

As my years in high school journalism come to a close, I reminisce on the skills I've learned and the friendships I've made. From a sixth grade girl joining journalism club at my middle school, I couldn't have imagined how far I've come and how my writing has improved. With the help from my peers and advisers, I've been able to contribute pieces to our website and newspaper and develop my passions into journalistic stories. This year, I wrote numerous news stories for our website and contributed stories to our newspaper all year. These stories ranged in length from briefs to main stories and varied in sections from features to opinions. I filled extra holes for stories when needed and was always available to help out writers. My job in our publication is as Copy Editor and Editor-in-Chief of our newspaper so I also work to help improve the writing of my staffers through lessons and one-on-one conversations. I have been contributing writing since my freshman year of high school and have thoroughly enjoyed doing so. The connections that I have made with my sources have spawned friendships which have been invaluable during my time in high school. A lot of my contributions this year have been passion projects that I have turned into journalistic content. I started off the year writing a personal column about my dog who had passed away and I had wanted to honor her. I also am a Buc-ee's enthusiasts and was able to cover the grand opening of a Missouri location for our website. And a decision by our school board prompted me to write an editorial that I was passionate about. Overall, I have come a long way since my first days writing stories at our middle school newspaper to covering important topics at our school and in our community. The skills I've learned like communication, organization and collaboration are invaluable to my personal and professional life and I would not be where I am today without the knowledge I gained in journalism. Writing has always been a first-love of mine and I am grateful for the chance to grow in high school and beyond.

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(Photos by Payton Johnston)

## LIFELONG COLLECTION TURNS INTO MUSEUM

With over a thousand items and after years of repairs, local Soda Museum on Main Street opens and displays the American spirit that lies within

by McKenna Hudson  
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A dream that has taken a lifetime of collecting and saving has been capped off in the opening of the Soda Museum. Tom Smith has been collecting soda memorabilia for nearly 40 years and has turned a lifelong dream into reality. With a seemingly never-ending collection of items, Smith has his life's work on full display with lots to do, see and drink. "My wife's dream in retirement is to be able to drink her coffee and watch the river," Smith said. "My dream of retirement is to hug a Coke machine."

On the first floor, the museum showcases some of Smith's favorite pieces as well as interchangeable exhibits that keep the museum fresh and new for each visit. Smith's first item he ever collected can even be viewed on full display. On the second floor, visitors can see more soda memorabilia and find obscure items such as the short-lived Tab drink created by Coca-Cola. In the basement is an arcade that houses vintage games where families can play and then enjoy a meal and a soda. However, his favorite item is one yet to be showcased at the museum.

"[This summer, there] will be a special exhibit that will be in a back room that will take full around-the-clock security," Smith said. "So, if you can think of what the Coca-Cola company would least like someone to show, that is what it will be."

At 10, Smith's first piece was a Coca-Cola serving tray which kickstarted a lifelong obsession. Smith's collecting didn't stop at soda, however. He also enjoyed other vintage items, especially ones representative of his youth, those being arcade games. When he was young, Smith enjoyed combining his two interests, soda and games to create the ultimate hangout spot.

"My friends would keep coming over because it was a cool place to hang out because we had free soda and a pinball

machine," Smith said.

As Smith got older, he knew his dream was not to be in the political consulting business forever, however, it was an interest that he pursued into his adult years.

"I started volunteering for a couple of different political campaigns," Smith said.

"I've worked in the world of politics ever since. I started my own political consulting business after seeing the way that campaigns were wasting money and so I knew that I could do it cheaper and I felt I could do it better."

But in the back of his mind, soda was always there waiting. He would continue to go to estate sales and auctions and even on "junking trips" with his father. More than just a hobby, Smith would devote his spare time to getting his hands on any piece of soda memorabilia he could find. In the 1980s, he even sent out letters to members of the Coca-Cola Collectors Club in hopes that some would be willing to sell their treasures. Even today, Smith still reaps the rewards of his efforts from back in the day.

### SODA MUSEUM FAST FACTS

Below are the Soda Museum's hours of operation and admission prices as well as a QR code more Soda Museum content

**HOURS**  
Monday - Thursday:  
10 a.m. - 6 p.m.  
Friday and Saturday:  
10 a.m. - 8:30 p.m.  
Sunday: Noon - 5  
**ADMISSION**  
Museum Admission: \$10  
Arcade Admission: \$15  
Museum / Arcade Admission: \$20



interested in buying the whole collections and so I would get some phone calls," Smith said. "So, I even put a little thing on there, save this letter, you know, anytime you or

your family want to liquidate your stuff, give me a call. My last collection I bought from letters I sent out in the '80s was last year."

After 40 years of collecting, Smith was finally ready to move forward on his dream of opening a museum. Being a St. Charles native, Smith was familiar with Main Street and particularly 126 North Main St. A former shoe store, Smith had had his eye on the place and knew when it went up for sale it was time to strike. After much negotiation, he bought the place in April of 2021 and was in for grueling repairs.

"There were seven or eight different species of animals living in there," Smith said. "There was three feet of standing water in the basement, the entire ceiling had fallen to the ground. It was in really, really, really bad shape."

After a few years worth of renovation, the Soda Museum was finally unveiled to the public on Nov. 30, 2023. The reaction from Smith and his companions in the journey was overwhelming.

"It was very emotional," Smith said. "I've been wanting to do this for 35 years and the day had finally come."

Carolyn Gertsch is an employee at the Soda Museum and has been a friend of Smith's for 17 years. Gertsch recognizes the effort Smith has put into the museum and enjoys being a part of the history.

"I think it's amazing and I love it so much for him," Gertsch said. "Personally, I love history and these objects all hold so much history. Not only of soda but of America itself."

But beyond the flashy items and expensive collectibles, Smith hopes for something more when visitors come to the museum.

"My strongest goal is for someone to come in here and to remember something as a child," Smith said. "So, whether it is a 30 or 40-year-old, or a 90-year-old coming here and saying 'I remember that' and have it bring joy to them in some way."

Click [here](#) to view the story on FHNtoday.com.

Working with a member of our video and photo staff, we created a multimedia project about the Soda Museum, a local museum that houses soda memorabilia and an arcade. I made connections with the owner and the employees and was a passion project where I was satisfied with the end result.

## VIEW REGULATION 6335

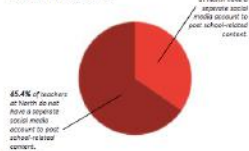
Here is the updated version of Regulation 6335. View the annotated sections below to see where some confusion about the policy originates.

It does not say whether or not it has to be a district or personal social media account. This opens possibility of what the regulation was intended as, the same across as saying that teachers can post on social media without stating content.

Discussing a student could be interpreted many different ways. This could be anything from sharing personal information about a student or a photo of the student. The wording is left vague to confusion could arise from what discussing a student means.

This line is unclear to the reader. Getting confidential information is important in understanding this language.

## BY THE NUMBERS



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## NEW BOE UPDATES ARE OUTDATED

Board of Education makes updates to Regulation 6335 which leaves many in confusion and creates a feeling of distrust between the district and teachers.

On Behalf of the Editorial Board  
www.fhntoday.com

A new move forward with technology and the use of social media, the FHS Board of Education has taken an outdated, two-back, with a new update to Regulation 6335. The regulation, originally made in 2011, now restricts teachers in the district from posting photos of their students and classroom content to personal social media accounts. With teachers in the past having no issue showing the activities and ongoing in the classroom, this new update has, like a stop sign, and left many administration, teachers and students confused. This restriction is outdated and generates a negative feeling from the district to teachers which further disconnects teachers from the larger FHS community.

According to a member of the Board, the update to the regulation was prompted by a teacher posting a photo from her vacation and then a following photo of content related to her job as a teacher. This incident was used as a hook to lock into the regulation closer and see what part of rules were in place for teachers and social media. This base of content is trivial among teachers or social media who want to share about their travels, family and career on the

who opted out. This increased the confusion with the regulation among the Board and subsequently the communications team and teachers.

Along with confusion, the updates made to Regulation 6335 created a feeling of distrust between district admin and teachers. By limiting a teacher's use of social media, the district is indirectly saying that teachers can misuse social media and therefore should not post about school-related content. This creates a situation similar to that of elementary school. If one person does something wrong, then everybody is punished. Because one teacher posted a photo from a vacation and then posted school-related content, now no teachers are allowed to share what goes on in their classrooms. Many view this as the board wanting their power over teachers and creating a world where teachers are not responsible adults who can use their social media controls.

In today's world, social media is the main way people keep up with what is new and communicate with each other. The district should see social media as a tool to connect with students and parents. Parents would like to know what goes on in the classrooms and who better to share that information than the teachers who teach the students? By not allowing teachers to share what goes on in the classroom, it creates a disconnect between parents and teachers. Furthermore, students often enjoy seeing their faces represented in their favorite teacher's social media posts or get excited about a lesson that is to come. Now, students are unable to see themselves being highlighted by a

teacher or are now only to be recognized by the district's social media. With over 17,000 students in FHS, the chance that a student is to be recognized by a district-sponsored account is unlikely.

Beyond that, students enjoy seeing what goes on in their teachers' lives. Being able to see a teacher have fun with their kids, go to fun places or enjoy their hobbies only serves to humanize them to students. Students can share a hobby with a teacher that they wouldn't have known otherwise, or have learned the same destination a teacher has that they saw via social media. Instead of limiting teachers from posting school-related content on their personal social media, teachers should be given social media training to learn about what is expected of them. To blindly assume that the over 2,400 employees of the district can use social media responsibly is unrealistic. Currently, employees of the district need general technology tips and don't as part of their training. However, if those teachers were given the opportunity to learn about what they should post on their personal accounts so that they can use social media-related content on the same account, that would be responsible.

There are many ways in which the district could explore giving access to teachers to post social media content. A broad ban on all posting of school content is too restrictive and is a simple solution to a problem that requires close analysis and teacher and district communication. For the district to gain the trust of its teachers, it needs to place trust in teachers that they will act responsibly.

## TEACHER USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Take a look at the various ways in which at North teachers have highlighted the work that their students were doing in and outside of the classroom. Currently, FHS teachers are not allowed to make posts like these on their personal social media accounts.



Illustration by Nicholas Marshall

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Click [here](https://www.fhntoday.com) to view the story on FHNtoday.com.

When we were brainstorming ideas for an editorial for our January issue, I was very passionate about this topic and wanted to cover the reasoning behind the decision. I faced a lot of communication setbacks with our Board of Education and when I was able to speak to them, I discovered a Board that knew very little about the decisions they were making. I was very proud of the final product and I learned to be persistent with my interviewing skills in the search for the truth.





## A TRIBUTE TO HOLLY

Reminiscing on a childhood pet and the lessons learned from her protection



### OPINION

McKenna Hudson

She was our fur-faced-fluffin'-barker with a wigger-wagger. At least, that's what my dad and I called her after hearing the phrase in a book. She was the kind of dog to bark at the wind. She would be the culprit behind my family stepping on chewed up Nylabones that would feel like stepping on Legos. Long bat ears and all, Holly was my first dog and greatest protector.

We picked her out of a litter of German Shepherds. Holly's jet-black coat and lovable face made her a stand-out to be the perfect choice for a family of three with a five-year-old daughter. She was a guard-dog first and foremost. She didn't like cuddles, wouldn't lay down with you and certainly wouldn't let you have friends over without scaring them a little first. Her territorial behavior often made me wonder why I couldn't have a dog that liked people or cuddles.

Holly enjoyed many typical dog activities like going for walks, playing with her ball and getting covered in mud from the creek in our backyard. We would go for long walks and bike rides with her on the Katy Trail and she loved hamburgers from McDonald's.

However, she couldn't keep up with us forever and soon her light and energy began to fade. Like what happens to many German Shepherds, she developed hip and elbow Dysplasia which limited her ability to walk, run, sit and get back up. Eventually, she couldn't control her bladder and we would wake up to messes in the morning. She became confined to the hardwood-floored kitchen where her messes would be easier to clean up. She couldn't enjoy doing the things she loved to do and her quality of life was

deteriorating.

It was a rainy day in June when we went for our last McDonald's hamburger. I cried as I handed the cashier my money knowing we had made the decision to put her down the next day. I sat on the porch of my house watching her enjoy the meal she loved most. Holly barked at a couple walking past our house and I wondered how I could have ever wanted anything other than my guard dog. She always protected me and while I always wanted her to have been more affectionate, I learned that her way of showing affection was by protecting her family.

On her last day, Holly hopped around the yard the best she could, basking in the temperate weather. We held her paw when it was her time and we reminisced about our favorite memories together over the past 12 years. I only wished I could have let her protect me a little while longer.



### Mental health Tips for the loss of a pet

Scan the QR code for six mental health tips to cope with the loss of a pet.



### Pet Grief Chat Room

Scan the QR code to access a chat room for people trying to cope with the loss of



### Arch Animal Hospital West

Scan the QR code to view the Arch Animal Hospital website.



### OPINION

Violet Newton

## THE MORNING RUSH

Let's be honest. Who actually eats breakfast before school? You wake up at the crack of dawn after getting a maximum of six hours of sleep, you throw some clothes on, wash your face if you are feeling really fancy, and by the time you feel remotely ready to set foot in school, you've already brushed your teeth and there is not nearly enough time to wash out the toothpaste taste in order to not throw up your orange juice. Every adult around will tell you just how oh so important breakfast is but...

how important is it really? The answer is not at all, maybe it's important for those who have the privilege of leaving their house after 6 a.m. But for the average high school student, it's less important than getting ready and enacting proper hygiene for the day ahead.

Breakfast is important. Although this completely contradicts the previous statement that every meal of the day is important. However, the breakfast you are most likely eating isn't important. A small pastry or granola bar isn't nutritious in any way, unless you are eating a hearty and balanced breakfast, it's a worse start to your day than no breakfast at all.

Students could, in theory, wake up earlier allowing them to have more time towards breakfast. But when faced with the whirlwind of homework, extracurricular activities, friendships, relationships and family time, getting to bed early can be quite a difficult task. Not everyone has the chance to eat a healthy breakfast every morning, especially if they are leaving at 6:30 for a day at school.

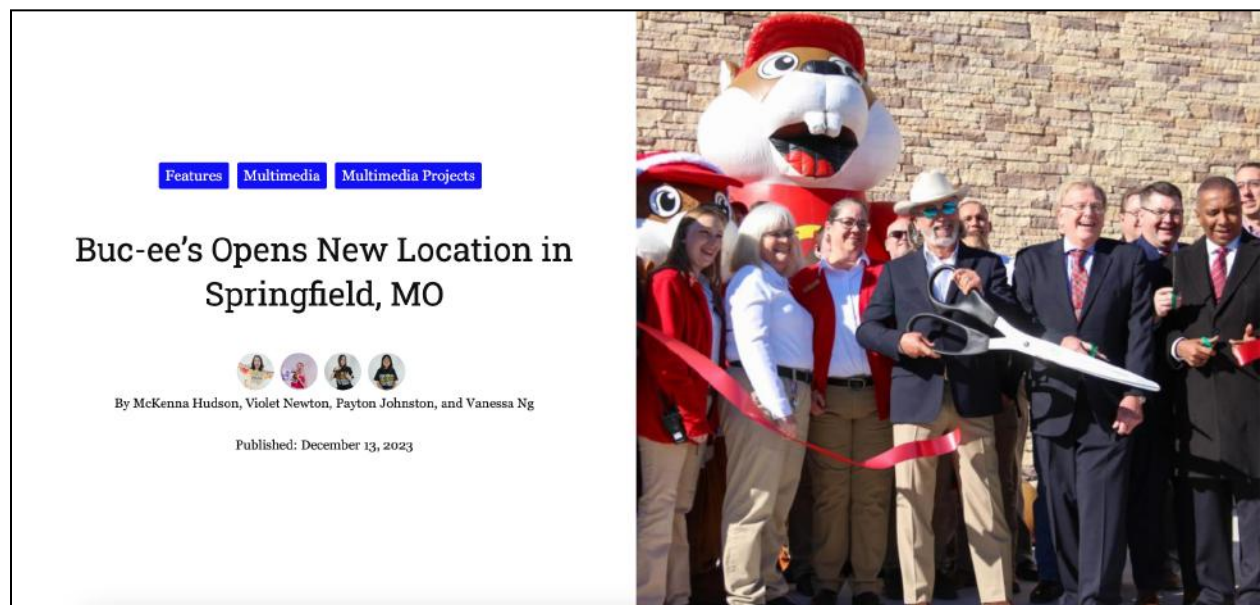
It's important to recognize that eating a healthy and nourishing breakfast is not just about caloric intake but about cultivating a habit of self-care. In the end, the importance of breakfast really boils down to personal choices and circumstances. For some the morning is a hectic race against the clock, making it hard to prioritize a substantial breakfast. Making breakfast the last to-do on the list.



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This is a very meaningful piece to me as it was a way for me to cope with my grief over the passing of my dog. I wanted to honor her in the best way I knew how, by writing a story. I am so proud of the story and how she will be forever memorialized in our newspaper. My story touched my parents and relatives who knew Holly and it allowed me tap into an emotional piece of myself.



Click [here](#) to view the story on FHNtoday.com.

For this story, myself and two other students drove three hours to Springfield, Missouri for the grand opening of Buc-ee's, the first location in Missouri. We got to interview various community members, locals and members of the Buc-ee's corporations, including CEO Arch "Beaver" Aplin. This was one of my favorite projects I've ever worked on as I used breaking news tactics to cover the event and to write a story within 48 hours as well as create social media content to produce a multimedia piece.

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Yadi's Yummies is a pet store in St. Peters, but they also offer many more products for cats and dogs. They have many different and unique items they offer. They make customized birthday cakes, and their treats are custom made by the employees. (Photos by Jacmin Acevedo)

## TREATS TO CONNECT A COMMUNITY

Yadi's Yummies helps more than just pets, it offers employment and community

**by McKenna Hudson**  
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The excitement felt by Jessica Eisenbeis when opening her business and being featured by CNN was one that few can relate too, let alone an individual who was deemed "unemployable." Jessica's struggle is one many individuals with mental disabilities and handicaps struggle with, as they are often deemed "unemployable" by the state. However, Jessica took matters into her own hands and turned a passion of making dog and cat treats into Yadi's Yummies.

"I love it," Jessica said. From her teenage years, Jessica

she could have other people work who also were having trouble finding a place. Some of the people that volunteer here are people that Jessica had gone to school with and some people that she didn't know, but just seeing how Jessica and they have blossomed since they've been here is amazing."

Jessica, with the help of Cindy, secured the storefront location at 1251 Jungfermann Road. They decided to name their business Yadi's Yummies after their own rescue dog Yadi, a nod to the famous Cardinals catcher "Yadier Molina." The store sells a plethora of unique pet treats for dogs and cats including ice cream, dog beer and "supacakes." They also sell toys, gifts and other pet memorabilia.

"Some of the people that volunteer here are people that Jessica had gone to school with and some people that she didn't know, but just seeing how Jessica and they have blossomed since they've been here is amazing," Cindy said.

Soon after the business opened, they received lots of media attention from many news outlets highlighting the store's equality and individuality. It's not only helped the store grow, but helped

the workers grow as well.

"We just had Show Me St. Louis in here," Cindy said. "And one of the individuals who used to go and hide when there was anything like that was going on, he was actually interviewed on TV. So, I would say it gives people confidence and they feel valued."

Part of Jessica's mission was to offer other people with similar disabilities a chance to work in a respectful and encouraging environment. Denni Fine is an original member of the team at Yadi's Yummies as well as an FHN alumna. Denni was born with Down syndrome and, like Jessica, struggled to find employment that suited her needs.

"Everybody here is so supportive and she learns skills that she never would have learned anywhere else," Denni's mom Cecilia Fine said. "She can bake, she can decorate, she can do all kinds of new skills so I was on board from the very beginning."

Denni's day consists of baking treats, decorating them and her favorite job, labeling. Denni also gets to participate in the many events that Yadi's Yummies attends. The often helps to encourage local businesses to donate and

persuades them with her sales pitch.

"Hello, my name is Denni. I work at Yadi's Yummies. I ask 'Do you have a pet and if it's a dog or cat?' And then I offer them a treat from the bag," Denni said.

Denni, Jessica and the numerous other volunteers at Yadi's Yummies enjoy the sense of community that the store offers.

"All of the young people who work here advocate for each other," Cecilia said. "I think Jessica is excited to have a friend. They've opened up to lots of other young people with disabilities and it helps [more people get] employed here."

Besides baking treats for pets, Yadi's Yummies also partners with local animal shelters to promote adoptions in the area. In addition, they hold adoption events and donate to provide medical care for pets in need.

"We had another dog, a Newfoundland, and she went through a period of time where she had to have three major surgeries within a 10-month period, which cost close to \$10,000," Cindy said. "That showed us how expensive it can be. So, we started Annie's fund, and we donate a portion

of our proceeds to a medical fund to help dogs and puppies be able to afford surgeries and stuff like that that they might not have otherwise."

Yadi's Yummies participates in many local events including the Summer Sunset Market in Wentzville on Oct. 12 from 5-8 p.m. They will also be participating at the Lake St. Louis Farmers and Artists Market at the Meadows on Oct. 15 from 8 a.m. to noon. They even have a party room at their store to hold pet birthday parties as well as Crotch Day celebrations.

"It's opened [Denni's] world," Cecilia said. "She loves the animals. She has friends. She gets out in the community. She loves to go ask for donations. She gets to go meet people, it's just opened her world."

Jessica and her dream have been able to open the world up to her volunteers who have struggled to feel accepted in the American workforce. Yadi's Yummies offers a refuge for not just pets and patrons, but for its volunteers who can feel a sense of belonging.

"Well, I am very happy," Jessica said. "Everyone is very, very nice to me!"



Yadi's Yummies offers many different events such as birthday celebrations. Patrons can visit the store or schedule a party online for their pets. Parties can allow for many furry friends guests and gift bags are provided. Crotch Day celebrations are also an available celebration that Yadi's Yummies offers.

Yadi's Yummies customizes their store to fit the seasons. Displayed are various fall items such as a pumpkin pie for evil a stuffed cutiecat. Also featured are the stores and here, a non-alcoholic beverage offered to the stores furry patrons.

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Click [here](#) to view the story on FHNtoday.com.

Writing about Yadi's Yummies was a highlight of senior year and a joy to create. The volunteers at Yadi's Yummies were outgoing, energetic and kind. I enjoyed being able to shed light on the lives of people with mental disabilities and show the great people who are carving out a path for those often overlooked.