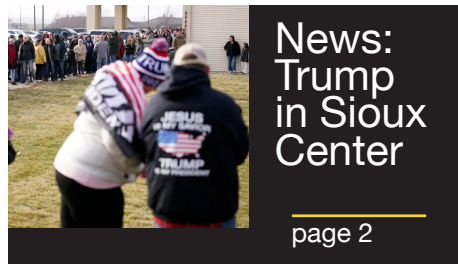




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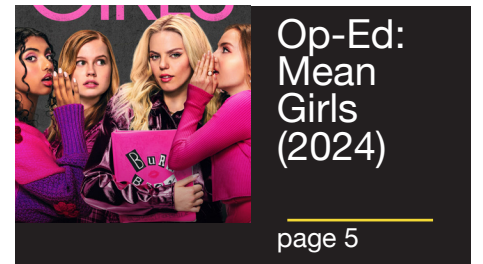
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# THE DIAMOND

## Planting for the Future Campaign raises over \$100 million

Jeralyn Wessel – Staff Writer

As 2023 drew to an end, Dordt University’s “Planting for the Future Campaign” came to a close on Dec. 31. The grand total of donations raised reached over \$103 million. Over six thousand donors contributed to the capital campaign over the past several years to support new infrastructure, current facilities, and financial aid for students.

In 2017 and 2018, Dordt University was working on the first phase, which included the Agriculture Stewardship Center, the Zylstra Nursing Education Center, and the Theatre Arts Center. While wrapping up those projects, several more appeared on the horizon. Dordt needed funding for the second phase of the Agriculture Stewardship Center, the new dining center, and a major addition to the B.J. Haan Auditorium. In anticipation of these projects, the advancement team began researching the funding they could realistically receive from Dordt’s donors.

After a consulting firm completed a feasibility study, Dordt set a fundraising goal of \$71 million dollars by 2019. The Board of Trustees approved the campaign and fundraising began with a timeline of around five years. Just a few months later, the COVID-19 pandemic struck, and the advancement team prepared for a pause in the campaign. However, while most non-profits struggled through an extreme downturn in funding during the pandemic,



Dordt experienced quite the opposite.

“Remarkably, our donors really stepped up during Covid,” said John Baas, the Vice President for Advancement. “When Covid hit here, it was like giving accelerated.”

“I think we were all shocked at how many people reached out to Dordt asking, ‘What can we do?’” said Janna Hulstein, Campaign and Advancement Events Director.

Donors were determined to ensure funding was available for students to return to Dordt after

the pandemic and gave far beyond expectations. By the end of 2021, the fundraising goal of \$71 million had almost been reached. With many donors still ready to contribute to the campaign, Dordt increased the goal to \$90 million in March 2022.

An end date of Dec. 31, 2023, was set for the campaign and the second goal of \$90 million was once again exceeded. Donors gave \$103 million by the end of the year. “Just about everyone who made a commitment

to the campaign gave more than we thought they would,” Baas said. “It’s a really interesting time in higher education right now. A lot of our donors hate what they see in higher education generally. They see Dordt as something different from that.”

*“It’s a really interesting time in higher education right now. A lot of our donors hate what they see in higher education generally. They see Dordt as something different from that.”*

*- John Baas*

The overall campaign included a \$15 million goal for estate gifts and \$10 million goal for student scholarships. By the end of the campaign, over \$24 million had been donated for student scholarships. Several new

Cont. on pg. 8

## Diving headfirst: Dordt adds swim team

Myliya Wagenaar—Staff Writer

Dordt University welcomes hundreds of new, talented students every year—runners, musicians, artists, and actors. But in the fall of 2024, a new group will join campus: swimmers. Joining this new group will be their new head coach, Mason Youngblood.

Dordt announced its swim team addition last May, although the plans were created much earlier.

“It’s a longer process than what people think,” said Trent Roose, Dordt’s interim athletic director. “The All Seasons Center has been here for a number of years, so we always knew a swim team would be an option for us.”

Before starting a program, Dordt wants to ensure that it can be successful on every level.

“We look at it from a budget standpoint and make sure it fits with the mission and vision of Dordt,” Roose said. For the swimmers, it has become official. “It will be a legitimate program. They will be on scholarship,” Roose said.

One of the first steps was hiring a new coach: Mason Youngblood from Silsbee, Texas. He swam at Ouachita Baptist University in Arkansas and graduated in 2020, then returned to Silsbee to coach.

“I’m from a super small town, and Dordt had a similar feeling,” Youngblood said.

Youngblood is 26 but has years of coaching experience. He first coaches Silsbee’s summer league team 10 years ago. He’s excited about Dordt’s new beginning—particularly for the recruitment process.



“The kids I’ve been talking to are really interested in wanting to grow themselves. I think it’s going to be a great first year,” Youngblood said. “they’re also fast.”

The All Seasons Center will be the home-base for the swim team, with minor additions set to be made this spring and summer. The pool will eventually have a scoreboard, starting blocks, a timing system, and become oriented to the Dordt team. “After that, it’s going to look fantastic,” Youngblood said.

Dave Egdorf, the Facilities Director for the All-Seasons Center, said his team is happy with

Cont. on pg. 4

## Izzy the studious corgi goes to college

Paige Corkill — Staff Writer

About four and a half hours south of Sioux Center, in the small town of Washington, Kansas, a little corgi gets ready to save the day – for the third time. On this occasion, Izzy the Corgi is on a mission to save some local cows from their alien kidnappers. Previously, Izzy has helped her sheriff owner save their small western town from pesky varmints and assisted her superhero owner in taking down the bad guys threatening her city. With this resume, there is no doubt that Izzy can’t handle some cow-nabbing aliens.

While these stories may not be quite true to life, Izzy is a very real corgi who does go on many adventures. When she’s not saving the day, Izzy spends all her free time with her owner and best friend, Kady Toole.

Kady is a freshman at Dordt University majoring in Fine Arts and Graphic Design. As a college freshman, Kady is already a published author and illustrator, with three children’s books up for sale, all inspired by her corgi, Izzy.

During her sophomore year of high school, Kady’s school decided to implement a project-based learning class. All the students at Washington County High had to choose some sort of project that would last an entire semester. There were several competencies to be achieved through the project, so some students started their own small business, did research projects, or learned to play an instrument. Kady had a different idea.

“For my project I decided to write and



illustrate my own children’s book,” Kady said.

The idea for “Izzy the Cowgirl Corgi” was born. She spent the whole semester working on it, using class time and free time to get it done. Her creative process is simple.

“As long as I have a general idea and basic plot I can start,” Kady said. “From there I did the illustrations and broke it up into pages so I knew what to draw.”

After getting positive feedback, she decided to try and publish her product. Self-publishing

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## Trump campaigns in Sioux Center



Jonah Hofmeyer — Section Editor  
Joya Breems — Co-Editor

Republican Presidential Candidate Donald Trump held a “Commit to Caucus” rally in Sioux Center on Jan. 5. Potential voters from all over the Midwest crowded into the Terrace View Event Center to hear Trump speak. Attendees of the event lined up outside Terrace View, past the Hampton Inn, Four Brothers, and to St. Andrews Way.

The rally was originally scheduled to be held on Dordt University’s campus, on Jan. 5, 2024. The event location was moved to Terrace View Event Center due to a miscommunication between the university and the Trump campaign.

Attendees could begin parking by the events center at 9 a.m., four hours before the doors opened, and over seven hours before Trump’s speech around 4:30 p.m. Because of the large lines and the 700-person capacity of the events center, many people standing in line were turned away at the door because there was not enough space to hold everyone.

Merchants gathered outside the venue, selling an assortment of Trump-related items such as MAGA hats, t-shirts, and sweatshirts.

One merchant was selling Trump 2024 stocking caps, which proved popular because of the cold temperatures, 36 degrees with a 10 mph wind. Many people in line stepped into the Hampton

*“These events are intended to be educational in nature.”*  
- Brandon Huisman

Inn to grab some coffee and warm up. Trump is not a stranger to Sioux Center. During the 2016 election cycle, many Northwest Iowa residents crowded the BJ Haan to hear Trump speak. This is where the infamous quote “I could stand in the middle of 5th Avenue and shoot somebody and wouldn’t lose any voters.” Dordt has a history of inviting any political candidate in good standing with their

Cont. on pg. 8

## Caucusing in the cold



Briana Gardner — Staff Writer

With temperatures around nine below zero, Sioux Center residents in precincts 2 and 3 took to the icy streets and headed to Sioux Center Christian School to vote on their preferred Republican presidential candidate.

Despite the cold temperatures, 270 constituents attended the event, lining up for voter registration and confirmation of location before they headed into the gymnasium.

Forms were available for voters to change their registration at the event, utilized by those changing their registration to Republican, those not previously registered as Iowan voters, and new voters. Volunteers initially printed 15-20 sheets for registration changes, but they had to go back twice to print more due to the number of people who wanted to participate.

Before the event, caucus leaders were instructed to only use the bleachers to sit voters, but due to the attendance volume, volunteers had to improvise and were hauling chairs into the gymnasium minutes before the caucus started.

After the pledge, a prayer, and the election of precinct chair and secretary, caucus chair and Dordt University criminal justice professor Donald Roth opened the forum to any precinct captains or attendees who wanted to speak on behalf of their candidates.

Dordt students and faculty were active in voicing their opinions. Nikki Haley’s campaign asked Dordt senior Matt Haken to be their precinct captain.

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## Entrepreneurship program continues to grow

Myra Carlson—Staff Writer

Dordt University’s business department made the addition of an entrepreneurship emphasis in 2021. The launch of the Dooyema Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation program has been popular, leading to 38 entrepreneurship majors and 15 minors in just

three years. The entrepreneurship program has allowed Dordt to serve both the community and students at Dordt to find their niche and passion within the business world.

“We want students to have great opportunities to learn,” said Dale Zevenbergen, director of the Center for Entrepreneurship. “Our goal is to be a resource for other businesses outside of Dordt.”

The entrepreneurship program has been an avenue for several students who are interested in starting businesses themselves. Project Elevate a resource within the program, allows students to get field experience through collaborating with local businesses. This project highlighted numerous business needs throughout the community, and has given Dordt the opportunity to be a resource to those business.

Ayden Den Herder is one example of a Dordt Student who has been impacted by the entrepreneurship program at Dordt.

“My business is a small Christian t-shirt company that specializes in making fun Christian merch that can be used to evangelize,” Den Herder said. “The entrepreneurship program has provided me with insight into the business world that I can apply directly to my business.”

Den Herder hopes that her business continues to grow following her time at Dordt.

This summer Dordt plans to have four students be a part of the Okoboji Entrepreneurial institute (OUI). Students will attend panels and listen to speakers at the event, along with gaining networking and connection opportunities. Many students in the entrepreneurship program will also be involved in IdeaFest on April 25 where they will present their business ideas.

Photo credit: Myra Carlson



## Student government creates new position

Audra Kooi — Staff Writer

Currently, Dordt University student body president Bryce Enger is spending his last semester at student teaching in Denver, Colorado. Vice president Sara Hofer and student government has adapted to this change, with Isabel Phiefer stepping into a new role as administrative assistant.

Enger’s decision to spend the semester off campus was not a hasty one by any means.

“I knew that I was probably wanting to go off campus in the beginning of my junior year,” Enger said. “I wanted some sort of off campus experience and realized that the best time to do that as an education major was to student teach somewhere.”

By the beginning of the 2023-24 school year, Enger was set to student-teach out of the Sioux Center area. This allowed him and Robert Taylor, the Dean of Students, to plan ahead and to prepare Hofer for what the second semester would bring.

“At the beginning of [last] semester before school even started, we met and went over how this semester would look, and he mentioned being gone right off the bat,” Hofer said. “He set me up very well.”

Part of this preparation was creating the administrative assistant role. This was designed to function as a support for the vice president who would be assuming more responsibilities, such as planning and leading weekly meetings.

Phiefer, who had served as the social sciences senator for three semesters, accepted the role.

The governing body voted to accept her to the position on Dec. 18, the last meeting of the fall semester.

“It’s fun to take on a little bit more responsibility in my last semester here,” Phiefer said. “I’ve cared so much about



Isabel Phiefer, new administrative assistant

student government, so being blessed with the opportunity to serve a little bit extra is exciting.”

This is not the first time that an arrangement has been made. During the 2020-21 school year, president Juliana Martinez graduated in December 2020, and vice president Daniel Moe studied abroad during the spring 2021 semester. In that case, the treasurer, Kendal Zylstra, was nominated as the acting president. However, since Hofer is remaining on campus this semester, she will assume additional responsibilities with support from Phiefer.

Despite his absence, Enger is confident in the ability of the Student Government to serve Dordt students and in Hofer and Phiefer’s success.

“We didn’t take this decision lightly; we took a lot of consideration about how we can still embody our mission. We have a strong support system for student government,” Enger said. “Student government is still going to embody the mission, and I am still here to support that mission.”

Photo credit: Dordt University

## AMOR students travel to Tanzania and Liberia

Vincent Keane – Staff Writer

It's not every day that one can leave the cold Sioux Center to travel halfway across the globe to the continent of Africa. A handful of students from Dordt University visited Tanzania and Liberia and experienced the culture while helping serve. AMOR (A Mission OutReach) seeks to provide a two-week experience where students can apply their gifts and specific majors to serve others.

The trip to Tanzania was medically focused, and most of the students who went have a medical specific related major.

"It was advertised as a medical mission vision trip, to see healthcare in a different country," said Dylan Pettit, a junior biology major.

Students learned what medical care looks like in another country and practiced hands-on work with some of the doctors and patients. Two students, Raeleigh Raines and Shayla Van Beek, helped deliver a baby. Raines explained the differences she noticed about medical care in Tanzania compared to the United States.

"People wait overnight at the STEM center to get help and resources, since they don't have pharmacies like we do," Raines said regarding the medical conditions in Tanzania, "The STEM center is located in Mbuguni, and the hospital there only have five doctors in a tan shack, while 5000 people live there. That's one doctor per a thousand people."

The team learned much about Tanzanian culture as well. They visited different markets, worship services, and goat roasts. Interacting with the Massai people and Nakweni sisters was



a big part of learning the culture of Tanzania. Several students said the joy is radiant.

"Their culture is extremely different from the Dordt culture. Their living is very simple and filled with joy, which doesn't change based off circumstances but comes from the Lord," said junior Brady Fergen. "They don't have a lot and live in mud houses that are under six feet tall but even amidst this, they remain so happy."

Pettit also noted the lack of correlation between material wealth and joy. A highlight of the trip was the children on the streets shouting

"Muzungu!" as the team drove by. By the second or third day everyone found out it means "white person" in Tanzanian. It amused both the children outside and the Dordt students.

The other AMOR trip to Liberia focused on business and agriculture. The students learned and researched the effectiveness of microloans and the way businesses function in a third world country.

Peter Van Nieuwenhuyzen, a Business Admin at Dordt, said, "We learned that poverty is relative. Being considered poor is much

different here than it is there," said Peter Van Nieuwenhuyzen, a business administration major. "Making ten bucks would be considered rich over there, and making one hundred bucks here would be considered poor."

The students learned what goes into making loans and interest rates different in these areas of the world. The agricultural side of the trip focused on techniques and strategies used in Liberia.

"Ag students visited farms and were able to see how the ag business worked," said theology major Colton Burney. "A lot about how their systems were able to differ from ours and how we could possibly fit in, but also learn from each other in terms of techniques."

It was full cultural immersion for the team in Liberia, and they spent most of their time building relationships and learning about the culture.

"We played in a church soccer tournament," Burney said. "We also went into the city and learned about the history of Liberia."

The group also went to historical sites and learned about the history of the Liberian Civil War and how peace was made.

"We got to see both the rural and city life of Liberia and it was amazing to see the culture," Burney said.

The AMOR trips were successful thanks to Karl Kaemingk and Dordt business professor Jesse Veenstra, who serve with One Body One Hope, a nonprofit ministry in Liberia.

Photo credit: Colton Burney

## Kwik Trip comes to Sioux Center

Rebecca Jacobsen – Staff Writer

On Jan. 11, Sioux Center gained a new business, in the form of a Kwik Star (known as Kwik Trip in other states) convenience store and gas station. Although snowy weather around opening day prevented regular business, store leader Amanda de Groot acknowledged the initial success at the Kwik Star.

"I think the snow has hindered people getting out and about but people are definitely coming in and checking things out," de Groot said. "There's a lot of new stuff; it's new to the community. I don't think we've had the traffic we're going to see on a regular basis yet, but I think that's because we've been so weather hindered."

Kwik Star is a vertically integrated company, meaning that all its products come fresh from La Crosse, Wisconsin, where the company is based. The convenience store holds a variety of options, including traditional gas station fare, as well as chicken, a bakery, dairy products, and produce. Kwik Star will be open 24 hours a day as Sioux Center's newest "one-stop-shop."

Food service leader and kitchen safety coordinator Lindsey Cuperus previously worked at a Kwik Star in Sheldon and then in Le Mars before transferring to the Sioux Center location. Both Cuperus and de Groot appreciate working at Kwik Star. De Groot enjoys working with the company, being part of a team, and providing a welcoming guest experience.

"My favorite part is probably answering everybody's questions in the kitchen," Cuperus said. "Everybody kind of comes to me for answers in the kitchen, and I love answering questions and helping people out, helping them learn, [and] helping them grow."

Cuperus noticed that the Sioux Center store is much busier than her previous locations—she even collaborates with an additional food service leader.

Along with the recent weather complications and business, another challenge for this Kwik Star has been adjusting to a new layout and for the team to get their bearings together.

"[Our challenges have been] organizing the kitchen, deciding where we want everything to go, making a nice flow, making sure everybody



has a routine," Cuperus said. "Where everybody trained before here was a totally different setup, so getting everybody comfortable is what's the big thing here."

Beyond working to successfully run the store, de Groot hopes to get involved in the Sioux Center community through fundraisers. Some of Kwik Star's opportunities for fundraising include car washes and gift cards.

"[I am most looking forward to] growing the business, and really seeing what we can contribute to this community and how we can help out and be in different places," de Groot said. "There's so many fundraising opportunities that we can get involved in with different parts of the community. We have a very heavy emphasis on fundraising with all the Christian schools, with all the different organizations."

Freshman and Wisconsin native Seth Rosenberg loves Kwik Trip (as it is called in Wisconsin). Although he has not yet visited the Kwik Star in Sioux Center, he looks forward to it and has high expectations.

"I think Kwik Trip is the greatest gas station on the face of the earth, because their food is good, they have a free ATM, they're clean, and the people are nice...It's better than Casey's," Rosenberg said.

Photo credit: Rebecca Jacobsen

## When in Rome

Mallory Nilles—Staff Writer

After a semester of learning about Dante and the Italian Renaissance, the HIST-329 class took a 9-day trip to Italy to deepen their learning experience. The course is offered fall odd years and is co-taught by History professor Dr. Walker Cosgrove and English professor Dr. Josh Matthews.

"Students gain an all-encompassing Renaissance Italian Catholic worldview—often contrasted with an all-encompassing Dutch Reformational worldview," Cosgrove said.

The trip allows students to explore the Renaissance worldview in areas like planning, architecture, artwork, and religion.

"[The trip] is great for historical reasons, as well as cross-cultural reasons as a class," Matthews said.

During the trip, the students followed an itinerary until noon, with free time to wander and explore after that. Some students went to Rome and visited the Colosseum, the Roman Forum, St. Peter's Basilica, the Pantheon, and tourist shops. Some students also visited the ruins of Pompeii.

Though all on the same trip, each student had a unique experience and takeaways that translated into their own worldview and overall appreciation of Italy and its abundant history.

"I learned so much about the history of Christianity as it relates to Italy and Italians, in a more close and personal way than a class could ever really impart," said Ethan Haeder, a senior History major.

Anna Janssen, a senior Secondary History Education major, appreciated the experience on a vocational level. "I think the most valuable part of the trip for me is now being able to say I have seen it all. I want to teach, and I think being able to experience something is so much more valuable than just learning it, and you just remember it all better, too," Janssen said.

Matthews' favorite part of the trip was seeing the student's reactions to the sites for the first time.

"They only have head knowledge of this place or know something they've seen in a book. Seeing it in person is different in scale and experience," Matthews said.

Cosgrove said many students on this trip loved visiting the Medici Chapel.



"This has never been my favorite part, and I could probably never see it again and be okay with that," he said. "But given the students' wonder and awe at the chapel I was able to get caught up in the grandeur and beauty of it through their experience."

Immersion is often said to be one of the best ways to know something, especially a place. "I was amazed by the architecture and the historical feel that everything had," said junior Secondary Education major Isabel Boer. "[I] kept trying to imagine how it truly would have looked and felt in the past."

"Nothing truly beats getting to visit historic places in order to bring history to life," Cosgrove said.

Matthews and Cosgrove will teach the course again in the Fall of 2025.

Photo credit: Anna Janssen

## Little but fierce: Dordt stands out at theater festival

Elise Stiemsma - Staff Writer

From Jan. 16-20, 24 Dordt University students—myself included—travelled to Des Moines, Iowa and participated in Region 5 Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (KCACTF). KCACTF is a place for all of the Midwest regions to gather and celebrate the best theatrical work from the past year. Even compared to much larger schools, Dordt tends to have great success at this event.

The first night we arrived, a slideshow presentation displayed the shows of every school in our area, along with awarding certificates of merit for exceptional work. We received several certificates, including Anna Jansen for educational outreach, Miranda Munson and Mercea Rediger for stage management, Jakob Kamp for graphic design, and Professor Becky Donahue for costume design. It was exciting to be recognized for our work, especially being such a small institution.

On top of the awards, the festival holds workshops for students to learn more about various theatre disciplines. I attended several workshops about acting, directing, and working with Shakespeare's plays. I learned many tips and tricks that help me and other students prepare for our upcoming production of Shakespeare's "Comedy of Errors."

I also had the pleasure of attending four selected shows. My favorite show was entitled "Thoughts of A Colored Man" and had an entirely African American cast, detailing an experience quite unlike my own. Another highlight was attending the "Percy Jackson Musical," which involved amazing lighting designs and eye-catching puppet and costume designs.

This year, six students submitted to the theatrical expo. Lynn Smit, a senior psychology major, submitted her sound design from "Almost Lifelong," a student directed show presented in the spring of 2023. Nathan Hopkins, a senior Digital Media major, submitted his sound design from the 2023 Spring mainstage "Dancing at Lughnasa."

Four students, Madeline Hofer, Maggie Domek, Jess Brander, and Miranda Munson, submitted their work from this past fall mainstage "The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe." These students prepared a PowerPoint and poster to present at the expo, alongside students from all over the Midwest. Throughout the week, a group of theatre professionals listened to the students' presentations, where they gave criticism and encouragement.

I was so excited to see all the posters displaying the hard work from all over our region; there is so much amazing work happening in the Midwest. Every year, one student from each category is selected to go to nationals in Washington DC. Miranda Munson was selected for stage management.

To close the week, Becky Donahue participated in the costume parade, showcasing several of her designs from "The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe." Her designs were met with thunderous applause as we made our way across the stage and hundreds of theatre students saw Dordt's theatrical work.

This event served as an important reminder that, in Shakespeare's words, "though she be little, she is fierce." Dordt has a small theatre department, but the work stands out.

Photo credit: Clark Stiemsma



## Snowpocalypse at Dordt



David Copley - Staff Writer

Dordt University students returned from their Christmas breaks to a campus covered in snow.

Continuous sub-zero temperatures paired with a number of intense storms created piles of snow. Removing this snow from Dordt's roads and sidewalks has been no simple task. Though the spring semester started off in a flurry, it isn't the worst of weather conditions that Dordt's maintenance staff has seen.

Craig Van Otterloo, the head of the grounds department, considers this one of the better years he's seen.

"Last year was much worse," Van Otterloo said.

Unlike previous years, the full force of snow didn't arrive until after students had left for winter break, which gave his crew plenty of time to work. The snow removal team cleared the ten-inch cover of snow from the parking lots, so they were ready for returning students to use. Overall, Van Otterloo said the snow itself

could have been much worse.

However, things certainly are not perfect. The temperatures were so far below zero, reaching a low of negative 17 degrees on Saturday, Jan. 13. Much of the equipment couldn't function properly.

"I was fixing equipment from Thursday to last Tuesday," Van Otterloo said.

Since the crew only has only four dedicated vehicles to use for snow removal, any equipment that is out of order will quickly snowball the amount of work needed to get the job done.

Van Otterloo noted the students working "doorway crew" have a particularly difficult job. They are responsible for unsticking and often unearthing frozen doors from the snow which gets blown in and built up around them. This means being outside and working by four in the morning so that faculty, namely chefs who have to prepare breakfast at the commons, can get where they need to be.

Photo credit: Hannah Schneider

## Izzy the studious corgi goes to college cont.

cont. from pg. 1

was a difficult process for Kady as it involved finding a company to work with, sending everything to the company, designing the book spread, re-sending, fixing, and of course paying for her book to get published and get made into copies.

"This was a process and there was a lot of learning from all that," Kady said, "But in the end, it's worth it."

After her book was published, Kady did a lot of promotion. This included starting a Facebook page and website for Izzy, going to libraries and schools to present the book and doing a read aloud - even bringing Izzy along to some of these events in her matching book costume.

After self-publishing, it was important to try to make some money back from all the costs incurred, and maybe even earn some extra to pay for college.

"I found the best way to make money is to buy my books and then sell them myself," Kady said.

It was never her initial goal to make money but any extra money the books made she intended for college.

"As long as we broke even it was fine," Kady said.

After having some success with her first book, Kady wrote a second one during her Junior year, and a third her Senior year. The three books, "Izzy the Cowgirl Corgi", "Izzy the Super Corgi", and "Izzy the Corgi Meets the Aliens" each follow a theme.

"The first one is western, second one is superhero, and third one small town dairy farm," Kady said.

Each book puts Izzy in a new situation that follows the theme.

Writing these stories has had a big impact on Kady's life. She says that through all of this she has become a better public speaker, and now more easily converses with adults and other people she might not usually talk with.

"I have also gotten a lot of new opportunities that I wouldn't have had otherwise. I've gotten to go to a lot of places in the Kansas area," Kady said.

Apart from reading at different libraries and schools, Kady attended a book festival where she was able to be on a panel for young authors.

"I love that I am getting to meet so many people and have all these experiences," Kady said.

Throughout each book process, Kady's parents have been supportive.

"They very much helped with the initial, 'this is something you could do', idea" Kady said.

With their work experience as an art teacher and accountant, her parents acted as her managers along the way.

Overall, Kady said that the best part is, "the experience itself."

She is encouraged by how supporting her community is. In her hometown, she and Izzy can't go anywhere without getting stopped to ask what she's been up to and when the next book is coming out.

This summer, Kady hopes to complete a fourth book.

Contributed photo

## Diving headfirst: Dordt adds swim team to Defender athletics cont.

cont. from pg. 1

Dordt's new plans.

"We're excited that it will bring more people to the area and to the pool," he said.

Egdorf hopes the swim team will fill open lifeguard positions next year, as the team's scheduled times for practices will not interfere

*"I'm excited to be able to say, 'Not only are we a great Christian school, not only are we a great academic school, but we've got a fantastic swim program.'"*  
- Mason Youngblood



Mason Youngblood, head coach

"I'm excited to be able to say, 'Not only are we a great Christian school, not only are we a great academic school, but we've got a fantastic swim program,'" he said.

Photo credit: Dordt Athletics

with the pool's public open hours.

The swimmers will compete in the Kansas Collegiate Athletic Conference, which includes four other GPAC schools with swim teams. Scoring is based on times and placings. Coach Youngblood hopes Dordt will someday host a swim meet, though likely not in its first year.

Plans are falling into place for the future Dordt swim team, and few are more excited than Youngblood, who is ready to tackle the year.

## One bottle is enough

Aiden Kraft—Staff Writer

With each new year the beast of consumerism finds a new product for the masses to purchase at excessive volume. In recent years, with the growth in social media's influence on the consumption of certain products, a trend has arisen: reusable water bottles.

Companies like Hydro Flask, Owala, Yeti, and the recent Stanley tumbler are all growing companies and products which have all made themselves viral on social media. These companies have convinced the masses that using their water bottle is a tangible way to gain clout with their peers, both in person and online. These companies preach a delusion which tells the consumer that they are incapable of overconsumption., that buying more will produce a sense of satisfaction for the customer. This creates a strange, unhealthy relationship between consumer, retailer, and the environment.

Retailing for anywhere from \$35 to 45 dollars, the Stanley Tumbler alone was projected to sell \$750 million in sales in 2023 according to CNBC. These numbers have also translated to social media in mind blowing numbers, with the #StanleyCup amassing a total of 6.8 billion views on TikTok according to CBS News. Additionally, other companies are grasping



their share of this growing market. Companies like Yeti and Hydro Flask are making millions of dollars coming out of 2023.

Just as much as anyone, I too enjoy a crisp drag from the long straw of a Hydro Flask and believe that a reusable water bottle is a practical way for many to help reduce plastic waste as a means of positively impacting the environment. Surely the alternative to a reusable water bottle, a throw-away plastic one, is much more harmful for the environment. However, deducing the environmentalism behind using a

reusable product to an internet trend, influences the consumer to overconsume and overspend on unnecessary products.

What is to happen when this trend ceases? It is inevitable that many of the people who purchased the product initially, will be influenced in the same way again with a competing product (of which there are many in this market). This will lead many to put their three Stanley cups into the water bottle drawer, never to be used again, or thrown into the landfill. This is a classic case of the pathway to

disaster being paved by good intentions.

Fortunately, the solution is simple: be an intelligent consumer. For consumers that already own a perfectly functioning reusable product, there is no need for something which is practically a duplicate. Practicing self-control in this aspect, especially when pertaining to products which are non-essential to everyday life, has environmental and financial impacts.

With consumer debt in the US on a steady rise, credit card debt alone increased by \$113 Billion in quarter three of 2023 according to the New York Federal Reserve Bank. Things need to change.

How can companies continue to market overconsumption, when consumer debt is increasing?

If the generation of our peers can realize the problem of overconsumption and utilize simple tactics like self-control, we will set up financial success for ourselves and successive generations both environmentally and economically. We need to use this one instance and let it teach us about ourselves, and other areas of consumerism which need to change, starting a change in the way consumers interact with any product, not just metal water bottles.

Contributed photo

## Get in loser, we're watching Mean Girls

Madeleine Kobes – Staff Writer

Before the remake of the iconic 2004 film and Broadway musical was released, everyone had one question: would "Mean Girls (2024)" live up to the original? The answer is difficult to determine. The movie is funny and entertaining, but the musical element falls short, and the characters aren't as memorable as the original cast.

"Mean Girls" follows Cady Heron (Angourie Rice) as she attends high school for the first time and struggles with the many challenges of teenage girlhood—making friends, having your first crush, and of course, mean girls. Over the course of the movie, Cady changes from naive, optimistic, and nerdy to selfish, arrogant, and popular. By the end of the movie, Cady realizes the error of her ways, embraces her math skills, apologizes to her friends, and becomes the girl she was before—except this time with more social skills and a boyfriend.

Beyond the plot, "Mean Girls" stays very close to the source material. There are even some nods to the 2004 film with returning actors, including Tina Fey. Mainly, the differences come down to more diversity and sensitivity with modernized slang and technology.

The movie shows increased racial diversity compared to the original. In addition, the fat-shaming and negative self-talk is less extreme than the 2004 film. While the plastics are still cliquy, judgmental, and ready to point out their flaws, these comments are less severe. There is enough judgmental "girl talk" to be true to the original—and true to real life—without taking it to a harmful extreme.

The 2024 movie is also an update and revamp to teenage culture, complete with social media posts and TikTok trends. These are used throughout the movie, to reflect how the characters' reputations change over time. The changes make "Mean Girls" far more applicable to current life, in a way that is relatable and often hilarious. The result of all these changes? A more tasteful version of the movie that relates to a new generation of girls, while providing plenty of nostalgia for older viewers.

The musical aspect of "Mean Girls" is where the movie falls short. The songs felt out of place and dragged the movie out, and quite frankly, the music just was not good enough to justify the interruption. Rather than fun Broadway hits, most of the songs sounded like forgettable pop music. That being said, the transitions between musical and movie were creative. For example, while Cady is singing about her crush, Aaron Samuels (Christopher Briney), during math class, the scene cuts back and forth from her



romantic daydream (to the tune of "Stupid with Love") to the concerned reactions of her classmates.

Ultimately, the music is a relatively small part of the film, and the humor and skill of the cast make up for it. "Mean Girls" was difficult to cast, given the well known and loved characters in the original movie. The actors needed to play a character, while also being judged according to the actor in the previous movie. In my opinion, the recasting was successful, but nothing can compare to the original cast that I grew up with. The star of the show was Damian Hubbard (Jaquel Spivey), one of Cady's friends. His lines were hilarious throughout the film - including the iconic "She doesn't even go here!"

Overall, "Mean Girls" (2024) was fun and campy. It may not be the best movie ever, or even as good as the original movie and musical, but it is worth watching. The changes add something fresh and modern to the loved classic, making it true to the time. If you enjoyed the original, I would recommend going into the 2024 movie simply to have a good time. Try not to compare the new with the old, appreciate the modern elements, and be ready to laugh.

Contributed photo

## Wonka embraces the over-the-top



Eleanor Ryder—Staff Writer

The announcement and advertisements for the movie Wonka caused quite a buzz among audiences familiar with its predecessors. Released in theaters on Dec. 15, 2023, Wonka is a prequel, featuring a young Willy Wonka before he owned his far-from-OSHA-approved chocolate factory.

The movie stars Timothée Chalamet as the famous chocolatier, a divisive choice. Many viewers grew up with the previous iterations of the character and were partial to those actors going in. Gene Wilder, in the 1971 "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory," delivers a manic performance in which he is unbothered by (and responsible for) the endangerment of multiple children's well-being. Johnny Depp, also plays Wonka as unsettling, though he leans more towards an awkward and disturbing attitude in the Tim Burton 2005 "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory."

Thus, it was speculated that we'd see a villain origin story, like the 2021's "Cruella," with Chalamet forming into the cheerfully disturbing character audiences we are familiar with. When audiences met a joyful young man that brought whimsy and enchantment to a cartoonish European setting, many were surprised.

For some, it was a pleasant surprise.

Wonka, though perhaps a bit peculiar, is above all a high-spirited dreamer brimming with optimism. As he pursues his dream of becoming a chocolatier among the greats, he is ensnared in a seedy washhouse. There, he meets Noodle (Calah Lane) and a host of other characters who help Wonka in his adventures. Wonka and his friends encounter a mint-loving giraffe, chocoholic monks, and a corrupt, monopolistic chocolate cartel.

Chalamet's charm and commitment to a goofy side of the character works in a world built for whimsy and magic. He embraces the potentially cringy musical numbers with a seemingly self-aware commitment. The movie is far from dark or gritty, embracing a child-like wonder approach to the idea of fantastical and eccentric candy. He quickly trusts and befriends anyone he meets, is a personable salesman, and faces adversaries with persistent hope.

For some audiences, the movie fell flat of their expectations. The movie is predictable, childish, and filled with familiar tropes. The humor, namely a running bit about a chocolate-obsessed and therefore fat police officer, didn't land for some. Chalamet's performance felt one dimensional, too pure and good; a caricature that fails to connect to the Wonka we are familiar with.

But I think that's the point.

"Wonka" is a new version of the classic character. The movie does not attempt to tie itself to either of the previous movies, the similarities ending at the characters of Wonka and a singular Oompa Loompa played by Hugh Grant. Otherwise, the movie lacks any easter eggs that might strongly bind its storyline to the other versions.

It is its own separate story. If one goes into the movie ready to accept it as such, they will find a heartwarming and endearing story about family, the dangers of greed, and a fantastical candy man.

Contributed photo

## Dordt orchestra tours over winter break



Breanna Braun—Staff Writer

On Wednesday, Jan. 4, the Dordt University Chamber Orchestra left for their winter tour. The 27-member ensemble started their tour locally in Orange City. Then they traveled to urban locations such as Chicago and Grand Rapids. The orchestra's last performance was at Dordt on Jan. 17. The ensemble played many pieces, from "St. Paul's Suite" by Gustav Holst to "Hoedown" by Aaron Copland.

According to Dr. Onsbey Rose, director of instrumental studies, his favorite piece was "Serenade for Strings" by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky.

"We just played the fourth movement, but it's very energetic and incredibly challenging," Rose said.

Senior music education major Alice Ymker said a common favorite from the students was "Simple Symphony" by Benjamin Britten.

"It's beautiful and has a wide range of dynamics, and most of the orchestra loved it," Ymker said.

The audience also enjoyed the energy of Tchaikovsky, as well as familiar tunes like "Selections from West Side Story" by Leonard Bernstein. The ensemble especially had fun with the West Side Story selections after watching the movie.

"It helped because then we got better and more energetic because we knew exactly how it

should sound," Ymker said.

Throughout the tour, the ensemble stopped at several schools to perform with the students. A lot of the tour members had fun getting to interact with the kids and enjoyed playing in a relaxed environment.

"It was cool because we would sit in mixed sections, and they would often ask us lots of questions," said junior engineering major Casey Oolman.

Dr. Rose found working with some of the younger students very rewarding.

"It's good for us to play with students at different levels so they can see what it is like at the collegiate level," Rose said.

Between performances and get-togethers with high school bands, the students and Dr. Rose decided to do some sightseeing.

"We took a lot of pictures, went shopping, and had fun hanging out during our downtime," freshman art major Elle Hiatt said.

The much needed free time was a good way for people to get to know each other better and ended up being the favorite part of the tour for some, like senior Jacob Olthoff.

"We got to grow closer as an ensemble and shared experiences and some jokes," Olthoff said.

Photo credit: Jamin Ver Velde

## NISO brings Broadway to the B.J. Haan

Joshua Louis—Staff Writer

On Saturday, Jan. 27, the Northwest Iowa Symphony Orchestra (NISO) will perform their pops concert at Dordt University in the B.J. Haan Auditorium. According to Onsbey Rose, Director of NISO, this performance is unique in that it will feature music genres other than classical music.

"I always enjoy the pops concert because it is outside of the normal canon of works that we typically play," Rose said.

"The Best of Broadway" is the theme for this year. As such, the orchestra will perform songs from well-known works such as "The Phantom of the Opera" and "West-Side Story." In many ways, challenges to preparation were kept to a minimum this year since this concert is utilizing much of the preparation from last year's concert, which was canceled due to snow.

The performance will also nominate the celebrity conductor for the year. The audience will vote on several distinguished community members, and the winner will earn the title of celebrity conductor for the year. This person will also earn the honor of conducting part of the orchestra towards the end of the concert.

Adam Galloway is a violinist for the orchestra. He said one challenge of the concert, is some of the music. "The Phantom of the Opera" in particular is difficult to play. However, he is



enthusiastic about the song "Stars and Stripes Forever," a John Phillip Sousa classic.

Adam's brother, Aaron Galloway, plays cello in the orchestra. Because of this, he will often play the baseline and with occasional melody. According to Galloway, a challenge to preparing for the concert is the minimal rehearsal periods. There are only two rehearsals a week, and while Galloway said that the music is not necessarily difficult to play, it is difficult to ensure that the entire ensemble is prepared to play well together.

"The music is often quite fun," Aaron said. "You don't get to play "Phantom of the Opera" all the time in an orchestra, or "Fiddler on the Roof.""

Photo credit: Hannah Schneider

## Caucusing in the cold cont.

cont. from pg. 2

"The campaign sent me some recommended remarks, but they also suggested to speak from the heart," Haken said. "I took some of what they gave and some of my own thoughts and made a brief two-minute speech supporting her."

Haken cited Haley's previous political history, her character, and her potential to win the presidential race as reasons to vote for her. After Haken closed his speech, he said he was "surprised and pleased" by the amount of applause he received from the audience.

Professor Taylor spoke on behalf of Trump. Dordt student Jensen Cooper also stood up to speak on behalf of Ramaswamy.

Dordt student Vanessa Peterson also noticed the civil mood of the event.

"I saw people talking to one another that had a DeSantis shirt on and a Trump hat on," Peterson said. "They were discussing the caucus, but they weren't argumentative with each other. I found that really interesting."

After the constituents finished speaking in favor of their candidates, people filled out their ballots. The poll reporter, secretary, and precinct captains left the room to conduct the vote count.

Roth says they checked the vote total against the number of people who had registered to ensure against voter fraud. For a moment, the vote was off by eighty, but the situation was quickly rectified when the volunteers realized they had forgotten a group of voters in their calculations.

DeSantis won precinct 3, Dordt's precinct. He was followed by Haley in second and Trump in third.

After the results were announced, constituents packed their bags and left. The early release meant that the few items left on the agenda were tackled by the small group of individuals who elected the central committee members and briefly discussed the party platform.

While Trump did not win Sioux Center, he did win the state. Shortly after the results, presidential candidate Vivek Ramaswamy suspended his campaign after a disappointing defeat. He is now putting his support behind Trump. DeSantis followed suit and ended his campaign on Jan. 21, also publicly supporting Trump.

These two withdrawals leave Haley and Trump as the two candidates left vying for the nomination. The New Hampshire primary on Jan. 23 gave Trump another victory, as he gained 12 delegates in the state while Haley gained nine. The two GOP candidates will compete on the same ballot again on Feb. 24 in South Carolina, where Haley was the two-time governor, but Trump has the backing of Republican senator and former presidential candidate Tim Scott. In addition to the endorsements of DeSantis and Ramaswamy, Haley may have an uphill battle in the primaries ahead.

Photo credit: Joya Breems

## For the love of singing

Gabe Graber—Staff Writer

For centuries, music has given people a way to have fun, express themselves, and make art through their voices and instruments. The Dordt University music department offers opportunities for many students, whether they are music majors or not. One of these students is Clayton Baas, a senior majoring in mathematics with minors in music and computer science.

This semester, Baas has chosen to participate in all four choirs available to men, which is a rarity. Baas sings in Concert Choir, Chorale, the Canons of Dordt, and in the 4th Avenue Jazz Singers. In addition to this, he was voted section leader for the tenors in concert choir.

"This year, I kind of just jumped into volunteering for the ensembles," Baas explained. "All throughout college, whenever there was a pop-up choir of any kind, I always wanted to be a part of it. There's very little preparation for it. I just show up and sing because that's what I like to do."



Baas then added a music minor to learn more from taking classes and lessons in the music building. He started to get to know the professors, especially Dr. Ryan Smit, who oversees most of the ensembles and the work that goes into them.

"As for preparation, Clayton is doing great," Smit said. "He is a fine singer and blends well but adds power to his voice when we need it. Generally, he is the second tenor, but he can sing the first tenor when it is needed. It depends on the type of choir."

Participating in these ensembles takes a serious time commitment, on top of work and assignments for other classes. However, Baas is ready for the task because he knows that he will never be able to sing for Dordt again.

"The thing about Clayton is that he just loves to sing," Smit said. "He's not on vocal scholarship or anything, it's just that he loves to sing and it's a real passion of his."

Photo credit: Joya Breems

*"All throughout college, whenever there was a pop-up choir of any kind, I always wanted to be a part of it. There's very little preparation for it. I just show up and sing because that's what I like to do."*  
- Clay Baas

Music is a big part of his life, but Baas did not come to Dordt study it. For him, it strictly a hobby. His freshman year, he was hesitant to join any musical ensembles. But then his roommate convinced him to join the men's choir, and he enjoyed it.

"After the first choir concert I thought I could do a bit more with music," Baas said. "The next year, I joined Chorale, and it was still fun. Singing in college was so different from singing in high school, and I realized a new passion for it."

## Hockey secures fourteenth win in a row

Logan Steinle—Staff Writer

The Defender hockey team is comprised mostly of underclassmen, but their gameplay is anything but. The team's record improved to 17-3 with its 9-1 win over the University of Nebraska Omaha on Jan. 21. The 2023 season has been one of the greatest years in program history, with Saturday's win marking a 14 game win streak.

Griffin Lennes, sophomore center and leading scorer for the Defenders, attested to the dominance the team has portrayed throughout the season, and the pressure such a streak can bring.

"I don't think the guys really think about it too much, so that helps a lot, but it definitely is in the back of your mind, for sure," Lennes said. "We haven't had too many close calls, thankfully. It has been fun to say the least."

Dordt has won most games this season by four goals or more. The only losses came in the first six games against two successful teams, Kansas University and Missouri State University.

To qualify for the Mid-American Collegiate Hockey Association (MACHA) national tournament, Dordt must qualify in the top 16 teams nationally or win the Silver Central Division. As of the Jan. 14, rankings Dordt ranks 19th nationally and has not quite clinched the division.

Continuing the winning streak is vital to Dordt hockey's position in the post-season



tournament.

"We definitely need [the streak] in order to qualify for nationals, and we kind of know that in the back of our heads right now," said sophomore center Isaac Baart. "We're looking to finish off the last three games of the year strong and then into the MACHA tournament to ensure we get a spot over spring break."

However, Dordt's success on ice is too new to deem the Defenders a dynasty or a "team to beat."

"I don't know that the pressure's quite there,"

said head coach Tyler Morgan. "Last year, we had success, but I think maybe the pressure will start to hit next season when we've done it two years in a row, then we have to continue doing it. Right now, it's still sort of fresh that we're winning so many games, so I haven't felt that yet."

The team is intentional about fostering a sense of close-knit community.

"We're a big family and we just all fight for each other on and off the ice, so it's great to see that. The chemistry between everyone,

everyone's just having fun. Makes it a lot easier when that's happening," Lennes said.

Baart also testified to the team's positive mindset. "I think that for a little bit we got ahead of ourselves, but we got a winning mentality, and we're used to it," he said. "I think that's a good thing. We know what it takes to beat some of these good teams, and we're planning on just keeping it going."

Morgan is satisfied with how well the team has bought into the program and the winning mentality they have developed.

"The guys have done a great job of buying in and doing things the right way. Staying out of trouble on campus, getting good grades, passing classes, all that stuff. I really feel like I've given the framework for them of 'if we're gonna be successful this is how we're gonna do it,' and I feel like they're doing it," he said. "I'm super proud of them and the fact that we're not good because of me, but we're good because we have good people in our program and good support around us on campus." Morgan said.

Lennes agrees that Morgan has been a strong leader and coach for the team.

"I think that Coach is just steering the ship right now, he's putting it in the right way, so I can't ask for more than that. He's just guiding us and telling us what to do."

The Defenders return to Omaha, Jan. 26 and 27 to close out the season in their final two games against Creighton University.

Photo credit: Dordt Athletics

## Women's basketball looks toward a successful 2024

Maddie Wolgen – Staff Writer

The Dordt University women's basketball team started 2024 the same place they left off in 2023: on top.

Their first three games of the new year resulted in wins. They have led the GPAC, and now hold a 15-0 winning record in the conference and are 15-1 overall. Before the first home game of the year, a sea of gold filled the stands as students, friends, and family waited in anticipation.

Dordt started the game strong with an 11-0 lead against the Dakota Wesleyan Tigers and held onto their momentum for the remainder of the game. Sophomore Macy Sievers led the team with 19 points, and freshman Gracie Schoonhoven was not far behind with 17. The team ended the game with a 89-46 victory over the Tigers.

"I think we executed really well," Sievers said. "The GPAC has a lot of great teams, so every night we have to play our best game."

"I thought we played really well," said five-year head coach Bill Harmsen. "You know, we shot some of our season-best averages from the field and we scored 52 points in the first half. To have all 18 women hit the floor and play so well and have so much fun is really gratifying."

The Defender women have various goals and expectations for the remainder of the season. In addition to their goal of winning the GPAC conference and playing in the championship, Harmsen stresses the importance of having a purpose and goals that go beyond the scoreboard.

"In our world today, everything is just so based on a win and that last game," Harmsen said. "But if we don't win that game, does that in any way affect who we are? No, it doesn't. We are still who we are in Christ."

Several players admire Harmsen's leadership and credit him for their success.

"He constantly reminds us of our goals and makes sure we're getting in the gym outside of practice to reach those goals and better ourselves," said junior Hayden Heimensen. "He's our biggest supporter, but also one of our best critics when he sees what we're doing wrong. He helps us learn from our mistakes."

Fifth-year athlete Karly Gustafson, also credits Harmsen as a key factor to the success

throughout her time at Dordt.

"The program has grown in so many ways, just culture-wise and skill-wise," Gustafson said. "And I think that's due to the girls that we have, but also the coaching staff."

Gustafson has seen tremendous success at Dordt. She was able to go to the NAIA national tournament with the team her freshman year, but the experience was unfortunately cut short after the COVID-19 pandemic. Her junior year, the Dordt women advanced to the NAIA national championship, where they ended the season as national runners-up. Once again, they returned to Sioux City to the national tournament last year, as they currently compete in the number one spot.

Despite their impressive ranking, Harmsen explained that it has little effect on his team and how they play.

"We want to leave the gym feeling really good about ourselves and being better than we were yesterday, and so we don't really talk about it or address it," Harmsen said.

In his first-year coaching at Dordt, the women were ranked number fifteen, so he said it has been a joy for him to see them become a better team. He said that their dedication to their fundamental development and to keeping themselves healthy in the weight room have played a part in their standings today.

Defender nation awaits the next appearance of the women's basketball team in the DeWitt on Jan. 27th. Varsity women's basketball will be celebrating its 50th anniversary this Saturday and will welcome back its alumni players and coaches. They plan to have all but two previous coaches present, along with alumni players from all corners of the country. The men will play at 2 p.m. on Saturday, and the women will play at 4 p.m.

Harmsen looks forward to hosting the alumni and their families at Dordt. They will be given campus tours, sit in on a women's basketball practice, eat lunch together, and be recognized at the home basketball games.

"It's going to be really, really fun to see God's faithfulness through those generations," Harmsen said.

## Defender baseball team has high hopes for their upcoming season

Samantha Wilbur—Staff Writer

Under the seasoned guidance of Head Coach Nathan Bacon, the Dordt Defender baseball team is ready to hit the ground running coming back from break as they prepare for their spring season. The roster for the team consists of a mix of seasoned veterans and fresh faces, creating an intriguing dynamic that could prove to be beneficial to the team.

The Defenders will start their new season with three away tournaments in Kansas. They will then spend their spring break with a five-game stretch in Orlando, Florida.

The team will host the University of Jamestown Jimmies, in March for the start of their GPAC season. The following eight games will also take place on Dordt's home field, Open Space Park.

Last season, the Defenders posted a 20-26 record. The team had the second most wins in the history of the program and finished ninth overall in the GPAC. There were a few highlights of the season, one that stood out was pitcher Gyeongju Kim signing a professional contract over the summer.

"I think this really set a foundation for some things moving forward that will allow us to build this next year," Bacon said.

The team has several returning players, Nolan Christianson, Chaz Gothard, Mike Bruell, and Derek Labounty all return for their final season. The team consists of a large group of seniors, and a large group of underclassmen, but not very many in between.

"It's been really cool to watch all those guys grow together, and the chemistry is really organic between the team," Bacon said.

Nate Eliason, a freshman from Fort Collins, Florida is one promising new addition to the team

"He is really dynamic and has some unteachable skills in terms of speed. He works his butt off and does a great job at showing up and being present every day," Bacon said.

Eliason is majoring in engineering, and batted a .357, scored 34 runs, and had 14 stolen bases during his senior high school season.

"Dordt baseball is more than just baseball. I've gotten a chance to grow in my faith, while



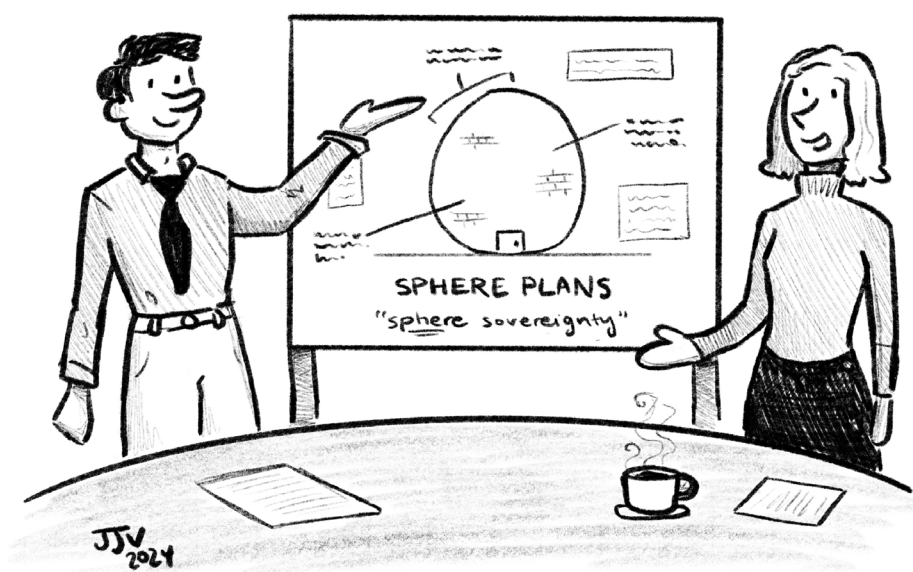
being blessed to play a sport I love," Eliason said.

The preseason poll that the GPAC releases currently has the Defenders finishing ninth this season, but the team is determined to prove them wrong. The spiritual development and chemistry that has been built through the foundation of Christ is going to be the leading factor in what helps the team succeed this season.

Photo credit: Hannah Schneider

# The Back Page

## Diamond Digs



*“After our success with the Squares, we believe that this project is the natural next step.”*



*Hearing rumors of colder temperatures, the Polar Bears book a vacation.*

## Trump campaigns in Sioux Center cont.

*cont. from pg. 2*

party to visit campus, with the stipulation that candidates must be willing to answer questions from students.

“These events are intended to be educational in nature,” said Brandon Huisman, Dordt’s Vice President of Enrollment & Marketing. “If a candidate or political group chooses to reserve a space at Dordt, they must agree to have the candidate answer three questions from Dordt students during a Q&A portion of the candidate’s presentation. This helps to prioritize student access to candidates and elevate student learning.”

After Dordt hosted the Feenstra Faith and Family event in November, which featured questions from students to candidates, the Trump campaign began the process of setting up a campaign stop at Dordt.

“The desire of the Trump campaign was to hold an event patterned much more as a rally format. Furthermore, they desired to hold the event at a time school was not in session, and therefore students would have been less likely to attend,” Huisman said.

The Trump campaign publicized information about the event before the university fully finalized the format.

*“As a political science student, I feel like it’s my duty to check out all the different candidates and see what our election cycle is like.”*  
- Jensen Cooper

“We understood that President Trump’s visit would not be publicized until the format was finalized after the new year. Unfortunately, the event was publicized by the Trump Campaign before the format was finalized. Ultimately, the vision of the Trump campaign and Dordt were incongruent, and it was determined that the event would not take place at the university,” Huisman said.

Despite the change in location, many Dordt students, especially students who live locally,

were still in attendance.

Jensen Cooper, a senior political science major, hoped to hear Trump speak.

“As a political science student, I feel like it’s my duty to check out all the different candidates,” Cooper said. “See what our election cycle is like. I have been to a lot of the other candidate’s events, but hadn’t seen Trump yet.”

However, because of the popularity of the event, Cooper was unable to get into the event. “I showed up a little bit after 1, and I still didn’t get in,” Cooper said.

During the Commit to Caucus rally, Trump spoke about his accomplishments as president, including his border policy and his monetary policy. Trump spoke for almost two hours.

The Diamond repeatedly requested media access to the event but was denied.

The Trump Campaign hosted several caucus events in different towns in Iowa; for example, Waterloo and Cherokee both saw similar events hosted in the new year.

Iowa is an important place to campaign as a politician because it is the first in the nation to hold a caucus. If a candidate does not poll well in Iowa, they are more likely to drop out of the race. This is why small towns like Sioux Center are scheduled stops for many candidates.

*Photo credit: Des Moines Register*

## Planting for the Future Campaign raises over \$100 million cont.

*cont. from pg. 1*

scholarships were established to aid current and future Dordt students.

“A lot of people have a heart to give to students directly through the scholarship program,” Hulstein said. “They can see the student that they helped.”

At many universities, most campaigns are funded through a small portion of large donors, but Dordt’s campaign was composed of thousands of donors, each giving different amounts in pursuit of the same goal. Throughout the campaign, the advancement team was continuously surprised by the generosity of donors.

“Each day I thought: when I show up for work today, what is God going to amaze me with?” Baas said.

The funding will be implemented in projects across campus and within current facilities and student financial aid. Following this successful campaign, the advancement team is entering a stage of reflection and immense gratitude as they plan for the future financial needs of Dordt. While some building projects have yet to be started on campus, the funding donated to the “Planting for the Future Campaign” will soon improve Dordt’s campus and community in very apparent ways.



“Your experience here has been transformed by this campaign even if you don’t know it,” Baas said. “If you have an opportunity to thank a donor, thank a donor.”

*Photo credit: Dordt University  
Photo credit: Jeralyn Wessel*

### The Diamond Staff 2023-2024

**Co-Editors:**

Joya Breems  
Georgia Lodewyk

**Section Editors:**

Emma Bennett  
Aleasha Hintz  
Jonah Hofmeyer  
Isabel Pfeifer  
Dayna Wichart

**Copyeditors:**

Gracie Campbell  
Sara Hofer  
Ian MacDonald  
Abby Starkenburg  
Elise Stiemsma

**Layout Editor:**

Julia Visser

**Cartoonist:**

Julia Visser

**Social Media:**

Heather Van Engen  
Christa Yoder

**Photojournalist:**

Hannah Schneider

**Staff Writers:**

Libby Bandelin  
Breanna Braun  
Myra Carlson  
David Copley  
Paige Corkill  
Wenwen Fan  
Briana Gardner  
Nyiah Gesink  
Gabe Graber

Rebecca Jacobsen

Vincent Keane  
Madeleine Kobes  
Audra Kooi  
Aidan Kraft  
Megan Kroon  
Adel Kuchyk  
Joshua Louis  
Mallory Nilles  
Siena Rose  
Eleanor Ryder  
Teresa Taylor  
Megan Vander Kooi  
Mylia Wagenaar  
Jeralyn Wessel  
Samantha Wilbur  
Maddie Wolgen

**Faculty Advisor:**

Lee Pitts