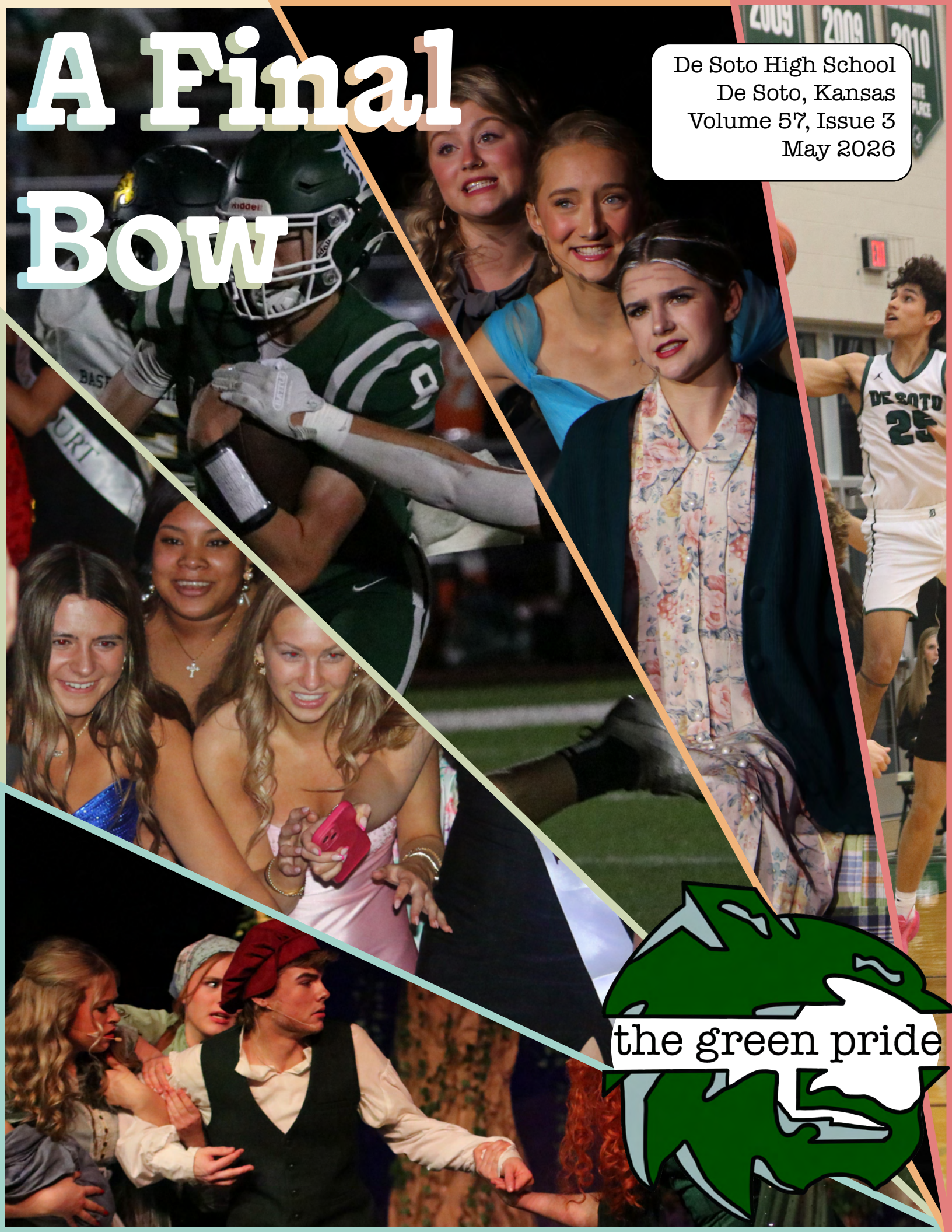


A Final Bow

De Soto High School
De Soto, Kansas
Volume 57, Issue 3
May 2026



the green pride

In This Issue

NEWS

Page 6: New Phone Law

SPORTS

Page 7: Boys Tennis

Page 16: Girls Softball

FEATURE

Page 4-5: Letters From the Editors

Page 10-11: Senior Seminars & Coach Relationships

Page 12: Mr. Murphy

OPINION

Page 18-19: Senior Parking Spots

Page 20: SPED Budget Cuts

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Page 21: Clue

PHOTO ESSAYS

Page 3: Newspaper Baby Pictures

Page 8-9: Athletic Senior Nights

Page 22-23: Prom

Page 24: Senior Assassins

POLLS

Page 13: Senior Confessions

Page 14-15: Senior Map

Meet the Staff

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Brooke Mermis

CO EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Maddie Hellerich

NEWS / OPINION EDITOR

Libby Meyer

FEATURE / SOCIAL MEDIA EDITOR

Gracyn Speck

A&E / SOCIAL MEDIA EDITOR

Ria Hudson

REVISION EDITOR

Kayla Tolly

SPORTS / GRAPHIC DESIGN EDITOR

Claire Thompson

STAFF REPORTERS

Addison Blunt

Madilyn Mitchell

Bailey Burns

Jaliyah Parker

Ethan Dobson

Hailey Smith

Sarah Follmer

Lyndsey Thompson

Jordyn Garvey

Laurel Zarda

Our Socials



@DHS_GREENPRIDE



DHSGREENPRIDE.ORG

Looking Back at the First Chapter

madilyn mitchell
staff reporter



Maddie Hellerich

• 2026 SENIOR
• CLASS ON THE
• GREEN PRIDE
• NEWSPAPER
• STAFF



Brooke Mermis



Kayla Tolly



Madilyn Mitchell



Libby Meyer



Ria Hudson



Gracyn Speck



Ethan Dobson
may 2026 3

brooke mermis
editor-in-chief

Letter from the Editor

A FINAL MESSAGE FROM THE 2025-2026 EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, BROOKE MERMIS

I never imagined that at the end of my high school career, I would be sitting here, at my seat in Newspaper, writing my final words as Editor-in-Chief of The Green Pride. This moment is very bittersweet for me; I feel a sense of accomplishment with what I have done with my years on staff, but I am also afraid of what my future holds for me.

Throughout my four years of high school, I have spent the majority of it looking at what's ahead. Not focusing on the past, not thinking about what is right in front of me, but stressing about what I will need to do with the rest of my life. The classes I took in school, the jobs I applied for, and the organizations I involved myself in were all part of what I thought I would need to do to find success in my future. Now that graduation is upon me, and I have completed this checklist I have made for myself, I still feel this sense of anxiety more than ever.

Despite my fears, I have found that living my life to the fullest has been the best remedy. Everyone always says to focus on school and push the fun activities aside, but I have done that my entire life. I needed a change, and it started with my realizing that life is not that serious. School is important to me, but it should not be all-consuming. As I transition into the next stage of my life as an adult living in the real world, with real problems, I have felt that the fun I have now matters more than ever.

Especially this year, I have taken all of the opportunities with my friends and family. Whether that is going out

to eat with my cousins, getting together with my extended family, or even going on an impromptu trip with my future roommate, I have been happier than I have ever been. I finally found the balance between my schoolwork and my life outside the walls of De Soto High School that I had been searching for my entire high school career. Once I had discovered it, I recognized that I could never go back.



My advice to anyone who is wishing for an escape from the never-ending bounds of school is to take all of the opportunities you can to have fun. The goal is not to neglect schoolwork, but to enhance your high school experience by ensuring that you are not constantly overwhelmed. It's okay to take breaks. It's okay to go out with your friends. But most importantly, it is okay to take opportunities in place of school. High school is about growing and finding the best version of yourself, not limiting yourself to the confines of a classroom.

To conclude, I wanted to give a few parting words to some of my friends and family who have helped me find my passions and my happiness.

To my mom, thank you for being my favorite person in the world. You are the strongest person I know, and I am so thankful that you push me to be the best version of myself every day.

To my dad, thank you for wanting me to do my best, while also recognizing where my limits are. I couldn't ask for a better role model.

To my sister, Anna, and my brother, Frank, I can't wait to see what you guys do in the future. Frank, I am so happy for your success in college, and Anna, I am excited to see the beautiful young lady you grow into.

To my best friends, Libby, Sam, Ria, Gracyn and Cadence, you guys are some of the most important people in my life, and I am forever grateful to you guys for making me laugh every day.

To Mr. Riley, my Newspaper advisor: thank you for always supporting me and allowing me to grow as a writer, designer, and leader. Also, thank you for the candy.

To Maddie, my Co Editor-in-Chief, thank you for being the best Newspaper partner I could ask for. You always make me smile, and I can't wait to see what you do at Mizzou.

Lastly, I want to thank my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, for giving me the opportunity to write what I am writing right now. I am very blessed to have the life I have been granted with the best people.

Letter from the Editor

feature || the green pride

A FINAL MESSAGE FROM THE 2025-26 CO EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

maddie hellerich
co editor-in-chief

My final year in the newspaper is finally coming to an end, after four years of writing, designing, interviewing, and tears of frustration from InDesign.

When I first walked into my newspaper class, my sister, Emma Hellerich, was an Editor in Chief. When I saw her up in front of the class, I knew I wanted to take on that position someday. However, I faced many setbacks that kept me from taking that position earlier. I procrastinated. In fact, in Emma's letter, her single piece of advice to me was not to procrastinate. I did not turn in assignments. I delayed many projects that the newspaper staff worked on; I take full accountability, but I am also embarrassed by that.

Going into junior year, I still had not completely proved myself from sophomore year to be a good fit for Editor-in-Chief. Therefore, I was not selected, but I understood why. I did that to myself. This was also the slap in the face that I needed; it was my motivation to improve. It's crazy how something small like a leadership position in a high school class helped me drastically improve my work ethic in school, tremendously boosting my GPA by almost a full point.

This motivation also carried over to the softball field, my second home. Junior year was a huge turning point, and a very stressful time, but I figured a lot out. I truly believe that a lot of this motivation and dedication to be a better version

of myself stemmed from being a part of The Green Pride and having the desire to be in a leadership position.

Although I will not be pursuing a career in journalism, it has been a staple in my high school experience and has taught some unforgettable lessons, as well as how to overcome the smallest and biggest of obstacles. The newspaper, and the people in it, taught me how to take feedback, how to help and encourage others, how to lead, and most



importantly, how to adjust when things do not go the way my staff and I initially planned. Most importantly, the biggest thing I have taken away from this class is the importance of a support system.

Throughout high school, it is so important that you find your people. To my teachers and mentors throughout high school: Coach Woolery, Coach

Wible, Mrs. Lehrman, Mr. Rivera, and Mr. Murphy, thank you for being my role models and always encouraging me, and reminding me that school is not a competition and to be my own person.

A special thanks to my support system: Ava Rosner, Abby Wagoner, Jordyn Bode, and Zoe Church, my sister Emma, and all of my softball teammates, past and present, thank you for being true friends. Thank you mom and dad for your patience and endless love and

support you continue to give me.

Also, thank you to my journalism friends across The Green Pride and Wildcat Wire. I cannot wait to see what you all do.

Lastly, thank you, Mr. and Mrs. Riley, for everything you have done for me at De Soto. Your empathy, patience, and kindness are what I look up to. Thank you for the edits, inspiration, feedback, and overwhelming support you have provided me for the last four years.

Thank you, Brooke Mermis, for being the best Editor-in-Chief. I couldn't have asked for a better partner to be in this class with. I cannot wait to see what you do at the University of Central Missouri, and I know you will be successful with whatever you do. You are an exceptional student and an even better friend to all, thank you for never judging me and always talking with me.

Thank you De Soto High School for the endless memories, and learning curves you threw at me.

Best,

Maddie Hellerich
(for the last time)

Phone Phrenzy



libby meyer
news & opinion editor

THE NEW ELECTRONICS BAN AND HOW IT WILL AFFECT DE SOTO

On March 19, 2026, Kansas Governor Laura Kelly signed Bill HB 2299 into law, which will take effect in the 2026 - 2027 school year. According to KMBC News 9, this bill will prohibit students from using personal electronics, such as phones, tablets, computers, smartwatches, or wireless headphones in schools.

The Kansas Reflector reports that this new law is “bell-to-bell”, meaning that students are not allowed to have personal electronics at all during the school day, including lunch, passing periods, and free time in class. This law also ensures that phones are not just set aside; instead they have to be turned off, stowed away, and not accessible during the day. Exceptions to this bill include medical needs, such as blood sugar monitors, and IEPs or accommodations.

The bill, however, does not detail how these policies will be enforced; instead, it leaves schools responsible. As stated by the Kansas Office of the Governor, certain aspects, such as where phones are kept, how the law is enforced, and exact punishments, are up to the discretion of the school administration.

When polled, 67 De Soto High School students overwhelmingly disagree with the implementation of this new law, particularly when it relates to safety. Freshman Alexis Reiswig raises concerns about the aspect of communication during the school day, especially if an emergency were to occur.

“I feel like I will be scared something will happen, and I won’t be able to contact my parents. I use my phone to text my parents if I need something or I need to ask something,” Reiswig said.

While this opinion represents an emergency, many students, like senior

Brooke Mermis, are also concerned about being able to contact and communicate with others in non-emergency situations.

“I think there are too many issues that could arise if students don’t have their phones. Medical emergencies, scheduling conflicts, and other situations could come up that could affect the way students communicate with their families, coaches, etc. Students shouldn’t be on their phones in class unless they are given permission, but taking them away entirely is a safety issue,” Mermis said.

Safety is not the only concern for most students. Junior Kaely Morris feels, like many others, that this law is too extreme, and should instead allow phones to be used during free time in class.

“I do not support this new law because I don’t think students’ phones should be taken away for the entire school day. We should be allowed to have them during passing periods, lunch, seminar, and when we finish our work early, since those are appropriate times to use them responsibly,” said Morris.

Overall, many students share the same concerns that the new law will not benefit schools and raises a safety concern.

For DHS faculty, this law introduces a plethora of new problems. While School Improvement Specialist Cathryn Monroe supports the law, questions of implementation have been raised among staff members.

“We don’t know yet [how the law will be implemented]. We are still waiting for a direction from an administrative office,” Monroe said.

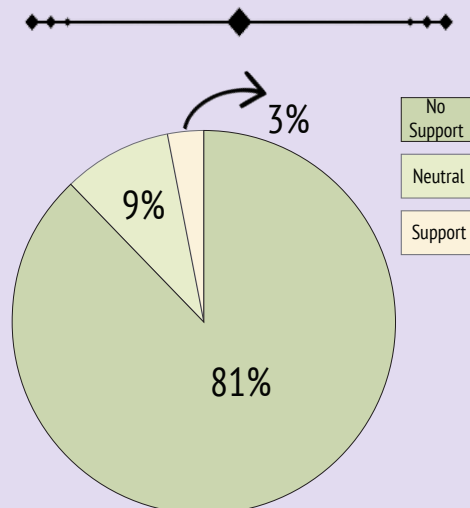
This lack of knowledge about the actual execution of the bill is caused by an abundance of vague language within the bill. Principle Kevin Thomas finds that this lack of clarity results in many unanswered questions for DHS.

“I struggle with the new phone law because there’s parts of it that are confusing. And to be clear about which parts, I would say the language around a phone being inaccessible is hard to define,” Thomas said. “And right now, there’s not clarity as to whether or not that means in a backpack, or if that means in a pocket, or if that means in a locker, and it’s going to be very difficult to navigate the law until we have a better understanding of what that means.”

Overall, even with the unclear language, Monroe clarifies that the administration does support the basic aspects of this bill.

“I think that having limitations on phones will help because I think, [with] the technology addiction, there’s a lot of research that shows that it is actually changing the chemical balance of your brain and will maybe help with some social emotional components,” Monroe said.

Even though the De Soto administration and staff are generally supportive of this new bill, it will greatly impact students, potentially leading to concerns over safety and lack of accessibility during the school day. Only time will tell how the law will play out at De Soto High School.



Data taken from a survey presented to the whole schools, represents the 67 students who responded.

Court Confidence

BOYS TENNIS AIMS TO STEP UP AS REGIONALS APPROACH

ethan dobson
staff reporter

As the boys' tennis season gradually comes to a close, the team is hoping to have a strong finish with hopes for players to pass through regionals and go on to the state tournament on May 15 and 16. Throughout the season, the team has had one collective goal: to be a team.

Coach Hoffman has played a crucial role in the team's success for the past twenty years. Hoffman cares for each player on and off the court and pushes

each athlete to their full potential. This year, he expresses the success that comes with going to state.

"Successful means we have players going to state. But that doesn't mean that if we don't, we don't have a successful season" Hoffman said.

Senior Donovan Dougherty has similar personal goals.

"Qualifying for state would be my ultimate goal as well as winning UKC [United Kansas Conference] as a team," Dougherty said. The United Kansas Conference consists of 5A schools in the northeastern region of Kansas. At the end of the season the UKC brings together the most competitive athletes in the area to compete against each other. Last year, De Soto scored fourth with Seaman winning the tournament.

With regionals and UKC tournament coming up, the team matchups are at the mercy of the conference. Earlier in the year the boys faced some tough

competitors at the Baldwin Invitational Tournament. Coach Hoffman talks about how preparing for skill on the other side of the net is crucial if they want a chance at winning the tournament.

"We can't control the regional assignments, but we can control how we play at conference," Hoffman continues, "We're going to have to really step up our level of play. And I'm excited to see if we can do it."

Tennis features singles and doubles games, meaning that players compete either individually or with a partner on the court. As

a result, finding a good dynamic for partners can be a struggle, especially with such a large surplus of players on De Soto's team. However, the boys' team hasn't run into that challenge.

"Everybody gets along, encourages one another," Hoffman said.

Tennis has been gaining popularity, but Dougherty points out how the size of the team could also cause some issues.

"It is definitely great that we have 30-plus guys on the team this year, but it presents the challenge of limited courts and coaching time," Dougherty said.

As the season winds down, the team looks ahead to regionals with determination, aiming to gain momentum and earn a place at state.



London Burch and Brody compete at the De Soto Varsity Invitational. *Photo by Amy Riley.*



Tanner Brace and Logan Wagoner team up in a doubles match. *Photo by Amy Riley.*

"I'm just not going to allow you to beat me today."

- Coach Hoffman



London Burch competing in a Varsity tennis match. *Photo by Amy Riley.*

SENIOR SEASON FINALE

ONE LAST MOMENT IN THE SPOTLIGHT

hailey smith
staff reporter



Softball Seniors:

Maddie Hellerich, Maddie Hillaire,
Abby Wagoner, Zoe Church, & Tania
Gamboa



Baseball Seniors:

Jack Cole, Anthony
Claeys, Atley Edenfield,
Luke Espe, Kian Hopkins,
William Jones, Kasey Kel-
ley, Tanner Krier, Keigan
Lindsay, Jacob Mall, Chase
McDonald, Jacob Norman,
Jaxon Purkey, Jackson
Whiddon, Bo Wiegmann,
& Nolan Wise

Girls Swim Seniors:

Lydia Cross, Amelia Caylor,
Ria Hudson, Emily Lawson,
Brooke Mermis, Samantha
Estes, Riley Ericson, & Gracyn
Speck



Girls Soccer Seniors:

Sienna McCracken,
Elliana Gress, Sydney
Cinotto, & Lily Sphar



Band Seniors:

Keegan Flynn, Maggie Steltzer, Olivia Frick, Brant Bertram, Dominic Irwin, Madelyn Neeland, Caroline Maisch, Nick Maskil, Reese Halvorsen, Matthew Barber, Leta Davis, Katelyn Deibert, Olivia Hamer, Sunny Hicks, Norah Kelly, Kasha Kemnitz, You-Ha Kim, Bennett Martin, Art McNemee, Reese Moss, Dane Newland, Isabelle Ohlsen, Abigail Storm, & Ava Waller



Choir Seniors:

Sadie Clarke, Anna English, Emelie English, Riley Ericson, Arabella Flanagan, Savannah Hendry, Chloe Kmiecik, Madilyn Mitchell, Quinn Schmidt, & Cadence ShROUT



bailey burns & lyndsey thompson
staff reporters

Coaches and Senior Seminars:

HOW MENTORS SHAPE THE

As the end of the school year is fast approaching, senior teachers and coaches are having their last few weeks with their students. Through building relationships and spending the last 4 years together, teachers and coaches say their time with the seniors is rewarding for them as well as the students.

For many educators, the greatest reward comes from watching students grow as people over time. Having the same group for multiple years allows them to watch their students change as they go through different stages of their life.

When asked what his favorite thing



Mr. Sharp with seminar seniors Kyle O'Rourke, Alexis Paterson, and Ethan Nickel. *Photo by Lyndsey Thompson & Bailey Burns*

was about having seniors, Mr. Sharp said,

“Being able to watch them grow and change over the four years of high school, from the first day of freshman year to now, that’s what stands out

the most,” about his senior seminar and senior athletes.

In addition to watching them grow, some teachers value the lessons they have given their students. They prioritize making sure their students succeed after high school, giving them advice. Another senior seminar teacher and girls basketball coach, Mr. Robie, gives word of advice to his seniors.

“Don’t worry about what other people think of you; run your own race. Everyone’s worried about what people think about them. Most of these people you won’t see after high school anyways, so don’t worry about it,” Robie said.

Coaches and teachers alike recognize that seniors are at a huge turning point in their lives.

Mr. Vieyra, a senior seminar teacher, wrestling, and football coach, has similar advice is given when he talks to seniors,

“Life is always going to be challenging, but it’s challenging for everyone, so find a way to push through to be the best version of yourself,” Vieyra said.

Mr. Vieyra and Mr. Robie focus on sending their seniors out with confidence. They hope their students don’t feel held back by others and want them to believe in themselves.

Other teachers highlight the different experiences and fun stories they have to tell about their senior students in class. Mrs. Adams shares her favorite memory from her seminar.

“I can still remember the first day of



Mrs. Christopher with some of her seminar kids. *Photo by Lyndsey Thompson & Bailey Burns*

freshman year, seeing how nervous they all were, watching them get to know each other, and now seeing them as seniors is just crazy,” Adams said.

Mr. Robie says he’ll always remember,

“When my seminar stole Halloween candy freshman year, and they had to apologize every Halloween for the last 3 years for it. I will never forget,” Robie said.

Preparing students for the future also means helping them get real-life experiences. Mrs. Christopher prioritizes this when she states,

“I have them do a lot of career research in classes just so they can learn more about what they are interested in, but specifically, I have them research real-life scenarios and when and what they would be doing for certain jobs and careers,” Christopher said.

Other teachers focus on helping their students by setting expectations and helping students reach their goals. Mr. Vieyra states,

Shaping Student Success

SENIOR SEMINAR EXPERIENCE

“Allowing them to have the freedom to make decisions but also helping to hold them accountable when they need it is the most important part of helping them succeed,” Vieyra said.

Additionally, building relationships with their students has become a huge part of understanding them to help them grow as a person. Mrs. Christopher highlights this when she says,

“Just having them for 4 years and checking in on them throughout that time and knowing what they’re up to and how they are doing. Just making sure they are doing okay mentally as well as making them feel safe and asking what things they like to do and chatting with them about their lives outside of school,” Christopher said.

In both classrooms and on the field, seniors often take on leadership



Mrs. Adams with a group of her seniors. *Photo by Lyndsey Thompson & Bailey Burns*

roles and help set examples for underclassmen. Coach Robie says, “I like that in the classroom and at practice in general, there is just a higher level of maturity. I can have more authentic conversations with them, not just about school but also life outside of the classroom. Coaching seniors helps create a sense of appreciation towards them because you lean on them to help grow the culture of our program, and to set the standard of how to show up and give your best effort.”

As graduation approaches, teachers are finally getting to see the person they are sending into adulthood after 4 years of teaching them life skills. Mr Vieyra says his favorite moment is when everything

finally clicks for students.

“I would say the end of the year is my favorite because often it’s kind of a click for them, and they realize that they’re about to go off on their own, and they have been preparing their whole life for this. It is usually when the lightbulb clicks,” Vieyra said.

The most important thing that all of the teachers and coaches gave as one final piece of advice was to enjoy the moment, work hard, and believe in yourself.

“Life is as fun as you want to make it, and you only get one shot, so make it memorable,” Mr. Sharp says.

With all of these things in mind, the senior class is preparing for life after high school, with the knowledge and support gifted to them by their teachers and coaches from the last four years.



Mr. Robie with some of his seminar class. *Photo by Lyndsey Thompson & Bailey Burns*



Mr. Vieyra and some of his seminar seniors. *Photo by Lyndsey Thompson & Bailey Burns*

finally clicks for students. Mr. Sharp says, “Life is as fun as you want to make it, and you only get one shot, so make it memorable,” Mr. Sharp says.

laurel zarda
staff reporter

The Lasting Legacy

AFTER NEARLY THREE DECADES, MURPHY LEAVES BEHIND A LEGACY OF LEARNING, MENTORSHIP, AND COMMUNITY

For nearly three decades, history teacher Michael Murphy has greatly contributed to De Soto High School's learning success. He has shaped classrooms, coached teams, and mentored both students and colleagues. After 29 years in the classroom, Murphy is preparing to leave behind a legacy that reflects his dedication to education and the people around him.

Murphy began his career at DHS in 1997. Over the years, he has taught nearly every social studies course offered at De Soto, including World History, AP U.S. History, AP Government, Constitutional Law, Civics, and AP European History.

"My very first year I taught economics...

And I didn't know much, really, about economics, other than what I learned in college," Murphy said.

Over time, Murphy became an expert in the subjects he taught and developed a teaching style that students will remember long after they leave the classroom.

Central to Murphy's teaching is critical thinking and curiosity.

"I hope students take away a passion for learning... That they truly understand the importance of getting educated, being informed, and understanding how to... be a good consumer of information," Murphy said.

For him, history and social studies are more than just facts and dates; they are tools for understanding the world.

"I think you can just live a richer, fuller life when you can make sense of the world," Murphy said.

Murphy's influence doesn't stop at academics; it extends beyond lectures and textbooks. Senior Maddie Hellerich, a student in his seminar for the past four years, describes him in three words:

"Diligent, encouraging, and authentic," Hellerich said.

She also recalls how he helped her embrace mistakes as a part of learning.

"Even if I made a mistake, he didn't

make me feel bad about it. If I did really badly on the test, he didn't make me feel bad about it. He just reminded me, it's okay not to do well," Hellerich said.

Not only has Murphy encouraged students to reach beyond their limits, but he has also been recognized for his kind demeanor. Hellerich emphasizes how Murphy's thoughtfulness goes a long way.

"Every time I see him in the hallway, no matter what I'm doing, no matter what he's doing, he will always stop and say hi to me.

And I think that goes a very long way," Hellerich said.

Murphy has also been a cornerstone in De Soto sports, as he has involved himself in coaching soccer, baseball, and even unified bowling.

"I was an assistant for 3 years, and then 5 years the head coach, then I did the...constructional coaching job where I couldn't coach," Murphy said.

So, besides mostly soccer and then a little bit of baseball, this last fall, I did unified that was really a great experience," Murphy said.

Murphy also reflects on impact between him and his

students. "I feel like as much of an impact

on me as I had on them," Murphy said. "The way that you guys... are engaging in the curriculum... we [teachers] get what you are trying to do for us as opposed to just like sit down and do your work."

Looking ahead, Murphy is excited about the future, even if his path is uncertain.

"I'm also just kind of excited to see where I might end up... what job I might end up doing, and if it's going to be in education or if it's going to be something totally different...I just don't know," Murphy said.

Following the 2025-2026 school year, he hopes to spend more time on his property in the mountains of Washington with his family while exploring future opportunities.

While Mr. Murphy may be moving on, for his students at DHS, his retirement marks the end of an era. As a student who has been a part of Murphy's last few years at DHS, Hellerich believes that Murphy's humility is what makes him unique.

"He genuinely wants his kids to learn," Hellerich said. "He is encouraging... He just knows what he's doing.

He loves talking to people, and he loves getting to know people."

As Murphy prepares for the next chapter, he has paved the way for a community boosted by his presence, a generation of students inspired to learn, and a school that has benefited from nearly three decades of his commitment.

"I've just been super appreciative of everything... I've never once woke up and thought, I don't want to go to work today," Murphy said.

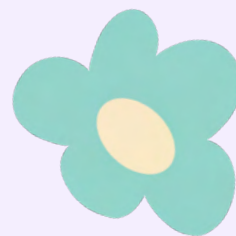
As he moves on, his impact will linger throughout the school long after he is gone.

Mr. Murphy in his classroom teaching his World History students. *Photo by Laurel Zarda*




Senior Confessions

poll/games || the green pride




DHS SENIORS CONFESS TO THEIR HIGH SCHOOL SECRETS



I snuck chipotle into the PAC and ate it while watching Mary Poppins

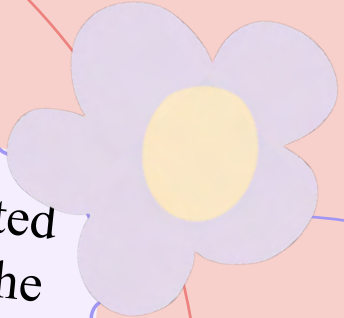
I skipped school to go shopping at holiday mart



Someone has a photo album of me sleeping during band

I fully believe in the 5 second rule

I broke a toilet my sophomore year



As a freshman I was gifted something stolen from the school (i didn't know it was stolen) and I still have it

the green pride || feature

What's Next?

SENIORS SHARE THEIR FUTURE PLANS FOLLOWING HIGH SCHOOL

California

Pepperdine University
Abby Heinisch

Utah

Utah State University
Crosby Taylor

University of Colorado Boulder
Kylie Groves
University of Northern Colorado
Savannah Hendry

Colorado

Grand Canyon University
Macie Brown

Arizona

Georgia

Savannah College of Art & Design
Katelyn Diebert

Oklahoma

Oklahoma State University
Austin Kelley

University of South Dakota
Chloe Kmiecik

South Dakota State University
Margaret Stelzer

South Dakota

Nebraska

University of Nebraska-L
Emelie English
Anna English
Hunter Hedberg
TJ Spurlock

Kansas

University of Kansas
Amelia Caylor
Deysi Cervantes Coronado
Xander Combs
Leta Davis
Samantha Estes
Olivia Frick
Ella Gary
Tania Gamboa
Dayanara Gonzalez
Carson Hanley
Evie Hanne
Viviana Haro
Christiana Headley
Tatum Hughes
Laina Jernigan
Riley Johnson
Nick Maskil
Kennedi Malone
Logan Miller
Art McNemee
Addison Myers
Mya O'Brien
Carmen Pichardo
Ian Rocha

Gracyn Speck
Dalton Springer
Abigail Storm
Jillian Sweeney
Luke Vogt
Abigail Wagoner
Carrie Wallace
Chloe Weber

Kansas State University
William Beach
Braelyn Billinger
Owen Carver
Jordan Case
Sydney Cinotto
Lydia Cross
Keegan Flynn
Riley Ford
Reese Halvorsen
Sunny Hicks

Norah Kelly
Kasha Kemnitz
Arzella Kiewiet
Jakob Knapitsch
Tanner Krier
Olivia Loner
Bennett
Martin
Caroline
Maisch
Kierra Minihan
Devin Murrell
Kyle O'Rourke
Carson Patterson
Kayla Tolly
Myah Tuttle
Charlotte Wallen
Tanner Waite
Nolan Wise
Tatum Wilson

Wichita State University
Arabella Flanagan
Cadence Shrou

Other:

Undecided

Alonso Alvarez Sanchez
Sam Porras

Trade School

Logan Clark
Quinn Schmidt - HVAC

Ashton Smith
William Jones

Military

Rogan Burns - Air Force

Collin Champlain - Air National Guard
Hadyn Gianforte - Air National Guard
Micah Morozov - Coast Guard Academy
Gap Year/Workforce
Tanner Brace - Electrician

**Some seniors did not reply and therefore were not included*

aska

ka-Lincoln
Nebraska Wesleyan University
Addison Gillespie
Creighton University
Elizabeth Meyer
Hastings College
Madeline Hillaire
Peru State College
Zoe Church

Iowa

Iowa State University
Maria Hudson
Austin Kohles
Emily Lawson
Isabelle Ohlsen

feature || the green pride

Ohio

The Ohio State University
Josi Kral

Pittsburg State University
Peyton Hughes
Emporia State University
Madelyn Neeland
Baker University
Lily Spahr
Fort Hays State University
Josiah Bunselmeyer
Washburn University
Olivia Hamer
University of St. Mary
Dawson Guy
Benedictine University
Anthony Claeys
Mid America Nazarene University
Brandon Serna
Pittsburg State University
Peyton Hughes
Johnson County Community College
Kayleigh Brummitt
Demian Carrillo-Mora

Emmy Crabtree
Kiefer Davis
Kiefer Davis
Ethan Dobson
Micah Douglass
Riley Ericson
Trenton Foged
Elliana Gress
Brody Hoffman
Jacob Mall
Chase McDonald
Madilyn Mitchell
Dane Newland
Enrique Sanchez
Isaac Schroeder

McPherson College
Kasey Kelley
Allen County Community College
Jacob Norman
Kansas Christian College
Christian Dickinson
Neosho County Community College
Gabe Green

Fort Scott Community College
Kian Hopkins
Kansas City Kansas Community College
Yaresley Acosta
Hutchison Community College
Peyton Makayla Gokcen
Kathryn Meyer

Illinois

Johns Hopkins University
You-Ha Kim

nsas

University of Missouri
Jordyn Bode
Maddie Hellerich
Madelyn Knuth
Sophia Mateo

University of Central Missouri
Kameron McCarty
Brooke Mermis
Northwest Missouri State University
Avery Noble

Louisiana

Louisiana State University

Sienna McCracken

University of Arkansas

Kayla Carroll
Ronan Conley
Peyton Gab
Addison King
Skylar Parker

Arkansas

Missouri

Full Swing

DE SOTO SOFTBALL'S TEAMWORK AND SENIOR LEADERSHIP POWERS A STRONG SEASON.

This season, the De Soto High School softball team has shown tremendous growth, determination, and skill, highlighted through a winning record of 13-7 so far on the season. In comparison to previous years, this record proudly represents the four returning varsity seniors' fighting effort to earn a spot at state this year.

Head coach Junelle Woolery emphasizes that this year's success is a result of their strong leadership and improvement.

"This year's team is awesome," Woolery said. "Our senior leadership has been great. Overall, our skill level is higher, and our buy-in to keep a high intensity all game long has been great."

This season, the team had an electrifying win against Spring Hill High School for the first time in nearly ten years. This game reflected the significant growth of the program, especially for the senior players. With the seniors' consistent commitment to their sport, Woolery notes that they have played a key role in what has made the team successful so far.

"They're not just focused on themselves," Woolery said. "They're focused on bringing the whole team along with them."

Senior Maddie Hellerich, a varsity starter of four years,

emphasizes how the relationships she has built with her teammates over the years has been a meaningful part of her high school career.

"I will miss being around my teammates and all the memories that we've made," Hellerich said. "I couldn't ask for a better group of girls, and I'm really going to miss the friendships."

Senior Zoe Church, a varsity starter of four years, said her most memorable moments came from the personal growth she experienced beyond the softball field.

"I've just become a much more mature person, especially when it comes to thinking about other people's feelings and emotions," Church said.

While playing at the highest level, Church also encourages younger players to enjoy their time in the sport.

"[You should] have fun, and don't take it too seriously," Church said.

Senior Abby Wagoner, the starting catcher for varsity, sees the Spring Hill victory as an accomplishment that has shown how far they have come.

"It was a big moment for us," Wagoner said. "We had never done that before."

Another senior, Maddie Hillaire, said her favorite memory came from her first team dinner.

"It made me realize our team was becoming a family," Hillaire said.

As the season ends, the softball team acknowledges their special year.

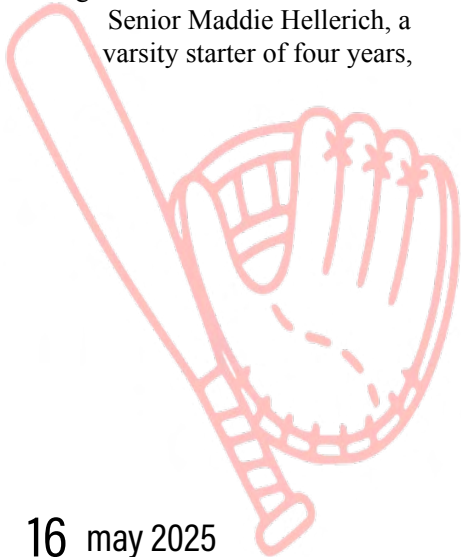
With seven schools left to play, the team remains focused on finishing strong and earning a spot at state. No matter the outcome, the senior leadership and program growth have been a major highlight of this season so far.



Zoe Church, Brynna Billinger, Annie Chick, Maddie Hillaire, Abby Wagoner, and Maddie Hellerich meet at the pitcher's mound mid-inning. *Photo by Kasha Kennitz*



De Soto softball seniors, Zoe Church, Maddie Hillaire, Abby Wagoner, Maddie Hellerich, and Tania Gamboa pose for a photo on senior night. *Photo by Kasha Kennitz*



WILDCAT WIRE

If you are interested in video production, broadcast, or podcasting, consider joining the staff! See Mrs. Riley in 200B for more information..



Catch what you missed!



HAVE A GREAT SUMMER!



THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING CATS CORNER

BROOME BROTHERS PHOTOGRAPHY
[HTTPS://258PHOTOZINE.OLIO.COM](https://258PHOTOZINE.OLIO.COM)

BOUND

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



To Decorate or Not to Decorate?

SHOULD SENIOR PARKING SPOTS BE PERMITTED AT DE SOTO HIGH SCHOOL

ria hudson

a&e editor / social media editor

Senior traditions are a significant part of every high school. Whether it be absurd outfits or invigorating events, these customs have been deeply integrated into De Soto High School since its opening. Looking forward to these traditions is a strong appeal to many students as they finish their high school career; it allows people to look forward to a memorable and enjoyable final year.

Historically, these customs have been honored; however, in recent years, several conflicts have prevented students from participating in many of these traditions.

Painting senior parking spots in the parking lot for seniors was just one of these time-honored traditions that now has constraints. Kevin Thomas, principal of De Soto High School, comments on these limitations.

“One of the things that you have to do when you do painted spots is you have to power wash and redo the lot. Even if you do it well, we can’t just let kids go out and power wash,” Thomas said.

Although the technical terms are an issue, Thomas makes it abundantly clear that he still wants students to express themselves.

“I wouldn’t want to dissuade you from being creative. I just don’t know that the tradeoffs of being creative in this case would be worth the sacrifices in the other way. So it’s really just a balancing act,” Thomas said.

Showing the originality of DHS’s 12th-grade class is a priority to many. Students

have the desire to express their various interests and passions, highlighting their unique and individual personalities. Senior Anna English remarks on what she would do with her parking spot.

“I was not planning a design, but if I did, it would probably be something from one of my favorite movies,” English said.

In addition to the artistic expressions, customized parking spots would increase school spirit among the senior class.

“I definitely think that senior parking spots boost school spirit because it gets

“I BELIEVE THAT SENIOR PARKING SPOTS ARE SUPER NICE TO HAVE BECAUSE WHEN YOU LEAVE DHS AS A SENIOR, YOU LEAVE YOUR MARK UNTIL THE NEXT YEAR. I THINK IT’S VERY SYMBOLIC.”

people involved in the school and gives them something to be proud of,” English said.

Furthermore, this emphasis on pride within the school can be utilized in order to keep students engaged as they move through high school. It can be easy to get lost in “senioritis” or “senior

burnout” as one goes through the motions. However, according to Cailyn Overturf, a junior at De Soto High School, decorating parking spots can be a welcome incentive for students to continue staying motivated.

“Traditions are something that people look forward to, and if you take them away, then they have less to look forward to as they get older,” Overturf said.

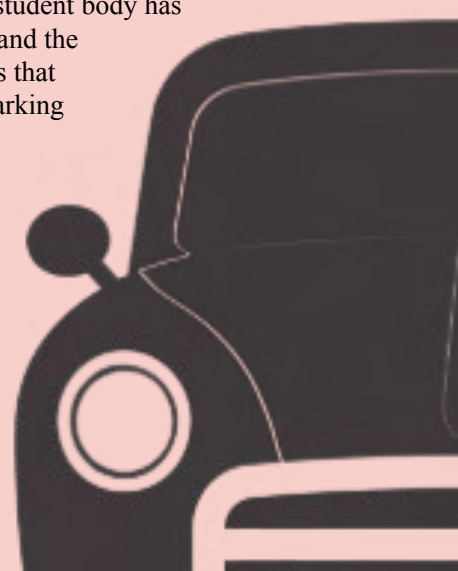
These motivations with school spirit have yet another benefit: seniors would have another area before or after school and practice, designated to them.

“They are a fun thing to have during senior year, and the area where all the spots are would be a great place to hang out and congregate after school,” English said.

This socializing can build a sense of community, one that students can take with them even as high school comes to a close, as senior Olivia Frick comments on.

“I believe that senior parking spots are super nice to have because when you leave DHS as a senior, you leave your mark until the next year. I think it’s very symbolic,” Frick said.

Based on these reasons, it is evident that the student body has spoken, and the verdict is that senior parking





A Eudora High School senior leaves their mark with the creative painted spot above. *Photo by Ria Hudson*

spots should be more of a priority for De Soto High School. For future graduating classes, leaving a legacy is the key to a successful and interactive alumni network, as Cailyn Overturf remarks.

“I would like this tradition changed by the time I’m a senior, so that way we can have senior parking spots. I think that would be fun,” Overturf said.

Further, English comments on what she believes should happen in the De Soto High School system.

“I think the school should definitely reconsider the policy because it seems really fun and memorable,” English said.

Although there are many obstacles and technicalities to overcome, it is clear that students believe that the addition of this activity would bring great benefit to the school. Since the passion around this topic is evident, more focus could be put towards planning how to make senior parking spots a reality for future students at DHS.



Several students let their uniqueness shine through at Eudora High School. *Photo by Ria Hudson*



Two parking spots are highlighted for their imagination in the senior section at Eudora High School. *Photo by Ria Hudson*



One senior demonstrates their musical passions by painting a guitar on the parking spot. *Photo by Ria Hudson*



A new and artistic take on senior parking spots is demonstrated by one senior at Eudora High School. *Photo by Ria Hudson*



At Eudora High School, many senior students use their creative talents to paint their designated parking spots. *Photo by Ria Hudson*



Cartoonish daisies are painted onto the parking space by one Eudora High School senior. *Photo by Ria Hudson*

Who Pays the Price?

DISTRICT MAKES UP THE DIFFERENCE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION FUNDING CUTS

sarah follmer
staff reporter

Throughout the United States, many programs that require funding have been getting less and less money from the government than they need. One of those includes the special education funding in Kansas.

According to Andrea West, the Director of Special Services in USD 232, the state government is supposed to pay for 92% of the special education funding, and the district is supposed to pay 8%. However, as of now, the district is paying for 50% of the special education program.

Due to this funding gap, West points out how students are left with many disadvantages for their education and future.

“We’ve had to reduce our professional development opportunities,” West said.

When the district has to cover more costs, there often have to be cuts in resources, such as staff and off-campus learning. Despite this, West is hopeful in the district’s ability to make budget cuts less detrimental.

“I would say that I think...they [students] might see less options available, but I would really

want to reiterate that I think we’ve worked really hard to not have a negative impact on kids with the budget cuts,” West said.

Although the budget cuts have hit harder in other districts, and it makes it harder in this district to have the best options available to students, West assures that the district has made sure that students are not affected by some of the cuts to their classes.

“We’ve worked really hard to make sure that that is not something that you would see a significant impact on and that we’ve not cut any positions,” West said.

Despite efforts, the district’s parents have reached out to the district

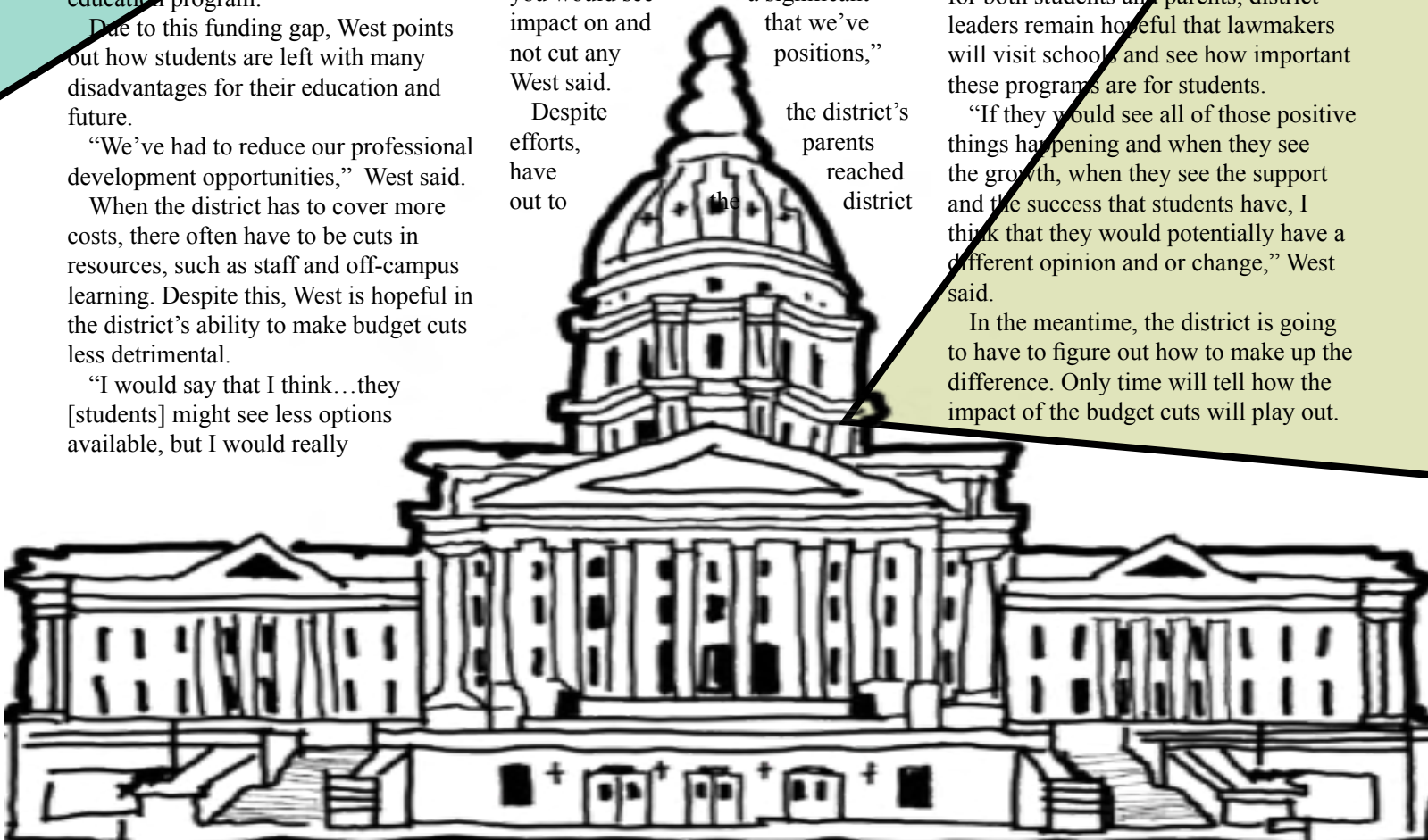
building, expressing their concerns about the cuts. Their support shows how families trust the district to make the best decisions that will support their students.

“They want to know that they’ve been advocating at the state level and that they, too, are hoping that this can be changed, that we will see increased funding in the future,” West said.

Although budget cuts district-wide, especially for the Special Education program, have caused some upheaval for both students and parents, district leaders remain hopeful that lawmakers will visit schools and see how important these programs are for students.

“If they would see all of those positive things happening and when they see the growth, when they see the support and the success that students have, I think that they would potentially have a different opinion and or change,” West said.

In the meantime, the district is going to have to figure out how to make up the difference. Only time will tell how the impact of the budget cuts will play out.



Clue: The Final Show

SENIORS SHARE INSIGHT ON THE BEHIND-THE-SCENES OF THEIR FINAL HIGH SCHOOL PRODUCTION

gracyn speck

feature / social media editor

De Soto High School's theater is full of many talented seniors who have played a critical role in the program for many years. Their final production is the play "Clue," a murder mystery storyline based on the popular board game.

This play requires extensive communication and teamwork to ensure that the suspense of the show is executed to a tee. Because of this, some seniors have taken it upon themselves to aid with additional tasks.

Senior Olivia Hamer, who plays Unexpected Cop and Backup Cop in the show, explains the roles she takes on.

"I do both cast stuff with certain characters, either ensemble roles or lead roles, and I also do a lot of backstage stuff with set building and scene changes. And sometimes I do sound and working the sound booth and stuff like that," Hamer said. "And so, as a

senior, being able to have experience doing all those things is just really fun."

Beyond the backstage aspect of the production, roles onstage are just as

vital in ensuring the show's success. Carson Hanley, one of the leads in this production, touches on what he finds to be the most difficult part of this show.

"The hardest part about this production for me, at least, is the amount of lines I have. In other productions, a main character is probably gonna have between 80 and 100 lines, and that's if they're really big. Whereas Wadsworth, in this production, has 232 lines that I have to memorize, plus a five-page monologue. So, it's gonna be interesting, but I know I can do it, and it's gonna be a really fun challenge," Hanley said.

All of the hard work these seniors have put in throughout the years has made the De Soto theater program a memorable home for many. One of these seniors, Arabella Flanagan, reflects on

her time in high school theater.

"De Soto Theater is amazing. I'm so happy I've gotten to be in it all four years of my high school, and I think that more people should do it," Flanagan said.

President of Thespian Troupe 1979, Savannah Hendry, also reflects on her time here and explains what she will miss the most about what DHS Theater has to offer.

"I will miss the people the most, just because I have found so many good friends and people that I trust so much. I think it's definitely gonna be the hardest thing that I leave behind," Hendry said.

With their commitment to the production of "Clue," as well as many others in years past, it is evident that the seniors have brought a lot to the department over the years they have been at DHS, and they will be greatly missed as they graduate and move forward to pursue their dreams.



Norah Kelly as Yvette



Carson Hanley as Wadsworth



Savannah Hendry as Miss Scarlet



Olivia Hamer as Unexpected Cop



Arabella Flanagan as Cook

A Letter From the Director:

"Saying goodbye to the graduating seniors is especially bittersweet this year. When I started at DHS they were only Sophomores and over the past 3 years, I've been lucky enough to watch them grow into mature young adults, leaders of the program, and incredibly passionate and talented artists. They are such a talented group of students, and their dedication to the Theatre program throughout their high school career has truly made the shows so special and successful. Some of the Seniors have done over 20 performances at DHS by now, and their legacy will go on to inspire both the students and myself long after they graduate. I know they will all find success in their futures and I hope they always keep their artistry alive no matter what career they pursue."

- Sara Bryant



Photos by Sophia Feyerabend

the green pride || p.e.

kayla toly
continuity editor

Midnight In Rio



Junior boys Daniel Gonzalez De La Cruz, Grady Neville, Dominic Hild and Axsel Guge pose for a photo at prom. *Photo by Amy Riley*



The 2026 Prom Court. *Photo by Amy Riley*



Seniors Anna English, Emelie English, Chloe Kmiecik and Kylie Groves pose at the photo booth. *Photo by Amy Riley*

22 may 2026



Seniors and juniors dances on the dance floor. *Photo by Amy Riley*



Seniors Tatum Wilson and Maya Tuttle chest bump at the 2026 Prom. *Photo by Amy Riley*



L.C. Heigele dances at the 2026 Prom. *Photo by Amy Riley*



Seniors line dance at the 2026 Prom. *Photo by Amy Riley*



Seniors and Juniors dance at the 2026 Prom. *Photo by Amy Riley*

Senior Assassins



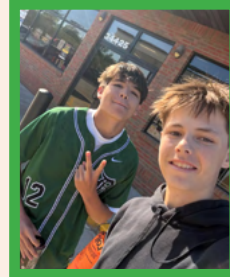
SOAKED, SNEAKY AND SLIGHTLY UNHINGED

jaliyah parker
staff reporter



Rogan Burns eliminates Atley Edenfield

Addison King eliminates
Ella Gary



Jacob Mall eliminates
Anthony Claves



Addie Myers eliminates Christiana Headley

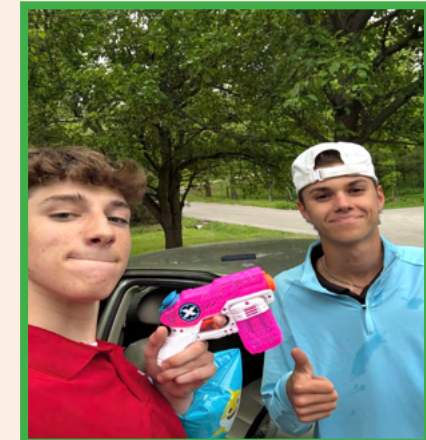
Senior Assassins is a popular end-of-year tradition where high school seniors turn everyday life into a friendly but competitive game of elimination. Participants are each assigned a target and use water guns to “assassinate” them, all while trying to avoid being eliminated themselves. What makes the game so exciting is how it blends strategy, creativity, and a little bit of paranoia. Students might wear goggles at all times, travel in groups for safety, or come up with elaborate plans to catch their target off guard. While it’s meant to be fun and build memories before graduation, many schools also set rules to keep things safe and respectful, like avoiding school grounds or public disruptions. In the end, Senior Assassin isn’t just about winning, it’s about the stories, the suspense, and the shared experience that makes senior year unforgettable.



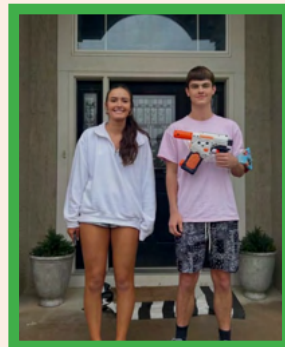
Sienna McCracken eliminates Kameron McCarty



Sydney Cinotto eliminates Luke Van Allen



Chase McDonald eliminates Tj Spurlock



Riley Ford eliminates Emily Lawson



Zella Kiewiet eliminates Matthew Barber



Gunison Hastings eliminates Kian Hopkins

24 may 2026

