

The Wildcat Echo

A publication by the students of Maquoketa Valley High School

MV earns three awards at art show

Last week, the winners from the Tri-Rivers Conference Art Fair were announced, and three Wildcats earned honors:

Lukas Chesnut -Oil Pastel 2nd place
Dustin Domico -Chalk Honorable Mention
Lilly Kraft -Ceramic Sculpture 2nd Place

The contest has been held virtually since COVID.

Speech, drama students honored at awards night

Last Friday night, the students who participated in the fall musical, spring play and individual and large group speech were celebrated at the annual awards night. Speech students received their medals for their accomplishments at contest. Several drama awards were presented.

Fall musical awards:

Best Actor: Ollie Hunter as 'Princess Winnifred the Woebegone'

Best Supporting Actor: Mileea Damico as 'Queen Aggravain'; Taylor Saunders as 'King Sextimus the Silent'; Sellah Ambundo as 'Lady Larken'

MUSCLE Award: Taylor Saunders

Mouse Devours the Hawk (Cast): Karl Zumbach and Abram Nolan

Mouse Devours the Hawk (Crew): Serenity White and Kinze Kuhlman

Spring play awards:

*Cool As A Cucumber-*Derrick Mohr for sweeping in during the last few weeks of practice and handling all backstage issues with a calm, cool and collected demeanor!

*Help is on the way, Dear!-*McKayla Weber for trying out three weeks into practice, taking on difficult and hard to learn roles and completely crushing it!

*Supportive Sequoia-*Taylor Saunders for her above and beyond leadership and support to the directors

*Best Actress-*Ollie Hunter

*Outstanding Crew Member-*Kinze Kuhlman

*Standout Scene-*Christopher Marlowe: The Elizabethan True Hollywood Story-Carly Dirks, Ollie Hunter, Tommie Cole, and Taylor Saunders

*Outstanding Leader-*Arianna Nolan

*Rising Star Award-*Owen Smith

Band, choirs attend large group contest



Last Saturday, the MV band and choirs performed for three judges at the IHSMA state large group contest. The band earned a division I (Superior) rating (the seniors have received one each year while they were in high school), and the mixed choir and treble clef choir each earned a division II (Excellent) while the bass choir performed for comments only.

TEL students host tailgate



TEL student organized a tailgate event Tuesday, with a picnic lunch and games. The inclement weather moved the event inside, but students were still able to enjoy some games, including basketball and bags in the gym.

One book closes, another will open for Montz as retirement nears

by Maya Smith

Our beloved librarian, mentor, and all-around superstar who inhabits our Maquoketa Valley High School Library has decided to retire.

Mrs. Montz has served our school for six years, counting her first year in 2020 as a substitute teacher. Before ending her journey here, her first job was at Cedar Rapids Prairie for eleven years in the elementary school. After making her mark there, she taught at North Cedar Elementary for the following 19. Following her retirement from teaching, the Montzes moved to Lake Delhi in 2020. Without ever taking much of a break, she started substitute teaching.

When asked what her favorite part of working at MV was, she said: "As with most jobs, it's the people that I enjoy the most. Moving here from another community and not knowing anyone, working at the school has exceeded what I was expecting from my 'retirement job.'" I feel so fortunate to have met so many great people (students and their families and staff) who have made me feel welcomed in this community. I really enjoyed going to as many student activities as I could: sports, music, speech, and drama. We have tons of talented students, and it is great to cheer them on! I am planning on continuing to keep attending all of these activities next year....maybe even getting to a few more of them."

She added, "I'll definitely miss the daily interactions with students and staff. This includes walking up the stairs at 7:55 in the morning and having a group of students waiting to get into the library, mostly



Mrs. Montz helps Taryn Burbridge navigate an online course.

patiently, as well as lunch with the staff in our "assigned seats," 7th hour sports talks with Coach K., and most importantly, daily chats with students."

These daily chats will definitely be missed. I asked a couple students about how Mrs. Montz has affected them. Lylah Billmeyer said: "Mrs. Montz is the most caring person I know. Every time you walk into the library, you are welcomed by her with open arms. You can always go to her, whether it be to cry or to share exciting news, and she will always be there for you. I'm going to miss her lovely smile and the treats she would bring for us, but I'm excited for her to go on to this new chapter of her life."

Preston Salow remarked: "Mrs. Montz is the face of the school. She greets everyone who walks into her room with a smile and is always helping any student who needs help. She's always helping people with projects, listening to a speech, or talking with students. She is a great person, and I wish we had more people like her in the world."

Carly Dirks commented: "Mrs. Montz has always been there for me and is one of my greatest supporters. She's a sweet lady and deserves the whole world. I'm really going to miss her, but I'm making sure to keep in touch with her. I am very grateful for her, and I think I can proudly say she's helped me through a lot."

Lucy Hucker said: "Mrs. Montz has been the most supportive and most genuine person I have known throughout

high school. She is always willing to listen and be the person you can always talk to. She has always been so level-headed and given great advice. She has always given me a reason to come to school and not be mad about it, especially when 'Dancing With The Stars' was on. Every Tuesday, we would predict the outcome of each night, and come to school the next day and non-stop talk about it. I genuinely love her so much, and I will miss her so much."

Ollie Hunter commented: "I love how Mrs. Montz doesn't care about who you are or where you come from; she will respect you, help you, and be the amazing human being that she is, no matter what. She is so kind and genuine and will be sincerely missed, but I do not doubt that Laura Begle will do a fantastic job next year in her new role."

Mrs. Montz boasts a 36-year career in education. When asked about advice for students considering their own careers, she commented: "I have never regretted my decision to become a teacher because I chose a career I loved, working with students. My advice is to follow your passion and interests, and your job will find you."

Don't be surprised to find her in the classroom occasionally next year as she plans on doing some subbing in the district. "Once a Wildcat, always a Wildcat!"

Even though Mrs. Montz is stepping away, the impact she's had on students and staff will not be forgotten. She leaves behind a legacy of kindness, connection, and unwavering support.



Dairy team advances to nationals, horse judging team reigns

by Anna Feldmann, FFA reporter

The last week has kept FFA members busy with various contests, and these Wildcats are showing they are a force to be reckoned with.

Last Friday, May 8th, the FFA Dairy Cattle Evaluation and Management team, consisting of Braden Ronnebaum, Cooper Schulte, Karl Zumbach, and Alison Schulte, competed at the Dairy Science Center at NICC in Calmar. This team truly showed how far hard work and dedication can take you by bringing home the first-place overall team and being crowned as the 2026 State Dairy Cattle Evaluation and Management Champions. The team also earned several specialty awards, including Top Team: Placing Classes, Top Team: Production Management Test, and Top Team: Oral Reasons

Braden Ronnebaum was the High Overall Individual and High Individual in the Production Management Test category. Cooper Schulte placed 6th place individually, Alison Schulte placed 12th place individually, and Karl Zumbach placed 17th place individually.

On Tuesday, May 12th, 16 members traveled to Hawkeye Community College to compete in the NE District Agronomy and Floriculture Team 1 of Agronomy consisted of Jace Leytem, Ty Hoeger, Abby Nieman, and Kyle Engelken. Agronomy Team 2 consisted of Kael Engelken and Trent Timmer. Agronomy Team 3 consisted of Ethan Crowley, Colt Kelzer, Karl Zumbach, and Linken Stansberry. Team 1 finished in second place overall. Abby placed 5th individually, and not far behind her, Ty finished 7th.

Kourtney Hatfield, Brylin Hoisington, Ella Reicher, Maggie Hoeger, Kendall Ronnebaum, and Kinley Hoeger all competed in District Floriculture.

On Wednesday, May 13th, the Horse Evaluation team competed in the NE District contest at Blush Acres in Worthington. The team, consisting of Khloe Glew, Tracy Reth, Kayla Hoeger, and Anna Feldmann, brought home the District Champion title for the third year in a row! All of the participants placed in the top ten, with Kayla Hoeger coming in 10th place, Tracy in 4th place, Anna in 3rd place, and Khloe was the Champion Individual. Overall, it was another great night for the Maquoketa Valley FFA chapter.



State champions include Cooper Schulte, Alison Schulte, Braden Ronnebaum and Karl Zumbach.



The horse evaluation team of Kayla Hoeger, Tracy Reth, Khloe Glew and Anna Feldmann finished first Wednesday at the district competition.

Salow prepares to take it to the next level



Preston Salow will join the Upper Iowa football team.

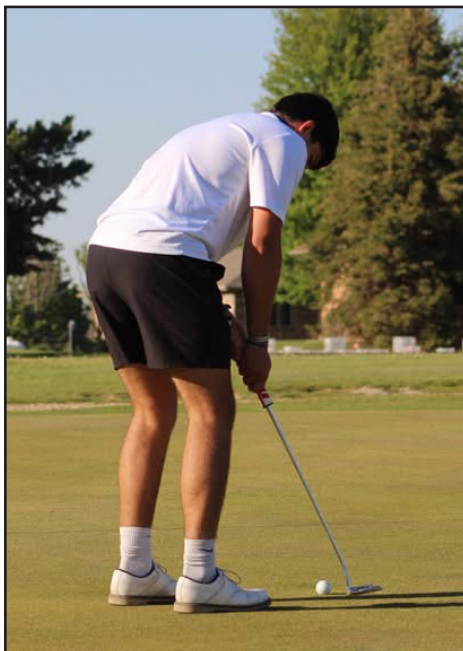
Girls team, Smith win conference, Dougherty advances



Coach Zietlow poses with the conference winning team of Olivia Begle, Macee Nolan, Morgan Clemen, Maya Smith, Ever Botos and Eva Mensen.

by Maya Smith

On Monday, the girls traveled to Lone Pine to compete in the girls Conference Golf Meet. Coach Zietlow was nervously watching the leaderboard switch after every score entered, but the girls took away the girls golf first conference championship title in school history, shooting a 395.5 strokes better than second place East Buchanan. Individual conference champion was Maya Smith, shooting a 91.



Dalton Africa competes against Springville last Thursday. (photo by Ella Reicher)

Here are the meet scores:

- 1st - Maya Smith: 91
- 7th - Macee Nolan: 98
- 10th - Olivia Begle: 100
- 15th - Ever Botos: 106
- 20th - Eva Mensen: 108
- 28th - Morgan Clemen: 114

Coach Zietlow comments: "When I took this coaching position in 2024, my goal was to bring home the first girls Tri Rivers Conference title to Maquoketa Valley. I didn't know how long it would take at the time but during this season I had a feeling this team was special, we just hadn't put it together all at once in a meet. I'm not saying we played perfect, but it was enough. Every shot mattered and watching the leaderboard all day was nerve racking. One minute we were winning by 3 and then 10 minutes later we were down 4. But in the end Ever Botos made the final putt to seal the deal.

"I'm so proud of Maya Smith for winning individually. She has come a long ways from her sophomore year. Also a shout out to dual spring sport track & golf athlete Macee Nolan for shooting a personal record on her back 9 to place 7th! And then for Olivia Begle for placing 10th. Both Macee and Olivia have only been golfing for a couple of years. The whole team including JV has also shown lots of progress this year and excited about everyone that is coming back next year."

On Wednesday, the boys trav-

eled to Denver to compete at sectionals. The boys shot a 324, placing 4th and unfortunately not moving on. However, meet medalist Eli Dougherty will compete at Districts. Eli shot an even par 70 to win the meet. Here are your meet scores:

- 1st - Eli Dougherty: 70
- 19th - Zachary Leytem: 83
- 23rd - Trevor Grimm: 84
- 29th - Dalton Africa: 87
- 40th - Anderson Holtz: 94
- 45th - Braden Gardner: 97

Coach Conner comments: "The results from our Sectional yesterday were bittersweet. On one hand, you see the pain in our guys' faces knowing how close we were to advancing as a team. Each of the guys battled through some tricky wind conditions that we really weren't expecting. In the end, we missed advancing by two strokes.

"On the other hand, we were really excited for Eli as he played really great golf yesterday. For the second year in a row in a very tough Sectional Meet, Eli was the medalist. He played such steady golf the whole day and it paid off for him in the end. Eli advanced to the District Meet at Gates Park on Monday. We will get a practice round or two in before Monday to familiarize ourselves with the course.

"I want to take a minute to talk about this team. They have been so much fun to work with this year and they accomplished some incredible things. They have taken our golf program to a new level and got to experience a lot of fun golf. The biggest disappointment for these guys is knowing that our team score would have advanced every other local Sectional in 2A. To me, it is unfortunate that the State can't figure out how to spread teams out a little bit better, but that is something that we cannot control. I am really proud of this team for all that they accomplished this year. Thank you to our three seniors, Anderson Holtz, Zach Leytem, and Braden Gardner for everything they have done for our program. It has been an honor to work with these guys over the last three seasons and wish them nothing but the best in their futures."

Dougherty will golf Monday in Waterloo.

Wildcats have good showing at conference track: girls win, boys second



The girls track team poses at the end of the TRC meet Thursday night after earning first place at the meet.

Boys track

by Lanni Beaman

Your Maquoketa Valley Boys Track & Field team is your TRC runner-up team! Our boys competed well with everyone running through adversity. Our boys were runner-up, following Lisbon, with a total of 86 team points. The next meet our boys are competing at is the Districts meet at Lisbon as well. Here are the TRC results: Long Jump: Jaxson LeGassick, 17-07.50: 6th Place

Discus: Preston Salow, 134-00: 4th Place; Dylan Knipper, 124-06: 5th Place

Shot Put: Preston Salow, 51-09: 1st Place (Conference Champion); Gabe Halweg, 40-05.75: 7th Place

Sprint Med: Dylan Knipper, Brady Wall, Kash Hunt, & Macoy Stone, 1:36. 51: 4th Place

4x800m Relay: Owen Smith, Kenyon Baker, Carter LeClere, & DaShawn Strickland, 9:00.88: 4th Place

100m Dash: Macoy Stone, 11.45: 4th Place; Kash Hunt, 11.63: 6th Place

Distance Med: Dylan Knipper, Carter LeClere, Owen Smith, & Kenyon Baker, 3:50.56: 4th Place

400m Dash: DaShawn Strickland, 52.10: 3rd Place

4x200m Relay: Dylan Knipper, Jaxson LeGassick, Carter LeClere, & Kash Hunt, 1:35.44: 4th Place

110m Hurdles: Jaxson LeGaassick, 18.08: 6th Place

800m Run: Kenyon Baker, 2:16.49: 5th Place

200m Dash: Macoy Stone, 22.93: 3rd Place
1600m Run: Owen Smith, 4:57.70: 5th Place
4x100m Relay: Keegan Rahe, Colin Smith, Jaxson LeGassick, & Brady Wall, 47.44: 8th Place

4x400m Relay: Carter LeClere, Kash Hunt, DaShawn Strickland, & Macoy Stone, 3:28.05: 1st Place (Conference Champions)

Girls track

by Alaina Mead

Last Thursday the girls track team had their Conference meet at Lisbon, scoring 156.5 points and coming home as conference champs!

Listed are the events scored in:

High jump- Taylor Salow; 3rd; 5'; Haydin Flannagan; 7th; 4-6

Long jump- Magda Petermann; 5th; 15-0.25 PR

Discus- Sellah Ambundo; 1st; 119-01, Grace Richter; 7th; 89-06

Shot- Sellah Ambundo; 2nd; 37-0, Morgan Hoeger; 5th; 30-8.5

Sprint Medley Relay- Camryn Paris, Rylee Reed, Audra Burbridge, Lanni Beaman; 1st; 1:49.77 PR & SCHOOL RECORD BROKEN!!

3000m- Anna Feldmann; 3rd; 12:33.10 PR, Breanna Bush ;5th 13:00.04; PR

4x800m Relay- Jaxyn Weber, Jena Hoefler, Kourtney Hatfield and Charlotte Ludovissy; 5th; 12:44.51

Shuttle Hurdle Relay- Haydin Flannagan, Taylor Salow, Natalie Ries and Alaina Mead; 3rd; 1:13.65 PR

100m- Mallori Ambundo; 5th; 13.61 PR, Lilly Kraft; 7th; 13.68

Distance Medley Relay- Rylee Reed, Khloe Glew, Taryn Burbridge and Audra Burbridge; 1st; 4:21.82 PR

400m- Lanni Beaman; 1st; 59.62 PR

4x200m Relay- Rylee Reed, Lilly Kraft, Taryn Burbridge and Camryn Paris; 3rd; 1:50.86

100m Hurdles- Natalie Ries; 7th; 17.88, Haydin Flannagan; 8th ;17.94 PR

800m- Audra Burbridge; 1st; 2:23.39 PR, Lanni Beaman; 3rd; 2:29.91

200m- Camryn Paris; 3rd; 26.74 PR, Rylee Reed; 6th; 28.05 PR

400m- Hurdles Taylor Salow; 4th; 1:13.87 PR, Magda Petermann; 8th; 1:17.02 PR

1500m- Anna Feldman; 3rd; 5:30.44 PR, Breanna Bush; 8th; 5:59.28

4x100m Relay- Mallori Ambundo, Lilly Kraft, Taryn Burbridge and Camryn Paris; 1st; 51.34 PR

4x400m Relay- Taryn Burbridge, Khloe Glew, Audra Burbridge and Lanni Beaman; 2nd; 4:14.09 PR

Coach Dunlap stated, "I love how this team came together and gave their best in their events. We had 17 personal records and a new school record in the Sprint Medley Relay. The team knew they had to have close to their best to find a way to get by Edgewood-Colesburg, who is a very well rounded tough team this year. This is the first time this season we scored more team points than them in a meet. With 17 PRs it was obvious the girls knew they had this opportunity to get the TRC title and they just fed off each event."

continued on next page

Girls track, cont.

The field events have also been very consistent and strong at each meet. "In particular Magda Petermann had a great long jump going 15-0.25. She has had some struggles the last couple meets so it was awesome to see her get back into the groove. Anna Feldmann and Breanna Bush both had gritty runs in the 3000m and 1500m. They both PR'd in the 3000 and Anna dug deep and found a way to do it later in the 1500m as well. They keep improving and it is a good feeling knowing you can count on them to get points in the longer distances," Coach Dunlap stated.

Another good surprise throughout the last couple weeks was Mallori Ambundo and her dynamic sprinting. Coach Dunlap said, "She PR'd in the 100m dash placing 5th and running 13.61. She also led off the 4x100 relay (Mallori Ambundo, Lilly Kraft, Taryn Burbridge and Camryn Paris) that also had a PR and placed 1st in the event."

Thursday the girls traveled to Lisbon one last time for their district meet and a chance to punch their tickets to state! "I am optimistic for them to have a great post-season and feel like they are going to peak at the right time at districts and state," commented Coach Dunlap.

Changes made to student elections

Student council and class officer elections for the 2026-27 school year have undergone some changes.

One challenge that has often faced the student council is holding elections with enough time to plan homecoming without feeling rushed.

Mr. Palmer, student council sponsor, and Mr. Mangold, high school principal, looked at how other schools handle officer elections and proposed a new plan. This year's student council reviewed it and made amendments to the student council bylaws.

Currently, students who wish to be a class officer or be on student council have filled out forms to be on the ballot, indicating which office they'd like to hold. They also need to get signatures from students and staff to show their support. Students wishing to be student council president have formed parties and have representatives on board.

Both elections will involve voting via an online form that students will receive in their email. Student council elections are today (May 15), and class officer elections will be on Monday and Tuesday.



Jeanie Teymer and friends did some campaigning at the TEL tailgate Tuesday by passing out drinks and cookies. She is running for student council president.

Seven Wildcats earn service award



These students completed over 300 service hours while in high school and were awarded the 2026 Wildcat Star Service Award. Front row: Meleah Burr, Jocelyn Kelchen and Rachael Hoefler; back row: Grace Richter, Preston Salow, Tyler Hoeger and Maya Smith

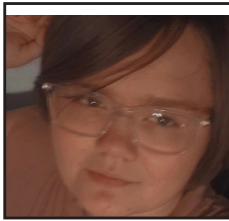
One at a Time

by Arianna Nolan

Through-out these four years of writing for this column, I have shared various messages. I focused on the aspects of mental health, diversity, and the importance of supporting the youth at Maquoketa Valley. When I started this column, I was at a really tough point in my life. Part of my writing these columns every week was also a way for me to try and motivate myself to become a better person, and I can say that it worked. Also, throughout these four years, I thought that this column would never come to an end, and even as I am writing this final column, I can't believe that it's the end. Writing has always been such a huge passion of mine, as well as helping others, so when I put these two together, I always felt proud of the columns I shared each week. But now, this is the end. I have written articles on how to say goodbye, but I find it still to be hard even now. The friends I have made at Maquoketa Valley will be some of the greatest ones for life, and I will deeply miss the teachers for how much thought and care they put into teaching the students.

However, my journey isn't over. I will continue to keep writing and sharing my voice in other ways. When I go to the University of Northern Iowa, I hope that I will be able to write for the newspaper, or I might even start a blog. The world hasn't seen the last of me yet because I still have so much to share with the world. And, the more I experience in life, the more I will be able to give thoughtful messages.

To end this column, I would like to give some special thanks. First, I want to thank all of you who have read my articles over the years. I have gotten so many messages of thanks from different people just for writing about a certain topic. It means a lot to me that people read what I write. I would also like to thank Mrs. Temple for all the work that she has done over the years. She has kept this Echo running for a long time, but every issue is special. She has also helped me become a better writer and a better person, and I cannot thank her enough for that. As always, I will still be here if any of you need me. I love you all! Thank you for being on this journey with me.



Jaelyn's Journeys



photo by Jaelyn Butikofer

Where in the school can you find this object? Be the first one to correctly name the place to Mrs. Temple to win something from the prize box!

Deep Dive

by Arianna Nolan

Welcome back, Divers, to the last edition of Deep Dive! Through these few years of writing this column, we have learned about so many creatures of the sea and how to protect our oceans. But our journeys together have come to an end. While there are still many creatures of the sea to explore, I will not be able to write about them anymore. This is one of the hardest goodbyes that I will ever have to do. Writing about a sea creature every week was always a highlight. I got to learn about a new sea creature and share it with people. It gave me time to finally step away from all the negative aspects of my life and just focus on the beauty of nature. I hope that, over these few years of writing for this column, I have sparked an interest in learning in all of you, and that you continue to see the beauty of life. Thank you all for diving with me, and well, I may not see you all next time, but I hope you have a fantastic life, even without Deep Dive! I love you all and thank you for reading!

Athletes of the Week

Name: Zachary Leytem

What is your favorite part of playing

golf? My favorite part about golf is being able to hang out with friends and play golf every day.

What's your favorite course to play in high school competition? My favorite

course that we have played in competition is Fawn Creek in Anamosa.

If you could golf anywhere, where would you golf? If I could golf anywhere, it would be at Augusta.

What's been a favorite golf memory?

I would say all the practice rounds that we play, they are always so fun, and everybody is so chill.



Name: Olivia Begle

What is your favorite part of playing

golf? I like the calm environment and being outside.

What's the most frustrating part of the sport?

Sometimes the weather is unpredictable so you don't always know what may happen.

How long have you played? I have been playing since I was 11.

Who's your golf role model? My golf role model is my dad.



Comedy Corner

—compiled by Grace Richter

Congrats class of 2026! Here are some jokes to send you off!

Why did the graduate wear sunglasses? Because their future is bright

What are the next 2 years? graduating classes? 2026 and 7 :)

I'm finally free! Now I just have to do it all again, but with more debt in college.

I'm moving on to bigger and better things... like sleeping past 7 AM.