



Omaha, Nebraska speaker Orlando Jackson talks to a crowd of people about his journey with addiction and recovery during the Recovery United! event on Saturday, Aug. 9, at Broadway Plaza in Concordia.

PHOTO BY OLIVIA BERGMEIER | CONCORDIA BLADE-EMPIRE



The Grind General Manager Sandy Fuller welcomes the crowd to Recovery United! An event dedicated to the recovery community within Concordia on Saturday, Aug. 9, at Broadway Plaza in Concordia.

PHOTO BY OLIVIA BERGMEIER | CONCORDIA BLADE-EMPIRE

Recovery United celebrates Concordia’s recovery community

BY OLIVIA BERGMEIER
Concordia Blade-Empire

Broadway Plaza filled once more on Saturday evening, but instead of live music or children playing throughout the stage, it filled with Concordia’s recovery community to celebrate a unique event — Recovery United!

“To anyone here today that might be exploring a path to recovery for the very first time, we see you, and we honor your courage, and we are so glad you are with us,” said The Grind Coffee House general manager Sandy Fuller. “That’s why we have brought together some truly incredible voices today.”

These voices included community partners like 12x12 Recovery, the Cloud County Chemical Dependency Committee, Celebrate Recovery, Concordia Wesleyan Church and Fellowship Christian Church.

The speakers who arose from these organizations included Fellowship Christian Church Pastor Dwight Whitead and 12x12 President Jordan Budreau, but the featured speaker arrived from Omaha, Nebraska — Orlando Jackson.

According to Fuller, Jackson was a staple in her own journey, accepting her time and time again as she navigated the bumpy road of addiction recovery. After Fuller introduced Jackson on stage, he began speaking to the crowd about his own journey and how he’s thankful for the community he witnessed on Saturday evening.

“I’m just so grateful, man, for each and every one of you that came here,” Jackson said. “Because, you don’t have to be here tonight, but somebody’s sitting here tonight, wondering, ‘What must I do to recover?’”

Besides the free The Grind drinks and some hot dogs and hamburgers, a host of community members

attended the event, with one bringing her family to support her friend, Tonya Fraser, a Concordia resident.

“My girlfriend is a recovering person,” Fraser said. “She was saying that, support works for her, so I stopped getting the girls’ hair done for school and came down to support her.”

Fraser said that she enjoys seeing the support that the recovery community has in Concordia, and shared a bit of her own story with recovery.

“I’ve been a recovering person for 25 years,” Fraser said. “Once I got done with (recovery), I went into nursing and did it for 19 years, so I have people behind me. See, when you don’t have support, it’s kind of hard to do whatever you have to do.”

Recovery United hosted yard games, turned on the splash pad for children and hosted a live music performance by a few local church members on Saturday, Aug. 9, in Concordia.



Third grade students Killian Jones, left, and Tevari Ruffin, right, play the “Stacking Game” during indoor recess on the first day of the 2025-2026 Concordia Elementary School (CES) year on Monday, Aug. 11, at CES in Concordia.

PHOTO BY OLIVIA BERGMEIER | CONCORDIA BLADE-EMPIRE



Concordia Junior/Senior High School (CJSHS) chemistry one teacher Quentin Clark teaches his new class for the 2025-2026 school year about phenolphthalein, which is a chemical commonly used to identify other solutions on Monday, Aug. 11, at CJSHS in Concordia.

PHOTO BY OLIVIA BERGMEIER | CONCORDIA BLADE-EMPIRE

USD 333 announces budget hearing, talks staff salaries

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The Unified School District 333 Board of Education met at 6 p.m. on Monday, Aug. 11, for the regularly scheduled meeting.

Board president, Brad Berk, Vice President Mike Cleveland and members John Culley, Nancy Owen, Amber Lambertz, Jenny Parker and Lindsay Metcalf were all present.

In reports, superintendent Tom DeBauche announced the date of the public 2025-2026 budget hearing and revenue rate neutral hearing held at 6 p.m. on Monday, Sept. 8, in the school board office with the budget and regular meeting to immediately follow.

DeBauche also reported on the enrollment numbers for the district on this, the first day of the 2025-2026 school year.

Enrollment in the district is up by 20 students, making the current count of all students across the district 1,157.

The board also discussed upcoming board goals for this 2025-2026 school year.

The board had discussed, at a recent meeting, the addition of a study session happening every month which includes a fifth week Monday, beginning on Friday, Sept. 29.

Among these goals are topics related to maintenance of facilities, community planning and strategic goals,

and recruitment and retention of qualified and quality staff.

In action items, the Board approved a new organizational plan outlining how the district will be structured.

The board also voted to accept the ratified agreement from negotiations for all certified and classified staff.

The new base salary will honor the steps and be set at \$47,250 and the supplemental base salary will remain at \$38,700 for certified staff.

Classified staff will have a base salary of \$12,022.

The board also heard a facilities update on the status of ongoing projects.

The City of Concordia voted to approve a 7-foot 4-inch striping easement at their last meeting, allowing for work to continue on the parking lot on the North side of 10th Street.

The lot is nearly finished being repaved and painted, adding 100 parking spaces to the school.

Curbing and sidewalks still need to be completed, as does the repainting of lines along the north side of the high school on 10th Street itself.

A renovation of the upstairs men’s bathroom in the high school is completed, making it easier to use and ADA compliant.

This project is possibly going to be repeated on the other bathrooms in the school in the future.

Work is continuing on the Hall of Fame/Holding

area outside the library in the high school. The new carpet and trophy cases have been installed, and later this month the information kiosk will be installed at the end of August.

Cafeteria tables have been installed in the elementary school and are fully operational.

And finally, the fiber installation project is nearing its completion as well.

Some challenges have arisen with the elevator and lifts in the high school, and a part is currently on order for the new lift. The part is not under warranty, although the lift itself is.

It was suggested that perhaps the elevator and lift issues might be part of the first fifth week study session happening in September.

The Board also approved the hiring of Crystal Lowell (full-time Sub CES/CMS), Andrea Anderson (Para USD#108), Cindy Erickson (Para USD#109), Ashley Cleveland (Para USD#109), Raegan Hinderliter (Para CES), Stacia Whitesell (Para CES), Kiara Mikkelsen (Sub Para/Teacher pending certificate), Danielle Mahin (Sub Para/Teacher), Tori Jessup-Genereux (Sub Para/Office sub), Marissa Montague (Sub Para/Teacher), Adrianna Romo (Daycare sub), Julie Cory (Para CES), Cynthia Atwell (Asst Jr HS Volleyball Coach), and Nancy Holbert (Sub Food Service).

They also accepted the resignations of Hailey Houck (Para CES) and Kiara Mikkelsen (Para CHS).

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