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# 100 YEARS OF CINCO DE MAYO

## Historic Mexican celebration returns to Omaha bigger than ever



Justin Diep & Adriana Valdez-Cue  
Co-Editor in Chief & Reporter

The South Omaha community will celebrate a century of history this weekend marking the 100th anniversary of the Cinco de Mayo festival.

The official 100th anniversary of the festival was in 2020, but was cancelled due to the pandemic. Last year's festival was pushed later into the summer for the same reason, so the celebration is being held this year.

"This year everything is back to a normal cycle," executive director of the Cinco de Mayo Omaha Organization, Marco Mora said.

The parade will be held on Saturday and for the first time in years, it will feature groups from Bryan High including: the dance team, cheer squad, band and girls' soccer team.

"We plan on playing our fight song in it along with some other songs," band director Christopher Short said. "The kids are really excited for it."

The parade will honor military veterans.

"This year is actually a salute

to the military," Mora said. "We'll have military veterans leading the parade."

The festival will take place on 24th Street like always, but will be expanded to stretch from L Street to Q Street.

"There is no festival that uses that amount of space in Omaha, so it's going to be pretty huge this year," Mora said.

The festival has started to bring in bigger bands for the concerts and this year they are going back to their two main stages for concerts on Friday and Saturday. On Friday, they will have Miata perform. Other groups performing include John Sunday, Mundo Risa, Bauna Brisa, North Daniels, Constant Theo and Bruxelles Musika Durango.

Along with all of the bands performing on Sunday, there will also be a mariachi mass, the carnival, another concierto and the baile con caballos, a dance with horses.

In addition to the Omaha Police Department's horses, the festival is working with Latino peace officers and the Nebraska National Guard to ensure the safety of all guests.

"We want to keep it as a safe family event," Mora said.

### Scheduled Events

	<b>May 6</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Mr./Miss coronation</li><li>-Concierto featuring Sonora Tropicana, Los Nobles and more.</li><li>-DJ Challenger will be playing Latin music and have dance groups/trios.</li></ul>
	<b>May 7</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Parade: includes a salute to the military, huge floats, many different entertainers and marching bands from around the city. The parade will run on South 24th street.</li></ul>
	<b>May 8</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Mariachi mass</li><li>-Carnival</li><li>-Baile con Caballos</li><li>-Concierto featuring Brazeros Musical de Durango, Konzentido Y Banda Brisa and others.</li></ul>

Photos of 2021 celebration courtesy of|Cinco de Mayo Omaha

LOCAL NEWS

# DOWNTOWN FACELIFT



After three years of construction, the Gene Leahy Mall in Downtown Omaha is scheduled to reopen on July 1. Construction first started in April of 2019, and will be finished within the next two months. The progress pictured above was as of April 20, 2022.

## Popular downtown park to reopen after 3 years of changes

Justin Diep  
Co-Editor in Chief

The home of the popular downtown slides, Gene Leahy Mall, will reopen this summer after nearly three years of construction. The park’s grand re-opening will be on July 1. The opening weekend will feature family friendly activities, free entertainment and live music to celebrate. Historically, the park was under utilized by the community. Christopher Koenig, project manager at HDR, an engineering and architectural firm, cited unclear connections between the mall and two other parks, lack of shade and inaccessibility as the reasons. “Although they have been in place for decades,

the three parks have failed to live up to their potential,” Jay Landers, contributing editor to the Civil Engineering magazine by the American Society of Civil Engineers said. The goal of the revitalization is to create a park Omaha residents will want to use. “Revitalization is centered on the impetus [push] for a more active place, with diverse social and recreational areas,” the website of OJB, the lead architecture firm for the project, said. New additions to the park include a performance pavilion, a new playground, interactive water features, a sculpture garden and a dog park. The slides will remain in their original location with two

new ones being added. “This amenity-rich, open space will create a sense of unity through thoughtful programming and enriching activities – all anchored by the scenic Missouri River and its resources,” The RiverFront Revitalization website said. The project is mainly funded by The Downtown Riverfront Trust (DRT). The DRT is used to collect funds and will contribute \$265 million from private donors for construction costs and the City will contribute \$50 million for capital improvements. The DRT and the City will also contribute \$3 million to fund the operations/maintenance costs of the mall. “I believe this will be one of the most significant projects in Omaha’s his-

tory,” Mayor Jean Stothert said. “It reflects the generosity of donors, the beauty of the riverfront and our faith in the future. The parks will be a destination for our citizens and visitors.” Supply shortages pushed the reopening of the park from Memorial Day weekend to July. “The Riverfront has been battling them [supply shortages] along with everyone else,” the Riverfront team said in a press release. The Gene Leahy Mall will be the first part of the \$300 Million RiverFront Revitalization project to reopen. Heartland of America Park and the Lewis and Clark Landing are scheduled to open later next year.



Photo courtesy of Riverfront Revitalization  
Commissioned by an artist in London, this statue will be placed in a plaza at the west end of the newly renovated Gene Leahy Mall. The sculpture features some plants that are native to Nebraska and details of Omaha on it. The sculpture is scheduled to be installed in mid-May, and once it is, a reflection pool and various landscaping will be built around it.



Photo courtesy of Riverfront Revitalization  
As part of the \$265 million Downtown Riverfront Revitalization project, the home of the popular downtown slides, the Gene Leahy Mall, will see the addition of two new slides, along with the addition of redoing the area of the mall the slides are in.

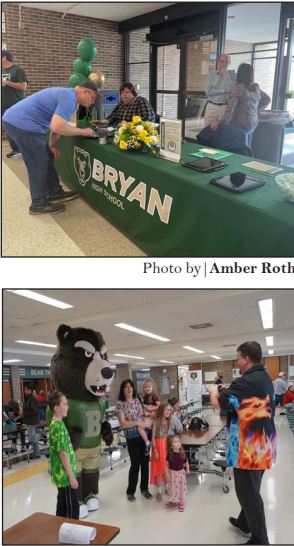


Photo courtesy of Riverfront Revitalization  
A Performance Pavilion is being added to the Gene Leahy Mall in downtown Omaha, as part of the Riverfront Revitalization project. This Performance Pavilion will house live performances in an amphitheater in the heart of the city, with the city skyline in the background. The mall will be the first park of the three that are under construction to open this year, on July 1. The other two parks scheduled to open later this year are the Lewis and Clark Landing and the Heartland of America Park.

## 50th anniversary kicks off with prom



Photo by Justin Diep  
Left: Senior Don Hannon reacts with pride and joy after he is crowned Prom King at the 2022 prom coronation. The prom was held at the Durham Museum on April 30, and the theme was vintage Hollywood. Prom Queen was Denise Valdez-Alvarez, and Prince and Princess were Uriel Flores Rojas and Linda Flores. Top Right: At the 50th anniversary ceremony for the school building, long-term substitute teacher Christine Jurgens helps a Bear alumni look at the Bryan Alumni Association and learn more information about it. The ceremony was held on May 1, the day after the building was first opened 50 years ago in 1972. Bottom Right: Formerly known as Billy the Bear, the newly renamed mascot Bryan the Bear poses with a family for pictures at the school building’s 50th anniversary and rededication ceremony that took place on May 1.



## OPS to introduce esports teams to all nine high schools this fall

Adriana Valadez Cue  
Reporter

Omaha Public Schools (OPS) are making a new addition to their athletics department by adding esports teams as an option, starting this upcoming fall season. The plan for esports is to team up with Play VS, who is the top leader in the country for providing esports programs within high schools. The district will offer an “unlimited model” for the schools, meaning the schools can have as many participants enter as they wish for each high school. “Our plan is to align with PlayVS who is the leader in the country in providing esports programs to high schools,” OPS Director of Athletics John Krogstrand said.

Students can join with no prior knowledge of esports and still be able to participate in practices and competitions. The district hopes to have “practice weeks” when the new school year starts in the fall to help coaches put their teams together and get students to join the team. “Meaning we can have as many participants as possible at each high school with no prior knowledge required,” Krogstrand said. As they plan to play or practice in a computer lab setting, all necessary equipment a student might need will be provided for them. Anything else that could end up being something a student might need, the school and/or district will come up with a way for it to be provided for the



Photo by BaldL, licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0  
Students at Arcadia University, Glenside, Pennsylvania, compete in an Esports event. Esports is gaining popularity in universities and high schools around the country.

needed game or competition. The plan to start it up will be to hold a few meetings where students can pair up in teams to try out the different games they have to choose from. The games that they are currently allowing are PC-based games, meaning there won’t be any console games allowed, although that could change in the future. “I would definitely join and I know many others would, I myself am really hyped for this,” junior Caden Pruitt said. Each coach/sponsor will be able to decide how they want to choose their teams. Tryouts can be held with options for games such as League of Legends, Rocket League and Hearthstone. All the games will be free for students to play.

EDITORIAL

# Local schools ditch valedictorian title



## District should keep title, but make changes, honor more students

It has become routine after the new semester kicks in for students to open Infinite Campus and check what their class rank is. Some students are joyful they moved up and some are disappointed they have moved down, but it gives the students something to work on, a reason to keep trying.

It is a shame however that high schools across the country and even here in the Metro area are getting rid of class rankings and valedictorian titles. Bellevue Public Schools is the latest of the schools to end the valedictorian tradition at their schools with the class of 2022. The schools have cited similar reasons for ending the tradition such as schools shouldn't rank the students and unhealthy competition between high achieving students could arise and cause problems.

Doing away with class ranking and valedictorians takes away from high achieving students. Those students who work hard throughout the school year

deserve to be recognized.

Schools getting rid of competition in the classroom simply doesn't make sense. Getting rid of competition means our students won't try as hard because there isn't that motivation in their mind to keep them going.

Some schools have even said it's not their job to rank and sort students. However, this logic is inconsistent within schools and the real world. If schools aren't supposed to rank and sort students, why separate students by academic skills in honors and AP classes or even have grades at all?

Schools do this to better serve students at their academic levels so students who are struggling to read are not put into an AP English class. Schools themselves are ranked by test scores and AP/honors participation.

The world is driven by statistics and those who have a higher rank are rewarded with salary raises, promotions etc. Getting rid of the valedictorian status tells our students that their hard

work and achievements from the last four years shouldn't be celebrated because other students can't compete and they shouldn't have gone the extra mile.

However, schools can have both. Schools can still recognize high achieving students without the need to only have one student recognized. A tiered diploma system where students are awarded special diplomas based on their GPA in addition to the current valedictorian system would allow more students to be recognized for their academic achievements while not taking away from the top student.

Colleges across the country including the University of Nebraska at Omaha use this system.

BPS and Westside are moving to a tiered system to recognize more students, but they have replaced the valedictorian. Both systems together would be best to still honor the top student while recognizing the achievements of more students.



Photo by |Justine Garman

Helping a student, senior school store intern at Benson High School, Ayanna Robinson, shows a student the various school merchandise available at the school store during first block.

## Real school store needed to increase school spirit, moral

Amber Roth  
Co-Editor in Chief



As the world slowly starts to recover from the

brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic, one thing is becoming blaringly obvious: school spirit and participation is sorely lacking, especially here in the school. With participation in athletics and different clubs and activities hitting all-time lows, there is one solution that could fix it: a new school store.

The current school store is in a small area in the commons, closer in size to a closet than an actual store. Because of this, many students aren't even aware that the store exists. There's so much potential for a school store here, but because of its location and lack of promotion, it's like it doesn't exist.

According to Sportin-gU.com, a sports gear company, having a school store where students can purchase gear can increase attendance and participation in extracurricular activities, improve

field trip safety and help represent the school in the community.

Other schools like Benson, Millard South and Burke have fully functioning school stores that operate during school hours. Their stores even have snacks that kids can buy before and after school if they are hungry.

Even if it can't change location, the school store can be given a face lift. Redo the outside of the store to make it more obvious and encourage students to stop in and buy something. Although the space is small, redo the inside so all the gear is on display and students can actually see what their options are.

The store could be run by a club like DECA that has a school-based enterprise competition, and it would give the students more experience in that category, while promoting the store better among students.

There are plenty of options on how to improve the school store, but at the very least, it needs to be promoted more so students are more encouraged to stop in and buy something.

# My name is pronounced like “Dye-yan-’R’-a,” get it right

## Demand respect, tell other people how to properly pronounce your name, you deserve it

Dallanara Sibran-Miranda  
Reporter



John, Jennifer, Cindy, Jose, Tiffany, Ariana. Most people can

pronounce those names correctly, yet they can never pronounce mine. My name is Dallanara, and it's pronounced like Dye-yan-ara and for most people,

my name can be difficult to pronounce properly.

Names are some of the most personal things about a person, and if someone can't take the time to learn how to pronounce my name or other peoples' names, it's disrespectful to them.

I've had experiences where the teacher says my name wrong, and they won't ask how to pronounce it right. But I've

also had teachers ask me and I'll repeat my name and they say it wrong and out of embarrassment I won't correct them.

Even though I have corrected them a few times before, I get exhausted from correcting them so many times. Recently, however, I tried to stand up for my name, but it backfired.

It took eight tries of going back and forth between

me and another person pronouncing my name and eventually I gave up, because they kept mispronouncing it.

Sometimes I devalue my name and I tell myself at least they are somewhat right even though my name is a part of my identity. When I'm out in public and I'm ordering food or something and they ask for a name for the meal, I want to say a different name

because it will be easier for the cashier.

If you go by a different name than your legal name, correct people. You owe it to yourself to be called your name, and when someone does have a difficult name, don't hesitate to ask them how to pronounce it. The person might be glad to help you pronounce their name properly.

Names can have such

a huge part in someone's identity and ignoring it or not trying to pronounce it correctly because it's "too hard" is like denying them their identity.

At the end of the day our names are our names, and people need to learn how to take the time to properly pronounce them, even though it may be difficult for them. We are worthy of that respect. Names do matter.



Photo by | Hailey Vizcaya-Dasher  
Trying to take the ball away from his opponent at the Columbus Scotus game March 24, senior Cesar Hernandez tries to steal the ball and score. Hernandez ended up scoring 2 out of the 3 goals that were made at that game. The bears ended up beating Scotus 3-0. Junior Donovan Williams ended up scoring the third goal of the game.

# Soccer boys climb to top of District 7

Daisy Chinchilla Ramos & Olouwatobi Noukpozounkou  
Reporter & Senior Editor

After a tremendous season, the varsity boys’ soccer team had their last game against Benson and beat the Bunnies with a score of 1-0, ending the season with a record of 11-5 and a winning streak of four games. The team earned the number one seed in District 7 for the first time in Bryan history and are currently eighth in the state. The Bears hosted the winning game against Central and beat them 3-0. The players who helped score for the team were junior Francisco Barajas-Castro and seniors Emerson Bonilla-Tornez and Cesar Hernandez. “I felt good because of the

win and the hardwork we put on the field,” Hernandez said. “By scoring the first [point, I] helped the team get motivated.” The team has all around had a better season compared to last year, when their overall season score was 10-8 and their districts score was 4-5. According to the captains, the team has also improved a lot since the beginning of the season. “The team has done an amazing job this season, we put in the work and we became a family,” captain Carlos Vargas Mejia said. “Last season in some games I felt I had failed my team as a captain but this year I’m making sure that doesn’t happen again.” The team still has to improve on things to propel themselves


beyond their current level. Head soccer coach Daniel Vasquez Gutierrez wants the team to keep working on communication, good flexibility, stamina and their overall athleticism. “The guys know that playing hard equals getting good results,” Vasquez said. “During the middle of the season the team had to understand that you need to come out and play your best every single game and not just in big games, but every single game in order to win every single game.” There was plenty of tough teams the athletes played against, but they came out victorious in a majority of them such as Papillion South, Westside and Creighton Prep. “We lost to some teams we

shouldn’t have and further down the season we took things serious,” captain Uriel Flores Rojas said. “We started getting more important dubs, we beat the top four teams. So, we definitely have the potential to make big things happen.” The coaches have pushed the players a lot to try and work their hardest and motivated them to achieve big things. The goal for the season is to host districts and to go to state and make an impact. “The coaches helped with tactics and helped everyone step up,” captain Christopher Gallrdo-Mejia said. “Last year we didn’t really focus on our leadership, like everyone getting together just coming as a team. This year we are a team.”


## Meet the captains

Here are the three boys varsity soccer team captains and their stats from the 2022 soccer season as of May 3.


**Uriel Flores Rojas**  
Games played: 17  
Points: 5  
Goals: 2  
Assists: 1



**Carlos Vargas Onofre**  
Games played: 17  
Points: 5  
Goals: 2  
Assists: 1



**Christofer Gallardo-Mejia**  
Games played: 14  
Points: 7  
Goals: 2  
Assists: 3



Graphic by | Olouwatobi Noukpozounkou

## Baseball team celebrates athlete’s citizenship

Olivia Wallace  
Reporter

The baseball season is only a few months of games and tournaments, which is not a lot of time for players to have time in the spotlight, but freshman Jaden Gil Rodriguez was able to get his spotlight by getting his citizenship. After moving from the Dominican Republic to New Jersey to finally

Nebraska his freshman year, Rodriguez joined the baseball team where he plays both JV and Varsity. When he got his citizenship, he didn’t tell anyone, not even his head coach, David Ashby. Instead, he skipped practice. “It was a surprise,” Ashby said “I felt bad in hindsight. Being mad at him for two hours thinking he skipped practice and then finding out he had a

reason.” When Ashby found out what it was for he was proud of Rodriguez, and planned to surprise him. He had the team sign a card for him. When he got to practice the next day, they pretended to be mad at him for skipping practice the previous day and told him to run 30 laps, but as soon as he started to run they told him he was joking and congratulated him.

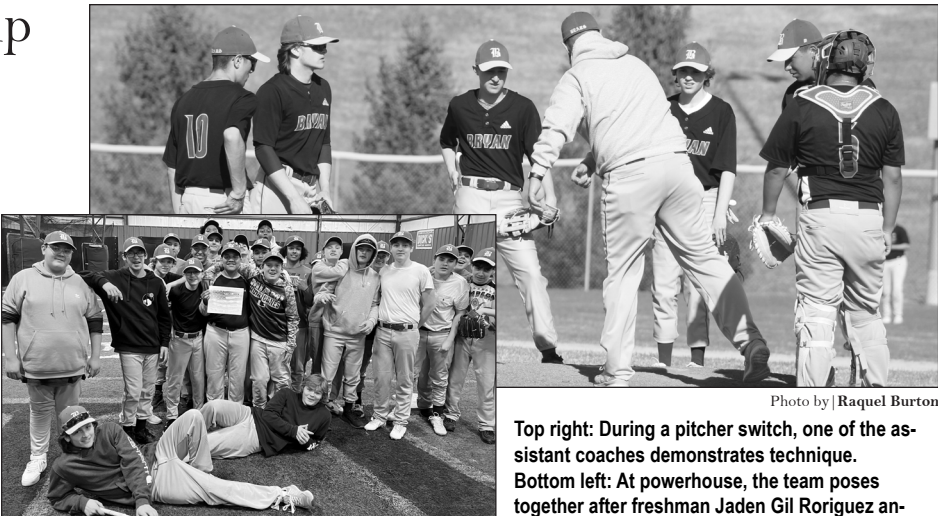


Photo by | Raquel Burton  
Photo courtesy | David Ashby

Top right: During a pitcher switch, one of the assistant coaches demonstrates technique. Bottom left: At powerhouse, the team poses together after freshman Jaden Gil Roriguez announces he got his citizenship.

# Spring sports

As the end of the year has ar-  
rived, here are the spring  
athletic events.

Justin Diep  
Co Editor-In-Cheif

**VARSITY TRACK & FIELD**  
4/1 Bob Whitehouse Invitational 8th Place  
4/8 Benson Invitational 6th Place  
4/21 Lincoln Invitational 13th Place  
4/25 Bellevue West Invitational 9th Place  
5/3 Metros @Burke  
5/4 Metros @Burke  
5/6 Metros @Burke  
**Upcoming Games:**  
5/11 Districts @TBA  
5/20 State @Burke  
5/21 State @Burke  
**Head Coach:** Marcy Krolikowski

**VARSITY GIRLS TENNIS**  
3/24 Northwest (W) 9-0  
3/25 @Nebraska City 1st Place  
3/29 @Burke (L) 2-7  
4/1 @Elkhorn North (L) 0-9  
4/5 Bellevue East (cancelled)  
4/12 @Millard South (L) 3-6  
4/14 @North (W) 7-2  
4/25 @Grenta (L) 0-9  
4/26 @South (W) 8-1  
**Upcoming Games:**  
5/4 Roncalli Catholic High School  
5/5 Gross @Dewy Park  
5/6 Bellevue East Tournament  
5/7 North Invite @Dewy Park  
5/11 Metros @TBA  
5/12 Metros @TBA  
5/19 State @TBD  
5/20 State @TBD  
**Head Coach:** Ricardo Hernandez

**VARISTY BOYS SOCCER**  
3/17 Northwest (W) 2-0  
3/19 Elkhorn South (L) 0-0  
3/22 @Gretna (W) 2-1  
3/24 Columbus Scotus (W) 3-0  
3/28 @Westside (L) 2-4  
4/2 @Lincoln (L) 1-3  
4/8 Metros @Millard West (W) 1-0  
4/9 Metros @Millard West v. Westside (W) 1-0  
4/11 Metros @Gretna (L) 0-3  
4/13 Creighton Prep (W) 1-0  
4/16 Bryan Triangular 2nd Place  
4/18 @North (W) 6-0  
4/20 @Lincoln Northeast (W) 1-0  
4/21 Papillion-La Vista South (W) 2-0  
4/25 @Benson (W) 1-0  
5/2 Central (W) 3-0  
5/5 Lincoln Southeast  
**Head Coach:** Daniel Vasquez Gutierrez

**VARSITY GIRLS SOCCER**  
3/18 Concordia (W) 2-1  
3/19 Fremont (L) 6-0  
3/21 @Northwest (W) 4-3  
3/23 @South (L) -06  
3/25 @Gretna (L) 0-14  
3/29 Burke (L) 0-5  
4/4 Bellevue East (L) 0-10  
4/6 Metros v North (W) 7-0  
4/7 Metros @ Elkhorn South (L) 0-10  
4/12 Millard South (L) 1-5  
4/14 North (W) 8-0  
4/16 Lincoln (L) 0-7  
4/20 @Lincoln Northeast (L) 0-8  
4/26 @Benson (L) 0-2  
**Head Coach:** Elias Galvan

**VARSITY BOYS GOLF**  
3/23 Northwest @Benson Park  
3/31 North @Benson Park  
4/2 North  
4/6 Bellevue East @Tara Hills  
4/14 Lewis Central @Fox Run  
4/19 Gross Catholic @Elmwood  
4/25 OPS Invite @Shoreline  
5/2 Millard North Invitational @Miracle Hills  
5/5 South @Spring Lake  
**Upcoming Meets:**  
5/11 Metros @Benson Park  
**Coaches:** Jason Brannen

**VARSITY BOYS BASEBALL**  
3/17 @Plattsmouth (L) 0-10  
3/19 Bryan Triangular 3rd Place  
3/21 Fremont (L) 1-32  
3/25 Benson (W) 18-0  
3/28 Bellevue West (L)  
3/29 Burke (L) 0-23  
4/1 Van Metre Invitational @Central (L) 0-23  
4/1 Van Metre Invitational v. Lincoln (L) 4-14  
4/4 Van Metre Invitational v. North (L) 3-17  
4/6 Gross (L) 1-30  
4/9 @Belleuve East (L) 5-15  
4/11 Papillion-La Vista South (L) 4-23  
4/13 Metro v. North @ Bryan (L) 0-17  
4/18 North (L) 1-31  
4/20 @Lincoln (L) 3-38  
4/21 Concordia/Brownell/Omaha Christina Academy (L) 0-17  
4/23 @Northwest (L) 2-28  
4/25 @South (L) 1-12  
4/26 @Lincoln East (L) 0-28  
4/28-30 Bellevue West Invitational  
5/2 @Millard North  
5/6 Districts @TBA  
**Upcoming Meets:**  
5/11 Metro @Benson Park

**Coaches:** David Ashby

## TENNIS



Photo by | Amairani Corrales-Benitez

At the Nebraska City tournament, junior Raquel Burton makes a forehand swing to return the ball to her opponent to win. The team took first place at the tournament.

# CHALLENGE ACCEPTED

## Burton steps up, ready to lead senior tennis season

Ulises Munoz  
Reporter

With no freshmen joining this year and six experienced seniors leaving, some challenges have appeared for next year, but junior Raquel Burton might just turn it around for the team.

Burton is the number one singles player on the team. She had to put in a lot of effort on and off the court for her to do this.

“She practices a lot, that’s the thing, she practices a lot on her own,” varsity tennis coach Ricardo Hernandez said.

“She plays very fearless tennis and she’s very smart, when she learns something new she applies it immediately to one of her matches.”

The season has been very good, but some challenges and worries have been appearing. In doubles it was challenging finding the right partners, so that they can help benefit each other on the court.

“We’ve all been practicing really hard and getting our games in during the summer conditioning, and then during winter conditioning right after,” Burton said.

What’s been more of a concern has been seniors that are about to leave pretty soon. The team has 19 players in total, with varsity having nine players and JV having 10 players, but soon six will be leaving.

“We have like six seniors that are leaving and they’re all really experienced, almost all of them have played for four years, so we have a challenge in trying to fill those shoes,” Hernandez said.

During the summer Hernandez will be having a summer clinic for all those who are interested in playing tennis.

# Girls’ soccer season ends with off-field success, hope

Ulises Munoz  
Reporter

The girls’ soccer season is soon to be over. It went well for most of the part, but record-wise they didn’t end up where they wanted to be, but it’s still a work in process.

Their overall score was 4-9 and they placed 13th in metros. The coaches feel like the girls have plenty of potential that they have yet to tap into.

“I think that Bryan is a sleeping giant, if we can get all of our students and athletes to be on board on the idea we have, we can have a winning culture,” head girls soccer coach Elias Galván said. “I know that’s where we aim to be, as being a school that competes and that stands out to the field where everyone is like ‘oh it’s Bryan’ and for the right reasons, that’s where we would like to be.”

Scores have been fluc-

tuating, some games have been good and some not so good. The girls have gone up against schools like Gretna, Elkhorn South, Millard South where those school’s programs have been strong for a while.

“Being disciplined helps a lot,” captain Ximena Morales said. “You need to know where you need to be . You need to know when to go, when not to go.”

Galván’s goals weren’t limited to the field. He also wanted the athletes to make sure they are succeeding in their classes and bonding together as a team as well.

“Our biggest takeaway this year is the classroom, getting all the girls on the same page and realizing that if we put the work in the classroom, we’ll be allowed to spend more time outside on the field learning what we need to learn,” Galván said. “I think we’re doing good.”



Photos by | Nadia Quintanilla-Garcia and Shantania Arellano

Left: Preparing to launch the shot put ball, junior Marquise Keeten tries to get as much momentum as he can. Middle: Sprinting to the finish during her 100 meter dash, sophomore Jade Polsley tries to pass her opponent. Right: Leaping into the sand pit during his triple jump, senior Steven Dalmeida tries to get the furthest distance. “I’ve only been here for a year and a half, but coach K continues to push me, so props to her,” Dalmeida said.

# Jumping Over All Hurdles

Dallanara Sibriann-Miranda  
Reporter

With Metros taking place today, and with every specialty coach spot filled for the first time, the track team is really pushing themselves more than any other year and preparing themselves for the competition.

“We are working harder than we have in the past few weeks to make sure that we are prepared mentally and physically for metros,” head track coach

Marcy Krolikowski said.

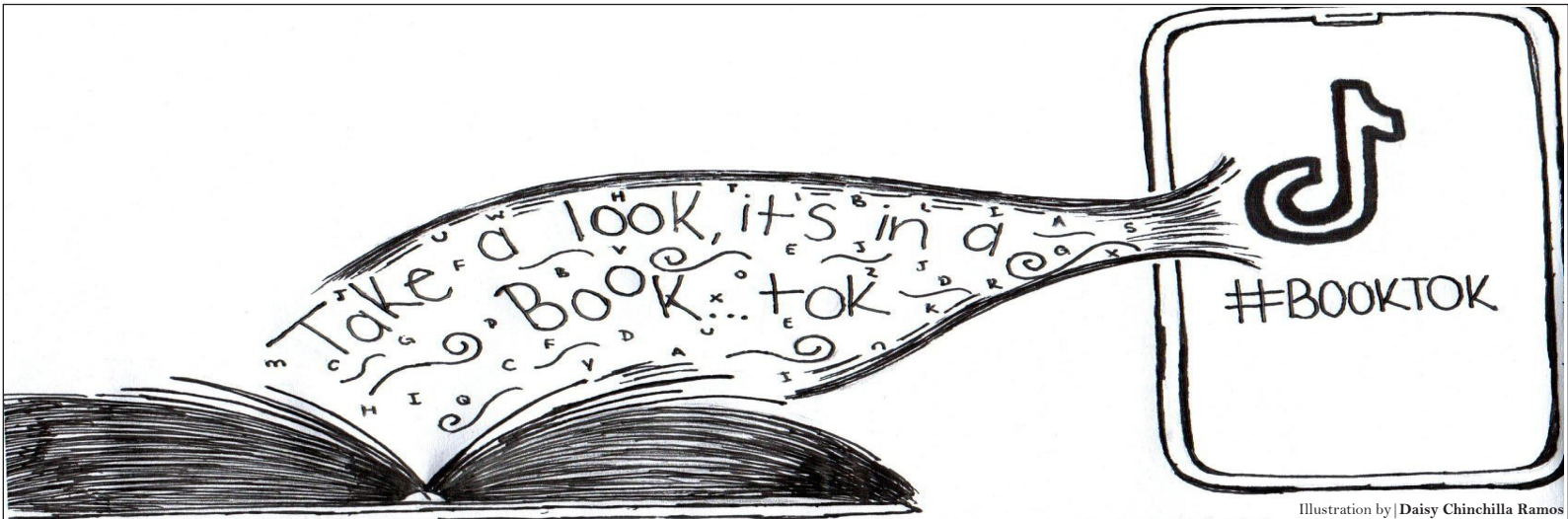
The students are really pushing themselves this year as well. Challenging themselves individually to become better by putting in the work off and on the track field.

“I’ve been coming to practice more consistently, been working on hurdle works and I’m doing sprint work outs,” senior Don Hannon said.

The team started off with 54 athletes, which according to Krolikowski, has been the most kids

since she started coaching nine years ago. However, it hasn’t come without its challenges.

“I think the season has been great, despite the weather and injuries here and there, our runners have risen to the occasion,” track coach Ciara Knudsen said. “We have had new personal records, students medaling for the first time, and many runners who were completely brand new to the sport. We have more runners than last year too.”



# TikTok becomes platform for readers

Amber Roth  
Co-Editor in Chief

With the rise of social media use among teens, the rate of teens reading for fun has decreased with less than 20% of teens reading for fun, according to the American Psychological Association. But as

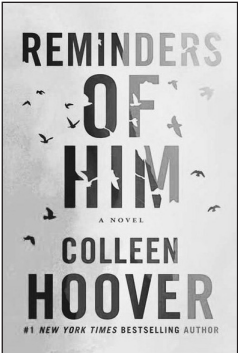
social media usage rises, the app is slowly becoming more popular: TikTok. According to cnbc.com, TikTok has quickly become one of the most popular apps among kids, with 63% of kids between ages 12 and 17 using it daily. With the rapid increase in popularity of

an algorithm-based app like TikTok, the different sides of it grow as well. BookTok, which is the side of TikTok for people who like to read, has slowly helped to get more teens to read. “Sometimes finding a good, physical book can take such a long time

to find,” senior Samira Zarazua said. “Sometimes people recommend stories or comics that are cool in the comments on BookTok.” BookTok is not only good for enticing more young adults to read, but it can also help someone who wasn’t a big reader

before discover what they like to read. On BookTok, there are many different genres like fantasy, romance, fiction, nonfiction and probably the popular of all, the spicy side. “It did help me find new genres I wouldn’t typically read,” Zarazua said.

## Reviews reviewed: BookTok books get mixed reactions

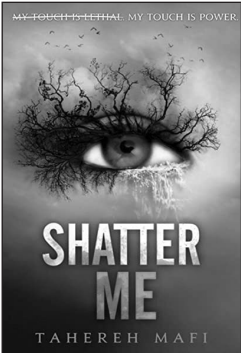


### Reminders of Him

By: Colleen Hoover  
★★★★★

The latest release of arguably the most popular author on Booktok, Reminders of Him follows a young woman, Kenna Rowen, who returns to her hometown in order to get her daughter back after spending 5 years in prison for a deadly mistake. I didn’t know what to expect for this book; it’s different from what I usually read, but the story had me wrapped

around its’ finger the whole time. Reminders of Him does a wonderful job of depicting Kenna fighting for forgiveness from a family that’s shunned her. It also does an amazing job of showing that everyone’s human and makes mistakes, but that does not mean we are beyond forgiveness. It shows all the good, bad and ugly parts about being human, making mistakes and earning forgiveness.

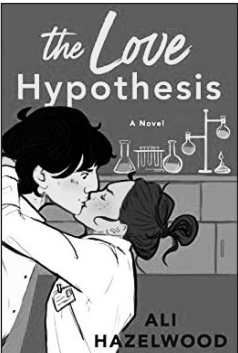


### Shatter me

By: Tahereh Mafi  
★★★★★

My expectations were in the gutter for this book. Centered around a young girl, Juliette Ferrars, who can’t be touched without causing others extreme pain and having to fight back against an oppressive regime, this book sounded only mildly interesting to me. After seeing mixed reviews on BookTok, I finally gave in and read it. For the first 70 pages,

I was right, it was very boring, the writing style was weird, and the characters were very 2-dimensional and flat. But after the first part, it quickly became one of my favorites. The pace of the story picked up, more characters developed actual personalities and there was a couple unexpected plot twists at the end that left me wanting to read the rest of the books in the series.

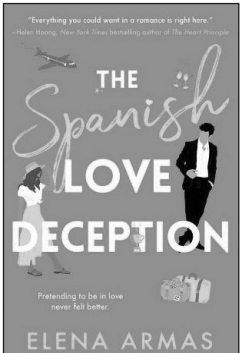


### The Love Hypothesis

By: Ali Hazelwood  
★★★★★

Normally I am a sucker for the fake dating trope, but this book fell just flat of living up to its’ hype. The Love Hypothesis is about a PhD student, Olive Smith, who does not believe in love or long-term relationships, but in order to convince her friend she’s truly happy, she kisses her professor, who then agrees to fake date her. There were some parts of this

book that I enjoyed, but nothing in the book hooked my attention super well and made me want to reread the book. Yes, it was decent and yes it had some cute scenes, but it wasn’t overly amazing, nor was it extremely bad. I would read it again if I had nothing else to read, but it’s not my first choice for a book.



### The Spanish Love Deception

By: Elena Armas  
★★★

This book was exactly what I was expecting it to be, which was absolutely nothing. Another book with the fake dating trope, the main character, Catalina Martin, needs a date to her sister’s wedding after lying to her family about having a boyfriend; unsurprisingly, her grumpy boss agrees to go with her and be her fake date. Since it did have the fake

dating trope, I had some hope for it, but the story was very bland and uninteresting. The writing was nothing spectacular, and it seemed like the author was trying to cram every cliché she could into it, but it was poorly executed and ruined the plot. The characters lacked the depth and personality the book very desperately needed.

## Viral cookie store opens, long lines worth the wait

Olivia Wallace  
Reporter

After seeing constant reviews on TikTok about the weekly flavors and the long lines, when it was announced that Crumbl Cookies was coming to Omaha, I was intrigued. So, when they opened a few weeks ago, I made my way out to 168th and Lakeside Plaza to try it.

Unfortunately for me, the lines were upwards of one to two hours long. Apparently I wasn’t the only one who was curious about the viral sensation. So, I

waited it out and went last week. The lines had finally died down to about 30 minutes, so it was time to see if it was all worth it. The aroma when walking in was heavenly. The sweet smell of more cookies being made to replace the ones that sold-out filled the small bakery. But that meant one thing, hot, freshly made cookies. The chain, which originated in Utah, is well known for making new, exciting flavors each week. The same was true upon my visit. The flavors of the week were: Confetti Cake,

Classic Oatmeal, Brownie Batter, Peanut butter M & M and Passion Fruit. I got a four pack with two Confetti Cakes, a Brownie Batter and the M & M for \$10.48 before tax. The price was a bit steep for four cookies, but I have to admit, they all lived up to the expectations. The Confetti Cake cookie was like a sugar bomb going off in my mouth and the frosting was made of cream cheese. It was a 9/10, but if weren’t for the big chunks of sprinkles, it would’ve been better.



Each week Crumbl Cookies, located in Lakeside, features unique and trendy flavors of cookies. This week they are featuring milk chocolate chip, lemon glaze, mango frozen yogurt, pink velvet, hazelnut mudslide ft. nutella and mom's recipe.

Both the Brownie and M&M were better than store bought cookies, as they should be. The Brownie was better than actual brownie batter, safer to eat too. The M&M

cookie was also delicious, I wanted to go back and get more. Both this and the Brownie would be 10/10. While you might wait in line for a bit, the quality of each cookie is worth it.

## Arts Calendar

Here is a look at Arts and Entertainment events and releases coming up.

### MUSIC

Harry Styles, Harry’s House

Releases: May 20



“Harry’s House” will be Styles’ third studio album and will feature songs called ‘Boyfriend,’ ‘Love of my Life,’ ‘Daylight,’ and the viral song ‘As It Was.’

Soft Cell, Happiness Not Included

Releases: Today

Soft Cell, an English synthpop duo, will be releasing their first album in over 20 years. The albums will include the songs ‘Polaroid,’ ‘Light Zone’ and ‘Nighthawks’.

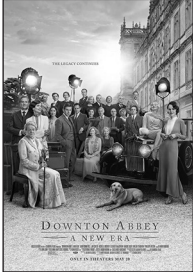
### MOVIES



Dr. Strange in the Multiverse of Madness  
Releases: Today

The latest release from Marvel, Dr. Strange in the Multiverse of Madness follows Stephen Strange after he casts a forbidden spell that opens a portal to other universes, and must deal with the consequences that inevitably arise.

Downton Abbey: A New Era



Releases: May 20

The sequel to the 2019 movie of the same name, it follows the Crawley family on their journey to Southern France on a quest to uncover the dowager countess’ newly inherited villa.

### AROUND TOWN

#### Wicked

April 27-May 15 at the Orpheum Theater.

Returning to Omaha once again, Wicked: Defying Gravity, a play about Dorthy before she landed in Munchkinland in the Wizard of Oz. This is the show’s seventh tme coming back to Omaha.

AJR, OK orchestra tour

June 8 at the Baxter Arena

This band consisting of three brothers, released their latest album, OK Orchestra, and will be going on tour, with a show here in Omaha.



Photo by | Nicholas Wennstedt

Photo by | Fatima Torres

Dominant: Social studies teacher Nicholas Wennstedt rides his bike towards the back of the school on his way in. Wennstedt rides his bike to school in order to save gas since gas prices are high right now, and to help keep himself healthy and fit.

Bottom Left: Taking a break during their April 3, over 20-mile ride in Washington County, social studies teacher Nichoals Wennstedt takes a photo of his social studies colleagues, Bidong Tot and Nicholas Clawson.

# Social studies, science teachers break cycle of driving to work

Olouwatobi Noukpozoukou  
Senior Editor

Driving cars to school is something teachers and students have begun doing for decades. It’s pretty much the default method of commuting next to walking. However, several teachers defy that reality in Bear Country.

Social studies teacher Nicholas Wennstedt and science teacher Eduardo Walmrath have been biking to school since the early 2010s. And while it is a more lengthy method of travel, they’ve found its benefits outweigh driving.

“It’s a lot of fun,” Wennstedt said. “If I’m tired in the morning the bike ride can wake me up or if I have either a long day or stressful day at work, the ride home can really help relive a lot of that, and you know, gas isn’t cheap.”

Wennstedt has been biking to work since 2014. He first started because he had always been into biking and wanted to find another way to ride his bike more and find a healthier efficient way of commuting. On days that he can’t bike like when the weather doesn’t allow it, he’ll still end up waking up at the biking time and just arriving to school early.

“I usually bike by myself, but I do go ride with other teachers sometimes,” Wennstedt said. “Now though, I do ride sometimes with Mr. Clawson on the weekends. And then just last week I rode with Mr. Clawson and Mr. Tot. We rode around North Omaha little bit and got out of the city.”

Walmrath hasn’t been at school as long as Wennstedt, he still started biking to school in 2012, which was around the same time

as Wennstedt. Walmrath moved to Omaha from Brazil in 2017.

When Walmrath would bike to his old job, he’d have to get the ones that are for rent, when he moved to Omaha, he was able to buy his own and from there he’s been biking often. He likes going on the trails in Omaha to bike with his family or by himself.

“It’s a good work out first of all,” Walmrath said. “Maintenance of a bike is cheaper; you don’t have to pay for things like for a car for a registration and cost of maintenance is much higher.”

During the pandemic, Wennstedt took time out to introduce some other teachers to the biking lifestyle including social studies teacher Nicholas Clawson, who now bikes regularly during his free time.

“I love cycling now, it played

a huge role in my personal life,” Clawson said. “Once you start pushing towards 40 you’ve got to exercise. You’re not going to be young and full of infinite energy always.”

For anyone who now reading this and is interested in biking, Wennstedt offers advice on what to watch out for while beginning your journey.

“It doesn’t matter what kind of bike you have as long as you just get out and do it and start small,” Wennstedt said. “Don’t feel like you have to complete get rid of your car first try or anything like that. If your bike isn’t in working order, get into a bike shop because a bike that doesn’t work is going to be frustrating. But start small, try to replace one car trip a week or something like that and then you can see what’s possible.”

### MUSCULAR BENEFITS OF CYCLING

**Muscles worked:**

- Abdominals
- Biceps/triceps
- Glutes
- Hamstrings
- Shins
- Calves

**Strong leg muscles:** reduce joint pain, strengthen bones and improve posture.

**Strong arm muscles:** increase heart strength, improve running speed and strengthen bones.

**Strong abdominal muscles:** prevent lower back pain, improve posture and improve breathing.

\*Sources: shape.com, healthline.com, mayoclinic.org

Infographic by | Amber Roth

# Weekend celebration of Cinco de Mayo brings top foods

Daisy Chinchilla Ramos  
Reporter

Mexican food has become a huge staple in American cuisine. Whether it’s the real deal or an Americanized version, it’s everywhere. TacoBell, Chipotle, are just a few examples of Americanized

Mexican food. But the real deal is even better.

Authentic Mexican food has many more flavors, textures and variety compared to the American versions. These foods can be found at celebrations like Cinco de Mayo. Here is a look at the top 5 best foods found at the festival.



Photo by | Elijah Bizcor (CC BY 4.0)

**Elotes (mexican street corn):** An elote, or mexican street corn, is a kob of corn typically topped with mayo, cilantro, lime juice, cotija cheese and chili powder. It’s a flavorful and addictive dish.



Photo by | Roland Tanglao (CC BY 2.0)

**Pupusas:** This is a delicious flatbread dish that comes from El Salvador and Honduras that has many different delectable flavors and fillings that will keep you wanting more.



Photo by | Sarah Stierch (CC BY 4.0)

**Tacos:** Mexican-style tacos can come with any form of grilled, fried or steamed meat along with toppings like cilantro, onion, lime and more. These are the best tacos you’ll eat, they’re authentic, originated in Mexico and have mouth-watering flavors.



Photo by | Manuel Gomez Ruano (CC BY 3.0)

**Aguas frescas:** These are sugary drinks that are typically made from one or more frutis, sugar and water. They’re refreshing, sweet amd flavorful, perfect for a hot day and they can be paired with any dish you would like.



Photo by | Juan Mejuto (CC BY 2.0)

**Churros:** These are a crunchy fried dough dish that originated in Spain and Portugal, but has made it all the way over here. It’s also soft on the inside, and can have tasty fillings that make this one of the best Hispanic desserts.

# 2022 Valedictorian named

## Metro wrestling champ, Portrait of a Graduate, Student Council member is No. 1

Olouwatobi Noukpozounkou  
Senior Editor

Lack of motivation, difficulties with friends and families and the loss of family members were all in 2022 valedictorian Layna Blankenship's path, attempting to block her from reaching this point, but the first girl's wrestling Metro champ in school history surpassed them all, claiming her title as the 2022 valedictorian.

Blankenship started off high school third in her class with a 4.3 GPA at Millard North. After transferring to Bryan sophomore year, she finished her senior year with a 4.65 at the top of her class.

"I received the news after winning Metros for wrestling so I felt like I was on top of the world," Blankenship said. "I wasn't anticipating actually bumping up to number one. I felt such relief that all of my hard work and dedication finally paid off."

Blankenship was able to do all of this with support from her friends, family and teachers to try her hardest and never give up. Even though at time she felt like she wanted to.

"It did become overwhelming at times," Blankenship said. "This year was the first year at Bryan where I felt like my grade goal was out of my hands. It felt extremely draining and harmed my path toward my goals. It made me want to give up on all the things I was working for, but I stopped myself from continuing the habits that would lead to worsening of that mentality. It's easier said than done, but self-discipline really helped me out."

Her freshman year when, Blankenship attended Millard North

High School, affected her social life and her mental health. According to Blankenship, the teacher-student dynamic wasn't as present at Millard North as it is at Bryan.

"Millard is nothing compared to Bryan," she said. "It's a whole different environment centered on success only instead of success and happiness. This school taught me a lot about time management, organization, responsibility, and most importantly, accountability. When I transferred to Bryan, I was shocked to find out that I was number two and on the tail of number one."

Blankenship also attended the April OPS Board of Education Meeting and brought to them an issue that her and the graduating class of 2022 had about graduation. The students were to only be allowed six tickets with no way to get additional tickets for family members and friends to attend their graduation ceremony, but the class of '22 wanted more.

Many of the students have numerous family members and having to pick and choose which family members to bring and who to leave at home would be heart-breaking for some, Blankenship included. So, she went to Board of Education and presented this issue. After which they replied and accepted and allowed students two more tickets each. This shows Blankenship's willingness to fight for her peers.

"I'm grateful that she used her position as valedictorian to make a change, not just for our school but all of OPS," senior Emma Cramer said. "It shows she cares about what happens in the school."



Photo by | Lacy Abdi

At the Bellevue East wrestling meet, senior Layna Blankenship stands tall and fiercely looks into the crowd and audience member after beating her opponent from Bellevue East, one of the many wins Blankenship had.



Photo by | Bryan Diaz

After hitting the ball into the outfield, senior Layna Blankenship sprints towards first base as fast as she can so that she can try to stay in and help the team continue scoring points so they can beat their opponents, Central.

save the date

# 2022 Graduation

Wednesday May 25th- 2pm

## Baxter Arena