

BENNINGTON (BUZZ)

“One Step at a Time, But Always Forward”: Bennington High School Celebrates Class of 2026

By Marisa Dawson

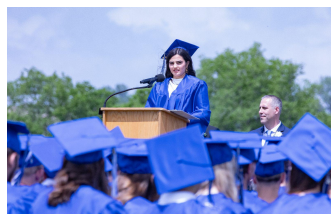


The graduating class of 2026 crossed the stage at Bennington High School on May 17, guided by their motto, “one step at a time, but always forward.” Senior speakers Carson Kortan and Brekhna Shah delivered addresses on resilience, intentional living, embracing individuality, and staying present.

Superintendent Dr. Aaron Plas noted the class’s perseverance through significant school growth and changes. “Just keep going... We all know that things aren’t always going to go perfect.” Principal Dr. Greg Lamberty praised their loyalty and resilience: “They never gave up on themselves. They continued to move forward, even when things got tough

for them.”

Shah, heading to UNO for pre-med, emphasized authenticity: “We are all so different... we just need to be our own person.” Kortan, attending UNL for finance and business management with a theology minor, encouraged purposeful living. The ceremony celebrated academic accomplishments alongside the growth, relationships, and resilience that defined their high school years.



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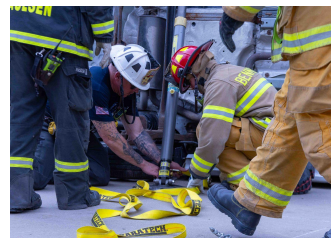


Cutting Through Chaos: Bennington Fire Honors Extrication Skills

By Marisa Dawson

Members of the Bennington Fire Department sharpened critical rescue skills during hands-on extrication training focused on stabilizing overturned vehicles and safely removing trapped patients. New crew member Kennedy Karschner and volunteer Nathan Wilch participated actively in the sessions.

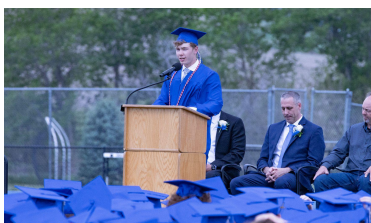
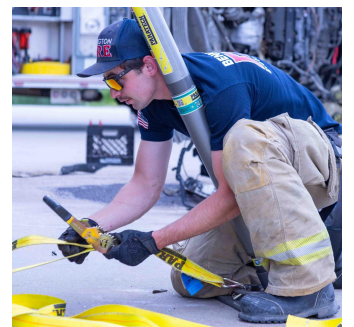
Captain Eric Paulsen emphasized critical thinking



on scene: “The biggest skill is not even a hands on skill... It’s the ability to critically think and make a judgment based on the things you see in front of you.” Firefighters practiced techniques like “tie back” and “chain basket” stabilization, door removal, roof cuts, and dashboard lifts across various vehicle positions.

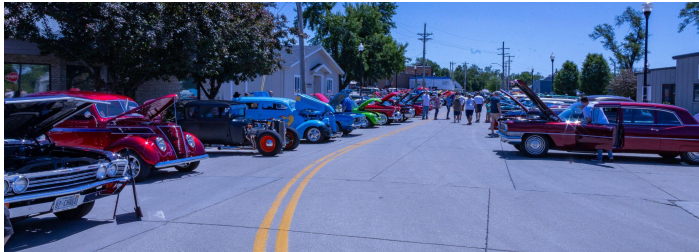


Paulsen noted challenges from wrecked vehicle anatomy and modern technologies, especially electric vehicles. Ongoing repetition and knowledge of vehicle anatomy are key to maintaining proficiency. He also reminded drivers to slow down and move over at emergency scenes for responder safety.



Revved Up in Bennington: Annual GEARS Car Show Cruises Into Town With Record Turnout

By Marisa Dawson



Downtown Bennington was lined with polished chrome, classic engines and crowds of spectators on Sunday as GEARS (Greater Elkhorn Area Rods) hosted its 30th annual car show, drawing a record-breaking 206 vehicles to the community. The longtime car club, which began in the 1980s, originally hosted the event in Elkhorn before eventually relocating to Bennington as attendance continued to grow.

"We used to be in Elkhorn and got too big, so we moved it over here to Bennington," said longtime GEARS member Fred Roza. "We have 206 cars, which is our record." According to Roza, last year's event featured roughly 70 vehicles, making this year's turnout a dramatic increase. Organizers spent much of the afternoon judging entries before awards were handed out, with Roza noting, "It's going to be really hard to



judge... There's so many nice cars here this year."

Roza said GEARS currently has around 36 members and has remained active for approximately 30 years. "Most car clubs don't hang together that long... It's really a pretty good honor to have it go that long." The club credits much of its longevity to the relationships formed among members and participants: "Just good people... Nothing but good people." Bennington has proven to be an ideal location, with Roza adding, "Bennington has been wonderful... You have businesses here, places to eat, and friendly people. We don't have any problems over here."

In addition to showcasing vehicles, GEARS uses its

events to give back to the community. "We donate all of our money back... We keep enough to go next year and that's it." This year's funds are going to QLI Rehabilitation Facility, a Bennington family for health rehabilitation aid, and various scholarship programs. Among the participants were young and returning enthusiasts with restored classics, custom builds, and even a pedal car shown enthusiastically by Bennington's Elsie Johnson (seen below).



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Bennington Students Earn Top Honors at Regional and State Science Competitions

By Marisa Dawson, Courtesy Photos

Students from Bennington Middle School and Bennington High School continued to build a reputation for excellence in scientific research after earning numerous awards, scholarships, and state-level honors during this year's science fair season.



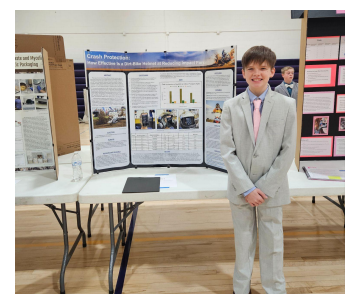
A team of 12 student researchers represented Bennington at both the Metro Science and Engineering Fair and the Greater Nebraska Science and Engineering Fair, with every student earning multiple awards or recognitions. Among the state finalists were eighth grader Jenna Murray and seventh grader Tessa Ehlers. Murray's project, "How Small Choices Add Up: The Effect of Micro-decisions on Mood and Fatigue," earned multiple honors including a \$100



Innovators Award, first place in Behavioral & Social Sciences, and selection as a Thermo Fisher Junior Innovators Challenge finalist. Ehlers' project, "Determining Vitamin C Levels in Fresh and Freeze-Dried Fruits Through Chemical Analysis," earned second place in Chemistry and a \$2,500 University of Nebraska-Lincoln Food Science Scholarship.

Bennington Middle School science teacher Lindsey Wilson highlighted the

students' dedication: "It's a big deal, but honestly what stands out more is the students themselves... Having two state winners just shows what's possible when students actually are given a space to dig into ideas that they care about." She noted the program builds persistence and real scientific thinking. Other students like Drake Wilson, Vladislav Bridgeford, and the Thorberg brothers also earned top category placements and special awards.



Community Collaboration Launches Summer Food Program for Bennington Students

By Marisa Dawson

A new Summer Food Program launched through collaboration between the Bennington Public Schools Foundation, Bennington Community Food Pantry, and Bennington Woman's Club to support students facing food insecurity. From May 27 through Aug. 5, participating students receive weekly bags with five breakfasts and five lunches.

Blake Thompson of the BPS Foundation explained the need: "When school is not in session, we do not have those securities in place. This can create a challenge for those in need."

More than 50 students were initially identified. The organizations met their \$5,508 fundraising goal quickly thanks to community generosity.

Kelli Wilkins of the Food Pantry highlighted the partnership's value and the community's spirit of showing up for one another. Donations continue to be accepted to support more students and future years. The program aims to provide relief, security, and opportunities for families to spend time together this summer.

If there is anyone not signed up that would qualify they can review the details and sign up for the program here:

<https://www.benningtonschoolsfoundation.org/get-assistance/summerfoodprogram.html>



Each week this summer (May 27-Aug 5) students will be provided with meal bags containing 5 breakfast and 5 lunch meals.

HAVE A BPS STUDENT FACING MEAL AFFORDABILITY CHALLENGES THIS SUMMER?

Weekly on Wednesdays, 3-6pm,
May 27 through August 5, 2026
(Delivery available upon request)

Bennington Food Pantry
(Located in St. John's Church, 322 N Molley St.
Bennington, lower level, West entrance)

531.329.3710

BThompson@foundationforbbs.org



SCAN TO SIGN STUDENT(S) UP



Must complete form prior to picking up meals.

Small Aircraft Incident at Blair Executive Airport

Emergency crews from several area departments responded Wednesday morning after a small aircraft made an emergency landing near Blair Executive Airport. Responding agencies included the Blair Police Department, Washington County Sheriff's Office, Fort Calhoun Volunteer Fire & Rescue, Blair Volunteer Fire & Rescue, and Bennington Fire Department. Dispatchers received reports around 11:34 a.m. of a possible plane crash on the south side of the airport. When first

responders arrived, they found a single-engine airplane in a field just south of the runway. Officials said the pilot, who was the only person onboard, was not hurt in the incident. EMS personnel evaluated the occupant at the scene. Early reports suggest the aircraft may have suffered engine trouble before the pilot safely brought the plane down in the field. The incident is currently being investigated by the Blair Police Department and the Federal Aviation Administration.



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BENNINGTON (BUZZ) SPORTS

Bennington Girls Track & Field Defends Class B State Championship, Boys Compete for Individual Medals

By Marisa Dawson, Photos by Jeff Douglas



For the second straight year, the Bennington girls track & field team is bringing home the Class B state championship trophy. The Lady Badgers capped an outstanding season by winning the 2026 state title, showcasing remarkable depth, record-breaking performances, and a resilient team culture. The team set six new school records in the pole vault, long jump, 4×800 relay, 300 hurdles, 800 meters, and 4×100 relay, while the 4×100 relay team also shattered the Class B state and meet records.

Head coach Jocelyn Suing

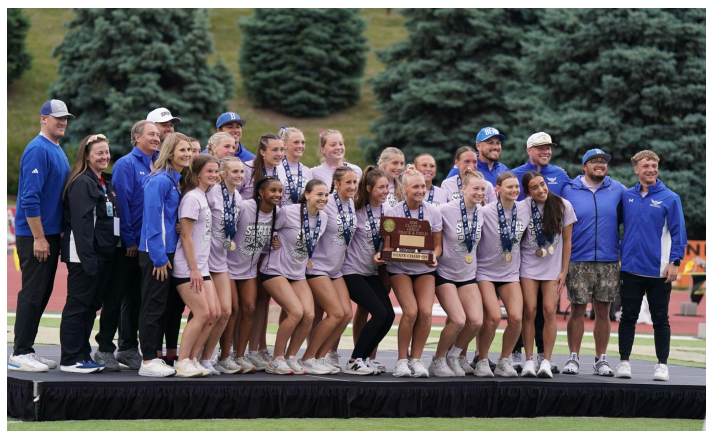
expressed what the repeat championship means: "Defending our Class B state title and bringing another championship back to Bennington means everything to this team and coaching staff because it was the goal from the very beginning of the season." Addison Kuntz led the sprints with a second-place finish in the 100m (12.08) and gold in the 200m (25.03). In the 400m, Macie Reiner took second (56.85), Addison Nguyen placed fourth (57.60), and Lauren Schmidt finished eighth (58.26). Ella Marcinek added a sixth in the 800m (2:17.60).

Field events and hurdles delivered strong results. Paige Gargano soared to gold in the long jump (18-06.50) with a new school record. Kiana Pierre placed fourth in the triple jump (37-06.50), while Brinley Kaczmarek cleared a personal best 10-06 for ninth in pole vault. In hurdles, Kennedy Portwood earned fourth in the 300m (44.72), and Adrienne Trebil made history as the first Bennington athlete to reach the 100m hurdles finals, finishing eighth (15.27).

Relays proved to be a major



strength. The 4×100 team of Addison Nguyen, Addison Kuntz, Harper Bohaboj, and Georgia Behlen won gold in a record 47.60 seconds. The 4×400 squad of Kennedy Portwood, Lauren Schmidt, Macie Reiner, and Addison Nguyen also took first (3:53.82). The 4×800 team placed fifth with another school record (9:36.33). On the boys' side, Knox Naughton earned silver in the 110m hurdles (14.64) and fourth in the 300m hurdles (39.67 PB). The boys 4×100 team of William Gutz, Knox Naughton, Parker Douglas, and Lane Molacek placed eighth (42.94). Suing noted that 13 of 18 girls earned medals and praised the team's support for one another.



Bennington Golfers Swing Into State After District Win

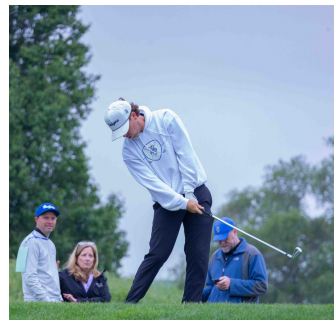
By Marisa Dawson, Team Photo Courtesy Photo



The Bennington High School boys golf team captured the district championship at River Wilds Golf Course, earning a trip to the state tournament in Scottsbluff. All five golfers finished in the top 10 and medaled individually while setting a new school district scoring record.

Leading the way was Kale Lamberty as district runner-up with a 70. Austin Jochum placed third (71), Caleb Clark fifth (73), Jax Gifford sixth (75), and Reid Thornburg seventh (76). Head coach Craig Nichols praised the team's depth and culture.

"Winning the district championship means a lot to our team and our program because it reflects the hard work, commitment, and dedication these players have put in throughout the season and over the last several years," Nichols said. "Having all five golfers medal and qualify individually also speaks to the depth of our lineup and the team culture they have built." The Badgers now prepare for state by trusting their preparation and playing smart golf.



Clockwise from top right: Austin Jochum, Reid Thornburg, Caleb Clark, Kale Lamberty, and Jax Gifford.

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