



Students give back in honor of MLK

Mark Ziegler reporter



Faculty Members (left to right) Lacy O'Malley, Eva Sager, Bailey Talkington-Miller, and Sydney Anselmi all pose for a photo behind a table where shirts and other items were handed out to volunteers | Photo by Mark Zeigler

Monday, Jan. 19 marked Martin Luther King Jr. Day, a holiday that has been celebrated since 1986 to honor the birthday of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his achievements across the Civil Rights Movement. In his honor, Pittsburg State held the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service. Students gathered some music and speeches, then proceeded to go around the Pittsburg area and campus volunteering.

"MLK Day of Service is kind of an idea that turned into an annual event," Bailey Talkington said, the Assistant Director of the Campus Activity Center. The event that originally started as a simple candlelight vigil in The Oval soon evolved into the day of service known across campus today.

The third annual Day of Service began with a kickoff in the Overman Student Center's ballrooms, where students, staff, alumni, and other Pittsburg residents had an Einstein Bros. breakfast and a time of fellowship, as well as free beanies for new volunteers and specially designed shirts for returners.

Deatrea Rose, the Associate Vice President of Campus & Community Resources, took to the lectern to introduce the event and its history. From there, others came to speak, including speeches from Pittsburg State president Dr. Thomas Newsom and senior elementary education major Charlie Judd. A duet of Sam Cooke's "A Change is Gonna Come" was performed by Dean of Students Dr. Jon Bartlow on the saxophone and Pittsburg State alumni Lem Sheppard on the bass guitar. At the conclusion of the kickoff, Talkington expressed her gratitude to the audience.

"We start pushing this event before the students leave for Christmas break," Talkington said. "We were a little nervous about if they're gone, we won't have the opportunity to advertise the event. So, we try to push that to them about Dead Week or Finals

Week. But we really do get a lot of sign-ups."

Talkington cited the day as a great way for students and staff alike to connect, grow, and ultimately give back to the community.

After the kickoff concluded, volunteers all headed off to numerous destinations in the Pittsburg area. While most of the service projects were within city limits, such as reading to children at Sonshine Childcare and helping organize at the Wesley House, some of them stretched to nearby cities, like helping organize at the Miners Hall Museum in Franklin, or playing games with residents of Arma Health and Rehab in Arma.

There were even service opportunities on campus. One such opportunity was helping out in the donation closet in the U-Club, which is sponsored by SparkWheel, a nonprofit that helps provide students with resources like food and clothing. Here, volunteers helped assemble shelves and organize clothes. Francisco Castaneda, a senior double majoring in Early Childhood Education and Spanish was one of those volunteers.

"I'm from the local area, and I've seen SparkWheel doing a lot with the schools I had been to," Castaneda said, going on to talk about how he dressed up as Santa around Christmas and worked with SparkWheel at the Family Resource Center as Saint Nick. When asked about how he gave back to the community, Castaneda talked about the service projects he does as a member of the Student Government Association, and how he also gives back to the elementary school he went to by volunteering his time at events, especially the school carnival.

Days of service like this are designed to give back to the community, but to also honor Dr. King's legacy. In the words of Dr. King, "The time is always right to do what is right."

A little razzle dazzle is coming to Pittsburg

Masynn Acheson reporter

The critically acclaimed, Off-Broadway musical "Chicago" is coming to perform at the Bicknell Family Center for the Arts on April 29, 2026. The show starts its tour of the U.S. Jan. 20, and will finish in May, making a stop for one night only here in Pittsburg, KS.

The Bicknell Family Center for the Arts hosts Off-Broadway shows as often as they can, with three scheduled for the 2025-2026 school year. "Artrageous" was in September, with "Uptown" scheduled for February and "Chicago" coming in April.

"Chicago" is meant to be a satire about corruption in the administration of criminal justice systems in America, specifically Chicago, in the 1920s. The 1920s, or the Roaring '20s as they are often called, was the heart of the jazz scene in America. As such, the entire soundtrack is done in a jazz style, all while the "Merry Murderesses" of the show make a performance of their court cases.

Several of the songs have become quite popular throughout social media and in dance team circles, such as "And All That Jazz," "Razzle Dazzle," and "Cell Block Tango." Everything from the signature style of slow, sensual, jazz choreography, risqué flapper dancer style of costumes for the main characters, and dancers, and of course the iconic music make the musical one to remember.

The show coming to Pitt will have set design done by John Lee Beatty, who has designed sets for more than 115 Broadway productions. Costume design will be done by William Ivey Long, whose work on Broadway shows like "Hairspray," "Cinderella," and "Young Frankenstein" speaks to his experience. Lighting design will be done by Ken Billington, who has worked on "Chicago" before, winning the Tony Award for Best Lighting Design nine times since 1997, and sound design will be done by Scott Lehrer.

According to Shawna Witherspoon, the "patrons will see what they originally would have to travel to New York City to see," right here in Pittsburg, KS.

The original story started as a play written by reporter and playwright Maurine Dallas Watkins. It is based on a set of murder trials Watkins covered in 1924. The trials were for Beulah Annan and Belva Gaertner. Watkins worked for The Chicago Tribune, and Chicago had gotten into

an intense fascination of female murderers, and as such, these two women were a hot topic for the tabloids of the time.

At the time of the trials, juries were all male, leading to a string of acquittals for these female murderers in Cook County. Typically, these juries would condemn convicted murderers to death by hanging, but with all these women walking free following their murder trials, a new lore arose in the city saying that women could not be convicted for murder in Chicago.

Roxie Hart, one of the main characters of the production, is based on Annan, who at the time of her trials was 23 and accused of murdering Harry Kalstedt, who in turn became the basis for the character of Fred Casely. Gaertner, as you can guess, was the basis of Velma Kelly, the other star lady of Chicago, and was a cabaret singer and society divorcee.

Just days apart, both women were acquitted. The fame garnered from covering these two trials was enough for Watkins to write a play based on them. Her show was first posted in 1926, running 172 performances. Later in 1944, it was remade as Roxie Hart, but in this one, Roxie was being accused without having actually committed the crime.

It was not until the 1960s where the script was picked up again, and upon Watkins' death in 1969, the rights were sold to producer Richard Fryer, Verdon and Fosse. The musical was written by John Kander and Fred Ebb, where they modeled it after a traditional vaudeville type of number, and opened in 1975, running for 936 performances before closing in 1977.

After opening again in 1979, and running for 600 performances, it was closed for some time again until it reopened in 1996 and has been open ever since, touring all over the US and United Kingdom. It surpassed "Cats" as the second longest running American musical on Nov. 23, 2014, after its 7,486th performance, but is still behind "Phantom of the Opera."

Tickets to see this show can be purchased at the Ticket Office in Room 137 of the Weede Building, 1701 S. Homer, from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday, by phone at (620) 235-4796, or online at bicknellcenter.com

Dark fantasy for the win

Masynn Acheson reporter

Divinity: Original Sin II is not a game for everyone but still deserves some love. It is a turn-based roleplay game made by Larian Studios released in 2017 and music composed by Borislav Slavov, the same studio and composer who brought Baldur’s Gate 3 to life.

The game came onto my radar after the announcement of Divinity, the seventh installation in the series, being announced at the last Game of the Year Awards ceremony following a departure from the Baldur’s Gate franchise.

The trailer for the new game is very graphic, as is some of the gameplay in Divinity: Original Sin II, so audiences need to be aware of this before watching or playing. However, while the story has a plethora of dark elements throughout, it is still a diverse story with an even wider range of choices for the player. While having a mature rating can limit your audience, it opens a whole new array of topics to explore in the story that could not if less mature audiences were being targeted.

One wonderful thing about Divinity: Original Sin II, is that not only can you play single player fine, but you can also play multiplayer just as well. Not only that, but the game was released to a variety of gaming systems, so both console and PC players could enjoy it.

While the game itself has a cool layout and good mechanics, the story it is trying to tell is captivating to see unfold. Some of the topics seen in the story are graphic and violent but add to the story in unexpected ways. One of the big ones you become increasingly familiar with if you choose the companion character Seville, is that elves are cannibals.

This alone is such a unique take on elves that it sets this world apart from all others I have seen. Elves are tall and have the signature long elf ears but have borderline gangly limbs that truly set them apart from all other creatures in the game. Not only this, but when they eat flesh of others, they can see that creature’s memories, experience what they felt, and even gain new abilities or spells from it.

Waking up on a slave ship with a collar around their neck, the player is in a precarious situation. After waking up, you are taken through the tutorial of how to move, do all sorts of actions, the usual kind of opening to a game. The opening cutscene tells of a witch hunt started because horrible monsters called Voidwoken emerged and began attacking people who used Source, attracted to it.

From then on, all creatures ranging from elves, humans, dwarves, lizards, undead, and even animals who had a trace of Source, which is essentially soul magic in this game; they are rounded up and shipped off to a faraway island. People who can manipulate this energy are called Sorcerers. The ship you wake up on is full of captured Sorcerers, all with collars to make sure they cannot use it. After meeting all the available companion characters, investigating a murder, and encountering an old woman who is partially responsible for the Sorcerer witch hunt, the ship is attacked and sinks. Landing on the ship’s intended destination of Fort Joy, you need to figure out what is happening to the Sorcerers who are taken away by the Magisters and find a way off the island. And that is just Act 1. Each act has a different piece of the story set in a different place.

The player has the choice between 14 classes, and while that choice shapes the kinds of things you will excel at, nothing is set in stone. You could choose a magic heavy class, but with the right tweaks to your skills, weapons, play style, and choice of skills, you can create something tailored to you. The game is not easy to start on, but if you put in the time to learn what everything does, then you will do great.

If you have played both this game and Baldur’s Gate 3, then you may be familiar with the companion system. While it was frustrating that each player could not have a full team of companions each when playing multiplayer, being only limited to one companion character to control and develop alongside my own character was kind of nice as a first-time player of the franchise. I hope to see the option of having more open up in the new game.

Overall, the game is a 5/5 for me, and I have been recommending it to anyone I can with the following advice. Make sure to read the content warnings beforehand, otherwise you might be a bit surprised. Almost everything you can see or touch is lootable, so do not skimp on your strength stats or your thievery skill if you need to steal something. Stealing can be a little broken in the game but helps when you need a ton of skill books but do not have the money for it in the early game, even more so in the later game as things get more expensive, so load up on as much gold as you can before leaving the island.

‘Anaconda’ don’t got it

Bryce Bicknell reporter

If I had to choose one movie that represents the nostalgia-laden age we live in, “Anaconda” would be a pretty good fit. A film so basic in its messaging and yet, as described by my father as he walked out the theater, “hard to watch”. This is coming from a man who loves “Nothing but Trouble.”

“Anaconda,” directed by Tom Gormican, stars Jack Black as Doug, Paul Rudd as Griff, Steve Zahn as Kenny, and Thandiwe Newton as Claire. The movie, as described by Wikipedia, is a meta remake of the 1997 “Anaconda” movie. It is truly beyond any genre definition as it is action adventure, comedy, and horror all at the same time.

The film primarily revolves around Doug and Griff, who as children aspired to make movies. But now as adults, Griff is a failed TV actor serving mainly as an extra, while Doug films wedding videos. Griff meets up with Doug to celebrate Doug’s birthday and proposes that they remake “Anaconda,” with Griff having bought the rights to it. Kenny and Claire join in, but Doug is skeptical until he rewatches an old film they made as kids. They fly out to Brazil and meet up with Carlos, played by Selton Mello, who is a snake handler, and serves as possibly the only point of enjoyment in the film.

Meanwhile concurring with the main plot, a woman named Anna, played by Daniela Melchior, is on the run, and claims the boat that the crew was going

to use is her father’s. They end up all agreeing to go together, and they film a majority of the movie all before Griff accidentally kills the snake by throwing it into the river, causing it to be chopped up by the boat’s propeller. Carlos, mourning the loss of his pet, goes out into the jungle at night. The crew goes looking for him only to find he has been eaten by an actual giant anaconda, and thus, they must escape.

The movie is trying to do a lot- even more than what I have described. The plot feels so disjointed and deeply incoherent at times. Another problem is the chemistry between the actors, which is essentially non-existent. None of the emotions feel real, and the movie doesn’t know what it wants to be. It’s not particularly scary, it’s not at all funny, but it does have some decent action bits. The only thing going for the film is its premise, but even then, this is only used as nostalgia to draw fans of the franchise in. You get a cameo from famed rapper and star of “War of the Worlds” (2025) Ice Cube, but it barely lasts.

This film will make no one happy. Fans of the original will not enjoy it due to its only minor use of the original characters. People who have never watched the old movies will dislike it, because it’s not at all unique or interesting. Overall, “Anaconda” is yet another remake attempting to cash into nostalgia. I give the movie a 3.2/10.

Tomato basil soup and grilled cheese for cold days

Fatimah Bader reporter

When the weather gets cold in Pittsburg, I always crave something warm and simple. Tomato basil soup with grilled cheese is one of those meals that never fails. It’s affordable, easy to make and perfect for a quiet night at home or a quick dinner after a long day on campus.

Tomato Basil Soup

Ingredients:
2 tablespoons olive oil or butter
1 small onion, chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 (28-ounce) can crushed tomatoes
2 cups chicken or vegetable broth
Salt and pepper to taste
1 teaspoon dried basil or a handful of fresh basil
½ cup milk or cream (optional)

Directions:
Heat the oil or butter in a pot over medium heat. Add the onion and cook until soft. Add the garlic and stir for 30 seconds. Add the tomatoes, broth, salt, pepper and basil. Bring to a gentle boil, then lower the heat and simmer 15–20 minutes. Blend until smooth. Stir in milk or cream if using.

Grilled Cheese

Ingredients:
2 slices bread
2 slices cheese (cheddar, American or mozzarella)
1 tablespoon butter

Directions:
Heat a skillet over medium heat. Butter the outside of the bread slices. Place cheese between the slices and cook until the bread is golden and the cheese is melted.

This is one of those meals that feels comforting without being complicated. Simple, warm and always a good idea on a cold Kansas day.



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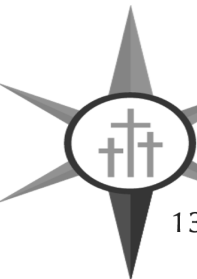
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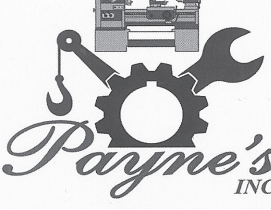
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Pitt State Press to give students hands-on publishing experience

Fatimah Bader reporter

Pittsburg State University is getting ready to open a new creative studio that will allow students to produce books, magazines, and digital media all in one place.

The Pitt State Press Creative Studio will be located on the fourth floor of Grubbs Hall and is designed to support student-led publishing, storytelling and media projects across campus.

“My background is in creative writing and literary publishing, and a lot of that work depends on collaboration between writers, artists, designers and editors,” Chase Dearing, faculty coordinator for Pitt State Press, said. “I wanted to bring that kind of environment to Pitt State, where students are creating work for real audiences, not just turning in assignments for a grade.”

Dearing said the idea for the studio did not happen overnight. It grew over time through partnerships and student projects, including work on Cow Creek Review, the university’s undergraduate literary magazine.

“It’s been more of a slow build than a single idea,” Dearing said. “These creative opportunities were already happening. We’re just now bringing them together into a shared studio space.”

The studio will allow students to complete the full publishing process, from planning and design to printing and distribution. Existing publications such as Cow Creek Review and Emerald City, Pitt State’s national fiction magazine, will now be produced entirely in-house.

“The studio will provide all the equipment needed to complete the entire publication process,” Dearing said. “But we’ll also be developing new student-run projects in print, audio, video and digital media.”

Dearing said the studio will focus on projects that reach audiences beyond campus and will be connected to ENGL 306, a project-based course that allows students to create and direct their own storytelling projects.

The Pitt State Press Creative Studio will also include printing and binding equipment.

“Students will be able to move from idea to finished product in one space,” Dearing said. “Some audio and video resources already exist in other departments, but Pitt State Press is meant to connect those efforts rather than duplicate them.”

The studio will also serve as a creative commons, with student work on display and a partnership with Axe Library’s Special Collections to highlight Pitt State’s history in industrial arts and regional print culture.

Pitt State Press will be open to students from all majors.

“Students from any major can get involved, whether they’re interested in writing, design, marketing, audio production or project management,” Dearing said.

Dearing said ENGL 306 will act as the capstone course for a new interdisciplinary Creative Media Certificate that includes courses in art, communication, graphic communications, English and business.

One of the main goals of the studio is to help students develop real-world skills.

“Students will gain internship-level experience working with professional equipment and collaborative workflows,” Dearing said. “They’ll be working under real deadlines for real audiences.”

Dearing said students pursuing creative careers will graduate with professional experience, while students in technical fields will gain communication and teamwork skills.

The studio will be student-led, with faculty serving as mentors.

“Students will drive projects from start to finish,” Dearing said. “A lot of the learning will happen by making things, working together and solving real problems.”

Momentum for Pitt State Press is already building ahead of the studio’s official opening. The first issue of a new fiction magazine, StoryBottle, is scheduled to be released next month.

Dearing said Pitt State Press Managing Director Lorna Rae Pierce will present research on letterpress and digital design at Undergraduate Research Day at the Capitol.

“Students are already helping design and plan the studio space,” Dearing said. “By fall 2026, we’ll be getting ready for a larger wave of student-run projects launching in spring 2027.”

Dearing said he is especially excited about the partnership with Special Collections.

“It will allow us to connect the region’s print history with the next generation of student creative work,” Dearing said.

Biology students use fire to protect prairie

Joshua Smith reporter

Over winter break, a small group of Pittsburg State University biology students got hands-on experience with conducting prescribed prairie burns at Prairie State Park in Missouri. The experience is part of an ecological management class taught by Dr. Andrew George, associate professor of biology. The students learned how to safely conduct and control the fire as well as how to use chainsaws to clear invasive species of trees. The burns are needed to protect the natural prairie ecosystem, the natural wildlife, and return nutrients like nitrogen to the soil.

Two of the students who attended were Caleb Stradley, a sophomore double majoring in biology with emphasis in wildlife ecology and geography, and Eva Arb, a sophomore double majoring in biology with emphasis in wildlife ecology and conservation and art with emphasis in studio practice.

George, Arb, and Stradley described fire as a needed tool used by natural resource managers to maintain the prairie. The burns help to strengthen the prairie ecosystem and remove invasive species.

“Fire is natural,” George said. “Fire is one of the many tools that natural resource agencies use. What managers are trying to do is recreate or mimic the natural disturbance regime prior to European colonization.”

“The prairie is a habitat that thrives on prescribed burns,” Arb explained. “It needs burns to get rid of the dead and invasive plants.”

“The invasive plants don’t fit the proper niche, and a lot of these invasive species disrupt the harmony,” Stradley said.

Arb added that the burns bring nutrients back into the soil and bring the natural wildlife of the prairie back to the area. George added that trees such as cedar are removed to keep the grassland

from becoming an unnatural forest.

“The burns recycle the dead plant material, so that helps the soil, which in turn helps microorganisms,” Arb said. “It helps bring back in wildlife because it creates more habitat for them, especially like prairie birds like the greater prairie chicken and meadowlark, those are ground birds that don’t nest in trees because the trees aren’t supposed to be on the prairie. We were cutting down a lot of cedar that’s not supposed to be there.”

“One of the biggest challenges in the Great Plains right now is woody encroachment or woody invasion,” George said. “Forests and shrub lands are gradually creeping into the Great Plains for a lot of different reasons. Fire suppression is probably the primary reason, and increased carbon dioxide in the atmosphere contributes to the invasive species. That is the primary challenge for folks who manage prairies and grassland systems all through the Great Plains.”

Arb said the teamwork was very effective. Arb described the tools used to prep the area and maintain the fire.

“Everybody worked together real quick,” Arb said. “They go out with the tractor and cut down the encircling area, and then we go out with leaf blowers to blow all the grasses and stuff a couple feet away from the line so that it would prevent the fire from creeping out and catching onto the area behind us. We had water trucks; we were going out and spraying it, and those of us with the plopplers and rakes were smothering the fire.”

Arb said the burns can only be performed at certain times of the year with conditions that will best suit safety.

“There’s a certain period of time that’s best suited for them: Winter to early spring,” Arb said. “You need perfect conditions, everything from humidity to the weather, to the wind – all these elements combine (to determine) it’s safe to do a prescribed burn.”

Stradley explained that even after carefully determining that the conditions were perfect, conditions changed and the burn had to be cancelled. Arb said the change in conditions caused spot fires to form outside of the designated area.

“One of the days,” Stradley said, “we had a guy from the Missouri Department of Conservation, as well as the State Park Manager, go out for a long time to make sure everything was perfect. And then decided to do the burn, and we ended up having to cancel part of the way though because out of nowhere it got windier and started blowing fire back behind the fire line.”

“We were getting spot fires,” Arb said, “which are when the fire gets behind us, and it creates a

different spot of fire, and you have to quickly put that out. Otherwise, it could burn the area that you don’t want, and that’s why you have a line.”

Arb said that the hands-on experience was invaluable compared to lectures in being able to fully understand the process. Arb also described the importance of personal safety.

“It’s a good experience because you can be lectured, but until you experience something like that yourself, you don’t really understand,” Arb said. “I knew fire is going to be smoky, I’ve worked with fire before. But you don’t realize how smoky it can be with the different things that get burned until you’re there, like I was crying the whole time because of the smoke getting in (my) eyes. Being careful and making sure that you don’t push your physical limits (is important), because we had enough people there to switch with someone to get away from the fire and smoke.”

The hands-on experience with conducting prescribed burns is part of an ecological management class. George described the class as designed to give students skills needed for their careers. Arb describes the class as a commitment.

“This course is part of our field biology program,” George said. “It’s designed to give students practical, marketable skills. A good portion of our biology students at Pitt State are looking for careers in natural resources, wildlife management, and fisheries management. It really helps with entry level jobs if they’re fire certified, can work a chainsaw, can drive an ATV, and use herbicide. So that’s what this course is all about.”

“It’s an ecological management class for Dr. George,” Arb said. “Not (just) anybody can be in it, you have to get permission from Dr. George. This is definitely a commitment; you’re working hands-on with Andrew (Braun), who’s the head at Prairie State Park. It helps if you have previous experience, like participating in WFS, which is the Wildlife Fisheries Society, so we do a lot of hand-on activity.”

Arb described the feeling of accomplishment and recommended readers to get certified. Stradley encouraged students to join WFS.

“Seeing that accomplishment with a group of people, talking about the experience afterwards, it was goosebumps,” Arb said. “I was a part of this and I made a difference. We succeeded and we’re improving this habitat. Just an amazing experience, I would recommend people to get certified.”

“Something for students, join WFS,” Stradley said. “It’s a lot of fun if you love wildlife, going out in nature, and just like animals in general. It’s a very open and friendly group.”

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Jacque Vaughn steps in and leads No. 19 Kansas to a win



Kansas assistant coach Jacque Vaughn, center, signals to players in the second half of an NCAA college basketball game against Colorado Tuesday, Jan. 20, 2026, in Boulder, Colo. | Photo by David Zalubowski

Pat Graham AP Sports Writer

BOULDER, Colo. (AP) — Jacque Vaughn’s point guard days at Kansas may be long gone, but he’s still collecting assists for the program.

Vaughn paced the sideline as he filled in for head coach Bill Self and guided the 19th-ranked Jayhawks to a 75-69 win over Colorado on Tuesday night.

Self didn’t make the trip after going to the hospital on Monday because he was not feeling well. He was released after receiving IV fluids. Self has missed several games in recent seasons due to heart issues.

Their coach was on their mind.

“It was definitely win one for Coach Self, win one for Coach Vaughn, win one for the team as well,” explained Tre White, who had 17 points and 15 rebounds. “We definitely had an extra chip on our shoulder today.”

The win goes on Self’s resume and, despite being at home, he improves to 22-1 in his career against the Buffaloes. Vaughn was just fine playing the acting coach role. He walked the sideline, alternating

between folding his arms and gesturing.

“I told the guys that the best part of team sports is everyone has a part, and my part was to fill in for coach,” said Vaughn, a decorated point guard at Kansas from 1993-97 who had his jersey retired. “You do the best that you can. You do it in your way.”

His team responded to his instructions. The Jayhawks (14-5, 4-2 Big 12) clamped down, too, holding Colorado scoreless for a 3-minute stretch late in the game to earn their third straight win.

After the game, Vaughn said he received a text from Self.

“He definitely was watching,” Vaughn said. “We didn’t play as well as we could have or wanted to, but he’s excited that we got a ‘W.’”

Will Self be back on the sideline for the game at Kansas State on Saturday?

“I don’t know about the timeline,” Vaughn said. “I’ll do my part, whatever it is, but he’s excited and we look forward to seeing him when we get back.”

Vaughn returned to Kansas last May as an assistant. He brought a wealth of NBA head coaching experience after being in charge in Orlando and Brooklyn.

His team appreciated his demeanor on the sideline. The Jayhawks needed a late run — and some tight defense — to escape Boulder with a win.

“He’s pretty calm,” said forward Flory Bidunga, who had four blocked shots and 11 points. “He has faith in us and trusts us. He told us we need to get the job done, told us we need to be who we are and nothing else.”

That sank in. Especially for Melvin Council Jr., who scored 10 of his 18 points in the final 5:07. Darryn Peterson also hit a pivotal banked-in 3-pointer down the stretch.

“We talked about, at the end of the day, can we leave this with an empty tank?” Vaughn said. “So that you leave everything on the floor for your teammates.”

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AATCC student chapter launches at Pitt State

Fatimah Bader reporter

Pittsburg State University has started a new student chapter of the American Association of Textile Chemists and Colorists, giving students a chance to explore textile science, materials testing, and applied chemistry beyond the classroom.

“The purpose of the AATCC Student Chapter at Pittsburg State University is to provide students with exposure to the textile materials and applied chemistry industries while connecting classroom learning with real-world applications,” said Dr. Mazeyar Parvinzadeh Gashti, an assistant professor of chemistry and faculty adviser for the chapter.

AATCC helps students with professional development and more.

“The chapter serves as a platform for professional development, industry engagement, research dissemination, and hands-on learning aligned with AATCC’s mission of advancing textile science and innovation,” he said.

The chapter’s executive committee for the 2025–26 academic year includes President Isaac Mountain, Vice President Tatum Carden, Secretary Julia Zeb, and Treasurer Reese Sutulovich.

Gashti said student leadership plays an important role in shaping the future of the organization.

“Since its formation, the chapter has steadily grown through student recruitment, interdisciplinary participation, and integration with ongoing research and applied projects within the chemistry and plastics departments,” he said.

He said involvement in AATCC helps students better understand how what they learn in class applies to real careers.

“Involvement in AATCC allows students to engage with industry standards, emerging technologies and professional networks early in their careers,” Gashti said. “AATCC provides access to technical resources, testing methods, conferences and industry professionals, helping students better understand how academic knowledge translates into industrial practice and innovation.”

The chapter plans to host a variety of academic and professional activities throughout the year.

“The chapter focuses on activities such as invited industry seminars, technical workshops, student-led research presentations, laboratory demonstrations, and participation in professional meetings and symposia,” Gashti said. “Emphasis is placed on applied research, sustainability, materials testing, and emerging textile technologies relevant to both industry and academia.”

Gashti said students who join the chapter gain both technical and communication skills.

“Participation enhances students’ technical knowledge in the textile chemical industry, communication skills and professional confidence,” he said. “Students gain experience presenting research related to textile chemistry, collaborating on textile and polymer projects, networking with industry professionals and learning textile industry–relevant standards and practices.”

He said the experience can prepare students for several career paths.

“It prepares them for careers in the textile industry, graduate school or entrepreneurship,” Gashti said.

The Pitt State chapter has already received national attention. Gashti said it was recently featured on The Voice of the U.S. Textile Industry website, a major publication that covers news and developments in the textile field.

Gashti said the chapter is also helping students connect with professionals outside the university.

“I am currently moderating bimonthly webinars at the AATCC Great Lakes Section and invite industry professionals to share the latest technologies in the textile industry,” he said. “I would be happy to include our students in these webinars as attendees.”

Students interested in attending the webinars can email Gashti directly.

“They can email me their request at mpg@pittstate.edu,” he said.

Gashti said Pitt State students are also helping produce AATCC content.

“We also publish a quarterly newsletter, and several students from Pitt State are leading the newsletter content,” he said.

Looking ahead, Gashti said one of the chapter’s goals is to involve more students across campus.

“The chapter also aims to increase interdisciplinary collaboration and student involvement across campus,” he said.

Gashti encouraged students from different majors to consider joining.

“I would like to encourage our students at Pitt State to join our chapter and take the opportunity to engage with the U.S. textile industry through AATCC,” he said.

Students interested in learning more about the AATCC student chapter can contact Gashti or watch for meeting announcements on campus.

Happy 250th birthday to the Declaration of Independence

Masynn Acheson reporter

This year marks the 250th anniversary of the birth of our nation, also known as the Declaration of Independence. To celebrate, Dr. Chris Childers, Dean of Arts and Sciences, partnered with Humanities Kansas to bring a traveling exhibition, Declaration at 250, about it to campus. The exhibition opened at the Axe Library on Jan. 3 and will continue until Feb. 1.

According to Childers, the exhibition is a set of nine infographics “telling the story of how we got to the point where the 13 colonies were writing a declaration of independence.” Each covers a different topic, ranging from the origin of the Civil Rights movement, Women’s Rights, the fall of empires, and how it led to a growing number of independent countries, and what the landscape looked like around the time.

While each infographic holds a different topic, they all come together to show what led to the signing of the declaration, the creation of the document, what happened after, and the effects it had on the world stage.

Dean Childers is not only the Dean of Arts and Sciences for campus, but a professor of history, and said that “the exhibit not only brings the visitors into not only the moment itself of July of 1776, but what that has meant ever since.” He encourages not only students to take a look at the exhibit, but faculty and community members as well.

Humanities Kansas is a non-profit based in Topeka, KS and believes in preserving the stories of the United States of America, their website says it best; “Stories carry our culture and ideas change the world.” Declaration at 250 was created to show those very ideals and just how the ideas of the founding fathers of the United States still affect the world today and the waves they caused throughout history.

Declaration at 250 uses “primary sources to illustrate how Americans and people across the world have been inspired by the Declaration in their pursuit of equality and self-determination.” He explained that the exhibit goes into detail about what exactly is in the document and what went into its creation.

The colonies had 200 copies of the finalized Declaration be printed to be distributed to “the states, commanders of the Continental troops, and King George III” on July 4, but it was not until a special copy was printed onto vellum that the iconic signing of all 50 delegates who were present at the finalization took place. That very copy is the one that rests in the National Archives Museum in Washington, D.C. now in the 21st century.

Following the Declaration reaching Europe, word of what the colonies wanted for their people spread throughout the world and led to movements for independence from tyrannical governments and oppressive monarchies for decades to come. Not only that, but the words declaring equality, choice, and freedom have become the cornerstone of not only the United States government but many others.

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Kaylee’s Conspiracy Corner: The pyramid that crumbled

Kaylee Dillow social media editor and photo editor

For the last 20 years, the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Food Guide Pyramid was the token of healthy eating in America. In 1992, the food pyramid was introduced, guiding Americans to a different, more conscious form of eating. The idea was to build meals focused heavily on grains, with fruits and vegetables next and fats and sugar at the top as foods to avoid. All in the name of healthy eating.

But as waistlines expanded and chronic disease increased, people began to question the diet being advised to them, asking the uncomfortable question: What if the food pyramid did not protect health, but actually undermined it?

At the foundation of the original food pyramid sat its strongest message, grains. Americans were advised to eat anywhere from 6 to 11 servings of grains daily. This advice shaped the structure of school lunches, government food programs, and overall household eating habits across the nation.

Nutritional scientists like Meir Stampfer and Walter Willet argued that this advice was too basic and simple. They pointed out that not all carbohydrates are equivalent to one another, stating that the pyramid did not provide any distinction between whole grains

and refined starches, which can raise blood sugar and contribute to overeating.

Since the pyramid’s introduction, obesity rates in the U.S. have increased. According to the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention, around 40.3% of American adults were considered obese in 2021-2023. This is higher than 1999-2000, when only 30.5% of adults were obese. Severe obesity has since tripled.

While obesity has multiple causes, some point to the pyramid’s carb-heavy diet and messaging, asking the question of if Americans were encouraged to eat too much of the wrong thing for too long.

Maybe the most controversial aspect of this triangle was its strong warning against any fats. Positioned at the top, fat was something you were advised against. The results of this? Cultural panic.

Food companies rushed to market low-fat or fat-free goods, many of which replaced fat with added sugar and refined starches in order to maintain flavor. Sugar consumption increased significantly around this time, with many Americans arguing that the pyramid indirectly fueling this fire.

Currently, nutritional science paints a

completely different picture. The pyramid’s emphasis on minimizing all fats left consumers unaware of the benefits of unsaturated fats found in nuts, seeds, fish, and vegetable oils, which is linked to better cardiovascular health, while sugar overconsumption is associated with obesity and type 2 diabetes.

While there is no direct connection between the food pyramid and the increase and trends of diabetes, these numbers show how metabolic diseases have grown as dietary patterns and lifestyles have changed.

To conspiracy theorists, this raises the question: Did demonizing fat open the door to a sugar-heavy food environment that only increased harm to the health of the public?

The rise of metabolic disease has only increased and deepened skepticism. Diabetes, specifically type 2, have become more common as obesity increases. More than 38 million Americans have diabetes, with 90-95% of these cases being type two, which is strongly related with high weight and obesity. CDC data at a county level shows the median diagnoses of diabetes rising from 6.3% in 2004 to 8.3% in 2021.

Type two diabetes is strongly connected to diet, weight, and insulin resistance, which are conditions influenced by high intake of refined carbs and any added sugars.

There is no proof, however, that the food pyramid caused these outcomes. But critics argue that the timeline is something that cannot be ignored.

Another concern about the food pyramid was its “one-size-fits-all” idea. By pushing a universal set of serving recommendations, the pyramid fails to account for the specific needs of individuals, including their cultural differences, or the differences of genetics in regard to metabolism. It also fails to reflect any new evidence showing that healthy eating patterns can vary widely yet still support good health.

Modern nutritional studies now support multiple healthy eating regiments, including Mediterranean, plant-based, or lower carb diets. The pyramid left little to no room for flexibility or change.

Some frame this as less about health and more about standardization. A system intentionally designed to be easy to teach, easy to implement, and easy to scale, even if it ignored any modern advancements.

In 2011, the USDA nutritional guidelines strayed away from the pyramid in its entirety, and to the MyPlate. This visual was different from the pyramid, for it was a plate, dividing fruit, vegetables, grain, and protein into sections. The change reflected something bigger, indication of evolving nutrition.

MyPlate emphasized more on the proportions of different food groups rather than specific serving counts. It also updated the dietary guidelines, founded and grounded in research about whole foods and better, more balanced eating.

There was no formal admission in regard to the pyramid’s failure, nor any public acknowledgment of its potential role in shaping decades of eating habits. Instead, the triangle that once defined healthy eating just silently disappeared.

To conspiracy theorists like me, that silence speaks volume.

There is no evidence that the food pyramid was designed with the soul intention of harming Americans. But the one thing people seem to agree on is that it substantially reduced the complex relationship that is nutrition, emphasizing the wrong priorities, and failing to keep up to date with ever-advancing science.

Whether this symbol is viewed as false advisement or a flawed public health and influential experiment, the food pyramid continues to remain a symbol of how effective, yet dangerous, nutrition messaging can be.

And for any readers who made it this far, a question still remains. If the pyramid was wrong for so long, what else might we be getting wrong now?

Predicting the 68th Grammy Awards

Mark Ziegler reporter

Since the dawn of humanity, music has existed to serve a variety of purposes- to worship religious symbols, to express feelings, to tell stories; the list goes on. Fast forward to the present day, where not only is music still alive and kicking, but people are able to make careers off of it. It is to recognize those musicians that the Grammy Awards exist. Feb. 1, 2026 marks the 68th time that the Grammys will be handed out, and it’s all happening in Los Angeles. Since I decided to share some of my Game Awards predictions a while back, I figured I’d give the Grammys a shot and make some predictions.

This year’s field is full of talent being recognized, with a massive 497 nominations across 95 categories, filtered into 12 fields based on genre. While I plan on making predictions for all categories, I have my eyes on the “Big Four,” which are the four biggest categories not just in the General Field, but at the ceremony as a whole. Leading off is Record of the Year, which honors a song’s team and the impact it left. Kendrick Lamar currently holds the title with “Not Like Us,” and he’s in the running again with “luther,” a collaboration with SZA. This time, however, I think someone else is taking the award; that someone being Lady Gaga with “Abracadabra.” The song blends 2000s pop with today’s issues for a musical battle cry against creative pressure and one’s inner critics. On top of that, with a team composed of three Grammy nominated producers (Lady Gaga included), a team of mixers with 40+ years of combined experience, and the legendary Randy Merrill as a mastering engineer, I think this Grammy is going home with Gaga.

My next prediction is for the category of Song of the Year, which doesn’t focus on impact, but on the songwriter(s) and the composition of the song. This is a title that Kendrick Lamar also holds with “Not Like Us,” and he’s also in it with “luther,” but so is “Abracadabra.” In fact, every song from the Record of the Year are in the lineup, with one exception. “The Subway” by Chappell Roan was replaced in this category with “Golden” by HUNTR/X. HUNTR/X is a band from Netflix’s summer smash hit, KPop Demon Hunters, that features the singing voices of Ejae, Audrey Nuna, and Rei Ami. Coincidentally, “Golden” is also what I think has the best shot to win this. The movie’s success is a moot point here, but the song’s overall flow is very smooth, the lyrics are easy to understand the meanings of regardless of if you’ve seen the movie, the rhythm is catchy and the list goes on. HUNTR/X may be fiction, but the talent is very much real, and the Hunters will surely shine in the City of Angels.

Zooming out now, we have Album of the Year, which celebrates the best album that was released within the period of eligibility. Beyoncé’s “Cowboy Carter” is currently the titleholder, but Queen B has no nominations to her name this year, guaranteeing a new winner for the category. And that winner, to me, is none other than Kendrick Lamar’s “GNX.” It seems to be a heavy favorite, and I can see why. “luther” is in the album, which is a close second to me in Song of the Year, but other hits like the rallying “tv off,” the much-anticipated “squabble up” and “peekaboo,” are all in the mix. Alongside that, some of the songs were written by Lamar himself, as well as one Mark Anthony Spears, better known as Sounwave, who has some nominations himself this year, and it’s all polished by Ruairi O’Flaherty, an LA-based audio master on the rise whose Grammy nominations span back to the 66th awards in 2024. I truly think that K-Dot will finally get to taste AOTY glory after losing his other six nominations.

To round out this article, I’m taking a look at the Best New Artist, which celebrates new artists on the rise within the eligibility period, a title currently held by Chappell Roan. With so many fresh faces coming out of the woodwork, each with their own unique talents, it was hard to make a pick for me, but I feel like Leon Thomas will walk away with this one. If the name sounds familiar, that’s because you may recognize him as Andre from the 2010s Nickelodeon show “Victorious.” A Brooklyn native, Thomas also did a lot of Broadway shows as a kid, as well as TV and music. He has worked as a songwriter, even earning himself a Grammy as one in 2024 for helping with SZA’s “Snooze,” which won Best R&B song. Thomas has two works on display this year- his album “MUTT” and his song “YES IT IS” are nominated, and with his multiple talents and creative history, the sky is beyond the limit for what Leon Thomas can do.

This article is just a slice of what you can expect to see at this year’s Grammys. Comedian Trevor Noah will host Music’s Biggest Night at the Crypto.com Arena on Feb. 1, at 7 P.M. Central over on CBS and on streaming platforms. With almost 500 nominations being cast and talent from all over the world coming together, one question remains- who will the Academy sing their praises to? Tune in to find out.

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Trump cancels tariff threat over Greenland

Josh Boak, Will Weissert and Aamer Madhani associated press

President Donald Trump announced Wednesday that he was scrapping his planned tariffs on eight European nations in an effort to force U.S. control over Greenland, pulling a dramatic reversal shortly after insisting he wanted to get the island “including right, title and ownership.”

In a post on his social media site, Trump said he had agreed with the head of NATO on a “framework of a future deal” on Arctic security.

He said “additional discussions” on Greenland were being held concerning the Golden Dome missile defense program, a multilayered, \$175 billion system that for the first time will put U.S. weapons in space.

The president has threatened tariffs before only to back away. In April, after first saying he would slap massive import levies on nations from around the world, which prompted a sharp negative market reaction, Trump eased off.

But his change of heart this time came only after he used his speech at the World Economic Forum in the Swiss Alps to focus on Greenland and to threaten to upend NATO, an alliance that has been among the globe’s most unshakable since the early days of the Cold War.

In his address, Trump said he was asking for territory that was “cold and poorly located” and that the U.S. had effectively saved Europe during World War II while declaring of NATO: “It’s a very small ask compared to what we have given them for many, many decades.”

“We probably won’t get anything unless I decide to use excessive strength and force, where we would be frankly unstoppable. But I won’t do that, OK?” Trump said, later adding, “I don’t have to” and “I don’t want to use force.”

But Trump has also said repeatedly that, while the U.S. will defend NATO, he wasn’t convinced the alliance will backup Washington, if needed, and suggested that was at least part of the reason for his aggressive stance toward Greenland.

His sentiments prompted NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte, in a post-speech event with Trump, to say that the alliance would stand with the U.S. if it is attacked.

“You can be assured, absolutely,” Rutte said, adding, “your allies will be with you,” Rutte told Trump.

A short time later came Trump’s post canceling the tariffs.

Negotiating ploy?

Trump argues that the U.S. needs Greenland for national security and to counter threats from Russia and China in the Arctic region, despite America already having a large military base there. He threatened to impose steep U.S. import taxes on Denmark and seven other allies unless they negotiate a transfer of the semi-autonomous territory.

The tariffs were to have started at 10% next month and climb to 25% in June.

Trump often tries to increase pressure on the other side when he believes it can lead to a favorable deal, and seemed content to do that at Davos. Still, his threats appeared on the verge of rupturing NATO, which was founded by leading European nations, the U.S. and Canada to form a bloc to counter the Soviet Union.

Before Trump’s change of heart, the alliance’s other members were steadfast in saying Greenland is not for sale and cannot be wrested from Denmark, while angrily rejecting Trump’s promised tariffs.

A Danish government official told The Associated Press after Trump’s speech that Copenhagen was ready to discuss U.S. security concerns. But the official, who was not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity, underscored the government’s position that “red lines”— namely Denmark’s sovereignty — must be respected.

It was not immediately clear how Trump’s canceling of tariffs might change such calculations. In the meantime, Greenland’s government responded by telling its citizens to be prepared. It has published a handbook in English and Greenlandic on what to do in a crisis that urges residents to ensure they have sufficient food, water, fuel and supplies at home to survive for five days.

“We just went to the grocery store and bought the supplies,” said Tony Jakobsen in Greenland’s capital Nuuk said, showing off the contents of bags that included candles, snacks and toilet paper.

Jakobsen said he thought Trump’s rhetoric towards Greenland was “just threats... but it’s better to be ready than not ready.”

Before backing down, Trump had urged Denmark and the rest of NATO to stand aside, adding an ominous warning.

“We want a piece of ice for world protection, and they won’t give it,” Trump said. “You can say yes, and we will be very appreciative. Or you can say no, and we will remember.”

He also called for opening “immediate negotiations” for the U.S. to acquire Greenland. In subsequent comments to reporters, he declined to name a price that might be paid, saying only, “There’s a bigger price, and that’s the price of safety and security and national security and international security.”

Trump suggests Europe is fizzling while U.S. booms

In his speech, Trump also argued that the U.S. economy is thriving, in contrast to Europe.

“I want to see Europe go good, but it’s not heading in the right direction,” said Trump, who also



President Donald Trump speaks during the 56th annual meeting of the World Economic Forum, WEF, in Davos, Switzerland, Wednesday, Jan. 21, 2026. | Photo by Gian Ehrenzeller

noted, “We want strong allies, not seriously weakened ones.” He said of European economies, “You all follow us down, and you follow us up.”

His arrival in Davos was delayed after a minor electrical problem on Air Force One forced a return to Washington to switch aircraft. As Trump’s motorcade headed down a narrow road to the speech site, onlookers — including some skiers — lined the route. Some made obscene gestures, and one held up a paper cursing the president.

After his address, Trump met with the leaders of Poland, Belgium and Egypt.

Trump’s housing plan overshadowed

Trump speech was supposed to focus on how to lower U.S. housing prices — part of a larger effort to bring down the cost of living, which could prove a liability for the president’s party of November’s midterm elections.

Greenland instead carried the day, with Trump lashing out at Denmark for being “ungrateful” for the U.S. protection of the Arctic island during the Second World War. He also mistakenly referred to Iceland, mixing up that country with Greenland four times during his speech and for the fifth time since Tuesday.

“This enormous unsecured island is actually part of North America,” Trump said. “That’s our territory.”

When he finally did mention housing in his speech, Trump suggested he did not support a measure to encourage affordability. He said bringing down rising home prices hurts property values and makes homeowners who once felt wealthy because of the equity in their houses feel poorer.

‘You have to be prepared for almost anything’

Before Trump announced that he was abandoning the tariffs, his speech left people in Nuuk preparing for the worst.

Resident Johnny Hedemann said it was “insulting” that Trump “talks about the Greenlandic people and the Greenlandic nation as just an ice cube.” He spoke while heading out to buy a camping stove and instant mashed potatoes.

“Living in this nature, you have to be prepared for almost anything. And now there’s another threat — and that’s Trump,” Hedemann said.

He added: “With this lunatic, you don’t know what’s going to happen tomorrow. He can make things very bad for everyone.”

ICE activity increases in Maine as anxiety grows

Patrick Whittle and Rodrique Ngowi associated press

The Trump administration is now targeting Maine in its mass deportation campaign, a state with relatively few residents in the United States illegally but a notable presence refugees in its largest cities, particularly from Africa.

The Department of Homeland Security named the operation “Catch of the Day,” an apparent play on Maine’s seafood industry, just as it has done for other enforcement surges, like “Metro Surge” in Minnesota and “Midway Blitz” in Chicago.

Reports of a surge in immigration arrests have struck fear in immigrant communities of Portland and Lewiston and prompted backlash from Gov. Janet Mills and other Democrats, including a refusal to help ICE agents obscure the identity of their vehicles by issuing undercover license plates.

“While we respect the law, we challenge the need for a paramilitary approach to the enforcement of federal statutes,” Portland Mayor Mark Dion said Wednesday at a news conference where he was joined by other local officials. “This council doesn’t stand apart from our immigrant communities, we stand with them.”

Portland and Lewiston have thousands of residents of African descent, including many from Somalia.

Somali immigration into Maine accelerated in the early 2000s, and the state now has one of the highest percentages of Somali residents in the country. Immigrants and asylum seekers from other countries followed.

Now the presence of Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents is causing great anxiety in Portland, said city council member Pious Ali, a native of Ghana.

“Our schools have seen about a quarter of immigrants not showing up,” Ali said, and many fear going to work as well: “There are immigrants who live here who work in our hospitals, they work in our schools, they work in our hotels, they are part of the economic engine of our community.”

ICE agents don’t need to spread trauma by smashing doors and windows, he said: “The federal government has the ability to contact these people without unleashing fear into our communities.”

Dozens of arrests

The enforcement action is arriving in Maine, a mostly rural state with about 1.4 million residents, as confrontations between ICE and demonstrators continue in Minnesota, where ICE is under scrutiny following an agent’s fatal shooting of Renee Good.

ICE didn’t respond to a request for comment Wednesday on the agency’s plans for Maine, where U.S. Department of Homeland Security said in a statement that increased enforcement began on Tuesday.

“We have launched Operation Catch of the Day to target the worst of the worst criminal illegal aliens in the state. On the first day of operations, we arrested illegal aliens convicted of aggravated assault, false imprisonment, and endangering the welfare of a child,” said Homeland Security Assistant Secretary Tricia McLaughlin in a statement.

No new undercover license plates

Secretary of State Shenna Bellows, a longtime opponent of President Donald Trump, said state officials received a request from U.S. Customs and Border Protection for confidential, undercover Maine license plates and decided against issuing them. The licenses plates are used on unmarked vehicles and Bellows said she wants more assurance they will be used appropriately.

ICE’s use of license plates in other states has raised concerns: Illinois Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias, a Democrat, issued a warning to ICE agents last year that swapping or altering license plates is illegal.

“These requests in light of rumors of ICE deployment to Maine and abuses of power in Minnesota and elsewhere raise concerns. We have not revoked existing plates but have paused issuance of new plates. We want to be assured that Maine plates will not be used for lawless purposes,” Bellows said.

Bellows has run afoul of Trump and his administration before. In 2023, she sought to remove his presidential candidacy from the state’s ballot, arguing that Trump had engaged in insurrection in violation of the 14th Amendment. More recently, she has refused to hand over the state’s voter rolls to the federal government.

Customs and Border Protection did not respond to a

request seeking comment, but a top Maine Republican said withholding the undercover plates would jeopardize public safety.

“That really, one, puts us at odds as a state. Puts us at one end of an extreme that we really shouldn’t be on,” Senate Leader Trey Stewart said.

Maine’s top federal prosecutor, U.S. Attorney Andrew Benson joined Democrats in calling for any demonstrations in the state to remain peaceful and civil. Benson, a Trump appointee, warned people to stay out of the agents’ way or be prosecuted.

Mayor, governors speak out

Gov. Mills has pushed back, as have mayors, school district leaders and numerous community organizations. Mills said aggressive enforcement actions that undermine civil rights are “not welcome.”

Lewiston Mayor Carl Sheline said ICE enforcement has been causing “anxiety, fear or uncertainty” for many.

“There is no evidence of unchecked criminal activity in our community requiring a disproportionate presence of federal agents,” Dion said.

Schools, Democrats call for caution

Portland Public Schools, the largest and most diverse school district in the state, said in a statement Wednesday that it conducted a “lockout” at two schools to prevent anyone from entering the building during the school day Tuesday because of concerns about ICE activity nearby.

“It was quickly determined that there was no threat to our school communities and the lockouts were lifted within minutes. This is an understandably tense time in our community, as reports and rumors of immigration enforcement actions grow,” the district’s statement said.

Maine Democrats have condemned the ICE activity.

“The Trump administration has deployed ICE agents to Portland, Lewiston, and possibly other Maine communities. This is not about public safety. It is about fear, control, and political theater,” Devon Murphy-Anderson, executive director of the Maine Democratic Party, said in a statement Wednesday.

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MLK day of service



Volunteers senior Corey Humble, a biology and communications major, and senior Alea Billingsley, a criminal justice and spanish major, enjoy breakfast before the MLK Day of Service kickoff event. | Photo by Mark Ziegler



Senior elementary education student Francisco Castaneda volunteers work together in Sparkwheel's donation closet, located in the U-Club, to help sort out clothing and build shelves. | Photo by Mark Ziegler



During the kickoff to the MLK Day of service, Pitt State Alumni Lem Sheppard and Dean of Students Jon Bartlow play a duet of Sam Cooke's "A Change is Gonna Come." | Photo by Mark Ziegler



Pittsburg State President Dr. Thomas Newsom takes to the lectern as he speaks about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy as the kickoff for the MLK Day of Service. | Photo by Mark Ziegler



Charlie Judd, a senior majoring in elementary education, tells a story about a service project he completed as a student at Pitt at the MLK Day of Service kickoff. | Photo by Mark Ziegler