

Your *Country* Neighbor

Free
April 2018

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Winter's last snowfall and an early sign of Spring, March 6, 2018

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Tecumseh; *Central Market, Harvest Bowl*

A Magazine for Small Towns and Rural America



Springtime means baseball and softball. The ballgame schedule for Peru State is on the back cover, and more photos of Men's and Women's ball are on page 14.

Your Country Neighbor

Voices and Views From the Valleys of the Nemaha
Publisher & Photographer, Stephen Hassler


Readers! Returning this month are most of your favorite Nebraska columnists. This 16-page issue is your 2-cup coffee-companion.

Viewers! In this issue you will find some of my recent wildlife photographs, rural landscapes, and my favorite action shots of Peru State athletes.

Tourists! Welcome! Have a good time exploring, and take this free publication home with you and use it as a reference for your next visit to our area.

Shoppers! Keep up with local businesses and news of their monthly specials. And please thank them for advertising in "*Your Country Neighbor*".

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Cover Photos

It's not often I get a sharp photo of a bird on a snowy branch. The light snowfall on March 6 was a pretty end to Winter (hopefully). The Mourning Dove's visit to my yard is certainly a sign of Spring.

Another sign of Spring is fun at the ballfield. Softball and baseball photos are on page 14. Basketball photos on page 13 were taken during Division playoffs, after which, the Bobcats advanced to the NAIA tournament in Kansas City, winning in the first round of conference play.

**Send this publication to your relatives
and friends who live outside our
'Country Neighborhood'.
Just e-mail them this web address:
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Guitar Poems

Steve Adams



He was a rebel
Might as well yell
Didn't have a house
Lived down at the hotel
Wasn't much he wouldn't do
Less he hadn't done
Like I said, he's a rebel's son

Might see him everyday
Then not for a week
I heard he had a little still
On Honey Creek

His pappy raised him
Back in them hills
Taught him all he knew
'Bout a corn mash still
How the copper
Sweat the devil's brew
Yeah, his pappy taught him
All he knew.....

Holes

Janet Sobczyk, ©2016

It's hard to enjoy
tromping through
fresh fallen snow
on a brisk winter's day
when there's a hole in your boot.

It's difficult to enjoy
the journey to
a long-planned vacation
or family reunion
when there's a hole in your tire.

It's impossible to enjoy
the pitter patter of raindrops
or the melting snows
of springtime
when there's a hole in your roof.

It's bittersweet to enjoy
daily blessings
joyful happenings
and tender moments
when there's a hole in your heart.

April Writers

Devon Adams
Steve Adams
Stephen Hassler
Merri Johnson
Janet Sobczyk
Merlin Wright

Thank You!

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Black Jelly Beans

Janet Sobczyk, ©2018

Grocery shopping
colorful Easter display
bag of black jelly beans.

Pick it up
sorrowful smile
clutching memories.

Used to buy these
only for Mom
no one else liked them.

Now she's gone
still tempted to buy them
set the bag down.

Slowly walk away
Easter's not the same
without black jelly beans.



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The Cardinal's plumage is striking this time of year.

Window on Fifth Street

Stephen Hassler

While gazing out my window on 5th Street one lazy Saturday afternoon, I was reminded of growing up on the farm, and my lazy thoughts went back to when I was only 10 or 11, to my tree house 'hideout', from which I looked out on my world that was the farmyard below.

There was the house and barn of course, and the corncrib under which my dog had her puppies. The three haystacks along the cattle-yard fence from which I jumped from one stack to another. The upstairs window of my room from which I strung a radio antenna wire over to the barn (my mother made me take it down during thunderstorms), the cow paths in the surrounding pasture over which I rode my bike.

I remember mulberries in June and purple lips, fireworks in July and gray clouds of smoke against the black night sky, green apples in August and sour faces. There is the evening memory of my Dad carrying buckets of milk from the barn to the "separator house", chased by cats and kittens, their necks stretching to catch splashes of milk out of the buckets sloshing to the rhythm

Continued from page 6 >>>>>>>



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Caffeine Musings

Merlin Wright

What is heard at coffee.....

At a local coffee meeting someone said, "It must be true because I saw it on the internet." However, Honest Abe Lincoln had doubts about things he read there. Al Gore has been quoted as having invented the internet. In a similar manner, some people try to prove something or the other by saying they heard it at coffee. Others say that what is said at coffee should stay at coffee.

I recently learned at coffee that a horse that is 10 hands tall is a normal size but later that day on the internet I learned that a 'hand' is four inches. My friends also did not agree on using a hand sideways or pointed up and down. I wondered which was true. Many people trust Wikipedia as much as they believe the local library encyclopedia. If you find an error on Wikipedia it is allowable to edit the entry.

Another day at coffee I asked a man if he had yet caught the mouse in his house and the conversation went from house mice to rats in a corn crib on the farm. The conversation turned a corner and soon was about trapping coons, skunks, possums and badgers. It is sure fun to watch a group of people cover all the related topics.

The local weather is always good for a few minutes of conversation and the first week of March had a couple days of winter between spring days. The switch from standard time to daylight time usually brings complaining at a high intensity. Many arguments have been held about the benefits of daylight time. This spring Florida is a state preparing to have daylight time all year. They will need approval from Congress.

The town of Decorah Iowa has an eagle nest and camera for people to watch the nest via the internet. A program gave the weight of an eagle nest. Someone at coffee said the nest weighed 200 pounds. I thought 2000 was more correct but said nothing. Later via Google I learned that 2000 pounds is normal but the record is three tons. An eagle nest is often about ten feet across and about ten feet deep.

Coffeecake, cookies, cinnamon rolls, and many other pastries are better with coffee. I decided to bake kolaches. During the baking and secondary rising the dough pushed the jelly over the edge. Next time I will try a different method. I had written in my diary about my kolache effort and a few days later my computer displayed a photo of a table covered with kolaches. Somehow someone or some algorithm seems to see a word and sends me an advertisement. Must be careful what words a person uses in emails and on Facebook.

A BRUSH WITH NATURE

Devon Adams

There is light at the end of the winter tunnel. Landscapes cut into copper plates and printed with black ink on stark white paper are getting soft around the edges. After months of the neutral grays and browns and tans of plowed fields and dead grasses, accented by lacy patterns of bare branches outlined against cold clouds, or chilly blue snow shadows dancing across the sparkle of drifts, colors are coming back.

Bumps on branches are growing into buds with little green eyes peeking out. The frost has melted into deep mud and encouraged tender blades of grass to venture into a warmer world. Robins have arrived and wasted no time in finding earthworms writhing just below the surface of the damp soil, their fat bellies wearing a fresh coat of sienna rust. Bright yellow bands across their tail feathers are like license plates proclaiming that the cedar waxwings are here too. Not to mention that goldfinches are turning gold again.

Cedar trees have hung their faded coats in the closet and replaced them with bright green branches that will soon be throwing clouds of pollen into the air in puffs of lemon wind. As the world starts to glow with spring, the sky reflects the glory of a new beginning with pastel streaks and fluffy cotton balls tinted with pinks and blues and yellows and oranges and greens and lavenders.

A huge canvas is being painted in impressionist strokes, as an invisible brush swoops and dabs quick flashes of paint, catching a fast memory of a constantly changing scene. Sun and shadow and wind are always moving, leaving transitory sights that exist for only seconds. A moving eye sees bright spots thrown into a picture.

Then the show intensifies with pop-up tulips and crocus and impossibly yellow daffodils, followed by the explosions of hues in the bushes. With their heady perfume plumes drifting leisurely on the breeze, lilacs and honeysuckle blooms combine with crab apple blossoms and forsythia and apple, peach and apricot trees to join the party. Colors become scents and scents become colors.

As tree leaves unwind, the canopy returns and there is shade once more, with its welcome sanctuary from increasingly warm and warmer sun rays. Deep in the south over the tropical gulf, moisture gathers and surges north and meets the much chillier air over the plains. A battle line forms as they meet, as a dark purple menace of towering thunderheads forms a storm wall full of angry lightning forks. Then the earth and the sky become a drippy watercolor, with soggy skies dripping into puddles in the fields and streets. Drops running down the outside of windows smear the details, as all the colors run into each other, while you stand inside, gazing at the wonder of nature.



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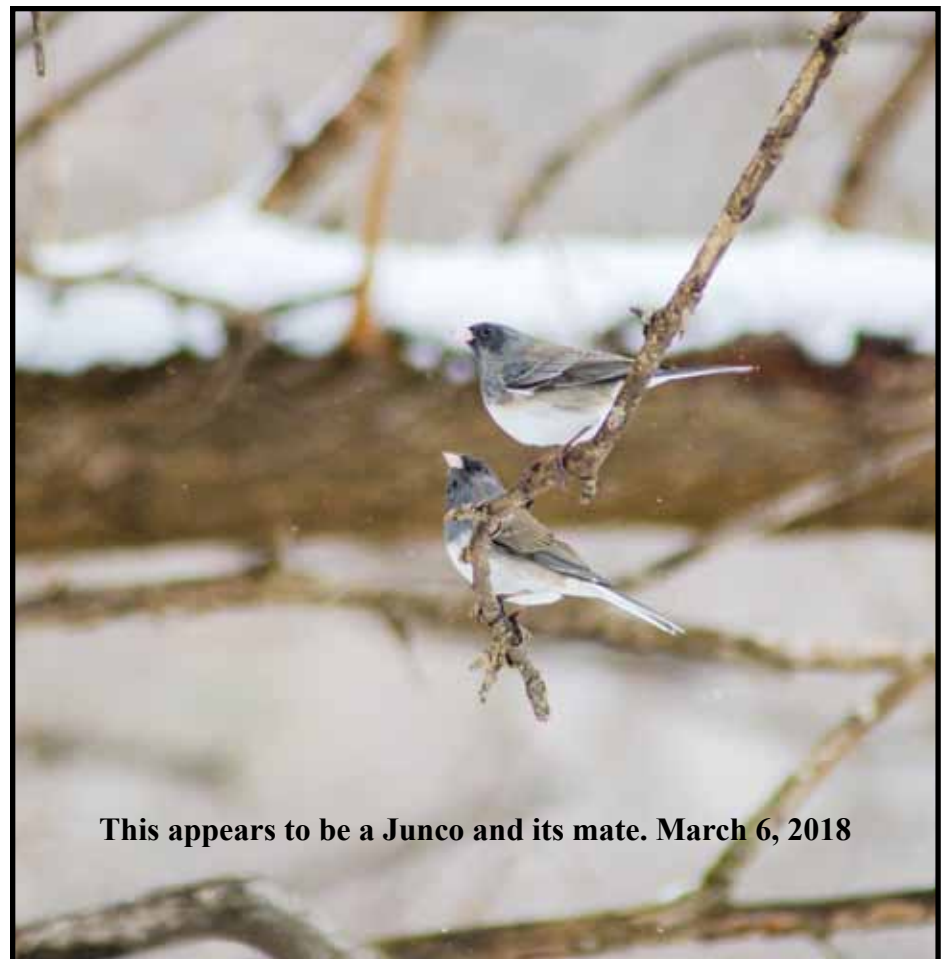
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<<<<<<< *Continued from page 3*

of my father's steps, the air warm and thick with Summer. Toads croaking their evening chorus, happy to be out of the daytime heat, June bugs flying into the porch door screen, moths circling the pole light. My parents sitting on the porch steps in the dark after supper, Dad with his cigarette, Mom with her iced coffee. And the stars!

The long lane up to the rural mailbox, impassable during times of heavy snow or rain. And not far down the gravel road, the one-room schoolhouse and the big Maple tree that was "home" for hide and seek at recess. Later, walking home from school through the pasture, carrying my empty lunch pail along the twisting crick with its steep, dirt banks.

I wrote down the memories as fast as they flooded my senses, wondering why I valued them so much. My pre-teen years were not that amazing, or were they? A time of innocence, love of life, treasures of the past, foundations for the future. So many of my skills and interests were learned then; changing my bicycle tire and the Ford's spark plugs, building a go-cart and setting a corner post, building a raft for the crick, catching butterflies with a home-made net, taking black and white photos with a 2-dollar pin-hole camera.

Maybe the best days of our lives are the simple ones, void of complications and anxiety, filled with the adventures of childhood. And maybe that's why I love my window on 5th Street. A view of my world in the present, and sometimes, through a glass murky with memories, a view of another world with simpler days, and that 10-year-old who I used to be. It doesn't seem fair that I know everything about that boy, yet he didn't know about me at all, and was unaware that he was creating these memories I cherish.

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The Bald Eagle's head is barely observable. She's been nesting since early March, near Dawson, NE

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Poetry by Devon Adams

MUSHROOMS AND VIOLETS

They travel together,
these spring dwellers.
Hunters wanting to
savor those delicacies
that grow by dead tree
trunks and branches,
that look like sponges
on stalks, will run the
gauntlet of poison ivy,
ticks and mosquitoes
for the chance to eat
a skillet of morels.
Sometimes, like the
loving father who
watched his five year
old daughter discover
violets for the first time,
will go home with a
happy child and a wilted
bouquet of purple and
white magic flowers that
are worth more than gold
to him for the memories.

TWO BY TWO

One of them is snuggled
under a huge cedar tree,
whose branches hang
low and cradle the baby
with soft shade. The
other one is hidden in
the long, dense prairie
grass that grows next
to the cedar tree. They
are twins, and Mom was
somewhat startled to find
that she had given birth
to two. But they are bonded,
all three of them, forever.
The spots will help to keep
the fawns invisible until
they can run like the wind.
Then they will join the herd
of shadow ghosts who hide
in plain sight of those who
seek to find them.

APRIL LIES

Tulips were coming up
next to daffodils, who
were wearing sunny,
smiling faces. Soft
breezes caressed the
new green grass and
insects were in high
gear as they started
their summer lives.
Ice was only a memory,
as a cloud bank rose
like a moving mountain
range on the western
horizon. Lightning forks
stabbed deep into the
growing thunderheads,
as cumulous crowns
billowed like exploding
popcorn, reaching high
into innocent baby blue
sky. In a fast five minutes,
the storm was overhead,
dumping buckets of big
drops that fell into the
thirsty soil. But then the
drops became huge
flakes of snow, falling in
dense, lacy curtains. It
was lovely for awhile,
until a sharp wind cut in
from the northwest. Like
a rock dropped in a lake,
temperatures fell to zero,
and hell froze over. Wind
continued to rise, creating
twisted snow sculptures
that blocked roads and
doors and windows. So
much for sweet spring!



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solar fury that can put
us back in the dark for
a long, long time. The
bloody wars we fight
over land, religion, race,
money, oil, resources,
and power are puny in
comparison to the fact
all of us are defenseless
little ants crawling around
on a lovely blue sphere.
In the deep space beyond
our existence are secrets
that we will never know.

WHAT YOU SEE

Ads for things you want
can be very attractive,
especially when it is for
something you don't need.
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decision. Then, when time
has passed and bills are
due, reality dawns, and you
vow never to do that again.
So, the next time you do it,
good luck with that.
By the way, this also happens
with instant love at first sight
occasions. What you see
isn't always what you get.

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I think the Snow Geese at the wildlife refuge east of Rulo are more impressive than the Sandhill Cranes west of Grand Island.

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Diary of Part-time Housewife

Merri Johnson

Dear Readers, I am feeling totally uninspired today.

It's spring, if you believe the calendar. But the sight of still-bare trees blowing around against a yet-again gray sky looks a lot like winter. I observed Vernal Equinox by balancing an egg on my kitchen counter. It stood for a couple of hours, so I guess the calendar is right. But it doesn't feel very spring-like to me.

Mother Nature has been nothing if not fickle so far this month. Why, just yesterday, I was sitting in my front yard with my bare feet in the grass, enjoying the sun. I walked barefoot across my driveway to inspect my teeny-tiny patch of lavender crocus that were blooming under the Viburnum. So far, they are the only spot of color besides the lawn greening up.

We've started in on the yard clean-up, but planting and transplanting are still a couple of weeks off. Hubby is eager to get his Peaches and Cream sweet corn in the ground. This will be his first corn crop in many moons. The former farmer in him is itching to see those green blades coming up in four straight rows. I just hope the raccoons and fox in the neighborhood don't get to the ripening ears before he does. I don't think he could bear the disappointment. He may be sleeping beside his plot come July.

Because the corn is taking up half of the garden this year, I'll have to space the lettuce, spinach, carrots and beets so that the peppers and tomatoes can be planted between them later on. The early crops will be done before the tomatoes and peppers get very big. I haven't tried a staggered planting schedule in a small space like that before, so I hope it works out.

Thinking of sweet corn reminds me of 1977, hubby's first year of farming in northwest Iowa. He was so relieved when the corn came up in more-or-less straight rows. You could hardly tell it was the first time he'd planted a field.

But, back to my whining.

Temperatures have been so up-and-down this week that we've actually made chili and chicken noodle soup in the space of four days. Soups are for winter!

Yesterday, I was barefoot in the grass; today I'm wearing layers of clothing in the house!

Daylight savings time means an extra hour of daylight in the evening, but it's too cool to enjoy it!

Thank you for bearing with me on that burst of petulance. Perhaps Spring will make a genuine appearance in time for Easter. If not, why, I'll I'll I'll be even crankier, that's what!



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The Junco is usually a 'ground feeder'. Not on this day, March 6, 2018

LIVING SPIRITS

Devon Adams

Even in the dark of the night, our eyes can see shapes and changes in grays and blacks and the pewter shine on objects under the smile of a full moon. Star scatter adds it's ephemeral contributions to the ambient light.

Added to the given amount of actual vision is the memory of where things are that are always there. The familiar furnishings that surround our daily lives give our bodies an intuitive feel that keep us from bumping into the coffee table, or the picnic table under the oak tree, or the planter next to the front steps when we find ourselves suspended in a shadowed place.

In the brightness of day, nothing seems to be hidden, as we run through time at breakneck speed. Even if we pause to catch a breath and actually focus on the apple blossoms in front of our face and inhale the gentle scent, we usually have a picture inside our minds of the crisis of the day or our long list of things to do that aren't done yet. We are not in a receptive frame of thought.

At the start of a new growing season, when the long sleep of winter is broken by the tilt of the earth, the miracle of life is happening all around us. As if by magic, trees start to add new leaves and branches, grass erupts out of a hidden root system, walnuts buried by squirrels sprout and reach upwards.

Seeds sown during mating season are ripening into miniature versions of their parents, be they fawns, or bunnies, or birds or horses, or snakes or humans. Could these new beings be more than the bodies that we can see as they come forth to greet us?

Do they join a huge contingent of spirits that surround and envelop our conventional ideas of life and living? The usual theory is that creatures are either alive or dead, and there is nothing in-between. We love them and lose them and miss them all the rest of our given days. Then we cross the shadow line and disappear forever.

Could it be that there is another dimension of existence that is harder to find, that we are always a part of, even though it is invisible to us? Maybe we are surrounded by those who choose to remain a part of us, albeit that they have no material substance or visual manifestation?

If they are there, perhaps it is to give us comfort, or protection, or because they are lonesome and need their presence to be acknowledged. If you truly let your mind find peace, and open your heart for clues, they may be there waiting to be found.

We know only the things that are familiar to us, and imagining different possibilities can be a daunting task, or an adventure. The universe is full of mysteries and all of them seem to be an infinite number of miles away, or not. It could be that only the thickness of a blink stands between here and there.

Pops of Red

By Janet Sobczyk, ©2018

Like a magnet, my eye is drawn to a pop of red, regardless of emotion, that's where it's led:

A male cardinal
on a snow-blanketed branch

A Flexible Flyer sled
at the crest of a hill

A first-to-show tulip
in a spring flowerbed

A poppy umbrella
on a gray rainy day

A freshly-painted barn
in acres of green

A potted geranium
on a wooden porch

A maroon door
on a white house

A meandering ladybug
on an open window sill

A cherished Valentine
on a crowded nightstand

A splash of wine
on a lace tablecloth

A garnish of berries
on sliced angel food

A long-stemmed cherry
on a hot fudge sundae

A red M&M
in a bowl of peanuts

A wedge of watermelon
on a flimsy paper plate

A splotch of ketchup
on a cotton blouse

A crimson wool coat
in a crowded church

An auburn ponytail
in a group of blondes

A queen of hearts
in a handful of spades.

Division Playoffs

Thank you Bobcats, for a Great Season!





Bobcat Baseball & Softball

See Game Schedule on back cover.



Peru State College named #3 in Nation for Online Criminal Justice Program.

Top Criminal Justice Schools (TCJS) ranked Peru State College #3 in the nation on their list of Top 50 Best Criminal Justice Online Degree Programs. Peru State was the top ranked of the four Nebraska schools included.

TCJS' methodology was explained, "We compiled this list of the top 50 best online bachelor's in criminal justice for 2018 by looking at tuition value, individual attention (as evidenced by faculty to student ratio) and tuition rate."

TCJS writes about Peru State, "With a student to faculty ratio of 22 to 1, the school offers an online bachelor of science in criminal justice, justice counseling option that is a 120 credit hour program including coursework in the analysis of evil and abnormal psychology."

"Peru State College offers an online undergraduate tuition rate of \$279 per credit hour, regardless of residency."

Peru State College offers a program of study in criminal justice that can be completed completely online. The major has three possible areas of emphasis: Justice Administration, Justice Counseling, and Law and Society.

Top Criminal Justice Schools continues, "Our mission is to share our expert knowledge on the highest quality criminal justice degree programs offered at the nation's top schools to ensure you receive the training needed to open professional job opportunities within the increasingly competitive criminal justice field."



PSC April Distinguished Speaker

Peru State established the Distinguished Speaker Series in fall 2010 as part of its commitment to student engagement and success. The intent of the Series is to bring diverse, nationally and internationally recognized speakers to southeast Nebraska to enrich the educational experience of students while also providing the surrounding communities with opportunities to engage in interesting and relevant topics.

Speakers are encouraged to connect with the community in a variety of ways during their visits through classroom discussions, guest lectures, meet-and-greet receptions and a keynote address.

Olympian and Nebraska native, Curt Tomasevicz, spoke as part of this series on April 10. All events are free and open to the public. For more information, visit www.peru.edu/speakerseries.

Thank You Teacher Award

Peru State Alum Tim Oehring one of Five Winners

As part of National Teacher Recognition Day, five Thank You Teacher Award winners and the students that nominated them attended a breakfast held in the Nebraska Governor's Mansion. A record number of 550 nominations were made by former students.

34th Annual District History Day

Middle and high school students participated in Peru State College's 34th Annual District History Day Contest. The theme for this year's contest was "Conflict and Compromise in History." Participating students conducted research based on the theme and presented their findings in one of five medias: exhibits, documentaries, performances, papers or as a website.

Dr. Justin Pfeifer, assistant professor of history, writes, "The history faculty, Phi Alpha Theta, the Social Science Club, and everyone at Peru State College are proud to host the 34th Annual Peru District History Day event."

"We are grateful to our local educators for encouraging and supporting their students to participate in the event, and we are equally excited by the passion and excellence displayed by students at various stages of their educational careers. Their work ethic and creativity shines throughout the project submissions, and it is a significant achievement for them to take part in this event."

Students competed in two divisions: junior (grades 6 to 8) and senior (grades 9 to 12). Students could compete individually or as part of a group of up to five students.

Almost 300 students competed, ranging from 6 to 12 grade. 200 entries were seen by nearly 60 judges, 16 judges assistants, and 18 teachers. Participating schools included Auburn Public Schools, Johnson-Brock Public Schools, Lourdes Central Catholic, Nebraska City Public Schools, Pawnee City Public Schools, Saint John the Baptist – Plattsmouth, Syracuse Public Schools, Syracuse-Dunbar-Avoca High School and a number of home-schooled students.

The top four winners from each of the five categories in this District Contest were eligible for the State Contest on Saturday, April 7, 2018, at Nebraska Wesleyan University in Lincoln. The National Contest will be held from June 10 – 14, 2018, at the University of Maryland.

Below, 1 of 23 winning categories of PSC's Annual District History Day



First Place Senior Group Performance: Jacob Kruse, Brendon Lyon, and Riley Teten (Syracuse High School) with Deborah Solie, Director of Alumni Relations and Annual Giving (right) and Dr. Dan Hanson, President of Peru State College (left).



BOBCAT SOFTBALL

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|----------|--------|
| 3-15 | Ottawa Univ. | Peru, NE | 2 p.m. |
| 3-17 | Mount Mercy Univ. | Peru, NE | 1 p.m. |
| 3-18 | Clarke Univ. | Peru, NE | 1 p.m. |
| 3-20 | William Penn Univ. | Peru, NE | 2 p.m. |
| 3-22 | Nebraska Wesleyan Univ. | Peru, NE | 2 p.m. |
| 3-30 | Evangel Univ. | Peru, NE | 2 p.m. |
| 3-31 | Missouri Valley College | Peru, NE | 1 p.m. |
| 4-3 | Grand View Univ. | Peru, NE | 2 p.m. |
| 4-14 | Baker Univ. | Peru, NE | 1 p.m. |
| 4-15 | Benedictine College | Peru, NE | 1 p.m. |
| 4-21 | Culver-Stockton College | Peru, NE | 1 p.m. |
| <hr/> <i>SENIOR DAY</i> <hr/> | | | |
| 4-24 | Graceland Univ. | Peru, NE | 2 p.m. |



2018 SEASON



BOBCAT BASEBALL

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|----------|--------|
| 3-13 | York College | Peru, NE | 2 p.m. |
| 3-17 | Mount Mercy | Peru, NE | 1 p.m. |
| 3-18 | Mount Mercy | Peru, NE | 1 p.m. |
| 3-24 | Clarke Univ. | Peru, NE | 1 p.m. |
| 3-25 | Clarke Univ. | Peru, NE | 1 p.m. |
| 3-28 | Bethany College | Peru, NE | 3 p.m. |
| 4-3 | MidAmerica Nazarene Univ. | Peru, NE | 1 p.m. |
| 4-14 | Central Methodist Univ. | Peru, Ne | 1p.m. |
| 4-21 | Culver-Stockton College | Peru, Ne | 1 p.m. |
| <hr/> <i>SENIOR DAY</i> <hr/> | | | |
| 4-22 | Culver-Stockton College | Peru, Ne | 1 p.m. |

MAY 2-5



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MAY 2-8



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