

# VFHS SEMI-ANNUAL

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF  
THE VFHS JOURNALISM DEPARTMENT

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## WELCOME: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

Hello, and welcome!

This is the first semi-annual publication from the Valley Falls High School Journalism & Yearbook Team.

Throughout the past semester, our team has been working hard to develop our story writing and editing skills. Each member of our team has hand selected a story that interests our community members. We have worked diligently to gather information, conduct interviews, and plan photo opportunities to create cohesive stories and produce a newsletter for our community.

With the creation of this newsletter we hope to make new connections between our community and our students. We want to share all of the exciting events that are happening in our area and at our school.

If you or someone you know has story opportunity that they would like to see in the monthly newsletter, please contact a member of our journalism team.

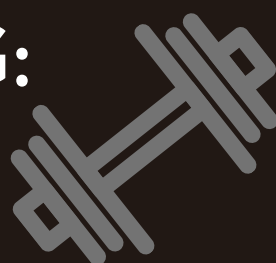
Thank you for your readership and we hope you enjoy our first annual Valley Falls High School newsletter.

Sincerely,  
The Valley Falls Yearbook Team



# STARTING OFF STRONG: POWERLIFTING

BY: SAMANTHA CLARK



In any sport, there are many things you need to achieve. The sport that asks a person to go beyond what they can do is powerlifting. Many people do not know the hard work and dedication it takes to participate in powerlifting.

At Valley Falls High School, there has not always been a powerlifting team. It has just recently started growing at our school. 2 years ago, Coach Hofstra brought powerlifting into our school. When asked why he decided to bring it into our school, he responded with, “I knew that we had some pretty strong kids that were good at lifting weights and were capable of winning some medals for themselves and the school (Cade Norris, Samuel Drinkard, and Renay Myers). I didn’t want them to lose that opportunity so I wanted to keep the powerlifting program running and also build it up in order to benefit all the sports in the school. Since then, we have grown to almost 30 lifters with close to 20 competing, and have brought home several medals already with records broken as well.”

Powerlifting can be a pretty exciting sport. Not only is it fun, but it will also prepare you for the other sports that you are a part of. One of the most involved athletes in powerlifting is Haley Nellis. When interviewing Haley Nellis, the first question I thought of asking her was what interests her the most about powerlifting. She responded with, “What interests me the most about powerlifting is getting stronger for

other sports I participate in. Doing powerlifting has helped me gain the strength I need to be better at softball. When I first started powerlifting, I didn’t know much about it, then after a year it became one of my passions and I love doing it.” This shows that powerlifting is not just about getting stronger for yourself, but also for the other sports.

Powerlifting is not an easy sport to be a part of. There are many things about powerlifting that people do not initially see. When Coach Hofsta told others the real truth behind what goes on in powerlifting and that it is not hard, a lot of high school athletes joined the powerlifting team. I asked Coach, “I see that you are getting a bigger team, what excites you about that?” His reply was astonishing! He said, “The most exciting part is that the students are excited about it. It’s awesome to see the desire to improve and competitiveness in students. It’s also great because it benefits their general well-being, and also aids in each of the sports they play while in school. Hopefully, it also allows us to score more points as a team and bring home a NEK League trophy or even State trophy.” Seeing how passionate Coach is about this leads everyone to believe that he will keep this sport going as long as he can.

Powerlifting is a sport that everyone should get involved in. When asked why others should be a part of powerlifting, Haley answered, “Others should be a part of powerlifting because it will help you become a better athlete with all your other sports. You also get to know and become friends with other people from different schools that are also passionate about powerlifting like you are.” Hearing all this information, I hope many more people decide to go out for powerlifting in the years to come.



Zachary Evans , Hayden Kearney, and Dylan Cerrvantez lift together.



Senior, Haley Nellis, pushes her limits at practice.



**SHOOTING FOR RECOGNITION**  
**BY: EMMA MONTGOMERY**

Have you ever heard about our High School Trap Team? Let me tell you a little more about it! The Valley Falls High School Trap Team was first started by our coaches, Jesica and Cody Clark, in the spring of 2018. They started the team because of the passion they shared for trap shooting. Since then, these two have been great influences to all the kids that have made their way through the program, but also at practices and events as well. They have also had a major impact on many students outside of trap shooting too and hope to continue sharing their love for the sport. They were both introduced to trap shooting by Jesica’s father, John. Cody says “When I met Jesica, and her father, I was just a hunting kid. I loved being outdoors and shooting guns, but I never had heard of trap shooting. I had shot a few clay pigeons in the backyard with friends, and was pretty good at it. John was an amateur trap shooter, he took me along to the Manhattan gun club to shoot a league with him. After this I was hooked. When our first born, Dallas got old enough his Grandpa John also introduced it to him, and since then it has been a family affair. All three of my kids now participate in the sport. I love spending time with friends and family introducing this to new kids and seeing them get hooked just like I did.” Hearing this come from one of our coaches shows how much he enjoys the sport and passing it along to new kids.

What’s even more impressive about the The Valley Falls High School Trap Team is that they support themselves. They raise all of their money through fundraisers and through the support of our community. All of the participants help with these fundraisers, and make them possible and a great success. Previously, the team has completed multiple



The Valley Falls High School Trap Team takes a group photo before a competition

raffles and has also hosted “Egg my Yard” for Easter time. All of these fundraisers have been quite successful for the group and have given them a name within the Valley Falls community. The Trap Team is located out of Valley Falls High School but they are not technically a school sponsored activity. The team shoots at the rock quarry just East of town. They also travel to surrounding gun clubs to compete in shooting competitions as well. Throughout the years the team has had multiple accomplished individuals through the high school league, at state shoots, and even just personal best, many members of the trap team have been recognized for their hard work and dedication! Although they may not get as much recognition from the school as other sports, such as basketball or baseball do for these accomplishments, the trap shooting Dragons still continue to perform their very best. Former participant and Valley Falls graduate, Dallas Clark says “I believe the Trap Team should get just as much recognition as other sports because we all put in the time to practice and get better just like other sports do.” This statement from Dallas is valued as true to a lot of participants including myself.

Being recognized by our school for our accomplishments would make us feel more like our hard work is paying off and other people are hearing about our accomplishments through our school too! Coach Cody also states that the team should receive more recognition. He says, “In my opinion, yes the team should get more recognition. Trap is a sport just like volleyball, baseball, or basketball. I believe we should also be able to post pictures on the web page and in the yearbook of the kids in action, doing what they enjoy. All of the kids on my team work just as hard as any other athlete, and put in the time to practice like other sports.”

The Trapshooting team will continue to compete this spring, but has finished their fall season. Some of the most memorable performances from the fall were, Emma Montgomery placing High Lady in our conference, multiple people also shot their first 25 straights! These students and athletes will continue to work hard in order to receive recognition from the school for the sport that they love.



Junior, Emma Montgomery proudly shows off her first place ribbon from the competition



**MAKING TIME: THE STRUGGLES  
OF A MULTISPORT ATHLETE**  
BY: CARLY HENSON

It's a question most involved teens ask themselves, is it better to be a multisport athlete or just stick to one sport while in high school? There are many pros and cons for both being a single sport athlete and a multisport athlete. After reviewing both sides of the debate, I hope that you can discover what is best for you and answer that infamous question for yourself.

One of the biggest benefits of being a multisport athlete is that you develop many different skills, which could consist of force, speed, endurance, coordination and flexibility. There is no doubt that while being involved year-round you have more skills compared to just being a single sport athlete. I interviewed multisport athlete and senior at Valley Falls High School, Lillian Darveaux, about what she enjoys most about being involved. She stated that, "you make more friendships with people, there's always something to do and you are able to stay fit."

Some bad attributes of being a multisport athlete is that you are often burnt out, while playing year round, it can cause athletes to lose the passion they once had for the game. Some people would also struggle on choosing just one sport to play. I interviewed another multi-sport athlete and senior, John Frakes, when I asked what the biggest challenge was with being involved in many sports he stated, "it would have to be juggling them, it's got to be hard not being able to commit to one or the other, multi-sport athletes are on another level." Zac Evans, a junior, stated that, "there is not a lot of time for other things, you are pretty much always tired and sore."

Single sport athletes have the opportunity to perfect skills, while they focus all their energy and time on one sport. I interviewed Carmen Sebek, a junior, about what she liked most about being a single sport athlete, she stated, "I like how half or your year is



Junior and multisport athlete, Zachary Evans, playing football

relaxed and you have more time for other things.

"When you are focusing on one sport you typically feel more confident, because you have practiced and specialized in that one sport. I asked single sport athlete member Allison Thomas, a junior, what she thought were the pros of being a single sport athlete, she explained, "you can devote all of your time to your sport. You are able to improve, because you aren't focusing on multiple sports. Your grades and academics will probably be better, because you have more time to work on school work." Being involved in one sport, can also allow athletes more free time to do homework or get a job. Nolan Dourghramaji, a junior, said that, "Being a single sport athlete you have more time for homework, less drama, and you can work more hours."

Just like being a multisport athlete, single sport athletes also tend to have burnouts because they can get exhausted from doing the same thing over and over again. A negative about being a single sport athlete is that it is more common that you get injured from repetition or from not using those muscles in a long time. You might miss out on the opportunity of new friendships and other opportunities by not being as involved. By being a single sport athlete you also won't be as in shape as you would be staying active year round.

In conclusion, there are many advantages and disadvantages to being a multisport athlete and a single sport athlete. Being a multi-sport athlete you are more involved and stay in good shape but you also are busy and miss out on free time outside of athletics. As a single sport athlete you can focus on one sport and you have more free time, but you miss out on new friendships and you could get injured from inactivity. Now knowing all of the pros and cons of being either a multisport athlete or single sport athlete, you should know what is the best fit for you.



A photo of five varsity multisport athletes



### ON THE ROAD WITH FFA

BY: RANDEE GATZEMEYER

More than 69,500 FFA members from across the country celebrated agriculture and agricultural education during the 95th National FFA Convention & Expo in Indianapolis this year. Luckily, some of our Valley Falls Dragons got to be a part of it.

Back in October our FFA officer team took a trip to Indianapolis, Indiana to attend the 95th National FFA Convention & Expo! On the 26th of October, Ms. Ebersole and her FFA officers got on the road to Indianapolis! They traveled about 8 hours to enjoy a fun-filled couple of days. They enjoyed a pumpkin patch, spending quality time together, shopping at the expo center, ziplining through the trees in St. Louis, Missouri while team building, and getting floor seats at the opening session of the 95th national FFA convention! I asked FFA officer and Vice-President Olivia Sprang, Junior, what her favorite part of our trip to the national convention was, she replied saying, "My favorite part of the National FFA Convention was getting to experience FFA on such a large level. Seeing over 60,000 people there, all in their FFA jackets, is something I will never forget. I also enjoyed the memories made and time spent with our officer team during the trip to Indy." I asked another FFA officer and secretary, Trinity Seymour, Senior, what her favorite part of our trip to Indianapolis was and she answered, "My favorite part of the national FFA convention was when we went to GoApe to zipline. We got to do some amazing team bonding and step out of our comfort zones. I had an amazing time and would do it again if I could."

From the perspective of the FFA chapter President, my favorite part of the national convention was being able to spend time with my other FFA officers. This experience has shown me that our FFA chapter is the fact that we aren't just members of this organization, we are our own family. Our chapter truly is a family and the environment we create when we are together is absolutely insane to me. Not only is our FFA chapter a family, but our officer team is too. We have a crazy amount of heart on our officer team. Every officer is so dedicated to improving our community. They are excited to keep learning and keep teaching information to others. I am so blessed to be able to stand alongside these people. That's why I was so excited to go on this trip with the other officers. We had so much fun being with each other, and being able to learn more about our FFA community.

Overall, the experience was memorable for all officers and many from the FFA chapter would love to go. I asked Olivia Sprang, If she would ever go again to the convention and if so, why? She replied saying, "I would definitely go again. It was such a great experience filled with so many memories."

The Valley Falls Dragons hope to take the chapter officers to the next annual convention in October of 2023 and are excited to make many more memories while they continue to educate themselves about FFA and improve their chapter.



The Valley Falls FFA chapter officers and advisor, on the floor of Lucas Oil Stadium, where the opening session of the 95th National FFA Convention and Expo!

### NEW YEAR, NEW LOOK

BY: GRETCHEN HAGER



Another year, another yearbook team ready to make their mark. The 2022-23 young Valley Falls High School journalists have already accomplished a handful of things during the previous 2021 school year. They've sold more yearbooks than Mr. Seth Cooper can count! They have also gone into the community: selling ads, attending conferences, and hosted a few fundraising events.

This year, the yearbook staff has seen multiple upgrades. With their hard work last year and their diligence this year, they have raised enough money to buy two new cameras for the team. The school has also provided them with updates to technology: new desktop computers in the classroom. All of these enhancements were needed for the growing yearbook team.

Since the beginning of the fall of last school year, the journalism team has grown from eight to thirteen, and with new people, come new ideas.





The entire Journalism class poses for a picture at their end of the semester party.

The journalism class wants to do more for our school, so we have offered a survey to our student body in order to give them the opportunity to give their personal input on what they would like to see our team do. The following open-ended questions were presented: “What is something you have seen from journalism that you enjoyed?”, “What is something you wish you saw more of?”, and, “What is something you would not like to see this year?”. The responses were quite helpful for our team this year with answers varying across the board!

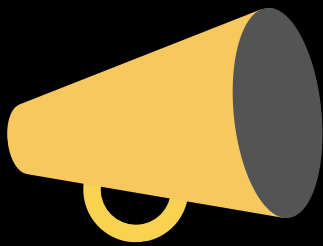
Along with the long-answer-questions, we also decided to give options for what the student body would like for us to create. A whopping sixty-four percent voted on the creation of a Valley Falls High School newspaper where we could document and remember all of our accomplishments, and commemorate the past.

To get a further understanding of our position, I interviewed two antinomical communal members. When I asked Lillian Darveaux, a senior, what she was specifically wanting to see from journalism, she said, “A weekly newspaper, and to improve our yearbook I think putting polls like best dressed, and things like that.”. When interviewing Seth Cooper, a long lived valley dragon, he stated, “I would love it if we had a school newspaper, and maybe even a photojournalism class, where you learn how to edit and take pictures so we don't have to rely on everyone to finish, and complete everything. I think it would be more organized. I think that would be a cool thing.”.

This first semester has been, in better words, amazing, and will continue to advance as the school year progresses. We are planning on taking everyones criticism to create a yearbook, create activities, and build a team that everyone will love!

# WE GOT SPIRIT!

BY: KORIE KIRKWOOD



One might describe the week and evening of homecoming at Valley Falls as eventful. Many members of the student body and the teachers get involved day-to-day, showing their Dragon Pride. Our homecoming has many fun traditions which accompany the homecoming football game. This year, Valley Falls’ homecoming was September 9th as our football team played against the Troy Trojans. For the crowning ceremony, we had ten senior king and queen candidates: Carly Henson and Thayer Coleman, Lillian Darveaux and Dylan Cervantez, Madelyn Miller and John Frakes, Emma Gibbens and Niklas St. Onge, and Trinity Seymour and Nick Dodd. These candidates were selected by other students in the senior class. All of these candidates as well as all Valley Falls students get the opportunity to participate in the many, exciting homecoming traditions.

Spirit week is a tradition in which we do fun things on different days during the week of homecoming. Unfortunately this year, we had no school on Monday, so there was not a theme day; however, the other days were as follows: Tuesday- Twin day, Wednesday- Decade day, Thursday- college, and Friday- black and gold. Students love showing their school spirit throughout the week and dress up to win prizes and bragging rights.

But the fun doesn’t stop there; we have other traditions during spirit week. On the Wednesday of spirit week we have powder puff and iron man games. This is where the girls get to play football and the boys coach them while the boys get to play volleyball and the girls get to coach them. Before the games begin, the candidates get to play a game crafted by their parents. These games are always light-hearted and are filled with great memories for everyone. After the football and volleyball games, everyone enjoys some food provided by FCCLA. And the night ends when the candidates spray paint their names on the road by the football field, making their mark!



Homecoming King and Queen, Dylan Cervantez and Lillian Darveaux pose for a picture.



On Friday of homecoming week, all classes decorate their own float according to the year's theme. This year's theme was Greek. The float construction process takes a couple hours for each group. Then the students have a parade from the school up to main street where the community joins us for pep rally. Many of the elementary and middle school students sit along the road and watch our floats go by and then they head up to main street to watch the pep rally. Making floats is a tradition and the best float wins money. Another tradition during the homecoming parade is the games we play at the pep rally. One classic game that everyone seems to love is "guess the candidate" where a story of a candidate gets told and the spirit winners from the entire homecoming week get to guess who it was. So, teachers team up against students to try and get the most points. Throughout the day, the excitement continues to build until game time! This is arguably the most exciting time since at half time the homecoming king and queen will be crowned.

This year's homecoming king and queen were Lillian Darveaux and Dylan Cervantez. Each year the candidates pick out Kindergarten helpers as a tradition. Their helpers were Dahla Jones, who escorted by Lillian Darveaux and Kadin Evans, who escorted by Dylan Cervantez. The homecoming process is so exciting for candidates, especially when they are crowned. When asked how it felt to win Homecoming Queen, Lillian Darveaux said, "It felt crazy and didn't feel real." I also asked her if she liked the homecoming traditions and she said, "Yes! It's the best part of homecoming." Another question I asked her was if she would change anything. To this, she said, "I wish they had the old cars back and a different activity to do for us candidates on Wednesday night before the powderpuff and ironman games." I interviewed Homecoming King, Dylan Cervantez and asked how he felt about winning King and he said, "It was good to know everyone cared about me. I helped a lot of people out, it was nice to win but it didn't matter to me win or lose." I also asked how well he liked our traditions and he said, "I liked it because it put more feeling into homecoming and the atmosphere was amazing. Decorating the floats is awesome because you get out of school and being your friends and with others in our school we don't usually get to talk to is nice." Then, I asked him the final question: If he wanted to change anything, and he replied, "I wish the cars were there because it would be fun. If I had to change anything it would be having the pep rally longer. Instead of one story about a candidate maybe two, and the winners get an actual prize."

On the other side of homecoming is our football team. Our Dragons played the Troy Trojans, and this was our second game of the season. We just switched to 11 man this year after years of playing 8 man. It was a tough game for Valley Falls especially with how young the team is.



Players on the Dragon Football team getting in position before a play during the Homecoming game.

Many freshmen played big minutes or even the entire game. Our four big players Zac Evans, junior, Dylan Cervantez, senior, Solomon Drinkard, junior, and Hayden Kearney, sophomore, are big benefactors in our football team. Unfortunately for the Dragons Senior Dylan Cervantez out with an injury this game. Head coach Wyatt Hofstra had a lot to say about the game. I asked him how he felt about the game and his response was, "With Dylan out it was a big factor to our game. Many of the players look up to Dylan for knowledge on the field. We started Grant Meyer at QB with little high school experience. I think he stepped up and did what he could do. We also put in Hayden Kearney and Zac Evans as QB to try and get some different looks. Troy is a very experienced team with 9 seniors. With that being said we could have done some things differently but we played hard." I also asked him what the team could have done better and he said, "Well it was only our second game transitioning into 11 man, some have never played 11 man before so it was new to our players. We have a lot of players still learning and we have a lot of freshmen. I don't think this is an excuse for all of our games but we are a young team. We only had three seniors, and a couple of juniors, most of our team were underclassmen. I think some of our mistakes could have been minimal instead of huge, other than that they were just a good team." I interviewed team captain Dylan Cervantez too. I asked how he felt the team did and what they could do better as a team, he said, "I felt that we competed the best that we could. Having players out is an inconvenience that no one wants. Sometimes adversity hits and we have to face it and find a way out of it. When it comes to what we can do better I'd say playing as a team. I feel like a lot of our key players didn't need to feel like they had to carry the game on their shoulders." The Dragons fell to the Trojans 63-0.

Overall, homecoming and the events that accompany the game are always a great time, filled with many memories. The dragons and community are looking forward to next fall's homecoming. But in the meantime, there are plenty of other school events to help continue Dragon Pride.



# A TRUE CONTROVERSARY: SCHOOL LUNCHES

BY: JOHN FRAKES

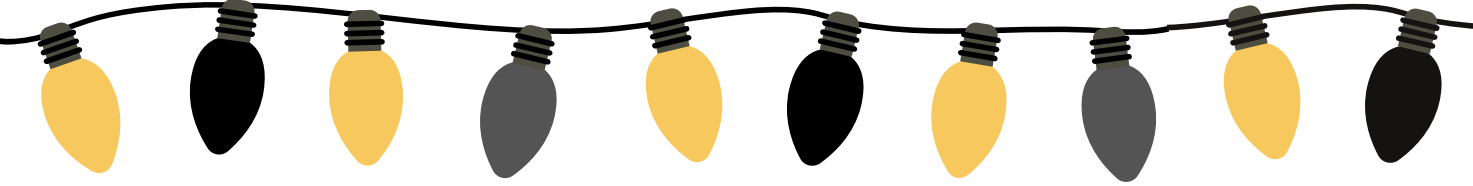
School Lunches, are they really that bad? This question is a common debate among many high school students, and Valley Falls is no exception. Throughout the past few years, there has been an ongoing conversation about the lunches in schools across America. Many students, staff, and community members are unsatisfied with the lunches being provided. Although, more recently, a lot has changed when it comes to school lunches.

This past year while our school lunches were paid for due to new legislature adopted to ease the troubles of COVID-19, the quality came into question. Many students and staff were understanding of the circumstances, but h some people simply complained because they could. When thinking of the good and the bad parts of our provided lunches, many had some of the same main concern, the food seems to be the same as it always has been. Nolan Doughramaji, a junior at Valley Falls High School, eats school lunch everyday. When asked for his opinion on the school menu he said, “Same food since grade school, filling, little protein, no flavor”. But, why is this though? And is it going to get better? Congress strengthened the standards for the national school lunch program in 2010, but with import restrictions and shortages brought on by COVID, the quality and stability of our school lunches fell off. With time, the district's food will be improving, though probably not during these current highschoolers' careers.

# CHRISTMAS WITH THE COMMUNITY

BY: JENNA FUNK

The Valley Falls High School Annual Senior Citizen Brunch shows how important our small town community is to us. This Brunch has been an annual thing for X years now. The high school culinary teacher, Mrs. Margo Ellerman, hosts this event with help from her FCCLA and culinary students. These students and others work hard all hours of the school day planning this event. Not only do they have to plan the logistics and advertise, but they also spend the majority of their time preparing food to feed everyone involved and this process can take 3-4 weeks alone. Despite the hard work it takes, Mrs. Ellerman hosts this event to bring people out of their homes to socialize and give them an opportunity for a free delicious meal.



The past couple of years this event was a drive through event. People would drive down the Dragon Drive, hop out to take a picture with Santa, grab their prepared meals, and then drive away. They did it like this because of COVID-19 and the restrictions the school had to make in order for everyone to stay safe. However, this year’s brunch was as “normal” as can be.

The brunch was hosted in the Valley Falls school band room. The event took place on Wednesday, December 7th. Instead of being greeted through a car door, families were welcomed into the band room as they got their food and had the opportunity to socialize. Two students, Hayden Kearney, a sophomore, and Zac Evans, a junior, made the event even more special as they gained valuable volunteer experience dressing up as Santa and his elf. With the help of this duo, the senior citizens had an easy and memorable photo opportunity with them. The yearbook team also helped throughout this event, capturing photos of the holiday cheer as guests gathered and students used their efforts for good. Jenna Funk, senior, volunteered to take pictures of people with Santa Claus while Samantha Clark, senior, helped document valid email addresses for the photos to be sent to. This is unlike years past where families got a paper copy of their photo mailed to them. Instead, the process has been simplified. Once uploaded, these digital pictures will be sent to them to cherish the memory of this day forever!

Mrs. Ellerman says, “The reason I started this tradition is because it teaches our students courage, responsibility, and the gift of giving and it gives students the opportunity to claim service learning hours and learn how important it is to cherish our community.” Mrs. Ellerman hopes to continue this tradition in the future as she encourages more students to get involved and volunteer within the community.

The event has had a tremendous impact on many Valley Falls community members, but it has also had an impact on the students as well. Skylar Neighberger, a sophomore, says, “My grandparents, John and Shirley Tripp, enjoy this event very much. They enjoy getting out and socializing with old friends that they don't see very much anymore.” Overall, the Senior Citizen Brunch is and will continue to be a popular and successful event within the Valley Falls Community.



Santa, the elf, and Sparky pose with community members attending the Senior Citizen Dinner



**LIGHT IT UP:  
CHRISTMAS AT THE PARK**  
BY: RENAY MYERS

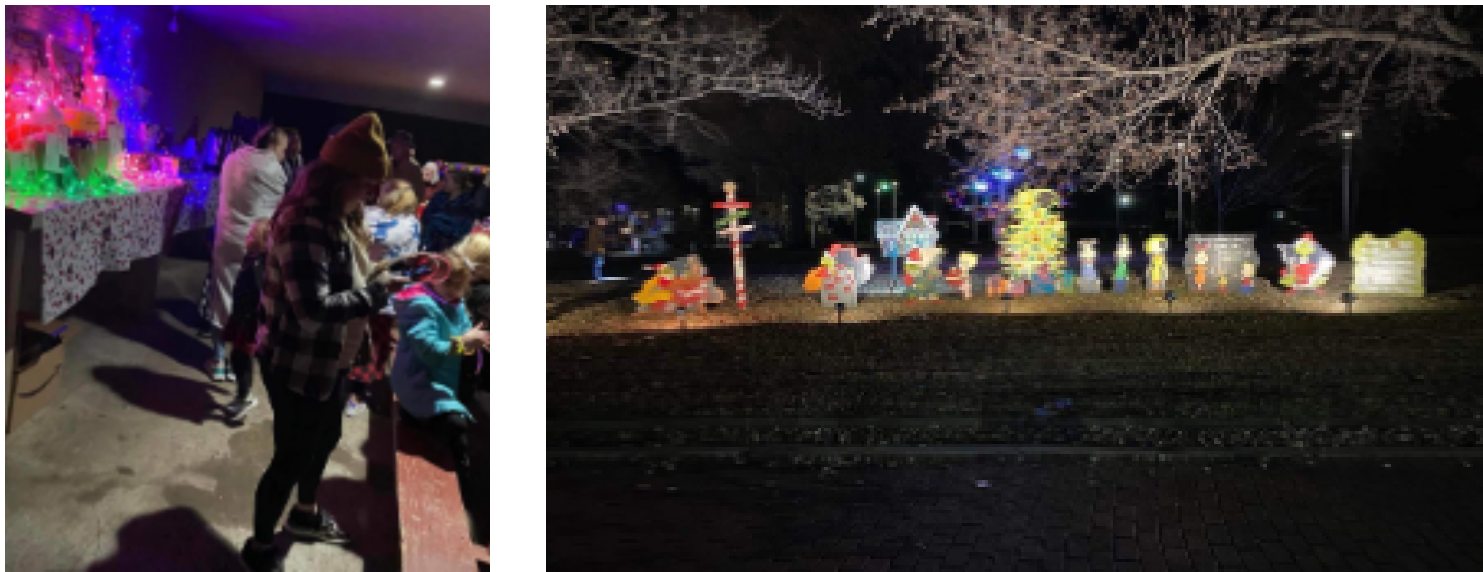
Some towns might do a Christmas tree lighting, or light show, but Valley Falls does what we call “Christmas in the Park”. Christmas in the Park is a tradition the town of Valley Falls has done for ten years now. Classes in the Valley Falls High School walk up to the park when they are able to help, they help clean up the leaves in the park, unload and even help the city guys set up the wood pieces displayed at the park. This happens towards the end of November every year.

“We always light the park up at 6 PM the Saturday after Thanksgiving, we have fire pits for s'mores, we have a hay rack ride that goes down to man to see the Christmas tree, then it drives around the park, Chandler Martens also makes spiced cider. The kids all have such a good time and that’s what matters “ - Jan Mcknight.

Many people every year come and go as they can attend Christmas in the Park in Valley Falls. This year was the 10th annual Christmas in the park, Jan Mcknight says “ When we first started we only had about four scenes, we try to add a little something new every year, this year it was more lights.” This event gets a lot of the community involved, and is a great opportunity for kids to get in the Christmas spirit with their friends and family.

"The lights give the feeling of a magical Christmas, and that’s what it’s all about” - Linda Stansell

The Valley Falls community hopes to continue this Christmas tradition, bringing joy to families for years to come!



Photos from the opening night of Christmas in the Park: Community members came out to participate in raffle drawings and see the lights for the first time this year.

**PHONE USAGE IN SCHOOLS**  
BY: SKYLAR NEIBERGER

What is the most common debate among teens? Is high school really fun or is it a waste of time? Do students get too much homework? Or maybe it’s questioning what the coolest trend on TikTok is?

But, the biggest debate truly is: Should phones be allowed in school?

A lot of teenagers want to have their phones in school for many reasons, but some abuse this power which sometimes results in the right to carry a cellphone being taken away. Schools across America are currently struggling with social media and phone control and Valley Falls High School is no different. In previous years, phones at school haven’t been a problem, but as social media has grown, the urge for students to constantly be checking their phones has also increased. There are now so many different social media apps that teenagers have access to. Some of these include TikTok, Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, and many more. In a poll given to Valley Falls students, we found that the two most popular apps are Tik Tok and Snapchat. These apps can also be addicting as students spend hours on their phone everyday scrolling through these apps. In the poll we also asked how much time each student spends on their phone per day and the most time spent is 4 hours, with the next highest being 6 hours and even a few with 10 hours per day. These numbers are definitely rising from past years so I interviewed Mr. Seth Cooper since he has been a part of our school staff for years. He was able to give his opinion on phones in school. “I want to see kids without phones because we need to talk to each other more and have more social interaction and we don’t get that with our phones. I would like to see a day where kids go into the lunchroom without phones and just talk to each other without a phone in their hand. Kids feel they are entitled and they don’t understand there are rules they have to follow.” The poll also asked all students in the high school what their thoughts were on phones in school. We got a lot of responses back. A lot of students said that they should be allowed but we also had one student that said they shouldn’t. One of the seniors Courtney Conner said, “yes, because if you have any kind of emergency it is always good to have your phone there. I feel like if it is our phones that we pay for then we should be able to keep them because it is our property. Another student that also said we should was a sophomore Cassie Frakes, and she said “I think phones should definitely be allowed in school. Phones are our personal right and the ones who abuse them during class should get punished. Many of us got phones at a certain age when our parents thought we were mature and responsible enough to have them and a teacher cannot take that away. If someone has anxiety or something where they need to contact their parents throughout the day you are limiting them from that and that can cause more uproar and distractions in class if they have an anxiety attack.” We also had one no. Krista Wade, a sophomore also filled out the poll and told us who she does not think should be allowed and here is her side. No, because they are a big distraction to the whole school. We should only use them when we need them, like in an emergency.





### TURN IT UP BY: ABBEY BROSA

Music helps many people when they are studying for several reasons. In an interview with Heidi Gibbens, sophomore, I asked her about her music preferences while studying. She said, "I feel like music helps me concentrate in a noisy classroom." Music seems to help many others as well.

It can also reduce distractions, relieve stress, help with concentration and motivation, improve memory, and keep you awake. In order to effectively research this topic at our school, I sent out a survey for students to complete. All of the questions were regarding music preferences during study time.

My survey shows 83% of students at Valley Falls High School like to listen to music while studying. Most people listen to country, pop, or rap music. Almost  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the students in the high school who responded to the survey said that they listen to music and study 5 days a week at school and home. So, it is evident that music plays an important role in the student habits of the students at our high school. Yet, music isn't always allowed for our students.

Many students have been in trouble at school for listening to music even though there are so many benefits. According to the handbook, students are not even allowed to have headphones in while walking in the hallway, and classrooms are no different. Many teachers have a strict no-phone policy, making it difficult to listen to music easily. However, some teachers have found that music is helpful for students to focus and stay calm. These teachers allow for students to listen to music while completing independent work. I asked Ms. Ritz, the English & Journalism what her thoughts were on listening to music while studying. In response, she said: "When I study or do work for school I tend to listen to music or have a TV show playing on my phone, I think the background noise is helpful to keep me focused on the task at hand; however, from a teaching standpoint, I am a firm believer that if you are listening to music with words it can be more harmful than helpful when it comes to reading and comprehension as well as writing. Listening to music while trying to comprehend is difficult because our brain can get confused during the decoding process- what information do I truly need to know: the lyrics or the reading material?". Nonetheless, music seems to have its time and place for individuals while studying, but there are some people who don't find music helpful while studying.

Some believe that music can be distracting. 7% of students surveyed don't like music at school. Some like to hear noise, but not necessarily music. White music is one that is commonly played. Some students and teachers will even play instrumental or classical music to help alleviate the painful silence that can come with independent work.

Overall, many can agree that having some type of noise is better than not.

In conclusion, music can be helpful to most people. But even those that don't necessarily like to listen to music while studying can still listen to a calming noise to help with focus. The students at Valley Falls will continue to practice their study habits, listening to music as they prepare for finals before winter break!

### SHAPING LIVES BY: TORI FREEBORN

A person can have numerous teachers throughout their educational career. Some of these teachers may have helped them through difficult homework problems, or maybe even tough life events. Nonetheless, the impact of a teacher can be substantial. Have you ever ever had a teacher that impacted your life academically and personally? In order to see which teachers have had an impact on the Valley Falls High School students, I've conducted interviews with students from each grade level at the High School. In an interview with Brigg Varner, he stated, "Mr. Bunde has impacted my life academically and personally. Mr. Bunde has made me a stronger and better person, overall." Mr. Rod Bunde has taught at Valley Falls High School for over 30 years, giving him the opportunity to impact many students' lives. When asked how he felt about impacting students' lives he says, "It is great to have an impact on our next generation."

The next teacher that has had a significant impact on their students is Mrs. Susan Savaria. Niklas St. Onge was asked what teacher has impacted his life the most. In an interview, Niklas says, "Mrs. Savaria has definitely impacted me the most. Mrs. Savaria is the only teacher that is willing to put her time and effort into helping all of her students. She never gives up on her students and she believes that we can do good." Even though this is Mrs. Savaria's first year, she is still impacting many lives. Mrs. Susan Savaria responded by saying, "It chokes me up, this is a career change and it is all new. Working with highschool students, I didn't know what I was going to do. I worked with older students who aren't lacking the motivation to be in class because they are paying to be there. My greatest fear was how I could handle a group of people that dont have the motivation to be there. Will I be able to convince them that English is a worthwhile subject?"



Senior, Niklas St. Onge, stands next to Mrs. Susan Savaria





Junior, Isabella Thompson, and Ms. Mattie Ritz

Another teacher that has had a significant impact on the students in Valley Falls High is Ms. Mattie Ritz. Izzy Thompson was asked in an interview what teacher has had the biggest impact on her. She responded by saying, “Ms. Ritz has helped me through a lot. She has helped me through some of the biggest and worst things that have ever happened to me. She has the best advice and always knows how to

make me feel better. Even though I do not have her class this year, I know she is still there for me because that is the kind of person she is, a good person and a great teacher.” Ms. Mattie Ritz was asked how she felt about impacting students everyday and she replied by saying, “I love my job and I love what to do. It brings me joy when I leave each day to know that I might have impacted someone's day positively.”

The final teacher that had a significant impact on the students is Mrs. Margo Ellerman. Mrs. Margo Ellerman has also been teaching at Valley Falls High School for over 30 years. Lauren Thomas was asked how Mrs. Ellerman impacted her life and she responded by saying, “Mrs. Ellerman always has a lot to do and she handles it very well. She never has free time but she always makes time to help my classmates and I.” Mrs. Margo Ellerman was asked how she feels about impacting students everyday and she responded by saying, “It’s what makes coming to work special. I love watching the light bulbs turn on when students finally understand a concept.”

The teachers at Valley Falls High School positively impact the students and other staff members around them every day whether it is inside or outside of the classroom. They are all such caring individuals that try to help their students as much as they can.

AND THE WINNER IS...  
BY: PEYTON LOCKHART



- Favorite Teacher:** Ms. Mattie Ritz
- Funniest Teacher:** Mr. Rod Bunde
- Nicest Teacher:** Mrs. Deb Spade
- Teacher With the Most Homework:** Mr. Seth Cooper
- “Cool” Teacher:** Mr. Wyatt Hofstra
- Best-Advice Giver:** Ms. Mattie Ritz
- Best Dressed Teacher:** Ms. Mattie Ritz
- Most Involved Teacher:** Mrs. Margo Ellerman
- Role-Model:** Mr. Wyatt Hofstra
- Most Organized Teacher:** Mr. Seth Cooper
- Most Strict Teacher:** Mr. Seth Cooper
- Most Fun Class:** Mrs. Deb Spade
- Most Experienced Teacher:** Mr. Rod Bunde

- Hardest Class:** Mr. Seth Cooper
- Loudest Teacher:** Mrs. Mary Constant-Douthit
- Most Energetic Teacher:** Mrs. Mary Constant-Douthit
- Smartest Teacher:** Mr. Seth Cooper
- Most Interesting Teacher:** Ms. Ara Carbonneau
- Most Approachable Teacher:** Ms. Mattie Ritz

Winner takes all! Again!

A poll was sent to and filled out by 78 students and teachers throughout the high school. On the form there were 21 questions regarding different teacher awards. On some of the awards many of the students and faculties agreed; however, on others there was much more variation in the answers given.

This December the teachers at Valley Falls High School competed in an event known as the “Teacher Olympics”. This is the second annual year for the “Teacher Olympics” with many new teachers and several new awards to win this year. With 19 different awards for the taking, teachers battled it out for who would win awards such as “Favorite Teacher” and “Funniest Teacher”. For each award won the teachers were one step closer to winning the biggest prize of all; the gold medal for the “most awarded teacher”. But only one could win and after several surprise winners Mr. Seth Cooper seized the title. There were many close races for many different awards, including the race for: Most Energetic Teacher, Favorite Teacher, Funniest Teacher, and Nicest Teacher. Many different teachers have impacted the lives of many different students leading to the many different answers given to who should win each award. A close second was Ms. Mattie Ritz who brought home four awards. In third place there was a tie between four different teachers: Mr. Rod Bunde, Mrs. Mary Constant-Douthit, Mr. Wyatt Hofstra, and Mrs. Deb Spade.

All four teachers were in agreement when asked about the tie. Mr. Hofstra said it best by saying, “I’m okay with sharing it. It’s a privilege to share it with those people.” Many of the teachers that won the awards were pleased to see the awards that they had won. When asked what his favorite awards were to win, Mr. Cooper, who won many of the awards that are less sought after, said, “It’s a tie. It’s very hard to choose between the Most Strict and the Gives the Most Homework. I pride myself on winning those two awards. Those are my go to winners every year.” When he was asked how he felt about winning his awards he said, “It’s really an honor to know that the students at Valley Falls High School think so highly of me.” Mr. Cooper has brought home the gold back to back years in the Teacher Olympics. He plans to do it again next year but many of the other teachers plan to try their hardest to beat him to it. When asked how it felt when she tied for the 3rd place award, Mrs. Spade even said, “I’m upset that I didn’t beat Mr. Cooper but it’s always an honor to earn votes.”

What will happen next year? Will there be new awards? Will some of this year's awards be retired? Will Mr. Cooper win it all again? We will have to wait to find out. This polling shows that Valley Falls High School has a very balanced staff built up of great people who have amazing impacts on our students.



Mr. Seth Cooper poses with his award.