

Linn-Mar

MAY EDITION

Shrek the Musical delights all ages

The Linn-Mar Fine Arts Department presented *Shrek the Musical* April 26-28 in the high school auditorium. The show, directed by Marcia Smith, was another shining example of how accomplished Linn-Mar's theatre department is when it shares its talents with the high school vocal and orchestra departments. Behind the scenes, vocal director Jaclyn Ohnemus, orchestra director Josh Reznicow and technical director Mark Bugenhagen joined choreographer Lovar Davis Kidd and costume designer Sarah Gustason to put on a stellar show.

The show starred Solomon Groothuis as Shrek and Emma Gostonczik as Princess Fiona in the lead roles. Both tackled their roles with relish, with Gostonczik having a particularly strong singing voice. The highlight of the show came in the performances of Akash Gururaja as the donkey and Casey Cerveney as the unfortunate Lord Farquaad. Both added humor to their roles and Gururaja, especially, should be applauded for his rich tenor voice. Nina Norton also added powerful pipes to the role of the dragon. Together, these five

showcased some of Linn-Mar's finest performers.

The five lead members of the ensemble cast were supported by a cast of energetic fairytale creatures including Bryce Spencer, Jonathan Issa, Ian Crumley, Daniel O'Hara, Kevin Drahos, Melaena Holm, Sierra Christensen, Katie Andreasan, Ruthie Gustason, Cheyanne Mann, Nora Read, Jake Varner, Zoey Marciniak, Gloria Hunt, Jill Klinkefus, Katie Stoddard, Bailey Sears, Emma Geneser, Olivia Holm and Erin O'Hara.

The ensemble cast included Micah Poellet as Young Fiona and Emma Geneser as Teen Fiona. Auggie Bugenhagen was Young Shrek and Marissa Good was Queen Lillian.

The technical crew included Stage Manager Sara Becker; Assistant Stage Managers Jack Kopesky and Derek Patel; and Luke Poellet, Noah Peyton, Sydney Williams, Erica Peck, Camden Woitas, Zach Fontana, Ciara Coon, Olivia Shifflet, Vy Nguyen and Tyler Vivian.

The two scene show featured 28 musical pieces, beautiful costuming and accomplished acting for an

enjoyable show that appealed to both young and old. Congratulations

Linn-Mar Fine Arts Department for a great musical.



Photos taken by Struttmann Photography

Student work shines in 17th annual art show

By Katie Dennis

The Linn-Mar Art Department put on its 17th annual All Student Art Show in the Pride Rock Commons to showcase student talent and to encourage more students to take art classes. At the end of the three week display, an award ceremony was held on May 8th to celebrate the creations made by the artists. At the celebration, the art staff gave awards to artists in order to recognize their artistic talents.

The awards were presented by the art staff and a local artist. The awards consisted of best in show, student's choice, administration choice, best ceramic, best metal, best photography and more.

This presentation of talent started 17 years ago when Ms. Angie White, the ceramics instructor, and Mr. John Genskow, the drawing and painting teacher, first started working at Linn-Mar. White said, "We decided that we enjoyed our

own high school art shows and thought it was important to the students and staff to have a fun way of showing their talents."

Within the art show, there are more than just drawings and paintings. There are different mediums such as ceramics, paper, wood, metal and sculptures made by students from every grade and skill level. Not every art piece is perfect- but there are a few that are very impressive.

Many of the students who have entered an art piece are currently in an art class, but not every artist has taken an official art class at Linn-Mar or is currently enrolled in an art class.

Students have been able to submit many types of art such as political, expressive, entertainment, optical illusion, persuasive, narrative and controversial pieces. There have been artistic displays of personal endeavors, as well as art that addresses problems or shares

a story. This year, there was a controversy over displaying certain pieces of artwork that some people found to be too graphic.

Specifically, last year, an artist had just gotten out of an abusive relationship and said she needed to release bottled up pain. The artist used paint to depict a very detailed image of the head of a ram on the torso of a shirtless woman with ribs and intestines showing. There was red paint dripping down the sides of the painting resembling blood.

A handful of parents complained that the graphic image was too much for young kids to see in the hallways at school. According to White, parents reacted before looking at the art work or even reading why the art was made and what it resembled.

After the painting was challenged, the administration decided not to remove the painting citing the young woman's First

Amendment rights. Upset parents expressed their distaste in the student's art style and expression but the artist stayed quiet and let administration handle the issue at hand.

According to KCRG, the administration kept both powerful yet graphic images on display to support the constitutional rights of the artists and to show all of the students at Linn-Mar that they have a safe place to express themselves.

Art on display included metal sculptures and cut-outs, photography, sketches, graphic designs and more.

"I highly suggest that students, staff and family stop by to see the show because it is very influential and unique. These students are very expressive and creative with their work, and they inspire other students to take art classes just by showing what they can do," said White at the end of another successful show.

Cook uses talents to give back to the community

By Rachel Bohnenkamp

A day in the life of Kaleb Cook is never boring. In fact, he probably does more in one day than most do in a week. One day for Kaleb may consist of running a Student Council meeting, going to class and stopping by alternative program “Iowa BIG” for meetings regarding numerous service projects. From there, he returns to the high school to host a Buddies gathering and later volunteers at Camp Courageous. After a long day, he returns home to spend time with his family and beloved black lab, Cricket. Yes, this happens in the span of just twelve hours.

A Linn-Mar senior, Kaleb is fully immersed in his community. Over the past four years, he has been involved in Student Council, Linn-Mar Buddies, National Honor Society, Special Olympics, Iowa BIG, SODA, TRY, Lean on Me and Camp Courageous. Additionally, he is the class president and president of Linn-Mar Buddies.

With all his commitments, Kaleb still finds time to relax and enjoy one of his favorite things: nature.

“My favorite place is my cabin on Lake Delhi. I absolutely love hammocking. I water ski, jet ski and canoe, too. It’s great.”

According to Kaleb, his cabin is where you are most likely to find him over the summer. He goes there frequently with his family and friends. In his free time, Kaleb also enjoys watching Netflix and adventuring.

Many would find Kaleb’s lifestyle of constant activity tiring, but Kaleb is powered by passion, especially for those with disabilities.

“My passion is those with special needs. It started back in elementary school where I noticed disabled students being treated differently. Ever since then, I want to change that.”

As a result, he found his “niche” freshman year in Linn-Mar Buddies, a club that encourages inclusiveness among all students. Since then, Kaleb has devoted himself to the disabled community through numerous organizations.

Recently, he established his own curriculum that connects special education students to dance therapy during the school day. According to Kaleb, “Dancing Away the Stigma” has become bigger than he ever expected.

“Teachers all across the nation have access to the dance videos. It’s really fun.”

It turns out “fun” is another thing that motivates Kaleb. Very rarely is he not smiling or laughing. He doesn’t take life too seriously and

can lift others’ moods with ease, something his friends appreciate.

“Kaleb always me laugh,” said Jaelyn Bowers, one of Kaleb’s best friends. “Some of my craziest and most fun memories are with Kaleb.”

In the future, Kaleb plans to maintain a lifestyle similar to his one in high school: busy, gratifying and impactful. Next fall, he will attend the University of Iowa to major in business administration with a focus in nonprofit management, fundraising and special education. Kaleb’s long-term goal is to create a year-round camp for people with and without disabilities.

“I envision it somewhere in Idaho or Colorado, with mountains and lots of outdoor activities. In the winter, there would be skiing and sledding. In the summer, we could hike and explore nature.”

In the meantime, Kaleb will have a relatively normal freshman year of college. After that, though, his plans are up in the air.

“I know I want to travel to Spain and study abroad for six months. I might take a year off and backpack across Europe and Asia. Honestly, I might be one of those people who never settles down. I’m always looking for something new.”

For the people who know Kaleb, this is not surprising. In his eyes, the world is just a place to explore. Kaleb’s passion for helping others

combined with his love of adventure makes him unforgettable, as not many enjoy living as much as him. Whether he spends the next twenty years working in special education at his own camp or navigating foreign countries, one thing is for sure: the future is bright with Kaleb in it.

Favorite Food Lebowski’s Buffalo Chicken Wrap (with extra Ranch)

Favorite TV Shows *Friends*, *The Office*, *New Girl*

Greatest Fear Cannibalism

Most Interesting Quirk “I am deathly afraid of wooden Popsicle sticks. Thinking about them against my mouth makes me cringe.”

Future Travel Plans Spain

Quote To Live By “F*** it”

Favorite Vine “Run in here and come get y’all juice!”



Diversity Days offer cultural variety

By Cassie Smith

How does one build a diverse country? It all starts with recognizing the different cultures and ethnicities within individual communities. With different cultures come different traditions, which is what gives a town its heart. Linn Mar decided to take it upon themselves to help take steps toward the community’s overall diversity, in hopes that their small-scale efforts would affect the country on a larger scale.

One of Linn Mar High School’s annual events is their Diversity Fair. Every year, Linn Mar students pack the high school’s main gym to experience the diversity that their school has to offer. The Diversity Fair is a compilation of many events, ranging from Bollywood dances to African cuisine. The Diversity Fair provides a place where everyone can express their culture, and put their diversity on display.

An issue of the Marion Times provides a brief overview of the history behind Linn Mar’s Diversity Fair. The first Diversity Fair to ever be held at Linn Mar High School took place on Friday, April

19th, 2013. The year that the fair launched, attendees were asked to pay \$5 for admission. Instead of the fair taking place during the day, the events took place from 6- 9 in the evening. This way, students could attend the fair without cutting into their class time.

Nancy Grindle of the *Marion Times*, described the first fair as a place where participants were “treated with colors, sights and sounds representative of people and cultures from around the world.” Taking place at the first fair were events that included dancing, singing, martial arts demonstrations, Salsa dancing, and a Czech Circle Dance.

According to Loan Tran, one of the organizers of the first Diversity Fair, the purpose of this event was, “To expose the school and community to different world cultures and organizations to build a local and international sense of community and acceptance.” He goes on to say that the fair helped them reach their goal.

On April 18, 2018, students attended this year’s Diversity Fair from 11am to 2pm in Linn Mar

High School’s main gym, located near the lower level cafeteria. Some of the events that took place included henna stands, the famous Bollywood dance, karaoke, food stands, and so much more. This year, an event that definitely caught people’s attention and applause was the performance of the song ‘Perfect’ by Ed Sheeran. During this performance, Linn Mar student Cassie Smith sang the first verse and chorus of the song in English followed Italian exchange student Anna Maria, singing the second and third verse and chorus in Italian. The crowd was very pleased to have this new event added to the annual fair.

As Linn Mar High School students take it upon themselves to accept diverse cultures and ethnicities into their community, they may or may not realize the effect that this course of action could have on their country as a whole. As these minors graduate, and pursue education elsewhere, their knowledge of diversity and how to bring it to light may affect places all around the country, bettering America one student at a time.

Iowa passes most restrictive abortion bill in the country

By Megan McDonald

A new bill that’s already passed through the Iowa House and Senate is said to be one of the most restrictive abortion bans in the country. The new bill bans most abortion procedures after a ‘fetal heartbeat’ is detected, with exceptions for pregnancies resulting due to rape or incest, or for pregnancies with fetal abnormalities or those which put the mother in serious harm or lethal injury. The bill passed the Iowa House in a 51-46 vote on May 2 and passed the Iowa Senate with a vote of 29-17 early in the morning on May 3.

Debates over women’s rights were bound to be brought forth in the wake of this law being passed. For a heartbeat to be detected as early as 6 weeks in a pregnancy, an ultrasound would need to be used. The new bill would require an ultrasound procedure for all women looking to get an abortion to test for the fetal heartbeat. If a heartbeat is detected during the ultrasound, then this law says they are not allowed to go further with the operation. Due to this newly passed bill, opponents say nearly all abortion procedures would be stopped. Critics argue that the new law dismisses women’s rights and point out that as early as 6-7 weeks, most women are only just receiving the early signs of pregnancy. Critics also maintain that it is unfair to base a woman’s freedom to choose whether or not to keep a baby on a law that takes away rights before a woman might even discover she is pregnant.

“Tonight, Republicans, you have once again made a choice: a choice to debate legislation that devalues the bodies and decision-making skills of Iowa women and girls,” said Senator Janet Petersen. “None of you went to medical school, yet you Republican politicians are making dangerous medical decisions. This bill tells Iowa women and girls that forced pregnancy is more important than their health and well-being.”

Iowa’s previous bill stopped abortion proceedings after 20 weeks of pregnancy, which could give ample time for a women to recognize their pregnancy and decide on their next course of action. Critics are also concerned that if Iowa women are turned away from local abortion agencies, they may look to the other states to get the procedure done or turn to more dangerous methods to remove the baby.

“By passing an intentionally unconstitutional bill, Iowa Republicans have declared that they do not care about the foundational values of our state, or Iowa’s future,” said Erin Davison-Rippey, public affairs director of Planned

Parenthood of the Heartland. “They do not care how much taxpayer money will be spent on a lawsuit, they don’t care how many women’s lives will be damaged because of inadequate access to care, or how many families may choose to go elsewhere because Iowa is no longer a state where they are safe to live and work.”

“All women, regardless of age, income or race, should be able to obtain reproductive health services, including abortion, free from political and economic barriers,” said Representative Beth Wessel-Kroeschell.

Many supporters of the new bill are hoping it will bring about an opportunity to challenge and overturn the Roe V. Wade federal law, which gave women the constitutional right to decide the

fate of an unborn child when the law made abortions legal.

“Today we will begin this journey as Iowa becomes ground zero nationally for the life [anti-abortion] movement and as the starting line back to the Supreme Court,” said Rick Bertrand, Republican State Senator. “I believe this bill will be the vehicle that will ultimately provide change and provide the opportunity to overturn Roe v. Wade.”

Originally, the bill had not contained exceptions for pregnancies due to rape, incest, or fetal abnormalities, though it did contain the exception of aborting the baby if the mother was at risk of serious or fatal harm. The bill also contained time restrictions to some of the exceptions. The original bill said a rape-induced pregnancy must

be reported to a health agency or law enforcement within 45 days (about six and a half weeks) of the incident and an incest-induced pregnancy must be reported to a health agency or law enforcement within 140 days (about 20 weeks) of the incident. Many Democrats believe the law is too restrictive and heavily disagree on the time restrictions, as it may put victims in a hard situation and force them to share their rape or incest experience before they’re ready.

“Science and technology have significantly advanced since 1973,” said Representative Shannon Lundgren. “It is time for the Supreme Court to weigh in on the issue of life. It has taken decades for the science to catch up to what many have believed all along: that she’s a baby.”

Controversial abortion bill takes away choice

By Dawn Ramirez

Abortion is a highly controversial topic no matter who you are talking to, no matter which side they lean towards. Left or right; conservative, moderate, or liberal; Republican or Democrat, everyone seems to have an opinion on this very polarizing issue. Recently Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds has signed a new abortion law that has everyone talking, but very few people agreeing.

What Reynolds just recently passed is the most restrictive abortion law in the United States and would prohibit nearly all abortions in Iowa after a fetal heartbeat has been detected.

As she signed the bill, Reynolds said, “I believe that all innocent life is precious and sacred, and as governor, I pledged to do everything in my power to protect it. That is what I am doing today.”

The legislation was approved over a divided vote, and if it is not stopped by the courts, it will go into effect July 1st. This new legislation will require physicians to do an ultrasound on the abdomen of the women wanting to get an abortion. If a heartbeat is heard, the abortion cannot continue. This will greatly diminish safe abortions because a fetal heartbeat often starts around six weeks and many times a women will not know she is pregnant until after an abortion has already declared illegal. This takes away a woman’s choice.

What Kim Reynolds and the Republicans in the Iowa legislature do not seem to understand is that this law will not lower the number of abortions in Iowa, it will just

lower the number of *legal* abortions. Abortions will continue, they will just not be *safe* abortions. No longer will women have access to the medical care she will need during and after a procedure. No longer will a women get to decide what she wishes to do, the government will have full control. This is wrong.

It should be a woman’s decision when it comes to what to do with her own body, it should not be the government’s decision. The government does not know a woman’s reasoning or choices when it comes to her body and a potential baby. Why should the government get to decide or make her choices for the woman? The answer is; they should not be given this power.

This law effectively puts the mother’s life at risk, and gives more value to a fetal life that cannot yet survive outside the womb.

Many pro-lifers think that this new legislation is brilliant because “no longer will innocent children have to die.” What they don’t seem to understand that an embryo, if taken out of the mother’s body, will not be able to sustain itself.

This bill has sparked outrage in many of those who are pro-choice because they feel this legislation is unconstitutional, invasive and punitive. This law will eliminate safe and legal abortions and instead lead to unsafe, illegal abortions that could put the mother’s life at risk. Coat hook abortions could return along with other unsafe options.

Also outraged is Planned Parenthood of the Heartland, Iowa’s largest provider of abortions. They recently filed a lawsuit against

Governor Kim Reynolds for signing the legislation, which they maintain is unconstitutional.

According to Suzanna de Banca, president and chief executive officer of Planned Parenthood, the organization is “outraged but not surprised.” She said, “I think many of us still never expected that Governor Reynolds would so swiftly jump to sign a bill that is so clearly unconstitutional.”

Reynolds, a Republican, had spoken about her opposition to abortion in the past and last year, Iowa Republicans enacted a bill that stopped abortions after 20 weeks. This legislation stops 14 weeks earlier, and is getting closer and closer to banning abortion all together. Iowa lawmakers hope to take this legislation to the Supreme Court to challenge Roe v. Wade, which was passed in 1973, and found that women have a constitutionally protected right to abortion. With a more conservative Supreme Court now than in the past, Republicans are hoping to push this law through. This is an outrage.

It is time to demand a change and to protect our rights to safe and legal abortions. The future will demand that we fight for our rights to decide what should happen to our bodies. We must fight for change and rally for what we believe, not just for abortions, but for all social and political problems that continue to plague our world. The world is changing and it’s time to get new ideas in the Iowa House and Senate, new ideas that support those of the people. You can help by signing up to vote to let your voice be heard.

Hungate's Christian faith sustains him

By Trent Davis

Tyler Hungate sits in a lush gray chair in a quaint library on the second floor of Marion Methodist Church. Just a floor beneath him, Pastor Mike Morgan is preaching to his congregation. Pastor Mike is a man Tyler emulates, and he hopes to one day follow in his footsteps. However, a life guided by faith hasn't always been the reality for Tyler.

"I was kind of anti-Christian growing up just because that's kind of the attitude that my dad always had," Tyler explained. "I didn't like Christians because everything that was taught to me about them was from people who weren't Christian." Tyler nervously wrung his hands together as he began to open up about his past - before he found Christ; something, he said, that changed his life forever.

He ran his hand through his pale, blonde, curly hair, which was situated nicely on top of his head. He was clad in a pair of khakis and wearing brown colored Sperry's on his feet with a brown belt to match. His shirt was a blue, collared button-up, with the sleeves rolled just above his elbows. At the end of his left arm, a blue bracelet clung to his wrist which read "WWJD."

"The idea of believing in God at all is kind of crazy, you know, and I get that, I totally understand why people are hung up on the idea. I thought that way for the majority of my developmental life."

In addition to religion, sports have always been instrumental in Tyler's life.

Tyler plays football and runs track for the Lions, and also played basketball and soccer throughout his childhood. He was - and still is - obsessed with sports and the grind, the hard work, and the determination that comes along with them. Putting in lots of time and effort to get good at something is what he enjoys most about all of his hobbies.

After an insanely successful freshman football season, Tyler had his sights aimed at a spot on the Varsity roster as a sophomore the next fall. During the summer leading into his second season as a high school football player, Tyler attended every single offseason lifting session and agility training, and was one of the only people in his class to do so. Even though the workouts were almost unbearable and made him throw up nearly twice a week, Tyler persevered because he was chasing a dream.

That same summer was transformational for another reason as well, and is a summer Tyler says he'll never forget. This was the

summer that Tyler's eyes were open to Christianity, and his relationship with Christ was founded. It all began several months before when his friends talked him into attending a Wednesday night youth worship service at Marion Methodist Church. The name of the youth group is "4:12" named after 1 Timothy 4:12, a Bible passage that resonates with many of the young people that attend these Wednesday night sessions.

Tyler had a childhood where faith was absent, and his perspective of those who chose a life of faith wasn't necessarily positive. Naturally, this led him to be hesitant and skeptical when a few of his friends asked him to join them one spring Wednesday night at their church.

"I had some friends in eighth grade that kept pressuring me to come to this thing called '4:12' with them, which is their youth group, and finally I said, 'Okay, I'll come with you and play basketball in the alley.'"

"I came and then that first day we played basketball and there were a ton of people from my school there so we were just playing and hanging out and everything was cool. Then, everyone went upstairs for the church stuff, and I just kind of got, you know, pushed in with the rest of the crowd."

His first experience at church went pretty much as he expected. He listened to the youth pastor, Pastor Keith, talk and remembers wondering why he was talking so loudly and animatedly. He said that everyone around him was getting into the sermon and was full of energy, but he just thought to himself, "this guy's crazy."

He continued to go with friends to youth group every Wednesday night, but only as a way to appease them.

"I wasn't really a Christian, that just became my routine. I would go and hang out on Wednesday nights but I never really paid attention to the sermons or applied anything that I learned at the church to my outside life."

As the summer dwindled away and actual football practice drew nearer, Tyler was attracting lots of attention from the Varsity coaches because of his talent and his work ethic. All of this led up to one scorching August afternoon, wherein he broke his collarbone at the annual preseason scrimmage.

"I was devastated. I had put so much into the game my entire life, and then it was one of those things where it just caused me a ton of pain, you know? Because one, I'm in physical pain, and two, I can't be



out there doing what I love."

Tyler's determination and passion for the sport were too great to keep him out of football, however. When he gets knocked down, he gets right back up.

Unfortunately, during his second season, the game let him down again.

"That's when I got my first concussion, in the second game of the season."

After the injury, he wasn't medically cleared to play for the next few weeks. When he was able to return to daily practice, his playing time had been cut. He wasn't able to show the coaches what he was truly capable of due to his sidelining injury.

"You know, I still loved the game, I just wasn't having any fun. I worked really hard to only see the field two, maybe three times a game."

When Tyler's final football season began to roll around, things didn't feel the same, but he still worked as hard as he ever had. It was in the first game of the season, when disaster struck once again. As Tyler prepared to make a play, an opposing quarterback lowered his helmet and slammed it into Tyler's. He was shaken, but he finished out the game and was presumably fine in practice the following week. That was until he took another blow to the helmet during a tackling drill, one that caused him severe pain. After going to the doctor, Tyler was diagnosed with his second concussion of his football career. Not only that, but the doctor also informed Tyler that he wouldn't be able to finish out the football season due to medical concerns. Tyler had played the final football game of his life without even knowing it.

"For a while, I just didn't like

football," he said. "And then I was like, 'Holy crap. I will never play football again. I'll never put the pads on again; I'll never experience any of that again.' And so, as soon as football ended for me, all the love came back."

Tyler explained that he was much more mature in his faith at this point in his life, at the time of the second concussion, which was something that helped drive him through all of his hardships. Finding some alone time out of his day once in a while to pray, read the Bible, or just listen to Christian music is something that gave him - and still gives him - a lot of strength. He says that it's like taking a deep breath, and that sometimes you just have to sit back and know that God has a plan for you; no matter how hard things seem right now, they will get better. It was in these hardships that his ever-growing relationship with Christ was strengthened even more. It also helped that he was avidly attending church each Sunday morning and Wednesday night, reading lots of scripture from the Bible, and doing lots of praying and self-reflection. At this period in his life, Tyler said that he began to notice changes about himself and about his personality.

"I wouldn't say I was depressed but I was a downer, you know, and I was kind of quiet and I was a loner, I didn't have that many friends that I was super close to. I was really angry too."

He continued to describe the way his faith had changed his personality, and how it shaped him into this ever-dynamic person.

"When I was a little kid I was angry, I was hurtful at times, like I wasn't very considerate of others, and all these different things about
continued on Page 5: Hungate

Integrity, self-confidence, are traits that strengthen Hungate

Hungate: continued from Page 4 me changed when I accepted Christ,” he said.

When you feel the love that Christ has for you, then the love that’s inside of you starts to come out for other people. It’s not a conscious decision that I made, to start loving people. Overall, like, when you get that love inside of you, it starts to come out and it’s not of your own accord. You’re not making yourself a great person. Christ is making you a good person.”

Tyler noticed that he was starting to become a leader for people around him, a trait that is very apparent in Tyler today. He said that he also gained a huge amount of self-confidence, boldness, and integrity - traits he never noticed in himself before.

All of these ideas and the way he views life and religion had to have come from somewhere, since he was, for the most part, leading a fairly non-Christian life as he began to attend the youth group “4:12.” There was one moment that quite literally changed everything for Tyler. During that fateful summer, he attended his first Christian camp, called Summer Games University.

“Pastor Keith told me that he signed me up for Summer Games and I told him, you know, that I couldn’t afford it, which was true, but it was also an excuse not to go. He told me that the church would pay for all of it and that I could go for free. I’m grateful for it now, but at the time I was a little annoyed because I kept looking for ways to not go to this camp and he kept finding ways around them.”

Upon arriving, Tyler was unsure of what to expect.

“I wasn’t necessarily avoiding becoming a Christian when I first got there. I just always thought that it would be impossible for me to become like that because of how I used to be,” Tyler said. That would certainly change the first night of camp.

“So, the first night was the ‘Altar Call.’ We had this really great sermon and a lot of worship and afterwards, you know, they say, ‘If for whatever reason you need to be prayed for or if you want to accept Christ in your life for the first time, you can come down to the altar.’ I remember getting up to get in line because everyone around me was. As I was walking up there I kind of felt a tugging on my heart and it was one of things where, for the first time in my life, I kind of understood the gospel message that no matter what your past is like, Christ died for your sins and still loves you. For the first time in my life I understood what it actually means to be a

Christian.”

Tyler now carries his faith with him in a variety of activities. One of the most prominent for him is track. Tyler ran at the Drake Relays in his junior and senior years, something that most people never get to experience at all. For him, this was a great accomplishment since he considered not going out prior to his junior year.

“The relationships I’ve built through track are amazing. I’m glad that I went out last year because this year has been the best. The team atmosphere is so much different than it’s been in the past because everyone is so close.”

Outside of sports, Tyler also participated in a plethora of clubs and organizations. He was the Vice President of the Linn-Mar Buddies program, a group leader for National Honor Society, a leader of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, a youth leader at his church’s “4:12” worship group, a “Huddle” leader at Summer Games University, and he volunteered at the Special Olympics every year. Not to mention, Tyler maintained a 4.25 GPA throughout high school, and was overall an outstanding student.

***“Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believes in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.”
-1 Timothy 4:12***

It is notable that Tyler is involved in a number of different activities that deal with students with special needs, such as the Special Olympics and Linn-Mar Buddies. He is also currently employed at the Arc of Eastern Iowa, a company that provides a number of programs and services for children with disabilities and special needs. Giving these children and students the same opportunities as those without disabilities is something that Tyler is very passionate about.

“I believe that students with disabilities can get a lot more out of life than a lot of people give them credit for. Trying to give them the same experiences as everyone else and trying to get them to have fun and be themselves is why I enjoy working with them so much.”

His work with the Linn-Mar Buddies has been substantial, and he’s been integral in changing the

landscape of how the club works. He said that this year, his goal was to increase overall attendance in club meetings. This meant getting more students in general education, and those that are not, to attend on a weekly or monthly basis.

Tyler has also been a long-time volunteer at the Special Olympics, something that involves two of his loves: sports, and helping others. Outside of the Special Olympics, which are held annually in Dubuque, he coaches a softball team that consists of adults with disabilities during the summer.

Tyler’s future holds many possibilities, which is evident by his broad involvement and success in school. He plans to attend Simpson College in Indianola, Iowa, where his girlfriend, Bailey, is currently studying. There is one path in particular, however, that his heart, and mind, have been leaning towards in the last few years. He says the call to ministry has been something he’s always considered, and something that has been blatantly presenting itself in front of him for the last few months.

“I kind of had a feeling, after accepting Christ, for that first year,” he commented. “I always sort of thought that becoming a pastor was a possibility but I put the idea out of my mind just because I get good grades and I could go to school and get a really good job and make a lot of money somewhere else.”

It was pressures from those close to him, he said, that made him tentative to pursuing a career that was backed by faith. He was afraid people would tell him that he could do so much better with his life because he was so talented and so gifted, especially when it came to school.

“My dad, since I’ve accepted Christ, sometimes has disagreements with me that are centered around God and that kind of thing. We’ll have, not arguments, but debates every once and awhile, and he’s definitely not any closer to being a Christian than he was, you know when I was a kid.”

Even though not everyone around him as been completely supportive of his aspirations, God’s calling to the ministry has been loud and clear for him.

“God will put you where He wants you to be,” he explained, “and I feel like He’s been calling me quite frequently over the past few months.”

As the interview was winding down, a teenage girl with blonde hair passed by the door, noticed Tyler and stopped to come into the library. It was McKenna Flood, one of Tyler’s good friends and also a

senior at Linn-Mar High School. She seemed very excited to see Tyler and to get to talk to him. It was immediately obvious through this small interaction that Tyler radiates a positive energy that rubs off on the people around him. Not only that, but people are instantly more comfortable when in his presence.

“Tyler is the best!” she blurted out. “He is honestly the most humble and down to earth person I know, and I seriously mean that. He’s such a great guy and I’m so lucky I can call him my friend.”

The two chatted quickly about how their final weeks of high school were slowly dissolving away and they shared fears and excitements about the journeys that lie ahead of them.

“We should get going, it’s almost eleven,” Tyler said, as he stood up and walked towards the door, holding it open for McKenna to walk through.

As Tyler entered the pulpit, several members of the congregation came over to shake his hand or give him a hug. As Tyler finally reached his regular spot at the front-most pew on the right side of the church, he took a seat, closed his eyes, and said a silent prayer to himself. A soft smile spread across his lips before he opened his eyes once again. This is his happy place. This is where he feels most comfortable.

For Tyler, it has undoubtedly been a long and winding road to get to where he is. Just three years ago, he wasn’t the same person as he is today. Today, he is courageous, he is bold, he is caring, he is a leader, and he is a devout Christian man. All of his accomplishments in sports, in school, in the community, and in his faith - he says - he owes to his savior, Jesus Christ.

“The turning point for me was being in a situation and actually seeing the Holy Spirit move through people’s lives and hearing all their stories and seeing how their lives are changed just by loving God. I look at that and then I look at how my own life was changed and I go, ‘Even when there are sometimes doubts, there is not a doubt in my mind that God is working in everyone’s lives.’”

Tyler’s favorite Bible passage is what helps guide him through each and every single day; it’s what helps keep him focused. The passage in particular is 1 Timothy 4:12, the same passage that the youth group he first started attending in eighth grade is named after. It reads:

“Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believes in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.”

Android versus Apple debate leads to increased competition

By Reese McCoy

Android and Apple. Both sides despise one another but both remain extremely popular among society. So which one to purchase? The answer is not simple, as both phones offer a lot of awesome features that may help to sway consumer choices. When deciding what's best for you, let's put the argument to rest by comparing features and day-to-day uses, as well as surveying users of both brands.

More often than not, people don't know or understand the geekier side of technology. For some people, if their phone does the job, that's good enough for them. For others, they're more concerned about the big features that they use on a day-to-day basis rather than the nitty-gritty details or system specs. Hopefully, a closer look at these features will end this argument once and for all.

When buying a new phone, the first decision is whether to buy an Android or iPhone. This may seem like it's the simplest to answer in context, but this can actually be the hardest. For iPhones, you just need to pick a model. Since many companies make Android phones, deciding which brand and model to buy can be a little confusing. Some may prefer the greater choice and varied price of Android phones, while others value Apple's more simple choice, even though they are a little more expensive in most cases.

Many people use phones for social media and connecting with their peers. Popular apps like SnapChat, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and FaceTime work and have the same features throughout platforms in most cases. One big reason people prefer iPhones is because of FaceTime. FaceTime provides an easy, hassle free app that is available across all Apple devices including iPads, iPhones, and Macs. All your contacts and messages can be accessed on any Apple device, which is very convenient. If their family and friends use Apple's proprietary FaceTime app, then they're usually content with an iPhone.

Unlike Android, Apple restricts and chooses how your own phone is going to be set up. For some, they like the ease of use this provides but others like to be able to customize their phone much more. The Apple store has basically all the widely used Google apps like YouTube, Chrome, etc. Conversely, very few Apple services or apps are available on Android phones.

The "Apple ecosystem" is known to be favorable for Apple users exclusively, but seems to be universally hated by everyone else

outside of it. Apple's "ecosystem" allows users to sync their data into the cloud, which can then be accessed on other Apple products. While this is great for dedicated Apple users, if one wants to switch to Android, years of data in the cloud could be inaccessible from outside the ecosystem. Since there is no official way of transferring and accessing that data outside the ecosystem, many people find themselves "stuck" with having an iPhone.

Apple will remain as proprietary as possible in order to keep everyone in the "ecosystem," making it difficult to leave. If you have music on iTunes, you're also stuck with using Apple products unless you want to lose all your previously purchased music. Android's platform is far more open to third party applications. Since Android is made by Google, they also have an "ecosystem." With Google's ecosystem, you can access your data literally on any internet connected device, Apple included. This means switching from Android to Apple is easy, but the other way around is a challenge.

With Android phones being open-source, the user is able to get root or administrative privileges, which allows you set up the device exactly how you want it. A little computer knowledge is required but there are how-to's on the internet to teach you. Getting root privileges also allows you to install custom roms or bootloaders, which allows you to run any other operating system on top of Android. An open-source operating system allows for software and system bugs to be easier to find and fix for anyone owning an Android device. For Android phones and PCs, there are also cash rewards for anyone that reports security flaws in Microsoft and Google's software.

Security is a huge market and major issue in modern technology. A malicious hacker would want to infect the greatest number of devices as possible. According to statista.com, nearly 90% of the world runs on PCs, and 80% of the world runs on Android phones. It's not that Android phones are less secure, it is that the market share difference is attractive to hackers. Those in tech fields argue that being hacked can be traced to user error nine out of ten times. If you're an iPhone user, don't get too cocky. There is still iPhone malware out there waiting to get you.

For the tech-minded people who like customizing their phone exactly to their liking, Android is the choice for you. If you plug an Android phone into a computer, you



can view, copy, and delete files just like you can with a flash drive, as long as you're signed into the phone and grant permission to do so. This allows users to install software that cannot be found on the app store, and being able to transfer videos, music, and pictures from and to any computer. On an Apple phone, you can view and copy the files too, although the file and folder names are scrambled so it's basically not useable. All the content that is seen, transferred, and edited is controlled and locked down by Apple.

Since there are many different companies making phones with divergent features, shapes, and sizes, it is challenging having one giant software update. Apple has the advantage here because they have fewer models which need updates. The newest version of Android, Android 8 (codenamed Oreo), was running on only 0.5% of Android devices eight weeks after its release according to engadget.com.

When it comes to Google Assistant and Siri, there is no question who the winner is. Google Assistant is more developed in the sense of App integration. The assistant allows you to Google anything with your voice, send texts and call people, find location in Google Maps and more. People would argue that Siri has more of a personality which may be true, however for app integration, Google Assistant has always been the best choice. This is because Apple has to update Siri around what Google has released, which takes extra time. Google can release updates for both Google Assistant and their apps, not needing to respond to Apple releases.

Battery life is major problem amongst phone users. Because Android phones come in all different shapes and sizes, it's a little difficult to say all Android phones share the same technology. However the major Android brands like Samsung, LG and Motorola, do charge faster and have bigger batteries compared to iPhones. However that is not to say the less expensive Android phones don't charge as fast or hold the same amount of charge. The major Android brands use Qualcomm tech to charge their phones. They claim

that with the new QuickCharge 4.0, five minutes of charging is equal to five hours of battery life. According to tomsguide.com, Samsung's new Galaxy S9+ has a 3,500mAh battery. Apple's iPhone X has a 2,716mAh battery. Expect all-day battery from both but Android wins this round being able to charge faster and hold more charge.

We all love our selfies and respect that smartphone cameras are getting better every year. When it comes to what most people consider a great camera, the more camera-oriented crowd would argue which is best by comparing the tiniest of features and specs. Comparing the newest flagship smartphones, the Galaxy S9 and the iPhone X, the spec sheet shows very similar results with the Galaxy S9 having slightly better specs with variable aperture, which basically means better low light shots. This is the case with every generation of smartphones. Both Android and Apple have very similar spec cameras, but Android usually has the edge in the camera department. When it comes to digital cameras, the software processing the images is a huge part in turning out better images. Android has many different companies making their own software for their cameras, this encouraging innovation and competition which, again, gives Android the edge.

As phones are getting more and more expensive, the cheaper Android phones are closing in on the quality gap that used to exist in the market. For \$500, the OnePlus 5T packs very similar specs and features to flagships like the Galaxy S9. The screen, build quality, and features are very similar, yet the phone has a higher megapixel count than the Galaxy S9. Retailing for almost half the cost, many people would argue it's not worth paying twice as much just to get the Galaxy brand recognition.

What it comes down to is whether you like to have more control over your phone, or prefer simplicity of use. If you're technically-minded or like to customize your phone exactly the way you want it, an Android phone would suit you better. iPhones are for users who like simple content in one place.

Poms excel at Nationals, grab highest place in history

By Brynn Carr

Imagine, your time has come to give it your all for a shot at a national title. After working for ten months straight towards this one final performance, it is time to walk from under the famous Cinderella Castle and onto the finals floor. This is a reality each year for the Linn-Mar Varsity Poms.

Each year the Linn-Mar Varsity Poms travel to Orlando, Florida to compete at the National Dance Team Championship. The championship takes place in the first weekend of February and lasts a total of five days. Teams travel from all over country and world to give it their best shot in hopes of securing a national title.

“I think it is the best feeling ever just knowing all of our hard work will pay off at nationals,” says Sophomore Nina Taylor. “But also I am really nervous going on to the finals floor because my team is depending on me.”

“The feeling of being at nationals is indescribable. The atmosphere is so exciting and positive. Sharing the feeling of accomplishment with my team is so rewarding,” says Junior Myah Schilling.

The Linn-Mar Varsity Poms is a team made up of seventeen girls and three coaches, each who dedicate their time and energy while still keeping up with school work, jobs and social functions. The pom season is May through the end of February.

“Having poms almost the whole year is very hard because we are always giving up our free time and putting tons of effort into each practice, but when we compete and place well, that’s when all of it pays off,” says Taylor.

The Poms prepare for Nationals by competing at the Iowa State Dance and Drill Team competition in Des Moines, Iowa, in the beginning of December and at the Spirit of America Regionals in Minneapolis, Minnesota at the beginning of January. The Varsity Poms took first place in every dance they competed in for both of the competitions.

The long, hard ten months of practicing and preparing is all for those five days spent in Florida.

“Our main goal is doing well at nationals. We compete at state and regionals, but our eyes are always set on how well we will do in Florida,” says Taylor.

Two minutes is all the Poms get to prove to the judges that they deserve a placement up with the best of the best.

“We say all year, ‘ten months for two minutes’, and it couldn’t be more true. We step on to that floor knowing we only have a short

amount of time to leave everything we have out there, especially at finals. Finals is surreal. The music is so loud, you can feel it in your chest. The best way I can describe it is it’s an out-of-body experience. The two minutes is over before it even sinks in. That’s why I feel like it’s so special,” says Taylor.

At the 2018 National Dance Team Championship, or NDTC, the Linn-Mar Varsity Poms placed 5th in the Medium Jazz category and 2nd in the Medium Pom category, a record breaking finish for the Linn-Mar Poms program. The highest placement Linn-Mar had received prior to the 2018 competition, was 3rd place in Pom in 2009. It is very special to the 2017-18 team to hold the honor of placing the best ever in school history.

“Varsity Poms always look up to that team [the 2008-2009 team] as being one of the best. They got three firsts at state and then went and placed 3rd [in Pom] and 6th [in Jazz] and until this year, no team was able to come near their accomplishments. It’s absolutely surreal looking back on our year and knowing we made history just like they did at the time,” says Junior Maddie Kerr.

Any sort of final award ceremony causes anxiousness and butterflies, and it was no different for the Varsity Poms as they went into the NDTC award ceremony.

“We were really just hoping for the best. We knew we did our best, but we really didn’t know how our best would match up against all of the other amazing teams,” says Kerr, “Hearing the third place team’s name get called and not hearing our name was the craziest feeling. I was thinking to myself, ‘there’s no way this is real’, and then they called us second, and all of us were just going crazy. We were all just so proud of everything we did at finals to get that second place medal. There’s really no words to describe it.”

It was very exciting for the Pom girls to receive a high placement at Nationals, but also exciting for their parents too, who got to witness their daughters make Linn-Mar history.

“It’s a thrill and a proud moment for parents, however the best part is seeing the happiness among the girls and coaches,” says junior parent John Carr. “It confirms how their hard work pays off.

The trip to Nationals is a crazy and special time for the Varsity Poms. Not only do they work toward one collective goal on the dance floor, but they also bond with each other throughout the whole trip.

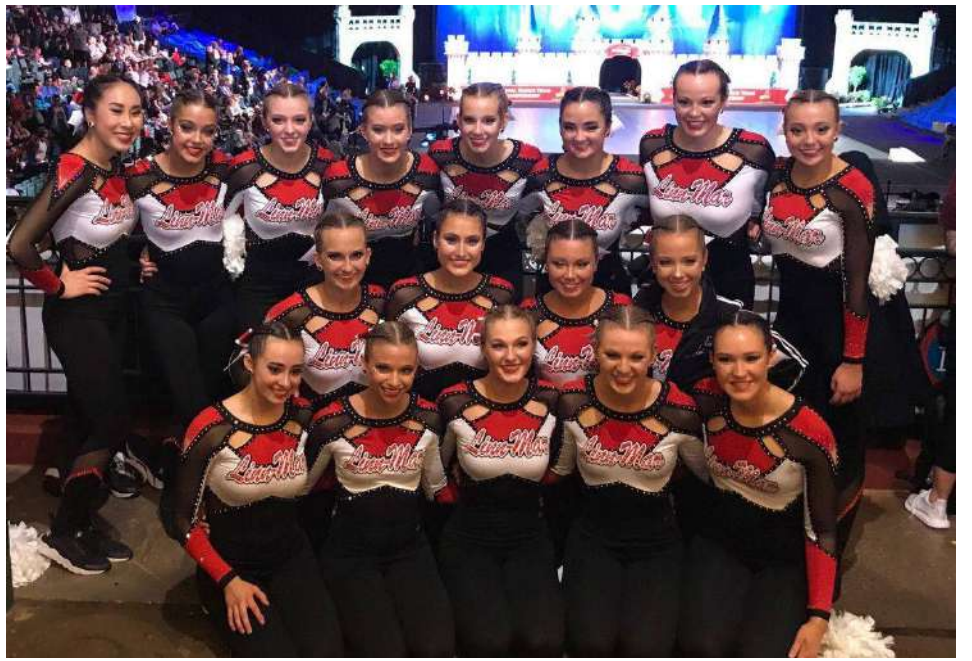
“Yeah, nationals is mostly about competing, but also I’ve made memories with my team that

will last a lifetime. Even though nationals is close to the end of our season, you bond to a whole ‘nother level which you never thought was possible,” says Taylor.

“Nationals is one of the most fulfilling experiences. You get to finally see all of the hard work pay off, but you also get to spend five days straight with your best friends. We all love each other so much, and

it really shows on and off the floor,” says Kerr.

If you know the Poms, you are probably very well aware of their shared craziness, dedication to their sport and undeniable closeness with one another. In the Linn-Mar Varsity Poms’ case, at nationals, this equation led to a result that made history.



Seniors do service for community

Over 250 Linn-Mar students participated in the annual volunteer service day on Wednesday, May 23. Students volunteered at a variety of places around town including: Indian Creek, the Salvation Army, Indian Creek Nature Center, Habitat for Humanity, Lowe Park, Summit Pointe Senior Living Center, African American Museum, Cedar Rapids Animal Care, Gems of Hope, McCloud Run, WRAP (wheelchair ramp building) and Linn-Mar High School.



Drahos hitting his stride as leader

By Katie Dennis

On a sunny Thursday afternoon, a young dark-haired boy walked into Scooter's Coffee Shop on C Ave, and found a seat in an empty corner. He sat comfortably at a table for two, set his phone face-down on the table and patiently fixed the bracelets on his right wrist. His phone has made a few quiet sounds notifying him that someone had contacted him but he left the phone where it was and focused on his wrist. One of the bracelets was rubber and showed his support for a local cause but the other two seemed to hold some value to him because they were handmade and were fraying and losing color, showing that he has worn them for a long time. Aside from unique bracelets, he was dressed nicely but comfortably in a button-up shirt, khaki shorts and Birks. He sat quietly while waiting for someone to take the seat across from him.

When the seat across the table was occupied by me for his interview, he leaned back in his chair and said, "Hey, how have you been? I haven't seen you in a while, what's new?" as if he was conducting the interview. While many people may change how they act depending on who surrounds them, Kevin Drahos seems to be himself no matter who he is with. Kevin is a very bold, welcoming junior from Linn-Mar High School who is making changes left and right to better his community. For example, he

is working to ensure the safety of his fellow students while they are getting an education by organizing anti-gun protests.

Kevin has a charming personality and carries himself with a level of self-confidence that many people hope to someday obtain. In middle school he participated in soccer, dance and music and he is still very involved in high school activities such as show choir, Key Club, marching band, piano, percussion, choir, show choir, Student Council and SIYAC (State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council). This year, Kevin was involved in 10th Street show choir at Linn-Mar and helped play a role in their undefeated season of tough competitions and performances.

Not only is Kevin dedicated to his schooling and extra-curricular activities, but also to politics. With recent events, like the school shooting in Florida, Kevin found his chance to start his political career in a small, but meaningful way. He helped to conduct a seventeen minute peaceful protest at the North entrance of the school by the flagpole to honor the victims of the shooting. He and some of his friends organized about six hundred students to attend the protest, where they rallied against gun violence, read the names of the victims and had a moment silence to honor them. Kevin's voice cried "Enough is enough. We are worth saving and protecting," in the entryway of the

school and he encouraged other students to join his protest.

His confidence in front of the crowd that morning helped to show him that he was meant to be a leader because he was strong with his words and didn't show weakness or any sign of backing down from addressing the issue at hand.

While Kevin has a very confident and strong personality, he has had his share of hard times and challenges. One of his toughest challenges was coming out as gay. For Kevin, coming out as gay was difficult but even though he came out a year ago, he says, "it's still an obstacle, but I have learned a lot from it." He says he used to be very concerned about what people thought about him while he was trying to act straight for so long.

"It was mentally draining to try to not act gay or make people think I was gay and so finally all the worry of trying to hide being gay just kind of built up and I didn't want to deal with it anymore so I finally told my friends." His friends supported and accepted him for who he was and are still by his side today. They support him when he is treated badly by people on social media because of the movements that he supports and Kevin still stands tall and does not let the negativity get him down.

Does he think being a gay man in politics will affect his efficiency and effectiveness in the community?

"I hope it doesn't. But I will



always have some people who won't support me or attack my ideals because I am gay, which is fine. I don't care. I want to focus on being a good representative and lawmaker for the LGBT community because they are under-represented. But I am different because I am such a unique person and some people might not like that."

Kevin continues to work to change gun laws to make schools safer for young adults and to improve his community. He has influenced his classmates and the adults of Marion by organizing walk-outs and marches and by being involved in SIYAC. Kevin has made changes locally and nationally due to his dedication and support for what he thinks is right. By standing for the safety of students, Kevin has strengthened his friends, his school and his community and he is making a difference in his local government as well, all before graduating.

Drake Relays becomes marquee event for track and field

By Trent Davis

Since the year 1910, Drake Stadium, located on the campus of Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa, has been home to one of the most prestigious track and field events in the United States. Most track athletes, and Iowa citizens in general for that matter, could probably tell you that this event is America's athletic classic, the Drake Relays. Each year, the Drake Relays plays host to some of the most outstanding competitors in the world at every level of competition. Olympians, college athletes, and high school students alike, compete on the blue oval annually with a common goal in mind: securing a white flag. Winning an event at the Drake Relays is seen as a great accomplishment, and is represented by the white flags the winners receive with the words "Drake Relays Champion" inscribed in blue lettering. Nearly 40,000 people attend the event, which spans over three days, and is held on the last weekend of April. The Drake Re-

lays has not only been a proud tradition of track and field in the last 109 years, but also a proud tradition of the state of Iowa.

The very first running of what has become known as America's Athletic Classic was in April of 1910. At the time, only 82 total athletes competed, and just 100 spectators came to watch, according to Drake University's website. In just five short years, the Relays saw its first crowd of more than 10,000 people, and its first world record on the track. This helped the event gain attention from the rest of the country. The increase in popularity carried all the way into the 1960's when it was opened to women's events as well, and when notable Olympian, Wilma Rudolph, decided to compete in the professional division. More and more distinguished track and field athletes decided to follow in her footsteps, helping make the Drake Relays the first track and field event broadcast by radio, according to *Track and Field News*.

By 1978, the switch to metric measurements became official, bringing with it a brand new, state-of-the-art, 400 meter track. This track would be resurfaced every ten years or so to maintain its elite status, and was renamed the "Jim Duncan" track in 1988 after the longtime public address announcer. Throughout the years, there have been several modifications made to the meet schedule to enhance popularity and spectator interaction. For example, the Grand Blue Mile, a road race run the Tuesday before the Relays, was added in 2010. Student street painting, the Beautiful Bulldog Contest, and a parade the weekend before have all also been added.

Notable athletes from across the globe travel to Des Moines every single spring in order to compete at one of the best track and field events the United States has to offer. Among them include Ari- es Merritt, gold medalist and world record holder in the 110 meter high hurdles, Michael Johnson, an

American Olympic sprinter, Jesse Owens, Bruce Jenner, and many more. Outstanding athletes such as these continue to attend the Drake Relays because of the proud tradition it has been able to establish, and because of the great competition it offers. The first world record to be broken was in 1922, and many more have followed. The event also boasts outstanding times in the 100 meter dash (10.01 seconds), the high jump (2.40 meters), and the mile (3:51.71).

Professional athletes may be a huge draw for the Drake Relays but, its amateur competitors, the college and high school-aged athletes, bring in a crowd of their own. More than 200 college and university teams from across the country compete at the Relays, as well as hundreds of high schools from across Iowa as well. These fields are as equally competitive as the world-class division, and can also boast fantastic records in almost every single

continued on Page 10: Drake

Linn-Mar track teams attack state records

By Trent Davis

The 2018 season for track athletes across the state of Iowa was certainly a frustrating one. Cold weather and freak snow storms late into the spring kept runners indoors and off the track for a large portion of the season. The Linn-Mar girls track team even had a small moment of panic early on in the season when the Drake Relays were only two weeks away and they hadn't had a chance to qualify simply because they had not run any meets. Regardless of the circumstances, however, both the boys' and girls' teams persevered through what they couldn't control and focused on getting better every single day. This hard work and determination throughout the season was apparent by the way both teams were able to finish the season at the State Track Meet.

The girls' track team had one of its most successful seasons to date, finishing fourth overall in the team standings at State and shattering records along the way. They were lead by dominant senior Payton Wensel who finished her decorated career at Linn-Mar with a bang. At the Drake Relays, the quartet of Chana Northrup, Olivia Hubler, Jill Bennett, and Wensel broke the all-time Iowa best in the Sprint Medley Relay, clocking in at 1:44.07. Wensel was able to secure two more gold medals at Drake in the 400 meter-relay (4x100 relay), and in the 400 meter hurdles, where she ran the second fastest time in the history of Iowa high schools.

The girls were far from done with their successful season when State weekend rolled around at the end of May. They were able to qualify a plethora of events including long jump, high jump, 1600 meter-relay, 800 meter-relay, 400 meter-relay, the record-setting Sprint Medley Relay, and a few others. Skyler Presler placed fifth in the high jump, scoring four points early on in the weekend for the Lions. Dimia Burrell kept the field events going with the long jump, sneaking into eighth place and tallying one point. Wensel placed second in the 400 meter dash, finishing behind Sidney Milani, who set the all-time best in

the event in that race. Payton was still able to bounce back, however, as she was part of the winning Sprint Medley Relay, which broke its own record, and took home another victory in the 400 hurdles, running a time of 60.15 seconds. Overall, the girls scored 55 points in a very successful weekend, capping off a memorable season.

Although the boys didn't place as high at the State Meet as the girls did, many on the team regarded this past season as a very successful one, and one that set the tone for future teams. The core of this team this season was a young one, comprised mostly of sophomores and juniors, with a good mix of strong senior leaders to help guide the team through its many ups and downs. They were unable to qualify as many events as they would have liked to the Drake

Relays in 2018, but they were still able to qualify the 400 meter-relay, the 1600 meter run, the 400 meter hurdles, the 110 meter hurdles, and the Shuttle Hurdle Relay. Trent Davis placed the highest of any Lion, getting third place in the 110 meter hurdles, and also anchored the Shuttle Hurdle team of Abass Kemokai, Carson Reilly, and Blake Esker, which placed eighth.

The boys' Lion track team was able to place second at the Conference and District track meets in the two weeks between Drake and State. They reloaded quickly and prepared to compete hard at the State Track meet, even though many people around the state didn't expect much out of them. They qualified many of the same events that they did for Drake along with the long jump, high jump, Sprint

and Distance Medley Relays, and quite a few other events. The field events contributed some key points early on in the weekend when Trey Hutcheson set a new personal best and cleared 6'3" in the high jump, finishing in sixth place. Riley Higgins also placed sixth in the discus, also setting a new personal best throwing 170'4". Trent Davis kept the 110 meter high hurdle success rolling with a runner-up finish in a time of 14.42, then placed eighth in the 400 meter hurdles, setting a new personal best in 54.67 seconds. Dylan Dolzeal capped off the weekend with a huge personal best in the 1600 meter run, finishing in 4:24.52, which was good for seventh place. Overall, the boys finished tied for sixteenth place tallying a total of 19 points.



Drake: continued from Page 9
event. Being given the opportunity to compete at the Drake Relays is something that most high school track athletes dream about, and is also something that is revered as a great accomplishment. Take it from Linn-Mar senior, Trent Roling.

"The first year I found out that I was going to [The] Drake [Relays], I was so excited. It's some-

thing that you always think about when you're daydreaming, and also a really huge feat. It's sort of a validation that you've 'made it' in the track and field world I guess."

Trent isn't alone in the way he feels about Drake. So many high school athletes find it so amazing to run at Drake Stadium because of how difficult it is to qualify for an event. It only accepts 16 to 32

participants from the entire state for each event, depending on what event it is. This comes out to be around the top 5% of athletes in the state of Iowa that are taken for each race or field event. Since qualifying is so difficult, making it to Des Moines is that much sweeter.

Making it to the Drake Relays is one thing, but being able to win amongst the best athletes in the

state, that's another thing. Each winner is awarded a gold medal as well as a championship flag. To the athletes, winning a flag is what dreams are made of.

Payton Wensel, a senior at Linn-Mar, told *The Gazette* that winning a flag was "the greatest feeling ever." For her and so many athletes across the world, attaining a Drake Flag will forever be a great accomplishment.

Skateboarding provides entertainment, exercise

By Blake Chambers

Awesome! You've made the decision to start skateboarding, or, maybe you are still thinking about it, but you're wondering what steps to take in order to get into this sport. Everybody has to start somewhere.

First, you need to get a board that suits you and your interests. There are a lot of different styles and brands of boards available for all skill levels and interests. Do yourself a favor, and don't go to Wal-Mart or Target to get a skateboard. In the skateboard industry, the "you get what you pay for" saying, couldn't be more true. I would suggest going to your local skate shop, (which in the Cedar Rapids area is Eduskate). They will help you browse the selection and give advice in choosing a skateboard that's appropriate for your size and desires.

Longboard versus Skateboard

The two most common types of boards are longboards and skateboards. Longboards are built more for cruising and going from place to place. They are also really good for beginners that want to just hop right on and ride because they are easier to ride than a skateboard. Longboards aren't meant for doing tricks, however, so if you're interested in popping Ollies, it's not the best option.

Skateboard decks are what allow you to do tricks and more intricate maneuvers. With tapered ends perfect for kicking, tricks, and jumps; and an easy, soft maneuverability, these boards are excellent for skating around at quick speeds, though they'll take a little more practice to get balanced when you're first starting out. If you want to eventually drop into a half-pipe, this is the board for you.

Custom anyone?

A custom board is one that is built and assembled by yourself with basic tools you could easily get at the same skate shop where you buy your deck. Generally, more experienced skaters will choose their wheels, trucks, bearings, and deck separately from the options available. When you choose the type or brand of each component that best suits you as a skater, you'll be happier on your board. A pre-built board is acceptable and may be even preferable if you are just starting out as a skater, because they are going to be cheaper, yet still adequate.

Set-up

When shopping for a board, make sure that it is set up right for a beginner. While loose trucks and a super curved board can be good for tricks, you don't want these when you are first starting to skate. The

above components make it much more difficult to stay balanced while riding, making it unlikely that you will stick with it if you can't learn to stay on the board. You can loosen your trucks later on when you are able to control speed-wobble, but until then, keep them a little tighter so you can learn to better balance on your board.

Shoes are important

You probably don't want to skate around in flip-flops or work boots. You may have a hard time staying comfortable on the board, and it's also a good way to hurt yourself or roll your ankle, so get a good pair of skate shoes. Most shoes aren't overly expensive and average from \$50 to 60. Skate shoes are going to have the right kind of sole to properly grip your board. Brands like Vans, Airwalk, DC, and Etnies are all signature skate shoes and are all great options.

Safety equipment

When starting out you also want to always be at least wearing a helmet. While you can get more padding, like elbow and knee pads, a helmet is essential to ensure your safety as you will be more than likely to fall a lot in the beginning stages. Just keep in mind that nothing is dorky about avoiding expensive trips to the Emergency Room. Don't let anyone tell you that "real skaters" don't use protective gear. This is an immature, foolish, and flat-out wrong statement. Besides, a helmet is cooler than permanent brain damage.

Where to Skate?

Now that you have everything you need, you need to find a place where you are actually going to skate. Ideally, you want smooth concrete without many cracks and bumps that could jostle you as you are learning to ride. Once you get more experienced, you'll be able to skate on uneven surfaces safely, but learning in a parking lot or on a smooth driveway will be much easier when you are first starting out. It's unfortunately harder and harder to find places that welcome skateboarders, given the unfair reputation skateboarding has in some towns. Don't be a skater that gives law-abiding boarders a bad name. Make sure you've got permission to skate when you're skating, and avoid scuffing up property that doesn't belong to you.

What about the Tricks?

The biggest thing that keeps beginners from actually learning how to skate well is wanting to jump straight to performing Ollies before even learning the fundamentals. You'll get there, with practice, but you've got to learn to push the board and ride it comfortably.

You've got to master staying on the board before you can start jumping and doing tricks with it.

The Basics to Riding

There's no right way to stand on the board, so set the board on stable ground, like the grass or inside on some carpet, (just anywhere where it won't roll easily) and figure out what feels most comfortable for you. Put one foot in front of the other, lined up roughly with the trucks. According to Aaron Kyro, a pro skateboarder from the Bay area, "Imagine if you are going to run and slide on a sheet of ice, which foot would you put forward to do so?" This can help you to figure out your riding stance. There are two different stances: regular, and goofy. Just because one is called goofy doesn't mean it's any more or less common than the other. Regular simply means that you ride with your left foot forward, and push with your right foot. Goofy stance means that you ride with your right foot forward and push with your left.

Now that you can stand relatively well on your board and have tried to do so on concrete and other hard ground, try to push off. On some level concrete, stand on the board with your forward foot and use a long, even step with your back foot to create momentum. When beginners start, they often tend to take several short "stabs" before getting started, rather than long pushes. You want to use a longer, sweeping push off, which will make the ride smoother and ensure that you'll stay balanced.

Now that you can push off, you need to shift into the riding position. When you get moving, you need to shift your riding foot sideways, more like how you were standing when you had the board still on the grass, and bring your pushing foot up to rest lightly on the fishtail at the back of the board. Your knees should be slightly bent, but you should be generally standing upright, with a straight back, to learn correct balance.

In a proper riding stance, your forward foot should be just behind or on the front truck screws, and your back foot should be near the back of your board, near or on the tail. This is the most stable and safe riding stance. Having your back foot already on the tail makes a quick kick-turn easier. This is the most difficult thing to learn when you're first getting started, but the good news is you'll be riding successfully when you get it figured out! No fear!

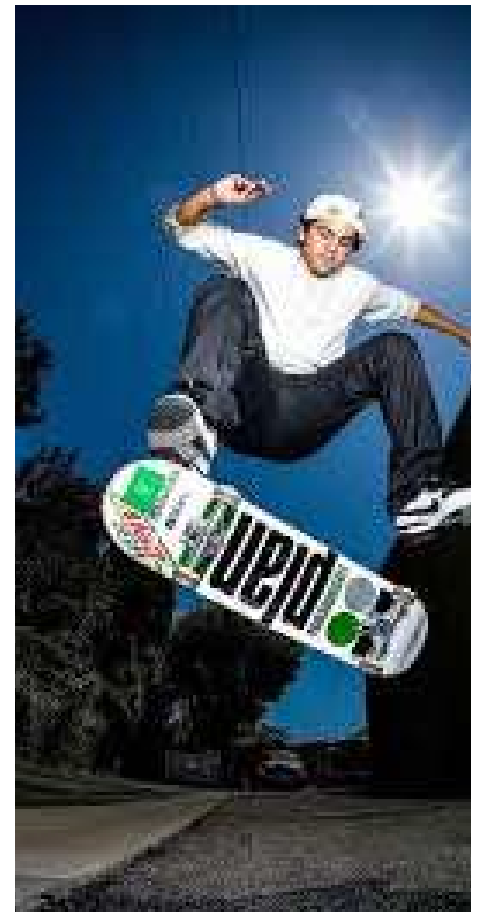
Next, unless you plan on going straight all the time, you must learn to turn. To turn, you'll shift your

weight forward or back from the ankle, depending on your stance and whether or not you want to go right or left. The amount of pressure you'll use will depend on how tight your trucks are and how far you want to turn. Practice on a level surface, getting started, shifting into your riding stance, and then executing a turn safely without falling off. This type of turning is the most common and is referred to as carving.

To make a tight turn, you want to learn to kick-turn. With your back foot, apply a slight pressure to the tail of the board to lift the front wheels slightly off the ground. Pivot your body in the direction you want to turn. This should be done in one motion. Be careful to not to put too much pressure on the tail or you risk the board slipping out from under you. Also, it's probably not a very good idea to do this while speeding downhill.

Now that you are riding on your board, you need to know how to stop. There are lots of different ways to stop a skateboard, and many of them are more advanced. For the beginner, the easiest way to stop or to slow down is by putting a foot on the pavement, or execute a tail stop. To tail stop, you'll shift most of your weight onto your back foot, standing on the tail of the board, and grind the board to a stop with the tail. Some people, including myself, don't like doing this because it wears down the back tail, but many skateboards, especially flat cruising models, have a plastic stopper designed for helping you stop, making it a good option for beginners.

Learning to ride your board and get comfortable on it is one of the most important ways to get better at skateboarding, however, learning



Skateboarding cont. on Page 11

Boys' tennis take state championship

By Brynn Carr

Coming off of a second place finish at state in 2017, The Linn-Mar Boys Tennis Team is hungry to bring the state championship back to Marion. After coming up short to the Trojans of Iowa City West 5-1 at state the previous year, the boys are more determined than ever. The Lions are led by sophomore Luke VanDonslear who is 5-1 in his second season and placed 6th individually at state his freshman year. VanDonslear leads the Lions in singles and will compete at state doubles with senior Ben Hediger who is 6-0 individually so far in his final season for Linn-Mar. Also, helping the Lions in their success is senior Jack Gertsen who is 4-0 in singles and 6-0 in doubles for his senior season.

Linn-Mar may have come up short in the previous years, but the undefeated Lions are ready to fight to the finish against the also undefeated Trojans.

"It's very important [to win] because we have four seniors in our top 6 and they want to go out with a bang. West has won five state championships in six years and we want to stop them from getting another one," says VanDonslear.

Gertsen, being one of the seniors in the top six line up, is more than determined to win the state championship again.

"I've been a part of the Varsity team for four years and we won state my freshman year in 2015. When we won state my freshman year we had two underclassmen and four seniors on the team and that's a lot like we have had this year. It would mean a lot to this senior class and this is the best chance we've had in a while to win. The goal is to win and I think

we can do it and honestly anything less is a disappointing season," says Gertsen.

It is very clear that Linn-Mar has a different mindset going into the 2018 season. The Lions are filled with talent, but what they are really hoping shows through is their dedication and mental toughness.

"[This year] we are all more mentally tough to compete with the best teams. We're more determined than last year and [we are] staying focused for every team we play," says VanDonslear.

Hours and hours were poured into the off season to prepare the Lions for spring success. Many team members stepped up and put the time in to better themselves and their game for the sake of the team.

"We trained lot in the off season and we are hoping it pays off. I practiced every day for maybe up to four hours a day and I got in the gym to get stronger and faster. Most of the team did the same," says VanDonslear.

In the Lions' case, it is not just the players behind all of the success. Coach Chris Wundram plays an important role in the ongoing success that the Lions have had this season. Coach Wundram is spoken of very highly by his players for his motivation and passion for them to always reach their highest potential.

"My coach [Wundram] always says to keep fighting and to push yourself to your limits. He [Wundram] is a very good motivator, he pushes all of us every day to want to get better. He knows what we are capable of," says VanDonslear.

"Chris Wundram is a competitive guy. He always wants to win. No matter what. I know everyone wants to win, but Coach [Wundram] takes

it to a whole new level. He also motivates us every day in practice by mostly yelling, but he gives us those pre-game speeches that make us think we can really do anything and beat anyone. But the thing I've noticed about him is he cares more than any coach I've ever had and it's awesome that he cares so much. I really appreciate all the time and effort he gives us," says Gertsen.

It is obvious the 2018 Linn-Mar Boys Tennis Team is special. Gertsen and VanDonslear both have invested time and energy to perfect their game on the court, but what can be said about the chemistry of their team is worth more than any match won or even a first place trophy.

"So we've known each other for a while now and over the years we've gotten closer. This year is sad because it's coming to an end so we

want to give it our all every day and cherish every day together," says VanDonslear.

"Most of us have been playing together for four years. This senior class became really close after four years on the tennis team and we all have each other's backs. I've known [sophomore] Jackson Elles before high school tennis, but never really got to know him until high school and we have become pretty good friends. I've known Luke [VanDonslear] since he was in preschool. He's like a brother to me. He blended in really well with our team and has been a huge asset to our team. With all the wins our team has had the past two years it's hard not to bond and build chemistry with all these guys. It's going to be awesome if I have the chance to hold up the trophy with them," says Gertsen.



Above: Senior Jake Gertzen hopes to rally for a State win this tennis season.

Update! The Linn-Mar boys tennis team recently won their seventh straight district championship. The senior-sophomore duo of Ben Hediger and Luke Von Donslear won doubles and Senior Zach Glanz won singles competition.

Even more immediate update: At press time, the Linn-Mar boys tennis team narrowly defeated Iowa City West 5-4 to win the class 2a state tennis tournament! Congratulations Lions!

Skateboarding cont. from Page 10

to fall can be just as important. No skater has ever not fallen off the board. Falling can be discouraging, but learning to fall properly can help make sure you don't seriously hurt yourself. Always wear a helmet, to keep your head safe, and try to use wrist guards, which you can use to take the brunt of most falls and avoid the nasty scrapes that are part of the skating world. The most common problem to cause falls seems to be running over small pebbles that jam up the wheels or hitting a crack that suddenly causes you to lose your balance. Keep a close eye on the terrain as you're skating, but keep your eyes up to stay balanced as much as possible.

One way to better ensure you stick with your new hobby is to skate with other skaters. Just like music and other sports, skating is easiest to learn when you have good

people to learn from. Hook up with more experienced skaters to watch and learn all you can, pick up tips and tricks along the way. Ask for advice and be honest about your experience. Make sure you don't get suckered into trying something you're not ready for, though. If you go out skating with a bunch of guys doing advanced tricks down a flight of stairs, you could wind up seriously hurting yourself. You're just trying to learn how to stop without falling down, go slowly. You'll get there eventually.

While it might not seem as important, watch lots of skating videos. Skating videos are the heart of skating culture. Compilation videos and tutorials are widely available for free on the Internet. You can find virtuosic displays of skating prowess, as well as helpful hints and tips for the beginner. For

example, Aaron Kyro and Andrew Shrock both have good tutorials and information on their channels. You can learn how to do more advanced technical skills and tricks with videos.

Another great way to help out with balance and board control is to try skating downhill. Letting gravity help you along the way is an important step in becoming a more advanced skater. It can be scary the first time you start going down a bigger hill where you don't have to push. Learning to balance and stay in control of your board is a necessary skill you'll need to master early on.

To stay balanced, crouch lower on the board and use your arms. Keep your ankles as still as possible, because at higher speeds, smaller movements create bigger swings, making it more likely you'll lose

your balance.

Don't rush yourself, try tricks when you're ready. When you start getting comfortable on the board and can stay on it regularly without falling down, you might be ready to start trying a trick or two. It's what you've been building toward, after all! Tricks might include shove-its, Ollies, frontside and backside 180, pop shove-it to the front shove, and then to the heel-flip and kick-flip. Simple grinds aren't too bad either once you learn how to Ollie and control your board in the air.

Finally, just keep skating! Stick with it! Learning to skateboard well takes time and effort. It's not something you'll be able to learn overnight. By taking it slow and practicing as much as you can, you'll improve and get more comfortable on the board in no time. Try not to get discouraged.

White suggests legislating ammunition

By Seth White

Meet Bob. In Bob's house, he owns a certain item, which is cheap and expendable. However, Bob lives in a country where the sale and distribution of this item is strictly regulated, so he doesn't have very much of it. Purchasing this item requires government-certified personal identification. Only legal adults can buy it, and sales are very limited. All purchases are monitored and recorded, and buying large amounts of this item, even over a long period of time, draws the attention of local or national authorities. This is a common item in Bob's country, one which millions of people buy and use legitimately every day. But the damage it can cause in the hands of just a few misguided individuals is serious enough to merit regulating it for the entire population, even for well-meaning guys like Bob.

There are several items that could fit this description, depending on what country Bob lives in. But the shocking truth is that, in the United States of America, this would be an accurate description of cold medicine, but not lethal ammunition. If America can track and control the distribution of cold medicine to tackle the meth problem, couldn't we do something similar for ammunition, and tackle the mass-shooting problem?

To be fair, America doesn't just regulate cold medicine for no reason. One of the most common components in cold medicine, a drug called pseudoephedrine, can be used in the illegal production of crystal meth, a drug whose infamy speaks for itself. But while crystal meth is no joke, the vast majority of people who buy pseudoephedrine use it only to treat their sickness. And, the amount of pseudoephedrine the average person will use is nowhere near what a meth-lab would need. Nonetheless, Bob has to jump through legal hoops just to treat his runny nose.

Now, let's transition over to America's gun control debate. Mass shootings are no joke either, and few would argue otherwise. School shootings, in particular, are not only unspeakably terrible, but they do lasting sociological and psychological damage. It is widely known that America has an unusually high amount of mass shootings (including school shootings) compared to the rest of the world. According to research from the University of Alabama, excluding attacks from terrorism organizations, "America holds 31%

of global mass shooters," despite making up only 5% of the world's population.

Each mass shooting that occurs brings with it renewed demands for gun control, and renewed efforts to prevent it. There have been landmark regulations, like the famous assault weapons and high capacity magazine bans, as well as the implementation of background checks and federal and state licensing. There have been efforts to close loopholes in these regulations, like the infamous 'gun show loophole.' However, there is one serious topic that has been sorely overlooked in America's gun control debate: ammunition.

Many developed countries have addressed the problem of mass shootings, most have done so more successfully than America. Take Switzerland for instance, the European poster child of American organizations like the NRA (National Rifle Association), which look to it as an example of a country which loves its guns, and yet doesn't have a gun violence problem (only 2 mass shootings in the last 20 years). To quote an article from the NRA itself, "In Switzerland, firearms in the hands of every citizen are considered [a] wholesome and a civic duty... the tradition of having a heavily-armed civilian populace has been this small nation's guarantee of freedom and self-determination." Based on that tone, America's strongest gun-regulation opponents would surely agree to using Switzerland as a model in the gun control debate.

Now, let's compare the nuances of Switzerland's gun laws with those of America. There are several different methods of regulating the licensing, selling procedure, and ownership of guns. However, there is a fundamental type of regulation in Switzerland (which exists in many other European countries as well) that simply doesn't exist in the United States. While the Swiss pride themselves on their right to bear arms, they have implemented a thorough system of tracking and regulating ammunition, without preventing its availability for legitimate use. In Switzerland, unlike the United States, customers who want to buy ammo must follow the same rules as they do for buying actual guns, providing personal identification, an up-to-date criminal record check, a weapons acquisition permit (which also must be kept up to date), and their home address. A customer can only buy ammo for a gun that

they legally own, and they must provide legal proof of ownership of that gun before they can buy the ammo. Furthermore, all purchases of ammo are recorded, and sellers must register with the government shortly afterward.

None of this has prevented the Swiss from having fun with their guns. To quote that NRA article once again, "I have never seen a golf course in Switzerland, but I wish I had a Swiss franc for every shooting range I have seen." Older children even participate in shooting clubs and hunting, and such activities are part of the nation's identity. Although ammunition is carefully regulated, it doesn't hinder their freedom to own and use their guns, but it does keep better tabs on who is buying what and in what quantities.

Clearly, regulations don't have to be obtrusive to be effective. Case-in-point: pseudoephedrine laws. According to Iowa's Director of the Governor's Office of Drug Control Policy, only 3% of purchase attempts statewide are actually blocked by the system. This means that 97% of customers were successful in getting the meds they wanted. Nonetheless, the laws have had a huge impact on the meth problem in Iowa. The system has prevented the production of \$18.8 million worth of meth, and the number of meth labs in the state has dropped 90 percent in the last decade.

Let's think of this from Bob's perspective. Is it worth it? Bob can still *get* pseudoephedrine. If he demonstrates a legitimate need (in this case, to his doctor), he can get a prescription for it that bypasses the normal rules and can get it in limited quantities. Meanwhile, the meth lab a few blocks away has trouble



cooking enough meth to keep hold of their customers, and they are constantly dodging questions from the feds. These laws don't stop labs from cooking altogether, but the production of meth is severely limited, and such operations are far more likely to be busted.

Now, instead of cold medicine, imagine we're talking about ammunition. Bob can still get ammunition. If he has a license for hunting or sporting, he can get hunting or sporting ammo. Or he could do like the Swiss, and buy ammo as he uses it at the range. Meanwhile, his neighbor, Eric Harris, is having trouble stocking up enough ammo for a rampage, and he's constantly dodging questions from the feds. Of course, these laws don't stop mass murder altogether, but both opportunity-for and lethality-of people like Eric is severely limited, and such 'operations' are far more likely to get busted.



Standardized tests fail to recognize creativity

By Cassie Smith

When I was younger, I discovered my passion for music. I have been playing piano since I was six and guitar for seven years. I feel as though I have been cheated throughout school, however, because my talent has been neglected.

When I look at the classes that are required versus elective in high school, I see that it is essentially required that students take classes that will improve their logical thinking. Required classes include biology, chemistry, mathematics, etc. In these classes, standardized tests take place, where students sit and fill in bubbles, which will determine their level of intelligence. Although thinking logically is an important aspect to life, so is impacting the world emotionally.

When high school begins, school consumes our lives and drowns our minds with standardized tests. All I have been able to think about during my junior year of high school is what college I will be going to, and how smart I must prove myself to be in order to get in.

I find myself falling short of my goals when it comes to test taking, because I simply don't perform very well on tests. I tend to perform better on stage, where I can put my talent on display. When I perform, I am able to speak my feelings through music, when they

cannot be vocalized using words. I like to say that music is much like a therapy session to me.

Diane Ravitch says it perfectly, "Sometimes the most brilliant minds do not shine in standardized tests because they do not have standardized minds." I find it sad that whether I get into college or receive a scholarship is weighed down by standardized tests like the ACT that only determine a level of intelligence that does not include my ability to be creative.

My talent is taken for granted, but I also notice that these tests take a major toll on my mental health. The American Test Anxieties Association states that the majority of students actually report being more stressed by tests than by anything else in their lives. This has to do with the lack of sleep students get the night before a big test and the time cap put on standardized tests, which causes major angst in test takers, including me.

I am the girl that stays up until 2 am either studying or stressing for a test. [A recent study](#) in the journal *Child Development* showed that sacrificing sleep in order to study will actually backfire. Of course, I never actually believe this, and continue to deprive myself of my precious sleep only to unconsciously lower my test score in the long run.

I have always strived for the best grades. In fact, I've noticed that I find that a lot of my self-worth comes from getting good grades,

which means doing above average on tests. Unfortunately, I am not the best test taker.

I tend to thrive when using the right side of my brain, focusing on music and art and creativity. Standardized tests target a specific part of the brain that deals with logical thinking, the left side, only accommodating students who thrive in subjects like math and science.

Standardized tests are unfair to those who are more right-brained. It would be like me telling students that they will do well on the ACT only if they are able to sight read music or write a song in 40 minutes. Sure, music students would be ecstatic to have their ACT scored based on their musical talent, but this would be completely unfair to students who thrive in math or science classes. Just as this way of testing would be unfair to logical thinkers, the ACT is unfair to creative thinkers.

Required tests on the ACT include, mathematics, science, English and reading, according to The Princeton Review. The writing portion of the ACT is optional.

The problem with this is that education is turning the student mind into a robot. No longer are students being tested based on their creativity skills, but rather their ability to solve a complex math problem in under a minute. Critical thinking is important, but individuals should feel called to have an impact on the world as well.

Some of the things that have had the greatest impact on my life have been great pieces of writing, concerts, and emotional dances. If the world is too focused on student's ACT scores, then the world may lose its ability to impact lives in an emotional way.

I miss the days when I could learn for fun and knowledge. I feel like nowadays, teachers teach in preparation for a test rather than in preparation for lifelong skills.

Outside of a standardized test, will I ever need to know what the 'nth term of an arithmetic sequence' is? The answer is, unless I decide to become a mathematician, probably not. When I travel the world, it will be far more important to know how to communicate and appreciate distant cultures, and how to entertain people and inspire individuals across the globe.

So how do we fix this rising problem? We stand on stage, and continue to touch people's hearts, and continue to write impactful words against standardized tests. I refuse to get discouraged. I refuse to believe that my intelligence is based off one test score, on one day, using one number two pencil.

Standardized tests are unfair, unrealistic, biased and uncalled for. I hope that one day the world can learn to further appreciate everyone's talents by using each individual's unique qualities to better this generation.

Movie theatres aren't dying, they just aren't what they used to be

By Seth White

Though it had the same old "Galaxy 16" sign out front, with its iconic neon arches in faded red and green, I realized the place had been gutted, foundation and all. Behind plastic curtains, where arcade games once stood atop sticky green and purple tiles, there were now flood lights and scaffolding sitting in dirt.

In 2016, Wehrenberg Theaters, which owns and operates the Galaxy 16 Cine on Council Street in Cedar Rapids, was acquired by Marcus Theaters. The theater is in the process of a total rework, including the replacement of all the old, fold-down seating with DreamLoungers, automatic reclining chairs with heated seats. Further upgrades are being planned, but you might already be asking yourself, 'after so many years, why all the upgrades? Why now?'

Well, in case you haven't heard, movie theaters are dying. It's not happening overnight, but everybody seems to agree that we're witnessing

the death of a titan. The thought is staggering, but also not surprising. Nowadays, just about everyone has Netflix or Hulu, and when it comes to movie watching, where do we usually go?

This demise has already hit our video stores. First, down went Blockbuster. Then, I learned that the old Family Video closed down, the very one I used to bike to when I lived in Marion. Nobody goes to places like that anymore, because there's just no reason to.

Streaming is the way of the future, it would seem. And it's not just movies, either. You've got television shows, documentaries, indie films, HBO-esque series (which I think deserve their own category: I mean, *Game Of Thrones* anyone?), even things like YouTube videos, e-sports, and livestreams. With so much content at your fingertips, why leave the house?

So why all the fancy renovations, then? Is it some kind of last-ditch-effort to bring people to the big screen? In some ways: yes. For

cinema as an industry, this is not their first rodeo. Look back to the 1950's, when everyone was just sure that the in-home television had killed the movie theater. Here's a report from the U.S. News and World Report in 1955: "Three-fourths of (those) interviewed are spending more evenings at home now. Slightly more than half are going to the movies less often, although formerly they were confirmed, and in most cases, very heavy moviegoers."

The thing is, home television wasn't anything less than what everybody said: it was a massive and revolutionary disturbance in the entertainment industry. But cinema didn't outright die, rather, it changed.

In the beginning, theaters were the only place you could go to watch motion pictures of any kind. Along comes the TV, and cinema's entire business model got stolen by a little box in your living room. Hence, the business model changed. In my lifetime, theaters have been the

place where I can watch a movie before my friends, and spoil it for them before they can buy it on Blu-ray. For my parents, the theater was a place they could go to watch a movie alone, or with a crush (away from the prying eyes of family). At one point, the drive-in theater was a big deal.

In 2016, the North American box office hit a record, \$11.4 billion in ticket sales, topping the previous record set in 2015, but movie attendance has stayed mostly flat. The implication seems to be that movie theaters have done nothing but raise their prices. To those of us who are used to looking at the theater for cheap entertainment, the industry might look doomed to sink. But if you look at the theater as an ever-evolving industry that's been with us through thick and thin, maybe this is just the next chapter for cinema. We have cheap movies at home, so now the theater is where we go for luxury viewing.

Theaters aren't dying, they just aren't what they used to be.

Drinking age of 21 not realistic in today's environment

By Rachel Bohnenkamp

If you were to ask an 18-year-old their opinion on the legal drinking age, odds are their response would be an eager, "Lower it!"

I'm with them.

But before delving into the issue, I want to set something straight.

Yes, I am a high school senior. I am heading to college next fall, where I hope to study hard and enjoy myself with new friends. However, my opinion stems from logical thinking and research, rather than personal interest.

In the United States, the legal drinking age is 21 years old. The limit, which was not initially federally controlled, was set by The National Minimum Drinking Age Act (NMDA) of 1984. The law mandated all states comply, or receive a 10% reduction in highway funds. Obviously, the state governments chose money because, well, it is the government.

While the law has had some arguable success, it is largely a failure. Those under the legal limit still drink, secretly and in large amounts, due to the fear of being unable to always get liquor. Law enforcement is expected to regulate alcohol use in their communities, when other issues compete for their time. Our country needs to repeal the NMDA and lower the drinking age to 18. Believe it or not, our communities will be safer because of it.

Of all the things guaranteed in life, one thing is sure: minors have a tendency to enjoy doing things they know they should not. For this reason, underage drinking is attractive. Preventing it, on the other hand, is almost impossible. Mark Beckner, chief of police in Boulder, Co., says his team has taken different approaches to combat the issue but none have been effective.

"We wrote hundreds and hundreds of tickets those years. All we did is we pushed it further underground," said Beckner.

For this reason, even Beckner supports a lower drinking age.

"The overall advantage [of a lowered drinking age] is we're not trying to enforce a law that's unenforceable. The abuse of alcohol and the over-consumption of alcohol and DUI driving, those are the areas we've gotta focus our efforts. Not on chasing kids around trying to give 'em a ticket for having a cup of beer in their hand."

If the legal drinking age was 18, minors would be less secretive about drinking and officers could focus on instituting laws that have

a greater impact on citizen safety. Overall, our communities would be better off repealing and replacing NMDA.

Another reason the drinking age should be lowered is to promote safer drinking on college campuses. Freshmen and sophomores are prohibited to drink in regulated establishments, such as bars or restaurants. Binge-drinking in dorms or fraternities before going out is the alternative. "Pre-gaming" usually includes dangerous drinking behavior with one goal in mind: to get as drunk as possible in the least amount of time. According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, binge-drinking can pose serious health and safety risks, such as car crashes, drunk-driving arrests, sexual assaults, and injuries. If the goal of NMDA is safety, the law is indirectly causing the opposite.

In addition to less binge drinking, young adults would also have experience with responsible alcohol consumption *before* stepping foot on a college campus. Students could experiment with drinking under supervision from parents or other adults. And rather than discover their limit in a frat basement, where they are more likely to be taken advantage of, they can do so beforehand.

Lowering the drinking age would bring about change, and with that brings opposition.

Some may argue that a lower drinking age would increase alcohol consumption, and they are correct. It would increase the rate of *responsible* drinking. The rate of secretive binge drinking would decrease. Others may point to the fact that highway fatalities did decrease 13% after the minimum drinking age was raised to 21. But consideration must be placed on other risks associated with underage drinking that have increased.

According to John McCardell, president emeritus of Middlebury College and leader of Choose Responsibility, "...we need to understand that lives are being put at risk off the highways in increasing numbers year by year as a result of this law."

Additionally, state accident rates before and after NMDA was enforced were analyzed by Jeffrey A. Miron, of Harvard University, and Elina Tetelbaum, of Yale University.

"Virtually all the life-saving impact of the MLDA21 comes from the few early-adopting states, not from the larger number that resulted

from federal pressure. Further, any life-saving effect in those states that first raised the drinking age was only temporary, occurring largely in the first year or two after switching to the MLDA21," said Miron and Tetelbaum. Therefore, the positive impact many claim the NMDA has is not so clear cut. Risks with binge drinking have increased, and lower accident rates were not seen across the board.

Because the federal government established NMDA, it should be responsible for lowering and enforcing a drinking age of 18. A new law would be passed to officially change policy. However, the most important changes would occur in homes and schools across the nation. Learning how to drink would occur under adult supervision. Health classes could focus more on responsible drinking rather than no

drinking at all, and law enforcement could focus on important drinking-related problems, like alcoholism and drunk driving.

To the concerned parents and teachers reading this, I can only imagine your anxiety. Maybe you recall your own teenage experiences, have a teenager yourself or teach at a college each day. You comprehend the dangers of underage drinking, and feel the idea of making alcohol more accessible is utterly ignorant. However, if you are frightened about the possibility of a lowered drinking age, then you are being naive about the current state of our high school and college campuses.

NMDA is not working for our students and law enforcement. America needs a lower drinking age, for the safety of our young now and in the future.



Shannon Bisgard named new Linn-Mar Superintendent

Shannon Bisgard was recently named Linn-Mar's new school superintendent by the Linn-Mar School Board after current superintendent Quintin Shepherd announced he would leave for a position in Texas.

Bisgard will begin as superintendent July 1, 2018 and has been associate superintendent at Linn-Mar since 2015. He previously served as a principal at Bowman Woods and Linn Grove Elementary Schools.

Bisgard's years of past service at Linn-Mar work in his favor, as he understands the district's strengths and knows the community. Bisgard is a familiar face to many teachers and administrators in the district and has three children who have all attended the Linn-Mar School District. His youngest daughter, Bri, is a 2018 Linn-Mar High School graduate, so he knows the pulse of the district.

Bisgard looks forward to a



smooth transition and, according to the district website, he has "proven himself to be a capable leader, well-poised to take the helm here at Linn-Mar."

Bisgard previously worked at Grant Wood Area Education Association as a Regional Administrator and has over 30 years in the education field.

You only get one shot at life, make it count

By Trent Davis

As a high school student, I'm sure you've heard it time and time again, that unavoidable question to which you can never produce a sufficient response. "What are your plans after high school?" For some people, this question produces an easy and honest answer. They can immediately formulate their plans, such as going to into the Pre-Law program at Iowa, playing football at Wisconsin, or getting ready to study abroad in London. No matter the circumstance, some people just always have things figured out. This is fine. It's great. Good for them.

A terrifying fear overwhelms most others when asked this question, however. The air is sucked from their lungs and they can no longer find their voice. They simply can't respond. If they manage to eventually choke out a reply, it's typically one that isn't entirely truthful, or is just a flat out lie. For years, when adults would pose this same question to me, I would tell them that I wanted to study engineering. This couldn't be further from the truth. Even though I excel in such areas, I utterly despise all forms of math and science, especially Calculus and Physics, the two major subjects someone should probably enjoy if they are going to be an engineer.

An important question comes up when discussing why high school students lie to adults about their plans for the future. Why? Why openly lie to your parents and teachers about what you want to pursue after graduation? It's simple, really. You lie because that's what they want to hear. Adults, and certainly parents, usually want to hear that your desire is to become a lawyer, a doctor, or an engineer. They want to hear safe, practical answers because this is your future - this is the rest of your life - and you only get one shot at it.

Why not tell the truth? To really answer that question, you need to take a deeper examination into what is going on behind the scenes; you need to figure out what's going on in the mind of the high school student and, more importantly, why those things are going on. I know, it's a horrifying thought, but the answers usually lie deep down.

In all honesty, there are pressures from society, peers, and from parents that make kids feel the need to just tell everyone what they want to hear rather than being honest. The worst part is that some people feel so much external pressure that they don't just lie about what

they're going to do, but they end up spending copious amounts of time and money pursuing a dream that was never their dream in the first place. These same kids then grow up doing something they hate and spend their entire lives being angry all the time. In turn, they take this anger out on their own children, and the cycle continues. This is a cycle that needs to end, and it needs to end soon.

Throughout time and history, society has created norms and guidelines that it expects people to conform to. Go against the grain, and risk being cast out by friends and family members. For high school students, society has created a norm that is often damaging to those who would rather not follow it. This, of course, is post-graduation plans. For all four years of high school in most places in the U.S., teachers and counselors are always trying to prepare students for college, and only college. Most of the time, kids are made to feel that college is their only option after high school, and that it would be the wrong decision if they were to choose otherwise. Think about it. There are college-prep courses, mandatory surveys that counselors have students fill out about what major and university would be best for them, meetings with counselors about what college to attend, and on and on. Sometimes it feels like there is an agenda to push, and that agenda is to make sure high school students immediately go back to school after receiving their high school diploma. They are essentially telling kids that they have to attend a four year university, get a degree, and then get a job right away, in that order. Take it from Senior Katie Dennis, a Linn-Mar student who has experienced this first hand.

"I remember how the counselors always have that required meeting with you and all they talk about is what you want to major in and what college you're planning on going to. That is the route I'm going to take, but for other students, it's probably really difficult to have all this stuff shoved in their face because they're not really given other options."

It's not just high school counselors and teachers, however, but society as a whole that has told students what they need to do. Unionized jobs like an electrician, carpenter, or ironworker are somewhat frowned upon in today's society, and for a pretty backwards reason. Some people believe that a degree is required to have a good job, but that's just not the truth. Someone

in the ironworking field could be making up to \$60,000 a year just two years out of high school, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, which is a great living for a twenty year old. Not only that, but they could be getting paid through an apprenticeship during that two year period while learning a particular trade. This contrasts with going to a four year university and paying thousands of dollars to get a degree, only to come out on the other side in a mountain of debt. Plus, for some students, a path in a trade skill would be much better suited to them than attending college.

Those with opposing viewpoints would suggest that a four year degree is necessary to get a good job in a very competitive field, which makes sense, but that simply isn't true. There is always a high demand for plumbers, construction workers, and many other trade jobs. In fact, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that a plumber or pipefitter is in higher demand and has a higher projected job growth than a "regular" job such as a business manager.

Parents want the best for their children, that's impossible to deny. That is their child, the person they treasure most on this earth, and all they could ever want is for them to live happy, successful lives. However, just because they *want* what's best for the kids, doesn't always mean that they *know* what is best for them. The distinction between wanting and knowing is a very important one, and one that is oftentimes blurred when it comes to the relationship between a kid and their parent. Things tend to get a little tricky when said line becomes blurred, typically causing the child to be put in an uncomfortable situation.

I have always grown up wanting to be a writer. I loved reading books and watching movies throughout my childhood, and always dreamt of one day writing for publication or for the big screen. That was fine growing up because, to my parents, that was just a pipe dream. I was going to outgrow those ambitions and eventually settle on something that was realistic; something that could put food on the table and a roof over my eventual family's head. However, when I got to middle school and into high school, my dream hadn't faded. In fact, it had grown stronger as I began to develop myself as a writer and as I learned new skills. The way my parents viewed the profession of a writer was certainly not the way

I viewed it, and this is where the conflict began. This is where the line was blurred. So, in order to appease them, I said that I would rather be an engineer anyway, because it's more practical, there's a higher demand, and the pay is better. This was fine for a few years until I realized that I was signing myself up for engineering classes, looking into colleges with prominent engineering programs, and telling everybody that engineering is what I wanted to pursue. I spoke the lie into existence, and I know that I'm certainly not alone in this regard. I very much disliked what I was doing, but I was doing it because I wanted to please the two people whose opinions matter most to me in this world.

This is what continues to happen daily across the United States and even across the world. Kids are influenced by external pressures from society, their peers, and especially their parents to go down a career path in a direction that is one they do not desire. Society is telling high school students that they need to go to college and get a four year degree in some advanced world to be competitive in an ever-challenging economy. Those in society are telling them that jobs like being a plumber, carpenter, or electrician aren't acceptable, when, in reality, these jobs pay well and are always in high demand. Pressures from peers are equally as oppressing; kids hate feeling ostracized or looked down upon, and especially for a decision that will most likely impact their entire future. Finally, the need to please one's parents might be the greatest burden of all. Wanting to make your parents proud is something almost every teenager can relate to, and sometimes they will go as far as choosing a career that they would rather not be in to gain their approval.

Trying to please your friends, parents, or society is something that you can't let happen when it comes to deciding your future. I know firsthand that this is easier said than done, but it is imperative that you choose something that is best fitting for you. Parents, although you want what's best for your kids, they know what is best for them when it comes to choosing a career path. As scary as that sounds, it's the truth at the end of the day. Do not let anyone make decisions for you that directly affect your future. Those are your decisions, no one else's. It is your future. You only get one chance at it, so make it count.

Homesickness common for new college coeds

By Rachel Bohnenkamp

After a brief time spent at the University of Tampa, Kyle Bennett had his routine.

Go to class. Return to dorm. Eat. Return to dorm.

September days turned into October weeks, and October weeks turned into winter months.

“Initially, it was a very boring experience,” said Kyle.

For many, college is the most exciting time filled with new friends, different surroundings and challenging courses. For Kyle, college was anything but exciting.

He missed home.

Homesickness among college freshman is more common than expected. According to the UCLA Higher Education Institute, 69 percent of first-year students report feeling homesick.

“It is likely that most students will experience some sadness and feelings of loss of comfort as they enter the college environment,” said psychologist Traci W. Lowenthal.

But what exactly defines homesickness?

According to psychologist Carl Pickhardt, Ph.D., homesickness is “some combination of grief, anxiety, loneliness, and longing at the loss of family connections that separation from home has created.”

If unaddressed, these feelings can cause withdrawal, depression and academic disengagement. In other words, homesickness is something worth preventing and treating.

However, high school seniors, never fear! There are four simple things you can do next fall that will help you be settled in no time.

First, and most importantly, get involved on your campus! The plethora of student groups offered in college means everybody can find something that interests them. Intramural sports, Greek life, art clubs and volunteering groups are among a few. In no time, you will have made new friends, will be pursuing new passions and will be immersed in your community.

The mistake Kyle made was settling into a routine that lacked much interaction with peers. At first, he was hesitant to get involved. But

he says once he was pushed out of his shell, “I developed a new home of sorts.”

Second, utilize your room as a comfortable, homey space. Without much decoration, bare dorms are anything but welcoming. To combat blank walls, hang posters or tapestries for color. Bring your favorite pictures of friends, family and pets for display on your desk. Rugs can help your dorm feel more cozy. Lastly, hang Christmas lights to soften bright overhead lighting for a more relaxed feel.

Third, avoid going home every weekend. Resisting the urge to leave campus, especially when you are feeling homesick, will be difficult. However experts say visits home can prolong the adjustment to college life.

“Visits home every weekend can actually be detrimental to a student’s ability to conquer their homesickness,” says Kelci Lynn Lucier, higher education contributor for U.S. News & World Report.

Instead, establish time for calling or for video-chatting your loved

ones. In this way, you can keep the connection to home in *your* new “home” of sorts. Also, plan visits home or visits to friends *ahead of time* so you have something to look forward to.

Lastly, if homesickness seems like something you can’t shake, you may find solace with help from a professional.

According to Dr. Pickhardt, “Most colleges have counseling centers staffed by people well-versed in helping a young person meet the significant challenge of creating a temporary home away from home.”

Taking advantage of your school’s resources will give you the chance to truly adjust to the many changes that accompany freshman year.

So this summer, as you anxiously await move-in day, take a deep breath. Anticipate missing home, but also realize the amazing opportunities coming your way.

In the words of Kyle: “My philosophy is simple. College is what you, the student, makes it.”

Well, high school senior, it’s your time to shine! Go make it great!

Ramirez values family and friends in life

By Dawn Ramirez

Rose Ramirez, I’ve known her my entire life and while there may have been times when we didn’t get along, that has never stopped our relationship. I’m in her bedroom so I can see who she really is. It’s slightly messy but it seems to be a controlled mess, she knows where everything is if she needs it. There are not many posters on the wall, I see a poster for Marvel and a few inspiring quotes but that seems to be it other than the body mirror hanging on the wall. Her laptop is sitting on the bed, open, I can tell she uses it often. On the laptop there are a couple of stickers. The TV is on in the corner of the room, not loud enough to really hear what’s going on but loud enough for there to be constant noise.

Rose seems distracted, like she’s thinking about something else and she probably is, she has plans tonight to hang out with her friends and they’re going to their usual haunt, Perkins.

“Perkins is a great place for us to go because we all close at work and it’s one of the few places open when we get out of there some nights.”

Rose works at Culver’s and so do her friends. She’s a manager there and her friends are trainers. She told me, “I don’t hate my job, but I don’t necessarily love it either; that’s life.”

According to Rose, she has only been working at Culver’s for two years and a third, and she feels

very lucky that she’s been able to succeed so well there in such a short amount of time. She says her time at Culver’s has really shaped her as a person. Her friends say she is now much more talkative and outgoing then she was before, and a lot more willing to let her personal thoughts be known.

Rose has two cats which she seems to love very much. She actually stopped the interview for a few minutes because the older of the two cats, Sage, walked into the room and Rose couldn’t resist picking her up. The other cat’s name is Chocolate and she doesn’t seem to like to be picked up as much but she still seems very affectionate.

“They are friendly cats but only when they want to be. They like things to go their way and if they don’t, they’ll make sure that it is known. They’re also very spoiled by my mom.”

After the cat leaves we continue with the interview and I ask her about the items she has in her room and other questions that center around her.

“I have that guitar in here not because I play the guitar but because I got it many Christmas’s ago from my grandpa who has since passed away. I keep it to remember him.”

She also keeps a ring as a keepsake of her grandma.

“I always try to wear this ring or have it somewhere on me, because it’s the last thing I got from my grandma before she passed

away. Those were the only two grandparents I’ve ever known so I try to keep their memory strong,” says Rose.

The ring is gold with four small jewels on top and each gem represents the birthstone of her dad and his siblings, and her grandma. Her grandmother and her children have always been close because that is the only parental figure they had in their life, and they depend heavily on her for all that they had.

Rose got very sentimental but she also seems happy because she got to know them before they passed and she felt very lucky that she had grown up knowing them and having them around.

Rose no longer has any grandparents around and says the two mentioned above are the only ones she’s ever meant. Her other grandmother died before her birth from cancer, and the other grandparent is not known. Her father never met his dad and he holds no familial relation with him. He refers to him as his sperm donor.

“I wonder what he (her grandpa) was like, why he never met my dad. I know there was a chance when they could’ve met, but my grandpa never showed up. Why didn’t he? That’s always been my question.”

There are now strong family bonds in her life, says Rose, because growing up, that’s all they had. Her dad, Martin Ramirez, said, “Family is forever. They’ll always be there through the hard times and when



things are rough and that’s because they have to be. Because family doesn’t leave.”

Family has shaped Rose in everything she does, and she says that’s because of her belief that nothing can be done without the help of family by your side. But it’s not just her family that has shaped her; her friends have as well. She and her friends seem close, willing to stay together when the going gets rough and just willing to help each other and stay true.

“I love my friends. I’m so happy that I’ve gotten to know them. Because without them I don’t think I’d be who I am today. My friends and family really matter to me. I think everyone needs people in their life, whether it be friends or family, that can always be counted on and who you can depend on. And the more people you have in your life, the better your life may be.”