

A 'fine' festival of fun, fundraising

School carnival returns after six years

Ksenia Bradford

Most Yutan junior and senior high students have fond memories of attending the Fine Arts Carnival as kids, with its games, inflatables, food and more. Before issues with sickness and COVID arose, the event had been a fun activity for the entire community of Yutan to enjoy. This year, the carnival made its comeback for the first time in six years.

"It provides a night of fun that everybody in a Yutan family can either help with or attend and make memories," Fine Arts Boosters member Rebecca Ringer said.



Eighth grader Griffin Ell gets ready to pie senior Carson Jurey in the face. Pie-in-the-face was just one of 20 different games kids could play at the carnival. (Taylor Shull)

The event, though popular among the community of Yutan, was first cancelled in 2021 because of COVID and then in 2022 because of widespread sickness in the district, but this wasn't the only thing holding back the carnival's return.

"You have to have a pretty large good group of people that are ready to organize such events. I don't think that we had the energy to put towards bringing it back in the last few years," Fine Arts Boosters member Rachelle Sliva said.

Since the fine arts have seen declining numbers, the Fine Arts Boosters teamed up with the post prom parents to make this year's carnival happen.

"The number of students in fine arts has drastically dropped, and we needed 50+ volunteers, so bringing in junior and senior students (post prom) to meet our volunteer numbers was a necessity," Ringer said.

The change of working together turned out to be a major benefit for both groups.

"The core group of parents that did the majority of the planning and set up worked well together. Both groups look for ways to fundraise during the year; by bringing the Carnival back, it's a way to bring the community together and both groups to raise some money," former head of the Fine Arts Boosters and current head of post prom Amy Tichota said

However, because the carnival hadn't been held for so many years, there were some early challenges.

"We haven't run an event for so many years. There's a lot of education to the parents that haven't been on the preparing side of what we need to get done, what we need to have ready. And then also, another challenge is, okay, this is not just fine arts, it's post prom," Tichota said.

While parents did the bulk of the preparations, the actual carnival is run by students. This year, especially, the groups needed help from junior high and high school students.

"[The students] put in hours to come help run the games, be pried in the face and also provided goodies for the cake walk and just helping outside with hauling stuff, sorting stuff," Sliva said.

Students who helped with the carnival had many different stations they could work at, such as Plinko, face painting, ring toss and much more. All of the jobs were a fun way for them to work on their leadership and responsibility skills.

"You get to have responsibility skills of making sure your prize boxes were filled, you had enough stuff for your station, making sure little kids were happy and making sure they had fun at the carnival," eighth-grader Clara Tasich said.

Even though there was a lot of work involved, students had fun working at the carnival.

"I think it's a really good way to get the community together, and I had a really fun time overall. I didn't end up logging my community (service) just because I had just had such a good time. I think it's good for the kids, especially because when I was younger, I remember I loved the carnival so much. So it's such a great opportunity to be able to come back and work. It's a good opportunity for community service for the high schoolers, but also just a good social thing," sophomore Erika Sons said.

The comeback of the carnival ended on a positive note, with another carnival next year seeming likely.

"We tracked the sale of wristbands sold and tickets turned in at each game. We use that information to plan the next carnival. We watched how games were played and made notes so we can improve for the next carnival," Tichota said.

All in all, the carnival had a great turnout with many benefits for all involved.

"I love that the kids work it," Ringer said. "I love it when little people interact with the big people and get to look up to them and see them work it too and then be like, someday I'm going to get to work the carnival. So I love that for our community."



Sophomore Isaac Anderson and junior Eli Kult explain the rules of the bounce house to younger students. Kids could buy a \$7 wristband for unlimited inflatables. (Taylor Shull)

Deck the halls, donation calls

Student groups lead holiday fundraisers to benefit community

Cheyenne Luebbe

The Christmas season is known as a time of giving, and Yutan students involved in school organizations put that idea into action this year. Student Council, Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), and National Honor Society (NHS) each held fundraisers during the holiday season to give back to the community.

Student Council did their third annual pie-in-the-face fundraiser for Ollie's Mission, a nonprofit organization started by former student Oliver Egr that buys Christmas gifts for people in need, which included veterans this year.

"Students put money in the buckets of teachers they would like to get pied in the face. Because we raised so much money, over \$300, we pied three staff members," Student Council sponsor Alyssa Hansen said.

Hansen was particularly impressed by the amount they raised, which was more than double last year's amount.

"The fact that we were able to raise a significant amount of money was really rewarding. Our students and their parents were exceedingly generous, and it felt really good to be able to donate that amount," Hansen said.

The teachers have to be willing to help and get pied in the face by students, which makes it fun for the students to participate in.

"It was a cool experience for the school to watch. I think it brought the school closer together because they got a good laugh from the teachers getting pied in the face," junior Student Council member Eli Kult said.

Beyond the fun moments, collaborating with Ollie's Mission on this occasion and in past years has allowed students to make an impact on others through their generosity.

"I hope it inspires students to get involved and realize they can make a positive difference because seeing the support from students and knowing the donations would help people was really rewarding," Kult said.

While Student Council focused its donation efforts on the high school, two students in FBLA organized a Christmas fundraiser that involved the elementary school. Sophomore FBLA officer Audrey Dieckman was the main organizer who came up with the idea to raise money to buy Christmas gifts and deliver them to the nonprofit organization Completely Kids in Omaha.

"It was called Tips for Toys. We placed tip jars in all the classrooms at the elementary school and had them there for a month so all the kids could donate whatever they wanted to the jars throughout the entire month of October," Dieckman said.

Senior FBLA officer Lexi Bisailon helped Dieckman with the fundraiser and learned different things about being a leader she hadn't realized before being involved in this project.



Ollie Egr pies STS teacher Brian Fitzgerald in the face during an assembly on the last day of school before Christmas break. Two other teachers got pied this year, Alyssa Hansen and Joel Carrillo. (Cheyenne Luebbe)



Sophomore Audrey Dieckman poses for a photo after dropping gifts off at Completely Kids in Omaha. Other FBLA members helped wrap the presents at Dieckman's house before she dropped them off. (Courtesy Photo)

"I've had a lot of experiences in leadership, but what this taught me that my other experiences haven't was working one-on-one with somebody and helping them as much as they help me," Bisailon said.

As a whole, the two raised over \$1,000 to buy personalized gifts for 35 kids, and Dieckman's favorite memory was dropping off the presents and seeing the kids' reactions.

"When we were at Completely Kids dropping off the gifts, we had to load them in the carts to be handed out later. They have an after-school program, so the kids were running around, and they were coming up to us and were like, 'Oh my gosh! Are these gifts for us?'" Dieckman said. "It was so much fun to see them and see how excited they were to get the gift that we got them."

After giving back to the kids, both girls hope other students will be inspired to find their own ways to get involved in the community.

"I hope it encourages them to help the other communities surrounding our area, helping those families that aren't as fortunate, and stepping up and really making a difference," Bisailon said.

NHS was involved in a similar project through Heartland Hope's Adopt-a-Family program, where they purchased Christmas gifts for less fortunate families. Chapter advisor Leslie Heise has organized this fundraiser for NHS members for the past three years.

"We collect generous donations from staff and families, then submit the paperwork to adopt 12 to 15 children. Then, we get sent the families' applications and get to go do the Christmas shopping for those individuals based on their personal preferences," Heise said.

Senior NHS president Mylee Tichota has done this fundraiser for two years and has made many memories from giving back to the community.

"I really enjoy being able to shop for little kids. Knowing that I can make a difference during their Christmas season and in their life fills me with joy," Tichota said.

While NHS members get to put themselves in the shoes of the kids they are shopping for, Heise views it from a different perspective.

"As an adult, I approach this project thinking through the lens of the parent who you know is doing their best, but also wants to provide more for their children, and wants them to have a great Christmas," Heise said.

Heise's favorite part of the fundraiser is seeing how much effort the NHS members put into picking out gifts.

"It's truly the nights we go shopping, when three to four students bring me their cart, and they're so excited about the gifts that they've kind of curated together for a package for that student," Heise said. "It really is so rewarding to get to see our kids feel joy for someone they've never met."

While the project benefited families in need, it also brought NHS members closer together because they could serve the community in a powerful way.



NHS members pose for a picture after buying gifts for the families they adopted. This year, they adopted 12 kids and bought multiple gifts for each child. (Courtesy Photo)

“Just being together outside of school creates a tighter group, along with knowing that you are passionate about promoting the same things,” Tichota said. “It helps represent what we stand for at Yutan, and although we aren’t a huge school, we can still make a difference in others’ lives.”

Review – “9-1-1 Nashville”

New spinoff highlights more action, drama

Cheyenne Luebbe

Behind the city lights and country music of Nashville are the emergency responders who keep the city safe—a world brought to the screen in ABC’s “9-1-1: Nashville,” which premiered Oct. 9, 2025, with new episodes released weekly on Thursday nights. The show is a spin-off of the original 9-1-1, which has been on the air for nine seasons. So far, there have been ten episodes, and the show is set to feature 18 episodes in its debut season. Every episode presents a new emergency in the Music City that the first responders must face to save the day, which will surely keep the audience on their toes. For anyone who wants to watch a thrilling take on real-life emergencies, “9-1-1 Nashville” is the perfect show to draw you in from the very first episode.



Image found at ABC

The show mainly follows the firefighters of Station 113, as well as a family conflict within the station. Captain Don Hart (Chris O'Donnell) and his son, Lieutenant Ryan Hart (Michael Provost), play an important role in the show as they navigate 911 calls in Nashville and challenges in their family. At the beginning of the show, the father-son duo is introduced, as well as Ryan's mom, Blythe Hart (Jessica Chapsaw), and his aunt Cammie Raleigh (Kimberly Williams-Paisley), a 911 dispatcher. In the “Pilot” episode, the firefighters encounter their first major emergency at a Kane Brown concert. While responding to another call, we meet Blue Bennings (Hunter McVey), Don's secret son, whom he had with singer Dixie Bennings (LeAnn Rimes) when he and Blythe were separated. After Don sees Blue's natural instinct to help people, he offers him a job as a firefighter. As the season

progresses and the emergencies heighten, the Hart family drama becomes more serious with Blue now in the picture.

What I really enjoy about the show is the characters. Each of the firefighters at Station 113 expresses so much passion for their jobs when they help people and respond to calls. As emergency responders, they all have to be ready to use special skills they've learned in their past training when dire situations arise. From a viewer's perspective, I notice that they all step up in different situations, but primarily Don because he is the captain and needs to set a good example for the others. Because of Don's role in the station and in his son's life, Blue steps up as a cadet and dedicates his life to learning the ropes of a new career. While Blue is new to the station, Ryan's experience and hard work to earn his position make him one of the strongest firefighters in 113. Since Don's leadership often takes the spotlight, it is inspiring to see the other firefighters demonstrate team-building skills behind the scenes during Nashville's biggest times of emergency. After watching the first ten episodes of the show, it is evident to me that every firefighter's character is well-written, and they show love for their job through the heroism they display when the city of Nashville calls for them.

Beyond the characters, my favorite part of the show is the thrilling plot because each time I watch, I don't know which way it will turn. The main plot of the show centers around the emergency calls and disaster scenes the firefighters respond to, which is the most riveting of the multiple plot lines. Meanwhile, the side plot of Blue's introduction into the Hart family after 20 years of not knowing his father intensifies the drama and complicates the show's family dynamics. The challenges of the wealthy Hart family include betrayal of trust, long-kept secrets and complex personal relationships between family members. On the other hand, the firefighters' camaraderie and teamwork are tested by intense, 24/7 rescue operations ranging from blazing fires to technical rescues in the Music City. The blend of thrilling action and soapy drama is exactly what I look for in a show.



Image found at soaps

Although "9-1-1 Nashville" has a well-written plot, the emergencies the 911 calls lead the firefighters to are a little extreme at times. While the drama is plentiful in every episode, some episodes with high-stakes situations take it a step too far. There have been reviews about the emergencies being too unrealistic. A few reviews of the show on IMDb state that the "storylines are even more far-fetched than the other 911 shows" and "the calls feel absurdly fake." I can agree that the storyline seems a little far-fetched, but the calls feel realistic because they are inspired by, or directly adapted from, real-life 911 incidents. They might be a little excessive, but not so much that it will change my view on the show.

Overall, "9-1-1 Nashville" is a new TV show worth watching. The show delivers on every aspect, from the dangerous calls Station 113 handles to the family drama behind the station walls. Even though the plot is a little extreme, the heroism of firefighters during life-or-death emergencies is inspiring. So, if you want to get into one of the 9-1-1 installments, "9-1-1 Nashville" is the perfect fast-paced, drama-heavy series to start with, as more episodes continue to get released and the circumstances in Nashville get more intense.