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LINCOLN EAST HIGH SCHOOL

EPIC
59

AUTHENTICALLY
EAST

AUTHENTICALLY

EAST

Photo Elizabeth Elitzin

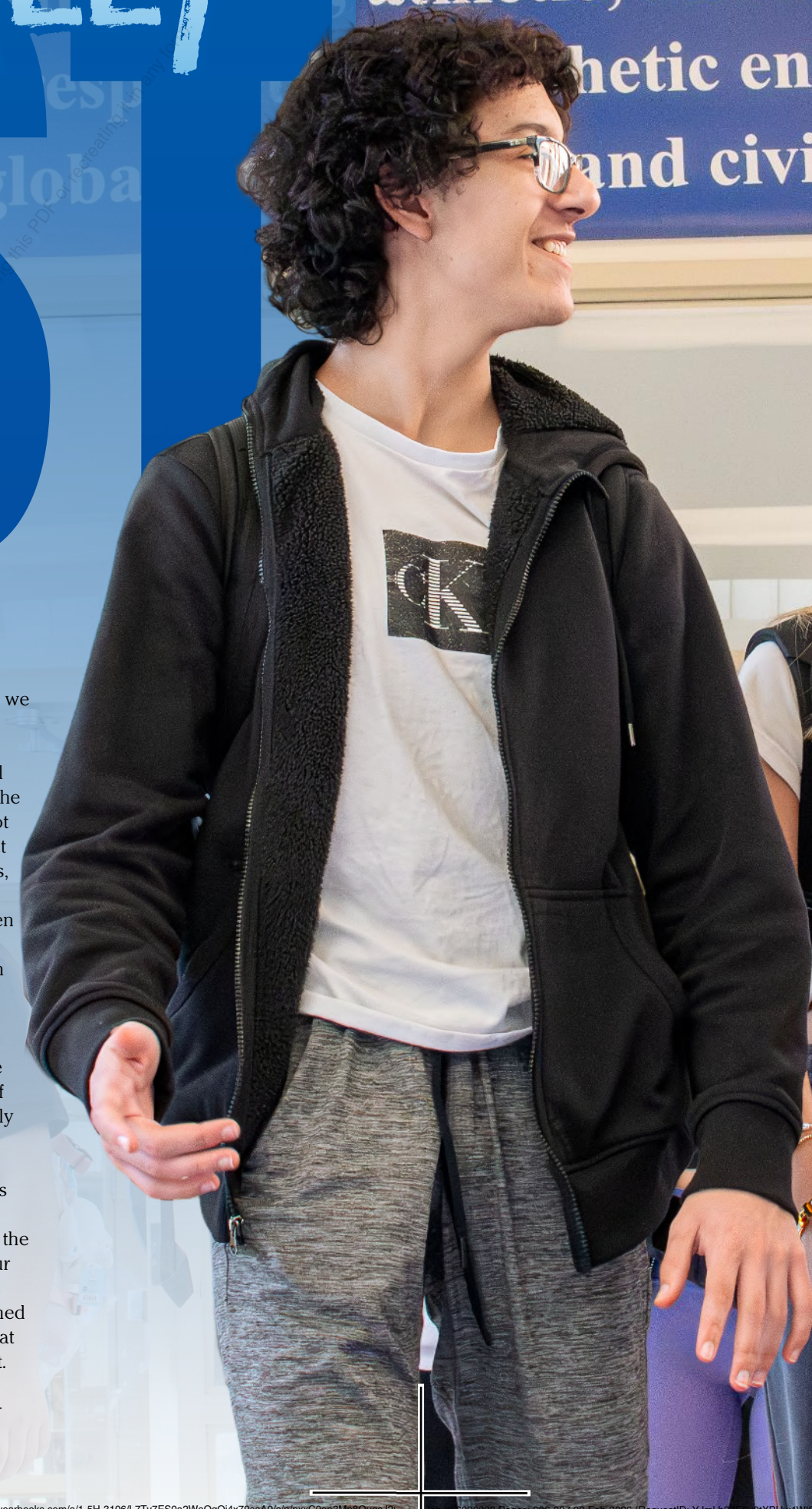
CANDID & TRUE

From the start, high school has encouraged us to confront our character. Tossed into bustling hallways, we struggled to keep the crowd from washing us away — just wide-eyed freshmen in a tumultuous sea of students. But, we confronted our conflicts with a determination to discover who we are among the crowd. We tried on new roles, spent time with different people, and threw ourselves into countless activities to discover a place to belong. Were we going to be a state-winning athlete, a devoted Key Club volunteer, or a thriving thespian? However, we sometimes got lost in conformity. The bobbing heads filling the packed hallways seemed to blur together seamlessly.

Rather than knowing where we belonged in the crowd, we began to feel lost without it. Who were we when the bell rang, leaving us all alone? The truth is, East students cannot be grouped into a few select cliques — we are individuals, possessing a personality entirely our own. We've been shaped by our friends, teachers, and setbacks, with each experience helping us understand who we are. Rather than conforming to find connection, our unique edges created the mosaic of Lincoln East — an undeniably complex student body. The crowded hallways are not a blurry blue mess of Spartans but a vivid, colorful array of students. We fought against the voices telling us to dilute our identities and sought something greater. We defined who we are — and that's what makes us Authentically East.

Copy Cinae Schneider

community is to foster the athletic, and academic selves. A synthetic environment that and civic responsibility.



FIRST QUARTER

SPARTAN STATE OF MIND

Layout Chloe Wolbert

As school began, carefree days spent under the sun faded into fluorescent-lit classrooms with hard chairs and assignments. Students in their first period classes tapped pencils against desks and wondered about lunch as they waited for the bell to ring. Humidity filled the halls, and walking through the sticky air was a struggle. But then, something changed. The air cleared. We settled into our schedules. New friends were found in classes and laughter snuck into even the most stressful subjects. Friday night bleachers filled with roaring crowds seeking entertainment and a break from homework. First quarter had officially begun, and with it, so did an anticipation to discover what lessons the year would bring and how we would stay true to ourselves throughout it. For freshmen, first quarter was especially meaningful. The first day of high school signified an opportunity for them to find a place where they could belong for the next four years. To get the ball rolling, students joined clubs, sports, and performing arts to try and find a place to belong. "I think it's really fun to get involved in stuff and it can help you meet a lot of new people," said [Christian Paulsen \(9\)](#). "It can be very intimidating coming to high school at the start, but having a community that's super supportive helps."

At the beginning of high school, four years seemed to stretch out for miles, unattainable. But in the blink of an eye, seniors found themselves trudging up from Seacrest on their last first day of school. Much like freshmen, seniors spent first quarter with questions about the future swirling in their mind. But amongst the tornado of thoughts in their head was the memories and people that made high school meaningful. "I think high school has gone by pretty fast, but the days have gone by slowly," said [Lawson Pearl \(12\)](#). "If I could talk to myself on the first day of freshman year, I'd say to talk to more people and join more clubs." Entering school, the hallways contained nothing more than a sea of strangers. However, within all of us was a desire to connect and learn about each other's lives, despite whatever differences divided us. And when we flowed out the doors on the last day of the quarter, we were ready to face the rest of the school year — not as strangers, but as Spartans.

Copy Cinae Schneider



AUGUST

SNAPSHOTS

Layout Jerrica Zhang

WHAT'S CHANGED?

The Epic Yearbook editors and staff decided to switch up the way we did Student Life this year. In previous years, we only included pictures and information about the East community. However, we thought about how much more goes on in the world outside of our school that's important to cover. As a result, Student Life will have more current events and references, while still maintaining snapshots of East students doing what they love. Although the yearbook will always be about the inner workings of the school, we wanted to emphasize more notable issues that occurred throughout the globe as well.

Being educated and acknowledging what was happening outside of our school helped us remember what truly took place during the year. We can recognize these events as real and impactful, rather than nonexistent. Therefore, we hope you, as the readers, appreciate and embrace this change as we recall everything that actually happened from August to May.

Copy Jerrica Zhang

First day nerves! Tiffany Zhou (9) experiences her first time at East and wanders around the Club Fair. She kept an eye out for any activities or extracurriculars that appeared interesting to her. "I honestly was nervous, because a new school and trying to make new friends can get awkward," said Zhou.

Photo Elizabeth Elitzin



Let's chill. After a long day of adventure, there's nothing better than kicking back by the fire. **Charlie Everman (12)** proves that senior year's all about making memories one campfire at a time. A group of seniors traded city lights for campfire sparks, spending the night laughing, talking, and soaking in the quiet. "Nights like these remind you how simple life can be," said Everman. "Everyone should take some time and slow down."

Photo Simon Morehead



Just keep watching! **Kate Ost (12)** dresses up to see Tate McRae's concert. She traveled all the way to Chicago to sing along with one of her favorite artists and get tour merchandise. "I really liked some of the merch I got, like a white t-shirt with her in blue," said Ost. Photo courtesy of Kate Ost



Bigs and littles! One tradition East activities use is to assign bigs and littles for the next year. Spartan swim, cheer, and student council uses this system to build friendships. Team rapport is key, and students **Noemi Sanchez (11)**, **Mariah Melessa (11)**, and **Lucy Welstead (9)** celebrate this lifelong tradition. "I like that it gives me the chance to connect with someone younger than me," said Sanchez. "Being able to express myself through the gift and seeing their reaction is the best part." Photo courtesy of Lincoln East Student Council

DRAWING NEAR THE FINISH LINE

As 12th graders finally reached the summer before their final year of high school, traditions like Senior Sunrise and Sunset began to take up space on their calendars. Seniors met at Seacrest with a bunch of chalk markers and crafty ideas to paint the windows of their cars. Each student drew colorful designs and words to capture their own personalities and aesthetics. Seniors like **Chloe Berry** and **Julia Shelton**, pictured on top of the car, enjoyed their Senior Sunset before the first day of school, taking it all in. "The lot was full of people, there were speakers everywhere and everyone was just bonding," said Berry. "I had always seen people post about it from years before on social media, and I was excited because it was finally my turn." These moments are what made senior year special for many previous East students, and it was time for the Class of 2026 to have the same experience.



Copy Jerrica Zhang

SPARTANS



MS. KARNES
MRS. HOVORKA
MR. TROWBRIDGE

Photo Elizabeth Elitzin



WHO HAS THE BEST JEANS?



"Uniqlo or Edikted has really good jeans."
Trish Le (10)



"JNCOs, they were really popular back in the 2000s, because of their wide-legged fit."
River Donner (11)



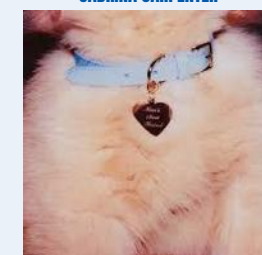
"Levi's, I like the fit of their jeans."
Kyler Garcia (12)

MAJOR EVENTS

- August 1-3 Lollapalooza continues with headliners like Olivia Rodrigo, Twice, Tyler the Creator, Doechii, and more
- August 9 International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples
- August 14-17 First World Humanoid Robot Games is held in Beijing, China
- August 22 Women's Rugby World Cup began in England
- August 26 Taylor Swift and Travis Kelce publicly announce their engagement

TOP STREAMED ALBUM

MAN'S BEST FRIEND
SABRINA CARPENTER



184 million streams in its first week



Snapshots

Spirit sisters! Seniors *Liliana Tejeda, Larkyn Johnson, Brielle Odenthal, and Marah Matoush* chant the fight song after another Spartan touchdown. The senior girls of the varsity cheer team have grown up in Spartan Cheer for all of their years of high school. The team was united in their love for cheering on their school's teams to help get the crowd's spirits high and fierce. "Seeing my parents in the stands supporting me every time I step onto either a court or a field makes me smile and want to cheer harder," said Odenthal. "My family and friend's makes me have more gratitude towards cheer." *Photo: Chloe Wolbert*



Goodbye Seacrest! Senior Larkyn Johnson cheers hard for her last appearance cheering for the Spartan Football Team. From memories of the cheering with the crowd after this year's seniors won their freshman city tournament to now cheering on varsity at the state playoffs; Larkyn's fondest memories are by the 30 yard line, feeling the crisp air of summer turning into fall. "Being able to spend my last year at East doing the thing I love makes it all worth it," said Johnson. "Being with my some of my forever people be my fellow cheerleaders is something to forever be grateful for." *Photo Chloe Wolbert*

WHO WAS VOTED

BEST TUMBLER



MOST SPIRITED



BEST FACIALS



TEAM TIKTOKER



TEAM JOKESTER



Boost the mood. Cheerleaders hype up the crowd, kicking and cheering, and all eyes are on the dazzling pompoms that electrify the room. At the fall pep rally, cheerleaders end the party with their dance to the fight song as everyone returns back to class. The team had not only an important role in cheering on the athletes, but also keeping the students in the pep rally excited and willing to participate. "We always have to be smiling and happy and sometimes it is hard to do that," said [Kali Kite \(12\)](#). "But when the student section is alive it gives us the energy to keep cheering." At football games, the vibes were high and the cheerleaders had the best job in the world. [Addie Shreve \(12\)](#), [Ava Runyan \(12\)](#), [Pallmer VanMeter \(11\)](#), [Sofia Feilmeier \(12\)](#), [Kite, Clara Thorson \(12\)](#), and [Marah Matoush \(12\)](#) lean in to take a picture under the Friday night lights. The cheerleaders yelled out cheers and showed school spirit during the football game against the Columbus Discoverers. "The energy was up the whole game," said [Sofia Feilmeier](#). "Everyone wanted that win so bad, and it made the energy amazing." [Photos Chloe Wolbert and Cael Egeberg](#)

A SCRIBBLE FROM THE SENIORS

Dear East High, we love the memories we have made along the way as we cheered on our school. Whether it is football, basketball, or volleyball, cheering with each other will forever be our favorite memory. Cheering with 18 seniors at Seacrest and celebrating our football team's wins with the student section are also some of our favorite memories. Riding on the bus to our away games, making candy salads with our team, and singing songs all the way up to a game will never be forgotten. Team bonding moments were always a blast and being able to hang out with your teammates outside of cheer is something that will always be replaying in our minds. Our coach, Sydney Mickells, has made our past four years something special, and all of us have so much gratitude for her. All of us will miss cheering for our school on the sidelines and seeing each other every week.

Love,
East Varsity Senior Cheerleaders



SPIRIT

Layout and photo
Chloe Wolbert

SUPERSTARS

© 2014 Scholastic Teaching Resources

Layout and photo
Chloe Wolbert

The sidelines are buzzing, the student section is screaming, and your eyes are drawn to the Spartan Varsity Cheerleaders flying through the air in bright blue and white uniforms. Captains yell out cheers and students loudly yell them back, but all you can focus on is how the cheerleaders are still smiling in freezing cold rain. On Oct. 24, Lincoln East football had their annual Pink Out game against Lincoln Southeast. The game ended with East winning, 27-14. That night, temperatures reached a low of 42 degrees with rain, but this didn't stop East's cheerleaders from cheering the whole entire game. Cheerleaders have a responsibility to keep the student section alive, but students often lose their energy in cold climates. In order to keep the student section alive, cheerleaders needed to keep their energy high. "The most important thing is to stay peppy," said **Mya Zabel (12)**. "Staying peppy is key – even if you feel like your toes are going to fall off." While some may think cheerleading is easy, small things like freezing cold games and difficult opponents proved just how important varsity cheer's relentless pep was to keeping team spirit alive. When the team was winning, the student section and cheerleaders were working as one, feeding off each other's excited energy and encouraging the team to keep going. "When the student section is alive it brings us up," said **Clara Thorson (12)**. "It gets to be so much fun for everyone there." Inevitably, the cheerleaders held the fate of the game. Without them, the fans' energy would be low and the game wouldn't feel the same. The varsity cheerleaders' dedication to uniting the crowd and keeping the Spartan spirit alive is truly admirable, illustrating how when we show up for each other, success is inevitable.

**WHEN THE
STUDENT
SECTION IS
HYPE, SO
ARE WE**
LAUREN
KECKLER (12)

Copy Claire Preusker

PASSING THE RACKET

This year, Lincoln East's Boys Tennis team accomplished an incredible feat — they won state for the fifth time in a row. Nothing felt better than smiling, ear-to-ear, grasping the trophy together. Keeping the streak alive put pressure on players to work hard even as the team changed. Boys Tennis had transitioned to a younger demographic, with three more sophomores on varsity than the previous year. This

KEEPING THE STREAK ALIVE HAS BEEN GREAT TO EXPERIENCE.

AARAV SHARMA (10)

shift in team makeup made senior leadership especially important as they guided and taught the younger athletes. "There are a lot more sophomores compared to our previous three years, where everyone was a junior or a senior," said Kayden Le (12). "So I'd say the team environment's a lot more rowdy, that's probably one of the things I like from this change." The environment was more focused on fun than in past years, which helped the younger crew comfortably transition to the varsity level.

As a result of the leadership in this exciting environment, the younger players could do nothing but give praise to their older peers. "The seniors this year were extremely helpful and very inviting which made the atmosphere really warm," said James Yu (10). The connection between this team also stems from years of playing together before high school in recreational and club tennis. This connection translated to the court and kept these last four years of tennis successful. "The chemistry within the team is really nice," said Samarth Sajeesh (12). "They're all my friends, so it's always a fun time." Due to all their previous years playing together, the boys knew how to work with each other and keep practices and games effective. For instance, Sajeesh explained his favorite game of the season was the semifinals matchups, not only because he played his best, but because everyone was lifting each other up. Their bond and powerful friendship led them to victory as state champions and maintaining their spot at the top, once more. They weren't just teammates, they were brothers — on and off the court.

Copy Elena Graves

Get ready to receive the ball. Hunter Nelson (12) sets up to strike back at the opponent. This year, Nelson was victorious in Class A Boys State Tennis Singles. His success began at an early age due to his father's encouragement and has become essential to who he is. "I like that it's an individual sport, and it's just me out there competing against one other person," said Nelson. Photo Simon Morehead



Keep your eyes on the prize! Devin Merchant (11) races to swing for the ball. He played tennis to not only celebrate his own wins and growth but his teammates'. "I really like how I could see my own improvement, but also my teammates' throughout the year," said Merchant. "We were all connected in a way." Photo Simon Morehead

Reaching for new heights! Emrullah Gider (9) stretches his arm out to ensure his racket reaches the ball. As an underclassman, he was able to learn and understand how the team operated. "I enjoy it, because it's a team sport. You have to be a hard worker to be good at it," said Gider. Photo Simon Morehead



A coach's support leads to success. Simon Johnson (12) and Samarth Sajeesh (12) listen to a pep talk and understand where they can improve as players. Their season, as Doubles partners, was extremely impressive. They won the Class A Boys State Tennis Doubles Champions in the first bracket. "I've been playing tennis my whole life, so it just made sense to join it," said Johnson. Photo Simon Morehead



Chasing down the perfect pass. D'Angelo Villanueva (9) feels the sun's rays beaming down as he runs to catch the ball. He spent this year sharing and cherishing memories with new teammates. "I chose tennis, because I had a lot of friends that were playing in it. I thought it would be fun to play it," said Villanueva. Photo Simon Morehead

ORDER ON THE COURT

Layout Jerrica Zhang
Photo Simon Morehead



NISHANT
DAVULURI



"Brad, because he's a lefty, and he has an interesting hitting style." Daniel Ji (11)

"I'd say William. I feel like playing against him made us both better." Shriish Sathish (11)

"Adonis, mainly because we're so evenly matched in skill." Isaac Lowe (10)

Who's Your FAVORITE TEAMMATE TO PLAY AGAINST?

WHAT'S YOUR PRE-GAME SONG



AMARI
J. COLE



90210
TRAVIS SCOTT

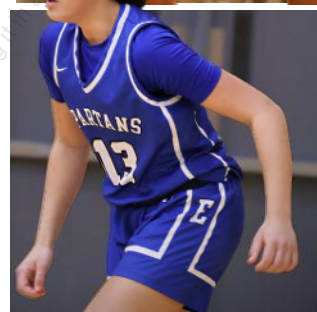


REDRUM
21 SAVAGE



JUNIOR
VARSITY

Photos Elizabeth Elitzin and Cael Egeberg



NOTHING BUT NETS

www.4mat.co.uk

Layout Oceane Ngabgna

Reserve



WHAT WOULD YOU BRING FOR A CANDY SALAD



"Sour Patch Kids"
Aurora Sibert (9)

"Trolli Sour Bites"
Lydia Jansen (11)

"Mike N' Ike"
Amaya Monzon (9)

"Airheads Xtremes Bites"
Hazel Okander (11)

"Nerds Gummy Clusters"
Rebekah Haines (10)

"Sour Gummy Worms"
Sadie Kobus (9)



Victory after victory, the Girls Reserve team flew through the season defeating most teams that came their way. "We've beaten teams that we haven't beaten in the last 10 years," said *Rebekah Haines (10)*. From endurance practices to heart pounding games, the team dribbled through a tough season and found themselves face to face with their biggest challenge yet: the City Competition. The team was 10-2, losing. But when all odds were against them, the girls pulled it back to 15-15 by halftime. By the third quarter, they took the lead to 27-20 when disaster struck. Two girls fouled out and four girls had four fouls. In a close match, with 3 seconds left, the team pushed through and won the LPS City tournament, solidifying the teams win for the first time since 2020. "We owe a lot of it to Coach Schaefer," said Haines. "She's genuinely such a good coach." *Photos Cael Egeberg and Chloe Eichorn*

DETERMINED

To Succeed

The game is neck and neck. Two girls are completely fouled out, with four girls close to the same fate. The score gets tighter and tighter as the clock ticks. The Lincoln East Girls Reserve Basketball team sat on the edge of their seats at the season ending tournament, the City Districts game. So with only a few seconds left, the girls took the lead and stole another victory for the books, winning 32-30. But this final score doesn't tell the whole story, as both JV and reserve shone bright this season. When announcing rosters this year, there was something different – the teams had a lot less people compared to previous years. At first this was a shock to the girls, but as the season progressed, they learned to love this new change because it came with the advantage of getting to know teammates on a deeper level and understand each other's differences better. "We know each other's strengths and weaknesses a lot more, so we can play better as a team," said [Rebekah Haines \(10\)](#). "And it's a positive environment, so we can rely on one another." This newfound unity pushed each girl to their limit, finding comfort and support within their team members. Having such a strong and hardworking younger class will pay off for East in the years to come. These students built great work habits to bring to varsity in future years. Their resilience against all odds set this group of girls apart from other teams and paved the way for all future East Girls Basketball teams.

“I think that it can help me get more reps in and learn,” said Camden Schupach. (9)

Copy Zach Johannes

PAIGE
TIGH

Photo Cael Egeberg

MAKING IT HAPPEN

Dedication kept this crew sailing, as their commitment, collaboration, and countless hours of rehearsal allowed their achievements to shine as brightly as "starstuff," the magical dust that gave this world its charm.

"Countless hours, time, and dedication is put in," said stage manager **Emily Bybee (11)**. "Everyone is so nice and so caring about each other. It feels kind of like a home." The theatre department built a loving community for people of all grades, personalities, and abilities.

Actors were divided by their "crew" with senior leaders from each group leading warm-ups and mini rehearsal sessions. Students like **Gavin Foust (12)** lead the powerful Wasp ship pirates and **Elizabeth Elitzin (12)** lead the mystic mermaids. Each group did their part to bring the whole show to a polished finish. *Photos courtesy of Hayden Rooney*



TECHNICAL THEATRE

While the main focus was on the dazzling show, the people behind the scenes worked diligently to amplify it. This would be no other than the technical crew, who worked on countless breathtaking outfits, lighting cues, and set design that would bring the magic of the show all together. Along with the radiant costumes and gleaming spotlights, students could do any job from run-crew, to set building, to prop management. "I love anything with sounds and lights," said **Hazel Silva (11)**. "I did the spotlight for this specific production. In the past I've done sound effects for student directed plays." *Photos courtesy of Hayden Rooney*

WHAT MAGIC WOULD BE IN YOUR TREASURE CHEST



"Anytime you open the trunk, something new would be there. Like new shoes or riches." **Ava Swank (12)** and **Wade Combs (10)**

"Starstuff! It's so magical! You can use it to fly and not age." **Evelyn Ockander (9)** and **Ethan Phan (12)**

MYLES
HARDT

CLAIRE
ROONEY

Photos courtesy of Hayden Rooney

PETER & THE STARCATCHER

Layout Elizabeth Elitzin

FINDING HOME

Neverland: a place far away from the supervision of adults, where a child's imagination can run free. A land where pirates, mermaids, and magic are all real – if you just believe. This make-believe place isn't just an island far from reality, it's the home of a hero: Peter Pan. "Peter and the Starcatcher" serves as a prequel to the beloved story of "Peter Pan," and it explains how Peter earned his name, why Captain Hook has a hook hand, and how Neverland became the memorable island we know today. But what struck Lincoln East's audience members the most wasn't the magic or adventure, it was the memorable pang of bittersweet heartache

IT WAS A VERY MEANINGFUL SHOW FOR US TO BE INVOLVED WITH.
ETHAN PHAN (12)

as the characters found their home. What differed "Peter and the Starcatcher" from the rest of the shows East puts on is that the one act team participated in the NSAA Play Production Competition, continuing their four year streak of qualifying to the state tournament. But before this achievement, the team first competed at an entirely new play festival,

hosted by Lincoln Southwest and placing third overall. This was a great opportunity to compete against schools outside of

the one act's competition bracket and gain feedback before the district competition. The one act team carried this sense of home with them as they traveled and performed at districts and finally, state. This crew gave an outstanding

performance, placing in the top three at state for the second year in a row. "The state experience really was a demonstration of our hard work," said **Ethan Phan (12)**. "I remember putting so many relentless hours working towards such a huge goal to try to make it to state or even just to perform a message that mattered to us." Competing at the state level was not just about awards or rankings, it was about representing a program that values connection just as much as performance. Standing under bright lights and in front of unfamiliar judges, the cast found comfort and confidence in one another. Just like the beloved character, Peter Pan, they realized they were never alone – their home was on stage, with each other.

Copy Zach Johannes

MAKING WAVES



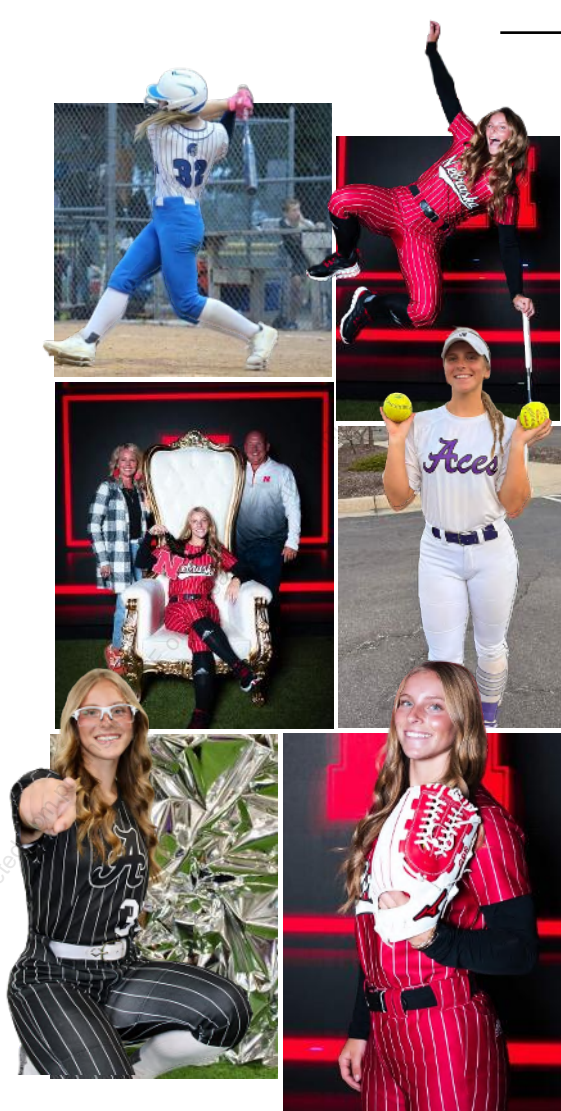
Making the audience believe they're truly floating in a shipwreck is hard work, but these gilly gals rose to the challenge. Directors had a team of mermaids and water-crew sailors create visual effects with fabric to extend belief to the audience.

Alyssa Zimmerman (9), **Kaelyn Livers (10)**, **Brooklyn Ellenbecker (9)**, **Alexandria Hansen (11)**, **Elizabeth Elitzin (12)**, and **Liv Jarnagin (12)** used makeup to continue to bring the world to life. Each girl has scales, pearls, and glitter galore. *Photo courtesy of Liv Jarnagin*



LUCY BARRETT

For **Lucy Barrett**, softball has never been just a sport — it has been a part of her story since she could walk. A junior at East, Barrett decided to make the quintessential decision to play softball for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, a dream that started long before high school. Growing up attending UNL's camps, she knew early on where she belonged. "I decided at a very young age... probably eight years old," said Barrett. "This is where I wanted to be forever." From T-ball at five years old to club teams like the Nebraska Firecrackers and a Kansas City program, Barrett built her game through hard work and leadership. When given roles as an upperclassman, East softball helped shape her growth as a leader, giving her opportunities to learn and compete at a high level. "Softball just brings me a lot of joy," said Barrett. "It is my outlet in life, it's always been my backbone." A proud homegrown Husker now and always, Barrett is ready to carry her love for the game to the next level.



Layout and copy Chloe Wolbert
Photo courtesy of Lily Jurgens, Connor Dews, Lucy Barrett, Dele Odulate, Addison Bliemeister and Chloe Wolbert

SIGNED FOR SUCCESS

LILY JURGENS

For **Lily Jurgens**, dance has never been just an activity — it is a part of who she is. After four years of dedication to the East Apollonaires and countless hours in the studio, Jurgens is taking her talent to the collegiate level. She has chosen to stay close to home, committing to The Scarletts Dance Team at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Jurgens started her career with competitive cheer in Lincoln and moved on to competitive dance at age seven, commuting to Omaha several times a week. After years of camps and tournaments across the United States throughout her middle and high school career, the Husker scarlet and cream never wavered her heart. "What I hoped for the most in a school was to be on a team that had a huge game-day, and it's incredibly hard to top Husker fans," said Jurgens. "But in the end after everything, it was always Nebraska." Dance hasn't changed Jurgens, but it made her who she is. Competitive dance and the Apollonaires taught her how to be a teammate, preserving and building a strong work ethic while always giving her something to strive for. As Jurgens steps onto the next field in red instead of blue, she carries with her not just talent and awards, but her heart, grit, and passion that has defined her every step of the way. "Never listen to people that tell you you can't shoot for the stars, you just have to find where you belong."



"Grades,"
Oscar Furr (9)



"Nursing,"
Megan Mullenax (10)



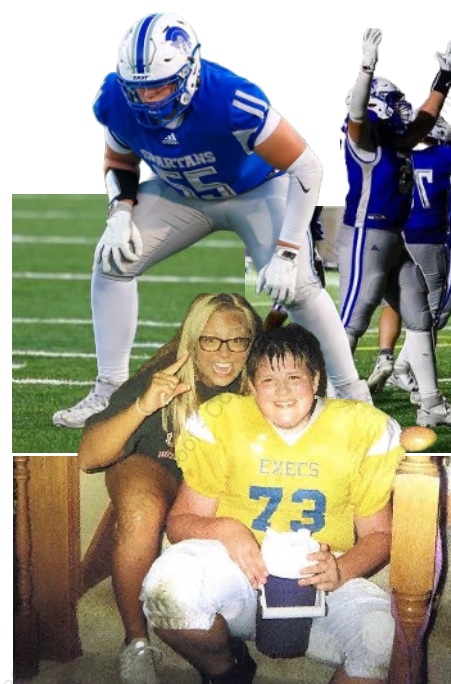
"Snowboarding,"
Eli Sampson (11)

WHAT ARE YOU COMMITTED TO



Dele ODULATE

At a very young age, senior baseball player **Dele Odulate** knew his love for baseball was monumental. From T-ball in California to high school ball in the Midwest, Odulate saw baseball as the start of something bigger. Moving meant new teammates, a new home, and a new level of competition. Odulate had the opportunity to swing up to varsity his sophomore year, and with the influence of seniors to juniors, Odulate knew his future would be to join those seniors on their path to college level ball. Trading palm trees for plains, he turned his work ethic and consistency into potential and production. There were endless nights of working out, staying consistent, and even missing out on the high school experience, but Odulate knew his one goal. Now committed to the University of Nebraska Omaha, Dele chose UNO for its resources, facilities and strong team culture. "There's a sense of togetherness when you go there," said Odulate. "The feeling is unmatched, it's like a family." Behind his success, Odulate struggled with sacrifices of time, missed events, or long travel weekends. But throughout it all, Odulate's father always provided steady support for his son. With a family on the field and a family supporting in the stands, Odulate has made it to the top.



As a high school senior, **Connor Dews** thought he had his future set. After committing to a four-year program on a football scholarship, he was ready for a new chapter. But in some instances, growth means changing direction. After long weeks of consideration and thought, Connor made one of the most pivotal decisions in his football career. "During my junior year I attended camp after camp for football, which is where I received my D1 offer," said Dews. "But I knew I could do better." Dews, known by his teammates as the powerhouse senior on the Spartan football team, decided to take his career the furthest he can. Dews chose to go JUCO, a term used for the National Junior College Athletic Association. This was the choice for Dews due to his extension of his ability to play the game. When committing to JUCO, athletes keep all four years of their eligibility, training and eventually getting recruited to a college to play their sport for longer with their remaining eligibility. In hopes that this was the right decision for him, Dews plans on playing college football and expanding his education through his doctorate degree. After betting on development, Connor focused on sharpening his skillset and plans on reopening doors down the road for better success. "Other people's opinions don't define the outcome of your life — do it for you, get the opportunities you deserve."

CONNOR DEWS



Signed For Success

NOVEMBER

SNAPSHOTS

Layout Oceane Ngabna
and Elizabeth Eltzin

AURORA BOREALIS

The aurora borealis became an unexpected treat for people across the Midwest, where it's usually almost never seen. A strong geomagnetic storm, caused by the sun nearing the peak of its 11-year cycle, pushed the shimmering lights much farther south than normal. Many people saw bright greens and reds in the sky, but the colors could be seen even better on phone cameras. Since seeing the aurora in Nebraska almost never happens, locals went to dark places like Branched Oak Observatory to get the best view, making it a once and a lifetime experience.

A good life! A wave of runners filled the streets during the Good Life Hallsy, running through the streets of Lincoln. Among the crowd, Avery Goulet (12) and Leighton Nyberg (12) stood out in bright pink. "We pushed through the final miles, laughing, encouraging one another, and we refused to let go of each other's hands," said Goulet. Photo courtesy of Pink Gorilla Events



Enjoying time with furry friends! Rachel Koch (12) and Sofia Martin (12) unwind with a therapy dog during lunch. During Mental Health Week, the student council organized a number of activities to raise awareness and provide some stress relief for our hard-working students. "I think that therapy dogs are helpful because they cheer up people," said Martin. "Right when I sat down next to the dog, he flopped down right next to me and it was very adorable." Photo Cinnae Schneider



Cooking up careers! Lydia Jansen (11) poses with culinary teacher Moriah Reinwald after competing in a culinary competition. Students in culinary classes have the opportunities to take their skills to a district wide competition. "It's interesting to see the skills people around the city have," said Jansen. Photo Kallee Henry



Bragging rights earned. After a talent show at youth camp, seniors Dom Velasquez, Parker Johnson, Cohen Torell, AJ Hoyle, and Blythe Biberdorf show off the prizes they earned, from a Nerf Gun to a coveted rubber duck. The friendly competition brought plenty of laughs as teams battled for the top spot in the evening's talent show, ending with a second and third place for the crew. "It was a good night, but even better with people," said Torell. "That's what I'll remember most." Photo Simon Morehead

Photo Elizabeth Eltzin

What are you grateful for? Paisley George (11) signs the student council's gratitude poster. That week, the Lincoln East Student Council had a different activity each day in support of the mental health of students and staff. "Mental health is something I find to be really important, especially for our age group," said George. "I think it's important to do something positive and focus on the good things rather than the bad things." Photo Luna Brandt



Winter Wonderland! East's junior girls, Harper Brehm, Malia Peters, Briana Rademacher, Pallmer VanMeter, Laci Ruppel, Elizabeth Burhoop, and Brynn Hershberger, get together for a winter ball at the local country club. Every year, the Country Club of Lincoln throws a ball for their members. "The winter ball is something to look forward to when it gets cold every year," said Brehm. "The anticipation of getting ready with my best girl friends makes the night." Photo courtesy of Brynn Hershberger



NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

November is an important month where we focus on celebrating Native Americans and their rich culture, achievements, and traditions embedded throughout the centuries. It was first celebrated in 1990, by President George H. W. Bush who established it with Congress. This commemorates the stories of people to ensure that their deeply-rooted culture lives on in future generations. During this month, several celebrations are displayed throughout the country. Cultural events such as powwows are one example of the animated gatherings of Native American people where dancing, singing, vivid story telling, and large feasts occur.

MAJOR EVENTS

- November 3 — Jonathan Bailey named People magazine's most attractive man alive
- November 5 — Zohran Mamdani wins New York City mayoral election
- November 12 — The government shutdown ends, marking the longest shutdown in American history
- November 21 — "Wicked: For Good" earned 150 million dollars in its opening weekend
- November 25 — Robert Irwin wins "Dancing with the Stars"



Cooking Up Success. Runza employee and Spartan James Shaffer (12) is grilling up burgers for some hungry customers. Many students had to juggle the pressure of being a full-time student with the demands of a part-time job. "If you need to take time off for any reason they're willing to do just about anything to make it work," said Shaffer. Photo Ben Shellhaas



Making a splash! Student David Cox (10) holds up a fish from science teacher Kris Jarnigan's classroom. This fish isn't the first one either, Mr. Jarnigan's classroom is full of new and exciting things including Rhonda the Turtle, a lemon tree, and a lime tree. Mr. Jarnigan, along with his innovative teaching techniques, have further inspired Cox to become an engineer. "I want to become a mechanical engineer, because I'm obsessed with understanding how things work. I want to design the machines that others depend on," said Cox. Photo Bella Brown



LIV JARNIGAN ALL STATE CHOIR



Perfectly in harmony! Lincoln East vocal music students are posing for a picture after their final performance at this year's Nebraska All-State Chorus festival. Being selected for the All-State Choir is one of the major achievements of excellence in Nebraska for vocal music students. "The most amazing part of All State is the unique voices blending as one," said Harper Risenbaw (12). Photo courtesy of Lincoln East Vocal Music