



March 19, 2021  
Issue 4



# THE DIAMOND

## President Hoekstra’s tweets on Equality Act spark critique, conversation

Zac VanderLey—Staff Writer

Steve Mahr, owner of Town Square Coffee House in Orange City and graduate of Northwestern College, recalls being part of the problem in high school. He and his friends picked on anyone who was gay, hurling insults and physically intimidating students they thought were lesser simply because of their sexual identity. One day during his freshmen year at Moody Bible Institute, Mahr believed he contracted an STD through his premarital relationship at the time. As he waited in the testing room, quivering in fear of being expelled from his private, conservative school, two gay men supported and talked him through his anxiety. They even showed him the bus back to campus.

Over the past few weeks, Dordt University President Erik Hoekstra has released four tweets critical of the Equality Act, specifically as it pertains to religious freedom. Mahr, along with Dordt alumni and students, expressed disappointment in the comments on Hoekstra’s tweets.

“You know the queer kids at Dordt can see your tweets?” Mahr wrote responding to one of Hoekstra’s posts. “You are aware that when you tweet s--- like this [it] helps enforce the idea in straight students that their peers are less than.” President Hoekstra responded to some of the



replies to clarify his beliefs.

“I think people misunderstood the purpose,” President Hoekstra said. “They thought I had no regard for LGBTQ rights, and that’s not true.”

Lauren Hoekstra, a columnist for The Diamond, is a member of the LGBTQ community and a committed Christian. She is frustrated at the way President Hoekstra used

Contributed Photo

his Dordt affiliated Twitter account to give the impression that his opinion is all-encompassing of Dordt’s viewpoint.

“I think it was hurtful for a lot of people and set a precedent for Dordt as not being a welcoming place,” Lauren said.

“You can’t love someone and also actively

exclude them from your communities,” said Mahr, whose shop has become a safe space for LGBTQ students and other members of marginalized communities.

President Hoekstra said he aimed for education rather than advocacy in his tweets—one of which included an opinion article against the Equality Act. He said he believes LGBTQ persons should have simple housing, medical, and tax rights, but his opposition to the Equality Act arises out of his desire to protect religious freedoms.

Section 1107 of the act overrides the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993. Hoekstra, and many others in Christian circles, are afraid of what this means for non-church religious institutions, including Dordt.

If the Equality Act, as currently written, were to become law in the United States, then private universities like Dordt would not have the freedom to discriminate in the hiring process based on the institution’s understanding of a biblical view of sexuality. Also, women’s sports and scholarships for women would be forced to accommodate biological males who identify as females and vice versa. Dordt would stand to lose federal funding for failure to comply with the law, should it be passed.

cont. on pg. 3

## Opening up about mental illness

Mikaela Wegner—Staff Writer

Mallory Nilles is 19 years old and a freshman at Dordt University. She has lived in Boyden, Iowa all her life, until this past year when she moved to Dordt’s campus. While transitioning from high school to university always presents difficulties, Nilles faced more than just the adjustment from school to school—she needed to figure out what life would look like after being diagnosed with generalized anxiety and bipolar II disorder.

Her high school experience was tough. She watched friends betray Her trust time and time again, always adding to the depression and anger within Nilles that confused her.

“I have a hard time trusting that people aren’t going to hurt me,” Nilles said. “Over and over, I see it proven to me: you give people information about you, they will use it against you.”

Around March of her senior year, she began to suffer from intense anxiety attacks. Nilles was registered to attend Dordt in the fall and play on the women’s basketball team but was scared she was not ready. During the COVID-19 lockdown, she played basketball in her basement—bringing her joy and an overwhelming pressure. She would break down from the invading anxiety she did not know how to handle. She worked out with tears streaming down her face.

Intense thoughts about hating her life and feeling trapped began to flood her mind. It was as though everywhere Nilles went, something

was preventing her from being fully present.

Nilles had dealt with bouts of depression over her years, sometimes months at a time. There was always a part of her that thought she had depression, but the rest of her believed she was being a “drama queen” because everyone told her she was. They thought it was normal. She said it was not.

In September 2020, Nilles began counselling. They decided she should try medication for anxiety disorder. And from there, life went on.

It was another weekly session with her therapist, on a Friday late in November, when things changed. Nilles had been at home for Thanksgiving break.

They discussed how Nilles had been feeling lately—if she had any anxiety in the past week.

About half-way through the discussion, Nilles said something that would be life changing.

“I just feel so hot and cold all the time,” Nilles said.

Her therapist just listened. Then she asked: “When did you feel hot and cold? What was the timeline like?”

“Every couple weeks I just switch. I don’t know why,” Nilles said.

“What do you feel like in the good weeks? And what about the bad weeks?”

“In the good weeks I felt like I could do anything. But in the bad weeks I feel depressed,

cont. on pg. 6

## Music with friends

Aleasha Hintz—Staff Writer

Last semester, members of the wind symphony filed into the B.J. Haan anticipating a new batch of music for their spring semester concerts. Since the beginning of the year, these students knew that their music would be professionally recorded, sold as CDs, and published on Spotify, iTunes, and various other streaming services.

The wind symphony ensemble felt the pressure. There seemed to be so much music and too little time. They were given a whopping 66 minutes of music and only seven weeks to perfect their parts.

The wind symphony featured a wide variety of pieces. Six out of the ten songs are world premieres and will be professionally recorded for the first time by Dordt University’s wind symphony. When the album is published this August, anyone who looks for the pieces will see Dordt University pop up in their search engines.

This project took a lot of preparation. Three times a week the players plopped into place and tuned their instruments, readying themselves for another 75-minute practice. On top of that, they practiced both individually and with their sections. Besides going over their parts, the ensemble had to fundraise to pay for a professional recording team.

In the end, their hard work paid off and the preview concert went beautifully. From the happy-go-lucky sounds of Spirit of Victory to the lyricism of Song for Silent Voices, this concert did it all, and the album will reflect that. High energy pieces punctured the otherwise somber song selection, which kept listeners thoroughly engaged.

The following week, students spent over thirty hours recording their songs. It took many early mornings and late nights, tenacity, and mental focus to play music for such a long time

cont. on pg. 3



Contributed Photo

## COVID-19 Stimulus Package offers help to college students

Aleasha Hintz—Staff Writer



Contributed Photo

The House of Representatives passed the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, also called the COVID-19 Stimulus Package, on Wednesday, March 10. The vote was primarily split by party as all but one Democratic representative voted in favor of the act, and all but one Republican representative voted against the act. The only Republican representative who did not vote against the act abstained from the vote.

President Joe Biden acted quickly. By Thursday, March 11, he signed the act into law. By that weekend, some Americans had already received and begun spending their stimulus checks.

And so, the long-awaited third stimulus check is on its way to the remaining American citizens, but Biden’s American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 looks to fund much more than just stimulus checks.

This package is slightly larger and broader than previous COVID-19 relief acts. The budget: \$1.9 trillion. Besides direct deposits, the \$1.9 trillion will be dispersed among other expenses. \$20 billion from the budget will fund COVID-19 vaccinations, \$25 billion will be dedicated to rental and utility assistance, \$30 billion to restaurants, \$120 billion to K-12 schools, and \$350 billion will go into state, local, and tribal relief.

The average U.S. citizen will receive direct deposits of up to \$1,400 (provided they do not exceed the cap on the yearly income), with variance the amount received based on salary, marital status, and the number of dependents on your filed taxes.

For example, those receiving checks for \$1,400 are individuals who make less than \$75,000 a year, or couples who make less than a combined \$150,000. Married couples with four children can receive \$5,600. Independent students qualify for the same relief as the average citizen.

*“This historic legislation is about rebuilding the backbone of this country and giving people in this nation,. . . a fighting chance.”*  
-President Joseph Biden

As for legally dependent college students such as those attending Dordt University, they can still receive the \$1,400 check. This is a distinct difference from the last stimulus package, which barred dependents from receiving the stimulus checks from the last two acts. The catch is that the person who claimed you will receive it on your behalf, meaning

dependents do not have direct access to their stimulus checks. If you are lucky, your guardian may feel compelled to share the wealth.

Additionally, some students may qualify for emergency aid. \$40 billion of the budget has been dedicated to funding colleges and universities, which is almost double what the last relief act allotted to colleges. Half of this must be spent on students in the form of emergency grants, spread out through the fall semester of 2023.

The initiation of the act is being lauded by Democrats as another step in the right direction. It is considered the natural next step to recovering from a sluggish economy.

Before Biden signed the act, he said, “This historic legislation is about rebuilding the backbone of this country and giving people in this nation, working people, middle-class folks, the people who built this country, a fighting chance.”

Republicans on the other hand, seem to think ill of the package.

Republican Senator Mitch McConnell commented, “The American people already built a parade that’s been marching toward victory. Democrats just want to sprint to the front of that parade and claim credit.”

Furthermore, some Republicans have criticized the plan for being too broad. About nine percent of the budget is going directly to COVID-19 relief. The rest covers various aspects of the economy.

Democrats countered this by saying they are simply trying to take a holistic view of the economy and prop it up in its entirety. The economy has suffered in various aspects, and so relief should cover various aspects too.

Either way, the fact is that 20 million Americans were receiving different forms of unemployment benefits when the bill became a law. The stimulus checks will provide some much-needed relief to a significant portion of the population, including those who do not receive unemployment benefits.

The bill, whether considered to be prudent or not by different politicians, is meant to help mitigate the economic strife following the lockdown, which it is poised to do, but only time will tell of its successes and failures.

## PLIA in a pandemic

Anna De Oliveira—Staff Writer

In a non-pandemic year, Dordt programs like PLIA and AMOR provide students with the opportunity to serve communities around the country and world. PLIA sends students to partner with outreach programs around North America. AMOR focuses on serving internationally in countries like Guatemala, Nepal, Haiti, and Cambodia.

This year, however, a lot has changed due to the number of travel restrictions.

AMOR is run by Campus Pastor Sam Ashmore and Assistant Professor of Education Mary Beth Pollema, and is usually offered to education and project management majors. The initial plan for AMOR 2021 was a trip to Belize in order to serve as educators in a local Presbyterian school.

The Belize AMOR trip had to be canceled on March 3 due to COVID-19 restrictions and travel insurance prices.

“I was disappointed when I received the email that the trip was not happening, it makes sense, but I hope to go next year,” said sophomore Cobi van Slegeren.

Since AMOR will not be happening this year, students are encouraged to serve through PLIA, which will be hosting a slightly modified version of their usual trips.

PLIA 2021 will focus on serving Dordt’s surrounding communities. The main goal is to serve Sioux County and encourage the students to work with their peers. This year, students will head out in the morning and return in the late afternoon for a small worship time in the evening.

This year PLIA will be led by sophomore Isaiah deRegt and senior Sarah Holmberg. They will also work with senior Annika Brands who is running the community outreach program for Dordt this year. They’ve selected five or six



Contributed Photo

projects so far to work on during the program.

“I love PLIA because it gave me a chance to meet new people and to grow spiritually. I also think that this is a great way to spend spring break; we will not have that this year unfortunately, but it is still a great way to grow alongside your peers,” said deRegt.

PLIA will have posters around campus with a QR code that allows you to sign up to participate, as well as a table will be set up in the Grille area so students can learn more. They can also be found online at @du\_plia.

## COVID-19 vaccines: what to know and expect

Elise Wennberg—Staff Writer

It has been four months since the first COVID-19 vaccine was approved for major healthcare workers in the US, giving hope the world may soon return to normal. Since then, more vaccines have been released and each state has been progressing through their respective vaccine rollout plans.

While exact plans vary state-by-state, the CDC has a recommended guide for organizing priority groups. The first group (1A) includes essential healthcare workers and long-term care facility residents. The second group (1B) includes people over the age of 75, frontline essential workers, first responders, agricultural workers, and educators. The third group (1C) includes individuals over 65, people over 16 with underlying at-risk medical conditions, and other essential workers.

As availability increases and more people are vaccinated, the general public will be able to have access to the vaccine.

The state of Iowa had been operating on an amended version of phase 1B since January under a vaccine shortage order. Effective March 16, the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) has amended the order to include individuals 16-65 with at-risk medical conditions, allowing all members of group 1B to register.

Several professors at Dordt University have had their first round of vaccination, despite not technically belonging to a priority group due to confusion surrounding who is considered an educator. This especially occurred at Sioux Center’s Hy-Vee. Bob De Smith, professor of English, recalls being invited to receive the



Contributed Photo

vaccination through Dordt as a part of group 1B, his wife, a K-12 teacher, also signed up during that time. De Smith will be fully vaccinated around the third week of March.

“I’m hosting a conference in April; about a dozen people will come to campus to attend.”

De Smith said, “I’m really happy for me as a host—and not just for my safety but for those around—that I will be fully vaccinated. We will take precautions, of course, but I’m glad to say

## Hoekstra’s tweets, critiques and conversations cont.

cont. from pg. 1

... ] In an audio recording, John Stonestreet, president of the Colson Center for Christian worldview, expanded upon the direct applicability of the Equality Act.

“Specific conscience protections of Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which have long been legal priorities, would be circumvented in cases deemed discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation. Effectively, conscience rights considered religiously-based would be tossed aside,” Stonestreet said.

“I believe that we [Dordt] can define for ourselves what our beliefs are,” President Hoekstra said. “Marriage, for example, is defined differently at the state level than at the church.”

In Dordt University’s handbook, active homosexual relations and gender identification beyond that of the biological sex is prohibited. From page 34, “Scripture is clear that God created humans as two distinct sexes, male and female... Sexual intimacy may be expressed as overt sexual interaction in the marriage partnership of a man and woman.”

The handbook also rules that active homosexual relations and gender identification beyond that of the biological sex are prohibited: “Scripture is clear that God created humans as two distinct sexes, male and female... Sexual intimacy may be expressed as overt sexual interaction in the marriage partnership of a man and woman.”

The advocacy of both these practices is also prohibited under handbook guidelines. Dordt University claims it is committed to showing grace, openness, and compassion while retaining biblical purity.

This stance comes from the idea of “principled pluralism”, a term used by Christian thinkers. In essence, it advocates for living in peace while seeing things differently and respecting those differences.

In his tweets, President Hoekstra supported the Fairness for All Act, a bill created by a group of Mormon and LGBTQ+ lobbyists in the

Utah legislature. This act, an alternative to the Equality Act, would allow for discriminatory hiring on the basis of religious convictions along with basic human rights: truth and compassion.

Lauren Hoekstra understands where the top university official is coming from and maintains respect for him. She, however, believes laws like the Equality Act are needed to protect marginalized communities like the LGBTQ+ community.

“Sometimes the best thing for a person in power to say is nothing at all,” Lauren said. “I wish [Dordt] would hire people who are different.”

She had no queer mentors to look up to during her formative years and believes her campus could benefit from having greater diversity in ethnicity, thought, and sexuality.

Mahr disagrees with the traditional idea of Christian conviction against homosexual relations, a belief that exists within “principled pluralism”.

“People’s convictions are moral and based in specific biblical interpretation, which is inherently flawed,” Mahr said.

He referred to slavery as an issue the Bible does not hold a clear objection to—and in some places, endorses the idea. Still, slavery is universally condemned by the modern church. On

the other hand, the Bible is quite clear on divorce and women in leadership positions in the church, but the church does not hold such strong convictions on these issues.

“The church’s conversation about who to include and exclude has taken our eyes off what it means to be a follower of Jesus,” Mahr said.

Tim Keller, American theologian and apologist, responded to similar biblical justifications of homosexuality in his 2015 Redeemer report review of two pro-homosexuality artifacts written by Christians. Firstly, Keller argued, the church never unanimously condoned slavery based on the principle of moral law. Secondly, he spoke on

the shift in views on homosexuality to Western culture’s narrative to placing emphasis on self and belief that “you have to be who you are.”

Similarly, Keller denied the acceptance of homosexuality from a biblical view. He explained the difference from moral law and ceremonial law; ceremonial law being that which was halted after the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. However, the moral laws of the old Hebrew law (like the golden rule), are reaffirmed in the New Testament in Romans 1 and 1 Corinthians 6, he claimed.

*“The church’s conversation about who to include and exclude has taken our eyes off what it means to be a follower of Jesus”*  
-Steve Mahr

“Love your neighbor as yourself”—a phrase from the “Great Commandment” in the Gospels—makes Mahr wonder what the church would look like if it literally applied this greatest commandment to the LGBTQ+ community. “I think of how I experience love: having a home, being well-fed, and not being shamed, and then I love my neighbor the same way I would love myself,” Mahr said. There needs to be conversations surrounding the LGBTQ+ community on campus, according to President Hoekstra. On March 3 Preston Sprinkle—an author and president of the Center for Faith, Sexuality, and Gender—delivered a chapel message on engaging in such

I will not be able to receive the virus nor pass it to others.”

Mark McCarthy, a history professor at Dordt, also received his first dose through Hy-Vee amidst the confusion. He experienced side-effects five days after he received the first dose of the vaccine.

“I had a stiff arm from the shot, but nothing bad after until one morning I woke up with chills,” McCarthy said, “When I was getting ready for work, something was off. I reread the description of the side-effects and thought, ‘Oh that fits to the T.’ I had chills, a headache, joint pain, muscle pain...I felt like I had been run over by a truck.”

About 1.1 million people in Iowa have been given the first dose of the Pfizer, Moderna, or Johnson and Johnson vaccines. There are 408,000 people who have been fully vaccinated, which is about 13 percent of Iowa’s population. About 7,000 individual vaccines have been given out in Sioux County, which has a population of around 34,000.

Though more people are becoming vaccinated, the CDC recommends continuing to take precautions in public as the effect of vaccines on the spread of COVID-19 is not fully known. However, fully vaccinated individuals are allowed to interact indoors without wearing masks.

Christians see wrong picture in the Equality Act

Caleb M.S. — Columnist

Evangelical and Reformed Christian circles alike have decried House Resolution 5, more commonly known as the “Equality Act,” as a threat to religious freedom in recent weeks.

Former Dordt University professor and now Representative Randy Feenstra called the proposed legislation an “infringement on religious liberties” and warns that “pushing an extreme, progressive agenda that further divides us is wrong.”

Likewise, Dordt University President Erik Hoekstra took to Twitter to denounce the Equality Act, saying, “The Equality Act sounds as American as ‘apple pie’, but it’s not.”

Hoekstra also retweeted an opinion article from Agudath Israel of America’s director of public affairs Rabbi Avi Shafan, asserting: “The Equality Act as written insults our nation’s foundational commitment to the rights of religious believers.” The group Rabbi Avi Shafan represents has spoken against LGBTQ people’s right to marriage in the past, as well as fought against mandatory vaccinations, the ability of women to minister in religious settings, the right to physician assisted suicide, and have taken the side of traditional Zionist values.

In one of the tweets sent by President Hoekstra, the top university official urged constituents to read the slanted article by Rabbi Shafan before making conclusions or public comments. I decided to go a step further and read the Equality Act, and the alternative “Fairness for All Act,” which President Hoekstra endorsed, in their entirety.

The Equality Act weighs in at twenty-eight pages, most of which set out to determine

the definition of gender and identity as they pertain to the bill. Additionally, H.R. 5 expands protections for women— especially those pregnant or breastfeeding.

The singular goal of this legislation, as worded in the bill itself, is to “Prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation.” The description sounds innocent and simple enough, and the bill is straightforward in its wording. For all intents and purposes, the Equality Act is a re-wording of the 1964 Civil Rights Act—passed by President Johnson to protect African Americans and other Americans of differing national origins and races— to include civil rights protections for LGBTQ people in places of employment, entities public and private, and in the accessibility of services dominated by religiously affiliated groups.

What is causing conservative Christians to scream “Religious Freedom!” is found in Section 1107, where the authors included “The Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993...shall not provide a claim concerning, or a defense to a claim under, a covered title, or provide a basis for challenging the application or enforcement of a covered title.”

Despite the complex wording, the inclusion of this small subsection is straightforward. The named act was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of the United States, and only remains relevant because former Pres. Donald Trump issued an executive order in the last portion of his term in office re-instating the law. By specifically disallowing the use of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act to form an appeal against the Equality Act, the bill authors are ensuring the Constitutionality of the law

remains intact.

The fact of the matter is, as conservative commentator and lawyer David French points out, religious freedom in the United States is well protected and affirmed by a decade of Supreme Court decisions.

The “Fairness for All Act,” alternatively, clocks in at seventy-eight pages, and provides more avenues of discrimination for private entities. The proposed piece of legislation allows adoption agencies to discriminate against LGBTQ persons, undermines Supreme Court precedent-setting cases defending the LGBTQ community, and most dangerously does not afford LGBTQ persons the same level of protection as other protected classes. The Fairness for All Act expands religious freedom beyond its constitutionally defined bounds. Religious freedom that infringes on the rights of others is not freedom—it is a dangerous blurring of the lines between church and state.

A “principled pluralism,” is possible, but requires painful self-examination.

Christians are not oppressed in the United States, nor are we a class needing protection. Our right to worship in a way we see fit is protected by the Constitution and always will

The Dig film review

Daniel Ketchelos—Staff Writer



Contributed Photo

Rarely does a Netflix Original film exceed expectations in both quality and storytelling. The Dig crafts together a captivating plot with beautiful cinematography and stylistic storytelling.

On the verge of WWII in 1939, an unorthodox archeologist is contracted by landowner Edith Pretty to uncover one of the most important discoveries of European history. The excavation of the Sutton Hoo site is the driving force behind The Dig. Nominated for five British Academy of Film and Television Arts awards, The Dig excels in storytelling.

The Dig is not a fast-paced film, and it is not meant to be. This is a film of patience and gentleness, much like the process that the archeologists undergo in the film to uncover the importance of the excavation site. The discovery of Sutton Hoo by Basil Brown completely rewrote the history of Britain during the dark ages. The Dig is a historical fiction piece that tells the story of the most important historical site for Anglo-Saxons.

Nominated for five British Academy of Film and Television Arts awards, The Dig excels in storytelling.

It makes heavy use of the idea “showing, not telling” and doesn’t spoon-feed information to the audience. Dialogue only reveals what is necessary, while the cinematography allows the key points of the story to unfold. Such dialogue is also well written, feeling natural rather than awkward or forceful when delivered by the actors.

The cinematography of The Dig is exceptional. This is not surprising since the director of photography is Mike Eley, a member of the esteemed British Society of Cinematographers. Initially, this film captures attention through the beautiful opening sequence showing Basil Brown grasping onto his bicycle as he rides a small wooden ferry boat across the river to Suffolk, England. This is one of many interesting compositions that Eley incorporates throughout the film.

Many establishing shots place the character

in the lower third of the frame, which utilizes a vast sky as negative space, symbolizing the grand mystery of the universe that has yet to be uncovered. When characters are unsure of where to go or what to do next, Eley positions them with a large amount of negative space behind them and little room between the front of their face and the edge of the frame. This deliberate positioning portrays their feelings of being stuck. Overall, the cinematography in this film should be highly appreciated because of the narrative value it adds.

Acting is another strong element of The Dig. Key individuals include Ralph Fiennes (Basil Brown), Carey Mulligan (Edith Pretty), and Archie Barnes (Robert Pretty). Fiennes’s performance as Basil Brown felt natural and authentic. He portrayed Brown as someone highly skilled and passionate about his craft while remaining subtle in action.

There is an ample amount of subtext throughout this movie as well. Aspects of discovery, human relationships, and the frail

be. The fear of those who oppose the Equality Act can be simplified into a single issue: money.

If the Equality Act were to pass the senate and be signed into law by President Biden, institutions like Dordt could potentially lose federal funding if we did not update our policies to be more inclusive of LGBTQ persons. The issue at hand is not about “religious freedom,” and never was. In the same way some private schools opposed the 1964 Civil Rights act decades ago, modern critics of the Equality Act fear they will have to let the “other,” participate fully in their sphere.

On March 10, Calvin University issued the following statement embracing their LGBTQ students:

“We at Calvin University believe in the God-given dignity and worth of all people, and we acknowledge and mourn the ways in which our nation, our churches, our communities, and Calvin University have not always defended the worth and dignity of the LGBTQ+ community. As fellow image bearers of God, we write today to affirm the image of God in our LGBTQ+ friends. We want all of our students to know that they are loved.”

In the same post, Calvin University noted they hold to the teaching that Christian marriage is between one man and one woman, but their statement showed no measure of degrading the LGBTQ community on their campus.

A “principled pluralism,” is possible, but requires painful self-examination.

Raya and the last time I cried in a movie theatre

Gretchen Lee—Staff Writer



I don’t cry during movies very often. I feel the full spectrum of human emotions and I connect deeply to movies and characters, but it takes a great deal of effort to get me to actually cry during a movie. Thus, I must give a proper “hats off” to Raya and the Last Dragon for making me shed a single, dignified tear and filling my eyes with the sheer beauty of the animation and environment.

Raya and the Last Dragon follows the story of a young woman, Raya, as she attempts to reconnect her fallen world and save her people by reuniting the pieces of the Dragon Stone and keep the last living dragon, Sisu, alive and out of the hands of her enemies. Along the way, Raya assembles a group of unlikely heroes and learns the importance of encouraging others through trust.

As mentioned above, this movie is visibly stunning. Every single scene is crafted with breathtaking artistry and use of color. The animators truly put their heart and soul into every frame and it paid off immensely. Besides the artistic aspect, the animation of the fight scenes is jaw-dropping. The movements are incredibly fluid and swift. There is one scene where two characters fought so quickly and with such skill that I couldn’t bring myself to blink. Paired with an equally lovely soundtrack, this movie is killer on the base of sound and design alone.

Thankfully, Raya’s magic doesn’t stop there; the storyline and characters are also expertly crafted. Despite existing in a world with deep lore and extensive world building, the story is not bogged down with backstory. Each detail about the world is revealed in a sensible way and allowed the viewer to take it in without getting overwhelmed or confused.

The “lesson” of this movie is also excellent. While Raya would rather use stealth and fighting to capture the five pieces of the Dragon Stone, she learns getting to know people and encouraging others is a better way to restore trust and build bridges. In a world where we are faced with conflict on social media platforms every day, this hit close to home.

The characters of the movie helped drive the plot in unexpected ways. Each character

who joined Raya on her journey, no matter how small their role, clearly served a purpose. They are each uniquely crafted and written, and made the movie more enjoyable. Raya herself is wonderful because the writers allowed her to feel emotions, make mistakes with real consequences, and learn to be better without losing the core of who she is through the process. Even her enemies are well-written, each of them having clear motivations. While the villains’ methods are morally debatable, their purposes are understandable, and the audience can sympathize with all sides of this broken nation of people.

Overall, this movie is incredibly well done. It’s gorgeous, expertly written, and a fun watch. It displays the full abilities of its animators and provides a delightful sensory experience.



Contributed Photo

Chaos Walking review

Aleasha Hintz — Staff Writer

As I walked into the theater at Cinema 5 to see Chaos Walking, the first thing that caught my attention was how few people occupied the fold-down seats. Including me and the two friends I brought, a grand total of five people watched the Saturday matinee of Chaos Walking.

The premise of Chaos Walking has all the ingredients for a great, although somewhat vanilla, sci-fi film. The final iteration of the movie is, by a critic’s standard, ultimately ‘blah.’

On a planet only ever referred to as New World, a settlement of humans makes their home. Unbeknownst to the settlers when they first arrived, a germ called Noise would infect the minds of all men and put their every thought on display for all to see and hear.

The result is a near-constant cacophony of thought. In the movie, it presents as a purple, orange, blue, and sometimes green haze. Some men control their Noise quite well. And others, like young protagonist Todd Hewitt, played by Tom Holland, have significant difficulty keeping their thoughts to themselves.

Due to a war with the native species, spackle, there is only one settlement left on New World, called Prentisstown. The settlement itself is made up entirely of men. The mayor claims that the women in the town were all killed off by the spackle.

The story then follows Todd as he meets a girl named Viola, played by Daisy Ridley. She is the first girl he has ever seen, and awkward but adorable moments ensue, even as they flee from Prentisstown and its dark secrets.

Tom Holland and Daisy Ridley do not disappoint in this film. Their performance is charming, and their on-screen dynamic is compelling. According to many critics, they are the one good thing about this film.

I disagree. Maybe I do not understand film. Maybe I am easily entertained, but I still thoroughly enjoyed this movie. The premise was interesting enough to hold my attention. And Todd’s Noise had a knack for making things awkward between him and Viola, which I thought was awkward, funny, and even cute.

The presentation of Noise itself I also found interesting. Some characters, like the mayor, have their Noise under complete control, with few aural leaks. In contrast, Todd’s Noise is always firing. He often has to cover up secrets

with a mantra of “I am Todd Hewitt. I am Todd Hewitt. I am Todd Hewitt.”

Others still, like the resident preacher, see the noise as a gift and make no effort to conceal it. Highly saturated oranges and blues color the preacher’s aura, which spews Biblical hellfire and brimstone references.

One frustrating aspect of the movie is its characterization. I found myself quite attached to Todd, his adoptive dads, and Viola, but their story arcs do not offer anything new.

I even had a morbid curiosity for the town’s preacher, the foreboding and manipulative zealot. He is fun to watch. The movie turns him into a plot device, which is a shame. His character had the potential to be quite the antagonist.

The movie is inspired by a young adult sci-fi book called The Knife of Never Letting Go. I think that some of the weak plot points are the consequence of trying to fit a 12-hour audiobook into less than two hours of screen time. The potential is there, but the execution is lacking.

The, well, chaotic history of Chaos Walking can explain some of its shortcomings. Lionsgate had the production rights for this movie for ten years before it finally got released to the big screen two weeks ago. It experienced several delays due to having different screenplay writers, directors, reshoots, and a delayed release due to the pandemic.

Despite the harsh critique of the film from movie connoisseurs, I loved it. Sure, the movie could have been better. Yes, all of their critiques about the underdeveloped characters and limping plot are valid.

If you are a sucker for action and easily entertained like I am, Chaos Walking is worth seeing at least once. It is not a blockbuster by any means, but it was good enough for me and my friends.



Contributed Photo

Music with friends cont.

cont. from pg. 1

in such a condensed period.

“It was exhausting, crazy, intense, exhausting,” Hannah Hansum, the principal French horn player, said. “But it was fun.”

Initially, the recording process only intended to make Dordt University known to the rest of the world. But what had started as a publicity stunt evolved into something more.

For the ensemble, the experience came second to none. The time spent practicing, the experience of professional recording, and the significance of the pieces involved all speak to the title of the album: Music with Friends.

Dr. Onsby Rose, the wind symphony’s conductor, organized the album. He chose the pieces based on relationships that he had with other composers. A friend of Rose’s wrote every work performed the night of the concert, except for Dordt University alumnus Johnathan Posthuma, who wrote one of the pieces.

Another layer behind the album name comes from the ensemble itself. The experience caused with the symphony to grow closer together.

“As more of a family than just friends,” Hansum said.

Even the professional recorders became friends or were friends with members of the ensemble.

The pieces themselves also carried a lot of meaning with them. Perhaps the most meaningful to this symphony is the piece written by Rose.

Originally, he wrote the song out of a

fundraising need, intending to show donors that the professional recording of this album proved worthy of an investment. Since Rose did not write the song with the intent of recording, he felt uncomfortable including any of his own works on the CD.

“This project is not about me,” Rose said. “It’s about the ensemble.”

However, another composer encouraged him to continue with the work. Rose ended up finishing a piece for them to play, and the ensemble had the unique opportunity of playing a work with the composer present and conducting.

The song continued to evolve and ended up being emotionally connected to the recording process of this album, originally scheduled to be recorded last Spring. The work is called Et Rex Propter Regnum, which is Latin for “For King and Kingdom.”

It is thematically connected to Dordt’s wind symphony and Rose’s own experiences dealing with the shutdown from COVID-19. It also examines the joy that is found when trust and purpose is discovered in God.

“I am incredibly proud of how our students prepared and executed this entire project,” Rose said, “It was a whirlwind from beginning to end and is a testament to the resilience and positivity of the wind symphony.”



Photo Credit: Caleb Herman

## Defenders break records at nationals

Mikaela Van Soelen—Staff Writer

The Dordt University Track and Field team broke school history at the NAIA National Track & Field Championships this month. On March 3-6, both the men and women competed at Mount Marty in Yankton, South Dakota. Teams from all around the nation came to compete for national titles.

The weekend began with eager expectations from the Dordt University team on Wednesday afternoon after a successful conference meet a few weeks prior. The men's team came into the meet ranked second in the nation, and the women ranked fifth. Both teams managed to live up to their rankings, making it the best seen placement in Dordt's Track and Field program history.

The men's team held their position as runners up overall and ended on a tight finish, just 4.5 points under Indiana Tech. Ten of Dordt's male athletes received All-American status with highlights in the 4x400 relay, the 4x800, and the Distance Medley Relay. The men's team had some outstanding individual performances. Senior Mathew Van Eps maintained his national champion streak in the 800-meter dash for his third season in a row. Sophomores Payton Mauldin and Cole Zevenbergen also placed fifth and second in the 600-meter dash. Senior Jacob Vander Plaats was also able to score fifth place in the mile. Sophomore Grant Brouwer lead the team in field events, placing fifth in high jump.

Eight of the women's athletes received All-American performance standards. The team saw strong performances in the long-sprint/mid-distance events. The 600-meter dash had a strong representation for the Dordt team with senior Mika Koistra, senior Annika Rick, and junior Anmarie Stuit placing third, fourth, and fifth respectively. Senior Emma Bakker also finished runner-up in the 400-meter open. Sophomore Bethany Ten Haken took eighth place in the open 800-meter race. Both the 4x400 relay and the Distance Medley placed in their events, landing the team a great overall finishing score.

The nationals meet did have some changes

this year due to COVID-19. The NAIA required athletes to be tested for COVID-19 multiple times in order to compete in their events.

While the event had no spectators, NAIA did provide a live-stream for fans. Aside from the restriction set on this year's national meet, the athletes were able to show up with strong performances and cheer each other on throughout the duration of the meet. Teammates and fans back at Dordt watched the livestream in the Grille.

"We are thankful for the opportunity to compete at nationals in these uncertain times. It was a special day for our team," Coach Heynen said.

Both Coach Heynen and Coach Wolf said they felt impressed by the performances of the weekend. Each continued to show the grit and dedication of the athletes. Not only did the track athletes have success, Coach Wolf also received the National Assistant Coach of the year just days after nationals.

The Defenders performed to the best of their abilities, with performances setting the team up for an exciting outdoor season. Outdoor track and field will begin in late March as the athletes prepare for more tough competition ahead. Also several members of the team are anticipating the cross-country nationals held on April 9 in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.



Photo Credit: Caleb Herman

## The Timberwolves are a mess (again)

Connor Van Hulzen—Staff Writer

Almost a year ago—after the Minnesota Timberwolves traded for point guard D'Angelo Russell—I wrote an article in the Diamond titled, "Impress me Timberwolves." Since then they have managed, in a surprising turn of events, to disappoint me even more.

It has been over a year since the trade paired Russell with his best bud Karl-Anthony Towns. The Timberwolves are in a state of complete disarray. As a matter of fact, Towns and Russell are a pairing that was supposed to represent the future of the franchise and bring the team back to a promised land not experienced since Kevin Garnett's successes nearly two decades ago. However, the pair have only appeared on the court together five times over the course of nearly 100 Timberwolves games.

Both have been injured and Towns contracted COVID-19, a virus that saw him lose seven family members—including his mother Jacqueline. These disastrous circumstances have resulted in a supposedly up-and-coming Timberwolves team sitting comfortably alone in the basement of the NBA.

Unfortunately for a team that will likely be in the running for a number one overall pick for the second consecutive year, last year's D'Angelo Russell trade also included the Timberwolves trading their first-round pick to the Golden State Warriors. For a team hopelessly lost in the wilderness, valuable draft picks are life-and-death assets.

In their defense, the Timberwolves have had some bright spots during an otherwise putrid season. First-overall selection Anthony Edwards has begun to find his groove and perform well in his rookie season. Edwards has also brought an unquantifiable edge and energy to the team that was sorely lacking. From his poster-worthy dunks to his celebrations of big plays in opponents' faces, the rookie has quickly maneuvered his way into a place of importance in the team.

Unfortunately, the Timberwolves' struggles exist off the court as well. Owner Glen Taylor has put the team up for sale. Taylor has made it clear to all prospective buyers of the team that

the franchise must stay put in Minnesota. One of the most talked-about potential ownership groups has a very familiar face at the front of their efforts. Timberwolves legend Kevin Garnett made very public overtures towards Taylor. However, the relationship between the two has been strained since Garnett's return to Minnesota near the end of his playing career. Garnett believed that he was guaranteed a front office job after he retired that would include a lot of power to make decisions for the organization. After his retirement, though, these promises did not come true.

Garnett becoming part owner of the team that he single-handedly brought to a place of relevance was the fairytale ending every Timberwolves fan dreamed of. This is not a fairytale story, though. The match made in heaven fell apart. Garnett announced through an Instagram story that he and his ownership group were officially out of the running.

For a team that has now passed the Tampa Bay Buccaneers for the worst all-time winning percentage amongst the four major professional North American sports leagues, the Timberwolves look like they are committed to holding this distinction for years to come. The Wolves are a mess and continue to disappoint. At this point, it would be more surprising for them to find some shred of competency than to sustain this failure.



## Blades secure a win and tie in weekend doubleheader

Ella de Jong—Staff Writer

The clock displays one minute remaining. The Dordt trails Missouri State 1-2. Students stand in anticipation as the hockey puck is flung across the ice rink. Loud cheers ring for the six Blades racing across the ice. The Ice Bears rush to defend their goal. Only four players stand between the Blades and opposing net. Two Missouri State players sit with drawn faces inside of the penalty box as the Blades on the bench yell in hope of a goal. The Blades attempt a goal, but miss. However, this briefly leaves the goal undefended on the left. Jonah

Weems, a freshman forward, prepares to take advantage of the opportunity. The clock turns to 48 seconds as Jaren Brue, a senior forward, passes the puck to Weems. Weems shoots it into the goal with 47 seconds left in the game and a score of 2-2.

"Just being able to have the team surround you after a game time deadline and secure a tie at least is an amazing feeling," Weems said. "I wish I could experience it every time I play."

The Blades tied against Missouri State in a weekend doubleheader on Saturday, March 13.

It was announced as a tie by the ACHA Standings as neither team scored in overtime nor tied in the shootout. They began the doubleheader on Friday, March 12, with a 4-3 win and intensity going into their Saturday game.

"The momentum we carried in from Friday's game was instrumental in our time on Saturday because with that came an image that we can play with them and compete with them at a level that we can win," Weems said.

The first period was scoreless for both teams, but things changed in the second. Weems had his first goal and Brue his first assist with 15:16 left in the second period. Missouri State retaliated with two goals to put them ahead going into the third.

"I don't think we were nervous," Kyle Espenson, a freshman forward, said. "I think because they were seeded above us, we had the mindset of 'we have nothing to lose,' like all the pressure was on them."

Dordt's power play with Weems' second goal tied the game and sent it into overtime, which ended scoreless and left Dordt and Missouri State with the last option of a shootout. Espenson was the first Blade to shoot. Students screamed and jumping in the stands as he shot the puck straight past the goalie into the goal.

"I was really relieved because when we were tied 2-2 in overtime, I had a breakaway and I tried to do the same move, but I went to the opposite side and I ended up missing," Espenson said. "So, I told my coach that I wanted to go again in the shootout and that I



Contributed Photo

## Baseball and softball head to Florida

Caleb Pollema— Staff Writer

Last week, the Dordt University baseball and softball teams travelled to Florida for a week-long trip in final preparation for conference play beginning on March 19.

The Defender baseball team entered the trip with a 3-5 record. They kicked off their road stretch on Saturday, March 5, with two wins over Trinity Baptist College from Jacksonville, Florida by scores of 7-3 and 18-5.

Dordt continued to build off that momentum on Monday where they won a tight game in extra innings over NCAA Division II opponent, Saginaw Valley State, from Michigan. In the second game of the day, the Defenders fell in a close game to Weber International University by a final of 4-2.

The Defenders continued play on Tuesday and split a doubleheader with Warner Southern University. The win came in a dramatic fashion with Connor Hommes’ first career home run—a walk-off solo shot that gave the squad the victory.

On Wednesday, Dordt left to Southeastern University, the number one ranked team in the NAIA, for a single game. Unfortunately, the Fire proved to be too much for Dordt, and the Defenders dropped the contest.

Thursday brought another single game after a change in game schedule. The Defenders again dropped a game to Thomas University out of Georgia.

Dordt finished play on Friday with another loss to Thomas and a loss to number 15 Keiser University. The Defenders concluded the trip with a 4-6 record and a 7-11 record overall.

“I hope the team builds on the hitting and the start of the Florida trip,” said senior outfielder and designated hitter, Lucas Nelson. “We were blessed with an opportunity to play some very good collegiate teams. I hope we can carry over some of the momentum from early in the trip.”

Despite the rough end to the trip, the Defenders are excited to begin conference play and are anxiously awaiting the opportunity to showcase the work that conference opponents have not seen in two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“I’m excited to do some real damage in the GPAC this year,” Nelson said. “A lot of teams will probably be overlooking us, and it will be nice to give them surprise when we play them.”

The Defenders will head to Dakota Wesleyan for a doubleheader to open conference play

on Friday, March 19, and will return home the following day for their first conference doubleheader in over two years.

Dordt’s softball team began the trip to Florida with a 7-3 record and a five-game winning streak.

They opened the trip on Saturday with two wins against Calumet and Spring Arbor to extend the winning streak to seven games.

However, the momentum was short-lived with losses to Bellevue University and the University of Northwestern Ohio on Monday.



Contributed Photo

The Defenders would not fare much better on Tuesday with losses to William Penn and Warner.

The losing skid extended to six in a row after falling to Florida National on Wednesday by a final of 1-0, despite giving up only two hits. In the second game of the day, the Defenders suffered a 10-4 loss to Keiser University.

On Thursday, the Defenders finally flipped the script and broke the six-game losing streak with a 4-0 victory over Bellevue University.

Dordt pitcher Abby Kraemer, threw a no-hitter with seven strikeouts against Bellevue.

“Initially, I did not realize that it was a no-hitter,” Kraemer said. “After coach told me it was pretty exciting. The team was very excited for me which feels even better.”

Dordt fell to St. Thomas in Thursday’s second game to conclude the day.

On the final day of play in Florida, the Defenders would fall to Ave Maria, 3-1, in the first game, but bounced back the with a 1-0 victory over Calumet in the second game of the doubleheader.

Dordt finished the trip with a 4-8 record and an 11-11 record overall. The Defenders will return home to play two against Dickinson State in their final non-conference matchup of the year before beginning conference play against Dakota Wesleyan at home on March 20.

“I am most excited to see the growth from this point forward,” Kraemer said. “We have a lot of depth in every position. With some struggles coming to light in Florida, I am to see what we do to change that and ultimately make some noise in the GPAC.”

Both the baseball and softball teams are eager to begin conference play after their seasons were previously cut short due to the pandemic.

## Hallway conversations inspire education professors’ podcast

Sydney Brummel— Staff Writer

Inside an office off the education pod, two Dordt education professors meet regularly to record their new podcast. With a couple USB microphones plugged into a laptop and a free editing software, Dave Mulder and Matt Beimers ask and discuss relevant questions within the field of education.

“The basic idea is that we often wind up having professional conversations,” Mulder said. “For me that’s one of the best parts of teaching in higher ed—that that’s normal and expected.”

The podcast came as a natural continuation of Beimers and Mulder getting to know each other better. Before a podcast was even considered, the two would frequently engage in practical and philosophical debates about education—both at Dordt and beyond.

“It really was one of those hallway conversations,” Mulder said, “We said, ‘We should start recording these,’ and it started out just for fun.”

Beimers and Mulder released the first episode of their new podcast, Hallway Conversations with Matt and Dave, earlier this semester. Each Wednesday the two professors drop a new episode covering a topic related to education. These can range from learning goals and teaching metaphors to homework and self-care practices. Each episode runs roughly twenty minutes long.

“Hallway Conversations is a wonderful podcast for new and old teachers,” junior elementary education major Christianna Marcy said. “Dr. Beimers and Dr. Mulder share their authentic conversations about teaching practices.”

Mulders said the podcast is targeted toward

Christian educators specifically, no matter where they teach, in the hope they will be benefited from hearing the two professors discuss education and its importance.

“It’s not like we know it all or have it all figured out,” Mulder said. “Hopefully, we’re refining our own practice through the process as well.”

The podcast’s tone is relaxed and made for easy listening. Beimers and Mulder have created an enjoyable podcast that tackles complex questions and sparks further conversation.

“This podcast inspires teachers to start their own dialogues as they wrestle with the gritty details of teaching,” Marcy said, “I enjoy listening to their insights as I prepare to teach next year.”

*“That’s really gratifying to hear stories that there’s other Christian educators”*  
-Dave Mulder

While Hallway Conversations is unscripted, Beimers and Mulder have been intentional in brainstorming questions for discussion. Together, they have thought of around thirty potential topics to pursue.

To ensure a conversational tone, the exact question featured in each episode is unknown until it is read out at the beginning of the



Contributed Photo

recording.

The two professors have so far committed to one spring season of their podcast. At the end of this semester, Beimers and Mulder intend to reevaluate their podcast’s future and approach.

With ten episodes released over the past six weeks, Hallway Conversations has over 1,500 downloads from all around the world.

“That’s really gratifying to hear stories that there’s other Christian educators, even on the

other side of the world, who are benefiting from this,” Mulder said, “That’s humbling.”

Hallway Conversations with Matt and Dave can be found on all major podcasting platforms. Although their podcast is directed toward teachers, the two professors welcome and appreciate all feedback from listeners.

## March is mad once again

Isabel Pheifer — Staff Writer

After a year without the excitement of March Madness, the whole country is eager for March 18 to roll around. The “First Four” games will kick off the tournament this Thursday followed by the round of 64 on March 19 and 20.

This year’s Men’s NCAA basketball tournament will look a little different than previous years. Due to COVID-19, the teams will not travel around the country to play at multiple different stadiums. Instead, all 68 squads will gather in Indiana, where all games will be hosted and played at a few select locations. While fans can attend, host sites are limiting attendance to 25 percent capacity, with one exception: Assembly Hall. Here, at the home court of the Indiana Hoosiers, attendance is capped at 500. Each player and coach will receive six tickets for friends and family.

Another change unrelated to COVID-19 is the absence of two of the most accomplished and popular programs in the tournament: Duke and Kentucky. These teams both amounted disappointing seasons and were unable to earn themselves a bid to the big dance. This comes as a shock and a disappointment to many, since the last time they both missed the tournament was in 1976.

Despite the loss of these blue blood schools, there are many other successful teams vying for the championship. The four number-one seeds include Gonzaga, Baylor, Illinois, and Michigan. The Zags rank as the number one seed overall—the only undefeated team at 26-0 and the favorite to win it all. The University of Virginia Cavaliers enter in as the defending champion after winning the last tournament in 2019.

There are several interesting matchups and potential upsets in the first round. One to look for is No. 10 Rutgers vs. No. 7 Clemson. Rutgers has a pretty good chance of upsetting Clemson, as they play in the dominant Big-



Contributed Photo

Ten Conference and had a tough regular season schedule because of it. They will be up for the fight against Clemson, as Clemson has not shot particularly well this season and may not be able to fend off the feisty Rutgers team.

Another good matchup comes from the South Region where No. 14 Colgate squares off against No. 3 Arkansas. This one should be competitive. Both teams like to play at a fast tempo and shoot a lot of threes. If Colgate takes care of the ball and gets their buckets to fall, there could be a big upset.

No. 10 VCU also stands a chance to upset No. 7 Oregon. Expect VCU to generate many turnovers from Oregon and turn them into buckets on the other end. The first round will be

nothing short of interesting!

Although Dordt is not affiliated with the NCAA, there is no lack of passion for March Madness on campus.

“I would consider myself a pretty big fan when it comes to March Madness,” said sophomore Grant Brouwer. “It’s the best thing about the month of March. Having played basketball for a number of years in my life, it’s definitely going to make listening to lectures very hard, and it’ll be tempting to flip on games during class.”

Although many students partake in the madness of this month, Grant typically finds himself rooting for Duke alone.

“Unfortunately, not everybody is a Duke

fan, so I often get grief or that. However, I can say they’ve won five championships, which is five more than any Iowa team.”

There are many bracket challenges happening around campus, but one particularly interesting one is taking place amongst the track and field team. Theirs is titled the “Chocolate Milk Mile” as those in the bottom percentage of the challenge must run a run a mile—stopping after each lap to drink a glass of chocolate milk. Also, the person who wins the challenge gets to choose one person to run the mile as well. Considering this, I would assume most people participating are trying very hard on their brackets to prevent what sounds like a very excruciating one-mile run!

Although this tournament may look a little different, one thing is bound to be the same: the competition. The dream of hoisting that championship trophy in the air is surely enough to keep the players and coaches going. March Madness is never boring, and you can count on seeing upsets, close games, buzzer beaters, and so much more. Will another Cinderella story erupt like Loyola-Chicago in 2018? Will a number one seed find defeat in the first round? That is why we watch, and why it is called March Madness after all!

The NCAA Men’s Basketball tournament will conclude on April 5, with the championship game being played at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis.

### It’s a two-way street Masks protect you & me

When we all wear masks, we take care of each other

Wear masks, avoid crowds, stay 6 feet apart, and wash your hands

Take all four steps for the most protection

cdc.gov/coronavirus

# The colorful journey of Anna Pikiben

Tabetha DeGroot—Staff Writer

Anna Pikiben dialed her parents’ phone number. She knew their response would not be warm, but it was time they knew. Her parents thought she was majoring in education, following in the footsteps of her family, but that was no longer true. The small talk subsided, and she broke the news.

“I’m a theater major now,” Pikiben said. There was silence on the other end. Finally, her father’s voice came through. “What are you going to do with that?” He said.

Fast-forward a few years and Pikiben is the new costumer and costume shop supervisor for the Dordt University Theatre Arts Department. Pikiben floats around the Dordt costume shop in her red and black plaid cardigan. She lays a partially-sewn dress out on the sewing table for inspection and gives instructions for getting it show-ready.

“That’s a beautiful stitch!” Pikiben says, as a work-study student shows her a dress just run through the sewing machine. Pikiben chats about her favorite book and throws her blue hair into a messy bun.

Later, she sits in her office in the back of the shop, filling out paperwork and sending emails. Her red nails click on her purple keyboard, matching her purple mouse, mousepad, wall tapestry, business card holder and various other office supplies. There are hippos everywhere in her office, from stickers to a little hippo USB cover. They are her favorite animal.

“Some people like animals. I love them,” Pikiben says.

It’s another day in the costume shop, but it’s something she never would have envisioned less than a year ago.

Pikiben’s first memorable encounter with sewing came from a high school prom dress. She had been chosen to waitress for her prom at George Littlerock High School and the dresses were “one size fits most...and I am not most sizes,” Pikiben said.

Her grandma, an avid sewer, saved the day. “She had to take two of them and put them together into a new dress and I just thought that process was really interesting,” Pikiben said.

Her grandma worked her magic and made a new dress Pikiben could feel comfortable in.

“That was the first time I really thought about sewing and I was like, ‘Wow, this is a really amazing skill to have,’” Pikiben said.

Pikiben discovered theatre in high school but fell in love with it in college.

“I was going to go to school to be an amazing actress...but then I realized I wasn’t actually that good at acting,” Pikiben said.

So, she searched for another element of theater she could involve herself in.

Her friend needed help costume designing for an upcoming production during her sophomore year of college, but Pikiben had not sewn a day in her life. She taught Pikiben the basics of stitching and assembling and then left the production to Pikiben, making her finish it completely on her own. Some would find this intimidating, but Pikiben loved it. She discovered her passion as she sewed on buttons and helped backstage.

Pikiben was undeterred by her parents’ reaction to her sophomore year change to a theater major, and she spent the next six years cultivating her passion at South Minnesota State University. She then went on to graduate school where she intensively studied theater at The University of South Dakota.

She worked twenty hours a week in the costume shop there while taking 700 level classes all morning. One of her supervisors made her write out a block schedule for every hour of her day, from sleeping to homework, and even a block for writing out the schedule. However, her hard work paid off and she received multiple awards at theater festivals for her designs.

Pikiben graduated from USD in May of 2020, entering what was not the best economic climate.

“I applied to over a hundred schools” Pikiben said.

When COVID-19 hit, her inbox flooded with emails from schools and businesses saying they were on a hiring freeze.

“A lot of departments kind of just canceled and died,” Pikiben said.

Dordt University was one of the last places she applied to, all because her grandma had saved the day once again.

Pikiben was planning to work at a coffee shop for a while, but her grandma saw a

newspaper ad for a costume shop supervisor at Dordt University and called her up. She applied in August, was interviewed on a Wednesday, accepted the job the Friday after, and started on the Tuesday after that.

“It was a whirlwind,” Pikiben exclaimed.

Dordt was not expecting to land someone with a masters in costuming, so the job has evolved quite a bit since Pikiben arrived. She teaches the work-study students in the costume shop many techniques and the basics of sewing.

Pikiben is working with the theater department as they are going through a program review right now, figuring out what they want the program to look like in the future. She also works with theater students, mentoring them through the theater world.

“[That] is probably my favorite aspect of the job,” Pikiben said. “Just getting them comfortable with where they’re at and taking anxiety off their shoulders.”

It’s been a colorful journey for Pikiben, from a prom dress to costume shop supervisor.

Despite the concerns of her parents, the stress of grad school, and going into the workforce during a pandemic, she stuck with what she is passionate about and it paid off.

“I knew God wouldn’t put more on my plate than I could handle” she says as she leans back in her office chair, surrounded by purple hippos.



Contributed Photo

# A day in quarantine (the introvert’s handbook)

Yage Wang—Staff Writer

On behalf of Dordt University students, we at The Diamond present you with the exclusive handbook for quarantine instruction.

Usually, when students are quarantined for the first time, they suddenly find themselves with an abundance free time available for assigned tasks. While they are obligation-free from attending in-person classes and segregated from social activities, it seems there is nothing much to do rather than scroll through Tik-Tok and Instagram. Here are some extra tips for a day in quarantine life that show you all the possible options for how you can spend your time.

## Food

I speak from experience. You must closely consider the portions of food you eat and try to balance the meal. Though the commons supplies an outstanding amount of food, the limited space for movement in your quarantine chamber does not aid in digestion. Plus, if you are sitting and laying down for most of the day, your poor stomach will feel jammed. In addition to your regular meals, try to get up early and enjoy the breakfast that you have been missing out on because of 8 a.m. classes. It energizes your morning mood, even with the snowy spring of Sioux Center. Overall, quarantine life is an opportunity to adjust daily schedules, food or otherwise.

## Movies

No doubt, social media is the most convenient way to keep in touch with our friends. Sending Snapchats and having some spontaneous conversations over text are great methods to avoid feeling lonely. However, the ten to fourteen days that quarantine usually lasts can even make social media feel dry. Since you have some time alone, it is a fortuitous chance to spend time with yourself and your thoughts. Yes, you heard me correctly. Not to sound cliché, but we usually spend too much time with other people, listening, talking, laughing, and studying. And we barely listen to our own voices because even when we are talking to others, our words are modified by that circumstance. Like Harry Nilsson’s song, Everybody’s Talkin’, “Everybody’s talking at me/I don’t hear a word they’re saying/Only the echoes of my mind.”

So, my suggestion on how to spend time with yourself is to watch a movie, without interruptions. You can turn off the light because there is no roommate to worry about. You can contemplate, immerse, or even cry to release your stress. You are free to have a conversation with yourself and commentate the film out loud. Be adventurous; choose a movie that you have never watched before or never thought would watch because you thought it might be boring.

If you want three hours of immersive meditation, Dances with Wolves should be on the top of your to-watch list. I’ve always had a bias for old movies. They have this magic of grasping classic and romantic sentiments that current films cannot do anymore. They show a burning affection for old memories, stories, and history. And so does Dances with Wolves. It breaks through the barrier of time to tell a story.

## Exercise

Under the condition that the weather is enjoyable, or that you are tough enough to brave the dreadful wind and slippery sidewalks: take a walk. As a senior, I am sad to say my time left at Dordt is running out. We all only spend a couple of years here, so seize the chance to enjoy the fresh air in the prairie and take advantage of the safety of small towns. While we are asked to stay away from people, we are not excluded from nature. For the graduating students, quarantine life might be your last remaining chance to take a break from the busyness of school.

# Feature

# The art of raising puppies

Katie Ribbens—Staff Writer

Chad Odenbrett keeps a collection of cards. These are not trading cards or sports cards, but rather canine business cards.

For each Labrador retriever puppy donated to the service dog nonprofit Partners for Patriots, he receives a small glossy card with the dogs smiling on the front. He currently has six in his collection, meaning six of the puppies have become service dogs. Several more are currently completing their training.

Along with the Partners for Patriots logo, the back of the card has a short biography of his dogs, which includes their favorite activities and treats as well as a bit about their personality. Most importantly, the cards list the services the dogs render to their veteran. The nonprofit places these dogs with a disabled veteran free of charge. Many of these veterans have PTSD.

When Odenbrett purchased his first Labrador retriever from Kentucky and flew the dog to his home in Iowa, he fell in love with the breed. He devoted sixteen years of his life to training and competing with labs, becoming intimately familiar with the breed. While he focused on hunting, Odenbrett became inspired to explore the versatility of the dogs. Eventually, his passion for labs sparked his breeding program, which he started a few years ago: 3 Rivers Outdoors Labs.

“I wanted to get into combining a solid, well-rounded dog that would fit anybody’s lifestyle,” Odenbrett said.

While browsing Facebook, Odenbrett stumbled upon Partners for Patriots by accident. They rely on puppy donations from breeders and volunteer puppy raisers to succeed in their mission.

Odenbrett is exceedingly grateful for the coincidence that brought him into the world of service dogs. He wondered if his dogs, bred for hunting, agility, and family pets, had what it took to become a service dog. On a whim, he messaged Partners to see if they were interested in one of his puppies. He heard back immediately. They wanted a puppy.

Only two puppies in his current litter had



Contributed Photo

yet to find a new home. One overflowed with energy, his sturdy body always in motion. The other: the runt. His small body, paddling legs, and gleaming obsidian coat earned him the name Goose. He had to work three times as hard just to get to his food.

In the end, his drive shaped him. Partners for Patriots had the choice between the fit puppy and the determined runt. They went with the runt.

Goose marked the first of many dogs Odenbrett would donate. Goose’s determination carried him through over a year of training to become a service dog. He now happily lives every day in service to his veteran.

Goose’s photo on his business card captures him mid-head tilt with bright, inquisitive eyes. On the back, in bold blue letters: PARTNERS FOR PATRIOTS ALL STAR GOOSE. My name is Goose. I was donated as a puppy. I help my veteran with anxiety and other issues with PTSD. I also alert to the sound of the insulin pump he needs. I am always there for my veteran. I like to go for walks on my free time.

Odenbrett planned on joining the military after high school, but it never worked out for him. Now, he is honored to serve and give back

# International recruitment and COVID-19

Yee Lim Shin—Staff Writer

When COVID-19 hit worldwide last spring, the globe went into lockdown. Schools and embassies closed and no one knew what the future had in store. This was especially true for Dordt University’s Global Education Department and prospective international students who wanted to come to Dordt.

COVID-19 started with sadness and frustration for the prospective students abroad who were wanting to come to the United States. These international students were in contact with the Global Education Departments months before the pandemic hit. But as the US Embassies started closing, it was impossible to know if and when they would be able to get their visas approved. There were also mutual frustrations from the Global Education Department when they were unable to help these students who were wanting to come to the states. Along with that, the department was also unable to visit schools abroad and had to change the way they handled communication with prospective students.

Adam Adams, the Director of the Global Education Department, had a drastic job change because of this new normal.

Before COVID-19 hit, travel season started in early September for Lockdown, where he usually went from country to country, recruiting and talking with people. Usually, he spends most of the fall semester overseas—going to school fairs, meeting pastors, parents, and other connections he has in across countries.

He leaves the comfort of his home at 3 a.m. and starts his long journey from the Sioux Falls airport and flies to Dallas or Chicago. From there, he embarks on his yearly trip to Southeast Asia on a 14-hour plane ride to Japan.

During this long ride, he is prepared. He listens to podcasts, reads books, and watches

movies provided by the plane. He knows the drill and knows what to do in order to be in peak condition for the days to come. Adams sleeps for a few hours, but he does not force himself to sleep.

“That’s a very important tool for people that don’t travel a lot because of the anxiety and the emotion and all of that,” Adams said.

When he lands in Japan, Adams eats a quick meal and hops onto another five-hour flight to Jakarta, Indonesia. When he finally arrives at his destination, it has been 36 hours since he left the fields of the Midwest.

Not long after arriving, he has breakfast with a school counselor, attends a school fair, and travels to another school to do a presentation about Dordt. For lunch, he meets and talks with prospective students, goes to another evening presentation, and ends the night with dinner with a family. After a long day of meeting people, he goes back to his hotel room and gets ready for another day. This goes on for the next few months as he travels from country to country, creating connections with prospective students.

Now, life looks a little different for the Global Education Department. When schools and embassies shut down last spring, this caused major problems for international students around the world, especially in the US. The Institute of International Education stated the total international enrollment from the fall school year of 2019 to the fall of 2020 plummeted 16 percent and had a 43 percent drop among new international students in colleges throughout the United States.

Dordt University, like many other colleges, was also affected.

Though some students were able to come to Dordt during the Fall semester, many had to

through his dogs. The service he renders to Partners for Patriots is substantial. A responsible breeder makes or breaks a dog.

It begins before the puppies are even born. When he started his program, Odenbrett researched quality bloodlines that would result in desirable characteristics. He also health tests his dogs, ensuring that his puppies will not inherit any genetic diseases.

The first few weeks of a puppy’s life are crucial in founding its perception of its new world. It must begin to trust humans and feel safe in its new environment. As it builds confidence, it will shape how it acts in future situations.

“A dog can have great genetics, but they need that potential to be unlocked,” Odenbrett said.

His goal is to create a dog that can do everything.

From the moment the puppies are born, Odenbrett is handling them. He desensitizes them to human touch. He shows them they can trust him and other people. They learn that good things come from people. And not just him, but others too: his children, nieces, nephews, and neighbors. As the puppies get older, Odenbrett

introduces them to some training exercises to encourage them to use their senses.

This practice allows them to succeed in hunting, agility, and even service work. Body awareness and a strong sense of smell is crucial for a successful service dog. Body awareness is key for a service dog to actively guide their veteran through crowds or find pressure points on them to execute deep pressure therapy with their paws and body weight. Their nose helps them detect blood sugar levels, oncoming panic attacks, and other medical issues. While Odenbrett donates 1-2 puppies from each litter to Partners for Patriots, he has also donated puppies to other nonprofits for diabetic-alert dogs.

Another puppy he donated, Delta, is thriving in her new role as a service dog. She travels with her veteran, enabling him to live more freely and advocate for Partners for Patriots’ mission.

“Every time I see Delta’s name, it just makes me smile, to know that she came from my dogs,” Odenbrett said.

The breeding business has become a family affair. On one memorable occasion, Odenbrett found himself out of town when his Labrador retriever went into labor. His eleven-year-old son had to step up to the plate and save the day. Odenbrett coached his son over the phone as his small hands worked furiously to safely deliver all the puppies. He cleared the mucus from their mouths, the birthing sack from their bodies, then dried them off and ensured they were breathing.

“He was a little nervous, but he did absolutely great,” Odenbrett said.

Even though Odenbrett does not get to attend the first introduction of one of his dogs to its new veteran, he closely follows their journey through the media. He studies the facial expressions of the veterans before, during, and after they meet their new service dog. He describes the veteran’s transformation from uncertainty to confidence as they are paired with their new partner. This is Odenbrett’s goal. This is the heart of a breeder.

# Opening up on mental health cont.

cont. from pg. 1

... like I don’t want to get out of bed.” Nilles knew what these questions meant. She had done research on it before and had seen the exact same things asked.

“Do you know where I’m going with this?” her therapist asked.

“Yes,” Nilles said.

Nilles was told for the first time in this moment that she could be mild bipolar. She had mixed feelings.

She felt nervous about the diagnosis, that there was finally a label. For the next week, Nilles was filled with deep thought.

But now she had something to work with.

Understanding what was going on in her body allowed Nilles to take steps forward and recognize different patterns. She described experiencing high energy for a couple weeks and then feeling a crash as a characteristic of these experiences.

The crash is ugly. In these times Nilles feels completely discontented, tired of everything. This switch can happen as quickly as in a day, feeling like the snap of one’s fingers.

After this, a period of time comes in which all emotions escalate. Here, everything matters more, starting with deep senses of sadness or anger. Nilles said it is here that any little thing that happens is a good enough reason to “call it quits.” It is during these crashes that Nilles is quick to make assumptions. In these moments, she says there is very little will to live.

“Then you come out of the crash and are like, ‘Dang, that was really bad, hope I don’t have to do that again,’” Nilles said. “But you know that in about a month you will.”

According to Depression and Bipolar Disorder Alliance, one in five individuals with Bipolar Disorder commit suicide. The organization also states that it is much more prevalent in women with bipolar disorder to the experience the rapid change between highs and crashes much like Nilles described.

*“I still struggle with it every day”*  
*-Mallory Nilles*

The yearly number of Americans with bipolar disorder tends to be around 2.7 percent. In 2020, that would be about 8,937,072 individuals 18 years or older.

Nilles is not alone in the struggles that she faces, but in the middle of it, she can feel like she is.

“I still struggle with it every day,” Nilles said. “I don’t want to get out of bed because I don’t want to put on my identity, cause it’s heavy.”

Getting through these hard times Nilles ultimately accredits the support system of her

friends and family. She is intentional about taking one thing at a time, and not being “too heavy” with all she does.

In all honesty, Nilles does not think she has her depression figured out. She does not yet “know how to beat them.”

But what gives Nilles the most hope is believing one day she will. She says she has been in her high for four weeks. Typically, she is only in it for two. She believes this means her medications are working.

“I don’t find like, ‘Oh man, this all makes life worth living,’ kind of hope,” Nilles said. “I find, ‘Okay, I can do another day.’” “That’s like my biggest dream, that I’m at peace,” Nilles said.

Nilles is very open about her mental illness and does not see it as something people should be ashamed of. Even with strangers, she will open up and talk about it, believing that the more mental illness is discussed, the more the stigma is broken down. Nilles does not want anyone to hide the issues they go through because she does not want anyone to go through it alone.

“People who don’t have mental illness really struggle to understand it, and that’s not their fault,” Nilles said. “It’s just the more we can try and let them understand it, the more we can all help each other.”



Contributed Photo

# The Back Page

