



THE BEAR

Student Newspaper

February 15, 2024 WBHS Volume 27 Issue 4
900 W. Main St., West Branch, IA 52358

DANCE MARATHON SMASHES FUNDRAISING GOAL

Student Government raises \$5,632.15 for Stead Family Children's Hospital

Ashlynn Nash
Co-Photo Editor-in-Chief
Olivia Naber
Head Editor-in-Chief

804 hospital meals. 375 nights at the Ronald McDonald House. 22 wigs for children who have lost their hair due to chemotherapy. 3 semester scholarships for cancer survivors. 1 funeral expense for a child who is now "dancing in our hearts."

These are only a few of the possibilities for the record-breaking \$5,632.15 raised through the West Branch Student Government's 2024 Dance Marathon. The event, aiming to raise both funds and awareness to support

pediatric cancer patients and research, far surpassed its \$4000 goal while bringing students together to dance For The Kids.

The Student Government put together the Dance Marathon committee on Friday, November 3, 2023. From then, they vigorously planned and worked to make the 2024 Dance Marathon event that took place on February 9, 2024, a success. Madelyn Stout and junior Jordan Waters served as committee heads, rallying the group's fundraising efforts.

The early start to the fundraising process began the previous year, and Student Government advisor Abby Noelck attributes much of the group's success to both this and splitting committee head responsibilities among students

from different grade levels.

Noelck explained, "I think it's helped having committee heads where there's not just seniors—where it's usually somebody older and somebody a little younger—so that way the younger person gets to see the planning and then kind of replicate it the next year. And I think that's one of the reasons why this year was so successful. We had folks who were really involved last year and then could build off of that this year."

This year's first fundraising push included reaching out to local businesses in hopes of a donation of a silent auction basket. The team got six baskets in return. The Honey Den, Branch Out, Dillards, Marisa Stout with Iowa Realty,

Roots Salon, and Scheels donated baskets.

On Monday, January 29, the baskets made their first appearance at the home boys basketball game, then on Tuesday, February 5, they were put out for bidding on Senior Night. The final day for bidding was Thursday, February 8, and by that time, the silent auction baskets made \$590 for the cause.

At the same time, the group looked for other ways to begin fundraising early for the event.

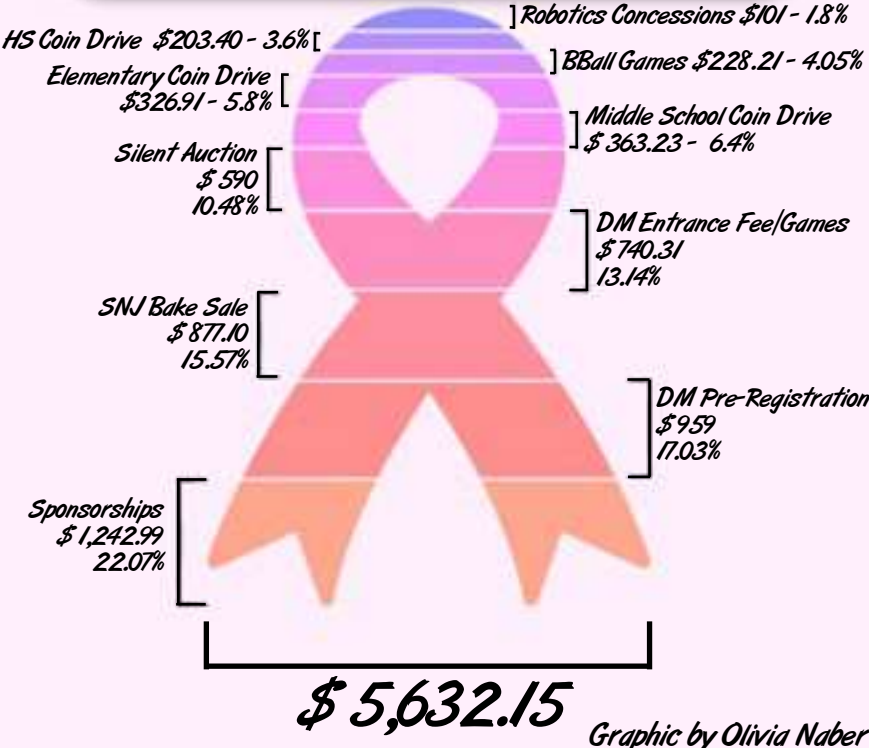
*Dance Marathon
Continued on Page 3*



Student government seniors Maddie Reed, Olivia Naber, Caleb Pedersen, Kaylee Kettler, Nina Torkelson, Madelyn Stout, Claire Jarrett, Maryam Martin, and Ashlynn Nash celebrate the record-breaking total of Dance Marathon funds, proudly lifting their money boards in the air. Photo by Larkin Brown.

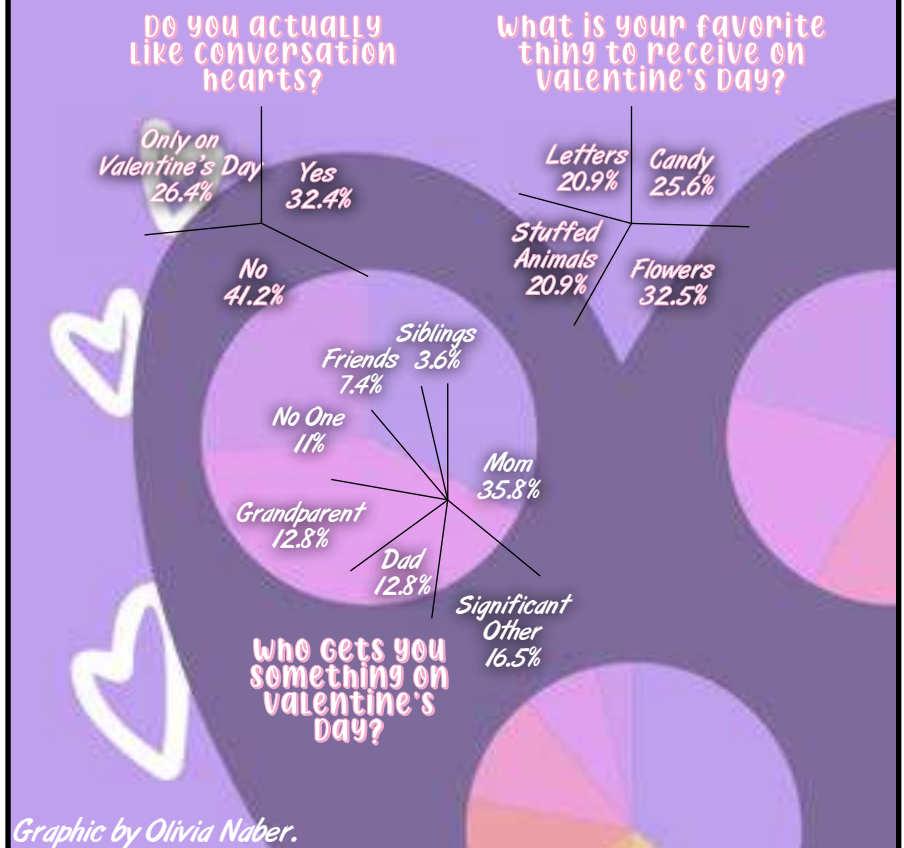
Dance Marathon: The Numbers

It takes a gargantuan effort to put together a fundraising event like this. Student Government far surpassed their \$4000 goal... but how? Below lists every penny that goes to the Stead Family Children's Hospital and how Student Government earned it.



Graphic by Olivia Naber

The Bear Asks... Valentine's Edition



Graphic by Olivia Naber.

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DANCE MARATHON RAISES A WHOPPING \$5,632.15

Continued from P. 1

They landed on utilizing community events such as home basketball games in December and January. At the home basketball games, committee members walked through the crowd with a tip bucket and held games such as half-court shot contests, making \$228.21 in total.

On January 20, 2023, they also utilized Saturday Night Jive—WBHS's home show choir competition—to host a Dance Marathon Bake Sale. By selling baked goods such as puppy chow, rice crispy treats, and brownies, the group raised \$877.10 in a single day.

A few weeks before the event itself, Student Government urged students to pre-register for Dance Marathon.

After individually fundraising at least \$25 for the event, Student Government gave students a complimentary t-shirt, two raffle tickets for event prizes, and free event admission (including games). Alternatively, students could pay \$10 at the door.

While these efforts were all done in advance of the event itself, there were ways the student body and staff participated during Dance Marathon week.

This year, Student Government put efforts forth to engage all three levels of the West Branch Community School district. They set out milk cartons in middle and elementary school classrooms as well as a donation bin outside the high school office for coin donations. Each day, Student Government encouraged students to donate a different coin, starting at pennies and gradually increasing to quarters on Thursday and a free-for-all donation day on Friday.

The middle school came out victorious, raising \$363.23. The elementary school came in close second with \$326.91, while the high school raised \$203.40 in change.

"I love that we involved the elementary and middle school this year," Noelck said. "It felt more distinctly like we were doing it as a district instead of just high school."

On Wednesday, Bob Hoffman of the West Branch Lions Club invited the DM committee to discuss a possible donation to the cause that Wednesday. After a brief presentation by Stout and Waters, the Lions Club generously donated \$500. Knowing that the school wore yellow in support of childhood cancer on Wednesday, the club also donated yellow apparel and donated over \$80 worth of dimes to the DM coin drive.

Thursday afternoon, Student Government invited the family of former West Branch student Sarah Waul to speak in an assembly during the Instructional Support period. Sarah passed away in 2023 after a long, hard fight with cancer. During her time at West Branch, she performed in the marching band, jazz band, pep band, choir and show choir. In addition, she took part in student government, softball, basketball management, and cheerleading.

Sarah's Parents, Kevin and Rachel Waul, spoke to the staff and student body about Sarah's fight with cancer and the importance of events like Dance Marathon in supporting research for pediatric cancer.

"I think that was super powerful," Noelck said. "It's so important that people realize that all the money that's raised goes to real people in our community and it's not just that you donate and you don't ever know where the money goes. It's very clear. We try to communicate really well exactly what the money does and what it's for, and I think it's so powerful when you have an actual face—this is a real person who benefited from this work—to show that the work is ongoing, and there's so much more to do."

Finally, the main event arrived, and students arrived on Friday night with painted shirts, faces, and limbs, ready to dance the next three hours away.

In addition to the hours of dancing, students participated in games throughout the night as an additional fundraiser. Students could pay \$5 in advance to play every game throughout the night or pay \$1 per game. Games included musical chairs, basketball knockout, oreo-stacking, and pie-eating.

This addition to the event began last year to break up the hours of dancing and came with the bonus of raising additional funds for the cause. What the

group did not anticipate was that the games would further connect students and engage them in the cause.

"Almost everybody went to the gym just either to play or to spectate," Noelck said. "A lot of kids had wristbands, but then as soon as people went in there, I had like ten kids come back and be like, 'oh, I wanna play I wanna play'... It feels very unifying."

For the first time, Dance Marathon included a concession stand. The robotics team, led by Matt Cain, brought the idea to the table after students because of students involved in both groups. Robotics members ran the concession stand all night long, donating the \$101 in proceeds to the cause.

Noelck appreciated the effects of the overlap in student involvement and the increasing amount of diversity within Student Government.

"Student government has started to attract a wider variety of students," Noelck said. "It's important that as humans we are representative of the student body, which means we need people who are involved in different things. So I love that we have few of our members now who are robotics members because (the concession stand) was their idea."

At the end of the night, Student Government seniors displayed the grand total, eliciting gasps and

thunderous applause from the crowd of dancers. The money total of \$5,632.15 far surpassed the \$4000 Student Government pushed for, and the numbers blew away Student Government members and students alike. Last year's total of \$3,536.46 set a record-high bar to pass, but the group stepped up to the challenge and pushed it even higher.

"There's a reason why I never tell you (student government members) what the total is..." Noelck told committee head Jordan Waters. "I like to see your face when I show you where we get because I think you guys feel really proud of yourselves, as you should. I think that it just shows the power of when you bring a lot of people together and you can get people on board with the cause."

Besides raising money, Dance Marathon teaches students the importance of rallying around important causes.

"I think Dance Marathon is a great way to introduce students to philanthropy and philanthropic giving," Noelck said. "And the fact is that it doesn't have to be a \$500 donation. It can be the fact that you're giving up your free time to a cause. You're giving something up, whether it's your time or whether it's your money. I think it's super important that students learn early on the power of giving up themselves to others. So that's what's big for me."



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LADIES' NIGHT OUT Extended Hours, Special Offers, Pop-Ups Spring Edition - Wed. March 6, 2024 Holiday Edition - Wed. November 6, 2024	LADIES' NIGHT OUT Extended Hours, Special Offers, Pop-Ups Spring Edition - Wed. March 6, 2024 Holiday Edition - Wed. November 6, 2024
SWEETS FOR SUCCESS Fundraising Dessert Auction + Social Friday, April 5, 2024	SWEETS FOR SUCCESS Fundraising Dessert Auction + Social Friday, April 5, 2024
Summer Kickoff Sidewalk Sales, Seltzer Stroll, Live Music Friday & Saturday, June 7-8, 2024	KICKOFF TO SUMMER Sidewalk Sales, Seltzer Stroll, Live Music Friday & Saturday, June 7-8, 2024
HOOVER'S HOMETOWN DAYS Fun for the whole family! Friday & Saturday, August 9-10, 2024	HOOVER'S HOMETOWN DAYS Fun for the whole family! Friday & Saturday, August 9-10, 2024
FALLfest Sidewalk Sales + Free Family Fun Friday & Saturday, October 11-12, 2024	FALLfest Sidewalk Sales + Free Family Fun Friday & Saturday, October 11-12, 2024
TRICK OR TREAT ON MAIN ST. 1 hour prior to Citywide Trick or Treating Thursday, October 31, 2024	TRICK OR TREAT ON MAIN ST. 1 hour prior to Citywide Trick or Treating Thursday, October 31, 2024
Christmas PAST Festival of Timeless Holiday Activities Friday & Saturday, December 6-7, 2024	A CHRISTMAS PAST Festival of Timeless Holiday Activities Friday & Saturday, December 6-7, 2024

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FIRM DEADLINE

for ALL Senior Photos Friday, March 1, 2024

Here is what's needed:

First of all, if you haven't had your senior pictures taken, please schedule them now and get them done. It will take a while to get them back and then choose the ones you want for the various publications. If you do not plan on taking senior photos at all, please let Ms. Krall or Mr. Connor know, and we will happily take a photo of you or use your school ID photo.

*Please note: It is fine to use the same senior photo for everything listed below as long as it meets the qualifications. Please email it to ALL 3 staff members if this is the case.

***GIVE YOUR PHOTOGRAPHER A COPY OF THESE REQUIREMENTS!!!!**

Newspaper:

- Email 1 photo, vertical pose only, NOT horizontal.
- Photo should be a head and shoulders OR head to waist shot only ("Portrait Pose").
- Photo can be in black & white or color; it will probably end up printed in black & white.
- Photo should be 300 dpi or high resolution in order to be printed clearly.
- Send photo in jpg form to Karina Krall at kkkrall@west-branch.k12.ia.us

Yearbook & the Class Composite (a digital poster that will take the place of the large physical posters that used to hang in the HS commons):

- Email 2 photos, vertical poses only, NOT horizontal.
- Photos should be head and shoulders OR head to waist shots only ("Portrait Pose").
- Photos can be in black & white or color. (Yearbook pages are in color.)
- Specify which photo is for the yearbook and which is for the class composite.
- Photo should be 300 dpi or high resolution in order to be printed clearly.
- Send photos in jpg form to Rex Connor at rconnor@west-branch.k12.ia.us

Senior Graduation Slide Show:

- Email 1 senior photo, any pose (full body ok); both vertical and horizontal poses accepted.
- Email 1 baby picture or toddler pose prior to school age.
- Photos can be in black & white or color.
- Send photos in jpg form (Not PDF) to Misti Donovan at mdonovan@west-branch.k12.ia.us
- Actual photos may be brought in, scanned, and returned to you as well.



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Student Life

4

February 15, 2024

MAKEUP WITHOUT BREAKING THE BANK: ASHLYNNE'S AFFORDABLE MAKEUP TIPS

Ashlynn Nash
Photography Co-Editor-in-Chief

Hey, you! Yes, you! Do you find it hard to keep up with trends and ever changing makeup industries? Need products that have a flawless finish but don't cost the big bucks? Look no further! I've got you covered.

To start off the routine, you will need a primer. It's important to note that while this is officially where the makeup act starts, it is always recommended to moisturize your face prior to applying primer.

Expensive: Milk Makeup Hydro Grip Hydrating Makeup Primer with Hyaluronic Acid + Niacinamide for \$38.00.
Affordable: e.l.f. Power Grip Primer for \$10.00.

This affordable option, or 'dupe' as many call it, is popular because it matches the stickiness of the expensive option while also retaining the chilly sensation when placed onto skin. After application, let it sink into the skin for a minute to get the full usage of the product.

Moving onto the next step of the regime, it is time for foundation. Foundation is the base of your makeup so make sure you pick wisely. Be sure to match the foundation shade to your skin so you don't put off your look.

Expensive: NARS Light Reflecting Advanced Skincare Foundation for \$52.00.

Affordable: Clinique Even Better Makeup Broad Spectrum Spf

15 Foundation currently on sale for \$24.50.

While this price does not exactly sound 'cheap', I am recommending it for multiple reasons. This product is not only a full coverage foundation, but also includes spf. Those products themselves can cost \$30.00. While both of these products double as skincare and a full coverage foundation, Clinique is a better price point for excelling results.

On top of our foundation, we dab on concealer. Concealer is often overlooked because of the small amounts we typically apply, but when done correctly it can make a world of difference for the finished look. Choose a slightly lighter shade of concealer than your foundation to cover dark spots and create a brighter look.

Expensive: Rare Beauty by Selena Gomez Liquid Touch Brightening Concealer at \$22.00.

Affordable: e.l.f. Cosmetics Hydrating Camo Concealer at \$7.00.

This price point is great for the e.l.f. option, as it is extremely reputable for lasting through long days. Pick this to count on extreme coverage. I also really appreciate that all e.l.f. products are dedicated to being animal cruelty free and vegan!

Next up, bronzer! While not everyone incorporates this into their routine, it is a fun touch to boost and elevate the look. I want to make it clear that the bronzer, highlighter, and blush are going to be liquid or cream products.

Expensive: Rare Beauty by

Selena Gomez Warm Wishes Effortless Bronzer Stick priced at \$26.00.

Affordable: Pixi On The Glow Bronzer, currently on sale for \$14.50.

The Pixi On The Glow has such a glowy finish and is so easy to apply and blend. It comes in the form of a stick and makes use effortlessly buildable as well.

Next is blush, and if you're anything like me, you're very interested in finding the perfect blush that's not too overpowering but pigments you just right. Everyone is different with their skin complexions and opinions, so be sure to know thyself and pick a blush color that suits you!

Expensive: Rare Beauty by Selena Gomez Soft Pinch Liquid Blush for \$23.00.

Affordable: e.l.f. Cosmetics Camo Liquid Blush for \$7.00.

This Camo Liquid Blush supplies an all-out pigment for the apples of your cheeks. Despite that, it endures day to day activities and keeps up its dewy finish.

After the cheeks are rosied up, a highlighter is typically layered into spots on your face that catch light, such as temples, cheekbones, and the inner corners of your eyes.

Expensive: Charlotte Tilbury Beauty Highlighter Wand for \$42.00.

Affordable: e.l.f. Cosmetics Halo Glow Highlight Beauty Wand for \$9.00.

After highlighting and pigmenting, we can refocus our attention onto our eyebrows. This step is completely optional, but if you want to add a little bit of pizzazz to your brows by adding color or shape, I would suggest these products.

Expensive: REFY Brow Sculpt Shape and Hold Gel with Lamination Effect for \$24.00.

Affordable: e.l.f. Brow Lift for \$6.00 and e.l.f. Brow Lift Applicator for \$4.00.

While the e.l.f. has two items to be purchased, it is so inexpensive that the price does not come close to the other high end product. The Brow Lift creates soft, long-lasting brows that hold up without fail.

Keeping our focus on the eye area, we can curl our lashes and administer mascara onto the eyelashes. Most

people prefer black, but you can opt for a more subtle brown, etc. Mascara is just like blush; the color is up to your choosing.

Expensive: ILIA Limitless Lash Mascara at the price point of \$28.00.

Affordable: e.l.f. Lash 'N Roll Mascara for \$6.00.

The e.l.f. Lash 'N Roll is effective because of its long lasting formula, which keeps a curl and never flakes.

Lips! There are a lot of great lip products out there in the market right now, but I definitely have a few personal favorites. For the sake of this, we are going to narrow it down to lip oils.

Expensive: Dior Lip Glow Oil for \$40.00.

Affordable: e.l.f. Cosmetics Glow Reviver Lip Oil for \$8.00.

The e.l.f. Glow Reviver Lip Oil is my holy grail. I was shocked when I discovered this product, and had to buy multiple colors. The product glides on, is better than the Dior Lip Glow Oil, has a pleasant scent, has an excellent applicator and cute packaging, and it is set at an exceptional price point.

Somewhere at the end of your makeup routine, set your face with a setting spray. Some people favor doing it before their mascara, and some after. Or you could set your face after your lip products if you feel that's best.

Expensive: Charlotte Tilbury Airbrush Flawless Setting Spray for \$38.00.

Affordable: e.l.f. Cosmetics Stay All Night Micro-Fine Setting Mist for \$10.00.

This setting spray keeps your makeup looking fresh and glowy whilst holding everything together smudge-free. Don't spend more for the same result, save and go with e.l.f.

Obviously, your makeup is your choice and you can choose to splurge on what you feel is needed; however, if you listen to my advice, you will spend \$100.00 in comparison to \$333.00. I hope that these tips can help you find the makeup products that work best for you and keep your makeup looking immaculate!

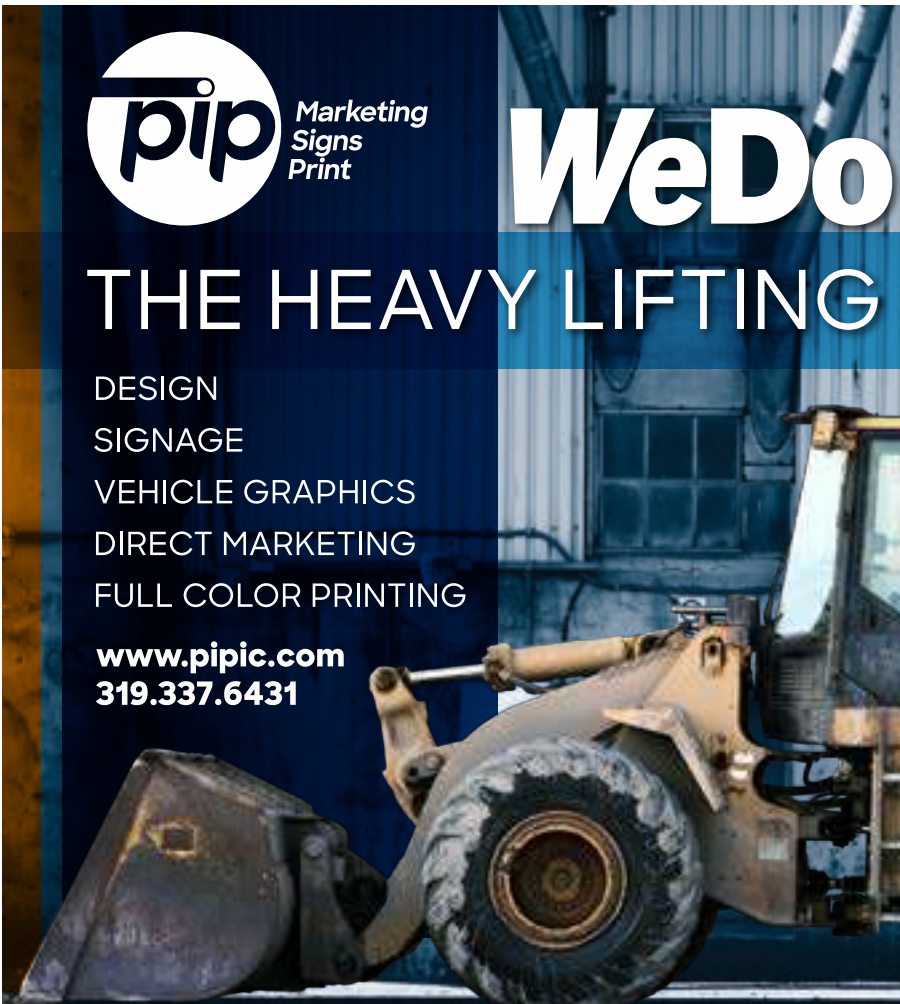


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ins and outs!

by Katey Noble

time management	procrastination
checking your email	dehydration
garlic bread	staying up late
good grades	bad grades
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taking more photos	gossiping
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yoga	socks over sweatpants
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drinking water	being mean
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MEET NEW STUDENT TEACHER

Lydia Yaley

Q: Where are you originally from?

A: Mt. Pleasant, IA.

Q: Where are you attending college?

A: The University of Iowa.

Q: What degrees will you have after you graduate?

A: BA in Mathematics and an MAT.

Q: How are you enjoying being at WBHS?

A: I love it! All of the staff and students have been very nice, and I am learning a lot.

Q: What made you want to become a teacher?

A: Growing up I liked to help my younger sisters with their homework, and as I got older both my mom and one of my high school math teachers encouraged me to consider being a teacher. My math teacher actually let me help out in one of her classes for one period a day my senior year to see what it would be like. I loved it

and decided I wanted to become a teacher!

Q: What animal best represents your personality and why?

A: Dolphin—I have a lot of energy and like to keep moving. I like being with others, and I like to have fun.

Q: What are your favorite hobbies/interests?

A: Gardening, hiking, or anything outside! I also like playing volleyball, reading, and sewing.

Q: If you could spend the day with one celebrity (dead or alive), who would it be and why?

A: Ben Rector, he seems like a really great person and I would love to learn from him when it comes to music.

Q: What is your favorite color?

A: Green.

Q: What is your favorite music genre and favorite band/artist?

A: pop/folk, either Chris Renzema or Ben Rector.



New math student teacher Lydia Yaley works daily with Kristen Westpheling. Photo by Caitlyn Harrison.

JANUARY KICKS OFF WITH A BANG

On January 11, the first day of regular class after J-term, a student's computer battery exploded in the high school media center. Noah Pedersen, pictured above scrubbing at the remnants of the explosion, said that "there was a tiny spark, and [the battery] made a hissing sound.... The film that was over the battery expanded, and it filled up with air and just popped." He explained that the battery exploded separately from the computer, so the computer itself was not damaged. The incident left the high school with a smoky scent for the rest of the day. Photo and caption by Olivia Naber.



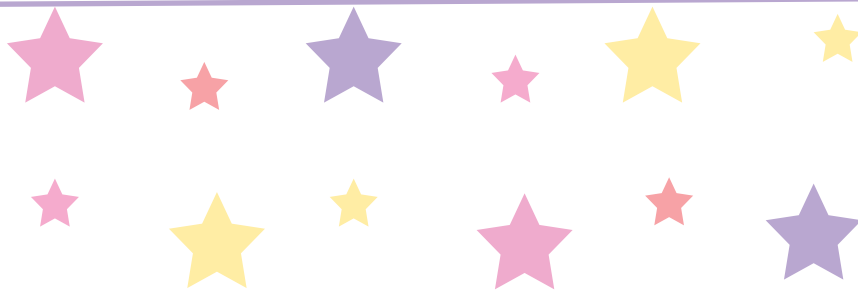
SCIENCE ROCKS



Conceptual chemistry students gather around the Activity Commons microwave as instructor Lynnette Cummings tests two different soaps in the microwave as a part of a density lab. On the left, the Ivory soap expanded, while on the right, the Dove soap expanded and sunk in on itself. Afterwards, Cummings quipped, "The microwave will probably smell like soap now. Do realize that if you do this at home, you will probably hear about it from someone." Photo and caption by Olivia Naber.



Lynnette Cummings and her physics honors class brave the wintry weather to sled outside WBHS. The class did this to demonstrate the loss in energy due to friction. Later in the year, the class also plans to visit the Coral Ridge Ice Arena for further demonstration. Photo and caption by Olivia Naber.



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2/13 Dandelion Stompers & SwampLand Jewels

2/14 Matthew Sweet

2/17 Isaac Rudd & The Revolvers

2/21 Burlington Street Bluegrass Band

2/23 Katy & The Honky Tonks with Travis Feutz

2/24 Good To Be King: Tom Petty Tribute

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HARTZ BECOMES BEAR'S FIRST REGIONAL CHAMPION

Lauren Keeler
Staff Writer

On Friday, January 26, the girls wrestling team traveled to Cedar Rapids for the regional qualifying meet in hopes of punching their tickets to state. The Bears had wrestlers Finley Rushton, Mia Rice, Hanna Lacina, Giselle Gross, Teagyn Hartz, and Saylee Gingerich competing at various weight classes.

Freshman **Finley Rushton** opened up the tournament for the Bears at 100 lbs. Her first match was against senior Abbie Grout of Highland Riverside. Rushton pinned Grout in the second period.

Her second match was against Olivia Hernandez of Bettendorf. Hernandez earned a fall in the third period. After her first loss of the tournament, Rushton dropped into the backside of the 100 pound bracket.

For Rushton's third match of the day, she won by major decision over Leah Hill of Muscatine. As she battled through the backside of the bracket, next Rushton pinned Belle Weets of Vinton-Shellsburg in the second period.

For her fifth match of the day Rushton faced off against Taylor Cavan of Iowa City. Cavan pinned Rushton late in the third period for Rushton's second loss of the day.

For the final match of her freshman season, Rushton wrestled Carly McGraw of Alburnett. McGraw pinned Rushton in the second period to give her her third loss of the tournament.

Rushton finished the season 19-11 and went 3-3 at the regional tournament.

Sophomore **Mia Rice** entered

the tournament at 105 pounds. Her first round match was against Tessa Kauffman of Muscatine and was pinned in the first period.

Rice then entered the backside of the bracket and had her second match of the day against Ashley Houston of Keokuk. Rice Pinned Houston in the second period to receive her first win of the tournament.

Rice then wrestled Sloane Slouha of Benton Community and was pinned late in the second period to receive her second loss of the tournament.

Rice finished her sophomore season with a 5-15 record and went 1-2 in the regional tournament.

Junior **Hanna Lacina** represented the Bears at the 140 pound weight class. Lacina had her first match against Callum Wu of Iowa City Liberty. Wu pinned Lacina in the first period. Next, she went up against Lauren

Briggs of Burlington. Briggs pinned Lacina late in the second period.

Lacina ended her junior season with a 14-16 record and went 0-2 at the regional tournament.

Freshman **Gisele Gross** represented WB in the 145 lb. weight class. Her first match was against Jenna Bose of Highland Riverside. Bose pinned Gross in the first period. After her first loss of the tournament, Gross dropped into the backside of her bracket.

Next, she wrestled Bryn Stephens of North Scott. Gross pinned Stephens early in the third period.

For her final match of the tournament, Gross wrestled Shariah Hart of Burlington. Hart pinned Gross in the first period.

Gross finished her freshman season with a 11-12 record and went 1-2 in the tournament.

Junior **Teagyn Hartz** entered

the tournament in the 170 lb. weight class. Hartz had her first match of the day against Kadence McGee of Mediapolis. Hartz pinned McGee early in the first period.

Next, Hartz wrestled Ivory Lesly of Davenport, pinning her in the second period.

Hartz's third match of the day was against Ava Pfab of Epworth Western Dubuque. Hartz pinned Pfab early in the second period.

Her final match was against Kensi Steele of Iowa City Liberty. Hartz pinned Steele to become WB girls wrestling's first regional champion and 2x state qualifier.

Hartz finished her regional run by going 5-0.

Sophomore **Saylee Gingerich** wrestled in the 190 lb. weight class. Gingerich had her first match of the tournament against Adrian Thorton of Burlington. Gingerich pinned Thorton in the first period.

For her second match, Gingerich wrestled Libby Dix of Mount Vernon. Dix pinned Gingerich in the first period.

Next, she wrestled Zoe Steen of Alburnett. Gingerich pinned Steen early in the first period.

For her final match of the day, Gingerich wrestled Michelle Hawkinson of Davenport. Hawkinson pinned Gingerich in the second period.

Saylee Gingerich finished her sophomore season with a 17-16 record and went 2-2 at the regional tournament.

**State results for Hartz were unavailable at The Bear deadline time. Check out the next issue for more!*



Teagyn Hartz qualifies for state in the 170 lb. weight class. Photo contributed By Tracey Hartz.

BOYS BASKETBALL LOOKS TO ADVANCE IN POSTSEASON

Madelyn Stout
Staff Writer

Although the girls' playoff run is over, the boys are just starting their fight to the Wells Fargo Arena. The girls ended their season 3-19, losing to Durant in the first round of postseason play.

Senior Kya Montgomery said, "This season was great. I loved playing with this hard working group of girls."

The boys are currently 16-6 with their first postseason game being at home on February 15 at 7:00 p.m.



Sophomore Brennen Dale dribbles down the court. Photo by Larkin Brown.

They will play the winner of the Mediapolis and Van Buren Country game due to having a bye the first round.

Senior Holden Arnaman is tied with Sage Suntken from West Fork in leading the state in successfully made three-pointers with 83.

He said, "It feels great. I'm shooting the ball very well right now. I'm hoping to keep it up for the remainder of the season."

Junior Nate Hills said, "I think [the season is] going really well so far. We have lost a couple games that we should have won, but we just have to keep winning."



Regional Wrestlers. Mia Rice, Hanna Lacina, Teagyn Hartz, Finley Rushton, Giselle, Saylee Gingerich. Photo contributed By Brian Driscoll.



BOYS WRESTLING WORKS TOWARDS INDIVIDUAL STATE DUALS

Lauren Keeler
Staff Writer

On Tuesday, January 30, the boys wrestling team traveled to Wilton in an attempt to qualify for the state duals. The Bears faced off against Interstate 35 and third ranked Wilton.

For their first dual of the night, the Bears wrestled **Interstate 35**. Ethan Humphrey and Logan Wright both won by forfeit. Next, at 120, Lincoln Edwards won by pin in 1:00. Timmy Hosier lost by decision, 9-5. Logan Christoffel won by pin in :38. Auron Marson lost by pin in 2:34. Keaton Gates won by pin in 1:53. Cale Seydel

won by pin in 4:12. Cooper Gates won by decision, 7-2. Shae Farmer won by decision, 4-2. Tate Frantz won by pin in :26. Quinton Rocha lost by decision, 0-5. **The Bears won this dual, 48-24.**

Next, the Bears wrestled the third ranked **Wilton Beavers**. First, Humphrey lost by decision, 2-6. Next, Edwards lost by decision, 0-7. Hosier lost by decision, 1-12. Christoffel lost by decision, 3-6. Marsh lost by decision, 11-15. K. Gates lost by decision, 7-10. Seydel lost by technical fall, 3-18. C. Gates won by decision, 5-1. Farmer lost by decision, 1-8. Frantz won by decision, 10-7. Rocha won by tech. fall, 17-1. Wright won by pin in 3:56. **The boys wrestling team lost to Wilton, 17-39.**

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Sports

February 15, 2024

8

WEST BRANCH HIRES NEW HEAD FOOTBALL COACH

Madelyn Stout
Staff Writer

The WB football team will have a big change coming to its 2024 season. WB has hired John Nestor as the new varsity head coach. During the 2023 season, Butch Pedersen was still listed as the head coach while John Hierseman, offensive coordinator, ran the team with the aid of the assistant coaches and volunteers.

Nestor comes to WB from Chicago. He said, "The tradition of excellence and community support for athletics was a big draw. Following a coach like Butch Pedersen is a huge challenge but one that I accept and look forward to."

He has four children, including one that plays football for the Iowa Hawk-

eyes. He has coached at two other high schools, the University of Wisconsin, and volunteered at the University of Alabama camps. He played defensive back at Miami University of Ohio.

As far as being ready for this new start, he said, "I think we have put in place an excellent coaching staff that will be great leaders of men, so just being able to be around those guys and the kids everyday has me very excited. I think the first home game will be special."

He added, "Being so new, I am still trying to navigate everything. I'm not a big 'change everything' guy, and so we will look at some routines and traditions that we like and will continue to use them while adding some new ones of our own."



Photo contributed by John Nestor

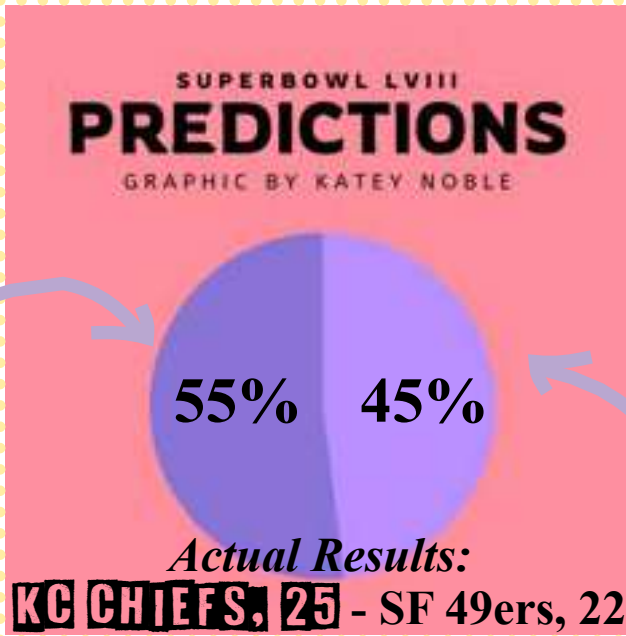
PREDICTIONS & TRADITIONS

Responses collected by
Larkin Brown



**SAN FRANCISCO
49ERS**

"Watching the game in our basement with a ton of snacks"
-Miley Shields



"We usually watch the Superbowl with family! Go, Chiefs!"
-Lydia Yaley

**KANSAS CITY
CHIEFS**

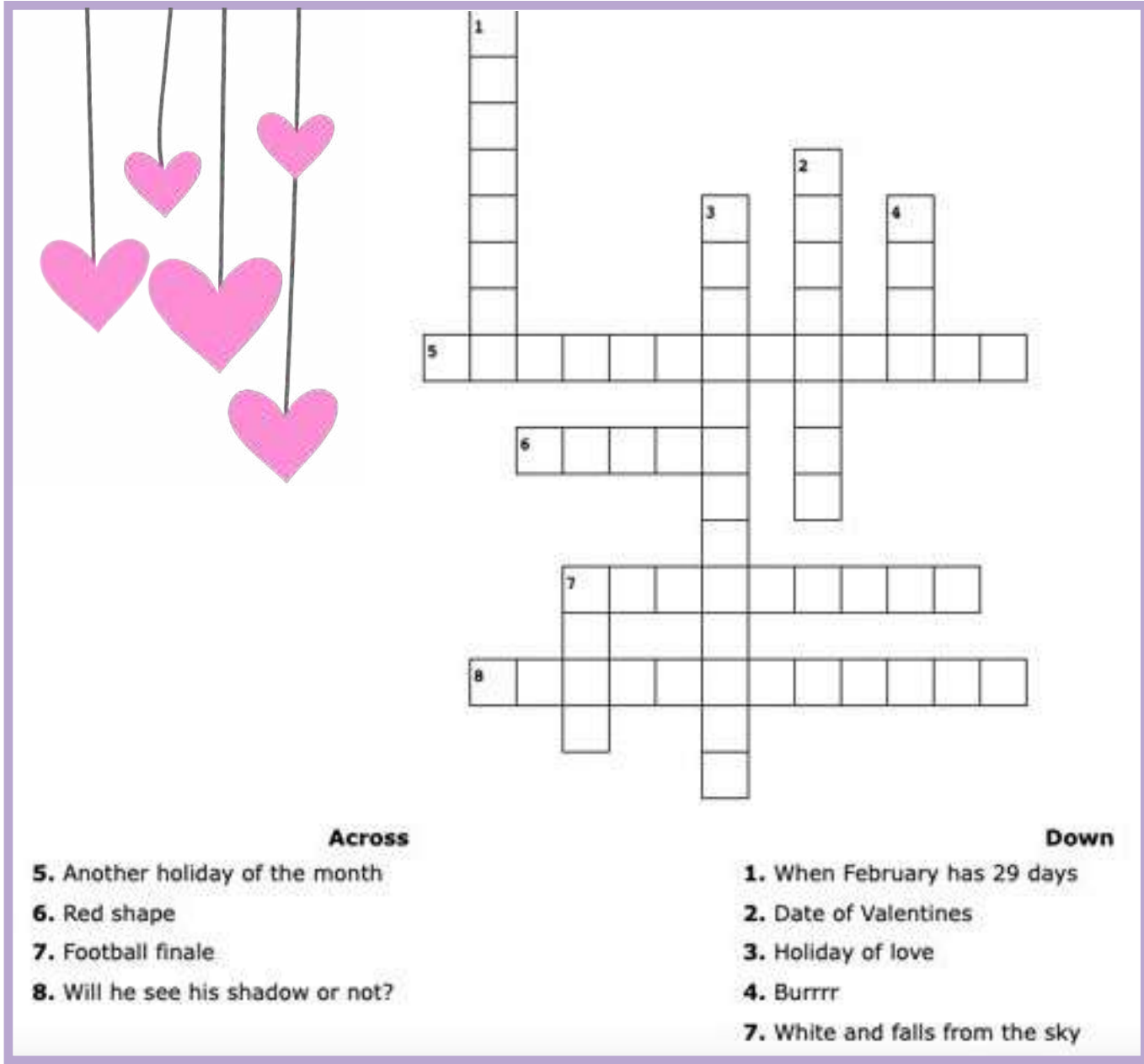
"Watching the game and the commercials!"
-John Walsh



"Make a bunch of food. Play board games at halftime"
-Joe Betts

KEY:

- 1. down - Leap Year
- 2. down - Fourteen
- 3. down - Valentines Day
- 4. down - Cold
- 7. down - Snow
- 5. across - Presidents Day
- 6. across - Heart
- 7. across - Superbowl
- 8. across - Groundhog Day



Across

- 5. Another holiday of the month
- 6. Red shape
- 7. Football finale
- 8. Will he see his shadow or not?

Down

- 1. When February has 29 days
- 2. Date of Valentines
- 3. Holiday of love
- 4. Burrrrr
- 7. White and falls from the sky

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EXTREME WINTER WEATHER TAKES IOWA BY STORM

Peyton Braddock
Co-Editor-in-Chief

Mother nature threw Iowa into wack this January with subzero temperatures and deep snow coverage.

A heavy snowfall blanketed the state, making road conditions and safety a struggle for many individuals. Because of the harsh weather, many schools, universities and businesses declared snow days.

The snowfall first began on Tuesday, Jan. 9 and continued throughout the week.

Snowfall amounts between 6-10 inches were common, with higher totals of 11 to 15 inches mainly falling in Jones, Linn, Cedar, and Johnson counties. The coldest day of the month was on Sunday, Jan. 14 with a high of -7 degrees to a low of -17, with wind gusts up to 25 mph.

Across the state, thick snow up to 8 inches covered the ground and many roads, making it almost impossible to navigate through the winter weather. Wind gusts kicked up to 30-40mph, making the visibility challenging for drivers.

Several accidents also occurred on area roads due to the weather, including a long backup/delay occurring on I-

80 on Tuesday, January 9th. North wind gusts over 30 mph were also very common across the state in various locations.

West Branch High School canceled the last two days of their J-Term courses due to winter weather advisory and freezing temperatures.

Because of the cancellation of J-Term, students were unable to complete their final days at internships or career cluster courses at the high school.

Sophomore Lillian Waters, who interned with Molly's Cupcakes said, "I had to end my internship early and I didn't like it. I really wanted to finish it out."

Logan Heick, who attended the Health Science J-term but didn't get to complete the Arts, A/V Technology and Communications J-term, added, "I really liked my J-Term class and I wasn't able to get more than a day with it."



A Winter's morning. Photo by Brooklyn Nash.

The high school also decided to close Jan. 9, Jan. 10, and Jan. 12 due to a winter blizzard and snowstorm and unsafe road conditions and below-freezing temperatures reaching into the negatives.

Since many days of school were canceled, a lot of activities were unable to practice. 3 basketball games were canceled and had to be rescheduled, and show choir was set back from learning vital parts of their show for SNJ.

Olivia Naber said, "Winter break just didn't feel long enough for me, so it was good to be able to get some sleep. However, I'm really disappointed that the show choir and jazz band were canceled several days in a row. We definitely needed those days to practice."

Nina Torkelson added, "The snow came at a really bad time because we were trying to get our show choir show ready for SNJ. We would have been a lot more prepared if we

could have had those weekend rehearsals, so we weren't able to sing one of the 5 songs at our performance. It also sets us back like a week, which is not helpful because we still have a lot of work to do!"

Snowflakes continued to fall on Jan. 22 and Jan. 23. Because of this, West Branch had a two-hour delay due to unsafe road conditions.

Although some students felt excited for the many snow days, emergency services were on high alert throughout January.

Ashlynn Nash said, "I live out in the country so for a few days I was unable to go anywhere because they had not plowed our roads. I am still unable to get packages and mail, and I have not been able to see loved ones who live a little farther than I'd like to."

As the month progressed, meteorologists predicted a gradual improvement in weather conditions. The temperatures began to progress to the 30s and mid 40s, which melted some of the snow and created slush on hard surfaces. School and activities were able to continue with more ease as roads and sidewalks slowly got treated.

DUALING PIANOS EVENT AMASSES FUNDS FOR PTO

Claire Jarrett
Photography Co-Editor-in-Chief

The 2nd Annual Dueling Pianos event in support of the WBCSD Foundation and PTO Fundraiser was a successful evening on February 3rd. Little Lights on the Lane hosted it for its second annual year. Pianopalooza which consisted of Tony Bohenkamp, who played last year, and Justin Schneider joined to play separate songs as well as joint songs throughout the evening.

Dinner this year was from Kalona Country Catering. On the menu included: Chicken Parmesan Dinner with Salad, Greenbeans, pasta with two sauces and chicken, and a roll. Dessert was chocolate cake and pumpkin cake donated by North Dodge Hy Vee.

The silent auction began at 5pm when cocktail hour started and ran until 9pm. The live auction started at 8:15pm where items were being auctioned. By

the end of the night, every item was completely sold. There were around 140 people in attendance this year and every item Live 1, 4, and 5 were auctioned for the high prices of \$1600, \$950, and \$900. An Iowa Hawkeye Helmet was also sold for the highest price of \$2000.

Some of the silent auction items included a day of golf, Iowa Hawkeye Helmet, Photo Shoot with Kelli Ann, Cleaning with Moppy Mo's, Brunch at the Lively, Autographed signed Ravens jersey, Broncos Football, and Guys and Gals.

Live Auction items included:

Live 1: VIP Chicago Cubs Gameday Experience.

Live 2: Iowa River Landing Getaway.

Live 3: Iowa Hawkeye Cornhole Set.

Live 4: Enjoy an Iowa Women's Basketball Game.

Live 5: Let the Golfing Extravaganza Begin.



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February 15, 2024

FEDERAL JUDGE BLOCKS IOWA BOOK-BANNING LAW

Vague language makes SF 496 unenforceable

Olivia Naber
Head Editor-in-Chief

Several books returned to WBHS shelves after a federal judge blocked the enforcement of a 2023 Iowa book-banning law.

Kim Reynolds signed Senate File 496 into law on May 26, 2023. The law called for the removal of books describing or visualizing a “sex act” in grades K-12 and restricted discussion and education relating to sexual orientation and gender identity in grades K-6.

Penalties for violating SF 496, ranging from a written warning to termination and teaching license removal, were set to roll out January 1, 2024, but federal judge Stephen Locher granted an injunction against the law December 29, 2023, blocking punishments from taking effect.

The same day, Reynolds released a statement criticizing Locher’s decision.

“I’m extremely disappointed in today’s ruling,” Reynolds said. “Instruction on gender identity and sexual orientation has no place in kindergarten through sixth grade classrooms. And there should be no question that books containing sexually explicit content — as clearly defined in Iowa law — do not belong in a school library for children. The fact that we’re even arguing these issues is ridiculous.”

After SF 496 passed, several Iowa schools removed books from school libraries and classrooms before the 2023-24 school

year to comply with the law.

While only half a dozen books left WBCSD shelves, other school districts found more titles in violation of the law. The Iowa City Community School District removed 68 books, including critically acclaimed novels such as Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple*, Juno Dawson’s *This Book is Gay*, John Green’s *Looking for Alaska*, and 8 novels by popular fantasy author Sarah J. Maas.

Other schools went further. Urbandale schools created a list of over 400 books to be removed from shelves, while Mason City schools employed artificial intelligence chatbot ChatGPT to determine which books violated the law. In total, over 500 different books left at least one school library across the state.

The variety in how schools enforced SF 496 is a key factor in the injunction against it. The court stated that because the law is “incredibly broad”, there is “widespread disagreement among school districts regarding which books must be removed to comply with the law.”

They explained that unclear standards of what is considered “age-appropriate” and the lack of “adequate guidance” on how to follow the law caused the over-removal of a wide variety of books—including historical classics, modern award-winners, and non-fiction books aimed at helping adolescents avoid sexual assault and make safe decisions about sex.

Rather than targeting individual books to be removed (as was the case with several previous bans), the Iowa legislature set rules in place that took hundreds of titles from Iowa schools. Such sweeping legislation has never been put forth in previous bans; in the words of the court, “the Iowa Legislature has used a bulldozer where school boards in prior cases merely employed a scalpel.”

The vague language used in SF 496 put educators in an unfortunate dilemma; how does one determine the line between legal and illegal literature? Because educators had to decide whether to remove a book that is slightly questionable or possibly face disciplinary actions (including termination and loss of teaching license), the court found that

SF 496 likely violated educators’ due process rights.

Vague language also caused issues with properly enforcing the part of the law restricting discussion on gender identity and sexual orientation for grades K-6.

“Gender identity” as defined by law includes both transgender and cisgender students, and “sexual orientation” as defined by law includes heterosexuality, homosexuality, and bisexuality. This means that any discussion on any sexual orientation or gender identity, including heterosexuality and cisgender men and women, must be removed to fully comply with the law.

Teachers would have to go to extreme lengths not to make any mention of gender or sexuality. This includes removing any mentions of “boys” or “girls” (even if that identity is in line with a person’s biological sex); not using the prefixes “Mr.”, “Ms.”, and “Mrs.”; not mentioning a teacher’s spouse or significant other (therefore revealing a teacher’s sexual orientation); referring to any students with any gendered pronouns whatsoever; and having “boys” or “girls” sports teams in grades K-6.

While this was very likely not what legislators intended and not how schools would enforce this, the court had to consider only the language explicitly used in the law.

Locher did not grant an injunction against an additional part of the law requiring that schools notify a parent if a student requests to be called by a different name or set of pronouns.

NEW, IMPROVED FAFSA FORM ROLLS OUT WITH UNINTENDED DIFFICULTIES

Olivia Naber
Head Editor-in-Chief

The new and improved 2024-25 Federal Application for Student Aid is now available and shorter to complete than ever, but it’s not without several issues to boot.

In the past, the FAFSA opened during October of each year, but the new form’s creation and implementation pushed the opening date to December 31. The Department of Education also announced that the opening date would be a “soft opening” while they continued to work on certain glitches and bugs.

The form, meant to make the process easier and more students eligible for aid, experienced several technical issues for several days after the soft opening. Between notifications about the form being down for maintenance and screens saying that the form was experiencing heavy traffic, it took students anywhere from a few minutes to a few days to do so much as enter the form.

WBHS FAFSA Issues

Several West Branch Seniors set out to tackle the form as soon as it opened with varying results.

Some students breezed through the form, such as Kaylee Kettler, who said she “thought it was relatively easy” because of the materials high school guidance counselor Miranda Schwickerath provided to the class of 2024.

Others hit road bumps with the site’s maintenance issues and the form’s glitches but managed to complete the FAFSA eventually.

Maryam Martin explained, “I would start filling out the form and come back to it and it wouldn’t let me open up my progress because the form was shut down again.”

Madelyn Stout expressed similar grievances, “It started out pretty simple. But now it keeps logging me out and I have to re-start.”

Despite feeling prepared well in advance, Ashlynn Nash has not been able to access the form whatsoever.

“I’ve had a super difficult time,” Nash said. “I made an account a pretty long time in advance, but then upon the launch date I attempted to log in and it said my password was incorrect.”

She worked with Schwickerath to resolve the issue and recover her account; unfortunately, their efforts were in vain. Nash hopes that the issue will be resolved sooner rather than later so she can be eligible for federal financial aid.

“At this point, I am a little wor-

ried,” she said.

The Department of Education keeps track of open and resolved issues with the form. Currently, there are 16 unresolved issues that bar students and contributors from progressing on or completing the form. Many of the current issues revolve around students not being able to progress on or complete the form after hitting certain buttons or choosing certain answer options. Currently, there are only workarounds for some of the issues and many students will have to wait until the issue is resolved to complete the FAFSA. However, students should visit the Issue Alerts page (<https://fsapartners.ed.gov/knowledge-center/topics/afsa-simplification-information/2024-25-fafsa-issue-alerts>) to check if there are workarounds for their particular issue.

2024-25 FAFSA changes

Several key changes affected the new form’s content and evaluation.

In creating a new form, the Department of Education aimed to streamline the process by reducing the number of questions to fill out. Rather than filling out over 100 questions, the new form only requires approximately 36. This reduced the amount of documentation needed on-hand for contributors to complete the form.

To reduce the number of questions, the form requires consent and approval from contributors to automatically pull financial information from the Internal Revenue Service. Without consent, students are ineligible to receive federal financial aid.

The new form also requires that every contributor, not just the student and one additional contributor like in years past, creates an FSA ID to fill out the FAFSA. To create an FSA ID, contributors must provide their Social Security Number, full name, and date of birth.

Additionally, the Student Aid Index (SAI) replaced the Expected Family Contribution (EFC), a key measurement in determining financial aid eligibility. While the two formulas are similar in many key aspects, the SAI removed the consideration of an applicant’s siblings in college. A person with siblings in college will likely earn less financial aid than if the form took this into account.

As a whole, the formulas for determining federal financial aid are being rebooted to maximize the money students are eligible to receive. The Department of Education predicts that because of the changes, “approximately 610,000 more students from low-income backgrounds will receive Pell Grants.” In addition, over 1.5 million more students will be eligible for the maximum Pell

Grant amount (\$7,395).

Many students fail to complete the form because they believe their family’s income is too high to qualify; however, it is advised to fill it out anyways since more students than ever will be eligible for federal financial aid this year.

Effects on Financial Aid Timelines

The form’s initial pushback meant that students would likely not know the extent of their financial aid options until late January at the earliest, but the technical issues pushed some of these dates back even farther.

Recognizing that technical difficulties prevented many from completing the FAFSA right away, several colleges pushed back priority deadlines for maximum scholarship consideration. The University of Iowa pushed the priority deadline to today, February 15, while Iowa State University pushed their deadline to Thursday, February 22.

However, in rushing to meet the December 31 deadline, the Department of Education failed to take inflation into consideration for this year’s calculations. The regrettable error means that the Department will not send out FAFSA results to colleges until March. From there, it takes several weeks for colleges to put together aid packages. All things considered, students will likely not know the extent of their federal financial aid opportunities until April.

By this time, students have already had to make key decisions about their future education. For many schools, priority applications for things such as housing and honors have already passed or will pass soon. Many cannot afford not to apply and accept college offers; at the same time, they cannot afford the uncertainty of federal aid.

Financial aid packages are a key factor in deciding where to attend college, but the combination of issues with the new form means that many students will have to choose their future col-

Let’s Define... FAFSA terms!

FAFSA

Free Application for Federal Student Aid. Determines a student’s eligibility for federal financial aid (grants, loans, scholarships, etc.).

PELL GRANT

Need-based grant from the government for college expenses. Does not need to be paid back. Amounts range from \$740-\$7,395.

FSA ID

Account used to log into and complete the FAFSA. Students AND all contributors to the form must create an FSA ID.

CONTRIBUTOR

Anyone who must provide information, consent and approval, and a signature. This includes the student, parents, stepparents and spouses.

SAI

Student Aid Index. Eligibility index number used by colleges and career schools to determine a student’s Pell Grant earnings.



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CJU45 PIRATES SET SAIL FOR SATURDAY NIGHT JIVE DEBUT

Keaton Norfleet
Staff Writer

Members of the WB Show Choir group, Christopher Jive and the Uptown 45 began as servants, then became masters.

On January 20, the WB Show Choir held their annual show choir competition, Saturday Night Jive, in the PAC at the HS.

To keep the day running smoothly, many show choir, band, and crew members took on a variety of jobs and responsibilities such as concessions, stage crew, PAC assistants, and shuttle drivers. Some students hosted classrooms, decorating and preparing them for the competing schools.

Senior Olivia Naber, a room host, said, "I came fairly early to the school, maybe eight or nine-ish, we set up our room and waited for our school to arrive. West Liberty arrived and we escorted them to our room. From there, we let them prepare all of their makeup and costumes and everything they needed for their show."

"We got to hang out with them throughout the day, we took them to their warmups, performances, and critiques before heading back to our room and waiting for the results."

Twelve schools registered to perform at SNJ; however, a wave of cold and icy weather caused trouble for participating schools. Pella's Middle School and Prep groups both dropped out, while Pella's Varsity group

had to leave after daytime awards.

After all competing schools performed, CJU45 took the stage and performed their pirate-themed show.

The show's repertoire consisted of five pieces: "Don't Back Down"; "Shiver My Timbers"; "Sail Me Away"; a mix of "Wellerman," "Bad Reputation," and "It's Going Down"; and a mix of "Pirates of Dance" and "What Ya Gonna Do."

For this particular show, Christopher Reed, the show choir director, did not have enough time to add the ballad to the show, so the group performed without it.

Reed said, "I thought our performance was great. We were kind of in shaky terrain, still putting the show together, and I thought we did a very nice job of our performance. I heard a lot of really nice compliments from other schools and parents, so definitely I thought we did a great job."

At the daytime awards, the emcee announced the finalists. The finalists were "Side One" from Indianola High School, "New Creation" from Marion High School, "Storm" from Liberty High School, "River City Rhythm" from Muscatine High School, "5th Avenue" from Western Dubuque High School, and "Sadie Street Singers" from Anamosa.

In addition to competing in the main competition, performers also received the opportunity to compete in a solo competition. Participating students performed a vocal solo for a judge who scored each singer. The top two scoring

soloists then performed at the beginning of finals.

First-place soloist went to Rico Miller from Indianola, and second place soloist went to Paige Wehring from Anamosa.

Indianola High School's "Side One", named grand champion, went home with not just a first place trophy, but also six



Caleb Pedersen threatens a fellow performer after his solo in the song "Shiver My Timbers." Photo contributed by Tracy Schutte.

other awards including best vocals, best choreography, best show design, best costumes, best special effects, and best soloist.

Days after Saturday Night Jive, on January 29, CJU45 competed at the Iowa High School Music Association State Show Choir Festival at Keota High School in Keota, IA. The group received a superior rating and a score of "I" from all three judges.

Naber said, "I felt very proud during that performance. Despite some of the challenges we faced in having a different set up for a stage than we are used to having... we got everything set out, and it went a lot smoother than I thought it would go."

"I'm proud of not only my performance but also just the way everybody else handled everything. Nobody freaked out, nobody made a big deal about the changes we had to make at the last second, and I thought that was very professional of us."

Following their successful State Contest performance, on Feb. 3, CJU45 placed fifth at their first competition, Music In Motion, held at Mount Pleasant High School. The group also won Best Crew and first place in the 2A category.

"We're never going to be perfect because we're human beings," Reed said. "We can't be perfect, and I totally accept that. But I feel like it's my job to try to find ways to motivate people to just constantly think, 'What can I do better and how can I improve myself?' Just because it helps you grow as a musician, and obviously the more comfortable you are with the show the more fun you can have with it. When you're worried about

things, performing isn't fun. There's been plenty of times where I've gone into performances myself, and I'm like, 'I don't know this as well as I should,' and it's just nerve-wracking."

"My goal is that our group continually improves every performance, and that whatever mistakes we were making before, we can eliminate those mistakes, and our performance truly becomes a show. When we take the stage, from beginning to the end, we transport the audience somewhere that they can enjoy a show, follow the storyline, and be entertained. If we can eliminate any problems, that's just going to make them enjoy it more."

"Trophies are cool if we get them, 'I' ratings are great if we get them, but the biggest thing is if we can continually improve and grow as musicians, that's awesome."

"I've had some years where we just kinda plateau, and those years are just not fun because we're just going through the motions and not getting better and that kind of stuff. Regardless of how we place at competitions, if every one of our performances are a little bit better, and we continue to grow, and we can walk off stage after Sunday's Swing Show knowing we pushed ourselves for the whole season, I'm set."

During their season, Christopher Jive and the Uptown 45 will attend three more competitions, with Pella's Dutch Masters on Feb. 17, Central Lee's Central Connections on Feb. 24, and Fort Madison's Stars In The Spotlight on March 2. The group will close their season with their two Swing Show performances on March 1 and 2.



Maddie Reed snarls at the audience during "Pirates of Dance" at SNJ. Photo contributed by Tracy Schutte.



Josh Kroemer, Nora Ziehr, Elliot Hinkhouse, Keaton Norfleet, and Lincoln Naber finish out the performance as singers leave the stage. Photo contributed by Tracy Schutte.

STUDENT GOVERNMENT HOSTS SNJ/DANCE MARATHON BAKE SALE



Madelyn Stout, Ashlynn Nash, Maryam Martin, and Jenie Gomez work at the bake sale for Saturday Night Jive to raise money for student government's Dance Marathon event. All proceeds go directly to the Stead Family Children's Hospital. The sale raised \$877.10 for the program. Photo contributed by Tracy Schutte.

Updates about Dance Marathon can be found on Student Government's social media pages:
Instagram: @wbstudentgov
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Clubs & Orgs

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February 15, 2024

ACE STUDENTS RECEIVE CARHARTT COATS

Caitlyn Harrison
Staff Writer

Hills Bank donated Carhartt coats to the ACE program, and these coats were handed out to nine students for their hard work in the ACE program. The coat ceremony took place at WBHS on Tuesday, January 30.

To receive a coat, students must take five Architecture, Construction, and Engineering, (ACE) classes over their four years of high school. While taking these classes they must maintain an average of a C or higher and demonstrate good employability skills.

Students who received a Carhartt Coat include Dylan Kazluauskas, Paxton Tisinger, Zack Capper, Reese Trepanier, Lincoln Edwards, Logan Wright, Noah Pedersen, Cale Seydel, Drew Wilcox, and Holden Arnaman. Randy Robertson said, "They're great

guys."

Students don't need to be enrolled at WBHS all four years to receive a Carhartt coat. "Some of them just came in and they had industrial tech. classes at Solon and other places, so we checked their transcripts and they qualified for ours," said Robertson.

Kazluauskas and Tisinger received their coats by completing CON-101, Arch. Plans and Specifications, a class through Kirkwood College.

Students appreciate Robertson and his work. Wilcox said, "It's pretty cool what Mr. Robertson does for this school; he's a great teacher and a great person."

Pedersen said, "I'm very happy that they gave us these coats; it was very generous of them. I think it's a good way to reward people for participating in the ACE program and push them towards working in the trades."



Back Row: Holden Arnaman, Lincoln Edwards, Reese Trepanier, Logan Wright, Cale Seydel. Front Row: Zach Capper, Drew Wilcox, Paxton Tisinger, Dylan Kazluauskas. Photo by Larkin Brown.

JAZZ BAND STUDENTS TRAVEL TO THE CORRIDOR JAZZ PROJECT

Keaton Norfleet
Staff Writer

Fifteen students in the West Branch Jazz Ensemble received the opportunity to record a jazz piece with a professional, but the most anxious person in the room didn't even have an instrument in his hands.

On January 25, the West Branch Jazz Ensemble, led by band director Samuel Ogilvie traveled to the Opus Concert Café in Cedar Rapids for the third year in a row to record a song with a professional jazz musician. This year, the musician of choice was Ryan Middleton.

"I was just a little bit nervous because my old high school band director

was in the room watching," Ogilvie said.

The Jazz Ensemble originally planned the recording session for Tuesday, January 23, however, due to conflicting weather conditions, Ogilvie decided to reschedule for the following Thursday.

Ogilvie said, "I personally was just a little bit nervous because we hadn't had a regular rehearsal; we had a makeshift rehearsal and a makeshift sectional time, and that was it."

The Jazz Ensemble recorded three takes of their song, True North by Mike Dana. The recording will be featured on the Iowa jazz station, 88.3 KCCCK, accompanied by a few student guest DJs who are a part of the ensemble.

"I think the band played really well and I'm excited to hear that

recording, and Mr. Middleton did excellent, as to be expected," Ogilvie commented.

After the recording session, students were given the option to record small snippets, promoting the radio station and the Corridor Jazz Project, which will also be featured on the radio.

The Opus Concert Café, over a few days, lent their space to the KCCCK radio station.

Every year, the station hosts the Corridor

Jazz Project, a program that gives high schools in the corridor area the opportunity to record a piece in a professional studio, "Which is unheard of. Some people will even go through college without having professional recording sessions" Ogilvie said.

KCCCK will also pay for each band to perform with a professional jazz musician, and finally, participating bands will get to play in the Corridor Jazz concert at the beginning of March.

During this process, KCCCK also creates a contest where students design artwork for the album cover.

This year, the West Branch Jazz Ensemble will perform at the Voxman Music Building in Iowa City on March 5.

"It's a very well rounded event that gives high schoolers so many awesome opportunities. It's very clever on KCCCK's end because they are getting young people, their future generation, to be engaged and interact with this radio station which is super smart."



Back Row: Nate Hills, Addy Schultes, Elliot Hinkhouse. Middle Row: Ewan Arlen, Kellen Dykstra, Nolan Staker, Josh Kroemer, Nina Torkelson, Samuel Ogilvie. Front Row: Eli Hansen, Keaton Norfleet, Jordan Waters, Maddie Reed, Nora Ziehr, Lincoln Naber, guest artist Ryan Middleton. Photo Courtesy of Rubicon Photos.

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GRANDE DROPS PRE-RELEASE AFTER FOUR YEARS

Caleb Pedersen
Staff Writer

Along-awaited release from one of the most recognized pop artists today, Ariana Grande, is finally out. Ariana Grande's new single, "yes, and?" is a pre-release song to her upcoming full album, "external sunshine". Her last release, positions, came out in 2020 and fans have been begging for a new release ever since.

During the 4 years with no

music releases, Grande had many public relationships that did not all go well. Her new song, "yes, and?" refers to what she thinks about the public's opinions about her and her actions.

"Yes, and?" is a dance and electronic music song that charted #1 on the Billboard Hot 100 the day of its release.

In my opinion, "yes, and?" is one of my favorite title tracks from Ariana Grande. The lyrics are very meaningful and the music is uplifting. I would give it a 5/5 rating.



VACATIONS BAND CREATES NEW WISTFUL ALBUM

Ashlynn Nash
Photography Co-Editor-In-Chief

VACATIONS band native to Newcastle, Australia, has recently released a fresh album titled *No Place Like Home*. Fans have long awaited brand-new music for nearly four years now, and are not disappointed with the outcome. While the band is from Australia, they have recently relocated to Los Angeles, California to accustom the majority of their fans.

The four person band is composed of head songwriter and singer Campbell Burns, bassist Jake Johnson, guitarist Nate Delizzotti, and finally drummer Joseph Van Lier. In their earlier years, VACATIONS dropped fan favorites "Young," and "Telephones." Now, fans have newly put together music to take a look at.

No Place Like Home is VACATIONS third studio album and encompasses the meaning of home not being just a house, but that home is within yourself. The artists present this with sensitive words and sweet sounds. I would call the music in this album easy to listen to and mostly of the Indie genre.

The album consists of ten tracks, with songs averaging in at around 3:10.

"Next Exit"- VACATIONS

- I think this song is poppy, groovy, and happy. Plus, it has a neat and enjoyable music video to go with it. You really start to feel a nostalgic vibe from this.

"Slow Motion"- VACATIONS

- The intro to this tune is euphoric. I love the guitar and strummings throughout the song. I would describe 'Slow Motion' as blissful.

"No Place Like Home"- VACATIONS

- Excuse me, I adore this song! The sound gives me an old feeling, and I quickly receive the feeling of nostalgia again. I'm living for the slow sounds and beats of the music, but the downfall of the song is the lyrics, as I feel that they begin to sound repetitive.

"Over You"- VACATIONS

- This song is more upbeat than the last, and it returns to a more pop music feel. I particularly like the guitar at the 2:21 mark. In my research, I was able to come across a fans words, and I felt that their sentences truly encapsulate the vibe of the band.

"They are a band that really calms me down when I am anxious, and

their sound reminds me of laying outside in the grass on a crisp, spring day," said an online fan.

"Midwest"- VACATIONS

- I find this song to be more alternative in comparison to the tracks on the album so far. I admire the lyrics to this song, but especially favor the first few lines. Watching the music video definitely adds layers to the experience and persona of the melody.

"Arizona"- VACATIONS

- I find this track to be absolutely flawless. Although, upon listening to the track, you'll find that it is only an instrumental melody. To me, this tune touches the soul while also being short and sweet.

One observation that I made this far into the album was that it feels like the album doesn't go in a specific order or tell a full story like some other albums. The tracks can be more distinct and listenable in different occurrences. Like all music, the lyrics and themes can be up to your own interpretation.

"Close Quarters"- VACATIONS

- To be honest, this song doesn't feel any more diverse than the rest of them. My other thoughts were that this number feels golden and upbeat.

"Off Season"- VACATIONS

- This song is just screaming nostalgia, if you aren't feeling that by now then you need to listen again. Something about this song is special. My understanding of this song is that it's about meeting someone and being able to let them go while still finding it hard to cope with.

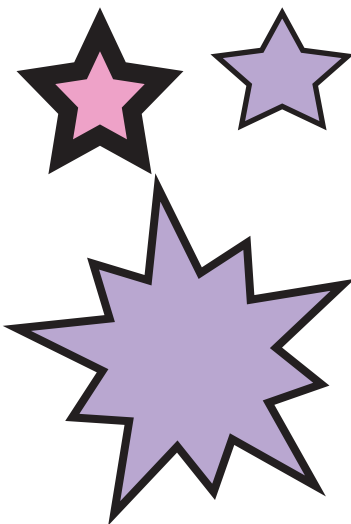
"Terms & Conditions"- VACATIONS

- This song encourages a person to reminisce. It feels tender yet uplifting to listen to this.

"Lost in Translation"- VACATIONS

- The last song here has a bit of a slower vibe, but it's sweet and nurturing to the listener. My favorite lyrics of the whole album are within this song. 'Know that I love you, you've always been enough' are such sentimental words of encouragement.

I think this album is a precious symbol that we can be our own homes. Let the music guide you to an understanding of self love, euphoria, and sensitivity. Sometimes, "home" isn't just about a physical location.



STUDENT REVIEWS NEW HIT MOVIE ANYONE BUT YOU

Kya Montgomery
Staff Writer

This hilarious romantic comedy *Anyone But You* is directed by Will Gluck. The movie is rated R, and was released December 22, 2023. Popular entertainers in the movie are Glen Powell and Sydney Sweeney, who portray the main characters.

This movie did extremely well, surpassing \$100 million worldwide, a feat not achieved by an R-rated rom-com in 8 years. This is very impressive considering the current competition with Oscar contenders.

This romantic comedy is about a couple that hit it off on their first date, but then it ends sour. They don't see each other for 2 years, then find themselves at a destination wedding in Australia. They pretend to be dating to keep up appearances.

The thing that stood out to me was the cast. I felt as if the cast was perfect for the movie and the acting was good. At times it was a little cringey, but is to be expected because it is a rom-com. Sweeney and Powell I thought did especially well in this movie, they were the perfect fit.

I found myself dancing in my chair while watching the movie. The soundtrack in the movie was very great. "Unwritten" by Natasha Bedingfield has

become super famous on TikTok from this movie. Some other songs I recognized were "The Spins" by Mac Miller and "Photo ID" by Remi Wolf and Dominic Fike.

I thought this movie was so funny. There were so many times I caught myself laughing out loud in the movie theater. The script was well written, there was never a dull moment in the movie. Some parts were a little predictable, but mostly I was wondering what was gonna happen next.

My favorite part of the movie was when Sweeney's and Powell's characters were trying to show everyone that they were a great couple but no one was watching. They soon found out there was a spider in Glen's pants.

Ashlynn Nash said, "My favorite part of the movie was the end, not going to give any spoilers but this is definitely your sign to go watch."

I loved this movie and I can definitely see myself watching it again and again. This is probably one of the best rom coms that I've seen in awhile. This movie definitely deserves the hype.

I heard about this movie from TikTok, typically when I see movies on Tik Tok they aren't that great. This movie exceeded my expectations, I would recommend this movie to everyone to go watch. I really enjoyed this movie and would give it 5/5 stars.



FROM PRISON TO FREEDOM: THE LIFE OF GYPSY ROSE BLANCHARD

Miley Shields
Staff Writer

The recent release of Gypsy Rose Blanchard has taken the internet by storm! Her release has brought more light to her backstory. Gypsy Rose was charged with second degree murder in 2016 and faced 8 years of her original 10 year sentence, and was then granted parole in September 2023 and released December 2023.

Gypsy Rose was sent to jail after planning the murder of her mother. The murder was carried out by her boyfriend of the time Nicholas Godejohn who she had been talking to online for many months. While with Godejohn she had thought she found the love of her life and wanted to spend their life together.

Due to her relationship with her mother they could not be together but because of her love for Nicholas she formed two plans to stay together. One plan was to become pregnant with his child forcing her mom to accept them being together. Her other plan was for him to kill her mother.

Growing up Blanchard had suffered in many ways due to her mother. Although she had no signs of mental or physical health issues, her mother, Dee Dee Blanchard, claimed Gypsy Rose suffered from leukemia, asthma, and muscular dystrophy. Her mother also claimed she had the "mental capacity of a 7-year-old due to brain damage" which was later proved to be false. Some doctors believed Dee Dee could have Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy causing her to exaggerate Gypsy's illnesses.

While Gypsy Rose was in the care of Dee Dee many charities had helped their way of life such as, Habitat for Humanity, Make-a-Wish Foundation, Ronald McDonald House, and Children's Mercy Hospital. Gypsy Rose underwent many unneeded surgeries as well as she took several superfluous medications.

Gypsy's childhood was very psychologically damaging, she was left isolated after she was removed from school as early as kindergarten leaving her to be homeschooled. Dee Dee made sure to keep her from knowing the truth about most

things, even her real age.

While in jail she had said, "I feel like I'm more free in prison than living with my mom. Because now I am allowed to live like a normal woman," on January 4, 2018 for 20/20, an American TV news program.

Many students within WBHS have strong thoughts on her past and her current media presence. One student, when asked if they think what she did was justified, said "I can kind of see both sides of it, but in the end, yes I agree that it is justified. She was in a terrible situation in which she didn't understand for multiple years, and she just wanted to be able to live life like a normal person. I couldn't even imagine how it would feel for multiple years to basically be held captive in your own life." Several students share similar thoughts on the case.

Some students had the opposite view of her case and what she did, one student said, "She's manipulative and should be in prison for conspiracy to murder for life." The question of whether it was justified or not has been talked about on many websites and social media platforms.

With her personal rise to social media, we've been able to see more of her current life. On June 27, 2022, she married her now husband Ryan Scott Anderson. On social media platforms such as Instagram she shares on topics such as her time in prison, time with her husband, and inspirational quotes. She makes sure to bring awareness to Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy.

Not everyone agrees with her receiving the attention through the media. She has received a lot of hate online and many disagree with what she believes in and her story. A student said, "I don't think she should be famous. She could have run away and gone to the police instead of killing her mother. While her situation is tragic, she should not be famous. She is still a murderer."

A common thing amongst many is believing that she doesn't deserve fame. With everything she has gone through and is still going through she continues to try her best to keep a positive attitude on all things and make the best of the life she was given.



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February 15, 2024

“SWATTING CALL” SENDS WBCSD INTO LOCKDOWN

Olivia Naber
Head Editor-in-Chief

Less than two weeks after the Perry High School shooting, West Branch entered lockdown after receiving anonymous school shooting threats.

At 2:14 p.m. on Wednesday, January 17th, the WBHS office received an anonymous call warning of a potential school shooting threat. Immediately, high school principal Sara Oswald notified staff and students through the public announcement system of an emergency in the building. She instructed students to stay in the closest classroom without further instruction.

Within minutes, law enforcement from several agencies arrived on the scene to investigate.

Superintendent Marty Jimmersen emailed staff and families at 2:37 to explain and clarify the situation. Put this in a separate box- screenshot? → “Staff, we recently received a phone call of a perceived threat of shooting out at the high school. This was a robo call and has went out to other schools throughout the state. We have contacted Cedar County and they are at the high school at this time. We will stay in lockdown until we get this resolved and will send something to families ASAP. Thank you.” Students stayed sequestered in classrooms with rumors and speculation for information.

“Every single group chat I was in was blowing up...taking pictures and all these videos of the cops with big guns,” sophomore Lincoln Naber said. After the Perry High School shooting, uncertainty over the situation put numerous students on edge.

“Once I started seeing the cops coming, I actually got kind of scared...I just felt like if there was an active shooter, there was no chance I was making it,” sophomore Ava Abdagic said. Eventually, the email sent by Jimmersen made its way around to students through teachers, social media, and word of mouth. Knowing the threat was likely a

hoax calmed the situation for some.

Naber said, “First, it was kind of worrying, but it got to the point where nothing was really happening. You’re like, ‘I’m trying to get to English. School’s going to be out soon.’”

At 2:50, law enforcement determined the threat was not credible, being one of several hoax calls sent to schools across the state. After sweeping the school once

ceived what is known as a swatting call. Swatting calls are hoax calls reporting serious crimes intended to trigger immediate deployment of law enforcement and emergency services to an area.

This isn’t the first time mass swatting calls targeted Iowa schools. In March 2023, over 30 Iowa schools entered lockdown after receiving swatting calls that were likely from the same per-

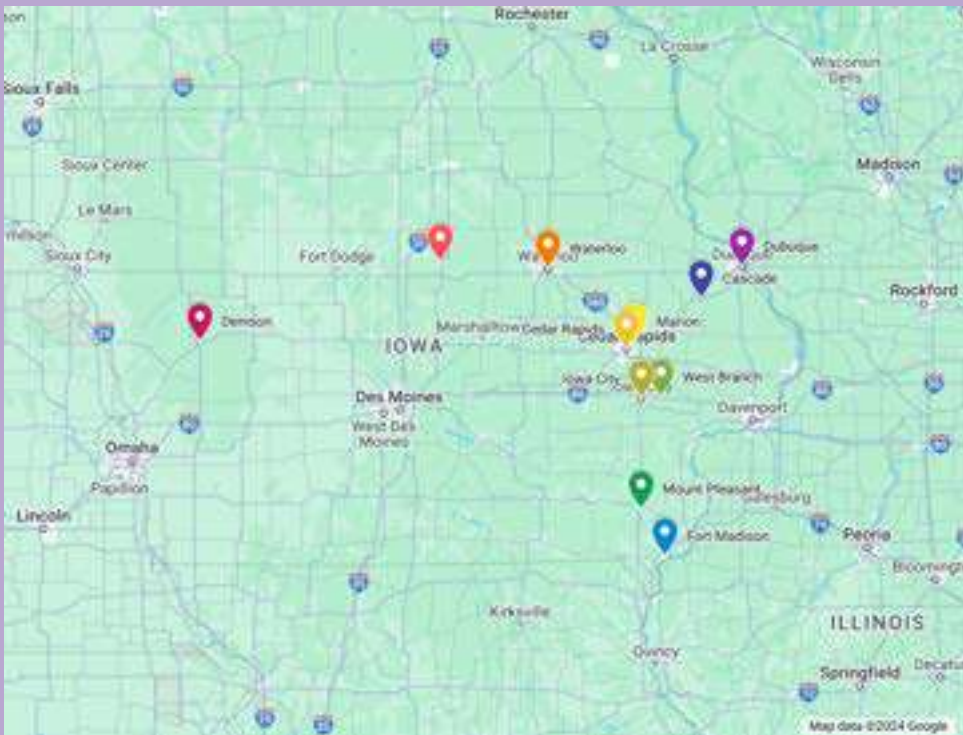
harsher punishments.

The recently-introduced House File 2165 would make knowingly reporting false information of a violent crime, an act of terrorism, possession of biological agents or diseases, or threats of arson/explosive devices to fire departments or law enforcement a Class D Felony with a punishment of up to five years in prison and a fine of \$1,025-\$10,245. If the call leads

Iowa Swatting Threats - January 17, 2024

Known Schools Districts Affected

- Denison
- Iowa Falls-Alden
- Waterloo
- Cedar Rapids
- Marion
- Iowa City
- West Branch
- Mount Pleasant
- Fort Madison
- Cascade
- Dubuque



more, the lockdown ended. Oswald made an announcement at 3:10 stating that the all-clear had been given and students were free to leave the school.

West Branch was not the only district to enter lockdown. Within the same day, several other Iowa schools re-

son or group of people. As a whole, 39 instances of swatting occurred in Iowa schools during the 2022-23 school year, a sharp uptick from 2021’s 4 calls.

Currently, swatting is classified as a misdemeanor in Iowa, but the increasing number of swatting calls prompted Iowa legislators to push for

to the serious injury or death of another person, this is bumped up to a Class C Felony with a punishment of up to 10 years in prison and a fine of \$1,370-\$13,660.



Above: 12 total law enforcement vehicles arrived within two-ten minutes between the three school buildings. Photo by Olivia Naber.



FEELING BLUE

Above: During the January 11 home basketball games against Wilton, the WBHS student section sported blue apparel in solidarity with Perry, Iowa, after the school shooting that claimed three lives, including Perry High School Principal Dan Marburger, and injured six. Photo by Olivia Naber.



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