Phi Delt Fish Fry
Annual philanthropy event raises money for the ALS foundation
Page 4

Special Coverage
Journalism students explore the exciting culture of the local food scene
Begins page 9

Who runs the world?
Student directed show tells the tale of women and war
Page 3
Longtime columnist shares thoughts on UNK experience, writing for Antelope

Elliot Gonnella
Antelope Staff

Three and a half years of writing does seem to go by fast.

What started out as a one-piece submission of a letter to the editor on any topic of my choice, and the advice of my English 100 lecturer Mrs. Hanson, became a semi-regular occurrence for the rest of my time at UNK.

As graduation approaches for me and hundreds of others, I cannot help but be reflective about the whole experience. I was the only one in my immediate family to go the traditional four year route right out of high school. I was constantly jibbed about it alongside my major (Middle School Education) by friends and family, mostly in good fun.

Although the question remains, even as I graduate debt free, has this all been worth it? Did the sleepless nights, the frustrating classes, the adulating at a moment’s notice and the job outlook too much for me.

“Today is what matters.”

Elliot Gonnella
Antelope Staff

Three and a half years of writing does seem to go by fast.

What started out as a one-piece submission of a letter to the editor on any topic of my choice, and the advice of my English 100 lecturer Mrs. Hanson, became a semi-regular occurrence for the rest of my time at UNK.

As graduation approaches for me and hundreds of others, I cannot help but be reflective about the whole experience. I was the only one in my immediate family to go the traditional four year route right out of high school. I was constantly jibbed about it alongside my major (Middle School Education) by friends and family, mostly in good fun.

Although the question remains, even as I graduate debt free, has this all been worth it? Did the sleepless nights, the ocassional rejection and 11th hour procrastination frustrate classes, the adulating at a moment’s notice and the job outlook beyond petty discomfort caused by a cold and uncaring universe?

Well I can’t speak for everyone, but I do not regret my time here and the decisions I made, both the good and ill. I’m glad I joined a fraternity even with the constant bouts of frustration I would feel from my brothers. I am glad I chose UNK as it gave me room to develop away from a small town atmosphere, but an easy opportunity to go back to visit when I had the time.

The experiences are ones that made me who I am today, and without a doubt I am better for them - even the ones that made me want to stay in bed until noon and stare at the ceiling.

It wasn’t just related to classes. This newspaper was one of those challenging experiences, with the occasional rejection and 11th hour stories, but it turned me into a better writer. It was a great honor that I am thankful I was able to participate in.

Here are a few highlights and thoughts from that career.

Favorite column? It is a toss-up between my analysis of religious fervor where I dusted off some old political cartoons from one of my American History classes and my lighter piece about ranking all of the Star Wars film. Both were pieces that I had a ton of fun writing.

Worst column? None have the distinction of the worst, but I did phone in quite a few columns when the election and early Trump slog was becoming

It wasn’t just related to classes. This newspaper was one of those challenging experiences, with the occasional rejection and 11th hour stories, but it turned me into a better writer. It was a great honor that I am thankful I was able to participate in.

Here are a few highlights and thoughts from that career.

Favorite column? It is a toss-up between my analysis of religious fervor where I dusted off some old political cartoons from one of my American History classes and my lighter piece about ranking all of the Star Wars film. Both were pieces that I had a ton of fun writing.

Worst column? None have the distinction of the worst, but I did phone in quite a few columns when the election and early Trump slog was becoming
‘Lysistrata’ gives audience laughs
Female characters bring war to a close

Upper left: Socrates (Brenden Zwiebel) lifts Xantippe (Emma Newman) in a dance scene.

Middle left: Drakes (Logan Giddings) gets an earful from Xantippe (Emma Newman).

Lower left: Socrates (Brenden Zwiebel) is consoled by Viagrus (Billy Deardoff) and Drakes (Logan Giddings).

Upper right: Ismenia (Ashley Glaser) serves up drinks in a bunny costume.

Lower right: Megan Coffin played the lead, Lysistrata. In the play, Lysistrata brings the women of both sides of a war together to help facilitate peace (also played by Ashley Glaser).
Fish fry raises funds for Live Like Lou

Phi Delta Theta hosts fish fry to raise money for ALS research

Braydon Conell
Antelope Staff

Members of Phi Delta Theta – Nebraska Beta, the chapter of the international fraternity located at UNK, hosted their third annual Phi Fish Fry on Friday April 12.

With the help of generous donations from families and local businesses, Phi Delta Theta had the opportunity to expand their food options at this year’s fish fry. In addition to the fried fish and homemade French fries, attendees could also choose to have mozzarella sticks with their meal.

Amber Hallberg, a junior organizational communication major, purchased her ticket as soon as they went on sale.

“ALS is a very sad and debilitating disease. It would be awesome to find a cure. That is why I wanted to buy a ticket,” Hallberg said.

She went on to add that the mozzarella sticks were a nice addition to the meal and felt that may have convinced some people to purchase a ticket to help the fraternity with their mission.

UNK’s Phi Delta Theta began these fundraisers three years ago in order to promote the fraternity’s national philanthropy. Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) is a nervous system disease that causes progressive degeneration of muscle tissue. ALS can affect any voluntary muscle group in the body including arm and leg movement, speech and posture. Life expectancy after diagnosis is two to five years and little treatment to slow the disease is available today.

Lou Gehrig’s, another name for ALS, is in reference to the American baseball first baseman. Gehrig played his entire professional career in Major League Baseball for the New York Yankees. In addition to being a professional baseball player, he is an alum of Phi Delta Theta. Diagnosed with ALS in the 1930s, doctors named the disease after him. This further pushed the international fraternity to adopt making a difference for those afflicted by ALS as their philanthropy.

Gustavo Balencia, the Nebraska Beta chapter’s chaplain and a junior business administration student, explained why the chapter participates.

“It is important to us because it is our national [mission]. It gives a great feeling knowing that [what we do] helps people with the disease and with research.”

One of the ways Phi Delta Theta helps those afflicted by Lou Gehrig’s is by hosting events such as the fish fry to raise money to donate. In the past, funds raised were sent directly to the ALS Association. The ALS Association is a national non-profit established in 1985. The association conducts global research aimed at finding a solution to ALS. The mission of the association is to lead the fight to treat and cure ALS and empower people living with Lou Gehrig’s disease.

This year, however, Phi Delta Theta will be donating to the Live Like Lou Foundation. The Live Like Lou Foundation was founded in 2012 as a grassroots effort by Neil and Suzanne Alexander. In 2011, Neil Alexander, a member of the Phi Delta Theta Fraternity, was diagnosed with ALS.

Initial efforts by the Alexanders resulted in $4 million being raised and the establishment of the $10 million Live Like Lou Center for ALS Research at The University of Pittsburgh’s Brain Institute, as well as an endowment that is able to provide grants to ALS patients and their families. An important aspect of the research center is that it provides grants to rising researchers under the pretext that collaboration is the key to finding a cure.

Phi Delta Theta – Nebraska Beta also partners with KneeKnocker Woods in Gibbon, NE during the Halloween season as another fundraiser for their philanthropy. Outside of these big events, the fraternity encourages people to make individual donations directly to an ALS foundation because it will take everything the world can give to find a cure for this disease.
Cutting-edge cyber security only getting better

UNK’s systematic security is going strong

Brett Westfall
Antelope Staff

Fake emails, hacked accounts, lies about privacy settings in recent hacking scandals, and the more Artificial Intelligence continues to develop through good and bad means, the more cyber security teams must create substantial protection for people. Students should always be wary of fake accounts and other issues that may invade one’s privacy, but UNK has taken the extra steps to make sure students’ access to items on their network and accounts are secure as well as provide students the opportunity to follow a career revolving around cyber security.

Two students from information technology, management and research majors held an event about the future of cyber security with the science, technology, engineering and math, or STEM, building as well as to teach students good cyber security practices and to inform about how the networking system works.

“Our Wi-Fi system, to understand how it is all connected networking and security wise, our smaller servers are in the buildings of the College of Education, the Communications Center, the Health Science Education Complex, and West Center and all of them connect to our large, main server in the Otto Olsen building that sends information to the main servers at the University of Nebraska Lincoln,” said Grant Oberg, a junior Information Networking and Telecommunications major. “UNK would be the main site for our large server location, in which UNO, UNL, and UNK are all connected. There are about 24 people at UNK’s Information Technology Services that also handle security and all together, there are about 400 ITS people working on this giant network.”

Privacy is big for Oberg as well, he explained how UNK remains cyber secure without breaking privacy rules. “UNK is a unique situation for cyber security because it’s an academic institution,” said Oberg. “There are only so many security measures they can put in place because of academic freedom. For example, they cannot dive into your internet traffic or history, the websites you’ve been to, what you’ve downloaded because you are researching something and they don’t agree with what you are researching or your viewpoint, they could potentially stop you.”

“In our classes, there are tools that we can use to backtrack viruses and more technical stuff like Artificial Intelligence without going into your private emails or any account information under the University system,” said Will Martinez, a junior studying information networking and telecommunications. “This is all even before the STEM building and the upgrades coming for everything.”

“When the STEM building is complete, information networking telecommunication majors that deal with cyber security now will stop because there will be a new department for cyber systems or operations when the building is complete,” continued Martinez. “So things are ramping up when it comes to security because of the boom of AI, which goes into everything technology wise. The University of Nebraska system all around is creating specific classes and programs for students interested in learning all of this because UNK is not going to be stagnant, they are taking the initiative to offer out a hand and let students come in and know the ins and outs of cyber security.”

UNK is quite ahead of many universities and colleges when it comes to cyber security thanks to great monitoring systems. “The University system has a monitoring system that catches sketchy things or viruses and alerts the security team when there is something wrong within the giant network,” Oberg said. “Though we shouldn’t say what the system is due to all types of hackers and other AI out there that could learn and bypass stuff, it is a secure system that is constantly updating and preventing students as well as faculty from having unsafe accounts.”

“UNK’s Wi-Fi security network feels light-years more secure than other networks for big universities and places like airports, but there are simple things anyone can do to prevent easy hacking,” Martinez said. “UNK’s system will block you or will find it due to a risk of potential threats found by the monitoring system and us. Always try and use ‘eduroam’ for Wi-Fi because it’s even more secure, faster, and you are protected.”

“Just trust your gut, if an email looks even partially sketchy or too good to be true, just don’t mess with it,” Oberg said. “Plus, being on this secure network, we are trained as well as practice staying current with whatever the latest security trends are since AI and technology is always evolving. UNK does and will continue to do a good job of informing it’s teachers, employees, and students of what practices not to follow when web searching and for us IT people to know what to do for security without invading people’s privacy.”
Purple Tie Event
First “Date a Delt” event, auction brings in students, community

Jose Perez
Antelope Staff

One of UNK’s youngest fraternities, Delta Tau Delta made history on Thursday, April 11th by hosting their inaugural “Purple Tie Event” at the Buffalo County Fairgrounds east of Kearney. Despite the university being closed that day due to weather conditions, Delta Tau Delta still had plans to proceed with the event and not reschedule it for a later date.

The Purple Tie Event was Delta Tau Delta’s first philanthropy event where the members of the fraternity served unlimited macaroni and cheese with a toppings bar, as well as hosting an auction. The auction consisted of current members of Delta Tau Delta creating “date night” baskets for places around the Kearney area.

Brady Deprez, a sophomore Health Science major from Elkhorn, serves as the current president of Delta Tau Delta. Deprez oversaw many factors leading up to the event, given the fact that this was the first ever Purple Tie Event.

“Since the colonization in the Fall 2017 semester, we have been looking to host a big philanthropy event consistently,” Deprez said. “After talking to other brothers at conferences and events, we came up with this idea because it was a great way to raise money for JDRF and support local businesses. Supporting our philanthropy was a priority for us.”

The Purple Tie Event went well, but there was major concerns leading up to the event.

“There was a couple of challenges we faced, with one being the weather and unexpected speed bumps,” Deprez said. “With the snow day, we had to wait until the morning of to decide whether to postpone or keep going with the event. Along with that, we had no idea what to expect in terms of attendance and participation in the auction. We know what to do better for next year and I’m looking forward to hosting the event again with a year of experience.”

Delta Tau Delta members recognized what could be changed for their event in the future.

“The attendance was amazing and I can’t thank the UNK students and community enough for this,” Deprez said. “However, for next year I would like to get some alumni there and I would like to reach out to the community more by advertising to local business or getting on the radio.”

Ronald Gonzalez, a sophomore Recreation Management major from Albion, was also one of the many Delta Tau Delta members that helped out with the Purple Tie Event.

Gonzalez was very confident with the attendance being great after selling a good amount of tickets.

“It really wasn’t difficult selling tickets all. As soon as me and other members from Delta Tau Delta set up our table in the union, we were selling tickets left and right.”

Gonzalez was confronted by people that expressed their opinions on the philanthropic event. Fortunately, most of the feedback was positive.

“I heard a lot of great feedback; everyone that approached me was excited and told me that this was a great event,” Gonzalez said. “The best part for me would have to be the amount of people that showed up to support. This was our first time doing this event, so we didn’t really know what to expect.”

All things Shakespeare
Sigma Tau Delta event brings old-world entertainment to UNK

Amelia Cooper
Antelope Staff

To celebrate Shakespeare’s birthday, the English Honors society, Sigma Tau Delta, is presenting the Shakespeare Revels. Welcoming all students, faculty and staff who have an interest in Shakespeare, this will be the third annual Shakespeare Revels.

This event will feature an Elizabethan-style feast, Shakespearean entertainment, an open mic and a raffle consisting of Shakespearean-themed trinkets.

“The Elizabethan feast will include tarts, meat pasties, cakes, butter beer and other delicacies that were popular in Shakespeare’s England,” said Dr. Marguerite Tassi, a professor in the English department.

The Shakespearean entertainment will consist of readings and parodies of Shakespeare’s poetry, dramatic readings and Elizabethan music performed by a local musician. This will also include an open mic.

“The open mic is truly open mic,” Tassi said. “Everyone is invited to bring their Shakespeare poem or speech to read and we also welcome Shakespeare-inspired creative pieces.”

Included with the open mic will be readings from English students, many from Sigma Tau Delta, students from other majors and faculty. The raffle will be a suggested donation of a dollar and the proceeds will go to Sigma Tau Delta, which is sponsoring the Shakespeare Revels.

Sigma Tau Delta is very active in the literary arts; the organization sponsors an annual Bad Love Valentine's open mic and they publish the literary journal The Carillon,” Tassi said. “Sigma Tau Delta invites new members to apply for membership in the organization and you can find out more about the organization at the Shakespeare Revels.”

The English Department hosts different open mics and literary events throughout the semester. The Reynolds Writer series brings poets and fiction writers each semester to read their work on campus and at the MONA.

Join the English Department and Sigma Tau Delta in celebrating Shakespeare’s birthday at the Shakespeare Revels on April 26 from 3 – 5 p.m. in the studio theatre in the Fine Arts Building.
Golf looks to qualify for regionals

Lopers seated ninth, top 12 teams advance to tourney

Hanna Hake
Antelope Staff

This has been a busy spring for the Loper women’s golf team. With NCAA regionals coming up in early May, the Lopers have been practicing and playing in tournaments around the country to qualify for the regional tournament.

The women’s golf team placed fifth at the Hardscrabble Invitational in Fort Smith, Arkansas (April 8-9). In the rare 54 hole competition, UNK shot a score of 933 led by Ogallala senior Maaika Mestl who was individually tied for seventh in the tournament.

The team has already put a great amount of effort into this spring season.

“This year we’re working really hard, practicing a lot more and really trying to eliminate our weaknesses, and utilize our talents,” said Danielle Dickerson, a senior from Mooresville, North Carolina. “We have a couple new team members this year, so that will really help us now and in building for the future.”

The UNK golf team is currently ranked ninth in the NCAA Central Region. Only the top 12 teams qualify for regionals. They will be played in Muskogee, Oklahoma.

Last season the Lopers qualified for the MIAA Regional Tournament in St. Louis, Missouri for the second time in school history.

At the Regional Tournament, the top five UNK golf members competed as a team, and last year the other team members went to Missouri to support their team members.

“It’s nice for the younger members who didn’t qualify for our traveling team to come along and see the atmosphere of a big tournament like (regionals). It gives them experience and a desire to try hard and get there to compete next time,” said Dickerson.

To qualify for Regionals, teams play multiple tournaments throughout the school year against other schools. Head-to-head scores are calculated for each team that attends tournaments. These scores are used, along with tournament placements and overall stroke counts, to tabulate which teams qualify for Regionals each spring.

The Lopers will be back in action at the MIAA Championships in Mayetta, Kansas (April 22-24).
After finishing junior season as 1st Team All-MIAA, Silvio continues to better himself

Jack McLeay
Antelope Staff

During the entire month of April, the UNK football team has been battling against each other in spring football practices in order to get ready for the first game against Missouri Southern on September 5 at 7 p.m. Although this will be the beginning of the season, it will be the “beginning of the end” for 21 seniors. One of those seniors is UNK’s 3-time starting linebacker Sal Silvio.

Last year, Silvio finished with 107 total tackles and was named First Team All-MIAA linebacker. Defensive coordinator and linebackers coach Scott Lewis spoke about Sal and his effectiveness on the field. “The thing about Sal is, he is one of the most instinctual players I have ever seen,” said Lewis. “He has an ability to sniff out what the offense is trying to do and has a nose for the ball I have never seen before.”

Silvio talks about his personal accomplishments and what that means for him going forward.

“Being selected All-MIAA was truly an honor, but I am not fully satisfied,” said Silvio. “My main focus is to be a better overall team and compete for a conference championship next season.”

One of Silvio’s main goals this upcoming season is to be more of a leader. “Last year, I still was trying to find the type of leadership role I wanted to play,” said Silvio. “I think I have found that now and want to be the person that people look to on defense and can count on.”

“Sal is a great guy with a great heart,” Stoltenberg said. “Just seeing how he treats people around him really says a lot about his character and the way he carries himself.”

Coach Scott Lewis went on to talk about Sal’s personality and what he brings to the team. “Sal truly is a joy to have around,” Lewis said. “He likes to have fun and mess around with his teammates, but also would have any of their backs any day of the week.”

UNK football has four remaining practices before their spring football game on April 20. Silvio is ready to make some noise in the MIAA this upcoming year.

Last season, UNK’s defense finished fourth in the conference in overall rush yards at 141 per game and third in pass yards at 185 per game. With an experienced defense that returns eight starters, Silvio says that execution will be key to being one of the best in the league.

“We need to be able to execute well at tackling and communicating,” Silvio said. “If we can all be on the same page and tackle well, I think it will be hard for people to get past us.”

Silvio’s notable recognition does not only come from on the field though. His acts off the field have given him a reputation as well. Offensive lineman Josh Stoltenberg talks about Silvio off the field.

“Sal is a great guy with a great heart,” Stoltenberg said. “Just seeing how he treats people around him really says a lot about his character and the way he carries himself.”

Coach Scott Lewis went on to talk about Sal’s personality and what he brings to the team. “Sal truly is a joy to have around,” Lewis said. “He likes to have fun and mess around with his teammates, but also would have any of their backs any day of the week.”

UNK football has four remaining practices before their spring football game on April 20. Silvio is ready to make some noise in the MIAA this upcoming year.

“Sal is a great guy with a great heart,” Stoltenberg said. “Just seeing how he treats people around him really says a lot about his character and the way he carries himself.”

Coach Scott Lewis went on to talk about Sal’s personality and what he brings to the team. “Sal truly is a joy to have around,” Lewis said. “He likes to have fun and mess around with his teammates, but also would have any of their backs any day of the week.”

UNK football has four remaining practices before their spring football game on April 20. Silvio is ready to make some noise in the MIAA this upcoming year.

“Sal is a great guy with a great heart,” Stoltenberg said. “Just seeing how he treats people around him really says a lot about his character and the way he carries himself.”

Coach Scott Lewis went on to talk about Sal’s personality and what he brings to the team. “Sal truly is a joy to have around,” Lewis said. “He likes to have fun and mess around with his teammates, but also would have any of their backs any day of the week.”

UNK football has four remaining practices before their spring football game on April 20. Silvio is ready to make some noise in the MIAA this upcoming year.

“Sal is a great guy with a great heart,” Stoltenberg said. “Just seeing how he treats people around him really says a lot about his character and the way he carries himself.”

Coach Scott Lewis went on to talk about Sal’s personality and what he brings to the team. “Sal truly is a joy to have around,” Lewis said. “He likes to have fun and mess around with his teammates, but also would have any of their backs any day of the week.”

UNK football has four remaining practices before their spring football game on April 20. Silvio is ready to make some noise in the MIAA this upcoming year.

“Sal is a great guy with a great heart,” Stoltenberg said. “Just seeing how he treats people around him really says a lot about his character and the way he carries himself.”

Coach Scott Lewis went on to talk about Sal’s personality and what he brings to the team. “Sal truly is a joy to have around,” Lewis said. “He likes to have fun and mess around with his teammates, but also would have any of their backs any day of the week.”

UNK football has four remaining practices before their spring football game on April 20. Silvio is ready to make some noise in the MIAA this upcoming year.
Special coverage: Food and culture in the Kearney area

Craft Brewing
The rise of breweries brings many great business to the area
Page 12

Booming Barista’s
The staple study spot for so many students, Barista’s continues to grow
Page 16
Taco truck is late-night treat

Taqueria San Judas is authentic Mexican food in Kearney

**James Rader**
JMC 416

“Gracias,” a customer says as he drops over a 50 percent tip in Jose Tapia’s tip jar. This is not an uncommon sight if you go Tapia’s place of business, a mobile taco truck called Taqueria San Judas, located off Highway 30 on the east side of Kearney.

Tapia, now in his 40s, is a Mexican immigrant living out the American dream. Tapia was born in Guanajuato, Mexico, but moved to Nebraska in his 20s searching for a better life, immediately finding a home in Kearney.

“I like this town because it’s kind of small,” Tapia said. “Not too big. Everybody is pretty nice. I love to see the same faces come back.”

After working several odd jobs, Tapia had the bright idea of cooking his home country’s food for the people of Kearney.

“When we started, there was not much Mexican food here in town. I fixed up the old truck and just started working.”

That was 12 years ago. Tapia has been doing it ever since.

“I never thought I’d own my own business like this. I never thought I’d be cooking for people like this,” said Tapia. “But I like it.”

An old 1978 RV is where Tapia began his journey. Under the business name Tacos Y Tortas, Tapia used lessons and recipes he learned from his time growing up in Mexico to feed his customers.

“I learned how to cook all of this back in Mexico, but I really do a lot more here with the business,” said Tapia.

Tapia is underselling it. His truck has a menu rivaling that of a restaurant. Tacos, tamales, tortas, tostadas, and more for people wanting standard Mexican dishes. Chiles rellenos, steak ranchero, menudo, sincronizadas, and choriquezos for people who branch out.

Tacos Y Tortas gave the people of Kearney the ability to satisfy the craving of authentic Mexican food. The business did well enough that Tapia and his family were able to open up a restaurant in Ravenna several years after starting the truck in Kearney.

Business isn’t always soaring, however. Like any business, Tacos Y Tortas saw its ups and downs.

“She works hard and it’s good, but sometimes it’s not you know?” said Tapia. “In the summer time it’s pretty good, but when the weather gets cold, it slows down.”

“It’s not uncommon to see a line waiting for tacos, tortas, burritos, and thelikes outside of Tapia’s truck in the summer months in Kearney.

“It’s my favorite part about owning my own truck, when a lot of people come. You see people waiting and it feels good you know? It feels good to make people happy. I see the faces of people coming to get their food and then when they get it. It’s nice.”

Business might slow down as the seasons change, but it sure doesn’t stop. The smiles and excitement don’t stop either. With temperatures in November now dropping into the 30s or even lower on most nights, people still come out to eat Tapia’s food.

Stay for a night at Taqueria San Judas and you’ll see a variety of people. Mothers with their newborn in a carrier, dogs accompanying their owners, friends walking from the bar across the street, designated drivers bringing in people from all over town after a night of drinking, people taking big orders to friends, and individual people just wanting some dinner.

Talk to these people and they will tell you what their favorite item on the menu. For most, it’s the tacos.

Every taco comes with choice of meat, onion, cilantro, lemon, and salsa. Meats include asada (diced steak), chorizo (Mexican sausage), lengua (tongue), pastor (pork), desebrada (shredded beef), Cabeza (cheek meat), pollo (chicken), and tripas (intestines).

A simple dish, Tapia hand cooks each taco to perfection. After ordering, you can hear the sizzle of the meat cooking while ‘Tapia gathers the tortillas and other toppings. Then, a heady scent overcomes the nose as Tapia he puts all of the ingredients together.

Talk to these people longer and they will tell you why they come. For most, it’s to satisfy a hunger with their favorite Mexican food. However, some people have additional reasons.

“I really like the guy that owns the place,” said Josh Temoshed of Kearney. “I like to eat late at night, and this is the best place to do,” said Fletcher. “Either sober or drunk, he added.

The hours of operation are what initially attracted Kearney police officer Anthony Faz while he worked nights, but it’s the food that has made Faz a regular customer for years now.

“It’s real authentic Mexican food. The tamales, the tacos, it’s all great. I don’t even know how long I’ve been coming here. Probably almost since it’s been open. Yeah, it’s been a while,” said Faz.

Talk to enough people at Taqueria San Judas and you’ll find out Faz isn’t a standout case. Almost all of the customers are repeat customers who come on a semi regular basis.

“I come a couple times a month,” said Sandra Caciano, who even brought her friend from out of town because she had never had Tapia’s tacos. “The first time I came was probably 2010, so a long time ago,” Caciano added with a
Farm-to-table movement flourishing
Central Nebraska recognizes current fresh produce trend

Rachael Fangmeier
JMC 416

Colorful peppers and textured pumpkins fill the old-fashioned metal basins that make up the aisles of Andrew's Garden shop in Kearney. Signs with farm themed sayings and jokes adorn the walls by the entry way. These items don't come from the big chains, but are created or produced by area vendors.

In the age of the farm-to-table movement, businesses are recognizing the new consumer trend. Local businesses are catering their products to meet consumer demand of local, fresh produce and meat.

"Farmer's market and buying local is kind of trendy right now," says Andrew Erickson, producer and owner for Andrew's Garden in Kearney. "The ultimate goal of the business is to give the consumer the best product that they can get. Locally grown, high quality, high nutrition. We offer fresher products, fewer days from the farm to the consumer."

Morgan Hebbert of Kearney has been shopping at Andrew's Garden before he had a store and was just a booth at Kearney's farmer's market in the old K-Mart parking lot.

"I love the fresh produce, and the prices are good," Hebbert said. "I also try to make an effort to support local businesses and when you walk in the door you can tell that it is a family effort, they take turns working and all contribute, young and old, which I really respect."

Hebbert does shop at traditional grocery stores on a weekly basis, but she also shops at the local business. She attributes her habit of supporting local business to growing-up in a small town. Her parents, both workers at local businesses, taught her to shop local to keep the money local. This idea has stuck with her.

Growing up, Hebbert's family always had fresh fruits and vegetables in the house. When she moved away from home, the habit subsided for a while. However, she has started including more fresh produce in her diet since after graduating college and entering the workforce.

"When you get older and your metabolism starts slowing down, plus you sit at work all day, the struggle is real," Hebbert said.

The in-season produce are Erickson's best sellers. Erickson grew up on a farm and grows the produce in his greenhouses. He prides himself on providing fresh, high quality produce to the Kearney community and surrounding areas.

"Our biggest thing is fresh vegetables. Tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, green beans. All the fresh vegetables in season. Everything fresh," Erickson said.

By offering fresh, local products, Erickson said the consumer is offered a choice of a high quality, better option. Since farm-to-table has made farmer's markets and buying local trendy, Erickson said this type of business can be thought of as more high-end.

"We continuously get new people that haven't heard of us, but many of the customers are returning customers," Erickson said. "The most rewarding part of the business is seeing the people, selling to the people, seeing the looks on their face and having a good discussion with them. The comradery."

Area vendors also sell their products at his store, with products including salsa, jams, jellies, popcorn, granola, taco sauce and honey. Non-food products are available as well, also from local vendors. A partnership between Erickson and other local producers allow area residents to have even more fresh, homemade, and non-processed foods. Doesn't hurt the vendors to have another place to sell their products either.

Another factor Hebbert appreciates is that the money goes to local families instead of big corporate stores.

Andrew's Garden started as a Future Farmers of America project 10 years ago where Erickson sold produce he grew in his garden, hence the name. Business was good and he added more greenhouses to keep the business going, even past his FFA days.

Now with 15 greenhouses, Erickson's business continues to grow as more people are becoming interested in knowing where their food comes from. He said the farm-to-table movement has had a huge, positive impact on his business and expects it to continue to help him grow.

Erickson's produce is also sold at Hy-Vee, so even people who don't make their way to his shop can still get the farm, fresh ingredients they want.

Andrew's Garden is not the only local business impacted by the increase in the farm-to-table movement. Matthew Fritz, part owner of Fritz's Meat in Holdrege, said the butcher shop gets their beef from Nebraska and Iowa producers.

"Our target market is basically people who want quality meat," Fritz said. "We make our own bacon, beef stick and beef jerky. We focus mainly on choice, high choice cuts of steak and we make our own hamburger."

Fritz's Meat is not a one-stop-shop where consumers can get all their groceries. Instead the store focuses on proving quality meat products that consumers know the origins of and can learn more about the production method by asking Fritz.

Photo by Rachael Fangmeier
Andrew Erickson operates Andrew's Garden, a farm-to-table produce store.

Holdrege does have a grocery store, but Fritz said he does not see them as being competitors. He said they work well with the grocery stores, and although the meat shop is small, they are good at what they do and they stay busy.

Being part of a small town, Erickson said he gets to know his customers and serve the community, which is the most rewarding part of his job.

In addition to being able to shop local and buy fresh produce and meat products, some people grew-up growing their own food, something that isn't just for farm kids. A mid-western stereotype that proves true for Mackenzie Crowder, UNK senior from Waco majoring in advertising and public relations.

Crowder's family had a garden where they raised their own produce, including: tomatoes, squash, sweet corn, potatoes, zucchini, cucumbers.

by Mackenzie Krumland the antelope

April 17, 2019 11 FARM, PAGE 15
Kearney embraces craft beer options

Thunderhead, McCues keep local brews on tap

Brett Westfall
JMC 416

Craft beer in Kearney is more than just a big named, skunky smelling, fabricated, and ordinarily domestic brew. It’s a culture within itself that more people are joining.

In an area close to the center of the consecutive 48 states in the United States, Kearney, Nebraska, has approximately 33,000 residents that are seeing an upswing of craft beer appreciation. Since 1999, Thunderhead brewery has been Kearney’s craft brewery that started during a time when craft beer wasn’t looked at by most. In June 2018, McCues taproom opened with plenty of lines that sell all Nebraska craft products, with the main emphasis on the craft beers.

McCues and Thunderhead are two huge influences in Kearney and the surrounding area have made the community proud and are now some of the best places to go for anyone that want to try something new.

Crafting beer is an interesting process that craft beer breweries allow a unique change to create products. The difference between the usual large named beers and craft beer has to do with not just the local community pride, but the ingredient changes during the process. “Most people around this area probably still prefer to drink domestic products like Busch Light but there is a growing appreciation of craft beer from the newer college generation and around that age,” said Professor Allen Thomas of the UNK Chemistry department. Professor Thomas used to teach a class dedicated to brewing beer talked about why craft beer is slowly becoming popular and how the taste of craft beer can change based on the process and it allows for greater freedom for the craft beer companies. “Certainly, places like Thunderhead Brewery and Platte Valley, who both brew their own beer, I think it introduced people to this new type of style.”

With more freedom to create new types of tastes through the brewing process, craft brew companies change the process of when ingredients can be added or boiled away depending on the type of beer that is going to be produced. “The primary difference that I am aware of for Ale’s and IPAs that are used a lot to create these new craft beers compared to the pale lager that is in big named domestics is the type of yeast,” said Thomas. “Based on temperature, the yeast can work better at depending on what is going to be produced, but there are longer processes and temperature changes for different types of beer, but primarily, it is the type of yeast used to distinguish what craft beer places use compared to big name domestic companies.”

Like all drinks, taste is an important part if a consumer is willing to buy the product as well as the color of the drink. Professor Thomas said, “There’s really only a couple of different types of barley that is used in beers and companies will cook the barley and...depending upon how long it is cooked, that’s where beers get their color from. The Flavors are coming from chemicals that are produced during the cooking process of that barley. Much like when someone cooks bread, the crust has a certain flavor to it, like a bitterness and that comes from the chemicals during the cooking process. Those main parts are pretty important during the long process in creating beer and it’s what these craft beer companies can experiment with as well as towards the end or in the beginning, they add sugars that add a little extra to the beer.”

The larger craft beer places that are well known around the Kearney area were built towards the late 1990s and even in the early 2000s. Thunderhead Brewery was one of the original businesses that continues to brew and sell their own product with rising success. Now in Axtell, Nebraska, for cheaper prices for land, less than twenty-minutes away from Kearney, Thunderhead Brewery operates and is proud to be a part of the community and the growing interest in craft beers.

“So many people have helped the spark into craft beers, I think in large part because based on the seasonal ingredients and the constant change in styles, people want something new,” said Dave Schaben, head of Thunderhead tours, a manager, and son of co-owner of Thunderhead Brewing, Trevor Schaben. “You can always try a different beer with us that isn’t just an IPA, or a lager, that have distinguished tastes. But you can’t have different a Coors Light or Bud Light because once you have them, they aren’t going to change like craft brews.”

The Thunderhead Brewing Company has a large consumer base around the state of Nebraska and now have two draft houses in Kearney and Omaha. They also serve pizza that can be paired with their many beers.

“Back when we started in 1999,” Schaben continued, “nobody made craft beer here because they were the typical ‘Bud’ drinkers or ‘Coors’ drinkers. We created the ‘Golden Frau Honey Wheat,’ which kickstarted everything at that point. We had a great opportunity to make unique beers at that time and to get someone to drink a nice, clean pilsner was hard for people out here. But with time, things are
In Lexington, food introduces culture

Lexington is home to a variety of culturally authentic restaurants

Haley Pierce
News Editor

“It’s not Kool-Aid,” Carlos Gutierrez says with a laugh while handing me a pineapple, or piña, Raspado. And it’s not. At Ruby’s Raspados, the Kool-Aid flavoring of a snow cone is replaced with the sweetness of a thick syrup.

Raspados are the traditional Mexican version of a shaved ice, but the difference doesn’t end with the syrupy flavor. “The ice is a lot thicker,” Gutierrez says, “It has to hold the thicker syrup.” Indeed, the ice is closer to crushed ice than snow, and layered on top of it is a sweet syrup made from fresh fruit, pieces of fresh fruit, and perhaps even candy.

The raspado stand tries to use the freshest fruit possible for its drinks, even if it means searching a distance away. “Sometimes it’s Texas, sometimes it’s California, sometimes it’s the HyVee in Kearney,” Gutierrez explains with a smile.

While not so common in Nebraska, raspado stands are scattered across the southwest. Though, not all raspado stands are created equal. The task of finding fresh fruit and the effort of making homemade syrups is what leads most raspado stands to modify the traditional recipes explains Gutierrez. But not at Ruby’s. “Everything we do is the traditional recipe,” Gutierrez says.

Customers will find eight traditional raspado flavors, including piña, limon, coco, fresa, vanilla, tamarindo, mango, and guayaba. Gutierrez says the mango is very popular, and so is the vanilla with white American customers. In addition, Ruby’s serves up six specialty drinks.

It’s a Saturday afternoon in early fall, and the trailer for Ruby’s Raspados is parked in the gravel lot of Lexington’s sale barn. Gutierrez’s twin boys – Jedediah and Jeremiah – are playing out front. They are 6 years old and identically dressed. While their dad is serving up raspados, I talk to them about school. They are all smiles as they tell me they “really like math class.”

For Gutierrez, the raspado business is only naturally a family affair. The business was passed down to his family from his wife’s. Now, Gutierrez’s eldest son runs the raspado stand; Gutierrez only fills in when his son is busy. “I wish I could do this full time,” he says.

Jedediah and Jeremiah are giggling when Leah Dutro pulls up.

Dutro wastes no time ordering two Megamango Locos. The specialty drink features not only fresh mango, but chili and sour punch straws. “It’s weird, but somehow it just works,” Dutro says. She is a nurse at the hospital, and she and her coworkers discovered Ruby’s Raspados after a late night shift some number of years ago. Now, Dutro, makes regular visits to the raspado stand.

But Ruby’s Raspados isn’t the only location in town Dutro dines at regularly. She and her family moved to Lexington about 20 years ago, and she has had some time to find her favorite restaurants. Standing in the parking lot, she spins in a circle – pointing to restaurants and describing the best dish at every one.

“You can’t forget fruit guy,” she says. Fruit guy? She doesn’t know his name, but he’s at the park almost every weekend – slicing and dicing the freshest fruit (and sweet corn) one can find.

I drive to the park in search of fruit guy. I can’t find him, but I take the opportunity to sit on a bench and finish my raspado. It’s sunny, but the park seems unusually busy for a day so late in the season. Entire families are at the park – moms and dads with their little kids and their teenagers too. There is a big laugh from the playground as I leave to find some of the eateries Dutro told me about.

The town of Lexington is home to about 10,000 people according to the 2010 census and over 20 ethnic restaurants and bakeries. Many of these restaurants are owned and operated by members of Lexington’s immigrant community – a community with people from Mexico, El Salvador, Somalia and Guatemala according to City Data and Data USA.

This cultural diversity is evident in the food. “Some of these restaurants are better known for the basics while others are known more for their cultural delicacies,” Erin Green, a UNK student from Lexington said. One such restaurant known for culturally specific food is El Rinconcito.

Situated along fourth street, Papuseria El Rinconcito serves up traditional Salvadoran eats, including pupusas. A pupusa is a thick tortilla dough filled with cheese, pork, beans or any combination of the three. It’s then fried and served alongside vegetables and red salsa.

Berta Recinos opened the papuseria in 1999, alongside her daughter Carla. Recinos greets me at the door. We’ve never met, but our handshake more closely resembles a hug. She tells me how she and her daughter sold pupusas to students outside of school after sports practice before quickly moving to their first restaurant location on Highway 30.

“Pepto Bismol pink” Recinos says through laughs as she recalls the color of the original building. Recinos’ family moved to Lexington in 1988 her...
different than I thought it would be,” Schaben said. “There are so many things that people don’t think about in the back-end process when drinking our beer, which is awesome, they should enjoy it, but it is sweaty, hard-work. We have to deal with what feels like every government agency that has ever been made for inspections. From city, state, county, and federal levels, there are many inspections, and so much… paperwork.”

“The family aspect and the process of finishing a good batch, knowing people will love it, is amazing,” Dave Schaben said. “I think that is what we offer, a chance to constantly change while maintaining a strong tie to the local area and family.”

In Kearney, Nebraska, downtown on the historic ‘bricks,’ a staff of over thirty people work at the Thunderhead Brewery draft house that serve an always steady customer base. “Usually, we have twenty-three tap handles in which usually only two, depending on the seasons, are guest taps,” said Layne Dowhower, Bartender of Thunderhead Brewery tap house in Kearney. “Craft beer is in a good place right now. It’s rising, the competition around Nebraska among other companies is all friendly, everyone hopes to succeed, and the actual breweries get to experiment with new stuff while their main, ‘go-to’ products are out there selling. It’s like successful, creative freedom.”

A big-name rival in Nebraska to all craft brew places is Kinkaider brewery, which, for how big the company is becoming, maintain a strong local, community tie to all of Nebraska and Thunderhead hopes to do the same. Dowhower said, “I mean we would love to be better than everyone else, who doesn’t, but everyone is cool around in this business and we may all be competitive, but we all love beer and the social setting that craft beers bring. It’s harder to drink a craft beer fast, especially if it’s for a party or something, because in here, people who drink craft beer want to relax and even just talk to someone new. It’s a strange, social thing now.”

Everyone has different opinions,” Dowhower continued, “which is why Thunderhead has almost over twenty taps at a time. As a bartender, you get to serve the beers as if they had a personality, get to know the flavors, and distinguish that taste to determine what type of person might like it if he or she are coming in for the first time with questions. People can just talk about beer, relax, and we can take care of what beers you would want based on the things you tell us. I don’t see big name places being able to adapt and change like that.”

Seeing the success of Thunderhead’s location in Kearney over the years, one block away, another, immediate successful business, McCues opened up in June 2018. Once an old grocery store for decades and before that, a previous location as a brewing warehouse, the new laid-back, rustic taproom opened with great praise.

“The four owners knew what they were doing when they opened this place up,” said Ethan Fitch, Bartender at McCues. “They have glass lines to the kegs in the big fridge in the back that go under and up into our thirty taps that we are almost always rotating because people like to drink these types of craft beers and ciders now.”

Fitch has only had five kegs that were not tapped before he had to change it since he also started back in June and it’s because he feels people want this kind of laid-back environment now more than ever. Fitch said, “Since craft breweries are smaller still, they can experiment with different hops and people like this new change. You can’t change a fixed recipe from the bigger names. There are even craft breweries popping up that aren’t distributing yet around the area that are good too and hopefully we’ll get them on the taps soon.”

All the alcohol at McCues is from Nebraska companies. The taproom primarily sells out of the craft beer. “We carry beers from all over Nebraska that people around here love,” Fitch said. “We have beers from Boiler, Kinkaider, Thunderhead, Farnam House, Prairie Pride, and even more all from around here all the way to Omaha. Everyone that like beer or even somewhat like beer come in and try the new stuff.”

Friendly competition, unique taste that comes from the process, and a happy, relaxed social setting is what has been driving the rising craft beer businesses around the Kearney community and around. With the success of Thunderhead and McCues that strictly sell craft beer and not big named domestics in an area that is still primarily dominated by the domestic beers, it should be interesting to see how big the businesses will become as craft beers continue to rise in popularity among the new generations.

Barista’s from page 16...

Barista’s from page 16...

to both people who come to study or socialize. There are numerous outlets to charge laptops and the baristas know their customers well enough to know when to chat and when to leave them alone. The booths along the wall make it easy to get in the study zone, or if you really want to chat with the baristas you can sit at the counter next to the muffins and coffee mugs.

“The atmosphere is calming, but as lively as possible. It’s kind of that good dichotomy that you need for anyone who’s here to try to find a quiet place to study or here to socialize,” said Polter. “We respect that too. If we see a customer who’s a regular and they need to get a test done for example, we’ll let them do their thing and save the chatting for later or something like that. It’s definitely interesting to see the differences in how people interact.”

Barista’s isn’t just a good place to socialize and study, it’s also a great place to get a cup of coffee. Barista’s is Gold Cup certified, which according to Castill means that a cappuccino here is the same cappuccino that you would get in Milan. “The World Barista Association says that this is how many shots, this is how much milk, that’s a latte. This is how many ounces of expresso dosed and weighed out and put into a drink. They’re the one’s who set the standards and we adhere to those standards.”

Barista’s and its baristas have won numerous awards, including the Lost Angeles Ultimate Barista Challenge and the Miami Ultimate Barista Challenge. They have also competed in many other barista competitions.

According to Polter, communication is key when trying to move quickly and efficiently. That way they can get their customers their coffee fast and the customers can get wherever they need to be.

“We’re always shouting across to each other and getting everything figured out,” said Polter. “We usually develop close enough relationships with each other that we kind of understand how each other works, and kind of play off that.”

Not to mention close enough to joke around and feed Barista’s mascots, squirrels who live right outside the drive through window. The big girl squirrel is named Gretchen, the big boy squirrel is named Charlie and a little guy they call Nacho. The baristas are excited because the squirrels have just started letting them feed them by hand. Nacho will even hold onto their hands while eating.

The most important thing to Barista’s is making sure their customers get exactly what they want in a cup of coffee.

“Sometimes you get those really particular customers who want their coffee a certain way. Which is awesome, because we want to make it that way for them, so they get the perfect cup of coffee,” said Polter. “One time, this customer came in and he wanted like a super dry cappuccino and long story short, I ended up making it three or four times before I got it. It was really frustrating for me because I wasn’t able to satisfy that need, but it helped me to grow and be a better barista. Because now I have tried to perfect that skill.”

Cruz said he believes that’s what keeps people coming back. “Just having that connection, that friendship, that relationship that you’ve built with that other person. That helps them to find comfort in coming here.”
laugh and a smile. It’s things like the smiles on peoples’ faces when they get their food that push Tapia through the slow times of the winter time in Nebraska as well as the frequent long nights he puts in cooking.

“With the truck we stay open late,” said Tapia. “Close around midnight on weekdays but stay open to 1 (am) maybe 2 (am) on Friday and Saturday because those are good business hours. People stay up late or go out late and then want their food late at night you know?”

The only exception is Sunday. Both the truck and the restaurant are closed on Sundays to allow Tapia and his family to rest, recover, and spend time together. They feel it is important to have quality family and church time as well.

Even though Tapia’s wife, son, and daughter help out with the business, most of their time is spent at the restaurant in Ravenna, so Tapia works most nights all alone in the truck.

Tapia uses these faith and family values as guiding principles in his life and his business. And his business and family have given Tapia a life most Mexican immigrants only dream of. Just this month Tapia hosted a grand opening of his new taco truck, finally moving on from the 1978 RV.

“It was kind of funny. The old motor home would break down or need repairs and customers would be calling me, ‘Where are you at? When are going to open?’” Tapia said. “But now we have the new truck.”

This new truck offers reliability, more room inside for Tapia, bigger and better menus outside for customers, and a modern aesthetic.

The new truck is still located off high Highway 30 on the east side of Kearney, but now under the same name as their family restaurant, Taqueria San Judas, paying homage to his family’s faith.

With these improvements, Tapia plans to keep the people of Kearney satisfied and smiling for a long time.

and eggplant.

“We mainly had a garden so we had something to do during the summer. It taught us responsibility and how to take care of plants. We also grew our own vegetables because feeding six people can put strain on the grocery bill,” Crowder said.

During her summers, Crowder would help hoe, pull weeds, plant and harvest. Some of the produce was raised from seed which were planted inside and transplanted into the garden later on since the plant could handle the exterior elements.

From a young age, Crowder learned responsibility and she said it is from working in the garden with her family.

“We had to take care of it every day or if we let it go, that would just be more work for tomorrow. Also, nothing beats homegrown vegetables,” Crowder said.

Even though she doesn’t live at home to help with the garden anymore, Crowder still gets vegetables from her parents. However, their garden got hauled out this year so there is a limited amount to bring home to Kearney.

Some people take for granted knowing where their produce comes from, but Crowder said it is important to know and understand where food comes from and the production methods behind it all. By understanding the production methods, the consumer has a greater appreciation of their food and are more confident in their choices.

“Gardening is not that hard, you can do it yourself. Just take the chance to grow your own produce and save some money,” Crowder said. “You can’t beat the taste and you know where it came from and that no harmful pesticides are still on the produce. If it comes from a small farm or somewhere local, you know it’s fresh and the quality and taste will be good. When it comes from a mass producer, the taste is usually blander and not as high quality.”

daughter Julia explained, and at the time of its opening, Recinos’ pink papuseria was just one of two ethnic restaurants in town.

However, while the food was good, El Rinconcito didn’t always attract non-Hispanic customers. “They were scared they’d walk in there, and nobody would speak English,” Julia said. So, in 2017, El Rinconcito relocated to fourth street and a former flower shop. “Now, white Americans, the Chinese, even Somalis come in,” Julia added.

Indeed, food is one way culture is shared in Lexington. “It amazes me how individuals of different cultures can come together just by placing food on the table,” Green said. “We can gather to eat in family owned and operated restaurants offering amazing, culturally-specific food and all enjoy different parts of the meal but come away with a new respect for the culture,” she added.

And at El Rinconcito, the sharing of culture doesn’t end with the food. Berta Recinos runs the restaurant with her husband Enrique, who has taken it upon himself to decorate the new location.

The lower half of the walls are covered in wood paneling – paneling that Enrique has carved and painted with parakeets, flowers, and a sunrise. “He does it all by hand” Julia said.

Green sees how food is used to introduce people to other cultures. “Really, food is the bridge between cultures in Lexington,” she said.

This link between food and culture might be part of the reason the restaurant owners take such pride in their businesses. Recinos explains excitedly how the health department not only always gives her business passing marks but it always adds praise for the cleanliness and orderliness of her papuseria.

Just down the street at La Vazquez Market, a similar pride in one’s work can be found. “To own my own business – that’s the dream,” says Gerardo Vazquez.

He opened the grocery store in 2000, and three years ago, he expanded his business into the next-door restaurant by opening a meat market. Now, he and his eldest daughter run the store, Vazquez said. But the family ties don’t end there. Throughout the store, pictures of Vazquez and his children at soccer games are hung proudly. One of his youngest daughters runs about.

Again, the sharing of culture is evident at the market. Papel picados – perforated paper décor – hangs from the ceiling. Vazquez is also stocking products from Mexico and Central America. “There’s a lot of different people,” Vazquez says of Lexington’s population, adding he tries to serve them all. At La Vazquez Market, one can find goods from Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Cuba, and more recently, Somalia explained Vazquez.

Serving these populations extends beyond placing products on shelves too. La Vazquez Market is the type of place where a poster hangs on the wall as a “cheat sheet” for calculating the exchange of the Honduran Lempira into the U.S. Dollar. It’s also the kind of place where posters hang on the wall that read “Gracias a nuestros clientes,” or “thank you to our customers” with pictures from opening day – August 12, 2000.

As I’m leaving the grocery store, I notice choco bananos – chocolate covered frozen bananas. I mention that a friend has told me how great they are. Vasquez’s daughter hands me two. They won’t let me pay.
At Barista’s Daily Grind, they work hard to make atmosphere welcoming

Jessica Moser  
JMC 416

As soon as you walk through the door at Barista’s Daily Grind the smell of coffee engulfs you. Like when you come home to the smell of the apple pie your mom just baked or the roast you’ve left simmering in the crock pot all day. You can barely get three steps in before every barista has said “hi” or “welcome back”, each of them raising their voices to be heard over the sounds of friendly conversation, blenders and the espresso machine.

The baristas know their customers and if they don’t know you, they want to.

“We have a wide range of customers. You have the very habitual customers who always come in at the same time and get the same drink,” said barista Jared Polter, a senior advertising and public relations major from Kearney. “It’s really fun to kind of get to know their schedules and have their drink ready for them. I definitely notice when customers don’t come in one day or if they mix it up. And then we have customers who aren’t as traditional and who come in rarely or we have travelers. It’s really interesting to meet that variety.”

Many of the barista’s are students at the University of Nebraska at Kearney. According to Polter, Barista’s tries to hire younger college students. “It’s really fun to kind of get to know their schedules and have their drink ready for them. I definitely notice when customers don’t come in one day or if they mix it up. And then we have customers who aren’t as traditional and who come in rarely or we have travelers. It’s really interesting to meet that variety.”

Barista’s customers notice the baristas dedication to their customers and that’s part of what keeps them coming back. “They’re all really great people who work here,” said River Mefferd, a freshman undecided major from Kearney. “That’s a really big part of why I come here as often as I do, is because I get along with them. I can talk to them. I’ve been coming to Barista’s for years, so I’ve gotten to know a lot of the people who work here.”

Another thing that keeps customers coming back to Barista’s is the friendly environment and welcoming atmosphere. “Everyone here is friendly and welcoming. They’re Nebraska nice, so I guess that’s another benefit to being a café in Nebraska,” said barista Moi Castill, a senior education major from Gibbon.

The beige walls, light wooden tables and chairs add a charming small town feel to Barista’s. Dark brown couches and chairs invite customers to relax and enjoy the smell of coffee beans that permeates the room. Accents like a chessboard, bookshelves, mirrors and paintings give Barista’s a homey atmosphere. But it’s really the customers and baristas that make Barista’s atmosphere so welcoming.

“So I don’t have a car, I just walk or bike around town. There’s been probably a dozen times when I’ve been walking to work and someone will pull up and be like ‘hey do you need a ride? Are you going to work?’ and I’ll be like yeah,” barista Moi Castill says about the customers at Barista’s. “They’ll be like ‘cool, cool, cool.’ And I’m like, I’ll buy your coffee, don’t you worry. Those things happen to me. It’s nice, it’s a good place and it brings people together.”

“I really do like the atmosphere that Barista’s has,” said Cruz. “An atmosphere can invite so many different things. So, there’s a certain level of energy that the place has with customers and coworkers and with the job. Making coffee drinks is really, really awesome. But, if we didn’t have that atmosphere, it wouldn’t be as fun.”

The atmosphere at Barista’s caters...