



DAUGHTERS & DADS  
DANCE NIGHT AWAY. 2



A VISIT WITH OUR  
UPSTAIRS NEIGHBORS, 4



PANDAS SEE STARS  
AT SILVERBELLS. 6

# THE GAVEL



## No need to dig deep to find talented Pandas

Notre Dame Academy's annual talent show featured the traditional senior-led dance performance of Holes, featuring Mollie Young, Hannah Talkers, Hannah Colvin, Francie Case, Leah Darpel, Emily Zimmerman and Arden Cleves. The talent show capped a fun-filled five days of Catholic Schools Week activities. **Story, 3.**

# Father-Daughter Dance delights

## The event was a success!

This year's father daughter dance was held on Jan. 29, 2016. It was, without a doubt, very successful. More than 100 people showed up with their dads. For the seniors it was bittersweet to have

their last father-daughter dance, but they still had a great time. The food was delicious, the music was magnificent, and the over all atmosphere was highly enjoyable. Asked what was her favorite thing about father daughter, Lauren Lawler said, "The rolls were A1! Oh, and spending time with my dad, of course!"



## Did dads dance?

It's common knowledge that most dads can't dance. Some dads know that and quietly sit back and watch everyone else get down on the dance floor. To many NDA girls' dismay, that was not the case at this year's Father-Daughter dance.

When they weren't by the dessert stand, they were breaking it down on the dance floor with their daughters. It was very heartwarming to see the dads bring back their old dance moves from their high school days, and in some cases, out-dance the girls.



**TOP:** Riley Green and Hannah Hammond with their dads.

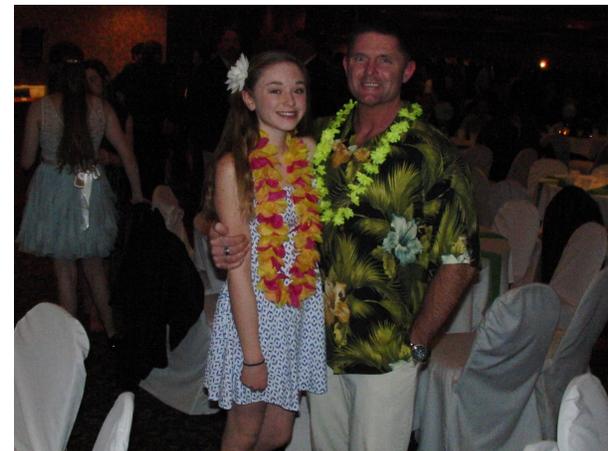
**LEFT:** Audrey Field dances with her father.

**BOTTOM:** Jordan Burwick and her dad rocked the island look. (Danielle Coyle photos)

## Did people dress for the theme?

The theme of this year's dance was around the world. Usually only a couple people follow the theme, but this year many people decided to dress the theme. There were Hawaiian, Chinese, and Japanese costumes, and one group dressed as

safari tourists. It was fun to see the variety of costumes, some subtle, and some not so subtle.



- Danielle Coyle

## Catholic Schools Week

# Celebration exceeds first expectations

### Freshman thrilled to see Pandas go all-in on week of fun, festivities

Freshman Grace Lawler is a newcomer to the experience of Catholic Schools Week at Notre Dame Academy. Coming from Gray Middle School in Union, she had high expectations of this week of fun-filled festivities.

"I expected Catholic Schools Week to be pretty awesome," she said. "I heard really fun things about it so I was very excited for it."

Notre Dame's fun week of spirit and celebration went above and beyond, she said.

"Catholic schools week was very fun and did exceed my expectations!" Grace said.

In her past years of school she said she had never experienced anything quite like our Catholic Schools Week. One thing Grace saw that she was not expecting was the number of girls who participated in the themes -- Nun Day Monday, Sisterhood Sleepover (pajamas), Dress Like a Boy, Throwback Thursday (Grade School Day) and Decade Day.

"A lot of people participated in the dressing-up days," she said. "Usually at public school, only around half of the people would actually participate and would actually dress up. It was really cool how almost everyone dressed up with the themes."

*- Macee Seshier*



Freshmen Grace Lawler and Jenna Schmal participate in their first Dress Like a Boy dad.



Freshmen Katie Draud, Abby Noll, and Julia Hughes join their fellow classmates in a throwback to the '50s.

# The *family* on the fourth floor

## A visit with the beloved Sisters who truly call NDA home

I step into the elevator. On the wall is a circular frame with the picture of the Virgin Mary and a simple prayer. Sister Paul Ann clicks the fourth floor button, and I feel a rush of excitement.

I had never really seen the fourth floor before.

It always fascinated me that people actually lived up there. There are currently six residents on the fourth floor, and I get to speak with four.

Sister Paul Ann leads me to the common room, calling to her housemates that I'm here. I sit at the table as Sister Reina, Sister

Rachel, Sister Dolores and Sister Paul Ann gather around me.

I ask my first question: Why do you live up here when there is a convent across the parking lot?

Sister Reina, who is retired and gets around the halls via wheelchair, answers. "It was always handy when I taught school. You could go down when you needed to." She pauses, collects her thoughts, and adds, "And everything's ready here that you could use in school -- you didn't have to run over to The Heights."

Sister Paul Ann liked that you didn't have to go anywhere for Mass, since it used to be right downstairs. "It's just so convenient! Why wouldn't you want to live here?" And I can see her point. Each sister has her own room, plus a workspace. There is a laundry room, and a common area with a TV, a bookshelf spanning one wall and multiple seating areas. They also have a kitchen and a larger gathering area.

Sister Paul Ann said the students provide fun and entertainment for them. "So we eat supper, come in and watch the news, and then go downstairs for whatever entertainment."

The Sisters are avid spectators at NDA events. Big sporting events almost feel incomplete without the student cheering section chanting for a wave from one of the Sisters. "It's a small group that lives here and we like one another." That comment prompts a chuckle throughout the group.

Sister Rachel then explains what she thinks of as her role. "I consider it a ministry to the people we serve here. So we are sort of like the face of Notre Dame to the public pretty often."



Sister Reina, Sister Dolores, Sister Rachel and Sister Paul Ann call the fourth floor of Notre Dame Academy their home. (*Leah Darpel photo*)

Sister Reina adds, "I think our availability is good. If they need us they know where to come."

Sister Dolores loves the commute. "I go down a half flight of steps to my work. And also, availability to people. And always coming in contact with the young people, which to me is valuable. It keeps me in tune with high school-age girls. And it's just fun walking through the halls and greeting people."

Their family includes God, and they feel very close to Him via a small chapel just down the hall.

I ask about people's reactions to living above the school, and they smile and say yes, people are surprised that there are nuns living at NDA. When they recently held an alumni gathering, "One of the ladies said, 'I always wanted to come up here!'" Sister Rachel said.

The mystery surrounding the fourth floor hasn't really subsided, and Sister Reina highlights that with an anecdote.

"And I think that one of the proofs that people really wanted to get up here and thought that it was pretty good... Formerly when we were at chapel, all the way down there, some very brave girls provided tours! They charged 50 cents and then they would take them and show them the fourth floor. That didn't come out until some of the ladies at Silver Anniversary said, 'You know, I was one that took a group upstairs.' It had a pretty good feeling."

At this point, done with my questions, I thank the Sisters for their time, and Sister Paul Ann leads me on a tour down the hall.

I pass the small chapel where the sisters connect with God, and pass their small bedrooms, with embroidered name cards outside the doors.

It struck me that such a life could exist above where I study and learn. Their home is quiet and simple, yet you can feel the love and family within their group. And the sisterhood that dwells on the three floors among the students ascends to the fourth floor with this little family.

I make my way back to the elevator at the end of my interview to descend back to school, and Sister Paul Ann bids me farewell and says that she's got some laundry to finish up.

I smile. All in a day's work.

## Scholastic Writing Awards

"The Family on the Fourth Floor," by senior Publications student Leah Darpel, was an honorable mention recipient for journalism in the recent Scholastic Writing Awards competition, a big day for Notre Dame Academy students across a number of categories. Also recognized from NDA were:

**Gold Key:** Sammie Kleier, short story; Maribeth Stafford, flash fiction, poetry; Abbie Guard, personal essay, memoir; Abby Bruns, poetry, short story; Katherine Horsford, humor, poetry; Erin Miller, flash fiction; Fiona Blackburn, short story; Kathleen Rice, short story; Christin Sherrard, short story; Paige Brunson, poetry; Amanda Smith, short story; Kendall Crawford, poetry, critical essay; Claire Lonneman, flash fiction; Lauren Reinersman, poetry; Rikki Buchberger, writing, portfolio; Lauren Darpel, personal essay/memoir, portfolio; Andrea Davis, flash fiction; Olivia Ossege, personal essay/memoir; Kate Williams, personal essay/memoir. **Silver Key:** Abbie Guard, poetry; Katelyn Egbers, poetry; Katharine Denby, poetry; Taylor Eiting, poetry; Caroline Jackson, poetry; Anna Klear, poetry; Clair Lange, short story; Rachel Massie, flash fiction; Katelyn Noll, poetry; Bridgette Stegman, poetry; Maddie Wilhoite, short story, poetry; Ming Wai Wong Burgess, personal essay/memoir; Laura Dinn, personal essay/memoir; Fiona Blackburn, poetry; Madison Jones, humor, poetry; Kathleen Rice, poetry; Grace Harmeling, poetry; Elizabeth Lonneman, poetry; Georgia Papakirk, personal essay/memoir; Emily Rice, personal essay/memoir; Dymond Robinson, short story; Fiona Blackburn, short story; Emma Duerstock, poetry; Abby Kelly, poetry; Julia Mathew, poetry; Catherine Meadows, critical essay; Kylie Moellering, poetry; Paige Montfort, short story, critical essay; Claire Morgan, critical essay, poetry; Jackie Noll, humor, poetry; Meg Whelan, poetry, personal essay/memoir; Rikki Buchberger, portfolio; Lauren Darpel, short story; Mikayla Rankin, critical essay; Malea Rolfsen, critical essay; Maggie Brinkman, science fiction/fantasy; Leah Darpel, flash fiction; Savanna Hasenkamp, poetry, short story; Mollie Seibert, short story, personal essay/memoir; Sarah Williams, poetry; Isabelle Morgan, short story; Olivia Ossege, science fiction/fantasy, short story; Kate Williams, short story. **Honorable mention:** Abby Bricking, flash fiction; Morgan Weltzer, personal essay/memoir; Abby Couch, flash fiction; Maria Danneman, poetry; Clara Davenport, short story; Taylor Eiting, short story; Lindsey Foust, poetry; Emilie Guerin, poetry; Lauren Judy, critical essay; Anna Klear, flash fiction; Clair Lange, poetry; Iris Rokvic, flash fiction; Sophie Skinner, short story; Carolyn Zeis, poetry; Sally Bishop, poetry; Laura Dinn, poetry; Fiona Blackburn, personal essay/memoir; Madison Jones, personal essay/memoir, humor; Christin Sherrard, poetry; Lauren Bracken, poetry; Olivia Cooney, poetry; Sophia Daniel, poetry; Camryn Diebold, poetry; Katie Hellmann, poetry; Ellie Kathman, poetry; Lauren Lawler, short story; Annabelle Lee, poetry; Anne Simendinger, humor; Ellie Vandergriff, dramatic script; Emily Buten, critical essay, short story; Sarah Draud, critical essay; Emma Duerstock, poetry; Olivia Hollman, critical essay; Julia James, short story; Abby Kelly, poetry; Josephine Meyer-Hogan, critical essay; Kylie Moellering, critical essay, personal essay/memoir; Claire Morgan, poetry; Lauren Reinersman, critical essay; Amanda Sauer, poetry; Lydia Watson, science fiction/fantasy; Meg Whelan, poetry; Kathleen Schawe, poetry; Lauren Darpel, personal essay/memoir; Andrea Davis, poetry; Maggie Brinkman, personal essay/memoir; Tia Browning, poetry; Emma Browning, short story, flash fiction; Anna Resing, poetry; Kate Williams, flash fiction.

## Silverbells

# A glittering night on the red carpet

Silverbells, held after Christmas break at Notre Dame, started off at a walk among the many stars, as in the Hollywood stars.

These stars were on the floor right next to you when walking down Alumnae Hall. When walking toward the doors, you saw a light peeking through these blue streamers; this is where you could be a star for the night. You could take pictures in front of the Hollywood sign, and act crazy with costumes and masks. There was popcorn, candy and fruit drinks, both rooms were filled with happy students either dancing or getting a drink to cool off.

Then when you were done taking pictures, eating candy and popcorn and getting a drink, you went into the auditorium, where DJ Sophie Arnold was blasting great music among the many heads of the dancing students. There wasn't one frown from the start of the dance to the end.

• **Favorite food/candy:** In Alumnae Hall, there were many treats for all students and teachers: candies, punch, and popcorn. Hard candies were especially popular. There were little bags for students to carry their favorite candy around the dance, so they aren't hanging around the table. By the end of the dance, the table was empty. I wondered why people were so jittery and could keep dancing without taking a break for so many hours. There was also popcorn that made your mouth water right after you walked in the doors.



From left, sophomores Abby Tierney, Kelsey Johnson, Samantha Merman and Grace Whitaker strike a pose at their first Silverbells.

• **Favorite dance/song:** Once the dance started, DJ Sophie was blasting the best music. But the song that got everyone moving was the Electric Slide, the most popular song to be played throughout NDA dances. Everyone was so into the dance there was no room to move. There was always music playing and people dancing throughout the night.

- *Katelyn Baker*

## Snow days

# A lot of deliberation, then a lot of fun

This year Notre Dame Academy rang in our first snow day on January 20, 2016. Although there wasn't very much snow, but we were all very excited to be off. Many girls spent their day sledding, catching up on sleep, school work, or spent the day inside watching Netflix. However you spent your day, it was nice to be off.

A lot of thought and deliberation goes into our snow days. It's a long process for Mr. VonHandorf, NDA principal, to determine whether school should close.

If snow is expected, Mr. VonHandorf's day begins at 4:30 a.m. He first checks all the local news stations and sees what other schools are closed and which are delayed. He checks the weather to see how the snowfall is going to accumulate during the day. He will check with Dr. Koehl and Mrs. Grayson for their input, and then start calling the other schools in the diocese to see what their game plan is. He usually likes to do the same as Covington Catholic so we are on the same schedule.

At the end of the day, he says, "The girls' safety is my number one priority."

Public schools take a lot more snow days than we do, in part because of concerns about buses on bad roads. NDA has two "free" snow days; after that, days must be made up. We have been lucky so far this school year, only having one



Juniors Maddie Deye, Natalie Snyder, Shelby Tomlin and Bella Cooney enjoy their day off sledding at Devou Park.

snow day. If NDA uses both free snow days, then "virtual school days," tested successfully last year, are an option. It worked out really well, and hopefully this year if he have any more snow days we can have "virtual school" so we don't have to stay in school past graduation.

*- Sarah Bajric*

## Senior retreat: a time to connect and reflect

On the long weekends of October 16-18, January 22-24, and February 26-28, one-third of the Senior class spends time to St. Ann's Convent in Melbourne, Kentucky. It is required that every senior complete one of the three retreat weekends. The first day starts at 1 p.m. sharp, with students being transported to the convent by a bus from NDA. The bus was full of excited girls anticipating whatever awaited them. They were greeted by welcoming leaders and teachers who had taken their time to plan the various activities months before. Mrs.

Price, NDA campus minister, is leader and organizer of the retreats. She says that she was **“grateful for the openness and honesty of the students and their willingness to share and participate in sharing their stories.”** There was an abundance of food that parents and students brought, and though the students ate throughout, still there were leftovers in the end.

The various retreats are a great opportunity to get closer to senior classmates and learn about

others' significant stories and life experiences. One student, Grace Lubbe, said, **“It gave me a peace of mind and a new perspective.”** The important thing to do is to go in with an open mind and be ready to share your own story. **“It was an amazing weekend, and I am so happy I got to have such an amazing experience with great people,”** Maree Grosser said.

This can be an emotional and life-changing weekend for you as long as you go in with a positive attitude. This is just another step in our religious journey and it's spent with girls who love and admire you. However, this weekend wasn't serious all the time; there was a lot of time for relaxing, snack breaks, nature-trail walks, sledding, and occasional ultimate frisbee games where everyone came together. There are late nights and early mornings, so you're sure to be pretty tired when it's all done. It was agreed that this short time together brought a small part of the sisterhood together. There were many take-aways that each student will experience. It's definitely something worth sharing, but we'll keep it a secret so you can find out about it for yourself.

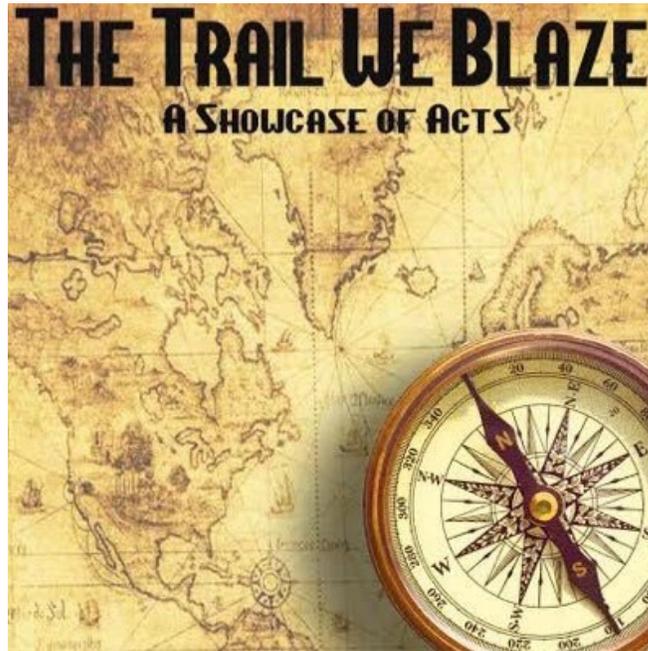


- Hannah Stetter

# 'The Trail We Blaze' showcases great theatre

From *Newsies* to *Les Miserables* and ending with *Hamilton*, the cast of *The Trail We Blaze* journeyed through time with various songs and skits for a beautiful performance. Starting as a cabaret, the showcase has appealed to many in the community. Notre Dame and Covington Catholic have journeyed together through the 1940s with the USO showcase, the 1960s, and the Fairy Tale show.

In Act One, you met Shrek and Donkey, played by Erin Miller and Fiona Blackburn, as they sang about their road trip; Huck Finn, played by Emma Lange, as he talked about his adventures with Tom Sawyer; and the beloved siblings Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy, played by Noah Birrer, Shelby Saylor, Kevin Eberhart, and Anna Resing, as they traveled through a wardrobe into the land of Narnia. The act ended in a heartwarming, "Do You Hear The People Sing" from *Les Mis*. "I planned everything out precisely and even drew three pages of poorly drawn diagrams for the choreography," Maggie Brinkman, the director of the scene, said. "I remember the very first time we rehearsed it and it all just seemed so



**LEFT:** The poster used to promote the show. The map and the compass add a feel to what the show is about. The poster was displayed around Notre Dame Academy and in the community. It was also an icon on many of the cast and crew's social media accounts.

**BELOW:** The set used in every scene: a basic background with vines covering a brick wall. Ropes hung from the catwalks and trees were stood up against the wall of the ramps.

(Katie Stratman photo)

surreal. I was standing in the back of the theatre facing the stage, and slowly they all started coming on stage and I'm not going to lie, I cried a little bit."

Act Two came into the light as the cast stomped into the aisles complaining about turning 13. The head-banging thrill took the audience back in time as Thomas Jefferson, played by Max Schaefer, Benjamin Franklin, played by Maggie Brinkman, and John Adams, played by Declan Blackburn, sang about what animal should be America's national symbol. The actors portrayed very well the three hard-headed men in the musical *1776*. "I was just so excited," Brinkman said.

"I begged and pleaded for three months to do songs from the movie."



The performance carried on with Emilie Gurein and Sarah Rolfsen dancing to the theme song of *The Pirates of the Caribbean*, Sullivan Blackburn and Tim Belton singing "The World Will Remember Us" from *Bonnie and Clyde*, and ended with a song from the hit new musical *Hamilton*, "Wait for It." Overall, *The Trail We Blaze* was a success, with three out of the four shows sold out.

- Katie Stratman

## Sports

# 'I knew I had to put in the work'

*Lexi Miles, a senior Publications student, shares her experience playing basketball for Notre Dame.*

Perfection for us is four drills in four minutes.

If the team doesn't finish the drills within the allotted time we run line drills: touch the first line, back to the baseline, touch the halfcourt line, back to the baseline, and so on.

One of our usual drills is Olympic shooting. If we don't make the goal, we do the drill repeatedly until we get to that goal. Next is Spartan transition, which starts as a 2-on-1 drill and eventually grows to 5 on 5.

There's also a 4-on-4 shell drill, where we split into blue, white and gold teams and work on defense. This drill is intense and we get very competitive.

After that we split up, post players at one end and the guards at the other, working on moves and ball-handling. At the end of practice we scrimmage each other, JV against Varsity, or coach mixes us up. Every practice is unique and depends on the game ahead of us, but the drills are always at the core.

I have played basketball at NDA for four years and have had an experience that most people haven't.

Practice at Notre Dame is competitive. We are out for impression. We all want to show the coaches what we are capable of. We all want to be the best in every drill and scrimmage. Sometimes a drill gets so intense, we have to stop. We get so hyped.

From my freshman year to now, my relationship with my team has grown



Lexi Miles on playing basketball for the Pandas: "I came here knowing only one person. It's weird thinking about how close I have become with my team." (Bob Jackson photo)

tremendously. You come in either knowing girls from grade school or not knowing anyone. In my case, I came here knowing only one person. It's weird thinking about how close I have become with my team.

Coming here I knew that I was going to be playing with the best of the best in the Ninth Region. I was anxious but ready every day. Knowing how talented and hard-working everyone was, I knew I had to put in the work to show that I was capable of playing up.

- Lexi Miles

## Sports

# Aquapandas win 18th straight regional; state next

Three Notre Dame Academy divers, twelve club girls and five girls from the Gold group of the team helped bring home the Pandas' 18th consecutive regional title and send the team to state on a high note.

The club girls have been training since early September to ensure a place at regionals and to move on to state.

The Aquapandas have risen to success once again, this time with a new head coach. Courtney Sorrell, former Dixie Heights coach, is just as excited for these girls to move on, having been an Aquapanda herself.

"The girls are working hard in this final stretch of the season," she said before regionals. "The outlook is promising."

Sophomore Sophie Skinner, who won the both the 100 and 200 freestyle at regionals in record time, was named outstanding female swimmer of the regional meet at Silverlake. She was joined on the all-regional team by Allie Piccirillo, Maddy Vonderhaar, Samantha Glass and Amanda Smith.

State swimming preliminaries are Friday and finals Saturday at the University of Louisville.

- Christine Bosch

**LACROSSE:** The team has already started daily practices, and many dedicated players have been taking part in many seasons since the high school lacrosse season ended in late May. Summer leagues and fall leagues were an integral part of preparing for this season, where the Pandas hope to take state. Conditioning has taken place at ASAP in Covington, ensuring that the players are in top condition.

The team consists of three sanctions: Developmental, Junior Varsity and Varsity. These three sanctions have been made necessary to account for the growing numbers of the team.

The team has big goals. Said varsity senior captain Laurel Atchison, "We hope to go to the state tournament again this year and do our best to improve our skills and make Notre Dame Academy one of the top high schools in Kentucky for women's lacrosse." A sentiment shared through the whole

team as well as well as the three other senior co-captains, Christina Kennedy, Emily Jackson and Abbey Keuper. In addition to the four co-captains, four other seniors will be there for leadership: Allison Boerger, Katie Summe, Kelly Schmall and Andrea Frickman.

- Christine Bosch

**SOFTBALL:** The first open gym had a great turnout. A dozen girls from our neighboring grade schools, sixth- through eighth-graders, and most of our existing team members came to have fun.

After a warm-up, it was time get a partner and throw. There is a specific order to warm up your arm. It goes: wrist flips, darts, stationary, T-throws, and heel clicks; if outside, you would add crow-hops. This takes about 20 minutes.

Another warm-up called the Tennessee drills, taken from a college softball team in Tennessee, followed. Every year, each girl learns and uses these drills in practice and before games. They teach you hand-eye coordination and balance, and you will never make it out on a field without using these techniques.

After all the warm-ups, the girls were divided into two groups: experienced and new to the sport. The coaches did not want to pair an older girl with a girl who has just started to throw the ball. "Keep everyone safe," said coach Don Baker.

One drill had the girls turn to their glove side, and then throw to their partners back hand. After a while of practicing this, your body automatically turns to the correct side without a thought.

Toward the end of open gym, coach Joe Stephenson asked if anyone wanted to try to pitch. There was no hesitation among some of the younger girls, who said they wanted to try to spin some. Everyone was smiling and having fun.

"I think we will have enough for a couple freshman games this year," coach Stephenson said.

The varsity Pandas will be out to make a return trip to the state tournament.

- Katelyn Baker