

THE BURLINGTON BARK

Burlington, Iowa | Oct. 4, 2024



The stands of Bracewell Stadium are packed with purple Sept. 20, 2024, ahead of the varsity game against Mount Pleasant. The Homecoming game drew a larger than usual crowd that included a number of alumni from graduating classes spanning more than seven decades.

FOREVER A GRAYHOUND

Bracewell swells with purple pride as alumni come home.

BY ANIKKA COOK FOR THE BURLINGTON BARK

As crowds of spectators entered Bracewell Stadium on Friday, Sept. 20, dressed in matching purple “BHS Alumni” shirts, one thing became abundantly clear: this year’s Homecoming game was a true homecoming.

Alumni from graduating classes spanning seven decades returned to Bracewell Friday evening not only to watch but to participate in Homecoming festivities. Former cheerleaders, football players, choir members, and band members joined current Burlington High School students to perform and be recognized at the game — a new tradition BHS hopes to continue in the future.

“It was so nostalgic,” former cheerleader Samara Knotts, class of 2016, said of reuniting with old friends and cheering on the field again. “It’s like I never left.”

QUICK SIX

- 1. Oct. 7**
VIBE Blood Drive from 1:30 to 6:30 p.m.
- 2. Oct. 14 & 28**
School Board meets at 6 p.m.
- 3. Oct. 18**
No School
- 4. Oct. 22**
Family Resource Night from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.
- 5. Oct. 29**
Haunted Halls from 5 to 6:30 p.m.
- 6. Nov. 1**
No School

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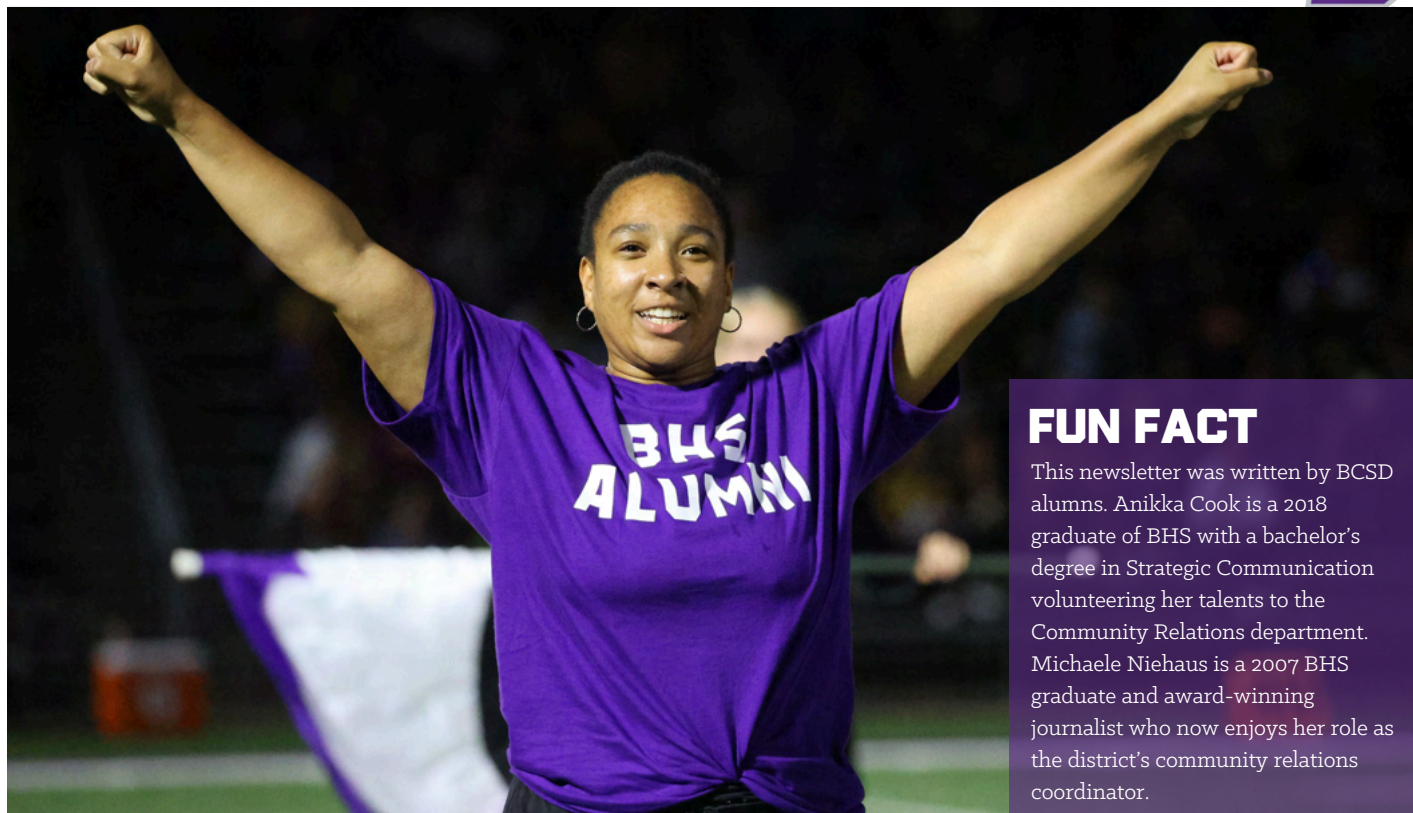
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THIS IS BURLINGTON



FUN FACT

This newsletter was written by BCSD alumni. Anikka Cook is a 2018 graduate of BHS with a bachelor's degree in Strategic Communication volunteering her talents to the Community Relations department. Michael Niehaus is a 2007 BHS graduate and award-winning journalist who now enjoys her role as the district's community relations coordinator.

Above: BHS Alum Samara Knotts performs alongside other alumni cheerleaders during the Grayhounds' Homecoming game against Mount Pleasant Sept. 20, 2024, at Bracewell Stadium. Below: Head football coach Jordan Webb, a 2011 graduate of BHS, smiles after the Grayhounds score a touchdown against Mount Pleasant during the Homecoming game.

Samara and her sister, Dionna Knotts, class of 2018, were among the 30 or so alumni cheerleaders who performed throughout the first half of the game. The squad stunted, jumped and cheered the fight song alongside current BHS cheerleaders.

As the alumni cheerleaders took the field, alumni football players were asked to rise and be recognized in the stands. Donald Hunt, class of 1979, described the experience:

"It's been fantastic. The food is great. The weather's great," Hunt said. "It's great to see the old friends and everybody like this." He joked, "Some of us stayed young; some of us are a little older."

Student Council Advisor and coordinator of the evening Sara Parris hopes to do more than just recognize alumni football players in the future and find a way to get even more alumni involved.

It was Parris who had the idea to invite alumni back for the Homecoming game.

"I wanted to try to make home games a thing for the community," Parris said.

With the help of the current football and cheerleading coaches and band and choir directors – all of whom happen to be BHS alumni – she was able to pull it off.

As a 2013 graduate of BHS herself, Parris participated in the alumni choir. After just one rehearsal, more than 40 choir members gathered around the iconic victory bell and sang the national anthem.



Parris described the rehearsal process. "(We) attempted to separate ourselves based off our sections, and everyone had a good laugh because most people aren't sopranos anymore."

The alumni band had its moment in the spotlight when they took the field with the current marching band for the pre-game show. More than 30 alumni members performed the fight song and other classic Burlington Marching Band cadences. As both the director of the band and a BHS band alum, the evening felt extra special to Derrick Murphy, class of 1986.

"It's still kind of a surreal experience even though I've been here for, like, 27 years. Sometimes, I pinch myself to believe I'm actually doing it. It's so cool," Murphy said.



Above: Alumni cheerleaders do one push-up for each point scored by the Grayhounds in their game against Mount Pleasant Sept. 20, 2024, at Bracewell Stadium during Alumni Night at Homecoming. Below: BHS alumni choir members sing the national anthem ahead of the Homecoming game. Bottom: BHS alumni perform alongside current members of the Burlington Marching Band.

With this year's large turnout and overwhelming success, Parris intends to keep the event running in years to come. She estimates a similar reunion will occur every three to four years.

Despite graduating decades apart, the Grayhound spirit of the alumni on that Friday night remained similar and unchanged.

"I feel like being a Grayhound, it brings so many people together," said Dionna Knotts. "We're all spread out. A lot of people have moved. They've gone and done different things with their lives. But as you can see, just with the alumni game, everyone's come back here and it's like, it's almost like a reunion. So many different generations, we all just come together as one and spend time together. I think that's what really it means to be a Grayhound."

Parris agreed.

"To be a Grayhound is to leave a legacy," said Parris. "You're a part of something."

That legacy was evident Friday evening as the Varsity Burlington Grayhounds defeated the Mount Pleasant Panthers 42-7. Students and alumni alike celebrated the victory.

Parris described the energy well. "Once a Grayhound, always a Grayhound."





Homecoming Parade Grand Marshal Geane Cleland looks at paradegoers lined up along West Avenue from the sun roof of a Jeep Rubicon being driven by Amy Kristensen Sept. 19, 2024, en route to Burlington High School.

CLELAND RETURNS AS GRAND MARSHAL

BY MICHAEL NIEHAUS/COMMUNITY RELATIONS COORDINATOR

On Sept. 19, Geane Cleland climbed into a silver Jeep parked in the staging area near where she used to work and waved at the crowd flanking West Avenue as the vehicle carrying the Homecoming parade's grand marshal made its ambling journey westward to Burlington High School.

The building she had spent so many years teaching in at the corner of West Avenue and White Street was gone, destroyed by fire in 2005, but the memories made there live on.

"That was my favorite place ever to teach," Cleland said of Horace Mann Middle School, where she taught eighth grade English Language Arts, among other subjects. "It was the best years of my career."

That's saying a lot for someone who spent so much time in schools.

"I tell everybody that I went to school for 60 years straight," Cleland said. "That's all I ever did. I loved it. I loved it until the day I retired."

Growing up in Ottumwa, Cleland never pictured herself doing anything else. Even as a young girl, she remembers playing school with her siblings. Every time, she played the teacher.

She taught in Albia, Iowa, and Mississippi schools for a total of 24 years before coming to Burlington in 1995. She spent her first year back in Iowa at Horace Mann, then moved to Sunnyside for a year, then James Madison before returning to Horace Mann.

She remained there until, at the request of then-Superintendent Dr. Michael Book, she took a position as an assistant principal at the high school in 2004.

"(When the fire broke out), my stuff was still in my old room because I had just been called to be a principal of the high school that year at the beginning of August," Cleland said, explaining she was in the process of getting her administrative degree at the time.

She remembers well seeing the smoke billowing into the sky on May 25, 2005.



A student represents “The Wizard of Oz’s” Lollipop Guild Sept. 19, 2024, during the Homecoming Parade while riding on a float made by the Drama Department and Music Boosters ahead of the BHS Drama Club’s fall musical. Monica Eisenmann, the mother of Naomi Eisenmann, who will play Glena in the musical, was instrumental in the making of the float and is among numerous parents who volunteered their time and skills to make the parade a success.

“We were at the high school when we saw the smoke, so Mr. Messenger, Mr. Turner and I drove over (from BHS to Horace Mann). We were standing out there just crying with smoke billowing out of that building because we all have such fond memories of that school,” Cleland said. “It was so heart-breaking when that place burned. It was just awful. So that was a bad memory. But the good memories I think are the plays. We just had a ball planning them.”

Each spring while Cleland, also a drama coach, was at Horace Mann, the eighth-graders would put on a three-part comedy that ran for two nights. They would spend the six preceding weeks preparing.

“It was just such a wonderful learning experience, and what was good about it is you don’t have to be a good reader to be in the play because you memorized the comedy,” Cleland said. “We had kids who could barely read, tried out for the play, did marvelous and it’s amazing how it improved their reading scores because, for some, it clicked and they got it.”

After about four years at BHS, Cleland accepted an assistant principal position at Oak Street, which was where she first met Sara Parris, a student at the time who now teaches engineering at the high school and is the Student Council advisor, among other things.

It was the Student Council that selected Cleland as the grand marshal for this year’s Homecoming parade.

“Any time Geane’s name was brought up in conversation, everyone would smile and respond with something kind,” Parris said. “Teachers would all have a story about how great she was at Horace Mann, Oak Street, Aldo Leopold, and BHS. Geane is a wonderful person who is kind and thoughtful.”

From Oak Street, Cleland went on to Aldo Leopold before taking on the principal position at Corse in 2015, from which she retired. She returned in various capacities following her retirement, filling in as a secretary at Corse and supervising student teachers. She also returned to Aldo for a time to fill in as an assistant principal.

She eased her way into retirement slowly and has found contentment as a voracious reader and casual mahjong player. She was surprised when she got the call from Parris about being this year’s grand marshal, an offer she accepted after being assured she wouldn’t have to give a speech. Her days of speaking at the front of the class, she explained, were behind her.

“I was really surprised, because I’ve been away for so long,” Cleland said.

But during her time as principal, she had hired many students with whom years ago she shared a moment of silence backstage before showtime, and just as she holds close fond memories of them, so do they of her.

'24 HoCo Court



Homecoming court, back, from left: Buxton Carlson, Raynard Woods, Matthew Mercer, Gavin Carlson, Jamar Carle, and Nehemiah Lewis, and front, from left: Annalise Buxton, Elaine Guyton, Sophie Brown, Adyson McCabe, Zoie Gaul, and Anabelle Albert.



Raynard Wood was crowned Homecoming King during an assembly Sept. 19, 2024, in the BHS gym. Raynard is the son of Juanita Williams. He is a member of the Student Council, FCA leader, Minority Scholars, Camp Counselor, helps with youth groups and various other volunteer services. He has participated in football, track and was a manager for wrestling. After high school, he plans to study Criminal Justice and Biblical studies. Elaine Guyton was crowned Homecoming Queen at halftime during the Grayhounds' game against Mount Pleasant Sept. 20, 2024, at Bracewell Stadium. Elaine is the daughter of Kurt and Amanda Rooney and Jason and Jennie Guyton. She has participated in swim team, tennis, wrestling, softball, marching band, pep band, concert and jazz band, orchestra, student council, bring change to mind, leo club, musicals and plays. She is also your current drum major. She is the Student School Board Representative and plays in the Burlington Municipal Band. After high school, she plans to attend the University of Iowa as a Music Education major and will audition for the Iowa Hawkeye Marching Band.



A rendering of the proposed performing arts center shows what the space could look like. On Sept. 10, voters approved a property tax increase to support the expansion of the auditorium at Aldo Leopold Intermediate School.

‘AWESOME PLACE TO BE PROUD OF’

Voters approve PPEL increase to support performing arts center.

BY MICHAELE NIEHAUS/BCSD COMMUNITY RELATIONS COORDINATOR

Burlington Community School District voters on Tuesday, Sept. 10, approved a levy increase of up to 67 cents per \$1,000 taxable valuation for up to five years that will make possible the transformation of the auditorium at Aldo Leopold Intermediate School into a district-wide performing arts center.

“We are so thankful to voters for getting out and supporting this measure and for the opportunity to bring such a high-level performing arts center to our area,” Superintendent Robert Scott said. “We look forward to the opportunities this will create for our students and our community.”

A total of 975 ballots were cast in the special election. Of those, 538, or 55.24%, were in favor of the measure.

“I’m super excited. It’s a victory for our kids, future kids and generations,” Burlington School Board President Darven Kendall said Tuesday night at the Des Moines County Courthouse after seeing the vote tally. “It’s a victory for our community and I’m so thankful for everybody who came out to vote and voted yes for us today. It’s been a long, long process with a lot of people working very hard to make this a reality.”

Among those involved have been the BHS Music Booster Club and music students, both current and former, who took to social media to campaign for the measure and made and posted signs encouraging people to vote in its favor.

“It was a team effort,” Board Vice President Anika McVay said.

The expansion will increase seating from 500 to 700 and include improved stage presence and acoustics, as well as improved accessibility. The expansion will be along the current auditorium’s south wall, allowing for seating to be installed up to about the end of the existing stage, which will be moved back further into the expanded space.

Other features and specifications for the project will be determined via input from staff, students and community stakeholders. The expansion will meet a need that has been discussed by community members since Burlington High School was built in 1969.

“This is the best chance for an auditorium in my whole time that I’ve been involved with this district,” board member Deborah Hatteberg said at the close of the Sept. 9 school board meeting. Hatteberg is in her third term on the school board and previously taught music in Burlington schools for 33 years.

Construction is expected to begin in the spring or summer of 2026.

“Our future generation of students are going to have an awesome place to be proud of,” McVay said.



Sixth-grader Charlotte Marlett smiles during Girls Group Sept. 17, 2024, at Aldo Leopold Intermediate School. Girls Group takes place twice a week during the lunch hour.

UNLEASHING GIRL POWER

BY MICHAEL NIEHAUS/COMMUNITY RELATIONS COORDINATOR

Every Tuesday and Thursday during the lunch hour, Cree Webb's office at Aldo Leopold Intermediate School fills with fifth- and sixth-grade girls skipping recess for Girls Group.

Lunch trays in hand, they pick a spot. For some, it's the couch in the far north corner. Others prefer one of the three tables nearest the door. Some settle into bean bag chairs and others sit criss-cross applesauce on rugs.

"This is their safe space," Webb said. "I tried to make it as girly in here as possible."

Seated below twinkle lights and a blanket-turned-banner displaying

messages of self-acceptance and grace, the girls dig into their lunch as Webb launches into the day's discussion. On this particular day, self-love was the topic.

"A big thing that we're going to work on in this group is loving ourselves, regardless of what people say to us, regardless of what people think about us," Webb said. "You are all wonderful in your own way, so regardless of what the world thinks — because sometimes the world is going to be hard on you — we are going to learn to love ourselves a little bit more and different ways to love ourselves. But the flip side of that is also to put out what you're getting."

With that, Webb planted in their young minds a seed that quickly



Above: Cree Webb, a social services specialist and 2007 graduate of Burlington High School, stands in front of the “Take What You Need” board Sept. 19, 2024, in her office at Aldo Leopold Intermediate School. The board is filled with notes written by students that are available to anyone in need of a kind word. **Below:** Friends Austyn Deutch and Avery Irish share a laugh Sept. 17, 2024, during Girls Group.

took root and sprouted in the form of heartfelt flattery and words of encouragement. The girls began to exchange phrases like “Yas, queen” and “baddie” (which means good unless used in reference to the bad guys in video games). No longer were they holding back; they were speaking their minds and they had good things to say. A girl’s girl culture was beginning to bloom.

“I feel like a lot of women, young girls in general, struggle to be girls’ girls,” Webb said. “Like they compare or they just don’t feel good about themselves, and so I really decided just to build a culture where we are girls supporting girls.”

A GROWING GROUP

Webb, a social services specialist for Aldo who also happens to be a 2007 Burlington High School graduate, first launched Girls Group five years ago in an effort to provide outreach to girls who were identified as struggling by either social workers or the Panorama social-emotional learning assessment.

That changed following the Iowa Legislature’s adoption of a new law in 2023 that made such assessments more difficult to administer. Without the assessment tool, Girls Group became open to any girl who wanted to be in it, so long as they had a signed permission slip from a parent.

The resulting turnout showed that word had spread and interest had grown. In the program’s first year, about 15 students regularly



attended Girls Group. By the end of the 2023-24 school year, that number had grown to about 70.

Not only was the group larger, but it had also grown more diverse.

“We have really high-functioning girls, we have low-functioning girls, we have everybody, which I think helped them feel comfortable to come,” Webb said. “They feed off of each other, so I think being able to allow anybody who wanted to be in it to join was really a good shift for Girls Group. We still get the girls with low self-esteem, but then they’re mixed with girls who have high self-esteem who are doing well in school, and they might foster some healthy relationships out of that.”



Seventh-graders Maleah Gilbert, Mya Wells and Jaziah Carter pose for a photo Sept. 24, 2024, in the library at Edward Stone Middle School. They learned lifelong lessons while in Girls Group last year, and highly recommend it for current and future fifth- and sixth-graders.

FINDING SISTERHOOD AND SELF

As the year progresses, Webb notices a change in the girls who attend Girls Group. They begin to hold themselves and their peers to a higher standard.

“It starts with me holding them accountable, and then you’ll see a shift where they are holding each other accountable,” Webb said. “They kind of wear the invisible Girls Group badge with honor, and I think that’s so cool when I can kind of pass the baton and they’re handling it.”

“It was like a sisterhood,” Maleah Gilbert, now a seventh-grader, recalled fondly of Girls Group while seated at a table in the library of Edward Stone Middle School, where she was joined by fellow seventh-graders and Girls Group grads Jaziah Carter and Mya Wells.

“And Ms. Webb, she’s like the mom of the family,” Carter added.

The three said they learned a lot in Girls Group, not just from Webb, but also from their peers, their experiences and how they cope.

“I would, like, always have self-esteem problems about how I looked and stuff like that, and being in there, in Girls Group, it helped me,” Gilbert said. “I learned about how other girls handle their problems and how I can handle mine.”

The three also said they learned a lot about themselves, that it’s important to show themselves the same kindness they show others, and that nothing — not boys nor friends — should come before their education.

“If I could tell my fifth grade self something, I would definitely tell her don’t listen to what nobody got to say (about you), always just get your work done, stay on task, love yourself, you’re beautiful just the way you are,” Gilbert said.

She had a similar message for current and future fifth- and sixth-graders: “I would tell them, like, y’all should really do your work, stay on task, get your grades done. Don’t worry about boys, don’t worry about friends, because people come and go in your life and that’s the last thing you should be worried about. Worry about yourself, worry about your grades and remember that you’re beautiful just the way you are.”

A SAFE SPACE TO TALK ABOUT TOUGH STUFF

Gilbert, Carter and Wells had a lot of fun in Girls Group. They enjoyed Girls Group parties, their trip to a nursing home where they painted residents’ nails while visiting with them, and the competitions between Girls Group and its boy counterpart, Man Club, which is led by student success advocate Antonio Redd.



Fifth-grader Arrielle Enhorning smiles while eating her lunch after participating in an ice-breaker activity Sept. 19, 2024, during Girls Group in Cree Webb's office at Aldo Leopold Intermediate School.

But it's not all fun and games. As the year progresses and Webb gets better acquainted with the girls, she is able to recognize their struggles. Sometimes, those struggles align with the latest social trend; other times, they're more unique.

"Even for the girls who seem OK, who are in sports, who are good in school, you'd be surprised how many worries they have behind all the things they do," Webb said. "They're great students, but they still need to come to Girls Group and share the things that they're struggling with and be human and then go back out and give it all they've got."

She starts the year by building a foundation of self-love and gradually moves onto more complex topics, such as healthy relationships, dating (and why they should wait a few more years before they start dating), social media safety, and the importance of always putting school first. Her lessons are responsive to the Girls Group members, and she adjusts quickly if more pressing issues arise.

Through it all, no matter the topic, Girls Group remains a safe space.

"We know girls struggle, teenage girls struggle, adults struggle, so Girls Group exists to have a safe space where we can talk about girl things without being judged and embrace being a girl," Webb said.

WRITER'S NOTE

One day, early on in my time with BCSD, I was coming out of the stairwell at Edward Stone Middle School when a girl randomly complimented my appearance. My initial reaction was panic. Did I have a stain on my shirt? Had the eyebrows I had so carefully drawn on that morning been smudged by my glasses yet again while I was taking photos?

I found my way to a mirror, relieved to see that everything appeared to be in order.

The next time I was at Stone, it happened again. This time, I didn't panic. These girls, I quickly began to realize, were simply being nice. Things had changed since my middle school days (not that my peers were mean, but I don't recall anyone, myself included, being particularly quick to dish out compliments).

I would leave the middle school after these encounters feeling just a little more confident, and soon I found myself looking for things to compliment other women on in the hopes of filling their cups as the students at Stone had done for me.

Sitting in Girls Group for this story more than a year after that initial exchange, it became clear where at least part of this contagious positivity had taken hold.

PIECES RECEIVES STARS AWARD

PiECES Afterschool Program has been awarded the 21st Century Community Learning Community's STARS Award for All-Around Achievement in 2023-24.

These awards are determined based on statewide local evaluation data collected each year. A snapshot of Burlington's data is below:

- 85% of students in grades 4-8 with data exhibited growth in Reading and/or Language Arts.
- 88% of students in grades 4-8 with data exhibited growth in Mathematics.
- Total Academic Improvement: This shows that ALL students are prioritized for improvement.
 - 88% of all students with data needing improvement exhibited growth in Reading/English.
 - 92% of all students with data needing improvement exhibited growth in Mathematics.

The program also held seven family engagement events last year. Way to go to all of our PiECES staff, students and families!



BCSD AWARDED \$10K TO HELP STUDENTS

Burlington Community School District is among 25 districts in the state of Iowa to be awarded competitive grant money to help meet basic needs of students experiencing homelessness.

BCSD will receive \$10,000 toward this effort. That amount is a portion of \$424,400 Resource Hub and Transportation Grants for Students Experiencing Homelessness monies awarded to districts throughout the state with the goal of helping districts address barriers that may prevent students from getting to and attending school by connecting them to critical resources.

“The transportation and basic needs of students who are displaced or experiencing homelessness should never be a barrier to school attendance and full participation in educational and enrichment programs,” Iowa Department of Education Director McKenzie Snow said in a press release. “We commend the awardees for their leadership in meeting the diverse needs of students and families experiencing homelessness to reinforce student success.”

The money BCSD receives will go toward the creation of school

resource hubs located in each school building so students experiencing homelessness can access basic necessities. Fund uses include personal hygiene supplies, clothing, food, emergency supplies, and other items.

Staff will be able to access these items and supplies for students when needed.

The district also still operates the Community Closet that was created last year at James Madison Education Center largely made possible by a fundraiser put on by the Greater Burlington Leadership Class of 2023. The closet also has benefitted from numerous donations from community members.

Funds for the Resource Hub and Transportation Grants for Students Experiencing Homelessness are provided through the Iowa Department of Education's portion of state set-aside funds through the [American Rescue Plan - Homeless Children and Youth \(ARP-HCY\)](#) to support the specific needs of children and youth without housing in attending school and fully participating in school activities.

MCINTIRE TAPPED TO MANAGE GRANTS

BY MICHAEL NIEHAUS/COMMUNITY RELATIONS COORDINATOR

Sibyl McIntire has been named the new grant coordinator for Burlington Community School District.

McIntire, who has nearly 10 years of experience managing grant-funded programs and writing grants at Southeastern Community College, will take on her new role Oct. 14.

“It is my greatest desire to impact students in our community, and moving into the position at BCSD seemed to be a perfect match,” McIntire said. “I will be able to not only assist the school district in meeting the needs of students and families, but be able to identify areas of opportunity to secure new funding for future projects. My desire to assist students in accessing educational services to be successful in reaching their personal goals fits into the mission of the school district. I’m honored to be able to serve students and families in this new role.”

McIntire will take the place of Cassie Gerst, who accepted a position as an implementation specialist for Conscious Discipline after nine years with BCSD.

“I want to thank Cassie Gerst for her years of dedication and service to our District and for her continued support of our programs during this transition period,” Curriculum Director Cory Johnson said. “Also thanks to the staff members who have taken on additional responsibility and leadership during the transition.”

In her new role, McIntire will manage grants the district currently has, including those that support BCSD’s YouthNet programs, such as PiECES Afterschool, Club M, and GEAR UP Iowa. She will also seek out additional grant opportunities to provide and sustain services for Burlington students.

McIntire is no stranger to the district, having worked alongside numerous Burlington High School graduates to help them navigate the college landscape in her position as the project director for TRIO Student Support Services for SCC’s West Burlington and Keokuk campuses for the past nine years. The TRIO program serves first-generation students who want to complete their degree at SCC and continue to a four-year college to earn their bachelor’s degree.

“I get to meet so many students from the Burlington Community School District and I hear such great stories and great experiences from the students,” McIntire said of her time at SCC.

McIntire grew up in Clark County, Missouri, and graduated from the University of Iowa with degrees in Political Science and Communication Studies. She has a passion for advocacy.

“With my background in political science and policy, I have an



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SIBYL MCINTIRE, INCOMING GRANT COORDINATOR

absolute love and desire to ensure that our students understand how they, as citizens, can really engage with their elected officials and tell their stories and tell how important it is to have (educational) programs in our communities and how their educational experiences are meaningful,” McIntire said. “That helps elected officials and leaders in our community understand how all students need access to education regardless of what their address is or where they live.”

She also holds a master’s degree in Psychology from the University of Phoenix, where she worked as an enrollment manager. She went on to accept a position at Buena Vista University, where she worked with Graduate and Professional studies programs before returning to her hometown, where she and her husband live with their two teenage sons on her family’s farm.



Eighth-graders are shown during an assembly Sept. 26, 2024, to celebrate National GEAR UP Week at Edward Stone Middle School.

GEARING UP FOR COLLEGE READINESS

BY ANIKKA COOK FOR THE BURLINGTON BARK

The Burlington High School class of 2029 gathered Thursday, Sept. 26, under a banner of their own colorful handprints spelling out “GEAR UP.” As they smiled for their official class picture, Edward Stone Middle School staff launched red, white, and blue balloons into the air to mark the commencement of Burlington’s first National GEAR UP Week celebration.

GEAR UP is a federally funded college preparation program that stands for Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs. As one of 13 schools selected across Iowa to receive a GEAR UP grant, 8th grade students and staff at Edward Stone spent Sept. 23-26 celebrating and raising awareness.

“GEAR UP Week was something new this year to the grant,” said Ivy Tranter. “We got a lot of creativity in what we got to do for the activities.”

Tranter is the district’s GEAR UP coach. She’s responsible for

managing and coordinating the GEAR UP grant. Formatted to be given to a class of students instead of a building, the grant follows one class through graduation. Burlington’s class of 2029 was selected last year as seventh-graders, and Tranter will follow them to the high school next year.

Now eighth-graders, the cohort of GEAR UP beneficiaries celebrated National GEAR UP Week by dressing up and participating in contests like pennant decorating, word scrambles, and scavenger hunts.

Student Ericka Osborn won first place in black and white Pennant Design. She wrote out the sheet music for one of her favorite songs, “25 Or 6 To 4” by Chicago, on her pennant.

“It was really fun,” said Osborn. “If you have the chance to do it, I would recommend it.”

Kimberly Bickel also won a prize for completing the word scramble.



Ericka Osborn poses for a photo Oct. 1, 2024, while holding up the prize she won for placing first in the black and white Pennant Design contest held during National GEAR UP Week at Edward Stone Middle School. Below is Osborn's design.

"It was based off of college things like tuition or classes that you have," said Bickel. "Things that you do in college."

The girls agreed on their favorite part of the week: seeing their teachers dress up.

"The best '90s outfit ever had to go to Miss Marshall," said Osborn. "She had the hair, she had the outfit, she had everything... I love her!"

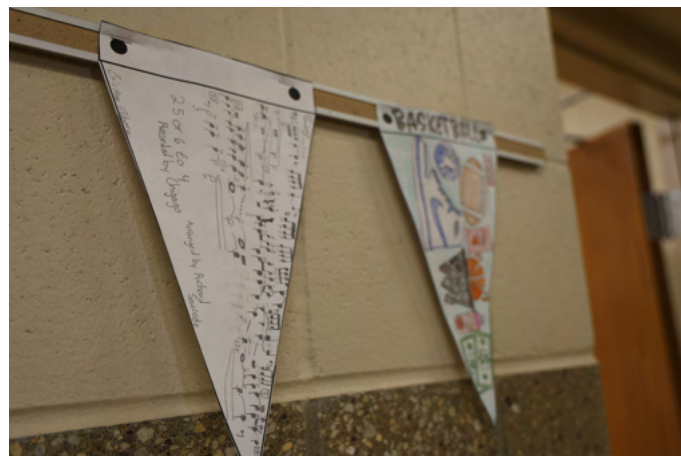
"The best outfit I saw was an American outfit, and Mrs. Smith had it," said Bickel.

Osborn agreed. "It was so fire!"

Each day of the week was a different college preparation-themed dress-up day. Themes included "I Will Make History" (decades day); "Our Future is Bright" (neon day); "25 Years of GEAR UP" (red, white and blue day); and "College Spirit" (college attire day).

The week wrapped up with an assembly Thursday afternoon where students heard college advice and stories from their own teachers. Iowa GEAR UP facilitator Christine Nguyen attended.

Nguyen described the program: "We help support college and career access for schools. Our schools are needing to meet 50% free and reduced price lunch. Essentially, the intent is to help bridge those academic gaps and help support college and career access."



Since becoming a part of the GEAR UP program in February 2024, students already have received more than 60 hours of after-school tutoring and career exposure and participated in summer programming like Camp Journey and KidTekU.

Tranter plans to continue and increase career and college exposure for the class this year. Plans include visits to the University of Iowa and other local schools as well as informational spotlights on both healthcare and Career and Technical Education industries as preparation for Burlington High School's career programs next year.

In some ways, Tranter and the GEAR UP program also function as a bridge between the Burlington community and Burlington students.



GEAR UP Iowa coach Ivy Tranter stands before an auditorium full of eighth-graders Sept. 26, 2024, ahead of an assembly to celebrate National GEAR UP Week at Edward Stone Middle School.



Eighth-graders decorate a GEAR UP banner with painted handprints Sept. 24, 2024, at Edward Stone Middle School.

“I bring in local community members to do career visits and talk about different ways that you can be in a certain field... and make a career out of it,” said Tranter. “At this point, we’re also getting into the age where the students are able to start applying for jobs in the next year. So going forward, we will be exposing them to local careers that maybe they can start working at [soon].”

In addition to the support and exposure the GEAR UP program provides for students, it will also provide scholarships to class of 2029 students who attend Title IV eligible undergraduate programs and maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP). More



The finished GEAR UP banner is shown Sept. 26, 2024, during an assembly at Edward Stone Middle School.

information on these scholarships can be found [here](#).

As the eighth grade students at Thursday’s assembly laughed and popped loose balloons, they might not have been thinking about their college and career decisions. They were, however, experiencing just one moment in a multi-year journey designed to set them up for success well beyond high school graduation.

This GEAR UP Week was the first of many, and the class of 2029 will continue to see increased college support and career opportunities for years to come.

GRIMSHAW JOINS WALL OF FAMERS

BY JAY HUFF/ACTIVITIES DIRECTOR

On Sept. 6, between the freshman/sophomore and varsity games against Washington, a new Wall of Famer was recognized.

Brett Grimshaw is a 1984 graduate of Burlington High School, where he earned numerous accolades that would set the stage for a stellar career.

He was named All-Conference and was recognized as an All-State running back in 1982 and 1983.

Grimshaw also excelled in other sports. In track and field, he led off the 4X100 relay team that placed third at the Drake Relays, and he placed fourth in the state shot put. His talents were also on display on the baseball field, earning all-conference and all-state honors.

After graduating high school, Grimshaw attended Western Illinois University, where he was voted Outstanding Freshman, Sophomore and Junior Player of the Year for his team and earned All-Conference in 1987 and 1988.

Grimshaw was also named Gateway Conference player of the week during the 1988 season. That same year, he was honored as Team MVP and served as team captain, guiding his team with both his athletic prowess and inspiring leadership.

He set several records during his college career, including the most receptions by a running back in a single season (104) and the All-Time Leader in Receptions at the time of his graduation. His name also ranks prominently in the record books for All-Purpose Yards (#8), Career Scoring (#6), Career Receiving (#10), and Career Rushing (#6). His accomplishments on the field were not only remarkable but also enduring, leaving a legacy of excellence that would be remembered for years to come.

After college, Grimshaw spent time with the Cincinnati Bengals, marking the continuation of a storied athletic journey. But his contributions didn't end with his playing career.

Returning home, Grimshaw embarked on a new path with the Des Moines County Sheriff's office, where he served for more than 30 years until his retirement.

His commitment to his community extended beyond law enforcement; he dedicated his time to coaching youth in football, softball, and baseball, shaping the lives of countless young athletes.

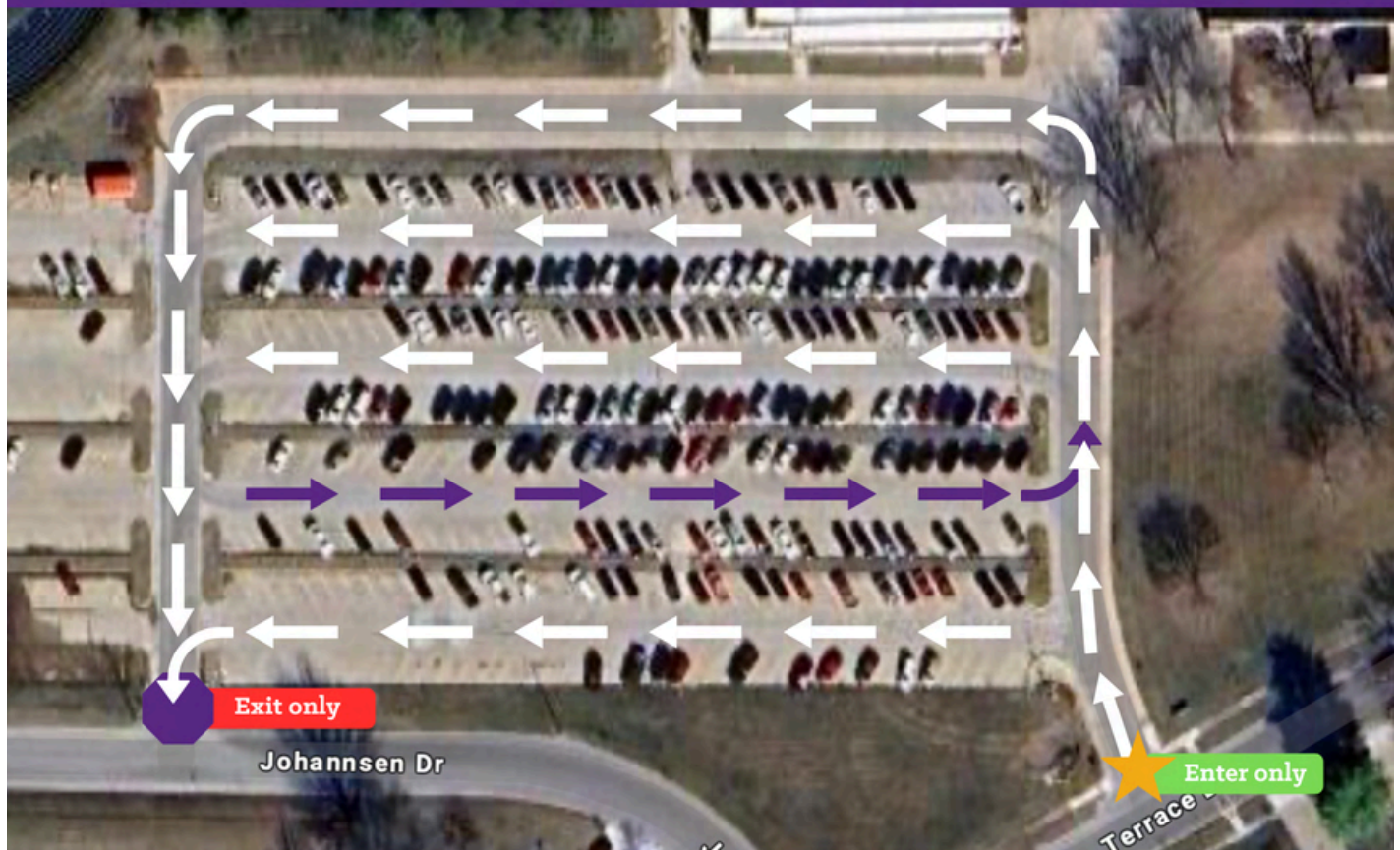
Grimshaw was accompanied by his wife, Kerry, and his parents, George and Marty Grimshaw. Brett and Kerry have two children, Garret and Brittanie, both of whom were outstanding athletes for the Grayhounds, Garret in football and wrestling and Brittanie in softball, basketball and soccer. Garret is serving overseas in the U.S. Navy, and Brittanie lives in California, where she works as an engineer.



Brett Grimshaw is inducted into the Bracewell Wall of Honor Sept. 6, 2024, at Bracewell Stadium. [Photos by John Lovretta/The Burlington Beacon]

NEW BHS TRAFFIC FLOW

EFFECTIVE MONDAY, OCT. 7



BCSD KICKS OFF 2ND SCARY STORY WRITING CONTEST

Calling all horror aficionados and aspiring fright-masters! Unleash your imagination in our second annual spine-chilling scary story writing contest.

Entries will be accepted through Oct. 16. Submissions should be made via [this Google form](#).

This contest, organized and judged by district staff, English teachers and Burlington High School's Creative Writing Club, is open to all Burlington students, with categories divided by building level.

Participants may choose from the following prompts, or come up with their own:

Grades K-4: 500 words max

- You get lost in the woods and encounter a strange creature. What happens next?
- A ghost lives in your classroom! (Is it good or evil?)

Grades 5-6: 750 words max

- You are the captain of a ship that is caught up in a storm. There is something BIG lurking in the water.
- You time travel to the future, and it doesn't look good.

Grades 7-8: 1000 words max

- A slasher serial killer is on the loose! No one is safe!
- You get abducted by vampires.

Grades 9-12: 1500 words max

- You walk into your abandoned childhood home. It's exactly the same, except there is something not right about it.
- An unknown virus is being spread around the world... (Zombies? Plague?)

Winners will be announced Oct. 28. Winning entries will be published in a digital book of scary stories. Check out last year's winning entries and student artwork in the first edition of "[The Grayhound Graveyard](#)" at [bclds.org](#).

BURLINGTON ACTIVITIES DEPT.

To view the Activities schedule, [click here!](#)

THE RECAP



UPCOMING EVENTS

BURLINGTON COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

- Oct. 14 - School Board Meeting at 6 p.m.
- Oct. 18 - No School (Professional Development)
- Oct. 21-25 - School Bus Safety Week
- Oct. 22 - Family Resource Night from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. at North Hill Elementary School
- Oct. 28 - School Board Meeting at 6 p.m.
- Nov. 1 - No School (Professional Development)

BURLINGTON HIGH SCHOOL

- Oct. 10 - Parent-Teacher Conferences from 4 to 7 p.m.
- Oct. 28 - Fall Orchestra Concert at 7 p.m. at Edward Stone Middle School

EDWARD STONE MIDDLE SCHOOL

- Oct. 8 - Parent-Teacher Conferences from 4 to 7 p.m.
- Oct. 24 - Fall Band Concert at 7 p.m.
- Oct. 28 - Fall Orchestra Concert at 7 p.m.
- Oct. 29 - Haunted Halls from 5 to 6:30 p.m.

ALDO LEOPOLD INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL

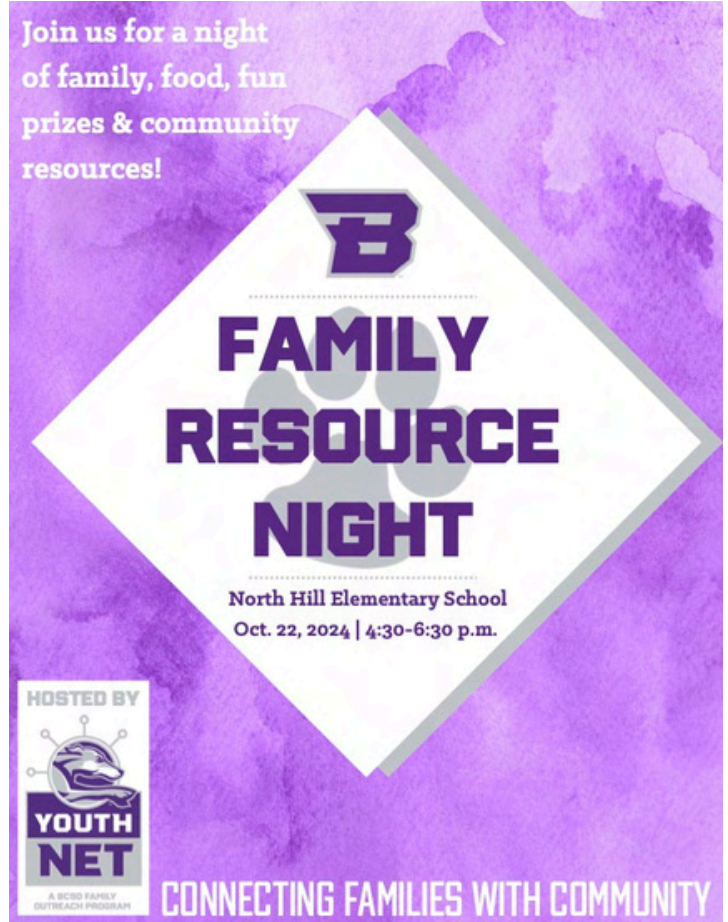
- Oct. 29 - Parent-Teacher Conferences from 4 to 7 p.m.
- Oct. 29 - Picture retakes

VIBE VIRTUAL LEARNING PROGRAM

- Oct. 7 - Blood drive from 1:30 to 6:30 p.m.
- Oct. 11 & 25 - Optional in-person K-8 activities from 1-3 p.m.
- Fridays: Drop-in help for grades 7-12 from 9 a.m. to noon

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS & CORSE EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

- Oct. 17 & 22 - Elementary Parent-Teacher Conferences from 4 to 7 p.m.



AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

[Click here to view the PiECES Calendar and activities!](#)

Saturdays with PiECES

- Chess Club: Oct. 19 from 9 a.m. to noon at the Burlington Public Library
- Brick Masters: Oct. 12 & 26 from 10 to 11 a.m. at the Burlington Public Library
- Starr's Cave with PiECES: Oct. 18 from noon to 2 p.m.

NO PiECES

- Oct. 18 & Nov. 1

CONNECT WITH US!



@BurlingtonCommunitySchoolDistrict

@bcsdgrayhounds

AT BCSD, WE ARE RAISING GRAYHOUNDS!



BURLINGTON COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT NONDISCRIMINATION NOTICE

It is the policy of the Burlington Community School District not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, religion, creed, age (for employment), marital status (for programs), sexual orientation, gender identity and socioeconomic status (for programs) in its educational programs and its employment practices. There is a grievance procedure for processing complaints of discrimination. If you have questions or a grievance related to this policy please contact the district's Equity Coordinators at the District Administrative Office, 1429 West Avenue, Burlington, IA 52601; (319) 753-6791.

For Educational Programs: Cory Johnson, Director of Curriculum, cory.johnson@bcstds.org

For Employment: Laci Johnson, Director of Human Resources, laci.johnson@bcstds.org