



INDEPENDENT ELLSWORTH COUNTY REPORTER

October is
Breast Cancer
Awareness Month!
See Pages B7 and B8.



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Alma Mater returns for Homecoming

BY KAREN BONAR
Ellsworth County I-R

For the first time in memory, the Sept. 26 Homecoming game included Ellsworth’s alma mater. The Ellsworth Jr./Sr. High School band performed the newly-arranged music during halftime.

“My interest in the Ellsworth alma mater began my first year here,” instrumental music teacher Chris Barlow said. “I asked the high school band if there was an alma mater and they had no idea what I was talking about.”

An alma mater is a song tied to the school.

“Many people I have talked with seemed confused with the difference between an alma mater and a fight song,” Barlow said.

He explained the term alma mater is a Latin term meaning “nourishing mother” or “nurturing mother.”

Barlow said its purpose is to foster community, preserve tradition and express loyalty and pride.

“It creates a sense of camaraderie and shared identity among students and alumni,” he said. “It preserves a connection to a school’s history and values. It is a vehicle for expressing gratitude and devotion to one’s ‘nourishing mother,’ the school that shaped their lives.”

The choice for a homecoming debut was a strategic one.

“I wanted to debut it when I had a good alumni representation,” Barlow said. “Homecoming is usually the football game that is very well attended, and I knew there would be a big crowd.”

“The music was ready to go back in July. I knew



Freshman Korbyn Jensen plays the alma mater on the trumpet Sept. 26 during halftime of the Homecoming game, where the song was debuted.

Homecoming was when I wanted to debut it because that was when alumni would be back to town.”

Barlow is entering his seventh year of teaching. His first teaching stint in Ellsworth was during the 2023-24 school year. He spent last year teaching at Sacred Heart Jr./Sr. High School in Salina, where he went on a similar quest to find — and in Sacred Heart’s case, craft — a school alma mater.

“When I knew I was going to come back to Ellsworth last spring, I decided that I wanted to continue to figure out the alma mater for Ellsworth,” Barlow said. “I felt like I had some ‘unfinished business’



Ellsworth’s alma mater was arranged by Steve Lueth, who created three different versions of the song for Ellsworth Jr./Sr. High School.

that I wanted to complete.

“I knew there was one, but it seemed lost to history.”

He reached out to EJSJS yearbook adviser Kendra Ploutz to see if

Photos by KAREN BONAR/Ellsworth County Independent-Reporter

accompanist for years,” he said. “I contacted Tami, and she suggested we ask in a community Facebook group if anyone in the community remembered or knew of an alma mater for Ellsworth. I don’t remember who found it, but someone found the music and we got a copy of it last spring.”

McGreevy said Hayden Sillmon, director of choirs for EJSJS, located the music.

“It is an octave in the library where the words to the alma mater were written in,” she said of the school’s music library.

“An octave is a musical interval that jumps all seven notes of the musical alphabet and lands on the same note, but higher or lower. A, B, C, D, E,

F, G, back to A,” Sillmon said. “Often, we called a single song a piece, and the piece of music that the alma mater words go with is a hymn called ‘Ode to the Homeland’ by Noble Cain.”

He said the original copyright for the music was 1941 by Harold Flammer Inc.

“I think unearthing the alma mater is a great opportunity for our students to learn and understand some of the history of the school,” Sillmon said.

Barlow said the music from the 1940s did not include a band arrangement.

Music more than eight decades old didn’t intimidate Barlow, though.

“The version we received was only a choir piece. I wanted it arranged for band so the high school band could play it,” he said. “I reached out to my friend Steve Lueth, who lives in Bennington. I knew he was a fantastic arranger who could help me out.”

“I sent him the original music we had, and Steve arranged it for band and choir. I wanted a version that could be played together (both band and choir at the same time) and one that could be performed separate if needed. I also had Steve arrange a field version that the marching band could play. The field version is much shorter and more appropriate for marching/pep band.”

Lueth said the Ellsworth alma mater was unique “because it came from a preexisting vocal piece that was adapted to an alma mater by composing new lyrics.”

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County transportation recognized

BY KAREN BONAR
Ellsworth County I-R

Innovation doesn’t have to be high tech to be high-impact.

This is what those who bestowed the Innovation Award from the Kansas Public Transit Association said of Ellsworth County Council on Aging Coordinator Flo Fosdick.

She was given the award during the 2025 Annual Meeting held Aug. 12-13 at the Kansas Public Transit Conference in Wichita.

“Her ability to see the big picture, backed by her experience behind the wheel, makes her a stand-out leader in rural transit,” Michelle Coats, Director of Mobility Management for North Central Kansas, wrote in the nomination letter. “Her work is a powerful example of how listening to the community and

acting boldly can drive meaningful change.”

Fosdick started with the agency as a driver in 2012.

“I am still a driver, but I am the last resort,” she said.

Fosdick said she “gradually” assumed additional duties at the Ellsworth County Council on Aging.

“When I was driving, I hauled several people that could give me the history of this town,” she said. “They told me what the buildings used to be compared to what they are now. That’s what I miss — getting that stuff.”

“A lot of the people we had when I was driving are gone now.”

While she misses the routes, Fosdick is able to continue to provide services for Ellsworth County residents.

“Residents in rural parts of Ellsworth County — many of whom previously

lacked reliable transportation — can now access medical care, groceries, social services and community events with dignity and ease,” Coats wrote. “Flo recognized an unmet need and met it with action, improving lives while strengthening the local transit system.”

Fosdick said the transportation arm of the Council on Aging assists residents who can no longer drive still be able to access necessary errands and appointments.

“We even take some people from the retirement home, it doesn’t matter their age,” she said. “We will take people in Ellsworth to Wilson, Holyrood, Kanopolis, Lorraine, the interstate. Or we will get whoever is in those towns, bring them here. We do go

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HOSPITAL BREAKS GROUND



KAREN BONAR/Ellsworth County Independent-Reporter

Officials gather Tuesday for groundbreaking at Ellsworth County Medical Center’s rehabilitation expansion project. Pictured, from left, are Mike Vance, Murray Company Vice President; Jeni Bahr, ECMC physical therapist; Jim Kirkbride, ECMC CEO; and Justin Nash, Ellsworth County Healthcare Foundation President.



Ross Janssen’s
Weather

Oct. 1-7

WEDNESDAY 83/61
Mostly sunny

THURSDAY 85/60
Sunny; breezy

FRIDAY 88/63
Sunny; windy

SATURDAY 84/62
Mostly sunny

SUNDAY 83/62
Evening storms possible

MONDAY 74/56
Isolated storms

TUESDAY 77/53
Partly cloudy

KID SCOOP	A2	SPORTS	B1
NEWS	A5, A6, B2	LEGALS	B2
OBITUARIES	A3	CLASSIFIED	B3
OPINION	A4	CHURCH	B5