

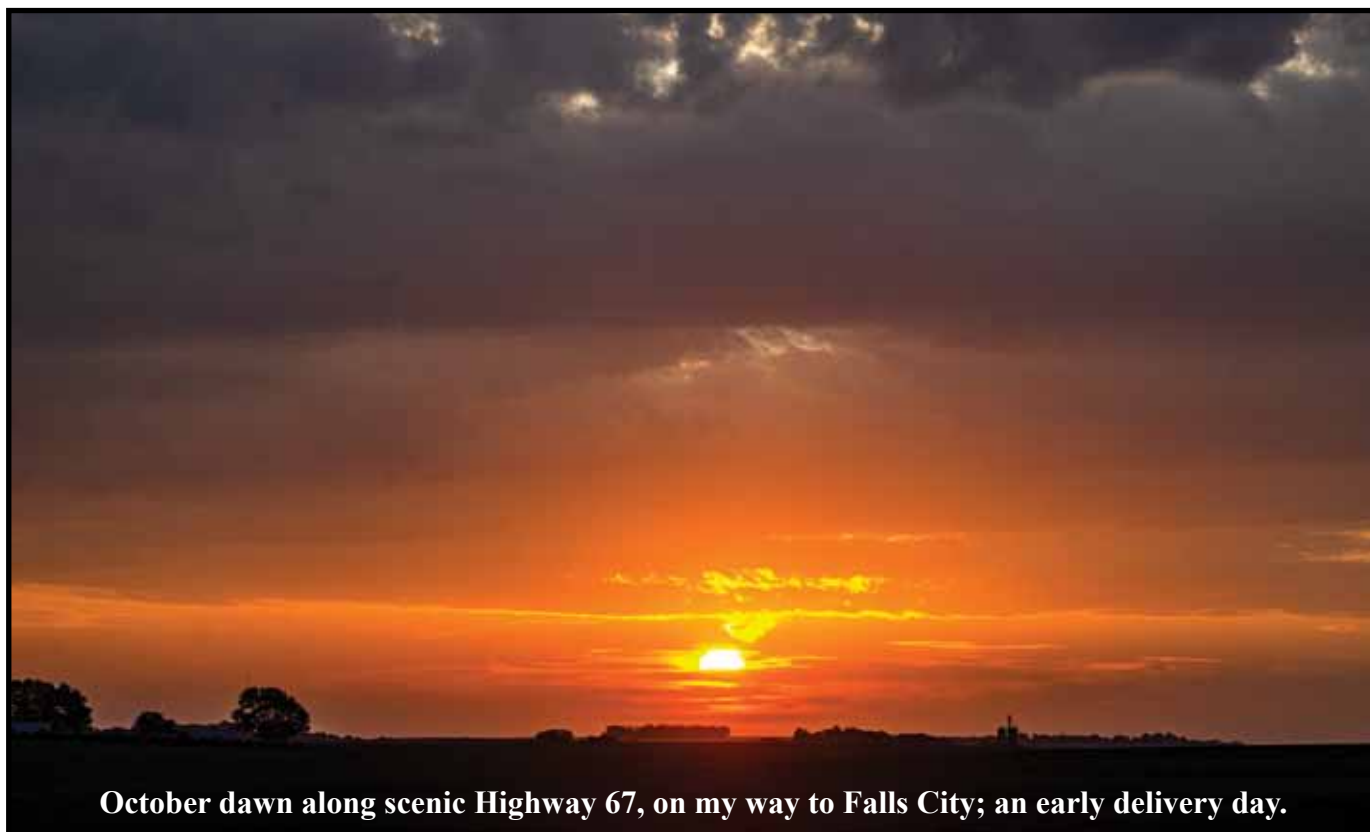
# Your *Country* Neighbor **Free** November 2019

Auburn • Brownville • Cook • Falls City • Hiawatha • Johnson • Nebraska City • Peru • Rock Port • Sabetha • Syracuse • Tecumseh

A Magazine for Small Towns & Rural America



Late migrating Monarch outside “Bird’s Nest” Thrift Store in Brownville.



October dawn along scenic Highway 67, on my way to Falls City; an early delivery day.

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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

## **November Contributors**

Devon Adams  
Stephen Hassler  
Merri Johnson  
Dorothy Rieke  
Janet Sobczyk

Thank You!

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## **Have A Thankful Thanksgiving!**

Dorothy Rieke

What wonderful memories Thanksgiving celebrations bring! Years ago, my family always celebrated Thanksgiving. We were even more thankful on that day if Dad had finished shucking corn, a major accomplishment during fall days which provided income for the following months.

Even though that was a special day, my family generally used what we had in the poultry house, in the barn, and in the cellar for our dinner. From the poultry house, we looked forward to a delicious roasted hen stuffed with dressing and surrounded with roasted potatoes, carrots, onions from our cellar.

On a blue and white platter would be homemade bread and nearby creamy churned butter. Jam from Mother’s hoard in the cupboard would add “special” to the bread and butter. Maybe a jar of green beans heated with onions and butter would be in a nearby dish. Nearly always, we had a small oblong dish of pickles. For dessert, we had thick pieces of Mother’s favorite recipe pumpkin pie topped with sweetened whipped cream.

It seemed that certain specialities were served on every Thanksgiving table. My grandma’s table always had some of her special bread-and-butter pickles and fried corn. My aunt served her luscious frosted cinnamon rolls to eat with the meal. Of course, Mom’s pumpkin pie took all the honors when she prepared that dinner.

My friend Agnes often told of her experience preparing a Thanksgiving dinner while her dad and mom finished shucking the corn for that year. Even though the gravy was a bit thin and the bread did not have time to rise sufficiently, everyone raved over the meal cooked by a twelve-year-old and the fact that harvest was over.

On this day, all controlling feelings of blessing invaded our thoughts. Hopefully, at this time, we have not lost the feelings of gratitude for our blessings. Being thankful has many advantages. First, being thankful improves our relationships with others. Of course, our attitude of thankfulness is often adopted by others who recall their blessings. Appreciating what we have definitely alters attitudes and often influences others.

Also, being thankful has a tendency to create thoughts of optimism because it plays a role in stress relief by reducing anxiety.

Thanksgiving Day is a wonderful day to be thankful, however, living here in the United States gives all of us many reasons to be thankful at all times. The freedoms of democracy, the benefits of a good economy, and the many natural resources found in the United States all enrich our lives. Because I need reminders of my blessings, I am glad I live in a world that celebrates **THANKSGIVING!**

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This scene from H-67 could have been a view in the 50's leaving the one-room schoolhouse around 3:30 in the afternoon, for home, just over the hill.

Some old roads don't need to be "improved" since they don't lead to schools or farmsteads anymore and are not needed by horse and wagon or the family car. The fields are accesssable by farm tractors and other giant machines.

These roads are still good for walking. And one can still wander barefoot, squeezing the cool powdery dirt between one's toes with each step. And good for listening for the Meadowlark's lilting song, "When are you going to plant the wheat?" Well, not for a while, now. First this road will be covered with snow and then mud. Come Spring ruts might be graded by the county, and then access to the fields once again will result in Spring planting, and the rural life cycle begins again.



Migrating Monarchs resting in Auburn, September 30.



Not many Milkweed Pods this Fall. Strange year.



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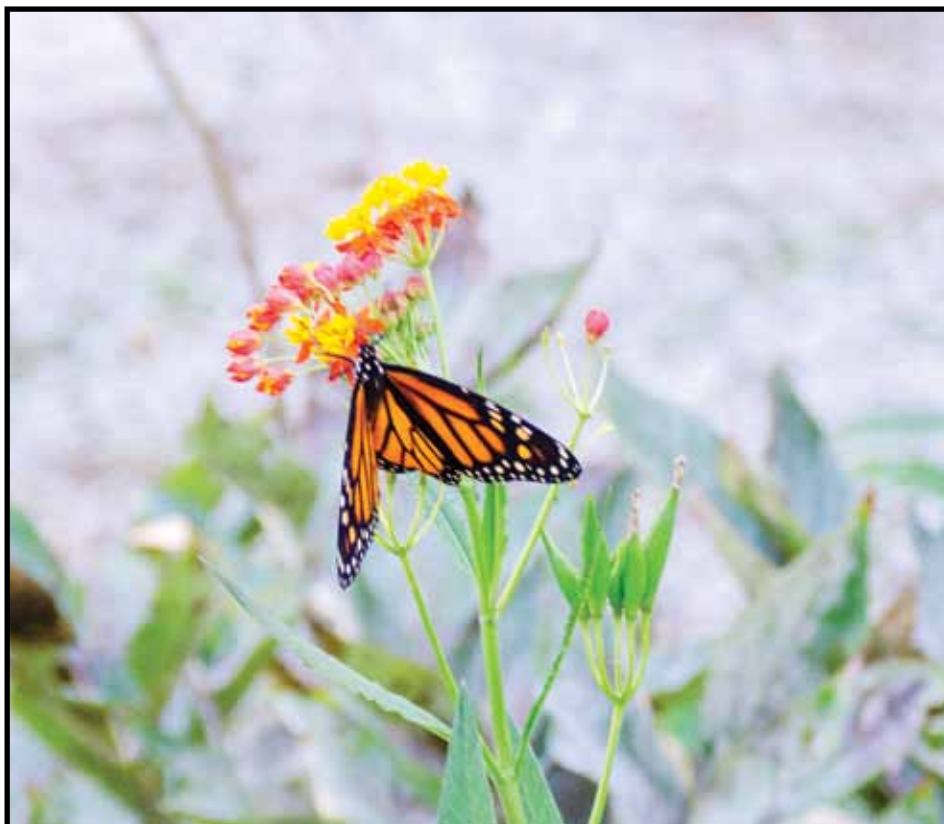
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Migrating Monarch in Merri's garden, that windy day, September 30.



**Happy Thanksgiving**

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## SKY LAND

The sweep of distance and deep resonance of the golden atmosphere permeated the interior of the cabin on the hill. No obstacles blocked the lines of sight in all four directions, and the large windows, absent curtains, were not in any way obstructions to the ambiance of the endless vista of the sky and the rolling waves of prairie. In the distant valley the wild river was marked by a brave line of aged cottonwoods. The old soldiers were battered and broken from the wounds of weather, with missing branches and seared trunks healed over with scars from the lightning strikes that hit them with fury during ferocious summer storms. The singing wind combed through tough grass whose roots had a death grip on the soil of the sand hills. It was a scene infused with the ghosts of indian tribes and buffalo and ancient memories from before humans ever set foot on the vast and lonely land of the sky.

## FLAMEOUT

We hope by now that trees have lost the leaves that get in trouble if they cling too tight to branches in the autumn of the year. Without a killing freeze, and the flaming colors that result, the chance looms large that rain will fall as ice that coats everything with glass. And that glass will shatter with the force of guns blasting bullets when strong winds come out of the north and knock branches bearing jewels to the ground.

# P o e t r y

by Devon Adams

## WELCOME BACK

It's almost time again for the family gatherings that can feel like heaven or hell on wheels to attend. The lucky people who are close to their parents and siblings, and even to all their cousins and aunts and uncles, and out along the branches of the family tree to the most distant relatives won't know what you mean when you tell them you'd rather walk through a nest of rattlers than sit down for a meal with your immediate family. So you try to explain that it's impossible to carry on a civil conversation with humans who think you're a crazy loon to support the democrats or the republicans, take your pick. If you're not on the right side, there is something wrong with you, even though your blood is their blood. Forget trying to argue, because they won't listen. So you lie, and come up with an excuse not to attend; anything to escape the sour stomach and the twisted gut that are always your reward for sitting down to a heart-warming meal. Better to watch football, alone with your TV dinner, than to stick your hand in a hornet's nest of stingers.

## FAINT MUSIC

As she worked her way through the rooms, cleaning from floor to ceiling, her mind was free to roam the roads of her memory and her imagination. Music was just barely there, like a shadow playing with the light. Then a scattered shot of notes caught her attention, catapulting her back to high school days, when time was mostly an illusion and the future only speculation. She turned up the volume to soak in the feeling of being back there on a certain day and time, with a special person who was almost the perfect match to her wildest dreams. But then the station threw out a loud commercial and the spell was broken into little pieces of sharp reality. From her perch on the edge of today, she looked back at the misty evening of her prom and saw with clarity that her prince had been a bandit in disguise, ready and willing to steal her heart without giving back anything but grief in return.

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## FADING FAST

Summer sheets are frayed at the seams, along with trees still trying to believe that green will last forever, even as their leaves turn gold and red and float away on a final journey into dust. The earth will turn in spite of wishes and curses, but the changes can be bright and beautiful instead of sad and gray. Behold the torch of sumac, burning in the dying sun, and the magic path of gold beneath the ancient maple on the corner. Squirrels are too busy hiding nuts to stop and notice colors; if they don't work hard enough they won't see spring. But when sky blankets finally shake out their snow, and sunshine paints bright blue shadows over sparkled white, we'll know how far we've come from summer.

## RIVER DAZE

We must be sleeping, because the water is still spread from bluff to bluff, and that would happen only in a nightmare shadowland of dread. "Oh wait, our eyes are open wide and we can see across the sparkling blue expanse that fields are only memories lying deep below the waves." 'They' said this couldn't happen in a hundred years, the chances were so slim, but there it is, and it's still wet, and you can't bet that it will go away.



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## Diary of a Part-Time Housewife

Merri Johnson

Finally, the season I wait all year for is here. For me, autumn encompasses the best of Midwest weather and seasonal activities. It is simply my favorite time of year.

The warm, dry days under bright, blue skies pair up perfectly with clear, crisp nights under a harvest moon. My birthday in mid-October was marked by a full moon that set in the western sky early in the morning just as the rising sun lit up the east. You don't get that just any time.

Autumn stirs up lots of memories for me. As former farmers, Hubby and I had personal experience with the dichotomy of harvest emotions: the thrill of wagons filled with grain approaching the corn crib well after dark many times, tempered by the anxious prayer that Hubby would be spared an accident with an auger or PTO shaft. A drive in the country during harvest time now reminds us that no matter how much the technology of farming has changed, it's still a matter of long days with fingers crossed, hoping to avoid breakdowns and early frost (or even snow), that brings in the crop. Accidents are less frequent these days I believe. But farming is still a dangerous occupation.

But those aren't the only memories. The flame-colored foliage reminds me of great piles of leaves that cushioned flying leaps and covered small, giggling children in games of hide-and-seek. I have a photograph of my children and their cousins playing in the leaves in the backyard of our farm home in the mid-1980s. Those were the days....before mulching lawn mowers took the place of rakes.

I was listening to an NPR program recently about fall color tours in New England, in particular a 34-mile drive through the White Mountains. The guest speaker described how motorists on that route pull over time after time to gaze at yet another spectacular view. The host of the program asked the foliage expert, "What is it about the sight of brilliant maple leaves covering the mountainsides that is so enthralling?" The answer, it seems, is found in the fleeting nature of the phenomenon. We know that the mantle of red and gold spread across the landscape that seems so solid today can be gone overnight in a hard freeze. A number of years ago, I had the singular experience of sitting under the maple tree in my own backyard when that very thing happened. A sudden breeze released the entire load of glorious orange leaves all at once. It was magical. Under ideal conditions, the foliage show might last a few weeks, but that's it. And the knowledge that cold and snow are coming soon after makes the beauty of it that much more poignant.

Perhaps the fleeting beauty of autumn is its best gift to us; a reminder that all beauty is fleeting and we must not waste the opportunity to enjoy it.

But if somehow you miss out on the splendor of this year's fall foliage, take heart. Even as the foliage is fading, holiday decorations will appear out of nowhere to brighten every house and store front. One color scheme will be replaced with another. The contentment of having the crop safely stored in grain bins or in jars on basement shelves will soon give way to the eager anticipation of Thanksgiving and Christmas.

May you all enjoy a bounty of health, hope and happiness this harvest season.

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J. Sterling Morton House



Wildwood House



Nemaha County Court House

## The Prank

Janet Sobczyk, Omaha

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Plant a fragile sapling  
dig, settle in the dirt  
fill in, shore up  
enjoy over long seasons  
notice it growing  
unfolding into the sky  
delayed gratification at its finest.

Plant a plastic skeleton  
dig, settle in the dirt  
build joists, lay the deck  
enjoy impossible anticipation  
for next homeowner to uncover  
maybe, someday  
delayed gratification most painful.

Won't it become Poe's telltale heart  
lying under the deck  
rasping a dry call to be found?  
Won't the prankster pry up one board  
show someone, anyone, everyone  
for a shocked look, appreciative chuckle?  
How could he not?

The inspiration for this poem was a Facebook post by "Dad Joke of the Day": "Redoing the deck, so I went to Party City and purchased a skeleton. Now in 20 years when the new homeowner needs to redo the deck....." The picture showed a realistic-looking, plastic skeleton half-buried in the dirt under the joists of the new deck in mid-construction. Creepy!

# Window On Fifth Street

Stephen Hassler, Peru

You might have looked out your window on your street and seen some joggers lately. My jogging for the last several years has morphed into occasionally running five kilometer races in Southeast Nebraska (5K = 3.1 miles). I feel good after a morning jog, but running 5K events is even more invigorating for me.

I began by walking to the post office about ten years ago, then added a half block jog and slowly extended the exercise to jogging a mile a day. At first I competed against my previous run time, then against my fastest time, and finally pushed myself to run in the annual “Freedom Run” in Brownville. Most of the time the Freedom Run is “down the road and back,” but recently in downtown Omaha, I ran a more “zig-zag-like” 5K. I remember every turn, and nearly every block.

The starting area is always crowded with men, women, and children, runners, joggers, and walkers preparing to funnel through the seemingly narrow starting gate. Nearly three hundred entrants are bunched up in the starting area on a “blocked off” street in anticipation of the race organizer’s voice; “Three, two, one, GO!” A computer “chip” on each participant “starts their clock” as they pass through the starting gate and head down the street.

There’s crowded running, jogging, and walking, eastward for about half a block before turning south. At first I try to run comfortably and avoid bumping someone as I maneuver around people, avoiding slowing down or having to speed up. A boy about 10 years old stops running and walks off the street in front of us. Some people forget that a lot of the race is happening behind them. I never turn around because I’m too focused on who is beside me and what is happening up front, like someone stopping. And I’m careful “changing lanes.” Someone could be about to run past me.

It’s flat running at first for a block or two south, as everyone tries to find their “pace,” then uphill to the next intersection. Hills are usually not steep in a 5K, but always difficult for me. I take smaller steps to avoid increasing my running effort too early in the race.

The pace is slower up the hill, at least for me, but there is not much passing going on right now, and we are nearly shoulder-to-shoulder. The “elite” runners are far ahead already, and as the bulk of runners turn west and the street begins a slight downhill slope, I take advantage of gravity, picking up speed with longer strides. Some of the younger, fitter runners are passing confidently. We won’t be in each other’s way the rest of the race.

By now, I’m becoming familiar with the moving scene in which I have settled. About a dozen runners keeping the same pace with a little back and forth. I notice a few in my peripheral vision and a few more slightly ahead. Behind me it’s a mystery, and if I’m fortunate, it will remain that way. I’m aware of three women of various ages, a middle aged man, and one a bit older, near me, consistently stepping along, veteran runners, not expending too much energy too early.

Turning north, the course is essentially flat now, my running app tells me I’ve run about a mile. Runners are stringing out, with an occasional young male passing through my running space. The faster men, women, and yes, children, are a blur beyond half a block ahead, and I won’t see most of them again, but if my pace remains consistent, I’ll catch one or two who are short on cardio and become tired after two miles. But right now there is another turn coming up.

This time it’s west for a long, flat block, then north down a dip to the halfway point, just over 1.5 miles. The “turn-around” is an orange hazard cone with a volunteer standing nearby. Now back up the incline, I glance momentarily at the runners coming at me, almost single file but with various spacing. I’m encouraged to see so many people “behind” me.

My breathing is labored and this incline requires shorter steps. It is crucial not to over-exert, but I’m not motivated to do so anyway. I just want to keep moving. I don’t know if it’s the sunny 75 degrees or the pace, but this race feels harder than others.

We turn left, back east, returning along the flat, long block, approaching the water station that I ignored minutes ago. Volunteers stand shaded by an overpass, holding small paper cups of water. I grab one, trying not to break my stride, manage to mutter a thank you, take a sip, and drop the half empty cup into one of the trash barrels. Too much water would not feel good; I just want to moisten my dry mouth. I drank plenty of water hours before.

A right turn, and another incline after two miles. I’m still with my “pack”, but now I’m back 20 feet or so. We turn east up the final incline, shorter steps again, but maintaining a steady effort. At the top of this hill we turn left and head downhill to the “stretch.” A faster pace now, with longer, downhill strides, then a flat stretch to the finish line. I’m thinking my “pack” will finish in the same lineup as we are now running; about 20 feet separating three or four of us, but glancing up I see the finish gate within 100 feet, and I know I can pick up speed in this short distance and not run out of steam before I cross the finish line. In my final effort I pass three, maybe four runners who don’t have a chance to adjust their pace, and then the race is over for us.

A strong finish makes it difficult for me to catch my breath. Someone asks me, “Chocolate milk or water?” I find a space between gasping breaths to say, “Wait.” Both my hands are gripping the edge of a barrel full of bottled water and ice. I needed something to lean on. Finally accepting a bottle of water, I say, “Thank you,” leave the finish area, and walk around among the others, selecting orange slices and banana halves from the snack tables. But mostly, I just want to sip water. I’ll check results online later where I’ll see my time, pace, and overall ranking in the race.

When I said I feel good after a jog, I meant mentally as well as physically, although my gradual increase in physical stamina contributes to my overall “wellness.” And knowing that I can outrun men and women 20 and 30 years younger than I am, makes me think I am doing something right... , even if I’m beat by an occasional 11-year-old.

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# Peru State College Football

## PSC v. Culver-Stockton



This pass reception sets up a touchdown.



And the Quarterback takes it in.



The Quarterback rolling out.



A good run.



Punting from the end zone is pressure.



ESPN filming in the background.



# Peru State College Volleyball



## Peru State v. Benedictine



Pink Jerseys are for "Breast Cancer Awareness Month" -- October.

## Peru State v. Culver-Stockton



# PERU STATE COLLEGE NEWS

## Peru State to Add Four Varsity and One Junior Varsity Program in 2020-21

After recruiting its largest freshman class in at least 30 years, Peru State College will add four varsity athletic programs and one junior varsity athletic program to begin competing in the fall of 2020. The new athletic programs are planned to continue the growth of on-campus opportunities.

The College will add men's bowling, women's bowling, men's cross country, competitive dance, and junior varsity women's volleyball. Hiring of coaches and recruitment will begin immediately.

The President of Peru State, Dr. Dan Hanson, said, "We know many students choose Peru State to become involved in teams, clubs and other organizations. They want to train and improve, compete, volunteer and engage in our communities. As we expand opportunities, Peru State has a tremendous foundation to build on – from the perfect score on our most recent Champions of Character designation to the personal and engaging education our students receive. I am excited to grow as a campus and to better share Peru State with the region."

The Bobcat's Athletic Director, Wayne Albury, noted careful research went into the plan to offer additional sports, "This decision was not made without a thorough review of the College's resources and needs. We are confident the addition of these programs – and the opportunities they represent – will better serve the current and future needs of our student-athletes."

The College credits much of its recruitment success this year to adding four junior varsity athletic programs and competitive cheer. More than 70 freshmen were added to junior varsity teams and the competitive cheer team. In addition, at least 15 students transferred to Peru State for one of these athletic opportunities.

By adding the four varsity sports, the College will now have a total of 13 programs competing for conference and national championships. Presently, Peru State offers football, women's cross country, women's golf, women's volleyball, men's and women's basketball, baseball, softball, and competitive cheer. All of the programs compete in the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA).

While three of the varsity sports are completely new, the men's cross country program is actually being re-established. The program was discontinued in the early 1980s after many years of success including six top-ten national finishes and ten All-American citations.

With the addition of the junior varsity women's program, that will bring the College's junior varsity offering to five. Junior varsity programs new this fall were men's and women's basketball, baseball, and softball.

Current head volleyball coach Laurie Felderman is excited to begin recruiting for the junior varsity component for her volleyball program, "Watching the very competitive practices of the newly-added [junior varsity] programs proves to me that this will strengthen our entire volleyball program at Peru State."

At Peru State, student-athletes may compete at both the junior varsity and varsity levels. NAIA guidelines allow for cross competition within scheduling limitations.

Peru State competes in the Heart of America Athletic Conference (Heart) against member schools in Missouri, Kansas, Iowa and Nebraska. In addition to playing Heart schools, the new programs will also look to play against other NAIA schools in Nebraska and regional junior college athletic teams.

Heart Commissioner Lori Thomas was pleased to learn of Peru State's decision to add programs, "Congratulations to Peru State as they expand their sports offerings and student-athlete experience. With the addition of men's and women's bowling, the Heart will gain a national championship automatic berth; and competitive dance will bring the conference up to ten sponsoring institutions, the largest participation out of all NAIA conferences. It is great to see when an institution looks not only at what makes sense to their campus but also a great fit for the conference."

Potential students interested in athletics at Peru State are encouraged to visit [www.pscbobcats.com](http://www.pscbobcats.com), speak with an admissions representative or coach.

To express an interest, potential athletes can also complete the College's inquiry form at:  
<http://my.peru.edu/athletics/inquiryform>



## 2019 BOBCAT FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

**SEPT 28**  
BAKER UNIV.  
PERU, NE - OAKBOWL  
HOMECOMING

**OCT 5**  
CENTRAL  
METHODIST UNIV.  
@Fayette, MO

**OCT 19**  
CLARKE UNIV.  
@Dubuque, IA

**OCT 26**  
CULVER-STOCKTON  
COLLEGE  
PERU, NE - OAKBOWL

**NOV 2**  
WILLIAM PENN  
UNIV.  
@Oskaloosa, IA

**NOV 9**  
GRAND VIEW UNIV.  
@Des Moines, IA

**NOV 16**  
GRACELAND UNIV.  
PERU, NE - OAKBOWL  
SENIOR DAY



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