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THE DIAMOND

Make it okay

Evangeline Colarossi — Staff Writer

Tuesday night found the West Commons crowded with packed tables, sweet snacks, and important topics to discuss. Approximately two hundred attendees, both students and professors were randomly assigned a table to sit at, awaiting deep discussion of mental health. Dordt is known for its aspect of community, and the Psychology Club wanted to use this to open up topics that may normally be avoided.

“When I looked around, there was never a table that had a lull in talking and I think that speaks to how needed this conversation was,” said senior psychology student Megan Middel. “People are willing and wanting to talk about it, and that’s beautiful to me.”

Shelly Rock, the speaker from Make It Okay presented several ideas, played supporting videos, and then used audience participation to gather polls displaying the general climate towards mental illness. This process was repeated throughout the evening, broken up by discussion at each table to “take down barriers in order to foster a climate in which our call and discipleship of loving our neighbor becomes a part of who we are on and off campus,” said Middel.

Students and professors come from a variety of backgrounds, ages, and locations. All of these factors can affect a person’s understanding and feelings towards mental illness. Discussing this



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topic and understanding that mental health is just as vital as physical health is how the Psych Club hopes to eliminate stigma about this topic.

Psychology professor Bruce Vermeer serves on the NAMI (National Alliance on Mental

Illness) North West Iowa Board, along with Shelly Rock, the speaker at Make It Okay. He approached the Psych Club with this event after Rock told him of the program. Megan

Middel, Sarah Krysl, and Levi Jungling, along with the Dordt Psych Club has been spreading awareness, raising funds, and organizing this event since the end of November 2019. Funding for the event came from Student Life, Human Resources, Dordt Administration, Co-Curricular Committee, and the Psychology Department.

“The Psych Club normally plans smaller, more low-key events, so this was a whole new task and step up in responsibilities than what we were used to,” said Middel. “We were happy and excited to plan such an important event as this.”

This was the first time Make It Okay has been held on a college campus, but psychology professor Luralyn Helming hopes that this will encourage students to personally help with this campaign.

“While the Psych Club could do this again, I think it would be more effective if future efforts were dispersed across the student body, as mental illness touches everyone,” said Helming. “Treating those with mental illness with respect is not only in the hands of future psychologists, but rather is the business of all.”

If you would like to become involved with Make It Okay, contact Professor Helming or Dr. Vermeer. For someone to talk to regarding mental health questions, contact counseling@dordt.edu, campus ministries, or a trusted friend or mentor.

Blauw nurtures musical gifts

Jaclyn Vander Waal— Staff Writer

After a word of prayer, Dordt University senior Anna Blauw opened her senior harp recital Saturday with Tournier’s “Etude de Concert (Au Matin).”

The audience silently leaned into the music she played, and only rustling of programs could be heard in the still auditorium during her hourlong performance.

As a daughter of a music teacher, Blauw was surrounded by music from a young age. She began by learning the piano, and when she reached the sixth grade, she was encouraged to begin learning another instrument. At the suggestion of her father, she chose the harp.

Eleven and a half years later, Blauw is happy to share the culmination of all she has learned with friends, family and community members at the B.J. Haan Auditorium.

“It’s really exciting that I’ve gotten to this point,” said Blauw, a choral music K-12 education major with a music performance minor. “I’ve been planning this moment since I got here.”

Music adjunct professor Anna Vorhes, who has taught harp at Dordt for about 30 years, enjoys developing Blauw’s musicality.

“God gives us a gift,” Vorhes said. “It’s our job to nurture it.”

In their eight semesters together, Vorhes has worked to grow Blauw as a young woman and Christian in addition to a musician.

“It’s important to know how to live in the world while being God’s child first,” she said.

Vorhes recognized from the beginning that Blauw had incredible technical skills, so their time together primarily was spent developing Blauw’s sight-reading and ensemble skills.



Contributed Photo

Blauw describes her relationship with Vorhes as a partnership.

“She has a wealth of knowledge about what makes a good and varied recital,” Blauw said.

Together, they created the list of songs for Blauw’s senior recital. In addition to pedagogy and historical music works, they kept the audience in mind.

“Music is ultimately communication,” Vorhes said. “We look for pieces that connect to her and the audience.”

Blauw said she picked songs her audience would enjoy because she wanted them to feel included in her performance.

“I want the audience to walk away and be impacted as well as have an appreciation about a song they never heard of before,” she said. “I want the audience to feel like the performance

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Koerner prepares for first show

Sam Landstra — Staff Writer

A fragile atmosphere lingers in the 4th Avenue Theatre classroom. Student actors Dakota Klein and Sofia Bouma stand at opposite sides of the room with pained expressions on their faces. They stepped out of character after playing a heated exchange between husband and wife for the upcoming production *Everything is Wonderful*.

“How was that?” Director Laurel Koerner asks. A script and notes lay in front of her on the wintery afternoon.

“I just wasn’t in the right head space,” Klein says.

Koerner probes her students for what worked well from previous rehearsals and challenges Klein to consider the pauses during his monologues. With less than a month away from opening, most practices consist of fine-tuning dialogue. They run the scene again.

Everything is Wonderful tells the story of Miri, an excommunicated Amish woman who returns to her people after the death of her two brothers in a traffic accident. Upon arriving, however, Miri finds herself still unwelcome in her family while the man responsible for the death of her siblings lives in their barn. It’s far from your grandmother’s Amish romance books.

“I love how honest it is,” Koerner said. “These are not two-dimensional representations of idealized, romanticized, Amish people. It’s messy and ugly.”

Ideas of forgiveness and reconciliation surrounding trauma and abuse fill the play. In Amish communities, sins are treated as if they never happened upon confession. As the characters onstage wrestle with how to approach wrongdoing, Koerner hopes audience



Photo Credit: Emi Stewart

members will do the same.

“I think these are people we can see ourselves in,” Koerner said. “It’s important to me that the show is hosting conversations students want to have.”

Throughout the production process, the *Everything is Wonderful* team has maintained “early and ongoing dialogue” about the mature content on display. Koerner and the cast have connected with professors, the Family Crisis Center, and Campus Health. After the shows, they hope to hold a discussion panel on the topics seen onstage with counsellors available on standby.

“What I hope for is a system that aids the integration of what’s happening in the arts on campus with what’s happening in the classroom,” Koerner said.

Klein and Bouma stand in their strained positions again after the second run through. Koerner asks them how their characters feel towards each other in the argument.

“Things are bad,” Klein says. “Things are really not good. Things are DEFCON 1.”

Klein, a sophomore transfer student from

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Are the humanities dying?

Tess Hemmila— Staff Writer

In December, Northwestern College announced that they will reduce their staff by 11 faculty positions, five of which will be through retirement. Northwestern's humanities are taking the hardest hit, as the college is also planning to drop its majors in philosophy, writing and rhetoric, and literature. The cuts will only affect ten Northwestern undergraduate students. Northwestern's restructuring will support increased enrollment in the STEM fields and decreased enrollment in the humanities.

Northwestern is not the only college that has noticed a steep decline in humanities enrollment. According to a 2019 study by Forbes, many humanities fields have suffered severe declines in enrollment while some STEM fields have more than doubled. Over the study's ten-year period, the field of education suffered the most with a 19% decrease of approximately 20,021 graduates. This leaves the lowest number of education graduates since 1986. Other fields

that faced sharp declines included English, philosophy, and religious studies.

On the other hand, Forbes reported that health professions more than doubled, shooting from 91,973 to 228,896 graduates in the ten-year period. Many other STEM fields and social science fields increased by more than 60%, including criminal justice, agriculture, and biology.

At Dordt, education is one of the top five majors, but the other four are STEM fields. Although the education department has not lost students at the rate that many other universities report, it seems inevitable that Dordt will start to notice gradually lower enrollment in humanities fields.

Dordt, like many other liberal arts universities, has had to adapt to the decline in humanities enrollment. One way that Dordt has adapted is by ending the Christianity and popular culture major. Junior Enoch Kim is the only remaining Christianity and Popular culture student and will be the last to graduate from Dordt with the

major.

In another effort to respond to the low enrollment in humanities, most humanities departments at Dordt have fewer faculty members than their STEM and social science counterparts. With the exception of the education department, most humanities departments have less than five full-time faculty members, some have only one.

Despite the useful skills that many humanities majors learn, many humanities students worry about the employment prospects after college. Some fear that they will not be able to find a job in their field or that they won't make enough money to support themselves if they do take a job in their desired field.

Junior Yovela Belicia faced these same concerns from her parents. From a young age, Belicia decided that she wanted to be an author, but her parents warned her that she might not be able to make a living.

"They used a saying that roughly translates to

'you'll have to eat rocks'" said Belicia.

After her parents warning, Belicia chose her major at Dordt carefully. Rather than simply pursuing a major in English, she decided to study English education in hopes of having more stable job prospects after college.

Despite the foreboding enrollment trends, history professor Scott Culpepper predicts that the humanities are not going anywhere soon. Although the sciences are certainly more popular at present, Culpepper says that the sciences and the humanities have alternated going in and out of popularity many times before.

"Predicting their end is a bit premature," Culpepper said. "The moment is going to come in the next few decades when that pendulum will shift back [to the humanities]."

In the meantime, Culpepper believes that universities and colleges should "stick to their guns" to preserve the humanities because of the crucial life skills that they teach.

Dordt students witness historic impeachment trial

Hannah Van Otterloo— Staff Writer

On Wednesday, February 5, the impeachment trial ended as the Senate voted to acquit President Donald Trump. A week before the trial concluded, however, four Dordt students had the opportunity to sit in on the trial along with President Hoekstra and Dr. Barb Hoekstra.

Nicolas Kuperus, Rachel Heynen, Kendal Zylstra, and Emily Zylstra were in Washington, D.C. while attending the National Association of Evangelicals' Christian Student Leadership Conference. While there, the students were able to hear from senators, representatives, congressional staff members, and organizational leaders, as well as visit the Supreme Court, tour the Capitol, and explore Washington D.C.

On Thursday, January 30, they also had the opportunity to sit in on the impeachment trial proceedings in the Senate. President Hoekstra's administrative assistant, Mrs. LeeAnn Moerman, was able to secure staff passes for the group from Senator Ernst and Senator Grassley's offices.

"We got up into the Senate gallery, which are seats that sit right above the Senate floor. So, from that position, you can see all 100 senators seated right in front of you," Zylstra said.

"I think overall, one word that comes to mind is historic," Kuperus said. "This is only the third time a sitting president has been impeached in the 200-plus-year history of the U.S.,"

"As to the gravity of the event, I was struck with gratefulness that our country does operate with a respect for process," Hoekstra said. "I thought Justice Roberts was the epitome of how a Supreme Court Justice should carry the role."

After their forty-five minute experience, they all reached similar conclusions.

"One thing I realized is regardless of which political position, you see how partisan things are. You don't see a lot of Democrats walking across the aisle to talk to Republicans, or the Republicans walking across the aisle to talk to Democrats about something... I think that no matter whether you're for the impeachment or against it... you have to acknowledge the fact

that partisan politics plays a major role in what happens," Zylstra said.

Kuperus agreed. "For all of the history and significance, it also highlighted how divided our country is," he said. "Regardless of your position on to convict or not to convict, here we were in the Chamber of the Senate discerning whether or not to convict the President rather than working on legislation and positive change that will bring the two parties together and help Americans across the country. In a way, the whole thing seemed to be an exercise of futility because, with the exception of Mitt Romney, we knew that the vote was going to go straight along party lines... So regardless of the merits of the claims of either the house managers or the defense team, it seemed that a conclusion had already been made in the minds of many of the Senators."

While observations like these don't inspire much hope for collaboration in our current government, President Hoekstra helps put it into perspective.

"While I'm saddened to see our government leaders spending such time and energy on a matter like this, overall I walked away with a confidence and appreciation for our three branches as well as for our bicameral legislative branch. Seriously, the framers of our republic were truly genius in the shape of our system of government.

"Now, I pray that we'll get more dedicated servant leaders (ideally with Christian hearts and minds) to be in those roles in D.C.—both in the elected seats and in the staff positions—to really maximize the potential of our national government into the future."



Photo Credit: Nicolas Kuperus

2020 Cultural Fair

Alicia Bonestroo— Staff Writer

Coming down the stairs of the Campus Center and into the Grille area, the community was met with small flags dangling from the ceilings and bannisters representing many countries around the world. An origami table was at the foot of the stairs. There, they could fold paper into any shape they wish -- with either the help from volunteers, instructions from books, or the internet.

On February 15 the Cross-Cultural Club held their annual Cultural Fair, where Dordt's international students share parts of their native culture with the community. This year, TJ Rankin, a transfer student, attended Dordt's Cross-Cultural Fair for the first time.

"There were several well represented countries with a lot of information, as well as the interesting cultural foods," said Rankin.

Colorful trifold boards containing information and fun facts about each country represented

decked tables in the grille area. Significant items and foods from each culture sat with their corresponding boards, free for the tasting pleasure of passing students.

In addition to displaying food, some members of the Cross-Cultural Club wore traditional clothing from their country. Those that chose to do this participated in a fashion show later in the evening.

Highlights from the fashion show included styles from Brazil, Costa Rica, Indonesia, Paraguay, Philippines, South Korea and China.

Alongside the fashion show was a talent show where students had an opportunity to display dances, music, or other talents traditional to their home culture. All three of the talent acts this year consisted of singing in multiple languages.

"It was really interesting to see the different types of fashion," Rankin said, "and the talent show was very fascinating."



Dordt Facebook

President's weekend

Yee Lim Shin — Staff Writer

On February 13-16, Dordt University held a President's Weekend event in Phoenix, AZ with around 100 guests from that area. The event was created to promote Dordt University and describe the college's future dreams and visions to those who were unable to visit Dordt.

"The people that we invited to the President's weekend are people who are either future parents or future grandparents, or even of current or future students at Dordt," said President Erik Hoekstra.

This was the second time Dordt has ever done a President's Weekend in this area and all of the people who were invited to the event were people related to Dordt. The guests attending were able to listen to President Hoekstra talk about the current situation at the university as well as Dordt's future dreams and visions of where they were heading.

The three topics for the weekend that the event focused on were to: raise the bar, ready the heart, and reform the culture. Two faculty members and one staff member from Dordt talked about these topics and how Dordt was implementing them into the lives of the students. Education Professor David Mulder talked about raising the bar and how to continually get better and strive for excellence for the cause of Christ. Dordt's football coach Joel Penner talked about readying the heart and how to shape and train a student's heart to love the Lord and be ready and willing to serve Christ in their vocations. Social Work Professor Abby Foreman talked about reforming the culture and how Christ calls us to take care of the more vulnerable

people in the world.

Along with these speakers, five students from Dordt University's Worship Team and 2 staff members also attended the event to lead people in worship and have fellowship with them. The worship team, led by Jonathan De Groot and Kimberly Byma, led the group to worship every day.

"We not only led them in worship, but we also were randomly assigned to tables," said senior nursing major Tianna Veldhuisen. "We could just make conversation with them and get to hear a bit of how they're connected to Dordt and if they have any children or relationships at Dordt."

The students were able to talk about Dordt from a student's perspective and give a different angle of how Dordt was impacting them.

"I really liked that they asked us about our experience at Dordt and how the whole event was done with worship," said South Korean exchange student Sunbin Kim.

The President's Weekend was created to promote and present Dordt and the things they were achieving and striving for to the people who cared about Dordt.

"People are excited about Dordt," said President Hoekstra, "and part of this place runs on donations from people who love the students that are praying for them and want to see them do great things in the world."

Ag club takes PAS by storm

Gretchen Lee — Staff Writer



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After weeks of late-night preparations, a four-hour drive, and two full days of competition, the Dordt Agriculture Club returned victorious from the Professional Agricultural Students (PAS) Conference.

On Tuesday, February 4, eighteen members of the Dordt Ag Club travelled to Ames, IA, to participate in a series of agricultural-related competitions. These contests covered areas such as Livestock Specialty, Impromptu Public Speaking, Dairy Specialty, and Employment Interview. Students faced the challenges of the competition by drawing upon their ag knowledge to solve problems and demonstrate their prowess in their chosen area.

“The competitions challenged me but were not extremely difficult,” said freshman participant, Emma Zwart. “It was just a good opportunity to learn and practice skills.” Zwart was a member of the Dordt Sheep 2 team and a participant in the Employment Interview competition.

Katie Bush, a freshman member of the Dordt Beef 2 team and a participant in Impromptu Public Speaking, felt similarly. “As a freshman, the content was a little hard, because we haven’t learned a lot of the specifics yet. We are only in the 3,000 foot animal science class, so we haven’t gotten into the specifics of feeding and stuff yet.”

While this competition focuses on skills-building, there are other benefits to attending PAS.

“I enjoyed getting to know Dordt students better. My favorite part of PAS was watching Dordt do well in almost all of our competitions and seeing teams and individuals excel,” said sophomore Dordt Beef 1 team member, Mariah Posthumus.

The teams from Dordt did indeed excel at PAS. In the Specialty Livestock competitions,

the Beef teams placed 1st and 5th, the Sheep teams placed 1st and 2nd, and the Swine team placed 3rd. The Soil Science team also placed 2nd.

The individual competitions also went very well for Dordt competitors. In the Agricultural Education competition, Jacob Van Der Wilt earned 2nd place. Brayden Konynebelt was the 1st place winner in Agricultural Sales. In the Vet Tech Specialty competition, Katia Sytsma placed 6th. In the career planning competitions, Hannah Baljeu was 2nd in Agriculture Education.

In the Employment Interviews, Gretchen Lee was 2nd in Agriculture Education, and Joslyn Fousert was 1st in Crop Production. Karibeth Englesma, Micah Kooiman, and Kalli Moser also swept the Job Employment: Dairy Production category, taking 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, respectively. Joeli Haan, Mariah Posthumus, and Adri Tilstra took the Employment Interview: Feeds and Animal Health category by storm, placing 2nd, 3rd, and 4th. In Job Employment: Livestock Production, Aubriana Vander Woude was 2nd, Emma Zwart was 4th, Tim Guse was 6th, and Levi Larson was 11th.

In the Precision Ag competition, Kallin Crile placed 11th. Katie Bush was 4th in Impromptu Public Speaking.

The Dordt Ag Students felt that it was an overall very successful week, both in terms of the competition, and in the relationships they built.

“I had a blast. I got to know more people and develop connections within the ag community,” said Zwart. “Working as a team on the case study and the presentation, I got to work with people that I haven’t worked with before and explore topics in an industry that I have been in my whole life.”

PLIA 2020

Lexi Schnaser — Staff Writer

Chicago. Colorado Springs. New Orleans. St. Louis. Atlanta. Houston. Panama City. Sound like fun places to travel? Well lucky for you, you could go to any of these places and more for a spring break PLIA trip! PLIA, or Putting Love Into Action, is a spring break mission trip program. Co-leader of PLIA, sophomore Sarah Holmberg, says PLIA is an opportunity for Dordt students to serve outside of the Sioux Center area and see other places around the country.

“It’s a really good opportunity to set aside studies and other focuses to go serve others, get to know classmates, serve God, and love on people,” Holmberg said.

This year’s PLIA group consists of the 109 Dordt students who applied for the trip by Friday, February fourteenth. There are usually anywhere from 100 to 125 students who take advantage of this opportunity each spring.

“Sports and band and choir really affect how many people can come because of tours and games,” says Holmberg. These opportunities are great ones as well, where students get to invest time in their activities they love. Some students also find the timing of the break a deterrent.

“For freshmen, it is their first year being away from home, so they want to go back to spend time with their families,” Holmberg said. “I

hear from a lot of upperclassmen who are going on trips with their friends.” Additionally, some people choose to go home and earn some quick cash by working for the week. While these reasons are understandable, it is important to remember that we won’t always have these unique opportunities to serve.

Freshman Timothy Molitor says one reason he chose not to go on PLIA this year is because “it’s for a short amount of time, so even though I think you do get to do a lot of service, I’m not too inclined to go on that. If there was lower cost, I probably would go.”

This year, Dordt students will spread out across the U.S. to serve in fourteen different locations. Most of the service trips will consist of hands-on construction or landscaping work, while other trips are more relational where students will go into to schools and read to children or work with refugees.

“But all of it is relational because you get to know your site organization leaders and the people on your team really well,” says Holmberg.

One of Holmberg’s favorite parts about PLIA is that “even if [the people we’re serving] aren’t Christians, even if I’m not telling them about God’s love with my words, I can show them God’s love through what I’m doing and the time I spend with them.”



Contributed Photo

Chaos at the caucus

Spencer Short — Staff Writer

On Monday, February 3rd, Democratic Party members went home after a long day of caucusing; aka, casting their votes, listening to speakers, and participating in the process, ready to rest easy for the night knowing that their voice mattered and that the results would be in by the next morning.

Unfortunately, that isn’t what happened. The caucus results, normally released late in the night of the caucus date, were nowhere to be found that next morning. The reason? A total meltdown of the multiple methods the Democrats had to report in vote tallies.

New this year to the caucus was a phone application that the volunteers would use to tally up votes. Along with this method of reporting, however, was the ability to call in who ended up voting for what candidate, which was the method used most frequently in previous years, the ability to check in the votes on a physical piece of paper, also not an uncommon practice, and along with the method of emailing the results. The app, however, was stated to be the main way that votes should be taken that night.

“I am absolutely disappointed in the reporting,” said Payton Kooi, a registered-independent sophomore from California, with the Iowa Democratic Party Caucus being the first one he has ever attended. “They had all these methods of showing the votes and they still failed. This absolutely unacceptable... It

was just general incompetence all around.”

Kim Van Es, the Chairperson of the Sioux Center South caucus and the vice-chair of the Sioux County Democrats, holds a different view on the caucus situation.

“I think it went well,” Van Es said, “we did use the app [for voting], and we had to restart it on some phones a few times, but overall I feel it worked very well for us... The changes were made with good intent, the Iowa Democratic Party wanted to be more transparent. I really do feel bad for [the IDP].”

As a student, especially a student of Iowa, you have unique opportunity to be involved

Troy Price, Head Chairperson of the IDP, stepped down eight days after the fiasco after multiple calls for him to resign from party leadership both in-state and on a national level. “The fact is that Democrats deserved better than what happened on caucus night. As chair of this party, I am deeply sorry for what happened and bear the responsibility for any failures on behalf of the Iowa Democratic Party,” said Price in his letter of resignation.

With the party leader stepping down, and both the Pete Buttigieg and Bernie Sanders campaign re-canvassing, essentially re-counting, some voting precincts, the party has a lot to deal with internally. Yet along with internal issues there have a multitude of attacks from President Donald Trump, and now they also have to handle debunking conspiracies as some believe these issues were caused intentionally to give Buttigieg an edge over Sanders, as Pete won the Iowa vote by a small margin.

“It was by no means rigged, [the IDP] was just understaffed at the higher levels and overstaffed at the lower levels,” said Kooi, “It was expected to be close, there’s no reason to suggest that anything happened.”

Now with most of the mess behind them, party members and officials are tasked with rebuilding trust and ironing out the kinks for the next elections. A lot of this focus is aimed at attempting to get younger people interested in politics since only around 30% of college-age people eligible to vote turned out in the 2018 election, the lowest voting-percent age group in the nation.

“As a student, especially a student of Iowa, you have unique opportunity to be involved,” said Van Es, “I started getting involved in politics because I am not only a citizen of my community, but also a citizen of the Kingdom, and out of that conviction I began to serve in politics... I encourage others to do the same.”

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“Without”: a perspective on perfectionism

Allison Wordes — Staff Writer

Black and white keys blur in and out of focus on the big screen. The ticking of a metronome counts time ominously. Students sit quietly, captivated in their seats of SB 1606 at Emi’s short film showing, called “Without”, held on Tuesday, February 11.

As part of her senior capstone project, digital media major Emi Stewart worked to write and produce a short film showing off her skills and abilities in the world of filmmaking.

Digital media majors are required to do an independent study project before they graduate. There are multiple options for what exactly the project looks like: a short film, research project, or documentary. Stewart started planning in her junior year.

As she wrote a story and began to cast the project, it didn’t feel quite right. Over the summer she began in another, more confident direction. The second filming began during the fall semester and finished mid-November.

The film starred several Dordt students including Erika Buitter, Lindsey Zuidema, Damon Groen, and others.

“I could still act while having a lower level of commitment,” Zuidema, who stars as a young pianist, said. She has been playing piano since the age of 5 and acted in a high school for *The Sound of Music*. Zuidema also plays oboe and bass guitar and is currently involved in the 4th Avenue Jazz, concert choir, wind symphony,

and worship team.

“Emi knows you have to have more than one good take,” Zuidema said. The cast and crew worked out the schedule so they could do 3-4 shots at a time. For Zuidema, the challenge was to play the piano at the correct tempo, over and over.

“You have to play it in front of 6 people recording you,” said Zuidema. Despite this challenge, she enjoyed working with Emi and her crew.

“The mirrors are reflections of ourselves”

One major strength of the film was cinematography.

“I love to control the cameras and set up those nice creamy backgrounds,” Stewart said.

The film had some spectacular shots, including scenes where the character could be seen from reflected surfaces like car rear-view, bathroom, and practice-room mirrors. The shots switch to include mirrors every time the character is doubting herself.

“The mirrors are reflections of ourselves,”



Photo Credit: Emma Stoltzfus

Stewart said. She said she was somewhat amazed herself by the way the small details of the film tied together. Some of this success was chance—for example, squishing 6 people into one of the music building’s practice rooms leaves little choice but to be creative with angles.

Stewart prefers the writing part of the filmmaking process, even though she doesn’t consider it a strength. The film is around 16 minutes long with the credits, which estimates out to 1 minute per page of script.

Stewart chose the theme of music—specifically, piano. While having played for 14 years, she confessed that she still struggles to play well.

“I was always frustrated with technique,” Stewart said, “and preferred to play by ear.” She said it is easy to focus on perfection both in music and the film industry. Perfection becomes the standard. As someone going into this area of work, she feels the unbelievable amount of pressure to perform well, for both herself and others.

“Overall, my character is not in a great spot,” Zuidema said. As a pianist herself, she realizes how it may be easy to get frustrated practicing but not to the extent the film portrays.

“There’s a little of me in that character,” Stewart said, referring to her protagonist. Reflecting on her previously abandoned project, Stewart thought perhaps it was her sense of perfectionism that kept her from finishing it.

“I have never hallucinated a metronome coming to life,” Stewart said as a disclaimer.

Part of the reward of a film premiere is seeing how others react. Stewart was delighted by the way people responded to the humor in the film. Even things she hadn’t considered funny came

through in a new light.

“That’s one of the benefits of... previewing it—you get to see it in a way you’ve never seen it before,” Stewart said.

Digital media professor Mark Volkers encourages students to sit in the back at their senior project showing so they can watch for the audience’s response. After all, the filmmaker has already seen the film many times over. Stewart said she spent nine months with her script.

Stewart wanted to have a small, casual showing in Dordt’s new screening room. However, students are not allowed to use the

“Make a story you want to tell”

room without a professor being present, so it was moved to the vast space of 1606. This allowed for even more people to come and support Stewart—and enjoy homemade gluten-and-dairy-free cookies.

Stewart offered encouragement to underclassmen, especially those going into media production.

“Don’t be afraid of failure,” Stewart said. “Reevaluate what you determine as failure. Make a story you want to tell.” Most importantly, she encourages students to keep it simple and have fun while they have access to all the professional equipment, professors, and fellow students in a university setting.

As an added bonus, those who attended the showing got to view pure joy and chaos in the show’s blooper reel.



Photo Credit: Emma Stoltzfus

The Birds of Prey characters had fun (and so did I)

Gretchen Lee — Staff Writer

I will admit: the 2016 *Suicide Squad* movie was not my favorite. While it had some excellent action scenes and interesting characters, the movie felt lacking in plot development. It just felt “thrown together,” if you will. That said, I was incredibly excited for *Birds of Prey and the Fantabulous Emancipation of One Harley Quinn* from the first few seconds of the first teaser trailer. I was not disappointed.

Birds of Prey begins with Harley Quinn explaining to the audience that she has broken up with her boyfriend, who just so happens to be the Crown Prince of Crime in Gotham, Joker. The severing of this relationship leaves Harley vulnerable to attack from everyone she has wronged in the past. One such revenge-seeker is the incredibly narcissistic villain of our film: Roman Sionis (aka Black Mask). In the meantime, a young pickpocket named Cassandra Cain has accidentally stolen a massive, prized diamond from the pocket of Sionis’s right-hand-man, swallowing it when she was arrested for theft by Detective Renee Montoya. While Quinn, Montoya, and Sionis’ driver, Dinah Lance (Black Canary) all try to protect and/or capture Cassandra and the diamond, another mysterious figure with a crossbow targets crime bosses at very convenient moments.

With so many characters and storylines to keep track of, I was pleasantly surprised to find this film is easy to follow. The storylines wove together in a tasteful way, even with an unreliable narrator like Harley Quinn. Each of the main characters were given time to develop and grow in such a way that all the “Birds” were multi-dimensional.

The fight scenes were another strong point.

Every brawl was flawless, captivating, and fun to watch. The directors made a creative choice on the use of colors and interesting weapons throughout the entirety of the film, and it seriously pays off. Pair all of that with a man-child of a villain, a funky soundtrack, funny running gags, brilliant visuals, and this movie becomes an instant win.

There were some elements, however, that lacked. Occasionally, cringe-comedy was used which, while functional in most places, was simply, well, cringy in others. Using such humor is a risky move as it only appeals to a certain audience. I also was disappointed that Black Mask never actually fought any of the main characters. Going in, I was hoping to see him brawl with Harley or Black Canary, but that never came to fruition. Having that fight scene would have made Sionis a significantly better villain but, I still enjoyed his character anyway.

I feel that *Birds of Prey* has brought an element to the table that many other DC movies are lacking: fun. This movie manages to allow its characters to develop and grow, providing a well-planned storyline, and create a fun experience for the audience all at once, which is something I feel most DC movies have failed to deliver.

I also appreciated the way this movie portrayed empathy, loyalty, healthy female friendships, and dealing with trauma. It touched on each of these topics in a way that recognized their importance and gravity but didn’t overshadow the plot or sacrifice the lighter atmosphere. It is evident that a significant amount of time was put into the planning and production of this movie and the result is a masterpiece.

Blauw cont.

cont. from page 1

... was worth their time.”

When choosing a performance order, Blauw sat in front of a large whiteboard and listed every possible order she could think of. She had much to consider when deciding an order -- the style of music, the energy to play it, key changes and more.

“I’m a chronic overthinker and processor,” Blauw said.

When she decided on a working order, she took a picture of the whiteboard and sent it to Vorhes to revise.

This last big performance at Dordt is both surreal and bittersweet to Blauw.

“It will change the dynamic of my last couple months here, definitely,” she said.

Blauw said she has learned a lot about perseverance and endurance by playing the harp. It always involves hard work, no matter how many recitals she prepares for.

“Every time, I expect it will be easier, but every recital is just so different,” she said.

Vorhes thinks preparing for a musical recital teaches many lessons. It teaches life-planning skills because Blauw must fit time to practice into her already busy schedule, which includes eight hours of student teaching every day followed by an hour or more of choir

rehearsals three days a week. It also teaches about the relationship between the audience and performer.

“You learn how to share who you are through a piece of music without exposing your entire self,” Vorhes said.

Blauw loves the way people react each time she shows up to any performance with her harp. She especially loves the awed faces and comments children make.

“The shock factor is really fun,” she said. “I never get over that.”

She also enjoys explaining the harp pedals to bewildered observers. Pedals control sharps and flats on the harp, which means each accidental is played with the feet.

“It’s a crazy time,” Blauw said. “It looks beautiful in my hands, but my feet are going crazy while I try not to make too much noise.”

Vorhes is proud of all Blauw has accomplished during her four years at Dordt and is sad that their time working together is coming to an end.

After Dordt, Blauw hopes to continue playing the harp. She is considering getting her master’s degree in harp performance. From there, she would love to teach private harp lessons and perform at churches, for paid gigs and in ensembles.

Broadway and desserts

Tabetha DeGroot — Staff Writer

The warm lights of the B.J. Haan wash over an excited audience, a blend of spectators and performers on February 15. Students, professors, and community members alike gather around tables clad with white tablecloths, soon to be topped with an array of delicious desserts. Small talk fills the air until one voice rises above the rest: “Ladies and gentlemen, it is with deepest pride and greatest pleasure that we welcome you here tonight,” booms Zach Dirksen as the keys of the Steinbach accompany him.

The audience becomes aware of the concert choir members surrounding them when they started a chorus of “Be Our Guest” from the Broadway rendition of *Beauty and the Beast*. What follows is Broadway and Desserts: the best arrangement of sugar and show-tunes this side of highway seventy-five. Music lovers of all ages enjoyed selections from *The Sound of Music*, *South Pacific*, *My Fair Lady*, *Little Women*, *Aladdin*, and *Frozen*. The choir opened a door to a “Whole New World” where they invited the audience to be the guests of an “Enchanted Evening.” Nicholas Schnell’s charming performance of “On the Street Where You Live,” Aaron Medberry’s tender presentation of “Edelweiss,” and Anna Blauw’s beautiful portrayal of “True Love” rendered applause.

“I was super impressed by the characterization and how everyone brought their own flare to their songs,” junior Christianna Marcy said. Sweet melodies mixed with sweet treats as the

guests enjoyed the evening.

“This was the highlight of the week for me,” freshman Julia Holleman said. “It’s the best of my two favorite worlds: music and dessert.”

While filled with fun and frivolity, the event also served a purpose. Dordt University director of choral activities, Mr. Ryan Smit, shared that the concert choir is planning a tour throughout the Eastern United States and Canada in a few weeks. One of their destinations will be New York City, where they will be attending a Broadway show. They will have to pay for the tickets to the show themselves, as well as hotel fare for the night.

The Broadway and Desserts night was Smit’s idea to raise money for their New York activities; it was the first time the Dordt music department has done something like this. Smit expressed before the show that if it was well-received, the concert choir will most likely do it again next year to raise money for their European tour. This seemed like a possibility when Smit asked the audience if Broadway and Desserts should return and was met with enthusiastic applause.

“I think the show went really well,” junior Concert Choir member Brittany Bloemhof said after the show. “There were fun acts and something for everyone.”

As the show closed, the “Von Trapp Family Singers” bid adieu to the audience, who left with stomachs full of cake and heads filled with the sound of music.

“Sonic”: a bit bland

Zach Dirksen- Staff Writer



Contributed Photo

It’s almost as if we’ve seen it before. A young-to-middle-aged man finds himself in the company of an oversized CGI creature with a talent for human speech. Said animal often possesses a unique skill, perhaps musical ability or some sort of magic power. The unlikely duo finds themselves in a variety of scrapes and close shaves, often pursued by a comical villain. It’s *Alvin and the Chipmunks*, it’s *The Smurfs*, and it’s a multitude of other family films released between 2000 and 2012. And, like an aftershock of movie genres past, it’s *Sonic The Hedgehog*. Yes, the speedy blue rodent has made his way to the big screen, and, if anything, it’s blandly familiar.

Ever since teleporting to our planet, Sonic’s been lying low in Green Hills, Montana. It’s a solitary life, but Sonic’s made the most of it by stealing various objects for his cave and admiring the lives of Tom and Maddie Wachowski, the Green Hills’ resident police officer and veterinarian, from afar. To Sonic, they have the perfect life: friends, purpose, and love. But to Tom, things could be better. Being a police officer in a small town can be boring, and he’s put in for a transfer to San Francisco.

Things come to a head when Sonic, finally realizing how lonely he is, accidentally releases an energy surge so powerful that it causes a mass blackout. The government takes notice and brings in an expert to handle the situation: Doctor Robotnik. He’s as smart as he is crazy, and things begin to look bleak for our little hedgehog hero. Sonic turns to Tom for help, but accidentally loses his teleporting rings. Thus, the pair sets out to retrieve the rings, with Robotnik in dogged pursuit.

Sonic the Hedgehog isn’t so much a movie as it is a test run to see if the character works in a medium outside of television and video games. It simply takes the Sonic brand and pastes it over a formulaic movie structure we’ve

seen a dozen times before. It works in many of the same ways those movies work, and fails in many of the same ways those films have failed: It’s got some fun moments and it makes good use of its cast, but fails to bring anything new or unique to the table.

While I’m not a Sonic fan per se, I know there is so much more that this film could’ve done to stand apart, and the fact that it is just a buddy road-trip sci-fi family comedy is kind of maddening.

However, the experience isn’t a total waste. The film does have a few bright spots. Parks and Recreation’s Ben Schwartz brings a fun and warmth to his vocal portrayal of Sonic that ensures it doesn’t grow stale or annoying. James Marsden turns in a surprisingly believable performance, especially considering he was likely acting against nothing throughout production, with Sonic being added in later in the editing process.

The absolute best thing about the movie is Jim Carrey as Dr. Robotnik. Carrey brings an energy and humor to his role that we haven’t seen from him in decades. Harkening back to his performances in *The Mask* and *Ace Ventura*, Carrey commits every muscle of his body and face to the role, energizing the entire production with his manic genius. Every frame Carrey occupies in *Sonic The Hedgehog* is a genuinely fun time and pushes the movie ever so slightly closer to being a unique experience. Carrey’s performance alone might be worth the price of a movie ticket.

Sonic the Hedgehog is an unoriginal waste of its source material’s potential, but still provides a sometimes-entertaining and fun escape, especially thanks to Jim Carrey’s hilarious performance. Perhaps its inevitable sequels will be able to capitalize on the weirdness and originality of the SEGA mascot, but for now, this safe, unoriginal version will have to do.

Megan Middel: The Untold Stories

Yage Wang — Staff Writer

Strolling into the painting classroom of the Art department, Megan Middel’s studio occupies a tiny square in this place. As with many other artists, one never expects to see what they have accumulated on their tables: apples, an electric cooker, pigments, and a few trying out paintings with vibrant color. All around the walls in her studio, ten portraits declare their stories in silence.

Middel is a senior student majoring in Studio Art and Psychology. On February 20 in the Campus Center, Middel’s art show opened for the public to see. The Senior Art Show is a practical exhibition for all art majors to gain experience and demonstrate their knowledge and works in their last semester at Dordt.

“The goal of the senior show is for the students to really take everything that they have been exploring throughout their years at Dordt,” says Professor Drissell. “It brings a synthesis of all the knowledge and learnings, combined with what they care about, what motivates them, and what inspires them to create.”

Middel’s art show includes 10 portraits of Ugandan children whom Middel met last January.

“I want to use their stories to create a new lens of perspective”

“I visited Uganda for about 14 days and there were about 200 hundred kids. I actually took pictures of all of them, but I only captured 10 of them (in my drawings),” said Middel. “Some of them I got to know well and I know more about their stories, but some of them are little bit more distant because I only got to briefly talk to them.”

Every portrait in Middel’s collection has a distinct, infectious smile. Those smiles were the initial inspiration of Middel’s paintings, allowing for a subject of study that is powerful and rich in context.

“I want to use their stories to create a new lens of perspective for people who often don’t hear about their sides of the world. It’s normal for them, but for us, it’s a complete shock.”

Middel wants to contain her artworks with healing power rather than just a pretty pictorial

landscape hanging on the wall. “It can reveal the brokenness, highlight a hopeful future for these kids,” she said.

Middel’s father works for a nonprofit organization that helps people in Africa build their own business. Through this, she connected with a Ugandan organization called “Mercy”. The Mercy Organization has a kids’ camp that is open to any child who wishes to come. “Part of the Mercy ministry is trying to connect them back to their families, which doesn’t necessarily

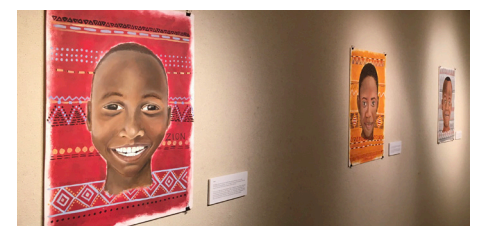
“I think art can be both reflective and meaningful, just as in art therapy.”

mean their parents but their aunts or uncles. So, they can stay at their homes, their natural states, but still are being helped through Mercy.”

This is why every painting has a theme color and personal story written in the background. Middel wants to closely combine the protagonist of the painting with their spirits and stories. “Each piece starts with little bit of their brokenness, like where they came from. Kwagala, was abandoned in a gas station. Mercy Ministration rescued her. She is two years old now, but her story does not define her in any way. I just want to highlight that even though those kids go through so much, they still have such hopeful outlooks.”

After Middel graduates in May, she wants to pursue her master’s degree in Chicago. This art show is only a preview of how she is capable of fusing art with therapy as a meaningful profession. On top of this, Middel hopes her artworks can create a second hopeful outlook for other people.

“I want to tie a little bit of my future vocation with my senior show. I think art can be both reflective and meaningful, just as in art therapy. It’s very therapeutic.”



Contributed Photo

Koerner cont.

cont. from page 1

... Tabor College, holds a special connection to Everything is Wonderful. His upbringing in a Mennonite community parallels the fictional Amish town in the show.

“It’s important to me to tell this story about the people who are not too far from my own,” he said.

Before repeating for a third time, Koerner leaves her chair and kneels next to Bouma, who sits on a rehearsal cube. In a quiet voice, Koerner illustrates the state of Bouma’s character in the scene. Unlike some directors, who give straightforward instruction, Koerner prefers to coax emotion out of her actors.

“She knows what she wants and knows how to get you to do that,” Klein said.

Koerner holds an MA in theatre history and performance theory and an MFA in acting. She has worked with professional actors in LA and in scene shops across the country. It was while a student Dordt, however, where she began her love for the theatre.

“I found the kind of community I wanted to be in for the rest of my life,” Koerner said. “[It is with] people who are asking hard questions and care deeply about connecting with the broader community.”

Before returning to Dordt as a professor, Koerner taught at Tabor College in Kansas (where Klein also attended). She and her husband bought their first house there and gave birth to their daughter, Amelia.

While driving in the car a year ago, Koerner’s husband handed her his phone with a job posting from Dordt. A position in the theatre department had recently opened.

“It had such a strong inevitability,” Koerner said. “Maybe that’s what we call calling.”

A difficult moving process to follow, Koerner and her family now live in Sioux Center. In addition to Everything is Wonderful, she teaches performance classes and a handful of core classes. This past fall, Amelia played a minor role in the mainstage production *Known but to God*.

Back in the theatre classroom, Klein and Bouma find success on the third try.

“Almost tears!” Klein says.

Even with the heavy subject material, the cast finds time for lightheartedness. Koerner calls for a ten-minute break before returning to the challenging script.

“Doing this ‘loving our neighbor’ thing can be really hard,” Koerner said. “We need to do it anyway.”

Early birds get snow removed

Lindsay Kuiper — Staff Writer

It's 4:00 a.m. in the middle of winter at Dordt. While most students are sleeping (or perhaps pulling an all-nighter), Cheney Vander Berg and Shane Van Essen are just waking up.

They walk, wordlessly, to the maintenance building on the West side of campus. They'll be removing snow from the sidewalks around Dordt for the next three to four hours.

On another day at work, Vander Berg might find himself sitting in a wheelbarrow for a quick picture, and Van Essen might stroll through the graveyard of discarded bicycles in the upper level of the maintenance building. But this morning would be a time free from sarcasm, witty exchanges, and time-consuming shenanigans—messing around at such an early hour is frowned upon.

When heavy machinery is being operated by sleep-deprived college students, there can be no room for error.

The Grounds workers each have routes they must complete before they can clock out for the day. Moving snow is the most time-sensitive job they have to work on. At 8:00 a.m., hordes of shivering students will make their way across campus, so the paths must be cleared.

Once the snow has been removed and the ice has been covered in salt, Vander Berg and Van Essen can head to class. On most days, they're busy until at least midnight. When they're finally able to anchor their heads to their pillows and sink into a well-deserved sleep, they will have completed a 20-hour day.

They don't always know if they have work in the morning. Every night, they keep their phones on and nearby in case Denny, their boss,

needs them to come in.

The Dordt University Facilities Team, more informally known as the Grounds team, works year-round to keep Dordt's campus functional and aesthetically appealing. In the spring and summer, all of the grassy areas on campus have to be mowed and weeded weekly. In the fall, dead leaves are the main concern.

"Every leaf you pick up now is one less leaf you have to pick up later," said Van Essen.

Safety is a high priority for Vander Berg and Van Essen.

"Rule #1 for Grounds: there are no heroes," said Vander Berg.

He explained that it's always better to complete jobs slowly and carefully rather than running the risk of injury.

"The unseen jobs that Grounds staff members work on are the jobs that makes a huge difference," said Van Essen. "Those are the jobs that make the day-to-day go by smoothly for everyone on campus."

Recently, the team had to move 10,000 pounds of water softener salt into the basements of dorm buildings so that the showers work properly.

Vander Berg and Van Essen said that the full-time staff in charge of Grounds do their jobs because they have a commitment to Christian education.

"[It's] pretty neat because they rarely get recognition," said Vander Berg. "That's partly because they don't want it, but it's mostly because of their determination to get the job done."

"I do my job, I do it well, and that's enough for me," he said. "That's all the praise I need."

Girls' night in for Galentine's

Sydney Brummel — Staff Writer

It's the day before Valentine's Day, and the excited buzz of special dates and sweet treats fills the campus. But walking into West Hall on the evening of Thursday, February 13, one might notice a slightly different atmosphere. Love is in the air all right, but rather than a feeling of romance, it is the bond of friendship.

A small sign reading "Gals, come this way!" directs students to West Hall's basement. Usually serving as a small computer lab, the room has been transformed. Christmas lights line the rearranged computer desks. Pink streamers hang across the ceiling tiles, and strings of paper hearts dangle overhead. Balloons scatter the floor. A small group of freshman girls is to thank for this seasonal redecoration.

"I have been inspired by the great show that is Parks and Recreation, where Leslie Knope put a date to Galentine's Day, which is February 13," freshman West Hall resident Lindsay Kuiper said.

Kuiper, a digital media and communications major from Orange City, IA, has celebrated Galentine's Day for the past two years by arranging special girls-only parties with her friends.

"Now I'm at college and I wanted to do the same thing," Kuiper said. "And here we are in West Lobby basement just with the gals. No boys are invited because it's just for the gals."

While Kuiper sent out the email invitations

and organized this year's event, she was assisted by some of her close friends. They helped her craft and hang up the decorations, and others supplied food and drinks. With an expected turnout of around twenty people, they put a great deal of thought and effort to make this get-together ideal for a group of girl friends.

"We're basically trying to have the girliest night possible," Kuiper said.

One table, covered with a pale pink tablecloth, is strewn with chocolates and other snacks, such as Oreos and bags of popcorn. Freshman Allie Zwart provided a large bowl of her homemade punch. A few bottles of nail polish and face masks sit in the corner of the basement.

A gift exchange starts the evening off. Afterward, the group of girls view the Netflix chick flick, *To All the Boys: P.S. I Still Love You*, which was released only one day prior. With two mattresses sitting in front of a TV, the friends had comfortable seating while the movie plays.

Despite the limited space of West Hall's basement, Kuiper and her friends successfully created an environment that welcomes any girl, regardless of her relationship status. With the colorful decorations, delicious goodies, and the company of good friends, the girls are sure to enjoy a memorable celebration of the unofficial holiday.

"It's just a fun day to spend with girls," freshman Alinda Brouwer said. "It's fun to have your significant other, but if you don't have your girlfriends as well, what's the point?"



Photo Credit: Sommer Schaap

Dordt loses flexibility

Kate Ribbens— Staff Writer

Groans and cracks can be heard as students' bodies become stiff from the cold and disuse. Impromptu stretching occurs as students painfully stand at the end of their long classes. Backs pop, complaints are spewed, and jokes about "old people's syndrome" emerge. Is there a cure for this epidemic?

Once upon a time, Dordt had a yoga club that many students were a part of. Now, however, the attendance is down. Shantelia Shook, one of the leaders of the club, believes that fewer students are attending because of the stereotypes associated with yoga. The media advertises yoga as a spiritual practice, which causes many Christians to shy away from it.

"It's not about spirituality or energy or all these stigmas out there," Shook said. "It's becoming healthy with your body, stretching it out, just becoming looser and more flexible."

Shook said that fear also keeps a lot of people from yoga. Fear that they'll be embarrassed by their inability to do poses, or that they'll be looked down upon. It's also a stereotype that only girls do yoga, which could be pushing away potential club members.

"It's not just for girls. It's, you know, for everyone and all age groups," Shook said. "All the old clubs that I did back at home had elderly people, men, women, children, even dogs."

Amber Veltkamp, a student studying abroad from the Netherlands, started attending yoga club this semester. She recommends that students at least come out and try it.

"Yoga club at Dordt is lucky because you can just try stuff. There are poses that you will almost definitely be able to do," Veltkamp said. "It's not about being flexible, it's about finding your own boundaries."

Students at yoga club come from a wide

background of skillsets. Veltkamp had done yoga for 5 years before attending Dordt's yoga club. She attended a camp that combined chiropractic work with yoga to facilitate additional releases in the body. However, most of the students that attend yoga club are experiencing it for the first time. The poses are beginner friendly, but each individual can make them more strenuous if they so desire.

Students are motivated to do yoga for a wide variety of reasons. Veltkamp says the physical benefits make it worth it.

"I think it's good for your flexibility," Veltkamp said. "People who have back problems and everything can strengthen certain muscle areas."

Many athletes joined yoga club to keep themselves loose during the off-season, or to balance their other workouts. Muscular health is maintained by balancing the strain of workouts with times to stretch and relax as well. However, there is a mental component to yoga as well.

"It's a really good stress reliever for me," Shook said. Exercise combined with quiet time away from the busyness of life is a key component to maintaining good mental health.

Yoga club meets at 7 p.m. on Thursdays in the aerobics room. Most sessions only take 30-40 minutes, so students can attend during short time blocks. The club has a special event each month and has opportunities for participants to choose the muscle group to focus on. The club balances strengthening and stretching muscles with a variety of poses and routines. The leaders cater to the students attending and often have a "back to basics" routine to welcome newcomers.



Contributed Photo

Opinion: Love in politics

Lexi Schnaser — Staff Writer

On the morning of February 6th, 2020, the day after his acquittal, President Trump spoke at the annual National Prayer Breakfast. The purpose of this event was to promote humility, reflection, and faithfulness among the leaders of our nation. The theme of the breakfast this year was focused on Jesus' call to love our enemies. However, this message seemed to have missed President Trump completely.

Whether or not you support President Trump, it is evident that he did not express humility, reflection, or faithfulness during this address. From claiming he was "put through a terrible ordeal by some very dishonest and corrupt people" who did "everything possible" to destroy him and our country, to boasting about the greatness of our country, Trump missed the core message of loving our enemies.

Many Christians who are politically active support Trump because he supports pro-God and pro-life policies. But how much can someone be pro-God when they don't even attempt to adhere to Jesus' commandments?

Our political culture today is unhealthy and corrupted. There is no perfect political party for Christians, and Christians should not try to squeeze themselves into one political party. Not

to quote Democratic presidential candidate Pete Buttigieg, but God does not belong to a political party. God loves us with a radical love that we are called to share with others.

In his speech, President Trump did not hesitate to attack Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and Utah Senator Mitt Romney, saying, "I don't like people who use faith for justification for doing what they know is wrong, nor do I like people who say 'I pray for you' when they know that is not so."

I agree with the President here. We should not use our faith to support our political decisions, but rather let our beliefs in our faith guide how we interact with our neighbors on a local and federal level. Also, duh, don't tell someone you're going to pray for them if you really won't. But who are we to judge whether Speaker Pelosi and Senator Romney were leaning on their faith?

So, if we're going to take anything away from the National Prayer Breakfast, the impeachment craze, and the American political culture in general, let it be this: if Jesus calls us to love our enemies and speak truth into their lives, let's put away the partisan divisiveness and instead support the person who we believe can help us love our enemies and serve our neighbors.

Nancy Pelosi – need I say more

Caleb Pollema— Staff Writer

39 years. Think of all the things you could do in that amount of time. Most coaches in professional and collegiate sports don't last that long in their jobs. For some Americans, 40 to 45 years encapsulates an entire professional career.

It's been 39 years since Nancy Pelosi began her political career as the Chair of the California Democratic Party in February of 1981. To put in perspective, the average cost of a gallon of gas in 1981 was \$1.31. In other words, it's been a while.

She turns 80 in March. She has been in politics for nearly half of her life. She represents California's 12th District, which consists of nearly 80 percent of the city of San Francisco.

As a native Californian and a champion of the revitalization of my beloved Golden State, let me tell you San Francisco is the last place you want to live or take a nice vacation in right now.

It is the core of a homelessness epidemic running rampant through California, not to mention the hub of the state's absolute abandonment of the rule of law. It is sad.

As a resident of California's Central Valley, which I would argue is one of the most vital geographical and economic regions in the entire country with its abundant agricultural production and oil reserves, I find the downfall of my state utterly despicable.

I also find despicable the recent actions of the 52nd Speaker of the House, Mrs. Pelosi.

Let me just cut to the chase.

She ripped up the State of the Union speech for the entire country to see. I watched it live and was quite frankly appalled.

What was she thinking? I honestly would love to know her answer to that question.

Furthermore, it is only fair I bring up President Trump's handshake rejection at the beginning of the speech. The video footage leaves room for the possibility he may not have seen her handshake, but I'm willing to give her the benefit of doubt.

But then again, if I was in President Trump's shoes would I want to shake the hand of a woman who has been looking to oust me from office from the moment I began my term? I would think not.

Shenanigans aside, I believe these actions

go a long way in showing that our country is becoming more divided than ever. Or is that the case?

I believe the State of the Union speech itself would argue that it is quite the opposite.

Now, at this point in my story, I could go on to explain why I believe President Trump's policies have worked and why I think he should be easily reelected. While I believe these things, I'm not going to expound upon them.

Instead, I would rather expand on a few points I believe are non-negotiable as a young member of Generation Z who will be voting in his first presidential election next November.

First, our national debt and deficit are both increasing and there seems to be no reversion in sight. The politicians of today, regardless of party, keep kicking the can down the road for the next generation to fit the bill.

We have the big-government Republicans and the big-government Democrats. The only vast disagreement is over what and how much money should be spent. Republicans have left the curtailed spending and limited government stance at the door, especially under a more populist Trump administration.

Second, as someone preparing to enter the workforce full-time in the next year, I am even more concerned with the removal of money from my paycheck.

While the removal of money from summer jobs and internships is minimal, for a real job it is not. One of these removals is Social Security.

Another problem for the next generation to solve. Another benefit I will probably not receive when it is time for me to retire.

Finally, I find it interesting most of our federal politicians are well, older. Donald Trump, 73. Elizabeth Warren, 70. Bernie Sanders, 78. Chuck Schumer, 69. Mitch McConnell, 77. And yes, Nancy Pelosi, 79.

I think this points to a firm need for congressional term limits. A way to more easily curtail career politicians and prevent them from abusing their power. It would give voice to a Generation Z that is much more conservative than many realize and far different from its millennial counterparts.

I believe this is something everyone can agree on regardless of political party, except maybe those currently in office.

Just ask Nancy Pelosi.

Nerf crew assemble

Benjamin Boersma — Staff Writer

T-minus-60 minutes.

It's become a routine for the past few Saturday afternoons. At about 2 pm, I set out my three Nerf guns, attachments and ammo in preparation for the weekly Nerf club meeting. I check to make sure each gun performs the way I like before putting everything I plan to take in a bag.

T-minus-30 minutes.

A half an hour before the first meeting of the semester, I sent a text to a few of my friends. We've all had Nerf guns since we lived in the dorms. Two of my friends have Apollo-type pistols, which fire the golfball-shaped Rival rounds. Another friend has a Khaos-type machine gun.

Other club members carry a much wider arsenal. Freshmen Zach Woudstra and Joe Mastbergen, the two club leaders, own a mix of new and old models. Their collections range from Kronos-type pistols, released in 2018, down to the Nerf classic: the six-round Maverick revolver. Most of their Nerf guns have some form of upgrade, ranging from spring replacements in their Mavericks to a complete rewiring of the feed mechanisms in their machine guns.

I don't claim to be quite that ambitious. Most of the upgrades I do involve some light power boosts to the springs or a few aesthetic touches. My Maverick, which I've had since junior high, has a full barrel drop, as well as a compressed

spring. On the other end is my Atlas, the biggest Nerf gun in my arsenal which is capable of firing two Rival rounds per trigger pull. The most I've done with that gun is add a braided yarn strap and a jerry-rigged scope from some PVC pipe.

T-minus-10 minutes.

Most of my friends have joined forces as we head over to the Rec Center. We're missing the Khaos, but there's other heavy firepower to choose from.

Mastbergen meets us by one of the basketball courts. We set up some tables on their sides and scatter them around the battlefield. Not the best cover, but it'll do. Woudstra would arrive later with his collection of Nerf guns.

A group of kids, seeing the pile of Nerf guns on the ground, come over to us and ask if they can join in. I look at my roommate, fellow senior Matt Frazier. We both shrug.

"You'll have to ask the club leaders," he tells the kids.

Their patience pays off. Mastbergen lets them join in, then texts Woudstra.

"He's going to have to bring all his guns," Mastbergen tells me.

A quick estimate puts attendance at around twelve people. Amusingly, the younger kids almost outnumber the six college students.

Meanwhile, we pair off into teams, doing our best to keep a balance between college kids and younger kids. For this battle, I decide to use my Atlas and my spring-loaded crossbow because of their accuracy over long distances. I hide

Impress me, Timberwolves

Connor Van Hulzen — Staff Writer

Kids latch onto specific sports teams mostly due to those teams' recent successes. For me, as a kid growing up in the Minneapolis suburbs in the mid-2000s, I had some options. The Twins – as frustrating as they may be when it comes to playoff success – were at least able to string together multiple seasons of playoff runs. The Vikings – another perennially snake-bitten playoff team – had some solid teams and actually made their way to two NFC championship games before I turned 18. The Wild – even with their first-round playoff exits every year – allowed me to watch good hockey for the first time and truly enjoy the game.

Notice that out of the four major sports teams in Minneapolis/St. Paul, I only named three. That's because for most of their history, the Minnesota Timberwolves have not shown even a fraction of as much ability or success as the three previously mentioned teams.

The Timberwolves have competed in the playoffs five times over the course of my lifetime. Over the almost 20 years of my life, the Timberwolves have advanced past the first round of the playoffs only once. (Also, the only time they've done it, period. Yes, ever. This team entered the league in the 1989-1990 season.)

I don't have a passion for following the NBA as much as I do the other three major professional sports leagues. I probably even follow MLS more closely than I do the NBA. I believe this is due, in part, to the fact the Timberwolves almost rarely find the time to even give fans a glimmer of hope. When they do finally manage to find something to make fans excited though, that is when things really get interesting.

Starting in 2004, the Wolves missed 13 straight seasons of playoff basketball. In 2017, after the drafting of franchise cornerstone Karl-Anthony Towns in 2015, the hiring of GM/coach Tom Thibodeau, and the trade for a star player in Jimmy Butler, the Timberwolves experienced their first playoff appearance I can remember. After being promptly shuffled out of the playoffs by the Houston Rockets and James Harden in a 4-1 series, fans were disappointed, but still excited to see what the team had in store for next season.

The team had shown to fans they were ready and able to win. And in doing so, it lured these poor fans into a trap before they even knew what hit them.

In the next season, the Wolves struggled. And soon enough, their star player Jimmy Butler demanded a trade and burned every one of his bridges as he left town in a single practice. Media members witnessed him swearing up a storm and leading a rag-tag group of third-string

players to handily defeat the first-team players and sufficiently embarrass the organization.

Butler was eventually traded to the Philadelphia 76ers. The firing of coach Tim Thibodeau followed shortly thereafter, and the Timberwolves were suddenly back at square one.

To recover from the mistakes of past regimes and rebuild the team without a full tear-down, Gersson Rosas was hired. Having experienced much success in the front office of the Houston Rockets, Rosas brought promise to an organization who doesn't get much anymore.

What the Timberwolves needed to get over the hump was star players. Saddled with bad contracts that left them with minimal cap space, however, meant these star players would not be walking in the door during free agency.

At the trade deadline, Rosas got to work. He ended up trading away two draft picks and seven players in return for one draft pick and eight players – headlined by certified star point guard D'Angelo Russell.

The D'Angelo Russell trade is supposed to give Wolves fans reason to celebrate and be excited for the future. The real question then becomes: Will these Timberwolves be any different from the previous iterations?

My first inclination is to say no. With the Minnesota Timberwolves, whatever can go wrong will go wrong. As a result, I believe the Wolves though well-intentioned and appearing as a team on the upswing, will continue to operate in their failing ways.

The Minnesota Timberwolves have and will continue to be the "little brother" of the four major sports teams in Minnesota until they are able to consistently prove themselves to be more than a habitual participant in the draft lottery. I certainly wish them the best of luck, but I just don't see this team pulling it together anytime soon.



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important rules to keep in mind. • The dart or ball velocity cannot exceed 120 feet per second. One of Woudstra's Nerf guns has a ball velocity of around 190 feet per second. Since the velocity is well over the limit, he doesn't bring that one to club meetings.

• The ammunition must be made of foam. Some people prefer to upgrade their Nerf guns to shoot different types of ammunition. My crossbow is capable of shooting custom-made balls, which are more accurate over long range. However, they are not made of foam, and they can reach a velocity of over 180 feet per second. Needless to say, I can't bring those to club meetings.

• Orange parts of the Nerf guns, including barrel tips and triggers, may not be painted over. This allows law enforcement and bystanders to tell at a glance that the guns are just toys. This is required by law. Other than that, repainting is allowed as long as people can reasonably tell that it's a Nerf gun.

The Nerf club usually meets Saturday afternoons at 3pm in the Rec Center. Those who are interested in joining are encouraged to contact either Woudstra or Mastbergen for more information.

Modified Nerf guns are accepted in the club, even encouraged. However, there are some



Contributed Photo

This is the XFL

Connor Van Hulzen — Staff Writer

On Saturday, February 8 the American public was introduced to another spring football league. The XFL played its first games that Saturday, featuring the Seattle Dragons playing the DC Defenders and the LA Wildcats playing the Houston Roughnecks.

This is not the first time the XFL has operated as a spring football league. In 2001, the league operated for only one season before folding.

Vince McMahon – better known for his involvement with WWE – functions as the owner of the league, as he did with the first iteration of the XFL. The return of the XFL was announced in January of 2018. The time allotted between the announcement and the playing of the first game allowed for logistics to be fully fleshed out.

The recent history of spring football leagues has not been encouraging. The Alliance of American Football was a football league which operated during the Spring of 2019. The AAF was announced after the XFL – in March of 2018 – but chose to begin playing as soon as possible in an effort to be there first and establish a brand before the XFL could even begin operations.

The short amount of time between the announcement and the playing of games lead to the AAF not being sound in investment or logistics. Emergency loans and investors had to be brought in on a seemingly weekly basis to support the league. When head investor Tom Dundon pulled out during the middle of the season, the result was an unfinished season and headaches for players who were suddenly without jobs.

With the failure of the AAF, the XFL was able to observe and take note of what works and what doesn't. One thing that the XFL has emphasized has been rule changes. With slight alterations to rules that exist in the NFL, the XFL has been able to make the game more fun to watch and easier to understand for viewers.

Kickoffs are entirely different. Video replay reviews feature an in-booth camera and microphone so viewers can see what the referees see and hear what the thought process behind the decision making. Players are interviewed live on the sideline after big plays and/or critical mistakes. Coaches are wearing microphones when making playcalls so the audience can hear what play is about to be run. There are not one-point kicking extra points but offensive plays which can score one, two, or three points.

The variance in rules while still maintaining core concepts of the game of football has allowed for audiences to enjoy the league as something new.

Dordt University Football Special Teams Coordinator and Cornerbacks Coach Brandon McCormick said, "I've probably watched about three XFL games and I can already tell that it's better than the AAF. I think the AAF was supposed to function as a 'minor leagues' of the NFL, but it had too many different rules to allow it to succeed. When teams can't blitz or are only allowed to play man coverage, it dumbs down the game a little too much."

McCormick also mentioned XFL-specific rule changes as benefitting the league. He said, "The XFL has an ability to keep the knowledgeable football fan and football coaches interested in the league with the coaches being mic'd up. The fact that the game is faster – by having a 25-second play clock rather than the 40-second NFL play clock – will help keep casual fans interested as well."

Dordt University Football Wide Receivers Coach Ben Dixon was cautiously optimistic about the league. He said, "Eventually, these teams are going to need to score a lot on offense to keep fans interested."

The sideline interview integration into the broadcast raised concerns from both coaches. McCormick mentioned specifically a moment he witnessed in a game which was coming down to the wire as a moment he found the interview process to be weird. "In one game, there was about two or three minutes left on the clock. The losing team throws a touchdown and then is trying to get back in the huddle to call a play for the conversion and the sideline reporter was still trying to interview the wide receiver who caught the touchdown. It was really poor timing on the interviewers' part."

Dixon echoed this statement when he said, "Obviously there are some kinks to work out with the sideline interviews. You have players who aren't comfortable on camera on the sidelines and that can make for some bad interviews and make the players uncomfortable."

The XFL has so far reached a large audience. The key to its success will be cultivating that audience and retaining fans so that it doesn't achieve the same fate as the AAF. Though it is yet to be seen if this will happen, the product the XFL has already put out shows promise that it could become a spring football league that stays.

Father Of All... album review: Green Day in 2020

Caleb M.S. — Staff Writer

The year is 2020. We don't have flying cars, self-tying Nikes, or hoverboards, but we do have a new Green Day album. Green Day delivered *Father of All...* (full title not suitable for the Diamond) on February 7 of 2020 to a dubious music critic community.

Contemporary and fringe critics alike were skeptical of a new project from the band, who has delivered lackluster (at best) albums in recent years, and their most recent work held in high regard by consumers and critics dates back to 2004's *American Idiot*. *Father of All...* feels sanitized, carefully curated, stagnant, and unemotional amongst a genre charged with passion, politics, and frenzy.

Green Day may very well be the pop-punk pioneers, but this most recent project swings much farther toward pop than punk. Instrumentals on *Father of All...* could easily have been borrowed from the worst of The Black Keys or Fall Out Boy, compressed and unzipped three times, ran through effects, then haphazardly tossed under Billy Joe Armstrong's trademark tinny voice.

Clocking in at just 26 minutes, *Father of All...* is decidedly un-conceptual and bland. If any through lines can be lifted off of this project, they are the feelings of disconnectedness to pop culture and current events. Each song would be more in place in a GMC Sierra commercial or light-beer ad than on a punk album.

It is worth noting Green Day has just signed a two-year contract with the National Hockey League to provide music for advertisements and jumbotron content, and many of these songs do feel as if they belong blasting in an arena. The title track and "Oh Yeah" both come across as designed to blare for thirty seconds at a time, cut and sliced up across a period in a large stadium. For an album with an expletive in the title, only two songs are marked as explicit on this project, and even content wise the piece is squeaky clean.

A billboard advertising for *Father of All...* heralds this album as "NO FEATURES, NO SWEDISH SONGWRITERS, NO TRAP BEATS, 100% PURE UNCUT ROCK." Does it hold up? There are certainly no features, no writers outside of the band are credited, and there are no trap beats.

But, does it meet the standard of "PURE UNCUT ROCK"? Short answer: no. Yes, the guitar is there, the drums get a nice little run every once and a while, and the band does not shy away from the gratuitous use of organ, synth, and auxiliary percussion. Each song sounds virtually indistinguishable from the one before it, outside of a drum or guitar solo here and there. Remove the vocals and I might think you gave me a mixtape of royalty free samples to use in garage band. Claps and tambourine make an appearance in "Oh Yeah," "Meet Me on the Roof," and more to give the listeners the idea of "Hey look I can participate in this," which is fine if the ending platform at which this album is heard from is crappy speakers at an NHL rink.

The lyrical moments where *Father of All...*



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does not feel squeaky clean come across as forced rebellion, like the workplace softie wearing a leather jacket and putting a toothpick in their mouth then pretending to be harder than they are. "I Was a Teenage Teenager" asks "Who has the drugs?" and proclaims, "My life's a mess and school's just for suckers." These lyrics carry a visceral image of balding boomers holding a Bud Light while they flip burgers with all their middle-aged dad friends in the backyard, complaining about modern baseball, and reflecting on the glory days on their high school football team.

Father of All... represents a larger issue in contemporary music. Weezer released *The Black Album* last year that evoked many of the same sentiments I am communicating in my review of Green Day's most recent work. Both groups are strikingly similar in market, age, and past relevance. At their height they were influential, mainstream, and not all that bad. Granted, each has had their quality moments and each their commercial flops. However, Weezer may be on better footing after releasing *The Teal Album*, composed entirely of covers. Weezer is having fun, making music to make music, and holding true to their band's ideas, which may have shifted in their twenty-five years of activity, but who doesn't change over the quarter of a century?

Green Day, on the other hand, has gone the way of Fall Out Boy or Panic! at the Disco, and gave into contemporary pressures. If the quality and shifting sound of their music has not alluded toward their selling-out, the quite literal selling out in their contract with the NHL makes it all too obvious. Green Day will continue to follow their own advice given in the second to last song on the album: "Take the Money and Crawl."

SONG BREAKDOWN

Will Listen to Again:
N/A
Delightfully Meh:
"Father of All..."
"Take the Money and Crawl"
Burn it Down:
"Literally everything else".
Dark Horse:
N/A

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Fri. Feb 21
Track Meet @ Mitchell, SD. All Day
Men's Varsity Baseball vs. McPherson @ McPherson, KS. 11:00am
Men's Varsity Baseball vs. McPherson @ McPherson, KS. 1:00pm
Men's Varsity Volleyball vs. William Penn @ Oskaloosa, IA. 7:00pm
Prairie Grass Film Festival @ Science Building. 5:45pm

Sat. Feb 22
Track Meet @ Mitchell, SD. All Day
Women's Varsity Dance Cheer and Dance Invite @Dordt. 11:00am
Men's Varsity Baseball vs. McPherson @ McPherson, KS. 11:00am, 1pm

Women's Varsity Basketball vs. College of Saint Mary, @Dordt. 3:00pm

Tues. Feb 25
Men's Varsity Volleyball vs. Briar Cliff @ Dordt. 7:00pm

Wed. Feb 26
Women's Varsity Basketball vs. TBA- GPAC Quarterfinals @TBA
Men's Varsity Basketball vs. TBA- GPAC Quarterfinals @TBA

Thurs. Feb 27
Women's Varsity Dance @ Western Christian High School. 7:00pm

Fri. Feb 28
Women's Varsity Dance NAIA National Qualifier @Sioux City, IA. All Day

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