

HERE IT IS



# 'Feed Me'

Three puppeteers and one actor prepare to play the part of Audrey II, a man-eating venus fly-trap, in the theatre department's spring musical "Little Shop of Horrors"

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# THUNDERBEAT



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# 'Feed Me':

Three puppeteers and one actor prepare to play the part of Audrey II, a man-eating venus fly trap, in the theatre department's spring musical "Little Shop of Horrors"

**LeAnne Bugay**

Editor-in-Chief // @LeAnneBugay

Senior Jon Waller pushed his glasses up the curve of his nose and pecked away on a fake typewriter.

Adjacent to him, a monstrous venus fly trap gaped open its jaws, exposing its scarlet-colored mouth with fangs the size of a human head.

"Feed me," the plant boomed.

Waller was frustrated with the plant's demands, and the two bickered back and forth. But the plant's mouth movements didn't match its voice. The vines on the side were stagnant, lacking emotion. Waller hobbled around the monster, continuing only on the crutch of his script.

The crew stopped the bleeding.

"No, like 'feeeeed me,'"

"It has to be faster though in between,"

"No bouncing,"

One thing was clear that afternoon: they were not ready.

But at that time, the stop-and-go flow of rehearsals was typical, considering the cast and crew of the theatre department's spring musical, "Little Shop of Horrors," a 1982 horror comedy written by Howard Ashman, had only begun a few weeks prior. Figuring out how to coordinate four actors into the role of one character, the man-eating plant named Audrey II and its three smaller replicas, would consume the lives of the lead characters for the several weeks leading up to showtime.

After the department picked up the rental puppets in a U-Haul from Omaha Benson in early January, the newly crowned puppeteers, freshmen Eliot Althof and Amelia Kerstetter and sophomore Ireland Sullivan, got right to work.

Their process started off slowly,

with the puppeteers getting comfortable with the plants, officially named "pods." But as the rehearsals picked up and the days flew by, the importance of memorizing the lines and pronunciation patterns of the voice of Audrey II, played by senior Anna Braxton, rose into their view.

"It's kind of like animations really where you have to do voiceover acting," Braxton said. "But instead of recording and lining up pictures, we really have to be on the same page and make sure that I'm saying stuff the same way every time in order for them to copy the movements at the same time."

Matching the puppets' mouth movements with the syllables of Braxton's lines is most challenging, according to Althof. To practice synchronizing, Braxton sends voice recordings of exactly how she plans to perform her lines to the puppeteers for them to digest.

Even then, some physical challenges stand in the way.

Althof, who controls pod four, the largest version of Audrey II, does so on his knees inside the hot trap of the puppet, which has two large arms on the inside. The weight of the mouth, while not unbearable, can make it hard for him to lift the mouth quickly enough to match Braxton's words.

While Althof mans the body of Audrey II, Kerstetter and Sullivan act as "tendrils," or the vines of the plant. The two wave around pillow-stuffed fabric vines on opposite sides of Audrey II.

"It's especially difficult because Amelia and I are the ones who do the tendrils, and we can't see each other on the other side," Sullivan said. "So we have to practice in the mirrors to try to mimic each other's movements and try to make it look as coordinated as possible. It took a while, but listening to the songs over and over and really practicing in the mirrors kind of helps with that."

While Sullivan manages

the inside of the slightly smaller Audrey II puppet, called pod three, Althof and Kerstetter switch to tendril duty, where they face the same challenge of coordinating their acting through the plant using carefully designed choreography and facial gestures.

Even though Kerstetter's pods one and two are handheld, she still faces physical hurdles, one being how she conveys the emotions of the plant.

"I don't really know what faces to do, so I'm still experimenting with that," Kerstetter said.

Kerstetter's pods are small enough that Waller's character, Seymour, the floral shop owner and male lead of the musical, carries them around. Sometimes, Kerstetter is caught in the middle of the action between Seymour and another character. But to Waller, the work of Kerstetter, Althof, and Ireland with their puppets is an essential part to both his performance and the quality of the whole show.

"I'm seeing them as embodiments of the plant, which is really cool because then it's not just me looking at Ireland or Eliot or Amelia," Waller said. "It's actually looking at the plant and their facial expressions back to me and reflecting what the plant would be looking at me like."

But through the frustration of missed lines and some awkward

movements, the puppeteers have gained their footing. Sullivan said their adaptability and having to perform as a unit has only lifted them up. As a product of the constant reliance on team work, Althof said he's enjoyed his time working with Kerstetter, who was already a friend, and meanwhile forming a new friendship with Sullivan.

Braxton said that because she can watch the puppeteers while she sings offstage, she's seeing Althof, Kerstetter, and Sullivan's energy and hunger pay off in the form of a quite entertaining performance.

"The puppeteers really do all the magic," Braxton said.

A few weeks later, Waller and Audrey II were bickering again. Waller paced in front of the monster, fuming that it was hungry.

"Feeeeeed me," the plant thundered.

But this time, Waller continued his lines, Kerstetter waved around Audrey II's tendrils, and Braxton's voice begged for supper.

They were ready.



Graphic art by Jay Walker-Schulte



# CRCC to add second mental health therapist for BPS

LeAnne Bugay  
Editor-in-Chief // @LeAnneBugay

Children's Respite Care Center will be adding a second licensed mental health therapist to serve students with mental health concerns at Bellevue East and West.

The decision is due to the "caseload size and effectiveness" of the program, according to a document from the February 3 Bellevue Public Schools Board of Education meeting agenda. The document included that in the first semester of this school year, 61 total students were referred to current therapist Danielle Garrison—42 from East and 19 from West.

CRCC is an Omaha-based non-profit that provides comprehensive care to children with a range of health/behavioral issues and their families. BPS confirmed to The Thunderbeat in March 2019 that the two entities would be partnering, and Garrison started working at both high schools on September 4, 2019.

CRCC will provide the second therapist at no cost to BPS, according to the document. The addition of the second therapist will house one at each school full-time.

Director of Student Services Rodney Brown said that after Garrison met a certain threshold for referrals in mid-November, BPS and CRCC agreed that a second therapist would be beneficial. Brown said that the interview process is done and the district expects the new therapist to start in mid-March.

"Danielle Garrison will serve as the full time LMHP (Licensed Mental Health Practitioner) at Bellevue East and the new LMHP will be at West," Brown said in an email.



Scan the QR code to watch a video about current CRCC therapist, Danielle Garrison.



Photo by LeAnne Bugay

Senior Jack Mettin directs sophomore James Keller on how to compost his lunch.

# FBLA starts school-wide composting and recycling initiative

Owen Reimer  
Reporter // @OwenReimtime

**P**roject Revitalize, a new FBLA program, started off as a way to help the school coffee shop, but it turned into something that could make the entire district greener.

FBLA has partnered with Hillside Solutions and Green Bellevue to begin a composting and recycling initiative at Bellevue West called Project Revitalize, (previously called Project Nest), that will continue throughout the year. The goal is to create a completely student-funded, school-wide composting and recycling program.

The concept for this service started earlier this year, and was originated by FBLA officer junior Baden Brumbaugh. He said that FBLA originally wanted to compost waste from the Thunder Brew. After thinking about how they could push students to compost, the idea turned into instituting composting and recycling across the school.

The main focus is starting a composting process during school lunch, which started on Feb. 10. Various student organizations accomplished this by pitching in to support the cause and having students follow the steps to incorporate composting.

"Normally we just go and we dump our stuff and that's it," Brumbaugh said. "You're still basically doing that."

The process of throwing one's trash from lunch away has changed slightly. Instead of dumping everything into a trash can, now a student would put their food and napkin in a separate bin, and the rest into the trash. After that, a student stacks their tray.

Another major aspect of Project Revitalize is that it allows clubs to collaborate and provide opportunities for students to serve their community. Instead of giving the custodial staff yet another thing to clean up, various organizations through the school are coming together to help, and make sure no extra work is added for the custodians.

"It's definitely reduced the amount of trash bags we take out," head custodian Laura Olsen said. "It's gone really smooth. With the kids, and FBLA, and all the groups that are helping, it's been really cool to see it."

Students can volunteer during lunch times and class periods to set up and tear down composting stations. The clubs and groups that are contributing so far are National Honor Society, French Club, Sophomore Senate, ROTC, and Ecology Club.

"As we keep going more groups are going to jump in," Brumbaugh said.

These clubs will volunteer to help run the composting stations, help re-incorporate paper recycling, or "adopt" a wing, and take over a department and pick up their recycling each week.

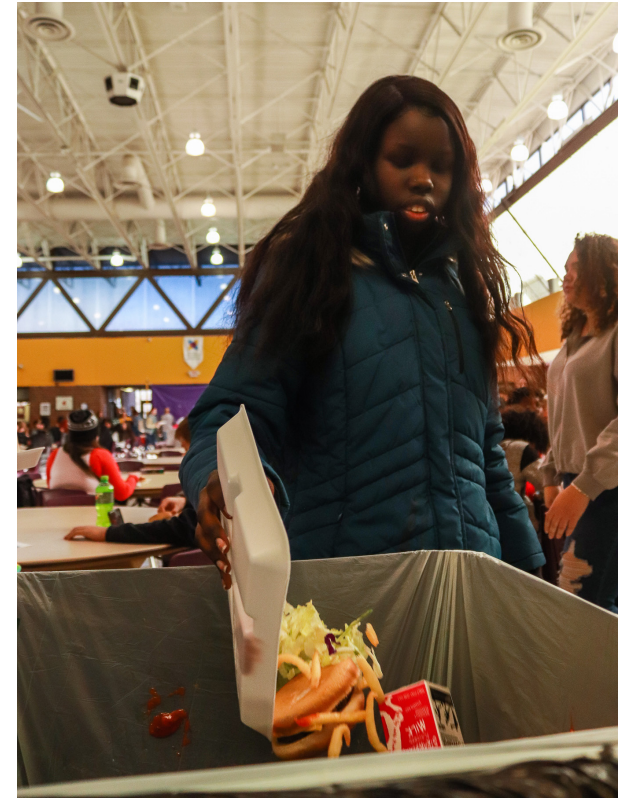


Photo by LeAnne Bugay

Senior Raechol Olieny tosses her lunch into the compost bin in the small cafeteria.

On top of that, a major goal is to be completely student-funded, so that the district does not have to pay for the cost. The money raised is going towards paying for the bins being used, to have the waste composted, and all of the stations cleaned out. FBLA also wants to prove that this could be easily incorporated into other schools.

"We really want to take it outside of Bellevue West," project lead Leah Larson said. "This is kind of a trial run to solidify that process that we can show the district that it can work at all levels."

This is already something being done in other school districts around the state as well.

"I wanted to be one of the people to set the trend in Bellevue," Brumbaugh said. "I visited Brownell Talbot, where they have every grade level going through, and if kindergartners can do this, I think that we can."

The program is being run by FBLA, and will continue, at least, throughout the rest of the school year. By getting the help of organizations across the school and wanting to make a positive change, this composting initiative has come to form.

"The goal is to minimize how much waste our school produces," Larson said. "I think it just makes students just take a moment to reflect when they're throwing their stuff away, the little things they're doing that can impact the environment."



# Forensics travels to Harvard for competition

Frankie Hessig  
Reporter

Four students from Bellevue West's forensics program competed in the largest national tournament at Harvard University from Feb. 15 to 17.

Before this event, the largest in-season forensics tournament West has participated in was the Nebraska state speech tournament competition.

Head forensics coach Becca Hier said she wanted to find an opportunity for her students to experience a competition on the national level in preparation for The National Individual Events Tournament of Champions in Houston, Texas after the season was over.

"You expose students to this caliber of tournament now and they start to learn how to compete on the national level," Hier said.

In-state tournament competitions become routine. Students present the same piece all year and the same students compete in the same events.

"We all know each other because we've been competing with the same pieces all season, so we realize 'This is the strongest competitors, this is the not so strong competitors, and this is where I'd rank among

them,'" junior Tyson Forbes said. "But at nationals we have no idea who's who so it's terrifying."

Not only are the students the same, but the judges recur as well.

"A lot of times it's typically people who are set in a certain way of how things can be," senior Darian Draft said. "But you can't get that at nationals because it's people from all different age ranges, backgrounds, and states."

It's not only the size of the Harvard competition that makes it difficult, but the unknown. Sophomore Robyn Boyland said she didn't have high hopes for the results of the Harvard tournament.

"I don't think I am going to do the best, I'm going to be completely honest," Boyland said. "But I feel like I'm going to gain a lot more confidence and being able to pursue things that I wouldn't typically."

Boyland had no reason to doubt herself. She ranked in the top 16 percent of all forensics students in the country. Draft and Forbes also made it far into the competition ranking in the top 30 percent.

"What started out with us trying to have fun and do speech somewhere else turned into us realizing that we have the capacity to be nationally competitive," Draft said.

**"But I feel like I'm going to gain a lot more confidence and being able to pursue things that I wouldn't typically."**

**Robyn Boyland**

# 'T-Bird Nest' opens to supply food, resources for students



Photo by Elissa Treu

"T-Bird Nest" displays their rules for using their resources on the outside of a cabinet.

Elissa Treu  
Reporter // @elissatreu

T-Bird Nest, formerly known as Thunder Threads, received a grant in October from the Bellevue Public Schools Foundation for storage and supplies, with the help of junior AP English students Karlee Reyome, Christian Wohlford, Julia White, and Michael Garza's Challenge Based Learning (CBL) project. The Nest provides food and hygiene supplies for students in need.

The T-Bird Nest is now officially open before, after, or during school in room 151, as was stated in February's weekly announcements.

"Ms. Flynn, Ms. Arkfeld, and I worked together with the CBL group to set up the T-Bird Nest and figure out what we wanted it to look like," T-Bird Nest sponsor Brenna Dacey said.

The sponsors ask students who utilize the Nest to assess their needs based on what their daily situation is.

"We don't want students who come and use it to be stigmatized, so what we put back there are just like reflection questions: 'Do you have food already on you? Do you have money to buy food?' so that students are kind of self reflective," Dacey said.

Clubs and organizations at West are encouraged to volunteer.

"NHS (National Honor Society) is a really big part of it; they're always in there helping," Reyome said.

About ten students use the Nest each day, according to Dacey.

"A lot of my students will utilize it in my classroom, which is fine, because again we kind of told them 'make sure you're using it properly and not abusing it,'" Dacey said. "There's a couple of students who will get stuff for the weekend as well."

Some resources available to students include granola bars, Cheez-Its, Ramen, shampoo, toothbrushes, toothpaste, deodorant, and laundry detergent.

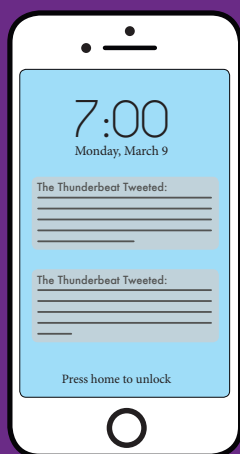
"We hope to expand it as we kind of see what the need is," Dacey said. "We're kind of evolving as we go."

The T-Bird Nest sets a budget to buy their resources through striving to raise awareness on social media, using the grant from the BPS Foundation, and personally buying supplies needed for the management of the project.

"We had been putting in some messages in the announcements and everything," Reyome said. "I think it's definitely brought some awareness with kids in organizations like NHS, but I don't think it's as big as we wanted it to be."

In the future, Reyome wants students to know that the T-Bird Nest will continue to provide essential items to students who need support.

"There are places where [students] can come get help if there's nowhere else for them to get proper needs that they need met," Reyome said.



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**BPS Board of Education**  
meeting updates.

Next meeting: Monday, March 9 at 6:30 p.m.



Photo by LeAnne Bugay



## Seniors discuss what they're looking for in 2020 POTUS candidates

Emma Gage

Managing & Copy Editor // @GageEmma

**M**any high school seniors are being thrown into the world of politics as the 2020 presidential election creeps closer and they begin to reach the legal voting age of 18.

Whether someone's political views come from family influences or independent research, new voters must determine what policies they stand with amidst a variety of external factors.

Senior Kelsie McClain works for Nebraska's 2nd congressional district representative Republican Don Bacon and has been politically influenced by her family since a young age, but is still trying to pinpoint exactly which party her beliefs best align with.

"I'm definitely more swayed toward the right but I think I might lean more Libertarian than anything else, but we're still kind of up in the air," McClain said.

Senior América Viveros said she finds it necessary to research before forming opinions.

"I probably follow so many political accounts," Viveros said. "I read the news once in a while. I watch TV like the actual news to see what's going on. I try to learn as much as I can so I'm not ignorant."

Senior Gabrielle Swing shared a similar sentiment.

"I don't have a lot of friends who really agree with me," Swing said. "I've really formed my own opinion by researching and not really, I don't want to say bandwagoning, but I feel like that's a lot of what teenagers do. They don't do their own research and so I do my own research and go with what I think is best for my country."

A candidate's social media strategies can

affect voters' opinions on them. Senior Sam Thrower said he supports President Trump, but doesn't like his social media presence.

"I mean I'll look at their social media but I don't really care about it as much, it's mostly ads and stuff like their speeches and whatever," Thrower said. "Trump's an idiot on social media so I don't like that about him, but he's a businessman."

Swing said she finds that a social media presence does influence her views on political candidates.

"Twitter, Instagram—I don't personally like how our current president presents himself on Twitter but you know it's just how he decides he does that and he's free to," Swing said.

Working for congressman Bacon's campaign has allowed McClain to experience first hand how social media can affect campaigns.

"And you have to be pretty careful because it can be used in a positive way and I think you see that a lot, but if social media doesn't like you that can really backfire and especially if your tweets are, you know, going viral for the wrong reasons, that can have a really negative impact on your campaign," McClain said.

Viveros said she partially bases her views off of how candidates present themselves on different social media platforms.

"If I see them using sexist comments or homophobic comments, transphobic comments, racist comments, I'm not gonna support them as much 'cause I know their morals aren't where they [should] be," Viveros said.

A student's peers may also shape their political ideas.

"I'd say most teenagers can influence each other, but my views haven't changed in

a long time," Thrower said.

Viveros said she has seen how the strong beliefs of one person may affect how another person develops their political views, causing uninformed opinions.

"Then, that cycle just repeats itself over and over like it has with Americans for many decades, if not centuries," Viveros said.

McClain noted how the opinions of others may affect how open someone is with their views.

"I think with most teenagers what your peers think is a really important factor in what you believe politically and even if you don't agree with everyone else you're not going to feel comfortable expressing that opinion," McClain said.

In addition to research, Swing's family has helped shape her concept of politics.

"I think my parents have had a big influence," Swing said. "Of course they want me to form my own opinion, do my own research and that's what they've pushed me to do, but I'm able to have those conversations with my family and they play devil's advocate and I play devil's advocate with them and we both try to learn from each other so that helps."

Regardless of their associated party, student voters are also looking to promote change within the government.

"I think what we're lacking with our current president right now is tact," McClain said. "And so I think going forward, diplomacy, and I don't want to say regal because it sounds pretentious, but a certain degree of respect toward others is something that I think we should look for."

Viveros said she values ethical politicians.

"They genuinely care about people and they try to not harm others, but they try to

solve problems in a way that's not destructive," Viveros said. "They take people, humans into consideration and not just profit and resources."

Swing and McClain both look for candidates who can cooperate with others.

"I look for someone who can work with everyone," Swing said. "I know all politicians are pretty dirty but someone who tries to keep their reputation clean."

Thrower said he doesn't want a candidate that lies to voters.

"Honesty," Thrower said. "Which is almost impossible to find in politics nowadays, which is pretty sad."

Although McClain wants a candidate to support her views, she also wants them to be authentic.

"I really like to vote for good people and it's very frustrating to me when I feel like someone is running and they're ingenuine even if I feel like I agree with them from a policy standpoint because I think public officials have a certain duty to lead by example and I don't think that they can run a country or run a state or make legislation if they're not also simultaneously inspiring the people, their constituents, to live better lives and treat each other well," McClain said.

Viveros said she wants people to take the time to form their views no matter what they are.

"I think people should really research their political views and they should really look into facts instead of just going with what they hear around them," Viveros said. "If you actually go out of your way and think for yourself, then I have no problem with that, but if you're just basing it off people around you just telling you stuff and you're just believing it, that's not convenient for anybody."



# Awkward Artists

‘Awkward Art’ creates ‘quiet and comfortable’ environment for artists to make friends

**Gnally Boukar**

Reporter // @gnallyboukar

Sophomore Alyse Stone looked around at the people attending the first meeting of “Awkward Art,” an art club for art lovers who struggle to make friends.

The art room itself can be an overwhelming place: paintings, portraits, and sculptures cover almost every open surface as well as counters stacked with copious amounts of art supplies. Stone, a self-proclaimed awkward and shy art lover, quietly introduced herself to the small group as the club leader.

“Awkward Art Club is for people who want a smaller group,” Stone explained to

the shy students. “Regular art club can be very loud and noisy, and ours is just a little more quiet and comfortable.”

Stone said her goal for the club is for people who struggle with making friends to find people to talk to and to bond with over their shared love of art. During the meeting Stone expressed how she struggled with social issues herself and she thought there must be other kids who felt the same way.

“I’m awkward and I have a hard time making friends,” Stone said, telling the group that is what inspired her to start the “Awkward Art” club.

The new art club plans to have meetings on Mondays following Feb. 21. As of right now, Stone said that the group will get together from 3:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. and work

on independent art projects, but that could change in the future. Stone said she believes the members in the club will not always be constant either.

“I think people will come and go,” Stone said. “Other people will join and hopefully find more friends.”

Stone said she fears that the club will stray away from the original idea of a quiet, intimate club. Bellevue West art teacher and art clubs advisor Paula Yoachim said she is also concerned about the club’s size growing too large. Between just two meetings, member numbers almost doubled.

“We want to get the word out but not to explode into a huge club,” Yoachim said. “That’s what we’re trying to get away from.”

Yoachim works as an advisor to Stone,

who Yoachim credits with conceptualizing the idea of “Awkward Art.” According to Yoachim, her main job is to be a support system for Stone, but creatively speaking, Stone is the one charge.

“The whole concept of this is Alyse Stone’s idea,” Yoachim said. “I just support her with helping remind her about materials, and bringing snacks. It’s really student-driven though.”

Yoachim added that she hopes students who are a little more shy can still feel welcome and create art in a quieter, more inclusive environment.

“They take ownership of the club,” Yoachim said. “I mean it’s their idea, that it’s a place they feel they all belong.”

## West students celebrate Black History Month

**Gia Blanks & Gnally Boukar**

Reporters // @gnallyboukar

According to the Library of Congress, Black History Month originated in 1926 as Negro History week to honor African American achievements and culture.

Black History Month has a different meaning for everyone, and for junior Lexi Austin and senior CJ Johnson, Black History Month is an important time of the year because it recognizes African American culture and achievements that are widely underappreciated in what she calls a mostly white country.

“People are always constantly like, ‘Black History Month is not a real month or a thing,’” Austin said. “But until we know the importance of the month no one else is going to realize it and it’s important that we know our value and our history.”

Austin said she believes anyone can recognize Black History Month. She said that a good example of this is the intercom announcements during advisory when they acknowledge African American achievements. Austin said the announcements recognize achievements without celebrating them which she said she believes is more

personal.

She said a problem with the announcements is they’re often people we grew up learning about since elementary school. For example: Harriet Tubman, Nelson Mandela, Maya Angelou, Frederick Douglass, and George Washington Carver.

“They can’t end prejudice, they can’t end oppression, they are doing what they can,” Austin said. “However, I feel like if that’s going to do the intercom thing then they should do less known people.”

Senior CJ Johnson said that Black History Month is a time he takes pride in himself and his culture as well as reflect on his heritage. Johnson said that Black History Month is also a time to learn about his ancestors and the things they endured.

Johnson argues that the school isn’t doing enough for Black History Month. Although he will be graduating this year, he said he hopes the school does more in the future than announcements to recognize and share black history.

“One thing I would like to see next year at Bellevue West, even though I’m not going to be here, is a specific day for every African American or black person to come together and do something,” Johnson said.

Johnson said that for Black History Month he went to the Martin Luther King Luncheon in North Omaha. Austin said she wouldn’t describe herself as someone who has done anything in the past for Black History Month, but this year she said she encouraged people to look into what Black History Month is all about.

“Growing up in Bellevue and Papillion you’re not really around a lot of black people,” Austin said. “I felt like as I got older and kind of on my own path and surrounding myself with different people I’m just more culturally aware. Which has kind of inspired me to do more and be more involved.”

Austin explained the social impact of her dedication to her culture. She said her friends don’t always understand the significance of Black History Month because they don’t personally relate to the month themselves.

“There are a lot of non-black people who kind of say and act like ‘you’re doing too much’ and ‘what is the purpose behind this?’” Austin said. “There are some who understand once you explain the importance of it personally, there are some that seem like ‘you need to calm down.’”

She said there can be a big cultural di-

vide between African Americans and what she calls “African Africans,” but she said she believes at the end of the day they’re both black and it’s important to remember they’re going through similar struggles.

“In the system we are black no matter what,” Austin said. “We are all going to live our lives the same because we’re black. I feel like there is a bigger divide between us as one race then there should be.”

Austin said she wants to use her voice to let African Americans struggling with their blackness to learn to find comfort in their skin and their heritage.

“You feel so much better with yourself when you get in touch with your culture and your group,” Austin said. “Just because you don’t know where you come from and this gives you a touch and sense of relief and self knowledge.”

Austin also added that she hopes all African Americans can embrace their culture and overall celebrate being black just a little more.

“Some people grow up in a society where being black is wrong, you’re not supposed to do too much and you have to try to blend in and I feel like we should get past that and celebrate your history,” Austin said.



# Teachers explain how to know if you're ready for an AP class

**Gnally Boukar**  
Reporter // @gnallyboukar

According to the College Board, Advanced Placement (AP) classes offer high school students college-level curriculum and exams to earn college credit. Among Bellevue West High School's variety of course options, there are several classes that offer the choice to take AP. Most core subjects have an AP class, with a couple in computer science.

There are several AP social studies classes available for sophomores, juniors, and seniors. They vary from college-level history classes to more elective style social studies. One course that is offered to juniors and seniors is AP Psychology.

Psychology teacher Robin Kratina said she believes students with good time management skills tend to do better than students who tend to put reading off until the last minute. Kratina also said she believes that the number one thing a student should be is curious.

"So at the end of the class here's what I hope, kids have a better understanding of being able to see behavior, take it in, explain

it to themselves without creating/having a decision about who the person is and being able to understand their behavior," Kratina said.

There are three AP math classes offered for students all across the board, including AP Calculus AB, AP Calculus BC, and AP Statistics. AP Stats teacher Jacob Eitzen said that he believes in order to be good at an AP math you don't need to be a strong math person, but rather someone who is committed to working hard.

"I think the overall benefits of taking an AP class are you get college experience in a high school setting," Eitzen said. "You get to experience what a rigorous classroom environment may be like."

Eitzen said he believes in any AP class, students should be organized and have the willingness to fail. Students new to AP may not be used to the heavier workload and expectations that come with an AP class, however, Eitzen believes that establishing early on that there's a certain level of effort you have to have in order to succeed in the class will help.

"I think the longer I teach AP, as long as a student is committed to working hard

they don't necessarily need to be a strong math person, or strong history person, or a strong English person," Eitzen said. "As long as somebody is committed to working really hard and it's something that they're passionate about they can do well."

AP Biology teacher Christine Hecht echoed Eitzen's statements, saying she believes that a hard work ethic and not giving up at the first bump is important. Hecht said her favorite part of teaching the class is how in-depth the course can go. She said one of the harder things about the course can be the level of thinking students need.

"In some of our regular classes, quite a bit of the tests are memorization-based like 'can you remember this term' while as in AP classes is a lot of analyzing and synthesizing information and that tends to be a step up for students," Hecht said.

English also offers AP courses for upcoming juniors and seniors. According to sophomore English teacher Jody Petrow, the difference between English 10 Advanced and the two AP courses offered is the focus on nonfiction in AP Language and Composition (AP English 11) and the deeper focus on literature in AP Literature and Composition

(AP English 12).

Petrow said the first thing she's concerned about for students taking AP is their writing abilities. According to Petrow, AP English 11 and AP English 12 focus more on timed writing not traditionally done in an English 9 or English 10 class, however she said she believes it's worth it.

"I think taking AP classes in general is awesome because it helps you be better prepared for college, it helps you get into college, and it helps you pay for college," Petrow said. "If you're getting credit for any college classes at all in high school you're saving yourself money down the line and college is horrifically expensive."

**AP Courses offered at Bellevue West:** AP Statistics, AP Calculus AB, AP Calculus BC, AP English Language and Composition, AP English Literature and Composition, AP United States Government and Politics, AP United States History, AP Psychology, AP World History, AP Biology, AP Chemistry, AP Physics I, AP Physics II, AP Computer Science Principles, and AP Computer Science

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# New tobacco laws affect teens

Gia Blanks  
Reporter

On Dec. 20, 2019, President Donald Trump signed the Tobacco 21 bill, which raised the purchasing age of tobacco from 18 to 21. The bill took effect on January 1, 2020.

Only 19 states have raised the tobacco age to 21, and Nebraska is not one of them. Instead, Nebraska has moved the minimum age to 19.

Bellevue West dean Sarah Schau said that although the new law is not going to put a stop to vaping and smoking in teens, it may have some benefits.

“Unfortunately, my guess is that it is probably easy to get from older brothers and sisters,” Schau said. “But it’s nice to have that safeguard put in place because most high school kids are not 19 and so it makes it a little more difficult to get. I feel like that is still a win.”

According to the American Lung Association in March 2015, a report from the National Academy of Medicine revealed that “Tobacco 21” could prevent 223,000 deaths among people born between 2000 and 2019.

Schau said she would have liked the legal age moved to 21.

“I just think that allowing youth that easy of access to something that they don’t truly understand how dangerous it is for them is scary,” Schau said. “Especially when research shows that their frontal lobe is not fully developed yet to be making grave de-

isions, so I feel like the adults are failing them, really.”

Tyler Roberts, an 18-year-old West graduate, who also vapes and smokes cigarettes, said he believes that the “Tobacco 21” bill shouldn’t be a priority right now.

“There are much bigger problems to focus on in the world,” Roberts said. “If tobacco is really that bad then they would have banned cigs and vapes a long time ago, but like whatever, if the world wants to focus on stupid small things instead of dealing with the bigger issues then let them.”

Artez White, also an 18-year-old West graduate, who vapes, said he believes that others’ actions should not dictate what he should be able to do.

“Personally it’s understandable with the epidemic going on or whatever,” White said. “I feel like those who were already old enough shouldn’t have to suffer for a handful of teens under the age limit choosing to shorten their lifespan.”

Schau said she believes that the epidemic we are facing with tobacco in teens is concerning.

“What’s most scary is youth and even as adults we don’t know the long term effects of this yet to even be able to talk about that,” said Schau. “We don’t even know what this is going to cause 20 years from now.”

While many of the consequences of vaping or smoking still remain unknown, the bill remains controversial.

“Vaping is bad for you, we know,” White said. “But it’s here. So either take it or leave it in my opinion.”

**“We don’t even know what this is going to cause 20 years from now.”**

**Sarah Schau**

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# Trump proposes rollbacks on Obama lunch regulations

Taegan Jacobs

Features Editor // @JacobsTaegan

In 2010, former First Lady Michelle Obama proposed the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act, which changed school lunch regulations in order to feed students healthier and more nutritious meals.

The act required schools to serve fruits and vegetables everyday, more whole-grain foods, and fat-free milk, according to USDA's Food and Nutrition Service. Regulations also included a calorie limit and required a reduction in saturated fat.

On Jan. 17, the Trump administration proposed a set of rollbacks on Michelle Obama's act. These rollbacks would allow schools more wiggle room when it comes to the student's nutrition—less of

Obama's desired fruits and vegetables, and more french fries and pizza.

Julie Jurek, who's been a part of the lunch staff for 14 years, said that when she first started working, Bellevue West offered french fries everyday. Where the secondary lunch lines next to the snack shop currently stand, there was a self-serve.

"And we would just dump fries and try to do this way and the kids took their own with tongs and got their own fries," Jurek said. "And it was so messy over there all the time, but the kids loved it though."

Before the law passed, the school had already started cutting down the self-serve to only a few days a week, but after, it was offered only one day a week.

But it wasn't only the fries affected.

"Everything had to be whole grain," Jurek said. "Some type of wheat, so you used to have white buns and you couldn't have white buns anymore, you had to have wheat buns. And then the pizza, and the pasta, the pasta used to be just normal old white pasta and it became whole grain pasta. So everything was—it didn't taste as good."

But the restrictions have eased up some, according to cafeteria manager Kellie Hooker-Picht. Where the original goal was 100 percent whole-grain, a law passed in 2018 changed it to only 50 percent.

While Hooker-Picht said she thinks the act is good for obesity, she is "100 percent" for the proposed rollbacks on lunch regulations.

"We would love to see maybe getting the milkshakes back, you know," Hooker-Picht said. "Which is a big thing. Old, greasy pizza that you fold over. You know, just fun stuff like that, I would love to get more varieties."

There is also no significant price difference between the less-healthy and healthier food options.

"You know, when you're seeking healthy food, say, going to a grocery store, you're gonna pay a lot more for healthy, obviously," Hooker-Picht said. "But when you buy in bulk like this, and because we are a school, the prices aren't that much more."



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And Hooker-Picht has already been proposing ways to change Bellevue West's menu.

"Food service downtown, they do all our menu planning," Hooker-Picht said. "And it's the same menu as it is for the whole Bellevue Public Schools. Although, I am talking with my boss and I'm trying to get more of an input on maybe a separate menu for high schools compared to, you know, elementary schools, stuff like that."

But until the government officially changes school lunch regulations, their hands are tied, according to Hooker-Picht.

Hooker-Picht's title puts her in charge of paperwork, deposits, concessions, schedules, and getting any food they may need for the day.

"Basically, just get the kitchen up and going for the day," Hooker-Picht said.

Bellevue West's kitchen staff is made up of 18 women. Hooker-Picht, who gets to the school at 7:30 a.m., says there are many different hats to wear.

West's two cooks arrive at the school and start preparing food at 6:30 in the morning—one is in charge of all the hot food, the other the cold, like salad bar and other produce.

Jurek is one of the four who comes in at 9 a.m., and she said when she's not filling the vending machines, she's preparing any hot food that goes in the snack shop.

"And then our jobs rotate every three weeks, so we're never in the same area," Jurek said. "Everybody's favorite job is snack shop."

But there's plenty of other areas to fill.

"The other girls don't usually come in until eleven o'clock," Hooker-Picht said. "And then I've got three people on dishes, and I usually have three people setting up the main line, two people setting up the snack shop, two people setting up the remote, two people on the sub."

After lunch, the staff is in charge of cleaning up their designated areas, including sweeping and mopping the floors, washing the tables, taking care of the trash and cleaning the friers on french fry days, according to Jurek. Most of the staff leaves by 2 p.m., but Hooker-Picht usually stays until 4:30 p.m.

"I'm always the last person to leave, correct," Hooker-Picht said. "Unless I have concessions, then the gals that are doing concession. But, you know, that's after school."

Hooker-Picht encourages students to give feedback.

"I'm always open for suggestions from the kids," Hooker-Picht said. "I love input on favorite likes, dislikes, something that you might wanna see on the menu that I can pass along."

Kelly Ripley serves lunch.

Photo by Taegan Jacobs



# Spring... into March

## Jay's top 3 spring cleaning tips

Jay Walker-Schulte

Co-Editor-in-Chief // @debauchering

### 1. Cleanse the energy and atmosphere of your room, not just the physical space.

Your physical space is a metaphor for your thoughts and mental health. If you let yourself dwell in disarray, it's likely that your mind will take the brunt of it. Before you start to clean: open a window, burn some incense, and take a deep breath. Remind yourself that cleaning is a worthy task, and will ultimately benefit you for the rest of the school year.

### 2. Make a checklist.

I don't know about you, but sometimes the sheer number of tasks I have make my head spin. There's always so much to do, in so little time. However, crossing things off as I undergo my cleaning journey calms my anxiety. Tack a list on your fridge and check each item off as you go—it will quell your agitated nerves.

### 3. Tackle one cleaning task per day, if you're easily overwhelmed.

Personally, cleaning calms me and makes me feel refreshed. However, not all take the chore with a grain of salt. Spring cleaning doesn't necessarily have to be a one-and-done deal. After all, spring lasts an entire season. If you need to, take things day by day. Pick a task: pick up all of your trash, or wash your sheets, or clean the windows—then what you don't have the energy to complete that day, do tomorrow.

## Emily's March Madness predictions

Emily Mabbitt

Sports Editor // @Emily Mabbitt

March has just begun and along with it comes one of the biggest events of the season, the NCAA Men's Basketball tournament. Though the field of 68 has not yet been picked, here are my predictions for the 2020 March Madness tournament.

**First Round:** With the first round comes upsets and during this tournament, being a high seed does not mean you're untouchable. Many low seed teams will see the end of their season, but potentially so could teams like Florida, Indiana, and Virginia.

**Second Round:** Though Gonzaga is highly ranked, I think their season will come to an end during the second round with a loss to Texas Tech. Unfortunately for teams like Iowa, I don't trust that Luka Garza will be able to pull his team through the tournament alone. In the second round we'll also say goodbye to teams such as Creighton, BYU, and Villanova.

**Sweet Sixteen:** Although Dayton and Florida State have been having good seasons while staying at the top of the AP rankings, I don't think they'll make it past the Sweet Sixteen. During the third round we'll also say goodbye to teams such as Michigan State and Oregon.

**Elite Eight:** Jared Butler and the Baylor Bears have had an impressive season but I believe their season will be ended by the Duke Blue Devils. San Diego State has been in seclusion for most of their season despite being highly ranked and I think their under-the-radar tactic will knock out Maryland. We won't be seeing Kentucky or Texas Tech in the Final Four either.

**Final Four:** Senior guard Miles Powell has been on fire for the Seton Hall Pirates this season. Being up against Kansas he'll have to go through junior Marcus Garrett first, who is a sensation on defense. San Diego State and Duke will also have to fight for a spot in the top two, but ultimately I think Duke has more talent to continue on.

**Championship:** In the final game of the season Duke and Kansas will brawl it out for the win. Despite losing Zion Williamson, Duke has had other players such as Vernon Carey Jr. and Tre Jones step up for the team. But with 7'0 senior Udoka Azubuike under the basket and sophomore point guard Devon Dotson, Kansas is a threat. That being said I think Kansas will go all the way and win the championship for the first time since 2008.

## Owen's fun facts about Nebraska

Owen Reimer

Reporter // @OwenReimtime

Nicknamed the Cornhusker State, Nebraska, sadly, isn't known for a ton. Being in the bottom 20 percent in population size for the United States (we're number forty!), not a lot is known about our home state. However, many interesting things have taken place in the state, and because March 1 was Nebraska's birthday, it's time to talk about some.

### 1. The birthplace of the McRib

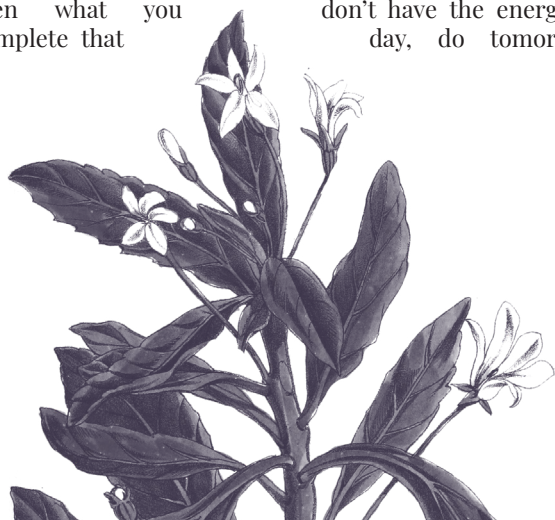
You read that correctly. Roger Mandigo, a former UNL animal science professor, is credited for the invention of 'restructured meat', the type of faux pork used in the infamous McDonalds sandwich. This shockingly isn't the only sandwich with a Nebraska origin, as the Rueben was originally created in Omaha.

### 2. Lincoln wasn't supposed to be the state capitol

The original governor of Nebraska was strongly in favor of Bellevue as the state capitol, but he died two days after taking the oath of office. Also, the fight to have Omaha the state capitol was one that took years to end, with Lincoln being the obvious winner, despite having a fraction of the population.

### 3. There's a Nebraska city called Friend

With over 400 towns ranging in population from four to 460,000, there's plenty of locations that are named weirdly. Not only is there a Friend, with a population of 978 people, but there's also Funk, Magnet, Surprise, and who could forget Ong.





# 5 Questions with Emma

## Emma Gage asks Grace Fettig

**Q: What events do you swim?**

A: The events that I swim are the 200 IM and the 100 fly. They're my favorite.

**Q: What school records have you broken?**

A: I have broken the 200 medley relay doing the fly leg.

**Q: What do you do to celebrate a successful meet?**

A: To celebrate a successful meet I hang out with the swimmers usually, we maybe go out to eat afterwards, that's a good one.

**Q: What goes through your mind during a race?**

A: My mind kind of goes everywhere. I think how much it hurts but I'm like 'the faster I get it done and the faster I swim, the faster it'll be done.'

**Q: What goal do you want to break before you graduate?**

A: I would like to get a minute on the hundred fly, that'd be pretty nice.



Photo by LeAnne Bugay

## Upcoming March Sports

### BASEBALL

Bellevue West @ Papillion La-Vista South (March 20)

Bellevue West @ Elkhorn South (March 24)

### GIRLS SOCCER

Bellevue West @ Skutt Catholic (March 19)

Bellevue West @ Papillion La-Vista South (March 21)

### BOYS SOCCER

Bellevue West vs. Lexington (March 20)

Bellevue West vs. Gretna (March 26)

### GIRLS TENNIS

Bellevue West vs. Omaha Central (March 24)

Bellevue West vs. Millard North (March 26)

### BOYS GOLF

Bellevue West @ Omaha Northwest (March 26)

Bellevue West @ Omaha Central (March 31)

### TRACK & FIELD

Bellevue West @ Nebraska Wesleyan Invitational (March 20)

Bellevue West @ Doane Invitational (March 27)

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# Basketball siblings support each other on and off the court

**Meg Gross**

Opinion Editor // @m3gz3r

While many athletes view their team as a second family, six Bellevue West basketball players have the opportunity to play with their own siblings.

Senior Kayla Elmore has played for West's varsity girls team since she was a sophomore. This year, she was joined by her sister, freshman Faith Elmore, and played alongside Faith during her final season for the Thunderbirds.

"Our family thinks it's pretty cool, especially our dad," Faith said. "Once again, it's our only year to play with each other, so they really like it."

Kayla said that due to the schedule of their games and practices, the two of them have become closer.

"We'll literally drive everywhere together," Kayla said. "Really, the only time really that we're not together is when I go to work."

Despite their close bond, Kayla said that they treat each other no differently than they would treat their other teammates.

"If she's ever doing something not right, I can teach her, just like I'd do for anyone else," Kayla said. "I treat them all the same."

For girls head coach Dane Bacon, coaching siblings is nothing new, having been an assistant coach for the Thunderbirds with both former players Mia and Akili Felici. Bacon said that coaching siblings can be fun.

"There are some times that you can defi-

nately tell that they're sisters and you definitely understand that Kayla and Faith will sometimes be more competitive with each other," Bacon said. "At the end of the day they do a really nice job with it and I'm happy they get to do it at Bellevue West."

This season, boys head coach Doug Woodard coaches two sets of siblings, junior Chucky and senior Trey Hepburn, and junior Frankie and senior Louis Fidler.

"In one way, coaching siblings is not any different than individuals," Woodard said. "Deep down they'll always want the other one to do very well, so to have that I think adds a lot of value to the team."

Chucky has played alongside his older brother Trey for nearly his whole life.

Having played with each other for so long, the Hepburns have learned how to support each other on and off the court.

"We talk to each other a lot outside of practice," Trey said. "At home, we'll have conversations about what we could've done better and what we need to keep doing."

The Hepburn brothers even find ways to support each other off the court, like through Trey's music.

"Whenever he posts something about his songs, I always make sure I'm reposting it," Chucky said. "His music's really good and I think he could go a long way with it."

Frankie has been playing basketball with his older brother Louis since third grade.

"Louis has always definitely been a little harder on me than my other teammates



Photo by Meg Gross

Senior Kayla Elmore and freshman Faith Elmore sit on the bench together during a game.

have, but that's just because we're brothers," Frankie said.

Frankie added that the two are almost always competing with each other, on and off the court.

Throughout the ups and downs of the game, Louis said that the brothers find support in each other.

"We talk a lot about the games and how we played and just talking about how to get

better," Louis said. "If we have a bad game, we like to joke around with it and with each other, which makes things easier."

Woodard said that the siblings' different strengths add to the team.

"I think that's a beautiful thing, especially in a sport like basketball," Woodard said. "Trey has different gifts than Chucky, and Louis has different gifts than Frankie. That's what makes basketball such a great sport."

# Bellevue West welcomes new girls varsity soccer head coach

**Emily Mabbitt**

Sports Editor // @emilymabbitt

Bellevue West is welcoming new girls varsity soccer head coach Tobi Maertzke to the coaching staff this spring. Maertzke is a 29-year-old originally from Germany who came across to America as a foreign exchange student in 2007. Maertzke played soccer for Omaha South High School and Bellevue University. He has also been coaching a U14 boys soccer team at Bellevue Soccer Club for the past five years.

Maertzke originally applied for the position as head coach not only because it opened up, but also because of his strong ties to Bellevue.

"I just want to get a little bit deeper into coaching as well," Maertzke said. "So whatever opportunities come up I would like to take."

When it comes to coaching boys in comparison to girls, Maertzke said that girls listen better whereas boys like to mess around and show off.

"It just seems like girls want to learn and want to just excel a little bit faster than what boys do," Maertzke said.

Sophomore Reece Flores said that as a coach, Maertzke is encouraging and knows what's best for the team.

"I feel like he works to our strengths which is good so hopefully we'll have a lot of success in the season," Flores said. "I think he's just a good guy but also a really good coach."

During the 11-week spring sport season, the athletes will play over 20 games, but Maertzke is excited for the amount of soccer that they'll play.

"The schedule looks crazy to me but I think that's what I'm looking forward to as

well," Maertzke said.

Freshman Chloe Easterling is excited for the soccer season and having Maertzke as a coach.

"He seems like he knows soccer and is willing to put effort into the players individually and not just winning," Easterling said.

The best part about being a coach for Maertzke is helping the players learn and seeing development from day one to the end.

"The most rewarding thing is to see something play off in a game the way you've worked in practice," Maertzke said. "Just seeing that development from day one to the end."

Maertzke's philosophy for coaching is being laid back and having the players learn by doing.

"I'm trying to get the girls and whatever team I coach, especially in the youth ages,

to have them figure out their own decisions and make their own mistakes and then learn from those," Maertzke said. "I see myself more as a guidance to decision making and trying to push them in the right direction."

**"I just want to get a little bit deeper into coaching as well."**

**Tobi Maertzke**



# Romance: Redefined

‘The Photograph’ brings positive representation to the big screen



Photos from Universal Studios

**Ellie Woodard**

Reporter // @elliewoodard\_

**A**lthough the on-screen representation of black women is improving, it's still clear that there's underrepresentation.

A study of “Gender & Race/Ethnicity Across 1,300 Top Films from 2007 to 2019” by the Annenberg Foundation showed that of 57 female directors across 1,300 top-grossing films from 2007 to 2019, only 6 of those directors are black women. Black women need to be better encouraged to tell their own stories in film because they represent the underrepresented women in the US population.

Director Stella Meghie does exactly that in “The Photograph.” In this film inspired by both the story of her own grandmother and older black romance films, she displays the paralleled romance of two couples in differ-

ent times.

Instead of constricting black cinematography to trauma, “The Photograph” covers the courage and power of revealing the truth to others, forgiving, and accepting love. It provides a necessary stepping stone to lead the path of future love movies with black protagonists.

“The Photograph” follows the estranged daughter of photographer Christina Eames. After her mother’s death, Mae Morton (Issa Rae) opens a safety deposit box containing a photograph and two letters. As Mae reads the letter, she dives into the mysterious romance between Christina and a man named Issac Jefferson.

The movie shows the relationship between Issac and Christina, exposed from the start to be doomed. Simultaneously, it juggles Mae and Michael, a relationship similar to the former, but unaware of their outcome.

It would have been nice to see more of the moments that made each relationship connect. Instead, it jumps from place to place, skipping through the tiny details that show that they’re in the “getting to know you” phase even though they mention it through dialogue. Mae and Michael are awkward, resembling a middle school relationship that can’t figure out when it’s appropriate to hold hands.

On Mae and Michael’s first date, they talk about music, where Mae humorously admits that Kendrick Lamar makes her feel guilty because she can’t impact the world like he does. They laugh and it becomes an on-going joke throughout their relationship. More of this is needed because it would establish the effortless love-at-first-sight relationship they were aiming for.

Despite the characters’ inability to communicate their emotions to others through speech, the stories portrayed their feelings

well. Emotions are instead communicated through lovey-dovey eye contact, facial expression, and body language.

The 90’s were the peak of romances featuring black leads. Romance films like “Love & Basketball,” featuring all-black protagonists are a rarity now. Today, it’s difficult to find black romance films that focus on love without analyzing the history behind the person being black.

Meghie combines the story elements from classics like “Love Jones” with her own approach to what love means. The outcome was a modern romance with the comforting familiarity of a 90’s film.

Black narratives are limited, often dark and traumatic. Black romances are often tainted by humor, becoming straight comedies spiced up with the hint of a relationship. However, “The Photograph” contributes a new perspective for future black love stories on the big-screen.





# Brooke & Meg's



## Bachelor Predictions

**Meg's picks:** who should win

**Brooke's picks:** who needs to go

**Meg Gross**

Opinion Editor // @m3gz3r

**Madison Prewett**

For Bachelor fans across the nation, week nine's episode was not ideal. Bachelor Nation was struck when they watched fan favorite contestant Madison Prewett self-eliminate after her decision to save herself for marriage. Since the first one-on-one, Auburn, Alabama native Prewett has obviously been a front runner this season for bachelor Peter Weber. On just their first date, Prewett met Weber's family at his parents' vow renewal, an event that obviously meant a lot to him. Because of this, it's easily visible to fans that Weber likes her; he even gave Prewett a framed picture that she took with his family that day. Coincidentally, Prewett also caught the bouquet towards the end of the date. She has also managed to stay out of the drama (champagne scandals, girls who are "there for the wrong reasons," etc.) circulating the mansion while still maintaining a connection with Weber. The only thing stopping a Prewett-won season is



the fact that after meeting her father, Weber was not given a blessing to marry her. Though, this is almost the exact scenario that we saw on Colton Underwood's season of "The Bachelor." Underwood, like Weber, wasn't given blessing to pursue Cassie Rudolph, and now the two are happily dating.

**Kelley Flanagan**

Despite her elimination in week six, it's easy to say that Kelley Flanagan had been a fan favorite since the very first episode, considering that she had run into and met Weber in a hotel before filming. From week one, Flanagan had arguably been the realiest contestant. So real, that she even had enough nerve to call Weber out for not being "ready" for whatever the end of the season holds. Flanagan might even be the most level-headed contestant we've seen on a Bachelor season thus far. At times, it almost seems like she's reading the audience's minds, like calling Victoria Fuller a "hot mess," for example. Unfortunately, many Bachelor fans were left disappointed after Flanagan was sent home during week six, beginning a campaign for a Kelley Flanagan season of "The Bachelorette," which even Peter is anticipating. In a recent interview with ET, Weber said "Kelley would kill it. Kelley is so ready, Kelley is one of the smartest people I've met. I think she can absolutely make an amazing [Bachelorette]." For Bachelor fans everywhere, hopefully this ain't the last we see of Flanagan.

**Brooke Jones**

Entertainment Editor // @brookeejonesss

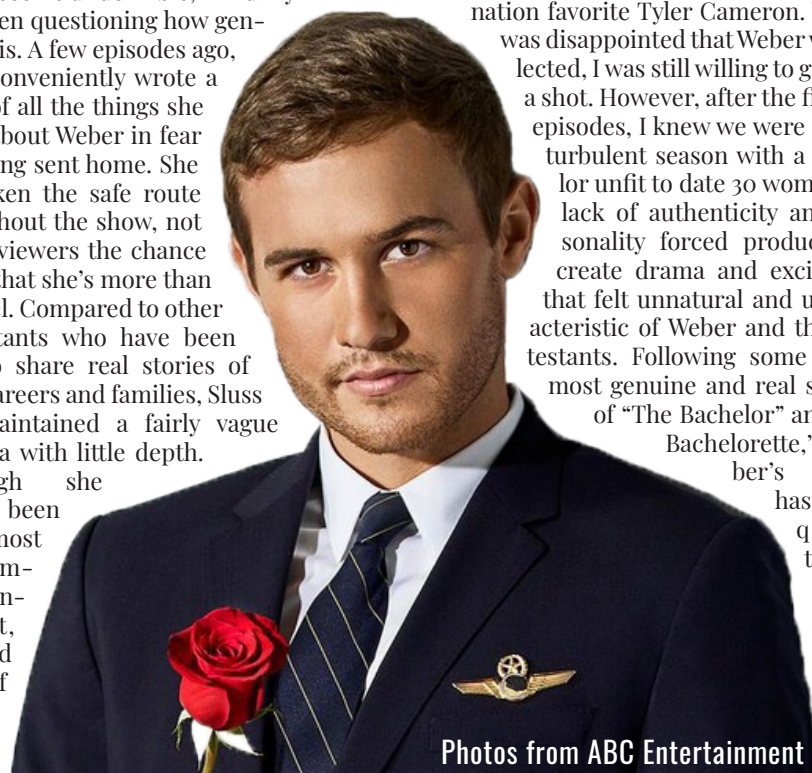
**Hannah Ann Sluss**

After receiving the first impression rose on night one, fans were certain that she would be a front-runner throughout the season. While she has managed to keep herself in the spotlight, she's drawn in plenty of negative attention. Sluss jumps on every opportunity to victimize herself and make the other contestants look like the bad guy. Time and time again, she has proven herself to be immature and unprepared to be engaged in a few short weeks. While the chemistry between her and bachelor Peter Weber seems undeniable, I find myself often questioning how genuine it is. A few episodes ago, Sluss conveniently wrote a letter of all the things she loved about Weber in fear of getting sent home. She has taken the safe route throughout the show, not giving viewers the chance to see that she's more than a model. Compared to other contestants who have been able to share real stories of their careers and families, Sluss has maintained a fairly vague persona with little depth. Although she hasn't been the most problematic contestant, I find myself for-

warding through the show anytime she makes an appearance.

**Peter Weber**

Controversial, I know, but bachelor Peter Weber has consistently let the contestants down with his wishy-washy behavior. Whether it's entertaining drama whenever it arises or reminiscing on his previous relationship with former bachelorette Hannah Brown, he obviously has a lot going on... maybe too much to be the bachelor. His inability to make up his mind and say "no" to drama keeps him in an endless cycle of confusion and bad decisions. Plenty of fans were disappointed with the show's decision to make Weber the next bachelor, given the other choices like Mike Johnson or Bachelor nation favorite Tyler Cameron. While I was disappointed that Weber was selected, I was still willing to give him a shot. However, after the first few episodes, I knew we were in for a turbulent season with a bachelor unfit to date 30 women. His lack of authenticity and personality forced producers to create drama and excitement that felt unnatural and uncharacteristic of Weber and the contestants. Following some of the most genuine and real seasons of "The Bachelor" and "The Bachelorette," Weber's season has been quite the let-down.



Photos from ABC Entertainment



## Editors-in-chief redesign the Thunderbeat newspaper

LeAnne Bugay & Jay Walker-Schulte  
Editors-in-Chief

Dear Thunderbeat readers,

The Thunderbeat is now being printed in a square format with a new graphic design theme.

Last school year, we noticed several of you passing by our table at lunch on distribution days. When we talked to a few of you, many said you didn't read the newspaper because it wasn't appealing. Because our goal is to inform the student body, we took your concerns seriously.

Many of the students we talked to said that a more graphic design-based newspaper would appeal to our generation. We constructed a modern, sleek-looking newspaper to attract more readers, while still maintaining a standard of ethical and professional design work.

We sincerely hope you find our redesign more appealing to the eye. But even though our design has changed, we are still dedicated to investigating stories and informing you on the topics you care about.

# PDA in school is a distraction to students and staff

CJ Lilienkamp  
Broadcast Manager  
@CJ\_Lilienkamp41

As I walk down the hall listening to music with a skip in my step, I turn the corner and realize what hallway I'm turning into: the PDA gauntlet. Everyday in the same spot at this exact time, students embrace each other, sucking each other's faces.

I try not to look, sneak by, and go to my class--but they start to get more aggressive. I begin to speed walk to my class.

It might be just two kids holding hands in the halls showing everyone their affection for each other, but it usually progresses into making out and causes a distraction to students in the halls. Students and teachers both have complained and joked about the kids showing PDA.

In my book, there are three distinct levels of this obscene act.

**Level One:** Holding hands and hugging. This is fine as long as the couple doesn't block people in the halls from getting to class. Most of the time, I don't even notice them.

**Level Two:** This is where I will see pecks on the lips right before the two separate. This is dangerous because some people might get weirded out by this, but as long as it's only for one second, then it's acceptable.

**Level Three:** This is the severe level where I'll see two young adults devouring

each other in the hallway in front of a class. This one leads to students and teachers being uncomfortable, and it can sometimes ruin my appetite.

Multiple teachers have tried to make a stand against PDA. The math hallway led the charge by putting up signs that embarrassed the offenders last school year. Teachers and staff need to follow suit with this kind of punishment of embarrassment because kids get more self-conscious when they get called out for something they do and will most likely not do it again.

If it doesn't stop, faculty needs to intervene and handout detentions or demerits. Math teacher Beth Dyrstad saw these actions take place in her hallway and made a stand.

"Last year these two kids kept making out right in front of my door and I got so tired of seeing it," Dyrstad said in an interview last year. "I decided to put a poster up saying 'Not the make out hallway' and I even moved desks in front of my class and the two kids finally disappeared."

If you're one of the offenders taking part in this vulgar act, please open your eyes and read the sign behind your lover's head and stop. If you're a student plagued by these roadblocks in the hall, don't be afraid to bulldoze your way to class. You've got somewhere to be. Leave them in the dust.

XOXO,  
CJ

## LEVELS OF PDA

### Level One

#### Holding hands and hugging

This is fine as long as the couple doesn't block people in the halls from getting to class. Most of the time, I don't even notice them.

### Level Two

#### Pecks on the lips

This is dangerous because some people might get weirded out by this, but as long as it's only for one second, then it's acceptable.

### Level Three

#### Severe

I'll see two young adults devouring each other in the hallway in front of a class. This one leads to students and teachers being uncomfortable, and it can sometimes ruin my appetite.

# A rough start to the year isn't the end of the world

Elissa Treu  
Reporter // @elissatreu

We tend to judge how the rest of the new year will pan out based on how the first few months go. While the new year holds lots of anticipation of good things to come for many people, it amazes me how a tragedy happens and we are shocked that it could occur during our new start. It's like we feel entitled to have absolutely nothing put a damper on our shiny glow of a new year.

From my observations, the doomsday panic seemed to begin when a U.S. drone strike killed Iranian General Qasem Soleimani on January 3. Mass hysteria and rumors of WWII spread like wildfire across Twitter. On January 26, Kobe and Gigi Bry-

ant, along with nine others, tragically died in a helicopter crash. America was heartbroken. Obviously, this crash was awful for so many reasons: five different families are forever broken, and Bryant was such an inspiration to so many people. In recent news, for some icing on the cake, the coronavirus broke out in China. 34 people have tested positive for the virus in the U.S., according to CNN producer Michael Nedelman.

Soon after, the pessimistic posts began to make the rounds on social media. While scrolling through my Twitter feed, many tweets from random Gen Z users came across my screen. "This year sucks bro," posted Twitter user Piper Houghton, "We all abt to get taken out by a new virus. We about to start WW3. Now Kobe is dead. And

it's only JANUARY. 2020 is cancelled idc." This one tweet pretty much sums up the rest of them; they all said the same things: the world is ending, 2020 is the worst year ever, we're all going to die in a lava pit full of sharks and tornados. You get the jist.

It's a little early to cancel 2020. Technically speaking, we've tried to "cancel" every year so far, since complaining on social media came into existence. It's pure ignorance to believe that a certain year is going to be perfect. All it takes is a little perspective to clear things up. In the 80's, almost everyone in America was scared to death of getting nuked by Russia during the Cold War. In 2001, 9/11 absolutely devastated America and started the longest ongoing conflict in U.S. history.

The point is, bad things are going to happen every single year until the world actually ends. Whether it's stuff in our personal lives or occurrences that make the national news, bad things happening are inevitable. It's a part of the ups and downs of living life. That being said, good things are also going to happen to all of us this year, no matter how negative we are about the upcoming months. It's the little things each day that add up to the good in each year: laughing with friends at lunch, working towards a goal in a sport or a difficult class, driving home and seeing the sunset, watching a new movie, spending time with family, or experiencing something new and exciting. Find those things in your own life and never take them for granted.