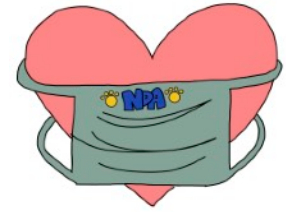




SPECIAL *thankful* ISSUE

Why the NDA community is particularly appreciative this holiday season. Pages 2-7



THE GAVEL



Cate Scheper, Emma Grace, Abby Powers, Emily Bentley, Emily Wichmann and Anna Long celebrate after match point in the 21-25, 25-19, 25-22, 22-25, 15-13 victory over Mercy in the state championship game. (*Maggie Smith photo*)

STATE CHAMPS!

NDA beats Louisville Mercy in a five-set thriller to win the KHSAA volleyball championship for the first time since 1994. It's the Pandas' first state title in a team sport since 2013. Pages 8-12

What Pandas are thankful for this season

ALEXIS DURIK, junior

This holiday season I am most thankful for my parents because they have worked super hard even during the time of quarantine to keep an income for my family. Especially since I turned 16 last year they have provided me with a car and gas.

ANNA NEUBACHER, freshman

I am thankful for all my friends and family, but especially my grandpa. He is the most important person in the world to me. I feel like I can really trust him with whatever I want to tell him. He has always been my father figure and has taught me so much about life and how to live it well. I couldn't imagine losing him. He has always been very special to me, and I hope he remains healthy and happy.

JENNA SHRIVER, senior

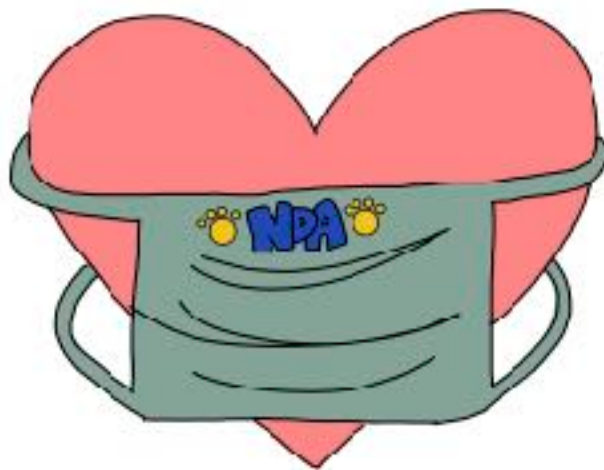
I am thankful for my little sister, Julianne, for always being there for me and making me laugh.

KENDRA COLLINS, freshman

I am thankful for a multitude of things and people. Some of those people are my brother, mom, and dad. They have always been there for me and I love them so much. My brother, although he can be a pain, is a wonderful brother and I wouldn't trade him for anyone else. My mom has been through a lot this year and she's so strong because she would do anything and everything for my family. My dad is a huge role model. He's amazing and I love him with all my heart. He's always there to help me with my homework or talk to me about basketball or anything really. He's also always there to jam out with me in the car. He works so hard every day and wants nothing but the best for our family.

CORINNE LAWS, senior

I'm thankful for the community I have around me and my friends. Both motivate me every day to work my hardest and put my best foot forward, not only for myself, but for all the people who surround me. In uncertain times such as now, it's so important to have others to support you and that's why I'm so blessed to have those people.



About this project

Senior publications students Lilli Nordloh, Mollie Tagher and Olivia Voelker surveyed students and faculty to find out what the NDA community was particularly grateful for in such a challenging year. Here's what you told us. Some responses have been edited for length and clarity. Thanks to senior Annabelle Stansel for providing the perfect illustration!

GRACIE DORNING, senior

I am thankful for my strength because it pushes me to do good things for other people.

TARA NEUHAUS, sophomore

This holiday season I am most thankful for my family's health. Being safe and healthy will help us celebrate this Thanksgiving with each other.

MARGARET GARTNER, senior

This holiday season I am grateful for my Mom. She is always so encouraging to me, makes me laugh, and she knows me better than anyone. She has been so positive and has helped me stay optimistic this year and that is why she is so special to me this holiday season.



the Thankful issue

'Faith helped me see the good things'

MRS. VAN AUKEN, teacher

I am thankful for family and technology. I am in a family group chat with my parents, sisters, and aunts/uncles. Even though we are busy with our lives and can't see one another very often, technology has allowed us to stay connected and support each other through prayers and laughter.

ELLA PADGETT, senior

My Grandma because she's still strong and healthy. My mom and dad for being excited about me graduating even though I want to go out of state for college. I am thankful for being able to push myself through all the ACT and college application stuff instead of just going half at it.

JOSIE LAWRIE, senior

I am most thankful for my family being able to all be together to celebrate the holidays. A lot of the time we are very busy, so it is rare that we are all together.

CHANCE LOSCHIAVO, sophomore

I'm thankful for my teachers. They are my motivation, they encourage me, they're like aunts and uncles really. I'm thankful for my dad because he puts up with me and he's always there for me when I need him. And finally I'm thankful for my friends Ava and Alex. They make me laugh when no one else can and I'm really appreciative for it.

REAGAN BAKER, senior

I am thankful that I have friends and family that love me and care for me.

MRS. WAGNER, teacher

I am thankful for my faith. This year has been a challenge for all of us and the knowledge that God walks with us in the hard times. My faith has also helped me to see the good things in the midst of the

struggle. The kindness and love of the people around me, the beauty of creation, the ways we find to still be a community.

LINDSI BOWMAN, junior

I am thankful for my sister because she is my best friend and is always there for me when I need her.

RILEY MADDOX, sophomore

I am thankful that everyone in my family is safe and healthy. In May, both my grandparents and my great grandfather contracted COVID. My grandparents recovered within 2 months, but my great grandfather was in the ICU for almost 8 weeks. It was extremely scary, especially because he is 94. My family prayed a lot, and it was a rough summer. Luckily, at the end of July, he got out of the hospital, and recovered. Now he is doing fine, and we are so thankful.

MRS. BILL, teacher

I am thankful for chats with neighbors around an open fire, phone calls on the way home with a dear friend, and bedtime snuggles with my girls.

ALLISON BELTON, sophomore

Ms. Ericson because she helps me with all my hard work and helps me with studying!

MRS. PROUDFIT, teacher

I'm thankful for walks with my family through crunchy leaves in crisp weather and a the big stack of interesting books I can't wait to read.

JODI LOVENSHEIMER, junior

I am thankful for NDA's theatre department and everyone in it. They have helped me through thick and thin. I am thankful that we have a wonderful new director in Miss Smith. I am also thankful we can make theatre in the time of COVID.



the Thankful issue

'Grateful to be part of our NDA family'

DR. LAURA KOEHL, NDA President

I am thankful for my incredible partner Brian and our sons and their partners: Louis and Denice, Alex and Carrie Jo and Sam and Barb. We are not all in the same town and I miss our out-of-towners very much, but the love and joy we share with each other is ever present. Over the years we have made so many wonderful memories together. I am also grateful to be a part of our NDA family. The kindness and care I witness every day constantly affirm God's ever-present goodness and love. I never think of it as going to work, rather being in my second home. What a gift!

MR. BYRD, teacher

I am grateful for so much, including the animals in my life: Bronco, Duchess, Fanny, and Darkness. These four legged creatures' signs of affection are sources of joy and healing in this very anxious time.

ANNASHEA CARLISLE, senior

This holiday season, I am extremely thankful for my Great Grandma. For most of the spring and summer, she was stuck inside her apartment unable to have visitors. In the past couple months, we have been allowed to go in and visit her for short periods of time with masks. She has always been so special to me, but this year I am especially grateful to just be in the same room and getting to talk to her.

MRS. GRAYSON, assistant principal

I am especially thankful for the outdoors and all the beauty it brings this time of year! I have a special appreciation amidst the pandemic!

AMELIA COOMES, senior

I am thankful for our school because they are working so hard to keep us safe and in person at school. I am grateful to have the opportunity to go

to school in-person, even though things are different this year.

CARLEIGH WITAJEWSKI, freshman

I am thankful for my friends and family. There have kept me sane through COVID and the quarantine.

MS. HILBERT, teacher

I am thankful for the NDA community. Throughout this crazy year I have relied on my Panda Friends to get me through the tough times. When I come to work I feel like I am with my family.

DINITHI FERNANDO, junior

My sister, because I noticed how much I missed her after she moved away.

MRS. LITMER, teacher/ volleyball coach

I am very thankful for my family. My husband has been overly supportive of our busy fall season, and my parents were very helpful while I was home quarantined for two weeks.

OLIVIA VOELKER, senior

I am thankful for the gift I have of happiness. I didn't realize how much I took a positive attitude for granted. This year has helped me see that you can help others make the best out of things using your gifts.

KATE MOORE, senior

I am thankful for all of my friends and my family for supporting me. This past year I had to go through one of the hardest things that was challenging physically, mentally, and emotionally. They were all there for me the entire time and picked me up on my hardest days, and I'm very thankful for that.



the Thankful issue

‘My parents have shaped me’

MRS. HEIDRICH, teacher

I am thankful for my daughter, who has helped me to better appreciate the joy and wonder that exists in each day. Being able to see the beauty and possibility of the world through her eyes, especially during these challenging months, has been an incredible blessing.

CLAIRE COPPAGE, freshman

I am most thankful for my family because without them, I wouldn't be where I am today. Especially my parents have shaped me tremendously. I grow with my family.

HAYLEY JANSEN, senior

Christmas music starting the day after Halloween because it gets me in the Christmas spirit and really motivates me to finish out the year strong.

ALLISON KNOP, freshman

I am thankful for my sisters because they add a lot of excitement to my life, and they often make me think deeper about my character. I am also very grateful for my friends at NDA, but I cannot name specifics because they are all amazing!

MRS. JOHNSON, teacher

I am most thankful for friends and family including my NDA family who has prayed for me, encouraged me, and helped me in recovering from my recent back injuries and recovery from surgery. God uses pain and suffering to show us how much we are loved!

GABBY BAKER, freshman

I am thankful for my family and friends because they make me who I am and who I want to be.

ISABELLE FETTIG, freshman

I'm most thankful for being able to stay at school in person and see all the new friends I made this year every day.

MRS. ABBOTT, teacher

I'm thankful for my kids, Teresa Clare and JJ. I'm thankful for the extra time I got to spend with them during quarantine. I'm grateful for their smiles and giggles, and the way they bring joy to the mundane. I'm thankful for the new perspective they give me when I look at the world through their eyes. I'm thankful for the way they challenge me every day to be a better person.

MRS. PERRINO, teacher

I am thankful for the opportunity to teach in person and share my love of science and the Catholic faith.

ROSEMARY MILLER, freshman

I love Christmas because all my family gets together and it's a little chaotic but fun.

LIZ DUFFY, sophomore

I am thankful for my cousin Katie. She has always been like a big sister to me, and has helped me through a lot.

MRS. BENKERT, librarian/teacher

For being physically, mentally and emotionally able to fill out this form!

SOPHIA STACY, sophomore

This year, I am very thankful for my mom. Over the past few months, our relationship has gotten much stronger, and I am very thankful for this. I don't know what I would do without her.

SOPHIA GRAHAM, freshman

I am very grateful for my twin sister, Emery. She is my best friend and has always been there for me. I am grateful for my parents, who have raised me to be who I am, and for my grandparents and great grandparents. I am grateful for my friends who lift me up when I feel down. I am grateful for my school and amazing teachers.



the Thankful issue

'My sister always, my rock and light'

CARYS MASSIE, freshman

Friends and family — for cheering me up and making me feel loved.

MIA KENT, freshman

My mom because she works so hard and sacrifices her time for my family.

DEASIA VONHANDORF, junior

This holiday season I am thankful for my mom. She does anything and everything to make me happy and give me everything I need. She is such a caring person and puts everyone before herself.

MS. ERICSON, intervention specialist

I am thankful for my children and my students. Both make the world a better place.

MACK ZEMTER, freshman

I'm thankful for my best friends Brianna and portia because they are always there for me. They always cheer me up and have been with me through some of my worst days.

JENNA DANNEMAN, senior

I am thankful for my dad this year because he has had to adjust so much in his life due to COVID, and is constantly positive with every curve ball that has been thrown this year. He has made life seem a little less hard, and brings comic relief when it is most needed."

LAUREN JANZARUK, senior

This year I am especially thankful for my friend group of girls. Over quarantine, me and my friend group have gotten a lot closer to each other and have bonded much more. It has been so fun spending my last year with my closest friends by my side.

BROOKE DONELAN, junior

I am very grateful for my family, especially on my mom's side. I am thankful for my friends, for their kindness, understanding, and ability to make me smile.

TAYLOR MEENACH, sophomore

I am very thankful for the sports I am able to play.

JASMINE BARCZAK, freshman

I am most thankful for my mom. She has been working a lot lately and she comes home after standing all day long and cooks dinner for our family. After that, she drives us to sports practices, comes home and has to go to sleep, only to wake up at 4:30 in the morning and repeat.

BRAELYN HAMBRICK, junior

I am thankful for my father because he's my best friend, protector, and greatest teacher I could ever have. I wouldn't be here on this earth if it wasn't for him, or I wouldn't be the person I am today if it wasn't for him. He supports me at my worst and at my best.

AVA ORWIG, sophomore

I am thankful for my dog because he never fails to make me smile. He is the best thing anyone could ask for, and he is the most kind hearted, gentle loving dog in the world.

PIPER WENSTRUP, junior

My sister always, she's my rock and light. She's just the best person in the world and always makes me smile 😊 I remember when we climbed on top of this mountain and we just watch the sun set and ate an entire cheesecake.



the Thankful issue

'For the counselors here at NDA'

MRS. GOEKE, director major gifts/events

I am extremely grateful for my husband, my children, and my grandchildren. They are the blessings in life and my major source of pride. I am also grateful for this wonderful country and the freedoms we have. And last, but certainly not least, I am grateful for the freedom of religion that I have. It is a true gift that I am able to express my faith openly and without restrictions.

MRS. MONOHAN, counselor

My mom. She is always available to help me and support me.

KELSEY WEIL, freshman

I'm thankful for Mr. Stamm. He brightens my day every day when I go to his class.

REAGAN HEITKER, junior

I am thankful for the people I surround myself with. They always put me in a better mood and make me laugh.

MR. CERIMELE, teacher/band director

School and music in person. It is difficult to do music as a solo act for too long before it loses its purpose. It is awesome to be able to do music with the NDA/CCH students in the band.

SOPHIA ERNST, freshman

This year, I am especially grateful for my family and friends. In particular, for my mom and dad, because during quarantine I realized how hard they work all day. I realized that it made it harder on my dad for work, and that my mom had more to do as well with us home all the time. But they always kept up a good attitude, and made it as fun as it could be. I am also grateful for my friends, because not being able to see them for months except for FaceTime made me realize that it was so important to me to have good relationships with my friends, and how much I need them.

TAYLOR NAUDIN, senior

This year I'm thankful for my family. Last year my stepmom had surgery and was in the hospital for a little bit, then came home for a few weeks, but then got really sick again with pneumonia and it was really hard. She is doing great now, so I'm thankful for that, and I think it made our family closer. I'm also very thankful for my mom and dad and everything they do for me.

KENDALL HEMSATH, sophomore

My sister Maria because she is always there for me no matter what.

MRS. BRENNAN, teacher

I am thankful for healthy grandchildren: Noah, James and Willy and three new babies: Addie and Aiofa and one on the way. All are three or under!

CAMILLE LAIRD, senior

I'm thankful that my family is healthy and able to spend time with us.

CLAIRE WEAVER, freshman

I'm thankful for my friend Ava.

ABBY HARDIN, sophomore

I am most thankful for America's armed forces and veterans. Their sacrifice lets me live free.

AVA ALEXANDER, senior

I am most thankful for the counselors here at NDA. I have faced many challenges and hardships throughout this and last school year. They never fail to make me feel better and brighten my day. They always know how to help whether its if I'm stressed, upset, need help on school work, or help with college stuff. They are truly the best.

CAMRYN WELCH, junior

I'm most thankful for my closest friends. They help me and pray for me when I need it.

In their own words: That PTS season

The Covid-19 pandemic provided the backdrop for the volleyball season, as for the school year, but mostly we'll remember the Pandas' 2020 season for ending in a state title, the program's first since 1994. An instant history of the Pandas' historic run to the hardware:



Masks and social distancing were in practice from Day 1, giving the bench a different look for the Pandas' Sept. 9 home opener vs. Sacred Heart.

SYDNEY SCHRODER, senior

Tryouts were very good. With the crazy year we were having I was more excited than ever to get back to volleyball.

MRS. WEBSTER, athletic director

As with all our sports and school in general, we worked very hard to follow protocols and put policies in place that would keep our students safe, healthy and able to continue. This includes things like temperature checks, masks, stringent sanitizing practices and social distancing.

ANNASHEA CARLISLE, senior

We could not use our locker rooms and we only got two tickets for games. The chairs were spaced 6 feet apart, and we had to wear masks whenever we weren't on the court. I was happy we got to play, but it felt very different from last year. We tried to make the best of it and still have fun.

MRS. LITMER, assistant coach/NDA alumna

I think this season was every bit of a process for everyone involved: players, coaches, families, and

administration. There were so many "new normals" that we had to adjust to, and I know the players had to somehow get to a good mental place accepting that there were many unknowns because of COVID, resulting in different protocols that changed the way you play together.

The Pandas started 3-2 against a tough schedule, then won 14 of 15 matches to go into the postseason on a roll. But the district tournament began with most of the varsity team in quarantine, putting JV players in the spotlight: They would play as varsity. The Pandas beat Holmes and Holy Cross to move on as district champs.

CLANCY GAY, JV coach

My first feeling when I found out the JV would be playing in districts was excitement. That feeling soon turned to anxiousness once realizing what was at stake. Having the fate of the seniors' season in our hands was nerve-wracking.

ADELE FRANCE, sophomore: I felt bad for how hard they worked all season. At the same time, I



The varsity Pandas together for player introductions before the Oct. 27 regional tournament game against St. Henry at Holmes. NDA won 25-23, 25-20, 25-15.

saw it as a chance to prove ourselves by letting them play again.

LIZZIE CHUN, sophomore

We had never prepared for a varsity game before by watching film and basing it around that. I felt special — and professional, in a sense — to be a part of something this big.

JADA KRAMER, sophomore

I treated every drill in practice like we were playing Holy Cross. Every time I touched the ball, I imagined it was game point.

MRS. LITMER

We are fortunate enough to be in a program where our JV team can compete at the varsity level, so I also felt so much happiness for that team.

ABBY POWERS, senior

Our JV stepped up to the challenge.

Then it was on to regionals for the Pandas with the varsity ready to return. NDA beat St. Henry, Cooper and Ryle, dropping only one set, in the regional to earn the trip to the state tournament.

EMMA GRACE, senior

We had no time to practice before the (regional) game. Because of that, I was worried we weren't going to play well and lose against St. Henry.

LIZZIE CHUN

Winning regionals was great, and it was the next step to the bigger things. Everyone knew there was a lot more to come because we definitely were not going to stop there.

ANNA LONG, senior

After being quarantined we lost some hope. We were able to win districts with the JV team, and luckily were back to win regionals. Once state arrived, we knew what we had to do.

Straight-set wins over Wolfe County and McCracken County got NDA to the semifinals on Nov. 7 at George Rogers Clark High School near Lexington, hosting because of Covid-19 concerns in Louisville, home of usual host Valley High School. The large gym allowed more fans to attend.

AVA QUIGLEY, senior

Since freshman year I've been wanting to lead a cheering section at NDA. We've been waiting for

an opportunity to do this with an energetic crowd at an extraordinary game. It was so exciting to see all of our parents and supporters cheering with us.

MADISON STEFFEN, sophomore

I decided to go because I play on the JV team and I love watching others play. Throughout the whole game — especially towards the end — the student section was out of their seats and wanting the win.

The Pandas beat West Jessamine in four sets in the semifinals to earn a finals spot later that night against Louisville Mercy, one of only three teams to beat NDA during the regular season.

SYDNEY SCHRODER

I was beyond excited. I knew we could beat them and knew that since they beat us in the regular season they would underestimate us.

MRS. WEBSTER

I was very excited, proud, and a little nervous. The volleyball program had worked hard to get that match. I had watched varsity improve all season, had the opportunity to help coach the JV during the district run, and then saw varsity come back with a hunger and desire to win it all. I was a volleyball player and I knew that if they played their game, they could bring home a state title. I was a bit nervous though, knowing what a great program Mercy has and how talented their team is this year.

The Pandas lost the first set, won the next two and took a 19-14 lead in the fourth. But Mercy came back to tie the match, and it was on to the fifth: First to 15 for the state championship.

EMMA GRACE

In the fourth set, we were up by a lot, but eventually Mercy caught up with us and ended up winning that set. I felt defeated, but I knew that I couldn't continue to feel that way if I wanted to win. We had to completely forget about that game and move on.

MR. VONHANDORF, principal

I was concerned after losing the fourth set, but you could tell that our team was not rattled and their confidence unshaken. I was very proud of the way our team handled themselves on the court. They played with a quiet confidence.



Cate Scheper (1) and Abby Powers blocked Mercy on championship point.

MRS. LITMER

I think the journey we were dealt was practice for the five-set, back-and-forth scoring in the state finals. You win, I win, you win, I win ... no one ever gave up!

With NDA clinging to a 14-13 lead, Mercy set up its outside hitter for a kill. But NDA seniors Abby Powers and Cate Scheper were there for the block.

EMMA GRACE

That set took everything we had. No one led by more than two points. I remember looking to Cate and Abby, telling them that if they set their outside hitter, they are going block her and end the game.

ABBY POWERS

It was like everything was in slow motion. When the ball hit the floor, I immediately became flooded with emotions. Everyone played their absolute hardest that night and left everything on the court.

EMILY WICHMANN, senior

I keep on replaying the moment in my head: the ball touching the floor on the opposite side of the court, everyone running towards me ... It's a moment my team and I will cherish forever.

ANNA LONG

The last point was like a big blur. All seven of us had been waiting for that exact moment since we were freshmen.

MAGGIE SMITH, senior

Being allowed on the court to take pictures was very exciting but also came with many challenges. It was very hard to keep myself from cheering after every point, and especially after the game winning block. I was so happy to have been able to capture such an amazing moment for the team.

The state championship was NDA's ninth in volleyball and will be remembered not only for the considerable achievement, but for all the obstacles this team had to overcome to earn it.

MR. VONHANDORF

All of our fall sports teams started back in June with conditioning. It was very uncertain if they would have a season, let alone a postseason tournament. In the midst of a global pandemic, would everyone stay healthy? There were many unknowns. When they were on the floor, they were able to block out the uncertainties and unknowns.

SYDNEY SCHRODER

The weekend of state my grandma got very sick. Right before the state finals I found out she was not going to make it and was being placed in hospice. She was the first person I wanted to tell because I wanted to make her proud one last time.

EMILY WICHMANN

The feeling of winning state was exactly how I dreamt it to be. The feeling of working hard for four years and it finally paying off. I still can't believe my team won state because my team and I always talked about how this is the year — this has to be the year — we finally win state.

EMMA GRACE

Winning state was a feeling that I had never felt before when winning a game. After the last point it was almost as if I had forgotten that that was the winning point. But then it hit me that we had just won everything.

MRS. LITMER

I get goosebumps. I truly feel that the best team in the state won, and it is just amazing to think that it has been 26 years since NDA last won state for volleyball. There has been so much pressure to bring



MRS WEBSTER: It was a wonderful match to watch for any volleyball fan, and I am thrilled for our players and staff as well as all past players and coaches who helped create the tradition and excellence of NDA volleyball.

the title back to NDA, placed upon ourselves of course, but it just really feels like a weight has been lifted. Whenever I am in the gym and see the year 2020 on the volleyball state championship banner, I will have so much pride for the girls and the adversity they faced.

ABBY POWERS

Everyone played their absolute hardest that night and left everything on the court. I could not have imagined winning this championship with any other team and I couldn't be more proud of everyone. Playing in this program over the past four years has taught me so much and helped me grow into the person and player I am today. Playing with this team gave me so many memories and friendships.

MR. VONHANDORF

I think that winning a state championship during a school year makes it a little more special. It was great for our community to celebrate the team on that Monday. Events like this bring a community together. To have something positive to celebrate was something we all needed this year.

As told to Publications students Annashea Carlisle, Jada Kramer, Josie Lawrie, Camille McMurtry, Natalie Newsom, Lilli Nordloh, Maggie Smith, Emma Spivey and Sophia Stacy

THE GAVEL



Floor row: Abby Powers, Annashea Carlisle, Kamden Schrand, Emily Wichmann, Lizzie Chun, Emma Grace. Row 2: Leah Fortner, Natalie Newsom, Kayla Hostetler, Emily Bentley, Sydney Schroder. Row 3: Abbie Piccirillo, Emma Brauch, Cate Scheper, Annie Long, Sydney Nolan, Peyton Mast. Row 4: coaches Molly McDermott, Leslie Litmer, Jenna Schreiver.

STATE CHAMPS!

NDA varsity volleyball team members pose with their hardware at a pep rally honoring the Pandas for their five-set victory over Louisville Mercy in the KHSAA championship game.