

Vol. 100  
Issue 4

# The Guidon

February  
2026

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

## HARMFUL HABITS

Increased number of teenagers  
experience disordered eating

Pages 6-7

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### ON THE COVER



Cover photo & cover design by Kennedy Fischer

## ORGANIZATIONS

# Newly formed Active Minds Club encourages positive mental health strategies for teens

By Kennedy Fischer  
26kfischer@usd489.com

Created in 2003 by Alison Malmon after her brother died by suicide three years earlier, Active Minds is a nationwide, non-profit organization that aims to make mental health issues easier to discuss with greater awareness.

A new chapter of Active Minds was started at Hays High School first semester, with the initial meeting being Nov. 14.

Junior Madison Adams, the club president, said that she and a group of students wanted to create a mental health awareness club because they noticed that there were many issues with students' mental health at Hays High.

"As I look around, I see many students who are struggling with mental health issues or have in the past, and I wanted to give people an opportunity to turn that hurt into something positive."

After developing the idea, Adams then approached English Language Arts teacher Maleigha Albers about being the club's sponsor.

"Ms. Albers is a very kind and empathetic teacher," Adams said. "I knew she would make a great addition to the club and that she would bring the best mindset."

In turn, Albers said she agreed to sponsor the club because she believed that Active Minds would be a good addition to Hays High.

"I think it [mental health] is an important conversation that many adults fear having," Albers said. "There is such a negative stigma around the concept of communicating about how we struggle with anxiety, stress, depression, etc., that people have just quit talking about it. Active Minds gets youth more involved and reduces the stigma over mental health by equipping them with resources and knowledge available and promoting positive mental health."

The group meets every other Friday during Advisory in Room 212, which all students are welcome to attend. During meetings, the officers – including Adams as president, junior Hannah Strasser as vice president, junior Avery Arias as secretary and senior Erin Ruder as social media coordinator – lead the organization's curriculum, then they have discussions over the topics. So far, they have discussed topics, such as mental health versus mental illness, self-love and positivity.

In addition to getting more students involved, Adams said they hope to have guest speakers about mental health careers, to give informational presentations to middle school students and to start a club at that level, too.

"My hope is that this club will decrease the stigma surrounding mental health issues and that Hays High will be more open to these kinds of issues," Adams said.



Photo by Khandi Guzman (Indian Call)

### MENTAL HEALTH

On Jan. 9 during Advisory, junior Madison Adams, the group's president, leads an Active Minds Club meeting. The club meets every other Friday during Advisory in Room 212 to promote good mental health and to provide resources to students.

## STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

On Friday, Feb. 6 at 7:30 p.m. in the school's Performing Arts Center, senior Connor Werth will premiere a short documentary film he made about a trip he took to Canada with his grandfather.

### What inspired you to make this film?

"I was inspired by multiple things that all helped create the vision for my films. For 'The Last Miles North,' I took inspiration from some online filmmakers, like Natalie Lynn, who creates similar style content. I also took inspiration from my grandpa (my travel buddy), as he is the central arc of the film's story."

### How long did you work on this documentary?

"I have been working on this film since July of 2025, with the editing process taking place starting in October. It will be up on YouTube as of Feb. 6."



senior  
Connor Werth

### How did you make the film?

"I filmed over the course of the trip and got the footage that I needed. Then I worked on the stop motion elements, like the text and photos, which I hand animated. I then put it all into editing and figured out my soundtrack and voiceover. I then spent the rest of my time editing together the story, which is by far the longest process. I also color graded it, which is an additional step in the process."

### Who has supported you the most in making the film?

"The most supportive people in the process of making my film would definitely be my grandpa and my mom. My grandpa, of course, was on the trip with me and has always been very supportive about my creative endeavors, and my mom has always been my No. 1 fan."

Reporting by Alijah Arias

## FACILITIES

# NEW NEXT-DOOR NEIGHBORS

## Hays Middle School moves to former high school, leading to transition period

By Delia Dixon  
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At the start of second semester, Hays Middle School completed its transition to the former Hays High School building at 2300 E. 13th St., neighboring the new Hays High at 2500 E. 13th St.

Out of the \$143.5 million bond passed in May 2022 for USD 489 updates, \$28.5 million was allocated to renovate the previous high school into the new middle school. Renovations, which started after the high school moved to its new building in August 2025, included removing walls to expand some classrooms, repairing and repainting lockers, repainting some classrooms, installing new flooring in certain locations, adding new restrooms and updating white boards and visual boards.

“When I first saw the renovations, it felt really weird and oddly nostalgic,” senior Emersyn Sander said. “All the places I remember have a completely different personality.”

At the time of its opening on Jan. 6, the middle school was about 58 percent done, and additional updates will be funded through capital outlay. For the 2026-2027 fiscal year, anticipated plans will include further classroom renovations and parking lot updates for \$620,000. In 2027-2028, \$120,000 will be used for classroom updates and \$375,000 for roofing replacements. And, the final updates are scheduled before the end of 2029.

“The move and transition have gone so smoothly,” gifted teacher Jerry Braun said. “I was honestly amazed at how well everything worked out. There are small glitches, but overall, it was seamless and made it feel like the first day of school again.”

While the move has gone well overall, according to Braun, the proximity of the middle school to the high school has been an issue of debate, providing benefits and drawbacks.

On one hand, families who have students at both schools have similar drop-off locations, or older siblings can drive younger siblings to school. Likewise, teachers who have students at the other building, such as high school teachers who have middle school students, can easily drop off their students before school, and the students can walk to the high school after school. And, for teachers who work in both the buildings, they do not have to waste as much time traveling between buildings.

“I was most excited about being able to walk between the high school and the middle school,” teacher Karen Eckhart said. “I split my time between the high school and middle school, and having them beside each other makes this easier.”

However, one area of concern has been navigating traffic, as students arrive in the mornings and leave in the afternoons near the same time, with the middle school starting at 7:55 a.m., and the high school starting at 8:05 a.m., then the middle school ending at 3:05 p.m., and the high school ending at 3:15 p.m.

“I was bracing for a disaster, but once the first few days passed, it has been easier,” Braun said. “From a teacher’s perspective, the traffic is less crazy than it was when Wilson and HMS were running start and stop times so close together.”

Still, during the first week with the new middle school location, some parents and Hays community members argued about the traffic on the “You know you’re from Hays if...” Facebook page.

“What used to take 7ish minutes in the morning, now pushes 20-25 minutes,” Garrett Reukauf said, while Nicole Hoffman said, “We were at the drive at 7:47 (after waiting at the stop light 5 cycles) and didn’t get to the door until 8:06.”

High school students have also been affected by the traffic while coming to and leaving from school.

“The first week, it was really bad,” freshman Ellee Lang said. “But, after that, I feel like it has gotten better. It still takes a very long time to exit the parking lot, though.”

While traffic has presented some challenges, the proximity of the schools offers potential for engagement between students. For example, the Hays High Ambassadors, who oversee the eighth-grade visits to the high school in the spring to prepare them for the transition to high school, plan to take advantage of the schools’ closeness. With the ease of bringing small groups of eighth graders to the high school now, the head ambassadors are hoping to create a more personalized experience for students.

“I have been reminded that many smaller towns have their middle school or junior high in the same building,” Eckhart said. “Many of our issues with having the middle school and high school so close to each other have already been dealt with by our smaller schools. I also think that these updates and renovations need to be done as we should value our kids’ education.”

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## EDUCATION POLICY

# With new legislative session starting recently, lawmakers introduce bill about student devices

By Alijah Arias  
27aarias@usd489.com

As students are aware, this year, the administration banned personal electronic communication devices, including phones and smartwatches, from the starting bell at 8:05 a.m. to the ending bell at 3:15 p.m.

This policy stemmed from the Kansas State Department of Education Blue Ribbon Task Force recommendations on student screen time from 2024, which many Kansas schools voluntarily adopted.

However, Kansas legislators have been seeking to make the recommendations into stricter, required state laws.

In February 2025, Kansas Senate Bill 154 (SB 154) was introduced to restrict student personal device usage at schools, but the bill never moved out of committee for a vote in the 2025 legislative session.

But, for the 2026 session, Senate Bill 302 (SB 302) was introduced on Jan. 12. If SB 302 passes into law as written, it would have four main requirements.

To start, the bill says that districts must “adopt policies and procedures to govern the use of personal electronic communication devices by students during instructional time,” basically from bell to bell, and it gives schools the authority to set consequences for violations.

In that section, it also requires that students’ personal devices be powered off and be stored away in an “inaccessible location.” School boards could even prohibit students from bringing their devices into school “by leaving such devices at a house or in a vehicle.”

Exceptions would be made for students who have Individualized Education Programs, 504 plans or medical plans that require them to use personal devices.

“I do not think it will be effective,” junior Olivia Brening said. “Even at this point, there are plenty of students still using their devices and not getting caught due to learning how to hide them better.”

Instead of using their own devices, if students needed to contact anyone, the school would have a telephone or a device available for the students.

“Taking away phones would be taking away a vital form of communication to friends, family and, most importantly, first responders,” sophomore Leah Thomas said. “I feel like legislators should focus less on electronics in schools.”

Next, SB 302 states that school districts may create policies “that limit or prohibit use of personal electronic communication devices by students during school-sponsored activities or events that occur outside of instructional time.”

This means districts could extend bans outside of instructional time, such as before school, after school or on weekends, if the students are at school-sponsored activities, dances, events, games, etc.

“I think the policy on phones should only be from when the school bell rings at the beginning of the day, to when the school bell rings at the end of the day,” junior Treize Beasley said.

Third, the bill says schools could restrict employees from “communicating with any student via a social media platform for official school purposes.”

“Official school purposes” could include “posting of public, one-way communications that pertain to school functions, activities or events,” but would not include “private communications, direct communications or two-way communications with any student.”

Rather than removing students’ devices from schools, some students say schools could provide better education about using devices appropriately.

“Banning devices is not a great solution to solving the issue, as students will be using them for the rest of their lives, and not knowing how to use them without being distracted is something we should know,” sophomore Carissa Sun said.

The final part of SB 302 states that, on or before Sept. 1, 2026, districts must submit certification to the state, verifying adoption of policies under the mandate.

If the bill passes into law, USD 489 could add to its existing policies on student devices and on staff policies. Based on findings from first semester, including a survey of staff members, principal Shawn Henderson told the Board Education members that the new policy has been effective in many ways.

“We are not wanting to or planning to stop this procedure,” Henderson said at the Jan. 19 board meeting. “When comparing this year to last year, student engagement has increased... when comparing this year to last year, [class] participation has increased... when comparing this year to last year, student interaction has increased without the distraction of cell phones.”

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# BODY BATTLES



## Many teenagers struggle with distorted body image, disordered eating habits

By Lily Butler  
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### ANOREXIA NERVOSA

Anorexia is characterized by extreme loss of weight and by difficulty maintaining an appropriate weight for age, build & height.

- Avoids eating meals, especially in public
- Denies feeling hungry despite not eating
- Is preoccupied with calories, diets & exercise
- Loses dramatic amount of weight quickly
- Makes comments about being "too fat"

As if teenagers did not have enough struggles already, yet another issue that research says has increased recently is eating disorders among adolescents.

In fact, a study referenced in an article titled "Eating Disorders in Teens More Than Doubled during Pandemic" on the University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School website, says that "one in five teens may struggle with disordered eating behaviors" and that "up to 10 percent of people will develop an eating disorder in their lifetime," often stemming from "disordered eating behaviors" started in adolescence.

At Hays High School, in a random survey of students, 46 percent said they have struggled with disordered eating or eating disorders, with 17 percent being "unsure" if they have.

### Disordered Eating vs. Eating Disorders

So, what is the difference between "disordered eating" and "eating disorders"?

The National Eating Disorders Collaboration (NEDC) in Australia says, "Disordered eating sits on a spectrum between normal eating and an eating disorder and may include symptoms and behaviors of eating disorders, but at a lesser frequency or lower level of severity."

A multitude of habits are included as disordered eating behaviors, including dieting, fasting, vomiting, binge eating, compulsive eating, restrictive eating, secretive eating, skipping meals and using diets pills, diuretics or laxatives.

In the Hays High survey, students reported they primarily have skipped meals (38 percent), binged food (36 percent), fasted for extended periods (14 percent) or had other abnormal habits (12 percent).

If not stopped and not treated, though, what may begin as a disordered eating behavior that is occasional choice, can turn into an eating disorder, a mental illness.

"Eating disorders are serious, complex and potentially life-threatening mental illnesses which impact a person's physical health, mental health and holistic wellbeing. They are characterized by disturbances in behaviors, thoughts and feelings towards body weight and shape, and/or food and eating," the NEDC said on its website. "Eating disorders are not a choice but a serious mental illness. Eating disorders can have significant impacts on all aspects of a person's life – physical, emotional and social."

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), which the American Psychiatric Association (APA) publishes as a guide to diagnosing mental disorders, classifies eating disorders into multiple categories. The most common of those categories among teenagers include Anorexia Nervosa, Avoidant/Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID), Binge Eating Disorder (BED) and Bulimia Nervosa.

### Causes of Disordered Eating & Eating Disorders

Like many lifestyle patterns and mental health conditions, disordered eating and eating disorders are caused by a complex combination of factors, including "sociocultural, psychological and biological factors," according to Mental Health America.

Sociocultural and psychological factors include having low self-esteem, having pressure to be thin or to lose weight from others, using food to cope with emotions like anxiety, sadness or stress and basing one's appearance on cultural norms of attractiveness that pop culture and social media present.

Biological factors include having irregular levels of certain brain chemicals (neurotransmitters), having genetic predisposition to mental health disorders and having certain personality styles, such as an obsessive-compulsive personality type.

In the survey at Hays High, those who said they have issues regarding disordered eating reported that many of those factors named above influenced them, especially their own anxiety, depression, insecurity and stress and others' judgement.

An anonymous 17-year-old student said, "body image, weight, health goals or depression" led to their issues, while an anonymous 18-year-old student said, "Bullying. I went from 120 lbs. to 200+ lbs. because I ate my feelings. Also, because I was already being told I was fat."

In addition, students said that pressure from their competitive sports mainly impacted their habits concerning disordered eating, as they felt the pressure to be a certain weight or look a certain way for their sport. According to the survey of Hays High students, 29 percent said that their sports affected what and how they ate.

### Impacts of Disordered Eating & Eating Disorders

Depending on the severity of disordered eating or the type of eating disorder, the effects can vary, but they have both physical and psychological impacts in the short term and the long term.

To start, physically, teens can exhibit many different effects in the short term: being dizzy especially when standing up, being fatigued or tired, being weak, fainting easily, feeling cold all of the time, having brittle nails and dry skin, having problems with concentration or sleep and having stomach cramps or other gastrointestinal issues.

In the long term, physical effects can include having abnormal blood and hormone lab results that can lead to other more serious medical issues, menstrual irregularities (especially loss of a monthly period), major dental issues, suppressed immune systems that can lead to more frequent illnesses and in severe cases, blood pressure issues, diabetes, gastrointestinal diseases and heart disease.

Psychologically, short-term effects can include increased anxiety, irritability, fear, shame, mood swings and social isolation, while long-term effects can include other mental health disorders such as anxiety or depression, self-harm behaviors and at the worst, suicide.

### Treatment for Disordered Eating & Eating Disorders

Because of the effects, physical and psychological and short term and long term, it is important that teenagers seek out help.

"The most effective treatment is some form of counseling, coupled with careful attention to medical and nutritional needs," Mental Health America said on its website. "Treatment must address the eating disorder symptoms and medical consequences. It must also address the psychological, biological, interpersonal and cultural forces that contribute to the eating disorder."

The organization also emphasized that a good treatment plan requires multiple health care professionals' input, including "a therapist (e.g., psychologist, counselor, or social worker), dietician, psychiatrist and/or primary care physician."

While some Hays High students reported that they were never officially diagnosed with a disordered habit or eating disorder, and while some said that they were still struggling, others said they were in recovery or had recovered.

"[I am] in the process," an anonymous 17-year-old student said. "I have lost quite a bit of the weight I gained from binge eating, and I am much happier than I was."

Although a teenager's desire to have a "perfect body" or to be the "right weight" can be strong feelings to overcome, it is possible with good treatment to fix the problems before they become much larger issues that affect their physical and psychological well-being.

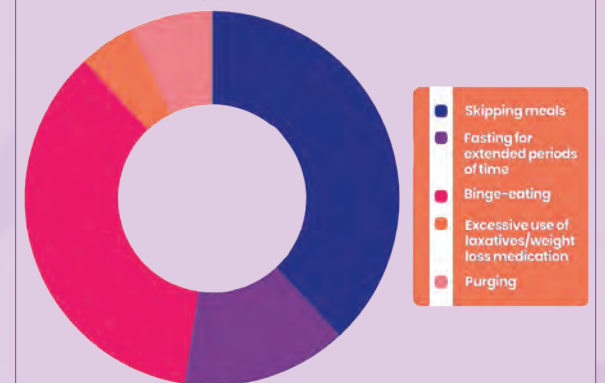
"I am healing, but it is almost like an addiction," an anonymous 18-year-old student said. "It is hard to stop."

### BINGE EATING DISORDER

Binge Eating Disorder is characterized by repeated episodes of eating large amounts of food in a short period of time.

- Avoids eating in public & eats secretly
- Eats until uncomfortably full & miserable
- Fails to lose weight despite dieting & exercising
- Feels lack of control when binge eating food
- Keeps hidden food in secret places

### IF YOU HAVE STRUGGLED WITH EATING, WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING HAVE YOU STRUGGLED WITH?

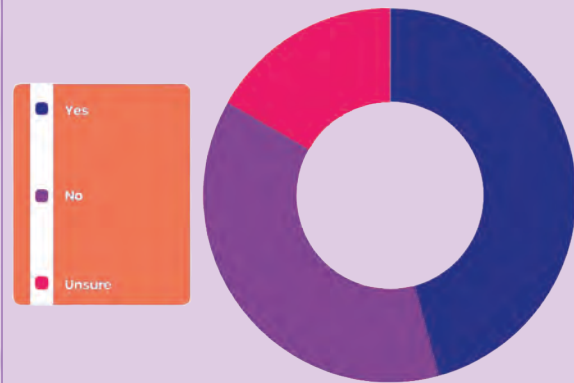


### BULIMIA NERVOSA

Bulimia is characterized by having episodes of binge eating, then purging what they consumed, like vomiting or using laxatives.

- Exhibits signs of not only Anorexia Nervosa, but also Binge Eating Disorder
- Makes frequent trips to the bathroom after eating and/or smells like vomit upon returning
- Uses excessive gum, mints & mouthwash

### HAVE YOU EVER STRUGGLED WITH DISORDERED EATING OR AN EATING DISORDER?



### AVOIDANT/RESTRICTIVE FOOD INTAKE DISORDER

ARFID is characterized by extreme refusal of certain food textures, types or quantities, often because of fears or sensory issues.

- Eats extremely specific food amounts & types
- Fears choking or vomiting, in some cases
- Limits preferred foods more & more with time
- Loses dramatic weight or fails to grow

Information for graphics from survey of Hays High School students

Information for infoboxes from National Eating Disorders Association

### Praises

- Board games
- Flight attendants
- Neighborly kindness
- Coconut-flavored things
- Guidon Online redesign
- Spring sports being closer
- McDonald's cookie tote
- 2016 coming back
- Warm cookies
- Gloving

### Protests

- Busy work
- People pleasing
- Minecraft drownings
- Not having snow days
- Fear of the untraditional
- People who do not tip
- The crunch of snow
- World corruption
- Imperialism

### Staff Recs

**Alijah Arias**

- "Lovefool" by The Cardigans
- "Bridesmaids"

**Joslyn Bates**

- "A World Alone" by Lorde
- "People We Meet on Vacation"

**Lily Butler**

- "Fake Plastic Trees" by Radiohead
- "Valentine's Day"

**Brooks Dixon**

- "Tennis Court" by Lorde
- "Knives Out"

**Delia Dixon**

- "Maine" by Noah Kahan
- "Steel Magnolias"

**Kennedi Fischer**

- "Aperture" by Harry Styles
- "Red White & Royal Blue"

**Jacob Ridgway**

- "Next Up Forever" by AJR
- "One Battle After Another"

**Brayden Staley**

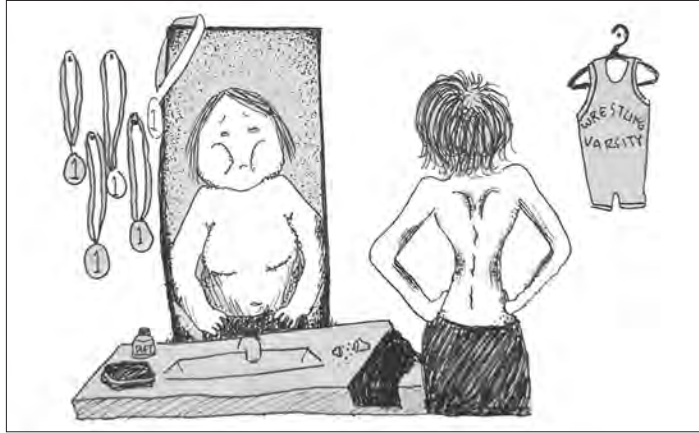
- "Sailor Song" by Gigi Perez
- "Sinners"

**Allison Stecklein**

- "Pink + White" by Frank Ocean
- "Misery"

**Jessica Augustine**

- "All I Have To Do Is Dream" by The Everly Brothers
- "Good Night, and Good Luck"



Cartoon by Khandi Guzman

## Addressing disordered eating necessary in school athletics

Eating disorders: the silent issue that affects one in five teenagers, but one in four adolescent student athletes, and that impacts their daily lives, causes irreversible damage to their bodies and deteriorates their mental health. While disordered eating can affect all people, student athletes involved in sports that focus on appearance or weight are more vulnerable to these issues.

While student athletics should be about promoting healthy lifestyles and teaching life lessons, athletes can shift to unhealthy habits that can be detrimental to their physical and mental health.

Even within this school, other students and grown adults have shamed student athletes for their physical appearances, citing "poor performance" because of "inferiorities" or "imperfections" with their bodies. Athletes are on display; however, this does not give people the right to criticize their bodies. These comments can be internalized, leading athletes to compare their bodies to unrealistic physical standards and to strive for "perfection."

In turn, disordered eating habits develop, disguised under a veil of "dedication" to their sports. According to the National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders (ANAD), athletes in sports that wear more revealing uniforms, such as cheer, dance, swimming, volleyball and wrestling, are more vulnerable to disordered eating, along with athletes in sports in which weight is a requirement, like wrestling. Meeting the aesthetic standard or making the weight class can affect student athletes' relationships with healthy eating.

Furthermore, many student athletes do not understand how to fuel their bodies properly. Vague instructions, such as "Eat less" or "Eat healthy," and widespread misinformation can create confusion and mislead athletes. Those not eating properly – despite thinking they look or perform better – actually harm their performance, even risking the formation of Relative Energy Deficiencies in Sports (RED-S), according to ANAD. RED-S leads to dehydration, fatigue, lower endurance, decreased focus, lower speed, decreased VO2 max and imbalanced hormones that could lead to bone density issues and stress fractures.

These factors, among others, have led to increased rates of disordered eating in teenagers whose bodies are still developing. Through restraint on commenting on student athletes' bodies, addressing the pressure on student athletes and educating both coaches and students on nutrition for athletes, we can promote healthier eating habits while also helping teenagers navigate the rocky path of self-acceptance.

### Opinion of the Guidon Staff

Agree: 8

Disagree: 0

### The Guidon Staff

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### Information/Policies

The Guidon print edition is published seven times a year by the Media Design and Production class at Hays High School in Hays, Kan., and it is printed by Northwestern Printers in Hays, Kan.

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.

The Guidon print edition earned the Kansas Scholastic Press Association All-Kansas Award in 2009, 2010, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2018, 2019, 2021, 2022, 2024 and 2025; received the National Scholastic Press Association Pacemaker Award in 2009; was an NSPA Pacemaker Finalist in 2009 and 2011; and received the NSPA First Class Award in 2012, 2018, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025.

Other policies are available upon request by contacting adviser Jessica Augustine at [jaugustine@usd489.com](mailto:jaugustine@usd489.com).

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# MOVIES OF THE MONTH

WITH JACOB RIDGWAY

## Staff movie columnist provides opinions on 'Knives Out' trilogy of films

The “Knives Out” trilogy of films, written and directed by Rian Johnson, includes murder mystery “whodunnit” stories that always feature unique twists that recontextualize everything you just watched. Because these are mysteries, I will spare you any spoilers and just recommend you watch these.

### “Knives Out” (2019)

The first film centers on the death of an author, played by Christopher Plummer, that police rule a suicide. But, “the world’s greatest detective” Benoit Blanc, played by Daniel Craig, suspects it was murder. The cast is full of A-listers, but the star is obviously Craig. The trilogy’s tone is set in this initial installment, being an enjoyable watch, but having an intriguing mystery and a stunning ending. It is an excellent film, but compared to the other two films, it is rather standard in execution, despite being hailed as quite revolutionary. It just proves that Johnson got bigger and better with each installment. 9/10.



Jacob Ridgway  
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### “Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery” (2022)

“Glass Onion” is the most divisive film in the trilogy. While the other two films are widely liked, this middle installment saw mixed reviews. It plays the most with the murder mystery formula, with a twist during the film that leaves viewers frustrated. But, that twist is what makes “Glass Onion” the most unique film of the three. Another perk is that it is the funniest, helped in no small part by the cast. Much of the cast is unlikeable, which is intentional, but the fact that they are so uniquely irritable makes them joyful to watch.

The story revolves around a party hosted by billionaire Miles Bron, played by Edward Norton, on his private island during the COVID-19 pandemic. The film contains criticism of the richest people and of their prioritization of public image and profit over morals. Any other story details are spoilers, though, so I will end this review here. 9/10.

### “Wake Up Dead Man: A Knives Out Mystery” (2025)

The most recent installment released in theaters in November 2025 and on Netflix in December 2025. Despite being my favorite film of the trilogy, it does feature less of Craig. In his place, actor Josh O’Connor takes over as the main protagonist, Father Jud.

It centers around a Catholic church in New York led by preacher Monsignor Wicks, played by Josh Brolin, to which Father Jud is sent. The strengths that the film has that put it over the other films include having the best central plot and the best plot twist, as well as having great commentary on the dangers of religion when used for selfish gains. It represents someone who uses faith to harm others and someone who believes in the faith they are preaching and wants to help the people around them. It is a unique movie that people of all faiths can enjoy, despite its subject matter. 9/10.

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

## Staff member thinks people should reassess choices of coffee shops

7 Brew recently joined the selection of places to grab coffee in Hays, which include Breathe Coffee House, Scooter’s Coffee, Starbucks and some fast-food restaurants. Residents and students alike consistently stop for their favorite drinks throughout the day. However, the popularity of these places begs the question: “What is an actual coffee shop?”

Although all those places serve coffee, nowadays, people think of all of these as true “coffee shops.” They drive through (which is the only option at 7 Brew or Scooter’s), grab their drink and continue their commute. They think the drinks from their favorite place are superior to others, or they just take part in the latest trend, like going to 7 Brew all the time.

However, even though people think of all these chains as real “coffee shops,” they just are not like a cozy, local, traditional coffee shop, such as Breathe.

Whatever happened to coffee shops with dim lighting, soft music and comfortable seating, where you can find people working or students studying? Local communities are losing shops that

give people a place to relax, to socialize and to study. We have traded those sit-down coffee shops for drive-through windows. Not only is the atmosphere more appealing in classic coffee shops, but the drinks are more traditional.

Whatever happened to drinks with beautiful steamed milk rosettas in ceramic mugs, and not just paper cups with cardboard sleeves? Classic coffee shops prepare their drinks using quality ingredients and artisan methods. Drinks are made with freshly ground coffee beans and carefully measured ratios of real milk or cream.

Whatever happened to drinks with classic flavors, such as caramel and vanilla? Nowadays, places use artificial syrups to make unnatural flavors, for instance, “Black Mamba,” “Gummy Bear,” or “Love Potion” at 7 Brew. With flavors like these, coffee is turning into a dessert, not to mention that actual desserts have made their way onto the menus also.

Whatever happened to shops that just served coffee and maybe breakfast items? Now, places serve ice cream and sweet treats. Scooter’s includes cake bites and cookies, while Starbucks has brownies, cake pops and other treats. This focus on treats promotes unhealthy choices.

Whatever happened to just regular coffee? Instead of traditional coffee, cappuccinos or lattes, customers choose drinks loaded with artificial flavors and added sugars. Black coffee has four calories per 16 ounces and has zero carbs, fat or sugar. But, 7 Brew’s large Blondie contains more than 500 calories, 62 grams of carbs, 33.5 grams of fat and 52 grams of sugar. Drinking that equals the sugar in six doughnuts!

Normalizing drive-through places, with sterile atmospheres, sweet treats and unhealthy drinks – it all has to stop. People need to understand what they are consuming, along with what losing local coffee shops says about what we value.



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PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL

# Sixtieth Super Bowl set to be played, with viewers anticipating ads, music

By Brayden Staley  
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Dating back to 1967, the Super Bowl is the championship for the National Football League (NFL), that has evolved from a simple game into a large celebration that blends not only football, but also advertising, music and more.

As Super Bowl LX approaches on Sunday, Feb. 8, people are discussing the upcoming event and are making their gameday preparations.

### Football

Entering conference championships on Jan. 25, four teams were vying to clinch a spot in the Super Bowl. In the end, the New England Patriots defeated the Denver Broncos, 10-7, and the Seattle Seahawks beat the Los Angeles Rams, 31-27, to move onto Super Bowl LX.

“There were a lot of injuries in both divisions, so we didn’t get to see the full potential of every team,” junior Jared Anschutz said. “AFC was taking care of the ball. NFC was coaching, as an absolute war came down to the end.”

Odds makers have Seattle as the favorite by three and a half points to five points. And, in a poll of staff and students, the favorite was also the Seahawks with 68.75 percent of the vote.

“I believe the Seahawks have the advantage,” teacher and coach Vinny Walker said. “They are the hotter team, they play more physical on defense and they have a strong leader at quarterback along with key playmakers.”

### Advertising

While some people watch the Super Bowl for the game itself, others watch for commercials. According to news organization The Squire, 57 nationally broadcast commercials appeared

during the 2025 Super Bowl. On top of that, according to AOL, national advertising time was roughly 51 minutes over nearly four hours in 2025, meaning viewers saw about 14 ads every hour. For reference, that means that almost 25 percent of the 2025 Super Bowl broadcast was ads.

In addition, the cost of ads has increased. In 1984, the Super Bowl sold national ads in the range of \$37,500 to \$42,500. In 2026, that price skyrocketed to \$4 to \$5 million for a 15-second ad and to \$8 million for a 30-second ad.

### Music

Through the years, the Super Bowl has included musicians for its opening ceremonies and its halftime performances. However, some performances have sparked some controversy, including this year’s choices.

The NFL picked Bad Bunny, a Puerto Rican artist, for the halftime show. The controversy is rooted in his Latin background and in his political views, such as about the current raids by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Doubling down this year, the NFL also added punk band Green Day to the game’s performers. The band has made political statements against the Republican Party and President Donald Trump.

“I feel his [Bad Bunny’s] music has gained massive popularity with both English and Spanish speakers,” teacher Jessica Nickum said. “He blends reggaeton, island influences and hip-hop, which allows his music to resonate with many different cultural groups.”

Whether you watch for the game, the ads or the music, Super Bowl LX will likely be another notable game, as people across the world tune in on Sunday, Feb. 8 at 5:30 p.m. CT on NBC.

## ATHLETE SPOTLIGHT

Boys Wrestling



senior Jonathan Rigler

Wrestling at 190 lbs. again this season, senior Jonathan Rigler has qualified twice for the state tournament – placing sixth at 175 lbs. as a sophomore and finishing third at 190 lbs. as a junior.

### What goals did you set for your senior wrestling season?

“Obviously, I want to win, but as long as I improve, that is what matters. Constant improvement is my long-term goal.”

### What keeps you motivated through the toughest parts of the long season?

“What keeps me motivated is the hard work – embracing the suck. Knowing that you are going to feel good after you do it always gets me through.”


### How have your experiences in sports shaped your plans after high school?

“I have been recruited by a few junior colleges and a Division II school. We are still looking at a few colleges, but I am probably going to go to college for wrestling and academics.”

Reporting by Brayden Staley




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## SCHOOL SPIRIT

# JUST DANCE!

## Dance team returns with more dancers, new coach, higher enthusiasm

By Joslyn Bates  
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Many major improvements occurred at Hays High School this year – not only including the new school building, but also including an improved dance team.

Last year, the group consisted of four members, including two seniors and two freshmen, but this year, 12 dancers are currently on the team, including juniors Kaylen Acosta, Mya Biggs and Pashyn Jones; sophomores Addy Day, Lindyn Jochum, Riley Larkins and Abigail Pyle; and freshmen Claire Decker, Zoe Gerstner, Avery Kieffer, Lendyn Melvin and Rylan Pfeifer.

Noticing that the numbers in recent years were so low and wanting to help make a comeback for the team, the girls – many who dance together at different studios – decided to join the dance team. In addition to gaining more members, the team also got a new coach, Brianna Day.

“Having my mom be our coach has been nice because I am able to help her and give her my ideas with choreography,” Addy Day said.

With the team set, the team jumped straight into preparing for their first dance, “Just Wanna Rock,” which they performed at halftime of the first football game on Sept. 12. Since then, the team performed throughout the fall athletic season at home football games and has continued into the winter season at home basketball games and at the Sweetheart pep rally on Jan. 30.

The team has danced to various upbeat songs, including “Just Wanna Rock,” “Lose My Breath,” “Maneater” and a mashup of “Poker Face” and “SexyBack.” Members have also had opportunities to choreograph dances, such as Jochum and Melvin choreographing “Lose My Breath.” With more members, there have also been more opportunities to be creative.

“What I like most about choreographing is getting to make a vision of mine come to life because of amazing dancers,” Jochum said. “Choreographing is definitely a creative outlet for me. Sometimes, it is easier for me to express things through dance rather than words, and getting to do that while creating new things is something I love.”

Increased numbers and new performances are not the only big changes; they also changed their style for this year. Instead of the old team uniforms, which had been used for years, dancers received new uniforms, which include a maroon tank top and black tank top, both having

updated school logos on the front. To finish their look, they wear black leggings, and they wear white tennis shoes or dance shoes, or they even dance barefoot for some indoor dances.

To prepare for performances, the team practices on Tuesday nights and on Wednesday mornings before school, when they learn and repeat their dance numbers to perfection for their upcoming shows.

“I like how much fun we have at practice because we all are very close,” Gerstner said.

Audience members enjoy watching the dancers and stay engaged by the moves and the tricks.

“The dance team has brought a lot of energy to the games for both the student section and the parents,” freshman Kendall Schulte said.

If students are interested in being on the dance team next year, informational meetings and team tryouts will be later this spring.

For more information about the team, people can also check out the team’s Instagram, @hayshighdance.



Photo by Lizzy Vajnar (Indian Call)

### MORE SPIRIT

During halftime at the Oct. 17 football game, sophomore Abigail Pyle and junior Pashyn Jones perform with dance team. The improved team currently includes 12 girls, with Pyle being the only returning dancer from last year.



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KINDNESS

# KINDNESS *showing random*

February includes, of course, Valentine's Day, but also is Random Acts of Kindness Month, meaning people can show love in their own ways all month

By Allison Stecklein  
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From Feb. 14 through Feb. 20, people will unite towards one initiative: Random Acts of Kindness Week, which is part of Random Acts of Kindness Month observed during February.

Some small acts may seem simple, but scientifically, these acts can benefit both the giver and the receiver, as when an act of kindness occurs, both the involved parties can experience an increase in oxytocin, dopamine and serotonin, all chemicals that affect people's moods.

Oxytocin, also known as the "love hormone," is a neurotransmitter that aids in lowering blood pressure, improving heart health and increasing self-esteem and optimism. Dopamine leads to feelings of happiness and satisfaction, while serotonin is a feel-good chemical that calms people down and increases happiness.

In addition, research from Emory University states that, when a person shows kindness, the brain's reward center – the mesolimbic system – gives itself pleasure, as if it were the one being shown kindness. This is known as "helper's high."

People do not need a specific week, though, to show kindness. This year, Student Council created the Kindness Initiative. Staff and students can nominate those who are having rough times, then StuCo will deliver "kindness" to them to lift their spirits. StuCo also has kindness "fairies," as students can be rewarded for doing random acts of kindness.

To tailor the kindness one gives, it can be useful to understand the five "love languages," as people view kindness and love in different ways.

Developed by Dr. Gary Chapman, author of the 1992 book "The 5 Love Languages," love languages are ways that people give and receive love in relationships; these include Acts of Service, Physical Touch, Quality Time, Receiving Gifts and Words of Affirmation.

**Acts of Service**

If people's primary love language is Acts of Service, they show affection by doing tasks for other people, such as by helping with chores or errands, and they appreciate when others help them with things.

**Physical Touch**

For those whose primary love language is Physical Touch, they prefer affection by physical closeness, such as by giving hugs or holding hands. These actions help them to feel emotionally connected to others, even if the action is physical.

**Quality Time**

People whose primary love language is Quality Time like having undivided attention with others without distractions, whether that is partners, friends or family.

**Receiving Gifts**

For those whose love language is Receiving Gifts, they feel appreciated when they get a meaningful gift from someone else, and they show appreciation by gifting something meaningful.

**Words of Affirmation**

People whose primary love language is Words of Affirmation enjoy giving and receiving verbal or written expressions of kindness.

"Kindness in school is very important," freshman Kenzie Karst said. "School can be a stressful place, and if you are helping someone or complimenting someone that has had a hard or stressful day, it can really make them feel better about themselves."

## LANGUAGES *speaking love*

**ACTS OF SERVICE**

- CLEAN UP OTHERS' TRASH
- HELP OTHERS WITH HOMEWORK
- HOLD OPEN THE DOOR FOR OTHERS

**PHYSICAL TOUCH**

- GIVE SOMEONE A HUG IF THEY ARE OPEN TO THAT

**QUALITY TIME**

- PLAN TIME ALONE WITH A FRIEND
- TALK TO SOMEONE NEW

**RECEIVING GIFTS**

- BRING SOMEONE THEIR FAVORITE DRINK OR SNACK

**WORDS OF AFFIRMATION**

- COMPLIMENT SOMEONE
- WRITE THANK YOU NOTES TO FRIENDS OR TO TEACHERS

To take the official Love Language quiz, scan here!



### Anticipated Albums

- Joe Bonamassa – "B.B. King's Blue Summit 100"
- J. Cole – "The Falloff"
- Jason Derulo – "The Last Dance (Part 1)"
- The Kid Laroi – "Before I Forget"
- Bruno Mars – "The Romantic"
- Robbie Williams – "Britpop"



### Future Films

- Feb. 5**
  - "Buffalo Kids"
  - "Dracula"
  - "The Moment"
  - "Solo Mio"
- Feb. 13**
  - "Crime 101"
  - "GOAT"
  - "Good Luck, Have Fun, Don't Die"
  - "Wuthering Heights"
- Feb. 20**
  - "For Worse"
  - "How to Make a Killing"
  - "I Can Only Imagine 2"
  - "Psycho Killer"
- Feb. 27**
  - "Dreams"
  - "Scream 7"



### Witty Wisecracks

- Do you have a date for Valentine's Day?**  
"Yes, Feb. 14!"
- What did one plate say to another plate?**  
Tonight, dinner is on me!
- Why are my feet cold on Valentine's Day?**  
You knocked my socks off!
- What did the cat say to its Valentine?**  
You are purr-fect!
- Why should you not fall in love with a pastry chef?**  
He will dessert you!
- How do you save yourself money on Valentine's Day gifts?**  
Be single!