

## *Southern Valley Schools: Built on Tradition*



An in-depth look at 28 years of Southern Valley traditions





## For over 25 years, traditions connect Southern Valley students

by Jady Wayman

Southern Valley Schools opened in 1995, combining the Beaver City, Orleans, and Oxford schools. From the very beginning, many traditions have been carried on connecting generations of students who have represented the Eagles. Traditions such as Homecoming week events and crowning royalty, certain classroom activities, or even newer traditions such as student council serving hot chocolate during the holidays helps students get excited and feel connected to others.

The first Homecoming at Southern Valley was in the fall of 1995. Current Southern Valley counselor and co-student council sponsor, Melinda Hunt, was a junior the year Southern Valley opened. Hunt said, "We have always done Homecoming royalty the same way and have always decorated the hallways. Dress-up days have also been a tradition." Since the first year, royalty has always been selected by a vote of the student body. Royalty has always included attendants from all the classes in high school. In 1995 the first king and queen were Steve Harder and Lesha Korte. This year's Homecoming was on September 29, 2023, and the king and queen were Braxton Hammond and Sarah Holste. Dress-up days have always been a part of the Homecoming tradition as well. Friday has always been Spirit Day. From 1995 to 2023, students have been seen wearing purple and black clothes, beads, and makeup to show off their Eagle pride.

Traditions extend to the classroom as well. In the Family Consumer Science (FCS) room, students built gingerbread houses in 1995. SV has had three different FCS teachers, and they have all had students build gingerbread houses around the holidays.

**THEN**



**NOW**



LEFT: Southern Valley's first Homecoming king and queen Steve Harder and Lesha Korte. ABOVE: The 2023 king Braxton Hammond and queen Sarah Holste.

**THEN**



**NOW**



LEFT: In 1995, Crystal Marvin, then a sophomore, decorates a gingerbread house in her Home Economics class. ABOVE: Current students Morgan Otte, Krayton Chesterman, Berkley Martin, and Jady Wayman show off their decorated gingerbread houses.

Current FCS teacher, Linda Dannehl said, "The gingerbread house unit may seem like it is a unit just for fun. It is fun, but it is also a culmination of several learning outcomes."

The Introduction to FCS curriculum includes a unit on housing. Students examine different architectural styles and designs and then try to integrate one of those features into their gingerbread houses. This class also learns about baking and cooking fundamentals which is useful as students prepare the dough for gingerbread houses. Dannehl said, "It's pretty easy to tell if they don't follow the recipe exactly. A recipe mistake may mean a house that won't stand."

A newer tradition that has been around for several years is the student council serving hot chocolate to the student body. Co-student council sponsor Stephanie Holste said, "We have been serving hot chocolate to the student body during the week before Christmas break for the last five years now. It is an excellent way to end the semester and wish everyone happy holidays. I think the students and staff like this tradition so much because who doesn't like hot chocolate?"

As the years go by and students get older and graduate, traditions have remained. Having been a student at the beginning, and now a staff member Hunt knows that traditions help create the culture at Southern Valley. Hunt said, "Traditions are important because they give students and the community something special to look forward to. It gives the younger students something to want to be a part of and the older students something to implement and pass down."



## Traditions provide a sense of belonging

by Sophie Lewis

The word 'tradition' comes from the Latin word "tradiare," which means "to hand over, to transmit." A tradition is a practice or ritual that is passed down from generation to generation. In schools, an event or activity that happens across many school years connecting students and communities can help create a sense of stability and help people feel a sense of belonging.

Millions of different traditions can be found across the globe and often include clothing, foods, or activities. Traditions are practiced in churches, schools, communities, and families. In the 2022 article "Habits+More: Why Traditions Matter," author Amy Brann said, "Each time you establish and carry out a tradition together with another person, you create and reinforce a shared memory. When these memories are of traditions that bring you joy, then reliving these memories together strengthens your emotional connection with that other person."

In schools like Southern Valley, traditions can help define the culture of a building. Some traditions like pep rallies get the students more involved in school activities and help the students create lasting memories with their friends. The 2023 article, "How School Traditions Leave A Lasting Impact," written by the Merion Mercy Academy, said, "Traditions bring together students, faculty, staff, families and alumnae to participate in shared experiences, creating a sense of connection and belonging. This can help to build relationships and support networks, which is particularly important in a school where students come from a variety of different backgrounds."

In many small towns, there are traditions on holidays or specific celebration days. This is true in the Southern Valley communities. Oxford has Turkey Days, Stamford celebrates Pork Days, Orleans has Applefest, and Beaver City celebrates Eager Beaver Days. Each celebration has its own traditions which provide a sense of pride for those living in that community. The article "Habits+More: Why Traditions Matter" states, "Over time traditions start to blend into the culture of your people, of your organization. They become more of 'the way we do things around here.'"

Practicing traditions can be beneficial in many ways, including for a person's mental well being. An article published by oregoncounseling.com on December 23, 2021, explains, "Traditions are important to our mental health because they provide a sense of stability and help us connect with our roots."

Traditions are one of the most important things in people's life. To some, traditions represent gifts that are being passed down from generation to generation. To others, traditions are a way to be able to bring your family together and a way to spend time with your loved ones. Whether it is at church, at school, in your community, or in your family, the most important reason traditions matter is that they bring comfort and belonging.

### SOUTHERN VALLEY BY THE NUMBERS

**Graduating Seniors**  
1996--44 graduates  
2023--32 graduates

**Four Superintendents**  
Nate Stineman--1995 to 2005  
Chuck Lambert--2005 to 2014  
Darren Tobey--2015-2018  
Bryce Jorgenson--2019-current

Southern Valley  
Jr/Sr High school is a  
90,000 square foot  
building originally  
financed by a 7.38 million  
dollar bond issue passed  
on April 3, 1993.

**Elementary School Added**  
Originally the Southern Valley district had  
three elementary schools: Beaver City,  
Orleans, and Oxford. The new elementary  
opened in the 2008-2009 school year.

**Sports at SV**  
1996--football, volleyball, boys & girls  
cross country, boys & girls basketball,  
wrestling, boys & girls track, golf  
2007--added softball  
2020--added boys & girls bowling  
2022--added girls wrestling

### Ten Remaining Original Staff Members

Greg Huerta, Anita Krejdl, and J.D. Wolzen (retiring this year)

Joey Bose, Renae Brooks, Mark Grove, Patty Hansen,  
Ellen Kuhl, Margaret McInturf, Pam Wessels



## *New traditions create new bonds*

by Peyton Brown

Over the past 28 years, Southern Valley Schools has had many traditions. While some of these traditions may have slowly changed over time, there have been new traditions that have helped to create the culture of #SVNATION.

One example of a new tradition that students have enjoyed is the addition of SOAR cards as a reward system. Earning cards enables students to use them for prizes such as bonus points, a free skip on homework, a snack, or removing a tardy. The bigger the reward, the more SOAR cards it takes to purchase the item. SOAR cards were first introduced in 2022.

Another new addition as a part of the behavior reward system is something known as the SOAR room. The SOAR room is for students who have “No D/F’s at the end of the quarter. No office referrals. No tardies. Participate in at least two extracurricular activities, and have no more than two absences,” said high school principal Josh Lanik.

Students who have earned a pass can go into the SOAR room whenever they have free time, like during study hall. Students can play board games or cards, talk to friends, and also use their cell-phone which is prohibited during classes. Junior Brooklyn Santifer has had a SOAR room pass since its implementation. “My favorite part of the SOAR room is having a quiet area to relax and decompress before my next class,” said Santifer.

Another example of a new tradition is having a schoolwide RoShamBo competition. RoShamBo is more commonly known as rock paper scissors. On the day of the tournament, students received a beaded necklace at the beginning of the day. Students could challenge others, but not during class. The winner would get the other student’s beaded necklace. When a student won five beaded necklaces, they could challenge staff members to a game of RoShamBo. People with more than 25 beaded necklaces were “protected” and participated in the finals during an afternoon pep rally.

This year staff members Joanna Chesterman and Joe York were in the finals along with students Anna Hamilton, Gabe Grove, and Rian Grove. Hamilton was the only junior high student in the finals. She said, “The rock paper scissors tournament made the day more exciting. Making the finals was fun with seeing everyone cheer for who they wanted to win. It would be fun to do it again.”

The overall winner was senior Rian Grove who was given \$20 as his prize. “I thought it was really fun and creative. The finals were really fun because the whole school was there and everybody was involved in who would win it,” said Grove.

New traditions mean more opportunities for student involvement within the school. With each passing year, Southern Valley continues to find new ways to help students bond through shared experiences. These new traditions are ones that student not only enjoy but will also remember after graduation.



ABOVE: Junior Brooklyn Santifer enjoys looking through a yearbook while using her SOAR room pass. RIGHT TOP: Cheerleader Adi Hunt presents Rian Grove his cash prize for winning the schoolwide RoShamBo competition.



RIGHT BOTTOM: Anna Hamilton smiles as she gets ready to participate in the finals. Gabe Grove faces Mr. York in a RoShamBo challenge during the pep rally.





## SV journalism: a winning tradition

by Jady Wayman

Since the opening year of Southern Valley Schools, journalism students have been very competitive in the NSAA State Journalism contest. Throughout the years, the contest format and categories have changed, but one constant is that Southern Valley students have earned hardware.

In 1995-1996 when the school was first founded, Mrs. Marilyn Siebels was the journalism advisor. Seven students placed in the annual NSAA State Journalism contest earning the school fourth place overall in the Class C statewide competition. That year, the competition was based on 14 categories in which the students' work was entered. Sophomore Isaac Garrett earned second place in editorial cartooning, senior Kili Rikli won second place in yearbook layout, and junior Marla Earley earned third place in photography. The team of seniors Merrit Fish and Devin Preitauer, junior Shawna Aungst, and sophomore Alisa Rikli received third place in class "C" in in-depth reporting.

The winning tradition which started in the school's first year has continued. Currently, Southern Valley journalism has a four year streak of being the state runner-up in class C. The competition has expanded to 25 categories including various types of writing, yearbook categories, photography, broadcast journalism, and artistic categories like editorial cartoon or photo illustration. Current journalism advisor Mrs. Meredith McQuay has been at Southern Valley since 2004. She said, "Traditions like this are rewarding for students. Getting to tell stories about our school helps document the events and students who are here each year."

In 2020, the Eagles qualified 23 entries and earned 41 total medals with Ashley Marcum being a state champion in editorial writing, along with Maggie Lammers, Brecken Preitauer, Carlee Thompson, Trinity Bantam, and Reagan Bennett earning first place in yearbook theme development. McQuay said, "The first year we were the runner-up team was the COVID year we were sent home in the spring. We had a virtual group watch party when they did the awards ceremony, so we still got to celebrate together even though we were all in our homes."

### THEN



1996 4th Place Class C Eagles Team

FRONT: Shawna Aungst, Devin Preitauer, Marla Earley, Merrit Fish, and Alisa Rikli.  
BACK: Kili Rikli and Isaac Garrett.

### NOW



2023 State Runner-up Class C Eagles Team

FRONT: Ashton Kirkendall, Ehme Linner, Adi Hunt, Ann Bose, Alyson Adams, Kady Willcock, Shyloh Gavierrez, Lily Holste, and Tori Bose. BACK: Advisor Meredith McQuay, Gabe Grove, Kiera Nash, Zuzka Pokorna, Camden Wright, Shae Mitchell, Keira Wasenius, Kolby Hunt, Celia Zetterberg, Maddy Schoen, and Alex Meyers.

In 2021, the Eagles qualified 29 entries winning 36 total medals. The team of Reagan Bennett, Alisha Bock, Abree Karash, Ashton Kirkendall, and Shelby Rickert were state champions in in-depth news. McQuay said, "The second runner-up year, things weren't back to normal yet after COVID. The awards ceremony was broadcasted, and we watched at school. It was the same day as RPAC track, so half of our team wasn't with us. We did our own awards ceremony at school the next week, and I got to present everyone with their medals. That was a really fun day."

In 2022, Southern Valley had 29 entries and earned 46 medals. Liz Meyers was the state champion in column writing and photo illustration. Additionally, Shae Mitchell placed first in information graphic and sisters Jenna and Adi Hunt won first in broadcast sports. "This was the first year that we were able to be handed our trophy at the state awards ceremony. It was definitely more exciting in person, getting to cheer for each student as they were given individual awards and stood on the podium. I will never forget having our whole team go up on stage for pictures to receive our runner-up team trophy," said McQuay.

Last year in 2023, the Eagles qualified 24 entries and earned 40 medals with Celia Zetterberg placing first in information graphic, Adi Hunt in action photography, and the in-depth news team of Shae Mitchell, Gabe Grove, Keira Wasenius, Kiera Nash, Ann Bose, and Adi Hunt bringing home the gold. McQuay said, "Last year, Celia won the first category that was announced. It was a thrilling way to start the awards ceremony. I am so proud of all our students and their accomplishments."

Each year, there are new stories to tell, new pictures to take, and new videos to produce. The NSAA State Journalism Contest is held in the spring, so Southern Valley students prepare for it all year long. McQuay commented, "I look forward to state journalism each year because I love seeing Eagles get on the podium and earn hardware. It is a source of great pride for our school and a tradition that I hope continues for years to come."



## A summer tradition: The Summer Honors Program provides learning opportunities for students

by Sophie Lewis

The ESU 11 Summer Honors Program (SHP) has been around for close to 40 years, making this program a tradition for Southern Valley students as well as for some families who have had multiple generations participate. SHP is a two-week summer school program held in June. It was designed to help students learn as much advanced subject matter in their areas of study as possible. Each year there are 10-12 different areas students can study such as art, creative writing, computer science, film, drama, math, architecture, engineering, medical science, agriculture, or logic. Teachers nominate students to attend, and those nominated take a test or submit a portfolio to be selected to participate. SHP is a work school, not a vacation school.

A former participant, Amy Russell, currently works as the library aide at Southern Valley Elementary. She attended SHP from 1993 to 1996. Russell said, "I learned a lot of independence by attending Summer Honors. I learned a lot about writing and have gained many great memories from the experience. I also made lifelong friendships."

Russell was encouraged to try out for the program after finishing junior high. "When I was an 8th grader, my English teacher encouraged me to go because she knew I loved writing. After going once, I was hooked. I decided not to try out my senior year and have always wished I would have gone all five years!"

Two of Russell's children, Taylor and Brianna both attended SHP. Taylor a 2019 Southern Valley graduate attended SHP as an agriculture student in 2017 and Brianna a 2022 graduate attended the film class twice in 2019 and 2021 and was an SHP special intern in 2022.

Current Southern Valley senior, Kady Willcock attended SHP for medical science in the summer of 2023. She said, "Summer honors helped me improve my grades by helping me realize that school can be fun. It also helped me realize that school is only as hard as you make it."

Summer Honors helps students start thinking about college and careers. Willcock said, "The medical science class was such a fun experience if you are interested in the medical field! While being in this class, we got to visit different hospitals, mortuaries, and even dental offices. Depending on the career we were thinking about, we got picked to job shadow at different hospitals to be able to experience what the jobs are like. I got to job shadow at CHI Health in Kearney and Phelps Memorial Hospital. In Holdrege, I got to experience the duties of an RN, and I got to see what they do to help others."

SHP is a summer tradition that current student should look into because of the many opportunities available. Willcock said, "Summer honors is not like school at all. It is more like a summer camp with fun things to do! It is like a big family because of how easy it is to make friends."

### THEN

#### SUMMER HONORS ~ 1995



Name: Amy Renae Stephens  
Address: RR1 Box 7  
City & Zip: Stamford 68977  
Phone Number: 868-4121  
Description of Personality: out-going, friendly, heterosexual, creative, frisky, fun, happy, carefree

#### Favorites .....

Subject: Study Hall  
Sport: horseback riding  
Book/Author: Accidents/Danielle Steel  
Food: Red Mr. Freezies  
Pet Peeve: Spice-scented car freshener trees  
Place to Travel: Milford  
Clothes: comfortable jeans, Ropers, shorts  
TV Show: My So Called Life/Grace Under Fire  
Movie: The Lion King  
Actor: Keanu Reeves  
Actress: Winona Ryder  
Two Things You Believe In: God and Pizza Hut Breadsticks w/ cheese  
Future Plans: College

Comic Strip: The Far Side  
Commercial: Budweiser Ant commercial  
Hobby/Pastime: Reading weird books  
Magazine: TEEN  
Type of Music: Country  
Radio Station: 104.5, 101.5  
Singer: Martina McBride, Garth Brooks  
Group: Alabama  
Song: Gene Country (Alan Jackson)  
Saying: "Whatever"

Activities Involved In: FPS, SHP, volleyball, Academic Bowl, Speech singing, band, CYO, 4-H, National Honor Society  
Most Prized Possession: My 100 count box of Mr. Freezies



ABOVE: Amy Russell's SHP biography page from her 1995 creative writing class.

### NOW



In June 2023, Kady Willcock learned about the human body by working with dissected pig lungs and hearts as part of the Summer Honors Medical Science class.



Willcock with other SHP medical science students examining the arteries and airways of cow lungs.



## Southern Valley Sports *A well-documented history of success*

by Ann Bose

Walk into the atrium of Southern Valley Schools and look up to the left. There, students and visitors can see the history of sports at Southern Valley. Sports are very popular in America and have always been a way to bring students together at Southern Valley. SV is a consolidated school that consists of four small towns: Beaver City, Orleans, Oxford, and Stamford. Going from several small schools to one large school had its challenges, however, a look at the history of Southern Valley sports shows that what began in 1995 continues to be a source of pride and excitement today.

Two current Southern Valley teachers, Joey Bose and Tina Brown coached together in the early years of Southern Valley. Bose was the first head coach of the program. "It was great, crazy, frustrating, and very difficult," Bose remembers.

Brown joined the coaching staff the second year of the consolidation. "I remember the other conference schools were not fans of SV because, apparently they felt SV was bigger than them and had an unfair advantage," said Brown.

When Southern Valley first opened, it was a large class C school. The original volleyball team had 38 members. The second year, the team had 37 athletes. From the second year, one sports record remains. The 1996 volleyball team holds the season match average for most ace serves at 6.4 aces per match.

Over the years, student enrollment and the amount of student participation in sports has declined. Currently Southern Valley is a class D school. Teams have gone from having almost 40 girls out for volleyball to just 13 girls this year. "Like everything in our world, there is a cycle of change sometimes for the good and sometimes for the not-so-good," states Bose.

Although numbers have declined, there are more sports opportunities available today. Now Southern Valley has 14 different sports options with four of them being added over the years. Sports teams that were not originally offered at Southern Valley include softball which started in 2007, boys and girls bowling which began in 2020, and girls wrestling which was added in 2022.

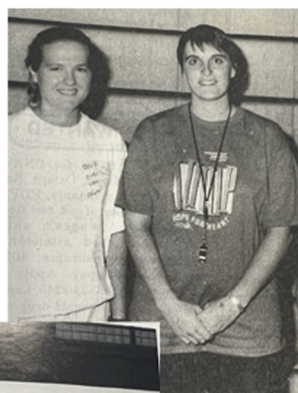
Times change and records are meant to be broken, but at Southern Valley, sports have always been competitive. From the original sports that were options during the first two years of Southern Valley, eight sports records remain. For the girls, in addition to the 1996 volleyball record, girls basketball player Lindsey Stineman still holds several records. In the 96-97 season, she set the record for rebounds per game with 20, the record for 2 point field goals with 14 per game and the record for season 2 point field goals with 180.

One individual football record for most rushing touchdowns in a season remains. It was set by Steve Harder in the inaugural season at 15 rushing touchdowns. The 1995-96 boys basketball team still holds the record for most rebounds in a game at 56. The 1996 boys 3200 meter relay team in track holds the fastest time with an 8:12.2. Relay members were Steve Harder, Brian Hinkle, Scott Hinkle, and Bryce Wolzen. Steve Harder still holds the individual record in the 300 meter low hurdles with a time of 42 seconds flat which he set in the first season in 1996.

With a strong history, athletics at Southern Valley have set the tone for years to come. In the early years, records were set by dedicated athletes who spent hours practicing and who were supported by coaches who were just as dedicated as their players. Today, athletes and coaches work equally hard chasing records to document their part in the long line of Southern Valley athletic successes.

### THEN

RIGHT: Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Bose coached the 1996 SV volleyball team.  
BELOW: The 1996 Southern Valley volleyball team had 37 athletes and two student managers.



### NOW

LEFT: Mrs. Bose and Mrs. Brown are still teachers at SV but currently do not coach volleyball.  
BELOW: The 2023 Southern Valley volleyball team had 13 athletes and three student managers.





## THEN

### My Favorite What?

- Actor
1. Jim Sandler
  2. Jim Carey
- Movie
1. "Happy Gilmore"
  2. "Dazed and Confused"
- Class
1. Study Hall
  2. Shop
- Jeans
1. Levis
  2. Wranglers
- Food
1. Pizza
  2. Pasta
- Ice Cream
1. Chocolate
  2. Vanilla
- Singing Group
1. Cypress Hill
  2. Alabama
- Saying
1. Sweet!
  2. This bites!

YEARBOOK SURVEY  
OF 1996 JUNIORS



PLAYING PEP RALLY GAMES--1996

"Some of the things we used to do when I was in high school, we still do today," states Melinda Hunt, current guidance counselor and 1997 graduate of Southern Valley.



MEDIA CENTER 1995  
Some areas of the school remain unchanged. Here, the 1995-1996 Future Problem Solvers team works on a problem for the national competition in Providence, RI.

## NOW

### My Favorite What?

### 2024 edition

CURRENT JUNIORS

- Actor
1. Ryan Reynolds
  2. Adam Sandler
- Movie
1. "Pitch Perfect"
  2. "The Woman King"
- Class
1. Weights
  2. Arts
- Jeans
1. Wranglers
  2. Levis
- Food
1. Spaghetti
  2. Steak
- Ice Cream
1. Chocolate
  2. Cookies and Cream
- Singer/Group
1. Zach Bryan
  2. The Lumineers
- Saying
1. It'll buff
  2. Bro



PLAYING PEP RALLY GAMES--2023  
Junior Adi Hunt (Melinda's daughter), leads a pep rally game of Name that Tune at the Homecoming pep rally.

### MEDIA CENTER 2024

In-depth team members include Peyton Brown, Ann Bose, Tori Bose, Jadyn Wayman, and Sophie Lewis.

