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# Creightonian

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Omaha, Nebraska

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## \$3M Gift funds Cura Personalis office

### Fritz Family donation supports student wellness and growth

LILIAN GARDNER  
News Editor

A \$3 million donation to Creighton University will fund a new office dedicated to supporting students' mental health, spiritual development and overall well-being, university officials announced.

The Fritz Family Office of Cura Personalis Services, established through a gift from alumni Lance and Julie Fritz, will expand access to student support resources, coordinate care across departments and provide programming focused on resiliency and life skills. The gift will also fund an endowed director position to oversee a cross-divisional team of case managers working directly with students.

The office is rooted in *cura personalis*, a Jesuit value meaning "care for the whole person," which emphasizes supporting students academically, emotionally and spiritually. In fall 2025, Creighton reaffirmed *cura personalis* as one of six core Jesuit values guiding the university's mission, according to a previous report by the Creightonian. The value reflects the university's broader commitment to holistic student development.

Creighton President Daniel S. Hendrickson, S.J., said the new office will strengthen existing support systems by centralizing services and expanding access.

"True to our mission, Creighton provides a strong focus on the individual student. No matter what they are facing, our faculty and staff are ready and waiting, offering their time and talent to support the unique needs of all students," Hendrickson said in a university statement. "The Fritz family's generosity allows us to scale this strength into a central-



JONAH LAGRANGE/THE CREIGHTONIAN

**A "We Thrive Together" banner hangs along the Mall on Creighton University's campus, reflecting the school's commitment to student community, wellness, and support.**

ized, university-wide effort, ensuring that our students have access to a team devoted entirely to every dimension of their well-being."

University officials said the office is intended to enhance coordination between existing services while increasing visibility and accessibility of support resources for students.

Students said the investment reflects increased attention to mental health and well-being on campus.

"I think it is nice that we are devoting more

attention and resources to the student body given that it is going to extend to every involvement and experience on campus," said Caroline Deeter, a junior in the College of Arts and Sciences. "I am curious about the new features of these facilities."

Deeter said she is interested in how the office will integrate spiritual and mental health support.

"I'm excited to see how the spiritual aspect will collaborate with mental health services,"

Deeter said. "Having been involved in a retreat, I think that there is a lot of potential for beneficial crossover, but I wonder if it will be structured for students who are also not spiritual."

She said the investment is notable because it supports the broader student population.

"It is nice to see that we are putting money into something that applies to all students beyond subsets of the student body population, like athletes," Deeter said. "We see a lot of money given to athletics. It's nice to see it given to the mental health of all students."

Deeter said expanding access to support services could positively impact students' overall experience.

Bridget Fauteck, a senior in the College of Nursing, said increasing awareness of counseling services could help more students access available support.

"I think it would help to advertise counseling services more," Fauteck said. "It's getting the attention it deserves."

Fauteck said counseling services helped her adjust during key transitions throughout college.

"Counseling services have been really helpful in difficult transitions, from moving away from home and starting college and now the transition out and into graduation," Fauteck said. "I think it's a good resource for students wanting to explore well-being."

The new office represents an expansion of Creighton's efforts to support student well-being and reflects a continued emphasis on *cura personalis* as a guiding principle. University officials said the initiative is intended to help students access resources, develop life skills and navigate challenges during their college experience.

## CU remembers Mary Lucretia Creighton

**Without Mary Lucretia Creighton, the university might not exist; her generosity and vision for a school honoring her late husband allowed the Creighton family to partner with the Jesuits to start the university.**

ELIZABETH JONES  
News Reporter

This month marks both Founders Week and the anniversary of Mary Lucretia Creighton's, one of the university's founders, birth. Born on Feb. 3, 1834 — nearly two centuries ago — her legacy still lives on at the university.

Creighton was named after Edward Creighton, according to the history webpage on the university website. The school was formed in his memory, and it opened in 1878, four years after his 1874 death. Edward left his fortune to his wife, Mary Lucretia Creighton. When she died, Mary Lucretia left much of this fortune — \$100,000 (equivalent to over \$2 million today) — for Creighton University to be officially established.

So who is Mary Lucretia Creighton?

One hundred ninety-two years ago, Mary Lucretia Wareham was born in Dayton, Ohio. She met Edward Creighton, also from Ohio, when he visited her father on business. The two married in 1856 and moved to Omaha shortly thereafter.

Joined by Edward's brother, John Creighton, and his wife, Mary Lucretia's sister Sarah Emily Creighton, the family became well known in Omaha for their successful business endeavors and philanthropy, according to the university's 2019-2020 fact book.

Edward had been passionate about education, so Mary left \$100,000 to help build a school in his honor after her death.

"The said school shall be known as Creighton College and is designed by me as a memorial of my late husband. I have selected this mode of testifying to his virtues and my affection to his memory because such a work



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

TURN TO "Honoring" PAGE 3

# CU adds stalls, garage discounts

## Gaining Cass Street parking, Burt Street discounts

**PARKER LUND**  
News Reporter

Creighton has expanded their partnership with PMC, the parking management company the university began working with in November. This expansion raises the number of stalls that Creighton students are allowed to use on 20th Street and Cass Street to 70, according to Creighton's parking specialist Jessica Weaver.

"We are continuing to see what becomes available, see if there's more spaces around the surrounding campus, but that was one way that we could at least gain stalls instead of losing stalls. And so that began officially last semester, partway through, but we gained more stalls as of January," Weaver said.

In addition to this expansion, there is also discounted garage parking in a spot that's a little farther away from campus. Creighton has leased out the lower level of parking at the location on 30th Street and Burt Street, from Nustyle, the property management company that owns the Atlas.

The back 265 spots on the lower level are being leased to Creighton, Weaver said. For students looking for definite, discounted access to parking, it is a good, if not convenient, option.

"It is better than driving around for 30, 45 minutes," Weaver remarked.

Part of the problem with the parking issue at Creighton, according to Weaver, is the lack of education for students about what parking is available.

"There are those that are gonna continue to drive around the same two lots because that's where they know. Some of it's just finding that education piece of, 'Hey, there's actually a lot over here.' It's a little further, but if you show up a little extra time, you're gonna have less stress."

Creighton is always looking to obtain new stalls, Weaver said, even if right now there aren't any definitive new plans for more parking expansions. Weaver recommended students who are looking for new spots to plan ahead, even if it's difficult.

**"With how many new students Creighton is letting in each year, which is growing quite a bit compared to previous years, [they're] going to need to have parking spaces."**

**-Taiga Conwell**  
College of Arts and Sciences  
Class of 2027

In addition to the new and discounted spots, Weaver talked about some parking that goes almost completely unused by students. It's also on 30th Street and Burt Street, and according to Weaver, it's marked on the Creighton website's student parking map.



ALLY SEEVERS/THE CREIGHTONIAN

Creighton has increased the number of stalls available to in the 20th and Cass parking garage.

"It's called W6. It is on the west side of campus, but we do have a shuttle that runs from that side over to main campus," Weaver clarified. "It's about a nine-minute walk, I think, from that lot, if you were to walk, but you do have to cross 30th Street."

The name of the game for Creighton students who want to park is "plan ahead," it seems. But some students, like Taiga Conwell, a junior in the College of Arts and Sciences living in Opus Hall, think that there should be other options for Creighton students.

"I definitely don't feel like they're doing enough," Conwell said, when asked what he thought of Creighton's efforts to expand parking. "With how many new students Creighton is letting in each year, which is

growing quite a bit compared to previous years, [they're] going to need to have parking spaces."

Conwell frequents about five different lots during his weeks on campus. This is a new struggle for him, as it's the first semester that he's had a vehicle on campus, but he's still managed to find some parking every day, for better or worse.

"I do discover new parking spots. I don't use them personally, but I do find new spaces a lot that can be accessed for small fees, but I think – well, this is how I feel but I also think other students might feel this way – that it's really inconvenient to have to pay a small fee every time when we're already paying so much in tuition," Conwell said.



## Weekly Campus Safety Report

This is a selection of incidents chosen by the Editor in Chief and is not a comprehensive weekly report. The full report is compiled in the Daily Crime Log which anyone can access in the Public Safety office located at 2222 Burt St.

### Creightonian

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1

February 6 - 11:32 p.m.

911 dispatch advised Pub Safe of an intrusion alarm at the new residence hall construction site. OPD searched the area but did not find anyone. OPD responded and arrested the suspect near Siena Francis House.

2

February 7 - 11:28 p.m.

Student alerted Public Safety to a heavily intoxicated student who was barely conscious and lying on the sidewalk behind Swanson Hall. The student was transported by OFD to CHI for entry into the TRAAC Program.

3

February 8 - 9:48 p.m.

Pub Safe Officer came across a fight in progress between three unidentified nonaffiliates. Officers used their emergency lights and nonaffiliates fled. Victim appeared to be mildly injured and called the attacking party to come back and pick him up as they were his ride. (Not Pictured)

February 9 - 3:14 p.m.

An IT employee reported that a former employee was issued a Dell laptop and failed to return it when separated from the University. IT advised it would report the laptop stolen to OPD.

4

# Bluejays don't have to lift alone

ISABELLA DIZONA  
News Reporter

The Bluejay Fit Buddy program is a new initiative through Creighton's Recreation + Wellness Center. It was created to help students and faculty find workout partners based on their goals, experience level and preferences. Designed to make fitness more accessible and less intimidating, the program pairs students with students, and staff with staff, to help with both accountability and community.

The idea for the program came from Mia Petersen, a campus personal trainer who noticed a common theme among students wanting to stay active.

"I talk to a lot of people about their fitness goals, and so many of them say they just want to be more consistent," Petersen said. "A lot of people feel like having a workout partner would help them stick with it."

Recognizing that not everyone can afford personal training, Petersen wanted to create a

free alternative that still offered structure and accountability. After pitching the idea to her supervisor and working through the logistics, she developed a Google form to match participants and began coordinating pairings herself.

"I basically help run the program," Petersen said. "I made the form, match people together and send out the emails."

The program is completely free for both students and staff. While there is potential for paired participants to meet with a personal trainer for additional guidance in the future, that aspect is still being finalized. For now, the focus is on building connections and making the gym feel more welcoming.

"It can be hard to meet people, and the gym can be scary," Petersen said. "This makes it more accessible."

Though fitness is often associated with physical results, the Bluejay Fit Buddy program is rooted in a broader understanding of wellness. Petersen emphasized that students come to the gym for many different reasons, not just to change their appearance.

"Some people want to be healthier physically, but others just want more energy throughout their day or to feel better mentally," she said. "We're trying to combine multiple realms of wellness: the physical, the mental and the social."

By pairing participants intentionally, the program addresses all three of those realms. Some students are beginners looking for someone to teach them proper form. Others are experienced lifters who simply want a social outlet.

"On the form, some people say they just want someone to have fun with," Petersen said. "They know what they're doing, and they just want that social aspect. Others want someone more serious to hold them accountable. Everybody kind of needs help in some area."

So far, the program has seen encouraging interest. Thirteen participants signed up in its initial rollout, a turnout Petersen described as strong compared to other Recreation + Wellness programs. Four staff members have already been paired, and student matches are

currently being finalized.

"We would love to get more, of course," she said.

One of the program's strengths is its flexibility. Participants are not locked into strict commitments, and meeting frequency is left to each pair's preference. The goal is to reduce pressure, not add to it.

"It's not like you have to meet every single week," Petersen said. "It's meant to be supportive, not stressful."

Ultimately, the Bluejay Fit Buddy program aims to make the Recreation + Wellness Center feel less intimidating and more community driven. Whether someone is stepping into the gym for the first time or simply looking for a friendly face during their routine, the program offers a way to get connected.

As the program continues to grow, Petersen hopes more Bluejays will take advantage of the opportunity to strengthen not only their bodies, but also their confidence and connections on campus.

## Honoring a founder's lasting legacy

**Continued from Page 1**

was one which he in his lifetime proposed himself," her will said, according to the "A Gift of Faith and Foresight" document from the Creighton University Heritage Society.

She died in 1876 and classes first started at Creighton in 1878. John and Sarah Emily worked hard to see out Mary's vision, and then-Bishop James O'Connor appointed the Society of Jesus to help. Sarah Emily, an important Creighton woman (much like Mary Lucretia is), was even responsible for the construction of St. John's Collegiate Chapel, which still stands on the Omaha campus today.

During her lifetime, Mary was a dedicated philanthropist. According to Creighton's

history webpage, she would ride into town on her horse Billy to hand out food, other necessities and \$25 to Omaha's low-income families. \$25 in 1870 is worth more than \$600 today.

Through her donation to Creighton, Mary's dedication to Omaha continued after her passing. She was able to help lay the groundwork for the university's commitment to education, academic excellence and the Jesuit values.

It was remarkable for a woman in the nineteenth century to have the access to funds to be such a giving philanthropist, and her charitable works have not gone forgotten — especially by the university. Today the Mary Lucretia and Sarah Emily Award, named for the school's two women founders, honors faculty

and staff at the university who are working to create more opportunities for women. This year it was awarded to Nicole White,

PharmD, Stephane VanderMeulen, DMSc, and Margarita Dubocq, MS. This year's recipients were announced earlier this month.

**"This gift and the legacy of the Creighton family... endures through the fruitful mentorship provided by our exceptional faculty and staff."**

**-the Rev. Daniel Hendrickson, S.J., Creighton President**

"This gift [Mary Lucretia's \$100,000 donation] and the legacy of the Creighton family, particularly Mary Lucretia and her sister Sarah Emily, endures through the fruitful mentorship provided by our exceptional faculty and staff," the Rev. Daniel Hendrickson, S.J., the university's president, said in an Instagram post that congratulated the three recipients.

While her legacy lives on year-round, it is especially remembered in February when Creighton celebrates the anniversary of Mary Lucretia's birthday and Founders Week.

## WRITE FOR US

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BEHLA SCHMIDT/THE CREIGHTONIAN

Artist Aaryon Bird Williams "Black Skies" mural pays tribute to the 21 Tuskegee Airmen in World War II that have ties to Omaha. The mural can be seen in North Omaha, near 24th and Lake Street.

## Celebrating local Black excellence

**BEHLA SCHMIDT**  
Assistant Scene Editor

Although February is the shortest month of the year, it features several notable holidays including Groundhog, Presidents' and Valentine's days, all of which spark varying traditions. From speculating about the arrival of spring, to the disappearance of nearly every red rose and teddy bear, these celebrations provide some comfort as anticipations for summer build. More significantly however, since 1976 when it was first recognized by President Gerald Ford, February has been known as Black History Month, granting proper recognition to various African American figures for their contributions and lasting legacies to American civilization.

Before such matters were acknowledged on a national level, affairs began more than fifty years earlier, in 1915, when Harvard historian Carter G. Woodson founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, today known as the Association for the Study of African American Life and History. Such efforts were in response to being barred from attending conferences held by the American Historical Association, which was primarily composed of white members. In contrast, Woodson's institution sought to offer professional and academic opportunities to other African Americans and preserve all aspects of Black history; actions that directly challenged the racist societal norms of the time period.

As his organization gained momentum, Woodson established the first "Negro History Week" in 1926 during the second week of February, to commemorate Black excellence and give voice to the struggles, victories and persistence of Black Americans through the centuries. This particular week was selected due to its alignment with the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass, two prominent individuals involved with civil rights advocacy for African Americans.

Such actions for equality and homage were

further expedited by the Civil Rights Movement, which began in the mid 1950s and spanned until the late 1960s, as people from across the country protested the racial segregation and discrimination towards African Americans and other Black minorities. These robust attitudes and nonviolent motions confronted political, economic and cultural oppression, contributing to the overall era of reformation.

Shortly after, came President Ford's "Message on the Observance of Black History Week," which urged all citizens of the U.S. to reflect on the ways in which the identity and culture of the nation had been influenced by the collective work of black Americans and those of African descent. Since then, presidents have continued honoring Black History Month and paying respect to the achievements made in professional and communal realms by issuing annual proclamations, establishing a lasting precedent.

Today, communities and families across the country celebrate this month through a blend of cultural and educational opportunities that highlight the labor and accomplishments of African Americans through all periods of U.S. history. Common activities include attending museum exhibits and other interactive experiences to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation for Black history, as well as consuming content and goods produced by Black creators.

As Omaha is home to many vibrant ethnic and racial groups, specifically with a strong African American presence in North Omaha, there are ample ways in which one can participate in the festivities, enjoy some quality food and develop a greater social awareness. One local option is Mixins Rolled Ice Cream, located downtown on Jackson Street. Their menu offers a wide variety of flavors, from the staff favorite of "Cookie Monster" to crazy combinations such as "Pardon My French Toast" and "Campfire," their tasty treats are sure to hit the spot.

Though the reviews online were somewhat

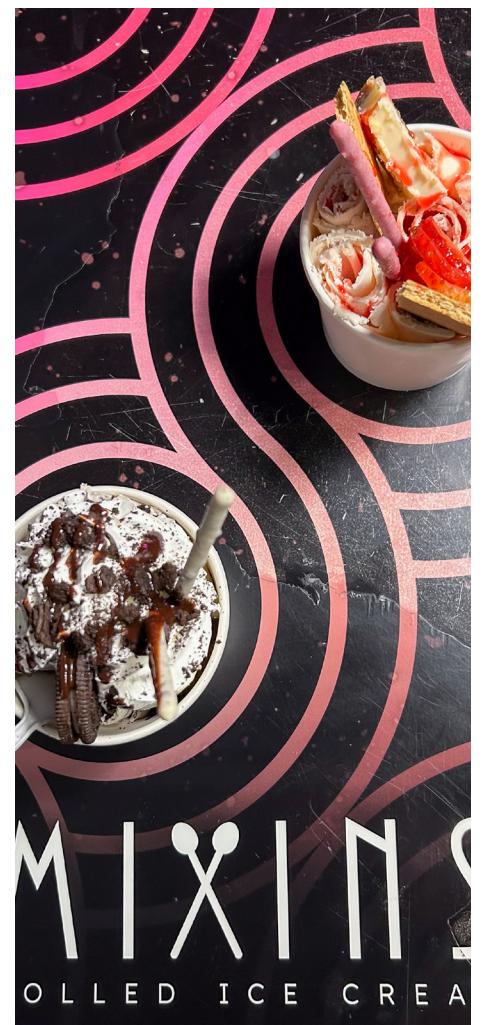
outdated, my expectations were high as I set out to investigate their creations: "Strawberry Cheesecake" and the classic "Milk and Cookies". From this, I can happily report that their ice cream and service did not disappoint, as the variety of toppings complimented the sweetness of the cold dessert, and the staff were eager to provide assistance. Though each dish was around ten dollars, which is pricey, I would recommend Mixins to anyone seeking to support a local business and satisfy their cravings for a sweet treat.

Another regional attraction is the "Black Skies" mural, painted by Aaryon Bird Williams as a tribute to the 21 Tuskegee Airmen, a group of African American World War II pilots with Omaha ties. The artwork can be found in North Omaha within the 24th and Lake Streets area, along with several other pieces, such as "The Ancestor, The Identity, and The Seed" mural by Reggie LeFlore and the "Jazz Trio" sculptures created by Little Alston. Each of these projects exhibit the pride and spirited aspects of African history and culture, symbolizing one's ongoing resilience in the face of oppression and hardship.

According to VisitOmaha.com, other acclaimed Black-owned restaurants in the vicinity are "Okra African Grill," "A Taste of New Orleans" and "Big Mama's Kitchen." Across these spots, one can choose from traditional African dishes like jollof rice and ablo, to Cajun fried seafood or chicken and sweet potato pudding. Such options allow one to experience the culinary trademarks of different cultures, while also promoting the efforts of provincial Black business owners.

The next time you're in need of a restaurant to review or a recreational activity to fill your empty afternoon, consider visiting these educational and cultural spots to enrich your social awareness and support those in the community. Overall, Black History Month brings awareness to past injustices towards Black Americans and calls for the eradication of the discriminatory practices that have plagued our society for far too long.

Through intentional involvement and open-ended discussions, the appropriate respect is granted to those that have driven development of our country. With these things in mind, we can be sure to extend these empathetic attitudes beyond the month of February and into the rest of the year.



BEHLA SCHMIDT/THE CREIGHTONIAN

Local Black-owned rolled ice cream offers a wide variety of fun flavors, including "strawberry cheesecake" and "milk and cookies."

# CU club promotes community in film

CHARLOTTE THAISETTHAWATKUL  
Scene Reporter

Every Wednesday at 5 p.m., Movie Club meets in the Old Gym. Today, they're discussing the 2014 Jake Gyllenhaal movie, *Nightcrawler*, which ironically—considering my status as a reporter for this publication—is a film about a corrupt freelance journalist. This week, the club meeting is being led by one of the members, who has set up her computer, preparing to give a presentation on the movie's themes and characters.

Movie Club is fairly democratic, with a member picking a new film to watch every week, and then the following meeting they lead a discussion on their thoughts on the film, assessing characters and general reactions. As I sit down at my usual spot, all the familiar faces file into the classroom, and friendly chatter begins to fill the room.

We wait for the club supervisor—Dr. Faith Kurtyka—to show up and officially start off the meeting. Dr. Kurtyka, an associate professor in the English department who teaches literature and composition courses, has always had a deep appreciation for the art form.

"I'm a big cinephile, and I listen to a lot of podcasts about movies, so I wanted to create a similar environment for students to discuss movies," said Dr. Kurtyka. "I feel like I'm teaching students how to have well informed opinions, how to have taste, how to have discourse with someone else... I'm teaching them how to have an opinion, which I think is really important in our society."

**"I feel like I'm teaching students how to have well informed opinions, how to have taste, how to have discourse with someone else... I'm teaching them how to have an opinion, which I think is really important in our society."**

**-Faith Kurtyka, PhD**  
Associate Director, Magis Core Curriculum, Associate Professor of English

Kurtyka's love for films started all the way back in her adolescence.

"I never got to go to like, smart kid school, so everything I learned [was] from movies, and I was a teenager in the late 90s, which was an excellent time for film. So, I always felt like movies challenged me intellectually and made me reflect in ways that I never felt like school did," she shared.

"My whole life has been oriented towards trying to get someone to watch a movie with me. ...My friend and I got these two guys to go to prom with us by taking them to see *The Matrix* in 1999. And that's like, the story of my entire life," said Kurtyka. "Like who I dated, who I was friends with, what I was doing on the weekend, always revolved around, 'how can I somehow get to watch a movie?'"

However, Kurtyka doesn't want Movie Club to be an elitist club of film critique and analysis. She seems dedicated to making film criticism and discussion an accessible, fun activity.

"When students had talked to me before about wanting to start a movie club, I wanted to capture the kind of non-academic nature

of movies, that I don't want to analyze them like English majors. I want to talk about, 'how do they make you feel?'" she said.

This emphasis on emotions and allowing yourself feel things brings me back to something she said at a previous meeting that was dedicated to "Puss in Boots: The Last Wish," where the group was talking about the main villain, Death, a menacing wolf wielding two sickles. She shared a story about how her children didn't like the film because it was too scary, which confused her because that was the point! Feeling things because of the film was the point; it means that the movie did its job.

"Sometimes that means we just talk about whoever is hot in the movie, but that's okay, because it's kind of like how a movie is trying to make you feel something. I want to move away from this brainy, bloodless analysis and towards this really emotional connection to the movies, which I think is way more interesting to talk about," exclaimed Kurtyka.

Not only is Movie Club a stand against elitism, but it's also a statement of her place as a woman in the cinephile space.

"Cinephiles are like, a very male dominated area, so I always felt like I was the outsider and I always felt like movies were made for men and movies were talked about by men, so I wanted to push back on that as being like, I can talk about these movies too, and I can watch these movies too..." she said.

Kurtyka has had her own share of encounters with film-bros, some even being her students.

"I used to have movie posters up in my office, but then these male students would come in and mansplain the movies to me, so I took all the posters down," she explained. "Because I like boy movies. I like movies that are typically for men, but I just reclaim them for me, because like, good movies are for everybody, they're not just for men."

However, despite knowing the types of movies she likes, sometimes the student's recommendations catch her by surprise.

"We watched a movie last year called *The Straight Story*, which is a G-rated movie about a farmer who drives a tractor from... Iowa to Wisconsin. I like gritty movies, I like dark movies, I like violent movies. This movie is so chill, and it's just this old guy on his tractor, and I loved it. And I would have never watched it had it not been for Movie Club," she shared.

"It just felt to me like this sort of masterstroke of artistry by this director David Lynch, who was like, a movie doesn't need to be gross and violent and scary. It can just be a guy on a tractor and just like totally blow you away. And so, it's movies like that, that I would have never watched had the students not exposed me to them."

Perhaps if you join Movie Club, you too can stumble on a film masterstroke by accident.

February 20  
Friday

**Fresh Fruit Friday**  
1:00-2:00 PM  
*KFC Spine*

February 21  
Saturday

**Lunar New Year**  
3:00-5:00 PM  
*Skutt Ballroom*

February 22  
Sunday

**Volunteering at Ronald McDonald House**  
3:00-4:00 PM  
*Ronald McDonald House*

February 23  
Monday

**Mindful Monday Board Game Break**  
4:00-6:00 PM  
*KFC 135*

February 24  
Tuesday

**CUASA General Meeting**  
7:30-9:00 PM  
*Harper*

February 25  
Wednesday

**Surviving The Semester**  
4:45-7:00 PM  
*Creighton Mall*

February 26  
Thursday

**Wednesdays After Class (WAC)**  
1:30-3:30 PM  
*Skutt Student Center*

**Blender Bike**  
2:00-3:30 PM  
*KFC Spine*

**Drop-in Spanish Tutoring**  
5:00-6:00 PM  
*Hitchcock 108*

**Survivor's Circle Support Group**  
2:00-3:00 PM  
*VIP Center Rise Room*

**Iftar**  
5:30-7:00 PM  
*Harper Ballroom*



# Wildcats pounce on Bluejays

## Costly first half drought leads to loss



ALLY SEEVERS/THE CREIGHTONIAN

Senior Josh Dix, junior Isaac Traudt and senior Nik Graves show visible signs of defeat during the second half. The Bluejays ultimately fell 80-69 to the Villanova Wildcats on Saturday Feb. 14.

### ABBIE GALLANT Sports Reporter

Despite seeing senior guards Nik Graves (15 points) and Josh Dix (14 points) and sophomore guard Austin Swartz (12 points) in double figures, the Creighton men's basketball team couldn't take down the No. 3 team in the Big East, falling to Villanova 80-69.

Back at CHI Health Center on Feb. 14, poor shooting, unforced turnovers and defensive woes proved the perfect storm of factors, beginning right from the opening whistle.

Three minutes passed before either team broke the 0-0 score showing on the board. Villanova finally got the ball rolling on a mistake from Creighton, as sophomore guard Blake Harper turned the ball over and allowed the Wildcats to execute a fastbreak layup.

A missed jumper from Dix, off-target three from Graves and missed layup from junior forward Jasen Green defined the next minute and a half of play before Creighton evened the score at 2-2 on a put-back layup from Green. It wasn't that all Creighton's shots were poor ones, it was that they weren't falling at a time when the Bluejays needed the points to get them rolling.

"I thought we were getting really good looks. Isaac [Traudt] had a bunch of good open looks at the beginning of the game that just didn't go in. I think if we make those shots, then it's a different game, but I feel like, obviously, they're a pretty good defensive team," Green said.

Traudt had four early 3-point tries that bounced around the rim but didn't hit home, which seemed to be a norm in the opening minutes for the rest of the Bluejay squad as well.

The cold stretch turned into a two-minute scoring drought before a triple from Swartz, assisted by Traudt, nearly evened the score at 9-7 in favor of Villanova with 13:22 remaining.

That was the last time that the Bluejays scored for over four minutes.

The four-minute drought was part of a larger 16-3 run for Villanova, which extended the lead from 11-7 at 12:24 remaining in the

half, to 25-10 with 7:20 left in the half.

"To start the game defensively, I thought we did some really good things for the first 15 or 16 possessions," head coach Greg McDermott said. "Unfortunately we were pretty inept offensively at the same time, and then they went on [a 16-3 run]. Those kinds of runs have been our problem all season long."

Green watched the sequence spiral from there — the kind of stretch McDermott had warned about.

"Coach said in the locker room earlier, 'If one person breaks down, then it's kind of hard for us to keep our defensive integrity going,'" Green said. "And there [were] just a couple possessions in a row where that unfortunately happened, and they were able to get a pretty big lead on us and we were kind of fighting back for the rest of the time. It's just kind of tough when we have defensive breakdowns multiple possessions in a row ... it's kind of hard to battle back from that."

Defensive breakdowns served as a major contributor to the widening gap, but when those mistakes became amplified by turnovers, Villanova's advantage only increased. Creighton turned the ball over four times in six minutes — bleeding into the 16-3 Wildcat run.

"Some of our turnovers, especially the first half, they were turnovers that were going to lead to baskets, and obviously live ball turnovers kill you too and we had a few of those, but the second chance points we lose by eight, the points off turnovers you lose by nine," McDermott said, referring the Villanova's 15-6 advantage in points off turnovers and 15-7 edge in second chance points. "It's hard to win and especially when you execute a play to perfection — you've got a lob, you've got a dunk or a layup — and you throw it away. Those are hard."

With 5:23 left before the break, Creighton sat at a 28-17 deficit, lessening the gap from as many as 15 two minutes prior to just 11, thanks in part to two shots in the paint from Dix.

But just as it looked like the Bluejays were making strides toward a single-digit deficit, Villanova's offense lit up again, scoring on five of the next seven possessions to end the half. Creighton trailed 41-27 at halftime.

"I was hoping we could cut into [the defi-

cit] there [before the half] ... we just couldn't sustain anything," McDermott said. "Our biggest scoring run was five points tonight which is ... not good enough, especially on your home floor. You've got to be able to sustain some things offensively and then sustain some things defensively, and we just weren't able to do that this afternoon."

Over the first 20 minutes, 30 of Villanova's 41 first-half points came in the paint, while Creighton managed just 12. Swartz (10 points) and Dix (7 points) spearheaded Creighton's offense in the first half.

To begin the second half, Creighton employed elements of zone defense at various points, a last-ditch effort to stifle Villanova's dominance in the paint, but to no avail.

"We've defended the 3-point line against them better than anybody in the conference ... and we've kept them in check for the most part there, but gave up, once again, way too much in the paint," McDermott said. "We tried some zone stuff to start the second half a little bit and they made a three on both of them and it's just one of those things: when things aren't going your way and you switch to zone, they hit back-to-back 3s, that's kind of a sign of things to come."

The 3-pointers McDermott referenced came five minutes into the half, pushing the Wildcats' lead to 55-44 and halting Creighton's push to make it a single-digit game. The Bluejays had trimmed the deficit to seven — at 47-40 and again at 49-42 — but Villanova's timely shooting quickly restored control.

By the end of the 40 minutes, Creighton's short bursts of scoring couldn't offset Villanova's lead, and the Bluejays took their 13th loss of the season, 80-69.

Still, there were individual efforts that stood out. Green recorded a season-high and team-high 11 rebounds, helping lead the Bluejays to 41 rebounds and a slight 13-12 advantage on the offensive glass.

A large part of Green's efficiency on the glass compared to previous contests stemmed from the presence of Karem Konan and Owen Freeman alongside him at various points in the game. With another true five on the floor, Green was able to slide to the forward spot rather than absorb the full responsibility of guarding the post.

"I had a lot more rebounds this game

which was really good. I was able to kind of find the ball a lot easier without having to block out the five-man as much," Green said. "Those two are just really big bodies that are able to affect shots, they're able to help on drives a little bit as well. I feel like the biggest thing for me is being able to get more rebounds defensively."

The extra possessions helped, but converting them proved to be a harder challenge, as Creighton combined for 41.5% from the field but just 29.5% from the 3-point-line over 40 minutes. Meanwhile, Villanova's sustained 46.2% from the field and 28.6% from 3 were enough to propel them to their 20th victory this season.

Now, the margin for error — if possible — gets even smaller, as the Bluejays turn their attention to No. 5 Connecticut on Wednesday, then No. 17 St. John's tomorrow at 11 a.m.

Ahead of these mentally challenging road matchups, McDermott's guiding principle has become balancing accountability with compassion as his team, given the emotional turmoil of Dix's mother's passing.

"We're not at a position emotionally where I could yell and scream at them right now. They don't need that with what they've been through this last week. You're trying to teach basketball, you're trying to help them get better, but you also have to understand they're kids and they've been through something they've never been through before," McDermott said. "I don't want to crush them emotionally because their emotions have been tested this week, so they also need a steady hand as well. We have a responsibility to get better, we have a responsibility to play better, and we're going to do everything we can to make that happen, but it's also a slippery slope because they're young people that have experienced something that's really hard for them."

Even amid the emotional weight of the week, the Bluejays haven't lost sight of their goals.

"I think we still have a lot of basketball to play. We still have a goal, at the end of the day, to make the tournament and make a run, so at the end of the day we've got to stack days," Graves said. "We're just taking days one at a time, trying to get better each and every day and just fix all these lapses we're having."

# Turnovers spoil senior celebration



MANAHIL FATIMA/THE CREIGHTONIAN

Seniors Kiani Lockett, Grace Boffeli, and Kennedy Townsend show off their jerseys celebrating senior day at DJ Sokol Arena on Sunday.

## DYLAN WIESE Sports Reporter

Senior days can bring out a mix of emotions for players, coaches and the seniors themselves. It was no different when Creighton women's basketball hosted Big East foe, Villanova, on their senior day last Sunday, Feb. 15. After a hard-fought four quarters, the Bluejays came up short against the Wildcats, falling 74-64. This dropped the Bluejays to an 8-9 record in Big East play and 12-14 overall.

"I thought if we'd made a few more free throws down the stretch to keep it closer, it would have been a little different," head coach Jim Flanery said. "I thought the live ball turnovers were critical and a credit to them; there is a reason that they are second in the Big East."

The Bluejays started off with a bang. After Villanova scored the first two points of the game, the Bluejays answered with a 9-0 run, including a transition 3-pointer from freshman Neleigh Gessert. However, this lead did not last long. A series of turnovers by the Bluejays led to an 11-0 run for the Wildcats, giving them a 14-9 lead late in the first quarter.

Creighton was able to erase the deficit to tie the game at 14 to end of the quarter, despite racking up eight turnovers in the first ten minutes of play.

3-point shooting became key to the second quarter for the Bluejays. A pair of 3-pointers from Gessert got the Bluejays up to a 20-16 lead early in the second quarter. After this, the next ten points for the Bluejays all came from senior Kennedy Townsend, who would finish the game with 23 points. However, the Bluejays were still unable to build on their lead, holding a 32-29 advantage at halftime.

The Bluejays were able to maintain a slight lead for the beginning of the third quarter. After a turnover from the Wildcats, the Bluejays were able to capitalize with a layup from Townsend to bring the lead to 44-41. However, like in the first quarter, turnovers continued to plague the Bluejays. After three turnovers in the final four minutes of the quarter, Creighton found themselves trailing 54-49 going into the final quarter.

The first few minutes of the final quarter were a defensive struggle. Neither team was able to score until a layup from Villanova brought their lead to 56-49 with six minutes remaining in the game.

"It seemed like it was 54-49 forever," Flanery said. "I don't know how many possessions either team went without scoring, but it was over three minutes before either team scored. That was critical because if we had cut into that lead right there, the game would have been different and the pressure on them would have been different."

The Bluejays found themselves struggling to close the gap, trailing by as much as 15 in the fourth quarter. The Bluejays were able to cut the lead to ten in the final minute but were unable to cut the deficit to single digits, falling 74-64.

Despite the disappointment, the Bluejays were still able to honor three players on senior night. They were Kiani Lockett, Grace Boffeli and Kennedy Townsend.

"Obviously, we wanted to win that game, but after the game, it was amazing just to see everyone show so much love and support to us three seniors," Boffeli said. "We have had a lot of ups and downs this season, but we were just so thankful for the relationships that we have made this season."

That appreciation extended beyond the seniors themselves, as Flanery highlighted their steady leadership and impact on the team.

"I said earlier today that [the seniors] don't get enough credit," Flanery said. "[The freshmen] have done so many good things, but there are so many things that freshmen have to navigate, not just basketball-wise. I feel like the stability and the steadiness of [the seniors] and what they do for them on and off the court is probably overlooked."

Another of the celebrated seniors was Kennedy Townsend, who was able to score 23 points on her senior night. This was Townsend's fourth year with the Bluejays and her first season as a starter.

"She could have gone somewhere else and played more, you see what a great player she is," Flanery said. "She could have gone somewhere else to play more, but she stuck it out, and she has always been a great voice in the locker room."

Townsend echoed that sentiment, reflecting on why she chose to remain with the program.

"I've never been into taking shortcuts or doing what's easy, and I knew how special Creighton was as a program," Townsend said. "I have no regrets about my choice to stay. I've always been a fighter, and I never wanted to just give up because I knew how special things were here off the court, too. I haven't regretted that for a minute."

Kiani Lockett is also a senior but was unable to play most of her senior season after suffering a knee injury in November.

"I've told people that if [Kiani] is ever down, I have never seen it because she is always positive in front of the team," Flanery said. "I am really impressed with her because it is hard to be injured and doubly hard to have to miss your senior year ... So, I'm just really proud of her and really impressed with how she hasn't let her adversity affect anyone else."

Lockett's resilience hasn't gone unnoticed by her teammates.

"She could have easily packed it in and sat on the end of the bench, throwing herself a pity party, but she hasn't done that for a single second," Townsend said. "I think that speaks volumes about her character, and I think she's going to be successful no matter what she does in life. I know that I'm going to have her for the rest of my life, and I'm so thankful that Creighton brought us together."

After facing Butler earlier this week, the Bluejays have two games remaining in the regular season. Both are against Big East opponents: Providence this coming Thursday, and then Xavier on March 1.

# Kingston Era opens with series win

## AIDAN FLAIRY Sports Reporter

The 2026 Creighton baseball season marks a new chapter for the program. Long-time head coach Ed Servais retired after more than 20 years at the helm, finishing with 721 career wins, six regular-season conference titles, five conference tournament championships, and six NCAA Tournament appearances. Mark Kingston, who had served as head-coach-in-waiting during Servais's final season, now takes over as the official head coach.

Kingston inherits a team coming off a strong 2025 campaign. The Bluejays captured both the Big East regular-season and conference tournament titles and made a solid run in the NCAA Fayetteville Regional, defeating Kansas and North Dakota State before falling to No. 3 Arkansas in the Regional Final. Creighton opened the 2026 season on the road with a three-game series against the Saint Mary's College Gaels in Moraga, Calif.

Creighton jumped on the Gaels early Friday. Three batters were hit by pitches and

another walked in the top of the first, giving the Bluejays a 1-0 lead. Graduate student outfielder Teddy Deters, who hit .248 with 33 RBI in 2025, extended the lead with a homer in the second inning. Singles from senior Nate McHugh, who batted .270 with 24 RBI last season, and junior Connor Capece, who hit .351 with 41 RBI and earned All-BIG EAST Second Team honors, set the table for a sacrifice fly by newcomer first-baseman Chris Baillargeon. The graduate transfer from Holy Cross hit .376 with 52 RBI last season.

By the third inning, Creighton had built a 4-0 lead. Redshirt senior shortstop Ben North, who led the team in 2025 with 59 RBI and a .289 batting average, added three RBIs over the course of the game, while Capece, McHugh, and graduate transfer Lew Rice, who hit .324 at Charleston Southern, contributed multiple hits. Creighton scored five more in the seventh and took the opener 11-3 behind junior starter Jack Pineau, who allowed two runs on six hits over five innings. Relievers junior Evan Stratton, a transfer from Riverside City College, and sophomore

Anthony Unga closed out the game.

The first game of Saturday's doubleheader was a challenge. Creighton struck early with back-to-back home runs from Baillargeon and Deters to take a 2-1 lead, but Saint Mary's answered immediately. The Gaels scored four runs in the fifth and added another in the seventh to pull out a 7-2 victory.

Sophomore Wilson Magers, who threw 72.2 innings with a 3.47 ERA in 2025 and was named BIG EAST Freshman of the Year, pitched four innings, while redshirt senior Jimmy Burke, who posted a 4.35 ERA and 38 strikeouts over 49.2 innings last season, took the loss. McHugh and graduate transfer Rocco Gump, a third-baseman from Northwestern State who hit .303 last season, led Creighton with two hits apiece.

The rubber match later Saturday afternoon started with a bang for Creighton, which sent 12 batters to the plate in the first inning, scoring seven runs. Contributions came from Gump, McHugh, Deters, Capece, Baillargeon, Lew Rice, a graduate transfer

from Charleston Southern who batted .324 last season, and Isaac Wachsmann, a redshirt junior from Xavier who hit .228. Wachsmann's three-run homer highlighted the early surge.

Saint Mary's clawed back with multiple runs over the first three innings, bringing the game within three. Creighton managed to maintain a narrow lead through the middle innings. Freshman reliever Brian Gould held the Gaels to two runs over three innings, and senior Ian Koosman, who pitched 60.1 innings with 59 strikeouts in 2025, closed out the game over the final four innings, inducing a game-ending double play. Redshirt senior Brett Williams added a solo homer in the eighth to keep the Gaels at bay. Creighton held on for a 9-8 victory, claiming the series and moving to 2-1 on the season.

Creighton will travel to La Jolla, California, to face UC San Diego on tonight at 8 p.m., beginning the Tony Gwynn Tournament. The team will also take on University of San Diego and Utah during the weekend event.