

# STUDENTS TAKE FUTURE INTO THEIR OWN HANDS

● By Simone Bender CO-EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

At a school where over 3,000 students and staff members gather every day, there’s a lot of room for talent. There’s music groups, sports teams, academic extracurriculars, and so much more you can be a part of to make an impact at the school. But some students don’t stop there. Some students are taking their lives into their own hands outside of the classroom and innovating, creating, and performing by their own standards. So we sought out to find them, and here we have brought you five of the most original and inventive students of Avon High School who are pursuing success in the real world before they even graduate. From entrepreneurship to competing in beauty pageants across the country, these students are expanding the experiences they receive in their teen years beyond convention – and they don’t plan to stop anytime soon.

## UP IN THE CLOUDS WITH JACE

Spring Break trips out of the country were always something senior Jace Hurd looked forward to growing up, and while the thrill of tourism was appealing, there was something else that struck his interest more: the airport. Hurd isn’t just a little kid looking at planes anymore, though. With the help of his parents, he’s begun training in high school with a plan that will land him in a commercial piloting role at the age of 21. “I always wanted to be a pilot when I was younger,” said Hurd. “I wanted to do something that I love but [that is] also different from other people’s professions.” Being a pilot isn’t easy, according to Hurd, but because of the support he’s received and the life lessons he’s learned along the way, his dreams are being made achievable. “My biggest motivator is probably my dad and mom because they’re



Photo submitted by Jace Hurd

putting a lot of money into this...and it makes me want to work even harder so I can repay them in the future,” said Hurd. Working toward your career at a young age comes with its benefits, according to Hurd. “I have learned more respect and to stay focused on my goals,” said Hurd. “[I’ve] also met new people to help me achieve my goals.” And while being up in the air is exhilarating, it’s not just sitting at the controls that Hurd looks forward to in his career. It’s the image he’ll put forward for other little kids to see. “I want to be able to inspire others,” said Hurd. “Especially being a black pilot, I want to encourage others that you can do whatever you want in life if you put your mind to it.”

## WAITING TABLES AND SO MUCH MORE

Junior Rian O’Maley sets down drinks at one table and a plate of food at another before heading back to the kitchen to clean up. She’s about to step out of the dining room when she hears her name called. She turns around to see a man holding out two fingers proudly to her. “I got it in two, Rian! I got the Wordle in two tries!” O’Maley isn’t like other waitresses. She works at Independence Village, an assisted living facility in Avon, where she takes orders from, serves, and cleans up after senior residents who live there full time. “I love it so much,” said O’Maley. “You get to learn so much about people and they get to learn so much about you and it just becomes like you know everything about each other.”



Photo submitted by Rian O’Maley

O’Maley said that one of the main highlights of her job is the interaction she gets to have with the different residents she serves. “Before I had the job, I was like, so shy, and now you can’t get me to stop talking,” said O’Maley. “I love the connections you get to make with people. It’s just so nice.” In addition to typical restaurant skills like patience and socialization, O’Maley said that the residents she works with have taught her many things about life. “Once you see that...this is where most people are going to end up, [you] learn that it’s really about the journey,” said O’Maley. “That made me think a lot about what steps I’m taking to just do what I want to do because...we’re not here for long.”

## STUDENT IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Junior Abram Teipen is more than just junior Abram Teipen. He’s a variety of people and characters that change faces at every rehearsal and every performance. He’s an actor. And he’s been one for a long time. Between involvement in out-of-school productions growing up and a newfound passion for Avon’s thespian troupe and show choir, the amount of time Teipen spends on stage has added up. “I’ve been singing since I was very little. I did some summer camps, too, with a lot of friends...we put on plays and that was really my first foray into theater,” said Teipen. “Then...I started getting involved with the Biz Academy.” Acting and singing isn’t where it stops, though. Teipen’s music ability also extends to the instrumental world. “I’ve played piano for about 11 years now. It’s something [that’s] very peaceful and calming to me, since I’ve been doing it since I was little,” said



Photo submitted by Abram Teipen

Teipen. Teipen said that his involvement in different musical and theatrical groups has really been able to help him develop as a person more than he would have been able to without it. “I think I’ve gotten really good at being a social person,” said Teipen. “It’s taught me how to trust people, how to care for other people, and how to be cared for and accepted.” But according to Teipen, his performing family has taught him about more than just himself. “There’s home and there’s school. And there’s a lot of going back and forth, which can be kind of monotonous,” said Teipen. “But now...there’s this sort of outlet...where I can be somewhere where I don’t feel I’m ever alone.”

## BY THE NUMBERS

**50%**  
*of students quit musical activities before turning 17.*  
According to the National Library of Medicine

**3.49%**  
*of pilots are under 18.*  
According to the Pilot Institute

**6%**  
*of teen boys own their own business.*  
According to Junior Achievement USA

**94%**  
*of people believe helping others is the most important thing to do.*  
According to University of Nebraska

**250K**  
*girls compete in pageants every year.*  
According to University of Nebraska

## 17-YEAR-OLD BUSINESS OWNER

It was at a Farmers Market in Pendleton where senior Drew Wilson, only 17 at the time, had the idea: a custom 3D Printing business. He could make toys, decorations, jewelry, all with his own creative freedoms—the possibilities were endless. And he made that idea a reality. Wilson’s business, Creative Prints Company, which he runs alongside his parents, is more successful than he ever could’ve thought, with profits and business endeavors stemming from their local Farmers Market and carnival setups. “We started [Creative Prints] with

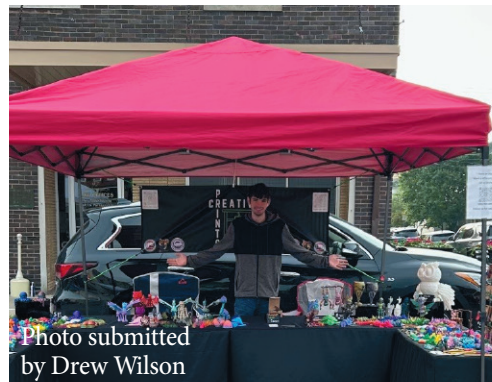


Photo submitted by Drew Wilson

only one printer, and we currently have seven, so we have been able to exponentially grow our business to the point where we now have a website,” said Wilson. “We’ve been able to support the growth...at a rate way beyond what we expected, and we’re still profiting.” According to Wilson, one of the main benefits of being so successful with his entrepreneurship is the way it sets him apart from other high schoolers in the eyes of college

admission. “This business has allowed me to kind of branch out from the typical workforce,” said Wilson. “A lot of people just have hours worked at ‘X’ company whereas for me, I made a business and I was successful with it.” And he doesn’t plan to quit anytime soon. Wilson said they plan to continue to sell at in-person events and online for years to come. “It’s been really cool actually seeing kids interact with the toys and having fun,” said Wilson. “I can print whatever I want...and [it’s] sort of magical in that way.”

Scan for more information about Creative Prints Co.



## AVON’S MISS INDIANA TEEN

At school, senior Ola Alawiye is just like everyone else. She goes to class, she hangs out with friends, she participates in extracurricular activities. But when school gets out, all of that changes. Alawiye has been competing in pageants since September 2022 and has made her way to the top, winning Miss Indiana Teen in a November national competition. “The main three competitions are interview, personal introduction, and



Photo submitted by Ola Alawiye

formal wear,” said Alawiye. “You gain a lot of confidence, and it teaches you a lot of skills like interviewing and being able to introduce yourself to a lot of people.” At her most recent competition, Alawiye said she competed in five different competitions, and while it was busy, she enjoyed being able to spend the nine days with her family in Orlando. “It’s all escorted so literally anyone in

your family can walk [with] you, and my brother walked me down,” said Alawiye. “It was really, really crazy.” While the Orlando competition was intense with over 700 girls competing, Alawiye said one of her favorite parts of the pageants is getting to meet so many different people. “A lot of [girls] have been competing for a long time. A lot of people do it even when they’re in college,” said Alawiye. “So, it’s like...if you don’t win, you don’t really get mad about it. They actually tend to encourage us to keep going on even if we don’t win.” And it doesn’t stop there. Between the networking and confidence-building, Alawiye said she’s learned so much from her experiences in pageants that set her apart from other high school students. She may seem just like everyone else, but when you get to know her, she’s so much more than that.