

The Scratching Post

May, 2025

ADVENTURE AWAITS THE CLASS OF 2025!

The Class of 2025 took a moment at graduation to reflect on their journey that had brought them to this moment. This journey was full of challenges, laughter, growth, unforgettable memories, gratitude, and reflection. The speeches shared weren't just about looking back at the hard work, struggles, and accomplishments, but about recognizing the people who helped make it meaningful.

Isaac Olsen, the class valedictorian, highlighted how far the class had come together, thanking the many teachers, coaches, and mentors who went above and beyond to help his class succeed. People like Mr. Gifford, who built more than an FFA chapter, but a foundation of confidence and leadership, and coaches Wegner and Revelle, whose encouragement helped students push through tough practices and tougher days.

Keira Bolander's speech, as class salutatorian, reminded everyone to cherish the good times. From early morning practices and late-night laughs to bus rides, class trips, and random conversations, these are the memories that will last a lifetime. Keira encouraged classmates to remember the smiles, the jokes, and the friendships that made school feel a little more like home.

It was apparent through the speeches that school was more than just sports, trophies, assignments, and assessments. It was a place where students bonded and came to rely on one another. This class showed up for one another, learning from mistakes and finding the courage to keep moving forward even when things didn't go their way. The message to the younger students was simple but powerful: work hard, ask questions, and don't be afraid to fail because that's how growth happens. A sincere thank you was also extended to the community, teachers, and families who have supported the graduates throughout their education: "Thank you for believing in us and for making Banner County more than just a school, but a place to belong."

As the Class of 2025 moves on to what's next, they do so with hearts full of gratitude, fond memories, and hope for the future. As Isaac Olsen stated, "Let's be bold enough to dream, brave enough to fail, and strong enough to rise again." **Congratulations to the Class of 2025 — the best is yet to come!**



BANNER COUNTY SCHOOL

PREPARING THE STUDENTS OF TODAY FOR THE WORLD OF TOMORROW!

HIGH SCHOOL TRACK RECAP

The purpose of track is to push yourself mentally and physically to run faster, jump higher, and work together. Guiding the high school track team this year were Coaches Geary, May, and Wenger. Thanks to their efforts, there were enough participants for a relay team this year, something that hasn't been an option for many years. These coaches supported the athletes, kept them motivated, and helped them work toward their goals.

The nine athletes who went out for track were Isaac Olsen, Logan Mason, Kesmera Palu, Gabe Collier, Shawnie Mason, Makynna Boettcher, Hayden Mathiason, Colesen Gilbert, and Karlye Dittbenner. Palu excitedly shared about her performances, saying, "Setting a personal record and then working to beat it was an amazing moment." However, it wasn't always about the competition, many fond memories were created at the track meets, bonding between teammates and meeting stellar participants from other schools. These were moments where the athletes were motivated to overcome both the physical and mental challenges of track.

Throughout the track season, our athletes were challenged not just physically and mentally, but also by the weather. These participants had to show grit to overcome the obstacles in their way throughout the track season. We are very proud of our track athletes and all they have accomplished this season. - by Jayden Marx



BANNER COUNTY AR ROAD PRESENTS

5K

RUN & WALK

DATE / VENUE **SATURDAY JUNE 14**
 7:00 Registration
 7:30 5K
 7:45 1 Mile Kid Run

BANNER COUNTY VOLUNTEER FIRE AND RESCUE, HARRISBURG, NE 69345
 Sponsored by



The spring expo has officially concluded with moderate success. The class took a portion of their profits and donated 10 percent of their total profits to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. The individuals involved in the expo included Blake Green, Gianni Green, Hayden Mathiason, Leigh McGowan, Kyrie Roldan, Lydia Wenger, and Mason Vargas.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EXPO

This year's students had a wide variety of products for purchase. Students surveyed community members and staff to determine if there was interest in their products and possible price points. Mason created engraved rock coasters, Kyrie crafted ribbon flower bouquets, Hayden produced Epsom salts, and Gianni designed handcrafted jewelry. Blake assembled jewelry boxes to compliment Gianni's jewelry sales. Lydia offered a variety of products, including apple butter, cinnamon butter, body scrubs, and tanghulu—a traditional Chinese candied fruit snack. **Continued on page 5.**

A Journey Through My School

This year, Mrs. Cooper hosted her first Spring Program, but she decided to add a small twist to it. This year's Spring program was a musical called "A Journey Through My School." It began with high school solos by Keira Bolander, Abby Jones, Kesmera Palu, and Isaac Olsen. It also included a duet between Abby and Isaac. Then after the high school portion, it was time for the musical.

The story was of three new students making their way through Banner County School, trying to find Mrs. Jessica Stauffer's classroom. Along their way, the students met the four musketeers a.k.a. Mrs. Knaub, Mrs. Groves, Mrs. Boettcher, and Ms. Villigrana, in the high school hallway, before meeting Dr. Browne and Mr. Holmberg in the lobby. The staff assisted the traveling students on their journey throughout the school to find the right classroom. Something unique about the songs in this musical was that they were all modified to include general descriptions of a school's learning environment.

According to Mrs. Cooper, the main thing she would change was the fact that they had too many components to the musical. In future productions, she will have fewer, simpler roles. With one year of teaching complete at Banner County, we can't wait to see how Mrs. Cooper continues to reinvent the music programs while inspiring the students to be the very best they can be.

With this year being Keira's last, she went all out with her amazing solo that kicked off the program. This was a grand way to begin the show that she helped develop. As a loyal member of the choir, Keira has grown a lot since she began her musical career. This year's spring program was also Isaac Olsen's final performance. Isaac began band in elementary school. He has been dedicated to the trombone since 5th grade. As we say goodbye to our amazing musical seniors, we wish them the best as they continue their journey with the skills they learned over the years.

Thank you all for coming out to support our students throughout the school year with their musical endeavors. We can't wait to see which direction the music program will take next school year with a new batch of seniors leading the way.

—Kesmera Palu



Run, Throw, Jump - Race for the Top!

As the Junior High sports seasons end, we want to congratulate all the students who dedicated their time to these athletic events. Junior High track was the last sport the students could participate in this year. This dedication was shown when the girls' team won third at the MAC conference and when the students came home with 22 new personal records (PRs)!

The girls' team is comprised of Kassie Loutzenhiser, Madalinn May, Natali Cordero, Kambrie Loutzenhiser, Callie Woodral, Bella Young, and Bailie Gilbert. The girls had a wonderful season, with many PRs throughout. The girls' team continues to strive towards their goals by working hard to accomplish them. We want to congratulate Callie Woodral and Kassie Loutzenhiser for making it to Best in the West track meet! Kassie took second place in the long jump, and Callie took 6th in her 100m hurdles and set a PR!

Throughout the season, the girls made many memories, too many to forget. Kambrie stated that she is going to miss the competition and finding ways to make herself better during the off-season. The team had some rough patches along the way. According to Kassie, the hardest part in track was "finding the motivation to do your best in the events."

The boys' team had to face similar challenges too. Their team consisted of Braedyn Bojorquez, Davian Martinez, Josh McGowan, Ethan Valverde, Knox Hottell, Quincy Boettcher, Railin Mesteth, Eli Allen, and Roger McGowan. The boys showed their growth by continuously setting and breaking new PRs each track meet. They have worked hard to get themselves to where they are today. One highlight for the boys' team was Braedyn Bojorquez making it to Best in the West for discus! Overall, the team has overcome the many challenges thrown their way.



Editor's correction to our April Scratching Post. This is the photo of Callie Woodral at "Best of the West" track meet that should have been included.

Congratulations to the Junior High teams for all of their accomplishments and all their hard work. Coach Kaitlin Knaub stated that, "I love it when an athlete obtains their goal and sees their potential. It is completely their glory that they get to experience." This is just one of the many highlights the coaches get to experience throughout the season. Thank you to everyone who supported the athletes during the hot and cold track meets. Everyone, mark the calendars and set reminders, the junior high kids are looking forward to next year's season! By Kyrie Roldan





CLASS OF 2037

Congratulations Preschool & Kindergarten On Your Graduation!



CLASS OF 2038



We wish you the best on your journey through school!

Entrepreneurship Expo— continued from page 2.

Lastly, Leigh sold candles and tie-knot blankets, achieving over \$200 in profits.

The most impressive aspect is that they accomplished all of this independently. The students developed and refined their ideas throughout the semester when they weren't working at High Energy Cappuccino, every Tuesday and Thursday. Many students had to create their products



at home after-school, which showed their determination and dedication to make their business successful.



The goal of this project was for the students to experience what it was like to start a business from the ground up. From product research, prototyping goods, production, and marketing, these students walked away from this experience with new skills that will benefit them as they consider future career pathways.—By Rhys Belden

Loutzenhiser Qualifies for Jr. High State Track!

Kassie Loutzenhiser is the first Junior High student at Banner County School to qualify for the Junior High State competition since its inception. Kassie qualified by finishing within the top 24 jumping distances between A, B, C, and D classes. The jump that got her to the state competition was 15 feet 6.5 inches.

Congratulations Kassie on this achievement!



Welcome New Staff

Christy Lecher— 3rd Grade



My name is Christy Lecher, and I am thrilled to introduce myself as the new 3rd grade teacher at Banner County School! I am incredibly excited to become part of this welcoming community and look forward to a wonderful year of learning and growth with your children.

I bring over 15 years of teaching experience to the classroom, having spent the majority of my career teaching 5th and 6th grade. Most recently, I taught middle school science at Franklin Public Schools. I am passionate about education and believe in creating a supportive, engaging, and curiosity-driven environment where students feel encouraged to reach their full potential.

I grew up in Ft. Laramie, Wyoming, and earned my degree from Chadron State College—where I also met my husband, Chris, the new Banner County Superintendent. Together, we enjoy attending school activities, camping and spending time with our family, including our very spoiled cat, Tally.

Family is very important to me. I have a wonderful blended family that includes a step-son and his wife who live on her family's ranch near Douglas, Wyoming, along with their two boys. My older daughter resides in Kearney with her three children, and my youngest daughter recently graduated from Wayne State College and is now attending the University of Nebraska Law. I'm excited to bring my passion, experience, and enthusiasm for teaching to the 3rd grade classroom and am looking forward to working with you and your children this year!

Emma Christiansen—Paraprofessional

Hello! My name is Emma Christiansen, and I will be a new para at Banner County as well as the high school cross country coach and a high school track coach. I have six children, three girls and three boys and now two grandsons. My family moved to Oshkosh, Nebraska in June of 2019 from Montana. I worked as an editor, sportswriter and sports photographer for the Garden County News while in Oshkosh. My youngest just graduated from high school in May so we have moved to Banner County where my husband has been working at Olsen Ranches. Before the News Office, I worked in schools in South Dakota and Montana for over seven years as a librarian, para, and coach.

In high school I ran cross country and track. My children played volleyball, basketball, football and also ran cross country and track so I have spent a lot of time in the sports world and in the schools. I have coached junior high girls' basketball and junior high track along with junior high/high school cross country. I love working with kids – helping them learn and grow both in and out of the classroom and watching them gain confidence in themselves through the hard work and effort they put into their schooling and other activities.

I am so excited to be a part of Banner County Schools, and I look forward to getting to know everyone this next school year!



Welcome New Staff

Mai Lee Olsen—Ag Science, Industrial Arts, FFA

Mai Lee Olsen was a FFA member in Texas throughout her high school career and was state vice president in 2008-09. Her primary SAEs were hogs, brangus cattle, and southdown sheep. She competed in several leadership events ranging from parliamentary procedure to job interview. When it came to career development events, there wasn't anything that she wouldn't try at least once. Whether it was dairy foods, livestock, meats, poultry or entomology, she was always willing to give it a try. One of her greatest accomplishments is earning her American FFA degree in 2009.

After her FFA career she went to Texas Tech University where she studied Agricultural Communications and was on the reserve national champion meat judging and the national champion meat science quiz bowl team. She also has a masters in Agricultural Education from Iowa State University. Post college, Mai Lee worked in higher education where she worked in various roles in student services at Eastern Wyoming College and Western Nebraska Community College. Her last role as CollegeNOW! Director allowed her the opportunity to work with 25 high schools and homeschool students across the panhandle where she was able to really rediscover her passion for education. Mai Lee taught at Gering High School as a science teacher for the past three years. Last year she was the lead teacher and implemented a new curriculum for the Freshman Success class. Mai Lee was also the HOSA sponsor for Gering and grew the chapter from 13 students to over 50 students. They have seen success at the state level placing and winning in a variety of competitive events and have advanced and competed and placed in the top 10 at the international competition.

Her husband Michael, a 2008 Banner County graduate, and their two boys, Robert "Bert" (8) and Cael (5) are planning to build their home in Banner County soon with the boys joining the Wildcat family as well.



Kyle Boettcher—Head Football Coach

We are proud to welcome Kyle Boettcher as the new Head Football Coach at Banner County High School. A Banner County resident for 18 years, Kyle has been a dedicated member of the Banner County Volunteer Fire Department throughout that time, serving as Assistant Chief and Vice President since 2016.

Kyle and his family run a ranch in southern Banner County, grounding him deeply in our community. He brings valuable coaching experience, having previously led Banner County High School football in 2011 and 2012. Beyond that, Kyle is highly involved in youth sports across the county—as Mat-Cat Wrestling president and coach, youth flag football head coach, and youth 6-man tackle football head coach.

He is married to Wittni Boettcher and is the proud father of Makynna, Quincy, and Kort, who are better known in our community as Fred, Q, and Squish. We are excited to have Kyle's passion and commitment driving the Wildcats football program forward!

Patrons' Day 2025



The sun came out and the wind died down!



Thank you Snowie Bus!





Board Briefs

May 12, 2025

President Douglas Olsen commended the following students and staff:

-Students of the Month - Fernanda Bocanegra - K, George McGowan -K, Izaveaha Chairez - 2, Camden Knaub -2, Isaac Olsen - 12

-Students who competed at District Music on April 24th: Abigayle Jones earned a superior rating for her saxophone solo; Isaac Olsen received a superior rating for his trombone solo.

Best of the West in Scottsbluff on 4/29: Junior High Best of the West Qualifiers: Callie Woodral, 100 Meter Hurdles (ran a 18.21 which was a personal best by 2 tenths of a second) Kassie Loutzenhiser, Long Jump (Placed 2nd overall with a jump of 15' 3.75") (First time we have had a JH track athlete place at Best in the West) Braedyn Bojorquez, Discus (threw 91')

-Tack Cross qualified for the Junior High Rodeo National in four events.

-Kassie Loutzenhiser qualified for Junior High State Track in the long-jump.

For the complete May 12, 2025 Board of Education Minutes go to: www.bcswildcats.org

SIGN-UP BY JUNE 1ST!

Banner County Activities

1ST ANNUAL 4 PERSON SCRAMBLE

8 June 2025 || 9:00am Shotgun Start

RIVERVIEW GOLF COURSE

\$400/TEAM

Taco Bar after @ Clubhouse

For more information or to register: 308.235.5008
witni.boettcher@bcswildcats.org

This tournament will raise funds for school activities and camps to improve skills and fundamentals.

Taco Bar! Contests! Prizes!

Join in the fun and register
YOUR TEAM by JUNE 1st!

Call 308-235-5008 or email:
witni.boettcher@bcswildcats.org

**Hope to see you
there!**



HARRISBURG, NE 69345
CURRENT RESIDENT or PO BOX

Banner County School
P.O. Box 5
Harrisburg, NE 69345



Order your 2026 Community Calendar September 1 Deadline

Don't miss another Birthday or Anniversary! The Community Calendar is \$10.00 - **available by pre-paid order only**. Family birthdays and anniversaries are included in the calendar based on "Household Name." **Because each listing carries an additional production charge, only PRE-PAID family "Household" information will be included in the 2026 Community Calendar.** Update your family information and changes on the form below and return to school along with your payment by **September 1 to: BCPS Foundation**

NAME: _____ Phone _____
Address: _____ State _____ Zip _____

Changes or additions to calendar

(Circle One)

ADD

Name: _____	Date: _____	Birthday	Anniversary
Name: _____	Date: _____	Birthday	Anniversary
Name: _____	Date: _____	Birthday	Anniversary

DELETE

Name: _____	Date: _____	Birthday	Anniversary
Name: _____	Date: _____	Birthday	Anniversary

Number of calendars (\$10 each): _____ Payment enclosed: _____

Thank you for supporting the BCPS Foundation Scholarship Fund!