



# THE BEAR

## Student Newspaper

March 14, 2025 WBHS Volume 28 Issue 5  
900 W. Main St., West Branch, IA 52358

### WEST BRANCH STUDENTS DANCE FOR A CAUSE: \$7,120 RAISED FOR CHILDREN’S HOSPITAL



Final total held up by seniors: Jordan Waters, Nora Ziehr, Josh Kroemer, Miley Shields, Layla Samuelson, Keegan Hansen, Amber Wolf, Elliot Hinkhouse, and Will Tidrick.  
Photo by Kara Heick.

**Miley Shields**  
*Head-Editor-In-Chief*

The WBHS Student Government raised a record total of \$7,120.48 for the University of Iowa Stead Family Children's Hospital. They held the 12th annual Dance Marathon on Feb. 28.

Preceding the dance, student government hosted a speaker, the family of Austin “Flash” Schroeder to talk about their experience with cancer and the importance of this event.

The week of the dance students dressed up in different colors to represent the different types of cancer. Monday students wore black for melanoma and skin cancer. Tuesday students wore red for blood cancer. Wednesday students wore yellow/gold for childhood cancer. Thursday students wore pink for breast cancer. Friday students wore white or Dance Marathon shirts for lung cancer.

Each day members of the student government encouraged students to donate certain types of change for the dress up day. The student government hoped to raise \$6,000 to surpass last year's total of \$5,632.15.

Leading up to the event student government members worked to find donations and ways to raise money.

They went to businesses looking for monetary donations or to donate items to be used in the silent auction held at sporting events in the West Branch High School activity commons.

The businesses who donated in some form consisted of: Serving Cafe, Branch out, Browns, Caseys, Subway, The Groom Station, Herb and Lous, Bronzing Bar, Grey Goat, 223 Vintage, Cotton Creek Mill, Iowa Meat Shack, Izzy’s Treasures, Joyful Rise Baking Co., Polishing Handcrafted, Taters Spa, Blackstone, Iowa City Orthodontist, Kendra Scott, Starbucks, Hills Bank, scheels, Culvers, Cookies and More, Raising Canes, and Trader Joes.

Not only did they obtain donations from the silent auction but also held fundraiser nights at different businesses in the West Branch area, Branch Out, Subway, and Shorts Burgers.

Before Dance Marathon week members of student government visited middle school classrooms to encourage students to donate their coins to the cause.

Student Government members also encouraged them to join the high school in dressing up each day.

Wednesday, Feb 26 members of the community participated in student governments trivia night to raise money, all of the proceeds went to the Dance Marathon making \$148. To participate in the event members of the community paid \$3 per person to play with the winning team receiving a prize.

During Instructional Support on the Thursday of Dance Marathon week West Branch High School hosted guest speaker, the family of Austin “Flash” Schroeder who lost his fight with cancer, to talk about their first hand experience of what they went through and how the Dance Marathon means so much to them.

On Friday, the day of the event, student government members spent time counting change that elementary and middle school students brought for the cause. The elementary brought in a total of over \$800 and the middle school in a close second with over \$600, each group doubling their total from last year. After an afternoon of counting, they stayed after school to get everything set for the dance.

To get into the dance students could either pre-register by raising \$25, they would then receive a shirt, free admissions to the dance, and raffle tickets to win prizes. For those that did not pre register they paid \$15 at the door. Admissions to the dance ended up being the high school's biggest contribution to the total making \$920.

During the dance students participated in games such as musical chairs, knockout, cookie stack, and pie eating contest. Not only did they participate in games but they did zumba lead by Abby Noelck. At the end of the night the total number of dollars raised for the University of Iowa Stead Family Children's Hospital being \$7,120.48 causing them not only to meet their goal of \$6,000 but to exceed it setting a new record to beat.

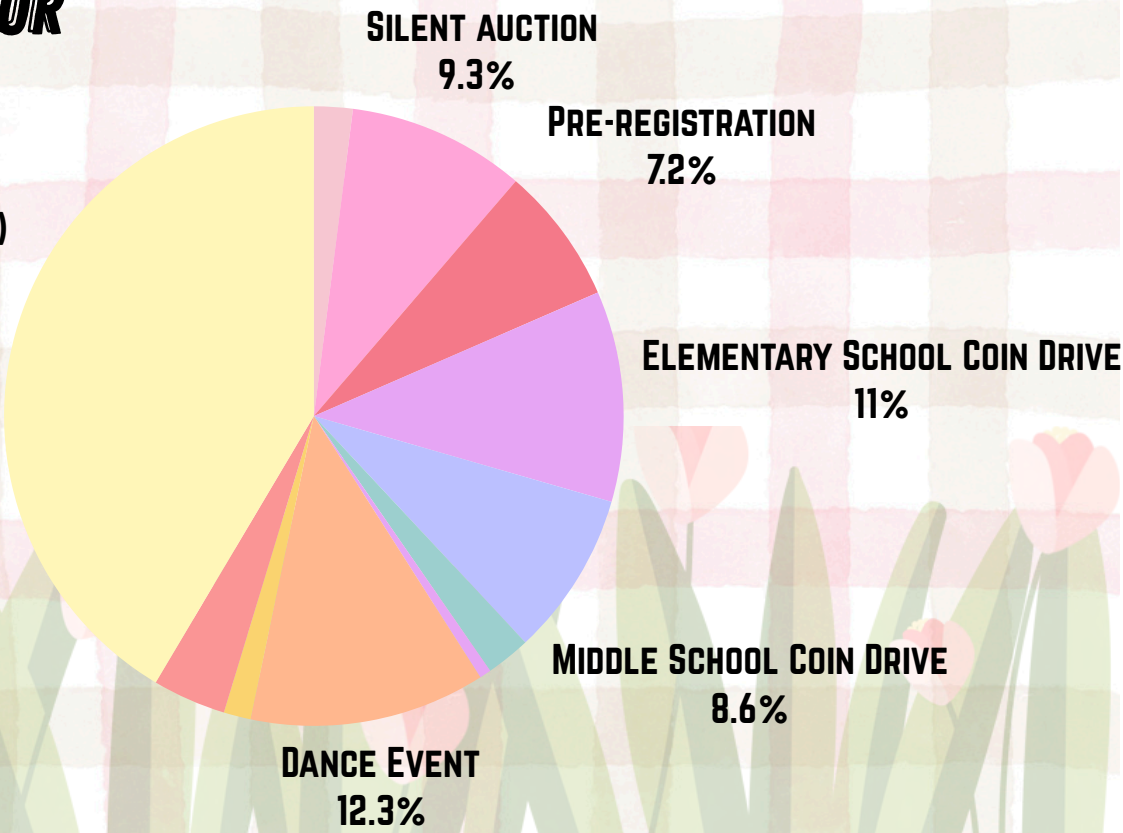
Noelck said “I’m really proud of students. I’m proud of the students who organize it. I think they work incredibly hard. I think they are very ambitious. I’m really proud of how this event has grown.” This event in its early years only raised a total of \$1,000- \$1,800. This event is now consistently increasing in the amount of money raised.

### FUNDRAISING BREAKDOWN FOR DANCE MARATHON 2025

OUTSIDE DONATIONS (CASH AND ONLINE)  
41.5%

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# Academics

March 14, 2025

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## WBHS STUDENTS CONQUER FEAR AND BUILD CONFIDENCE THROUGH POETRY OUT LOUD

Caitlyn Harrison  
Co-Editor-in-Chief

English teacher Elizabeth Gallagher wrapped up her eighth year leading the Poetry Out Loud program at WBHS with the current junior class. Poetry Out Loud is a national program designed to inspire students to engage with poetry in a meaningful way. Students not only strengthen their public speaking abilities but also gain a deeper appreciation and understanding of the power and beauty of poetry. This unit also aligns with both the speaking and listening standards taught in Gallagher's classes. Students are graded on their ability to communicate and perform their poems effectively.

Gallagher explained, "In the workplace and in life, you'll often be asked to do things you've never done, and they can be scary. I feel that Poetry Out Loud is a great way to prepare students for that."

**"IT HELPS STUDENTS FACE A FEAR OF SOMETHING THEY'VE NEVER DONE BEFORE, WHICH IS HUGEY IMPORTANT." - GALLAGHER**

Judge Abby Noelck added, "I think this process is comparable to how it feels walking into a job interview, and this can help students emotionally prepare for experiences like that."

Students selected their poems from the Poetry Out Loud website, ensuring they met the twelve-line length requirement. They were then given three weeks to memorize their poem before their performance for the judges on Friday, Feb. 14. To help them memorize and feel confident in their ability to perform their poem, Gallagher said, "I let students work with their friends for about a week and then I help them by letting them practice with me as often as they want to."

In the early years of this unit, students would perform in front of their class as practice for the performance day. This dress rehearsal lasted for about three years, however, by the fourth year, Gallagher noticed a shift in student preferences. "The kids just didn't want to do that, they did not want to perform in front of their class," she explained. Recognizing that each group of students is different, she respected their wishes and adjusted the format. Since then, the program never returned to having students practice in front of their

classmates before the final performance.

Faculty members served as judges and most gave up their prep period to be there for the performances.

This year's judges included: Jessica Taylor, Lennis Hasenbank, Christina Reynolds, Chris Reed, Austin Curtis, Kristen Westpheling, Trent Mack, Abby Noelck, Bella Rivera, Miranda Schwickerath, Colby Vos, Misti Donovan, and Kathy Dix.

Reed said, "I was lucky enough to be a part of a very strong and successful speech program in high school and used to be a judge for the Iowa High School Speech Association. With the show choir schedule, judging Poetry Out Loud helps me fill the void of missing judging for Iowa High School Speech contests. In addition, I really enjoy supporting the choir students performing their poems. It is also awesome to see students that I don't know, especially when they do a great job."

In each class period of Poetry Out Loud, judges presented four awards to recognize outstanding performers: Evidence of Understanding, Voice and Presence, Judges' Choice, and Best Overall.

Romy Springensguth performed "Karma" by Sarah Crossan which is all about the ripple effect of our actions on others. She won Best Overall in her sixth-period English class.

Springensguth said "The meaning of the poem really resonated with me, which made it easier to perform. I worked hard to memorize every part, and receiving that award made it all worth it. I'm so proud of myself." Despite the nerves and fear that accompany public speaking, the students faced this challenge head-on. Judge Donovan shared her hope for the students, saying: "I hope they

realize how brave they were and remember, just because it's hard, doesn't mean you can't do it."

As the performances concluded, the true value of Poetry Out Loud became clear. Judge Curtiss shared his perspective on the lasting impact for students. He said, "I hope students can use this as sort of a confidence boost; being able to draw back on this experience as evidence that they can get up in front of people in a "scary" situation and still be able to accomplish a task. Additionally, it also develops an appreciation for the spoken word and the power that can come from the craft of ideas presented verbally."

**"I LOVE TO SEE THE STUDENTS BLOOM. I LOVE TO SEE THEM BE SCARED TO DEATH, THEN GET UP THERE AND DO IT, AND THEN WALK AWAY SAYING, 'I DID IT, I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!' I JUST LOVE THE SELF-CONFIDENCE THAT IT BRINGS STUDENTS BECAUSE AT THE VERY LEAST THEY KNOW THEY'RE ABLE TO DO IT AND THAT JUST BRINGS ME JOY." -GALLAGHER**



## CONNOR TAKES OVER WBHS MYTHOLOGY COURSE FOR 24-25 SCHOOL YEAR

Sabree Depoorter  
Staff Writer

This semester WBHS students can participate in an exciting course, Mythology, taught by Rex Connor. In the past, Karina Krall taught the class but Connor took over this year. The course dives into the complexity of human history, specifically myths, and stories that focus on various gods and religions from around the globe.

During the class, students will compare and contrast certain cultures from different eras. Eventually, students end the semester by creating their own god or goddess for a culture they learned about during the course.

Since this is the first year Connor has taught the course, he expressed the process of planning for the class.

"It's just been a lot of fun, and I have too many ideas!" said Connor.

His favorite aspect of the class is talking about the many different cultures. He noted because of the wide variety of differences, this created better class discussion.

Although this is a positive that students are excited to discuss, there is also an issue with time.

Connor said, "With the semester being so short, the fact of having too much to cover, and some that I just can't teach, I've learned it's all about prioritization."

Senior William Hayes is a currently taking Mythology. There are sixteen students in the course this semester.

Hayes said, "One thing I enjoy about mythology so far is that I get to study all the big cultures of the many different nations from their era. One of my favorite subjects is how religion and belief conflict between many nations."

Even though the class is a semester-long, students are able to learn about many different cultures from multiple eras. This is an opportunity not all students have at other districts due to less staff and less student interest. The course is a captivating journey through mythology that ignites students' imaginations and should be a course all students sign up for.



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WEST BRANCH SENDS SIX TO STATE WRESTLING TOURNAMENT

Halia Gade  
Staff Writer

Six wrestlers for the West Branch boys wrestling team punched their ticket to the state tournament this season. From Feb. 19-22, the Iowa High School Athletic Association hosted the boys state wrestling tournament at the Wells Fargo Arena, in Des Moines, Iowa. Wrestlers from all over the state compete there each spring. Cooper Gates, Keaton Gates, Cash Hatfield, Logan Christoffel, Ethan Humphrey, and Tate Frantz all traveled to Des Moines to represent West Branch high school.

Humphrey went 24-4 on his season and 4-1 at state, finishing third in the 106 weight class. “It was cool wrestling in front of lots of people, I didn’t get what I wanted but made the best out of it. My season was good, I had downfalls like breaking my wrist but I came back ready to compete and prove what I can do,” said Humphrey. Junior Cooper Gates finished his season 38-6 overall and 3-2 at state. He finished 7th in the 165 weight class at the state tournament. “My season went pretty good,” Gates said, “I hope to win the state title next year.”

Christoffel went 39-14 on his season and 2-2 at state. He wrestled on the first day and succeeded in his first match but fell later on Friday night to Hunter Cooper from Sioux Central, ending his run at state. Hatfield went 30-4 for his overall season record and Keaton Gates went 39-20 for his overall season. Both Hatfield and Gates went 3-2 at state. They both won their first matches, but eventually due to losses both were sent to the consolation bracket. Hatfield lost to Kaden Lange from Jesup.

Gates lost by fall to Dawson Beyer from Sibley-Ocheydon. Both of these losses put an end to Hatfield and Gates' seasons. Lastly, Frantz went 37-10 on his season, and 2-2 at state, falling the match before placing on the podium. He wrestled the final match of his high school career Friday night since he is a senior this year. While at state, Frantz collected his 100th career win. All of the wrestlers worked very hard during the season and although it didn’t go the way some of them hoped, they still made West Branch proud.

Cash Hatfield starts his match.  
(Photo taken by Amber Seaton. Contributed by Cora Humphrey)

Keaton Gates looks down before starting his match at state.  
(Photo taken by Amber Seaton. Contributed by Cora Humphrey)

Tate Frantz looks at his competition.  
(Photo taken by Amber Seaton. Contributed by Cora Humphrey)

Logan Christoffel gets into a defensive stance to take on his opponent.  
(Photo taken by Amber Seaton. Contributed by Cora Humphrey)

Cooper Gates, at state, wins his match.  
(Photo taken by Amber Seaton. Contributed by Cora Humphrey)

Ethan Humphrey locks an arm with his competitor to try and take him down.  
(Photo taken by Amber Seaton. Contributed by Cora Humphrey)

road to State

HARTZ TO ENTER WEST BRANCH HALL OF FAME

Kendra Rarick  
Staff Writer

Teagyn Hartz is the second girl in West Branch history to make it onto the Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union state wrestling podium, placing seventh in her weight class and earning her a spot in the West Branch Hall of Fame. Hartz made it to the state tournament for the past two years, but this year she advanced to the final day of competition to win seventh. Athletic Director Jake Stenberg explained that Hartz will now be in the West Branch Hall of Fame. On Feb 6 and 7, Hartz traveled to the Xstream Arena to compete in the girls state wrestling tournament. Hartz placed 7 out of 16 girls at the state tournament and is 7 out of 80 girls in her weight class across the state. Hartz competed in class 1A in the

190-pound weight class. In an interview, Hartz shared her feelings about placing seventh. “I was happy. Looking at the rest of the podium, I beat the three girls that were ahead of me so that was kinda sad but I was really happy to still be on the podium.” In addition to placing seventh, Hartz also earned another big achievement this season. Hartz made fifty pins. This is a big deal as not many athletes get fifty pins even if they wrestle all four years. “My mom got a poster with pictures of me and 50 pins and after the match, all my teammates were holding a paper with the number 50 and I got a special pin,” said Hartz. This season will end Hartz’s journey as a wrestler at West Branch as she will go on to graduate this spring. Hartz finished her wrestling career with an overall record of 85-18.



Hartz poses with her brother after placing seventh at the state tournament. Photo contributed by Tracey Hartz.





# Student Interest



March 14, 2025

## FFA WEEK STARTS WITH AN INFLATABLE HORSE RACE

**Raelyn Wilcher**  
*Staff Writer*

Students barrel-raced inflatable horses Friday, Feb. 14 at the FFA week assembly. The FFA members planned the assembly with the intent to allow everyone to participate in many ways. Students from each class volunteer to play games such as a spelling bee, a relay race, and a horse race with inflatable horses. The hosts discussed the dress-up days and why FFA Week is celebrated. FFA week took place Feb. 17-21 and involved many exciting events.

FFA member Amber Wolf said, “ The hardest part about planning FFA week was planning the assembly and trying to find fun things that students would like to participate in but also learn from.”

The dress-up days included Pajama Day and Anything but a Backpack on Tuesday. Wednesday students wore red, white, and blue for America Day. Students could also drive their tractors to school but this was moved to Wednesday, Feb 26 due to extreme cold.



Tractors line up in the softball parking lot for FFA week’s “Drive Your Tractor to School Day” *Photo by Raelyn Wilcher*

National Blue and Corn Gold Day happened Thursday. Lastly, on Friday students wore any West Branch FFA t-shirts.

The FFA members decided on each themed day by throwing ideas out, keeping previous years' ideas in mind, and then voting on the ideas as a group.

In addition to dress-up days, there was a raffle throughout the week where students who dressed up could submit their names on a ticket for the raffle. If they were picked at the end of the day they won a prize.

The prize included a goody bag with items like a small stuffed animal, candy, silly putty, and a small key chain.

During IS students could participate in daily trivia with each question involving agriculture and the history of it as well.

For those who don’t know much about FFA as an organization, it stands for Future Farmers of America; however, there is more to it than just farming. FFA Advisor Reene Thompson said, “

FFA is whatever you make of your experience.

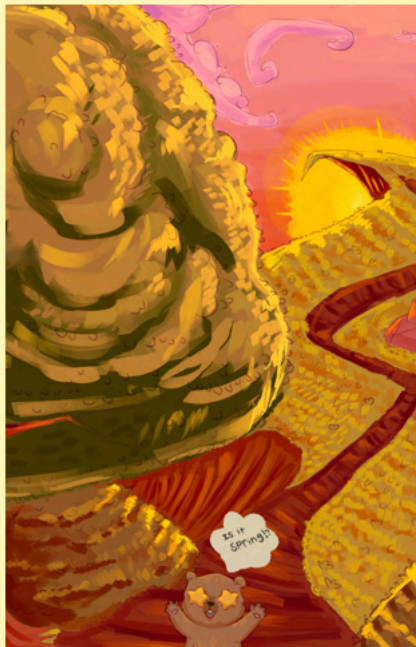
It is a broad category that can involve public speaking all the way to engineering, it’s really a place to develop leadership skills.”

“It is an organization that not only helps you learn about the different aspects of culture but helps you grow as a person as well. Many schools celebrate as well, any school with a FFA chapter will most likely celebrate National FFA Week, although differently than when we did,” said Layla Samuelson.

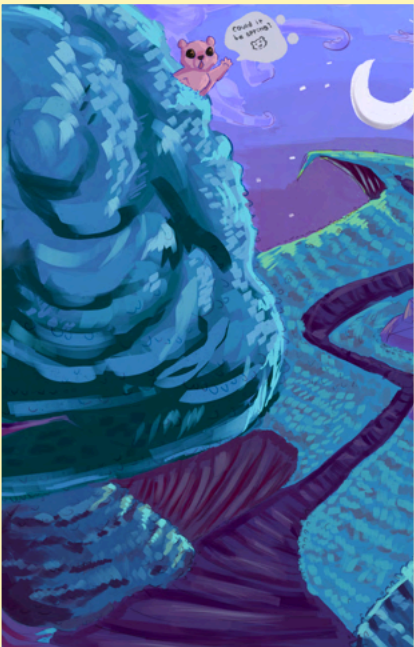
Many students might debate whether or not to join FFA or if they should take an agriculture class.

Amber Wolf says, “ While FFA does revolve around agriculture, it is so much more than that, with opportunities for improving skills such as public speaking, communication, leadership, knowledge, teamwork, and much more. And even if you are not necessarily interested in agriculture, it impacts everyone’s life in more ways than anyone thinks, and it’s important to at least know the basics.”

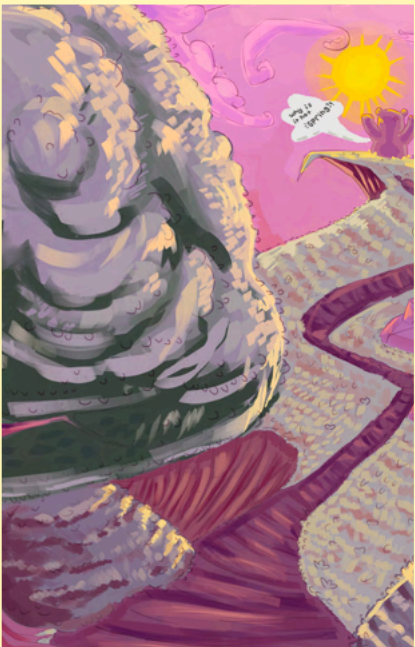
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# Clubs & Orgs



March 14, 2025

## END OF THE LINE: CJU45 TAKES FINAL RIDE, HONORS SENIORS

**Keaton Norfleet**  
*Staff Writer*

Christopher Jive and the Uptown 45 performed their Train-themed show for the final time at the 2025 Swing Show concert. With the help of the Performing Arts Committee, underclassmen presented a slideshow, created by sophomore Cassie Swisher, and gifts to seniors involved in CJU45 for their time and commitment over the years.

The Performing Arts Committee also honored the parents of four seniors, Dawn Johnson, Kayla Garrett, Keaton Norfleet, and Nathan Hills, for their continued support and commitment, transporting set pieces, cleaning and organizing costumes, fundraising, and more.

As graduation day crawls ever closer, Christopher Jive and the Uptown 45 prepare to say goodbye to 13 seniors, Garrett, Hills, Norfleet, Keegan Hansen, Elliot Hinkhouse, Nora Ziher, Jordan Waters, Miley Shields, Layla Samuelson, Josh Kroemer, Eli Hansen, Katey Lenocho, and Calvin Clemens.

Many seniors joined show choir in their middle school years.

K Hansen said, "I have been a part of show choir since seventh grade. My favorite memory from show choir was at Pella last year when we were scared we weren't going to make finals, but we did!"

Swing Show took place in the Performing Arts Center over two days, March 7 and 8. and featured performances from the middle school Jazz Band, middle school show choir, "JiveWired", the high school Jazz Band, Jazz Ensemble, Christopher Jive and the Uptown 45, and seven solo or small ensemble acts put on by students.

The soloists, Jenie Gomez - Lay Me Down by Sam Smith, Kiley Pierce - Yours by Conan Gray, Sabree Depoorter - Cups by Anna Kendrick, Nolan Staker - Go The Distance by Micheal Bolton, Shields - Slipping Through My Fingers by ABBA, Norfleet - Watch How You Go by Keane, and small ensemble members, Kellen Dykstra on drums, E Hansen on bass, Norfleet on tenor saxophone, and Hinkhouse on trumpet - Among Us Drip theme jazz version, all worked to prepare their acts in the days leading up to Swing Show.

### WEST BRANCH STUDENT GOVERNMENT ENHANCES LEADERSHIP SKILLS AT DISTRICT CONFERENCE

**Anthony Heitzman**  
*Staff Writer*

Members of WBHS Student Government attended the Southeast Iowa Student Leadership Conference in Fort Madison on Wednesday, Feb. 26, 2025, to learn about leadership skills and opportunities, acquire new ideas for future projects, and connect with other student leaders.

The conference opened with a keynote address by speaker Matt Doty who talked about stories from famous authors such as Dr. Seuss and J.K. Rowling in addition to his leadership experiences in the Iowa Army National Guard. Once the keynote wrapped up, students watched different presentations about topics such as the Iowa.

Leadership Training Camp, the 2025 Vision Conference, and careers with the Iowa Department of Public Safety which sponsors the Iowa Association of Student Councils ILTC is an annual four-day summer camp where students can "Grow their leadership skills, connect with other students, and make new friends" and the Vision Conference is an annual conference in Oklahoma City where students and advisors connect with others from around the country.

Depoorter said, "I sang this song for two reasons. One, I wanted to dedicate this song to the seniors, we will miss them when they leave. Two, I actually found out I could sing when I sang this song. This was my first song I ever sang. I sang it with my sisters all the time so it was special to me."

"I wanted to make my family proud because a lot of them are really musically talented," Pierce said, "I was really nervous at first but after I started singing it went great."

Shields said, "I decided to do a solo this year because it's my last year to do one and I wanted to do something meaningful. My solo had a very rough start, they played the incorrect backtrack twice before playing the correct track. Once they played the right track it went well."

"Our performance went really well," Dykstra said, "Personally, I didn't make any noticeable mistakes during the performance. I've been told by many audience members that they really enjoyed listening to it."

Staker said, "I decided to do a solo because I really enjoy singing and playing piano. I thought my solo went well and I was happy with how it turned out."

"I have done a solo before," Gomez said, "It builds my confidence, and I love singing. I think my solo went well and there is always room for improvement. Doing a solo each year is cool to see how I have improved."

The middle school Jazz Band, directed by middle school band director Beth Wirtanen-Obernotle, performed four songs, Sweet Georgia Brown arranged by Micheal Sweeney, It Don't Mean A Thing arranged by Paul Cook, Toes in the Water by Dean Sorenson, and Rock Hero by Victor Lopez.

JiveWired, directed by choir director Christopher Reed performed their new show consisting of three songs, Our Time Is Now, Nothing To Lose, and Nothing's Gonna Stop Us, without choreography. The show will be performed again with completed choreography on May 20.

The West Branch High School Jazz Band directed by high school band director Samuel Ogilvie, featuring guest artist Micheal Stow, performed Two-Lip Blues by Steve Shanley, Jumpin' Jack Jive by Carl Strommen, and Ritmo Cristal by Michele Fernandez.

The high school Jazz Ensemble presented their show featured in the 2025 Corridor Jazz Project album, showcasing their piece, Nueva Vida by Steve Shanley, along with their seasonal pieces, Don't Get Sassy by Thad Jones, Comfort Zone by Paul Clark, and Bloo Phunk Strut by Michele Fernandez.

The Jazz Ensemble performed their Corridor Jazz pieces at the Corridor Jazz Project concert at the Paramount Theater in Cedar Rapids on March 10.

The high school Jazz Band and Jazz Ensemble will perform their shows for the final time at Wildwood Smokehouse & Saloon on March 31, wrapping up the official jazz season. Jazz will return to the stage on May 1 in the form of Optional Jazz Band.

As the closing show to wrap up the night, Christopher Jive and the Uptown 45 for the final time performed their train-themed show composed of songs: Go Far, Happy Train, Crazy Train, Free Ride, and Enjoy The Ride/Hands Up.

CJU45 finished their competition season at Central Lee's "Central Connections" placing fourth overall. The show choir earned first place in the 2A division at all four of their competitions, along with Best Crew at Mount Pleasant's "Music InMotion", Best Vocals and Best Choreography at Pella's "Dutch Masters", and a Superior 1 rating at Keota's Iowa High School Music Association Show Choir Festival.

"This senior class was in eighth grade when we came back to school during Covid," Reed said, "Over the course of that year and the next, many of the students in that class dropped out of choir and show choir, but luckily the six singers who stuck with it and the five show band members who stuck with it grew into amazing performers and leaders! This group is small but mighty and takes up a big part of my heart of senior classes who have graduated from me."

I will miss all of them very much next year. Not only do they leave big shoes to fill as performers but I will miss them even more because they are simply great human beings!"

Lenoch said, "Thank you for giving me an awesome team to work with, show choir made me feel like I was a part of something."

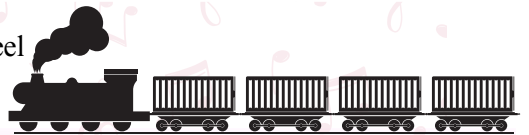
"Show choir has been one of my favorite things for so long and it's something that I always look forward to every year," K Hansen said, "I love singing, dancing, and having fun on stage with everyone. I'll miss you all so much!"

"My parting words are a huge thank you to Mr. Reed for all of his efforts into the show choir and for producing such an incredible and inspirational music program with so many incredible opportunities with both the musicals and show choir," Shields said, "Mr. Reed has made such an impact on the program here at West Branch and has also made such an impact on my life, for that I am so thankful. For the underclassmen, be committed to whatever you are doing. Commitment impacts everyone around you and can make a world of difference. To show up every day and try will earn so much respect from others no matter how much you improve as long as you try! Appreciate the fact that West Branch has such a great opportunity for music and that the music program is non auditioned so they include everybody who is interested."

With 20 eighth-grade JiveWired members and only thirteen seniors leaving, the next generation of Christopher Jive and the Uptown 45 holds promising potential.

Reed said, "This year's show choir singers were very young with 32 of the 50 on stage being ninth and tenth graders. That means we are moving to an older group of singers with more experience. We have the potential of adding many talented eighth-grade singers if they continue in show choir."

"Band-wise, we will have nine seniors which is the biggest group of seniors I have ever had in show band. The show band will be really strong for one more year and then it will be a rebuilding year. I believe with our singers getting older and more experienced, the show band having tons of senior leadership, that if we are able to get most or all of the current eighth graders to go out for show choir next year and students remain committed, we could have an outstanding year."



### MARCH CONCERT FEATURES SEVEN SOLOISTS AND STUDENT ARTWORK

**Wyatt Chapman**  
*Staff Writer*

The West Branch High School band showcased seven soloists between songs at this year's March concert.

Last year, the May concert featured the soloists, but band director Samuel Ogilvie switched them to March. Band students wrote and read the program notes for this performance. Ogilvie introduced this idea this year with the winter concert. Program notes give a brief description of what the song is about and background knowledge of the composer.

Ogilvie also tasked Rey Watt with an art project to be displayed on the back wall of the auditorium during the second song, "Scarborough Fantasy" by Christina Huss and R. Alan Carter.

The ensemble played three songs and featured seven student soloists between songs, each one accompanied by Maggie Mowery on the piano.

The ensemble began the evening with "Vuelo" composed by Salvador Alan Jacobo and afterward soloists Oliv Schlitz, Olivia Becker, Caleb Reardon, and Eli Farmer performed.

The ensemble moved on to play "Scarborough Fantasy," by Christina Huss and R. Alan Carter, followed by solos from Lincoln Naber, Keaton Norfleet, and Logan Christoffel.

They ended the night with "Sunsapes" by Chandler Wilson, featuring soloists Cassie Swisher, Lillian Waters, and Schlitz.

"I'm still shaking from my solo," said Naber, who played "Arioso and Caprice" composed by Clifford Barnes.

"I was so nervous, more nervous than I was for football," Naber added.

This is the ensemble's second to last performance of the year, their next and final one is on May first.

"I'm not ready for the May concert. I'm not ready to see the seniors and Mr. O leave," said freshman Emma Revis.





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March 14, 2025

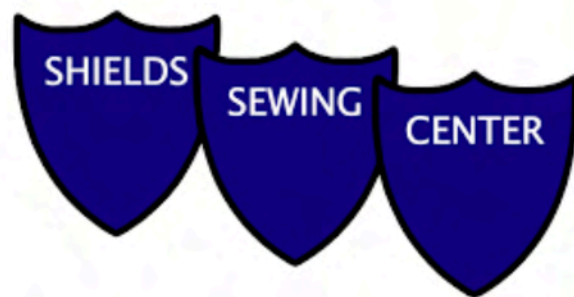
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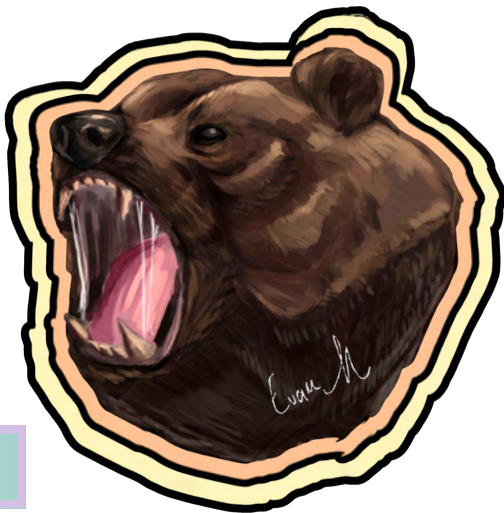
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# Spotlights

March 14, 2025

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Keaton Norfleet

**Q: What made you want to join robotics?**

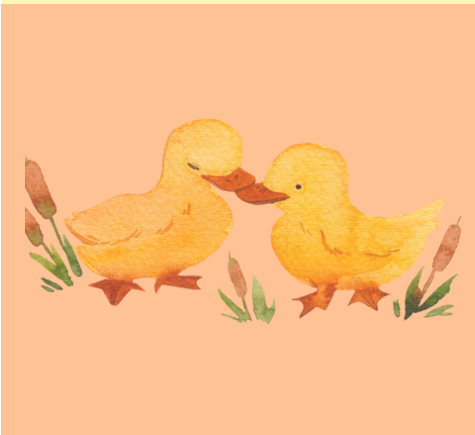
A: I've always liked structural building and my brothers were both in it.

**Q: How do your robotics competitions work?**

A: Three day event we leave in the afternoon, set up our pit and robot. Practice matches give us time to see if there are issues and inspect it. If it doesn't pass we will be disqualified or we have to fix it quickly.

**Q: What's something that you're proud of that you and your team did?**

A: Last year, I was very happy we made 2nd place at the Iowa regional. We had a great robot that worked very well and we all achieved something that our team had never achieved before.



Alyssa Pierce

**Q. What is your role in track?**

A: I am a captain this year, and being a role model to the underclassmen.

**Q. What is your goal?**

A: My goal has always been to improve, I don't like putting numbers out there because then I set too high expectations.

**Q. What is track about, what do you do?**

A: For me track is my favorite sport! I throw, which means shot put and discus!

**Q. What is the farthest distance you've thrown?**

A: For my shot put, my farthest is 41 '1 ft and disc is 93 ft, I believe!



Alison Gade

**Q: Why did you join SkillsUSA?**

A: I want to be an architect, and that's in the trades.

**Q: What is the most important thing the club teaches you?**

A: How to do hands on things, it is important because AI will never be able to take over the trades.

**Q: What is something people may not know about SkillsUSA?**

A: You can join even if you don't want to be in the trades.

**Q: What's your favorite fast food place, and why?**

A: Taco bell, especially on Tuesdays because of the Chili Cheese Burritos.



Lincoln Naber

**Q: What events do you run?**

A: 400 200 800, D-Med, Sprint Med, 4x400, High Jump

**Q: What's your favorite thing about running track?**

A: I love when meets are over and I don't have to run anymore.

**Q: How long have you been doing this sport?**

A: 3rd grade.

**Q: How did you feel when you were getting ready to run at state last year?**

A: I threw up a few times that morning because I was so nervous.

**Q: What's your favorite things to do outside of school?**

A: I like baking and cooking.



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March 14, 2025

WBHS STUDENTS MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN COMMUNITY THROUGH FIRE CADET PROGRAM

Evan Highly  
Staff Writer

Students of West Branch High School serve their community by volunteering with the West Branch Fire Department.

The Fire Cadet program gives students under the age of 18 the opportunity to help alongside firefighters, giving them hands-on experience in the firefighter's line of work.

There are a total of five cadets in the West Branch High School district: Seniors Nate Hills, Paxton Tisinger, Keaton Norfleet, and sophomores Eli Farmer, and Robby Boaz.

To apply as a cadet, students contacted Fire Captains Matt Hills and Jose Gongora to receive an application to be turned in by the next business meeting.

Norfleet said, "Miranda Schwickerath came into our classroom, and asked if anybody was interested in being a firefighter. I was thinking no, probably not, but at the same time my hand raised."

Hills became a cadet because his father, M Hills and brother, Gavin Hills, a West Branch alumn, are both firefighters.



West Branch fire cadets pose with their fire gear in front of the fire and rescue truck. Photo by Miley Shields.

Hills said, "I thought it would be good to help out the community, just do all that I can."

With this great opportunity of experience, Hills plans to enroll in college to become a firefighter.

With a lot of Farmer's friends being cadets, he thought he would join as it would be a great opportunity to help the community.

Boaz said, "I just really enjoy helping the community, and helping other people. I help out wherever I can. I wanted to be a part of something bigger than me."

Being a cadet brings a lot of responsibilities, but it also brings a lot of good to the community and to the people that really need it.

Tisinger became a cadet because many of his family members are firefighters, and he was recommended to join the fire cadet program.

"I tried it and liked it a lot. It's kinda nice being able to leave school and go on calls, being able to help out when I can." Tisinger said.

Norfleet's first experience with being a cadet was going through training. Norfleet got the opportunity to smash in windows with a halligan bar.

Farmer's first experience being called in for a fire call, he was confused by the noise. Farmer didn't know the alarm to the fire call, but after checking his phone he

was on the move.

Boaz's first experience going into it was a medical call with Farmer. It was a code green, so Boaz got on an ambulance to Iowa City.

Tisinger's first experience getting a fire call was responding to a call that required their attention to a car accident on the interstate.

Hills discusses his thought process when he is called in, saying, "I just think about what truck we would be going with, I'm thinking if I'll need to put my gear on or not, just stuff like that."

"Figuring out what I can do, getting down there quickly, ready to go. I figure out the situation and what to do." Tisinger said

Farmer answers what Cadets do, saying, "We do whatever the paramedic says, if they need a medical bag, we go and get the medical bag. If they need anything from the truck, you go get it. If they need help, you help." Sophomore, Robby Boaz, encourages people to become a cadet because of the community, saying, "it's an amazing community to help out, it's such a fun program, such a close knit group. Everybody is there for every type of program."

Boaz's first experience going into it was a medical call with Farmer. It was a code green, so Boaz got on an ambulance to Iowa City.

HAGANMAN OPENS NEW DENTAL PRACTICE IN WEST BRANCH

Halia Gade  
Staff Writer

The new dental practice, West Branch Family Dentistry, opened on Jan. 13 on West Main Street. Dr. Kyle Haganman is the head dentist, and the one who opened the new practice.

Haganman explained, "Our office provides excellent care with compassion and to have that offered with the convenience of being here local has been well received here and in the surrounding communities."

Haganman has lived in Iowa his whole life and graduated from Osage. He attended the University of Iowa for undergrad and dental school and met his wife Becca there.

They are raising a family just outside of town. They have a 5-year-old son, a 3-year-old, and a 10-month-old daughter.

Haganman said, "We enjoy spending time with family and friends, and being outside as much as possible."



Photo by Cameron Waters.

Haganman originally wanted to study medicine because his dad was a family physician for 30 years before switching to emergency medicine. This all changed when Haganman job shadowed his uncle, a prosthodontist (a dentist specializing in the replacement of teeth). He then started considering density as his career choice.

For the past 3.5 years, Haganman commuted forty-five minutes to Cedar Rapids.

This all changed when Haganman job shadowed his uncle, a prosthodontist (a dentist specializing in the replacement of teeth). He then started considering density as his career choice.

For the past 3.5 years, Haganman commuted forty-five minutes to Cedar Rapids. Due to the long commute and a want for more family time, Haganman decided opening a dentist office in West Branch would be a great idea.

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Haganman shared, "I love the town of West Branch and realized if I didn't jump on the opportunity to practice here, someone else would."

Haganman credited Downing Construction for making the building process so easy.

Haganman mentioned, "I would say the most challenging parts of the building process were mostly just all the decisions to be made with design and how I wanted the building/practice to "feel" for patients as they enter the door."

The practice has now been open for around 6 weeks. Haganman announced, "We love it and the community has been extremely supportive and thrilled that we are in town."

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# Opinion

March 14, 2025



## VOICES FROM THE HALLWAYS: OPINIONS ON WBHS’S PHONE BAN

Cassie Swisher  
Staff Writer

Starting March 24, after students return from their spring break plans, a new phone ban policy will go into effect at West Branch High School. The phone ban will restrict all usage of phones or personal devices during instructional time.

The phone ban got announced with the intention of creating more focused and fulfilling educational time while students are in the classroom. WBHS hopes to remove hurdles in learning and prepare students for phoneless atmospheres in the workplace. While this approach is understandable, I think there are better solutions for this issue.

The argument that phones wouldn't be permitted in the workforce is a flimsy objective for banning phones. Instead of completely removing the distraction, teaching students to manage that distraction alongside the work being done would be more effective and properly set teenagers up for success later in life as phones will most likely be a permanent feature in the future. After all, it's unlikely that the workplace will also take a phone away from someone. In the workforce, maturity and self-control isn't a request, it's an expectation.

In an ever-changing world, technological education is another important facet of adapting. Being able to utilize technology and AI in learning is an important tool. If you can define when the appropriate times for the usage of systems like ChatGPT or social media are for students, it could prevent issues like plagiarism or inaccuracy.

While the effectiveness of learning is important, stripping away phones as a tool can have dangerous consequences on student awareness. In the politically involved society that is the American education system, the only thing more dangerous than screen time is ignorance. Phones provide a window to political ideas too controversial to introduce in the classroom.

While I can't argue that all screen time in the classroom is productive or educational, I can say that the phone is a conduit to information. Schools around Iowa find themselves in a similar position as West Branch, as Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds aims to completely ban cellular devices from schools after the 2025 election.



Several schools around Iowa already banned cell phones with the governor's looming decision on the matter.

While an informative email detailing the ban went out a few weeks ago from Principal Sara Oswald, some are still seeking clarification on what the ban exactly entails. Vague details were shared by students and staff around the school, but most people concluded phones would still be allowed during passing time and lunch hours. When prompted on how the ban could be altered for a better compromise with students, an anonymous student stated, "I would leave room for teachers to decide what is instructional time and what isn't."

During the school day, study halls and I.S. (Instructional Support) serves only as a free period for students looking to get a brain break with their devices. With unclear expectations on teachers and students, it is unknown whether this classifies as "instructional time"

or not.

The ban itself was a unanimous decision for the school board, however, students and teachers have much to say on the controversial topic affecting schools around the world. A phone ban is certainly an extreme measure to take on a small issue in the grand scheme of things.



**"YES, PHONES ARE AN ISSUE AT TIMES, BUT THEY'RE QUIET ISSUES. WHEN THOSE GET TAKEN AWAY, STUDENTS ARE GOING TO BE LOUDER AND MORE DISRUPTIVE."**  
-AN ANONYMOUS TEACHER

New threats arrive at American schools on a daily basis, and West Branch High School even faced a cyber-threat only last spring. The school launched into a multi-hour lockdown where students were left in the classrooms with their phones and silence.

Some worries arose that with the phone ban, student anxieties during a critical time such as this might become unmanageable without their devices to contact loved ones or alert others of happenings.

While a phone ban certainly has its advantages, the first priority of a school is to educate and prepare students for the future.

Phones must not be used during instructional time come March 24, however, maybe this ban will fuel students to start conversations on other ways they could be better prepared for the future through WBHS.

## CAPTAIN AMERICA FRANCHISE SOARS TO NEW HEIGHTS IN “BRAVE NEW WORLD”

Anthony Heitzman  
Staff Writer

“Captain America: Brave New World” premiered in theatres on Feb. 14, 2025. The movie is a follow-up to the Disney+ miniseries “The Falcon and The Winter Soldier” in which Sam Wilson took on the mantle of Captain America after the retirement of the original Captain America, Steve Rogers.

The movie also follows up on some events from the 2021 film “Eternals” so I would also recommend watching said film before seeing *Brave New World*. The film stars Anthony Mackie as Sam Wilson/Captain America, Harrison Ford as Thaddeus Ross/Red Hulk, Danny Ramirez as Joaquin Torres/Falcon, Tim Blake Nelson as Samuel Sterns, and Giancarlo Esposito as Seth Voelker/Sidewinder. The production team picked the cast lineup very well. I especially enjoyed Harrison Ford’s portrayal of President Thaddeus Ross.

The movie follows Sam Wilson and Joaquin Torres as they work to track down the rogue scientist responsible for framing their friend for an assassination attempt on the newly elected President Ross and

attempting to start a global conflict over newly discovered resources and Wilson’s relationship with Ross whom he had previously disagreed with and even fought.

I ended up being pleasantly surprised by the movie’s quality upon first watching it in the theatre. Stunt Coordinator Alex Benevent did an outstanding job on the action sequences. The fight scenes in particular are very suspenseful and keep the audience on the edge of their seats and were very well choreographed as well as being filmed using stellar cinematography.

Another exemplary element of the film is the costume design. One area where the costume design particularly stood out in Sam Wilson’s Captain America wingsuit.

I think the designers very well improved upon from the costume featured in “The Falcon and The Winter Soldier” The upgraded suit is now made of the near indestructible metal vibranium which also gives it a number of unique abilities that were very well showcased in the previously mentioned action sequences.

The final part of the movie I enjoyed were the characters. I especially liked how the film continued the story of Isaiah Bradley, a black supersoldier

wrongfully imprisoned and experimented on by the US Government during the Korean War and whose story got largely hidden from the public until Wilson brought him and his story into the public eye.

I also enjoyed the character portrayal of Thaddeus Ross. The film depicts him as being softer on Wilson than he had previously been by sending him on special missions and even asking him to restart the Avengers. It also shows him attempting to maintain relations with US allies such as France, India, and Japan while also trying to cover up his misdoings in the past. But in the end Sam Wilson himself ended up being the best character in the movie.

As a Captain America fan I never thought that Wilson or anyone else could ever live up to the legacy of Steve Rogers, and while that is true to a certain extent I ended up being pleasantly surprised at how well Wilson performed as the new Captain America despite not having superpowers like Rogers.

But as Rogers himself once said, “Heroes are made by the paths they choose, not the powers they’re graced with.”

