

INK AND IDENTITY

Students use tattoos to express themselves

By JADE GRASIANI

Facing your fear of needles may be worth it to get different creative designs inked right into your skin.

“I like tattoos,” senior Riley Koranda said. “The one I have didn’t hurt so why wouldn’t I get more?”

Recently, multiple students and teachers at Mead have been getting tattoos. Some have been getting them for years, but others have just begun.

Senior Stella Charles got her first tattoo last school year, and it has lots of meaning to her. She and her older sister Miranda got matching ones.

“I got my dad’s signature and then my mom drew a little heart,” Charles said. “I just got it to always remember my parents and a lot of people get it when they get married to remember their maiden name.”

Yes, this tattoo means a lot to Charles, but some tattoos can have an even deeper meaning. History teacher Brandi Zetocka has more than 30 tattoos, and all of them have a special story to go along with it.

“My favorite tattoo is going to be my tv,” Zetocka said. “The meaning behind it is in memorial of my little sister-in-

law that passed away in a car accident on Sept. 14, 2021.”

Although many tattoos have a deep meaning, that’s not always the case. Sometimes tattoos are just done for looks.

“Lots of the tattoos on my arm are just filler,” Zetocka said. “It makes the sleeve look more cohesive.”

Adults can go get a tattoo whenever they want, but things are a little different for teenagers who want tattoos. You must be 16 years old and have a parent’s signature to get tattoos in Nebraska.

Senior Alex Harmon loves tattoos and the artistry behind them, but her parents don’t necessarily feel the same way.

“I have a snake and it’s a symbol of resilience and rebirth and I wanted that for me,” Harmon said. “I also didn’t ask my parents to get it, so I was in a lot of trouble, but it was worth it.”

Sometimes students have private things in their life that they may not know how to express, and Koranda uses her adoption triad tattoo to symbolize that.

“I’m adopted,” Koranda said. “Me, my sister and my brother all got the same tattoo because we’re all adopted.”

Even though tattoos can have

extremely deep and desolate meanings, that doesn’t mean they all do. Special education teacher Nathan Krauel has a few tattoos that all mean something to him, but not in a sad way.

“It’s just something for my kids,” Krauel said.

Some people have had their tattoos for a long time, others just started getting them. Regardless of that, plans for future tattoos stay consistent for all.

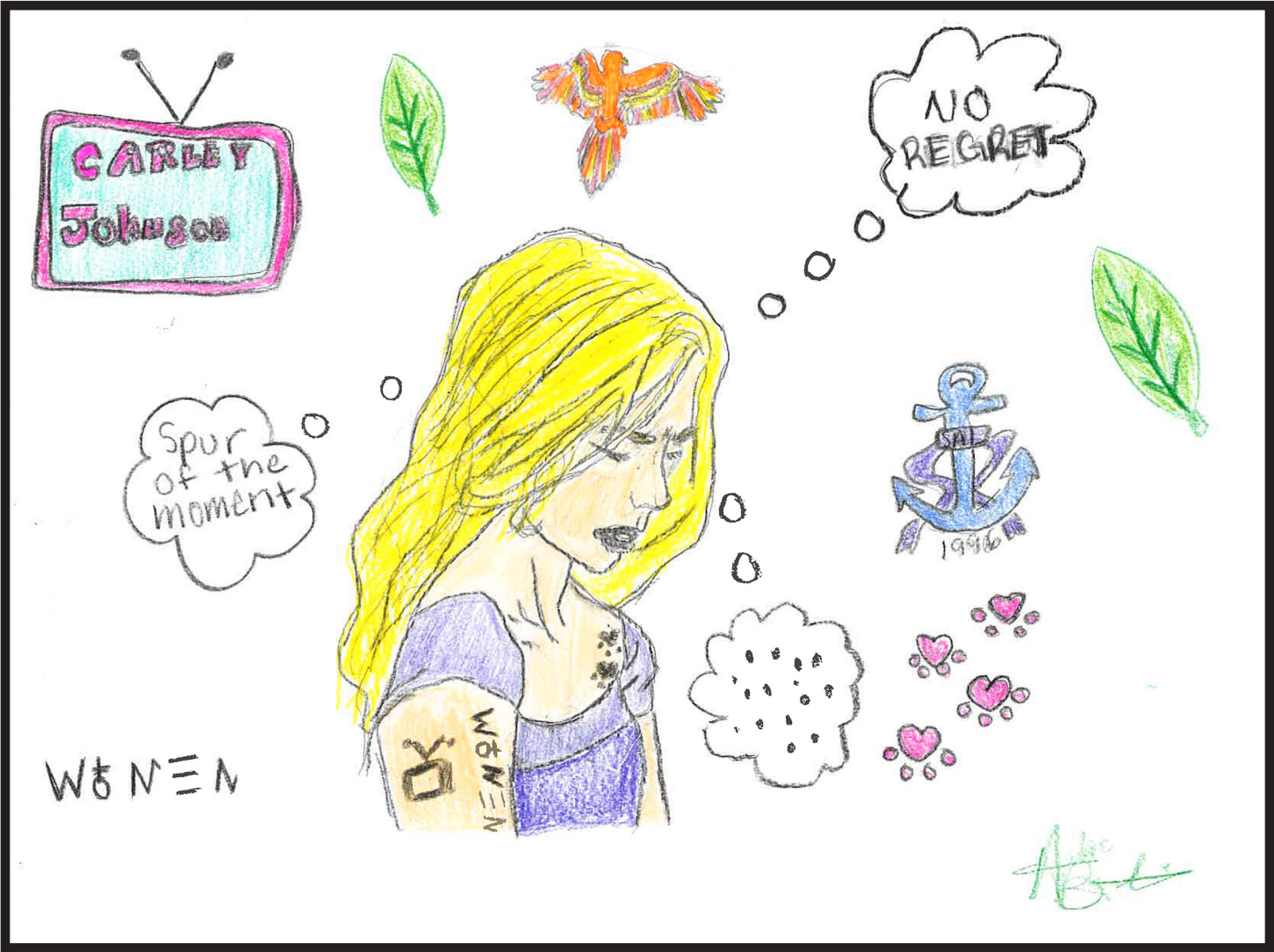
“I already have plans for future tattoos,” Zetocka said, “and what they’re going to look like and kind of what I’m going to do.”

As someone who gets tattoos often, it’s no shock that Zetocka has future ideas in mind; however, she’s not the only one.

“I want to get one on my back with my family’s birth flowers on them,” Koranda said. “That’s meaningful to me.”

Self-expression is huge for not only students, but adults as well. Tattoos are a great way to be able to express yourself in a unique and personal way.

“When I was younger, I struggled with mental health,” Zetocka said. “Tattoos were a safer, yet more artistic way to express how I feel.”



Serving Up Friendship

Senior, freshman share volleyball court after years of sisterhood

By AUBREE BROEKEMEIER

When senior Stella Charles was four years old, she saw freshman Hadley Havelka as a baby for the first time. From that moment on, Charles knew that she and Havelka would be a part of each other’s lives forever.

Now, years later, that bond has only grown stronger, especially on the volleyball court.

“We were kind of pushed together when we were little,” Havelka said. “But since we are older, we are closer than ever.”

Havelka, a setter, and Charles, an outside hitter, both have the same idea about their

connection. Both talk very highly of each other, especially Havelka.

“Stella has been a role model for me,” Havelka said. “Not just on the court, but in life.”

That respect is mutual. Charles, as a senior leader, always hoped to be a role model for the younger girls — especially Hadley. The two have trained together, lifted together and now finally get to compete together — something they dreamed about for years.

With Charles being a role model for Havelka, she feels that she can trust Charles to ‘make the right play’. Even with this trust on the court, her

trust off the court feels more sister-like than best friends.

Coach Keshia Havelka — Hadley’s mom — has had a front-row seat to their connection from the beginning.

“Stella and Hadley have known each other all of Hadley’s life,” she said. “So, 14 years.”

For Coach Havelka, their bond goes far beyond friendship. It’s something deeper.

“Even with their age gap, Stella always finds a way to include Hadley,” Havelka said. “I’m incredibly grateful for their relationship.”

Their time together on the

court may be limited, but the impact they’ve made on each other is lasting. For Hadley, being able to play with Stella — even if just for one season — is something she’ll carry with her long after this year ends.

For Stella, finishing her senior year playing alongside someone she’s known since birth feels like the perfect end to her high school volleyball career.

“I think when I’m playing with Stella, I’m playing for her,” Hadley said. “When she’s not out there, I’m just playing for myself. But when she’s next to me, it means more.”

Small numbers = Big decisions

Mead prepares for potential transition to 6-man football

By OLIVIA LEE

Mead High School is considering going to six-man football because of small numbers.

At Mead, every year administration surveys the 7-11 grade students asking who is thinking about playing football the following year. They also look at the projected male enrollment for the following year.

Terry Hickman, activities director at Mead, indicated that the number of boys in high school will drop below 27 for the next several years.

“Boy enrollment numbers in the mid-20s projects out to team sizes in the mid-teens,” Hickman said. “Oversimplifying greatly, if you were playing eight-man football with fewer than 16 players, practice gets fairly difficult.”

Living in the eastern half of Nebraska, fans see more 11-

man and eight-man, than six-man football teams. Currently, 128 schools play 11-man football, 112 schools play eight-man football, and only 35 play six-man football.

Mead has only played eight-man football. With the possibility of Mead switching to six-man football, there are fans who are uncertain about this change.

According to Nate Neuhaus, assistant director of the Nebraska School Activities Association, 5-10 years ago schools like Mead would have had to travel much further; however, with the increase in the number of schools that play six-man, the travel time would not increase much.

Mead’s head football coach Brandon Mills is willing to work with this possible change.

“It is more about get-

ting the best six athletes on the field, and when you have lower numbers, that’s what it becomes,” Mills said.

Next year at Mead, the number of boys will be unbalanced. There will be more underclassmen, rather than upperclassmen. With such small numbers, Mills said he wants to “protect some of the underclassmen.”

Wyatt Engel, a current junior, has played football all three years of high school. With the possible switch to six-man football, Engel has a positive outlook on it.

“Having that kind of situation happen might be tough, the transition from eight-man to six-man,” Engel said. “But also, with our low numbers and a lot of young guys, it would be good for us older guys, because there are less people on the field.”

Wyatt Engel
Mead High School