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The Guidon

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Hays High School | 2500 E. 13th St. | Hays, Kan. 67601



Playing It Safe

Fear of failure in young people
caused by multitude of factors
Pages 6-7

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ON THE COVER



ORGANIZATIONS

Chess Club members start competitive season by earning second place in recent tournament

By Kennedy Fischer
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At Hays High School, many student organizations have busy schedules, but often go unnoticed by the student body, with one of those being the Chess Club.

On almost every Wednesday after school until 4 p.m., the club members meet in sponsor Alan Neal's classroom, Room 156, to play the game to prepare for tournaments they attend.

Five group members traveled to Hutchinson's Trinity Catholic High School on Saturday, Nov. 15 for their first tournament of the school year, the Trinity Celtics K-12 Chess Tournament. Overall as a team, they earned a second-place trophy, which was the team's first trophy since the 2022-2023 season.

"For the team's first tournament, coming home with a second-place trophy was a pretty big achievement," junior Kamden McBride said. "Some people were there for the first time, so it was nice for them to have that experience."

As individuals, McBride placed sixth, and junior Max McDonald finished 12th, with each earning four points towards the team score. Junior Cedric Durr placed 17th, and junior Amil Srivastava ended 20th, to get three points each for the team. And, junior Edison Leuschner earned two team points.

"I felt swell about the Nov. 15 tournament," McDonald said. "After the conclusion of the tournament, I was feeling quite exquisite with both my and my team's performance. I feel awfully optimistic about the prospects of the future growth of our community."

Following the Trinity tournament, the club members attended another tournament on Saturday, Nov. 22 in Lawrence, where they placed fourth in the team standings.



Photo by Dexter Sullivan (Indian Call)

MAKING MOVES

At their Sept. 17 club meeting after school in sponsor Alan Neal's classroom, Chess Club members practice playing the game against one another. In their first tournament at Hutchinson Trinity on Nov. 15, the team members placed second overall, earning a trophy.

The Chess Club members will continue competing in statewide tournaments during second semester with the Grade Level Championships on Saturday, Jan. 17 at Valley Center and the Thomas More Prep Invitational on Saturday, Jan. 24.

To end the competitive chess season, the state tournament will be on Saturday, March 14 at Emporia State University. To qualify for state, players have to compete at one or more tournaments before the state tournament. Last year at state, McBride placed in 18th, Srivastava finished 81st and McDonald was 120th as individuals.

If people are interested in joining Chess Club, they do not need previous experience, as the team works on gameplay at its meetings.

"The team is growing and is looking forward to playing in even more tournaments if people are interested in traveling to other schools," Neal said.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Assistant principal Becky Hickert has been playing clarinet for 34 years. So, when the Hays High symphony orchestra was created, Hickert was asked to play with the student musicians.



assistant principal
Becky Hickert

Is there a reason why you originally chose to play the clarinet?

"When we did instrument tryouts in sixth grade, my band teacher suggested the baritone, which I was excited about. However, my mom told the teacher that my aunt had a clarinet, and it was much more portable – I was a pretty small kid in sixth grade – and the baritone weighed more than I could carry!"

Why did you get involved with the orchestra?

"Last fall, [orchestra teacher] Mr. [Brayden] Smith approached me, telling me he had heard

I used to play clarinet. I thought it was an awesome opportunity to get to be a part of a large ensemble again and participate alongside students. It's been really fun to learn new music and to be an example that music is a lifelong activity."

What is a favorite memory from playing in the symphony orchestra?

"My favorite memory is playing in the first concert in our new Performing Arts Center. 'The Journey Home' is truly a beautiful piece of music – congratulations, Mr. Smith and Catherine Treischmann! During our first rehearsal with the choir, I was literally brought to tears during the fourth movement when the choir came in. It was a 'goosebumps' moment, as the 140-plus musicians on stage filled the auditorium with gorgeous music."

Reporting by Alijah Arias

CLASSES

'NECESSARY' CHANGE**Following serious incident, Junior Class experiences change in sponsorship**

By Alijah Arias
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At Hays High School, the Junior Class has many responsibilities, including participating in Homecoming Week and hosting Prom, and all that goes along with those annual events. However, the Class of 2027 has experienced major challenges this year, including a change in their sponsors midway through the year.

To start the year, four adults signed non-athletic supplemental contracts to sponsor the class, including health secretary Julie Pfannenstiel as the head sponsor and English teacher Audra O'Reagan and parents Andrea Carmichael and Patricia Deines as assistant sponsors.

On Monday, Sept. 22 at the juniors' float building event at junior parent Kyle Normandin's shop, an emergency occurred involving a student when no official class sponsors were present; only three parent volunteers were there.

Junior Kamden McBride had been cutting cardboard with metal scissors when the scissors slipped, cutting his hand. Immediately, he began bleeding profusely.

"Our third and fourth sponsors [Carmichael and Deines] showed up right as I was running to the bathroom after Kamden," junior Alexis Bickle, the class president, said. "[Junior] Hannah [Strasser] followed me and stayed with Kamden, applying pressure to the laceration, while I ran to go find a first aid kit. I couldn't find one, and when I returned, all I remember is seeing how much blood was gushing out, no matter how much pressure was applied."

After contacting McBride's girlfriend, junior Avery Arias, and his mother, Kendra McBride, McBride's mother instructed the students to take her son to the emergency room at Hays Medical Center, where she would meet them quickly.

"Kamden was stable at this point, but the bleeding had not stopped," Bickle said. "Kennedy [Normandin], Avery and Hannah walked him to the car. I went to find another towel for the drive there. Just as I returned, I saw Kamden's eyes roll back into his head. He had passed out on us. I will never forget that image."

At that point, Bickle said the girls began to reassess the situation, knowing it was serious from their CNA training.

"We told my dad to call 911," Bickle said. "It was at this point that our sponsors first said something to us. The one said that we 'really needed to call 911'... that 'this was serious'... My dad was already on the phone with them."

"Once [junior] Kamden [McBride] was taken to the hospital, all we were left with was all of the blood to clean up... We had to dig blood clots out of the drain..."
junior class officer
Alexis Bickle

With McBride being "in and out" of consciousness and bleeding still, Bickle said she had the idea to apply a tourniquet to try to stop the bleeding.

"I quickly got to work applying the tourniquet," Bickle said. "It was at this time that our sponsors made their second comment. When I was

putting the tourniquet on, one of them told me to not put it on too tight."

After the ambulance arrived about four minutes later, Bickle said she "switched from caretaker to class president in a matter of seconds" with "no time to process what had just happened."

"Once Kamden was taken to the hospital, all we were left with was all of the blood to clean up," Bickle said. "Our two sponsors offered to go get cleaning supplies. They dropped off the supplies, complimented us on our work and left. Kennedy, Hannah and I were the only ones that stayed after what had happened. We continued to work on the float until 8 p.m., then we began cleaning up all of the blood that had been left. We were there until almost 10:30 at night, cleaning and scrubbing the hallway and bathroom. We had to dig blood clots out of the drain and scrub the concrete outside."

Following the incident, the juniors present said they felt unsupported, not only by the two sponsors who stood by during the incident, but also by O'Reagan and Pfannenstiel.

"In the days following the accident, our sponsors made several inappropriate comments, including, 'Did he get blood on the float?' and 'I hope you learned your lesson,'" Bickle said. "They never once checked in on us or came to float building

after that. The third and fourth sponsors came for five to 10 minutes the following days, but that was it."

While it was not required for sponsors to attend float building, the junior officers all said that they expected more support from their class sponsors.

And, McBride, who is recovering from the cut through the muscle of his hand, said, "I feel like their response to the incident was unprofessional, and the officers would have appreciated assistance with cleaning and emotional support, considering the gravity of the incident."

Following Homecoming, the juniors and their parents communicated with Student Council sponsors and with administrators. And, later this semester, the four Junior Class sponsors resigned from their supplemental positions. While the four sponsors were contacted for their input on this article, none of them replied.

"It has been difficult for everyone involved, but, we have implemented several positive changes," Bickle said. "These include requiring at least one class sponsor to be at float building/class activities, sponsors being trained in first aid and having a first aid kit and having students write down emergency contact information at float building."

With the Junior Class still needing to plan Prom, the school is in the process of hiring new sponsors. While the Board of Education has not yet approved hirings, teachers Thomas Decker, Abby Gillan and Jessica Nickum said they applied.

"The key of being a sponsor to me is being involved in the processing and consideration of ideas," Decker said. "Then, once they reach a decision that we can live with, guide the execution of that plan."

As the juniors move forward, the class officers say the change was unfortunate but needed.

"I wish things did not have to get to this point, but considering

"I wish things did not have to get to this point, but considering how everything was handled, this change was necessary for us to move forward."
junior class officer
Avery Arias

how everything was handled, this change was necessary for us to move forward," Arias said. "We went from barely having any guidance to having people who consistently show up for us and who are committed. I am glad that the responsibilities will not fall entirely on us juniors anymore. It has been a big change, but it has been a positive one."

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ELECTION

Experienced members win reelection to school board

By Jacob Ridgway
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Following the Nov. 4 local elections, Hays residents elected three previous board members to the USD 489 Board of Education.

Receiving the most votes, with 2,531, was current board president Curt Vajnar, who will return to the board for his second term. Tying in second place with 1,948 votes each were current board vice president Ken Brooks and former board member Craig Pallister, who will also both serve their second terms.

This upcoming January, the three will join returning board members Jayme Goetz, Allen Park, Ruth Ruder and Derek Yarmer, whose terms all expire in 2028, to lead the district. Here, Vajnar provides his views on the district's future.

Why did you decide to run for the board?

Vajnar: "Originally, there were things I wanted to see changed. Now, there is the bond issue that needs to get finished, and that is why I ran this time."

What was your reaction to winning this fall?

Vajnar: "I expected to win. I have been here for several years, and I think I have done some good things, and people wanted to keep doing things."

What are some of the priorities that you have during your upcoming term?

Vajnar: "I want to see the bond issue finished. The middle school kids will see their new facility in a month. Wilson [Elementary School] will move into the old middle school, and then Wilson will become the board office. And, I want to make sure everything is in the budget."

What developments in the district are you looking forward to?

Vajnar: "Finishing the bond and seeing the rest of the projects get done. The only thing Hays High has to finish up is the tennis courts. Otherwise, I would just say we have to pay our bills and to focus on teaching and classroom kind of stuff."



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JOURNALISM



Photo courtesy of Jessica Augustine

IN MUSIC CITY

While in Nashville, Tenn., for the National High School Journalism Convention, adviser Jessica Augustine, junior Raylee Brungardt, senior Khandi Guzman, senior Kennedy Fischer and junior Alijah Arias tour the Grand Ol' Opry on Nov. 13. In addition to attending convention events, the group toured historic sites throughout Nashville.

By Delia Dixon
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Recently, four members of the Quill and Scroll Journalism Honor Society, along with adviser Jessica Augustine, attended the fall National High School Journalism Convention in Nashville, Tenn., from Nov. 12-16. Students attending included seniors Kennedy Fischer and Khandi Guzman and juniors Alijah Arias and Raylee Brungardt.

On Nov. 13, the group attended one of the convention's media tours, taking a bus to Clarksville, Tenn., about an hour northwest of Nashville, to tour the Jostens printing plant, where Hays High's yearbook will be printed this year.

"Compared to previous visits to different yearbook plants, the last time being almost a decade ago, the tour to the Jostens plant showed me how much the technology has increased," Augustine said. "By doing the tour, I also hope that the students understand more about why we have to complete certain parts of the book at certain times."

That evening, the group went to the convention's trade show, then attended the opening keynote session, "The Power of Stories: How Local Journalism Can Make a Difference," which featured Pulitzer Prize-winning reporters.

On Nov. 14 and Nov. 15, the participants chose among various sessions to learn about journalism. Fischer said her favorite session highlighted the similarities between film and yearbook.

"I came back with more knowledge and skills than I had before," Fischer said. "My main takeaway was to take stories a different direction than the obvious – find an angle."

With sessions being taught by professionals, those attending had opportunities to get new insights.

"Making those connections to journalists and with colleges and having those contacts before getting out of high school will help us along our pathway," Arias said.

Augustine also explained advantages, academic and experiential, of the convention trip.

"One notable benefit is that the students and I have opportunities to hear from people who we do not learn from normally – not just Kansas advisers, but professionals around the nation," Augustine said. "And, I think there are a lot of good life lessons in taking students outside of Hays, so they can experience life in larger cities."

Outside the convention, the group explored the cultural side of "Music City." On Thursday, they visited the Grand Ole Opry and WSM radio station, and on Friday, they toured the Country Music Hall of Fame museum and the Hatch Show Print shop, which is a working letterpress printshop. To finish their trip, on Saturday, they visited the Ryman Auditorium, the Johnny Cash Museum and the Musicians Hall of Fame.

"We got to see the place where country music culture and history is centered, and that was honestly really cool," Arias said.

Younger generations often avoid taking even slight risks, as many youth have a fear of failure

What causes a Fear of Failure?

- ✓ Academic pressures
- ✓ Career & college decisions
- ✓ Economic uncertainties
- ✓ Family expectations
- ✓ Low self-esteem
- ✓ Mental health issues
- ✓ Parenting styles
- ✓ Perfectionist tendencies
- ✓ Social media comparisons

What Effects Does Fear of Failure Have?

- ✓ Anxiety
- ✓ Avoidance
- ✓ Insecurities
- ✓ Isolation
- ✓ Perfectionism
- ✓ Procrastination
- ✓ Shame
- ✓ Stress
- ✓ Underachievement

How can one combat Fear of Failure?

- ✓ Avoid negative influences like social media
- ✓ Be content with your best effort in the process
- ✓ Break down challenges into small steps
- ✓ Get out of your comfort zone in small ways
- ✓ Give yourself grace when you make errors
- ✓ Listen to how others failed, then succeeded
- ✓ Replace negative thoughts with positive ones
- ✓ Seek advice from adults you trust
- ✓ View failures as steps towards successes
- ✓ Visualize success

NO RISK...

By Lily Butler
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Shaky hands, sweaty palms, queasy stomach – feeling full-blown panic. One might think that this kind of anxiety would sprout from a major situation, but for some young people, simply having to make a phone call to their boss, having to complete a scholarship form or having to tackle a school project triggers an overwhelming fear of possible failure.

In recent years, a fear of failing seems to have become more prominent in the younger generations, including Generation Z or Generation Alpha. Taking some risks or trying new things causes instant anxiety, as if there is a slight possibility of failure or judgment, young people will not attempt the activity.

According to sources, including Forbes magazine, those in younger generations, overall, are more anxious and are more fragile than previous generations when they were the same age. An article on Forbes web site, “Helping Gen Z Learn To Fail – Well” says, “It’s no surprise that they also have a heightened aversion to negative events, including failure. In fact, perceptions of failure can impact a spectrum of mental health disorders.”

So, why are younger people more afraid of failure?

A slew of factors contributes to this fear of failure, according to sources – parenting styles, academic pressures, college decisions, career options, financial instability, mental health, social media, technological advances, cancel culture and much more. All of these create an immense amount of pressure on youth, leading them to just “shut down” instead of taking risks when they realize they might not succeed.

“Our generation is so afraid of failing because we have such an overwhelming amount of pressure put on us,” senior Lindsey Hernandez said.

Of those factors, research points to technology – specifically social media – as a negative influence on young people’s perceptions of themselves, and thus, willingness to take on new challenges.

Constant access to others’ successes and constant comparison to others’ lives may lead younger people to feel insecure in their accomplishments, or lack thereof. And, social media and other technology also allow people’s failures to be made public.

“With the rise of social media, we have become overcautious with the things we do and say in public, fearing the risk of getting posted online,” math teacher Jerett Pfannenstiel said. “Technology allows an embarrassing event to be exposed to so many more people than ever before.”

While not taking *big* risks may be normal for younger people, Pfannenstiel said that he has seen his students not take *any* risks at all.

“Over the last few years, I have seen that more students would prefer to write down nothing at all than to actually attempt a question and risk getting it wrong or failing,” Pfannenstiel said.

Pfannenstiel added that students often only do something if they get rewarded and if there is not a chance of criticism or disapproval.

“A mindset of ‘What am I going to get out of this?’ has taken over,” Pfannenstiel said. “They take less risks if there is not a perceived reward at the end compared to when they have a chance of winning a prize.”

So, what can be done to combat these mindsets?

According to Lightfully Behavioral Health’s article “21 Ways You Can Help Your Teen Combat the Feeling of Failure,” adults play a key role in changing youths’ perspectives. The article encourages adults to understand teens’ fears by communicating openly and by showing empathy, but also to “shift their perspective on failure” by emphasizing that mistakes lead to growth, limiting negative influences like social media, developing coping skills, having growth mindset and sharing inspirational stories of their own failures and successes, among other strategies.

“I think young adults are afraid of failing because older generations think we are defined only by our successes,” senior Mitzi Carrillo said, underscoring the need for adults to guide teens in positive ways.

How Much of a Risk Taker Are You?

Answer the following questions to find out!

Would you rather...

- A) Have to be in a project group with people you know?
- B) Have to be in a project group with people you don't know?

Would you rather...

- A) Send an email to your teacher about a bad grade?
- B) Talk to your teacher in person about a bad grade?

Would you rather...

- A) Not say anything to a waiter about an incorrect order?
- B) Complain to a waiter about an incorrect order?

Would you rather...

- A) Go straight to college after graduating high school?
- B) Take a gap year after graduating high school?

Would you rather...

- A) Apply to colleges with high acceptance rates?
- B) Apply to colleges with very selective admission?

Would you rather...

- A) Have a major decided before you enter college?
- B) Enter college with an open major and decide later on?

Would you rather...

- A) Pay for college with scholarships and savings?
- B) Pay for college with loans?

Would you rather...

- A) Live at home for awhile after high school?
- B) Move out on your own right after high school?

Mostly A's? You are a risk taker! Mostly B's? You like to play it safe!

NO REWARD

Praises

- Blankets
- Ethan Slater
- Winter Break
- Holiday decor
- Christmas lights
- Christmas Caroling
- Peppermint flavor
- Leaving the country
- Generous old people
- Southern accents
- Snow days

Protests

- Finals
- Wind chills
- School laptops
- Sliding on the ice
- Ebenezer Scrooges
- Quarter zip with matcha tea
- Amount of things to be done
- Flat-tiring in the halls
- Short notices
- Frost
- ICE

Staff Recs

Alijah Arias

- "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree" by Brenda Lee
- "National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation"

Lily Butler

- "Christmas Wrapping" by The Waitresses
- "Home Alone"

Delia Dixon

- "Sleigh Ride" by Ella Fitzgerald
- "Four Christmases"

Kennedi Fischer

- "Drumma Boiah" by Justin Beiber
- "The Muppet Christmas Carol"

Avery Moreno

- "15000000 easy" by torr
- "Jujutsu Kaisen: Execution"

Jacob Ridgway

- "You're a Mean One, Mr. Grinch" by Alex Brightman
- "Klaus"

Brayden Staley

- "Deck the Halls" by Thomas Oliphant
- "Polar Express"

Allison Stecklein

- "Last Christmas" by Wham!
- "Elf"

Jessica Augustine

- "O Holy Night" by Celine Dion
- "How the Grinch Stole Christmas"



Cartoon by Khandi Guzman

Older generations must help youth learn how to fail 'forward'

As the saying goes, "You're not learning if you're not failing." While risk aversion is related to the fear of failure, there are many factors contributing to young people's unhealthy relationships with failure. Older generations often criticize younger generations about their hesitance to take risks, but Gen Z and Gen Alpha have been raised in a very different society than the older generations.

In school, the emphasis on grades makes students fear failure in academics and, potentially, in life. Grades are often used as punishments for failure instead of reasons to learn more. And, while some people may say that grades do not matter, they do. For example, for some, one low grade can be the difference between receiving a scholarship for college and getting no assistance. Of course, it is not realistic to abolish all grades, but approaching failure with a healthy mindset takes practice, meaning exposure to failure should be taught throughout students' education – for example, exposing students to failure in the form of challenging activities with low risks. That way, there are opportunities to succeed after initial failures, which is a crucial lesson to learn.

At home, parents play a role in how children approach failure. By raising children in an environment where failure is not an option, whether parents are too overprotective or overly strict, kids are not given the opportunities to learn how to fail in healthy ways. If parents always "save" their children from failure, children become dependent on their parents, or other adults, to remedy their issues. Plus they may believe that their failures are someone else's fault. Thus, from the start, parents should strive to guide children in handling their problems and to instill in them that they can learn and grow from mistakes.

Finally, social media discourages making mistakes or exerting effort. Young people see others who judge their peers for "trying too hard," for making any mistakes or for doing something different than the "norm." Breeding an environment for constant comparison, social media feeds highlight others' successes while degrading those who may have tried and failed. And, due to people's unwillingness to admit their failures, it creates the illusion that youth may be the only ones failing. If adults shared their personal experiences with failure, young people may be more likely to recognize its inevitability.

Through creating more opportunities for students to learn from mistakes, plus openly discussing experiences with failure, we can ensure that young people do not fear failure to the point of restricting their potential.

Opinion of the Guidon Staff

Agree: 8

Disagree: 0

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Information/Policies

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The *Guidon* is a student-produced newsmagazine published to inform and entertain the Hays High community, to record the history of the school and to serve as an educational tool for journalism students. Under the supervision of a faculty adviser, journalism students have the opportunities to inform, investigate, entertain, interpret and evaluate in an open forum – all accepted functions of the traditional free press – and have the responsibilities to provide accurate, fair, objective and truthful coverage. Should unintentional errors in content be made, they will be retracted in the next issue of the school year.

The views expressed here are those of The *Guidon* staff and do not express the opinions of the USD 489 Board of Education, administration, faculty or staff. Advertisements must meet content, deadline and size requirements, and acceptance does not constitute an endorsement from the student staff or by the school district.

The staff welcomes letters to the editor, as long as they are not libelous, an invasion of privacy, obscene or copyright protected. Letters must be signed and must include the writer's name, address and phone number.

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Other policies are available upon request by contacting adviser Jessica Augustine at jaugustine@usd489.com.

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MOVIES OF THE MONTH

WITH JACOB RIDGWAY

Reviewer critiques 'Wicked' sequel, 'Pinocchio' remake, holiday favorite

"Wicked: For Good" (2025)

Going into this movie, I was very nervous since I have issues with its source material, Act II of the musical "Wicked."

To me, the story feels rushed, and the pacing is bad, especially in the first hour. In addition, while Cynthia Erivo's and Ariana Grande's voices blended well in 2024's "Wicked," I was disappointed by the songs in this movie and was only impressed with "No Good Deed."

Despite this, I enjoyed this movie. First, it fixes the main problem that I have with "Wicked," making the lighting actually look decent. But, my favorite part is the acting. To me, the standout is Ethan Slater, who plays Boq; while I did not care for this character in the first movie, it shocked me with how good he is in the sequel. And, he has the best line in the movie...

Overall, I had a lot more fun with this movie than I expected. Even if it has its flaws, I give it 7/10, so check it out, especially if you are a fan of "Wicked."



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"Guillermo del Toro's Pinocchio" (2022)

I will be honest, I am writing this immediately after watching the movie, and I am speechless.

First, this is not the same movie as 2022's "Pinocchio," the live-action film that remakes the 1940 Disney movie.

This is a stop-motion film produced by Netflix and directed by Guillermo del Toro.

The stop motion, along with the puppets and the sets, all really look incredible. The colors are vibrant, and the lighting fits the mood of each scene. The pacing and the editing are relatively perfect, the screenplay is tightly written and the direction is obviously amazing, as it is done by freaking Guillermo del Toro! But, the best part about

this movie is the ending, which almost brought me to tears. I have only ever cried at one movie – "The Grave of Fireflies" – but this movie almost had that effect.

That said, I rate this a 9/10, so check it out.

"The Polar Express" (2004)

Viewing "The Polar Express" together is a Christmas tradition in my family, and we watch it every Christmas Eve.

Maybe I am biased because of that tradition, but this movie is excellent. The story is endearing, the characters are lovable and the animation is great... whenever a human character is not on screen. The stop motion on the human characters has not aged well at all.

Another issue I have is Tom Hanks is everywhere in it. I love him, but hearing his voice in every part gets more jarring each time that I watch it. But, to end this review on a positive note, I LOVE the songs, with the crown jewel being the orchestral score, which is one of my favorites of any movie; the song "When Christmas Comes to Town," gets me emotional every time I hear it.

With an 8/10, I would say, "check it out," but there is at least a 90 percent chance that you already have.

Do you have an old or new movie you want me to review? Email me at 27jridgway@usd489.com with your suggestions!

Staff member recalls discovering true story about Santa Claus lie

As a child, the iconic story of Santa Claus, flying across the world with his mystical herd of reindeer and his overflowing sack of presents, was the most magical part of the entire holiday season. Each year, I would write my long letter to Santa to explain what gifts I wanted, I would go to the mall to meet Santa, I would set milk and cookies out for him on Christmas Eve – the whole package.

However, I also remember being absolutely crushed when I found out none of it was actually real.

Discovering that Santa was not real was definitely a moment of character development in my life. I was just a little kid, sitting on the couch next to my mom. Now, something that you should know about my mom is that she is obsessed with true crime documentaries. Why is this relevant, you ask? Because, apparently, on some random crime documentary on some random weekday afternoon, some mean old lady on TV spilled the beans that Santa Claus was not real.

I sat in disbelief, as my whole world unraveled. Very dramatic, I know, but

to a little kid, learning the truth about Santa Claus was really shattering news, and it made me quite sad. While my mom explained the situation and while I felt better later on, the following Christmas was just different. It definitely lost some of its magic.

Now, I know that some aspects about Santa Claus are derived from facts. St. Nicholas, on which Santa Claus is based, was a real person; he was known for his generosity during the Christmas season, and he often gave gifts to the less fortunate.

But, the story that an old man with a big old belly and a bushy white beard flies around the world in a single night with a bunch of hooved animals was all just a blatant lie that my parents continued telling me. Though I am grateful for getting to experience Christmas magic for the first few years of my life, I cannot shake that it was a lie that adults tell to their kids each year.

Adults preach to children that lying is one of the worst habits, as lying will get them into trouble and cause them to have horrible lives – again, very dramatic. Adults teach us children about the "power of the truth" and encourage us to always be honest and have integrity. But then, they change their course, turning around and lying to their kids about everything – Santa Claus, the Tooth Fairy, the Easter Bunny!

While, as a child, I did not understand these lies that my parents told to me, and then to my younger brother, about these fictional figures, I now understand the good intentions behind the fibs. While I know it is wrong to lie, keeping the magic alive for children is important – especially because, as kids grow older, the world becomes tougher.

So, if you know youngsters who still believe in Santa Claus, let them keep writing Santa their letters, telling him their wishes and believing in the magic.



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BOWLING

ON A ROLL

In its fourth year, unified bowling captures first state championship

By Brayden Staley
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In any sport, qualifying for the state is an honor, but winning the championship is another accomplishment of its own.

At Hays High School, there were previously 19 state championships across different sports, and the unified bowling team achieved the 20th on Nov. 18 at West Ridge Lanes in Topeka, as they won the state title for all classes.

Throughout the team's season, bowlers attended four meets, then regionals and state. For the first meet in Great Bend on Oct. 16, they scored 933 points and finished in first place. At their second meet in Garden City on Oct. 23, they scored 1,044 points and ended in first place. For the third meet in Liberal on Oct. 29, they scored 901 points and finished in first place. And, in their final regular season meet, held in Hays on Nov. 6, they scored 1,076 points and ended in first place.

"The team did pretty well," junior Keaton Brown said. "Obviously, we made mistakes, but I felt like we performed pretty well. We practiced hard and executed as best as we could."

Following the regular season, the bowlers competed against 11 other teams at regionals on Nov. 11 at the Let's Roll Seneca bowling alley in Wichita. The regional team consisted of senior Ben Bergman, Brown, junior Xander Clark, junior Ethan Kuhlmann and sophomore Camaron Daughhetee. In the team's first three games, Hays scored 548 points, and in its last three games, Hays scored 455 points, for a series total of 1,003 points, putting them in second after Liberal.

"They were nervous, and many of the new bowlers were not ready for it," head coach Richard Hodges said. "Going from the regular season meets to the next level is always a challenge.

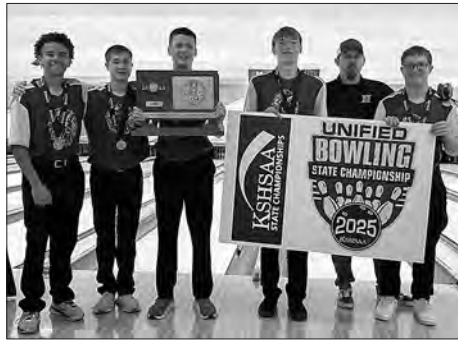


Photo courtesy of Julie Brown

WITH THE TROPHY

After winning the unified bowling championship, the state team gathers at West Ridge Lanes in Topeka on Nov. 18. Included on the state team were junior Xander Clark, junior Keaton Brown, junior Ethan Kuhlmann, senior Benjamin Bergman, coach Richard Hodges and sophomore Camaron Daughhetee.

But, once you step on the approach, see the lights and the scoring system comes on, it is a whole new world. You are faced with a 'show up or go home' scenario, and they did a good job of filling that void."

At the state meet, the Indians bowled against 19 teams from all classes, 1A to 6A, including the 2024 state champion, Great Bend. In the first three games, they scored 585 points, and in the last three games, they had 530 points.

"I felt like everybody contributed," Brown said. "Xander got quite a few strikes – he was on fire. Ethan was on fire, too, just knocking pins down. And then, Ben was hitting his mark and executing as good as he could. The team just connected really well together."

In the end, they placed first with 1,115 points, earning their first state title in the program's existence.

"It felt great to win the state championship," Bergman said. "The bowling program was only created four years ago, so it's nice to end with a bang during my final year of unified bowling."

Making it to state was a challenging process, but Hodges said that, the team was focused from the start of the competition.

"Winning state validates all the support, effort and work we've put in," Hodges said. "It puts us on the map, and now we just have to deliver again. We need to show that it wasn't a fluke – we were meant to be here, and we're not going anywhere."

On top of winning, they set two new state records, including the individual game record of 226 points and the overall series record of 1,115 points, topping Great Bend 2024 records.

"I feel bowling deserves more recognition," Bergman said. "[It] takes skill, practice, precision and a lot of mental strategy. It's not just physical — it's a mental and strategic sport. Bowling requires just as much focus and discipline as anything else."

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ATHLETE
SPOTLIGHT

Boys Cross Country



sophomore Bladyn Werth

At regional cross country at Great Bend on Oct. 25, sophomore Bladyn Werth placed 14th to be the only Indian runner to qualify for the state meet. At state at Rim Rock Farm in Lawrence on Nov. 1, he placed 76th out of 99.

What was the biggest reason for your success?

"My consistency during the off-season and the work I put in over the summer definitely paid off during the in-season races and practices."

What race this season challenged you the most?

"The hardest race for me was Junction City. It has always been my least favorite course, and it was my slowest time of the year. The race served as a good reminder of how large the mental aspect of this sport is."

What goals are you aiming for next year?

"Stay consistent, lead my team and pick up a few medals on the way. And, of course, get back to state."

Reporting by Brayden Staley

WRESTLING

Wrestling teams open winter season with coaching changes, ranked athletes

By Allison Stecklein
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With outside temperatures cooling down and winter sports starting up, there has been a major change in the wrestling room: a new head coach for the girls' team.

Ever since girls wrestling became a Kansas State High School Activities Association sanctioned sport in 2019, art teacher Heath Meder had coached both the boys and the girls. However, at the end of the last school year, Meder stepped down from being the girls' head coach and would only be the boys' head coach.

"We had talked about fully separating the programs for a few years, and I felt like it was time to give both programs the dedication of a head coach for themselves," Meder said.

With the position open, the administration hired previous assistant coach Joshua Pfannenstiel as the girls' head coach, with Kade Bloom and Josiah Ortiz as assistant coaches.

"My goals for this season are pretty high," Pfannenstiel said. "I want to see us as a team bring home a state trophy. Individually, I want to see improvement in all of the girls – if that is being a state champion, state placer, state qualifier or even just winning matches at the end of the year that they were not winning at the beginning."

This year will be Pfannenstiel's 18th season as a coach, having begun as an assistant coach during the 2008-2009 season. He also wrestled at Hays High School from 2000-2004.

"I have no doubt that Coach Pfannenstiel will do what is best, not only for our team, but as individuals as well, and lead us to a state title as a team and have some state champions," senior Lexi Barnett said.

With the boys and the girls sharing the new wrestling room, the coaches have decided to take turns using the room to avoid it becoming too busy. As one team has been practicing in the room, the other has been completing exercises, including doing cardio and lifting weights.

"Because of the split practice, we can focus more," senior Reese Vehige said. "We also gain more opportunities to have coaches help us."

With those changes, both wrestling teams have begun preparing for this season with high expectations, especially for wrestlers who are ranked in preseason standings.

For the boys, senior Jonathan Rigler started the season ranked in first at 190 lbs. in Class 5A. Other boys who started the season being ranked included senior Jaxson Chartier in fifth at 215 lbs., junior Tanner Geist in fifth at 285 lbs. and junior Cyler Luck at third at 106 lbs.

For the girls' team, junior Timber Lovewell led preseason rankings, being ranked second at 145 lbs. in Class 5A. Other ranked girls included Barnett in fourth at 155 lbs., Vehige in fourth at 125 lbs., junior Emersyn Copper in sixth at 100 lbs. and junior Eleanor Stoffel in sixth at 190 lbs.

Having started practice on Nov. 17, the teams took to the mats on Saturday, Dec. 6, with the boys traveling to Junction City and the girls competing in Valley Center. As teams, the boys placed fourth, and the girls took third.

Those tournaments were just the start of a long season for the wrestlers and the coaches.

"The tournament that I am most excited for this season is our Hays tournament in January," Pfannenstiel said. "It will be our first chance to showcase our new school and our hard work to the community and surrounding towns."

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COMMUNITY EVENT

GERALD MITCHELL HAYS CITY SHOOTOUT

Early December basketball tournament draws crowds to Hays, but few know the namesake of the annual tournament

By Brayden Staley
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From Dec. 4 through Dec. 6, Kansas high school basketball fans convened to watch 16 teams from across the state, as they played in the 43rd Annual Gerald Mitchell Hays City Shootout tournament at Hays High School and Hays Middle School.

But, who was Gerald Mitchell?

Raised in Osborne, 70 miles northeast of Hays, Mitchell graduated from Osborne High School in 1963 before earning his bachelor's degree at Washburn University in 1967. After a year of law school, Mitchell returned to Western Kansas and completed his teaching credentials at Fort Hays State University.



Gerald Mitchell

At the same time, he began his teaching and coaching career, in which he worked at Gorham High School from 1968 to 1974, Plainville High School from 1974 to 1978 and finally Hays High School from 1978 to 2005. At Hays, he taught history and economics classes and served as head coach for girls basketball and assistant coach for track and field.

"He was actually my teacher and coach," business teacher Shaina Prough said. "As a student, I enjoyed his dry sense of humor. As a coach, he wasn't a man who expressed a lot of emotion, but I knew he cared deeply about us as players, and he was very demanding as a coach — we ran a lot."

Although Mitchell had high standards as a teacher and as a coach, he was well admired by the Hays High community.

"He was highly respected by the teachers in his department and by other coaches," Prough said. "Everyone who knew Coach Mitchell spoke very highly of him. He wasn't someone who expressed a lot of outward affection, but he could be fun — you would see him tell a joke and laugh at himself."

In his coaching assignments, Mitchell played major roles in shaping the girls basketball program and the Indian track and field high jump athletes.

As a basketball coach, Mitchell had more than 300 victories in his entire career, he led his teams to state eight times and he earned the Kansas Basketball Coaches Association (KBCA) Junior High Girls' Coach of the Year Award. In track, Mitchell's high jumpers competed at the state meet for 17 years in a row.

For his work, he received the Hays High School Alumni Association's Distinguished Service Award, and during his career, he participated in the KBCA, the Kansas Coaches Association and the Kansas National Education Association. After retiring, Mitchell resided in Hays until his death in June 2012.

Even now, Mitchell's presence is alive at Hays High, as he is in the Athletic Hall of Fame in the new Athletic Complex, and he is the namesake of the Hays City Shootout.

"Coach Mitchell did a lot of things that really influenced me, especially because that was my first head coaching job," social science teacher Matt Brooks said. "He was a great resource and a great influence. Even though we didn't coach together directly, he was someone I could always go to for advice."

Brooks added that Mitchell was not only an influence for his fellow coaches but also for his students and his athletes.

"He was so positive with students and student-athletes," Brooks said. "He was fun to talk to and very approachable but he was also disciplined. He made sure his athletes did all the little things right, and I learned to also do that by watching him coach and from the advice he gave me."

For 43 basketball seasons, Hays High has hosted the Shootout, which draws local and statewide boys and girls basketball teams, along with their fans, community members and Hays students. This year, in addition to Hays, other teams competing included Blue Valley Northwest, Hugoton, Life Prep, Manhattan, Newton, Salina Central and Thomas More Prep, with Life Prep winning the boys' tournament and Hays High winning the girls' tournament.

"Gerald Mitchell was a respected coach and mentor at Hays High School for many years," boys basketball head coach Sean Dreiling said. "To play in the tournament and honor his name is important to me and our program."

Photo courtesy of 2005 Indian Call



Anticipated Albums

- 21 Savage - "What Happened to the Streets?"
- Jade - "That's Showbiz Baby! The Encore (Deluxe)"
- Kanye West - "Bully"
- Lil Baby - "The Leaks"
- Pink Floyd - "Wish You Were Here"
- Roddy Ricch - "The Navy Album"



Future Films

- Dec. 12
"Ella McCay"
"Silent Night, Deadly Night"
- Dec. 14
"Sense and Sensibility"
- Dec. 19
"Avatar: Fire and Ash"
"The Housemaid"
"The SpongeBob Movie: Search for SquarePants"
- Dec. 24
"Father Mother Sister Brother"
"Goodbye June"
- Dec. 25
"Anaconda"
"Marty Supreme"
"Song Sung Blue"



Witty Wisecracks

- What did one snowman ask the other?
"Do you smell carrots?!"
- What do you call a snapshot from the North Pole?
A Polar-oid!
- Why was the little snowman sad?
He had a meltdown!
- How do snowmen find their information?
They search the winternet!
- What does a coffee shop employee's job title change to in the winter?
A brrrr-ista!
- What kind of bug hates the holidays?
A humbug!