

# Durant students give thanks for referendum

By Ryan Brown

Students and athletes at Durant have a lot to be thankful for today.

The community of Durant approved a bond referendum for projects totaling over \$13.2 million on November 7, and the main project will be gutting the elementary-middle school gym and building a new one that can host high school basketball games and practices.

Two public measures were actually up for vote: a bond worth \$11.06 million and a Physical Plant and Equipment Levy (PPEL) worth \$2.181 million.

The \$11.06 million bond, which required 60 percent of the votes to pass, made it with five votes to spare. The PPEL received more than 59 percent of the vote and passed easily, needing just 50 percent.

As a senior who has seen the needs of our school firsthand, I feel a sense of relief



**Photo provided by OPN Architects**  
A new elementary-middle school gym is part of the bond referendum passed earlier this month. This picture is a graphic rendering of an architectural design concept of what the gym might look like.

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being mixed with other drugs like marijuana, cocaine, meth and so on,” he said.

To show the scope of the problem, Mrs. Dorris pointed to data from the National Center for Drug Abuse Statistics.

According to statistics she quoted from the center, 96,000 deaths occurred from drug abuse in one year between March 2020 through March 2021, and the national overdose death rate has increased almost 256 percent between 2000 and 2019.

The center indicated that Iowa had

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-ty. She hopes this impact shows young kids they can help out.

“Our members can be as young as freshmen, so by starting to engage within the community at the beginning of one’s high school career can help make connections with people that may have never crossed paths,” she said.

Mrs. Houk believes the work her

that, after two previous defeats, the school district has gotten a bond to pass.

In 2018, voters rejected a referendum that included a new high school gym, new STEM classrooms, an update to the auditorium, and a new secure entrance to the building.

Just this March, another proposal for a \$15.6 million bond referendum was rejected by a dozen votes. This referendum included renovations to the elementary-middle school gym and the auditorium.

Durant Superintendent Joe Burnett felt the proposal rejected earlier in the year just needed a little bit of tweaking.

“It was just a handful of votes that would’ve tipped it the other way, and so the board and the committee that did the work didn’t change a lot; they had to change just a few things,” Mr. Burnett stated.

He added that the auditorium unfortunately was cut because the feedback the board received was that it needed to be less expensive.

Mr. Burnett stated that the architect on the project, OPN Architects of Cedar Rapids, has said the renovations will take about 15 months from start to finish, and they will likely begin in the spring of 2025. He noted that renovations usually begin during the summer months when the school building is not occupied, but this summer is out of the picture because architectural spec work must be completed, and bids must go out.

352 overdose deaths per year, and the overdose death rate in the state has risen 3.93 percent over the last year, according to Mrs. Dorris.

According to a website titled Teen Health and Wellness, when used correctly by a patient, opioids treat or relieve pain or stress.

If patients accidentally overdose, the results can be fatal. Initially, opioids were used to treat chronic pain and were even viewed positively until their addictive

“It’s too tight to start later this spring, so most likely it will start in the spring of ‘25,” Mr. Burnett stated.

Durant Athletic Director Mr. Matt Straube said that the new gym will be a full-sized court, 84 feet by 50 feet, and will include more out-of-bounds area than the current 2.5 feet.

“This new space would make it a safer space for the larger, more athletic, high school bodies to have practices in that space as well if needed,” Mr. Straube stated.

Mr. Straube anticipates that freshman and junior varsity games could be played in the new secondary gym, adding that most schools in the River Valley Conference have this as the case currently.

“This would allow for a shift in start times that would be more accommodating for people to get to the lower-level games after work while also not keeping students out as late each evening as the varsity games would start a little earlier,” he said.

In addition to hosting games, the new gym will help with crammed practice schedules for the girls’ and boys’ teams. Mr. Straube said that the basketball teams currently have three different rotating time slots for practices during the season.

“From 3:30-9 p.m., the girls’ JV/varsity takes a two-hour shift, the boys’ JV/varsity takes a two-hour shift, and the boys’ fresh/soph team takes a 90-minute shift,” he said.

nature came to light, according to the website.

In order to get opioids, the patient in need of them will need to get a doctor’s prescription. Some notable opioids include fentanyl, heroin, oxycodone, hydrocodone, codeine, and morphine, according to Mrs. Dorris.

According to an article by Iowa Public Radio, the Iowa Legislature passed a law in May “that increases penalties for dealing fentanyl and for causing death or se-

On occasion, the teams have had to resort to using an off-campus gym owned by girls’ varsity basketball coach Ross DeLong when other activities, such as concerts, take place in the gym.

Durant junior Bryce Daufeldt says that he was “very surprised that the bond passed,” adding that the new gym is ideal for basketball players like himself because multiple teams can practice at the same time.

Senior Charles Huesmann, who played varsity basketball last year, said this extra practice space will be beneficial in the long run.

“The bond will make practices and other extracurriculars much more convenient for everyone,” he said.

“I was surprised to see the bond pass after the two previous attempts due to all of the “Vote No” signs, and I feel that too much of our community is too focused on paying taxes [rather] than the future of the town of Durant,” Huesmann stated.

Huesmann added that although he will miss out on the renovations, it will affect the future generations of Durant students, including his family members.

“I know that I won’t benefit from this, but my younger sister and younger cousins will benefit from it, which is more important to me, and the passing of the bond makes me feel more confident in enrolling my future kids here someday rather than a different school,” Huesmann said.

rious injury by selling any illegal drug.”

This bill also allows Iowa schools to stock an opioid overdose antidote such as Narcan.

Acting on the law, Durant amended its school policy, according to Mrs. Dorris.

“The district did recently pass a policy, allowing Narcan (naloxone) to be stocked at school,” said Mrs. Dorris. “We were able to receive two doses free of charge from the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services.”

acted.”

In preparation for Thanksgiving, the food pantry asked its guests what their favorite holiday food was, so it could start requesting more of those items.

Mr. Nelson wants to remind the community that it’s important to donate during the holidays because budgets get tight, and donating helps stretch monthly budgets.

The food pantry is open the first and third Saturday of each month from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and the second and fourth Wednesday of each month from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m.

The journey to opening the food pantry started with community members donating food to the local Boy Scouts Blessing Box located on Fifth Street.

“Without that Blessing Box on Fifth Street, we would not have been aware of the need perhaps as easily,” said Mr. Nelson, who joined with six other community members to research the possibility of bringing a food pantry to Durant, and they contacted a variety of agencies to find out what needed to be done.

Prior to the local pantry opening in October, Durant residents used to travel to the food pantry in Wilton to get donated goods.

The Durant community is happy to have its own food pantry now because some Durant residents had trouble getting to Wilton. Under certain circumstances, he said the Durant pantry will deliver food to the doorsteps of local residents.


“We do offer a front-step delivery service for those with mobility or transportation needs within seven miles of Durant,” said Mr. Nelson.




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**Today's Dentistry coach of the month**  
Coach Casey Strub is the Durant Wildcats girls' and boys' wrestling coach. Coach Strub has been coaching wrestling for 12 years and has developed a love for the sport. What he enjoys most about coaching is teaching the students the skills they need to be successful in life at anything the students do. Coach Strub's goal for his teams this season is for his wrestlers to outfight everyone in every match.



**Strub**




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**Liberty Trust & Savings Bank's club member of the month**  


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Senior Kaetlyn Hansell is the president of the NHS and has been in it since her sophomore year. She said her favorite thing to do in NHS is welcoming the new members with a ceremony and breakfast. Also, she likes how it looks good on a resume or scholarship.



**Hansell**