

# The Register

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## Why students skip

*When we had nine periods, I never left class. I've been suspended a couple of times. **I need a break. It became a habit, a bad habit that I want to get rid of.** Man, I just want to hit my fein. I'm skipping because there's no point in being here. **Put something in there so we are actually interested in our work! If my grades aren't getting affected, why would I stop? My grades always good, so I don't put my all into thinking I shouldn't be skipping.** I don't care about this place at all. **I'm not going to stay in a class if the teacher doesn't know my name.***

Isabel Hoiberg  
digital editor

Every year, the Central administration tries to crack down on the issue of students skipping class. There are tardy roulettes, security guards roaming the halls telling students to go back to class, teachers being able to give detention to students without a pass, closing off the new addition bathroom, and Eagle Bucks for students who show up on time. Central isn't alone — Omaha Public Schools is spearheading a larger initiative called "Strive for 95" to address absenteeism, to which skipping is a contributing factor. The Register wanted to hear why students skip class in their own words. We interviewed over 20 students roaming the building during school hours in places like the new addition basement, gym lobby, bathrooms and stairways. Students were granted anonymity to be able to speak freely, using their honest opinions to describe their lives at Central. Their responses shed light on how skipping is often a symptom of other issues, like mental health, addiction or classroom engagement.

*Often, I will only skip a class if I feel as if I am not missing out in a class, which is very often. **Now that I have learned not skipping will help get my grades up, I am trying to go to more classes. If I haven't gone to a class for a while or if I'm behind, it makes me anxious to go back to the class, and so I avoid it.** My grades seem to struggle. **It was very relieving to not have to face the pressure of doing stuff if I didn't feel like it. I have bad ADHD and no 504.** I feel like I could do better, but at the same time, I am ready to leave this school. **I think it is 100% my fault that I miss class so often. I mostly skip with friends because I don't know people in my class.** If I'm not skipping, then I'm asleep in class. It's not my teachers, it's the classes; they're so boring. **Everybody think you bad if you skip; I don't think that.***

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The basketball community all over the Omaha metro area has been impacted by Brad Feeken's death.

## Central students, staff advocate for student press freedoms

Jazmin Guimenes-Mills  
contributing writer

A new Nebraska bill, LB 1071, would protect freedom of speech of high school and college student journalists. Last month, Omaha Central High School students Charlie Yale and Jane McGill, along with other students from Central and other schools, attended the Omaha Public Schools Board of Education meeting to persuade the board to support the bill.

They managed to get OPS to monitor the bill, not taking the bills' side or not opposing it.

"We are both very fortunate to work at a school where we are not censored by the administration, but we know that is the exception and not the norm," McGill said.

On March 31, 2022 at Northwest High School in Grand Island, their student newspaper program was shut down due to

a controversy surrounding LGBTQ-related articles. This angered many and inspired others to speak out against what they felt was infringing on students' free speech rights, hence LB 1071, which was proposed by Sen. George Dungan.

In 2021, Sen. Adam Morfeld introduced a similar bill, but was shot down.

Omaha Central High School Journalism Adviser Brody Hilgenkamp wrote a letter to the OPS board in support of the bill. In the letter, he wrote about how important it is for student journalists to get this bill supported.

"The bill gives student journalists the freedom to engage in a valuable educational opportunity in which they explore complicated topics, interact with people who share diverse perspectives, hone skills that are transferable to every career field, and document the rich experiences of their fellow students," Hilgenkamp

wrote. He also described some of the ethical expectations for students and advisers. "Student journalism and advisers would not enjoy the protections outlined in the bill if their work is libelous, invades privacy, violates state or federal law or incites violence," Hilgenkamp wrote.

Nebraska High School Press Association President Michelle Hassler also wrote a letter to the board members in support of the bill.

Though students and staff have managed to get the school board to monitor the bill, they will keep pushing until the bill is fully supported.

"While we are happy to see them change away from from oppose, we're gonna continue working with the school board and we're gonna continue applying the pressure to make sure that they are gonna support the bill," Yale said.

## Pay raise excites Central special education department, offers hope for future as a solution to staffing issues

Steven Dickerson  
staff writer

Special education teachers in Omaha Public Schools will now receive a 10% variance on top of their \$50,500 base teacher salary, the OPS Board of Education decided at its Jan. 11 meeting.

The 10% variance is a 3% increase from the former 7% variance, meaning special educators will get an additional 10% of their salary on top of their base salary, according to school board documents.

The three-year contract is from 2023-2026, and teachers will receive backpay from Aug. 1, 2023. It was negotiated by the Omaha Education Association and OPS and received wide support from both district officials and special education teachers.

Gregory Betts, the executive director of human resources for OPS, said these raises were necessary to make sure special education teachers feel appreciated for the hard work they do, including managing individualized educational programs (IEPs), attending long meetings and filling out lots of paperwork, along with other duties that come with being an educator. "There's always that conversation of making sure our staff are supported," he said.

Another reason the district believed the raise was necessary is the ongoing special education staffing shortage. "We have a significant shortage of special education teachers K-12," Betts said, while adding he didn't have a specific number of open positions. The problem isn't unique to OPS, as 65% of public schools in the United States are understaffed in special education, according to the Institute of Education Sciences.

Central is one of the understaffed schools, with 287 students with IEPs but only seven full-time special education teachers, one part-time teacher, one speech and language pathologist, and one Alternative Curriculum Program teacher. "Our caseloads are very heavy," said Julianne Fant, Central's special education department head.

Fant explained that every single IEP demands lots of communication, coordination and paperwork, and that when caseloads are hefty, it can get stressful to make sure every student gets the best outcome. "Time is something that is a challenge for us here at Central [with such large caseloads]," she said.

Despite the difficulties with staffing and more work to do, Fant believes the raise will show special education teachers at Central and in the district that

they are acknowledged and appreciated. "It was nice to see that we are receiving this pay increase," she said.

Both Fant and Betts believe the pay raise will help recruit and retain special education teachers.

"If caseloads go down [due to increased staffing], that's a win for everyone," Betts said. But he also acknowledged that there is more to the job than just the paycheck.

Fant wants new special education teachers to have proper training and appropriate professional development so they feel comfortable and confident in their position.

Apart from the pay raise and increased training, OPS is utilizing current high school students to address issues with special education. Betts said the Teaching as a Profession pathway is opening students up to opportunities into what being a special educator is like. As students complete the pathway and graduate from high school, they are better equipped to enter the education field, and OPS remains connected with them.

"We love our OPS grads who come back ... we want them to come back and work for us," Betts said. By increasing the amount of current high schoolers who go into the education field, the district is setting itself up to help relieve staffing shortages, he said.

"I feel we can only go up from here," Fant said when regarding the future of special education at Central. If the district can recruit and retain more teachers through solutions like the pay raise, she believes special education and students will be very well off. She tells students interested in a career as a special education teacher, "It is one of the most rewarding careers."



Special Education Teacher Abigail Hiller, center, helps students in a classroom Feb. 8.

WHITMAN RUTLEDGE | The Register

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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.



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# Composting initiative shuttered amid staffing concerns

Hadley Forsen-Yepes  
chief copy editor

Post-winter break, there has been an absence in Central's lunchrooms: composting bins. The composting initiative, a partnership with local waste hauling company Hillside Solutions, was introduced at the start of the 2023-24 school year.

Central's Green Team, the sustainability club that spearheaded composting at Central, feels that the initiative was successful. On the first day of school alone, the number of trash produced was reduced from 76 to 18 bags.

"I was receiving feedback from teachers and other people within the community of just constant praise of the program and how they just love that Central's adopted this and that we've integrated it into our community," said junior Evalina Sain, the president of Green Team.

So, what happened?

In short: a staffing dilemma. "I pulled it because we basically did not have the staff to make sure we were doing it appropriately," Central Principal Ellisa Kirksey said.

Custodians were required to periodically check the bins to ensure that the compost had not been contaminated with garbage. "[The custodians'] job responsibilities just have been expanding since Covid, really, and I just feel for them," Green Team sponsor Andrew Ruchti said. "At some point, you can't just keep adding responsibilities on teachers to check on this, to janitors to come clean up after it every single lunch period."

Sain described a rumor that "there was an internal fight between the custodians, and three custodians quit on the spot." Kirksey denied this rumor.

The custodial shortage was not the sole reason that composting was postponed, however. Kirksey also feels there was a lack of student involvement that made the maintenance of composting more difficult for all involved.

"I don't think it's one club's initiative; I think it [has] to be multiple clubs," Kirksey said. "But then, if we want to do this, what is everybody willing to sacrifice for the planet to be better or for us to make sure that we're cutting down on bags?"

Junior Nell Farrington and fellow compost manager senior Norah Hicks believed that most students were making an effort to properly sort their waste. "When we would stand there, you could tell that [students] wanted to do it right when we were watching," Farrington said.

However, Ruchti said, "It just takes one or two students not to do it, and all of a sudden it's an everybody problem."

Kirksey remarked that she believes there is a classist ideology in believing that managing the compost is only the responsibility of custodians.

"There's a sense of decency and order that we all have to have when it comes to cleaning the building. When it comes to doing certain stuff, we want to say, 'That's a custodian's job,'" Kirksey said. "I don't think you get any further with an initiative or any further with what you're trying to do if you don't realize we all have to do this."



Composting's return now depends on Central's open janitorial positions being filled and the program receiving more buy-in from students and clubs outside of Green Team. Evalina Sain reached out to Central's administration to learn more about the custodial hiring process but received contradictory information from TAC.  
MAURO GUTIERREZ | The Register

Composting's return now depends on Central's open janitorial positions being filled and the program receiving more buy-in from students and clubs.

Sain reached out to Central's administration to learn more about its custodial hiring process. Additionally, she has requested a timeline from the administration and has yet to receive a response. Kirksey has explained that staffing is controlled externally, at the district level; however, after reaching out to TAC, Sain was told it is internal.

Sain has been disheartened by an administration she believes has always been reluctant to the composting program.

"I spent months trying to initiate this, and I brought all different adults and professionals in to help with this," Sain said. "[The administration has] been assured from the beginning that everything would work ..."

Sain found one of the administration's concerns particularly shocking, which she perceived as an a possible excuse for their disapproval of the program. "For a while, their main issue was the aesthetics of the bins," Sain said. "They said they would be distracting."

"I think administration had an understanding of what [the composting initiative] entailed, like the work that it was going to take, and were nervous about whether this program would be successful at Central," Ruchti said. "Maybe for good reason, because it sounds like it wasn't — according to them."

Kirksey confirmed that she was hesitant about initiating the program. "We said we were going to go ahead with it, but I was always concerned about how can we pull it off in the [staffing] shortage," Kirksey said.

"I think it's unfortunate because there's other schools that do it. We have elementary schools that do it," Hicks said.

"Why at other schools and not Central, though, is kind of my question," Ruchti said.

Regardless of administrative hesitancy toward the program, Central's Green Team is committed to bringing composting back, and Sain has even resorted to working on solutions with external organizations to speed up the comeback. Kirksey said that she would consider ending the postponement once she feels the program can be properly maintained.

Meanwhile, Green Team encourages students to continue their sustainability efforts.

"The environment — that's not a political issue, it's not a polarized issue. It affects literally everyone and everything," Sain said.

Ruchti referenced the extreme cold weather in the days following Winter Break to make a point about the environment. "If this last week was any indication, we need to be doing something to fight climate change," Ruchti said.

## Freshmen to watch Broadway's 'The Lion King' at Orpheum

Fiona Bryant  
opinion editor

A donation will allow freshmen who meet behavioral and attendance requirements to watch the Broadway performance of "The Lion King" at the Orpheum Theater on March 19.

Students will have orchestra seats and the opportunity to interact with the cast members after the performance.

Each ticket to the musical is valued at \$160 and is at no cost to the student because of donations from the Central High School Foundation and anonymous donors through the Omaha Performing Arts (OPA).

"That's the beauty of being at a school that's so old and graduated so many successful students: that there's nice deep pockets here in Omaha, and people are so incredibly generous to Central students," Freshman Academy Lead Martha Omar said.

To be eligible for the field trip, freshmen must turn in a permission slip and have no

suspensions, detentions or unexcused Eagle Time absences, plus no more than five tardies or two unexcused absences in any class. These requirements were implemented by Central's administrators.

Principal Dionne Kirksey said the "barely can breathe" requirements were chosen purposely because this is an extra cultural experience for the freshmen. The freshmen will also be attending Flip Fabrique Blizzard on April 2, with fewer requirements for eligibility.

"I think, personally, the absences is where it gets me a little bit," freshman Virginia Arce said. "But I think that it will push me to be at school more and honestly just make me better." Arce also said that her peers have been discussing the attendance requirement and freshmen's struggles to get to school on time.

Omar said that teachers know some unexcused absences can be out of students' control, especially for freshmen who cannot drive. "We will go on a case-by-case basis," Omar said. "So, I feel good about it because

I know that we will have a very nuanced approach."

The musical begins at 7:30 p.m., which some freshmen, including Arce, said could be inconvenient for students with other activities. There will be pizza and games in the courtyard so students can stay at school before the field trip.

Omar has received around 100 permission slips at the time of writing and hopes to have all 626 freshmen attend "except for anybody who gets suspended."

"Genius is everywhere ... you never know what amazing gifts lie in a kid that could be triggered by something amazing like going to this," Omar said.

Central and the Omaha Performing Arts have had an unofficial, multi-year partnership since Kirksey's start as principal. "I just asked, and then it happens," Kirksey said.

"It's our mission to enrich the community through education and engagement initiatives," OPA said. "We look forward to hearing

about the amazing experiences that students will have."

Kirksey said she wants to give each freshmen class a cultural experience along with a college visit and community service opportunities.

"I just love that kind of stuff," Kirksey said. "So me, not selfishly, but intentionally believing in my heart that if you get outside the walls of Central and you see something else, it's eye-opening."

Omar said students' reactions and interest are "mixed" because students do not recognize that the musical is an "incredible" once-in-a-lifetime experience. "This cast is an incredibly diverse cast of actors, and they match our diversity here at Central," Omar said. "When else can you go to a musical where the cast looks like our student body?"

"This is, like, for real, for real, and what I do think is people don't understand how big of a deal this is," Kirksey said. "You won't understand how big this is until you get there."

## Student Council shares process to throwing Winter Formal dance

Elle Hurt  
contributing writer

Hearts pumping, feet jumping, and popular tunes blaring from loudspeakers, beckoning anyone and everyone to come on the dance floor and bust a move.

This is what Winter Formal is to the people who get invited to party the night away. The members and advisers of Student Council are the reason for all the night's festivities.

Student Council Sponsor Libby Cruz describes the extent the members of Student Council go through to make sure that the dance is such a success every year. "I feel like we started planning in like, November," Cruz

said. The very first step is the most important: choosing a theme. Every other step from then on rides on the theme, from choosing decorations, foods and invitations through a voting process. First year Student Council member Sihaam Ali said that the voting processes are fair. "I like having a choice; I like deciding," Ali said.

With planning things, problems can arise, and this year's problem for Student Council was the venue. As the normal venue for the dance is under construction, the Student Council members and sponsors face a huge road block with the new venue, The Hitch.

"Being in an unknown space, dealing with the uncertainty of not being there before," Cruz said was a challenge. Going in blind with the amount of decorations and space that the venue has, making the main part of what makes a dance so fun, the decorations, was hard to figure out.

The decorations for each dance can come from a number of different places, from other dances, other events, or even purchasing new ones that fit the theme better. Student Council members go to the venue to set everything up themselves before the dance even starts.

Having to get new decorations costs money, and the Student Council doesn't have

funding at all from the school for the dances that they plan. Student Council needs to fund-raise and use the money from previous ticket sales to fund these planned events. "Basically, the events kind of pay for themselves," Cruz said.

With tons of planning, certain skills are needed to bring everything together. Cruz had personal experience planning events for her college, at one point even getting paid for her position.

"It was a thing you had to apply to and do interviews," Cruz said, explaining how impressive the gig was.

## New Dundee restaurant opening early March

Millie Jackson  
staff writer

Ooh De Lally is a new restaurant in Dundee aiming to open to the public by the first week of March. It will be working with the Metropolitan Community College's 180 Re-entry Assistance Program (RAP) to help formerly incarcerated people transition into the working world.

"This should help them overcome the stigma of incarceration and provide them a path forward in their lives," Executive Director of Ooh De Lally Tim Steinbach said.

Replacing the previous location of Mark's, 4916 Underwood Ave., Ooh De Lally will be serving American cuisine and two prominent Mark's dishes, mac and cheese and bread pudding.

The 180 RAP program gives former prisoners the opportunity to train for jobs across many industries. It is the largest on-campus re-entry program in the United States, working with over 370 employers. The program began in February 2015 and has served more than 9,000 people exiting prisons, jails and treatment centers.

After completing a three-segment curriculum where they learn about prep cooking, line

cooking and serving, three program participants will work alongside three industry professionals each month. The participants can then choose to enroll in MCC's Institute for Culinary Arts.

"The main goal is to help people coming out of incarceration. We will do that by providing training in the food service industry so they will be able to gain experience in an industry with high demand," Steinbach said.

During training, the program participants will be provided the necessities for transitioning into the working world.

"This partnership will enable the trainees to focus on their training and not have to worry about financial stressors centered around transportation, housing, parole fees, hygiene, food, etc.," said Diane Good Collins, director of the 180 RAP.

Each staff member is someone whose life experiences are tied to the mission of Ooh De Lally. A board of directors governs and raises funds for the nonprofit.

"My absolute favorite part of the process has been watching the team come together and build a working relationship focused on the goal of helping others through the medium of food," Steinbach said.



JOSEPHINE McLAUGHLIN | The Register



## Central students speak on Affirmative Action ruling

Hadley Forsen-Yepes  
chief copy editor

On June 29, 2023, the United States Supreme Court struck down affirmative action, a practice used by universities that allowed an applicant's race to be considered during college admissions. Central students applying to college have now finished the first cycle of post-affirmative action applications, and they are beginning to see the impacts of the court decision on the college admissions process.

When Central senior Shruti Garapati learned of the decision, she thought it was "kind of dumb" and "unnecessary." "It felt like ... like the Supreme Court, why is that what you're spending your energy on?" Garapati asked.

"I don't think it'll make that big of a difference," senior Hime Moore said of the decision's effect on college enrollment. "I think it just adds [some] extra hurdles."

The Register contacted multiple students for interviews about the affirmative action ban, and a significant number had no comment on its effect on their college application process.

Affirmative action, also known as "race conscious admissions," resulted from the Civil Rights Act of 1964. "Because talent lives everywhere, but opportunity does not, there are undoubtedly talented students with great academic potential who have simply not had the opportunity to attain the traditional indicia of merit that provide a competitive edge in the admissions process," as the Harvard Student and Alumni Organizations put it.

Its implementation successfully resulted in admitting students who were historically excluded from selective universities, such as African Americans and Latinos. "This created unprecedented education and employment opportunities for marginalized ethnic communities, and studies published in the early 1990s also indicated white women were benefitting from affirmative action the most," CNBC said.

The debate over affirmative action's fairness has reached the Supreme Court several times. In 2003, Grutter v. Bollinger ruled that racial quotas were unconstitutional, but affirmative action could continue if race was merely one factor in a holistic

review of an applicant's file.

Twenty years later in Students for Fair Admissions (SFFA) v. President and Fellows of Harvard and SFFA v. University of North Carolina, the court declared that affirmative action violates the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment and Title VI.

Garapati is also frustrated with the misconceptions people have about race conscious admissions. "There's such a misunderstanding in the Asian community about what affirmative action does because so many of them are like, 'Oh, I'm not getting in because I'm Asian,' or they have this resentment toward it when they don't really have a full understanding of it," Garapati said.

Edward Blum, who brought the affirmative action-ending cases before the Supreme Court on behalf of SFFA, holds the same views as the students Garapati referenced. "There is no way to increase the percentage of Black and Latino students without decreasing the percentage of Asian American and white students," Blum told The New York Times after the decision.

Garapati dislikes Blum's argument, which discredits the accomplishments of the students affirmative action is helping. "People act like affirmative action is this huge thing that's just letting people in, when I'm like, they're still way underrepresented in some of these top schools," Garapati said. "They are very, very high achieving students, and that's how you get [in] there."

While an applicant's race will no longer be directly shared with admissions officers, there are indirect methods for colleges to discover it, like supplemental essays. Most college applications require long-answer questions that are used to understand the personality and background of potential students.

Moore explained that when colleges ask applicants about a hardship they have overcome or whether they've faced discrimination, "For most people, if you're a person of color, it's going to be tied back to that, so it's hard to find a topic that stands out."

Garapati expanded on the dilemma that students of color

face when asked a race/culture-based question. "There is a certain level of privilege with applying to colleges or in the academic world that being Indian and Asian has," Garapati said. "So, I felt like sometimes with applying to college, ... they're like, 'Oh, if you're Asian, don't talk about these core experiences of being a child of immigrant parents.'"

"Just like, the tiptoeing around and having to answer more questions, then it's like, do I answer it authentically? Do I also tiptoe around it?" Moore said.

Something Garapati has never been fond of, even before the 2024-25 college admissions cycle and affirmative action ban, is when an application questions her about topics that she feels are irrelevant to what she is applying for. She prefers questions that require applicants to channel their creativity or discuss their passions — questions she believes better reflect a person than asking about their circumstances, which don't always define an applicant.

"If getting rid of affirmative action caused them to create more questions about your race and identity and stuff, then I feel like it's definitely a negative effect of them not automatically knowing," Garapati said.

Something admissions officers do automatically know, however, is whether an applicant is a "legacy." Legacy admissions are when colleges give the children of alumni an increased chance of being accepted. Garapati pointed out that it was not long ago when many colleges would not admit students of color or women. "Some people's grandparents could not have gotten into these schools," Garapati said.

"Anything that has to do with race, they'll scrutinize it super heavily, take it to the Supreme Court," Garapati said. "But, legacy, because it's not directly about race — even though race is heavily involved in it, won't get the same treatment as affirmative action."

The nation will begin to see the full impact of the recent Supreme Court ruling on admissions once college decisions come out in the spring and fall enrollment is finalized. For now, Garapati and Moore are hopeful that the decision will not negatively affect the diversity of American universities.

# District undergoes transition to new online program

Ethan Hughes  
staff writer

Next school year, the 2024-25 school year, Omaha Public Schools will officially switch to Canvas from Microsoft Teams. In fact, all of Nebraska, both public and private schooling, is switching as per an agreement with Canvas's parent company.

Canvas is a learning and education system made by Instructure Inc. It is designed to make learning easier for students, as it is made for their use.

Teams, in contrast, was made by Microsoft mostly for businesses and later adapted for school use.

This year, 2023-24, OPS announced that it was switching to Canvas next year, but teachers were still free to use either Teams or Canvas until then.

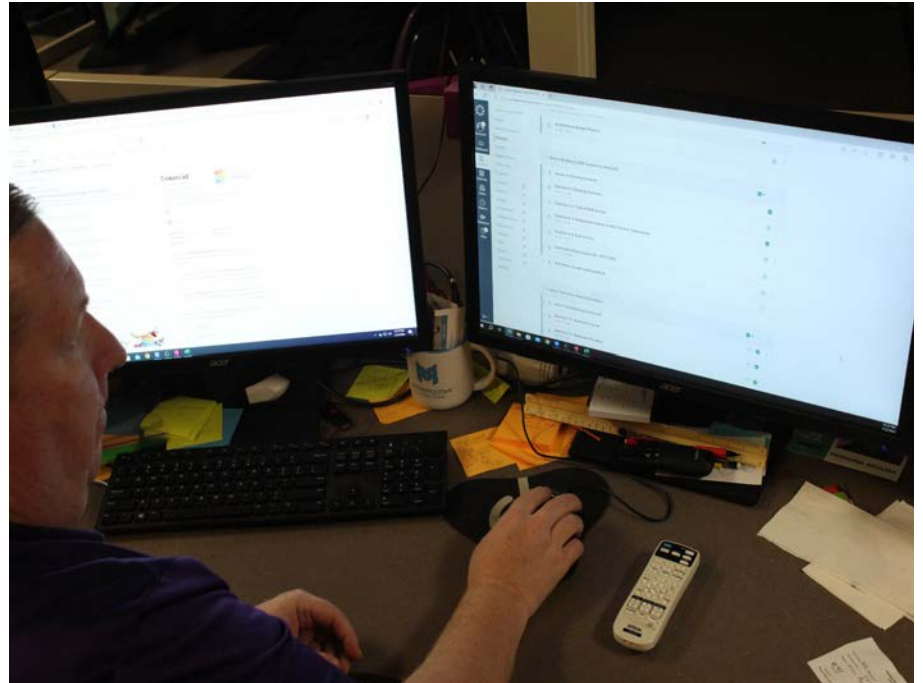
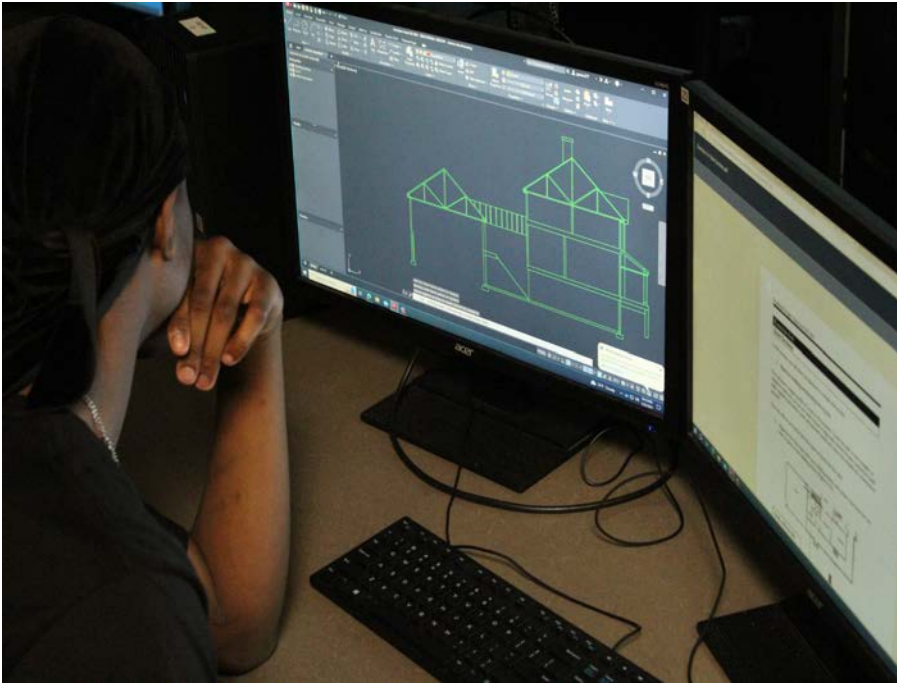
Teachers are greatly affected by this change, as many have to learn an entirely new program, and several will have to alter their syllabi to match.

According to Benjamin Boeckman, a social studies teacher at Central, who uses Canvas, he

uses it because of the differences between the two systems. Aside from the fact that the district was switching anyways, he said that he prefers Canvas's information and organization, although he does prefer Team's communication options. "For educational resources," Boeckman said, "Canvas is superior."

On the other side, Diane Allen, an English teacher at Central, argues that there's no need to switch. "Why fix what's not broken?" Allen said. However, Allen also stated that she will switch next year as the district does. "The district does whatever the district wants to do," Allen said. "I just have to adapt."

Another social studies teacher, Jordan Boyer, agreed with Allen. "If they tell me I can keep Teams, then that is what I'm going to do because it is what I'm most comfortable with," Boyer said. However, much like Allen, he also said, "If they tell me that I have to switch to Canvas, then I will begrudgingly conform and learn a new platform."



Whitman Rutledge | The Register Left, student works on an architecture project through the Canvas app; right, a teacher navigating the modules page.

## Central student participates in 'Living the Dream' competition

Marlie Best  
contributing writer

Freshmen Kylee Fulkerson participated in the "Living The Dream" competition at the Holland Performing Arts Center on Martin Luther King Jr Day.

The "Living The Dream" competition has been going on for six years now and is a opportunity for students from around the Omaha area to express themselves. At the competition students can choose to express themselves through dance, spoken word, vocal music, and instrumental music, and there are a wide range of topics.

"I feel like this event really captures the will of kids to be able to get on stage and perform and talk about something that's important to them," Fulkerson said.

Fulkerson was the only student from Central to present this year and she did an original spoken word piece about the LGBTQ+ community.

"I feel like there's a lot of discrimination against the LGBTQIA+ community and I just feel like it's not noticed enough," Fulkerson said.

Fulkerson talked about the LGBTQ+ community, but at this MLK event students can speak about almost anything if students are passionate about and willing to put the work in to do it. The event is for students to feel empowered and like they have a voice to create changes they want to see.

Bryan High School had 11 students participate in the "Living the Dream" competition this year. Social Studies Teacher Nicholas Clawson from Bryan gave Central some suggestions of how Central can get even more people to represent the school and all it has to offer. Passion for

topics that interest a student, some clips looking at past performances from this event, advertising it around the school, asking for help or support from teachers, and word of mouth are all examples of how Bryan has recruited students.

"The first year there was three freshmen boys, from Bryan High, who did a Donald Trump diss-track and that angered a lot of people. I mean I assumed it did, but I found out for sure this year I was told that had angered a lot of people, but that's what the whole things about. MLK was spicy, he angered a lot of people," Clawson said.

A helpful part of getting a lot of people engaged and involved with this event is students having support from their school, Clawson said. Having a teacher to check up on students or suggest students for this event and support their craft is beneficial.

This event honors the legacy and passion of Martin Luther King Jr., but it also is for students and what they get out of it. This event helps students overcome the common fear of public speaking and performing, while talking about topics of their choosing.

"Performing art to me is sacred, it's a sacred act that I take very seriously. It gives them an opportunity to combat and overcome the fear of public speaking and performing, it gives them courage, confidence, self assurance, self love. "I always tell them 'no pain no gain, you are going to have to practice.'" If you put in the work at the end and after you perform, I know that feeling, and there's nothing else like it in the world, the feeling of pride," Clawson said.

## Central teacher hopes to bring trust back into GSA club

Ella Levy  
co-editor-in-chief

The Gender-Sexuality Alliance (GSA) club never completely ended at Omaha Central High School, but over the past couple years, it started to trickle to an end. The past sponsor was unable to be as available as the club needed. The biggest issue came when students were unsure when meetings were going to happen.

Hayden Brown, an English teacher at Central and new club sponsor, said attendance started to drop.

Brown started teaching at Central during the 2021-22 school year. He noticed the GSA club was not as prominent as he wanted and assumed it would be. After spending his first two years observing, he felt it was time to get involved. "I think having a GSA and working to make it better is [a] symbolic act of, 'This is how our school is going to be; this is how I would like our school to be,'" he said.

Brown himself heard about GSA in high school. He then attended a conservative Christian college, where he tried to start a GSA club but was shut down. After coming to Central, Brown aims to take his third go at GSA.

GSA has importance not just to the school but to Brown himself. GSA "shows a desire to make sure this is a

place for everybody," Brown said.

Although the club never technically ended, Brown is having to rebuild it. "It's attempting to be a fresh start," Brown said.

This year, GSA has had a few successful meetings, but they are struggling with low attendance. "The first year of anything is not going to be its best year," Brown said. After this year of building a foundation and getting people involved, he plans to go bigger next year.

Meetings are every Tuesday and Thursday after school. "I attempt to let student decision guide what we do," Brown said. The meetings can be about a wide range of things: discussions, writing letters to politicians, taking a trip to watch a film or a student-led activity.

"The bottom line of GSA is to make life simpler for those who need it and to educate those who need that," Brown said.

As for the goals of GSA this year, Brown highlights trust and consistency, which would instill confidence among the students. "I hope that we can begin to trust it ... it needs to be very, very consistent," he said.

"At its heart, GSA is supposed to be a place where students feel they can go consistently for support or to broaden their scope of the world," Brown said.



Mauro Gutierrez | The Register

## Wilson inducted into Millard South Hall of Fame

Katie Besancon  
staff writer

Central High U.S. History teacher Scott Wilson was inducted into the Millard South High School Hall of Fame on Jan. 27, 2024. “I was speechless. It was wonderful and kind of fainting; it never crossed my mind, especially since I work at Central and it’s a different school district, it’s a different school,” he said.

Wilson has been at Central for 27 years teaching Advanced Placement U.S. History, Honors U.S. History, U.S. History, and International Baccalaureate U.S. History. He earned the Omaha Central High School Teacher of the Year Award in 2005 as well as the Alice E. Buffett Outstanding Teacher Award for Omaha Public Schools in 2006, one of the most prestigious education awards for an OPS teacher.

Wilson found out about his induction when he got a call from his high school AP U.S. History teacher. “I was happy to hear from him. I couldn’t imagine why he was calling me,” Wilson said. “He told me that I was going to be in the Millard South Hall of Fame; I was speechless.”

The night before the induction ceremony, Millard South invited all its Hall of Fame inductees to their girls’ basketball game,

followed by a presentation to honor the inductees. Little did Wilson know his Central colleagues were there to surprise him.

“I started seeing people in purple gather across the court. Then I started to recognize a few of them, like Ms. [Michelle] Synowiecki and Ms. [Jennifer] Stastny. I turned to Mrs. [Beth] Wilson, and she could hardly hold in her smile,” he said. “Then, I knew what was going on, and I had to choke back some tears. I ran over and hugged them all. It was so special to have them there, and I will never forget that kind gesture by them.”

Many of Wilson’s Millard South teachers had a role in him wanting to become a history teacher. Aside from the teachers, the most enjoyable memories from Wilson’s time at Millard South “were the friendships that you make. I was also in the school play, and that was fun.”

Wilson’s current connection to Millard South is only as an alumnus. “Occasionally, I will go back for basketball games when Central plays them, but I think all of my teachers are retired.”



WHITMAN RUTLEDGE | The Register

## November presidential election resembles weight of 2020

Ethan Hughes  
staff writer

Here it is: the next presidential election year, 2024.

Last election cycle, the main front runners were Republican billionaire and at-the-time incumbent President Donald Trump, running for his second term, and lifelong politician Joe Biden, a Democrat and former vice-president. After a lot of controversy, including accusations of voter fraud, mail-in vote problems and online voting, Biden won the election, much to the annoyance of many.

This year is likely to be similar.

Currently, at the time of writing, Biden is the likely Democratic nominee as the incumbent. On the Republican side, Trump and Nikki Haley are both running for the nomination. While the winner is still up in the air, Trump has won Iowa, New Hampshire and Nevada and is currently considered the front runner.

If Trump wins the nomination, it is likely that the election will be similar to 2020. Whoever wins would be just as unclear as it was four years ago.

There would be a major difference, though, being the several indictments that have been placed upon Trump – one by Georgia for alleged attempts to falsely overthrow the victory of Biden, one in New York for tax evasion, one in Florida for mishandling of federal documents (theft and disguising, specifically), and one in Washington, D.C. for attempts to overthrow the election on Jan. 6, 2021.

A concern that many have is whether a felon can run for a political office, let alone presi-

dent. The technical answer is yes. There is no law in any state or nationwide that prevents a felon or any kind of criminal from running for president. Because of this, if Trump is convicted for any of the crimes he is currently being prosecuted for, then the election will likely be far more complicated.

Trump being accused of being responsible for the 2021 riots will not alone prevent him from running. Although Maine and Colorado are trying to remove him from the ballot for this accusation, the Supreme Court is weighing in on that. The oral arguments began on Feb. 8.

Trump’s first, second and third court dates are currently set for March 5, March 25, and May 20.

What’s important is the knowledge that Nebraska is one of two states that cast their votes differently from the others, alongside Maine. In these two states, the government sends their votes into the Electoral College (roughly) proportionally to their voters. Most other states simply give all their votes to the winning party in their state, also known as “winner-take-all” or “first past the post.”

This is important because the Nebraska-Maine system statistically increases the importance of individual votes. If a state gets 51% pro-Republican, any other state will give all of its votes to the winning party. Nebraska, meanwhile, will give two votes to the majority vote, and then award the other three by congressional district. Maine works the same way.

The Republican and Democratic Primaries in Nebraska are both on May 17.

## FAFSA undergoes significant changes

Grace Sunseri  
staff writer

The US Department of Education made significant changes to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) application process for the 2024-2025 school year.

FAFSA is a form that prospective college students fill out to determine the financial aid they are eligible for. Changes include that the number of questions went from 108 to 36, and parents and students now fill out their respective parts of the form. The opening date for this year was also moved back from Oct. 1 to Dec. 31, 2023.

Central’s college counselor and AP dual enrollment coordinator, Angela Meyer, noted the challenges in this specific change. “[The date change] caused some stress to some students and families,” Meyer said. But she also believes the reduction in questions made the delayed opening easier.

Senior Avery Gilbreath did not have a huge issue with the later date. “It felt pretty much the same,” she said. “My parents have done it multiple other times ... so it wasn’t a burden or anything.” Gilbreath did

note her frustration in withholding her college decision longer because the date was changed, and it could possibly affect where she ends up going.

Meyer said students can usually complete it all independently, but

the most common issues have been tech issues. “There are still some glitches and tech issues,” Meyer said. FAFSA is trying to fix these bugs, though, and the website does occasionally go down for maintenance.

The most helpful changes, according to Meyer, are the changes for reporting information from tax returns and the separate sections for students and parents.

Parents can automatically include their tax return information

on the form. “You don’t have to look on a certain line in a parent’s tax form ... and do the math,” Meyer said.

The least helpful parts come to first-generation students. There have been issues for students applying who are United States citizens but whose parents have undocumented immigration status. These special circumstances can be confusing, Meyer said.

Starting in the 2024-2025 school year, 12th graders in Nebraska will be required to complete a FAFSA form to graduate. There can be exceptions, and guardians can waive the requirement, but for the most part, everyone will have to apply, no matter their financial circumstances.

The opening day will also return to Oct. 1 next year. With the late opening this year, it collided with students’ other college responsibilities, such as applications and scholarships. Meyer said, “We will have more time, and any time we have more time, it is less stressful.”



RAKHIJA ABDALLA MOHAMMED | The Register

## New club to focus on city planning

Bri Gaines  
contributing writer

Urban planning is the process of developing and designing urban areas to meet the needs of the community, but to Evan DeMaria, the creator of the Urban Planning Club at Central High, it means “a better chance at community.”

Evan DeMaria is a 12th grader who has a plan to start a new way of life in Omaha and he introduced it to teachers and got a response from Adam Raffety, a history teacher who also wants to make a change.

“People who are interested in urban planning and development can talk about it and make a change,” DeMaria said. DeMaria, he wanted to start this club because of his interest in urban planning, wanting to travel to bigger cities, and wanting a

better Omaha for the future. He spoke on being excited about the club and possibilities that the club has started, and that this is “something that can be at Central after he is gone and could make a difference.”

Raffety and DeMaria both believe that the base of urban planning is community, and that community is what makes a place and a difference. “There’s something for everyone in urban planning if you care about community, fashion, biking, roads, or anything there is something for you in urban planning,” Raffety said.

Raffety also hopes to better connect and serve the needs of the club and its interests, and to have better connections as the club grows. “I used to live in Europe and in Europe it’s a better walkability and a closer com-

munity,” Raffety said. “Food trucks, public parks, arts, and gardens are all apart of urban planning.”

The club went to The Cottonwood Omaha where they looked at the hotel’s history and saw how they combined modern architecture with past history.

The club meets every other Wednesday from 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. in room 218.



The Urban Planning Club poses during an outing earlier this year. Photo Courtesy of ADAM RAFFETY

## English teacher heads creative writing opportunity

Colin Simmons  
contributing writer

“Duct Tape” is an opportunity for the students in Deron Larson’s creative writing classes to express themselves and see the imaginations of fellow writers. There are currently 26 issues of “Duct Tape,” the most recent coming from December. Some of the issues will have a theme, but that is entirely up to the students that contribute to the work. “Duct Tape” is an accumulation of pieces written by the students in creative writing to make connections with each other and go beyond their boundaries. Larson has been the sole creative writing teacher since his third year at Central in 2004, and he has led issues six through 26 after taking over for the “founder” of “Duct Tape,” David Martin.

The students in creative writing are given majority control of the class for this assignment. Larson loves watching the process and collaboration unfold throughout the weeks of development. Seeing his students come out of their shells and making strides in communication along with their writing is very exciting. Larson is always open to opportunities for improvement but leaves a lot of the layout structure in the hands of the honors creative writing students.

The students’ visions are more important to him than any ideas he might concoct. A handful of students have suggested a web version with the way everyone absorbs media now and Larson is open to making that change if students are willing to put in the work.

In the upcoming issue of “Duct Tape,” this semester’s group of students are just getting their feet wet into the daily routine of creative writing. There are some students who have taken the creative writing course multiple times and Larson relies heavily upon the ideas that they have because of their past experiences.

Many students at Central are unfamiliar with “Duct Tape” issues and even the creative writing class itself. “It’s an opportunity to put words into the world that aren’t journalistic, that aren’t hard news. It’s an opportunity to assert one’s imagination and maybe make a connection with somebody else,” Larson said.

One of those creative writing veterans is junior Rowan Cavender, who has been in three semesters of the course and was a part of one “Duct Tape” issue that she submitted a piece for. She said this past issue took longer than usual because of the high number of students who took part in it. Cavender credits Larson for much of the work done.

“He’s providing us with the papers to edit and we piece together those pieces according to how they sound together,” Cavender said.

Cavender’s favorite part about “Duct Tape” is the opportunity for people to get their pieces published and seen by others. Challenges came along during the editing process. “Understanding other people’s work, not in a bad way at all, but just understanding the movement of it and where it belongs within the issue,” Cavender said.

A writing piece for “Duct Tape” is much like any other piece for Cavender as she forms a vision and completes it through the ideas she gets along the process. Laying

out a plan for her writing makes it easier to develop clear thoughts and build a cohesive story. As far as improvements go for future issues of “Duct Tape,” “More participants, less work done by Mr. Larson and maybe more students putting recognition into it,” Cavender said.

The amount of people who are unaware of its existence is something Larson and Cavender hope to improve. Issues can be found on the purple kiosk on the second floor, three side. The small, but unique project has given students an opportunity to express themselves in a judgment free zone. What makes “Duct Tape” special, Larson said, was “That twinkle in their eye; that opportunity where they made a connection with somebody that they wouldn’t have made if they hadn’t put their words in that way.”



Deron Larson teaches creative writing in 240.

HAYLON SIPE | The Register



The “Duct Tape” bookcase near room 240.

COLIN SIMMONS | The Register



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## ISSUES AFFECTING US ALL

### *The Register urges senators, student body to support student press freedom bill*

LB1071 would protect student journalists in Nebraska from censorship and prior review

#### **|The Register Editorial Board**

On March 31, 2022, the principal of Grand Island Northwest High School walked into the journalism classroom with a new list of rules from the administration. Three transgender students were forced to use their given names for bylines because their use of chosen names was “controversial.”

In response, the students published their final issue of the year in June, dedicating three stories to LGBTQ+ pride. After this issue was published, the school administration retaliated by shuttering the paper, leaving their high school without any student journalism.

Unfortunately, what happened in Grand Island is not an outlier. The Student Press Law Center has chronicled dozens of similar issues over the past few years. But Legislative Bill 1071, which is currently being considered by the Nebraska Legislature, has the chance to make this kind of censorship a thing of the past in our state.

We speak as students who have succeeded in our high school paper because we attend a school whose administration does not arbitrarily censor student journalists. But unfortunately, we know that not every student journalist in Nebraska is so fortunate.

At a time in which social media has enabled misinformation about our schools to run rampant, student journalism has emerged as a vital source of information for students, teachers and parents. We want every student journalist in Nebraska to have the same opportunities we had to tell stories that are important to their communities.

LB 1071 would narrow the circumstances in which school administrators could censor student publications. If passed into law, administrators in Nebraska would only be able to censor student journalism if it invades others’ privacy, breaks the law, violates accepted standards of journalistic ethics, or creates a clear and present danger to the school.

In 1988, the Supreme Court ruling in *Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier* said that school administrators have the right to censor media when censorship is “reasonably related to legitimate pedagogical concerns.” This ruling curtailed the recognized precedent established in *Tinker v. Des Moines* – but only for student journalists. Regular students cannot be censored unless their speech disrupts the learning environment. The *Hazelwood* standard has essentially given school administrations carte blanche to censor student newspapers.

Often, as we saw at Grand Island Northwest, stories that are censored address LGBTQ+ issues, issues related to race, are critical of the school administration, or expose scandals. As Nebraskans, it’s important to us that we’re able to report on issues affecting us and our community.

In the status quo, that line is blurred – this legislation serves to help not only student jour-

nalists but their schools by protecting the school and district from liability. In turn, this helps to create an environment where students feel free to report on and engage with complex topics, sharpen their journalistic prowess and prepare them for the world. Districts often try explaining that student publications and the opinions of the district are inextricably intertwined as a point to knock this type of legislation. This bill specifically targets this type of argument, giving school boards a reason to support LB 1071.

Moreover, this bill protects school districts from lawsuits. To this date, no school district has ever been held liable in U.S. court for the content of a student publication. But, through *Hazelwood’s* vague definitions of “legitimate pedagogical concerns,” expensive and embarrassing litigations between students and schools often ensue. After the student journalists at Northwest High were censored by administrators, taxpayers in Grand Island had to foot the bill for a costly lawsuit from the ACLU and Nebraska High School Press Association alleging the students’ First Amendment rights were violated. A clear, direct policy about when student media may be restrained ensures that schools and journalists are protected.

Most importantly, it overturns the policy of prior review. Prior review exists when a school administration must approve a student publication before it goes to print. Prior review is criticized by every journalism education group in the U.S. as the wrong way to teach student journalists. Yet, prior review continues in Nebraska. When a policy is criticized by all national education associations surrounding a certain subject, it is removed from the curriculum, not further entrenched. Students cannot learn algebra without learning quadratic functions, nor biology without learning cell functions. This policy allows us to practice good journalism with the guidance of an adviser who will support us in our pursuit of newsgathering.

LB 1071 does not open schools to lawsuits, allow students to publish without proper feedback, or step on any other district policy. When student journalists are free to address issues affecting their community, the whole student body benefits. Passing LB 1071 is imperative for all students who wish to attend schools where justice is the default operational motivation instead of censorship.

For the past 138 years, *The Register* has served the students and teachers of Central High School by seeking out the most important stories of the day and uplifting student voices. Today, we ask for your support in ensuring that future student journalists at Central can continue that mission. Call or email your state senator and urge them to support LB 1071 to protect Nebraska’s student press for generations to come.

### *iPad kids need better parenting*

Becca Rock  
staff writer

The average 10-year-old is shifting from playing with dolls, collecting toys like Shopkins, and playing outside to collecting makeup and skincare products endorsed by 20-year-old influencers. This is connected to the rise of early social media use and the integration of technology as a form of parenting.

Generation Alpha and the iPad entered the world in 2010. This correlation is seen in public today, where children are handed iPads when they seem to act up in public. For example, the other day, I saw two 8-year-olds crying at First Watch, and suddenly, the kids were motionless, looking zombie-like into the iPad they were handed. This is what we call parenting.

The older half of Generation Alpha, who have access to social media, are becoming heavily influenced by people significantly older than them. Which, in turn, is creating preteens who are rapidly becoming addicted to technology. On TikTok, many beauty influencers film “Get Ready with Me” videos. These are videos of influencers getting ready for an event and showing the skincare and makeup products they use. These videos have caused preteens to go out and buy these products, collecting them as if they were Shopkins.

Kids are supposed to be the ones exploring: climbing trees, riding bikes, learning about the world around them and acting like kids. The CDC states that children 8 to 10 years old have a daily screen time of six hours. Thus, instead of going outside and playing with the neighbors down the street, these children are given phones, sit in their dark rooms and are absorbed by technology.

In this technology use, kids are being exposed to trends of skincare that do not fit their needs. They have even been starting to use skincare that is “anti-aging,” and they are wrecking their skin because the products they are using contain the ingredient retinol. Retinol increases skin cell production, which can be good for combatting acne and aging skin. But, if kids use this product, their skin can become irritated, dry and inflamed.

Products such as Drunk Elephant are known for their cute, trendy packaging that attracts many young consumers. Their products are also used in many child and adult influencers’ content on TikTok and YouTube. But many of their products also have harmful ingredients for their young audience. These products are suitable for older skin and anti-aging, not for a child’s sensitive face.

While pre-teens and children try to become older faster, trends of teen girls and young adults embracing their youthful girlhood increase. This is shown through the “coquette” style of wearing bows and wearing pink. Preteens are acting older and trying to become the people we (teens) do not want to be anymore.

Kids cannot be kids when they are constantly trapped within social media. They are never given time to be bored, and it shows. Generation Alpha is the definition of creativity being ripped from childhood. I do not think that is their fault; I think it shows that we as a society need a change in our technological usage, especially in our ways of parenting. Parenting should be showing a child how to interact with the world. When they are given iPads at any minor inconvenience, in the future, we will have a generation that needs phones to simply interact with another person.



Mommy, what do you mean Santa can't afford Dior?

CRIS BATAILLON | The Register

#### **RIP snow days p. 9**

I miss snow days. It used to be that I could rely on a handful of days in the winter when the weather would cover for me, canceling school and giving me a day of rest during one of the busiest times of the year.

#### **Why have love when you can have consumerism? p. 10**

Ah, Valentine’s Day: The day of love, expensive gifts and dinner reservations.

#### **X users, abandon ship while you can p. 10**

Twitter is an abomination of a website that should be abandoned and left to rot and burn, empty and alone.

#### **Central should bring back drivers ed classes p. 11**

Central has been missing a drivers ed class for decades, yet its students would still benefit from drivers education offered by the school.



# Why have love when you can have consumerism?

Grace Sunseri  
staff writer

Ah, Valentine's Day: The day of love, expensive gifts and dinner reservations. The holiday has gone through many changes over the past 2,000 years. It started as a Catholic feast day to commemorate a Roman priest. Then it was mentioned in a 15th-century poem declaring it as the day birds found their mates. William Shakespeare even mentioned the day in "Hamlet" as a day for love. Subsequently, lovers began using the day to send notes to their beloved.

Like most commercialized holidays, Valentine's Day was popularized worldwide in the early 20th century. Ready-made cards first began being produced in 1900. According to Hallmark, 145 million Valentine's cards are sent every year. This is the second biggest card holiday of the year, behind only Christmas.

The commercialization of this day waters down the intent entirely. The day is supposed to be about cherishing the people you love, but it has turned into a day marked by absurd spending. In their annual consumer spending survey, the National Retail Federation said in 2023 Americans spent around \$25.9 billion on Valentine's Day presents and festivities. The average spent per person is over \$190.

While it can be nice to spend one day celebrating, why should you hoard all your love for

one day and not give the same effort throughout the entire year? Instead of spending over \$100, here are some ideas for high schoolers.

Quality time is the best way to show someone you care for them. On Valentine's Day, consider doing just that, at the many places around Omaha you can visit.

With an Omaha Public Library card, you can get free passes to places like the Durham Museum, the Henry Doorly Zoo, and even Fontenelle Forest. With this nice weather, it is the perfect time to spend time outdoors with your loved ones.

Another idea is just a date day around the city. Valentine's Day is on a weekday, so move it to the weekend. Go for breakfast; Harold's Koffee House is a very cheap but very delicious option. Then, make your way to the Old Market and walk around and visit shops to browse everything downtown Omaha has to offer.

If you are looking to stay in and save some money, make dinner and dessert together. It is cheaper to buy the ingredients and cook at home than to order in or go out. And it's more intimate and romantic!

If you do want to go out to dinner, consider fast food. Get ready like you are going to a five-star restaurant and make your way to places like McDonald's or Burger King. This can make the occasion much more special, even if you are eating chicken nuggets and not \$40 steak.

## RIP snow days

Brayden Simpson  
staff writer

I miss snow days. It used to be that I could rely on a handful of days in the winter when the weather would cover for me, canceling school and giving me a day of rest during one of the busiest times of the year. When I was younger, I would wake up late, eat my Cheerios, and stomp out the door to roll around in the snow for hours. As I got older, I was more reluctant to spend all day outside and more appreciative of the opportunity to sleep and catch up on homework.

And then telecommunications took that all away from me.

The COVID-19 pandemic kept kids at home for school, negating the need for a physical classroom. With that discovery, schools everywhere realized they could apply the same system to days canceled for inclement weather. And thus, childhood joy everywhere was extinguished.

Unfortunately for all parties, the new "Remote Learning Days" accomplished very little. The 20-minute class schedule combined the "no learning" aspect of snow days with the "waking up early" aspect of in-school learning. We were suffering from the downsides of both in-person and at-home learning, with no solution to the problem.

It always seemed to me that this new kind of schooling was more for show than for anything else. After all, how were we supposed to cover any content in 20 minutes? We couldn't. Taking attendance took long enough with the struggles both teachers and students faced using Teams.

In fact, many teachers simply dismissed my classes after the first five minutes. Nevertheless, we were required to show up. Even if no grades were entered, our attendance counted. So, it was mandated that everyone, all students and all teachers, were required to wake up and get ready for school to accomplish nothing.

This year, we've switched to a better model. Instead of logging onto calls for 20 silent minutes, students do not have to actively participate at all. That means no more attendance, and no more attempts at some kind of activity. Now, there are optional assignments or readings posted to Teams or Canvas, which students are free (and encouraged) to engage with, but not required. In fact, teachers are not allowed to introduce any new content while students are at home, so the most they can offer is a review of past work. This is an obvious step up, but it begs the question: why not just make it a true snow day? If what is posted to Teams isn't required, then surely it can't be important to the curriculum. And if that's the case, why bother at all? It feels like the district is grasping for ways to optimize our resources to eliminate snow days when it's just not necessary.

We pad our school year with more days than we need for just this reason, so what's wrong with just letting a day off be a day off? Besides, people need a break every once in a while. Snow days used to provide that relief. Now, we've managed to overcome the inefficiency of weather and childlike joy, and I don't like it. For the sake of my third-grade self, bring back snow days. Please.



"Snow day at Clark Park" by ceg is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

## 24 habits to take up in 2024

Ella Levy  
co-editor-in-chief

1. Make your bed- Starting the day off by making your bed is an easy accomplishment to achieve. It is something you can check off your to-do list right away. And who doesn't love getting in a made bed at night?

2. Stay hydrated- Hydration is so good for your body. Staying hydrated may mean drinking a glass of water when you wake up or drinking a bottle of water throughout the day. Being hydrated varies from person to person, but it is good for everyone.

3. Express yourself without consequences- We all have so many emotions throughout the day, but not all of them need to be voiced. But they do need to be expressed. Start journaling, writing, doing art, making music—anything to relax and express yourself without consequences.

4. Tell people you love them- So often, we think of someone and miss them. But we don't take the extra step to call or text, and then we forget and continue missing them. Get into the habit of sharing your thoughts and sending a quick text when you're thinking of someone you love.

5. Pick up your room before bed- This is a nice way to wind down your day. And when you wake up, you have a clean room and one less thing to do.

6. Do the little things your future self will appreciate - Do the simple tasks you are putting off, such as laundry or putting away clothes. Make the next day simpler for your future self.

7. Start an assignment the day you get it- When we get a task, we often put it off because we are unsure of the difficulty level and how long it will take. But if you start it early, you will know how long it will take and will be more likely to take it on.

8. Schedule out big tasks- Schedule out big papers, applications, or anything that will take a lot of time and effort. A schedule will make the task less scary and will give you something to check off every day.

9. Stretch when you wake up- Take five minutes at the start of the day to wake your body up in a pleasant way.

10. Give yourself deadlines- It is hard to achieve something if nothing is pushing you to do so. Set goals for yourself and give deadlines to them so you can achieve them.

11. Wind down before bed- Winding down before bed will help you to fall asleep faster. Having a bedtime routine can help you wind down. It could consist of skincare, cleaning up your room, setting out things for the next day, or reading.

12. Set your alarm a few minutes early- When you get up, you can take your time to get out of bed and go at your own speed in the morning.

13. Go through your social media following- Take a couple of minutes and go through the social media you follow. Take time to mute and unfollow so you can feel free to be yourself and get rid of accounts that are bad for your mental health.

14. Go on walks

Get in the habit of going on walks either by yourself or with someone to clear your head and give yourself a break in the middle of the day. I recommend a simple walk around your neighborhood or walking to the nearest park.

15. Change things

Stop doing something you hate. Take the time to change things, such as your outfit in the morning if you don't like it or the room decor you keep staring at.

16. Bring aspects of balance into life

Make sure you are balancing your mental health, social life, and work life. Balance is the key to making sure one doesn't take over the others and leave you with nothing. I recommend keeping a schedule to keep track.

17. Get off electronics at least 15 minutes before bed

Staying on your phone until you fall asleep is only keeping your brain awake and making you tired in the morning. Get off electronics as part of your night routine and wind down without them.

18. Appreciate the little things

Stop and look around at life every once in a while. Take a couple minutes to admire the world around you and appreciate where you are in life.

19. Move around throughout the day

This doesn't mean you have to run or even exercise every day. Stretch, do yoga, go for a walk, or just take the stairs instead of the elevator.

20. Clean out little spaces

Often, we look at the entire picture and feel overwhelmed. If you clean one little space per week, such as your desk, your room or your house, your week will not only end clean but truly organized.

21. Let things go

So often, we spend our energy holding onto negative things. Make a habit of letting things go and holding onto the good things in life.

22. Introduce yourself

Make a habit of introducing yourself, talking, and reaching out first. We will never be at a point in our lives where it is too late to meet someone or make a new friend. Meet new people and get to know them to expand your life.

23. Be supportive

Be supportive of the people you love. Be helpful and give advice when people ask, but always make sure it is with the best intent.

24. Believe in yourself

Get into the habit of believing in yourself. Be your own biggest fan because no one else is. Rebut negative thoughts with what is real and be there for yourself through the rest.

# X users, abandon ship while you still can

Ethan Hughes  
staff writer

Twitter (Officially now X, but I'll be using Twitter for the sake of clarity) is an abomination of a website that should be abandoned and left to rot and burn, empty and alone.

This is a very extreme opinion, I know. But I hold it, nevertheless. And I have a few reasons why I feel this way.

One is the (tenuous term) radicalization of Twitter towards political parties. Because Twitter heavily relies on the idea of posting whatever you want (as long as it doesn't insult, threaten or otherwise bother a given business that Twitter likes), many politicians from several countries (but mostly the US) have taken to getting their Twitter followers riled up to listen to whatever they say.

But that's not the focus here.

The second reason is more important – Twitter doesn't only radicalize people politically; what it usually does is filter out their common-God-forsaken-sense. On the filter end, users, especially older users, often obsess over the concept of "free speech" and how they can "say whatever they want." Thus, they will begin to say worse and worse things because they cling to the idea that they can't be punished or silenced.

Well, for one, that's not what the First Amendment says. It simply says that people have a right to free speech, not that they have the right to say whatever they want and get away with it. Being criticized or punished isn't having your First Amendment rights broken. The First Amendment just guarantees that you can say it to begin with.

Granted, this issue can be found in basically every social media site available to Americans, albeit to a lesser degree than on Twitter. You can find people like this on Facebook, YouTube, Reddit, Tumblr, etc. There's just more of them on Twitter. Since most people can generally ignore things like this, it's not a huge issue, although it is unques-

tionably a downside.

The bigger problem is the lack of common decency and sense. What social media tends to encourage is anonymity – you can say things you would never say in real life, because who's going to stop you if they don't know who you are?

But anonymity only goes so far. After a certain point, it seems that people just lose the ability to comprehend that the other users beyond the screen are actual people with lives.

This is most visible with the concept of "doxing" – posting private information about a person in a location where it can be accessed by the general public. While this theoretically can include car license plates, phone numbers, email addresses or names, doxing is usually most dangerous when it reveals housing information. No person with even a drop of common sense would ever do this – same with death threats.

I'll be direct. I have never doxed a person. As such, I cannot understand how badly you must hate someone and how lacking in common sense you must be to send death threats to and leak information about another person. No one can say that this is a healthy mentality. It is extremely dangerous and must be stamped out.

And the real problem is that not only does Twitter do nothing about doxing, but its system also almost encourages people to get more extreme and lose that common sense faster. The system of Twitter works so that while you aren't exclusively shown content by the people you follow, it does filter out minor opinions you disagree with until you are generally shown only either extremely different opinions or ones you strongly agree with. This leads people to disregard the feelings of those they don't like or whom they generally disagree with, and often this "disregarding" can become a lot more extreme.

Consider how there have been several people who were

simply driven off the platform, often for no real reason. I'll bring up an example many may not be familiar with but is still the best example – a medium-sized YouTuber known as "JoCat," a very unproblematic internet personality who is very actively pro-LGBTQ+. A few years ago, on April 2, 2021, he posted a joking, gender-bent version of the song "Boys" by Lizzo, swapping the concept to girls instead of men.

The joke was fairly well received not only within his community but on YouTube as a whole. Objectively, it was harmless. The parody itself is talking about how JoCat likes a variety of women, not just ones who are traditionally attractive. In fact, this is a positive message.

But once it made its way onto Twitter in December 2023, it was met with fire and fury. JoCat and his family received several death threats and were doxed several times until he publicly quit the internet.

This is not okay. This is indefensible.

And while this is a terrible story that no one deserves to be the star of, I'd like to point out that not only is this not a unique tale, but Twitter is almost universally the common thread when things like this happen. Something or someone is just fine, no controversy or public shame, until a random Twitter user posts about their dislike of them. Then, due to how the algorithm works, the site suddenly bursts into uproar over a non-issue – like posting a song parody swapping the men and women in the lyrics a song.

Because of how Twitter functions, what even a couple of people say can become trending. People who agree with an opinion or who even just jump on the bandwagon aren't helping when they over-escalate something that was originally not a problem.

Twitter doesn't deserve to exist if it promotes this toxic, actively dangerous environment. I'd advise all current Twitter users to abandon ship while they still can before the site becomes truly unsalvageable.

# Overconsumption makes Stanleys unsustainable

Millie Jackson  
staff writer

Founded in 1913, Stanley has been an essential for high-quality, lasts-for-life food and beverage products. On their website, they claim to be a sustainable staple for everyone, but how true is this statement? With the recent popularity circling their 40 oz quencher bottle, the mass production and overconsumption surrounding this brand have proven it to be quite the opposite of sustainable.

Stanley has been popular in the market for durable and reliable insulated containers, particularly thermoses and water bottles, for several decades. The brand has become associated with high standards, making it a popular choice among outdoor enthusiasts, travelers and individuals looking for reliable hydration solutions.

By creating countless unnecessary colors and variations of their products, Stanley has further pushed overconsumption of them. Collectors feel they have to have each and every color, and Stanley uses that for their benefit instead of considering the environmental effects.

Overconsumption is the excessive use or purchase of goods and services beyond what is necessary for basic needs. It often involves the unnecessary accumulation of material possessions, leading to increased demand for resources and energy. Mass production is the large-scale manufacturing of goods. Both overconsumption and mass production can have detrimental effects on the environment for several reasons.

Mass production relies on extensive resource extraction and energy consumption, contributing to environmental degradation, pollution and climate change. Overconsumption worsens

these issues by driving higher production volumes, leading to excessive waste generation, loss of biodiversity and the diminishment of natural resources. This consumption and production is inherently unsustainable, promoting a throwaway culture that contributes to overflowing landfills and ecological imbalances.

According to The New York Times, the production of stainless-steel bottles like Stanleys requires seven times the amount of fossil fuels and emits 14 times more greenhouse gases than the production of a plastic one. Yes, reusing the same stainless steel water bottle is better for the earth, but when people begin to gather huge and unnecessary collections of these bottles, things begin to take a turn.

Numerous videos on the internet capture people fighting for the newest design and showing off their massive collections. Some limited-edition tumblers are even reselling for hundreds of dollars.

Similar to the previously trendy Hydroflasks, Swells and Nalgene, the Stanley trend will eventually die off, leaving countless amounts of these cups sitting in the back of a cupboard or a landfill.

No, it is not wrong to invest in a durable water bottle like a Stanley for long-term use, but acquiring numerous bottles just for their popularity does contribute significantly to climate consequences and is ethically problematic. It is exceedingly important to consider the impact before deciding how much you really need the next trending water bottle.



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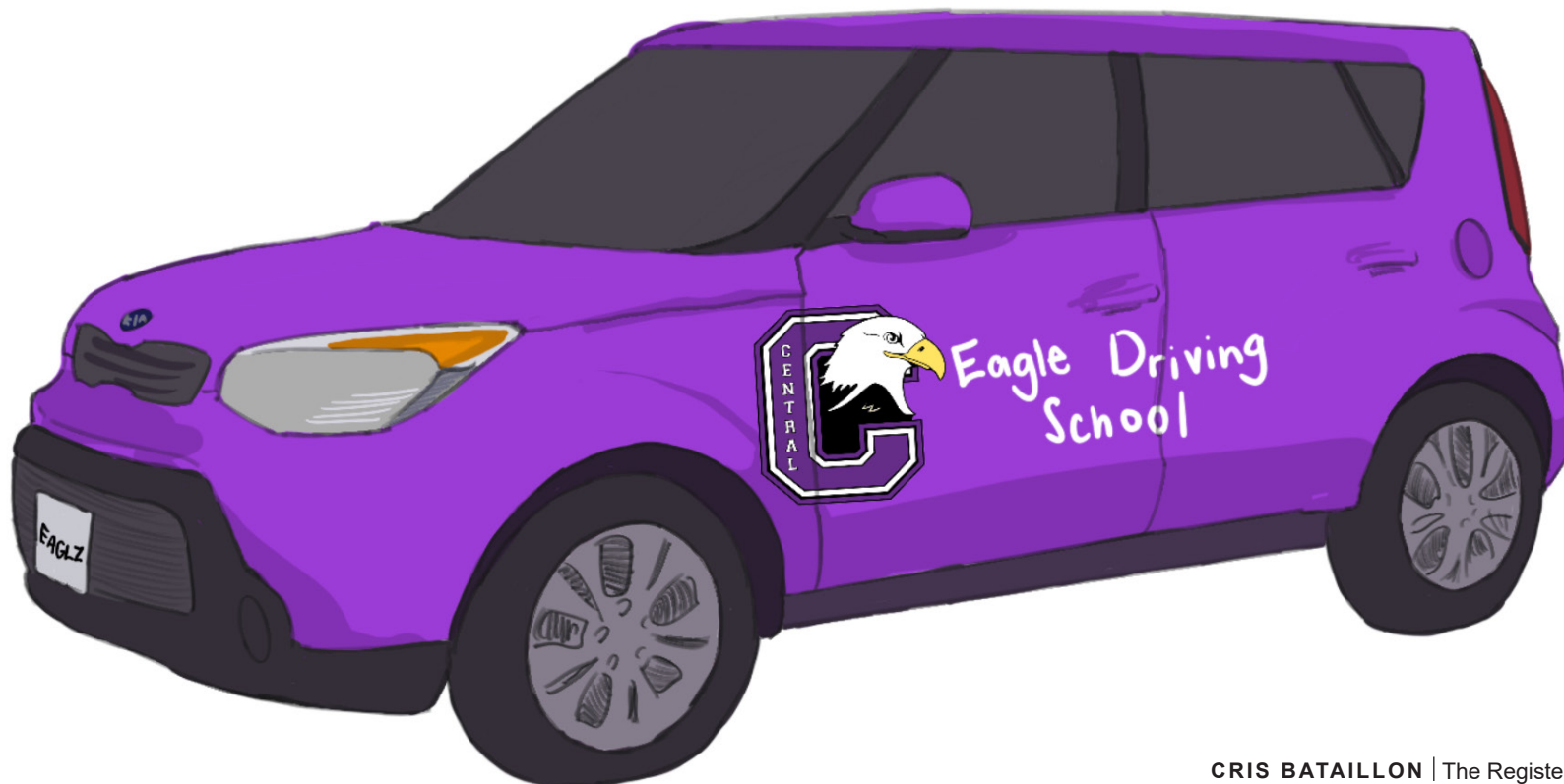
## Central should bring back drivers education classes

Fiona Bryant  
opinion editor

Central has been missing a drivers ed class for decades, yet its students would still benefit from drivers education offered by the school. Students are still learning to drive, and the expensive costs and other barriers to taking drivers ed are still present. Ending drivers ed because of high insurance costs left many Central students without the opportunity to be taught how to drive by an instructor.

Privately owned driving schools in Omaha charge as much as \$500 and require attending more than 20 hours of instruction or driving practice. Even though the price of drivers ed can pay off later in saving on insurance costs, qualified drivers ed offered for free at a school would save even more. The National Safety Council of Nebraska offers a scholarship covering all or part of a driver's ed class for lower-income students, but this is the only drivers ed program offering scholarships in Omaha. Additionally, students with responsibilities outside of school may be unable to fit classes into their schedules.

By offering a free driving class during the school day as an elective, or even as required for graduation, all students would have access to quality drivers ed and the subsequent benefits. Drivers who take drivers ed are less likely to get into accidents or have bad driving habits such as distracted driving. In the U.S., learning to drive safely and well is a practical skill. Unless public transportation rapidly improves and schools teach



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students how to utilize it, driving skills are a requirement for reaching work and school. It is safer for everyone when every driver has learned how to drive well.

Driving skills should be treated like any other life skill taught at Central. If many students will eventually drive every day, is driving not as pertinent a skill as Personal Finance? Not to mention, hundreds of students drive to Central every day already and small accidents on the way interrupt students' abilities to get to school.

The discontinuation of Central's drivers ed program was due to high insurance costs. Equipping a driver's ed program

is bound to be expensive. However, driving proficiency is a practical skill that needs prioritization and would ultimately lead to fewer problems for Central. A skill being used every day by hundreds of students should be supported by the district and continually sharpened. For students' safety and to diminish interruptions to their attendance, offering driver's ed is essential. Drivers ed has so much urgent value, arguably more than some programs that large hunks of Central's money does go to (like new football uniforms every year).

OPS knows that life skills are important parts of the curriculum, yet not when it comes to driving.

## Public speaking should be required for high school students

Arisa Lattison  
arts & culture editor

In my freshman year at Central, I took a speech and debate class. It was one of those courses where you'd learn about the different types of speech as well as the structures of debates, and then practice them in front of others. I wasn't particularly inclined towards public speaking, nor was I very extroverted, but one of my goals going into high school was to come out of my shell and get more comfortable around larger groups.

Because of this, I mustered up my courage and signed up for Molly Mattison's Intro to Speech and Debate class, tried out for cheerleading and exposed myself to as many clubs as I could. If I had to name what had the biggest impact on me that year, I would answer the first with no hesitation.

At first, it was very hard to get accustomed to the class. It was so far out of my comfort zone that everything we did required me to exert myself. I would stress about presenting the night before, my palms would get clammy waiting to be called on, and my heart would race walking up to the front of the class. If anything, the course doubled as a workout with the way it got my heart rate up and made me sweat. It truly was a hard class to take — at first.

However, one thing I specifically remember changing my perspective was having to recite a poem in front of the class for an oral interpretation assignment. I spent hours reading the words on the page, going over every line and committing it to memory. And despite me having it down that morning, I still ended up stumbling over my words.

I also recall this moment because it was the first time that year that I presented without reading from my paper. It was the first time I was relaxed enough to look at my classmates as I talked and made Courtney Peppernell's words my own.

For me, I had always expressed myself through unspoken words, through the ones you'd

read off a page. That day was the day I was able to connect my passion of poetry to my learning of public speaking. Then, it clicked for me.

I joined the speech and debate club after that. In the club, we went beyond learning about it and additionally practicing it in competition. I would have three rounds to present my speech to different judges, competing with six others, and we would be ranked so the best would move on to the final round afterward. During my time, I tried the informative and persuasive categories. Both categories were similar, with a 10-minute cap on presentation time — the thought of which was terrifying to someone like me. My very first time, I ended up forgetting my speech a minute in, and I spent 30 seconds calming myself down and using breathing techniques in front of the judge as I waited for the next lines to float back into my head. My other rounds that day didn't go so well either.

What helped me was researching topics that interested me. I was able to use them as stepping stones to reach a comfort I had never felt before when confronted with an audience. As I attended competitions and continued to place better and better, I gained more confidence, although the nerves never completely faded. Slowly but surely, I started to loosen up, and it wasn't as scary as it was when I'd started.

There is high value in taking a public speaking class in high school, especially for those who are more reserved. It really opened me up to new opportunities. I found myself approaching people and making friends more easily, being more expressive when cheerleading, and feeling more closely connected within communities as an active participant.

It was only possible for me to develop my voice because I took the course, and I have Mattison to thank for my growth. I was supported throughout the process, which only furthered the progress I could have made if I had been on my own.

## There are better alternatives to college

Lily Hartley  
staff writer

For many high school students, committing to a college and obtaining a degree remains the logical step following graduation. For those students, college is the next path and challenge in their life. But for others, taking the college route isn't always what is best, or the most valuable. College, while extremely beneficial in many ways, isn't the only choice. Knowing your alternatives can be favorable.

In a rapidly evolving world, the traditional expectation of pursuing higher education immediately following high school is being questioned. The question "Are there better alternatives to college?" opens the door to a discussion on various pathways available for high school graduates.

For those drawn to hands-on learning, vocational training and apprenticeships beckon. Choosing a vocational school will allow you to experience a form of education that is designed to teach and train students for skilled jobs. Apprenticeship programs are long-term, compensated jobs, designed to train a participant in a skilled trade, giving the opportunity to work and study at the same time. Industries such as construction, healthcare and technology place high value on practical experience.

The drive for entrepreneurship is thriving among the youth. By giving individuals with creative minds the ability to work without the constraints of a college curriculum, working as an entrepreneur can open doors to a collection of possibilities. Having a blend of the right skills, mindset, and determination are key factors success. Those who show risk-taking, self-motivation, and problem-solving skills hold the potential to flourish. Whether it be a tech startup, a local venture, or an online platform, any idea could succeed with the right mindset and drive. Having business experience can be beneficial, but it may be hard to obtain right out of high school.

While being a solid alternative, volunteering is an overlooked alternative to college. Engaging in volunteer work provides an opportunity to apply your distinct skills within a real organization, enriching and enhancing your own portfolio. The beauty of volunteering lies in its adaptability, allowing you to tailor your experience as a volunteer to match your specific background and skill set.

Volunteering can prove to be extremely rewarding and beneficial to professional development. By being exposed to new workplace environments and inevitably learning new skills along the way, volunteering can demonstrate commitment, and even build character. While most volunteering is

not paid, you can gain many benefits from it. For example, the Peace Corps provides free health care, housing and a living stipend, as well as covers travel expenses.

Joining the military following graduation offers a unique path for individuals who are seeking personal growth, discipline, and a sense of duty. While it is a choice that must take reasonable and fair consideration, it has many advantages that even college would not be able to provide.

Joining the military provides opportunities for practical skill development, leadership training and exposure to diverse environments. It will instill qualities such as teamwork, resilience and adaptability. These are skills that can't quite be achieved in a similar way anywhere else. For those who value hands-on, structured and stable career paths, the military can serve as a launchpad for a successful and fulfilling professional journey.

For many students, affording college tuition can be too costly. Applying for jobs around your community, or gaining expertise interning, can prove to be a great alternative.

Choosing an alternative to college can alleviate the financial burden associated with tuition, accommodation and other expenses. Individuals who choose alternative paths can start earning earlier, and potentially avoid student loan debt.

# arts & culture

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## OCEAN'S BEST UNRELEASED SONGS

Millie Jackson  
staff writer

Known for his thoughtful and emotionally charged lyrics, Frank Ocean is often regarded as one of the most innovative and influential artists in contemporary music.

Ocean has a reputation for being selective in releasing music, leading to a considerable amount of unreleased material that has intrigued fans. While specific details about unreleased songs can vary, some of the notable unreleased tracks that have circulated among fans include:

"Trouble" - This is a catchy, upbeat and short song that expresses the narrator's desire to face societal judgments and seek a connection with someone they deem worthwhile, despite a large age difference. The song explores themes of insecurity, defiance and the readiness to confront potential repercussions in the pursuit of love.

"Strawberry Swing" - This song provides a triumphant and nostalgic reflection on the delicate nature of life, emphasizing the importance of cherishing the people and moments we hold dear. It is an emotional and meaningful song while still being somewhat bright.

"Bedtime Stories" - In this track, the narrator expresses his symptoms of insomnia after a breakup. He is unable to sleep with all the thoughts of his past lover running through his head. Despite the struggles expressed, the song is fast-paced and upbeat. Overall, the song conveys a central theme of grappling with the challenges following a breakup.

"American Wedding" - Recently gaining significant recognition across social media, this song reflects on the American Dream, love and societal expectations. It samples the popular song "Hotel California" by The Eagles.

"Songs for Women" - Ocean explores a man's connection with music and its impact on his personal life and relationships in this song. It explores the concept of using music to attract romantic partners but acknowledges the consequences and their effects on a relationship.

"Wise Man" - This song was recently sampled in the popular Drake song, "Virginia Beach." "Wise Man" delves into themes of human nature, morality and societal expectations. The song questions the existence of absolutes such as good and evil or strong and weak. It encourages introspection and an understanding of the complicated nature of humanity.

"Memrise" - A brief, reflective song with minimal lyrics, it allows for personal interpretation. The song touches on themes of memory, self-perception and individuality. It highlights the value of being genuine, forming authentic connections, and acknowledging that people go beyond what is superficial.

"At Your Best (You Are Love)" - This is an emotional track that explores the intricacies of love and comprehension. It's a beautiful rendition, serving as a cover of Aaliyah's original.

"Summer Remains" - In this track, Ocean delves into the themes of youth, the passage of time and the brief nature of summer love and experiences. His poetic lyrics create a feeling of temporary beauty and bittersweet gratitude for the memories and experiences that influence our lives.

"Voodoo" - In this intricate track, the themes of deception, unity and power dynamics in relationships are discussed. The lyrics explore darker aspects, proposing that we are frequently exposed to misinformation and influenced by external forces. It serves as a prompt to safeguard oneself and uphold a sense of self-awareness.

## Central drama places first and third at Thespian awards

Iyanna Wise  
staff writer

Central Drama took home first in the improv challenge and third in the tech challenges at the Nebraska Thespian Society Festival located at the Hilton and the Holland Performing Arts Center. They also got two superior musical theater solos, the troop gold ranking for the second year in a row, and film and play works.

Central Drama Director Scott Mead expressed pride in his student's performance. "Very pleased and proud of our students from Central," he said.

The Nebraska Thespian Society Festival is a two-day event that takes place the first weekend of January where drama programs from around the state known as troops perform, listen and talk to guest speakers. Additionally, they attend a banquet, go to workshops, get college information and go to many other activities.

The troops make banners that represent their program, as well as accessories to identify their schools and exchange trinkets to meet and give to people from different schools.

Improv Team Captain Nate Remington was excited about the first-place win. "Last year, Central didn't even make it to the top nine, so it was such a comeback from last festival, and I'm so proud of my team," he said.

Tech Challenge Captain Amy Fischer was also excited about her team's third place finish, but she said a change in coordinators caused different rules in some challenges, but that didn't bother Fischer. "I was really happy with how we competed besides the changes," she said.

Reflecting on the improv team's performance, Remington said that the biggest thing was never getting cut off by the judges. "We were able to recognize the time and place for our scene to end on our own terms, and that goes a long way in preventing the story from dragging," he said.

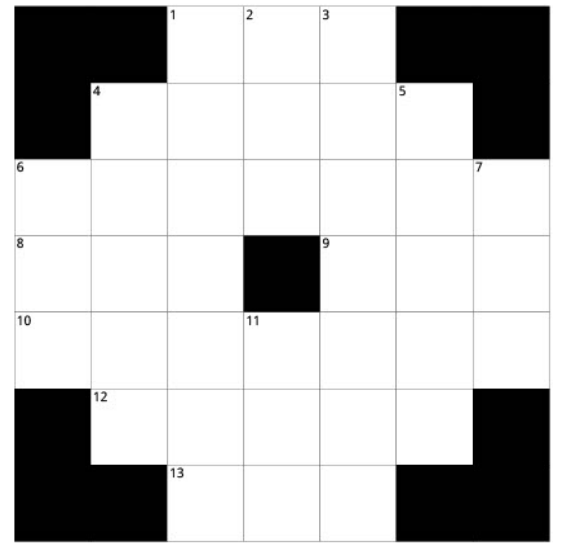
Remington was initially nervous about the performance. "We have a tendency to make jokes for each other in the scenes, but the second we got in front of the audience, we listened to each other very well and had a great scene for our qualifying round," he said.

### ACROSS

- 1 Leo Messi's trick
- 4 Pesto herb
- 6 Upper chambers
- 8 Since Jan. 1
- 9 Origin director DuVernay
- 10 Karl and Post
- 12 What one watches on Netflix, en français
- 13 Professional wrestler Flair

### DOWN

- 1 Person in charge of an animal
- 2 Former Arkansas Governor and Former G.O.P. Candidate Hutchinson
- 3 Ship that went on a one way trip
- 4 Software test versions
- 5 Dry place where one drives a Chevrolet to drink brown liquor
- 6 Prefix meaning together
- 7 Norwegian Flier
- 11 "Either you do it, \_\_\_ will!"



Fischer was proud of the teamwork displayed, so much so that the team could communicate without talking. But the one thing Fischer said could have been better was more communication from the coordinator.

The improv and the tech challenges had some complexities.

The improv challenge is categorized by three different improv exercises. The teams get judged by acting and improvisation professionals. The teams also get judged on teamwork, contributions from each member, and forming a complete, cohesive story.

The tech challenge is teams of six competing in different challenges like sewing a button, folder drop, setting up a sound system, hanging and focusing lights, a quick costume change and crop shift. Each challenge allows for a certain amount of team members to participate.

To prepare for their challenges, both Fischer and Remington used class time and rehearsals outside of school to prepare. Fischer said the majority of the tech team took Advanced Stagecraft, a pathway class, which also helped them prepare. Remington said that the team was mostly prepared.

Remington had a great time at the festival. His highlight was getting a callback on his superior musical solo; the Thespy Award for individual event. As well as being able to perform in front of a panel of judges.

Fischer had attended the festival for three years and was overjoyed by the superior solos for Remington and senior Jill Bertino. But she also enjoyed the student performance of "Tuck Everlasting".

Mead, Remington, and Fischer agreed that a memorable moment of the festival was the placements of the improv and tech teams.

But Mead also enjoyed watching his students get involved, and the performances from other schools. He noticed how hard his students worked throughout the festival and the preparations that went into it.

"I think we [did] a great job representing Central," Remington said. "

### Sam's Leon proves fantastic p. 13

It was in a quaint spot right in the middle of a neighborhood, somewhere you wouldn't normally stumble upon by chance. We walked inside and up to the counter as if we'd been there a million times, and my dad ordered after regarding the menu for a split second.

### Read your way through Omaha history p. 14

The Register's Jane McGill provides a digestible reading guide for anybody interested in Omaha history. Whether you have the historical expertise of Scott Wilson, or are just entering freshman year U.S. History, there is a book for everybody!

### Where did all the good award hosts go? p. 15

What is going on with award show hosts? Whether it's Jo Koy's sexist tirade, or Chris Rock's jokes about Jada Pinkett Smith, Katie Besancon expresses disappointment with the 2024 award shows.

### 'Mean Girls', Netflix Original? p. 15

Known for their harsh behavior and wearing pink on Wednesdays, the "Mean Girls" made a return to the box office with a 2024 remake of the 2004 film. But the movie was not the same; it reflected our society today, but it also showed a simple production that could have been recreated by Netflix.

## Dolomiti Pizzeria not Omaha's newest highlight

Fiona Bryant  
| opinion editor

Housed in the Ashton Building of the growing, trendy Millwork Commons, Dolomiti Pizzeria and Enoteca seamlessly fits in. The restaurant's brand is modern and earthy, hosting mostly adult customers. Finding the restaurant in the confusing Commons is as difficult as finding any other business, especially with Dolomiti's lack of signage on the outside.

High schoolers can find some value in one of Omaha's newest restaurants close to Central. In theory, the slightly high prices, shareable pizzas, and romantic lighting could make Dolomiti a superb pit stop before a school dance. Coneflower Creamery is also right next door for convenient dessert (I ate there as well). Yet, in execution, Dolomiti makes for a forgettable dining experience.

Small friend groups who are looking for a quick, fancier bite before a formal event will adore Dolomiti. However, as someone who walks through life in search of food that makes my eyes roll back in my head, the underwhelming food and inconvenient seating make the higher prices harder to understand.

Per the waitress' recommendation, I ordered the Patata, a potato pizza with mozzarella and pancetta (salty pork), plus a basic Margherita. Both were noticeably salty, and the Margherita was a bit burnt, but both came out of the oven in less than 10 minutes. The restaurant played "Serial Heartbreaker" by FLETCHER, which was an excellent music choice in general and in representing my reoccurring disappointment with each slice.

Don't be afraid to ask your waiter if you don't know what the ingredients are (many have Italian names). The pieces are small and thin, per most Italian-style pizza, so I was able to eat seven adequate pieces. Dolomiti is adept at causing a good food baby (bloating), though.

I expected incredible pizza based on the photos, but I won't be giving it a second thought after writing this review. For \$32 worth of pizza, I expected a bit better. Omaha already has quite a few local pizza businesses, so I would rather explore one of those than revisit Dolomiti.

Even dining with another person did not make the experience worth repeating. We were seated at a table for two in a line of other tables for two. Seating rarely registers in my opinion of a restaurant, but these tables were placed extremely close in an open-floor-plan restaurant. Halfway through dinner, another couple was seated at the table less than a foot away from mine. The seating arrangement is not ideal for privacy on a date. The waiters would have to ask someone to move for a second so they could take a table's order. Paired with the loud volume of the rest of the restaurant and unproportionally large tables, Dolomiti sucks as a date location.

Even for large groups, such as high schoolers before a dance, seating may prove difficult.



FIONA BRYANT | The Register

Of course, I did not request accommodations for a large group during my visit, but tables are limited and already set up in four-person arrangements. Those smaller groups, however, would thrive at Dolomiti (so long as they don't mind not hearing their companions very well).

Overall, I would recommend skipping Dolomiti if you're a food lover. But for the small, already late group on the way to a dance, Dolomiti will be fast and filling.

## Sam's Leon: connecting culture and kin through cuisine

Arisa Lattison  
| arts & culture editor

One of my core memories from last semester was when I went to a Mexican restaurant with my dad on a school day. I had pictures to take at Arnold Clark, and the only available times were during class, so we ended up pulling me out that morning. Upon arriving we were informed the photoshoot would take longer than my dad could have stayed. Accordingly, we left, and instead of him taking me back to school, he asked me if I wanted to go eat lunch. Naturally, I said yes.

Ten minutes later, we arrived outside of a restaurant called Sam's Leon Mexican Food and Tortilleria on South 20th Street. It was in a quaint spot right in the middle of a neighborhood, somewhere you wouldn't normally stumble upon by chance. We walked inside and up to the counter as if we'd been there a million times, and my dad ordered after regarding the menu for a split second. I did the same. That day we bonded over a meal as he told me about how he discovered Sam's back when they didn't have indoor dining. The place had expanded since.

Recalling this moment, I decided to revisit this spot with my mom. We went on a Sunday, and it got busier the longer we stayed. I could tell it was a place that had many regulars.

When ordering, the staff was very amiable and assisted in giving recommendations when I asked for them. I ended up settling on a lengua taco, which is made from cow tongue, and a chicken enchilada, while my mom ordered the grande burrito. It is a very affordable place, and the cost for the two of us came out to be roughly \$20.

The decorations of the place screamed authenticity. There were hints of Mexican culture everywhere, including the flag, the music playing, figures, photographs on the wall—everything from the way Sam's was set up to the very atmosphere the people brought. The tables were appropriately spaced out with accommodation for the different sized parties. The one thing that both me and my mom commented on was the lack of artificial lighting, and because they relied on natural light, it was awkwardly lit in certain locations of the restaurant.

The food came very quickly, and my mom and I dug in. The enchilada can be summed up in one word: delicious. It was the same thing I had ordered when I'd gone to eat with my dad, it left an impression on me. I went back to the restaurant for that dish alone. The lengua taco was also very good—the meat was tender, and the sauce was just the right amount of spicy. My mom enjoyed her burrito as well. She found the portion to be hearty, and she ended up taking half of it back for my dad, who also liked it.

As we dined and more people poured in, I saw the appeal of the place more. The groups engaged in conversation just like my mom and I did, and I found myself thinking about how Sam's now served as a good memory for me regarding both of my parents.

Sometimes, there is a connection between our senses and our memories, and I find that the best experiences should be able to draw nostalgia out. The recollection of Sam's never fails to bring back those feelings, and I believe it holds a special place in the hearts of all new diners and regulars.



Arisa Lattison | The Register

## Read your way through Omaha history

Jane McGill  
staff writer

### “River City Empire”

Orville D. Menard paints a fascinating portrait of “the Rogue who ruled Omaha” in this methodical biography. From his humble beginnings as the son of Irish immigrants, Tom Dennison rose to become one of America’s most powerful political bosses, wielding unparalleled influence over political and economic life in Omaha. Never elected to any office or convicted of any crime during his nearly 30-year reign, Dennison was a master of delegation and subterfuge. In painstaking detail, Menard unveils the true extent of Dennison’s power in the city during the early 20th century, describing his role in historical events ranging from the eighth-time election of James Dahlman as mayor to the Omaha Race Riot of 1919.

### “The Women Who Built Omaha”

Eileen Wirth’s chronicle of an unsung history – following her 2013 book “From Society Page to Front Page: Nebraska Women in Journalism” – profiles women who used their influence to enrich civic life in Omaha. The book relates the achievements of Omaha women across time periods, from Susette LaFlesche, translator at the trial of Standing Bear to Mildred Brown and founder of America’s oldest continuously published Black newspaper, to Sarah Joslyn, whose philanthropy established the city’s most prominent art museum. Wirth, a longtime reporter for the Omaha World-Herald, brings an incisive tone to the anecdotes and accounts contained in the book, lending a particular focus on how women have shaped the patchwork of institutions that constitute the city we know today.

### “My Omaha Obsession: Searching for the City”

An idiosyncratic tour through some of Omaha’s most unorthodox buildings, architecture, and people, blogger-turned-author Miss Cassette draws the reader into the strangest episodes of the city’s past in this book.

“My Omaha Obsession” takes the reader on an idiosyncratic tour through some of Omaha’s neighborhoods, buildings, architecture, and people, celebrating the city’s unusual history. Rather than covering the city’s best-known sites, Miss Cassette is irresistibly drawn to strange little buildings and glorious large homes that don’t exist anymore, as well as to stories of Harkert’s Holsum Hamburgers and the Twenties Club.

Piecing together the records of buildings and homes and everything interesting that came after, Cassette shares her observations of the property and its significance to Omaha. She scrutinizes land deeds, insurance maps, tax records, and old newspaper articles to uncover a property’s singular story. Through conversations with fellow detectives and history enthusiasts, she guides readers along her path of hunches, personal interests, mishaps, and more.

As a longtime resident of Omaha, Cassette is informed by memories of her youth combined with an enduring curiosity about the city’s offbeat relics and remains. Part memoir and part research guide with a healthy dose of colorful wandering, “My Omaha Obsession” celebrates the historic built environment and searches for the people who shaped early Omaha.

### “Lost Omaha”

The landmarks of Omaha’s past reveal a history of industry, innovation and change. The Hotel Fontenelle, the Omaha Athletic Club and the Medical Arts Building disappeared in the wake of changes remaking downtown after World War II. Jobbers Canyon, a vital part of the city’s wholesale district, was sacrificed to ConAgra’s headquarters. Peony Park closed as

suburban sprawl prevented its expansion, and changing leisure patterns took residents farther away for their amusement park experience. The stockyards finally closed in 1999, ending a long chapter in Omaha’s history. Author and historian Janet R. Daly Bednarek charts the legacy of Omaha’s lost history through its landmarks.

### “Omaha History Detective: Mysteries, Myths & Memories”

Bob Marks spent his professional life in banking and accounting prior to starting in 1975 with Mutual of Omaha’s corporate tax department, where he stayed for 25 years. Soon, he was chronicling local history, including works for the two-volume set of mid-19th century letters, “Their Man in Omaha: The Barker Collection, 1860-1876” (2006), and “Omaha and Council Bluffs, Yesterday & Today” (2008). He also wrote short stories and limericks for personal enjoyment and a highly anticipated Christmas letter (dating to 1984) for family and friends.

In early June 2022, the author was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer as the final chapters of “Omaha History Detective” were written. He died June 17, 2022 – one week before his passion project went to press.

“You can be your own history detective with the incredible explosion of digitized information online and the wonderful search engines that are available at little or no cost,” he wrote.

“Omaha History Detective” includes tips and tidbits for nascent Omaha history buffs, including a geography lesson to help make sense of downtown Omaha’s early street addresses, and helpful guides for sorting fact from fiction. The rush of satisfaction you experience from these pages just might inspire a passion project of your own!

### “The Rhythm Boys of Omaha Central”

ESPN researcher, former journalist and Omaha Central alum Steve Marantz (Sorcery at Caesars: Sugar Ray’s Marvelous Fight, 2008) walks a fine line between impartial reporter and impassioned participant in telling the story of the 1968 Omaha Central boys basketball team, a talented team more notable for its unlikely role in the tapestry of the Civil Rights movement than its on-court success. Featuring a rare all-Black starting lineup led by star Dwaine Dillard, the “Rhythm Boys” (a nickname both stylishly apropos and implicitly racist) demolished opponents in a community that evinced an outward tolerance of racial and religious differences but featured distinctly separate white, Black and Jewish neighborhoods.

On the eve of the state playoffs, a visit from segregationist presidential candidate George Wallace lit the waiting match of racial tension, leading to a series of riots and the arrest of Dillard, who was either out to harm Wallace or simply in the wrong place at the wrong time. Regardless, the tumultuous events derailed the team’s championship hopes, as a lingering malaise spurred by Dillard’s off-court troubles doomed them against a less-talented but sharper-shooting team in the title game. Marantz’s meandering account wants for more riveting in-game descriptions of the team’s prowess, and the blurred line between the author’s role as a journalist chronicling the events and a classmate of his subjects makes for a jumbled composition. Still, the author spotlights a bizarre intersection of sports, culture and politics amid a volatile decade that deftly highlights how momentous, community-changing events could occur far away from the bright lights of major metropolitan areas.

Despite a sometimes-muddled narrative, Marantz presents an ultimately compelling snapshot of an era—and a city—in the throes of social upheaval.

### “The Lost Sons of Omaha”

On May 30, 2020, in Omaha, Nebraska, amid the protests

that rocked our nation after George Floyd’s death at the hands of police, 38-year-old white bar owner and Marine veteran Jake Gardner fatally shot James Scurlock, a 22-year-old Black protestor and young father. What followed were two investigations of Scurlock’s death, one conducted by the white district attorney Don Kleine, who concluded that Gardner had legally acted in self-defense and released without a trial, and a second grand jury inquiry conducted by African American special prosecutor Fred Franklin that indicted Gardner for manslaughter and demanded he face trial. Days after the indictment, Gardner killed himself with a single bullet to the head.

The deaths of both Scurlock and Gardner gave rise to a toxic brew of misinformation, false claims and competing political agendas. The two men, each with their own complicated backgrounds, were turned into grotesque caricatures. Between the heated debates and diatribes, these twin tragedies amounted to an ugly and heartbreaking reflection of a painfully divided country. Here, Joe Sexton masterfully unpacks the whole twisting, nearly unbelievable chronicle into a meticulously reported and nuanced account of the two deaths, explaining which claims were true and which were distorted or simply false. “The Lost Sons of Omaha” carefully examines some of the most pressing issues facing America today, including our country’s dire need for gun control and mental health reform; the dangerous spread of fake news, particularly on social media; and the urgent call to band together in the collective pursuit of truth, fairness and healing.

### “Upstream Metropolis”

From its birth as interdependent towns on the Missouri River frontier to its emergence as a metropolis straddling two states, Omaha–Council Bluffs has been one of the greatest urban construction projects in the nation’s history. “Upstream Metropolis” provides the first comprehensive history of this unique urban region that ranks 60th among the 370 major metropolitan areas in the United States. Drawing on local newspapers and historical archives, the authors deliver an anecdote-rich account of how and why a large metropolitan area developed in this spot. They also explain why it grew so big—and no bigger—but could never have remained two small towns.

“Upstream Metropolis” is an urban biography of the highest order, tracing the lives of two cities, which though divided by a river, the problems of a state line, and inevitable rivalry, have always been inextricably linked. This discussion moves from the freewheeling frontier days to the times of farming and railroads, examining influences such as the populist movement, the meatpacking industry, immigration, and ethnicity. The highly readable result is a pioneering contribution to the history of urbanization in America.

### “Wicked Omaha”

In old Omaha, the scent of opium wafted through saloon doors, while prostitutes openly solicited customers. When the St. Elmo theater ran short of the usual entertainment, the residents could always fall back on robbing strangers. Tenants of the Burnt District squirmed under the extorting thumb of a furniture dealer dubbed the Man-Landlady. The games of chance and confidence and outright municipal graft all played a part in a wicked city where gambler Tom Dennison ran politics and Madam Anna Wilson drove philanthropy. Join Ryan Roenfeld for a stroll along the seamier side of Omaha’s past.

### “Buildings for the Ages”

“Building for the Ages” takes you on a historic and visual tour of 155 of Omaha’s significant structures built from the 1850s through the 1940s. This exceptional resource book provides each buildings history, its architect and style and the role it played in Omaha’s development. Also included is a pullout map to create your own landmarks tour.

## Spring play in full swing

Grace Sunseri  
staff writer

Central’s drama department is in full rehearsal mode while preparing to showcase their spring musical, “Mamma Mia.”

Students got to vote on what they wanted to perform. Out of options such as “Freaky Friday” and “Zombie Prom,” students overwhelmingly chose “Mamma Mia.” Senior Lucy Simmons-Pope, who plays Sophie, was not surprised by the choice. “Out of the options I feel like it was the most fun,” Simmons-Pope said.

“Mamma Mia” is the story of a girl who wants to find her father so he can give her away at her wedding. The only problem is that three prospective fathers show up.

The snow days early in the second semester set the cast back in rehearsals. “Rehearsals are chaotic because of snow days,” said Izzy Montanez, the stage manager.

Drama Director Scott Mead believes they are catching back up. The student actors are working mostly on learning their lines. “Learn your dances, learn your music, learn your lines!” is something Mead says to his actors. He does believe they are on track for opening night.

The drama department is working with a new choreographer, Julie Stanfill. “Whew!” Mead said, “a lot of dances in the first act.”

Assistant stage manager Grace Spicka believes the dancing and blocking, the location of the actors on stage and their movements is what is going best for the cast right now. “Everyone is so good at what they do,” Spicka said.

Mead is looking forward to students having their time in the spotlight. “I’m excited for [students and families] to come sing with us, watch the story, and enjoy the performances of our students,” he said.

“Mamma Mia” will be performed on March 1 at 7 p.m., and Mar. 2 at 2 and 7 p.m. at Central in the auditorium.



Photo Courtesy of Paramount Pictures

## ‘Mean Girls,’ a Netflix Original?

Becca Rock  
staff writer

Known for their harsh behavior and wearing pink on Wednesdays, the “Mean Girls” made a return to the box office with a 2024 remake of the 2004 film. But the movie was not the same; it reflected our society today, but it also showed a simple production that could have been recreated by Netflix.

“Mean Girls” follows previously homeschooled Cady Heron and her experiences moving to an American high school filled with cliques, one of them being The Plastics, a group of girls led by “the queen bee,” Regina George.

“Mean Girls,” the 2024 version, has a large presence of phones, and how they spread

gossip and create trends. Rather than one person being influential in one place, they can become influential everywhere. A popular scene in the original “Mean Girls” is when George’s shirt is cut, and this is supposed to ruin her outfit, but instead, she creates a trend within her school. In the remake, George is sprayed with a sprinkler, and “the wet look,” which included mascara dripping down her face and wet, slicked-back hair, caused social media influencers Veronica and Vanessa Merrell, Nia Sioux, Jazz Jennings, Chris Olsen and others to respond and participate in the trend. Additionally, a Snapchat filter was made to imitate mascara dripping down someone’s face.

This movie highlighted how as a culture we have disconnected from our surrounding environments and have become connected

to what is happening in other people’s lives. Anything that happens at one simple high school can become global news, and one action a person makes now can have significant effects on society.

This movie is a “period piece,” demonstrating how, within the 20 years from the release of the original “Mean Girls,” the high school experience has changed from being an “in the moment society” where phones did not play a major role in the lives of students, to a society in which phones are embedded in the way most high school students receive their “news” and stay connected. The movie tried to relate to Generation Z more than Gen Z wanted them to; the integration of TikTok videos in the middle of the movie and the e.l.f. makeup brand product placement made the

movie feel like watching someone’s TikTok “For You Page.”

The movie created a Regina George that the original Regina George would not be associated with. In the 2024 version of the film, Regina was wearing trendy black leather pants, long-sleeved mesh corset tops, and outfits that looked like they could have been bought from Shein. She uses drugstore makeup (e.l.f) when, in the first movie, she is portrayed as a rich, mean girl. I do not think that a rich, mean girl would constantly use e.l.f.

“Mean Girls” feels like a Netflix Original because of the musical transitions. Monologues begin, and suddenly, music appears. The music was out of musical style and made watching the movie a struggle.

**ACROSS**

- 1 Leo Messi’s trick
- 4 Pesto herb
- 6 Upper chambers
- 8 Since Jan. 1
- 9 Origin director DuVernay
- 10 Karl and Post
- 12 What one watches on Netflix, en français
- 13 Professional wrestler Flair

**DOWN**

- 1 Person in charge of an animal
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- 3 Ship that went on a one way trip
- 4 Software test versions
- 5 Dry place where one drives a Chevrolet to drink brown liquor
- 6 Prefix meaning together
- 7 Norwegian Flier
- 11 “Either you do it, \_\_\_ will!”



## Award show hosts must improve act

Katie Besancon  
staff writer

Lights, camera, action! Award shows in 2024 have begun, highlighting some of the Entertainment industry’s best artists, actors, films and shows from years prior.

What is going on with the hosts of these shows, though? The Golden Globes, for example, hired Jo Koy, a standup comedian, who, in his monologue, made remarks about the stereotypes of “Barbie” compared to “Oppenheimer.” Making remarks about how “[t]he big difference between the Golden Globes and the NFL? At the Golden Globes, we have fewer camera shots of Taylor Swift.” What, like the two of them are so similar outside of Taylor Swift?

Later in the show, Koy commented on the movies “Barbie”

and “Oppenheimer,” mentioning how “Oppenheimer is based on a 721-page Pulitzer Prize-winning book about the Manhattan Project, and Barbie about a plastic doll with big boobies,” truly highlighting the sexism that “Barbie” faced when released.

Confronting the sexism was one of the goals of “Barbie,” mainly trying to encourage women to know that they have the opportunity to be anything and everything that they may want despite what our society may portray.

This is not the first time that an award host has made an audience uncomfortable or upset with their performance. Back in 2022, Will Smith slapped Chris Rock after Rock made a joke about Smith’s wife, Jada Pinkett Smith. While the joke was meant to come off as lighthearted and funny, it came off as rude and disrespectful towards Pinkett Smith, and rightfully

so—nobody should have to show up to an award show knowing that there could be a possibility that they could have jokes cracked about them because of their appearance.

Why do award shows continue hiring these comedians as hosts when, year after year, there are jokes made that offend others? Award shows are meant to highlight the success of artists, actors, films and shows, not bring them down. Hosts continue to highlight irrelevant content in their performances. There needs to be a more rigorous vetting process to ensure that there are no comments that could be controversial because artists and actors should not be uncomfortable at a show.

Nobody wants to attend award shows that create an uninviting and uncomfortable atmosphere; these events are meant to be a celebration, not an awkward occasion.

## Senior reflects on her time with Omaha Academy of Ballet

J. Will Harbour  
contributing writer

The Omaha Academy of Ballet presented their 2024 “Omaha Dance Project: The Match Girl and Other Works” the last weekend of January, and senior Ren Livingston performed in three of the acts.

The show was presented at Marian High’s Mary Joy and Tal Anderson Performing Arts Center and the total works included “What Was I Made For,” “Pale Blue Dot,” “Purple Rain,” and “The Match Girl.” The annual “Omaha Dance Project” contains several shorter, more contemporary works to start the show and a longer, more traditional title piece.

This year’s “Match Girl” was inspired by Hans Christian Anderson’s classic tale of the same name first published in 1845.

Livingston, who was involved in “What Was I Made For,” “Purple Rain,” and “The Match Girl,”

has been dancing since she was 3 and has been with OAB since sixth grade. She explained that she’s drawn to ballet because of the beauty of the art form, but how it is also mixed with athleticism.

“That dichotomy between the high level of technical control it requires, and the freedom of

movement and expression is very captivating to me,” Livingston said.

Ballet is known by many to be one of the most demanding physical activities one can undertake, but it is unique in its artistic expression that most sports lack. Livingston echoed this sentiment, saying that ballet can be physically and mentally draining.

“I think the biggest challenge of ballet is the constant struggle to be perfect. There’s always something to improve,” Livingston said.

Despite the inherent difficulty of ballet, she has found inspiration in many different things to keep her going. She is inspired by videos online, live performances, and simply watching her friends dance in class. One of the main things that inspires her to dance is music, and she says that when listening to music, she will visualize steps in her head.

“There’s a lot of dance floating around in my head I guess, and I love how inextricably connected dance and music are to each other,” Livingston said.

Livingston has been dancing for much of her life and now she is thinking about what will come next. She is considering if ballet has a place in her future and what else awaits her.

“I’m not sure if I’ll continue dancing or not. Being a senior, that’s something I’m trying to figure out right now but it’s a little up in the air,” Livingston said.

# sports & leisure

THE REGISTER

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## NLI SIGNING DAY

The National Letter of Intent (NLI) Signing Day took place February 7th

### Supernovas fall in first game but offer exciting environment

Steven Dickerson  
staff writer

Jan. 24's inaugural game of the Pro Volleyball Federation saw the Omaha Supernovas fall 3-2 to the Atlanta Vibe in a thrilling five set game. But the CHI Health Center was more bustling than ever. The crowd of nearly 12,000 was loud, energetic, and showcased exactly why Nebraska was the perfect spot for a professional volleyball team.

The game started with a phenomenal light show, made by fans turning on flashlights. It was an interactive experience I hadn't seen at a sporting event in a long time.

The first set started slowly, but quickly became competitive and had fans on the edge of their seats. When it reached 24-24, everyone was standing up as the arena's lights dimmed, spotlight focused on the court and fans screaming. However, a strong block and stunning attack from the Vibe saw Omaha lose the first set by two, 26-24.

The second set was competitive the minute Atlanta's Leah Edmond served. The first few minutes saw each team rally back and forth, constantly tying the score. As the set progressed, it stayed close. Atlanta's Karis Watson had an attack that brought the team to a very intense set point that included a hotly contested net violation by Omaha outside hitter Jess Schaben-Lansman, giving Atlanta the second set 25-23.

As I watched the third set begin, I anxiously awaited what direction the set would take. I was secretly hoping the Supernovas would turn things around because I loved the atmosphere too much for it to be over in three sets.

Thankfully, that wish came to fruition as the Supernovas pulled off a 25-17 win. The set was full of long rallies and exciting plays like the many hits from outside hitter Brooke Nuneviller. The set point at 24-17 was so exhilarating. I haven't felt

the tension and optimism of a volleyball crowd like that ever before. Following Atlanta setter Tori Dilfer-Stringer's serving error, the arena erupted in cheering for the first win of a set in Supernovas history.

The fourth set started strong for the Supernovas, with wild attacks from Bethania De La Cruz, Nuneviller, Sydney Hilley and Danielle Hart as well as many errors from Atlanta on passing and attacking. While it was generally close, Omaha dominated after it was 23-19, with a crazy attack from middle hitter Tori Dixon and a stunning, set-winning block from Schaben-Lansman. The crowd went insane as the game headed into a critical fifth set to decide who would take the win in the first PVF game ever.

Competitive is an understatement for the mood of the fifth set. Almost every single point had fans standing, screaming, or booing. The serve was changing rapidly as each team went back and forth on winning and losing every point. De La Cruz was by far the Supernovas' star of the set, with her speedy, ferocious serves and aggressive, spatially smart attacks. However, Atlanta's Edmond dominated in wild attacks that took Atlanta from 13-13 to 15-13.

While some were visibly disappointed in the tough Supernovas loss, almost everyone expressed happiness with the closeness and excitement of each set and how amazingly fun the game was. Afterwards, the team did autographs and photos, which had fans (including myself) lined up around the entire arena. Meeting the Supernovas players was

super cool, and they all were extremely friendly and personable.

The fans were the real winners here though. Everyone I met or interacted with, everyone who made it on the Jumbotron (yes, I made it on there too), and everyone who went and got autographs all made the experience amusing and spectacular. I cannot wait to go to another game, and I would highly recommend checking out the Supernovas in their first season. Nebraska is definitely a volleyball state.



STEVEN DICKERSON | The Register

### Central supports Gretna team after facing loss of coach

Aubri Kolterman  
contributing writer

Gretna Basketball Coach Brad Feeken lost a battle to cancer Dec. 30 at the age of 48. Feeken served as head coach of Gretna for two decades. His team qualified for the state tournament 11 times and won the title in 2016 and 2017. Feeken had an overall career record of 346-140.

The basketball community all over the Omaha metro area has been impacted by his death. The Central basketball team remembered him as a good guy as well as a great coach. Central boys basketball Head Coach Bruce Chubick remembers him as a good guy, and he was always drawn to him. "He had a ton of energy, you would kind of feel that energy when you were talking to him," he said.

Chubick said Feeken's greatest joy was to see the kids succeed whether it was in basketball, life, or academics. He wishes he had more time with him as his time got cut short.

"Unfortunately, that time got cut short which is really a shame, but he left me with a lot

of good things as far as the basketball coaching side," Chubick said. He did things as to what Chubick considered 100% the right way.

The death of coach Feeken did not stop the players from continuing to play basketball. Gretna chose to play in the Metro Holiday Basketball Tournament. Playing against Gretna during the winter metro tournament, Central senior Devin Holman said the Gretna players came out with a lot of energy, and they came out really hot, they came out with a heartbreak, but they wanted to play for Feeken. He knew how to draw the plays and get them to play to the best of their abilities, Holman said.

The same day Feeken died, Gretna had a matchup against Papillion-La Vista South and beat them 49-47. Gretna players pointed up to the sky, remembering their coach as they got the victory for Feeken.

Central senior Kevin McGee said that Feeken was definitely a great coach, a hall-of-fame level coach. "They're a very well coached team, very disciplined, they listen to the coach in every situation they got in," he said.



Kevin McGee signed with Southwest Minnesota State University to play football.



Daniel Lemi signed with Southwest Minnesota State University to play football.



Jordan Brown signed with Arizona Christian University to continue with track and field.

HAYLON SIPE | The Register

**Daleron Thomas proves integral p. 17**  
"Playing with my brother at North was a lot of fun, but after he graduated, I knew I wanted a change," Thomas said. "Central was the perfect place."

**Basketball faces foul rule change p. 18**  
Instead of players shooting one-and-one free throws when they got to seven fouls and two shots after 10 fouls of each half, the foul count restarts after each quarter and the double bonus is after five fouls.

**The Register checks in with DI swimmer Christina Spomer p. 19**  
Central alumna Christina Spomer has been dominating the University of South Dakota's swim team for the last three years.

**My love and hate relationship with heavy circles p. 20**  
It was August of 2022 when I was first introduced into the world of weights. I didn't know it then, but that day was the gateway to my obsession with weightlifting.