

NW Sunrise Dr

WAUKEE
NORTHWEST
HIGH SCHOOL



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ABOUT



THE COVER

Design by: Avery Herman

Description: This edition of the Tenth Street Times highlights the exciting moments and stories that defined this semester. Like the cover, featuring the Northwest High School building under stunning light, we have captured the essence of what has made this school year unforgettable.



WAUKEE FFA

FOOD DRIVE



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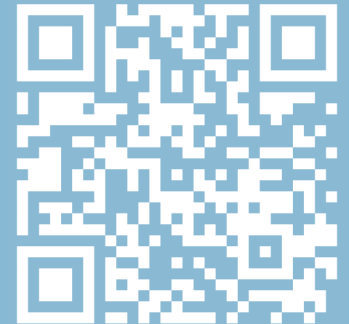
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FFA'S FOOD DRIVE FEEDING WAUKEE

Starting January 7 and continuing through the month of January, the Waukee Future Farmers of America (FFA) chapter is holding a food drive for the Waukee Area Christian Services. The Waukee FFA is asking for unexpired, non-perishable food items from members of the Waukee community. Food items can be turned...



by Avery Herman • Jan 11, 2025



LOSS OF IOWA'S NATURAL PRAIRIE

In 2025, less than 0.1 percent of Iowa's native tallgrass prairie remains due to rapid expansion and agricultural settlements. Iowa was once the heart of the prairie lands, with 28.6 million acres of natural plants and grasses covering 80 percent of its landscape—today, about 90% of Iowa's land is crops.



by Addax Hicks • Jan 12, 2025



OZEMPIC AND THE MEDIA

In recent years, GLP-1 blockers like Ozempic have become more frequent in Western culture through a spike in social media fame, often staying away from the real purpose of medications like these. Anyone on social media is aware of the trend cycle that seems to come and go faster than anyone could comprehend. Between...



by Ava Hansen • Dec 16, 2024

The 10th Street Times is a student-led, student-created magazine distributed to the students and faculty of Northwest High School and local businesses. The 10th Street Times does not voice any opinions or ideas of the Waukee Community School District. The 10th Street Times serves the purpose of entertaining its readers and informing them of issues and events going on around the Waukee community and globally. We strongly encourage our readers to reach out to us with questions, concerns, input, and topics they'd like to be seen addressed in the 10th Street Times. The rights and responsibilities of the student journalist are protected by the Iowa Code 280.22.

THE TOLL OF TIKTOK HAIR TRENDS

Story by Reagan Hansen



While looking through TikTok, there are endless tutorials showing people how to do the trending hairstyles, from slick backs to messy buns and curly ponytails. People will blindly do these hairstyles without knowing the possible damage it could be causing to their hair.

Megan VanderZwaag has been a hairstylist for 16 years. Through those years, she has seen what is good for hair and what is secretly causing damage.

When it comes to dyeing hair, VanderZwaag has noticed that the trending “calico” hair, which is when there are stripes of blonde, black and orange inspired by the hair of calico cats, has been causing a lot of damage. The cause for the damage is the fact that there is too much of bleach overlaid on the hair to have the strip effect.

“Only professional salons carry and can guarantee high-quality hair care products. When you purchase products from Walmart, Target, etc. most of the time it has low-quality ingredients that can be damaging to your hair and skin.”

Another trend VanderZwaag has noticed is people buying affordable hair care from stores such as Target, Walmart and even drug stores.

VanderZwaag exclaimed, “Only professional salons carry and can guarantee high-quality hair care products. When you purchase products from Walmart, Target, etc. most of the time it has low-quality ingredients that can be damaging to your hair and skin.”

Northwest sophomore Keziah Caldwell has textured hair. When it comes to her being able to participate in hair trends, she finds it difficult to find ones that will not cause severe damage to her hair.

Luckily, Caldwell does not feel any pressure to change her natural hair, but unfortunately, the trending hair products severely impact her hair, like L’Oréal or any dry shampoo. Caldwell has noticed that trending hair products are not made for Black hair. Another problem is that straight

hairstyles are extremely damaging to her hair. She cannot do simple hairstyles such as slick backs because even that can damage her hair.

Caldwell shared, “I really love swimming and thought continuously of being on the swim team, but the only reason I decided not to do it is my hair. My hair would not fit in a swimming cap, and could not handle being put back every day. Even doing slick backs can sometimes be damaging.”

Byrdie, a hair, skincare, makeup, nails and style website, wrote an article on hair trends that are ruining hair. Jenna Marie Shafer is a Lead Pro Educator for the hair care brand Amika and Session hair stylist based in New York City.

One of the most trending hairstyles is a slick back or ponytail. To have it stay in place, there is gel or slick-back products that have been designed to help hold the flyaways.

Shafer attested, “When you wear your hair in the same ponytail every day, you are adding stress to the same spot over and over and over again, and eventually that is going to cause your hair to snap and break off at the base of the ponytail.”

It is important to be mindful of potential damage caused by specific products or hairstyles. Just because something is trending does not automatically mean it is safe.

MEDIA'S POLITICAL IMPACT

In today's world, media plays a significant role in shaping political opinions, policies, and public discourse.

From traditional outlets like newspapers to modern social media platforms like TikTok and Snapchat, the way information is disseminated profoundly impacts how people engage with politics.

Media is not just a tool for informing the public; it actively shapes political narratives. Through news reports, political debates, and coverage of social issues, media outlets decide which events and ideas are given attention, influencing how the public perceives political figures and policies.

Miles Burrell, a sophomore at Northwest High School, described, "I see varied political posts based on what the algorithm gives me, but it's not uncommon for me to come by a political post. To see if it's reliable, I cross-reference the information to see if it's confirmed elsewhere."

He explained that he followed some

political accounts because of the election and consumes political content to be informed on what's currently happening. He described enjoying learning about political affairs and learning how the world around him works, which he can do through media.

"It is very important to make sure we know how to vet our sources... We have to make sure that we are looking at the full picture and that is very hard to do"

Education on the topic of credible sources and politics is incredibly important and plays a pivotal role in empowering people to analyze and question the media they consume.

Mr. Van Oosbree, a Contemporary Affairs teacher at Northwest High School,

stated, "We teach how the media and politics and government intertwine and how they affect each other and how people participate in that or are affected by it. One of our biggest things is we try, and for any topic, teach that you should use multiple sources to get multiple perspectives. You have to look for information reported in multiple places that have credibility, but we also try and teach skills to evaluate any source."

He described that having the tools to evaluate information is important and that students have to be able to evaluate information and decide whether it is trustworthy, credible or accurate, especially in today's political landscape.

Ms. Rechkemmer, a librarian who also helps teach media studies, explained how algorithms feed our political opinions. She stated, "I find it very, very important to make sure that we know how to vet our sources, how to make sure we understand the bias of sources and also making sure that we know the difference between a source that is biased, a source that is neutral, or a source that is parroting back our information to us. We have to make sure that we are looking at the full picture, and that is very hard to do because we want our opinions solidified."

Similarly to Mr. Van Oosbree, Rechkemmer explained cross-referencing and the credibility of websites and news sources.

It might be easy to repost or take something false for truth, which is how misinformation spreads. Checking for accurate information, especially in today's political landscape. Politics impact our daily lives, so checking for credible, accurate information is crucial.

Story by Krista Giltner





VOTING BREAKDOWN

Voting in the United States has a long history of being exclusive, rather than inclusive.

Ever since America's independence in 1776, it has been a symbol of democracy and freedom. Yet, only the top few select Americans were allowed to enjoy that freedom. In the beginning, only white, male, land-owners or taxpayers were allowed to vote. This did not change until 1850, when all white men were allowed to vote, regardless of property status. The 13th and 14th Amendments, ratified in 1865 and 1868, laid the groundwork for the 15th Amendment, which supposedly prohibited states from denying citizens the right to vote based on race. However, numerous barriers, such as class and education, were created to make it more difficult for minorities to vote. Women were not included in the voting discussion until the 19th Amendment was ratified in 1920, granting them the right to vote.

Historian Martha S. Jones, author of *Vanguard: How Black Women Broke Barriers, Won the Vote, and Insisted on Equality for All*, stated in an interview with the *New York Times*, "The 19th Amendment did not eliminate the state laws that operated to keep Black Americans from the polls via poll taxes and literacy tests—nor did the 19th Amendment address violence or lynching.... many Black women faced the beginning of a new movement for voting rights in the summer of 1920, and it's a struggle they will wage alone because now the organizations that had led the movement for women's suffrage are disbanding."

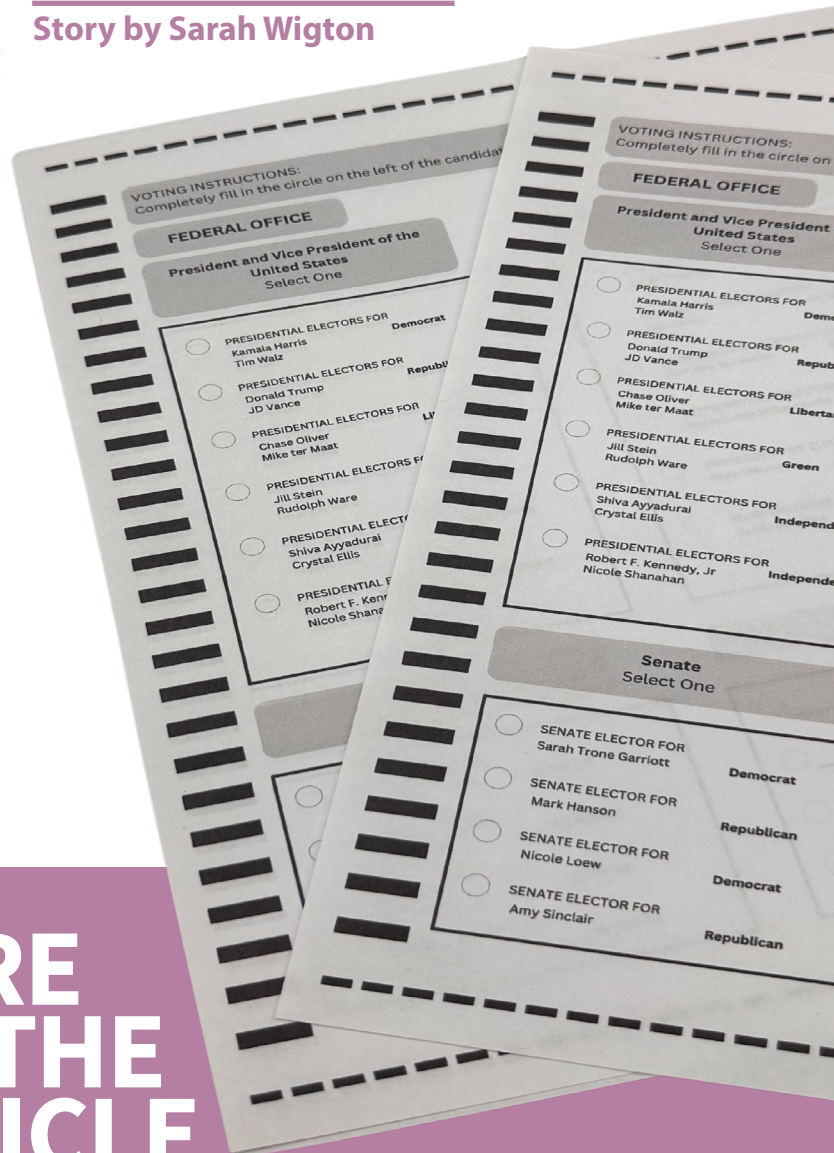
[America] will not be a completely free nation until all are free to be heard, to be seen and to have a voice in America's future.

It was not until 1965 that the Voting Rights Act was passed, prohibiting racial discrimination in voting, that Black women could join white women at the polls. While America became

a free nation almost two hundred years before, it will not be a completely free nation until all are free to be heard, to be seen and to have a voice in America's future. The right to vote has been fought for centuries; yet, according to the national and state turnout rates as determined by the National Election Pool, close to 90 million eligible voters did not exercise that right and vote in the 2024 presidential election. For voters young and old, the process can be confusing and daunting. How does one register to vote? Are there other elections besides the presidential election? Does every vote actually matter?

This article dives into the local and national elections, voting eligibility requirements and registration, political parties and the impact a vote can have. Scan the QR code to read the rest of the article, or go to tenthstreettimes.com.

Story by Sarah Wigton



SCAN HERE TO READ THE FULL ARTICLE

What is HOLIDAY

Throughout the fall and winter months, many in the western portion of the globe feel the heightened sense to give back to their community due to what is widely considered the “holiday spirit.”

The moment November fades into December, it feels as if ears fill with high-pitched bells, and signs encouraging community engagement flood our vision. Warmth drives, bell ringing, food packaging, and other means of community service have become a staple surrounding the holiday season. Although winter can pose a wide variety of challenges, especially in Iowa, help is always needed within a community in many different ways. Regardless, increased empathy on a large scale seems only to be a vital part of the holiday season.

Cassidy Gomez, the event manager at Make-A-Wish, an organization that provides for children and families battling cancer, stated, “The holidays tend to bring an increase in generosity and involvement. People are more likely to give back, whether through donations, volunteering, or supporting local causes. It’s a time when people feel more connected to their communities and want to make a meaningful impact.”

Considering involvement is at its peak, what is it about the sudden chill in the air and festive music that makes people want to give back? Annette Hacker, Vice President of Strategy and Communications at the Food Bank of Iowa, an organization dedicated to providing food to those all over the state, believes that it whittles down to gratitude.

“It comes down to gratitude – there is always something for which to be grateful,” argued Hacker.

Similarly, Gomez voiced, “The holiday spirit is about kindness, giving, and fostering a sense of togetherness. It’s about taking a step back from our everyday lives to appreciate what we have and sharing those blessings with others.”

Gratitude, or reflecting on what one has thankfully, goes hand in hand with the sudden rise in empathy. The holiday season can be a time of rest, community, and joy, but many experiences can be tainted due to uncontrollable circumstances for the less fortunate. This idea seems to drive most of the holiday season community service. Imagining what others must feel while fighting tough battles during a time that is supposed to be merry pushes many to do what they can to bring that spark back into the winter months for those in need.

Olivia Bauer, a sophomore at Northwest High School, runs a Toys-For-Tots drive alongside her family. This drive often gains attention from the family’s elaborate, plentiful display of holiday ornaments and inflatables.

Bauer explained, “The holiday spirit, to me, is doing what you can to bring joy to others. The most powerful part of the holiday spirit is the giving spirit and people wanting to pay it forward.”

Not only does the holiday spirit allow many people to feel good in their service, but the impact is tremendous to many communities and organizations.

Gomez reflected, “Holiday-focused

WISPIRIT?

wishes and events can significantly help raise awareness about Make-A-Wish and our mission. These celebrations connect the community with our cause, and they also provide great opportunities for media coverage, which helps spread the word about the impact we have."

Once the new year emerges and the buzz surrounding the holiday spirit fades out, the impact made in a couple of months makes all the difference. The real holiday spirit is the empathy and gratitude that is held in the hearts of many.

Hacker noted, "No one can do everything, but everyone can do something. Even the smallest efforts can make a big difference in

the lives of others. I'd like to see us all hold the holiday spirit in our hearts throughout the year."

Story by Ava Hansen

HOLIDAY VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Food Bank of Iowa:

- Volunteer in our Des Moines or Ottumwa centers or volunteer at a pantry or meal site in your community.
- Make t-shirt tote bags!
- Make inspiration cards for our Backpack Program!

Visit <https://foodbankiowa.org> for more information.

Bauer Family Toys for Tots drive: December 6, 2025



ATHLETE OF THE YEAR: ROMEY CROATT

A key player for both basketball and soccer teams, Northwest sophomore, Romey Croatt, has proven herself not only as a gifted athlete but as a leader who embodies the values of hard work, dedication and sportsmanship. In only one semester at Northwest High School, Croatt has established herself as an outstanding student-athlete worthy of representing Northwest athletics.

Croatt explained, "Sports have been very influential in my life... They [have taught me that] there is not success without hard work and failure and that having fun and relaxing will get you far in sports and life."

Croatt started her journey as an athlete at four years old, when she joined her first Pre-K basketball and soccer teams. From there, she continued to grow and improve, eventually set-

ting her up for her first season as a wolf. Croatt made a name for herself in her freshman year, helping both her basketball and soccer teams to the state tournament. In the spring of 2024, Croatt helped lead her soccer team to the state semifinals match.

"[My favorite memory in sports] would be my entire freshman year in soccer," Croatt reflected. "My freshman year was absolutely amazing. We had the best seniors you could have asked for and the state tournament was something I'll never forget."

Croatt has some even bigger goals as she moves forward. Looking to compete at the Division I level in either basketball or soccer, Croatt's athletic career is far from over. While she is still competing for the Wolves however, Croatt aims to bring her basketball and soccer teams back to the state tournament for the next three years and hopefully come back with a IGSAU State Championship.

2024 TENTH STREET TIMES

PEOPLE *of the* YEAR

STAFF MEMBER OF THE YEAR: MR WINTER



For Mr. Winter, teaching is about much more than just equations and formulas. He inspires his students to embrace the challenges that come with learning—and challenges are plenty in his AP Calculus AB and BC classes.

"I want my students to know that the hard things are worth the struggle. What's hard to one student may not be hard to another, but it's worth it if you push through and you learn because then you have a sense of accomplishment," Winter attested.

Whether his students are grappling with derivatives or integrals, in Mr. Winter's classroom perseverance is valued just as much as understanding. That moment

when a student's perseverance is rewarded with understanding is the most rewarding part of being a teacher to Mr. Winter.

"My favorite thing about teaching is the moment when a student gets it, that's that moment that makes you smile as a teacher. When you have that 'aha, I get it now,' moment with a student, it's pretty amazing to see when it happens," Winter reflected.

In his 11 years teaching in Waukee, Mr. Winter has developed a deep appreciation of his colleagues at Northwest High School.

"Name any staff member, custodian, lunch worker, teacher or anybody who supports our students in this building and they are all just as worthy of this award as anybody else," Winter claimed. "We have a staff of wonderful caring people here at Northwest and it's a reminder to just keep doing what you're doing and keep doing it with love and care."

PERFORMER OF THE YEAR: GRETA PAULSEN

Great Paulsen's love for performing was born in fifth grade, when she auditioned for a community theater play called, *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*. This passion has only continued to grow as Paulsen's performing career has developed.

Now, she can be found in the Northwest High School Fall Play, Spring Musical and many Thespian Troupe events, including Flip the Script, the Musical Theater Cabaret and the Staged Reading. One of Paulsen's most notable roles was as Cady Heron in the Northwest Spring Musical, *Mean Girls*.

"I think [theater] can help put you in other people's shoes and to learn more about how other people live. You have to become someone else when you're doing a theater performance, so you can see from different perspectives," Paulsen reflected.

Outside of theater arts, Paulsen continues to perform for the Northwest Choir Department. She

has been a member of Northwest Singers and EOS Show Choir all three years of high school and has also been involved in the Keynote Jazz Choir and Noteworthy. Again, Paulsen got involved early, having joined the Iowa Youth Chorus in third grade, and has yet to slow down since.

Paulsen plans to continue pursuing her passion for performing arts after she leaves high school. Her goal is to major in musical theater, move to a big city after college and pursue performing full-time.

"One of my biggest goals is to be part of a national tour or a touring theater company because I love traveling and I love performing, so to combine those would just be a huge dream come true. I want to perform until I die," said Paulsen.



Northwest High School is home to hundreds of talented students and staff, and the Tenth Street Times People of the Year awards recognize the best the school has to offer.

This December, Northwest students and staff nominated and elected three students and one staff member to represent the High School. Voters looked for kindness, leadership, service and high

personal achievement; traits exemplified by all four award recipients. Whether in athletics, teaching, performing arts or making change in the community, these four Wolves embody these qualities in everything they do and have made a lasting impression on Northwest High School and their community.

The 2024 Tenth Street Times People of the Year awards are awarded to the

following: Romey Croatt, Athlete of the Year; Mr. Winter, Staff Member of the Year; Greta Paulsen, Performer of the Year; and Nolan Craig, Change Maker of the Year. Congratulations Wolves, for your outstanding leadership and commitment to Northwest High School.

Story by Avery Herman

CHANGE MAKER OF THE YEAR: NOLAN CRAIG

At Northwest High School, senior Nolan Craig has proven that change-making starts with getting involved. Despite the commitment to leadership and service that he has now, Craig was not always involved in the school. In his sophomore year, Craig decided to step outside of his comfort zone and run for student council. From there, his involvement at Northwest snowballed until he became one of the most influential people in the student body.

"When I first came to Northwest, I was very reserved and quiet. The more I've involved myself, the more confident and outgoing I've become," Craig attested. "Just choosing to be involved and stepping out of my comfort zone has shaped me into the person I am and want to continue to be so that I can keep making that difference in other people's lives."

As President of the National Honor Society, Vice

President of the Environmental Club, Secretary for Student Council, and various other roles, Craig has not just participated but led. As a leader, Craig believes the true reward lies in the impact he makes on others.

"Just someone saying that they appreciate what I do and that I've helped make a difference really leaves a big impact on me and makes me feel very grateful for the school and the students and staff," stated Craig.

Craig's hope is that he was able to leave a positive impact on Northwest and inspire students to take a risk and get involved in their community. Craig urged, "Step out of your comfort zone and challenge yourself. Always treat people with a smile and be willing to meet new people and do things that you're unsure about. Eventually, that willingness to take risks will pay off."



Date: 2024-2025

Name: Tenth St. Times

Grade:

GUIDE TO GOOD GRADES

Attaining good grades in school is something that most students strive for, but what does “academic success” really mean?

Achieving academic success first starts off with determining what it means to the student. Interpreting it varies from student to student. For some, all that matters is just passing a course. For others, it is about deeply understanding a topic so the student has the necessary knowledge to ace a subject. It is very important to set goals for what the student wants to get out of school.

Once the student knows what they are aiming for, the next steps could be identifying what they can do to help achieve their goals. Students are busy people, which is why time management is a critical skill to have. Whether they are in a sport, or involved with a club, those kinds of extra commitments take up lots of students’ time. Understanding how to balance activities, as well as jobs, friends, and family, can give those students extra minutes studying for a test that could end up rewarding them with a better grade.

Northwest High School sophomore Kimball Mendenhall stated, “Going home and getting straight to work is a common habit for me, so that way I can finish all the necessary work quickly and efficiently. I like to have all of my school done before I can fully relax going into downtime.”

After a student builds in the extra time for school, it is important to make the most out of that session. If they struggle to retain information, trying a new format of notes that organizes the content better will help. Little things such as reciting facts onto a set of flashcards, or even making an online quiz to help practice, could make all the difference.

Northwest High School Counselor Mr. Twig stated, “Setting incremental goals are always important. This could include improving weekly study habits, less screen time, getting to bed sooner, starting a workout plan, or even using a planner.”

Following practice, checking understanding with a teacher is crucial. Teacher feedback can help students identify what their strengths are, and

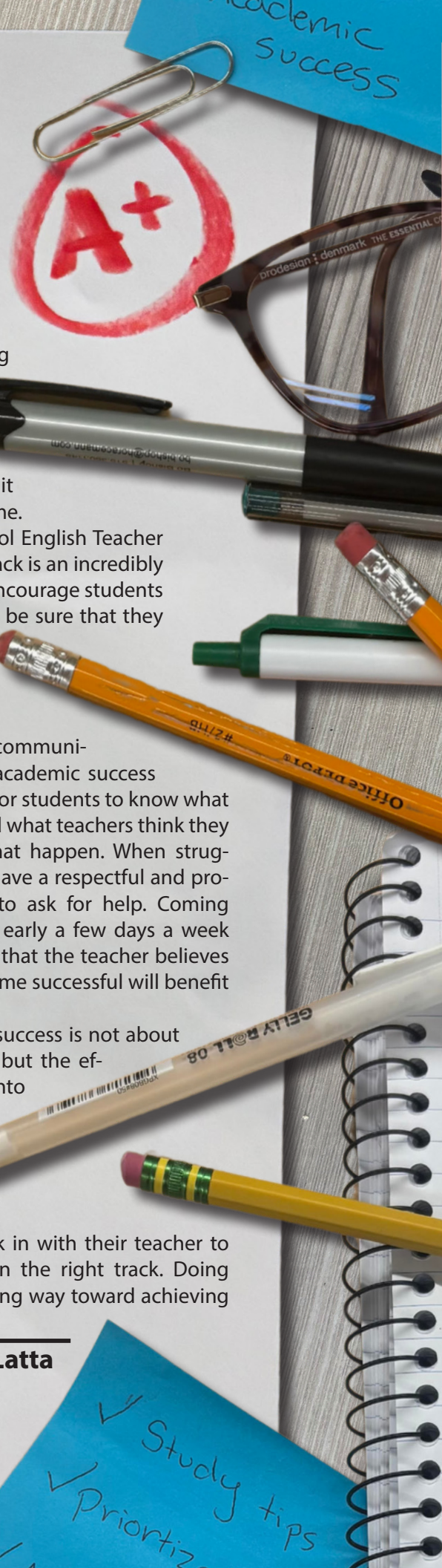
what they could use improvement on. Taking suggestions and implementing them into their work will help them when it comes to assessment time.

Northwest High School English Teacher Julie Cusak said, “Feedback is an incredibly powerful tool. I would encourage students to look at feedback and be sure that they understand why they received the feedback they did before moving forward.”

Student-to-teacher communication is a big part of academic success because it is important for students to know what is expected of them, and what teachers think they need to do to make that happen. When struggling, students should have a respectful and professional conversation to ask for help. Coming into school 20 minutes early a few days a week to go over some things that the teacher believes can help a student become successful will benefit their learning.

Ultimately, academic success is not about how a student studies, but the effort that they put into studying. Students should clear time to have a high-quality study session, and make sure to check in with their teacher to ensure that they are on the right track. Doing these things will go a long way toward achieving academic success.

Story by Jackson Latta



19 ?s

at NW



19 at Northwest is a segment where a Northwest High School student is asked to answer 19 rapid-fire questions about their experiences and opinions. This time we spoke with Izzy Wick, a senior at Northwest.

Q: Where's your dream vacation destination?

A: Paris, France. I just love Paris so much. My brother's been there before and he sent us so many things and it was the best experience, even though I've never actually been there.

Q: How would you spend one billion dollars in a day?

A: I'd probably buy a lot of clothes, that's what I spend most of my money on. Or I'd get a car. I just love spending money.

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

A: Taylor Swift and Lizzy McAlpine. They're my top two for Spotify Wrapped and I was the top .05% listener for both.

Q: Do you have any pet peeves?

A: When people are rude to you when you first meet them, I just can't do it. Or when people at my job don't sweep properly. It's disgusting.

Q: Do you prefer going out or staying in?

A: I like staying in. I like reading, watching movies and just being at home.

Q: What is your phone wallpaper?

A: It's me and my boyfriend on Homecoming.

Q: What is your most irrational fear?

A: Space. I can't do space. I can't control it and if I got shot into space there's nothing I can do, I just can't get back.

Q: What was your favorite childhood TV show?

A: Drake and Josh. I used to watch that with my older brother all the time. Most of the time I had no clue what was going on, but, I was with him so I loved it.

Q: If someone made a movie about you, what actress would you want to play you?

A: Probably Emma Watson. I just love her and she's such a good person too.

Q: What is your most prized possession?

A: A pair of earrings my grandma gave me. My grandpa gave them to my grandma and she gave me and my sister each a pair of diamond earrings, and it's really special because he isn't alive anymore.

Q: What's your comfort movie or show?

A: Phineas and Ferb. It can just get your mind off of anything.

Q: Did you have a favorite stuffed animal growing up?

A: It was a stuffed animal that my sixth grade buddy gave to me when I was in kindergarten. I called it my Riley bear and it was literally my favorite thing in the entire world.

Q: Would you rather live without music or TV?

A: Without TV. Music is my entire life. I play piano and violin and I listen to music everyday.

Q: What is your "hidden" talent?

A: I don't really talk about it, but I play the piano and violin. I could literally play any piece of music you put in front of me.

Q: How do you see yourself in five years?

A: Hopefully I get accepted to medical school. And hopefully I'm surviving, college is my biggest fear just because of the loans and stuff.

Q: If you could have any animal as a pet, regardless of money or rules, what would it be?

A: A dolphin. I've loved dolphins ever since I was little. Some people are scared of them, and I feel like they are kind of scary, but they are just so cute. You can't hate dolphins.

Q: Are you an early bird or a night owl?

A: Night owl. I'm so excited for college because I can have 12 o'clock classes and not have to get up at seven.

Q: What is the most used app on your phone?

A: Instagram, I just watch Instagram Reels all the time.

Q: What makes you feel the most like yourself?

A: Probably when I'm with my family. I can just be myself around them. They don't care about anything I say or do and it's just so nice because I don't have people judging me at any point in time.

Story by Avery Herman
Photo courtesy of Izzy Wick

BALANCING SPORTS & SCHOOL

Northwest High

School student-athletes must take time out of their schedules to focus on assignments and their many intense classes to remain in the sport they love.

All sports come with their own set of challenges, and it can be hard for students to manage their busy schedules while in season. All sports last around six months, three months being a pre-season and the other 3 months being the actual season. When a team or student makes it to state or state qualifiers, they will continue to practice, making their season longer and taking more time from the students. Northwest's cheer teams are split into fall and winter cheer, to support both the fall and winter sports, which takes up much of the cheerleaders' time when they participate in both.

“Sometimes I have to sacrifice sleep to get [homework] done, and sometimes it is hard to manage, but I think that is the challenge you take on when joining sports.”

“Missing practice is not acceptable so I just have to find time either before or after practice to get [homework] done. Sometimes I have to sacrifice sleep to get it done, and sometimes it is hard to manage, but I think that is the challenge you take on when joining sports,” commented junior Cali Kuhl.

Working time for school work into a student athlete's schedule is hard and

can take a lot of effort. Not only do athletes train in their school practice, but some students also play club sports, so they have multiple practices in one day. Some students prioritize their academics before sports, leaving free time for doing classwork or homework. However, what classes the athletes take can also determine how much homework students have outside of class.

“I prioritize my schoolwork over sports and always ensure that I am on top of my

assignments before spending time with friends. If needed, I sometimes miss dance at night to catch up on schoolwork and make up my absences later on,” added senior Katie Rush.

It is easy to get behind at Northwest because of how long the classes are due to block scheduling. Simply missing one day of school can put students far behind depending on what classes they are taking. To continue involvement in school activities, students must end term grades above an F. If students fail to meet this, they will not be allowed to perform in their activity for 20 calendar days. Nonetheless, some student-athletes still tend to value sports over school instead.

“I think that I prioritize sports more than school. I spend more time doing school things, but I care more about how I perform on the court or the field, but I would say it is close,” stated junior Isaiah Oliver.

Northwest offers its students an environment where they can explore their passions and grow their skills in both their academics and their athletics. And while the school and its teachers and coaches can not decide what of the two student-athletes will prioritize, they work to support their students no matter what.

Overall, students prioritize different things, whether it is school grades and assignments or if it is personally trying to improve their performance. All student-athletes have to balance their school work and athletics to perform their best and represent Northwest High School.

Story by Meredith Muller



PHONE

ADDICTION

Phone addiction has become a huge problem in today's society, in school, at home and working, most are almost always on our phones.

A study from Clearfork Academy states that 83% of teens use their phones daily for about 7-9 hours, with an addiction rate of 37%. Teens then and now are not very different from each other when it comes to phone addiction. Phones outside in day-to-day life have always been prominent, starting with the rise in popularity of flip phones and other portable phones in the mid-2000s. Even then, without portable phones, teens would eagerly wait for their friends to get home to spend hours on the phones talking.

"People will run into other people in the hallways because they'll be on their phones, and, like in class, they won't pay attention sometimes," stated Kaylee Roush, a junior at Northwest High School.

When the topic of phone addiction is brought up, it is usually targeted at teens, maybe even iPad kids. However, adults

do not disappear from the group of phone

addicts.

Over 60% of people aged 18-34 admit to being addicted to their phones, according to research from BankMyCell, done in 2019. Many adults admit they spend their time looking through advertisements, playing mobile games, messaging friends and more on their phones during work.

"It feels like eyes are on you 24/7 now."

"[I am] very much addicted to my phone. I'm always connected, ready to respond to a friend, colleague, child of mine, or my spouse. I check the phone so many times, it's annoying. And if I'm bored, I'm playing games on my phone or looking at Instagram Reels. I realized years ago that I was addicted to my phone when I'd feel the phantom buzz in my pocket and check my phone, but there was rarely anything there," admit-

ted Mr. Vollmecke, a teacher at Northwest High School.

There are many signs and effects of phone addiction. A study done by the CDC shows that suicide rates rose by 65% due to the usage of phones, with a 58% rise in depression in teenage girls. Some signs of phone addiction can be lying about phone usage, isolation, phantom vibrations, fear of missing out (FOMO) and many more signs of addiction.

There are also many ways to get rid of the addiction, such as going to counseling, setting a screen time limit, self-discipline and much more. Some of these can be effective, but it all depends on the person and what works best for them. Phone addiction can be rid of, but only if the addict chooses to do so.

"Everybody's way more pressured. It feels like eyes are on you 24/7 now, and people are constantly cyberbullying and all these other things on the internet, which can really damage people's mental health," explained Hiya Shah, a sophomore at Northwest High School.

Story by Aubriella Snyder



GATHER, COOK, SHARE: FAMILY HOLIDAY RECIPES

As the holiday season approaches, people all over the world come together and make memories over food.

However, food can hold memories, as well as make them. Northwest students and faculty share their unique and personal holiday recipes and the backstory behind them. Paige Moore is a sophomore at Northwest High School. Reflecting on the holiday season, she shared a holiday recipe for those who are gluten intolerant or those with celiac disease.

Moore reflected, "This recipe has been in my family for a long time, and it has always been something that me and my family bond over, especially since the majority of my family is into baking. Going up to Minnesota to see my grandparents, this recipe was one of the main things I would look forward to eating. I love to carry this tradition of making this during the holiday season because it is so good. Typically, I eat this with a cup of coffee or just a plain glass of water."

"Going up to Minnesota to see my grandparents, this recipe was one of the main things I would look forward to eating."

Perfect for an early fall morning or a chilly winter night. These creamy Gluten Free Caramel Apple Cheesecake Bars start with a shortbread crust using Bob's Red Mill gluten-free flour. Then, students can add a thick cheesecake layer and top it with diced cinnamon apples and sweet streusel topping (the recipe for this delicious masterpiece can be found by scanning the QR-code).

The next recipe by Northwest faculty and students is a holiday delight. Nick Smith, a senior at Northwest Waukee High School, shares his family

recipe, a gooey butter cake.

Smith stated, "I always think of it as maybe something around the fall or the winter. It has butter in the name, so you're packing down on the fat in preparation for winter-time. This is much more of an American bake than anything."

This thick, buttery recipe could be perfect for a cold winter night surrounded by friends and loved ones.

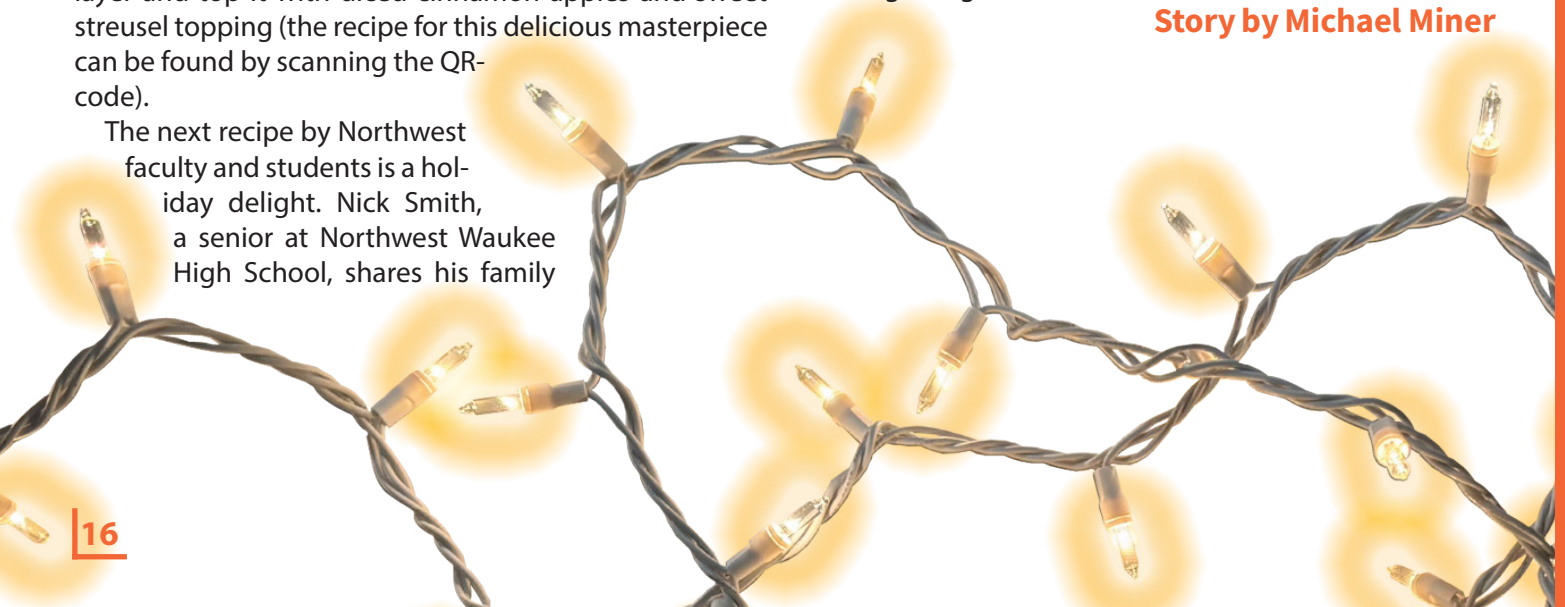
Additionally, it makes a delicious late fall breakfast option, equated to that of a creamy coffee cake, for students who may enjoy pastries—prepared with a simple box of cake mix, one stick of butter, eight ounces of cream cheese, and four eggs. This recipe is an easy bake that could be enjoyable for some students and faculty.

For a more savory afternoon meal, Waukee Northwest Family Consumer Sciences (FCS) Teacher Theresa Lauritsen shares her family recipe of a sweet potato casserole along with her fondest memory of the dish.

Mrs. Lauritsen shared, "I remember this one time my little cousin Taya was about two years old. She would always turn her nose up at it. She thought it was the grossest thing ever. And then when she finally tried it, she loved it, and she ate the whole thing."

The recipe calls for three to four sweet potatoes, a half cup of creamy butter, one cup of brown sugar and two cups of mini marshmallows. This quick and easy recipe could be great for many Waukee Northwest students and faculty members needing a simple bake for their fall and winter get-togethers.

Story by Michael Miner





Barb's Gooey Butter Cake
equipment
- 9 x 13 inch pan, greased
- oven, 350°

ingredients
- 1 box (16 oz) pound cake mix
- 1 stick butter, melted
- 4 eggs
- 8 oz cream cheese, softened
- 16 oz powdered sugar

Directions
mix pound cake mix, butter, and 2 beaten eggs
- press into pan
mix cream cheese and two eggs
- slowly mix in most of powdered sugar
- pour in pan - gently spread to cover entire surface
Bake until edges are brown + comes out clean (35 min)
Let cool for 15 min
Sprinkle with powdered sugar




Scan me to see
video
instructions
and full recipes!

Sweet Potato Casserole
ε ε ε

ingredients
3-4 sweet potatoes
1/2 c butter
1 c brown sugar
2c mini marshmallows

directions
01 Preheat your oven to 350°F.
02 Chop the sweet potatoes into bite-sized pieces.
03 Saute the potatoes in 2tbsp of butter over medium heat until they are lightly browned.
04 Put the potatoes in a 9x13 glass baking pan.
05 Chunk up the rest of your butter stick and spread it out throughout the pan.
06 Sprinkle the brown sugar on top of the sweet potatoes and butter. Then bake for 30 minutes or until the sweet potatoes out of the oven and add the marshmallows on top.
07. Bake for another 5-10 minutes or until the marshmallows are lightly browned. Enjoy!



PAYTON JOY PHOTO

Payton Hummel is a sophomore at Waukee Northwest High School with a special hobby outside of school that has turned into a successful job, Payton Joy Photo.

Hummel has always had a passion for photography. Before starting her current business, she started by second shooting several weddings with her aunt, Morgan Moon. Moon also owns her own successful photography business, Morgan Moon Photography.

"I have loved supporting [Payton Hummel] through the process of shooting, starting her own business, and everything else," explained Moon.

Hummel takes shots of couples, friends, families and more. In November, Hummel photographed juniors Carter Johnson and Ella Eckhart capturing amazing moments between the two.

"I loved taking pictures with Payton because she made us both feel comfortable in front of the camera," commented Eckhart.

Hummel has a busy day balancing shoots, editing, school, sports and other activities. Hummel participates in Aurora Show Choir as well as Northwest's Girl's Basketball team. Starting a successful business is never easy, especially as an involved student and family member.

"It takes a lot of time to cut and edit, and I don't always get my galleries to my clients as soon as I would like," explained Hummel.

Running a business as a student can be a busy and physically demanding job, it is a rewarding

experience as well. Many parts of the job can be rewarding.

"The most rewarding part so far was seeing a family I did photos for use them in their family Christmas card. When it came in the mail, I was so happy to see that they loved my photos and used them," commented Hummel.

Hummel also shared her favorite part of the whole process itself.

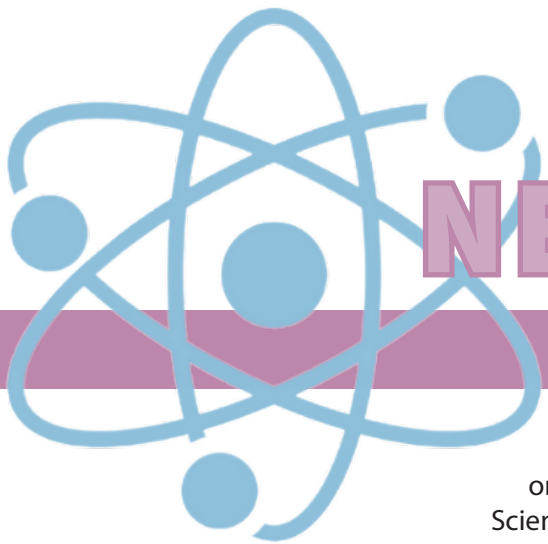
"My favorite process is the shoot because I get to connect with my clients while experimenting with new techniques and trying out new locations. I get to see families, couples and friends have so much fun and loosen up in front of the camera," explained Hummel.

Hummel's photography business is still in the early stages, but she has a bright future ahead with support from her family and friends.

Story by Abby Lee



Photos Courtesy of Payton Hummel



CREATING FUTURE SCIENTISTS: NEXT SCIENTISTS

The nonprofit organization Next Scientists was founded in March 2024 by Northwest High School sophomores Shreshta Akarapu and Elise Smith. This school year, the group is taking action to spread science education throughout the Waukee and Des Moines communities to inspire the next generation of scientists.

Their slogan, “creating future scientists,” is exactly what Northwest’s student-led nonprofit, Next Scientists, aims to do. Run by Akarapu and Smith, the group organizes and meets virtually and in person planning outreach, lessons and activities for schools in Northwest’s nearby area. They work to involve students in the pursuit and love of science and academics.

Smith said, “We want to introduce these students to in-depth science content that can ignite their love for science and maybe start to put them on the path of science. When you’re young, the things that you experience as a child really shape you and what you decide to do when you’re older. By introducing these students to science, we hope that they will want to do science.”

Another goal the nonprofit organization strives for is to bring science exposure and opportunities to low-income areas. Bridging the gap between who can and cannot access proper STEM education and equipment and spark an interest with younger students creating an easy path to opportunity.

Northwest High School sophomore and member of Next Scientists, Hiya Shah, shared, “I’m very happy that we like work in these areas. I feel like we give exposure to these kids who don’t have the resources for STEM. We inspire them, and I really love how the nonprofit does that. We also give them the opportunity to do labs and further their knowledge on these science topics we explore.”

The non-profit aims to spread science education, this process is done through school visits and events. Since the creation of the group in spring 2024 to the end of the year, Next Scientists has visited over five schools and hosted over 22 lessons. The group was able to create this impact through a series of legal processes. By working with a Drake University lawyer the non-profit was able to solidify their articles of incorporation.

Akarapu shared, “We decided on the name of the nonprofit, and then we reached out to a lawyer that we got in contact through a clinic at Drake University. They were able to help us

create these articles and incorporation, which made whatever we had in our brain an actual foundation. It stated what we do in our nonprofit, how we do it, what the rules are, and then we had a 503, which is a tax exemption. And we had some members come in and they joined as part of our nonprofit and they helped us with our lessons and science experiments.”

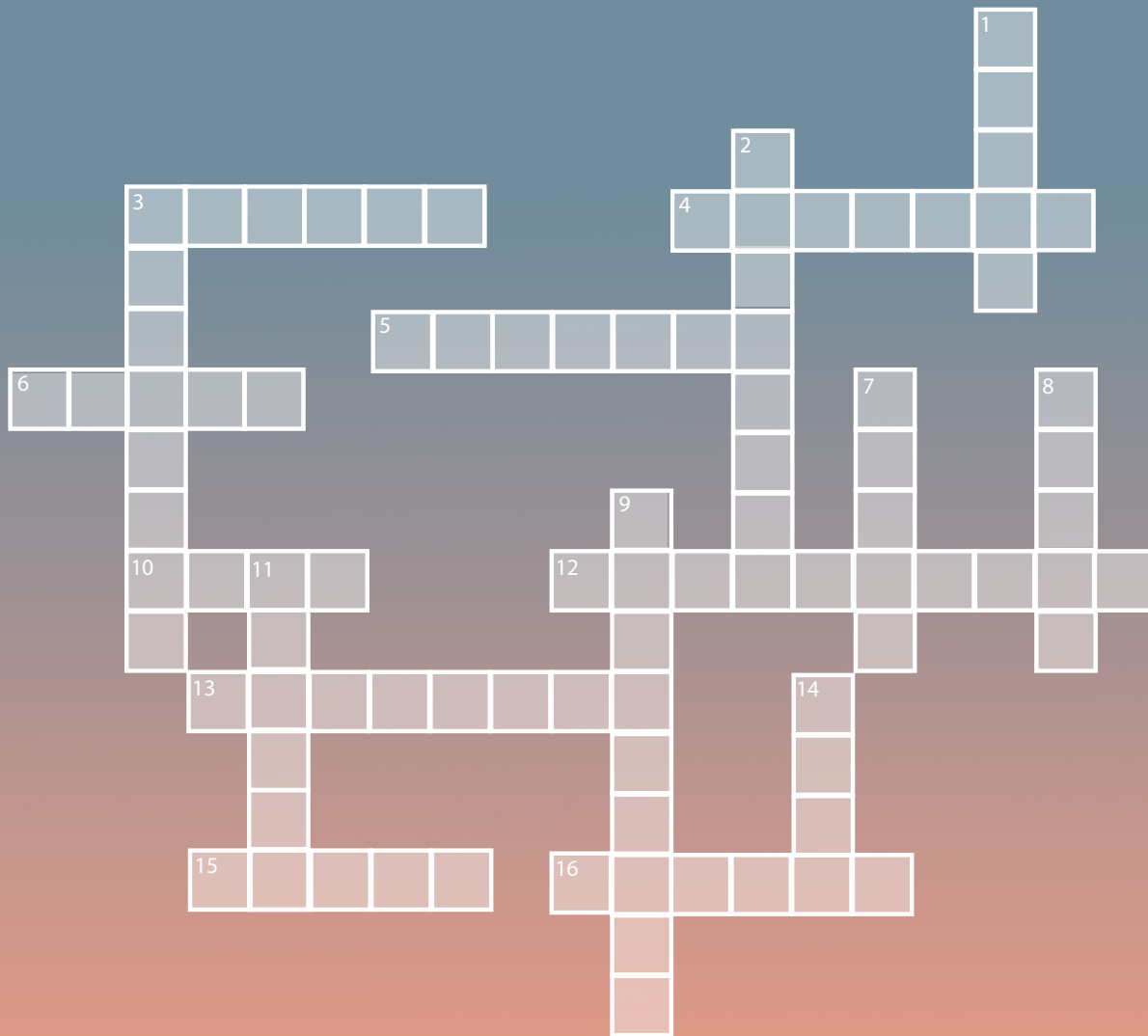
With a future as bright as the stars, Next Scientist’s has big plans for the group moving forward. The group aims to spread and further outreach across the United States.

Smith expressed, “I definitely want to keep up with the organization. And I think wherever I end up going to college, if possible I’d like to create a little branch there so that we can have. And because I don’t think I’m going to be staying here and I will go far for college, I can introduce it to other states and then I’d like to, in the future, have many different branches so if the other members of Next Scientists want to keep up with Next Scientists, they can open branches where they go to college.”

The impact of the Next Scientists is profound on their surrounding communities, spreading scientific knowledge and education to inspire a new generation.



Story by Michael Miner



Down

1. This People of the Year recipient is in Student Council, National Honor Society and Environmental Club.
2. The shortest day of the year is the Winter _____.
3. Drive carefully when temperatures are below this.
7. This People of the Year recipient played Cady Heron in last year's spring musical, Mean Girls.
8. To glide on ice.
9. Student-athletes must balance their athletics with their _____.
11. A three-toned hair trend characterized by orange, blonde, and black stripes.
14. A scandinavian winter festival celebrated on the winter solstice.

Across

3. A McDonalds treat or another word for light snowfall
4. Page 8-9's exploration on the _____ spirit.
5. These winter accessories keep your neck and face warm in cold weather.
6. A mix of snow and rain.
10. _____ Smith shared his family recipe for gooey butter cake on page 18.
12. Founded by Shreshta Akarapu and Elise Smith, Next _____ promotes science education.
13. A severe snowstorm with high winds and low visibility.
15. This People of the Year recipient plays Varsity Basketball and Soccer.
16. This People of the Year recipient thinks that "hard things are worth the struggle."