



P.C. Payton Strobel

## Bus Driver Shortages

By Payton Strobel

The Waukee Community School District faces a lack of school bus drivers as COVID-19 numbers rise and staff numbers fall short during the 2021-2022 school year.

Driving buses full of students, some of whom do not respect COVID safety rules, can easily spread the virus. According to district transportation general manager, Gwen Brettman, “15%

[of bus drivers] are at higher risk.” Being at a higher risk to COVID, due to age or otherwise, is an incentive for the drivers to stay home.

According to Brettman, there are 80 bus routes and only 82 bus drivers for the entire Waukee district. This leaves no room for sick days, vacations or any other type of leave. When there are drivers missing,

Durham School Services staff will often step up and drive some routes themselves. Brettman explained, “The office staff and myself, we’ve been driving because people still get sick and people are out on leave for medical reasons so my office staff is pretty much driving every day.” While Durham staff typically assists with driving, WSCD District Office staff assist with communication to parents and community members.

Due to the lack of staff, bus routes have been

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## Instagram Takeover

By Jack Andersen

In December, a growing trend created high school exposure pages on Instagram. Accounts like northwest\_pda and nwhtea popped up on multiple students’ Instagram pages.

The Northwest Instagram pages began with a simple parking lot page that posted pictures of bad parking. The creators kept it anonymous and blacked out the license plates. Sophomore Avari Baldwin exclaimed, “If you are doing that stuff and someone posts it on Instagram, it’s not that big of a deal. They’re not really adding names. You can’t Google your name and have the posts come up.”

Multiple pages have since popped up. Pages like northwest\_pda have posted pictures of



P.C. Jack Andersen

people engaging in public displays of affection, even tagging some students. Pages like nwhtea post direct messages that expose rumors and gossip. Usually, the “tea” was centered around sexual acts. Nwhtea has even begged people to bring more attention to the page. The page posted “DM [them] with good stuff.” Majority of the posts have been removed from the page. The

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## COVID and College Sports Recruitment

By Caden Sammler

Many high school athletes have come across trouble this past year with recruitment due to COVID. From coaches not able to go to games, the extra year for college athletes due to the COVID-year option and COVID opt-outs, recruitment for athletes during COVID was truly a big problem.

Many games were not played due to COVID so college coaches were not able to go out and see players play. That left many athletes with limited exposure to colleges, which made the recruiting process far more difficult for high school athletes. It also made things hard for college recruiters in that aspect. Recruiters would have to base some of their recruitment solely on social media and videos sent in by players. For athletes that did not see the field, it was especially difficult because, besides practice video, there was no game film for players to send in. Overall it was a huge hassle for everyone. Northwest uncommitted soccer player and senior Tyler Rayburn mentioned, “Recruitment was tough due to the fact that coaches were not able to come to see me my sophomore year of soccer, but junior and senior year coaches have been able to come to see me play.”

Another big trouble in recruitment with COVID was that there was an extra year given to college athletes. Since all student-athletes had the option to take a COVID-year (or gain an extra year of eligibility), there is an extra year of athletes at the college level. Because of this, high school athletes get limited recruitment due to the overload of college athletes. Most schools were not able to take in more athletes because they had such an overflow of athletes at the college level. It was a huge struggle for coaching as well because, with the extra classmen, there will be double the amount of players graduating the following year.

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combined and therefore some kids are spending more time on the bus. Brettman stated, “[The average bus route] is about 35 minutes because we’ve had to combine routes.” The combination of routes has only added about ten minutes to the average bus ride compared to previous years.

The lack of bus driving staff has most impacted the students of WCSD. Eighth grade student William Andersen, revealed, “Before Covid, there were more people on buses and it was more social, but after COVID it is a lot less social and less people on buses.” Andersen spends 45 minutes on the bus each day and is also required to wear a mask on his bus.

Some students spend almost two hours on the bus each day, which causes various issues and annoyances. Waukee Community parent Ginger Kronk explained, “That’s kind of wasted time for [my high schooler], he can’t connect his school computer to a hotspot on his phone so he can’t even get school work done.” This unproductive time is what truly aggravates Kronk.

Brettman assured parents, “We’re getting students to school and home safely, always safely, it just may take a little bit more time and a little bit of planning.” However, the Facebook chat, ‘Waukee School District Parents,’ have not hidden their feelings on the issue. Chats shoot back and forth discussing the long bus routes and concerns for their children.

While it may aggravate some students and parents, the district does not anticipate the problem getting better in the near future. “COVID-19 numbers are rising... so I think this is going to get worse,” Brettman predicted.

Eason Elementary, Waukee High School and Maple Grove Elementary are the three schools in WCSD that have started picking up one group of students, taking them to school, and turning around to pick up another group. Brettman informed that there was about eight to ten minutes of return time in this process. This will become a more frequent procedure throughout the district according to Brettman. “It’s going to happen in some of the other schools eventually,” she revealed.

As the problems continue and WCSD works to find solutions, the transportation department would like to assure every parent and thank them for their patience. “I would like to thank the parents for being so patient with us and understanding... The parents have been really good at understanding what is happening.” ■

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Instagram Continued from Page 1

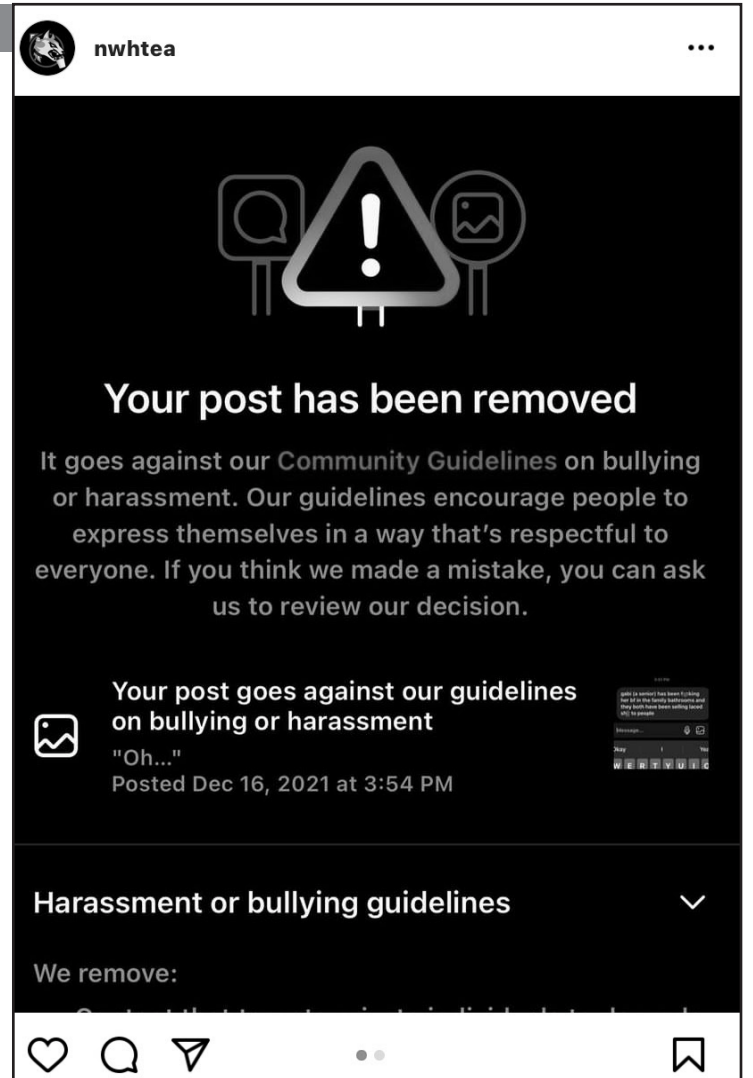
page also asked users, “Don’t take my [stuff] down.”

These pages began to scare some students. Junior Sarah Kapustka said, “I just don’t like the fact that I could be on one of those things and I don’t want that to happen.” Many people have declined to comment about the pages because they are scared of being posted on them. The pages have begun to make some sort of positive change; however, some students have remembered to check their posture, out of fear of being on the posture pages.

Instagram has rules surrounding their community guidelines that all creators of these Instagram pages had to sign. Instagram wrote, “We remove content that targets private individuals to degrade or shame them.” In turn, multiple exposure posts have been removed and reported to Instagram on nwhtea. Anyone can report these posts for bullying, and Instagram will view and make an official decision on what to do. Sophomore Abby Elsbernd thinks that teens can do without social media. Elsbernd said, “You can come to school and make the same relationships you would online.”

Waukee Community School District has a policy on cyber bullying. The district says, “[Bullying is something that] has a substantially detrimental effect on the student or employee’s physical or mental health.” If students participate in this, then the district could possibly remove students from participating in school programs and activities. So far, no consequences have been made public for these pages.

Prairieview, Northwest’s 8th and 9th grade feeder school, has also had problems with these Instagram pages—accounts such as prairieview\_yawning, prairieview\_chicks and prairieview\_gamers. The page prairieview\_stop came with



Nwhtea posts an alert about a post being removed for bullying or harassment. “This is obviously spreading rumors... These pages are not necessary,” said sophomore Abby Keen.

one clear message. “For the 8th graders that are making Prairieview accounts and using them to post people without their consent, especially when it’s rude or negative—you need to leave people alone. It’s stupid and nobody finds it funny,” the page wrote. Many of these pages have since been removed. The majority of those that still remain are private or have deleted all of their posts.

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## WCSD Brain Health

By Paige Finney

Waukee Community School District has a multitude of resources and staff working to help support and educate students about their brain health in order to help combat the brain health crisis in the district and around the country.

For situational struggles, the best in-school resource is a counselor or a trusted adult. If a student has an immediate concern or an emergency they should go to their teacher and dismiss themselves with the explanation of needing to meet with their counselor. Once that student gets to Student Services, they should let the student services secretary know that it is an emergency and they need to meet with a counselor. "A scheduling appointment is important, but a student crisis is our top priority," explained Mrs. Vogt, Northwest High School's counselor for the last names starting with A-G.

One resource that counselors can direct students to is Employee & Family Resources's (EFR) program called the Student Assistance Program (SAP). This program is meant to assist both students and their families with mental health con-

cerns. Some resources they offer include in-person/in-school counseling, telephone counseling, counseling through text, as well as online resources. Counselors can refer students to this resource if there are clear signs that a student is struggling with mental health-related issues and are not utilizing outside resources. This program does not need to be approved by a parent/guardian before a student uses it and it is completely confidential. After the referral is made the rest of the process is completed by the student. The student has the ability to set up an appointment with a counselor employed by this program.

An alternative option for students who have a diagnosed mental illness is creating a 504 plan. According to Mrs. Vogt, "A 504 is an educational plan where a student has a medical disability that significantly impacts their ability to function in our daily environment." One example given was a student struggling with anxiety. The student was showing clear negative impacts on grades, attendance and other daily school functions, due to this diagnosis. 504 plans can be created to devise strategies and make revisions to daily teachings and routines in order to help the student function in a sustainable and successful manner. 504 plans are not just for mental health diagnosis, but any medical diagnosis in which students

need modifications to their day.

One employee combatting and working towards solving issues involving the mental health of Waukee students is the District Social Worker, Lesleyann Christensen. She explained that she did not exactly have a job description when taking on this position, but Christensen shared, "A big piece of my role is addressing the whole child so when we are looking at a student, we aren't just looking at the student from the time they walk into the school and the time they walk out." A lot of Lesleyann's work is not recognized by students and a big part of that is due to how little of her job is in the spotlight, or even involved with students in general. "I don't often meet face to face with students, a lot of the work that I am doing is behind the scenes, providing consultation and collaborating with principals and administrators, counselors and teachers." She explained that the more she educates the staff in Waukee's schools, the more self-sufficient those staff members become in assisting students. That decreases the amount of time she is involved in singular cases and increases the amount of time she can be involved in district-wide issues and modifications.

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### Sports Recruitment Continued from Page 1

Schools that have a lot of COVID-year athletes may hurt themselves in the long run because of the limited high school athletes that they are pulling in. Many athletes that typically would be good enough to play at a Division I program must play at a lower level because those Division I programs do not have room.

Northwest senior and Creighton commit for baseball Anthony Watts said, "I guess recruitment was a little bit difficult for me. I did not have much coming in but by my senior year I did not have any trouble."

There was also a small portion of players that opted out of their season. Many athletes during the extreme parts of COVID opted out of their season which created even more trouble for those athletes to play. During that time, players were not able to get their name out to coaches or showcase their skill which created a huge problem for these athletes. Northwest Two-sport athlete and uncommitted junior Carter Van Horn said, "COVID has definitely been tough for sports. Freshman year a kid on our team got COVID and it wiped out the whole second half of our season. So I can 100% see why getting recruited during COVID has been difficult." ■

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Mrs. Vogt is Northwest's counselor for last names starting with A-G. Vogt shared, "I don't ever feel like you can have enough [brain health resources] in place, you can always do more, get more knowledge out there, more literature, more people, more frequent check-ins."



Lesleyann Christensen is the Waukee Community School District social worker. She explained, "We are kind of in a crisis state in terms of our mental health services and addressing the brain health of adolescents and youth particularly."

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P.C. Naomi Pittman

Mrs. Ehlers sits behind her desk during the school day. Mrs. Ehlers is in her fifth year of teaching within Waukee.

## Teachers Making an Impact

By Naomi Pittman

Teachers are at the heart of every student's school experience, so they can make a great impact. Many students have fond memories of the teachers who influenced them.

Northwest sophomore Arya Ambardekar reflected on the teacher who affected her the most. Mr. Holthaus was her 6th-grade social studies

teacher and one of the best teachers she has ever had. "He was very interactive with everyone, we did a lot of fun projects... [his class] was just a lot of fun," Ambardekar stated. The greatest lesson Holthaus taught her was to enjoy classes more. Ambardekar did not like Social Studies, but Holthaus' class changed that. She described, "The first day I walked into there I was like... 'I hate this class, I'm not going to like it at all,'... it ended up being my favorite class of all time." Holthaus was also accepting of Ambardekar's culture, especially since it was a part of the curriculum. He would ask about her cultural experiences when teaching them, which she appreciated. She explained, "The best thing that he did was ask for my input about [those] things."

Northwest senior Emma Breheny's past teacher also made an impact with positive interactions. Her theatre director and Technical Theatre teacher Mr. Jorgensen was kind and built a positive environment. "[His class] was very relaxed... He wanted [students] to know that [they were] welcome, and he wanted you to feel comfortable in his classroom," Breheny explained. Jorgensen joked with his students, making an environment where students could have fun while learning. Breheny described, "He was able to take a joke, and that was very helpful." His class offered more than just a fun environment, though. Breheny reflected on the life lessons that Jorgensen had taught her. She recounted, "Hard work pays off, even if you don't think it's going to be worth it... You just have to focus on what you're passionate about, and you have to put all your work into that."

Teachers can make impacts on students that last well into their futures. Mrs. Savage, a Northwest Social Studies teacher, described her past teachers. Mr. Sleister, her math teacher, was famously strict. Even still, he was encouraging and led her to success. Savage explained, "He believed in me. He encouraged me... He was the kind of human you think of when you think of the perfect teacher." Savage's Speech coach and English teacher, Mr. Walker, was genuine with his students. "[He] treated us like actual human beings, and I appreciated that," stated Savage. While Savage was in law school, she had a teacher who reminded her of the impact that Sleister and Walker had made. She described, "They made me happy to be in their classroom every day... they taught me [things] that weren't just about the subject matter, but about life... I wanted to have that kind of an impact in society, so I changed course."

From offering encouragement to inspiring change, teachers have an incredible range of potential impacts. Of course, no teacher is perfect, but they all play parts in shaping their students' lives. ■

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P.C. Matthew Maslikowski

From left to right: Pryce Sandfort, Matthew Maslikowski, and Omaha Biliew stand on the court at Waukee High School, holding up W's. Maslikowski, a NWHS senior, has continued his account with the wolves.

## The Wolfpack Woj

By Molly Campbell

The Waukee Woj is a school sports graphics Instagram and Twitter account created in 2019 and run by senior Matthew Maslikowski. It focuses mainly on promotional graphics made by Maslikowski that display athletes in action and provide information on upcoming games and players. The Instagram page has 464 followers and the Twitter has 405 followers as of January 31st, 2022.

Maslikowski, the sole graphic designer for the account stated, "I have a lot of friends that play for the football team and the basketball team, and I like graphic design, so I'll make graphics for their games." Maslikowski continued, "My favorite [sport to cover] is probably basketball... it's just the easiest; the ones without as much equipment are typically easier." Maslikowski said

he likes to focus on sports, stating, "I grew up around sports, always watching them and playing [them], so it's kind of something I've just enjoyed throughout my life." Maslikowski uses Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator to create his sports graphics. "Sometimes I'll see something on Instagram that will give me inspiration, other times I'll come up with ideas on my own. Eventually, I'll find something I like, and I'll iron out the details to make it look how I want," Maslikowski shared.

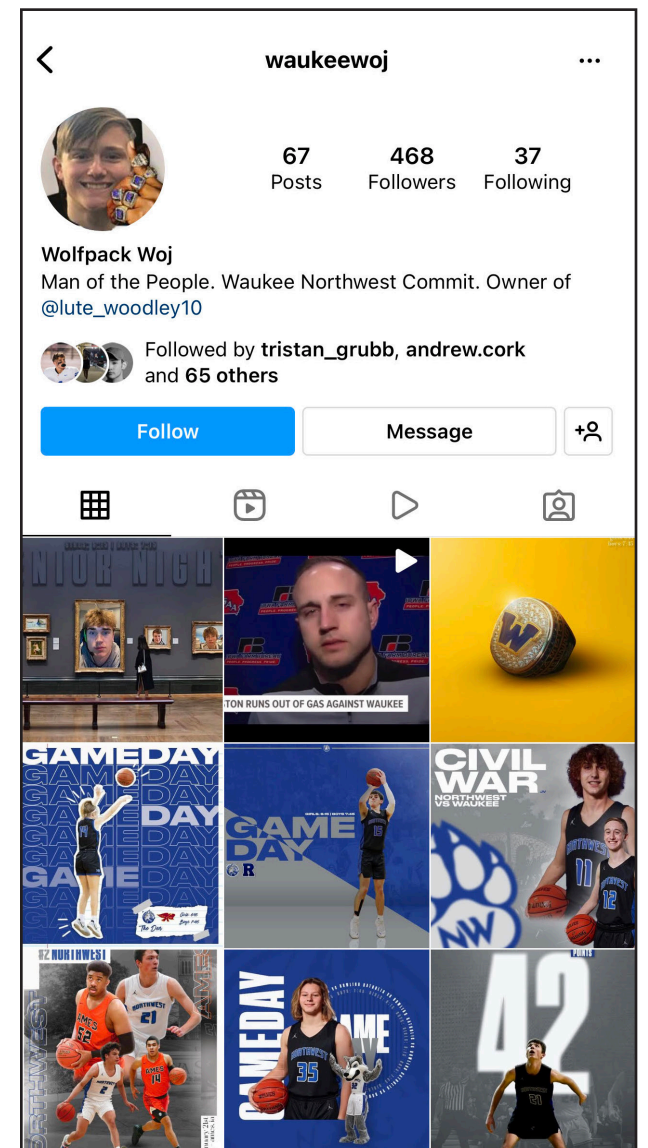
"It was the summer of 2019 when I first made the account, but I didn't really start posting until last fall," Maslikowski commented, adding that he does not have specific plans for the Waukee Woj. The name Waukee Woj is a play on Adrian Wojranowski, a famous NBA reporter for ESPN, and his nickname is also Woj. When asked about a favorite graphic of his, Maslikowski said, "I definitely have favorites but I don't think I can choose just one." The school split affected the page, making it harder to cover sports from two

different schools. "Last year I covered Waukee more, but now it's Northwest. But I've still got some buddies at Waukee, and if they want me to make a graphic for them I won't say no."

Many of the players featured on the Waukee Woj are star athletes at Northwest and are in full support of the page. Senior Cade Kelderman said, "I like how [Maslikowski] gives all our sports programs some support and some hype and buzz around our teams." Junior Pryce Sandfort commented, "I like his game-day edits...they're my favorites because they're pretty good, and sometimes it's just a joke or just for the JV teams." Kelderman added, "I think it's a really cool idea that [Maslikowski] has done and he's very funny with it."

Maslikowski does not currently have plans to pass on the Waukee Woj, as he states that the Waukee Woj "is just for fun", but he does wish to continue to run the page as long as he can. Maslikowski plans on continuing his graphic design making as a career, stating, "All the graphics I make are good experience for me and I can experiment and get better." ■

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The Wolfpack Woj Instagram feed as of February 7, 2022.





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a trip over to the fieldhouse on December 3rd, 2021 to play the Waukeewau team. With the wolves dominating throughout the game, they won 58-41.

The split didn't impact some teams, however. The girl's swim and dive team stayed combined this fall, showing that Waukeewau's family is stronger than ever. Senior Camden Habgood said, "It was cool to have some sense of normalcy while everything was changing. It's stayed consistent and that's what has made a big difference." The combined team won 1st in every meet they competed in. Most Northwest athletes would say that family is the most important part of a team sport. Habgood agreed, "[The swim team] offers a place where you can do what you want to do, surrounded by people with similar goals."

## The Split

By Jack Andersen

Not only did Waukeewau High School split its academics into two, but so did its activities. In its first year, Northwest High School's activities represented the school skillfully by being a top predator.

Northwest's dance team has won many awards throughout the season so far. Receiving 1st place in state and regionals with 5 out of the top 8 individual dances at state, the dance team has been showing Iowa what Northwest can do.

Boys Cross Country also set the bar for Northwest sports. The team first proved what the Northwest Wolves can do by placing 10th in the state this fall. Senior Kon Dut said, "Ever since I was a little kid I've liked running a lot and I found passion in doing a sport. Before running, I really had no passion." Northwest sports give students the opportunities to express themselves and their passions.

Another team with passion is the boy's basketball team. The team split after winning the state championship as one school last year. In their last year together, they finished the whole season with a 16-2 record. Supporting one another is important to Northwest team sports. Junior Henry Manning said, "The basketball team is like a family. We all care about each other's success and we put the team first." The Waukeewau basketball team has been getting better in recent years. The team placed 3rd in 2018, 3rd in 2019, 2nd in 2020, and 1st in 2021. Basketball has always been important to many athletes on Northwest's team. "I have been playing since I was 4 years old and [basketball] is something I will always watch or

play," described Manning.

After winning state last year, the girl's basketball team also split between the schools. Senior Camryn Weers said, "It was difficult coming off of the state championship and splitting schools...it was different having to re-adjust and re-build."

The girl's basketball team has also shown that basketball isn't all competition. Family is also important to the team. "It's really like a family dynamic. You're with them all the time, you practice every day, and so you're constantly around them, you're best friends with them [and] you got through hard times with them," expressed Weers. The girl's basketball team took

The boy's swim and dive team is also combined, proving that having two schools doesn't mean that competition is at the front of everyone's minds. Junior AJ Abram expressed, "We haven't split yet, but when it does happen, I trust the underclassmen to continue our culture on both teams." Swimming is very different from other sports. It's non-contact, exerts different muscles and of course, there is a lot less sweating. "I think people should try out because it gives an opportunity to be a part of something really special," explained Abram. ■

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Junior Henry Manning, number 15, shoots a basket against Ankeny Centennial's Braden Simonsen. "Before the split, we had a really talented team and a lot of kids have had to step into a bigger role in a bigger spotlight," said Manning.

# Dallas County Closet

By Ariana Aponte

162 families served, 790 people served, and 6,038 items of clothing given away this quarter, the Dallas County Closet, established in 2017, serves families with clothes completely free of charge. The Dallas County Closet, now located on NE Cardinal Lane in Waukee, is a non-profit closet run completely by the community through donations and volunteers. Families experiencing financial hardship across Dallas County can shop for necessities from infants to adults free of charge. The idea was started in 2016 by school nurse Ingrid Williams at Brookview Elementary. Williams found an evident need for clean and new clothes in Waukee Schools.

In January 2016, Williams took the idea and ran with it. She brought together a board of community members to help propel the idea forward. The closet started in a Prairieview classroom, but as demand for the classroom space for the next school year grew, demand for an actual store increased. In January 2017, the board gathered together donations that were once accepted in an RV and clothing racks from the out-of-business Younkers and Gap to pull together the Dallas County Closet for its first shopping day. Cindy Torvik was invited by the board to run the closet, which she felt was her calling. “[Ensuring kids fit in with their clothing] is important to me. I don’t

want anyone to be singled out, especially a kid,” stated Torvik.

“Providing dignity & confidence through the gift of clothing,” reads the Dallas County Closet Website. An important part of the closet is ensuring that those in need are not only provided clothing but clothing that is clean, new and trendy. “We want to provide nice clothing. We want [shoppers] to feel dignified. We want the shopping experience to feel dignified,” noted Torvik. A study completed by Northwestern University stated, “...those who wore clothes they perceived as more professional performed bet-

Volunteers can assist in organizing the shop floor and sorting through donations, assisting shoppers and counting their pieces of clothing or helping with gathering and accepting donations.

Senior Lillie Thennes has spent some time volunteering at the Dallas County Closet and noted how much of a rewarding experience it is. “[Volunteering] was a really positive experience! All the other volunteers were welcoming, the atmosphere was good all around and it was overall enjoyable,” exclaimed Thennes.

She also touched on the importance of the closet’s motto and message. “The biggest thing



P.C. Dallas County Closet Logo

that was mentioned to our group of volunteers is that this isn’t a Goodwill or like another thrift store—these are brand name clothes that are in good shape. It was made clear that the people shopping there weren’t supposed to feel embarrassed or ashamed that they were there, because the clothes were quality. It just felt really important that people out there aren’t ashamed of the

clothes they are wearing, or where they are shopping for them. It’s a safe place, and that’s what makes the Dallas County Closet so special,” ended Thennes. ■

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## Tim Grover:

### Relentless Review

By Caden Sammler

Relentless by Tim Grover is a self-help book written in 2013 from the perspective of Tim Grover where you learn what needs to be done if you want to be the best. Although this book was written in 2013, it still has relevance to this day. Many athletes have been recommended to read this book by Coaches in the Waukee area due to the effect it leaves on athletes on the mental side of sports.

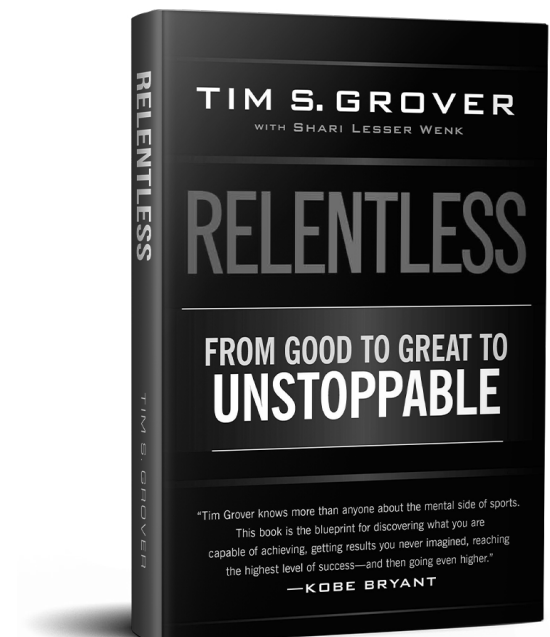
There are many things to take away from Relentless. One of the biggest things I took away is how you need to think if you want to be the best. Grover teaches about the three types of people: the cleaner, the closer and the cooler. If you

want to be the best you have to be the cleaner. The cooler is constantly nervous and does not show up at the end of the game. The closer is not there most of the time but always shows up in the clutch time. The cleaner is always there and always plays like every minute of the game is game seven of the finals. The cleaner never needs to tell people when they are working because everyone already knows. Tim Grover taught me that these three types of people can be used in all aspects of life. Whether it is actually in sports or in the classroom, there are always cleaners, closers and coolers.

I have read a lot of books and out of all the books I have read, the book Relentless has been the best on improving mental toughness. Relentless talks about pushing you out of your comfort zone and showing what needs to be done to become the best. Tim Grover uses stories from his days of training some of the most mentally tough players that are some of the best of all time. Showing that if you want to be the best physically, you have to mentally be the best. You have to

know that no one outworks you, which is one of the biggest takeaways that I have. ■

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