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The Guidon

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



NEW EDUCATION
Along with students using AI,
instructors also utilizing it more
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ON THE COVER



Cover digital illustration generated with Adobe Firefly Flux Pro 2 by Alijah Arias & Kennedy Fischer

ORGANIZATIONS

Qualifying teams from business organization prepare for future international competition

By Allison Stecklein
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Coming off of a strong showing at state, Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA) members are already shifting their focus to the international stage.

DECA is an organization that prepares students to become leaders in business fields. Hays High School's DECA chapter, led by teacher Shaina Prough, has 21 members between two classes, Principles of Marketing and Marketing Applications. In both classes, students learn by classroom lessons, real-world experiences and competitive events.

One of those competitions, the Kansas State Career Development Conference (SCDC), was March 1-3 at Kansas State University in Manhattan. At this competition, Hays High had six teams qualify for the International Career Development Conference (ICDC), which will occur in Atlanta, Ga., from April 25-28.

Placing first were juniors Elsa Brungardt and Brooklyn Koerner in Business Operations Research, junior Jose Rauda in Business Growth Plan and senior Lizzy Vajnar in Professional Selling. Other qualifiers included seniors Ava Biggs, Savannah Clingan and Jenna Kisner, who placed second in Community Giving; seniors Mitzi Carrillo and Aralen Maupin, who finished second in Hospitality and Tourism Operations Research; and juniors Neema Murithi and Hannah Strasser, who took fifth for International Business Plan.

According to www.deca.org, there are 60 events in which students can compete. To prepare for competitions, students write research papers that are submitted for judges' review. After that, they can begin creating their presentations. During the preparation process, students practice their presentations multiple times to prepare for the actual competitions.

"My team and I prepared for competition by practicing a lot," senior Braiden Bickle, who is co-president of DECA, said. "We would do run throughs and mock presentations in order to be fully prepared to compete."

While preparing for competitions makes up a large part of the curriculum of the classes, students learn other skills, as well, in class and in the local community.

"I have learned real-world business skills, such as how to create a budget, human resource plans and so much more," Biggs, the DECA vice president of leadership, said.

This year, DECA also volunteered for Trick-or-Treat So Others Can Eat and at

Hays Recreation Commission's Turkey Trot. Their biggest project was a movie event at the old AMC Theatre, from which the proceeds went to the city of Grinnell, which was damaged by a tornado last May.

"My goals are for students to place at the international competition as well as prepare them for post-secondary experiences and for the workforce," Prough said.

Anyone interested in joining DECA next school year can contact Prough at sprough@usd489.com.

"My goals are for students to place at the international competition as well as prepare them for post-secondary experiences and for the workforce."

DECA sponsor
Shaina Prough

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

In the Spring Musical on March 5-8, senior Johanna Jones played the lead of Maria Rainer in Hays High School's production of "The Sound of Music."



senior
Johanna Jones

How did it feel to get this role?

"It felt really good! This was my first experience getting to play a lead, and it couldn't have gone any better, in my opinion. It also definitely solidified my passion for musical theatre."

What was the most challenging part of this role?

"The most challenging part of this role was to find a balance between Maria's defiance and her loving nature. It's a very fine line to walk, and eventually, I figured it out, but there were definitely some lines I didn't know how to get across in the right way."

How did you prepare for the demands of this role?

"I am so lucky that my voice is extremely resilient. My voice can go a long time without showing signs of being tired, which played a huge part in how I was able to perform well for every performance. As far as before the audition, I made sure to work with [musical director] Mr. [Alex] Underwood a few times to feel more comfortable with the original audition song."

What was your favorite scene of the musical to perform?

"My favorite scene to perform would probably be any of the scenes with the little kids. Specifically, 'The Lonely Goatherd' and 'Do-Re-Mi.' I loved how I got to goof off and play with them on stage."

Reporting by Alijah Arias

LEGISLATION

GENDER IDENTITY VS. BIOLOGICAL SEX

Recently enacted state law targets gender identity of transgender Kansans

By Delia Dixon
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Two months ago, about 1,700 Kansans had their driver's licenses invalidated.

In February, the Kansas legislature passed a bill (SB 244) prohibiting Kansans from updating gender identification on their driver's licenses or birth certificates, meaning that state driver's licenses that reflect a transgender person's preferred gender identity are no longer valid.

Furthermore, the bill also prohibits transgender people from using restrooms in public buildings that align with their gender identity instead of biological sex, and it penalizes them with written warnings on the first offense and possible fines of up to \$1,000 and potential jail time of up to six months for repeated offenses.

The bill was passed into law by Kansas legislators on Feb. 18, as they overrode Governor Laura Kelly's initial veto.

In her veto, Kelly said, "I believe the legislature should stay out of the business of telling Kansans how to go to the bathroom and instead stay focused on how to make life more affordable for Kansans."

However, with the override vote, as of Feb. 26, the law has been in effect, causing chaos for Kansans who had changed their licenses' gender markers, as their licenses were immediately invalidated, which they were notified about through a letter.

"I was one of the lucky people who had not yet changed my license," senior Rowan Brock said. "That feels crazy to say 'lucky.' Many people woke up, unable to drive legally from place to place."

Following the law going into effect, two anonymous transgender Kansas residents filed a lawsuit, asserting that the bill violates protections for due process, equality under the law, freedom of speech, personal autonomy and privacy.

"This bill is unconstitutional," Brock said. "America is supposed to be a place where you can come to BE different, not to hide away BECAUSE you are different."

Any person whose gender on their license does not align with their biological sex cannot legally drive or use their license as proper identification until they receive a new one with their biological sex on it. Having an invalid driver's license also prevents transgender people from voting due to lack of proper identification.

State representative Barb Wasinger, who represents District 111, which includes parts of Ellis County, including the city of Hays, voted for the bill.

"I believe you are what you are when God got you here," Wasinger said. "[Trans people] are seen by their government. There have been people cross dressing for years. People can do whatever they want with their lives, but we need to keep men out of women's restrooms."

Kansas does not have a law that expressly prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity in employment, housing, public accommodations or other areas.

"Conservatives do not want trans women around their daughters, but really, stop and think about what is going on in the mind of those same trans women," Brock said. "All trans people

do is live in fear. There is fear of how we are making others feel, how we are being treated by others, if others know, etc. It is a hard concept to grasp if someone has lived their whole life a certain way."

For current transgender students at Hays High School, the single-stall, non-gendered restrooms in the school provide a gender-neutral restroom in addition to the gendered stalls, but in other public buildings, that may not be an option.

"When they are in other public buildings in the state, they will have to navigate the restrictions," Gender Sexuality Alliance club sponsor Alex Underwood said. "It puts them in a position where they, like trans people of generations past, must decide how to move forward."

Kansas now joins 20 other states that restrict transgender people's access to restrooms and other facilities in public buildings. The bill also redefines "gender" to mean one's biological sex, removing "gender" from the "Help Not Harm Act" for gender-affirming care.

"While the law isn't going to impact trans students much in the short term, my concern is how they interpret the intention of these laws," Underwood said. "Does this mean the Kansas government doesn't understand trans folks? Or worry trans folks are sexual predators? Or even that the people of Kansas agree their understanding of their gender is wrong, bad, immoral and now illegal? Perhaps the message is they aren't wanted in Kansas, and if it were me, I would be considering finding a safer state to live, like many trans adults have already done."

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STUDENT LIFE

Student Council hosts Talent Show, with returning performer winning

WINNER WINNER!

On March 26, junior Kamden McBride sings and plays piano to "All of Me" by John Legend in the Performing Arts Center for the annual Student Council Talent Show. McBride, who finished in second last year, won the recent show with his performance. This year marked the first time the show was performed in the new school school and in an auditorium.



Photo by Lizzy Vajnar (Indian Call); reporting by Allison Stecklein



Photo by Ethan Branaman (Indian Call)

AS THE RUNNER-UP

Interacting with the audience, senior Tyler Huynh beatboxes during the Talent Show on March 26. For his performance, Huynh placed second in the show.



Photo by Rylen Harrington (Indian Call)

IN THE TOP THREE

Freshman Jon Summers plays electric guitar for his act in the StuCo-sponsored Talent Show on March 26. Summers earned third place with his guitar solo.

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ACADEMIC PREPARATION

YEAR BY YEAR

Students can prepare for the future with certain tasks in each year of high school

By Brooks Dixon & Guidon Staff
29bdixon@usd489.com

Preparing for life after high school can be one of the most stressful parts of a student's journey. No matter what pathway the student is taking after graduation – completing an apprenticeship, entering the workforce, enlisting in the military, enrolling at a college or otherwise – the key to success is starting to prepare early in high school.

The Institute of Education Sciences says high schools need to encourage *all* students to start post-secondary planning during freshman year and build their plans throughout the four years.

"Freshman year is about exploration – figuring out your strengths, joining activities and learning how to manage your time," college preparation site Colleges of Distinction (COD) said.

Some tactics for freshmen are meeting with their school counselor to ensure they understand required credits and elective options, plus exploring extracurricular activities and volunteer opportunities.

"My freshman year, I got involved in basically every possible club I could, and throughout my years, I narrowed down the ones that I wanted to dedicate more time to," senior Connor Werth said.

During students' sophomore years, COD says that they really need to start focusing on career paths and post-secondary options by taking courses that align with their career interests, researching careers and building lists of possible post-secondary options.

With ideas, students can enter their junior year, which COD says is "one of the most challenging – but also one of the most important" years of high school.

To start, students should ensure their classes align with their career ideas.

"I want to attend Fort Hays [State University] for Elementary Education, so I have been taking classes, such as Human Growth and Development," junior Jayci Plante said. "I have also been taking a lot of college credit classes to help aid in making college a bit easier."

In addition, they recommend focusing on testing and refining post-secondary plans during junior year. To do this, students should enroll in test preparation for the ACT and/or SAT before taking those tests, and they should narrow down post-secondary options.

In addition, students should shadow professionals in their chosen career and schedule visits to colleges or attend opportunities, like "junior days" at the universities, for which lists are available for Hays High School students on the Counseling website.

Senior year is when it all comes together. By the start of senior year, students should have their career or college plans in mind, so they can focus on applying to colleges or applying to workplaces, plus completing scholarship applications and seeking financial aid, which Hays High seniors can find more about on the Counseling website, as well.

Most importantly, though, COD says that seniors need to "finish high school strong [and] avoid senioritis!"

STEP BY STEP

Tips for each year of high school

FRESHMAN YEAR

- Meet with your assigned high school counselor
- Choose elective classes that interest you
- Explore extracurricular activities & athletics
- Volunteer for organizations in the community
- Start a résumé for your activities & experiences

SOPHOMORE YEAR

- Continue freshman year tasks, but also...
- Choose electives that focus on a career path
- Take the PSAT to get familiar with testing
- Research career paths that interest you
- Build a list of college options & key information
- Update your résumé with your progress

JUNIOR YEAR

- Continue previous years' tasks, but also...
- Study for & take the ACT and/or the SAT
- Shadow professionals in possible career paths
- Narrow the list of college options & information
- Schedule college visits & attend junior days
- Build a list of possible scholarships for senior year
- Use breaks for jobs, shadowing, volunteering, etc.
- Update your résumé with your progress

SENIOR YEAR

- Continue previous years' tasks, but also...
- Study for & retake the ACT and/or the SAT
- Complete the FAFSA when it opens
- Update your list of eligible scholarships & apply
- Request letters of recommendation as needed
- Refine the list of college options & information
- Schedule college visits & attend senior days
- Make your post-secondary plans & finish strong
- Update your résumé with your progress

Information from Colleges of Distinction

K-STATE
Research and Extension



Cottonwood
District

Ellis County 4-H
601 Main St.
Hays, KS 67601
785-628-9430

<https://cottonwood.k-state.edu/ellis-county4h>

ARTIFICIAL "INTELLIGENCE"

Conversations about artificial intelligence in education often focus on student use, but increasing numbers of educators are using AI within their instruction

By Alijah Arias
27aarias@usd489.com

Artificial intelligence is rapidly reshaping classrooms, not only changing the ways students approach learning, but also changing the ways that instructors approach teaching.

From generating lesson ideas to explaining complex concepts, AI has become a tool that many educators are beginning to explore. While it offers new opportunities for creativity and efficiency, it also raises important questions about academic integrity and the role of technology in education. As teachers navigate this evolving landscape, they are learning not just how to use AI – but how to use it responsibly. *(By the way, that paragraph was written by Open AI's Chat GPT on Model 5.3.)*

"I use AI as a 'thought partner,'" social science teacher Abby Gillan said. "Sometimes, I have a vague idea of a lesson or an activity, and if I am having trouble nailing down the details, I will typically go to a colleague, but most times, they are busy with their own work. So, I have started using AI as a thought partner. It has helped me bring ideas to life in practical ways."

In addition, Gillan said she has used AI to improve previous lessons she created, especially for differentiating assignments.

"I may take an old assignment and ask AI for ways that I can make the assignment more inclusive for students of varying strengths," Gillan said. "Things that used to be time consuming are now accomplished more quickly."

With AI, users feed the platforms with prompts, and AI produces the results in an almost immediate time frame. To refine the results, it is important to continue prompting the AI program. AI learns from users' requests to build its models and users can narrow its responses with more fine-tuned requests, but AI still has faults, which is why sites often include instructions to the user to be sure to fact check the work – something science teacher Thomas Decker recently experienced.

"I used AI to develop a lab for Biology class," Decker said. "It was a lab I had never run, and I knew it would have some rough spots. But, the AI failed to understand the order of events for the lab to be successful. However, that failure was caught by me and fixed. The failure of AI is only major when you, as the user, fail to catch it or to understand it."

While AI can provide the results, in the long term, many skeptics of AI argue that it removes an important layer of critical thinking, as there is not an opportunity for the human users to increase their knowledge or skills because they do not have to think as much; they just have to feed it with their requests and read the results.

"I am not against teachers using artificial intelligence in every single case," journalism teacher Jessica Augustine said. "However, as a profession, I feel education is an art and a science, and that said, I feel like things are lost when relying too heavily on AI to do our work – just like it is when students rely on AI, too. AI may provide teachers with a technical framework, but there are so many fine nuances in educating, that AI-generated work should never completely substitute teacher-developed instruction that has authenticity, creativity, critical thinking, factual verification and, most of all, passion. AI cannot replace passion. I would tell students the exact same thing about them using AI."

With teachers using AI to adapt or to create their instructional materials, some students say it is hypocritical, since students are told not to use AI on assignments.

"The use of AI sucks people in and traps them," senior Lindsey Hernandez said. "Using it in any way can become addictive, and using it creates a bad habit for both the student and teacher. It makes school feel like it is more about good grades than actually learning."

However, many teachers at Hays High School say that teachers using AI is not hypocritical of them.

"The reason I would say it is not hypocritical pertains to the motive or intent for prohibiting its use," language arts teacher David Buller said. "It is essential for students to know how to read complex texts, write proficiently and think critically for themselves. For example, I have assignments in my classes that, three years ago, would have taken straight-A students 45 minutes to complete. Now, I have D students that can score perfectly on those same assignments in seven minutes using AI. Is the same level of thinking going into this? Are the students emerging from the assignment having thought critically about the message of the text and having developed an understanding of its life lessons? Are they practicing writing and honing their skills? Education is not happening when students use AI like this – and that is why teachers prohibit it."

Given that AI will likely continue to impact education, the U.S. Department of Education published "Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Teaching and Learning" in May of 2023, which included information about how teachers could utilize AI and have their students use AI. The publication stated that AI could help teachers save time by providing instructional recommendations that are in tune with their classroom needs.

"I am kind of a mid-to-late-comer when it comes to AI," foreign language teacher Matthew Whitney said. "I have almost gotten away from using it. I mean, it is not good because of the environmental impact that it has, and I realize that, but it is also the future. They have let the genie out of the bottle."

"I am kind of a mid-to-late-comer when it comes to AI. I have almost gotten away from using it... but it is also the future. They have let the genie out of the bottle."

TEACHER
MATTHEW
WHITNEY

- 23 PERCENT** of those surveyed in a schoolwide poll said AI was positive; 15 percent were "unsure"
- FIVE MILLION** average gallons of water is consumed by large AI data centers per day
- 2.5 MILLION** tons of electronic waste is expected to be produced per year from advanced AI by 2030
- DIGITAL NOSE?** Some AI can predict molecular structures in compounds and predict its smell
- FLYING CARS?** AI is a huge factor in the progression of transportation, like self-driving cars
- 30 PERCENT** of current work hours have the potential to become automated by AI
- \$15.7 TRILLION** is what AI is predicted to contribute to the economy by 2030

- 62 PERCENT** of people surveyed in a schoolwide poll said that AI was negative overall
- 34 MILLION** AI-generated photos are created daily among the 2,000 generation tools online
- 500** metric tons of carbon dioxide was emitted during the training of ChatGPT-3
- HUMAN BRAIN** AI's "deep learning" has been modeled after human brain networks
- STORM CHASER?** AI learned to analyze datasets, enabling it to predict natural disasters
- 1,287** megawatt-hours of energy is used on a regular basis to train and operate AI
- 97 MILLION** new job opportunities created by AI are expected in coming years

Praises

- Spontaneous hangouts
- Fancy cheese section in Dillons
- Cortados in fun cups
- The color yellow
- Cadbury eggs
- Spring weather
- In-service days
- Ulta gift cards
- Jelly beans
- Artemis II

Protests

- Wind
- Deadlines
- War in Iran
- Disregard for the world
- Depop shipping fees
- Gas prices increasing
- Midwest goodbyes
- OpenAI & ChatGPT
- Dandruff

Staff Recs

Alijah Arias

- "She Looks So Perfect" by 5 Seconds of Summer
- "Hairspray"

Joslyn Bates

- "Valerie" by Amy Winehouse
- "Clueless"

Lily Butler

- "400 LUX" by Lorde
- "Can't Hardly Wait"

Brooks Dixon

- "Boys Don't Cry" by The Cure
- "Remember the Titans"

Delia Dixon

- "Sedona" by Houndmouth
- "We Live In Time"

Kennedi Fischer

- "The Spins" by Mac Miller
- "27 Dresses"

Jacob Ridgway

- "Swim" by BTS
- "tick, tick... BOOM"

Brayden Staley

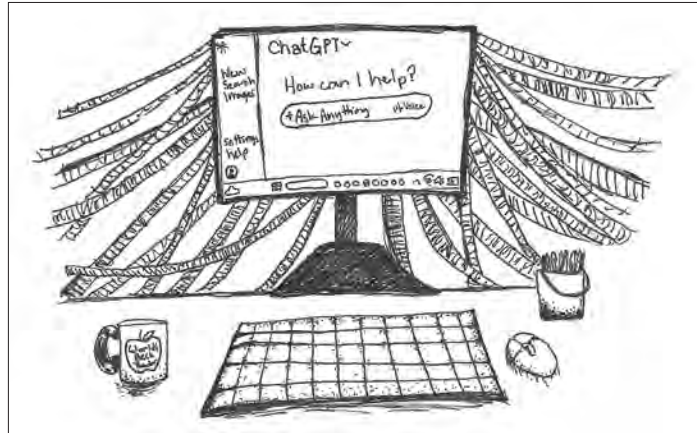
- "Here Comes the Sun" by The Beatles
- "Class of 2027"

Allison Stecklein

- "Red Balloon" by Charli xcx
- "Set It Up"

Jessica Augustine

- "Love in Letting Go" by Warren Zeiders & Lanie Gardner
- "Apollo 13"



Cartoon by Khandi Guzman

Artificial intelligence requires regulation to prevent misuse

As artificial intelligence technologies charge forward at an alarming speed, there is a lack of regulation concerning what AI companies can do with this ever-changing technology.

AI can be a valuable tool, but we must be more vigilant in regulating AI companies and ensuring there are proper restrictions to prevent AI misuse.

As AI expands with no guardrails, its use can easily become corrupt or deadly. OpenAI, the company behind ChatGPT, embodies this concern. In the current war with Iran, the U.S. military has been seeking ways to use advanced AI tools. Anthropic, creator of Claude AI, refused to give the U.S. military unrestricted access to their AI tools for "mass surveillance" and "fully autonomous weapons." However, after negotiations failed, Open AI's CEO Sam Altman contacted Trump's administration to offer Open AI's technology. The two parties struck a deal under vague terms of "lawful uses," which seemingly include AI-powered weapons that do not require human oversight. Furthermore, Open AI has concerningly close relations to Trump, as the company donated \$25 million to the MAGA Super PAC during the 2024 election, the largest single donation to the Trump campaign. They are now allowing the military to use their technology with little to no restrictions.

AI's power should not rest solely in the control of independent companies or in the government. To prevent abuse of and corruption around AI, both entities should check each other's powers. However, the government has not yet placed any specific restrictions on AI tools, likely because Trump receives immense support from OpenAI. And, while some states have attempted to regulate AI themselves, the federal government has moved to block state regulations, and OpenAI has lobbied against state AI laws, giving Trump the sole authority on AI control. By hindering OpenAI's power, the Trump Administration would be undercutting one of its biggest financial supporters, which points to why there have been no moves toward regulations on AI. As demonstrated by Anthropic, independent companies should not allow governments to abuse their tools. On the other hand, governments should enforce regulations on how AI can be used ethically and legally.

Since this power separation is failing, the American people must take action. By boycotting ChatGPT, we weaken OpenAI's influence and power. The "QuitGPT" movement involves uninstalling ChatGPT or using alternate AI tools. To prevent corrupt leaders from controlling the vast unseen possibilities of AI, we must stop enabling them and stop using ChatGPT.

Opinion of the Guidon Staff

Agree: 9

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

Columnist reviews three more films, spanning from modern to classic

“Wolfwalkers” (2020)

When I first told my friends that I would be reviewing films for The Guidon, one recommendation was the obscure animated film “Wolfwalkers.” I had not heard of it before, due to it being exclusive to Apple TV, but after seeing that nearly every review was positive, I decided to seek it out. And, I am so glad I did because this is unironically one of the best movies I have ever seen.

Its story is unique and vibrant, drawing some inspiration from Irish folklore. It features fun characters and includes a great script, but its best aspect is absolutely the amazing 2D animation. The hand-drawn style is so interesting to look at; it is really absolute eye candy. It is a bit rough around the edges, and I have a few problems with the direction the story takes in the third act of the movie, but it might be the most underrated film I have ever seen. Seek this one out if you can; you will not regret it. 8/10.



Jacob Ridgway
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“La La Land” (2016)

Two of my favorite active actors are Ryan Gosling and Emma Stone, and the romance musical “La La Land” features both as co-leads. Although I think of this film fondly and have no major problems with it, I also do not think of it when I think about great movies.

A big part of that is because, while this movie is a musical, a genre I absolutely adore, this film’s soundtrack is not memorable. The jazz-inspired music is fun to listen to during the film, but I never find myself listening to the songs outside of when I watch the movie. The songs do not detract from the experience, but I do not think the story is heightened much at all by them.

Regardless, this is still a charming romance story with some excellent lead and supporting performances and stellar directing. 7/10, bordering on an 8. If you dislike musicals or romance, this may not be for you, but otherwise, I would recommend it.

“12 Angry Men” (1957)

I do not often watch films that are in black and white, but my personal favorite colorless film is “12 Angry Men.” This crime drama is one of the highest-rated films of all time, with 100 percent on Rotten Tomatoes and a 9/10 on IMDb.

Dramas are my personal favorite genre of films, and this is one of the tensest, most interesting dramas I have ever seen. What makes this extra impressive is the fact that nearly the entire film is just 12 men talking in a room together, deciding a young man’s fate. The feature centers around the jury of a murder trial, in which the 12 men of the jury must come to a unanimous decision regarding whether the accused is guilty or innocent. There are no fancy sets, no larger-than-life scenarios and not even any profanities – just a tense atmosphere with a thrilling conclusion. I absolutely recommend this film, especially since it is available for free on Pluto TV. 9/10.

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

Multiple factors negatively affect small generational family farms

With small family farms, many people may think that the next generation will want to take over the farming operation, but having grown up in this situation, my dad has repeatedly told my three brothers and me, “do not get into farming.” Farming has always been an unstable career path, as uncontrollable factors influence farms.

One major factor is the weather. Currently, farmers have been struggling with drought. Kansas State University reports that, from 1991 to 2020, the yearly precipitation in Ellis County averaged 24.98 inches. From 2021 to 2024, that average dropped to 19.24 inches, with 2022 recording only 14.92 inches. Without moisture, crops are more difficult to grow, unless farmers irrigate land, which could cost more than \$1,000 per acre.

On the flip side, too much precipitation or other severe weather, like ice or hail, can also devastate farms. Years ago, my great grandpa lost 50 horses to flooding. In 2018, we had to keep a herd of cattle on a little island near the river when it started flooding, but we got lucky, as the river receded with no losses.

Another uncontrollable factor is the economy. In November of 2025, cattle prices were low. For my family, which sells calves at the end of the year, we made the choice to keep the calves until we would be able to sell them to make a profit or at least break even. Luckily, cattle prices are higher right now, but we have to factor in the input costs, as well, to maintain the herd.

The economy also affects other costs, such as equipment, fertilizer and fuel. Depending on the equipment, the prices can range from thousands of dollars to millions of dollars, so getting secondhand farming equipment is not uncommon. Even now, we use a feed truck that was on the farm before 1970. Added to equipment costs are maintenance costs and fuel costs, which right now, are rising drastically. For most small farmers, whatever money they make ends up being put back into the farm to sustain it.

That said, it may not be too surprising that mental health issues and suicide among farmers is not such a rare occurrence, unfortunately. With farming controlling farmers’ entire lives and being their entire identities, it can be difficult to step away from the stress. For instance, even on a rare vacation with my family, I still hear about farm conditions, as my dad will be checking weather, watching prices, searching for used equipment and so on.

Even with the hardships, though, farmers love their work. The most memorable conversation about farming I recall was between my dad and another farmer. They were complaining about farming issues – like they always do – but instead of the conversation dying out like normal, the other farmer said, “But, we don’t do it for the money... I wouldn’t want my life to be any different.” It is the most sentimental thing I have ever heard a farmer say to date.



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TEAMWORK

To have success, athletic squads start by utilizing team-building techniques

By Brayden Staley
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Across all sports, people see teams succeed through seemingly impossible odds. However, many people usually do not consider what goes into those successes beyond the games: effective team building.

From the first day of practice to the final day of competition, team bonding plays a crucial role in shaping athletic teams, creating connections that extend beyond the playing venue and developing skills that become essential during high-pressure moments.

According to TeamWorx Team Building, team bonding reinforces growth through five C's: collaboration, commitment, communication, common goals and conflict resolution.

To build these skills, coaches often start the season with team themes and team goals. According to Peak Performance Sports, many coaches use overarching themes for their teams, such as a "team first" mentality, where coaches will emphasize sacrificing individual statistics for team success, or a "family" theme, where they will encourage players to be loyal.

This year, the lady Indians basketball team utilized a theme for their season.

"Our theme this year was 'together,'" assistant coach Haley Wolf said. "We tried to apply this to all aspects of our team, and I think the girls really bought into this. Win or lose, we do it together – and not excluding people from things done outside of basketball."

Bonding players together outside of sports is something that softball coach Abby Gillan emphasizes to her players, as well.

"Important traditions we do that help build our team culture and team chemistry would be

team meals," Gillian said. "A lot of teams do that, but I think that it is just a really good time for the girls to sit down and be able to talk to each other about softball but also about things outside of softball. Other things we have done in the past include team scavenger hunts. That gives them a chance to work together and have a good time. That is really important – creating experiences for student athletes outside of just what is happening on the field is what is needed to make a successful team."

Football coach Tony Crough also acknowledges team bonding for overall success.

"The most important quality for team building is having acceptance," Crough said. "Football teams are full of 100-plus personalities that have to learn to get along with each other. You don't have to like everybody, but you do have to accept and respect each other."

To achieve that goal, Crough said he uses multiple activities for the football team.

"The most important team bonding activity, in my opinion, is working together," Crough said. "We also do lots of dinners and camps, but teams that work out together learn to respect each other. Teams that respect each other play hard for each other."

No matter the sport or the team-building activity, it is essential that coaches and players connect inside the sport and outside the sport to improve their bond and their skills.

"Team chemistry is something that we work on a lot throughout the course of a season," Wolf said. "We had a group of kids that really played well together, and that gave us a lot of confidence going into games. We had a very talented group of players, but what really set us apart this season was our kids' ability to come together and play for each other."

ATHLETE SPOTLIGHT

Girls Basketball



sophomore Jenna Schmeidler

Returning from a successful freshman season, this year, sophomore Jenna Schmeidler had an average of 19.9 points per game and in the state semifinal game, she had a career high of 33 points. Schmeidler also earned the Western Athletic Conference Player of the Year.

What was the most memorable moment of the season?

"The most memorable moment was beating Shawnee Heights in the semifinals to advance to the state championship."

How do you feel about being recognized this season?

"I feel very honored, but I most certainly couldn't have done it without my amazing teammates and coaches pushing me every day."

Who or what inspired you the most during the season?

"My teammates and coaches inspired me because we had big goals we wanted to achieve, and that motivated us to keep pushing hard the whole season."

Reporting by Brayden Staley

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SPORTSMANSHIP

TEMPER TANTRUMS

Youth sports negatively affected by adults showing bad sportsmanship

By Joslyn Bates
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Sports is meant to be a positive extracurricular activity for youth. It can provide them with a space to make friends, stay active and have fun. However, if you walk into many sporting events, you can find at least one adult, such as a parent or even a grandparent, who is yelling in negative ways – perhaps at a coach, at a referee or even at their own child.

“I think when parents get crazy and yell rude things, it can either be deserved or completely outrageous, depending on the game and the situation,” junior Brooklynn Koerner said.

But, bad behavior from spectators can cause issues in youth athletics, affecting more than just the game.

One effect of these inappropriate outbursts is the loss of game officials and youth coaches. The National Association of Sports Officials recently reported that 64 percent of referees have ejected an adult from a game and that 75 percent of officials have hung up their officiating whistles because of bad sportsmanship by adults. With some officials quitting, this leads to the other referees having to work games by themselves or do double shifts.

Officiating youth sports, such as through Hays Recreation Commission, is a common job for teens, but that job can be intimidating due to adult behavior.

“I have been yelled at multiple times, and most of the time, the parent is just being dumb,” freshman Levi Denham

said. “One time, a coach disagreed with me and tried to to get me in trouble.”

In addition to the verbal outbursts, some adults get physical, as well.

“While umpiring a youth baseball game, a mom cursed at me while shaking on the fence when she disagreed with a call I made,” freshman Myles Archer said.

Another effect that is linked to adult behavior is the lower numbers of athletes involved in some sports. In a video post by The Dad Edge, it explained that about 70 percent of youth athletes quit their sports by age 13, with “sideline coaching” from their parents being one of the main reasons.

O b n o x i o u s sideline coaching can confuse the players because they do not know whether to listen to their coach or their parent. Furthermore, in a 2024 article, Baylor College of Medicine says that negative adult input from the sidelines can also cause additional anxiety, increased pressure and unnecessary embarrassment for athletes – something teacher Lindsay Hart has seen at her son’s youth games.

“At a recent kids wrestling tournament, a boy, probably 10 to 12 years old, was wrestling, and his mom was in the stands videoing his match,” Hart said. “The mom was screaming

at the top of her lungs, “MOVE!” “GET OFF YOUR BACK!” “ROLL OVER!” “MOVE!” Everyone around her was looking at her, and in turn, watching her boy’s match. As the boy was wrestling, he looked up at her and just grimaced in disbelief that she was screaming at him, embarrassed. In the end, he lost the match. The mom was red with fury, turned around and stomped away. The poor boy was so upset, probably both that he lost and that his mom was screaming at him from the stands.”

Rude adult behaviors such as this do not have to be normalized, though. Youth sports can be a more positive environment, and adults can learn to watch their children compete peacefully.

According to The Coach Diary blog, adults can practice the “silent sideline” method, which includes clapping for good actions instead of harping on the bad. Another method for adults to control their behavior is by having perspective, meaning they should take a step back and remember this is for the youths’ fun and health, not their own benefit. Finally, remembering their role can help adults by letting coaches coach, players play and officials officiate – and just being present to watch the competition.

“The mom was screaming at the top of her lungs... As the boy was wrestling, he looked up at her and just grimaced in disbelief that she was screaming at him.”
teacher Lindsay Hart



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POP CULTURE

POKÉMON

Started back in 1996, popular creature-catching franchise celebrates 30th anniversary this year

By Jacob Ridgway
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In February, Pokémon, the world's highest grossing media franchise, with more than \$103.6 billion in lifetime retail sales, according to Yahoo, celebrated its 30th anniversary.

Created by Satoshi Tajiri in Japan in the early 1990s, Pokémon was inspired by bug fighting, a form of entertainment in Japan. According to the Pokémon Company website, Pokémon originally featured 151 fantastical creatures known as "Pocket Monsters," a title eventually shortened to "Pokémon."

These days, Pokémon is enjoyed by all ages, including high school students like senior Xander Fitzhugh.

"I got into it through Youtubers and the anime when I was in elementary school," Fitzhugh said. "I got really into the series through my first Pokémon game, 'Pokémon Moon.'"

Sophomore Lauren Carlin also became interested in Pokémon as a child.

"I remember getting into it with Pokémon cards," Carlin said. "The cards were cheap at the Dollar Tree, and it was a reward for my brother when he did good, and I was brought into it also."

In February 1996, "Pokémon Red" and "Pokémon Green" were released on the Nintendo Game Boy in Japan as the first Pokémon games. These were a national hit in Japan, thus, Pokémon Red" and "Pokémon Blue," were released worldwide by 1999.

Following the popularity of the games, the Pokémon Trading Card Game released its first set, featuring the original 151 Pokémon characters, in October 1996. The card game became popular worldwide, with official tournaments since 1997, and world championships every August since 2004.

In April 1997, the first anime episode, "Pokémon, I Choose You!," aired in Japan. The show followed a 10-year-old aspiring Pokémon master, named Ash Ketchum, and his partner, Pikachu, for more than 20 years until their journey finally ended in 2023, after which the Pokémon anime followed a new protagonist in a different storyline.

"I watched the anime when I was younger," Carlin said. "Now, I prefer the games over the rest. I still collect cards when I get packs, but I mostly play the games."

Ever since the original games released, players could connect with their friends to battle, but in 2008, the Video Game Championships became the official competitive format. In-person tournaments regularly saw a couple hundred participants up until "Pokémon Scarlet" and "Pokémon Violet," when competitive play really skyrocketed.



One of the most memorable games for many students was "Pokémon GO," a mobile game released in 2016 that started a craze.

"My brothers made me an account, and we would drive around to get the Pokémon because we didn't have any on our farm outside of Ellis," senior Kennedy Fischer said. "The best places around Ellis were my grandma's store, the high school, the grocery store and the parks."

Since 1996, new games have been released every few years. The latest of these main series games is "Pokémon Legends: Z-A," from 2025. But, on Feb. 27, it was announced that "Pokémon Winds and Waves" would be the next main series games, coming in 2027.

"What I am most excited about for the future of Pokémon is to see them keep improving it, now that they have serious competition in the monster-catching genre with other games," Fitzhugh said.

As of 2026, there are 1,025 unique Pokémon species, 22 main series games and more than 50 Pokémon spin-off games!



The company has shipped more than 489 million units of video game software and produced more than 75 billion trading cards!

Screenshot by Jacob Ridgway; images courtesy of Adobe Stock



Anticipated Albums

- Foo Fighters - "Your Favorite Toy"
- Noah Kahan - "The Great Divide"
- Ella Langley - "Dandelion"
- Laufey - "A Matter Of Time: The Final Hour"
- Miss Grit - "Under My Umbrella"
- Snoop Dogg - "10 'Til Midnight"
- Zayn - "Konnakol"



Future Films

- April 1
"The Super Mario Galaxy Movie"
- April 3
"The Drama"
"Fantasy Life"
- April 10
"Beast"
"Hamlet"
"You, Me & Tuscany"
- April 17
"Mile End Kicks"
"Normal"
- April 24
"I Swear"
"Omaha"



Witty Wisecracks

- What monster plays the most April Fools' Day jokes?
Frankenstein!
- Why shouldn't you tell ducks jokes on April Fools' Day?
They will quack up!
- What do you call a mud pie on April 22?
An earthday cake!
- What shoes do frogs wear in the spring?
Open-toad!
- When do gorillas fall from the sky?
During Ape-ri! showers!
- How can you tell if plants are good at math?
They have square roots!