

**Your  
March  
2021**

# *Country* Neighbor

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and Share!**

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“Apple Barn” on Hwy-136 East of Auburn, West of Brownville



PSC v Missouri Valley p. 14

## **A Magazine from Small Town & Rural America**

*Voices and Views from the Valleys of the Nemaha to Sweeten your Coffee Break*




### Deaths so far, from Covid-19 in our “Country Neighborhood.”

Source: Google Search; ‘Name’ County, Nebraska Covid

<u>Date</u>	<u>Nemaha</u>	<u>Otoe</u>	<u>Johnson</u>	<u>Richardson</u>
February 6	13	4	7	15
February 13	13	6	8	16
February 20	13	7	8	17
February 27	13	7	8	17

**The virus has “slowed,” but has not stopped.  
Keep Wearing Masks! Get Vaccinated!  
You Are Making It Work!  
*Masks and Vaccines save Lives.***

## **Inside**

Covid-19 Deaths in Southeast Nebraska.....	1
Dorothy’s “ <i>Instant Kindness</i> ”.....	2
Photos of Snowy Architecture.....	3 & 4
Photos of Feeder Friends.....	5
Devon’s Poetry.....	6 & 7
More Photos.....	8
Merri’s “ <i>Diary of a Part-time Housewife</i> ”.....	10
Janet’s “ <i>A Popcorn Lover</i> ”.....	10
Janet’s “ <i>Music in My School</i> ”.....	12
“ <i>Window On Fifth Street</i> ”.....	12
 PSC Basketball Photography.....	13 & 14
 PSC News.....	15
“Success Awards” At Peru State!.....	16
 Valentino’s Coupon!!.....	16

# Your Country Neighbor

Voices and Views From the Valleys of the Nemaha

Publisher & Photographer, Stephen Hassler

P.O. Box 126  
Peru, Nebraska 68421

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Online at [yourcountryneighbor.com](http://yourcountryneighbor.com)

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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

## March Writers & Contributors

Devon Adams - 6 & 7

Stephen Hassler - 12

Merri Johnson - 10

Dorothy Rieke - 2

Janet Sobczyk - 10 & 12

Thank You!

## Deaths from Covid-19 in Counties Bordering Nebraska

Date	Kansas		Missouri		Iowa	
	Brown	Nemaha	Atchison	Holt	Fremont	
02/06	32	50	6	10	9	
02/13	32	50	6	10	9	
02/20	32	50	6	10	9	
02.27	32	50	6	10	9	

## Total Deaths from Covid-19 in Nebraska

February 6 2065

February 13 2110

February 20 2167

February 27 2195

Check here again next month.

## Instant Kindness, The Ultimate Behavior

Dorothy Rieke, Julian

Have you ever heard of "instant" kindness? We have heard the word, instant in regard to oatmeal, tea, and mashed potatoes, so why not "instant" kindness?

Several weeks ago as I stood in a check-out line waiting for a clerk to add my purchases, the customer in front of me completed his transaction and received his sales receipt. Before he quickly walked away, he turned around toward me and handed me a slip of paper. Printed on that slip was "Save \$10 off your next in store purchase."

I was so astonished because I did not know the man, and I could not imagine what he was handing me. I believe I uttered a surprised, "Thank you." He, then, turned away and quickly left the store.

I looked at the receipt. I could not believe my eyes!

I turned to the clerk and questioned, "Is this any good?"

"Yes, it is," he answered. So my bill was \$10 less than if I'd not received "instant" kindness.

I could only speculate that the man was from out of town and did not expect to do business at that store again.

"Instant" kindness! What a wonderful idea! Often, we see what we can do for others in an instant. Why not follow through on those things?

What about holding the door open for those following you? What about picking up a dropped package for someone?

A friend recently related that he had seen a stranger drop a credit card as she entered a financial institution. He picked up the card and followed her to return it. She was so relieved and thankful.

"Instant" kindness does not take much thought, time, or effort, but it is so satisfying because others are delighted and appreciative of any small kindness.

Don't be reluctant to practice "instant" kindness. It will create in your heart wonderful feelings. Your rewards will be grateful smiles and appreciative comments.

If that kind gentlemen who gave me the \$10 rewards slip reads this, I hope he will accept my heartfelt thanks. He "made my day" and reminded me that I, too, should be involved in "instant" kindness.





Chickadee trying to get a foothold.



Goldfinch left, Nuthatch center, Housefinch right.



House Finch avoiding the Cardinal.

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Songbird photos on this page were taken Monday, February 15.



The Cardinal's plumage is especially vivid this time of year. It's color distracts from the drab grays and browns of Winter. and complements the pure white snow.

Brownville Snowy Architecture



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School House Art Gallery.



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Nebraska City Snowy Architecture



Arbor Lodge Mansion



Arbor Lodge, Rotunda Portico

*Note; I counted 5 Robins in the park as I was leaving on February 19th.*

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 **HOLIDAY,**  
**Drink Responsibly,**  
**ARRIVE HOME**  
**SAFELY!** 

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## DEEP FREEZE

Spring may not be sprung yet, as March comes around, because Winter has decided to be a bully. It was pretending to be mild at first.

But then something happened to change the mood of the ice king who lives in a house set next to the north pole.

One afternoon, after his nap, he tripped over his pet polar bear, Thor, and fell down the steps.

Well, that hurt.

He was mad and Thor was sore.

So they both started to roar.

The louder they got, the madder they were. “Go away Winter,” they screamed, “and don’t come back for awhile!”

So winter went south, and it locked the good old U.S.A. in a deep freeze so cold that it felt like camping on the surface of the silver moon.

## A QUIET KITE

Through the lacy bare branches of the trees is a moving silhouette hanging on the breeze. Closer it comes to the edge of the field, until it breaks from the wall of timber and becomes an eagle, his enormous profile swooping low over the grass, seeming to be tethered by an invisible string, like a menacing kite bought from a crafts store, before he lands high in the top of the lightning scarred cottonwood.

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# P o e t r y

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## WIND IN THE WILLOWS

The river is a slithery,  
slippery snake, sneaking  
around the bend by the  
bluff on the bottomland.  
Wavy willows bow to the  
wind gracefully, bending  
and standing, pausing  
and moving like a ballet  
of ballerinas beside the  
winding water.  
They are a painting in  
motion, like brushstrokes  
kissing the canvas,  
tracing the lines and the  
curves of the stems and  
the leaves. Geese glide  
in on the breeze, coming  
to a sliding stop by the  
bank by the willows.

## LUCKY?

They are hiding  
under a blanket  
of snow. One of  
these days they'll  
grow into clover.  
They'll have sweet  
blooms, and people  
will crawl on their  
hands and knees  
through the patch,  
counting leaves.  
If one finds a plant  
with four leaves,  
instead of three,  
they will shout out,  
"Whoopee, lucky  
me!"

## WALK AWAY

It's time to walk  
away from the  
long tunnel of  
time that has  
led us through  
the depths of the  
dark of winter.  
Look to the sky  
for the glow of  
spring that is  
coming to the  
rescue of our  
sad hearts.  
Tomorrow comes  
every day, and is  
a new way  
to be in a better  
place that is full  
of hope and the  
promise of peace.

## FRIENDS FOREVER

At times, we love  
our friends as much,  
or even more, than  
family members.  
Obligations don't  
trump connections  
that are invisible  
cords that draw  
us to each other.  
They make a bond  
that is as strong as  
family blood and as  
lasting. Our hearts  
have room enough  
to hold everyone  
who belongs there.

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## NORTH OF SPRING

On the steep north  
slope of the blue  
bluff by the river,  
are old snow drifts,  
warriors left from  
the fierce battles  
of winter. They  
have eluded the  
warmth of the  
south sun, but  
soon it will find  
and devour them,  
as it moves toward  
equinox. There is  
no escape from  
it's deadly eye.



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- (S) '14 JD Z930R, 54" deck, 1097 hrs, stk 320772.....\$6,200

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The female Cardinal shows her best colors this time of the year, too. (See male page 3.)



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## A Popcorn Lover

Janet Sobczyk, Omaha, © 2021

She pretends to settle into bed but ears point to the door  
at the slightest kitchen rustle she'll dash to beg some more.

Plink, plink, plink, kernels hit the pan  
oil's heated, salt's ready, a midnight snack's the plan.

She waits, impatient, white popcorn overflows again  
bounces off counter, hits the floor. Win!

She skitters and dives, nabs her prey  
triumphantly carries it away.

Spits it out, bats it around  
picks it up and flops on the ground.

Nibbles it carefully, not in a hurry  
then trots after the maker to dance in a flurry.

He relents, tosses one high  
she biffs the catch, it bounces wide.

She sniffs and tracks it down  
scarfs it, acts like a clown.

The game resumes, simple and fun  
she leaps and catches the very next one.

With popcorn she delights, it lifts the mood  
she loves to perform and play with her food.

*Did you know that March 11th is National Popcorn Lovers Day?*



## Diary of a Part-time Housewife

Merri Johnson, Auburn

Wow, people. I was asleep by 10:00 last night and did not wake up until 7:45 this morning. Must have been the glass of wine I had. Or maybe I was just completely exhausted from five days of jigsaw puzzle effort.

Hubby bought me a 1,000-piece, 22-by-14-inch puzzle for Valentine's Day. That number of pieces in that small a finished size translates to individual pieces that are barely larger than my thumbnail. Just getting a grip on them is a challenge, let alone trying to fit them into place.

If you are a puzzle fan, you know how addicting puzzles can be. Half an hour goes by like five minutes when you are fixated on finding that one piece. You know the one. It is totally unique among all the pieces. There is no chance you could mistake it for some other part of the puzzle. It should be easy to spot!! In fact, when you finally find it, you realize you have looked at it, and even tried to make it fit, multiple times already.

There are definitely strange physics at work in jigsaw puzzles. Or perhaps it's just my 68-year old eyes and changing light conditions.

The cold weather of this past week has been ideal for puzzle making. It's not like I would have been doing much outdoors anyway in mid-February, but somehow sub-zero mornings and single digit-afternoons induce a kind of mental time-warp. It feels like you have all the time in the world and nothing more pressing to do than fritter away half a day on a jigsaw puzzle inside your warm house. (Truth be told, my deadline for this column is the only thing keeping me away from that puzzle right now!)

I used to make a lot of large-piece jigsaw puzzles with an elderly friend at Good Sam nursing home. She always asked, "Now, what will we do with this puzzle when it's finished?" She was a very practical person. Activities and things needed to serve a purpose. My theory of her enjoyment of puzzle-making is that it was a substitute for her previous pastime of sewing crazy quilts. Fitting the pieces of a crazy quilt together resulted in a beautiful, yet practical, item. My friend passed away earlier this year at age 100, and one of my prized possessions now is a crazy quilt she made that adorns a bed in my guest room.

Puzzle-making was a staple of activity at my mom's house when we used to spend Christmas there each year. Mom also used to quilt, and she did embroidery and other fabric crafts. For my 60th birthday she made me a set of cotton dish towels embroidered for each day of the week. Sadly, my mom is not able to handle a needle and

*Diary Continued on page 11 >>>>>>*



## Diseases Can Be Invisible

Stephen Hassler

I received notice from a friend that his doctor recently informed him of “what he has.” He says that after years of being in pain, hiding symptoms from others, pretending to be doing better than he was until that no longer worked, and finally knowing what he has, he wonders, “How do I deal with it?”

Tired, wanting to lie down, taking medication frequently, having a whole pharmacy on the nightstand. Doctors say this disease lasts forever and that he will not heal.

Tired of being asked, “Did you go to the doctor, have you tried this, have you tried that? Just go out and exercise.” Yes, he’s tried everything, but he’s not giving up.

Not a cure, but a nap helps. Not lazy, but medication makes him sleepy. Not angry, but sometimes cranky with pain, mobility problems, fatigue, environment.

Most frustrating is when people say it can’t be that bad, you look good. He always tries to look good. But the disease is an invisible one that affects one physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Rare autoimmune diseases cannot be seen, but they are there, silent and painful. ALS, cancer, rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis, fibromyalgia, lupus, the list is long.

I try to identify with my friend. My wife had polio when she was about four years old. She had multiple surgeries during high school, spending a lot of time at home in bed or in painful physical therapy. Learning to “hide” her limp, her neck and back pain, muscle pain in arms and legs, she blended in with society and the workplace. And then tragically, at middle age, nerve cells that didn’t die at first, but were only damaged, began to die, resulting in a lower level of mobility and more pain. She developed *Post Polio Syndrome*\*.

I used to think that if you’re in a wheelchair, you must be paralyzed, and so you don’t feel anything, no pain. But many people are in wheelchairs because it is excruciating to walk or stand, and sometimes even to sit. Sidewalk cracks are jolting, steps are mountains.

And people add insult to injury by their ignorant comments. “You’re lucky you’re not a quadriplegic.” Right, she was so “lucky.”

Do not try to diminish another’s pain. “Be there” for a friend or relative if they need someone, and perhaps help make their life easier. And be grateful for your health, not arrogant about it.

*\*I don’t know my friend’s disease, however, if you are a polio survivor, the Nebraska Polio Survivors Association has a website; NE-polio.org or request an electronic copy of their newsletter; npsa.org@hotmail.com*



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<<<<<<< *Diary Continued from page 10*

thread or puzzle pieces anymore. She lives in an assisted living facility now, at age 95. And like my friend had, my mom has a cheerful attitude about each day.

Time does not actually stop, it turns out. We all eventually reach the winter of our lives. Before that happens, we do well to take stock of how we are spending our time. Let’s accomplish something meaningful. But let us also take a bit of time off once in a while.

I am setting a goal to finish my jigsaw puzzle by the time the snow is melted. Then, I will rejoin the outdoor world. First on my list is taking a daily walk, then there’s pruning and ordering garden seeds and maybe even hiking at Indian Cave again. I feel more energetic already!! How about you?

## Music in My School

Janet Sobczyk, Omaha, © 2021

It lifts my spirits  
that lilt of piano  
wafting down the hall  
whether by a skilled hand  
with smooth confidence  
or a beginner's hand  
plinking with hesitation  
doesn't matter  
it's music the same  
tugs the corners of my mouth  
upwards  
pause to listen  
just for the moment  
it calms stress  
inspires gratitude  
lifts thoughts  
above mundane concerns  
soak it in  
then...  
praise the player  
and thank the teacher.

*March is "Music in Our Schools Month."  
This poem is dedicated to music therapists, teachers, and  
band directors everywhere,  
but especially those at Madonna School in Omaha.*

## Window On Fifth Street

Stephen Hassler, Peru

I wonder what it means to have a window to the soul.

My sons' mother's mother, had Alzheimers. One son, concerned about the possibility that he might have inherited that gene, sent a saliva sample to one of those online companies that analyze DNA and provide info on one's ancestry and possible diseases. He was relieved when the "printout" did not list the gene for Alzheimers.

Other things were listed that did not manifest themselves, like the genetic defect that is tested for in all new-borns, because it must be treated immediately if the baby has that abnormality. The gene was there, but the abnormality was not. As far as I know, there were no red flags in his DNA analysis.

To further analyze his "genome" my son offered to pay to get me tested. So I sent in my saliva sample. The results showed nothing catastrophic for me, but the other side of the coin was interesting; ancestral lineage. The data showed that my son and I, as many Americans, have Western European ancestry. Ours is mostly German and Irish, as we already knew, but also a spattering of various nationalities including some representation from Eastern Europe. And farther back, way back, was a Neanderthal presence/strain.

Some background; The latest research shows that Neanderthal man did not evolve into Cro-Magnon man as I was taught when I went to school. Rather, each was a separate species, but the Neanderthal "died out," supposedly because it was inferior to Cro-Magnon which continued to evolve into Homo Sapiens -- us. And yet, both the Cro-Magnon and Neanderthal genetic make-ups allowed inter-species reproduction, and that is why Neanderthal is part of our DNA.

I jokingly pointed out to my son that according to the printout, he is more Neanderthal than I am. I don't think he thought it was funny. Anyway, this DNA analysis is as close to a "window to the soul" as I can imagine. Furthermore, I can't help but be intrigued by relating all this to the concept of "original sin" and how Cro-Magnon might have been "tempted" to get to know his Neanderthal neighbor a little better. Or maybe the other way around.

So what would a "window to the soul" reveal? I'll let you know if I ever get a peek. Until then, I anticipate that, this being March, my window on Fifth Street will provide a "window to Spring." Looking forward to it.

---

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**including local photos and articles**

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# PSC Men's Basketball

FEBRUARY 1, PSC v CULVER-STOCKTON COLLEGE  
Visit [pscbobcats.com](http://pscbobcats.com)

PSC 65-67







# PSC Women's Basketball

February 10, PSC Bobcats v Missouri Valley Vikings  
Visit [pscbobcats.com](http://pscbobcats.com)

PSC 79-58





# Peru State College News

## Peru State Recognizes Senior Cheerleaders

Prior to its virtual competition Valentine Day's Night in the Al Wheeler Activity Center on the campus of Peru State, the Bobcat cheer team recognized its six seniors.

Before each of the cheerleaders were honored, the entire squad was introduced as this was the first and only performance in front of home fans. A special recognition was announced prior to the event noting a special shout-out to one of senior's mothers who had been undergoing radiation in her battle with breast cancer.

The following seniors were recognized, along with their parents and/or escorts.

Hailey Babish, Ogallala. Molly Brown, Falls City. Kelsey Brundage, Juniata. Bailey Johnson, Johnson. Destiny Maguire, Greenwood. Cassie Seckel, Columbus.

1) Three of the seniors – Kelsey, Bailey, and Destiny have been members of the team for four years. Hailey and Molly joined the team a year later while Cassie has been on the team for two seasons.

2) All six of these young women have not only worked hard on the competition floor, but in the classroom as well. All six were named as Daktronics-NAIA Scholar-Athletes last season and all are on track to earn the recognition for a second straight year.

3) Their focus on their academics, too, helped their team last season to be named as an NAIA Scholar Team which requires that the entire team who competed had to have a cumulative 3.0 team grade point average.

**Following the recognition of the seniors, the cheerleading squad warmed up for their virtual performance, which they eventually won. It was Peru State's first-ever win in competition in the two years of being competitive.**

## Lone Bobcat MBB Senior Recognized

Before the final home game of the Peru State men's basketball team, the Bobcats took a few minutes to recognize their lone senior member of the team, #32, Isaac Simpson (Papillion). Simpson, a 6-7 forward, was accompanied to center court by his mother Tasha.

One of his favorite Bobcat memories is winning the conference tournament championship in 2019 and earning a berth into the NAIA National Championship tournament.

Simpson came to Peru State from the University of Omaha. He is the son of Jim and Tasha Simpson. Simpson is an elementary education major and after graduation plans to become a basketball graduate assistant and start teaching within the next few years. He is presently student teaching at Auburn Elementary.

## Peru State Recognizes Women's Cross Country Seniors

During halftime of a recent Peru State men's basketball contest, Bobcat fans were able to acknowledge and thank its two women's cross country seniors. Annika McDonald (Tecumseh) and Makalah Scheele (Beatrice) were recognized by cross country coach James Cole and the Bobcat fans in attendance.

McDonald is a psychology major and after graduation she plans to find a job helping children in foster care so she can make an impact on those who are going through something really hard in their life.

After graduation Scheele will continue her education to get a masters in child studies and hopefully get a child protective services job.

## Bobcat Softball Opens with a Split

The Peru State softball team opened its 2021 season with a split against Southwestern in Winfield, Kan., on Thursday. The Bobcats won their first game of the season by taking the first game 8-1 over the Moundbuilders. Southwestern then took the second game 6-4.

## Bobcat Baseball

In their first action of the year, the McPherson Bulldogs swept the visiting Bobcat baseball team Friday in McPherson. The Bulldogs won the double header winning 13-5 and 16-11.

With the wins, McPherson improved to 2-0 while Peru State falls to 1-6.

## Bobcat Men's Basketball

Henry Tanksley (Lincoln), was named to the Heart of America Athletic Conference Second Team List for the second year in a row. Tanksley, a 6-4 senior guard, finished as the fifth leading scorer overall in the conference and sixth in average scoring. The postseason awards were selected by each head coach in the league.

March 2021

## PASA and Bobcat Athletic Department Recognize Hansons

The Peru State athletic department and PASA, presented a plaque to "Dan and Elaine Hanson- In appreciation of your support of Peru State athletics from 2009 to 2021."

As many of you are aware, the Hansons have decided to retire at the end of this fiscal year from Peru State after 11 years of service to the institution. The Bobcat athletic program thanks Dan and Elaine for the leadership provided in helping secure upgrades for the Oak Bowl Stadium, the Field House, the Park Avenue Entrance, and for getting the initial funding coming for an indoor facility for baseball and softball. In addition, more operational and scholarship funding has been provided. Plus, Mrs. Hanson has been a key part, too, in our student-athletes development as by helping with PASA and helping organize many community service opportunities for the athletes.

Athletic Director Wayne Albury commented, "We have been very fortunate to have them as part of Peru State for the past 11 years and we definitely know the athletic programs would not be where they are at today without the support of both of them."

## Peru State Dance Shows Big Improvement

The Bobcat competitive dance team continues to show improvement as they earned a season-high score of 59.65 Friday night. Peru State finished third in a triangular hosted by Hastings.

The Broncos won the triangular with a team score of 73.05 while York was second with a total of 68.1 The 'Cats actually scored a 66.15 but had deductions of 6.5 – five of which was for not having a large enough squad.

Dance has three categories which are expected to be performed – jazz, pom, and hip hop. Friday night, the Bobcats received their best total in jazz.

Peru State received its highest marks in choreography and overall degree of difficulty.

## Peru State Golf

Bobcat Golf Team Honored as "Champions of Character Team."

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