



Which
Christmas
character are
you most like?
Find out
on page 4.

the Echo)))

Illiana Christian High School

Read about Christmas
music
from
other
cultures
on page 6.



Volume 72 Issue 4

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Lansing, Illinois

School board cancels 'Godspell'

Disheartened students, directors plan to bounce back with musical revue of past productions

Beth Boonstra

Co-Editor in Chief

Maddie Holesinger

Co-Editor in Chief

Illiana's musical for this coming spring has gone through a myriad of changes, forcing the drama department and its students to ride a roller-coaster of emotions. On Tuesday, Dec. 12, the school board, after already having approved the musical "Godspell" months before reversed its decision, citing doctrinal issues of portraying Christ. Directors made a quick comeback with a new musical idea, a recap of the greatest musicals throughout Illiana's history.

In the late spring Mrs. Mary Lagerwey, Illiana's musical director as well as one of the Bible teachers, proposed the Stephen Schwartz musical "Godspell," a 70s telling of Jesus' life on earth based on the Gospel of Matthew. This wasn't her first time proposing this musical either. Normally, musicals and plays are not proposed to the education committee or to the school board beforehand, but recognizing potential controversy in this choice, she wanted to make sure that the board was behind her and the other directors.

Principal Peter Boonstra who was at both of the board meetings regarding the musical said, "[Lagerwey]" acknowledged that there were certainly

problems with other presentations of this play by other people that were not all God honoring. In particular, I think the emphasis was based on 'Can you give us permission to do this play recognizing that we would do it in a God honoring way?'"

Aware of the musical and the potential for controversy, the board approved "Godspell." Since then, directors Jim Kamphuis, Kathy Sliemers, and Lagerwey have been working hard to make this musical possible.

"It's difficult to put a number on the hours we had already spent on this musical," said Kamphuis. "Some of our effort goes back several years, but we had worked most intensively on this show for the five weeks between the fall play and the Board's decision. Much of the set design was either complete or had at least been conceived, and thousands of dollars had already been spent on set pieces and other equipment." Kamphuis spent hours rewiring light fixtures in preparation to light the stage from 360 degrees, a requirement for putting on what would have been Illiana's first theater-in-the-round production. These lights will now have to be rewired all again.

Students also put in a significant amount of preparation for this musical. Auditions were to be held on the same day as the board's meeting, so students rehearsed for auditions, believing that they would be performing "Godspell." Senior Ben Fabrizio listened to the "Godspell" soundtrack at least ten

times memorizing songs in preparation. "I spent a lot of time preparing like everyone else interested in [the musical], I'm sure."

Fabrizius wasn't thrilled at what sounded like a boring musical at first, but his opinion quickly changed. "This musical has developed my faith very much. I am moved by the great message it has to offer and I believe that message shouldn't be shut down for a very small amount of people. One of the main conflicts was unity. "Godspell" is all about community. We are disciples of God, and "Godspell" shows with the modern take on it."

While some were preparing for the musical, others were working to shut it down through petition and letter.

Matthew Huizenga and Sam Boonstra, sophomore and junior students prospectively, who have both been in Illiana drama productions, wrote a letter of concern to the directors. Huizenga also circulated a petition amongst classmates, receiving 24 student signatures, several of which belonged to students who had never even been a part of a drama production and many more who had only been part of one production in the past. Huizenga's main points in the letter were that "'Godspell's' intent is the entertainment of man rather than the glorification of God, ...'Godspell' uses Biblical stories with disregard for the message of scripture, ...'Godspell' takes the word of God lightly, ... [and] By portraying Jesus in this musical, we would profane the Lord."

Turn to Show, Page 3

Preview draws crowd, shows age

Cate Peerbolte

Co-Feature Editor

On Thursday, Nov. 30, Illiana hosted the annual fall "Preview Illiana" where prospective Illiana families come to learn about Illiana.

According to Vice Principal AJ Turkstra, Preview officially began in 2010. "I pitched the idea to the school board in 2010, but I first had the idea in 2009, when I was teaching shop classes in room 114. We would have open house nights where parents could come and see the projects their children were working on. I had the idea to expand these shop open houses to a school open house."

It was Illiana's fourteenth preview this fall. Turkstra said, "I think that it (Preview) is running its course. It has seen its time, but it is getting harder to come up with something new and fresh to replace it."

This year the families in attendance previewed a school that will

not be in use next year. As part of the tour, each group stopped in a classroom for a powerpoint presentation given by Principal Peter Boonstra on the new campus and other changes coming next year.

Turkstra said, "Preview has never been about seeing the building, especially now. We are showcasing what Illiana has to offer."

Prospective parents who were at Preview mostly thought the night was a success but reflected on the night in various ways.

Gary Eenigenburg said, "I liked listening to Mr. Davids and Mr. Boonstra, but I wish they had more time to speak. The night was very choppy with lots of little things, that added up to a long night."

Tracey Eenigenburg said, "I think that I learned everything I need to, but I would have liked more time with the core people who were explaining programs."

Betty Beishuizen said, "It

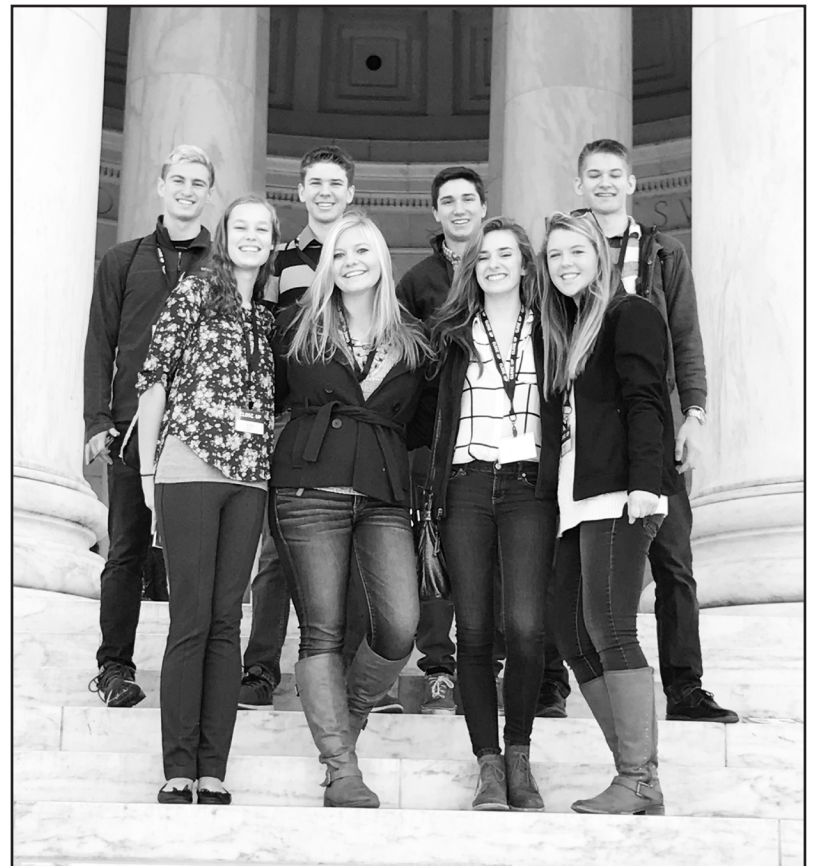
was very well done and I was very pleased with the program. The best part was seeing the teachers' love for the school and their students."

Bob Beishuizen said, "The seven minutes with Mr. Boonstra seemed rushed. I would have liked less stations with more time in each one."

Karen VanBelle said, "It was great to see the classes in action. I wished we could've talked to department heads about the curriculum. It also would have been nice to be able to choose what classes to visit based on what my son is interested in. It was great to see the community and how it has grown and how it works together."

Vicky DeBoer said, "My favorite part was seeing the different classes and how the halls have changed."

Dave DeBoer said, "I would like to see the new building. I know that's not possible, but I want to see what the future of Illiana looks like."



Photot courtesy of Liz VanDrunen

Close-up group gathers for group discussion at Jefferson Memorial.

D.C. exposure teaches students firsthand lessons

Amber VanKalker

Reporter

Juniors Elizabeth DeYoung, Trent Kamp, Julia Oostema, Ashley Pigatti, Alec Vander-Zee, Liz VanDrunen, and Alex Wondaal joined chaperone Mr. Darren DeBoer for a week-long study trip to Washington, DC for the annual Close-up program.

The Close Up program, according to its website, offers students "a front row seat to democracy in action in the halls of Congress, as well as in meetings with Washington insiders and media." The ICHS Social Studies Department chooses eight students from the junior class to represent our school. Students are selected through a process of application that includes a written essay and an interview.

While in Washington D.C., the group visited the Washington Monument, World War II Memorial, and the Capital Quarry. They also had the opportunity to see the Senate building and the House floor to witness a bill being passed.

While on the trip students had a chance to split up into a student section with students from other schools, and the teachers went to the teacher section. During these hour-long sessions, they learned from experienced people who work at

the Capitol. Students visited monuments, landmarks, and memorials that were involved in what they had learned in their prior workshop.

Meanwhile Mr. DeBoer got a chance to go on different tours including Quantico, where the marines train, and Harper's Ferry, which was an important site before the civil war. Two of his greatest memories were celebrating Pigatti's birthday and walking down MLK Ave. in southeast Washington.

Elizabeth DeYoung said, "The highlight of the week was almost getting arrested" while on a 10-mile hike through the woods to the old Capitol building. When they tried to go back, they had to cross a roped off bridge that led straight to the Police Station. Fortunately, they didn't get in much trouble. They got back safely and the forest trooper let them leave without penalty.

Close-up is a time for students to learn to be courteous, to respect everyone's opinions, and to learn to hear the opinions of those around them while staying true to themselves.

Pigatti said, "To me it was a chance to learn about past events in history that aren't talked about in class, and to see jobs that are needed at the Capitol."

Hear it from Time's Person of the Year herself

Yes, so as this title states, I was indeed named Time's Person of the Year for 2017. I and many, many others all in one, collective group known as The Silence Breakers. Together, these were some of the bravest and strongest and most influential women of the year. These were all of the women who came out in this past year and spoke up about their own sexual harassment or abuse. I spoke in chapel about mine in November.



Beth Boonstra
Co-Editor-in-Chief

This was easily one of the hardest things I've ever done. I didn't do it because I wanted popularity or recognition. If I wanted that I certainly wouldn't have shared with the entire school the humiliation that I felt. I went into it knowing that I might lose friends, I might have people saying things about me behind my back, but I wasn't going to let that stop me. I knew that it wasn't just about me. I knew that there were other people out there who needed to hear what I had to say, people who needed to see firsthand the hurt that actions can cause, people who needed to learn that forgiveness isn't ever easy, people who needed to hear from someone who experienced something like they did, because it happens more often than any of us think.

Thankfully, I have not experienced any negative feedback since I spoke. I was surrounded, literally, by an enormous group hug of people who were there to support me and tell me how much what I did meant to them. I am so glad that I had them and those people mean the world to me, but I have to tell you the truth, I wouldn't have changed what I did even if I didn't have those people in the end.

It was the people who came to me and to the counselors that day and spoke up for the first time about what had happened to them. They made it all worth it.

In the past couple of months since allegations first started pouring out, I have heard far too much negative feedback from people who are ignorant. I've heard accusations that: 'these women are doing it for the money, for the spotlight.' This sickens me. First of all, no one is getting any money from this, and second, why would anyone want fame for something like this? Why would they put themselves in such a vulnerable position, even if they knew that they could be laughed at, ridiculed, slut-shamed, dehumanized, and disbelieved, if none of it were true? When I think about the emotional toll on me to humble myself to speak to the entire school, I can't even imagine the courage that these other women must have to speak before a national audience. When I spoke up, I knew revealing the truth could end in me even getting hurt even worse. It could end with me, the victim, being blamed for the wrong done to me. But I didn't care.

These courageous women have sparked an international movement, a flood of women coming forward and speaking up. And despite the intimidation, sometimes violent, that has been shown to these women, their voices are only growing louder. I applaud these women and I applaud Time magazine for giving them an even greater voice. Time was debating between these victims and survivors of sexual offenses and a man who has been accused of and bragged about being a perpetrator of such offenses, our very own president. I hope that there is some truth in saying that times are changing. No longer will we diminish such offenses and stand for these accusations to go unnoticed. We will not give these perpetrators the power that they do not deserve.

As Time's Person of the Year, I am telling you that the truth is ringing. We are at a watershed moment culturally. Which side of history do you want to be on?

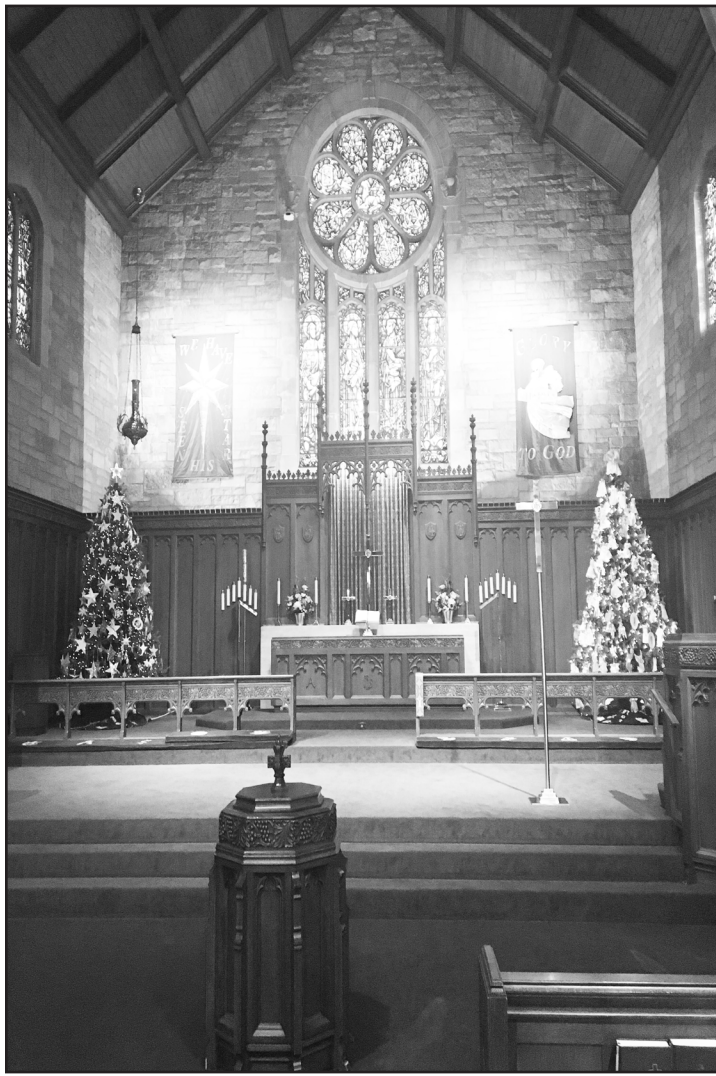


Photo by Natalie Togtman

St. Paul Lutheran Church decorated for Christmas when German students attended church service on Dec. 3.

Students receive full immersion in German at St. Paul's

Natalie Togtman
Co-Arts Editor

On Sunday Dec. 3 students in German 1-4 were invited to Saint Paul's Lutheran Church in Chicago Heights for a Christmas service in German. Students who attended received extra credit.

During the service, worshippers sang lots of classic Christmas hymns such as "Silent Night" and "Lo How a Rose E'er Blooming."

Sophomore Lance Mulderink, who is currently in German 1, said, "I really enjoyed the singing because it seemed a little bizarre in the way that the songs we sang were sung in a different tune than I was used to."

The pastor read multiple Bible passages from Luke and Matthew that told about the birth and life of Jesus.

The service lasted about an hour, and afterward students were invited to a fellowship hall across from the church for a time of eating and fellowship with members

of the congregation. Multiple types of cookies, punch, and water were served.

Junior Emily Poortenga, who is currently in German 1, said, "The pastor was so nice, and seemed very invested in the service and making sure he talked to almost everybody, but the other people attending the service were also very kind. I talked to multiple members of the congregation and their reasons for continuing to come to the service were very interesting."

This special Christmas service has been offered for seven years as a way to remember the Lutheran roots of the church.

Senior Josh Smits, who is currently in German 4, said, "I go to this service because I love being able to translate everything in my head, but I also really enjoy the extra time of worship. The worship at this church was different because the service was in German and that really helps broaden your mind to the different types of worship."

Illiana hires new marketing director

Kylie Boss
Reporter

Mrs. Jenna Dutton has taken a position at Illiana as marketing director starting in December. Her position, according to Principal Peter Boonstra, has been created to help Illiana become better known in the community.

"Some people I've talked to in this area claim to have never known [Illiana] existed," said Boonstra. Boonstra, with the help of Dutton and Fundraising Director Lance Davids, hopes to in-

crease community awareness, especially in the area where the new school will be.

Dutton, said Boonstra, is well qualified for the job, with background work experience in marketing at Trinity Christian College. Dutton is a member of the community of South Holland, IL. She graduated from Timothy Christian High School and Trinity Christian College with a marketing degree.

Dutton has already started a new ICHS blog, found on the Illiana website. Its purpose, according to Dutton, is to update

parents, students, alumni and possibly future students and parents on Illiana. The first article on the blog was about the close up trip.

Dutton said, "The blog is a lot more in depth [than the social media pages]."

The difference between Dutton's, Admission Director Mrs. Marie Limback's, and Davids's jobs is a fine line. All of their jobs overlap is some way, said Boonstra. Limback, according to Boonstra, is mainly in charge of admission and recruiting 7th and 8th grade students. Davids does fundraising for Illiana, and Dutton does marketing of Illiana's brand.

Flood of funds to raise ARC

Jordan Bivins
Reporter

Illiana has raised \$1.2 million for completion of the ARC (Arts, Recreation, and Community Center) at the new campus but still needs \$300,000 to finish the construction.

Mr. Lance Davids, who is working beside Principal Peter Boonstra to raise funds for the project, said he reached out to members of the community to help finish phase one of construction, asking donors to continue to share the vision of building hearts and minds.

"We have incredibly faithful people in support of this," Davids said.

One bit of good fortune is saving ICHS some money on the project. The Holiday Star Plaza Theatre in Merrillville is being torn down, and its owner held a liquidation sale. Mr. Boonstra and art teacher Mr. Jim Kamphuis went to the theater before demolition began to find working equipment to put in the ARC. Doing so allowed them to get professional light and sound equipment for pennies on the dollar.

"As a theater-tech guy, getting a 1000 watt light for \$10 was probably my favorite find," Kamphuis said.

Both Davids and Boonstra are extremely confident the ARC will be ready for the fall of the 2018-19 school year.

Competition promotes constitutional savvy



Photo by Jeff White.

Illiana's We the People team poses at their competition at the Dirksen Federal Building.

Jo Mulder
Co-Photo Editor

We the People Club, a group of 14 students, sponsored by Mr. Jeff White, competed downtown on Friday, Dec. 9.

The We the People Competition allows students to "demonstrate their understanding of constitutional principles and have opportunities to evaluate, take positions, and ultimately defend their positions

on relevant historical and contemporary issues during a simulated congressional hearing," according to classroomlaw.org

Our students had prepared for the few weeks before the event, and the members competing stayed after school on Preview Illiana Night to write their opening statements for each issue under discussion.

On the day of the event, the club members met at school early to catch a bus to Chicago.

In teams of two to four people, students presented their arguments. After giving their opening statements, they put their notes away and the judges began asking a steady flow of questions. The team had to answer based on their understanding and memorization of historical events that had been affected by the constitution.

According to Junior Austin Parks, the groups knew their issues well and received positive feedback from the judges.

Teach takes charge of Dorchaeus program

Maddie Holesinger
Co-Editor in Chief

In an effort to revive the Dorchaeus program and make it better, its founder, Mr. Lance Davids, is handing the program over to Mrs. Heidi Teach, one of the new teachers in the resource room. The Dorchaeus program was an idea put to action three years ago by Davids. It is a mix of Dory, the fish from “Finding Nemo” that keeps on swimming, and Zacchaeus, the little man who wanted to see Jesus. Both characters promote encouragement and caring for the lost.

“I don’t want kids feeling alone,” said Davids. “I always want us to be the hands, the feet, and the heart of Jesus. And sometimes if we aren’t intentional about that, it doesn’t happen.”

The first year the Dorchaeus program was introduced, many students were involved.

“I thought [the program] would be a cool way to be a light to another student who may need help,” said senior Grace VanDam, who was a part of the program her sophomore year.

Show must go on

School board, from Page 1

The school board also received letters from several parents and one church sharing their concerns about the musical and its portrayal of Jesus Christ violated Lord’s Day 35 in the Heidelberg Catechism.

All students and parents contacted who were not in favor of “Godspell” declined interviews for this story.

Kamphuis said, “My interpretation of the 2nd Commandment is that ‘graven images,’ intended for worship, are sinful - our portrayal of Jesus in ‘Godspell’ would not have been that. The Heidelberg Catechism Lord’s Day 35 tells us that ‘God cannot be portrayed in any way;’ we agree, and would not have presumed to show a depiction of an almighty, incomprehensible God onstage. We know two things about ‘God’s image’ from Scripture: that mankind was created in His likeness, and that when God revealed Himself to us at the Incarnation, the form He chose was that of a human being. As Mrs. Lagerwey is fond of saying, Jesus was 100% God, and 100% human. It was His total humanity that allowed Him to experience life on Earth as a real person, minus the sin, of course, to take on the burden of our sins for us, to endure real suffering and pain, to die a very real death, and for that death to actually mean something.”

Senior Tom Ericks, who has been involved in all of Illiana’s previous productions throughout his time at Illiana said, “I thought that it

Other students believe the program was not successful for a myriad of other reasons.

“I joined [Dorchaeus] to make a difference; I was paired with a freshman girl, and I just didn’t do that much to help her,” said Paul Kamp, a senior. “That was my fault. But I think that the program wasn’t set up to be successful. In my opinion it wasn’t a good forum for change. I think it could have worked better if we had been paired with someone more similar to us.”

Last year, Davids, with the help of Ms. Kim Mesman, started the program up again, but when busyness struck, the program began to fade.

“I’ve got too much on my plate right now, but the program is too important so I’m handing it over,” said Davids.

Teach hopes to make the program into a club. That way she can meet with the leaders more regularly. The leaders have been recommended by Davids. Her goal is to have more leaders watching over fewer students all of whom will be paired with someone. That way she can make sure that

the leaders are talking to each of their groups and staying on task.

“Our school needs the social and emotional support for students,” said Teach. “Getting students involved with other students is an easy [solution] for the issue.”

Teach first heard about Dorchaeus at a faculty meeting. Later in the year, Teach went to Mrs. Helen Bussema to talk about a way to provide the support kids with emotional and disability needs. Bussema brought up Dorchaeus, so Teach went to Davids to find out more about the program.

“There are kids here that don’t have friends, and it’s like there should never, in a Christian school, be kids without friends,” said Teach. “No kid should feel like an outsider; every student should feel included no matter their race, or gender, or anything else.”

“[My vision] is for the whole school to be a place where all students feel accepted, where everyone can get an education, where every child can come here and feel safe,” said Teach.

Peter Boonstra met drama students to inform them of the Board’s decision and that there might be no musical this year. Because of the students’ motivation to put on a show, however, the directors announced two days later that they would put on a show. English teacher, Mrs. Ginny Dykstra’s quick thinking offered the idea to combine all of Illiana’s previous musical productions. With the working title “The Show Must Go On,” the drama department is committed to making this happen in time. Despite the struggle to secure rights, to plan ahead, or even to have a script.

“We all have favorite songs from past musicals that we’d love to hear again,” said Kamphuis, “but a lot depends on the students who audition and where we feel their gifts might best be used. We plan to also spend a lot of time writing a framework for this show that gives it some cohesion - we’d like this to still be a musical, in the traditional sense, rather than just a ‘greatest hits’ concert!”

Fabrizius, who knows as little as everyone else about what the new musical will look like, has dreams of being able to play Jean Valjean or Javert in a recap of “Les Miserables.” He along with 35 others auditioned for the new musical on Monday and Tuesday, Dec. 18 and 19. More than a hundred students are usually involved in the spring musical in one way or another.

Kamphuis said, “We’re trying to do the impossible, and we’re going to need all the help we can get!”

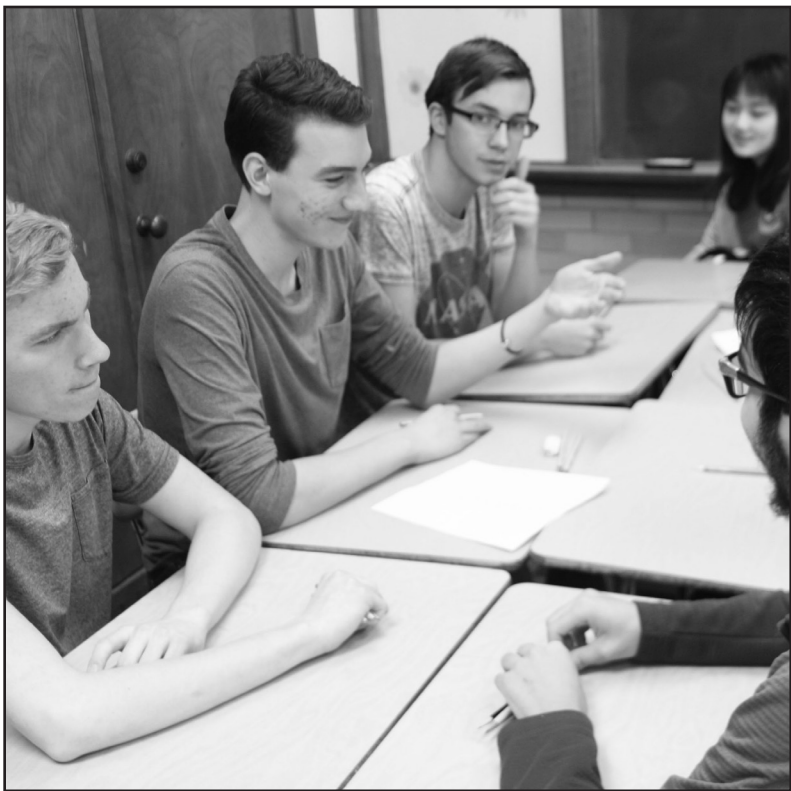


Photo by Grant Gibson

Illiana students prepare for the 8-person event.

Illiana hosts first math competition

Jaden Denton
Reporter

Illiana’s math team took third place and nearly squeaked by with second place title, falling short by only one point on Saturday, Dec. 3, at the Metro Suburban Conference Math Competition.

Algebra 2 Junior and Pre-Calculus Senior teams both took 1st in their sections. The Junior/Senior 8 person team took 2nd and the 2 person team of Matthew Haak and Andrew Feikema took 2nd. Individual honors went to Grant Gibson, Sam Boonstra, and Audrey Luo who tied for 2nd in the Algebra 2 division. Matthew Haak took 2nd in the Pre-Calculus division.

The overall scores of the entire competition were unbelievably close with the 1st place team scoring 506

points, 2nd place scoring 501, and Illiana falling in 3rd with 500.

“Lots of people were mad and frustrated,” said junior Sam Boonstra.

Tom Gu, a freshman, believes that everyone did really well but was a little disappointed at the near win.

Junior Raul Garcia participated in the Algebra 2 section of the competition.

“We tried our best,” said Garcia. “There was a lot of people and a lot of noise, but it was fun.”

This competition happens to be the very first ever hosted by Illiana, but hosting didn’t worry Mr. Doug Gorter, Illiana teacher and co-coach of math team. He said, “I’m glad nothing bad happened, and I’m very proud of the students.”

The next competition for math team will be at Lemont in January.

Better Illiana Club leads student body to serve with Phil’s Friends

Dominic Turkstra
Reporter

On Tuesday, Dec. 12, homerooms began to fill out get-well cards as a service project with Phil’s Friends. Better Illiana through Better Understanding organized the school wide effort.

Senior Esther Lagerwey said, “I am excited to be managing this. It will be a lot of work, but it will also bring unity with the home-

rooms.”

This project is another way to connect with your homeroom other than Go Day, Lagerwey added.

Phil’s Friends is an organization which originated in Roselle, Illinois, and it supports cancer patients in the United States and many countries around the world.

The cards will be mailed to Phil’s Friends on Dec. 15, and the organization will distribute the cards to cancer patients afterward.

Ugly Christmas sweaters? Thanks, but I'll pass!

Call me crazy, but I hate ugly Christmas sweaters. Before you stop reading and write me off as a Christmas hater, let me explain.

To start, I love the Christmas season as many do. Breaking from school, spending time with family, attending parties, eating food, and celebrating Jesus' birth all create a wonderful holiday season. The Christmas season also brings the cold weather with it. And cold weather means boots, scarves, and sweaters.

Christmas-themed sweaters have been around for a long time. Traditional Christmas sweaters were the most popular in the 1980s. Wool pullovers stitched with snowflakes, trees, and jingle bells became mainstream. Cardigans with festive patterns, colors, and buttons were the style of the season. These sweaters bought a new sense to holiday style – because they were in style.

Christmas sweaters have disobeyed one of the biggest fashion rules: let it go, and it will come back. But instead of letting go, we added an adverb. A very rude adverb: ugly.

I would not like to be called ugly, and I don't think that you would like to be either. So why is it okay to name a style from the 80s ugly? If it is ugly, then it is out of style and shouldn't be worn.

For some reason we clenched tightly to this style and have created a cultural ritual around it. It seems that every day in December there is an ugly sweater event: a party, a brunch, a dance, a day at the ice-skating rink, a day at the bowling alley. Alaskan Airlines even let passengers who wore ugly Christmas sweaters on December 15th get early boarding privileges.

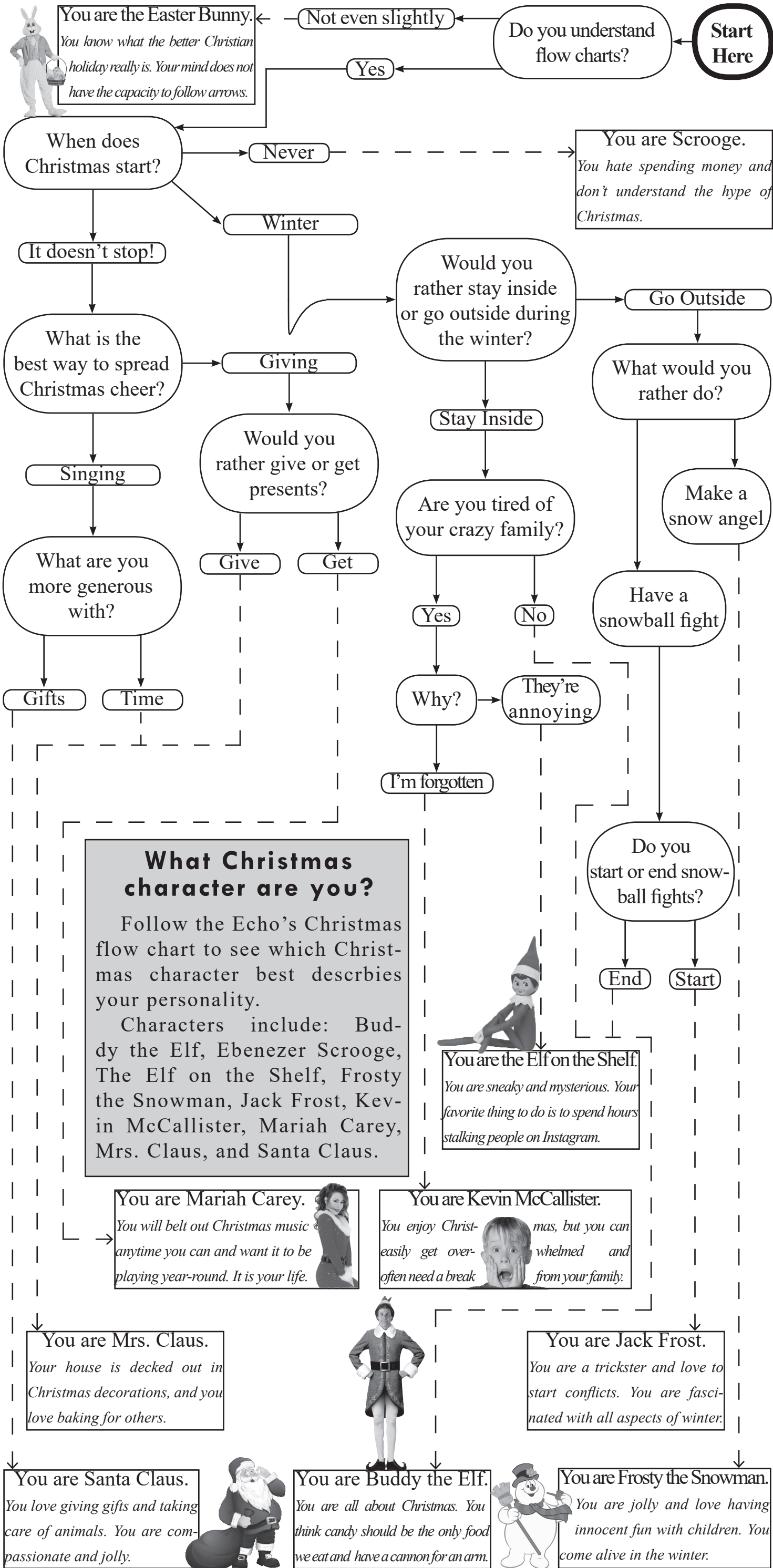
Don't have a sweater from the 80s? Don't worry. Walk into any store that sells clothing and a rack of ugly sweaters will be readily available for you to purchase. For only \$14.99 you can buy an out-of-style, itchy, sweater you will only wear once a year!

Doesn't dressing up in a sweater from the 80s and laughing at it seem strange? Or what about buying a hideous sweater because other people think it's funny? I don't think it's funny to denounce the 80s fashion. And I really don't think it's funny to buy a sweater with a foolish saying on it. What happened to holiday elegance? Parties with dresses and ties? Or what about just wearing fun, fashionable outfits to celebrate?

These sweaters have been dragged through time, and now it is on the last thread. Ugly Christmas sweaters have been in style—or well out of style – since the 1980s. I understand that they will be as much a part of some families' Christmas traditions as skiing over Christmas is to mine, but I will be wearing my new (in-style) chunky knit sweater this Christmas.



Cate Peerbolte
Co-Feature Editor



Not your average Christmas traditions

Cutting into symbolic birthday cake

Liz VanDrunen
Co-Feature Editor

“My unique Christmas tradition is that every year on Christmas Eve, my grandma makes ‘Jesus’ Birthday Cake.” said junior Katie Dykstra.

“Every detail on and in the cake has a meaning. The cake is round which represents the whole world that Jesus was born into. The frosting is white which stands for the righteousness and purity of Christ. The cake consists of three layers: black on bottom, red in the middle, and green on top. The black represents that the fact that

all people have sinned. The red layer symbolizes Jesus’ blood that was shed for our sin. The green layer represents the new life we have in Christ after our sins have been washed away. A star sits on top which led the wise men to the stable,” said Dykstra.

“I don’t exactly remember when it started. All I remember is that it’s been a thing ever since I was little. It’s mainly for the little kids in the family, who don’t know about the story of Christ being born. I think that it’s a great reminder to the whole family about the birth of our Christ Jesus,” said Dykstra.

They carry out this tradition every year on Christmas Eve when they go to their grandparents’ house.

Dykstra said, “I love that my grandma continues this

tradition because it reminds me of how this season isn’t about the gifts we give and receive. It’s about celebrating the birth of Christ and not forgetting about it.”



Photo from www.pinterest.com

Other families also bake layered cakes symbolizing Christ.

Fix Christmas

Christmas is boring. Call me a Scrooge, but something about the stale Christmas songs, overabundance of cheap decorations, tedious family cards, etc. just sounds an alarm, or jingles the bells, in my brain. It’s all been done before, and I’ve seen it all.

When my mind was a clean slate and I had yet to experience many things, Christmas fascinated me.

I loved the snow, the story, the sights, the sounds.

But, like a song playing on repeat for hour, it grew repetitive and predictable

by the time I had taken my first high school exam.

Although you might “get a sentimental feeling when you hear voices singing, ‘Let’s be jolly’ when you hear it, Christmas music especially hits a sour note with me. Name any better-known Christmas song, and I’ll be able to sing the first few verses and the chorus. Once I know the words to a song, its power to mean something or influence “the most wonderful time of the year” is gone, because every “thumpity thump-pa rum pum pum pum” gets older the more it’s played despite its genre, tune, or season. Today, I usually greet the ceaseless “Yuletide carols” with an eye-roll or a “Why do I even have this radio station as a preset still?” And don’t even get me started on their meaningless lyrics.

Christmas lights and decorations are another problem. The industry can only put out so much content for avid consumers before people have to start getting creative. You can keep stringing those crappy lights, which seem to go out every other year, across the gutter, sure, but it eventually becomes a chore which requires more effort than it reaps reward. Instead, for example, you could follow in my neighbor’s footsteps and buy Chinese lanterns, stake them into your yard, wrap them in layers of lights, and call them enlarged ornaments.

I could tell you instead to go against what is mainstream, to do your own thing, but that’s what caused Christmas to end up how it is now: a commercially vital but annoying shell of the real Christmas story.

Somewhere along the line, some marketing gurus came up with the great idea to link their products with the festive holiday. Yes, it may have been great for sales and, later on, today’s economy, but it’s not so great for baby Jesus, lying neglected in some back woods manger. And on that same line, a songwriter decided not to sing about the wondrous event of baby Jesus but about their wonderful significant other. Now, most Christmas songs are romantic, and, sadly, I have to hear Mariah Carey’s shrill voice every year.

Because of those changes, among other things, people have stopped focusing on what really matters, like giving back to the community through serving. In contrast, we fill that time with shopping sprees and more work to make up for money spent. Then we justify ourselves by attending, if not participating in, a Christian Christmas program and call it a (holi-)day. And this is all acceptable to us, to us Christians.

So redo Christmas. Do things differently. Be a good neighbor and stop worrying about buying or receiving gifts. Instead, support new Christmas content from Christian singers and ease up on the gifts; you can give better things, like your time. Get more involved. Pack some Christmas meals for those that can’t afford that luxury. Your choice to change impacts and benefits others around you, reflecting the very reason that Christ was born.



Grant Gibson
Co-Feature Editor



Photo from www.bungenorthamerica.com

Another family’s rendition of the sweet bread with baby Jesus.

Christmas tamales, sweet bread spice up Christmas

Cate Peerbolte
Co-Feature Editor

Junior Raul Garcia said, “In the week approaching Christmas we [his sister, mother, godfather, and uncle] go to my Grandma’s house to make tamales. It is always such a fun time. Not only do we make the traditional tamales with meat in them, but we also make sweet tamales with red dye in them. My mother always looks like she is leaving a murder scene when she is done mixing the red dye into the dough, because her entire arms are stained with the red color. We make a lot of tamales, at least three dozen for everyone in the family. Each family member gets some and we eat them all the way until the new year.”

Garcia said, “At

Christmas, on my Father’s side, we always have a sweet bread ring called Rosca de Reyes. It looks like an oversized donut, but it has four or five plastic babies baked into it. My Godmother slices the bread. Each person gets a piece and whoever has a baby in their bread is the winner. There isn’t a prize, but they still are the winner. Once, a baby was sliced in half because it was between two pieces. On that day we also play Christmas-themed games. We have a competition of who can unwrap a Hershey’s kiss the fastest with oven mitts on. We also get into groups and turn a family member into a Christmas character like a snowman or a tree with items from around the house. We also do a gift exchange by drawing numbers that correspond to a gift.”

Matching pajamas for all cousins

Liz VanDrunen
Co-Feature Editor

Junior Lyla Kooistra said, “Every year our Grandma Claus-ing gets us [all of the cousins] matching ornaments and pajamas. She likes to give us all equal shares of presents, and the ornaments usually have a picture of her and Grandpa so we could hang them up

in our trees as a special ornament to remember them.”

Kooistra isn’t sure when the tradition started, but she thinks it began when they were two or three years old.

“We all love getting those presents because they are meaningful; they come from our grandparents and they want us all to be happy,” said Kooistra.



Photo courtesy of Lyla Kooistra

The Claus-ing cousins pose for a family photo in their matching pajamas.

Family celebrates Christmas with country twang

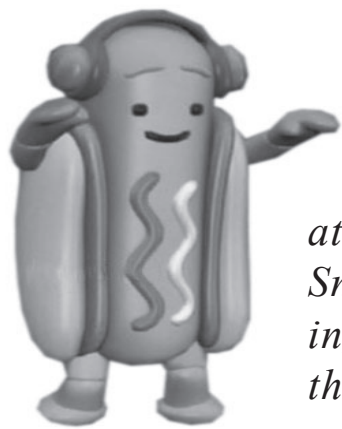
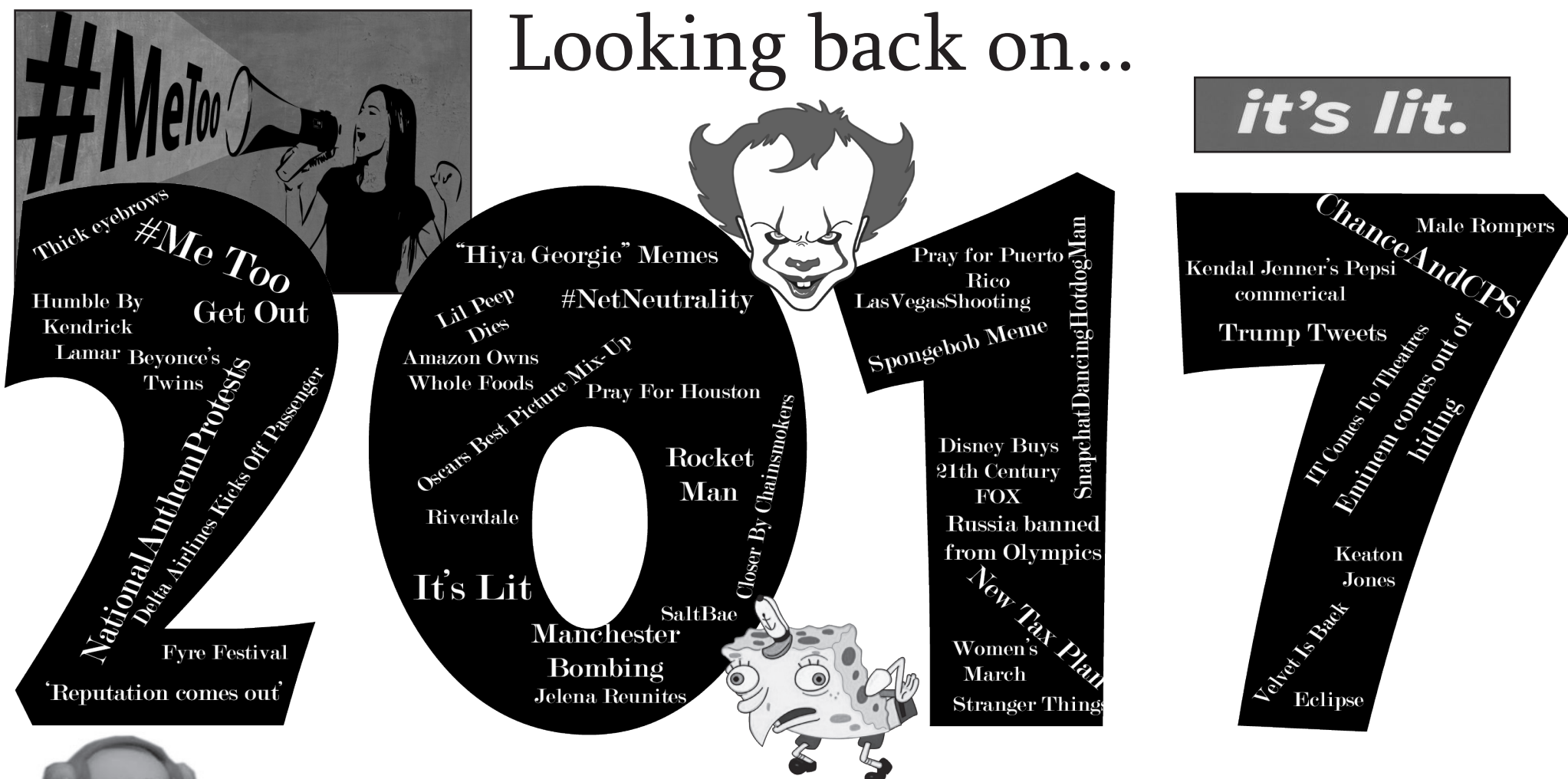
Haleigh Olthof
Co-News Editor

“Before we open any presents, we sit and read a devotional,” said Mia Roth. The family wants to reflect on Christ be-

fore they celebrate with other Christmas traditions. Each year, they also read Luke 2, listen to “Happy Birthday, Jesus” by Reba McEntire, and light a candle near their family’s nativity scene.

Looking back on...

it's lit.



Another year has flown by, and with it, events and trends that set this year apart from the rest. We laughed at everything from Salt Bae and Riverdale to the dancing Snapchat hot dog man, and we mourned over mass shootings and sexual harassment. Looking back, these are the things that we will remember about 2017.



Celebrating Christmas music around world

Lauren Curtis
Co-Arts Editor

Every year at Christmas, we are bombarded with the same handful of Christmas songs, and after a while, it all begins to feel washed out. We've strayed from the traditional Christmas music to find a few songs from around the globe to spice up the holiday season.

Oh baby, I've falling in love on Christmas Day

South Korea: "Snow Candy": Falling in love on Christmas Day? So cliché, but K-pop group, Starship Planet knows how to sing it right. In this upbeat Christmas song, these lovers tell us how falling in love is as sweet as candy. This song has everything from singing to even a little bit of rap



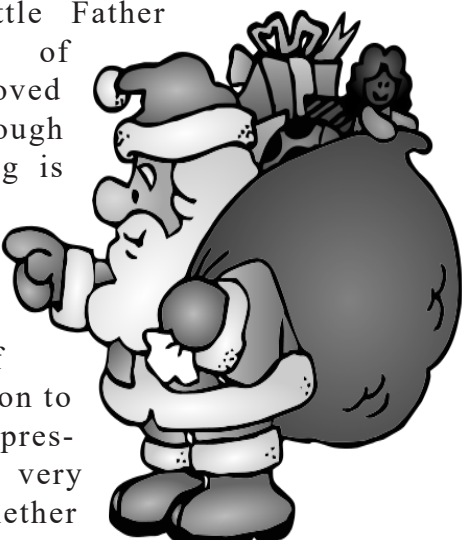
Puerto Rico knows how to do Christmas right: Party

Puerto Rico "La Fiesta De Pilito": For the band, El Gran Combo, the best part of Christmas is the food, and who can blame them? They love the food parties so much, that they decide

to write a song about it. "La Fiesta De Pilito" is the type of song that you would want to play at a party because it is very danceable. From the beginning to the end, it makes you want to get on your feet. In the song, El Gran Combo talks about forgetting the problems of the past, present and future because Christmas is coming. This song definitely gives off a carefree vibe, perfect for the holiday season.

Santa, could you come a little sooner?

France "Petit Papa Noel": "Petit Papa Noel" or "Little Father Christmas" is one of France's most beloved Christmas songs. Though very cheesy, the song is cute because it's sung by a young child. He explains how he is anxiously awaiting the arrival of Santa Claus. In addition to having his mind on presents, he seems to be very concerned as to whether Santa stays warm or not.

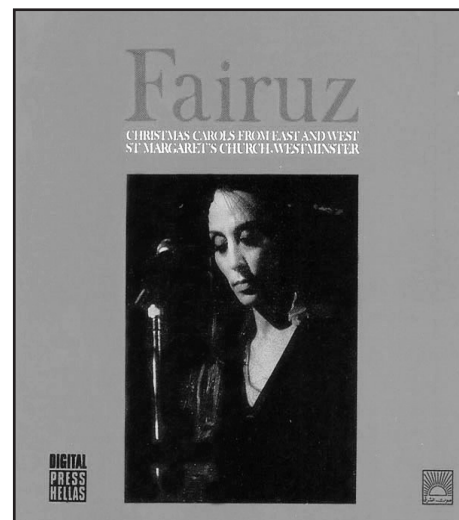


Do you hear the sound of drums?

Spain "Fum, Fum, Fum": If you are looking for a fast-paced, catchy song, this is perfect for you. The fum, fum, fum sound heard in the song, mimics the sound of the stringing of a guitar or of the beating of a drum. The lyrics celebrate the birth of Christ.

Dreaming of what a white Christmas might look like

Lebanon "Talj, Talj": Although snow isn't something very common in Lebanon, that didn't stop Fairuz from singing what has become one of Lebanon's most beloved songs. In this song, she talks about the effect that the snow has on everything from flowers to clouds. She continues to dream for a white Christmas that may never come.





Sports Catch-ups



Girls Basketball

Kade Bouwer
Co-Sports Editor

The girls basketball team has stumbled off to a disappointing start. After winning their first game they have been on a twelve game losing streak. A stark contrast from last years team which had only nine losses for the entire season. Their offense has held them back for most of the season. They have averaged 29.8 points per game, while shooting just 28% from the field. Turnovers have plagued the offense as they have averaged 28.2 turnovers per

game. Assistant coach Tom Knapper said, “We need players to want to take the ball to the basket. For a couple of games, we didn’t really have anybody finishing at the rim. If you got turnovers, and nobody wants to take the ball to the basket, offensively you’re done.” The team, despite its poor record, has not given up on the season yet. Junior guard Kelsie Derico said, “I’m not saying the season is going to get easier, but I’m saying that it is going to get better.”

Boys Basketball

Jo Mulder
Co-Sports Editor

The varsity boys’ basketball team, after some early stumbles, is currently boasting a 5-4 season. The team began rough, but lately plays have begun to flow better on the court. Because the team does not have many big bodies to take up space under the hoop, they have had to rely on their speed to give them the advantage. However, with their speed they needed control under pressure, and according to junior Andrew Smits, the team

has been working on just that. Smits said that smooth and fluid passing allows them to move down the court more quickly, making their play more efficient. According to senior Collin Flipse, the team has also shot better in recent games. Flipse said that the team’s “heart” and “how much they want it” has given them the strength they need on the court. He also said that because the team consists of so many juniors, inexperience hurt at first, but the newcomers are figuring things out, which helps to improve play.

Wrestling

Alex Wondaal
Co-Sports Editor

With a young and inexperienced team, the wrestlers are off to a rocky 2-7 start. Senior Isaac Lyzenga said the team goal is to win 5 matches this year. With a young group comes a lack of physical strength – strength that cannot easily be accumulated in a single season. Coach Dean Bosman said, “Technique needs to compensate for lack of physical ability. We need effectiveness to come from

different moves.” Sophomore Sam Dekker said the team has spent lots of time trying to learn different approaches and new moves. Dekker said that he feels a sense of leadership even as a sophomore. Despite the team being in the midst of a rebuilding period, Lyzenga has high hopes for his personal season. “I’m hoping to finish in the top three at State,” said Lyzenga. He said in order for his goals to be achieved, he’ll need to work on his physical fitness and endurance.

Illiana’s first ever male cheerleader defies boundaries, gravity

Beth Boonstra
Co-Editor in Chief

Illiana’s newest up-and-coming cheerleader is a flexible jumper, a quick learner, and a trailblazer– Illiana’s first and only male cheerleader. Junior Christopher Bass may not wear a bow and glitter, but he cheers just as fiercely as the rest. “Chris is an incredible asset to our team,” said cheer coach Carisa Beezhold. “He has amazing jumps, is now tumbling at an advanced level, and adds stability to our stunts and pyramids.” She said that the girls were now working harder on their jumps just to try to keep up with him. Surprisingly, Bass has not had any gymnastics experience other than personal stretching, but he has had cheer experience and many of his family and friends do cheer. They encouraged him to join this year, so he did. The dance choreographer has intentionally avoided hip swings or other moves for Bass’s sake. Bass participates in everything except for the poms routines just like everyone else on the team.

Cheer is harder than most people think according to Bass. He said that they worked on sideline cheers for one day and spent the rest of the time practicing for routines and competitions. Cheer captain Gracie Bultema said, “Everyone thought something was wrong. They didn’t like a coed team because it’s out of the ordinary. I feel like the Loud Crowd game was a chance for Chris to show the school his skills. He did amazing, and I hope that people will respect him for choosing the cheer team because he has worked so hard to be where he is now.” Junior cheerleader Lily Gerstner has received feedback on both ends of the spectrum with comments from ““Wow, that boy is really good,” all the way to, ‘Hey, is that boy on your team gay?’” Gerstner, along with the rest of the team, has never felt uncomfortable with the situation. “He knows his job and does it with the most respect possible,” she said. Bass has come to accept the negative feedback. “Some people may take it well, some people may

not. For me [the negative feedback] is consistent, so it’s just whatever at this point. I just deal with it. . . .” Bultema touches on a difference in team dynamic in having a male on the team. “The team definitely has to be careful of how our feelings and emotions come out. We used to talk about relationship problems and our feelings. Sometimes he feels a little uncomfortable.” Gerstner said, “There is nothing different to me. His smile, personality, and sass is what makes him Christopher Bass himself. Being a boy doesn’t stop him from doing what he loves. Yes, of course we are used to an all girl team, but we don’t love each other for being girls; we love each other because we are a cheer family.” Beezhold said, “One lady actually came down out of the stands at a competition to tell Caitlyn, the assistant coach, how impressed she was with his jumps, not only the height but also his technique. At the Seneca tournament, the fans for the opposing team wanted him to jump during timeouts they enjoyed watching him so much.”

Cheer team tumbles to state competition



The cheerleaders pose for picture after a Loud Crowd game

Photo by Deb Kamp

Cassie Laninga
Co-News Editor

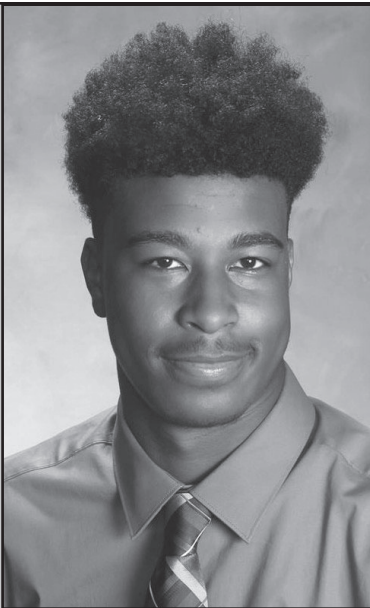
On Saturday, Dec. 16, the Illiana cheerleading team captured a 4th place finish and qualified for state in New Berlin, Illinois, after also competing well on Dec. 9 for small varsity division. Sophomore and first year member on the team Kristine Neumeyer said, “We hit everything. We had a small mishap on the basket toss, but we recovered well. Other than that, the routine was really good. We all

do really well together.” “I am really proud of our team,” said senior Grace Bultema. “We got the most points and the highest level in difficulty a team could get at the competition.” The cheerleading team continues to make progress, performing stunts at the start of this year that they had not mastered until the end of last year. Sophomore Anna Lenting said, “I think we are doing pretty good this season. We are making a lot of progress.”

“For practices, we focus on things we need to work on and then do them repeatedly until it’s in our brains,” said sophomore Christopher Bass. The next step for the cheerleaders is to go to Springfield, Illinois in January for ICCA State. “It’s a lot of fun. It’s a lot of work,” said Neumeyer with a laugh. Bultema said, “Everyone on the team has differences, but because we are all working toward a common goal, we work well together.”

Male Athlete of the Month

Josh Harris transferred to Illiana the second semester of his freshman year. He played for the JV basketball team his sophomore year and the Varsity team his junior and senior years. This year Harris has led the team as the starting center and has averaged 10.2 points and 10.1 rebounds per game. Harris takes pride in his rebounding: “I want to be known as the rebound guy, the garbage man–but not dirty,” said Harris. “The teammates this year are a great group of guys,” added Harris. “They’re really funny. Andrew Smits is a goofball, but I love him.”



Female Athlete of the Month

Senior guard Bethany Junker, playing basketball at Illiana for her first time, has already made a big impact on the team. She is the team’s second leading scorer and has the highest 3-point shooting percentage on the team at 37%. After playing basketball at Grant Park High School for her first two years, she transferred to Illiana for her junior season, but she was not allowed to play due to eligibility rules of IHSA. “I love playing with these girls,” Junker said. “It doesn’t feel like my senior year yet. I guess it just hasn’t kicked in.”

Editorial

Bullying should have no home here

She's new to the school, and she's having some trouble adjusting. She's shy, quiet. Being introverted, she has trouble making new friends easily. One boy seems to take interest in her, but his intentions seem less than honorable, so she cuts it off. The next day, she finds that her car has been covered with condoms. This is too much for her to bear, so she leaves the school.

He's been here since freshman year. Everything was going great, perfect family, good grades, but then his "ride-or-die" friends randomly start to ignore him. They start rumors about him that made others look at him differently. Now he eats alone at lunch.

They are a good group of black students, celebrating their culture during Black History Month. They innocently hang posters on their lockers, not expecting it to be a problem. A few students notice this and decide to rip them down, an act that comes off as racists and hurtful to the black students.

He is a Chinese transfer student. He brings his grandparents to school for Grandparents Day. They are having a great time until his teacher addresses them as "immigrants who are taking all the

good jobs away." Not only are his grandparents offended, but now he wonders if everyone sees him that way.

These are but a few of the true stories of students bullied at Illiana. Going to school can be very stressful, taking tests, learning new ideas, making new friends. Just imagine having to deal with all this, plus bullying. That could really push someone to the edge.

No one can look at those

"No one can look at those stories and say that this is okay behavior for a body of students that wears the word 'Christian' on their chests like badges."

stories and say that this is okay behavior for a body of students that wears the word 'Christian' on their chests like badges. Our oppressive behavior does not show that we are Christians, and it needs to stop if we want to continue to wear the Lord's name on our chests.

But in order to fix the problem, we need to know how to look for it. Bullying is defined as "using superior strength or influence

to intimidate (someone), typically to force him or her to do what one wants." Bullies are typically people that feed off the weak in order to either make themselves feel better, to gain attention from others, or both. We typically think of bullying as knocking down someone's books or tripping them in the hallway, but there are also other, less obvious ways such as calling someone out of their name on social media or purposefully hurting someone's

feelings.

So, how should we respond to bullying? Although fighting back with words and fists sounds like a good answer, it's not. It only makes things worse. That doesn't mean not to stand up to bullies, though. Something as simple as calling them out on their behavior could cause them to change. Of course, this does not always work, so tell-

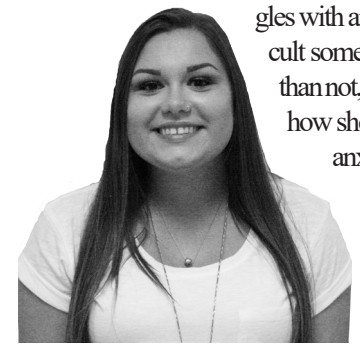
ing a teacher or parent would be the next best option. For the bystanders, stop watching and get involved. It isn't hard to see that what the bully is doing isn't right, so say something or stop watching. Most of the time, once a bully loses their audience, they stop. Saying nothing makes bullying worse because the kid who is bullying will think it is okay. It is never easy dealing with bullies, but doing so helps to remember that we all are children of God and should be treated as such.

So, what's next? People do not change over night, so don't expect anything more from a bully. It takes time, and patience so 1. help that person, sometimes bullying stems from self-esteem issues or other problems not talked about. Helping the bully can help the community too. Tell an adult, who can find them the help that they need and eventually they will change. 2. Pray for them—actually pray for them—to have the strength to change. 3. Lastly, stay with them. Don't just get them some help, and say "now it's someone else's problem." As Christians, we are supposed to stick together and help one another. Bullying isn't just the problem of the person being bullied; it is everyone's problem.

Recognizing signs of anxiety

I met my best friend, Emily, four years ago, when we were both freshman. When we met, I didn't know she'd end up being one of my biggest blessings, nor did I know she struggled with anxiety.

Being the outgoing, people-loving person I am, having a best friend who struggles with anxiety can be difficult sometimes. More often than not, I don't understand how she's feeling because anxiety is something



Riley Goodwin
Co-News Editor

I've never had to deal with. I've learned a lot about anxiety and depression since we've been friends, and I'd like to think she's learned things from me

that help her throughout her daily experiences

I thought I knew about anxiety from books or posts on social media, but I never really understood the severity of it until I became close with Emily. She also struggles with social anxiety, but it isn't as severe as her overall anxiety. If she's out in public, she'd rather pee her pants than ask someone where the bathroom is. Whenever we're in a drive-thru together, she'll ask me to order her food for her because she gets flustered talking to people. Another big thing for her is making phone calls. Whether it's to make an appointment or call a store to ask a question, she struggles with it, so she'll have me make the calls for her.

When it comes to her everyday anxiety, the smallest of things bothers her for months, things the average person would forget a few minutes afterward. For example, if she had an awkward conversation with someone and she felt like she said something weird, she'd continue to think about it and think about it to the point where she loses sleep at night. Or, if she did something goofy but people thought she was just acting weird, she'd overthink that as well.

Overthinking is a big part of her anxiety. She constantly needs reassurance from me that I still love her and want to be her friend. There are times when she's afraid something she says will offend me and make me stop being her friend, so she won't say it at all. Deep down she knows I'm not going anywhere, but she still gets caught up in the fear of not having me in her life. This can be really frustrating because I've never experienced anything like this, but I do my best to be understanding, loving, and uplifting in every situation. More often than not, I'm Emily's voice of reason. Thankfully, she appreciates when I'm straight forward with her and tell her everything is fine and she's really just overthinking something. But, there are times when what I say matters to her, but she doesn't do anything with it because she can't see the same endpoint I can. That's just how her brain works.

That's another thing that's been difficult for me to wrap my head around. Sometimes I want to tell her to just 'stop thinking about it' or 'calm down, it isn't that big of a deal' but then I remember that it isn't her fault.

Emily is not the only person who deals with this mental disease, either. People all around you struggle with anxiety, people you'd never guess. Don't give them a hard time for being the way they are, especially if, like me, you don't fully understand what's going on. Don't assume someone is being standoffish or rude because they aren't speaking. They may be dealing with the same issues as Emily.

Emily didn't choose to have anxiety. Nobody does. She'd do anything not to have to deal with being anxious and nervous all day. I've learned that the only thing I can do is pray for her, love her, and continue to be the uplifting friend that I've been, and everyone else should do the same.



Merry Christmas
from the Echo staff!

The newspaper is a forum for expression; therefore, we encourage feedback or commentary. Please contact us at echo@illianaweb.org

the Echo)))

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