MESSAGE FROM PROGRAM DIRECTOR JODI PESEK

It is said that time flies when you’re having fun. That must be the case because this year has gone by in a flash! Blackburn staff members put their hearts into all they do and the results show in our students’ accomplishments. Watching as staff teach students new skills that make them stronger academicians and better people is the most thrilling part of my job. It never gets old watching students be awarded for their hard work and tenacity—be it a blacksmithing project or a science essay—our students know how to stay in the game because our staff infuse tremendous energy into making Blackburn a great place to learn.

Blackburn seniors commenced the next phase of their journeys on May 24, 2018. They were celebrated by family, friends and engaging speeches by community member Ashlei Spivey and senior Dulce Mejia. Aaryon "Bird" Williams beautifully performed an original poem for the crowd. Dominique Morgan regaled the crowd with his soulful music, especially the song he wrote in 2017 for Blackburn, "Shine." Dominique also introduced the Lisa Spivey Scholarship, which he initiated for Blackburn students. This year, the scholarship was won by Jose Morales-Garcia. Tara Friis received the Yolanda Williams Scholarship, which will pay for her CNA studies; Isabel Cerna was gifted with an Aksarben scholarship to continue her academic studies at the collegiate level.

Getting students across that finish line is a team effort, and we appreciate every parent who helped their child achieve their goals. We want our families to know that we are here for them, too, so we have designed family events to solidify our relationships with students, parents and community members. Blackburn staff has decided to focus on increased family engagement into 2018-2019 as well. Stay tuned for the plans that are in the works for a great Back-to-School Night!

There is so much more to share with you, so please enjoy this latest edition of the Blackburn Chronicle. Have a safe, healthy and happy summer!
I did not want to go on the trip to Inclu-city. I did not want to go after I was told that I couldn’t have my phone for 3 days and I would be in Ashland, NE, away from my own bed and my family in Omaha. But I went anyway.

I went anyway, and realized so many good things that came out of this for Blackburn students, students from Council Bluffs, and students from Ralston. There were so many amazing stories told and new things experienced. So many subjects that people usually don’t like to talk about were broken down—topics such as sexuality, abuse, race, etc.

I can tell you there were very heavy times, sad times, happy times that made you think. It was a lot to process. So many new friends were made; it was an awesome experience that really opens one’s eyes. I am open-minded to a lot, but this trip made me think more—think about what I do and how I say it because it can easily affect people.

I realized that before, but after people shared names or phrases that they had said to them or been called and how much hurt was behind it, I took a step back and realized that I say some of those words a lot. It just makes you think. The trip’s purpose was to make you think, and to be a better person. I know a lot of us have changed our ways for the better after that trip. The cold and the sucky food aside, the friends I made and the lessons I learned were phenomenal. I would recommend this trip to all high schoolers.

On April 20, TaQuayla Hytche and Alexis Davenport were feted at the Nebraska Science Festival for their winning essay contest entries. These young science scholars were 2 of the 5 statewide winners—no easy feat! Prior to a keynote speech by Ginger Zee, head meteorologist for ABC News, our winners were treated to a reception at Joslyn Art Museum with Ginger herself! What a proud moment!

SCIENCE FAIR
On May 17, Blackburn held a Science Fair so students could show off what they learned this semester!

Top: L. Bonam and Trinity think seriously about what they drink!

Below: Jamari explains how a fruit battery works!

NEBRASKA SCIENCE FESTIVAL
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Blackburn Alternative Program endeavors to educate our school community, students and parents as well as staff in responsible, respectful use of digital technology. We are committed to preparing 21st Century Learners equipped with the knowledge of appropriate behaviors that demonstrate positive digital citizenship. By incorporating Common Sense Media lessons into our classes we are able to achieve this goal.

Sharing the Common Sense Media message within our community has opened a dialogue between staff, students and parents with the shared goal of safe appropriate use of technology. We will be including Common Sense Media’s Digital Dilemmas into our newsletter. This is one more way to begin a conversation with our students encouraging positive digital citizenship. For this, our fourth installment, please see the following Digital Dilemma about Digital Footprints.

For further information on Common Sense Media please go to https://www.commonsensemedia.org/.

While you’re at it, check out this video about oversharing!
https://www.commonsense.org/education/videos/oversharing-think-before-you-post
BLACKSMITHING

Blacksmithing students once again practiced this ancient art under the direction of Art Teacher Hilary George and Master Blacksmith Elmo Diaz. Students became quite proficient at the craft, making everything from roses to kaleidoscopes!

NEBRASKA WRITING COLLECTIVE

This semester, students participating in the Nebraska Writing Collective were under the direction of Michelle Troxclair to prepare for Louder than a Bomb performances in April.

Per Ms. Troxclair, this program exists to provide a creative outlet for youth who frequently do not have a positive safe space to express themselves. It seeks to expand an arts-based program in creative writing and performance poetry to youth. Creative writing and poetry allows participating students the opportunity for positive self-expression, the ability to have their voices heard, improve their writing and vocabulary skills, better their ability to communicate their feelings with others and establish a healthy coping mechanism for life’s obstacles.

Blackburn students poured their hearts into their original pieces. With Ms. Troxclair’s superb coaching, students honed their performances. This first-time team made it all the way to the semi-finals where they placed fourth! We are proud of their accomplishments. Please use the link below to see the team performance about being “alternative.”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cJPbU5HegNM

STUDENT COUNCIL BY AMELLIA HANSEN, ADVISOR

For the 2017-2018 school year, Blackburn Student Council busily planned activities. The students planned a spirit week in the fall, with dress up days ranging from “pajama day” to “twin day!” The spirit day that gained the most attention was “pink out” day. The student council also organized a ribbon drive to support awareness for topics such as grief, cancer and Alzheimer’s disease. The student council students’ most empowering project was working with the “Secret Kindness Agents” from the University of Nebraska at Omaha late in 2017.

Student council made holiday cards to send to hospitalized children across the United States. The students made over 70 cards! Before winter break, student council wrapped hats and gloves donated to the school for each student at Blackburn to receive a gift before break. Student council handed out these warm gifts as students left the building late in December. It was a great way to help everyone stay warm over break! After winter break, student council continued to plan fun activities for Blackburn students. In February, student council made “Love Grams” attached to candy for students to purchase for other students and staff. They didn’t quit there; they continued making “Love Grams and made over 50 Valentine cards and candy to deliver to the Adam’s Center to brighten their day.

PROM BY NYAKUEKA KHOR

Diamonds and pearls glittered through the evening of Blackburn’s prom May 3. Students arrived in their finest fashions to eat, meet, and dance the night away to tunes under the twinkling white lights. A variety of menu choices were available, including Swedish meatballs, egg rolls, turkey roll ups, and variety of candies, cupcakes, and lemonade.

Crowning the Prom Court was the highlight of the evening. Students and staff were able to vote once a day during lunch to choose the winners of the tightly-contested race. The Prom Court winners shown below are: King Gregory Garrett, Queen Shannon Mayehama, Princess Clenisha Martin, and Prince Jonathan Minnifield.
On April 18, 2018, from 12 to 1:30 p.m. Blackburn Culinary students, led by Mrs. Christianson and Mrs. Middleton, held the 8th Annual Spring Fling along with UNO service learning students.

The Adams Center residents and community members were served pulled chicken, BBQ ribs, macaroni and cheese, and potato salad with a bread roll on the side. The beverage was Blackburn’s famous punch made with pineapple juice, ginger ale, lemonade and iced tea mix. Everyone enjoyed cookies and a nice Jello cheesecake for desert.

I sat down with Rosemary Brown and she said, "It was a beautiful experience. I’ve been coming for two years now, and I love it.”

I also spoke to Sarah L. Rountree and she said, "They have excellent cooks, great food, and I love coming every year.”

"They have excellent cooks, great food, and I love coming every year.”

RAD WOMEN OF OMAHA

Mrs. Colón’s Yearbook students and Mrs. George’s Art students have been working on an exciting service learning project this school year along with UNO Dr. Ritzman’s Speech/Language students and the UNO Service Learning Academy. The project, RAD Women of Omaha, showcases 37 influential local women. The project culminated in a gallery showing at Omaha Design Center, on Friday, May 18th. Students researched or interviewed and created artistic and biographical representations of these women who have made such a difference in our community. The goal of the project was for students to learn about women, past and present, who have made a difference in the Omaha community and to discover how they as students can make a difference themselves. To evidence making a difference, students studied human trafficking and made an infographic for Youth Emergency Services. They also created prints and zines to sell at the show to benefit Youth Emergency Services’ Programs and they raised $2000!

To learn more about the project and to see many more pictures of the event and of all the RAD Women, please visit our Facebook page, @RADwomenofomaha.

L-R: Artist-in-Residence Kim Darling, Taynesha, Felandes, Nyakueka, Kijonae, Allyssa, Relina, Kaniya, Mikheal, Lanija, Daniel, and Mrs. George celebrate their hard work, fabulous art, and success at fundraising!

Below: RAD Woman Brenda Council and Felandes pose with his art and her likeness.
OTTO SWANSON SERVICE AWARD

On April 15, Inclusive Communities held their annual Humanitarian Brunch and fundraiser. This agency has been part of the Omaha social justice fabric for 80 years with a simple mission of making our community a better place for everyone. The brunch recognizes those who are dedicated to creating more inclusive communities, and this year our Social Worker LaKeisha Bonam was selected as the recipient of the Otto Swanson Spirit of Service Award for her commitment to creating safe spaces for youth to discover who they are. Ms. Bonam has been an integral part of Inclusity for several years (see story, p. 2.) We see the difference that Ms. Bonam makes on a daily basis; Blackburn is proud to have her aboard!

A DOSE OF ADVICE BY NURSE TIMARA KROEGER

Let’s take some time out for ourselves this summer to get HEALTHY!! Remember that reducing your carbohydrate intake, which are your breads and sugars, helps a lot. Take advantage of the fresh fruits and vegetables available during the summer. Use your grill to cook your meats and vegetables as much as possible. Also, watching your portion size is essential for weight loss. For example, instead of eating 4 cookies eat ½ of 1, instead of eating half of the cake have 2-3 bites. Portion size helps a lot because you still get a taste of what you are craving but with fewer calories. Another important factor is to drink plenty of water (6-8 glasses are recommended a day) and get up off of your couch and move. Remember even 15 minutes of some activity 3 to 4 times a week is better than none.

Here are a few fun facts:
• changing from 2% or whole milk can reduce calories by 63
• using cooking spray or a non-stick pan instead of butter can reduce calories by 34
• adding more vegetables such as cucumbers, lettuce, tomato, and onions to a sandwich instead of extra meat or cheese can reduce calories by 154
• eating air popped popcorn instead of oil popped popcorn or dry roasted nuts instead of oil roasted nuts can reduce calories by 73
• steamed or grilled vegetables rather than those sautéed in butter or oil. Try lemon juice and herbs to flavor the vegetables. You can also sauté with non-stick cooking spray. This can reduce calories by 62

Everything in moderation is the key. Good Luck!

Marque A. Snow, President
Lacey Merica, Vice President
Tracy Casady          Lou Ann Goding
Dr. Shavonna Holman    Ben Perlman
Amanda L. Ryan         Matt Scanlan
Ricky Smith
Mark A. Evans
Superintendent

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Las Escuelas Públicas de Omaha no discriminan basados en la raza, color, origen nacional, religión, sexo, estado civil, orientación sexual, discapacidad, edad, información genética, estado de ciudadanía, o estado económico, en sus programas, actividades y empleo, y provee acceso equitativo a los “Boy Scouts” y a otros grupos juveniles designados. La siguiente persona ha sido designada para atender estas inquietudes referentes a las pólizas de no discriminación: El Superintendente de las Escuelas, 3245 Cuming Street, Omaha, NE 68131 (402-557-2001).