Childhood experiences spark dreams

Sara Bulin, senior from Bruning, is majoring in comprehensive biology with a general emphasis and is in the pre-veterinary medicine program. Bulin knew she wanted to be a vet when she was 5 years old, and she followed her original plan.

Bulin credits others, who have played a large role in her life, to her success. “My high school anatomy and physiology teacher, Emily Winter, really helped me out a lot. Her husband and in-laws are veterinarians and own the vet clinic where my family takes our animals …. She helped me look at colleges to go to and even held me back after a dissection to show me some suture techniques and let me practice. … I still consider her a great influence for everything she’s done for me,” Bulin said.

She said her great-grandma was always someone who she knew believed in her. “She never questioned why I wanted to pursue becoming a vet and was always the first one to tell me that I could do it.”

In addition to having a support system, Bulin also shadowed at the vet clinic owned by Winter’s husband and in-laws. “I spent two summers job shadowing at a clinic in Fairbury, where I was able to observe many neuters and spays on cats and dogs, as well as a fair share of dental work. One surgery I watched was supposed to be a rabbit neuter, but turned into a rabbit spay when the vet discovered that the rabbit was not a male like the owner had thought! I was also able to observe surgery on a calf that had an umbilical hernia.

“I also job shadowed at a clinic here in Kearney, and now I work there as well as completing an internship there. During work, I work with mainly dogs and cats since it is mainly a small animal clinic. I help with blood draws for the animals that are in for surgery,” Bulin said.

About that blood, she says she generally assists. “But sometimes I get to try my hand at drawing blood. I also help intubate the animals before their surgery and then recover them after.” Bulin said.

Bulin says each step along the way was part of her education. “All of my jobs, in some way or another, have helped me prepare for the future even if they didn’t involve animals at all. I have worked in a clothing store back home since I was in high school, though just on the weekends. I also worked at a sports complex working and running the concession stand the past three summers. Both of these jobs have helped me improve and hone my people skills.”

In addition to the jobs Bulin says she has also had valuable courses to prepare her to be a vet. “Most of the science classes I’ve taken, I think will be beneficial. Anatomy and physiology, though about humans, will help with the skeletal system and overall body systems. Organic chemistry will be helpful in understanding the way different chemical components such as drugs will react with each other or chemical components found in the body. Genetics will also be helpful, as well as biochemistry.

Bulin shows off her 4-H Clover Kid ribbon she earned from showing her goat at the Thayer County fair. Bulin continued to show in until she was 18, but mostly sheep.
Happy Finals Week!

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Western Nebraska Community College
Coffee houses bring soulful sense of warmth

It's not just about the cup of coffee

A common phrase that I hear on a day to day basis is, “I need coffee.”

While conversing with someone in one of my morning classes, we were discussing the daily need for a coffee.

One of the other girls who happened to hear our discussion spoke up and said, “You should ask for a coffee pot for Christmas.” I looked at her, then looked at the other girl. We both chuckled and simultaneously said, “It’s not the same!”

Here is why.

A coffee house is a home away from home. A safe place. A place of warmth and happiness. It’s aesthetically appealing in every way and it’s a good place to stay on a rainy day.

For a student who lives on campus or even off, you have two or three places of existence. Work. Home. School. Repeat.

You stare at the same blank walls. The same carpets. Read the same text books and listen to the same music station on Pandora. Simply put, you need a change in scenery and simply everything else.

It’s not just about the cup of coffee.

When you walk into the coffee shop, the barista always welcomes you with a warm smile. It’s instantly a warm, bright atmosphere. This feeling is almost an equivalent to the feeling of going to grandma’s house on Christmas Eve. The smiles, the music and the interior are designed for the sole purpose of making you feel at home, which is simply something you do not get on campus, work or in a dorm room.

Coffee shops are a necessity for college students.

They not only give you a cup of coffee, but they give you an escape from the mundane life of being a college student.

A simple act of kindness, no matter the size, can impact others more than anyone could imagine.
Carlson takes on growth, friendship, challenges

KATIE SADD
Antelope Staff

Sports may have driven December graduating senior Emily Carlson to transfer to UNK, but her time here has been more than enjoyable. "I have met a lot of my lifelong friends while at UNK," she says.

Carlson grew up in Orleans and attended Southern Valley Jr.-Sr. High School. There, she was always busy with extracurricular activities and sports. "Sports have always been a major part of my life."

Carlson says it was her passion for sports that led her to UNK. Now, she is excited and ready for her next adventure.

After spending one year at UNL studying meteorology, Carlson found herself missing the sports environment she grew up around.

She transferred to UNK, changed her major to sports management and says she's been happy ever since.

Carlson says she is extremely excited to be graduating this semester. With the support from her family, Carlson says she is more than ready to make them proud.

"It might be bittersweet after a few months, but for right now I'm excited to have a break from school," says Carlson.

And a break is exactly what she needs.

While attending UNK, Carlson has paid for her schooling by herself. She knew once she moved to Kearney she would need to get a job.

She turned 19, and right away started applying for jobs and began working at Target the week after she moved.

At the conclusion of her sophomore year, Carlson decided to get another job for the summer, while keeping her almost full-time position at Target.

"I worked days at Target, and I would waitress at Cunningham's Journal, a bar and restaurant at night."

After the hot summer days came to an end, Carlson wasn't ready to quit either of her jobs.

She continued to work both jobs while being a full-time student at UNK.

Her hours and workload began to increase, but it wasn't anything she couldn't handle at the time.

"I worked between 50-60 hours a week at both jobs. I continued to do this for a couple of more years, each year adding more hours at both places."

Eventually Carlson had reached nearly 75 hours between both jobs and was ready to cut back a bit to enjoy her final semester.

She recently ended her time at Target where she had worked up to Cash Office and even Front End Supervisor. Currently Carlson still works at Cunningham's Journal where she bartends and serves.

Working hard is just part of being herself. "Just from how my personality is, even if I didn't need a job, I would continue to work. It's just how I am," says Carlson.

While working two jobs and having classes, Carlson says she learned how to manage her time extremely well.

"Was I exhausted a majority of the time? You bet! But I knew I was working toward my end goal, which was graduating."

Carlson jokes about the library not being open after she gets done bartending at 2 a.m. "My dining room table or Baristas is where all of my homework gets done," says Carlson.

Carlson says not having time to enjoy hobbies was one of the hardest parts of being so busy during college. "I love to paint and draw, and I never had time for that anymore."

The constant stress and heavy workload were also a challenge for Carlson at times. But she says she personally thrives off it at times, so it was never too horrific.

If Carlson could have done anything differently, she would have quit her day job a little sooner. "Having one job right now has been a blessing."

If she could give any advice to underclassman it would be: "Always keep the end picture in mind. Sometimes we fail but that's when we learn how to succeed."

Carlson also would always encourage any college student to find a balance.

"Learn how to spend your time wisely. Life is all about balance, and too much of anything can be detrimental."

Carlson is definitely in need of a little break but after graduation she plans to return to UNK to complete her Master of Business Administration next summer.

When she has time, senior Emily Carlson packs up her book bag and heads to Baristas to enjoy hot coffee and a quiet place to study. Carlson worked an average 75 hours a week between two jobs during her time as a full-time student.

"At UNK, it never felt like I was just another student. It really felt like my participation and contribution mattered."

/ Emily Carlson

"...learning how to spend your time wisely. Life is all about balance, and too much of anything can be detrimental."
Construction, occupational therapy marry need, product

ANGELA BALCOM
Guest Writer

Angela Balcom submitted this story about the changing needs of aging baby boomers summarizing the meeting of construction and occupational therapy.

A construction worker walks up to the counter to buy supplies for a standard-sized door frame. Another construction worker is standing with a list of supplies needed for a doorway that a wheelchair will fit through.

The first guy asks the second guy “Why are you buying so many supplies?”

He tells him that, after receiving a request from an occupational therapy practitioner, he has to modify the doorframe so the person in a wheelchair is able to get into his/her own home.

Although the marriage of the medical field and construction may seem unrelated, sometimes opposites attract.

Occupational therapy (OT) is an area in the medical field that can benefit people of any age, people with any diagnoses and can help people to function at the highest of their abilities as independently as possible.

OT looks at the big picture, has a holistic approach and takes all aspects of a person's life into consideration in order to promote the most optimal environment for improvement and function. Similarly, the construction field looks at the big picture and the keeps the consumer's function in mind. Both OT and construction value the idea of universal design, which aims to design a product or environment and to plan for future accommodations to be beneficial or accessible to a variety of people with varying needs, including the elderly or people with disabilities.

Due to advances in medicine and the aging of the baby boomer generation, people are living longer, causing the elderly population to rise. Along with that, our nursing homes and assisted living facilities are rapidly reaching their capacities.

As the world moves forward, OTs are continuing to promote more independence for elderly individuals and for people with disabilities. Aging in place promotes keeping people in their own homes for as long as possible and benefits individuals by not placing them in an institution, giving the elderly a better quality of life. This also benefits the over-capacitated nursing facilities by lowering the numbers of incoming patients.

From a construction standpoint, universally designed homes are designed with the consumer in mind, keeping an open mind to what any individual may need throughout life, such as grab bars, railings, wider doorways, flush door thresholds, safe shower ledges or stairs for wheelchair accessibility. Designing a home universally can save on costly modifications for people as they age or develop a disability when they may no longer have the means to pay for the modifications.

How do OT and construction go hand-in-hand? OT and construction both promote quality of life and functional independence for people as long as possible. Therefore, an OT practitioner and a construction designer could have an effective marriage when they share the common goal of the consumer's functioning and independence, helping consumers live their lives to the fullest. Sometimes, opposites really do attract.

On this day in 1911, Roald Amundsen reached the South Pole. Amundsen, born in Borge, near Oslo, in 1872, was one of the great figures in polar exploration. In 1897, he was first mate on a Belgian expedition that was the first ever to winter in the Antarctic. In 1903, he guided the 47-ton sloop Gjöa through the Northwest Passage and around the Canadian coast, the first navigator to accomplish the treacherous journey. Amundsen planned to be the first man to the North Pole, and he was about to embark in 1909 when he learned that the American Robert Peary had achieved the feat.

Amundsen completed his preparations and in June 1910 sailed instead for Antarctica, where the English explorer Robert F. Scott was also headed with the aim of reaching the South Pole. In early 1911, Amundsen sailed his ship into Antarctica's Bay of Whales and set up base camp 60 miles closer to the pole than Scott. In October, both explorers set off, Amundsen using sleigh dogs, and Scott employing Siberian motor sledges, Siberian ponies and dogs. On December 14, 1911, Amundsen's expedition won the race to the Pole and returned safely to base camp in late January.

After his historic Antarctic journey, Amundsen established a successful shipping business. He later made attempts to become the first explorer to fly over the North Pole. In 1925, in an airplane, he flew within 150 miles of the goal. In 1926, he passed over the North Pole in a dirigible just three days after American explorer Richard E. Byrd had apparently done so in an aircraft. In 1996, a diary that Byrd had kept on the flight was found that seemed to suggest that the he had turned back 150 miles short of its goal because of an oil leak, making Amundsen's dirigible expedition the first flight over the North Pole.

In 1928, Amundsen lost his life while trying to rescue a fellow explorer whose dirigible had crashed at sea near Spitsbergen, Norway.

To learn more, please visit:
http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history

by Rachael Fangmeier
SENIOR DUO TAKES TO THE COURT

Team players set goals for final college season on the court

NCAA bylaws allow an athlete four years of eligibility.

For seniors Kelsey Fitzgerald and Alexa Hogberg, this season marks the end of playing basketball as Lopers. Both of these women bring experience and leadership to this Loper team. Both have seen playing time since their freshman year for a combined 191 games played.

The only two team members to have spent four years at UNK, the duo intends to leave their mark on the Loper basketball program.

EXPERIENCE, LEADERSHIP

HALEY PIERCE
Antelope Staff

Kelsey Fitzgerald, a biology major from Yankton, South Dakota, is a three-time MIAA Conference Honor Roll awardee. She enters the season with three career double-doubles, and her 75 career blocks ranks ninth all-time.

Fitzgerald has since added eight more blocks. A true team player, Fitzgerald has not started every game this season, but continues to “keep getting better each day.” Her 12 points off the bench helped rally the Lopers in a close road loss to Colorado Christian University.

Alexa Hogberg, an exercise science student from Chandler, Arizona, returns from a junior year season that culminated in All-MIAA honors. The starting point guard, Hogberg’s current 330 career assists is fourth all-time for the Lopers.

As a sophomore, Hogberg led the MIAA Conference in assists per game and was again an assist leader throughout her junior campaign. Hogberg is also a threat from behind the arc, with a 4th all-time 34.5% career 3-point percentage.

Fitzgerald and Hogberg share a common goal: to lead UNK to an MIAA Conference Tournament appearance this season.

Loper forward Kelsey Fitzgerald averages 5.2 points and 5.4 rebounds through this season’s first 11 games. After a 12 point performance and an impressive shooting display against Colorado Christian University, Fitzgerald has moved into a starting role for the Lopers.

Haley Pierce

Shooting .882 from the free throw line, Alexa Hogberg averages 7.5 points per game as the starting point guard for the Lady Lopers this season. Through a tough early schedule Hogberg has shown great composure at playing the point.
I would just like to be a great leader for my team and to give my very best each time I play.”

/ Kelsey Fitzgerald

I will cherish every single moment of my final season, because I will never have a chance to be a part of something like this again.”

/ Alexa Hogberg

Kelsey Fitzgerald

FUN FACTS
KELSEY FITZGERALD

Favorite food: Pancakes
Holiday movie: Any Hallmark movie!
Favorite sport other than basketball: Volleyball

Alexa Hogberg

FUN FACTS
ALEXIA HOGBERG

Favorite food: Thai food
Holiday movie: "The Family Stone"
Favorite sport other than basketball: Tennis

When did you begin playing basketball?
I started playing basketball when I was really young, probably around the age of 5.

At what point in your career did you realize you wanted to play college ball?
It was during my senior year of high school, I was debating between playing basketball or volleyball in college. After going on my visit here at UNK the decision was pretty easy.

What brought you to UNK?
The team and the people around campus were all so welcoming and friendly. That made it a really easy decision for me when I came on my visit.

How do you balance being a student-athlete?
It's difficult and time consuming, but I am constantly doing homework and studying on away trips when I am not playing basketball. Also, after practices are done for the day I am at the library a lot.

What has been your most memorable moment on the court thus far?
It's hard to decide a most memorable moment. Mine isn't technically a moment, but rather every time that we step onto the court to play a game. To know that your whole team is out there fighting with you makes it all worth it.

How have you grown as an athlete at UNK?
Being a part of basketball has taught me so much more than just how to play the sport. I believe I have built more character and understanding of who I am. There are so many ups and downs throughout a season that you have to figure out how you are going to handle them and I feel like basketball has, in a way, helped me know when to pick my battles and how to respond to them.

Do you have any pregame rituals?
I don't really have a pregame ritual. Something I like to do before games though is go out to the gym before we start warming up and I like to get some shots up and really focus on the upcoming game. That doesn't happen all the time though, depends on my schedule.

What are your hopes for the team and individually this year?
My hopes for the team, as coach always says to us, are that we keep getting better each day. Ultimately, getting to the conference tournament would be a goal as well. Individually, I would just like to be a great leader for my team and to give my very best each time I play.

What does your final season mean to you?
My final season means so much to me. This is something I have been playing ever since I can remember. It's going to be difficult not being a part of the team next year. Basketball is a part of me, so with that in mind, I don't want to waste even one day. Every day I play is meaningful to me! I think senior year puts everything in perspective and makes this last season mean a lot more.

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Following graduation, what are your goals for the future?
I plan to attend optometry school.

Following graduation, what are your goals for the future?
Following graduation, I hope I can travel a little bit and see the world. I also plan to go to graduate school, and I have also been thinking about possibly coaching.

Any final thoughts?
I am so grateful and blessed to be apart of such a great university, and I cannot thank my family and coaches for the opportunities that I have had. I will miss being a University of Nebraska at Kearney student-athlete.
Two sports, twice the demand

Not many are blessed with the ability to compete in two sports, or the time management skills to balance sports with school, but Loper Micheala Hoffman has found a way to make it work.

Imagine this. You are a full-time student with a full-time job that lasts for 3-4 months. For that job you must wake up and get to work at 6 a.m. You have class at 8, and you might have to wait for your meeting room to be cleared out by another group of workers before you can get in and begin your process.

After that you must find time to do your homework and maybe sneak in some social time — but also get enough sleep. Also, don’t forget the business trips to other states twice a week every other week where you and your co-workers must show everyone how well your boss has prepared you.

"Soccer— I like the aggressiveness and the team, and track it’s the same with the team. But also, it’s an individual sport, so you really push yourself. Like it’s all on you.”

Micheala Hoffman

Now, after you are finished with that job, you have a week or two to recover, be a normal student, attend class, enjoy social time and get plenty of sleep.

The next week, you start a new job you will work through the end of the year; this one with even later hours. Every weekend you leave your home to go to another city and present your work to others.

This is the life of a two-sport athlete in collegiate athletics. More specifically, this is the life of Micheala Hoffman, a soccer and track athlete from Fruita, Colorado, playing outside forward/center forward for the Loper soccer team and competing in the 100m and 400m hurdles for the Loper track team.

Hoffman, a sophomore with an undetermined major, decided during her college search that she wanted to do both sports at the college level. “I couldn’t pick which one I liked, or wanted to do, over the other. So I just thought, why not just do both?” Hoffman says with a smile and laugh.

An 11-time varsity letter winner in four different sports in high school, Hoffman stayed busy at Fruita Monument High School as she was a member of the cross country and swimming teams as well. Even though she was a member of the XC and swimming teams, Hoffman says her favorite sport aside from the two she currently competes in was basketball because cross country and swimming were “…terrible sports in my mind because they were so hard.”

Hoffman has a strong family lineage at UNK; three of her family members are UNK alumni. With her mother as a former student and her two aunts (Carol and Lori Rochford) as former Loper student-athletes, Hoffman was well-prepared for life in Kearney.

As a freshman soccer athlete, Hoffman came into UNK and made an immediate impact playing in all 19 games and recording the second most minutes played in a season for a Loper women’s soccer player.

This past season, she scored her first goal as a Loper in a 2-0 win over William Jewell.

As a track athlete for UNK, Hoffman was selected to the Indoor and Outdoor Conference Team and made the trip with the Lopers as they competed for the MIAA crown during both seasons. Season bests of 14.89 seconds in the 100m hurdles and 1:06.42 in the 400m hurdles came at the outdoor conference meet at Northwest Missouri State University.

Although Hoffman cannot distinguish one sport as her favorite she does have reasons she enjoys each one.

"Soccer— I like the aggressiveness and the team, and track it’s the same with the team. But also, it’s an individual sport, so you really push yourself. Like it’s all on you,” Hoffman says.

Hoffman cannot agree with the idea that one sport’s athletes are in better shape than the others. “With soccer it’s endurance so you have to able to go for 90 minutes, but it’s not necessarily running the whole time. You just gotta keep moving your feet, but with track it’s a different endurance, a shorter amount. It’s more of a mind game,” Hoffman says.

Many athletes are ecstatic to receive offers to continue their favorite sport onto the collegiate level. Not many are blessed with the ability to compete in two or have the time management skills to balance the two along with school, but Micheala Hoffman has found a way to make it work. Two years and six seasons left after the 2016-2017 season ends and Hoffman is showing no signs of slowing down.
Tuba-grams spread cheer

Fundraising for an upcoming Regional Low Brass Conference, Kearney Low Brass Studio performs tuba-grams.

Top: Baires, Lawson and Oishi perform the Christmas song “Santa Baby” along with two other songs for the girls at the Alpha Xi Delta sorority house.

Bottom: Yuma Oishi, a freshman from Shizuoka, Japan, and a music performance major sports his tuba Christmas hat while performing the tuba Christmas tunes. “I just love music,” said Oishi. He says he loves every instrument but likes the variety of music he can play with the tuba.

Photo by Sydney Norris

PHOTO OF THE DAY

Junior guard Ty Danielson drives to the basket and shoots over Washburn defender Brady Skeens during the first half of the Loper’s game against the Ichabods Saturday December 10th. Danielson scored a career-high 28 points as UNK beat No. 26 Washburn 93-80 to improve to 8-3 on the season.

Photo by Todd Rundstrom

More Photos online @ UNKANTELOPE.COM
Growing up with seven siblings, senior English language arts, education major Kate Baker, from Gibbon, learned how to get involved. "I did just about everything. I did volleyball, basketball, track, trap shooting, softball and dance team. I was also in a lot of clubs growing up. I grew up in a small town so you kind of have to be involved in everything," Baker said.

College hasn't effected Baker's love of being involved. "It is so much fun," she said. She volunteered at the homeless shelter, Arc of Buffalo County and coached a high school club and elementary volleyball team.

"I work a ton, especially on campus, so that's another way to get involved. I love intramurals, and I volunteer a lot. I just love volunteering and as a bonus, it looks really good on a resume," says Baker.

Baker also does a lot of her volunteer work with her twin sister. During their sophomore year, they helped raise money for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital and participated in St. Jude Up 'Til Dawn.

Baker is currently working to raise money to provide backpacks and school supplies for children in the Kearney area for the next school year. "Education is very important to me, and I am excited to help some kids feel the same love that I have for learning," says Baker.

She has been on the Dean's List every semester and is in the English honor society Sigma Tau Delta.

Baker doesn't limit her volunteering to the surrounding area. “My sisters and I went on a Mission trip to Uganda in 2014, right before my sophomore year. We were able to teach in the schools, provide medical care, food and water, as well as share the Gospel with the people we came in contact with.”

Since then Baker and her sisters have been able to sponsor three girls and one boy from Uganda through Show Mercy International. "We are able to send money in order to allow these kids access to education, medical care, clothes, food and water and show them the love of Jesus," says Baker.

Baker leads a very busy life and she likes to get others involved.

“Step out of your comfort zone. A lot of people that I know say that they haven't met many people in college because they didn't really go and get involved. I would say to do all you can to get involved, especially the first year of college. There are so many opportunities, especially if you're living in the dorms to get involved and meet new people. My best friends are the ones I've met in college," says Baker.

Baker also says you should get to know your professors really well. "I've had a lot of times where it really helped me to have a good relationship with my professors. Get out there and find people who are in your corner.

“There are so many opportunities, especially if you’re living in the dorms to get involved and meet new people.”

/ Kate Baker

for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital
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“Just this summer I found a family that has done so much for me and has kind of taken me in. So if you can find yourself a surrogate family, it's great. They are always checking up on me and making sure I'm doing OK and letting me be a part of their family," Baker says.

When Baker isn't working or volunteering she likes to hang out with friends, ice skate and read. “I love reading. I'm an English major so I have to read a lot for my classes but I love just reading.”

After graduation Baker still aims to be involved and helping people.

“I hope to teach at a high school and coach volleyball or basketball for a while. Then I would like to come back and get my Master's Degree. I would like to teach in a college but we'll see if I like teaching high school first.”

For more information on volunteering opportunities please visit http://www.unk.edu/academics/health_sciences/volunteeropportunities.php

Photo by Jessica Moser

Kate Baker stands next to a tower of some of her favorite books. Baker's favorite books include anything by James Patterson and J.K. Rowling.

If you would like more information on Show Mercy International please visit their website at: showmercy.org
**SEATING, PARKING INFO**

UNK commencement ceremonies are webcast at www.unk.edu. Find out more details at http://www.unk.edu/about/commencement/index.php.

For guests, parking in the west lots is encouraged. Visitors with handicap permits can park east of the Health and Sports Center. Those transporting a handicapped person will have access to drop off the person on the east side of the complex, but will need to move their vehicle to another lot.

Visitors with wheelchairs can sit in the corner seating sections on the main floor or use the elevator in the northeast corner of the building to sit in the designated section on the arena floor. Individuals who have difficulties with steps should arrive at least an hour early to have access to seats just below the railings on the main floor or to obtain seating on the arena floor seats.

**DREAMS from page 3**

Coach Carnes hollers my name from the opposite side of the dugout and says “Grab your helmet and bat, you’re hitting for Mak.”

My heart was racing 100 times a minute. Dallas heard what coach said and didn’t even hesitate to give me the opportunity I could have only dreamed for.

Grabbing my bat and helmet I rushed out onto the field and headed straight to the batter’s box. I knew in this moment, this was it. This was my final at bat of my softball career.

“Ball one,” the home plate umpire said. I step out of the batter’s box and look down the third base line to where coach was standing. “You got this; see the ball,” coach Carnes said.

I exhale, step back into the batter’s box, press my helmet down a little more on my head and stare straight at the pitcher who is getting her next sign from the catcher.

“Strike one,” called the home plate umpire.

I think to myself, ‘Hey, I got this. Just see the ball and breathe.’

The next pitch comes down the pitching lane.

“Ping.” The softball rolls off the bat and heads straight where the second baseman is standing.

My entire team screams my name, “Run Rylee, run!” I sprint down the first base line, driving my cleats into the dirt as I run.

“Out,” the field umpire said. I knew in that instant I didn’t make it in time, but I was OK with that. I just had a teammate give her spot to me, the girl who wasn’t a starter, but was ever so grateful to be part of the team.

After the game was over, I instantly run over to Dallas and give her the biggest hug I can manage. Tears running down both our faces, we both look at each other and say “thank you.”

That “thank you” meant different things for each of us, but one thing was for sure. The impact of that day hasn’t left either one of us and will never be forgotten.

A simple act of kindness, no matter the size, can impact others more than anyone could imagine.

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**ATTENTION SPRING GRADS**

The application for May 2017 (spring) graduation is now open. The application deadline is February 1, 2017.

Applications must be submitted via MyBlue. The fee is $25.

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**PAID ANTELOPE STAFF POSITIONS**

**Sports writers**
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Madeline Maloley
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**WANT TO TALK?**
Diffenderfer
diffenderftm@unk.edu
SYDNEY NORRIS

It is noon and students are finishing morning classes. Some students go back to their rooms to do homework, but most students walk to the Nebraskan Student Union where breakfast, lunch and dinner is served every day stressing about classes or homework.

Often these worries are interrupted with a bright smile and very welcoming words, “Have a great lunch!”

Cindy Pearson has worked for Chartwells since August 1998.

Loving to cook, she originally signed on as one of the evening cooks for University Residence South up until fall semester of 2015.

However, after finding out about opening she currently has, she decided it would be best to do something with a little more variety. One of her many tasks includes welcoming people into the cafeteria and swiping their cards. While this may seem like a simple task at hand, one of the hardest parts of her job is pronouncing the student’s names, Pearson said.

As students say thank you and proceed on to grab a bite to eat, Pearson continues to welcome each student with a friendly smile and tries her best to pronounce each student’s name with precision.

Pearson has faced obstacles in her life that could have given her every opportunity to have a negative outlook. She says instead she chose to see life as an opportunity to help others and give back.

She was born premature on Oct. 30. Her parents were convinced that something was wrong with her hearing. After going through many doctors who told her parents that nothing was wrong, her theory was confirmed. At 5, they finally found a nose and throat doctor in Lincoln who ran a series of tests on her.

“I remember being in a long room and sitting in a chair when they had this conversation,” said Pearson, “My mom said that the doctor started off and it sounded like the doctor was going to tell her that there was nothing wrong.”

The doctor confirmed a hearing loss saying, “By all rights she shouldn’t be able to walk, she shouldn’t be able to talk and she shouldn’t be able to do anything except be sitting in a corner.”

Nerve damage caused her moderate to severe hearing loss. Not only has the nerve damage made her hard of hearing but it has also made it difficult for her to walk due to balance. She got her first hearing aid when she was 6.

Even though doctors had finally figured out what was wrong with her, Pearson had a long road ahead. She was the only student in her class with a disability, and people didn’t quite know how to react. However, along the way she ran into a teacher that not only helped her but inspired her.

“The one teacher that I had that did help me was Mrs. Sears,” Pearson said. “The reason Mrs. Sears was such a role model and such a big person for getting over obstacles is that she had polio when she was a young woman and was on crutches and had special braces for her legs.”

Pearson says Mrs. Sears saw her as an equal and not as someone with a disability who needed extra attention. This did a lot for Pearson down the road.

She went to UNK after high school but never finished her degree. She had many interests and loved learning so much that the classes she ended up taking never added up to a degree.

She says one of her biggest regrets is not finishing college. She told herself that she would eventually come back to school; however, years later, this was never accomplished.

She learned during her college years not to let anyone tear her dreams apart. “When somebody tells you, you can’t do something, you go for it and don’t let anybody tell you, you can’t do something,” Pearson said.

As Pearson got older she learned to overcome these obstacles by not letting people determine her future based on the cards she was dealt. She says she instead decided to inspire others by telling them that their dreams are possible no matter what obstacles have come their way.

“You don’t have to feel like you need to win the Nobel Prize, but maybe your actions will affect that person and they are the ones meant to win the Nobel Prize,” Pearson said

Pearson says students should not allow fear as a reason to not do something or to not push forward. She tries her best to see the good side to every situation and not only wants to be the catalyst for others, but for others to be catalysts for people they run into as well.

Even though Pearson never finished college, she still found other ways to do what she loves. She enjoys baking and cooking with her niece and nephews when she has time. She also loves to read whenever she can find a spare moment. She gives back to the community by knitting for Good Samaritan Hospital. Most importantly, she found her place up front where she can put her good heart and big smile to good use every time someone comes through her line.

“Every day I work in the cafeteria, people tell me how much they appreciate me,” Pearson said. “It’s the highlights of my day when people say something nice to me.”

“Whenever I walk into the cafeteria, and Cindy is there, she always knows my name and has a big bubbly smile on her face.”

-Zoe Flynn

Interesting
Hobbies

- Loves knitting for Good Samaritan Hospital
- Enjoys baking with her family
- Likes to read in spare time

Photo by Sydney Norris

Katie Kovanda, Junior education major from Grand Island hands her card to Cindy Pearson in the cafeteria. Pearson says she likes to be up in the front and enjoys talking to the students.

“We are all in the same boat, and we all gotta keep goin’, or else we aren’t goin’ to make it.”

/ Cindy Pearson

[Image of Cindy Pearson in the cafeteria. Pearson from Grand Island hands her card to Cindy Pearson in the cafeteria. Pearson says she likes to be up in the front and enjoys talking to the students.]

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