



VALLEY FALLS HIGH SCHOOL

SEMI-ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

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Volleyball Season Recap

By: Tori Freeborn

The volleyball season has blown past us! The Valley Falls varsity volleyball team ended their season with a record of 15-19. The Lady Dragons had many great players that made this season successful. The varsity team had 6 seniors this year: Lauren Brown, Calleigh Clark, Tori Freeborn, Gretchen Hager, Korie Kirkwood, and Peyton Lockhart. When asked if the varsity team looked senior heavy, athletic director Stacy Cervantez said, "I noticed more team unity and I think that has something to do with the fact that these girls have been playing together for four years and they knew they needed to step up and lead the whole team for their last year."

The Lady Dragons started off their season with a win against JCN in one set. The team captain, Korie Kirkwood was asked her favorite memory from the season and she quickly stated, "My favorite memory was definitely beating JCN in one set." But this was just one of many amazing things that happened during this season. Other season highlights were when Lauren Brown reached 1,000 assists, and the team won against Jackson Heights for the first time in 4 years. The team went through a few hardships during the season, but always pulled through when it meant the most. The Lady Dragons varsity volleyball team improved significantly from last year and always put up a fight with their opponents.



The Seniors of the volleyball team pose together for a picture.
From left to right: Tori Freeborn, Calleigh Clark, Gretchen Hager, Izzy Thompson, Lauren Brown, Peyton Lockhart and Korie Kirkwood.



The junior varsity team huddles up in between games.
From left to right: Lily Lassiter, Shelby Kirkham, Carly Sprang, Chesnie Barrow, Chloe Cox, and Paisleigh Heinen

The junior varsity team also had an amazing season. The junior varsity had one junior, Addie Moore and one sophomore, Jayden Senn to lead the 11 freshmen to a successful season. All 13 girls improved significantly over the entire season and had a great season overall. When asked how she feels about being a leader for next year's season, Jayden Senn reports, "I believe that it will be a challenge but it will be a very fun season and I will learn a lot from it." The 6 seniors give their best of luck to all of the girls in the next year's season.

Flashing Back to Football

By: Flint Seymour

The clock ran out for the last time this football season. The Dragons finished their season this October at home with their final game against Onaga. The young team made a lot of improvements this season, and head coach Wyatt Hofstra had a lot to say about it.

“This season we took a leap and bound forward in football IQ. We were fundamentally better, especially on defense bringing on Coach Courter. We made great improvements on football knowledge and technique, although sometimes the scores would not reflect that. I think that there was very good growth especially by our young guys. Last year we were a very freshman heavy team. New to 11 man this year, we were more comfortable and the freshman turned sophomores played a big lead this year.”

As the football season ends and students move into winter sports, the off-season plays a big role in preparing for next season. Coach Hofstra agreed by saying, “I see a very bright future in this team, especially in the next two years as we have a lot of potential. But potential is just on paper. That success will be determined by our young guys, especially our sophomore class, because it is so large and makes up most of our team. There could be more potential if they continue to get in the weight room and just get better as a whole.”

As the football season progressed we had challenges we were faced with as a team. When players were injured we adapted and figured out a way to overcome it. Many players went out of their comfort zone and played positions they may not have normally been in.

Keeping our football team as a tight knit group is important during football season but also in the off-season. Many guys are out for powerlifting, basketball, baseball and track which will help in keeping us in shape. Just because we had a tough season we can't let that get us down. Coach Hofstra added, “The competition going into this season will be strong and I think that says something about our district and our league considering JCN and St Mary's have gone to the state championship games. St Mary's won it twice, JCN graduated a large group of seniors, Jackson Heights will be good the next few years and teams like McLouth impressing people this year and they have potential to be better. Oskie has potential to get better as well as Effingham will get better as time goes on with their younger groups.”



The football team huddles around their head coach, Wyatt Hofstra, for a motivating pre-game speech

Coach Hofstra said, “I think we took a big step forward in fundamental football and overall knowledge of the game and we competed against stiff competition. I also like that we had some good quarters and good halves against some good teams in 1A. I am also proud every year that we have increased numbers and we have guys that stick with it and compete every week and chance they get.”

It is important that we all set goals to improve for the future. I want to continue to strengthen myself so I can be a bigger force on the football field next year. When asked about his goals, Coach Hofstra said, “My goal personally for the future is to win the league. We have not done that since 2010, which I think is a good goal and is very feasible. Another goal would be to make the playoffs which also hasn't happened since 2010, which I think would be reasonable goals for us at the current moment.”

FFA National Convention

By: Ciera Steinlicht

The Valley Falls FFA officers took a trip to Indianapolis Indiana to participate in the FFA National Convention. While the officers were there they did many team bonding events like walking around Indianapolis Zoo looking at the animals, playing games at Rascals Fun Zone, walking around to shopping expo in the convention center, and Go Ape zip lining. The officers also went to many sessions and heard motivational speeches and retiring addresses from national officers while participating in workshops to build their leadership skills. While talking with the FFA Advisor for the Valley Falls FFA Chapter she said her favorite part was, “getting to see the officers experience FFA on a national level”.

This year at the 2023 National FFA Convention there were 700,000 FFA members with people from all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. So, why is National FFA Convention so important? I asked Ms. Ebersole the advisor and she said, “it's important because it shows students that FFA is not just local and a small organization it reaches so many people, we get to see a lot and learn about a lot of colleges and talk to them about things that peak kids interests”. At National Convention people are also able to compete in contests like CDE's and LDE's and to get there chapters must win at district competitions and win at their state convention in order to qualify for nationals. While I interviewed Ms. Ebersole, I asked, "Do you hope to be able to have kids compete on the national level?" she said, “Yes I want to have a team compete at national level but it takes a lot of hard work, time and dedication to get to that point”. The FFA students are looking forward to competitions this year and working hard at the local level.



Olivia Sprang (Sr) looks at the an exhibit in the zoo.

The Journalism Grant

By: Maddison Conner

Over the past three years the journalism class at Valley Falls High School has grown and updated a

lot of their electronics. They went from having only eight members in 2021 to a class of fifteen. A more efficient yearbook class was the goal for the journalism team when they applied for the CTE strategic implementation grant.

The class applied for the grant in the spring of 2022 and they were awarded the full \$10,000. Unfortunately due to confusion with KSDE, the team was not able to spend the full amount due to the fact that they were awarded the money too late in the school year. But despite the setback, the team decided to apply for year two of the grant. Journalism teacher Mattie Ritz says “It was really unfortunate that we weren't able to spend the money, but we were looking forward to reapplying for the grant because year two is focused on ordering equipment”.

This year the class was awarded another ten thousand dollars which they plan to use to order new equipment for the class. The class ordered two smart boards, four iPads, three tv monitors for the hallways which will be used for the announcements for the students and the community, and the money which is left over will be used to send teachers to professional development conferences. All of these items will be used for the betterment of the CTE courses, specifically journalism. When asked how the technology will be used in class, Senior Chief Editor Peyton Lockhart said “we will be using it to keep our students informed and to have more hands-on learning experiences”. The yearbook’s business manager, junior Cassidy Frakes, says that she is excited to use the new technology because “it will help with the efficiency of building the yearbook and it is a great advancement for the class to bring us to the next level”.

Not only is this beneficial for the class, but it also looks good for the district. Here’s what Principal Greg Morgan has to say about the grants impact on the district: “It creates multiple opportunities for our students to engage in learning opportunities that resemble workforce, experience with technology, photo editing, and increases interactive learning experiences”.

Phone Usage at School

By: Aubrey Hernandez

The debate of whether or not phones should be used for school is one that has been around since they originated. Some believe that phones are nothing more than a hindrance and should not be allowed in schools at all. While others believe phones are very beneficial to the students. The students at Valley Falls High School weighed in on the debate with their thoughts and opinions. The majority was overwhelming, claiming that phones were needed in school for a number of reasons.

Izzy Thompson, a senior, offered her thoughts on the matter. She stated her concerns of not being readily available to someone if they need it. She says, "If I am not able to reach my phone I worry that someone will need me and I will not be there when they need it". Her fear is that someone will reach out and need her, but because of the phone rules in school she will not be there in time to help that person. This is a very pressing issue for many students as many struggle with a multitude of their own issues both inside and outside of school. Not being able to contact someone should not be a serious concern during the school day for students.

Another student, Junior Cassie Frakes, continues to reinforce reasons why phones would be useful in school. She prefers to have something on in the background to get her work done most efficiently. But since the new phone rules have hindered that some she states "I need to have something going on in the background during my college classes to do my work to the best of my ability. My chromebook oftentimes does not work so my phone has become a great and very valuable resource when our chromebooks are not providing what is needed or working to the extent required."

An interview with sophomore Jayden Senn she offered us a different perspective. She admits that phones can be distracting however they can also

be useful. However it should be up to the students to decide if it is a distraction or a resource. "It can be helpful to help me get my work done and focus but also I need it as a resource for when my chromebook does not work."

In conclusion the students at valley falls have banded together on this issue. Phones have become a highly useful resource to all. For many reasons but the main one being chromebooks are not adequate for the needs of the students. After doing a poll the overwhelming majority of students say their chromebooks do not have wifi connection often throughout the school day. Students are also inconvenienced by the large number of websites blocked on the chromebooks. This also applies to the students taking college classes often websites or links provided to them by the professors are blocked. At the end of the day the students at Valley Falls High School agree that it should be up to the discretion of students and parents if they get to have their phones. The chromebooks are not a liable resource at the moment for what is needed. What do you think, should phones be allowed in school?

Songs of the Year

By: Korie Kirkwood

There are 616.2 million people that have listened to music this year. 82% of teens or high schoolers have listened to music this year. That's a lot of high school students that listen to music on a daily basis but what do they listen to? I have asked many of my high school peers what they like to listen to and what are their top songs of this year. Many of them were the same and many were different. The first person I interviewed was a junior attending Valley Falls High School. I asked her the question, "What is your favorite genre of music this year?", she answered, "This year I really loved and still love pop and piano music." The second person I interviewed

was a freshman attending Valley Falls High School. Question one I asked was, "Out of all the album drops this year what was your favorite?" He responded with, "Out of all of them, I would say, Lil Yachty- 'Let's Start Here' I also asked, 'What was your favorite song this year?'" He said, "My favorite song has got to be 'My eyes' by Travis Scott." The third person I asked was a senior attending Valley Falls High School. I asked, "What's your favorite genre of music this year?" He responded with, "Definitely has to be Gym Phonk" The second question I asked was, "What is your favorite song this year?". He said, "I love 'Cowboy Killer'". The last two people I asked are close friends of mine. They are both junior girls attending Valley Falls High School. I asked them similar questions. The first girl's favorite song is, "Hard to trust" by King Von. Her favorite genre of music is rap. The second girl's favorite artist this year is Zach Bryan. She believes the worst music of the year is Kpop. As you can see there are many different types of music people listen to and love. The final question I asked to all of them was, "Has your music changed since last year?" All but one responded with yes. This means music is evolving and so is our taste in music. The internet's answers to my questions were, best album of the year, "1989 (Taylors version)" by Taylor Swift and "Utopia" by Travis Scott. Most listened to song of the year is "Last Night" by Morgan Wallen. Pop is the most popular genre of music. Genre Fusion is the best music trend of 2023. What kind of music do you listen to?

Dress Code Controversy

By: Calleigh Clark

What are you wearing!? The VFHS dress code states that you cannot wear t-shirts with any sleeve alterations or sleeveless, loose-fitting tank tops, see through clothing, shorts and skirts above mid-thigh, no jeans with holes above the mid-thigh, and pants or dresses above mid-thigh.

Students also cannot wear glasses in school that aren't prescribed or approved by the nurse as well as hats, caps, hoods, and other headwear. When Senior Korie Kirkwood was asked in an interview if she thought the dress code is stricter for some rather than others she stated "I do think the dress code is stricter for girls rather than boys."

Anywhere that has a dress code generally has the same or close to the same restrictions, but with those restrictions women feel that the dress code is mostly aimed at them because of how many restrictions are what is in the women's section at the clothing stores whereas in the men's section you won't really see any of the things that are mentioned in the dress code because they aren't worn by most men." Korie Kirkwood also stated "I think that our dress code isn't necessarily enforced unfairly but just not really enforced at all" when asked if she believed that the dress code is enforced fairly in our school. Although not many people generally break the dress code when they do they aren't punished for it at all. The staff generally doesn't enforce the dress code when it is broken. I have never seen someone get dress coded at all this year." According to the dress code from Washburn Rural High School "Clothing which reveals parts of the body which are not usually exposed or visible in quasi professional settings or typical work environments. No clothing or body adornments with offensive, sexually suggestive, vulgar, profane, ethnically derogatory messages, pictures, or symbols, illegal substances, drug paraphernalia, tobacco, alcohol, or depictions or symbols of violence. No potentially hazardous articles of jewelry or articles on clothing, such as chains or studded bands, or have sharp points, etc.

No clothing or styles identified to be associated with gangs or illegal activities. No outdoor clothing or accessories, such as headgear, capes, blankets, hoodies, sunglasses, jackets or coats that make it difficult for staff to quickly identify students or which may pose a danger, distraction, disturbance to the school environment is allowed." The restrictions seem to be less vague and there are more things that you cannot wear due to the

wording on it. I talked to Grace Heinen, an ex-Valley Falls student who transferred to Washburn Rural High School and she stated that people were able to wear more revealing clothing because the school size was much bigger so it was less likely to be dress-coded.

Mindset: Growth vs Fixed

By: Abbey Brosa

Our teachers encourage students not to give up when faced with new challenges. They emphasize the importance of a Growth Mindset over a Fixed Mindset. A Fixed Mindset is the belief that a person can not change their abilities or skill level. This mindset can be detrimental as it restricts improvement. In contrast, a Growth Mindset is the belief that a person can develop their capabilities with practice, which is a more positive way of thinking and an adaptive way to learn.

Transitioning from a growth to a fixed mindset is common, especially when students struggle, are tired, and are stressed out. They think it is too difficult to learn during these moments, reflecting a fixed mindset. One example would be, "I can't play basketball". A growth mindset involves acknowledging challenges as opportunities for learning, with a statement like "I will practice to get better at playing basketball." Embracing failure as part of the process is also an important step.

Many people may attempt a task once and then give up. Overcoming this mindset involves a variety of strategies. Breaking down a challenge into smaller steps, finding help from a coach or tutor, and using resources such as videos, books, or regular practice are effective methods for a growth mindset and continuing learning.

Many famous people believe in the growth mindset. One example of someone with a successful career would be Taylor Swift. Swift has transitioned between musical genres and changed her songwriting style throughout her career. From country to pop, she has

demonstrated a willingness to learn and adapt to stay on the charts.

In conclusion, having a growth mindset is essential, as our teachers emphasize. The difference between fixed and growth mindsets impacts the belief in improvement. A growth mindset is a positive and adaptable way to learn.



Petro to Casey's

By: Randee Gatzemeyer

Many people struggle with change and the citizens of Valley Falls are no different. Now, this isn't always a bad thing, some people just like things to stay the way that they've always been. Recently, the Valley Falls gas station, once known as Petro, was bought by one of the fastest growing gas station franchises in the midwest, Casey's. Once the rumors of this happening started going around, it spread like wildfire. There have been many mixed opinions about this happening. Some people are excited to see this change happen, while most were not.

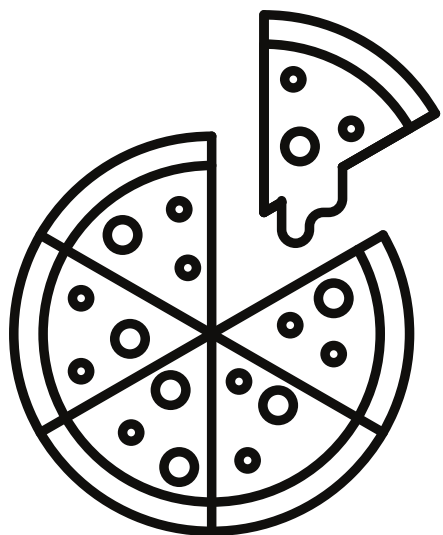
I recently interviewed an ex Petro employee/current Casey's employee and asked her some controversial questions. First I asked her what her favorite thing about working at Petro was, and she said "My favorite thing about working at Petro was the environment and all the friends/ friendships that I created while working there. It never really felt like a job because I was always having fun." As an ex Petro employee myself, I agree with this very much. With Petro being a locally ran business, it hired many teenagers who attended the local high school. This accounted for a majority of Petro's employees, but with Casey's being a bigger franchise, their rules were a little different. At Petro employees were only required to

be 14 years old, while at Casey's they require most of their employees to be 18. Casey's did choose to keep some of the teenagers who were under the age of 18, but this impacted many other teenagers in Valley Falls.

I next asked her how she felt the transfer from Petro to Casey's was affecting our community. She said, "There are a lot of differences from when it was Petro. The whole gas situation is different, we can't accept checks anymore, and there are no longer any local accounts. I think Petro was just so hometowny and now that it's Casey's, you can just tell that it is run by a corporation. People don't like change and it has become very obvious in this whole situation." Being in such a small town, any change is a big deal and everyone feels the right to speak their opinion. It's hard for people to even give Casey's a chance because they are blinded by the fact that things are changing.

I then asked her if it was hard to adjust to working at Casey's after working at Petro. She said, "Yes, It actually was. I knew it was going to be different but I feel like it was kind of worse than I thought it was going to be. Everything changed so drastically and so fast and I just wasn't prepared for it. Honestly, I feel like I'm still adjusting."

The change from Petro to Casey's affected more people than you would think. Some in good ways, and some in bad. This just goes to show how much people hate change especially in small towns.



The Drought in Valley

By: Brodie Hollis

One topic that's worth drowning about is the great water shortage in Valley Falls. In an interview conducted by Brodie Hollis with Rod Bunde we talked about his thoughts and ideas on the drought issue. Bunde stated "It has limited his supply of water for his plants and animals". We also talked about the ways to conserve water, Bunde stated "people could conserve their water usage in many different ways from shutting the water off when you brush your teeth, or filling up the dishwasher or laundry machine to its full capacity to use less water". The question was asked if the issue would go away over time or if it would stick around? Bunde stated "Water shortage has been an issue for a long time and has been all over the world, but this situation could be different due to climate change and other issues in this world." With the question brought up that climate change could be an issue, and if the population change is causing part of the problem? With the research conducted, if the amount of people never changed and people were using the same amount of water. The water table wouldn't change as fast but with the large population number the water table can not replenish as fast and take longer for it to grow. The question was asked: What is the water shortage issue? A "Emergency Water Plan" is put into place with a stage 1 plan when the Perry lakes elevation level reaches 890.27 Feet. This plan was last put into place October 19, 2023. As of November 27, 2023, we had reached stage 2 of the Emergency Water management plan. This was when Perry lake reached 888.90 Feet. The goal of the Stage 2 plan was to reduce the water demand by 20 percent or more.

Stage 3 is reached by one of these four issues, the water district has fallen 50 percent of capacity, treatment plant operations are at 80 percent of the demands that are needed, the demands for 1 day exceed 325,000 gallons in one day, The Perry lake level reaches the elevation of 888 feet. The purpose of this article is to inform the people of their water usage amounts and to limit their usage amounts if at all possible.

(Information from Local Valley Falls Sources)

Cancer in the Community

By: Cassie Frakes

Cancer. A deadly word and a deadly disease. You may not think it is surrounding you but it is. It ripples through all communities, no matter the size. Even the small town of Valley Falls, Kansas has its cancer fighters and survivors. And today I will be telling you the stories of two beautiful people affected by this disease.

The interview process started this October, with the woman dearest to my heart, my mother, Stephanie Frakes. Stephanie had stage 2 Melanoma. She was diagnosed when she was just 34 years old. Recalling her initial thoughts after her diagnosis, she said, "I was diagnosed four months away from my wedding, I remember thinking: will I make it long enough to marry the love of my life?" and "How will my family handle it if cancer wins this battle?" Stephanie never would have given the spot a second thought, let alone go to the dermatologist to check the area if it were not for her mother, Kay Swendson. After they tested it and it came back as malignant, positive for cancer, she had to go in to have it surgically removed, inches deep into her calf. Relief was the emotion she felt so strongly when they told her they had got it all. Years later that relief would be ripped away and replaced with anxiety when they tested a spot on her chest and it came back cancerous.

Even now, two to three years after the last spot was found, the anxiety levels before each check up appointment are off the charts. Luckily for Stephanie she was diagnosed early enough that she did not have to go through the taxing tribulations of chemo and radiation. To conclude Stephanie's interview I asked her, "How did this journey change your views on life?" and she replied thoughtfully saying, "Make time for those you love and never judge someone when you have no clue what they are going through." and "Live everyday like it is your last, find the good." My mother is the most genuine person I know, and her experience has touched our lives forever and opened our eyes to see all of the struggles that cancer brings.

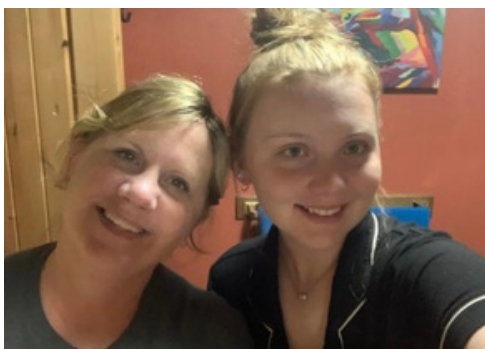


Mrs. Marjorie Bunde, a local cancer survivor with her husband.

Another story close to the high school comes from Marjorie Bunde, the mother of long-time high school science and physical education teacher, Rod Bunde. Margorie has been a Valley Falls resident for the past four years, and I had the pleasure of speaking with her over lunch about her experience. Margorie was 77 years old when she was diagnosed with Ovarian cancer on November 20th, 2015. She later discovered that it was stage 3. Margorie admits that her diagnosis was scary. She was left questioning: "Can it be possible?" and "What was her future going to be like? Would she ever see her great granddaughters or her granddaughters getting married? On March 1st, 2016, her doctors performed a minimally invasive robotic surgery to resect the cancerous cells. Throughout this whole process, Margorie remained positive and had some advice to share with others. She says to "Keep a journal" and also to "Keep your faith in God".

Writing is a proven way to help someone that is coping with an extreme life event. In Margorie's case writing in a journal helped her organize her feelings before, during and after appointments. It was a way to express, in words, her struggles without having to say them aloud to someone. Looking back, she can recollect this period in her life; she can remember how she felt in those exact moments. Ultimately, it was things like this that helped Margorie during her battle with Cancer. Now she is Cancer free and gets to live out her dreams, including attending her granddaughter's wedding. Everyday she lives by these simple words, "If it doesn't get done today, don't worry, there is another day." Stephanie also had a similar thing to say: "Make everyday important". Both of these women have fought and survived one of the deadliest diseases. But, that doesn't always provide full relief. Margorie explains that cancer always stays with you, and that it lives in the back of your mind constantly: "I don't think you ever forget the fact that it could come back."

But just because the recurring thoughts might be scary, doesn't mean that we can't do anything to help. As a person who has watched many family members through their fights, the best way to show your support is to spend as much time as possible with them. There are many members of our community, who are affected by Cancer and it is important that we acknowledge their struggle and be there for them as we can. Even though it may not affect you directly, it might impact someone close to you and you need to be aware of how to help them. So, in the words of our interviewees, make sure to make everyday important and to be grateful for all of life's experiences, no matter how small.



Cassidy Frakes, Valley Falls Junior and her mother and Cancer survivor, Stephanie Frakes.

Christmas in the Park

By: Renay Myers

Are you looking for a new Christmas tradition? Christmas in the Park is put on every year the Saturday after Thanksgiving. This tradition began in Valley Falls in 2013, and has since then improved every year. Some students in Valley Falls high school participate in community service by helping clean up the park before setting up the Christmas scene and also help getting some props brought up. After the process of many kind volunteers preparing for this day, "The Christmas spirit officially begins!" says Jan Mcknight. Jan was part of the few girls that started this, they had a small idea and have turned it into something pretty special. She says that over the years of her and her friends painting and learning to be creative, "we like to add something new each year and have retired some pieces throughout the years". During the lighting of the park, families get to enjoy a bonfire, s'mores, hot cocoa, spiced cider, hayrack rides, and prizes. This is a good time to all that come out, join in on the fun next year and start a new tradition for you and your family if you haven't already!



A baby poses with Santa at Hometown Christmas

Presents of the Year

By: Izzy Thompson

The countdown is on for Christmas!! Christmas is just around the corner and I couldn't be more excited!! It's that magical time of year when the air is filled with joy and excitement. The holiday season brings people together, spreading warmth and love around the people they love. One of the best parts of the holiday for some people is gift giving. The excitement of giving gifts for someone special and seeing their excitement over it, it's just a great feeling. The students at Valley Falls are looking forward to getting gifts. We pulled the students to see what the students were looking forward to the most. Students are looking for Ugg slippers and Nike Dunks this year. Uggs started getting popular around 2 years ago after their downfall after the 2010s. They offer lots of comfort and love to your feet. Nike Dunks started getting popular in the late 90's they quickly gained popularity among college basketball players for their cushion and support in the shoe. Another thing people want for Christmas this year is a new iPhone and laptop. Christmas is a great time for people to get new electronics so you can get a great deal on black friday. It is a great gift for seniors going off to college. Another way to change your look this holiday season is by asking for these popular beauty items: rare beauty bronzer, rare beauty blush, laneige lip mask, and anything charlotte tilbury. Another thing people love to get for Christmas is candy. So what are you excited for this christmas?



New Year New Resolutions

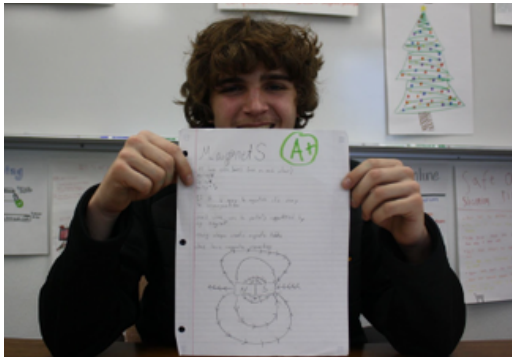
By: Gretchen Hager

New Years is right around the corner, and along with the year changing, so are the resolutions. This well-known tradition, called resolutions, are commonly created during New Years, and they are the act of creating personal goals that are intended to be completed or on-going, and are typically started at the beginning of a new year. Resolutions are mostly practiced in the Western part of the world, but are also found sporadically in the Southern part. For some people, resolutions are a forgotten chore that people don't find intended meaning in, but for others, resolutions are a sense of comfort for new beginnings, and a way to resolve unwanted baggage. A google form was sent out to the entire student-body of Valley Falls asking them a sequence of questions that relate to their New Year's resolutions, and the responses were overwhelmingly positive.

The first question asked was: "Do you usually participate in making resolutions?" After asking the students this question, I had a great understanding that most students grew up with this tradition; a whopping 46% of students answered with yes, and another 46% for "have you thought about what your resolutions are going to be for 2024". Some of the thoughtful resolutions were: "to get better at focusing and improving my attention span", "run 2 miles at least 4 times a week", and "to have a clean slate". A common theme I have noticed, and I'm sure you have too, is that most resolutions are fitness, and stability related, and for students they are grade related.

Most resolutions for people do not change. Whether this is because they failed the first time they have tried it, or it is just an ongoing goal. When asking if the resolutions have changed since last year, there was a student that responded with "(it) Hasn't changed in like 4

years". Another student said that theirs are "more realistic" this year. Out of the thirty-eight responses, only six people have changed their resolutions. If you are one that enjoys creating resolutions, then I am sure you must know how hard it is to continue those resolutions for the whole year, let alone the first week. From experience I have found that there is a recipe to follow to become the best you can be, and complete these resolutions, no matter what they may be. However, a great way to start is to be picky about what you choose to follow for the whole year. If it is too specific then it may be more difficult, unlike a vague goal, like "Being positive". Next you must plan your resolution. Writing down the steps that you should take, and different tips and tricks to continue are great ideas. Lastly, you should be patient with your resolution. Resolutions need time to become normal to your everyday life, as they are usually set to be a change from what you usually do.



When the time comes, have a Happy New Year, and have even happier resolutions!

Teacher Awards 2023

By: Peyton Lockhart

Going for Gold

Once a year, beginning in 2020, the teachers at Valley Falls High School face off in a battle for the most awarded teachers. With 19 different categories for the taking, teachers compete for prizes such as "Favorite Teacher", "Nicest Teacher", and "Most Interesting Teacher." Each victory by a teacher in one of these categories brings them

one step closer to winning the best prize of all 1st place Most Awarded Teacher. Students throughout the high school vote on who they think is most deserving of each award being presented.

Favorite Teacher - Ms. Ritz

Most Homework - Mr. Cooper

Most Fun Class - Mrs. Spade and Ms. Ritz

Nicest Teacher - Senora Blanton

Funniest Teacher - Ms. Ritz

Most Involved Teacher - Mrs. Ellerman

The "Cool" Teacher - Ms. Ritz

Role-Model Teacher - Mrs. Spade

Best Advice-Giving Teacher - Ms. Ritz

Most Organized Teacher - Mrs. Spade

Best Dressed Teacher - Ms. Ritz

Most Strict Teacher - Mr. Cooper

Most Experienced Teacher - Mr. Bunde

Hardest Class - Mr. Cooper

Loudest Teacher - Mr. Bunde

Most Energetic Teacher - Senora Blanton

Smartest Teacher - Mr. Cooper

Most Approachable Teacher - Ms. Ritz

Most Interesting Teacher - Mr. Oakleaf

Most Helpful Teacher - Mrs. Craft

Most Impactful Teacher - Ms. Heineken

Most Creative Teacher - Ms. Gaschen

We are the Champions

This year caused a big upset in the fight for gold. Two-time gold medal champion, Mr. Cooper, was taken off of his throne by none other than Ms. Ritz. Over the past three years, Mr. Cooper has won a total of 15 awards. Coming in first place with a total of 7 awards was Ms. Ritz, the 9th and 10th grade English, and Journalism teacher. Over the years of this competition, Ms. Ritz has won 16 awards. Coming in second place was Mr. Cooper, the Pre-Algebra, Algebra, Algebra II, and Trigonometry teacher. In third place, there was a tie between Señora Blanton, Mr. Bunde, and Mrs. Spade. When asked how she felt winning first place for the first time, Ms. Ritz said, "It feels nice to earn recognition for something that I feel like I have been working."

really hard towards. I feel like the awards that I win are very meaningful, and it makes me happy to know that I have an impact on so many students.



Mr. Oakleaf a new teacher at Valley Falls accepts his teacher award for most interesting teacher.



Ms. Ritz and Mr. Cooper the 1st and 2nd place winners of the 2023 Teacher Awards

Here We Go Again

The same awards are handed out annually with a few additions each year. The additions this year include the most helpful, most impactful, and most creative teachers. Many of the award winners change each year but some of them remain the same. There are several awards that have been won by the same teacher since this award competition began in 2021. Mr. Cooper has managed to win four awards for three consecutive years. These awards include the hardest class, the most strict teacher, the teacher who gives the most homework, and the smartest teacher. When asked how it felt to win four awards three years in a row, Mr. Cooper said "It is an honor to be seen like that by the kids. Year after year there are certain awards that I like to win and agree that I should win those." The Valley Falls Journalism class loves bringing recognition to the teachers at their school. We hope to continue this tradition for many years to come. The journalism class wishes the best of luck next year to all the teachers hoping to earn themselves a first-place award.

Thanks for Reading!

