

The Guidon

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



SCHOOL'S OUT!
As school year ends, students
anticipate graduation, summer
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ON THE COVER



Cover by
Kennedi Fischer;
images courtesy
of seniors

ORGANIZATIONS

Fellowship of Christian Athletes gives teens opportunity to strengthen their faith at school

By Joslyn Bates
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Being a student organization at Hays High School since 2022, the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) has been active throughout this school year, practicing their faith in a school setting.

Most recently, on April 18-19, five members attended the FCA Spring Conference at the Webster Conference Center in Salina, including senior Serena Wilson, junior Amos Buller, junior Anna Kuhn, junior Talulah Woolsey and freshman Jacy McMurtrie.

At the Spring Conference, the five were able to partake in various activities, including chapel, competitions and discussions about their faith. During the FCA conference, Kuhn also received an opportunity to share her religious testimony in front of all attendees – more than 600 people.

“It definitely felt nerve-racking beforehand, but on stage, I felt so much peace,” Kuhn said. “My goal was to share the Gospel and to encourage others in their walk with the Lord.”

In addition, FCA has met every Thursday morning when there is school at 7:25 a.m. in the Hospitality Room. At the meetings, sponsors Dave Buller and Jill Schaben or the student leaders share inspirational messages or religious passages. The student leadership team includes students from all grades, from seniors to freshmen, who are passionate about the organization’s mission.



Photo by Ethan Branaman (Indian Call)

MORNING INSPIRATION

Sophomores Kasdan Green and Bladyn Werth read a passage during an FCA meeting on April 23 in the Hospitality Room.

at school, the student leadership team has been intentional about inviting speakers that have a Christian background. Outside speakers bring many benefits, including encouragement for our students, spiritual insight and role model testimonies.”

While the official organization name includes “Athletes,” FCA is not just open to student athletes, but any student at Hays High. All students can also participate in club activities, such as the annual back-to-school party, the “See You at the Pole” event and the baccalaureate ceremony for seniors, which will be on Wednesday, May 13 at 6:30 p.m. in the Performing Arts Center and will be a time to pray over and send off the graduates.

For updates on FCA, students can check out their Instagram, [@fca_hays](#).

“My favorite part about being an FCA leader is seeing people grow and change,” Brewer said. “I love getting to watch how God works in their lives, even when it doesn’t make sense at the time.”

During some FCA meetings, the club has invited guests to speak to the members – from community pastors to other figures, such as a former Kansas State University football player.

“The FCA student leadership team brainstorms ideas for speakers and then decides who should be invited,” Dave Buller said. “Since the purpose of FCA is to be a safe space to talk about the Christian faith

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Behind the scenes, counseling office secretary Hillary Randa does more than most people realize – from getting students scheduled to meet with counselors to helping with pre-enrollment, like students recently did.

What is a typical work day like?

“A typical day is usually busy, between getting students into their counselors for appointments, working on the courses and the schedule for next year and helping the nurses out.”

What might not come to people’s minds when thinking about what you do?

“I am, for the most part, the ‘PowerSchool person’ in our building. I help staff, students and parents with their PowerSchool accounts and answer most questions that come up.”



secretary
Hillary Randa

What is your role in maintaining a positive environment in the office?

“I try to keep our environment calm and peaceful throughout the day. I usually tell everyone that it is quiet, calm and smells good in our office.”

What is one thing you wish students knew about the counseling office?

“We are not discipline! Sometimes, when we call students in, they ask, ‘Am I in trouble?’ The answer is always, ‘No.’ That is not what the counselors are here for!”

What is the most rewarding part of your role in the counseling office?

“The most rewarding part is getting to see all the students, having conversations with them, getting to know them and watching them mature through their high school years.”

Reporting by Alijah Arias

FACULTY MEMBERS

ONTO THE NEXT PHASE

At the end of this school year, five teachers with 177 combined years of experience will retire from Hays High School



special education
teacher
Kelly Ackerman

How many total years have you taught and at what schools?

"33 years. Seven years at Paradise Junior High/Natoma High School and 26 years at Hays High."

How do you feel the teaching profession has changed?

"It is so much harder. There is much more expected of us. Kids definitely are not as respectful as they were; I don't think this is on kids – I think it is more on adults who are willing to accept this."

What advice would you have for new teachers or those still teaching?

"You are going to cry, and you are going to want to quit many times over, but the number of respectful students who are fun to be around far outweigh the negative ones."

What are your plans for retirement?

"I am going to enjoy my summer without doing any book studies or lesson planning. I have a retirement trip planned to Hawaii in September with Mrs. Renz and other friends who are retiring this year, and right after we get back, my son is getting married. After that, I will figure out what my next act is."



special education
teacher
Kelli Karlin

How many total years have you taught and at what schools?

"33 years at Hays High School."

What is one favorite teaching memory?

"Memories I have made with students and staff that have developed into lifetime friendships. And, labs. I love to do labs with my students."

What is one crazy teaching story?

"We were doing a chemistry lab; the students were heating up zinc, and they were instructed to let the zinc cool before putting it into the trash. One group put the hot zinc into the trash can, and it caught fire. You can imagine the reactions of the class."

How do you feel the teaching profession has changed?

"Technology has been the biggest change."

What advice would you have for new teachers or those still teaching?

"Enjoy the art of teaching."

What are your plans for retirement?

"Enjoy the extra time with my family and play lots of pickleball. I hope to do some traveling."



language arts
teacher
Lisa Renz

How many total years have you taught and at what schools?

"35 years. Eight at Russell High School and 27 at Hays High."

What is one favorite teaching memory?

"My favorite memories would be all the Homecomings that I was a part of, both as a teacher and when I was a StuCo co-advisor. It was fun teaming up with my colleagues for Spirit Days."

What is one crazy teaching story?

"I was teaching at Russell... and we had a tornado warning. As we went to the locker rooms (our shelter), we saw the tornado out the windows. We had to stay in the locker rooms for two hours – with 300 students and no air conditioning."

What advice would you have for new teachers?

"Take time for yourself and your family. I regret not taking more time for my family."

What are your plans for retirement?

"My husband and I are looking forward to traveling this summer and spending time with our family, especially our two grandsons, Archer and Callahan, and four 'grand dogs!'"



language arts
teacher
Kathy Wagoner

How many total years have you taught and at what schools?

"35 years at Hays High. I came for my first year and never left!"

What is one favorite teaching memory?

"[My favorite teaching memory has been] making connections with students."

What is one crazy teaching story?

"A young man asked me why I was hurrying the lesson. I had two cliches in my head: 'I want to keep the ball rolling,' and 'I want to keep you on your toes.' Let's just say it came out of my mouth in an inappropriate way."

How do you feel the teaching profession has changed?

"Today, school is expected to solve societal issues, not just academics, which is causing faster teacher burnout."

What advice would you have for new teachers or those still teaching?

"Complete what you can during the school day, perhaps staying until 4:30 or 5, and then leave it behind."

What are your plans for retirement?

"To enjoy my hobbies and family."



science teacher
Cheryl
Shepherd-Adams

How many total years have you taught and at what schools?

"41 years. In Kansas: Topeka, Washburn Rural, Hays High. Tiffin, Ohio: Hopewell-Loudon School. West Lafayette, Ind.: William Henry Harrison High School. FHSU: three years (physics & math); still an adjunct instructor."

What is one favorite teaching memory?

"It's got to be when I interact with former students in town (and elsewhere) and I get to appreciate their grown-up selves. And, of course, [junior] Kaylee Desaire pie-ing my face last year."

What are your plans for retirement?

"In no particular order: take care of my health, learn Italian to the point of a 5-year-old, spend more time with my granddaughters, my kids and my sister, get back to sewing and crafting, grow more herbs and flowers, travel (I've only been to 14 other countries and I want to experience more!), find some way to help make our corner of the world better, do some volunteer science outreach, maybe get my voice back in shape... oh, and delete the 5:00 AM alarm from my phone permanently!"

FUTURE PLANS

School administration to discuss several changes for 2026-2027

By Delia Dixon
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The opening of the new high school provided administrators with an opportunity to change school policies and procedures. While changes also brought anticipated challenges, they aimed to improve the high school experience for students and staff.

After a year of immense change this school year, for the 2026-2027 school year, the administration wants to emphasize consistency.

"The amount of time, energy, patience and flexibility it has taken to pull off such a substantial move is something that should create a sense of pride for our people and this great community," principal Shawn Henderson said. "I am so proud of the students and staff and how they have embraced this move and worked daily to build new traditions and norms for our spaces and with our procedures."

One change that will be implemented into next year's schedule is for Advisory time. Currently, the weekly schedule includes a 40-minute Advisory on Mondays, shortening other classes, and other weekdays have a 20-minute Advisory. However, next year, Advisory will be 30 minutes long after third block each school day, so the Monday through Friday schedule stays consistent.

"That was the overwhelming response of our teachers," Henderson said. "We hope the consistency will be appreciated by all stakeholders."

Another change concerns cell phones and electronic devices. With new state legislation restricting devices in all K-12 schools, Hays High School will have to ensure compliance with the law. While the current policy implemented for this year will continue, there will be additions in the coming year to satisfy the law.

"We, like all schools in Kansas, are working through what the legislators have put into place through the law, starting this fall," Henderson said. "We are proud of the work we have done here this year, and we are positioned to make small adjustments to our already strong cell phone policy."

Among the improvement goals for next school year, Henderson highlighted how there are plans to further reflect on safety within Hays High, as well as in daily procedures.

"We always put safety first in our analysis of one year to the next," Henderson said. "This year will provide even more opportunity for that reflection. Roadways, parking, drills and daily communication is something we review constantly, and that will be the case this year as well."

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SENIOR YEAR

GRADUATION TRADITIONS

Seniors prepare for upcoming ceremony by decorating their graduation caps

By Brooks Dixon
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As the end of school nears, students' stress levels rise every day. Yet, one graduation tradition that can help seniors to have some fun is decorating their graduation caps. From rhinestones to streamers, seniors use many different art forms to express themselves.

Wearing graduation caps dates back to the 12th century at early European universities. According to the History Channel, "Early students at these universities may have worn a calotte or skullcap similar to what some church figures wore. Later, students adopted a brimless hat called the pileus. Named after a similar cap from ancient Rome, the pileus was the progenitor of the modern graduation cap. In the 16th century, two versions of the pileus became popular with university graduates: the square-shaped pileus quadratus and the circular pileus rotundus."

The square-shaped, flat-topped version of the cap was the version that American universities started using in the 17th century. The cap has also been called a "mortarboard," as the cap looked like "an actual square board used to hold mortar," according to the History Channel.

The ornament that hangs from the top of the cap is referred to as the tassel. It was first introduced when students wanted to add decoration to their caps, according to an article from Goucher College. Since then, the tassel has evolved into an iconic part of the graduation process.

According to an article on *www.honorsociety.org*, the turning of the graduation tassel from the right side of the cap to the left side of the cap signifies many things, including class unification and academic achievement: "[Turning the tassel] is a visual representation of the hard work, dedication and perseverance required to earn a degree."

Finally, the tradition of throwing the caps originated at the Naval Academy in 1912 when Navy graduates would be presented with new hats, signifying their newly earned officer rankings. When presented with these new hats, the graduates would throw their previous hats into the air, according to Graduation Source. The tradition quickly spread to universities and has remained a prominent part of graduation ceremonies.

With these traditions in mind, seniors will often decorate their caps to reflect their personalities, whether that includes bows, charms, flowers or other decorations.

"My grad cap is inspired by Sharpay Evens's grad cap from 'High School Musical 3,'" senior Lindsey Hernandez said. "I chose it is because 'High School Musical 3' was one of my favorites movies as a kid and still is now. It is also just

a nice little reminder of my childhood, as I near the end of high school."

Many graduates will also add quotes on the top of their caps, such as a Bible verse, a humorous line or a song lyric that speaks to them.

"My grad cap designed is bedazzled in blue to look like the 'Short n' Sweet' album by Sabrina Carpenter, with the words 'busy woman' on it, which is one of her songs," senior Erin Ruder said. "I

choose that because I thought, throughout high school, I was very involved, aka a busy woman!"

While students may want to go all out in decorating their caps, there are some restrictions since the caps will be worn at graduation. If students do have a design that is considered inappropriate, they will be asked to remove their caps to participate in commencement.

"Things that would be considered inappropriate for the school day would be inappropriate for graduation," Hays High School Principal Shawn Henderson said.

These decorations allow seniors to express their unique personalities during the ceremony and provide students with a lasting keepsake to symbolize their goal of finishing high school, following in the traditions of many other graduates.

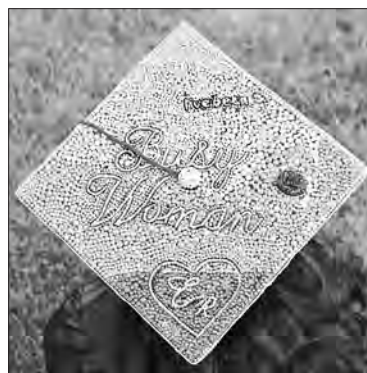


Photo courtesy of Erin Ruder

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UV Index Breakdown

0-2
Low UV

3-5
Moderate UV

6-7
High UV

8-10
Very High UV

11+
Extreme UV

Considering all the dangers from tanning in the sun or in tanning beds, there are some safe, and simple, ways to add some summer color to your skin without the risks. Most self-tanners are completely safe for skin and are great alternatives to UV tanning.



4/5 stars
"It smells like coconut, which you would think would be a good thing until you bask in it all night. But, it is not blotchy, and it goes on really well."
— junior Kennedy Normandin



4/5 stars
"It doesn't smell bad like other self-tanners, but you have to apply it every night, making it a gradual thing. But, that makes it look more even on the skin. I don't feel orange when I use this one!"
— senior Delia Dixon



2/5 stars
"I don't like the smell of it, and it really sticks to your skin for days. However, I do like the clear formula so that it doesn't transfer, and you don't have to wear it for long to see results."
— senior Kennedy Fischer

"What is the UV today?"

While many people love summer sunshine and tanned skin, sun exposure without skin protection can lead to dangerous effects

By Lily Butler
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Prom season, outdoor sports, lake trips, pool days – the warmer weather in the spring and the summer provides multiple reasons that students are outside in the sunshine, or at least wanting to look like they have been. While getting some sun can have various benefits, some people have become too careless about protecting their skin from the effects of the sun.

It is important to note that, in contrast to getting too much sun exposure, too few sun rays also can have negative effects on the human body. A lack of Ultraviolet B (UVB) rays from the sun can lead to a lack of Vitamin D, which can deplete bone density and lead to fractures in the bones. However, when exposed to sunlight, the UVB rays convert 7-dehydrocholesterol (7-DHC) in the skin into Vitamin D, according to Yale Medicine.

Researchers from UCLA Health discovered that, during the spring and summer months, about 25 percent of the body is exposed to sunlight, so around eight to 10 minutes under peak sunlight suffices to get the recommended amount of Vitamin D. However, during the winter months, only about 10 percent of the body is sunlight exposed, which requires up to two hours of sunlight.

"I like warm weather since it is more enjoyable to go outside without a jacket, plus it feels like summer," junior Brooklynn Haynes said.

However, exposure to UV rays without using any sort of skin protection can definitely lead to harmful effects on people's skin. These effects can include apparent signs of early aging like wrinkles or sunspots, increased risks for skin cancer and serious damage to cell DNA.

"I have to see a dermatologist yearly now because I already have had a skin cancer scare," teacher Jessica Augustine said. "Several years ago, I had what I thought was a birthmark that started growing rapidly and changing colors, and to be safe, the dermatologist removed it – but, in doing that, to make sure to get any possibly cancerous cells, they ended up cutting out a quarter-size area, and now, I have a very visible scar. Although that turned out not to be cancerous yet, they considered it 'pre-cancerous,' and so now, I am more cognizant of wearing sunscreen when I am outside. I like being tanned, but I like not having skin cancer more."

Although it is rare, young people, including teens, can get skin cancer, but even getting too much sun exposure as teens can cause issues later in one's life. To avoid hours in the sunlight, some people opt for tanning beds to get their tans.

"I just started using tanning beds because it gives a longer lasting and more natural tan," senior Melissa Boland said.

While tanning beds can be convenient and effective ways to get tanned, they are actually more dangerous than rays from the sun. Because of the concentrated UV radiation, which can be anywhere from 10 to 15 times more powerful than the sun, the tanning bed rays can penetrate far deeper into the skin, which accelerates the aforementioned negative effects.

"Honestly, I know tanning beds aren't great for you and have risks of skin damage, which is definitely kind of scary," senior Jaci Schmidt said. "But, I still use them because I like how I look with a tan, and it just makes me feel more confident. I try not to think about the long-term effects too much, even though I probably should."

Another safe and effective way to get a tanned look, without the risks of UV exposure, is by getting a spray tan, which is easy to keep maintained with follow-up appointments. In Hays, there are many salons that offer spray tan services.



"This spa is truly the best. I continue to return for all my needs."
— Google review



"Bronze on the Bricks is hands down the best tanning salon around!"
— Google review



"Love Love Love this place and the ladies that work there!"
— Google review

Praises

- Naps
- Long hugs
- E-sports
- Brayden Smith
- Nick Wilde AI Scuba
- Harry Styles x Obama
- Hootin' and hollerin'
- DQ Strawberry Angel Food Cake
- Coconut Dr. Pepper
- Platonic love

Protests

- Math finals
- Yearbook deadlines
- Walmart renovation
- U.S. Supreme Court
- People with too much power
- Unnecessary apologies
- Self-perception
- Cool lighting
- Smoldering

Staff Recs

Alijah Arias

- "Bleed to Love Her" by Fleetwood Mac
- "We're the Millers"

Joslyn Bates

- "Young Hearts Run Free" by Candi Staton
- "Along For the Ride"

Lily Butler

- "Under Pressure" by Queen & David Bowie
- "Napoleon Dynamite"

Brooks Dixon

- "Actor" by Conan Gray
- "Project Hail Mary"

Delia Dixon

- "Golden" by My Morning Jacket
- "The Breakfast Club"

Kennedi Fischer

- "Landslide" by The Chicks
- "Clueless"

Jacob Ridgway

- "Party Rock Anthem" by LMFAO
- "Saving Private Ryan"

Brayden Staley

- "Thriller" by Michael Jackson
- "Michael"

Allison Stecklein

- "Diamonds" by Rihanna
- "Twisters"

Jessica Augustine

- "Wildflowers" by Tom Petty
- "Ferris Bueller's Day Off"



Cartoon by Khandi Guzman

Despite society's expectations, students must follow passions

There is not a finish line – just the time we have and what we choose to do with it.

High school students are constantly looking to the future, and high school itself feels like the final barrier before we are thrown into the gaping chasm of real life. Society drills it into our brains: school, grades, college, internships, careers, money, retirement. If you stray from these stepping stones, you will end up free falling through life, reaching for success but only grasping emptiness. But, this is simply not true.

We have been conditioned into thinking that life is one big race: a challenge to see who can have the best grades, who can complete college the fastest, who can enter the workforce before the rest of their peers. However, we have yet to even know our own selves by the time we are 18. Why must we rush into the rest of our lives?

Instead, we should use this time to explore who we are. We have barely experienced not even a fraction of what this world has to offer us. How can we possibly know how we want to spend the rest of our lives here? The answer is, we do not. Whatever we choose to pursue after high school, the world will not move on without us. Our experiences are not a waste of time if we are learning in the process.

The fear of taking the “wrong path” may restrain us from exploring something that piques our curiosity, but we must not let fear dictate our lives: fear of making mistakes, of getting behind, of not knowing. We need to keep exploring despite those fears because the only mistake we can make is stagnancy, staying rooted where we currently are simply out of fear that we will not find something better later. We should not shy away from that discomfort surrounding the unknown in the world. The challenges we will face, the fears we will feel and the rejections we will experience are indicative of our growth.

As seniors reflect on high school, they should not view this time as a sobering end of childhood. Instead, we should rejoice for new beginnings and infinite possibilities. And, with this overwhelming independence, we must remember that we are not alone. While we must follow our own goals, we do not have to do it alone. We should not fear asking for help along the way and seeking advice, guidance and support from those around us. Our lives will constantly involve learning, even after exiting school, so we need to take every chance we get to continue that expansion of knowledge and experience.

By stepping off that racetrack, we can discover just how many more paths there are to explore.

Opinion of the Guidon Staff

Agree: 9

Disagree: 0

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Information/Policies

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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

For final column, staff member reviews two last movies – new and old

“Project Hail Mary” (2026)

The latest film project from beloved writer/director duo Phil Lord and Chris Miller is also an instant classic adaptation of Andy Weir’s novel. “Project Hail Mary” has been absolutely showered with praise ever since it was released earlier this year, and I am so happy to report that the praise is absolutely deserved.

The film follows a science teacher-turned-astronaut named Dr. Ryland Grace, played by Ryan Gosling in what may be his best performance yet. In the movie, Dr. Grace travels light-years away from earth after scientists discover that the sun is actively dying, and so, they send Dr. Grace on a mission to find a fix.

While about half of this movie is just Gosling in a spaceship on his own, he manages to make it entertaining and captivating. In space, Gosling encounters a lovable rock-like space creature that he names Rocky – also known as, in my opinion, the best



Jacob Ridgway
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character in the movie – with whom he learns to communicate and from whom he discovers they have a common goal.

This newer film offers great themes about bravery, compassion, found family and when it is worth giving something up for someone you care about. The direction is spectacular, and the writing is both dramatic and comedic, as is commonplace with Lord and Miller productions.

I have never read the novel, but fans of it have sung this adaptation’s praises online for weeks. Of course, the biggest compliment I can give to this film is that it nearly made me cry over a faceless rock alien. Check it out, for sure. 9/10.

“Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb” (1964)

Aside from having an unnecessarily long official title, “Dr. Strangelove” is a classic film best remembered for being a comedy meant to make light of the Cold War. And, what a comedy it is! This is one of the funniest movies I have ever seen.

In addition to being regarded as one of the best comedies in film history, it is also credited as one of the most influential films in history, and for good reason. Modern political satire owes its existence to this film.

The plot of the movie is sporadic and admittedly a bit confusing, but that is what helps lead to some of the best jokes. The story follows a U.S. Air Force General named Jack Ripper, who is both a hysterical and an insane character, as he orders a nuclear attack on the Soviet Union. The events that follow that order can only be described as “hijinks, shenanigans and tomfoolery.”

It is quite difficult to put into words how funny this movie really is since most of the film’s jokes tackle topics that would normally be considered too serious for a comedy movie, but the miracle of this movie is that it makes it work. I truly do not even know how it does this, but it just works.

“Dr. Strangelove” is not very deep, and it does not have profound messages or great drama, but it is a comedic riot that I have no issues with. 9/10.

Student provides insight on recent discussion about school restrooms

With the new Hays High School having been open for almost one complete school year, recently, concerns about its restrooms have gained attention again.

While previous discussions questioned the combined female, male and unisex stalls with common sink areas, as opposed to restrooms for just one gender, recent discussion follows a parent’s Facebook post describing unsanitary conditions and issues, such as vandalism and vaping.

Although social media users can sometimes blow issues out of proportion, in this case, there *have been* issues with the restrooms. While occasional issues of vandalism or vaping must be addressed legally, the issues with cleanliness also need to be taken seriously, as students and staff need access to clean restrooms.

Personally, I have observed issues in restrooms, like unsanitary conditions and purposeful misuse. When entering, I have seen urine all over the floors, especially in the unisex restroom stalls. Other Guidon staff members reported seeing urine covering the toilet seats, menstrual blood on the stall walls and large amounts

of toilet paper being shoved into toilets or being strung up on the stall walls.

In a building used by more than 1,000 students, maintaining clean restrooms requires more than an occasional check. Prior to the discussion on Facebook, restrooms were being cleaned once per school day; now, they are being cleaned twice during the day. When usage is constant and cleaning is limited to once or twice a day, conditions can deteriorate quickly, creating an environment that some students may avoid altogether.

Addressing concerns requires a combination of approaches rather than one solution.

First and foremost, students need to be more responsible and take care of the facilities. This new school cost more than \$100 million, paid for by taxpayers, including their own parents. So, to start, they just need to be aware that they are making messes or are damaging facilities that their families are paying for.

An idea from Facebook suggested having restroom monitors who check the stalls after use. Although teachers already watch common restroom areas during passing periods, perhaps having additional staff or community volunteers monitor restrooms and check stalls would be beneficial.

Another solution involves more structured access to the restrooms by installing an electronic entry system that requires student IDs, so that if the restrooms are left dirty or even vandalized, it would be easy to determine who used specific stalls at specific times.

Another option is rethinking the restroom facility designs. While urinals were present in the previous school’s male restrooms, some people have mentioned the lack of urinals

here contributes to the cleanliness issues.

While these are not the only possible solutions, a combination of approaches may ensure that these essential facilities meet the high expectations of a new building.



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SUMMER RECREATION

START YOUR ENGINES

Area speedways provide fast entertainment for long summer nights

By Kennedi Fischer
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During summer, most students will look for ways to wind down, but at local speedways, the races will be revving up.

Rolling Plains Motor Speedway, or RPM Speedway, opened in 2006 at the Ellis County Fairgrounds, northwest of Hays. With a 3/8-mile, high-banked oval dirt track, the speedway is home to many racing events from the spring to the fall.

The racing season started with the 14th annual Sunflower Classic from March 26-28, which hosted more than 150 race cars. Each month from April to October, the track will host races that are governed by the International Motor Contest Association (IMCA). This summer for the annual Ellis County Fair, they will host the Wheat Shocker Nationals on July 11, and this fall, they will host the 20th annual IMCA Fall Nationals on Oct. 1-3.

At RPM Speedway, there are five IMCA divisions run: Modified, Stock, Hobby Stock, Sport Compact and Sport Modified – although the IMCA includes other divisions as well. Every division has regulations concerning the car’s body, engine, tires and more.

In 1979, the IMCA introduced the Modified Division, what it says is “the calling card of IMCA” and “the largest division of race cars in the United States.” Just five years later, in 1984, the IMCA started the Stock Division, which includes full-bodied car models that one would see on roadways adapted into race cars.



Later in the ‘80s, the IMCA began a new Hobby Stock Division, which maintained full-sized cars but with regulations on the cars that allowed for lower costs, allowing more new drivers to get into racing and more veteran drivers to also stay.

In 2005, the IMCA introduced the Sport Modified Division, or SportsMods. In this division, which also has Northern and Southern classes, it also has regulations allowing for lower costs. Most recently, in 2025, the IMCA started the Sport Compact Division, an entry-level division with four-cylinder engines.

For most races, admission is \$10 for Age 13 and up and \$5 for senior citizens, and if you have a military ID or for any child under Age 12, admission is free.

“I enjoy the speedway because it is something that my friends and family like to watch,” senior Jadyn Younger said. “I think everyone should attend races at the speedway because it is a very welcoming place, and I always run into different friends that I don’t get to see very often.”

While the RPM Speedway is local to Hays, there are several other area speedways where races occur, including in WaKeeney, Stockton and LaCrosse.


Just down the interstate, WaKeeney Speedway is a 4/10-mile dirt track that was first sanctioned in 1988. On May 15 at 7 p.m., the track will host May Madness with the United Rebel Sprint Series Cars. And, on June 5-6, the speedway will have the Revival Super Dirt Series.

In Stockton, the Rooks County Speedway is a 1/3-mile clay track, which is home to five events for the season. On May 22 and on June 12, the track will host IMCA racing, and on July 17, Keller Motor Night will take place, running Modified, Stock Car and Sport Compact divisions, plus the RaceSaver Sprint Car Division. Finally, for the county fair, on Aug. 6-7, the speedway will host its normal IMCA divisions.

Finally, in LaCrosse, the Rush County Speedway is a 1/4-mile clay track, which will host three races during the summer. On June 6, it will have the Bullring Nationals with stock cars and sprint cars. On July 31, the second race of the summer will be the “Rumble at the Bullring,” and on Aug. 14, the speedway will hold the Cattlemen’s Classic.

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ATHLETE
SPOTLIGHT

Girls Track & Field



freshman Sydney Lewallen

Although it is her first year of high school track and field, freshman Sydney Lewallen has consistently been a top athlete in the 100-meter, 200-meter and 400-meter races. According to Milesplit, her best race is the 400-meter run, being seventh in the state with a 58.26 from the Wichita Heights Invitational.

What has been your focus in training during this season?
“My biggest focus in training has been to keep getting faster and to stay healthy.”

How do you perform consistently well across multiple events at a meet?
“I make sure that I don’t get worn out before my events, and I get off my feet after my events so that I have enough energy for the next one.”

What goals are you working toward as the season ends?
“Some goals I am working towards is to break the school record in the 400 and hopefully to place at state in a couple of my events.”

Reporting by Brayden Staley

COLLEGE ATHLETICS

Executive order attempts to make NCAA change rules regarding college athletics

By Brayden Staley
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Since 1906, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) has shaped the rules that govern college sports and college athletes.

However, on April 3, President Donald Trump issued an executive order, titled “Urgent National Action to Save College Sports,” which attempts to mandate that the NCAA makes directed changes to certain athletic policies, including eligibility limits and transfer rules, with an upcoming deadline of Aug. 1.

Currently, the NCAA provides collegiate student athletes with five years to complete four seasons of play after enrolling in college at any point, which has been called the “Five-Year Clock” rule. Under the executive order, there would be stricter “age-based eligibility limits to promote fairness, consistency, safety and opportunities for student athletes.”

With that in mind, the NCAA has proposed a “Five-for-Five” rule, which is anticipated to become policy this month. Under this, athletes will have five years to compete in five seasons, but the five-year window starts immediately when the athlete graduates from high school or turns 19 years old, whichever comes first.

In addition, the executive order would only give limited exceptions to the five-year eligibility period for “military service, missionary service and other periods of absence from participation that are in the public interest.”

“The new NCAA rules will not affect me,” junior Gus Corsair, who recently signed to play football at Oregon, said. “They will just let you play five years as opposed to having a redshirt year with four playing years. It has always been my goal to perform right away, so nothing really worries me.”

Another topic in the order involves the transfer portal. At present, NCAA athletes are allowed to transfer from one school to another school an unlimited number of times within their eligibility period, yet still compete immediately under very flexible transfer rules.

“The current NCAA rules affect high school athletes in two major ways,” assistant football coach Nathan Hale said. “First, opportunities to compete at the college level are more limited because schools have easier access to transfer athletes [right now]. At the same time, if a player performs well anywhere, they have a chance to transfer somewhere that may be a better fit.”

However, the executive order aims to make the NCAA create stricter transfer rules. According to the order, student athletes could “transfer one time during the five-year period with immediate playing eligibility, and one additional such time if the student athlete obtains a four-year degree.”

While the executive order also suggests key changes to revenue sharing between college athletic programs, the NCAA has not made changes to those policies yet.

With uncertainty surrounding the NCAA rules, high school athletic staff want student athletes to stay aware of potential rule changes that could affect them.

“Students who want to participate in NCAA sports at the collegiate level need to make sure they are staying up to date on all the current rule,” activities director Chris Drees said. “They should be speaking with counselors, making sure they are passing all the required classes the NCAA requires and always researching what is going on. Those rules can change at any point in time, and the more information that you have, the better off you are going to be.”



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HERITAGE

Willkommen!

Ellis County celebrates 150th anniversary of arrival of Volga Germans throughout this summer and fall

By Allison Stecklein
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Throughout 2026, the Ellis County Historical Society (ECHS) invites community members to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Volga Germans settling in Ellis County.

The term "Volga Germans" refers to ethnic Germans who migrated to western Russia along the Volga River in the mid-1700s. After nearly a century in Russia, many emigrated to Kansas in 1876. Their arrival was a turning point for this region of the state. If not for Volga Germans moving to Ellis County, Hays would have shrunk after the 1889 closure of Fort Hays. Volga Germans also introduced agricultural techniques that transformed Western Kansas into sustainable farming areas. Today, Hays remains a major stop for surrounding residents, thanks to the Volga German heritage.

To prepare for the 150th anniversary, the ECHS created a small group of community members, known as the Sesquicentennial Action Committee (SAC) in 2024. So far, the group and other local residents have sponsored several events, including a Volga German folk music presentation, polka dances and masses at area churches. However, most of the events to celebrate the anniversary will take place over the summer.

On June 13, the ECHS will host "Kinderfest," which will have stations where visitors can learn past skills used by the Volga German immigrants, including writing with a quill pen. On Aug. 7, there will also be a play about Volga German heritage written by Cheryl Glassman that will be performed at the Hays High School Performing Arts Center. In weekend following the play on Aug. 8-9, Victoria will be hosting Herzogfest, an annual event to celebrate local Volga German heritage. And, on Oct. 1-2, Oktoberfest here in Hays will also recognize Volga German heritage through traditional dancing, food and music, and international culture.

One activity, which opened on April 23 and continues through 2026, is the historical-

ly themed escape room at the Volga German Haus at the ECHS at 100 West Seventh St. in Hays. Students in the Special Projects and Research class at Hays High School, under the guidance of gifted education teacher Jerry Braun, designed and built the experience.

"The Youth Engagement Committee for the 150th anniversary brainstormed ideas, and since I previously owned and operated an escape room, they came to me to see if I wanted to do it," Braun said. "My students have always wanted to write ones of their own, so I thought it would be a great project for them."

Since November 2025, students have developed five distinct rooms varying in difficulty. The simplest puzzles are geared toward elementary students, while the most challenging are designed for adults. Each room follows the story of the Haberkorn family, a Volga German family who settled in Pfeifer in 1892. During the escape rooms, participants must locate missing or locked items, such as a family Bible, a wedding dress or a family heirloom.

"We focused more on the daily life of the Volga Germans," senior Emerson Sander said. "We felt it made it easier for players to connect to the family they are learning about."

The escape rooms will be available by reservation on the ECHS website at www.echshays.org for \$20 per group of up to six players. Different levels will become available throughout the summer.

"In today's highly interactive world, many people learn in different ways, and in many cases, the challenge is to hold people's attention more than reading text on a display panel or in a book," ECHS director Amanda Rupp said. "The escape rooms are another way to make learning memorable and fun."

The ECHS encourages the public to join the festivities as the sesquicentennial continues. To stay informed about upcoming events, visit ourpeopleourhome.org.

"Sharing the history in an engaging way with area children is the only way the story of Volga Germans will survive and not be lost to a textbook," Rupp said.



Photo courtesy of ECHS

VOLGA GERMANS

The Haberkorn family was the inspiration for the escape room created by gifted education students at the Volga German Haus in Hays.



Anticipated Albums

Drake – "ICE MAN"

Lizzo – "B***h"

Madonna – "Confessions on a Dance Floor: Part II"

Bebe Rexha – "Dirty Blonde"

Olivia Rodrigo – "You Seem Pretty Sad For A Girl So In Love"



Future Films

May 12
"The Punisher: One Last Kill"

May 15
"Driver's Ed"
"In the Grey"

May 22
"Corporate Retreat"
"Passenger"
"Star Wars: The Mandalorian and Grogu"
"Tuner"

May 29
"The Breadwinner"
"Pressure"

June 4
"The Amazing Digital Circus: The Last Act"
"Toxic"



Witty Wisecracks

What did the graduation cap say to the tassel?

"You hang around; I'll go on ahead!"

Why did the clock get a diploma?

It put in a lot of overtime!

Why did the audience at the graduation ceremony need sunscreen?

The graduates were all so bright!

Why do bananas wear sunscreen?

Because they peel!

Where do sheep go on summer vacation?

The Baaaaahamas!

What can cause dry skin after being in a swimming pool?

A towel!