

The Daily Iowan

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Forty years together began at the UI

What started with saying “Hello” at a business fraternity meeting blossomed into 40 years of patience and kindness.



Left: Contributed. Right: Gabby Drees/The Daily Iowan

Rachel Schilke
Senior Print Editor

The bar basement at a business fraternity social was the last place Dale Wirtjes expected to meet his future wife.

Dale attended the University of Iowa chapter of Alpha Kappa Psi’s “smoker” and social on Feb. 3, 1982, the type

of event he typically never went to. While making small talk with current members, two upperclassmen girls were showing their new roommate, Juli, around the gathering.

And then, Juli pointed at Dale. “How about that guy over there?” she asked.

Forty years later, Dale and Juli Wirtjes, now both 61, sat in the basement of the same bar — today St. Burch Tavern on Iowa Avenue — in the dimly lit basement next

to the restaurant’s “THE DEN” neon red sign, enjoying dinner and cocktails, celebrating the anniversary of the first time they met.

To prepare for dinner, Dale went to extreme lengths, beginning in June 2021, to find a memento from that fraternity meeting in 1982, which took form in a clipping from a 1982 edition of *The Daily Iowan*.

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INSIDE



Being Black in business: UI students, alumni pave the way for success

Several University of Iowa alumni and students share their experiences of being Black in business and paving their own way toward success.

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Iowa City High students create a composting program

After a significant amount of waste coming from their cafeteria ended up in a landfill, 10 City High students launched a program to limit waste in their school.

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OPINIONS: Iowa needs more representation

As President Joe Biden plans to nominate the first Black woman to the Supreme Court, Iowa needs to take a necessary step forward in improving representation at all leadership levels.

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Keeping Anne Frank sapling safe on campus

The UI will put an iron cage and other safety precautions in place to protect the Anne Frank sapling arriving in April.

Emily Delgado
News Reporter

A sapling commemorating Anne Frank will soon take root on the Pentacrest, but fears of anti-Semitism and vandalism mean the tree

will be guarded by an iron cage.

The sapling comes from the famous chestnut tree that Anne Frank wrote about in her diary 80 years ago. Fears of the tree getting vandalized

are on the minds of the Anne Frank sapling team, said UI arborist Andy Dahl, as anti-Semitic actions have happened in other parts of Iowa, and in Iowa City.

“We want to ensure

that every precaution is taken to protect it,” Dahl said.

A tree planting ceremony is scheduled for April 29, Arbor Day, outside MacBride Hall. The ceremony will feature

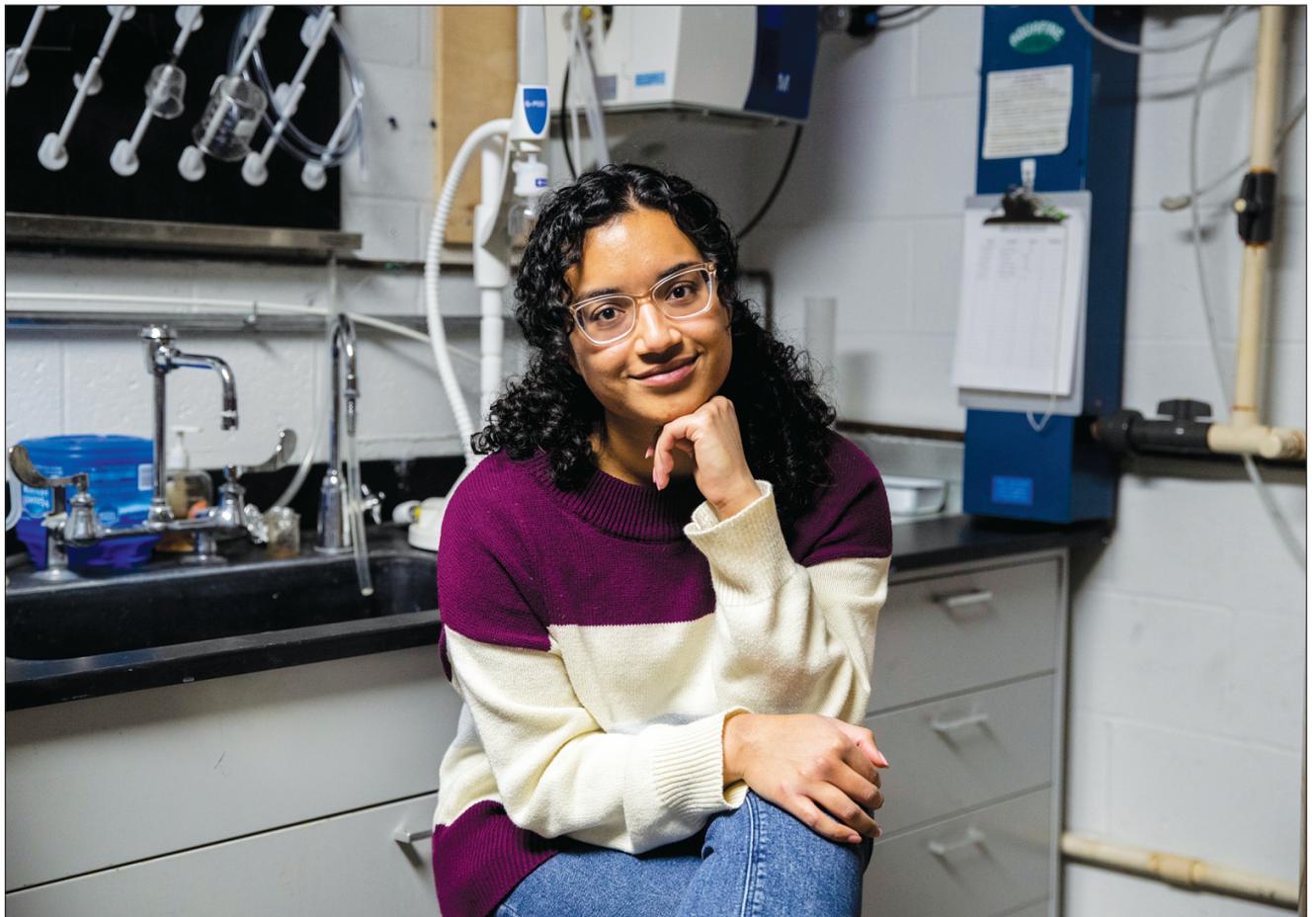
speeches from UI President Barbara Wilson and Associate Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Liz Tovar, along with music and

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Series: UI Dare to Discover campaign

Student seeks answers for chronic stress

Radha Velamuri, who studies biomedical science at the University of Iowa, is looking for conclusions on chronic stressors that affect everyday brain functions.



Isabella Cervantes/The Daily Iowan

Radha Velamuri poses for a portrait in the Pappalohn Biomedical Discovery building on Feb. 9.

Samantha Bielema
News Reporter

Radha Velamuri has always been interested in sci-

ence, as she and her family have struggled with health issues in the past.

She said that was one of her biggest influences to go

into medicine. Her journey with research started the summer before her senior year of high school. She conducted research in the

department of gynecology at University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics and presented her project on reproductive toxicity at the national Ju-

nior Science and Humanities Symposium, as well as the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair.

“I fell in love with it

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Opinions

COLUMN

Iowa has a representation problem

As the U.S. Supreme Court prepares to take a step toward representation, Iowa does not reflect the country's progress.



Sophia Meador
Opinions Columnist

President Joe Biden says he will nominate a Black woman to the Supreme Court, declaring this historic nomination as “long overdue.”

But Biden's move to nominate a woman of color to the Supreme Court is not without backlash. Many Republicans believe this promise is unfair, with Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, calling Biden's actions “offensive.”

Biden's promise is a step toward a more representative country, and Iowa should follow its path. We need more representation in all levels of leadership.

Similar to most seats ever held on the Supreme Court, the Iowa Legislature is almost exclusively white and male.

After the 2020 elections, the number of people of color in the Legislature doubled. But, this percentage is still a tiny

fraction of elected officials in the Statehouse: the number of representatives of color doubled from just four to eight. In addition, there are no people of color in the Iowa Senate.

As it stands, the Legislature is 95 percent white.

In addition to this lack of diversity, the Legislature is overwhelmingly male. Women account for just 31 percent of House members and 24 percent of Senate members.

Of the 100 seats in the Iowa House of Representatives, there are just two Black women, Rep. Ruth Ann Gaines, D-Des Moines, and Rep. Phyllis Thede, D-Bettendorf.

Iowa's higher-education institutions also need better representation. Though the University of Iowa promotes itself as a diverse community through initiatives like the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion division, the faculty demographics remain stagnant.

Of the 1,474 tenured and tenure-track faculty at the UI, 23 percent are minorities, and 34 percent are women.

This might be expected

to many considering Iowa's population is nearly 85 percent white. However, that number should not be an excuse for a lack of diversity.

Representation matters on all levels, and Iowa needs to do better.

Affirmative action includes policies, laws, and initiatives that increase the historically disproportionate representation of minority groups and women.

This spring, the Iowa City Community School District will launch the “Grow Our Own” program to support students interested in teaching, especially students of color.

Current students work with teachers to learn about the profession. If students decide to pursue a career in education, they receive financial advice for the college enrollment process, and are guaranteed a job upon college graduation if one is available.

While 43 percent of students in Iowa City schools are people of color, only 7 percent of teachers in the district are people of color. Initiatives like the Grow Our



Grace Smith/The Daily Iowan

The Iowa Capitol is seen before the opening of the 2022 Legislative Session in Des Moines on Jan. 10.

Own program are a key way to promote diversity, short of electing people of color and women into roles of leadership. In the upcoming midterm elections, we all need to be aware of this issue, and work to support more candidates who will promote diversity.

In higher-education institutions, like the UI, we need to focus on re-

cruiting educators from diverse backgrounds and retaining those who are already on staff.

K-12 education needs more affirmative action programs in schools that support and guide historically underrepresented groups of people. All schools should establish diversity, equity, and inclusion task forces to monitor and promote di-

versity in education.

The advancement of representation in Iowa is long overdue. When the next Supreme Court Justice is sworn in, the country will take a small, yet vital step forward in the right direction. Iowa needs to follow this step and promote representation in leadership.

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COLUMN

Expand love this Valentine's Day

Spend the romantic holiday saying “I love you” to people besides your partner.



Signe Nettum
Opinions Contributor

By middle school, I no longer enjoyed Valentine's Day. It was not a fun craft day where each student made their little mailbox for other students to throw in their generic Valentine's card with either a sticker or a piece of candy taped to it.

All of a sudden, I left the joyous wonder of elementary school and faced the idea of being single and not receiving either flowers or a card. The holiday no longer revolved around candy and communication. It was affirmations of affection and opinions on what you should do to show your partner you really loved them.

I never liked the idea that you had to spend Valentine's Day with your romantic partner. Love comes in all shapes and sizes, and Valentine's Day should include all those loves, not just romantic. Especially this year, two years after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, when loved ones have not seen or interacted with each other in months, possibly years.

I have written about self-care on Valentine's Day and making sure you have open communication with your partner. Now, I am taking it in a different direction.

This year, make your grandmother, or maybe your pet, your valentine. Two years into COVID-19, I have learned to no longer take time with relatives for granted. The birthday card my grandparents sent me absolutely made my day, and the silly one-word postcards from my mother currently hang on my apartment wall. Get rid of the idea that you have to

have a special dinner meal with your partner the night of Valentine's Day. Instead, gather your roommates and have a movie marathon. If you are visiting family, celebrate with a large meal to bring everyone together. Yes, you can still invite your partner — finally introduce them to your parents.

When I return to my family a few days after Valentine's Day, I plan to continue our tradition of homemade pizzas. It's the one time a year where we get to go ham on toppings and cut them into hearts. I will not let college stop me from connecting with family this year.

If you do not want to have a gathering of friends, narrow it down to one or two. Make it a date night but with a friend or a family member. Go through all of the motions of a romantic date: dress up, bring gifts, and have a fancy lunch/dinner. I would love to take my grandmother out for a Valentine's Day date if I had the time.

Here is more Anti-Valentine's Day rhetoric: it is the small moments that matter. Call your parents or your friend and tell them you love them, not just on Valentine's Day. Valentine's Day puts too much pressure on people, showing love in special ways makes more of an impact than generic Valentine's Day events.

If you are still looking for places and things to do around Iowa City, there are restaurants, hiking trails, and bookshops to take your loved one to for the afternoon or evening. St. Burch Tavern is always a nice place to eat. Terry Trueblood Recreation Center looks beautiful this time of year. Prairie Lights, a bookstore, is always a wonderful place to visit, no matter the day.

If all else fails, and you cannot treat Valentine's Day like a normal day, give yourself a break and treat yourself. Splurge on that Ben and Jerry's, watch that rom-com on your laptop, and love yourself.

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COLUMN

Maya Angelou's legacy is worth more than 25 cents

Maya Angelou is the first Black woman to be depicted on a quarter. But does this truly honor the poet's legacy?



Arabia Parkey
News Reporter

Confining Black women to the back of currency upholding images of men who enslaved our ancestors is an act fit to erase the legacy of Black freedom fighters.

Poet, singer, author, and social activist Maya Angelou is the first Black woman to be depicted on the U.S. quarter.

The Maya Angelou quarter is the first coin in the American Women Quarters Program, a four-year program aimed to celebrate the contributions made by women who furthered the development and history of the U.S.

The first series of the coins began distribution to banks across the country in early January.

“This coin will ensure generations of Americans learn about Maya Angelou's books and poetry that spoke to the lived experience of Black women,” Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto, D-Nevada, the Senate sponsor of the initiative's legislation, said in a statement.

But, is this truly a productive way to honor Angelou's legacy, when the oppressive history of George Washington — whose image continues to be featured on the head side of the coin — is unknown to

most Americans?

Though Washington has been fronting the quarter since 1932, many are unaware that he inherited 10 enslaved people at the age of 11 after his father died. He purchased many more enslaved people as an adult, eventually owning upward of 100.

It's slightly more well-known that Washington's famous dentures likely included teeth from

“Black women deserve to be paid homage in ways on par with the legacies we've created for ourselves.”

enslaved people.

“It kind of plays into the way that we hold up the founders on this pedestal without really acknowledging any of the horrible stuff that they've done,” University of Iowa first-year Madison Johnson said. “If your goal was to raise awareness of who Maya Angelou was, there are much better ways you could go about it.”

Black women deserve to be paid homage in ways on par with the legacies we've created for ourselves, a legacy greater than being plastered onto the backside of coins. Using Black faces as decoration is not the progressive act that it is intended to be.

Angelou, who died in 2014 at age 86, was active in the Civil Rights Movement and has a long list of accolades that warrant recognition.

As a social activist, Angelou worked alongside both Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. She

also spoke at the Million Man March in 1995 and served as the northern coordinator of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, a prominent African American civil rights organization.

The Maya Angelou quarter is not an effective way to teach about or honor the poet's work. Don't put Black women on currency when there is an inherent pay gap between the Black

and white communities. On average, Black women in the U.S. are paid 37 percent less than white men and 20 percent less than white women.

Black faces on money can not properly honor Black lives when the racial wealth gap is at more than \$11 trillion and the African American U.S. net worth has decreased by 14 percent. Instead, commemorate Black accomplishments and create substantial change by funding financial literacy programs in Black communities.

Honor Angelou and other Black freedom fighters by inciting tangible change in the Black community. This can be done by creating opportunities for Black artists and furthering Angelou's contributions to the arts by funding Black art initiatives in her name.

Angelou's legacy is worth more than a 25-cent commemoration. Honor Black women by giving us the tools to buy the freedom that Angelou's caged bird sang for.

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Being Black in business: UI alumni and students share their journeys and students pave their way

From Humanize My Hoodie to Josina's Handmade, UI alumni and students share their journeys of being Black in business and paving their paths to success.



Gabby Drees/The Daily Iowan

Andre Wright, co-founder of Humanize My Hoodie, poses for a portrait in an alleyway near South Clinton Street in Iowa City on Feb. 10.

Arabia Parkey
News Reporter

Black students made up just 3.01 percent of those enrolled at the University of Iowa in fall 2021, meaning those pursuing business ventures often have to create their own paths to success.

Andre Wright

Andre Wright, who graduated from the UI in 2005 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts with an emphasis on graphic design, created an avenue for himself that led to the co-founding of his fashion activism brand, Humanize My Hoodie.

Wright said it was dis-comforting to be one of the only Black students in his

classes, but he retained a lens of activism throughout his work, allowing him to maintain a sense of identity.

"I was able to create my own environment and knew that I was unique," Wright said. "And then I was able to capitalize off those things by creating various strings of businesses."

Wright said he had

few Black "heroes" in graphic design at the UI, so he paved his own path by running multiple garment-centered businesses in college, though he had no formal fashion training.

The activist mindset and diligence that Wright maintained through his schoolwork and entrepreneurial ventures con-

tributed to the success of Humanize My Hoodie that transformed from a mission to a movement. Wright said the brand started as a way to bring awareness to Black people being criminalized by wearing hoodies, but it has evolved into more comprehensive action, through cultural competency workshops, graphic design courses, fashion shows amplifying ancestors, and more.

"The fashion piece is just a vehicle to be able to hold the conversation and get it on as many bodies as possible," Wright said.

Sandrah Nasimiyu

Global health major and fourth-year UI student Sandrah Nasimiyu co-founded her business, Josina's Handmade, while in high school. Josina's Handmade employs about 45 artists along the eastern coast of Africa, producing handcrafted home goods and jewelry.

Nasimiyu works outside of school, spending weekends finding live events to showcase the handmade goods while also managing international laws and paperwork for the products.

She said she wants Josina's Handmade to continue growing, but also stay home-based, so that every piece continues to feel personal to the customer.

"I don't want it to become something that's so mainstream that it's

continuously copyrighted," Nasimiyu said. "Because each of our pieces are handmade and they're unique, there's not one that will look the same as the other."

Rita Guzmán

Rita Guzmán, who graduated from the UI in 2018, is an enrollment adviser at AllCampus — an organization tasked with lowering the cost of U.S. education through collaborations with their partner universities. She majored in marketing and, like Wright, was often one of only a few Black students in her classes.

Coming from a small town, Guzmán was more accustomed to a lack of diversity before attending the UI. However, there were times when Guzmán said she found herself confronted with differing and uncomfortable perspectives in classroom discussions.

Guzmán said speaking her mind was a "means of survival" at the UI. She advises young, Black entrepreneurs to use their voices, as well.

"If you're trying to better things like representation, especially in business schools, it's important to keep pushing and to speak your mind," Guzmán said. "If you have ideas and thoughts and perspectives, share them. Don't be silent."

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City High students create composting program

An Iowa City High club launched a compost program in the fall semester to minimize cafeteria food in landfills.

Simone Garza
News Reporter

Iowa City High School's Environmental and Garden Club has launched a composting program for food in the lunchrooms to reduce food in landfills.

In August 2021, at the beginning of this academic year, City High students started to look at methods for composting, splitting responsibilities between each member and reaching out to other schools that practice composting.

About 10 students participate in the compost program. Mary Lestina, City High science teacher and club organizer, said students really saw the need to reduce the amount of waste going into the landfill that didn't need to be.

"Our district has made some changes to our paper plates and food boats we use," she said. "These are now able to be put into the compost bins and not the trash bins."

Lestina said the students set up and remove the compost bins every day, and make sure everything is clean and ready for the next day.

She said students were able to get funding from the Student Senate Program for the first month of composting.

"The cost of composting costs up to \$250 a month for Johnson County Refuse to take food waste back to their

facility to compost it and turn it into soil as the final product," she said.

Lestina said the composting process is more sustainable than sending the waste to the landfill.

The student organization will apply for a grant through the Iowa City Community School District Foundation for the next three years, she said.

Lestina and the students hope to demonstrate the need and importance that students really want to make a difference.

"Hopefully the district will see that this is a need, and to make composting more of a priority," she said. "We hope our program can help demonstrate this. It would be amazing if we could even incorporate it into the district's budget as well."

Lestina said the Environmental and Garden Club is working on an informational video to promote the program in the school.

"I think education is key right now. We have some barriers because there are things in the lunch that are not compostable, such as foil lined packets and plastic bags," she said. "The food waste and greasy cardboard is then composted and turned into soil, which can be used to benefit our community as well."

Elizabeth K. Mackenzie, University of Iowa sustainability program manager, said organic materials that

can be composted generally make up 30 percent of the waste stream.

"The earlier students can engage in that practice, the better prepared they will be to participate in those activities wherever they encounter them," she said.

The UI also allows for composting at residence hall market places and offers composting bins to people living in residence halls. Since beginning in 2007, the program has composted 800,000 pounds of food waste a year, according to the Office of Sustainability's website.

Scott Jespersen, secondary assistant principal at City High, said the club planned to start the program a few years ago before the COVID-19 pandemic.

"COVID-19 changed everything, and that was really a conversation that was shelved because of all the different mandates and restrictions," he said.

Jespersen said there are COVID-19 guidelines for the compost program — special liners that go into the collection bins and can be sealed up and put in out to the curb to make the process hands-off.

He said there were a few logistical challenges, including the pandemic and the education process and how to collect the composted material.

"It's pretty specific. You really have to be able to almost man the disposal at lunch so that people don't always know what identifies as compost and what does not," Jespersen said.

Jespersen said the next challenge was to have an area easily accessible to move the compost material, and to also secure it until it can be picked up.

"I am impressed by and really take pride in the school," he said. "Our curriculum at City High infuses that and into biology and AP environmental science and other areas."

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Radha Velamuri poses for a portrait in the PappaJohn Biomedical Discovery building on February 9.

CHRONIC STRESS

Continued from Front

when I did the OB-GYN project," Velamuri said.

Velamuri, a fourth-year student, is one of 82 students featured in the university's Dare to Discover campaign, organized by the UI Office for the Vice President of Research, and displayed on banners in downtown Iowa City.

After her time doing research in high school, Velamuri arrived at the UI and wanted to be involved in more. In college, she has been a part of numerous research projects, from wet labs with microscopes to clinical data extraction.

She's currently researching vulnerability to chronic stress in the neuroscience lab. Velamuri and her team study cellular, molecular, brain-network-based, and behavioral data to figure out how the brain works.

Velamuri's goal is to study brain data to see how a person can avoid chronic stressors by using mouse models and building electrodes in the lab.

"Radha is one of those people that loves research, she loves learning," said Melinda Licht, program coordinator for the Iowa Center for Research by Undergraduates. "She's also this really, really sweet human being. She's extremely genuine and personable, ready to talk to anybody at

a moment's notice."

Velamuri is a firm believer in communication — one of the reasons she has been so successful, she said.

"I always communicate about what's going on," she said. "It's all about managing my time and if I can't do it properly, I ask for help."

Leslie Revaux, interim director for strategic communications for the UI Office of the Vice President of Research, said the office reaches out to staff members, professors, and students for nominees each September for the campaign.

"We usually get around 200 applicants, and we normally only take about 50," she said.

This year was an exception, with 82 students recognized. Revaux said students were only recognized virtually last year and the department wanted them to get a chance to be featured on the downtown streets like in previous years.

Velamuri is currently in the undergraduate-to-graduate program, meaning she is finishing her bachelor's degree in biomedical science while making strides toward her master's in public health in epidemiology.

She's also receiving a certificate in clinical and translational science at the UI.

She said it was easy to get involved in research because the university is

such a research-driven school. Velamuri is heavily involved as an ambassador for the Iowa Center for Research by Undergraduates.

Licht said she met Velamuri about two-and-a-half years ago at the center. Velamuri presented at conferences, led sessions, organized activities, and talked to classes, encouraging students who are interested in research.

Bob Kirby, Iowa Center for Research by Undergraduates director, said the center helps research students by giving support where it's needed.

"What we work on with students more is how research is going to serve them more and help them make decisions on where they want to go," Kirby said.

Velamuri said moving forward, she plans to get into research for public health. It's something she was putting off this semester, she said, but is extremely interested in that kind of work.

Iowa is one of Velamuri's top options for medical school, she said, as she hopes to become a physician-scientist.

Velmuri said she is most thankful for all the people in her life that have supported her along the way.

"I've just been lucky," she said. "That's how I feel."

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Contributed

WIRTJES

Continued from Front

On the afternoon of Feb. 3, he presented her with the ad and said he wanted to take her on a “trip down memory lane.”

The music playing on the speakers on Feb. 3 was typical 2022 electronica bar music with soft jazz music, at times changing the mood from excited to soulful. In 1982, songs such as “Billie Jean” by Michael Jackson and “Flashdance” by Irene Cara emitted from the speakers.

Juli said that, despite some of the obvious differences, being in the same spot was surreal — as if barely any time had passed at all. “It feels like five years,” she said. “You find out as you get older that your life just goes faster and faster... I’m 26 still.”

“She got my attention”

After talking to Juli that night long ago, Dale said he did not think much of it, as he believed she was a freshman and not his own age.

“We talked for a while, and she was — she got my attention, let’s put it that way,” Dale said. “And it seemed odd to me that she was interested in talking to me as much as we did that night.”

One of the fraternity’s traditions, to this day, is for new pledges to choose a “pledge parent” — a student in the fraternity who teaches new members the fraternity’s rules and mottos. Typically, Dale said, women would choose a pledge mother. That was not the case for Juli.

Juli’s friends were astounded that she wanted

Dale never said no to a movie Juli wanted to see, despite her favorite genres — chick-flicks and romance — not matching his own favorites.

He remembers plopping down into the theater’s plush, red seats almost every week to watch the top box office movies — at the time “Flashdance” and “An Officer and a Gentleman.”

Juli said her fondest moments of college were

some-thing miniscule — spending days with Dale in the Health Sciences Library. Dale would tutor her in math and art, she said, but mostly algebra, causing some moments of extreme frustration for him.

“I think he threw a book at me once, because I kept asking him to explain why x equals three,” she said laughing and looking over at him.

“It wasn’t airborne!” Dale responded.

Eventually, it came time for Dale to graduate in May 1983. However, after meeting Juli and establishing a relationship, he decided to stay in college for one more year for her.

While their love story is unique, a study by Facebook in 2013 showed that 28 percent of married graduates attended the same college as their spouse.

Dale said after meeting a woman he really liked, he never regretted spending another year at the UI.

“I could enjoy [college] a little differently and especially with her in my life,” he said. “I could really enjoy that last year of college as a year of college with not as many stresses, and also the euphoria that goes with a new relationship.”

“A lifetime home run”

he decided to move.

“I think my threat, at one point, I said, ‘If you go somewhere else, and there’s no commitment here, then there is no commitment here. I’m going to go do my thing,’” Juli said. “I don’t wait around.”

Juli had been in some previous relationships with ups and downs and knew that she never wanted to go back to that again.

“I became very independent after that, and, I mean, I had no problem going and doing my thing, but I’m not playing the game,” she said. “We’re together, or we’re not, and that’s what it’s gonna be.”

Dale said after that, he saw the writing on the wall, and it was “thick and black.”

After missing Valentine’s Day the year before, Dale made sure to make up for it the next year. On Feb. 14, 1983, he presented her with roses and breakfast in bed, and proposed with a heart-shaped ring. Juli sadly doesn’t have that ring anymore, as it used to catch on everything and scratch their kids.

The wedding was planned for April 1984, but the couple eventually moved it up to Sept. 17, 1983.

“The vision was so clear, yet I was in denial. It was the difference between someone who had previous relationships, and I had not really had any,” Dale said, grabbing Juli’s hand at the table next to an empty martini glass. “So, what turned out to be my first serious relationship is a lifetime home run.”

Returning to the UI

Despite going to school for business, Juli soon realized that her future was in education. After teaching in elementary schools in Linn-Mar Community School District in Marion, Iowa, for 33 years, Juli decided to retire and return to the UI to teach students in the College of Education as an adjunct supervisor.

Her typical work day, since COVID-19 forced many schools online, is Zooming



Gabby Drees/The Daily Iowan

Dale and Juli Wirtjes look at old photo albums in their house in Cedar Rapids on Saturday. Juli and Dale have been married for almost 40 years.

wasn’t gonna retire from everything, that she would still do something, because like I said, she’s such a go-getter that, you know, she’ll always have something that she’s doing.”

Gary Gabel, a UI elementary English and math coordinator and Juli’s supervisor, said her dedication to teaching is inspiring.

family and that they wish they were closer with their siblings who were older and far away,” Holly said. “I just think they grew up one way and were like, ‘No, we don’t want it to be like that. We want us all to be close.’”

Holly said her parents opted to spend time with them versus having alone time, which showed her how

Rob, 32, said he can always go to his parents for advice, especially his dad.

“My dad is probably the best person to bounce things off of, or to talk to, about life things, if it be financial or health-related, or job-related, he’s one of the best people I have in my camp to talk to, just to figure out life,” he said. “I don’t know that every person my age has that built in with one of their parents.”

Mel said with a lot of her friends having divorced parents, it is amazing to her that after 40 years, her parents are still happily married.

Living only 10 minutes away from her parents, Mel said they are very involved with their grandchildren, whether it be giving rides to and from school or teaching Landyn, her eldest, how to play piano.

Her parents’ opposite personalities have transferred over to how Mel views obstacles in her life. While her dad provided empathy and sympathy, her mom, always a go-getter, she said, would tell her to take a few minutes or a day to cry, and then be done and do something about it.

“You gotta get up and

“With everything I do, I jump in with both feet. I’m excited. I say, ‘Let’s go for it,’ and I’m ready.”

—Juli Wirtjes

He added that she is always willing to take an extra step to lend support to her students or to Gabel.

“She built a good sense of community with her students,” Gabel said. “That’s kind of what I’ve seen and what I hear from students, is how she advocates for them, and how she’s just accessible and available all the time.”

Over her 33 years of teaching elementary students, Juli said she’s had 25 practicum students in her classroom, and now being able to teach those students is her “dream job.”

“I’ve learned as much from them as they did from me,” she said. “They bring new ideas and all kinds of cool things to do...so I always knew I was looking at a job like this for several years before I retired.”

Making family a priority

A large family photo hangs in the entryway of Dale and Juli’s home in Cedar Rapids. Several photo albums fill the bookshelves, stocked cover to cover with photos of their children and grandchildren.

Two days before Valentine’s Day, the couple smiled as two of their grandchildren, Landyn and Lauryn, sat in the leather chair opposite them, presenting their “Mimi” and “Bumpa” with colored drawings. Just that morning, Juli said, almost all of the grandchildren were over at the house — a typical family gathering.

Their three children, Holly, Melissa “Mel” Mitchell, 35, and Robert “Rob” Wirtjes, 32, said their parents continue to be as supportive and involved as they were when they were kids.

“I think that they always sort of didn’t like that, like they wish they had the big

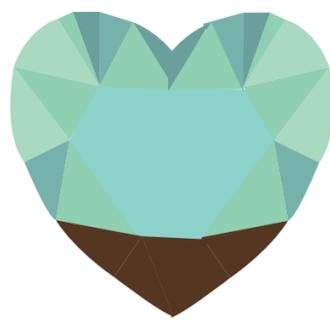
strong a relationship they had.

Friday nights with pizza and a rented movie stood out in her memory.

“My parents didn’t go out on a date, they spent time with us. And I just, that’s really important to me and like something I want to do with my family, too,” she said. “My parents just made us a priority, and maybe made their relationship less of a priority, because they went on trips with us and went out with us.”

All three children added

28% of married graduates attended the same college as their spouse



Facebook Data Sciences, 2013

that road trips with their parents were some of the best memories they had. They traveled to Disney World and Disneyland, North Carolina, the Gulf Coast of Florida, among many others.

Mel said her parents set the bar high for a relationship and defined for herself and her mom what love actually is.

“My dad has always been like, ‘Let me help you, let me take care of you,’” said Mel, who is the eldest daughter and has two children of her own. “[He] drops everything to go above and beyond to help people, that I expect everyone to be that way.”

go and like, choose to be a happy person, and choose to have a good day, it’s all within your control and it’s all mindset,” Mel said. “I think I’ve picked up from them like the dos and don’ts of a relationship.”

Dale said looking back, their marriage has all been about following their promises to each other.

“It’s kinda like the vows: ‘Love is patient, love is kind,’” he said, smiling at her. “We really did live our wedding vows.”

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Gabby Drees/The Daily Iowan

Dale Wirtjes listens to his wife Juli Wirtjes tell stories at their house in Cedar Rapids on Saturday. Juli and Dale have been married for almost 40 years.

Dale for her pledge parent, but she said she chose him because he was nice and easy to talk to. Dale said he gladly accepted once she asked.

While reminiscing their relationship’s early days, Dale realized he was pretty “slow on the uptake,” as Valentine’s Day passed 10 days after their meeting and he did not “seize a golden opportunity.”

“I don’t think her interest in me had really occurred to me yet,” he said. “I was in disbelief that this terrific woman would take an interest in me.”

Even when there wasn’t a reason for the two to get together, Dale said he started to find reasons to go over to Juli’s apartment. He had a friend in her same apartment complex, and he decided one day to introduce them, even though they were on opposite ends of the building and had no reason to interact.

“And then I don’t know if she invited me, or if I showed up one evening. I think she invited me to come over one evening, and we hung out all evening there, and a romance was born,” Dale said.

Over the course of their time together at the UI, the couple would go to dinner at The Mill, the Brown Bottle, and Bushnell’s Turtle. Dale remembered walking under the lamplights in the Pedestrian Mall together to visit different bars and enjoy Iowa City’s nightlife.

They would see movies at the Old Capitol Mall’s theater.

Juli and Dale have a set routine that Juli says she “drags him through” every morning, starting with making the bed and working out in their basement, and ending with making dinner together — she cooks, he cleans.

“We always make the bed,” Juli said, holding the family dog, Trixie, in her lap.

Dale said Juli was able to make instant judgments on things, and “99 percent of the time, she is dead on, and is to this day.”

“I could tell early on she knew what she wanted, was decisive, and I found that really attractive,” Dale said, recollecting his early memories of Juli. “Because, frankly, I was more the indecisive one. It was kinda an opposites attract kind of thing.”

Juli said she is very much the optimistic type, and that has not changed as she has gotten older.

“With everything I do, I jump in with both feet,” Juli said. “I’m excited. I say, ‘Let’s go for it,’ and I’m ready.”

That mentality helped Dale realize the moment that Juli was the one he was going to marry, when she told him she loved him during a weekend visiting his parents in Buffalo Center, Iowa.

Her decisiveness and his ability to mull things over allowed them to balance each other well, he said.

When it neared time for Dale to start looking for post-graduation jobs, Juli said she asked him what was going to happen with them if

into her students’ classrooms, advising on English and math.

Dale and Juli’s youngest daughter, Holly Caldwell, 30, said her mom loved teaching, but it got draining after a while.

“She ended up retiring a little bit earlier than she had intended to,” Holly said. “So, I think she knew, even when she did retire, that she

MAPPING THEIR ROMANCE

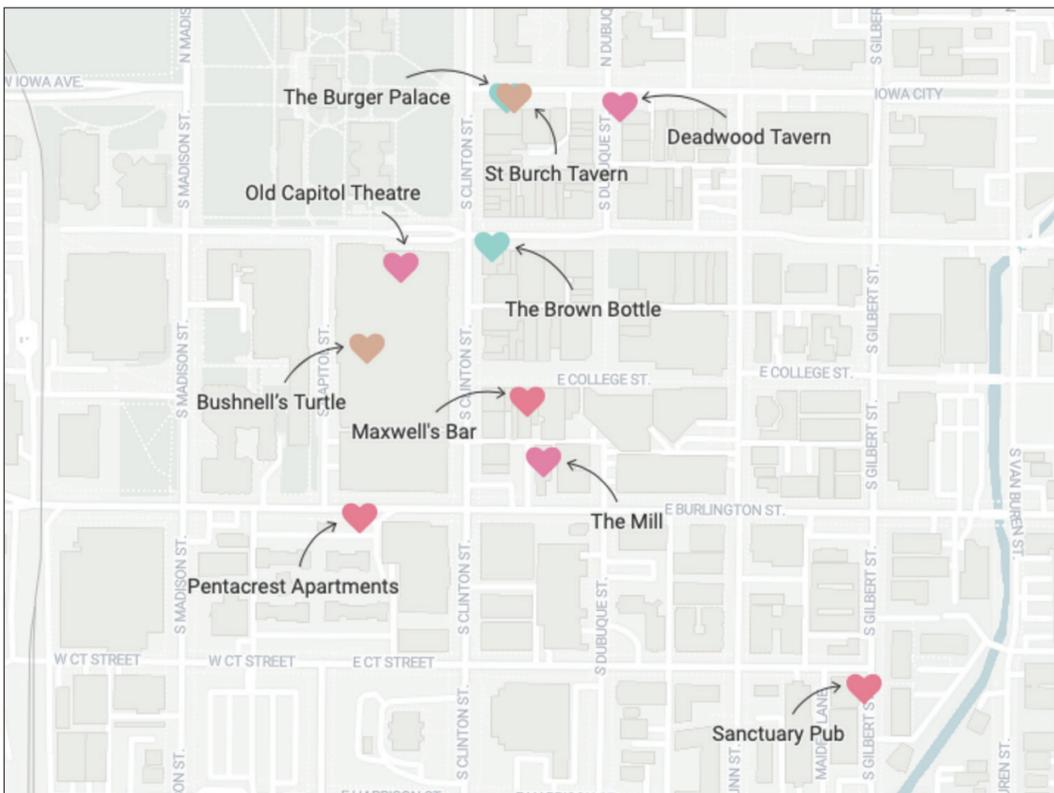


Illustration by Molly Milder. Infographics and design by Marandah Mangra-Dutcher.

BENNETT

Continued from Page 8

character. He spent five seasons in the Ontario Hockey League with the Saginaw Spirit, tallying 90 points in his final two seasons. Instead of jumping into the professional ranks after his junior career, Bennett enrolled at the University of New Brunswick. A member of U Sports, the highest collegiate league in Canada, New Brunswick men's ice hockey has a similar reputation to the University of Iowa men's wrestling program. The Reds have won eight David Johnston University Cups — the third-most of any school in the league.

Bennett helped lead New Brunswick to its eighth cup in 2018-19, recording 15 goals and 20 assists in 30 games during the regular season.

Bennett said his favorite moment of his hockey career was winning the cup.

"It's awesome," said Bennett of competing for a successful program. "Obviously, it's not easy showing up, going to battle every single day with your teammates. Every single day is accounted for. You have to get better every single day. You're pushed by the coaching staff and the players around you.

"We go there to win a national championship, not a conference championship."

After three seasons as a Red, Bennett signed an amateur tryout with the AHL's Stockton Heat for



Gabby Drees/The Daily Iowan

Iowa forward Kris Bennett shoots the puck during a hockey game between the Iowa Heartlanders and Indy Fuel at the Xstream Arena in Coralville on Nov. 12, 2021. Bennett scored two goals. The Iowa Heartlanders defeated the Indy Fuel, 5-3.

the 2020-21 season. He competed in nine games, putting up two assists.

In August, he agreed to a one-year, two-way contract with the AHL's Iowa Wild and has split

the 2021-22 campaign between Des Moines and Coralville.

He was selected to the ECHL All-Star Classic in January — the only Heartlander to earn that

honor — but couldn't participate because he was on the Wild roster when the game was played on Jan. 17.

Kuffner said he constantly makes great mem-

ories with Bennett as a Heartlander — whether on the ice, at their apartments, or inside Starbucks. "We're just happy to be here," Kuffner said. "Happy to be friends and team-

mates, line mates, and to have this opportunity, to have a role on this team and give it everything we've got."

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FLOWRESTLING

Continued from Page 8

Ballpark," I don't think the platform offers enough marquee content to help a casual fan justify the purchase. The sport's biggest events — like the Big Ten and NCAA Championships, the Iowa-Penn State dual, and the Olympics — don't air on FloWrestling.

If the goal of "Bout at the Ballpark" was to grow the sport of wrestling, Flo might not have been the right streaming option. To increase a sport's popularity, casual fans need to have access to big events. Once the casual fan has watched a marquee matchup, they might become more invested in wrestling.

I think the steep price is more than enough to scare a casual fan away from "Bout

at the Ballpark." If a casual fan is unwilling to pay that much, "Bout at the Ballpark" can't grow the sport because it's not attracting the eyes it needs to do so on FloWrestling.

To me, "Bout at the Ballpark" would've been a more potent event on the Big Ten Network or the ESPN family of channels, where fans can access it for free with a standard cable subscription.

"Bout at the Ballpark" may have even been better-served on other streaming services like Roku, ESPN+, or BTN+. All three streaming platforms offer monthly subscriptions of \$10 or less.

I'm more than willing to pay \$10 for one dual. Subscribing to one of the aforementioned platforms for a month and canceling isn't a deal breaker for me.

I'm a stereotypical broke college student. \$10 isn't slashing my personal budget. But \$149.99 is a significant investment.

I'd suggest FloWrestling either switch to a monthly payment model or allow fans to access top-notch events like "Bout at the Ballpark" on a pay-per-view basis. If "Bout at the Ballpark" was available via pay-per-view for \$50 on FloWrestling, I would've bought it in a heartbeat. I just can't wrap my brain around paying \$149.99 for one event.

For wrestling aficionados, Flo is certainly worth the price tag. Subscribers get access to Flo's library of high school, collegiate, and Olympic-level events across all sports. Flo streamers can also watch the service's documentaries at any time. Flo's live

events are archived so subscribers can watch them at their convenience.

For casual wrestling fans and the sport's more localized, niche reporters like me, FloWrestling isn't worth the asking price.

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MAZUR

Continued from Page 8

starter to begin the season, head coach Rick Heller said the starting pitching rotation will be fluid throughout Iowa's first neutral tournaments. Heller said Mazur will start on Fridays, Schultz will start Saturdays, and Morgan will start Sundays. For the time being, Heller said, Baumann will be in the bullpen.

Schultz is a graduate transfer from Butler and went 2-5 as a weekend starter in 2021 with a 6.22 ERA. Morgan is a true freshman out of Iowa City West High School, and posted a career record of 21-5.

"We've got a lot of guys that are really battling for those three weekend spots," Heller said. "And we thought about attacking the first three weekends since they're neutral site

tournaments ... since it's early, that gives us the opportunity to kind of book-end with some other guys, so it's almost like a double start in those games."

Mazur will get his first opportunity to pitch as a Hawkeye in the Swig and Swine Classic in Charleston, South Carolina, this weekend. Iowa will take on Air Force to open the 2021-22 season.

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Jerod Ringwald/The Daily Iowan

Iowa head coach Rick Heller walks back to the coaching box after disputing a call with the home plate umpire during a baseball game between Iowa and Maryland on April 24, 2021 at Duane Banks Field. The Terrapins defeated the Hawkeyes, 8-6.

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HAWKEYE UPDATES

Nyla Valencia joins Iowa women's wrestling 2022 recruiting class

Nyla Valencia, the third-ranked 106-pounder in the nation, has signed a national letter of intent to join Iowa women's wrestling, head coach Clarissa Chun announced Thursday.

"Nyla is an incredible person that works diligently to achieve big aspirations," Chun said in a release. "She is competitive in the classroom and on the mat. She found Iowa to be the perfect fit for her and I know she is a perfect fit for this program."

Valencia, out of Morgan Hill, California, will train in Iowa City and compete unattached with Kylie Welker — the Iowa women's wrestling team's first-ever recruit — in the 2022-23 season. The Hawkeyes will officially start team competition in the 2023-24 season.

Valencia won a title at 106 pounds at the first USA High School National Wrestling Showcase at Xtream Arena in Coralville on March 25-27, 2021. She also won two Super 32 titles in 2019 and 2021.

"It was important to me to have an impact on women's wrestling while pursuing my dreams and aspirations, first as a collegiate and international champion on the mat, and then as a heart surgeon in an operating room," Valencia said via a release "I truly believe that, under Clarissa Chun's leadership, I can develop into a world class athlete. I want to be a part of a team that is a pioneer in women's wrestling. For these reasons I have chosen the University of Iowa."

Iowa women's basketball center Monika Czinano named to Lisa Leslie Watch List

Iowa women's basketball senior center Monika Czinano has been named to the Lisa Leslie Center of the Year Top-10 Watch List, the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame announced Friday.

The annual award honors the top center in Division I women's basketball, and was first started in 2018. Former Hawkeye Megan Gustafson received the honor in 2019 as the award's second recipient.

Czinano has made 64.5 percent of her shots in the 2021-22 season — good for third in the country. She ranks 15th in the nation with 20.3 points per game, and ninth with 180 field goals made.

Indiana University's Mackenzie Holmes joined Czinano as the two Big Ten representatives on the list.

The Lisa Leslie Award selection committee is made up of media members, head coaches, sports information directors, Hall of Famers, and Lisa Leslie.

Keegan Murray named to Naismith Trophy Midseason Team

Sophomore forward Keegan Murray was named to the Naismith Trophy Midseason Team on Feb. 10. Murray is one of 30 student-athletes in the running for Naismith Trophy Player of the Year.

Six other Big Ten men's basketball players join Murray on the list: Ohio State's EJ Liddell, Purdue's Jaden Ivey and Zach Edey, Wisconsin's Johnny Davis, Illinois' Kofi Cockburn, and Indiana's Trayce Jackson-Davis.

Murray ranks first in the nation with a 37.4 player efficiency rating. He is fourth in the country with 22.3 points per game. The 6-foot-8 forward has recorded over 20 points 14 times in the 2021-22 season and over 25 points a nation-leading nine times.

Former Hawkeyes Megan Gustafson and Luka Garza won the Naismith Trophy in 2019 and 2021, respectively.

Murray has also been named to the John Wooden Award Late Season Top 20 List and the Lute Olson Player of the Year Midseason List. He is a midseason second-team All-American in *Sporting News* and *The Athletic*, and is a Karl Malone Power Forward of the Year Semifinalist.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"It's kind of surreal."

— Iowa women's basketball sophomore Caitlin Clark on Brooklyn Nets forward Kevin Durant talking about her on his podcast

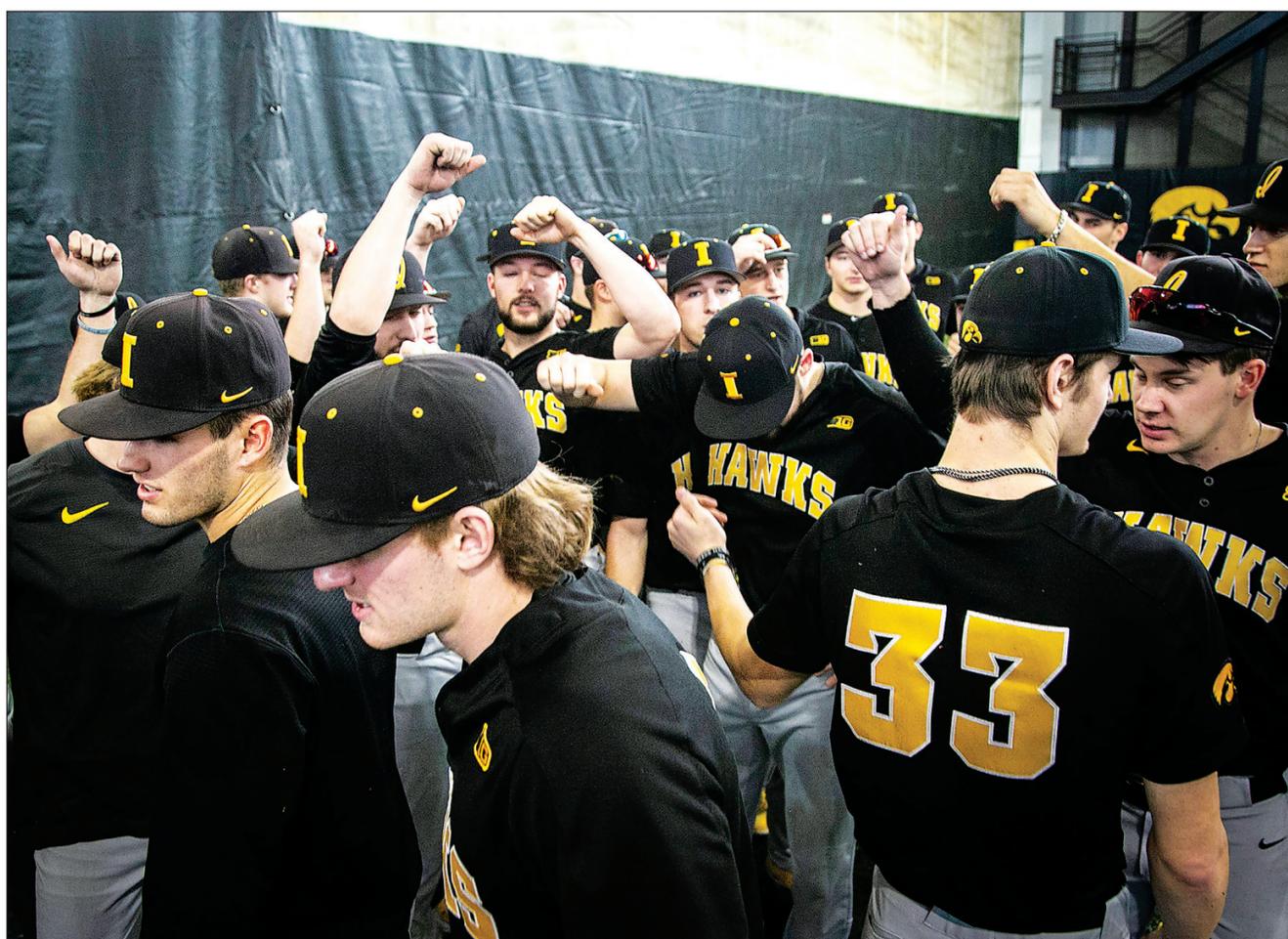
STAT OF THE DAY

100

Miles per hour Iowa baseball pitcher Brody Brecht can throw a fastball

Baseball taps Mazur as ace

Iowa baseball's Adam Mazur, who transferred from South Dakota State for the 2022 season, will be the Hawkeyes' Friday night starter.



Joseph Cress/Iowa City Press-Citizen

Iowa players huddle up during the Hawkeyes' NCAA college baseball media day, Feb. 10, at the University of Iowa Indoor Practice Facility in Iowa City, Iowa.

Chloe Peterson
Assistant Sports Editor

Iowa baseball transfer Adam Mazur was surprised to hear he earned the spot as the Hawkeyes' ace.

Mazur beat Butler transfer Connor Schultz, freshman Marcus Morgan, and returning Hawkeye starter Cam Baumann for the Friday night position.

"Honestly, with how deep our pitching staff was coming in, I was a little bit [surprised]," Mazur said at Iowa baseball's media day on Feb. 10. "That's something I wanted though, coming into the decision, is to be able to go out and earn a Friday spot. So, I'm happy I earned it. But then again, it was tough, because there's a lot of great competition out here and a lot of depth at pitching."

Mazur, who transferred to Iowa from South Dakota State in fall 2021, was the Jacks' ace for two seasons in the Summit League. The redshirt sophomore went 2-7 in the 2021 season with a 5.43 ERA.

The pitcher out of Woodbury, Minnesota, said he didn't have any issues transitioning from South Dakota State baseball to Iowa. Iowa baseball had 22 newcomers on its roster of 44 for the 2022 season — 10 freshmen and 12 transfers.

"The guys that were returners were very welcoming," Mazur said. "And we had 20 or so new guys. So, it was pretty nice not being the only new guy, but the returners did a great job accepting us right away, and we got to work on team bonding."

When deciding on a new school, Mazur said technology was one of the most important factors that drew him to the Iowa baseball program. When Heller became head coach in 2013, the Hawkeyes started to invest in technology similar to that of Major League Baseball.

Iowa has Trackman and Rapsodo to help pitchers — devices that use radar technology to track metrics like spin rate and axis, as well as release speed and height.

"I knew that if I wanted to reach my full poten-

tial I needed to go somewhere that had access to a lot more technology and places I could develop a lot better," Mazur said.

"It has completely flipped my fastball," he added. "It plays a lot better in the zone now, and I'm able to throw a lot more efficiently. I've also been mixing and matching with a couple different pitches and it's really helped my changeup to kind of deaden the spin."

While Mazur is the Hawkeyes' Friday night

MAZUR | Page 7

Bennett leads Heartlanders

Forward Kris Bennett is the first captain in Iowa Heartlanders history, showing leadership through his tenacity.



Larry Phan/The Daily Iowan

Iowa forward Kris Bennett and Utah defenseman Miles Gendron both go for the puck during a hockey match between the Iowa Heartlanders and the Utah Grizzlies at Xtream Arena in Coralville on Feb. 9. The Grizzlies beat the Heartlanders, 5-4, in overtime.

Isaac Goffin
Sports Reporter

Four minutes into an overtime period, Iowa Heartlander forward Kris Bennett found himself on a breakaway.

The Heartlanders were playing the Toledo Walleye inside a packed Huntington Center in Ohio on Feb. 4. While the Walleye were wearing SpongeBob SquarePants sweaters, the Heartlanders got the last laugh.

Bennett said that he "kind of blacked out" as he recalled his thoughts about the overtime breakaway three days later. As Bennett moved closer to Walleye goaltender Max Milosek, the left-handed shooter delivered the game-winning goal, giving the Heartlanders the overtime 6-5 victory in front of a shocked crowd.

He's tenacious," Heartlanders head coach Gerry Fleming said. "I guess if I was going to use one word to describe Benny — tenacity. He's just relentless."

Heartlanders fans see Bennett as the club's leading scorer when he's out on the ice. But the way the first captain in Heartlanders history carries himself throughout the day is what makes him stand out.

"He's an awesome guy," forward Ryan Kuffner said. "He does everything the right way. Always putting in the work behind the scenes to be able to perform and get all the fans on their feet out there."

Originally from Brampton, Ontario, and the youngest of four brothers, Bennett credits his family's sacrifices for helping him earn a professional hockey career and his

COLUMN

'Bout at the Ballpark' wasn't accessible

DI Sports Editor Austin Hanson explains how "Bout at the Ballpark" could've been improved.



Austin Hanson
Sports Editor

REV Entertainment's "Bout at the Ballpark" had a chance to be one of the biggest wrestling events of the year, bar none.

With the U.S. Men's and Women's Freestyle National teams and Iowa and Oklahoma State men's wrestling programs all competing under one roof, the bonanza had plenty of intrigue. Not to mention the event was held at Globe Life Field in Arlington, Texas — home to the MLB's Texas Rangers.

For many, including myself, the spectacle fell flat.

It wasn't a lack of action that turned me away from "Bout at the Ballpark." I'm sure I would've found No. 2 Iowa's 23-9 win over No. 10 Oklahoma State to be plenty exciting.

What steered me away from Saturday's action was its prohibitive cost. FloWrestling, the subscription-based streaming service "Bout at the Ballpark" aired on, has a \$149.99 annual cost.

Streamers do not pay a monthly subscription fee that eventually amounts to \$149.99. If they did, they'd pay about \$12.50 a month.

FloWrestling subscribers must pay the annual fee upfront. To FloWrestling's credit, its website makes it clear that users will have to pay \$149.99 to activate a subscription.

For Iowa men's wrestling fans, the cost outweighs the benefits of a subscription. The Hawkeyes competed on FloWrestling once this year. If I were to subscribe to FloWrestling for the sole purpose of watching the Hawkeyes, I would've paid \$149.99 for one dual.

While FloWrestling did stream "Bout at the