



## Singing telegrams are back! *Students serenade Illiana halls for Valentines Day*

Giannia O'Neal-Schultz  
News Editor

On Feb. 13 Illiana students were surprised with singing telegrams from various groups of students. The singing telegrams this year was a fundraiser held by the student council for former Illiana student Lizzie Knot who has recently passed away. All the proceeds from the Valentines day sale were donated to Bethshan, an or-

ganization that was special to Knot. Bethshan is a faith-based organization providing homes and support services for people who have intellectual and developmental disabilities.

English teacher and student council sponsor Sara Johnson said, "Izzy's family asked for donations to be made to Bethshan in her name as a way to honor her memory and her life. We had decided early on that we were going to donate



Photo by Jeff DeVries

Senior girl group sings "Call Me Maybe" to Nate Turkstra on February 13.

the proceeds and as student council we were deciding where we wanted to donate. This just seemed like the perfect fit: it was a way to honor Lizzie, who Mrs. Aardsma and I knew well, and a way for the student council to do some good in the larger community."

There were seven singing groups and one solo act who performed this year. Senior telegram singer Khiari Robosion said, "I sang 'Love' by Keyshia Cole solo, and it was really fun singing for other people. It was a great experience, and I enjoyed it."

## Melissa Kreykes: New face in Illiana office

Natalie Tambrini  
Reporter

If you've been to the office recently, you may have noticed a new face at the back desk. The occupant of that space is Mrs. Melissa Kreykes, Mr. Brent Vermeulen's new administrative assistant.

Her job involves arranging substitute teachers, organizing graduation and the awards ceremony, helping keep Mr. Vermeulen's calendar, and more.

Kreykes isn't new to the Illiana community. Her two children, Lily (senior) and Logan (freshman), attend school here.

After studying accounting at Vincennes University for a year and a half, Kreykes decided to become a flight attendant like her sister. Since then, she has worked at an eye doctor's office, and most recently in the office of Dutch American Foods, before



Photo by Jeff DeVries

New worker in the office Mrs. Kreykes diligently works at her desk during the day.

coming to Illiana.

Kreykes said, "It was time for me to change careers, and I wanted to be close to the kids."

This is her first time working full-time, so the job has

been an adjustment.

Kreykes said she has enjoyed the job so far and that "Everyday is very different.... I like to stay busy all day, and I feel like it's a good environment

where you stay busy and it's never boring."

In her free time, Kreykes enjoys making crafts, reading, spending time with family, and making care packages for people.

## Illiana looks to expand sports outlets: new dance team underway

Joy Ramsey  
Sports Editor

Illiana Christian is currently looking into starting a dance team, potentially this summer. Although some details have to be worked out in order to get started next school year, the team would hold tryouts in the summer and perform as a winter sport during halftime in basketball games. The team would have three practices a week in order to perform.

The first meeting that was held for the team had 14 girls who were interested and they discussed what the team would like.

Many details are still in discussion such as coaching, which Mrs. Jenna Dutton, the school's Admissions Director, has expressed an interest in doing. Dutton used to be on a dance team when she was in high school. Other details under discussion include the team's potential performance schedule, budget, and uniforms. According to Dutton, the athletic department is also still working out if the team would perform at boys basketball games, at girls, or at both. And, she added, if football becomes a reality in the future, the team might perform at football games too.

The team will be performing during home game warm ups. Hypothetically this means they would do 2-3 9 count dances along with the pep band warm up song.

Another topic they are looking into is the overlap with the cheer team.

Dutton said, "It was a concern at first but I think that dance and cheer are both heading in such different directions with tumbling and technical things required. Our hope would be that these teams would complement instead of compete with each other."

## Illiana's Jazz Select Band performs at Night to Shine

Aneyah Barnes  
Reporter

Illiana's Jazz Select Band performed at Faith Church - Dyer "Night to Shine" on Friday, Feb. 7, 2025. The group of nine musicians performed a variety of Latin, jazz, groove,

ballads, swing, rock, and gospel tunes. The students prepared about 10-12 songs on their own and then performed without a director, according to Mrs. Rachel Monroe. They performed for a whole hour, entertaining the parents and caretakers of people with disabilities.

Monroe said, "The Jazz Select students did incredible! The super cool thing about Jazz Select is that these students are training to become working professional musicians."

Almost everything went according to plan except for a few complications which

were corrected about 5 minutes before the performance began. Mrs. Monroe stated that some of the ear monitors weren't working properly for the drummers. The drummers were also behind a drum shield to keep the volume down, so they couldn't hear the rest of

the band. Mrs. Monroe said two of the students, JC Colar and Colten Sederstrom, were unphased and handled the situation like professionals.

The Jazz Select students said it was a fun experience and were happy to bless those attending Night to Shine.

## Common Grounds prices being raised is a result of inflation

Many Illiana students have likely noticed the increase in Common Grounds prices. The candy that once cost \$1 is now \$1.50. This has been enough to spark a range of student reactions, from outrage to mild annoyance. The sight of snack prices increasing can be a sorrowful sight to a student on a budget. But while it's easy to try and find blame

for prices going up, the reality is much more complex than simple greed. The prices at Common Grounds aren't driven by profit. Rather, it's a reflection of the issues in the world today. Inflation follows us into our schools.



Isabella Wright

Reporter

Inflation is not just a hard-to-understand economic term, burning through the headlines about the US economy. It's something the average person experiences every day, from gas to grocery prices. For the past few years, supply chain disruptions with their increased production costs has begun climbing the prices among many industries, especially food distribution and production. Avian flu has wiped out millions of birds, driving the price of eggs through the stratosphere. For Common Grounds, which relies on external manufacturers and distributors for their products and supplies, the climbing prices trickle down to directly impact their costs. Simply put, the suppliers charge more, so to stay viable, the store must charge more.

It's important to note that Common Grounds isn't a Starbucks. It isn't here to maximize profit; Common Grounds exists solely to provide a service to Illiana students, offering them cheap and convenient snacks and drinks during the school day. The workers behind the counter, many of them familiar faces, are mostly volunteers who don't make a dime. They are working in support of Illiana students.

Behind every item in the fridges or written on the board, there is a chain of people and processes that make them accessible to the general population. Manufacturers create the base product, and distributors help move it to a retail space like Common Grounds. These manufacturers and distributors are completely malleable to the economic changes we see on the news, transportation costs, supply shortages, and labor costs. When the prices for these go up, they must raise the prices of their products to match. And because these businesses are trying to make a profit, they are not likely to eat additional costs that reduce their profit.

The Common Grounds workers, who spend weekdays stocking shelves, organizing inventory, doing transactions, and making you the hot chocolate you've been craving, are a part of a non-profit enterprise, but they cannot sell items for less than they pay for them. If they were to do so, Common Grounds would not be around for long.

In the face of rising prices, it is easy to overlook the effort and processes that go into bringing you that chocolate chip muffin. The logistics are complex, and in some ways it feels natural to just be mad at the people closest to you for the prices going up. But it is also unfair. The blame actually lies elsewhere.

So when you feel the urge to complain about the prices going up for your veggie straws and your hot chocolate, remember why you are being inconvenienced by this. The rising prices may feel like a burden, but they are a part of life and they are certainly not the fault of the lovely person handing you your cup of coffee.



Senior Andrew Calix talks to students within his challenge day group called the Panthers.

Photo by Jeff DeVries

## Illiana students participates in challenge day

Dorothy Leep

Reporter

Every year, Illiana students and staff gather in the ARC for a day of community, bonding, and faith-filled activities. This day is known as Challenge Day.

The first Challenge Day ever held was Spring of the 2021-2022 school year, and the day has stayed essentially the same since that first day though new students get involved every year.

Mrs. Melanie Benes and Mrs. Heidi Teach are the two staff members that

helped start Challenge Day here at Illiana. Benes found out about the idea of Challenge Day from her husband, who is also a high school guidance counselor, at Shepard High School. She said, "It sounded like a great experience at his [her husband's] school so I thought why not check it out."

Benes and Teach discovered that Merrillville High School also does a Challenge Day, but unlike the one at Shepard, which was run by an outside company, Merrillville ran its own program. Both Benes

and Teach visited Merrillville High School and participated in its Challenge Day. Through this experience, both Benes and Teach worked to perfect Challenge Day for Illiana, tweaking things to make it more faith-based and more suitable for the ideals that Illiana possesses.

The main purpose of Challenge Day, as Benes puts it, "is to develop a passion for God, people, and the world, especially God and people."

Challenge Day seeks to build a culture of caring by getting students to

open up, learn things about our peers, and learn things about themselves. The idea is that students then take that learning into the rest of their lives. Benes stated, "It shows people how to love others the way Christ calls us to love them."

All of these things that Challenge Day entails are useful to daily life, whether it be spiritual, within your relationships, even if everyday tasks, what Challenge Day teaches can be, "... carried with you wherever you go no matter what stage of life you're in," Benes said.

## Illiana has new vape detectors to deter students from vaping

Levi Alons

Reporter

With little fanfare, in January Illiana installed new equipment meant to protect the student body--vape detectors.

"I'll give you as much information as I can," said Principal Brent Vermeulen, but he also made clear that he would not divulge much more. "If students know where they are or how they

work, then they would know how to avoid triggering them."

Instead, Vermeulen told me why they were installed.

"The idea was to deter students from even bringing them [vapes] into the building," Vermeulen said. "We just don't want it to happen. It isn't how Christ wants us to live."

Vermeulen opened a large desk drawer, full to the brim with confiscated

vapes, and pulled one out. He explained that an average cigarette only lasts a little while, with a max of 15 puffs. A vape can typically have over 1000 puffs, with high-end ones getting up to 50,000. The inhaled vapor, according to John Hopkins, has potentially harmful chemicals in it. Nicotine is addictive, raises blood pressure, and spikes adrenaline, which can cause heart damage. Emerging

data also links other chemicals in the vapor to chronic pulmonary diseases such as asthma.

Because the smell of vapes is easier to hide than that of cigarettes, students have more easily gotten away with vaping on campus. Hence, the school board's decision to install the new detectors.

"Do we have them?" said Vermeulen. "Sure. That's about all I can say."

## DeVries takes Advanced Language Arts students on 'Dream' field trip to Shakespeare Theater

Isabella Wright

Reporter

Illiana's Advanced Language Arts students took a field trip to the Chicago Shakespeare Theater on Monday, Feb. 9, to view "Short Shakespeare! A Midsummer Night's Dream," a 75-minute adaptation of Shakespeare's romantic comedy directed by Edward Hall. His production captures the exhilaration and humor of young love in Shakespeare's words, all with a

modern twist.

Mr. Jeff DeVries, the teacher who led the trip, said, "I like taking students to see Shakespeare because they learn how fun and how accessible it really is."

"A Midsummer Night's Dream" is a whimsical comedy by Shakespeare that follows the tangled romantic entanglements of four young lovers, Hermia and Lysander, Helena, and Demetrius, in an enchanted forest. The fairy

king Oberon and his mischievous servant Puck use magic to create chaos, causing love triangles and broken hearts among the lovers.

Meanwhile, a group of amateur actors rehearsing a play for the Duke's wedding adds humor with their clumsy antics. As magic and dreams blur the lines between reality and illusion, the play explores themes of love, mischief, and transformation, ultimately resolving in harmony and celebra-

tion.

The actors used a myriad of tools and instruments hung at the back of the stage as effects. Senior Levi Sliemers said, "One thing I thought was cool, was the sound effects. They were doing them on stage, like the triangle."

Senior Alyssa Buxton said, "I just loved how colorful everything was; they weren't afraid to be very silly and slide across the stage. It was just super fun to watch."



Photo by Melissa Kreykes

Illiana's Wind Ensemble competed in the Midwest Band Festival on Saturday, Feb. 22.

## Wind Ensemble competes in new division

*Playing more difficult music, Vikings face off against largerschools, place fourth in division one bracket*

Lydia O'Riley  
Editor-in-Chief

The Illiana Wind Ensemble traveled to Lemont High School on Saturday Feb. 22 for the annual Midwest Band Festival. They placed fourth overall in their division, only 0.67 points away from placing third on the podium. In addition, they received the Best Brass award, which means the band had the best brass section of the entire competition.

Last year, the Wind Ensemble was in Division 2

which plays lower level music and is judged less aggressively. They placed first in Division 2 last year but moved up to Division 1 this year. They played higher level music this year featuring "Slava!" by Leonard Bernstein, and "Minimalist Dances" by Matt Conaway.

Several students played solos such as sophomore Kaleigh Bennet on clarinet, sophomore Natalie Tambri on alto saxophone, junior Annabel Kamphuis on oboe, senior Levi Sliemers on trombone, and senior Isaac Gorter on trumpet.

The Wind Ensemble also

had three Symphonic Band students join their clarinet section for this competition: freshman Grace Carter and sophomores Lincoln Pienias and Alanna Lee.

Senior Raelyn Sederstrom said, "I think we all did great. We put in a lot of hard work and that paid off. There were a few bumps along the way, but we went in and did the best that we could."

Band director Rachel Monroe said, "This ensemble has been a joy to work with. They have the BEST attitudes, great hearts and Christ-centered focus during our rehearsals. They put God first in their lives, relationships and in our band room. So happy for these students and their well deserved placement."

## Illiana raises money to help keep tuition down

Aneyah Barnes

Reporter

Illiana's Mission Possible Drive was Feb. 10-13. The Mission Possible Drive is a fund raiser for the school and helps keep tuition down. The drive usually begins in October and lasts about a week, but this year, in order to avoid conflicting with fundraising for the auditorium in the fall, the drive was moved to the spring. The annual drive has been active for about 20 years.

Many students, parents, and alumni have shown their support and donated to the drive to help the school. People usually mail or call the school to make their dona-

tions. Mrs. Cassie Siersema has been running the drive for about seven years now, and appreciates all the volunteers and support the drive receives.

The drive is aimed to raise money for the school and keep tuition costs low. Many students helped out with the drive by calling parents and alumni, and sending out emails to gather donations. Many people have already donated to the drive, which has helped the school. Mrs. Siersema said she is thankful for all the donations and the people who have supported, as they are helping to raise money for the school.

Siersema said, "Thank you to the students and community for their support."

## All-school testing day returns

Giannia O'Neal-Schultz

News Editor

On March 12th Illiana will be having an all school testing day. Freshmans will be taking the PSAT 8/9, Sophomores will be taking the PSAT 10, and the Junior will be taking the SAT. The state of Indiana wants all juniors to take the SAT or ACT as a graduation requirement.-

Director of students services Heidi Teach said, "We have the sophomores and freshmen take the tests to

not only get data to help with instruction but for them to practice taking the test. We do not want the first time students take the test to be when they are juniors in a high stake situation."

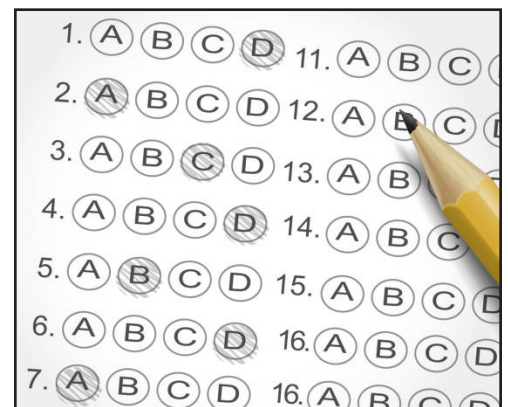
In previous years se-

niors would have had the day off, but because the SAT has switched from being on paper to online it has shortened the time of the test, seniors will have a late start instead.

Teach said, "Last year we tested the three different groups on three separate days as the test went digital. It was something that we were not familiar with proctoring so we were unsure of how things would go. The

year prior to that we did test everyone on the same day but it was paper tests which were

more familiar for the teachers and not technology based. This year we have gone back to testing everyone on the same day. This will continue at Illiana as we want students to be prepared to take the SAT in their junior year."



## Mr. Hillegeonds takes Human Body Systems class to hospital

Dorothy Leep

Reporter

Friday, Jan. 31, Illiana's juniors and seniors taking Human Body Systems taught by Mr. Ty Hillegeonds took a trip to the Franciscan Hospital in Olympia Fields, IL, where they received firsthand accounts from nurses, doctors, and even emergency planning managers of all that they have seen and experienced.

Hillegeonds worked closely with Vanessa Scheidt, Manager of Educational Services at Franciscan in Olympia Fields, to arrange the field trip. This is Illiana's second time attending this trip, and it is a new experience for those working at the hospital as well. Scheidt said, "Since the school year began, many other schools have contacted and shared their interest in making field trips here as

well, but Illiana was the trailblazer for this experience."

The day started with a lineup of interviews from all different types of employees to give an explanation of their field and the work that they've done. Hillegeonds said, "It's C.O.P. appointment speed dating!"

One of the students, junior Daniel Dykstra, said that there was one interview that stood

out to him. Dykstra said, "Kevin Johnson's [Administrative Services VP] interview was really interesting; he gave a lot of good insight on what his career looks like."

After the interviews concluded, the students were taken on a tour around the hospital, being shown the different wings and given explanations of what goes on in

each of those wings. McKenzie Bell, a junior taking Human Body Systems, said she enjoyed the tour, calling it, "... an experience that was very informative and eye-opening to see the many different career opportunities."

Hillegeonds said, "The students get to meet people who've experienced... [the careers] they hope to experience."

# America's consumption crisis: the rising impact of waste, fast fashion, Energy

Marissa Krause

Feature Editor

How much is too much? As consumption levels rise in the US, industries from fashion to food contribute to waste, higher energy demand, and environmental strain. Experts point to materialism, single-use culture, and inefficient energy as key drivers of the issue.

As fast fashion becomes more popular in the United States, because of its inexpensive and trendy styles, it contributes to the overall clothing waste in the industry. According to Earth.org, an environmental news website, "In America alone, an estimated 85% of all textiles – end up in landfills on a yearly basis. That's equivalent to approximately 81.5 pounds per person per year and around 2,150 pieces per second country-wide." The fashion industry is the third biggest pol-

luter, generating 35% of microplastics in the ocean, says a report published in 2017 by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. "clothing is only worn 7 to 10 times before being thrown away." with women as the largest consumers keeping up with all the trends and seeing shopping as an activity instead of a need.

Additionally, overconsumption inevitably leads to increased waste production with food being the largest component in US landfills, says usda.gov. "In the United States, food waste is estimated at between 30-40 percent of the food supply. This estimate, based on estimates from USDA's Economic Research Service of 31 percent food loss at the retail and consumer levels, corresponded to approximately 133 billion pounds and \$161 billion worth of food in 2010" There is just a surplus of



Photo Courtesy of Komrads.world

food being bought.

According to ReFED, a nonprofit organization dedicated to reducing food waste, "approximately 38% of the U.S. food supply's 241 million tons of food, equating to roughly 549 pounds of annual surplus food per person. The value of this surplus food amounts to \$444 billion, or 2% of U.S. GDP."

Our overconsumption

also extends into our energy use. Despite being 5% of the world population Americans consume approximately 17% of the world's energy resources. This is projected to reach record highs in 2025-2026 driven by increased demand from data centers supporting AI as well as greater electricity use in residential and commercial areas, Scott DiSavino from Reuters reports.

## Project Pan: helping reduce overconsumption one post at a time



Marissa Krause

Feature Editor

In response to this awareness of overconsumption a movement, known as "Project Pan," was born on social media platforms like Tiktok and Reddit, all the way back in 2018, but has recently grown in popularity. This initiative encourages individuals to fully use their beauty and skincare products, like moisturizer or body wash, before purchasing new ones, in hopes of reducing waste and promoting intentional use.

"Essentially Project Pan is a lifestyle challenge that encourages participants to use all the beauty products they already own before buying a similar one. The name comes from the satisfying moment of 'hitting pan' or reaching the bottom of the beauty product," says Anna Dooley, Associate Editor for HerCampus.com. "Project pan isn't just about finishing products- it's about reevaluating consumption habits."

Participation can lead to meaningful and rewarding practices such as saving money, avoiding unnecessary purchases, and reducing waste. "Encouraging intentional use and fostering an appreciation for what you already own offers a refreshing alternative to the constant push for 'more' in today's consumer culture...It's a great way to embrace sustainability and intentional living," added Dooley.

# True meaning behind Valentine's Day

Kenadie Piepenbrink

Sports Editor

As everyone knows, Valentine's Day is the day of love. It's the day where people show their love and affection for one another. Couples buy their special someone sweet treats and gifts such as flowers, chocolates, candies, and send cards with meaningful messages written in them. Groups of girls plan and go to Galentine parties. Galentine parties are Valentine's Day themed parties, where groups of girls get together to talk and hangout, while participating in fun, cute activities, such as playing games, baking sweet treats, making crafts, or painting. What most people might not know is how Valentine's Day got its name and how the traditions came to be.

Valentine's Day is celebrated on the 14th of February every year. The day gets its name from a saint that many people believe was a priest named Valentine from Rome.

Emperor Claudius II believed that Roman men were only good soldiers if they were single, since those who were married would have a hard time leaving their wives behind while they went to

war. Claudius banned marriages for soldiers, but Valentine would secretly set up marriages. According to Medfieldhistoricalsociety.com, after Valentine got caught, he was thrown in jail and sentenced to death on February 14. Many believe that he fell in love with the jailer's daughter and gave her a love note the day he was sentenced. That love note is known as the first valentine. There are many stories and beliefs about how he died and what happened. Another belief is that he was killed for trying to help Christians who were being treated wrongly in the prisons by Claudius.

Valentine's Day became a tradition and originated from a Roman festival called Lupercalia, the festival was held in February at the start of their springtime. According to History.com, one tradition of the festival was that the boys drew names of girls out of a box and they would then be boyfriend and girlfriend for the rest of the festivities. Very often they would get married. The church then decided that they wanted to turn the festival into a Christian celebration showing love and remembering the story of St. Valentine and how he helped the Christians get free from Caludius' control.



# 10 hobbies to try instead of scrolling on social media

## Bible Study

Deepen your faith, find guidance and strengthen your spiritual life and theology with scripture, by reading, reflecting and discussing with others.



## Going to the Gym

Stay active, build strength, and boost mental health by focusing on physical fitness.

## Volunteering

Give back to your community by helping others, making a positive impact, and gaining a sense of fulfillment while connecting with others. And you can always bring a friend along!

## Scrapbooking /Journaling

Capture memories, organize thoughts, or express yourself through writing, collages and creative layouts with websites like Canva or the basic pen to paper you have at home.

## Car Restoration

Get working on a new project such as rebuilding a car. Learn valuable mechanical skills, work with your hands, and bring an old vehicle back to life while developing patience and attention to detail.



## Put Your Nose in a Good Book

Whether you consider yourself a reader or not, finding a good book can help relieve stress, improve mental health, and enhance vocabulary.

## Baking & Cooking

Experiment with new recipes and indulge in the satisfaction of creating homemade meals or snacks for you and others.

## Painting & drawing

Express creativity through different types of art media, like photography, sketching, and watercolor. Work on developing different techniques and skills.



## Brain Challenging Games.

Challenge yourself with puzzles, crosswords, and sudoku. These games can help improve problem solving, memory and focus. A good place to start is at [nytimes.com/crosswords](https://www.nytimes.com/crosswords)

## Learning A New Language

Expand your communication skills, learn about different cultures, show hospitality to others, and practice your vocabulary by learning a new language. You can use apps like Duolingo to get started.



# Three interesting hobbies amongst Illiana community

Levi Alons

Reporter

Josh Bunker

Josh Bunker, an Illiana Senior, has the hobby of building and painting "Warhammer 40,000" figures. He buys the figures, which come in very small pieces. He cuts them out of the plastic pieces they come in with wire cutters. Then he glues them together, then paints them with tiny brushes. Once assembled, the figures, which are very detailed, stand typically around 1.5 inches tall.

"Warhammer 40,000" is a series of books, vid-

eo games, tabletop games, and even a movie, all of which center on the same complex fantasy universe. Bunker started out reading the books and playing the games, when one day last summer his dad asked him if he wanted to try building the figures. He did, enjoyed it, and has never really stopped since.

**Dan Blom**

Illiana Marketing Director Mr. Dan Blom's unique hobby is collecting Star Wars memorabilia. He started when he was a child, just after watching the very first Star Wars movie in 1977. He then began to collect action figures and vehicles from the blockbuster franchise.

Once he started collecting them, he never really stopped.

"I'm just trying to retain just a fraction of my childhood and stay a kid," Blom said with a smile. Recently, he went to Disney World with his daughter and was impressed with the Star Wars exhibits. Even visiting his office, you can see his passion for Star Wars. Some of his stuff is worth a good amount of money, but its nostalgic value is, to him, priceless.

**Zachary VanderWoude**

Illiana Sophomore Zachary Vander Woude has a unique hobby of taking pictures of his small action figures. On nice days, he heads outside and uses the area around his house to find a place to dis-

play them. Sometimes he adjusts the scenery around them to make it fit better. He uses a mix of Lego minifigures and other action figures. He snaps most of the photos with a Canon EOS Rebel T3i camera,

and while he occasionally uses computer editing software, but prefers not to. He got the idea one day from watching a YouTube video of someone else doing it, and he decided to try it out for himself.



Action figure of Indiana Jones

Photo by Zachary VanderWoude

# Captain America: Brave New World

Gabriella Costello

Arts and Leisure Editor

Feb. 14 a new Marvel movie hit the theaters. Captain America: Brave New World, a continuation of the TV miniseries The Falcon and The Winter Soldier. The movie starts with Thaddeus Ross, a former lieutenant general of the US army, becoming president. Throughout the movie we see flashbacks from Ross's previous job as a military general when he consistently struggled with major anger issues that led to controversy in his attaining the presidency. Many opposed his presidency because of his violent outbursts, and they refused to believe that he was a changed man who had mellowed out. As the movie continues we see conflicts between Sam, the former Falcon and the new Captain America, and President Ross. There's a huge secret President Ross is hiding, and we see the backlash of this secret unfold throughout the movie.

Throughout the movie I was very confused because I had not previously watched The Falcon and The Winter Soldier. As the movie continued, however, I could piece the information together. Still, I would not recommend watching this movie as a stand alone; knowledge of the earlier story will make this film more enjoyable. Towards the end, the movie felt very rushed and almost like they spent all the time in rising action, so the climax was just a let down.

On the bright side, the cast was phenomenal. They had renowned actors Harrison Ford as Thaddeus Ross, Giancarlo Esposito as Seth Voelker, and Carl Lumbly as Isaiah Bradley. They also had well known Marvel actors Anthony Mackie as Sam Wilson, and Sebastian Stan as Bucky Barnes. All give solid performances.

The film was good, but not great. If the movie had been another thirty minutes longer, it would have made a big difference and it wouldn't have felt so rushed.



## Scooters fails to dazzle



Red Bull Infusion and Oreo Blender

photo by Gabriella Costello



Blackberry Velvet Macchiato and Salted Caramel Creme Cold Brew  
Photo by Gabriella Costello

Gabriella Costello

Arts and Leisure Editor

What a let down! After much anticipation and hype surrounding Scooters, the new coffee shop that opened across from Lake Central High School, the actual opening has proven a huge disappointment.

Scooters, located on 8455 Wicker Ave. in Saint John, opened on Feb. 13. The number of people that told me they were excited to finally have a Scooters in the area (the franchise typically shows up in southern and western states) is more than the fingers on my hands. The anticipation and excitement was contagious, and my friends and I were eager to go and try it.

Scooters is a drive through only coffee shop and has a wide variety of drink choices, coffee-based and non-coffee-based alike. The chain is renowned for its coffee, but it was the worst drink we selected. I got nine different items ranging from iced coffee, to smoothies, to egg bites.

We tried a variety of drinks. First on the list was an iced blackberry velvet macchiato. Out of all the different coffee drinks this was my favorite. The people I went with would disagree, but I found this one had the most flavor. Second on the list was a salted caramel creme cold brew, which sounds delicious but tasted really watered

down. That "watered down" feel was a recurring factor in all the coffee drinks, and the only thing that made them taste better was drinking them without a straw. The cold foam on top made the drink enjoyable for a couple sips. Third on the list was a raspberry Red Bull infusion, and it was by far the best drink on the list and the most refreshing. Patrons can choose from among a couple different syrup flavors to add to the tropical Red Bull base. Fourth on the list was an iced salted caramelicious, another let down because it tasted too watery and with no big coffee or caramel flavor at all. The Oreo blender, on the other hand, had a good shake consistency and great Oreo flavor, making it a close second on the list of drinks. Sixth and last drink on the list was the fruit flavor duo smoothie, we selected the mango base and strawberry syrup for the mix in. It had great flavor and was refreshing.

For food we ordered tomato and feta egg bites, red velvet cake bites and birthday cake bites. Overall the food was good and tasted fresh. The egg bites come warm and have a good initial flavor, but it seemed the more bites I took the less flavorful it became. It needed more of a tomato punch. Both the cake bites were good, but we were surprised to only get one when we ordered. The menu says cake BITES, plural, but each came with only one cake bite. The red velvet had a better flavor than

the birthday cake. The birthday cake bite had white chocolate hershey's kiss in it which was over the top.

Overall I'd say my experience was a let down. In the future, I'll likely just scoot on past Scooters to a better coffee shop.



Photo courtesy of Haley Vervlied

Haley Vervlied and Natalie Bantsolas at the Natatorium

## Illiana girls place 26th at state swim competition

Lydia O'Riley

Editor-in-Chief

Finishing the season, the Illiana girls swim team had two individuals advance past the sectional finals. Junior Haley Vervlied and sophomore Natalie Bantsolas competed in the state competition on February 14. Bantsolas took 8th in the 50 freestyle and 14th in the 100 backstroke. Vervlied placed 26th in the 100 freestyle. Ultimately, Illiana placed 26th out of 36 schools.

Vervlied and Bantsolas have been swimming for multiple years, both for different club teams. Bantsolas has been swimming for the Highland Hurricanes club for ten years, and Vervlied has been swimming for Munster High School's club for three years,

but she has also been swimming Lake Central since 2015.

Bantsolas joined the Illiana swim team to see what a high school season of swim would be like. Many of her friends from different schools have participated in their schools swim team, and they seemed to enjoy it.

When asked if high school swim meets were easier than club swim meets Bantsolas said, "A little bit, just because there wasn't as much stress. There was more room to breathe because it is a different environment."

Vervlied said, "In club, all you worry about is winning and getting the next best time. High school swim is still very competitive; however, it's more aimed at having a good and fun experience, which it definitely was."

## Girls basketball

Joy Ramsey

Sports Editor

The varsity girls basketball team finished the season with an 11-9 record and a 4-2 record in conference placing them in fourth. The team fell short to Hanover Central in the first round of sectionals with a score of 35-42.

Senior Abbie Ritzema led the team in points with a total of 247, averaging 13 per game. She also led in assists with 73

averaging 3.8 and blocks with 9 while averaging 0.5 per game. Ritzema averaged as a 74% free throw shooter per game.

Senior Ella Olthof led the team in rebounds with 187 averaging 9.8.

Junior Sienna Eenigenburg led in steals with 53, an average of 2.8 per game. She also led the team in 3 point field goals, making them at a 23% clip.

Junior Kennedy Voss had the best field goal percentage overall, making 49% of the shots she took.

# Boys wrestling season comes to an end

Marissa Krause

Feature Editor

Boys wrestling ends its regular season with a record of 18-6. With senior David Antunez leading in wins with a record of 30-3 and Junior Levi Kreykes close behind at 28-3.

Boys sectionals were held Feb. 1 at Crown Point High School with Antunez, Gage Bambic, Kreykes, Caden Morrissey, Adrian Perez, and Noah Yannuzzi advancing (with Calvin Hamstra as an alternate). The team placed 5th overall behind state ranked teams.

Regionals were held the following week on Feb. 8. This time Bambic advanced to Semi-State held at East Chicago Central on Feb. 15, where Bambic fell in the first round, ending the Viking's season.

"Even though I want to be mad because I feel like I worked really hard," Bambic said, "I just know that if I would have had more time, knew where to go when I was a freshman, and knew all the stuff I knew now, I would have been a better wrestler. But there's nothing I can change about the past but just go into the future and go wrestle in college."

David DeBoer, the head coach of the boys wrestling team, acknowledged that these boys made the best team Illiana has had since moving to Indiana. He said, "No doubt this was the hardest working team I've coached. They put in a lot of out of season and pre-season work, and it showed. The wrestlers performed great. The style of the team this year was relentless attack and it

brought us a lot of pins."

DeBoer is not ready to say goodbye to what he called "the most committed and talented [group of seniors I've coached]," and he hopes they come back to help coach next year.

Bambic commemorates his fellow teammates as well. "[Our team's strengths] would be by far work ethic this year. Every person was in that room, and every single practice we were willing to go live until we were dying."

Bambic said to any students interested in the program to try out but to have grit. "Don't expect to be great because you won't be. You will get beaten, and your body's gonna hurt. Nothing worse than your first year. But in the next few years it will get easier. You just have to show up and work."

## Boys basketball nearing postseason

Joy Ramsey

Sports Editor

The boys basketball team currently is 10-12 and 3-3 in conference, placing them in fifth. They have two remaining games in the regular season versus Lake Station and Culver.

Senior Jake Scott leads the team in rebounds with 104 averaging 5.5 per game and assists with 42, averaging 2.2 per game. He is also the team's leading free throw shooter, making them at a 69% clip.

Senior Lucas Reidelbach leads in steals with a total of

39 and averaging 2.2 per game.

Junior Noah Sons leads in points with a total of 239 and averaging 12.6 per game.

Sophomore Colin O'Hara leads in blocks with a total of 11, averaging 0.6 per game.

## Illiana sophomore competes in artistic gymnastics

Joy Ramsey

Sports Editor

Sophomore Angelina Pinto has been doing gymnastics since she was seven years old. At eight she joined Midwest Training and Ice and from age nine until now she has been competing there.

Pinto does artistic gymnastics which means she does vault, bars, beam, and floor. Her season runs all year long including summers. She competes in 9-10 meets per season and trains five days a week for a total of 20 hours.

She said, "My mom used to see that I was super hyper and always doing cartwheels all over the place and then she put me in rhythmic gymnastics and saw that I really liked it, so I started doing artistic and I fell in love with the sport

and never stopped."

Her highest score she has achieved was a 9.675 at the Indiana State meet for her floor routine. Pinto said, "That was a huge accomplishment because

very hard."

One of her favorite accomplishments was placing first on bars at the Big Classic Gymnastics meet in Illinois. Her personal goal for this

season is for her to get a 36 or 37 all around score.

Pinto definitely wants to continue her athletic career in college and is hoping to attend the Air Force Academy in Colorado.

**Illiana athletes who play outside school**  
**OUT OF BOUNDS**



Pinto places first on bars

Photo courtesy of Angelina Pinto

# Editorial

## Unavoidable events replace club period, bright solution to solve this problem

Illiana's weekly schedule is very structured: chapel is on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Friday, and club is on Tuesdays and Thursdays. That sounds ideal, but where do we fit in other regularly occurring, but not weekly, events? Events such as early dismissals, Head of School assemblies, and S.H.I.E.L.D. groups? Unfortunately, and almost without exception, these events take the place of club period.

When there is an early dismissal or Head of School assembly, they always occur once a month on Thursdays and replace the club period. The procedure for scheduling S.H.I.E.L.D. groups is quite different. S.H.I.E.L.D. groups happen twice a month. For the first meeting of the month, S.H.I.E.L.D. groups substitute for chapel on Mondays, then for clubs on Tuesday the second time.

So where's the issue? Well, if you stop and do the math, you will realize that in a four-week month we should have club eight times. However, once you subtract out other regularly occurring events, we

are down to only five. Mix in a snow day, a delayed start, or a national holiday and the next thing you know our clubs hardly meet.

This is exactly what happened in January, when clubs only met three times.

games. If you are in a movie club you may only watch a movie or two. If you are in a sports club, you may only play a couple of matches.

Additionally, certain clubs, such as Fine Arts Committee, Praise Crowd, and

their classes.

Colleges and parents expect students to be hyper-involved in school activities and honors classes, which creates a stressful environment. As involved students, we need time, even if it is just twenty minutes playing Uno with our friends, to ease the stress that comes with schoolwork.

So how can this problem be solved? One main solution is to change the weekly schedule.

Here is one solution: make Mondays and Fridays chapel days; Tuesdays and Thursdays club periods; Wednesdays are a "free space." Wednesdays can be used for S.H.I.E.L.D. groups twice a month. Monthly assemblies, late starts, and early dismissals can also be on Wednesdays. If the situation arises where there is no chapel on a Monday or Friday, chapel can occur on Wednesday to ensure that there is an even amount of club and chapel time per week.

This would allow the school to stop skipping clubs, and it would ensure students are able to enjoy the clubs that they choose. This shouldn't be too hard to fix, right?

... make Mondays and Fridays chapel days; Tuesdays and Thursdays club periods; Wednesdays are a "free space."

We select the clubs we would like to be in. Clubs are only twenty minutes long, yet the clubs that we selected and are excited about are taken away frequently. Seldom does a week go by where there is the traditional schedule of chapel on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and clubs on Tuesday and Thursday.

If you are in a board game or card game club, you may only be able to play a few

Student Council, plan events and have deadlines to meet. When these clubs are skipped, they lose valuable work time and progress is halted.

Missing club is disappointing, since between school, homework, and extracurriculars, it's challenging to find time during the week to have fun. Although school isn't made to be a strictly fun place, students need a break if they are to perform well in

## Choose friends wisely or pay high price

Healthy and toxic relationships. How do the people you surround yourself with affect your mindset? If your friends are nice and friendly but don't believe in God and are trying to get you to stop following God, should those friends really be your true friends? It's easier to talk to people who have similar ideas and opinions as you since you can understand each other and where you're coming from. With friendships it can be hard to realize which people should really be your friends and which ones shouldn't. It can be especially hard while being in school.



Kenadie Piepenbrink

Movies and TV shows have shown school as a place where almost everyone bullies each other and there's usually different cliques, including one group of girls that has the main popular girl. These depictions show everyone following whatever the popular girl does.

People like to prioritize someone and give their all to get them to like them or at least know who they are instead of them being a nobody. A lot of people want to be in a specific "crowd." I've been one of those people until I realized that I need to have my own opinion. My own opinion shouldn't merely be a reflection of any other person's opinion. If it is, it's not really my own opinion. I shouldn't try to impress everyone. Sure, first impressions are important but I shouldn't give up what you believe in, just to impress someone. If your friends make you feel like you need to give up things I like to do or things I love. If someone is asking me to do that, maybe they shouldn't really be my friend.

Another sign of a good friend is someone who tells you when you're in the wrong. Do they tell you when you're in the wrong? Do they tell you what you need to hear or only what you want to hear?

Of course, to have a good friend, one ought to be a good friend. Are you truly being a good friend? Do you listen to what others have to say or just make everything about yourself? It's okay to talk about your feelings, problems or anything you have going for you, but let your friends talk too. Don't just listen to what they're saying but actually listen and engage in what they're saying. Pay attention to how they're acting; sometimes feelings are shown more through actions rather than words.

Now with boyfriend-girlfriend relationships, things are no different. You need to have respect for each other. You should respect each other's boundaries and make decisions together. Instead of fighting and arguing over something, come to an agreement between the two of you. You should be honest with each other and stay loyal. Trust is a big thing and once you break it, it's hard to get it back and be trusted again. I think you still have to make decisions for yourself, so don't let another control everything you do but tell him or her about your decisions and speak up about what you think. Don't hide your feelings and emotions. If you feel like you can't talk about how you feel, then you should talk with your partner about it and see if there's anything you guys should change about your relationship to make it work and be better for each other.

Moral of the story, you should realize who the people you surround yourself with are and how they affect you and your well-being.

### the Echo

#### Editor-in-chief

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#### News

Giannia O'Neal-Schultz

#### Feature

Marissa Krause

#### Arts

Gabriella Costello

#### Sports

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Joy Ramsey

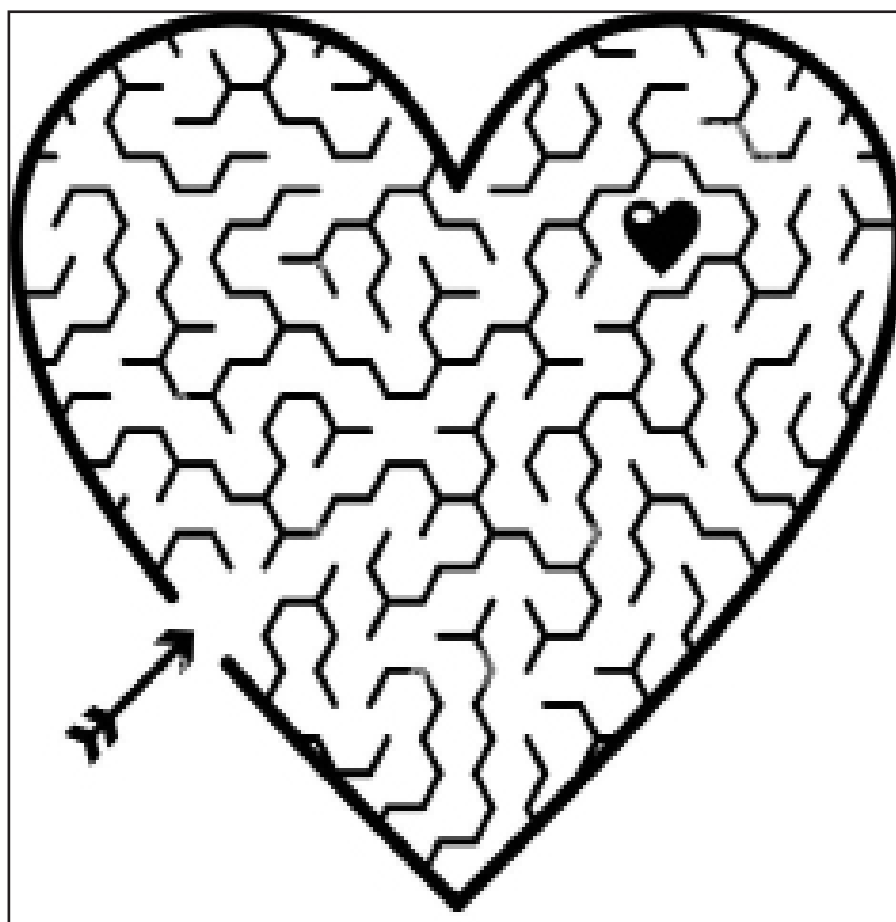
#### Advisor

Jeff DeVries

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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 this Valentines Day  
maze Illiana!



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