



THE BEAR

Student Newspaper

December 18, 2025 WBHS Volume 29 Issue 3
900 W. Main St., West Branch, IA 52358

DUAL ENROLLMENT ON THE RISE: WBHS JOINS NATIONAL TREND

Caitlyn Harrison
Head-Editor-In-Chief

Over the last several years, dual enrollment continues to increase across the United States, with Iowa reporting one of the highest participation rates in the nation. A broad national trend reshaping students' transition from high school to college is reflected in the WBHS student body. The number of WBHS students signing up for online and in-person courses through Kirkwood Community College continues to increase.

Kirkwood Student and Academic Support Coordinator Jewels Holladay said, “Dual enrollment has grown significantly. Over the last two semesters, Kirkwood’s K–12 Partnership team has expanded by about 20%. More students are taking online and on-campus courses as well as Kirkwood-taught classes directly at their high schools. Participation has steadily increased over the last four years, and interest continues to rise as students look for ways to get a head start on college.”

Enrollment data from Kirkwood’s Institutional Research Center matches this steady upward trend. In 2020, approximately 30% of Kirkwood’s student population consisted of dual enrollment students. In 2024, 4,761 enrolled in Kirkwood classes, raising the percentage to 37%.

According to national data from the Community College Research Center, Iowa ranks third in the nation for student participation in dual enrollment classes, with 44% of students enrolled in at least one class. This puts Iowa just behind Idaho and Indiana, which have over 50% participation.

In the 2022-2023 school year, Iowa reported 52,291 dual enrollment students, representing 24% of the state’s undergraduate population. Nationally, only about 12% of high school students enrolled in dual credit that year, placing Iowa at double the national rate.

As stated on Kirkwood Community College’s website, “In the 2024–25 school year alone, Kirkwood’s dual enrollment partnerships saved high school students and families more than \$11.5 million in tuition — and that’s just one of the many benefits.” For students, dual enrollment is free. For the district, it isn’t. WBHS reported paying \$84,101.30 last year, and the first semester of this year alone has cost another \$28,906.80.

At \$221 per credit hour, even one 3-credit class costs the district roughly \$663. Some of this cost is reimbursed by the state through a supplementary weighting formula, but it does not cover the full amount.

Angie Klinkkammer, Business Manager at WBCSD, said, “Of the amount we spent last year, the State of Iowa paid us \$39,000. More enrollment means more reimbursement; however, it doesn’t

cover all costs. It still doesn’t account for students who fail or drop, and we lose all of their tuition costs.”

Because of this financial burden, the school encourages students to stay on top of their coursework and make early decisions if a class isn’t a good fit. If a student needs to drop a course, they must do so within the first two weeks to avoid academic or financial penalties.

WBHS counselor Miranda Schwickerath said, “If a student fails a class or drops it after the drop date, that goes on their high school transcript and their Kirkwood transcript, and we are still responsible for the cost of the class.” She added, “There are times where I have students sign up for classes and think that because they’re a high school student, that it should still be high school level, and it’s not. You are signing up for a college class, so you need to expect that it’s college-level. I think it’s super important to have those conversations on what classes are good for them to take because I have had students in the past who did not want to have those conversations, and it can lead to them struggling or choosing courses that aren’t the right fit.”

This fall, 46 WBHS students enrolled in online classes through Kirkwood’s dual enrollment program, and 8 students travel to the Kirkwood Regional Center at the University of Iowa to take in-person career academy classes.

Students have several options for completing dual enrollment, including online courses, classes at their high school, and programs at the Kirkwood Regional Center.

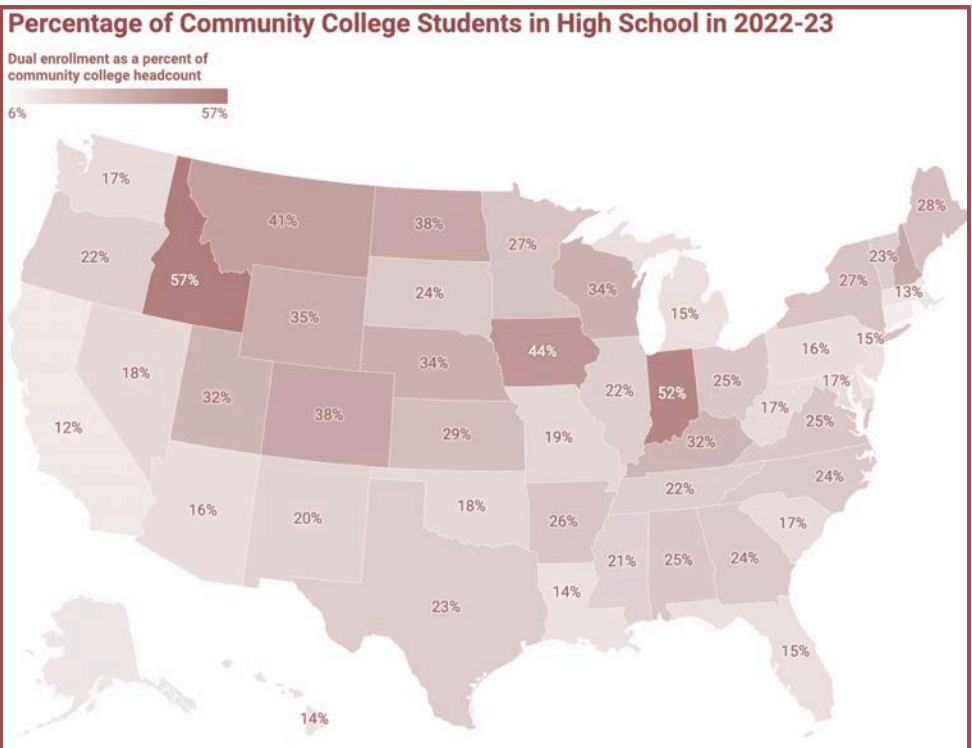
Currently, WBHS offers only one dual enrollment class on campus: Business 290, taught by Lennis Hasenbank. While other schools in the area provide multiple dual enrollment options at their high schools, WBHS does not.

According to Schwickerath, this is because offering more classes “limits the number of high school electives available to students.” As a smaller school with a limited number of teachers, it wouldn’t be fair to other students who aren’t ready to commit to a college-level course.

Additionally, teachers must be specially trained to teach these classes, and Schwickerath said, “We still have to pay for the Kirkwood class even if our teacher is the one teaching it, so it’s not really a benefit for us to have classes available here.”

At WBHS, dual enrollment is generally open to juniors and seniors only. To qualify, those students must be passing all of their high school classes and be proficient on the Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP). This ensures that the students are prepared for the rigor of college coursework.

Exceptions can be made for underclassmen who demonstrate strong academic readiness.



These students must meet with Schwickerath to discuss expectations and whether it’s the right fit for them. An advanced proficient score on the ISASP makes approval more likely. Holladay said, “It’s important to keep your high school counselor in the loop. It’s called ‘dual credit’ because you earn both high school and college credit, so decisions affect both sides—and we’re here to help you navigate that.”

Sophomore year is when students first visit Kirkwood.

Schwickerath said, “They present to the students to show what they have to offer, and we get them applied to Kirkwood. Then later in the year, I will send out the email to those students, letting them know that the dual enrollment classes are open and available for them to sign up for.”

When registering for classes, students must ensure that they register in the right software to avoid any unwanted costs. “High school students register using the Dual Enroll program while traditional college students use Kirkwood’s My Hub. High school students can register for classes in My Hub, but those are self-pay.” Said Holladay.

College students receive first priority for entrance into classes, so students may not end up with the professor they signed up for originally. In this case, Kirkwood staff place the student into another section of the same course, or the student may sign up for any of the classes with remaining spots.

With hundreds of classes available each term, choosing the right courses is one of the most important parts of the dual enrollment process. Students must think beyond just earning credits and consider how each class will fit into their future plans.

Holladay said, “Students can try out subjects related to majors or career pathways to see what they enjoy, and what they don’t, helping them make more informed decisions. I actually love it when a student learns this is not what they want to do. It helps them find a better path or direction for their future self.”

Schwickerath also urges students to be careful while selecting courses.

She said, “Be strategic about it and not just be like, yeah, that sounds good, and sign up for it. There is also room for exploring, though: maybe you’re interested in criminal justice, but you also might want to go to hair school. You could take Intro to Criminal Justice to see if it’s something you’re interested in, and at least it could get elective credit for it later on if that’s not the path you choose.”

For many, the benefits of dual enrollment courses are far more than just financial.

Junior Oliv Schlitz said, “I chose to do a dual enrollment class because it is an amazing opportunity to get free college credits and learn about things not taught at WBHS. I have been able to be challenged academically, which will better prepare me for college.

“Colleges recognize dual enrollment as a sign of readiness and motivation,” Holladay said.

However, dual enrollment is not for everyone. Time management remains a challenge for students.

“That’s the hardest thing about online,” said Schwickerath.

Holladay said the biggest challenge is “adjusting to the increased independence of college classes. Students often need reminders to check their Kirkwood email regularly and learn how to use a syllabus effectively.”

Technology can also create issues. Because WBHS is required to follow state guidelines on school-issued laptops, certain features on Kirkwood’s online platform, Talon, may be blocked. Some courses require students to download additional software, such as a lockdown browser, which cannot be done on the Chromebooks issued to WBHS students. To work around this, students may check out a MacBook to use while at school on assignments or exams that require those special programs.

Holladay said, “Despite these challenges, students frequently share that their dual enrollment experience was meaningful and worth it, and many say it helped them feel more confident and prepared for their future.”



View this issue online!

AND

Follow us on Instagram!



THEBEARSTUDENTNEWS



Clubs & Orgs



December 18, 2025

SENIOR LOGAN HEICK EARNS EAGLE SCOUT RANKING FOR BOY SCOUTS

Emma Revis
Staff Writer

Senior Logan Heick achieved the rank of Eagle Scout, in Boy Scout Troop 156. Eagle Scout is the highest rank in Boy Scouts. To become an Eagle Scout you need to be motivated, committed, and driven. Heick worked eight years to accomplish this rank.

To achieve the rank of Eagle Scout you must progress through all of the ranks, earn 21 merit badges, and complete a focused community service project. This all must be completed before a scout turns 18.

For Heick's community service project, he built fishing line waste receptacles around Cedar County. Some of the things he struggled with in his journey including coming up with the project, managing the people to accomplish the project, and acquiring the 21 merit badges.

Heick said, "Looking back, I don't think there was anything I



Logan Heick builds fishing line waste receptacles for his Eagle Scout project. Photos contributed by Mark Heick.

would change about my journey to an Eagle Scout besides some minor things, but overall I had lots of support and experience from helping with my other troopmates' projects and having some of those people's experience helping my own project."

His journey to Eagle Scout followed a structured path through each scouting rank.

Scouts begin at Scout, then moved to Tenderfoot. Tenderfoot focuses on troop activities, physical fitness, healthy living, fire building, and cooking, while the Scout rank focuses on the oath, basic knots, and first aid.

The next rank is Second Class. After Second Class, you complete trials to move up to First Class.

First Class leads to Star and then the final rank before Eagle Scout, Life. The Life rank focuses on leadership towards younger groups and scouting values in everyday life.

Once a scout has achieved all of the ranks, they move onto the last and final rank, Eagle Scout.

CYBEARS SHOWCASE NEW COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAM

Anthony Heitzman
Business Editor

The West Branch Robotics team 5041 CyBears collaborated with The Black Rose on Nov. 15 to sell customizable 3-D printed bookshelves designed to raise money for both parties. The event raised ~\$660, split between the two.

The fundraiser is part of a larger outreach program pushed by

the team in recent years. This new outreach push by the team includes partnering with local businesses such as The Black Rose and The Honey Den for fundraising efforts.

Educational events such as STEM Summer Camp, held this summer, are another main focus for the team's outreach.

During these camps, students in kindergarten through eighth grade spent a day doing various activities such as performing science

experiments, building Lego robots, and 3-D printing custom fidget toys.

5041 CyBears also mentor local Girl Scout troops from the area. They provide lessons in subjects such as building robots and experimenting with coding to assist them in earning merit badges.

Growing the Lego League program from 11 students in the 2023 season to 53 in the 2025 season is a major accomplishment for the team.

Team members say the goal of the expanded outreach program is to promote STEM education throughout the community and to increase awareness of the team as well as recruiting more members.

CUSTOM 3-D PRINTED BOOKSHELF
MADE BY THE CYBEARS

MEXICO LINDO
GRILL & CANTINA

711 S Downey St
West Branch, IA

(319) 877-8025



WILDWOOD
Open Daily 11am-9pm

\$10 DAILY
LUNCH SPECIALS!

Kids 12 & under
eat FREE on
Tuesday!
(excludes show nights)

TICKETS & MORE INFO AT WILDWOODSALOON.COM

WE CATER!

Birthdays
Graduations
Team Dinners
Pre-Dance Dinners
Holiday Parties
Fundraisers
etc!

WILDWOOD

(319) 333-1750

4919 WALLEYE
DR. SE
IOWA CITY, IA



700 Leonard Ln
West Branch, IA

noelautomotive.org

319-643-5088



Jennifer Walker
Owner

(319) 643-5484
(319) 631-8615 cell
theservingcafe@gmail.com
theservingcafe.com

209 E Main St
West Branch, IA 52358



Spotlights



December 18, 2025

Q. What is your favorite aspect of the sport?

A. My favorite part about basketball is playing defense and rebounding. I like the unnoticed parts that aren't what typical players want to do but rather that I love to do, because without the little things like boxing out or diving for a loose ball the game wouldn't be the same.

Q. What would you say to incoming freshman players?

A. Just outwork your potential, get in the gym as much as you can and work harder than everybody else. God gave you everything you need to move forward and whether it so keep moving regardless of what other people say, think, or do, focus on you.

Q. How long have you been playing basketball?

A. Going on my fifth year, since 8th grade.

Q. What athletic achievement are you most proud of?

A. State track past years & the pentathlon last year.



LEXI SKAY

BRENNEN DALE



Q. How long have you been playing basketball?

A. My whole life.

Q. What athletic achievement are you most proud of?

Getting 1st team All District in football while going 7-2 with my brothers.

Q. What is your favorite aspect of the sport?

A. That I get to play with my guys and compete every day to go out and win games.

Q. What would you say to incoming freshman players?

A. Love to work, the process is what makes the outcomes so enjoyable. Look forward to the work and you'll like the outcome you get.

Q. What is a challenge you have overcome as a player?

A. I tore my groin and had surgery on my elbow both in my Junior year. It took a lot of hard work and a long time in the weight room and field to get back to my best self.

Q. What do you think is the most challenging part about wrestling and why?

A. In the beginning I thought training to wrestle and conditioning, now, I think mental toughness. It's just you and the other person and you're the only person to blame when things don't go well.

Q. How would you describe your wrestling season in three words?

A. Independent, tough, mental.

Q. Do you have any plans on continuing wrestling after graduation?

A. As of right now, I'm not wrestling for a school. I'm going to Iowa State, so I want to join their girls wrestling club for fun.

Q. What advice would you give to a new person joining wrestling?

A. Become obsessed with it, don't be halfway in it, be educated on it, improve everyday, it will be tough but it will start to become more fun.

Q. What has wrestling taught you as a person?

A. Taught me to be confident in yourself, just be better than yourself and who you were five minutes ago.



SAYLEE GINGERICH

CASH HATFIELD



Q. When and why did you start wrestling?

A. I started wrestling when I was four years old, my parents thought I was too wild.

Q. Do you have any plans on continuing wrestling after graduation?

A. Yes I am committed to wrestle at Loras College in Dubuque.

Q. What do you tell yourself before matches to get yourself prepared?

A. Just good thoughts, just knowing you are going to win no matter the achievements/ranks of the other person, I don't let it stop me.

Q. How do you stay active and warmed up in between matches?

A. Run after matches, I'm always moving, I don't really ever sit.

Q. What is your favorite part about wrestling and why?

A. Winning, I like that it is individual, it's you winning not the team.

Q. What made you join bowling?

A. It's a family tradition, everyone in the family bowls.

Q. What is your way to overcome your challenges?

A. Walking away and taking a breath, realizing that not everyone is perfect and it is okay to make mistakes.

Q. When did you start bowling?

A. 5th grade.

Q. What do you most enjoy about bowling?

A. The environment, family, and going to the bigger school at City High.

Q. What is your favorite memory?

A. When the team bowled a 290.



LARKIN BROWN

Financial & Retirement Planning



Michael V. Sexton, CLU, ChFC, AFIS

319.643.4128

agentmichaelsexton.com



**FARM BUREAU
FINANCIAL SERVICES**

Registered Representative/Securities & services offered through FBL Marketing Services, LLC,* 5400 University Ave., West Des Moines, IA 50266, 877/860-2904, Member SIPC. Advisory services offered through FBL Wealth Management, LLC.* Farm Bureau Property & Casualty Insurance Company,** Western Agricultural Insurance Company,** Farm Bureau Life Insurance Company**/West Des Moines, IA. *Affiliates. *Company providers of Farm Bureau Financial Services. PR-WMA-D (3-25)



Sports



December 18, 2025

SENIOR STARTS WB GIRLS ATHLETIC CLUB WITH SUPPLEMENTAL TRAINING FOR FEMALE ATHLETES

Karlee Hansen
Staff Writer

Every Sunday at 6:00 P.M., Tony and Erin Senio host an optional lifting for WBHS female athletes. The Senios made this program to ensure athletes are getting their workouts in for present or upcoming sports.

These lifts consist of the fundamentals of proper form and techniques, but also encourage athletes to take proper rest and care for their bodies by doing certain stretches, rolling out, taking an ice bath, etc. Cardio and endurance workouts happen in the gym if lifts aren't going on. The topic of fueling the body with the right foods after a lift is included as well.

In order to start this club, Jake Stenberg and lifting coaches, Grant Meth, and Kaleb Dua, needed to give permission to use the gym and equipment. This organization had been in progress for a couple months, but received approval to move forward with hosting this program.

Freshman Kylie Puhl said,

"I am glad this program is a success, it will help us become better athletes and progress us in skills and technique... I think lifting with different grade levels will help us become one team. Converging together creates a sense of fellowship. It's also nice to socialize with different grade levels when we aren't in the same sports or activities."

By starting this program, T. Senio said, "We wanted to help enhance performance P.E. by giving extra instruction for those who wanted it in a non-rushed atmosphere and to generally build camaraderie among the athletes in the school."

WBHS currently offers a performance P.E. course, which is required for all student athletes, where students do a series of specific lifts, exercises, and agility in the gym. This is to help all student-athletes gain endurance and strength.

Many female athletes believe that they want more outside of performance P.E. to ensure they are getting what they need for any sport/activity they are in.



Tony and Erin Senio pose for a photo in the WBHS weight room. Photo by Karlee Hansen

The attendance varies from 10-12 girls per session. All of whom are in performance P.E.

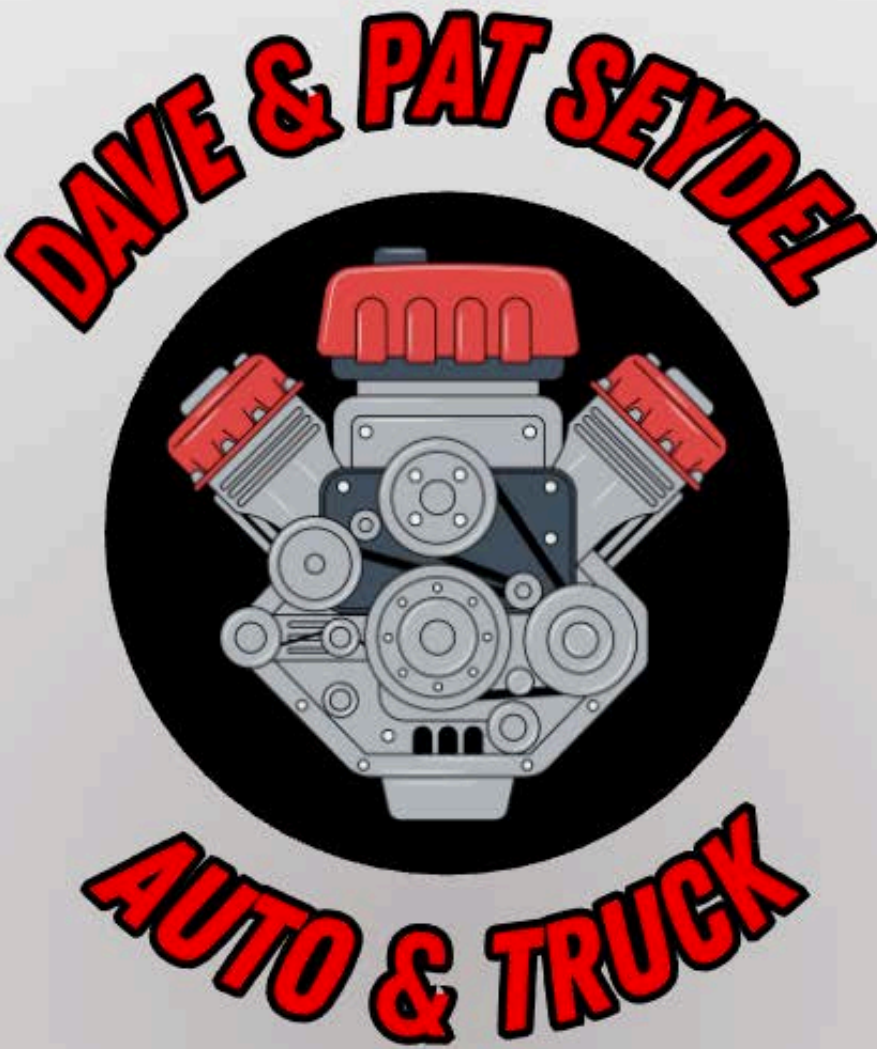
"I hope the girls gain knowledge and confidence not only in the weight room but also in sports as well," E. Senio said, "I want them to leave with a sense of self-worth and feel like they have accomplished something, that they are always learning ways to improve and grow."

Lifting weights can help athletes grow if balance is included. Pushing yourself too hard can result in injury; not pushing yourself enough can result in seeing little to no progress. With this program, the Senios intend to guide these athletes in the right direction

to continue to grow. Lifting can bring many benefits if done correctly.

Junior Chloe Albrecht said that she came to these lifts, "To better my form and to learn more beneficial techniques... I feel like it's a team bonding activity because we are getting closer together, being around different people and sharing different experiences, mostly because we are in different sports."

The West Branch girls athletic club consists of basics for proper form in the weight room, agility in the gym, and how to fuel properly after a lift. The Senios hope that using these techniques will ensure success in female athletes by continuing this program.



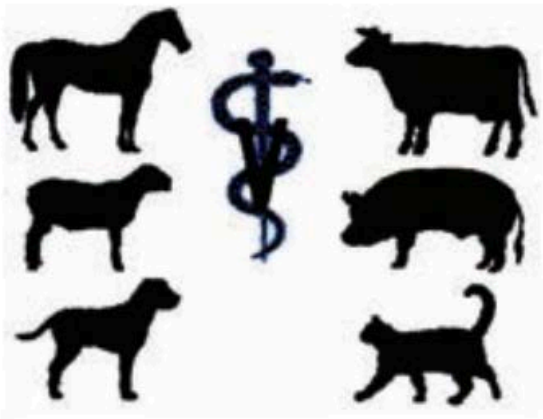
"THE BEST FRIEND YOUR
CAR EVER HAD"

**917 MAIDEN LANE
IOWA CITY, IA 52240**

319-351-6805

West Branch Animal Clinic

*Providing quality health care to our small animal,
large animal and equine patients with efficient,
effective and practical animal care services
and products.*



508 N. 4th St.
West Branch, IA 52358 (319) 643-2127
westbranchanimalclinic.com



WBHS GAINS 2 NEW TRANSFER STUDENTS FOR ATHLETICS

Halia Gade
Social Media Editor

WBHS gains 2 new students, senior Hunter Knorr and junior Cody Maddux, who both hope the switch will better fit their athletic goals. Knorr transferred from Solon at the start of the 25-26 school year. Maddux transferred from Liberty in the middle of the 24-25 school year. Both Knorr and Maddux transferred well before their sports seasons arrived. Since they did this, the 90-day wait period did not affect them. Athletic director Jake Stenberg said, "If you don't move into the district then you have to wait 90 days until you are able to participate in a sport. If you have a reason such as bullying, harassment, divorce, etc. then you are able to participate right away. If you have a physical

residence in the district then you are immediately eligible as well. Basketball coach Kaleb Duwa said, "I agree with the rule, it should be looked at on an independent basis under certain circumstances, but as a general rule I don't mind." Stenberg said, "Personally, a problem I have with this rule is that private schools don't enforce the 90 day wait. If you transfer to a private school you are immediately eligible no matter what." Across the state, schools are seeing more students transferring for sports and activities. Knorr said, "I transferred because I was looking for a better fit for my baseball goals. I picked West Branch because my cousin went here, and I already had friends that I grew up with who transferred here. West Branch offered a baseball program that fit what I was looking for." Knorr made the decision based on

where he felt the strongest fit for his baseball career was. Knorr said that although West Branch's and Solon's academics are excellent, that didn't play a part in his decision. Knorr is already committed to play baseball at Eureka College. Knorr said, "Even though I am already committed, having a strong senior year is still important to me." Many students usually transferred due to challenges with classmates, staff or coaches. Knorr said, "Solon's baseball coaches helped me grow into the player I am today, and I'm thankful for the training they've provided me." Maddux said, "I switched to West Branch for basketball because I like the culture and the coaching staff. I watched them play at Tipton and reached out to Coach Duwa." Duwa said, "I showed him around when he came to visit. We

talked about basketball, the culture, and how the program is committed to developing its players." Maddux said, "I knew the culture was good after visiting." West Branch is often said to display a great culture and coaching staff by students who transfer. Duwa said, "A good coach depends on the standard they hold, and how good of teachers they are. Me personally, if I see you do something once, I'll expect you to do it again, but I'm not gonna expect you to do something you can't." As more and more students are switching schools for sports, it is important to understand the rules, so you are aware of what will happen, and how it could affect your season. WBHS welcomes Knorr and Maddux, and wishes them luck in their upcoming seasons.

SIMPSON BREAKS SCHOOL RECORD SCORING 35 POINTS IN ONE GAME

Kendra Rarick
Staff Writer

Senior Kennedy Simpson broke the WBHS girls' basketball record for most points scored in a game with 35 points in the Bears' first game of the season. Tuesday, November 25, 2025, the Bears played Iowa Valley and won 71 to 37. This sets the Bears up with a 3-1 record for conference play currently. The WBHS girls' basketball team is starting the season off with plans to make changes offensively and defensively. Coach Justin Liddle plans to run more zone defense as well as include his assistant coaches' perspectives on offense. Sixteen girls are out this season, and WBHS will have both JV and Varsity teams. "Some returning starters are Lexi Skay, Kennedy Simpson, and Ava Burnett," Liddle said. "Clancy Trepanier has really stepped up as a freshman, also." The WBHS girls' basketball team lost to Camanche 45 to 22 on Dec. 9. The Bears struggled to find their shot, only making 7/50 FG attempts. Lexi Skay scored six points, the most of the night. She also had 9 rebounds. On Dec. 8, the Bears beat Burlington Notre Dame 56 to 31. The Bears

started with an early lead ending the first quarter 16 to 9. The Bears had 17 steals and 41 rebounds. Skay led the rebounds with 14. Poe scored 14 points, the most of the game. On Dec. 6, the Bears won 59 to 35 against Easton Valley. Trepanier started off the game with a fast break, quickly followed by a 3-pointer by Emalyn Poe. By halftime, the Bears led 31 to 14. In the second half of the game the Bears scored an additional 28 points. Poe led the team in points scoring 14. Junior Ava Burnett and senior Lexi Skay each scored 13 points. Rebounds were led by Burnett with 14. Trepanier had three assists. Some big conference games include the Bears facing West Liberty on Dec. 19. The Bears also will face Tipton, Regina, and Wilton later in the season when students return from winter break. Tickets continue to be sold on Bound and WBHS continues to be cashless for payment.

Kennedy Simpson shoots a free throw against Burlington Notre Dame on Dec. 8. Photo by Ava Lacina



NEW HEAD COACH DUWA LEADS WBHS VARSITY BOYS BASKETBALL

Kendra Rarick
Staff Writer

Kaleb Duwa takes over the head coach position for the WBHS boys basketball team for the 2025-2026 season. Currently, the team is 1-1 for the season. Last year, Duwa coached as an assistant, working mostly with the junior varsity or JV team. This year, Duwa takes on the role of head coach for the varsity team. The boys' basketball team is hoping to improve defensively and push the pace more on offense. On Dec. 9, the Bears played Camanche Storm. The boys took a quick lead ending the first quarter 19-4. Ending the half, the Bears were up 31 to 11. This was a big win since West Branch has only won three times since 2014. On Dec 8, the Bears faced the Burlington Notre-Dame Nikes and lost 72-54. Lincoln Naber scored 14 points, the highest scoring player of the night. Naber also had 5 rebounds. The boys' basketball team won 66-45 against Easton Valley on Saturday, Dec 6. The score stayed close until the Bears started scoring more.

The Bears scored 15 points in the third quarter, bringing their total points to 48, while Easton Valley only scored 7, bringing them to 34 points. Brennen Dale scored 15 points and had 12 assists. Brandon Pederson scored 14 points for the Bears, and Jayden Harris scored 12 points. The Bears beat the River Hawks in rebounds, having 38 total throughout the game, 24 defensive and 14 offensive. There is a lot of talent returning to the boys' basketball team for this season. A total of 34 boys are out, meaning WBHS will play Fresh/Soph, JV, and Varsity teams this year. In an interview, Duwa stated, "Jayden Harris was a first-team all-conference player last season and is one of the best scoring guards in 2A. Brandon Pedersen had a breakout second half of the year and earned second-team all-conference honors. While those two get most of the media attention, Brennen Dale has been a two-year starter for us and has a great feel for what I want to do and how we want to play."

Coach Kaleb Duwa prepares to give players instructions. Photo by Halia Gade



LYNCH'S PLUMBING, INC.
Wayne & Steve Lynch, owners



Residential and Commercial
New construction - Remodels
Boilers - Waterheaters - Softeners
Licensed - Insured - Bonded

115 S. 2nd Street
West Branch, IA 52358
Office: 319-643-2022 Email: Lynchsplumbing@Lcom.net

Presidential Builders, LLC

Gabe Waters 319-631-1210

New Construction - Additions - Remodels - Siding
Roofing - Porches/Decks - Screening - Snow Removal



Sports

December 18, 2025

6



Larkin Brown eyes the pins and plans where to throw the bowling ball. Photo by Rose Nkumu

BROWN RANKS THIRD FOR TOTAL PINS KNOCKED DOWN IN CITY HIGH BOWLING SEASON

Cameron Waters
Staff Writer

Senior Larkin Brown bowls with City High and currently holds third place on the team this season with a total of 1311 pins knocked down so far.

Brown is going into her fourth year of varsity bowling, but she faced some major conflicts before the season started.

In June 2024 and Oct. 2024, she ended up having surgeries to get 2 ribs removed.

She said, "This impacted me by showing that I need to enjoy my sport and keep finding ways to love it. Because tomorrow isn't a promise for anything."

Bowling is a sport where individual players receive their own score. At the end of the competition, each player's score is added together for an overall team score and a team placement. This is similar to track where athletes run or participate in individual

events that are then all added together for a "team" sport.

City High practices at Colonial Lanes in Iowa City, working on drills and fun games for an hour and a half.

The City High bowling season started with a match at Cedar Rapids Xavier on Nov. 11. They ended the match with 2223 points as their team score but were close to Cedar Rapids Xavier's 2394 points score.

Nov. 21 City High hosted their first home meet of the season at Colonial Lanes. The City High bowling team scored a 2386.

Dec. 5, City High hosted Cedar Falls at Colonial Lanes in Iowa City. The Little Hawks lost with a close score of 2528-2546.

Brown came in a close third place with a total of 365 pins, three pins behind first place. The biggest award Brown earned is second place in the conference match and is hopeful she will be able to achieve this again.

BOWLING AT STATE: MY SPECIAL OLYMPICS POV

Connor Davidson
Staff Writer

I got 4th place out of 7 competitors in my division at the State Special Olympics Bowling Competition at the Cedar Rapids Bowling Center in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. It took place on Saturday, Nov. 22.

The Friday leading up to this was really cool. To start my day, I got up extra early because I got a shoutout on 103.7 WLLR, which is the country station in Davenport. Jodi Byrd, who is my coach, is a cousin of one of the personalities on WLLR. Everybody was in on this shoutout and Byrd sent it in. To end the day, everybody gathered in the Bear Den to send me off.

The Friday leading up to this was really cool. To start my day, I got up extra early because I got a shoutout on 103.7 WLLR, which is the country station in

Davenport.

It was pretty good considering that it was my first year doing the Special Olympics. My parents and brother were there to support me. My coaches, Byrd and Dawson Ryner, also came to support me. My teammates, Alex Moss and Kohry Curtis, attended as well. I had quite a crowd on that day.

Leading up to the competition, practice took place during lunch and 6th period at Colonial Lanes in Iowa City. I make sure that my arms get into shape and my posture is as good as possible. I've been working on making sure that my back doesn't bother me during competitions.



Connor Davidson watches the ball roll down the alley. Photo contributed by Heather Davidson



2 LOCATIONS!

200 Scott Ct.
Iowa City, IA
319-351-9303

1069 Hwy. 1 West
Iowa City, IA
319-351-9323

www.midtownfamily.com

YOUR VISION. OUR PASSION.

 **QUILT SHOPPE**
Cotton Creek MILL

WWW.COTTONCREEKMILL.COM



Shop with us **ONLINE!**

3000+ BOLTS OF FABRIC • CLASSES • FREE OPEN SEW
GIFTS • BOOKS • NOTIONS • PATTERNS • KITS
BLOCK OF THE MONTHS • SEW ALONGS • SEW RETREATS

113 W. MAIN STREET • WEST BRANCH, IA 52358
www.CottonCreekMill.com

319.643.3554

HOURS: TUESDAY - FRIDAY 10 - 5 PM • SATURDAY 10 - 2 PM



Sponsors



December 18, 2025



• Auto Repair • Tires • Custom Accessories

319-643-2509

West Branch, IA

**JACK & JILL
GROCERY
STORE**

115 E Main St
West Branch, IA
319-643-2611



**FAMILY PET
VETERINARY**

West Branch, IA • 319-643-3555

THE GROOM STATION



Where you can feel at home.

(319) 643-5099
(563) 886-4546

Groomstation@aol.com

620 Division St.
West Branch, IA 52358

info@familypetveterinary.com

WBR

WEST BRANCH ROOFING

GO BEARS!

(319) 643-2435

westbranchroofing@gmail.com

PO Box 100
West Branch, IA 52358



Sponsors

December 18, 2025

8

For the connections
that matter most...

THERE'S LIBERTY



INTERNET

Get the speed you need to download music, stream 4k, play online games and more! With fast, reliable speeds up to a Gig, Liberty Communications is proud to be your local internet provider.

DOWNLOAD / UPLOAD SPEED	YOUR PRICE
1Gbps / 500Mbps	\$149.95
500Mbps / 500Mbps	\$99.95
250Mbps / 125Mbps	\$79.95
100Mbps / 50Mbps	\$59.95



MANAGED WIFI \$8.95

With Liberty's Managed WiFi service, our friendly technicians are here to optimize your WiFi experience. They will:

- Provide a premium WiFi router
- Set up your network
- Troubleshoot for you
- Ensure your WiFi is up and running

Expand your wireless coverage with a wireless extender for just **\$3.95/month**



PHONE \$29.95

Clear connections and no dropped calls mean you can keep in touch with loved ones and manage your busy lives.

Included FREE with your package:

- Unlimited Nationwide Calling to the 48 Contiguous United States
- Caller ID
- Call Waiting and Call Waiting ID
- Call Forwarding
- 3-Way Calling
- Speed Dial

DIRECTV



TELEVISION

Watch what you want, when you want with a DIRECTV Device, developed exclusively for DIRECTV. Enjoy our complete entertainment experience:

- Unlimited hours of Cloud DVR
- Stream your favorite shows anywhere in your home
- A package designed just for you
- Easy set up

CONTACT US TO LEARN MORE!

Liberty
communications

[in](#) [f](#) [@](#) libertycommunications.com | 319.627.2145

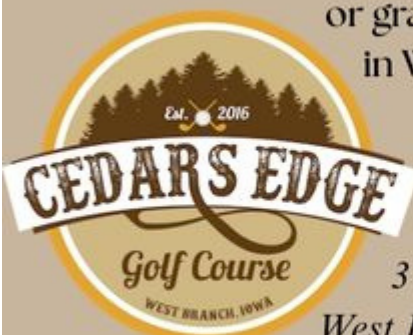
413 North Calhoun, West Liberty, IA 52776 | 117 1st St, West Branch IA 52358

THE
ENCOUNTER
CAFÉ



Open Monday - Saturday
7:00 - 2:30
Closed Sunday

376 Clinton Street, Iowa City, IA
(319)-530-9285
encountercafe2017@gmail.com
www.theencountercafe.com



Enjoy a round of golf
or grab a bite to eat
in West Branch!

3 Ember Lane
West Branch, IA 52358

(319) 643-3343



(319) 643-3287

FIDELITY
BANK & TRUST
www.bankfidelity.bank
Member FDIC

**MAIN
STREET
Sweets**

104-1/2 E. Main St.
319-643-5001
www.mainstreetsweetswb.com

Open Year round!
Serving Sandwiches, appetizers, soft serve ice cream, slushies,
and hot & cold drinks!
Hot plate lunches served Friday
Homemade Pie every Thursday!



Student Interest



December 18, 2025

THE WONDERFUL WITCH OF OZ: WICKED FOR GOOD REVIEW

Wyatt Chapman
Writing Editor

I am going to preface this with a SPOILER WARNING! So if you don't want any spoilers, don't read this story until after you've watched the movie.

Now getting into "Wicked: For Good", I am absolutely obsessulated with the movie. I liked it significantly more than the first movie.

"Wicked: For Good: introduces a huge mood shift within the world of Oz because in "Wicked", Elphaba is seen as the outcast until Galina (Now Glinda) realizes that Elphaba is just another person, despite her being green. In "For Good", which takes place four years after the first movie, Elphaba is now the Wicked Witch and all of Oz is out to get her and Cynthia Erivo & Ariana Grande played their parts perfectly for this mood shift.

In my opinion, Ariana Grande beats Kristin Chenoweth by a long shot. I do look at the Broadway performance and the movie as two separate forms of media. Erivo did great, but no one can play Elphaba the same way Idina Menzel plays her. Jonathan Bailey as Fiyero was amazing casting and Ethan Slater played an incredible Tin Man. Jeff Goldblum plays the role of the Wizard the best.

"Wicked" Director Jon M. Chu wrote two original songs for "Wicked: For Good", "Girl in the Bubble", a song about how Glinda feels about

the whole situation with all of Oz out to get her best friend and her being the face of good.

The second act of the Broadway musical was missing the reason why Glinda switched sides and having this song was such a perfect fit. He also wrote "No Place Like Home," a song sung by Elphaba as animals are fleeing Oz to escape capture, not as good as "Girl in the Bubble" but it was still really pretty.

"No Place Like Home" is an incredible nod to "The Wizard of Oz" when Dorothy returns to Kansas. Besides that the song is about how Elphaba gave up her goodness to the public eye to actually do good in Oz. This song was used to show Elphaba's love for Oz and how cruel it's being to her.

Costume designs were amazing, Glinda's many pink outfits even her wedding dress was beautiful. All of her outfits fit Ariana so well, she was such a perfect fit for Glinda. Elphaba wore pretty much the same thing throughout the whole movie so her costumes weren't super breathtaking, aside from the hours of costuming that went into Elphaba.

Set design, chefs kiss, stunning, absolutely marvelous, everything on the set was built by hand and everything fully works with no CGI for the set anywhere. Aside from the obvious things like the monkeys.

The only downside is I wished there were more scenes with Dorothy... more specifically I wanted the field of poppies which is my

favorite scene from "The Wizard of Oz."

Watching everything come to life on the screen was wonderful. There were definitely restrictions when it came to filming but they had so much more room than what they would've had on a stage for a Broadway musical.

Glinda told Morrible and the Wizard to target Elphaba's sister because she is her weak spot. Which is after Elphaba crashes Glinda's wedding by releasing the animals that the Wizard captured and Fiyero does end up running off with Elphaba because he's actually in love with her rather than Glinda, and with that we get Glinda's version of "Not That Girl", Which I like better than Elphaba's from the first movie.

Afterwards is where Glinda sings "Girl in the Bubble" and when Elphaba sends her monkeys to kidnap Dorothy. After "Girl in the Bubble" is finished Glinda flees the Emerald City to go to Elphaba's castle using Fiyero's horse, which is who is running from the castle at the beginning of "Wicked" after I watched Glinda run from the Emerald City everything started to fall into place.

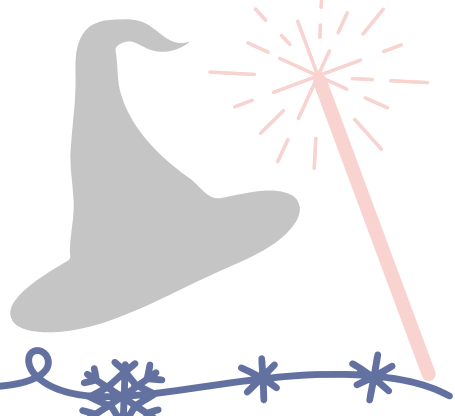
Glinda shows up to Elphaba's castle as she is putting Dorothy in the basement and they sing For Good together, which is such a powerful song, I did cry during it.

Nothing could've prepared me to see Glinda in her pink ballgown and walking up the stairs of that tower at

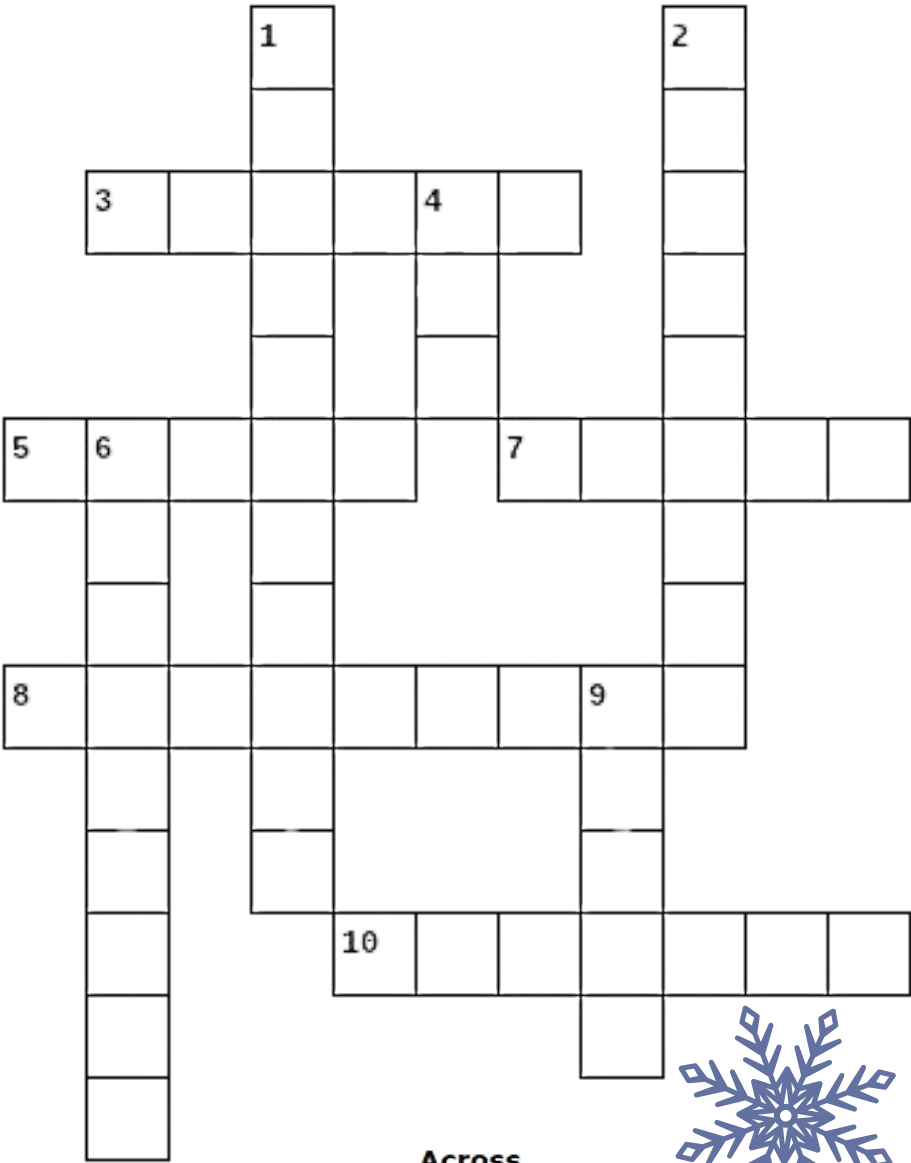
the end of the movie. It was just such a cinematic moment and such a heart wrenching but beautiful way to end the movie and I adored it so much. It is sad to think that Glinda will never know that Elphaba is still alive but that's just how things have to end sometimes.

A fun fact that I learned about Elphaba is the origin of her name, the author of The Wizard of Oz is named L. Frank Baum. Gregory Maguire the author of Wicked realized that the wicked witch didn't have a name so he took the L, F, and B of L. Frank Baum and turned it into Elphaba's name.

Another fun fact, this one about the yellow brick road, the yellow brick road is another thing that is copyrighted by the creators of "The Wizard of Oz," except there's a loophole. The part that is copyrighted is the start of the yellow brick road like the point that is in "The Wizard of Oz" where it splits between the yellow and red brick roads. In "Wicked: For Good" it is seen that the yellow brick road doesn't have a start. It's just a giant yellow circle.



WINTER CROSSWORD



Across

- 3. The season that brings snow and ice
- 5. A garment people wear on their neck to keep warm
- 7. The ___ express
- 8. Bundle up near this warm object
- 10. The misfit reindeer

Down

- 1. Common cookie used for building houses
- 2. Something people catch on their tongue
- 4. Santa's helpers
- 6. Holiday celebrated on Dec. 25
- 9. Hot drink people consume to warm up

Answers:
Across: 1. Gingerbread, 2. snowflake, 4. elf, 6. Christmas, 9. cocoa
Down: 1. Winter, 3. scarf, 5. Polar, 7. Polar, 8. Fireplace, 10. Rudolph

ATRIUM VILLAGE

HILLS, IOWA 52235

Committed to Caring since 1981

Independent Living

WAITLIST Available

Care Center

Semi-Private Female Room
Semi-Private Male Room
Private Suite

Give us a call at 319-679-2224 or check out our website:
atriumvillagehills.com, Facebook Page (Atrium Village Hills) or in-person at Atrium Village,
117 S. Third Street, Hills, Iowa 52235

COMIC CORNER "TO BUILD A HUMAN"

knowing its Huming!

Can We build a human?

Best Christmas Ever



Student Life

December 18, 2025



SNAP: WHAT DOES IT PROVIDE OUR COMMUNITY?

Ava Lacina
Staff Writer

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) supplies impoverished families with assistance on food budgets so they can afford healthy meals while also encouraging healthy lifestyles and eating habits.

SNAP allows families to buy any foods commonly found in the home, including: fruits and vegetables, meat, dairy, whole grains, general snacks, and seeds/plants. However, it will not assist in the purchase of alcoholic beverages or any form of drug use, nor can it buy non-consumable items.

SNAP requires a person to apply in order to receive benefits, and the process varies by state. The state of Iowa allows applications online, on paper, or by phone call.

This program instructs that an applicant must meet certain eligibility requirements, varying from citizenship to payments made in advance under law. An applicant must be a United States citizen and a resident of the state they are applying from.

West Branch schools have a program in which SNAP is directly connected to free or reduced lunch (FRL)

benefits. The two programs are connected because the income requirements for FRL are tied to the Human Health Services (HHS) website, which SNAP is applied for on.

In addition, children who attend school in the WBCSD who receive SNAP assistance are automatically eligible for FRL. Furthermore, in general, it is likely that a child who qualifies for FRL would be approved for SNAP as well.

As of Oct. 2025, there are 811 people in Cedar County using SNAP, and Johnson County has about 9,639 participants. In total the state of Iowa has approximately 267,876 recipients.

In 2024, Iowa had 259,000 SNAP users per month, which is roughly 8% of the state's population, and in 2022, the state had an estimated number of 274,333 beneficiaries.

During the longest federal government shutdown ever recorded in American history (43 days), West Branch's local food pantry saw a substantial increase in demand—13%, to be precise, according to West Branch Times writer Gregory Norfleet.

The shutdown forced food welfare payments to stop. The pantry regularly assists about 35

families per week, a number which rose to 40 during the shutdown.

Iowa Senator Chuck Grassley expressed his surprise at the amount of calls he received of people panicking at the loss of payments. However, many people donated, helping the pantry's stock remain flourishing.

There are resource and income limits as well, depending on the state. The home's income must be at or below the poverty line. Iowa's laws say the applicant must have a maximum of \$3,000 in bank-related assets—unless a disabled person resides with said applicant, then the limit is increased to \$4,500.

Elderly and disabled people are more likely to be eligible for SNAP benefits. A person is deemed elderly if they are above the age of 60.

Someone is disabled if they meet any one of these requirements: receives payments under the Social Security Act, Supplemental Security Income, retirement benefits from SSI, Railroad Retirement Act, or Medicare.

You may also be a veteran in need of medical aid, along with being the spouse of child of a deceased veteran in which you receive

VA benefits.

A non-disabled person is still suitable for receiving SNAP payments regardless of if they own a home/lot, receive annuity from TANF welfare, or gain retirement benefits.

Once an applicant is deemed eligible, they will be told the duration they will receive financial aid. SNAP transfers money to its users via an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card, which is used like a debit card.

In 2013, a spike of 420,300 occurred due to poor economic conditions. This includes that benefit cuts were enacted due to the expiration of the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). This caused a notable decline in monthly benefit resources available to many SNAP households.

Iowans suffered a significant impact, as the final benefit cut was around \$43 million, affecting nearly 421,000 SNAP users.

As the festive season drew nearer, pantries in Iowa encountered an increasing demand because, after the cuts were enacted, it was difficult to sustain a family with short amounts of money and little assistance in buying groceries.

VOS ORGANIZES VOTER REGISTRATION DRIVE AT WBHS

Raelyn Wilcher
Staff Writer

Social Studies teacher Colby Vos helped supervise a voter registration drive in the WBHS library to encourage seniors and students who are old enough to register to vote.

Given the opportunity through student government, Freshmen Ava Lacina, Gavin LeMay, and Harper Jeffries helped work at the registration table throughout the school day.

Students who did not register online could register to vote at the school, with a total of 27 students registering there.

Vos said, "There are a handful of others that have already registered online.

There will be another drive next semester with a goal of trying to get the entire senior class to register and vote."

To be eligible to register to vote, students must be 18 years old by the next election and a US citizen.

Hosting an event like this can be a lot and takes careful planning. A challenge included trying to find a day that worked with all students' schedules. Most seniors have PART, which allows them to leave early.

"A lot of students not having what they needed, like their license, was a challenge to get students registered," said Jeffries.

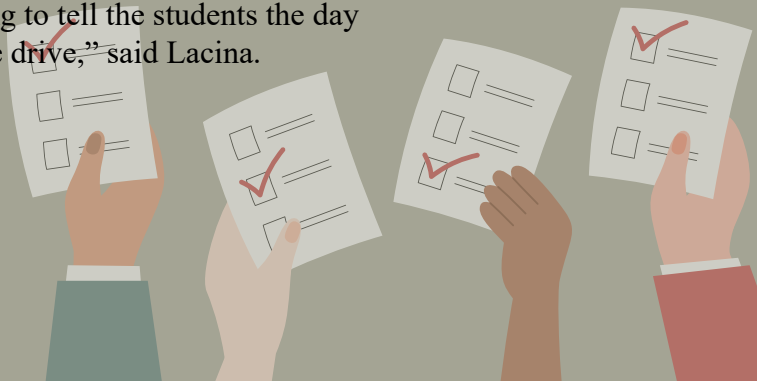
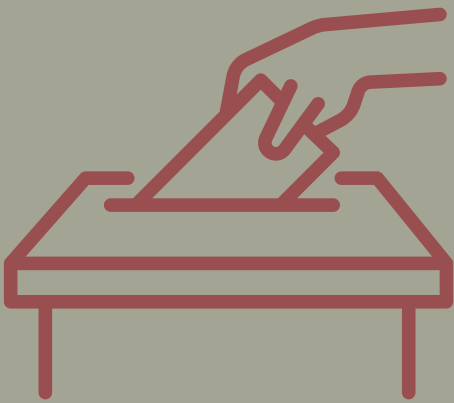
LeMay said, "Mr. Vos helped us partly, he gave us the outline and we told him what we needed

from him."

Vos walked the student volunteers through the process of voting, but gave them free rein to run the event as they saw fit.

There will be another voter registration drive later in the school year before the election.

"Hoping next time around, that there is more advertisement so it is known that it is happening around the school, instead of the teachers having to tell the students the day of the drive," said Lacina.



BARNHART'S

CUSTOM SERVICES

WEST BRANCH, IA
319-643-7230

412 E. Main St
West Branch

North Dodge

HuVee

Fresh. Fast. Friendly.

Right Here in Your Neighborhood.



GREEN COUNSELING SERVICES JOINS WITH WBHS TO OFFER THERAPY & MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Evan Highly
Design Editor

At the beginning of the school year, WBHS partnered with Green Counseling Services due to the past school therapist leaving. During school hours, provided you meet all the requirements, students can partake in in-school therapy.

Originally, WBHS received therapy through Family’s Inc, a therapy group in West Branch. Due to the therapist leaving, and Family’s Inc. not being able to find another therapist for the school, WBHS partnered with Care Solace. Although Care Solace was a great option for therapy, it was all online or required a parent/guardian to drive the student all the way to the therapy location. The partnership with Green Counseling Services benefits the students by coming in person rather than the students having to leave the school building.

WBHS counselor, Miranda

Schwickerath, said, “Therapy is something that is highly sought out by our students, and we as a school were reaching out to find someone to have access to our school.”

The partnership between the school and Green Counseling Services is separate from WBHS, which allows a licensed therapist to enter the school.

As of now, Green Counseling Services is receiving a great deal of traction. WBHS is currently seeking another therapist who could come in on additional days due to slots being already full. The more people that need it, the more therapists WBHS will get.

To see a therapist at the school, students must have insurance and be referred by a counselor. Once referred by a counselor, the school contacts parents/guardians for consent for their child to go to therapy and to continue the sign up process.

Currently, mental health issues for students continue to rise. The persistent feeling of sadness and

hopelessness found in students sat at 40 percent according to the Centers for Disease Control or CDC. In other words, four out of ten students.

From 2013 to 2023, students with feelings of sadness and hopelessness jumped; female students started at 39 percent, and jumped to 53 percent while male students went from 21 percent to 28 percent. Along with this, two out of ten students reported having thoughts of suicide, and one out of ten students reported attempting.

Schwickerath said, “I think it’s really important, it was really difficult when we went from having a school-based therapist to not having a school-based therapist because there are people with needs that are more than Ms. Boles, Mr. Larson, and I can handle within our scope of practice and school day. I think it’s a really great resource for us to have, and students to have access to.”

An optional survey about stress levels sent out by newspaper staff showed many WBHS students felt

high levels of stress. The majority of the student body chose a high level of stress, whilst very few picked low stress.

Options six, seven, and eight combined, accumulated to nearly over 50 percent of what the students chose.

Additionally, students could choose who they confided in or turned to most when faced with stress. The options given included themselves, parent/guardian, an adult that does not live with them, sibling, and friend or peer. The top two options, with 41 selections each, included themselves and a friend or peer.

Therapy can be used as a tool to help treat student mental health and overall emotional well-being.

WBHS students now have more options for therapy and mental health help due to the team up with Green Counseling Services.

If students are struggling with mental health concerns, they should reach out to Ms. S for more information.

GOING AGAINST THE GRAIN: SCHOOL LUNCHES REVOLUTIONIZE STUDENT HEALTH

Cassie Swisher
Photography Editor

Schools across the country are facing rapid changes in lunch programs to align with the USDA’s, the US Dept. of Agriculture’s efforts to address health issues in America. WBHS’s own school nutrition program fights to stay caught up in health requirements for students.

Nutrition standards in public schools are set in place by the USDA, which is a living, breathing document. Amendments are made regularly as the definition of healthy food in America evolves to meet student needs.

The main categories regulated by the USDA include grain, sodium, added sugars, and dairy. For example, in 2015, sodium limits set by the USDA were required to fall under 1230mg daily. The updates to the nutrition standards in 2025 to be implemented by 2027 require sodium quantities to fall under 1080mg.

USDA guidelines often fluctuate between measuring by quantity and quality, covering multiple angles in student health.

As their primary initiative in the last few years, the USDA began to shift grain intake in schools.

Grain standards 10 years ago primarily focused on quantity, whereas in 2025, that focus shifted to quality. Grains are now required to be whole grains rather than refined grains.

Refined grains in food tend to hold longer shelf lives and less-heavy in nutrients, while whole grains last shorter amounts of time but are denser in fiber and minerals. This switch reduces reliance on processed foods, a leading cause of obesity.

In a study conducted by the CDC,

1 in 5 adolescents is considered obese. Across the country, this means that 19.7% of children are affected. In direct correlation, the USDA is making strides to reduce this number by pushing quality over quantity in school lunches.

WBHS students face individual health concerns affected by school lunch as well.

Principal Sara Oswald said, “Nurse Tracy takes a big lead on that because if a student has a significant issue and they’re not able to manage it on their own, then she writes an individual health plan that discusses their diagnosis.”

With the standards set by the USDA, public schools in America are expected to implement changes within a certain time frame.

If schools fail to meet these standards, such as substituting refined grains for whole grains, they could lose funding.

Oswald said, “What a student pays for lunch doesn’t cover the actual groceries for that lunch because we get governmental assistance.”

School lunches are financially supported by the government to promote healthier choices for students in schools.

Another amendment made to USDA standards includes schools supporting local businesses and farmers by purchasing from them.

In public schools, the administration puts out bids at the beginning of each school year for companies to buy to supply food to them.

As of the 2025-2026 school year, WBHS doesn’t purchase from any local businesses or farmers. This could be a mutually beneficial move in the local community when schools receive unprocessed, fresher food, and local businesses or farmers get regular business.

Hours:

Mon-Fri (11-8)

Sat & Sun(11-10)

503 Westbury Dr, Ste 1, Iowa City, IA 52245



management@blackstone-ic.com

319-338-1770

Amanda Budreau

OWNER//PLANNER

✉ dragonflyevents.amanda@gmail.com

📷 @dragonfly__events

📍 dragonfly wedding & event planner





Academics

December 18, 2025

12

STATE PERFORMANCE PROFILE RANKS WBHS AS “COMMENDABLE”

Raelyn Wilcher
Staff Writer

West Branch High School currently measures at 65.35% performance rate for Iowa schools, on the Iowa School Performance Profile.

This score means that WBHS is "commendable" in its overall performance for point categories such as attendance, graduation rate, students proficient in mathematics, and students proficient in language arts, ect.

The Iowa Department of Education runs the Iowa School Performance site for schools to see how they are doing as well as see where they fall as a school state-wide.

The website is required to be updated by state and federal law to help track what schools might need extra assistance or help based on their overall performance.

One factor for the performance profile is enrollment. The total enrollment number at WBHS currently is 273, not counting foreign exchange students and homeschooled students.

“We had 8 new students join WBHS second semester last year and 11 so far this fall so a total of 19 since Jan 1, 2025,” said Principal Sara Oswald.

Another factor in this score, is participation in all assessment subjects such as ISASP, or Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress. This includes science, mathematics, English, and Language Arts. Combining those

four-year and five-year students. WBHS’s percentage of students that graduate is at 90.91% in four years, and 95.24% in five.

Typically, WBHS tends to hover right above the line of being commendable and being

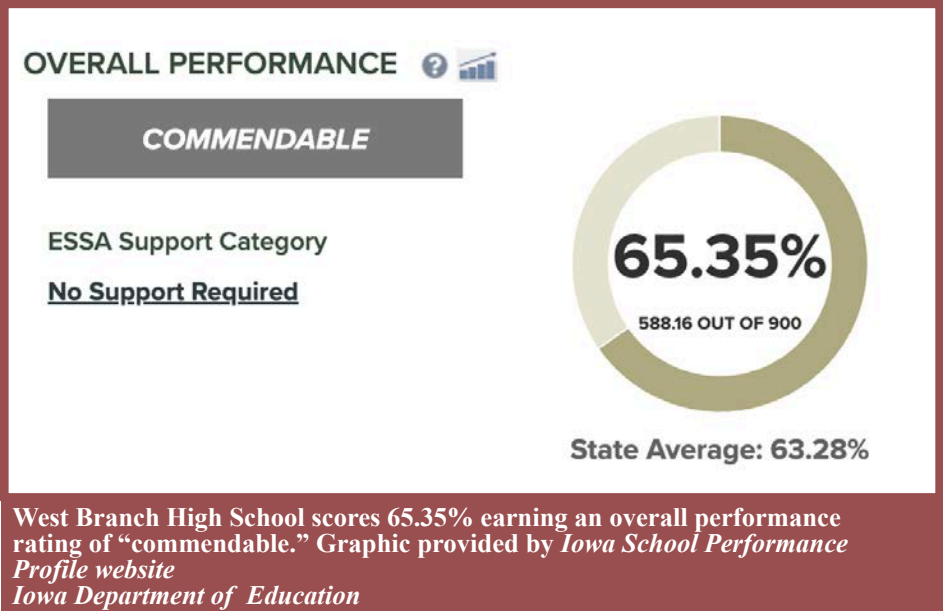
currently lower than Oswald would hope.

More than a handful of students are absent for more than ten days a year for any reason. WBHS falls below of the state average for attendance growth with a rating of 2.77%. WBHS also scored 18.79% for chronic absenteeism, higher than the state average of 15.81%.

In the 2024-2025 school year, if a student attended school for one or two periods, it would count for a whole day. This year, after 10 unexcused absences, a letter is sent home and followed up with a parent meeting. If attendance does not improve, parents are served with a truancy notice. Truancy is when a student is absent or late 10 days altogether without a valid excuse. The parents could then be required to attend a court hearing in the hopes of addressing the students attendance.

Oswald said, “The main purpose a child is enrolled in school is to become educated. By not attending regularly, skills are lost.”

While WBHS scored above the state average for overall performance, Oswald hopes to improve school performance for next year, by focusing on attendance and overall academics.



scores puts WBHS at an above average score for testing participation. WBHS students sit at 78.54% proficient in language arts, 66.34% proficient in mathematics, and 74.35% proficient in science. Both language arts and science percentages are above the state average.

Graduation rates, another overall performance factor, at WBHS are higher than the state average for

acceptable.

Oswald said, “I hope to maintain commendable status or get higher for the next academic year.”

One way to maintain the commendable status or rise to a higher one would be increasing the number of students who choose to do internships and job shadows. WBHS could also improve ISASP scores.

Attendance is also an area that could be improved, which is

AI AT WBHS: OPINIONS, PURPOSES, AND STATISTICS

Chloe Kleinmeyer
Staff Writer

WBHS teachers are currently seeing a rise in AI-generated work on assignments. Educators strive to teach students about properly using AI in school.

Schools often face the issue of students using AI on assignments. AI, which stands for artificial intelligence, is an easy-to-use program that can come up with text in just a few clicks. Students use AI because it is a quick way to finish an essay or assignment. But for teachers, this takes away the purpose of giving the assignment. Teachers want students to use their own knowledge, rather than generated information that anyone can access.

Students and staff at WBHS received an optional survey. The survey asked about opinions on AI, and how often they used it.

According to the collected responses, 42.1% of responders said they use it once in a while, and 13.2% said they use it all the time. The rest of the answers stated that they never use it. This suggests that around 50% of students and staff use Artificial Intelligence in a school setting.

English teachers Kara Heick and Rex Connor were interviewed on their perspectives of AI in their classrooms.

Heick teaches English 9, and shared her overall opinion about AI. She said, “it’s not a bad tool,” but she “wants to help students use it effectively instead of as a replacement.”

Heick thinks AI can be a useful tool, but only when you know what you’re looking for. She believes AI is hard to use when you are not able to search for exactly what you need. There is currently a policy on AI in her classroom, and it entails that using AI on an assignment counts as academic dishonesty.

Heick also does not allow students to copy and paste any information from outside sources and claim it as their own without citing where it came from.

Connor’s approach is a bit different when it comes to AI in his classroom.

“AI kinda scares me,” Connor said during his interview. He also stated that he is not very familiar with AI as a whole. Knowing the state of the academic system, he will need to learn to use it to help students. Connor does not allow

any of his students to use AI on their assignments, as he is not accustomed with the program. While he does not have a strict policy on AI usage, he still does not allow it in his classroom.

Connor’s rule is: if a student decides to submit AI-generated work, they will need to redo the assignment as a whole.

Along with interviewing English teachers throughout the High School, Principals Sara Oswald and Brian Walthart were asked about artificial intelligence usage at school.

Oswald, the principal of West Branch High School, reminds students that there is in fact a policy on AI in the Student Handbook. The policy states that the school does not allow “submitting AI generated work that does not present your own ideas”.

Therefore, students should not submit any work that is not their own on an assignment of any type, as this goes against the rules in the school-wide handbook.

Oswald also says that she knows how much AI is going to continue to grow in our day-to-day lives. This means that students need to be aware of when it is appropriate and inappropriate to

use the program. Students will eventually need to be able to come up with their own ideas, and Oswald hopes to be able to prepare them for that.

In the middle school, the handbook also has a section on AI usage. According to Brian Walthart, the principal of West Branch Middle School, the section is slightly vague. It falls under the category of plagiarism and cheating, and it is very similar to the rules implemented in the high school. Walthart says he hopes to eventually go in and revise some of the guidelines so that they are up to date. Walthart believes that in the world, there are always tools that adults should be familiar with.

On a schoolwide level, staff should be educated to the point where they can enlighten students on proper usage. Walthart says he knows “it’s not going anywhere,” so students and staff both need to be familiar with it.

AI is a tool that people need to be familiar with, but should not be used as a way to cheat or used as any form of academic dishonesty. Teachers and administrators want students to learn how to use AI in a proper way that does not harm their learning experience.

KIRKWOOD OFFERS INTERNSHIPS AND JOB SHADOWS TO WBHS STUDENTS

Sydney Nash
Staff Writer

Every quarter, WBHS offers three different windows of time where students can sign up for different job shadow/internships opportunities. Students can sign up once per time stamp. Each window is open for two weeks, and the three different windows are in Sept, Nov, and Jan. The three different stamps are in the same months.

“It opened my eyes to other types of surgeons and not just the one I was set on, it also put into perspective how much work you would have to put in

becoming a doctor.” said Halia Gade.

She expressed that experiencing a job shadow made her more open to different opportunities in her future.

When they attend different job shadows/internships, students get more personal outlooks of what their possible future could be like.

Dec. 15, 2025 through Feb. 6, 2026 is the next window students can sign up for an internship.

Students must be in at least tenth grade to attend a job shadow and at least eleventh grade to do an internship.

The sign-up process includes going online to WorkPlace

Learning Connections, which is a program through Kirkwood Community College.

Each sign-up window has different career options for students to attend and participate in. These include agriculture, food and natural resources, applied sciences, technology, engineering and manufacturing, business, finance, marketing and management, health sciences, human services, and information solutions.

To learn more about these topics, students can find the information on the Kirkwood Community College website and search for job shadows.

Another way to get information is to set up a meeting to speak with business teacher Lennis Hasenbank, or counselor Miranda Schwickerath.

