

Falcon Print



Counting from the past

It's amazing that DC West High School is hitting the 20-year mark. That's a milestone worth celebrating. As our school approaches its 20th anniversary, there's many old stories being told and much excitement in the air. It's not just about marking time; it's about celebrating the community, the learning, and the shared memories.

The goal is to make this anniversary a memorable event that honors our school's past, celebrates its present, and looks forward to its future.

"Tradition at our school is a big thing," says DC West Superintendent Melissa Poloncic. "Through homecoming week, parents, students, little kids and big kids all come together to celebrate that tradition because it's something that brings joy to the whole community, and I think that's what DCW is all about."

By bringing together alumni, students, faculty, and staff, we hope to create a sense of unity and pride that will last for years to come.

"When you have a consolidation between Waterloo and Valley, like what happened 20 years ago, anytime you bring schools together sometimes it's hard to keep those older traditions alive," principal Jim Knott said.

To make this reunion truly special, we're making new traditions. During our homecoming game, the plan is to throw a reunion, bringing back alumni from the 2005-2006 graduating class, which is our first ever graduating class. It also happens to be their 20th year from graduating high school.

“ The 20th anniversary is a monumental thing because there has been a lot of building and growing, and coming together as a community and really putting our name on the map,” Poloncic said.

During halftime, a group of our graduates will be inducted into the DC West Hall of Fame. They will join the other graduated alumni and be presented at the center of our new athletic complex football field.

“I heard many people give positive responses after our first home football game, even though it didn't go the way we wanted,” Principal Jim Knott said. “I think people have a lot of pride in our community, and I think people supporting us were proud that we can support this facility.”

The new athletic complex is a sign of growth in our community. Times have changed, so recognizing our past graduates in our new field will hopefully bring a sense of gratitude and hope for what has been built upon in these past years, and hope for what's to come next for this school!

From recognizing these graduates, our staff plans to continue this trend to present future classes when their time comes around. It's a chance to reflect on how far we've come and to reaffirm our commitment to providing a quality education and community for generations to come.



By Ava Newbauer and Adisan Jeffery

Senior Spotlight



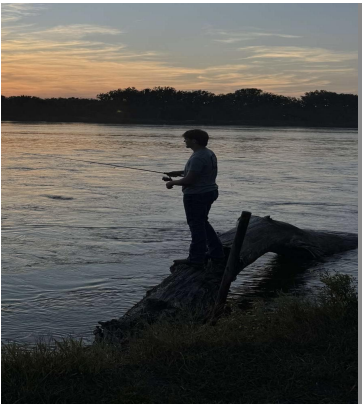
**Jetta
Sattem**



**Barrett
Hinrichs**



**Anella
Pralle**



**Cade
Listenberger**

Introducing this year's 2026 graduating students
Written by Parker Steskal and Mallory Shaw

Starting the year off strong, we picked four seniors to interview about the start to their senior year. As the fall sports were beginning, we chose two athletes – Jetta Sattem from the volleyball team and Barrett Heinrichs from the football team, to talk about their involvement with the DC West community. To continue reading this article, go to Page 6..

Falcon Fuel



DC West Coach Making History

Written by Adisan Jeffrey

Congratulations to Coach Bob Wald for 500 career victories! During Wald's career he's always dreamt of winning. This season the Falcons have started out with a record of 3-3. But their 5th game this season was extra special to Coach Wald; he hit one of the biggest milestones in his coaching career that most aren't able to do. With the help of a win over one of our biggest school rivalries, Syracuse, the Falcons soared and fought hard with a two set victory, where junior Kinley Nelson led the team in kills (7), and senior Abby Rayer in digs (13). This season the Falcons are ranked 3rd in the district with hopes to climb to the top. The Lady Falcons work hard to achieve anything they put their minds to whether it's coming in after school, practice during the summer, and putting in the time in the weight room. One thing Wald makes sure of in any team he coaches is that they "play with energy, effort, and attitude. Those are all things you can control and do not require any talent."

Wald has been a part of the Douglas County West Falcons for 20 years now. Wald's career didn't just start at DC West, he also taught at Elgin Pope John High School where he also served as the head volleyball coach for two years. When Wald moved to Omaha, he then started teaching and coaching again at Waterloo High School for 12 years before the merge of Waterloo and Valley. Wald was named head Coach for the Falcons and has spent the last 20 years there. Wald isn't just a volleyball coach at DC West. He also teaches middle school PE and Computers and was an assistant Boys basketball coach for 10 Years. Wald is often asked how has your philosophy changed from your 1st year coaching till now? He often replies with " Kids have changed a lot over the last 35 years. They have different priorities and needs now than they did when I first started coaching and I've had to learn to adapt my way of getting through to them."

Bob is also happily married to Tammi Wald and they have two children together, Rachel who graduated from Bellevue University and is now the assistant Volleyball coach at DC West, and Trevor who graduated from DC West in 2018 and graduated from UNO in 2022. In Wald's free time he also enjoys playing sand volleyball, spending time with family, and going/watching other sporting events happening. Wald, and his daughter also coach at Club Legacy, where they coach 16 Bravo. We asked coach Wald what made you decide to get into coaching? Bob replied with " I had some very good coaches in high school who really made an impact on me and I wanted to make that difference in the lives of athletes also."

Over the years, Wald has overcome many achievements in Bob's 30th season coaching He coached the team to the district finals where they then won 3-1 battle against Lakeview to then lead them to the State tournament for the first time in school history where they came short to 34-4 Minden. Despite that loss Coach never fell back with determination he was determined to have another winning season. Wald then achieved the Jerry Stine Family Level IV Milestone award for achieving 400 wins. Wald then asked what are some of your highlights you've had during your coaching career that really stand out to you? Wald replied with " Making the state tournament in 2022, making it to the district final in his first year as a head coach and losing in a very close match, to the eventual state champions, playing against Husker Coach Dani Busboom Kelly in the District Final two years in a row, and seeing former athletes playing at the next level in college." Any final thoughts for us about your coaching tenure? Wald replied " 500 career victories would not be possible if not for the hundreds of players over the years who have put in hours of hard work and their endless dedication and passion for volleyball."

Congratulations again on your 500 career wins!! Thank you Coach Wald, for all of your commitment to your players, and dedication to the game, and your passion for Coaching.

This week we asked staff what their advice is for students at the beginning of the year. These staff members have been here since the start.

Mr. Travis's Advice

Mr. Travis has been the athletic director for DC West for 2 years. However, Travis has worked for the school for 26 years. When Mr. Travis was asked what advice he had for students at the beginning of the year he said "My advice for our student athletes would be to utilize your calendar and to be organized. You should always make plans accordingly for practices, games, homework etc. The days go fast and if they aren't organized they are always asking other people to help. So planning is important." When asked what his main point for student athletes is he said, "Time management is crucial."

Ms. Cox's Advice

Ms. Cox is the math teacher in the high school here at DC West. She has worked at Waterloo/ Valley High School and DC West for 27 years. Ms. Cox is very dedicated to the school. Her advice for students who are kicking off the year is to "learn the expectations of your teachers. Do all of your homework and turn it in on time. Get involved in at least one sport or activity. Find a healthy balance of school, family, friends, extracurricular activities, work, and sleep!!" When she sees students following her advice she is very proud that they are taking ownership of their school life.

Mr. Caldwell's Advice

Mr. Caldwell is the history teacher at DC West. He has been here since the start in 2005 and continued working here for the past 20 years. When he was asked our central question he responded with, "Be willing to work. Right away. Don't fall behind if you can help it because you'll be doing twice the work to catch up. Ask for help if you need it." He recommends for students to stay on top of their homework by using time in class and communicate with teachers if they fall behind or have questions.

Teacher's Corner



Written by Aurora Harris and Peyton Casper

In this week's teacher corner we spotlighted the spanish teacher Senior Johansen. Senior Johansson always has a huge smile on his face. This year is his second full year teaching at DC West and we wanted to ask about his experience so far coming to our school. The first question we asked was, "Why did you move to DC West?" He replied, "I wanted to teach at DC West because I really liked the idea of teaching at a high school similar to the high school I went to, but I also knew that I wanted to be at least very close to the Omaha metro area."

Senior Johansen used to teach in Spain. He would teach kids how to speak English. Knowing this information, it led us to ask him our next question, "Why did you want to switch from teaching in Spain to America." He responded saying, "I knew that Spain was a temporary thing, I always kind of knew that I was going to come back. Spanish is what I was trained to teach, I wasn't actually trained to teach English."

Senior Johansen has only been at DC West for a little over a year now. We wanted to know if he has enjoyed his short time at DC West so far. We asked, "How has your experience been so far at DC West?" He replied with, "I mean obviously I liked enough to stay another year. All jokes aside, I really do like it here. I feel like just from my very first day, all my coworkers have been really welcoming. I get along obviously really well with all my students, they're great to be around. It's fun to teach them something new! So it's been great, I love it here."

Senior Johansen teaches grades 9th-12th. He has 7 Spanish classes a day. We asked "what's your favorite grade to teach and why." He responded by saying "it's kind of a tie, probably either between the Freshman because they are fun. They don't know anything and it's fun to just start them off on the adventure of Spanish. I also really like teaching Spanish 4 because its high level stuff and we can actually get to the point where we are talking more in depth about things in Spanish."

Hometown Highlights



Have you heard of the Annual Pancake Feed at the Valley Fire Department? The Pancake Feed is a happy and memorable experience for everyone that joins. The Pancake Feed is something that every person should experience, its a 25 years tradition. The Feed helps improve the Valley Fire Station, as well as our community. The funds raised go to help improve on equipment, and the brand new Fire Station! The atmosphere is a great buzz for teens and families. This event allows for people of the community to come together and see the fire station, and even learn a couple things about the trucks and

the station. The feed starts at 7 am and continues until 12pm. This event is slam packed with different learning games, truck sightseeing, and a life flight helicopter. The Pancake Feed invites other collaborators and business to participate. There are local business that give the Fire Station little gift baskets and different items for a silent auction. Overall, the Pancake Feed is such a great and amazing chance for members of the community to come together and spend time with your loved ones over soft and fluffy pancakes. Therefore, the Pancake Feed is something that every person should experience.

Written by Johanna Luthy and Lilly Kosiske

What's coming up..

Homecoming week is here!. This Friday is DC West's homecoming parade, starting at 12:45. The parade is always a fun and memorable event for everyone in the community. What makes homecoming Friday different from every other Friday, is because this day is when the entire community comes together to celebrate their school! Later that night is the homecoming game against Roncalli! It will be an exciting game to watch, so show up and get loud. The following night, on Saturday the 20th, is the homecoming dance. This year's theme is 'Hunger Games'! The dance is always an unforgettable night for students to dress up and dance with their fellow classmates.

What's coming up..

This season DC West's Journalism class has made an opportunity for students to receive special awards for showing falcon spirit. It is called "Pack the Stands", for everyone who shows up at these specific sporting events you could get your name drawn and earn one of these awards. The Volleyball game is September 23rd against Yutan. The softball game is October 2nd against Yutan. The Football game is October 10th against Mount Michael Benedictine. If you are the winner then you could receive an extra pass, concessions money, or a ticket to be first in line at lunch! To be chosen all you have to do is show up to the "Pack the Stands" events listed above!

What's coming up..

A classroom buzzing not just with the drone of teenage chatter, but with actual drones! One visionary teacher, Mr. Eddy decided to spice up STEM by getting these drones into the curriculum. Students aren't just learning about science, tech, engineering, and math- they are building, and flying their own drones! Sure there is probably going to be a few crash landings and some regulatory hoops to jump through, but the sky's the limit for these kids. Who knows? Maybe the next generation of drone inventors is taking flight right there in middle school.

Senior Spotlight Continued..

Beginning with our senior that has been a part of the DC West volleyball community for all four years of her high school career, Jetta Sattem. She's the starting outside hitter for the Falcons. The first question we had for Jetta is how do you feel about the connection that the DC West volleyball team is forming so far. Sattem said, "I think it's very good, our team has great energy and works well together." Continuing on, we asked Sattem where she sees the season leading up to and ending near the future. "I think we will have a great run and a good end to the season. I think our team will make it far, hoping to make it to state.", said Jetta. Sattem has also had a big impact on the cheer team her whole high school career.

Next we have senior Barrett Hinrichs, our starting running back and outside linebacker. Barrett has shown commitment through all his four years of high school to the football team. That was a key factor in choosing Barrett to be highlighted in the senior spotlight page. We asked Barrett how summer football helps the team succeed when it comes to the regular season. "You get to be around the team all through summer so when school comes around you are already pretty close with the kids on the team.", answered Hinrichs. Then we asked Barrett if he has any plans of moving forward in the future with football, if not, are you sad about it. Barrett said, "No, I plan on this being my last season. I'm not really sad but I will miss playing football with my teammates and friends."

These two athletes have shown much growth and pride to the Douglas County community. So far they have had a great start to their fall seasons and are continuing to improve, working hard everyday to reach their individual goals as well as sticking up to DC West's legacy.

Now focusing on two students who are very involved in DC West through the classrooms and school. Anella and Cade have led their class all four years. We asked them about their experiences throughout their four years of high school. These two individuals are very well rounded and getting involved with clubs and activities.

Anella Pralle has carried herself well as a falcon. We asked Anella what it is like having her, Mr. Pralle who teaches at the same school she attends. "His room is a good place to store my coat in the winter, and my lunches. He also keeps lots of snacks in his room so when I get hungry I can go and grab one during the day.". Then we asked Anella what some of her highlights were at DC West. "One of my highlights at DC West is the breakfast for lunch. I also loved being part of French class my sophomore and junior year." Pralle said. Anella's four years at DC West are some memorable years. We will miss Anella and her influence on the DC West community.

Our last senior that we're spotlighting is Cade Listenberger. Cade has involved himself in many clubs throughout his four years at DC West. Cade has taken roles in FCA, HOSA, and has played basketball and baseball. Focussing on his strong academic path Cade wants to continue his path to be an orthopedic surgeon. The first question we asked Cade was what inspired him to pursue that career. Listenberger responded "I chose to be an orthopedic surgeon because I want to make a lot of money in the future.". We also asked what Cade expects as one of his biggest challenges he will anticipate in medical school. Listenberger responded "I think my classes will be hard like science class for example anatomy.". Overall Cade has a very bright future ahead of him and leads a great example for younger generations coming into high school. Cade shows how many endless opportunities the academics at DC West offer.

The DC West community wishes all four of our students, Jetta, Anella, Barrett, and Cade good luck in the future. They have shown so much commitment and growth through all these years. Although they're working for a future they also have built the person they are today and have made friendships and memories that will last a lifetime.

Written by Mallory Shaw and Parker Steskal