



Alexis Hoover Power Lifts at High School Meet Hosted by PSC



American Bald Eagle returns to her nest near Rock Port.

Voices and Views From the Valleys of the Nemaha
A Magazine for Small Towns & Rural America



Restored, in Julian, Nebraska

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# ***Your Country Neighbor***

*Voices and Views From the Valleys of the Nemaha*

Publisher & Photographer, Stephen Hassler

P.O. Box 126  
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*"Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail."*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

## **April Writers & Contributors**

Devon Adams  
Stephen Hassler  
Mary Ann Holland  
Merri Johnson  
Dorothy Rieke  
Janet Sobczyk

Thank You!

**Your Country Neighbor  
can be found online at;**

**[yourcountryneighbor.com](http://yourcountryneighbor.com)**

**Inform your relatives  
and friends residing outside  
our 'country neighborhood'.**

## **The New Hero**

Stephen Hassler, Peru

In times like these we change our views as to what is important. In the past we developed a greater appreciation for things like running water, shelter, gas and electricity for heating and cooling. But now, with *physical distancing* to minimize infection, we are becoming more aware each day of the freedom of movement and the freedom of assembly, values that we don't usually think about while going about our lives day to day.

Another new phrase is *essential worker*. When in our lives have we all been faced with the raw truth as to who these essential workers are? Of course we recognize police, firefighters, doctors and other health care workers, but now; grocery store workers, post office clerks and mail carriers, garbage collectors, drive-thru attendants at your bank and take out restaurant. You might know others to add to this list.

These least appreciated and often lowest paid working members of society seldom have health insurance or other benefits with their employer, and often are limited to working fewer hours. But these days they are at the front lines of businesses deemed essential to society. And weren't they always there?

After 9/11 I noticed the addition of fire fighters in our community parades. They were always there driving their emergency vehicles, but we wanted to see them without being enclosed. So when this is all over, will we ask our new heroes to the parade? Would there be room? Well, we can still thank them for their service.

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The Gull in the two photos above had just dipped  
into the choppy water to catch its lunch along  
H-136 just east of Brownville.



This Eagle is nesting. One of these days I hope to  
photograph its mate's return with food.





A view from my window on 5th Street.



Gulls east of the Brownville Bridge.



Gull in flight.

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## Add To Your “Golden Years”

Stephen Hassler, Peru

Will you turn 40 years of age this year, or 50 or 60? Have you enjoyed your life so far and believe you may be looking at an uncertain future limited by the nature of the human condition? Do you want to live well past “retirement age?” Never mind wrinkles, look at your health. Spring is a good time to get outdoors and “move around.” Yes, gardening counts.

Exercise can make one healthier, both mentally and physically. You could start by walking, but before that, have your doctor check you out. You might be healthier than you give yourself credit for, and if not, that knowledge can be a good thing. Are you aware of; your cholesterol level, blood pressure, iron and calcium levels? If not, consider getting a physical. An annual checkup is free if you qualify for Medicare (ask your doctor). Preventive care can keep you healthy and reduce health care costs overall.

You may have to overcome challenges; chronic ailments, disease, weight, genetics, bad habits, or poor motivation. You might think it’s too late, but it’s not up to you. Before failing, try!

If you have internet access, google “Couch to 5K” for a simple training plan. You don’t have to be rigorous at it. You will soon formulate your own plan to fit your situation. Any movement is a good way to feel better mentally, improve your immune system, delay dementia, or reduce inflammation of vital organs (which causes disease).

Eventually we will all be unable to walk, but exercise could delay the inevitable! For every hour of exercise, longevity can be extended by two hours! That can add years to a life.

In any case, keep moving. Get up from the couch for a few minutes at least once an hour. Maybe walk around the block two or three times a week.

After some training you might consider walking or running in a 5K event. You will be surprised how many young people with their name-brand running gear and athletic physiques you will pass after a mile or two, where the “under 30-minute” crowd just keeps going and going and going.

Never mind those New Year’s resolutions, go!



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# P o e t r y

by Devon Adams, Peru

## BABIES AND BUNNIES

He's just a baby, and  
everything he sees is  
new and wonderful.  
He feels soft green  
grass on his bare feet  
and wiggles his toes.  
Bright rays of sunshine  
find happy dandelion  
faces, and he smiles  
back at them as he  
grabs a bloom and  
tastes the yellow petals.  
A big fat robin hops  
along, following the  
trail of a wiggly worm,  
before he stabs into the  
dirt and gobbles his  
lunch. Giggles of delight  
erupt from a wide grin,  
and float away on the  
breeze like a trail of  
invisible bubbles. Notes  
fall out of the trees from  
bird throats trilling songs  
that sound like flutes and  
violins. From the edge  
of the garden another  
child is watching nature's  
wonders unfold, as he  
crawls into the light from  
the cozy nest under the  
rose bush that his mom  
made for her spring litter  
of cottontails. All is well  
and wonderful on this day  
in the kingdom of the kids.

## KEEPING THE PAST

Calendar time looks simple,  
with little boxes and lines,  
and numbers on some paper.  
Months are on different pages,  
and a year is all bound together  
in a pretty stack with pictures  
printed one through twelve.  
But real time comes in shapes  
and forms and memories that  
don't match clocks or measures.  
It's so easy to lose track of what  
happened when, if a day was  
full of ordinary actions, or a  
week flew by when we weren't  
looking. We savor good days,  
and wish they wouldn't end.  
Snapping photos helps, and so  
does reliving minutes with loved  
ones. But when crisis comes,  
and it is bad, time stops moving,  
and we are mired in the mud of  
despair. Ticks and tocks echo  
through the air, but we don't  
hear them. In the days ahead,  
pain is sharp and feels like a  
giant boulder in our path. We  
will hold a certain sorrow with  
us forever. But in spite of many  
tears, the space between now  
and tomorrow slowly grows, until  
we realize that we have, indeed,  
moved into a softer, more gentle  
frame of mind, where there is  
space for joy to live.

# P o e t r y

by Devon Adams, Peru

## SUNRISE SERVICES

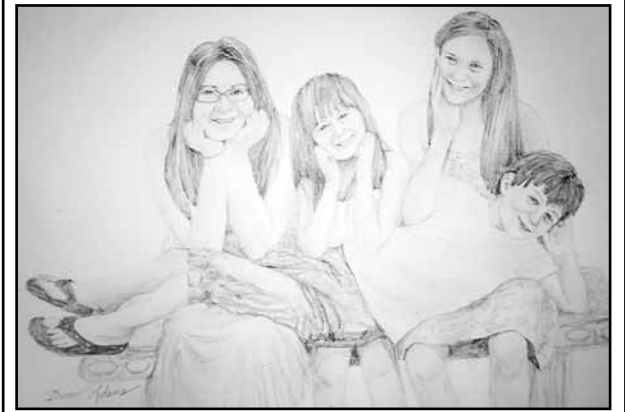
There is a special day  
written on the calendar  
when people will walk  
up a hill to watch the sun  
rise. They celebrate new  
hope in the face of a  
black night. Life is hard,  
but it is good, and a little  
extra belief makes it easier.  
There are lots of days,  
and they all start with a  
sunrise. So think of  
yourself on a hill every  
morning, and soak up  
some energy from the  
ball of fire that rolls  
around right on time. It  
is part of a mysterious  
plan that we don't  
understand, but we  
believe that it is there.

## SPRING COUNTRY

As buds swell and burst  
into fancy flowers, clouds  
do their part to make the  
world green again. They  
rush in like noisy trains,  
rattling branches, throwing  
spikes of lightning to the  
ground, causing chaos as  
they dump buckets of water  
out of their angry innards.  
Dormant plants wake up  
and drink, and push more  
flowers into life, as birds  
use puddles to splash into  
drippy rags of feathers that  
must sit to dry on branches,  
like dirty clothes made clean.  
Storms subside, as breezes  
touch blooms, pulling their  
perfumes into wavy ribbons  
that float and wander all  
through the hills and fields.

## CONCERT ON THE GREEN

The music started before  
the whole orchestra arrived.  
In February, when light was  
starting to stretch again after  
the dark of winter, a peep here  
and a whistle there popped  
up in the middle of silence.  
Rusty throats remembered  
they had a schedule to keep  
and began some vocal  
exercises. Soft two-note  
staccatos from chickadees  
and exclamations from  
titmice highlighted drumbeats  
from busy woodpeckers.  
Silent snowbirds began to  
listen as bluejays yelled  
at everyone else. Then,  
like liquid velvet, came a  
trill from a cardinal. It wasn't  
the whole verse, but the  
memory was there, and  
soon others from the red  
feather clan answered with  
partial poems of their own.  
And now, the robins are  
celebrating the rain with  
their lovely vibrato, and  
cardinals have found the  
line of the melody and are  
being seated for the main  
concert to come. It will be  
a spectacular production  
by players of many colors  
and sizes, not the least of  
which are the finches, who  
sing yellow and purple notes  
better than anyone else.  
I can't wait to hear it all!



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the sunshine of late  
summer. The April leaves  
will wither and dry away,  
but months later, you will  
be startled to see that long  
pink legs have kicked up  
overnight, wearing turbans  
for the first part of the act.  
Days later, the turbans will  
explode into exotic lavender  
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## Diary of a Part-time Housewife Merri Johnson, Auburn

Dear Readers,  
 I hope you are not so holed-up that you are unable to get out and pick up  
 this month’s Country Neighbor.

Like you, I am tired of hearing about hand-washing, social distancing and  
 self-quarantining. So, I’ll just share with you a few personal anecdotes  
 related to the talk of the day.

Right before our Governor closed our schools and advised us all to shel-  
 ter in place, I had started the long-overdue project of sorting photographs  
 from the past 50 years. Four days ago, I dragged out all my half-filled  
 photo albums, plus dozens of packets of photos that had never made it to  
 an album. Half of my living room floor is covered with piles of photos  
 sorted into categories like vacation trips, kids through the years, life on  
 the farm, miscellaneous extended family photos, miscellaneous photos  
 of friends, unidentified – but intriguing – black and white photos of an-  
 cestors, and photos to discard. So, I can keep busy for several more days  
 working on that.

Among the suggestions for keeping busy under lock-down is to read  
 more. Hubby revealed to me last evening that he has added “Hagar the  
 Horrible” comic strip to his daily routine. I congratulated him on expand-  
 ing his literary horizons.

Ordering take-out food from restaurants has also been promoted as a way  
 to support our local eateries. Hubby and I have never been big on eating  
 out. But I was saddened to hear yesterday that our local Chinese restau-  
 rant has closed. I do hope they will be able to reopen, and pledge to pa-  
 tronize them if and when they do. I may have to go with my friend who  
 also enjoys Chinese food since Hubby is not a fan. But that will be a plus  
 for me.

Today I read an online post about redeeming the extra time many of us  
 have on our hands right now. I am retired, so I really don’t feel at loose  
 ends like many people do. Let me just say this: strive to do something  
 meaningful with your time, rather than simply binging on electronic  
 media or video games. Praying for the success of all of the efforts being  
 undertaken to end this pandemic would be one way to do that.

Last night, I participated in something I never would have imagined hap-  
 pening. I accompanied my congregation’s mid-week Lenten service for  
 a total of four people. Mind you, the service itself was cancelled. But  
 we made an audio recording so others could listen to it on our website. I  
 don’t mean to joke about the situation, but I can now officially say that  
 I have made a piano performance recording for public consumption. On

*Continued on page 12 >>>>>>>>>>*



the serious side, the experience gave me a new perspective on what it means to worship, and also gave me pause when I considered what it would be like to not have face-to-face communal worship. I plan to participate in a live-streamed worship service this Sunday. It won't be my own congregation since we don't have streaming capability. But I know at least two other people who will also be watching remotely. So that's something.

I'm sure we will all have very specific, individual memories of the impact of Covid-19 on our personal lives, not to mention all the societal, political and economic impacts of this upheaval. I hope and pray that this crisis does not reach the level of the Great Depression or of World War II deprivations. But it is testing us. I hope we will all conduct ourselves in ways we can be proud to tell future generations about.

For now, stay healthy and help someone who is struggling.



The Snow Geese have left the area.

## April's Weather Can Be Surprising!

Dorothy Rieke, Julian

Mark Twain once observed: "In the spring, I have counted 136 different kinds of weather inside of 24 hours."

When we think of April, we associate that month with "flowers and showers." It is true that April often brings sunny days and daffodils, hyacinths, and other spring flowers. However, if you are a student of history, you have probably read about some violent weather that occurred in April, especially on the Great Plains during settlement times.

Time and again, we are reminded that weather on the Great Plains can be very surprising and even disastrous for some. The Easter Sunday blizzard in April of 1873 certainly proved this to be true.

That particular Easter Sunday began as a sunny day. However, soon two storm systems collided bringing heavy rains and wind. The rains quickly turned to sleet building up as ice. When the snow arrived, it was so wet, that a person's clothes were soon soaked through.

The wind continued to blow. One couple, sitting on a tool chest next to their stove, suddenly found themselves sitting on the underside of their home's collapsed roof, but luckily they were unharmed.

During blizzards, farmers, concerned for the safety of farm animals often brought them into their homes. During this Easter blizzard, one farmer brought into his house a hog, a dog, four head of cattle, and chickens. This was in addition to the eight family members living there. Raging until Wednesday, this storm left eighteen to twenty-foot drifts in some areas. Twenty people died during this storm in central Nebraska along with thousands of livestock. At this time, Nebraska was sparsely settled, so the death toll was fairly low.

Weather during any month affects our lives. It governs our clothing choices, where we live, our activities, and when we travel. It also affects our moods and, at times, our attitudes.

Perhaps the best advice about weather is to listen to forecasts and arrange schedules accordingly. April can be a month of surprises. We must realize that and adjust our daily activities for our safety.

## Window On Fifth Street

Stephen Hassler, Peru

This is one month I don't appreciate the view from my window on Fifth Street. As bleak as the gray, naked trees are this time of year, the bleakness of an invisible curtain hangs over the town, more foreboding than the memories of last year's flooding.

The curtain-like unease that drapes the town is not the presence of a virus, but the unknowing of what the next week will bring. On this day the cloudy, sunless sky adds another wrinkle to the dismal view.

Downtown I dropped two bill payments in the letterbox outside the Post Office and left a deposit at the bank's drive-through window. I went into the grocery store for a block of cheese to satisfy my desire for a grilled cheese sandwich for lunch. I noticed that Decker's had toilet paper, which I hear has been sparse in some other stores. I've not run low on food or supplies yet, so with any luck, by the time I need something stores will be restocked with essential items.

And if we are all lucky, this Spring will just be another time of learning, learning how unpleasant our lives can be when routines that we take for granted are blocked by concerns of health and safety, flooding, or other negative events for which we should learn to prepare.

After WWII many people moved from the urban areas of the city to the suburbs to be safer from nuclear warfare. Millennials are not as adverse to urban living as their parents; I'm thinking of the "Blackstone" district and "Mid Town" in Omaha. Urbanites, more than anyone perhaps, will see changes in their social fabric. One might lose their favorite coffee shop, which means another might lose his coffeeshop business.

It would be pollyanna-ish for me to think that we will all be stronger for this experience, because some will lose their businesses or savings, some will lose friends or relatives, and some will lose their lives. What we might expect is that some of our lives could be very different.

Whatever happens or doesn't happen, we will become more aware that nothing is permanent. We will remember that we all benefit from some social connections. And we might place more value on public spaces. Yes, "better" could come from all of this, but from empty shelves in grocery stores we might extrapolate to empty grocery stores in rural areas. So tragically or fortunately, our social framework might require some changes, or at least, some repairs.

In the meantime, we will try to avoid infection while trying to retain some cherished routines (or perhaps renew old ones). We will try to make a living while practicing "social distancing." And we will try to maintain relationships by using our phone, email, or social media.

I am grateful for my friends. I am grateful for the internet's information and communication options. I am grateful for my health. And I continue to be grateful for my window on Fifth Street.

## Immigrant Dandelions

Janet Sobczyk, © 2018, Omaha

They arrived, precious cargo  
in the baggage of colonists  
settling America  
with high hopes for the future.

They emerged from careful wrappings  
were planted, nurtured  
used as food, medicine  
and to prevent erosion.

Native Americans  
learned their value  
saw their versatility  
appreciated their uses.

Now they are reviled  
a blight on manicured lawns  
weeds to be eradicated  
by hand or chemical.

They defy extinction  
multiplying quickly  
migrating across the land  
on gusts of untamed wind.

Little children are their allies,  
still blowing seeds  
offering yellow blossoms  
with innocent smiles.

Valued plant  
or invasive pest  
depends on perspective  
what does your eye behold?





# PSC Hosts High School Power Lifting



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Team Trophy awarded to  
Lexington High School



Co-Ed Championship  
Team Trophy awarded to  
SCOTUS Central Catholic,  
Columbus, Nebraska





# PSC Home Game Baseball Photos



## MBB Tournament Photos, Last Home Game of Season



The National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) announced the 2019-20 Division I Men's Basketball All-America Teams. Peru State junior Henry Tanksley (Lincoln) was among those earning honorable mention recognition by the (NAIA).

With Tanksley's honor, it makes the fifth year in a row that a Bobcat has either been named an All-American or has received honorable mention.

Photos at left are of Tanksley in the tournament win at home against Baker.



# PERU STATE COLLEGE NEWS

## NAIA Cancels Spring Sport Season

### Bobcat Softball Tops Tabor for First Win of 2020 Season 3/7/2020

Peru State softball team opened their season with four losses. The long layoff apparently didn't bother the Bobcats as they responded with a 7-2 win over Tabor (Kan.) in the first game of the Friends Invite in Wichita, Kan., Friday afternoon.

In the Bobcats' second game, Peru State jumped to an early lead, but could not hold off a late charge by Bethany (Kan.) as they fell 19-9.

The Peru State softball team dropped all three of the games in the Friends Invitational in Wichita, Kan.

In the first game Saturday, the host Friends team topped the Bobcats 11-3 in six innings to improve to 5-12 on the year. In the second game, York beat Peru State 5-2. In the final game, Ottawa (Kan.) topped the Bobcats 9-3.

## Bobcat Baseball Swept Mo Valley in Heart Season Opener, February 29th

It was the way any team would want to start their conference season – especially at home.

The Peru State Bobcats swept a pair of games from the visiting Missouri Valley Vikings taking the first game 10-4 and then putting more runs on the board in the second game winning 19-3.

### Bobcat Men's Basketball Season Ends with OT Loss in Heart Semifinals

A Peru State shot near the buzzer at the end of regulation missed which forced the game into overtime against Clarke in Dubuque, Iowa.

In the overtime, the Bobcats took an early lead, but could not hold on as the Pride pulled out an 84-79 win in the Heart of America Athletic Conference (Heart) semifinals.

Peru State's basketball season ends with a 17-15 record.

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## Eight Bobcat Teams were on Track for Scholar Team Status

Eight of the nine Peru State varsity athletic teams eligible for NAIA Scholar Team status at the end of the academic year were on track to earn the honor following the first semester.

The NAIA requires a team to have a composite 3.0 grade point average (gpa) which reflects all members of a team who were certified during that academic semester for eligibility purposes.

Following the first semester, the Bobcat golf team had the highest team grade point average as they finished with a 3.8056. Members of the golf team include junior Vivian Brown (Wichita, Kan.), junior Taylor Finke (Battle Creek), sophomore Sydney Neal (Peru), and senior Kayla Myers (Sidney, Iowa). Finke finished the semester with a perfect 4.0.

The Bobcat volleyball team had the second-best composite gpa with a 3.6318 which was slightly higher than one year ago at this time. An impressive six volleyball players earned perfect grade point averages – seniors Claire Cudney (Marysville, Kan.), Mallory Matthies (Omaha), and Darlene Quinonez Holguin (Anthony, N.M.); sophomore Sarah Brown (Seward); and freshmen Grace Frederick (Benkelman) and Randee Witt (Falls City). In addition, former player Hannah Sexton (Sedalia, Colo.) had a 4.0 gpa.

The women's basketball team had a composite 3.43 after the first 16 weeks. Two players had perfect semesters - seniors Claire Cudney (Marysville, Kan.) and Anjanae Simms (St. Louis, Mo.).

Two members of the Bobcat cross country team had perfect 4.0 fall semesters which helped their team to a cumulative 3.30 grade point average. Those with perfect 4.0 fall semesters were senior Julia Zurek (Louisville) and sophomore Aubrey Wattier (Malcolm).

For the second year in a row, the men's basketball team is among those teams looking to be a Scholar Team at the end of the entire academic year. The team posted a 3.27 cumulative grade point average. Two players posted perfect grade point averages this fall – senior Drew Switzer (Casper, Wyo.) and junior Isaac Simpson (Papillion).

The Bobcat baseball team finished the fall with a 3.24 varsity cumulative grade point average. While they did not have any varsity team members earning a perfect grade point average, they should have nine individuals who will be recognized on the Dean's List.

The seventh team meeting the threshold at the end of the first semester is the competitive cheer team. This is the first year that cheer could potentially be named as a Scholar Team. They finished the fall with a team gpa of 3.15. Juniors Bailey Johnson (Johnson) and Jordyn Todd (Omaha) each had a perfect 4.0 semester.

The final team currently on track is the softball team which had a cumulative gpa average of 3.13. Freshmen Brooklyn Franco (Syracuse, Utah), Cheyenne Leach (Wymore), and Morgan Wilke (Bakersfield, Calif.) all started their Bobcat careers with 4.0 semesters.

The final calculations will be made at the end of the 2019-20 academic year following all grades being posted in the middle of May.

Of the junior varsity programs, the women's basketball team led the way as they had a cumulative team grade point average of 3.46.

Peru State athletic director Wayne Albury was very pleased with the efforts of the varsity teams. He stated, "To have eight of our nine teams at Scholar Team levels at the end of the first semester is outstanding. More importantly, as an entire department, our varsity overall grade point average is 3.01 which is important for the Champions of Character scorecard."



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