

# UPROAR



**For more information about the update in Nebraska's state standards go to pages 8-9.**

# Cougars in college

Alumni excel athletically in colleges and universities across the state

by Brittany Godtel

Many students dream of continuing to play the sport they fell in love with as a child in college. Since their youth, athletes have put in a lot of effort through countless practices, games and weeks of conditioning, and a few Sandy Creek graduates have worked hard enough to find themselves playing at the college level.

"Our ultimate goal here at Sandy Creek is to prepare our athletes for the next level of competition and to improve both their skills mentally and physically to compete. I'm glad to see that this has worked for eight of our alumni currently playing sports in college," said girls basketball head coach Russ Ninemire.

There are currently eight Sandy Creek alumni competing in athletics at the college level. 2015 graduate Brendan Lipovsky is a freshman at Des Moines Area Community College where he plays basketball. Fellow 2015 graduate Logan Searle dons a blue and gold singlet as a member of the UNK wrestling team. Bailey Stapleman, 2014 graduate, is a sophomore pole vaulter on UNK's track team. UNO junior and 2013 Sandy Creek graduate, Mikaela Shaw,

laces up her sneakers as a Division 1 starter for the Maverick's basketball team. Andrew Kuta, fellow 2013 graduate, is currently a junior at Hastings College where he plays baseball. Matt Beck, 2014 graduate, and Scott Hild, 2013 graduate, both sport the black and orange of Doane for the Tiger track team. Ashlee Harms, a 2012 graduate from Sandy Creek, is currently a senior at Midland where she plays volleyball.

"It's great to see so many former Sandy Creek athletes competing at the college level. I am very proud of them, and I enjoy following their achievements. It is awesome that these athletes are still representing the Cougars while competing in college," said Mr. Jeremy Borer, assistant girls basketball and football coach.

There are many benefits to playing a sport in college, even though competing at the college level can be taxing. Students who play sports in college can pay for a good chunk of their tuition through athletic scholarships. Another benefit, is that collegiate athletes sometimes have better opportunities to form lasting relationships by bonding with teammates.

"I play because I love the sport, it has been my dream since I was young to play college basketball, and now here I am still trying to achieve my goals. The benefits of playing are getting to do something you love everyday and being a part of a team you get close with. You become close with people you meet from different states and even from around the world," said Lipovsky.

Although these athletes have played these sports since childhood, college really is a whole other ball game. For one, as an athlete advances into the next level they experience the faster pace of play and more skilled competitors who can focus more on their strengths in one specific sport opposed to in high school where they jump right into the next season. Another major difference in college is playing with teammates from all over.

"Sports in college tend to be more fast paced than high school. It definitely was for volleyball. I think many athletes struggle at first adjusting to the quickness of the game. Another way it's different is that you can put more of your time towards the sport you are doing in college. In college, you have much more time to focus on the sport you're in and improve it," said Harms.

Any student athlete knows it is not easy balancing both school and sports. Most students try to maintain good grades, while teachers and coaches strive to make sure students work and perform at their peak. Time management is crucial when you

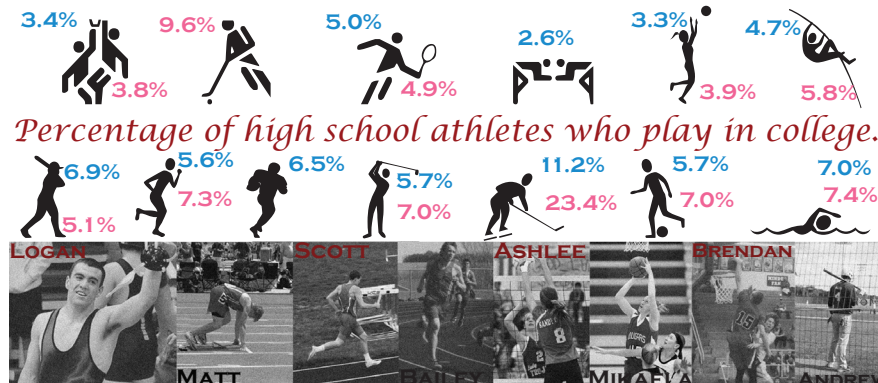
are a student athlete balancing multiple hours of school, homework and practices without the benefit of high school teachers making sure the work is getting done. The schedule of an in season athlete can be grueling.

"College sports are as demanding as a full time job, and balancing at least 12 credit hours of classes

a semester is not easy. Because it is so difficult, at UNO, there is an academic room for all the student athletes with staff that is there to help us be successful. Most of the sports teams, including my team, have required study hall hours in this room, but it is necessary to put in more time on my own. Playing college sports isn't always all the glory everyone thinks it is. Granted I wouldn't trade this busy, hectic lifestyle for anything," said Shaw.

Being a student athlete can have its stressful moments, but through everything these athletes love the opportunity to play and represent their college. Many high school student athletes dream of becoming better and continuing to play through college, but those who truly work for it get to live their dream, making their college, family and high school proud.

"It's such an awesome experience getting to play baseball at the college level. Using baseball to further my education makes it an even greater experience, and I am so grateful for the opportunity," said Kuta.



Sandy Creek alumni who are playing in college since 2012.

Informational Graphic by Caitlyn Schumm

# A dream for athletes

by Garrett Orcutt

Two Sandy Creek athletes, Brook Svoboda and Chandler Soucie, have signed with Midland University as they make plans to continue their football careers. Each player will receive \$15,000 per year to sport the blue and orange of the Warriors.

Competing in sports after high school is a dream for many athletes, but for Svoboda and Soucie, this dream is becoming a reality with the swift scroll of a pen across a letter of intent on Thursday, February 4th.

Since playing little league football, these teammates have dreamed about having the opportunity to continue their careers at the college level, and both knew they had the athletic ability and drive to make it possible.

The high school coaches weren't the only ones who noticed their skills, Midland Football Coach Jeff Jamrog also recognized their potential and contacted Svoboda and Soucie in the hope that they might become Midland Warriors.

"It has always been a lifetime dream of mine to play a sport at a collegiate level and now I get to live it," said Svoboda.

The long hot summer days of practice made them better athletes. Svoboda and Soucie were always out on the field first and were the last ones to leave, working hard every practice for those Friday night lights. The day Svoboda and Soucie drove to Midland for a college visit and meeting with Jamrog was one of the most nerve wracking days of their lives. They had been practicing for this moment their entire lives, and the hard work was about to pay off. As they arrived at the college, they felt the football spirit embrace them.

"When I looked over at Brook as he signed his papers, I could see his joy was the same as mine," Soucie said.

Svoboda has been playing middle linebacker at the varsity level since his sophomore year, making a huge impact on and off the field. With a total of 246 tackles, 138 solo, he has taught many

underclassmen the ins and outs of their positions. He knew the game well and excelled at teaching the younger athletes on the team. "Brook is a good leader and teammate, who helped us adapt from middle school sports," Greg Pavelka, sophomore tackle, said.

Svoboda has seen the team change for the better and hopes to continue to see the change as others step up to fill his position. Along with Svoboda, Soucie has been a leader and a driving force for his teammates.

"Chandler was a great leader and helped push us beyond our limits to get better," Dillon Schiermeyer, freshman guard, said.

Soucie has been playing defensive end since the beginning of his sophomore year. He's the jack of all trades when it comes to the positions he plays, playing various positions throughout his career, filling in wherever needed. With 71 tackles, 38 solo, Soucie has been a model for many younger athletes coming up. Perhaps Soucie's best trait, the one coach Mr. Jason (Bump) Novacek would like his younger players to emulate, is his work ethic.

"Chandler is a kid that maybe wasn't blessed with as much God given talent, but he's made up for it with working hard; he might surprise himself about how good he can work at the next level," said Novacek.

This was a dream that they pursued their whole athletic career. When Jamrog contacted them, they knew he was the key to the door of success. From little leagues to Friday nights, these athletes have dreamed of this moment, and now they are going to live their dream. As their tassels will get turned in May, they will begin packing their bags and dreaming of Midland.

"Both of them worked very hard in the weight room and practice field, and that's what happens when you work hard, people want your skills and talents.

"They have great attitudes and will do very well at Midland," Novacek said.



Chandler Soucie, 55, blocks for his teammate number 28, Brook Svoboda.



Chandler (left) and Brook (right) on signing day at Midland college.



# Bestselling novel "The Martian"

Andy Weir wrote a masterpiece of human struggle

by Jaedin Switzer

When a book starts with a man alone on Mars bleeding from a hole in his stomach, it's sure to be a rollercoaster. "The Martian" by Andy Weir is exactly that, a book that pulls at your emotions and soul, a well rounded book that you don't want to put down.

The Martian centers around Mark Watney an American astronaut stranded on Mars with no way of getting home. The rest of his crew left him, believing him to be dead. "The Martian" chronicles in logs Watney's struggle to survive.

Weir's language and structure make "The Martian" unique in a variety of ways. Some authors would follow the character around as they went about their day, Weir didn't; he wrote from the perspective of a computer listening to Weir's tales. This perspective makes the story more believable and realistic. While that perspective is unique, so is the language used. Weir isn't afraid to use swear words and everyday language in conversations with NASA, giving the book humor and character. This character is something not all authors can accomplish but it is wonderfully done in "The Martian."

Weir's writing allows the story itself to shine. Mark Watney's struggle is not an easy one and readers never

have a clue as to the ending. Weir isn't afraid to include possible life ending disasters and dangerous plans. People get tired of reading books where they know the protagonist is going to survive, this isn't one of those. Readers will never know if Mark lives or dies until the last pages.

Some readers may see a book in the science fiction category and think this isn't a book for them, but don't be fooled, this is a book anyone can enjoy regardless for the genres they read. While "The Martian" includes some science heavy parts the overall struggle is a struggle against one's self and a harsh environment, making it relatable.

This age old struggle of man versus nature may be a well-used story type; however, Weir changed this format with a new plant, no hope of help and by including some science. This was a struggle not just about survival, but one about the hope of the entire planet Earth.

"The Martian" is a must read for all. It's not just a regular story; it's an epic. "The Martian" is a book that readers will struggle to set down because Weir managed to do everything right with "The Martian."

## Family fun night lives up to the name

Event brings families together to benefit students and the community

by Jacob Schlick

Sandy Creek Elementary has a new event on its schedule, family fun night, an event focused on encouraging reading and creating a positive attitude about school and education.

"We wanted to create a community here at Sandy Creek where parents interact with each other from the time their children are in elementary and come to the school for reasons other than parent teacher conferences," said Mrs. Julie Studnicka, elementary principal.

Sandy Creek, unlike a lot of similarly sized schools, has families spread out over five different towns, leading to parents not interacting until their children are in high school. The administration hopes the inclusion of this new program will encourage parents to become more active in the school and their children's education. The family fun nights are helping to bring people together.

"Family fun nights create a positive attitude about school and allow families and students to bridge the gap between school and home," said Mrs. Freeda Novacek, kindergarten teacher.

Although the program is new, they have had an impact on the students and their families, by creating a positive environment which encourages students and parents to read together. According to the Department of Education a shared enthusiasm in reading deepens the child's interest in learning to read.

These events also help bring students and families closer together and offer a reason for families to leave the house and participate in a positive learning activity.

"At the last fun night parents were telling me that their children couldn't wait to come back to school, at the last one we had 114 people in attendance, meaning more than half of our students and families are attending," said Studnicka.

Every month a group of teachers plan the family fun night for their classes. When planning, the teachers pick a book or author to use as a theme. By doing this, students are able to have fun participating in activities while still reading and learning.

All of the family fun nights have a reading area for parents and students to sit down and read together. Each night the families are given a list of various activities to complete to receive a prize at the end of the night. While the activities change from event to event, they range from reading together to decorating a cookie. Regardless of the activities or what class is in attendance, everyone is working towards the goal of promoting reading and encouraging parental involvement.

"It's always good to see the students and their families together talking, reading, and having fun together," said Novacek.

# Standardized success

Standardized testing may not be as evil as previously thought

by Garrett Uecker

Albert Einstein once said, "Everybody is a genius. But, if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid." This statement is frequently used by those who wish to rid the school system of standardized testing. Those who oppose the use of standardized tests believe that not everyone can be held to the same standard based on the same means of measuring student progress. Yet in today's easily offended world, objectivity is more important than ever before in measuring student success, which is one of the things that standardized tests do.

As the name implies, standardized tests are a standard test, given to students regardless of age, race, religion or any other demographic that might set students apart from their peers. By administering these tests to students from all walks of life, there can be no accusations of targeting particular groups of students. These tests are designed to be a non-discriminatory means of measuring student achievement by including the same content, regardless of who is taking the test.

They are also a method used by many successful nations, such as China, a country who recently displaced Finland in reading, math and science following the implementation of their nationwide standardized testing. I do not believe that these programs kill creativity in the classroom either, rather they function as a core for the curriculum that needs to be taught in order for students to master the subject.

Standardized tests are also unobtrusive methods of gathering data at a low cost. By taking only a few days a year to complete these tests, schools are rewarded with volumes of information that can be analyzed in order to see which portions of their curriculums need to be reinforced. These tests are administered to all students and can assist administrators in viewing the struggles of particular students, especially those in specialized courses who are rarely compared to their peers.

Now many students complain about the testing, however students as a majority fail to reject the tests. In a Public Agenda survey it was found that 79% of polled students believe that the questions asked of them were "fair." Students also benefit from the tests as it holds their teachers to a higher standard of instruction under the supervision of a higher body.

While standardized testing can seem to be a cold and sterile method of examining students to many teachers, parents and students, the results of these tests are, in many instances, difficult to dispute. These results are reinforced as nations who are more rigorously tested continue to pull ahead of the United States in international rankings. It is true, you can't judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, but fortunately we are not fish and, by and large, we are capable of the same things.



**You better  
Belize it!**

**There's still time to sign up!**

**Come to the meeting at 6:30 pm on  
March 8th in the Art room.  
For more information contact  
Mrs. Hassenstab at 402-705-3900.**

# Cell phones could be used productively in schools

by Nora Pulda

Some schools allow cell phones - some don't, yet phones have always been a topic for discussion in schools where no universal decision has been made. A few teachers don't care about cell phones, but others are bothered by them, taking phones away anytime they appear. Often, there are no uniform regulations on how to deal with cell phones in the classroom, a discrepancy which causes a lot of problems.

I am a foreign exchange student from Austria, and in my school we are not allowed to have cell phones; we are a "cell phone free school," yet in my school in America we are allowed to have cell phones in school. Having experienced both sides of the debate from a student's perspective, I can say that cell phones really should be allowed in schools.

Administrators at the school that I attend in Austria are always debating whether or not cell phones should be allowed in school. On one side, there are a lot of people against cell phones in school because they can be distracting or help students cheat. The current rule requires cell phones to be in a student's locker, turned off. If a teacher sees

a student with a cell phone, they will take the phone away and keep it until the end of the day. On the other side of the debate, people who are against the cell phone rule argue that students have their cell phones with them anyway and use them in secret, so it would be easier just to allow students to have their phones and teach them how to use them responsibly.

In my school in America we are allowed to have cell phones. Teachers don't care if a phone is on a student's desk, or if they are on it at appropriate times. This school is productive even if they are not a "cell phone free school." If a student has her/his cell phone too much during a period the teacher might ask the student to put it away or even take a phone away but teachers don't really have to take phones away too often because students have learned how to use their cell phones appropriately and as learning tools. Every student has his/her cell phone with them, yet discipline doesn't really seem to be a problem.

It doesn't seem to make any difference if cell phones are allowed in schools or not because students have their

phones with them all the time anyway and if they really want to, they will use it. Schools that ban the use of cell phones are not considering the future needs of the student both socially and educationally. Cell phones can be used productively as educational tools. And like it or not, most adults have their cell phones within reach all the time, so it is important that teens learn to use their cell phones appropriately.

I can understand how teachers might be concerned about the easy Internet access because then students can get distracted on social media sites, watch videos or even cheat, but at some point we have to trust students to be smart enough to stay focused and not play on their phones. We have to trust that students want to learn and don't want to miss important information.

Because of my positive cell phone experience in an American school, I can see that cell phones can be used productively and responsibly by students, and I plan to go back to Austria and show people that you can use electronics productively in school.



Information from <http://science.opposingviews.com/advantages-disadvantages-allowing-cell-phones-school-1428.html>; Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, Tens and Mobile Phones Survey, conducted from June 26- September 24th, 2009. N=625 teen cell phone owners ages 12-17 and the margin of error is +/- 5%

Informational Graphic by Alisha Schnakenberg



## "Social" media: The truths behind social networking

by McKensi Uecker

Remember when the word "social" was a behavior and not followed by the word media? In recent times, social media sites such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat have seemingly taken over our lives. Many people view social media as a positive way to keep in contact with friends and family (it's perfect for those relatives that you don't actually want to talk to!). And while social media helps people keep in contact with friends, although it is a distant, less personal communication, recent studies have shown that the "positive aspects" associated with social media may not be as positive as they seem.

Dr. Heather Woods, of the University of Glasgow, has proven that using electronic devices to access social media before bed leads to a poor night's sleep. And let's be real, we need all the sleep we can get! Not only does accessing social media before bed lead to an exhausting morning, but it has literally resulted in depression and higher levels of anxiety. According to Brent L. Fletcher, a mental health therapist, Facebook and other social media contribute to depression in many ways, including bullying, comparison with others, and influencing self worth (as if people don't struggle with personal image enough).

There is a new condition commonly referred to as "social media depression" which describes the depressive thoughts associated with social media. Despite the fact that some critics believe depression linked to social media lacks legitimacy, social networking sites are under fire. Regardless of the links between mental illness and social media, using social media results in lower self esteem. This is all amplified by the fact that all social media sites measure

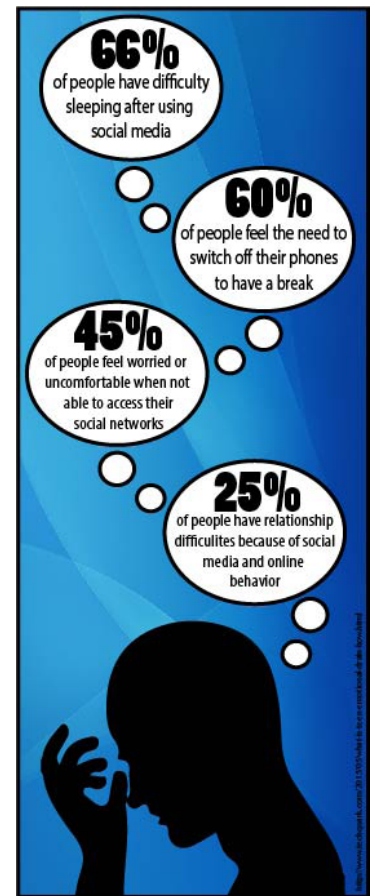
some sort of popularity. Twitter has retweets, Instagram has likes and Facebook has shares. People who often use social media admit that their self esteem suffers because they compare their lives and accomplishments to their online friends. It's impossible to see friends' posts about traveling the world and not want a life like that.

Not only does social media damage how we feel about ourselves, but it's a huge waste of time. The average person spends approximately 1 hour and 40 minutes on social networking sites each day, wasting precious hours of their lives, hours they can never get back. While that seems like an extreme amount of time stalking exes on Facebook, the statistic seems more reasonable when you consider the number of social media accounts that the average person has. There are a variety of social networking sites and people generally have five social media accounts. But the majority of people have the same friends on every site, so they see the same post, just on different sites. The redundancy of seeing the same post numerous times is a complete and utter waste of time.

All of this time spent liking, retweeting, or snapping is disproportionately limiting human interactions. People don't actually call people to "see how they're doing" anymore. With more and more people on social media each day, people can see what everyone is doing by the pictures they post and their, often annoying, status updates. By spending so much

time on social media, people have seemingly gotten lost in their delusional, digital worlds. Online, people can be whoever they want to be and they get obsessed with the illusion they create. They can pretend to be thinner, successful, and confident online. But editing profile pictures won't make them lose weight, and posing with fake smiles won't make them happy. So despite the fact that people might be "so much cooler online" it's better to just be who you are.

The word "social" is supposed to be a behavior and not followed by the word media. But sadly, social media sites have seemingly taken over our lives, filling our days with lower self-esteem and depression. My advice? Log off for a few weeks and see what kind of impact it can have on your personal satisfaction.



Informational Graphic by Mackenzie Turman



Editorial Cartoon by Gavin Keeler

# No more novice NeSA's

Nebraska's board of education ups the standards for testing

by Courtney Anderson

This past year the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) decided to change the curriculum that is on the Nebraska Standardized Assessments (NeSA), specifically in the area of English/Language Arts (ELA), and plan to revamp standards and tests in the area of Mathematics in the next year. They have decided to alter the curriculum so that it better fits the new College and Career Ready (CCR) Standards. There are mixed emotions about the new assessments, as they reflect the state's decision to make these changes, so that the test scores are not primarily on what the students know but how they know what they know.

"While the standards will be more rigorous, it is integral that students know how to explain themselves and their work in the real world. The implementation of the new standards and assessments will be a big change for everyone; however, after some growing pains, I believe it will align with what students are learning in the classroom on a daily basis, as well as be applicable to what

they need to know to be successful in the future," said Mrs. Shandi Tobias, English Teacher.

Though there are many things that will change in the coming year, some things will remain the same. For the spring of 2016 the writing portion of test will be scored as usual in regards to the College and Career Ready Standards of ELA.

"The new items will be field tested this spring. Next year's NeSA-ELA test will be the first time the scores will actually count and reported to students and the public," said Curriculum Director, Mrs. Amanda Skalka.

The reading portion of the assessment will take on some changes in the new year. The new reading portion of the test will be composed of three parts.

Passage one is accompanied by selected response items, passage two has selected response items and text-dependent analysis and lastly there will be stand alone writing items. Within these components of the test students will be expected to be able to apply word analysis strategies to determine the meaning of unknown or multiple-meaning words across content, use semantic relationships to analyze, evaluate the meaning and validity of text and evaluate the relationships between elements of literary text. These are just a few of the new guidelines that have formed the 2017 NeSA Reading Assessment.

"I believe these changes are for the better; I think challenging students and assessing in multiple ways will help prepare students to become better problem-solvers in college. I like the idea of changing the testing questions and format around to stay up-to-date and address the needs of our students," said special education teacher, Mrs. Carissa Eberhardt.

The State Board of Education has decided that in order to make the

transition from the old standards to the new CCR standards, they will have the 2016 testing scores only be collected for data analysis. This will be a field testing, this test will be given to give the NDE a baseline for scores to expect from future assessments. These scores will not be published in account to that it is a trial run for the new curriculum. To run the field test students will be tested as normal but there will be additional test questions that are based off of the new standards. From those questions scores will be taken and not published.

"The decision to implement the standards in a trial run will be beneficial to both students and staff in the district. The intensity of the new

**"We all know that the initial scores will drop, but it's exciting that the state is getting behind a more advanced curriculum. It makes it easier for us to help prepare students for college and beyond"**



assessment will be a change for all, but hopefully will have positive outcomes for students across the state," said Tobias.

The department thinks that this format and curriculum will be more rigorous for the students, but in the long run it will pay off. The department is aware that at first the scores will drop, hoping that after time, not only will the scores rise up to expectations and beyond, but the students will be college and career ready. This year's test has many new guidelines that require the students to know more than ever before, and the content is more advanced. This change in pace will affect not only the students but also their scores.

"We all know that the initial scores will drop, but it's exciting that the state is getting behind a more advanced curriculum. It makes it easier for us to help prepare students for college and beyond," said Ms. Andee Collinson, secondary English teacher.

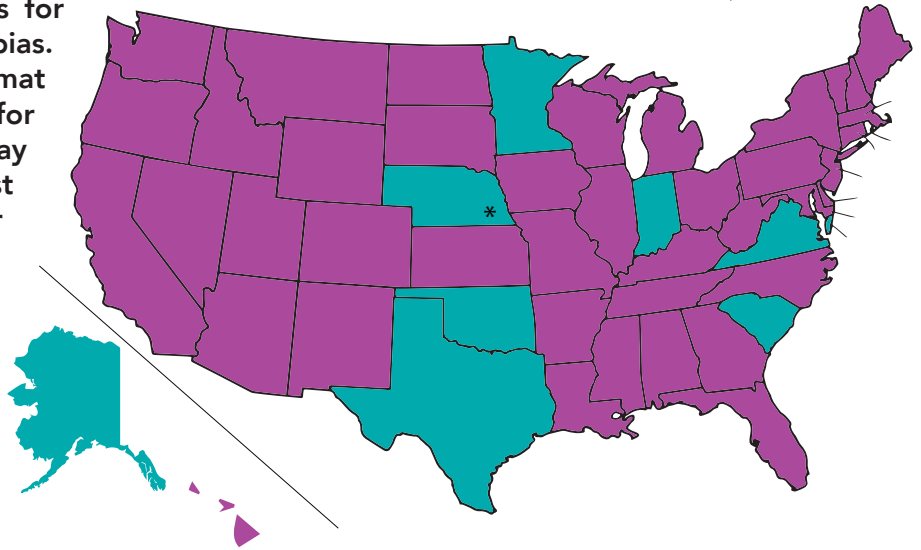
Once all the new tests have been taken and the scores are collected, they will be compiled into data and analyzed. From these scores the NDE may make small adjustments to the test to better meet the needs of Nebraska students. Come spring of 2017, the CCR based assessment will be given and official scores will be taken.

"It is common to see a decline in overall number of students meeting the standards when there is a change in the assessment. Our teachers are reviewing the curriculum and individual lessons now to make sure the new elements are included and are incorporating them as needed. This will help minimize the decline in scores when the new assessment scores are in place," said Skalka.

The NDE has worked countless hours this past year to organize and produce the new ELA assessment. The ELA assessment will not be completely finalized until December and then officially available in January of 2017. The sole purpose of such large changes to the ELA assessment is to help students be college and career ready early in their lives, preparing them for the rigorous work that will be expected of them after graduation.

*Informational Graphic by Molly Dane*

## Common Core Standards By State



### States Who Have

- Adopted**
- Not Adopted**

\*Nebraska has not adopted Common Core Standards, but the ELA standards have been updated to align more closely to the Common Core Standards.

## ELA Standards Testing For College Readiness

- Reading Comprehension
- Writing Skills
- Speaking and Listening
- Language Skills

## Current Students and College Readiness



These high school graduates are going to a 4-year college. But...



About 20% will need to take remedial classes.

# NSAA transgender issue

## NSAA votes on a new policy for transgender athletes

by Kyra Sorensen

On Jan. 14 the Nebraska School Activities Association voted on a highly debated policy, allowing transgender students to participate in sports. In adding this policy, transgender students would be allowed to participate in sports with others of their identified gender. The board voted 6-2 to pass the new policy that will become part of the organization's by laws taking effect immediately.

"I think that it's a good thing that the NSAA is

dealing with the situation. I don't know if I necessarily agree with it, but it's good that the issue is being talked about," said senior athlete Jaedin Switzer.

The new policy requires that male-to-female transgender students submit documentation of at least a year of hormone therapy, in an effort to keep competitive equality, by addressing the fear that males are physically larger. The policy would also require transgender students to use private bathrooms and locker rooms that match their biological sex. Although the NSAA will determine whether the policy passes, ultimately the decision to allow transgender athletes to compete with their identified gender will be up to every individual school.

"It would be an unfair advantage for transgender females to play on a volleyball team because even though they identify as female, they still have boy-like height and strength,

which makes a big difference when it comes to kills and blocks," says Brittany Godtel, sophomore setter.

Though the policy was passed, the debate seems to be far from over. Some districts have argued that students

should compete with the gender they were identified as at birth, basing eligibility on the athlete's birth certificate. Members of the NSAA Representative Assembly will vote to challenge the policy in April. Currently,

support of this stricter change to the new policy seems limited and unlikely to pass.

It's likely, and not surprising, that parochial schools, like Hastings's St. Cecilia, will vote to support the gender at birth policy.

"I don't necessarily think that they should be able to switch genders, and I agree that changing the gender you were born with goes against most religious teaching," says Alyssa Brenfoerder, senior basketball player.

Some individuals may think that this treatment, forced by the policy, is too

harsh and the medical information that individuals in question would be forced to share is personal. Others argue that, if passed, the gender at birth policy would be the strictest in the nation.

"I hope that the gender at birth policy doesn't get passed. It seems unfair to punish students for expressing themselves. Schools need to provide equal opportunities to all students," said Ms. Andee Collinson, English teacher.

If the new policy is passed, the fairness of games could be lowered, as males have more muscle strength than females. The policy also may be viewed not fair because girls are allowed to participate on a boys' team if there is no girls' sport or comparable sport, they wish to participate in. However boys are not allowed to play girls sports or participate on a girls' team, even if there is not a corresponding boys sport.

"I think that the gender you are born with is the gender that you should identify as when you play sports; because males will have an advantage because

of muscle size. If they identify themselves with a new gender, than one school could have six guys out on the volleyball court playing against six girls, and they would have the advantage," said Mr. Russ Ninemire, Athletic Director.

Only time will tell where the NSAA stands, but for now, the updated policy will be enforced.

**"It would be an unfair advantage for transgender females to play on a volleyball team because even though they identify as female, they still have boy-like height and strength, which makes a big difference when it comes to kills and blocks"**

**"I hope that the gender at birth policy doesn't get passed. It seems unfair to punish students for expressing themselves. Schools need to provide equal opportunities to all students"**

# Whatever floats your goat

by Garrett Uecker

In a digitized world, sometimes students need a break from the screens, and that's exactly what students at Sandy Creek are getting from the FFA's goats.

"People who don't have the opportunity to deal with animals can have the chance to see what it really takes to care for an animal," said Brook Svoboda, FFA Vice President.

Animals can be a way to teach children more about responsibility than any amount of homework ever could, and at Sandy Creek that is exactly what is being done for many students in the Ag and FFA programs. This all started five years ago when Sandy Creek FFA began their discussion about what new programs would most benefit their members. The decision was made to add four animal residents to the Sandy Creek property. FFA headed up the project and used their funding, combined with the help of alumni, to purchase their first four goats. The fences and living facilities for the goats were erected, and the goats moved in on Valentine's Day of 2012. The herd began as a small group that had a buck (a male goat) and four does (female goats).

"When the goats first arrived I wasn't

sure how it would work out, but since then it has turned into a great program," said Carli Shuck, FFA President.

The herd is cared for by FFA students who are interested in making money while learning about goats and animal sciences. The students who care for the animals must first apply for the opportunity to own one of the goats. If their application is selected, they will become responsible for caring for the goats and checking in on a daily basis. By owning one of the goats, these students are able to show them at the Clay County Fair. Following the show, the student in possession of the goat auctions it off and is able to keep the profits from the sale of the goat. After paying back the FFA program for the feed bill, usually around \$70, the student can expect to make in excess of \$400.

"The proper care of the goats provide the animal science kids with the chance to see real world examples and possibilities for future careers," said Jacob Schlick, senior FFA member.

The animals serve a second purpose as well. The animal science classes held at Sandy Creek are able to use the goats

as supplemental learning material. By actually observing and interacting with live animals, they can put the information from their textbook to real use.

"The students are always eager to go out and help with the goats, even if it is something like cleaning up after them,"



Elementary students were able to meet the goats which were held in the high school shop after birth.

said Ms. Amy Tomlinson, FFA sponsor.

Since the introduction of the herd to Sandy Creek pastures, there have been many changes. In the second year of having the goats, FFA diversified the group with the inclusion of a llama. The same year they also changed out their buck and added two does, replacing one that had passed away.

"We've recently made some new additions to the herd that will give a couple more students the chance to take care of the goats," said Chandler Soucie, FFA treasurer.

The herd has recently expanded with one doe giving birth to two healthy kids (baby goats). These two new additions to the herd were moved outside just last week, having spent the first few days of their life in the paint room of the wood shop. They will soon be assigned to the best applicants who will begin to care for them until their time at Sandy Creek is though. So, even though these goats won't be administering any peer pressure, it's safe to say, these kids will be good for kids.

"At the end of the day, I really believe that it will be good for the students in the Ag program at Sandy Creek to have opportunities to work with livestock in an educational setting," said FFA member Carrie Murman.



Mrs. Crystal Hassenstab, Sandy Creek art teacher, pets the young goats.



# Declining participation in sports

## Dedication is key

by Makenzie Svoboda

When fall rolls around, students lace up their sneakers and get involved in fall sports. However, participation in sports has been slowly falling in recent years as many students are finding it difficult to balance school and sports.

"It can be very stressful, but in the end it's all worth it because I love playing volleyball. Volleyball keeps me busy and entertained, as well as keeping me active," sophomore Caitlyn Schumm said.

Recently participation in sports has been declining, according to Kids Health, some suggest that this is due to the pressure many students feel to improve their academic standing. Games and practices after school and on weekends take up a lot of time, and not all students feel that they can do well in school, work or participate in non-athletic extra curricular activities while committing so much time to athletics.

"It's definitely hard to juggle sports and all of the homework we get on a daily basis, for some it's just too much to handle. We don't get home until late and then we have to spend the rest of the night working on homework. This leaves us no time to relax and be with friends," said Ty Schweer, sophomore athlete.

One downfall of decreasing athletic participation is that many students don't

get enough physical activity on their own. Additionally, students who choose not to participate in athletics may fail to learn what it is like to be apart of a team.

"Being on a sports team, especially in a small school, allows you to get to know the people you go to high school with and allows you to bond with your teammates more. Another benefit of playing at least one sport or more can allow a person to work on social skills," sophomore Brittany Godtel said.

Time isn't the only reason that students choose not to play sports. According to [sportsparticipation.com](http://sportsparticipation.com), lack of transportation prevents some from being able to participate, despite a desire to do so. For some students, finding reliable transportation every day during a three month long season can be challenging, and constantly asking friends or coaches for rides to their home can be daunting and act as a deterrent for some.

"It can be annoying to ask all the time, but if you enjoy doing the sport and you have encouraging coaches and teammates, then I don't see why it should affect your thought on sports," freshman Devoney Keeler said.

Other students may struggle with deciding if they want to be involved or not based on their individual level

of skill or experience with a given sport. Not everyone has been shooting hoops or throwing a ball with their teammates since third grade, and these students often feel like they don't have the experience to be as competitive as their peers. Experience and eligibility are why some of these students don't want to participate in fall sports, and parents and family status typically play a role in the decision. Parents are busy and the cost of the travel and equipment can play a role in the decision.

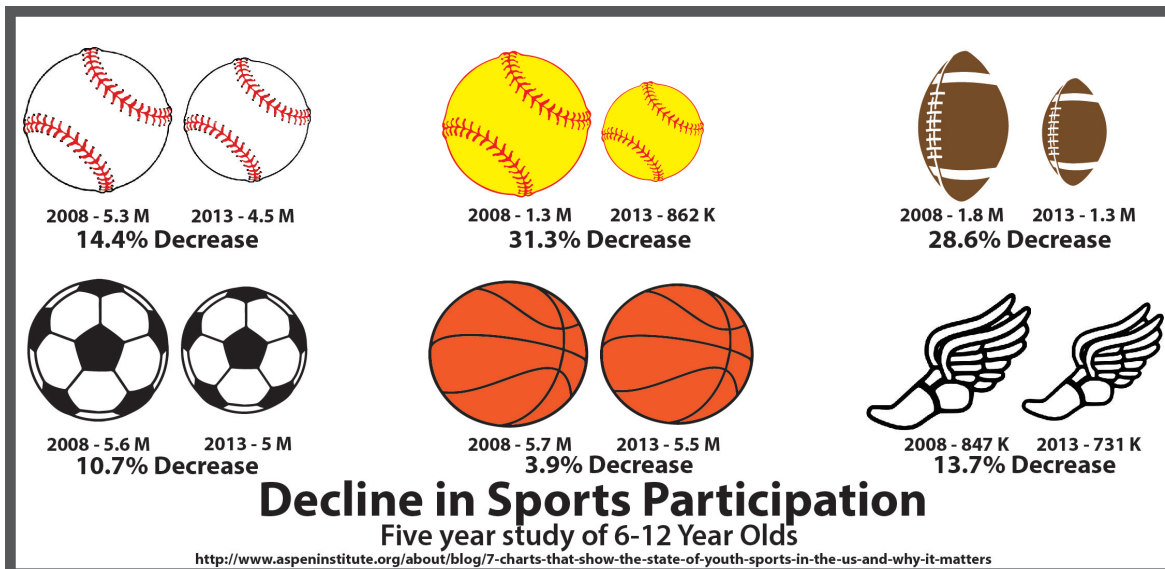
"I really think that parents play a huge role in supporting their child in their activities. I know that we do have a lot of parents that attend all their child's activities, but it breaks my heart for those children who do not have their parents in the stands. All student athletes need the support of both of their parents," said Mr. Jason Searle, high school principal.

In the end, sports participation is declining due to a number of factors, but that doesn't change coaches' desire to get more students involved in athletics. The low participation levels, are a problem, and if the trend continues, athletic programs could cease to exist.

"I hope that more students will choose to participate in athletics in years to come; it's really important that

teams have enough quality players to be competitive, and the students get the opportunity to get active play as part of a team," said Mrs. Crystal Hassenstab, assistant basketball coach.

Informational  
Graphic by  
Corbin Hansen



# Putting an end to pain

## Cougars take every precaution to ward off injuries

by Lauren Shackelford

For student athletes nothing is worse than missing practices or games due to an injury, especially if the injury was preventable. Not only is it hard to sit out and watch, but sometimes once they can return to the game many athletes never reach 100%. Last year, injuries plagued Sandy Creek's girls' basketball team, forcing many players to take time off. Though not all injuries may be prevented, the team's coaches and athletes are now taking every precaution possible to prevent sports related injuries and their long term effects.

"Anytime you have an injury and a player cannot participate, it affects the whole team. It lowers the standards of how many people are playing and it affects practices. The team is built by numbers working toward one goal. When someone gets hurt the team has one less person out there, and the team gets weaker. The key is that when someone gets injured, you get them rehabilitated quickly and get them back on the floor," says Mr. Russ Ninemire, Sandy Creek Girl's Basketball head coach

According to stopsportsinjuries.org, high school athletes account for an estimated two million injuries each year. Many injuries result from irritation of a previous injury, therefore proper rehabilitation after an injury is very important. Rehabilitation is the process to regain full function after an injury and includes restoring strength, flexibility, and endurance.

"It is really important to take the time to properly allow your injuries to heal and to work yourself back into playing again. If you push yourself too hard, the short time that you had to take off could turn into a longer time and a lot more pain," says Addison Kuta, starting post for the Cougars, who struggled with an injury this season.

Sports injuries are most commonly caused by failure to properly warm-up before strenuous exercise. According to nsmi.org, warm-ups should last at least 5-10 minutes and begin slowly, then gradually build up to a quicker pace. Warm-ups should include stretching which increases blood flow to the muscles and reduces the risk of

Editorial Cartoon by Samantha Stapleman

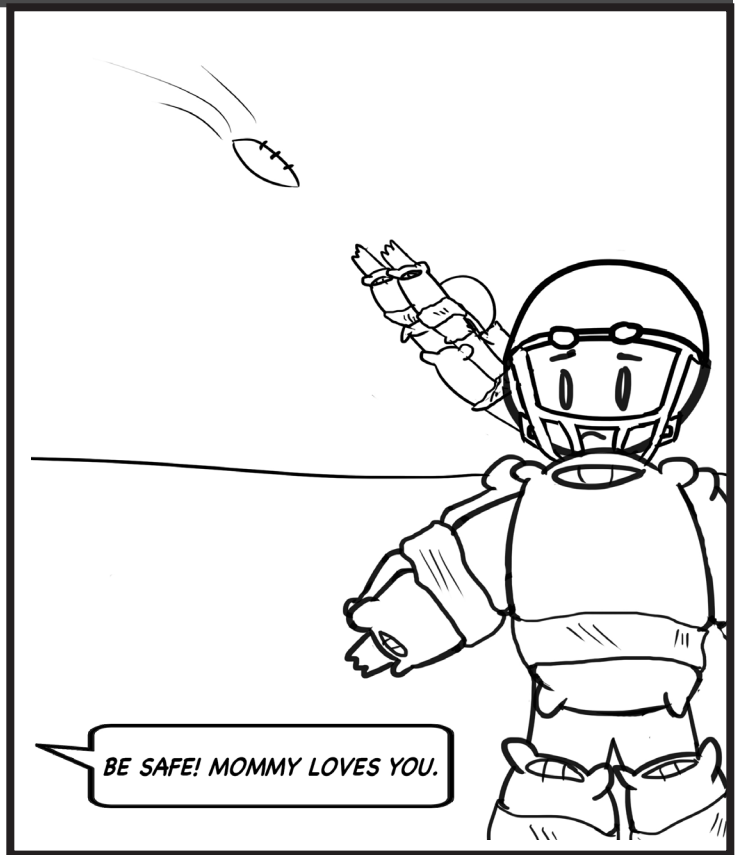
pulling muscles. "We always have our athletes warm up before exercising by doing some stretching or light jogging to get the body temperature up and ready for activity," said Ninemire.

According to breakingmuscle.com one way to reduce the risk of injury is to take time off to allow the body to recover. During this time off, athletes should rest and take steps to

maximize the body's repair. A few of these steps include hydrating, icing, stretching and maintaining proper nutrition. At least one day off each week from exercising is necessary for muscles, tendons, ligaments and bones, to recover after exertion. Additionally, overuse of muscles can make them more vulnerable to injury.

"Our coaches know how important it is that we give our bodies time to recover after a long week. Especially after weeks like conference, when we have multiple games in a row; we are all sore, tired and need time to recover. The coaches always emphasize how important it is for us to get rest and sleep during our time away from basketball," said Hope Svoboda, senior and Sandy Creek's starting guard.

Improper training and technique is another major cause of sports injuries. Using the proper technique and equipment for each sport is extremely important in minimizing the risk of injury. Proper technique should be taught to all athletes, and they should always use this technique when playing their respective sport. To



avoid injury athletes should also make sure that they wear the right shoes and use the appropriate braces when playing.

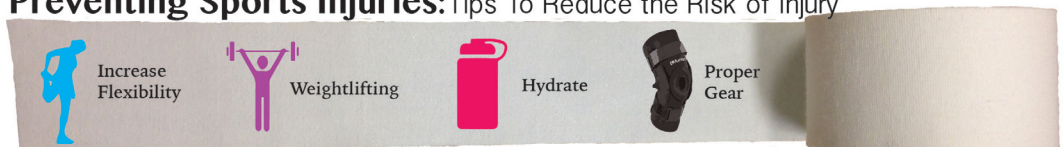
"Wearing braces is a great precaution to take to avoid injuries or further damage to an injury. I personally have bad knees, so I wear braces to help prevent them from getting more severely damaged. Many girls on our team also avoid ankle injuries by wearing ankle braces that provide support," said Samantha Janda.

Using these techniques the Cougars have reduced the amount of injuries this season. Last year two members of the girls' basketball team were benched due to ankle injuries. With the help of ankle braces, proper technique, adequate warm-ups and quick rehabilitation none of the players had to miss a game due to ankle injuries this season.

"Playing safe and staying healthy is really important to the success of our team. We will continue to do everything we can to prevent injuries and keep all of the girls on the court," said senior Alyssa Brennfoerder.

Informational Graphic by Sadie Svoboda

### Preventing Sports Injuries: Tips To Reduce the Risk of Injury



# Standardized testing: should software be tested first?

by Alyssa Brennförder

Every year standardized testing rolls around for every high school junior, and each year students are expected to excel on these tests. Each student is tested on their knowledge in the areas of reading, math, science and writing. As technology has progressed, tests have gone from pencil and paper, to being taken on computers, but with any form of technology there will always be unexpected problems.

"There is always so much pressure to do well on these test, but it seems like there are always problems when we are testing," junior Molly Dane said.

Technical problems with standardized testing are happening all over the state, making Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) officials second guess their \$7 million contract with the Minnesota company who distributes the tests, Data Recognition Corp (DRC). The company has promised that the

problems have been fixed, but it is still hard to want to keep the contract going, with the effect the problems had on the students' testing. During the last testing sessions in 2016, 325 students from 18 different schools were not able to get online for one hour and 47 minutes because of a bug in the software.

"We were very fortunate to not test on the days that DRC was experiencing issues with their software. It will be interesting to see what the State Department of Education will do with the results and the contract with DRC for online testing," said Jeremy Borer, district technology coordinator.

In 2013-14 at least 500 students lost their work while testing, and 1,000 were kicked off the program during one 40-minute period, which caused inaccurate test scores. The DRC software experienced glitches this year as well.

On January 27, at least 1,488 students from 112 different schools couldn't get online for 32 minutes because the server was low on hard disk space.

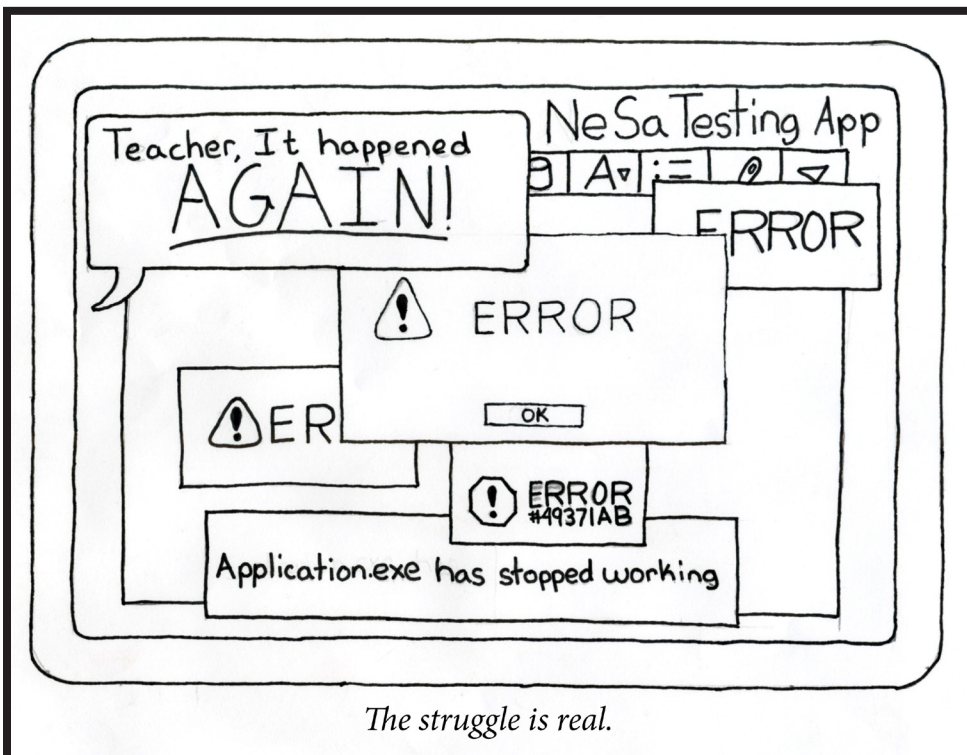
"It's really frustrating for the students when they work so hard to do well on the test and prepare all year, only to find out that they won't get their results back because of technical difficulties. It's like telling the students that all their hard work didn't matter," said Mrs. Andee Collinson, junior English teacher.

Sandy Creek and Lawrence-Nelson were relieved to hear that the vast majority of their students were not affected by the technical errors. Two Lawrence Nelson students had trouble with their test, but the other students completed their tests without issue. Even though the students between the two schools did not have a lot of trouble while testing, there is still a chance their scores will not be recorded due to software problems that other Nebraska schools encountered.

"It was a great feeling not having huge software issues this year like they have had in the years past," junior Lauren Shackelford said.

In spite of these technical errors, school districts are still required to continue to use standardized testing while students continue to struggle past software issues that have not yet been fixed. Schools around the state hope to find a system to accurately measure a student's knowledge and ability without having trouble doing so. Until then, NDE officials will continue to keep their contract with the Minnesota company.

"Hopefully the current software issues can be fixed before the next testing session and students will have no worries while taking their tests," Jeremy Borer added.



Editorial Cartoon by John Uecker



# Big businesses booming; small businesses looming?

Small businesses making a big impact.

by Jacob Schlick

I have lived in a small town community all of my life. Whenever we needed to go on a quick grocery run, we would head into our local town. The Emporium in Fairfield, Nebraska, is finding out quickly that a small town community relies on their local store for more than just groceries. The Emporium receives part of their support

due to convenience, the other from a desire to help the community grow and expand. Small businesses also look to give back to the community that supports them by providing 63% of the new jobs in the United States and paying 44% of the private payroll, according to an article by Forbes. Small businesses give back to their

communities in more ways than just employment. Before Christmas, our journalism class was tasked with finding sponsors to support our publications. I went to our local businesses, while others sought funding from larger businesses. With a larger business, one would think they could afford to better sponsor their local

schools because of the amount of money they make, but it was the smaller businesses that made the effort to give back to their communities. Of the 11 chain stores contacted, none of them gave even a dollar to sponsorship to the Journalism group. It was the opposite when we approached the local businesses. Almost all of them gave a donation to our group, making a contribution to the class's future.

The fact that a larger store would not or "could not" donate just a small portion of their large profits to a small group that receives little funding from the school makes me wonder why this was so. It also makes me appreciate our small businesses that were willing to make an investment in our future.

There is a noticeable difference between the two types of stores' atmospheres when one walks in. While a big business seems to overwhelm one when they walk in, even with a greeter at the door, they just seem to do too much while not doing enough in the customer service

department. On the other hand small businesses seem to be more welcoming. They can develop a connection with their customers and give them a homey feeling. There's something to be said for visiting a place where everyone knows your name and greets you warmly.

A small town business is always ready to help the community. Whether it is organizing an event for the town to help bring more people in, or providing food and drink to a crowd that helped clean up the town after a storm they are always there. When the community is in peril small businesses will pull through and help their community, make it better and see through that it happens.

The next time you find yourself standing in the frozen foods aisle think about your community and who you would rather support a big business or your local community. Keep your money in the community, shop local.

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