By Julia Oestmann

90. That’s the number of days in the Johnson-Brock summer vacation.

34. That’s the number of nights Erin Bohling slept in her own bed between her old days as a J-B junior and her new ones as a senior in high school. Exactly five spaces on her summer calendar managed to remain unaffiliated with any school or sporting activity, youth group event, or friend/family function; however, ask her how she feels about that subject. The response will no doubt include a casual shrug and a smile.

“I always had something to do,” Erin said. “Whether I was working for my dad or packing for some upcoming trip, I was never bored.” Erin’s impressive summer agenda including one trip to the nation’s capital in Washington D.C., one national FBLA conference in Anaheim, California, a mission trip to Hawley, Minnesota, a Youth Group foray to Colorado Springs, and a variety of athletic camps left her very few days to overflow with the daily juggle of softball practice, conditioning, and singular, miscellaneous events.

Erin’s many travels this summer do not illustrate a unique situation. Of the J-B high school student body, 95% named at least one out-of-state location they traveled to this summer. A total of 18 students qualified for national competitions on both coasts. Four bright-eyed youths even braved the passport process and the overseas flights to engage in their own European adventures.

One of these newly seasoned world travelers was Junior Ryan McMann, who participated in the German American Society exchange program. After a few months of e-mailed correspondence, Christoph was welcomed into the McMann family. For three weeks, Christoph learned about the American culture, visited museums and popular tourist spots, and spent time with Ryan’s family. When it came time for Christoph and the other German exchange students to go home, Ryan said goodbye—but only for awhile, because a few weeks later, he’d be embarking upon his own international journey. For three weeks during the month of June, Ryan lived with Christoph’s family in Braunschweig, Germany. During his stay, he spent time visiting many German historical points of interest with the 15 other American students in the program, as well as getting to know Christoph’s family.

Ryan says he decided to participate in the program based on his cousin’s experience. “He did the program last summer and also this summer with me,” Ryan said. “I thought it’d be a nice, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.” While he admits that being away from the U.S. was a little unnerving at first, he acknowledged that the best part of the whole experience was getting to know Christoph’s family. “I made lots of new friends,” he said.

As Ryan represented Johnson-Brock across the sea, several other students were making academic waves at the national level in America.

Seven of Mrs. Broady’s outstanding history students qualified for the national contest at the University of Maryland in June. Among them was a group performance consisting of Morgan Rieger, Rhianne McRoberts, and Emerson Carbajal. While the group was not recognized on the final day, they reveled in the chances they had to meet other bright young students from every state and to see the nation’s capital.

“Who would have known that during my first year at Johnson-Brock, I’d go to nationals in NHD?” said sophomore Rhianne McRoberts, who will never forget her D.C. experience.

Junior Samantha Teten was also among those who made the trip east. Her historical paper finished 11th place in the nation; however, her tour of national achievement did not end there. She proceeded to join Mrs. Smith and ten other budding J-B business leaders as they headed west to the National Leadership Conference in Anaheim, California. While there, Samantha placed tenth in the FBLA Principles and Procedures objective test.

“I made a lot of connections with kids all over the country,” Sam said when asked about her summer. “I got to hang out with my friends in different cities and see things I don’t usually get to see!”

Summer. Depending on whom one chooses to gather their intel from, it is a word with a myriad of definitions, connotative implications, and conjured visual images. Perhaps it symbolizes the monotonous 104-day break that begins mid-May. Maybe summer primarily means the hot, torturous, athletic boot camp many students embark upon somewhere during the second week of vacation. For some it embodies grand world expeditions—and for many at Johnson-Brock, summer becomes more academically taxing than school itself. Whether it was filled with hard-working hours (paid and otherwise), it became a magical adventure full of swimming pools, bonfires, and exotic, new experiences, or it simply encompassed any and every category on the board, one thing is for sure: J-B’s student body racked up some heavy-duty mileage between May 17 and August 15.
By Julia Oestmann

The government has shut down.

You probably learned of the controversial government power-off the morning after it happened. Maybe you heard about it on the radio during your morning drive to school. You most likely caught it on MSN when you logged on to the server and hit the Internet Explorer button.

Now for those of you who (A) don’t know me or (B) just emerged from a rock that you’ve been living under since I entered your life, I have something to say: I am a nerd. I just wanted to get that out there before we continued. My unabashed nerdiness has a lot to do with the fact that I was already patiently awaiting news of a massive government shutdown. In fact, when the news finally broke around 11 p.m. Central Time on September 30, I saw it first on Twitter. By the way, the number of political news sources I follow is not a matter for you to judge.

By now, you’ve probably heard plenty about the shutdown that ended last week. You probably even formed an opinion about it. But how much have you really heard? Are you fully aware of what a “government shutdown” entails?

Let’s discuss some facts:

When the government shuts down, it means (in this case) that the Senate has failed to pass a continuing resolution—in other words, a resolution funding all government operations. Actually, a continuing resolution is the document they send through to make up for the fact that the Senate hasn’t passed a budget since April 29, 2009. During the shutdown period, only workers which have been deemed essential are allowed to work—and they do it without pay until the government “turns back on,” so to speak. They do receive back-pay for the hours they labored.

So why are we shut down anyway?

You can blame the GOP. You can blame the tea-party. You can blame Ted Cruz and his 21 hour filibuster. You can blame the whole District of Columbia if you want to. But I don’t. In fact, I was rather pleased with this shutdown; furthermore, Ted Cruz might just be my hero.

I don’t understand why they can’t compromise. You know they’re not spending money on anything but their own salaries. Wouldn’t accepting Obamacare be a little more mature than simply shutting down?

You’ve heard these statements. You might even agree with them. Compromise seems like an elementary concept the senate should have mastered by now, correct? Except here’s the thing: sometimes compromise isn’t the best solution.

Imagine there’s a child in the middle of the street. Just for kicks, let’s name that child…Liberty. There’s giant, evil bus moving full-throttle toward Liberty, but the Liberty can’t move because she has one foot trapped in a hole. You can’t move Liberty, so the only thing left for you to do is try and stop the bus. The bus can’t be stopped by one person. I mean, it’s a bus, right? So you gather all the other empathetic, red-blooded citizens you can find. You reach out to them and you pull them together. You muster every last ounce of courage and tenacity you’ve got. You vow to stop that bus or to go down with Liberty. You’re not just vowing to protect Liberty’s left hand. There’s no clause in your oath that says you plan jumping out of the way if it appears Liberty can no longer be saved. Liberty will come through unscathed, or your team of American heroes will fall with her.

The men and women in congress who have taken a stand against Obamacare aren’t being immature. The way they see this shutdown, it’s just a valiant attempt at saving the constitutional integrity our nation deserves. Furthermore, they promised their constituents they would end the movement toward socialized healthcare at all costs. Keeping campaign promises? What a novel idea!!!

We’re all entitled to our opinions. I don’t do much to hide the fact that I have quite a few. Luckily for us, the Bill of Rights guarantees freedom of expression. That is the most important thing to remember. I wanted people to know where I stand, so I wrote this column. A man by the name of Chris Cox wanted to make his own statement about the government shutdown, so he hauled his push-mower and his South Carolina flag to the Lincoln Memorial where he proceeded to begin manicuring the overgrown grass! Personally, I like his style.

GRAND CANYON—CLOSED TO PUBLIC

AND THE HUMANS THINK THE SHUTDOWN IS HARD ON THEM.

NO FEEDING THE SQUIRRELS
The Krenk Connection
Watch for Sugar Todd in the Sochi Olympics

By Julia Oestmann

There are very few events with the capacity to enrapture the entire world. Every four years, however, the Winter Olympian frenzy sweeps the earth engaging the competitive, patriotic spirits of populations everywhere. Next to the flashing, metallic blades flying around ice rinks and the masked, latex-clad speed skiers exceeding 130 miles per hour down treacherous mountain terrains, even the Summer Olympic Games seem almost pale by comparison.

When a medalist emerges from even a neighboring state, Nebraskans adopt a particular sense of pride in his or her success. For Johnson-Brock faculty member Nick Krenk, his family, and everyone who knows them, it seems, the connection became real and personal the day Sugar Todd made the 2014 U.S. Speedskating team.

Krenk’s fondest childhood memories of his first cousin Raeshelle “Sugar” Todd involve hanging out in his grandparents’ basement – where they’d “all just do dumb things.” By the time Sugar turned nine, however, she had already developed a deep passion for speedskating. So deep, in fact, that she persuaded her parents to relocate to Milwaukee, Wisconsin where she could train with the best programs in the nation. Her father, an Omaha firefighter, made the 1,000 mile round trip to spend his six days off with the family every 10 days.

By the time Todd was 18, she had a decision to make: continue training or attend traditional college. She chose the former when she was offered her first invitation to compete on a national team. She moved to Salt Lake City, Utah, where all training expenses would now be covered by the United States Olympic Training Committee.

Does Coach Krenk’s passion for basketball parallel his cousin’s commitment to speedskating? He didn’t have to give up college to play his sport, but he understands her dedication. “You only have so long to do certain things in your life,” he says.

Sugar is a “long track” skater. After the World Championship in the 500 meter event, she was ranked 32nd in the world which earned the U.S. a fourth spot in Sochi. Todd still had to qualify for that spot in the U.S. Olympic trials held in January. She also earned the third place spot in the 1000 meter event.

The Krenk family is excited to cheer for Sugar and her two roommates who also qualified for the Sochi Olympics. The online fundraising campaign Sugar ran to cover her parents’ travel expenses met its goal in less than 24 hours. According to Krenk, the family is only mildly concerned about the safety of traveling in Russia – but the recent terrorist threats are one reason their grandparents will not be making the trip.

There will almost certainly be a spike of U.S. Speedskating interest among the students and staff at Johnson-Brock this February. After all, we have a two-degree relationship with Sugar Todd. The Sochi 2014 Winter Games kick off Thursday, February 6. Will you be watching?