

THUNDERBEAT

Your voice, your stories, your community

FBLA fundraises for elementary school playground construction

AJ FORBES
CO-EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

It all started with a 15-page paper outlining a simple concept: community service. From there, that same report became the foundation for Project Playground, an FBLA organized mission centered around the construction of a new playground for Peter Sarpy Elementary School.

"Brian Lacy's (project co-founder and Bellevue West graduate) mom works at Peter Sarpy and we were looking for a community service project," FBLA sponsor Pat Hinkle said. "She said they could really use a new playground. That's how it started—a simple conversation."

The Peter Sarpy playground is in "dismal" shape, according to Hinkle. Students can be seen swinging on tilted swing sets, shooting hoops on a bent basketball hoop, and practicing their gymnastic skills on a balance beam constructed of tie rods.

"It doesn't even resemble a playground," Hinkle said.

The first phase of three has already been completed. Background research and reports have already been done on what it would take to construct a new playground. The second phase is the process of acquiring the funds in order to make what was originally an idea on a piece of paper a reality.

"This year is focused on



Photos By AJ Forbes

An FBLA group plans to replace the playground at Peter Sarpy Elementary.

the fundraising of the estimated \$70,000," project co-leader Reggie Wright said.

Other than experiencing first-hand the shape of Peter Sarpy's playground, Wright was inspired by the students who founded this mission.

"My motivation behind being a part of Project Playground was to carry on the legacy of leadership last year's team left behind," Wright said.

The leadership team last year consisted of Bellevue West graduates Jenna Swaney and Jeremiah Mejia, as well as Lacy.

Before construction can begin, the proper fundraising must be done.

"We are partnered with an organization called T.A.G.G. (Together A

Greater Good) as another way to raise money," Hinkle said. "Say I go eat at a participating restaurant and I take a photo of my receipt and send it in. That business will donate up to 5% back to a cause of our choice."

Although Project Playground is only partnered with Peter Sarpy as of now, opportunities to advance into the rest of the community may come.

"It is just Peter Sarpy as of right now, but it very well may branch out into other elementary schools," Hinkle said.

There is not a set date for the completion of the project at Peter Sarpy, but the elementary school should have a new playground soon.

"If all goes as planned,

the playground's reconstruction will begin next year," project co-leader Michelle Zavala-Castro said.

Using T.A.G.G.

1. Download the free T.A.G.G. app from Google Play or the App Store.
2. Visit participating businesses, and take a photo of the receipt within seven days.
3. Choose Bellevue West High School and then select FBLA to support Project Playground.

T-Bird update: Alumnus C.J.

Johnson succeeds in D-I football

NATHAN HAWKINS
BROADCAST MANAGER

When the end of October came in 2014, Bellevue West's football season ended without state championship glory. But one T-Bird in particular made sure to leave his mark in Nebraska high school football history.

As he hung up his purple and gold cleats for the final time, he left his legacy behind as he littered his name in the record books: Class A records for receiving yards in a season, most career receptions, most receptions in a season, most touchdowns in a career, and is currently tied for Class A record for most touchdowns in a game. And the most career receiving yards in Nebraska.

2015 Bellevue West grad C.J. Johnson currently plays Division I football at the University of Wyoming. After redshirting his first year, Johnson saw significant playing time in his freshman season and now as a starter in his sophomore year. Currently waiting to play in the Famous Idaho Potato Bowl, Johnson has had a successful season so far, totaling six touchdowns on 27 catches for 468 yards.

Born and raised in Bellevue, C.J. is a rare player from Bellevue to get an opportunity to play Division I football.

C.J. said he feels like he has something to prove, being from Nebraska.

Continued on Page 10.



File Photo

C.J. Johnson turns to the camera at Seaman Stadium during a 2014 game against Omaha Central.

New classes to be introduced next year

MELISSA IRISH
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

As students begin to register for high school classes at the start of the second semester, they will find some changes hidden away in the registration guide.

For the 2018-2019 school year, three new classes are being added to both Bellevue East and Bellevue West: Anatomy and Physiology, AP Computer Science Principles, and Calculus BC.

"Students have expressed interest in these types of classes," counselor Susan Polk said. "Also, the district makes decisions based on which classes they think will be helpful for students. They are working pretty heavily on career paths, and some of these classes have

to do with the opening up of career paths to students."

Science teacher Erik Johnson said he believed that the Anatomy and Physiology course may be useful to prepare students for college-level science classes.

"I am all for having options for students to advance in their science preparation for college," Johnson said. "More doesn't necessarily always mean better, but in this case, there are some things that can help students prepare better for science careers and one of those things is having extra science classes."

Johnson has been assisting in developing the curriculum for Anatomy and Physiology. He has been

meeting with a group of nine people as they decide on the details, contemplate prerequisites, and look over the Anatomy and Physiology textbook.

"Basically it's Med. Bio.

When math teacher Angela Daughtrey received the news that Calculus BC was going to be added, she was elated.

"Mrs. Sailors over at Bellevue East and I have been

long time. I was super excited that our dreams were going to finally come true."

Her collaborator at Bellevue East, Valorie Sailors, has been interested in the opportunities this course can provide its students for years.

"I was interested in having the BC course as soon as I started teaching calculus because I was excited that it could offer both Calculus I and II credit in the same year," Sailors said in an email. "I often have students that choose to study extra for the BC exam

and take it instead of the AB exam and they usually do very well, but I always thought it would help them improve their scores if they

could have it taught in class instead of independent-study."

To Daughtrey, the potential benefits extend past class credits.

"It really allows for students who are really good at mathematics to advance themselves and then it's another way for the juniors who only have the option for Stats AP their senior year to have another class," Daughtrey said.

The number of teachers and available sessions for each class will not be determined until after students begin to register this upcoming spring.

"We're excited for these changes coming up next year and we hope to share more information with students next semester as we do registration," Polk said.

"I was super excited that our dreams were going to come true."

- Angela Daughtrey

on steroids," Johnson said. "It's going to be a lot more deeper scale, with probably a lot more essay writing and more in-depth learning."

fighting for this for over 10 years," Daughtrey said. "We wrote the curriculum for this in 2006-ish, so we've been lobbying for this for a

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE



Learn about Hannah Johnson's involvement with Zoo Academy on Page 5.



Discover the mass appeal of the "Star Wars" franchise on Page 6.

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Graduation requirements change to meet state standards

EMILY SCHMIDT
REPORTER

Beginning next year, students will be required to take a semester class in economics along with their English, math, science, and other social studies courses for graduation. While the class of 2019 is exempt from the change, the class of 2020 and all classes following will take economics their junior year.

The new credit requirement was caused by a change in the Social Studies State Standards. A University of Nebraska-Lincoln economics professor wrote a new standard that was adopted by the State Education Department. The new standard caused the curriculum committee to add a required economics class to meet the criteria.

"The idea was new standards required a new class," member of the curriculum committee for economics

and Bellevue East social studies teacher PK Simmons said in an email.

"[The curriculum committee] recommended these changes and leaders of BPS approved our recommendation."

The curriculum covers basic, micro, macro and international economics, as well as personal finance.

"Economics is the study of human unlimited wants and needs in a world where we have limited resources, so it's important that we understand how those systems work," first year economics teacher James Torrez said. "And then when kids get older, they can certainly vote and help to shape a policy on economics."

Social studies teacher Robin Kratina, who taught economics for 15 years and has been the only teacher of the subject until Torrez this year, said it's important to study economics because it's involved in everything. For

example, Kratina said one can't understand the government's decisions heard on the news without understanding economics.

"You could listen to a law, but without understanding the economic impact of it, you wouldn't even be able to make a critical decision about whether you could support it or not," Kratina said.

Kratina said many people are confused as to why economics is considered to be a social studies class. After all, it has a personal finance component, and that elective is a business class. Economics is a social studies class because it has to do with how people interact with the economy.

"Personal finance is in business because it's teaching you how to use the tools to get the job done, but knowing what kind of job you need to get done and what you have to do in order to make those decisions is a

human behavioral decision," Kratina said.

Faculty and students can expect to see some changes in the teaching schedules of the social studies department. As Torrez is the only staff member teaching economics this year, other teachers will have to take a section, too.

"It is gonna impact it obviously, because there will be a few more teachers having to teach it, but they'll teach one of the sections first semester and then again second semester, so it won't be as many as I think people are afraid of," freshman counselor Lynne Henkel said.

The change will have an effect on student schedules, too, especially the class of 2020. They may have had an idea of what they wanted their schedule to look like going into their junior year and now have a few changes to make. Henkel said she believes it won't have a ma-



Photo by Gauret Stearns

James Torrez instructs students during his fifth hour class. This is his first year teaching economics.

major impact on the classes they take outside of social studies. Where a student may have wanted to take psychology, they may have to compromise and take economics instead.

"It might impact the social studies electives, but they just need to match it up with another semester class that they want to take,"

Henkel said. As the staff prepare for the change, Torrez and Kratina believe the class will benefit students in the near and far future.

"I think it's going to be a positive change for Bellevue and kids will be smarter and more aware of how to deal with the world around them," Torrez said.

2017 Finals Schedule

| December 21 | December 22 |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 7:50 am - 9:25 am Period 1 Final | 7:50 am - 9:25 am Period 2 Final |
| 9:35 am - 11:10 am Period 3 Final | 9:30 am - 11:05 am Period 4 Final |
| 11:20 am - 1:40 pm Period 5 Final | 11:10 am - 1:20 pm Period 6 Final |
| 1:45 pm - 3:20 pm Period 7 Final | |
| Lunch Schedule | Lunch Schedule |
| 11:20 am - 11:50 am 1st Lunch | 11:10 am - 11:40 am 1st Lunch |
| 11:45 am - 12:15 pm 2nd Lunch | 11:40 am - 12:10 pm 2nd Lunch |
| 12:40 pm - 1:10 pm 3rd Lunch | 12:10 pm - 12:40 pm 3rd Lunch |
| 1:10 pm - 1:40 pm 4th Lunch | 12:50 pm - 1:20 pm 4th Lunch |

Sophomore senate works with student council to revive "Mr. Bellevue West"

SARA FOGARTY
COPY EDITOR

Student Council and Sophomore Senate are working together to restore the "Mr. Bellevue West" event. Mr. Bellevue West, which hasn't taken place for 4 years, is a pageant-like event where senior male students compete for the title.

"Mrs. Geiken and I decided to bring back Mr. Bellevue West as a joint effort between Student Council and Sophomore Senate," Sophomore Senate sponsor

Alexandra Thiessen said. "It was only held one time in 2013 and we thought now would be the perfect time to revive it."

Student Council and Sophomore Senate have split into committees to distribute the responsibilities of planning the event. Sophomore Senate member Madison Joiner explained that these committees include script, advertising, set-up, and program.

"Mr. Bellevue West is such a big project," Joiner said. "By teaming up with Student Council it results

in the project having a lot more helping hands."

This event entails preparation continuing through first semester and into second semester. Thiessen said that the application process will take place at the end of first semester, and the committees will create the program, set, and script in second semester.

"It's going to require a lot of preparation," Student Council Junior Co-President Mia Pancoe said. "With committees covering advertisements, the final script, and planning, I'm

sure the preparation for the event will run smoothly."

Student Council and Sophomore Senate will split the proceeds to contribute towards their respective programs. These earnings will provide them with club funds and donation opportunities.

"The money that Sophomore Senate receives will go to our funds for next years prom," Joiner said. "The Student Council profits will go to the charity 'Make a Wish'."

Mr. Bellevue West will take place on Feb. 8, 2018.



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Early school times detrimental to students



NATHAN HAWKINS
BROADCAST MANAGER

It's past midnight. You're putting the finishing touches on your English essay, trying to make it the best it can possibly be. You finally hit the sack when you're finished. Five hours later, you wake up and prep for an eight hour school day.

A schedule such as this is all too common for high school students. Managing school, homework, a social life, and sleep isn't an easy burden for teenagers to bear. The erratic sleep schedule that teenagers have is an

unhealthy yet relevant issue among teens, as in 2013, almost half of the teenagers in the United States were affected negatively by a lack of sleep. Although sleep deprivation may never go away entirely for students, the starting point in order to increase the amount of sleep teenagers get is simple: school starting times.

At Bellevue West, school starts at 7:50 a.m., with the first bell being at 7:45. This start time is already 13 minutes earlier than the average start time around the United States. However, even the average start time for schools everywhere is far earlier than what the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend. According to the CDC, schools should have a start time of no earlier than 8:30

to accommodate the general need for students to get 8.5 to 9.5 hours of sleep every night. That's 27 minutes past the national average,

and can even decrease life expectancy. So if you think about it, high school is literally killing me.

and can even decrease life expectancy.

So if you think about it, high school is literally killing me.

in the morning.

There are benefits for starting school early for some people, such as coaches, who have practice after school. It could also potentially help some students who have extracurricular activities going on in the evening. Even then, it'd still be very possible to get around that, as around the country there are still many schools that begin at 8:30 and have a practice schedule around it.

The easy solution to improve mental well being and sleep deprivation in students is simple, and the district needs to address it. Begin school 40 minutes later. End school 40 minutes later. The positives overwhelmingly outway the negatives.

Starting school at 8:30 won't instantly cure insomnia and spike up grades, but for kids whose busy lives put them in a position to be low on sleep, it's a place to start.



Graphic by Gauret Stearns

and 40 minutes past the start time at Bellevue West.

That explains why students catch up on their sleep during class time.

Being tired isn't the

consequences of not getting enough sleep. Through their research, they found that sleep deprivation can correlate to obesity, heart disease, mood disorders,

in their performances at earlier hours of the day and later hours of the night. So even if students get enough sleep, the performance could still be worse earlier

Staff Ed: Students should be more involved in decisions

EDITORIAL BOARD

As high school students, we are at the stage in life where we are no longer children but are not yet seen as adults. Though a vast majority of us do not have our own homes or pay for our own health insurance, it is not too much to ask for our voices to be heard in decisions that impact us.

Of course there are things that should be left to faculty and administration regarding the issues of the school. Having things like the Bellevue Public Schools budget out of the hands of high school students is completely understandable. What would be nice, though, is the student body having a say on issues that directly affect us.

The big change this year was an Advisory period. As many students had been told, Advisory was established in response to a survey

that revealed over half of the student body didn't feel like they had an adult in the building that they could go to for help. Yes, student input was used in order to identify an issue, yet the student body wasn't involved in coming up with a solution.

Yes, students were asked about the effectiveness of the Advisory period, but it was only after the fact that it was established.

The concept of Advisory is not the problem; it is how Advisory is being carried out. There are multiple classes that use that 20 minute period the way it was meant to be, while others use it as a study hall. Teachers should be open to student suggestion if Advisory isn't fulfilling its purpose. The daily school schedule is something that nobody really thinks about, but impacts students the most. School begins at 7:50 a.m. and ends at 3:20 p.m. Nebraska high schools are required to have 1,080

hours of school every year according to the U.S. Department of Education.

Is there a better schedule that is more student friendly?

Private schools, such as Creighton Prep, have utilized block scheduling as their primary daily schedule. Block scheduling consists of splitting up the classes that students are taking and putting them into two different days.

So, rather than having your science class every day during fifth hour, you would have that class every other day for 75 minutes or so. This could allow students to get out of school at least an hour early while starting at 8:00 a.m. and keeping the five minute passing periods.

There are a variety of decisions that directly involve students within Bellevue West. The students within the school should be able to have a say in those decisions that affect them.

Introverts need friends, too



LAUREN KLONE
GUEST REPORTER

Right as I entered my teen years, four of my friends moved. While this may not seem like the biggest deal, we were a close-knit group, and I was un-naturally shy, so making friends wasn't necessarily easy for me.

However, after a while I managed to branch out and make a new group of friends, using these methods.

Get outside your comfort zone

I would much rather wrap myself in three blankets and become absorbed

in a good book than actually socialize. However, these antics aren't the best ways to make friends. I'm not saying you have to become a party animal, but try talking to new people at lunch or while waiting for the first bell to ring.

Choose people who share your values

While it is important to be with people who help you get out of your shell, you need to choose friends who understand how you feel in social situations and don't make you feel obligated to be outgoing all the time.

For example, if your friend interrupts your annual eat pizza and binge-watch "Harry Potter" Friday night, to invite you shopping or to a sleepover, it's refreshing. However, if this is constant, they may be inconsiderate of you and your time.

Pick someone who bothers to pay attention to you

People not being considerate is one thing, however people not giving you any

attention is a whole other ball game. For example if you start talking to your friend and they don't even look up from their phone, it shows their lack of interest for what you're about to say, even before you say it.

Don't get me wrong. They could be doing something important like texting their mom. However, if this is a consistent thing, it might be a red flag.

Keep happy body language

While you want to find friends who have a similar personality, first you have to make it so they can approach you. "Lauren stop slouching," "Lauren uncross your arms." I've heard these comments repeated like a broken record, however they are important in your quest of making friends. Negative body language shows the people around you that you don't care.

But most importantly, just be yourself, and if these tips don't work then you can just be my friend.

The Thunderbeat Editorial Policy 2017-18

The Thunderbeat is an official publication of Bellevue Public Schools and is a part of the learning curriculum of the Communicative Arts Department.

The Thunderbeat is a member of the National Scholastic Press Association.

The Thunderbeat, a non-profit newspaper, accepts advertising, letters, and other contributions.

Inquiries should be addressed to: Bellevue West High School, Journalism Department, 1501 Thurston Ave., Bellevue, NE 68123. Phone: (402) 293-4068. Email: thethunderbeat@gmail.com

Content

The role of The Thunderbeat is to inform students and others in the community of events that pertain to student life at Bellevue West.

The Thunderbeat Edi-

torial Board may consist of the following editors: Editor-in-Chief, Business Manager, Front Page Editor, News Editor, Focus Editor, Commentary Editor, Entertainment Editor, Sports Editor, Features Editor, Photography Editor, adviser Julie Rowse, and principal Kevin Rohlf.

The Thunderbeat will not print material when information is limited or can be obtained from only one party or viewpoint so that the information cannot be verified.

Only material that is clearly substantiated will be printed.

Obscene language or profanity will not be used. Profane words will be edited from all direct quotations unless decided upon by the Editorial Board.

Material that violates the privacy of a person or that is libelous will not be printed.

Material that may disrupt school, as judged by the adviser or principal, will not be printed in the publications.

Articles, editorials and advertising dealing with areas prohibited for study in schools by the Board of Education will not be printed.

All stories, unless it is a staff editorial, will be identified by a byline and all photos with a photo credit.

The Thunderbeat will not endorse or show preference for any political candidates or party.

Statements that could be logically assumed to be derogatory to ethnic groups will not be printed.

The Thunderbeat will report fairly, and without bias, differing sides of any controversy relevant to the school and to the students.

Publication staffs reserve the right to review school productions.

Individuals involved in skill endeavors will not be criticized for poor performance.

Any student appearing in a public event such as sports, contests, or music concerts may be photographed without violating the privacy of the individual. Also, students who agree to be interviewed or photographed on the record may appear in the school publication without the threat of invasion of privacy.

Commentary

All unsigned editorials in The Thunderbeat will represent the opinions of the student Editorial Board.

Opinions represented in personal columns are those of the author's and might not reflect the opinions of other staff members or school district.

Letters to the Thunderbeat editor are welcome, but because of space limitations

the staff reserves the right to edit letters for length, grammar, and punctuation. All such letters must be signed; they will not be printed anonymously. If one feels strongly enough to write a letter, one should feel strongly enough to sign one's name.

Letters or guest editorials for the Thunderbeat will not be printed if they contain libelous, obscene or profane statements. The Thunderbeat is under no obligation to print all letters.

Advertising

The Thunderbeat reserves the right to reject any ads.

Ads containing poor taste, invasion of privacy, libel, products illegal for the majority of the student population, sexist or racist comments or representations, encouragement to break laws, regulations, or ordi-

nances will not be printed.

Staff

The Thunderbeat does not necessarily represent the views of Bellevue Public Schools, and the staffs strive to promote the publications through the sale of advertising. To achieve the optimum learning situations, as well as serve the audience to the best of the staffs abilities, the publication staffs believe that content decisions should rest primarily with the student editors and adviser according to the standards of journalism and keeping in accordance with the Bellevue School Board policies.

The publications have the right to dismiss any student staff member from his or her job due to lack of responsible behavior or journalistic performance.

The adviser and principal have final decision on questionable material.

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THE CALM AFTER THE STORM: BELLEVUE COMES TOGETHER

“IT HAS SHOWED ME HOW
WHEN NEEDED, PEOPLE CAN
PUT THEIR DIFFERENCES ASIDE
AND WORK TOGETHER.”

—EMILY NELSON

Photo courtesy of Carley Conover

TAEGAN JACOBS
REPORTER

“There was a house about three blocks away from us,” math teacher Angela Daughtrey said. “Over by Two Springs Elementary and, I mean, the whole house was just annihilated. It was gone.”

During the afternoon and evening of June 12, Bellevue and other western Nebraska areas were hit by one of the most notable cases of severe weather to hit the area in the past 30 years, according to the National Weather Service. Severe thunderstorms, hail storms, and a string of several tornadoes left not only a multitude of Nebraskans devastated, but properties in southeast Wyoming as well.

At one point the storm left 76,000 people without power—which ranks it as the fourth-largest outage in at least four decades, according to the Omaha Public Power District.

“Just a couple of my trees were completely knocked

down and power was out for 3 days,” sophomore Emily Nelson said in an email. “But my neighborhood was hit pretty bad. Whole houses were wiped out.”

Two of the worst-hit neighborhoods were Hyda Hills and Two Springs. Both neighborhoods are near Two Springs Elementary, which was one of the schools that received significant damage during the storm.

“The grounds had a lot of blown insulation that looked like snow covering the playground, grass and flower gardens,” Two Springs Elementary Principal Kelli Berke said in an email. “There were also shingles that had blown off the roof. We had to have a hundred percent of the ceiling tiles replaced inside, along with repair to the cupolas.”

Not only was there notable damage inflicted on the school and the property in the surrounding neighborhoods, but a lot of the nature and outdoor public areas were destroyed as well.

“There was this new trail that connects, I think it’s

Two Springs to Pilgrims Landing,” Daughtrey said. “And you used to just go through this trail and it was covered in trees, and it’s gone.”

Daughtrey, who lives in Two Springs and was home sick on the night of the storm while her husband and son attended a University of Nebraska-Omaha jazz camp concert, hadn’t even realized there were storms until her mother called her to tell her she needed to get to the basement. She didn’t register the severity of the storm until the next morning.

“Just going around the Two Springs neighborhood and the Hyda Hills neighborhood—it was just,” Daughtrey said. “It was really sad.”

The damage inflicted to the Daughtrey household included the loss of a beloved apple tree, a shared oak tree that missed their house and their neighbor’s merely by chance, and eight panels of fence, which Daughtrey said was an interesting situation with two labradors that needed to be in the backyard.

“We had a roof over our deck and we lost that,” Daughtrey said. “That ended up in Two Springs park.”

Several people lost their garage doors and their yards were covered in debris, twigs, and branches. As for other parts of the neighborhood, some houses were even annihilated.

“I felt sorry for a lot of people,” Daughtrey said. “Especially the people that lived over by Two Springs Elementary and across from the park. They had to move out and that would be really hard. And the people in Hyda Hills, too. It was just so random. One house might be fine and two houses down one was obliterated.”

Omaha’s Offutt Air Force Base wasn’t in any better shape. Significant damage to at least six on-base houses and at least 10 of its aircraft were reported, and the storm was estimated to have caused between \$7 million and \$10 million worth of damage to its facilities.

As for neighborhood cleanup, Berke said the community came together

to help cleanup the school on June 21.

“We had over three hundred volunteers help us clean up the grounds,” Berke said in an email. “It was amazing and many of the volunteers there had their own damage at their own homes, but took the time to help at the school.”

Other volunteers besides residents helped clean up the neighborhoods, including a Bellevue East sports team who went and helped Hyda Hills.

“You just saw people out helping each other,” Daughtrey said. “And there were tons of lawn services running around trying to, you know, earn a couple extra dollars helping people clean up.”

But despite the large number of helpers, cleaning up of the storm’s aftermath took a long time and some buildings are still being fixed and rebuilt now.

“It took a while. Some people had piles of twigs and branches in front of their yards for weeks. You could tell the people that were like ‘Oh, we’re getting this done this weekend’ ver-

sus the people that were like ‘Oh, you know, we’ll ease through this.’ You know, the ‘type A’ personalities versus the ‘non-type A’ personalities. You could tell in your neighborhood,” Daughtrey said.

Some of the pieces finished include Two Springs Elementary’s damaged roof and ceiling tiles, just like Berke promised it would be by the start of the school year according to a KETV News article.

“We want the place to be normal for our kids,” Berke said in the same KETV article. “and a safe place for them to come back to.”

The damaged trail, Daniell Trail, will continue to undergo construction until December 21. Crews have been working four ten hour work days a week since October 16 in order to cleanup the trail and make it safer for the public.

And despite all the bad, the tornado was able to create some positives.

“I’ve seen a lot of people of all different races, ages, and families come together to help in a time of need,” Nelson said.



Photos courtesy of Chris Gage, Janelle Shere, and Carley Conover

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Teachers who coach inspire students despite challenges

LEANNE BUGAY
FEATURES EDITOR

As the bell rings signaling the end of the school day, students sprint out to the parking lot while teachers begin to pack up. For most, the next priority on their to-do list is to go home and relax.

A select few don't stop their work at 3:20.

"When you're a head coach, you're on the clock 24/7," math teacher and head wrestling coach Jerry Schumacher said.

Teaching all day until mid-afternoon, running practices, coaching at games or meets, and spending time with family challenges those who take on the task.

"You really have to learn to balance your time," American history teacher and head golf coach Robert Klug said. "Sometimes I get here a bit early to get some school work done that I maybe didn't get done the night before because you don't really have a lot of time after school with practices and games."

Despite the high stress and time crunch sports seasons create, the outcome of coaching is what keeps teachers involved in student athletics.

"I coach and teach because it is my passion. It's what I feel I was called to do," Betz math teacher and head girls varsity tennis

coach Thomas Harris said in an email. "I love seeing the growth in both my students and athletes and I enjoy being a part of it."

English teacher and cross country and track coach Leigh Officer said that she aims to help students understand the value of everyday life and what it means for kids to do their best for themselves and others.

"That sounds cliché, but when we learn about people who have struggled in unimaginable ways, we should realize how privileged we are to attend a great school, to be able to learn, and to connect with other conscientious people," Officer said in an email.

Students that have their head coach as a teacher can benefit from it by creating a special bond with that adult.

"I've had very few discipline problems with the students in which I've coached or been involved with," Klug said. "I think it's because they see me as a real person outside of our school. It shows you care about them more than just in the classroom or on the court."

Even though Harris teaches elementary schoolers during the day and high schoolers in the afternoon, he said his mission remains the same.

"My goal is for my athletes and students to leave me better than they came to me," Harris said.

Zoo Academy accepts first Bellevue West student

EMILY SCHMIDT
REPORTER

Junior Hannah Johnson's day doesn't start with English or study hall, but with her class pet, a "really fat" Cairo spiny mouse named Fry in Zoology class.

Johnson's class feeds him, freshens his water, and provides enrichment. On days where the class cleans his cage, Fry roams free in a hamster ball.

This year is the first that Bellevue Public Schools sent students to the Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium's Zoo Academy. The program started in 1995 and allows high school juniors and seniors to receive college credit while they explore several career pathways in zoology.

"We're looking at expanding the program to open it up to other areas, and so there was a couple of spots open and Elizabeth Mulkerrin, the Director, reached out to Bellevue and Westside to see if they would like to send a student this year to experience the Zoo Academy as we open it up for next year." Career and Academy Administrator Missy Jabens said.

A district representative called Bellevue West and Bellevue East with the news and the counseling staff began sorting through the group of possible students.

"It all happened during the summer, so that made it a little more difficult," counselor Susan Polk said. "However, the counselors



Photo by Emily Schmidt

Junior Hannah Johnson cleans as part of her shadowing at the Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium's Red Barn Park.

looked at a pool of applicants and I believe Hannah was selected based on GPA and class rank."

Johnson said her dad got a call from Principal Kevin Rohlfs this summer offering her the Zoo Academy opportunity.

"After we situated transportation problems, everything was set," Johnson said.

Johnson's schedule consists of shadowing, Algebra II, Environmental Policy, and Zoology. Johnson got to experience all 11 different shadowing opportunities her first quarter before deciding to finish her semester at Red Barn Park. She'll choose another shadowing spot to finish the year with after she presents a science fair project relating to the animals she works with.

"Because half of my day is block schedule and the other half is regular scheduling, procrastination is a big thing I've had to get past," Johnson said.

Johnson's math and Environmental Policy classes are on a block schedule. For both, she is the only student, which provides a challenge in the latter because it makes peer debates virtually impossible.

"At first I wasn't sure how I felt about it, but as the year has gone on I really enjoy it," Johnson said. "I don't mind the one-on-one stuff, I actually like it more than being in a larger classroom."

A typical shadowing day for Johnson consists mostly of cleaning and enrichment. While she acknowledges the filthiness of the work,

she has no problem tidying up the enclosures and the concrete stretch outside the barn where the goats typically roam. The enrichment is the zoo's way of providing stimuli to the animals to ensure their well-being.

"There are different types, so one day you could put hay in a bucket so they have a different way of feeding," Johnson said.

In her Zoology class, Johnson has Zoo Orientation, a year-long project in which groups of students create their own zoo exhibit.

"The main goal is to create a new exhibit and while doing this we learn what goes into the making of an exhibit. And we chose the Amazon because we had a different and unique vision for it," Johnson said.

English teacher brings passion for music to Bellevue West

EMMA CLARK
REPORTER

Anne Mullins teaches junior and senior English, but she brings an outlet for creative minds of all grades. Mullins sponsors the Singer and Songwriters Club, which she started her first year teaching.

Mullins' mom taught her piano at a young age, and she said she started getting into singing when she was seven or eight. Throughout her childhood she enjoyed taking voice lessons.

"I've always taken piano and quitting wasn't an option," Mullins said. "I really

wanted to quit in middle school and my freshman year of high school, but I had to keep doing it."

Mullins always loved singing more than piano, but then her freshman year she heard alternative singer-songwriter Regina Spektor. Shortly after, she started writing music heavily influenced by Spektor.

"I read about her in I think a 'Spin Magazine,' Mullins said. "And now she's my favorite artist, the one who got me started."

Now Mullins can play the piano, guitar, banjo, and ukulele.

"If you know one stringed instrument you can pretty much play them all,"

Mullins said.

"Falt Lines" is the name of the band she formed with her dad and her best friend Allison Falt.

"In the past I've only done solo stuff, but my best friend is a really good singer so one day we were like 'what the heck,'" Mullins said.

Falt attended Bellevue West High School and Mullins went to Bellevue East High School.

"I met my best friend through church and we went to different high schools," Mullins said.

Mullins' dad plays the mandolin while her and Falt sing and play the guitar or piano, whichever the song

calls for. Her dad performs in a band himself with some of his old fraternity brothers.

"He's in an old man band but he's really good," Mullins said. "It's fun and we like it."

Mullins said that she loves the club she runs, and is enthusiastic about being able to connect with kids through the common passion of music.

Singer and Songwriters club is a group of students who write and perform music at gigs that Mullins sets up. She also performs with her band at those gigs.

"I've always imagined doing a club like this cause songwriting and music is

my passion, so I'd like to share that with kids," Mullins said. "When I was in

high school I always wished that there was an outlet for me."



Photo by Emma Clark

Anne Mullins performs with her band "Falt Lines" at the Ozone Lounge on Nov. 30. "Falt Lines" played with other bands from the Bellevue West Songwriters Club that night.

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“Star Wars” fandom spans multiple generations

ALEX TOTH
ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

Star Wars is one of, if not the biggest franchise in American culture. With its resurgence in recent years with “The Force Awakens” it’s both introducing new fans to the franchise and letting old ones relive what made them fall in love with it in the first place.

With the next installment of the series, “Star Wars: The Last Jedi” coming out December 15, fans around the globe are buzzing with anticipation. You’d be hardpressed to not find a fan of Star Wars in any given group of people, and Bellevue West is no exception.

“From a kid perspective it was a really big deal,” history teacher James Torrez said. “I use a lot of ‘Star Wars’ in my teaching. For some reason it turns out that it’s pretty relevant, but I do try to integrate that into a lot of my curriculum.”

The recognizability and wide spread awareness of “Star Wars” makes it easy for teachers to use it for teaching purposes without having to confuse students.

“It’s a political story about power, and getting a dictator in power and how that corruption and all the things that go on could hap-



Photo by Alex Toth

Business teacher Chad Huseth showcases his “Star Wars” memorabilia in his classroom

pen in society today,” teacher and superfan Chad Huseth said. “It’s easy to talk about ‘Star Wars’ with what I teach, because they coincide and it’s something that the kids can understand.”

With “Star Wars” being such a long-lasting franchise, kids who saw the original film back in 1977 are now taking their kids to the film and exposing an

entirely new generation to the beloved galaxy far, far, away.

“My son had just turned four, just like I was, and I was going to take him to a bunch of other movies leading up to that, but I said, you know what, if I hold off for a couple months I could make his first movie when he was four the new ‘Star Wars’, just like mine was,”

Huseth said.

Students at Bellevue West grew up with the prequels—the hated-by-fans and child-appealing films made before Disney bought the franchise in 2012.

“That opening where the name ‘Star Wars’ comes up, and the music kicks in, I always thought would be really magical movie experience,” junior Nik Nikunen

said. “And I finally got that when ‘The Force Awakens’ came out, and the sheer excitement when the word ‘Star Wars’ came up and the music started playing, it was just unlike anything I had ever experienced before that.”

While the fandom stays stronger than ever, there is concern amongst fans. With Disney seemingly releasing

as many films as they can as of late, fans are worried they’re more focused on money rather than quality.

“[“Rogue One”] is just made to make a profit while we wait for the next installment in the saga,” Huseth said. “I am a little worried they’re going to oversaturate it, but if there’s anybody that can do it, [Disney] were the ones who could, and I was skeptical as anybody going into ‘Episode 7’ but they just made an amazing movie.”

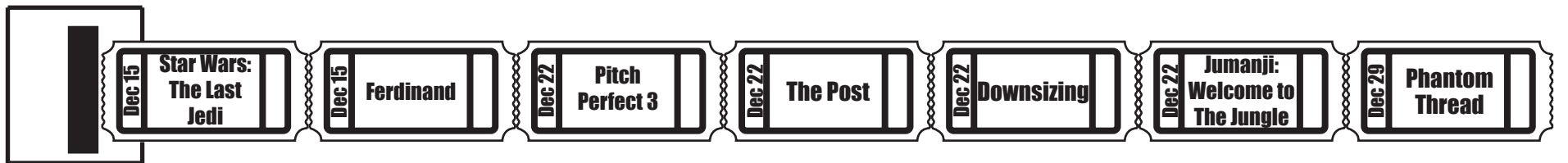
With fans anticipating 2015’s “The Force Awakens” follow up, “The Last Jedi,” fans are speculating about what it entails for the rest of the saga.

“There’s probably going to be some big reveals, and hopefully we find out who Rey’s parents are,” junior J.C. Hackler said.

“Star Wars” not only brings people together, but inspires millions of fans worldwide, young and old.

“I think it’s going to be controversial actually,” Nikunen said. “I think it’s going to take a darker tone and I think that some people are going to love it and some are going to hate it, but I am expecting to like it.”

See the next installment, “Star Wars: The Last Jedi” on December 15.



Top albums of 2017

ALEX TOTH
ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

8. Vince Staples - Big Fish Theory

There’s no other way to describe this album besides the word “banger.” The bass on every song is so ridiculous, it makes the whole album perfect to put on in the car. It isn’t as concise or profound as many of the other rap albums on this list but its unforgiving energy and boldness give it a special place in my heart.

7. Mount Eerie - A Crow Looked at Me

Phil Elverum’s addictingly depressing eulogy to his late wife, Genevieve Elverum feels more personal than he’s ever gone before. With the stripped down sound he’s known for, Phil is able to bring the listener into his grieving process through his incredibly written and unforgettable lyrics.

6. Remo Drive - Greatest Hits

I’m going to start this one off by saying that this isn’t actually a greatest hits compilation, but the band’s first in a hopefully prolific discography. The band’s indie-emo flavor blend well with the energy they bring to the table. Songs like “Art School” and “I’m My Own Doctor” remind me how versatile the emo genre can be, something I’ve ultimately lost hope for in recent years.

5. Milo - Who Told You Think?!!?!?!?!?

Milo brings an all new collection of rap that goes deep into his psyche and digs out some of the most challenging and memorable verses of the year. The stripped down, ethereal production lends well to the more thought provoking ideas he’s bringing onto this album, and it has me excited for what he’ll put out in the

future.

4. Tyler, The Creator - Flower Boy

Tyler, The Creator’s surprising return to a more refined sound caught me off guard, coming out with his most well put together and thematic album to date. You really get a sense of who Tyler is as a person, and at the same time get a col-



ed sound was as exciting as it was surprising. I was way more into this album than I thought I would be, with each song presenting their ideas both effectively and extremely creatively while managing to be incredibly infectious.

1. Brockhampton - Saturation I & II

Both “Saturation I” and “II” have solidified Brockhampton as one of the most unique hip hop outfits to come out of the 2010s. Both

lection of great tracks that range from love songs, to songs perfect for playing at an unreasonable volume in the car.

3. (Sandy) Alex G - Rocket

Alex G’s new, more folk oriented style is a great new addition to his sound. It works well with his voice and his writing style and kept me interested the entire album. Songs like “Bobby” and “Powerful Man” are wonderfully warm feeling and unnerving at the same time while still providing the same lo-fi feel Alex G is known for.

2. Kendrick Lamar - DAMN.

Kendrick Lamar’s journey into a more trap orient-

albums blend trap rap, alt-rock, and a distinct suburban rap sound popularized earlier in the decade. Each member has their own unique sound that sets them apart from any other given member in the group and with topics ranging from the struggles of being gay, racism, Tom Hanks, and the boredom and pressures of the modern suburban lifestyle makes for an engaging and fun listen. Brockhampton are definitely one of the most polarizing newcomers of the year and are something to look out for going into 2018. The group will complete the Saturation trilogy on December 15 with “Saturation 3.”

Graphic by Alex Toth

Bánh Mì provides authentic Vietnamese dining experience

TIFFANY DOMINGO
REPORTER

Bellevue has added another Asian restaurant: The Bánh Mì Shop.

Bánh Mì isn’t setup like a typical Asian restaurant. The Bánh Mì Shop has more of a coffee shop feel to it. White is a common theme at the store. White tables and white chairs. White paint grace the walls with artistic black designs on the border.

The atmosphere of the store was calming and peaceful. Alternative and Indie songs softly played in the background. The atmosphere of the store is peaceful. Alternative and indie songs play in the background.

The Bánh Mì Shop has more of a coffee shop feel to it, considering that the size of the store was small. White was a common theme at the store. White tables and white chairs. white paint graced the walls with artistic black designs on the border.

Bánh Mì is a Vietnamese sandwich commonly served in Vietnamese restaurants. Common ingredients in the sandwich are the Vietnamese baguette, meat with Vietnamese seasoning, and native Vietnamese vegetables.

The menu is displayed on a black chalkboard to the right and another hung above the cash registers. Not only does the restaurant serve a variety of Bánh Mì sandwiches, but they also sell tea, smoothies, lemonades, and coffee. Most of their drinks come from the Asian culture as well: bubble tea, matcha tea, and cà phê đá coffee.

When it came to ordering my food, the workers there were very welcoming.

They recommended which sandwich I should pick, since it was my first time trying Bánh Mì. Ultimately I picked out the Bánh Mì Thit Nuong, which is made out of grilled pork with garlic and lemon-grass marinade, topped with sweet hoisin sauce. I added the honeydew bubble tea to wash down my food.

The price was reasonable, just under \$8 for a sandwich and tea.

The sandwich was served

sandwich anyway

The fruity bright green honeydew flavoring made my taste buds dance and sent out a summertime vibe. Their bubble tea was so impressive that I ordered one before I left. This time it was the taro flavoring, it came out in a vibrant purple color making it look like it was from a Willy Wonka factory. The taste was a mixture of nutty, sweet, and vanilla.

I would definitely come back to this unique sand-



Photo by Tiffany Domingo

Bánh Mì’s décor departs from traditional Asian aesthetic

wrapped inside in a brown paper bag. I’m not very fond of sandwiches and drinks that they offer. It’s also a great place for a quick bite out to eat and the laid back, coffee shop like environment makes it stand out from other asian restaurants in the area.

wich shop again to try the several different choices of sandwiches and drinks that they offer. It’s also a great place for a quick bite out to eat and the laid back, coffee shop like environment makes it stand out from other asian restaurants in the area.

The Bánh Mì Shop is located on 923 Galvin Road S in Bellevue. It’s open 10 a.m. - 10 p.m. Monday-Sunday.

Put down the phone and talk to each other

JAY WALKER-SCHULTE
REPORTER

Tech. Is. Extraordinary.

It's incredible that we've evolved from the stone wheel to tiny computers in our pockets that can allow you search for virtually anything, just within reach of your fingertips.

Technology is becoming more and more pervasive in our society whether we like it or not: from enjoyment, education, or even getting a job or doing your work. There's a constant debate of whether technology is a negative or positive influence. And, to be less vague, the technology we're talking about here is the stuff you use to stay social.

Are computers and smartphones tools to a better future of human understanding, or little parasites draining us of our social energy and etiquette?

It's no secret that technology is an incredible advancement in human civilization. But in the sense of how we're evolving socially, is it extraordinarily useful or an extraordinary harm to us?

Phrases like "Just shoot me a text," or "Send me the homework," have become commonplace in school hallways. According to the website Statistic Brain, in 2017 the average amount of text messages someone sends per month is 551, up from 62 texts in 2005.

Although that might not seem like a big deal, that's only the monthly average for an adult, so you can imagine how that compares

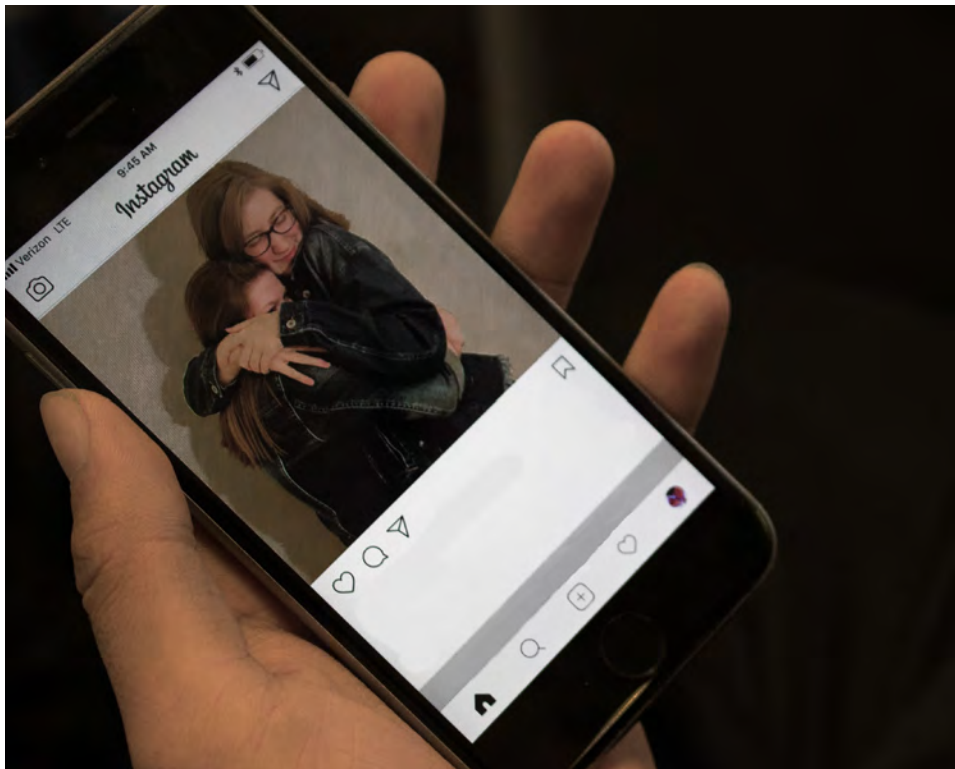


Photo Jay Walker-Schulte

Senior Trey Tucker scrolls through his Instagram feed. A study in the U.K. found that Instagram use has been detrimental to teenagers' mental health.

to a teenager.

It seems like texting one another has largely replaced calling, and some people find it unnecessary to make phone calls unless it's important. This isn't necessarily meant to call anyone out though, because I'm guilty of it too.

It's incredibly hard to read someone else's emotions over text. If you get marked for not using enough voice on an essay you presumably spent a whole week on, how do you know if you're actually conveying emotion when you're texting someone, especially when so many people chop their sentences up into nothing?

For example: "lol." How do you perceive that word? Sure, we all technically know what it means. "Laughing out loud"--Something's funny, the person you're texting is laughing. However, tech language is changing so rapidly that you could gain multiple meanings from it, and everyone uses it differently.

If you're texting someone you like, it could mean that your conversation is going dry or it was dry to begin with, and they don't want to talk to you.

If you send a friend a meme, it could mean that they didn't find it very funny, or that they found it hilarious.

The way someone's cheeks flood with muted scarlet tones as you chat on the way to your bus which is coated in frost, your crush bumping softly into you as you walk side by side in the halls, and the blossoming smile of the girl that you never had the courage compliment until now.

Using your phone as an electronic mediator will never be as satisfying as letting life flow naturally, as it should.

To quote Aristotle, as humans, we need to be social to survive. And, unfortunately, a text message will never be as satisfying as a hug or the laugh from someone you love.

Ways to give back during the holidays

EMMA GAGE
REPORTER

The holiday season is one of the most popular times for charities to receive attention. However, many local charities can often be buried under the larger, more well-known organizations. While many of these larger charities do good for people all over the country and even the world, it is also important to support your local organizations in order to ensure a positive and safe holiday season for all members of the community.

Open Door Mission-Project Santa

The Open Door Mission is a well-known organization that provides for less fortunate community members year-round, and one of its biggest programs is Project Santa. Project Santa is a toy drive that helps more than 6,000 local children. New and unwrapped toys can be donated to one of many drop-off locations throughout Omaha. This project goes through Dec. 22.

Goodwill

Many people cannot afford to go on large shopping sprees during the holiday season in order to buy gifts or winter clothing. Goodwill sells donated items at an inexpensive cost. These items include clothing, toys, books, and even household items such as decorations. If you have any items in your home that you would like to donate they are welcome at these stores. Your donations could end up as a gift for someone else!

Lutheran Family Services

Lutheran Family Services provides for veterans, refugee families, and any family in need. Their services are not holiday specific, so if you would like to support a family at anytime this is a great place to do so. However, it is especially important to help families during the winter and holiday season because this organization collects clothes, toys, and diapers. It also has many volunteer opportunities including tutoring and working with people that do not speak English.

Omaha Professional Fire Fighters Association Operation Warm

Operation Warm is a fundraiser that collects money in order to provide brand-new winter coats for local children in need. It is run by the professional firefighters of Omaha, Local 385. They have a goal of raising \$10,200, which would provide for about four bus loads of children. This annual fundraiser is a great way to help youth in the community stay healthy and warm for many months of the year.

Whether donating time, money, used items, or brand-new toys giving back not only benefits the recipient but it also does good for the donor. Knowing that you gave something to another person in your community that could bring joy to their entire holiday season is enough to do the same for yours.

Holiday traditions from around the school



"Every year me and my family usually go up to Chicago because we have a lot of family there. We have a great time and we have a nice Christmas turkey of course."

Jacob Carter



"Christmas day we wake up super early. My mom makes Abuelita Chocolate. We eat a bunch of chocolate and cookies. We don't eat pretty much any real food that day, we do eat tamales though."

Bex Rangel



"[On Christmas day] we all sleep in like crazy, wait for everyone to wake up. Then we unwrap presents, pour out our stockings and spend time with each other for the rest of the day."

Kendall Wooden

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Recruiting method changes provide more opportunities

EMMA GAGE
REPORTER

The desire of many high school athletes to continue their sport into college has not changed over time. What has changed, however, is the way that they are recruited to do so.

Recruitment is the process by which colleges select athletes to attend their schools for a specific sport.

Head softball coach Laura Kratochvil has seen many changes in recruiting methods from her recruitment by Creighton University and the State University of New Jersey for softball.

"It was a lot of old-school mailing in letters, recording videos and sending it in DVD form in the mail," Kratochvil said. "It was kind of the beginning age of doing questionnaires online and sending things like that."

Coach Wade McVey was recruited by multiple schools for both football and wrestling, and now coaches as a defensive coordinator for the football team. He has noted a difference in technology and its effects on recruitment.

"Sometimes they would have you send in film, like an actual VHS tape," McVey said. "So it wasn't like it is today, electronically done."

Senior Barton Community College baseball recruit Cooper Allen explained that he contacted his coaches through email and texting. He also used social media to communicate with schools.

"I joined a recruiting site called NCSA and I just used it for finding coaches' emails," Allen said.

Senior Concordia University volleyball recruit Morgan James used similar means to contact future schools.

"I used a website called Sports Recruits, and you can find schools through there," James said. "I just emailed them through that recruiting site and then it will tell me when they look at my profile."

Allen has received a lot of assistance from his coaches in selecting his school.

"[Our coaches] talked to us lots of times about what we wanted out of our college," Allen said.

James also gained advice from her coaches about choosing a college.

"My coaches would help me decide what to say back to a coach," James said. "If I didn't know how to respond, they would help me with what to say back, or what schools were good and what schools to stay away from."

Kratochvil has seen a

significant change in the age at which most schools begin recruiting players.

"It starts so much earlier," Kratochvil said. "When I was a student recruiting was more junior/senior year. I see a lot more today people getting recruited and even committing before they even go to high school."

One of the major changes that McVey said he has noticed overall is that along with the improvements of technology, an athlete's chance of recruitment increases.

"It's a lot easier for kids to get noticed because they can make their own highlight tapes and put them on the internet," McVey said.

Kratochvil has noticed that one thing has not changed between past and current recruitment—the importance of academics along with athletic ability.

"Even if you are the best athlete you will not get recruited if you can't stay in school," Kratochvil said. "Coaches have to see that you're willing to put in the work at the younger age."



Senior Morgan James plays against Bellevue East with the rest of the varsity volleyball team.

Photo Credit Emma Gage

A positive outlook: Why you should start looking at change differently



KORTNEY BURESH
SPORTS EDITOR

Think about the word "change." To many people, change has a negative connotation. Change can be moving to a new state, adjusting from high school to college, or even something like a different coffee or-

der. Many people like to stick to the same routine of things, but because change is so unfamiliar to us, the adventurous and exciting features about it are ignored.

Change is inevitable. It's something that is always going to happen. This can be super scary at times. A great way to combat the stress that may come from a constantly changing life is to look at it as an adventure.

It sounds cheesy, but if you look at a change in your life as exciting and as a chance to grow, it makes it seem a little less scary and a lot more enjoyable.

For the longest time, I viewed change as a loss. Things like losing an experience, person, routine, etc. But what I failed to see is that I'm not losing some-

thing, but gaining an experience or personality trait. Once you change your perspective on it, it's not so bad. In fact, it's pretty exciting.

Some of the best advice I received growing up was that "being uncomfortable is the best platform to grow." The moment we embrace the change that happens in our lives is when we grow into the best version of ourselves. But we have to be willing to see the need for change. Change in a person doesn't have to be bad.

Same can be boring. Some people like their nor-

mal routine everyday, but this isn't the most exciting way to live life. I understand that's the way some people like to live, but don't be afraid to shake things up a bit. It can be as simple as changing the route you go home. Something as small as a change in scenery can be refreshing.

Recently I cut six inches off of my hair. I would be lying if I said I wasn't scared, or if I didn't cry afterwards (because I actually cried). What was so scary to me was the fact that it was so different than my normal long hair. I had to close my eyes while the lady cut it, but I'm glad I had the cour-

age to change my style up a bit. This was a great reminder of the cheesy phrase; "you never know until you try."

For any freshmen or seniors in high school, I'm sure most of you can attest to this. Change is something that either just happened or is about to happen and it's pretty scary, but it's time to look at it as exciting.

For my fellow seniors, we have a little over a semester left until we are in the "real world." For some of us that means college, for some that means work, and still for others they're not sure

yet. Either way, we're all going to be doing something different than going to Bellevue West High School every day.

Embrace the change because we're all going through it together. This change in our lives is happening soon and it should be treated as exciting—not terrifying.

The reality of change can sound awful. It comes in at unexpected times, usually when everything seems to be going great. It makes people uncomfortable and it takes a long time to get used to it. Along with all of these horrible traits of change, many great ones come along with it. However, you won't be able to see the great qualities until you put a positive perspective on the word.

"Once you change your perspective on it, it's not so bad."

Let go of negativity to improve 2018



TIFFANY DOMINGO
REPORTER

2017 is coming to a close, and every year we burden ourselves with the thought that we could've been better. We are filled with regret on the choices that we've made, and every year we wish we tried harder because if we did, we would be exactly where we want to be.

We start to make a list that we hope to accomplish

to better ourselves. But in the long run, we end up failing. We ignore our priorities and start focusing on the things that don't matter.

So how do we break this cycle? What's the key that will unlock us to be better?

Change. That is the key that will lead us to be the person we want to be.

One of the biggest things that is holding us back is negativity. We dwell on all the bad things, but never take a second look on all the positivity going on in our lives. It's so easy for us to knock ourselves down and just give up. It's time that we change that.

Instead of being disap-

pointed in yourself after receiving a bad grade, take that opportunity as motivation to do better. Or instead of thinking you're not good enough, think about the things you know you're good at and build on that.

We also have to start letting go of everything toxic around us. Toxic activity ties in with the negativity we talked about. If you're sitting at home, crying or angry about a person, let that person go. No matter if it's a significant other or a close friend, they shouldn't be making you feel that way. You deserve the compassion and love that you need.

Surrounding yourself with toxic people will only

bring you down. But being with positive people will inspire you to do greater things, and most importantly, make you happy.

Naturally we often think about what the future holds for us and what we need to do in order to secure our success. We need to start living in the now, because all of our overthinking, stress and worrying comes from "living in the future."

Last but not least, we need to forgive ourselves for everything and anything. We can't ever change the past, and we can't keep living from our pasts. Regretful things that you've done will only stir you away

from happiness. We need to accept what happened and learn from our mistakes.

Change is never an easy thing that you can do. But we all have to find

that strength within ourselves that will bring us to it in order to be where we want to be.



Coming-of-age films provide gateway

ANDREA GONZALEZ - REPORTER

Photo from GlobalPanorama on Flickr



"**Boyhood**" Mason Evans' childhood was filmed in a time span of 12 years to demonstrate how Mason grows up with divorced parents. His mom remarries to try to build a family but it doesn't work, as Mason's step-father becomes an alcoholic and abuses them. As he grows up, Mason experiences drugs, friendships, and love.

Photo from Zoetrope Studios



"**The Outsiders**" After killing one of their rival gang members out of self defense, Ponyboy and Johnny run away and hide in an abandoned church. During their time on the run, they play poker, read books, and even save children from a burning church. The movie wraps up with Ponyboy giving a speech about his adventure.

Photo from Universal Studios



"**The Edge Of Seventeen**" High school is full of drama and it's not any different for teen Nadine Franklin. As she goes through depression, the only person in her life that she trusts is her History teacher Mr. Bruner. He gives her advice on how to get through her teenage problems. At the end of the movie, you see her as a much happier person.

School dress code changes with the times, trends

TAEGAN JACOBS
REPORTER

As the times change, so does fashion.

And, as demonstrated by the fashion trends of the well remembered 1970s, 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s, as well as our current beloved trends of 2017, the times sure do like to change fast.

For better or for worse is to be debated.

One thing's for sure though, and that's that dress codes change just as quickly as the trends.

"It's hard when fashion's always changing," World History teacher Brenna Dacey said. "To constantly be changing the dress code to accommodate what's in style, what's in fashion. I think they do the best they can. But it's really subjective, and it's tough, and I feel like they stay on top of it."

To successfully accommodate and keep up with the trends, dress code is usually one of the first things reviewed at the start of the school year—even as early as the first week.

As for this year's dress code, the administration decided to remove the rule restricting leggings and ripped jeans.

"I think this year, since they updated it, it's a little bit more laidback," Dacey

said. "Because I do think that they realized that if you go into a store, ripped jeans are common and those cold shoulder shirts are popular. So it's like they realized they had to accommodate and adjust more and allow more because of what's in style."

And, despite the fact that this may not be much of a change for those who may have not even realized that leggings, ripped jeans, open-shoulder shirts and clothing similar was against the dress code in the first place, this is a significant change compared to the policies of the past.

"Bellevue used to be a very conservative district," Bellevue West dean Jessica Prusha said. "Honestly, if we spent all day worrying about how many holes people had in jeans, that's all we would do. So, we tried to de-vilify dress code and try to update it along with the trends."

Although Prusha and Dacey attended different high schools—Prusha graduating from Omaha Bryan High School in 2000 and Dacey from Bellevue East in 2003—one thing they both remember being a main concern when they were in school regarding dress code was gang affiliation.

"You couldn't wear certain gang colors, you



File Photo

Ripped jeans that were once considered a distraction are now regarded as acceptable school attire.

couldn't wear hats, pants that were saggy and showed guy's boxers," Dacey said. "For female students, it was fingertip—for shorts and skirts, the tip of your fingertips—and then two fingers for your straps. Otherwise, ripped jeans, leggings—that wasn't really popular when I was in high school, so those weren't really a concern. But I remember the big thing was gang affiliation stuff."

For the most part, the way dress code violations are handled are the same as in the past, except for some minor personal methods of approaching an issue.

"You know, whenever I address dress code I always try to spin it not so to make the student feel uncomfortable about what they're wearing, because I truly believe people have the right

to wear what they want to wear," Prusha said. "But it's just making sure you're dressing for your environment."

Without thinking about the controversy surrounding dress code, Prusha makes sure to always think of two things when addressing violations: safety and respect for your environment. Dacey believes that fashion is a way some express themselves.

Prusha does have one concern about the way teens are dressing nowadays.

"My biggest concern for teenagers and how they dress nowadays is why are we bringing back high-waisted pants?" Prusha said. "Because those were in the 90s and they should have stayed in the 90s. They're gross."

A Brief Timeline Of Bellevue West



Bellevue West first opened its doors to students in 1977.



The 1978 baseball team won West's first state title.



The North Gym and its link were added in 1980.



In 1990, ninth grade was added to the school.



The school day's end time changed from 3:10 to 3:20 in 2009.

From student to teacher: How West has changed

MELISSA IRISH
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Although seniors have expressed their excitement at being able to leave high school behind forever for decades, there are some that wind up returning. Among that handful of alumni are those that come back to teach.

Craig Moraski, Kelly McVey, and AJ Reimer all fall into that last category. When they attended Bellevue West, the school looked significantly different, with vast quantities of bright orange and a futuristic floor plan.

"There were no doors and there were glass walls," Moraski, who graduated in 1988, said. "Some of the classrooms had a divider, like the cafeteria has, so that they could make them into a big classroom. That's why when they closed all the classrooms in that the heat and air didn't work very well."

Having been involved in several sports and then becoming a coach, Moraski said he had noticed a significant change over the years

in how athletes prepare during their off-season.

"Now there's a lot more year-round preparation for sports that puts a little more pressure on kids to have to split their time," Moraski said. "When I was going to school here, it was you played during the season with a little preparation before, but you weren't pulled by three sports into three directions all year-round. There's pressure on coaches to be more com-

petitive which trickles down to more pressure on kids. Other coaches want them to compete in something else in the offseason but they still want you to be part of what they're doing too."

Reflecting back on when he was attending Bellevue West from 1994-1998, Reimer noted that student involvement in organizations has changed.

"We were allowed to be involved in more things," Reimer said. "I think now

everything is so darn specialized that it's hard for you to do other things and everything is becoming more year-round. It was easier for people to try different things rather than be stuck with one thing."

While McVey was a student at Bellevue West, neither she nor her peers had cell phones yet. However, she said she did not believe that the increased access to cell phones is always advantageous.

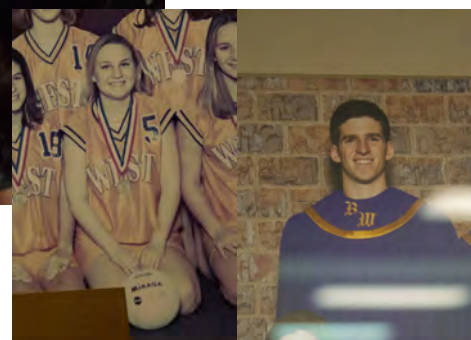
Photo Credit
Gauret Stearns

AJ Reimer's photo hangs on the Fine Arts Wall of Champions for 1997 All-State Choir. Kelly McVey's photo is on the Athletic Wall of Champions for 1996 State Champion Volleyball team.



Photo Credit Melissa Irish

Craig Moraski talks with sophomore Juliaana Brophy and freshman Marti Brown during his Strength I class.



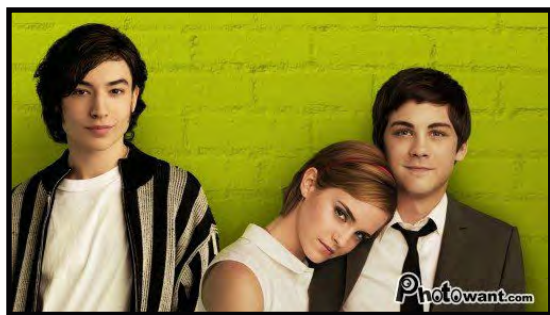
into adolescent anxieties, concerns, life

Photo Courtesy of Flickr



"Almost Famous" William Miller has been under the roof of his overprotective mother, but he becomes a fan of rock music and starts writing articles for underground artists. A Rolling Stone editor hires him as a teen to write a story about them. Before publishing the story of all the problems Rolling Stone has, their lead guitarist accuses him of lying.

Photo from Summit Entertainment



"Perks of being a Wallflower" Charlie Kelmeckis has been released from a mental health care institution and is ready to begin high school as a freshman. Still suffering from depression, he meets two seniors with whom he gets really close. Throughout the movie you see how Charlie adjusts to high school and battles his depression.

Photo from Universal Studios



"The Breakfast Club" Everything can change in a detention room. Five high school students—each of them from different cliques—are brought together when given detention. While serving their time, their perspectives of each other change and they end up building a powerful friendship despite their differences.

From junior varsity to varsity: Athletes make large improvements in a short amount of time



File Photo

Meleah Turner dribbles the ball in the girls basketball game against Lincoln Southeast on Jan. 28, 2017. The T-Birds won 65-56 against the Knights.

EMMA GAGE
REPORTER

Each year, athletes of every sport make it their goal to improve their skills in hopes of making a varsity team. For some, this transition happens quicker than others.

Her first year at Bellevue West, Jackie Apel played on the freshman volleyball team. But, as a sophomore, she improved enough to make the varsity team as a middle hitter.

"I was super excited and pumped and ready to play on varsity," Apel said.

Apel said she found that her drive to improve came from a desire to play at a more competitive level. She said she believed that the challenge on this new team would also push her skills and help her become better.

"I just wanted to be on a higher level with girls that I can improve with," Apel said.

Senior Meleah Turner was in a similar situation during her first years play-

ing basketball at Bellevue West. Turner played on both the freshman and JV teams as a freshman, suited varsity as a sophomore, and started varsity as a junior and senior.

"I was excited to play with the girls that I practiced with because I was

coach Rick Mintken knows the amount of effort that some athletes put into their skill development both on their own and with their team.

"We do summer workouts, fall workouts, and then we have our season," Mintken said in an email. "There

der to enhance her skills.

"I worked with my dad probably six days a week in the gym outside of practice," Turner said.

While Mintken has seen students transfer or quit because they do not make it on the "A team," he also has first-hand experience with athletes like Turner and Apel who are willing to wait a little longer and put in the work needed to improve.

"It does not happen overnight," Mintken said.

Mintken also noted that hard work is not only important in sports, but it can also affect a student's future career.

"If you really want something in life it is not going to be given to you," Mintken said. "You have to work for it."

Apel believes that in order to be successful in any sport it's important to continue to put in the extra effort.

"Work hard and push," Apel said. "Push yourself so you can get where you want."

"If you really want something in life it is not going to be given to you. You have to work for it."

Rick Mintken

practicing with varsity," Turner said. "When I got to varsity it was fun to actually be able to go to the team dinners, and be involved more with the higher level."

Even though some students start preparing for their careers well before they are ever on a high school roster, a lot of work happens between seasons.

Head girls' basketball

is a lot of stuff that goes on behind the scenes for these kids to get where they are."

For both Turner and Apel, their success came from hours of hard work, often on their own time.

"I had to put in a lot of work from the spring season," Apel said. "I went to the gym to get extra reps."

Turner also dedicated time in the off-season in or-

From T-Bird to Cowboy: Former Bellevue West star helps turn around Wyoming football

NATHAN HAWKINS
BROADCAST MANAGER

Continued from Front Page.

"You just have to show everyone that people from Nebraska, that we can play football," Johnson said. "Especially from Bellevue West, Huffman has done so well these last couple years. If you look at all of the successful players from West lately, there's a bunch."

C.J. is one of the most notable names of Bellevue West football history, but he wasn't new to the infamy. C.J.'s father, Clester Johnson, can be seen a few rows above C.J. on the Athletic Wall of Champions. Clester was also the best player in the state of Nebraska at one point,

winning Gatorade Player of the Year in 1990 as a quarterback for the T-Birds. Clester then went on to be a wingback for the Huskers, contributing on back to back national championship teams for the college.

Clester knows that his lofty football career put pressure on C.J., but said he tried to make sure it didn't affect him.

"I think there is a certain level of pressure that he put on himself," Clester said.

"But I always told him to be

who he is and don't feel like he has to live up to what I did."

C.J. isn't the only one in the family who has the pressure of having a former football star as a father. C.J.'s two younger brothers, Cade plays at South Dakota State, and Keagan, who is a freshman at Bellevue West, are part of the successful athletic family.

Keagan, who C.J. said will be better than him one day, was close with his brothers growing up and is happy to see C.J.'s success.

"I've spent my whole life with him," Keagan said, "So it's been awesome seeing it all pay off these past few years."

Keagan has been able to take some of the game skills that he's observed from his brother.

"He's helped me a lot because during the games he would stay calm," Keagan said. "He always kept his cool."

C.J. has the composure to match his talent, which according to Bellevue West head coach Michael Huffman has seemed effortless for him.

"I always called C.J. 'silk smooth' because it



Photo Courtesy of C.J. Johnson

C.J. Johnson runs in a 29-yard touchdown against Gardner-Webb University on Sept. 9, 2017. Johnson had a career-high 130 receiving yard performance.

didn't seem like he was running very fast or had subtle moves," Huffman said. "Nobody ever touched him; they couldn't tackle him, they couldn't press him, and he just ran by everybody."

C.J. is focusing on continuing to improve those already skilled assets. He's been part of turning around the Wyoming football team, which has jumped from

2-10 in 2015 to 7-5 this season.

"We're slowly getting better and better and that's all I want to do," C.J. said. "Get better this offseason that's coming up, and just help out the team as much as I can."

As C.J. finishes his second year of college football, he further distances himself from the time of his record

breaking Bellevue West days. Although his days as a T-Bird were special, he was ready for the next challenge.

"There's nothing like Friday nights," C.J. said. "It was so much fun, but I think I achieved all I could. I knew I wouldn't take anything back and I really think I had a successful four years, and I was able to move on happy with myself."



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