

North Branch Knowledge Bowl advances to state

STAFF REPORT
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For only the third time in school history, a North Branch Knowledge Bowl team has advanced to the state competition, after students Justine Joyal, Garrett Korkowski, Kobe Yang, Norah Judson, and Josiah Zderad — Team 1 — placed second in Region competition held at North Branch on March 15. The other two times North Branch advanced to state were in 2004 and 2018. North Branch has competed in Knowledge Bowl since 1998.

Knowledge Bowl is an academic competition where teams of four students and one alternate answer questions related to all areas of learning typical of secondary education programs. Teams are awarded points for each correct answer during up to five rounds of competition, both directly and indirectly against teams from other schools.

The first round of competition is a written, 60 multiple-choice-question quiz, where all five team members work together to answer the questions within 50 minutes.

Teams are then ranked based on their point totals from the written round, with the top three teams, teams ranked four through six, teams ranked seven through nine, etc. going against each other in an oral round of 45 questions. The teams get re-ranked following each oral round based on their cumulative points from all rounds.

The oral rounds of Knowledge Bowl are just like the common conception of trivia competitions. A question is asked to all three teams, with any of the four team members “buzzing in” to answer the question. The team can talk among themselves before the designated spokesperson of the team gives their official answer.

The first team to correctly answer

the question receives the points. There is no point deduction for an incorrect answer.

For the Region 7 competition, both North Branch teams (for region competition, each school could have two teams competing) were neck-and-neck with each other, according to coach Charles Bettendorf. Ironically, the two teams wound up going against each other in the final round, with them being only one point apart, and Team 2 being tied with a team from Annandale — which was competing in a different room against two other teams.

Team 1 was able to secure 16 points in that final round, which was enough to leapfrog them into second place and secure the state competition berth.

The state competition, which is made up of 48 teams that will be broken into two classes based on school size, will be held at Cragun’s Resort in Brainerd, April 7 and 8.

ECRL places 2nd in nation-wide NASA reading challenge

CONTRIBUTED
EAST CENTRAL REGIONAL LIBRARY

In December of 2021, East Central Regional Library patrons participated in a nation-wide reading challenge titled NASA @ My Library, the James Webb Space Telescope Challenge.

Participants read books, logged their minutes, and completed space-themed activities to earn badges in the Beanstack Tracker App.

During the month of December, readers across the U.S. logged more than 2 million minutes, read nearly 1,000 books, and completed nearly 3,000 activity badges.

In February of 2022, ECRL learned they had placed second in the NASA @ My Library reading challenge. As its prize, NASA recently sent ECRL two specially curated NASA Space Explorers Backpacks to be added to the library’s collection. The backpacks each contain:

- FunScope Telescope with instruction manual
- Moon Map
- The Night Sky Planisphere with a red light flashlight
- Code & Go Robot Mouse Game
- Book: Starry Skies by Samantha Chagollan
- Book: Find the Constellations by H.A. Rey
- Book: Mousetronaut Goes to Mars by Mark Kelly
- Book: 8 Little Planets by Chris Ferrie
- List of additional books NASA suggests for space-lovers

These backpacks are being cataloged and will soon be available for ECRL library card holders to check out and enjoy.

East Central Regional Library holds monthly reading challenges for all ages through the free Beanstack Tracker App. Learn more about how to participate at www.ecrlib.org/events.

ARTS BRIEFS

New date set for Big Band Extravaganza

The annual Big Band Extravaganza — originally set for March 5 — will now be performed on Sunday, April 24.

The event, featuring the Braham Area High School Jazz Band — along with jazz bands from Rush City High School and Onamia High School — starts at 3 p.m. at the Braham Event Center, 655 8th Street SW. Hitting the stage will also be headline act the LaValle Jazz Cats from the Twin Cities.

Concessions will be available for purchase at the concert, and although there is no charge for admission, free-will donations will be taken.

Best-selling author at Cambridge library

The Cambridge Public Library is excited to host a special event featuring author Kendare Blake at 11 a.m. Saturday, April 23. She will discuss her new book, “All These Bodies,” an edge-of-your-seat thriller set in small-town Minnesota.

Blake is a *New York Times* bestselling author and graduate of Cambridge-Isanti High School. Her novels include “Anna Dressed in Blood,” “Antigoddess,” and the “Three Dark Crowns” series. She lives and writes in Gig Harbor, Washington. Learn more about the author and her books at <https://www.kendareblake.com>.

For the April 23 event, Blake will tune in virtually and take questions after her presentation. The event will be held in the Great Northern Room on the lower level of the library, 111 Dellwood St. N. Registration is required and opens March 26 on the events calendar at ecrlib.org. For more information, visit ecrlib.org.

Cambridge library welcomes ComedySportz

Comedy made up on the spot based on your suggestion — that’s ComedySportz, and it’s coming to the Cambridge Public Library on Thursday, April 7 at 6 p.m.

ComedySportz is improvised comedy played like a sport. Two teams of actors create short games and scenes, based on audience suggestions, to earn points and laughs. This event is for all ages. Registration is required and now open on the events calendar at ecrlib.org. Please register each individual who plans on attending. Face coverings are required at the performers’ request.

This event is funded with money from Minnesota’s Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund.

The Cambridge Public Library can be reached at 763-689-7390. For more information, visit ecrlib.org or follow the library on Facebook and Instagram (@ecrlmn).

Cambridge library welcomes ComedySportz

Chad Filley and Brice Danielson will be hosting an evening of good, old-fashioned Scandinavian entertainment at the Scandinavian Showcase at 7 p.m. on Saturday, April 23, at the Richard Hardy Performing Arts Center at Cambridge-Isanti High School, 430 8th Avenue NW.

The all-ages show will include comedy, music, and storytelling, including performances by storyteller Rose Arrowsmith and nyckelharpa players Renee Vaughan and Janet Hill.

Tickets for the event at \$10 and will be available through preorder at norskstoryteller.com/scandinavian-showcase-tickets. Tickets will also be available at the door.

SPOTLIGHT: Theatre crew leaders ready technicians for opening of ‘The Matchmaker’

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tech crew to star. During performances, Jesse is situated in the light and sound booth behind the audience, calling the show. This means she gently reminds her technicians of upcoming light and sound cues. She is also able to communicate to the actors waiting in the make-up room and with all technicians in the booth, on the spotlights, and backstage.

“I have communication with everyone,” Jesse said. However, she doesn’t communicate with the technicians with much frequency during the show because, “I trust all of us with what we do. I don’t really need to bug (them) because they know what they are doing.”

Marilyn Malnar, also a senior, is in charge of sound and sits in the booth near Jesse. Marilyn assigns microphones to cast members, a tricky task since there aren’t enough mics for everyone. In that case she performs a little theatre magic. Certain mics are assigned to certain actors; they share the devices with one actor handing off the mic to a different actor. It’s up to Marilyn to make sure the correct microphone is turned up or down for each performer.

“There are a lot of mic swaps,” Marilyn said. “Because the actors have to switch the mics out, sometimes they get unplugged, so we have to send a runner backstage to fix it.”

She keeps everything straight via a mic plot, a written system showing which mics need to be on at any

given time.

“I have to be sure that someone backstage doesn’t have their mic turned on, and I have to tell them who they swap their mics with,” she said. “It’s all written on the mic plot.”

Marilyn also has to follow the script during the show for any sound cues, such as horses walking across a street or large cans of rotten tomatoes exploding offstage, both of which are called for in “The Matchmaker.”

The last couple of weeks have involved training crew members on different tasks, whether that be running a spotlight or moving set pieces. Assisting Jesse and Marilyn with this work is Rachel, the backstage manager. Often, Marilyn relies on Rachel to guarantee the mic swaps are taking place. Rachel is also Jesse’s right-hand person, responsible for all the doings behind the scenes. Jesse conveys to Rachel via headset if something looks “off” onstage during a performance, or if something is missing that should be in place.

Armed with a roll of duct, gaffer or glow tape, Rachel guarantees that things run smoothly backstage. Also a senior, she engineers the movement of set pieces and assigns various responsibilities to the running crew — the black-clad technicians who ensure that the set pieces and props are in place when scenes change.

“It’s my job to assign which techs will be on stage left, stage right, and whose going to be in control of which set pieces,” she said. For “The Matchmaker,” Marilyn said close to 10 people will work backstage alone. She also gives the fly-loft operator — “the ropes guy” — a gentle nudge when he needs to bring in or take out a backdrop or open and close the curtain.

“Jesse is also cueing me and making sure I’m not missing a cue in my script,” Rachel said.

Rachel is also on the ready in case of wardrobe mishaps.

“I assist the actors if their costume is malfunctioning during the performance. I’m right there helping them,” she said.

All three of the ladies are proud of the work they do in making sure the drama remains on the stage. They started theatre at the same time and enjoy seeing the how they have helped create the spectacle the audience sees.

Rachel was inspired by seeing “Chicago” performed several years ago by PlayArts in Cambridge. She remembered her reaction when she decided to be a “techie.”

“I was just so amazed by what a group of people can do,” she said. “I thought it was just so cool that a bunch of kids could do this; a bunch of high school kids can make a show happen.”

Director Anderson realizes that, with all three of these technical wizards graduating this year, they may be a hard act to follow.

“It is thoroughly a joy and a privilege to work with these three young ladies as we work through the theatre processes,” Anderson said. “They are bright, energetic, and creative. They are leaders to their peers and are willing to train other students in the fine art of the technical theatre world.”

“The Matchmaker,” written by Thornton Wilder, will perform Friday and Saturday, April 1 and 2 at 7 p.m.; and Sunday, April 3, at 2 p.m., at the Richard G Hardy Performing Arts Center at Cambridge-Isanti High School, 430 8th Avenue NW.

All tickets are general admission and available only at the door. Tickets are \$5 for students, K-12, and \$8 for adults and seniors. For questions, email cihstheatre@c-ischools.org; or call the ticket booth, 763-689-6466.



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