

UpRoar

3



Creature - Student

You gain 3 mental health.

“Sandy Creek students are playing Magic: the Gathering in their free time.”

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Working separately to stay together

Sandy Creek and Lawrence-Nelson make sacrifices to better school programs

By Courtney Anderson

This year the Sandy Creek and Lawrence-Nelson school boards were faced with a heavy decision to bear on their shoulders. They had to come to an agreement between the five Clay County towns and the two Nuckolls County towns that make up the South Central Unified District #5 and decide whether to reunify or split. To make this decision, the boards held several meetings over the past few months to help narrow down the options and get input from the community. After many meetings and months of uncertainty and debate, the board finally came to an official decision on Monday, November 16th. The Sandy Creek board voted 5-1 to reunify Sandy Creek with Lawrence-Nelson, whose board voted unanimously in favor of the reunification. This reunification came with a few added details to appease both sides.

"I think the Unification was a great idea. For one reason it is a great help in reducing cost and pulling resources. For example the computer programs and webpages we pay for are divided among the two schools, bringing the cost per student down. We also share faculty, which saves us from spending the money on two of the same person, and because of the Unification, more collaboration between teachers happens, strengthening our academic programs," said Julie Studnicka, elementary principal.

This new unification is set for seven years, meaning that it won't be up for discussion again until 2022. Additionally, upgrades to Lawrence, Nelson and Sandy Creek sites have been agreed on, and an all new budgeting system will be put into effect, in the hope of appeasing all parties.

"I think the new system of budgets is good. I stand behind the school board's decision, and as long as they are thinking about the students and what is best for the school, I agree with them," said Mr. Matt

Swartzendruber, social science teacher.

There will be three separate budgets for this unification; a Sandy Creek budget, a Lawrence-Nelson budget and a Unified budget. The Unified budget is composed of the combined income from the entire district and state aid. This budget will be used to pay the unified staff: those who work for the entire district, not a single building, and for the programs that are shared between Sandy Creek and Lawrence-Nelson; such as co-opted sports and career pathways, as well as all things that are beneficial for the district as a whole. The remaining money will then be split between Sandy Creek and Lawrence-Nelson, and each school will only receive the equivalent amount of the total tax dollars their respective areas pay. The Sandy Creek budget will come from the tax base of the Sandy Creek area and will only be spent on things related to Sandy Creek; the Lawrence-Nelson budget will come from the Lawrence and Nelson area taxes and only be spent on things associated with Lawrence-Nelson. The school board hopes that this will divide the money fairly.

"I hope it goes well and everyone is able to retain the educational opportunities they have now, even though the budgets might not be equal," said Spanish teacher Mrs. Kalee Lipovsky.

Money will be spent to improve the building at Lawrence resulting in the addition of new exterior doors in the gym; the Nelson site will also see improvements in the form of new windows and a ventilation system that

will address the asbestos problem. All of the upgrades to Lawrence-Nelson will come from the Unified

budget.

"I think that it is fair that Lawrence-Nelson uses the Unified budget because Sandy Creek is using the same budget

for all of the both

new buildings, so we get something out of it," said science teacher, Mrs. Ashley Borer.

kitchen/cafeteria area while renovating career pathway classrooms and shops.

"I am super excited for the new theater and classrooms. I think they will bring a new life to the school and give all students great opportunities," said Rami Hinrichs, Sandy Creek freshman.

By adding on to Sandy Creek, all current programs will be maintained and the possibility of adding new programs in the future is improved.

"I think that even though the new additions don't affect me, they are going to bring a lot of good things for all of my younger siblings. They will

have opportunities that I never had to improve their education and futures," said Jessica Bowden, Sandy Creek senior.

Within this new agreement Lawrence-Nelson gets to keep both of their buildings open, despite the feelings of many Sandy Creek patrons.

"I don't think that it's about whether it's fair or not for Lawrence-Nelson to keep their buildings open. It's what needed to be done for now to keep everyone together, but I think that it will be easier financially for the district to have one big building rather than 5 separate ones, some with few or even no students," said Jameson Voorhees, Sandy Creek senior.

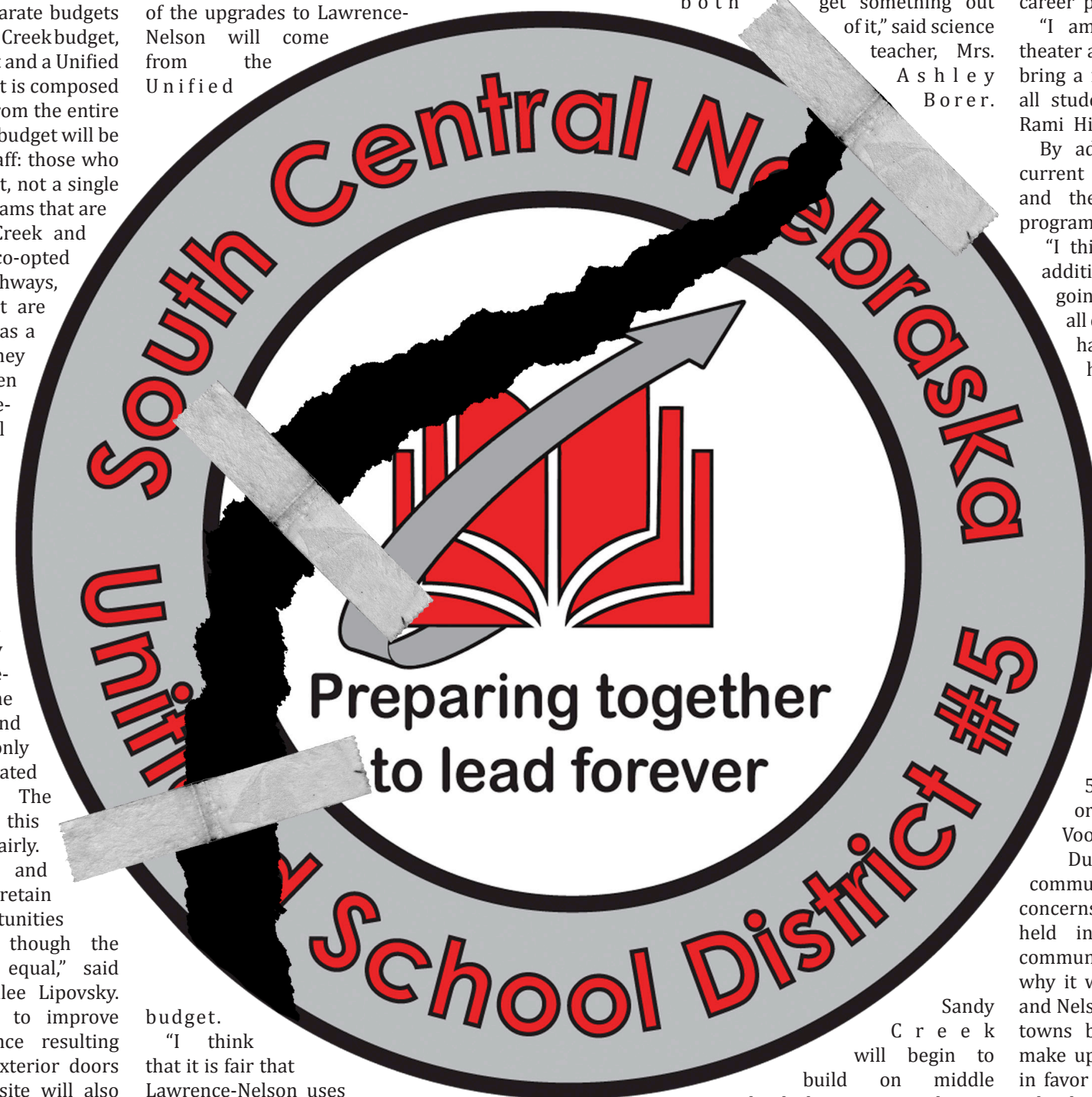
During the town meetings, many community members had similar concerns and ideas. At all of the meetings held in the Sandy Creek portion, community members struggled to see why it was so important for Lawrence and Nelson to keep their schools in their towns because the communities that make up Sandy Creek made a decision in favor of its students, giving up their school classrooms, a theater, a wrestling practice room and a

keeping education the focus point of all decisions, the boards would not only be proactive but also find a way for the district to work most efficiently. District wide, the most common concerns were based around the schools' purposes, education. Many members wanted the boards to consider not just current but also future generations of students and focusing on what would benefit everyone by giving all children an equal, quality education. Many argued that buildings don't make education, teachers and programs do. Community members wanted the boards to see the importance of cutting buildings before programs.

"I believe the school board did the right thing by reaching a compromise that would work for both school districts to achieve their common goal of advancement for our unified students. Instead of focusing on what one individual or another wanted, the board focused on what was best for our students: continuing to expand our career pathways together. Together, we are much more powerful than either of us are apart," said Mrs. Dana Epley, Lawrence-Nelson Principal.

With all the talk of the reunification and possible closing of extra buildings, everyone is wondering where all the students will go. They also wonder about how all the students will be transferred to and from a more central location. There are still a lot of questions about how everything will work, but for now, the two school boards' main focus is on the additions and upgrades to each school and maintaining education programs.

"I think that both of the boards made the best decision for all of our students. Both sides had to make some sacrifices for the best of our students, and I am excited to see all of the programs at both schools continue to grow because of the new additions," said Dr. Randall Gilson, Superintendent.



Artificial intelligence, real results

Elementary students tackle robotics and coding

by Lauren Shackelford

South Central Unified District #5 recently started a robotics program for elementary students at both elementary sites. Through this program students will learn what a robot is, the different sensors that a robot can have and how to code or write programs to control the robots.

"We wanted to give the kids something that interests them, extends learning, gives the kids a reason to read and is just different," says Julie Studnicka, elementary principal.

Using Code.org, students learn to code, or write computer instructions written in programming language. This website asks students to code computer games, giving them hints when they error and getting increasingly harder as they progress through the levels.

"Coding makes the robots work, so by learning how to code the students gain the knowledge to control the robots," says Mr. Jeremy Borer, district technology coordinator and head of the robotics program.

The district is currently using two different types of robots, both on loan from the local

Educational Service Unit (ESU #9). Both of these robots, the Finch and the Edison, were designed for educational purposes. The Finch robot connects to a laptop with a USB port. The students are tasked with coding this robot to move and changing the color of the light on the robot's nose. Conversely, the Edison robot is already coded and can be programmed simply by driving it over a barcode. With these preprogrammed codes, the robots can respond to light and sound, follow

lines and avoid obstacles. This robot can be programmed to respond to any remote, including one made for a TV. Jeremy Borer says, "The problem solving that the students have to use to make the robots do what they want them to do can be applied to anything in life."

The purpose of the robot program is two-fold, first it is used to enrich the education of gifted elementary students. The district ultimately wants to challenge students to think way outside of the box and attempt to solve intricate problems. Additionally, the program allows the classroom teachers time to focus on the students in their classes who need additional assistance.

"A lot of what happens today is controlled by robots and this program shows our kids all the advanced stuff that they can do as elementary students," says Julie Studnicka.

Borer is partnering with ESU #9's Gary Needham to instruct this program. The program is currently separated into two different sections, with the Lawrence-Nelson students starting with the robot portion and Sandy Creek with coding. Lawrence-Nelson currently has students in grades 2-5 involved in the program, while Sandy Creek has only reached grades 3-5. At Sandy Creek, seven to ten students from each class are currently participating in the program.

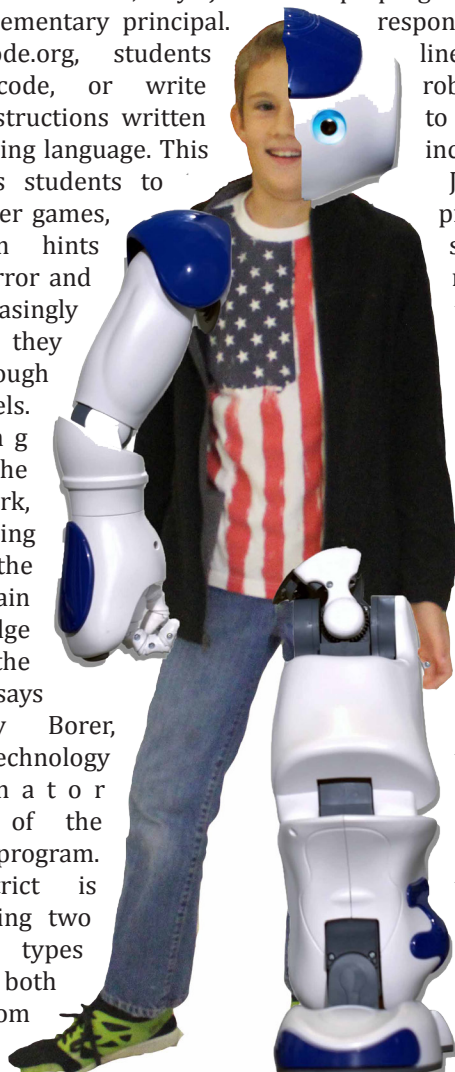
"It's fun learning to use coding to create the games and control the robots," said fourth grader Kaleb Whitmore.

This program provides students with opportunities to master many skills, such as advanced technology skills, problem solving skills and teamwork. This program also teaches students coding, which is a very marketable skill that is needed in today's tech-savvy world. Not only does this program provide students with these skills, but it also gives them a positive outlet to attack issues far above traditional grade level challenges.

Fifth grader McKenzie Bohlen said, "It's really fun, except for when I get stuck on a level and have to ask for help."

If this pilot program is successful, the district would like to purchase robots for every 5th grade student to be able to use in science class. Superintendent Dr. Randy Gilson is also looking into starting a Computer Science career pathway for the high school students that would involve the use of the robots.

Curriculum director Amanda Skalka said, "I would like to see the kids take an interest in the skills they learn from this program and apply them to other classes and careers, because these skills can be applied to so many things."



A painful toilet talk

It hurts to go #2

by Jacob Schlick

There is nothing worse than when you have to go number two in a public bathroom, and there isn't any serviceable toilet paper. When you go number two, you want the number 1 in toilet paper. Nobody wants to reach over in their time of need to find something reminiscent of old sandpaper from the shop.

Absolutely no comfort comes from this type of TP. It is not like the touch of Angel Soft that provides comfort and a clean wipe, it is more akin to a brand that would be called Satan Scratcher. Due to this

catastrophe, students are resorting to smuggling contraband into the school to arm themselves for a better wipe and a cleaner bum.

Rumors run rampant of students so desperate for softer toilet paper that they have ripped the Toilet Talk off the wall on their quest for a more suitable alternative to the harsh, brittle basics. Instead, what they find is pain and agony and less entertaining visits to the restroom.

With stashes running low, people have started searching the school, in need of a better toilet paper.

This has led students and faculty to examine all ends of the school, from the shop to Bob's

toilet paper, there was a test run in the boys' bathroom with two rolls of toilet paper,

one was Angel Soft while the other was


provided by the school. After two hours, the soft roll was half gone while the school's remained untouched. This proves the fact that has been known; the school's toilet paper is worse than the bark on the trees surrounding the school.

So when we hit rock bottom in our time of need, it's important to comfort rock bottom with the softest toilet paper that can be afforded. That's all that we as students really ask for, a little bit of extra cushion when we're pushin'.

World, even breaking into the elementary teachers' lounge.

In order to see how many students prefer the nice touch of Angel Soft compared to the harsh school





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& anything else to better our community or that is just plain fun!

Meetings 4th Tuesday of Each Month at 6 PM-American Legion
cclub@clay-center.net www.clay-center.net
Dues: Individual-\$15 Civic Organizations-\$20 Family-\$30 Business-\$35
Payable at: PO Box 114 - Any Meeting - Or Cornerstone Bank

I eXceL, or do I?

by Kyra Sorensen

Over the past year, Sandy Creek has implemented a new web-based educational program that targets skills in Math and language arts. IXL was added in all math courses for the 2014-2015 school year, and due to its success, the program has expanded to language arts for the 2015-2016 school year.

"It has taken some getting used to for many

students, but I think the program offers quality practice in many skills that they will need to be successful on tests like the ACT. The great thing about the program is that I can use it to enhance lessons taught in class and give students extra practice and instruction based on the individual needs of the student. If they 'get it' then they can fly right through each lesson, but if they need extra help, they get it," said Miss Andee Collinson, English teacher.

IXL is an online study site, that offers Math and English language lessons that help students comprehend skills that teachers may not have time to cover in depth in the classroom. In 1998, IXL's first website was published, Quiz Web, which allowed teachers to create and share customized study materials for students. Quia Books, their second product, was released in 2001. In 2007, their attention turned to math, when they released a new subject, K-12 math. Eventually, these programs morphed into the IXL students use

today. The new addition of Math to IXL covers over 3,500 distinct topics; in 2013, English language arts was added.

"IXL is a great program because it gives students immediate feedback on problems that they are working on, and shows how they got problems wrong or problems right," said Mr.

Jared Blackwell, math teacher. The program is used in over 190 countries and there are over 50 million

active subscribers worldwide. With a subscription to the program students have access to an unlimited number of questions in over 4,500 different skills. Schools all over the world have adopted this program because the program boasts comprehensive coverage of math skills in an interactive format that offers unlimited, adaptive questions and immediate feedback.

"IXL refamiliarizes me with the information, not necessarily in a pleasant or efficient way, but it does do its job," says senior Garrett Uecker.

The district has put its faith in this new program, that costs a little over \$5 a student, per subject area. That means that the school is paying about \$10 per student to have access to both math and language arts lessons.

"I think that IXL is a good tool to use when teachers don't have time to go over somethings in detail. It's worth it, but they can also be very stressful for students," senior Alyssa Brennförder says.

Although IXL is productive and

helpful with test scores, some students suggest that "mastering" the skill can be very stressful. When students start trying to master the skill their

"score" goes up nine or ten points for each question answered correctly.

If a student misses a question, their score will go down 6-8 points. The program is adaptive, meaning that it gets trickier once the student's score reaches

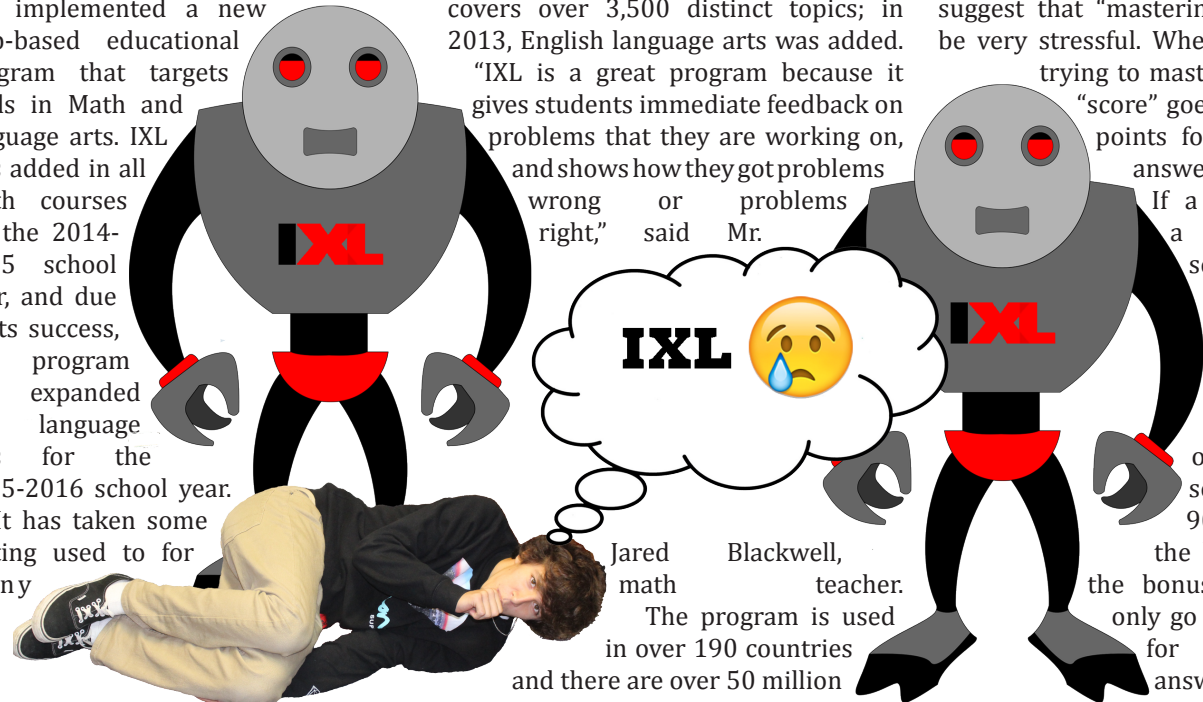
90, known as the bonus round. In the bonus round, scores only go up by one point for each question answered correctly,

but it still drops seven or eight points when a question is answered incorrectly. This is one of the main reasons that students aren't necessarily on board with the new program.

"I know students get frustrated at times when they are close to finishing a lesson and get a problem wrong. What the students have to realize is they will learn from this program if they will read the explanation of how they do the problem," states Principal Jason Searle.

Despite the hesitation from many students, school administration believe that the program has helped students to master necessary skills. They also believe that, with time, students will become more comfortable with the program and reap its many benefits through repetition and practice.

"Anytime you can get more practice or repetition you are going to master the skills much quicker," states Principal Jason Searle.



Are we striving or stressing?

Meant to help, IXL may only be hurting students

By Allison Story

We hate IXL! Sometimes it makes us want to cry. What's the point of sitting in front of a computer screen answering questions, walking on eggshells until we eventually get one wrong and watch our score plummet? Is it really worth it?

IXL is being used throughout the school by different teachers in the hopes of helping students master vital skills in both math and language arts. While these seem innocent enough, getting assignments on IXL that are due at the end of the week can be extremely frustrating.

When we get answers right, we get a few points. However, when we get it wrong, BOOM - it drops you down like a million points. 300 questions later, we finally get to 100 and master the skill. We spend hours upon hours throughout the week trying to get one thing done. No, just No!

Even though we have a certain hate for IXL, Sandy Creek's teachers and Curriculum Director, Amanda Skalka, love it, throwing out terms like achievement, student growth and standards to defend the program. Teachers

expect us to simply understand and learn from the program, but when students don't read the explanations for the answers, we end up doing hundreds! It seems that they assume we understand it, when in reality we don't think so.

According to Skalka, the long term goal is to "see teachers guide students to work on the area in which they need more practice instead of just assigning one or telling them that they can pick."

Maybe that is true, but we don't see any evidence of that happening in the near

future. They decide what IXL they want done and for some, actually most, it becomes a big waste of time! If we have to do it can we at least get an area where we actually need help? Earth to teachers, we have lives too! We get tons of other homework loaded on us, and adding IXL to our never-ending to-dos really is the cherry on top. Even if there are some effective aspects of IXL, is it really worth the frustration, pain and tears? Do we really want to sit there and, well...DIE! Well if you ask us, we

Problems attempted

172

Time elapsed

00 16 56

HR MIN SEC

SmartScore out of 100 ?

17

would most definitely tell you NO! We have had enough, and at this point, we don't care if we excel or not.

Practice that feels like play

Dynamic, adaptive learning

IXL

Math | Language Arts | Science | Social Studies

MAGIC: GATHERING STUDENTS

Magic: the Gathering grows at Sandy Creek

by: Jaedin Switzer

Students all around Sandy Creek High School have begun playing, Magic: the Gathering in their free time. The game has enticed a growing number of players throughout the course of the semester and shows no sign of slowing down.

"Our group of players started with a few students and has grown to include more than 15 students," says Garrett Orcutt, the first student to bring the game to Sandy Creek.

When the school year first began, Orcutt and fellow senior Tristen Hancock, decided to bring their cards to school, hoping to play each other during their free time. These students are still bringing their cards to school, but have been joined by many other Sandy Creek students. Orcutt and Hancock are always on the lookout for new people to recruit to play, noting that the more people who play, the more chances of being able to find someone who has time to play.

"Garrett came up to me one day and said, 'Dude, you have to see this game, it is the best game ever!' I avoided playing as long as I could, but the game took hold of me when I started to play it," said Foster Galaway.

Magic: the Gathering, a role playing card game, has gained a following at Sandy Creek because it is not like most traditional card games where everyone plays with a common deck of cards. In Magic each player makes his or her own deck of cards. These cards aren't normal cards; they

are special Magic: the Gathering cards that have instructions and abilities instead of suits and royalty. Magic: the Gathering also has a complex backstory that explains how all of these cards exist in their own magical universe, a universe more and more Sandy Creek students are becoming a part of.

Students play Magic: the Gathering for many different reasons, whether it be the intricate backstory, social interaction or competitiveness.

"Magic: the Gathering is not only a card game; it is a story line. When I play the game, I do not see the cards; I see giant monsters and beings battling for existence," said Hancock.

This backstory appeals to some players while others focus more on the game

"Magic: the Gathering is not only a card game; it is a story line. When I play the game, I do not see the cards; I see giant monsters and beings battling for existence,"

and playing. To the players, it doesn't really matter why they are playing as long as they are across the table from their friends having a good time.

"I like to play Magic because it's a fun and interesting game that makes you think. It's

a good way to pass time with friends," Ty Schweer, sophomore and new Magic player said.

Magic's following and interest in playing has helped to propel the game to success. While other games like pitch and Minecraft are also prevalent at Sandy Creek, Magic: the Gathering has grown in ways that these other games could only dream of.

"I prefer Magic over traditional card games because it's one on one, and creativity

is involved," said Orcutt.

While the success of Magic is no surprise to people who have been playing for a while, to others it is mindblowing.

"I am surprised because a couple of years back if you told me it was going to be popular, I wouldn't have believed you, but I think we will be playing it for years to come," admits Schweer.



The expansion to battle

Popular card game receives new update *by Garrett Orcutt*

If anyone was looking for any Magic the Gathering players on October 2nd, 2015, they surely would have found them at any card shop. The Battle of Zendikar is one of Magic the Gathering's biggest and most anticipated expansions. This expansion pack introduced new, never before seen cards that literally changed the game.

Magic the Gathering has been out since 1993, and since its initial release over a decade ago, only standard edition land cards have been released. However, The Battle of Zendikar has a new, full art land cards. The full art land is a card that is completely covered with an illustration; this differs from the standard, which is only the top half. Many players see these new cards and a much needed opportunity to make their decks look good. The full art land is worth its weight in gold, valued at two dollars a card; while the regular standard land card costs five cents.

The value of this deck is incredible; there are many cards with the value over one hundred dollars. There are lands that come foiled, Legendary Expansion Full Art Land, these lands are valued anywhere

from one-hundred dollars to three-hundred dollars. Many of the new cards that came out give players the power to win by chance, and this creates a new strategy for the game that many players plan to utilize.

There are cards that players only need to put on the battlefield to win, such as Felidar Sovereign that allows them to win the 40 life. These cards are overpowered and detract from the game. Despite the overpowered cards, Battle of Zendikar is the best expansion pack that MagicTheGathering released.

In addition to the new, high

powered, visually appealing cards comes a new storyline. The storyline starts out with Allies finally coming together in peace, and making their world better. The next year the Eldrazis decide to take out their world. The Eldrazis are a powerful group of creatures that thrive off fear, and they destroy worlds to be able to thrive as a team. The Eldrazis team must destroy the world, and the war-fighting Allies must become a team in order to destroy the Eldrazis. The Allies must work together to win, they all have effects on each other. If one enters the

battlefield, the special effect will be that they all gain flying.

The Battle of Zendikar was one the greatest expansions to ever hit Magic the Gathering stores and players. This has a lot of influence on the battlefield, whether it's how the creatures play, or the art of the card, it changed many things. This had added much value to the game, as well as added a storyline that many people enjoy learning about. Between the art, creatures, and value, the first seven cards could win the game.



Mockingjay Part Two, a review, just for you.

Second half of Mockingjay proves to be the victor.

By Garret Uecker

The much anticipated movie, Mockingjay Part Two, hit theatres receiving a warm welcome from fans. As the fourth movie in the popular series, many fans were concerned with how they would handle the end of the series. Throughout the first three movies, viewers saw a star studded cast capture the engaging story of Katniss Everdeen [Jennifer Lawrence] adapted from the novels written by Suzanne Collins. Katniss, who begins as a simple rural girl just trying to provide for her family, is the hero of the series who is forced to use her hunting skills in ways she would never imagine when she is drafted to fight in a competition called the Hunger Games. From there she is thrown through a whirlwind of fate and manipulation, including a quarter quell, and a few major plot twists. The second installment of Mockingjay picks up where the first left off, as the opening scene finds Katniss in a hospital bed, opening her eyes after Peeta makes an attempt on her life.

From the opening moments of the film, viewers see the tale of Katniss Everdeen portrayed in the high energy vision of series director, Gary Ross. As Katniss awakes deep in the heart of District Thirteen's underground bunker, she immediately wishes to be cast back into the war that she instigated with her brazen actions in the 74th and 75th annual Hunger Games. Unfortunately, for her, she is not allowed to do what she wishes and is instead forced back into the mold of The Mockingjay, the simple figurehead for the rebellion against the capital and a shell of who she wants to be. She wants to be more than the icon for the rebels and instead fight alongside them.

A small while into the movie viewers see her strike out on her own, much to the dismay of the leaders of the rebellion. Rather than mourning the loss of their figurehead, they choose to take it in stride. The journey proves to be incredibly nerve racking for all involved. The group who travels with her, consisting of Peeta Mellark [Josh Hutcherson] and Gale Hawthorne [Liam Hemsworth] amongst others, manage to keep her safe through her treacherous journey despite personal demons they must overcome. The cast has done a stellar job of making an ordinarily,

ridiculous setting seem real and frightening. Their convincing and impressive performance is further accented by some impressive special effects. With a combination of a perfectly arranged soundtrack and the latest computer generated images, a truly immersive experience is created. This skilled use of the resources the director had can transform a scene into a peaceful relaxing moment, as characters share the bonds forged in war, or a terrifying moments of life or death.

This is another impressive element that is unique to the Hunger Games franchise, their ability to generate fear and intensity without the usage of crutches found in other films. With virtually no profanity, the characters are still able to engage in meaningful and convincing dialogue, portraying the significance of a moment without the usage of obscene language, resulting in a PG-13 rating that appeals to a larger audience. Not only that, but despite the inherently grisly nature of children fighting to the death, the Hunger Games features little gore. This, like the lack of profanity, does not remove any of the intensity from the movie, demonstrating the skill of those who have written and directed the screenplay by Gary Ross.

All of these elements, working in concert, have lead to the creation of a film that has filled the footsteps of its predecessors. Not only that, but it has surpassed the bars previously set by the film franchise as it harnessed the hype of all the previous movies combined. It also avoided the sluggish feel of many movies which have divided the final movie into two parts, keeping the energy and excitement alive. Finally, the film managed to set itself aside from the series as a great conclusion to the saga, leaving the viewers satisfied with the linage as a whole.

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Photo Courtesy of <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/watchinggodd/2014/11/mockingjay-part-1-panem-circuses-and-christ/>

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National FFA Convention and Expo

Local FFA students partake in National FFA

by Jacob Schlick

Early on October 26th, six students from Sandy Creek and one from Lawrence-Nelson embarked on a trip to Louisville, Kentucky to attend the 88th National FFA Convention and Expo. Because no students were participating in competitions this year, students were able to participate in touristic activities between attending seminars on leadership, advocating agriculture and communication.

"Though we had less people go this year, it was fun because it was a good experience, and we got to know the people who surrounded us better," said Carli Shuck, senior FFA member.

The long haul was broken into two days. Making a pitstop at Columbia, Missouri, and staying for the night was a relief, allowing FFA members to stretch their legs and release some pent up energy by swimming in the hotel's pool.

"It felt good to be out of the van for the day. It felt even better to be able to run around and swim!" said Grant Schiermeyer, senior FFA member.

With the next day's arrival they set off again for the final stretch of travel. Running into many accidents along the interstate because of the inclement weather, they found themselves in the backwoods of Missouri.

"It was a nice break from the interstate travel, and those roads are better than that of back home," said Kolt Illingworth.

After many detours around accidents, members and their chaperones found

themselves at their hotel in Louisville. Getting a little bit of much needed rest, they then departed from the hotel and went to the Expo Center. Presented with the sight of hundreds upon thousands of blue corduroy jackets, all were united by a common purpose and passion. At Freedom Hall, where convention meetings were held, an endless sea of blue filled the massive space. The roar among the crowd as they introduced the present year's officer team was electrifying. Thousands of FFA members and guests packed the bleachers to see the national officer team and listen to several keynote speakers. All of which had AMPLIFIED their lives.

"It was a breathtaking sight seeing all of the people here sharing a passion for agriculture," said Tayler Johnson, sophomore FFA member.

One of the speakers was Dr. Rick Grigsby, a BIG man who has a BIG passion for seeing the best in people. He encourages his audience to do great things. He has received his PhD and devotes his full attention to empowering people worldwide while speaking to Fortune 500 companies. His goals to FFA members is to let their lights shine and impact the world, asking members to hold on the wisdom of past generations.

"He was very motivational and tied everything together, to AMPLIFY their FFA experience as well as their future from FFA and beyond," states Mame Hild, chaperone.

A side session that the group went to was conducted by a former student of Ms. Amy Tomlinson, FFA Advisor for Sandy Creek. Levy Randolph spoke on the importance of advocating agriculture.

He stated that it is important to get the correct image of what farmers and ranchers do on a daily basis. He showed

us an ad that Chipotle

broadcasted that shadowed the agricultural industry. The things that were being projected were machines hurting animals, but none of that was true. Opening the eyes for the majority of those in attendance, showing what really goes on in agriculture.

Tomlinson then had the great idea to make sure there was no energy left among the members of her group by taking them to a trampoline park where the group was exhausted within an hour of jumping.

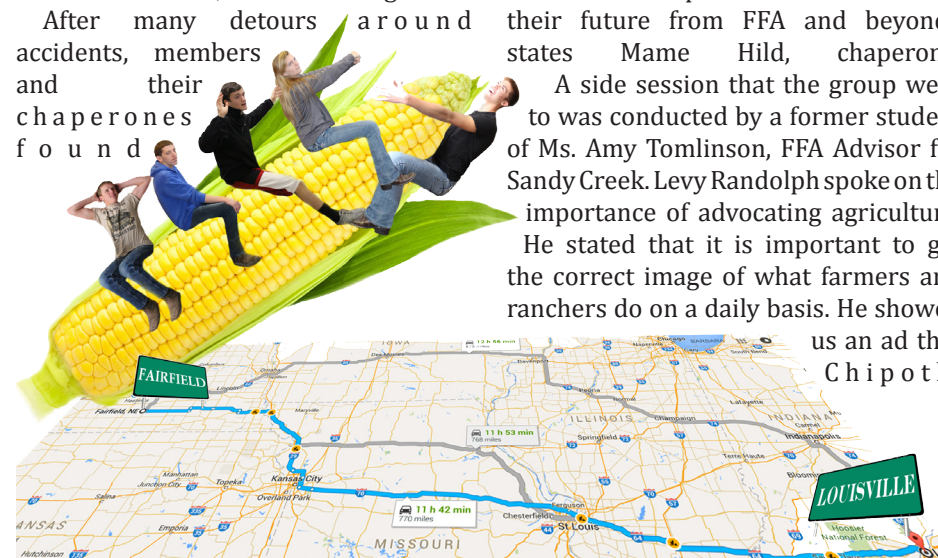
"It was a killer workout, but I would love to do it again. By the end I didn't even want to move," said Johnson.

The following day the members were able to shop at the convention store, picking up items and souvenirs for their friends and loved ones, and go through the career and college fairs. Talking to a multitude of representatives from all over, FFA members gained a great deal of knowledge. Whether it was from John Deere or one of the many universities in attendance, members were able to communicate with them and figure out more about their passions. Members were able to learn from others' experiences at these booths. Whether it was the welding simulator at Lincoln or climbing an electric pole at Stihl, students were able to develop their skills as well as compete against others.

To finish the conference, there was an all states dance. Hundreds of FFA members piled on the dance floor to show their moves whether it was line, square, swing dancing or even doing the Wobble. Members had a blast mingling with other groups, meeting new friends and making new connections.

Throughout the trip members learned more about agriculture, communication and themselves, finding passions that they didn't know existed. They created bridges into other states. From New York to California, members now have connections that cover the United States.

"I am thankful for the opportunity that was presented to me. I can't wait to go again!" said Johnson.



One Continent, One Problem

By Nora Pulda

Most people know that there are a lot of problems going on in Europe due to ISIS and thousands of people are fleeing from the regions they control. Normally, the countries in Europe don't have problems finding new homes for refugees, but right now, there are many more than normal.

All of the refugees are coming over the Mediterranean Sea by boat or are hiding in the back of trucks, hoping nobody will notice them.

The problem is that Europe cannot take care of so many refugees. All countries in Europe are trying to work together towards a solution. However, that's not easy because not all the countries want to take a lot of refugees, and some are fiscally unable to host many. To make matters worse, thousands of new people are flooding into Europe every day, and nobody knows what to do with them.

I am from Austria, and my country has always had refugees. Since I can remember, we have had a small number of refugees seeking asylum in our country, but right now, there are more than ever.

Most of the refugees, who are coming over the Mediterranean Sea or over the Balkan states to Europe are passing through or staying in Austria. To make life a little bit more comfortable for the refugees, the government has begun to build big tents to serve as temporary housing, but that's not a long-term solution and won't suffice during the winter. The problem is that the government has to find places where the people can stay for a longer time, but there are not enough places to house thousands of people, despite the fact that the government has started to renovate older buildings. Everybody is doing their best, but, for a lot of people, it's not enough.

Austria is just one of the many countries who is scrambling to deal with this problem. All countries in Europe are doing their best. Some countries

have financial problems themselves, but they are still trying their best. These countries probably can't handle as many refugees as other countries who have healthier economies, but they still try.

Germany is a really important country in the refugees situation because they take the most refugees. The majority of refugees leaving Austria are going to Germany. Despite efforts from economic powerhouses like Germany, this problem will continue to grow unless all governments in Europe start to work together closely; no single national government can solve this problem alone.

I think it is a good thing that the governments really want to find solutions instead of just sending the refugees back to make their own lives easier. These people have seen terrible things that most of us can't even imagine, and they want to come to Europe to start a new life. Everybody should try to make them feel welcome and make them feel that their wish to start a new life can eventually become true.

Regardless of the efforts of many, there are still a lot of people who see refugees as a threat, worrying that refugees will steal their jobs or get a lot of money from the government, which they don't. A person with no language skills and no experiences cannot really steal your job, unless you are unwilling to work hard. These people need to stop thinking in this racist way.

I had the chance to talk to a refugee, and that experience totally changed my mind about the situation. The refugee told me his incredible story. I couldn't believe what I heard because I cannot even imagine surviving what he did. He saw his brother get shot in the head, lost five family members, dealt with ISIS searching him and suffered the near capsizing of his boat in the Mediterranean Sea. His story brought me to tears, and

it is just one of thousands of stories with strikingly similar details.

Recently there was a terrorist attack in Paris, France, which killed about 130 people. Now a lot of people are placing the blame at the feet of the refugees and the government. People think that terrorists are coming into the country with the refugees, and hope to see the government check the refugees better. I understand why people are scared because they worry that more attacks like the ones in Paris could happen, but the refugees are not the problem. If we would stop letting refugees come in our country nothing would change because terrorists will find a way to come to Europe anyway. The Paris terror attacks showed that almost all terrorists were born and raised in Europe. The refugees are not the reason the Paris attacks happened. In fact, these attacks are the reason why the refugees are in our countries in the first place. They are trying to escape these kinds of awful things happening everyday in their countries.

I think problems like this are challenging everyone of us; we really have to work as one and we have to stop caring where these people are from. Even people in Nebraska can help. However, after the attacks on Paris, Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts has put a halt to efforts that would have brought Syrian refugees to the state, stating the common fear that these refugees might be terrorists.

True, we are from different countries, but we are all humans. It is not a problem that can be solved just by Europe, they need help from all over the world; it doesn't matter if you're young or old, men or women; everybody can help. We just have to go out there and actually do something. We are one world and one is the answer. We have to get ONE and have to work as ONE, to find a solution for this problem.

Surfing the pavement

A group of students pick up longboarding

by Jaedin Switzer

A group of 10 Sandy Creek teenagers has picked a new hobby, longboarding. The classic midwestern teenager hunts, drives a big truck and helps on the farm. This stereotype may be changing.

A group of students has a new hobby, and it might morph into something larger.

A longboard is similar to the skateboard Tony Hawk used in the X- Games. Longboards are longer and wider than a skateboard, and some also sit close to the ground. All of these things combine to make a great board to ride to the gas station or just cruise around town.

While some may use them for this others use them in different ways.

"It was amazing to watch longboarding grow in popularity. It started out with just a few people and has grown into a large group with people asking if they should buy a board or whether or not they should

come ride with us," said Garrett Uecker. The hobby of longboard started out with seniors Garrett Uecker, Jacob Schlick and Jaedin Switzer and has exploded since then. People saw them riding or talking about it and decided that they should give it a try.

"I like to longboard because it is an activity that is outside of athletics that allows me to be with other friends," Jacob Schlick, senior longboarder, said.

People choose to longboard for all sorts of different reasons, from going to work to passing time. "I like longboarding because it allows me to focus on socializing, getting outdoors and seeing the world from a different perspective," said Garrett Uecker, senior.

Other people look at longboarding as physical activity and a way to get their heart beating. "Longboarding is a good way to spend time with friends while still being active," said Jaeden Traudt, junior.

This group of longboarders decided to do something different; they decided to make their own longboards. They learned how to ride on a friend's longboard, and while riding, they came to the conclusion that they could make boards

themselves for a fraction of the cost.

The process began by researching what actually makes up a longboard and how to make them. Once they knew what to do, they made a trip to town to purchase enough supplies to make a few boards. The group also purchased materials to make a press, which would allow them to give the boards a curve—making them easier to ride. The press is made of 2x4s and is a homemade creation that allows them to make custom boards. Although their first boards weren't perfect, these boards were still rideable. After a few failures their longboards were finally perfected.

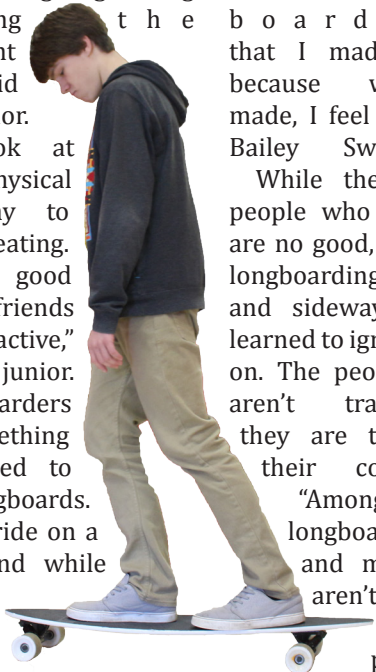
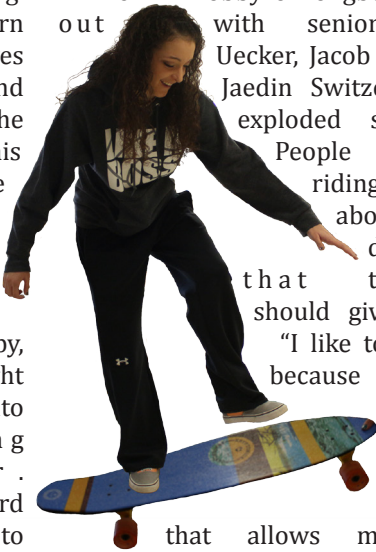
"I like riding the board that I made because when I ride the one I made, I feel proud and accomplished," Bailey Switzer, freshman, said.

While there is a stereotype that people who skateboard or longboard are no good, this is not the case. While longboarding students might get glares and sideways looks, but they have learned to ignore these people and move on. The people that are longboarders aren't traditional skateboarders; they are top students involved in their community and school.

"Among the students that longboard are an Eagle Scout and multiple 4.0 students. We aren't bad people; we are just students trying to pass time," said Schlick.

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Sandy Creek gives back

Give more than you receive

by Alyssa Brennfoerder

'Tis the season to give back, as some might say, but Sandy Creek doesn't stop after the holiday season; SC students strive to make a difference year-round.

"Help is needed at all times of the year, not just at Christmas, so as a school we are good at helping others in need every chance we get," said Lauren Shackelford, junior.

A group at Sandy Creek that loves to give back is FBLA, who hosts two Red Cross Blood drives during the year. The students involved in the group set up, bring cookies and even help work the blood drive. Having the blood drive at the school helps tremendously because there are plenty of willing students who have the opportunity to give blood. On average, 45 people donate blood when Sandy Creek hosts a drive, and students who donate or help with the drive learn just how easy it can be to save a life.

"I know that as a high school student, I can't do a lot by myself, but being in a group that supports different charities, I have the ability to help those who really need it," said Courtney Anderson, senior.

This year the freshman class raised supplies for Start Over Rover, a non-profit pet rescue corporation which is headquartered in Hastings, Nebraska. The class looked for donations like dog food, trash bags, cat/dog toys and many more items that would help the animals who need the items. The students

learned that a lot of people are in need, even the animals. The class learned that by helping the community they can grow as a person and learn true meaning of giving to those who can't help themselves.

Elementary students raise money for Jump Rope for Heart, an American Heart Association program to raise money to build healthier lives, free of cardiovascular diseases and stroke. The students go house to house asking for donations in the month of February, which is the month that supports cardiovascular health. Jump



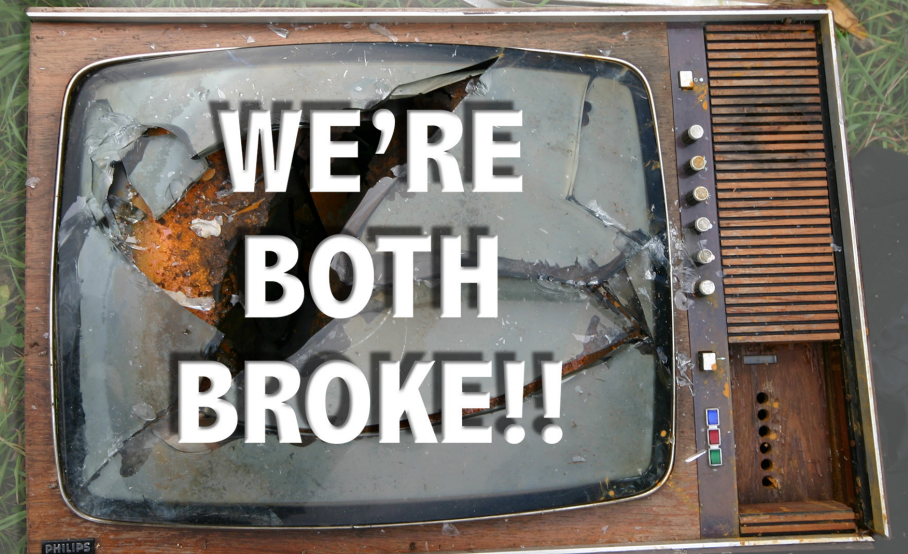
Rope for Heart is a great way to show students that it doesn't take much to lend a helping hand. They bring in money, and then they get to see a greater outcome of how their donations helped many lives throughout the country. "I like to help raise money for Jump Rope for Heart because I get to meet new people when I go door to door, and I get a good feeling knowing that I am helping

those who need it," fifth grader, Kassydi Garvin said.

There is not a time where various groups around the school aren't looking for some way to give back by helping those in need. Between baking cookies, looking for donations and helping sponsoring many different activities, Sandy Creek makes an effort to give back every chance they get.

"Having the heart of giving is beneficial to everyone, not just the people who are getting help but also to the ones who are giving. I'm proud of all the students and teachers who donate their time to be willing to help others," said Julie Studnicka, elementary principal.

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