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bison alumni newsletter

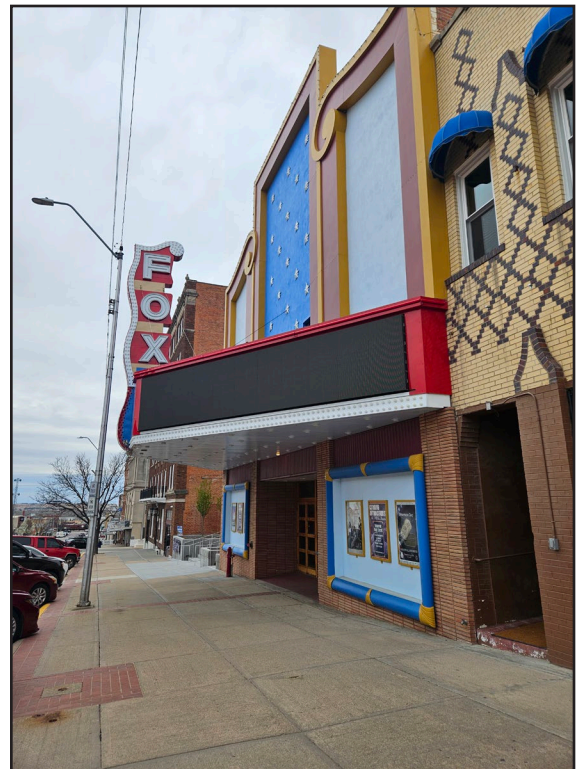
spring 2025 vol. 64

Congratulations to the 2025 MHS graduates!
You are now Bison Alumni

McCook Moving Forward



New McCook signs can be seen at the entrances to town



The Historic Fox Theatre had its marquee and signage revamped with new LED lights to shine bright on the bricks of McCook

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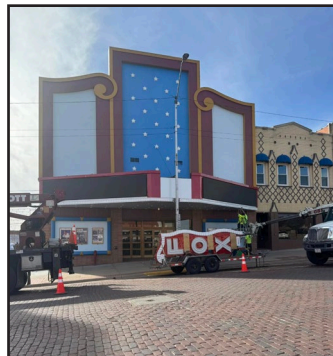


Photo Credit: McCook News Now



The Bison Alumni Newsletter exists to keep McCook High School alumni connected to one another and to McCook. It is published biannually in the spring and fall. It is emailed and posted to www.bisonalumni.com

Did you know you can donate to the Bison Alumni Newsletter online? It's easy.

1. Go to: <https://www.nebcommfound.org/give/mccook-community-foundation-fund/> and click on the red button "Donate to this fund," then click on Bison Alumni Newsletter.
2. Scroll to the bottom to select an amount provided, or type in a custom amount.
3. Type in your contact information, then you can enter your credit or debit card numbers. Voila! Donation made! (And you saved yourself a stamp!)

Have you registered on www.bisonalumni.com yet? If not, please do so today! It's like an online reunion. We currently have more than 2,000 alumni registered at this site.

Have you moved, changed phone numbers, or changed your last name? Please update your information on the website so your classmates can find the most current information.

Do you have a new email address or can't get into your account? E-mail Tori at mccookbisonalumni@gmail.com or write to Bison Alumni Newsletter, P.O. Box 665, McCook, NE 69001

Connect with us on Facebook! Search Bison Alumni Newsletter-McCook NE High School Alumni.

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Note from BAN Editor

Hello everyone!

I hope this newsletter finds you well! I'm so excited for you to read the great things that your fellow alumni have been up to.

This spring will be a busy one for me personally as my husband and I welcome our third baby boy sometime in May. We are so excited!

That does mean that I will be on maternity leave for most of the summer. But if you need help with the website or anything else, please still send me an email via the 'Contact Us' button on the website or by emailing mccookbisonalumni@gmail.com. I'll get back to you as soon as I can!

I know that many classes have reunions planned for this summer and for Heritage Days 2025. Hopefully, you all have a wonderful time catching up with your classmates!

Please send us any class reunion pictures you have after the fun is over. Everyone loves to see who was there and what you guys did.

As always, if you have any questions, concerns, or story ideas, I would also love to hear from you! You can email me at mccookbisonalumni@gmail.com.

Until next time,

-Tori



Option For Printed BAN Subscription

By **Ronda Graff** for the McCook Community Foundation Fund

Do you like the Bison Alumni Newsletter? Do you enjoy having a paper copy in your hands? Do you think others might enjoy a paper version of BAN for themselves?

Well, you are in luck. This fall, BAN plans to launch the subscription service for the twice/yearly newsletter. For a suggested \$20 yearly donation (more is always welcomed), a full-color, printed copy of BAN will arrive in your actual mail box at your home or office.

Three years ago, the McCook Community Foun-

dation Fund, which has the sub-account for BAN, began paying to have printed copies available around the community. Perhaps you have seen them around McCook at various locations where people sit and have time to read.

With those copies available, we have heard from others that they would like a printed version for themselves. While everyone will still have access to the email version of BAN, the printed option will soon be available, with the Fall 2025 copy. To keep costs down, at least 200 copies need to be printed and mailed of each edition.

Consider a copy for yourself, for family mem-

bers as a Christmas gift, or for friends as a birthday gift. Some McCook classes even print off for their entire class as a way of staying connected. If this is something that interests you, visit the MCFF website at mccookfoundation.org to find the link to make a contribution. Or you can send a check to BAN Subscription, Box 525, McCook NE 69001.

Please include the name of the recipient(s), address and an email or phone number if we need to contact you.

For more information or with questions, please visit the MCFF website at mccookfoundation.org or contact MCFF coordinator Ronda Graff at

308.340.3412 or mcf-fund@gmail.com.

In the meantime, enjoy this copy of the Bison Alumni Newsletter and stay in touch with your hometown.



COLFER, WOOD, LYONS & WOOD LAWYERS

Tom Colfer ('28)
(1910-1999)

Dal Wood ('48)
(1930-2005)

Phil Lyons ('74)

Paul M. Wood ('80)

Emily M. Wood ('11)

P.O. Box 100 I 124 West C, McCook I 308.345.5063
FAX 308.345.2426 I cwlwlaw@gmail.com



High Plains Historical Society Museum of the High Plains

Museum is open Tuesday - Friday 1 - 5pm
and Saturday 11am - 3pm.

Alumni are encouraged to come see what's new!

Space can also be rented for class reunions.

Phone 308-345-3661 for details or to reserve a date.

The Garrett House



The Garrett House, located at 1001 Norris Ave., McCook, NE is available to rent on a short term basis for weekend getaways, reunions, showers, small parties, etc. The home features 7 bedrooms with 1 King bed, 2 Queen beds, 6 Twin beds, 3 futons, and 3 bathrooms. To book your stay at The Garrett House call Golden Plains Realty 308-345-4108 or Melanie Goodenberger at 308-345-7709.

House call Golden Plains Realty 308-345-4108 or Melanie Goodenberger at 308-345-7709.

FROM MCCOOK TO THE PARALYMPICS 2024

AN ALUM'S JOURNEY ACROSS THE GLOBE

Monica Gillen (Johnson) ('97) has taken quite the journey from McCook High School to the global stage of the Paralympics, and it is nothing short of inspiring. Her path has been shaped by faith, family, and an unwavering dedication to her career.

After graduating, Johnson discovered a deep-rooted faith that guided her through life's challenges and triumphs. She gained experience in retail management, developing a love for sales, leadership, and team-building. Her passion for helping others led her to pursue higher education in business and massage therapy, ultimately launching a successful career in sports massage.

In 2015, Johnson began practicing massage therapy in Omaha, Nebraska. Recently, she and her family made the decision to return to McCook to be closer to her parents and siblings.

Family remains at the heart of her life—she and her husband, have four children, ranging in age from 9 to 27. Their eldest now resides in Omaha with his wife and is expecting a child. Their



22-year-old daughter recently followed them back home and found a place in McCook. Their 20-year-old son lives in Omaha, and their 9-year-old is thriving here in their hometown of McCook.

Johnson's journey to the Paralympics started in the world of competitive swimming. She began working with a club swim team in Omaha and had the incredible opportunity to attend the Olympic Swim Trials in 2021 alongside the coaching staff and five qualifying athletes.

This pivotal experience led her to apply for a sports massage position with Auburn University's

Swim and Dive team in 2022, where she has been contracting ever since.

Her expertise and growing reputation opened doors to new opportunities. In March 2023, she joined a rotation at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, followed by a role with USA Swimming in August of the same year. Most recently, she worked with Arizona University at the Pac-12 conference in February 2024.

Initially, Johnson was offered an alternate position for the Paralympic Games, a role that still required extensive training and preparation even though it wasn't a guarantee that she would be needed.

During this time, she devoted herself to daily prayer for her family and hoped for the opportunity to officially attend the Games. In a remarkable moment of fate, she was officially invited to serve as a Team USA Massage Therapist in August 2023—a moment she describes as overwhelming and deeply emotional.

Working with Team USA Sports Medicine was an extraordinary

experience for Johnson.

The rigorous pre-Games training ensured she was well-prepared upon arrival in Paris. She was stationed at the High Performance Center near the Team USA Welcoming Experience facility, where athletes and staff received gear from top sponsors like Nike, Ralph Lauren, Procter & Gamble, and FIGS.

Johnson was part of an elite Sports Medicine team, which included athletic trainers, a chiropractor, a sports physician, an orthopedic surgeon, and a sports psychiatrist. The team alternated between day and evening shifts, but also had time to explore the vibrant city of Paris.



Some highlights of Johnson's time off included attending Hillsong Paris Church, embarking on a guided city tour, taking a croissant-making class (her personal favorite!), visiting the Team USA House, and witness-



ing a para-taekwondo match at the Grand Palais. Navigating the city was an adventure in itself, as she relied primarily on the metro, with Uber as a backup when needed.

She also spent time working at the Athlete's Village, where the majority of athletes were housed.

The Village buzzed with energy, and Johnson took in all the sights, including a visit to the Village Post Office, where she had her picture



printed onto a set of international stamps—an unforgettable souvenir!

Among all the incredible moments Johnson experienced in Paris, one stands out above the rest. Upon arrival, she and her colleagues received packets of collectible pins to trade with people from different countries. These pins, highly valued as symbols of international unity, became an unexpected source of joy.

One day, while riding the metro, she noticed a young boy about her son's age standing nearby with his parents. Though Team USA members were advised not to wear their official clothing outside of training centers to avoid drawing attention, Johnson felt compelled to share a pin with the boy. His face lit up with joy, a simple yet profound reminder of how a small act of kindness can leave a lasting impact.

The pin, which displayed both the USA and French flags along with the Paralympic symbol, represented more than just a souve-



nir—it was a symbol of goodwill and international friendship.

Her time at the Paralympics reaffirmed what the Olympic and Paralympic Games are truly about: uniting people from all nations in a spirit of peace and camaraderie. Johnson's journey from McCook to Paris is a testament to hard work, faith, and the power of pursuing one's passions.

With her dedication and heart for service, the future looks bright for this remarkable professional, and her story will no doubt continue to inspire for years to come.



McCook's Dream of an Inclusive Playground Becomes Reality

Exciting news is coming to McCook as the long-awaited dream of an inclusive playground is now within reach!

Thanks to the unwavering generosity of the community, nearly \$1 million has been raised to install an accessible play area at Kelley Park by the end of the year.

The ambitious fundraising goal of \$925,100 seemed daunting when first dreamed up three years ago by local occupational therapist Mariah Pierson. But partnered up with others such as Kacee Samway (Karr) ('17), Pierson began to see McCook work its magic.

Word spread and donations poured in through community contributions, grants, and city support, allowing the project to move forward at an incredible pace.

Inspired by similar parks in other communities and motivated by

personal connections—her sister, mother, and niece all have physical limitations—Pierson saw a need for a space where children of all abilities could play without barriers. Soon, a dedicated committee of community members formed, and the project took off.

While McCook boasts wonderful parks, many present obstacles for individuals with mobility challenges. The current playgrounds often include ramps that cannot accommodate wheelchairs or surfaces like sand that make accessibility difficult. The goal of this project is to eliminate these barriers, creating an environment where children, parents, grandparents, and caregivers can enjoy playtime together.

The new playground at Kelley Park will replace outdated equipment that is over 20 years old and beyond repair. Some

salvageable pieces will be relocated to Barnett Park.

One key reason for choosing Kelley Park as the site is its existing accessibility features, including restrooms with changing tables. Additional donations will go toward installing an adult changing table, further expanding accessibility for older children and adults.

The playground's design will feature a rubberized surface for easy navigation with wheelchairs,

strollers, and walkers.

Planned play structures include a wheelchair-accessible swing, ramps to multiple activity areas, and an inclusive merry-go-round. A communication board will also be installed to help non-verbal children express their needs, whether they want to play on specific equipment or request a restroom break.

City officials have played a vital role in making this project a



reality, with the city budgeting \$50,000 toward the playground. Public Works Director Kyle Potthoff ('86), City Manager Nate Schneider ('93), and Assistant City Manager Tera Loop (Koetter) ('94) have been instrumental in supporting the project, along with many community members and organizations.

Special recognition goes to Jessica Bortner of the Community Hospital Foundation, who played a key role in securing grants for the initiative.

The inclusive playground committee, consisting of dedicated members such as Kaylee Samway (Wiemers) ('13), Katie Kjendal (Stagemeyer), ('17) Michelle Dickes, Molly Herzberg, Marisa Esch (Hoins) ('13), Tina Kennedy, Tricia Mitnik (Wagner) ('13), Stephanie Montey, and Katrina Gomez. Each has worked tirelessly to bring this vision to life.

"This couldn't have been done without the support of our community," Pierson shared. "Everyone—committee members, city

officials, local donors—stepped up to make this dream a reality."

With funds secured, the next step is finalizing details with the city and obtaining approval from the city council. Once approved, the playground equipment will be ordered, with installation expected to begin in the fall of 2025.

While the primary goal has been met, additional donations are still welcome. Extra funds will go toward added seating, an adult changing table, and future maintenance of the playground. Those interested in contributing can make donations at the City of McCook office or inquire about sponsorship opportunities.

For more information, contact Mariah Pierson at 308-350-2786 or email mccookinclusiveplayground@gmail.com.

Thanks to the generosity and dedication of McCook's residents, a space for inclusive play is no longer just a vision—it's a reality that will benefit generations to come.



Support your hometown of McCook with "Five to Thrive" and make McCook an even better place to call home.

MCFF and the McCook Philanthropy Council encourage current and former residents to consider a planned gift to their hometown. Support the community that supported you and your family by leaving five percent so your hometown can thrive.



Michal & Angie Swanson
Funeral Director/ Owners
308 345 3000

Herrmann Jones Funeral Chapel- McCook
Lockenour Jones Mortuary- Cambridge



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McCook, NE 69001

(308) 345.7040 • Fax (308) 345.7050
www.krd-fcu.org

Grateful for the past, preparing for the future.



McCook Youth Survey Shows Different Priority in Ideal Community

For the past 20 years, McCook Community Foundation Fund along with the Nebraska Community Foundation has conducted a survey of our high school students. Done every four to five years so that a student participates at least once, the survey covers a wide range of questions from what they like - or don't like - about their hometown, what size of town they would like to live in when they are older and what is important to them when deciding where to live when they settle down.

One reason to conduct the survey every few years is to determine trends as the community, as well as the students, changes and evolves. And the most recent survey offered a few surprises.

Perhaps the most dramatic shift in answers came from the question about priorities. The students were asked what is important to them when choosing a place they want to call home and what makes an ideal community.

In 2006 when the survey was done for the first time at McCook High School, recreation ranked as the most important priority. So think fishing and hunting, basketball and

tennis courts, movies and music. Young people wanted things to do, which was not unexpected.

Fast forward 20 years and the tides have turned on what young people expect from their community.

In 2024, safety topped the list of what makes an ideal community. Students want to live in a place that is free of violence and theft. Rounding out the top three in the most recent survey was good schools and proximity to family.

But a place where they feel safe now and in the future is most important to today's youth.

And that sentiment is echoed by others.

K.C. Belitz, the current director for the Nebraska Department of Economic Development, spoke at the McCook Economic Development Corporation's annual meeting in March and reiterated that a safe place to live is commonly cited by young people across the state when deciding where they want to find a job, where they want to move, where they want to raise their family.

And Nebraska is fortunate to be able to offer a level of safety and Mc-

Cook in particular ranks among the safest places to raise your family.

Is it perfect and will nothing bad ever happen? No. But many of us don't think twice about leaving our vehicles unlocked and even take it a step further by just leaving the keys in the vehicle. Now, if you leave the keys in the ignition then you are really trusting.

When our young people say that safety is the most important aspect in an ideal community, what exactly does that look like? Is it more police officers? Is it well-lit streets? Is it sidewalks that are free of barriers? Is it neighbors who know each other? Is it all of the above?

The survey is just the first step. Further conversations with our young people need to be held to dig deeper into their answers, to learn more about what they are thinking and to discover what they think will make their communities safer. And hopefully that will happen over the next few months.

But that is not all that needs to be done with this information.

The survey was not conducted to then be filed away and put onto

a shelf. The survey was done so that it could be used to shape policies and programs moving forward. It was done so that the adults in our community could learn what our young people are thinking. It was done so that we could work together to create the community that our young people will want to return to.

McCook Community Foundation Fund Advisory Committee members are more than happy to share a presentation about the 2024 McCook youth survey with groups, businesses or organizations who would like to learn more. Reach out to any member (contact info is at mccookfoundation.org) to get connected.

Using the data from the 2024 McCook Youth Survey, we can start the conversations about what we need to be doing to encourage our students to return to their hometowns. We can use the information to develop the opportunities that our future leaders are seeking to make an impact where they live. And we can use this insight to invite our young people to be the decision makers who will shape their hometown into an even better place to call home.

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How to sign up for the first time

1. Go to bisonalumni.com and click "Join Here"

2. Find your profile by searching your name or clicking your class year

3. Click "Join Here" and you will be prompted to provide information, such as your email and mailing address.

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| Classmate Profiles | | | |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| <input type="text" value="Search"/> | | | |
| Select Year of Graduation. Guest Members are listed below. | | | |
| Year Unknown | 1945 | 1971 | 1997 |
| 1920 | 1946 | 1972 | 1998 |
| 1921 | 1947 | 1973 | 1999 |
| 1922 | 1948 | 1974 | 2000 |
| 1923 | 1949 | 1975 | 2001 |
| 1924 | 1950 | 1976 | 2002 |
| 1925 | 1951 | 1977 | 2003 |
| 1926 | 1952 | 1978 | 2004 |
| 1927 | 1953 | 1979 | 2005 |
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| 1929 | 1955 | 1981 | 2007 |
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| 1932 | 1958 | 1984 | 2010 |
| 1933 | 1959 | 1985 | 2011 |
| 1934 | 1960 | 1986 | 2012 |
| 1935 | 1961 | 1987 | 2013 |
| ---- | ---- | ---- | ---- |

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If you are Josiah, please [click here now](#) to create your login!
Participation in this site is free. There are **no fees** of any kind.

Once you've created your account, here are some of the key buttons.

Hover your mouse here to see the various issues of the BAN that are available for viewing. Then click on the issue you would like to view. Once the issue has loaded, you can click icons on the upper right hand corner of the newsletter to either print or download.

This is a great place to start. It has lots of helpful information for setting up your profile.

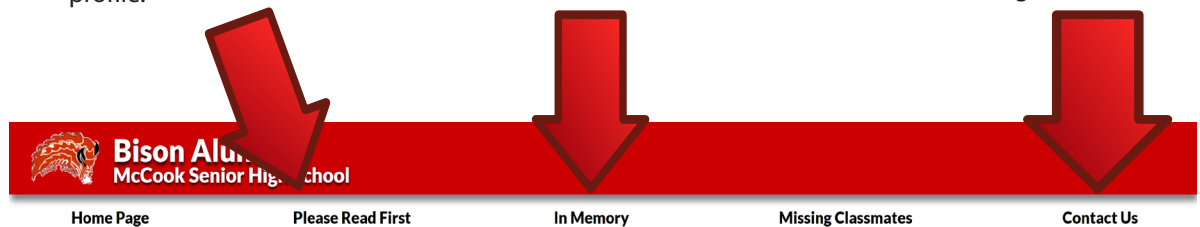
Click here to view obituaries and in memory posts for classmates. You can view the latest or search a specific classmates.

If you know a classmate that should be added to the in memory section, feel free to send us an email.

Need some help? Have a question?

Please send us an email!

mccookbisonalumni@gmail.com
or
Hit this button on the website to send us a message.



Classmates can be searched for by class year or by name. Click here to find any classmate's profile. From there, you can send a private message to the classmate.

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[Teacher Profiles](#)

| UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS | |
|--|---|
| John Bartels (Bartels) (1980) 11/26 | Shel Dodge (Prince) (1981) 11/26 |
| Shelly Gonzales (1999) 11/26 | Vicki Markwith (Scott) (1977) 11/26 |
| Jay Michaelis (1983) 11/26 | Kristy Ziemann (Pollnow) (1983) 11/26 |
| Larry Alberts (Alberts) (1959) 11/27 | Shirley Austin (Ridgley) (1973) 11/27 |
| Esther Baldwin (Marr) (1955) 11/27 | Kinsley Gehle (Hurst) (2012) 11/27 |
| Connie Jolls (Haag) (1966) 11/27 | Myra Miller (Lezanic) (1971) 11/27 |
| William Noll (Noll) (1961) 11/27 | Timothy Vap (Vap) (1982) 11/27 |
| Patricia Cheney (Winters) (1989) 11/28 | Cristy Cook (Laya) (2002) 11/28 |
| Larry Neiman (Neiman) (1962) 11/28 | Jennifer Rich (Larington) (1991) 11/28 |
| Richard Wilson (1963) 11/28 | Sheila Leamon (Tallent) (1990) 11/29 |
| Richard Budig (1956) 11/30 | Gloria Mosher (Foxworthy) (1963) 11/30 |
| Cathy Reid (Barna) (1970) 11/30 | Portia Jameson (2012) 12/1 |
| Larissa Leibrandt (Fagundes) (1990) 12/1 | David Robertson (Robertson) (1989) 12/1 |

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| PROFILE UPDATES | |
|--|-------|
| • Scott Bennett (Bennett) (1976) | 11/12 |
| • Max Moskal (1953) | 11/11 |
| • Tom Wiemers (Wiemers) (1997) | 11/12 |

Local Indie Author Abby Larington

From MHS Graduate to Bestseller

The road from McCook High School graduate to Barnes & Noble Bestseller has been a whirlwind for Abby Johnson (Larington) ('18), and she wouldn't have it any other way. After graduation, Larington took college classes before settling into her career as a district court reporter for the State of Nebraska. In 2020, she married Dane Larington ('15) and together they lead a busy life in McCook. With Dane running his electrical business and Abby, who also goes by AJ, building her career as an author, their days are packed, not to mention managing life on the farm and caring for their three dogs. But as they say, farmers rarely ever move!

Larington's journey to

becoming an author was fueled by her lifelong love of reading and writing. 2022 reignited her passion for books, and by the end of 2023, she finally put pen to paper—or fingers to keyboard—to write the story she had been dreaming about for years. That story would become *The Wynera Kingdom*, a dark romance fantasy series that challenges traditional publishing norms.

"I didn't want to change my story to fit the norm, so I decided to self-publish," Larington explained. "That way, I retained all creative rights and could keep the plot exactly as I envisioned it."

For those who think writing a book is as simple as jotting down a few

words. But writing is only the beginning. The editing process is long and grueling, followed by the challenge of marketing—choosing quotes, creating content, designing covers, and navigating a world full of publishing scams.

Independent publishing, often seen as an "easier" route, is anything but, according to Larington. "You have to do everything on your own, making it so much harder but also so much more rewarding."

Despite the obstacles, she persevered, learning how to create her own covers and building relationships with talented artists to bring her vision to life.

While publishing can be a lonely endeavor, Larington has been overwhelmed by the support she's received from the McCook community. And while the encouragement from fellow MHS alumni has meant the world, she has also found an unexpected and invaluable network in other independent authors who share her journey.

There are moments in

life that validate years of hard work, and for Larington, those moments came in rapid succession. The first was when she officially became a Barnes & Noble Bestseller, a milestone that many authors only dream of achieving. Just two weeks later, she experienced another unforgettable moment—selling out of her books in just twenty-three minutes at her launch party.

"It was absolutely surreal," she said, reflecting on the experience.

AJ Larington's journey is a testament to perseverance, passion, and the power of storytelling. With *The Wynera Kingdom* capturing readers' hearts, there's no telling how far this McCook native will go. One thing is certain—her story is just beginning.



The 2025 Nebraska Passport: McCook Garners Three Stops

By Ronda Graff

McCook is privileged to feature three (plus a bonus stop) on the 2025 Nebraska Passport Program.

The 2025 Nebraska Passport program runs from May 1 through September 30, 2025, and includes 70 stops with prizes for reaching a certain number of stops.

Every year, dozens of people make it a mission to visit every location and achieve the top prizes. Coordinated through the Nebraska Tourism Commission, the purpose of the Nebraska Passport is to help travelers discover Nebraska's hidden gems. The Nebraska Passport is special because it offers a wide variety of travel adventures, including museums, parks, restaurants, wineries, retail stores and more.

The McCook stops include:

- Embers Bakery & Cafe, 314 Norris
- Mint 217, 217 Norris
- Senator George Norris State Historic Site, 706 Norris

Additionally, the McCook Creative District was one of six creative districts selected as a passport stop, to highlight the new economic tool created by the Nebraska Unicameral a few years ago. More than 35 communities have been certified as a creative district, which enables special funding and calls attention to the impact arts and culture has on a community both creatively and financially.

Each location will have a stamp to mark the special passport books created for the program with Embers serving as the site for the McCook Creative District.

And if a location happens to be closed when a visitor stops, they can still get the "stamp" on the Nebraska Passport App.

Passports will be available at participating stops starting May 1 or can be pre-ordered at NebraskaPassport.com. Participants are encouraged to download the Nebraska Passport App on their smartphone for the option of digital stamps, supplementing the physical Passport booklet for convenience.

Those who used the mobile

app last year will need to update the app to see the new program information about the current McCook sites.



FACEBOOK SURVEY QUESTION:

Where is the craziest place you've seen a fellow alumni?

A few years ago, our son Chris, '05, was taking his dog to the vet in the Orange Co., CA town they had just moved into. As he was getting out of his car, he heard his name "Chris" being called. He ignored it and then the person yelled out, "Chris Lyons from McCook, NE" It was Alicia Shaffer, '04 who was taking her dog to the same vet. They hadn't seen each other in over 15 years. Had a great time catching up on their lives and admiring each other's dog! - Diane Wilson (Lyons) ('76)

Target in Nashua New Hampshire. Wearing a Bison Shirt. Graduated about 10 years apart but knew each others families. - Larissa Liebrandt ('90)

In 1976 we bought a brand new car and drove it to the top of Twin Peaks in San Francisco to see the sights. We had only been parked for a minute or two but then a car pulls up right next to us. In it were Kip McGooden and Bob Anderson, much to my surprise. We had a pleasant visit, showed them our new car and went home. [And] around the same time we ran into

Greg and Lynn Burns in a Safeway grocery store not far from Twin Peaks. San Francisco is a great city for running into folks you know. - Joe Gallagher ('65)

I was stationed in NY city my first year in the Army. While processing in I was befriended by a nice fellow from Oklahoma who never met a stranger. We walked around a bit by the harbor and he snapped a picture of me. He stayed at Ft. Hamilton in Brooklyn and I was sent to Ft. Wadsworth on Staten Island. A couple of months later he called me and asked if i knew Ed Fahnholz. Of course. Ed had transfered in and this fellow, who never met a stranger took him home to meet his wife and have dinner. While showing Ed pictures he had taken around the city, there I was. 10 minutes later I was on a bus to Brooklyn. - Chuck Benson ('65)

Two encounters. One was on a troop ship going to Korea in Dec 1954. 2,500 men on board and they forced us to go on deck for an hr or so every morning to get fresh air. So crowded there was no place to sit down. I

looked up and there was Wilber Wagner '52. We chatted about friends and living in east McCook and I never saw him again. Don't know where he was assigned in Korea. Second encounter was on vacation in Manzanillo Mexico. My wife and I along with my brother Ron and his wife were waiting in line to enter a function for dinner and entertainment and Jim Koetter '54 recognized my brother's booming voice and came from further back in line to talk. He and my brother talked football for 10 minutes or so. Both were into football. - Terry Byrd ('54)

Queenstown, New Zealand - Mara Lee Weskamp (Ebert) ('78)

Manila. Ran into Randy Peters at the hotel I was staying at. He was with the wheat board. - Ed Townsley ('74)

Midway Island - Lee N Pat Guthrie ('68 & '72)

I think it was 1969 when I was on shore patrol in Yokosuka, Japan, and needed some assistance with an issue with a couple sailors. I sent my partner to get help, and who

showed up, Terry Hilker! - Jerry Sigwing ('66)

Few months ago my husband and I went to eat at vidlaks in Omaha and we ran into Mandy Leamon - Billi Modrell Burrows

Playa de Carmen - Peggy Dueland

Several years ago my wife (Tami "Wudtke" Davis-Bartley '87) and I ('86) bumped into Todd McCarty (McCook '85) and his wife at Reptile Gardens in South Dakota. We were leaving and they were just coming in. - Tim Davis ('86)

November 1967. Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego. Marching at the head of my squad, I saw Jay Nylander, class of '65 (I was '64) marching at the head of his squad in a platoon headed the opposite way. We were not allowed to look around or do anything other than march but we made eye contact and risked a tiny nod. We didn't get caught breaking the rules. I was very pleased to discover he got out alive. Obviously I did too. - Otto Hallgren ('64)

Brad DeMoss and I recently sat next to each other on a flight from Omaha to Charlotte! - Lisa Dusatko (Mroczek) ('90)

High school games where our kids played each other....may not be the craziest but definitely unexpected. - Jeanette Cappel Wonderly ('90)

About 9 years ago we were on a 7-Day cruise out of Miami and on the 6th night I recognized Rodd Moretz playing Putt-Putt with his son on the 6th night of the cruise. He still had this young baby face even after 34 years since seeing him and his sister and MHS graduate Bunny Moretz (Leister) ('79) was on the cruise also. Both of their families were there except their dad and so we got together later at the comedy show on ship. Also on this same cruise, when I was checking in I recognized Sheila Berls from McCook that had worked with my dad down at the hose plant. She and her family were doing the same cruise. - Pat Howell ('82)

At an airport in Minnesota. I was flying to NE from Indiana and into them boarding the same flight to NE. It was cool. - Andrea Herzog Jennings ('91)

At Elitch's sitting on bench waiting for my family to get off the ride. It was a student of my Dad's who played Anna in the King and I. Carolyn Hinton and I recognized her but I was a kid when I went to the rehearsals so she didn't recognize me till I told my Dad was Mr. Ganseboom. I so admired Charles Coleman and Carolyn and all of kids in all his musical's thru the years. - Sarah Granseboom (Brown) ('72)

My daughter was in New York in the holocaust museum her and one other man was in there they were chatting he was not originally from McCook but went to the college in the 80's. - Chris Cappel ('77)

It was 2010. My daughter needed a last minute item for Christmas so I went with her to COSTCO in Boise, ID. I saw a man's profile who I thought was David Backer ('67). I then went up and asked him if he was from McCook. Of course, it was David and his wife, Lori (Lebsack) Backer ('68). We had a good visit. I have not seen them since nor have I been in that COSTCO again. - Tom Murphy ('66)

I ran into Leonard Stelmach ('66) at Pioneer Village many years after we graduated - Cliff Davis

('66)
I ran into a classmate in NYC. - Christine Marie Kier ('85)

Well I saw a classmate at the bathrooms in Coronado Island, San Diego. - James Allerton ('88)

I ran into Scott Lorentz on Mission St. in S.F. during lunch, circa 88/89. We worked a few blocks from each other! - Jim Rossitto ('77)

Was at Walmart here in Omaha n I saw Billy Ortiz ('85). I couldn't believe it. We talked for a minute. But then he passed the next year. Sadness. But I was glad to have had that moment. - Kim Smith (Sanwick) ('90)

If you're not already a part of our Facebook group, we welcome you to join! This group has over 3,200 members and is a great place to receive updates on fellow alumni and the newsletter.

Search 'Bison Alumni Newsletter-McCook NE High School Alumni' and hit 'Join'!

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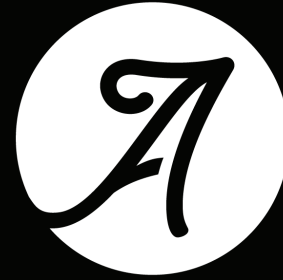
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class notes

Please send your news and contact info changes to your class rep. Class news items are due to the BAN Oct. 15 for the fall newsletter and March 31 for the spring newsletter. Phone numbers are in area code 308 and addresses in McCook (69001) unless otherwise specified. Deaths are on Page 18.

1945: -Greetings to classmates Class of 1945, still hanging in there. Please email me or write about your condition and doings. My email is jehubert@swnebr.net --- Home address is still 901 Sunset Rd. McCook NE 69001. We may have several thousand dollars to divide. (just kidding). Best regards , John Hubert

1948: Mary Lou Drake, 1515 West 2nd, mloudrake@gmail.com

1949: Needs a class rep. E-mail mccoockbisonalumni@gmail.com

1950: Needs a class rep. E-mail mccoockbisonalumni@gmail.com

1951: - Dennis Moskal djmoskal34@gmail.com

1952: -Peggy Appleyard, 1006 E. 4th St., 340-0641

1953: Condolences to the family of Sylvia Pearson Patterson. Hope you all have a great summer! - Pat Rogers Schmid, Kinship Pointe, 1500 East 11th St. Apt. 204, 345-3081, pschmid1953@gmail.com

1954: -LaVonne Sayer Hanchera, 308-895-2323, hanchera@bwtelcom.net

1955: -Come to the McCook Senior Center at noon on the last Friday of each month and enjoy a meal with Classmates.

Catch up on each other's lives. All welcome. Dick Trail, 201 W M St., dickt@swnebr.net

1956: - Come to the McCook Senior Center at noon on the last Friday of each month and enjoy a meal with Classmates. Catch up on each other's lives. All welcome. Ann Tondreau Trail, anntrail@swnebr.net, 201 West M Street. Cell: 340-3578

1957: Class luncheons continue on the fourth Thursday each month at 11:30 a.m. at Pizza Hut in McCook for all 1957 Bison class members who can attend. -Jerda Thompson Vickers - jvickers@mccooknet.com

1958: Greetings Classmates of 1958: We have had several emails returned as errors plus letters returned as no such address. Please ask your spouse or friend to let us know of any changes even telephone numbers. We are planning on our 70th reunion in the fall of 2028. If you are interested in receiving a BAN printed fall 2025 newsletter, please let us know. Wishing you a healthful and blessed 2025.

kent.kotschwar@gmail.com or phone 308-345-7579; or

Leanna Leibrant - lleibrandt@comcast.net, or phone 970-689-7497.

1959: Good times and memories flowed as we celebrated our 65th class reunion over McCook Heritage Day's celebration! When we parted many left saying, "See you in five years at our 70th reunion!"

I had several reunion letters that I sent returned; that being said, please remember to send me any home address, e-mail additions or changes to me. -Janet Eckhardt Rich,

1301 West 1st Street McCook, NE 69001, jrlr@centurylink.net, 308-345-2703

1960: - 65th Reunion on September 20th. For information and tour input, message or email Charles Peek cpeek.cp@gmail.com

Connie Carlson Bennett connieb1942@aol.com 308 324 7228

1961: Contacts: Jo Ann McMullen Brand, 777-2094, cell 737-8326, jobrand961@gmail.com or Dian Keene Trail, 345-5116, 340-3484, cdtrail@mccooknet.com

1962: -Tom Buresh, 1212 Norris Ave., 345-5441, tnburesh@msn.com

1963: -We are running out of money for funeral flowers and memorials, so any donations are greatly appreciated. This is the last thing we can do for our classmates and want to do it for every one. Lorraine Rose, 719-339-2803, Lorrainegolds@me.com; Dick Cappel, 308-350-0363, dick@cappelsales.com

1964: Class Reps: Gloria Shepherd Mefford, gloriamefford@Icloudcom or 308-373-7787 and Cheryl Myers Beckenhauer, cheri.beckenhauer@gmail.com or 308-340-0421.

1965: -We are planning our 60th Class Reunion September 19-21, 2025. It will begin with a party at Gary Grim's house on

Friday night and dinner out on Saturday night.

This is German Heritage Days weekend in McCook. The motels will be filling up so if you are planning to attend, you might want to get a reservation. We have Denver Air that flies into McCook and is very reasonable.

Motels available are: Cobblestone Telephone 308-777-2000, Horse Creek Inn 308-345-4505, Quality Inn & Suites 308-345-7115, Holiday Inn 308-737-3005.

Linda Taylor, ltaylorvk@gmail.com 308-345-3682
Steve Batty, sbatty@mccooknet.com 308-345-4021

1966: -Linda Sines Clark, lindaclark0606@gmail.com, 707-695-9170

1967: Regarding the class account, we really need another person on the account. -Jean Harmon Hallowell, 903 W 7th St., 345-7663, terhall5@hotmail.com

1968: -Sue Coady Doak, sdoak@swnebr.net; -Susan Andrews Thomsen, salt6768@charter.net

Continued on the next page



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class notes cont.

1969: -Debbie Krieger Jenkins, 1411 West 5th St., 340-7526, debbie_ann_s@hotmail.com

Please join our Facebook - 1969-McCook High School Class of 1969

1970: Our 55th reunion is "just around the corner" - - - so start making your plans now. We plan to have our celebration during Heritage Days - - September 19th - 21st, 2025. More information will be sent via email. Please contact Diana Newton Butler for any questions or changes in your email address. Email at dianabutler52@yahoo.com or text at 402-699-4029

1971: We are still in need of email addresses for about a third of our classmates so that you may continue to receive the alumni newsletter. Please forward your email addresses to sclapp@gpcom.net or to Kathy Wallen at dankatw@gmail.

1972: -Anne Unger Confer, 1111 Norris Ave., 340-5924, Anne_confer@yahoo.com.

1973: -Request to join our Bison 73 Facebook page, for 1973 classmates. Around 100 classmates are connecting on this site. And, if you aren't receiving class emails, I probably don't have a current email address. Send to dmdue@outlook.com Mary Anderson Dueland, 112 E N St., 737-6111

1974: -Thank you for all who attended and we missed those who were not able to attend. If any family members have current email contacts for those who didn't respond please send to pegandrews18@gmail.com. You all were so generous to help pay for the weekend, we can start rebuilding our class fund for the next one please

send to Federal Lincoln Savings and Loan 221 Norris Avenue McCook make checks out to Class of 1974. Thanks again for the great weekend!

1975: We will be celebrating our 50th class reunion Memorial Day weekend 2025! Watch for future updates! -Dari Tucker Olson, 705 W. 5th St., 340-3595, dariolson@gmail.com

1976: -Diane Wilson Lyons, 1007 E. 1st St., 308 340-8439, pdlyons@gpcom.net

1977: -Scott Schneider, scott.schneider.np@gmail.com; -Class Treasurer Charlotte Hays Dunsworth, P.O. Box 83, Culbertson, NE 69024, 737-6558

1978: -Jerry Calvin, 807 W. 13th St., 737-9778, pepsidude2004@gmail.com; -Mara Lee Weskamp-Ebert, 707-363-2432

1979: -Robin Frick Calvin, 807 W. 13th St., 340-2401, craftwhiz@swnebr.net

1980: We have started the planning of our 45th reunion for the 13 and 14 of June 2025. Please watch for more posts on Facebook; 1980 McCook High School Class of 80-BAN. or Bison class of 1980 photos. Peggy Messinger peggymessinger@swnebr.net

1981: -Kellie Soden, 303-589-3459, RKASODEN@msn.com.

1982: I would appreciate it if you would please e-mail me updated mailing and e-mail addresses. Thanks! -Sara Wiemers Rippen 103 Courtney Ln, sara.rippen@gmail.com

1983: -Janice Howell, pcshowell@gmail.com

1984: Needs a new class rep. Donations can be sent to Dawn

Hess Foster, 305 Apache Dr., 340-0135, dawnfostr1965@gmail.com

1985: -Annette Kool Wagner, 345-3852, acwagner2@gmail.com

1986: -Michelle Hubert Doorn, 28328 463rd Ave., Davis, SD 57021-6127, michelle.doorn@k12.sd.us

1987: Donations to Class of 1987 c/o Andy Hofman, 903 Missouri Ave., 340-9602, andy_hofman@yahoo.com. -Rich Barnett, 340-0815, rich@highplainsradio.net

1988: -Pat Weskamp, pweskamp@outlook.com

1989: -Chanin Monestero, cd_monestero@hotmail.com

1990: -We are trying to plan our 35th class reunion this year. Check out our facebook page '1990-McCook High School Class of 1990-BAN'. Also we would like to pass on

condolences to classmates who have lost loved. And pass along congratulations to classmates who have had exciting things happen. -Jeanette Cappel Wonderly, 519 Buffalo Street, Benkelman, NE 69021, 883-1960, wonderlytj@gmail.com

1991: -Michelle Henrickson, s-mhenrickson@hotmail.com

1992: -Jason Loop, 18 Wedgewood Dr., 345-1977, jloop@ocsmccook.com, -Trevor Taylor, 308-340-0131

1993: -Joann Pick Barenberg, 901 W R St., 345-8703, jbarenberg@mnbank

1994: -Stephanie Hays Stevens, 1606 W 2nd St., 345-5688, voiceonhold2@gmail.com

1995: -Carmen Irwin Lervold, 15788 W. Acapulco Lane, Surprise, AZ 85379, 623-322-9281, bisonclass95@cox.net

1996: -Anne McCarville, 511 West 2nd Street McCook NE 69001, amac513@hotmail.com

1997: Connect with us on Facebook: "McCook High

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School Class of 1997.” -Lisa Beckenhauer Pomajzl, 1650 Karol Kay Blvd., Seward, NE 68434, 402-826-7050, bepuz-zled2@yahoo.com

1998: -Brian Symington, Brian. Symington@gmail.com

1999: -Vanessa Lytle, 909 East G St., 340-3863, vlytle9969@gmail.com

2000: -Anna Dueland Hunnicutt, mccook2000@gmail.com

2001: -Shaelin Monzon Stiver, 706 East 3rd St. Apt. B, 340-5408, shaelinstiver@gmail.com

2002: - Laura Lyons Plas, Implas@mpsomaha.org

2003: -Jill Hansen Purvis, aj_purvis@hotmail.com

2004: -Nicole Hedke Sutton, nicole_sutton@live.com

2005: Can you believe it's time for our 20th class reunion? Planning for this fun event combined with Heritage Days is underway. We are looking forward to seeing classmates

and friends Sept. 19-21, 2025. We will post specific information on our alumni Facebook page. If you have any questions, ideas or would like to help- please reach out to Alison (Wilcox) Marts at marts.alison@gmail.com -Kate Wolford Wawrzynkiewicz, 12129 S. Hansen Rd., North Platte, NE 69101, 340-9156, katewaz05@gmail.com

2006: -Julia Lyons Krebs, julia.krebs25@gmail.com

2007: -John Swanhorst, 9 Mashie Dr., 340-1648, jswanhorst@gmail.com

2008: -Cory Gaston, 712-204-3052, cmg_4@hotmail.com

2009: Needs a class rep. Parent rep, -Doug Skiles, dskiles@slbw-cpa.com, P.O. Box 36, McCook, NE 69001

2010: -Shane Wallen, shane_wallen@hotmail.com

2011: -Jaci Saalfeld Weissert, saalfeldjn@gmail.com, 340-6254.

2012: Needs a class rep. Parent rep, -Sherri Stang, 345-4240, sherri@mnbl.com

2013: -Tricia Mitnik Wagner, 340-3209, pwagner@chmccook.org, Gavin Harsh, 340-7178, gharsh.3513@gmail.com

2014: Miranda Payton, Text 340-5380, 1507 West 5th St., McCook, mirandapayton14@gmail.com

2015: -Marlys Brenning, 340-8496, 424 N Church St, Elm Creek NE 68836, mebrenning@gmail.com

2016: Needs a class rep. Parent rep, -Tom Bredvick, 345-4240, Bison2016@bredvick.com
2017: Lexi Gross, lgross69001@icloud.com

2018: Adelina Wilcox, adelinawilcox@gmail.com

2019: Rose Bishop (Stoney) 308-737-6006, rosestoney47@gmail.com

2020: Lydia Risenhoover, lydiarisenhoover75@gmail.com, 340-7433

2021: Needs a class rep.

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In memory

Each class expresses sincere condolences to the families. Many of their obituaries are posted on the Bison Alumni Facebook page and on bisonalumni.com

Faculty - Paul Forch, Pam Schilz

'48 - Darlene Berndt (Ramsey)

'49 - Elaine Fritz (Haussler)

'50 - Janet Hockman (Springer), Lois Williams (Painter)

'53 - Sharolyn Bales (Hornkohl)

'54 - Roland Carlson, James Koetter, Willa Shepherd (Shewalter)

'55 - Jude Byrne

'56 - Marilyn Brown (Malleck), Margaret Hassler (Ruby)

'57 - Alice Gerver (O'Dea)

'60 - John Best, Corlyn Billesbach (Gettman), Sharon Schow (Derr), Dorothy "Dottie" Smith (Evans), Robert Thompson

'61 - Donald Crocker, Linda Gaver (Fricke), Don Rowland

'62 - Carole Messer (Roberts)

'63 - Carol Cottingham (Smith), Dennis Matson, Betty Lou Rains (Erb), Gerald "Jerry" Schwarz

'64 - Jane Bagan (Dutton)

'65 - Janet Bahl (Thompson), Pamela "Pam" Gull (Schilz), Evelyn Reiners, Kenneth "Ken" Wells

'66 - Karen Bales (Rima), Mary Linnemeyer (Thorson)

'67 - Kelly "KC" McKillip

'69 - Jayne Lyons, Colleen Moreau (McVicker), Patricia Wagner (Zimmerman)

'71 - Cynthia Madron (Sandman), Duane Rupert

'72 - Charles "Chip" Smith

'74 - Mark Johansen

'75 - Michael "Mike" Brown, Carol Davis (Runge), Mark Haller, Charles "Chuck" Reichenbach, James Tyson

'80 - Leslie "Les" Bussard, Billie Grossman (Vaught)

'81 - Stephani Hauxwell (Olson)

'91 - Scott Doyle

'96 - Timothy Peterson

'09 - Milan Jones



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