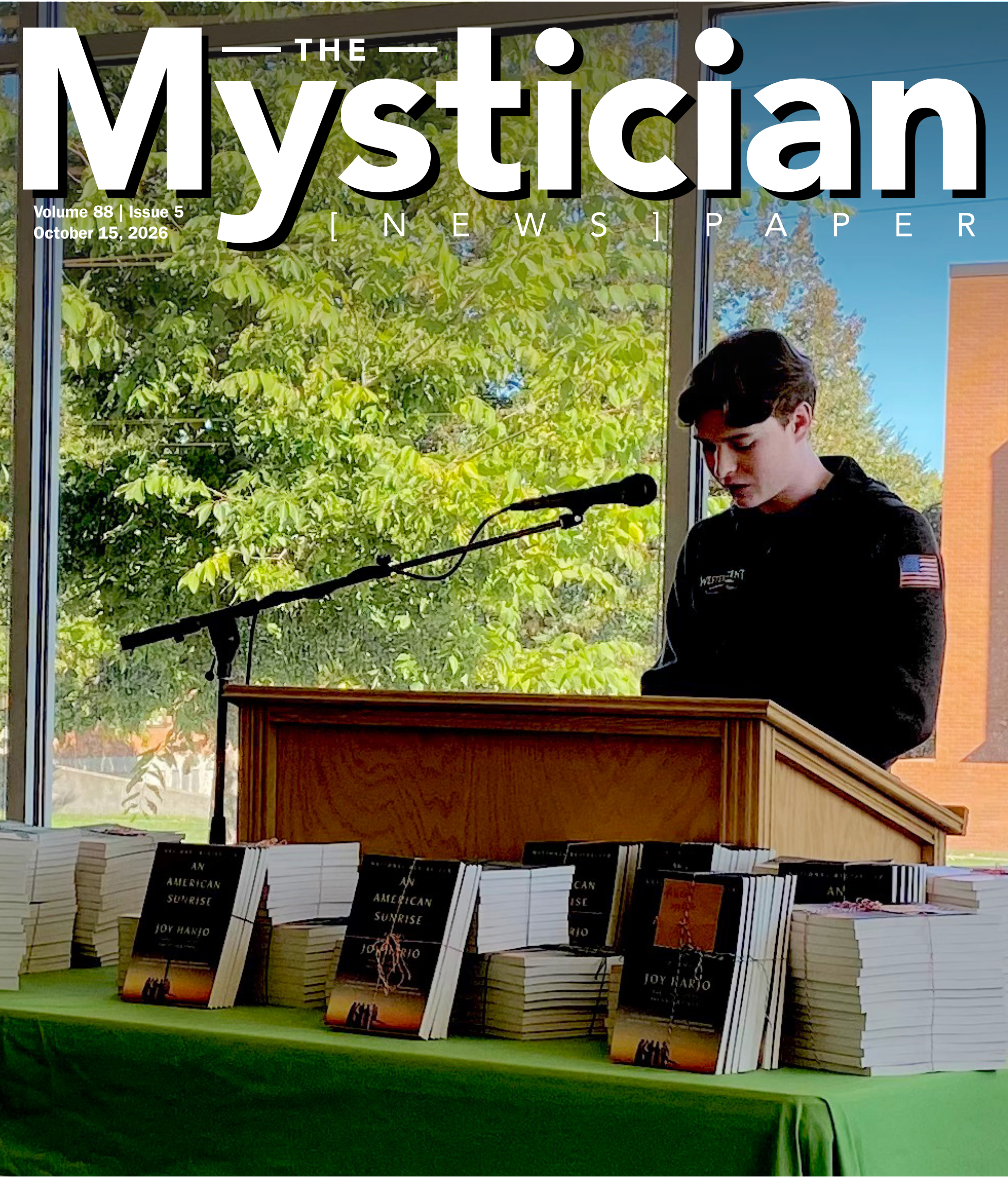




Pete DeMille | Reporter

Reading and Reflection - Cash Crimmins reads “The Glorious Cause” by Robert Middlekauff at the NEA Big Read event in the BSC library on Tuesday Sept. 29.

Marathon Kicks Off Big Read

Liberty Friez
Editor

Bismarck State College hosted its first National Endowment for the Arts Big Read and reading marathon event on Tuesday, Sept. 29 in the BSC Library. BSC received a grant from the organization and is the only college in the state to receive it this year.

The NEA Big Read is an United States government organization that presents an annual list of novels, poetry collections, short stories,

memoirs, and essays focused around a central theme or idea. The 2026-2027 grant, American250, was centered around the 250 year anniversary signing of the Declaration of Independence which influenced BSC’s focus on the grant.

“We wanted to focus our efforts on Indigenous people, culture, and history as it is a major part of our region and the land we currently inhabit today,” Kim Weismann, the Dean of Arts, Humanities, and Sciences, replied in an email response.

Participants of the reading marathon chose selections from the 24 books on the 2026 NEA Big Read list. Of the 24 books, “An American Sunrise” was picked as BSC’s NEA Big Read book. BSC President Brian Kalk read an excerpt from the book at the end of the event.

“When BSC decided we wanted to focus on Indigenous culture, we looked at the books on the NEA Big Read list and this is the one that best fit what we were looking for,” Weismann said.

It was announced at the

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MYSTIC MEDIA

SHENANIGANS



Mystic Media Staff

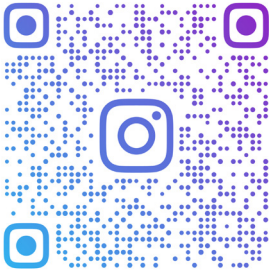
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MYSTIC MEDIA MISSION STATEMENT AND DISCLAIMER

The purpose of college media is to serve and give voice to the students. We, as the student based forum of journalism on the Bismarck State College campus, provide content that is informative, fair, concise and of importance to students and the community. With this goal in mind, Mystic Media is dedicated to accuracy and maintaining ethical journalistic practices. We strive to give a voice to student issues and policies within the local community. Our goal is to incorporate as many students as possible and be an outlet for student expression. Mystic Media strives to be objective and is not affiliated with any outside organizations. Mystic Media upholds the principles guaranteed by the First Amendment and utilizes these rights to bring diverse, entertaining, and thought-provoking material to the college community. Thoughts expressed may not be the opinion of all the staff or BSC community.



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Next issue
88.6 on
October 29



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Big Read

Cont. 1

conclusion of the reading marathon that BSC received a \$20,000 NEA Big Read grant that will go to promoting literacy and building community partnerships. This is the first time BSC has been awarded this grant.

Applying for the grant was a team effort, and it is unknown whether BSC will be able to receive it once more.

“These grants are very competitive. Programming with them takes a lot of hours,” Weismann said. “Right now, I am always up for reapplying for the grant, but there is no guarantee we will receive it again.”

Weismann said she worked with Maureen Murchie, Marlene Anderson,

and Sara Vollmer, and the BSC grant team worked on the application.

The reading marathon kicked off the start of multiple events through the months of October, November, and December. With the BSC initiative focused on Indigenous culture and history, some events have been created around that.

There will be an art showcase in Ganon Gallery Nov. 16 to Dec. 11, featuring artworks from United Tribes Technical College students.

BSC is working with athletics to include a drum circle at athletic events and a talk from Indigenous author, Heid. E. Erdrich.

BSC and two different Department

of Correction and Rehabilitation facilities will be showing the documentary “Waterbuster” with a panel of speakers to follow.

There will be a variety of book events based on “An American Sunrise”. Book reads are being planned at BSC and several partner programs including OLLI on Nov. 5 and one at Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library.

Many event dates are still being finalized.

The grant’s reward comes with a goal.

“The NEA Big Read grant is to encourage and promote meaningful conversations, share community connections, and share perspectives within our region,” Weismann said.



Pete DeMille | Reporter
Captivated Audience - Audience listens to speaker Kim Weismann.

Let Books Be: Protecting Your Freedom to Read

Kelsey Riggs
Reference & Instructional Librarian

Monday, Oct. 5 kicked off Banned Books Week 2026 at the BSC Library. Banned Books week is an event celebrated every Fall to bring attention and give voice to banned and challenged books. Now, to clarify, banned books are those titles that are actively taken out of circulation. Challenged books are those titles that have been requested to be removed for one reason or another.

Most book challenges happen at public and school libraries. To see the list of titles, reasons for challenges, and startling statistics, visit www.ala.org/bbooks. Libraries around the world have fought against censorship and for a person’s freedom to read ever since the first printed book – the Bible. In North Dakota, a local librarian leads a nonpartisan organization called Right to Read ND, whose dedication and advocacy to protect those freedoms has helped defeat legislation aimed at censoring libraries unfairly.

This year’s theme for Banned Books Week, chosen by the American Library Association, was Let Books Be. This felt like a phrase unfinished, so the BSC Library challenged the rest of campus to reveal their ending(s). Kim Kohler’s classes showed their answers on Wednesday, Oct. 7, at the Exploration event. Campus Security used their answers to help create the escape room on Friday, Oct. 9.

If you did not get a chance to see or go through one of these amazing events, stop by the library and add your answer(s) to the Memory Wall. The wall was first put up on Monday, October 5, and will remain up until the end of October.

I hope everyone had a wonderful time celebrating Banned Books Week with us, because the BSC Library sure had fun. We loved seeing you all ask questions and share your thoughts on banned and challenged books. It is a battle that libraries can only win when people like you say something.

Pleased to Meet You

Clayton Sicble-Fox
Reporter

El Jay Dugenio

Year: Sophomore

Degree: Political Science and International Relations

Q: If you could choose one song to play every time you walk into a room, what song would you choose? Why?

A: “Reminder” by the Weeknd

Q: From your perspective, what is the best part of BSC?

A: Definitely the small community because you get to know a lot more people.

Q: If there was a movie made about your life, who would play you and what genre would it be?

A: Simu liu - political drama

Q: If you had to explain your degree to a five-year old, what would you say?

A: Talk to important people in other countries.



Q: If you could be in any TV show, which would you choose and why?

A: “The Office” because I think it would be a really fun environment to act/play in.

Phi Theta Kappa

Emma Smithers
Reporter

Phi Theta Kappa is an Honor Society for community and two-year colleges that started in 1918. Bismarck State College’s own chapter started in 1960 as the Kappa Omicron Chapter, and it is currently under the advisement of Michael Tomanek, an Associate Professor of English at BSC. Dan Leingang will also be stepping in as part of the faculty advisory staff for PTK.

Tomanek first became the PTK adviser back in fall of 2013 as one of four faculty advisers, but took a break when he became a department chair. He has now returned with a plan to get the organization back to what it once was.

“PTK is a chance for students who are academically focused to hang out socially and network with other students,” Tomanek said.

Though BSC has continued to admit students into its Phi Theta Kappa chapter, the in-person student organization has been dormant since COVID. An effort was begun to change this in Spring of last year, when a meeting was held to nominate and elect officers. As of now, four of the five positions are filled.



PHI THETA KAPPA
HONOR SOCIETY

What’s the Most Popular Candy on Campus?

Brennen Friebel
Reporter

Bismarck State College has a wide array of candy you can purchase, from the classic Hershey bar, to more out there picks like swedish fish. I was bored and decided to ask as many people around BSC campus what their favorite candy is, and tally which one was the most popular among both students and staff.

Coming in with three points each, two complete opposites on the candy spectrum. Sour gummy worms are soft, long, and sour, whereas Skittles are a small, sweet, and crunchy snack.

Four candies tied with four points each, a split between chocolate and sweet candy. Starbursts and Nerds both being fruity, with M&Ms and Twix being the first chocolates in this list.

Another two way tie with Kit-Kats, a nice chocolate treat you can snap in half up to three times, and Gummy Bears, a classic treat that’s over 100 years old. Both scored five points each.

Reese’s peanut butter cups got six points. This simple candy is made of only two ingredients, peanut butter and chocolate. Fun fact: most people pronounce Reese’s wrong, opting to say “ree-seez” instead of “ree-siz.”

The most popular candy on campus is Snickers, with an astounding eight points. A chocolate bar filled with peanuts, caramel, and nougat has made it a fan favorite among BSC students.

Honorable Mention: Heath was the least popular candy with an astounding half a point, because someone wanted to choose two candies. The other candy they chose was Butterfingers, which got one and a half points.



Kayla Hilzendeger | Graphic/Web Designer
Sweet Treats - Some of the candy options available to purchase in the Student Union.

Broadcasting Worldwide From a Prison Cell: The Rise of the Chainz 2 Changed Podcast

Zach Schmidkunz
Reporter

(Note: The author of this article, Zach Schmidkunz, is the co-creator and former co-host of the Chainz 2 Changed podcast.)

Deep within the walls of the North Dakota State Penitentiary sit rows upon rows of cells. One of these cells, however, is not like the others. Not even close. Depending on the time of day, the door might be closed with a sign that says “recording in progress.” Other times of day, music and laughter can be heard coming from the cell. What kind of place is this?

Inside cell 103, otherwise known as “the booth,” the walls are lined with black soundproofing squares and there is podcast recording equipment in the room. This is home to the Chainz 2 Changed Podcast, which was created by Antonio Stridiron and Zach Schmidkunz and made its debut August 14, 2023.

The show has hosted several high-profile guests, including North Dakota Governor Kelly Armstrong. Schmidkunz and Stridiron like to joke about locking guests in a cell for interviews. When Armstrong’s security insisted on crowding inside the tight

booth, Schmidkunz spent the episode teasing the bodyguard, nicknaming him “Mr. Baywatch.”

According to NDDOCR Director Colby Braun, this booth provides a rare window to the outside world.

“It gives people an opportunity to better understand prison,” Braun said, “and, hopefully, to see those inside as more than the offense that brought them there.”

That driving force is exactly what Schmidkunz and Stridiron want to share.

“We wanted the world to know that there are so many men and women in prisons that have changed their lives for the better, and have some amazing stories of change that need to be heard,” Schmidkunz said.

What started out as just a thought turned into a six-year journey when Schmidkunz and Stridiron approached Braun with the idea. The pitch line that ultimately won Braun over, according to the two residents, was that Stridiron doing this by himself was like a chocolate ice cream cone, Schmidkunz doing it by himself was just a vanilla ice cream cone, but if you put the two together, it would be like the twist ice cream cone from McDonald’s.



Submitted

Talk it Out - Antonio Stridiron and Zach Schmidkunz hanging out in the Sound Booth

While most maximum-security residents might petition Braun for better food or a comfortable mattress, these two fought for a podcast.

“I didn’t want to get in their way, but I’ll be honest, I didn’t really understand what it took to do a podcast, and I didn’t have the time to research it myself,” Braun said. “So, I told them they needed to figure it out.”

Schmidkunz did just that, drafting a business plan, and within weeks, community partners climbed on board to fund the project. Led by the North

Dakota Council on the Arts and the F5 Project, Prairie Public Broadcasting also joined.

Today, the show is available anywhere you get your podcasts, pulling in over 20,000 downloads across all 50 states and 40 countries.

Releasing these episodes to the public supports a clear mission for the state.

“If nearly everyone who enters prison is eventually going to come home, I want them coming home better prepared to be a productive neighbor,” Braun said.



Submitted

Important Conversations - Antonio Stridiron and Zach Schmidkunz interviewing former First Lady of North Dakota Kathryn Burgum on Recovery Reinvented, a public movement and state initiative aimed at reducing stigma around addiction abuse.

RA Spotlight

Natalie Lawrence
Reporter

William Bohmbach

Q: What is your name, year in school, and major?

A: My name is William Bohmbach, but I just go by Billy. I am a sophomore at BSC as it is my second year here, and I am majoring in Elementary Education.

Q: What hall do you live in?

A: I live in Mystic Hall, but I also work in Health Science Hall.

Q: Where are you from?

A: I grew up on a farm near Hannover, ND.

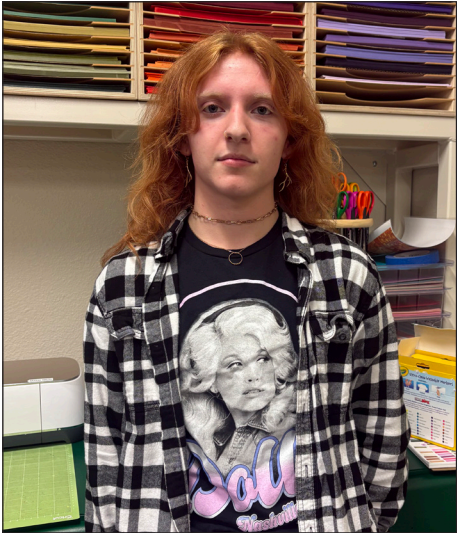
Q: If you could instantly become great at any skill, what would it be and why?

A: Getting my work in on time, I procrastinate, like really bad.

Q: What is one thing on your bucket list?

A: To see Stevie Nicks perform at least one time before she’s done performing for good.

Q: If you could have dinner with any celebrity, fictional character, or historical figure, who would it be and why?



A: Hayley Williams from the band Paramore. Not only because I love Paramore, but because she is my idol. I would also show her my Paramore tattoo.

Q: What is your biggest pet peeve?

A: When people lie or are fake. Would it kill you just to be honest?

Q: What is something you are proud of outside of being an RA?

A: Being a part of Student Government.

Q: Dream Vacation?

A: I would love to go to Ireland

How to Survive Midterms: Study Tips and Tricks

Cheyenne Hayes
Reporter

Between classes, work, social life, extracurriculars, and trying to get enough sleep, college students often have a lot to balance. Finding time to study is one thing; knowing how to study effectively is another.

When exams and deadlines pile up, it can be tempting to cram everything into the night before. But effective studying is about more than spending hours staring at a textbook.

Here are three tips for studying more effectively:

Break studying into chunks – Focus on one topic or section at a time instead of trying to tackle everything at once.

Quiz yourself – Practice recalling information without looking at notes. This can be more effective than simply rereading.

Take short breaks – Study for a set amount of time, then take a brief break before getting back to work.

Students looking for academic support can also check the tutors’ weekly schedules on the BSC website to find available drop-in hours and appointment times, either on campus or online. Schedules are updated each

week, and students who cannot find a time that works for them can contact the tutoring office to explore other options for getting help.

One common study tactic is heading to a local coffee shop or public space with a cozy, quiet atmosphere. The Library, Student Union, and dorm halls are all convenient places to study on campus. Some students might find these spaces too loud or distracting and may benefit from trying a different environment.

The Innovation Barn offers plenty of workspace for group studying and independent work. Its quiet and cozy atmosphere makes it a great place for students looking for a comfortable environment to focus. It is located at 2905 Jude Ln NW, Mandan.

It is open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. On Wednesdays, it is open from 8 a.m. to 2:45 p.m. It is closed on Saturdays and Sundays. A day pass costs \$15 for students with a valid student ID. Groups of six to eight students can purchase a group day pass for \$30.

Students should be aware that the space may occasionally be reserved for private events or group activities, which can limit public access.



Cheyenne Hayes | Reporter

The Innovation Barn - Located in Mandan, the Innovation Barn makes a great study spot for midterms.

Editorial

OUR VOICE

Letter from the Editor



Liberty Friez
Editor

Obligatory Colleen Hoover Rant

Publishing The Mystician every two weeks means I have to figure out something to write about in my letter. This can be difficult. This issue, it just happened I would be going to see “Verity” which means I get to discuss my dear, old friend, Colleen Hoover.

“Verity” is a new movie that was just released in theatres and was adapted from Hoover’s popular novel of the same name. This is not a review, so I won’t be talking much about the book itself. But I could be persuaded, very easily, to write a review on it.

Hoover’s novels are, to say the least, mediocre nonsense. I have had issues with every one of her books I have read or watched a synopsis of. My main problem is that her books keep getting adapted into movies.

There are hundreds of amazing authors whose books deserve to see the big screen, yet we are adapting books that a 12-year-old could have written. I mean this is the third book in almost as many years of hers that has been released, yet I am still here waiting news for “The Cruel Prince” or “Unwind” to be adapted (highly recommend by the way) but yes lets adapt Lily Blossom Bloom and her toxic but neurosurgeon husband and her “Just keep swimming” ex-lover.

Maybe I shouldn’t wish for that because everytime a good book does get adapted, it gets turned into an edgy, romance. If “The Cruel Prince” gets turned into smut, I’m throwing hands.

I say all this to say, whoever controls what movies get adapted, please stop choosing Colleen Hoover movies. I have Colleen Hoover fatigue. Every-time I close my eyes, she’s there and her silly little books too.

I think that is enough talking about Colleen Hoover. Come back next semester when the spring obligatory rant is published.

Crochet update: I did not forget my update during my rant. I finished my hexagon sweater! I am so happy with how it turned out but it took me longer than I expected. For my quilt, I have more mini squares done and am hoping to sew them together to make larger squares soon.

Campus
Convict



Got Problems? Zach Has Time. Roommate driving you crazy? Relationship hitting a wall? Get some real perspective. Scan the QR code or visit our Instagram @bscmysticmedia to submit your questions to The Mystician’s newest advice column. Hosted by Zach Schmidkunz, who writes directly from inside prison after serving a lengthy sentence, this column offers a heavy dose of reality with zero judgment. You bring the campus drama; he’ll bring the survival strategy.

Oops!

Credit for the 88.2 Cover
Photo goes to Jessica Rhodes



Fantasy Football Punishments



Jace Groseclose
Reporter

The fall for most is when the weather starts to cool down, leaves start falling off the trees, school starts, and the summer is coming to an end, But for some, this is the most important, meaningful, and intense time of the year coming right at them. Fantasy football, where friendships go to die and mercy is the thing of the past. I’m just kidding, fantasy football for some is the highlight of the fall or football season. Whether it’s getting ten of your buddies together to start a league, or even just a few, or even furthermore, just join by yourself for fun.

No matter who you’re in the league with, no one wants to take last, and rightfully so. There has been a fantasy football tradition that has slowly become just as popular as fantasy football itself: The Punishment. The punishment has risen to fame over the years as more and more leagues have implemented a punishment for the member that takes last place in

the league. This does two things for your league, it makes sure that everyone in the league is actively adjusting their lineups, there is no one wasting a spot in the league keeping everything stays competitive, and it will keep the league together. For example, my buddies have had the same group of guys in a fantasy league since our freshman year of high school. A lot of the guys don’t know a whole lot about the NFL let alone watch it regularly. We get together for a draft every year and come up with a punishment. That punishment is usually what keeps the fellas into it.

I asked a few student/fantasy football managers about fantasy football punishments that their league has done. Lucas Vasey, a junior here at BSC says “My league had a punishment last year where the person in last place had to just drive to the middle of Nebraska and back for zero reason.” I then asked if the loser had to pay for the gas money himself and got the simple reply of “yes.” simple, yet effective. I like it. His favorite punishment his league has done was the loser had to get a buzzcut, that’ll give you a reason to set your lineup every week. The next fantasy football owner I talked to was Brayden Bunnell. He said “My league’s punishment last was the loser gets blindfolded and dropped off somewhere just out of town and they had to find their way back to campus without using their phone.” Now, you may have some safety concerns, so did I. But don’t you worry they’re kind enough to give them a backpack

with some supplies including an apple watch for tracking. His favorite league punishment was the “milk mile” the way Brayden explained it was “the loser had to run laps around the block and after every lap he had to chug a bunch of milk.” That does not sound fun one bit.

The possibilities for fantasy football punishments are endless they can be as

simple as the plain torture of boredom by being forced to drive several for no reason like Lucas’s league, or a little more ruthless by putting your body to work like Braydens league. When doing fantasy football remember that it’s supposed to be fun. So have fun with it. Implementing a punishment into your league will help you do so. Good luck fantasy owners!



Zach Schmidkunz | Reporter

Fantasy Football Fanatics - Zach Schmidkunz displaying his Fantasy Football Magazines. He grinned and said, “there is a reason I’m 0-4.”

Staff Opinion



Benjamin Wolff
Reporter

Panda Playground

If I could own any animal in the world, assuming that it won’t attack me, it would be a panda bear. Their ginormous furry bodies would give the best hugs. I love that they are cute and clumsy, in fact, I would buy a whole playground so I could watch it play every day. I would then have a reason to start a bamboo hobby farm since the average panda eats a whopping 26-30 pounds of strictly bamboo per day. Panda bears are picky creatures that somehow haven’t gone extinct yet so zoo keepers tend to give them double the bamboo they need to compensate for the sticks they don’t think are appetizing enough. Sassy, iconic, and adorable, what more could you ask for?



Mygel Porter
Social Media Manager

They Just Sleep

If I had to choose an obscure animal as a pet, I’d choose red panda. It’s basically a bigger cat. All they do is sleep, eat, then sleep some more. They sleep about 17 hours a day so it wouldn’t be crazy to manage a red panda. Also space wise they’re not too big so I wouldn’t need to do anything extra to fit it. Also red pandas are so cute and fluffy. It would be an awesome pet to have to play with and pet.



Liberty Friez
Editor

A Viper and a Shark

The animals I would want if I could have any pet would be a cookie cutter shark or a gaboon viper.

I would never get a snake as a pet. But if, hypothetically, a gaboon viper didn’t have two-inch fangs, deadly venom, and didn’t eat rodents, it would be my first choice. They are easily the cutest snake on the planet with their little plump bodies, intricate pattern, and friendly face.

My next choice would be a cookie cutter shark. These are small, deep sea sharks that come to the surface and take cookie shaped bites out of unsuspecting creatures before swimming away. Purely for the novelty of having one.



Pete DeMille
Reporter

Gators Gone Wild

I think an alligator would be the best pet to have because they are really good guard dogs. I would train one of them to be my ride into town for when I need to buy groceries. I’d be the coolest guy ever and would feed the gator whole chickens. Plus, I would live on a lake or pond so my pet can go to the water whenever he wants to. If I train them enough, I can go swimming with my gators to watch neighbors squirm. And just imagine the pictures and videos I can take to show friends.



Elena Sanchez
Reporter

Corvids are Cool!

If I were to own any obscure animal as a pet, I would own a corvid—specifically a crow! Corvids, such as ravens and crows, are incredibly smart birds and are loyal. Crows typically travel as a flock known as a murder so they migrate. Corvids and up to 1,200 other bird species are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty act which means they are federally protected from being owned as pets or hunted. However, in a different world, I would own one to have a loyal feathered friend. Plus, they can remember faces and give you gifts!



Natalie Lawrence
Reporter

Don’t Worry, Be Capy

If I could have any obscure animal it would be a capybara. Capybaras look like giant guinea pigs. If I had one, I would dress mine up in outfits. I could get little sun glasses and bucket hats. I would also want to get a swimming pool for it so we can chill on hot days together. I would probably get a girl capbara and name her Cami. Capybaras are also incredibly territorial, so they could protect me. The only downside to this pet would be the size. Capybaras can weigh anywhere from 77 pounds to 150 pounds. Overall, I think capybaras would make for excellent pets.

If you could have an obscure animal as a pet, what would it be and why?



WHAT’S YOUR OPINION?

Want to Share Your Thoughts

We want to know what your opinions are on our Staff Opinion Questions! How do you Respond?

It’s simple!

Scan the QR code. This will direct you to the Editor-in-Chief’s email address. Send your “Staff Opinion Response” submission. Make sure to include your first and last name. Also, remember to title the email “Staff Opinion Response”.



Kerstin Hilzendeger
Layout Editor

Don’t Badger Me

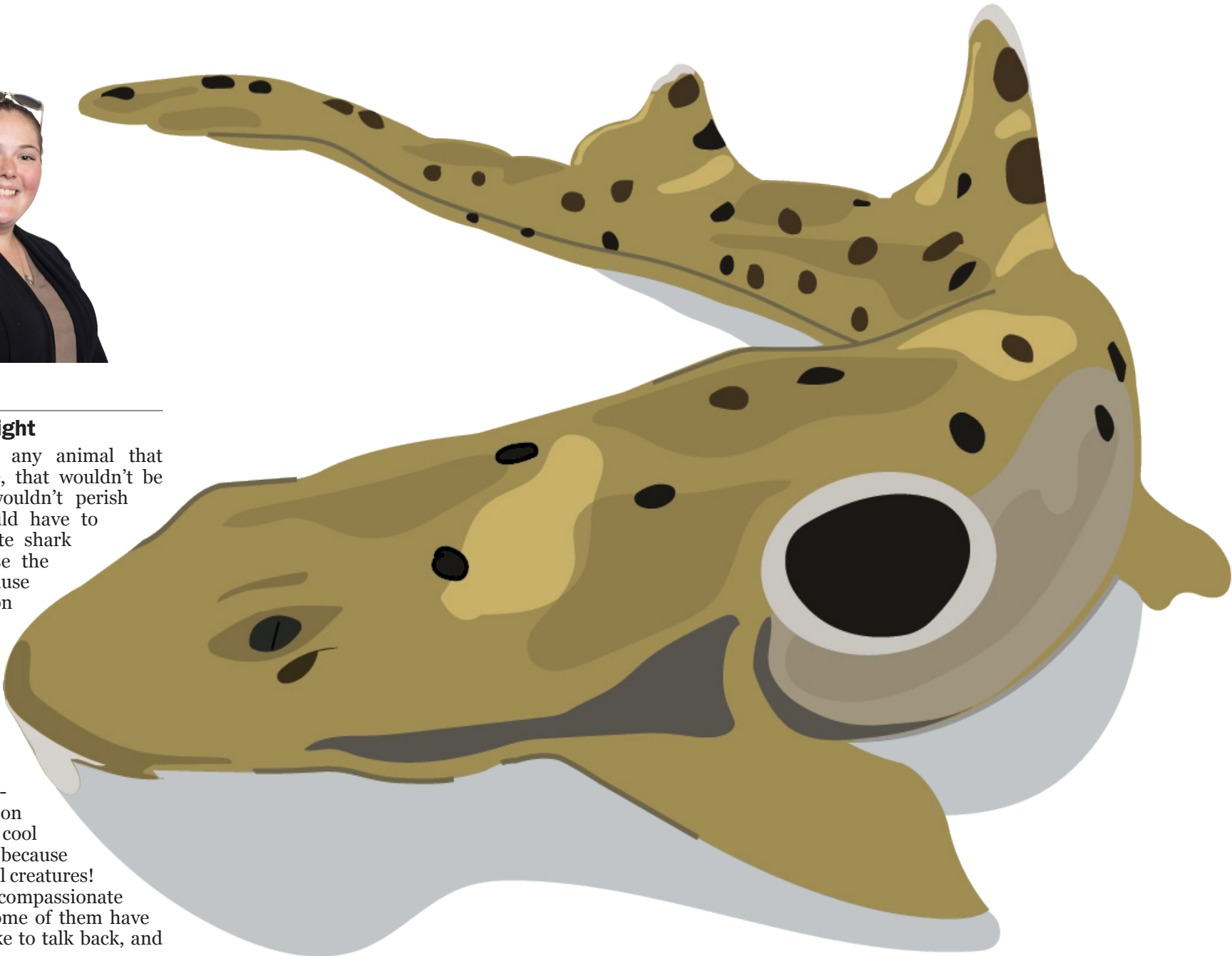
If I could have any obscure animal as a pet, I would want a badger. But not just any badger, a European Badger. While badgers are not necessarily an obscure pet and people sometimes have them as pets, they are certainly not a normal pet either. Badgers are typically thought of as being extremely aggressive and mean, but European badgers are different. Compared to American badgers, European badgers are kind of like me: much more shy and tend to avoid people when possible. Having one as a pet would also offer multiple different benefits such as free landscaping, pest control, and protection from people you don’t like. European badgers are also one of the cutest species of badgers. So while most people see badgers and run the other direction, I think having one as a super cute, slightly scary sidekick would be great.



Kayla Hilzendeger
Graphic/Web Designer

Swimming vs. Flight

If I could have any animal that wouldn’t attack me, that wouldn’t be illegal, and that wouldn’t perish in captivity, I would have to choose the epaulette shark or a raven. I chose the epaulette shark because they can walk on land. A shark that can walk on land! No other party trick compares (however I would only do this trick in the presence of a specialist - we are NOT abusing animals here). The reason I think it would be cool to have a raven is because they are phenomenal creatures! They are so smart, compassionate and affectionate. Some of them have big personalities, like to talk back, and love to solve puzzles.



Chivalry Isn’t Dead, ‘Bro’



Zach Schmidkunz
Reporter

I swear, if I hear one more guy call his girlfriend “bro,” I’m going to lose my mind and bash my head into a brick wall.

Look, I get it. It’s 2026, language evolves and times have changed. But surely we haven’t slid to the point where we address our girlfriends and wives exactly like our frat buddies, have we?

Take Brad, for example. Overall, Brad is a decent college guy, but I can picture it perfectly: Brad picks up his girlfriend for a date at a nice restaurant. She has spent hours getting ready and is genuinely excited. Yet, when

Brad arrives, he just waits in his car in the driveway blasting his music. When she lets herself into the car, Brad looks deeply into her eyes and says, “Yo, bro, you look beautiful tonight, dude!”

To this day, nobody knows if Brad got dumped that night.

Growing up, I was always taught to hold doors open for people. I remember my dad never failing to drop off my mom at store entrances during freezing weather, and always unlocking her passenger door before getting into his own seat.

Yet in an unbelievably ironic plot twist, many of the “Brad girlfriends” are actually taking the word “bro” as an endearing term rather than a bad thing. To them, it has started to signify best friend and entry into Brad’s sacred inner circle, rather than a squat-rack-spotting, Madden-playing teammate.

While we aren’t expecting a knight on a white horse, we can still attempt to bring back the age of the gentleman. Some might worry this implies outdated gender roles, or the idea that a man opens a door to assert control or because he expects a reward. But true chivalry in 2026 isn’t about acting superior; it is basic human courtesy.

A gentleman doesn’t hold a door open because he thinks someone is weak; rather, he does it out of genuine consideration, with zero strings attached.

Hey fellas, pay attention - especially all the Brads out there.

First, chill out a bit on the whole “bro” energy. It’s cool your girlfriend is your best friend and all, but there is a time to treat her like she’s your gym buddy, and then there is a time to show some actual romance. When you take her out, relax on the frat-guy impersonation.

Second, for crying out loud, when you pick her up, get out of the car and go knock on the door. And when you get to dinner, put your phone away. She doesn’t want to hear about your Madden stats, she wants to see that you’re willing to put in the effort.

I’m just saying, stop calling your girlfriend “bro.” If you want to date a “bro,” there is a different app for that.

Chivalry isn’t dead, bro; it’s just hiding under your backward baseball cap. Now for Pete’s sake, flip your cap around, kill your crappy music and go knock on that door.



Kayla Hilzendeger | Graphic/Web Designer
Bro - Isiah Johnson embodies “Brad” for photo.

When Image Erases Imagination



Isiah Johnson
MystiCast Executive Producer

Rambling Raconteur

The act of adding myriad photos to newspapers is not something I have a problem with, but it reflects a growing trend toward the visual. I do not have any qualms against the visual. I am, in fact, enrolled in a digital broadcasting degree. Strong visuals have an incredible power to reach and influence people. But they are becoming the only thing people care about.

Images, at their core, promote passivity in the human brain. Photos portray something as the human eye would see it. We are effectively told how to think about what’s in the image. Videos follow a similar principle. They are called moving pictures for a reason, as they are comprised of a string of photos. Watching videos only requires a passive brain to receive what the eyes are seeing.

Images have supplanted words as our primary means of communication. The pervasiveness of brainrot and nonsense phrases begins to make more sense in this light. We must see a thing to understand it, so eloquence in speech and writing is beginning to fade. Reading and listening require attentiveness and focus, so when greeted with a long string of text or an academic lecture, our brains instead reach for more passive visual stimulation. Is it any surprise that our minds have grown more fractured and lazy in the digital age?

Our brains become what we train them to be, and the brain of the average American is one that is enslaved to visual media. The ease of consumption is high, so the skill of learning has faded. This is the state of our world today. We have forgotten the kinetic beauty of words. Words are alive in a way images can never be. They hit our brains and stoke wonder and deep contemplation. They stop us in our tracks and arrest us with thoughts of the great majestic things in this world and beyond. They communicate truths about eternity and our purpose on this earth that we could never grasp through simply seeing. Let us learn again to engage with the written word.

Staying Safe Online Becomes Essential for Students and Staff



Jesse Engesser
Reporter

Digital safety has become one of the most pressing concerns for individuals who rely on phones and computers for communication, coursework and personal information. As cyber threats continue to evolve, the responsibility to stay protected extends across home, school and work environments. Professionals often repeat a familiar reminder: “Security is everyone’s job,” a phrase that underscores how essential awareness has become.

Cyberattacks today are more sophisticated than ever. Phishing attempts, ransomware, and data breaches target individuals and institutions alike. While technology provides layers of protection, experts frequently say that humans remain both the weakest link and the strongest defense. Safe habits, practiced consistently, form the foundation of cybersecurity.

Many incidents begin in the home, where individuals often feel most comfortable and least alert. Simple steps can significantly reduce risk. Strong, unique passwords prevent unauthorized access, while two-factor authentication adds an extra layer of protection. Regular updates ensure devices receive critical security patches. Securing home Wi-Fi and changing default passwords on smart devices further strengthens household defenses.

A familiar industry phrase captures the idea well: “If it’s connected, it’s protected — or it should be,” a reminder that every device in a home network plays a role in overall safety.

Schools remain frequent targets

because they store large amounts of personal data and rely on shared devices. Students and staff can help protect campus systems by avoiding suspicious links, logging out of shared computers and using approved apps and platforms. Reporting unusual pop-ups or login screens allows IT staff to respond quickly and prevent wider issues.

One of the most repeated safety phrases in education is simple but effective: “Think before you click,” a reminder that careful attention prevents many common attacks.

Workplaces face constant threats, especially phishing attempts designed to trick employees into revealing sensitive information. Verifying emails before responding, locking screens when stepping away and following data-handling policies all contribute to a safer work environment. Avoiding personal browsing on work devices and backing up files according to guidelines further reduces risk.

A well-known cybersecurity motto applies strongly in professional settings: “Trust, but verify,” a phrase that encourages caution without slowing productivity.

Phones have become prime targets because they are always connected and often less protected than computers. Installing apps only from official stores, reviewing permissions and using biometric locks help safeguard personal information. Avoiding public Wi-Fi and keeping apps and operating systems updated also reduces exposure to threats.

A modern cybersecurity saying captures the shift in how phones are viewed: “A phone is a computer — treat it like one,” a reminder that mobile devices deserve the same level of protection as laptops and desktops.

Cybersecurity depends on awareness, consistency and responsible digital habits. Whether at home, in school or at work, individuals strengthen their safety by staying informed and practicing caution. Many professionals emphasize a guiding principle that reflects the ongoing nature of digital protection: “Security isn’t a product — it’s a process.”

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BSC Volleyball Extends Win Streak to Five

Isaiah Johnson
MystiCast Executive Producer

The Mystics hosted the Carroll College Fighting Saints and the Rocky Mountain Battlin’ Bears to cap off homecoming weekend. Homecoming queen, team



Logan Hoff | Sports Information Director

Blocked - Ashlee Stanger and #18 Ellie Baumstarck block the ball against opponents Carroll College Fighting Saints.

captain, and libero Piper Harris led her team to two decisive victories, bringing the Mystics’ win streak up to five.

Carroll’s match against the Mystics was the Saints’ fourth match in five days. The Fighting Saints were on a roll, riding a four-match winning streak into Friday night’s action

The Mystics came out firing, taking a 10-2 lead and maintaining a comfortable advantage to the end of the set. Set two was tight up to a deadlock at 19, when the Mystics clicked and put up five straight and finished it off on an Ashlee Stanger kill. The third set was similar to the second, with BSC putting up a six-point streak and building a seven-point lead. McKenna Brendel added the last two kills of the match, propelling the Mystics to their third straight sweep at home: 25-19, 25-22, 25-22.

Reese Duchsherer racked up 11 kills, and Ashlee Stanger added. Jordyn Rood put up 9 kills on a .471 clip, and Ellie Baumstrack added 7 kills and 7 blocks, hitting .429 for the evening. Aislyn Hogan managed 38 assists and ni service aces, and Piper Harris patrolled the backcourt with 21 digs.

Rocky Mountain came next, and the Battlin’ Bears gave the Mystics a test. Set one was back and forth the whole way through, but Piper Harris’ clutch defense lifted the Mystics to a hard-fought 30-28 win. BSC settled in in the second set and maintained a large lead, earning a 25-15 win. Rocky Mountain managed to rally



Logan Hoff | Sports Information Director

Another Mystic Victory - Teammates Piper Harris, Shayna Roach, and McKenna Brendel celebrate their win following their game on Friday, Sept. 25 against the Carroll College Fighting Saints.

in the third set behind senior Josie West, who led her team with 14 kills. The Battlin’ Bears took set three 25-19, snapping BSC’s 13-set winning streak. The Mystics roared back and completely dominated Rocky in the fourth set for their biggest margin of victory of the season: 25-10.

Reese Duchsherer put up 14 kills and 15 digs for a double-double, and McKenna Brendel scored 12 kills for the afternoon. Ellie Baumstrack added 9 kills on a .643

clip, and Piper Harris put up 24 digs. Setting was split between Aislyn Hogan (23 assists), Aspen Roaldson (14 assists), and Delany Deschamp (9 assists).

BSC now sits in solo sixth place in the Frontier Conference and will travel east to face Valley City State and Mayville State. Their next home series begins on Oct. 9 at 7 p.m. against Dakota State.

A True “Comeback Story”

Kylie Quandt
Reporter

The Bismarck State College rodeo team has been one of the top performing sports for BSC athletics. The men’s rodeo team recently picked up a first place win at University of Wisconsin-River Falls Rodeo and the women’s rodeo team picked up a third place finish. The team also has a national champion in tie-down roping, Tyler Hansen.



Submitted

Ridin’ and Ropin’ - Aerial Schaaf competeing in breakaway roping.

However, for some students, outside factors can compete with rodeo. Aerial Schaaf faces her own challenges and shows grit and determination of a true “comeback story”

Aerial Schaaf grew up in Glen Ullin, ND. She is currently a freshman majoring in Automotive Technology. Schaaf got involved in rodeo by watching it on TV and attending the National Finals Rodeo in Las Vegas.

In April 2023, Schaaf was involved in a one-vehicle rollover. Schaaf and her friend were headed back to Hebron when they came across mud and her friend lost control of the pickup. She was ejected out of the driver’s side window at 70 mph. Schaaf suffered a traumatic brain injury. When Schaaf arrived at the hospital they did not think she was going to survive. Luckily the doctor was able to remove a part of her skull to make room for swelling. After the surgery she was then placed in a medically induced coma for a few days. After Schaaf woke up, she had to relearn how to eat, drink, talk and walk again. Schaaf’s recovery was days filled with intensive physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, and appointments. A few days after receiving a fabricated bone flap she was discharged from Craig Hospital.

“It has shaped me into the person I am today by forcing me to keep pushing forward no matter how hard things get,” Schaaf said.

Schaaf credits the accident as her motivation to keep going.

She now competes on BSC’s Rodeo Team in barrel racing and breakaway events. At the Mystic Stampede on Oct. 2-3, Schaaf ran an 18.78 in barrel racing and a 4.3 in breakaway roping.

Her favorite part about the rodeo team is making new friends and making memories on the road.

Schaaf’s story shows the true determination, mindset, and grit of a come back story after a devastating accident motivated her to chase her dreams. Schaaf shows that if you have the right mindset you have the ability to achieve anything. Schaaf competed at the Iowa Central Community College Rodeo on Oct. 9 and 10.



Submitted

Yee-Haw - Aerial Schaaf competing in barrel racing.

Arts & Entertainment

Creepy Creatures and Fall Features

Enjoying Fall Activities

Maren Gaebe & Madelyn Gefroh
Reporters

The changing of the leaves has signaled the time for fall activities. Whether it's carving pumpkins, visiting a pumpkin patch, or watching movies, there are plenty of activities to enjoy during the autumn season.

A popular fall activity is carving pumpkins. This activity can be done with family or friends. Start by choosing your favorite pumpkin, scooping out the seeds, and creating a fun or spooky design. When the pumpkins are done being carved, they can be placed outside with a candle inside to make them glow. This is a fun activity that brings people together and gets everyone ready for Halloween.



Submitted | bsc_mystics_xctf Instagram

Group Picture - The BSC Track and Field team and Cross Country team stop to take a group picture at Papa's Pumpkin Patch.



Submitted | bsc_mystics_xctf Instagram

Fall Fun - BSC Track and Field team and Cross Country teams take a rest day to bond at Papa's Pumpkin Patch.

One Free Concert Admission

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Instagram: rhythm.records.nd

Cat in the Hat Terrorizes Country

Benjamin Wolff
Reporter

The Cat in the Hat is one of the most beloved children's books ever. Written by Dr. Seuss, he wears a red and white striped hat and has a goofy smile. His whole idea is to make harmless chaos funny and entertaining for kids. Yet somehow, the Cat in the Hat has become internet nightmare fuel.

There was a trend which originated by taking clips from the 2003 live action movie to edit and caption them into creepy, disturbing memes. This has changed the whole view of the show. Then, instead of people thinking the Cat in the Hat is a funny children's icon, people were rewatching the movie and realizing how uncanny valley the Cat in the Hat is. People were realizing the Cat in the Hat doesn't just walk into children's houses, he appears out of nowhere and starts destroying things with his big scary grin and dances around.

This wasn't the end of it though. On TikTok, creators began taking clips and putting extremely dark captions over them. One of the earliest posts on TikTok is a clip of the Cat dancing with a horrific caption under it. People started editing scenes to make analog horror out of it. These things weren't all that bad, and even gave some lore and helped spread exposure of the movie to different kinds of people. Until the fake sightings came along.

The trend took an even darker twist when fake sightings of the Cat in the Hat started appearing on campuses, people's houses, businesses, and even inside of

Benjamin Wolff | Reporter

Sneaky, Sneaky - Kat Elrod terrorizing the BSC campus.

people's bedrooms. The images spread online like they were real sightings, but most of them were debunked for being artificially generated.

Local law enforcement and news outlets in Bismarck have already sent out posts and articles warning parents about the new trend.

Benjamin Wolff | Reporter

Peek-a-Boo - Benjamin Wolff and Kat Elrod taking Cat in the Hat photos at the BSC sign.

MystiCast

Check out the New
Mysticast Episode!

Theatre Kid Reacts to “Hadestown”



Jessa Lee
Reporter

After watching “Hadestown” on Prime Video, I can see why the musical has received so much attention. Being a former theater kid of 12 years, it was one of my most highly anticipated watches.

Something that immediately caught my attention was the folk-jazz style of the music. The music style made the musical feel fresh and modern despite the ancient storyline. It gave the musical a different sound than what I normally expect from theater and made the story feel more unique. The music also helped create the atmosphere of the show, especially with the darker themes surrounding “Hadestown.”

I also really enjoyed the characters of Hades and Persephone. They specially made the story more interesting. Persephone had a lot more fire and personality than I expected, but I liked that about her character. It felt like that was an important part of who she

was rather than something randomly added to the character. It better showcased the complicated relationship between her and Hades which added to the overall story.

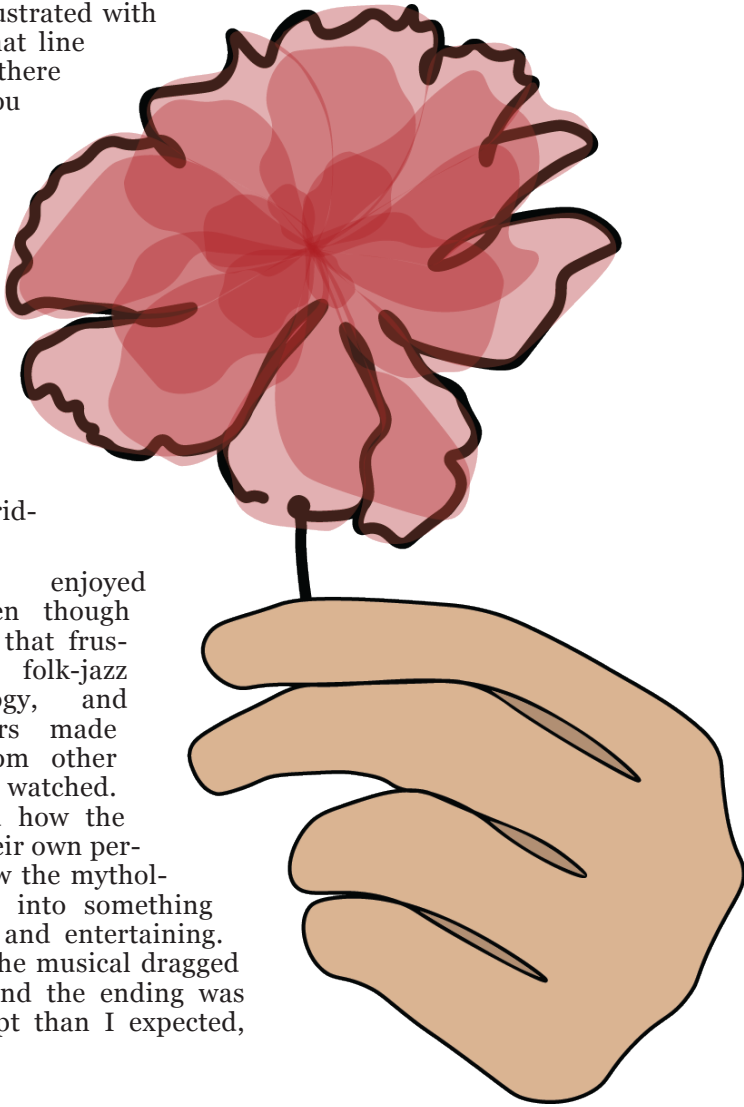
Spoiler alert: I thought the ending was extremely abrupt. We spend roughly two hours watching Orpheus build this story, travel to Hadestown, convince Hades to let Eurydice go, and finally attempt to bring her home. Then, within seconds, he turns around, Eurydice disappears, and the story ends. As a viewer, it still felt frustrating. With that said, I think there is a deeper point behind Orpheus’s decision. In a way, he is a hero simply because he has the courage to attempt to save Eurydice. He travels into the underworld knowing that he could lose everything and still chooses to go after her. The problem is that he cannot trust that she is behind him, even though he has been given one simple instruction: don’t look back. Knowing that looking back is the one thing that could ruin everything makes his decision especially frustrating.

I think the logic behind the ending is there, but I still struggled with it. If Orpheus knows that the only way they can both make it out is by looking forward, why would he suddenly doubt Eurydice at the very end? At the same time, that doubt is what makes the ending meaningful. His biggest challenge was not physically getting Eurydice out of Hadestown; it was trusting her and trusting that the promise would be kept. It emphasized how the vulnerability of human doubt can destroy

us and the things we love. In the beginning of the story, the characters sing “it’s an old song, a sad song, but we are going to sing it again,” which is repeated right after Eurydice is sent back to the underworld. So while I was frustrated with the abruptness that line reminded me there was a reason. You are supposed to feel almost betrayed by the story in a sense, because Eurydice was betrayed when Orpheus looked back and Orpheus was betrayed by his own doubt ridden mind.

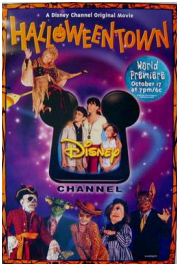
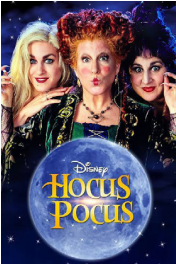
Overall, I enjoyed “Hadestown” even though there were parts that frustrated me. The folk-jazz music, mythology, and unique characters made it stand out from other musicals I have watched. I especially liked how the characters had their own personalities and how the mythology was adapted into something that felt modern and entertaining. While I thought the musical dragged in some places and the ending was much more abrupt than I expected,

I think those choices also gave me something to think about after it was over. “Hadestown” may not have been perfect for me, but I found it to be a story worth watching.



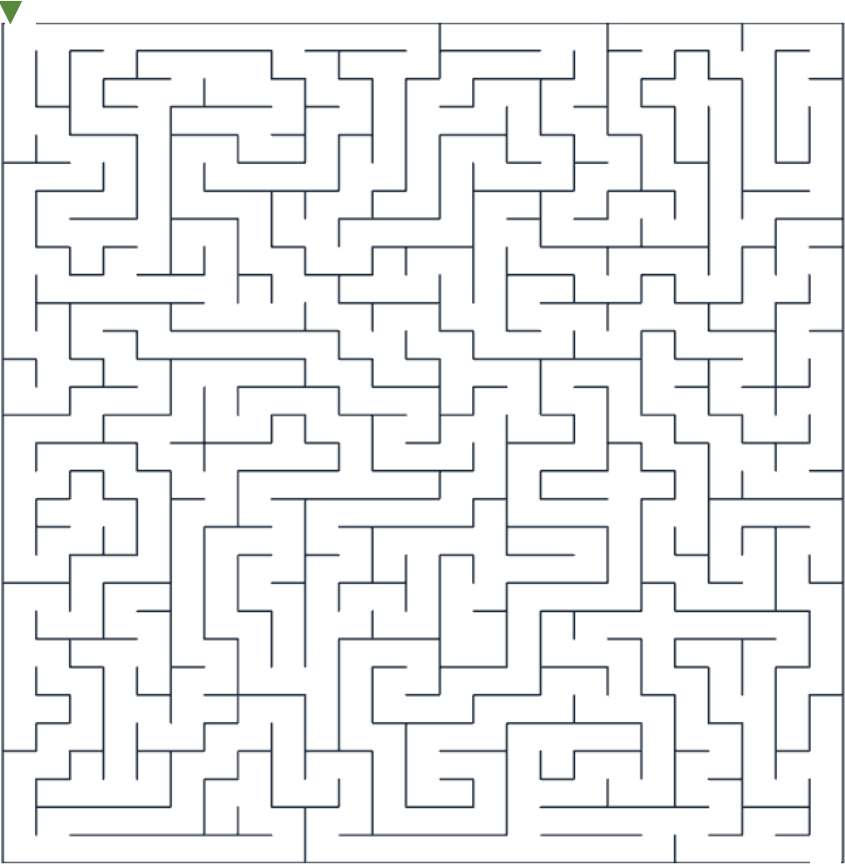
BSC’s Guide to Halloween Movies

Students Weigh in on Their Favorite Halloween Movies and Why

Scooby-Doo on Zombie Island <i>Jasmine Nash</i> One time when I was a kid I got scared when they got turned into werewats. 	The Shining <i>Kessa Bigger</i> I recently went to the house the movie is based off of. 	Halloween Town <i>Blair Ham</i> My family used to watch it every year. 	Child’s Play <i>Domomique Anderson</i> People should watch it because it’s like watching a fantasy come to life. your worst fears coming to life in ways you don’t want them to. 
Coraline <i>Jess Rhoades</i> The movie is so cute and freaky if you truly think about it.. 	Beetlejuice <i>Jaxon Miller</i> It’s a fun movie and there are a lot of fun characters and moments. Michael Keatan is in it. There are also a lot of funny jokes. 	Lights Out <i>Addison Baillie</i> It is a quick and scary Halloween movie. It makes every flicker of a light feel tense. 	The Batman <i>Simon Klein</i> One reason to watch is because it is a really good movie. It is one of the best batman movies ever made, second to Lego Batman. 
Venom <i>Carmyn Durand</i> It’s a great movie to watch for people who love Marvel and want a little scare. 	Hocus Pocus <i>Anonymous</i> I’ve always watched it with my children every year. It’s just a good movie. 	Scream <i>Karlee Stein</i> It’s a classic, back when film was actual-ly good. 	Psycho (1960) <i>Pamela Torres</i> You should watch because it is basically the godfather of the slasher genre. 
Evil Dead <i>Carmin Geloff</i> It’s the perfect combination of horror and comedy, it’s such a good movie. 	Texas Chainsaw Massacre <i>Shanice Poitra</i> First it’s a classic, I feel like the era is when scary movies actually got scary. 	Scary Movie <i>Clayton Sicble-Fox</i> It is a good twist and it’s funny, it makes me feel less scared. Good to watch if you want a movie that isn’t too scary. 	Geepers Creepers <i>Elena Sanchez</i> People should watch it because the music in it is really good. The music makes you feel good and then you get scared out of nowhere. 

PUZZLE PAGE

A-MAZE-ING



BSC BINGO

Carry bingo where ever you go! Look around campus to spot common campus happenings and mark them down. First friend with a full vertical, horizontal, or diagonal line, or blackout wins!

Halloween Decor	Textbook reading	Last-minute Essay	Mystic Bean Coffee	Cafeteria Food
Late-Night Studying	Merlin	All-Nighter Pulled	Volleyball Game Day	BSC Hoodie
Club Meeting	Dorm Room Party	FREE	Tutoring	Fire Drill
Ramen	SU Hangout	Group Project	Class Schedule	Library Silence
Pizza Night	Lecture Hall	A on an Assignment	Final Exam Cram	Roommate Drama

REBUS PUZZLES

Each of the boxes below represents a phrase. The only rule is that there are no rules so think outside of the box. Don't forget to have fun!

LEADTEN

Going

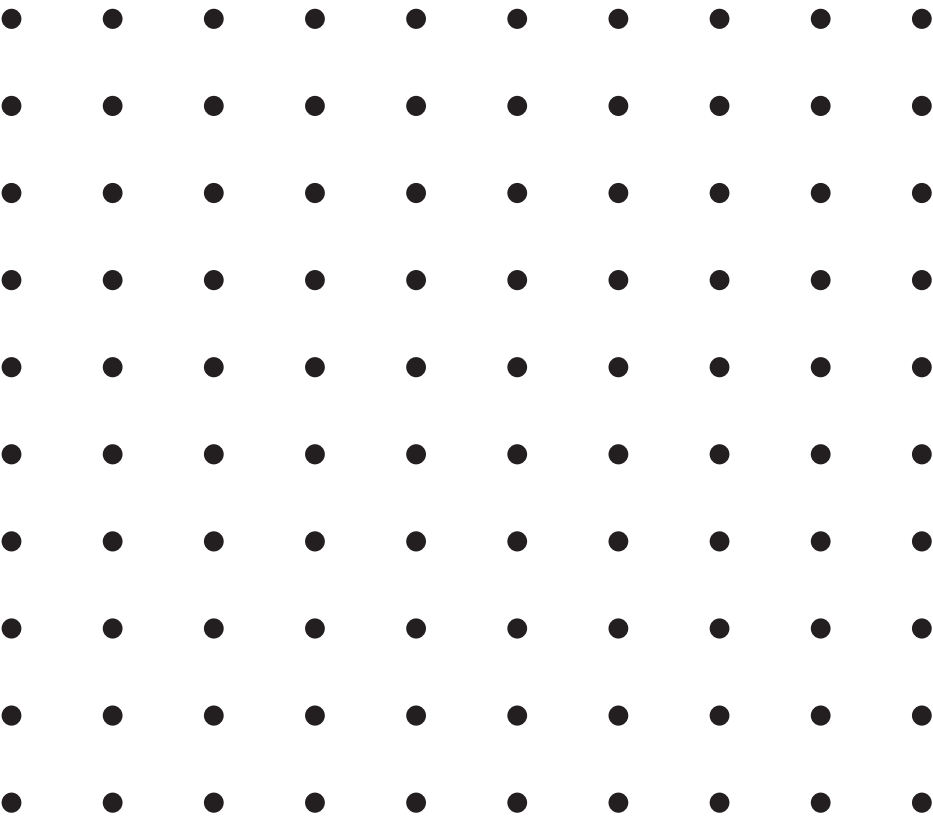
Board

1,2,3,4 Dracula

Sand \$

DOTS TO BOXES

Two players take turns drawing a single horizontal or vertical line between adjacent dots on a grid. The player who draws the fourth line of a 1x1 square claims the square by putting their initial inside it and gets to take another turn. The game ends when no more lines can be drawn, and the player with the most claimed squares wins.



SAY CHEESE!

Clay Sicble-Fox | Photographer

Hanging Out! - BreAnne Fischer, Jasmely Perez Vargas, and Kylee Jessen hang out together in the BSC's Student Union.

Find the answers to these puzzles and more on our website!

