

GROVE GAZETTE

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Union Grove JH/HS Newsletter

March 2022

One-Act Play Prepares for District Contest

Faith Woodall

The One-Act Play cast and crew will compete in their district UIL contest March 1-2 in the Lion Center. The top two plays advance to the bi-district contest March 22-23 at Panola College in Carthage.

Senior Katelyn Vaughn is confident the group will advance.

"I think we have an amazing play," senior Vaughn said. "We have steady ground work and great actors and actresses. With patience and more work with one another this play WILL be state worthy."

This year's play, "The Sweet Science of Bruising", written by Joy Wilkinson, is set in 1869 London.

"It tells the story of four women from a variety of backgrounds who find their way into the boxing ring to literally fight for their right to freedom and gender equality," director Sandra Spears said.

The cast and crew have been preparing for One-Act competition since they wrapped on the fall musical. They've had three workshops, where they performed for judges and reviewed their critiques, plus periodic Wednesday and Sunday night practices — on top of class time to build skills and strengthen weaknesses.

Baseball Opens District Play at Hawkins

Faith Woodall

JV and varsity baseball play at Hawkins March 1, the first of varsity's nine district games this month. The boys will also face Leveretts Chapel, Overton, Beckville, New Summerfield, Carlisle, Big Sandy, and Union Hill. JV will play six games. Both teams have a bye March 22.

According to Coach Chad Halcumb, even while waiting for basketball to end, the "group already created a very tight bond and have been working really hard".

"We have a big number of younger players this season, which is great," Halcumb said. "The older players have really taken the role of helping them learn."

Halcumb looks to improve in the batter's box compared to last year.

"We struggled at the plate last year at times, and I think this year we will be a little better with our situational hitting," Halcumb said.

Softball Tournament Namesake to Throw First Pitch

Katy Parman

The softball team will host the Melinda "Memaw" Smith Softball Tournament March 3-5, the weekend before their March 11 district opener at Big Sandy.

Como Pickton, Harmony, Alba-Golden, Linden-Kildare, Jefferson and Quitman have committed to playing the tournament, which will begin with an opening ceremony pitch from Memaw herself.

The Lady Lions play at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. on Thursday and 9:30 a.m., 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. on Saturday.

Track Team Hosts Dee Mackey Relays Annual Event

Jaycie Mullins

Once the Feb. 24 track meet was canceled due to weather, the Dee Mackey Track Meet on March 4 became the first meet of the season. Varsity girls, varsity boys and junior varsity boys will compete in the home meet against 17 other schools.

"We're looking for everyone to set a baseline time or distance that we can improve on each week," Coach Greg Park said.

All teams will camp out on the visitors' side of the stadium, as no camping on the field will be allowed.

PHOTOS: MOLLY MACKEY

Student Council members created home-made cards and candy baskets for children at the Truman Center and delivered the gifts on Valentine's Day.

Sponsors Bethany Ledbetter and Molly Mackey created the council after homecoming. "Molly and I both were very involved in student council when we were in high school, so we wanted to boost student morale, school spirit and pride," Ledbetter said.



Boys' Team Pile on the Pounds

Powerlifters Vie for Opportunity to Lift at State

STAFF

Eight boys have earned a spot at the Region 3 Division 3(3A) and 4(1A and 2A) meet at Malakoff High School on Saturday, March 5, where they will compete for a chance at the state meet in Abilene: Isaiah O'Neal (10), Lane Turner (10), James Evans (11), Carter Smith (12), Davy Branscom (11), Vincent Miller (12), Reed Cooper (11), and Tyler Rodgers (12).

At least three of the boys are ranked in the top five going into the regional meet, including Turner, who advanced to state last year, along with Miller. According to Coach Roger Adams, Turner went up a weight

class from last season. If he'd stayed in his previous weight class, he'd currently lead that division by about 100lbs.

Some of the boys clinched their regional tickets at the last-chance qualifier meet at Maud Feb. 24, where O'Neal (10) won first place in his weight class with a total of 780lbs, and Miller (12) placed second in his weight class with 1110lbs. Rodgers (12) placed third with 1135lbs, and Evans (11) took fifth in his weight class with 885lbs. Mason Byers (10) also competed and placed eighth in his weight class with 890lbs.

Turner, Smith, Branscom, and Cooper had already qualified for region based on lift totals from previous meets.

The boys last competed at Harmony Feb. 14. There, O'Neal placed second with 905lbs, Turner (10) placed third with 755lbs, Smith (12) placed second with 880lbs, Evans placed third with 845lbs, Jacob Hart (9) placed sixth with 560lbs, Byers placed first with 875lbs, Jacob Griffin (9) placed third with 1000lbs, Josh Joyner (12) placed third with 850lbs, Rodgers placed first with 1160lbs, and Tommy Branscom (9) placed second with 1000lbs.

One-Track Mind

JH Athletes Learn from First Meet

Sydney Pritchett

Junior high track competed in their first meet Feb. 28 at home and will compete again on March 7 at Sabine with one thing on their minds: improving in order to win.

To prepare, athletes practice after school on Tuesdays and Thursdays, when Coach Park introduces athletes to new events and

participants work on field events and relays in order to gain skills and speed.

"I'm going to work on having more strength in throwing the shot put and discus and to have good form in both throwing events," eighth grader Kaki Parr said. "I will give it my all."



PHOTOS: AUGUST VESTAL



Feb. 28 Meet Results

Seventh-Grade Girls

- Relays: 4x100 (Griffin, Lemming, Villamendez, Vestal) - 4th, 4x200 (Griffin, Cook, Villamendez, Vestal) 3rd, 4x400 (Griffin, Taylor, Potter, Vestal) 4th
- Individuals: Miley Nono—4th 100m dash; Kaci Pirtle—4th 100m hurdles, 4th 300m hurdles; Rachel Potter—4th 800m run, 4th 400m run; Bre Reynolds—4th discus; Jill Taylor—6th 800m run; Danica Vestal—6th long jump; Tinsleigh Webb—5th 100m hurdles

Eighth-Grade Girls

- Relays: 4x100 (Humphreys, Head, Chavez, Woodard) 5th place, 4x200 (McTyre, Chavez, Schaefer, Woodard) 4th, 4x400m (Humphreys, Chavez, McTyre, Woodard) 4th
- Individuals: Karen Chavez—6th high jump; Kyla Humphreys—2nd long jump; Kaki Pharr—2nd shot put; Callista Reeves—6th 200m run; Rhiley Schaefer—3rd 300m hurdles; Natalie Woodard—3rd high jump; Makynlie Young—3rd 800m run, 6th 400m run

Seventh-Grade Boys

- Relays: 4x100 (Langley, Wightman, Nutt, Nutt) 4th place, 4x400m (Langley, Nutt, Nutt, Wightman) 4th
- Individuals: Parker Johnston — 3rd 2400m run; Mateo Lara — 5th 2400m run; Kody Nutt— 4th high jump, 6th 200m run; Kolby Nutt — 4th triple jump; Hudson Wightman — 5th 100m dash, 1st triple jump, 2nd long jump

Eighth-Grade Boys

- Relays: 4x100 (James, Sirmans, Fernandez, Sartain) 3rd place, 4x400m (Cooper, Sirmans, Roberts, Graham) 3rd
- Individuals: Cooper Borden — 3rd 1600m run; Carter Cooper—5th 110m hurdles; Gracen Graham— 3rd 400m run; Dalton Hawkins — 4th Shot Put; Celson James — 5th 100m; Jared Rangel — 5th Discus; Wrigley Roberts—3rd 110m hurdles; Kendal Sartain—3rd 100m dash; Hunter Sirmans — 1st 800m run; Mason Stanley — 2nd 2400m run, 2nd 1600; Jayse Swigart—4th 110m hurdles

Golf Team to Grow Before Next Tournament

Sydney Pritchett

The golf team will travel to the Van Zandt country club in Canton March 7.

The boys team of Harlee Kirbus (12), Blake Moore (11), Cooper Vestal (11), Jaxson Daniels (10), and Kaden Day (9) competed Monday, Feb. 28 with Brady Colby (10) and Sydney Pritchett (10) at the East Texas Charter Invitational at the Alpine Golf Course in Longview.

After practice March 3, Coach J.B. Littlejohn will evaluate and select more female players to join the team before the March 7 tournament.

Ag Students Gain Incredibull Experience FFA to Compete in RodeoHouston

Olivia Hudgens

This month, several FFA students will attend events at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, which is the largest livestock show in the world. Also known as RodeoHouston, the show provides multiple opportunities for 4H and FFA students to demonstrate knowledge and skills and, according to their [website](#), has committed over \$14 million to scholarships for 2022, among other prizes. Attending the show might seem like a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, but it happens every year, right here in Texas.

The FFA Livestock team will travel to the Junior Breeding Heifer Show March 9-14, where Avery (12) and Chloe Brooks (8), Katherine (10) and Rachel Potter (7), Josh Baker (11), and Maddie Byers (9) will exhibit animals.

"Essentially, the judge is trying to determine which heifer will be the best "momma cow" and produce the most valuable offspring," ag teacher Josh Shafer said.

Bre Reynolds (7) and Emori Lemming (7) hope to place with their market barrows at the Junior Barrow Show March 12-17 one last time before they part.

"This is a terminal show, and every hog

Band Strives For Straight Ones At UIL Contest

Taylor See

Band will compete in UIL concert and sight reading contest March 10 at Gilmer.

"The band has been rehearsing the music each day and will have several Monday evening rehearsals in preparation for the performance," band director Andy Thompson said. "The band has been working hard to prepare three musical selections for the UIL judges."

The band plans to perform "La Madre De Los Gatos", "Kiefer's Special", and "Lone Eagle" in hopes of achieving their 32nd consecutive sweepstakes.

that arrives on the grounds, regardless of their placing at the show, will go onto a truck bound for the slaughterhouse," Shafer said. "Those pigs become part of the food chain."

UG's three-man tractor team competes March 12-14. The competition tests students' knowledge and skills in agricultural mechanization, power systems, engine theory, electrical theory, and hydraulics.

"Brice Hart (12), Rowdy Williams (10), and Cash Coleman (10) placed third in our respective area competition on Feb. 11 to earn themselves a spot among 35 other teams from all over the state," Shafer said.

The boys will take a 100-question exam and evaluate 20 tractor components. The top 10 teams will then compete in the debugging portion of the contest, where they must use their own tools to fix problems before one team member drives the tractor. According to Shafer, the winners will be earn much more than bragging rights.

"The winner is crowned state champion and will receive several thousand dollars worth of tools and tool storage chests to further their aspirations as tractor mechanics," Shafer said.



PHOTO: OLIVIA HUDGENS As of publication, junior Briyanna Blalock is the only majorette participating in twirling tryouts on March 12. However, Blalock, Angelina Leyva (11), and Sarah Clowers (10) will each tryout for drum major.

Cheer Candidates Tryout for '22 Squad

Olivia Hudgens

Varsity cheer candidates will tryout Friday, March 11 in the Lion Center starting at 9 a.m., followed by junior high.

Varsity girls will learn their cheers and chant Saturday, March 5 at the Lion Center and their dance through video. Junior high girls will learn their cheer and chant March 7-10. Since Gracie Winn (11) is the only candidate for cheer captain, she will automatically earn the position.

"I believe school spirit is one of the most important and fun things about high school," junior Gracie Winn said. "I've realized how much it contributes to making students' days better. I would love to be able to bring that to Union Grove and make memories for everyone."

Debating Duos Pair of Partners to Compete in State Meet

Olivia Hudgens

Two CX debate teams will compete at the state meet in Austin March 14-15: Emily Melton (12) and Colton Mead (9) and Brendon Fuller (11) and Kyler Littlejohn (11).

On the first day, all students will debate four rounds. Tournament breaks for day two will depend on the win/loss record and total speaker points. Day two rounds are single elimination.

Hobbs Outlifts Competition, Advances to State Powerlifting Meet

STAFF

She walks awkwardly to the squat rack, knees wrapped and unable to bend normally, her determination visible to the other lifters. She grips the bar, dips under it, and braces with a deep breath. One more lift. One more chance to outperform the competition.

Union Grove junior Jessica Hobbs won the girls' regional powerlifting meet Saturday, Feb. 26, earning a trip to the state meet March 15-17 at Corpus Christi—a trip she's wanted to make since she qualified as a freshman in 2020 when the meet was canceled due to COVID-19 concerns.

"Jessica is the true definition of discipline, determination and effort. She has made every workout (except when sick) with a great attitude and an eagerness to work,"

coach Roger Adams said. "Her hard work has paid off. In the 5 meets that Jess has competed in, she has won every meet in her weight class. I am extremely proud of Jessica. It has been my honor and privilege to be her coach."

Three of Hobbs's teammates also medaled at regionals: Lainey Ledbetter placed third in her weight class, missing second place and a trip to state by only five pounds; Savannah Clark placed fourth; and Katy King placed fifth.

Keeley Rust, Addison Smith, and Daytona Vaughn also competed at the meet, and all the girls set new personal bests, but since only the top two lifters in each weight class advance from region to state, Hobbs will be UG's lone representative in Corpus Christi.



PHOTO: PAYTON HALEY

Winn-ing Athlete Longview Group Rewards Junior

STAFF

Longview Orthopaedic Clinic Association named junior Gracie Winn their Athlete of the Week Feb. 18. The group chose Winn primarily due to her athletic achievements as a multi-sport athlete, but also in consideration of her academic success and involvement in other extracurricular activities.

Shooting for 100% Skeet Team Aims to Repeat Success

Sydney Pritchett

Three members of the shotgun team shot new personal bests at the San Antonio Stock Show and Rodeo Junior Shootout Feb. 17-20: Jeremiah McGee (10) broke 96 out of 100 clays to place fourth out of 251 FFA competitors and tie for 15th of the 974 total competitors, Cason Cowan (9) broke 84 of 100 clays to place 55th in the FFA division, and Colton Jamison (9) broke 80 out of 100 clays to finish 80th in the FFA division.

"The shotgun meet in San Antonio was one of my favorite competitions I've been to, because I got to put all the effort to work on a field," McGee said. "[Every day] being able to get out on that field is another day I get to set a new goal."

McGee improved from hitting nine out of 25 clay birds to shooting 25 out of 25 targets over the course of this season. He hopes to hit a perfect score later this month, when the team competes at the New Diana trap shoot March 26.



PHOTOS: DAYTONA VAUGHN Above: Junior Jessica Hobbs squats 350lbs at the Harmony meet Feb. 7, a 30lb gain from January and new personal best. Hobbs lifted a total of 830lbs in the meet to win first in her weight class. Sophomore Addison Smith also finished in first with 620lbs lifted.

Right: Freshman Savannah Clark squats 260lbs at the Harmony meet Feb. 7. Clark lifted a total of 610lbs to earn third place in her weight class. Three girls took second in their classes: Katy King (10) with 660lbs, Daytona Vaughn (10) with 655lbs, and Lainey Ledbetter (11) with 755lbs.



Academic Teams Prepare for District UIL

STAFF

The district academic meet has been re-scheduled for March 21, the first day back from spring break, leaving teams and their coaches two weeks to prepare.

"Even with almost unprecedented success at the invitational level against both large and small schools, there's still a lot of preparation ahead in the next few weeks," current events coach John Rappazzo said. "The district test covers a variety of current events over a rather massive period of time from August 16-February 7 so there's no rest for the weary."



PHOTO: JOHN RAPPAZZO

Several teams have been preparing during classes, Academic, and on weekends by attending practice meets such as the Hallsville Tournament of Hearts Feb. 12, where the current events, computer applications, computer science, science, and journalism teams gained knowledge, skills, and some new hardware.

"Hopes are high for current events going into district," Rappazzo said. "They won first place team at Lindale, and then at Hallsville individuals placed third and fifth along with second place team. Because of their diligence and endurance throughout the year, [I'm] confident [the] team is up to the challenge."

Since contests will take place during the regular school day, it is important that students maintain appropriate behaviors, including watching their volume so as not to disrupt testing. However, even with

classes and contests running simultaneously, coordinator Rhonda Baker is "looking forward to hosting and competing in our District UIL meet."

"Coaches and students have been working hard, and we are excited to see them reap the rewards," Baker said. "Hosting during school has required more detailed logistics, but I feel confident we will run the event with minimal issues."

Participants in speaking events, including prose and poetry interpretation, informative speaking, persuasive speaking, and Lincoln-Douglas debate, will compete separately on March 29 at East Mountain Baptist Church.

"Our speech team is incredibly prepared for this, practicing nearly everyday, as well as winning first place speech team at an invitational," freshman Colton Mead said.

Boys' Basketball Ousted at Area Lions Finish Historic Season

STAFF

Union Grove's basketball season ended Friday when the boys succumbed to Big Sandy Dallardsville in their area playoff game at Woden.

The Lions led the first quarter 11-6, and, at halftime, were only behind by two. Both teams added 17 points to their scores during the third quarter, but Dallardsville pulled away in the final quarter by scoring 16 to UG's nine for a final score of 54-45.

Aubrey Woodard and Colton Cowan kept the Lions close with the better-on-paper Dallardsville team by scoring 15 and 11 points respectively. Hunter Cannon picked up seven rebounds, and freshman Jace Roberts pitched in six.

Going into the game, UG boasted a 7-3 district record and a 57-54 bi-district win against Woden with big plays from Woodard, Cannon, Cooper Vestal, Cowan, and Jaxson Daniels. The win marked the team's first playoff victory since 1955.



PHOTOS: AUGUST VESTAL



Upcoming Events

March 1

HS One-Act Play Contest
Baseball @Hawkins — 4:30 p.m.
Softball v. Pittsburg — 5 p.m.

March 2

HS One-Act Play Contest

March 3-5

Melinda “Memaw” Smith Softball Tournament

March 3

FFA @Jacksboro CDE Invitational

March 4

HS Track @Dee Mackey Relays
Baseball v. Leverett’s Chapel — 6 p.m.

March 5-6

FFA @Houston HSLR Meats Contest

March 7

JH Track @Sabine — 3:30 p.m.
JV Baseball v. Overton — 6 p.m.
Golf @Edgewood Invitational (Van Zandt)

March 8

V Baseball @Overton — 4 p.m.
Softball @Kilgore — 5 p.m.

March 9-20

FFA @Houston Livestock Show

March 10

HS Band UIL Concert and Sight Reading Contest
HS Track @Sabine

March 11

Cheerleader Tryouts
Baseball v. Beckville — 4:30 p.m.
Softball @Big Sandy — 5:30 p.m.

March 12

Majorette and Drum Major Auditions

March 13-15

CX Debate State Meet

March 14

Softball v. Overton — 5:30 p.m.

March 15

Softball v. Overton — 4 p.m.
V Baseball @New Summerfield — 4 p.m.

March 15-17

State Girls Powerlifting Meet @Corpus Christi

March 17

Skeet Shooting Team @Simms FFA Trap Shoot
V Girls Track @Queen City

March 18

Baseball v. Carlisle — 4:30 p.m.



PHOTOS: KIMBER SMITH Sisters Kennedy (7) and Riley Schmidt (7) celebrate the holiday with matching outfits and gifts for their favorite math teacher, Ms. Nowell. Miley Nono (7) poses with her gift from Cooper Borden (8).

March 21

HS Academic UIL Meet
JH Track @Harleton — 3:30 p.m.

March 22

Softball v. Union Hill — 5:30 p.m.

March 22-23

Bi-District One-Act Play @Panola Jr. College

March 23-24

FFA @Tarleton Invitational

March 24

HS Track @Tatum

March 24-26

State Boys Powerlifting Meet @Abilene

March 25

JH Band Pre-UIL Concert & Sight-Reading Contest
Softball @New Summerfield — 4 p.m.
Baseball @Big Sandy — 4:30 p.m.

March 26

Skeet Shooting Team @New Diana
FFA @Limestone Co. Livestock Judging
FFA @A&M Judging Clinics
JV Baseball v. White Oak — 1 p.m.

March 28

JH Track @Harmony

March 29

HS Speech UIL @East Mountain Baptist Church
FFA @Huntsville Ag Mechanics Invitational
FFA @Parker County CDE Invitational
Softball v. Carlisle — 5:30 p.m.
V Baseball v. Union Hill — 6 p.m.

March 30

FFA @SFA CDE Invitational

March 31

FFA @Area 6 Forage CDE
HS Track @Harmony