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Uninterested or Overworked?

DWINDLING PARTICIPATION

ELENA LEE
HISTORY

Northwestern boasts of its leadership, extracurricular and travel opportunities to prospective students and incoming first-year students. What they fail to mention is that many of NW's traditions and signatures are losing interest and numbers.

The Student Government Association (SGA) has had open positions all year. Deadlines for student leadership opportunities become extended due to low applications. Club attendance across the board is dwindling. Traditions like RUSH and Clash of the Classes used to involve a large percentage of the school. Volunteer opportunities that helped students build their applications to get into college are at the bottom of students' priority lists. While there are many theories and explanations for this trend, there has

yet to be a definite solution.

The easiest answer is COVID-19. The senior class spent their first year on campus wearing masks, unable to organize any type of social event. Many traditions passed down and recommended by upper class students are without first-hand experience. The lack of excitement around certain events could lead to lower participation. NCDC, one of the more popular events of the last few years, has started up again after several years hiatus due to COVID-19 and low attendance. It may take more time to build up anticipation and attendance for events that were popular pre-pandemic.

Associate professor of history education, Dr. Rebecca Koerselman, has a few theories about the dwindling participation. "Before social media was more prevalent, a lot of students used clubs and other organizations on campus to meet people and socialize in person," Koerselman said. "Now, I think more college students use social media to fill that gap (some more

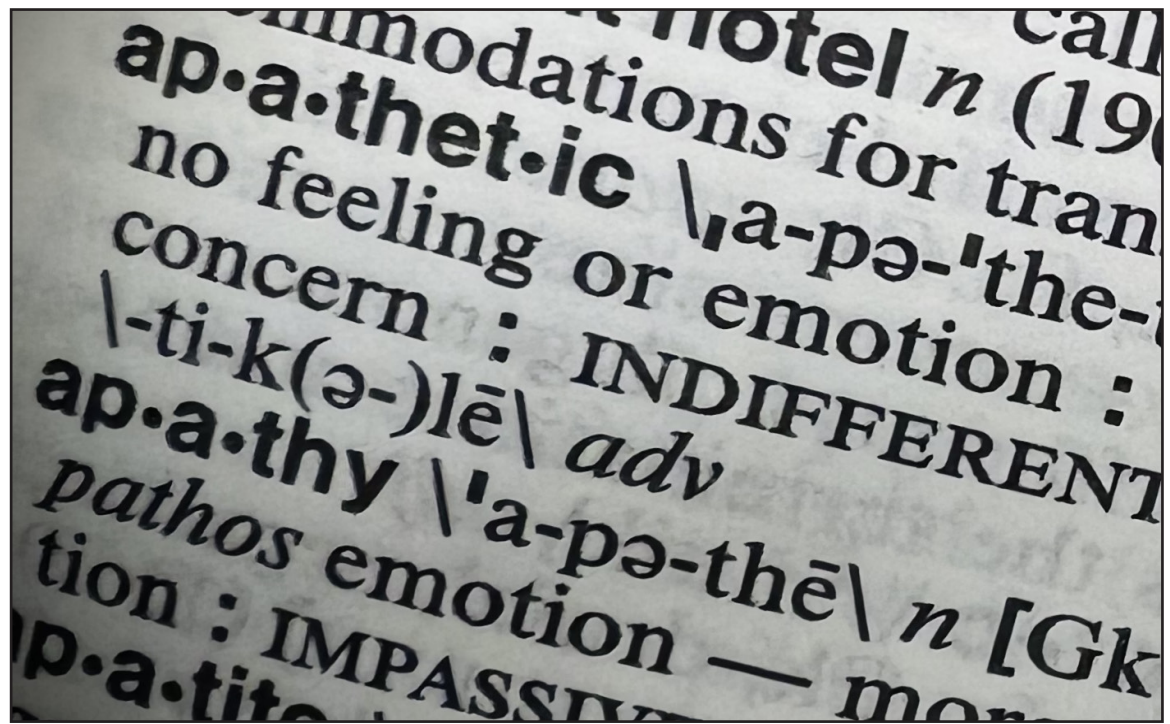


Photo Submitted
Participation at NW continues to lessen year after year.

than others, of course), and do not seek it out in more in-person ways."

Another possibility could be the fact that extracurricular events do not pay the bills. NW is an expensive

school, and many students are only able to attend due to sports or fine arts scholarships. Time that could go towards events is now taken up by an activity that enables them to

go to college. If a student is not on scholarship, then they may have to have a work-study position, or find employment outside of the school to afford their tuition.

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Typical day for Vonder Bruegge

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A FAN FAVORITE

HOPE WALLACE
PUBLIC RELATIONS

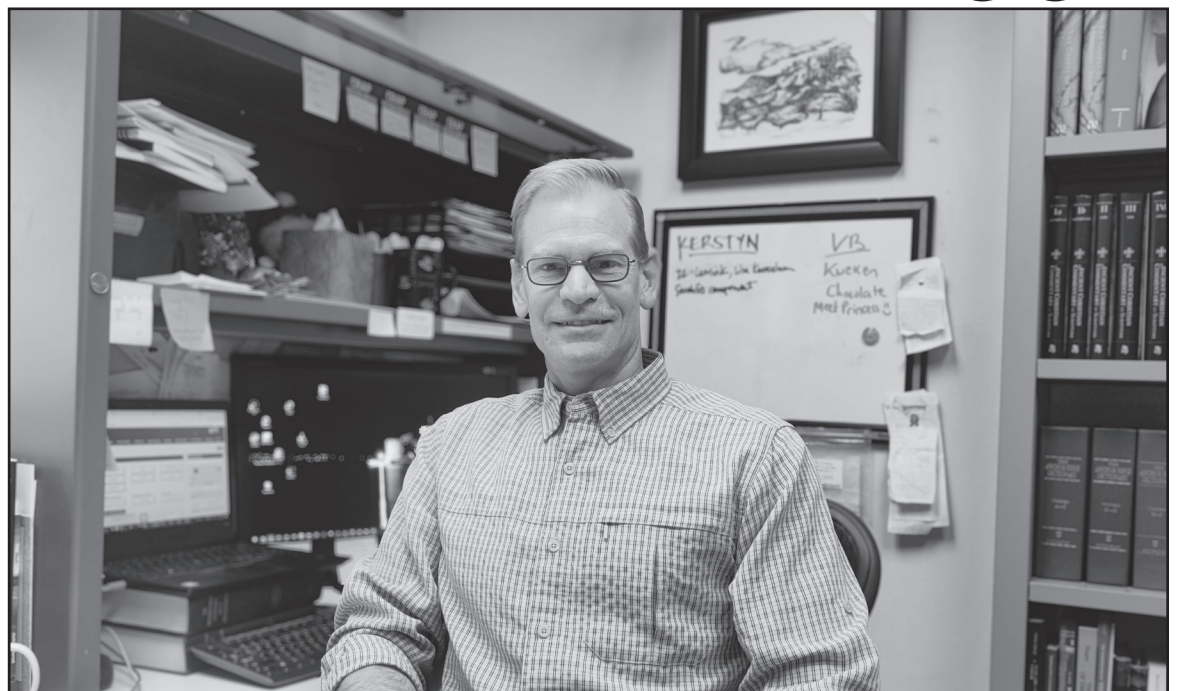
When asked what a typical day looks like for Dr. John Vonder Bruegge, or VB, he replied by saying he does not have a daily routine because "each day is different." When he goes to work on any given day, he does not know what tasks he may undertake. Considering the multiple roles VB serves on campus, this comes as no surprise. On campus, VB holds positions as a professor of the Biblical and Theological Studies (BTS) department, the Dean of Arts and Humanities and a Co-director of the Honors Program. Each of these positions provide VB with different opportunities to connect with students and colleagues while they also, as he states, "teach him something new every day".

While VB's various positions often make for an unpredictable

schedule, there is one activity in his daily routine that is consistent: taking his dog, Blaze, for a walk. "When I need a break from the craziness of my schedule, Blaze and I go for a walk," VB said. "It is a great time to be outside and enjoy God's creation, and everything, by necessity, has to shut down".

After he is done taking a break with Blaze, VB returns to the work he is currently doing in one of his three positions. Perhaps what he is most well-known for on campus is being a professor in the BTS department, where he is currently finishing up his 20th year of teaching.

One aspect VB loves about being a BTS professor is teaching the Greek Legacy course that is held every other spring semester, leading up to the trip that honors students take to Greece. Throughout the course, VB assigns different locations in Greece to each of the students that they research extensively. Once in Greece, the students then act as the local experts and tell the group all about their assigned locations.



COURTESY OF Pratik Praudel
Each day brings something new for Dr. Vonder Bruegge.

"I love seeing the students fall in love with a place they've never been to before," VB said. "Every time we arrive somewhere a student has studied about throughout the course; the student's face lights up like a kid in a candy store. It never

gets old." Beyond the Greek Legacy course and the Summer Study Abroad associated with the Greek Legacy trip, VB also teaches the Greek language, upper level "Topics in the New Testament" and Christian

Story I. He loves teaching Christian Story because he describes it as the perfect chance for him to be "a welcoming face to new students who are navigating life at Northwestern." Because of this, his position as a professor overlaps heavily with the

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“Manna” breaks Christian music norm

SOMBER
AND GRACE-
DEPENDENT

JOSEPH CALLAHAN
NURSING

Chris Renzema is a contemporary Christian artist who blends indie rock and folk into his music style. He has over a million monthly listeners on Spotify, with numerous albums that have resulted in his blooming career as a Christian artist. In his most recent album, “Manna,” Renzema has broken away from the therapeutic efficacy commonly found in contemporary Christian worship music. Listening to the album will not leave Christians emotionally charged feeling like God will poof their problems away. It will leave them feeling affirmed in their human experience of faith. “Manna” is written for the cynic, skeptic and stalled out in faith.

Renzema plays with almost every theme that bounce around the typical doubting Christian’s head. He writes lyrics about depression, emotional distance from God, heroes of the one’s faith go down in scandal and desires one perceives they

should have in contrast to the realities of faith.

The album’s opener “Not Giving Up On You” is the most emphatic piece of “Manna.” It serves as an upbeat purpose statement for the album. In essence he is saying that no matter what follows this song, be it doubts or brokenness, he is not giving up on God.

Following his purpose statement, “Hereditary” serves as more of a thesis for what the album will be thematically. With somber guitar and harmonica, Renzema lays out the human condition of rebellion that separates us from God and our need for Jesus to break us free from our lineage of sin.

The body of this album is a story of dissonance between the beliefs of Christian faith and the lived feelings Renzema has had. First, in “Holy Ghost” he shares a memory of going to a revival “wanting to feel God reaching out.” However, when it was his turn to be slain by the spirit the result was anticlimactic. “I swear I believed, but I didn’t lock my knees, was the only one left standing wondering what was wrong with me.” For the listener who has been left dry-eyed with hands by their sides at praise and worship perhaps this line

resonates. He writes a chorus for the skeptical Christian; “Doesn’t mean I’m not hopeful just means that I’m a cautious believer. It’s the craziest this after all I’ve seen, well I still want to believe, yeah that Holy Ghost keeps haunting me.” This is a song that recognizes the work of faith on the human end and the persistence of the Spirit on the transcendent end.

Next, instead of a song about neutrality where he perceives there should be euphoria, he writes a song about depression and faith. “God & Prozac” is a rare Christian song that plays with a biological origin for depression, use of medication, a good gospel and the difficulty of holding those things together. He writes “Hung up on this heartbreak and the distance between, the way that I’m feeling and what I believe. Just gotta know that you’re with me, yeah I really do, but these feelings just need some help to break through.”

The back half of this album is for the stagnant believer who is in year 20 of the wilderness. “My Heart is a Stranger” and “Manna” are two songs explaining the fatigue Christians may feel waiting for changes in self or circumstance.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHRISRENSEMA.COM

The former Renzema sings, “I get so lonely waiting for the sun to rise up in the morning waiting for something to change and I don’t know, is it ever gonna go? Or is this just the way I am?” The latter, “After all these years I’ll still praise your name, cause even when I’ve lost my

taste for manna, it comes from heaven all the same, every day.”

The closing of this album is particularly unique. Again, Renzema does not leave listeners feeling like triumphant conquerors, he leaves them as somber and grace-dependent. He ends this album with an

instrument titled “...I Still Love You...” It features majestic brass echoing the chorus of the song “Manna.” It is a wordless song that say “God, I know I’ve said a lot of things with this one, but I still love you and need you.”

★★★★

A new trilogy following “Kung Fu Panda 4”

PROMISING
FUTURE FOR THE
FRANCHISE

EVAN FISKE
SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

“Kung Fu Panda” is one of Dreamworks’ and animation’s strongest franchises. Following two great entries and one pretty good one, the series seemed to have reached its end. However, a staggering eight years after the previous installment, “Kung Fu Panda 4” was released. The movie, while nowhere near as good as the first two entries, is still enjoyable, on par with its predecessor, “Kung Fu Panda 3,” and shows promise for the future of the franchise.

This film is not meant to be the fourth entry in a tetralogy, but rather the first entry in a new trilogy. This distinction becomes clear from a variety of factors. Firstly, the story centers around Po needing to choose the new Dragon Warrior so he can become the spiritual leader of the Valley of Peace, signaling a different direction for the franchise’s story. Secondly, the cast of characters does not feature the Furious Five, opting instead to focus on one new

martial artist, Zhen. Thirdly, the film looks very different from previous entries. With a brighter, smoother color palette and a more simplistic animation style, possibly from a lower budget, the visual aesthetic of the movie is distinct from the original trilogy.

These changes, and the lack of similarity to the third, and to a greater extent first and second movies, are probably what underlies much of the negative response to this entry. However, this movie and the inevitable sequels to it, will probably have a similar trajectory to the “Star Wars” prequel trilogy, which were poorly received at release, but have since grown to be fan favorites, once they were out of the shadow of their predecessors.

This film was overall a good time and there are several factors which contribute to that. Jack Black and James Hong are as good as ever as Po and Mr. Ping. Black plays an older, more experienced Po than in previous films, but this works for the story and the portrayal is as lovable as ever. While the Furious Five do not show up in any meaningful way, this works well for the story, and they would have felt shoehorned

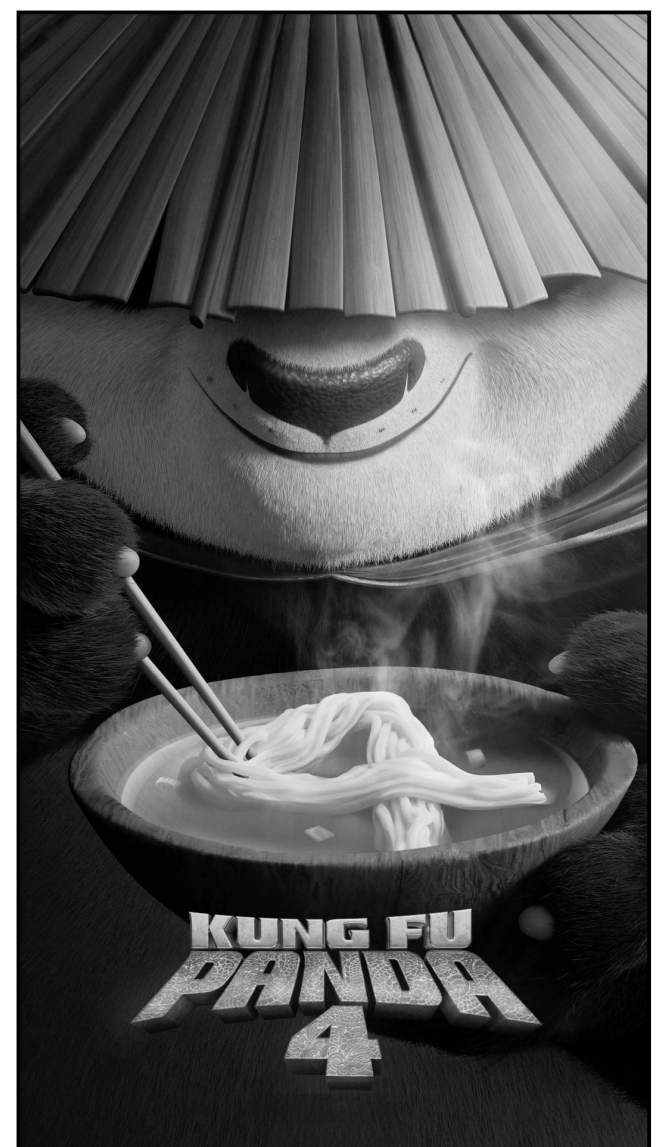
in if they were included. The villain is fairly menacing in voice portrayal and especially in animation, even if the writing is lackluster. Some of the fight scenes have problems, which will be discussed later, but when they work, they really work. The movie does not overstay its welcome with a brisk 90 minute runtime. Lastly, spoiler, the credits are a training montage with the Furious Five and Zhen, while a rock cover of “Hit Me Baby One More Time” by Tenacious D, Jack Black’s Band, plays, making it easily the best part of the movie. While it is unfortunate that the credits outshine the actual movie, that is more a reflection of the credit’s quality, not the movie’s lack of it.

The film is not, however, without its problems. The budget is noticeably lower than the original three movies, and while this in some ways works to the movie’s credit, giving it a distinct style, it also makes the movie look worse in many ways than the previous entry nearly a decade earlier. The voice cast is noticeably worse. This movie introduces Akwafina to the franchise. Her portrayal of Zhen is serviceable at best and still has most of the grating

tendencies her acting has become associated with. Dustin Hoffman gives a much less energetic performance as Shifu this time, not bringing the same life to the role as he used to.

The movie’s writing is not as witty; the jokes are usually fine, not great, and fairly juvenile, with a few laugh-out-loud exceptions. However, these exceptions are due to the delivery, especially Hong as Mr. Ping, not from the quality of the writing. The jokes also undercut serious moments in a clumsy way several times. Most seriously for a martial arts movie, the fight and/or action scenes are fewer and further between in this entry, and several are either boring or edited in such a way that they are difficult to follow.

This movie, while overall positive, has some issues that seem to be the problems of a new creative team finding their footing. If they learn from these mistakes and improve them in the next movies, there is a bright future for the “Kung Fu Panda” franchise.



★★★★

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MOVIE DATABASE

Senior Spotlight: Madison DenHerder

EMBRACING A LOVE FOR THEATRE

JORDAN DESMET
PUBLIC RELATIONS

Madison DenHerder has worn plenty of hats during her time in the theatre program. With experience in designing, acting, stage managing and more, DenHerder carried out almost every possible role in the theatre department. However, at one point, she did not think this was in the cards for her because, after high school, she wanted no part of being a theatre major.

"I thought it wasn't a good idea to have a career in something so impractical and that it was something to keep busy with, kind of like a hobby," DenHerder said.

So, as a freshman, DenHerder ended up settling for business marketing. In her first semester, a couple of the classes on her schedule included an accounting class with one of the instructors in the business department and Theatre Experience with

longtime professor, Dr. Bob Hubbard.

"Guess which one I liked better?" DenHerder said. "Dr. Bob showed me how I could further my fascination with theatre deeper while being at Northwestern. After a month and a half of the first semester, I switched my major to theatre."

That decision completely changed the trajectory of DenHerder's college experience. Since then, she has been responsible for props, costumes, acting or stage managing in about a dozen different shows on campus. In addition, she won Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival Region 5's Distinguished Achievement in Stage Management for her work on "Life is a Dream," Certificates of Merit for costume and prop design and awards for presenting "Jabberwocky" and "Life is a Dream" to the Region 5 festival.

"You could say I'm always a little busy, but I like it that way," DenHerder said. As if the shows she has been involved

with did not occupy enough of her time, DenHerder also takes part in a work-study position in the scenic shop, where she gets to build sets and props for upcoming shows.

"Being a scenic work study is probably my favorite thing I do for our department," DenHerder said. "We will get the floor plans for the set, gather and cut the wood, screw everything together, paint it and it's good to go. I think the funniest thing we do in theatre is paint wood to look more like wood from far away."

The scenic shop also allows her to work with some of her favorite people. "Getting to work under Ethan Koerner and Cindy Moeller is one of my favorite parts of the job. I mean, getting to work with one of my best friends in the whole world, Jack MacGregor, is also a plus, too. DenHerder said "Ethan and Cindy have just taught me so much, and I'm just so grateful for them for helping find my passion in life for technical theatre," said DenHerder.

Although she has

experienced plenty of joy while being part of theatre, her interests still come with their fair share of challenges. "To design or stage manage a show isn't for the faint of heart," DenHerder said. "Especially, when I'm a bit of a perfectionist when it comes to my work, I throw myself full-heartedly into the process that sometimes it can be too much for even me."

But for DenHerder, the struggles she encounters are worth it. "It comes with many ups and downs, but with all the hard work and late nights, being able to watch the show and see people be entertained with the little things I created brings me so much joy," DenHerder said.

As she prepares to leave NW, she will be forever grateful for the opportunities she received from everyone in the theatre department. "To any incoming theatre enthusiasts [or anyone that is] just curious about our theatre program, you can literally do anything you want in our department," DenHerder said. "If you even



PHOTO COURTESY OF NWC MARCOM

have the slightest interest in something, just ask one of the professors, and they will set you up for success. Being able to do anything you desire is such an amazing opportunity in the college theatre world."

TEDxNWC explores the meaning of "Allegory"

SPEAKERS PARTICIPATE IN THE SECOND ANNUAL EVENT

NICHOLE HANSEN
PUBLIC RELATIONS

As the sun peaks above Zwemer Hall, students crawl out of the dorms to start their long day ahead. While the students scatter to different classes, events, and extracurriculars, several faculty and staff members are busy with similar things. Everyone seems to be busy with something from overflowing study rooms to busy courts and fields. One place in particular, Christ Chapel, recently held a busy and exciting event that seemed to be buzzing all over the college campus, the TEDxNWC event. This event featured seven different speakers, all speaking on the topic of allegory and what that meant to them. The speakers involved were Tina Bakehouse, Kristin Brouwer, Dr. Jay Medenwaldt, Jessica Nibbelink, Martha Draayer, Kristi Huss and Dr. Robert Hubbard.

Tina Bakehouse's speech was entitled "Unleashing the Power of Narrative: How Storytelling Helps You Find Your Voice," and it uncovered an exciting and shocking truth: we are all built to be storytellers. "All of us can anchor in our confidence and be a magnetic storyteller who uses their voice, body, energy, and overall essence to make the impact they desire," Bakehouse said. "For stories to be impactful and tug at the audience's heartstrings however, they need strategy, structure, and style." She shared several stories in which her voice had been stripped from her which, ironically, taught her that she had a voice of

her own and she had stories to share. "What I wanted others to be aware of is we all have stories to share," she said. "We sometimes hold back and bundle up important, powerful stories inside of us because we care what others think, the fear prevents and holds us back. It takes true courage to speak our truths unapologetically." Not only was the event an experience for her audience, but she expressed just how much she enjoyed it herself saying, "This TEDx event was an extraordinarily empowering experience for me."

Another engaging speaker at the conference was Kristi Huss. Her speech was entitled "The Flipping Point: How to Reach the Flip Side of 'No I Can't' to 'Yes I Did.'" Within her speech, she approached the topic of never giving up on your dreams, even when things get hard. She used the acronym FLIP to describe the process of turning the negative into the positive.

The other speakers covered topics such as toxic leadership, the Enneagram, the solidarity of womanhood, presuppositions and doubt and lament. Each speaker had a load of knowledge to share with the audience that benefited everyone in attendance. If students missed the event, the recordings will be placed on YouTube for public enjoyment. The organizer of the event, history major Elena Lee, described the event as "a year's work in the making." She wanted to thank everyone involved saying, "The team and speakers worked incredibly hard to put together the event, and none of it would have been possible without each person's unique contributions and expertise."



PHOTO BY CLARA PAHL

TEDxNWC speaker, Kristi Huss, describes the process of flipping perspectives.

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Helpful tips to survive Humans vs Zombies

ZOMBIES RETURN TO CAMPUS

KARA VAN GENDEREN
NURSING

What's that? Zombies by Zwemer? Corpses outside of Coly! Dead walking around the DeWitt buildings? Nowhere is safe during the Student Activities Council (SAC)'s Humans vs Zombies event, returning to campus April 8-12. It is the perfect blend of chaos that can lead to relationships that last for years to come. The premise of Humans vs Zombies seems simple enough: stay human, but with some well-timed surprises. SAC guarantees it will be an amazing time you will never forget.

There are many strategies while competing in the fan-favorite event of Humans vs Zombies, and a few professionals from past years have offered up their best tips and tricks. Junior sports management-business major Noah Lopez started off with an easy but solid suggestion. "One tip is to try to stay in a group of other humans because you're stronger with numbers," Lopez said.

This is not only one of the biggest tips, but it is also one of the greatest benefits of the game. You get to know so many more people on campus. That is just one reason why people

like senior history major, Elena Lee, love this high-action game. "Humans vs. Zombies is a great way to shake up your normal school routine, meet new people, and develop some healthy paranoia," Lee said. "I would recommend planning out your routes, so you spend the least amount of time outside as possible and be ready for anything to happen."

Many participants from last year's game agree with Lee that you need to be ready for anything to happen. Sophomore theatre major, Jessica Schulmeister, attested to this when she was asked about the game. "I was only a human until 5 p.m. the first day, so the best advice I can give is to be careful of the cafeteria around supper time," Schulmeister said. "Zombies might be lurking in the lobby and run out to get you before you can reach safety."

Schulmeister is not the only one who fell victim to the zombies early on. The champion of last year's game, sophomore exercise science major Nathan Jensen was turned zombie only a few days in. "I got out two days in because I became cocky and went to the Peer Learning Center during an Apocalypse Hour," Jensen said. "To stay alive, always err on the side of safety. But being a zombie is super fun as well! Definitely my favorite SAC

event last year!"

How did Jensen win if he turned zombie on the second day? Well, SAC likes to make their scoring as creative as they can. For last year's competition, the participants were playing for their assigned houses. These houses were in a year-long competition to see which house could earn the most points throughout various events. For Humans vs Zombies, if you survived the five-day onslaught of zombies, you scored 15 points for your house. If you turned into a zombie, as Jensen did, you scored points by turning other humans into zombies. Jensen turned a remarkable 11 humans into zombies, rewarding him with 33 points for his house. This earned him the well-deserved title of champion and racked up the points for his house. This year's competition will look a little bit different since there are no houses to play for. Maybe you'll need to stay human in order to win. Maybe you'll need to eliminate the most humans to win. To find out, join the action coming up next week!

Humans vs Zombies is not just an afternoon commitment or an event every night. It is a full-time, schedule-adjusting, no-turning-back competition. Only the best of the best can survive to the end. Will you make it out alive?



PHOTO COURTESY OF UNSPLASH

One way to defend yourself against zombies is to shoot Nerf bullets at them.

Test your skills April 8-12 by joining the competition. Who knows, you might just be our next Humans vs Zombies champion.

Where are the student participants?

FROM PAGE 1

Many students might want to participate in NW programming but have other priorities that enable them to make college financially feasible.

An interesting correlation, but not causation, is the fact that there are more women than men involved with leadership opportunities on campus, even though there are more men than women in the undergraduate program. Bridge Center interns, Franken Fellows and Campus Ministry leadership are disproportionately represented by women, not because of a hiring bias, but because women make up most of the applicants. This could be due to male involvement with athletics, the plethora of Hospers events or the North Suites gaming epidemic, but the exact reason why men are not getting involved with student

leadership or opportunities is unknown.

The prospect of committing to a club for the entire year is daunting. From the way events and opportunities are advertised, it can seem like attendance is required to be a member, which can be unappealing at the beginning of the school year. However, many events are not as strict on year-round attendance as students may think. Some consistently attended opportunities are Spring Service Partnerships and home athletic games, which are low commitments or when students are on a break.

This suggests that students are interested in getting involved at times where they are not expected to be in class, or if they only must commit several hours of their time as opposed to the whole year or semester. In college, time is valuable, and many students choose to be frugal with how they spend it.

The previous rationales may paint students in an underachieving light, as if they are lazy for not diving into NW's many opportunities. While there may be an element of unintentionally, another possibility is that students are overworked and burnt out. Overprogramming, excess of schoolwork and Christian Formation opportunities during the evening lends itself to students not wanting to attend late-night events or spend an entire semester off-campus. However, every individual reason for not participating adds up to a common problem: fun, edifying and beneficial opportunities provided by NW are not receiving the attendance or attention that they merit.



PHOTO SUBMITTED

Many posters are seen throughout buildings hoping to draw attention to hopeful participants.

Staff, students prepare for fall ResLife changes

SMITH AND
CHRISTY SEE
CHANGES

KAYLEE BANDSTRA
PUBLIC RELATIONS

For decades since their establishment, dormitories Fern Smith (Fern) and Colenbrander (Coly) housed many young women and men, respectively, but that is going to change this upcoming fall semester. With Coly on the verge of being demolished, Fern is becoming a men's dorm, changing the name to Smith. But where will the young women of Fern go? On the north side of campus, many displaced Fern residents are planning to live in Christy Suites.

Natalie Wheeler has been the Fern resident director for four years, and Brian Follett has been the resident director of Coly for three years. Due to these changes, Wheeler and Follett will continue being resident directors – Wheeler to Christy and Follett to Smith.

Any variety of moving can bring questions, even if the move is only a block away. As Follett is preparing for the move, questions keep popping up in his head. "Obviously, there is the physical sense of

moving buildings. I am trying to figure out the logistics of housing the guys in a new building and thinking about what that is all going to look like," Follett said. "Then there are other questions such as: Will moving to Fern change the demographic of Coly? How will it feel different? What things do we want to bring over? What things do we want to start? What should we change? We are trying our best now to think about those questions to prepare ourselves well."

With a location change, the possibility of culture change arises as well. Follett wishes to maintain the Coly culture in Smith but wants to "tweak things as we go." Coly is currently the largest male dorm on campus, and Smith will take on that role next semester. The dorm's size helps increase the dorm's diversity. Many men in Coly are involved in various athletics and other activities. "The culture we try to shoot for is one that is welcoming to all and gives space to be yourself but also to branch out and see what other guys have to offer," Follett said. "I hope to continue that and grow that as we move to a new dorm."

Follett's favorite memories in Coly includes the spontaneous conversations. "The spontaneous moments

are always fun when guys group together in the halls to have random fun conversations," Follett said.

Follett also loves the planned events, such as Coly Hog Roast and Coly Christmas. The named events are not going to disappear, they are just going to be rebranded, with help from the Advanced Public Relations class.

While Fern and Coly residents are saying goodbye, there is also excitement from many students. The women in Christy will no longer share a communal bathroom and will instead share a jack-and-jill bathroom with at least three other residents. The men in Coly will no longer have communal showers – an aspect all of campus is excited for. According to current Coly resident Leo Costa, "it will be weird having men walking around in Fern. It is going to smell."

Wheeler is looking forward to a bigger apartment, and, according to Wheeler, as is her small and energetic dog, Oakley.

However, the Folletts plus their dog Ozzy will not have to squeeze into the tiny apartment in the north stairwell of Fern. Throughout this year, construction on the first north wing will create



PHOTO COURTESY OF NW MARCOM
Colenbrander "Coly" Hall will no longer house students next year.

a bigger RD apartment. Wheeler's current apartment will be transformed into a larger room, which upper class students can apply for occupancy.

Even for those not moving dorms or living spaces, everyone will have to adjust. Calling "Fern" by the name "Smith" can be a tricky transition for a majority of campus who have always known the dorm attached to

the cafeteria as Fern. Everyone will have to get used to the new Christy Suites building by North Suites.

The many hats of VB

FROM PAGE 1

duties that come as the Dean of the Arts and Humanities.

As the Dean of the Arts and Humanities, there are tasks VB may do on any given day. Such as, being on the search committee for new staff and faculty members of the department every year, conducting reviews for each staff and faculty member in the department and helping plan the budget for the year.

When asked what his favorite part of this position is, VB replied with: "The arts and humanities today in our society face headwinds, so when I can find ways to help arts and humanities

sail into those headwinds and face them with confidence by having the correct resources, it is rewarding." VB went on to explain how he accomplishes this by helping NW's faculty and staff face a new class or pick out a new major or program to get under way.

As VB is currently finishing his fourth year in this position, he has learned to "go with the flow" and accept the fact that each day is going to look different than the next. VB described the "unpredictability" as the most challenging part of being the Dean of the Arts and Humanities, but he would not change it. He

loves welcoming in any new staff and faculty members each fall, and he loves helping Jodi Grant from the theatre department run the IHSSA (Iowa High School Speech Association) contest each year. Another task connected to his position as the dean is being the Honors Program's co-director.

VB wears many hats around campus, but no matter which one he wears on any given day, a common theme is that he loves working with people. "It is my absolute joy to walk with and help support the students and faculty I get to work with every day," VB said.



PHOTO BY PRATIK PAUDEL
VonderBruegge loves creating connections with students.



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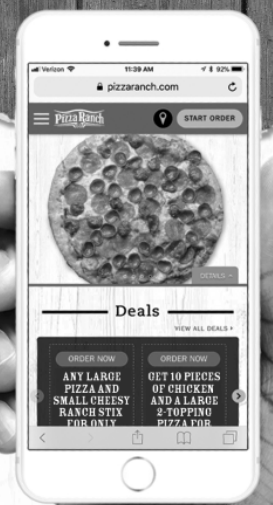
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38%

EDITOR'S TAKE:

We are looking at two of the most iconic NW professors today. Let's look at academic areas, history & education versus biblical & theological studies. VB takes the win in this category for me. Also, the title of Dean of Arts & Humanities is a tempting one to hold. Both of these professors have top tier office vibes, but Koerselman's office feels like an eclectic sanctuary. We also must consider the fact the VB is here working late into the night. Would I rather do that or go home and mother two small children? Probably, stay working if I'm being honest. Another thing to consider is how we would appear to the public. Miss Frizzle or Indiana Jones? Give me that magic school bus, I'll be riding with Dr. K on that adventure. For hobbies, I do not know much about how VB spends his time, but baking, roller skating and reading are all hobbies of Dr. K's that are enticing. What this question really boils down to is having access to Dr. Koerselman's closet. This is what makes her the big winner of this week's question. Sorry VB, you could never rock those golden boots the way Dr. K does.

xoxo, Jillian

The quotes expressed in these polls represent student opinion and is no way intended to indicate particular perspectives or beliefs of the beacon staff.

Be sure to follow the Beacon on Instagram to submit your own HOT TAKES!

Taylor Swift: more than an artist



Katie Hopkins
Nursing

Don't Blame Me but with women's history month just wrapping up, Taylor Swift will go down in the history books as one of the most influential women of our time because she is a mastermind. Before you skip this section because you are sick and tired of hearing about Taylor Swift and the NFL, pause for a second and breathe, and recognize she is not only a woman of class and style, but what she added to society is undeniable.

Her Eras Tour was the change big cities needed, boosting the economy post pandemic. Restaurants for a week had an influx of customers, hotels boomed in that city after the pandemic lull and concert-goers were also spending money on the fun outfits they would wear inspired by Taylor Swift's eras. Every city she stopped in, she donated a large sum of money to food banks of that city. She has visited children in hospitals when she is not

writing music or on tour. She has helped contribute to music education centers to help not only preserve music but offering learning programs to many people. Taylor is constantly donating to other charities and organizations to help struggling families.

Additionally, she is helping connect fathers and daughters in another way by dating football player, Travis Kelce. She is showing women that they do not have to be small while cheering on a loved one when they are doing something they are passionate about. You can cheer loudly, take up space and be confident while doing it. Taylor Swift is helping show the girl at home she is not alone, to never grow up, to keep dreaming big dreams and that they are gorgeous. You can find something you are passionate about and change the world while wearing a skirt or pantsuit.

Beyond any of the previous statements, her music is timeless. She can touch a wide audience crossing many genres of music which most artists do not. Some would criticize that all she writes about is her boyfriends and her exes, but she writes so much more than that. Her albums "Evermore" and "Folklore" are full of songs that tell stories about imaginary places she would create in her mind while she was trapped in her house during COVID. The song "Marjorie" is dedicated to her grandmother who passed away

who wanted her to accomplish her big dreams. The song "Ronan" was written about a real boy who passed away before his fourth birthday. So, before you say her songs do not have depth and substance, dive a little deeper. Other male artists are doing the exact same thing as her, writing about their life, past and current girlfriends and situations in their life.

Her songs are like nothing of this time, so much so that there are college classes dedicated to studying her music, showcasing her lyrical genius. So, call it what you want but Taylor Swift has had a bigger impact on society than you may realize. Please don't be mean to those who love Taylor Swift because to some women she is their Tom Brady. I will be anxiously waiting for her new album, "The Tortured Poets Department" to drop April 19, to see what this genius has in store. There might just be a song for everyone as Post Malone is being featured in the first song. And if you can find all 13 song titles, thanks for reading this fellow Swiftie.

Is competition cheer a sport?



Kate McEwen
Public Relations

While cheerleaders look glamorous and peppy with their pleated skirts and bows, there is much more going on behind the scenes. With rigorous and sometimes dangerous training and performances, I believe competitive cheerleading should be considered a sport.

For years cheerleading has only been looked at as what it's called, cheering, but in recent years, cheer has developed to become much more. The throwing and catching of girls, stunting multiple people in the air at the same time and tumbling extreme passes are a few components of cheer.

You can dissect cheer into ten categories: partner stunts, pyramids, basket tosses, standing tumbling, running tumbling, jumps, choreography, showmanship, execution and difficulty. Each section is graded harshly and by the decimal.

Perfection is scarcely reached as only the best in the nation come close to a 9.9 or even a 10. So, image trying to obtain anything close 10 on all categories.

Months are spent dedicated to each category to strive for perfection only for a two minute and 10 second routine. In cheer, you are based on one performance only for your score. If you mess up even the slightest part of a stunt, bobble on pyramid or a smile fade for too long, enough for a judge to notice, that could cost you first place.

Showmanship might be the most difficult to maintain in cheer. In all sports you are expected to play your best and you are based strictly on skill and who scores the most. Cheer is the same, who will score the highest. However, the biggest part of the routine is how you compose yourself. Cheerleaders are not allowed to look tired, mad or sweaty; cheerleaders are supposed to look composed, happy and perfect. If anything, cheerleaders do more than most athletes. On top of the same hours put into training, they must worry more about the composure of the face and body and how they will appear to judges.

Looking further, a big majority of the scoring is based on stunts, baskets and tumbling. Each stunt takes months to perfect, building the chemistry in a stunt group alone takes time along with figuring

out how to throw and catch for the flyer to stand perfectly in the air on only the hands of the bases. Along with that section, baskets are where flyers get launched in the air while they perform a flip or full twist in the air then come back down only a few seconds later to be caught. Cheerleaders also must make sure the catch and throw look perfect, or they will get deducted for execution on looking "sloppy" or not "sharp enough."

Cheer has developed over the years and the skills required to be viewed as ranked are becoming incredibly hard to maintain. I believe cheerleading should be viewed as a sport as the skills needed might be viewed as more mentally and physically demanding than any other.

If you do not believe competitive cheerleading should be considered a sport, I highly recommend you watch a competition or look back at the videos of Northwestern's team which just placed sixth at nationals. There are many characteristics to what a sport is, a textbook answer from the dictionary defines it as "an activity involving physical exertion and skill in which an individual or team competes against another or others for entertainment." I believe competitive cheer fits this category well.

Editor's Note

The opinions published both in print and online are the opinions of the authors only. Beacon staff members do not necessarily support the opinions expressed in this section. Research and editing (other than formatting) of articles is the responsibility of the authors rather than the editors.

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Final season of intramurals is in full swing

BACK AND BETTER THAN EVER

JESSICA MCCUBBIN
ART THERAPY

The third season of intramurals is about halfway done at Northwestern.

The sports that are competing are pickleball, slow-pitch softball and indoor volleyball.

The pickleball teams are at about 16 total, with two on each team, and with matches being on Mondays between 6:00 to 7:30 p.m., their season goes between March 18 to April 29.

They started their season on March 25 at the RSC in courts 2 and 3.

The slow-pitch softball teams have games on

Tuesdays at 6:00 pm, their season goes from March 19 to April 30.

They have six teams and have eight or more on each team.

The have games at Vets Park, by Unity Christian.

They started their season on March 26, starting at 6:00 and 7:00 at the North and South Softball Fields.

Indoor Volleyball takes place in the RSC between 7:00 and 10:00 on Wednesdays.

They will have a season from March 20 to May 1.

Teams have between three to nine people on their roster, with a total of six teams in the league.

Their games start on April 3 from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the RSC four-

courts, on courts 2 and 3.

For more information on the teams and where they are playing, see the intramural website at www.imleagues.com/nwciowa.

Be sure to show your support by showing up and helping them stand out.

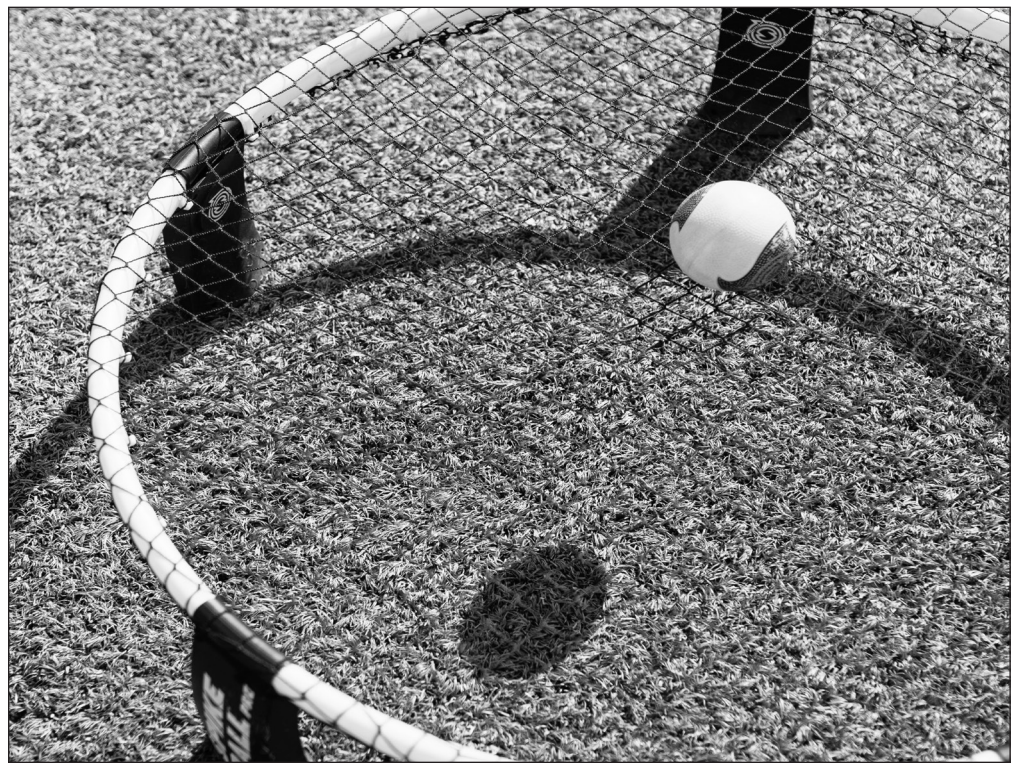


PHOTO COURTESY OF UNSPLASH
Intramurals start back up on campus.

Outdoor track and field starts off with a bang

AUTOMARKS ARE HIT BY BOTH TEAMS

ALEXANDRIA SQUIRE
BUSINESS ADM/GENERAL

After an exciting indoor track season coming to a close, the Northwestern track and field team are excited to now be participating in the outdoor arena for track and field events. The team's first meet took place at Wayne State University on March 28 and 29. The 60 degree weather offered an advantage that allowed for several athletes to make automatic qualifying marks on the men's team.

Automatic marks are set at the beginning of the season and if a person or team meets these marks during a normal season meet then they make it to state

automatically. The auto mark qualifiers for the NW Raiders for individuals were Braden Kalvelage placing second with a jump of 7.31 meters and Justin Gleason placing third with a 7.26 meters in the long jump, Ben Thelander in the javelin with an impressive throw of 57.02 meters, and team that made the provisional was the 4x100m relay made up of Braden Jahn, Grant Palmer, Vance Hayenga-Johnson and Ashton Sandbulte with a run time of 41.14.

On the women's team not only had 16 wins that placed in the top 10 places but among those were four amazing performances that resulted in the first place standings. These include the 4x100m relay team with Addison Wierda, Marissa Hackman, Caitlin Ostbye and Emma Blum

with a 49.18, 4x400m relay, Emma Blum in the women's 200m dash with a 26.69 and Kennedy Kramer in the women's 400m dash with a 57.56.

After this very successful meet the NW track and field team are in good spirits. The Raiders next meet will be at University of South Dakota in Vermillion, South Dakota on April 5 and 6 for the South Dakota Early Bird meet.

Then both the men's and women's track and field teams are going to Sioux City to compete in the Sioux City Relays on April 12 and 13. Then the first NW Raider home track and field meet will take place on April 19 and 20. This season is looking to be very successful and exciting to see how far the team goes this year.



PHOTO COURTESY OF NW MARCOMM
Track hits automarks in numerous events.

Raider softball and baseball are full of talent

WINS AND STATS TO PROVE IT

CHEYENNE SCHMIT
BUSINESS ADM/MKTG

Raider softball and baseball are having standout seasons this spring.

Softball has won 28 of the 30 games so far, with a promising season full of challenges from the number 18 ranked team, Grand View on April 9, and ranked number 10 Midland on April 27. There are 19 games between them and the Great Plains Athletic Conference (GPAC) Tournament on May 1.

Their statistics are also very impressive with

Kameryn Etherington leading the team's batting average at .468, with the runner-up being Tatum Schmalbeck at .403. Etherington also leads the team in hits with 36, not too far behind is Gwen Mikkelsen with 33. In terms of home runs, there is a three-way tie at two homeruns between Etherington, Mikkelsen, and Ravyn Krahey. Someone who leads in putouts is Chloe Gallegos with 145 and Randi Childress is behind her with 119. Mikkelsen leads the team in assists with 49, with Jori Hajek at 33.

Schmalbeck was also the first freshman this season to achieve the GPAC player of the week, as well as the American

State Bank Raider Athlete of the week. Etherington got the GPAC pitcher of the week.

The baseball team has a winning streak average in their 16 of their 31 games. They also have a challenging season ahead of them with the ninth ranked team, Doane on April 5. They also have 18 games between them and the GPAC tournament on May 2.

Their statistics are just as impressive with their batting average leader, Sam Stanford at .357, with his runner-up, Bryce Click at .338. Stanford also heads the team in hits at 40, with a tie between the runners-up, Luke Wroblewski and Mason Porepp at 28. As for homeruns, Porepp

leads the team with three, he also has runners-up in a three-way tie at two homeruns between Wroblewski, Drew Dykstra, and Stanford. In terms of putouts, Issac Short heads the team with 211, with his runner up over 100 behind him at 117 with Devin Dirck. Stanford leads the team with 39 assists and his runner up is Ranier Castillo with 34. Dykstra and Brad Tornow are tied with three wins apiece.

The seniors on both teams will leave huge shoes to fill when they graduate in May, especially those with statistics that lead the team.



PHOTO COURTESY OF NWC ATHLETICS
Raider softball and baseball are to have challenging seasons.

Beacon Staff Missing Princess emerges

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CONSPIRACY THEORIES PROVEN FALSE

TABITHA THATCHER
SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

Up until the royal announcement on March 22, stating that Kate Middleton had cancer, the Princess of Wales had been missing. Or at least missing from the public eye, leaving the internet speculating about what might have caused this sudden disappearance. These speculations began slowly after Middleton was admitted to the London clinic on Jan. 16. The following day, the palace announced that Middleton had undergone a planned abdominal surgery and that it had been “successful.” However, Middleton was not discharged until Jan. 29.

Numerous conspiracies began circulating about Middleton’s whereabouts, including speculations that the King was abdicating and a surprisingly popular theory that Middleton is the anonymous street artist Banksy,

since Banksy had not released work since Middleton’s “disappearance.” Interestingly, many of these theories were popularized by celebrities.

In response to Middleton’s absence, late night host, Steven Colbert, joked that Prince William, Middleton’s husband, had an affair. This was a widespread theory after the prince attended a fundraiser gala on Feb. 7 and the British Academy of Film and Television Arts awards on Feb. 18 without Middleton. On Feb. 27, the prince missed an annual royal event for “personal reasons,” according to the palace, leaving more questions.

Rumors reached an all-time high after Middleton shared a Mother’s Day photo on X, formerly known as Twitter, that was allegedly photoshopped. The photo was an image of Middleton sitting with her three children. Internet users were quick to point out the hands and hair of the children looked off. According to the Associated Press “the source had manipulated the image in a way that did not meet AP’s photo standards.” The next

day, Middleton released a statement saying, “Like many amateur photographers, I do occasionally experiment with editing,” implying that it was a simple mistake. However, this did not stop further speculations.

Soon, people began theorizing that Middleton was dead, replaced, or in a coma. Kim Kardashian posted a photo on March 12 captioned, “On my way to go find Kate.” After a video of Middleton walking through a farmers market went viral on March 18, Andy

Cohen wrote on X, “That ain’t Kate....” And on March 22, Cohen released a podcast episode where he discussed a theory that Prince William was having an affair with Rose Hanbury. The episode aired a few hours before Middleton’s announcement.

In a video released by BBC, Middleton shared that her absence was due to her recent cancer diagnosis. Although the type of cancer was not disclosed, it was discovered during her abdominal surgery, and she is undergoing

chemotherapy. She concludes by saying, “This of course came as a huge shock, and William and I have been doing everything we can to process and manage this privately for the sake of our young family.”

Most responses have been positive. Overall Middleton has received an enormous amount of support online from people wishing her health and healing during this very difficult time. But hopefully Middleton and her family are also allowed privacy to process and recover in their own time.



PHOTO COURTESY OF INDEPENDENT.CO.UK
Kate Middleton announces her cancer diagnosis.

Beloved Festival Of Culture returns

EXPERIENCE THE MANY CULTURES AT NW

THEA ANGELEE DAVIS
GRAPHIC DESIGN

Mark your calendars for Saturday, April 6 at 5 pm because Northwestern is hosting its biggest celebration of culture in the RSC 4-Courts: the Beloved Festival of Culture!

The vibrant celebration, hosted by the Bridge Center for Intercultural Development with the leadership of I-Club and the support of La Mosaic and Bridge Scholars, aims to foster a sense of inclusivity and appreciation for the different cultures on campus and in the community.

The event is open to all students and to the public. NWC students can get in with a meal swipe, while individuals ages 12 and up can buy tickets for \$13. Children ages four-11 get a discounted entrance fee of \$8, and those under three get in free. If you choose to only enjoy the performances, admission is just \$1.

Here’s a closer look at what the tickets include and what you can expect from this event: Cuisine from Around The World

A variety of meals from around the world will be served at the first hour of the event. Indulge your taste buds with food from Japan, Taiwan, South Africa, Haiti, Germany, The Netherlands,

Kenya, The Philippines, Nepal, South Korea, Venezuela, Italy, Brazil and Thailand—all available from 5 pm until 6 pm.

Aside from an opportunity to taste global food, tickets include free access to several fun activities offering little prizes. These include a game of soccer, a Henna tattoo station, a chance to take photos in a photo booth station with an assortment of hats and props, and “Plane Through The World,” a unique game where you fly paper airplanes through different-sized circular holes to win prizes.

As a bonus, all paid ticket holders will be entered into a free raffle for a gift. Raffle entry for students who entered with a meal swipe is \$1.

In addition to the free activities, there will be a small gift shop if you’d like to buy crochet keychains as a souvenir of this fun cultural celebration.

The Bridge Center is very thrilled to feature 12 performances from different groups. The festival kicks off with a fashion show, where participants (students, staff, faculty, and community members) will showcase outfits representing their culture, such as traditional attire and national jerseys. Moreover, attendees will be able to enjoy various song and dance performances. This includes excellent performances from NW’s three NCDC finalists: Just Jazz Combo, Second Rate Sound, and Divercity), a collaborative K-Pop dance number from some NW

and Dordt University students and a fantastic Dutch dance performance by several talented members of the community. Furthermore, attendees will also be treated to some exceptional performances by NW’s very own multi-talented student, Shion Lee.

There are numerous fun things to do at the Beloved Festival of Culture. Indeed, it is not just an event—it’s a celebration of the diversity of God’s beautiful creation.

With that in mind, save the date, spread the word, and get excited to join this wonderful cultural celebration!



PHOTO COURTESY OF NW MARCOM
Above are previous participants in the Beloved Festival of

Orange City

Hardware