

*De Soto High School
De Soto, Kansas
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TURNING A NEW LEAF

the green pride



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meet the staff

editor-in-chief

brooke mermis

assistant editor-in-chief

maddie hellerich

news/opinion editor

libby meyer

sports editor/photographer

carrie wallace

feature editor

gracyn speck

arts and entertainment editor

ria hudson

photographer

sadie clarke

graphic design editor

claire thompson

revisor

kayla toly

staff reporters

addison blunt

bailey burns

ethan dobson

sarah follmer

jordyn garvey

norah kelly

madilyn mitchell

jaliyah parker

hailey smith

lyndsey thompson

laurel zarda

want to join?

contact mr. riley in room 200a or
at sriley@usd232.org



guarding the capitol,



testing the law

laurel zarda
staff reporter

Throughout American history, presidents have rarely deployed the National Guard without the consent of local leaders, as such actions raise questions about federal authority and balance of state and federal power. Now, President Donald Trump's decision to send the National Guard to Washington, D.C., has ignited controversy over limitations on his authority. According to NPR, Trump has argued that he is targeting "crime-riddled" cities such as D.C., Baltimore, New Orleans, and Chicago. Critics say his actions test the boundaries of federal law. Michael Murphy, a history teacher at DHS, has shared his thoughts on the deployment.

"D.C. was a good starting point because D.C.'s not a state. It has no real sovereignty," Murphy said. Sovereignty refers to the power of a state to govern itself without outside interference. Because Washington, D.C., is not a state and does not have the same level of self-governing authority, the president can deploy federal forces there more easily than he could in a state. This lack of sovereignty is a key reason Trump chose D.C. as a testing ground.

According to Politico, the deployment of the National Guard in D.C. has revived a conversation over two key laws: the Posse Comitatus Act and the Insurrection Act.

The Posse Comitatus Act restricts the use of military enforcement in domestic cases. However, the

Insurrection Act gives the president authority to deploy troops to suppress a rebellion or enforce federal law. Many people have speculated as to whether Trump's actions are fueled by crime or are more about political optics. Murphy also commented on the broader implications of the deployment.

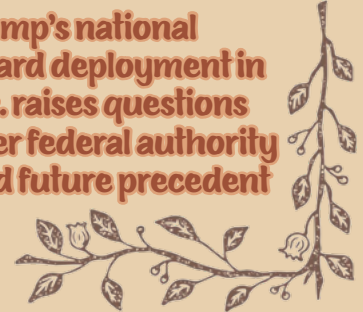
"I'd say that what he's [President Trump] doing is testing the waters," Murphy said. "I can get away with this here. So if I do it here and if it works, because that's the thing. It's got to work. There has to be some tangible benefit to this process." Murphy said.

If the deployment in D.C. is considered successful, Trump might consider extending National Guard operations into states, although this would present additional legal and political challenges.

Governors control their state National Guard units, and federal intervention without consent would spark extensive legal battles between the states and the federal government. This could cause economic troubles as well as distrust for the federal government. Murphy noted the issues that might be caused if Trump takes the action to extend the deployment.

"Now, in a state, that would be a big deal, particularly if it's a state where there's a Democratic

trump's national guard deployment in d.c. raises questions over federal authority and future precedent



governor. You know? So, like, if you're gonna say, go in Chicago? Yeah, yeah. Where Illinois is, you know, run by a Democratic governor, that might be more of an issue." Murphy said.

People warn that putting the National Guard into the states could cross the line between maintaining order and suppressing dissent. The Supreme Court has previously ruled in *Martin v. Mott* that the president has broad discretion under the Insurrection Act, according to the Brenna Center for Justice. Still, courts can intercede if power is abused. However, the long-term concern of President Trump's actions is not control but the example it sets for the future. Murphy explains the long-term concern of the deployment.

"The precedents [have] been set. So someone else can do it now, too, because nobody stopped him," Murphy said.

As debate continues, D.C. serves as a test of presidential power and the strength of legal checks.



leaves are changing,

madilyn mitchell & kayla tolly
staff reporter & revisor



meet mr. thomas

After seven successful years of being the Principal at De Soto High School, Samuel Ruff has accepted the position of Director of Post-Secondary Success for the district, leaving a vacancy in the principal's office.

This school year we welcome Kevin Thomas as principal, former principal of Verrado High School in Arizona. Before being a principal, he taught economics and history as well as a coach.

While the Thomas' enjoyed living in Arizona, moving to Kansas was like coming home because Mrs. Thomas grew up in Missouri.

"I will not miss the dust and the lack of green, but I will definitely miss the basically 45 minute drive to the just amazing national parks and mountains," Thomas said.

One thing that did not change for Mr. Thomas during the move was how he feels about leadership and community in a school environment.

Mr. Thomas feels school leadership is about empowering teachers to be the best that they can be, and that, in turn, helps all of the students.

"I thought that the impact could be really large, so one of

the ways is empowering teachers and then the other is through, like school culture and kind of mindset and kindness and stuff like that. So it was really those two pieces, like empowering teachers to be the best that they can be while also trying to help build a positive culture," Thomas said.

One aspect of student development that is important to Mr. Thomas would be character, in terms of work ethic and humility.

"I think humility is not spoken about enough. Just having humility goes a long way because if you are humble, it allows for growth, Thomas said.

”

Mr. Thomas believes that if you are arrogant, it limits you. And that there is a difference between confidence and arrogance. "Confidence, you believe in

yourself to overcome things, whereas arrogance is you're disrespectful almost. And then you're narrow, so I think humility is a trait that I would love for students to develop," Thomas said.

One way that Mr. Thomas sees for a positive community is through clubs and organizations.

Mr. Thomas enjoys that there are a lot of different programs for students to be involved in, and that students and families are excited for them and proud to be a part of De Soto.


"I think the nice thing about De Soto is that there is a positive school community already. It's a matter of, keeping the ship sailing and continuing to build on what's already a great place, so there's a lot of pressure to do a good job because it's already in a great place," Thomas said.

After his experience in education, Thomas leaves students with a bit of advice.

"I think my first thought is it goes by fast. And that's all of high school. So enjoy it, but also have the humility to want to get better and be willing to look in the mirror and want to get better."

so are we

say hello to the new crew of leaders making their mark in our halls

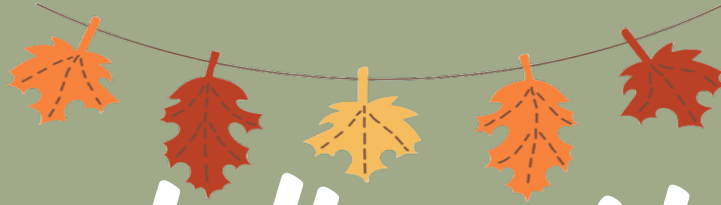


Meet Celine Sengvilay Oliveira, the new art teacher. She enjoys that Green is one of De Soto's school colors because it is her favorite color. She loves reading, walking her dog, and art. Her hidden talent is that she can throw on a pottery wheel blindfolded.

Meet Scott Kovacs. He enjoys the community that the students cultivate at DHS. He likes reading and playing golf. He also plans to break the curse of Room 107, and stay in the room for longer than a year. "[I] love it here, [and] I especially like how it feels like a community, more like, almost like family feels," Kovacs said.

Meet Laura Legatt. She has been a school nurse for nine years, she studied at Minnesota State. She enjoys doing crafts, traveling, and watching her kids play sports.

Meet Jenri Conley, one of the new English teachers. This is her fourth year teaching, and she studied at Kansas State University. She enjoys mountain biking, fishing, running, and playing guitar.



fall sports



norah kelly
staff reporter



JV girls run in the Olathe Twilight Invitational. *Photo by Norah Kelly*



Varsity volleyball girls embrace during their Volleyball Jamboree. *Photo by Norah Kelly*



Junior Ryan Vogt runs ahead at the Olathe Invitational. *Photo by Norah Kelly*



Football team gets into line during victory game against Turner High School. *Photo by Brooke Meremis*



Senior Gabriel Carillo charges with the ball during the team's match against Lawrence Free State. *Photo by Norah Kelly*



Senior Avery Noble looks ahead during team's varsity home meet. *Photo by Amy Riley*

Sophomore Maci McDowell spikes the ball during a home match. *Photo by Norah Kelly*

The De Soto girls golf team smiles after performing the best at the UKC tournament in school history. *Photo via De Soto Wildcats Twitter*



hailey smith
staff reporter

practice meets classroom

poms, turns, and grades! De Soto Cheer and Dance fuel the school's spirit.



This fall, the De Soto cheer and dance teams have been thrown for a wild loop as their sports have now been offered as a class. Cheer and dance are hopeful that, with the significant changes in their team sizes and the opportunity to use class time for practice, their teams will become stronger than ever.

With the upcoming football season, the girls have been working hard on new routines, bringing the energy, and learning how to become leaders. With the support of the cheer and dance teams' head coaches, Coach O'Boyle and Coach McKinzie, the two squads have been working hard since the summer.

They have been able to show off their improvement and growth at football games on the sidelines and during half time performances. Cheer and dance have fabulous routines they have been working on up their sleeves for State and other competitions coming up in November.

Coach McKinzie, first year dance

team coach, highlights the team's aspirations for the season.

"Our goal is to create a tradition of excellence that will carry on beyond this season to help make the Diamonds Dance Team one of the best in the State. More specifically for the 2025/26 season, we want to make it to Finals at State in November and to have a successful first NDA Nationals experience."

De Soto's dance team is experiencing its first year having a large team including 18 girls. Vivian Riss, a senior on the Diamonds dance team gives her input.

"Having a larger team overall looks better because there's more variety with what we can do, but it's definitely harder to clean."

Seniors, Laina Jernigan, Vivian Riss, and Tatum Wilson are pumped about getting their team ready for state and are having fun bonding with all the first-year dancers! The Diamond seniors are stepping up and learning how to be leaders to bring their team to success.

On the cheer team, the juniors have taken charge of a large roster of first-year cheerleaders this season due to having no seniors on the team. Josie Merando, junior cheerleader for DHS, mentions the strength of the team's bond.

"This year we are not having captains, which makes us be more of a team rather than people having power over others. I like that all the juniors are able to get along, so it makes planning a lot easier" Merando said.

People only see the cheer and dance teams progress from the sidelines, and halftime performances, but they do not see what happens behind the scenes of the hour-long practices, the physical and mental toughness, the dedication, and work ethic these performers and athletes have.

Upcoming Dance: State 11-21

Upcoming Cheer: State 11-22

making the impossible

brooke mermis
editor-in-chief



cadence shrou's success-filled journey as a student athlete at dhs

A successful student-athlete encompasses more than just triumphs in sports; they must be able to accomplish tasks both in the classroom and out of it. Dealing with homework, practicing with the team after school, and scheduling time to attend a friend's birthday party can become overbearing at times, but in the end, it can prove an individual's resilience to do what it takes to be the best. Senior Cadence Shrou is an expert at making difficult tasks look easy, and it is all in the way she carries herself around her teachers and her friends.

With her athletics, Shrou has proven herself to be a leader, especially on the volleyball court, as her role on the Wildcats' varsity team has been recognized by her close friend, senior Emelie English.

"She's always encouraging everyone," English said. "If the team is down a little bit, she's always coming in the huddle and telling everyone, 'It's okay, we'll get the next one.'"

Besides demonstrating leadership, Shrou has also had numerous achievements through her perseverance on the track and field team at DHS. With her state championship in the 5A girls' category for discus, throwing coach Jim Riedesel sees no signs of Shrou slowing down.

"She's the best female athlete I've

ever coached, and I've coached for over twenty years," Riedesel said. "She's extremely competitive. It's almost like she's a college athlete."

She's always coming in the huddle and telling everyone, 'It's okay, we'll get the next one'

- Emelie English

Beyond the world of sports, Shrou has associated herself with the fine arts realm as well. As a member of Voce, De Soto's top choir, Shrou embodies many of the same qualities she exhibits through her athletics. Right before she was supposed to throw during the 2024 Kansas state track meet, Shrou sang the National Anthem. With recognition of such talents, choir teacher Mindy Fry understands that Shrou's desire to improve is what drives her to succeed.

"Cadence is a beast. If Cadence isn't happy with her performance, she just doesn't take 'no' for an answer," Fry said.

Shrou approaches her academics with a similar drive. Despite some stress that may come with balancing her various AP classes and extracurriculars, Shrou feels

comforted by the love from her friends and family.

"My parents and family are extremely supportive of that [my workload]," Shrou said. "They know I have a super busy schedule...if I need time by myself, or if I need to do a lot of homework that night, they're not super strict with any of that."

Within her academics, Shrou has found comfort in marketing. By enrolling in Marketing and Advanced Marketing throughout her high school career, she has been given the opportunity to work in the school's coffee shop, Cats Corner. After improving her skills as a barista and in communicating with customers, Career and Technical Education Instructor Benjamin Stamey realizes he can always rely on Shrou to get tasks done effectively.

"I know she's going to do the right thing. If I give her a task or an assignment, she's not just going to do it, she's going to do it right," Stamey said.

Although balancing school with extracurriculars may not be the easiest task, Cadence Shrou impacts people around her every day with every high five during a volleyball game, every note sung in Voce, and every smile at a Cats Corner customer. It is not magic, but rather a girl who can make the impossible look possible.

look possible



how braden hoffman exemplifies what it means to be a wildcat

When academics and athletics clash, much can be learned about what student-athletes personify. Leadership, perseverance, and motivation to go above and beyond what is expected of them prove to both teachers and coaches that these students have the tools to be successful in the classroom and on the field. Junior Braden Hoffman possesses all of these qualities, as his involvement in De Soto's marching band, theater department, and football team shows his determination to build a positive high school experience.

With his participation in numerous extracurricular activities within the school, Hoffman notes how he stays organized and continues to stay on task.

"My parents helped me a lot with, 'Okay, you need to stay on top of this,' and getting done with homework, assignments, or something like that the day it was given to us," Hoffman said. "For sports, [I] just worry about the task at hand."

Hoffman's desire to be involved in many different aspects of school did not stem from just him. His dad, U.S. History and Strength and Conditioning teacher Lynn Hoffman, was also very ambitious both as a student and an athlete.

"Growing up, I did all the sports: football, basketball, track, and baseball. And then I was in Orchestra and choir in the musicals," Hoffman said.

Similar to his dad, Hoffman is a

valuable asset to the DHS marching band through his involvement in the drumline. Although his football games on Friday nights are met with his halftime performances in the band, Assistant Band Director Philip Kaul appreciates Hoffman's professionalism with this difficulty.

"Braden is super mature and really good at communicating with us. You've got to manage your time, and he does a great job with that," Kaul said. "We've all lived that life before, but when you love what you're doing, it's worth it."

Hoffman not only exemplifies his communication skills within De Soto's band, but he also makes sure he is dedicating equal amounts of time and effort to each of his activities. Theater teacher Sara Bryant especially notices this quality in Hoffman through his role as George in *The Drowsy Chaperone*.

"I know *The Drowsy Chaperone* was a really quick rehearsal process. So we would offer some seminar rehearsal times where they [the cast] could come in...they would review [choreography] in the Black Box, and he [Hoffman] was always the first one to sign up," Bryant said.

Along with all of the other chaos of balancing activities, an additional one Hoffman has to keep track of is football. With his position as an offensive tackle on the team, Head Coach Brian King knows Hoffman will find success in his future endeavors.

"I hope he just continues to develop as a leader," King said. "As far as the leadership piece, he's going to be the really strong kid who keeps growing and getting more mobile and more physical."

All of Hoffman's activities have led him to make friends in many different areas. Junior Evan Brame is involved in marching band and theater productions with Hoffman, and their friendship has only grown stronger through these interests.

"He just always makes my day better. His energy is infectious," Brame said. "Anytime I see him, I'm always talking to him."

With his dedication, his perseverance, and his desire to put his best work into all of his efforts, Hoffman has set himself apart as both an outstanding athlete and an exceptional student. Although there may be bumps along the road, all of the impossible can be made possible with Hoffman's positivity, paving the way for the future Wildcats.

I hope he just continues to develop as a leader

- Brian King

addi blunt
staff reporter

the new game plan

a brand new volleyball staff and a new look for the program

De Soto Volleyball has a new game plan this year. It's more than just new faces; it's a new vision and look for the program. With an entirely new coaching staff, they are ready to take on the challenges that come with a new season and boost positivity for a fresh start. Head coach Justina Smith is thrilled for the season to start.

"Every single coach is eager. They're excited. They come with this hype," Smith said.

With coaches from a variety of backgrounds, the new staff is working together to shape a strong, inclusive foundation for the program. Assistant varsity coach Kaitlyn Bell recognizes the importance of representing differences on the volleyball court.

"We all come from different backgrounds, and we all have experience in volleyball," Bell said. "Just meshing that all together and giving these girls the opportunity and the experience to get to know us and each other and grow connections with them."

Beyond the game of volleyball, the coaches want to create a culture of sisterhood, positivity, and inclusivity. Junior varsity coach Maya Bascom stresses the importance of an uplifting environment for the team.

"We definitely want a positive team culture, inclusive for sure as well. I want everyone to kind of feel like a sisterhood. We want a really tight-knit team where the girls can feel like they can bring up anything and everything, and just good, positive energy," Bascom said.

In addition to creating a supportive atmosphere, the coaches are focusing

on developing leadership. Smith, in particular, believes encouraging athletes to take initiative will build confidence and accountability across the team.

"This is our family... good team culture and respect for one another. As a teammate, you have to be accountable and you have to have some leadership qualities, even if you're not necessarily outspoken," Smith said.

Not only are the coaches pushing the importance of leadership as a teammate, but also as the people the players are going to be in their futures. Bell wants to have a positive impact on the girls, not just in volleyball but in life as well.



Head coach Justina Smith and Assistant Varsity coach Kaitlyn Bell pose for a photo. *Photo by Brooke Mermis*

"I want the girls to be good leaders and not just as volleyball players, but just good people and good young women, and to just thrive in this environment and any environment that they go into in the future," Bell said.

Not only are the coaches shaping the program, but Smith notes that the girls

are also providing lessons that impact and teach the staff in return.

"Just asking the girls what they want, like, whenever they did tryouts and getting their input, getting their opinions, taking that into consideration, leaving their mark and leaving their stamp, but also, leaving mine too," Smith said.

By building new traditions, the new staff is making an effort to respect the girls' opinions and letting them have a say. In doing so, Smith also hopes to allow the program to grow and evolve with the years to come.

"This is where I plan to be. I plan to stay. Smith said. "Change sometimes is needed, but if it's not broken, don't try to fix it. I think we will be able to develop strong leadership. The program will be even better than it is now with consistency and continuity."

The new volleyball staff at DHS and their commitment to the team reflects their focus on building a program that not only thrives in the present but also



Aces and Eagles at De Soto

athletes and coaches share insights on golf and tennis seasons

As fall sports swing into full gear at De Soto High School, both the golf and tennis teams are hard at work on the course, the courts, and at practice. Athletes and coaches alike shared their perspectives on the challenges and rewards of their seasons.

Kenzie Keeps Her Focus on the Fairway

Junior golfer Kenzie Laster has been competing since seventh grade. What started as a fun hobby has grown into a true passion.

“I actually prefer playing tournaments,” Laster said. “I play better under pressure.”

Her daily practice routine includes spending a few hours on the course, fine-tuning her swing, and working on consistency. While the mental side of golf can be tough, Kenzie keeps her focus simple.

“I just try to focus on every shot,” Laster said.

Inspired by her dad and supported by teammates, she hopes to continue her golf journey into college.

Sienna’s Love for Tennis Runs Deep

Senior Sienna McCracken has played tennis all four years of high school, as she was encouraged by her parents and motivated by her friends. She prefers doubles matches for the social and team aspect.

“It’s more fun because you get to talk with your partner,” McCracken said.

When practicing every day after school, Sienna focuses on serving and ball machine drills. While she faced the pressure of possible cuts this year, she now competes with confidence after earning a spot in the top twenty both her junior and senior years. Her role model, Myah Turtle, inspires her to work hard.

“My goal is just to keep improving and win as many matches as I can,” McCracken said.

Coaches’ Perspectives: Sharp and Hoffman

For the coaches, helping athletes grow goes beyond just winning. Scott Sharp, who teaches Anatomy & Physiology, and KNAT. Mr. Sharp has been involved in coaching since the early 2000s, emphasizes fundamentals, psychology, and strategy.

“It’s like a three-legged stool—you need all of them to stand strong,” Sharp explained. He structures golf practices with a mix of course play, skill drills, and turf room sessions, always reminding players to “trust themselves” under pressure. The most rewarding part for him?

“Seeing growth,” Sharp said.

Justin Hoffman, who teaches biology and honors biology. Mr. Hoffman grew up a tennis player himself, joined coaching after taking interest in the program while substitute teaching. He describes his coaching style as very technique-driven, with a strong focus on fundamentals. He values

each athlete’s unique approach to handling challenges.

“There’s no one-size-fits-all answer,” Hoffman said.

Hoffman similarly notes is his favorite part of coaching tennis “watching players grow and develop confidence within the sport.”

Looking Ahead

With strong leadership from coaches and committed athletes like Kenzie and Sienna, De Soto’s golf and tennis teams are poised for successful seasons. Whether they’re on the green or the court, the players continue to chase improvement, teamwork, and their love of the game.



Sienna McCracken and Paige Kerr highfiving
photo by Ellie Lancaster



Kenzie Laster getting ready to swing
photo by Mrs. Riley

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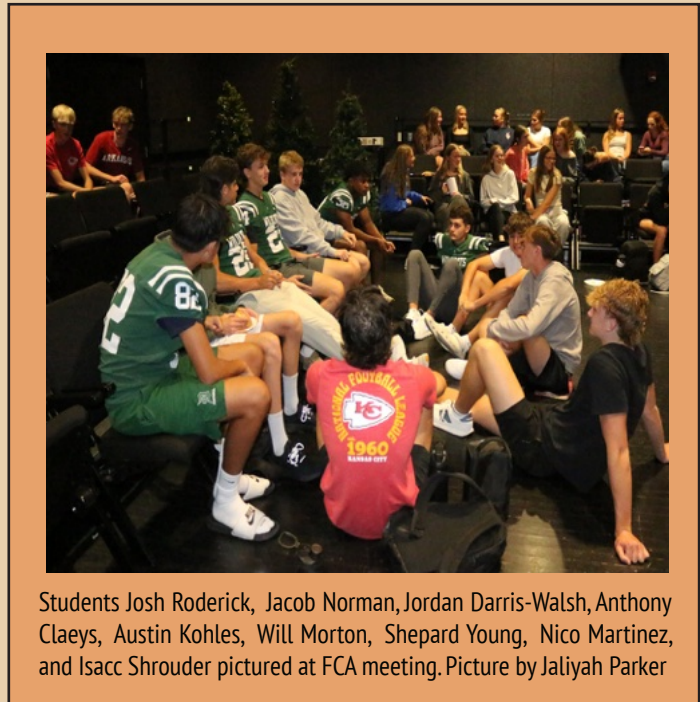
fellowship of christian athletes

Faith, Fellowship, and a Place to Belong

jaliyah parker
staff reporter



Students Charlotte Phillips, Jordyn Garvey, Addison Blunt, Bailey Burns, Willa Prothro, and Reagan Doyle smile for a picture at an FCA meeting. Picture by Jaliyah Parker



Students Josh Roderick, Jacob Norman, Jordan Darris-Walsh, Anthony Claeys, Austin Kohles, Will Morton, Shepard Young, Nico Martinez, and Isacc Shrouder pictured at FCA meeting. Picture by Jaliyah Parker

Fellowship of Christian Athletes, more commonly known as FCA, has been an active club for the past twenty-six years. With an increase of students attending the weekly 7 A.M meetings, seats are becoming increasingly scarce; however, the sense of community feels stronger than ever. Centered on faith, fellowship, and encouragement, FCA offers students a space to connect, grow, and support each other both on and off the field.

The club first began in the late 1990s, when a small group of students and teachers wanted to create a faith-based community at school. Over time, it has grown into one of the most popular clubs on campus, drawing in students from every grade level and background.

A warm smile, along with a donut, greets you as you enter the building. The

smell of coffee mixes with the sound of laughter as students gather before the school day begins. Senior Sienna McCracken highlights the positive atmosphere.

“FCA is an incredibly inviting environment where the students of DHS can go to grow closer with God,” McCracken said.

FCA meetings are simple but powerful. Students usually open with a prayer before diving into a short devotional or Bible passage. Afterwards, leaders encourage discussion and personal reflection, allowing students to share how their faith intersects with school, sports, and friendships. Guest speakers, including local church leaders, are occasionally invited to share stories about faith and perseverance.

Although the word ‘athletes’ is in the

name, Girls Physical Education teacher and Girls Softball coach Junelle Woolerly wants to emphasize that FCA is open to everyone.

“FCA started off for athletes but you don’t necessarily have to be an athlete, it’s for anyone who wants to grow and live their life through God” Woolerly said.

That sense of belonging is what has kept FCA alive for more than two decades at DHS.

As FCA continues to grow, one thing remains the same: it’s more than just a club. It’s a family built on faith, friendship, and the desire to make a difference.

buds in pubs

maddie hellerich
co editor-in-chief

De Soto High School's publication classes have grown significantly over the past year, resulting in more opportunities to cover various works. Sean and Amy Riley, the faces of the journalism department, have worked extra hard to create an improved atmosphere with returning staff members and newcomers.

Over the past two years, The Green Pride and Wildcat Wire have been collaborating to grow the face of the school's journalism program. Mrs. Riley, the broadcast and yearbook director, highlights the benefits of combining the two teams.

"It brings viewership to the page, because some people might see the video, but want to learn more, and so they can read more," Mrs. Riley said. "Some people might see an article and want to know more, and they can view more. I think it just brings you different audiences all into one place."

With bigger numbers, it is important to make sure that each new staff member is comfortable and understands the process of their publication class. Mrs. Riley was inspired to have "buddies" or "bigs and littles" to facilitate learning

and collaboration.

"I think that when you are new to a staff, it can be intimidating because where do you fit in, right? And so if you have bigs and littles, then you have somebody who's been there, who has already gotten that established friendship, relationship working, and partnership," Mrs. Riley said. "If you partner them with somebody who is new, they can automatically have an into everything that's going on, so they feel more a part of the group than they would have without them."

On the newspaper side of publications, Mr. Riley, director of The Green Pride, describes how it helps his team.

"We have had a couple sessions where we have paired up the new staffer with returning staff with their buds, and given them the opportunity to work on some things together, like how to do interviews, how to go out and take photos, some of those basic things. And it seems to work pretty well...everybody seems to be getting along really well with that," Mr. Riley said.

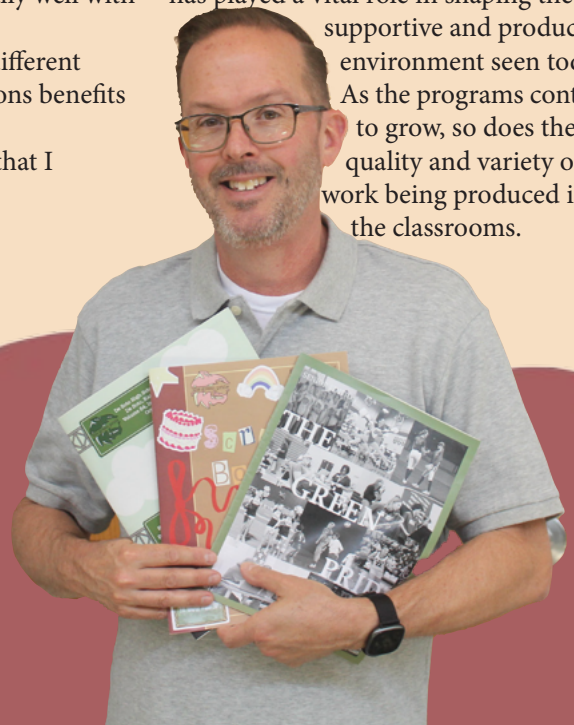
Additionally, having different perspectives and opinions benefits the staff as well.

"Sometimes the way that I

explain something, or even my Editor-in-Chief explains something, might not click for a new member," Mr. Riley said. "So the other nice thing about having buds is that, that really gives them like another layer of explanation and in a one-on-one scenario where they might ask questions with them that they wouldn't ask in a room full of people."

With the introduction of the "bigs and littles" system, new staff members are finding it easier to adjust and feel welcomed into the publication classes. The initiative has created stronger bonds between students and has encouraged more collaboration across all journalism platforms. Both The Green Pride and Wildcat Wire have benefited from the shared knowledge and creative ideas flowing between teams. New members are learning valuable skills, and returning students have also grown by stepping into mentor roles and sharing their experience.

The guidance of Mr. and Mrs. Riley has played a vital role in shaping the supportive and productive environment seen today. As the programs continue to grow, so does the quality and variety of work being produced in the classrooms.



dhs publications classes emphasize partnership for success

As the school year begins, students in journalism classes, such as newspaper and broadcast, are receiving a little extra help thanks to the “big” and “little” buddy system. This concept pairs experienced returning staff with new staff.

Junior Hailey Smith, a first-time staffer for the school’s newspaper, the Green Pride, shares how much she appreciates being paired with her big, Carrie Wallace.

“What I like being paired with a returner is that she’s experienced and knows how to handle cameras and knows how the layouts are with writing stories,” Smith said. “And so it helps prepare me for my stories.”

Newcomers tend to have less experience with their stories than returners. Hailey explains how getting help from a returner can make a drastic difference in her stories.

“Having a buddy has made a difference in my stories because my buddy has helped me with the outline and with like how the layout goes,” Smith said.

She gives credit to Carrie for helping her improve her stories. Hailey describes not only what she has learned from her big but also what she hopes to learn.

“Things I’ve learned from my big are the outline, how to lay out the wording, and how to use a camera,” Smith said. “I hope to develop more skills on how to take pictures for the newspaper.”

The bigs are equally excited about the opportunity to help new students of The Green Pride learn more about writing stories. Senior Carrie Wallace, a returning writer, notes that this new concept strengthens the team by offering support and building friendships.

“It’s someone to constantly answer their questions without having to interrupt class,” Wallace said. “It also

builds a friendship so the whole team is closer.”

While littles enjoy self-improvement, the bigs share that same reward of seeing their buddies grow. There are several positive aspects that Carrie enjoys about being a mentor.

“What I enjoy most about being a mentor is getting to work one-on-one, helping her, and seeing her get better in writing,” Wallace said.

She appreciates the bond she has built with her buddy and offers Hailey some short but sweet advice.

“Just keep trying your best,” Wallace said.

In Broadcast, students also see the benefits of these partnerships. Similar to Newspaper, Broadcast bigs are helping their littles get comfortable with cameras, editing, and interviews, all while forming relationships with one another.

Carson Hanley, the producer of Wildcat Wire, explains how the buddy system will bring a new dynamic to the class.

“In past years, there has been a large disconnect between the upperclassmen and the underclassmen,” Hanley said. “What’s nice about broadcast is that you can work with your friends on broadcast packages; however, people get stuck working with the same people, and I feel like this is a great way to get people to work with new individuals.”

According to Hanley, to ensure that the program is successful, he believes that it needs to be structured in a way that students interact and connect.

“The buddy program has to be forced. I know this sounds bad, but the interaction needs to be forced,” Hanley said. “The new broadcast students will

jordyn garvey
staff reporter

know that their big will have to answer their questions and help them. This will make students more adept at interacting with each other, increasing positivity.”

Hanley is confident that the buddy system will bring students closer and help build a stronger sense of unity in broadcast.

“I definitely think that the buddy system will help build a stronger community within the broadcast class. Again, the gap between the underclassmen and upperclassmen will be lessened by the forced interaction,” Hanley said.

By introducing the big and little buddy system in both the Newspaper and Broadcast programs, students are gaining more than just journalism experience—they are also building skills in mentorship, collaboration, and communication. As these connections strengthen, the overall sense of

community within the journalism program continues to grow.



cahoone's costumes



libby meyer
news & opinion editor

the secretary behind the fabric of dhs theater department

The De Soto Theatre department couldn't run smoothly without each group doing their own independent jobs. One of these essential departments is costuming, which is run by DHS's office secretary, Anne Cahoone. Her crucial services and support for both the students and staff in the theater department help to ensure that everyone looks and feels fantastic during their big moment.

Mrs. Cahoone's assistance in this department ensures that each actor has a costume that is comfortable and fits their character like a glove.

"I take measurements of all the cast, so we know what size they are. So when I go to pull costumes, I know what size, how big or how little I need to go," Cahoone said. "And then I also do any alterations for the costumes, any repairs, and then if we need to order anything or make anything."

Although Mrs. Cahoone's primary job is working with and fixing costumes, she also assists with many other tasks. Junior Sophia Feyerabend, a crucial member of the backstage crew, knows that Mrs. Cahoone helps with more than just costumes.

"Anything that happens off stage, Mrs. Cahoone helps with that. Costumes, hair, makeup, some props, and she always makes sure that everyone feels confident and looks their best in their costume," Feyerabend said.

While Mrs. Cahoone may make the job seem simple, not everything about costuming is a breeze. Not only can costumes be ill-fitting on an actor, but they can also malfunction while on stage, requiring someone to make quick fixes under lots of pressure.

"The most challenging part [of the work I do] is trying to repair something during the show," Cahoone said. "We've

"My costume in Mary Poppins, it was a little too big when I first tried it on. I had a little long sleeve dress, and I was kind of panicking about how it would look on stage. And so she helped me pin it up. And she also helped me pin my apron."

- Senior Brooke Mermis

"I remember when I was a freshman. I was put up into a Lumiere get up because I was playing Lumiere, and Lumiere has these, obviously candle hands and my costume had flashlights in it, to make the lights turn on. They never worked, but at one point, they fell off on stage. This was during the dress rehearsal, but she [Cahoone] had to go backstage, and she like super glued it and I got some glue on my hands, but, you know, she fixed the costume, and that's all you can really ask."

- Senior Carson Hanley

had rips and tears and broken zippers and trying to get those fixed before they go back on stage."

However, expert costume experience is not the only service that Mrs. Cahoone provides for the theater department. Senior Carson Hanley shares that Mrs. Cahoone also provides an extra voice of discipline and reason during the chaos of rehearsals and performances.

"She helps students behave right. She gives another voice, another teacher, another adult to supervise," Hanley said.

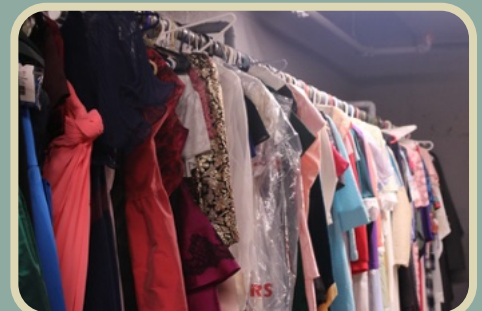
The kindness that Mrs. Cahoone provides for the theater department is not only vast in quantity, but in quality. Whether that means another moral compass or a quick repair on a broken costume, Mrs. Cahoone is always ready to help. Senior Brooke Mermis attributes these qualities of Mrs. Cahoone to her determined and relentless personality.

"I would say that Mrs. Cahoone is incredibly determined to get everything done. She has a huge task of getting everyone fit for costumes, and it's just very difficult to make sure that everyone gets what they need," Mermis said.

Mrs. Cahoone helps the theater department in more ways than they can describe. With relentless determination and a steady hand, she is one of the essential cogs in the ticking clock that is the De Soto High School theater department.



The costume storage closet for the theater, which Mrs. Cahoone helped to curate and fit to the multitude of actors during DHS's theater career. Photo by Gracyn Speck



More costumes that cover the walls of the theater department storage. Photo by Gracyn Speck

pride in decline

as attendance and excitement dwindle, de soto high school fights to keep school spirit alive

claire thompson
design editor



Cheerleaders junior Hailey Smith, freshman Ava Clark, and freshman Mercy Orbin get the crowd excited during a football game. *Photo by Claire Thompson*

Senior football player Ronan Conley running out before kick-off. *Photo by Claire Thompson*



The student section at a pink out-themed football game. *Photo by Claire Thompson*



Most would consider high school an incredibly important, but stressful time in every teenager's life. Something that can only enhance the school experience is school spirit and pride. However, the very nature of school spirit has been at risk in De Soto High School in recent years.

The decline in school spirit is evident in how the Student Council has to persuade people to dress up for spirit days. Volleyball has to offer free concessions just to get students to show up. School spirit, at least at DHS, has felt like it has been on a decline since the pandemic. Senior Emelie English, a member of the DHS volleyball team, has seen this decline first hand. "I remember coming to the volleyball games when I was in elementary school. There were a lot of people in the stands," said English. "And now I notice, when I'm playing, we don't have a student section."

However, it is not just volleyball that has been hit with low school spirit. Most sports and activities have seen a downturn in attendees or support. Junior Willa Prothro, a long-time cheerleader and Student Council member, has insight on the topic.

"School spirit to me is being proud of the school that you attend

and supporting everything the school does, no matter if it's from band, art, to sports. You really want to support all of it," said Prothro. School spirit is not just showing up for football games and club activities. School spirit can be participating in assemblies, donating to the theater program, or simply congratulating a friend on a team's win. What is hindering DHS is not only a low level of participation, but also the lack of excitement surrounding these activities. Wildside cosponsor Ms. Lathem has been working hard to overcome the challenges facing school pride.

"One thing we're really trying this year is to make it very clear that everyone is a part of Wildside," said Lathem. "Wildside just provides the structure for communication."

Change needs a movement, and while organizations like STUCO, the cheer team, and Wildside are doing their best, it takes more than a few groups of people to fix school spirit at large. The most we can do is support all activities – that means showing up and getting excited to make everyone feel welcome no matter if they are in five activities or none.



Mental Health

carrie wallace and sarah follmer
sports editor and staff reporter

The positive effects

In recent years, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has made its way into almost everything. Since the creation of AI, numerous debates have been associated with it. Whether it be a moral or ethical dilemma, people are well aware of the red flags that arise with AI.

Specifically with high school academics, the fear of cheating and the use of AI when doing work comes into play. However, few people think about AI and its impacts on mental health.

In school, the social and academic stress can be enough to really wear on someone's mental health. Artificial Intelligence as a possible resource might be game-changing.

When it comes to AI's availability to students, De Soto's school social worker, Joe Kordalski notes how AI affects students at DHS effect of AI.

"It's impacted their accessibility to getting answers," Kordalski said.

This new resource has many benefits that are offered to teenagers. When referring to AI's role with mental health and illness, the National Library of Medicine presents facts about its impact.

"With over 970 million people living with a mental disorder worldwide [1], as well as a shortage of accessible care for many people, leveraging tools such as artificial intelligence (AI) could influence mental health through prevention and treatment," researchers said.

Additionally, AI is usually seen as simply a resource to gain information. However, Artificial Intelligence is programmed to receive feedback and return with fact-based advice. Unlike other websites, AI is meant to have a conversational feel with its disclosure of information. This serves a huge gain to all students who use AI because it not only serves as a source but also as a responsive voice.

Regarding students reaching out to AI about mental health, Joe Kordalski mentions how simply asking for help in the first place is a huge benefit.

"Whether that's in real time, asking for questions for a paper they're doing or inquiring about their own mental health, I think people are more open to asking, which is a great thing," Kordalski said.

Since AI is easily accessible, it allows those who have not been able to receive help or talk to someone to still do something about their mental health. This is a big step in helping those who are struggling but afraid to reach out.

Mental health awareness is important, and the more it is normalized and the easier it is to receive help, the better students will feel. AI may have never come to mind when thinking about mental health, but it can be useful if students have general concerns or questions.

One of the struggles with AI is that it might not be specific enough for someone's mental health needs, and therefore, can be unreliable. Joe Kordalski expresses his concern with relying on chatbots.

"I would be concerned that if a student is using AI as a way of receiving support, that it's going to give more broad general information and might not meet their individual needs," Kordalski said.

However, AI should not be a replacement for human interaction and professional advice. AI is still new and has not been through the same school as professionals, which is why it can never be a replacement. Joe Kordalski said,

"I'm always gonna defer to talking to somebody in person... as awkward and uncomfortable as that might be, I would hope that students could see after that relationship is built, whether it be with a

coach, a sponsor, a teacher, a social worker, that initial unease that somebody might feel, what quickly goes away," Kordalski said.

Talking to a trusted adult or classmate can give you advice that AI cannot because



and AI:

and negative effects of AI as a resource

it has no real-world experience. Relying on AI for advice can be similar to relying on social media.

When being asked about this, Joe Kordalski stated,

“I think that when behind a screen or a

keyboard, then whenever we’re struggling in real time, we’re less likely to reach out and ask for support,” Kordalski said.

One way that students can strengthen their connections is by setting healthy boundaries with technology. For example, teens could try to get involved and join a club that does not involve screens or technology, or they can simply choose to talk face-to-face instead of texting. This can help make connections with people as well as lower codependency with screens.

Many different research sites, including the American Psychological Association, point to the negative effect of social media on teenagers.

While social media often gets the spotlight, AI tools are rapidly becoming a big part of daily teenage life. With the use of chatbots and other AI systems, students’ confidence can quickly deplete. Some may think they are less capable of asking for help when they need it, and they begin to rely even more on AI as a coping mechanism.

It is important to discuss that, while AI has a lot of benefits and is impressive in its abilities, it cannot substitute a person. AI does not have the same training, context, or cognition to be able to understand mental health situations as a human would.

When people use AI as a support system in place of talking to a professional, a lot of harm can come from it.

A recent example of this is on TikTok, where a woman uses AI to enable her to believe that her psychiatrist was in love with her. When doing more research, people found out that she was feeding AI information that was biased to her opinion, so AI would agree with her.

This is just one of the first famous examples of a woman who may be struggling mentally and falling into a

delusion caused by AI. Someone who is already wrestling with everyday obstacles may be quick to believe anything AI says. This could then lead to a worsening state for a person or lead them to be misinformed. This trend is likely to continue until AI sets margins on its abilities, or people step back from reaching out to AI for mental health-specific reasons.

People tend to acknowledge that AI can only respond with information it can find or is provided. AI will not know anyone’s personal background or mental status without being told. This gives it the ability to feed into whatever the user is trying to get at due to a lack of context. It is a reminder to people that AI should not replace real professional help.

It is necessary in a time of technical advancements to discuss the possible dangers of technology, too. And with AI’s new transformation, there is a lot that is new.

Millions of people turn to AI for advice, but high school students are especially affected. While AI can offer much help in school, it should be noted that it should be approached with caution when turning to AI for mental health questions.

As a school, De Soto has many other options for when students want to explore their mental health. Our student services have counselors and social workers on hand to help. These professionals are the ones who know students and are trained to help them.



sadie clarke
photography editor

wild about de soto

During Labor Day weekend, the city of De Soto hosted its annual De Soto Days Festival which filled the downtown streets with carnival rides, games, live music, local vendors, and a parade.



Senior Kylie Caudell poses with her younger sister. *Photo by Sadie Clarke*



Band members perform in the street. *Photo by Sadie Clarke*



Junior football players toss candy to parade goers. *Photo by Sadie Clarke*



The De Soto Diamonds wave their poms in the parade. *Photo by Sadie Clarke*



James Kountzman, Teddy Caro, Liam Johnson, and Katelyn Carlyle enjoy the De Soto Days festivities. *Photo by Sadie Clarke*



Fair attendees ride the Cliff Hanger. *Photo by Sadie Clarke*



Above: Sophomores Liliana Davis and Ava Gentsch smile at the fair. *Photo by Sadie Clarke*



To the Left: School Resource Officer Deputy Newsome falls into a dunk tank. *Photo by Sadie Clarke*



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CATS CORNER

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Hudl Fan is the new location for DHS Sports!

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Subscription proceeds go to the DHS Activities fund. This is a benefit to ALL student activities at DHS!



fall into fun: a senior activity guide

ria hudson

arts & entertainment editor

seniors cherish their last year at dhs

Senior year of high school is known for its bittersweet goodbyes. It's one final salute to the end of a high school career and the start of a new life. To commemorate this memorable final year, students are embracing numerous trends.

Children's backpacks, painted cars, sunrises and sunsets, hand-painted jeans, and Senior Sunday posts are all examples of these traditions that students partake in. Although they can be seen as simple activities, a deeper meaning can be found at a closer glance. Joe Kordalski, a social worker at De Soto High School, comments on the impact these tasks can make.

"You guys are finishing up a big piece of your life, and so the more we can have fun with backpacks or, girls decorating their jeans or any way to kind of bring closure to something that has been a lifelong venture for you guys, I think that that's an amazing way for you guys to just be able to express yourself," Kordalski said.

Self-expression is not the only benefit of senior year, either. Discovery is an integral part of every young person's life, which Kordalski also discusses.

"You guys are here for academics, but the activities are a piece to you guys figuring out what you love and how you can contribute to us as a community," Kordalski said.

Socially participating in this kind of community is another benefit of the community. Harrison Smith, a teacher at De Soto High School, comments on the benefits of connecting with peers.

"All those [activities] just bring you together with a group of people that have similar interests, and it's an easy way to make friends and an easy way to make community," Smith said.

So what kinds of crafts bring people together as a community? What helps our school form its own bubble? According to Tatum Hughes, a senior at De Soto High School, there was one in particular she enjoyed.

"I really loved decorating my car with chalk markers. I thought it was a really fun way to get ready for senior year with my friend, and it was really fun to just be decorative," Hughes said.

and trying to have fun and embrace it," Hughes said, "So little things like that or the kid backpacks, like, kind of just help us, like, remember that we're experiencing our last year in high school."

Remembering the little things is a common theme, even according to already graduated teachers like Smith.

"Advice for seniors: try new things, meet new people, and savor the time you have left," Smith said.

Ultimately, there's no question that being a senior has its ups and downs. However, in the end, savoring senior traditions with friends and family is something that will stick with graduates forever.



"You guys are here for academics, but the activities are a piece to you guys figuring out what you love and how you can contribute to us as a community," Kordalski said.



In addition to her car paintings, Hughes touches on the importance of having fun and living life to the fullest, even when it can get stressful.

"With college coming up next year and a lot of college applications and college readiness, we're not really focusing on our last year of high school



senior backpacks



decorated jeans



senior boxes



painted cars





what's in season?

favorite seasons and their trends

In a recent poll of students at De Soto High School, Fall emerged as the overwhelming favorite season, earning 56% of votes. Fall includes a variety of events, including De Soto Days, Football games, Halloween, Thanksgiving, the fall mixer, and Homecoming! Along with homecoming is hoco week, including spirit days, powderpuff, and pep-rallies! The fall season has the strongest school spirit, with dressing up for football game themes, spirit days, and Halloween.

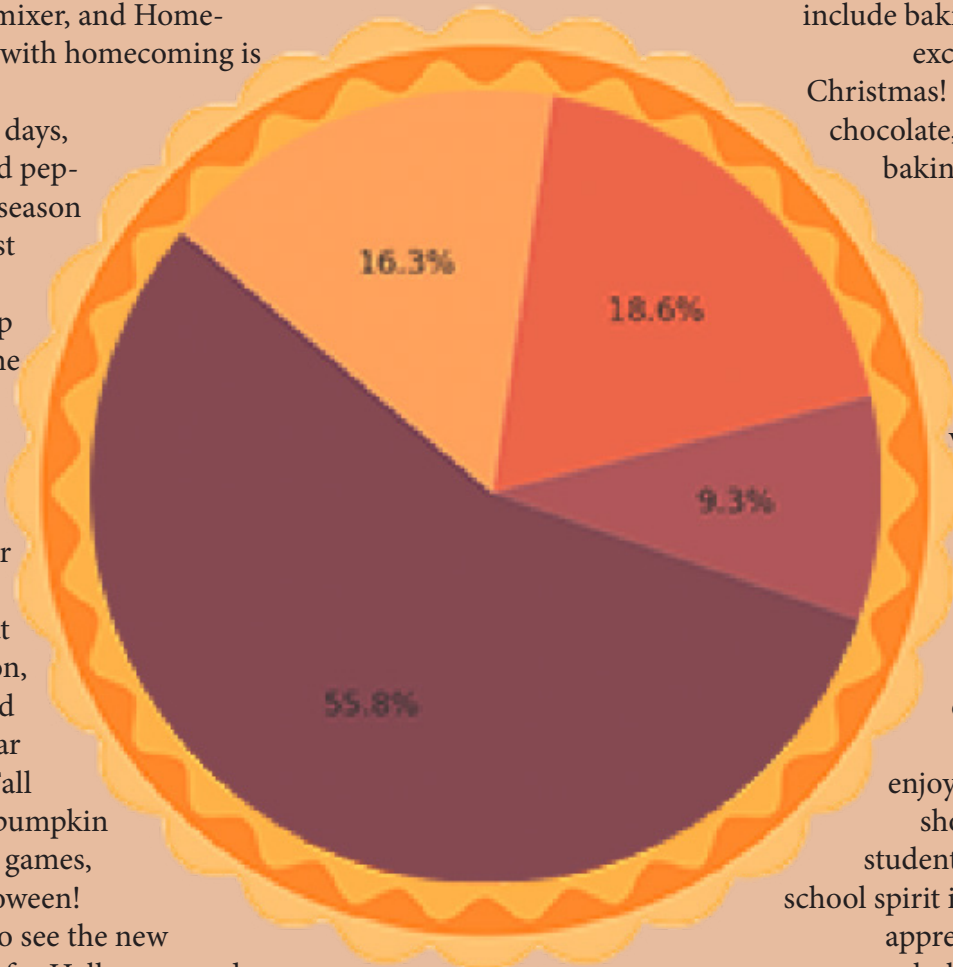
When asked what their favorite trends were within that particular season, the students said the most popular trends among Fall were sweaters, pumpkin drinks, football games, Uggs, and Halloween!

"I love to see the new costume trends for Halloween and just the cozy vibes of October", said a student at DHS. Fall's lead was huge, with over 37% higher than the second-place season.

Nationally, fall is often reported as the most popular season across the U.S, thanks to the cooler weather and festive traditions. Coming in second favorite was summer, with 19% of students voting as their favorite.

Trends that students voted as their favorites for summer included swimming, tanning, lake days, no school, and the Fourth of July. Following the summer, Winter came in third favorite with 16% of the votes. Some activities for winter include baking, winter dances, gift exchanges, travelling, and Christmas! Students point out hot chocolate, pajamas, snow, skiing, baking, and Christmas were their favorite trends of winter!

According to the students, the least favorite season is spring, with 9% of the votes. Common events in spring include easter egg hunting, taking photos, prom, graduation, and musicals. The main trends students enjoyed in spring were thenice weather and enjoying nature. The results show that the majority of students enjoy cozy vibes and school spirit in the fall, while others appreciate the sunshine and holidays in other seasons.



Common activities during the summer include lake days, bonfires, pool parties, fairs, and the Fourth of July.

