

Inquiry uncovers ‘dirt’ on mound

Students, teachers question plan for piles of dirt

BY KYLEA GARDNER
Assistant Editor

“It’s going to be a new school!”
“No, it’s going to be a softball field!”
“It’s definitely going to be a new practice field for the football players.”
Opinions have varied widely about a growing mound of black fill located behind the junior high building. Dump trucks have been unloading all semester with an occasional timeout to level

what appears to be the ever-expanding pad of topsoil.
“Guesses have ranged anywhere from a new school, to a swimming pool, to a shooting range,” Superintendent Shane Fields said. “But as of right now it’s nothing more than a mound of dirt.”
Speculation has been running rampant through the halls as the mounds of dirt began to pile up, and though many people believe that they have the answer to the mystery, there really isn’t a mystery at all.
“The dirt is not being used for anything,” Fields said. “It’s just landfill. That area has a rather large drop off and we used the dirt to level the space to reduce the chances of flooding



Superintendent Shane Fields poses in front of the mysterious dirt mounds located behind the high school. Speculation has continued to pile up among students and teachers since the mounds began arriving last spring. PHOTO BY KYLEA GARDNER

near the baseball field and batting cages.”
Although people have heard the reasoning behind why the soil has been dumped, they still ques-

tion where it came from.
“The school administration has always been good friends with the City of Albany, and this past summer they dug out a

tank at the golf course and needed somewhere to dump all of the dirt, so we agreed to let them dump it

SEE “DIRT” Pg. 8

“Dirt”

Continued from | PG 1

on our land,” Fields said. “The city has been doing all the work, as far as dumping and leveling the ground.”
Many people, including teachers and students, have found themselves wondering what the growing mound of fill dirt will be used for.
“Lots of people have been talking about it being used for a new school or a softball practice field,” high school coach and special education teacher Sara Wilson said. “But I don’t know anything

about it, that’s just what I’ve heard.”
Junior Alexis Munden has also heard theories as to what its use will be.
“Lots of people were walking around saying that our school was going to start a soccer program and that was going to be the field,” Munden said. “I knew that was just a rumor from the second that I heard it because there would be no reason for a small school like Albany to have a soccer team.”
Science teacher Andre Raymond had a more comical take on the situation.
“When they first started dumping the dirt, all of the kids in my classes

kept asking me what it was being used for, and I told them that it was just dirt that was leveling out the ground, but they wouldn’t accept that answer,” Raymond said. “Anytime I answered them, they would say something like, ‘but what do you really think it is?’ and so I told them what they wanted to hear.”
Raymond had his own spin on the soil that isn’t quite as typical as assuming that it’s a new school.
“It is the makings of the ‘Norton-Raymond Science Lab,’” Raymond joked. “There will be a Norton Wing and a Raymond Wing, and the center will be used for storage.

There is also no reason for the children to fear bad weather because the Norton-Raymond science lab will have escalator stairs leading to an underground tram where the kids will be able to get to the science lab without having to go brave the weather.”
Raymond laughed stating that is the answer he gives when the truth isn’t good enough.
Although many people still question the purpose of the fill and will continue to for a while, Fields has finally provided an answer. It is just a pile of dirt that there is no real use for right now. Or so he says...

Students hunt for souls, adventure

Teens travel to South Africa, Rwanda, Belize

BY PARKER MOON
Staff Writer

Laughter, joy, and love filled the air last summer as local students participated in a variety of mission and vacation trips around the world.
Seniors Curry Wilson, Drew Neece, Caleb Masters, and freshman Caroline Masters travelled to Belize in July on a mission trip, along with 34 others making the trip with the goal of helping others.
“The purpose of the trip was to spread the word about Christ to a country that is less fortunate than us,” Caleb Masters said.
The six-day trip included a children’s Vacation Bible School, a doctor who prescribed eyeglasses and sunglasses, and a sports camp that taught local children how to play American football and basketball. Other volunteers helped rebuild and paint a church.
“Building the church was cool,” Caroline Masters said. “The people were amazed to see us doing something that they do on a regular basis.”
Caroline’s father, Brian Masters, also participated in the journey not only to help with the building project, but also to baptize converts. Brian is a deacon at Elliott Street Church of Christ in Breckenridge and is in charge of the youth ministry there.
“For me, baptizing the children was life changing,” he said. “Knowing that you had a major part in their lives and helped them start their life with Jesus was awesome.”
Masters baptized a total of six people while he was there.
“Watching the people there get baptized, turning their lives to Christ and knowing that we helped them do that, was the highlight,” Neece said.
While there, Wilson said that they traveled to the Caribbean Sea where a man took off his shirt and explained that he was



Junior Madison Brown (left) helps women in Rwanda mold mud bricks to be used to the rebuild a house for a man in need. Brown and five others left for the two-week mission trip in mid-June. The trip was sponsored by First Baptist Church of Albany. The church is planning another trip to Africa during spring break. PHOTO PROVIDED BY THOMAS ALY



Seniors Curry Wilson and Drew Neece (left) speak to a group of children on their mission trip to Belize. Seventh grader Hannah Trail (top) poses with trophy kudu in South Africa last summer. PHOTOS BY TAMMY MASTERS AND TAMARA TRAIL

wanting to get baptized for all the wrong doings he had done earlier in life. He said that he was part of the wrong crowd, such as gangs who did drugs and other bad things.
When the man took off his shirt, he had scars on his back from being stabbed twenty times while he was sleeping. That incident changed his perspective of life.
“To get to the Caribbean Sea,” Wilson said “you had to

travel down a road that was not maintained with pot holes and power lines in the middle of the road.”
On the last day, volunteers were able to go shopping, snorkeling, or swimming in the sea.
“It was nice to get involved in the culture and meet new people,” Wilson said. “I would definitely do it again in a heart beat.”
There were other mission trips during the summer including one to Rwanda attended by Madison

Brown and five others.
Like most mission trips, the two-week trip was to share the word of God to people, but for Madison it was a deeper experience.
“For me, it was connecting with God and reaching out to others,” Brown said. “The highlight of the trip was knowing the impact I had on the people over there.”
While there, the group sponsored by First Baptist Church

of Albany, made mud bricks, fed street kids, and held church services.
“We built mud bricks to help a man rebuild his house who lost everything during the genocide,” Brown said.
Various speakers spread the word during church services.
“There was already a preacher over there that we met up with,” Brown said. “Thomas Aly helped out with the church services too, mainly trying to teach them about purity because they weren’t really taught that part of the Bible.”
Brown said she would love to go back again to help others and enjoy the culture.
For a hunter, going to Africa would be a hunt of a lifetime. Most hunters don’t get to go until later in life, but for one-seventh grader, dreams became a reality early.
Hannah Trail traveled to South Africa in July for a 10-day trip with family and friends. The trip consisted of hunting, hanging around the fire, and enjoying views of the landscape.
“The trip was really cool because we got to hunt a lot of animals, eat weird food, and hang out with a bunch of friends,” Trail said.
From a hunter’s standpoint, Trail said she had a successful hunt, killing an ostrich, zebra, and a kudu that had big swirly horns.
“There was a lot of excitement coming from my mom, dad, and sisters when I shot my animals,” Trail said.
With all of the animals to see, places to be, and friends to hang out with, Trail was most happy when with friends and family.
“I had a lot of fun with all my friends, and we got a lot closer to each other during the 10 days,” Trail said. “It was also fun to see what animals they shot, and to see the excitement between them and the family.”
“Also, while we were all driving around in the Jeep, we got three feet away from a lion,” Trail said.
The summer wasn’t just fun and games. It included fellow students taking time to go help others and teach others about God, while others grew closer to friends.

Cheerleading: The other side of the megaphone

Students share the inside story

BY KYLEA GARDENER
Assistant Editor

The sight of perfect-looking young cheerleaders under the Friday night lights can be deceptive. Cheerleading is an often underappreciated activity that in reality requires many hours of work and dedication.

Like many other sports, cheerleading takes up multiple hours of a student's time.

"Every week I spend 30 minutes to an hour planning a pep rally, and then we have morning cheer practice every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings from 7:15 to 7:45 a.m., as well as practicing during tutorials on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday," head cheerleader Curry Wilson said. "I also learn new material over the weekend and send videos of it to the other cheerleaders so they can be prepared when they get to practice."

Junior Alexis Munden also spends a majority of her time cheering.

"I would have to say that about six hours or so of my week consists of doing cheer-related things; whether it is learning material or doing pep rallies or cheering at games, most of my time is dedicated to cheer," Munden said.

Fellow junior and varsity cheerleader Sydney Key explained that homecoming week is much more time-consuming than a

regular week of cheer.

"During homecoming week, we basically spend every available hour, and if there are no conflicts, we spend every night in the gym having cheer practice," Key said. "We spend a lot of time perfecting our routines, stunts, and dances, and then we spend two to three hours the night before decorating the gym for the pep rally."

A couple of the cheerleaders spend extra time participating in competitive cheerleading as well as school-related cheer.

"I spend a lot of time during the week cheering for the school, but I also spend a lot of time being involved in competitive cheer and dance," junior Kaleigh Clevenger said. "I spend about four and a half hours a week doing competitive cheer, so it makes for a very busy schedule."

The group expressed that there are pros and cons to being a cheerleader.

"The hardest thing about being a cheerleader is that you are obligated to stay positive at all times, even when things go wrong," Key said. "But the best thing is all of the young kids who look up to you, because I used to be the kid looking up to the varsity cheerleaders, and now I am the person they're looking up to, so that's really cool."

Clevenger also shared the hardest and most rewarding aspects of cheering.

"It's hard to learn new material every week and get it perfected before the pep rally, plus juggling homework, sports, after school practices, and



Junior Kaleigh Clevenger prepares to dismount during a pep rally (top), while cheerleaders Alexis Munden and Curry Wilson (L to R, below) lead the crowd in a cheer. The squad spends 4-5 hours a week practicing performance routines.

PHOTOS BY
KYLEA GARDNER



games," Clevenger said. "Getting to be on the sidelines cheering for the boys and getting to bond with the squad are the best parts of cheering."

Wilson shared the struggles of being head cheerleader.

"Getting organized and getting everyone on the same page for pep rallies is sometimes really frustrating because it never seems like we're prepared enough," Wilson said. "People always say 'its only high school cheerleading,' but you would be surprised by how many people actually care."

The squad agreed that it takes more than just a pretty face to be able to succeed as a cheerleader.

"You have to be happy and cheerful at all times, and you are expected to be a role model for all of the kids that look up to you," Key said. "It's sometimes stressful to be held to higher standards, but it's so worth it to be able to cheer."

Clevenger added that patience helps.

"The number one thing is that you absolutely have to have good leadership abilities, and lots of patience is also important," Clevenger said.

Wilson said that there are many expectations, especially for a head cheerleader.

"I feel like you have to have a whole lot of time on your hands, especially as a head cheerleader," Wilson said. "You need a great attitude because a lot of people look up to you, and you need thick skin because there are people who complain to you and tell you that you're not doing

a good job. You also need to be a good representative of Albany and show school spirit not only for football but for every sport."

Munden thinks that cheerleaders must be fearless in order to be successful.

Stereotypes can also come into play.

"If I could say anything to the people who judge us, I would just say that we are normal people who enjoy cheerleading," Key said. "We really don't look down on anyone despite the fact that they think we do."

Munden had similar thoughts.

"Many people have their mind made up that all cheerleaders are snobbish and look down upon other people, but we really don't," Munden said. "We don't cheer for the prestige of it; we cheer because we enjoy it, and we love to support the football team."

Wilson addressed the idea that cheerleaders don't work hard.

"People think that we don't work hard, but we put in lots of extra time that we don't get credit for," Wilson said. "People don't understand that we get here early and stay late. It's literally like a job, and we are very underappreciated. People don't see all of the extra things that we do, but we do it because we love to cheer and we love to support the athletes."

Despite the hardships and judgment, all of the cheerleaders agreed that cheer was one of the most rewarding extracurricular activities that they have been involved in throughout their high school careers.

Volleyball sets up for new season

Lady Lions improve during pre-season

BY MICHAEL COTTER
Sports Editor

With district play now underway, the Lady Lions are serving up a young team of competitors who are looking for a successful season that extends into the playoffs.

"Everything we are working on this year is wrapped up into the word 'compete'," head volleyball coach Kimberly Hill said. "We know we will play teams who have more girls, who are bigger, and maybe even more talented. However, our goal is to work hard and out-work every team we face."

The team has played bigger schools this year to prepare for post-season competition.

"We are working hard and playing tough teams right now to prepare for later," Hill said. "We have already had some ups and downs this season, but the girls are improving every week."

Although there are five varsity returners, the team still consists of a wide range of classes.

"Our younger girls have

shown maturity this season," Hill said. "Rylie Scott is very consistent and composed, and she gives us a setter we can lean on."

With a young team, upper-classman play an important role.

"The seniors have really stepped up this season," sophomore Rylie Scott said. "They've continued to improve and encourage the underclassmen and provide a good example."

Despite having girls from three classes on the varsity squad, the team has come together.

"All the girls are really selfless and have a team attitude," senior Tobin Nall said. "We are like a big family, and we really get along well. We love playing together."

Returning several players does give the coach some freedom in changing things up.

"We are running a lot of different sets and hitting schemes this season," Hill said. "It has allowed us to extend rallies and attack from all angles."

Even though the team has good chemistry, they seem to struggle sometimes with consistency.

"We have got to find some rhythm and get off this roller coaster we seem to be on," Hill said. "Our serving has got to become more consistent, and we

need to finish a little stronger."

Similar to last season, the girls will have one major opponent in district.

"Hawley is going to be a challenge just like last year," Scott said. "I think we are going

to take this momentum into district and leave with a district championship."

Along with a district title, the girls also aspire to higher goals.

"I believe we have a shot to make a run this year," Nall said.



Junior Rachel Hill goes up for the kill over the hands of Knox City blockers in the first district game on Sat. Sept. 12. The girls won in four sets, and then went on to defeat Woodson in three. Albany is expected to battle Hawley for the district title later in the district 6-2A race.

PHOTO BY
NOLAN DAVIS

Safety concerns hover over students

New tech items reach greater heights

BY NOLAN DAVIS
Staff Writer

Hoverboards and drones, this year’s top Christmas gifts, have become a top safety concern for teenagers and adults alike. To combat safety concerns, laws and rule changes have been made for these items.

Hoverboards are two-wheeled devices that are stood on to ride, made by a number of companies and ranging in price from \$250 to \$500. Controversy surrounds the machines because officials don’t know if the hoverboards should be considered a registered vehicle or not.

A new California law states that a hoverboard rider must be 16 years or older, must wear a helmet, and can only drive on streets where the speed limit is under 35 mph.

Hoverboards have also recently been banned from New York City streets since they are motor vehicles that cannot be registered by the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Drones, another popular item this Christmas, are flown remotely and sometimes have a camera mounted onto them. Since they can fly anywhere, drones have received restrictions for their owners.

The Federal Aviation Administration has received a list of all U.S. owners of remote-controlled devices to be registered. Near crashes between drones and aircraft, such as passenger planes, has become a major concern now that drones are widely available. Restrictions for the drones include only flying below 400 feet, steering clear of and not interfering with manned aircraft missions, not flying within five miles of an airport unless specific permission is obtained from the airport, and not flying near people or stadiums.

Hoverboards have become very popular lately.

“I don’t have a hoverboard,”

sophomore Chase Hill said. “One of my friends got one for Christmas though, and I go to his house and we ride it frequently.”

Hoverboards have become well-known around the world because many videos of hoverboards have been posted on social media.

“I’ve learned about hoverboards because I saw them on social media,” freshman Cutter Edgar said. “I thought they were cool, so I got one for Christmas.”

Hoverboards can be hard to ride since there are no handlebars.

“When I first got on my hoverboard, it took me a while to figure it out,” Edgar said. “Now that I have ridden it a lot, I am a master.”

Hoverboards are also tough to balance on, according to Hill.

“The hoverboard I rode was tricky to figure out at first,” Hill said. “I had to hold onto someone or something at first so I wouldn’t fall. I never fell off of the board, but I ran into things.”

Even with new laws in place regarding hoverboards, their popularity continues to soar.

“I think that hoverboards are getting so popular now because people think that they look cool when they ride them around,” Hill said. “Once you get the hang of riding them, they are also just fun and easy to ride.”

Riding the boards can bring a feeling of elation, according to Edgar.

“When I ride my hoverboard, I feel like I’m on top of the world,” Edgar said. “It makes me feel like I’m flying.”

One disadvantage about hoverboards is that there is not always a good place or time to ride.

“I normally ride my friend’s hoverboard when I am hanging out with my friends,” Hill said. “I have ridden it many times.”

Riding hoverboards can also be relaxing.

“When I’m stressed or trying to think, I ride my hoverboard,” Edgar said.

As hoverboards become more popular, many wonder if everyone will have them in the near future.

“I don’t think that everyone in



Freshman Cutter Edgar (top) rides past a group of friends on his hover board during the tutorial period. Some laws have been made prohibiting children under the age of 16 to operate the boards. Senior Drew Neece (above) flies his drone in his living room. Neece received his drone as a Christmas gift. PHOTOS BY NOLAN DAVIS

Albany will get a hoverboard,” Hill said. “In Albany the roads are bumpy, so there’s not really any good places to ride.”

Other people feel differently.

“I think that everyone in the world will have hoverboards,” Edgar said. “They are so much fun to ride that most people will want them.”

Even though it is a law in some states, all hoverboard riders don’t always wear helmets when riding.

“I’m not going to wear a helmet,” Hill said. “I would look dumb and my friends would make fun of me.”

Others rely on their riding ability to protect them.

“I’m good at riding my hoverboard, so I don’t really think that I need a helmet,” Edgar said.

Instead of hovering on land, other students are taking to the skies.

“I got a drone for Christmas,” senior Drew Neece said. “It can fly and take pictures with a camera that is attached to it.”

Drones can be used for photography or just having fun, but they can also be used for surveying land and science experiments.

“I just use my drone to fly around and have fun,” Neece said.

Drones don’t have to be flown outdoors.

“I flew my drone in my house, and it was pretty cool,” Neece said.

While fun, drones can be unpredictable.

“When I first got my drone,” Neece said, “I immediately flew it into a tree. So there is a learning curve.”

At school, hoverboards are not allowed to be ridden inside the school or on school grounds. Students can ride them to school and ride them back home, but that is all.

Drones are not allowed unless a student has permission to fly one for educational benefit.