

Over the past few years, I've penned fewer written columns in favor of podcasts that provide greater insight into our district. Many of these podcasts feature high school seniors I'm interviewing about their total school experience in Guthrie. These interviews have provided me great insight into what we are doing well and what deserves review. I'll allow some of the feedback I've been provided by the Class of 2024 representatives to guide the recap of the year.

To say 2023-24 was a great year, would be a huge understatement. Let's start with WHERE DID THE YEAR GO? This school year seems to have flown by at supersonic speeds. I attribute much of this to the climate. This seems like the most 'normal' year since the pandemic. Our students, faculty and staff are having normal discussions that don't involve quarantines, COVID testing, masks or distance learning. These are huge milestones considering what we've been through.

Let's begin with some of the outstanding accomplishments in extra curricular activities. This fall featured the Clay Tarter Invitational Cross Country Meet with over 900 runners coming to town. The Lady Jays High School Softball team finished as the state runner-up and two weeks later the Lady Jays Cross Country team also finished as the state runner-up while the boys finished fifth. Also, the fall saw the first high school volleyball competition in school history as the program in its infancy completed a junior varsity schedule. November brought us a National Championship with our Livestock Judging Team and yet another playoff appearance by our football team advancing to the second round.

In February, the GHS Band program had multiple members awarded honors by the Oklahoma Music Educators Association. Later that month, our wrestling team crowned a state champion in Kaedin Herendeen who was also named outstanding wrestler of the tournament. Both Bluejays and Lady Jays Basketball teams advanced to the Area Tournament with the boys losing a heartbreaking game in the finals to the eventual state champion.

The Spring brought multiple honors from our High School Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) chapter. Our Bluejay Soccer program recorded their first playoff win in school history while the boys and girls golf teams both advanced to the state tournament.

December also saw a key moment in the history of our school district as ground was broken on the construction of a new Cotteral Elementary School building. The increased capacity as well as a state of the art facility will help with the growing enrollment of the district. With over 900 homes slated to be built inside the city limits and approximately 1,700 within our school district, being proactive is essential to serve our community. The partnership we have formed with the community is unique as we have so many who support our district through cheering on the Bluejays or supporting us through previous bond issues as Guthrie evolves. This marks the second new building in six years our district will open. Given that no new construction had occurred since 1989, this is obviously a significant time in the history of Guthrie Public Schools.

One of the common threads I've heard from our students is their love of our traditions and community. The support shown at every opportunity by people who may not even have children in school is something our students notice and appreciate. Your support matters to our students! It is astounding to me that this senior class was in first grade when I became superintendent. Watching the class of

2024 and those younger than them grow is truly an honor. They continue to amaze me with their hard work and accomplishments.