THE BEAR

Student Newspaper

October 17, 2024 WBHS Volume 28 Issue 1

900 W. Main St., West Branch, IA 52358

All the Spotlight on Shrek Jr.

WBHS Sets to Perform Shrek JR.

Cassie Swisher
Staff Writer

West Branch High School's theater community returns with the goofy and gassy rendition of the Broadway musical Shrek Jr.

Their first performances take place the final week of October with three shows in total. Tickets are available now, so make sure to stop into the office to get one. From singing fairytale creatures to dancing castle guards, this show is one to see.

Last year, the drama students made history in West Branch High School with the debut of Grease The Musical, the first musical performed at West Branch since 2014.

Mary Denmead, West Branch alum Nina Torkelson's mother, is returning to direct the show with her vast experience in the music industry.

With the huge successes with ticket sales last year, choir director Christopher Reed and Denmead decided to produce another musical this fall.

As for the future, the theater department will rotate the fall production between a musical and a play yearly.

Many students have lots to say about the differences between this year and Grease last year. In Shrek Jr., many more underclassmen take on big roles with a speaking or singing solo due to the structure of the musical.

"We definitely have a lot less of the seniors and they were a major part of the last musical." Shrek Jr.'s Donkey, Sophomore Robby Boaz said. With the underclassmen outnumbering the upperclassmen, the group's future is promising with so many young voices.

The cast is even joined by eighth grader Gentry Meiers as young Fiona.

Another important distinction from last year is that involvement with the show is completely optional.

Last year, singers, dancers, and band members were all required to partake in the production if they were enrolled in show choir.

"The biggest difference this year is that we are not requiring show choir kids to be a part of it," said Reed, "Everyone who is in the show wants to be at rehearsal and it's a much more positive atmosphere."

Many students also report that the evening rehearsals include a much more committed crew with better attendance and consistency.

The musical band will differ from Grease with a few new members and a new location. The band will be in the orchestra pit, a new feature of the auditorium instead of their loft on stage in last year's production.

The band is orchestrated by pianist Arlen Ottmar, and is comprised of junior Ewan Arlen on the drumset, senior Nora Ziehr on the alto saxophone, senior Keaton Norfleet on the tenor saxophone, and senior Eli Hansen on the bass guitar. New members include senior Josh Kroemer on the trombone and senior Elliot Hinkhouse on the trumpet.

With the musical's shows coming soon, the theater department is excited to present the production to the community.

Here is a sneak peek of some of the cast's favorite parts;
Sophomore Grace Vincent (Mama Bear) said, "I really like the Freak Flag song choreography."
Senior Jordan Waters (Wicked Witch) said, "I want to see the tap dancing rat's costumes."
Senior Miley Shields (Princess Fiona) said, "The song I Think I Got You Beat is just so silly and so fun."
Director Mary Denmead said, "I want people to see kids who may have had smaller roles last year shine this year."





Front Row: Keaton Norfleet (Band member), Josh Kroemer (Band member), Eli Farmer (Lord Farquaad), Miley Shields (Princess Fiona) Nolan Staker (Shrek), Robby Boaz (donkey), Lynden MacGillivray (Pinocchio), Jordan Waters (Wicked Witch/Rat/Duloc Dancer).
Middle Row: Harper Driscoll (Duloc Dancer/ Woodland Creature/ Little Bo Peep), Grace Vincent (Mama Bear/Rat/Duloc Dancer), Cora Hernandez (Captain of the guards/ Knight/ Duloc Dancer), Gisele Gross (Duloc Dancer/ Puss In Boots), Whitney Spratt (Fairy God Mother/Rat/Duloc Dancer), Sophie Oaks (Mama ogre/Rat), Seth Hosier (Papa ogre/Guard/Duloc Dancer), Evan Highly (Gingy).
Back Row: Olivia Becker (Pig/Knight/Duloc Dancer), Emma Revis (Pig/Duloc Dancer), Emeri Poock (Pig/Kight/Duloc Dancer), Ben Ziehr (Papa Bear/Knight/Bishop/Duloc Dancer), James Haack (Storyteller/ Big Bad Wolf/Duloc Dancer), Teague Thomas (Ugly Duckling/Duloc Dancer), Ethan Highly (Guard/ Duloc Dancer).
Not **Pictured:** Oliv Schlitz (Teen Fiona/Peter Pan/Knight/Duloc Dancer), Chloe Kleinmeyer (Storyteller/Duloc Dancer), Cassie Swisher (Storyteller/Rat/Duloc Dancer), Gentry Maier (Young Fiona/ Baby Bear), Chason Maker (Young Ogre/Dwarf), Sabree Depoorter (Dragon). *Photo taken by Cassie Swisher.*

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STUDENTS MAKE A SPLASH AT HOMECOMING

Cassie Swisher
Staff Writer

Homecoming week in West Branch wrapped up with the high school's annual homecoming dance on Saturday, Sept. 28, 2024, from 8:30 pm until 11:00 pm.

The Student Government dance committee organized the dance and WBHS staff chaperoned it.

The dance instated a $10 entrance fee for everyone but juniors, who won the spirit contest throughout the week and got a $5 discount.

The class of 2026 has won overall in the week's festivities for two years now.

Between the dress-up days, hide-a-bear, and other various homecoming week activities, the junior class came out on top, with the sophomores close behind.

The event took place in the high school's Bear Den, which became an Under the Sea-themed dance center. Bubbles, seaweed, and sea creatures covered the walls, and students danced until the final call. Students would find a photo booth, dance party, and water supplied by Hy-Vee inside the main area of the school.

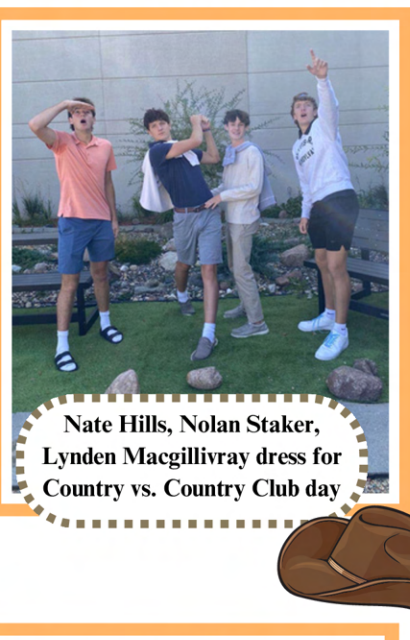


WBHS students dance at Homecoming.
Photos contributed by Principal Sara Oswald

HOCO DRESS UP DAYS



Alison Gade and Abby Linn dress for PJ day



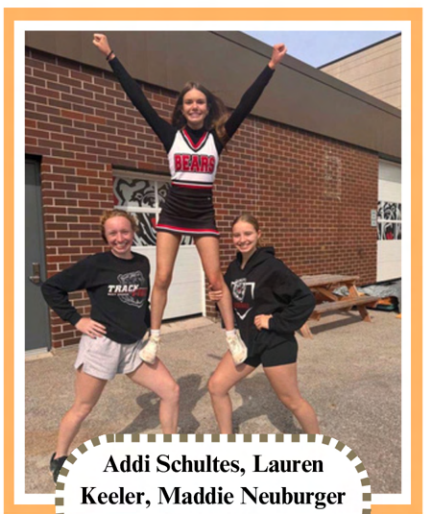
Nate Hills, Nolan Staker, Lynden Macgillivray dress for Country vs. Country Club day



Grace Vincent, Cassie Swisher, and Harper Driscoll pose dressed for "Dress Your Age" day



Jordan Waters, Keegan Hansen, Nora Ziehr, Miley Shields dressed for *Inside Out* day



Addi Schultes, Lauren Keeler, Maddie Neuburger pose for Spirit Day







WBHS Homecoming: A week of fun and school spirit

Hills and Waters crowned Homecoming King and Queen

Anthony Heitzman
Staff Writer

Hundreds of people came out to support their community and watch West Branch's annual Homecoming Parade. Afterwards students, teachers, and community members gathered at the Little Rose Bowl to watch the Homecoming coronation ceremony, which took place on Wednesday, Sept. 25, 2024.

The parade was led by the Grand Marshals Jessi Simon and Tony Senio. Simon is the Executive Director of Main Street West Branch. Senio is a former West Branch alum, the father of multiple West Branch students, and the head Girls' Track and Field coach.

Grand Marshal Simon said, "It's a huge honor and a really fun way to participate in Homecoming."

Participants in the parade included various businesses, organizations, and athletics groups from the community such as FFA, football, and volleyball.

After the parade was the Homecoming Coronation Ceremony. Student Government Advisor Abby Noelck invited 2023 Queen Peyton Braddock and 2023 King Reese Trepanier to help with the ceremony. Only Braddock was available however so Noelck invited 2023 court member Trenton Schutte to the event in place of Trepanier. The Coronation was emceed by Elliot Hinkhouse and Layla Samuelson who introduced court members.

Candidates for King included Nate Hills, Josh Kroemer, Ethan Miller, Ian Nelson, and Connor Rios. Candidates for Queen included Ava Abdagic, Maddy Falco, Alyssa Pierce, Jordan Waters, and Nora Ziehr. Exchange student Romy Springensguth was also included as an honorary court member.

During the ceremony, Hills and Waters were crowned Homecoming King and Homecoming Queen.

The Queen's crown Bearer was Natalie Rozinek and the King's crown bearer was Giles Bass.

Overall turnout for the parade and coronation was high. Student Government Advisor Abby Noelck said, "I felt great about the turnout here, they're always so supportive of us and it's nice to see so many businesses in the parade." Many people involved in the parade said they were proud to be involved in the community and show their local pride.



Nate Hills and Jordan Waters pose for a photo after being crowned king and queen. Photo contributed by *Tracy Schutte*

Student Government hosts annual Homecoming Pep Rally



Elliot Hinkhouse and Miley Shields speak to the audience during the Homecoming Pep Rally. *Photo taken by Anthony Heitzman*

Anthony Heitzman
Staff Writer

Student Government hosted their annual Homecoming Pep Rally to encourage student participation in Homecoming activities and increase attendance at sporting events. The pep rally took place on Friday, Sept. 27, 2024, at the high school gym and was emceed by Miley Shields and Elliot Hinkhouse.

The pep rally started with an opening performance of the West Branch fight song by the band and cheer team.

After the pep rally began Shields and Hinkhouse announced various Student Government events for the remainder of Homecoming Week. Students then participated in a grade-based cheer contest in which the Junior class won. Student-athletes such as West Branch swimmer Larkin Brown, volleyball captain Jordan Waters, and cross-country runner Nora Ziehr spoke on behalf of their sports and told the audience about upcoming games and events.

The main and final event included a game of *Family Feud* played between the boys and girls on the Homecoming Court where the boys team won.

Student Government members said the event's reception was very positive among the student body. Committee Head Josh Kroemer said, "I think this was honestly one of the best pep rallies we've had since I've been in high school."

Students said that they enjoyed the event because of the fun games with the audience and the Homecoming Court. Sophomore Seth Hosier said, "I like that it was hype and that we did games and fun stuff."

PowderPuff and PowderBuff bring energy to WBHS Homecoming

Caitlyn Harrison
Co-Editor-in-Chief

The juniors took home the win after two games, remaining undefeated. Addi Schultes spent most of the games playing running back and accrued four touchdowns. Kennedy Simpson played quarterback and ran it into the endzone for a total of two touchdowns.

The juniors had the smallest team of the four grades. Lexi Skay said, "Despite being outnumbered, I think we really pulled through with our athleticism and speed compared to the other grades."

Following close behind were the sophomores, who only lost to the juniors. Grace Hamann used her speed to lead the team with five rushing touchdowns.

The freshmen came in third place, winning only against the seniors, who ended up in last place. Many people from the community volunteered their time to help make this event a success. Volunteer referees included: Kyle Hamann, Tony Senio, Taylor Larson, and Kaleb Dua. Pete Swisher and B.J. Rios also volunteered in the press box, announcing the games.

Coaches included: Kyler Donohoe, Cooper Hartz, Caeson Gingerich, Bryce Anderson, Keaton Gates, Eli Klinkhammer, Oliver Trepanier, Lincoln Naber, Michael Montgomery, Connor Rios, Ethan Miller, and Dylan Schiele.

Alyssa Vargason said, "Our coaches created a positive atmosphere and it really encouraged us to have fun and play well."

PowderBuff came later in the Homecoming week activities on Friday, Sept. 27. Following the pep rally on Friday afternoon, the boys played PowderBuff. PowderBuff is the same concept as PowderPuff; the boys played volleyball and were coached by the girls.

Games began around 2:15 p.m. and in total, five games were played, lasting eight minutes each. Much like PowderPuff, the first two games were seniors vs juniors and sophomores vs freshmen.

In the first game, the seniors won 16-10 against the freshmen. In the second game, the juniors won a close match, defeating the sophomores 15-14. After that, there was a game for the winners' and a game for the losers of those games.



Students participate in the 2024 PowderPuff games. *Photos taken by Miley Shields*



In the losers' game, the sophomores won 22-11 against the freshmen. In the winners' game, the seniors won 14-12 against the juniors.

Those last games solidified the final rankings: freshmen in fourth place, sophomores in third, juniors in second, and seniors in first.

For the last of the five games, the seniors went on to play the teachers.

Some returning players for the teachers' team included: Art Teacher Lukas Jordan, History Teacher Erin Brown, Guidance Counselor Miranda Schwickerath, Spanish Teacher Abby Noelck, and Health/P.E. Teacher Grant Meth.

The seniors secured another win with a score of 18-10. This came as a surprise to most, as the teachers normally put up a strong fight.

A standout for the senior team, Josh Kroemer said, "I was really happy that we were able to pull off a win two years in a row." Kroemer played a crucial role in the team's success, which doesn't surprise many, as he has a background in club volleyball.

CyBears named grand champion at inaugural Clash in the Corn

Keaton Norfleet
Co-Editor-in-Chief

CyBears named grand champion at inaugural Clash in the Corn

The West Branch High School robotics team, 5041 CyBear Robotics achieved first place with their alliance at the inaugural Clash in the Corn off-season FIRST Robotics Competition.

The event took place on September 27 and 28 at Valley Southwoods Freshman High School in West Des Moines.

The CyBears, teamed up with team 3928 Neutrino and off-season demo team 9995, engaged in four play-off matches and two finals.

The alliance won both final matches against Alliance 3 crowning themselves the champions of the off-season competition.

West Branch Robotics senior mentor, Matthew Cain said, “I was pumped, the team did great. I thought it was wonderful. I was anticipating that the team would do well, to some degree I was not surprised that the team won, I thought the team had it in them to win and be part of a winning team.”

The CyBears also received the Balanced Systems award, which celebrates the team's ingenuity and creative engineering of their robot.

Only seven FRC teams attended the event. Due to the lack of contenders, teams were allowed to register additional robots with free entry.

Along with their 2023-2024 CRESCENDO season robot, Bearthoveen, Cain registered a defense robot that the team built one week before the competition. The robot featured a tank drive chassis and a kiddie pool, which attached perpendicularly to the chassis.

The robot, named CyCubs in parallel to the CyBears, received its own number for the duration of the competition, taking the place of off-season demo team 9997.

It takes a drive team to pilot each robot. The Cybears drive team consisted of senior driver Katey Lenoch, junior systems operator Lillian Waters, and returning alum drive coach Jade Gongora.

The CyCubs drive team consisted of freshman driver Hunter Hammer and senior drive coach, Safety Captain, and Alliance 4 Captain, Keaton Norfleet.

Lenoch said, “Being on the drive team is kind of scary sometimes. But I think since this is the end of the season and I’ve driven the robot a lot I’ve definitely gotten more confident with it. The people that I work with on the drive team are really nice. Lillian is always there to help and Jade definitely helps me emotionally and keeps me calm.”

After the completion of the qualification matches, teams lined up in rank order and alliance selection began. The Cybears finished in Rank 2, and the CyCubs landed in Rank 8 Throughout the selection process, many high-ranking teams joined together in their alliances, moving lower-ranked teams into higher positions.

Team 3928 Neutrino invited 5041 CyBear Robotics to join Alliance 1. 5041 graciously accepted the invitation. Alliance 1 also invited off-season demo team 9995 to join the alliance.

Cain said, “ It was awesome to get to work with team Neutrino who has been a great inspiration for our team with some of the non-robot stuff. A lot of the organizational work we’ve done with things like the annual report and other documentation and branding was really inspired by a lot of what team Neutrino did.”

The secondary West Branch team, off-season demo team 9997 landed in rank four after the previous alliance selections, making the team an alliance captain.

Team 9997 CyCubs invited team 525 SWARTDogs and team 967 Iron Lions to join Alliance 4.

Cain said, “I was surprised that the other robot was an alliance captain and had some power. It was very cool and surprising to me that they got to be in that position. In all of our team's history, being the team that got to pick teams like 525 and 967, instead of being picked by them, was amazing.”

Alliance 4 played in three playoff matches, eventually falling to Alliance 3 in their final elimination match.

With the elimination matches over, the two remaining alliances, Alliance 1 and Alliance 3 competed for the grand championship title.

Alliance 1 emerged victorious with the results of the final match, a 25-point difference, 69 to 44.

The Clash in the Corn off-season robotics competition officially wrapped up team 5041 CyBear Robotics 2023-2024 CRESCENDO season.





WB Band Faces Challenges In 2024 Marching Season

Isaiah Witchek & Madeline Elouqui
Staff Writers

West Branch Band faces challenges with new students for the 24’-25’ marching season. “[There is] so much to focus on,” said Samuel Ogilvie, the West Branch High School band director. Ogilvie mentioned many new students had joined the marching band, causing them a little bit of a setback because of the many new students this year.

Ogilvie was faced with a couple new obstacles this year. The marching band had lots to focus on. With only five days of rehearsal, Ogilvie still made their first performance happen despite not having enough uniforms for the increased number of students.

One of the things the West Branch High School band participates in each summer is band camp. Students are split into different groups depending on their instrument, and the section leaders help approximately four to five kids learn how to properly march.

They go over specific songs and Alto/Horn Section Leader Maddy Tygrett said, “we go over curtain marching techniques.”

Most students have never marched in a band until they get to high school. They must focus on this right away during band camp. Usually, band camp happens at the high school and everyone goes to the practice field to march.

Tygrett also said, "we have to memorize all of the music for Homecoming."

This year, the theme for the marching Bears is country so keep an ear open to hear the band play songs “Chicken Fried” by the Zac Brown Band, “Fancy Like” by Walker Hayes, and “Take Me Home, Country Roads” by John Denver.

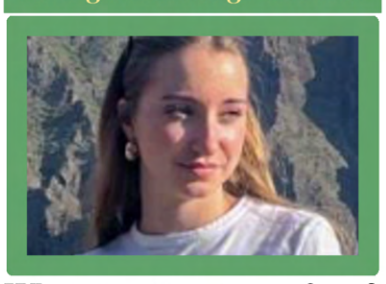




5 Q+A & Academics

October 17, 2024

Romy Springensguth
Foreign Exchange Student



Q. What country are you from?
A. Germany
Q. Differences from home vs. this school?
A. No sports are through the school.
Q. How old are you?
A. 16
Q. What made you want to be a foreign exchange student?
A. Experience the American lifestyle
Q. Food differences from home vs. USA?
A. Less fast food.
Q. What are the grades in Germany?
A. Kindergarten, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.
Q. Was it hard to learn English?
A. I have taken English since first grade so not really.

Ms. Maske
Special Education



Photo by Karlee Hansen

Q. How long have you been teaching?
A. 5 years.
Q. Where did you go to school?
A. University of Northern Iowa.
Q. What did you want to teach when you went to college?
A. History
Q. What would your students be surprised to find out about you?
A. I love Metal Rock
Q. Favorite sports team?
A. Saint Louis Cardinals
Q. What is your biggest fear?
A. Someone living in my walls
Q. What is your favorite way to teach?
A. One on one, presenting in front of a class is nerve racking.

Ms. Betts
English & Newspaper

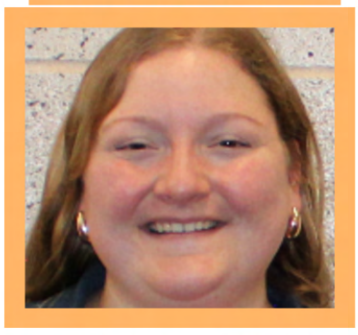


Photo by Kendra Rarick

Q. Where did you grow up?
A. Jefferson, Iowa, on a farm
Q. What school did you go to?
A. Greene County High School
Q. What made you want to be a teacher?
A. I want to help people feel confident when writing and reading.
Q. What is one thing students would want to know about you?
A. When students are doing well I bake treats.
Q. Why did you take the responsibility of teaching Newspaper?
A. You get to practice writing in a format that most people in general English don't get to, it's exciting.
Q. Was English hard for you when you were in school?
A. English wasn't hard until Comp. 1 and 2
Q. What's your dream vacation?
A. New Zealand

Ms. Reynolds
Special Education



Photo by Cameron Waters

Q. How long have you been teaching?
A. This is my 34th year of teaching.
Q. Where did you go to school?
A. Loras College, then University of Iowa.
Q. What did you want to teach when you went to college?
A. I first taught history then moved into resources.
Q. What would your students be surprised to find out about you?
A. I used to be a rock climber.
Q. What is your favorite sport?
A. Track and field, high school meets are the best to watch.
Q. What is your favorite genre of music?
A. I like Usher, Classical, Hip Hop.
Q. What is your biggest fear?
A. Not making an impact on anybody in life, you want people to miss you when you're gone.
Q. What is your favorite time of school year?
A. November, December, everyone is in a good mood.

Ms. Dix
Science



Photo by Halia Gade

Q. How long have you been teaching?
A. 1st year ever teaching
Q. Where did you go to school?
I went to college at the University of Iowa, and high school at City High.
Q. What would your students be surprised to find out about you?
A. I was in a rock band in high school, I played the keyboard, and a bit of bass guitar.
Q. What is your favorite time of school year?
A. The fall in general, lots of students seem to like fall, so it's a good vibe.
Q. What did you want to do before you decided to be a teacher?
A. I wanted to be a geologist, and study Earth Science.
Q. If you couldn't teach what job would you want?
A. I would love to work at a cute little bookstore.
Q. Is there a quote or saying that you live by, or you think would help students?
A. There's always tomorrow to focus on things today you should still try, but it's not the end of the world if you take a day to just breathe.

Mr. Vos
Social Science



Photo by Cameron Waters

Q. How long have you been teaching?
A. First year
Q. How long did you go to college?
A. Five years
Q. What made you want to be a teacher?
A. I believe people can change the world if someone else believes in them
Q. Favorite sports team?
A. Broncos
Q. Favorite way to spend your weekend?
A. Reading, hanging out with my dog
Q. Where did you grow up?
A. All over the place, but most of the time in Pella
Q. Where did you go to college?
A. University of Iowa

Robotics advisor and STEM instructor to take over National Honor Society

Keaton Norfleet
Co-Editor-in-Chief

The Herbert Hoover chapter of the National Honor Society welcomes their new advisor, Matthew Cain.

Cain is a West Branch High School instructor in STEM learning and is also the senior mentor and advisor of the FIRST Robotics Competition program and the Middle School Lego League.

Cain said, "It was not something that I sought out to do. It was sort of later, not early on in that transition. They had originally planned for someone else to possibly take it, but it was going to be something that they would not be able to invest as much time and energy into taking care of it as it deserves.

I thought with the student body that I work with in Robotics and with taking on physics that I have some more upperclassmen in now, I thought it would be a great place for me to engage with some of the upperclassmen students in an extracurricular group.

I could see them excel in leadership positions and also help to make sure that we are keeping a strong culture of service and leadership in the building by keeping NHS a dedicated activity to those things and keeping it strong."

Cain does not intend to make any major changes to the program at West Branch for his first year as the advisor.

Cain said, "The National Honor Society is mostly going to be the same this year. We made some changes just as a matter of structure for the number of committees and how students are organized, just to play with it a little bit, and see what works and what doesn't work. The frequency of meetings and how meetings work have changed a bit as well,"

"A lot of the activities that the NHS did in the past were moved to this year again. The one big exception is that we're going to be including two other groups in helping to do service day. The Robotics team and the Student Athletic Leadership Team, SALT, are both going to be stepping up to also support doing the service day activities."

Hills Bank Scholarship

Naeomi Shimon
Staff Writer

On Sunday, Sept. 8, at Hancher Auditorium in Iowa City, the Hills Bank Youth Salute ceremony was held. West Branch students Cole Crosthwaite, Tate Frantz, Elliot Hinkhouse, Keaton Norfleet, Alyssa Pierce, Layla Samuelson, Jordan Waters, Amber Wolf, and Eleanor Ziehr attended this event. Hills Bank set up this program to recognize students who are leaders for their generation. To be accepted, these students participated in an interview with Hills Bank employees.

They also answered questions about their leadership skills and involvement in their community by filling out a packet they mailed in.

Eliot Hinkhouse said, "This program provided me with money to help with college." The participants received scholarships of up to 200 dollars. This could go to college or any need after high school. This program also helps students set up plans for the future.

Keaton Norfleet said, "They had a guest speaker named Anthony, he had a very good speech about things that motivated him throughout his life".

This gave Norfleet the motivation to step out of his comfort zone and try new things.

By hosting this program, Hills Bank is setting up participants to make the world a better place by developing and recognizing their leadership skills.

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Each month, we pick a local charity and hold "Tips for Charity." Every Wednesday of that month we donate all tips received to said charity.
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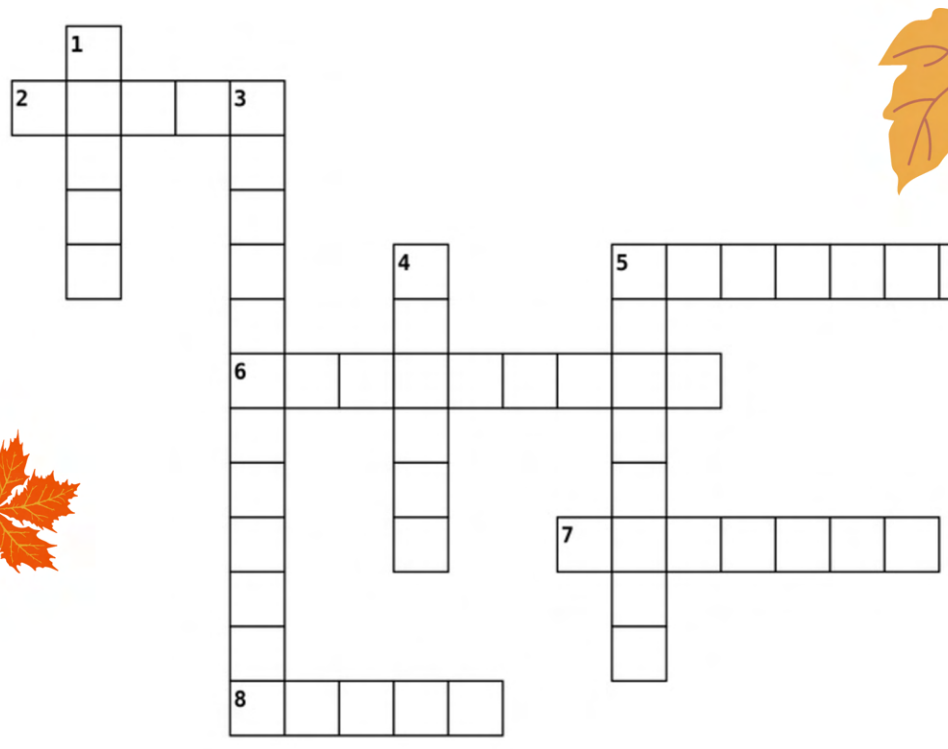
HAVE JUMPED IN LEAVES	GONE TO CORN MAZES	HAVE A HALLOWEEN COSTUME	LOVE S'MORES	WENT TO PUMPKIN PATCHES
WORN SWEATERS	PLAYED FOOTBALL	**FREE SPACE**	HATE SCARVES	DRANK HOT CHOCOLATE
LOVE FALL COLORS	FAVORITE SEASON IS FALL	HAS DONE FALL CLEANING	LOVE THE SMELL OF COOKIES	LOVES PUMPKIN SPICE LATTES
CARVED PUMPKINS	WENT TO HAUNTED HOUSE	HAS HALLOWEEN DECOR	WATCHES HARVEST MOON	PLANNING TO TRICK-OR-TREATING

By designers
Sabree Depoorter &
Connor Davidson

Fall Festivities



Across

2. trick or...
5. Fall celebration name starting with "F"
6. gets rid of the crows
7. what combines & farmers do in the fall
8. spooky dress-up idea for Halloween

Down

1. ...or treat
3. a fall feast celebrated 1x per year
4. bird you pluck and stuff
5. a sport most school watch every Friday night

BROWN SHARES WHY SWIMMING IS THE SPORT TO JOIN

Evan Highly
Staff Writer

Before an injury over the summer, West Branch High School junior Larkin Brown swam for City High's swim team, the Little Hawks, for three years.

Even though Brown cannot participate currently, she is taking measures to keep herself safe so she can swim again.

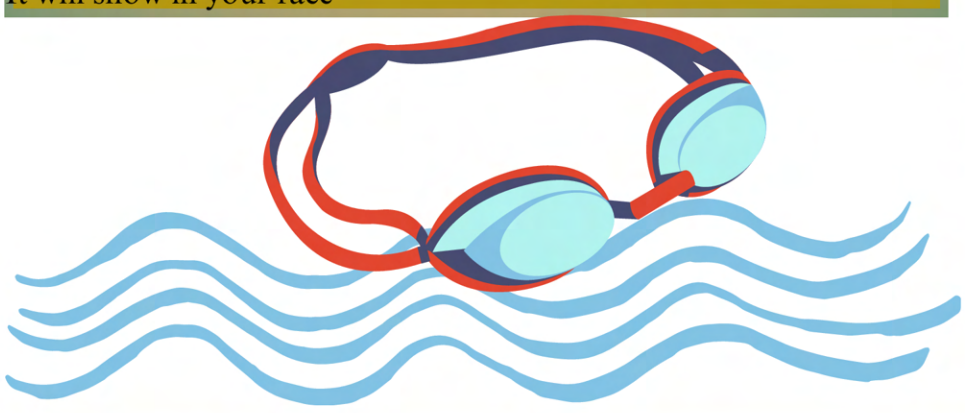
Brown said, "Swimming has a lot of good benefits, you're very active. We're in the weight room two times a week. Staying strong prevents them from potentially injuring themselves. If you are not eating enough, you can tell. It will show in your race performance, you will start to slow down because your body is overworked."

Like many sports and activities, swimming requires dedication.

Brown shared why she thought someone should join swimming.

Brown said, "I think they should join because it's a great opportunity. You get to meet many people from different schools,"

"Being a small school, we don't go out to places like Cedar Rapids Kennedy. You get another perspective on life and sports because as a small school, you can't do much until you look out there."



THE FUTURE OF CHEER IN WB

Naeomi Shimon
Staff Writer

The West Branch cheer team identifies certain areas they want to grow in this year including; stunts, jumps, and dances.

To improve, they attended a clinic at a competition gym in Sigourney called KC Elite to help them grow their skillset.

Miley Shields said, "I'm super proud of everyone that worked so hard there's a lot of positive things and [we're] still growing as a team."

They are also looking forward to learning new dances in the future.

The team hopes to be role models for younger girls in the West Branch community and encourage them to want to join cheer when they reach high school.

Jordan Ellyson is the head coach of the Bears cheer team and this is her second year as head coach.

Before that, she was the assistant coach for one year.

Miley Shields and Olivia Schlitz are the head captains of the West Branch cheer team.

Other members of the team include Kiley Peirce, Sophia Garcia, Kaitlynn Waite, Chloe Branch, Emma Abdagic, and lastly Grace Vincent.

Freshman Emma Abdagic said, "I enjoy cheer so far. I like traveling and cheering for the Bears and supporting the community."



THE BEAR COMIC CORNER



By designer Sabree Depoorter



By designer Evan Highly



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The Bears Tackle the 2024 Season

Miley Shields
Head-Editor-in-Chief

The West Branch 2024 football season. With a new season comes the new head coach, John Nestor. Alongside Nestor the coaching staff consists of, Offensive coordinator Jarod Tylee, Defensive coordinator Tyler Bailey, Special Teams coordinator Kevin Braddock, Defensive Line Dan Zuniga, and Running Backs Jacob Graves.

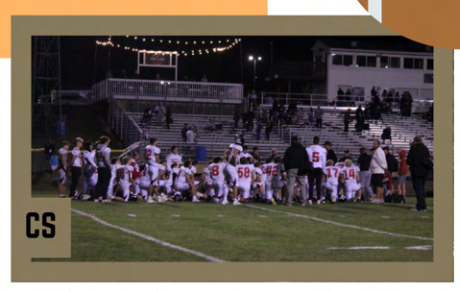
At the first game of the year, time was taken before the game to unveil the brand new statue of the former head coach, Butch Pedersen, and to recognize the work done as well as recognizing the Pedersen family. This statue represents the Pedersen legacy and history of West Branch Football making the statue meaningful for the community of past football players, current football players, and West Branch football fans.

Current head coach Nestor previously coached at Mount Carmel in Chicago, Illinois. Mount Carmel is a 7A school significantly larger than the 1A West Branch. When asked how this large shift has affected him and the team he said, "They had to get used to me and I've had to get used to them of course."

While it is a significant change, the players and Coach Nestor have one common goal, "Win every game."

Each year the team changes as seniors graduate and freshmen come up to play at the high school level. With this shift, many players begin to step up and show leadership.

Something new for the 2024 season is Nestor having both junior and senior captains. The captains consist of seniors Cole Crosswaite,Tate Frantz, Ethan Miller, Connor Rios, Dylan Schiele, and juniors Brennen Dale, and Oliver Trepanier.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With their goals set, the Bears began their season playing Williamsburg on August 30 with the final score being 55-10 Williamsburg.

In the second game, Sept. 6, the Bears faced Dike-New Hartford with another loss of 27-0.

With spirits low from the crowd's point of view, the players began to work harder using this loss as motivation.

Miller said, "I think playing those difficult teams is going to make us better in the end, with them being so good when we play teams that are not as difficult we will be ready. It made the team a little upset but we're back on track now."

This newfound motivation in the game against the Columbus


ER

Catholic Sailors on Sept. 13 brought the Bears record to (1-2) winning the game 49-7.

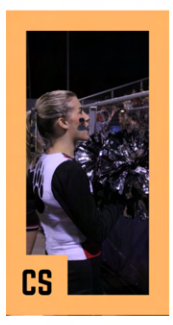
After that, the Bears began a winning streak. On Sept. 20, the Bears traveled to play Cascade.

The final score against the Cougars was 35-13 resulting in another Bears win.

The homecoming game on Sept. 27 took place against Beckman Catholic. The final score ended 41-13, with Beckman taking the win.

Although it has been a difficult season for the Bears, players are optimistic to win more games later this season.

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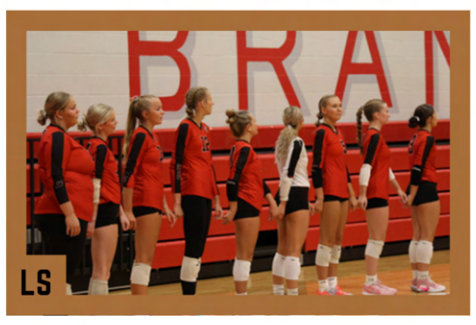
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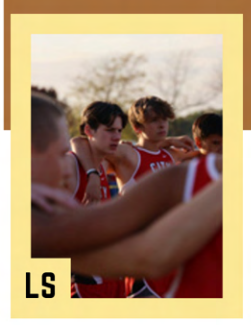
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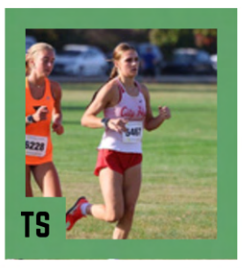
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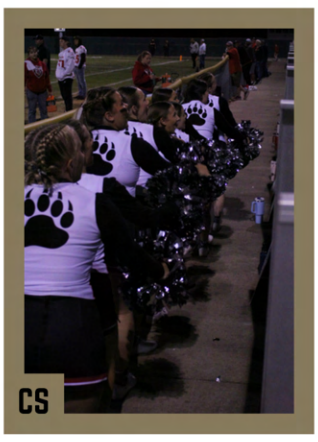
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Cross Country involves rigorous training and mental stamina

Kendra Rarick
Staff Writer

The Cross Country team works hard to prepare for their season.

What they do during their practice, how they prepare for the season, and what they do to prep for a meet requires many steps and each runner's process might look different. Some take cold showers the night before, others try to get extra sleep on the bus ride, some listen to music.

Most of the runners agreed that the mindset is one of the hardest things about cross country.

Freshman Olivia Becker said, "You get to a point in your run when your whole body is on fire and you just want to die. But once you get past that it feels pretty good."

For some, challenges might be early mornings. This fall for meets, the athletes have traveled far and wide to run. The farthest the runners have traveled so far was Decorah. Due to the two hour and fifteen minute trip, some of the runners had to get up between 2:00-4:00 AM.

Most runners participate in summer running which takes time from summer fun, but prepares them for the season. The runners meet at City High at 8:00 AM every Monday through Saturday.

Travel is another challenge. West Branch runs with City High so most carpool each day for practice. Once they get there they stretch and warm up. Then, depending on the day they run between three and seven miles.

When the going gets tough, most of the athletes try to pace themselves based on their teammates pace.

Sophomore Cassie Swisher said, "A lot of it is just choosing not to stay in my mind about things, and just focusing on the girls around me."

All of the Cross Country runners work really hard to prepare themselves physically and mentally for the challenges their meets require them to face.

WB Aces the 2024 VB Season

Karlee Hansen and Halia Gade
Staff Writers

The West Branch Bears volleyball team took on Cascade and won Tuesday, Sept. 17 at home.

The Bears had a strong lead after the first two sets. To win in volleyball, a team must win three out of five sets. West Branch won the first two sets, 25-20 and 25-21, and lost the third 25-16. In the fourth set, West Branch won 25-17 ending the game.

Briley Kaalberg shared how she felt about the game. Kaalberg said, "I am very happy with it and I am very proud of my team."

Becky Hoiser and Monica Tylee are the co-coaches for Varsity. This is their third year coaching and they have put together a great team.

Tylee said, "It was a great team win against Cascade. All our cylinders were on, serve receive, defense, sets, and our hitting was on. We are proud of how the girls adjust to whatever lineup comes their way. They roll with it and perform to their highest potential."

"I would hope our goal as a team is to take it one game at a time in the postseason and go as far as we can. We have a talented group of girls, we hope by the end of the season we are playing the best volleyball we can as a team."

Each part of the team has its role and must fulfill that position completely to make the team successful.

Based on the stats after the Cascade game, one can say that the Bears volleyball team was working well together.

Leading the team so far this season is Junior Alyssa Vargason with a total of 34 kills.

Junior Briley Kaalberg leads the team with a total of 30 blocks.

Senior Maddy Falco leads digs totaling 104 and Sophomore Lyla Popkes served 11 aces.

Each teammate has their own goals to work on during the season. Alyssa Vargason said,"I want to build as a team and see our improvement and progress in each game."


LB


LB