

Photo by Jeff DeVries

Science teacher Mr. Brian Sylvester launches aquaponics program by releasing the fish into their tank.

Aquaponics provides unique educational component, Purdue University shows interest

Natalie Tambrini

Reporter

The Science Department has been faithfully using hydroponics to grow food for the past few years, but now they're taking a different approach with aquaponics, and Purdue University is interested.

Hydroponics is a system of growing plants without soil, whereas aquaponics does the same but adds fish to the equation, using the fishes' waste to feed the plants, which in turn filtrate the water for the fish.

Mr. Brian Sylvester said, "If you think about it, [the aquaponics system] will actually be like a complete ecosystem."

The aquaponics aren't new,

said Dr. Jim Kuipers, but Illiana's science faculty are taking a new approach with the system. Sylvester designed and built the prototype that currently resides in the biology room, and their plan is to put ten such stations in a new trailer outside. The main body of each station will be the fish tank on the bottom. Pumps move the water up about six feet where it works its way through a series of plant boxes as gravity moves the water back down to the fish tank on the bottom.

Kuipers said, "We're really designing it so that we have ten unique stations so that it works with education... We're not just interested in raising fish and growing lettuce. This is designed to have a strong educational com-

ponent to it."

Sylvester and Kuipers got the idea after visiting Purdue University, which has similar systems. Purdue is associated with a company called Sea Grant, which helps people get into aquaponics.

Sylvester said Illiana's project has been funded by a generous donor, and Purdue is interested in what we are pulling off even though we're on a tighter budget than them.

Kuipers said that Purdue is intrigued because of the educational component to our vision. Kuipers said, "...it's unique. It's not designed to raise hundreds of pounds of fish; it's designed to have students be able to do it, and each group of students have their own system."

Illiana brings in both young, old voices with community choir

Isabella Wright

Reporter

The Illiana Community Choir, hosted by Illiana Christian and directed by Mrs. Kathy Sliemers, had an amazing turnout at its first concert at Redeemer United Reformed Church on Nov. 17.

After returning to Illiana this year, the community choir's first performance back was a full house. They had 10 rehearsals and prepared 8 choral pieces for the performance.

It is open to the entire com-

munity, as well as all ages, with no audition required. Choristers simply pay a small fee for music, and they are all set. Illiana used to have a similar choir around thirty years ago. Now after a long dry spell, Sliemers has brought the choir back this year with the aim to have it rolling strong before the auditorium's completion. She said, "I've always wanted to start one, so here I am."

Sliemers said that a number of things motivated her to start it now, but at least "part of it is that there's been a falling off of church choirs." She asserted

her true passion for giving people who want to sing the chance to do so. The members range from high schoolers to retirees.

Illiana teacher Bethany DeVries sings in the choir. DeVries said, "We have a wonderful director. She explains things very well."

DeVries showed excitement when talking about the group's first concert, saying "it's so wonderful to see the community come out." She also kept reiterating her wonderful experiences she's had with all the people who joined the choir.

Moving beyond biology

Open hearts, open arms build families through adoption

Natalie Tambrini

Reporter

According to adoptionnetwork.com, 1 out of 25 families with children in the U.S. have adopted children, and the number of children put up for adoption increases every year.

Adoption is a route that many have considered, but few have pursued. At Illiana, multiple families have been created through adoption.

English teacher Mrs. Kristy Medema has two children who are adopted. Many members of Medema's family are adopted, so adopting children felt natural to her.

Medema said she decided to adopt because "there's all kinds of different ways to build a family."

Zander, Medema's oldest, was domestically adopted as a newborn. Medema's daughter, sophomore Claire Medema, was born in South Korea, and Medema and her husband retrieved her there.

Junior Renee McClenahan was adopted alongside her brother when she was twelve years old. Born in Kansas, she was in foster care for over six years. When she met her current family, a different

kind of relationship grew, and eventually the idea of her adoption came up. On the day she was adopted, McClenahan and her brother went to the courthouse.

McClenahan, who had never had much say about her living arrangement, said that she "remember[ed] the judge asking us, 'Do you want to be adopted?', and it was kind of eye-opening because it was like, wow, they want my opinion on this."

Two of McClenahan's sisters were adopted by her adopted father's sister.

McClenahan said, "We're still family, but we're cousin-sisters; that's what we call it."

Senior Atikilt Bosman and her brother, Zinabu, a sophomore, were adopted from Ethiopia in 2011.

A difficult part about moving to the U.S. was learning English. At the time, Bosman, five years old, and her brother, three, had to adjust to life in the U.S. and experienced culture shock.

Bosman said, "It was a hard transition because of the age that I was, and not knowing the language as well."

McClenahan said, "It's something I'm still getting used to. But, wow, these are the people who love me and wanted me and went through all that work to claim me. Adoption is a really great thing... It can come in any time of your life."

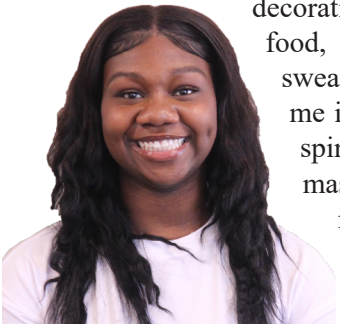


Photo courtesy of Atikilt Bosman

Senior Atikilt Bosman and junior Zinabu Bosman pose for picture after being adopted from Ethiopia in 2011.

Christmas time is here with holly, jolly cheer

It's that time again to celebrate the best holiday ever, Christmas. No other holiday can top Christmas because, as the old song says, it simply is the most wonderful time of year. The



Giannia O'Neal-Schultz
News Editor

decorations, seasonal food, music, ugly sweaters--it all puts me in the Christmas spirit. The Christmas spirit according to Google Overview is "a mood or attitude that involves being cheerful, friendly, and

generous during the Christmas season." One of my favorite ways to get into the Christmas spirit is listening to Christmas music, and my favorite Christmas song to put me in the Christmas spirit is "The Christmas Song" by Nat King Cole. Any time that song is played during the holiday season, I just stop whatever I am doing to listen and vibe to the song.

Another thing I do to get in the Christmas spirit is decorate my Christmas tree. I like to decorate my tree based on iconic Christmas movies. This year we decorated our tree with ornaments that are based off the movie *The Polar Express*. My favorite place to get decorations for our tree is Hobby Lobby. They have so many options to choose from. I can literally walk in the store for a few things and then purchase almost everything in sight. To say I'm a Christmas decor and gifts shopaholic is an understatement.

Shopping during the holiday season is my kryptonite. I love getting people gifts that they actually love and will cherish but my bank account definitely will be hurting for certain. The worst type of people to shop for are those who never know what they want, and when asked, they reply by saying "Whatever you get me, I will love it." This could either be a true statement or a fib. Most of the time it is a fib. Even though getting a gift for someone who doesn't know what they want is a challenge that occasionally causes me to get a gray hair or two, I still love being in the Christmas spirit and seeing my friends and families' faces light up when they see the gift I have gotten for them.

When I am in the Christmas spirit, I buy a lot of stuff but one thing I never buy is an ugly sweater. My family and I have a tradition of having an ugly sweater party. Each year we go over to my auntie's house and we make ugly sweaters. Then we have to vote on which sweater is the ugliest and the winner wins bragging rights for the rest of the year. My family and I have many traditions, and they all help make Christmas fun for me.

Christmas is what you make it, so that's why I try to do everything that makes Christmas special to me and my family. Forgive me for sounding like a hallmark movie but remember the reason for the season. God's been gracious to us, so getting in the Christmas spirit is easy for me, and I am beyond grateful for being able to spend it with the people I love.



Illiana students and Mr. White pose for a picture with Mike Braun in Washington DC.

Photo courtesy of Illiana Facebook

Mr. White takes Illiana students to Washington DC for Close Up trip

Lydia O'Riley

Editor-in-Chief

8 Illiana juniors and seniors spent a week in Washington D.C. learning about the United States government on the annual D.C. Close Up trip. The trip was from Saturday Nov. 30 to Saturday Dec. 7.

The students participated in various workshops with students from around the country, as well as being a part of a mock Congressional debate. Within the workshops, students talked about

the government and politics.

Aside from the Close Up workshops, the students were able to meet with government legislators and other staff members when they visited the Capitol; they even talked with Indiana Senator and governor-elect Mike Braun.

During times that the students weren't meeting with government representatives or going to workshops, the students were sightseeing and visiting historical sites such as Christ's Church (George Washington's church),

the Jefferson and MLK Jr. Memorials, the FDR Monument, the Portrait Gallery, and the American History Museum.

A couple of highlights for students included Capitol Hill day and seeing the Speaker of the House walk past them, along with visiting Colonial Williamsburg.

Students were interested in the Close Up program for many reasons. Junior Alexi Shaffer said, "...it provided a different experience than a STEM class or

sports. I've always been interested in history, so I knew it would be a great experience."

Junior Ellie Ratliff said, "Ever since I was a little girl I have been obsessed with our government, so for me this was a dream come true."

Students learned a lot about the people involved within our government. Ratliff said, "I learned that politicians are just people and we need to show them grace just like how God shows us grace."

More than just a smiling face, Carol VanDrunen uses Common Grounds to foster community

Dorothy Leep

Reporter



Photo by Jeff DeVries

Carol VanDrunen puts out donuts in Common Grounds.

Common Grounds is a popular spot here at Illiana, but Common Grounds needs a lot of helping hands to get through the day-to-day schedule, and one of those helpers is Mrs. Carol VanDrunen.

VanDrunen, an Illiana alumnus from 1979, has worked at Common Grounds since its opening in Fall of 2019. VanDrunen was on the committee that first conceptualized the coffee shop within the school. She and a few other women from the committee were all part time workers to start. One day, Mr. Lance Davids came to the committee saying there was a need for a permanent Common Grounds employee to spearhead the effort. Seeing this need, VanDrunen said she applied without hesitation. She got the position and has been working here ever since.

VanDrunen enjoys her time at Common Grounds, especially because it is "one of the many ways Illiana fosters community. I try to memorize as many names as I can; it's a little tricky sometimes."

Over the course of her five years at Illiana, she has tried to make an impact on those around her. From greeting each student with a smile to making sure the donuts and muffins are restocked, VanDrunen works to keep Common Grounds a welcoming space. She said, "I think Common Grounds brings people together. From the students who meet up for a cup of coffee or a snack together to the teachers who bless kids with a gift card or bring their whole class in for a birthday treat to the volunteers who enjoy seeing their grandkids and interacting with all the other students."

VanDrunen added, "It's fun to be here, and I just love these students to pieces."

Illiana sponsors Pathway to Jesus students to give students Christian education

Levi Alons

Reporter

A visitor to the school might wonder why homerooms are selling root beer floats or energy drinks in the commons at break. The reason, of course, is that these homerooms are Pathways to Jesus sponsors. But what's a Pathway to Jesus sponsor? Well, here's the answer.

Pathway to Jesus is a private Christian school in the Dominican Republic designed to help lower income families get a shot at better education typically reserved for the rich. With low quality public schools being the only option for poorer families in the Do-

minican Republic, an affordable, better school was needed. Pathway to Jesus was founded by Mrs. Shelley Hernandez in September of 2003. She currently holds the title of Executive Director at the school.

Hernandez started Pathway to Jesus as a preschool, and it extended to include grades pre-k to 6th. Hernandez decided to start the school after she went on a mission trip for her church and fell in love with the area.

Though the school is efficient with its money, it is still expensive for most of its students' families. Hernandez explained, "If parents have a financial need, then they can apply to be a part of this [sponsorship] program... and they're

all chosen because they all have a need. We do our best to make sure that any parent that applies for the program gets sponsored."

Currently, 166 of the school's 296 kids have sponsors, with 31 sponsored by Illiana homerooms through an organization called Hands of Grace. Homerooms try to raise \$420 for the child to help fund their schooling for the parents who can't afford it.

Every year in June, students from Illiana go to the DR on a mission trip, on which they visit their homeroom's sponsor child. Felicity Nieves, a junior, said "The trip was fulfilling and I would recommend anyone to sign up for it."



Photo courtesy of Illiana's Facebook

Ms. Hernandez interacts with the Pathway to Jesus students last June on the DR.

Homeroom Christmas decorating challenge changes

Aneyah Barnes

Reporter

The annual homeroom Christmas decoration competition has taken a new turn this year, with each homeroom being judged solely on a decorated Christmas tree rather than a themed homeroom.

The change was an idea from Mrs. Bethany DeVries, who wanted to find a contest that go more homerooms competing. In the past, some teachers went so big on the themed decorations that other homerooms didn't even participate.

Mr. Neil Zandstra, whose homeroom won last year with a retelling of "National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation," said that the competition "is a great way for homerooms to get involved and participate."

Ms. Deb Top, another former winner whose previous homeroom had inspired the "No live animals" rule, said, "I prefer the room decorating to the tree decorating rule, but I think now more people will be motivated to enter the contest. I will definitely be going all out this year with my tree. And yes, I will still decorate my entire room. I simply love lights, and it makes me happy to have them all over the place."



Photo courtesy of Illiana Facebook

Athletic Director Darren DeBoer auctions off items to raise money for athletics.

Illiana hosts athletic fundraising auction

Dorothy Leep

Reporter

Every fall Illiana's Athletics Department hosts an auction, selling items that range from a PS5 game console to a European river cruise, all to raise money to funds for Illiana athletics.

Athletic Director, Darren DeBoer, and his assistant, Bonnie Trepton, work together all year long to plan the auction for the upcoming year. The process starts in August when Trepton sends out letters to businesses asking them if they would like to donate cash or an item to the auction. These businesses then end up as sponsors in the athletic sportsbook.

This year, the auction was able to cover most of the expenses that Illiana's athletic department has had in the past year. To raise such a large amount of money, the auction had to offer the right items. Trepton said, "The key to making the most profit is making sure that there is a variety of items. You always must have those unique items that anyone can enjoy."

Every year there is a special part of the auction called the "Raise Your Paddle" event. DeBoer said, "There is always a big need for something in the athletic department, which then turns into a big commitment. This year it was wrestling mats and we are very committed to getting those for our students."

Wrestlers Hannah Hammer, senior, and Jared Antunez, sophomore, and wrestling coach Dave DeBoer, were all pleased with how the auction went and agree that it was helpful meeting the needs of the wrestling program. Antunez and Hammer both said that the mats were a safety issue that needed to be addressed and now that these new mats are coming, both wrestlers are thrilled. Antunez said, "I'm excited for the new mats; the room is going to look nice and new."

From a coach's perspective, DeBoer said, "This auction really shows that the community cares for our program. It's encouraging to the kids and the coaches too, to see the community give money and show their support."

New exam schedule receives mostly positive reviews

Positive Reactions:

Mr. Kamp (Intro to Construction and Intro to Welding):

"Absolutely love it. Students have the best opportunity to reflect what they've learned before you take 2 weeks to forget most of what you've learned. That's how memory works."

Luke Jania (Senior):

"Honestly I like it because I feel like you don't have to stress all break about exams."

Richard Hillegonds (Sophomore):

"Very good, because I get more time to go to Florida. I'm not stressing about exams all of break."

Lily Kreykes (Senior):

"Definitely positive, I really like that change. It does give less time but I don't have to think about it over Christmas break."

Adam DeBoer (Senior):

"I think it's positive because then you don't have to think about it during Christmas break (although it is more stressful before Christmas break)."

Natalie Carpenter (Senior):

"Good because I'm not so stressed out thinking about exams while I'm trying to enjoy time with my family."

Amalia Barnes (Senior):

"I think it's positive. Just to get it over with so you don't have to study over break."

Ryan Mulder (Junior):

"It's good cause then I don't have to think about it over Christmas break."

Carson Rietveld (Junior):

"I think it is better, then we get it done before Christmas and don't have to stress about it over break."

Seth Strigow (Sophomore):

"I like that we can get it over with before break."

Tanner Post (Junior):

"I think it's good since we won't forget the things we've learned."

Layton Topp (Sophomore):

"Good because we don't have to study over break."

Max Van Beek (Senior):

"Definitely good because I don't have to think about exams all of Christmas break and I just get it over with."

Lucas Reidelbach (Senior):

"I think it's good because we can get it out of the way before Christmas and don't have to study over break."

Tristen Bell (Senior):

"I love it because otherwise when we get back from break we have to cram studying which is so annoying. If we do exams before, we have time for studying and don't have to cram over break."

Neutral Reactions:

Evan Baez (Senior):

"Neutral, like I was never really that worried about it. I never really studied."

Nia Clark (Junior):

"I don't care. I'm not gonna study either way. It doesn't bother me."

Negative Reactions:

Kaitlyn Gutierrez (Senior):

"Little negative. Because we get less time, and less time in class to finish all our projects. It's a lot of cramming to do in two weeks, instead of having a week or two more."

Nick Buczkowski (Senior):

"Originally when I first heard it I wasn't a fan, kinda angry. But thinking about it more and more it's probably better for me to take it before the break. Then I'll actually study, as opposed to having two weeks off. But, I still liked it more when exams were after break."

Leah Carton (Senior):

"I'd say more negative, because I was able to do exam reviews during break so I'd have more time to do them."

Izzy Girolimon (Senior):

"I'm not a big fan of it. It's a lot of stress with exams [in December]; having break first gives us time to study and relax, letting us catch our breath before midterms."

Kaleigh Bennet (Sophomore):

"Negative, they come way sooner and I don't have as much time to study."

Students getting lost in translation

Idioms are a regular part of every language, but even native speakers sometimes get confused in funny ways.

“The cats pajamas”



- “Something is cool/interesting”
- Elena Vega
- “Something’s not going well”
- Lucy Calabrese
- “Something is dramatic and unbelievable”
- Maddie Terpstra
- “Something is sarcastic”
- Angel Cubelo

Actual Definition: *an excellent person or thing.*

“Pie in the sky”



- “Something is high in the air”
- Julia West
- “Something’s really good”
- Aaron Huisman
- “On drugs”
- Kamryn Taylor
- “Chasing Dreams”
- Sienna Eenigenburg

Actual Definition: *something that is pleasant to contemplate but is very unlikely to be realized.*

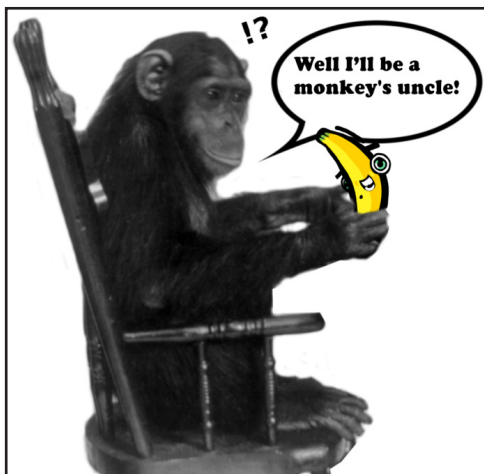
“Long in the tooth”



- “Someone talks a lot”
- Matthew Vander Woude
- “Someone had buck teeth”
- Luke Jania
- “A wolf, they’re mean”
- Sienna Eenigenburg
- “Wise”
- Issac Gordier

Actual Definition: *rather old.*

“I’ll be a monkey’s uncle”



- “I’d be a wild person”
- Adam DeBoer
- “I’m surprised”
- Levi Christoffels
- “I’ll be someone’s stupid uncle”
- Elizabeth Alons
- “This is absurd ‘oh wow’”
- Robert Reeder

Actual Definition: *to express complete surprise, amazement or disbelief.*

“A tempest in a teacup”



- “A big whirlwind of fighting/conflict in a small area of your life”
- Aliyah Lanting
- “Someone who is wild and unkept while everyone else around is calm”
- McKenzie Bell
- “A person with an aggressive personality but presents themselves as nice”
- Grace VanDrunen

Actual Definition: *great anger or excitement about a trivial matter.*

“Pyrrhic victory”



- “You won something”
- Kiera Frisema
- “Something was won but in a dirty way”
- Atikilt Bosman
- “Stolen victory”
- Maya Reinsma
- “Throwing a rager”
- Trinity Tricka

Actual Definition: *a victory that is not worth winning because the winner has suffered such a great loss that it is similar to defeat*

“Cut the mustard”



- “Don’t be ridiculous”
- Kate Santefort
- “Get to the point”
- Raelyn Sederstrom
- “Stop lying”
- Marie Williams
- “Tell me the truth”
- Kaleigh Bennet

Actual Definition: *come up to expectations; reach the required standard.*

“Hill of beans”



- “It makes no sense”
- Julia West
- “Not very strong/useful”
- Aaron Huisman
- “A lot of lies”
- Ashlee VanderMeer
- “Keep it to yourself”
- Grace Meyer

Actual Definition: *anything of little importance or value.*

Preparing for exams: tips for aceing tests

Marissa Krause

Feature Editor

With exams before Christmas and not having that extra two week study period before testing, it may seem a bit more stressful to fit in studying for all your classes in such a short amount of time. But there are many tips and tricks to help you manage your time better, stay focused, and efficiently study to ace your exams. Here are five tips recommended by Princetonreview.com and Summer.harvard.edu.

#1 Talk to your teacher. A good resource to use, provided by your teacher, is a study guide. Although quite intimidating at first, it helps refresh your memory about things you studied months ago, and it helps you ask the right questions of your teacher. (They may even use the same exact questions on the exam.) Asking your teacher how and what to study can help reduce your stress and nar-

row down the studying you have to do.

#2 Make a schedule. Making a schedule can help you organize your study time so you can study more efficiently. You can study for less if you make a dedicated study time, not wasting any time wondering what subject to study for first. It's also beneficial to include break times, for doing so can improve focus and increase productivity.

#3 Form a study group. Sometimes studying by yourself can be hard, especially if you don't have self discipline. So having a study group to keep you accountable can help you feel more focused and motivated to do your work.

#4 Don't skip on sleep. According to the Perelman School of Medicine of the University of Pennsylvania, "Sleep research from the last 20 years indicates that sleep does more than simply give students the energy they need to study and per-

form well on tests. Sleep actually helps students learn, memorize, retain, recall, and use their new knowledge to come up with creative and innovative solutions." Starting a healthy sleep routine beforehand can help set up that sleep schedule right before exams.

#5 Don't cram before a test. While doing so, you are less likely to retain the information being consumed, increase stress, negatively impact sleep and decrease your overall preparedness. Don't try to do all your studying in the study period. According to thinklikeapublisher.com "Every time we see information, our brain strengthens the neural pathway connected to that data. More exposure means a stronger pathway. It's also about repetition over time that creates effectiveness. There needs to be an interval between the exposures to allow our brain to refresh and reinforce the memory." Study-



ing in smaller chunks of time spread out over days is more effective than studying the same total amount of time but doing it all at once right before the test.

Exams seem more stressful and more time consuming than a regular test, but when

prepared enough, they don't have to be so intimidating. Most of us are huge procrastinators and usually do "the study really quick and pray for the best" method, but when we are prepared we can be more confident in our scores and in ourselves.

Exams have you too stressed to rest?

Study suggests over 25% of students experience test anxiety, but psychiatrists have ways to help people cope

Marissa Krause

Feature Editor

Those nerves right before a test or quiz that feel overbearing, may be a sign of testing anxiety. According to a student resource published by the College of Western Idaho (CWI), a study was conducted and

about 25-40% of students experience test anxiety which affects their overall testing, preventing them from doing their best.

What is testing anxiety? The American Psychiatric Association (APA) describes anxiety as "an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, wor-

ried thoughts, and physical changes like increased blood pressure." Test anxiety is considered a type of performance anxiety wherein students become excessively worried and upset before and during an exam. Students who experience testing anxiety may have physical effects such as headaches, nausea, panic attacks, crying, tightness in the chest, light-headedness or faintness, sweating, and trouble sleeping. Others experience more emotional responses: stress, fear, mental blocks, helplessness,

depression, or ruminations on past disappointments or failures. Students who suffer from these emotional and physical distresses may have impaired concentration, lower test scores, negative self-image and burnout.

While these are many signs, there are no definite answers as to why some people develop testing anxiety, although there are some common factors such as low self-esteem, insufficient preparation, intense internal and/or external pressure to perform, and perfectionist tendencies.

If you suffer from mild testing anxiety, here are some suggestions from CWI that might help reduce your symptoms:

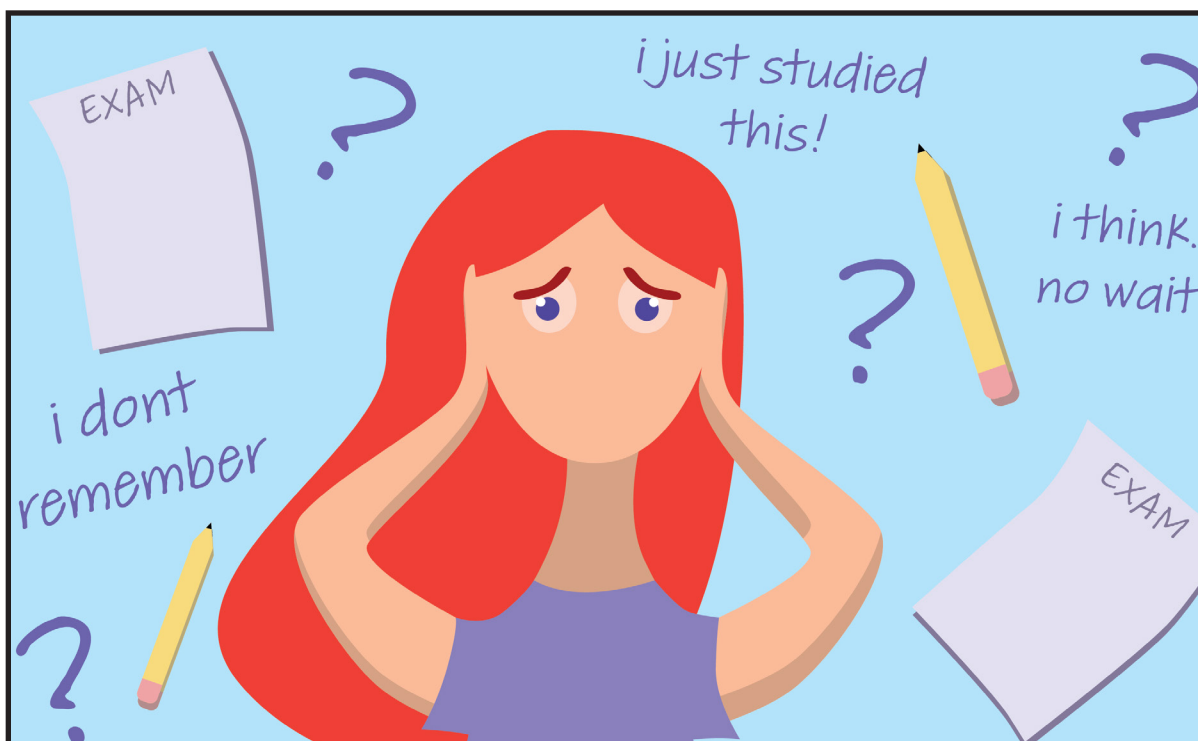
1. Put things in perspective: When struggling with anxiety, having one bad grade may feel like the end of it all. But remember that we are all not perfect. Setting achievable goals of understanding the material enough to pass the test is a great way to take small steps while navigating your anxiety. One bad grade does not define who you are as a person, or your abilities and strengths as a student. Try not to dwell on your

one mistake, and see how you can improve for the next test.

2. Visualize positive outcomes: It's easy to go into a test with a negative mindset and visualize the worst case scenario. This can truly have an effect on your overall performance, as you trick your mind into thinking that is the only possible outcome. You can overcome this by trying to replace your negative thoughts with positive ones. For example, "I've passed many tests before this one and I know I can do it again." or "I studied hard for this exam, and I am well prepared."

3. Be sure to actually prepare for your test. (See tips in article below). Anxiety can affect even people who have prepared, but you pretty much guarantee anxiety getting ratcheted up if you fail to study for your test.

4. Seek professional guidance. If you tried some of the test taking tips for studying as well as your thought process, it can be helpful talking to a counselor who can help you walk through any more struggles or concerns you are having. It can really help to be in a comforting and helpful environment that can also provide other ways to help cope with your anxiety.



'Wicked' truly a sight to see

Gabriella Costello

Arts and Leisure Editor

Part one of director Jon M. Chu's "Wicked" came out Nov. 22 and I had the opportunity to see it with my family recently. This movie takes place primarily at Shiz University in the Land of Oz, and it follows the unlikely friendship of Elphaba and Glinda.

The movie begins where "The Wizard of Oz" ends so I would recommend watching it before "Wicked" but it is not necessary. After the opening scene you get taken into a flashback for the rest of the movie. The movie shows Elphaba's adolescent life, her schooling life at Shiz, how she met Glinda, how that relationship blossomed, and how her interactions with the Wizard of Oz turned her into the "evil" Wicked Witch of the West.

"Wicked" is truly a sight to see. Jon M. Chu casted a beautiful cast not only

by looks but by sound. The well known actor and musician Ariana Grande not only played Glinda but she embodied her. Ariana was able to give life to a character in a way no one else could. Another outstanding actor and musician in this cast is Cynthia Erivo as Elphaba. Her voice sent chills down my spine every time she sang. Her voice resonated with the crowd and left us all applauding after her final performance. Lastly on this outstanding performance list is Peter Dinklage as the goat Dr. Dillamond. Dinklage wasn't on screen for long but when he was, he set the stage for the need to save the animals in The Emerald City.

I felt like I was at the musical in Chicago, which I have seen before, so it was incredible to see how the two correspond. The choreography was impeccable and the singing was chill worthy. Not only was it a musical masterpiece, but it was comical. The simple

remarks that the characters had were hilarious and left the audience in laughter.

There were some slow parts but it was all worth it for the closing song and scene. The last song felt like a Disney fireworks show.

Now as much as I like the musical there are some parts that could be approved upon. For instance, they could have casted someone better fit for The Wizard. Jeff Goldblum is a fantastic actor, but this role did not suit him. Same goes for Michelle Yeoh as Madame Morrible. Goldblum and Yeoh seemed like filler characters and didn't have much dimension or "wow" to them. Another actor like that was Marissa Bode as Nessarose; she didn't fill the character well and didn't make an impression.

The scene in The Emerald City leading up to Elphaba creating the flying monkey's seemed unnecessary and filler content that should have been left out or put to better use. As beautiful as the movie was, it



did not need to be 2 hours and 40 mins. They could have cut around 30 minutes of filler content and still have the same impactful creation.

All that being said, I still stick to my previous statement that everyone should see "Wicked" while it's still in theaters.

Illiana's favorite Christmas movies in order

1



2



3



4



5



This list is the result of an Echo poll of Illiana students conducted in the last week of November.

Boys basketball season begins

Lydia O'Riley

Editor-in-Chief

Boys basketball has started the 2024-25 season with a record of 1-1.

The team played against Kouts High School on Nov. 26 after Tanner Post shot a buzzer beating 3 pointer, resulting in their first win with a score of 65-63. However, on Dec. 6, they fell short to the Munster Mustangs with a score of 49-52.

Varsity coach Tom Rozeboom said that in the last quarter of the first game the team "finally came into their own." He added, "If we can have that momentum moving forward, I think that is going to pay dividends for us, not only in our record, but as we move forward into the post-season."

Rozeboom explained how the team prides themselves on not giving up and practicing GRIT. That is one of the contributing reasons to their win against Kouts. Rozeboom said, "...I was super proud of not just the players out on the floor, but also our bench who was just as into the game as the people on the floor. It just resonates well with what we are trying to accomplish not just in basketball, but in life."

Rozeboom said that the team needs to "clean up" a few things when it comes to the team's defense and their offensive efficiency.

Seniors Jake Scott and Josh Bultema said that communication on the defensive side could use some work. Scott added, "...being more vocal on the court instead of just thinking everybody knows what is going on; we should be talking things out."

Swim team discusses goals for season

Giannia O'Neal-Schultz

News Editor

Illiana swim team winter season has started, they have made improvements and have many goals for the future. Some of those goals are getting faster times in their events and making it to the state championship. Swimming is a relatively new sport to Illiana compared to Illiana's older sports teams. This team has grown within the last year and has a few new athletes ready to compete for Illiana this swimming season.

Senior Zach Vervlied said, "Me and my family along with Mr. DeBoer all really pushed to start a team last year. Originally it was just me on the team, but this year we have had a couple of girls sign up to be a part of our growing team. We have pretty high expectations this season, my goal is to win sectionals then go to state and place in the top 3."

Sophomore Natalie B said, "Swimming for Illiana is a good and fun experience, I get to talk to my friends all the time while I also get to do the sport I love."

Boys wrestling brief

Joy Ramsey

Sports Editor

The boys wrestling team currently has a record of 10-2. Senior David Antunez and junior Levi Kreykes are both undefeat-

ed and lead the team in wins with 11 each. Senior Gage Bambic follows right behind them with nine. Senior Noah Yannuzzi, Antunez, and Kreykes all went undefeated out of five matches at the North Newton invite.

Girls wrestling brief

Joy Ramsey

Sports Editor

The girls wrestling team is now sanctioned by the IHSAA so the team now wrestles schools much larger than ours. Although last year the team went undefeated, their current record is 2-5 but they have had very close match-

es, often only losing by one match. Junior Gabriella Costello is ranked in the top ten girls in the state at 115 pounds. She placed first at Highland and second at Rochester. Both Costello and senior Amy Bosman lead the team with 11 wins this season. Right behind them is senior Khari Robison with 10.

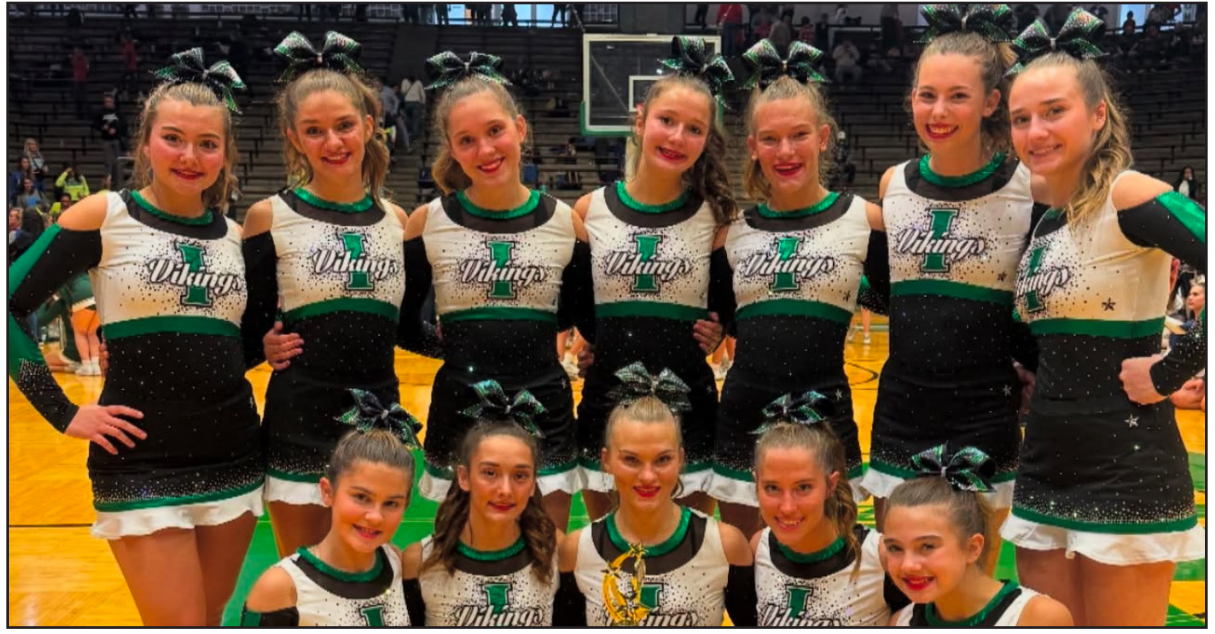
Girls basketball brief

Joy Ramsey

Sports Editor

The varsity girls basketball team has a current record of 2-3 overall and 1-1 in conference placing them in second. Senior Abbie Ritzema leads the team in points averaging 12 per game

and assists averaging 4.6 per game. Senior Ella Oltoff currently leads in rebounds averaging 9 per game and blocks averaging 0.6 per game. Junior Sienna Eenienburg currently leads as an 83% free throw shooter and a 42% 3 point field goal shooter. She also leads in steals averaging 2.6 per game.



Varsity cheer poses with fourth place trophy

Photo courtesy of Illiana Cheer

Varsity cheer takes fourth at state competition

Joy Ramsey

Sports Editor

Varsity cheer competed in the state finals at New Castle High School on Nov. 9. The team placed fourth to end the competition season.

Sophomore Claire Santefort said, "My favorite memory of state is probably when we

are in the tunnel and about to go out and the team is hyping each other up and getting ready to go."

Moving forward into the sideline cheer portion of the season, senior Jenna Koontz said, "I want everyone to have fun but still be determined and push themselves to keep advancing in the sport." Santefort

added, "I think we should just keep being determined for sideline cheer. I also hope that we can just keep getting better as a team for the years to come"

Junior Alise Evenhouse said, "My goals for the team next year is to be as close as we are this year and have people gain and improve on their skills."

State ranked Taekwondo athlete within the sophomore class

Joy Ramsey

Sports Editor

Although she was just looking to learn the basics of defending herself, sophomore Angel Cubelo developed a passion for taekwondo.

In the future she would also like to be a taekwondo instructor but isn't sure about continuing it as an adult. This past year she ranked first in the state for overall points in combat sparring and third in districts for combat and revalue sparring but this year she's

ite part of the sport is sparring because, "I get to compete with different people, and I get to compete for points. I really enjoy fighting because there's forms where you practice the art of taekwondo and then there's the actual fighting part

Illiana athletes who play outside school

OUT OF BOUNDS

Taekwondo is a Korean martial art similar to karate, but more focused on kicks than hand strikes. At each competition points are earned by landing legal strikes to certain target areas of the opponent's body. These points get tallied and help rank competitors in state standings. Cubelo hopes she can eventually receive a ranking in world standings.

Cubelo started when she was nine, then stopped to do gymnastics, and eventually came back to it in seventh grade. She personally does competition and is a first degree black belt. She competes through the Region ATA academy which is connected to ATA martial arts.

Cubelo said, "I enjoy the sport because it taught me good discipline, integrity, and respect towards my peers and adults. I consider the taekwondo community like my second family."

aiming to win the district competition in order to compete for worlds.

She added that her favor-

and I just enjoy fighting because I'm good at it and it's the thrill and the adrenaline that makes it even more fun."



Sophomore Angel Cubelo ranks first in state.

Photo courtesy of Angel Cubelo

Editorial

Should Illiana bring back nostalgia from middle school day with homeroom Christmas parties?

We, the Editorial staff, believe it is about time we bring back homeroom Christmas parties. There is an understanding that we would have to do it before exam week since the usual schedule has been changed but that just makes it all the better. It would be a good foot to lead into exams and end the first semester.

Don't you remember the joy of having a classroom Christmas party in middle school? Half the day was just full of fun games and snacks. If you were lucky, your teacher would fill a small stocking for you. Well, we feel it's about time that such frivolity be brought back. After all, who deserves a nice little break from classwork more than a high schooler?

Now we aren't forgetting about the staff. This would also be a time for the teachers and staff to clear their minds and relax. Plus, this party also allows teachers to share another experience with their homeroom students,

strengthening that relationship.

Try and remember the excitement you felt waking up, realizing that it was the last day of school before Christmas break.

We, the Editorial staff, believe it is about time we bring back homeroom Christmas parties... Don't you remember the joy of having a classroom Christmas party in middle school?

You're getting ready for school, wearing your ugly Christmas sweater and the bizarre Christmas socks your grandma got you because she thought they were cute. Your parents have breakfast ready downstairs, but you're almost too excited for the day to eat. You hop into the car without your backpack, and your mom yells at you for not being bundled up with your winter coat, hat, and gloves. You anxiously

sit in the car anticipating the eventful day ahead. Suddenly your heart drops because you forgot the Christmas treat you were supposed to bring for the party. Your mom scolds

you a little, but thankfully says she will drop them off later. Your mom drops you off and you just can't wait for the movie your teacher picked out for your class to watch, the treats all the other kids in your class brought, the fun games you get to play, and so on. The biggest anxiety is your slight fear that you might end up being the only one wearing an ugly Christmas sweater.

You walk into your

classroom and see all your friends; the fear of being the only one in an ugly sweat washes away and you're ready for the fun to start. Your teacher acknowledges the excitement yet still relays the disappointing news that there is still half a day of classes before you can get to the party. The classes drag on as you impatiently wait for the party. You get back to your homeroom and see it all decorated for the party, the room moms standing there with the sweet treats they made, and the little candy canes the teacher got for you all. The teacher announces you will be watching "The Polar Express." You all yell excitedly, the room moms start to hand out hot chocolate as the movie starts, they call you up to get a sweet treat and all the good food they brought. A warm feeling fills your chest and once the day is over you go home ready for Christmas break and rejoice that you have no homework.

Now why wouldn't you want to bring that back?

Surviving family during holiday seasons

Christmas is just around the corner and tis' the season of new beginnings, birth of Jesus, Christmas lights, presents, yummy food and its makers, "its makers" being our crazy families who we love so dearly but want to avoid. Now as a teenager,



Marissa Krause

Feature Editor

we spend most of our time in our rooms or with friends, so this is one of the few times we actually get/have to see our families. So here's a helpful guide to navigating your family during Christmas time. (You're welcome)

#1 Sidestep that nosey aunt or uncle. For some reason the first words to come out of their mouths after the "welcome in" hug is "So, you got a boyfriend/girlfriend yet?" like their saving a spot on their fridge for a "save the date" card to come into the mail. Fortunately, if you're like me I can avoid this since I have a two year relationship under my belt, but if you're in that uncomfortable position, suddenly develop a cough, or whip out your math homework. I'm sure they'll slowly walk away.

#2 Camp near the snacks. Stay near the snack table, if you have a mouth full of cookies, no one should bug you while you're munching away. Unless it's grandma, then you have to sprint cuz she don't care.

#3 Find the hideout spot. Whether it's your house, or a relative's, there is always that one spot where all the cousins go down to sit on their phones. This is your home base: you are safe here.

#4 Talk back this time (it's okay). We all get those comments our parents make in front of our whole family so they can try to make them laugh. Yes, Dad, I farted at the dinner table when I was 7, let's talk about the symphony you make while napping on the couch, shall we?

#5 Avoid the little monsters. Sometimes you have the little kids ask if you can play, and I personally don't have the heart to say no. So, play hide and seek, then "forget" to find them. Then maybe go find a hiding spot for yourself.

#6 Be ready for the inevitable question. If you haven't been around your family in awhile, they'll probably ask "So what do you want to be when you grow up?" Reply with a simple, "Dog food taster" or "Furniture tester" but look serious. I'd want to see their reactions.

#7 Ignore that one uncle. Once in a while you'll get that family member that says "It's apple juice. One drink won't hurt." Just say no: trust me, it's not apple juice.

Lasty, #8 Embrace the Midwestern goodbye. Seriously, this single handedly makes me want to move out of the Midwest forever. This is the marathon of farewells. Apparently we need another 30 minutes and 10 conversations while standing in the doorway to be able to fully get our butts outside. Are we leaving, or just trying to slowly convince ourselves it's okay to leave? Unfortunately, I cannot help with this problem. I am a fallen victim, not a survivor.

the
Echo

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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 a Christmas themed
word search Illiana!



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