

De Soto High School
De Soto, Kansas
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THE GREEN PRIDE



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SHORTER ACTS SIGN ME UP!

In 2026, major changes will be made within the American College Test (ACT). These changes are being made to offer students a more modernized test-taking opportunity.

In April of 2025, the science section of the test became optional for the ACT. Without science, the composite score is now based on only the english, math, and reading portions of the exam. If taken, the science section of the test will be reported separately.

“These changes reduce time-related pressure that makes it easier to demonstrate students’ knowledge,” Kaul said.

A common request by students who plan to take the exam is that they want the overall ACT to be shorter; luckily, these test-takers have gotten their wish. In 2026, the number of questions on the test will be reduced. Exactly 44 questions were removed from the test to reduce time. The test now consists of 75 fewer minutes to help gain more accurate scores on students’ academic abilities. The math section now has one fewer answer choice to choose from. one fewer answer choice to choose from, granting a better insight into students’ capabilities.

The same concept of decreasing the workload on the math section of the ACT similarly applies to the English portion. To reduce students from having mental fatigue ACT changed their reading passages to be shorter. This gives students more time to answer the questions on the test rather than reading lengthy passages.

Depending on the thought processes of different school districts, the ACT has given the option to take the test not only on paper but also online. Students are more familiarized with online tests, so having an online ACT would likely prove to be less intimidating. However, School Improvement Specialist Cathryn Monroe points out that the concept of online testing can depend on the college a student wants to attend.

“Know what the score requirements are of the colleges you are interested in applying to and whether it is test blind, test-optional, or test-required,” Monroe said.

Test blind practices are three different trials. Test blind does not use test scores for any admissions. The test option is used for scholarships. The test required you to have a specific score for admission.

Opportunities to prepare for the ACT at De Soto High School are a semester-long class with Mr. Riley and Mr. Kaul. Students learn tips and tricks and participate in practice ACTs in class. Mr. Hamilton also offers a summer class that helps students prepare for the ACT. Mr. Kaul discusses what he believes is important to consider prior to the ACT, **“Questions to ask yourself while prepping for the ACT is, what is your goal? Why are you taking the test? What score are you hoping to get?” Kaul said.**

The ACT updates are benefiting students and there scores by adapting to modernized education.



Featured above is Oasis Nutrition, a local drink shop located in De Soto, Kansas with Sherelle Witt as the owner and manager.

Photo by Ria Hudson

Shear Images Hair, Skin and Nails Studio, a local beauty shop, is featured in the snowy climate below.

Photo by Ria Hudson



Panasonic battery plant, they are not the only ones. De Soto High School, a school with approximately 968 students currently enrolled, is planning on exponentially raising the number of spots for out-of-district students. Therefore the school would be accommodating those moving to De Soto for the battery plant, according to the Johnson County Post.

“USD 232 in De Soto will quadruple its capacity for open enrollment in the 2025-26 school year, allowing more students who live outside the school district’s boundaries to attend there this fall,” the Johnson County Post said.

Although the quantity of additional available seats may be daunting, several advantages will come from this influx of students. Kevin Thomas, principal of De Soto High School, comments on the possible new funding capabilities from the state.

“In my mind, the more students that come in, that also brings in support from the state. I suppose if it happened, it wouldn’t be the worst thing, because it

would allow for more funding and allow for us to grow,” Thomas said.

Moreover, this funding could help De Soto High School maintain a more local, hometown feel. Thomas pointed out that long-term success could align with these hopes excellently.

“So in five to ten years, success at DHS would be the culture [that] still feels like home for people, no matter how many people move into the area or anything like that, but that the culture still feels like home, families are still invested in the school community. And we’re still one of the, if not the best, high school in the state,” Thomas said.

In the spirit of moving forward, for the greater good of the community, there are several options to take. One of the most popular is expressed by Witt.

“I would love for the city council to invite developers to come in and really invest in our community, not just in the apartment or townhomes, but in actual single-family homes for people,” Witt said. “I think if we can give some incentives on that side for infrastructure,

water, sewer, power, you’re going to see some developers come in and actually put some single-family homes.”

Thomas adds to this focus on community improvement when he mentions traffic control, as well as being wary of what this could look like in the future.

“If there is going to be a large influx, I think having an awareness of narrow roads and high traffic areas and traffic on the [Highway] 10, for example,” Thomas said.

Ultimately, it is undeniable that there will be extensive changes to many parts of the community over the coming years. However, as Witt wisely points out, it’s not just a space that makes a community, it’s the people.

“I’m excited about the growth, and I think I want people to keep in mind that, like I said, even if we do grow, we’re still a small community and we still can keep that small town feel by getting to know one another and saying hi to each other and being kind,” Witt said.



Our Home

brooke mermis
editor-in-chief

Every four years, billions of fans are drawn to one of the most prestigious sports competitions: the World Cup. Since 1930, hundreds of teams have been allowed to compete in a series of tournament games over a month, eventually crowning a single winner as the best soccer team in the world.

Despite a variety of countries participating in such an event, only a select few of them host the World Cup. In the summer of 2026, the World Cup is making a comeback, with Kansas City designed as one of the major host cities.

With such a large-scale event taking place in Kansas City, much preparation has gone into making sure the experience for both the players and fans is top-tier. One aspect of preparation is making sure that small businesses in Kansas City are prepared for the onslaught of attendees from various countries. To ensure all entrepreneurs knew what was in store for their businesses, the FIFA World Cup Kansas City team devised an initiative called the “KC Game Plan.”

“KC Game Plan is kicking off an exciting new training series...to get small businesses ready for the global spotlight. These free trainings will equip local entrepreneurs with practical tools and insights on a range of topics...” the website announced.

With specific classes tailored to marketing and consumerism, as well as “readiness assessment” forms available to small-business owners, Kansas City is working hard to prepare its companies for international attention.

Beyond having plans to improve its commercialism, Kansas City has also been working to renovate its facilities for the World Cup. A KSHB Kansas City article reported that in May 2023, Missouri legislators “allocated \$50 million,” in which the majority, 42.5 million dollars, was planned to be utilized to repair GEHA Field in Arrowhead Stadium. Those working on renovations also removed “3,000 seats along the visiting sideline...to accommodate the wider and perfectly leveled surface FIFA requires” for the eight total games being played in Kansas City. Although the club will need to rework these arrangements to fit the field requirements of the National Football League, other infrastructure plans, like concrete seating sites, are permanent at Arrowhead Stadium.

Along with ensuring the comfort and accessibility of the World Cup venue, increasing the potential for fan hype has also been considered a top priority. Phil Buttafuoco, Deputy Athletics Director for the Army West Point Athletics Association, played a crucial role in helping bring the 2026 World Cup to Boston, Massachusetts, another major host city for the international event. After working as the Executive Director of Special Events at Gillette Stadium for the New England Patriots football team, Buttafuoco also had the opportunity to plan marketing tactics and maximize

the fan experience. Similar to those experiences being planned in Boston, others have been incorporated into Kansas City’s World Cup preparation.

“The fan festival, which is an event that Kansas City is very excited about, and an event that FIFA was asking each host city to host...for 40 straight days during the event [the World Cup] to celebrate soccer, [and] to have an entertainment hub...where people can go and listen to music, but also watch games from other regions of the event,” Buttafuoco said.

With all of the buzz around such an international event, Kansas City, as well as other host cities, is ensuring that soccer fans will get to experience the beauty and fun of their communities. With much preparation and planning going into business measures, infrastructure, and fan opportunities, Kansas City is stepping onto the national stage to showcase its passion to thousands of World Cup fans globally.

Our Pride

AS EXCITING UPDATES FOR THE WORLD CUP AND THE KANSAS CITY CHIEFS COME TO LIGHT, KANSAS CITY WORKS TO PREPARE FOR THESE EVENTS THAT WILL CHANGE THE TRAJETCORY OF OUR STATE..

The Kansas City Chiefs have become an integral part of both Missouri and Kansas cultures. From the game-winning field goals to the energetic Super Bowl parades at Union Station, the excitement of football has been never-ending in both states. While the Kansas City Chiefs' facilities are technically located in Missouri, Kansans consider them an essential part of their local culture.

However, the tides have changed for the Chiefs, as rumors have been swirling involving the new location for their facilities. Long-standing in Jackson County, the Chiefs have remained at Arrowhead Stadium for the past 60 years. According to the Jackson County Historical Society, this period began when then-owner Lamar Hunt relocated the team from Dallas, Texas, to Kansas City. This is when the "home of the Chiefs" was born.

Now, in 2026, the history of the Kansas City Chiefs in Jackson County lives on with a multitude of Super Bowl titles, American Football Conference (AFC) wins, and AFC West titles.

However, the Chiefs will have to uphold their victorious identity while on the hunt to relocate their facilities.

According to an article written by Dillon Seckington of FOX4 News, the process of relocating began in July of 2023, after ownership raised concerns about the "significant investments" it would take to improve its facilities at the Truman Sports Complex. At the time, potential renovations seemed like the best option for the Chiefs.

Despite refurbishments being in the works for the team and its facilities, Kansas legislation had other plans. In June of 2024, Governor Laura Kelly signed a multi-million dollar deal with Sales Tax and revenue (STAR) bonds to relocate both the Chiefs and their baseball counterpart, the Kansas City Royals, out of Missouri. This decision was made following Missouri taxpayers' rejection of a 3/8 -cent sales tax, which would have financed up to 70% of renovations for both teams' stadiums.

Although this initially seemed like a success, some Missouri legislators had other ideas. An article announcing the bill, written by the Missouri Independent, claims that Jackson County Executive Frank White Jr. was open to keeping the teams in Missouri but felt that the tax plan was "vague" and "incomplete."

With relocation in the cards for both the Chiefs and the Royals, Kansas and Missouri legislators and taxpayers still disagreed on the major move going into 2025. A timeline recorded by

Seckington of FOX4 News shares that the primary obstructions in the process of signing a complete deal to move the sports facilities to Kansas involved the extension of the team's STAR bonds into June 2026 and White Jr.'s recall from office.

Although the application of STAR bonds had the potential to increase the funding for the Chiefs' facilities to be updated at Arrowhead, Chiefs' owner Clark Hunt points out how the deal would only work if both the Kansas and Missouri governments make appropriate arrangements.

"Just frankly, not everything was resolved that needed to be resolved," Hunt said, as reported by Eric Graves of KMBC 9 NEWS.

The other issue of White Jr.'s recall fueled the fire between the two states, as his vote out of office in September 2025 proved to be a step back for Missourians. Luckily for Kansas, the 85%-15% margin made it easier for the Chiefs to complete their major move.

Finally, after withholding deals and untransparent disagreements, the National Football League (NFL) reported that the Chiefs ultimately decided to leave Jackson County and relocate their facilities to Kansas. By 2031, the Chiefs will be playing in a stadium near the Kansas Speedway and the retail district, The Legends, as well as practicing in their new facility in Olathe.

According to the announcement released by the official NFL website, Hunt is more than excited to see a new change for the Chiefs, but also reflects on how the culture can stay consistent throughout both Kansas and Missouri.

"Our fans will still be the loudest in the NFL, our games will still be the best place in the world to tailgate, and our players and coaches will be ready to compete for championships, because on or off the field, we are big dreamers," Hunt said.

Patience, Practice, Progress

ethan dobson
staff reporter

Boys and girls basketball finish the season strong

As the boys and girls basketball seasons are coming to a close, the teams are continuing to find their identity as games and practices shape the way they work together.

The women's team is led by Coach Ryan Robie and Coach Jessica Kelley. Coach Robie notes that they are excited to see how the girls' team can progress throughout the season and what they can work on at practice.

"We want to play fast and put a lot of pressure on teams defensively," Robie said.

Part of the major progress that comes from the team is practicing. For Coach Kelley, attention to detail is an important aspect of basketball and growing as a team,

"Execution of offense and defense is our main focus," Kelley said. "Practice is a great way to hone in on a specific skill that the team can work on, but also getting the team working together."

With Coach Rice leading the men's team, their focus at practices has been to continue to develop defensive skills, but also to get better at teamwork.

"Making sure we are just guarding the guy they've been assigned to, but guarding the other team as a team," Rice said.



Senior Brayan Salas-Flores dunking against Turner. *Photo by Norah Kelly*

The theme of working on specific skills but making sure the entire team is flowing nicely and working together is crucial. Having a leader to look up to is beneficial for teamwork among players. For the girls' basketball team, Addison Gulley has really stepped up and shown her communication abilities on the court with her teammates, but Coach Kelley explains that she has also demonstrated this off the court.

"You constantly hear her voice, and she studies the scout and calls out what the other team is doing," Kelley said.

"Our focus has to be not on who we're playing but what on what it takes to win." - Coach Rice

Being able to communicate with teammates is essential, especially during intense situations. High-stake games can get into players' heads, but Coach Rice believes that coaches help them prepare by treating them like any other game.

"Naturally, we will treat some games as 'big' but we want to look at them as no different than any night we play," Rice said

The coaches for both teams are eager to see the growth in players, but also how the team is going to evolve as a whole. Coach Robie highlights the potential that freshman Maddie Leis has.

"We are really excited about how she can continue to grow and improve over the next few years!" Robie said.

On the boys' team, Coach Rice highlights senior Carson Patterson and how senior Dylan Narayan has stepped up as a leader "in a more quiet way," according to Rice.



Varsity player Sloan Carpenter lining up for a free throw. *Photo by Norah Kelly*

With the success of both the boys and girls basketball seasons, the teams have grown and fit into their mold with improvement in practice, focus on specific skills, and good communication from leaders like Addison Gulley and Dylan Narayan. Along with the coaches, the rest of De Soto is excited to see how these teams can transform into even better versions of themselves.

Hard Work in the Off-Season

SPRING SPORTS PREPARE FOR THEIR SEASONS WITH WINTER CONDITIONING

With spring sports starting soon, track, baseball, soccer, and softball athletes have been preparing for their respective seasons. Teams have spent the past few months, starting in January, training after school on Mondays and Wednesdays; these sessions are known as “Speed School.” Speed School focuses on conditioning, strength, and team bonding to prepare for the upcoming season.

Baseball’s winter conditioning not only works on physical preparation but also on injury prevention. The players go to Speed School twice a week and attend morning weights sessions called “Champions Hour.” In February, they do arm care twice a week, leading up to the first week of March, which prepares them for tryouts.

Focusing on arm care before helps prevent injuries during the season. Assistant boys varsity Coach, Brett Hothan, explained that winter conditioning helps get the players ready for the spring season to start.

“It gets their bodies ready to go, especially their arms,” Hothan said. “Being proactive with arm care and focusing on mechanics like KU jump, shin angle, and change of direction helps prevent injuries and prepare their arms for the first week of the season.”

Hothan also mentions that, in addition to physical strength, the main goal for the baseball team’s conditioning is accountability.

“[The coaches want] to make sure that everyone who is not in a winter sport is there and has a lead-up into the season,” Hothan said.

Another sport that participates in winter conditioning is girls soccer. Girls soccer trains Monday through Thursday with Speed School twice a week;

conditioning after, running endurance, and two days of strength training are also included with head football coach, Brian King. Assistant girls’ soccer coach, Emily Thayer, explains what helps the team prepare for their season.

“More of getting them in the mindset to be at school that long, having long days, build confidence around the team and coaches, feel expectation, gets them in a good groove to prepare for the season,” Thayer said.

In addition to boys’ baseball and girls’ soccer, track athletes have training options depending on their event. Sprinters, jumpers, and hurdlers attend Speed School, while 400-meter runners meet every Green Day and occasional Fridays to run long distance. Head track coach, Sachse, explains what the team does to prepare for the season.

“We do the work so we can do the work. Winter conditioning isn’t hard or specific but can be appreciated in March. They will not be prepared otherwise,” Sachse said.

Sachse also believes that winter conditioning and focusing on specific skills will prevent injuries for his track athletes.

“Hopefully people get in better shape

so it is not a shock to their bodies,” Sachse said.

Softball’s winter conditioning looks a little different in comparison to other spring sports. Between Speed School twice a week and hitting practice every Tuesday and Thursday in the turf room, assistant football coach Brett Hoffman, head softball coach Junelle Woolery, Hothan, and King have these athletes working hard.

Coach Woolery explains the reason behind winter conditioning and how it prepares the athletes.

“[Softball] develops mental toughness of showing up and team bonding,” Woolery said.

Woolery similarly talks about how the main goal for softball’s winter conditioning is to improve individually and as a team.

“[We want to] be better physically, mentally, and bond as a team going into the season,” Woolery said.

All the hard work coaches and athletes have put into winter conditioning have helped them become stronger, prepare their bodies, and work together as a team to have the best sports seasons possible.



Baseball, track, girls soccer, and softball, on the football field during speed school. Photo by Lyndsey Thompson

POWERLIFTING

POWER, DISCIPLINE, DEDICATION

jaliyah parker
staff reporter

A new powerlifting club at De Soto High School is giving students a chance to build strength, confidence, and community. Created in response to growing student interest in lifting, the club welcomes students of all experience levels, from beginners to advanced lifters. The goal is to provide a supportive space where students can learn proper technique and improve together.

The idea for the club came from



students who noticed that many people were already lifting but didn't have an organized group. The club now gives students a place to train in a positive environment.

Junior Brynna Billinger said "We wanted something that was open to everyone, not just people who already knew how to lift," said Brynna Billinger. "It's about learning and improving, not just being strong."

Since officially starting this school year, the club has continued to grow. Members meet after school to focus on the three main powerlifting lifts: squat, bench press, and deadlift. Meetings

usually include a warm-up, lifting time, and stretching, with members encouraging one another throughout practice.

Safety is a major focus of the club. Members are taught proper form, use spotters, and lift weights that match their ability level. Experienced lifters help beginners feel comfortable and confident.

"Nobody is judging you here," said senior Tila Lusk. "Everyone helps each other out, especially if you're new."

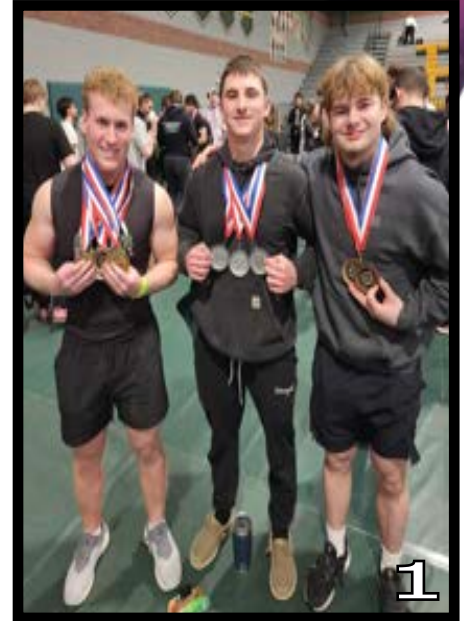
Beyond physical strength, the club

offers mental and social benefits. Members gain confidence, reduce stress, and form friendships through teamwork and encouragement. The club also promotes inclusivity, showing that anyone can participate regardless of gender or experience level.

"It's empowering," Lusk

said. "You realize you're capable of more than you think."

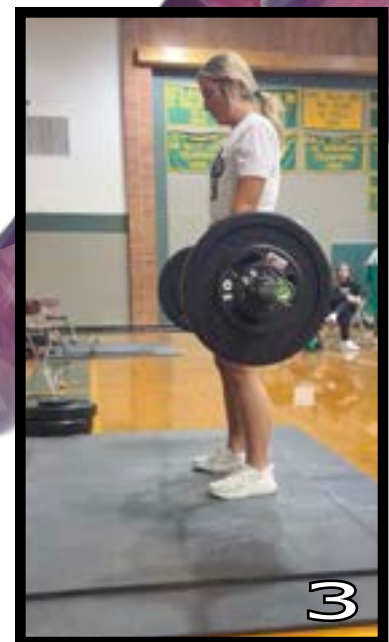
Students interested in joining the powerlifting club can sign up through school announcements, contact a club officer, or attend a meeting. With its welcoming atmosphere and focus on growth, the powerlifting club has become a positive addition to student life at De Soto High School.



1. A group of senior boys pose for a picture with their medals after competition. *Photo by Drew Wroth*

2. Junior Kennadi Fuhrman bench pressing at powerlifting competition. *Photo by Drew Wroth*

3. Junior Brynna Billinger deadlifting at first competition. *Photo by Drew Wroth*



CATS CORNER

Power Your Day!

Protein Shakes



BOUND

Use the QR code below to follow your favorite Wildcat sports and activities!



WILDCAT WIRE

If you are interested in video production, broadcast, or podcasting, consider joining the staff! See Mrs. Riley in 2026 for more information.



Catch what you missed!



addi blunt & bailey burns
staff reporters



Driven

Students at De Soto High School have many opportunities to join various clubs and activities, and many of them choose to participate in more than one. Highly involved students often feel overwhelmed as they attempt to balance sports, activities, and demanding coursework. Many students who are involved in multiple activities all agree that prioritizing mental health and maintaining a positive mindset can make stress more manageable and lead to greater success.



involved in :

- theater**
- basketball**
- track**
- a&m mentoring committee**
- assembly leader for wildside**
- thespian troops**
- voche choir**
- ips advisory committee**

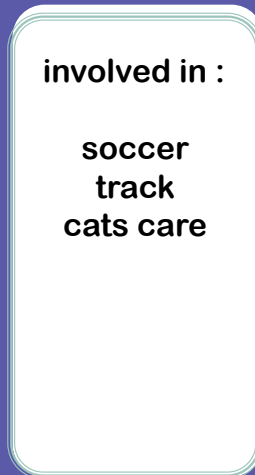
Junior Sloan Carpenter, a multi-sport athlete at De Soto High School, encourages students to prioritize their mental health when facing overwhelming stress.

“Always put yourself first, no matter what. If you’re doing something stressful or overwhelming, go home, let yourself relax, and then do homework or whatever else you have to do,” Carpenter said. “Your mind will be a lot happier. Mindset is always the key to success in stressful times.”



Sophomore Colbie Warne strives to push herself both in and outside of school. She is a well-rounded student athlete and is involved in other volunteer activities. While currently playing on the girls’ soccer team at DHS, Warne plans to continue her soccer career after high school and into college. With big plans in mind, Warne discusses her future and why she works so hard at what she does.

“I really care about school, and I want to push myself, because I know it will help me in the future. I also love playing soccer, so that is definitely something that is not hard to push myself in,” Warne said.



involved in :

- soccer**
- track**
- cats care**



involved in :

- cats corner**
- scholars bowl**
- science olympiad**
- jazz band**
- concert band**
- officer for national honors society**

Senior Matthew Barber, who juggles leadership roles such as an NHS Officer and activities, like science olympiad points out that students who put themselves out there are more likely to expand their horizons.

“I don’t see the point of not trying my best and putting myself out there. The more I put myself out there, the more opportunities I see myself getting,” Barber said.

Students



feature || the green pride

Freshman Logan Brady is an extremely motivated student who plays three different sports throughout the course of the year. Brady played varsity football and varsity basketball this year as a freshman and is planning on running track in the spring. He wants to play basketball at any level and is determined to achieve that. He discusses what motivates him as a year-round student-athlete.

“My parents are definitely my motivation. They push me to be the best I can in school and sports, and I wanna make them proud,” Brady said.

involved in :

**basketball
football
track**



involved in :

**green pride newspaper
wildcat wire
soccer
track
cross country
a&m mentoring
spanish nhs
prom committee
wildside**

Junior Jordyn Garvey is a multi-sport athlete and is involved in various clubs within the school. She recommends putting forth your full effort and doing things you love. She is also a member of Wildcat Wire and plans to go to college to eventually pursue Sports Broadcasting.

Advice she gives to students is, “I would say that it’s something that you get to do and not something you have to do.”

Senior Chole Kmieck, soon to play D1 volleyball at the University of South Dakota, mentions some of the benefits of being a hard worker.

“I would give advice that working hard will make you stronger in the long run, [and] being super busy is actually a blessing, because you get to meet so many new people, and it’ll make you stronger mentally,” Kmieck said.

involved in :

**volleyball
track
vochee choir**



involved in :

**marching band
drumline captain
president of the model
UN club
youth attorney for johnson
county youth court
national honors society
-cats care
speech and debate
a&m mentoring
wind ensemble**

Norah Kelly, who is involved in countless extracurricular activities and multiple advanced programs, like NHS and Wind Ensemble, explains how she remains positive during all of her activities. :

“Something that motivates me is that I take a lot of classes of things I’m actually interested in. One of the biggest pieces of advice I’d give to anyone is pursuing things you actually want to do and find interesting,” Kelly said.

Junior Brady DeArmond is a multi-sport athlete who manages his grades while participating in sports like track and football. DeArmond also elicits how other students can balance their busy schoolwork and athletic schedules the way he does.

“Pay attention in class and get all your work done in class to make a sports schedule easier to manage,” DeArmond said.

involved in :

**football
basketball
track**



Drumming Up Knowledge

WHERE LESSON PLANS MEET DRUM JAMS DHS TEACHERS
IN BANDS



libby meyer
opinion / news editor

Life beyond the classrooms of De Soto High School takes a different beat for teachers Ben Stamey and Sean Riley in the form of a drum set. At the end of the day, both teachers shed their work clothes and put on their rock-and-roll uniforms to perform with the numerous bands that they are a part of.

These two rock stars share more similarities than just playing the same instrument; they both picked up their drumsticks at a young age and have been playing ever since.

"I started playing drums when I was about two years old. My mom was a percussionist and a drummer, and so there were drums around the house, and I started banging on the stuff that she had around," Stamey said.

Although Mr. Stamey started playing drums a few years before Mr. Riley, both teachers' love for the drums coincidentally started from the same limitation.

"I play drums because when I was in grade school, I could not read sheet music that had notes, and so my parents gave me a snare drum because it was all on one line," Riley said.

Mr. Stamey shared a similar sentiment about his dislike of reading sheet music; however, the similarities do not end there. Both teachers have also found themselves as members of more than one band. Mr. Stamey currently performs with three bands.

"The main band that I play the most with is called Penelope in Last Call. Then the bass player from that band... and I had formed a whole duo... Then the third group... I play the drums at the church band," Stamey said.

Mr. Riley finds himself in a similar situation, performing with a multitude of different bands. He currently plays with not one, not two, but four and a half

bands.

"I was in a band called Iron Guts Kelly for 20-some years... Then I'm also in a band called Mad Lion..." Riley said, "In college, I was in a band called Sixpenny, and we still get together... I play for another band called Second Chance... I also used to have a teacher band... the Untamed Mustangs... we get together."

Through their participation in various bands it is made abundantly clear that both teachers have a deep appreciation for not only drumming but also for music in general. Stamey, in particular, notes that playing in front of others is one of his favorite parts of being in a band.

"I enjoy when other people get up and dance, like when the music moves people to actually get out of their seats and shake around a little bit. It's kind of an ego boost to know that I'm doing things that are making other people happy," Stamey said.

Both teachers also attributed some of the best parts of themselves to their bands and their experiences playing instruments. Mr. Stamey loves the unusual experiences that being in a band has allowed him.

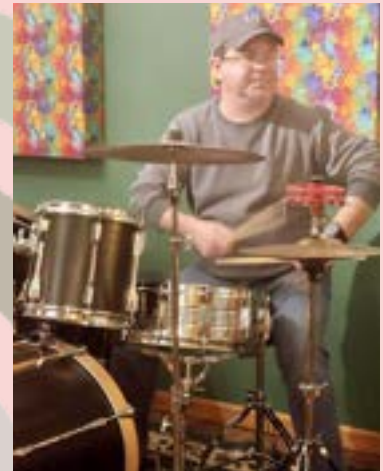
"I played in the band out of high school that moved to Florida to try to make it big and try to become famous and popular. That was a great experience for me to know that I could chase my dreams," Stamey said. "Even though I didn't get on the cover of Rolling Stone Magazine or MTV or anything like that, I was able to take that time of my life and pursue a dream."

The experiences gained from traveling with a band are irreplaceable. For Mr. Riley, being in a band is both fun and enriching.

"It's one of the most fun things that you can do. I had a friend in high school who kind of gave me the right attitude for it. He said, 'This is what we

do instead of being part of a bowling league or play on a softball team in the summer.' This is just my friends and I getting together, and we make a whole bunch of noise, and it's fun," Riley said.

The experiences and the people both Mr. Stamey and Mr. Riley have met through their instruments have only enhanced their lives, showing just how important exploring your interests and having experiences is. Even if you establish a full-time career, you do not have to let your dreams take the backseat; follow the beat of your heart or your drums.



Mr. Stamey play the drums at practice, after work with his band. *Photo by Benjamin Stamey*



Mr. Riley enjoys playing with his band. *Photo by Sean Riley*

Exploring "Valedictorian"

kayla tolly
continuity editor

HOW DE SOTO HIGH SCHOOL RECOGNIZES VALEDICTORIAN WITHOUT THE TITLE OF VALEDICTORIAN

In years past, De Soto High School has stopped awarding the valedictorian title to graduating seniors. With new leadership now in place, questions about this decision have resurfaced.

This approach was not new to Principal Kevin Thomas; at his previous high school, the valedictorian was not recognized either.

"In schools I've worked in the past, the speeches that were determined to happen were not by valedictorian or salutatorian or class rank... There was a panel with a couple teachers, an administrator, one of the admin assistants, and this group together would determine who the speakers would be" Thomas said.

As of right now, Thomas is unsure of bringing back valedictorian for a few reasons.

"I wouldn't want to [bring it back] without leaning into the school community, like what is Mill Valley doing?" Thomas said.

In contrast, former DHS student Colton Jones feels that not recognizing valedictorian takes away from students academically.

"I feel that valedictorian was a position that honored students that did their best throughout their four years here at De Soto High School, and I feel that it is taking away from students pushing themselves

to achieve that title," Jones said.

Jones added that the removal of the valedictorian title also affects how students feel about recognition in the classroom.

"Kids enjoy being recognized for their hard work in the classroom, so the lack of recognition is disheartening," Jones said.

It is possible the decision was influenced by concerns surrounding fairness and competition, though no official reason has been given. English teacher Harrison Smith feels that achieving valedictorian feels like a competition.

"I think it can breed an unhealthy culture of competitiveness that I don't think is good for students... Wanting to succeed and challenge yourself is good, but in my experience throughout high school, I think it led to people being too competitive," Smith said.

Smith feels that the competition is almost inevitable but there could be some options to make it more inclusive.

"I think celebrating one specific student who has the highest grade kind of inherently creates competition... Maybe if they recognize the top ten students that might be more inclusive and less competitive," Smith said.

However, does removing the valedictorian title really promote fairness? Or does it take away from

meaningful recognition. Jones feels that removing the title was a positive thing competition wise, but maybe not so fair.

"I wouldn't say that it promotes fairness, I think it promotes a sense of not elevating one student over the other, based on academics purely," Jones said.

Jones also acknowledges that the policy could be viewed as having a negative impact on DHS.

"You're taking away from the student that went the extra mile and applied themselves in every category to get that work," Jones said.

In comparison, Mill Valley High School does recognize valedictorian. Dr. Gail Holder, principal of Mill Valley, feels it is important to recognize the status.

"We feel like it is an important part of the academic journey to recognize those students who have achieved that status, both the courses they've taken and what they've been committed to during their high school career," Holder said.

As of right now, MVHS is not thinking about joining DHS in their decision to remove the recognition.

"I don't know the reasons why we would... It's a way of honoring the academic success of really all students... It's really just highlighting academic success," Holder said.

Dressing Up for Budgeting Down

sarah follmer
staff reporter

*DISPITE EARLY SUCCESS FAID FACES
AN UNKOWN FUTURE*



F AID, the DeSoto High School's fashion and interior design class, is a way for students to branch out, explore new interests, and find new hobbies through hands-on projects.

One of the most memorable projects the students did was make a dress completely out of newspaper. Students were sorted into groups of 5-6 and were given the task of only using newspapers to make a dress. Sophomore Colby Craig's group created one of the most outstanding dresses.

"If you wanted to get any shape you have to fold alot" said Craig

The goal of the project was to focus on sustainability, use the supplies already available in the classroom, and bond and communicate as a team. Finding pride in a long-term project is important for high school students. Senior Olivia Hamer believes that the team work element helped her group become successful.

"I'm very proud of our groups ability to take the design I created... and just being able to have it done effectively and we worked really well together" said Hamer

Students talked about how FAID was different from all the other classes that they have taken at De Soto High School because it opens up lots of new learning experiences. The teacher, Mrs. Christopher talked about how she has been able to watch students grow more confident in themselves as the semester goes on.

"Knowing that its okay to ask for help and ideas other its to bounce off each other its good for

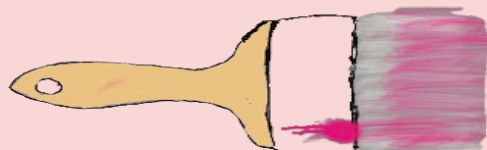
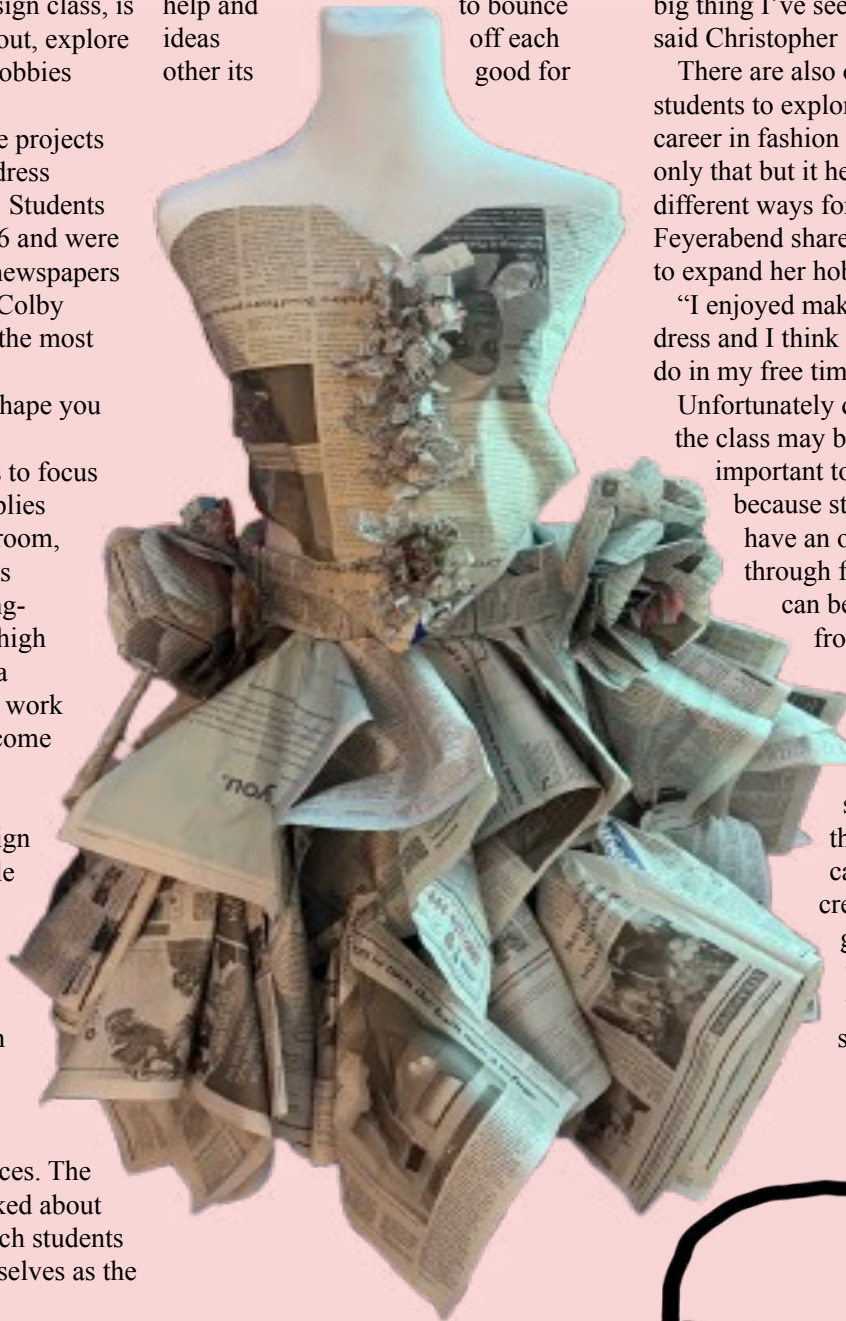
conversations too, communication is a big thing I've seen them do in this class" said Christopher

There are also opportunities for students to explore if they would like a career in fashion and interior design. Not only that but it helps prepare students in different ways for the real world. Maya Feyerabend shares about how she is able to expand her hobbies outside of class.

"I enjoyed making the newspaper dress and I think it is something I could do in my free time"

Unfortunately due to lack of funds the class may be terminated. It is important to talk about this because students are able to have an outlet to flow creatively through fashion. Improvements can be made to keep the class from not being a class next year.

"I understand, like there's not a lot of careers for it in the state of Kansas, but that doesn't mean there can't be ones that are created or the kids aren't going somewhere else to continue on at what they are amazing at," said Christopher.





Hannah Shinault



Emma Stapp



Josie Merando



Claire Thompson

Bright Students, Bright Futures
Three students at De Soto High School share their experiences with preparation for their lives beyond the high school classroom.



Brooke, Andrea, Laurel

CONGRATS DHS JOURNALISM *on* 4th place *at* KSPA Regionals



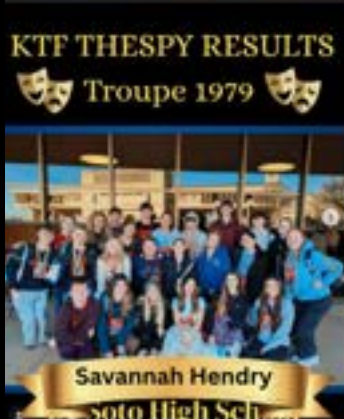
Laura & Melanie



Maddie & Bo



Elodie Monroe



Savannah Hendry



Jordyn & Reagan



Brielle & Emmie

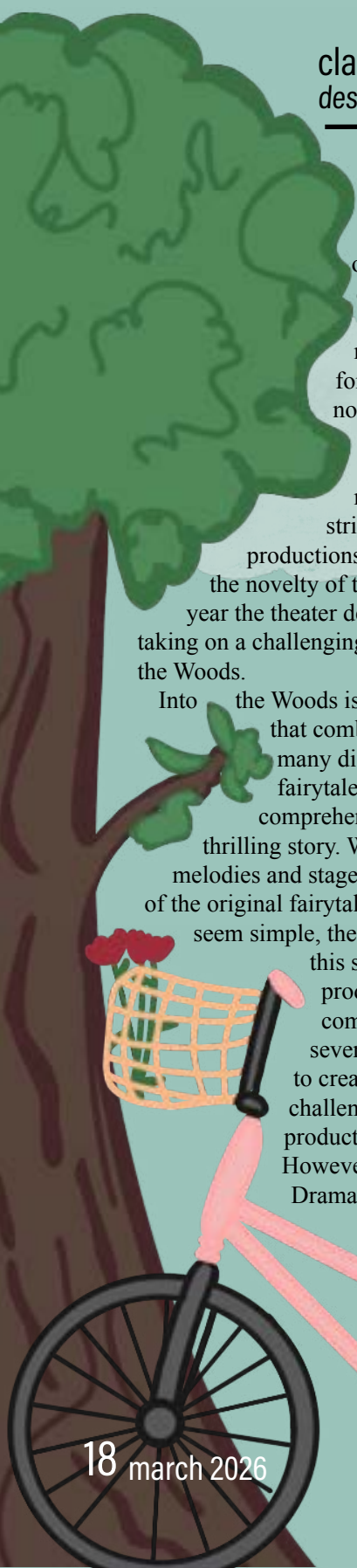


Axsel & Bryan

Into The Theater

THE DHS THEATER DEPARTMENT TAKES ON A CHALLENGING NEW SHOW, INTO THE WOODS

claire thompson
design editor/sports editor



De Soto High School has only had a dedicated winter musical for two years now, but the program is quickly making big strides in their productions. Despite the novelty of the idea, this year the theater department is taking on a challenging show, *Into the Woods*.

Into the Woods is a musical that combines many different fairytales into a comprehensive and thrilling story. While the melodies and stage direction of the original fairytales may seem simple, the music of this specific production combines several elements to create a challenging production. However, Drama

teacher and Director of the musical, Sara Bryant, picked the story partly for the learning experience it can provide to students.

“It’s always a big tackle to try and do any Stephen Sondheim show,” Bryant said. “But we felt that our students were ready to take on this challenge, and they were all really interested in the show as well.”

Musicals composed by Stephen Sondheim, who also composed *Into the Woods*, are known to be difficult due to the fast-paced lyrics and large vocal jumps. Therefore, the choice to do this particular production as the winter musical was made with much concern for the students in mind. Due to being such a demanding production, *Into the Woods* relies on its small cast to bring the show to life. One of these members, a Junior at DHS, is Via Keefer, who plays Rapunzel.

“It’s a very small cast for this winter production. There is no ensemble. That’s the major difference between the winter and fall musical,” Keefer said.

While the fall musical accepts everyone who auditions, the winter musical is often more condensed in terms of how many actors it accepts. In the case of *Into the Woods*, there are only 18 roles with no opportunity for an ensemble. That means the production works as a small, focused

group. Due to the small size of winter musicals, students who may have never been heavily involved in theater are now permitted an opportunity to audition and get a role, instead of

being put in the ensemble. Senior Chloe Weber, who plays Lucinda, is one of those students.

“It’s my senior year and I haven’t done anything in theater since freshman year, so I thought it would be fun to do it on a whim,” Weber said. “But I really like how *Into the Woods* follows the original Grimm’s fairytales because not a lot of media does.”

While *Into the Woods* is about many beloved fictional characters that high school students are familiar with, a key difference is that the musical uses the original Grimm’s fairytales to tell a more mature story, which Bryant wisely pointed out.

“It looks at the cost we pay for our wishes, and the consequences of getting everything we want in life aren’t always what they seem to be,” Bryant said. “It’s really just about these characters reconnecting with their humanity rather than the magical, fantasy world that we are familiar with them in.”

The message of *Into the Woods* celebrates change through familiar characters. The majority of the show takes place in the woods and in small village scenes, which lend themselves to interpretation by the backstage crew.

“We have some incredible student designers and builders in stagecraft, and that sign up for the technical team in the production. They have the most creative ideas already in motion to create this forest on stage,” Bryant said.

As students work towards the musical, they will tackle several acting and technical challenges as they handle a difficult musical. But development is heading forward fast, and there is no doubt that *Into the Woods* will be a fantastic musical when it debuts in March.

Senior Carson Hanley as Jack and Junior Evan Brame as the Baker consoling each other. *Photo by Sophia Feyerabend*

Sophomore Lyla Warnes as Cinderella and Junior Mason Fry as Cinderella's prince holding hands. *Photo by Sophia Feyerabend*



INTO THE WOODS TO...

Juniors Evan Brame and Lily MacDougall posing together as the Baker and his wife. *Photo by Sophia Feyerabend*



Junior Sydney Mater as Little Red skipping through the woods. *Photo by Sophia Feyerabend*



Junior Via Keefer as Rapunzel. *Photo by Sophia Feyerabend*

Impossible n'est Pas Français

SOCIÉTÉ HONORAIRE DE FRANÇAIS COMES TO DE SOTO HIGH SCHOOL

madilyn mitchell
staff reporter

At De Soto High School, French is not impossible. Recently, the Société Honoraire de Français (SHF) became an opportunity for De Soto High School students.

SHF is a way for students to be more involved in the French language and culture. Susan Smith, the French teacher, delves more in-depth into what they do.

"[SHF] is a society that is dedicated to celebrating accomplishments in French, in the French classes, in the French language, but also to promote the study of the language, study of the culture, to celebrate that, and to enjoy it," Smith said.

However, in order for one to participate in SHF, there are requirements that prospective members have to meet.

"Students do have to be in at least level three of French, and they do have a GPA requirement. 3.0 overall, 3.5 in French classes... There's a teacher recommendation portion," Smith said.

Beyond the logistics of joining SHF, Mrs. Smith further speaks on the goals she, and the members of SHF, would like to put into fruition.

"Honor Society would like to host events almost like a French club, not just for French students, but also for

other students who might be interested in joining us. Another thing is that we support international organizations that have a role in French-speaking countries," Smith said

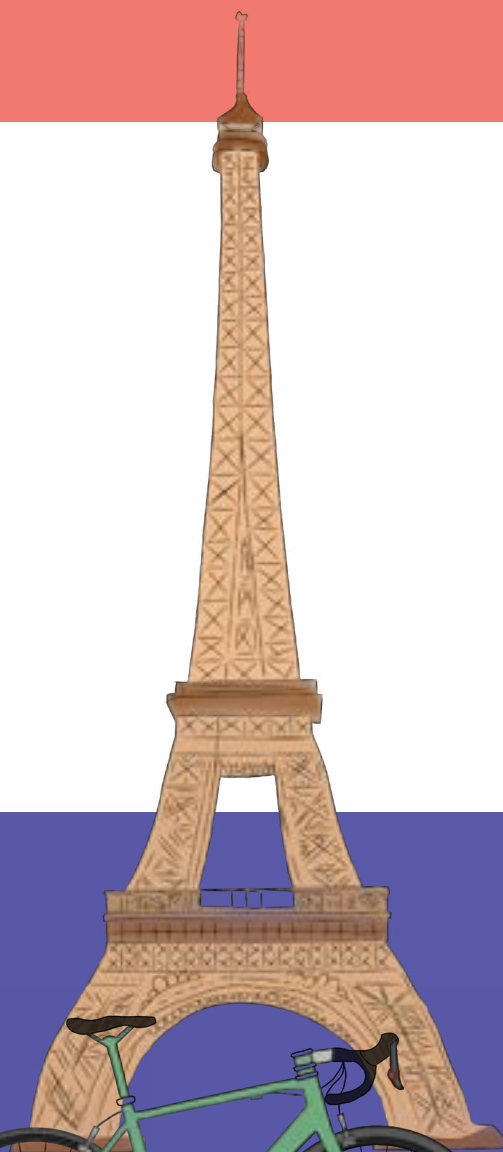
She follows up with that as she further states how it could be important to take French.

"Over 55 countries, worldwide, speak it [French] as a first or second language, and I know Spanish is more represented in the United States. French is an excellent choice if you're interested in a life on the global scale," Smith said.

To share their experience, Leta Davis, a member of SHF, comments on why she decided to join.

"I really like learning French, and I think it's kind of fun... But it also is an opportunity to more easily access volunteer opportunities because I'm not in NHS," Davis said.

While enrollment in Spanish is typically higher than in French SHF plans to encourage more students to take French so that those in SHF can learn more about the French language and culture.



DHS PEP BAND BRINGS ENERGY, VARIETY, AND SCHOOL SPIRIT TO EVERY BASKETBALL GAME

laurel zarda
staff reporter

De Soto High School's dedicated band performs throughout the year at football and basketball games while also competing at the district level. However, during basketball season, DHS pep band students fill the stands with music and school pride to create an atmosphere that goes beyond the game on the court.

For junior Andrea Burns, a tenor saxophonist in her third year playing for the pep band, the season stands out because of the musical variety.

"My favorite part about playing the pep band for basketball is the variety of songs. In comparison to the football pep band, we get tons more to play," Burns said.

Unlike football season, where songs must be memorized and rotations are limited, the basketball pep band allows musicians to perform with sheet music in front of them. This allows students to play a wider range of energetic songs, including Black Dog by Led Zeppelin and Uma Thurman by Fall Out Boy.

Senior clarinetist Caroline Maisch, who has been in the band since

freshman year, appreciates the freedom that comes with having music available during the games.

"We actually get to have sheet music in front of us, allowing us to be able to play more fun and interesting songs, instead of the ones that we had to memorize for the football pep band," Maisch said.

Preparation for the pep band is significantly different from that for the concert season. While concert music requires weeks of focused in-class rehearsals and individual practice, Burns discusses how the pep band relies more on repetition at games.

"We play the same songs at every game. They become easier because of how frequently we go to these games," Burns said.

Senior percussionist Norah Kelly, a four-year band member, described the pep band as a low-pressure environment focused on enjoyment.

"We don't rehearse for pep band season, so it's more of just fun playing," Kelly said.

Game days follow a structured but familiar routine. On nights with double headers, students report back to the school around 5:30 p.m. to set up

their instruments, stands, and music in the band section of the main gym.

During the games, the band is only allowed to play at specific times: during timeouts, between quarters, at halftime, and between games. The band plays Danger Zone during player introductions and usually performs the National Anthem before the boys' game. Drum majors cue each song, counting the band in when the play stops.

Because of the large number of musicians playing together, small mistakes often go unnoticed. Maisch noted that the pep band feels far less intimidating than concert performances.

"With a concert band, it is rare to have more than 2 people playing the same part, so errors are much more noticeable," Maisch said. "If I mess up, there are nearly 5 other people playing the exact same parts as me, so I can just laugh it off and move on," Maisch said.

After each game, the band gathers for a brief "pow-wow" with the directors to reflect on the night. One of the most anticipated traditions follows: the announcement of the "Woza Wildcat Winner." The award goes to the band member who brought the most energy and spirit to the game. The winner gets to take home the Wowza, the band's stuffed animal mascot.

While pep bands may differ from school to school, DHS's basketball pep band is defined by its sense of community.

"In the end, we're all there to have fun, play music, and cheer our teams on," Burns said.



Senior Maggie Stelzer conducting the pep band at a basketball game. *Photo by Hannah Shinualt*

the green pride || p.e.

Winter Dance Under the Lights

A SPECTACULAR SKI LODGE
SEMI-FORMAL

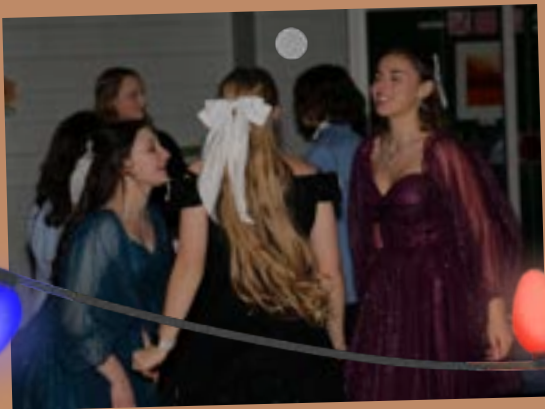
gracyn speck
feature / social media editor



A group of people dancing. Photo by Amy Riley



WOCO court candidates pose with king Carson Patterson and queen Sydney Cinotto. Photo by Amy Riley



Freshmen Katelyn Speck, Aubrielle Cunningham, and Olivia Lowry dance to some tunes. Photo by Amy Riley

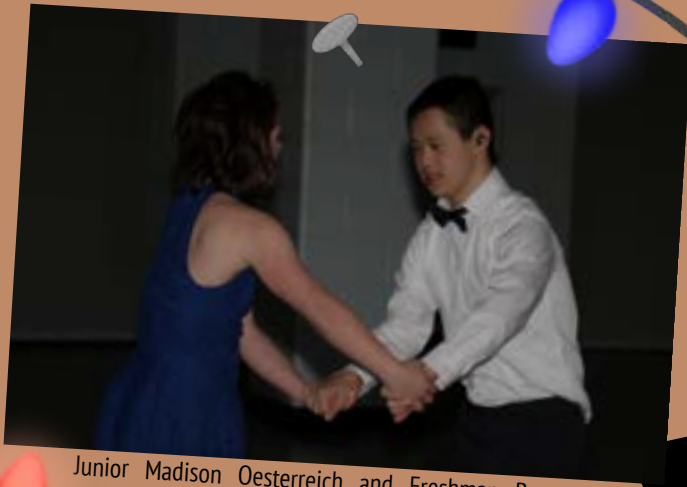


Junior Faith Settlemeyer and Freshman Sophia Schmidt strike a pose. Photo by Amy Riley



Students parade in a conga line around the commons. Photo by Amy Riley

22 march 2026



Junior Madison Oesterreich and Freshman Ben Meehan holding hands while dancing. *Photo by Amy Riley*



Students smiling while dancing to a well-known song. *Photo by Amy Riley*



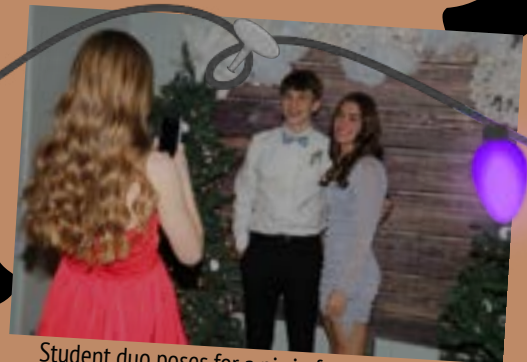
A senior girl group posing for their picture. *Photo by Amy Riley*



Seniors Myah Tuttle and Sienna McCracken smile for a photo. *Photo by Amy Riley*



Juniors Leah Johnson, Charlotte Daniels, and Sloan Carpenter dancing in the dance floor. *Photo by Amy Riley*



Student duo poses for a pic in front of the photo wall. *Photo by Amy Riley*

2026 Resolutions

BINGO

DE SOTO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS LISTED THEIR GOALS FOR THE NEW YEAR

| | | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|---|----------------------|
| eat less added sugar | be on time/ early to events | walk 10k steps a day | run 3x a week |
| work harder in the gym | read 100 pages a day | get faster | drink more water |
| save \$5000 | stop procrastinating homework | go to the gym four to five times a week | read 15 books |
| read and watch more movies | be better with money | eat cleaner | eat more whole foods |

BOXES MARKED OFF SHOW THE STUDENT HAS KEPT UP WITH THEIR GOALS