"I wrote a list of 43 items that I wanted to accomplish when I started this job on day one. I think I have accomplished 40 of the 43 in the time that I've been here."

– Kevin Kavan

OPERATION

Kevin Kavan speaks about the importance of school security during an interview with the Journalism 1 class. Photo by Cassandra Santillan

40/43

An in-depth look at FHS security and the man behind the mission

Every advanced journalism student once sat in Intro to Journalism, nervously preparing questions for District Security Coordinator Kevin Kavan. Each quarter, he met with new classes for interview conferences — something he often said was one of his favorite parts of the job.

Now, as advanced journalism students, we chose to center this in-depth on Kavan not only because he is retiring, but because many students may not realize the full extent of what he has done to keep Fremont Public Schools safe. From emergency protocols to grant-funded security upgrades, much of his work happens quietly behind the scenes.

This package is both an exploration of school safety and a recognition of the lasting impact Kavan leaves on Fremont — an impact many of us have witnessed firsthand and will deeply miss.

—The Tiger's Eye Staff

The Balancing Act

How teachers handle safety measures in a classroom.

Grace Walters, *Staff Writer*

A fire alarm signals in classrooms. Blue lights flash in noisy areas of the school. Teachers, calm, cool, and collected, grab their red drawstring bag as part of emergency procedures. The bag contains teacher's rosters, a folder of all the emergency information and even a stop the bleed kit. They guide their students to the designated zones, stand outside and hold up their green okay signs. All clear and everyone goes back into school for continued learning.

The educators at Fremont High are not just there to teach students, but also ensure that they follow all the safety guidelines set in place. The Fremont District uses a protocol known as Standard Response Protocol (SRP). which provides students and staff clear instructions on what they need to do in the event of an emergency. Teachers take on this responsibility while simultaneously having to teach classes ranging from 20 to 40 students.

From big to small safety measures, teachers like business teacher and football coach Chase Lipsys work diligently to build a safe classroom environment.

"As the teacher, I need to be on the lookout for things like using technology and materials correctly, monitoring Securely passes, preventing classroom accidents, etc. Some of these things can sound ridiculous, but they play a large role in student and classroom safety," Lipsys said.

This is all done while teaching and managing a classroom full of students, who at times can get distracted and not pay attention. However, the district's structured and efficient emergency response system, managed by District Security Coordinator Kevin Kavan, helps teachers balance their instructional and safety responsibilities.

Under the advice and instruction of Kavan, teachers completed Stop the Bleed training last year. Staff watched videos, completed a quiz and participated in hands-on demonstrations to prepare for medical emergencies. This training is given to the teachers to ensure they can remain calm and know what to do if an emergency were to occur.

Ashley Bignell, an English and social science teacher, gave her perspective on why she believes reacting calmly is the best possible response.

"I tend to stay pretty calm in stressful situations. I mean why stress about something that is out of your own control?" Bignell said. "Plus, freaking out isn't going to help anyone. Most students will follow teachers' examples in an emergency and look to them for help or answers. If we stay calm, that will help all involved."

Several other teachers at Fremont agree that remaining calm is the most effective way to respond during emergencies.

While lesson plans and grading are part of a teacher's daily routine, ensuring student safety is an equally important responsibility that teachers take on.

Lockdown Standard Response Protocol Icons

The icons above are displayed in posters in every single classroom at the high school.

Teachers are more than educators. They are mentors, counselors, role models, and, most importantly, peacekeepers and enforcers of safety. Without teachers, there would be no one to carry out the protocols and rules set in place that are made by those who oversee public school safety.

Safety is vital for maintaining a healthy learning environment. Through the professional guidance and oversight of Kavan, teachers like Bignell and Lipsys are equipped with the tools and training needed to make Fremont High a safer place.

Behind the Screens

Fremont High Student Safety Through the Lenses

Gianna Hass, *Staff Writer*

Security cameras have historically been used for safety purposes, catching incidents to prevent misinformation from spreading. These situations aren't unfamiliar to the administration of a public school, and cameras are often checked to ensure the security of the staff and students.

Head principal of Fremont High School (FHS), Myron Sikora, helps aid his team in monitoring the school and keeping things in line; it isn't a solo job.

"I would say maybe the administration uses the cameras a little bit more than I do, but I assist however I can. Sometimes it's a matter of one person working on one piece of the situation, and another person checking the cameras, like reaching out to parents, for example," Sikora said. "Or one person is talking with the teacher, and then another is looking on the cameras to see what we can see. Those kinds of things."

Staff member Gianna Hass agrees to be recorded by the ffront entrance cameras.

As with all safety measures, protocols are put in place for situations. Fire drills, tornado drills, lockouts, and lock-ins are all part of school safety procedures. It's no different when an incident happens within the school walls. Cameras are checked often and thoroughly, though there are certain limitations that the school has to work around.

"One of the things that we have to be careful of with the camera system is FERPA, which is the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act." Sikora said, "So, video [footage] is considered an educational record, and so we have to treat that just like any other student records with regard to showing it to other people if they don't have the need to see it."

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a law which has been protecting the educational records of students since 1974. While this law is important, it does add a few hoops for the administration to jump through.

While the law makes it harder for administrators to work through situations, the surplus in cameras around the school in recent years has helped extensively.

"There were cameras at the high school, but they needed serious updating. Cliff Huss was able to get funding for FHS," District Security Coordinator Kevin Kavan said.

The upgrades at FHS were part of a broader district-wide effort to improve school security. Kavan explained how he helped bring the elementary schools up to the same standard. "I was able to get funding through the School Violence Prevention Program Grant for new cameras at Bell Field, Grant, JCAC, Linden and Milliken Park," Kavan said.

The funding allowed FHS to modernize its camera system and expand its capabilities.

"We have a lot more of them now than we ever have before," Sikora said. "The technology is a different software altogether. We also have a tracking system that's part of the software which allows you to go from camera to camera to camera, versus stopping and moving to a different camera. It allows you to just keep things flowing from camera to camera. So, that's something that we never had before, and our current software allows that, and it's very helpful."Cross-camera tracking isn't new technology by any means, but the addition of it to the cameras in FHS has aided staff tremendously. Cross-camera tracking can shorten investigations by days, creating a continuous trail that follows the subject across multiple cameras.

With updated technology and clearer investigative tools, Fremont High School's administration continues working behind the scenes to ensure incidents are handled efficiently and responsibly.

Kevin Kavan stands outside the sheriff's office on his final day before retirement. The photo was submitted by Kavan.

Kevin Kavan's Lasting Legacy in School Safety

Cassandra Santillan, *Editor-in-Chief*

After years of turning on red and blue flashing lights and participating in high speed chases in a patrol car, Coordinator of District Security Kevin Kavan has dedicated 8 years to keeping the district safe. His commitment has kept The Fremont Public School District's flashing lights signaling a state of emergency from turning on.

Despite his passion for protecting the district, he has announced he will retire at the end of this school year. Over the course of his service, he has built an extensive list of accomplishments.

To honor his commitment and dedication, the following provides a closer look at his life and lasting impact on Fremont Public Schools.

Before stepping into school security, Kavan patrolled the streets as a state trooper alongside his brother. With only a high school diploma and a commitment to public service, he worked his way up the ranks through hands-on experience and training.

"Once you're a state trooper, though, it's rigorous training. It's 24 weeks of training, and it's basically from the time you get up till 8 or 9 o'clock at night," Kavan said. "And it's pretty intense. They're packing a lot of information and throwing it at you every single day."

Having spent roughly 30 years in law enforcement, many experiences helped shape Kavan's approach to his work. While the tasks demanded discipline and quick decision-making, there were still moments of excitement — including the thrill of the chase.

"Pursuits were fun for me. I loved a good car chase," Kavan said. "...I had a guy riding with me, too. It was his first or second day on the job. I can't even remember. But when we got done, I don't think I could even peel his fingers off the dash. He was white as a sheet and scared to death. He'd never been in a car going fast in his life, and here he is riding with me on a pursuit. It's a lot of fun.

After retiring as a state trooper, Kavan transitioned to private security — a job he describes as the least enjoyable of the many roles he has held.

"Private security sounds really interesting, but it is about the most boring job you can think of," Kavan said. "We did security for special events. We did courthouse security. We did prisoner transport. I was bored out of my mind."

With the job not aligning with his ideal path toward more engaging work, he was ready to accept any opportunity that offered more interaction.

"I got a call out of the blue from the Department of Education out of Lincoln, and they asked if I was interested in going down and learning about school safety and security. And I said, absolutely. And that was before they even gave me the spiel — how much money or anything like that. I said, 'Sure. I'll come to Lincoln. I'll do whatever you want,'" Kavan said.

And just like that, he began working in school safety, starting in Lincoln and traveling across Nebraska before eventually settling at Fremont High School. Before even knowing the pay or the state of the school, Kavan was all in. He was ready to do work he felt passionate about.

In addition to his passion for student safety, Kavan has several family members who have worked in public schools.

"My brother is a teacher. My sister-in-law was a teacher. My two aunts — one was a principal at Clarmar Elementary years ago, and the other taught in the Fremont Public School system," Kavan said. "My mom worked in the schools, too, so anything I could do to help schools stay safe, I was all in."

Using that as motivation, Kavan focused on inspecting and improving the schools little by little. He created a list of improvements he wanted to see — 43 projects in total — and has completed approximately 40 of them.

"I wouldn't say that I'm a person who gives up easily," Kavan said. "It's frustrating — very, very frustrating — but it's stuff that I really wanted to get in place. I wrote a list of 43 items I wanted to accomplish on day one. I think I have accomplished 40 of the 43 in the time that I've been here."

Having little to no budget made that pursuit challenging. Although funding was a setback, he did not let it stop him and instead applied for grants to enhance the district's security.

"The first grant I wrote, I got $104,000 to do school safety security throughout the district, and what we added were push-button locks for every classroom door," Kavan said. "So every classroom door has a push-button lock so you can quickly shut that door, lock it and get to a safe spot in the room."

Recently, Kavan received $600,000 through a second grant from the School Violence Prevention Program under the Department of Justice and has begun implementing new safety features. This is one of the most exciting — and intensive — projects he has worked on.

> **"It's taken me years and years and years to get this accomplished, but on Monday, the final pieces of the puzzle are going to be in place in this building. You guys are going to have one of the safest buildings in the state of Nebraska. I am so excited."**
> — Kevin Kavan

To improve emergency preparedness and response time, he introduced a new system that allows any administrator to initiate a lockdown immediately by pressing a handheld fob. Rather than relying on phone calls or radio communication, the device immediately alerts law enforcement while simultaneously activating safety precautions throughout the building. "Lockdown: Locks, Lights, Out of Sight" will be announced over the intercom in both English and Spanish. Blue lights will flash to signal danger, and every door will automatically lock to prevent entry during an emergency. The system is designed to ensure everyone — whether in a classroom, gym or entering the building — receives clear, immediate notification.

"It's taken me years and years and years to get this accomplished, but on Monday, the final pieces of the puzzle are going to be in place in this building. You guys are going to have one of the safest buildings in the state of Nebraska," Kavan said. "I am so excited."

With the final pieces now in place, Kavan can turn his attention toward retirement. On a more personal note, he enjoys a variety of hobbies.

"I love to read, watch baseball, watch football, watch college basketball, work out, go for long walks, take care of the two acres we live on, garden, travel to Minnesota to visit my daughter and go out to eat every Friday evening."

After years dedicated to protecting students and staff, it is safe to say the district is sad to see such a trusted and impactful team member retire. The school's safety foundation is firmly established, and the list of goals written by Kevin Kavan will continue to be carried forward and accomplished one at a time.

"I hope it's someone much younger than me who has brand-new, fresh ideas and just runs with it," Kavan said. "I know it'll be frustrating for them as well, trying to get the funds to do it, but I hope they persevere. I hope they go out and get the funds to accomplish whatever they want to do. I was very, very fortunate to be able to go all over Nebraska and look at different schools to see what systems they have in place for safety and security. I hope that person has experience and the capability to go out and look at other places as well."

LOCKS, LIGHTS OUT OF SIGHT

Kavan shares features that go unnoticed in school safety

"All staff are wearing IDs so we know they belong in the building."

"Exterior doors are numbered in a clockwise direction to direct first responders to the correct entry point if needed."

"Push button locks on every classroom door in the entire district so teachers, staff or students can quickly lock the classroom door in an emergency situation."