

The Storm Report

OAKES TORNADOES UPDATES

December 5th, 2025



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Ask Us Anything: Dear Mass Media!

By: Kalyn Haafke

Got a question? A problem? Need advice—or just want someone's honest opinion? Dear Mass Media is your go-to advice column! Our Mass Media students are ready to dish out thoughtful answers, opinions, and feedback—about school, friendships, social media, or anything on your mind.

No topic is too big or too small (as long as it's appropriate):

1. Drama at school or with friends

2. Teamwork, communication, or leadership struggles

3. Social media mysteries or online rumors

4. Ideas for making school better

...Or anything else you're curious about!

[SUBMIT YOUR QUESTIONS HERE](#)

or email them to: Kalyn.Haafke@k12.nd.us

questions will be answered publicly in the newsletter. You can choose whether your name is included or just let your question be featured!

Your question could appear in the next newsletter—and spark a conversation everyone can learn from! So don't wait...ask away!

The Storm Report

Senior Spotlight



By: Kalyn Haafke

OHS senior Jackson Sorum has made his mark both on and off the field. As a dedicated member of OHS Football and Wrestling, Jackson has built a high school experience full of teamwork, resilience, and unforgettable memories. His favorite moment? Starting in his very first varsity football game—a milestone he'll never forget. He also loves the tradition of hearing the tornado siren before each football game, a signal that something exciting is about to begin.



Academically, Jackson enjoys History, finding nearly every topic in the subject fascinating. One teacher who has had a lasting impact on him is Mr. Peterson, who has taught him “random things about life” that he might have never learned otherwise.

Outside of school, Jackson enjoys weightlifting and MMA, and he's a fan of the Creed movie series. At home, he spends time with his 12-year-old mini teddy bear dog, Baxter, who's been by his side for years.

Jackson describes his high school journey as eventful, and much of that comes from the challenges he has faced. After his first knee injury, he struggled to catch up with schoolwork, relying on determination and thinking outside the box to relearn material. Since freshman year, he's grown more focused on his own goals and self-image rather than worrying about what others think.

His biggest inspiration is his mom, whom he admires deeply for her strength and accomplishments as a single parent. She says Jackson's resilience is inspiring—despite losing his dad, undergoing knee surgeries, and giving up the sports he loved, he has always pushed forward and strived to be his best. She notes that he has taught her what truly matters in life: to stay positive, be yourself, and trust that tomorrow will be better. Her advice to him as he graduates is to remember he is deeply loved, to always do his best, and to lean on God.

Through two ACL tears—including one at the start of his senior season—Jackson has learned firsthand that life isn't always fair. But those obstacles have also shaped him. He's proudest of recovering from his ACL injuries, and he hopes to impact others by setting an example of perseverance.

Being a senior, Jackson says, makes him grateful he's made it this far—yet aware that it's time to “lock in” for the future. As graduation approaches, Jackson is thinking ahead. He aims to become more educated, chase what he aspires to do, and avoid taking the easy path.

Congratulations, Jackson, on everything you've accomplished and all that's still ahead!

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Wrapped Happiness

By: Nadysen McKay



Whether you're shopping for a friend, a family member, or someone who seems impossible to buy for, there are plenty of thoughtful gift ideas that can make anyone smile. People often struggle to find something meaningful and not just another basic present. The best gifts aren't always the most expensive they're the ones that show you care. From DIY crafts and personalized items to experience based gifts like concert tickets or a fun day out, there are many ways to make your present stand out. This holiday season, it's all about giving from the heart, not just the store.

1. **New Shoes:** Shoes are a good gift because most people (like robin) love getting a new pair. They're useful since everyone wears shoes, and they can make someone feel confident. With so many styles like sporty, comfy, or stylish you can pick one that fits their personality. It shows you put thought into the gift.
2. **New Water Bottle:** A water bottle is a smart and practical gift. People use them at school, sports, or work, and it helps them stay healthy by drinking more water. With different designs like insulated bottles, bottles with straws, or cool colors, it's a simple but thoughtful gift.
3. **Jewelry:** Jewelry is a special and personal gift. It can make someone feel valued and appreciated. Whether it's a necklace, bracelet, or ring, it's something they can keep and wear for a long time. It also reminds them of you whenever they wear it.
4. **Gift Cards:** Gift cards are great when you're not sure what to buy. They let the person choose something they really like, whether it's clothes, food, or books. It's an easy gift, but it still shows you care and want them to enjoy it.
5. **New Books:** Books are a great gift for people who enjoy reading. They can take someone on an adventure, teach new things, or inspire them. Books last a long time and can be meaningful and enjoyable.

In conclusion, the best gifts aren't about how much money you spend they're about the thought and care behind them. Whether it's a pair of shoes that boosts someone's confidence, a water bottle they'll use every day, or jewelry that feels personal and special, meaningful gifts show you truly know and appreciate the person. Even simple gifts like books or gift cards can be unforgettable when they match someone's interests or needs. This holiday season, remember it's the love, effort, and meaning behind the gift that makes it truly special.

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Table of Hope



By: Nadysen McKay

Hunger is a problem that many people face, even if we don't always see it. Some families work hard but still don't have enough money to buy food. That's why food pantries are important. A food pantry gives food to people who need help, without making them feel bad. It shows that our community cares and wants to help others. A food pantry is not just about food it's about kindness, support, and making sure no one has to go hungry. I have interviewed Danielle Dinger about the food pantry and here is what she has to say.

When I talked to Danielle at the Oakes Area Food Pantry, I asked her to tell me a little about the pantry. She explained that they recently opened a new self-serve style food shelf in Oakes, ND. Danielle said they are trying to find the best way to serve their neighbors and meet the greatest needs of the community. Even though the new pantry just opened on November 8th, 2025, people have been helping the community with food since 1988. They just changed the process to make it better and easier for everyone, and now it's open on the 2nd and 4th Saturdays of each month from 10 to noon.

When I asked where they get their food, Danielle told me that the pantry has a partnership with the Great Plains Food Bank. This gives them access to more food and also lets them offer TEFAP, which is a federal program that provides American grown food to people with low income. For some of the biggest challenges she said it's hard to meet the needs of everyone in a way that works for all, especially because some people are used to the old way of doing things, and the new style might take time to get used to.

I asked how the pantry helps families beyond just giving food. Danielle told me that they want to make it a one stop shop where people can get food and also learn about other resources they might need. She said many people who use food pantries might have emergencies, low or unpredictable income, or just can't keep up with the high cost of living. She said food pantries are meant to help anyone who needs them, without judgment, because everyone deserves enough to eat.

For the future goals of the food pantry she said they want to expand services, improve access, and work with the Oakes community to make a strong organization. I asked how the community can support the pantry, and she said people have already been very generous, but they still need volunteers, especially youth. People can donate food at 115 S. 5th St or give money at Starion Bank since the pantry doesn't get any government funding. Finally, I asked what one improvement she would like to see. She said she would love to see more youth involved because it helps teach leadership, empathy, and life skills. She invited youth to join their next meeting on January 5th at 5pm at the new pantry location.

In conclusion, Danielle cares about helping people in the community and making sure everyone has access to food and support. The pantry is growing and trying new ideas, and she believes that with more community and youth involvement, it can become even stronger and more helpful for those in need.

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Secrets of a White Elephant Pro

By: Breann Young

For this weeks newsletter, I talked to Rhonda Lovelace, someone who absolutely loves white elephant gift exchanges, and her answers were super funny and honest. Her all-time favorite gift she ever got was a framed picture of someone else in the gift exchange, which is both random and exciting.



Rhonda says she is not a risk taker at all. If she opens something she likes, she tries to hold onto it instead of picking a new mystery gift. She's seen some really weird things over the years, but she said the strangest ones are cash or gift cards, because those don't even feel like real white elephant gifts. The funniest ones, according to her, are the super weird or ugly things like garden hoses, creepy dolls, ugly clothes, or outdated home decor.

Unlike people who just show up and hope for the best, Rhonda actually plans ahead. She talked about how she once spent two months putting together a white elephant box for a teen auction, adding multiple random gifts to make it extra confusing. When she chooses what to bring, she always goes for gifts that create confusion. She also said she definitely prefers funny gifts over useful ones. When asked about how she picks a gift from the pile, she wasn't totally sure what the question meant. But she did say she doesn't avoid certain types of gifts even if she thinks people won't like them. She admitted she's probably brought plenty of gifts that weren't crowd favorites, but that's just part of the fun. And yes—Rhonda has brought gifts that started stealing wars, although she thinks it's more fun when it's over an actual item instead of money or gift cards.

Rhonda also says she doesn't spend much money at all. She believes the whole point of a white elephant is to not spend money. She usually finds something she already owns or grabs something cheap from a garage sale.

Overall, Rhonda Lovelace's stories remind us why white elephant exchanges are so much fun: they're unpredictable, funny, and full of surprises every single time.

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8th Graders give support to Teen Mental Health



By: Ava Thompson

Mrs. Gramlow said her 8th-grade Study Skills class was talking about how to make a difference and stand up for the things they care about. She stated that the students had great discussions. Using the STAND steps, the class chose Teen Mental Health as their cause. They made bracelets, and posters, along with several events such a bingo night, a bake sale, and even a fun run/walk. Mrs. Gramlow shared the bake sale made \$225; bingo with \$440 and about 20 people came to the walk. She had a couple students write a letter to the CboysTV asking for donations but haven't heard back.

Skye Anderson ran bingo night and did a fabulous job; the community loved it. Here are the steps she took, she explained "We asked businesses for donations such as Corner C Store, T-Stop, Sweets and Stories, The Grand Theatre, and The Bakery Shoppe." They also had to get a game permit, bingo cars, and a location. The event was held November 6th, 2025, at growing small towns, open to the community. Skye said, "Thirty-two people showed up." As a group with Skye as the leader for this event, they chose bingo because "We thought it would bring people together and we chose Teen Mental Health as our cause because a lot of teens suffer from Mental Health Issues." The event raised \$440 for the local Mental Health Coalition.

Carter Udem helped plan the Fun Run/Walk. He explained they originally wanted to hold it in the park, but couldn't be due to bad weather, so they moved it to the Armory. Carter said they wanted it to be "A fun time with yard games and costumes," especially since it was close to Halloween. The event was held October 27th at the event they have bean bag games, guess how much candy is in the jar challenge, and the winner received the whole jar of candy. Even with the location changes, it still turned into a positive event!

Jayla Peters coordinated the bake sale. She said they started by "finding a date where there was also a volleyball game so she could do it in the gym lobby." As a Group (Jayla as the leader), they asked Robin Paul, the Athletics Director at Oakes Public School, for permission, and she approved it. Jayla explained that they made sign-up sheets to get people to donate baked goods and created flyers to let everyone know about the sale. On October 14th, 2025, they set up a table and hosted an event which was open to anyone and used free-will donations. Jayla said, "We raised \$225 and donated it to the North Dakota Chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention." She added that they chose Teen Mental Health because "People don't realize how important it is and because many teens in our school struggle with it."

Overall, the 8th-grade Study Skills class showed that even small actions can make a difference in our community if they work together for something they believe in. Through their bingo night, bake sale, and fun run/walk, the students raised money, spread awareness, and brought the community together to support Teen Mental Health. These 8th graders, along with their teacher, have not only learned how to organize events but also made a meaningful difference in the lives of others.

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8th Graders give support to Teen Mental Health

Pictures



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First Noel Event

By: Addie Umbreit

Here in Oakes, it's important that everyone has the chance to experience the excitement Christmas brings, which is exactly what the First Noel Event accomplishes. President of the Oakes Fire Auxiliary, Anna Elsen, explains in more detail what this is, "The event is a toy drive for kids in the community, mainly for families who don't have the extra money to spend on toys or other goodies during the holidays." The First Noel Event is a great way Oakes continues to show support to its community members even throughout the holidays. This event highlights the joy of giving back to others during Christmas for those around us.

Furthermore, this event also gives the whole community a chance to get involved. First, schools and daycares in the area nominate families. These nominations help determine how many families participate and who will receive gifts. After nominations have been sent in, the Fire Department members reach out to see what the kids of the families like and need. Anna says, "We begin getting nominations in November and then members of the first responder community will deliver gifts alongside the principals around Christmas time." Not only this, but community members can participate by helping purchase the gifts that are posted on an Amazon wishlist which can be found on all first responders' social media pages. In addition, people of Oakes can support the first responder community by attending fundraisers so they can continue events like these. The goal of the First Noel Event is to bring joy and gifts to families in Oakes, and the community and first responders continue to reach it each year.

The high spirits of this Christmas event wouldn't be possible without the people behind the scenes. Thanks to the dedication from the Oakes Fire District, Police Department, Fire Auxiliary, and the Oakes Ambulance for making each Christmas a little merrier for these families. Equally important is the community for making the nominations and pitching in to help with purchasing gifts for kids around Oakes. The overall teamwork shown throughout the First Noel Event is what makes Christmas time special for the Oakes community members.



Fargos New Slide Zone

By: Jyles Meier

Slick city the new amusement park in Fargo. Me and a few friends went to see what its all about. When we went it was very colorful and packed on a Friday afternoon, kids everywhere. Which was normal but seemed like they were never ending. But it was a very fun environment. With really fun workers. And some concessions that had some variety. When we first walked in it was It was \$29 for 90 minutes, which we thought was a solid price considering sky zones. The slides were crazy fun. They have rugs that you ride down on that make the slide way faster. Some of the slides were very kid friendly but some of them I wouldn't suggest. The two middle slides would make you catch some air. Those would give you a hard landing, but they have a pretty good pad for protection.

Not only were there slides, but there were also two basketball courts. One lower than the other, With a lot of dodgeballs. Which I did get to do right before leaving. They would have a public vote then start up a game of dodgeball if people wanted it. Or you could've played some basketball, which was also a lot of fun.

The thing I didn't get to try out was their medium-sized playground. That was a pretty popular choice for the children, but I stuck to the bouncy court. All in all the park was fun packed and very enjoyable with some crazy slides that are making me want to go back.



A Fresh Start to a New Place

By: McKenna Allston

Missing Ed's famous barbecues? Everyone is wondering what is happening with the space. Today I am here to answer questions that everyone is asking. I interviewed Scott Roney (the new owner). Scott is a 2016 graduate and animal science alumni of Lake Area Tech, Watertown SD. Growing up in Oakes gave him an appreciation for the opportunities that are provided. Scott is currently self-employed, running farm and ranch operations, fuel and convenience stores, and rental properties.

"What do you plan to do with the old Northside building?" I asked him. Scott replied, "My goal is to take the old Northside property and turn it into a modern, high quality convenience store with a retro style sit down coffee counter, a few booths, and a small format. Something clean, useful, built to last, and just right for Oakes."

My next question to Scott was, "How soon do you plan to start developing?" He said, "Working with engineering planning and approvals. If that timeline holds, we expect to see visible construction to begin in spring of 2026."

My final question was, "What excites you most about this project?" He said this project will be the first of many North Dakota locations. This is his hometown and that matters to him. He continues to tell me about how he lives in the former home of Walter T Noonan. Scott tells me that he does not want to let the standards drop.

In all, Scott plans to turn the old Northside property into a retro style convenience store with a sit-down coffee counter. Scott wants the public to know that there will always be opinions, questions, and doubts, but over time results will sort it out.

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MORE COWBELL: The 80th Annual Cowbell Game Tips Off December 19th

By: Kalyn Haafke

Get ready, Tornado fans—the most legendary, good-natured rivalry in the region is back and louder than ever. On Friday, December 19th, Oakes and Ellendale will meet once again for the 80th Annual Cowbell Game, a tradition that goes back to the 1946–1947 season, when someone apparently decided that the best trophy for a basketball game was... a cowbell. And honestly? They were right.

This year's matchup is a double-header, with both girls' and boys' varsity teams taking the court. The night begins with JV girls and JV boys at 4:30 p.m. in both OHS gyms. After that, everyone will pack into the south gym for the varsity girls' game, followed immediately by the varsity boys, whose game decides who gets to babysit the cowbell for the next year.

The highly coveted cowbell travels home with the winning boys' team each year, and it stays on display until the next season's matchup. Over the decades, the bell has changed hands many times. Oakes has held the cowbell for 24 seasons, while Ellendale kept it for 11 straight years from 2012–2023. However, during the 2023–2024 season, Oakes finally broke that streak and brought the cowbell back home!

With 80 years of history, friendly rivalry, and community pride, this year's Cowbell Game promises energy, excitement, and maybe a few nervous nail-biting moments. Fans from both towns will pack the gyms, hoping to see their team come out on top and claim bragging rights for another year.

So, mark your calendars, wear your orange & black, get ready to cheer —because somebody's taking home the cowbell, and the other team might just have to listen to it ringing all year long.

Claim Your Throne at the Cowbell Game

By: Kalyn Haafke

Want to watch the Cowbell Game in style? The basketball team is giving fans the chance to win the Best Seat in the House for just \$5 per ticket!

Winners will get to sit on a comfy couch for two, complete with cupholders, generously donated by Total Home and Ashley Furniture.

And don't worry—both Oakes and Ellendale fans have a chance to score this premium spot, so everyone has a shot at VIP seating while cheering on their team.

Grab your \$5 ticket (or three), support the basketball teams, and cross your fingers—because if your name is drawn, you won't just see the game... you'll watch it in ultimate comfort!



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Snowstorm Surprise Brings Early Outs and Late Starts at OHS

By: Lila Iverson

Living in ND means dealing with unpredictable winters. One day we had green grass, and the next day everything was completely covered in snow. It all happened in just one night. The sudden weather change caused chaos and plenty of unhappy people. Some students even left their houses earlier than usual to make it to school on time. Very few enjoyed being there, but everyone burst with excitement when they found out we could leave at 2:30. Then, the following day, school started two hours later than scheduled.

The snow had started early that morning. It looked like a winter wonderland, with flakes gently falling through the streetlamp's glow. Drama kids had to drive slowly to practice because the roads were rough. Students were disappointed when school was not called off, and the teachers definitely heard about it. Still, the day went on. My classmates and I perked up whenever the intercom buzzed, hoping it meant we could go home early. Our teachers found it hilarious how hopeful we got every time an announcement played.

By the time lunch rolled around, there was not much left to do after school except head home and enjoy the evening. After lunch, we went back to class, and during that hour, we got the best news of the day: we were getting out at 2:30. I am not sure about the other classes, but mine was absolutely pumped. As soon as the announcement ended, we were already packing up.

We all knew we got lucky, but unfortunately, we had to come back the next day. Since it was Wednesday, we already knew it would be a late start. Then came the news: first an hour late... then two. Which honestly was perfect for sleeping in. Altogether, we ended up with only four hours and twenty-five minutes of school, plus practice afterward.

Snow does not just take over our schedule—it takes over the halls too. Kids drag it in, stomp it off, and somehow it still ends up everywhere. The floors get damp, the stairs get slick, and squeaky shoes echo down the hallway. And, of course, because this is ND and we are in high school, half the students are still wearing shorts and a hoodie instead of dragging around a winter coat.

Between the early out and the late start, it felt like a mini holiday before our actual holiday break. Whether we get more snow days or not, at least we got two little surprises we don't have to make up. Happy snow days!

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Library corner



By: Isaac Bjornstad

The new library corner is right round this corner. With new books in the library, we thought it was appropriate to get the finer details for our own story. I interviewed Mrs. Dobitz to get a better idea of what's in store for the library corner this month. Here's to hoping you get as lost in our stories as much as the libraries.

For the library corner, there won't be an event as of this month. However, you are more than encouraged to visit the library, regardless. The library has many genres of books that easily suit many demographics, such as action, romance, thriller, etc. With winter's unrelenting nature being thrust into the front lawn, a nice book in front of a cozy fire is a great way to distract you from the fact that you still need to shovel the driveway.

With the library corner introducing 3 new books to our small-town library, I'm sure you're interested in hearing more about them. Asking Mrs. Dobitz, she listed "Four Found Dead" by Natalie D. Richards, a thriller about 4 coworkers trapped inside a deserted mall with no way out, and a killer amongst the 4 of them, they must find a way out while they still can. Our next one would be "Don't Hate the Player" by Alexis Nedd, a drama about Emila, a star hockey player by day, and KNOX the elite esports player in the dog-eat-dog world by night. And finally, we have "Crave" by Tracy Wolff, the story about Grace Foster, a boy who, after losing his parents, is sent to a boarding school filled with cryptids and monsters alike.

Now if those books aren't your kind of style, then you're lucky we asked Mrs. Dobitz about the most popular book the library has as of now. She stated that the Diary of a Wimpy Kid books are pretty popular right now. And after the 20th book just released, more Wimpy Kid fans should give it a read. Though 20 diaries? Cmon bud, a therapist works just as well.

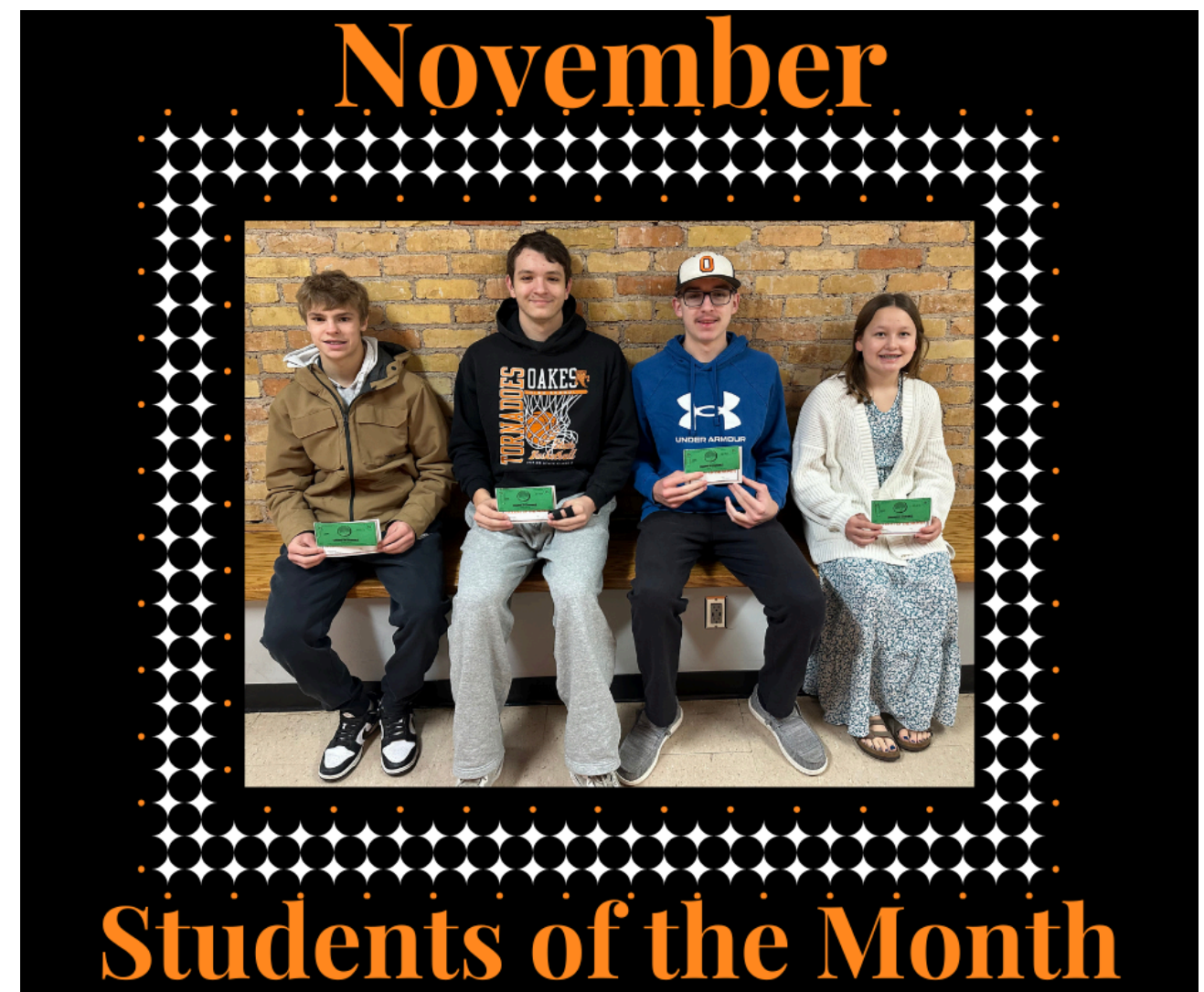
Before we send off, if nothing above remotely interests you, you could try Mrs. Dobitz's personal recommendations. Asking Mrs. Dobitz for some personal recommendations, she responded, "Two books I recently finished were The Picasso Curse by Dan Gutman and Borrow my Heart by Kasie West." Now with all that said and done, with Christmas approaching and the new year closer than ever, some last-minute reading to say you've read this year would be a good idea. Have a lovely winter!



Student of the Month

By: Kalyn Haafke

For the month of November, we are recognizing students who exemplify Critical Thinking and a Growth Mindset — learners who make sound judgements and decisions while using feedback to move forward.



8th Grader

He consistently sets the bar high for himself and isn't afraid to ask thoughtful questions to clarify, grow, and improve. His dedication, focus, and willingness to push himself makes him a strong role model for his peers.

Junior

He is usually the first one to ask really meaningful questions in order to deepen not only his own understanding, but that of his classmates. He also looks for ways to connect what he's learning in school to things he's previously learned or things in the world outside of school.

Junior

This junior is a hardworking student who isn't afraid to take risks, make mistakes, and grow from them. He's open-minded, curious, and always willing to learn new things from new perspectives. His positive attitude and willingness to stretch himself make him a standout in the classroom.

7th Grader

This 7th grader is a thoughtful and dedicated learner who shines in her own quiet, confident way. She listens closely, observes carefully to truly understand, and asks thoughtful questions that deepen class discussions. Her responses are always detailed, reflective, and show just how much she cares about learning.