FROM HALLWAYS TO HEAVY METAL

Courtesy photos

Above: Dave Morningstar stands with his retirement cake at a celebration in Waverly in December. Below: Morningstar played in several heavy metal bands when he was younger.

Longtime Waverly High School custodian retires in hopes of spending more time on his music

Patrick Bragg
Waverly Yearbook

WAVERLY – Most students see David Morningstar pushing a mop through the halls of Waverly High School, but when the school day ends, the custodian trades cleaning supplies for a bass guitar and an amp.

Waverly High School custodian David Morningstar recently retired in December after serving the school for approximately 28 years. He is more than a janitor; he is a death metal enthusiast who hopes to spend more time pursuing his passion after retirement.

Morningstar started the job in April 1997, the year before the high school moved into its current building.

"The biggest change that I've seen was how people interacted with each other, once the smartphones came out, somewhere around 2004 or 5. I don't even know for sure, because I didn't get a smartphone until 2019, and kids were actually talking to each other," Morningstar said.

Along with these changes, many people have come and gone. Principal Scott Shepard became the school's principal in 2024.

"Dave's a guy who starts his day at 4 a.m. and makes sure that the school is clean, organized, and ready to go. He sets out all the lunchroom tables, and he does it with a smile every day. And that's the thing I love about Dave, he doesn't complain. He's here every day making sure the building's ready," Shepard said.

While Shepard knows Morningstar well, school counselor Jason Boitnott has known him even longer. After nearly 30 years of working together, Boitnott knows a lot about Morningstar from work, but some unique aspects of his life as well.

"We are heavy metal buddies. So we grew up on heavy metal together, so when he started here, we talked about heavy metal stuff a lot. He plays a bass guitar, his guitar work is really pretty great," Boitnott said.

Morningstar's talent has also helped him to build relationships with students.

"Probably 15 years ago, we had an exchange student from Germany who was an exceptional musician, and he and Dave performed for the entire school at a holiday performance," Boitnott said

Through the years, Morningstar's passion for music has only grown. His love for music has lasted most of his life.

"I play bass guitar and do some home studio recording. It's a hobby. I grew up from 15 to this age now playing both instruments, so I had a good time with that," Morningstar said.

He played in several bands throughout his life. The last band he played in was in 1997 and was called "Maniacal."

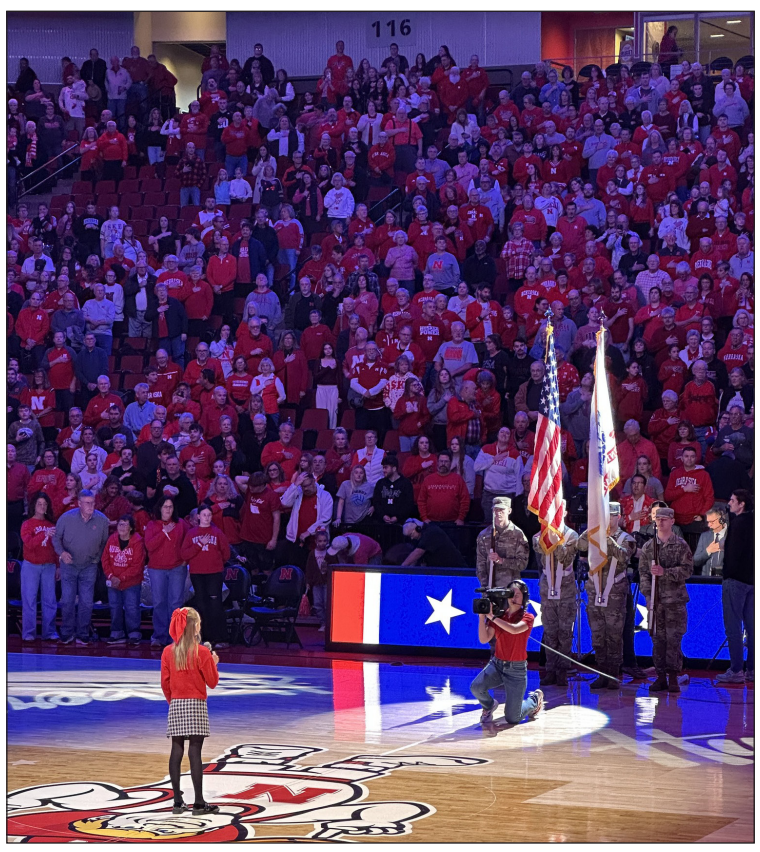
"It was a pretty crazy band. It was heavy metal. Super hard, super fast. Tried to keep up the head-banging music."

Morningstar says he prefers a simpler life now, disconnected from the pressures of social media.

He plans to spend his retirement helping his parents move out of his childhood home, but mostly to play music.

"But I'm a pretty simple man. I just love music. I can live in that world most of the time. Just having fun," Morningstar said.

Norris fifth-grader Eva Ehrke performs National Anthem at NU basketball game

Courtesy photos

Norris fifth-grader Eva Ehrke continued her experiences of singing the National Anthem at the Husker women's basketball game against Purdue on Jan. 4 at Pinnacle Bank Arena. Ehrke had previous sung the anthem at Husker softball, soccer and swimming and diving events but never before at a basketball game. She is the daughter of Todd and Megan Ehrke.