



Iowa Gubernatorial Candidate Deidre DeJear

By Payton Strobel and Colson Thayer

Iowa Democrat, Deidre DeJear, is running for Governor in the 2022 election cycle because she wants to see democracy working for every Iowan. She came to the state when she was 18 to attend Drake University for broadcast news and politics. DeJear said, “I fell in love with the state and the opportunities that were made available to me. I was able to start a small business while I was an undergrad; I started a non-profit in undergrad.” Throughout her vast career helping Iowans, one mentality rose above the rest: she is a firm believer in ‘We the people.’ DeJear addressed a variety of issues that relate to the Waukee Northwest community.

Education

First and foremost, DeJear thinks that the Iowa education system is underfunded. “There’s not

a lot of equity that exists there.” She thinks that students across the entire state should have equal access to classes and opportunities that will allow them to compete on an even playing field. “We’re only better when each of us—especially the least of us—is lifted up.” DeJear wants to better fund education so students feel secure in their future plans. She wants to ensure each child receives 30 hours of Pre-K per week; currently, only 10 hours are guaranteed. DeJear also hopes to expand options for students, including career readiness in addition to college readiness partnered with re-instituting the trades in schools.

Teachers/School Faculty

DeJear is a strong supporter of increasing teacher pay. DeJear cited the inability of school workers to bargain for pay and leave. In 2017, the

state took away their bargaining power and in turn, their voices. “I want to restore that opportunity for them to bargain because our democracy works when people are consensus building.” Not only does DeJear support teachers, but also the school faculty as a whole, including cafeteria workers, janitors and bus drivers. She wants to make sure all staff can have their voices heard. Governor Kim Reynolds recently passed a retention bonus for “some educators.” DeJear thinks that this pits school entities against each other. Instead, DeJear wants everyone to work together. “We can restore our value in education in the state again. We once were number one... now we’re 18, 19, 20.”

Today’s Hottest Topics

DeJear stated her opinion on several hot topics relating to Northwest students and staff.

She addressed trans girls and women in sports, “Eliminating a section of girls from participating in sports does not resolve the competitive problem. What she did there was essentially bully a group of individuals— a vulnerable group of individuals.” She believes that this is only stoking fear among the people of Iowa. She plans to simply fund competitive girls’ sports.

Next, she spoke on the importance of mental health resources. “People are lacking that access to mental health care services.” She thinks it is necessary to have a therapist or social worker in every school in the state. DeJear wants to ensure the doors are never closed for students when issues are most crucial.

DeJear does not think that the state is too far gone and believes in the future of Iowa. “We see a lot of loss, and these are the moments in which we dig deep and start adding value to the fabric of our community so we can move forward collectively.”

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Courtney Clarke: Mayor of Waukee

By Anna Hansen

Courtney Clarke is the current Mayor of Waukee and has dedicated many hours of her time to the job with hopes of bettering the Waukee Community.

Mrs. Clarke was elected to her first term on the Waukee City Council during the November 2017 election and then was elected as Mayor of Waukee in November 2019, beginning her role as Mayor in January 2020.

Throughout her term, Mrs. Clarke has worked on various projects leading to many successes. Some of her biggest successes have been Triumph Park near Northwest High School, the future KeeTown Loop Development, which will have various hotels, apartments and a live entertainment venue and her time spent on converting the Des Moines Water Works into Central Iowa Water Works; this has been an ongoing



P.C. The City of Waukee



Many Hands Thrift Market opened in 2013 as a way for central Iowans to serve their community and make a global impact for the organization Many Hands for Haiti.

Rylie Ovel has worked at Plato's Closet since April 2021. Ovel said, "I'm really grateful that Plato's Closet exists because it's a way to get really cheap clothes." She likes Plato's Closet because it offers quality products at 1/3 of the retail price.

Not only are thrift stores and consignment stores a great place to find a discount, but they are also good for people with a lower income. For families living on a smaller income, it is a place to get all the tools necessary for life. Ovel explained that it helps kids from low-income families fit in at school. She used American Eagle jeans as an example and said, "You wouldn't know where you got these American Eagle jeans, if they were [from] American Eagle or if you got them [at Plato's Closet]."

Reduce, reuse, recycle, is the motto that is often used for recycling and secondhand shopping at thrift or consignment stores. It is best to reduce the effect of fast fashion by purchasing cheap clothes at thrift stores instead of producing excessive waste. Reuse products that still have a lot of life left and recycle clothes or furni-

Des Moines Thrift Stores

By Emma Goode

Just a few years ago, thrifting was something that very few people participated in. In recent times, thrifting has come back and people have rediscovered the positives of shopping second-hand.

Many Hands Thrift Market opened in 2013 as a way for central Iowans to serve their community and make a global impact for the organization Many Hands for Haiti. They have stores in Grimes, Clive and Des Moines. Emily Van Gent, one of Many Hands' managers said, "We want our customers to feel like they are a part of our Many Hands family as well as a part of the greater mission." In their thrift stores, they resell items donated by the community as well as sell fair trade items from the hands of the very same Haitians that the organization benefits. Many Hands has a small staff, with much of their work being done by volunteers who serve in the stores.

Animal Lifeline of Iowa has its own thrift store on SE 14th street in Des Moines where all of the proceeds go to animals in the community. Gypsy, a 5-year-old Pyrenees/Shepherd/Setter mix, is one of the furry friends at Iowa's only



Colorful clothes displayed on a rack in the women's section of Many Hands Thrift Market in Clive.

special needs no-kill animal shelter. Stacie Leinen, the Director of Development at Animal Lifeline said, "We're probably the most unique thrift shop in the area in the fact that the money that we make directly supports an animal rescue."

While many thrift stores focus on giving back, many consignment stores have a focus on sustainability. Plato's Closet is part of a franchise of nationwide consignment stores. Sophomore

ture into new works.

Shopping at thrift stores reduces waste, is nicer to the wallet and has a minimal impact on the environment. At many thrift stores, the money goes to support a higher cause and helps a local or global community.

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Students for Ukraine

By Amela Medinoski

In the wake of the current geopolitical crisis in Ukraine, three Des Moines area international exchange students, sophomores Aisha Kademova and Yelyzaveta Yaryshinka of Waukee High School and junior Bakai Tolunda of Roosevelt High School, banded together in support of the sovereign nation.

With the help of their host parents, friends and Raygun- a midwestern printing and designing clothing company- the group created four shirt designs: "Iowa for Ukraine," "Waukee Students for Ukraine," "Roosevelt Students for Ukraine" and "Students United for Ukraine." Each shirt is \$25.

"Your purchase can save someone's life," said Yaryshinka, Ukraine native. She expressed that although she can not be with her family and friends back home during this time, she wants to make a difference. Shirt proceeds are donated to the Livoberezhnyi Maternity Hospital in Kyiv, raising money to ensure proper medical care for Ukrainian mothers and babies. "By donating to charitable organizations, we help make a difference we are unable to provide with our own hands," added Kademova.

The fundraiser began on March 4th, 2022, and so far, the group has raised almost \$1000. "We can help the world, as we are all human and will get through this together," Kademova concluded. The three students plan on instituting more Ukrainian awareness-based projects in the future.

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Shirt reading, "Waukee Students for Ukraine." The shirt was created by three metro foreign exchange high school students. All proceeds are being donated abroad.

project since 2017.

Mrs. Clarke has enjoyed her time both on City Council and as the Mayor, but one aspect she has particularly appreciated about the Mayor position is getting to work with members of the surrounding communities. Mrs. Clarke stated, "I enjoy getting to know the Mayors, Council Members and City Administrators for the rest of the region, and seeing what we can do to work together."

Mrs. Clarke originally became interested in running for City Council due to a zoning issue in her own neighborhood. The issue led to her wanting involvement in the city's decisions so she could personally assure the concerns of citizens were heard.

She had not intended to run for Mayor, but when the previous Mayor, William Peard, had decided to not run for re-election he reached

out to Mrs. Clarke, indicating she would be a good fit for the position. After some reluctance from Mrs. Clarke, she decided to run. Looking back on her decision, Mrs. Clarke emphasized, "I think this shows the power of encouraging others to do things and helping them realize they'd be good at it because sometimes we don't realize that about ourselves."

One concept Mrs. Clarke felt some may not understand is the group effort it takes for ordinances to be passed. During work sessions, current issues are brought up and as a team, the council members work together to come up with solutions. Mrs. Clarke stated, "My role is to facilitate that discussion and make sure that we're listening to everybody that has input, so we can come to a conclusion that's going to benefit the community."

Mrs. Clarke spends roughly 20 hours a week doing various tasks as Mayor, but outside of this position, she works as an Institutional

Portfolio Manager. She has earned a Bachelor's degree in Business Management, International Business and French from Iowa State University. She is also a member of the Iowa Child Advocacy Board and is a team leader for the non-profit organization, Love Lunches.

As of February 18th, 2022, Mrs. Clarke is planning to run for re-election in November 2023. Mrs. Clarke feels people sometimes may be leery of speaking with public figures. Mrs. Clarke expressed, "I really encourage students, and all people, when I meet with them to not be afraid to share your thoughts on a topic."

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Waukee's Triumph Park

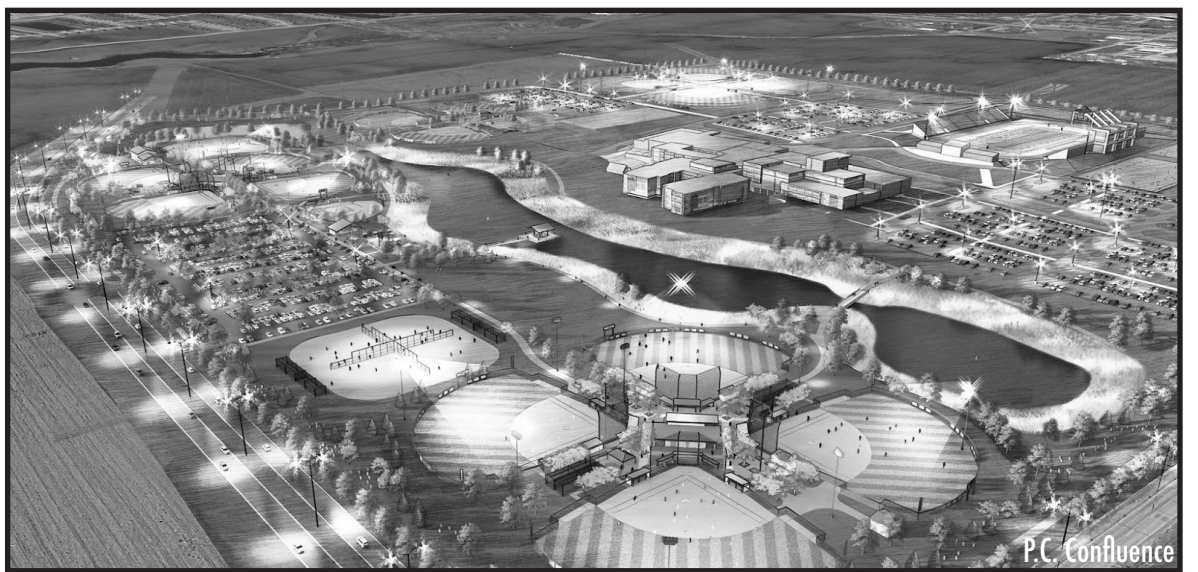
By Jack Andersen

This summer, the City of Waukee will open its 66-acre Triumph Park across from Northwest High School.

Triumph Park will include a large ballpark, a Miracle League Field, a large pond, many green spaces for events, miles of trails connecting to existing Waukee trails and an EPIC Inclusive Playground. This playground is the biggest in the City of Waukee.

This park will include features such as ramps and Sway Fun Gliders, which allow children with wheelchairs to have fun with other kids at the park. Many more features can be found on the city's website. Waukee Community School District Board Member Jaime Secory stated, "Over the past several years we have experienced tremendous growth. Our booming population can be a challenge at times, but I also view it as an incredible opportunity. As we have grown we have also seen a significant rise in the diversity of our population, a change that I believe benefits our community as a whole."

Each year, Landscape Structures, Inc. (LSI) designates one EPIC playground. This



An aerial mockup of Triumph Park and the Northwest High School campus.

means that the playground is able to incorporate custom-designed equipment. Waukee's EPIC playground will join a few others from around the country. Waukee's playground is the most inclusive of its size to date.

Waukee Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Josh VandeKamp states, "My favorite thing about the park is how the centerpiece of the entire park is focused on the EPIC playground, Greater Iowa Credit Union (GICU) Miracle League Field and the accessible fishing pier." Oftentimes those amenities are thrown in

as an afterthought, but Triumph Park was designed around these three things. Waukee CSD School Board President Lori Lyon agreed. Lyon expressed, "Allowing all metro residents access to features such as the handicap accessible fishing pier and play equipment demonstrates that we are a community that cares about providing safe and enjoyable recreational experiences for all within our community."

In 2016, the City of Waukee worked with the WCSD to purchase the 160-acre site where both Northwest High School and Triumph Park sit. Since then, the city worked with Confluence Landscape architects to design and construct the park.

The Waukee Betterment Foundation was started to help fund more projects like this for Waukee in the future. They raised \$1.1 million to help fund the Waukee Railroad Pergola, which opened in 2018 on the Racoon River Valley Trail near 10th Street and Hickman. President of the Waukee Betterment Foundation, Todd McDonald explained, "We are all volunteers that accepted the charge of raising approximately \$2.7 million to build the all-inclusive area of Waukee's new Triumph Park." Apple inc. donated one million dollars to Triumph Park. The large technology company is set to begin construction of a 1.3 billion dollar data center in Waukee this year.

If the weather cooperates this spring, the park is set to open in June 2022.

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A rendering of the 'Epic' Inclusive Playground. Waukee Parks and Recreation Assistant Director, Josh VandeKamp said, "[Accessibility] was a high priority for the design team and Landscape Structures, Inc. (LSI) to create a space for everyone to be able to play together at the same location."

APEX Diversity

By Ariana Aponte

The Aspiring Professional Experience (APEX) and School-to-Work program located in the Waukee Innovation Learning Center (WILC) has been offering high school students real work-based learning and experience, but there has been a noticeable lack of diversity in these work-based programs during the 2021-2022 school year. The main problem that the district faces with diversity is that there is not enough of a diverse community to enroll in the APEX programs. The Waukee District is a Predominantly White Institution (PWI), which means that more than 50% of the students enrolled in an institution are white. Since Waukee is a PWI, this means that there is a significant disparity, or not a proportionate amount of students of color to enroll in an APEX program.

Staff involved in building the APEX program look at a few different aspects while creating their program goals; if a student sees someone in their profession who looks and sounds like them, the student is more likely to drive for that specific profession. This is also a district goal. “You have to be able to see that representation to be able

to grow that efficacy,” noted Waukee Director of Diversity and Equity, Dr. Lindsay Law. APEX directors also look to peer-to-peer relationships, in terms of if the course is widely talked about with students and their peers. “[When creating program-based goals, we focus on] being more collaborative and open-minded and listening to our students...we also seek out what other districts have done,” explained Dr. Law. Dr. Law and her team try to expand Work-Based Learning and course offerings; she strives to grow as many opportunities as possible at the WILC.

The APEX program is currently just shy of 600 students and all instructors at the WILC work to make the work-based programs more equitable for everyone. This involves providing adequate transportation for students commuting to and from the high schools to the WILC, providing a free community closet to students so they are able to meet the WILC dress code and providing a lunchroom or ‘The Hub’ for students to get lunch and snacks. APEX directors also work to bring down diversity barriers by eliminating GPA or course prerequisites to enroll in an APEX program. “The WILC is a hub for community,” details Director of Work-Based Learning Michelle Hill. However, the district’s current biggest barrier is transportation. It has been difficult to find bus drivers to fulfill shuttles to and from the schools to the WILC, and shuttles for long trips

to and from APEX activities.

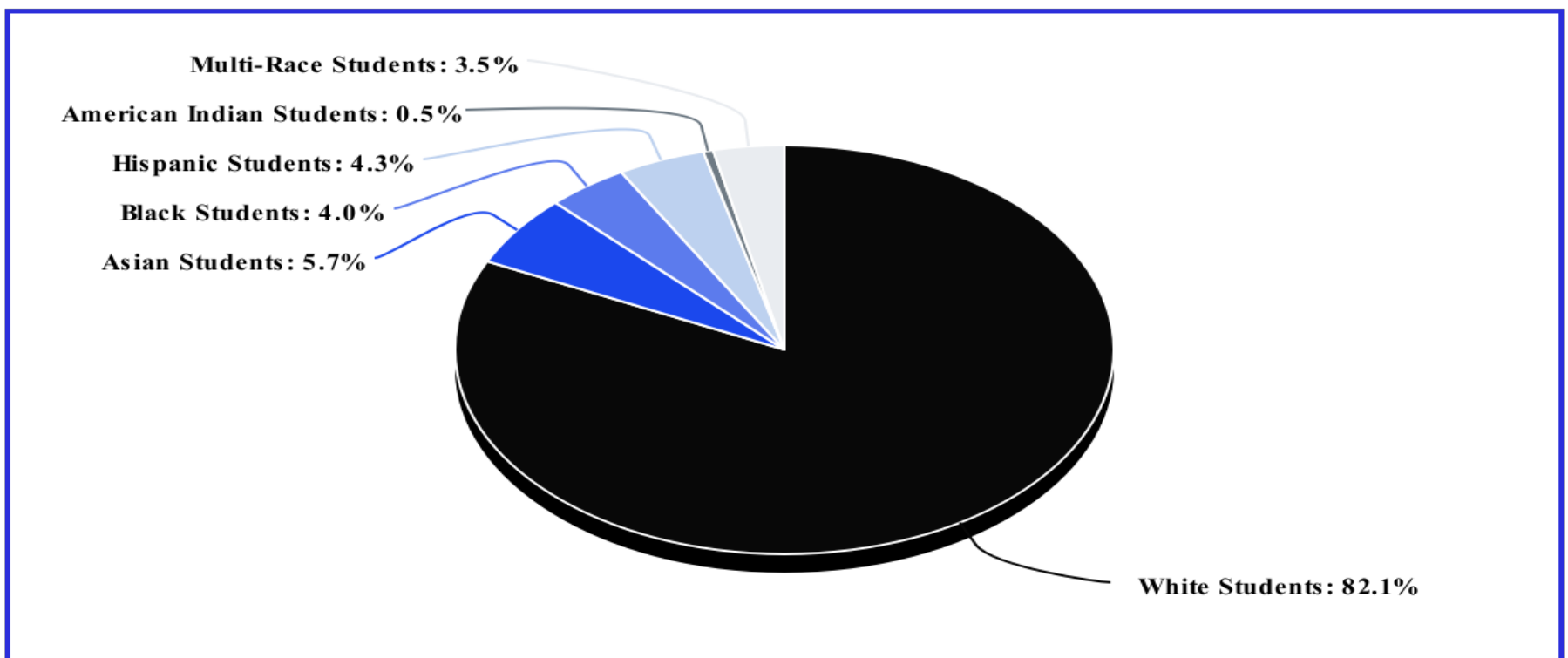
The district and the team at the WILC set strategic plans every year for their program. Having an annual report helps set goals and having a strategic plan helps create opportunities and conversation. Current reports for the 2021-2022 school year show that the Intro to Education program has only White students. In the School-to-Work program, this program is only made up of White and Asian students. About 90% of the program is white students and the last 10% is Asian students. The most diverse class appears to be the Business Startup program which has White, Black, Asian and Hispanic students. This program contains almost double the black population.

There is also an apparent financial disparity in the Intro to Education and APEX Tech and Robotics program which shows that no student is in need of free or reduced lunch. The most financially diverse program is the APEX-CNA program, which has 65% of students not in need of financial assistance and 35% of students in need of free or reduced lunch.

APEX Veterinary Science and senior associate Abigail Delgado said, “I feel like it’s just the area we live in. There’s a disproportionate amount of white people to people of color.”

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Waukee APEX Equity Data
Waukee APEX Annual Report 2019-2020



White Students
 Asian Students
 Black Students
 Hispanic Students
 Multi-Race Students
 American Indian Students



P.C. Naomi Pittman

ICU Nursing

By Naomi Pittman

Since the beginning of the pandemic, Intensive Care Unit (ICU) nurses in Iowa have been put through more than ever before.

ICU nurses treat patients in critical condition. Because these patients require such close attention, ICU nurses usually handle one to two patients at a time, while regular floor nurses may have four or five. Dr. Syeda Thomas is a Staff-Registered ICU Nurse at St. Luke’s Hospital in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and an Associate Professor of Nursing at the University of Iowa. Dr. Thomas has been a critical care nurse for 17 years. “The difference between an ICU nurse and a floor nurse is [while nurses] are all very intelligent... as an ICU nurse, you have a lot of things that you’re managing at once,” Dr. Thomas stated. “You have to be able to multitask... [and] be very reactionary.”

While ICU nurses often experience stress and patient deaths, this has only worsened with



P.C. Dr. Syeda Thomas

Dr. Syeda Thomas is an Associate Professor of Nursing at the University of Iowa and a Staff-Registered ICU Nurse at St. Luke's Hospital in Cedar Rapids. She commented, "ICU nurses aren't any 'better' than any other nurse... I think we're all amazing. We all have our specialties and we all have our talents."

the COVID-19 pandemic. In Dr. Thomas's experience, ICU patient mortality has increased dramatically. For example, her coworkers would sign cards for families if a patient passed away. "[Before], you would see those cards on the weekend maybe every so often, maybe one time, maybe two," Dr. Thomas described. "There were times during COVID I would show up and there would be ten cards."



P.C. Claire Weihs

Claire Weihs is a senior nursing student at the University of Iowa College of Nursing and taking an internship at the University of Iowa Medical ICU. She described, "The more I got into nursing school, the more I loved it... it's really amazing how much you learn and how you change the way you look at everything."

The increase in deaths and stress is causing many nurses to leave their jobs or retire sooner than planned. Claire Weihs is a senior nursing student at the University of Iowa College of Nursing who is taking a medical ICU internship. Weihs has seen and heard the stress of ICU nursing during her time as an intern. She noted the effects of patient death. "People used to graduate the ICU, they used to go down to

the floor, they used to go home...now a lot of people are not making it home anymore. I think that's really challenging emotionally on the nurses," Weihs said.

Though some nurses could not endure the stress of the pandemic, many have continued working through it. Madison Helvie is a registered nurse in the trauma ICU of Bergan Mercy Hospital in Omaha, Nebraska. She began nursing around the start of the pandemic, and while working with COVID is difficult, her duty as a nurse keeps her going. Helvie stated, "I know that every time I go to work, I am making a difference. We could be the reason that someone lives or dies."

Nursing is essential to healthcare, but it is often overlooked and underappreciated. For example, many hospitals did not give nurses pandemic pay for risking their lives with COVID. Also, nurses are oftentimes viewed as unimportant compared to doctors. The reality, Dr. Thomas explains, is entirely different. "If things get missed [by doctors], we are the last line of defense," she described. Dr. Thomas believes that for nurses to be truly appreciated, they must be heard more. She declared, "We need more people to fight for nursing... We are such a special profession. We need a voice."

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P.C. The City of Waukee

An aerial mockup of the future Apple data center located one mile west of Northwest High School.

The Apple Data Center

By Anna Hansen

Apple Inc. is expected to begin building a \$1.3 billion data center in the spring of 2022, located on 2,000 acres of land in Waukee, Iowa.

The idea was announced in 2016, with the company originally wanting 400 acres of land for a data center. However, it has developed into a much larger data center on 2,000 acres. The project was initially supposed to begin in 2018, but it was delayed due to design changes and then because of COVID-19 complications. As of March 20, construction will begin in early spring 2022.

The data center will be located one mile west of Northwest High School, off of Hickman Road. The first phase of construction will include a minimum of six buildings on 300 acres of land. Each building is estimated to have a value of \$300 million dollars.

"They're essentially just giant buildings with tons and tons of servers throughout, that store all the data on your cell phone," explained Brad Deets, the Waukee Assistant City Administrator.

With ample room to grow, it is expected the center will eventually have 20-30 buildings, as they will continue to be built over many years. Although Apple is a large, international company, Deets said, "The most amount of land they own in one location is in Waukee, Iowa."

Having such a major project in Waukee will generate money for city improvements. The tax dollars generated from the project will allow for the extension of roads, the investment of other lands, and many future public venues.

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19

?s

at NW

19 at Northwest is a segment where a random Northwest High School student is asked to answer 19 rapid-fire questions about their experiences and opinions. This time we spoke with Brianna Jones, a 17-year-old junior at Northwest.

Q: What is the worst flavor of ice cream?

A: Mint chocolate chip, because it feels like you're putting toothpaste in your mouth while also putting more food in your mouth. Like, you can have them separately right? You can have chocolate chips and mint, but you can't put them together. You can't put anything with mint. Mint is just gross.

Q: Favorite school lunch?

A: I like those pizza-cruncher thingies... Also the french toast... Only the middle ones, though. The side ones are [too] crunchy.

Q: What superpower do you wish you had? Why?

A: I don't know what I'd have now, but when I was a child, the thing I wanted most was to be able to turn into other animals. I thought that'd be so cool, to turn into a bird and fly off somewhere... I'd join a flock and fly off with them.

Q: What is your phone wallpaper?

A: It's [my friend] Molly. I feel fear taking it off, that she might hit me.

Q: What song/artist have you been listening to most lately?

A: Jawny. I just like his music. Also, I found him through TikTok, because TikTok told me that capricorns would like his music. I guess they were right, because I'm a capricorn and I like his music quite a bit.

Q: What did you want to be when you were a kid?

A: I wanted to be a veterinary person or work at a zoo, or just do anything with animals, really.

Q: What was your favorite childhood TV show?

A: Probably Chowder. I couldn't stop watching it, it was so good.... [In the show,] there's this little purple dude that ran around. He had a grandpa and a grandma. The grandma was a mushroom.

Q: Most irrational fear?

A: I don't know if it's irrational, but probably spiders. They could kill you, you know? The worst part is some of them are actually cute, so it's like they're luring you in to murder you... Some are kind of just gross, like daddy long legs. They look nasty. They're just like this itty-bitty body with giant legs.

Q: If you could live in a fictional universe, which one would you choose and why?

A: Probably Adventure Time. I feel like that'd

be really cool. It's like a bunch of different weird biomes, different creatures... I'd be like Finn.

Q: What's something you can't do, but wish you could?

A: I can't do... a cartwheel.

Q: Who is your favorite character of all time and why?

A: My favorite character of all time is Beast Boy... he has the same Harry Potter house as me. And he has a good personality.

Q: What's a fashion trend that you hate?

A: That weird thing where people are putting piercings everywhere. It's okay to put one in your eyebrow or your lip or something, but to [make] your whole face metal... It's weird.

Q: If you could be anyone in the world, living or dead, who would it be and why?

A: I wanna be Einstein. I feel like it'd be really fun to have that long of a tongue. His hair's pretty cool too. And I've always wanted a mustache. I used that mustache filter on TikTok [and] I looked pretty hot.

Q: If you could choose anywhere in the world to visit, where would it be?

A: With the exception that I wouldn't freeze to death, probably Antarctica. I think there are penguins there. After watching Happy Feet, I just really wanna go visit penguins.

Q: What do you want to be known for?

A: Something cool... My amazing personality. Just become famous off of [my personality], like the Kardashians. Except they're not amazing, they're just kind of drama-y. Kind of like them, but cooler.

Q: If you could say something to your 5th-grade self, what would it be?

A: Probably to keep the friends that I had. I just kind of abandoned everyone. I had friends at the beginning of the year, and then I left them, and

then I made new friends, and then I left them... So I'd probably tell myself to be more social and actually make a lot of friends instead of going in between friend groups.

Q: What's the most memorable thing someone's said to you?

A: My mom told me that she would accept me for who I was. And then didn't. That was a memorable experience.

A: Probably Molly. Just being around her, I can just be myself, you know?

Q: What's something most people don't know about you?

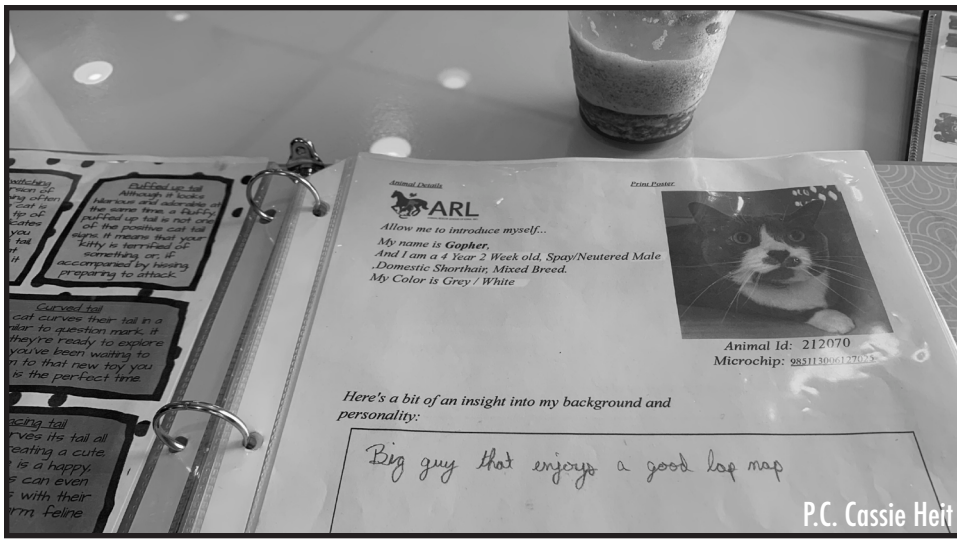
A: I'm pretty wacky. Most people don't know that, because I'm pretty shy when I first meet people, so I just kind of try to be as normal as possible for as long as possible. [Then] it's like an entire switch just went off, and I'm strange.

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P.C. Brianna Jones



Coffe Cats By Cassie Heit

The cat cafe, Coffee Cats in Valley Junction, is an adorable and cozy place to be. The workers are nice and the cats like to come up to people after having napped on the various elevated surfaces. At the cafe, people are able to meet the cats and if they make a special connection, they are able to adopt the cats. To meet with the cats there are fees in order to keep the cafe running. Prices start at \$2.14 for 15 minutes to \$10.70 for one hour. The cafe has ten to twelve cats at a time from the local Animal Rescue League. Since opening the cafe in the summer of 2020,

the cafe has adopted out 600 cats. The cafe also offers cat yoga at 7 pm on Wednesdays and 8 am on Saturdays. Reservations with the cats are highly recommended as there are only two spots for walk-ins per day. Despite going in an hour after opening, the cafe was relatively full with people enjoying the company of

was really fun and relaxing. I was able to bring in my laptop in order to do homework without stress. I would definitely go again; everyone was very friendly.”

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the cats.

At the cafe, they offer many types of local coffees, Italian sodas and pastries. There are a variety of flavors within each category except for pastries. Sophomore Avery Jones said, “[I] had a coffee and I really enjoyed it! I believe it was a white chocolate mocha with lavender.”

Sophomore Cameron Lindsey stated about the cafe, “The service was good [and] there weren’t many people so we were able to get everything quickly.” The workers would go about the cafe, help customers pay to go in with the cats, be with the cats themselves or work the cafe area. Lindsey also witnessed a cat adoption while there. People go to the cat cafe to relax and some have even proposed at the cafe.

Sophomore Erin Stone said, “My experience

New District Buildings By Ariana Aponte

The ever-growing and expanding Waukee Community School District has several new buildings in the works for elementary, middle, and high school students. Sugar Creek Elementary, the district’s 10th elementary building, is set to open in the Fall of 2022. The 100,000 square foot building is located near Ashworth Road in Waukee. Trailridge School, the district’s third 8-9 building will start out with students in 6th and 7th grade when it first opens. This building is anticipated to open in the Fall of 2023. This is the district’s version of a newer Timberline, with a baseball, softball, football and track complex right near the building. The district’s most recent expansion is its Natatorium. This building is anticipated to open in the Fall of 2023 and will house Northwest High School and Waukee High School swim students. This summer, the district is looking to bid on

the 11th elementary school that they hope to open in the Fall of 2024.

When creating, designing and opening a brand new school, there are a lot of different elements involved. With Northwest High School there were several students, staff and Waukee High School teachers that were involved in the process. For high schools, the district takes a lot of time and thought into what they ultimately want the building to look like. For elementary and middle schools, the process looks slightly different. With schools that are built more frequently, the district uses something called a “site adapted process”. Chief Operating Officer Kirk Johnson detailed the process. “We do a site adapted process with our architect. We basically start with the layout of the [Sugar Creek Elementary], and as we designed elementary number 11 we just did that more [rapidly].”

Johnson and his team include construction workers who have their boots on the ground, the Director of Construction, members of the Senior Leadership Team, and members of their business staff. When finding the perfect location, Johnson and his team work with a demographer that helps to predict enrollment and where new housing is going to be built. They

come up with three to four scenarios of what the proposed boundary is anticipated to look like. They then get the input of community members and staff members.

For elementary and middle-level buildings the design process lasts only a few months but the process looked a lot different from building Northwest High School. “[Building a high school] is a different animal,” emphasized Johnson. Elementary and middle-level buildings take around two to three years to build.

The cities and the district do a lot of talking when it comes to opening a new building. Buildings in the Waukee district are located in four different cities: Clive, Waukee, Urbandale, and West Des Moines. The district is constantly engaging with these cities to help propel the process forward. The process involves a submittal piece, inspection and approval process to begin building on a site. Waukee Assistant City Administrator Brad Deets shared, “City administration and school district administration work closely and collaboratively on all new building decisions as what the City does and what the school district does have impacts on each other. We keep in regular contact so that the school district understands where housing is being built so that they can plan accordingly for the development of additional schools.”

Senior and swimmer Camden Habgood expressed her excitement for the new Natatorium in Waukee. “I think the team is excited to start training in the new Natatorium. While the Waukee Y has a lot of history for the team, we are beyond excited to start new at this amazing facility,” said Habgood. “I hope this new facility sets a precedent of excellence. Coming off a state championship and entering a new season with a state-of-the-art facility, we have a reputation to uphold. I have no doubt the new Natatorium will provide many opportunities to grow,” she emphasized.

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Construction on Waukee’s Trailridge School as of February 2022.

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