

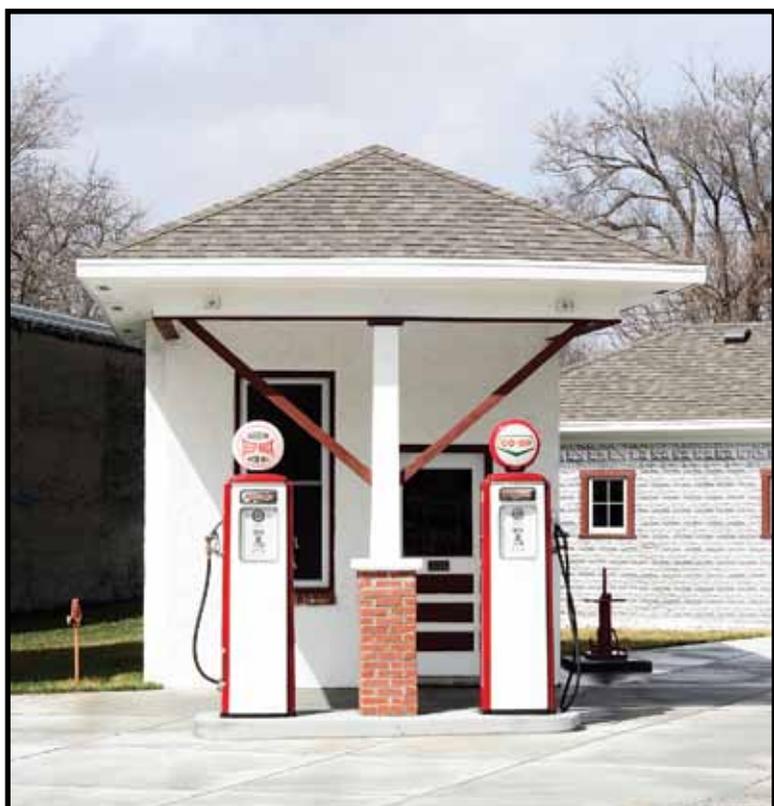


Alexis Hoover Power Lifts at High School Meet Hosted by PSC



American Bald Eagle returns to her nest near Rock Port.

Voices and Views From the Valleys of the Nemaha A Magazine for Small Towns & Rural America



Restored, in Julian, Nebraska

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Your Country Neighbor

Voices and Views From the Valleys of the Nemaha

Publisher & Photographer, Stephen Hassler

P.O. Box 126
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“Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

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Thank You!

Your Country Neighbor

can be found online at;

yourcountryneighbor.com

**Inform your relatives
and friends residing outside
our ‘country neighborhood’.**

The New Hero

Stephen Hassler, Peru

In times like these we change our views as to what is important. In the past we developed a greater appreciation for things like running water, shelter, gas and electricity for heating and cooling. But now, with *physical distancing* to minimize infection, we are becoming more aware each day of the freedom of movement and the freedom of assembly, values that we don't usually think about while going about our lives day to day.

Another new phrase is *essential worker*. When in our lives have we all been faced with the raw truth as to who these essential workers are? Of course we recognize police, firefighters, doctors and other health care workers, but now; grocery store workers, post office clerks and mail carriers, garbage collectors, drive-thru attendants at your bank and take out restaurant. You might know others to add to this list.

These least appreciated and often lowest paid working members of society seldom have health insurance or other benefits with their employer, and often are limited to working fewer hours. But these days they are at the front lines of businesses deemed essential to society. And weren't they always there?

After 9/11 I noticed the addition of fire fighters in our community parades. They were always there driving their emergency vehicles, but we wanted to see them without being enclosed. So when this is all over, will we ask our new heroes to the parade? Would there be room? Well, we can still thank them for their service.

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The Gull in the two photos above had just dipped into the choppy water to catch its lunch along H-136 just east of Brownville.



This Eagle is nesting. One of these days I hope to photograph its mate's return with food.



A view from my window on 5th Street.



Gulls east of the Brownville Bridge.



Gull in flight.



As you or a family member approaches Medicare eligibility, the task of understanding Medicare enrollment can be daunting. Nebraska Senior Health Insurance Information Program [SHIIP] offers free, unbiased Medicare counseling and education to help seniors and people with disabilities make informed decisions about health insurance. Services are provided statewide by 350 certified volunteers. Nebraska SHIIP is federally-funded and is coordinated by the state Department of Insurance. Visit the SHIIP website at www.doi.ne.gov/shiip, or call the SHIIP office at 402-471-2841.



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Add To Your “Golden Years”

Stephen Hassler, Peru

Will you turn 40 years of age this year, or 50 or 60? Have you enjoyed your life so far and believe you may be looking at an uncertain future limited by the nature of the human condition? Do you want to live well past “retirement age?” Never mind wrinkles, look at your health. Spring is a good time to get outdoors and “move around.” Yes, gardening counts.

Exercise can make one healthier, both mentally and physically. You could start by walking, but before that, have your doctor check you out. You might be healthier than you give yourself credit for, and if not, that knowledge can be a good thing. Are you aware of; your cholesterol level, blood pressure, iron and calcium levels? If not, consider getting a physical. An annual checkup is free if you qualify for Medicare (ask your doctor). Preventive care can keep you healthy and reduce health care costs overall.

You may have to overcome challenges; chronic ailments, disease, weight, genetics, bad habits, or poor motivation. You might think it’s too late, but it’s not up to you. Before failing, try!

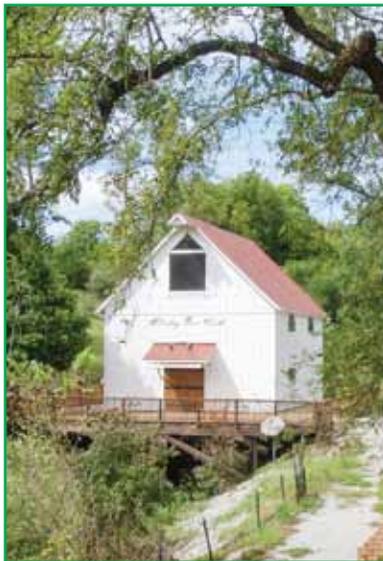
If you have internet access, google “Couch to 5K” for a simple training plan. You don’t have to be rigorous at it. You will soon formulate your own plan to fit your situation. Any movement is a good way to feel better mentally, improve your immune system, delay dementia, or reduce inflammation of vital organs (which causes disease).

Eventually we will all be unable to walk, but exercise could delay the inevitable! For every hour of exercise, longevity can be extended by two hours! That can add years to a life.

In any case, keep moving. Get up from the couch for a few minutes at least once an hour. Maybe walk around the block two or three times a week.

After some training you might consider walking or running in a 5K event. You will be surprised how many young people with their name-brand running gear and athletic physiques you will pass after a mile or two, where the “under 30-minute” crowd just keeps going and going and going.

Never mind those New Year’s resolutions, go!



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P o e t r y

by Devon Adams, Peru

BABIES AND BUNNIES

He's just a baby, and
everything he sees is
new and wonderful.
He feels soft green
grass on his bare feet
and wiggles his toes.
Bright rays of sunshine
find happy dandelion
faces, and he smiles
back at them as he
grabs a bloom and
tastes the yellow petals.
A big fat robin hops
along, following the
trail of a wiggly worm,
before he stabs into the
dirt and gobbles his
lunch. Giggles of delight
erupt from a wide grin,
and float away on the
breeze like a trail of
invisible bubbles. Notes
fall out of the trees from
bird throats trilling songs
that sound like flutes and
violins. From the edge
of the garden another
child is watching nature's
wonders unfold, as he
crawls into the light from
the cozy nest under the
rose bush that his mom
made for her spring litter
of cottontails. All is well
and wonderful on this day
in the kingdom of the kids.

KEEPING THE PAST

Calendar time looks simple,
with little boxes and lines,
and numbers on some paper.
Months are on different pages,
and a year is all bound together
in a pretty stack with pictures
printed one through twelve.
But real time comes in shapes
and forms and memories that
don't match clocks or measures.
It's so easy to lose track of what
happened when, if a day was
full of ordinary actions, or a
week flew by when we weren't
looking. We savor good days,
and wish they wouldn't end.
Snapping photos helps, and so
does reliving minutes with loved
ones. But when crisis comes,
and it is bad, time stops moving,
and we are mired in the mud of
despair. Ticks and tocks echo
through the air, but we don't
hear them. In the days ahead,
pain is sharp and feels like a
giant boulder in our path. We
will hold a certain sorrow with
us forever. But in spite of many
tears, the space between now
and tomorrow slowly grows, until
we realize that we have, indeed,
moved into a softer, more gentle
frame of mind, where there is
space for joy to live.

P o e t r y

by Devon Adams, Peru

SUNRISE SERVICES

There is a special day
written on the calendar
when people will walk
up a hill to watch the sun
rise. They celebrate new
hope in the face of a
black night. Life is hard,
but it is good, and a little
extra belief makes it easier.
There are lots of days,
and they all start with a
sunrise. So think of
yourself on a hill every
morning, and soak up
some energy from the
ball of fire that rolls
around right on time. It
is part of a mysterious
plan that we don't
understand, but we
believe that it is there.

SPRING COUNTRY

As buds swell and burst
into fancy flowers, clouds
do their part to make the
world green again. They
rush in like noisy trains,
rattling branches, throwing
spikes of lightning to the
ground, causing chaos as
they dump buckets of water
out of their angry innards.
Dormant plants wake up
and drink, and push more
flowers into life, as birds
use puddles to splash into
drippy rags of feathers that
must sit to dry on branches,
like dirty clothes made clean.
Storms subside, as breezes
touch blooms, pulling their
perfumes into wavy ribbons
that float and wander all
through the hills and fields.

CONCERT ON THE GREEN

The music started before
the whole orchestra arrived.
In February, when light was
starting to stretch again after
the dark of winter, a peep here
and a whistle there popped
up in the middle of silence.
Rusty throats remembered
they had a schedule to keep
and began some vocal
exercises. Soft two-note
staccatos from chickadees
and exclamations from
titmice highlighted drumbeats
from busy woodpeckers.
Silent snowbirds began to
listen as bluejays yelled
at everyone else. Then,
like liquid velvet, came a
trill from a cardinal. It wasn't
the whole verse, but the
memory was there, and
soon others from the red
feather clan answered with
partial poems of their own.
And now, the robins are
celebrating the rain with
their lovely vibrato, and
cardinals have found the
line of the melody and are
being seated for the main
concert to come. It will be
a spectacular production
by players of many colors
and sizes, not the least of
which are the finches, who
sing yellow and purple notes
better than anyone else.
I can't wait to hear it all!



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of naked dancers who will
flaunt their slim shapes in
the sunshine of late
summer. The April leaves
will wither and dry away,
but months later, you will
be startled to see that long
pink legs have kicked up
overnight, wearing turbans
for the first part of the act.
Days later, the turbans will
explode into exotic lavender
headdresses that shake
and shimmy to the beat
of the wind and a musical
chorus of bird songs. The
girls will wear a delightful
perfume that you can smell
if you sit in the front row of
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the charge of admission is
only the time it takes to
pause and soak in the sights.

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- (S) '13 JD 825i Gator, 140 hrs, camo, alloy wheels, roof, bucket seats....\$11,800
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- (S) '14 JD Z930R, 1094.5 hrs, 54" MOD deck, sus seat.....\$6,900
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<<<<<<< *Diary, Continued from page 10*

the serious side, the experience gave me a new perspective on what it means to worship, and also gave me pause when I considered what it would be like to not have face-to-face communal worship. I plan to participate in a live-streamed worship service this Sunday. It won't be my own congregation since we don't have streaming capability. But I know at least two other people who will also be watching remotely. So that's something.

I'm sure we will all have very specific, individual memories of the impact of Covid-19 on our personal lives, not to mention all the societal, political and economic impacts of this upheaval. I hope and pray that this crisis does not reach the level of the Great Depression or of World War II deprivations. But it is testing us. I hope we will all conduct ourselves in ways we can be proud to tell future generations about.

For now, stay healthy and help someone who is struggling.



The Snow Geese have left the area.

April's Weather Can Be Surprising!

Dorothy Rieke, Julian

Mark Twain once observed: "In the spring, I have counted 136 different kinds of weather inside of 24 hours."

When we think of April, we associate that month with "flowers and showers." It is true that April often brings sunny days and daffodils, hyacinths, and other spring flowers. However, if you are a student of history, you have probably read about some violent weather that occurred in April, especially on the Great Plains during settlement times.

Time and again, we are reminded that weather on the Great Plains can be very surprising and even disastrous for some. The Easter Sunday blizzard in April of 1873 certainly proved this to be true.

That particular Easter Sunday began as a sunny day. However, soon two storm systems collided bringing heavy rains and wind. The rains quickly turned to sleet building up as ice. When the snow arrived, it was so wet, that a person's clothes were soon soaked through.

The wind continued to blow. One couple, sitting on a tool chest next to their stove, suddenly found themselves sitting on the underside of their home's collapsed roof, but luckily they were unharmed.

During blizzards, farmers, concerned for the safety of farm animals often brought them into their homes. During this Easter blizzard, one farmer brought into his house a hog, a dog, four head of cattle, and chickens. This was in addition to the eight family members living there. Raging until Wednesday, this storm left eighteen to twenty-foot drifts in some areas. Twenty people died during this storm in central Nebraska along with thousands of livestock. At this time, Nebraska was sparsely settled, so the death toll was fairly low.

Weather during any month affects our lives. It governs our clothing choices, where we live, our activities, and when we travel. It also affects our moods and, at times, our attitudes.

Perhaps the best advice about weather is to listen to forecasts and arrange schedules accordingly. April can be a month of surprises. We must realize that and adjust our daily activities for our safety.

Window On Fifth Street

Stephen Hassler, Peru

This is one month I don't appreciate the view from my window on Fifth Street. As bleak as the gray, naked trees are this time of year, the bleakness of an invisible curtain hangs over the town, more foreboding than the memories of last year's flooding.

The curtain-like unease that drapes the town is not the presence of a virus, but the unknowing of what the next week will bring. On this day the cloudy, sunless sky adds another wrinkle to the dismal view.

Downtown I dropped two bill payments in the letterbox outside the Post Office and left a deposit at the bank's drive-through window. I went into the grocery store for a block of cheese to satisfy my desire for a grilled cheese sandwich for lunch. I noticed that Decker's had toilet paper, which I hear has been sparse in some other stores. I've not run low on food or supplies yet, so with any luck, by the time I need something stores will be restocked with essential items.

And if we are all lucky, this Spring will just be another time of learning, learning how unpleasant our lives can be when routines that we take for granted are blocked by concerns of health and safety, flooding, or other negative events for which we should learn to prepare.

After WWII many people moved from the urban areas of the city to the suburbs to be safer from nuclear warfare. Millennials are not as adverse to urban living as their parents; I'm thinking of the "Blackstone" district and "Mid Town" in Omaha. Urbanites, more than anyone perhaps, will see changes in their social fabric. One might lose their favorite coffee shop, which means another might lose his coffeeshop business.

It would be pollyanna-ish for me to think that we will all be stronger for this experience, because some will lose their businesses or savings, some will lose friends or relatives, and some will lose their lives. What we might expect is that some of our lives could be very different.

Whatever happens or doesn't happen, we will become more aware that nothing is permanent. We will remember that we all benefit from some social connections. And we might place more value on public spaces. Yes, "better" could come from all of this, but from empty shelves in grocery stores we might extrapolate to empty grocery stores in rural areas. So tragically or fortunately, our social framework might require some changes, or at least, some repairs.

In the meantime, we will try to avoid infection while trying to retain some cherished routines (or perhaps renew old ones). We will try to make a living while practicing "social distancing." And we will try to maintain relationships by using our phone, email, or social media.

I am grateful for my friends. I am grateful for the internet's information and communication options. I am grateful for my health. And I continue to be grateful for my window on Fifth Street.

Immigrant Dandelions

Janet Sobczyk, © 2018, Omaha

They arrived, precious cargo
in the baggage of colonists
settling America
with high hopes for the future.

They emerged from careful wrappings
were planted, nurtured
used as food, medicine
and to prevent erosion.

Native Americans
learned their value
saw their versatility
appreciated their uses.

Now they are reviled
a blight on manicured lawns
weeds to be eradicated
by hand or chemical.

They defy extinction
multiplying quickly
migrating across the land
on gusts of untamed wind.

Little children are their allies,
still blowing seeds
offering yellow blossoms
with innocent smiles.

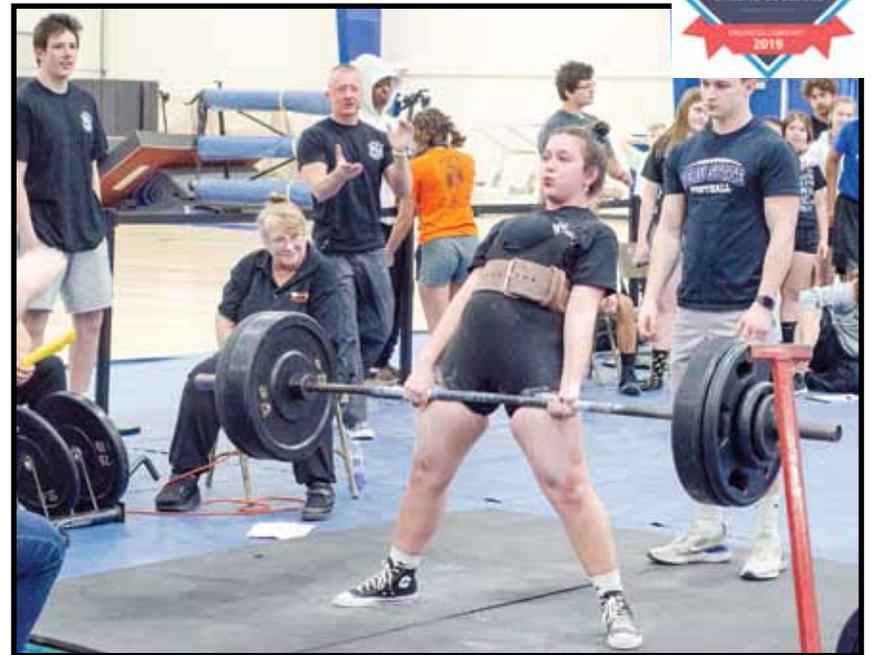
Valued plant
or invasive pest
depends on perspective
what does your eye behold?



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Arthur Desek deadlifts 500 lbs! Omaha Gross Catholic.



SCOTUS Central Catholic Lifter, Columbus, Nebraska



Boys' Championship Team Trophy awarded to Lexington High School



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PSC Home Game Baseball Photos



MBB Tournament Photos, Last Home Game of Season



The National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) announced the 2019-20 Division I Men's Basketball All-America Teams. Peru State junior Henry Tanksley (Lincoln) was among those earning honorable mention recognition by the (NAIA).

With Tanksley's honor, it makes the fifth year in a row that a Bobcat has either been named an All-American or has received honorable mention.

Photos at left are of Tanksley in the tournament win at home against Baker.

PERU STATE COLLEGE NEWS

NAIA Cancels Spring Sport Season

Bobcat Softball Tops Tabor for First Win of 2020 Season 3/7/2020

Peru State softball team opened their season with four losses. The long layoff apparently didn't bother the Bobcats as they responded with a 7-2 win over Tabor (Kan.) in the first game of the Friends Invite in Wichita, Kan., Friday afternoon.

In the Bobcats' second game, Peru State jumped to an early lead, but could not hold off a late charge by Bethany (Kan.) as they fell 19-9.

The Peru State softball team dropped all three of the games in the Friends Invitational in Wichita, Kan.

In the first game Saturday, the host Friends team topped the Bobcats 11-3 in six innings to improve to 5-12 on the year. In the second game, York beat Peru State 5-2. In the final game, Ottawa (Kan.) topped the Bobcats 9-3.

Bobcat Baseball Swept Mo Valley in Heart Season Opener, February 29th

It was the way any team would want to start their conference season – especially at home.

The Peru State Bobcats swept a pair of games from the visiting Missouri Valley Vikings taking the first game 10-4 and then putting more runs on the board in the second game winning 19-3.

Bobcat Men's Basketball Season Ends with OT Loss in Heart Semifinals

A Peru State shot near the buzzer at the end of regulation missed which forced the game into overtime against Clarke in Dubuque, Iowa.

In the overtime, the Bobcats took an early lead, but could not hold on as the Pride pulled out an 84-79 win in the Heart of America Athletic Conference (Heart) semifinals.

Peru State's basketball season ends with a 17-15 record.

Eight Bobcat Teams were on Track for Scholar Team Status

Eight of the nine Peru State varsity athletic teams eligible for NAIA Scholar Team status at the end of the academic year were on track to earn the honor following the first semester.

The NAIA requires a team to have a composite 3.0 grade point average (gpa) which reflects all members of a team who were certified during that academic semester for eligibility purposes.

Following the first semester, the Bobcat golf team had the highest team grade point average as they finished with a 3.8056. Members of the golf team include junior Vivian Brown (Wichita, Kan.), junior Taylor Finke (Battle Creek), sophomore Sydney Neal (Peru), and senior Kayla Myers (Sidney, Iowa). Finke finished the semester with a perfect 4.0.

The Bobcat volleyball team had the second-best composite gpa with a 3.6318 which was slightly higher than one year ago at this time. An impressive six volleyball players earned perfect grade point averages – seniors Claire Cudney (Marysville, Kan.), Mallory Matthies (Omaha), and Darlene Quinonez Holguin (Anthony, N.M.); sophomore Sarah Brown (Seward); and freshmen Grace Frederick (Benkelman) and Randee Witt (Falls City). In addition, former player Hannah Sexton (Sedalia, Colo.) had a 4.0 gpa.

The women's basketball team had a composite 3.43 after the first 16 weeks. Two players had perfect semesters - seniors Claire Cudney (Marysville, Kan.) and Anjanae Simms (St. Louis, Mo.).

Two members of the Bobcat cross country team had perfect 4.0 fall semesters which helped their team to a cumulative 3.30 grade point average. Those with perfect 4.0 fall semesters were senior Julia Zurek (Louisville) and sophomore Aubrey Wattier (Malcolm).

For the second year in a row, the men's basketball team is among those teams looking to be a Scholar Team at the end of the entire academic year. The team posted a 3.27 cumulative grade point average. Two players posted perfect grade point averages this fall – senior Drew Switzer (Casper, Wyo.) and junior Isaac Simpson (Papillion).

The Bobcat baseball team finished the fall with a 3.24 varsity cumulative grade point average. While they did not have any varsity team members earning a perfect grade point average, they should have nine individuals who will be recognized on the Dean's List.

The seventh team meeting the threshold at the end of the first semester is the competitive cheer team. This is the first year that cheer could potentially be named as a Scholar Team. They finished the fall with a team gpa of 3.15. Juniors Bailey Johnson (Johnson) and Jordyn Todd (Omaha) each had a perfect 4.0 semester.

The final team currently on track is the softball team which had a cumulative gpa average of 3.13. Freshmen Brooklyn Franco (Syracuse, Utah), Cheyenne Leach (Wymore), and Morgan Wilke (Bakersfield, Calif.) all started their Bobcat careers with 4.0 semesters.

The final calculations will be made at the end of the 2019-20 academic year following all grades being posted in the middle of May.

Of the junior varsity programs, the women's basketball team led the way as they had a cumulative team grade point average of 3.46.

Peru State athletic director Wayne Albury was very pleased with the efforts of the varsity teams. He stated, "To have eight of our nine teams at Scholar Team levels at the end of the first semester is outstanding. More importantly, as an entire department, our varsity overall grade point average is 3.01 which is important for the Champions of Character scorecard."



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