



THE BEAR

Student Newspaper

December 21, 2023 WBHS Volume 27 Issue 3
900 W. Main St., West Branch, IA 52358

THE BEAR'S NORFLEET IN THE RUNNING FOR STATE-WIDE NEWS PHOTO AWARD

The Bear Staff Members

The Bear staff would like to congratulate its very own Keaton Norfleet for his current standing in the Iowa Better Newspaper Contest. The junior snapped a stellar news photo after a big storm in May, which was then published in the WB Times. His photo was sent into a statewide photography competition sponsored by the Iowa Newspaper Foundation. Norfleet is guaranteed to earn 1st, 2nd, or 3rd place in the Best News Photo

Category. Results will be delivered in February 2024.

The modest Norfleet said, "The shot was nothing special. After the worst of the storm had passed, my dad [Gregory Norfleet] and I ran to his office to grab his camera. We were driving up to the Co-op when we looked into the sky. My dad described it as 'standing in a painting.' We were driving back, and my dad handed me his phone, rolled down my window, and said, 'Start snapping.'" The Bear staff would also like

to salute Gregory Norfleet and his WB Times staff members. K. Norfleet isn't the only one up for awards. The following people are guaranteed 1st, 2nd, or 3rd place in these categories: G. Norfleet - Best Front Page, Best Coverage of Education, Best Use of Graphics, Excellence in Editorial Writing (weekly), and Master Columnist (weekly); Annie Schroder and G. Norfleet - Total Newspaper Design; G. Norfleet and Matthew Dickinson - Best Use of Social Media; and Dickinson - Best Sports Story (weekly).

Read This Issue Online!



Keaton Norfleet's award-winning photo, taken after an Iowa storm, features the natural phenomenon of mammatus clouds above a picturesque Iowa landscape. Photo By Keaton Norfleet.

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SKILLSUSA WELDERS COMPETE IN ABC WELDING CONTEST

Olivia Naber Head Editor-in-Chief

ACE students and the WBHS SkillsUSA chapter took the trek up to the Iowa State Fairgrounds December 1 to attend the 2023 High School Craft Championship, where several of their own had the opportunity to compete. Five students entered into the ABC welding competition, which was split into a beginner level and advanced level. Of the two classifications, Garrett Spevacek and Drew Wilcox entered



into the advanced competition, while Reese Trepanier, Julian Garcia, and Heather Powers entered the beginners category. Each category took on 50 stu-

dents to compete against each other.

Last year, graduates Nick Hein and Kyle Harold took part in the contest, taking home the top two prizes. Having students who had gone through the process of preparing for and competing in the competition gave advisor Randy Robertson an idea of what might be in store for his students.

"I just tried to prepare them to work with the stick welding part of it because I knew that's what they were going to do," said Robertson. "So we worked all nine weeks pretty much on stick welding... When they went up there, I think they were a little nervous about it, but they ended up coming out of there okay I think."

Unfortunately, only the top two ranked welders are listed, so the WBHS welders didn't know how they compared with those from other schools.

What makes the ABC competition unique is that students competing against each other hail from all sizes of schools, regardless of class, as well as competing with students from trade schools. Being able to compete with students from such larger schools was an impressive feat by the five Bear welders. Although seniors Trepanier and Wilcox won't have any more opportunities to enter the ABC competition, Robertson hopes that his younger competitors will try their hand again next year.

While the five students competed, other students on the trip had the opportunity to check out several other careers in the trades.

"The ABC Competition was a great way for students to learn different skilled trades," beamed Robertson. "I have had many students mention that they are interested in doing one or two of the careers. This is a great way to open the eyes of students to get ideas for the future. Students are finding out the advantages of being in the trades: good money, starting right out of high school, benefits, and feeling you are in a field to grow in a career."



Drew Wilcox. Photo Contributed by Randy Robertson.



Garrett Spevacek. Photo Contributed by Randy Robertson.



SkillsUSA chapter members. Front row: Dilan Kazlauskas, Reece Gingerich, Alison Gade, Garrett Spevacek, Dylan Schiele, Paxton Tisinger, Heather Powers. Middle Row: Porter Steele, Draven Ladehoff, Jay Cantrell, Kaylynn Stein, Alison Tygrett, Advisor Randy Robertson. Back Row: Jaimy Sanchez, Cooper Exline, Connor Sexton, Robby Boaz, Preston Mayhew, Albert Moss. Not pictured: Jeremy Budreau, Melayna Burmeister, Grace Hamann, Jackson Marcy, Ellie Olmstead, Mason Pedersen, Rowdy Rood, Jayden Schaffer, Garrett Sotzen, Alissa Van Hall, Hunter Vanderhorst. Photo by Larkin Brown.

THE BEAR COMIC CORNER: WINTER ADDITION



THE GREATEST CHRISTMAS MOVIES OF ALL TIME (AS TOLD BY WBHS)



Graphic by Olivia Naber



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EIGHT FFA MEMBERS ATTEND NATIONAL CONVENTION

Larkin Brown
Staff Writer & Photographer

Eight FFA members traveled to the 2023 National Convention from Oct. 31- Nov. 3. They went with Adviser Renee Thompson, who has been taking her students to the convention for the past 19 years. This trip is available to members annually. The convention has taken place for the last few years in Indianapolis, Indiana.

On the way to Indianapolis, they took a slight detour to the Fair Oaks Farms for a dairy cow and pig adventure. There were 2 individual tours. One tour took the students through a progression of pigs from grown sows and boars to newborn piglets. The other showed the cows on a carousel waiting to be hooked up to milking machines and then being milked. Students got to see their tags with such info. as how many times they've been milked that day, gallons produced, and their tag numbers. Cows are chipped in the forehead and carry a lot of info.

On the first official day of the convention, they went to the Indianapolis Zoo where they got to see and interact with dolphins in a "Meet & Greet" session. Sophomore Maddie Neuberger said, "My favorite part of the trip was meeting the dolphins at the zoo because they looked so cute. I was not expecting them to feel so rubbery at all."

After the zoo, they went to the convention center to get registered and attend Session 1A, where students were introduced to the national officers and saw state maps with how many chapters existed in each. The band played, and the

choir sang. Then a speaker discussed his many trips/safaris in an amusing manner. There were also many shopping opportunities available. Sophomore Lauren Keeler, a first time attendee, said, "I spent \$500 on clothes, jewelry, food, and on-line shopping in the van."

On day two, they went back to the convention center, where they went to the FFA Workshops, CDEs (Career Development Events), the Career show, and the Agriscience Fair.

That night, they attended a rodeo at the Indiana State Fairgrounds. Sophomore Saylee Gingerich said, "My favorite part was going to the rodeo and seeing people from chapters around us."

On day three, students went to the final session where the choir sang and guest speaker Corey Flournoy from Chicago addressed the many attendees. He was the 1st urban and African American to become the National FFA President. He spoke of diversity and inclusion in FFA. Also, National FFA Western Region Vice President Ryan Williamson gave the retiring address, entitled "Hidden Pieces." Students then headed home.

Keeler said, "Making corn and door vlogs/hauls with Maddie Neuberger [in the FFA Workshops] was my favorite part. Especially when Mrs. Thompson told Maddie her orangutan Octavious was the ugliest thing she's ever seen and that it would be in her nightmares."

FFA attendees included: Lauren Keeler, Maddie Neuberger, Amber Wolf, Layla Samuelson, Saylee Gingerich, Maddie Tygrett, Lillian Waters and Lexie Isabel.



FFA members stand in front of large FFA sign at the National Convention. **Back Row:** Maddie Neuberger, Maddie Tygrett, Saylee Gingerich, Lillian Waters, Adviser Renee Thompson. **Front Row:** Layla Samuelson, Lexie Isabel, Amber Wolf, Lauren Keeler. Photo contributed by Renee Thompson.



FFA Adviser Renee Thompson poses for picture in front of a quote that reads "I want to hold your ham." Photo contributed by Renee Thompson.



FFA members Lexie Isabel and Lillian Waters pose for picture with new items purchased from the gift shop. Photo contributed by Lexie Isabel.



FFA members pose for a picture on a cow bed. Pictured are Lillian Waters, Layla Samuelson, Maddie Tygrett, Maddie Neuberger, Lexie Isabel, Saylee Gingerich, Lauren Keeler, Amber Wolf. Photo contributed by Renee Thompson.



FFA members visit the Indianapolis Zoo. Pictured are Amber Wolf, Lauren Keeler, Maddie Neuberger, Lillian Waters, Maddie Tygrett, Saylee Gingerich, Lexie Isabel, Layla Samuelson. Photo contributed by Lillian Waters.

4TH ANNUAL HARVEST DINNER HELD

The FFA held their 4th Annual Harvest Dinner for local farm families on Nov. 18 from 5:50 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. in the WB United Methodist Church basement. FFA members worked two shifts but were able to eat with their families when they arrived. Approximately 100 families were served.

Freshmen members were in

charge of desserts, juniors and seniors brought in ready to eat veggies and dips, and Adelyn Hetrick secured Texas Roadhouse rolls and butter for the sophomore class contribution. The main meal consisted of soups provided by the mothers of Saylee Gingerich, Lillian Waters and Dylan Schiele.



FFA members Adelyn Hetrick and Maddie Neuberger prepare food for the Harvest Dinner. Photo contributed by Renee Thompson.



FFA members Grace Hamann and Lilah Pedersen cut desserts for the Harvest Dinner. Photo contributed by Renee Thompson.

FFA OCTOBER NEWSLETTER HIGHLIGHTS

Amber Wolf
FFA Reporter & Guest Writer

Fruit Sales - Fruit sales is a fundraiser the West Branch FFA Chapter does every year. This year we did it a little bit earlier than usual, but the fruit will still be delivered around the second week of December. Our top 5 sellers this year were: 1) Lillian Waters, 2) Lucas Lacina, 3) Max Lodge, 4) Dylan Schiele, 5) Adelyn Hetrick. Thank you to the community and our families for supporting our chapter.

Linn-Mar Livestock - On October 9th, Shay Kinsinger, Lillian Waters, Maddie Neuberger, Larkin Brown, and Saylee Gingerich attended the Linn-Mar Livestock Judging. At the livestock judging these members judged different groups of livestock and put them from 1st to last place. They did very well in swine. At this judging, members do not have to give reasons so it was strictly judging. It is more about concentrating on the skills built, what the event is about, and trying out new things. This event is only for freshmen and sophomores, so it gives a good, early experience to determine if a member is interested in livestock judging.

Greenhand Fire-Up - Each year Southeast district and Iowa FFA officers plan and facilitate Greenhand Fire Up Conferences for FFA members in the Southeast district. Cedar Rapids Prairie High School welcomed FFA chapters from all over the Southeast district on Monday, October 16. Members in attendance were: Sophomore Adelyn Hetrick; Freshman

McKenna Worrell, Grace Hamann, Sullivan Bucknell, Heather Powers, Melayna Burmeister, Holly Woody, Lilah Pedersen, Emma Wolf, Allison Tygrett, Shay Kinsinger, Mason Pedersen, Reid Hansen, and Alissa Van Hall.

While at Cedar Rapids Prairie on Monday, district and state officers lead four interactive workshops for first year high school FFA members, also known as Greenhands, for the annual Greenhand Fire Up Conference. The workshops facilitated were leadership focused with an emphasis on the experiences that occur in the lives of beginning high school students.

The officers prepared and facilitated workshops of: authenticity, balancing priorities, communication, and FFA opportunities - in order to provide the first-year FFA members with skills they would use both within and outside of FFA. The goal was to engage FFA members in learning about the tools that would allow them to be successful in anything they are part of through high school and beyond. Greenhand Fire Up is made possible with support from the Iowa FFA Foundation.

Trunk or Treat - On Sunday, October 28th, a small group of members went to the Johnson County Fairgrounds and participated in Trunk-or-Treat for this year's Fall Activity. Members in attendance were Maddie Neuberger, Lauren Keeler, Larkin Brown, Emma Wolf, and Amber Wolf. They dressed up as smarties to hand out Smarties and Nerds candies to the kids.



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Student Life

4

December 21, 2023

PEDERSEN'S WINTER SKINCARE ADVICE AND PRODUCT RECOMMENDATIONS

Caleb Pedersen
Staff Writer

Winter has arrived, and so has your dry skin! This winter, you'll be more prepared than ever to tackle the dry and cold air.

Taking care of your skin is super important. Skin is the largest organ of the human body and it's critical that you maintain a healthy skin barrier during the colder months. The cold weather brings super dry air, causing dryness and disruption to the stratum corneum, your skin's outermost layer and skin barrier.

A simple and efficacious skincare routine includes a cleanser, moisturizer, and sunscreen. Although most people believe sunscreen is not necessary during the winter months, it is crucial to wear sunscreen everyday. UV rays are out all year round and can be very damaging to your skin. In this article you will be pro-

vided with product recommendations and explanations for each.

To start, a cleanser is essential because although you cannot see it, dirt and bacteria is accumulated on your skin throughout the day. When cleansing, start by massaging a quarter-sized amount of your cleanser on to damp skin for 1-2 minutes. Continue by rinsing all of the residue off before moving on.

After Cleansing, follow up with a moisturizer. A moisturizer is a cream or lotion that will hydrate, moisturize, and lock in water content. Take a nickel sized amount of your moisturizer and massage into your skin.

Next, sunscreen is very essential. When applying sunscreen, to get the required protection, 2 finger lengths worth is recommended for your face and neck. Massage into skin until completely blended out.

Cleanser recommendations:

Oily skin: La Roche-Posay Purifying Foaming Face Wash
Combination skin: Krave Beauty Matcha Hemp Hydrating Cleanser
Dry skin: La Roche-Posay Toleriane Hydrating Gentle Face Cleanser

Moisturizer recommendations:

Oily skin: Bubble Level Up Balancing Moisturizer
Combination skin: Good Molecules Lightweight Daily Moisturizer

Dry skin: Summer Fridays Rich Cushion Cream Ultra Plumping Moisturizer

Sunscreen recommendations:

Oily skin: Eucerin Face Oil Control Sunscreen Lotion SPF 50
Combination skin: Innisfree Daily UV Defense SPF 36
Dry skin: Krave Beauty Beet The Sun Lightweight Sunscreen Broad Spectrum SPF 40



KEVIN ABSTRACT RELEASES GENRE-BENDING ALBUM, TAKES FANS TO NEW WORLD

Ashlynn Nash
Co-Photo-Editor-in-Chief

On November 3, 2023, Kevin Abstract, former leader of the hip-hop group Brockhampton, dropped a solo album. *Blanket*, his first album since the group announced their pause early last year, shows fans a taste of Abstract's rock interest. This album highlights a dirty guitar sound, which leaves a lasting impression on listeners.

For those who are just tuning in to Abstract, he is a 27 year old American rapper, vocalist, and composer. He is primarily known for hip-hop music, but dabbles in indie and alternative tones as well. In this album, you'll experience his rock and grunge side.

If this sounds like something you enjoy, or if you're looking to expand your musical horizons, look no further. In the entirety of this review, I will cover

every song from the 13 track album *Blanket* by Abstract and add my honest opinion.

"When The Rope Post to Break" - Kevin Abstract

★★★★☆ - I find this song repetitive and scary. On top of this, it's very mysterious and grungy. Not my favorite style of music, and definitely not Abstracts typical genre.

"Blanket" - Kevin Abstract

★★★★☆ - This song follows with the same energy as the previous. I find it short, pointless, and honestly a little chaotic. From just two songs of a listen, you can tell Abstract is attempting an angry rock vibe.

"Running Out" - Kevin Abstract

★★★★☆ - This song is a bit more easygoing and calm on the ears. I can find

myself rockin' and jammin' to the beat of this tune. I can also play it as background music.

"The Greys" - Kevin Abstract

★★★★☆ - I love the sound of the strings in this track. I find it to be chill and groovy.

"Voyager" - Kevin Abstract

★★★★☆ - I absolutely adore the change of heart of this song, and I love the lyrics. This sound is heavenly, and I particularly like 2:20 to the end of the song.

"Madonna" - Kevin Abstract

★★★★☆ - This is my favorite song of the album! This song is poppin' and the intro is a bop. This song has earned itself a spot on my liked songs Spotify list.

"Today I Gave Up" - Kevin Abstract

★★★★☆ - This song is vibey, and takes up more of a slower pace. What I really liked about this song is the percussion moments. Listeners really get to feel the rhythms and beats in their souls.

"What Should I Do?" - Kevin Abstract

★★★★☆ - This song, quite frankly, is boring. However, it sparks my interest because it is the first moment of Abstract's familiar rap scene. I think the rhythm of the track is good and dandy, too.

"Mr. Edwards" - Kevin Abstract

★★★★☆ - This song is strange and short. It is very questionable! Not an essential listen.

"Scream" - Kevin Abstract

★★★★☆ - I love this song, I got very excited for the vocals! This, for me, has

got to be within my top three songs on the album. I find this song to be essential to the balance and bliss of the album.

"Real 2 Me" - Kevin Abstract

★★★★☆ - I would describe this tune as poppy, fast, and definitely more of an indie genre type vibe. I appreciate Abstract's use of this song, as it caters to his indie fanbase (AKA me!).

"Heights, Spiders, and the Dark" - Kevin Abstract

★★★★☆ - I love the low guitar strums at the beginning of this track. It's got a western appeal type of vibe. This song shows Abstract's vulnerability.

"My Friend" - Kevin Abstract (Ft. Kara Jackson & MJ Lenderman)

★★★★☆ - This song is melancholy, sympathetic, and provides a gentle-like vibe. To be honest, I have no strong feelings as to whether I like this song or not. It is not something that jumps out at me. I do appreciate the feature, as none of the other songs on this album have one!

Blanket, in my opinion, does not fully represent the musical artist Kevin Abstract. A few songs that I really enjoy by

Abstract include, "Peach," "Empty," and "Big Wheels." It makes sense because I don't really enjoy rock or grunge music, but enjoy indie, acoustic, rap, and r&b.

Overall, I feel that this album deserves **3.5/5 stars**. It has a few icky downfalls, but those moments are short enough to be swept over with pearly fixes. I feel that Abstract was trying something new and wanted to play around with a few genres, and there's no harm in that.

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A TASTE OF FRANCE: GRANDMA SALLY'S PIZZELLES

Olivia Naber
Head Editor-in-Chief

As a child, I always delighted in going to my Grandma Sally's house. From her pillowy couches to the TV that seemed to always be playing The Muppet Show, being at her house was my second home. What I remember most, though, is baking with her.

Even though I nearly always made a mess by turning the stand mixer up a few notches too high and sending flour everywhere, she always let me be a part of the process. When I was too little to reach the counter, she'd set up a table better suited to my stature so I could partake in the kitchen magic and delight in making something sweet to eat.

One of my favorite recipes we frequently made was her Pizzelles. The light waffle cone-esque cookie not only tasted delicious but looked gorgeous because of her special Pizelle press. Adorning the top with powdered sugar always made them feel extra special, mimicking the snow that floated down from outside the kitchen window.

My first memory of the cookies was when I needed a recipe reflecting my heritage to bring to class. I knew a few

things about my French background—my great-great grandmother started her life just outside of Paris before coming to the U.S. as a toddler. But I didn't know much about my family's baking history. Of course, the first person I turned to was my grandma. While she had a lot of recipes under her belt, the only one she could draw up from our French background was the Pizelle.

My great-grandmother introduced the recipe to my grandmother in her childhood, though they did things a little differently than we do today.

"My mother would make a pretty similar batter," Grandma Sally reminisced, "but then she would put it in a single press, put it on a gas stove flame, and time it just right to be able to know when to flip it and cook the other side."

Nowadays, we've invested in an electric dual-cooking press, but the magic is still there. The recipe always brought feelings of warmth to Sally in her childhood, and I can't help but feel the same way when I bite into a Pizelle.

I hope that this wintry family staple can bring the same feelings of love to your own family this holiday season. Who knows? Maybe you'll end up passing it down just like my family has.



PIZZELLES. Photo by Olivia Naber.

Makes about 30 Pizzelles

Prep time: 5 minutes

Cook time: 20 minutes

Total Time: 25 minutes

Ingredients/Equipment:

- Pizelle Press
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 4 eggs
- ¾ cup butter (melted)
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- Cooking/baking spray
- Powdered sugar (optional but highly recommended!)

Instructions:

Plug in and lightly spray your Pizelle press with cooking or baking spray.

In a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment or by hand, mix flour, sugar, baking powder, eggs, melted butter, and vanilla extract until a smooth batter is formed. Make sure to wipe down the sides of the bowl and the paddle to ensure everything is mixed thoroughly.

Using two spoons, scoop a spoonful of batter onto the heated Pizelle press.

Close the press and cook for 1 minute or until slightly golden.

Carefully remove the Pizelle from the Pizelle press (it may seem floppy, but it will crisp up as it cools).

(Optional) Dust Pizelle with powdered sugar in a sifter before it entirely cools. Sally says, "They get crispy real fast, and the powdered sugar won't stick to them very well when they get cold."

Repeat steps 3-6 until out of batter.

(Optional) If you want a more uniform look, trim the uneven edges where batter may have spilled over. We typically leave the edges, as they give the cookies an imperfect kind of charm—plus, it leaves more cookie for us to eat!



Grandma Sally

GRANDMA KATE'S SUGAR COOKIES: A SUGARY-SWEET, FIVE GENERATION RECIPE

Ashlynn Nash
Co-Photo-Editor-in-Chief

For many years, I was invited down to my grandma Mindy's country home to make her family famous sugar cookies. Little did I know that the Ashlynn that eagerly wanted to make cookies, was the fifth holder of the family recipe. I was recently informed on the history of the tasty cookies.

"Grandma Kate used to make these for me when I was a little girl, and now I get to share them with you," Mindy said, smiling.

I'm proud to share this recipe with whomever is looking for a classic Christmas cookie recipe, or even someone looking to spend some time with their loved ones.

First off, it is important for you as the reader to know that this recipe is a two day process. Day one consists of dough preparation work, and day two is for baking and frosting the cookies.

Ingredients needed:

- 1 cup of sugar
- 1 cup of margarine
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup of sour cream
- ½ teaspoon of salt
- 1 teaspoon of vanilla extract
- 5 cups of flour
- 1 teaspoon of baking soda
- 2 teaspoons of baking powder



Grandma Mindy and Ashlynn Nash make Grandma Kate's cookies. Photo Contributed by Ashlynn Nash.

Instructions:

First, grab a large bowl. In this bowl, you are going to cream your margarine and sugar. Do it well, and then add your vanilla, sour cream, and eggs in there too. You can do this by hand, but we use a mixer.

In your second bowl, combine the salt, baking soda, baking powder, and flour. These are your dry ingredients. Slowly work to add your dry ingredient mixture into your creamed mixture.

Now you should have something that resembles sugar cookie dough. Cover the dough, and let it chill overnight in your refrigerator. The next day you will be ready to bake your cookie dough.

The next day, roll out your dough on a floured surface. This can be anywhere, but we use the kitchen island. Then, cut your cookies the way you'd like.

"Make sure to use a good amount of flour on your counter and on the roller. It will stick to everything if you don't," said Mindy.

Typically, we make these near Christmas time, so we use our Christmas themed cookie cutouts. We also prefer our cookies on the thicker side. The batches usually come out to about 50 cookies at the end, with approximately 10 fitting to a pan. All of these details are important, but can

be flexible. For example, if you prefer thinner cookies, you may be able to make more than 50. Or if you own tiny cutouts, there will generally be more cookies in a pan.

Be sure to keep the dough not being used at bay in the refrigerator. It is important to keep the dough cold.

"If you don't keep the dough cold, it will stick when rolling it out," advised Mindy. When you complete a pan, put it into your oven and bake for 10-15 minutes at 350 degrees. Watch your first pan to see what time works for you, as thicker cookies will need more time. Cookies should be lightly golden.

Once you've finished baking all of your cookies, let them cool to room temperature. After cooling, you may frost and decorate your freshly baked cookies. Lay out newspaper or other materials to prevent a mess on your counter.

Now as far as frosting goes, you can use any cream cheese frosting recipe. Feel free to stray away from this and use store bought frosting, or any other alternative. You can also choose to add food coloring to your frosting and sprinkles to your cookies.

You have now created the perfect Christmas sugar cookie. Share with others or keep it to yourself (we know you want to!) Merry Christmas!



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BRADDOCK, KETTLER, SHIELDS PERFORM IN IOWA HONOR CHEER SQUAD

Peyton Braddock
Co-Editor-in-Chief

On Nov 17, three WBHS cheerleaders earned the opportunity to perform in the Iowa Honor Cheerleading Squad at the UNI-Dome. Their performance was during the halftime show of the State Championship Class 2A and 3A football game. Many different schools across the state of Iowa were able to nominate three cheerleaders to participate in the honor squad. The cheerleading squad consisted of over 200 participants. There were a few practices that led up to the performance on Nov 17. The first practice was held on Nov 12. Head coach Jordan Ellyson, Peyton Braddock, Kaylee Kettler, and Miley Shields attended the eight-hour-long practice at Ames High School. College Cheerleaders from Iowa Central taught the 200 cheerleaders the dances and cheers that they would be performing.

Shields said, "I really think our practice on Sunday was a great experience! There were times when learning the dances were tough, but overall I had a really good time. I think the dances that we learned were a good challenge because it wasn't like anything I'd ever done before."

The cheerleaders were divided into two groups. There was a dance group and a stunting group. Braddock, Kettler, and Shields were all a part of the dance group. They performed two different dances that involved real competition cheer music and motions. The stunting group executed cheerleading stunts with a small choreographed section of cheer motions.

There was also a small portion within one of the dances specifically for the cheerleaders who could implement a tumbling pass. Braddock participated in this section of the routine and executed a back tuck during the performance.

Both of the dancing and stunting group came together to perform a cheer and chant during the performance as well. This was supposed to initiate how cheerleaders across the state of Iowa stay united, no matter what team they are cheering for.

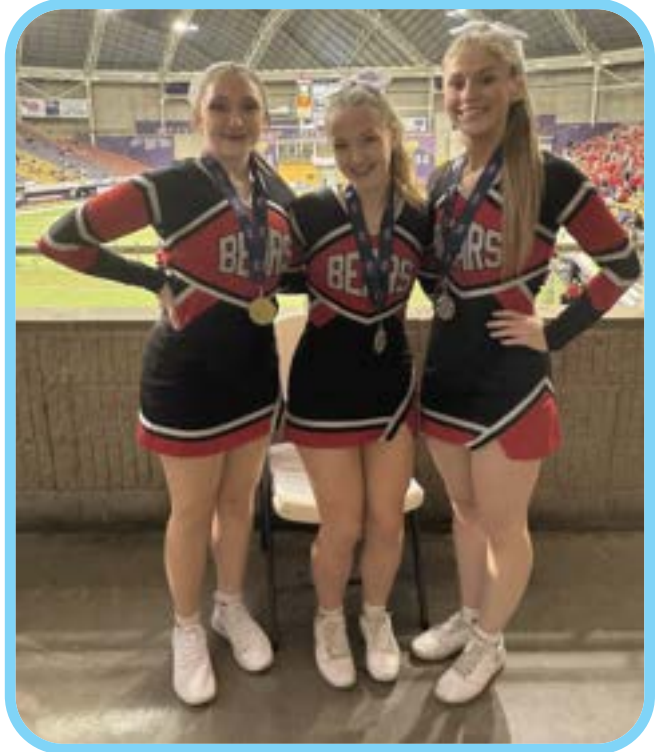
On Nov. 16 there was a second practice held the day before the performance. That practice was just to clarify everything that they were taught in the beginning of the week. The practice was much shorter since they just reviewed the dance.

On the morning of the performance, there was a practice at 7:00 am to

run through the dance and cheer one last time before the performance.

"Honor cheer is a great experience for any high school cheerleader," Coach Ellyson said. Typically, only upperclassmen are chosen to be on the honor cheer squad, so it is a very rewarding experience.

Braddock said, "The performance went really well. It was a lot of hard work and dedication. Although the practices were long, it was still enjoyable. Honor cheer is definitely an opportunity that I would recommend to anyone involved in cheerleading, and it was a wonderful experience that I will never forget from my high school experience."



IOWA HONOR CHEER. Kaylee Kettler, Miley Shields, Peyton Braddock. Photo Contributed by Lisa Braddock.

WRESTLING FEATURE PICTURES



Aurora Marsh. Photo by Ashlynn Nash.



Hanna Lacina. Photo by Rylee Grace.



Shae Farmer. Photo by Ashlynn Nash.

ARNAMAN BREAKS 1,000 CAREER POINTS



HOLDEN ARNAMAN BREAKS 1,000 CAREER POINTS VS. MONTICELLO ON DECEMBER 1. Back Row: Michael Montgomery, Cole Crostwaite, Trenton Schutte, Nolan Staker, Brandon Pickett, Brandon Pedersen, Coach Cooper, Kabela. Front Row: Coaches Grant Meth and Kaleb Duwa, Nate Hills, Cameron Gingerich, Brennan Dale, Reese Trepanier, Holden Arnamen, Jady Harris, Ethan Miller, Lincoln Naber, Head Coach Jason Kern. Photo Contributed by Stephanie Arnaman.

GABBIE MARSHALL VISITS GIRLS BASKETBALL

Caitlyn Harrison
Staff Writer

On Monday, November 13, Iowa women's basketball star Gabbie Marshall came to visit the WBHS girls basketball team. Per IHSAA rules, Marshall couldn't coach the girls, so she spent the practice watching them. They spent their practice working hard. Freshman player Ava Burnett said, "We worked on lay ups, our plays, and outside shooting."

There were a lot of emotions when Marshall came to visit. Freshman

player Tori Vikel said, "When I first saw her I was nervous right away. Like, seeing a college player that you watch on TV all the time in your gym with you and watching you practice is crazy. She was so sweet and I feel beyond lucky that I got to meet her."

Sophomore player Maddie Neuberger said, "I was excited that I was able to meet her because she's a great basketball player and I like learning from her. Everyone was freaking out, but I wasn't because I am used to always going to their games and seeing the players on the court."



GIRLS BASKETBALL TEAM WITH GABBIE MARSHALL. Back Row: Kya Montgomery, Alyssa Pierce, Lexi Skay, Gabbie Marshall, Kennedy Simpson, Madelyn Stout, Alyse Klinkkammer, Joelle Haas, Grace Hamann. Middle Row: Addi Schultes, Kylie Pickett, Jenie Gomez, Emalyn Poe, Tori Vikel, Ava Burnett, Melayna Burmeister. Front Row: Chloe Albrecht, Maddie Neuberger, Katelyn Essington, Alissa VanHall. Photo Contributed by Justin Liddle.

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Feature

December 21, 2023

8

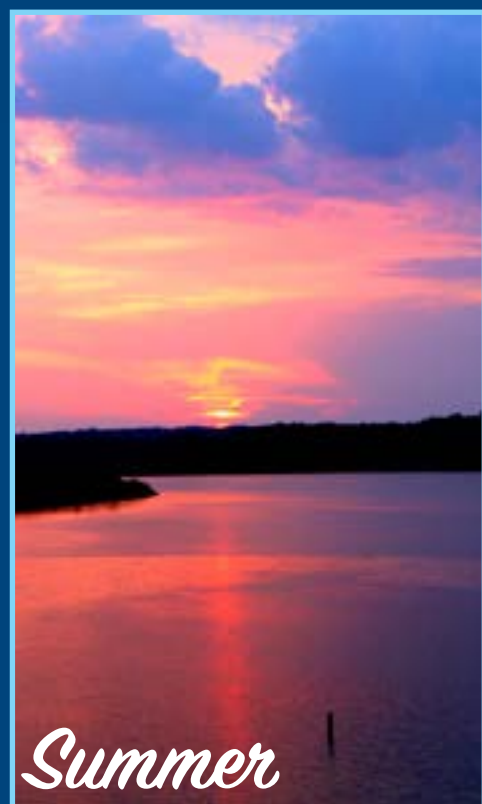
FOUR SEASONS GREETINGS



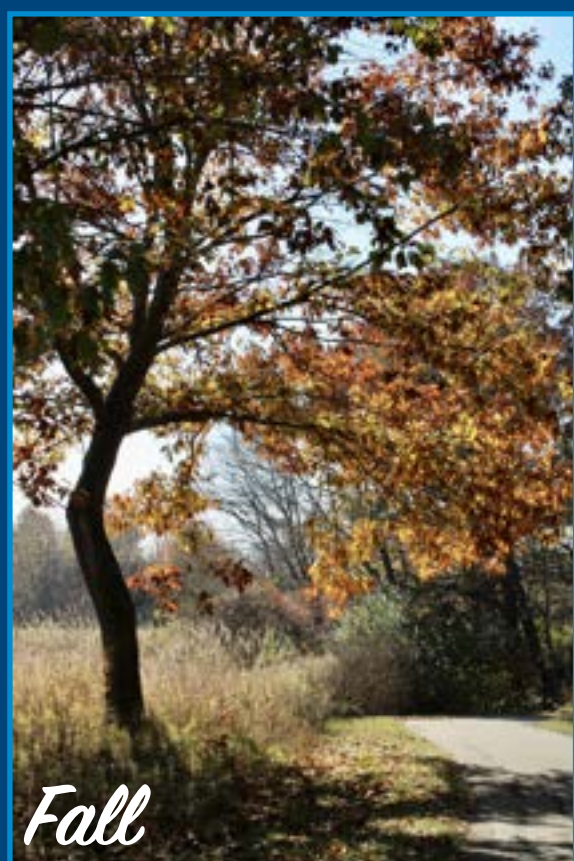
Fall



Winter



Summer



Fall



Winter



Summer



Spring



Spring

All photos by Ashlynn Nash.

TWO SISTERS KENNELS RAISES MONEY FOR DOG PARK EXPANSION

Maryam Martin
Staff Writer

The West Branch Dog Park began talk of expansion in November of 2022. Two Sisters Kennels was responsible for the fundraising and construction of the expansion.

Lauren Ruse, owner of Two Sisters Kennel, said, "The animal control committee started a Go-

fundme which got some local resident donations. Two Sisters Kennels collected donations at our daycare open house. When donations became stagnant we (TSK) decided to host the first annual West Branch Dog Fair to raise money for the park."

The original quote was estimated at \$17,000 but with help from volunteers the cost was able to be lowered significantly. Concrete was donated by Croell Concrete and local

volunteers helped with installing the new fence.

With the donations, they were able to raise over \$4,000, which ended up covering the cost of the fence. The expansion began in early November and was quickly completed by the end of the month.

Locals love to let their dogs play in the park, but the capacity was reaching its limit. Ruse said, "West branch is a growing city and new res-

idences with canine companions move in every month. It's great to have two areas for dogs to exercise so owners with smaller dogs can choose to have their dogs play separately from the larger dogs. It's great to have the option to choose which area to take your dog."

With the new expansion, there are hopes that all dogs will be happier to roam and play with their size of dogs at the Dog Park.

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WINTER QUESTIONNAIRE

What do you want for Christmas?

I want a bright pink Bronco - Lexi Isabel

I want new parts for my drum set - Kellen Dykstra

Some Sprite Cranberry and a PS5 - Brandon Pickett

Are you going anywhere special for the holidays? If so, where?

I get to go to work on Christmas. - Keaton Norfleet

The farthest I plan on moving is from the couch to the fridge and back. I'm taking the opportunity to get some much-needed rest, that's for sure. -Olivia Naber

Do you have any New Year's resolutions? If so, what are they?

I never make them because I have never kept one. -Karina Krall

To fix my posture because I'm not trying to have back problems at 16. -Nina Torkelson

I want to read more books next year - Kellen Dykstra

Do you have anything special planned for Christmas break?

Make a lot of money. -Connor Rios

Relaxing and 1 awesome rehearsal with CJU45!! -Chris Reed

Doing puzzles, watching movies, and doing my Kirkwood class - Nina Torkelson

What is your favorite thing to do over the holidays?

Decorate the house, bake multiple goods, and spend time cozied up by the fire! -Ashlynn Nash

Eat cookies - Olivia Thomas

I love giving gifts. Something about seeing a person's face light up as they open a present is so heartwarming. -Olivia Naber

FEATURE PICTURE



ELL Students decorate their first-ever Christmas tree. Photo Contributed by Annie Popkes.

WBHS VOTES: WHAT'S THE BEST CHRISTMAS SONG?

- All I want For Christmas is You*
Maiah Cahey
- Wonderful Christmastime*
Paul McCartney
- Rudolf the Red Nosed Reindeer*
Gene Autry
- You're a Mean One, Mr. Grinch*
Trent Ravenscroft
- Santa Clause is Coming to Town*
Maiah Cahey

Graphic by Olivia Naber

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Feature

10

December 21, 2023



NABER GIVES *THE BALLAD OF SONGBIRDS AND SNAKES* 3/5 STARS

Olivia Naber
Head Editor-in-chief

Released eight years after the final installment in the Hunger Games franchise, *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes* returns to the world of Panem, this time in a pre-Katniss era. In this prequel, future president Coriolanus Snow takes the stage 64 years before the events of *The Hunger Games*.

The Snow family, devoid of its patriarch after the war between the Capitol and the districts, has landed in a precarious financial and social situation. Young Coriolanus, a bright Academy student, is in dire need of the Plinth prize, a scholarship to the Capitol university, to help lift his family out of poverty.

Instead of the prize being grades-based, however, he and his classmates are given the task of mentoring tributes for the 10th annual Hunger Games to determine who takes it home.

Coriolanus, who's hoping for a strong competitor, gets stuck with the worst of the lot—the District 12 girl, Lucy Gray. However, she upends expectations from the start with her showmanship abilities and killer voice. If Coriolanus wants any hopes of winning the Plinth Prize, he has to work with her to not only keep her alive, but also create a killer show.

As a whole, there was a lot that did work and a lot that didn't work for this film.

One plot device that is used often—and for good cause—is music. Music is an integral part of Lucy Gray's character, and the songs she sings aren't just there to be there: the lyrics are all significant to the story. From the reaping ceremony in which she asserts herself as a force to be reckoned with to her love songs, the character conveys such raw emotion that it's hard not to be drawn in. The movie soundtrack is fantastic for foreshadowing and for showing us who Lucy Gray is. She's one of the most com-

elling, vibrant characters in the film, and the film's use of music puts this on full display.

A surprising highlight of the film for me didn't come from any of the main characters, but rather Lucretius "Lucky" Flickerman. The awkwardly charismatic weatherman-turned-Hunger Games Announcer brought some much needed lightness and humor at unexpected points. Jason Schwartzman was cast perfectly for this role, and his delivery killed me nearly every time.

Another character that I felt was well cast was Viola Davis as the sadistic head gamemaker Volumnia Gaul. Having read the book, I had no clue who could pull off this role and portray such a menacing mentor to Coriolanus, but I really enjoyed Davis' performance.

offer up enough insight into his inner workings and the way his mind operates. The novel provided us with a constant internal monologue that showed Snow's key characteristics: drive, ruthlessness, ego, and ambition. It was easy to make the connection between young Snow and the genocidal President he becomes later on.

Because of this, the way his mood shifts at the end (I won't spoil it for those who haven't seen it) takes the audience by surprise, and it's more difficult to understand his motivations. We don't have this constant buildup and ramp up of his ambition and drive to land on top, which makes the twist ending come up as slightly confusing.

Apart from the ending, it was much easier to see Coriolanus as a hero

*"A few standout performances help lift *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes* into a compelling story despite numerous pacing issues."*
- Olivia Naber

Upon first glance, you can immediately see that Gaul is going to be villainous—her heterochromatic eyes, voluminous gray afro, and vibrant outfits (barring the one that looks like a used tampon—she was done dirty on that) are reminiscent of a mad scientist—which is precisely what she is.

According to People, director Francis Lawrence said that "one reference point he gave Davis, 58, for her character was Gene Wilder's titular candy-maker from 1971's *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory*." Davis certainly brought a kind of singsong-yet-sinister character to Gaul that is definitely reminiscent of Gene Wilder's slightly unhinged Willy Wonka.

Surprisingly, the character that wasn't as impactful for me was our main man Coriolanus Snow. *Ballad* doesn't

held at the Methodist Church. There was also a cookie walk to benefit Bethany Lutheran Church.

Later in the day, there was an indoor farmers market at the Rummells Center. Free community brunch was held at the West Branch Friends Church. One could take puppy pictures with Santa and Krampus at the Two Sisters' Kennel.

Little Lights hosted a DIY wreath class. There was also Christmas dance cardio and a pie making workshop with Chef Chris.

At 3:00 p.m., there was story time with Ms. Becky at the Rummells Center. A soup and stroll was held at Little Lights. Later in the evening, a candlelit concert was performed at Little Lights.

Student government and National Honor Society members were encouraged to participate in the Christmas Past activities and take pride in helping out fellow community members.

Claire Jarrett said, "Volunteering for events and activities that other organizations put on shows a nice deed for the community. It shows the community and others about WBHS and the small impact we can make on those that are requesting volunteers as well as others helping with the event. I feel like I've done something good when I volunteer for these events in West Branch."

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS VOLUNTEER AT CHRISTMAS PAST

Kya Montgomery
Staff Writer

West Branch continued its annual Christmas Past weekend on Friday and Saturday, December 1-2. Multiple students volunteered in various activities during the weekend.

On Friday evening, there was an opening ceremony, which took place at the Village Green where there was caroling, brief remarks, and Santa's arrival.

On both Saturday and Sunday, there was *Something for my Siblings* hosted at Izzy's Treasures, where kids were able to pick a present out for their sibling and have it wrapped. Caitlyn Harrison and Josh Kroemer were just a couple students who helped to wrap gifts.

"I liked talking to the kids and helping them pick out a gift for their sibling. I loved seeing how excited they got to be able to give something to someone they love. It was also really special seeing the parents being so appreciative because some were in a position where they couldn't get their children gifts like we had," said Harrison.

There was a Christmas in Yellowstone documentary held at the National Park Service Visitor Center. One could also take pictures with Santa and Mrs. Claus at the Town Hall. Santa's

elves were there on hand for any assistance.

A favorite part of Christmas Past for many is the food available. At the bonfires scattered across Main Street, people could roast hot dogs or marshmallows. Homemade fried donuts that are made by the local Boy Scouts are always popular. The Lions Club provided hot chocolate, the fire station provided cookies alongside the Gibson train display.

A main event of Christmas Past would have to be the horse-drawn wagon rides and carriage rides. The horses took riders around Main Street. There were also festively dressed alpacas ready for photos.

Winter holiday arts and crafts put on by the National Work Service. This took place at the Visitor Center. Also at the National Park, there happened to be live blacksmithing demonstrations from Jesse Hoover at the Blacksmith Shop.

Fine art students performed traditional Christmas music throughout the festive weekend. They performed every half hour in front of the Herbert Hoover Birthplace Cottage and National Park Service Visitor Center.

On Saturday, starting at 8:00 a.m., there was a candy sale and bake sale

held at the Methodist Church. There was also a cookie walk to benefit Bethany Lutheran Church.

Later in the day, there was an indoor farmers market at the Rummells Center. Free community brunch was held at the West Branch Friends Church. One could take puppy pictures with Santa and Krampus at the Two Sisters' Kennel.

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Josh Kroemer wraps a present at "Something for my Sibling" in Izzy's Treasures. Photo contributed by Josh Kroemer.



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WINTER WEEK PLANNED BY STUDENT GOVERNMENT AMUSES STUDENTS

Ashlynn Nash
Photo Editor-in-Chief

Starting last year, WBHS Student Government has planned and created a week during December to host their event called 'Winter Week'. During this week, students are brought together to destress and participate in fun activities. There are dress up days, a trivia night, and an assembly.

Starting on Monday, the students were encouraged to dress up in Christmas colors according to their grade. Seniors wore green, juniors wore red, sophomores wore blue, and the freshmen wore white. Teachers and staff were also included in this, and were urged to wear purple.

To keep it fun and light-hearted but also encourage participation, student government implemented a point system. Throughout the week, Instructional Support classes could earn themselves points by dressing up each day, winning or being present at trivia night or cookie decorating (Wednesday), decorating their classroom doors, and joining or participating at the assembly on Friday. The Instructional Support class or I.S. with the greatest amount of points at the end of the week got to wrap their I.S. teacher.

On Tuesday, students sported their pajamas. Pajama day is a common favorite dress up day, as students were able to cozy up at school.

Wednesday was ugly sweater day. Aside from dressing to match the theme, students' door decorations were due. The door decorating was solely based on creativity and students worked together to complete this.

In the evening after school, cookie decorating and trivia night took place. Hosted by student government members, students could pay \$3 extra dollars to decorate cookies at 4:30 pm in the activities commons before they played trivia night. Trivia night costed students \$2 dollars each.

Trivia night started at 5pm. Teams of three to five people competed against each other for five rounds with ten questions each. The team "Last Year's Winners" took the win with 70 points!

'Last Years Winners' was a team of teachers. Karina Krall, Terri Zumbahlen, Kristen Westpheling, Amanda



Photo of trivia team 'Last Years Winners' after winning for the second year in a row. Photo taken by Ashlynn Nash

Budreau, and Annie Popkes are the 2023 Winter Week Trivia winners.

"It's nice to win, but basically the group of us just like to play trivia in general, that's why we play. We like to give our prize away to a student group afterwards," said Krall.

Leading for the majority of the night was "Team 1," a team of seniors. On the team was Kya Montgomery, Maryam Martin, Katey Noble, Claire Jarrett, and Caleb Pedersen. The team placed in sixth at the end of the night because of wagering issues.

One team who tied for second, "ANLLL" was a sophomore team of Addi Schultes, Nolan Staker, Lincoln Naber, Lexi Skay, and Lynden McGillivray. The other team was "Keeguns' Minions," and on the team was Jordan Waters, Nina Torkelson, Elliot Hinkhouse, Josh Kroemer, Jake Swisher, Nora Ziehr, and Keegan Hansen.

Thursday was Christmas hat day. This consisted of elf hats, reindeer ears, and santa caps. Students were able to get creative with this theme and showcase their Christmas spirit.

Ending off the school week strong was flannel Friday! Many colors,

patterns, and stripes were shown off. Along with this, door decorations were voted on by students.

Friday also continued with an assembly. At the assembly, multiple Christmas themed games were played such as sled race with towels or musical chairs with Christmas music. An opportunity for scoring points was presented with each game.

At the end of the day, all of the votes and points were tallied up. Kristen Westpheling and Annie Popke's I.S. were tied. Both classes got the chance to wrap their teacher.

Westpheling's I.S. ended up winning after the whole school voted on the best wrapping job.

Winter Week committee members were seniors Caleb Pedersen, Peyton Braddock, and Torkelson, juniors Hansen and Kroemer, sophomore Naber, and freshman Lyla Popkes.

Trivia Night committee members were senior Olivia Naber, freshman Anthony Heitzman, and juniors Layla Samuelson and Will Tidrick. They organized the fun filled night, came up with trivia questions, and scored the slips.



Cale Sydel and Ethan Humphrey participate in sled race during assembly. Photo taken by Ashlynn Nash.



Nina Torkelson and Elliot Hinkhouse decorate Christmas cookies before Trivia Night. Photo by Karina Krall.



Katey Noble, Ashlynn Nash, and Peyton Braddock participate in Christmas color day at school by wearing the color green. Photo by Fern Stubbs.



Kristen Westpheling's IS takes a picture after wrapping their teacher. Photo by Ashlynn Nash.

DANCE MARATHON DATE SET FOR FEBRUARY 9

Claire Jarrett
Photo Editor-in-Chief

2023-2024 Dance Marathon preparation has begun for Student Government members. Committee members consist of Madelyn Stout (head), Jordan Waters (community outreach), Caitlyn Harrison, Claire Jarrett, Addi Schultes, Kennedy Simpson, Ashlynn Nash, and Julia Herring. The Dance Marathon committee has started fundraising to raise money for the Iowa Stead Family Children's Hospital. On November 27, members stopped in local businesses and in Iowa City/Coralville to request for possible monetary donations or items to go towards the silent auction baskets. Baskets will be available at the boys and girls home basketball games in January. Two fundraisers will be held at home basketball games to help raise money for the kids. December 12 will be the half-court fundraiser and December 18 is the knockout games. You can pay \$1 to play each game.

Dance Marathon week will start February 5 and go up until the dance on February 9. Dance Marathon will be February 9 from 8-11pm. This week will be filled with dress up days, coin drives with donations, guest speakers, and \$1 handprints. Tip jars will be located in businesses including BranchOut, Honey Den, Sephora, Scheels, Serving Cafe, McDonald's, Kum & Go, Mexico Lindo, and Roots Salon. Look for more information regarding the dance, however possible games consist of Pie (whipped cream, m&m game), different themes for each hour, team competitions, and a talent show. Wristbands to play all games are also available for purchase during Dance Marathon. Remember in order to get a shirt, students will need to raise \$25 for the Children's Hospital which also pays for your admission into the dance.

Dress Up Days:

Monday: wear green for bone marrow/liver cancer
Donate pennies

Tuesday: wear pink for breast cancer
Donate nickels

Wednesday: wear gold/yellow for childhood cancer
Donate dimes

Thursday: wear lavender/purple for all cancers
Donate quarters

Friday: wear DM shirts
Donate anything!

Updates about Dance Marathon can be found on Student Government's social media pages:

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Clubs & Orgs

12

December 21, 2023

STUDENT GOVERNMENT OPENS UP THE "CLAWSET"

Olivia Naber
Head Editor-in-Chief

Ofentimes, apparel makes the difference between being in a school and being part of a school. Wearing the Bears' signature red evokes a sense of school pride and belonging that comes from being part of something bigger than yourself.

But, let's face it—new apparel is expensive. Not all students can afford to show their spirit or keep up with the ever-changing selection of apparel available for purchase.

The desire for all students to be able to show their Bear Pride inspired a new project by the Student Government: a spirit rack with free ready-to-grab apparel for anyone who needs it.

The idea for the project was born during one of student government's summer meetings. A few students heard of apparel drives when attending the Iowa Association of Student Councils State Conference the previous year.

Adviser Abby Noelck explained, "We all really liked it, and everybody was really on board. It more came to fruition when [the officers and I] went to Leadership Boot Camp, and they kind of workshopped this idea and made it come to life."

After working through the logistics of the project, student government began gathering materials and advertising to the community. Student government announced the project in the days leading up to Homecoming Week. Students and community members were encouraged to donate new or

previously loved Bears clothing items so they could find a new home.

Donations came in hot, with entire boxes of Bears gear coming in droves. Within days, Student Government gathered a plethora of clothing from students, staff, and the community.

From there, special education teacher Dawson Ryner and his students assisted the group in cleaning the clothes before they got hung on the clothing rack. Student Government volunteers put together the rack, as well as sorting and hanging the donations.

As students made their way through Noelck's classroom and saw the Clawset's progress, buzz began to spread over the project.

"Honestly, I loved having [the Clawset] in my room for a while," beamed Noelck, "because a lot of the students just got to watch the process come together, so I had students who were like, 'Seriously, when is this available? I want that clothing.' So it was really fun to watch the excitement build."

When each piece of the puzzle was finally put together, Student Government opened the rack up to the public on Wednesday, November 7. While there were hopes that at least a couple of students might take advantage of the rack, nobody anticipated how eager students were to check out the Clawset.

Students rushed to take a look at and claim clothes for themselves. Despite the "two per person" rule to promote fairness, the Clawset, which initially held several items, looked quite bare by the second day. Only a few items and countless empty hangers were

left by the end of the day.

"I didn't realize how fast the items were going to go," commented Student Government Secretary Nina Torkelson, who contributed to the project. "I didn't get any new clothes, but I really don't need more."

The success of the rack has far-reaching implications for students who are now able to express their Bear pride.

Marcy Willier, one of many community members who donated clothes, expressed that the Clawset could be an important addition to school life for many students and their families.

"I think it's a great opportunity because not all families can have the opportunity or the funds to buy certain apparel," said Willier. "It's always fun to be part of the crowd, especially because we've had such good years with athletics, and to be able to support your team. And I just think the most impact is for those families that need a little bit of help. It's a fun way to [help them out] without pointing them out and just letting all students be a part of it."

In addition to benefiting students and families looking for Bears apparel, The Clawset allows people the opportunity to part with clothes in a way that will support those around them, as opposed to throwing clothes away or donating them to Goodwill. It's a win-win solution that benefits all parties involved.

"As a parent, I know I have given my kids' WB gear away to friends or taken it to Goodwill. I love having the option of giving it to current students and families," com-

mented principal Sara Oswald. "Also, many families are not able to prioritize spirit wear for their children. It can be pricey with so many options advertised throughout the year. I love that those students are able to find something that works for them."

Student government hopes to keep the project going throughout the year, with new rounds of donations and "shopping days" as needed.

Those interested in donating clothes to the Clawset can bring donations to the high school office.



Available Clawset donations are placed on racks in the activity commons near the HS office. Photo by Olivia Naber.



THOSE GREAT MONTANA SKIES!

Photo by Miley Shields.

NHS holds Fall Food Drive

Katey Noble
Co-Editor-in-Chief

NHS seasonal committee members set up a food drive to donate to the West Branch Food Pantry. Items were accepted from November 13 to November 21. They collected almost 80 items within this time.



NHS member Claire Jarrett sorts through food donations for the WB Food Pantry. Photo by Ashlynn Nash.



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LEGO LEAGUE TEAM EARNS TEAM SPIRIT AWARD

Keaton Norfleet
Staff Writer

LEGO League members won the “Motivate” Award at the Quad City Qualifier in Davenport, Iowa.

On Sunday, December 10, Matthew Cain and the members of the West Branch FIRST LEGO League club traveled to the Putnam Museum in Davenport, Iowa to attend and compete in the Quad City Qualifier FIRST LEGO League competition.

Upon arrival, teams checked in and set up their pit station. Afterward, all members, mentors, and volunteers

headed to the Grand Lobby for opening ceremonies.

Fifteen teams competed at the event that came from Iowa City, Bettendorf, West Branch, Muscatine, and Davenport. In total, 10 West Branch LEGO League members participated in the competition. At the beginning of their season, the members were split into two separate teams, each team ranging in experience.

Team 62613: Craft0saurs, the largest of the two teams, included six members, sixth grader Rhys Arlen, and fifth graders Eli Finzel, Jack Seiberling, Jaxon Gray, William Nash, and Alex Heintz.

Team 61374: Crafty Patties consisted of four members, Eighth graders Eli Garrett, Noah Gray, and Chloe Kleinmeyer and sixth grader Marisol Murray.

Both teams designed t-shirts that they wore at the competition, as well as buttons and small 3D printed trinkets. Craft0saurs printed small t-rexes and Crafty Patties printed small pineapples.

During their season, the members of each team were assisted by high school robotics students who acted as mentors. This year, sophomores Audrey Watt, Wyatt Chapman, Ewan Arlen, and junior Keaton Norfleet assisted students with coding, robot construction, team engagement, and presentation skills.

Robot matches began shortly after opening ceremonies.

Each team played in three matches. To score points, a team must send their robot out onto the game mat to complete missions. Each mission completed will earn a team a range of points.

In their first qualification

match, the Crafty Patties earned 105 points, and the Craft0saurs earned 155 points. After the match, both teams had time to adjust their code and robot if necessary.

In their second qualification match, the Crafty Patties earned 175 points, and the Craft0saurs earned 95 points. In their third and final qualification match, the Crafty Patties earned 105 points, and the Craft0saurs earned 125 points.

At the end of the matches, the team's ranks were determined. The Crafty Patties placed in rank 10, and the Craft0saurs placed in rank 13.

After robot matches were concluded, teams made their way to the judges room, where both teams presented their innovation projects.

The Crafty Patties presented their project as “D&D but with cooking” according to Garrett.

The team created a chart containing all types of food, toppings, and sauces, and gave each option a number 1-20. The user would then roll a 20-sided die, and create a meal based on the results of the roll.

The Craft0saurs presented their project with live action skits about video games. The students performed two skits, the first being about the Nintendo action-adventure game, *The Legend of Zelda*, and the second being about the Epic Games action-battle royale game *Fortnite*.

All teams took a break for lunch before returning to the Grand Lobby for the closing award ceremonies.

The Crafty Patties received the “Motivate” award, which is an award that celebrates a team that embraces the cultures of FIRST LEGO League through team building, team spirit, and displayed enthusiasm.

Cain said, “They really worked hard to grow and were paid off with a really fun and successful event.”

With the closing ceremonies concluded, the competition ended. Students loaded up their pits and headed back to West Branch, but not before stopping for ice cream to celebrate the day.



(Above) Lego League advisor Matt Cain points out details on the game mat. Photo By Keaton Norfleet.



(Right) Sophomore Ewan Arlen assists Lego League member and younger brother Rhys Arlen with the construction of a LEGO structure. Photo By Keaton Norfleet.

TREBLE ON THE HIGH SEAS: CJU45 BRINGS PIRATE SHOW TO LIFE

Miley Shields
Staff Writer

The 2023-2024 show choir season is off to a start after the ending of the fall musical, “Grease”. The theme of Christopher Jive and the Uptown 45’s show was announced at the end of the 2022-2023 school year: pirates.

To go along with the theme, the songs picked for the show are “Don’t Back Down” by Mammoth WVH to open the show, followed by “Shiver my Timbers” from the movie Muppet Treasure Island. From there, the show leads into an originally composed ballad titled “Sail me Away”. The next song is a mix between the sea shanty “Wellerman” (sung by the tenors and basses) and “Bad Reputation” by Joan Jett and the Blackhearts (sung by the sopranos and altos). After the girls’ song, the guys come back to perform “It’s Going Down” from Descendants 2 as a full group. To end off the show the singers will perform “Pirates of Dance” by DJ BoBo.

On December 21st, CJU45 will have their very first performance at the 5-12 vocal music concert at 7:00pm.

This year, CJU45 will host the annual Saturday Night Jive (SNJ) on January 20th at West Branch high school. SNJ is West Branch’s show choir competition where schools from many different parts of Iowa come to perform

for judges and try for the chance to go to finals and win a grand championship in their season. CJU45 will be performing before daytime awards are announced but will not be able to compete.

The very first competition West Branch will compete in is on February 3rd at Mount Pleasant high school. After that, they will perform at Pella high school, Central Lee high school, and Fort Madison high school.

When asked about the competitions, director Christopher Reed said “Finals are never guaranteed no matter what competition we go to since we’re constantly competing against 3A’s and 4A’s. I am still hopeful for this season since our choreography is a challenge and will make our singers better.”

Many students say the choreography for this show is very difficult, but it will make for a great show. Senior Peyton Braddock said “The choreo this year is really challenging this year compared to last year, but I think it’s going to push us to work harder and have a better chance against the bigger schools at competitions.”



All photos contributed by Diana Borash and Tracy Schutte.

The set for the show was revealed on November 22nd and soloists were revealed for the show on December 7th. In “Don’t Back Down”, the soloists are Maddie Reed and Nate Hills; for “Shiver my Timbers” there are 6 soloists consisting of Diego Carrillo, Eli Farmer, Miley Shields, Robby Boaz, Caleb Pederson, and Kaylee Kettler. In “Wellerman” Nolan Staker will perform the solo and for “Bad Reputation” Nina Torkelson will be singing the solo. The closing song does not contain any solos.

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Feature

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December 21, 2023

HS & MS BANDS PERFORM IN DECEMBER CONCERT

Keaton Norfleet
Staff Writer

Students in the high school band and middle school band joined together to form a "Mega Band" at the end of their December performance.

On December 14, Band Directors Beth Wirtanen-Obermolte and Samuel Ogilvie, as well as student teacher Shelby Mutter, hosted a 5-12 grade concert band performance in the high school Performing Arts Center. The concert began at 6:30 p.m.

The fifth, sixth, and seventh-eighth grade bands were all directed by Wirtanen-Obermolte and Mutter.

The fifth grade band played eight songs: "Hot Cross Buns," "Mary Had a Little Lamb," "Lightly Row," "Rockin' Along," "Ode to Joy," "Jingle Bells," and "Code Name: B.A.N.D." by Ari Richards.

The sixth grade band performed two pieces: "Royal Christmas," arranged by Tim Smith, and "Time Travelers: Mission One," by Randall Standrige.

The seventh-eighth grade band also performed two pieces: "Eagle Mountain Overture," by Robert Sheldon, and "Jungle," by Brian Balmages.

After the middle school finished their performance, Ogilvie and the high school band took the stage.

Ogilvie said, "In the rehearsals coming up to the concert, I am always a little stressed. In preparation for this concert, we also had to prepare for Christmas Past, starting our pep band season, and our jazz concert."

"Since we were being pulled so many different ways, I knew it would be easy to have something fall through the cracks. However, in the last two rehearsals we had, the band brought a level of

focus that made me confident on concert night."

The high school band performed two pieces: "Pax," by Catherine McMichael, and "Sirocco," by Gary Ziek.

"I think we were able to capture the essence of our music and communicate that to our audience," Ogilvie said. "We sounded like we were doing more than simply playing notes and rhythms. We took what was on the page and elevated it into an artistic performance."

When the performance concluded, the high school band stood up and made their way towards the audience and side of the auditorium. Then the fifth, sixth, and seventh-eighth grade bands re-assembled on stage to form the "Mega Band."

After brief closing remarks from the directors, Ogilvie, Wirtanen-Obermolte, and Mutter raised their arms, counted off, and the "Mega Band" ended the night with one last piece; a marching band tune called "Conga Line Christmas Parade," arranged by Tim Galyen.

Ogilvie said, "'Mega Band' is always a blast. I think experiences like that are important. As a high school program, we need to show support and enthusiasm for our middle schoolers. It is also important for the middle school students to see what they can be a part of in high school."

He added, "I think the performance went well and that the audience loved it. I did not choose the piece this year, Ms. Beth did. The most important part of selecting a 'Mega Band' piece is that it needs to be a piece that we can easily create different parts for our younger players that are easy to play along with the original music."

HEALTH 1 STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN "IMPAIRING YOUR SENSES" LAB, USE FATAL VISION DRUNK GOGGLES

According to instructor Grant Meth, "Students in Health 1 go through a two day lab where they experience having different senses impaired through special simulations during the Alcohol Unit. Students use a mirror box to draw a star and experience how alcohol can impair motor coordination, reaction time, and the ability to multitask. On day two, students do various activities with Fatal Vision Drunk Goggles to simulate how alcohol has an effect on balance, vision, and basic motor coordination while performing basic tasks."

He continued, "The overall purpose of the lab is to help students learn the dangers of driving under the influence and to spark discussions of how alcohol could cause dangerous situations, even if the person is not driving a vehicle."



Freshman Grace Hamann walks the line wearing the Fatal Vision Drunk Goggles. Photo by Guest Journalism 1 Photographer Lyla Popkes.



Freshman Alissa Van Hall smiles as she drops her egg off the top of the bleachers by the track for the Egg Drop Challenge in Matt Cain's conceptual physics class. Photo by Journalism 1 Guest Photographer Lyla Popkes.



Merry Christmas!



By Ava Hazelwood.



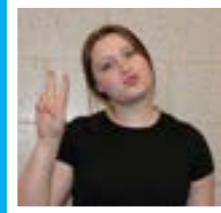
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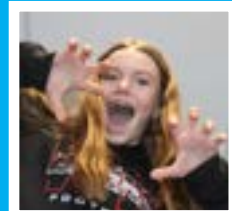
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