while down in the dumps and focusing on getting through each day, I realized that the actions and motions that we go through every single day are truly incredible.

While on the trail, I didn't have access to the luxuries we enjoy almost every day that we take for granted. I had to filter my own water using a special cap, sleep in an unwashed sleeping bag on top of a 2-inch-thick sleeping pad that attempted to mask the figures of the rocks and roots below me (spoiler alert—it failed), carry all my food, my dirty clothes and a metal pan in my pack.

But doing all this forced me to accept the fact that the basic act of surviving and caring for yourself is demanding and rewarding and necessary. Give yourself credit. Every



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single day brings its own challenges, and no matter how big or small, you deserve to be heard and you deserve to care for yourself. Every single act of self-care is essential.

### The trailhead

As I sit at my desk writing this piece, I gain the pleasure of writing about my trip with my rose-tinted glasses on. I (mostly) only remember the good, I cannot seem to remember the bad as vividly.

I do remember the fact that I had more bug bites than I knew what to do with, scratches that popped up out of the blue and caused me to bleed all over my clothes, bruises and bumps from who-knows-where, joint pain that made me feel like a senior citizen and blisters the size of golf balls on both of my feet—of which the remnants still exist—but I still look back on my experience on the trail as a good one.

I pledged to myself on one of those days when nothing seemed to go right that I wouldn't ever do a trip anything like the one I was on ever again.

The minute the van picked me up from the end of the trail after I had finished the hike, air conditioning and music blasting, my mind slowly started to change. I still don't understand what I found fun about the trip, but I had fun regardless. In due time, it seems that I will once more find myself at the trailhead.

## Students describe life with Type 1 Diabetes

E Dona-Munoz

staff writer

As a senior at Central, I've had plenty of hardships these past four years. Yet none come close to dealing with the literal ups and downs of Type One Diabetes. Type One Diabetes (T1D) is an auto-immune disease in which insulin-producing cells in the pancreas are mistakenly destroyed by the immune system, causing the pancreas to no longer produce insulin. The cause is not certain, and a cure hasn't been developed yet. When people hear the word “diabetes,” there's a specific image that comes to mind. But there are many people who don't fit that image, myself included. It's important to remember that having diabetes doesn't prevent someone from having a normal life.

I interviewed Hime Moore (junior) and Morgan Gniffke-Leak (freshman) on their experiences with T1D as well. Their responses have been edited for clarity and length.

*Do you use a continuous glucose monitor? Insulin pump?*

Hime: I use both. I have a Dexcom and a t-slim which is nice because they connect.

Morgan: Yes, I use both a CGM and insulin pump. I have a tandem pump and Dexcom sensor. How do you communicate with teachers/coaches/sponsors about your type one?

Hime: I have a 504 which all my teachers are supposed to read but, I know they're busy and that doesn't always happen. So, I usually go out of my way within the first couple days to tell my teachers and explain any questions they might have.

Morgan: I typically find a moment to let them know I'm diabetic and what that entails. I say that I have an insulin pump, I am not using my phone in class. I like to stress that I am very independent in my handling of my diabetes.

*Have you ever needed to explain to a fellow student what “that thing on your arm” is or educate them on type one? How did you go about this? What information do you think is vital for other people to know about type one?*

Hime: Yeah, usually it goes well. I like to keep it light because new stuff tends to scare or shock other people. I just say, “I have diabetes, so my body doesn't make insulin and I basically get to wear robot parts.” I'm always open to questions too because I think it's important that people know we're normal, but we get help from medicine and other devices to function like everyone else.

Morgan: I've had questions about my sensor or pump. People are naturally curious, and I always appreciate when someone respectfully asks about it. Sometimes I go for a humorous answer. Otherwise, I normally say I'm diabetic, give a brief explanation of insulin and what it does, and how my body does not produce insulin. I do my best to keep it short. I think it's important for those who are close with someone who is diabetic to understand how that affects us. Low and high blood sugars can do weird and uncomfortable things to the body. I think it's important for people to understand that each diabetic's experience is different. The most important thing is to be respectful to that person and their experience.

*Does your T1D ever make you feel alienated or isolated from fellow classmates?*

Hime: I got diagnosed at 9 so I remember what it's like not to have it and sometimes it felt like a curse or a punishment. In the earlier years it was hard because I was so scared about doing everything on my own at school. I still didn't understand how to deal with a low/high or that sometimes I had sat out of an activity because it was important for my health. But, at some point I realized diabe-

tes doesn't control me and if I can get on top of it, everything would be okay. Now, it doesn't stop me from doing much and I've met some cool people because of it.

Morgan: I've never felt isolated from my classmates because of my diabetes. Part of the reason is because my mother has T1D, and my sibling was diagnosed with diabetes four years after I was. It's something that's very normal in my family. I've had it from a young enough age that I don't remember what life was like without it, so it's not something I think about too much.

*What do you wish the school did to improve the high school experience for students with type one?*

Hime: One thing that's so important for diabetics is to always have access to a restroom and water. With block, I've noticed that it's been a challenge because of the rules on when you can or cannot go and they're packed during passing period.

Another important thing is making sure teachers know the signs of high versus low blood sugar so they can get a student the help they need. I've had situations where my blood sugar was 40, I didn't realize, and my teacher was panicking because she didn't have food. I don't think it's the school or teacher's job to manage my diabetes but to be aware and make sure I can function and get the access to the things I need.

Morgan: Most of my issues with being diabetic are more about the actual handling of blood sugars and such. I think the permanent nurse pass is very convenient. I do think that there should be more education and awareness about diabetes in general, which is something the school could have a hand in working on.

## Being rewarded with junior year

Alice Larson  
staff writer

Everyone has told me junior year is the hardest. Classes, the ACT, preparing for college, jobs, sports, and combining them all seem to drag down the reputation of the third year of high school. I however, am finding junior year to be rewarding.

All the years of honors classes have paid off and I find myself in advanced placement classes. All the years of straight A's seem to be paving the way to a good college. I have worked hard every year of school and I am finally seeing my progress. It was difficult to make it through last year because I was doing work but felt like I was never seeing any improvements.

Since the seventh grade I have been in honors everything. Anyone can sign up for those classes but because of the level of difficulty of AP, one must have worked hard in the past to be in the class in the 10th, 11th, and 12th grade. The reputation of the AP courses makes them feel special to me.

This year I am in a different spot. I can not only see my progress but am living the high

school life I have worked for. Section editor on newspaper, AP classes, a sport I am committed to, and knowing what I want for my future are all things I am experiencing this year because of the work I put in last year.

The experience of the past two years has also paid off. Meeting new people and teachers, knowing where everything is, and learning what to do not to do has made me feel more confident.

Learning where the door stoppers are so I do not trip on them, is also a benefit. I have spent the past two years finding my place. I now know more about myself and what I want to do in the future.

During my sophomore year I discovered a love for chemistry. I am now taking steps to pursue a career in science. Working all of last year to now be in AP Chemistry, I feel as though every assignment and every test I have studied for has led up to this class I enjoy.

I am sure the year will get harder as it goes on and I will learn why everyone dislikes their junior year, but as of now I am happy to be a junior.

## OPS high school start times hold students back

Chloe Johnson  
staff writer

Cartoon by Chloe Johnson

“Good morning!” cheers a high school teacher to her first class of the day. It is 7:45 and her students do not respond, much less look up from their phones, catching up on messages from the night before. Some have Starbucks, or a Redbull on their desk.

It is easy for teachers to blame the laziness of today and technology for this lack of interest. However, many are forgetting that at one point they were these barely awake students. Our parents were also groggy, but perhaps not our grandparents, because it was not until about two generations ago that public high schools, including Central, shifted start times back from nine to eight in the morning with horrific consequences.

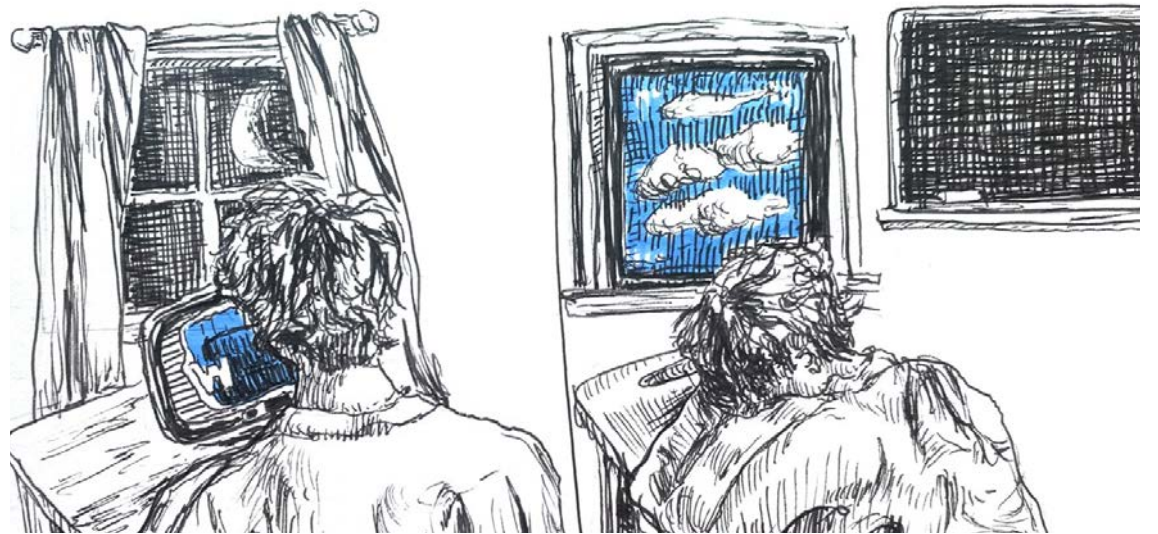
Teenagers are biologically designed to stay up later and sleep in more than our society deems normal. Our circadian rhythm literally shifts forward to delay our release of melatonin, so we do not feel tired until far later than children and adults. According to Matthew Walker PhD, author of *Why We Sleep*, “Asking your teenage son or daughter to go to bed and fall asleep at ten p.m. is the circadian equivalent of asking you, their parent, to go to sleep at seven or eight p.m.” As growing teenagers, sufficient sleep means sleeping in until eight or nine in the morning minimum. Yet our school days start before elementary students and many adult careers. Under the current OPS high school schedule most students must wake up at six in the morning to get to school, but are still biologically inclined to stay up past eleven at night. Not to mention sports, screens, and homework that further push back bedtimes. What this leads to is a normal of fewer than seven hours of sleep, alarming as Walker writes, “Ten days of six hours of sleep was all it took to become as impaired in performance as going without sleep for twenty-four hours straight.” Applying this to Central, a large population of our school is likely going about their life on a chronic all-nighter.

Sleep deprivation has extremely serious consequences. In fact, quality of sleep has been shown to have a greater overall impact on health-

-physical and mental-- than exercise or nutrition. With this in mind, OPS should consider why it spends so much on free school meals, athletics, and counseling yet prevents the healthy sleep schedules needed to make any of those things effective with its start time.

Most relevant to OPS, is suffering academics, especially at Central where so many students are bussed in, meaning they are likely to have less sleep. Dr. Lewis Terman, who helped invent the IQ test, believed that sleep was the most important factor in a student's intellectual success. Tired students are prone to falling asleep in class, but they also are unable to remember the information learned in school without entering deep or REM sleep. “If you don't sleep the very first night after learning, you lose the chance to consolidate those memories,” writes Walker. Caffeine, screens, and sufficient sleep time all prevent REM. Caffeine, drank in the late afternoon, a staple of busy teens, prevents this memory making sleep. Screens before sleep also delay the release of melatonin until the morning. So, students who stay up late in coffee shops doing homework on their OPS iPads, and students who stay up late on Netflix will be equally drained and unprepared.

Suffering mental health, long thought to be the cause of bad sleep, is now understood to often be the result of insufficient good sleep. Mental health is suffering now more than ever, due to the social disruption of the pandemic and an increasingly screen addicted world. At Central last year all outside people wanted to talk about was the outrageous behavior-- the fights, the weed, the property destruction, but not the suffering mental health issues causing the behavior. Sleep deficiency leads to a 60% amplification of the amygdala, our fight or flight part of the brain. “...Without sleep our mind reverts to a primitive pattern of uncontrolled reactivity,” writes Walker. Stuck in



fight or flight, everything is a bigger deal, leading to more hallway fights and uninterested, depressed students. Because of this connection, insufficient sleep has been scientifically proven to cause higher rates of teen suicide, violence, addiction, bipolar disorder, and ADHD. Sleep is not the only solution, but it is a critical piece of the puzzle to getting OPS students back to stability.

Long-term health is being determined by improving the sleep teens get right now. Ever wonder why hard-working people who exercise and eat healthy are obese, suffering from heart disease, or cancer? The culprit is built up lack of sleep. When sleep deficit occurs, our bodies decrease satiety signals and increase appetite, specifically for high sugar and high carbohydrate foods.

So even if one is simply eating as their body instructs, they will gain excess weight overtime, if under slept. Staying up and preventing the sympathetic nervous system from rest, causing immediate hypertension, even among teenage athletes. Eventually this leads to the leading cause of death in America: heart disease. The amyloid brain plaque that causes Alzheimer's? Cleaned up by the brain at night with sufficient sleep. Cancer is linked to sleep. “Poor sleep quality therefore increases the risk of cancer developing,” says Walker.

Short term, student safety is also on the line. New research shows that sleep deprived drivers are as cognitively impaired as drunk drivers (with the study's definition of sleep deprived as waking up at seven a.m.

and driving home at ten p.m.). Teens are notoriously bad drivers, and car accidents are the leading cause of teen death in America. However, a school in Wyoming found that when it pushed start times from seven thirty-five to eight fifty-five, car accidents among teens were reduced by 70%.

At least one Omaha high school has taken this into consideration and pushed its start time back. Duchesne Academy starts the school day at eight forty a.m. and the students themselves are noticing a difference.

“I personally love starting later because I am more awake in the morning, and I don't dose off during class. In middle school, in the morning, I felt that I was still waking up during my first period and so I wasn't really focused,” says junior Mary Rose Bartek Miller.

What if Central followed the science as well? Many student problems may fix themselves if school start times adjusted and homework returned to harmless pen and paper, allowing sufficient sleep to become the norm once again. Maybe will remember what they learned in high school. Maybe teenagers will not have a stereotype of grumpiness. Maybe so many teens will not have expensive caffeine addictions. Maybe antidepressants and Adderall will not be such common prescriptions. Maybe suicide rates decrease. Maybe teen car accidents will be less common. Maybe eating disorders will not be so rampant. Maybe nothing would be visibly different, except for that students would be able to muster a “Good morning” back to their teacher.



## arts &amp; style

## 'THE POPPY WAR' HISTORY THROUGH FANTASY

R.F. Kuang explores power, war, colonialism and belief in one of the greatest books of our time



Photo Courtesy of Harper Voyager

### Hadley Forsen-Yepes staff writer

Disclaimer: The Poppy War is filled with graphic content that many will find disturbing. I recommend looking up content warnings before reading.

What if Mao Zedong was a teenage girl?" is how R.F. Kuang once described her 2019 debut novel, an adult fantasy inspired by the Second Sino-Japanese War and the Song Dynasty. With it, Kuang explores power, war, colonialism, and belief. The Poppy War's strong historical parallels and gripping magic make it one of the greatest books of our time.

Earning her way into the country's top military academy is the only option for Fang Runin—or Rin for short, a war orphan about to be sold off into an arranged marriage by her opium-dealing foster parents.

After years of extensive and torturous studying, Rin earns an abnormally high score on the Empire's military academy entrance exam and is sent off to the prestigious Sineward, where she is immediately treated lesser-than due to her dark skin, gender, and southern upbringing.

At school, Sineward's skilled yet unprofessional Lore Master takes her under his wing, and it is in his class that Rin discovers she has a gift of shamanism. However, calling on her vengeful Phoenix god comes at a dangerous cost. To achieve full shamanic power—power that could give her country an advantage in

the looming war—Rin will have to give in to the Phoenix entirely. What will she do to save her country?

I had high expectations diving into the rich fantasy world of The Poppy War. After being told by an abundance of my peers both on and offline—who I share almost identical book taste with—that it would change my life, I assumed it would be one of my new favorites, but nothing anyone could have told me about it would have prepared me for what I was about to delve into. It is, by far, my favorite book I have read this year, and I cannot wait to finish the next two novels in the trilogy.

It shocks me that this is Kuang's debut novel considering how masterfully it is written. The story and prose flow to create lush imagery, three-dimensional characters, and a painfully accurate depiction of war. It was hard to put down, mainly due to its pacing.

Some chapters recount the events of one day while years pass in others, but Kuang pulls it off seamlessly because she knows when a time jump is necessary to move the story along. The chapters are the perfect length, and they always end with a sudden twist, so I would often lie to myself that I would only read one more chapter, but then I would end up reading a lot more.

With its pages densely packed with action, I constantly lost track of time while reading it. This book took over my life, and I put everything on hold to finish it. When I was not reading The Poppy War, it was all I was thinking about.

Fang Runin is one of the most extraordinary protagonists I have ever encountered. The book is written in third person limited, so readers get an outside-perspective of Rin while also being able to hear her inner thoughts. Rin goes through a lot, and that makes her seem like less of a book character and more of an actual person.

To escape her home life, she puts herself through hell and back to earn a spot at Sineward. When she gets into Sineward, she does all that she can to succeed, even if that means jeopardizing her physical and mental health. Becoming a soldier comes with its own endless traumas.

We can sympathize with Rin, and we can root for her, but we can also admit that she is a flawed individual who does not always make the best decisions. It is her nuanced character that makes The Poppy War such an all-around impressive novel.

Drawing inspiration from religions and cultures rooted in China, Kuang created her own epic mythology. In the world of The Poppy War, shamans use psychoactive substances and meditation to escape the material world and commune with the gods. Rin has the ability to call on the Phoenix god, who fills her with fire (literally) and rage. Shamans, in this world, are exceedingly rare and extremely dangerous.

The entire concept of drugs and shamanism as a gateway to the gods and their powers is so intriguing to me, and I loved seeing the roles these gods among men played in the war.

The idea for The Poppy War came to Kuang after talking with her grandparents about their experiences in 20th century China. Kuang, who was studying Chinese history at Georgetown University at the time, was angered by the fact that the West rarely talked about the tragedies her grandparents spoke of.

The Poppy War was a way for her to process the information she had learned and to ensure that her family's story was not forgotten. She writes in the Author's Note, "It's a history that isn't often taught in American classrooms, and which often is not known even to members of the Chinese diaspora. I hope my work does a little bit to change that."

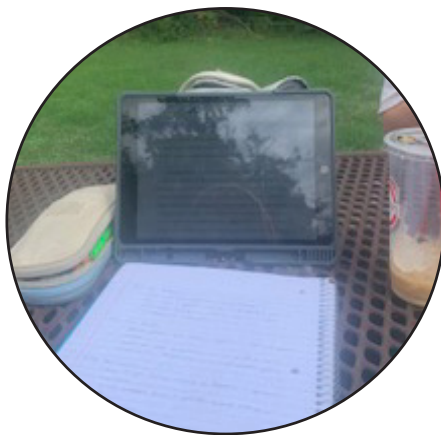
In her book, each fictional nation has an obvious real-life counterpart. The international conflict between Nikan and The Federation of Mugen in the book are parallel to that of China and Japan during the 1930's and 40's, and most of the war atrocities that take place in the novel were directly inspired by the events of the Second Sino-Japanese War, such as the Nanjing Massacre, the Battle of Shanghai, and Unit 731.

Not only does this make for a more accurate depiction of war, but it also helps Kuang achieve her goal of making readers aware of what was going on in East Asia during the second World War. The novel is just as much a historical fiction as it is a fantasy.

The Poppy War is a brilliant read that left me in complete shock—but a good kind of shock. I hope others allow it to take over their life like I did.



Places to study: 13th Street on page 10



Places to study: Elmwood Park on Page 10



Places to study: Inner Rail on page 10

# HITTING THE BOOKS

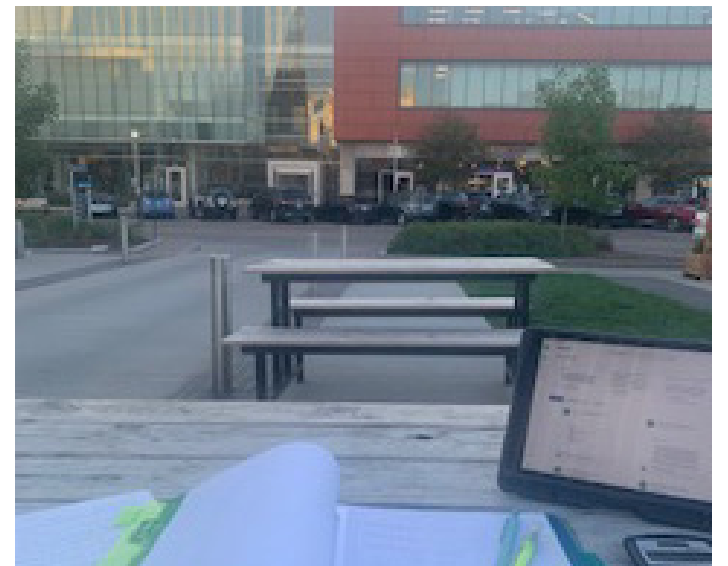
Opinion editor Ella Levy explored places to do homework earlier this fall. She visited a new place each day of the week, and ranked them to discover the best study spot Omaha has to offer.

## INNER RAIL

Location: Across from Power Life Yoga (1917 S 67th St Ste 108)

To start off the week I decided to work in Aksarben. Big picnic tables seemed to be a perfect place to work; that is until you get there and realize the sun is beaming down on you, making you want to leave. After moving to a different table, to face a different direction, I was able to start working. I focused for three hours and did not even finish -- that's what I get for taking AP Chemistry. While working, I enjoyed watching the people around me laugh and eat. Next to me were many adults drinking and playing cornhole, which, yes, was as entertaining as it sounds. The biggest problem with picnic tables is they do not have a backrest. After three hours

I was very uncomfortable. This spot works for students to go after school because the Inner Rail food court is behind the tables. Because I was able to focus, I would come back but it does not earn my top rating. A well-deserved #2 ranking has been earned.



## GENE LEAHY MALL

Location: 1001 Douglas St

Tuesday came and I wanted to go to my favorite place to do homework: the Gene Leahy Mall. The weather always seems to be perfect, I focus, and I'm comfortable. I adore watching everyone walk by and I love watching the remote-control boat races in the water. There are many places to sit, but my favorite place is the big wall of benches on 10th street. I love coming back here and seeing the weather turn. I'm excited to see the look of it in the fall. This location is very close to Central and is within walking distance. I recommend it to everyone. This is and forever will be my #1.

## 13TH STREET COFFEE

Location: 519 S 13th St

Wednesday came and it was time for me to face my fear of coffee shops. Let me explain my fear; there are so many options to choose from and if you do not know what you want the workers seem annoyed.

Coffee shops always seem to have a God complex, but if you can get through ordering and sit it is the most enjoyable experience. If you want to be the main character in a 90s rom com, all you have to do is go to a coffee shop and you are in it. However, the one I chose to visit gave a sense of home. The workers were so nice and there were so many things on the menu, not just coffee. This café was relaxed and there was even a wall with art done by local artists. There were so many places to sit, and it was perfect for homework. It is also located downtown, a quick drive or a slightly long walk after school to do homework in a cute café was worth it for me. This coffee shop has slid into third place simply because of how well I focused at Aksarben.



## ELMWOOD PARK

Location: 802 S 60th St

It was Thursday and I had to go to another park. This time I decided to try the picnic tables at Elmwood Park. It was not as enjoyable as Aksarben and I was not able to focus at all. I felt isolated from the rest of the park instead of part of it. It was unbearably hot, and I only had the view of a tree. Lots of people run on the path through the park. I was passed by many times and found it distracting. I was able to do a couple assignments but was not able to work ahead like I normally do because I wanted to leave. I might try this location again on a day with better weather, but it unfortunately earned last place.

## ZEN COFFEE

Location: 2505 S 133rd Plaza

Friday came and it was time to step out of my comfort zone and go to a different part of town. I wanted to try a variety of different locations because Central students come from all over. Luckily, I have a friend who lives out west, so she went with me. While the workers were again nice and I got through ordering, it did not have the same personalized feeling as 13th Street Coffee Café. I also had trouble focusing. Maybe it was because I was with a friend or because it was Friday, but I just could not seem to focus. I decided to rank second to last, behind 13th Street Coffee Café.



## ‘Bodies Bodies Bodies’ captivating, original

Claire Nipper  
staff writer

Slasher films are one of the most overdone and cliched tropes in the horror genre. During the “Golden Age” of slasher films, the late 1970s to the early 1980s, renowned movies like *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and *Halloween* were released. These movies pioneered the genre, but in the coming decades, films including the idea became less and less original. When I first saw the trailer for *Bodies Bodies Bodies*, the loud, obnoxious music and seemingly predictable plot made it seem as if the movie would just be another remake of this same hackneyed trope. But I was mistaken. *Bodies Bodies Bodies*, directed by Halina Reijn, is captivating, original, and filled with flair from start to finish.

It begins with two teenage girls, blasting music, on their way to a house party. After meeting their somewhat passive aggressive and filthy rich “friends” there, they consume many intoxicating substances and decide to play a game called “Bodies Bodies Bodies.” To play this game, someone is secretly assigned the role of “killer” from a card draw, and then all the lights are turned out. When the killer taps someone, they must play dead, and when someone finds a “dead” body, they shout, “Bodies Bodies Bodies!” Now, as you may have predicted, the game goes horribly wrong. The group of teenagers actually finds one of their friends dead, and then the movie begins to pick up speed.

While this may seem to be a watch-and-forget type movie, Reijn employs a few different techniques to make her film memorable. For starters, she uses some fascinating lighting techniques to make her visuals aesthetically appealing. *Bodies Bodies Bodies* takes place over the course of one night, so most of the scenes were shot in partial or total darkness where characters were not always visible to the camera due to lack of light. To be able to capture the characters while also having the element of darkness, Reijn and her cinematographer Jasper Wolf had to get creative. They chose to use a method that resolved this technical issue while also enhancing the costumes of each of the characters. Alice (Rachel Sennott), an energetic girl who loves being the center of attention, is decked out in glow-stick jewelry. This reflects her outgoing personality while also illuminating her face and body when the lights go out around her. Jordan (Myha’la Herrold) is a powerful leader and doesn’t back down without a fight. Throughout the film, she wears an LED headlamp, which quite literally allows her to illuminate the path the group should take to resolve their issues. These original approaches to lighting actors on set show the ingenuity of this film.

Another interesting thing about *Bodies Bodies Bodies* is its depiction of modern-day youth. While many other scripts make use of outdated and nonsensical slang, inaccurate depictions of style, and cringe-worthy social media references, *Bodies Bodies Bodies* hits the nail on the head almost every single time trends are brought up. When Reijn’s charac-



Photo Courtesy of A24

ters are speaking to each other, their dialogue feels very natural. The “Gen Z” words they use are used correctly, and at no time does it sound like a 40-year-old man wrote a parody of a modern-day teenager’s conversation.

The soundtrack also plays a role in the film’s representation of teenagers in 2022. Reijn made use of a few tracks including the artists Charli XCX, Shygirl, and Slayyyter. The songs used largely fall into the genre of hyperpop, which is usually characterized as a maximalist take on popular music. With the rise in popularity of this genre among today’s youth, it fulfills Reijn’s purpose of matching the soundtrack of her film with her characters. This talented take on popular culture allowed Reijn’s writing to create an underlying commentary on media culture and how teenagers interact with it, where a lesser movie would parody Generation Z’s overuse of technology.

Overall, this movie was undeniably fun and definitely worth the 95 minutes it took to watch. The way Reijn turned a commonly-seen plot into something original and creative was amazing to see, and I am excited to see what she creates in the future.

## ‘Nope’ is a triumph of horror cinema



Photo Courtesy of Universal Pictures

Claire Nipper  
staff writer

Jordan Peele is a mastermind of the genre of horror. In his third feature-length film, *Nope*, Peele creates an original and terrifying tale of extraterrestrial life that left me astounded as the credits rolled.

The film follows O.J. Haywood (Daniel Kaluuya) and Emerald Haywood (Keke Palmer), two adult siblings who run a horse ranch in the desert of California. After horses disappear from their stables and mysterious objects rain from the sky, the two encounter a large, threatening, extraterrestrial being soaring over the horizon of their ranch. The rest of the movie follows the sibling’s journey to document the existence of the weird thing floating ominously in their vicinity.

One characteristic that is included in all of Peele’s films is a level of social commentary. Symbolism and metaphorical connections between the events in his screenplays and social issues in real life are found in all his movies. In *Nope*, Peele’s commentary focuses on modern entertainment culture and societal obsession with spectacles. The opening scene of the film, which takes place in 1998 and on the set of a sitcom titled “*Gordy’s Home*,” truly encapsulates this message. The sitcom involves an animal actor, a chimpanzee called Gordy.

After balloons mistakenly pop on set, causing loud noises that startle everyone, Gordy begins to attack the other actors. Even though this seems to be a tragic, freak accident, it was completely preventable. Chimps are known to be dangerous, and it is bad for the animal to be kept in this type of environment.

The screenwriters, directors, and producers of the sitcom knew this, and yet they still chose to include a chimpanzee actor. The reason they did this is simple; including something interesting, original, and possibly dangerous could create a spectacle that will bring in money from

viewers. This ties the storyline back to Peele’s commentary. The merging of Society’s fascination with spectacles and the culture of modern entertainment elicits negative consequences.

Peele’s use of “*Gordy’s Home*” as an example is not the only way he supports his commentary. Many parallels exist between the plot of *Gordy* and the plot of *O.J. Haywood’s* quest to document the mysterious occurrences that take place on his ranch. The way Peele intertwines two storylines to create a captivating tale as well as meaningful symbolism is enthralling, and something that should be celebrated in the age of modern cinema.

With his incredible use of cinematography, Peele has created a series of distinctly memorable and truly frightening shots from his movie. Like *Get Out’s* “sunken place” and *Us’s* hall of mirrors, *Nope* largely uses its environment as its inspiration of terror. With the big expanse of sky and the middle-of-nowhere feeling of the Haywood Ranch, it seems as if the danger could come from anywhere.

Peele utilizes wide shots of the vast horizon to frighten his audience. But achieving this came with its own set of challenges. Jordan Peele wanted scenes shot at night to be visible, he needed to come up with a different way to light the environment where he was filming.

To accomplish this task, Peele chose genius cinematographer Hoyte van Hoytema to work with him. Hoytema is renowned for his work with Christopher Nolan on *Interstellar*, *Dunkirk*, and *Tenet*, and is considered one of the best cinematographers to work with the IMAX format. When Hoytema was asked by Peele how he would capture the story of *Nope*, Hoytema was sure that IMAX was the best medium to use. It allows for much higher image resolution, created by using a larger film frame. To achieve this benefit while also being able to capture night scenes where it isn’t completely dark, he needed to make use of an unconventional method of filming.

Hoytema built a custom camera rig to be able to shoot these scenes. It was a combination of an ARRI Alexa 65 camera shooting in infrared mode and a Panavision System 65mm film camera, similar to what he created for the lunar rover chase in *Ad Astra*. The Alexa 65 was pointing upwards, and the Panavision film camera was on a horizontal axis. This rig made it possible for them to shoot the nighttime scenes in broad daylight, and then utilize the layers of the rig to create the look we see in *Nope*.

For example, during the shot towards the beginning of the film where O.J. watches one of his horses run away from the ranch after being spooked, the cameras record the sweeping plains of the Californian desert and the dark, looming sky of the horizon. The shot is purposefully chosen to emphasize the way the ranch is isolated from the rest of the world and establish the emptiness that becomes distinctive to this film. With this rig, Peele and Hoytema were able to literally change day into night. It created *Nope’s* characteristic expansive feel, which is exactly what Peele aimed for.

The illustrious, picturesque visuals that belong to *Nope* are a prime example of ingenuity in the field of cinema. The combined genius of Jordan Peele and Hoyte van Hoytema created something truly astounding and revolutionary to the genre of modern horror. What they tried to do was deemed as impossible by many, yet they accomplished it.

Purchase yearbooks at [yearbookforever.com](http://yearbookforever.com) and search “Central”



## Remington student directs 'Wizard of Oz'

Noemi Gilbert  
news editor

To make a show as ambitious as "The Wizard of Oz," students assist with every element. The sets, the props, the costumes, and of course, the acting: Central students must be creative and hardworking as they do their part to create a musical. The role of assistant director is one that audiences may not directly see, but their effect will be surely felt.

Junior Nat Remington will be assistant directing Central's fall production of "The Wizard of Oz." He has been involved in the drama department since his freshman year, working as both an actor and member of

tech crew for several productions.

"My favorite has been the musical last year. I played Schwartz in the '25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee' and that was incredible," Remington said.

As an assistant director, Remington will be working with drama teacher Scott Mead. He will be assisting with blocking, leading warmups for the cast, ensuring everyone is present and has their scripts, and keeping tabs on the rehearsal process.

His role includes being a student leader among the cast and assisting anyone who is struggling with line memorization. "My brain, whenever I get a script, I just have an image of how it goes in my head, I immediately start

to plan it out," Remington said.

Remington's interest in directing dates to his early experiences in drama. He attended a summer production camp at the Rose Theater when he was eight. "The director came up to my mom after the show and said, 'Nat has a little director's brain.' I realize now that the entire time, I was suggesting ideas for this scene or how to block it, but I didn't realize that I was being a director," Remington said. "Now that I do, I'm like, this is fun!"

Remington is excited about the upcoming production, and the opportunities that "The Wizard of Oz" provides theatricality.

"I'm most excited for the scene where the witch throws the fireball at the scarecrow,"

Remington said. "I want to see our set and our props. I want to talk to Mr. Mead and give my ideas, see how we do the special effects that have to happen to create magic."

"The Wizard of Oz" will be performed in the Central auditorium on Nov. 4 at 7 p.m. and Nov. 5 at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m.

"There are so many things that make it so fun," Remington said about the production. "Everybody is so passionate about what they're doing, and we all want to put on the best show possible. When you get to see it on the stage at the very end, everyone's doing their little tiny parts and putting it together to make this spectacular incredible show."

## In 'Emotional Creature,' Beach Bunny's Trifilio is all grown up

Charlie Yale  
web editor

It is impossible to talk about Beach Bunny without their remarkable beginning. The band rose to prominence almost exclusively due to the circulation of their songs on TikTok, a trend in the music industry that has seemingly become more prevalent in the past two years.

Much of the appeal for Beach Bunny's music comes from their subject matter: Trifilio, Beach Bunny's lead singer, writes about many different shared experiences across generations; the ambiguity that accompanies a waning relationship, relationship apprehension, guilt. In the album's first track, "Entropy," Trifilio writes, "Splitting your heart and your brain makes you feel/Uncertain if thoughts were the same even back then/I feel ashamed, I feel ashamed, I feel ashamed."

Beach Bunny's debut 2020 album, "Honeymoon," is an album full of lacy tracks carried by their strong, bubbly melodies and rhythms. Many of the themes present in "Honeymoon" revive themselves in "Emotional Creature," invoking the love and breakup songs that we know and love from Beach Bunny, with seemingly more sophistication. At face value, the album's lead single, "Oxygen," seems like a classic love story, but digging

into the lyrics, it is a story about codependency. Trifilio belts out, "with you, with you, I breathe again/Maybe you're my oxygen," seemingly sweet enough with themes of toxicity shining through.

"Weeds" is a pivotal point for Beach Bunny. The song serves as the main apex of the album, the culmination of all of Trifilio's pent-up feelings. At a concert before the release of the album, Trifilio included the crowd in the (at the time) unreleased coda of the song: "You keep taking another piece of me/Not your problem, not my problem." Trifilio sings not only about herself and her experiences, but evidently to her past and future self as well.

"Emotional Creature" is an album that encapsulates growth, in Trifilio's personal life but also in her music. She was quoted in an article from the New York Times saying, "It sounds like Beach Bunny, but it just sounds a little more grown up. Which I'm happy with because I'm growing up."

Beach Bunny's peculiar rise to fame, largely due to TikTok, has brought with it a new frontier for the band. Since their song "Prom Queen" exploded in 2020, the band has been innovating, but in the most crucial ways – even with the wonderful music it has produced – it has yet to leave its comfort zone.



Photo Courtesy of Mom + Pop

# sports & leisure

## SAYERS IMMORTALIZED WITH STATUE

The Central High School Foundation unveiled a statue of Gale Sayers outside Seeman Stadium earlier this August.



NARVENA SALLOM and SOPHIE CULLUM | The O-Book

Roger Sayers gives an emotional speech before the unveiling commemorating his brother. The statue is unveiled revealing Sayers's larger-than-life figure and Central-colored balloons.

### Conor Harley

staff writer

It has been 62 years since Gale Sayers laced up his cleats as a running back for Omaha Central, but after all those years he was not forgotten for his excellence both on the field and off. On Aug. 26th a statue of Sayers was erected outside of Seeman Stadium.

The statue unveiling came with a ceremony in which members of the Central High School Foundation, the sculptor of the statue and Gale Sayers's brother, Roger Sayers, attended.

Sayers was an extremely accomplished person, having an exceptional collegiate and NFL career, being inducted into the NFL Hall of Fame, becoming an athletic director at Southern Illinois University, establishing himself as a philanthropist and staying an important part of the Omaha community.

The ceremony was a long time in the making. Sayers passed away

on Sept. 23, 2020. The project was organized by the Omaha Central High School Foundation and Michelle Roberts.

"Tonight we come together to celebrate the life of a great athlete, great educator, great businessman and great supporter of Central High," said Foundation Board President Mike Lebens. "This monument to Sayers...much like Central High, is one for the ages."

Sayers distinguished himself on the field as one of the greatest running backs of all time, but what he did after his playing days was much more impactful. Sayers spent his post-athletics life giving back to the community that built him up by investing into Central High and establishing scholarships.

An emotional Roger Sayers made his way up to the podium to speak to the crowd.

"The story of Gale Sayers, the Kansas Comet, the Chicago Bear, has been told over and over again in books, film and print," he said.

"What is not often written were Gale's accomplishments after football!"

After what Roger described as an all too short NFL career, Gale quickly went back to school to earn his bachelor's degree in Physical Education. While he was earning that degree he served as the assistant athletic director, which would act as the precursor to him being a head athletic director at Southern Illinois University.

After earning his degree, earned a master's degree in Educational Administration. He then moved back to Chicago to launch his own firm named after his family, Sayers & Sayers Enterprise, and eventually he launched a computer supply business.

"Gale recognized that at an early age that he could not make a living with football," said Roger Sayers. "I can not begin to describe to you how much of an impact the learning environment...made him want to succeed."

The wisdom of Sayers landed him as one of the most wealthy minorities in the country and a member of numerous business halls of fame across the Chicago area.

Central Principal Dionne Kirksey also made an appearance to speak, where she spoke of the impact Sayers had on the Central community.

"Here at Central High we remember Gale not only as a football player, but as a brother, husband, father, grandfather, advocate for equality and supporter of Central High School," she said. "We strive to prepare our students to become citizens who are change makers within their communities, much like Gale Sayers was."

The Foundation selected Littleton Allston, an African American and world-renowned sculptor, to do the Sayers statue. Allston provided a touching moment when he gifted his sketches and drafts of the statue to Roger Sayers as a show of appreciation.

"As a kid growing up in D.C., Gale was one of my heroes," said Allston. "(I) was so thrilled to get the opportunity to bring my talents to sculpt one of the great people of color in the history of this nation."

Allston put long hours every day into the sculpture of Sayers, and he wanted to capture his spirit within it. In coordination with the Sayers family, Allston worked to bring together the sculpture.

The ceremony ended with the statue being unveiled, and a flurry of purple and white balloons floating away over Seeman Stadium.

To the Central community Gale was more than a football player, and that was emphasized by every speaker at the ceremony. Gale was a businessman, educator, community builder, family man and supporter of Central and Omaha all together. The statue will now sit alongside the Victory Eagle for decades to come, and serve as a symbol of overcoming the odds to all future eagles.

## Baseball fixes mistake made seven years ago

### Brody Hilgenkamp

adviser

I can distinctly remember thinking that MLB Commissioner Rob Manfred should receive votes for a 2015 Most Valuable Player award. It was his first year as commissioner after taking the baton from Bud Selig, and things were going well. The Home Run Derby had stumbled on an exciting new format, dynamic rookies like Kris Bryant, Carlos

Correa and Francisco Lindor were grabbing headlines and TV ratings were great all season, with 25 of the 29 U.S.-based teams finishing the season as the most viewed cable program in their local markets, according to Forbes, and a third of U.S. teams finishing as the most viewed program across all networks.

The most encouraging sign, however, was the improvements that were made in the pace of play

to the game. While MLB is a money-making machine and is incredibly popular, its popularity has waned in large part because the pace of the game slowed. By 2014, the average time of a nine-inning game had increased to three hours and two minutes, up from 2:26 in 1978.

But 2015 was trending in the other direction. During the first few months, the league enforced an already existing rule to make batters keep one foot in the batter's box

between pitches. The early results were beyond encouraging. Immediately, several minutes of game time were shaved, so much so that even after the league stopped enforcing it a few months later and times began to creep up again, the average nine inning game for the 2015 season dipped back below the three-hour mark to 2:56.

While 2015 was a great first year as commissioner for Manfred, he also made the biggest mis-

take of his tenure by backing off enforcement of the foot-in-the-box rule. The lesson he and other MLB leaders should've learned early that season was that baseball's increasingly sluggish pace was mostly attributable to dead time between pitches. Game times again continued their upward trend and baseball continued to become slower and less exciting; in 2021, nine inning games averaged 3:10.

As commissioner, Manfred's

MANFRED on page 14



SCOTT FROST on page 14



FIRST GAME on page 16



VOLLEYBALL on page 15

## Huskers fire Frost; Nebraska wins first game with Joseph

Charlie Yale  
web editor

The University of Nebraska Athletic Department announced Sunday, Sep. 11, that it had fired Scott Frost following the Cornhuskers' disappointing 45-42 loss against Georgia Southern.

In a statement, Nebraska athletic director Trev Alberts explained the circumstances surrounding the decision:

"Earlier today I met with Coach Frost and informed him we were making a change in leadership of our football program, effective immediately. Scott has poured his heart and soul into the Nebraska Football program both as a quarterback and head coach, and I appreciate his work and dedication."

Frost ended his coaching career at UNL with a 16-31 record, winning only 34% of the games he faced off in.

Frost's current contract, which was renegotiated in 2019, calls for a \$16.4 million buyout, which would be cut in half to \$8.2 million after October 1. According to Alberts, the Huskers are responsible for covering the entire buyout. "The University has a long history of living up to what we've agreed to. The contract is what the contract is."

This also means that the Huskers' largest boosters, some of whom are "friends with Frost," according to the Omaha World Herald, must have either encouraged the firing or at the least not blocked it from happening.

Furthermore, Alberts announced that Associate Head Coach Mickey Joseph will serve

as the interim head coach for the remainder of the season. Mickey Joseph is the older brother of Vance Joseph, former Denver Broncos head coach and current Arizona Cardinals defensive coordinator. Joseph will be the first Black head coach – of any sport – at the University of Nebraska. According to The Institute for Diversity and Inclusion in Sport, only 11.9% of NCAA Division I football head coaches are Black, compared to the 46% of Power 5 student athletes who are Black. Since 1981, only 39 Black head coaches and 29 Black athletic directors have been hired; only 30 of the 65 power five programs have hired a Black head coach.

In the meantime, Nebraska will conduct a national search for a new head coach. Joseph does have an opportunity to prove himself

as a strong candidate through the final nine games of the season, a coaching option that Alberts says he "loves."

"It's been a tough day today," Alberts said. "This is a day that I'd hoped would never come."

Joseph lost his first game as head coach against Oklahoma 49-14, but beat the Indiana Hoosiers signifying improvement within the program and putting the team in first place of the Big Ten West Division.

"It's football. You don't know what's going to happen and it's the wild west right now. Everybody's fighting but the games are coming down to the fourth quarter," Joseph said. "But we're going to take it one game at a time."



Courtesy of GIA STANG

Stang has competed in cross country throughout all four years of high school even with other extracurriculars and without wanting to compete at the next level.

Left to right: Indigo Torres, Maggie Ernst, Allison Stisi, Gia Stang, Chloe Johnson.

## Senior speaks on commitment to fall sport

Alice Larson  
copy editor

Few high school athletes compete in a sport for all four years unless they show clear athletic promise of continuing that sport in college. Interests change, schedules get busier, and a drive to keep pushing oneself fades. It's made clear upon one's first day freshman year—the next four years of your life set a precedent for your future. Which implores many athletes over the course of their high school careers to question if playing a sport takes away time that could be spent doing homework, having a job, having fun with friends, or doing a club why should one participate in sports if they won't be a part of life out of high school?

For senior cross country athlete Gia Stang, despite other extracurriculars and no plans to continue to continue running cross country in college, her adoration for the fall sport has kept her coming back to the trails year after year. Stang explained she's continued to race "because I like staying fit and having something to do after school-I

like the community aspect of running cross country". She noted her drive to continue pushing herself in the sport is because of a light bulb moment she experienced at one of her first races freshman year, "Freshman year after the Central invitational meet- I ran a really good time and I realized if I really put my mind to it and worked hard I could really improve and just that feeling after that race I just carried with me to senior year—the feeling of accomplishment".

While a drive to continue has fueled Stang these past four years, she expressed participating in the sport had not been without its challenges. The cross-country season falls from mid-August to mid-October, a season that results in athletes scurrying under the blazing sun for miles, their feet throbbing from the pressure of shoes pounding against hard pavement and uneven trails. Practice times fall right after school, cutting into athletes' free time and availability to complete homework. Stang noted that despite obvious challenges of exercising for hours in a balmy environment, time management has been a challenge she's faced "because

I have to be at practice every day after school, I've had to make a lot of sacrifices in my personal life and in terms of academics, when I get home from practice each day it's so hard to get to work on something else because I've already used so much of my energy at practice that day". Stang went onto explain, that due to the amount of energy running cross country requires she's taken steps back in other aspects of her life to better accommodate a lifestyle as a runner "I've chosen to do cross country instead of taking certain classes that have a lot of out of class work, I've chosen to run cross country even though it interferes with marching band and time I could spend with friends".

However, despite the sport's lack of glamour & the personal sacrifices she's had to make to keep pounding the pavement each fall, Stang doesn't have any regrets for the athletic lifestyle she chose to pursue. She is grateful to the sport for the lessons she learned on the value of hard work and the relationships and friends she's acquired by lacing up her racing shoes each fall.

## Commissioner makes right decision with pitch clock

MANFRED from page 13

main role is to grow the game and keep it printing money for all its stakeholders, mostly the team owners. And that is what was so baffling to me, that baseball, which saw attendance per game decline in nine of 13 seasons between 2007 and 2019, continued to ignore a fact that

was pointed out in its own data and by the media: the game was getting slower because pitchers and batters alike were wasting time between pitches, and people were tuning out as a result.

So it was with great relief when I read the news on Sept. 3 that baseball would be implementing a pitch clock for the

2023 season. Pitch clocks have been in use in the minor leagues for several seasons and game times are regularly around 2:30, a much healthier and exciting pace of play. Anyone who has been to an Omaha Storm Chasers game recently has probably noticed the brisk pace of action on the field.

To be fair to Manfred and

his lieutenants, a pitch clock would've been implemented much sooner had the players not resisted. But the league had the authority to implement one without the players' approval, and by waiting the game's mass appeal continued to erode. But it shouldn't have taken them seven years to fix their mistake.



Courtesy of Jillian Bertino

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## Nebraska seeing rise in women in football

Ann Carlson  
staff writer

More women are playing high school football in 2022 than ever before, and it's happening here, at Omaha Central.

Junior Hunter Stoffel recently started playing football for the Eagles. This season is her first season playing and she is part of the freshman team.

"I decided to play because I wanted to take part in a team sport," Stoffel said. "I wanted a sport that I thought I could be good at and after going through the list I decided on football."

Stoffel was inspired by another female football player, Marley Dodenhof, who was a senior kicker on varsity and graduated last year. "When I saw Marley playing it made me realize that football could be a sport for women as well," Stoffel said.

Stoffel plays on the defensive line and is hoping to be part of the varsity team next year.

"If I work hard in the off season and get stronger and with the support of my teammates, I hope to make my goals happen," she said.

Forty-seven of the 50 states have seen an increase of female football players in the past decade and Nebraska is one of them. According to the National Football League, the number of women playing football in high school

has grown from under 1% to 10% in the past five years. Another Eagle woman playing football, junior Angie Rose, said she started playing football because all her cousins and uncles played. "I started playing competitively in seventh grade because I was surrounded by guys in my family that played and it seemed like something I would be good at," Rose said.

Both Stoffel and Rose said they felt included by the coaches and fellow teammates. "The team goes just as hard on me as they would if I was a man, if not harder," Stoffel said. "They don't favor me just because I'm a woman."

Omaha Central's football coach, Jay Landstrom, said he hopes all players in the program feel included, male or female. "The girls work just as hard as the guys on the team and it's important to our program that they feel included."

Central isn't the only school in the Omaha metro area that has women on the team. Westside, which has played in two of the past three state championship games, has had two females part of its program. Sophomore Piper Zatechka of Westside played on the freshman team last year as a middle linebacker and fullback. She got involved in the game because of her dad, Rob Zatechka, who was an All-American for Nebraska and played for the New York Giants. She talked about how her dad was always supportive and always pushed her to be better. "He would take me to the



CHARLIE YALE | The Register

stadium and have me run stairs, he pushed me to be strong," Zatechka said. "He told me if I wanted to play against the guys I would have to be two times better than them."

Zatechka is taking a break for football this year to focus on becoming a state champion wrestler, but she said she will not stop her love for football.

Omaha Westside senior Erin Mardi has been playing football her whole life just like Central Eagle, Rose. Mardi is a wide receiver on the varsity team. She believes Nebraska has seen a rise in female football players because

of the importance of football in Nebraska.

"Every Saturday in Nebraska little girls look on the television and see football on the screen," Mardi said. "Seeing it on TV is ultimately what made me want to play and I think that's how a lot of girls who are joining the game feel."

Mardi was the first female player in Nebraska to play on the field in a varsity game that was not a kicker. Both Stoffel and Rose are hoping to join Mardi with this title next year.



NARVENA SALLOM | The O-Book

In the class of 2023, 24 players and counting have committed to their Division I school of choice.

## Nebraska volleyball preview

Isabel Hoiberg  
staff writer

Playing high school volleyball in Nebraska is one of the most competitive sports to be involved in today, going against teams nationally ranked and having multiple players committed to the highest level of collegiate sports, Division I.

In the 2022 graduating class, there were 25 players in Nebraska committed to Division I schools, two of them being students at Omaha Central High School: Ital Lopuyo, pin hitter/ middle blocker who played club at Nebraska Juniors and now attends Texas A&M, and Bianca Martinez who played club at Nebraska Elite as a middle blocker and currently attends California State Fullerton. Both were in the top 100 players in the state, and two of the three Omaha Public Schools players to make the list.

In the class of 2023, there are 24 players who are currently Division I commits, with many players still in the process of committing. None of the 24 players are in O.P.S., but on the waiting list for the top 100 is Central's setter, Caroline Festerson. Festerson is committed to a Division III school, Connecticut College.

While most juniors are preparing for the upcoming recruiting season, there are eight players in the class of 2024 who are commit-

ted to a Division I school.

Though players in the class of 2025 cannot make official commitments, there is still a top 100, none of those players being in O.P.S. Laura Lindsay, one of Central's pin hitters, is on the waiting list, along with the setter from Omaha Northwest, Grace Lewis.

Three Nebraska club programs have nationally ranked teams in multiple age brackets. Nebraska Premier is ranked No. 37 in the 18's age bracket, fifth in the 17's age bracket and fourth in the 16's age bracket. Nebraska Elite is No. 84 in the nation for 17's the 16's age brackets. Volleyball Club Nebraska (VCN) is nationally ranked No. 62 in the 16's age bracket.

Under Armour also hosts a national volleyball team each year where the best players from the nation in the upcoming graduating class come together and play against each other. Two of the players in the 2021-22 game were from Nebraska, one being Gatorade player of the year and Nebraska commit middle blocker Bekka Allick of Waverly High School. The other is libero/defensive specialist for 2020 state championship team Elkhorn South and Wichita State commit, Katie Galligan.

So many people start playing club and high school sports (volleyball) with goals of getting recruited but do not realize those goals are hard to reach, especially with a competitive state like Nebraska.

## New coach brings energy to varsity teams

Bobby Winton  
staff writer

Central High School's newest member of the varsity football staff is here, and ready to give Central some of his contagious energy.

Nicholas Webster is 27 years old, and not only a history teacher at Central, but a football, soccer, wrestling, and basketball coach. He is a Central graduate who previously taught and coached at King Science Middle School for six years.

Webster might be young, but he is a seasoned coach, coaching soccer for nine years, football for eight, basketball for seven, and wrestling for three.

When first making the decision to start coaching, it was a love for the sport, and a naturally competitive personality that drove Webster to take a different role on the field – this time as a coach.

Webster decided that after six years at King Science he wanted the personal growth that came with teaching at a higher level.

"I wanted to see if I could teach the best of them...If you can teach at Central, you can teach anywhere."

During his time as a Central student, Webster played football and soccer, now returning as the assistant varsity football coach, JV offensive coordinator, and soccer

coach. Webster said his biggest strength is the energy he brings to the team, trying to get the players to lock in, and match his energy.

"We have a good relationship, and my energy is starting to rub off on them," he said.

Webster hopes that since there are many juniors on the team this year, next year the seniors will be familiar with his coaching style, energy level, and comfortability with him will result in an even smoother season. Webster said that it has always been his role as an educator and coach to talk to encourage kids to take the opportunities available to them.

"I'm from an area where kids don't get lot of opportunities. When I see kids with opportunities, I try to be a positive influence for these kids to take those opportunities. A lot of the kids come from the area that I come from, so it's easy when we know where everything is at in the side of town that we come from, so it brings us together," Webster said.

The positive relations Webster has experienced extend from the players to the staff as well. He said all coaches complement each other.

"I think whenever someone on the football staff needs to work on a skill, another coach has already

perfected that skill".

Webster said he has tried to understand the motives behind his players' actions and emotions. He tries to imagine how he would have wanted his coach to react when he was a player at Central.

"When I see a kid make a mistake, or when I see a kid having a rough go at things, at first, I think to myself, Would I have done that when I was fifteen or sixteen? But the other part of me is thinking, Okay, well I know why he went that way instead of this way, or I know why maybe he thought this would be a better move. I just try to give grace."

# Friday Night Lights

Shyla Youngs | editor-in-chief

Students celebrate a return to the nest this football season. This brings a sense of normalcy to many eagles as COVID-19 restrictions limited game attendance in the past.

