

Your

October 2020

# Country Neighbor

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Smoky Red Dawn



Migrating Monarchs on Boneset

## A Magazine for Small Towns & Rural America

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

### Cases “tested positive” for Covid-19 in our “Country Neighborhood.”

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

Date	Nemaha	Otoe	Johnson	Richardson
September 5	97	125	28	37
September 12	108	129	32	46
September 19	112	134	38	50
September 26	122	146	46	53

This table shows that these southeast Nebraska counties increased in Covid-19 cases through the month of September. October results, if available, will be presented here next month.

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# ***Your Country Neighbor***

*Voices and Views From the Valleys of the Nemaha*

Publisher & Photographer, Stephen Hassler

P.O. Box 126  
Peru, Nebraska 68421

**countryneighbor@windstream.net**

**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

## ***Your Country Neighbor***

**can be found online at;  
[yourcountryneighbor.com](http://yourcountryneighbor.com)**

### **October Writers & Contributors**

Devon Adams - 6 & 7

Stephen Hassler - 12

Merri Johnson - 10

Dorothy Rieke - 5

Janet Sobczyk - 2 & 11

Thank You!

## **Shattering the Stereotype**

Janet Sobczyk, © 2020, Omaha

The black Harley stands shiny  
next to a grey, dusty Camry  
their drivers and wives vastly different  
on roads that converged  
in this parking lot  
at this Inn  
to open the mind of one of them.

The tanned couple  
in black boots and slim jeans, Harley logo shirts  
tells tales that amaze  
of rallies in towns across many states  
of 30+ years riding close, her front to his back  
avoiding the interstate  
seeing sights that few knew.

The other couple  
in sneakers and extra-large jeans  
not well-traveled, raised five kids  
has little to contribute to this conversation  
of scenes and sights  
and adventure  
but curious, keeps asking questions.

The men have nothing in common  
but the women connect  
share a love of books, including the bible  
both enjoy quiet time with nature  
the biker wife resembles the other’s sister  
who thinks *this could have been Sis’s life,*  
*she would have loved the open road.*

Their differences fade as dusk settles into dark  
they tell of tomorrow’s plans, retreat to their rooms  
meet for breakfast, then  
one couple vrooms away  
to see covered bridges in Madison County  
the other drives to KC  
to see their grandbaby.

### **Covid Cases In Counties Bordering Nebraska**

(Same Source As Page 1)

Date	Kansas		Missouri		Iowa
	Brown	Nemaha	Atchison	Holt	Fremont
September 5	80	57	34	69	62
September 12	81	66	39	72	64
September 19	91	81	44	73	79
September 26	114	101	51	75	115



Roadside Garden of Thistles and Sunflowers.  
H-136



Migrating Vultures stopping for a snack of dead fish.  
H-136



Common Crownvetch  
H-67

# Better Way

## AUTOMOTIVE

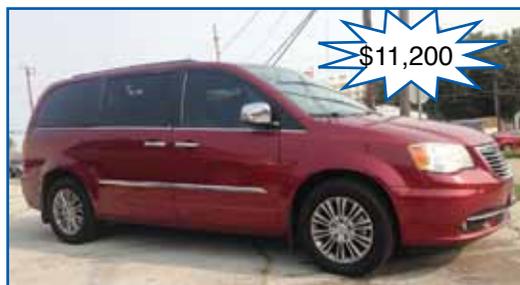
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Monarch on Common Sunflower



Migrating Monarchs preferred *Late Boneset* to Sunflowers.



Monarch on Jerusalem Artichoke (a sunflower variety).



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## VOTING IS A PRIVILEGE AND A DUTY

Dorothy Rieke, Julian

This year voting is especially important for every citizen. By voting, each of us can stand up for issues we care about. If you are concerned about raising the minimum wage, funding education, or even who is representing you in Congress, you need to vote.

Because there have been many lawless upheavals in our country recently, we need to vote for those who have answers to our country's problems.

This is your life! You need to take time to study candidates' qualifications and their previous decisions. Will they represent your ideas and your beliefs?

Elections have consequences. Voting is an opportunity to stand up for issues you care about. If you do not cast a vote, others will be making decisions for you.

Most of us are paying taxes. Do you want to have a voice in how that money is spent? Voting offers an opportunity to choose how your tax dollars are spent.

It is also important to vote intelligently. Be sure to study qualifications of candidates carefully. Past performance may be an indication of future actions.

Above all, voting is an opportunity to make a positive impact on conditions in our country. We need to support the candidates that are aware of the needs in our communities, state, and country.

It is also our responsibility to vote because our freedom to pursue happiness depends on a working, representative democracy.

Our system of government only works with knowledgeable voters voting on election day.

The following are some reasons why you should vote:

Your vote is a voice that deserves to be heard.

A lot more is at stake than just who is elected President.

Health care continues to be a major issue.

You owe it to America's heroes past and present.

It is the right thing to do for others.

It is our duty to prevent America's decline as a democracy.

Voting means you are a doer.

For the health of our democracy and your own well-being, you need to vote in this November's election. The more you understand and the more you know, the better off your community and our nation will be. America is strongest when people have skills to take advantage of the opportunity to vote.



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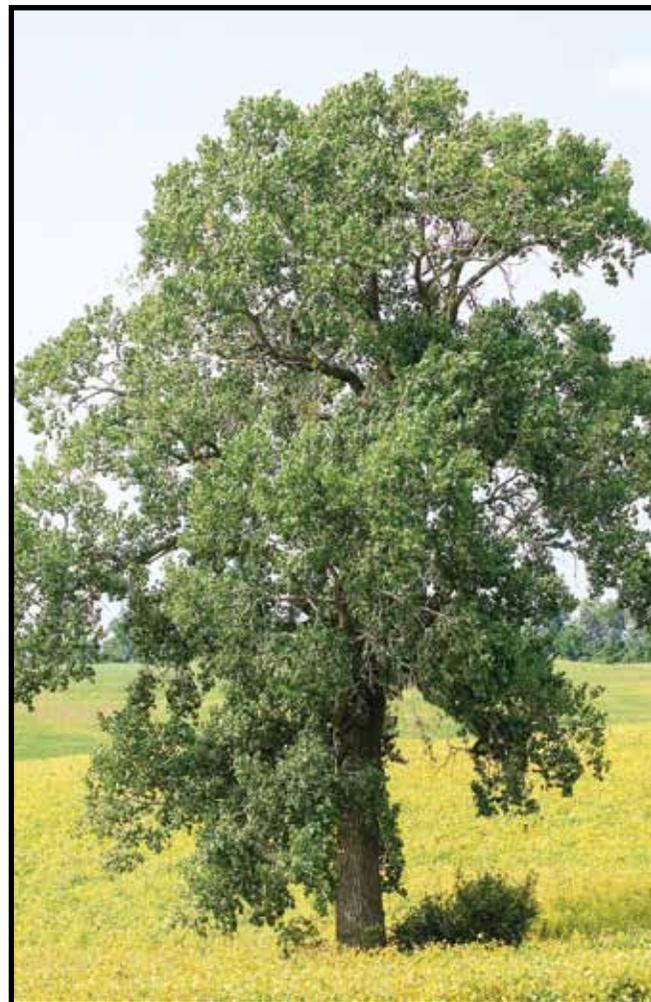
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**Emerald and Gold -- Cottonwood Tree in Soybean Field**

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### HALLOWEEN MASKS

Have you noticed that people look very strange with their virus masks? Imagine what a child must think when he sees a body with a head that is only part human. You can't judge expressions when you can't see them. Eyes can seem to be very menacing without a smily mouth to go with them. So, this year may become the scariest time we've ever known, when you consider why we're wearing surgical equipment. There really is a menace causing us to be in hiding.

### WHAT IF?

Consider the chance that Christopher Columbus might not have found this continent at all if he had encountered some of the wacky weather that we have experienced recently. Forecasters have been pointing out these little swirls in the Atlantic that keep launching off the African coast. They look like white tops spinning on a blue table from the satellite videos, but the awful truth is that they are baby monsters that have been growing into deadly storms by the time they smash into our coastlines. Old Chris may not have found more than the ghosts that live down on the bottom of the ocean, if he'd set sail in a year when one hurricane seems to spawn the next one, and they keep coming at us like cannon balls fired by a vengeful spirit.



Bumblebee on Field Thistle.

One of 250 species of bumblebees of which I've seen 3.

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by  
Devon  
Adams,  
Peru

### YARD SALE TODAY

Like busy butterflies flitting from bloom to bloom in the sunny warmth of autumn, people are driving from street to street, looking for the signs of sales. Like gardens planted at each home, smorgasbords of “stuff” are carefully arranged to catch a buyer’s eye. Over here is the kid’s corner, with toys and books begging to be bought, and here are the kids pulling their moms closer and closer to what they want. The tools are in the garage, or at least they used to be, before they were the first things sold. The furniture is priced to leave the yard, and decorating items can be had for less and less as time goes on. Books are bargains, almost always, but as treasures go, they are priceless in their value. Have a nice day, and come back next spring!

### BURNING LIGHT

Sky shine is diminished, with intense autumn blue faded to dirty white at the crack of noon. The sun disk rises and sets behind a dense curtain of smoke riding high over the earth. The beauty is eerie, like an other-worldly scene from a science fiction film. With no clouds to throw down shadows, the fiery furnace of our nurturing star is somehow less than it should be. The day is not normal. It is caught in a drama that resembles an eclipse of the sun. But the reason is far more somber than an astronomical trick. Lives are burning all along the western coast of our great nation. Dry vegetation has ignited and will not go out. Where the wind goes, so goes the devastation. Caught and carried by the powerful jet stream, smoke rides the air currents to our great plains. The passionate rosy orange flare of a perfectly beautiful circle is a mask that covers the tragedy of such a display.

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### TOXIC CHANGES

As the world turns in it’s usual orbit, our heads spin out of control with a situation that is not the fault of the good old U.S.A. Who would think that particles so small could wreak such damage? It is the equivalent of a bomb dropping, as the Covid virus has spread around the world, killing and wounding both people and their financial health. We were attacked, but we cannot let our independence be compromised by those who want to use the virus to control every aspect of our existence.

### LOVE IS A PUPPY

If he will sit still for at least two seconds, you may get a chance to look into his eyes, before he gives you another sloppy kiss. They are Hersey’s chocolate brown, soft and sweet and oh, so bright and beautiful. But then you’ll see the lashes that are longer than any human’s who ever lived. Not only are they long, but they curl up on the ends! His feet are mostly big and getting bigger. And his legs are longer than his long tail. But it is his curly hair that makes him feel like a plush toy on a shelf in a store. It is the color of caramel in candlelight. He wants to be a lap dog, but he doesn’t fit, so it might work if you sit on the floor with him and hug him ‘til you cry.



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Maximilian Sunflower Patch



Goldenrod

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## Diary of a Part-Time Housewife

Merri Johnson, Auburn

Yippee!!! It's October, my absolutely favorite month, perhaps because I was born in October. Anyway, I have written on that topic before, so I will not go into that again. I just had to give a shout-out for the season.

So, on to this month's topic: change and power.

Over six months have passed since I last saw, or even spoke with, my friend who lives in a nursing home. I have been sending her a greeting card and note every week, but that is a poor substitute for the weekly in-person visits that had been our custom for the past five years. My friend will turn 100 in a few days and I am sad that the best I can do to celebrate it with her is a closed-window visit by telephone.

That juxtaposition of time – six months versus 100 years – gives me something to ponder.

I have not been compelled against my will to stay strictly inside my home, as nursing home and assisted living facility residents have been. Nor have I deemed it necessary for my health or peace of mind to keep completely away from others, as some have done, even going so far as to have their groceries delivered to them.

I have come and gone largely as I did pre-pandemic. Don't get me wrong, though, I'm not a rebel. I do wear a mask inside public places and have not been in any indoor gathering larger than my church service, which, sadly, has not exceeded 40 since resuming in-person worship in June. Yet, I find myself getting emotional over the restrictions on society that have happened in such a short time.

When I consider the changes my friend has seen in 100 years of life, it seems to me that those changes have been largely positive. Of course, there is always nostalgia for the loss of long-held traditions, especially those traditions that marked one's childhood. But, the changes of the last century have come about in large part from new technologies that, no matter how radically they changed daily life, did not happen literally overnight by government decree.

I think what bothers me most about the current situation is that we may be irreversibly changing how we personally relate to each other and how we handle crises, not to mention the psychological and economic damage of it all. I am not saying that extreme measures were a mistake, or that they should have been more extreme. That assessment is beyond my capability.

What I am suggesting is that we should be vigilant about not letting these temporary government actions become permanent, or be considered a legitimate precedent for future mandates. No matter who is in power, we all know that power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

Now, get outside and exercise your right to connect with nature in this glorious season, up close and personal!!



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## A Year After the Flood

Janet Sobczyk, © 2020, Omaha

For our anniversary over Labor Day we returned to one of our favorite spots, the River Inn in Brownville, NE. We had wanted to come in 2019 but the summer flooding prevented it. This time, after so many months at home due to Covid, we especially enjoyed the chance to get away from the city and spend time on the river.

The Inn has a rustic feel yet provides amenities that non-campers like us require: a good bed, nice bathroom, and a hearty breakfast. We took the dinner cruise on the Spirit of Brownville, which gave us a glimpse of the changes brought by the flooding. We talked with other passengers and crew, and heard about the struggles the people of Brownville have faced.

The next morning as the sun rose over the east bank, I sat on the deck watching the birds. I thought about the dredge upstream that was almost washed away, and the effort it took to save. This poem is a result of those quiet moments alone.

Fresh foliage creeps over eroded banks  
wild sunflowers bloom as if nothing happened  
but the trees bear scars  
tangled drifted debris whispers the tale.

The Captain Meriwether Lewis Dredge Museum  
floats secure in its dry-docked moat  
imagine the struggle by tugs, chains, men  
working 16-hour days to contain it in high water.

It rose, bucking to break free of moorings  
they held on with all their might  
restrained it from a rampage  
prevented catastrophe downstream.

It rests silent and sullen in its defeat, bested this time  
a little worse for wear, but not broken  
peers from its perch above the now-lazy river  
calls me back to watch the sunrise with it again.

As swallows dart and eagles soar  
mist rises from the ever-flowing surface  
sun's rays shoo wisps away  
ushers in a clear day

washes the dredge in light  
its twin smokestacks stand tall  
white decks await tourists  
kept away by Covid and a damaged road.

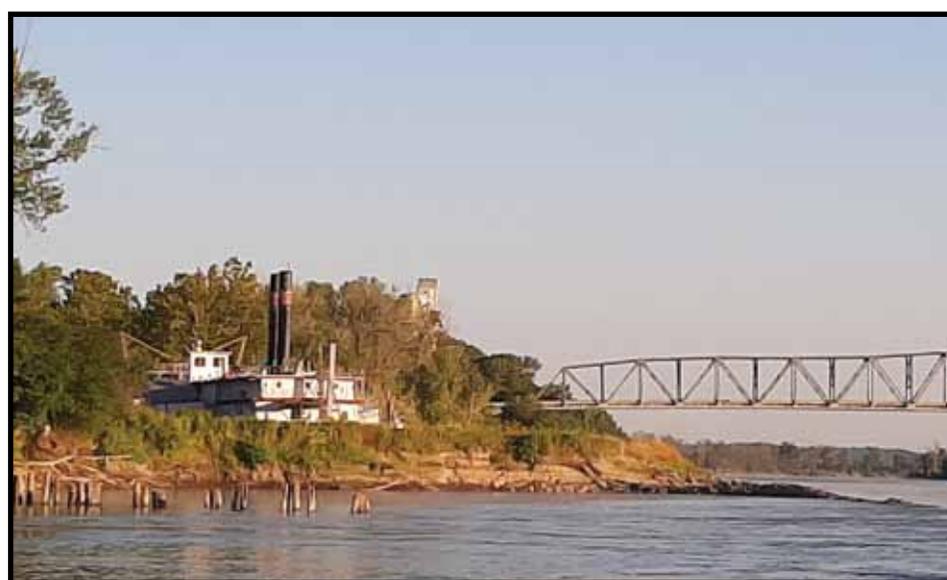
The town waits, too  
it survives as Midwest people tend to do  
shops closed for now  
but restaurant still serves, so does the bar.

There's hope as a new store opens  
a sign of growth in a small town  
that understands the damage a river can do  
while it sustains life, too.

**This poem is dedicated to the people of Brownville,  
with gratitude for your hospitality and  
admiration for your fortitude.**



View from the deck of *The River Inn*.  
Missouri River bridge at Brownville.



*Captain Merewether Lewis* river dredge at sunrise  
from the deck of Brownville's *The River Inn*.

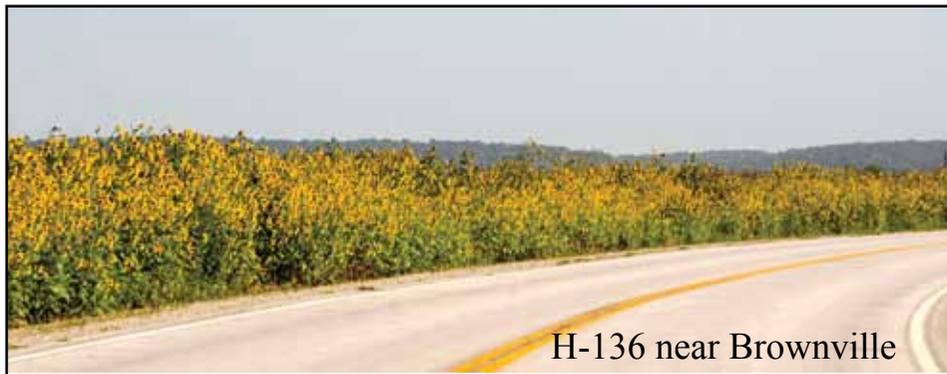
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# Window On Fifth Street

Stephen Hassler, Peru

I'm taking my view a little farther than my window on Fifth Street this time. H-67 passes by Peru on the south, and along that highway I take a lot of the photos that you see in this publication every month. Not just wildflowers, but windmills, barns, field harvesting, eagles, hawks, and this month, even a cottonwood tree (page 5).

You've probably noticed the sunflowers along the road in the ditch and reaching up the banks to farm fences. In August and September trees were still green, but yellow dominated the roadside. Some sunflower varieties are still blooming, providing nourishment for straggling Monarchs, even this late.



H-136 near Brownville

The Common Sunflower, tall and spindly, mid September

Other than the "Common Sunflower" I thought there might have been maybe one or two other varieties out there, but it's more complicated than that. Driving by in my car or even parked on the shoulder, many look the same to me, but on closer observation, by comparing photos side by side, there are subtle differences; number of petals, shape of petals (pointed or rounded), and difference in leaves. What also varies is the number of flowers on the stem.

I've been observing and photographing sunflowers for many years, but this year, with my new "PictureThis" app (application, program), for my iPhone, I am assisted in the identification process, and the process is difficult, even with this digital advisor. Two or more varieties are very similar, making identification difficult. I'll try to get it close.

The *Jerusalem Artichoke* was one of the two most common that I found, the other being the *Maximilian Sunflower*.



*Jerusalem Artichoke*



*Maximilian Sunflower*



*Jerusalem Artichoke*



*Sawtooth Sunflower?*

Other than the tall spindly *Common Sunflower*, the *Maximilian Sunflower* is the easiest to identify. The *Max. S.* has a tall stalk with feathery flowers clustered closely around it.

The *Jerusalem Artichoke* had to be identified by its leaves since the flowers varied in appearance and often brought up false names, including *Hairy Sunflower*, *Woodland Sunflower*, *Swamp Sunflower*, *Sawtooth Sunflower*, and even *False Sunflower!*"

But I'm thinking this *Sawtooth Sunflower* photo might be authentic.

On the last day of my "hunt" I came across this *Cup Plant*. It's mostly "bloomed out", but it was the only plant of its kind in seven miles of H-67.



*Cup Plant (relatively large leaves)*



# Peru State College Athletics



## Joan Albury Named Heart's NAIA Coach of Character

The Heart of America Athletic Conference (Heart) recently announced that Joan Albury, Peru State head women's basketball coach, as their NAIA Coach of Character award winner for the 2019-20 year. Albury is the first Peru State coach to ever win the award at the Heart conference level.

For the award, which recognizes a head coach who is dedicated to deliberately teaching character through sport, a nomination packet was submitted. In the nomination, Coach Albury had to describe her methods of teaching character and completed an essay on the same topic. In addition, three letters of recommendation had to be secured – one from the president, a player, and a colleague.

Peru State president Dr. Dan Hanson wrote this in his letter of recommendation for Albury, "I have been a colleague of Coach Albury since she arrived at Peru State College. She first served as a math instructor and was highly regarded by students for her ability to help them understand this important and challenging subject. To assist the College, she served as interim volleyball coach for a year, and then, three years ago, assumed the responsibilities as head coach for our women's basketball program. Throughout her time as head coach, I have been impressed with the high expectations she sets for her student athletes. They are models on campus and on the court demonstrating outstanding sportsmanship, a commitment to service, and academic excellence."

Former player Claire Cudney of Marysville, Kan., who actually played both volleyball and basketball under Albury, commented, "Even though she has a warming personality, when it came to the court her high intensity coaching was present. She has been a coach who can build a personal connection, receive respect, and see great potential in her players. Coach Albury has always held her athletes to a higher standard on and off the court."

Albury was very pleased to learn of her honor and said, "I am very honored to be chosen as the Champions of Character Coach of the Year for the Heart of America Athletic Conference. The Champions of Character initiatives are something that our college athletic department and athletes aspire to achieve on a daily basis."

Albury's nomination has been forwarded by the conference to the NAIA national office for judging with other conference nominees. The winner will be announced in September as part of the NAIA National Awards Day.

## Homecoming activities at Peru State College are Scheduled for the week of September 28

**The football game against Central Methodist University is to be held on October 3.**

The Saturday, October 3 football game will be held at 2:00 p.m. The Homecoming King and Queen will be crowned at half-time.

The Campus Activities Board and the Student Senate will hold events for students throughout the week. Events include Mr. Peru, Acoustic Karaoke and Casino Night.

Women's Volleyball plays Culver-Stockton in the Al Wheeler Activity Center on Sunday, October 4 at 11 a.m.

### No alumni events

In the wake of the global pandemic, all planned fall 2020 alumni events, including several annual homecoming events were canceled. This decision was made in coordination with the Peru State College Foundation and the National Alumni Association. Events impacted include, but may not be limited to all reunions and the Homecoming Parade.

### Athletic events and COVID-19

Peru State will abide by the Southeast Department Health District, State of Nebraska, and the Heart of America Athletic Conference guidelines and requirements as it relates to COVID-19, including mandatory face coverings for all attendees in both the Al Wheeler Activity Center and the Oak Bowl.

All admission and game tickets for volleyball and football will be pre-issued by Peru State athletics staff via HomeTown Ticketing at <https://tinyurl.com/PeruStateTickets>. There will be limited walk-up ticket sales at the AWAC or Oak Bowl and will be dependent on pre-sales.

The Heart of America Conference has advised that no visiting team fans attend games.

All attendees will be screened for COVID-19 at the entry gates and will be stamped upon passing the screening. The screening will include a temperature check and a review of the symptoms. If you do not feel well or have any symptoms prior to the games, do not attend.

Fans will be asked to abide by all facility signage and instructions, including no tailgating policies, social distancing seating, face coverings and any other instructions from game management.

Fans must sit in the seat assigned on their tickets and fans assume all risks of attending Peru State athletic events.

There will be no tailgating at Peru State athletic events this fall.



## FALL 2020 PERU STATE SPECTATOR AND TICKETING PROCEDURES



In the Interest of Fan Health and Safety, Peru State has Modified its Fan Attendance and Ticketing Procedures for Fall Sports for the 2020 Season.

In the Al Wheeler Activity Center (AWAC), for volleyball, Peru State will have a maximum of 544 available seats. In the Oak Bowl, for football, Peru State will have a maximum of 618 seats available. All tickets will be available on a first-come, first-serve basis. Ticket counts and procedures will be broken down into five categories:

- 1) Student Tickets
- 2) Faculty & Staff Tickets
- 3) Season Pass Holders
- 4) Home Team Fans Only
- 5) Complimentary Tickets for Recruits and Guests

All admission and game tickets for volleyball and football will be pre-issued by Peru State athletics staff via HomeTown Ticketing. There will be limited walk-up ticket sales at the AWAC or Oak Bowl and will be dependent on pre-sales. All tickets will include a unique code and may not be duplicated. Tickets will be verified electronically at the facility's point of entry by Peru State game management staff. Any tickets issued to a game that is postponed to a later make-up date will be honored on the new contest date.

### **Other Helpful Information for Bobcat fans:**

Peru State will abide by the Southeast Department Health District, State of Nebraska, and the Heart of America Athletic Conference guidelines and requirements as it relates to COVID-19, including mandatory face coverings for all attendees in both the Al Wheeler Activity Center and the Oak Bowl.

All attendees will be screened for COVID-19 at the entry gates and will be stamped upon passing the screening. The screening will include a temperature check and a review of the symptoms. **If you do not feel well or have any symptoms prior to the games, DO NOT COME!**

For the 2020 fall season, Peru State will not have any tailgating. Fans will be asked to abide by all facility signage and instructions, including no tailgating policies, social distancing seating, face coverings and any other instructions from game management. Fans must sit in the seat assigned on their tickets and fans assume all risks of attending Peru State athletic events. For football fans, entrances will be either via the south entrance through the Parking Lot F entrance which is handicap accessible or via the main gate.

Restrooms in both facilities will be monitored, cleaned, and disinfected regularly. Entry and exit doors to restrooms at the Oak Bowl will be marked. All lobbies and/or concourses will be monitored to ensure appropriate social distancing.

There will be no spectator and/or student-athlete meetings prior to and/or following the contests. All will be asked to leave the premises as quickly and safely as possible.

# Peru State College News

## Peru State College adds new Public History Certificate

The Nebraska State College System board approved the new Peru State College Public History certificate program.

This program may interest students who plan to work in public history. Public history refers to public-facing positions such as museums, state and national parks, national monuments and social media.

Dr. Kathi Nehls, assistant professor of history at Peru State College said, “Public history differs in significant ways from academic history. The audience is different—the general public rather than academics. There is also a sense of shared authority and collaboration with other disciplines in public history that is not found in academic history.”

The new certificate will not only interest students preparing for graduate studies and public-facing positions in History, but also students in any public-facing position. The courses will prepare students for any job that includes responsibilities such as historical representation, public relations, curation, public policy or urban planning.

Courses will include hands-on, practical engagement through class activities, projects and required internships. Students will also work with social media and digital platforms. Digital platforms include uses for spatial history, virtual and in-person exhibits, crowdsourcing projects, online oral history projects and data-mining analysis.

The program requires 15 credits, including:

Hist 322 Introduction to Public History (3) (New Course)  
Hist 324 Introduction to Museum and Archival Practices (3)  
(New Course)  
PSCI/BUS 468 Public Administration (3)  
Hist 411 Internship in Public History (6)

Nehls continues, “The program will allow us to work with local and regional historical sites and societies who frequently call on the Social Science faculty for student interns who are qualified to help with staffing and special projects. Recently requests for interns have come from Peru, Brownville, Auburn, Nebraska City, the Homestead National Monument and Fort Sisseton State Park in South Dakota. We are very excited to offer this additional, marketable credential to Peru State students.”

## Peru State will make History once again this year with The premier of their Collegiate Bowling Program.

The Bobcat bowling teams opened on Saturday, Sept. 26 in its inaugural season with both teams competing in the Midland Warriors Mike Hammer Open.

The teams will compete in Elkhorn, Nebraska, at the Mark for the two-day competition.

Competing for the women’s team are transfer McKinley Cross (Buhler, KS.), freshmen Annessa Crowell (Ravenna) and Cassidy Haberman (Sioux Falls, SD), sophomore Alena Montoya (Lakewood, CO), and senior Alyiah Franco (Enterprise, AL). Montoya, Franco and Haberman are dual-sport athletes as they are also members of the Peru State softball team.

The men’s team is comprised of freshmen Theodore Straube (Lincoln), Alexxander Uecker (Hastings), and Michael Anderson (Cairo). In addition, current Peru State students joined the team including Alex Chmelka (Lincoln), Gavin Maas (Glenwood, IA), Mason Clobes (Seward), and Austin Guhde-Egger (Auburn). Clobes is a senior while Chmelka and Maas are juniors. Guhde-Egger is a sophomore.

The bowlers began practicing in late August for the much-anticipated initial season opener.

Brenda Lutz is the bowling coordinator on campus. Coaching assistants are Nathan and Jeni Seitz, co-owners of Bowldog Alley, home practice facility for the team. Skip Wilson and Bob Benoit are bowling consultants. Both Wilson and Benoit were pro bowlers and members of the Pro Bowlers Associations (PBA).

Peru State will be competing in several competitions this fall in preparation for the Heart of America Athletic Conference (Heart) Championship in February.

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