

Photo by Jeff DeVries

Mr. Dan Blom, Illiana's Marketing Director, brings professional journalism background to his job here.

Get to know Dan Blom

Isabella Wright

Reporter

Dan Blom, Illiana's Marketing Director, is the genius behind Illiana's Social Media, but many students never have the honor of getting to know him.

Blom now works for the same school he once attended. A member of the graduating class in 1992, he used to write for the Illiana Echo and was the president of the student council.

Blom is a previous investigative producer at CBS News Chicago, where he worked for around 17 years until the pandemic. His job included research and projects based on fraud, government corruption, and scams. Blom's favorite part of working for CBS was "helping and informing the public about what's going on in the world, and I loved the people I worked with."

While working for CBS, Blom was able to have once in a lifetime experiences. He covered the White Sox winning the World Series, as well as being at Grant Park during the victory celebration when President Obama was elected.

Blom has been with Illiana for three years. His official title is Director of Marketing and Communications for Illiana Christian. His main work surrounds social media postings, Illiana website maintenance, the published newsletter, external communications, and more.

His previous job prepared Blom for what he does here at Illiana. "I think of what I do here at Illiana as my news beat, and I cover Illiana like I would cover it as a journalist. So, I want to know what is going on in the school, and then I report what is happening to our

parents, students, and community through the newsletter, Facebook, and social media."

"My favorite part of the job is [working with] the students," Blom said. "It's invigorating to see the things that [the students] do. It's exciting to watch when the light bulb gets turned on with you guys, or to see the special things you guys do cause you all do such great things here at Illiana...It's fun...here I get to cover more fun, uplifting things."

When students are walking in the commons, they are likely to see the informational slides flick by on the screens. Most don't know that Blom also carefully curated those slides himself.

In his spare time, Blom reads sci-fi and is an avid Star Wars fan. He also has a 9-year-old daughter at Highland Christian.

New computer programming class offers preparation for future jobs

Levi Alons

Reporter

A new computer programming class is being offered at Illiana this year. Taught by Mr. Joshua Gabrielse, they are focused on helping students learn about how computers work and how to use them better. This class lasts for one semester and it is officially called "Introduction

to Computer Science."

The class will have three units, the first one focusing on website design, the second on making video games, and the third on physical computing. The video games unit will focus on creating small 2d, scrolling style games. The third unit will involve students programming a device called a micro bit which does things like light up and

make noises. That third unit, according to Gabrielse, is about understanding the "connection between hardware and software."

The class is designed for anyone who is interested in computers. "The only real requirement is, you should want to take it," said Gabrielse. "It's for people that want to be able to make [the computer] do

Honors English 10 challenges students reading, writing skills

Dorothy Leep

Reporter

Illiana's new addition has brought many new classes to its hallways, but there is one in particular that has allowed students to challenge themselves, grow their knowledge of the subject, and become more advanced in their skill, that class is Honors English 10.

Honors English 10 is taught by Mrs. Kristy Medema, who said, "There was a need to challenge the different abilities that students have."

Medema along with Mr. Jeff DeVries, head of the English Department, have been working on getting Honors English 10 in place for over two years.

DeVries said, "The English Department believes that extending the honors track into our sophomore classes will get a bigger percentage of our students reading and writing better. More of our students needed this challenge in order to reach their full potential."

He added that the class is a prerequisite for students to take Honors English 11 and 12.

The curriculum that goes along with Honors English 10 is similar to regular English 10, though not identical. The new class will include the study of Elie Wiesel's "Night" and Homer's "Odyssey," for example. Students in the Honors track will also go into greater depth in their study. Medema said, "There is going to be more writing, but not just writing. [Students will work on] supporting. . . , defending. . . , and truly explaining. . . [their ideas]."

All of these factors are attractive to students that strive to be challenged and grow their abilities using the English language. Sophomores Simone Bergeron and Claire Aardsma are both enrolled in Honors English 10. Bergeron said, "It's a good challenge; we move at a faster pace than regular English, but it's good preparation for Junior year."

Overall, Honors English 10 is a wonderful addition to Illiana. Medema highly encourages students to take the class, step out of their comfort zone, and embrace the challenge.



Photo by Jeff DeVries

Mrs. Medema teaches the Honors English 10 class on Oct. 10.

what you want it to do, and understand how they work better."

This class would likely be helpful for students exploring the world of programmers or software designers, but it isn't just for those students. Most jobs require a computer nowadays, and this will help students be better prepared for whatever job they choose.

Senior Matthew Vander Woude said, "I think this class would be helpful in the future." Vander Woude isn't planning on being a computer programmer, but he believes that learning more about computers will provide skills and understanding that will aid him in his future career, where he plans to be either an electrician or a stationary engineer.

God's light will shine through, even on your darkest day

I won't lie, sophomore year was probably one of the hardest years of my life; however, I got through it thanks to God and the people around me.

Throughout the entirety of sophomore year, I got sickness after sickness and missed over a month of school. During that time, I was put on over five different medications which were supposed to help me get over all my illness.

Eventually, something worked and I got better, but the process to get there was a wild ride.



Lydia O'Riley

Editor-in-Chief

Long story short, because of how much school I missed, I fell behind in all of my classes

and felt like there was no hope for me to catch up. I didn't want to go back and even tried to convince my mom to homeschool me, which she immediately said no to.

I felt hopeless. Not only was my physical health declining, but so was my mental health. There were many things in my life that just seemed to keep going wrong, so I stopped talking to the majority of my friends, stopped going to my youth group, and truly thought I was alone. People were telling me that they were praying for me and that I should just put everything into God's hands. How was I supposed to do that? I kept getting sick and nothing seemed to be getting better. This was the farthest I had ever felt from God. I didn't want to pray or put effort into my relationship with Him.

It wasn't until I was forced to go back to school that things started to look up. One of the first chapels back was about going to God during trials. Ironic right. God works in mysterious ways.

After I had spent time thinking over the chapel, I went home and I prayed as I was going to sleep. I told God that I didn't know what was going on. Why would He put me in this situation? Why would He let this happen and keep me out of school, which brings me happiness? Why did I have to go through a season of isolation where I felt so alone? I kind of just sat there and questioned God, but in the end He answered me.

I was reminded of a verse, which I am sure almost everyone in this school has heard before. Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

God is always watching over us. He knows everything. All of our thoughts, fears, anxieties, and even the things that weigh the heaviest on our hearts. We can always go to Him. It may seem hard at times because He is not in person with us and we can't physically talk to Him, but He has such a big plan for each of us.

Life may seem overwhelming, like the odds are against me, and that His plan will never come to light, but, He has a plan for me. I know that even on my darkest days, God will work in my life to get me through them.

White takes Landlopers to Indiana Dunes



Photo courtesy of Illiana Christian Facebook.

Landlopers visited the Indiana Dunes National Park on September 20. While there they hiked, swam, and grilled out.

Levi Alons

Reporter

On Friday, September 20, Landlopers, led by Mr. Jeff White, went to the Indiana Dunes National Park, also known as "The

Dunes" near Portage for some hiking, swimming, and eating.

Many students came with their friends on the trip, while some flew solo. Students traveled to the park in two groups.

The first left school at 3 PM, and the second left at 5:15 to accommodate after-school activities.

Once at the dunes, students hiked by the lake, and a few stopped to go swimming. After the

two groups hiked, they reunited and ate hot dogs, cooked by Mr. Kuipers and Mr. Sylvester. "It was really fun," said Raelyn Sederstrom, senior. The students returned to school at 10:30.

Eighteen students came this year, along with several teachers. For many students, this was their first time on a Landlopers trip. White said he considered this outing a success. "We were looking for something close by, something different from a typical weekend," White said.

He's been making this trip for decades. While not being able to make a trip last year, They've previously gone to other places such as Goodenow Grove, Kankakee River State Park, Conner Station, or Willow Slough.

"It was a nice night," White said.

Illiana celebrates new addition with ceremony

Natalie Tambrini

Reporter

Members of the Illiana community were invited for a ceremony on Saturday, Sept. 28 to dedicate and celebrate the new Phase 2 addition with a concert, dinner, and presentation.

The evening centered on dedicating and displaying the new addition of the building to the Illiana community. Many who attended the ceremony were parents, family members, donors, or supporters of Illiana.

The ceremony began with a concert from the orchestra, Wind Ensemble, and choirs. Following the concert, a meal catered from Little Italy was served.

After the meal, Head of School Mr. Lance Davids spoke about the purpose of the new addition. He said the new addition, which includes new band, choir, and

vocational spaces, is dedicated to encouraging students to pursue a diverse set of skills and passions, and is the second phase of Illiana's expansion plan. The next phase is building an auditorium, which has already begun.

Finally, there was time for attendees to walk around the new spaces. There were two dessert stations where people could visit.

Caryl Lindemulder, an Illiana grandma, said that the ceremony was thorough, and that she is looking forward to seeing future plays and musicals in the auditorium once it is built.

Wendy Zylstra, an Illiana mom, said that she loved the concert portion and that the school's music program is great.

Zylstra said about the concert, "This is really corny, but I'm being honest: I could have almost cried."



Photo by Dan Blom

Head of School Lance Davids speaks a word of gratitude to the Illiana community during the ceremony.

Indiana Studies students explore Chicago, Gary, Calumet Region on field trips

Aneyah Barnes

Reporter

On Tuesday Sept. 24, history teacher Mr. Jeff White took his Indiana Studies class of 21 students, on a field trip to Chicago.

The group left the school at 6:15 a.m. on a minibus, and returned at about 4:30 p.m. The local history field trip is part of the curriculum as North-

west Indiana is part of the Calumet and Chicago-land region.

The drive into the city took 45 minutes. White and his students toured many places like the Coast Guard Station, the Pullman National Park, the Chicago stockyards, and many other places. The students spent the day touring these sites, and getting to learn more about their signifi-

cance in the history of the region. On the way home, the group swung through Gary and made a stop at Michael Jackson's childhood home.

Senior Amariah Allison who went on the trip said, "The Pullman National Park was the most fun. And although it was raining, I would recommend others go on the trip."

"It's a good class,"

White said. "We go on about nineteen trips throughout the course of the year, and we see a lot of stuff."

The field trips give the students an opportunity to view history locally, discover different experiences, learn about different people, landmarks, and events, and tour sites that still have significance today.



Photo by Dan Blom

After several frustrating delays, the new metals class has students welding for the first time. Here students practice making mig welds on a steel plate.

New metals class in full swing with students welding outside

Aneyah Barnes

Reporter

After a series of frustrating delays, students in Illiana's new Principles of Welding Technology class tried their hand at welding as October began.

Students began by welding on practice plates so they could practice mig (metal inert gas) welds. Their first actual project is a drink holder on a stake.

Senior Morgan Smith, who is a student in the

class, said she enjoys the class. She explained, "I like doing hands-on stuff, not just learning through a textbook. Plus, we get to make fun things."

Junior Gabriella Costello, another student in the class, said, "I welded once before in my life, as a child, when a plumber working at our house let me weld together two pieces of pipe. It's nice to have a class like this that is useful for things we might encounter. It is definitely a skill I want to

grow."

Mr. Tom Kamp, who teaches the course to mostly juniors and seniors, explained that he and his students faced several obstacles to the class launching as hoped in August. First, the welding machines, which had been in stock in early August, were unavailable once the school was ready to accept the order, and so Kamp had to wait on a new order being shipped from the manufacturer.

Even after the welders

arrived, they had to wait on the fume extraction unit, but once it arrived, it was missing the parts necessary for securing it to the wall, so it was temporarily unusable. As a result, Kamp went to plan B--extension cords which allowed him to set up the welders outside so students could get started.

Kamp said with a smile, "We are welding for the first time--outdoors. Our first welding project has started."

Illiana's annual Spire Party brings students, alumni together for 77th edition

Natalie Tambrini

Reporter

Illiana hosted the annual Spire party on Fri., Oct. 7 at 7 p.m. for sophomores, juniors, seniors, and alumni to celebrate the 2024 Spire by signing each other's yearbooks.

The new Spire, which was centered on a fairytale theme, is the 77th volume of the yearbook. This year's book was dedicated to Mr. Peter Boonstra, who retired this summer.

Students arrived throughout the night to receive their yearbook. Additionally, some alumni from the class of 2024 came back to attend the event. They then had the opportunity to look at the book and sign

their friends' books.

Alumnus Lucas VanderWoude, co-editor of this year's Spire, said, "Alyssa and I had both read this series called The Land of Stories... We thought, what if we did something like that where the book just transports you into a fairytale land?"

The book features sections with titles such as "Senior Sovereignty" and "Student Life Labyrinth" that reflect the fairytale theme.

Alumna Alyssa Mulder, co-editor of the book, when asked about her favorite part of the book said, "Genuinely everything... If I had to pick something though, I'd say the cover, or all the memories the book itself keeps and reflects."

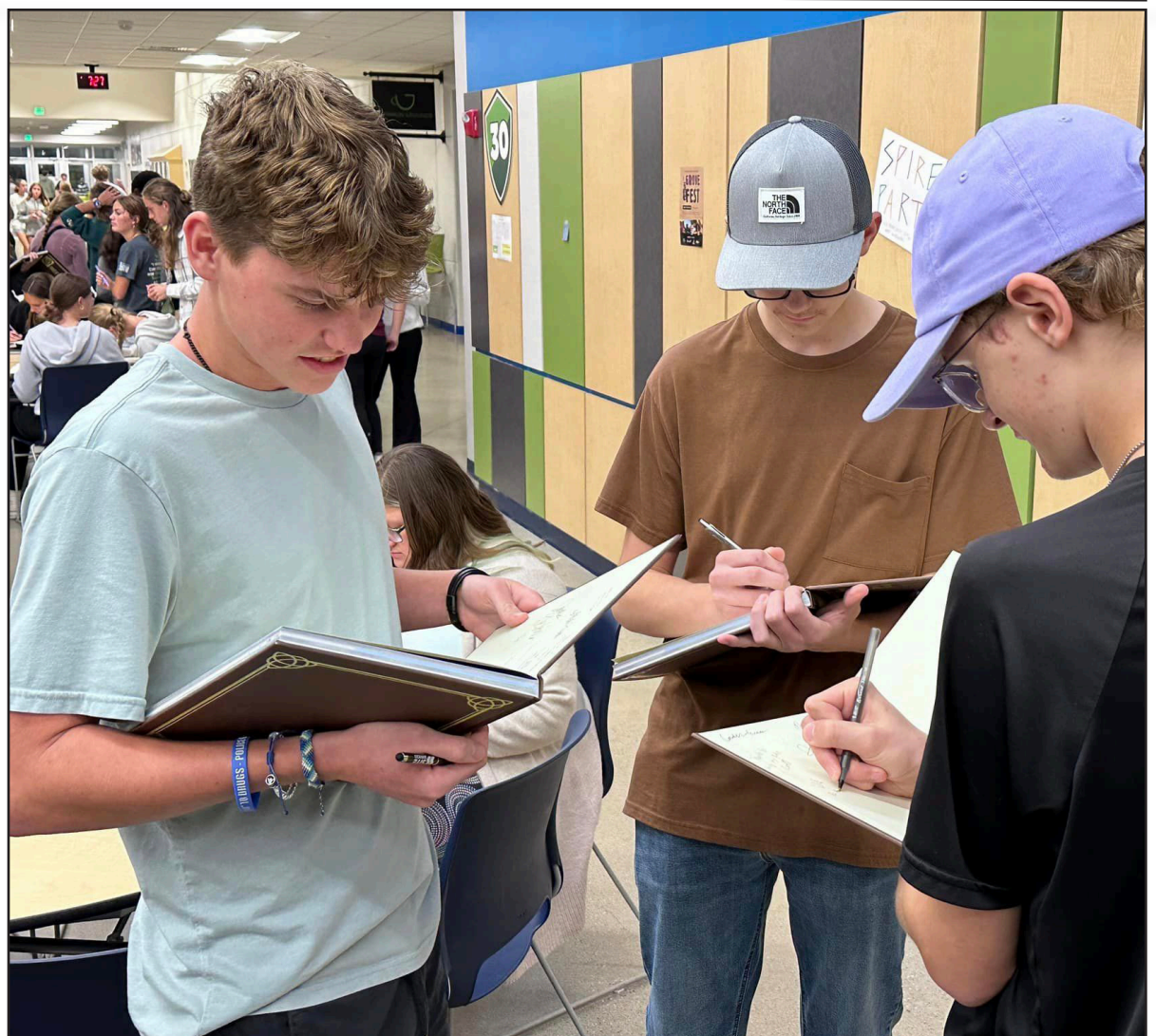


Photo courtesy of Jeff DeVries

Seniors Cameron Schutt, Grady Logan, and junior Jace Ooms sign each other's year books at the Spire Party on Oct. 4.

Sadie Hawkins Dance provides music, laughter for friends

Dorothy Leep

Reporter

This month held Illiana's annual Sadie Hawkins Dance, a night full of dancing, laughter, and friendship.

This year the students here at Illiana did just that. For freshmen, this is their first high school dance and for transfers this is their first dance at Illiana. Freshman Josie Balkema, who attended the dance, said, "It's fun to be around your friends and dance with them. It was a great time."

For many people at Illiana, this is their second, third, or fourth Sadie's. Sophomore Hazel Porter said, "It was a great time to get together with friends, just like it was last year."

Balkema and Porter both followed Illiana's recommendation to get together a group of friends and have fun, but historically this was not always the case for a Sadie Hawkins dance.

Sadie Hawkins dances take their name from a female character in the comic "Li'l Abner." In a 1937 strip, the single females all chase eligible bachelors on "Sadie Hawkins Day." Within two years of the comic strip appearing, Sadie Hawkins dances emerged on over several hundred college campuses.

Going with a group of friends can be just as amazing and fun as it is going with a date. Addison Burch, a junior who attended the dance, said, "Finding the right people to go with makes your experience 100 times better, even if that's just your friends."

Teachers reminisce on past Washington DC trips

Marissa Krause

Feature Editor

Since the 1970s, the class trip to Washington DC has been a long standing tradition for seniors and their homeroom sponsors. Every year during fall break, which is usually towards the end of October, seniors take five days to tour Washington DC, spend time with peers, and learn about our nation's history.

Many students may have had the opportunity with Mr. White to go on the Right to Life March or for Close up, but for many students this is a first time experience exploring the nation's capital. Many teachers at Illiana, however, have gone on the class trip multiple times, experiencing all DC has to offer.

Rachel DeVries, a junior homeroom sponsor, has chaperoned for 4 trips and is excited to spend time with the Senior class this year. She warns that sleeping is nonexistent on this trip. "The most difficult part of the trip is the lack of sleep... But, when you return home, you do take the best nap ever! However, the lack of sleep is completely worth it since we always have such an incredible time, make solid core memories, and pack so much into a crazy short amount of time!"

DeVries, even though sleep deprived, still has those memorable moments to look back on. One of them being in the fall of 2022 when she

had the opportunity to attend the student-led impromptu magic show/talent show. "The students had started talking about it early on in the trip, and it just came together. Word spread quickly that this is what was happening, and nearly everyone attended it on that last night. It was a night filled with a lot of fun, a lot of laughter, and we had the best time!"

Dave Bosman, a senior homeroom sponsor who has attended the DC trip four times and has made some fun memories, said he is looking forward to building relationships with students and teachers outside of the school setting. But he sometimes doesn't enjoy the initial craziness of the bus rides. "The most difficult part is the ride to and from the trip. Although this part is a lot of fun because you have time to talk and get to know students and sponsors, it is a long time on the bus and keeping track of time and students when we make stops is not my favorite part."

Bosman shares a couple of his memories of his times in DC. "One year on the boat from Mount Vernon to Alexandria, we played a song over the PA system. When the song came on, Mr. Veldman took the microphone and entertained the students and teachers as he sang along with the song. Everyone LOVED it!!"

Bosman also remembers Mr. White's incredible speech skills. "I believe in either

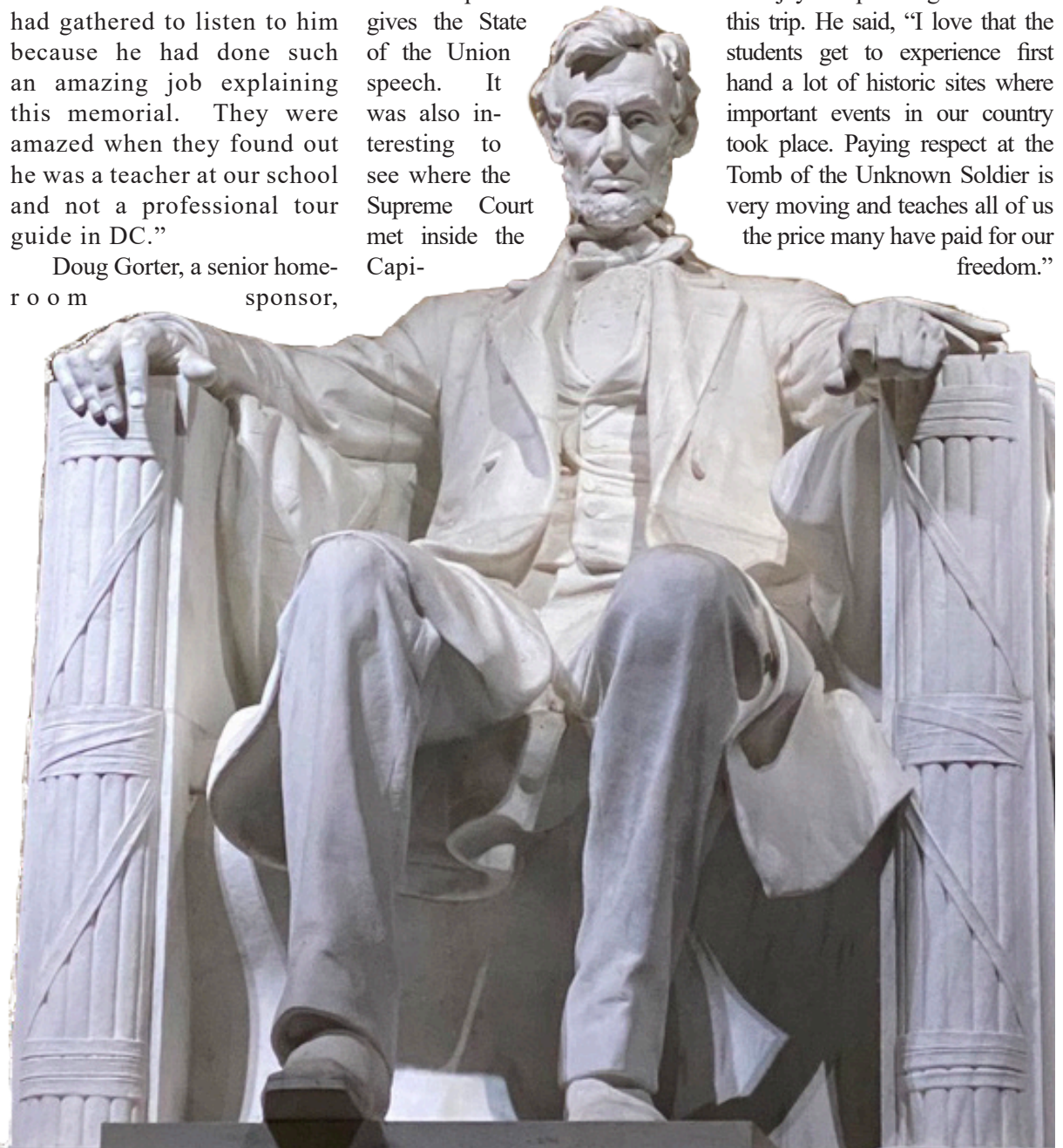
2008 or 2012 we were at the 9/11 memorial and Mr. White was giving a speech on what happened at the Pentagon on 9/11 and how the memorial represented those who lost their lives at the Pentagon. By the time he was done with his speech there was a crowd of people that were not associated with Illiana who had gathered to listen to him because he had done such an amazing job explaining this memorial. They were amazed when they found out he was a teacher at our school and not a professional tour guide in DC."

Doug Gorter, a senior homeroom sponsor,

has attended twice, and is excited to visit the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. He states touring the capitol building in 2016 was his most memorable moment. "I toured the Capitol building and we were able to go inside the chamber of the House of Representatives. It was meaningful to be in a place where laws are debated and where the president gives the State of the Union speech. It was also interesting to see where the Supreme Court met inside the Capi-

tol building before the court had its own building."

Neil Zandstra, a senior homeroom sponsor has attended the class trip 4 times and is excited to build more relationships with students and to visit all the different sites in Washington DC. He also agrees that the most difficult part of this trip is sleeping on a bus. But Zandstra said he enjoys chaperoning students on this trip. He said, "I love that the students get to experience first hand a lot of historic sites where important events in our country took place. Paying respect at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier is very moving and teaches all of us the price many have paid for our freedom."



DC sponsor alumni give advice for upcoming senior trip

"Do everything you can. Don't relax, go go go. See everything you can while you can. I highly recommend you choose something you love with your free time and not because your friends are going. Chase your pursuits. Learn from professional historians."

- Mark Dysktra

"I suggest doing and seeing and learning as much as possible. In addition to a lot of interesting history, many important current events take place in the White House, the Capitol building, and the Supreme Court. The memorials are also masterfully crafted. The Smithsonian museums are full of fascinating exhibits. There is a Gutenberg Bible in the Jefferson building of the Library of Congress. The architecture of the buildings and monuments is wonderful. You may not know when you'll be back to Washington DC, so take time to learn and experience as much as possible."

- Doug Gorter

"Make sure you pay attention to each other. I've heard many times how the class trip brings seniors together as a class and I hope that is true for your class as well. Get to know some fellow classmates who you don't know very well and listen to their stories. Make new friends."

- Neil Zandstra

"1. Take a lot of pictures! 2. Be patient with your classmates, your roommates and your chaperones 3. Buy a souvenir, even if it's a sticker for your Stanley or a magnet. 4. When Mr. White tells his stories, listen to them! He knows what he's talking about! 5. Have so much fun on the bus, but be respectful of your driver and don't be messy! 6. Sleep when you can, but be prepared for not much of it 7. Thank Veterans when you see them at the memorials. You have the freedoms you do because of their service and dedication to our country. 8. Go single file on the Metro escalators! 9. Watch out for each other and take good care of each other and 10. KNOW, REMEMBER and LISTEN to your number when it is assigned to you!" And a bonus added piece of advice, "take with a refillable water bottle and use it (especially at Arlington) but, on Thursday night, don't drink too much at dinner because our Capitol Hill walk at night has no bathrooms."

- Rachel DeVries



Will it Waffle, or will it not?

That's the ultimate question

Gabriella Costello

Arts and Leisure Editor

Evolving from its food truck origins to an actual brick-and-mortar location, Will it Waffle made the ultimate upgrade. This past April, Will it Waffle made its grand opening on 150 W Joliet St, Crown Point, IN 46307. The restaurant is decorated with cutesy designs surrounding anything waffle-themed and pink. Upon entering, customers place their order at a movable table from a menu displayed over three screens above. The space is confined, but includes a counter that seats six people and small tables outside on the patio as well. Washrooms are clean with inspirational quotes hanging on the walls. While the space may be limited they definitely make good use out of what they have.

A couple of friends accompanied me when going to try some of the different waffle creations Will it Waffle had to offer. We or-

dered six of their popular waffle creations. The three cheese grilled cheese sandwich was not a total bust, but it is in need of a change. The sandwich was bland and lacked an appropriate amount of cheese. Furthermore, it wasn't really on theme as the sandwich used regular bread put into a panini press to look like a waffle rather than using an actual waffle. The ham and cheese sandwich was better than the previous one due to the surplus of ham on it, but it still lacked the actual waffle element.

Now onto the creations with an actual waffle. The deep dish pepperoni pizza waffle was interesting and the ingredients complemented each other well, but it lacked the right proportions: too much waffle and not enough sauce, pepperoni, and cheese. Next the waffle-cado Toast, their take on avocado toast, was a surprising win. The avocado tasted fresh and the egg on top was cooked perfectly.

Lastly we tried two des-

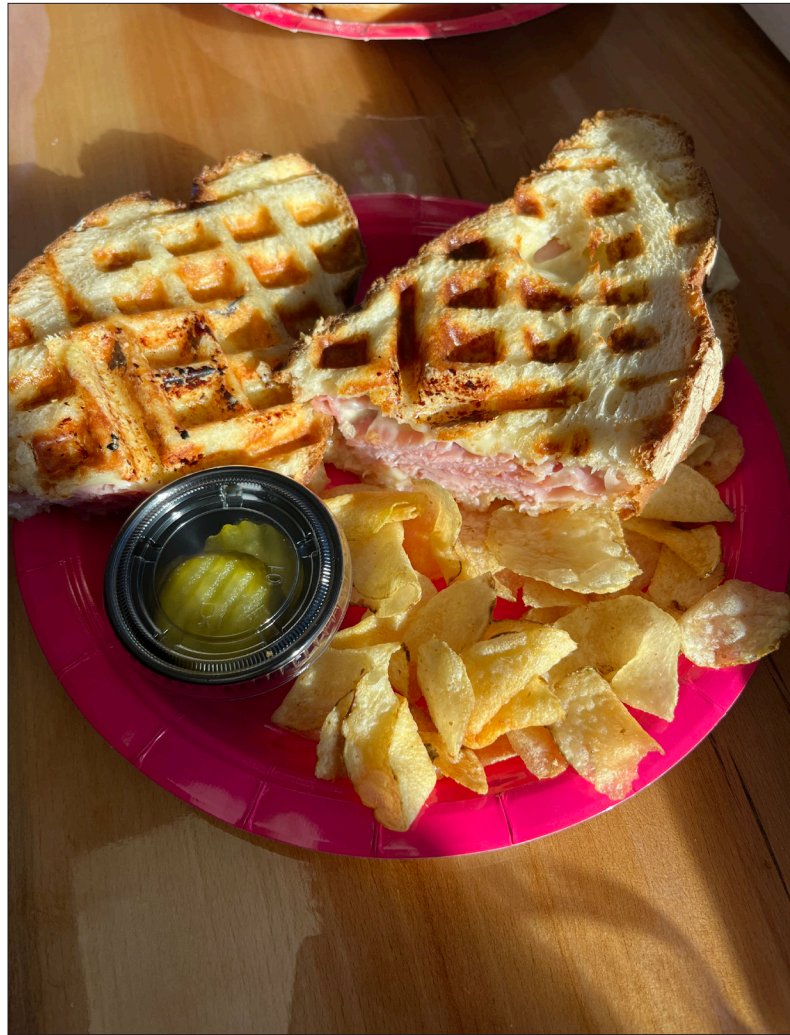


Photo by Gabriella Costello

Ham and Cheese sandwich with chips and pickles from Will it Waffle goes a bit light on the ham and heavy on the bread.

sert waffles. The chocolate peanut butter was too sweet and hurt my teeth after taking a single bite. The fresh fruit waffle was simple but that's what made it delicious. You have the opportunity to choose what fruits you want on your waffle, too, a nice touch.

Will it Waffle is an af-

fordable treat to get every now and then, but expect lots of waffle and not quite enough of the signature toppings. Service was decent but a bit slow. They seemed understaffed.

Will it Waffle is definitely an experience, but not without its flaws. I give it three out of five stars.

Levi Sliemers takes trombone to new heights in the Northwest Indiana Youth Symphony

Giannia O'Neal-Schultz

News Editor

Senior trombone player Levi Sliemers is a part of a youth

symphony called Northwest Indiana Youth Symphony Orchestra. Sliemers has also been a part of Illiana's bands since his freshman year, and he has just begun his third year in the youth

symphony.

The Youth Orchestra, according to its website, is "an audition-only group of young musicians that offers students a fun and educational musical environment, where a strong emphasis is placed on artistic excellence and personal growth." Sliemers auditioned for the youth symphony because it sounded really interesting to him and he thought it would be fun.

Sliemers said, "I keep coming back to it because I love the music and I have made friendships. This is something that is really fun, and I'm passionate about it."

He first joined the youth symphony sophomore year of high school. The group meets every Sunday for three hours from 2 to 5. They play many pieces, including selections from "The Nutcracker" by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky.

Sliemers' favorite song that he's performed with the group is "Finlandia" by Jean Sibelius, a highly dramatic piece that has great parts for the low brass instruments. He meets with the brass section of the youth sym-

phony sometimes for sectionals usually before or after regularly scheduled practice to perfect their performance.

Sliemers said, "Besides practicing every Sunday, I try to do my part by memorizing the music. The job I have as a brass player is different when I play with the symphony. In Illiana's bands I play higher notes and practice to make sure my lips are in shape."

There are two performances a year, one is during the end of November for the winter semester and another one during April or May for the spring semester. At the performance the orchestra plays the songs that they have been learning and practicing over the semester.

His favorite memory from playing with the youth symphony is from last year during late October when the youth symphony played side-by-side with professional musicians of the Northwest Indiana Symphony for a Halloween concert in Crown Point.

Sliemers started playing the trombone in his fifth grade band just to try something new and then soon after he then fell in love with it.



Photo courtesy of Jeff DeVries

Levi Sliemers performs with Illiana's jazz band in 2023.

9th annual 24-hour theater project at Trinity Christian College attracts Illiana students

Isabella Wright

Reporter

Four Illiana students connected to the drama department took part in Trinity Christian College's annual 24-hour theater event. The event is a series of small plays written, produced, and performed in a mere 24 hours.

Mr. Jim Kamphuis, who is technical director in Illiana's drama program and who recruited students for the event, said it was a chaotic but entertaining time for those involved. This is the 9th year Trinity College has hosted the event. Kamphuis said this was the best one he has seen yet. All the students involved came in on Friday evening, Sept. 27, to get divided into teams and to begin brainstorming from 8 to 9 p.m. After that, the playwrights stayed up overnight to write scripts. A few other attendees stayed overnight, but most went home and then returned Saturday at 8:30 a.m.

Six groups put on different productions, working throughout the entire day—memorizing lines, blocking scenes, and designing sets and costumes. Performances were Saturday night.

Illiana junior Gabriella Costello was an actor in a production. She expressed her excitement in meeting people from different areas and ages. She said, "My partner in crime was 20 and from Ukraine; it wasn't just high school kids."

Illiana sophomore Blake Tackett said his favorite part was working with other people. He was on the sets construction/sets running side of the productions. Tackett added, "No matter what you do, you'll have fun."

Illiana explores possibility of new football program

Joy Ramsey

Sports Editor

Over the past few months a committee consisting of athletic director Darren DeBoer, head of school Lance Davids, as well as a variety of board members and community members have been in the process of exploring a possible football program in Illiana's future.

This committee is looking into different things such as property and location of the field, equipment storage, student interest, number of years it would take to start, seating for fans, parking issues, funding, and conflicts with other sports.

According to DeBoer, the talk has been around for quite a while, but when the school was still in its Lansing location, there was not enough land and the enrollment was decreasing too much to consider starting a

team.

Although talk of a team has been happening for over 25 years, Davids said, "The possibility became a little more clear recently with our growth and our joining a new conference in two years, but we're still [just] looking at it. There's no timeline."

Even though we will be joining a new conference, that itself is not a determining factor for Illiana's decision. DeBoer explained, "When we agreed to join this new conference, it was not a condition that we would have football, and they [the other schools] were aware of that."

With our new facilities and land, football at Illiana is at least feasible. Illiana's enrollment has greatly increased the past few years which allows the committee to see if this is another opportunity for student involvement.

Freshman leads girls varsity golf at sectionals

Kenadie Piepenbrink

Sports Editor

Freshman, Regan Kats pulled off an impressive feat for a freshman, advancing out of the sectional golf tournament in September.

During Sectionals, Kats led the team with and as well as her personal best of a score, 82. Kats advanced to Regionals, which was hosted at Sandy Pines. She golfed well there, but failed to advance in state tournament play.

Kats has been playing golf since she was five years old, thanks to her family who helped her to get into the sport. Kats participates in competi-

tions and events over the summer. The events are usually about a day long. Kats said she has been doing these competitions for around two years now. She said she enjoys golf because of the fact she gets to be outside while playing a sport she loves.

Throughout her high school career, she hopes to get better and possibly play in college. Kats puts in a lot of time and effort to get better. To practice and prepare herself for upcoming competitions, she spends time putting, chipping and going to the driving range to work on her swing. She is excited about the upcoming seasons and competitions over the summer break.



Photo courtesy of Illiana Instagram

Freshman Regan Kats poses before Regionals



Photo courtesy by Jim Kamphuis

The team smiles after capturing first place at Lake Central High School.

Varsity cheer takes first place

Lydia O'Riley

Editor-in-Chief

Illiana's competitive cheer team is off to a great start placing 2nd on Sept. 14 at Tri-West High School, 1st on Sept. 28 at Lake Central High School, and 1st place on Oct. 5 at Pendleton High School. The cheer team will appear in a state wide competition on Nov. 9.

Senior Nolee VanDrunen competed individually as well on Sept. 28 at Lake Central and placed 4th out of 8 people.

VanDrunen said, "I was happy with what I did and couldn't have asked for more.... Being all by yourself shouting at a crowd was unnerving, but an awesome experience."

This year, VanDrunen

choreographed the team's cheer routine. VanDrunen said, "I found out we were going to pay somebody this year, so ultimately the responsibility was left to me to do. It took about two months, but now we are happy and excited to perform."

Senior Jenna Koontz said that practice was somewhat different this season because they had to practice the routine in sections and then put them all together to perform full out.

This season VanDrunen wanted to create a community where the team pushes each other to the best of their ability because there were a lot of freshmen who made the team this year.

Koontz said that she and

VanDrunen want to leave behind a strong team with a good sense of leadership to keep growing the team in the future since the team is in a tougher division than just two years ago, and they are still learning how other schools compete. VanDrunen added that she hopes the team takes the qualities of perseverance and leadership into their personal lives and that they are "able to be magnets of spirit and passion that represent the school."

Because cheerleading is not an Indiana state sanctioned sport, two associations have decided to create two separate competitions that the team will participate in. The second state competition will be on Nov. 19 and Nov. 26.

Football player within the halls of Illiana

Joy Ramsey

Sports Editor

Though an Illiana

student, senior Michael Recupido played football for Calumet Christian High School his sophomore and junior year. Recupido started playing football his seventh grade year at Taft middle school for Crown Point.

Before Recupido started to play football he had played basketball, but he didn't feel like it was the right fit for him. He added, "I felt like God led me to football for a reason and wanted me to glorify him through the sport."

Calumet Christian in past years has accepted players on its team who were homeschooled or who attended other Christian schools, but this past year they instituted a rule that allowed public school athletes to participate on their team as well.

"I was looking for schools around the area that would allow me to play, and I just felt like Cal-

lege of St. Joseph and plans on playing for them next year. He added that his plan is

to be playing football his whole life by playing in college and eventually hoping to make it to the NFL. Recupido added that he feels like this is what God is leading him to do.

Illiana athletes who play outside school
OUT OF BOUNDS

met was a good place to land because it's a Christian school and the environment around it was just right for me," said Recupido.

He played wide receiver and defensive back for the team. Recupido won special teams player of the game as well as leading the team in solo tackles for his junior season.

He said, "I'm definitely a player that coaches look out for."

The senior, who took the year off to concentrate on academics, has been recruited by Calumet Col-



Photo courtesy of Michael Recupido

Recupido looks for the play carrying the ball

Loudest and proudest captain, Samantha Bultema leads statistics in varsity girls soccer

Giannia O'Neal-Schultz
News Editor

Senior Sam Bultema is the captain of the varsity girls soccer team. She is leading the team with the most goals, points, and shots this season, averaging 1.3 goals per game; she has gotten 19 goals, 41 points, and 56 shots so far this season. Throughout her soccer career at Illiana she has racked up 57 goals and 122 points.

Bultema first played soccer when she was young but she stopped for a little while and then started to play again in 6th grade she then realized she loved the sport and wanted to play in high school. Her favorite thing about soccer is the people on the team and the team camaraderie.

Bultema said, "I love the sport and I love the aggressiveness I can use, but I think the team is a big part of why I love soccer. We are all so close and it is really fun to play a sport with people who love it just as much as me."

At practice the team takes turns doing devotions and prayer to help each other grow closer as a team, this allows for the team members to find comfort in each other as a safe space.

"I like to talk about devotion when practicing so I can set an example for the freshman. I want them to feel comfortable to talk about God and share what their thoughts and feelings are," said Bultema.

At practice she does shooting drills that help her to shoot the ball in the corner of the net. During these drills she focuses on leaning over the ball and practicing different techniques to have more precise shots. She surveys the field to see where she is on the field and how she can get the ball in the net. Doing footwork drills helps her control the ball and be aware of her surroundings so she can shoot the ball.

Bultema said, "I try really hard to understand where I am on the field and where the defenders and my teammates are, so I can put myself



Photo by Jeff DeVries

Senior and team captain Samantha Bultema dribbles the ball down the soccer field. Bultema is having a banner year.

in a position where I can easily get the ball to turn around and shoot."

Since this is Bultema's last year she advised the underclassmen to be friends

with one another and continue to build their team chemistry.

Bultema said, "It's just so much more fun when everyone on the team is of one

accord; everything goes so smoothly when there's good team chemistry. Just continue to pray with each other and respect everyone, especially the coaches."



Viking sports briefs



Boys Soccer

Boys varsity soccer is currently going 12-2-2 overall and is undefeated on a 4 game streak for conference. The team is currently ranking 30th in the state.

Senior Michael Zylstra leads the team in both goals and points. He is averaging 0.8 goals per game with a total of 12 goals and

28 points for the season. Zylstra is second in the conference for points and for goals.

Sophomore Aidan Drost is leading the team in saves, shut outs, and goals against average. He has 65 saves, 9 shutouts, an average of 4.1 saves per match, and has a 0.850

goals against average. Drost is 14th in class 2a for goals against average and second in conference for both goals against average and saves.

Junior Josh Carter is ranked 13th in class 2a for assists with a total of 11 as well as first in the Greater South Shore for points and first for assists.

Girls Soccer

Varsity girls soccer is overall 12-4 and is undefeated in conference.

Senior Samantha Bultema, sophomore Hannah Gorter, and junior Alex Cruz currently lead the team in statistics.

Bultema leads with an

average of 1.2 goals per match, 56 shots, 19 goals, and 41 points. Gorter

leads with 73 saves, 4 shutouts, and an average of 5.6 saves per match. Cruz is leading with a 0.4 assist per match average and 4 assists.

Boys Tennis

The boys tennis team has a current record 13-8. After losing to Calumet with the JV team, the team is 4-1 in conference but will have won the conference overall.

Coach Karen Blaauw said she was "very pleased with the team camaraderie, competitiveness, respect for the coach, etc. It was an extremely successful season." She was also impressed with the entire varsity team as a whole on the season they have had this year.

Girls Volleyball

Girls varsity volleyball has a record of 20-8 and is currently ranked second in conference with a 7-1 record.

Senior Lydia VanderLaan currently leads the team in blocks with a total of 71. In class 3a she is ranked 11th for blocks.

Junior Isabella Borrero is ranked 2nd in the Greater South Shore Conference for assists with a total of 395.

Girls Cross Country

The girls cross country team had its conference meet on October 5th. The team's best performances this season have been fourth out of 16 at the Highland invite, fifth out of 22 at the New Prairie Invite, and first out of six at the Hobart invite.

Coach Luke Fennema said, "Ella Olthof has led the way in every race, most

recently finishing second overall in the meet in a new personal best time." She has medaled in every race she finished in this year.

Freshman Olivia Olthof medaled at 15th place at the New Prairie Invite and finished seventh at the Christian Schools Invitational in Michigan.

Senior Alexa Mercuri

has been an asset to the team who occasionally earns medals such as at the New Prairie Invite.

The teams 4-5-6, which consists of junior Ellie Ratliff, sophomore Madi Schurman, and sophomore Simone Bergeron, has dropped a lot of time in past meets which contributed to the team achieving top finishes.

Editorial

Do social media have too much control over our lives?

Social media have become staples of modern society. Various platforms serve as a lifeline for some and a nuisance to others. This generation is too dependent on social media to define who they are.

Social media, whatever its intended uses originally, has been abused. This idea of connecting with people was great in the beginning because you could contact family and friends that live in different states easier, you could make friends from other countries, and you could learn how other people live in real time rather than in dated accounts in magazines or books.

But social media, it turns out, also gives power to dangerous people. Cyber bullying wasn't a problem until social media was invented. Bullies once had to operate face-to-face, making it possible to try to address the situation in the old school way (on the playground after school) or probably more responsibly, to bring the problem to an adult authority. Now people can hide behind a screen, and in complete anonymity they ruin other people's lives. There is

no good way to address an enemy you cannot identify.

Also dangerous are impersonators, people posing as your friend, people that want to make you feel safe and cared for, only so they can exploit you and use you. The often told

want to be like them. They give up their childhood almost before it has even started. Young boys are watching teens and adults sit on their butts and do nothing but play video games, and they think that lifestyle must be "cool." Kids see the

and go on adventures. When we were with our cousins we would run around in our grandparents' yard for hours, go to the neighbor's house and jump on their trampoline, ride our bikes around the neighborhood to the store. We would ride four wheelers in the paths behind their house, mess with the chickens, and bunnies, have campfires, skateboard in the barn. Now those same cousins might as well have an umbilical cord attaching them to their phones. They have their device on them at all times, scrolling through it with the eyes-glazed look of a zombie, yet they believe the lie that they are too "cool" to do things with their family.

Now by no means are we saying all people are like this, but it is a reality for too many. Yes, we are growing up and don't want to do certain things like run around playing tag but what's better, sitting on your butt watching TikTok for hours on end or experiencing God's creation with those we love? We shouldn't be watching the world through a screen but experiencing it for ourselves.

We shouldn't be watching the world through a screen but experiencing it for ourselves.

tale of people getting duped on the internet is more real than most will ever realize. In 2023, the FBI reported that consumers and businesses in the United States lost a record \$12.5 billion to internet crimes.

In addition, the ability to see other people's lives broadcasted on social media is distorting young minds from reality. Young girls, children, are seeing adults or teenagers put makeup on. They are watching them do skin care and get their nails done, and the children

amount of fame and popularity certain trends attract on social media, and naturally they want to feel that attention too. Such children are growing up too fast and aren't enjoying what all adults wish they could still experience. Kids are wanting freedom without realizing that they are the most free out of us all.

When some of us were younger, we would go out in front of our old apartments or houses with the neighborhood kids and climb trees, play tag,

Finding God during times of difficulty

Being hurt. You can be hurt mentally, physically, and emotionally. There's so many different ways you can be hurt, loved ones passing, friends not being "friends" to you anymore, not liking the way you look, comparing yourself to others. Even in those difficult times, however,

one can still find happiness.

A lot of people like to

act like they're okay when in reality, they aren't.

Some people like to hangout with friends or family when they aren't feeling their usual self.

Others like to be left alone



Kenadie Piepenbrink

Sports Editor

or start getting into trouble and stop caring about the consequences. Some start to feel numb, like nothing's ever going to get better. And some people find God.

During my freshman year of high school at my prior school, I started struggling mentally. I started failing my classes when I used to be a straight A student. I started missing school more and more, losing friends because I distanced myself from them. My sophomore year, I decided to transfer to Illiana, and it took me a while to get used to the changes, but I ended up loving the school and the new environment I was in. I started to love school again. I loved the teachers, the friends, the activities. I started to feel like myself again. But then there were a few deaths in my family, and I started to fall back into the negative place I had just escaped, the mental state I had suffered in during freshman year.

When I started to feel myself fall back into the place I thought I had finally escaped, it was hard, but things started to get better again. After school ended last year, I started to hang out with new people and started my journey of getting closer with God. I wanted to feel more of a connection with him. A lot of people have told me that because they grew up knowing God and were born into the religion, they feel like they have never really gotten the chance to grow their own connection with God and find him themselves.

Those people I have talked with have said that when they go through a difficult time, they happen to start falling away from God and his Word, and they begin to question God: Why are these things happening to me? Why is no one else going through the same things? Why is everyone happy but me? The questions only made them feel worse, they said. Once they were sick and tired of being in that state of mind, however, they started to grow their relationship with God again, feeling that they needed him. They prayed for his help and trusted that he had a plan. And in turning to God, these folks found healing.

Now this has happened to me. I found friends that found their connection with God and love to worship, go on Bible dates, and talk about sermons they've heard. And those friends are helping to fill me in. No one really likes feeling like they're not okay or that something is always wrong with them. We all want to feel happy and filled with joy and life, rather than feeling filled with sadness and misery. We all want to have a sense of purpose and passion. You should always be kind to people because you never know what they're going through and what your words or actions could suggest to them. Things do get better, and even negative turns will all work out, thanks to the plan God has in store for each of us. We should always take a moment and realize all that God has done for each and every one of us.

the
Echo

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Try to find the 8 differences!



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