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BELLEVUE EAST TOM TOM



BELLEVUE EAST HIGH SCHOOL 1401 HIGH SCHOOL DRIVE (402) 293-4150 BELLEVUE, NE DECEMBER 2018 ISSUE 3 VOLUME 68

Local pantry accepts donations



Helping Hand. Linda Sema, a Bellevue Food Pantry staff member, takes canned food items out of a box on Dec. 12 to store into containers that can later add to the pantry's inventory. The food pantry received donations all year round from locals in Bellevue. "I do this because I love feeling helpful to the community and giving back," Sema said. *Photo by McKenzie Gandy*

Cam Smith
Reporter

The Bellevue Food Pantry is in a constant need for donations throughout the year and with the holidays coming up, donating is makes sure every family has food on the table.

"The Bellevue Pantry is totally supported by the Bellevue community. We receive both monetary and food donations. Schools, churches, businesses and individuals donate to the pantry," director of the food pantries in Bellevue and Omaha, Carmen Bradley said. "The Holiday season tends to be our season

for receiving the greatest amount of donations. Special events such as the Bellevue East and Bellevue West games also impacts the amount of donations we receive."

Mobile food pantries are also an effective way to get food on the tables of families in need. Food Bank for the Heartland has food drives at Mission Middle School. Non-perishable food items and clothing donations happen every third Wednesday from 5-6:30 p.m. These food drives are held all around Nebraska and depend on citizens.

"Food Bank for the Heartland serves 93 counties across Nebraska and western Iowa. We source per-

ishable and nonperishable food items. Food items collected during a food drive in one county may benefit a child or family living in another county," Communications director of Food Bank for the Heartland Angie Grote said. "In our service area, approximately 209,000 people are considered food insecure and may not have regular access to the meals they need to be healthy,"

Households across Bellevue are in need of food. Donating to the food pantry allows people unable to afford food are able to put dinner on the table. Over 200 households are in need of food and rely on the

food pantry every month.

"We serve approximately 250 to 300 households in Bellevue monthly. In 2017 we had more than 4100 individuals impacted by the Bellevue Pantry. When donations are low that reduces the number of meals we are able to provide in each pantry," Bradley said.

Making sure there's enough food is important to both the workers and volunteers of the varying food banks, but also to the Bellevue community.

"People who are hungry tend to lean towards crime and basically anything they can do to get food on the table, whether it's just for them

or for their families, so it's important that there are sources for people to get food and not worry about all the bad things," Watson said.

The Bellevue Pantry is open to donations every Monday-Thursday from 1-4 p.m.. They accept canned food and non perishable food items. The Mobile Food pantries once a month and every other month at Bellevue East.

"Keep in mind there is approximately 10 families in Sarpy County that don't know how they will feed their family tonight. With out places like the Bellevue Pantry we can fill that need for emergency food," Bradley said.

Rusty Hike; new mayor of Bellevue

McKayla Vermeer
Co-Editor in Chief

Q: How does it feel to be elected as Bellevue mayor?

A: It is an honor to represent our city. I am a 4th generation resident, local volunteer, business owner and investor in Bellevue and I feel I have the city’s best interest at heart. Presiding over my first meeting last night felt like I belonged there - it was a good feeling.

Q: What are the main policies you are focused on for this term?

A: There are several policies; roads (infrastructure), being growth friendly to expand our tax base, and make sure our city workers are doing the best job they can and enjoy working for the city.

Q: Why did you decide to run for mayor?

A: I was frustrated with how stagnant development is in our community. I think we have bet-

ter resources than most cities and I want to exploit those.

Q: What do you most hope to accomplish in your career in politics?

A: Making a difference by making Bellevue more competitive in the metro area when it comes to attracting new jobs and opportunities.

Q: What are you most excited for in this term?

A: To bring the community closer together and create a new sense of pride.

Q: When did you decide you wanted to be involved in politics? Why?

A: My father was a county commissioner when I was in my teens and I was able to see that a normal citizen can make a difference. My first public office was in 2008 when I won my father’s same commissioner seat. I felt like I was very effective in that role at the time and now I feel I can be effective as mayor.



Hike to the top. Rusty Hike was elected as mayor of Bellevue on Nov. 6. Hike has ideas to help change Bellevue in positive ways. “If I have made Bellevue a better place to work, live and play, I have accomplished my goal,” Hike said. *Photo courtesy of Joanna Hike*

Dunkin’ Donuts changing intersection

Owner Bryce Bares proposes modernization on Galvin, Harlan

Brooklyn Anderson
News Editor



Dunkin Donuts will be replacing the old gas station on the corner of Galvin Rd. and Harlan Dr. and is projected to be open by the fall of 2019.

Bryce Bares, the owner of the Dunkin Donuts in Omaha, has proposed a plan to the City of Bellevue to build a Dunkin’ Donuts on the corner of Galvin Rd. and Harlan Dr. which have been accepted by the Bellevue City Council on Sept. 24 to continue on with the plan.

“We’re excited to build a Dunkin’ on the corner of Harlan and Galvin,” Bares said. “This store will be a ‘Next Generation’ Dunkin’.”

The Dunkin’ Donuts team and the City of Bellevue study the morning traffic counts on the roads and evaluate the demographics of the area, such as median income, number of households, and daytime population. After evaluating all of the factors, they start to determine whether to take the risk and build at a location.

“We spent about six months working with the City of Bellevue to improve access to the site which was the big hurdle to development,” Bares said.

There are medians on Harlan Dr. and Galvin Rd. which currently prevent left turns to the site of the future Dunkin’ Donuts. Those medians will be modified which will allow for increased traffic flow and easier access to Dunkin’ Donuts and Walgreens.

“I think that the Galvin Rd. corridor is on the verge of a revitalization,” Bares said. “So much retail has moved away from that area that it’s left Old Town Bellevue under-served.”

The plans are for Dunkin’ Donuts to begin building in the spring and have the store open by the fall of 2019. This store will be a “Next Generation” Dunkin.’ There are not that many open in the U.S.

“It will incorporate a lot of new technology and have a different look than our other restaurants,” Bares said. “We’re exploring technology like ordering kiosks and a dedicated mobile-order drive-thru lane where you order from your phone.”

The city and the Dunkin’ Donuts team will be paying for the project which is roughly around \$1 million for a typical freestanding Dunkin’ Donuts in a neighborhood. The Dunkin’ Donuts team puts funding into it in the beginning and then has a loan with the bank that gets paid off throughout the years.

“It feels really good to bring a modern and sharp looking building to that corner and the old gas station was an eyesore but Once completed, that corner will serve as a gateway into Old Town Bellevue, and we’ll be very proud to have helped reshape that corner,” Bares said.



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Barclay Knapp offering sense of direction

Abbie Deng
Opinion Editor

for the remainder of the time they had with him.

Barclay Knapp, creator of Internet of Things Access (IOTA), is a Bellevue High graduate that told his story to aspiring business students on Nov. 14.

“I think thing the most important thing is in your academic career; in your career you need to continue to be open to new things and I think this part of my success is because I did get a well-rounded education. I went to a very highly scientific school, Johns Hopkins University, and I was a math major, but my second



Billionaire Barclay Knapp visited East to talk about his life successes and lessons on Nov. 14. Barclay Knapp is the creator of IOTA and graduated from Bellevue High School. “Being open to new things allows the opportunities come to you.” Knapp said. *Photo by Hailey Hendry*

credits were in art history and the history department there was fabulous,” Knapp said.

Business students and teachers took their seats in the auditorium and listened to Barclay as he retold his path to success. Teachers and faculty members listened in as well, a rare opportunity for them also.

“Since Mr. Knapp has literally walked the same halls of Bellevue East, just like the students today, he is easy to relate to and students can see themselves being successful in the future as well. It helps drive home the point that the starting point of a happy success-

ful career can start here,” business instructor Dawn Danauskas said.

Barclay attended Bellevue East when it was known as Bellevue High. After he graduated in 1975, he got accepted to Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland, studying mathematics. From there he continued his education and got his MBA at Harvard Business School.

“My favorite quote is by Louis Pasteur and he said ‘fortune favors the prepared mind,’ and I think I was very fortunate - from Bellevue, to Johns Hopkins, to Harvard. I learned how to learn. I learned how to observe, and so when luck came my way, I learned how to spot it,” Knapp said.

Knapp’s success story started off when he was really young; he became an entrepreneur in his late 20’s and continued to work from there. Knapp’s current business venture is IOTA, which is giving internet or connectivity to everyday devices. From there, IOTA connects those “things” to their network and allows for services like tracking and other applications that let their users work with them technologically.

“I was fortunate because I was successful young. I started one of the first cellular phone companies when I was 26 years old, and by 27 I was the chief financial officer of a New York Stock Exchange listed company,” Knapp said.

The district partnership facilitator, Garrett Simms, was key in Knapp returning to Bellevue. He created the itinerary and planned the day with both East and West high schools.

“I contacted Mr. Knapp earlier this year and began a series of conversations. Knowing everything that he has experienced in the business and finance world, we started talking about him returning to Bellevue to speak with our high school business and economics students. Hearing from someone who has first-hand business experience is great, but when that person is also a graduate from the same town? It was a very unique opportunity,” Simms said.

Knapp presented his story using a PowerPoint emphasizing lessons he learned on his journey to success; he wanted the students to understand. Senior Ellie Foral was one of the students who listened to Knapp. Foral found his words encouraging.

“Hearing Mr. Knapp’s story just kind of reaffirms that where you’re from doesn’t matter because you can go anywhere. It’s encouraging for me to know that just because I don’t go to the best school in the country, doesn’t mean I can’t be successful in my own right someday,” Foral said.

After ending his presentation, Knapp allowed the students in the auditorium to ask him questions

for the remainder of the time they had with him.

“It was overall very informative because of how he viewed the Virtual Enterprise program from a business person perspective and as graduate of East,” junior Breck O’Grady said. “I think he very well did give students a chance [to engage] because of how he opened up to questions.”

Knapp took the time to visit the various student-run businesses in the school, like the school store operated by the DECA chapter, Beast Brew by FBLA and the new class, Virtual Enterprise’s No Coast Soap company.

“Any chance to build relationships in the community is a must. The closer these are between student and community leaders, the better. Learning increases 10 fold with their help and experience,” business instructor Andrew Werner said.

Knapp finds a successful education as important as a diverse background and having diverse intellectual abilities.

“I find the most successful people, my colleagues, who are well rounded and have had life experiences, have taken history, English, philosophy classes as well as math, science, and engineering,” Knapp said. “You have to be prepared; it will show out. You’ve got to be able to recognize it.”

School board members discuss changes to BPS

Hailey Hendry
Co-Editor in Chief

The current Bellevue Public Schools board members were elected on Nov. 6.

The elected candidates are Nina Wolford, Maureen McNamara and Frank Kumor. These five board members spoke with the Bellevue Education Association and have come up with new ways to better the BPS district for the staff and students.

“The board’s role in curriculum development is to make sure the administration is asking teachers what works in their classrooms,” Wolford said. “We should formulate our grading philosophy, our approach to raising test scores, etc. based on direct input from teachers.”

In addition to the concerns listed by Wolford, board members are also concerned about the amount of plan time teachers are given.

“I would like to see us move towards a better and full plan [time] of all teachers,” Kumor said. “We are looking for ways to accomplish this so we move forward with our strategic plan. This is a high priority for our district.”

Each board member brought to light the amount of plan time the teachers in the district have. It has been said that many elementary staff members feel they do not have enough time to plan out an entire days’ worth of classes.

“First, I would want to know if the district needs to consider common plan time while exploring continuous year-round plan time options. If so, this adds another dimension to scheduling,” McNamara said. “After years

as an active participant in seeking solutions for plan time issues, I experienced numerous attempts at resolutions. Committee members researched practices across the metro and nation, surveyed staff and worked with the BEA to find the solution to continuous year-round plan time.”

Though the district has many strengths, a common problem the board members see for the school is the behavioral issues of the students throughout all grade levels. Many ideas have been given thought to try and cease the epidemic. Along with the behavior, budgeting for the schools and building maintenance has also been a reoccurring issue.

“Ultimately, it appears the only solution would be additional resources, and yet with limited funding sources, this has forced the district to explore the best options while manipulating schedules, specialists, etc., knowing we are limited by the minutes in the school day,” McNamara said. “This model has been funded in school districts across the nation. Again, the district staff has done a good job of seeking solutions; it is a tedious process that has plagued school districts for decades.”

The candidates ran for many different reasons, but all had a similar desire to serve the adults and students within the schools.

“Thirty-five years of experience as a classroom teacher, principal and director have provided numerous opportunities to learn from others and acquire skills for working with a multitude of individuals in a positive manner,” McNamara said. “Those skills, which have been attained, will serve the board well as we move forward collaboratively supporting the students, staff and families.”



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Madie Ybay

Features Editor

Up on stage vocalists take their place. After the months of practice, the choir department has finally perfected each song carefully. Their

voices blend together in a harmony as they reach the audience’s ears.

“I joined choir because I love singing, I always have, and I cannot imagine life without it. I’m so glad I did because I now have this whole other family I can always count on,”

sophomore Julia Cheek said.

The choir department has four different groups with different purposes. The groups practice with check-offs. Check-offs are when section leaders check their sections to make sure they know the songs

well enough. If someone does not check off, they are not allowed to perform at the next performance; if they miss two performances, they will get kicked out of the group.

“Freshman Chorale is a lot easier for me than Take II, but I’m glad that I have to take the class because it helps me fine tune skills like reading sheet music and being able to hit just the right notes,” freshman Jordan White said.

Freshman Chorale is a choir class with all freshmen. All students that want to be in choir in the upcoming years are to tak Freshman Chorale as a class. Mxied Chorus is also a class that is not freshman nor a varsity choir. These groups participate in concerts such as the fall concert and Candlelight. E Street is a chorus group that is a extra-curricular. It is not actually a class that takes place during the school day, but instead they meet after school during the week. To get into E Street, students have to try out since it is a varsity choir group. E Street participates in concerts at the school and more recently at Chick-Fil-A during the holiday season.

“The worst part for me is the stress of check-offs and auditions. I just get so worried over if I’m going

to make the audition or if I won’t check off. I just really want to get it right so I can perform with all my friends,” junior Chloe Johnson said.

East High Singers is also a varsity choir group. Singers is an actual class during the school day. They are the singing group that wear purple robes. They perform for many occasions such as graduation, concerts, and more recently a wedding.

“I love singing, so whether it’s for Singers or Take II, I love performing and showing off what I and my friends have been working so hard to perfect over the past couple months. Especially in Take II, I get a rush from performing and competing that makes all the hard work pay off,” sophomore Cullen Krishna said.

Take II is the only show choir that East has. It is also the group that competes against other schools. Take II is varsity choir that combines both singing and dancing. They have competitions and have events such as senior night, concerts, Chick-Fil-A night and so on.

“Choir is definitely one of the things that has built me into the person I am today. Choir is one big family and we always have each other’s backs,” Cheek said.



It’s lit! East High Singers practice for the Candlelight concert in the auditorium on Dec. 17. Sophomore Cullen Krishna takes time and dedication to perfect his part in Singers. “I’m just trying to memorize music to keep up with everyone else in my section,” Krishna said. *Photo by Brooklyn Anderson*

Leadership Academy gives back to community with Angel Tree

Emily Nelson

Reporter

Every year, the Angel Tree returns and provides an opportunity for students to give back to the community. This tradition was started by a Leadership Academy student who thought it would be a great service project.

“I think it benefits students from the community who receive the gifts because they may not otherwise receive a present for the holidays.” Leadership Academy sponsor Sara Fjell said. “I think it benefits our students because it is a great example of student servant leadership, giving back to one’s community.”

The Angel Tree is a Christmas tree or holiday stocking that has Salvation Army tags that people can grab and then purchase gifts for specific kids on their list of families in need. According to junior Megan Mendick, who is in Leadership Academy, the tree was also featured

at her church. She said she loves seeing the Salvation Army’s presence in her community.

“The tree makes students feel good that they’re making someone’s holiday better.” Mendick said. “It could be a \$5 gift and the person will be grateful. The people who receive the gifts are thankful that other people are thinking about other people and not just themselves.”

Fjell said the tree has become more successful throughout the years. With more teachers and students sponsoring trees each year, it provides families with more presents and happiness for the holiday season. Junior Ethan Fritz said he gets a kick out of buying presents for others and can only imagine the joy it brings.

“It’s crazy because you would pick a young boy or you could pick a teenage girl,” Fritz said. “Either way, you know that they’re going to be so grateful for what they receive.”

Both Fritz and Mendick said it’s important for students to participate

in the Angel Tree. They said it gives a better look into a world not familiar to some students. Fritz said it’s not just about giving back to the community, but also bringing the community together.

“Some kids don’t know what it’s like to not even be able to afford Christmas presents.” Fritz said. “I’m not saying Christmas is only about the presents, but it’s nice to have this idea that someone cares about you.”

According to the Nebraska Department of Education, 43.6 percent of students at Bellevue East are eligible for free and reduced lunches, which means their family income is below poverty level. Many families are not focused on getting their children presents, worrying about necessities instead.

“It reminds me every year how lucky I am.” Mendick said. “The Angel Tree reminds me that I actually really have it good. I’m so grateful that I’m given this opportunity to do this.”



Joyful Giving. Trees decorated with Salvation Army gift tags were in several East classrooms at the end of November. Students, faculty and staff could choose a tag which indicated a gift for a specific age of a girl or boy, then bring in the gift, and the Salvation Army would ensure that the child received it for the holidays. Some of the rooms that participated were Sara Fjell, Kayla Brown, Elizabeth Beman, Whitney Wilson, Rebecca Holland, and Jeremy Lenz. The final date for gift giving was Dec. 19. *Photos by Vanessa Hineman and Kaida Page*

Families speak about military veteran grandparents

Sharon Guchu

Reporter

Who is a veteran? According to American War Library, a veteran is defined by federal law, moral code and military service. There are different types of veterans. Some of them are war veterans, combat veterans and protected veterans.

Here in East High School, we have students who have parents and grandparents who are veterans. seniors Elizabeth Foral, Nautica Geiser, Gabriel Tweety, and are just some of those students.

While serving in the military, there are different time periods when people served. For instance, Geiser’s grandfather served for

about 30 years in the navy, Tweety’s grandfather served for about two years at the Korean War and Foral’s grandfather served in the World War II.

“Veterans are brave people because not everyone would be willing to protect their county like they do,” Geisler said.

All three students were not born

yet when their grandparents were in the military, but that doesn’t prevent them from hearing about all the accomplishments of their grandparents.

“He puts his flag and all his pins out on the fireplace and every time I go to his house I see it,” Geisler said.

Other memorabilia includes items such as handwritten notes to

family from the military members who were abroad and separated from their loved ones.

“I know that my grandma and grandpa wrote a lot of letters to each other when he was overseas,” Foral says. “She still have those letters and look back at them is kind of adorable and makes me cry a little bit.”

Staff provides help to senior

Student living alone supports himself, works toward graduation

Abbie Deng
Opinion Editor

We all face challenges and adversity in life, but to brush it all off and keep going is something that many people haven't mastered yet. This is not true for one student at East. Senior Komlan Akakpo shows the world just how easy life can be.

"It's just life it's not that hard" Senior Komlan Akakpo said.

Komlan, more known by the name Sylvain, started at East in 2016 when he moved from Togo to the U.S. Togo is a country in West Africa centered between Ghana and Benin.

"People see Africa as a country, but it's not, it's a continent. They think 'you're African, you probably come from a poor country.' People also ask me, 'Do you guys have water?' Like where I lived I had water and I used water the same way I use it here in America right now. It just depends on where you go in Africa. Every country is different and every part of a country is different," Akakpo said.

The transition from Africa to the U.S. was one Akakpo had to adjust to quickly. When he moved to the U.S., he had to adapt to the language, as well as the American way of life.

"I come from a different culture. I respect differently than American people. If someone is older, you respect them. You don't call them by their name; you call them 'uncle' or 'aunty' or something like that," Akakpo said.

After his arrival and enrollment at East, Akakpo has had mentors in the building who have also helped him adjust, including ELL teacher Nancy Sivils.

"Sylvain joined clubs right away so he could meet new people and practice his English," Sivils said. "He understood that the challenges you face and the mistakes you make can help you grow. He is a kind, caring, resilient individual, who is always striving to

better himself through education and experiences."

His ambition and dedication to success stood out to many. Not too long after long after arrival, Akakpo decided to live on his own after he and his father came to a mutual decision. When he lived in Africa, he had already been living on his own, so the change wasn't too hard for him. Since Akakpo's move from Togo, counselor Sara Powell has had the chance to work with him more and learn his background.

"Sylvain is not your typical high school student, but part of what makes him unique is the fact that he started living on his own at the age of 18 after getting his first job at Walmart working 10 p.m. to 7 a.m. during on the weekends and 8 p.m. to 5 p.m. three days out the week on the weekdays," Powell said.

Along with Powell, Sylvain worked closely with Lt. Col. Patrick Finan. Sylvain approached him during his sophomore year wanting to learn more about AFJROTC, but joined his junior year.

"I first met Sylvain my first year here," Finan said. "I was immediately impressed with him; he was very motivated to learn everything that he could about ROTC. I know at the time he was working, but he would come and work the football games. He would go as long as he could, but then he would have to jump on his bike and ride to work."

After Akakpo got his first job at Walmart, he started living on his own within two months and has been supporting himself ever since.

"A lot of kids his age could have given up and quit and lost hope with his situation. When we work with students we are always trying to build resiliency and a work ethic into their mindset. Sy's one of those kids who just naturally has it. He's the kid who moved out on his own during his junior year of high school and financially

supports himself and still goes to school full time and is involved in extracurricular activities," Powell said.

Sylvain decided to live on his own after he and his father came to a mutual decision. When he lived in Africa, Sylvain had already been living on his own so the change wasn't too hard for him. When faculty members heard the news many of them wanted to help including Powell, Principal Jeff Wagner and Finan.

"When I didn't have food in my apartment they helped me get stuff, Mrs. Powell and Colonel Finan and the Paul family, they also helped me. Just the school; everybody wanted to help me. I didn't think I needed that kind of help, but they were all willing to help me, like every teacher, everybody was trying to help me, even Dr. Wagner took me to the grocery store and helped me get some groceries. That was cool; it was amazing," Akakpo said.

As Akakpo made this change to his living situation, he now juggles maintaining a home, going to work, and graduating from high school, all at one time.

"I passed all my classes last year and this year has been okay. It's hard to study when you get off work late and you come home and you're just so tired, but I just take it," Akakpo said.

He left behind many close family members in Africa, and has had to utilize resources like social media to stay in contact with them.

"I have a lot of people that live there; I miss all of them. They call me everyday, but it's not enough. I want to see them face to face," Akakpo said.

He has bright hopes for his future, intending to pursue his education further after he graduates.

"I want to study electrical engineering in college, so I'm looking into that; I want to move back to Africa and maybe open a business there or do electrician work," Akakpo said.

Dogs assist students, staff



Trigonometry, math instructor Cynthia Watts' service dog, stands in his alert position to let her know when her blood sugar is decreasing. Photo by McKenzie Gandy

Brooklyn Anderson
News Editor

As he walks into school Trig keeps distractions away and makes sure to stay by his owner at all times. Now Pugsly on the other hand, he gets ready to put a smile on people's faces. Trig and Pugsly are service animals that help out at East.

Service dogs have been allowed East since Mar. 7, 2011 and geometry instructor Cynthia Watts has had Trig for almost a year. Pugsly has been around since the beginning of the 2018-2019 school year when Colleen Pribyl, the freshmen counselor, started working at East.

"Trig is about 18 months old and he is a Labradoodle," Watts said. "I am a diabetic so when my blood sugars gets dangerously low, he makes sure to alert me."

When Trig was first a part of Watts' life, he was dominant in the beginning and needed more training to make sure that she was safe throughout the day. Trig was trained through Dillon's Dog Training where other kinds of service dogs like therapy dogs, veteran service dogs, seizure and allergy alert dogs and much more.

"The training cost around \$3,000 and I have to keep up with grooming and more training and the price alone for Trig was an outrageous amount," Watts said.

Trig is not allowed to be petted by other students and teachers because whenever he is wearing his vest, he is working and has to keep all of his attention on Watts for her safety. When he needs to alert her, he first seems agitated and sits up straight and then takes his nose to bump her hand to tell her to check her blood sugar levels.

"There is a lot of really good experiences with Trig," Watts said. "The best experience was when he alerted me when he wasn't being trained."

Trig is a service dog while Pugsly is a therapy dog. The service that Trig does is to alert Watts when needed and to keep Watts safe while staying away from distractions. Pugsly is at East to help students and teachers when they need it, so they are allowed to pet him and spend time with him for a little bit before heading back to class.

"I love him so much. When you pet him, he will smell your hand and then lick it. He will put his head down so you will keep scratching his head," senior Shae Friman said. "Then he will start begging for treats. They have treats in the counselor's office. They are like miniature milk bone treats."

Pugsly is a puggle, which is a pug and beagle mix, and he is 13 years old. Pugsly has only been working as a therapy dog for about three years. When he was first adopted, Pribyl decided to make him into a therapy dog for hospitals and then eventually lead him into East. Pugsly went through training with Nebraska Humane Society and the overall cost was \$220 and then \$60 a year to have him be a part of Paws for Friendship.

"Pugsly just calms people down when they see him," Pribyl said. "We get some angry students that come in sometimes and they forget their anger when they're lying on the floor petting him."

Owning a service or therapy animal requires time and dedication.

"It's a commitment," Watts said. "You not only need to form a relationship with the animal, you also have to take care of the animal."

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Photos courtesy of Gregg Deal

Native Americans have long history in Nebraska, Bellevue

Emily Nelson
Reporter

“I feel that when you omit aspects of history you give value to that history and value to the people involved,” Native American artist and activist Gregg Deal said. “That does a disservice to the foundation of this country and the values we are supposed to be built on.”

Deal is part of the Pyramid Lake Paiute tribe, and is an advocate for Native American representation and rights. He speaks often about how Americans are a major part of the United States, and that their history is rich and contains many stories of hardship, triumph, and heartbreak.

Director of Native Student Studies at University of South Dakota Marisa Miakonda Cummings recalls the story of her people in Nebraska, the Umonhon. She said the Umonhon is the only tribe that resided in what is now called Nebraska prior to statehood and still resides there today.

“In the first half of the nineteenth century, increasing settlement by

Americans pressured the Umonhon and other tribes to sign the 1830 Treaty of Prairie Du Chien,” Cummings said. “Exposure to disease had decimated the Omaha people from 10,000 to 337. An 1854 Treaty established the current boundaries of the Omaha reservation lands, with the northern portion being sold to the Winnebago in the Treaty of 1865 and Treaty of 1874.”

According to the Wisconsin Historical Society, in the fourth Treaty of Prairie Du Chien, the United States and tribes including the Omaha agreed to the land cession of two strips of land on either side of the boundary established by the first Treaty of Prairie du Chien. The treaty also established the Nemaha Half-Breed Reservation, which provided land in southeastern Nebraska to the mixed-race descendants of European and American fur trappers and their Native American significant others from different tribes. Boarding schools were also being built for Native American children.

“These boarding schools were essentially forced assimilation

schools,” Deal said. “Kids were forcibly removed from their homes and as they got to the school they cut their hair, scrubbed them clean, and put western clothes on them. They had to speak English; if they spoke any other language, they were beaten.”

Deal said incidents like this weren’t uncommon. According to an article from the Northern Plains Reservation Aid there were 60 schools for 6,200 Native American students by the 1880s. Deal said one school now has a graveyard containing over 200 headstones, 13 of those listed as unknown.

“It was all about eliminating the culture out of these people,” Deal said. “The stuff that was happening in these schools was incredibly gross and disturbing.”

When the turn of the century rolled around, the United States Census Bureau reported the population of Native Americans in the country as roughly 250,000. Deal said in terms of the population as a whole, there were virtually no Native Americans at this time because of their systematic

elimination and it would be hard for any form of communication to be laid down between colonials and natives because of that history, despite the natives being part of the American story.

“You can tell our identity becomes an incredibly integral part in America’s identity, that we are part of this existence,” Deal said. “But, our existence did not have the same level of quality.”

Cummings said that there are many stories of the Omaha people that are beautiful and show the complex and creative connection they have to America. She said these stories should be shared. Senior Aurora Villarreal, who belongs to the Cherokee tribe, believes the topic is simply brushed over in textbooks.

“I wish native history was discussed more in school,” Villarreal said. “Their experiences and interactions with the settlers are not talked enough about and it can be disappointing.”

Read the rest of the story online at [thechieftainspear.org](#)

| | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------|--|------|---|------|--|----------|
| Native Americans were viewed as separate nations entirely; laws were passed to protect their land | 1787-1828 | Congress passes a law that stopped treaties with Native tribes; tribes are not longer seen as separate nations | 1871 | Congress passed a law that gave citizenship to all Native Americans | 1924 | A relocation program offered housing assistance for Native Americans, in the process many tribal governments were disbanded | 1956 |
| Disease was spread from early European settlers to Native Americans, decreasing population and increasing tension | 1492-1787 | The Indian Removal Act of 1830 led to the relocation of many Native Americans from their land | 1830 | General Allotment Act sought to remove reservation boundaries | 1887 | Indian Reorganization Act was created to protect the remaining Native American land and encourage them to self-govern | 1935 |
| | | | | | | During this time, the United States government made attempts to help the lives of Native Americans; however, Native Americans have lost more than 80 percent of Supreme Court cases since 1970 | 1968-now |

Shaping American culture

McKayla Vermeer
Co-Editor in Chief

In Nebraska and across the nation as a whole, Native Americans remain a significant part of American culture, even though they are most often thought of in main stream American culture as existing purely in history books.

“Being Native American in today’s world can be extremely crazy. We are still fighting for land and dealing with racism,” junior and member of the Omaha - Ponca tribe Kendra Dragon said.

In the United States there are over 570 tribes with federal recognition, and even more that are seeking this recognition today. The majority of Native Americans today - with or without tribal affiliations - live in densely populated areas like the Omaha metro area.

“For the tribal people living in Omaha, their lives are much like yours and your family’s. Some Native people continue to speak their language, practice their ceremonies and live their cultures - some do not,” director of Native American studies at the University of Nebraska Omaha Beth Ritter said.

There are many misconceptions surrounding Native Americans, including the thought that they only existed in the past. In reality, Native

Americans are still an active part of American society and culture.

“Most people’s perception of Native Americans and their culture is that it’s something in the past. That Natives no longer exist. Or if we do we don’t contribute to society and we are invisible to most people,” member of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma Gretchen Carroll said.

Due to the common thought that Native Americans only exist in the past, stereotypes are prevalent. The perceptions that remain are largely supported by how Native Americans are portrayed in popular culture.

“Some frequent misconceptions that I have heard is that most people still believe that we live in teepees, we act how we are portrayed in movies, but oddly enough we are just like everyone else in today’s society,” Dragon said.

Native Americans are very much integrated into modern American society. Just this year, two Native American women - Deb Haaland and Sharice Davids - were elected into Congress.

“Native people are in every profession, two Native women were just elected to Congress. There are native doctors, lawyers, astronauts, professors, actors, journalists, and professional athletes,” Ritter said.

There are still hardships that many Native Americans face,

however. A large issue that affects the community includes the use of Native Americans items in non-traditional ways.

“We struggle with stereotypes that perpetuate negative images of us. We struggle with people appropriating our art and culture and spirituality. We struggle with the right to sovereignty within our own Nations. We struggle to give hope to our young ones to have a better life,” Carroll said.

Statistically, Native Americans have the most health issues out of any other demographic. In fact, the Pine Ridge Reservation in western Nebraska - home to the Oglala Lakota - is just one example of alcoholism and poverty affecting a Native American community.

“Some Native people struggle due to historical trauma and crushing oppression, but Native people are more than stereotypes and certainly more than mascots,” Ritter said. “Native Americans in the US have the shortest life expectancy, the greatest health disparities, highest suicide rates, and highest rates of poverty.”

The issues that Native Americans face should not outweigh the successes.

“The struggle for some is real but there are also many, many examples of resilience and revitalization,” Ritter said.

Mascot concerns continue

Madie Ybay
Features Editor

Native American culture has been used as mascots for many school and sports teams throughout the U.S., causing controversy as to whether they should be used or not. Some people find them offensive and others believe they are honoring a tradition. Dating back to the 1950’s when Bellevue High was opened, according to Bellevue Public Schools website, the Chieftain head has been the mascot for East. During the 2015- 2016 school year, controversy arose on whether BPS should change the mascots or not. UNO professor Ed Zendejas spoke out against the Native mascots to the school board during this time.

“The change needs to come from within the community. People must be willing to listen and attempt to understand what is really at stake,” Zendejas said.

Some Native American sacred symbols have been used as mascots all around the country. The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) has been one of the oldest and most outspoken organizations about their concerns with harmful stereotypes. In 1968, the NCAI began a campaign to challenge stereotypes in media and sports.

“I have been advocating for changing or retiring Indian mascots

for over 20 years. It is a frustrating endeavor. However, I think it is important enough issue, that I have wrote a book on the topic, and I have taught a class on this issue. It is worth my time and effort,” Zendejas said.

People who advocate for change may do it for different reasons. Some, like Zendejas, advocate because of education. According to the NCAI, most students do not know much about Native Americans, yet some schools still have them as mascots. Other Natives find it offensive. So much in fact that, according to Change The Mascot, the usage of Native American mascots have caused serious negative psychological, social, and cultural effects on Native youth.

“I don’t find the mascot to be offensive. I think it’s fine the way it is, however I understand why others would want to change it. I don’t think it’s disrespectful to me personally, but if others find it offensive and want to change it, that’s okay, too,” junior and Sioux member Ian Wedergren said.

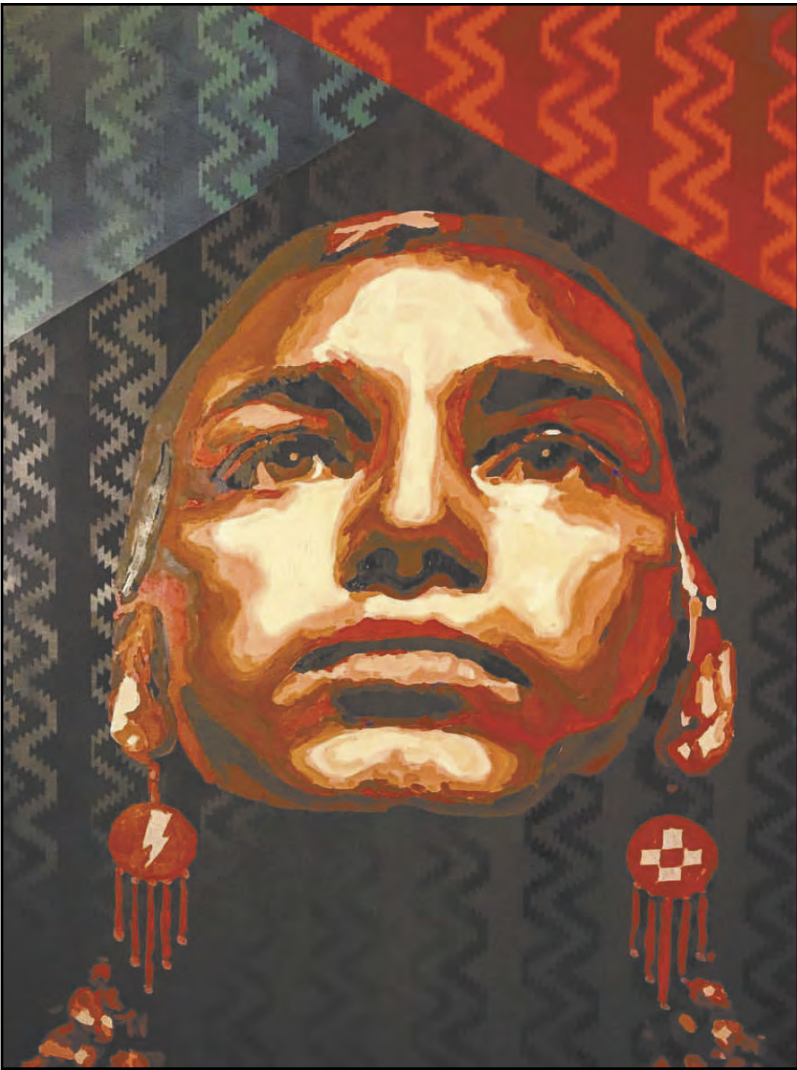
There are also people who believe in keeping the Native mascots. Some who want the mascots to stay, believe that they are keeping tradition and respecting Natives. According to Psychology Today, some would argue that other sport

teams are named after religious, regions of origin, or occupations. For schools to change mascots it would cost a lot of money.

“I think that the mascot is actually respectful. It is nice to see Non-Native people using a Native symbol to respect and honor Native Americans. I don’t think that there should be a ban on the mascots, however there are things that people don’t know that are incorrect. For instance, ceremonial face paint should not be referred to as ‘war paint,’ that is wrong,” Cherokee tribe member Joshua Lively said.

Schools in Nebraska have already begun changing their mascots. In 1991, The Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs asked 27 schools that they stop using American Indian mascots and nicknames. Millard South High changed their mascot from the Indians to the Patriots in 1999. Way before the Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs request for a change, UNO had changed their mascot from the Indians to the Mavericks in 1971. BPS decided not to change their mascot after requested to do so because of the city’s honor toward the culture, and it’s Native history.

“For schools, it should be about educating students. If you continue, it will be difficult. Change is hard for people to accept sometimes,” Zendejas said.



Rise up Native American artist Gregg Deal creates pieces depicting Native American culture and people. He created this piece called “Yotse” meaning “Rise.” “Having correct representation is important not just for Native people, but also for non Native people to understand the context of our people and history,” Deal said.

Photo courtesy of Gregg Deal



Pride Deal also creates pieces of a more political nature relating to Native Americans. This piece, entitled “American Indian #3,” juxtaposes the American flag with the Native American. “It’s both true and not true,” Deal said. Photo courtesy of Gregg Deal

Wrestling produces new records

Camrin Smith
Reporter

Wrestling season kicked off on November 9 along with the rest of winter sports. The four month season has been put into full gear in the beginning of December, with the start of duels and invitationals.

“On our first meet we had two champions, the Grice brothers, both seated in their 5-0 and ranked one and two in state,” coach Todd Porter said.

The team has been conditioning and been working on moves, and doing workouts to get their bodies in shape for duels.

“Conditioning is difficult because you’re putting your body through things you don’t want to go through,” freshman Garrett Grice said.

The effort that the team has been putting in preparing for the rest of the season has been hard and well worked, Porter said.

“Everyone says congrats on the hall of fame last year, but without all the hard work that’s been done by my assistants and all the kids on the team, we wouldn’t have the success that gets you individual



Ready to wrestle, sophomore Collin Mutzenberger and freshman Gavin Zurcher end practice by competing with other wrestlers in their weight class. Photo by Acacia Phillips

things like that,” Porter said. “I’m really proud of what we’ve done here because it’s very difficult to be successful at Bellevue East, and the kids that are a part of it are proud to be.”

The team has had six meets since the beginning of the season. Starting on Dec. 1, and going through the 21. With the team

gaining Garrett and Gabe Grice, expectations are high in Porter’s eyes; however,

“I don’t have any expectations for the rest of this season; I just want to do my best,” Garrett Grice said.

The last years produced new records for East Wrestling, and even put Coach Porter in the Hall

of Fame. The work put in by the wrestlers will not slow down from the previous years.

“Wrestling over the time I’ve been here has been the most successful boys program in the building,” Porter said, “In the 21 years I’ve been here we have more top 10 finishes at 10, which far our strips any other boys sports team.”

The team has high expectations for the rest of the season. Ending on Feb. 18 the team has time to prepare and room to grow.

“We feel like we’re going to have a really good year, we’re a very young team but we have some talent. We have four freshmen starting which is unheard of,” Porter said.

Senior athletes last season approaching



In the game, senior Christian Archie and senior Stevins Spurgeon run down the court to get back on defense against Bennington. Photo by Cora Bennett



Getting the rebound, senior Hannah Madison (front) scrambles to grab the ball as junior Madison Pelzer (back) grabs the ball off the floor in the game against Bennington on Nov. 20. Being an exhibition game, this was the first game the varsity girls played for the season. Photo by Cora Bennett



During their practice, senior Michael Palmquist and sophomore Nathan Wheeler go head to head to practice for an upcoming meet. Photo by Acacia Phillips

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Hailey Hendry

Co-Editor in Chief

The year is half over and the students and staff could not be happier. That much closer getting into college, the senior student athletes are coming to the realization of playing high school sports for the last time.

When tryouts come, not many athletes participate in sports throughout their entire high school career. The athletes will often quit or will not make a team their senior year. Those who do, often cherish the sport and plan on playing in college.

“I have learned a lot from these four kids. Mostly that when you put your mind to something you can achieve it,” boys varsity basketball coach Chad Mustard said. “They have all come a long ways both on the court and in life. Their growth and maturity has been remarkable.”

Senior Hannah Madison has been playing basketball since elementary school when she played for Bellevue St. Mary’s. She plans on

continuing basketball at Midland University next year and major in Early Education.

“What I feel when knowing this is my last opportunity to play basketball I play like I will never play again, like everyday is my last,” Madison said.

Senior Michael Palmquist has participated in wrestling since his freshman year, as well, but does not plan on furthering his career in high school.

“I think my work ethic has improved a little more since freshman year because I know I’m reaching my last moments of high school,” Palmquist said.

The athletes and coaches create a bond that will last after the sport has concluded for the seniors because of the excessive amount of time that is spent between the players and coaches.

“I’m closer to some than others, but they all have fun personalities,” Mustard said. “They are fun to work with and they really do want to be good. Those kids are the types coaches like to coach.”

Girls, boys basketball seasons improve

Sharon Guchu
Reporter

This year, the girls and boys basketball teams have started the season, with both varsity teams losing 2-4.

Caitlyn Conover is a frehsman on the teams that plays for both varsity and JV. Conover has been playing since she was in the third grade and plays for the Omaha Sports Academy as well.

“I started playing because I was playing other sports throughout my whole life so I decided to try basketball out,” Conover said.

The girls varsity team’s average points per game has increased from last year, and is gradually getting higher.

“They are going up because we are scoring about 50 points a game,” Conover said, “which is where we wanted to be going into this season.”

The coaches intend to coniuue pushing their teams through practices and drills that strengthen the players.

“They have matured a ton; they have put a bunch of time into their game and it shows on the court,” boys varsity coach Chad Mustard said. “I think this could be my best team at East. The seniors have the chance to be very successful because of their hard work and dedication.”

Senior Maddison Luderman is a player on the varsity team and has played for East all four years. Luderman can see the positive changes for team.

“The coaches are the same as last year, but I feel like the girls are getting along better this year and are closer,” Luderman said.

Robert Richter is a sophomore on the boys JV team and plays center and forward. Both



Looking for the open player, senior Fred Knotts looks down the court watching his teammates scramble to get open. As the varsity point guard, Knotts is in charge of starting plays in order for the team to score points to win the game. The boys are on track to go even farther this season compared to the successful season they had last year. *Photo by Cora Bennett*



Driving to the hoop, freshman Caitlyn Conover sees the open lane and opportunity to score a basket for her team. The game was an chance for the coaches to see how each individual plays. *Photo by Cora Bennett*

his positions vary on the purpose during the game.

“A center is to get rebounds and put the ball back at the rim and a power forward is kind of the same job, but with more perim-

eter,” Richter said.

Many different changes have impacted the boys varsity team this year, but these change have not deterred them from their mission to success.

“So far this year, there have been a couple of changes. We lost key players like Hunter and Austin,” Richter said. “Compared to last year, my freshman coach was not the best ,but this year they are very supportive.”

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The role of the Tom Tom is not only to promote the accomplishments and highlights of the school, but also to inform the Bellevue East community of events and issues that will affect the students, faculty, staff, administration, and community. Its primary focus is to serve Bellevue East High School and cover issues that affect teenagers today. The Tom Tom does not necessarily represent views of the Bellevue Public Schools and strives to support itself through advertising. In order to achieve the optimum learning situation, as well as serve its audience to the best of its ability, the staff believes that the decisions should rest primarily with the adviser and editors, according to standards of journalism. Material judged to cause significant psychological harm, or that violates the privacy of a person, or that is libelous will not be printed. Obscenity or profanity will not be printed in the Tom Tom. Stories in the Tom Tom will be based on substantial facts with quotes clearly attributed to named sources whenever possible. The Tom Tom will not run gossip or stories or columns founded on rumor without facts. Any student appearing at a public event such as a sports event or music concert may be photographed, and that photo may be published without violating the privacy of that individual.

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High school vaping epidemic; 2.1 million students addicted

Editorial
Tom Tom Staff

All across America there are students taking the path towards drug addiction, but another epidemic, known as smoking devices, is on the rise. These devices can be easily concealable, some resembling little flash drives making it easy for a student to keep them hidden in plain sight in non-smoking areas such as school buildings. This problem takes many different forms and designs including: drops, JUUL's, E-cigs, Box's, Pen's and more. The vapes themselves also have different types including dry herb, e-liquid, wax

and concentrate vapes, desktop, portable and oil vapes.

Even though the vaping industry claims to be marketing to adults trying to fight their smoking habit by having little nicotine in them, about 99 percent of vaping pods (where the e-liquid is stored) have nicotine in them. According to Holly Korbey in Eudotopia, there is more nicotine in one vape pod than there is in an entire pack of cigarettes, thus making people an established smoker by the time they finish the pod.

For the companies that claim to be helping prevent people from smoking, it's actually worse to start out vaping or vape in general.

If you vape, you are more inclined to try smoking later in life and progressively move up the chain to heavier drugs, according to Kate Zernike in The New York Times. There is one question that needs to be answered: why is nicotine so addictive?

Nicotine influences the amount of dopamine produced in ones body. Dopamine is the same neurotransmitter found in drugs such as Marijuana that produce a mini high. The high that comes from inhaling nicotine is temporary which increases the person's want to keep smoking in order to remain high.

Over 2.1 million middle and high school students in the U.S.

vape and the epidemic has now even trickled down to middle school students. Because of the addictive properties, students can't stop and feel the need to bring their vapes to school otherwise, they end up feeling the symptoms of withdrawal. For example, the experiences of nicotine withdrawal would include intense cravings, sweating, irritability, and headaches.

This problem needs to be addressed at home; parents should be educating their children on the dangerous risks of vaping or using e-cigarettes. There should be consequences and deeper levels of precaution to purge this issue.

Phone addiction affects teenage mental health



Brooklyn Anderson
News Editor

All of those Tweets, Snapchats, and text messages that go off, making us reach for that piece of technology buzzing in our pockets. You take a look at your phone unintentionally and something that occurs in a lot of people happens - addiction.

Phone addiction is a real thing that affects everybody young and old every day. This strong addiction has the potential of increasing mental illness as well. The feeling of detachment, loss, separation anxiety, withdrawal and not know-

ing what to do with life. Do not get me wrong, I have been addicted to my phone and it was a struggle to say the least. It blows my mind to see how people do not know how to interact face-to-face and not be afraid about it. I do believe that there is a phone addiction that has the same effects as drugs and alcohol.

Imagine a time in the world when we did not have any form of technology at our disposal. Sound scary? Well, it shouldn't because it was like that a long time ago. Technology took a spike in the late 20th century and took an even bigger spike in the 21st century. Phone addiction didn't rise until smartphones were invented along with other portable devices.

According to Forbes, there are mental health risks involved with phone addiction like anxiety, depression and suicidal thoughts which have increased in teens within the past few years. When the phone is taken away, the experiences of withdrawal happen and the increase of heart rate occurs because the thought of not knowing

what to do without a phone since teens revolve around social media.

I see posts on social media of photos mimicking our reactions to losing our phones then titling them "when you lose your phone." The sad truth is every person that views these posts is able to understand them because we all feel that way when we lose our phone. When one person relates, the posts are then shared and spread.

So then what is the cause of phone addiction? The rewards involved in the device are the same as the rewards that drugs give people. When our phone alerts at us, a chemical in the brain, called dopamine, gets released which is a neurotransmitter that sends signals between the nerve cells in the brain. When it is released, it sends pleasure throughout the brain. For example, when the phone goes off, the first instinct is to grab it to see who was texting, tagging us in posts, liking our posts or even a reminder that we set up. That is the reward when picking up the phone.

Not every notification is positive so when the notification has

a negative effect to it, our mood changes in a heartbeat. When the negative emotions take over the mind, negative obsessive thoughts take over that put us in a depressive state. When this happens, it's hard to stop the thoughts because we start to believe them and it creates a hole. The deeper the hole gets, the harder it is to get out of it.

For being someone that is addicted to my phone, I constantly have to keep myself in check so I can take care of myself mentally and physically.

Taking time away from the cell phone allows people to breathe, even if it's for 20 minutes in the day. It takes dedication to take time away, but we just have to give ourselves a break. There is a lot to do when trying to break phone addiction that has worked for other people. Keeping distance from the phone will have a big impact. Try to leave your phone at home, even if it's only for quick grocery shopping. Try to find a hobby that doesn't require a phone so you are able stay busy while staying off of the device.



American schools lack credibility; unwanted need in young students



Emily Nelson
Reporter

Today it seems like fewer students want to go to school. The stigma often surrounding K-12 education is, as students, we are forced to be here rather than want to be here. This may lead to resentment from students toward the education system, which aids in affecting students' mindsets so they do not want to go to school.

To me, that's a huge problem. Students have to spend years of their lives at school, an average of 180 days per school year, and an estimated 16,380 hours (not even factoring in the time spent for extracurriculars, sports and homework.) If students spend so

much time in school, why do our test scores not reflect that?

In my own experience, I don't hate school. It gives me something to do with my life; frankly, I'm glad it's a requirement to go through the first 12 grades. However, America is constantly bashed by other countries for having an awful education system.

From Abby Jackson and Andy Kiersz in a Business Inside article, our math test scores on the Program for International Student Assessment were 94 points lower than Singapore, which is statistically the highest scoring country. Our reading scored 38 points lower, and science 60 points lower in 2015. According to Carlos Mejia in a Fatherly article, Singapore students spend nearly 9.5 hours a week on homework and even more time in school. Which makes me wonder if it even matters how much time we spend in school and on homework.

Professor F.H. Buckley discussed in a Fox News article that our math scores rank 38th in the world, right alongside developing countries.

While high school graduation rates continue to grow higher and higher, it seems as though test scores are plateauing. At least that means we aren't scoring lower. We are simply not where we want to be as a nation.

On the other hand, how do you truly rank

a school system? One may look at graduation rates, test scores or even how many hours students spend in school; but what is the most important thing to look at? This seems simple: we need to look at whether or not students are comprehending, retaining knowledge and enjoying learning.

A lot of factors have played into the decline of test scores and world ranking for the American education. Children in this today are drastically different from children 20 or more years ago, which tells us that the blame doesn't necessarily fall on teacher's shoulders. The education system as a whole needs to be looked over starting with the superintendents of every public school district, then every working person down to the teachers.

As I said before, teachers are not the ones to blame. They need better pay for resources, more time for their own curriculum, and more control of their own classroom. Students could benefit greatly from this, which could raise test scores and ultimately better our education system.

A teacher sets the mood for the classroom, allowing room for students to be as creative and productive as possible or not. If they can't be the best for their students because they don't have what they need, it will completely transform the student's idea of their teacher. This creates an unhealthy

environment that doesn't invite learning, but invites a resentment for it.

When the teachers receive the resources they need that will only be the beginning and there will still be many more problems to tackle. The material being taught is drastically different and not something students are excited about learning. Nowadays, education is something students don't want to partake in and will avoid as much as possible.

When I was in elementary school, there was one way to do a math equation. Now, there's about a million. While that is an exaggeration, the learning process is overcomplicated, as if it's trying to be something it's not. As the years progress, students graduate and put the years they disliked the most behind them, and the system backpedals even more.

The education system cannot be fixed in a matter of weeks, months, or even years, so we must start somewhere. Administration needs to start communicating better with students and teachers to establish a way to make improvements on all ends of the spectrum. The people in charge should become more hands-on and prominent in classrooms. This will allow them to actually make a change instead of creating orders that will force the students to want to drop out as soon as they can.

Old, outdated electoral college proven unfair; popular vote better, more efficient method



McKayla Vermeer
Co-Editor in Chief

Throughout American history, citizens have been engaging in the democratic process of voting. Every four years the members of our nation would come together to decide who would be leading our country. This process occurs through the electoral college, an outdated way to determine the results of a presidential election because the number of representatives a state gets is not accurate in proportion to population state to state.

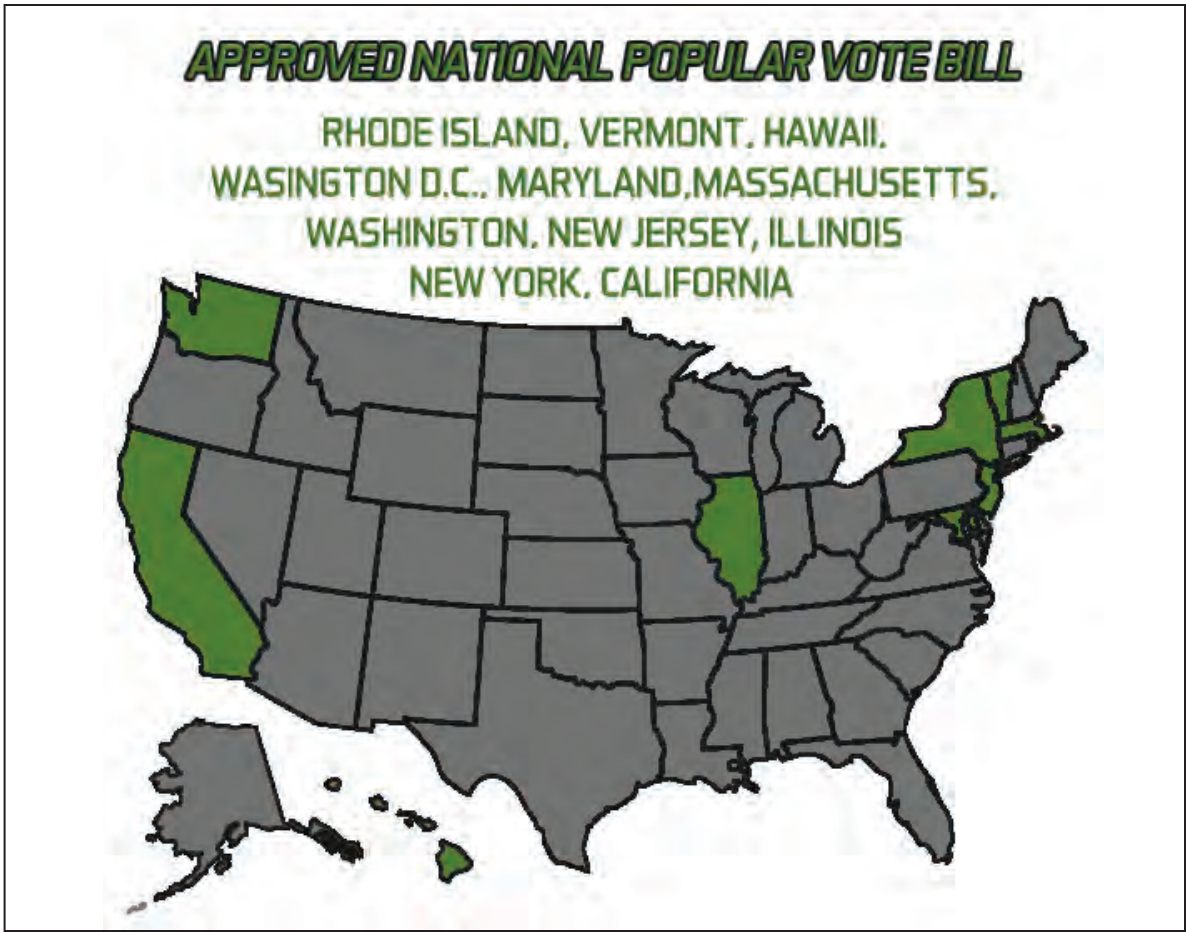
A study done by NPR in 2016 shows that a presidential candidate would only have to receive 23 percent of the popular vote in order to win the 270 necessary electoral votes. While this scenario is highly unlikely, it is still hard to ignore that a candidate would only have to be supported by less than one quarter of American citizens in order to become the president. In fact, in both 2000 and 2016, the presi-

dential candidate that won (in these cases George W. Bush and Donald Trump, respectively) did not receive the popular vote.

A bill proposed in January of this year would enact popular vote as the way to determine which candidate would become president. The bill has already been enacted into law in ten states: Rhode Island, Vermont, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, Washington, New Jersey, Illinois, New York, and California. Additionally, the District of Columbia has approved this bill.

By maintaining the electoral college system, our country is allowing people to be president over a nation that not even the majority of citizens support the views of. The whole concept of democracy is giving citizens a voice by voting for their officials, but when the majority of citizens vote for the candidate that does not even end up winning, is it even democracy at all? The electoral college is not accurately giving a voice to every citizen, unintentionally devaluing some citizens compared to others.

The whole concept of the electoral college can easily be argued as being against the whole foundation of this country. If all men are supposed to be created equal, then why are some citizens being literally valued numerically less than other citizens? This is inequality in the most literal, mathematical terms. Looking at the population distribution per each electoral college representative, there is great



disparity to be found. In largely populated states like California, each electoral vote is equal to approximately 508,000 people, while in states with lower populations like Wyoming, each electoral vote is equal to 143,000 people.

The idea that one citizen is worth more than another should be a concept that scares and infuriates everyone. By the logic of the electoral college, citizens of Wyoming have more of a say in our presidential election than citizens of California, which frankly, is an injustice to the whole of the United States. Every citizen matters, and every citizen's vote should be counted as such as we are all created equally.

An "easy" solution would be to simply remove the current system of the electoral college and instead have the more democratic system of popular vote. In 2016, CBS News put out a poll and the majority of Americans answered that they would support the changing to elections by popular vote, so it is not like the decision to change the system is an isolated idea. If we as a nation have the ability to count each vote, then the most important issue is why that is not taken into account when determining who becomes president. If each citizen is granted the democratic right to vote, then it is only right that their every vote matters.

Lights, Camera, One-act play

Camrin Smith
Reporter

After the big plays of the season are finished, schools around the state rehearse for weeks to prepare for the NSAA play production competition, and Bellevue East was no exception.

“They’re more important because they’re actually being scored and judged, unlike actual performances [fall plays] which are to perform and hope the audience likes it,” freshman Sydnee Wenninghoff said.

Play production competitions take place once a year, roughly around the end of November or early December. It’s organized by the Nebraska School Activities Association (NSAA), who set performance times and places.

East competed at Lincoln Southeast

High School on December 1. They put on a performance of their one-act play the night before in the auditorium at East.

Schools that compete are broken up into classes by size and student talent based off of previous years. East’s theater program is placed as a class A school.

“The NSAA blocks out an amount of time to set up, perform, and then strike the stage. Once all the shows go, they [judges] tabulate all the ratings together and the come out with the winner,” Theater Director Joe Hamik said.

The performance or act, called “Tracks” was about a group of average civilians from different cities waiting at a bus stop. They soon find out they are not where they originally set out to be.

Everyone discovers that they all have died in one way or another and the bus stop leads to either heaven or hell. No one can

figure out which way it’ll go, as each person has made a varying degree of mistakes.

“I play the lawyer; I’m the one that questions everything and is a very mean person to everyone else, and my character is kind of the one that sets in the motion that we could be in hell,” Wenninghoff said.

Rehearsals for “Tracks” started right after the fall play “12 Angry Jurors” ended. The small cast of 10 students rehearsed about 3 times a week, running lines and memorizing. While rehearsing came to an end and the competition was coming up, the nerves of competing again kicked in and the cast started to notice.

“The last two weeks have been intense leading up to the home show because we’ve been getting actual directions with blocking, as early on rehearsals have been just lines,” Wenninghoff said.

Helping out and co-directing alongside

Hamik was English teacher Jerry Geho. Geho was recruited by Hamik in an effort to help get more teachers around the school to become more immersed in the theater program.

“Working with a partner isn’t something as teachers we get to do, and so it has been really different getting the chance to bounce ideas off of another person. Mr. Hamik and I work really well together and I am excited to be a part of it all,” Geho said.

Going to districts and even heading to state would make an impact in the theater department. The last time East went to districts was over a decade ago in 2005.

Although this year East did not make it past the first competition, the cast still received 7th place in their class. Chieftain Theatre was able to use this competition as a learning experience and are to improve for next year.



Students from the Chieftain Theatre gather on stage Nov. 30 to perform a one-act play titled “Tracks” that they have been rehearsing for weeks. *Photo by Camrin Smith*

Mercury lives on in ‘Bohemian Rhapsody’

Madie Ybay
Features Editor

I know I can be dramatic a lot of the time, but “Bohemian Rhapsody?” I could not have kept in the tears if I tried. Everybody knows Queen, or at least three songs from them. “Bohemian Rhapsody” the movie follows the story of Queen and their rise to fame.

The casting for the movie was really good. The actors and actresses were immersed into their roles and portrayed the story well. Rami Malek played Freddy Mercury, spectacularly I might add because a huge part of the movie was Freddy’s sexuality. I think that Malek played the role well without any salaciousness.

When Freddy had to tell his bandmates

that he has AIDS, I sobbed. The movie respectfully depicted the AIDS epidemic of the late 80’s.

While Freddy was the protagonist, they in no way forced him to be the “good guy.” The story was told truthfully and showed all the ugly parts of Queen’s backstory, such as the amount of crazy drugs Freddy was on and the messed up rumors he spread about his parents. Obviously, what Queen-based movie would it be if it didn’t have a banging soundtrack to back it up? “Bohemian Rhapsody” was such a good movie and I would recommend it to just about anyone. Whether you like Queen or not it was a really accurately and beautifully portrayed. I give it a good 5 out of 5 stars.



Smash room brings relief, lets out underlying stress

Jill Stofferahn
Reporter

It’s finals season, the most stressful time of the year for students and teachers. So as you finish studying this year, on the verge of a mental breakdown. remember this article. Le Smash is a new smash room located in Omaha.

The smash room was built to provide people with a safe space to relieve stress by breaking things. I had to check it out. Scheduling was an easy process, you sign up on their website and can get in as soon as the next day. Prices vary from \$20 to \$40 dollars. I think these prices are a little expensive for what it is, but after further reading on their website I found that you can get \$10 off if you bring your own items to smash.

When I first got there I was asked to fill out a waiver, being that I am only 17. I had had to have my sister sign as my guardian. If you are under 18 years old you will need someone to sign for you. After filling out

the waiver, we got suited up. They provided gloves, smocks and helmets, as well as asked that you dress in pants and close-toed shoes. These precautions made me feel very safe; I was able to fully enjoy the experience and not have to worry about getting hurt by the glass.

Next, they had a table filled with different bats, hammers, and golf clubs to choose from and provided boxes of different bottles and ceramics to smash. Once you get into the room you can choose to plug your phone in and play your favorite music for releasing anger, or they will play music for you. The only rule they had for us was to not destroy the walls, everything else is free reign. Originally, my sister and I had signed up for a 30-minute session, but we ended up staying there for 50 minutes. Any questions we had were answered right away. Overall, I’d rate my experience at Le Smash an 8 out of 10, but I do not see myself going back. A high school student spending over \$20 to release stress is not reasonable. However, it would be a great place to go with friends.