



De Soto High School  
De Soto, Kansas  
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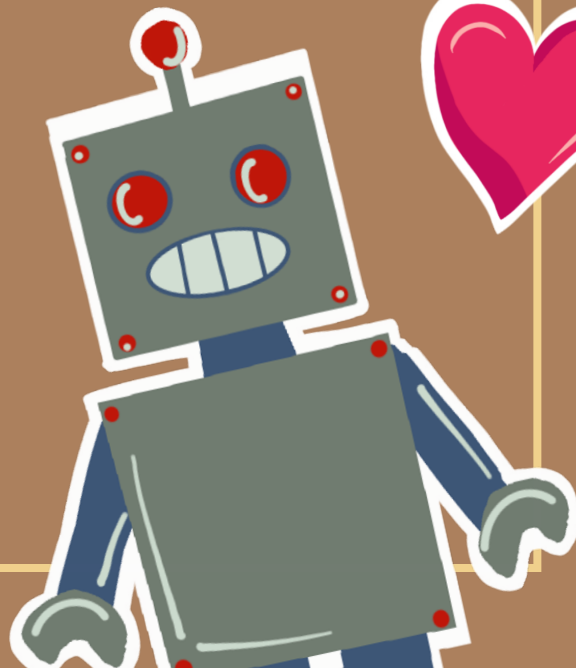
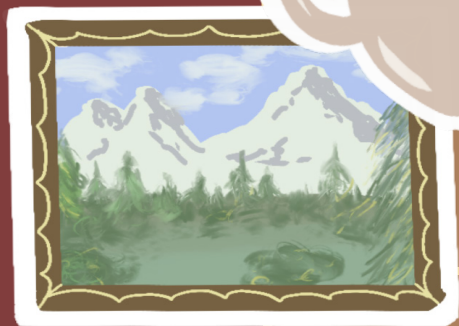
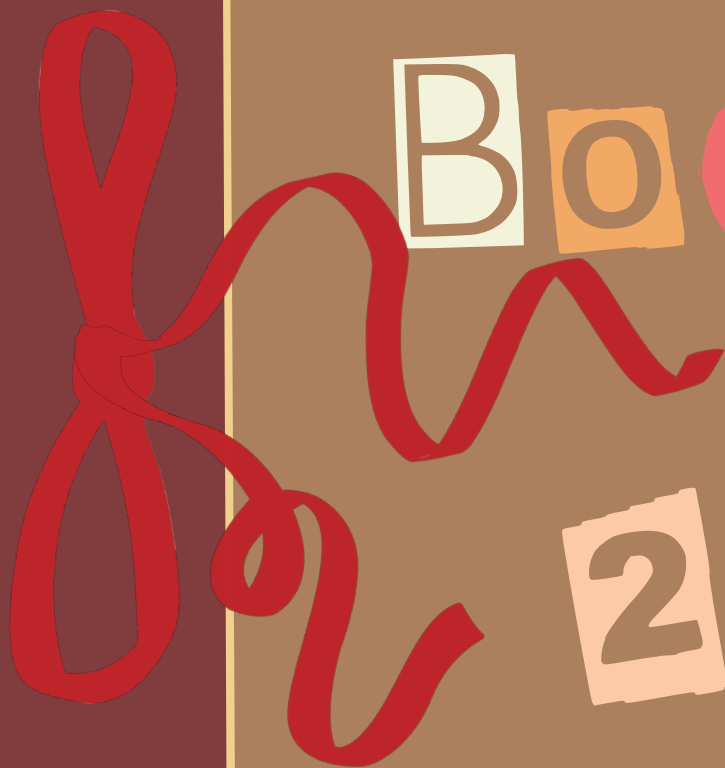


Booking



into

2025



## IN THIS ISSUE

### NEWS

**PAGE 3:** NATURAL DISASTERS

**PAGES 4-5:** TIKNOT?

**PAGES 8-9:** BREAKING BARRIERS

### FEATURE

**PAGE 10:** ROLLING INTO ROBOTICS

**PAGES 16-17:** STUDENT ARTISTS

**PAGES 24:** SNOWBALL

### SPORTS

**PAGE 6:** MAKENZIE FARMER

**PAGE 7:** EMERSON TJADEN

### OPINION

**PAGE 11:** FALSE NEWS FRENZY

**PAGES 12-13:** SEPERATION OR UNITY?

**PAGE 18:** AI IN SCHOOLS

**PAGES 20-21:** WELCOME TO OUR CHANNEL

**PAGE 22:** AWARD SHOWS

### ARTS/ENTERTAINMENT

**PAGE 14:** SMALL SCRIPT, BIG STAGE

**PAGE 19:** MEN IN DRAMA

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## PHOTO OF THE MONTH



Senior Bradley Janes swims during a meet at the Shawnee Mission Aquatic Center. Photo by Kasha Kemnitz

## MEET THE STAFF

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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# Whirlwind of a Year

COMING BACK FROM DESTRUCTION The Palisades fire was a destructive

Carrie Wallace  
ONLINE CO-EDITOR

Since the series of events in early 2020, people have joked about how often natural disasters occur. Many people think the rise can be attributed to climate change, while others believe climate change does not pose a threat to Earth. However, according to a blog from the National Climate keepers, science and data go to show that natural disasters are becoming a frequent activity with little decline in the forecast

In recent months, some of the most notable natural phenomena and tragedies have occurred. Snow fell in the deep south, floods wiped out whole towns, and Los Angeles saw flames take over the city.

In a report done by the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), scientists have said that the impact of climate change on natural disasters is already worse than previously predicted.

The Palisades fire was a destructive fire in which flames burned over 23,000 acres. The total fire took 24 days to completely contain. Reports said that around 31,000 people were issued mandatory evacuation orders (California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection). Many famous houses and sites were burned to the ground.

Climate change has increased temperatures everywhere, making seasons dryer and longer. The Palisades area experienced drought-like conditions in the dry seasons. On top of the increasingly dry and hot conditions, the wind conditions were heightened. California's Department of Forestry and Fire Protection reported that the wind gusts reached past 45 mph causing the fire to rapidly spread. These wind gusts are comparable to Hurricanes.

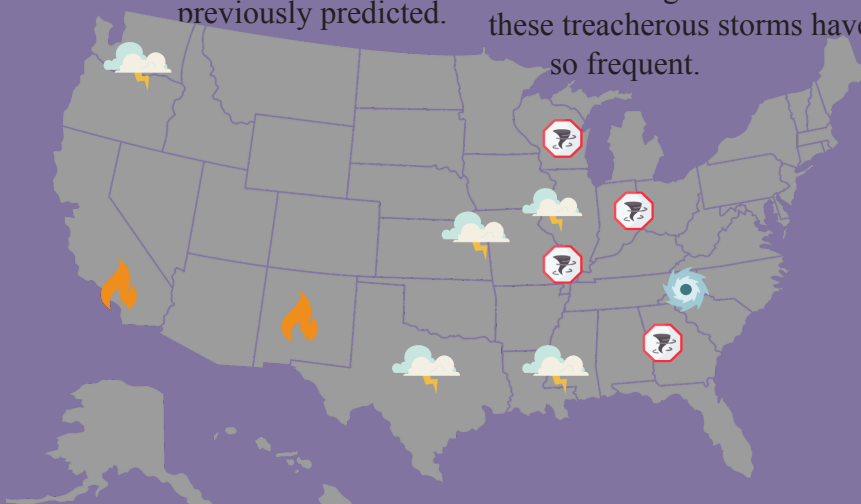
In 2024, Hurricane Milton hit Florida in early October. The flooding and conditions of the category 3 hurricane caused more than 34 million dollars in damage. Hurricane Milton was just one of five major hurricanes in 2024, along with 11 other tropical storms. People have been searching for answers to why these treacherous storms have become so frequent.

Hurricanes evaporate warm ocean water to combine with warm, moist air. As the water cools, it mixes with wind in the air and a storm is created. As climate change warms the atmosphere, it also warms the ocean. With warmer climates and warmer waters, the ability for a tropical storm to be created is much more likely. High winds and mixing of warm and cold air can go to make more than just one natural disaster.

Tornadoes form similarly, but not over oceans. With warmer temperatures, moist air, and high winds, tornadoes can easily form. 2024 was the second most active tornado season in U.S. history. There were close to 2,000 preliminary tornado reports. The breaking of records did not stop at tornadoes, but reached down to the South where history was made in 2024.

In 2024, snow fell historically in places like Louisiana, Alabama, and Florida, some of which haven't snowed in over 15 years. More than just a couple of inches, huge snow storms have been hitting nationally. Similar to every other natural disaster, cold fronts and storms travel through wind patterns. The warming of the atmosphere combined with the extra moisture allows snowfall to break records when freezing.

Natural disasters happening more often can be very destructive and scary. Science has proved the warming of the Earth is causing these activities. The best thing to help is to promote the stop of climate change. Climate change and natural disasters will only get worse. It was a crazy year of storms in 2024, and it will only get crazier if things don't change.



wildfire/drought



hurricane/flooding



tornado



severe weather storm

DESIGNED BY CARRIE WALLACE || MARCH 2025



# TikTok Not?

AS LEGISLATION ATTEMPTS TO BAN TIKTOK, IT HAS SPARKED DEBATES OVER WHETHER OR NOT THE GOVERNMENT HAS THE RIGHT TO BAN SOCIAL MEDIA APPS



JASON NEUBAUER  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

TikTok, since its launch in 2016, has become one of the biggest social media apps of all time. After merging with Musical.ly in 2018, it has garnered over one billion active users. On the app, users can go from scrolling through videos to buying items such as a Pink Adjustable Chair, or an Exfoliating African Net Sponge on the TikTok Shop.

TikTok has been accredited with helping new music artists such as Beabadoobee, Tyla and Flyana Boss grow their popularity, along with promoting important issues, such as politics. With just one quick scroll, a user can go from a cute video about dogs to updates on the Russia and Ukraine conflict. Or, from a video with a new Tate McRae song to a user describing reasons not to vote for certain political candidates.

With the rise of the app, there have been some benefits. For sophomore Elodie Monroe, her feed switches between fun animals and World History facts.

"My TikTok feed is mainly animals, so I get a lot of dopamine and I'm just really happy because I get a bunch of silly animals all the time," Monroe said. "I find that I get a lot of World History stuff on there, I get a lot of random facts,

which is something I personally enjoy and I think that kinda helps me."

However, the popular social media app has been facing many challenges recently, with uncertainty about its future here in the United States.

Back in 2020, concerns rose about TikTok's parent company, ByteDance, possibly collaborating with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) allowing the Chinese government to look at user data. That led to President Trump signing an executive order that forced TikTok and Chinese messaging app WeChat to be taken

Reply to DHSCats123's comment

I think it has been a punishment that has been delayed long enough. This app promotes child exploitation, body image issues, focus issues and many more.

off of app stores. Despite initially being blocked by the by a court injunction, which ordered ByteDance to sell the platform, the previous Biden administration reversed the injunction, allowing the ban to proceed.

ByteDance, to keep its app active in the United States, then started

negotiations with the federal government. However, these negotiations did not work out and a Senate hearing involving TikTok CEO Shou Chew took place.

Following the hearing, Congress passed the DATA and RESTRICT Acts, allowing the government to force the divestiture, or selling of, apps, programs, or platforms that could pose a national security risk. Along with the laws, congress members alleged that TikTok had been promoting pro-Palestinian content, along with anti-Israeli messages.

Attempts to block the ban led to the Supreme Court case *TikTok, Inc. v. Garland*, where TikTok argued that the law suppressed free speech against former United States Attorney General Merrick Garland, citing national security concerns.

These concerns are shared by some students at De Soto. In an anonymous survey conducted by The Green Pride, one student shared their view on the ban.

"I think the ban is hypocritical because many other American social media sites and software harvest user data like TikTok," the student said. "While I don't want the CCP to get their hands on this data through DanceByte [sic], I think it is up to the users to be educated about how their personal



data is being exploited.”

These criticisms are shared by freshman Eli Knapitsch as well, who is speculative of the actual reasons behind the ban.

“I think it was kind of stupid, more than anything else I feel like there’s something I’m not being told,” Knapitsch suspects. “I’ve seen things about how people who get the confidential info about the ban are always very for the ban, but I don’t know what they know so I think that it’s kind of dumb.”

Additionally, Monroe shared her thoughts on the ban.

“I think the reasoning behind the ban is stupid. They’re ‘stealing’ stuff from us, but there’s no evidence that they are,” Monroe said.

“I get if there were more guidelines or restrictions on it or something like that, but the requirement that it has to become a U.S.-owned business is stupid.”

In 2019, a similar situation unfolded, with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) fining Facebook, owned by Mark Zuckerberg, a hefty \$5 billion after it was revealed that the platform allegedly deceived users about how their data was handled.

For TikTok, the Supreme Court ruled unanimously in favor of Garland and upheld the ban. While the ban was initially supposed to go into effect on January 19th, the app “shut down” the previous night and many users were unable to access it.

Although the app technically “shut down,” it was only for a small amount of time – lasting for less than a day. In a January 19th statement shared by @TikTokPolicy on X, formerly known as Twitter, TikTok shared that they were in “the process of restoring services,” thanking “President Trump for providing the necessary clarity and assurance to our [TikTok’s] service providers that they will face no penalties providing TikTok to over 170 million Americans.” It is important to note that at the time of the ban, President Trump had not been sworn in yet and former

President Biden stated that his administration would not enforce the ban.

That leads us to today. While the app is now functioning for United States citizens

after an executive order signed by President Trump has extended the deadline by 75 days, it has been removed from the app store. Unless the app is sold to an American company, TikTok will remain off of app stores until then.

The “banning” of TikTok has also spurred discussions about how harmful social media as a whole can be to one’s mental health, as people took time to reflect on the app.

Evidence has suggested that social media plays a key part in teenager’s

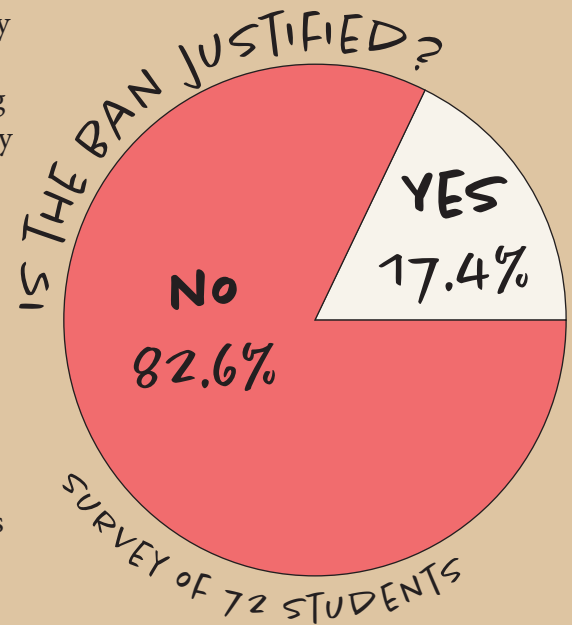
mental health. According to Yale Medicine, there has been evidence linking social media to issues such as depression and anxiety.

Knapitsch commented that it could be easy to fall into a rabbit hole of social media issues.

“Only seeing the good parts of someone else’s life and then comparing it to your own feels like a great way to get feeling bad about yourself,” Knapitsch said. “Then again, I don’t think it has really done that for me so who knows.”

Monroe feels as if it depends on the ways you may use apps and offers advice to those who may be struggling with a social media addiction.

“It definitely depends on how you use social media. I tend to find that... lots of people look at these influencers and go, ‘I wanna be like them,’ even though maybe they photoshop their stuff,” Monroe said. “You can do an hour a day, but as soon as you get used to doing that, you can get a little more of everything as a reward for being able to regulate that.”



Reply to wilddcatss's comment

I think it's unjustified because the Chinese Government literally has nothing to find on the platform and people are influenced by ideas regardless of TikTok.

# The Life of mackenzie farmer

## HER INSPIRATIONS, AWARDS, AND INFLUENCES

RIA HUDSON

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

Athletics are an aspect of school that many students take seriously, but none as seriously as Makenzie Farmer. Farmer is extremely active in the school community. Farmer's dedication to the clubs and sports she is involved in sets an example for the student body.

Although Makenzie Farmer is known for her athletic excellence, the extensive amount of clubs she partakes in demonstrates how well-rounded she is.

"I am currently involved in girl's basketball, Wildside, A&M crew, and National Honors Society at school. Outside of school, I volunteer as a Sunday school teacher for my church," Farmer said.

Farmer does not just participate in the activities, but excels in them. She has won various awards for her sports and is in pursuit of many more. One of her most recent prolific accomplishments is scoring 1,000 points in her time playing basketball.

"For awards, I got 1,000 career points, also record for assists in a season, record for assists in a game, record for steals in a season, All UKC 1st Team for Basketball in all four years of high school, Hardwood Classic Tournament Team all four years, Hardwood Classic Tournament MVP, 5A players to watch list three times, all UKC Honorable Mention for volleyball, 2024 Sports in Kansas Girls Basketball Player of the Year Finalist," Farmer said. Along with all of this, she received several club awards for her basketball career, as well as many tournaments through the DHS team.

However, there is a downside to her astounding amount of awards. The time commitment to each activity can

be overwhelming at times, and some aspects of Farmer's relationships with peers have been negatively influenced.

"Parts of my social life have been impacted because the sports I play take up so much of my time. For people that aren't on my teams, it is pretty difficult to get to hang out with them



during the season because you only have so many off days, and usually those off days get devoted to family," Farmer said.

Although handling the commitment to sports can be difficult at times, her mentors support her through it all. For one, Coach Ryan Robie, a history teacher at DHS, as well as Farmer's basketball coach, has been a major influence.

"Ever since I first met Robie he has always put so much faith and confidence in me," Farmer said. "He started me as a freshman on varsity and he put full faith in my ability to handle the ball. Even on days when I was at my lowest, Robie was always checking up on me and giving me confidence that I needed to be successful."

In her personal life, Farmer has another number one supporter, her mother. Amy Farmer's help has been vital to her career.

"My biggest inspiration is probably my mom. She is the most unselfish person. She gives up everything in her life to provide for me and my brother, whether it is taking us to tournaments for our sports all summer and winter long all around the country, or spending countless hours waiting for us to be done with practice," Farmer said.

Nevertheless, she finds the good in her school day in her passion for her sports and her friends.

"My favorite part about being a student-athlete is probably just the relationships you make with people on the team and the skills that you learn from having to be both an athlete and a student," Farmer said.

However, Farmer is extremely busy in her typical day-to-day activities, she finds a balance between her social life and her academic life with the help of her loved ones.

# One wrestler, One champion

## EMERSON TJADEN'S SUCCESSFUL WRESTLING CAREER AT DHS

BROOKE MERMIS

ASSISTANT EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Every athlete has a story to tell. Whether it involves clawing out of unfortunate situations or basking in the spotlight of accomplishment, everyone becomes a champion in their own way. This includes Emerson Tjaden, a wrestler whose journey to success is just beginning at De Soto High School.

As a 150-pound sophomore, Tjaden has already broken numerous De Soto records and has made a name for himself as one of the most prolific wrestlers in the country. With a record of 68-26, Tjaden has placed first at major meets like the Johnson County Classic on December 21, 2024, the Louisburg Wildcat Invitational on January 11, and our own De Soto Wrestling Invitational on January 25. Outside of the regular season, Tjaden placed fourth at the USA Wrestling Southern Plains Regionals and first at USAWKS Freestyle state in the 16U category.

Despite already demonstrating the highest level of concentration and productivity, Tjaden still has more to learn. DHS wrestling head coach Javier Vieyra shares the areas where he has seen extensive growth from Tjaden.

"I would say where I've seen the most growth from him is the way he approaches matches and practices mentally," Vieyra said. "He's really

figured out how to prepare himself to be successful."

The intensity of the sport is truly a deal breaker for some. Cutting weight, difficult workouts, and tough coaching can make wrestling even more of a challenge outside of battling on the mat. Sophomore wrestler Elijah Anderson emphasizes what can cause mental hurdles and how athletes like Tjaden get over them.

"With wrestling practices and tournaments, a lot of people can't stick with it. There are lots of people that quit early," Anderson said. "People that stay committed are people who are being motivated in practice by upperclassmen and by people who have been in that spot like Emerson."

Outside noise can be overwhelming at times and can elicit certain distractions. Tjaden emphasizes how he keeps his mind straight and focuses on the tasks at hand.

"There's injuries and the mental aspect of it," Tjaden said. "Just keep looking forward and try to think about how it [struggles] can help you."

Although wrestling is one-on-one on the mat, it is a sport that requires collaboration and perseverance through teamwork. Nothing can be completed without the comfort and support of teammates who are with you every step of the way. Vieyra states what qualities Tjaden possesses that make him a motivator and leader to those around him throughout the season.

"Whenever we have an odd number or need somebody, he's always hopping in," Vieyra said. "It doesn't matter how big or small the person is. He's always the first one to not just hop in and do the extra work but bring along other ones."

No win or championship can be achieved without the support of teammates who are with you every step of the way. Tjaden knows that well, as his appreciation for the people around him is only highlighted more with every win he has on the mat.

"The coaches help me get better, keep me motivated," Tjaden said. "My teammates are always having fun, having a good time, making memories."

Although his high school career is not over, Tjaden still has a long road ahead as a wrestler. Vieyra has high hopes for Tjaden's future and believes his work ethic will take him far beyond the walls of DHS.

"I just hope he continues growing and working hard," Vieyra said. "He's always going to be in conversations about state or national championships, but his future is definitely going to be him being a college wrestler."

Although skill and capability play major roles in success and accomplishment, nothing fuels the fire of triumph more than relationships, positivity, and open-mindedness. Tjaden is proof that talent is not the only factor that builds a winner; it takes a group of Wildcats to make a champion.



Sophomore Elijah Anderson wrestles an opponent at the De Soto invitational meet on January 25. Photo by Brooke Mermis



Sophomore Emerson Tjaden prepares for his wrestling match. Photo by Brooke Mermis



# Breaking Barriers



## WOMEN ACCOMPLISHING NEW GOALS AND INSPIRING MANY

GRACYN SPECK  
STAFF REPORTER



All across the world, women have been and currently are making meaningful impacts to help strengthen and empower others. For decades women have been fighting for equal rights and respect where equality has been given and though it has been a struggle, so much headway has been



gained.

This is especially true for 27-year-old Malala Yousafzai. Malala's story is nothing short of incredible, as she is the youngest-ever Nobel Peace Prize recipient and a beacon for many young girls. She has shown great bravery in her fight for women's rights and education.

According to her website malala.org, Malala was born in Mingora, Pakistan. She became well-known for surviving an assassination attempt by the Taliban in 2012 over her advocacy for women's rights and education.

Since her near-death experience at 15 years old, she has been an active promoter of these rights, and she has stuck to this mission by creating the Malala Fund. This policy invests in change and educational programs that help to instate and establish 12 free, safe, and quality years of education for all women.

Malala emphasizes the importance of her experience on her

fund page.

"I tell my story not because it is unique, but because it is the story of many girls," Malala said.

Even though many women and children in our community may not have faced these harsh realities, they have been able to understand and appreciate the steps that Malala has taken to ensure the future of many bright minds.

Keri Lauxman, an underclassman English teacher, gives her opinion on Malala's influence on women's educational rights.

"Her ability to persevere through physical hardship and then political persecution and cultural persecution to fight for the right that all women deserve an education is extraordinary," said Lauxman.



Malala Yousafzai giving her 21st annual Nelson Mandela Lecture in Johannesburg, South Africa on December 5, 2023. Photo by malala.org ect

Not only are barriers being crossed in the education field, but women are also making a change in the world of sports.

Over the past year, the WNBA has seen a huge increase in recognition and attendance. While many other athletes have contributed to this, Caitlin Clark has had one of the largest impacts. Her impressive three-pointers and steady ball-handling make her an exceptional

player that many fans enjoy watching.

"I'm all about growing the women's game, and I'm glad I've given something that little girls can scream about at the top of their lungs. I can imagine when I was younger, I was doing the exact same thing watching on TV. It's pretty fun," Clark said, according to Ms. Magazine.



Women have also been making advancements in the game of soccer. In March of last year, the new KC Current Stadium (more formally known as the CPKC Stadium) was built. It is the first ever privately owned stadium constructed exclusively for women's professional soccer.

Playing in this new stadium has led to a great 2024 season for the KC Current team. According to FBREF, the team placed fourth in the league and scored a total of 57 goals. Approximately 35% of those were scored by Temwa Chawinga, a new addition for the 2024 season. She is known for her outstanding footwork and strong shots, which helped her break the record for "player with the most goals in one season" by two goals.

In an interview, Emily Thayer, the JV girl's soccer coach, talks about her views on the growth of women's sports.

"If we're talking about women's sports and we're talking about the players that are impacting in a positive way, then that's what we want," Thayer said.





Caitlyn Clark shooting the record breaking shot and becoming the NCAA Division I women's record holder for most points in a single season. Photo by cnn.com

Another area women are growing in is the music industry. Many women are starting their careers at a young age and gaining popularity quickly.

Stars like Taylor Swift, Chappell Roan, Sabrina Carpenter, Olivia Rodrigo, and many others are being placed in the spotlight and becoming role models for the younger generations.

When asked about her favorite pop woman role model, Mindy Fry, the choir teacher, provides some insight on what she believes makes someone a worthy figure to look up to. In her response, Fry spoke of Kristin Chenoweth and her appreciation for what she is doing.



Kristin Chenoweth eating from a local ice cream truck November 8th 2024. Photo by her facebook account @Kristen Chenoweth

Another area w<sup>h</sup>er videos are not about looking perfect or showing a fake life...it's hard to be a female teenager sometimes in this world with what we see on social media and what society expects, so I appreciate that she's real," Fry said.

While that is the sad, yet true reality of being a teenager, there are so many important women going out, chasing their dreams, and becoming huge role models for young girls and women around the world. Lauxman expands on this idea by suggesting that anyone can connect or resonate with these influential models and ideas, not exclusively women.

"Feminism is for all genders, and all people should be feminist," Lauxman said.

This kind of mindset will tie together the human race as a whole and create a better sense of unity among the communities.



Taylor Swift wearing her "The Man" outfit on November 14th in Toronto. Photo by Anne Chen in her blog called Girls' Life



# ROLLing Into Robotics

The USD 232 Robotics Club consists of about 60 members from both Mill Valley and De Soto High School. Divided into two teams, upperclassmen are a part of team 1810, and underclassmen are a part of team 9316. Until recently, the club consisted of only Mill Valley students, but with the introduction of the CTEC building and the resources it provides, the club has opened up to De Soto students as well.

Led by sponsor Neil McLeod, Robotics Club consists of a variety of elements and offers a range of new and exciting opportunities for students involved.

"The club combines engineering, programming, teamwork, and creativity to design and build robots that compete in annual challenges. Beyond technical skills, the club also involves business, marketing, and community outreach, offering opportunities for all interests and talents," McLeod said.

Robotics combines STEM elements, like engineering and manufacturing, with social skills essential for life after school. Junior, Austin Kelley, believes that Robotics has helped him prepare for all aspects of later life, not just Robotics-related skills.

"Robotics has given me opportunities to pursue jobs that I wouldn't have without being in the Club. It teaches you more than just how to build robots—it also helps you develop skills in team organization, timeline management, and teamwork," Kelley said.

Not only does Robotics prepare its members for the future, but also fosters a community of Mill Valley and De Soto students. Club members, like junior Logan Lackey, enjoy the connections between students just as much as the actual robotics.

"I have met so many amazing people here and I have reconnected

LIBBY MEYER  
NEWS EDITOR

with some old friends that I haven't seen since middle school," Lackey said "Everyone is like-minded. We all want to accomplish the same goal and working together in this enjoyable environment is really fun,"

These friendships have been fostered during the long hours spent together at competitions and during practices. The time commitment fluctuates depending on students and the time of year.

"The time commitment varies throughout the year, but it's especially demanding during the competition season [January through March]. Students typically meet several times a week, including evenings and weekends, to design, build, and test their robots," McLeod said.

The club currently has practices Wednesday and Thursday from 6 - 9 pm and Saturdays from 9 am - 3 pm at the CTEC. Robotics also involves hours outside of practice and school.

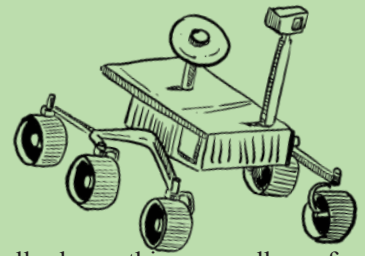
"The club participates in several robotics competitions, including regional and state-level FRC tournaments. We also host and attend community outreach events, such as STEM expos, elementary school visits, and district-wide showcases to inspire younger students and promote STEM education," McLeod said.

While the Club has a strong emphasis on STEM, Sophomore Levi Fandel stresses that prospective members do not have to be interested in pursuing a career related to those ideals; instead, they need to be willing to learn and have fun.

"Robotics is super fun and everyone should do it. You don't have to be obsessed with the STEM field to enjoy it. Before I joined I had no engineering experience whatsoever. They teach you everything, so anybody

can really do anything regardless of where they come from and how much experience they have," Fandel said.

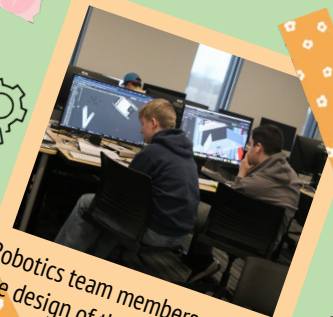
Overall, members and sponsors of the club alike hope to attract new members. Members who are willing to have fun, learn, try new things, and make new friends more than anything. If you are interested in joining the club or have any questions please email the sponsor Mr. McLeod at [NMcLeod@usd232.org](mailto:NMcLeod@usd232.org)



Robotics members work on the building of their robots Photo by Libby Meyer



Members of the Robotics team work in collaboration with teachers on their robots Photo by Libby Meyer



Robotics team members work on the design of their robots Photo by Libby Meyer



# Fake News frenzy



HOW MISINFORMATION IS RUNNING RAMPANT AND AFFECTING COMMUNITIES

SAMANTHA ESTES  
STAFF REPORTER

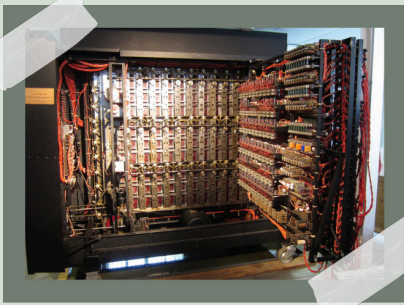


In today's digital age, misinformation and its ramifications are running rampant. It is affecting schools and communities and yet it is increasingly complex to mitigate the issue.

Schools are probably getting the brunt of significant impacts that are coming from misinformation.

"I think that sometimes students, rather than searching for a wide variety of perspectives, set out to look for their own. And so with something that confirms their perspective, they don't tend to investigate further," Philip Hamilton said.

This not only leads to being closed minded but it also makes it so students can fall prey to false narratives because they only want to learn the perspective they know and they are stuck in that mindset.



ChatGPT machine that many students use to get arguments for their opinion when they cannot find sources to actually support their views. Photo by Yuk Huiin used in the e-flux journal website.

Students are simply not fact checking what they hear either. In fact, according to a report from Common Sense Media, "50% of teenagers admit



they have shared a news online story without knowing if it was true or not."

When people do not take the time to double check the information they are hearing, it not only makes them seem uninformed, but it also takes away from their critical thinking abilities and tends to ruin relationships. Norah Kelly, a member of speech and debate, speaks on this as well.

"I think that when we don't inform ourselves on what is actually happening and form our own opinions, we don't get along with each other as well...and we aren't able to be firm in our own beliefs without conflict," Kelly said.

This tends to be a common theme throughout communities as groups start to separate because of their beliefs and they can't collaborate because they are too set in their beliefs, and unwilling to put in work to fact check their thoughts or why others believe what they do.

Now there are a multitude of ways in which misinformation, and related conflicts, can be avoided. William Mercer, gives a good, neutral news site and another helpful tip.

"One thing I think is useful is, if you aren't interested in the news... Associated Press is excellent in that they are just very straight shooters...[also,] you know, scroll down to the bottom of articles. Make sure they cite their sources and check the links they have, if any," Mercer said.

Other useful tips, according to Hamilton, are using fact checking websites such as Snopes.com and FactCheck.org to double check all of the material you are intaking that may not be true.



Just simply taking little steps like this before forming opinions and reposting information could save friendships, reputations, and assignments. Many organizations are attempting to limit the amount of misinformation being spread.

Facebook has even stated, "We are committed to fighting the spread of false information on our platform through partnerships with fact checkers and improved technologies."

There will still be slip ups; however, corporations like them, and others, like the News Literacy Project are working hard on reducing the false media intake.



# separation or unity?

BROOKE MERMIS

ASSISTANT EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



For centuries, separation of church and state has been a staple for the United States. It has shaped the formation of schools, businesses, and numerous political endeavors. Recently, debates have been circulating regarding the implementation of this rule, as some states are beginning to openly declare their desire for biblical concepts in their schools.

This past summer, the Oklahoma state superintendent issued a mandate declaring that the Bible must be included in academic curricula in grades five through twelve. Many have issued their grievances against decisions like these, stating that what occurs in church and what goes on in classrooms should not be unified. Nonetheless, this has been a discussion that has infiltrated American society.



Coach Kennedy kneeling on the field prior to kick-off at Bremerton High School. Photo by Meegan M. Reid/Kitsap Sun for AP News

At De Soto, there has been a fair share of religious content displayed for students. Whether that is learning about the history of religion in social studies classes or even through school-run organizations like Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA), the aspect of faith and divinity have been no mystery to our school. Senior Cade Martinez, a

student leader at FCA sessions, explains how he has seen religion impact DHS.

"When I started going to FCA, there was about 30 or 40 of us...and then slowly over time, it grew drastically," Martinez said. "Sometimes there will be over 100 people in there."

Although many students at DHS may not be Christian, it is still a very insightful opportunity to allow people to explore their own faith and worship where they see it best fit. Religion may not be too apparent in the school's direct actions, but senior Ace Red Corn points out that it is certainly evident in the way students profess their theological beliefs.

"I haven't seen any religious impact on the school itself, but I have definitely seen many people in our school who are religious and show it in their own ways," Red Corn said.

What is particularly perplexing is the extent to which a student is able to demonstrate his or her beliefs before it is considered to be "going too far" by district or school standards.

In Washington, a high school football coach named Joseph Kennedy began kneeling in the center of the football field to pray, along with some students and players joining him. The Bremerton school district, for which Kennedy worked, asked him to stop to protect the district from violating the terms of the Establishment Clause. The Establishment Clause is one of two clauses of the First Amendment; it ensures that the U.S. government does not create a "set" religion that all citizens must follow and worship. To defend himself and his beliefs, Kennedy sued the district for violating his rights under the First Amendment, specifically

the Free Exercise Clause. He asserted that he should be able to practice his religion freely, especially because it was not interfering with any governmental matters. After being taken to the Supreme Court, they declared that Bremerton's regulation over Kennedy's religious practices ultimately violated his liberties under the First Amendment.

The significance of Kennedy vs Bremerton signifies that schools may be able to shy away from religious content to a certain extent but not to the point that includes the lack of liberties for the individual. Being able to express one's religion in school presents an openness that some students may struggle to find, and it develops connections between communities of people who are alike and seek the same goals.



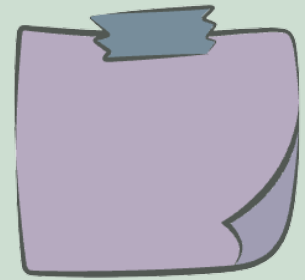
Players of the opposing team surround Kennedy at midfield to pray following their game on October 16, 2015. Photo by Meegan M. Reid/Kitsap Sun for AP News

However, many have pointed out how Kennedy vs Bremerton puts extra pressure on students and parents. According to Richard Foltin of the Freedom Forum, the concept of the First Amendment raises even more questions amongst school districts.



# CURRENT DEBATES IN SCHOOL DISTRICTS ACROSS AMERICA

OPINION || THE GREEN PRIDE



"The...First Amendment requires that teachers and administrators...remain neutral among religion and between religion and non-religion," Foltin said. "Now the lines are blurry. To what extent are teachers allowed to practice their faith in the presence of students?" Kennedy's prayer at mid-field may have caused some students to feel obligated to participate, even if they were not specifically told to. These athletes may have had their own religious beliefs that do not directly follow Kennedy's, but it is easy to feel "rebellious" or "left out" of a situation if a teacher or other students are engaging as well. The coercion of this circumstance is what could potentially cause issues to rise in public school districts.

Nonetheless, the decision of Kennedy vs Bremerton allows deeper connections to be made between DHS students on a spiritual level. Sophomore Abigail Champlain explains her mission at a Christian camp she attended over the summer and how she was advised to spread her faith to others around her. "To make relationships was one of the key factors to getting people's trust, genuine trust," Champlain said. "[It is important] to just be kind to other people because so many people are lonely and needing someone to speak life into their life."

Religion impacts students in everyday life, even outside of a school setting. Wildcat Softball head coach Junelle Woolery explains the importance of allowing religion and relationships made through it to be shown openly. "Religion and your character and your beliefs are all melded together," Woolery said. "The people at De Soto High School are what make it awesome, but



DHS students worship at FCA. Photo by Brooke Mermis

Students participate in small groups in FCA. Photo by Brooke Mermis



Worshippers converse while waiting for FCA to start. Photo by Brooke Mermis

their actions affect our high school every day."

Besides constitutionality factors, religion is sometimes discouraged in school settings because people are worried they will offend someone who does not possess the same beliefs as them. It is difficult to navigate an environment where others may not feel comfortable expressing such a normal aspect of their lives like religion, even if it is important to them. Here at De Soto, there are numerous opportunities to express one's faith. It is not an obligation by any means but giving kids the option to be fluid in their worship is vital for personal growth and development. Champlain shares how she hopes religious students at De Soto become more accustomed to sharing their beliefs.

"I hope that we [FCA] can just grow and that we wouldn't be ashamed of our faith or afraid to spread the word of God to other students in our school," Champlain said.

Adding onto the hopeful future of religion in school, senior Lydia VanBooven shares her personal goals regarding her divinity.

"My goal as a Christian is to be a light of Christ and share his love throughout," VanBooven said.

Regardless of what comes next for theology in school districts across the country, it is truly a beautiful sight to see so many students willing to share their experiences and practices without censorship. Although the separation of church and state is not likely to change anytime soon, proclamation and love for whoever or whatever constitutes a student's religious beliefs should not be shut down. If there is no harm, there is no foul.



# Small Scripts, Big Stage

## DRAMATIC ARTS TAKE CENTER STAGE AT ANNUAL THESCON EVENT

GRACYN SPECK  
STAFF REPORTER

Theater has been a major part of American culture for several decades. Almost everyone has heard the famous productions of Phantom of the Opera, Romeo and Juliet, and Les Misérables. Recently, productions such as Hamilton and Wicked have brought even more attention to the theater community.

De Soto High School is fortunate enough to have such an incredible theater department with many talented student actors and technicians. This year, they were able to take their

talent to Wichita to compete in a theater competition. ThesCon, more formally known as the Kansas Thespian Festival, is a state-wide conference where schools from all over Kansas gather

and compete with various theatrical acts. Sara Bryant, drama teacher and director of the school's theater department, talks about the vast opportunities provided to students who wish to showcase their talents.

"The cool thing about ThesCon is there's lots of different types of performances you can take to it. We usually bring a one-act and try to get as many people involved in that as possible, but you can also take your own individual performance[s], which are called Thespys," Bryant said.

De Soto High School brought a total of five acts with them to the

competition: three solo performances, one group acting scene, and a one act. Each performance, excluding the one-act, is graded and given a score: fair is the lowest, then good, excellent, and finally superior, which is the highest.

All De Soto entries received a score of excellent, except for Carson Hanley, who received a superior rating with his

performance of the song "I Don't Care" from Cabaret. The one-act received second place out of the whole conference, which is a substantial improvement from the previous year's placement of second to last. Rose Rulifson, a senior at De Soto, reflects on the one-act and gives some insight into the aftermath of the high-scoring performance. "We have had so much fun putting it together,

but things really clicked when we performed it for everyone at ThesCon... We were very proud of ourselves afterward and our scores were way higher than any of us would have expected," Rulifson said.

However, ThesCon is more than just competing against other schools.

attending the conference.

"ThesCon actually does this thing where you can buy [rubber] ducks and they have names on the bottom, like Romeo and Juliet...and you have to find the other person, so that is a really interesting way to meet people," Hendry said.

Overall, ThesCon is an excellent opportunity to showcase the abundant theatrical talent that exists throughout the state of Kansas, while also creating opportunities for growth and building connections with others. Sara Bryant ended her interview by

expressing her hopes to expand future ThesCon opportunities for anyone interested in attending.

"Anyone involved in the theater department is welcome to attend. If you're reading this and want to attend next year, let me know," Bryant said.

You can contact her at [sbryant@usd232.org](mailto:sbryant@usd232.org).



Rose Rulifson performing her excellently scored song "Fly Into the Future" from Vanity the musical. Photo by Gracyn Speck



Juniors Brooke Mermis and Carson Hanley performing a scene from "Too Many Detectives at the Murder Mansion." Photo by Gracyn Speck



The one act cast poses outside of theater after taking second place. Photo by [desotowildcattheater Instagram Page](#)



# SPRING

## IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

March 17 - 24	Spring Break
April 1	College Fair
April 2 - 4	Cheer Tryouts
April 12	Prom
April 17/18; 22	Dance Tryouts
April 30	Signing Day
May 9-14	Senior Finals
May 17	Graduation
May 19 - 22	Final Exams

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Catch what you missed!



# CURATING STUDENTS'

KAYLA TOLLY

OPINION EDITOR

When you stop by our school's coffee shop, Cat's Corner, you may have noticed student artwork hanging up on the walls.

Mikki Gotham, Sheila Wilkins from the art department, collaborated with Ben Stamey, one of the CTE instructors, during the spring semester of the 2023 school year to showcase a select group of students' artwork in Cat's Corner each month.

Usually, seniors are selected, but recently, some art classes are freshman-heavy.

The students are picked based on how well they met the criteria of the assignment given to them. They pick one student per art class.

They typically ask or tell the student they are putting their artwork on display. Usually, students react by saying "Okay!" or "Cool!" according to Mrs. Gotham.



Audrey Jacquot said she felt "particularly happy because it's a self portrait so not only is my art is being displayed but also myself."



AUDREY JACQUOT - CAT'S CORNER



HENRY LASHAM - CAT'S CORNER





SAM PORRAS - DIGITAL



KASEY KELLEY - PHOTOGRAPHY



ATLAS DUFFY - SELF LEAD



MADDIE HELLERICH  
ONLINE CO-EDITOR

# AI: Friend or Foe?

DE SOTO HIGH SCHOOL EXPLORES HOW AI IMPACTS THE CLASSROOM

*In this story, there is one paragraph that is AI generated. Can you find it? Look for the answer at the end of the article!*

People around the world have expressed concerns about the rapid advancements in Artificial Intelligence (AI). While many once feared AI would take control of jobs, technological advancements, and human connections, it is abundantly clear that AI has transformed education. Now, AI can offer solutions to questions students have been asking without a teacher, such as brainstorming ideas, summarizing reading passages, or creating schedules. Today, AI has become an issue for students and how they handle their classwork.

Artificial intelligence replicates human cognitive functions through algorithms and data processing. It identifies patterns, learns from past inputs, and adapts its behavior. AI systems continuously improve by optimizing decision-making processes based on historical and real-time data. As technology advances, AI evolves beyond initial capabilities, predicting and innovating in ways that extend human-like abilities.

English teacher Phillip Hamilton points out how students do not understand the impact that AI has on their learning process.

“I think that they

[students] have no concept of why assignments are important or what the goal of assignments are, and don't know how much they are hurting their learning,” Hamilton said. “It's really hard for them to conceptualize how that might hurt them down the road.”

Because of AI, students' integrity and work ethic has continued to dwindle. English teacher Keri Lauxman reminds educators that they have a

responsibility to teach diligence.

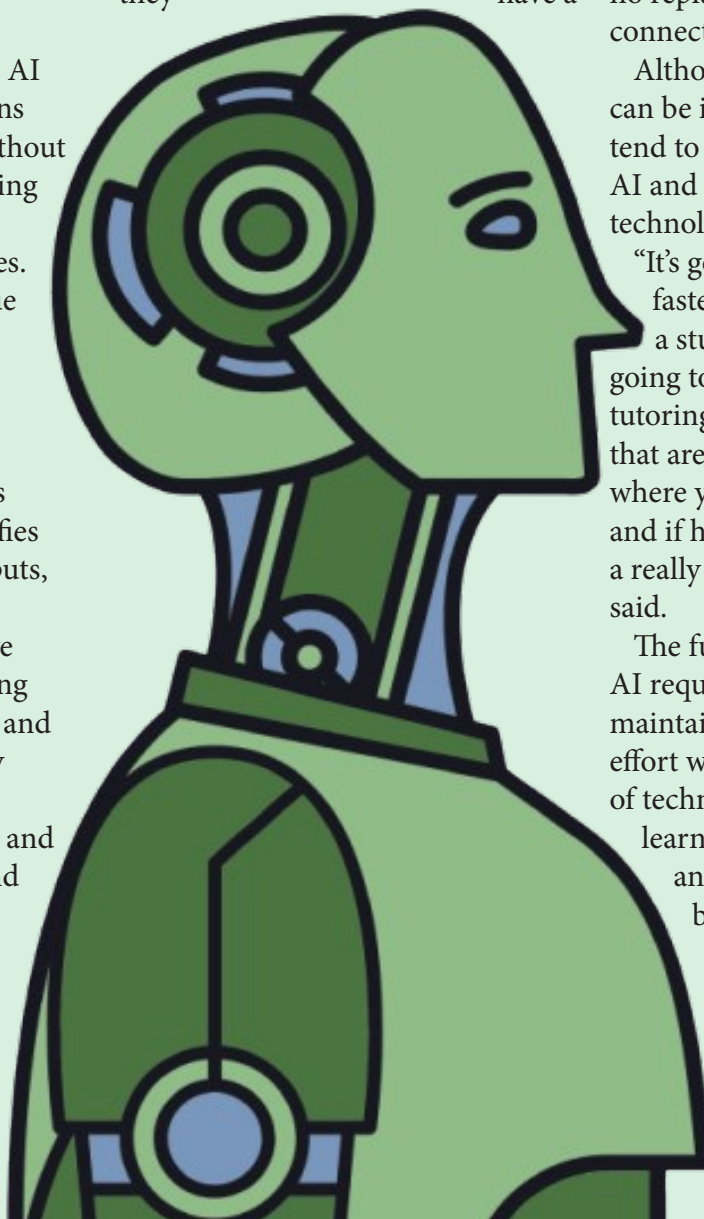
“We have to be intentionally teaching and reminding students that intellectual integrity is something of value,” Lauxman said.

AI has separated the originality of the human mind, from the fraud that is AI. For example, math teacher Melissa Lehrman emphasizes the importance of fostering personal connections with students, noting that “there's no replacement for human connection.”

Although the progression of AI can be intimidating, individuals tend to ignore the positives of AI and what it can do to help technological improvements.

“It's going to make a ton of things faster and more efficient. From a student standpoint, you're going to be able to see some private tutoring apps and things like that, that are really able to adjust to where you are as a specific learner and if harnessed correctly, could be a really powerful tool,” Hamilton said.

The future of education with AI requires a balance, one that maintains human connection and effort while utilizing the power of technology to enhance the learning process. If students and educators can find that balance, AI could become a dominant tool for both academic success and personal growth.





# DRA- e RAMA

## MORE MEN STAND IN THE THEATER SPOTLIGHT

CLAIRE THOMPSON  
STAFF REPORTER

Although both women and men are crucial to a successful drama program, men are not found nearly as frequently as the former at De Soto High School. As the drama program grows in male actors, it is vital to examine how a lack of men has affected the program and how they became so scarce.

One of the most notable spikes in men participating in drama comes with *The Drowsy Chaperone*, the most recent musical at DHS, with a total of 12 male actors. Director and drama teacher Sara Bryant has seen this shift toward drama firsthand.

"In the recent years...we've only had two guys in the show or five guys in the show," Bryant said. "If you're a guy in the audience watching this production and you're not really seeing guys in the production, it doesn't feel like something that's super welcoming to be a part of."

It is difficult for men not participating in drama to join when they do not see themselves being represented. As a result, they see themselves as unfit for the department. Carson Hanley, a veteran and current member of the DHS drama program, also has insight on the topic.

"For guys coming into it who are new, I think it'd be difficult to adjust just because in sports, you're obviously surrounded by,

if you're a guy, other guys...so it's just a big jump," Hanley said.

In the majority of high school activities, men and women are separated. However, this is not the case in drama, and men who have only participated in activities with other men can find the change daunting. This separation occurs during childhood, making it difficult for men to diverge from stereotypically gendered activities.

"Girls do have a bit more options...when they're going up that is more acceptable for them to be a part of that leads them to theater," Bryant said. "It is seen as more of a feminine thing because it does deal with

ARTS/ENTERTAINMENT || THE GREEN PRIDE

The Scooby-Doo Crew in *Too Many Detectives in The Murder Mansion*. Photo by Claire Thompson



expressing emotions more and as guys grow up and go through middle school, that's not cool."

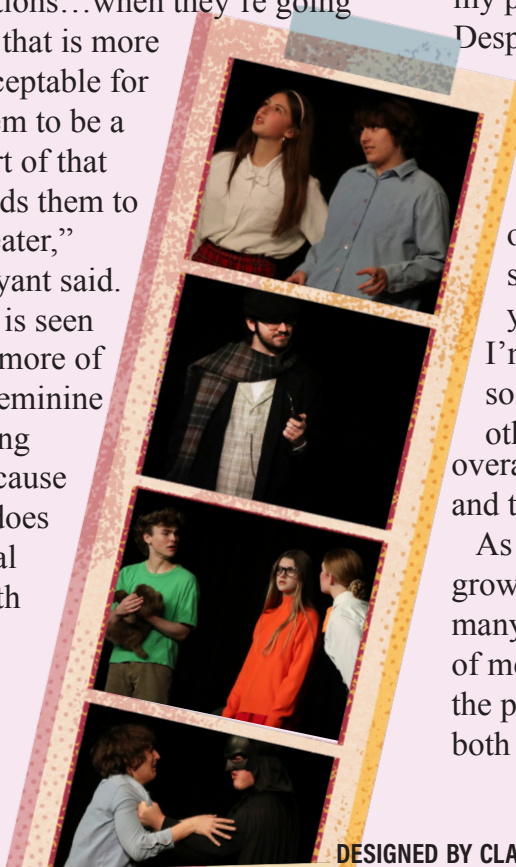
Men do not often have the same hobbies (singing, dance, etc.) growing up that lead to theater, which is partly why participation is so low. Mason Fry, a two-year DHS theater participant, sees the benefits of being a man in drama.

"I feel like I get to make more friends than I normally would not have known about or talked to in my personal life," Fry said.

Despite the rarity of it, being a man in drama can be very beneficial to the social life of all the actors.

"You're just with each other all the time," Hanley said. "So the relationships you form are very strong. I'm with everyone all the time, so of course we do get on each other's nerves sometimes, but overall it's just fun for bonding and to get to know each other."

As the DHS drama program grows, it is crucial to identify why many high schools have a lack of men engaging and how to fix the problem, as well as encourage both men and women to join.



DESIGNED BY CLAIRE THOMPSON || MARCH 2025 19

THEATRE

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# Welcome to Our Channel

RIA HUDSON

ARTS/ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

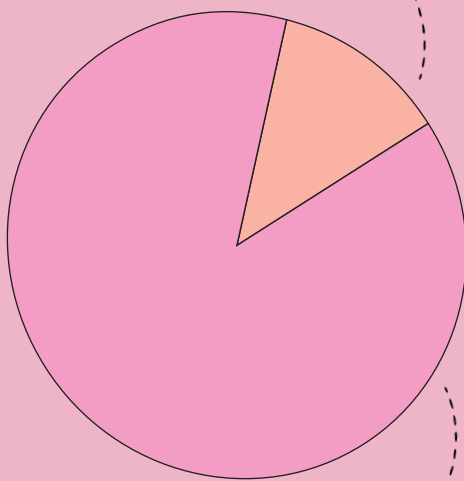
“Family vlogging” has become a prevalent form of content creation in society as a form of social media. Channels such as “8 Passengers” (who have been charged with multiple accounts of child abuse) gain millions of views and subscribers by giving their viewers a look into their daily lives.

What makes them so popular if they are known for being exploitative? Why do these channels have such a big



## DO THE MAJORITY OF FAMILY VLOGGERS EXPLOIT CHILDREN?

14.3% of students disagreed.



85.7% of students agreed.

following if they abuse children?

For starters, the majority of students at De Soto High School hold the opinion that these families exploit the children. Specifically, 87.9% believe that these channels are harmful, with a measly 12.1% selecting that these channels do not typically exploit children. DHS student, Fernanda Acosta Arreola remarks on the reality of family vlogging.

“The kids are raised into being filmed their whole lives and it’s not healthy for development,” Acosta Arreola said.

Not only is it bad for childhood development, but the content can also be extremely harmful. Senior Carrington Palmeri comments on how the welfare of the child should be a parent’s utmost priority, however, in the age of technology, family vloggers stray further and further away from this.

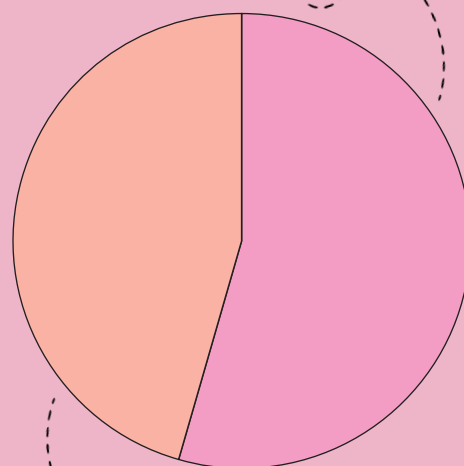
“Most popular family vloggers make their channel centered around children, mostly toddlers or younger. This puts the children at risk. There are weird people in the world who do bad things with these types of videos and putting it out there, so easily accessible, damages the children’s safety,” Palmeri said, “not to mention what happens when they get older, there’s a thing called a digital footprint. The videos of the children will stay with them forever.”

In addition to the dangers of putting vulnerable children out into the public, exploitation also affects the futures of the children. Brains do not develop well into adulthood, so the things showcased by parents could be more harmful than a typical adult would do. As sophomore Molly Roach comments, this could affect future job opportunities and outlooks.

“Most family bloggers I find

## SHOULD FAMILY VLOGGERS BE LEGAL?

51.4% of students agreed.



48.6% of students disagreed.



tend to film their children a bit too much and share too much of their information, which can really hurt them later in life as well,” Roach said.

According to DHS students, some examples of these exploitative channels that have kids featured in them include the “LaBrant Fam”, “Ryan’s World”, and the infamous “8 Passengers”.

According to the BBC, the “8 Passengers” mother, Ruby Franke, who was charged with six counts of child abuse and counting, is one of the most extreme examples of this abuse.

As stated by the BBC, “In one

# THE LIVES AND SECRETS OF FAMILY VLOGGERS



video, she could be seen telling her sons they would 'lose the privilege to eat dinner' if they continued play-fighting. In another, she said that her six-year-old 'needed' to go hungry after forgetting to take her lunch to school."

Because these channels are so harmful for so many reasons, many would assume them to be illegal. However, this assumption is proven wrong by the statistics listed by De Soto High School students. 54.5% of students who replied to the survey stated that they believe family vloggers should be legal.

"I believe it's immoral and harms the child's development but I think the outlawing of this content would be censorship and hard to regulate," one student said.

On the other hand, 45.5% believe that they should be made illegal, proving to be incredibly controversial. Some students believe that the channels are bad enough that they should be outlawed.

In the survey, another student said, "They are filming minors when they are not old enough to consent or don't know the consequences of social media."



Photo of the LaBrant Family, a family vlogging channel recognized to possibly be problematic by De Soto students. *Photo from LaBrant Family Youtube Channel*



A popular youtube channel known as "Ryan's World", suspected to exploit the main character, Ryan. *Photo from Rolling Stone*



So if it is known that many channels are so dangerous, what are authorities doing to combat these issues? In a news article by The Conversation, they comment on how some states have many movements to prevent this.

According to The Conversation, "In August 2023... Illinois became the first U.S. state to pass a law protecting the financial interests of the children of family vlogging. The bill requires parents to put aside 50% of the earnings for a piece of content featuring their child."

In addition to Illinois' new rule, several other states now have policies preventing these things.

"Minnesota...prohibiting children under 14 from appearing in more than 30% of their parents' social media content," The Conversation said. Without the support from the public, there will be no possible way to completely eliminate this issue. Continuing to dissuade the public from watching and supporting these channels is of utmost importance.

Ultimately, it can be said that the controversial family vloggers have set their place in social media. New laws and bills are limiting the camera

time that children are allowed to have, and how much profit they make from it. However, the online community is the final decision-maker in this story.



The Franke family, better known for their Youtube channel "8 Passengers", pose for a family photo. *Photo from imdb.com*



Ruby Franke's reaction to receiving a one-to-15 year prison sentence, after pleading guilty to four counts of second-degree aggravated child abuse. *Source NBC News, Photo from Wisconsin Public Radio*



Photo of Shari Franke, oldest child of Ruby, who spoke out about the abuse her and her siblings received at the hands of Ruby. *Photo from NBC News*



# golden globes recap

SADIE CLARKE

FEATURE AND SPORTS EDITOR

## THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 82ND ANNUAL AWARD SHOW

On January 5th, the Golden Globes were held at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills, California.

After an unfortunate hosting failure last year with comedian Jo Koy, the award show redeemed itself with the addition of Nikki Glaser. The Saint Louis native and Kansas University graduate, charmed the audience with her witty jokes and impeccable comedic timing, helping launch ratings. According to data collected by CBS, this year's award ceremony averaged 10.1 million viewers and had 40 million social media interactions on show night.



Photo credit: goldenglobes.com

At the ceremony, various accolades were given out to excellence in television and cinematography. Categories ranged from recognizing actors in lead or supporting roles to the behind the scenes elements of directing, musical score, and animation.

This year, a new addition was included in the list: Cinematic and Box Office Achievement, which was awarded to *Wicked*. While fans of the movie were excited to see this win, they felt it was snubbed of other



Photo credit: goldenglobes.com

awards, especially the category of Best Motion Picture - Musical or Comedy.

The controversial Spanish film *Emilia Pérez*, which follows a Mexican lawyer being offered a job to help an infamous cartel boss retire and transition into a woman, led the night in wins leaving with four golden globes including Best Motion Picture - Non-English Language, Best Performance by a Female Supporting Actress (Zoe Saldña), Best Original Song, and the coveted Best Motion Picture - Musical or Comedy.



Photo credit: goldenglobes.com

Many felt as though the film was not worthy of the amount of recognition it received throughout the night. Some note that they had not even heard about the movie before its nomination, and question if it was able to leave more of an impact than the box-office hits it was up against. Others have been relentlessly critiquing *Emilia Pérez* online for pushing Mexican stereotypes and having a poorly written script and soundtrack.

While a few award wins left people feeling disappointed, there were also victories that were almost unanimously celebrated.

Demi Moore, an industry veteran won her first ever golden globe for her leading role in *The Substance*. The 62 year old actress was overcome

with emotion after her achievement. "Thirty years ago, I had a producer tell me that I was a popcorn actress and at that time, I made that mean that this wasn't something that I was allowed to have," Moore said.



Photo credit: goldenglobes.com

Moore's acceptance speech was impactful and inspiring. She let the audience know that it is still possible to achieve your dreams, despite how long it takes.

In addition, *Shōgun*, a historical drama series set in 1600's Japan, swept the competition in the television categories. It won Best Television Series - Drama, Best Performance by an Actor In A Television Series - Drama (Hiroyuki Sanada), Best Performance by a Male Actor in a Supporting Role on Television (Tadanobu Asano), and Best Performance by a Female Actor in

a Television Series - Drama (Anna Sawai). These achievements made history, as *Shōgun* became the most awarded Japanese show



Photo credit: goldenglobes.com

and leading actor Sanada became the first Japanese man to win in his category.



*De Soto High School Presents:*

## CAREER PANEL SERIES

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- JANUARY 15** Engineering
- JANUARY 22** Government & Public Administration
- FEBRUARY 5** Health & Bio Sciences
- FEBRUARY 26** Hospitality & Tourism
- MARCH 12** Human Services
- MARCH 26** Marketing
- APRIL 9** Law, Public Safety, Corrections & Security
- APRIL 23** Manufacturing
- MAY 7** Transportation, Distribution & Logistics

Students who are interested in attending the career panels must register in Minga by searching "Career Panel" in activities.

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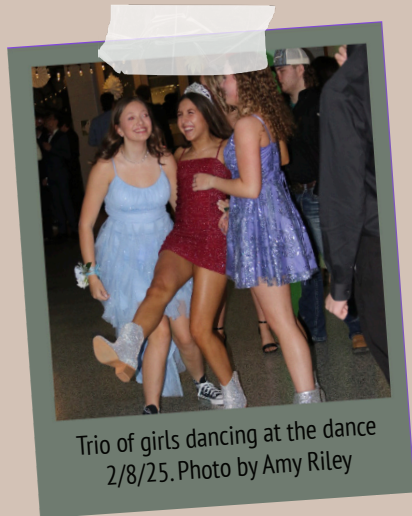
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ALL student activities at  
DHS!**



# Captured in Time



DE SOTO STUDENTS SNOWBALLED WITH MEMORIES AT WOCO



Trio of girls dancing at the dance  
2/8/25. Photo by Amy Riley



Woco attendees being admitted into  
the dance 2/8/25. Photo by Amy Riley



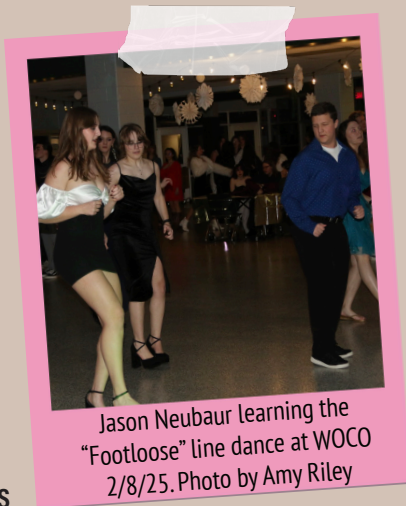
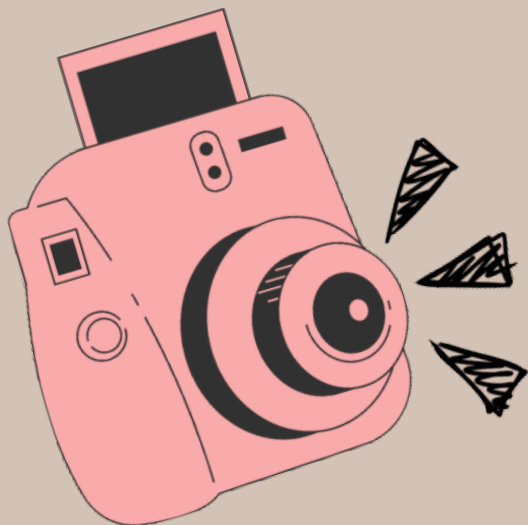
Woco court 2/8/25. Photo by Amy  
Riley



Brooke Wagner and Reaghan Sabo  
with WOCO king 2/8/25. Photo by  
Amy Riley



Junior couple dancing at WOCO  
2/8/25. Photo by Amy Riley



Jason Neubaur learning the  
"Footloose" line dance at WOCO  
2/8/25. Photo by Amy Riley



Group of 10 underclassmen 2/8/25.  
Photo by Amy Riley