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




When it's very cold, squirrels hunker down in their den, but come out for food on warmer days.

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



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Your Country Neighbor

Voices and Views From the Valleys of the Nemaha

Publisher & Photographer, Stephen Hassler

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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



Black-capped Chickadee

January Contributors

Devon Adams
Stephen Hassler
Merri Johnson
Dorothy Rieke
Janet Sobczyk

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Thoughts On Time Passing By

Stephen Hassler, Peru

I like to think that we are all alike more than we are different. If true, then we all may think about similar things. Maybe you think about seasons too, certain months of the year, the passing of time. I'm not obsessed with the passing of time, but I'm a careful observer.

When I'm in January, I think about longer days, (later daylight), which means thinking about more light and more warmth. I think about what to plant in a garden; roses and zinnias, tomatoes and green beans, basil and parsley. These thoughts are motivated in part by Jackson & Perkins and other seed catalogs that come through the mail. I think about Spring planning; new life, new beginnings, more color!

When I'm in February, I think of Valentine's Day. I think of reminding those close to me that I love them, and I think of reminding myself that it shouldn't be just one day a year. But I don't have to be reminded of the cold.

When I'm in March, I think of warmer days and look for early blooms; red-buds, daffodils, crocus. And Spring migration, with thoughts of visiting the Platte River near Grand Island to view the Sandhill Cranes.

When I'm in April, no more frigid wintry days! Warm days can be counted on if only in the minority. Signs of Spring are all around. Many trees are "leafing out." Cardinals sing in every neighborhood. Weekends are more "recreational," almost festive sometimes.

When I'm in May, I think that a hard journey is over, and I've arrived where I want to be, content, but eagerly anticipating Summer and extra fun times; picnics, cookouts, fireworks, parades, reunions.

When I'm in June, I think about birthdays and anniversaries because those were and are my "family times" in June. I recall "summer vacations" from elementary school; bicycles, treehouses, and fishing.

Continued pn page 11 >>>>>>>>>

New Beginnings Mean Better Days

Dorothy Rieke, Julian

Every day of our lives should represent a new beginning or a "clean slate" because through the experiences of previous days, we have learned and profited.

Making this happen means we will must take full advantage of the power we have over our lives. We will use our knowledge to set goals, work to achieve, and employ the determination to utilize our skills to the fullest extent.

Being positive rather than negative also influences what occurs each day. Negative attitudes lower spirits and expectations, damage self-confidence, and work toward failure. Being positive means hoping for the best and expecting the best.

At times, problems have a way of working themselves out if we have the courage to pause and believe in ourselves. What we can do is put forth every effort to solve problems using our abilities and knowledge and then give it a rest.

Moving forward is a real challenge. However, employing hope and faith in our own capabilities in facing the next day, is a tremendous help.

Recognizing what we have and showing appreciation for traits and abilities as well as the people in our lives works toward new beginnings.

A part of new beginnings is coping with the unexpected. The unexpected can be upsetting as well as intimidating. In this case, make plans and anticipate what might sabotage plans. Forewarned means forearmed. With early detection of the unexpected, remedial tactics can be put in place and acted upon.

Some regard unfavorable daily events as bad luck. Truthfully, we often "make our own luck" using self-confidence, knowledge, and skills. Seldom is there bad luck, just errors made when one is careless and unheeding.

How can daily events be anticipated and improved keeping in mind new beginnings? The following are suggestions:

- 1 Have faith and confidence in yourself.
- 2 Always be ready to put into practice your innate abilities.
- 3 Learn from your own experiences and the experiences of others.
- 4 Don't be afraid to follow your well-thought-out plans.
- 5 Don't underestimate your capabilities and those of others.
- 6 Don't dwell on past events and failures.
- 7 Think, plan, review, and then act.
- 8 Remember that boldness has genius, power and magic.
- 9 Discover happiness and new confidence in new beginnings.

We can begin any day to improve our performance and our lives. Try a new beginning tomorrow, you will be amazed at the results.

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My Van Has White Coat Syndrome

© 2019 by Janet Sobczyk, Omaha

It's a common complaint. You've been feeling sick or something hurts, but by the time you actually get to a doctor, you feel better. That's called White Coat Syndrome (WCS). Actually, doctors use that term more specifically for elevated blood pressure while in the doctor's office. But the first definition is the one most other people think it means.

People are the most prone to WCS, but I've seen pets have it too. Fido might seem on his last legs at home, but as soon as you pull up to the vet clinic, he hops right out and trots in like, "Look at me. I'm fine."

My van now has it. I'm not kidding! The other day it started making a horrible sound all the way home from work. For 30 minutes it rattled so loud I thought a front tire was going to fall off. Except the sound wasn't coming from the wheel area. And it made a metallic "ding, ding" sound like a chain swinging and hitting metal. I made an appointment with the mechanic for the next morning and prayed I'd make it there intact.

You guessed it. The next morning the big sound was gone. And the ding-ding, too. But I took it in anyway and described what had happened. An hour later they ended my waiting-room misery (whoever chose CNN for that TV was sadistic!) and told me they'd found nothing wrong. Of course!

Then the mechanic reassured me that old vehicles do have a lot of rattles. Well, I guess a 16-year-old vehicle does qualify as old. Maybe I was over-reacting. And then he told me that next time they would need more detail, like at what speed does it make the sound? Or when you turn in which direction? Really, it just made the awful, death-sounds the whole way home. But that was yesterday, and today it seems just fine. Good! I had errands to run.

The van ran perfectly (with only its usual rattles) all the rest of that day. But the next day, yep! The noises returned, complete with ding-dings. Maybe I'll have to call a driveway mechanic who can sneak up on the van and check it out before it knows what's happening.

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P o e t r y

by Devon Adams, Peru

CAMPFIRE

Outside the circle of fire
the snow is cold and white,
fighting with the dark of
night to enlighten the frigid
sight of humans gathered
together. They are modern
day models of their cousins
who lived in caves and tents.
Find food, make shelters,
and manufacture weapons
and clothing were on their
list of things “to do” every
day. Not the time or the
place to text, buy a new
smart phone or a big screen
TV, or to work at minimum
wage jobs for sixteen hours
a day. Back then, it was
a group effort to stay alive in
the face of threats from wild
animals who wanted to kill
you before you killed them,
accidents without emergency
rooms, and other clans who
might be inclined to steal your
stuff, not to mention your life
or your freedom. So, if you
find yourself toasting fluffy
puffs of sugar and squishing
them between graham crackers,
along with Hersey’s chocolate
bars, remember to look over
your shoulder at the tribes of
yesterday, whose spirits are
standing right behind you.

FIRE IN THE ICE

The inside of a diamond is
full of the fire of creation.
Born of time and immense
pressure, simple atoms of
carbon have become the
valuable items that dance
in the light of jewelry store
counters and cases. Buyers
give them as proof of love,
or devotion or power, and
the gifts dangle as earrings,
or flash on deep plunges of
necklines, or gesture on the
wrist of an animated gossip.
The hallowed halls of rich
and famous individuals see
wealth every day, and it is
thought to be an ordinary
part of life. But for those
who toil forever, and never
get in front of bills and debts
and doubts, their lives are
enriched by simple things
that are free to see by all
who have sight. To watch
a swollen moon rise in the
winter sky that hangs over
an ermine cloak of fresh
snow is to know the joy of
wonder. Millions of snow
diamonds flash in the frigid
moon beams, sending a
message of peace to all
who step into the wonder
of a frozen night.

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P o e t r y

by Devon Adams, Peru

BY THE RIVER

*Year after year the wild river runs,
never stopping or reversing the fury
of it's currents. There is a path that
runs beside the water, weaving through
grass and trees and time. We are all
walking on that worn old trail, from
our childhood days, through the busy
years of jobs and families, to the slower
pace of aging bodies. We can glance
back at our yesterdays and savor them
as they grow more precious to our hearts.
But they are the smoke from old fires
that can't be repeated. The wise water
knows that the only way is forward,
and that there isn't time to worry
about tomorrow when you have today.
The path and the river wander out of
sight into the fog of forever, where we
will find each other once again, and
make new memories we can't imagine.*

THEY WENT THAT' A WAY!

On a damp, dark afternoon,
that feels like evening, distant
voices ring through the valleys
and the hills by the river.
Directions are hard to gauge, with
fog hanging over the snow,
but soon a band of talking birds
erupts over the top of the barren
trees. The geese are heading
for the fields by the barn, to
search for grain. Rains in the
autumn left a muddy mess
between rows of corn and beans,
making a hardship out of harvest.
Then the weather warmed, the
ground dried out and the calendar
got stuck. The crops got picked,
and a few snorts of wicked winter
kicked up some snow, but then it
melted and we're once more
warmer than we should be. But
no one feels guilty for being
comfortable. Especially the geese,
who have forgotten
they should be in Texas by now.

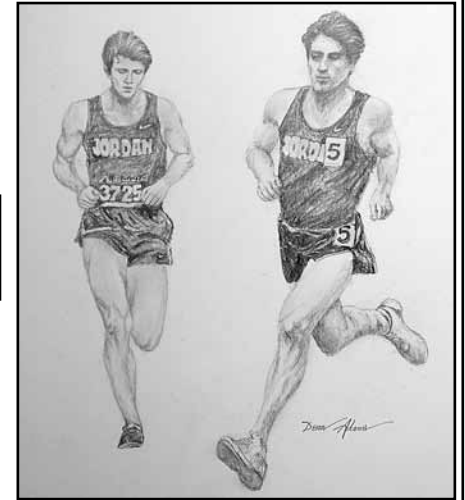
SWEET MEMORIES

Months before the festive
season, your thoughts
turned to the wonders
of grandma's kitchen, if
you were lucky enough
to be related to a lady
who was a good cook.
Before you even got
inside, your nose would
twitch like a spaniel at the
mouth-watering aromas
leaking out of the kitchen
doors and windows. But
it was nothing compared
to being IN the kitchen.
It was torture to be told
that you would have to
wait until dinner time.
No sneaky stolen bites
allowed (unless you were
a born thief). Finally, the
meal was served, and
before long you were
feeling miserable because
your tummy was full, and
you hadn't even started
on the big piece of pecan
pie on your plate. But
Grandpa told such a long
story at the table, that by
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had eaten all of your pie!

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WISHES OR RESOLUTIONS?

How are your clothes fitting
these days? A little tight,
a lot tight, split? But all that
holiday food was so good,
and there was so much of it
that you would have felt guilty
wasting it. Now that you
don't want to remember
being a glutton, there is no
way to ignore the reading on
the scale. Maybe if you just
hide the scale for a couple of
months, the numbers will
magically go down, just like
all those yummy bites of
pecan pie and mashed
potatoes went down your
throat. But no, that would
be cheating on your vow to
reduce the volume of your
formerly slim waist. Painful
as it is, the plan must be to
eat less, a lot less, and
exercise more. But it's so
much easier to wish the
weight away than to carry
out your good intentions.
If that is so, then be sure to
drop hints before Christmas
next year about your new
clothing sizes.

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Diary of a Part-time Housewife

Merri Johnson, Auburn

Are you ready for all the clever usages of “2020” that will surely be coming at us from all directions all year long? The last time I recall a year getting so much publicity was 2000 – the year of Y2K. Of course, 2012 was going to bring the end of the world based on the fact that the ancient Mayan calendar ran out that year. I think people panicked less about that than about Y2K, however. Apparently predictions of technology failures strike more fear into our hearts than threats of the actual end of the world. Then again, climate change alarmists are throwing around a lot of doomsday warnings now. But I digress a bit.

Back to Y2K. Computers were going to crash, causing all sorts of mayhem. Gas-powered generator sales skyrocketed due to fears of electricity grid failures. According to the website science.howstuffworks.com, the federal government spent over \$100 Billion on computer fixes. Maybe they were necessary. But just maybe that money could have been better spent.

And, do you remember how we were all advised to stock up on necessities in case of disruptions in the grocery supply chain? We had a supply of food in our freezer, so we weren’t all that concerned. It was January, after all. If we lost electricity, we could just put our food in boxes and keep it cold outdoors.

Twenty years on, the only disaster preparedness I recall doing concerned twine. Twine, you ask? That’s right. My mother and step-father had needed twine for some reason and had purchased a two-pack. Apparently that was the only option. Since they didn’t need quite that much twine, they gave us one of their rolls. Obviously, none of us needed that much twine, so we jokingly referred to it as our Y2K twine. Each roll was ten inches high and nine inches across. I know this because we still have our roll. In the event that there had been a run on twine, we would have been sitting pretty.

The twine appears to have been a French import. At least that’s my assumption, based on the fact that the instructions on the wrapper are printed in French and English. Or maybe the manufacturer was American and had a big trade deal with France. The interesting thing is that there are instructions in the first place. If you are buying twine – for whatever reason – I would think you already know how to “use” it. Oh well. That, in itself, is a sign of the times.

Which brings me to my next point. What are the odds, do you think, that 2020 will be the start of a return to common sense in this world? With perfect 2020 vision, and all of the hindsight we now possess on so many topics, just maybe we’ll realize that doomsday predictions have yet to come true. Not to say we shouldn’t keep working at improving how we treat our world and each other. But let’s not get so fixated on doom and gloom that we fail to recognize all the good in the world. It’s out there. Just look; you’ll see it.

Happy New Year, everyone.

Taking The Right Approach

Dorothy Rieke, Julian

Life often throws us “curve balls” such as those balls veering to one side as they approach the batter during baseball games. As a result, we are often unprepared for the unexpected. Of course, the best solution is to cope skillfully with that curve ball, hitting it for a home run. In other words, we need to be informed about the right approaches in life.

“Home runs” often occur in real life as projects are successfully completed using our abilities. Lasting friendships, good family relationships, and meeting goals also represent “home runs.” It takes optimism, effort, and knowledge to turn that “curve” into a “home run.”

Realizing our own power as it lies dormant is often a problem. Acknowledging our talents, opportunities, and possibilities while being aware of the right approaches will eliminate the dangers of most “curves.” In other words, our power must be used in the right way with the right approaches.

Indeed, the right approaches are invaluable in meeting those “curves” flung at us. The following give examples of right approaches:

Celebrate yourself. Discover your talents and purpose in life, understanding who you are and where you want to go. Value yourself so everything you accomplish builds feelings of worth.

Be explicit in your verbal expression. Say what you mean, and mean what you say.

Maintain forgiveness. Forgive others as well as forgiving yourself. Regard forgiveness as a healing lotion that spreads good will.

Take an active role in your own life actively pursuing your dreams. View the full picture of your assets and make plans for the future.

Remove worries and bad memories completely. Focus on things you can control while making positive changes.

Train your perceptions to search out the good in everyone which improves relationships and prolongs friendships.

Develop a sense of humor to keep you smiling.

Open your mind and learn from those more knowledgeable.

Exercise your brain. Mental stimulation works well for all ages.

Always be aware of the differences between wants and needs.

Maintain friendships displaying graciousness and kindness.

Take time for relaxation and quiet times.

If these suggestions are followed, curves may never represent a problem. Indeed, by actually practicing your improved approaches to living, you will solve problems of the unexpected.

<<<<<< “Thoughts On Time...” *Continued from page 3*

When I’m in July, I think of hot days and humid Summer evenings, melancholy feelings while lounging on my porch, watching the eastern hills reflect the last of the setting sun, grateful to be alone during a personal segment of time and simultaneously longing to share it with someone.

When I’m in August, I think of back-to-school and football. I’m pleased for children and younger adults who are living what will become cherished memories.

When I’m in September, I often lament what seems like lost days of Summer, but I welcome Autumn, which is no longer threatening as it was when I was a schoolboy.

When I’m in October I hope for an extension of Summertime with shirt-sleeve weather and lots of sunshine, but welcome the colorful masterpieces in landscapes that are simply trees, whose dying leaves’ colors are only rivaled by those of Spring and an occasional snow scene in Winter.

When I’m in November I think about being thankful; for friends, family, home, conveniences, luxuries. Mostly I am thankful for things to do, and things to look forward to.

When I’m in December, I reflect on the passing year, the good and the bad, and I begin planning the next, all while basking in the pageantry that comes with Christmas. And I look forward to the Winter Solstice, because that is the annual event when the days begin to stay lighter longer, as if life is growing again, and will be ‘reborn’ come Spring.

This is my “circle of life.” And whether it’s the Christmas season or the 4th of July, freezing cold or uncomfortably humid, I know that “this too, will pass”, and it will return again; I’m hoping many more times.



The Nuthatch hangs on as another bird lands.

A “Window” From The Past

Stephen Hassler, Peru

Memories, Milestones, and A Mother’s Smile

I expect all of us who have lived through “interesting times” have special memories that will never leave us. On my list is the assassination of President John Kennedy, the Challenger disaster, seeing Darla for the first time, and seeing her for the last time.

My grandfather wrote in his diary about spotting the first Robin of the year, a welcome signal for him that warmer weather was coming and the bitter cold nights working in the Omaha stockyards would soon give way to Springtime temperatures. No doubt his memory of the first Robin helped him keep faith on those cold nights herding hogs through the maze of pens and alleys that were the Omaha Stockyards.

There was an episode of Downton Abbey in which ‘his lordship’ announced to his family and staff that the war (World War I) was over. It reminded me of my mother relating her memory of the news that the second World War had ended. She was a housewife on a farm in Iowa and rushed out of the house and into the field to tell my father “The war is over!”

I wonder what other moments were important memories to my parents. One died too young and the other didn’t talk much about the past. What were their lives like as newlyweds? What happy times or sad times did they reflect back on? Which events were random and which were results of personal life decisions? I wish I could understand better what their lives were like; the lives I didn’t know.

Imagine if parents kept a diary or a journal chronicling their daily lives, or at least the milestones on their journey through life. Later, their children could reconnect, renew experiences in their minds, and reflect in their adult years what they let pass by earlier in life. Photo albums help with this, but if a person wrote down their thoughts and feelings describing those birthdays, holidays, and vacations, what a treasured companion to the photo album!

My sister remembers our mother’s favorite Christmas ornament; a vintage angel with sparkling wings and a gown of many strands of thread. She remembers that our mother would smile admiringly at it hanging on the tree. I don’t remember the ornament but the memory of that angel is a go-between connecting my sister to our mother’s smile. That particular connection to a moment in the 1950’s no longer exists; the angel’s threaded gown unraveled long ago. Nor is its image in any photos of the family Christmas tree. But my sister has the memory of that smile and the image of the angel, and a determination to reconstruct it. She wants to hold, feel, and touch it, to create a present-day connection to a special memory.

Some memories are just milestones, signposts, but others are more intimate. Sometimes we reach back in time to connect with a smile, a kiss, or a touch. By grasping at the threads of long ago memories, we try to sew a fabric of love, connection, and hopefully, deeper understandings.

Suggestion; begin a journal by listing each day, three things for which you are grateful.



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This is the “Lady” Cardinal in the snow “storm.”
I have not seen her mate in over a month.
Maybe this “sad” pose was due to the snow and cold.



Peru State College Women's Basketball

Peru State v. Mid America Nazarene & Clark





Peru State College Men's Basketball

Peru State v. Mid America Nazarene & Clark



PERU STATE COLLEGE NEWS

Feeding 44 and the Lincoln Food Bank Continue to serve Nemaha County

On the Peru State campus, Feeding 44 distributes food to the Nemaha County community each month as part of a partnership with Catholic Social Services and the Food Bank of Lincoln. Feeding 44 is a mobile food pantry that distributes food to residents of Nemaha County that are food insecure.

Feeding 44 distributes on the second Friday of every month. The distribution runs from 12 to 1 p.m. on the Peru State campus.

The Student Director of Feeding 44, Bailey Bindle (Falls City, Neb.), writes “In the weeks leading up to each event, we are in contact with our valuable partners at the Food Bank of Lincoln to coordinate our efforts, so the distribution is ready to nourish our community with food when the distribution date comes around.”

“Since our distribution is held on the Peru State College campus, we are fortunate to always have our campus community willing to volunteer their time to our cause,” Bindle continues. “With approximately 12.5% of the Nemaha County population being food insecure in 2017, it is incredibly rewarding to be able to provide over 100 individuals and their families with food each month. With the help of the Food Bank of Lincoln, we are making an incredible effort in Peru to alleviate hunger in Southeast Nebraska.”



Peru State student-athletes from the women’s basketball team assist with the Feeding 44 distribution.

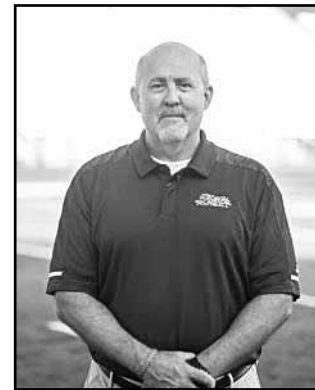
The Development Director at the Food Bank of Lincoln, John Mabry, adds “We are grateful for all of the support we have received from our Nemaha County friends over the years, starting with Peru State grad Rachel Henry Schwindt, who started Feeding 44. The administration and everyone there has been great to work with, and we could not do all of this without our Peru and Auburn area partners.”

The Food Bank of Lincoln released a flyer earlier last fall that described its fiscal year 2019 efforts in Nemaha County:

- An estimated 104,429 meals were connected through food distributions and SNAP outreach.
- The value of food distributed equaled \$307,021.
- 52 food-filled backpacks provided each week to children in Auburn schools.
- Serving an average of 127 families per month.

In addition to the Feeding 44 distribution at Peru State, fresh produce is distributed (when available) on the third Thursday of each month at the Auburn Horse Arena parking lot.

If you would like to learn more about Feeding 44, contact Program Director Bailey Bindle at BaileyBindle@gmail.com.



Schneider to retire after eight years as Head Football Coach at Peru State

Steve Schneider announced his retirement at the Bobcat Football Team’s annual banquet on December 8, 2019. Schneider had served as head coach of the team since 2012. He also served as Peru State’s Athletic Director from 2011 to 2018 before stepping down to focus on the football team for the last two seasons.

Dr. Dan Hanson, President of Peru State College, said, “Steve brought an important level of organization and professionalism to managing both the Athletic Department and the football team. His leadership and experience will have a lasting impression on both organizations.”

Peru State Students Recognized At SHAPE Nebraska Conference

For the second year in a row, Peru State College students have been recognized and awarded major of the year awards from the Society of Health and Physical Educators Nebraska (SHAPE NE). Dr. Frank Lynott, assistant professor of Health, Physical Education and Recreation, said, “These students not only represented Peru State College well, but due to their dedication and commitment to their fields of study will continue to be assets to the field of education and kinesiology.”

Melanie Slama (Auburn, NE) was named the Peru State College Health Educator Major of the Year.

Hannah Sexton (Sedalia, CO) was named both the SHAPE NE Physical Education Major of the Year and the Peru State College Physical Educator Major of the Year.

Julia Zurek (Louisville, NE) was named the SHAPE NE Kinesiology Major of the Year and the Peru State College Kinesiology Major of the Year.

Sexton and Zurek were also nominated for national majors of the year in their respected fields of study.



'19-'20 BOBCAT BASKETBALL

MEN'S

11/29	Northwestern College	Sioux Center, IA	5:00 p.m.
11/30	Dordt College	Sioux Center, IA	4:00 p.m.
12/2	MidAmerica Nazarene Univ.	Peru, NE	7:30 p.m.
12/5	Baker Univ.	Baldwin City,	7:30 p.m.
12/7	Clarke Univ.	Peru, NE	2:00 p.m.
12/14	Central Methodist Univ.	Fayette, MO	4:00 p.m.
12/28	Concordia Univ.	Seward, NE	3:00 p.m.
1/4	Mount Mercy Univ.	Peru, NE	2:00 p.m.
1/8	Grand View Univ.	Des Moines, IA	7:30 p.m.
1/11	William Penn Univ.	Oskaloosa, IA	4:00 p.m.
1/15	Benedictine College	Peru, NE	7:30 p.m.
1/18	Graceland Univ.	Lamoni, IA	4:00 p.m.
1/22	Missouri Valley College	Marshall, MO	7:30 p.m.
1/25	Culver-Stockton College	Canton, MO	4:00 p.m.
1/27	Baker Univ.	Peru, NE	7:30 p.m.
1/30	MidAmerica Nazarene Univ.	Olathe, KS	7:30 p.m.
2/1	Clarke Univ.	Dubuque, IA	2:00 p.m.
2/4	Univ. of South Dakota	Vermillion, SD	7:00 p.m.
2/8	Evangel Univ.	Peru, NE	4:00 p.m.
2/12	Grand View Univ.	Peru, NE	7:30 p.m.
2/15	Central Methodist Univ.	Peru, NE	4:00 p.m.
2/19	Benedictine Univ.	Atchison, KS	7:30 p.m.
2/22	Mount Mercy Univ.	Cedar Rapids, IA	4:00 p.m.
2/26	Graceland Univ.	Peru, NE	7:30 p.m.
2/29	William Penn Univ.	Peru, NE	4:00 p.m.
	Senior Day		



WOMEN'S

12/2	MidAmerica Nazarene Univ.	Peru, NE	5:30 p.m.
12/5	Baker Univ.	Baldwin City, KS	5:30 p.m.
12/7	Clarke Univ.	Peru, NE	12:00 p.m.
12/14	Central Methodist Univ.	Fayette, MO	2:00 p.m.
12/16	Missouri Western Univ. (EXH)	St. Joseph, MO	11:00 p.m.
12/18	College of St. Mary	Omaha, NE	6:00 p.m.
1/4	Mount Mercy Univ.	Peru, NE	12:00 p.m.
1/8	Grand View Univ.	Des Moines, IA	5:30 p.m.
1/11	William Penn Univ.	Oskaloosa, IA	2:00 p.m.
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2/29	William Penn Univ.	Peru, NE	2:00 p.m.
	Senior Day		



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