



THE

BEAR

Student Newspaper

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

ON YOUR MARK, GET SET FOR THE 2026 WBHS TRACK SEASON

Ava Lacina & Karlee Hansen
Staff Writers

On Feb. 23, the WBHS girls' and boys' 2026 track & field season commenced. The 2025 season ended on a triumphant note with records 130-68 for girls and 188-69 for boys, along with state performances of returning members Grace Hamann, Rena Holmes, Addi Schultes, Lexi Skay, Nolan Staker, Lincoln Naber, Cooper Gates, Keaton Gates, Connor Capper, Xavyer Boone, Ty Stout, and Brandon Pedersen—the 2025 first place winner of the 2A boys 100m at the state championship meet with a time of 10.73.

For the 2026 season the boys competed at nine meets as of early April, placing first at the RVC Indoor Conference Meet with 48 points. Multiple athletes placed in the top three, including Pedersen in the 200m dash, the 4x200m relay, the 4x400m relay, and the 1600 DMR with times of 23.52, 1:34.97, 3:36.79, and 3:56.60.

The girls participated in ten meets as of early April, placing ninth at the RVC Indoor Conference Meet with 22 points. Hamaan scored in the top three in the 400m dash and the 800m dash with times of 1:01.74 and 2:21.20. The girls' 4x800m team came in third with 10:55.75.

This current season saw a substantial increase in track athletes compared to last year. The boys' roster this year consists of 41 athletes, a huge improvement from the 32 students who went out the previous year. As for the girls' team, 35 will participate in the 2026 season, up from 31 last year. Grant Meth, an assistant



Brandon Pedersen pushes through the rain at the Chad Gates Co-Ed Invite on Thursday April 9.
Photo contributed by Olivia Thomas.

coach for the boys' team, already knows his goals for the season ahead.

Meth said, "I want to win conference, qualify for state, and place."

"I feel really good about how the season has started," said Naber, a senior varsity runner, "My times are where they were at the end of last year."

The girls' team added 18 new members to their roster this year, 14 of whom are freshmen.

Hamann hopes to attend state once again.

"I plan to work hard in every event that I get to run and do my best to make improvements," said Hamann, "My goals for after the season is to have a strong mentality about being a leader on the team and helping others to also make large improvements."

Team captain, Skay said, "Training hard, staying consistent, and pushing myself to become comfortable with being uncomfortable [are my goals]."

"I've learned a lot about myself, including which race strategies work best for me and how to properly fuel my body. In my earlier years, I ran a lot of relays, which limited my opportunities in open events," Skay said, "As I've gotten older, I've had more chances to compete in open races and not put so much pressure on myself, which has helped me start to overcome my pre-race nerves."

"I want girls to feel a belief in themselves and know they are capable of doing hard things," said the girls' head coach, Tony Senio. "I want them to leave the season not afraid and put themselves in situations that are tough."

NATIONWIDE GAS PRICES FIND A YEAR-ROUND HIGH

Cassie Swisher
Staff Writer

Over the last three months, gas prices nationwide jumped from an average of \$2.70 per gallon at the start of the year to \$3.90 per gallon at the end of March. The results from the increase created catastrophic consequences as 77% of American individuals and households fall into the lower tax brackets with a minimal yearly income.

Gas prices increasing globally can be traced back to the stress of oil, as America recently entered into a high-intensity conflict with Iran. Missile and drone attacks against the U.S. became a result of this.

Americans previously struggling to make ends meet reported skipping meals to stretch totals like \$30 across a week, food-wise.

Many of these Americans also reported their fervent disinterest in starting a war overseas.

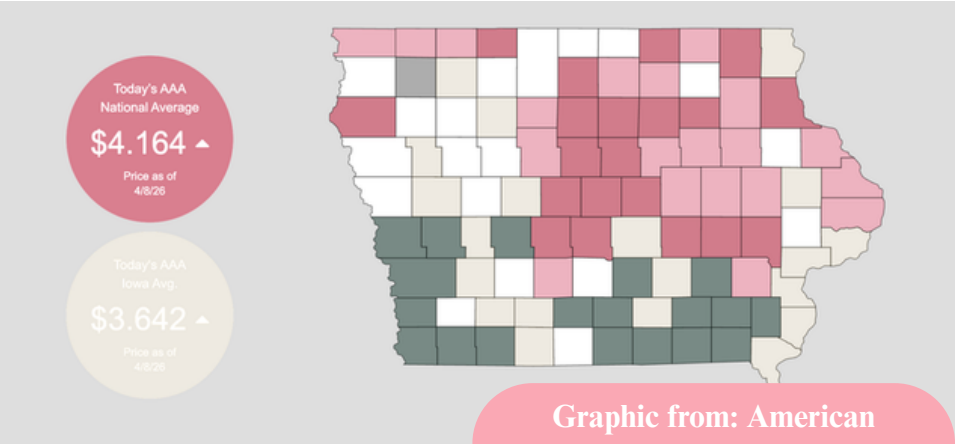
Fear of being involved in the conflict while simultaneously handling increasing financial pressures is at the forefront of American thoughts.

In Iowa, February gas prices averaged around \$2.60 per gallon. The final weeks of March showed an average inflation of \$3.30 per gallon statewide.

With a majority of high schoolers providing their own transportation to and from school every day by car, increased gas prices also affect WBHS students.

A poll sent out to WBHS students revealed that, per trip to refill gas, 42.2% of students saw a \$10-20 increase on top of what they were already paying. 15.6% saw a \$20-30 increase, 17.8% saw a \$30-40 increase, 8.9% saw a \$40-50 increase, and 15.6% saw an over \$50 increase.

The poll also showed that for students refilling their gas weekly, expenses can add up to a minimum of \$50 more on transportation a month. \$50 that is being taken



Graphic from: American Automobile Association (AAA)

away from social outings with friends or multiple meals. For students commuting to Kirkwood Academies every day, mileage can add up for the means to access education.

Students involved in athletics at WBHS by default deal with limited hours to work, which often causes an ultimatum of participating in a sport or having accessible income to spend on gas and transportation.

Gas prices can be driven up for a multitude of reasons. With the oil industry as the leading energy

supply globally, when conflicts arise requiring the usage of aircraft, more oil is needed to fuel them. This creates a greater demand for that resource, which, in turn, has a rippling effect on the rest of the world's transportation.

When the cost to transport supplies like food, construction utilities, or cosmetics around the nation increases, the price to purchase them individually will rise as well to make up for that newly created gap.



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THEBEARSTUDENTNEWS



ROCHA SIGNED OFF TO WALDORF COLLEGE

Cameron Waters
Staff Writer

Addy Rocha decided to sign for soccer at Waldorf College on March 23, 2026. Rocha chose Waldorf to go to college where her older brother also attends school.

When visiting Waldorf, the welcoming and kind atmosphere of the school helped her decide to select it as the school for her.

Her brother attending the school also helped make the decision.

Rocha felt nervous but excited when she found out about being scouted to play at college.

She knew committing to a

college sport means being ready for hard work, long practices, and competition.

"Make sure you like the school itself, not just the team," said Rocha.

Playing the sport since she was little, Rocha stopped for a while in middle school due to no teams. Then, started back up in high school and played all four years. She's faced challenges through her years. Balancing school work, and long practices, with a job on top was the hardest part for her doing sports in high school.

She said, "My favorite memory is always the bus ride on the way back from soccer games."



Addy Rocha signing off to Waldorf college.
Photo contributed by Addy Rocha

KAALBERG COMMITTED TO ST. AMBROSE



Briley Kaalberg signing off to St. Ambrose.
Photo contributed by Briley Kaalberg

Maycie Hughes
Staff Writer



and competitive during matches but Kaalberg uses strategies to deal with this.

Senior, Briley Kaalberg, committed to St. Ambrose University to play volleyball on March 23, 2026.

Kaalberg played the middle blocker position during her time with West Branch volleyball.

Kaalberg said, "[St. Ambrose] provided the perfect classes for me to study what I want. I also really like the volleyball coaches' values in the game".

"When I visited the campus and got to know it more and fell in love", said Kaalberg.

Volleyball can become stressful

Kaalberg states, "My goals for college volleyball are to grow and just have fun. I know I have so much more potential and that the coaching staff at St. Ambrose is capable of helping me meet my full potential. But I also want to enjoy it because it really isn't that serious. I think that taking sports or things you enjoy too seriously can ruin the fun".

Kaalberg knows college will be more competitive, but she is excited to see where her volleyball career will take her for the next few years.

WBHS SOCCER TEAMS FACE CHANGES IN COACHING

Raelyn Wilcher
Staff Writer



WBHS starts both the girls' and boys' soccer seasons off with new coaches.

Jose Gongora will be the boys' soccer coach this year. In previous years, Gongora coached the girls' team alongside Becky Hosier.

Anthony Cappel will coach the WBHS girls' soccer team this year.

On Monday, April 6, the girls played their first game against Beckman Catholic.

Saturday, April 4, the boys soccer team played their first triangular against Solon and Clinton.

Both coaches feel confident in their teams this year.

"I have been coaching soccer since 2009. I started at Iowa City Kickers. With over 30 years of playing experience, my last game was at ISC over 35 (5v5), we won the Championship 2024 and 2025," said Gongora.

With new coaches, certain aspects of the teams will change.

Gongora said, "One thing I'm doing differently this year is coaching just the boys' team. I will definitely miss coaching the girls, as I've built strong bonds with many of them over several years, including our time at Iowa City Kickers. While I know I'll want to jump in and help, I'm confident they have a great coach who will guide them."

Gongora plans to develop the team as a goal for the boys' team this year.

"The main thing I hope to accomplish this year with our team is to further develop our chemistry and communication,

and to help every player take their skills to the next level," said Gongora.

For the coach, this is a completely new experience because in previous years he coached for other grades or schools.

Cappel said, "Officially, I have been coaching for four years, one as GK coach with WB, then two as head coach at Tipton, and now this is my fourth year when I'll coach the WB Girls. Although I have been around the game for a long time."

Coaching at the high school level is different from younger grades. Cappel has a plan to give more responsibility to his players.

"This year, compared to years past, I am really letting the captains and leaders of the team drive where we go. With this team and the leadership we have - I am putting a lot of responsibility on our captains and leaders," said Cappel.

Gongora and Becky Hosier worked together to coach the girls' team for three years and built trust with their players. Since Cappel is new, he wants to do the same thing.

Cappel said, "The most challenging is building that trust between the girls and me, because if they don't believe in me or what we are trying to do, then it makes everything else a lot harder. With this new team, I did not know a lot of girls from my previous time with WB, so it has definitely been a challenge - but we are making progress!"

BOYS' GOLF STARTS SEASON 2-0, GIRLS CONTINUE TO WORK HARD

Kendra Rarick
Staff Writer

The boys' varsity golf team won the second match of their season against Mid-Prairie at Cedar's Edge Golf Course in West Branch on Monday, April 6.

As a team, they won overall 152-169. All team members played the course with less than 42 strokes. The Cedars Edge course is a 36 stroke course for par.

On March 30, the boys' varsity golf team competed in their first match against West Liberty. They won 147-167.

At the first match against West Liberty, Junior Sawyer Jeffries completed the course with 34 strokes.

Junior McGavin Smith also completed the course with 35 strokes.

To get par on this course, a golfer would need to have only 36 strokes, so Jefferies and Smith both scored below that.

"I know that the boys have

extremely high aspirations," said boys' head coach Randy Sexton.

The girls' golf team also competed against Mid-Prairie on April 6 but played at the Kalona Golf Course in Kalona. The girls lost the overall meet 200-220.

Junior McKenna Worrell completed the course with 53 strokes.

Junior Oliva Thomas and senior Adelyn Hetrick followed close behind both finishing with 55 strokes.

"I'm excited to get to golf with some of my friends from other schools," said Thomas.

On March 30, the girls also competed at the West Liberty Country Club. The girls lost 232-222.

Hetrick earned third on the leaderboard with a stroke count of 56. Worrell landed right behind Hetrick with a stroke count of 57.

"I want them to have fun and enjoy their time out on the course." Girls head coach Angie Miller stated.



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Clubs & Orgs

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SPRING BREAK DISNEY TRIP SUCCESSFUL EVEN WITH PICKUP MISHAP

Evan Highly
Design Editor

On Saturday, March 16-20 the West Branch show choir and band expected to be picked up by the motorcoach company Windstar to start their trip to Disney World.

Windstar mixed up the pickup date causing a delay to the start of the trip.

Thanks to permission of Superintendent Marty Jimmerson, the school buses took the group to Mount Vernon, Illinois, where they stayed the night, and Windstar picked them up the next morning.

Every four years, West Branch show choir and band members get the opportunity to travel to Disney World in Florida.

Introduced the year before, students could plan ahead to pay for the \$2000 trip fee.

By the time the Disney trip arrived, two directors, 13 chaperones, and 60 students were ready to embark on the trip. To help the students pay for the trip, they could raise money by participating in fundraisers and working in concessions.

On the trip, students received a 140 dollar gift card, a 40 dollar Universal gift card, and a 50 dollar Visa card to spend on whatever they desired.

The directors who orchestrated the entire trip included choir teacher Christopher Reed and band director Jamie Flanagan.

Chaperones selected to attend included: Amber Stubbs, Benjamin Waters, Carrie Arlen, Jake Coblage, Jessica Grace, Kim Kleinmeyer, Logan Norfleet, Linn Zouleck, Mark Heick, Renee Thompson, Robert Arlen, and Sarah Lowe.

To remedy the time missed for swimming and visiting Disney Springs, students sprinkled activities throughout the week instead.

Despite the incident, the students felt content with how the situation was dealt with. "I felt that it shouldn't have occurred, but it was dealt with in the best



Group photo taken at the Hollywood Studio's park. Photo contributed by Grace Vincent.

way possible, the chaperones did their best to make the trip as enjoyable as possible," Whitney Spratt said.

While at Disney, the school's code of conduct still applied to the students.

Additionally, the students were required to be in one of the four parks: Magic Kingdom, Hollywood Studios, Epcot, and or Animal Kingdom throughout the day while being expected to represent their school.

Before going on the trip, students picked who they would like to room with; essentially forming a group. Expected to be in their rooms by evening, students would receive a daily room check to

ensure they stayed in their rooms at night.

"I thought it was ok, I liked who I was rooming with, and I enjoyed that we got to choose who we would be sharing a room with," Maria Montfort said.

A free day for the students, Monday gave the students the opportunity to participate in what Disney offered.

the full band, not the smaller group," Grace Vincent said.

Wednesday of the trip gave the students the opportunity to experience Disney's Universal Studios.

Junior, Gisele Gross said, "I mainly stayed in the Harry Potter park, I did the Escape From Gringotts and Harry Potter and The Forbidden Journey. My body felt like it wanted to run away at some point because it was so overwhelming."

Thursday being the last day at Disney, the students in the show choir finished their trip by performing on the Waterside Stage in Disney Springs. Due to the differences in the stage compared to the normal competitions the students are used to, the stage required them to adapt.

Junior, Eli Farmer said, "The stage was smaller and the number line was falling off the stage, we also did not have any risers.

As the trip came to an end, it left the question of what could be expected for the next Disney trip and what should've been done differently.

"It could be organized in a fashion where we stay off property and not have the park hopper pass, I would want to stay in one park for the entire day," Reed said.

Adult chaperone, C. Arlen, who is also a teacher at West Branch said, "I enjoyed getting to spend time with students in a different setting, especially in a place that I love like Disney. We had so much fun and shared a lot of laughs in a different environment than school." Arlen said.

C. Arlen also said, "I also got to spend a lot of time with Ms. Flanagan. She is a former student of mine, so it was great watching her take on a leadership role with the trip. I was very proud of her. We all had a blast."

ROBOTICS SELECTED FOR FIRST AWARD



Photo of WBHS robotics team celebrating at a recent competition. Photo contributed by Wyatt Chapman.

Wyatt Chapman
Writing Editor

WBHS team 5041 Cybears, recieved the FIRST Inspire the Future Recognition Program award.

The robotics team is one of fifteen schools throughout the world to earn this award.

Mentor Matt Cain is also one of fifteen educators in the world to be honored with this award.

The FIRST Inspire the Future Recognition Program award is a FIRST award program that honors schools and educators who make an exceptional commitment to students

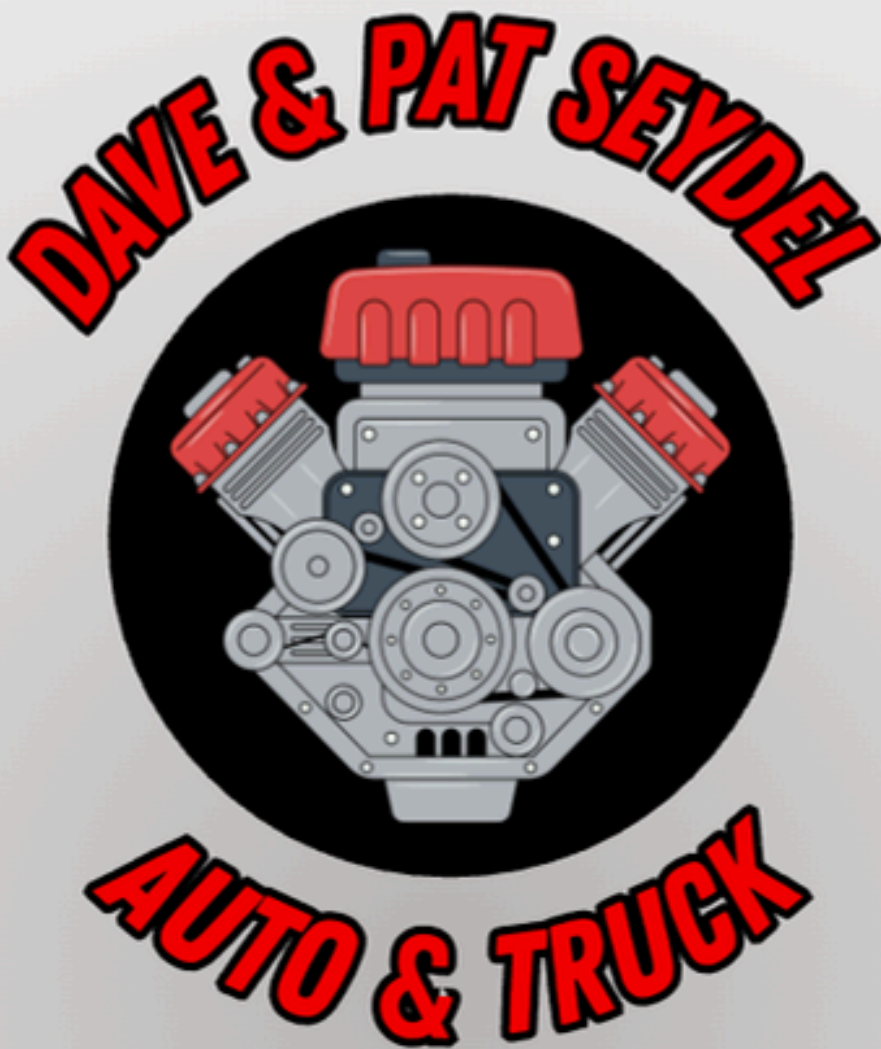
and to expanding access to FIRST programs. It recognizes PreK-12 educators who engage students in STEM throughout the classroom or afterschool activities.

At the Iowa Regional, March 27 and 28, the Cybears ran into a few problems throughout the event.

The week after at the City of Fountains regional in Kansas City, April 3 and 4, Cybears ran into a few more problems, but corrected them.

Alliance four in the playoffs picked Cybears as their second pick.

They did lose to both Alliance five and eight, eliminating CyBears from the playoffs.



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Academics



April 16, 2026

WBHS WRAPS UP NEWLY TITLED "SPRING TERM"

Karlee Hansen
Staff Writer

West Branch Middle School and High School held their annual January term from March 5-13.

Beginning in 2018, this year's "J-term," always occurring after winter break, differed from years past, with the decision for the event to be held in March.

High school Principal Sara Oswald said, "The new name for J-term will be 'Spring-term.'"

J-term in high school is a set of courses planned to give opportunities to students in career exploration.

Every year, a new cluster of courses is given to students for their choosing. This allows them to discover new ideas and plans for the future.

If students fill out the paperwork, they can leave school to pursue an internship or job shadowing experience instead.

The middle school J-term is composed of offerings focused mostly on hobbies and passion projects.

Oswald said, "There were 124 people who chose to do internships, and roughly 157

students stayed at school."

The courses offered this year and teachers who taught them included, Architecture and Construction Cluster: Robertson & Culver & Duwa, Arts, A/V Technology and Communications Cluster: Connor & Gallagher, Education and Training Cluster: Meth & Popkes, Finance Cluster: Walsh & Vo, Government and Public Administration Cluster: Noelck & Maske, Health Science Cluster: Thompson & Reynolds, Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Cluster: Curtiss & Dix, Transportation, Distribution and Logistics Cluster: Cain & Flanagan.

Freshman Zoey Brain said, "I liked having it in March, so I really get two weeks off from school. It makes me feel like my spring break was extended. Next year, I plan on doing another internship since I had a great internship at Hoover Elementary School."

Senior Kennedy Simpson decided to stay at the school and take the course of her choosing. "I enjoyed it, I personally think I would like it after spring break, though, so we can ease our way back into school. I have done an

internship twice, and I enjoy it better, though I did do an education cluster this year at the school, and that class was great! If I could go back, I definitely wish I had done one with a nurse."

Middle school teachers also had thoughts about the change in time of year for J-Term "Spring-term."

Sixth-grade science and math teacher Anthony Tometz instructed a survival of the fittest course along with art teacher Lucas Jordan this year.

Tometz said, "[Having it in March] gave more opportunities to do things outside in good weather."

Oswald listed pros and cons of undergoing J-term in the spring.

She said, "The weather is way nicer, and there is more availability of guest speakers and having access to the University of Iowa. They wouldn't have been able to do it in January. However, some students didn't engage because they looked at it as an extension of spring break, making attendance

not as good."

Numerous students showed more interest in pursuing job shadows/internships in place of the courses given at the school.

However, students who stayed at the school have enjoyed the opportunity to explore new options and interests for the future.

Some high school teachers also had thoughts about the change in the date.

Spanish teacher Abby Noelck said, "I liked it in March a lot. I enjoyed coming right after the break and starting class. The weather was nice and it gave a longer time to plan which was easier to reach out to guest speakers. Looking back, I wouldn't change anything. It was my first time teaching this cluster, and I'm overall pleased with how it went."

The 2026-2027 West Branch district calendar shows "Spring-term" landing on March 4 - March 12, right before the district would dismiss for spring break.

ISASP EXPLAINED: HOW SCORES AFFECT WBHS AND HOW STUDENTS CAN PREPARE

Anthony Heitzman
Business Editor

During the 2025 ISASP testing season, WBHS received a school performance score of 65.35%, just above the statewide average of 63.28%.

This slightly above average score earned WBHS a "Commendable" and "No Support Needed" designation, indicating no major issues in student performance.

Student scores on ISASP are a big factor in determining a school's academic performance score, which is used to determine how much assistance schools require from the state as well as how much general funding they receive.

The Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress, commonly known as ISASP, is an annual standardized test conducted by the Iowa Department of Education during the spring academic term to assess students' academic progress over their school careers and determine the distribution of educational funding.

Many students are often unaware of how important their performance on ISASP is for not just themselves, but WBHS as a whole. This often leaves students feeling apathetic towards ISASP and viewing it as a mild inconvenience rather than something that they should be concerned about as students. These

feelings of apathy often lead to a lack of preparation for ISASP compared to other standardized tests.

One of the best ways for students to prepare for ISASP is to utilize practice tests made available online. Practice tests are available for each subject and grade level on the ISASP website.

These practice tests offer both multiple-choice and written questions. Students can also find rubrics on the website to prepare for the written questions. Utilizing these tests and rubrics can help students identify areas where they need to study ahead of the test.

Another common mistake people make when studying for tests is a practice known as 'cramming,' in which students attempt to study and memorize a large amount of material in a short amount of time. Studies have shown that cramming before a test reduces productivity and decreases memorization. Cramming also induces great amounts of stress, which itself negatively affects student's ability to reason during tests.

Before testing for ISASP, students should also remember to prepare not just academically, but also mentally. Students should remember to get at least nine hours of sleep the previous night and to be well hydrated and fed, as dehydration and lack of sleep also reduce the brain's ability to reason during tests.

FOUR LOCAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS TO COMPETE IN TAG EVENT "SOARING HIGH"

Sydney Nash
Staff writer

"Soaring High" an event for fourth and fifth graders from West Branch and other local schools, will be hosted by WBHS TAG students on April 28, 2026.

Elementary students will participate in three different components including trivia, logic activities or puzzles, and STEM activities.

The event will be held at the old West Branch Middle School, 225 N Maple Street, West Branch, IA 52358.

"Soaring High" ended during COVID and has not been held since.

The high school TAG students decided to revive the event because they enjoyed it as young students and wanted to give elementary students the experience again.

Lone Tree CSD, West Liberty, and Iowa Valley will also send their fourth and fifth graders to "Soaring High".

Each school will compete against the others with a team of six students for both fifth and sixth grade.

For the three rounds of the event, students will first compete in trivia.

The topics Greek Mythology, Iowa Agriculture, Crazy US Laws,

Dinosaurs, and National Parks. Then the students compete in the logic puzzles.

The final round is a STEM challenge. Fifth graders perform the "Bridge Challenge," and the fourth graders execute the "Marshmallow Challenge".

TAG teacher Julie Howland said, "Fifth-grade students will receive the same materials and design and build the strongest bridge to span a distance of about one and a half feet. The bridge will be between two chairs and books will be placed on the bridges. The bridge that holds the most books will be declared the winner. Fourth-grade students will receive the same materials and design and construct a free-standing structure that will hold a regular-sized marshmallow on the top. The tallest structure will be declared the winner."

The purpose of this event is to create a fun experience and a chance for young TAG students to show off their STEM knowledge. The high school TAG students are a main factor in the success of this event and will be helping run it. Along with the high school students, Howland and other teachers have helped tremendously in hosting and preparing this event.

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Spotlights

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April 16, 2026

Wyatt Chapman



Q: What is your position or what are your main tasks?

A: I am the systems driver on the driver team. I press buttons on a controller and the robot responds accordingly, I pretty much control the upper parts of the robot while Ewan controls its movement.

Q: What is your biggest accomplishment individually or as a team?

A: My sophomore year I made the team drive team jackets half fur, half leather and I am still very proud of myself. Again sophomore year, we made it in second place with two other teams out of 50.

Q: What is your favorite part of robotics?

A: Walking around at regionals checking out all of the other teams and what goodies they have to offer.

Q: What is your role in robotics?

A: Coach, go out with the drag team for matches and help them know what to do and keep them updated on how much time is left in a match.

Q: What is your favorite part of robotics?

A: How accepting it is and how you can hang out with your friends.

Q: What advice would you give to a new person thinking about joining robotics?

A: Be willing to do stuff, have an open mind and don't think you are limited to doing stuff.

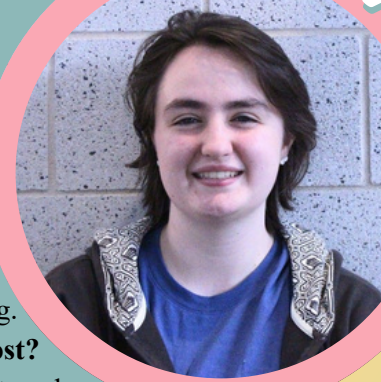
Q: What skills has robotics taught you?

A: Public speaking, creativity, problem solving.

Q: What areas of robotics are you interested in the most?

A: Design aspect and outreach.

Rey Wattt



Aizlyn Marsh



Q: How long have you been doing Robotics?

A: Four years, but I was also in Lego League for four years.

Q: Do you plan to use Robotics in your future?

A: Definitely, I mainly do paperwork and speak for an award, so I'll use the social skills I learned from presenting a lot.

Q: What is your favorite part of Robotics?

A: Being part of an accepting community, and hanging out with people at regionals.

Q: What is your favorite place you've been for Robotics and why?

A: My favorite place is definitely the Iowa regional at UNI because it's a familiar environment and really well organized. They also have good food.

Q: What got you interested in starting golf?

A: I had always liked playing golf and my freshman year one of the golf seniors kind of just forced me to give it a try, and here we are 4 years later and still playing.

Q: Do you have any superstitions on meet days?

A: I have always golfed with a red hat and I have tried to switch it and just couldn't do it, it didn't feel right.

Q: Who has had the biggest impact on you during your golf career ?

A: There have been a lot of people that have had a big impact on my golf career but I think the biggest influence has been my Dad. My dad is the one who takes me to play courses on the weekends before I play them in a competition. My dad has been the one that pushed me to be my best everytime.

Adelynn Herrick



McKenna Worrell



Q: What is your favorite memory of golf?

A: One of my favorite memories in golf was at a conference meet hearing the honorable mention and 2nd team scores being released and hearing that I had placed in 1st Team All Conference for my first time.

Q: How long have you played golf for?

A: I have played golf since I was in 2nd grade.

Q: What is your favorite club that you use?

A: My favorite club that I use is my driver and my favorite iron is my 7.

Q: What is your best individual score you have got?

A: I believe that my best individual score has been a 46.

Q: What is your favorite ice cream flavor?

A: Salted Caramel.

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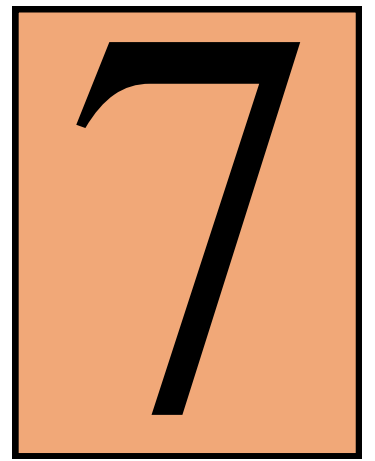
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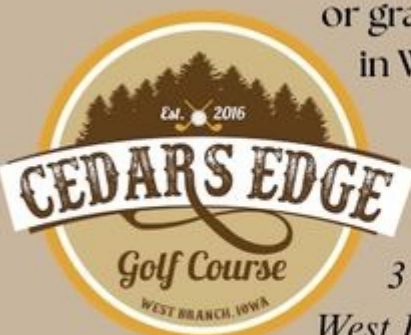
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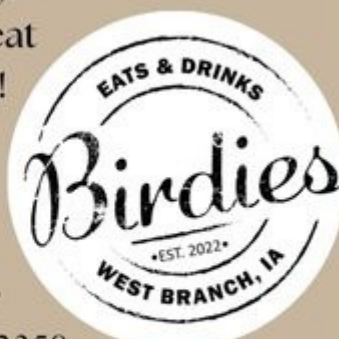
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8

Student Life

April 16, 2026



RECESS FOR WBHS: BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

Ava Lacina
Staff Writer

About 80% of high schools nationwide report no recess for their students. With social media on the rise and studies showing benefits from downtime for students, it's no surprise that the talk about recess has made it into our schools as well.

Despite the cognitive and somatic benefits for younger kids, recess is typically shortened significantly or removed altogether as grade levels increase.

The reason for this is to ensure maximum academic focus and to manage student behavior—but does this ideology really apply to the needs of high school students at WBHS?

Recess is defined as “a period of time when the proceedings of a parliament, committee, court of law, or other official body are temporarily suspended.”

In simpler words, it's an interval in which participation in any sort of activity is stopped for a designated period of time.

Recess is a common practice among elementary-level schooling as it prompts young students to engage in physical activity and social interaction, along with allowing their brains to reset and alleviate stress and anxiety.

Grant Meth, a teacher and coach at WBHS, said, “Students can benefit from downtime in the day; less is more in some cases.”

“I think if expectations are clear, most students focus better after having a little time to relax,”

said Meth.

A recent poll sent out to the student body asked if they'd enjoy having a recess.

53.6% of 67 respondents agreed WBHS should make time for a schoolwide break, with 34.8% answering “maybe” with some concerns, and only 11.8% disagreeing with the idea completely.

Secondly, the poll asked students about the benefits and challenges that could arise from enacting a recess at WBHS.

The two most popular “pros” included stress relief and allowance for social interaction.

On the other hand, the biggest concerns due to recess include poor weather conditions and longer school days (or less class time).

It appears that the majority of WBHS students would like to have a schoolwide break or recess executed during the day, but are concerned about where it would fit into the school day and/or the options of which they could choose to participate in during recess.

Fortunately, there are a multitude of suggestions that could work to make everyone happy.

Due to Iowa weather and the fact that school operates during colder temperatures, it is understandable students would vote against an outdoor recess like our middle & elementary schools have.

However, if time were to be set aside for this said recess, there

would be countless locations in which students could play board games/cards, read, engage in physical activity, talk to friends, etc.

One of these places would be the Bear Den, of course.

A common hangout area designed for students to comfortably occupy their time during or after school, it's a perfect location to explore for recess use.

Many students are found in the Bear Den playing cards, catching up on school work, and talking with their friends all the time, so there's no reason it wouldn't be suitable for a break.

However, there is not enough seating arrangements for the entire student body to have recess there, which is why there should be more than one designated space.

The gym is open throughout the majority of the day when PE students are not in session (or in the weight room), and during J-term, pickleball nets were set up.

It's used a lot during homecoming and other school-sanctioned activities, considering all the space and accessibility.

Additionally, middle school students occasionally use the high school gym for their recess, proving it a safe and convenient place where students can thrive.

Where the school would place recess in the schedule and time is also a concern, but there is a potential solution for this as well.

Many students at WBHS worry it would elongate the school day, but recess won't if placed correctly.

IS, or instructional support, is a 20-minute interval, allowing students to meet teachers in their classrooms for help on assignments or to simply get some simple homework done in their own assigned IS classroom. However, many students are left with nothing to do, resulting in teachers feeling overwhelmed with restless kids and students feeling bored out of their minds.

If IS were to be revamped into a time where students and teachers can take a 20-minute break rather than a study session every day, stress levels would decrease, and students would become more focused in their following classes.

Conversely, some students really value IS time for school work rather than a break time, causing a possible disagreement. To overcome that, some students can go outside, to the gym, Bear Den, etc., for their recess, while others can either remain in classrooms or take schoolwork down to the Bear Den if they'd like.

Teachers would also be able to request a student during this time still and if students were caught up on work or had good grades they could go take a “recess” or break instead.

With the possible execution of a recess, it's important to accommodate as many students as possible and create a safe and comfortable environment suitable for everyone.

STUDENT SPENDING PER WEEK: SURVEY DATA

Wyatt Chapman
Writing Editor

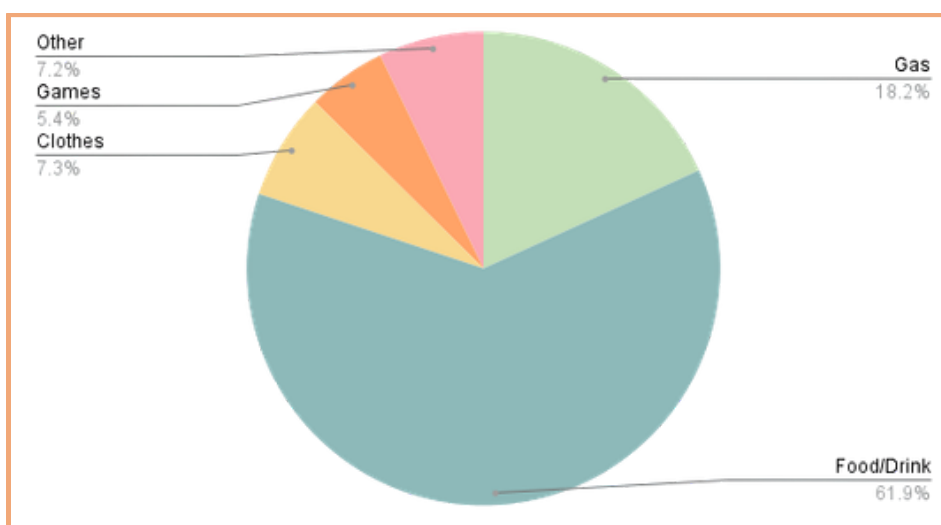
West Branch High School students were surveyed about the

amount of money they spend in a week, how they get their money, and what they spend their money on. On average, most roughly 34% of students spend more than \$30

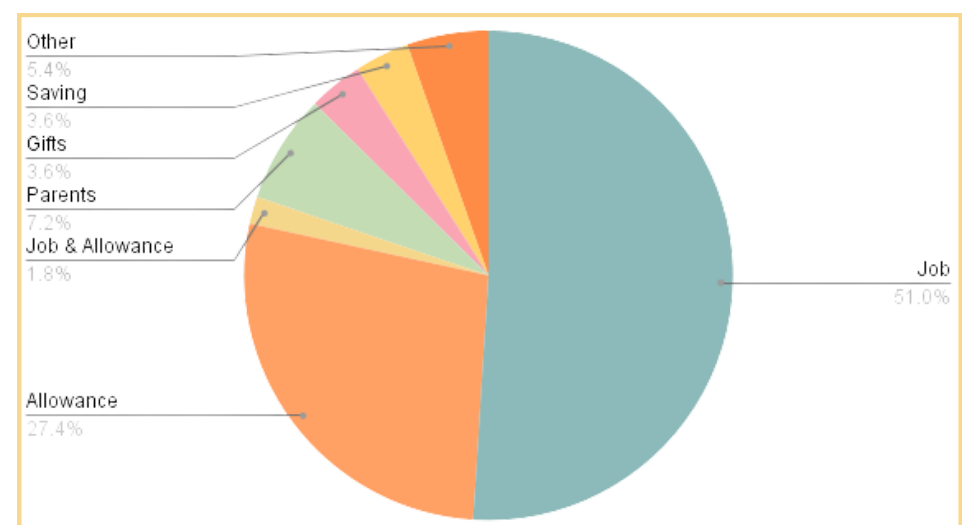
dollars a week. The top category that high schoolers spend money on is food and drink at 61%. Most students, 51%, stated they earned money from a job to spend.

The poll also showed that although students spend \$30+ dollars a week, 67.3% claim they track their spending and what that money is going towards each week.

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Student Life



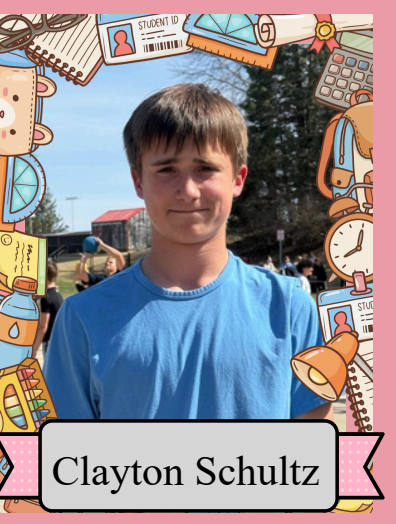
April 16, 2026

8TH GRADERS THOUGHTS ON HIGH SCHOOL




Avery Worrell

1. "I'm excited to choose some of my classes."
2. "Not knowing my way around a big building."
3. "All of the older people."
4. "Is it easy to find your way around?"



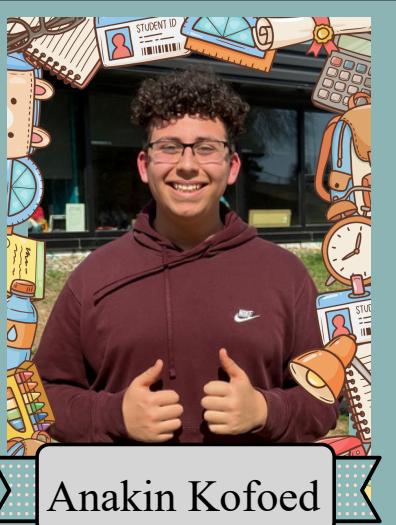
Clayton Schultz

1. "Probably sports."
2. "Not having any recess."
3. "I'm nervous for nothing."
4. "What are the classes like?"



Evan Farmer

1. "Probably sports."
2. "Not having any recess."
3. "I'm nervous for nothing."
4. "What are the classes like?"




Anakin Kofoed

1. "Having classes with higher grades."
2. "New teachers."
3. "Getting new classes."
4. "I would like to meet the golf coaches."


Questions asked:

1. What are you most excited for?
2. What is your biggest concern about transitioning buildings?
3. What are you most nervous for?
4. What would you like to know about high school before starting?



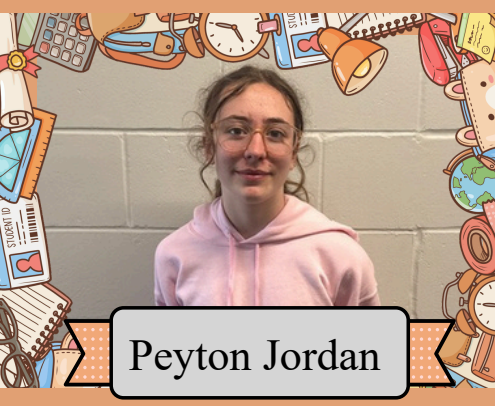
Blake Shelton

1. "I'm excited for new classes."
2. "Classes getting harder."
3. "Homework."
4. "How much homework you get."



Kendall Driscoll

1. "Classes with different people."
2. "Classes being harder."
3. "Finals."
4. "How everything works."



Peyton Jordan

1. "I'm not very excited, especially to not have recess."
2. "All the classes changing."
3. "Meeting new people."
4. "How hard classes are."



Sophia Richardson

1. "To learn new things."
2. "How people are going to act."
3. "The workload."
4. How many students per class there are."

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Opinions/Reviews

April 16, 2026



THE PITT: MEDICAL DRAMA OR MEDICAL DRAMATIC

Chloe Kleinmeyer
Staff Writer

When people watch medical shows, they almost always ask the same question. Are these shows even accurate? Sometimes, I find myself asking this exact question. Where does the media draw the line between authentic and exaggerated? Knowing this, when someone asks me to recommend them a medical show, I will always recommend The Pitt.

The Pitt is a medical drama that is available exclusively on HBO Max. The Pitt is currently the most watched show on the platform, holding a steady first place in countries across the world. The show

released to the public on January 9, 2025.

In the first three days of the show's release, over one million views had already been achieved.

The show stars actor Noah Wyle, who is widely known for his role in the show ER. Wyle plays the day shift's attendant, Micheal Robinavitch. Robinavitch is the hospital's highest ranked employee. Robinavitch must face the day-to-day hustle of the hospital, while also dealing with PTSD from his time working during COVID.

Robinavitch is accompanied by charge nurse Dana Evans. Evans is played by Katherine LaNasa, and she is often recognized for her leading role in a sitcom titled Three Sisters.

These two work beside actors Tracy Ifeachor, Patrick Ball, Shawn Hatosy, Gerran Howell, and many other stars in the film.

Viewers often credit this show as extremely accurate. People who work in the medical field know how much of a toll the environment can take on you. I spoke to my mom on this topic specifically.

My mom worked at a hospital similar to the one in the show, and she said, "The show captures the emotions of the ER. One example of this is when a doctor loses a patient, it really goes deep into the emotional toll that you feel for the rest of the shift. Sometimes, shows tend to exaggerate what really goes

on in a hospital environment. But we felt that this is definitely a series that showed things almost exactly how they really are.

My personal favorite detail about the show is that each episode is the duration of only one hour in the ER.

I think it's a really good detail that shows just how much happens in only an hour.

The ER is an intense place, and I feel like The Pitt captures that really well.

The next time that someone asks you to recommend them a new series, I suggest that you recommend The Pitt. The show does a good job of keeping things realistic, while also keeping the audience interested. If you haven't yet checked it out, I suggest that you give The Pitt a try.

ONE CHICAGO BRINGS BACK FAN FAVORITE CHARACTERS IN THREE-PART CROSSOVER

Anthony Heitzman
Business Editor

On Wednesday, March 4, 2026, NBC premiered a long-awaited three-part crossover of the One Chicago franchise, titled 'Reckoning'.

Fans and critics alike were both stunned by the event, with the event averaging a rating of 8.3 stars from critics on IMDB.

One Chicago is a television franchise created by executive producer Dick Wolf that focuses on the personal and professional lives of doctors and first responders in the city of Chicago.

Wolf is also known for creating other notable franchises such as Law and Order and FBI.

The franchise currently consists of three shows, Chicago Fire, Chicago PD, and Chicago Med. The crossover saw the return, departure, and deaths of several important characters, leaving a large impact on the series.

One Chicago has done similar three-part crossovers before, such as 'Infection' and 'In the Trenches', however, unlike those events that were fairly self-contained, 'Reckoning' would have major story implications on the franchise long after the credits rolled.

The crossovers storyline does heavily rely on plot lines from previous episodes of all three shows in order to add dramatic effect so if you're new to the franchise and looking to watch 'Reckoning' I would heavily recommend watching the latest seasons of all three shows to have a better understanding of the crossovers events.

As a big fan of the One Chicago franchise, I had very high expectations for this crossover event, and I was not at all disappointed with the result.

One of the lines that was frequently used in promotions for the event was 'Nobody does crossovers like Chicago' and this one definitely lived up to that.

One of the main aspects of the event that I enjoyed as a One Chicago fan was the return of Detectives Upton and Halstead. During their mutual

stint on Chicago PD their relationship brought a sense of personal drama that the show had been lacking for several seasons after the departure of Halstead's previous partner Det. Erin Lindsay.

Consequently, their departures from the show had also left a similar gap in the show and seeing them return gave the audience a taste of nostalgia for 'Upstead' as the pair was known by fans.

Another standout aspect of the crossover is how it continuously looped in previous storylines from the franchise.

One of the main plotlines that acts as a catalyst is the seemingly accidental death of a CFD chief during a previous episode of Chicago Fire that ends up being connected to the chemical attack on the plane.

I especially liked this storyline as this was previously just a single episode plot that I never expected was related to the events of 'Reckoning' until it was revealed during part 3.

Another existing storyline central to the crossover is the relationship between Dr. Hannah Asher and Dr. Dean Archer and the former's ongoing pregnancy. Unlike Chief Cranston's death however, Dr. Asher's pregnancy and relationship with Dr. Archer had been an ongoing storyline throughout season 11 of Chicago Med.

However, ultimately the greatest aspect of 'Reckoning' would be it's long lasting on the franchise as a whole, specifically Chicago Fire. Chief Pascal's defiance of the FBI and subsequent arrest would eventually lead to him being fired from the CFD and leaving the show for good.

The writers of the show have also indicated this decision to be permanent and the show has also been hinting that Lt. Kelly Severide of Squad 3 is being set up to become the next leader of Station 51.

These events, if proven permanent, would likely designate 'Reckoning' as the most impactful crossover event in the history of the One Chicago franchise.

WHY FILM & THX AREN'T DEAD

Connor Davidson
Staff Writer

In today's world of streaming and digital services, most people have quit going to the movies and renting or buying DVD's.

If you have been in a movie theater or if you have a DVD, you have probably seen the name THX in your life.

THX is a company working with sound and picture quality to make movies look and sound great. It catches people's attention with its sound trademark known as the Deep Note, the most recognizable sound ever.

The story of THX goes back to 1983 when George Lucas and Tomlinson Holman looked at the speakers in a movie theater for the premiere of "Return of the Jedi," part of the Star Wars Trilogy.

Horrified by how the theater set up the speakers to the screen, they came up with a standard for audio for the movies.

Holman and another engineer from Lucasfilm Ltd. developed a standard for what would become THX.

Lucas wanted to have a logo appear before "Return of the Jedi" so he tasked someone to come up with the animation for the first logo.

James A. Moorer made a computer program that would eventually become the Deep Note.

Lucas convinced theaters to put THX equipment in the auditoriums so they could play the movie.

Four theaters put these speakers in

the auditorium and became THX certified for the first time.

May 25, 1983, "Return of the Jedi" became the first movie to use THX.

When the logo and the Deep Note showed up on theater screens, people were blown away by the new sound system. THX accomplished everything that Lucas wanted.

Then THX branched into people's homes by putting their system on DVD's. This allowed people who wanted to watch movies at home to experience the same sound they heard in the theater.

When people first watched films at home, they could experience the same sound and images on a bigger scale like Lucas had intended. Now, with streaming services this is not as easy.

This is why supporting THX and the film industry is so important.

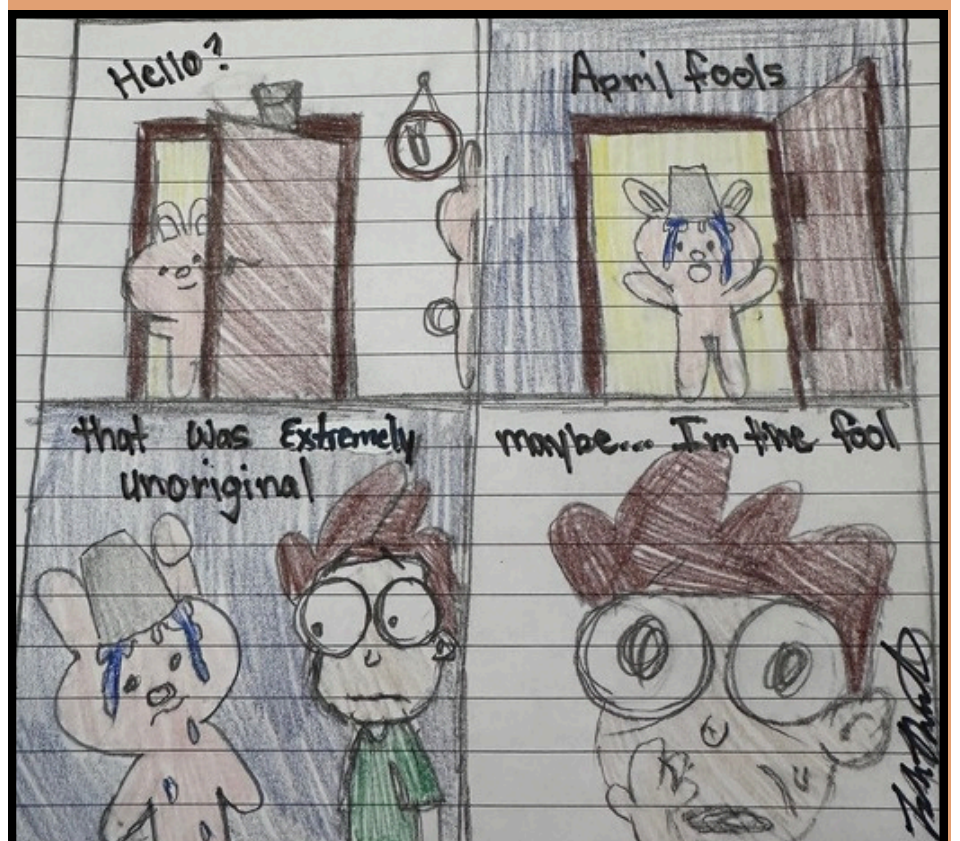
Many people probably have seen Bambi, Independence Day, Twister, Toy Story 2, and many more at home. Seeing them in the theater would make the experience much better and more impactful.

People choose to watch t.v. shows and movies at home because it saves them money; however, they aren't getting the experience THX provides in the theater. This might change the way people think about a movie or show. If they saw it in a theater, they might like it better.

You should support your movie theaters by watching films when they come out and if you enjoy watching movies or films take a look into the history of THX!

COMIC CORNER

By Sabree Depoorter



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