



Seniors Tiffany Nieves, Amy Bosman, and Tori VanderZee pose for picture holding up pages they colored for Veterans.

Photo courtesy of Illiana Facebook

New addition brings delight, new beginnings for students, faculty

Isabella Wright

Reporter

As a new school year kicked off on Aug. 14, returning students greeted each other in the building's newly completed expansion which includes new classrooms, lunch lines, staircases, common areas, and vocational classes.

Principal Brent Vermeulen said that the new vocational spaces offer three times the size as previous space dedicated to such classes. Vermeulen also gave some insight into the objective of vocational spaces. He stated, "Our goal is to connect community businesses to students," directly uniting our students to future job opportunities.

The new addition also includes dedicated, separate spaces for band and choir. Junior Shawne Barnes said of the new bandroom, "It's no longer crowded. Usually when we would get our instruments it would be crowded."

Part of what has opened the space up is an additional room for instrument and music storage. In the previous space, instruments and music cluttered the hall and main doorway into the music room. Barnes did wish that the new band room had more individual practice rooms than the two that are part of its design.

Choir director Kathy Sliemers voiced her delight in having a room acoustically tailored for her choral music. Sliemers said, "We are better able to hear."

When asked if it met her expectations Sliemers said "Totally met. Exceeded my expectations."

Social studies teacher Kyle Vanderhelm also got a new room. Vanderhelm said he best liked having walls to decorate, after previously sharing a room with two other teachers.

Students welcome home vets at Honor Flight

Natalie Tambrini

Reporter

Mr. Jeff White, a history teacher, took a group of 22 seniors to Midway International Airport on August 28 to welcome home an Honor Flight of 116 veterans.

After a tour of Washington D.C., the Honor Flight was welcomed home. Honor Flights are trips for veterans that are fully paid by

generous donors to thank veterans for their service.

Illiana students welcomed the veterans home by creating signs and cheering for them as they arrived. The veterans were surprised because they didn't know that a group of students would be welcoming them home.

White expressed interest in taking a group of students to the arrival of the flight after seeing veterans on

their Honor Flight in D.C. during class trip. This summer White saw an Honor Flight homecoming at Midway and said, "Maybe our students need to see this aspect of Honor Flight and not just when they're in D.C., but to see the homecoming."

The students involved noted that they were impacted by the experience. Tori VanderZee, a senior, said the most impactful part was "...seeing these veterans coming through,

and their emotions are very clear; they're very excited that they get to be welcomed home finally."

Students got to shake hands with the veterans and thank them for their service. Senior Sam Franco said, "They sacrificed so much for us to be free. The least we can do is welcome them home." After the homecoming, senior Nathan Witham said, "If you ever get the chance to do it, do it."

Mr. Kamp's new classes give variety to career opportunities for students

Levi Alons

Reporter

Illiana welcomed an old face back to teach some new construction classes starting this fall. Mr. Tom Kamp, who taught at Illiana twenty years ago, is returning to teach Intro. to Construction - House Repairs and Intro. to Metalworking Technology.

The overall goal of these classes is to help the students to see opportunities and to gain more skills in the trades. Kamp, who ran his own construction company the last few years, said that the classes would help students "Glorify God with whatever talents he gave you."

The classes are also designed to help students who don't feel called to

go to college. Kamp is helping those students get a head start on the trades by learning to weld and do other things, as well as learning what they like doing and what they don't like doing.

"Because of how many people are retiring in the trades today," Kamp said, "we need more young people."

These classes aren't exclusively for students going into the trades, however. The classes can also help students who want the skills to do everyday repairs around the home. Such skills are a good way to save money, by doing things yourself instead of paying others for their labor. So far the students in the metal working class have made a phone holder and a storage box out of bent metal.



Photo by Jim Kamphuis

Seniors Noah Yanuzzi and David Antunez work on shelves for the new construction room.

Junior Ethan Vermeulen, a student of Kamp's, said that he enjoys the class. The class also has already taken one field trip to Region Iron, a

nearby metal fabricating company, where they learned about the production of metal stairs, platforms, and railings.

Do you know what you are listening to?

What is your favorite song?" Doesn't seem like it's such a hard question to answer, right? But one day my favorite song is "Passionfruit" by Drake, and the next it's any Elevation Worship song I claim I listen to every day before school. Two completely different messages.

As someone with probably 50 different kinds of playlists with all different kinds of genres, I understand the struggle when asked such a simple question. I start naming at least one

song from each of my playlists just to show that I'm cool with just about anything. I love 90's alt rock music, but I can mellow out with some country -- some Zach Bryan, a bit of Thomas Rhett. But then I bring up how I know it's considered "new country", and how "real country" is Waylon Jennings and Johnny Cash, just so I don't sound like such a member of Gen Z. Let's not forget about Josiah Queen or Frank Forrest, top two younger artists for Christian music today that I truly love.

There are also songs I listen to when I'm in a certain mood. Some songs I choose for summer time, for example, playing Heat Waves in the middle of June. Or my favorite, Christmas music right after Halloween. (Sorry Thanksgiving, but there are no songs written about you). I have a playlist for my drives at night and my worship playlist I listen to before school.

"Music has power over our feelings. No other species has evolved in such a way to ascribe meaning and create emotional responses to music as humans..." said Laurel Trainor, professor of psychology, neuroscience and behavior and director of the McMaster Institute for Music and the Mind says in a CNN article in 2019. In other words, music has incredible power, filling our heads with certain messages and helping to create a certain mindset.

If we constantly listen to songs with explicit lyrics, that's probably how we are going to talk to our friends. If we listen to songs that glorify drinking and partying, those things may unconsciously sound more appealing to us. Or, if we are struggling emotionally, we might find comfort in those depressing songs that sound "real" to us, but they keep us stuck, wallowing in our current depressive states.

As someone who grew up listening to secular music, I can say managing what I listened to changed my heart on different aspects of life. I still like to listen to my nostalgic 2010 Katy Perry music, but I try to be mindful of what goes into my head and heart.

I started finding worship music that was fit to what I preferred. I liked my mom's 89.7 Shine.fm form of worship but it didn't get me started in the morning, so I tried to find music that was made by younger artists that fit more to my style. I started being intentional, looking for music that would help mold me into who I wanted to be.

Worship music might not be for everyone, but don't give up on it just yet. Do some research, try new types of music. You'd be surprised how many different types of worship music there are. But be intentional about what you're listening to, because music will truly change your life, for better or for worse.



Marissa Krause

Feature Editor



Senior Lexi Miedma reads prayer journal to her Shield group.

Photo courtesy of Illiana Christian Facebook

Shield groups undergo major changes

Kenadie Piepenbrink

Sports Editor

Shield groups underwent a bit of a reset this school year in order to help them better meet their goals.

This year, there has been changes to shield groups, such as increasing the number of groups from 40 to 64. This change was made to the groups to make them smaller. With the smaller groups, it allows the leaders to have more connection with the students and be able to manage the ac-

tivities better. Meeting time has also been moved to after break to give leaders more time to prepare. Teachers have also been assigned to oversee hallways and other meeting spaces to lend a bit more authority to student leaders who sometimes struggle to get peers to stay on task.

The purpose of creating Shield groups was to help build community by mixing the grade levels to be able to have each student attending Illiana Christian be "known" by 8-10 other students, said

Janna VanEssen. The name of the groups is based on an acronym that captures what the groups are supposed to be about: S:selfless, H:helpful, I:impactful, E:encouraging, L:loving, and D:daring.

A journal is now in each Shield group as well. This journal is for the group to be able to share prayer requests and praises. VanEssen said, "The journal will encourage groups to dive a little deeper with those in their group and to reflect back on requests and praises."

Makenna Langan, a junior who just transferred into Illiana, said she thinks the groups are a good way to get to know others.

The leader of each group is a junior or senior, who has volunteered to serve as a leader.

Addison Kinkade, junior, said, "If you are looking for something to be more involved with the school that doesn't take up a lot of time, and you enjoy being a leader, then you should volunteer as a Shield group leader."

Gorter leads hiking, camping trip to Colorado

Aneyah Barnes

Reporter

During the last week of July, seven students joined math teacher Doug Gorter and science teacher Josh Gabrielse on a trip to Colorado.

Early Monday morning, the students and teachers drove around

10-12 hours in a minibus to get to the campsite in Colorado. One activity at the campground was beach volleyball.

Being in the Rocky Mountains led to another "peak" of the trip, a climb up one of the mountains. Everyone made it to the top, and afterwards the students ran down the

mountain.

Gabrielse said, "The view from the mountain and campsite was breathtaking and very good for seeing God's creation." He added that everyone should sign up for trips like Colorado, since everyone had a good time.

Additionally, the group did a lot of hiking

during the trip, including walks to two lakes. They also visited Buena Vista, went white water rafting, and went shopping in town.

Sophomore Hannah Gorter said, "I encourage everyone to sign up for the Colorado trip because it is a great way to meet new people."



Students from the Colorado climbed several summits, including this picture taken on UN 13,500.

Photo Courtesy of Gabriella Costello



Photo courtesy of Illiana Christian Facebook

Senior Luke Smith is spinning around the bat before he gets pitched the ball by Mr. Kamp.

Wiffle ball game raises money for mission trips

Isabella Wright

Reporter

The Wiffle Ball fundraiser game between the teachers and the students on Friday night, Sept. 6, showed a close game, with teachers squeaking out a 2 run win.

Miss Sara Johnson, Illiana's Missions Director, organized the event which raised funds for Illiana's mission trips. In advance of the game, she sought to create a lot of hype for the tournament from different posters

placed around the school. Each poster featured specific teachers and students with a "who will win?" formatting.

And the hype was met and exceeded according to students who attended. Sophomore Preston Ross said he enjoyed the event as an opportunity to hang out with friends and participate in a good fundraising event.

"I think it was really good for the school," Ross added.

Johnson said the event raised around \$2,000. The money raised will support students going on mission

trips.

The idea for the wiffle ball game originated from seeing the baseball team's already developed fanbase, according to Johnson. A year ago, she sought to capitalize on that fanbase and launched the first wiffle ball game.

"I like to watch Illiana students interact with the community and teachers," Johnson said.

Senior Levi Sliemers ran a table for the event. He expressed his support for the school in having more fundraisers for missions.

Freshman visit Cedar Lake for retreat



Photo from Illiana Christian Facebook

Freshmen take part in rock climbing competition.

Natalie Tambrini

Reporter

On Friday Sept. 13, 158 freshmen and 62 S.H.I.E.L.D. group leaders engaged in activities at the Freshman Retreat at Cedar Lake Ministries to build community.

This was Illiana's fourth year sponsoring a Freshman Retreat. Students participated in activities such as

kickball, rock climbing, and boating. The day centers on building friendships and strengthening leadership skills.

S.H.I.E.L.D. group leaders attend to supervise and connect with the freshmen.

Senior Maddie Terpstra said, "I understand why Illiana does this because it makes a good outlet. Everyone gets to know each other a little more, seniors and freshmen."

Each group is led by four or five S.H.I.E.L.D. group leaders. Freshmen rotate through the various activities stationed around the grounds of Cedar Lake Ministries. Popular activities at the Retreat are tomahawk throwing, rock climbing, and the boat ride.

When asked about his opinion on the day, freshman Noah Falvey said, "It was a good time; it was a good experience."

Mrs. Janna VanEssen, who organized the event, said, "I love watching the freshman start to become more confident."

Students seek new use for duckweed

Dorothy Leep

Reporter

This year at Illiana Jaylyn Podlin, junior, and Chase Lindemulder, senior, under the guidance of Dr. Jim Kuipers, the chemistry teacher, are doing an independent study involving duckweed and seaweed and the new ways to incorporate them into agriculture.

Duckweed is a macrophyte that can be helpful to the environment. According to Kuipers, "Duckweed can be used in a number of different ways, but with this experiment we are trying to focus on getting it to reproduce and using it as a nutrition substitute."

There are two ways in which the study is using the nutritional values of duckweed and seaweed. One way is using it as feed for livestock to carry the nutrients back into the environment. The other way that these substances can be used is as a potential source of nutrition for humans.

In the past Kuipers has done independent studies with students, but in some ways this seems new to him. This new study puts Kuipers, Podlin, and Lindemulder in the same position. Podlin is very excited to be doing this independent study. She said, "This is nice to have the study to do myself; it's good to figure it out and rely on myself."

Summer mission trip impacts Chicago at Dream Center

Dorothy Leep

Reporter

Over the summer Illiana students and staff kept it local, going on a mission trip to Chicago where they impacted the community, had many rewarding experiences, and learned that it doesn't take a trip around the world to help people in need.

Our Missions Director at Illiana, Miss Sara Johnson, chose the Dream Center in Humboldt Park for the trip. The Dream Center is an organization, Johnson said, that "works within the community to bring the community what it needs."

Johnson wanted the students at Illiana to be able to see that sharing the love of God and helping others does not require a trip around the world.

In Chicago homelessness, human trafficking, food

insecurity, and many other issues plague the lives of numerous people. Illiana's group fought such darkness by helping at a thrift store, feeding the homeless, cleaning churches, and even helping convert an abandoned school into a place where the recently unincarcerated can go to finish schooling.

Mr. Jim Kamphuis, the art teacher at Illiana, went on the mission trip as a last minute decision. Kamphuis said that the highlight of his trip was, at the end of every day everyone would meet together and talk about the highs and lows of their day over evening devotions. These devotions brought the staff and students closer throughout this trip.

Along with that, sophomore Aidan Drost said, "My favorite part of this trip was getting to know people, not just the people we helped, but the people on the team as well."



Photo from Jeff DeVries

This trailer will be used to harvest fish and plants for aquaponics class.

Something fishy is going on: Illiana introduces Aquaponics

Aneyah Barnes

Reporter

This year, Illiana plans to offer an aquaponics lab along with its current hydroponics lab. The lab will reside in a new trailer next to the current one behind the gym.

Hydroponics grows food in a system without soil, circulating fertilized water to the plants' roots. Aquaponics adds another element, using fish tanks to create an ecosystem in which the fish produce waste which fertilizes the plants, and the plants filter the water to keep the fish healthy. Essentially, students will work to create a small ecosystem. At the end of the process, such farming allows a harvest of both fish and plants.

Mr. Sylvester, Mr. Kui-

pers, Mr. Hillegonds, and Mr. Gabrielse are all involved in creating the new aquaponics lab. The four teachers have been actively working to make new software to test the waters for this program.

Sylvester said, "This program is a way to give the kids different experiences that solve problems efficiently. It also makes us better stewards."

This program has been in progress since May, but getting construction permits to set the trailer has been a slow process. The teachers have met several times to discuss and organize this program. They've also worked with Purdue University to launch the new program. Once it is up and running, students will get to experience and discover new ways of doing science and solving problems.

Challenge to Move gets people moving

Levi Alons

Reporter

Challenge to Move was held at 7 am on August 17. Previously known as "Challenge to Ride," the event now featured several different sports such as Pickleball (new for this year), Disc golf, and a long distance bike ride. The event had 22 pickleball teams and 35 bikers show up this year. No disc golfers were present, however, many spectators showed up to watch the events.

Some people may wonder why the games available were a bit random. Ms. Siersema, organizer of the event, jokingly refers to it as an "Obscure Sports Day". She hopes that those who come could find a sport that they enjoy, or perhaps learn a new sport.

This event was primarily used in order to build community and to raise money for the general fund. There was a \$60 entrance fee to play the games, or to join in on the bike ride. The entrance fee covered lunch. There was a 100 mile or 50-mile bike ride available. Half of the bikers rode 100 miles, and one third rode the 50 miles. They traveled along a marked route through Momence, all the way to Lowell.

The event in total brought in \$10,000.

Illiana's enrollment hit highest mark in over decade

Students come for variety of reasons, but school's Christian vision remains number one attraction

Marissa Krause

Feature Editor

Illiana Christian has traditionally been the “go-to” high school for many of the Christian grade schools in the area such as Crown Point Christian, Highland Christian and Lansing Christian. Increasingly, however, Illiana is also attracting students from other schools. From a recent Echo survey of students living greater than ten miles from campus, the number one reason that students gave for choosing Illiana is its commitment to education ground in a Christian world view.

Illiana's mission statement reads that the school “is founded on the Bible as interpreted in the Reformed creeds. We graduate academically capable people with a comprehensive Christian view of life committed to the challenge of serving God and others.” The survey revealed that a whopping 74% of respon-

dents chose Illiana because of its mission.

Adeline Mulder, a senior who transferred her junior year, felt the Lord was calling her from her home in West Lafayette. Mulder said, “Everything is centered on Christ, all the teachers and everyone in the school has some sort of walk of faith no matter how deep it is. I feel like [Christian education] means everything will be pointed back to God...The teachers find a way to show why God wants you to know this and why God wants us to know this.”

To attend Illiana, Mulder had to literally go to great lengths, moving in with her grandma in Cedar Lake. “I was scared. I didn't really like the school I was going to [in West Lafayette], but I was also really nervous about what was coming, so much change.”

Freshman Asher Jablonski even goes as far as feeling the Holy Spirit when watching the play “Alice

in Wonderland” in the fall of 2023. “I came to see the play and I walked in and was greeted and I felt like this is where I should be.”

Grace Wonder, a sophomore, feels Illiana was the most prominent Christian school around her area. “This is the biggest Christian school that was actually Christian, not just private.” Wonder said she explored other high school options, but they did not show the actual faith of Christianity. Wonder did not shadow or tour Illiana, but her mother was an alumna and knew the school's background, so Wonder ended up here.

The same survey did show that other parts of Illiana also attract students to come from great distances. About 27% of students expressed that athletics were a factor in their decision. Junior Ana DeBoer, who plays soccer and basketball, would hear stories from her father, who is an alumni, which got her excited about athletics before enrolling.



Photo by Marissa Krause

Senior Adeline Mulder is one student who has come from a great distance. Her parents live in West Lafayette, and she moved in with her grandmother to attend Illiana.

But even here the Christian element was part of the attraction. DeBoer said, “I like how we have a strong Christian community here... on the teams. We have a strong Christian core to what we do, and I really like that.”

Other attractions according to the survey include 30% who said their parents were alumni, 26% who disliked their public school option, and 29% who found importance in Illiana's academic and dual credit opportunities.

Distance presents challenges for students

Marissa Krause

Feature Editor

Opening Its doors to both Indiana and Illinois residences, Illiana Christian has a variety of students coming from as far as Valparaiso, Tinley Park, and DeMotte. In fact, roughly 20%

of students live more than 10 miles from campus, and that distance from the school can be a difficult obstacle, especially when it comes to extracurriculars, sleeping routines, participating in school events, homework, and relationships.

Living an average 30 minutes

away from campus can have multiple effects on high school students. From a survey sent out to students who lived outside the schools 10 mile radius, many express their concerns on their challenges living far from campus. 45% of students felt

one of their challenges was waking up earlier than most students just to make it to school on time. While 35% felt the mileage and paying for gas was another struggle with driving to school. 41% said that it makes extracurriculars harder, and struggled getting to school sponsored events.

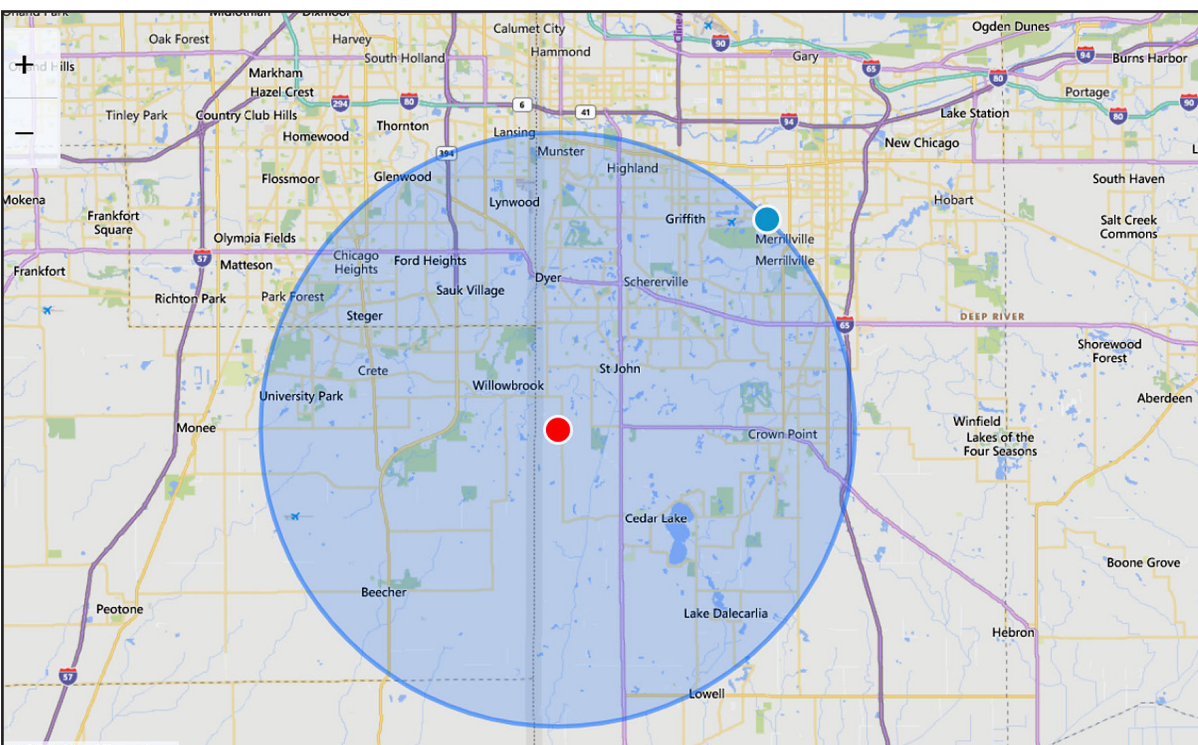
Junior Cadence Knisley has to travel around 45 minutes to school each day, but she explains that in a way she is following in her family's footsteps: “My mom went to Illiana with her brothers, and she also had quite a long drive to school. So knowing that she was able to make the drive made it seem more possible for me to do it too.”

Still, the distance is difficult. Knisley said, “Sports and extracurriculars are a really hard thing as they often are early morning and late nights. I would say lack of sleep with having to wake up so early is a problem. If I have morning practice, I of-

ten have to wake up around 4 to make it in time.”

Sophomore Brooklyn Vanderveer, who hails from Monee, Illinois, highlighted the strain distance can put on relationships. She said, “I have a lot of friends that live close to school and close to each other. [So] it's hard to make plans because of how far the drive is to them. They aren't always willing to find rides to come out to me, which can be a challenge for my family and me. I wish I lived closer to school so that it could make it easier to hangout with them.”

Vanderveer said school events also present a greater challenge because of the distance. She added, “I wished I lived closer to school so that I could drive home and then back to school for sporting events. Instead, I have to stay at school until the game starts or else I have to drive all the way home and then back to school, which takes an hour.”



The map illustrates 10 mile radius from Illiana Christian. 20% of our students live outside this radius.

Students faith journeys extend beyond campus

Two students visit Youth of the Nations in Dallas

Gabriella Costello

Arts and Leisure Editor

Two of our students, junior Daniela Dodge and senior Marissa Krause, who attend Solutions Church, went to Dallas, Texas this past summer. They were invited to attend a church camp named Youth of the Nations. Once arrived they settled into the dorms that were repurposed to use as housing for the campers. The two girls shared a dorm with eight other girls.

Krause said the most important takeaway was worship. "People were falling out of their seats,

many (including myself) were crying, you could really feel the Holy Spirit," said Krause.

The church was grouped with another church to create nation games. The concept is to bring churches together and see how well they work together and win games for their nation. Solutions Church was Ireland this year.

Dodge said, "This is a place to have an experience and interaction with the Lord; it truly is amazing. The presence of God was in that place, like if you were looking for the presence of the Lord, you were going to feel it."



Photo courtesy of Gabriella Costello

ELCA youth pray over workers at rec center. During the week, teens participated in three work projects in the community.

Costello and other 16,000 ECLA Youth gather in New Orleans

Lydia O'Riley

Editor-in-Chief

Junior Gabriella Costello went to the ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans this summer with Holy Shepherd Lutheran Church, Bethel Church, and Christ Lutheran Church. The gathering was from July 16th through July 20th. It was held at the Smoothie King Center and had over 16,000 people attend.

The trip was filled with sightseeing and service opportunities. The second day of the trip was the main service day, called "Accompaniment Day." Costello

said, "We helped paint a rec center wall and we pulled weeds from the sidewalks. Those tasks were already going to be done, but we helped get it done in less time."

Each night the group would have a mass gathering with all 16,000 people, where speakers would come in and different musical groups would perform a concert. The theme was "Created to Be..." Every night a word would be filled in explaining what God created us to be.

Costello said, "There were some speakers that I didn't agree with because they kind of went against what I think the Bible

says, and were just not my cup of tea. But, it was interesting to hear what they had to say."

A blind musician called Blessing Offer sang and performed on the piano one of the nights. "[He] was probably the best performer that came," said Costello.

Costello's biggest takeaway from this event was, "You could really go up to anyone in this community [at the convention], and they wouldn't judge... I feel like there can be this stereotype of 'I'm too cool for this' but you didn't see that. Everyone was getting along and interacting with each other."

Reformed Youth Service Convention gathers in Oregon

Gabriella Costello

Arts and Leisure Editor

This past summer a number of Illiana's students flew to Oregon for a Reformed Youth Service convention. This convention hosted many churches from around the country, and over 800

people attended. These students had the opportunity to work with other churches and find others like them. They had workshops and sessions with different pastors.

Sophomore Natalie Tambrini said, "My favorite session was the one about the different levels of friendship. You need to learn and differentiate

between who you're truly close with and who you're just acquaintances with. You need to learn how much you can trust certain friends."

Senior Isaac Gorter said, "On this trip you realize and see that you're not alone, and you have others to connect with."



Photo courtesy of Kaitlyn Gaiser

Youth group at Houston leadership convention.

Seniors learn leadership skills in Houston

Gabriella Costello

Arts and Leisure Editor

Another group from Illiana went to Houston, Texas this summer for a leadership trip. Seniors Kaitlyn Gaiser and Hannah Sherman, along with thirteen other kids, were chosen to go on this trip. To get invited, students needed already to show good leadership skills and have a strong faith.

There were five churches total that sent students to this

gathering. Once there, attendees played leadership games and got to room together in a nearby hotel. These allowed for the different groups to interact with each other and connect.

Gaiser said that "the most important thing that I learned was that I don't need to worry about everything, and that God is by my side."

She also mentioned that she would love to go again next year and connect with more people around that States.

Student artists share their talents outside of school



Photo courtesy of Mattie O'Keefe

Mattie O'Keefe models her dress at 4H state competition in Indianapolis.

Gabriella Costello

Arts and Leisure Editor

Three Illiana students took their artistic talents into the community over the summer. Senior Adia Falvey had the opportunity to attend The Awakening, a church camp at Hope College, to learn how to be a better spiritual leader. This allowed her to tap into her drama skills as she learned how to be a better worship leader. At this church camp, attendees were split into groups to perform different tasks. She was tasked with the sermon portion of a worship service.

Falvey also participated in "High School Musical" with sophomore Brinn Miller this summer with the Highland Theater Company. Both have participated in the Highland Theater

Company previously.

According to Miller, "They post on Facebook to draw people who are interested in theater to audition for their show. The company requires you to send in a headshot on a Google form and to pick a time slot for when you would like to audition. The audition periods are about five minutes and they give you a song genre you must pick a song from and then you sing for them. If they know you, then they won't have you sing the whole time but if you're new, they want to get a gist of what your vocals are like."

There were also some road blocks leading to the musical and even on performance night. The company performs and practices outside under a pavilion in downtown Highland. Though a lovely performance

space, being outdoors posed a problem when a storm rolled through. This caused delayed practices, and even cut one of the performances early.

Another Illiana student, Senior Mattie O'Keefe, is a skilled seamstress. She sews many of her own dresses, including the ones she wears to school dances.

O'Keefe has competed in sewing competitions in 4H for many years. She had the opportunity to go down state this summer for dress making (her second trip to state finals). She was confident in her dress, which took months to make, but once arriving at the competition in Indianapolis, she realized another girl had made a dress almost identical to hers, and she finished in second place.

She plans to make a comeback next year.

Illiana turns music room into new wrestling room

Kenadie Piepenbrink

Sports Editor

Part of Illiana's renovation included a repurposing of old spaces, and as a result the wrestling program has its own practice and training space now.

The old music room now holds wrestling mats and other equipment. This new space is beneficial for the teams to be able to move around more since the space the wrestling teams were using in the prior years was very limited, said senior Gage Bambic.

Since coming to the new campus, the wrestling team has practiced on the balcony of the main gym.

Coach Matthew Vander Laan said, "For the first time ever, the wrestling teams have a proper practice space. We couldn't be happier. The balcony was too small and narrow to safely practice at full speed. That obviously has an impact on competition performance. Imagine that our basketball teams could only practice on a court one-quarter the size of

the ones on which games are played, or trying to learn tennis in a hallway. That's essentially what we've been dealing with as a wrestling program."

Wrestlers across the board are communicating excitement at having a better space to train. Renee McClenahan, a junior, said that she really likes the new space because it is not only bigger but it is also a more private area and she feels more comfortable in it.

Vander Laan added, "This change is an important step in growing and working on improving the program. Combined with wrestling starting this year at our feeder schools, this gives us a central place to coordinate club activities and create a wrestling community and culture that will be key to our future success. In addition to running proper practices and drills, we can accommodate our growing teams, run pre-season conditioning, and host more season-round camps and clinics outside of our regular season."

The bigger space not only allows wrestlers more room to practice, but it also allows for



Photo by Kenadie Piepenbrink

Coach David DeBoer hangs from new pullup bars in the wrestling space

more equipment for training. Illiana is investing in more exercise equipment like pull up bars, more mats, slam balls, plate weights, plyn boxes, battle ropes, and other equipment to support the high intensity interval training the program plans to add in the upcoming months. There will also be screens add-

ed to the room so the wrestlers and coaches are able to watch the matches they participate in. Olivia Rich and Ella Hammer, both sophomores, are most excited about the pull up bars being added to the room as well as the screens.

Wrestling is a growing sport, especially girls wres-

ting, and the teams expect to have about a 20% increase in new wrestlers. As the student body grows and people learn more about the program, the coaches are hopeful that even more students join the team. No wrestlers get cut in tryouts, and anyone can be taught how to wrestle.



Illiana to join new conference

Giannia O'Neal-Schultz

News Editor

During this past summer athletic director Darren DeBoer sent out an email informing parents that in the 26-27 school year, Illiana will be leaving the Greater South Shore Conference and joining the Northwest Crossroads Conference. DeBoer said, "With the development of our programs and growth of our school, the NCC provided a greater challenge for our programs overall."

The schools in the Northwest Crossroads Conference are Andrean, Munster, Highland, Hobart, Hanover, Kankakee Valley, and Lowell High Schools. DeBoer said, "I think there will be a heightened sense of rivalry and value in conference competitions. Conference championships

and all-conference nods will have a greater value because of how challenging it will be to achieve those things."

The conference change has made many athletes excited and eager for the future of Illiana athletics.

Boys Varsity Basketball Coach Tom Roozeboom said, "I think my team views the conference change as a step up in the right direction."

Girls Varsity Basketball Coach Aubrey Colvin said, "The team is very excited to play some new and more challenging teams."

Even though this conference may bring some heavy competition, there is faith that all of the athletes will continue to be prosperous. DeBoer said, "I think they will all benefit from it. Each sport will have tougher conference competition and will have to step up their performance in order to consistently compete."

Illiana junior participates in equitation competitions

Joy Ramsey

Sports Editor

Junior Kayla Misch has been horseback riding as a competitive sport for about eight years. She became involved in this sport because of her neighbor who encouraged her to come watch the track,

which he worked at, and see what it was about.

Misch competes through two different organizations called USEF and USHAA. These two organizations allow her to compete while riding her own personal horse. However, she also is involved in the IEA organization which gives her more of the college feel for the sport. Through this, she is on a team with other riders and is assigned a horse right before a match begins. In horseback riding, there are three different types; jumpers, hunters, and equitation. IEA is an equitation organization meaning that the scoring is based on the rider and their movement. She has a separate trainer for IEA, but mostly Gianna Gierczyk has been her main coach for 7 years. Gierczyk

said, "She has a great competitive edge and sportsmanship. A lot of athletes don't have that. She also has a great work ethic; she is one of my most dedicated riders in the program." When asked about what Misch has improved on the

most through the years, she added, "Her mental attitude. She used to lose confidence quickly, but now she's much tougher and stays on task."

Misch's favorite highlight occurred just this last season. She placed first in a 40-person

hunter derby. Her scores for both rounds were an 85/100 and an 86/100.

"I was really proud of that," she added.

Illiana athletes who play outside school
OUT OF BOUNDS



Photo courtesy of Kayla Misch

Junior Kayla Misch competes in a competition on her horse



Photo by Jeff DeVries

Olthof finishes her 5k at the Lake Central meet on Labor Day weekend.

Ella Olthof aims towards cross country state championship for the third year

Joy Ramsey

Sports Editor

Senior Ella Olthof, the anchor of the girls cross country team, has big goals for the year, including another appearance at the State Championship in October.

Olthof, who is running varsity for her fourth year, has gone downstate two years in a row. Her sophomore year she placed 66th with a time of 19:35. Her junior year she improved her time to 19:05 though she ended up placing 77th due to stronger competition. She is aiming to beat her previous times.

For this season Olthof ran a time of 20:03 to finish 13th at Lake Central, and she ran a time of 20:05 to finish second at LaPorte.

Coach Luke Fennema said, "We can count on her to win a medal or a certain individual award at every meet." He added, "I see her being able to make state again."

Olthof said her favorite cross country memory is the annual Michigan meet, "because you get to stay overnight in a hotel with your team and bond with each other." She also really enjoys being able to run and talk with her teammates at the same time.

Olthof is known by many of her teammates and coaches as a leader. Fennema and Senior Adeline Mulder said, "She leads by example." Mulder added, "She shows that if you put in the hard work, it will pay off."

Fennema added, "Ella has been our number one this season so she usually finishes the highest at every meet; she also did a great job doing summer training and always completes her workouts really well."

For her training, Olthof said she would do summer morning runs with previous athletes who graduated in the last few years. Junior Makenna Langan added, "She really spends each and every moment of practice making sure that we're all okay and checking up on us. She's just a fun person, she makes it so easy to enjoy running."

Illiana introduces new girls flag football team

Lydia O'Riley

Editor-in-Chief

Sept. 7 issued in a new era at Illiana with the first game for the school's newest program--girls flag football.

The Indianapolis Colts reached out to schools across Indiana as part of its initiative to spread flag football throughout the state of Indiana. The Colts have fully funded the flag football team, providing all of the equipment and uniforms.

Athletic director Darren DeBoer sent an email to teachers over the summer to recruit coaches for the new team, and director of student services, Heidi Teach, and English teacher, Taylor Benes, jumped at the chance.

Teach said, "I've never played flag football before because it was not an opportunity for me growing up. My kids, though, have played tackle and flag football the past couple years, and I have just always loved football, like watching the Bears growing up with my dad...So when this opportunity was presented I was like, 'Yes! I am joining that bandwagon and I am going to ride it.'"

Benes explained, "I worked for the Purdue football team for a couple of years when I was in college, and I loved it. So, I knew that once

something football related came up here at Illiana, I wanted to be a part of it."

Tryouts were on Aug. 12 and all the girls who tried out made the team. There are 19 girls on the team and one team manager.

Teach said, "We didn't want to cut anyone because we wanted everyone to come out and get a feel for it. Next year, there may be cuts depending on how many girls come out."

Junior Renee McClellan said, "I wanted to try something new because friends from wrestling were joining and my coaches said it was good to get you conditioned."

The team's first two games were on Sept. 7. Illiana played Riley High School first and lost 51-6.

Then they played John Adams High School lost but by a smaller margin, falling 19-6.

Benes said, "We didn't know what we were expecting until the clock started during the first game. We came out of the gate able to make split second decisions and to change how our defense and offense looked based on the team that we faced."

One of the goals this year is to build a foundation and have fun. Benes said, "It's the first year, so we're not going to come out of the gate the best that we can be, but being able to grow that foundation from the start so that we can keep building, keep getting stronger, and keep getting more competitive."



Photo by Jim Kamphuis

Freshmen Sofia Dunnett runs with the football.



Viking sports briefs



Girls Volleyball

Illiana's varsity girls volleyball team has gone 13-7 thus far in the season. Currently the team is third in conference rankings.

Senior Lily Huynh leads the team- in digs and receptions with 129 digs and 235

receptions. Senior Alexa Miedema leads the team in kills with 119 and a 2.6 kills per set average. Along with Miedema, junior Bella Borrero, and junior Ava Bercott have so far been nominated for the Athletes Tournament Lake Bracket.

Boys Soccer

Varsity boys soccer's record so far is 7-1-1. They are also ranked second in the conference behind Griffith.

Junior Josh Carter leads the team in assists with an average of 0.7 per game and a total of 7 so

far for the season. Adding to this, he is also number one in the conference for assists. He also leads the team in shots with a total of 30. Junior Grant Terpstra leads the team in goals with an average of 0.8 per game and a total of 8 goals in the season

The boys cross country team started their season in Terre Haute and placed 18th out of 39 teams. They then placed second at Laporte, sixth out of 10 at Lake Central for the Rudy Skorupa invite, first at the Hobart invite and third out of ten teams in Michigan

Boys Cross Country

for the South Christian Invite.

The team has been led this season by seniors Cody Aardsma, Josh Wondaal, and junior Dane Scheeringa. Coach Ramos said, "These boys train hard and work very well to run together and have great camaraderie. Dane Scheeringa

has really improved this season and has been a solid contributor and part of the 'front three' of our lineup."

The boys are two time 2A New Prairie Invite Champs and will aim for the three-peat on September 21.

Girls Golf

Illiana's varsity girls golf team has gone 7-3 as their overall record and 4-1 for conference.

The team won conference with a team score of 406, which means they won by 46 strokes. So far, leading conference is Gaby Sarabia with 122 strokes, Amalia Barnes with 121, Katarinna Dobrijevic with 100, Jonna Balkema with 98, and Regan Kats with 87.

Girls Soccer

Varsity girls soccer is 7-3 and is currently first in the conference.

Captain Samantha Bultema leads the team in goals, shots, and points. She is averaging 1.3 goals

per game and has gotten 47 shots, 13 goals, and 27 points in the teams season this far. Bultema is also placed first in the conference for points and goals.

Editorial

Illiana is truly blessed: A huge thank you for the new addition

This fall marks a new chapter in Illiana's story with the opening of the new addition, and we feel like it is appropriate to stop and say a HUGE thank you. Thank you so much to everyone who was involved in the process of creating the new addition of Illiana. The whole area is more than any of us could have ever imagined.

All of the space allows Illiana to grow in such a huge way. We are able to enroll a much larger number of students than we have in the past years in this building. Increased enrollment not only allows more students to experience an Illiana education, but it also makes greater programming available to students already here.

Also, because of your generosity and vision, our students are able to walk more freely throughout campus. The main upstairs hallway connecting the English, math, and Bible classrooms used to get extremely congested during passing periods, but now with the extra hallways and spaced out classrooms, we are all able to walk more freely and get to class without getting stuck in the traffic of students.

Not only are the hallways

freed up, but students are also able to use the common areas outside of classrooms for studying and group work. Not everyone has to jam into the main, English, and history common areas. The main commons gets busy at the end of the day with all of the sports

In all of these ways, Illiana's present and future is in better shape thanks to our new addition, and we are so grateful.

teams that Illiana has, so having new, quieter spaces where students can study is truly a blessing. Teachers are also able to utilize this space more when sending students out into commons to collaborate in groups.

Choir, orchestra, and band, for the first time in Illiana's long history, have been equipped with the correct acoustics in their classrooms so that the students are able to hear their music the way it should be heard. In addition, with ample space, music

and instrument storage no longer obstructs hallways. Furthermore, the layout of the building makes a shorter and easier movement from rehearsal rooms to performance spaces (whether that be the ARC now or the auditorium in the future). Life for our music

students is better and easier in many ways.

Another benefit is additional restrooms. Restrooms are less crowded during breaks and passing periods because of the two additional bathrooms in the new wing of the building. Students no longer have to wait in a long line to use the bathroom now, which allows them to get to their classes on time.

For the students who are not going to a college and are planning to go to a trade school or into

the workforce, Illiana has new classes to offer thanks to our new spaces. Students are able to pursue their passions and interests in construction, welding, computer science, and cooking with brand new equipment to give them better preparation for what they hope to do in the future.

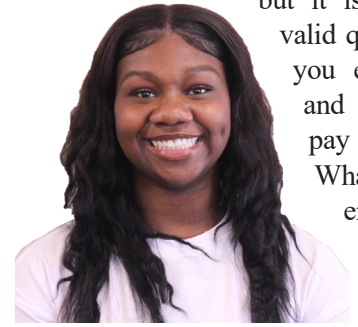
Since the choir, band, and orchestra have their own classrooms now, the wrestling team is able to move into their former space and lay out their wrestling mats. They are purchasing equipment for this room and are making it their own. Before, they had to practice on the balcony, which was a struggle sometimes due to the fact that both the girls and boys wrestling programs continue to expand and they were outgrowing that space.

In all of these ways, Illiana's present and future is in better shape thanks to our new addition, and we are so grateful. Again, if you were a donor, or on a planning and design committee, or on a fund-raising committee, if you prayed for the building and the school, if you were in any way involved in this project, we sincerely thank you. This school would not be the same without you.

Getting saucy about sauces...

Welcome to my Ted Talk. I don't mean to be pessimistic, but this level of idiocracy is insane. We are dealing with an outbreak of sauciness. What is classified as a sauce? This might seem

like a lame brained question, but it is valid. It is a valid question because you eat it everyday and probably don't pay any mind to it.



Giannia O'Neal-Schultz
News Editor

What's the difference between a sauce, dip, condiment, or dressing? This is an age-old question that everyone

is definitely wondering right...(cue crickets sounds).

Google's AI overview says, "Sauces are liquids, creams, or semi-solids that are used in cooking or served on other foods. They can add flavor, texture, and visual appeal to dishes." A dip is just a thick sauce. Condiments are usually added to the food after it's cooked. Dressings are usually for salads but can be added to other things. There are no rules when it comes down to food. Honestly all of these things are just one and the same; they just have different names to make the English language even more confusing than it already is.

Wanna know what's more confusing than the English language? Going through a drive thru and not getting sauce after I explicitly asked for it. I understand that people forget and are human, but, bro, everytime I go is ridiculous. Because of this behavior I have grown accustomed to eating my nuggets dry. That's right, you heard me. DRY! Sahara Desert type dry..

Now don't get me wrong I love a good sauce to add to my meal, but I'm not willing to go through the drive thru again just for some sauce. Some might call me lazy, but I honestly think it's innovative: might as well call me Albert Einstein.

According to einstein-website.de, Einstein's favorite sauce was tomato sauce. His favorite food was spaghetti so it's only right that his favorite sauce is tomato sauce. My favorite sauce is barbeque sauce. It could literally go on everything, well probably not ice cream, carrots, cupcakes or a lot of things, but you get the point. I put it on pretty much everything. If Einstein and I were in a competition to see who has the best sauce, I would win by a landslide, Giannia 1 Albert 0. (That is assuming, of course, that the knucklehead at the drive thru remembered to put my sauce in the bag.)

Barbecue sauce to me tastes like how Kendrick must feel after killing Drake with his diss tracks. To put it simply, it tastes great. There are so many flavors of barbecue sauce too. If you walk into any grocery store, there will be a lot of barbecue sauce flavors like sweet and tangy, jalapeño, brown sugar, maple, the possibilities are endless. Every time I try a new flavor, my tastebuds are jumping for joy.

Now that you have listened to all my yapping, I get to ask the ultimate question which is to dip or not to dip. I know it's a difficult question to answer so let's all not answer at once. If I had to decide I would choose (drumroll please) to dip because a great sauce will add a little sparkle of pazazz to any meal.

Thanks for coming to my Ted Talk.

the Echo

Editor-in-chief

Lydia O'Riley

News

Giannia O'Neal-Schultz

Feature

Marissa Krause

Arts

Gabriella Costello

Sports

Kenadie Piepenbrink
Joy Ramsey

Advisor

Jeff DeVries

Editorials, unless otherwise stated, have been written by an editor and reflect the opinion of the majority of the Echo staff. Opinions expressed are not necessarily that of the administration, faculty, or student organizations.

Letters to the editor can be submitted to the advisor or sent to the school. All letters must be signed and must not exceed 250 words. They will be printed provided there is enough room and content is not offensive to the general public.

Enjoy an Echo themed word search!

```

U S E L K S P Q N N
D A C M X R D M O H
O U N T Q F Q I R U
C C A G M J S S T M
M E T M J S D L U U
S Q S Z I E Q S V Z
D C I M F L I G H T
F L D A S C Z D N N
U O E K Q H Z W X K
F W O I S F N A I E
N A B T H Y O Y R Y
I N Q S B S I I V D
N N N E A A D Q M R
J H L K T L L Y H Q
D E E W A E S L O B
    
```

FLIGHT SHIELD FOOTBALL MISSION
SEAWEED SAUCE DISTANCE MUSIC

The newspaper is a forum for expression; therefore, we encourage feedback or commentary. Please contact us at illianaecho@gmail.com