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Academic standout

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Jeremy Hollman is the guy to have on your quiz bowl team.

He's well-versed in history, politics, geography and math -- all subjects that come up regularly in competitions.

"He's very gifted in those areas," said Jackie Zehendner, Heartland Lutheran High School's quiz bowl coach. "He's a wealth of knowledge."

Hollman has also taken it upon himself to learn more about subjects that have surfaced in competitions. For example, a couple of years ago George Orwell's "1984" yielded a lot of questions, so Hollman read the book on his own, she said.

"He's very good," she said. "He's very responsible, very driven, very reliable. He's a good all-around student."

The team's conference meet is on March 15 and they've been conference champions for two of the last three years. They've also done well at the ESU 10 meet, getting progressively better each year, she said.

Hollman is modest about his academic achievements. When asked about graduating with honors, he replied simply, "I'm up there."

Zehendner shook her head at the response.

"He's the valedictorian," she said. "His class rank is one."

Zehendner is also Hollman's guidance counselor and she has written several scholarship recommendation letters for the 18-year-old. He plans to go to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to major in international studies. He hopes to work for the State Department one day.

His interest in international studies stems from his participation in geography bees when he was in grade school in Battle Creek. He won the local portion of the competition four times and went to state during his eighth grade year at Zion Lutheran in Hastings.

Once the geography bee bit, Hollman turned his attention to preparing for his chosen major. He has taken the ACT, scoring 33 out of 36 possible points, and he took Spanish as a freshman and sophomore. He plans to study the language again at UNL.

"It came fairly easily to me," he said.



Heartland Lutheran senior Jeremy Hollman is an academic standout at the school who plans to delve into international studies in college. (Independent/Barrett Stinson)

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Hollman has taken all the history classes he could at Heartland Lutheran and goes to Central Community College for an English composition course three days a week. Last semester he took a college-level calculus course at CCC.

"I've tried to soak in what I can," he said.

In addition to his academics, Hollman played basketball for his first three years of high school and started running distance races in track as a sophomore. He also took part in speech and the fall play this year and is a member of the National Honor Society.

The smaller environment of Heartland Lutheran has allowed Hollman to get involved in more activities. He drives to the school each day with his brother, Michael, a sophomore. They live with their younger sister, Bethany, and their parents, Kent and Janet, in a housing development five miles north of Hastings.

He chose Heartland Lutheran because he had gone to Lutheran schools previously and it felt like the "natural choice," he said.

The high school, which has fewer than 80 students, has given him the chance to get to know all of his classmates.

"We're like a big family," he said.

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