

2017

# **State Journalism Champions Class A**



## Opening Division

In the lazy, hazy days of summertime, when these school halls are barren save for the permanent blinking of fluorescent lights and accumulation of dust atop the ruby lockers, life remains still. No student voices ring out across the cafeteria, no creaking of ancient desks across the scuffed linoleum floors, no bells to be rung or paper airplanes to be tossed.

Resting in the Commons, sat the dutiful eyes of Henry Claymoore, the first principal of City High. His black and white gaze was fixated on the north end of the Commons, towards the entrance of the cafeteria. He still rested on the wall above the drinking fountain, where he has always been, where he will always be.

As the leaves on the crabapple trees turned to a brilliant crimson, so did our school become more colorful with a brash array of brilliant human diversity. For one of the first years in the history of City High, minority student comprised the majority of the student population. And with it, our ideas became diverse. Perspectives became colored with more worldly views and differing experiences. 10 new staff members and a new assistant principal were embraced by the student body.

And, when the doors opened on August 15th to reveal the new that graced the school, so did it reveal the old.

Still, Mr. Butler, in his signature Bugeater Red tie, high-fived every student in sight. Still, Ms. Hammock scolded kids for running down the halls through thick, brass-rimmed glasses. Still, the lights never failed to blink nor dust to dissipate. Still, Mr. Claymoore gazed out at the masses of students during passing periods.

We were different, a generation building an ever-changing world. But, still, we were the same as we had always been and always will be.

Dylan Miettinen  
Elkhorn High School  
Yearbook Theme Copy Writing

# THE TRUTH ABOUT

# Lice



**6-12  
MILLION**

Children in the  
USA get lice  
every year



Contrary to popular  
belief, Headlice cannot

**JUMP  
AND FLY**

The life cycle of the  
average headlice is

**21  
DAYS**

**99%**

of headlice have mutated to resist  
over the counter lice treatment

**DISEASE**

can only be transmitted by one type  
of head lice: The Body Louse-

Lice can be contracted by

**ANYONE**

SOURCES: HEALTH.USNEWS.COM, MAYOCLINIC.ORG, PEDIATRICCHAIRSOLUTIONS.COM

Camryn Bowers

Papillion-La Vista High School, Info Graphic





LIKE  
NEVER  
BEFORE

Benjamin Valle is all too familiar with the cold linoleum floors of Leaguetown Central Hospital. As the son of a terminally ill cancer patient, his visits to the dreary hallways are frequent.

Every visit, his mother grows more ill with a different kind of sickness: the sickness of worrying she will not see her son graduate high school.

On April 23, however, Valle will walk the same hospital floors with a different purpose. Surrounded by a mass of celebratory balloons and streamers, he will receive his high school diploma.

And Valle's mother will watch.

Senior Benjamin Valle will graduate early in the lobby of Leaguetown Central Hospital. His mother, Mrs. Lydia Valle, will fulfill her life long wish of seeing her son graduate before her battle with mantle cell lymphoma comes to an end.

In early April, Valle's mother was given a month to live. This month did not include Valle's assigned graduation date.

Valle asked Principal Kendall Lindaries for the opportunity to graduate early, but did not expect the accommodations that came with it.

"Not only did [Lindaries] allow me to graduate early, he suggested a full graduation ceremony in the hospital," Valle said. "I was so touched I could hardly speak."

This special event holds more importance than its timing. Valle will be the first in his family to graduate high school, and will do so as an honor roll student. As he has worked overtime to earn all of his credits early, this accomplishment will be especially gratifying to his mother.

"My mother has always pushed me in school," Valle said. "My mom regretted not having her diploma, and she wanted to make sure we had the opportunities she didn't."

Despite his current success, Valle has had his fair share of battles. Valle's mother was diagnosed with cancer when he was a freshman, and he has watched the illness progress throughout his high school career.

"It's been hard watching this awful disease take my mother," Valle said. "I know this will be the last time my mom is here for a milestone in my life."

Despite the immense struggle it has caused, Mrs. Valle's illness will not steal joy from this commemorative time.

"My mother is not expecting any of this. We simply told her we had a special surprise for her," Valle said. "I can't wait to see her face when she sees me in my red cap and gown."

Valle's father has been the director of transportation in the school district for 20 years, while Mrs. Valle serves as PTA president and a regular volunteer. As part of the foundation of the Leaguetown district, the graduation ceremony will serve as an act of gratitude towards the Valle family.

"Many friends plan to be there to show their love and support," Lindaries said. "This is going to be a wonderful celebration for Benjamin and his mother."

Lindaries has made sure that although the ceremony is taking place in a nontraditional lobby room, the ceremony will be formal.

"We thought we would buy an old cap and gown and just put on a little show for [Mrs. Valle] in her hospital room, but Mr. Lindaries wouldn't have that," Valle's father, Mr. Antonio Valle said.

Nicole Ludden  
Papillion-La Vista High School  
Newspaper Feature Writing



Aaron Mercado  
Fremont High School  
News Feature Photograph



For most people living in a house is the norm, but Hank Bettina, a social studies teacher at Leaguetown High School, had a different idea. Bettina bought a school bus that he plans on moving into over spring break, March 17-22.

"I bought the bus on a whim," Bettina said. "The bus was in decent mechanical shape, but the inside was pretty beat up. That's when the idea of converting it into a home just popped into my head."

After purchasing the bus, he spent his two week winter break transforming a bus meant for driving into a home meant for living. The toughest part for him was running electricity and getting a small water tank attached to the back of the bus.

Bettina said that he got a little obsessed with the project. One weekend he even stayed up for 36 hours.

"I was a little tired for school the next week, but the adrenaline and excitement kept me going," Bettina said.

His new home includes a small bed with a storage area, a mini bathroom, and a kitchenette with a table. He also decorated with bright colors to brighten up the space.

Bettina originally bought the bus for \$3,000 and the reconstruction cost about \$6,000. He said that he will save more than \$500 a month on rent and about \$200 a month on utilities.

"With the money I save on rent and utilities, I will be able to travel more," Bettina said. "I won't live in a bus forever, but for right now, it's the perfect place for me."

The overall goal for Bettina with the bus is a little more than a year or two summers of travel. In the summer, he plans to spend two months traveling the infamous Route 66. After he is satisfied with traveling, he will bring the bus to his grandfather's 80 acres in Colorado, where it will serve as a vacation home.

"A few people have questioned why I am doing it," Bettina said. "And I guess my best answer is, 'Why not?'"

Bettina is 25 years old, single and doesn't have a need for a lot of material things. Traveling is important to him and he still has plenty of time to live in a house. His lifestyle may be different than others but to him it is worth it.

Emma Schrick  
Blair High School  
Yearbook Feature Writing

The buzz of a cellphone vibrating, the ding of a new text, the vibrant tune of a missed call; all of these noises can be heard on a daily basis. More likely, they are all heard on a minutely basis.

Technology has infected the new generation. It has latched on and spread throughout the masses. Dependence on the cellphone particularly has catapulted the rise of technology in everyday life.

Dependency on anything has a negative connotation in society. Everyone is supposed to be an independent, self-sufficient contributing member of society by the time they're 18, but a piece of metal, a chunk of glass and some wires all wrapped up still dictates life.

For example, I cannot drive across tiny Lincoln, Nebraska without using "maps", much less anywhere else. Put me on the highway with no phone and I'm toast. One could argue that my lack of ability to read a map is a side effect of the accessibility of new technology.

Had I not had access to a phone when I first learned to drive maybe I would have learned to read a map and wouldn't have to plug in the Chipotle I go to every a week simply because I can't be bothered to remember how to get there on my own.

This common theme rings true for most aspects of the infamous cellphone. If I couldn't send a text maybe I'd be better at handwriting letters, if I couldn't make a call maybe I'd be better at face to face communication, if I couldn't take a picture maybe I'd be better at living in the moment.

But then again, maybe I wouldn't. If there were never any advances in technology, I'd still be waiting for a letter from the pony express. The lightbulb, the printing press, the Model T were all revolutionary for their times, and I'm sure some critics thought that dependence on them would lead to the demise of society too. But, they all made life easier for people; no more horses and buggies, no more handwritten books, and no more oil lamps.

We are a technology dependent generation, and maybe that isn't the horrendous atrocity it's made out to be. Texting can help build relationships, calling could very well save a life in an emergency, taking a picture can save the memory, and "maps" gets me to Chipotle without the hassle of a real map. Although, realistically I should have that memorized by now.

Now, I'm not saying there doesn't need to be a balance. Should I still know how to read a map in case of an emergency? Sure. Is that going to happen? Probably not.

Cellphones should not be tethered to everyone at every moment. We shouldn't have a mini heart attack when we think we left it at home for the day (yes, I did that this morning). A cellphone is meant to be a device, not a lifeline.

With kids having cellphones, tablets, iPods etc. earlier and earlier, they are becoming more of a necessity than a privilege. They have never experienced life without them. They will never have a technology-free childhood, but that doesn't mean they aren't going to have a good, wholesome childhood too.

Erin Dolph  
Lincoln Pius X High School  
Newspaper Column Writing

# WHAT'S FOR LUNCH?



**CHOOSE WISELY. CHOOSE HEALTHY!**

Geordana Gonzales  
Millard North High School  
Photo Illustration

# These Last Friday Night Lights

Coach Wittry leads to Rabbits to victory in final game as head coach

Beaming lights, the smell of freshly cut grass, and the deafening roar of the student section. It was something that Coach Jeff Wittry had experienced hundreds of times before. But there was something about this game that made it different from the rest. It was the first time Jackson High had made it to a State Championship game in football, and it was also the final time Wittry would lead the Rabbits as Coach. The fact that the team went home with a stunning Class B victory against Summit made Wittry's last game of his coaching career that much sweeter.

Wittry lead his team through an incredible last season. Though it started off with a disappointing loss to Washington, the Rabbits rallied, ending with a 12-1 record. After qualifying for the playoffs for five straight seasons but never making it to the final game, a state championship was the perfect way to finish strong.

Wittry had some amazing players to thank for this incredible State win. Senior running back Dan Smith dominated the game with 25 rushes for 178 yards and 12 total tackles. Joe Schellen and Jim Hiller also aided the team in rushing yards.

A holding call late in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter nearly cost the Rabbits the game. However, Smith responded with a nearly 40-yard field goal that sealed the victory for the Rabbits. The game's final score was 17-16, with the Rabbits winning by only one point. It was a narrow victory, but one that would be remembered in school history for years to come.

Wittry's retirement came as a surprise to many when he announced it was his last game in the locker room after the game. "We were all excited to win, and then when Coach Wittry told us he was retiring, we all got teary-eyed. He's been such a great coach to have. We couldn't have asked for a better way to send him out," said Smith.

A leader, a coach, and a friend to many, Jackson was grateful for Wittry's many successful years as their coach and for winning the school their first State title in football. "I couldn't ask for a better way to end a 25-year career in coaching. The last 21 years here at Jackson have been great. This is a storybook ending to my coaching career."

Megan Szwanek  
Omaha Marian High School  
Yearbook Sports Feature Writing

## **All Business, No Play Makes Hawk's Point Student Center a Dull Place**

*by Lily Yates*

Path Hall commons area leaves much to be desired in terms of community atmosphere

To think of a college cafeteria is to think of something like family. As students adjust to living away from home, commons areas and dining halls can usually provide reassuring feelings of comfort and community. At Hawk's Point student center, however, the atmosphere is less like the family dinner table and more like an office cafeteria.

Built in 2016, the Path Hall dormitory building's exterior is sleek and efficient. But when the metallic doors clang open, the impression regrettably carries inside. Whoever took charge of design choices in the dining area, especially, was more concerned about an impression of modernism than any semblance of warmth. A blur of monochrome and mismatched textures and patterns manages to spread blandness throughout the sprawling cafeteria. It seems designers were unable to decide on one motif, from the space-age, art deco upholstered chairs and mosaic carpet to the ponderously contrasting wood stains on the walls and tables.

But, thankfully, food service at Hawk's Point gets the job done where it counts. An accessible buffet-style greens bar boasts enough variety for even the most finicky veggie fiend. Students can also avail themselves of continental breakfast amenities, including a waffle maker, juice bar, and selection of fresh-looking pastries. If a foodie isn't quite feeling up to the task of assembling breakfast themselves, the cafeteria has also provided staff at the delicious-smelling Create bar to serve up hot commodities like omelettes and pancakes.

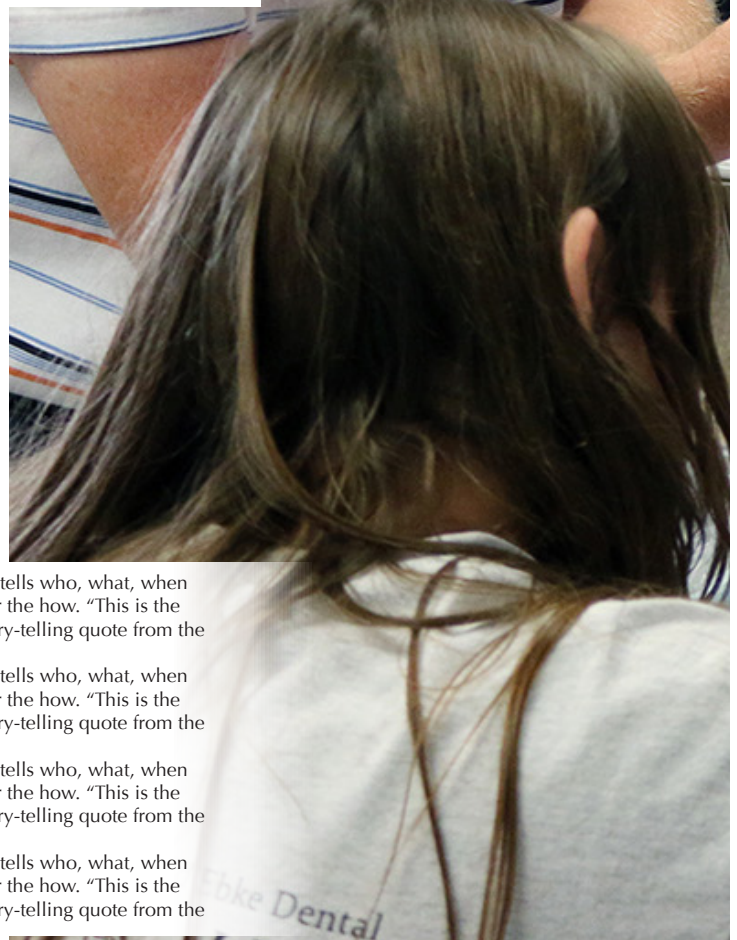
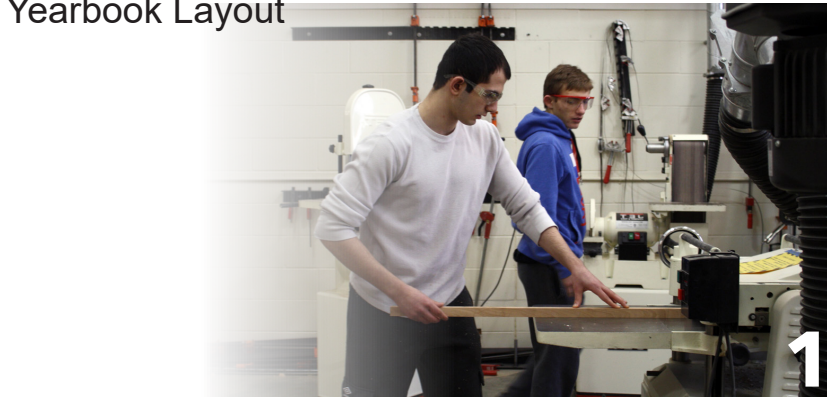
However, it was apparent in some respects that the way the food line is run may need some improvements. At 8:55 a.m., prime breakfast rush time, the menu was either still or already on its lunch phase- the smell in the air, however delicious, certainly did not consist of baked pollock, steamed rice, carrots, and green beans. Maybe it was due to the presence of only four kitchen visible kitchen staff, but it seems like knowing what's on the menu should be a rather more important consideration.

Another component of the food services available was the small convenience store just off of the main buffet. Manned by a single, obviously-exhausted college student, at first glance the store seemed ripe with options. But the positive expectation set by a sign outside, proclaiming, 'a healthy meal starts with a healthy appetite' was quashed after a closer look at the array of potato chips, sticky candy, and soft drinks.

The stickiness of the convenience store candy, however, luckily doesn't speak to the overall cleanliness of the facility. Impressively, even the game room is spotless, where one could ordinarily expect to find collateral damage from the college students who frequent it. The room flaunts a plethora of activities like pool, foosball, ping-pong, and pinball. It is even equipped

Lily Yates  
Omaha Skutt Catholic High School  
Entertainment Review Writing

Kaitlin Smith  
Millard North High School  
Yearbook Layout



- 1** This is the first sentence of the caption: it is written in present tense and tells who, what, when and where. This is the second sentence of the caption, telling the why or the how. "This is the third sentence of the caption," said Your Adviser. "It might be a good story-telling quote from the person in the photo."
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Deianeira Rodriquez  
Millard North High School  
Editorial Cartooning



## Shooting for Gold

Every kid who grows up playing basketball has practiced the shot a 100 times in the driveway, breaking down every little detail in their heads and not going inside until they finally hit the shot, the shot to win a state championship at the buzzer.

The Norton Bluejays defeated the Stockton Tigers 78-75 on a game winning three pointer to win the Class B State Championship game in front of a packed crowd of 12,860 at Pinnacle Bank Arena in downtown Lincoln.

The Bluejays managed to pull off a 13 point comeback, capped off by senior Mike Davis's game winning three as time expired.

"That's my favorite shot, so I was excited once it left my hands," David said.

Stockton looked good early in the game, getting off to a quick 6-0 lead in the first quarter. Stockton sophomore Brent Hansen led the Tigers early scoring 11 points in the first quarter. Norton star senior Rod Green got into foul trouble and had to sit out the last 4:15 in the first.

Stockton started to pull away in the second quarter, extending their lead to 38-25 with 2:58 left in the half. Norton never went away though, and Green scored 9 points late in the second to shrink the lead to 4 at half.

"We had a good lead," Hansen said, "then they started coming back."

Senior Dru Smith led the Tigers in the third with 8 points, extending the Stockton lead to 11 going into the final quarter.

The thing that really changed the momentum of the game and brought Norton back into the game was switching from their signature press to a full court man-to-man look on defense, and really trying to speed Stockton up and get some turnovers.

"I knew we had to do something different defensively and the man-to-man pressure was the answer," Norton coach Rod Johnson said.

Norton forced 11 turnovers in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, which gave them a chance to comeback in the game.

"I think we panicked a little and once we started turning it over, everyone started turning it over," Stockton coach Jeff Wittry said.

The teams found each other tied at 75 with eight seconds remaining, and Norton had just taken over possession after a jump ball. Green was the first choice to take the shot, but when he found himself double teamed, he kicked out to his teammate Davis who hit the shot of a lifetime.

"I was supposed to take the last shot, but I couldn't get a shot off," Green said, "I have all the confidence in the world in Mike and I knew he could make it,"

Green came up big in his last game, leading all scorers with 24 and adding 11 boards to his efforts. Senior Dan Tietjan added 22 for Norton, while Stockton was led by Hansen with 21, and Smith who chipped in a double-double with 20 points and 12 rebounds.

This was Nortons first ever State Championship game, and they were led by a strong senior group.

"We seniors have wanted this for so long and we had come close the last few years," Green said.

Dylan Nicholson, Papillion-La Vista High School  
Sports News Writing

# TENNIS: FINAL SMACKDOWN

Jessica Blum  
Gretna High  
School  
Newspaper  
Layout

The common cliché among American citizens is the youth is the future of this country. For the MN girls tennis squad, not only is youth the future, but it has also become the present state of the team.

After entering the 2015 season with high expectations, and hopes of a state title in the works, the girls team snagged a slightly-disappointing fourth place at the state matches, with seniors Libby Koukol and Christina Ternent claiming the crown as the top doubles team in Nebraska.

However, with those two seniors, as well as a few others departing for college, there were some much-needed holes to fill. Lacking a senior class heading into the 2016 slate, the team is looking towards some reliance on freshman and sophomores in a youth movement.

Freshman Josie Friedman will be filling the role as the number one singles player on the team. In her first year at MN, Friedman is being thrown straight into the fire, but has garnered three consecutive wins to start the season.

"I'm kind of nervous because I don't know what to expect, but I think it's really exciting. I know I can get so much better and there's not much pressure since I am a freshman," Friedman said.

As the number one singles, Friedman will frequently face some of the best players Nebraska has to offer. She will be paired up with the top singles player from each of the other high schools.

"I think I'll do well, but I know there will be a lot of competition. I just want to improve, gain more experience and have fun doing it," Friedman said.

The strong play of Friedman in the preseason has the coaching staff excited at the potential for this team. The team has complete confidence in their new number one singles player.

"I think Josie is a very young talented player, and she will play

matches tough and give the older number one players a run for their money. It's always nice to have a young player come in and play number one singles for you, as she will just improve that much more and gain much more experience at that position this year," head coach Josh Raymond said.

Another contributing factor to this inexperienced team is a complete lack of a senior class, as well as losing one of the starting varsity juniors for the season. With zero returning, the team will have to look more towards the junior class as leaders.

"I think we lost a lot of really good players last year. But since all of the seniors left, three juniors have really been taking charge to be the examples," junior Kashish Singh said.

With more of a young-talent type of team moving forward, the MN girls tennis squad has all the makings of future state contenders down the line. As the team gains more experience and veteran leadership each match, there's no telling how strong they can become.

"I think that every girl will give their very best in every match they play this year. If they do that and trust in themselves, they will all play very well," Raymond said.



# SOCCER: FINAL SHOWDOWN

Last year the boy's varsity soccer team swooped in and made it all the way to the state semifinals. With the soccer season starting up there's one thing weighing on all the boy's minds: winning state.

MN boys soccer has only won the state championship twice: first in 1995 followed by a win in 2007. After that last win, making it to last year's state semifinals was the first real excitement for the team.

"Before last year we were quite young and it is one thing to have skill to play varsity and another thing to handle the speed, rigor and mental and physical demands of playing so many games in a short period of time in the difficult weather that we have," Cunningham, Boys

Varsity Coach said. This season the boys will refine their skills as a team for the state

hours of practice and teamwork to improve. Besides what is seen by students and fans who watch the boys on the field during games, the boy practices everyday after school as well as having additional weekend practices.

"Last season's success can be attributed solely to drive. We were definitely not the best team in the tournament, but we fought through a tough district and completed multiple upsets to reach the semifinal," senior Alex Jana said.

After a season consisting of 9 losses and 9 wins last year, the boys lost 0-2 in the semifinals to the Creighton Prep team.

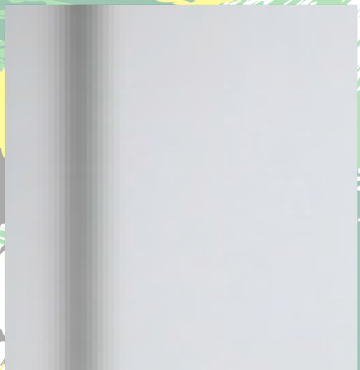
Although the competition will be tough, the team is looking forward to the opportunity to prepare and work for their chance at a good season ending in the chance "get back to state and finish some unfinished business" junior Ben Schulz said.

Already this season the boys have put on a good show. With only three losses along with six wins, the boys have shown their potential this season.

While the losses demonstrate there is room for improvement, a majority of wins for the boys indicates this season is shaping up in their favor.

Furthermore, with all three losses, including one against Creighton Prep who beat them in the state semifinals by two, being only by one point the boys have the chance to make a comeback. Taking this year's state tournament and beating the teams they previously lost to.

"Our goal is quite simply to win state. While we realize this is a lofty goal, we know that this year we have the potential and skill to make a deep run in the tournament," Jana said.



The stretch of Highway 275 that exists east of Norfolk to west of Fremont will be brought into the 21<sup>st</sup> century with the Transportation Innovation Act.

The Transportation Innovation Act will direct \$450 million over 17 years to infrastructure projects across the state with Highway 275 being top priority. The current two lane highway will be expanded to four. While currently in the design stage, construction is set to begin between the spring of 2019 and early 2020.

“We’ve come together to make a simple point: Northeast Nebraska deserves 21<sup>st</sup> century infrastructure,” executive director of 4 Lanes 4 Nebraska and Norfolk mayor Josh Moenning said.

4 Lanes 4 Nebraska is a trade and advocacy organization that promotes the modernization of Nebraska’s transportation infrastructure. Moenning says that the expansion will bring economic success to the area.

“With 1940s roadways, our steelmakers, manufacturers, cattle feeders, famers and small businesses remain isolated from major markets,” Moenning said. “We have tremendous potential for new growth and increased quality of life, but outdated infrastructure is costing us countless opportunities to help the state move forward.”

In 1988, the state enacted a transportation policy to prioritize the connection of each major Nebraska community to an interstate system via a four-lane highway. Originally constructed in 1939, Highway 275 remains as one of the few unfished segments within the 600-mile statewide expressway system.

“There’s tremendous support in the region for getting this highway,” Moenning said. “The promise was made back in 1988 that this roadway was going to be completed in 2003 and here we are 15 years later and nothing has been done.”

The project is also set to improve public safety. A 2015 study conducted by 4 Lanes 4 Nebraska found that the current two lane highway had a traffic fatality rate that was 152 percent higher than other counties across the state and a 62 percent higher traffic accident rate.

Emily Pemble  
Omaha Bryan High School  
News Writing



Aaron Mercado  
Fremont High School  
Sports Action Photography

We've all been there. You crammed for a test during the first fleeting minutes of class, glare at question one, and panic. You look up, and that one really smart girl just happens to be sitting caddy corner to your desk. You take a peek.

It's no big deal; it's only one question, right?

But then your little scheme turns into a tissue box. You steal one, and another one pops right back up after. Pretty soon, your test will be just as solid as that one really smart girl's.

You know, the one who studied until 1:00 AM last night, or not to mention, has tediously built up her grade in this class all so you can sit in a desk caddy corner to her and steal her answers. Steal her work. Steal her pride.

And not only this; you are robbing yourself of an honest education.

A plague is sweeping over Lunar High School far worse than a mass of sneezes and sniffles. Students are relying on cheating as means of passing classes more than ever before. In fact, a survey from faculty listed cheating as a top concern, second only to bullying.

In order to prevent the spread of this commencing epidemic, Principal Kim Johnson has required that all students sign a pledge stating they will not cheat, aid others in cheating, and that they understand the consequences of cheating.

The document has caused uproar, mainly because a student will be issued ISS if he or she refuses to sign it. We must realize, however, that the ends justify the means.

As students, we do not realize the seriousness behind cheating. This is proven simply through the number of students who have been caught in the act.

English teacher Mr. David Francois admits, "This year alone I've caught 20 students cheating, and almost everyone of those caught was shocked when I gave them a zero."

It may seem menial to require a signature to prevent cheating, however, this signature is forcing students to educate themselves on the consequences of their actions.

Just as Mr. Francois said, his students were shocked when they received failing grades for not doing any work. This is a serious issue, because what should be obvious is not. If you put in zero work, you will receive zero compensation. The contract we sign simply reinforces this notion, as some of us have clearly forgot.

This requirement will not end in our high school careers, either. In order to receive financial aid, many colleges require similar pledges to be signed.

Regardless, many are protesting the contract due to the punishment that results from not signing it.

Our principal has declared herself, "The student's who don't want to sign the pledge have not given me a reasonable explanation on why they refuse."

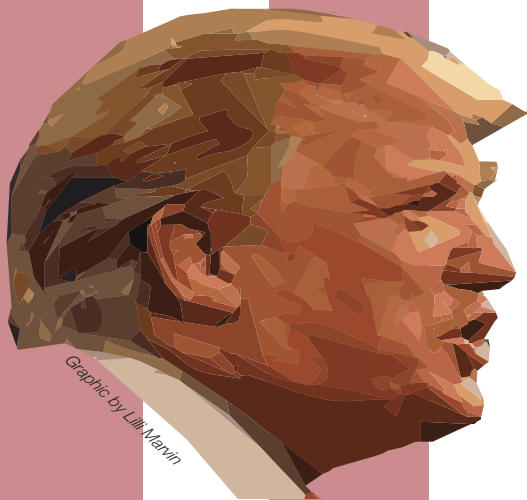
One explanation is simple: we rely too much on cheating to sign a contract giving it away.

If there is a legitimate concern upon signing the pledge, there is no reason as to why this cannot be voiced to our principal, who is more than willing to negotiate.

"If they had a logical argument or religious reason, then I would be more prone to listen," Johnson said.

Nicole Ludden  
Papillion-La Vista High School  
Editorial Writing

# THE 2016 ELECTION



The Merriam-Webster Dictionary does not have a current definition for “The 2016 Election,” but if it did, the entry would not likely be a reassuring one.

With headlines beaming “Welcome to the Election from Hell” and comedians like John Oliver referring to the past 15 months as “the electoral equivalent of seeing someone puking so you start puking and then someone else is puking and pretty soon everyone is puking 2016,” the outcome can hardly be anything but unsatisfactory.

This issue, Westside Journalism takes a look at the arguably most appalling, exhausting and controversial election our country has ever seen, with one message in mind: This November, vote wisely.

## Winning Despite the Odds

Norfolk is one of the larger cities in Nebraska, which isn't saying a whole lot. It's a small, tight-knit farming community in the middle of a flyover state. On the way into town on the highway, drivers pass by grain silos, cornfields, and even a few feedlots. It's surrounded by tiny communities like Wayne, Wisner, and Battle Creek. Its main school, Norfolk High School, is on the small end of class A, but their basketball program is one of the focal points of their town.

Papillion is a suburb of Omaha. It's got a suburban feel to it, right on the edge of the biggest city in Nebraska, just outside the commotion of the metropolis. Papillion-LaVista High School is one of the largest in Class A, and boasted one of the most dominant basketball programs in recent years, producing standouts such as Ed Chang and Ayo Akinwale.

When these two basketball teams met on the court at the Pinnacle Bank Arena this year for the class A state championship game, many outside of Norfolk immediately wrote off the Panthers. Chang was just too dominant, Akinwale just too much of a precision shooter. Even popular support seemed to swing toward the Monarchs of Papillion-LaVista. Noted Nebraska football recruit Keyshawn Johnson Jr. was easily viewable in the front row of the Monarch student section with Husker punter Caleb Lightbourn, cheering on the team they thought was a shoo-in to win the trophy.

Sure, Norfolk had some talent. Sure, Logan Strom, UC-Davis basketball recruit was something to behold on the hardwood. Sure, Lane McCallum, Air Force football commit was one of the best athletes to come out of the state in recent years. Still, the doubters persisted. Norfolk hadn't won a basketball title since 1987. Why was this the year they could do it?

The answer came in many forms, but it's embodied by their leader.

Tony Siske.

The head coach is new to the community, but not new to small town Nebraska. He's coached at Scottsbluff, Raymond Central, and now this year at Norfolk. He's had assistant jobs at Dorchester and Mead High School after playing for Ralston High School and Midland University.

To Siske, the culture at his latest stop on a long coaching journey has been familiar. He says it feels like Scottsbluff, a small town with a big fan base.

"It's a community not like Omaha or Lincoln," Siske says. "There's not a lot of schools to choose from, and we start working with kids in third or fourth grade.

Siske is a very even-keeled man when he enters a room. He stands at average height, and his close-cropped buzz cut is just beginning to reveal a few grey hairs.

When he got the head coaching job with the Panthers, he was filling some big shoes. Ben Ries had just stepped out of coaching after a long tenure at Norfolk. Ries hasn't left, though. He's the athletic director for the Panthers now, and Siske said he was fortunate enough to be able to reap the benefits of the program Ries had built.

Will Morris  
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# Legislative Shootout

## Democratic and Republican lawmakers fight over bill to loosen gun laws

In an alarming victory for the gun lobby, Missouri's Republican-controlled Legislature voted Wednesday to override Gov. Jay Nixon's veto and enact a wholesale retreat from gun safety in the state.

The law will let citizens carry concealed weapons in public without a state gun permit, criminal background check or firearms training. It strips local law enforcement of its current authority to deny firearms to those guilty of domestic violence and to other high-risk individuals. And it establishes a dangerous "stand your ground" standard that will allow gun owners to shoot and claim self-defense based on their own sense of feeling threatened.

The measure has drawn no great national attention, but it certainly provides further evidence that gun safety cannot be left to state lawmakers beholden to the gun lobby. Democrats opposed to the Missouri bill called it a "perfect storm" of lowered standards for the use of deadly force and an invitation for people to be armed without responsible controls. The measure was enacted by the Republicans, despite strong public opposition and warnings about the threat to public safety from the state Police Chiefs Association. Everytown for Gun Safety, one of the groups fighting the gun lobby, noted that

stand-your-ground laws result in disproportionate harm to communities of color.

Mr. Nixon, a Democrat, vetoed the measure in June, saying it would allow individuals with a criminal record to legally carry a concealed firearm even though they had been, or would have been, denied a permit under the old law's background check. Mayors Sly James of Kansas City and Francis Slay of St. Louis warned against restricting the power of the local police to deny guns to those who commit domestic violence. They cited sharp spikes in domestic violence homicides in their cities, and they noted that the police would be left at greater risk by this bill.

Republican legislative leaders, who cut short debate on the override vote on the last day of the session, were ebullient in overriding a variety of the governor's vetoes beyond the gun measure, including one that will force voters to show a government photo ID.

Senator Maria Chappelle-Nadal, a lawmaker from Ferguson, which erupted in protests after the 2014 fatal police shooting of Michael Brown, an unarmed African-American teenager, warned that enacting the stand-your-ground standard would mean another "bad Samaritan like Zimmerman." She was referring to the

shooting death in Florida four years ago of Trayvon Martin, an unarmed black teenager, by George Zimmerman, who used a stand-your-ground defense allowed under Florida law.

Missouri is joining 10 other states that loosened gun laws to allow concealed firearms in public without the need for a permit. Federal gun controls still require background checks on buyers, but only at federally licensed dealers. Unfortunately, there is a separate and busy uncontrolled market where buyers at gun shows and on the internet do not have to undergo background checks.

In the presidential campaign, Hillary Clinton has called for extensive gun safety measures, including a ban on the assault weapons favored by mass shooters, closing background-check loopholes, ending the gun industry's outrageous protection from civil damage suits and denying guns to risky suspects on the government's no-fly lists. Donald Trump, endorsed by the National Rifle Association, favors more armed civilians ready to engage in what he calls a defensive "shootout." This is one of the most pathetic measures yet of his pandering, when he should be leading, on an issue of vital importance to the public.

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