

VFHS SEMI-ANNUAL

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
THE VFHS JOURNALISM DEPARTMENT

HIGHLIGHTS

Softball & Baseball -	Page 2
Track & Field-	Page 3
FFA State Convention -	Page 4
FCCLA State & Nationals -	Page 5
Dragon Service Learning -	Page 5
Prom-	Page 6
Sparks & Its Future-	Page 6
All School Cookout -	Page 7
Comfort Shows -	Page 7
Graduation-	Page 8



WELCOME TO OUR SPRING NEWSLETTER!

Hello, and welcome!

This is the Valley Falls High School Journalism class' second semi-annual publication.

Through this newsletter we hope to share some interesting events, stories, and opinions from the 2023 spring semester.

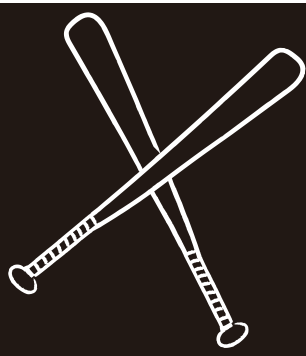
There was a lot that happened this semester, so we might have missed something. If you or someone you know has story opportunity that they would like to see in the monthly newsletter, please make sure to contact a member of our journalism team.

Thank you once again for your readership and we hope you keep coming back for more newsletters as we enter next school year!

Sincerely,
The Valley Falls Yearbook Team

SOFTBALL & BASEBALL

BY: KORIE KIRKWOOD &
SKYLAR NEIBERGER



Spring sports have blown past us! The Valley Falls Softball team ended their regular season 10-10, 500 on the season. The Lady Dragons had many great players this year that made their team successful.

They had one senior, Haley Nellis, who was a crucial player for the team. She played 3rd base and has dominated this role since her junior year. She will be tough to replace next year.

The pitcher Lauren Brown, a Junior, has over 100 strikeouts on the season. Her helpful arm has led the Dragons to a number of wins.

Other members of the dragon softball team consist of: Juniors- Peyton Lockhart, Korie Kirkwood, and Renay Myers, as well as Freshmen: Brooklynn Schmelzle, Jayden Senn, and Lorren Conner.

Over half of the girls are batting over .300, which is a great number for the team!

Head Coach John Deitrich and Assistant Coach Jordan Glassel say, "It's been a rough year with only one true pitcher and 9 girls, but we are working hard and pushing through. We are very proud of Haley and her accomplishments and we hope she succeeds in all of her steps moving forward! She will be missed!"

The softball team finished with only 9 girls so they encourage the incoming freshmen or any upperclassmen who are thinking about playing to come out next year!



Haley Nellis, Senior



The Valley Falls High School Boys Baseball Team.

The baseball team has also had a great season. The Valley Falls boys baseball team ended their regular season 14-6. There were many key players on the team who helped drive them to win with their leadership on the field.

The team had three seniors this year: Dylan Cervantez, Nicholas Dodd, and Thayer Coleman. Each senior has greatly contributed to the team to this and for some other years as well; their leadership and positive attitudes will be missed!

The dragons also have a long list of other players this year: Junior- Zachary Evans, Sophomores- Hayden Kearney, Vincent Carter, Myles Reich, Anthony Lux, and Brigg Varner, and Freshmen- Grant Meyer, Brady Nellis, Carter Pickerell, Dylan Herring, Ashdan Reeves, and Layne Adcock.

SOFTBALL

Jackson Heights	L;L
JCN	L;L
Pleasant Ridge	W;W
Horton	W;W
McLouth	L;L
Troy	L;L
ACCHS	W;W
Doniphan West	W;W
Oskaloosa	L;W
Onaga	W;L

BASEBALL

Jackson Heights	W;W
JCN	W;L
Pleasant Ridge	W;W
Horton	W;W
Maur Hill	W;W
McLouth	W;W
Troy	L;W
ACCHS	W;W
Oskaloosa	L;L
Onaga	L;L

Both the softball and baseball teams won their first regional games on Tuesday, May 16th, despite some weather delays and complications. Both Dragon teams hope to win their second regionals game on May 17th and make it to the state tournament!



The Valley Falls High School Lady Dragon Softball team.

TRACK & FIELD

BY: EMMA GIBBENS

Over the years, I have found track to be one of the best sports to be in. While I do not always enjoy being out in the heat, running and working out, I do always find the time to be useful and joyful. Of all the sports and other activities I have been involved in, track takes the cake for being the most like family. Being around my friends in an environment where we are pushed to do our best and encouraged to try our hardest is something that can not be replicated. Track is not just an individual sport, but a team sport as well. It is important for individuals to do their best not only for placement, but also to help the team be victorious.

When talking with the coaches about how this year has gone, we have made tremendous progress in all aspects, at every track meet we have done better. I, myself, have set a personal record in at least one event at every track meet. It is great that we all have continuously made improvements throughout the year. Many of our Dragon athletes have placed at track meets. For instance, Ashley GrandPre placed 3rd at shot put and threw a 28ft 7in, it was a foot better than her previous best, and three feet more than she was throwing at the beginning of the year.

Our girl's 4x8, throughout the seasons has made a lot of progress, at the JCN meet they broke the school record, and continue to do better every time they participate. Carly Henson, one of the girls who broke said record, reports that “It was amazing, like no other feeling”. The 4x8 team hopes to break their record once more when they run at regionals on Thursday, May 18th. Track has shaped so many students into being people who will just try harder in day to day life. The coaches and community that have made track so great will forever be remembered by anyone who had the pleasure of being a part of it. I love track and know that I would not be who I am today without it.



Members of the Track teams 4x4 Trinity Seymour (Sr), Aubrey Hernandez (So), Josiphine Heuertz (So), and Gretchen Hager (Jr) pose for a picture with smiles knowing that they placed.



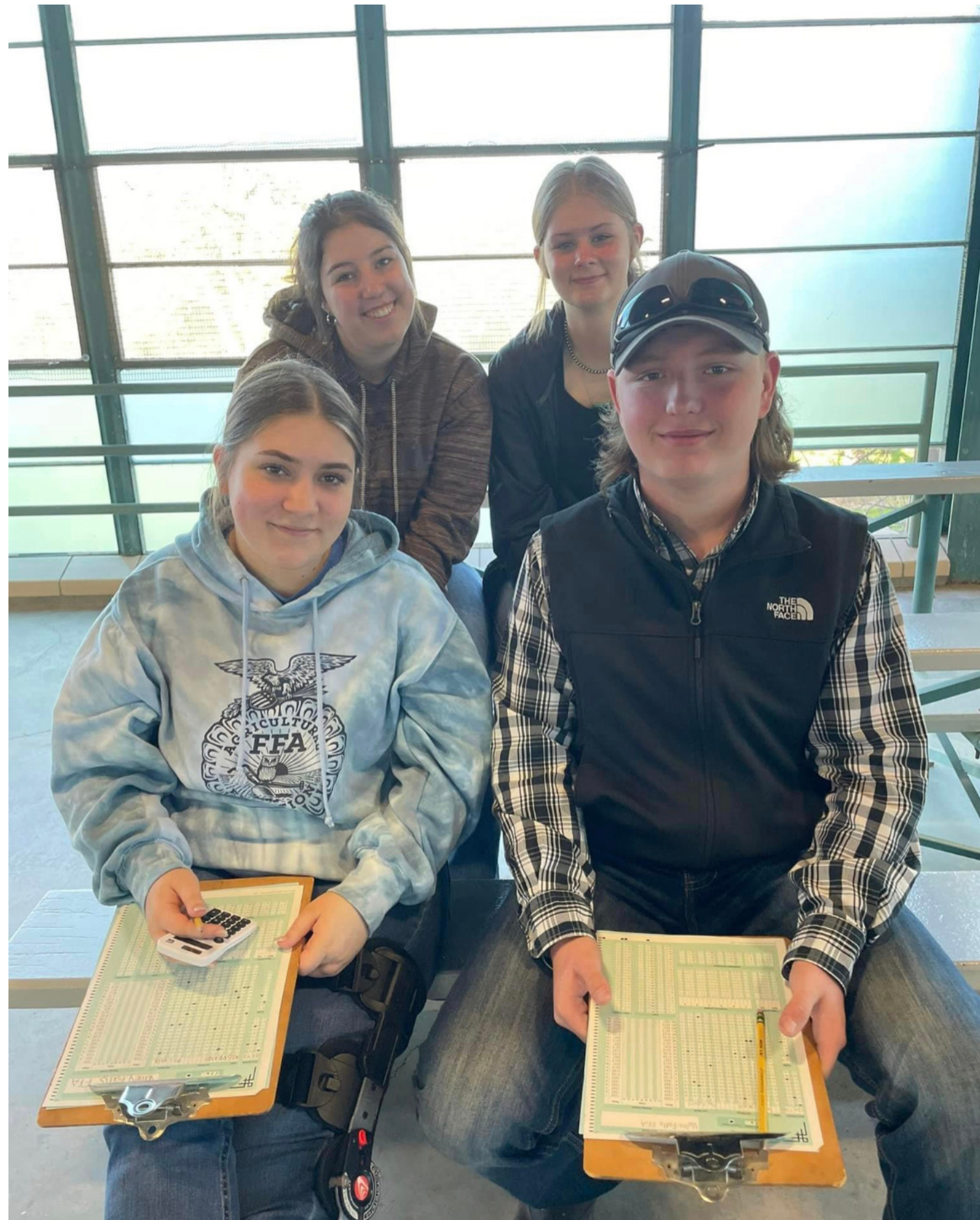
The Valley Falls High School Track and Field team takes a photo during the pre-season.

FFA STATE CONVENTION
BY: EMMA MONTGOMERY & RANDEE GATZEMEYER

On Monday May 1st, and Tuesday May 2nd the Valley Falls High School FFA students traveled to Kansas State University Campus to compete in Kansas State FFA CDE's competitions. Throughout the two days students competed in Vet Science, Poultry Judging, Livestock Judging, & Food Science.

On Monday morning, Juniors Randee Gatzemeyer, Ciera Steinlicht, Olivia Sprang, and Sophomore Jayden Herrman competed in Vet Science. These students competed to identify different vet equipment, animal breeds, clinical procedures and lots more! They placed 53rd as a team out of 77 teams.

Monday evening Juniors Emma Montgomery, Ciera Steinlicht, Olivia Sprang, and Freshman Colby Clark competed in Poultry Judging. They used skills in judging hanging carcasses, bone-in & bone-less parts, parts identification, and a written test. These students placed 25th as a team out of 50 teams.



Juniors Ciera Steinlicht, Olivia Sprang, and Randee Gatzemeyer, and sophomore Jayden Herrman get ready for their team competition at State CDEs.



Juniors Ciera Steinlicht, Olivia Sprang, and Brodie Hollis, and sophomore Jayden Herrman posing for a team picture after competition.



Juniors Ashley GrandPre, Emma Montgomery, Randee Gatzemeyer and Sophomore Josiphine Heuertz take a quick photo after competition.

Tuesday morning both the Livestock Team, and Food Science Team competed in their events. The Livestock team consisted of Juniors Ciera Steinlicht, Olivia Sprang, Brodie Hollis, and sophomore Jayden Herrman. These participants judged a class of each Hereford Heifers, Angus Bulls, Barrows, Gilts, Boer Goats, Market Lambs, and also gave reasons on three of their classes. They were judged by how well their reasons were and their placing score of each class. These students placed 70th as a team out of 92 teams.

The last event was Food Science, participants included Juniors Randee Gatzemeyer, Emma Montgomery, Ashley GrandPre, and sophomore Josiphine Heuertz. During this contest these students used skills in taste and smell to complete a triangle test, they used smell to identify aromas, a food safety and quality test, math practicum, and finally a written test. These students placed 30th as a team out of 61 teams, & Emma Montgomery placed 11th as an individual.

Throughout these two days the FFA students had lots of fun as a group, and got to do participate in team bonding activities like going out to eat and spending quality time with each other.

The teams hope to compete again at state next year and improve their placements and have more individual placers as well.

FCCLA STATE & NATIONALS

BY: VICTORIA FREEBORN & RENAY MYERS

On April 29th at 2:00 P.M., Brickstreet Bourbon hosted a cornhole tournament. They provided pulled pork and brisket sandwiches. Brickstreet Bourbon also had Noah Anthony performing live. This was a fundraiser for the FCCLA National Qualifiers as they head to Denver, Colorado on July 1st through the 6th. The trip to Denver, Colorado can be well over \$1,000. These students have to fundraise for the trip to cover hotel fees, food, activities, and transportation.

The students that qualified for Nationals this year are Senior Amelia Brown, Junior Ashley Grandpre, and Freshmen Brooklynn Schmelzle. Amelia Brown placed second in the baking and pastry category on April 17th in Wichita, Kansas. Ashley Grandpre also placed second in the baking and pastry category. Brooklynn Schmelzle is on the Peer Education “Stand Up” team, so she will also be headed to Denver.

Multiple middle school girls also participated in STAR events. Lindsay Martin, Abby Wilson, Helena Shankland, Chloe Cox, Lily Lassiter, and Danielle Reeves all qualified for nationals at the State FCCLA convention.

When asked how hard it is to qualify for nationals, Margo Ellerman said, “It is very difficult. We are going up against 13 districts. These other districts are very competitive and work really hard on their STAR events. District E West has a practice conference where the participants can get feedback on their STAR events, which really helps our students succeed.” Margo Ellerman is very proud of all these students for qualifying and representing the Valley Falls school district.



FCCLA sponsor Margo Ellerman recognizes members who placed at district and state FCCLA competitions and congratulates national qualifiers during the clubs recognition assembly.

DRAGON SERVICE LEARNING

BY: GRETCHEN HAGER

With the year coming to an end, our school hosted another DSL event to reward the kids who have spent their time serving toward the school. DSL stands for Dragon Service Learning, and anytime a student participates in helping out the community they receive time that goes towards their DSL hours as students. For this semester, the students had to have four or more total hours to participate in the event, and – students were able to join!

The DSL event was held on May 8th, and it was during the school's seminar class period. The students were given the opportunity to play indoor games inside of the west gym. Volleyball nets were down but the volleyballs were up! On the other half of the gym basketball activities were being played such as knockout, and 5 v 5.



Sophomore Aubrey Hernandez and Juniors Peyton Lockhart and Renay Myers enjoy their popcorn.

DSL participants play volleyball during seminar.



While some people played, others were eating the food catered by the SPARKS group that were a part of setting up this event. Junior Chris Nesbitt baked delicious brownies alongside of junior Solomon Drinkards honey cookies. Popcorn, and the students' choice of drinks were served from the concession stand. Juniors Gretchen Hager and Brodie Hollis were in charge of tending to FCCLA sponsor and FACS teacher, Margo Elerman's, and Science Teacher and DSL sponsor, Alyssa Hatch's needs for the event.

To get a better understanding, we interviewed different students who attended the event to see how they enjoyed the event. Tori Freeborn says, “it was fun getting out of class, and getting to play volleyball!” Hosting these events are important to the student body to encourage the students to get involved in the community and collect hours!

SPARKS & ITS FUTURE

BY: JOHN FRAKES

This marks the second year of sparks within the Valley Falls school district. Sparks was implemented into our school system, at both the middle and high school levels; however, many are not sure of its success. While many of the projects this year were done successfully. There were a range of projects produced this year, which included: a community cookbook (by sophomores Cassidy Frakes and Aubrey Hernandez), Prom Planners (by juniors Peyton Lockhart, Calleigh Clark, Mallory Johnston, Olivia Sprang, Braden Meyer, Nolan Doughramaji, Renay Myers, Victoria Freeborn, and Randee Gatzemeyer), The high school newsletter (by senior Jenna Funk), and many, many more. These sparks projects give students the opportunity to learn and practice new skills, build relationships with peers and in the local community, and work on necessary planning and organizational skills needed for later in life.

But, many students have struggled finding time to work on these projects because they take away from the time they have to work on homework for core classes which is assigned to them. When speaking with Peyton Lockhart about the success of their prom planning sparks project she said that Sparks time was super stressful. “It was hard to find time to balance planning such a big event, while also getting homework done. The minimum time that you have to put into the project is at least 40 hours, but many projects which are interesting actually take a lot more of your time than those 40 hours”. She also added that “in order to get a good grade on it, you must spend a lot of time organizing your paperwork on top of completing the actual project”.

For some people, sparks time isn’t as stressful. Those who aren’t doing a sparks project are placed into interventions. Interventions are a great time for those students who need extra help to work on important English and math skills. But, some who are in sparks believe that their work is not equivalent to those in interventions. Although, both classes are still a grade.

Unless sparks finds a way to make itself useful to the students, it may not have a place in these next coming years, and if it does, it will still receive a lot of criticism.

Junior Calleigh Clark shows off the sweets she has been practicing for Prom as part of her SPARKS project.



Valley Falls High School students crowd the dance floor with their dates as they dance at Prom.

PROM

BY: CARLY HENSON

The junior class started planning prom early this year by picking a theme and figuring out decorations. They sent out a google form to the senior class asking for their pick on two different themes and the winner was ‘Enchanted Forest’.

The juniors had a difficult task as that theme had been used in previous years and they wanted to make it special and unique. Several students used the planning of prom as their sparks project and did double the work. They all put their creative ideas together and made an unforgettable prom! They had vines and fairy lights strung throughout the township hall. Some of the students made different food ideas that were fitted to the theme. They set up a photo area on the stage that included vines, lights, a wood bench, and much more.

As the night of prom approached, some people went in different groups out to eat and then showed up at the township hall for the red carpet. Everyone in their rides all waited with anticipation for the red carpet to begin. As each person walked by they stunned the crowd with their beautiful dresses and handsome tuxedos. Once inside, the 2023 prom began. Everyone danced and laughed and took pictures all night long. Later that night, they did the crowning for prom queen and king and the winners were Madelyn Miller and Thayer Coleman! The juniors placed the crowns upon their heads and they shared one dance together. When asked, most students agreed that their favorite new addition to prom was the pop up Photo Booth that had a wide variety of props and fun colored lights!

One thing that most people enjoyed was the amount of people who went out on the dance floor. At previous dances the amount of people actually dancing was low, but not at prom! Everyone danced the night away until it was time to get changed and head over to the school for after prom. Overall, the 2023 Valley Falls Prom was a huge success!



Freshmen Emma Bolz, Abigail GrandPre, and Katelyn Gier eat their hamburgers and hotdogs at the all school cookout.

HIGH SCHOOL COOKOUT

BY: PEYTON LOCKHART

Every year as the school year comes to a close, the students at Valley Falls High School prepare for the end of the year barbecue. This barbecue serves as an opportunity to send off our seniors and, for other students, it's a chance to say goodbye to friends for the summer. The food for this amazing tradition is cooked by Mrs. Ellermans class and provided by . Students bring lawn chairs to set up in the front lawn of the school and prepare for a great meal. They sit and talk or play games with each other. It is a great way for students to close out the year and provides an amazing boost to morale before finals begin.

This year's annual barbecue was held inside because of rainy weather. Students were offered hot dogs and hamburgers, their choice of different chips, a variety of cookies, and several different drink options. Students Ashtan Sample and Edward Delao spent most of their morning at the grill preparing the food for their peers to enjoy.

During the indoor barbecue, students participated in many different activities. Many went into the gym to play games like volleyball and basketball and others cheered on the bleachers. Some students stayed in the high school commons and played board games and others stayed in the commons to talk with each other.

Overall, this year's barbecue was a huge success. Everyone enjoyed the food and it was a great time even though it was held inside. This event is something that students look forward to every year and it will continue to be an amazing tradition for years to come.

COMFORT SHOWS

BY: ABBEY BROSA

Everyone has that one show they won't stop watching or re-watching. It doesn't matter if it has a million watchers or you're the only one that knows it exists. What matters is how it makes you feel. Watching a show you have a connection with can help you relive a memory, uplift your mood, or even help you sleep. Having something to escape to like a show or movie can help when you feel overwhelmed or stressed. Out of 28 people, 25 people have said they have a comfort show. When asked about what genre it is in, 8 said comedy, and 5 said drama. Horror, Action, and Rom-Com all had 3 people that said that's their favorite. The rest were random but generalized to the ones already stated.

For about a year, New Girl has been my comfort show. It has helped me calm down when I'm super stressed from homework. Having something familiar during a time when I'm confused makes everything seem less stressful. People can find the same comfort they might feel from a person with a show they love or relate too. Solutions to problems can also be found in a comfort show. One might relate to a show including a problem that a character is facing. Watching how they handle you can help you make a decision of what to do or not do during that situation.

For example, in New Girl, Schmidt feels like he is being overlooked but his friends. Instead of communicating to those people, he chooses to move out. He then realizes that it didn't change anything and that he just needs to tell people how he feels. This particular moment helped me realize that I need to communicate my feelings as well if I want to see any change instead of trying to drop hints.

I have learned many things from my comfort show and I know everyone else has had similar experiences like me. Re-watching a show can reveal the true message behind an episode that you didn't see the first time. This summer break might be the perfect opportunity for you to find your comfort show!



GRADUATION
BY: SAMANTHA CLARK

The Class of 2023 had their graduation ceremony on Sunday May 14, 2023 at 2p.m. The graduating class consists of 20 bright individuals who were all very successful during their high school career. There were many different achievements gained during the last 4 years, from winning many different types of contests to being in the state tournament in sports, that this class was a huge part of. We would like to congratulate all of the following students for their excellent academic performances: Harly Boyette, Dawson Branam, Amelia Brown, Dylan Cervantez, Samantha Clark, Thayer Coleman, Courtney Conner, Lillian Darveaux, Nicholas Dodd, John Frakes, Jenna Funk, Emma Gibbens, Carly Henson, Alexia Long, Madelyn Miller, Haley Nellis, Trinity Seymour, Niklas St. Onge, Sarah Voelker, and Addisyn Wilson.

There were awards presented during the graduation ceremony. The Dale M. Dennis award was presented to Dylan Cervantez. This award is presented to one student in the graduating class yearly. The award provides schools the opportunity to recognize a senior for their citizenship, service, scholarship, and demonstration of self-awareness. The next award given was the KSHSAA Citizenship award. This award is presented to one male and one female of the graduating class. The two recipients of this award were Carly Henson and Dylan Cervantez. The next award given was the Kansas Board of Regents award. This award was presented to Samantha Clark. The next recognition was the student that received the Governor's Scholar award. This student was selected as part of the 1% of high school graduates in the state of Kansas. The student that was presented with this award was Samantha Clark. Samantha also got the opportunity to present a Teacher of Influence award to one or more teachers she felt were the most influential to her life. The teachers she chose were Mrs. Kelsey Bonnel and Ms. Ariel Hinman. The final recognition was the two students that showed the most involvement within the school and the community. Their involvement was recorded by getting a paper signed by the adult in charge of the event they were helping with. The two seniors with the most Service Hours were Trinity Seymour and Dylan Cervantez.

Congratulations to all these amazing students for their achievements! Go Dragons!

Senior Trinity Seymour's decorative cap offers a positive note to classmates and friends.



Valley Falls High School seniors move their tassels as the graduation ceremony came to a close.

VFHS
JOURNALISM SENIORS



Jenna Funk,
Editor in Chief



Samantha Clark,
Business Manager



Carly Henson,
Design Editor



John Frakes,
Staff Member



Emma Gibbens,
Staff Member