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## BACON VISITS CENTRAL

Rep. Don Bacon, who represents District 2 in the U.S. House of Representatives, spoke to students about personal finance and debt.



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Charlie Yale  
sports/web editor

U.S. Rep. Don Bacon visited Central as a part of the Capitol Hill Investment Challenge. On Feb. 23, Rep. Bacon spoke to a group of students in the Blackbox theater regarding economic responsibility.

The Capitol Hill Investment Challenge is a simulation taken on by Andrew Ruchti's government class. The Challenge gives students a hypothetical \$100,000 to invest in portfolios, stocks and bonds to help young people learn about financial markets.

"I don't claim to be a brilliant guy on this, but I'll tell you what I'm doing and I hope they do better than me," Bacon said. "[Investing] is one of the core life skills people can have, and very few people who come out of high school have them right now."

Bacon described several strategies on how to be smart with finances. He advised students to be selective on their choice of education after high school and said people in trade positions made upwards of six digits because of shortages of welders, truck drivers, electricians and plumbers.

Bacon also strongly advised people against taking on debt. "Know the hole you're jumping into with debt," he said.

After giving advice, Rep. Bacon fielded questions from students in attendance. The Register asked Rep. Bacon about the ongoing debt limit standoff, and what he was planning to do to address it.

"The federal debt crisis is, in my view, a crisis. I think very few people – even in Congress – understand the scope of what it's going to take to fix it," Bacon said. "A lot of people think that this is mainly discretionary funding," i.e., funding at the government's discretion, "but a third of our funding is discretionary."

Bacon talked about mandatory government funding, which he said are "promises" that the country has made like social security, the Department of Defense--which controls the military--Medicare and Medicaid. The Treasury reported that Social Security is the largest part of the government budget, followed by "Health, Income Security and Defense." The other part of the budget Bacon touched on was the discretionary budget and Bacon said the returns on the discretionary spending the government authorized were much higher than that of the mandatory spending.

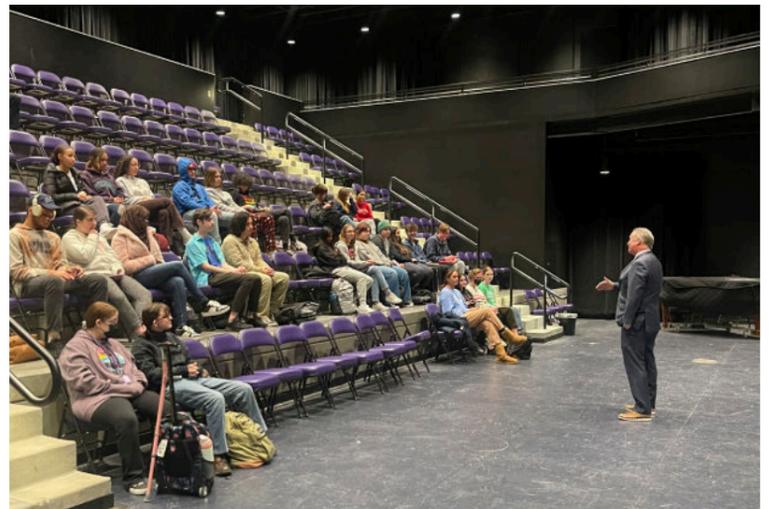


Photo Courtesy of ANDREW RUCHTI

Bacon suggested that the Congress re-inspect its mandatory budget and make changes to cut what he called unnecessary spending.

The US debt has reached a record-breaking \$31.4 trillion, over the limit it has set for itself, and economists expect it to grow by \$20 trillion more by 2033, according to the Congressional Budget Office. If the US continues not to raise its debt limit, the country could default on its debts and stop all debt payments, which would cause a hike in interest rates bound to increase unemployment and inflation. Dr. Ernie Goss, economist at Creighton University, said that the US defaulting on its debt would be a "calamity."

Republicans in Congress are refusing to raise the debt limit unless Democrats agree to cuts in spending, but the Biden administration has said that it will not take part in policy organizations surrounding the debt ceiling hike.

After addressing students, Rep. Bacon said that he enjoyed being at Central. "[Central] is gorgeous," Rep. Bacon said. "It's one of the most pretty schools we have in the area."

## Board of Education ratifies new teacher contract

Jane McGill  
arts & culture editor

The Omaha Public Schools Board of Education voted unanimously to ratify a new three-year contract between OPS and the Omaha Education Association on Feb. 22.

The agreement was the result of months of negotiations between the district and the teachers union, culminating in salary increases for educators, including pay raises for extra-duty work performed by teachers. The board's approval comes two days after the negotiated agreement was accepted by 86% of OEA members who voted, clearing the contract to go into effect at the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year.

"[The negotiated agreement] is a great step forward not only for us as a district, but for the teachers as well," said Spencer Head, president of the OPS school board. "Thank you to the OEA and our staff for their work on that."

The contract raises the starting salary for first-year teachers with a bachelor's degree by \$7,500 over the next three school years. In the 2023-2024 school year, it will be raised by \$1,000 to \$45,000, in the 2024-2025 school year by \$5,500 dollars to \$50,500, and in the 2025-2026 school year by \$700 to \$51,200. These pay increases are in addition to the \$4,500 stipends that OPS will pay to educators in three installments throughout the school year.

"With any contract negotiation there are wins and losses," said Michelle Settlemeyer, president of

the OEA, "In this agreement, the wins outweigh the losses. There is still work to do in particular areas and we will continue to work at getting those changes."

The ongoing teacher and substitute shortages was a major factor in the contract negotiations, with many of the changes being motivated by a mutual desire to lower OPS' high rate of teacher turnover.

As part of the salary schedule, OPS teachers with more years of teaching experience and education will receive even higher raises as the increase was made to the base salary.

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## New contract addresses retention

**TEACHER CONTRACT** from page 1

"The hope is definitely that the increased compensation will encourage more folks to stay," said Molly Davies, a Central teacher who has served as chief negotiator for the OEA since 2018. "[Under the previous contract] an OPS teacher with 15 years of experience, a master's degree, plus 30 additional graduate hours, which is common for teachers, might experience a fifteen thousand salary differential with Gretna or Elkhorn. So, as you get more experience and education, it is very tempting to look at other districts because you can get increased compensation with different working conditions."

Settlemyer said that while increased compensation will encourage teachers to remain in the district, it is unclear at this time whether it will be able to prevent further turnover.

"We must look at a lot of different variables with paying being one of them," she said. "The new contract does significantly increase the chances of individuals staying in the district, but again we must look at the other reasons as to why teachers leave OPS. It may not always be about the money."

"Nationwide, the teacher shortage presents itself the most in urban pockets of the nation that have school systems that deal with a diverse population of kids and have a high proportion of kids who are struggling with poverty," explained Davies. "Our jobs in OPS don't compare with jobs in a lot of other parts of this city, and that makes it harder to recruit and retain teachers."

Tasks performed by educators because of the ongoing teacher and substitute shortage were codified in the contract and will now be compensated. Teachers who lose plan time as a result of having to cover classes will now receive \$50 per hour of lost plan time. Teachers will receive an additional \$2,150 per "hybrid class," in which a teacher virtually teaches students at another OPS school while simultaneously teaching an in-person class at their own school. Teachers will also now be paid \$30 per home visit, which will be capped at 10 per semester.

Despite making gains in compensation in the new contract, Davies said that there were a number of changes sought by the OEA that they were unable to secure.

"The plan time situation for elementary teachers is just very difficult...," she said. "Their allocated plan time is insufficient for the complexity of an elementary school teacher's day. That was a high priority and it was a loss, we failed to get that done."

While Davies described the negotiating session as the most productive she's participated in, she stopped short of saying she is satisfied with the contract. "A teacher's working conditions are a student's learning conditions," Davies said. "My top priority is that every classroom and school is a place where students want to be, feel seen, can learn, have the supports that they need, and have a teacher who can do their job well. I'm never satisfied because the problems are never all solved."

## The future of Nebraska journalism

Jane McGill

arts and culture editor

It was a cold, dreary morning in February when Randy Essex got the call. "When I became the editor of the World-Herald, I thought, 'The first newsroom I worked at professionally will be the last newsroom I work in professionally,' thinking I was going to retire," said Essex, who began his journalistic career with an internship at the Omaha World-Herald in 1979, before leaving Nebraska to work at newspapers across the country. "Moving back to my home state was an opportunity to give back, help young journalists, and be a voice in policy in Nebraska."

But, as he was preparing to set out for work

on Feb. 16, 2022, Essex was laid off as Executive Editor by Lee Enterprises, the newspaper chain that owns the World-Herald, effective immediately. He was not given the opportunity to write a farewell column or to say goodbye to the staff he had worked with for the past two years.

Essex was only one of many World-Herald journalists laid off by Lee, which is infamous for aggressive cost-cutting at its papers. When Berkshire Hathaway sold the newspaper to Lee in 2020, it had a newsroom of nearly 80 full-time journalists. After Lee's most recent round of layoffs and buyouts, there are 30 full-time journalists remaining at the World-Herald.

The decreasing size of the World-Herald is part of

**JOURNALISM** on page 5



Jane McGill | The Register

I am thrilled to present the fifth 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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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 or come to room 029 to discuss your idea.

## Foreign language education in flux

Fiona Bryant

contributing writer

Students and educators in Nebraska's language classes are grappling with the implications of the Covid pandemic and reduced funding for Nebraska's world language program.

Speaking instruction and conversational activities saw a reduction following virtual learning and social distancing, according to teachers and foreign language experts. Physical separation, whether virtually or in the classroom, limited students' interactions and comfortability with speaking to each other.

"There's a very negative impact of Covid on students because this is a language. It's about communication," said Chrystal (Xianquan) Liu, the world languages specialist at the Nebraska Department of Education.

Cecilia Tocaimaza-Hatch, the department chair of Foreign Languages and Literature at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, noticed that students continuing their language education from high school should've been more prepared to speak confidently in their target language.

"Sometimes we feel that they have perhaps taken many classes in high school, but perhaps they have not been able to interact in the target language in some situations that would push them to produce language more naturally," Tocaimaza-Hatch said.

After taking three years of French, senior Mayra Grima-Topete said that speaking more of the language in class could have helped her better achieve fluency. Grima-Topete said she would be able to hold a small conversation in French.

Erica Meyer, the language department head at Central, said that getting students to speak with each other is difficult but that students are more comfortable with each other by their third year of instruction.

Elana Elder, a 2022 Central graduate who took International Baccalaureate (IB) French, said, "Definitely in IB classes, it was very centered around speaking and just becoming more fluent in the language because that was part of the testing. And I think because of that, I feel a lot more comfortable with French than I did before."

Meyer said having students ask for bathroom passes or other needs in the target language could be a measure to encourage more speaking in the classroom.

However, Tocaimaza-Hatch believes that a beneficial aspect of the world language program is the experience of language learning in high school. Meyer also said that the use of the target language in teacher instruction is positive for Nebraska's language learning.

"I think a lot of our teachers do a really good job of speaking as much of the target language as possible," Meyer said.

According to Tocaimaza-Hatch, students who took a language in high school are "far more prepared" for college-level language classes because they already know themselves and their language learning abilities.

Liu and Tocaimaza-Hatch said that language classes in OPS and school districts across the state are being reduced or completely cut as

school budgets cannot support them. Language programs were also discontinued when some schools' sole teachers of a language resigned due to COVID-related issues or wanting to leave the teaching profession; Central's Latin program was discontinued last year when the Latin teacher resigned and could not be replaced.

"I have to say, I'm very frustrated [about cutting language programs]," Liu said. "I'm trying to advocate for world language education. I mean, more like raise the public awareness about the benefit of language learning."

Liu also said that certifying world language teachers in Nebraska is challenging compared to becoming certified in other states. And for teachers coming from other countries to teach in the US, "most likely they will choose another state because in other states, getting certified is not such a challenge."

"We have a severe world language shortage in Nebraska," Liu said.

When schools have world language teachers and programs, Liu said that teachers need to promote more of Nebraska's language learning opportunities, such as the Seal of Biliteracy. According to Liu, many students are qualified but unaware of the opportunity to earn the state's award for attaining proficiency in at least two languages.

"The problem is not all schools are doing it, not all teachers are aware that [of] its existence," Liu said.

Everyone interviewed said that starting language learning younger is better, but some said that implementing language classes for younger grades could prove difficult with budget cuts and teacher shortages.

"I think it will be really cool if, in the future, public schools also started teaching languages younger, but that would also require having teachers for those ages which is kind of already an issue in the high school and middle school," Elder said.

Liu and Tocaimaza-Hatch both cited before puberty as the easiest time for someone to learn a second language, with Liu giving the specific ages of 6 to 11. However, both individuals said that language learning is possible at an older age and is affected by factors such as personality and interaction with native speakers.

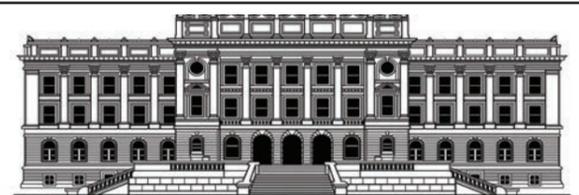
"It will depend on the student and what they do with their opportunities," Tocaimaza-Hatch said.

Meyer said that when OPS had more language classes in middle school, it was "better." Liu said that she "really likes" the Spanish Dual Language program in OPS because "it prepares students."

Besides a lack of funding, not having a cultural emphasis on learning foreign languages was also cited by Tocaimaza-Hatch as a reason for starting language classes in high school. Tocaimaza-Hatch said that, with the emergence of English as a global language, Americans have stopped valuing bilingualism or multilingualism.

According to the Pew Research Center, in 2018, 20% of students in kindergarten to 12th grade studied a foreign language, while the median percentage for school-age European students was 92%.

**LANGUAGE** on page 4



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OMAHA CENTRAL HIGH

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## U.S. Education Secretary visits Bryan

Ann Carlson  
staff writer

United States Secretary of Education, Miguel Cardona, visited Nebraska on February 8th, a day after President Biden's State of the Union address. Cardona toured Bryan High School to discuss its academic pathways.

"Last night the President talked about the opportunities public schools give and how public schools can shape our country," Cardona said. "I chose to come to this school the day after President Biden's speech because Bryan does it right and Omaha Public Schools does it right in regards to pathways."

Cardona talked about how these pathways offer lifetime skills that go beyond high school.

"The pathways at this school are more evolved than most schools I've seen," Cardona said. "They connect pathways to careers outside of school as well as skills that can transfer from one career to another."

After the tour of the pathways, Cardona sat down with students to discuss their experiences with pathways. The students explained how the pathways help them form stronger bonds with their teachers and improve class involvement. In addition, pathways introduce the students to potential job opportunities in their field of interest.

"The pathways allow for the students to get a step ahead in employment," Cardona said. "At the end of the day, it's the people business."

Superintendent Dr. Cheryl Logan was also present and discussed the benefits of the pathways.

"We are honored by this opportunity," Logan said. "It shows our district wide commitment to prepare students for success in college and their careers."

After his visit at Bryan, Cardona met with therapists and administrators to discuss mental health in schools.

## Non-birds need not worry about H5N1, experts say

Charlie Yale  
sports/web editor

Bird Flu does not pose any current danger to human beings, says Dr. Ali Khan, dean of the University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Public Health.

"This is a significant agricultural disaster," Khan said. "But this [influenza] is not very good at infecting humans."

Like the rest of the world, the United States continues to face an ongoing outbreak of highly pathogenic – meaning that the disease spreads quickly – avian influenza (HPAI) A(H5N1). The current clade, or subtype of a species of virus, of H5N1 has been detected in wild birds in all 50 states, and in 47 of the 50 states there are "bird outbreaks," according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). More than 58 million commercial poultry or backyard flocks have been affected by H5N1, causing an international farming crisis.

"The risk is to domestic poultry," Khan said. "Forty-eight million birds culled (killed) at this point, and God knows how many tens or hundreds of millions of eggs not been laid because of this event. Unlike prior avian influenza outbreaks, this version of the virus is extremely contagious, and is continuing to spread within the [avian] community. Prior outbreaks and eventually get them under control. That has not been true for this one, for almost a year and a half, two years now."

Khan attributes this to the influenza's ability to spread efficiently between wild and domestic birds, which he said will potentially have long-term impacts for poultry and egg farms. Although the United States has faced outbreaks of H5N1 in the past, Khan said that "this is the largest outbreak [of H5N1] I've seen."

To prevent further infection within avian populations, Khan said that vaccination is an option to protect birds from the flu.

"It would be a bird vaccine," Khan said.

But the ramifications of vaccination would be immense on the global scale.

"If you vaccinate your animals, then they are not eligible for the export market. So, you would basically be closing off the export market," Khan said. "That's why these animals are culled as opposed to vaccinated [to prevent illness]."

While there have been a small, sporadic number of cases of humans becoming infected with H5N1, Khan re-emphasized that it should not be the main worry: "There have been over 800 cases of human infection with avian influenza [since the early 2000s]. So just

think of it in the big picture," Khan said.

Dr. Tim Uyeki of the CDC said seven cases of human contracted H5N1 have been identified globally since January 2022, and there have been zero instances of person-to-person contracted infection.

Khan said these cases could have been caused by extraneous circumstances. "It may be possible [that] you inhale some of this virus. If I come up to you after you do that and swab your nose, I'll find it, but it doesn't really mean you're infected," he explained. "It just happens to be there because you're around all these dead and dying birds."

Khan stressed that human cases were extremely rare, but on the off chance that there was a human case, it could be severe.

Khan didn't give people a free license to forget about the flu, though. He thinks that influenza viruses need to be worried about before the next pandemic.

"So, the interesting thing about influenza viruses, which make them very problematic, and why we worry about the next pandemic," he said, "is that they can infect multiple animals, and when they infect multiple animals, they can swap their genetic material between them, and you get these weird hybrid viruses."

After this genetic material is swapped, influenza can start infecting humans. In fact, the Spanish Influenza over a century ago originated from a bird virus. But Khan once more said not to worry. "The only way they're similar is that they're bird viruses," he said. "The 1918 one somehow figured out how to infect humans."

He didn't exclude the possibility of the current outbreak of H5N1 infecting humans, though. "This bird virus could, at the same time, infect a human or who's infected with influenza or pig who's infected with influenza, swap a couple of genes, and voila," he exclaimed. "You have the next influenza pandemic."

Khan said that, no matter what, it is imperative that people are vaccinated against infectious diseases to slow the spread once they are human-borne. Referring to COVID-19, Khan said, "[There are] still 400 deaths a day. The third leading cause of death in America is not behind us." He stressed that individuals at high risk should still consider wearing masks, and that vaccination is the only strategy to slow the spread of COVID. "Vaccinate, vaccinate, vaccinate," Khan said.

As for future pandemics, Khan continued to caution individuals on the flu.

"It's a reminder that the biggest threat to us always has been influenza, will always be influenza, because of the ability of influenza to essentially swap its genetic material to become worse," he said. "We need to do what it needs to take to be ready for the next pandemic."

## Teen Council reimagines sex education

Noa Gilbert  
news editor

On one Monday evening at Planned Parenthood Northwest Health Center, the eight high school students who make up Teen Council gathered. Information about HIV/AIDS transmission decorated the whiteboard, and large, colorful plushies of uteruses and ovaries sat neatly on a table.

Teen Council starts its meetings with laughter and catching up about its members' weeks before beginning their work: empowering teens to become peer sex educators and spread accurate and inclusive information.

Junior Aiden Whalen said that Teen Council allows him to be an educator and a resource for his peers. "I'm judgement free, I'm a safe place, and it feels more natural learning in a face-to-face interaction."

Teen Council differs crucially from most mainstream sex education because, instead of adults educating teens, Teen Council empowers young people to educate each other.

"It's stuff like consent and boundaries, how to say no. How to do all this stuff that just school doesn't talk about," said junior Harley Lawton.

Whalen said that peer education helps young people access accurate information. "It's more comfortable for me to go to [a peer] and say like, tell me about condoms or whatever, then going up to like my parent or an adult and saying like, hey, how do I do this?" said Whalen.

This is Whalen's second year as a Teen Council member. He first applied in May 2021. "I could see kind of where our world is leading," he said, "and I was like, I want to be able to do something."

Teen Council aims to educate young people about information that curriculums don't often include. "We don't have the most comprehensive sex ed," Whalen said. "It's an unfortunate stigma." Each week, Teen Council members learn about sexual health, healthy relationships, and many other topics. Then, they bring the information they learn to their communities. "We connect things to our day-to-day life, and then learn how to talk about those things in a way that is inclusive," said Whalen. "We educate everyone around us," added Lawton.

Planned Parenthood education intern Henry Nelson is one of the facilitators of Teen Council. He begins meetings by leading warm-

ups, energizers, and art projects that allow Teen Council members to connect with each other. Then, they get to work. This year, Teen Council are creating a collaborative art gallery, where members can share educational artwork and zines. Lawton plans to create art representing the diversity of bodies, and Whalen is making a penis-shaped incense holder.

"I love Teen Council," said Lawton. They appreciate the educational value of Teen Council as well as the "delicious" free food. "You learn more than you think you ever will," they said. "It is such like a welcoming space for people to just kind of be themselves and they're very accepting for whatever identities you bring to the table," Whalen added. Applications for Teen Council's 2023-2024 cohort are open, and interested students can find more information about the program at [linktr.ee/omahateencouncil](http://linktr.ee/omahateencouncil).

Both Lawton and Whalen encourage others to apply to Teen Council. "The amount of information and resources I have is honestly really cool," Whalen said. "It's so important to me to be able to give this information to teens."



Sophie Youngs | The Register

## English teacher runs writing workshop for veterans

Bobby Winton  
proofreader

English teacher Jennifer Stastny has been teaching English at Central for 25 years. While she spends her weekdays at school, she continues her teaching through the weekend by leading a writing workshop for veterans.

In partnership with the Nebraska Writing Project and the Veterans Administration, Humanities Nebraska launched this writing program in 2014, designed to help all veterans and active-duty military personnel to express their feelings in a creative outlet.

The Omaha chapter currently meets at the Nebraska Wildlife Rehab's Baldwin Center, where Stastny works as a janitorial employee.

Stastny has been a part of Nebraska Writing Project, since 2004. She was contacted by the Nebraska Warrior Writers' liaison in 2016, starting her position later that August. She agreed to the demanding position, with one condition – she would be allowed to choose her co-facilitator.

Stastny decided to choose her friend, Cindy Cronn, a retired art teacher and trained counselor.

"I felt like I needed somebody who was trained in counseling because I didn't quite know what could come up in a writing workshop for military veterans," Stastny said.

Participants of the workshop need only be interested in writing in any form – they do not need to have any previous writing experience to benefit from the workshops.

The workshops consist of six to eight biweekly sessions focused on developing different writing strategies and skills. The range of works includes fiction, poetry and memoir. Writers develop a strong bond as they encourage each other. The workshop culminates in a voluntary public reading.

In response to being asked one of the ways teaching both at Central and the workshop has impacted her, Stastny responded, "Seeing how writing is still valuable to adults beyond the school system."

Nebraska Warrior Writers will be meeting in person in Lincoln and Omaha during Spring 2023, with an option to attend online via Zoom.



Aiden Whalen, left, and Harley Lawton, right, display their artwork.

Noa Gilbert | The Register

## Zoo academy students participate in project-based learning

Millie Jackson  
contributing writer

Central students at Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium High School Zoo Academy spend their Friday classes participating in specific collaborative learning projects that lead them a step in the right direction for their futures.

The zoo academy is a program offered to juniors and seniors attending school districts across the metro area. Zoo academy students spend half of their day at the zoo, and the other half at their high school. They use a non-traditional and innovative learning style by having students apply their knowledge to real world situations. Students and teachers in the program say that this makes learning fun and beneficial for both of them.

The classes specific for Fridays are Zoo Operations and Conservation and Service Learning. The first-year students take the Zoo operations class, while second-year students take the Conservation and Service Learning class. Students in each class start a project in the beginning of the year and spend the entire school year working to finish the project.

Senior zoo student Ignatius Cox said he appreciates the real-world aspect in this timeline.

"In the working world, chances are you're going to be working on a specific thing for quite a while, it's not gonna be a week-long

project with a due date," Cox said.

Zoo operations focus on gaining a deep understanding of a particular issue, developing important skills, and beginning to theorize a solution. Zoo school teacher Kyle Tredinnick has been teaching Friday classes for six years and says the Zoo operations class helps students learn in many ways.

"They develop a holistic look at a conservation issue, where they approach it from a mapping and conservation perspective," Tredinnick said.

As a second-year student in the conservation and service learning class, one can either put their plan from the previous year into action or participate in Envirothon, where teams test their knowledge on a diverse set of environment-related topics. Cox decided to take the Envirothon path for his second year. He said being in such a focused and hard-working environment has helped him learn and improve upon many skills.

While students formulate their long-term projects on Fridays, they develop major skills for their futures. Tredinnick said that students evolve their marketing, mapping, and conservation planning skills. Students also develop problem solving skills as they work through their projects.

Junior zoo student Bethany Abdul enjoys working with arch. gis, a mapping program used by all first-year students during the Zoo Operations class.

"Learning about all the work that goes into these presentations is really cool," Abdul said.

Teachers Koleen Haldeman and Tess Sykes co-teach the Conservation and Service Learning class. Haldeman recalls that students are often able to bring information and skills from their projects into their future.

"It's been fun to see them take those projects onto the next level," Haldeman said.

Friday classes at the zoo also help students discover their interests and passions. Before attending zoo school, Cox didn't have much of an idea of what path his future was headed in. When he started at zoo, he was able to explore many subjects, which then led him to discover his interest in animal science. Abdul said that the zoo has helped her further explore her interests in wildlife biology and conservation.

Tredinnick described the Friday classes as a relaxed way for students to be able to learn conservation skills and work with others in a group setting.

In addition to the opportunities provided on Friday classes, Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium High School Academy has more to offer. Abdul said that the projects presented at the end of the year are just the tip of the iceberg.

"Zoo academy, for anybody, even if they are not looking into a career in animals science, is a great opportunity," Cox said.

## Central library resilient in the face of challenges

Steven Dickerson  
contributing writer

Just a few years ago, the COVID-19 pandemic altered life for everybody. Central, whose halls were once packed with students and lights shining bright, went dark and empty. The once bustling library became an empty room full of dust-collecting books. But, the dark times of 2020 became the bright days of 2023.

The library is now beginning to make its comeback from COVID, in the first year in the new library where there are no active COVID restrictions. Its resources, including Homework Help, are also on the upswing. Open every Monday through Thursday from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. and every Friday from 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., the library is trying to return to its bustling pre-pandemic state.

According to library data, 75,000 visits were made to the library in the 2016-17 school year. This school year, it is estimated that 24,200 visits have been made so far, a clear drop from pre-pandemic days. While that number is not nearly as high as pre-pandemic levels, it is a start as this is the first year where no restrictions are active. This year around 220 students have visited the library each day before and after school on their own (not including Homework Help or study halls). Other uses for the library are also making their return.

Homework Help, which takes place most Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, saw 829 student visits in the 2018-19 school year, and is now returning from COVID with around 660 student visits so far this school year. If that trend continues, Homework Help could return to pre-pandemic visit levels by the end of this school year. Study hall visits and classes visiting the library are also increasing. More than 540 classes have visited the library for a lesson since August, a nice change for the new library which sat empty during the pandemic.

"The library is returning to a pre-pandemic 'normal' for sure in our visitor numbers and in our programming and instruction," librarian Beth Wilson said. She thinks the library has been thriving this year and making the best of the space.

Perhaps no group of people benefits from the library's post-pandemic bounce back than students. Students expressed positivity and excitement towards the library.

"I love our library," said freshman Lucy Puls, who visits the library every B day during second hour for her study hall. She expressed happiness and excitement about the return of the library and its resources, and how it has a benefit to the start of her high school career. "Everyone there wants what's best for the students and it's very obvious," she said. Puls also explained that going there for study hall helps her get work done. "I'm more productive in the library than a home or in other classrooms."

Another freshman, Grace Sunseri, echoed many of Puls' points. Sunseri also visits the library every B day for a study hall. She called the library a nice and new environment, one that you can be productive in and that's quiet at the same time. She said, "I'm not getting distracted a lot and I'm able to focus." Speaking on the benefits of the library's resources, Sunseri said the library offered "so many resources for students to succeed."

While the library and its resources may not have fully recovered from the toll of COVID, this school year has become a turning point post-pandemic. As the library begins to get many visitors again and its resources become more familiar to students, they could face potential challenges to fully recovering.

Nebraska conservatives have taken on an education agenda that could challenge materials libraries can have open to students. LB635 says library educational databases must block materials "obscene as to minors or harmful to minors." It is unclear what is meant by obscene, and state statute 28-807, which was said to clarify that, says obscene means "appeals to the prurient, shameful, or morbid interest of minors, ... is patently offensive to prevailing standards in the adult community as a whole with respect to what is suitable material for minors, and ... is lacking in serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value for minors."

Dr. Mikayla Arciaga told the Intercultural Development Research Association that, "The use of the word 'obscene' is intentionally coded language that has historically conflated 'pornography' with non-obscene educational materials about gender and sexual identity." She also said obscenity is the excuse to censor materials, a trick that policymakers have used for decades.

The library could also be affected by LB374, dubbed the "Parental Bill of Rights." It would allow for parents to challenge curriculum if they believe "learning materials, course of instruc-

tion, activity, or unit of study offered by a school will direct or otherwise compel a student to personally affirm, adopt, or adhere to any of the ideas listed in subdivision 8 of this section."

Section eight of the bill states all the rights parents stand to gain if the bill passes. The bill also targets education standards that teach "individuals of any race, ethnicity, color, or national origin are inherently superior or inferior," according to the bill's language.

LB374 also has a direct impact on libraries. It would allow parents to directly challenge books on the shelves of school libraries in Nebraska. According to the bill's language, parents have "an opportunity to challenge the educational benefit of any item of library content. Such policies and procedures shall require consideration of each such challenge and that if a challenge is upheld, item of library content shall be removed from the school." As to what library content can be challenged, the bill says, "Inappropriate for minors means that an item of library content (i) is designed to appeal or pander to the prurient interest; (ii) depicts, describes or represents, in a manner patently offensive with respect to what is suitable to minors, an actual or simulated sexual act, sexual contact, or a lewd exhibition of the genitals or post-pubescent female breast; and (iii) lacks serious literary, scientific, artistic, or political value for minors."

While the bill is going through debate at the State Capitol, some are taking a stand against these bills because of the targeting of libraries. The American Library Association said book bans across the country are unconstitutional. "Libraries and their governing bodies have a legal and professional obligation to ensure that all members of the communities they serve have free and equitable access to a diverse range of library resources and services that is inclusive, regardless of content, approach, or format," their website says.

Regardless of whether LB635 or LB374 pass, the Central library believes it can adapt, just as it did with COVID and moving spaces.

Wilson said the library will be ready for whatever the future holds. She pointed to a banner in the library that proclaims, "The Omaha Central Library, where past, present, and future intersect."

## Students respond to Pathways

Ethan Hughes, Adi Samson  
contributing writers

As of last year, Omaha Public Schools has implemented the College and Career Academies and Pathways program – originating from Benson High, in exchange for removing one period/block that could otherwise be used for electives, students now take one continuous pathway for their whole high school experience, which can allow them to try things they never would have considered. But how do the students feel about this?

OPS decided to switch to pathways to give their students a well-rounded education, according to Molly Mattison, dean of students at Central. "This falls in line with what we call 'portrait of a graduate,' where we want students to have a well-rounded education and access to rigorous college and career-centered classes," Mattison said. She then said that every high school in OPS has switched to either a pathway system or an academy system.

According to counselor Sheri Harrach, all current freshmen have received their first choice for pathways, and all sophomores have been offered the choice to switch. "I don't feel like we have kids in a pathway that they do not like or would never have selected," Harrach said. Reportedly, fewer than 20 students have requested a pathway change.

The pathways themselves are very diverse,

falling in line with Mattison's belief of "giving students a well-rounded education" – ranging from Instrumental Music to Global Health Science to Entertainment and Sports Marketing.

The Register interviewed sophomore Nathan Lewis who chose Entertainment and Sports Marketing, about how he felt about his pathway. "I don't really enjoy it," Lewis said. "I wouldn't have picked Entertainment and Marketing if I had thought about it." He then revealed that he had already changed his pathway, changing to International Business and Finance. When asked about how hard his current pathway was, he said that he "wouldn't say that it's difficult, but I would say that it's a lot of work," which means that the pathway change was not due to difficulty.

The Register also interviewed sophomore Malorie Lakin about her pathway. She said that she has grown to love the people with whom she shares her pathway and made many new friends. "At first the pathways scared me because I thought I would be stuck with very few options from my choice, but I have thought of so many new career ideas I would like to pursue from these classes," Lakin said.

According to Harrach, the number of people who fit into the first category are, thankfully, minimal. But for those who still do, Mattison says that to switch a pathway, one should "just need to talk to your counselor."

## The state of language education

LANGUAGE from page 2

Meyer said the US's language fluency compared to the rest of the world is "horrible" and that "we're way behind." "It's almost embarrassing as Americans. Everywhere we go, everybody's expected to speak English for us, and Americans expect it."

Tocaimaza-Hatch said the American value of monolingualism also extends to the treatment of heritage speakers of other languages in the US. Immigrants, especially Spanish-speaking immigrants, are expected to learn English, sometimes at the expense of their first language.

"That's because the US, like I was saying before, doesn't really have a system for us to maintain those languages," Tocaimaza-Hatch said. "Languages are learned or lost because the society assigns a value to it."

For Spanish-speaking students, Tocaimaza-Hatch finds that there is often a double standard between them and monolingual students learning a second language; students learning a second language are supported more than heritage speakers.

"I think that often, the bilingualism that these students come with is seen as a problem and less as an asset," Tocaimaza-Hatch said. "There's never much of an investment in helping that individual maintain their home language and be bilingual. The focus is only always on, 'you gotta learn English.'"

Tocaimaza-Hatch said teachers may have some of those attitudes or may not know how to work with heritage speakers.

"There are specific goals that we need to follow as teachers when it comes with heritage speakers. And the number one of them is giving them confidence for their language," she said.

Underfunding and a lack of teachers affect the Spanish for Spanish-speakers program as well, but OPS has a lot more emphasis on the program than other districts, according to Tocaimaza-Hatch.

Francisco Juarez Palomo, a Spanish for Spanish-speakers teacher at Central, said that he thinks the program is doing a good job to help heritage Spanish-speakers. Juarez Palomo said he has asked the district to create a new Spanish for Spanish-speakers class specifically for students who can speak Spanish but cannot write in Spanish. It would be called Spanish for Spanish-speakers 0.

Samantha Lopez-Vazquez, a Central graduate now attending Northeast Community College, said the Spanish for Spanish-speakers program helped her with her writing in Spanish. She is now able to text her family members and husband without having to use a lot of Google Translate.

"In my degree, I don't need a language but if I would've, it [Spanish for Spanish-speakers] would've been a lot of help," Lopez-Vazquez said.

"Learning a language opens new windows into how other people live life. And so when we don't have that, our windows are closed. And no amount of Google Translate will make up for us being able to experience that firsthand," Tocaimaza-Hatch said.

## Ethics Bowl team wins state championship

E Dona-Munoz  
staff writer

A large part of the International Baccalaureate Theory of Knowledge (TOK) course during students' junior year is the introduction of ethics and how that affects the acquisition of knowledge. In an attempt to dive deeper into the topic of ethics, TOK teacher Shane Thomas coaches Ethics Bowl, a series of competitions where teams of students discuss various cases and the ethical dilemmas they present. This year, Central had three teams, each consisting of IB juniors and seniors. On January 28th, all three teams competed at the University of Nebraska at Omaha against other schools across the state. Three weeks later, on February 15th, the Eagle team, which consisted of seniors Sophie Cullum, Noa Gilbert, and Rayya Haider, and juniors Hadley Forsen-Yepes and Aiden Whalen, competed against Iowa's state champion.

Senior Noa Gilbert was first drawn to Ethics Bowl as a junior last year. "Ethics Bowl was an opportunity to really dive into and discuss complicated ethical scenarios with a group of people who are also really into thinking really deeply about certain difficult topics," Gilbert said. Junior Aiden Whalen joined Ethics Bowl because he enjoyed the ethical questions Thomas presented to his TOK class.



Photo Courtesy of Shane Thomas

This year, Central had three teams competing: Silver, White and Eagle. The teams started preparing for competitions in January. "I know that doesn't seem like a ton of time," Whalen said. "But we used the time we had wisely, and it really did pay off!"

On January 28th, all three teams traveled to UNO for the state/regional competition to go up against other high schools in Nebraska.

Each competition round pitted two teams from different high schools against each other. The first team had five minutes to present their case for their assigned ethical dilemma. Then, the opposing team had three minutes to present their rebuttal. The first team then had three minutes to respond to the rebuttal and finally, there was a ten-minute Q&A session. Out of the three teams from Central, the Eagle team

moved on to the final round against Millard North High School. "We won that which was really exciting. We got ranked above Millard North for a number of points," Gilbert said. "So after that, we qualify for the super regional competition, which is where individual states play each other."

Three weeks after the state competition, the Eagle team faced Iowa in the super regional competition. "We faced the Iowa state champion... and lost in a close split judges' decision," Thomas said. Gilbert was also disappointed in the outcome, "But we had a difficult case to argue," they explained.

Overall, Ethics Bowl was a very rewarding experience for Whalen and Gilbert. "It was really nerve-racking for me, as I felt like I didn't know a lot of vocabulary or ethical outlooks, but I am really proud of myself and my contributions," Whalen said about his experience. Mr. Thomas also was very proud of his students' accomplishments. "This has been the most impressive group of students I've had for the Ethics Bowl competition," he explained. "It was such a privilege to work with them as their coach and watch their collaboration and intelligence shine." Whalen plans on continuing with Ethics Bowl and Gilbert is excited to see the direction the program will take next year.

## The future of Nebraska journalism

JOURNALISM from page 2

The decreasing size of the World-Herald is part of a larger trend of newspapers downsizing across the state and the country as their advertising revenue diminishes. The 2020 U.S. Census revealed that half as many Nebraskans are working as journalists compared to the number that worked in the profession in 2000. The rapid decline of Nebraska's legacy publications has underscored the need for Nebraska's news ecosystem to find new methods of funding journalism, and for new, independent newsrooms to fill the gaps in news coverage.

In 2021, Matthew Hansen and Matt Wynn, two former reporters at the World-Herald, co-founded the Nebraska Journalism Trust, a nonprofit organization dedicated to expanding nonprofit journalism in Nebraska. "It's uniquely suited to Nebraska," said Wynn, who serves as the Trust's Executive Director. "This is a wildly philanthropic town. Ironically, because of Warren Buffet, he made a lot of people wealthy and those people have given back to their community in a very real way. Nonprofit journalism is just a way to take advantage of that."

The venture is funded through both large and small donations by corporations, charitable foundations, and individuals, all of whom are published on its website as part of its commitment to financial transparency. "For a long time, the way that newspapers existed was that advertisers funded the journalism," Hansen said, "which doesn't make a ton of sense, it was more of a marriage of convenience in a time and a place. The question we need to ask ourselves is, 'Is that how newspapers should be funded?'"

The Nebraska Journalism Trust launched the Flatwater Free Press, Nebraska's first independent, nonprofit newsroom, to focus on in-depth investigative and feature stories. The news outlet is a member of the Institute for Nonprofit News, a national nonprofit news network founded in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis to spread nonprofit journalism. When the network was founded in April 2009, it comprised 27 nonprofit newsrooms. In April 2021, the Flatwater Free Press became the 335th nonprofit newsroom to join the organization.

"We get to reimagine the news the way it should be done," Wynn said. "We don't have shareholders. We view journalism as a public good, not as a way to make money."

In an early sign of growth for nonprofit journalism in Nebraska, another nonprofit newsroom, the Nebraska Examiner, was launched in January 2022. "I had been very concerned when I saw how traditional news outlets are struggling," said Cate Folsom, Editor-in-Chief of the Examiner. "Whether it's newspapers, television, or radio, the advertising support isn't what it used to be. It's getting harder and harder to produce news using that model."

Folsom worked at the World-Herald for over 40 years before coming out of retirement to lead the Examiner.

The Nebraska Examiner was the 26th news outlet to join States Newsroom, a national nonprofit news organization specializing in political coverage of state governments, with the goal of establishing an affiliate newsroom in every

U.S. state. The outlet is funded both by States Newsroom and local donors, but unlike other nonprofit news outlets, it does not run ads or accept corporate donations or underwriting.

"As newsrooms shrink, we have fewer eyes on government," Folsom said. "That means we don't know as much about how government is spending our money or what kind of policies they are enacting. We think it's important for democracy that we keep shining a light on that."

The decline in newspapers' advertising revenue was caused in large part by the explosive growth of Facebook and Google, who successfully monetized the attention of internet users through hyper-targeted advertisements. "By 2017, Google and Facebook were taking more than \$60 billion a year in revenue that had gone to newspapers," said Essex. "No industry can survive that kind of disruption."

However, one local publication figured out how to capitalize on Facebook and Google's dominance. "Google and Facebook saved us," said John Heaston, editor and publisher of the Reader, an alternative news monthly he co-founded in 1994. "Most media say that Facebook and Google destroyed them by taking all of their ad dollars."

The Reader was funded primarily through print advertisements until the 2008 financial crisis when most of the Reader's advertisers were unwilling to buy ads. "We needed to meet our payroll, so we asked them if there was anything we could help them with," Heaston said. "And universally, they said, 'We're looking for somebody to help us with this Facebook and Google thing.'" So, Heaston shifted the company's business model from advertising to providing digital marketing services to assist Omaha businesses in growing their online presence. "We're in a very strong position because we don't have to rely on donations or memberships."

Not content with merely reinventing the revenue source of his publication, Heaston is now working with other local media to reinvent journalism for the digital age. "Once upon a time, you needed an industrial printing press or a broadcast license to reach an audience," Heaston said. "The internet blows that up. If we are not the information gatekeepers, then how do we become referees and moderators when everybody has a voice and a video camera in their pocket?"

In 2022, Heaston and other journalists at the Reader formed the Omaha Institute for Nonprofit Journalism (OINJ), a nonprofit that seeks philanthropic support for local media in the Omaha metro area. The organization's premier project is Omaha Documenters, a citizen journalism initiative created by the Chicago-based civic journalism lab City Bureau. Omaha Documenters recruits and trains a network of community members to document every public meeting in Omaha through detailed note-taking and live-tweeting.

"It's really about how we get information out to people so they are better informed about how decision-makers impact their lives," said Abbie Kretz, Executive Director of OINJ. "It also changes journalism which was typically white men in these beautiful towers reporting on

things. We want to transform that into something where people can tell their own stories."

Kretz emphasized collaboration between different news organizations as key to OINJ's mission. "It's a collective approach to media and journalism," she said. "We work to support local media and journalism innovation in the Omaha metro area."

Redressing the lack of news coverage of historically excluded groups has been a priority for many of Nebraska's nonprofit and alternative news outlets.

At its launch, the Flatwater Free Press pledged that a quarter of its stories would focus on people of color or the state's Indigenous communities. "I think we needed to say something out loud because otherwise, we wouldn't do it," Wynn said. "So many newsrooms are for wealthy people, for white people, and we wanted to, front and center, say out loud, 'That's not what we're trying to do here.'"

Minority-owned news organizations in Nebraska have long struggled with a lack of funding, preventing them from covering issues facing Nebraskans of color. When minority communities are covered by traditional news outlets, their coverage is frequently criticized as containing bias.

"We were just tired of how they tried to portray the north side as this super, uber-violent place where you should never go to or live," said Paul B. Allen, CEO and founder of 1st Sky Omaha, an alternative news organization that focuses the Black community of North Omaha. "The place where I was living in North Omaha, the whole street was owned by elderly Black folks who kept their lawns meticulous. It just wasn't like how they were describing it in the World-Herald and Channel 7."

Allen, who previously ran Mind & Soul, a low-wattage community radio station supported by the Malcolm X Memorial Foundation, co-hosts the organization's feature show "1st Sky Omaha In the Morning" with Mark McGaugh three days a week.

"We're basically holding two-hour round table sessions with the community three days a week," explained Allen. "This is new in journalism as far as we are concerned, that we spend so much time talking to people about what they think about what's in the news and what they really want to hear about."

1st Sky Omaha collaborates with other independent news outlets including the Reader, the Flatwater Free Press and the Omaha Star, bringing them story ideas based on the issues facing their community. The company is funded through a smorgasbord of revenue sources, including donations, paid memberships, advertising, grant money from the Omaha Institute of Nonprofit Journalism and the Weitz Foundation, and even digital services, specifically live-streaming. But, the income received from all those sources is still insufficient to cover their expenses. "Since none of that really pays for what we do, it's also really out of our pockets," Allen said.

Allen is hoping to receive increased funding to expand 1st Sky Omaha, as they are creating a news division and training journalists of color to

cover Omaha's minority neighborhoods.

Allen also said that 1st Sky is in discussions to build a news network alongside other Black media outlets in the Omaha metro area. "We believe in collaboration and not competition," he said.

"There's so much room for Black journalism in our city, that even if we all got together right now we would still need to build out more."

In addition to the lack of coverage of Black Nebraskans, the shortage of local Spanish-language journalism has been a persistent issue for the state's growing Latino population.

"It is essential to continue being a bridge of communication that understands the culture of the Latino community and understands how the minority local communities are built, their challenges, and opportunities," said Abril Garcia, owner, publisher, and founder of the Mundo Latino Network, the most widely circulated Latino-owned Spanish-language publication in Nebraska. "It is not just about presenting content in Spanish; it's about featuring our community on our different platforms, so our readers feel they are being represented."

Mundo Latino, which has published weekly printed editions in addition to its website since 1999, has struggled to survive over the past five years. "I would love to see more support," Garcia said. "Information is the key to the success of any community, but we can't do it if we don't get support from advertisers or agencies."

With the challenges facing Nebraska's daily newspapers, journalists across Nebraska face an evolving news ecosystem, one containing as much promise as uncertainty.

"The problem for Nebraska journalism," said Essex, "and the problem for any state with a significant rural population is that so many of the small, local papers have closed or have staffs that are so small they do not do meaningful watchdog journalism. Local journalism watching small-town government is really lost, and I do not know what the solution is for that."

Despite being a firsthand witness to the World-Herald's decline, Essex doesn't believe Nebraska's legacy publications will cease publication entirely. "I think that these brands like the World-Herald brand will continue to exist in some fashion because there's some value and equity in them," he said. "Frankly, if I were king, I would rip off the band-aid, stop printing every day, and do a strictly local news website and a Sunday paper that has your very best reporting every week."

"We need to figure a way to replace what's been lost and acknowledge that we need to do things differently," said Hansen of the Flatwater Free Press. "It wasn't like journalism in 1985 was perfect. The disaggregation of this thing that we know as the newspaper needs to happen and it gets us a lot closer to the way news should work."

"There will be more, even smaller news outlets that find a niche and a good working business," predicted Heaston. "Together, they'll form an entire ecosystem and with an engaged audience and citizenry, the storytelling potential is unlimited."

# opinion

## A LOOK INTO THE FUTURE

Two students search through their present moments to find the path that will lead them to their future.

### Success as a career

Ella Levy  
opinion editor

Writing has always come naturally to me. I used to write down my thoughts in a miniature notebook as I assumed they were poetic. I even wrote a book in the seventh grade that remains unfinished to this day. Writing is a talent I can count on. In my darkest times I open my laptop and just start typing. I picture myself traveling the world, working on my novel whenever inspiration strikes me. However, my interests are shifting, and I no longer consider this my only career possibility.

As the years went on, I surrounded myself with new people. My best friend and I fell in love with fashion. I tore pages from every Vogue magazine I got and taped them to my walls. I asked my grandmother to teach me how to sew and made outfits in my free time. Fashion was it for me. My freshman year I planned to go to fashion school, and that summer I even visited Parsons and the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York. I soon found fashion unpredictable. The more I started questioning it the more I fell out of love with it. My best friend and I separated and that was it, I was not going into fashion.

Sophomore year I was swept off my feet by chemistry. Understanding science for the first time was overwhelming. I was amazed with its explanations about the world, and I was good at it. It made me feel smart and special because I easily understood something that many in my class struggled with. Chemistry is a bright light in my future. My family would be so proud, so I have decided on my college major and have applied to work in a lab for the summer. Chemistry seemed perfect until the reason I loved it became the reason I feared it. It is harder now, and as time passes, I spend more and



Chlöe Johnson | The Register

more time trying to understand a topic. Once I do, I would gladly offer my free time to solve equations, but I have so much doubt. With every new topic I doubt that I can do it at all. I doubt that I can continue this into college and my career.

I also have little dreams like being a podcaster or a producer. I've made a podcast and tried making music, but neither stuck. I've dreamed of flinging myself into the creative world and painting whatever I see. I've also dreamed of being a photographer and traveling the world.

Whatever I do, I want to be successful at it. I want to be so successful that people recognize me for it. I want to see jealousy poured over the faces of people and want them to idolize me because I've put everything I've got into my career. But which one will cause that look on people's faces? Which one will put me on a pedestal for the world to see? Which one will make my family proud?

I have yet to figure it out, but when I do, I am going to give it everything.

### Not sure about the future, and okay with it

Hadley Forsen-Yepes  
copy editor

Every time someone asks me what I want to do when I grow up, I jokingly respond with: "That's a great question," and then proceed to tell them that I have no clue what I want to do when I'm older. I mean, I have some ideas, but I'm not particularly passionate about any of them, and I know that many other people are experiencing the same dilemma.

For the longest time, I thought I would computer program for a living. I've taken computer science classes at school ever since I was first given the opportunity in eighth grade because I thought computer science was my thing. And while I haven't ruled it out entirely, in recent months I've realized that computer science is not my thing, because if it were, wouldn't I be coding in my free time? Wouldn't I have built and programmed my own lightsaber by now?

Not to mention that there are so many subjects I enjoy, so many things I'm interested in, but I can't tell if any of them would suffice as a career. I love to read, but I can't see myself

being a writer (ironic considering I'm writing right now). I love movies and television, but I cringe at the thought of having to tell people I'm a film major (that's a ridiculous reason not to join the film industry). But how can I discard an entire career when I've never experienced it?

With all this uncertainty, there's only one thing I can do: make an effort to find a career that I love. This is why it's so important for teenagers to take advantage of the opportunities we are given. Join a club, even if you're unsure about it at first. It might become something you look forward to each week. Apply for an internship and see if you might consider it as a possible career path. Take a college course at Metropolitan Community College—for free—and decide whether the subject matter is something you'd like to pursue further. Our passion won't come to us, we must actively seek it out.

But it might take time, which is something we still have plenty of. Really, we have our whole lives to discover our passion. If you're going straight into the workforce after high school, you aren't stuck with the career you've chosen. According to numerous online sources, such as Career Foundry,

the average person will change careers five to seven times in their life. It will take a few tries, but eventually, we'll end up where we're supposed to be.

And if you plan on pursuing a higher education, most colleges allow you to apply undecided. This enables you to spend your first year or two getting general education requirements out of the way and exploring possible interests both in and outside of your classes. According to Amy Bergeron, associate provost and dean for undergraduate education at Miami University, the national average of students who change their college major is 75%.

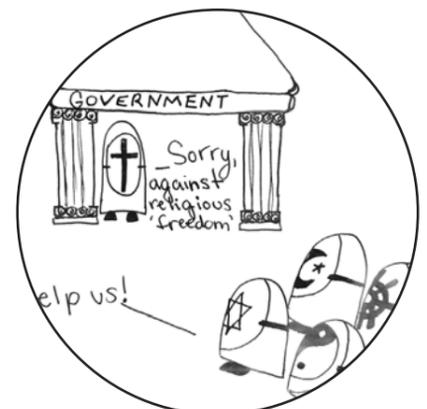
So, if you don't know what you want to do with your life, don't be hard on yourself. We're not alone in our indecisiveness, and it only makes us more human. Also, we're teenagers, and we will still have plenty of opportunities to discover our passion. I wish everyone, especially those with a graduation in their near future, a successful and fulfilling life outside of Central High School, even if you're not yet sure what that will look like.



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RELIGIOUS FREEDOM on page 9

# The essential moments of alone time

Alice Larson  
copy editor

I consider myself a fairly outgoing and social person. However, there are few things I value more than spending time by myself.

I have always relished any time I get to spend without the company of others. Driving in my car, shopping and working out are all moments in my day I frequently choose to spend solo. For most of my life, I believed most people enjoyed spending large blocks of their time alone, too. However, a few years ago, when most of my friends began to get their licenses, I noticed I began to receive mounds of spontaneous invitations to run an errand, go for a walk, or get coffee with close friends because they

had too much social anxiety to go at it alone.

While I immensely enjoy such spontaneous invitations, and relate to having social anxiety in public, in general I believe learning how to enjoy spending time alone is an important skill for everyone to learn.

Not to sound morbid, but the only person you'll spend every second of your life with is yourself. It's no question friends and family are vital parts of someone's life, and we as humans can't function without the connections and relationships we have with others. However, on a more philosophical level, we're born alone and we die alone. I don't necessarily think that fact needs to be something that's alarming or depressing.

Spending time alone can be incredibly therapeutic. You're able to fully relax without

distraction from others, and able to explore new hobbies and interests. From a young age, I've had the nightly routine of shutting myself up in my room, curled under a mound of blankets, watching a sitcom a good hour or so before I fall asleep, and it's the most cherished part of my day. It's time just for me to put myself into a pleasant, relaxed mood to end the day. Not that everyone has to spend time alone at the end of their day, but I believe spending at least a portion of your day or week by yourself is essential to ensuring you're properly caring for yourself.

Time spent alone is the perfect opportunity to put on a favorite album and go for a drive, go for a bike ride or a walk, or simply to put down one's phone and try a new hobby or interest. It allows one to

explore their interests and continue to learn and grow as a human being.

Additionally, I think being able to spend time alone is essential in ensuring one's friendships and relationships are healthy. Too often people adopt the personality of their latest significant other, or their newest friend, and I believe being able to spend time solo is the perfect way to combat this. Becoming a person who is able to feel comfortable and confident by themselves is a sign of a secure, healthy person who won't become overly clingy, or adopt another's personality, because they have one of their own.



Shyla Youngs | The Register

## Digital camera offers positive experiences, commemoration of senior year

Shyla Youngs  
editor-in-chief

With all the "lasts" of senior year, I wanted to document everything. The last Friday night lights, the last homecoming dance. In an attempt to memorialize this, I started taking pictures on my mom's old digital camera.

I didn't think it would turn into anything, but now it has become one of my biggest hobbies.

My camera comes everywhere with me. I think that's one of the reasons it's so special—it has allowed me to capture all the small moments too. By having a separate camera to take photos rather than use my phone, it's allowed me to stay more present in social situations. This added bonus has turned out to be incredibly beneficial over the course of this year. By living in the moment and taking things slowly, I've been able to enjoy and better appreciate my last year as a Central student.

But I also wanted a place to put all of these pictures. So, I created my Instagram, @shysdigitalcamera, and that's when my newfound hobby fully developed. It makes social media have less pressure too. My camera account feels harmless in comparison to my others. I don't interact with anyone on it; I'm more focused on using it as a space to commemorate special moments with friends.

There's also an aspect of taking pictures of people who aren't in your circle or your close friends. Through bringing my camera places, I've definitely met more people, which has been a really positive experience. Documenting other people's senior year makes me feel like there's more to the camera than the Instagram or cute pictures of my me and my friends. It's made everything more approachable, because when I come to events people will ask me to take a picture of them. It feels like there's this mutual support from everyone, and it's one of the

reasons I started taking it more seriously.

However, sometimes I question: if I'm always behind the camera, will I feel like I missed out on capturing my own experiences? In the beginning it felt like I was missing out, and not seeing myself in those pictures was something I had to adjust to. But over time I've realized that having all of those memories from my own perspective is something I value even more.

Aside from my camera, I've also explored other ways to catalog everything. I found a camcorder in a junk drawer and have been recording footage for a video I plan on making at the end of the year. I've also started getting interested in other types of photography, and have used both disposable cameras and film cameras.

With senior year comes a lot of stress and uncertainties. Friends are deciding where they want to attend college next year, and saying goodbye to everything you've experienced the last four years is tough. Having a creative outlet is something that has really helped me get through these difficulties. Right now, it's mainly for fun, but I've decided to pursue this more creative aspect of myself in college. Not only will I bring my camera with me, but I also plan on taking classes that will allow me to develop my love for photography.

My digital camera and the scrapbook I've curated through my Instagram are both something that have allowed me to live in the moment, while still recording all the moments senior year encompasses. I think everyone deserves to experience this, so if you happen to stumble upon a camera like me, use it! Explore creative outlets, and have fun with your friends, because that's what this time is for.



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Chlöe Johnson | The Register

## Too much non-food in our food

Chlöe Johnson

staff writer

From a young age, many American kids are conditioned to believe that standard Western foods are why Americans have the highest obesity rate.

However, this narrative may be misleading. When foreign exchange students come to the US, they notice that despite no drastic changes in their eating, they find themselves gaining weight. And acne. And stomach aches.

While many of our popular foods are higher in calories, we only eat about 100 more calories than France, while we double their obesity rates. After all, our stomachs still come in the same standard human size. So why are we fatter than the rest of the world? Specifically, why are we fatter than countries in the European Union with comparable lifestyles and wealth?

I'll answer this question with a scarier question: why are we suffering from deadly diseases such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and Alzheimer's more than the rest of the world?

While many lifestyle factors are certainly responsible for the disaster of American health, the primary issue lies with specifically American food, based on the prevalence of synthetic ingredients. For example, while both Europeans and Americans consume candy, it is common knowledge that it should be consumed in moderation. Bread on the other hand, is seen as a nutritious food to consume daily in both places. However, American bread such as Frederick's Whole Wheat

bread contains as much added sugar as a Jolly Rancher. Not to mention cancer-causing potassium bromide (banned by the EU), metabolism-slowing pesticides (also banned by the EU), and seed oils, which often cook into trans fats (an oil that is currently banned by the US in this form).

The non-food ingredients within American foods are so far from their natural state that our struggle to digest them as food results in the chronic inflammation linked to most health problems. Problems that we have come to accept as part of aging in America.

One major culprit is the lab-made ingredients added for the purpose of boosting sales rather than to nourish. Potassium bromide and titanium bromide are added to whiten foods. MSG brings out the red in processed meat. Artificial sweeteners are added to replace sugar. These additives are banned in the EU, as they have been linked to cancer, debilitation of gut enzymes that break down sugar, diabetes and heart disease.

There are two other ingredients found in almost every American food. The first is seed oils, which are chemically extracted and contain harmful residue. Even worse, they break down into trans fats, which are actually banned by the FDA, as they are linked to obesity and heart disease. Americans consume more of these oils than any other country.

The other common ingredient is sugar. Sugar or its hyper-processed cousin, corn syrup, are added to all sorts of foods, even those not thought of as sweet. Chronic overconsumption of sugar leads to insulin resistance, thus causing weight gain and even diabetes.

Even if one is careful enough to read and research all ingredients, they will still be hurt by the American food industry as even our food packaging contains toxins such as BPA and phthalates, which are banned in the EU due to the harm they cause to brain development and obesity.

Even our fruits and vegetables, which are a single ingredient, are often a deception as well. Current farming practices and genetic modification prioritizing size has led to a 40% drop in the micronutrients in most produce since 1950, according to the FDA. Pesticides are also found in most of our produce, including a quarter of which that are currently banned by the EU and China for their effect on metabolism, brain development, and cancer risk.

The moral dilemma is that even if one follows the government guidelines on nutrition, they will be consuming drastically more toxins than are accepted elsewhere. Health class teaches us to simply consume less of the most beloved and accessible foods. Thus, the responsibility becomes the individual's, not the government's. This is ideal for the American government, which has no motive to protect our health by banning toxic ingredients, since healthcare is privately funded.

However, my message still has a patriotic silver lining. Classic American foods from fries to steak to baked beans to coleslaw are not destined to lead to a premature death. If the government eliminates scientifically proven dangerous ingredients, then American food has no reason not to be healthy.

## Required classes limit seniors' lives, must be restructured

Noa Gilbert

news editor

I recently missed two periods of AP Government in the same week. My grade dropped as I scrambled to finish my assignments on time without class periods to work on them.

I was absent because I was in Lincoln, actively participating in my democracy by testifying against bills in the state legislature. "I should've gotten EXTRA government credit for that," I remarked to my parents once I got home. Two required senior credits—Government and Personal Finance—claim to be preparing seniors to enter adulthood. Unlike other required credits, government and personal finance specifically purport to be building practical skills in seniors. But all too often, these graduation requirements limit seniors from applying their learning in the real world. Students should be able to receive Government and Personal Finance credits by showing proof of their applied learning in these subject areas.

The required government credit limits seniors—particularly seniors with full schedules, like those in the International Baccalaureate program—from having the time and energy to get involved in their local and state government. If it were not for my required Government/Personal Finance period, I could have had an early out this year. Maybe I could've gone to city council meetings, which are held at 2 p.m. every Tuesday, mere blocks away from Central. Maybe I could've made the

trip down to the Capitol more often, where bill hearings often start at 1:30 p.m. and continue into the late afternoon. Instead of this active involvement in my government, I spend my afternoons sitting at a desk and doing a worksheet about the Whigs.

Which would you rather have students understand: 18th-century political parties, or how to write and deliver a testimony to their elected representatives about an issue they care about?

Of course, civic education is essential, and students need to understand the history and makeup of their government. The required Government credit seeks to ensure that students graduate with knowledge of their role as constituents, voters, and citizens. It's a noble goal, which is why I am not advocating for dropping the required credit entirely. I am advocating for students to be able to get an exemption from the Government credit by demonstrating proof of their active involvement in democracy.

Active involvement can look different for different students because there is no "correct" way to be a citizen. Students can serve as poll workers, ensuring elections are efficient and fair. Others may get involved in advocacy on the city or state level. They could go to City Council meetings or bill hearings to share their thoughts or join local advocacy groups and nonprofits for issues important to them. Demonstrating proof of this involvement should be more than

enough to prove a student's growth as an informed citizen.

The other required senior class, Personal Finance, demonstrates this same problem of taking up time that seniors could use to apply their learning. Without needing to use a full block for Personal Finance, seniors could have more time to schedule shifts at part-time jobs to save money for their futures, developing budgeting skills that work for them and their unique paths.

The skills learned in Personal Finance are clearly important, but it would be more practical to allow seniors to apply their learning while earning and spending money. Perhaps, with proof of part-time employment, students could attend Personal Finance for half of the block and use their extra time to allow for a part-time job in their schedule. The remaining time in Personal Finance could be spent on a shortened version of the curriculum that focuses on students' current financial goals. I know that if I had even a few more hours free each week, I could take on a regular job, and apply the saving and spending strategies I learned in Personal Finance class to my everyday life.

Government and Personal Finance are required as senior credits because they provide valuable skills for students' lives. But, when these classes get in the way of seniors applying their learning and engaging in civics and personal finance in their own lives, we must reconsider their structure as required, full-time senior courses.

# Conservative pushback on renewable energy

Chlöe Johnson  
staff writer

97-99% of scientists agree that human use of fossil fuels is to blame for the rapid change in our climate. Combine this scientific consensus with the economics of rapidly decreasing costs of wind and solar, and opposition to renewable energy is difficult to understand.

The exception to this is those working jobs in the fossil fuel industry. However, our job market is currently booming, and most businesses are hiring, so even if laid off, they will be just fine. However even employees with non-transferable skills are often perfect for renewable energy careers in installing wind turbines or solar panels.

This is further emphasized by the interesting overlap between the locations with coal or oil resources and solar and wind resources, meaning that as fossil fuels are phased out, renewable companies will be rushing to replace them, bringing along jobs with higher pay and safer working conditions.

That said, Nebraska specifically has no reserves of fossil fuels, so this job loss is not even a worry. Our unique plains' potential for wind and solar energy make the transition a net positive that will bring wealth to our economy.

However, looking at the energy bills that are currently

being proposed by the legislature, one would think the opposite. There are a sudden flood of bills attempting to prevent Nebraska's renewable transition in various ways, all of which come from Republicans.

One example is LB541, which seeks to make public power district elections partisan events, for unspecified reasons.

Another is LB566, which seeks to analyze the "the short-term and long-term costs and economic risks of replacing baseload generation of electricity with intermittent renewable energy generation..." as well as "the economic benefits of maintaining and developing coal, natural gas, and nuclear power plants in Nebraska." This study explicitly says that while benefits of fossil fuels will be considered, only the risks of renewables will be. Also, intermittent renewable energy is not in the OPPD plans for Nebraska, as we are currently building two gas plants that will be ready as backups throughout the transition.

A third bill is LB120, which would require that all private wind projects go to a public hearing before they can begin. This is an unnecessary step in the legal process that would only serve to slow the transition.

It is difficult not to be suspicious of the motive of conservatives fighting renewable energy. Among the top 20 corporations who contribute the most to Nebraskan Republican poli-

tics are four directly involved in the fossil fuel industry, along with many with more discrete ties, and all of whom donate to conservatives. One of the most alarming is Tenaska, a natural gas distributor supplying \$220,290.00 to Republican political campaigns. While fossil fuels do not make long-term economic sense for Nebraska, they have made short term economic sense for individual conservative politicians for decades.

Nebraska is not alone in this disheartening trend. Other conservative states are seeing the same pushback to renewables. Texas's governor Greg Abbott recently told press, "I support [the program] not providing economic incentives for renewables."

At a time when horrible natural disasters tied to changes in climate are increasing in frequency, it is frustrating for the 67% percent of Americans who support the transition to all renewables. However, these are the growing pains that come along with any technological transition. It is human nature especially as we age to avoid change. People scoffed at electricity as well as iPhones in the beginning as well. Change is uncomfortable, yes, but it's also inevitable and the only choice we have is whether the change is in power source or in the safety of our children.

# Politicians distort religious freedom

Noa Gilbert  
news editor

Laws infringing on Americans' liberty to access reproductive healthcare and gender-affirming healthcare proliferate in state legislatures across the United States, including Nebraska. Public schools are becoming ideological battlegrounds, where parents seek to assume ultimate control over the information their children receive. One defense for these unconstitutional intrusions into freedom of autonomy, expression, and healthcare is common: "religious freedom."

Religious freedom is guaranteed by the First Amendment, and it is an essential tenet of any functioning society. But its meaning has become distorted by neo-fascist politicians who use "religious freedom" as an excuse to censor media, persecute marginalized groups, and infringe on basic freedoms.

Religious freedom stops being a valid justification when it infringes on others' constitutional rights to live freely. Yes, we all have the inherent human right to practice our religion. We do not, however, have the right to use that freedom as an excuse to limit others' lives. Right now, "religious freedom" is often used as an excuse to suppress reproductive healthcare. Anti-abortion advocates often argue that allowing other people to access abortion is a violation of their faith. The Nebraska Family Alliance, an organization that supports conservative political causes in Nebraska, states that its vision is to, "ensure Nebraska is a place where God is honored, marriages and families thrive, life is cherished, parental rights are protected, and religious liberty flourishes."

Yet, despite their stated commitment to ensuring that "religious liberty flourishes," the Nebraska Family Alliance actively and consistently advocates for legislation that suppresses minority religions. I'm a Reform Jew, and the Reform Judaism movement understands traditional Jewish values to support abortion rights. "The Reform Movement's positions on reproductive rights are grounded in the core belief that each person should have agency and autonomy over their own bodies. Our advocacy around abortion access is inspired by the Jewish value of kavod ha'briyot, respect for individual dignity," the Union for Reform Judaism states. In fact, Jewish leaders have led lawsuits against abortion bans, stating that the bans suppress their right to make medical decisions that align with their religious beliefs.

Conservative lawmakers claim that they defend religious freedom, but their legislation does the exact opposite as it suppresses the religious rights of millions of Americans.

"Religious freedom" has a long history as an excuse for persecution in the United States.

In elementary school history class, many of us were taught that the Pilgrims fled to the United States in pursuit of religious tolerance. This lesson often goes along with a picturesque view of the first Thanksgiving, with Indigenous people in headdresses sitting alongside Pilgrims in buckled hats, sharing a meal in a lovely moment of intercultural peace and friendship. After all, the Pilgrims, Puritans who rebelled against the Church of England, fled from religious persecution to the so-called New World. With a history of fleeing religious persecution and a dedication to creating a new country of religious freedom, the Pilgrims should've been understanding and respectful to the religions of the Indigenous tribes they encountered, right? Wrong. The Pilgrims used religion as an essential tool in their suppression and attempted destruction of Indigenous American cultures. Indigenous people of North America suffered plagues of smallpox and measles, illnesses brought to the continent by European colonists. National Geographic writes, "Some colonial leaders, such as the Puritan minister Increase Mather, believed that the illness and decimation of the New England Native Americans was an act of God to support the colonists' right to the land." Though they stated that they were motivated by religious freedom, colonists used religion as justification in their mission to make the United States a homogenous Christian nation, forcibly suppressing those who disagreed.

The Pilgrims were the first (though surely not the last) Europeans who used "religious freedom" as a justification for the destruction of Indigenous cultures in the United States, as well as discrimination against marginalized groups, such as immigrants, Black people, LGBTQ+ people, and women. And this legacy continues into the present, as politicians in legislatures across the country cite "religious freedom" as they advance bills that threaten Americans' access to healthcare and freedom of expression.

Though this hypocrisy in the name of religious freedom is common, it can and must be addressed. Lawmakers need to create policies based on facts with the goal of creating a more equitable and fair society for everyone, and "religious freedom" must not be an excuse for harmful legislation to pass. Religious freedom may be a First Amendment right, but it's not permission for one religious group to discriminate against the rest.



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# A response to “In Defense of J.K. Rowling”

**E Dona-Munoz**  
staff writer

On February 16, 2023, the “New York Times” published an opinion piece written by Pamela Paul titled “In Defense of J.K. Rowling.” The thesis of the article was that the hate and backlash received by Rowling due to her transphobic comments is unjustified as she supposedly has never made a transphobic comment, instead having her words taken out of context. I first came across this article while working on an assignment for my politics and government class and it sparked my interest on what Paul had to say on the issue. As a gender non-conforming ex-fan of the “Harry Potter” books and Rowling’s writing, the contents of this article are frustrating, with the evidence that Paul presents to be lacking.

The article starts with a series of quotes from Rowling’s June 2020 essay on her stance on sex and gender issues, originally titled “TERF Wars.” The title comes from the acronym TERF, which stands for “Trans-Exclusive Radical Feminist,” which describes a group of feminists who do not believe transgender women are women and therefore should not be included in the conversation about gender equality and equity. At a glance, the quotes Paul includes appear to be in support of transgender people and that is the intention. Throughout the article, Paul provides links to her sources, including other news articles and tweets from Rowling herself. The downside to these citations is that the average reader will not pursue further knowledge and information in this age of a fast-paced lifestyle. Paul uses this to her advantage, taking these quotes out of context and choosing what she wants to include and what she wants to leave out so she can manipulate the narrative to better fit her opinion.

I decided to read Rowling’s essay and go through every single link that Paul included in her article to see where Paul was pulling her information from. I went so far as to read links posted in those other articles. After doing so, my opinion on Rowling has not changed. While she may say she is not transphobic, her writing both in the essay and on Twitter dispute that. Not only is Rowling presenting false information, she also does not cite her sources in her essay, something that could have possibly elevated

the credibility had she done so.

A large part of Rowling’s argument in her essay is how easy it apparently is for someone assigned male at birth to receive a Gender Recognition Certificate in order to legally identify as a woman and to use she/her pronouns in Scotland. Her phrasing of “a man who intends to have no surgery and take no hormones” makes it seem like these people have nefarious purposes for seeking out a Gender Recognition Certificate. She is misgendering an entire group of people in this statement, making it so I take her writing less seriously due to her disrespect. Additionally, Rowling fails to mention the high cost of gender confirming treatment and the barrier it poses for transgender people, especially for those without insurance, anywhere in her essay.

While I could not find a reliable resource for how much gender confirming treatment costs in the United Kingdom, I did find a CNN article from 2015 about the cost of being transgender in the United States after Caitlin Jenner’s highly publicized transition. The article mentions how many transgender people “cite the cost of the [medical] procedures – potentially more than \$100,000 out of pocket – and the lack of insurance coverage as a barrier to their transition.” The article cites the Philadelphia Center for Transgender Surgery as their source for more specific prices of gender confirming surgery, \$140,450 for male to female transitions and \$124,400 for female to male transitions when the patient is uninsured. These systems are put in place to make things harder for transgender people in any way possible in order to invalidate their existence and identities, making Scotland’s policy a big help to diminish the difficulty that transgender people face.

Paul isolates Rowling’s statement that she feels “nothing but empathy and solidarity with trans women who’ve been abused by men,” but if one were to continue reading Rowling’s essay, she expresses her prejudice against trans women, saying “when you throw open the doors of bathrooms and changing rooms to any man who believes or feels he’s a woman... then you open the door to any and all men who wish to come inside.” She talks about how she believes that trans women are predators because they were assigned male

at birth, constantly misgendering them to attempt to prove her point. Instead of trying to get me to understand why she has these beliefs, her disrespect makes me roll my eyes and dismiss her opinions.

Rowling continually contradicts herself both in the essay and on Twitter. She writes how she believes that “trans people need and deserve protection” but on Twitter, she says “I’d march with you if you were discriminated against on the basis of being trans.” It is these contradictions that have led to her being called a TERF and her books to be boycotted by fans. Trans people are being discriminated on the basis of being trans. In the United States, this is evident with the slew of anti-trans policies and legislative bills that are currently working their way through state legislatures. Instead of looking further into the subject, she makes blind assumptions that do not convey the message she thinks she is conveying.

Rowling’s statements are full of disrespect towards trans people and those who do not fit the gender binary. In a June 2020 tweet, she ridicules an article’s use of inclusive language by saying “people who menstruate” instead of “women.”

“I’m sure there used to be a word for those people,” Rowling writes, “Wumben? Wimpund? Woomud?” Her distaste for inclusive language continues in her essay. She does not refer to transgender women as women, only as “any man who believes or feels he’s a woman.” Her reasoning for not liking inclusive language such as “menstruators” and “people with vulvas” is that this language “strikes many women as dehumanizing and demeaning” and that even though she understands why trans activists and advocates prefer to use this kind of language, Rowling says that “for those of us who’ve had degrading slurs spat at us by violent men, it’s not neutral, it’s hostile and alienating.”

This is not the intention of trans activists who use inclusive language. The intention is to make sure everyone, regardless of gender identity, feels accepted, represented, and included. This language recognizes that not all women get their periods while some men do. It also recognizes that there are people who identify outside of the gender binary that may get their

periods as well. It is focused on increasing awareness of these various groups of people and making sure they have a voice in these conversations as well.

Rowling continually talks about how “the new trans activism is having... a significant impact on many of the causes I support, because it’s pushing to erode the legal definition of sex and replace it with gender,” explaining how trans activists are supposedly saying that sex and gender are the same things, just with two different names. This is not true. Transgender people are not trying to replace the word “sex” with “gender” because the two terms have different meanings, with one based in biology while the other describing a social-cultural construct.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines “sex” as “either of the two major forms of individuals that occur in many species and that are distinguished respectively as female or male especially on the basis of their reproductive organs and structures” while it defines “gender” as “the behavioral, cultural, or psychological traits typically associated with one sex.” While the two are sometimes connected, for example when someone assigned female at birth identifies as a woman and vice versa, they are not always connected. Sex refers exclusively to the classification of reproductive organs, making the basis of it a biological one. Gender is a social construct that is primarily presented as a binary, but more closely follows a spectrum instead. The idea of nonbinary individuals as well as bigender, genderfluid, and genderflux individuals is not a new one, with two-spirit individuals being an important part of various Indigenous groups, long before the colonization of countries such as the United States and Canada.

Rowling’s incorrect assumption that trans activists are attempting to replace the term “sex” with the term “gender” concerns her because of her involvement in funding medical research for multiple sclerosis, a condition that affects people assigned female at birth differently than people assigned male at birth. She says that it is topics such as this one that would be most affected by replacing “sex” with “gender.”

Time and time again, Rowling emphasizes her concern for the

safety of cisgender women in prisons and domestic abuse shelters if trans women are allowed to use these spaces. This reiterates Rowling’s view of trans women as predators, even though she later states that she knows that “like women, they’re [trans people] most likely to be killed by sexual partners. Trans women who work in the sex industry, particularly trans women of colour, are at particular risk.” The best way for trans women to be protected from abuse and violence is to allow them to be in these spaces along with cisgender women. Just because they were assigned male at birth does not mean they are predators. This may sound like a “not all men” excuse, but this is not the case because trans women are not men, they are women. This is the mistake that Rowling keeps failing to notice. Her word choice shows that she does not see trans women as women and that is why she has been labeled a TERF by the internet and her former fan base.

Paul’s reasons for defending Rowling are just as harmful as the original offenses made by Rowling. Unlike what Paul, E.J. Rosetta, and Megan Phelps-Roper are trying to say, Rowling has made countless transphobic remarks. Paul even spells it out in the beginning of her article, as plain as day. Rowling believes that a medical diagnosis is necessary for someone to identify as transgender, even though she does not mention how difficult it is for the health care system to acknowledge these issues or provide safe, affordable gender-confirming care. She has explicitly stated that she believes that trans women are predators, that being transgender is a new way for men to get access to women in order to assault them. So, in order to try to prevent this unrealistic scenario, Rowling wants to exclude transgender women from women’s prisons and domestic abuse shelters for women.

Rowling’s comments toward the transgender community do a lot more harm than good. Her comments help add to false and negative narratives about transgender people without providing sources to back up her claims. Coming from a nonbinary individual, these are the reasons why Rowling is transphobic and why her comments are hurtful to the “Harry Potter” fanbase.

## Crochet makes a comeback among Gen-Z crafters, offers personalization, sustainability

**Claire Nipper**  
staff writer

Crocheting has been a method of self-expression for as long as it has existed. Using colorful yarn to create ornate and complex articles of clothing, home décor, and many other things has been a popular pastime of people all over the world, and recently it has become especially popular with younger people. Social media has allowed youths interested in crocheting to show their projects and communicate with other crocheters, inspiring many to learn the craft.

Apps like TikTok, Instagram, and Pinterest have primarily motivated the spread of crochet-related trends. Specifically, many people on TikTok have begun crocheting clothing items such as tank tops, sweaters, and even skirts. Creators are able to share their patterns (instructions for creating a crochet project) with others, so that their projects can be recreated by other users. Sharing patterns and ideas for crocheted projects is greatly fueling the innovation of the craft and allowing crocheters to make new things.

This method of making clothing by hand is also an original way to avoid supporting fast fashion—cheap clothing that is made to last only as long as trends do, and then be thrown away. Crocheted items of clothing are likely to last much longer than crudely made clothing from brands like Shein. The time required to create a crochet project and the level of personalization that can be added to an item makes it a much more desirable piece, and more likely to be kept and cherished forever.

I have been crocheting since I was about eight years old. My great grandma was amazing at crocheting, and she taught me to love it just as she did. The way intricately created and beautifully delicate crocheted items are being made and shared online by talented people makes me hope that more will learn to crochet. Crocheting is by far one of my favorite hobbies, and an excellent way to bring people together.

## arts &amp; culture

## 'SCREAM VI': GHOSTFACE TAKES MANHATTAN

The franchise's latest self-aware horror flick has everything a fan could want.



Photo Courtesy of **Paramount Pictures**

**E Dona-Munoz**  
staff writer

After the events of 2022's "Scream", protagonists Sam Carpenter (Melissa Barrera) and her younger sister Tara (Jenna Ortega), and twins Chad (Mason Gooding) and Mindy Meeks-Martin (Jasmine Savoy-Brown) attempt to go about their normal lives in New York City. "Scream VI" is the darkest and goriest entry in the "Scream" series and the best sequel yet. The script does not rely as heavily on the whodunnit aspect of the series, instead focusing on emotional moments between the characters. This provides for an intriguing story that perfectly balances horror, comedy, and drama.

The film's setting is changed from the small town of Woodsboro, California to New York City, drawing a connection to "Friday the 13th Part VIII: Jason Takes Manhattan." The similarity did not go unnoticed by writers James Vanderbilt and Guy Busick, as "Friday VIII" can be seen playing on a television screen in the background of the opening sequence. Unlike "Friday VIII," "Scream VI" uses the setting of New York City to its full potential.

The movie takes place around Halloween and therefore uses people in costumes to its advantage. The abundance of people wearing Ghostface costumes not only parallel people dressing up as serial killers, both real and fictional, for the holiday, but it also makes it

much more difficult for the protagonists to decipher who the real Ghostface is. The large city also makes it difficult for law enforcement to respond quickly to attacks,

The film, just like previous entries in the series, serves as a perfect snapshot of not just pop culture in 2022 and 2023, but also of American society in general. Just as "Scream 3" tackled the topic of the potential relationship between violence in media and violence in real life in the wake of the Columbine High School shooting, "Scream VI" tackles the topic of true crime and the glorification of serial killers and mass murderers.

Gale Weather's (Courtney Cox) role as a news reporter has been updated from writing books about each attack to having her work be the basis of a true crime limited series, mirroring the explosive popularity of the 2022 Netflix series about Jeffery Dahmer. Similar to the criticisms that the Dahmer series faced, Gale's series and the fictional "Stab" franchise contribute to the glorification and immortalization of the Ghostface murderers.

This theme continues with the killers' motivations and methods of operation. The film's largest set piece is an abandoned movie theater that had been converted into a shrine to the nine previous Ghostface killers. The shrine contains the robes and masks of each previous killer as well as critical police evidence from each murder scene. Additionally, the killers leave an old mask at the scene of each crime starting with Richie Kirsch's

(Jack Quaid) mask and ending with Billy Loomis' (Skeet Ulrich) mask. While the killers' motivations of wanting to copy their idols and the original Ghostface murders committed by Billy Loomis and Stu Macher (Matthew Lillard), the reveal of the perpetrators was lack-luster. This was partially due to the lack of focus on the whodunnit mystery in the script but also because it felt forced. But the reveal would have been less satisfying if the writers had brought Lillard back as Macher to be the killer, even though he was supposedly killed in the original 1996 movie.

Original "Scream" screenwriter Kevin Williamson had planned for Stu Macher to return as the killer in "Scream 3" along with a cult of Ghostfaces, but the idea fell through as Williamson was not able to return to pen the third movie since he was busy working on "Dawson's Creek" and "Teaching Mrs. Tingle." This plot idea feels redundant at this point as it is now common knowledge among the "Scream" fanbase, but the sixth film does recognize this idea and alludes to it throughout the movie. The opening sequence hints at a cult of Ghostface killers with their base of operations being the shrine in the abandoned movie theater. Additionally, there are a couple instances in the film where characters hint at the theory that Macher is alive.

Each "Scream" movie has a couple of opening kills before the title card pops up on screen and "Scream VI's" opening kills are the best since "Scream 2" (1997). Writers James

Vanderbilt and Guy Busick understand that fans are expecting a series of specific beats that the opening sequences usually hit, and they make sure to hit those beats while adding new elements to increase the unpredictability of the plot.

The sequence in the subway trains is one of the most brilliantly crafted sequences in a horror film to date. The combination of the crowded subway trains and the plethora of people in Halloween costumes, specifically Ghostface costumes, increases the sense of unease that the characters feel as they nor the audience know if something bad will happen or not. The sequence where sisters Sam and Tara are hiding from Ghostface in a convenience store shows just how brutal the latest killer is willing to be and shows how much higher the stakes are in this film compared to the others.

"Scream VI" is everything a fan could want in a "Scream" sequel. It incorporates the self-aware, satirical dialogue that has been the series' *raison d'être* since the original film and yet still manages to find new ways to surprise its audience. This film is the perfect time capsule of 2022 and 2023, focusing on the idea of film franchises and the United States' true crime-riddled society. Even though "Scream VI" knows it is a "Scream" sequel, it manages to stand out against the rest as a truly dark, gritty horror flick.



**PRIDE PLAYERS** on page 12



**SKINAMARINK** on page 13



**HIKING** on page 14

# Pride Players

Noa Gilbert  
news editor

The teenagers twirl and backflip across the stage, holding newspapers and singing a student-written Newsies-inspired showtune: "Gay for all and all for gay!" Pride flags hang from the walls of the theater and frame the stage in colorful curtains. Each seat is full, so audience members crowd onto the stairs to watch the show.

This is Pride Players 24, which ran from Feb. 2 to Feb. 5, as part of the Rose Theater's Teens-n-Theater season. Pride Players is an annual production made up of student-written scenes, monologues, poetry and dance numbers that explore the experiences of LGBTQ+ teens in Omaha. This year, Pride Players sold out for the first time in the show's 24-year history.

Senior Pretzel Urwin is an intern at the Rose Theater, and a first-year participant in Pride Players.

"It was so fun. They welcomed me with open arms, they were super excited for me to be there," they said. "It felt really good to be in that space where everyone is loving and accepting."

As an intern, Urwin was on the leadership council for Pride Players 24 and choreographed the Newsies-inspired musical theater number. The scene was inspired by the 2022 closure of a journalism program at a Grand Island high school after the school newspaper released an issue focused on the LGBTQ+ community.

The show also included a scene titled "Pronoun Wizard," which Urwin said explored "the importance of using the pronouns people are comfortable with, even if it's not something you quite understand."

Junior Grayson Shuler-Morgan wrote "Pronoun Wizard" and performed as the title sorcerer.

"My favorite part was performing and educating the audience about pronouns," he said. "Gender is a made-up concept, so why not have fun with it?"

Pride Players' primary purpose is to educate the audience about issues affecting young LGBTQ+ people in Omaha, and to encourage inclusivity.

"It's especially important because you'll have grandparents coming to the show, older people who might not be as aware of these issues, or not as informed about the LGBTQ+ community, who come out with greater understanding," Urwin said.

"To have a community full of LGBTQ+ people performing and having fun and being kids and teens is really important for cis het adults who maybe haven't met a queer person, to show them that we're just like everyone else," Shuler-Morgan said.

The educational aspect of Pride Players was particularly resonant this year for Urwin and Shuler-Morgan, because as they were rehearsing Pride Players, several bills restricting transgender and gender-nonconforming youth were introduced to the Nebraska Legislature.

"A lot of the bills are introduced because of a lack of awareness," Shuler-Morgan said. "The first step to acceptance is awareness. If you don't know any queer people, you're not going to be very accepting of it."

Both Shuler-Morgan and Urwin encourage others to participate in Pride Players. "We all link so well because we all have a similar love of theater and LGBTQ+ rights," Urwin said.

"It's such a joyful place to go," Shuler-Morgan said. "There's something in the community you can actually do to help, to get involved. Art is one of the most powerful forms of education."



Photo Courtesy of The Rose Theater

## vegetable 1

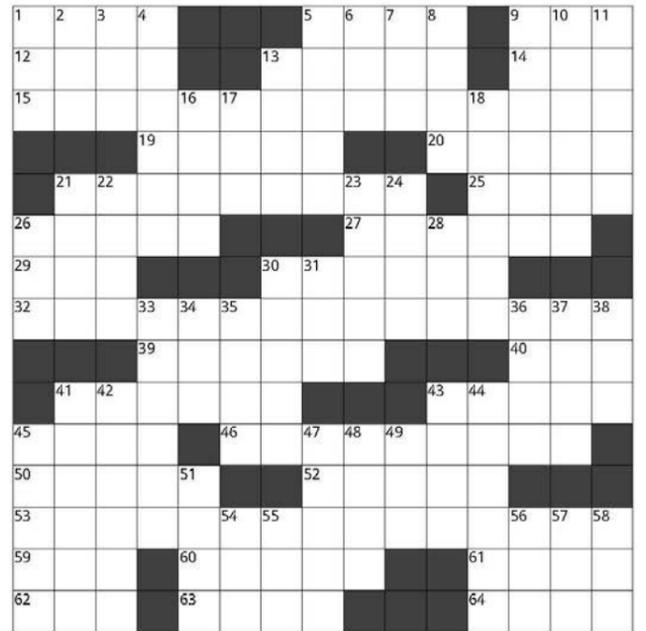
Noa Gilbert

### ACROSS

- 1 Sounds in dentists' offices
- 5 Cartographers' products
- 9 Rowboat necessity
- 12 Desperate ask
- 13 Bread roll first created by 17th-century Polish Jews
- 14 Author of "The Raven" and "Annabel Lee"
- 15 Earning from a gourd job?
- 19 Pioneering video game company
- 20 "Aristotle and \_\_\_ Discover the Secrets of the Universe"
- 21 Statement from one who's been extremely funny (or a hint for the theme of this puzzle)
- 25 Brewed drinks
- 26 Disease that Jonas Salk's vaccine targeted
- 27 Garden pests, ladybug's delights
- 29 Retirement savings account, for short
- 30 Central grad, first American woman to die in WWI, and freshman team namesake: \_\_\_ Crandell
- 32 "Stop the kale-ing" slogan?
- 39 Dim
- 40 Tuna common in sushi
- 41 The last Tsesarevich and the youngest son of Tsar Nicholas II

### DOWN

- 43 Sportscaster Rashad
- 45 Czech, Serb, or Pole
- 46 What an artichoke heart may do when excited?
- 50 Beatles album "\_\_\_ Road"
- 52 Discovered randomly
- 53 Lettuce make the music louder?
- 59 Thurman of "Kill Bill"
- 60 Cougars
- 61 "Como \_\_\_ usted?"
- 62 Winter hours in L.A. and S.F.
- 63 Rotate
- 64 365 days



- 21 Congresswoman Bush
- 22 Patron saint of Norway
- 23 Gold measurement
- 24 Super-cool
- 26 Sty resident
- 28 Partially deaf, abbv.
- 30 One Direction star Zayn \_\_\_
- 31 "\_\_\_ was saying..."
- 33 Stranger Things protagonist
- 34 Illness
- 35 Female sheep
- 36 Moniker
- 37 Talk online
- 38 Celebration of the end of Ramadan
- 41 Collections of music
- 42 Test animal
- 43 Peek \_\_\_

- 44 Shirt with two or three buttons at the collar
- 45 Suddenly took notice
- 47 Congresswoman Omar
- 48 Treats with crusts and fillings
- 49 Off-road transport, abbv.
- 51 Noises from a 54-down
- 54 Young dog
- 55 "You're oversharing!" via text
- 56 Purpose
- 57 Org. that runs the NYC Subway
- 58 Hearing organ

# Teagan's Treats

Macy White  
contributing writer

Teagan Dethloff is a 15-year-old who's been selling desserts through her business, Teagan's Tasty Treats, in Omaha since 2020.

She started her business after inspiration from her mother's friend, who had started her own bakery. Since then, she has begun selling her products both online and at local craft fairs.

Dethloff works alone on her business with occasional help from her mother to deliver orders. Because of this she spends at least three days a week working on her business.

"When I have orders I like to take that day off," Dethloff said. "I need to know two weeks in advance if you would want to put an order in."

These rules help her manage her time while keeping up with the high demand of products.

Her product orders come through social media, her biggest promotional tool. She promotes by advertising her newest products and seasonal items on Instagram. It is the biggest aid in her business and helps spread publicity to people in the area.

Dethloff's Instagram highlights her best-selling products, "My most popular items are cake, breakable chocolate hearts, and the famous Oreo cake pops," Dethloff said. These products help her business stand out as many bakeries in the area stick to one niche, but her ability to branch into different fields of baking puts her ahead of others.

As her business continues to progress, Dethloff has started thinking about the future of her business.

"I would like to go to pastry school and hopefully come back and open a business." She said. She hopes to keep her customers in the future and open an in-person store.

She has found a passion in baking as a teen entrepreneur and encourages others to follow their dreams. "If you want to start your own business, do it," Dethloff said. "Yes, you will have your ups and downs, but will get through it."

Answers on Page 15

# ACCESS TO EXCEPTIONAL

EDUCATION, LIFESTYLE, AND OPPORTUNITIES

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# 'Skinamarink' is a horror masterpiece

Claire Nipper  
staff writer

On Friday the 13th of January, I sat down in the packed micro-theater Dundee Film Streams Theater and saw the best movie of 2023. My viewing of *Skinamarink* was the most enjoyable theater experience I have ever had.

One of the oddest movies I have ever seen in theaters, Kyle Edward Ball's *Skinamarink* follows two children, who wake up in the middle of the night to find their father gone. Neither of their parents are in the house, and a few other things have eerily gone missing; All the windows and doors in their house have disappeared, leaving bizarre expanses of blank wall. The phones only speak the ring of the dial tone, but the television is still able to play reruns of Looney Tunes. Not having any way of reaching their father or calling for help, the two siblings venture to their living room and fall asleep on the couch in front of the television. The progression of the film is difficult to pace, as there is no distinguishing between night and day due to the lack of windows and doors. The children remain downstairs and in the living room mainly throughout the rest of the movie, except for the daughter's journey upstairs to see her mother sitting on the edge of her bed, facing directly towards the wall and whispering "look under the bed," and the son's walk towards the kitchen where he plunges a knife into his eye upon the request of an undisclosed entity.

*Skinamarink*'s cinematography is its most distinct element. The film was shot on a Sony FX 6 camera, which allowed the filmmakers to capture imagery in low light environments. This gives *Skinamarink* a visual noise that overlays every shot. By using almost no added light—often just a flickering television set—and turning up the FX 6's ISO, the setting that regulates sensitivity to light—raising it in order to make a dark image brighter), *Skinamarink* contains a film grain that gives it a sense of nostalgia. The grain characteristic of cheap video cameras combined with nineties wood paneling on the walls of the home and Looney Tunes on the television are all elements that were present in the childhood of today's adults, specifically Kyle Edward Ball's life. The interior design of the house, toys, and cartoons contribute to its older look, emphasizing the youth of the two main characters and the naivety present in adolescence.

Kyle Edward Ball uses a creative method of shooting that



Photo Courtesy of Shudder

gives *Skinamarink* its bizarre look. Instead of filming a scene continuously, cutting between shots of characters faces and surroundings relevant to their dialogue, most of the shots present in *Skinamarink* are not of the actors. The blank expanses of wall, corners where painted white trim meets shag carpeting, and quick flashes of chair legs resting on the ceiling are the primary subjects captured by the camera. The two main characters of the film, the son and daughter, are never shown from the front. The audience only ever sees their feet walking down a hallway or the back of their heads while sitting. Dialogue is sparse throughout the film, and I often found myself sitting in grainy silence and watching from strange angles the shots of Ball's parents' house, where *Skinamarink* was shot.

*Skinamarink* is a film like no other. Cinematography, acting, plot, sound design; In all these respects the movie has presented itself as something completely new. Especially in its narrative, *Skinamarink* was completely original. In fact, it was probably the most horrifying movie I have ever seen

because of that fact. The way in which jump-scars are turned on their heels, the eerie and uncanny are put right out into the open, and how the audience's view of the terrifying scenes are so twisted make this film so appallingly dreadful. At multiple points throughout the screening, I felt like I needed to walk out of the theater because I was at extreme risk of showering my neighbor with a stream of half-digested popcorn. The tension upheld throughout the film never let out for a moment, from beginning to end. For ninety minutes, I sat on the edge of my seat, not knowing if I was going to receive a visual of a blank wall or an absurd jump scare that would prevent me from closing my eyes that night. Even attempting to write this review made my blood pressure skyrocket; I will never forget a single second of this movie. Its very essence is engrained into my mind and has changed the way I view horror films. *Skinamarink* defines the word "horror."

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# Hiking Trails: The Register Reviews

## Hitchcock Hiking

Chloe Johnson  
staff writer

As an awful driver of a twenty year old car, I try to spend as little time on the roads as possible. Any trip more than fifteen minutes is rare. However, a happy exception is Hitchcock Nature Center in Honey Creek Iowa, around twenty five minutes from downtown Omaha. I have come here with my family ever since I can remember, but especially during the pandemic. As we have an energetic dog, the fact that the 13 miles of hiking trails are all dog friendly was huge. And the size makes these trails pretty kid friendly as well, as they can be loud without too much worry of disturbing others. For those with groups that spread out, every trail was well marked and connected to the others, making it pretty hard to get lost. A wide variety of paths are available, from 0.5 flatter trails to 5 mile steep hilly paths to even a boardwalk that puts one at tree level. This means not only that various types of hikers can enjoy Hitchcock but that one can come back many times before they see the entire forest. You do have to pay \$5 to enter the hike as it is part of the Pottawatomie County Park System, however the extensive trail maintenance is worth it. You can also pay \$10 to rent a trailside campsite or \$6 to rent snowshoes in the winter. All of this can be done in the nature center next to the 45 ft lookout tower. This station has lots of information about the park, merchandise, and bathrooms, but no snacks or drinks. So make sure to stop by the nearby Stanley Snack Shack for goat ice cream and baby goat yoga in the warmer months. This trail is also great for learning about a uniquely Nebraskan feature: loess. This is the incredible fine dirt created millions of years ago by glaciers pushing across North America, that makes up the "Bluffs". The only other place loess has been found in the world is Shaanxi China. While Hitchcock is busier in the more vibrant months of spring and summer than at the moment, parking has never been an issue. Hitchcock is probably the best local winter hiking location, as the prairies grass stays a beautiful burnt orange all year long, and snow shoes are available to rent. However, no matter the season or who is hiking, Hitchcock is an all-around great option.

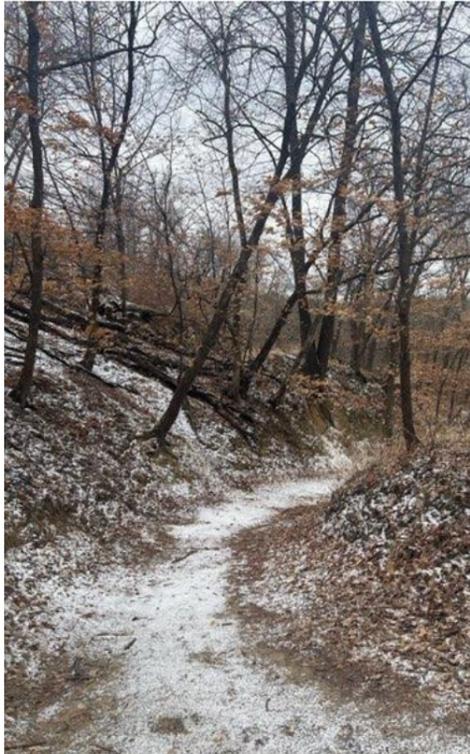


Photo Courtesy of Chloe Johnson

## Fontenelle Forest

Ella Levy  
opinion editor

Fontenelle Forest is a nature preserve in Bellevue, Nebraska. It has so many trails to explore and has both wooden pathways and dirt trails. It's a perfect in-between of family friendly and serious hiking. The trails this time of year are very muddy. If I stood in place for too long my feet would sink, so I recommend wearing shoes you have no desire to keep clean. Despite the mud, I could not help but have a great time. The air felt fresh, and the high views of nature gave me a glimpse of summer. Hiking this time of year is doable, but I recommend waiting till spring. If I had



Photo Courtesy of Ella Levy

waited just one month, I think the trails would have been easier to walk on. I paid \$8, which may be a little overpriced for this time of year, but during the summer I think it is worth it. I started on Habitat Hollow, then took the long path, Liden, across the forest. At the other end of the forest, I traveled on Child's Hollow and Hawthorne and made my way back to Hackberry. Hackberry was mildly steep, but every path was relatively easy to travel on. The forest offered a mix of shade and sun. I would recommend pants if you were walking on the trails because there are many plants on the sides of the trail. Because I had trouble traveling on the trails it took me until the end of the journey to look up and enjoy the view. I wish I had done this more often, so I recommend stopping occasionally, looking up, and taking it in. I also recommend bringing a friend. Laughing while slipping in the mud is much more enjoyable with a friend by your side. I will be returning to Fontenelle in the summer, and I recommend it to teens and families.

## Hummel Park

Alice Larson  
copy editor

Hummel Park Nature Center is not for the faint of heart. I have ventured to Hummel numerous times throughout my life and I have yet to find an actual marked hiking trail. Most of the hikes I've been on have included patches where I've quite literally been sliding down a hill, as well as walks along paved roads that cars come rushing down without a moment's notice. Hummel does have a few enjoyable overlooks, and it is rare you'll find fellow hikers on your journey, so it is the perfect spot for hikers looking for a secluded location, and seeking a "choose your own adventure" experience. The park is easily accessible from the major streets that lead up to it- North 30th street & Interstate 680 and due to the low amount of fellow hikers you'll encounter, finding a parking spot



Photo Courtesy of Alice Larson

will never be a burden. The nature center is also an excellent spot for hikers who are a fan of horror. Growing up in Omaha, most are aware of the rumored albino people who live in Hummel's hills, the park's staircase that never adds to the same amount of steps each time you climb it, and the rumored satanic rituals that occur. While such lore has never been backed by observable data, each hiking experience at Hummel makes one feel like they're testing the supernatural. While Hummel may not be my go-to spot, it is an enjoyable hike for all adventurers who enjoy living life on the edge, and beginning hikes with no particular end spot in mind.

## Neale Woods

Shyla Youngs  
editor-in-chief



Photo Courtesy of Shyla Youngs

As warm weather is quickly approaching, many people look for ways to spend their free time outside. Omaha has a wide variety of options to partake in outdoor activities, and I would recommend visiting Neale Woods Nature Center. Located in North Omaha, Neale woods inhabits 600 acres of forests, hilltop prairies, and about nine miles of hiking trails. When I arrived, the parking lot was nearly full, but the trails were uncrowded. Due to seasonal conditions, the trails were quite muddy in spots, but they did not make it impassable by any means. I'd just recommend wearing hiking boots, or shoes that can get dirty. Although the trees were leafless, and nature wasn't as flourishing as it will be in the summer months, the trail still maintained its beautiful views. Each trail offers a variety of scenery, while also ranging in levels of difficulty. The trails were also very well maintained and well-marked, which made my trip even more enjoyable. I had to pay a small fee, but it was extremely affordable. It costs \$5 for adults, \$3 for children, and it's free to members of Neale Woods/Fontenelle Forest. The cost was definitely worth the experience, and one could spend hours here exploring multiple trails. I chose to start right next to the parking lot, and took Gifford Trail north for a little while until I connected with Neale Trail. I then followed that path until I saw a sign that directed me onto Wagon Trail. For a short hike, continue on this path until you spot the parking lot. It took me around an hour to complete my route, but I did make frequent stops to observe everything and take pictures. The trail wasn't too difficult, but still made for good exercise. The only issue Neale Woods could present for visitors is the rule that prohibits any animals on the trails. So for people who are looking for pets to accompany them, this is a problem. However, this was the only complaint I had. Neale Woods is also in a location that is easily accessible from the interstate, so it's not too long of a journey. Although the distance from the city may not be far, it really felt secluded and peaceful. It also is neighboring a known hiking spot in Omaha, Hummel Park. This could allow for a day trip to both locations, which would be a great outing for you and your friends. Even at this time of year, Neale Woods Nature Center had so much to offer. I will be returning again and expect the visits to become even more enjoyable into summer. I'd recommend anyone, from kids to adults, to do the same.

# Which 'Princess Diaries' movie is better?

Editor's Note: Following the announcement of a third 'Princess Diaries' film, two Register staff writers rewatched the classic 2000s rom-coms to determine which is superior.

## Princess Diaries

Alice Larson  
copy editor

The Princess Diaries franchise had an insurmountable impact on my childhood. Growing up in an age just prior to streaming services, and without cable, any shows or movies I consumed were on public TV, DVDs, or VHS. One of the DVDs I watched most frequently was Princess Diaries 2: The Royal Engagement. I wasn't even aware there was an original Princess Diaries movie until late in elementary school. However, despite arriving late to the franchise's origin, I believe the first film is superior. The first film encapsulates the aesthetics of the perfect early 2000s high school rom com, a grainy yet timeless camera quality, an era-appropriate soundtrack, and wardrobe choices that convince viewers low rise jeans were a flattering trend. While both films follow the life of Mia Thermopolis, a lovable geek who learns she's a princess, and highlight themes of female empowerment, the awkwardness that accompanies being young, and tumultuous boy problems, the first film portrays her life in a more relatable light. The cinematic masterpiece which follows the life of 15-year-old Mia, transports the viewer back into their most awkward years. It is easy to empathize with teenage Mia as she fights with her best friend, idolizes the wrong people, and tries to imitate adulthood with little grace, struggles I believe all viewers will or have experienced. While the second film follows the life of 21-year-old Mia, who experiences her fair share of awkward moments and boy problems, I don't think the movie is overall representative of an average 21-year-old's life. At that age, Mia would be expected to start engaging in typical 21-year-old behaviors. However, her behavior and grace differ very little from the first film, when she was just 15. I believe a large part of this is due to the films being Disney-owned, which limits how mature Mia's behaviors can be, but even her overall thought process in the second film feels incredibly immature. Lastly, in a film franchise that largely centers on Mia's potential love interests, Michael, Mia's interest in the first film, is just better than Lord Devereaux, Mia's interest in the second film. Michael is objectively hotter, and while Lord Devereaux switches back and forth between trying to sabotage Mia and developing feelings for her, Michael stays true to Mia the whole film. Michael works for free on Mia's car, forgives her after she ditches him for another guy, and loved her when no one else did. As opposed to Lord Devereaux, who's greatest act of love is declining to take her throne, which he spends most of the movie trying to make her ineligible for. Due to the first film's stunning early 2000s aesthetics, relatable story line, and far more attractive love interest, the first Princess Diaries movie is than the second.

## The Princess Diaries 2

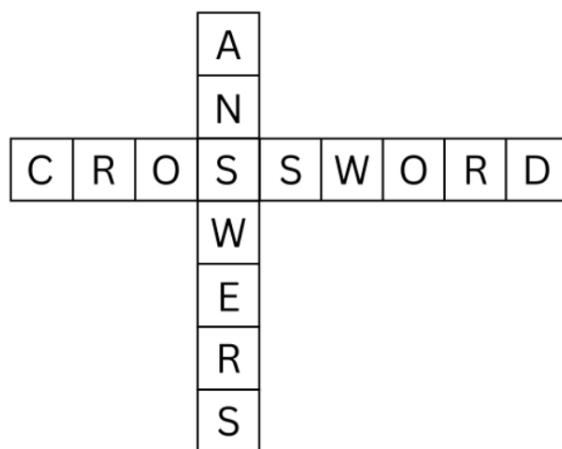
Ella Levy  
opinion editor

The movie Princess Diaries, starring Julie Andrews and Anne Hathaway, is a staple movie from the childhood of Generation Z. It's the classic story of a nerdy teenager becoming a popular princess, but in this movie, she actually becomes a princess. The movie concludes with Mia, the main character, accepting her position as princess of the European nation of Genovia. The second movie, Princess Diaries 2: The Royal Engagement, was released three years later. It features the same cast but, in this movie, Mia is becoming queen. The movie is filled with romance, friendship, bravery and laughter. Both movies are amazing, but the second movie is much better. The love interest in the second movie has amazing chemistry with Hathaway on screen. Their back-and-forth banter is something the audience can enjoy every minute of. The storyline follow-

ing this leading couple is also far more interesting than the one featured in the first movie. The royal court decides Mia must be married to become queen, so Mia has an arranged marriage set up, but the chemistry is noticeably absent. If she does not marry another man will take the throne. Throughout the movie the two fight as he tries to seduce her, so she questions her marriage. In the end he drops out of the race and supports her position as queen. She takes the throne without a husband and the two announce the love they have for each other and finally get together. This love interest is undeniably cuter than her best friend's brother, Michael, whom she falls for in the first movie. The two actors have unmatched chemistry, a better plot, and let's face it better faces. The second movie represents Mia as a person. In the first she is stuck in the plot of her awkward and shy and awkward character. But the second movie is

a story of growth. In the end she stands up to parliament and puts their sexist views to rest. She stands up for every woman in Genovia and makes a motion to abolish the marriage law. Her motion is taken, and she becomes queen without a husband. Because this movie is a sequel the audience has seen Mia go from a reserved schoolgirl and the queen be an uptight ruler. In the second movie the relationship between the queen and Mia is endearing. They are so close and the queen guides Mia in her choices as an adult. The queen has also grown as a person and is now fun-loving. Mia is bright and makes mistakes but has a personality so different from the one in the first movie. Mia and the queen truly feel as though they have become themselves in the second movie. Some say a sequel can never be as good as the original but in this case they are wrong. Princess Diaries 2 is far better than Princess Diaries 1.

Noa Gilbert



# Dinkers Bar and Grill



2368 S 29th St



# sports & leisure

## NEW FACES, NEW PLACES

Omaha Central hired a number of new coaches for sports. The Register spoke with Terrence Mackey, Melissa Kuskie and Jen Gillespie to give the student body a look into the new coaching positions.

### Mackey: 'We're coming here to win some games'

Charlie Yale  
sports/web editor

Omaha Central's football team has a new face at the helm.

Terrence Mackey was hired as the head football coach of the Eagles last month. "I'm happy to be here," Mackey said. "We're ready to make a difference."

Mackey, a product of North Omaha, has been a football coach for most of his life. "I went to school at Benson High School. I played football and basketball, and I graduated in 1979. I've been coaching football since I was about 19 years old," he said, "and I'll be 62 in July."

Mackey played a semester of college football at the University of Nebraska at Omaha and graduated from Bellevue University. His coaching career started with the North Omaha Bears at the Boys & Girls Club, where he would often send kids to play football at Omaha North and Omaha Central. Mackey was the head coach at Benson High School before being hired this year at Central.

"I've met a lot of [Central] players, I know a lot of the kids from the Boys and Girls Club,"

Mackey said.

As a coach, Mackey said that he is excited to build the program in the first year. He said that he wants to make the players believe that they are winners. "We're coming here to win some games. You got to get the kids that have confidence. You know, you got to be able to relate to the kids," Mackey said. "[At Benson], I had to get kids that believed they had competence, because once you start losing, you know, they believe that they're losers. We don't want that. We want them to believe that they're winning."

Mackey said he started to look at the program last year after his win against Central. "I told my assistant head coach they're young, just like we were at Benson. They're gonna be tough next year," he said. "So we got something to work with, something to build on."

Mackey emphasized how excited he was to coach a young football team. "Central has a young team now. But these kids are winners. They believe in themselves," he said.

"When I first started at Benson, I couldn't get those kids at first to believe in themselves. Right now, [there's] a lot of excitement going on."

### Kuskie heads girls' tennis

Jane McGill  
arts & culture editor

The new head coach for Central's girl tennis team began playing the sport as a high school student in 1983, going on to win a scholarship for Most Improved Player.

Melissa Kuskie's only respite from the sport came after she suffered injuries from an accident in 1993. "A two-ton truck hit me and so I had about five years of rehab," Kuskie said. "I was just trying to get back into things. So, I did take that five years off and then slowly I started coming back the best I could. It just kind of took some time to heal."

In 1998 after her recovery, Kuskie resumed playing tennis again, which she describes as being enjoyable for people of all ages. "You can play tennis the rest of your life, I play with people that are 80+ years old on a regular basis. I think it's a sport where it isn't impactful to the body so I think people aren't as intimidated. It's not like track where you have to be super fast, it's a gentle sport."

Kuskie, who has taught Spanish at Central for 20 years, first got involved in girls tennis as a volunteer. "I came of my own accord, I wanted to get involved, but they

didn't need a coach at that time," she said. Eight years ago, Kuskie became an assistant coach. The upcoming season will be Kuskie's first as head coach.

"There's been a lot of preparation," Kuskie said of becoming head coach. "Trying to figure out what uniforms the girls might like, where we'll be at, making a connection with the City of Omaha and Parks and Rec to secure the courts at Dewey."

Kuskie described shouldering her responsibilities as head coach with her teaching position as a careful balancing act. "It's a lot of multi-tasking," she said. "I am teaching and have tennis in the back of my mind all the time, because I can't let it go. It's making lots of lists and checking them off when you get something done and always using a calendar to seeing what's ahead so you can plan, whether it's teaching or whether it's tennis."

Kuskie said that she believes the universality of tennis is its greatest appeal. "You can do it your whole life, it's kind of like swimming or walking," she said. "It's also so social, and I think the girls really like that. The girls have a lot of fun... I think because I love it so much and I love teaching so much, my players have a good time."

### First all-female girls soccer staff

Katherine Besancon  
contributing writer

Omaha Central's girls' soccer program will have the first all-female coaching staff in program history, led by new head coach Jen Gillespie, and is one of two schools in the state of Nebraska to have a coaching staff consisting of all women.

Previously an assistant on the girls' team, Gillespie is walking into this season striving to make Central's girls soccer team a positive and successful program and hoping to build a culture where girls want to come play for the Eagles.

"I want to change the overall perspective of how people view Central's girls' soccer program by creating winning mentalities, winning mindsets, winning attitudes, and winning seasons," she said.

Gillespie emphasized, "We will not just be an easy 'W' on any team's schedule again."

Behind Gillespie are her four assistant coaches Casey Denton, Madison Verschoor, Samantha Foster and Sidni Trotter, who went through their high schools playing soccer but also advanced to the Division 1 level to play as well, helping Gillespie reach her goals for the Central girls' program.

After attending Central for her freshman year of high school, Gillespie decided to transfer to further her soccer career. Gillespie was recruited to Old Dominion University by Linda Hamilton, who was

at the time the United States women's national soccer team captain. Gillespie played her four years at Old Dominion before moving on to play for the first women's professional league for four years before having to quit because the pay was not adequate, which was a function of the unequal pay between the men's and women's teams.

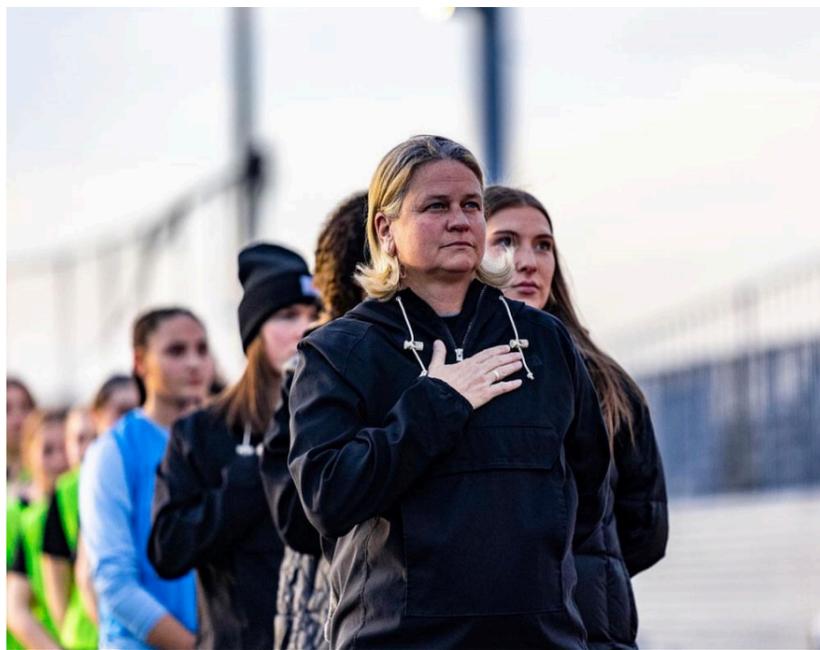
That is why it is "so important and beyond deserved that the women just won their equal pay lawsuit. I am excited for the future of women's soccer and the pay to be equal, so women can make their passion their career," Gillespie said.

After soccer, Gillespie entered law enforcement, becoming a licensed private investigator.

Gillespie is planning to have her team come into this season as mentally and physically fit as possible, with a mindset that "we can accomplish anything together as a team."

Casey Denton, assistant coach, said, "Gillespie is an OG (Original) soccer player where women's soccer was just becoming a professional sport and the national team was just on the rise. Being mentally and physically fit is what separated women's soccer from any other team and really made them the powerhouse they are today, that is a huge emphasis for Gillespie."

Changing things for the better is what Gillespie is focusing on, building the culture and relationships between player and coach, while



"I want to change the overall perspective of how people view Central's girls' soccer program," Gillespie said. Photo Courtesy of GARRETT HAWKINS

"making the girls soccer program a successful and winning program, a program where the top girls soccer players in the state want to come for the academics and the soccer program. My mission is

to raise the level of the soccer program to the level of the academic programs and opportunities at Central High School," Gillespie said.



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