

Your *Country* Neighbor

Free
February 2019

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**A Magazine for Small Towns
and Rural America**

Description on page 2

This Bald Eagle was roosting not far from her nest in Missouri. See “Cover Photos” on 2.

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Your Country Neighbor

Voices and Views From the Valleys of the Nemaha

Publisher & Photographer, Stephen Hassler

P.O. Box 126

Peru, Nebraska 68421

countryneighbor@windstream.net

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February Writers

Devon Adams

Stephen Hassler

Mary Ann Holland

Merri Johnson

Dorothy Rieke

Janet Sobczyk

Thank You!

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might appreciate this magazine.**

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‘Welcome to Medicare’ Workshop

February 28 in Nebraska City -- March 28 in Falls City

The Nebraska *Senior Health Insurance Information Program* [SHIIP], a division of the Nebraska Department of Insurance, is pleased to host the “Welcome to Medicare” workshop. Medicare eligibility, enrollment, affordability and other insurance basics will be covered.

The Welcome to Medicare workshop will be held on Thursday, February 28th from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the Learning Center in Nebraska City, 819 Central Avenue. The class will be repeated on Thursday, March 28th from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the Falls City Learning Center, 116 W. 19th Street, Lower Level.

As you or a family member approaches Medicare eligibility, the task of understanding Medicare enrollment can be daunting. Mary Ann Holland, SHIIP Certified Medicare Counselor, and retired Nebraska Extension Educator will be the presenter. This event is co-sponsored by Southeast Community College and the Nebraska Senior Health Insurance Information Program [SHIIP]. You can read a more detailed description in the Winter Class Schedule 2019 of the Southeast Community College catalog recently sent to your address.

Tuition is being provided by the Nebraska SHIIP. There is no cost to attend the workshop, however participants must register to ensure adequate handout materials. To register, please visit the www.doi.ne.gov/shiip, or call 402-471-2841 at the SHIIP office. 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.

Left Cover Photo

Not a “Red-headed” woodpecker, although its head is red. This is a “Red-bellied” woodpecker. Note the rose coloring on its breast. Another “pose” is on page 3. Google the former to see the difference.

Right Cover Photo

Very soon Bald Eagle pairs in the four corners area will begin nesting, with eaglets hatching in April or early May. This adult was probably watching for a last meal before sundown. Its mate was no doubt hunting as well, but farther from home.



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Red-bellied Woodpecker



Lady Cardinal

14 REASONS TO
LOVE VALENTINE'S DAY

by Dorothy Rieke, Julian

VALENTINES APPEAL TO OUR SENSE OF BEAUTY. Many cards are designed to be eye-pleasing and beautiful. Embellishments such as music, color, designs, and shapes make valentines special.

VALENTINES ARE FOR REMEMBRANCE. February 14 is a time set aside to communicate with sweethearts, friends, and family members with messages that are chosen for that particular person. Receiving a valentine with a sentimental message improves spirits and gives encouragement.

VALENTINES ARE TRADITIONAL. Down through the years, school children decorated classrooms with paper hearts for the upcoming valentine party where cards were exchanged. Most of us follow celebrations and holiday practices of years ago.

VALENTINES REVIVE MEMORIES OF EARLIER CELEBRATIONS. Some of our best memories are those wonderful school day celebrations when we exchanged penny valentines, ate valentine-shaped cookies, and fantasized about those who sent valentines.

VALENTINE'S DAY IS A TIME FOR DISPLAYING FEELINGS. Some emotions would never be expressed without this day set aside for revealing caring and love for others.

VALENTINE'S DAY INCLUDES TREATS. The anticipation of eating special valentine-shaped decorated cookies and rich candies makes this holiday special.

VALENTINES BRING JOY. Some valentines have humorous pictures and sayings; others have romantic verses. Many cards read "Be my valentine." Sending valentines often acknowledges the good qualities of others with appropriate verses.

VALENTINE DAY LEGENDS ARE RECALLED. Valentine's Day revives legends of a man who restored sight to a jailer's daughter, married young couples against the Roman Emperor's wishes, and received loving messages from children. His good works set examples for us.

VALENTINE'S DAY INCLUDES DECORATIONS. Decorations, often made of paper doilies, red paper, red ribbon, and hearts, create atmosphere.

VALENTINES MAINTAIN COMMUNICATION WITH OTHERS. These cards, a good way of keeping in touch, reveal our thoughts and demonstrate caring, thoughtfulness, and love.

VALENTINES ARE SOURCES OF CREATIVITY. Those who celebrate use creativity in decorating, creating their cards, and making candy and cookies.

VALENTINES CREATE A SPIRIT OF ROMANCE. February 14th often reveals romantic natures because love is demonstrated through the giving of cards and small gifts.

VALENTINE'S DAY BRINGS EXCITEMENT. Receiving valentines, attending parties, and seeing the reactions of others as they view valentines make this day extraordinary.

VALENTINE'S DAY RELIEVES BOREDOM. The winter months with cold weather and snowy days cause negative attitudes. Colorful, meaningful valentines often turn dreary days into pleasant interludes.

Valentine's Day is a special day. It promotes caring and love, and enhances our surroundings. Even more important, it serves as a time to reveal your love and caring for others.

YESTERDAY IS UPSTAIRS

Devon Adams, Peru

Maybe, when you were a child, there was a spare room, or a corner of the basement or an inconvenient closet where your parents stored the artifacts of family history. Boxes for each child that held "handmade" gifts to Mom and Dad, baby shoes, battered beloved toys, school mementoes of wonderful art work, or masterful rows of words printed on lined practice paper, or lopsided clay figures claiming to be frogs, or dogs or dinosaurs. Old, musty Halloween costumes were stuffed inside catcher's gloves or pairs of roller skates, ballerina skirts and toe shoes with shredded ribbons nestled next to cherished children's books about Bambi or Christopher Robin. A battered doll house full of tiny furniture, or a replica of a gas station filled with "Hot Wheels" cars could fill a carton by themselves. Legos and logs and soldiers and horses and cowboy hats and comic books with feathered pages lay beside other "stuff" that comprised the touchable parts of your personal history. Things that would never appear on a resume, but they were the building blocks of your life.

If your family moved around often, the tonnage was less, due to throwing over-board items that could be cut from the square foot space of a moving van. But for those who were raised all in one house, from the oldest child to the youngest, the mass of accumulating treasured debris could be amazing. If the home place was large enough, not only did Mom save things for her children until they married and could take them to their own houses, she relented when they begged her to store them "just another year," until they could afford a down payment for a bigger house of their own. Of course, that never happened, and on holidays and other family gatherings, this or that child would leap into yesterday and take a tour of his or her past.

Continued on page 8 >>>>>>



The "Apple Barn" on H-136 west of Brownville adds needed color to the lanscape.



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Poetry

by Devon Adams, Peru

I SEE GREEN

Winters have changed from being predictable to being wild cards. As different as a cougar is from a lap-sitting house cat, these current critters spend some of their time howling and prowling and throwing blizzards down on the prairies. But just when we settle into a rhythm of scooping and sliding, the temperatures rise, the sun shines, the temps rise higher and we can see buds starting to swell on bare branches, and grass poking fresh blades up through the mud that was the frost line last week. There are geese here in January. I saw a blue heron drift down to a pond without ice. Iris bulbs have been sending up shoots since October. There were bugs flying and crawling in the afternoon when the temp was a balmy sixty degrees. How many times can the bottom go out of roads? There was so much rain in November and December that a farmer was still picking corn this afternoon. As I am writing, snow is falling, mixed with freezing rain. The power will be going out soon, so I'll finish this sentence.

ECHOS FROM A DISTANT PAST

The sounds are ethereal, not of this earth, maybe not even from this galaxy. They seem to come from everywhere and nowhere at the same time. But they are floating on the river of wind that flows over the plains in an endless current of weather and change. The jet stream offers a chance for both planes and birds to hitch an easy ride that saves gas and energy. Every spring and autumn, it brings the graceful bodies of sandhill cranes to the ancient channels of the Platte River. They sing a deep sigh of relief at the end of their journey and execute a spiral descent from their lofty high blue highway. Landing in the fields that border the river, they eat leftover grains on countless acres until sufficient strength has been achieved to continue their trek to breeding grounds in Canada. For millennia they have charted this precious place as a staging ground for continuing survival. They were camping here long before the famous pioneers ever thought of leaving Europe for greener pastures. They are a testament to the enduring wisdom of the wild ones among us.

Poetry


by Devon Adams, Peru

SLEDDING PARTY

Only teenagers knew how to have fun sliding down icy streets in a hilly town in the middle of winter in the middle of the night, when there were no cars moving, or at least the ones who had been moving were in the ditches. We knew there would be soup and sandwiches, and hot cocoa at the end of our wild night out on the slopes, so no one worried about freezing fingers and toes. Why worry about something that you couldn't feel anymore? The down part was easy, despite the terror involved when you realized your sled's steering mechanism wasn't all that effective on solid ice. We had several giant stretches that were three blocks steep and one block flat at the bottom of the hill. The real idiots chose to challenge the "gut buster," a narrow alley so slanted that cars needed to drive up in first gear, or second, if you took a run at it. It was laid out like an actual ski jump, with a sharp drop in altitude, ending in a flat space at the street intersection. The slicker the slope, the further you flew, with or without your sled still under your belly. Lucky for us, there were no broken bones on that infamous night, only some knots from knocking noggins on the bounce at the bottom.

BORN ON THE WIND

School starts when they leap away from a lofty platform as high in the sky as their parents could build it. All spring and summer they've been watching life in the space around the nest, and now is the time to try the feel of the air under their wings. They are the children of eagles, born of royalty, destined to own the sky. But first they must figure out how to take off and land without being awkward and undignified. Hanging upside down in the cottonwood tree isn't what Mom and Dad are looking for as the subject of their Facebook post about two brilliant kids. Nevertheless, perseverance prevails, and by autumn the adolescents can mimic acrobatic maneuvers modeled for them by the experts. In time they will don the sacred vestments that set them apart from all other members of the tribe of feathers, the majestic white headdress and tail of the bald eagle.

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BLESSINGS IN BLUE

Out of a burst of snow flurries comes a flustered flock of bluebirds who perch on the rim of a heated bucket. They fluff their damp feathers and enjoy the warmth rising from the water. It's clear they are not happy about the current conditions, which are opposite to the sunny comfort of yesterday. After a drink, and a blink of a nap, they sail into the cedars for a grooming session. All of the short afternoon they flit from bucket to branch, relaxing in the cover from the wind and the company of each other. But they are fickle, and I may not see them again for months, because it is their nature to come and go when they choose. It's my pleasure to watch them when they're here.

THE CUT OF THE BLADE

The ice was alive, talking through the dark of the night, sending out cracks like bullet shots. Billowing, blowing, crackling flames from the bonfire were speaking in their own language, as skaters teetered and tottered around the frozen pond. A few floated like graceful swans, leaning in and out, tracing perfect circles and figure eights, doing impossible jumps and spins. There are those who like to play at sports, and then there are the ones who are born with the language of movement in their limbs, sure of angles and speeds and heights and landings. They are the poets without words, dancers from another planet, who know secrets without ever asking questions. To watch them perform is like listening to gifted musicians who speak to ordinary beings with magic sounds that ring bells inside our hearts.

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<<<< YESTERDAY IS UPSTAIRS *Continued from page 4*

Whether it was high in a dusty attic, deep in a dark corner of a basement, or even in actual childhood bedrooms that somehow had never been cleaned out and converted into studies or dens or offices or sewing rooms, we could find ourselves immersed in memories sharper than a boning knife. Old photos would invite us to step into the kitchen with it's bright yellow formica kitchen table and chrome frame chairs. There was the birthday cake when you were five and your front teeth were missing and you spit cake out when you giggled. There you were playing baseball with a brand new catcher's mitt that your dad gave you when you made the team! Rusty the collie snuggled under your arm as you sat on the front steps the summer before you went to college.

Sometimes, your fiancé or spouse walks with you through the winding lanes of your past, getting to know the child before he or she was a wife or a husband. That kind of connection creates new bonds between you that echo and continue the time line from the past to the present. Maybe you grew up together and had known each other forever, and in that case you both would remember that smothering hot afternoon on the baseball field when you were both eight years old and the girls' team beat the boys' team, and there was a fight about it and the girls won that one too.

Further down the lane will be your children trying to imagine Dad or Mom as a child, as they look at the photos and touch the old, precious relics that were yours, and still belong to you.

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Eagle nests are easy to spot this time of year... if you know where to look. This one is in Missouri

Diary of a Part-time Housewife

Merri Johnson, Auburn

Which philosophy do you subscribe to? Aging gracefully? Or wearing purple when you get old?*

My mother just turned 93. She is doing her best to age gracefully in the face of the challenges of advanced age. I won't enumerate those challenges; we all know what they are.

On the flip side, my siblings and I keep insisting that she "wear purple," as it were. Her birthday in January happened to coincide with a stay in the hospital. We were all planning to celebrate her birthday at my sister's home. But since mom couldn't get there, we took the party to her hospital room. (Cherokee, Iowa, Regional Medical Center is very accommodating.)

We all wore unicorn horn party hats, each of us with our horn pointing out of a different spot on our heads – foreheads, chins, cheeks, skulls. (We're talking about a bunch of people in their 60's, mind you.) I wore my horn as a monocle protruding from the lens of my eyeglasses. And not only that, but we took a group photo and posted it on Facebook. It got nearly a hundred likes within minutes, most from people my mother does not know, but the messages were uplifting. My favorite one said, "There's a lot of awesomeness going on in that hospital room!"

In my personal life I try to maintain a youthful attitude without completely humiliating myself.

A few weeks ago our grandson celebrated his sixth birthday at an ice-skating rink. Hubby and I had not been on skates since the mid-'90s when we got inspired by the Winter Olympics and took our own kids to a rink in Omaha. I don't recall how long it took me to gain my "ice legs," then. But this year, it took half an hour before I could complete the circuit of the rink without needing to grab for the railing.

I'm pretty proud of the fact that I only fell twice – and didn't break anything! – at my age. Reviewing the video evidence, it's clear that my "form" on the ice was far short of graceful. Keeping my center of gravity low to maintain my balance resulted in posture that looked more like a 1970's-era girls' basketball photo for the school yearbook than the Dorothy Hamill wannabe I imagined for myself. Hubby used to roller skate a lot in junior high school, so he was much better on the ice than I. He didn't fall down until he tried to skate backwards. But he deserves a lot of credit for trying!

I did a little better two weeks later when our grandkids visited and we sledged on the hill behind our house. Even though I wiped out, I gave myself an 8 for my double tuck-and-roll ejection from the sled.

Today, hubby and I cleared our 25-foot by 50-foot driveway, plus the patio, of approximately 6 inches of drifted snow, in an hour, using only manually operated scoops. No brag, just fact. One of these years, the end-of-season clearance price on snow blowers will prove too much to resist. But for now, we continue to tough it out.

The American humorist and writer James Thurber said that "old age is the most unexpected of all things to happen to a man." Ironic, but so true. However one goes about defying aging, I advocate wearing purple as gracefully as possible, for as long as possible.

*For those of you not familiar with "wearing purple," it comes from the poem *When I Grow Old, I Shall Wear Purple* by English poet Jenny Joseph.



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Flight Path

By Janet Sobczyk, 2019, Omaha

I'm a lousy bird watcher
can't claim to know much about them
seldom use binoculars
don't keep a record of birds seen in my lifetime
can't tell a bird by its call
but their sounds and movements fascinate me.

At our old home I placed a feeder in a pine tree
nestled between boughs next to a window
sparrows gathered, flitting branch to branch
waiting turns impatiently
scared off by a loud jay or acrobatic squirrel
delightful entertainment.

New home, same feeders, placed in an ash tree
attract different entertainers
black and white woodpeckers with red caps
pink-breasted tiny blue birds I can't identify
cardinal couples
and squirrels I've named.

Another new delight... geese!
Not attracted to the feeders
but residents of this part of town
their squawks distinctive
capture my attention through closed windows
a wonderful sound.

Early in the morning they make a v-line
rising from roosting grounds
to stretch wings, find food, socialize
as humans head off to work
geese begin the day
heading south over my house.

At day's end they commute home
pass my way again heading north
routine predictable
could set my watch by them
pause to listen, watch
it's pleasant living under a flight path.



This shutdown appears to be for the birds.
Photo by Janet Sobczyk



Cottonwood Tree along H-67, January 17, 2019

Window On Fifth Street

Stephen Hassler, Peru

I know what to expect these days when I look out my window on Fifth Street. The scene is going to look a lot like Winter, more so than last year. I like ‘some’ snow. Snow can be photographed better than barren trees and dead grass. A fog last month (hoarfrost?) froze on many trees outside of town. Silver, glistening branches are better than gray. Especially on Cedars and Cottonwoods.

Warmer temperatures make life better for me. Or I’ll take sunshine on a cold day; certainly rather than gray clouds. In Winter the clouds don’t take the form of those puffy-white, pillowy clouds of June and July. But Winter sunsets are often better.

Warm conversations with friends can bring sunshine. We talk about things we do, things we used to do, and things we no longer do. Some still drive but others have difficulty seeing at night. Some jog but others find it difficult to walk. Some are married, and others used to be. Some were farmers, construction workers, or store owners. Some are retired, some can’t retire, and some don’t want to retire. It used to be beers in the evening and now it’s coffee in the morning. Some changes are for the better.

I’m often reminded that “change” does not feel good. It takes me out of my comfort zone. But if I don’t change, change happens to me when it’s less convenient, less comfortable... it’s better to control the timing. On the other hand, there are times when I can’t make a decision, so I wait until I get an idea, or until fate decides for me. That approach can be a gamble, but I think I’ve developed a “sense” for it — most of the time.

I started remodeling my bathroom last year. Some changes I handled well and were completed, but I have yet to figure out how to enclose the front of the bathtub. Waiting has not been productive this time. I might just have to try something even if it’s wrong, and embrace the trial and error of it all.

So; choices and changes. During the cold of Winter, choose warm friends. Make changes happen or wait for change to happen. Remain in my comfort zone until it becomes too uncomfortable to remain there, or sacrifice a little comfort right now in order to control the situation and keep it manageable. Keep the unsightly appearance of an unfinished bathroom or take some kind of action.

Making choices is part of moving forward with life. The results of our lives are due to the choices we make... and don’t make. Remember that it’s easier to live with failure than to look back and regret never having tried. Now, if I only could change Winter into Spring!



Coffee, friends, and conversation; warmer than the weather.

*A wrong action might
have an end result
of being good.*



PSC Women's Basketball





PSC Men's Basketball



Johnson-Brock Groups Recognized at Peru State

The Peru State Student Athlete Advisory Council (SAAC), along with the Bobcat athletic department, recognized three different student groups from Johnson-Brock on Wednesday, January 2.

Johnson-Brock's state championship **football team, their state third-place volleyball team, and the Eagles' district one-act play runner-up team**, were acknowledged between the Peru State women's and men's basketball games.

The Johnson-Brock students and staff were recognized at the conclusion of the women's contest.

All attendees from Johnson-Brock were admitted free to the games by showing appropriate identification.

SAAC's fan support committee, headed by senior softball player Erin Snyder (Omaha) and senior baseball player Darren Hasch (Destin, Fla.), tries to invite area high school groups and/or other community groups for recognition. Snyder has made the initial contact with eight area high schools.

Johnson-Brock was the first group to be honored while different student groups from the Auburn Public Schools will be recognized on February 13.



Peru State History Book Wins 2018 Nebraska Book Award

Lincoln – The Nebraska Center for the Book announced 17 Nebraska Book Award winners for 2018. The award for Cover/Design/Illustration was presented to Peru State College's sesquicentennial book, *Nebraska's First College: Shaping the Future Since 1867*.

Nebraska's First College was created in collaboration with the Omaha World-Herald and Dan Sullivan. Sullivan was the author of the book and Christine Zueck-Watkins served as the designer. The Nebraska Book Award follows a 2018 Circle of Excellence gold award from the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE).

The book blurb reads, "Peru State College celebrates its 150th year in 2017. The Nebraska school's history is a rich tapestry of innovation, endurance, community service and pursuit of educational excellence. Celebrate the sesquicentennial with a look back through the remarkable story that began with a vision on a hilltop in Peru."

Due to the inclement weather both Sullivan and Zueck-Watkins were unable to attend the award ceremony. Peru State's Director of Marketing and Communication, Jason Hogue, was able to attend the ceremony.

Zueck-Watkins sent in written remarks, including, "Dan and I made numerous trips to Peru State College during the two plus years we worked on the book. Dan conducted many interviews and did all of the research and writing. I scanned and retouched hundreds of old photos from the school archives and designed this 320-page book."

"The result is a volume that tells the fascinating history of the 150-year old school and captures the essence of 'The Campus of 1000 Oaks.' It was an honor to help tell this story."

A copy of the award-winning book can be purchased by visiting www.peru.edu/150. Book purchases support the Peru State College Foundation's mission to assist and support Peru State College's programs and services including scholarships for hundreds of students.



'18-'19 BOBCAT BASKETBALL

MEN'S

11/26	Graceland Univ.	Peru, NE	7:30 p.m.
12/1	Evangel Univ.	Springfield, MO	4:00 p.m.
12/4	Grand View Univ.	Des Moines, IA	7:30 p.m.
12/8	William Penn Univ.	Oskaloosa, IA	4:00 p.m.
12/15	Culver-Stockton College	Peru, NE	2:00 p.m.
12/29	Dakota Wesleyan Univ.	Mitchell, SD	8:00 p.m.
12/30	Dakota State Univ.	Mitchell, SD	2:00 p.m.
1/2	MidAmerica Nazarene Univ.	Peru, NE	7:30 p.m.
1/5	Mount Mercy Univ.	Cedar Rapids, IA	4:00 p.m.
1/10	Benedictine College	Peru, NE	7:30 p.m.
1/12	Clarke Univ.	Peru, NE	2:00 p.m.
1/16	Grand View Univ.	Peru, NE	7:30 p.m.
1/19	Central Methodist Univ.	Fayette, MO	4:00 p.m.
1/24	Graceland Univ.	Lamoni, IA	7:30 p.m.
1/26	William Penn Univ.	Peru, NE	4:00 p.m.
2/2	Evangel Univ.	Peru, NE	4:00 p.m.
2/6	Mid-America Nazarene Univ.	Olathe, KS	7:30 p.m.
2/9	Culver-Stockton College	Canton, MO	4:00 p.m.
2/13	Missouri Valley College	Peru, NE	7:30 p.m.
2/16	Mount Mercy Univ.	Peru, NE	2:00 p.m.
Senior Day			
2/20	Benedictine College	Atchison, KS	7:30 p.m.
2/23	Clarke Univ.	Dubuque, IA	2:00 p.m.
2/27	Missouri Valley College	Marshall, MO	7:00 p.m.
3/2	Baker Univ.	Peru, NE	4:00 p.m.



WOMEN'S

11/26	Graceland Univ.	Peru, NE	5:30 p.m.
11/29	UMKC	Kansas City, MO	7:00 p.m.
12/1	Evangel Univ.	Springfield, MO	2:00 p.m.
12/4	Grand View Univ.	Des Moines, IA	5:30 p.m.
12/8	William Penn Univ.	Oskaloosa, IA	2:00 p.m.
12/15	Culver-Stockton College	Peru, NE	12:00 p.m.
12/19	Augustana Univ.	Sioux Falls, SD	5:30 p.m.
1/2	MidAmerica Nazarene Univ.	Peru, NE	5:30 p.m.
1/5	Mount Mercy Univ.	Cedar Rapids, IA	2:00 p.m.
1/7	Missouri Valley College	Marshall, MO	7:00 p.m.
1/10	Benedictine College	Peru, NE	5:30 p.m.
1/12	Clarke Univ.	Peru, NE	12:00 p.m.
1/16	Grand View Univ.	Peru, NE	5:30 p.m.
1/19	Central Methodist Univ.	Fayette, MO	2:00 p.m.
1/21	Baker Univ.	Peru, NE	7:00 p.m.
1/24	Graceland Univ.	Lamoni, IA	5:30 p.m.
1/26	William Penn Univ.	Peru, NE	2:00 p.m.
1/30	UNO	Omaha, NE	7:00 p.m.
2/2	Evangel Univ.	Peru, NE	2:00 p.m.
2/6	Mid-America Nazarene Univ.	Olathe, KS	5:30 p.m.
2/9	Culver-Stockton College	Canton, MO	2:00 p.m.
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2/23	Clarke Univ.	Dubuque, IA	12:00 p.m.

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