

Illiana students celebrate with kings, queens at Night to Shine

Taylor Benes
Reporter

Nearly 20 Illiana students joined more than 600 volunteers, kings, and queens to dance the night away at Night to Shine, a prom night experience for people with special needs, celebrated on Feb. 8 at Faith Church’s Dyer campus.

Night to Shine, sponsored by the Tim Tebow Foundation, began nationwide in 2015, and Faith Church has hosted since 2017. This year was Illiana’s first organized involvement in the event, arranged by Impact Club sponsor Heidi Teach.

Students lined the red carpet, cheering on the kings and queens with either a loud or quiet welcome, as some people with special needs are overwhelmed by loud noises. They helped at dinner by getting plates of food, refilling drinks, and cleaning up. Near the end



Students Annie and Chloe Weemhoff smile with their dates Peter Olthof and Ryan Musgrove at the Night to Shine dance.

of the night, the students joined the kings and queens on the dance floor.

Other Illiana students unaffiliated with the club

were “buddies” for the night. Sophomore Chloe Weemhoff attended the event as a buddy.

“My favorite part was

the dancing because you could see all the participants letting loose and being themselves and just having a great time. I really

loved being a buddy because I knew I was making them feel special,” Weemhoff said. “I highly recommend Illiana students to participate in this amazing event next year.”

Senior Lyla Kooistra was a buddy for her second year at Night to Shine.

“Night to Shine is very important to me because it is a reminder that everyone has an opportunity to have fun and have fellowship together as one united family of Christ,” Kooistra said.

Kooistra and her date, Rachel, walked down the red carpet, danced, took pictures in the photo booth, and enjoyed chicken and ice cream. “The joy on her face said it all,” Kooistra stated. “She definitely deserved it and I had so much fun talking and dancing with her.”

Kooistra said, “The Tim Tebow Foundation is so powerful— it gives many special needs friends & families an opportunity to have a night to shine.”



The Spanish IV singing telegram group serenades Justin VanDrunen during Spanish I with the song, “Tengo tu Amor” (I have your love.)

Valentine’s telegrams leave lovers red-faced

Cate Peerbolte
Co-News Editor

On Feb. 14, Illiana was filled with love, sponsored by Student Council. Student Council Co-President Mickey Boss said that carnations and suckers were not popular items this year. But the singing telegrams were a great success. Over forty were sold with only three singing groups.

She added, “The singing groups were mostly made up of seniors, so I am concerned about who will do it next year. I hope Illiana continues to do this because my favorite part is seeing how embarrassed everyone gets. It’s just hilarious.”

Singing telegram stars Alex Eenigenburg and Isaac Gibson both agreed that their favorite part of Valentine’s Day is the singing telegrams. Eenigenburg said, “I

love embarrassing people when I sing my heart out to them. My favorite performance of the day was to Daniel Chandler because he was so uncomfortable while we serenaded him with the song ‘Head Over Boots.’”

Senior Annie Weemhoff said, “I thought they [singing telegrams] were really funny, and I think that we should have more groups next year because there were only three.”

West Virginia trip first project of new missions director Sara Johnson

DJ Gladney
Reporter

Ms. Sara Johnson has taken a new title and set of responsibilities at Illiana: she is now the new Missions Coordinator for the school.

In her new role, Johnson will help to plan and organize and increasingly large number of service or mission trips for Illiana students in the years ahead.

Johnson said the position suits her personality well as she has a passion for service and helping others. She is excited to organize the projects and missions, and she said she wants to help set a vision for Illiana.

As part of her inaugura-

tion to the new role, Johnson will also lead a mission trip to West Virginia March 30-April 6. Illiana will be teaming up with Young Life, which has a lot of connections in the community, schools, and churches in the area. On this trip, students will be doing things like renovating apartments, deep cleaning and repainting the town hall, and helping pick up trash with a trash-o-thon camp fundraiser. The students might get a chance to go on ATV rides, hike at a park, and hangout and talk with local teens too.

Johnson asked that if anyone has places or organizations that would partner with Illiana to do these missions, please talk to her about it.

Christianity can learn from meme culture

For thousands of years, Christianity has strongly shaped moral principles in the West.

However, these Christian principles have been steadily declining in the face of rampant individualism and paganism. “This world,” as Paul would put it, has suppressed our religious purposes arguably more than any tyrannical government could. And, since there are no restrictions on religion in America that could hinder Christianity, the decline of Christian influence is our fault.



Grant Gibson
Co-Feature Editor

Over the past few years, memes have had a greater impact on America’s social environment than Christians have, and often in a positive way, too. Sure, Christians donate billions of dollars, but where are we when it comes to changing society? I don’t have a positive answer to that, but I can tell you all about memes:

Stefán Karl Stefánsson, the Icelandic actor who played Robbie Rotten in *LazyTown* and is featured in many memes, got cancer in 2016. People started to show support all across the Internet for him and completely paid for his treatments because of memes. Sadly, he passed away when the cancer returned, but his legacy lives on. Memes kept him alive for over a year, and—through the permanence of the Internet—allowed him to live past his death.

A year and a half ago, Americans from all corners of the Internet banded together to protect Net Neutrality, the concept that ISPs shouldn’t sell different speeds of Internet. Soon after that, Europeans similarly united to repeal Article 13, a bill which would drastically decrease the amount of copyrighted material that creators could fairly use. Internet users are defending everyone’s rights to equality and free expression.

Because of the online prevalence of self-deprecating jokes, deep, serious conversations with strangers about mental and emotional health have become commonplace. These conversations are almost always wholesome and helpful. They develop from simple jokes, providing comfort to those with mental health issues.

These conversations are especially common in comment sections of sad videos or songs on YouTube. One artist who produced such music is the late XXX-Tentacion, a rapper and singer who had a strong presence in meme culture throughout his short career. He turned his life around from actions like beating his girlfriend to using his Instagram Story to spread word about mental health, self-love, self-care, and being charitable. He was shot and killed last year, but that didn’t stop his fans from continuing the ripple of good vibes. The Internet met him where he was, helped him change through positivity and encouragement, and carried his cause on when he couldn’t.

So where is the Church to help people delay their dying day or live past it? Where is the Church to protect everyone’s rights? Where is the Church to provide comfort to people struggling with mental health? Where is the church to meet people where they are and help them change?

I’ll tell you where we should be. We should be at the sides of people threatened by death, helping them overcome it. We should be honoring the deceased past their deaths instead of forgetting about them and moving on with life. We should be fighting for the basic rights of all humans. (Shoutout to Illiana Right to Life, by the way, for being a great example of that.) We should be inviting, caring, and judgment-free toward those facing inward struggles. We should be forgetting about people’s past actions or wrongdoings and focusing on what they’re doing now. We should be family.

So, please, let’s take a page out of the Internet’s book and get better at making change.



Photo courtesy of broadwayworld.com

The Weird Sisters featured prominently in this production of “Macbeth.”

Seniors see ‘Macbeth’ at Chicago Shakespeare Theatre

Benjamin Wheeler
Reporter

On Feb. 11, sixty-two seniors joined English teachers Sara Johnson and Jeff DeVries to watch “Macbeth” at the Chicago Shakespeare Theatre on Navy Pier.

DeVries said that the English Department has taken seniors on this

field trip for years. He added, “We think it is a great experience for students to see Shakespeare performed live by professional actors. Students suddenly discover that Shakespeare’s work is far more accessible than they ever realized.”

This production started with the Weird Sisters performing a wild dance

to a hip-hop beat as the opening battle raged around them.

Emma Slings said that she really liked how the director of the play perceived the witches. She said, “I liked seeing something as minor as the witches come to life in a story we read a year ago.”

“For being someone who doesn’t really like

Shakespeare, I thought it was a pretty good and entertaining play,” said Alex Eenigenburg.

Colton Dejong had seen “Macbeth” before and absolutely loved it both times he went. He said, “The lighting and music was my favorite part of this production, and it really kept my attention for the whole performance.”

New Bible studies encourage questioning, spiritual growth in students

Sophia Thompson
Reporter

As Illiana moves into the new semester, it welcomes two new clubs as well: Branches led by senior James VanderMolen, and Grounds led by Mr. Lance Davids. These new clubs are being formed to create a space for students to feel open in discussing their faith and growing in their knowledge of God.

Branches, started by VanderMolen, is a prayer

club that is being held every day after school from 3 until no later than 3:30. “This club is to help students in understanding what it is like to follow Jesus,” VanderMolen said.

VanderMolen started the club because he, “saw a need for people to have a space safe to grow [in their faith].”

The Grounds, the other new club, is “an attempt to continue to build community while simultaneously providing a place

to talk about the gospel in small group settings,” according to a blog post by Davids. The club started because Davids found a need for people to be able to find a place to ask questions about life, Jesus, and anything else they wondered about. The club uses a small group setting with only three or four students at a time meeting with Davids to ask questions or discuss struggles. Davids provides attendees of the

club with a snack from Common Grounds during their discussions. Their first meeting was held Wednesday, Feb. 20.

The two clubs differ from each other because Branches is geared more towards students and building relationships with others spiritually while Grounds is purely for asking questions about anything, though Davids said all questions ultimately come back to God.

Student Council plans Sadie Hawkins style dance with Chicago Christian, faces scheduling issues

Samuel Vargo
Reporter

Illiana and Chicago Christian may be rivals on the basketball court, but they have a chance to be friends on the dance floor next month.

The idea for a combined dance between the two schools, Preview to Dance, goes as far back as November and was

first conceived by seniors and co-Student Council presidents Alex Wondaal and Mickey Boss. Student Council hoped to have the dance in December, but the idea was shelved when it was discovered that Chicago Christian had exams on the week they were planning.

The dance was rescheduled for March be-

cause it is, according to Student Council member Simon Molenaar, “an open month.” January and February found Illiana’s exams and the run-up to homecoming causing calendar problems, leaving March as perhaps the final window to fit in a co-school dance before the spring busyness begins on both campuses.

According to Won-

daal, the dance is supposed to be a Sadie Hawkins style dance where the girls ask the guys. Things are still up in the air as Student Council reached out to Chicago Christian again and have yet to receive an official answer. Even if the dance falls through this year, Wondaal hopes the idea returns next year.

‘Whole New World’ greets homecoming guests in new building

Madison Ceponis
Reporter

Illiana welcomed students and alumni to “A Whole New World,” an Aladdin-inspired homecoming, on Friday and Saturday, Feb. 1 and 2.

Friday night’s highlight was the crowning of a new Mr. and Miss Illiana. The junior varsity had just lost a close game to Tinley Park, but that bitter taste washed away as the lights dimmed and Mrs. Siersema introduced the 2019 Homecoming Court: Mark Hernandez and Emma Groot, Alex Eenigenburg and Annie Weemhoff, Alex Wondaal and Haleigh Olthof, Ben Wi-



Senior Mickey Boss is crowned Miss Illiana.

Photo courtesy of Jeff DeVries



Former Mr. Illiana Jordan Miller and senior Ben Wiersema embrace as Wiersema accepts the title of “Mr. Illiana” from Miller.

ersema and Emma Wheeler, and Colton DeJong and Mickey Boss.

Ben Wiersema and Mickey Boss won. After their speeches, the Varsity Boys Basketball team took to the floor, battling Tinley Park before a Loud Crowd clad in green and white. The team eventually lost 75-72.

The homecoming dance on Saturday, Feb. 2 continued developing the “Whole New World” theme. The Student Council and Junior/Senior Banquet Committee settled on the theme for several reasons. Dave Bosman, a Student Council sponsor, said the group liked the exotic air of an Aladdin theme. He also said it fit well since this was the first homecoming in our new building.

The dance was supposed to take place in the Commons, but later took place in the ARC because of large attendance.

Prospective student dinner encourages community building, brings new students to Illiana

Lauren Woo
Reporter

The “Supper and Small Talk” dinner for parents of prospective Illiana students began last year as a way to spread information about the new campus, but has taken on a new purpose.

The dinner last year “went over really well,” according to Marie Limback, the Director of Admissions at Illiana. When about 30 parents of 8th graders attended. They met at Little Italy, ate dinner, and heard from Peter Boonstra, Illiana’s principal, Lance David’s, Illiana’s Vision Director, Bible teacher, and Director of Spiritual Development, as well as Brent Vermeulen, who, at the

time, hadn’t taught at Illiana. He now teaches STEM classes.

“We did have some families last year say they made the decision to send their students to Illiana after the dinner,” Limback said.

David’s emphasized “connecting teachers and students” and “community building,” according to Limback.

Limback also said that it was nice to meet with parents in a smaller setting and allow them to have their questions heard.

There was supposed to be another dinner on Feb. 7, but it was cancelled due to lack of sign-ups. The dinner on the 19th, however, is still on, and, according to Limback, “the registrations are flooding in.”



Little Italy is located on Route 30 in Dyer and is a popular venue for any occasion.

Traveling from China, new exchange student pursues better education in America

Madison Rogers
Reporter

Illiana Christian’s foreign exchange student program has brought in a new sophomore, Chinese student Eason Wang. Wang has been attending Illiana since the start of second semester this year in hopes of getting a better education than what he has previously received in China.

Wang first heard about Illiana from Mr. Fan, leader of Cul-

ture Matters requiring agency. His family then signed him up for Illiana to get a better education.

“China’s education is not good enough for those who want a higher scholar, (higher levels of learning),” Wang said. Wang’s family feels as though Eason’s best shot a great education is in America.

Wang has been sponsored and lives with junior Josh Maticcik and family, he has been

enjoying his time in America and fitting in well with the change in lifestyle.

Wang said, “The students are kind and teachers too ... Classes are easy to understand and taught well.” Wang said he also enjoy his new experiences of America.

Wang is looking forward to his education. He plans to stay in America, more specifically Illiana, for the rest of his high school.



Wang enjoys livnig with the Maticcik family in America.

Photo by Haleigh Olthof

Finding church in Ford Heights

Maddie Holesinger

Co-Editor in Chief

Haleigh Olthof

Co-Feature Editor

If there's one thing Chico and Tatiana Fajardo-Heflin desire for people to understand about Ford Heights, it's that "the people in Ford Heights have names." They've spent ten years learning those names, building trust with their neighbors, and engaging with the Ford Heights community, but the road to where they are now was not an easy one.

"We both grew up in Christian schools and churches that emphasized that the Bible is the Word of God and should be taken seriously. However, when we started reading the Bible for ourselves in our late teens and early twenties, we realized that there were some parts of scripture that Christians weren't treating as the Word of God," said Chico and Tatiana, responding to the interview. Jesus taught his followers to sell their possessions and give to the poor, and Jesus "rooted his life among lepers, beggars, and outcasts" and taught his followers to do the same. "Our churches always seemed to find ways to justify why we didn't have to take these parts of the Bible seriously, but it is this very Jesus--the Jesus that makes us uncomfortable--that we began to fall in love with.

"I guess you could say we ended up in Ford Heights because we wanted to treat seriously the parts of the Bible that churches seem to ignore."

Chico had been attending art school in Chicago, where his daily walk from his dorm brought him past over a dozen homeless people. In his pursuit of taking Jesus seriously, he dropped out.

"It was just very clear after a couple of years that I couldn't spend my life making really beautiful paintings while there were people living on the streets, literally right below me," said Chico.

Tatiana felt called to pursue that same way of life, radically rejecting conventional living. She graduated from college with a degree in Biblical studies, not intending to get a job with that degree but deciding that it would make her a better Christian.

A couple years later, after Chico and Tatiana got married, they moved to Reba Place Fellowship, which is an intentional group of Christians who live together in Evanston and share all of their possessions, much like the church in Acts 2 and 4. While living there, they both prayed that God would lead them somewhere, and after reading about the plight of Ford Heights in the paper, that's exactly what happened. They visited Ford

Heights and started attending First Union Missionary Baptist Church. Six months later they moved into a house down the street. They had saved up enough money for three months' living expenses, expecting to find jobs in the community. However, they had moved to an economically depressed area during the recession in 2008, and after applying to every part time, low wage position they could find, they still had no jobs. Yet when they checked their bank account three months later, there was still enough money to get them through the next three months.

to "embrace a deep level of social discomfort" in order to form friendships. One main way Chico and Tatiana made connections, especially at first, was through their church.

"The truth is that the majority of people in our town are Christians," said Tatiana, and even those who don't attend regularly have respect for the church. It still took years to build trust between people who used to fear each other, but now they share such a trust that drug dealers put an arm around Chico and ask if anyone is bothering him.

"Chico threw a snowball at me," said Kaneisha, "so I turned around and was like, 'What the heck?' But then, me being who I am, I was happy. So, I picked some [snow] up and threw [it] back at him. And ever since then they've just been really close with us."

Chico and Tatiana later met the rest of Jacoby and Kaneisha's family. Their mom was the first adult to welcome them into her home, which was a big step towards being accepted into the neighborhood.

According to Chico, Kaneisha's and Jacoby's family was at

Jacoby was less excited.

"When I first came here, I was sad because I wanted to go to a public school with people I knew and people I could relate to," said Jacoby. "Going to a private Christian school, there aren't many people that can relate to a young black man in the hood. Not everyone goes through the same struggles as me or views the world the same way as me or talks like me."

A month after Kaneisha and Jacoby started attending Illiana, their family could no longer afford to stay in Ford Heights. Their mom moved closer to Chicago with their



Photo courtesy of Chico Fajardo-Heflin

Chico, Jacoby, Kaneisha, and Tatiana pose for a picture in front of their home in Ford Heights, Illinois.

Since then, they have been trusting God to bring jobs and resources into their lives, and He's been providing "just enough" for ten years through profits from Chico's paintings, odd jobs like food catering, and even bags of food left on their doorstep by their neighbors.

Although their physical needs were met, integrating themselves into Ford Heights was difficult. Chico said that they realized their neighbors viewed them as "either there to hurt them or there to help them, but not to know them." Instead of giving them things and serving them, Chico and Tatiana took walks when it got warm out and waited for their neighbors to welcome them into their lives. Some neighbors were hostile, other would just stare, and still others were curious. Because they were so different, both sides had

"If fear is ultimately what keeps us from belonging to one another," said Chico, "it will be belonging to one another that keeps us from fear."

Two people who have embodied this belonging are seniors Jacoby and Kaneisha Perry, who have lived with Chico and Tatiana for over three years and have known them for much longer. Ten years ago, they were the first children Chico and Tatiana ever met in Ford Heights.

Kaneisha and her little sister Tariana were playing in the front lawn of an old, abandoned brick building.

"I had this old, raggedy pot that had water and leaves in it, and I was mixing it up like it was soup," said Kaneisha.

Meanwhile, Jacoby and one of his friends were throwing rocks at the building, and that is when Chico and Tatiana walked by.

that time "the center of our block." He and Tatiana would talk to people in their front yard and roast marshmallows around their makeshift fire pit, made from the bricks of the collapsing house next door. In Ford Heights, everyone spends time outside, and everyone knows each other.

When Kaneisha was in eighth grade, Chico and Tatiana started to realize Bloom Trail High School, the local public school, would be a toxic environment for her. Kaneisha was involved in her church and "eager to live a life that looked different from what she saw around her." When they realized that Illiana was nearby, Tatiana and Chico started working with the school so that Kaneisha and Jacoby could attend: their mom had decided that if Kaneisha was going, Jacoby would go too. Although Kaneisha was enthusiastic about Illiana, Ja-

three younger siblings, but Chico and Tatiana took Kaneisha and Jacoby in so that they could continue attending Illiana. Since then, they have seen their mom and siblings less and less frequently, but they have grown closer and closer to Chico and Tatiana.

"Kaneisha and Jacoby understand all of our worlds now," said Tatiana, referring to being caught between the world of Ford Heights and a predominately white, upper class world.

At the end of the day, Chico and Tatiana may be different from the people in their town, but they are still able to sit at the table and break bread with them.

"Our neighbors don't want us to be anybody but who we are," said Chico. "If they grow to learn to love you, they will accept you for being super white or super reformed or whatever you are."

Vaping popularity rises above Illiana like fat, nicotine-infused cloud

Haleigh Olthof
Co-Feature Editor

Cate Peerbolte
Co-Sports Editor

Vaping has become a popular pastime for teenagers, and it is now the most common for them to be exposed to nicotine. According to the surgeongeneral.gov, “E-cigarettes are now the most commonly used form of tobacco by youth in the United States.” The small device and non-lingering smell, unlike smoke, make it easy for teenagers and adults to carry it with them and vape as they please.

The most common vapes high schoolers use are Juuls and Stigs. Juuls can be recharged and refilled with various flavors of Juul pods, each pod containing the same amount of nicotine as an entire pack of cigarettes. Stigs, also available in a variety of flavors, are not rechargeable, but thrown out when used up after 270 puffs.

Typical cigarettes use the heat from fire to change substances from a solid into a vapor. The smoke produced from this contains partially burned particles which creates tar in the lungs, causes

cancer, blackens teeth, and kills taste buds. Vaping is considered a safer option to smoking because the electronic heat vaporizes the chemicals at a much lower temperature.

The amount of nicotine in a vape can vary widely depending on the device and e-liquid used as well as how the device is operated. Some evidence shows that vaping can help users quit smoking, although it is not the most effective method. The nicotine is still

addictive, however, so doctors and even the manufacturers themselves do not recommend for non-smokers to start vaping.

When nicotine travels to the brain, it causes a temporary feeling of relaxation and stress relief. It can also improve the user’s mood and elevate the heart rate.



www.808novape.org

Long term effects of vaping are unknown but the effects of nicotine have been researched. According to the US National Institute of Health, “Nicotine is well known to have serious systemic side effects in addition to being highly addictive. It adversely affects the heart, reproductive system, lung, kidney, etc.”

The FDA considers most vape flavorings to be safe in food, but the effects when inhaled are largely unknown. The same is true for the propylene glycol and glycerin that make up much of the liquid. Studies have found that some vapes, even nicotine-free vapes, produce harmful chemicals, including formaldehyde, when heated. The inhalation of diacetyl, a chemical used to create a buttery flavor in some vapes, has been linked to lung disease.

Students can’t see through fog, continue to vape

Alex Wondaal
Co-Editor in Chief

Although the administration guaranteed that there would be no punishment for 18 year old non-athletes who vape off campus, none of the Illiana vapers who fit that demographic were willing to talk openly about their use of electronic cigarettes. So instead, we agreed to let students speak anonymously to answer the three following questions:

1. When and why did you start vaping?
2. How often do you vape?
3. What do you enjoy about vaping?

Here are their responses:

1. I started in 6th grade. My friend wanted me to try it.
2. Everyday

3. You get a good buzz and puffing smoke is cool

1. Freshman year because my friends encouraged me to
2. Every other day
3. The feeling of calmness

1. I first tried vape in the seventh grade when I was hanging out with one of my friends who had one. I tried it because they said it was a good flavor and I had to experience it for myself.
2. I vape on the daily.
3. I enjoy the relaxed feeling it gives me and also the many flavors that have come out over the years.

1. I started the weekend after class trip because I had never tried it before and my friends asked me to.
2. Every day, it’s an everyday thing, it’s an addiction. Should I stop? Yes, and I think I could if I wanted to.

3. The buzz. And sometimes when I’m too amped up, it calms me down.

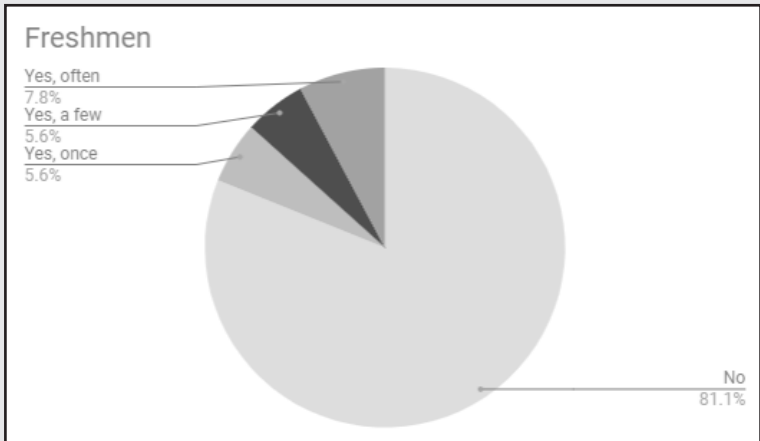
1. I started in 6th grade when my cousin told me to try it but I started vaping regularly freshman year.
2. About 5 days a week
3. I enjoy the buzz; it’s fun to blow fat clouds and make rings and do other cool tricks.

1. I started in 5th grade but then did it often freshman year.
2. Every day, usually hourly.
3. I like the nicotine buzz and I’m addicted.

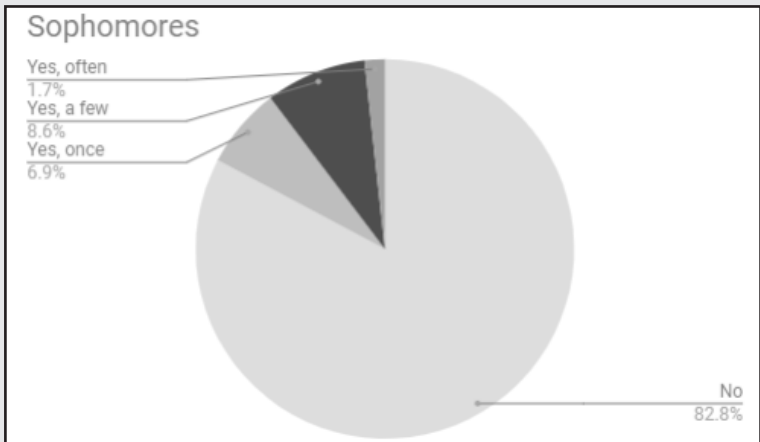
1. I first vaped in 6th grade but did it more regularly my sophomore and junior year.
2. Daily
3. I like not going through withdrawals, the nicotine buzz, and I think I’m addicted.

Has Illiana ever vaped before?

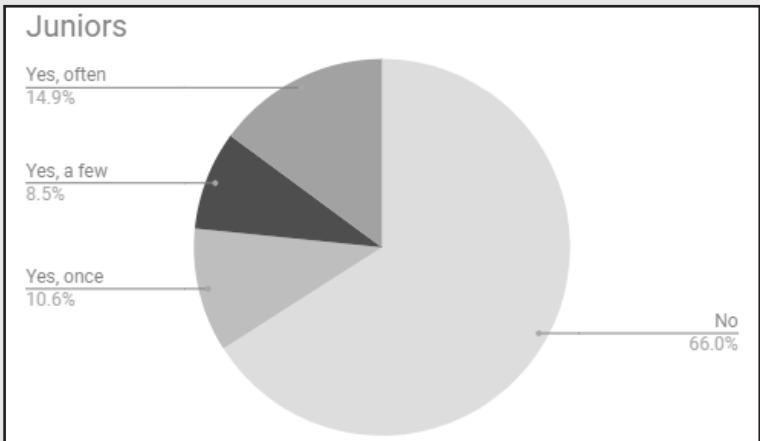
These charts combine the two multiple choice questions “What grade are you in?” and “Have you ever vaped in your lifetime?” from a survey that the Echo sent out to the entire student body.



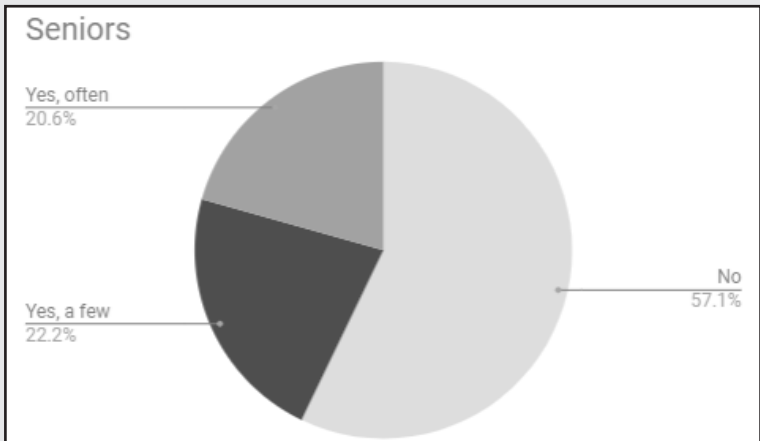
This test group includes 90 freshmen.



This test group includes 58 sophomores.



This test group includes 47 juniors.



This test group includes 63 seniors.

Any survey has a margin of error, and we have reason to believe that margin may be higher than we’d like in this survey. We have indication that some people answered less than truthfully because they were afraid of possible ramifications if their identity were revealed. Others answered in ways that were clearly false. We removed such responses. We offer these numbers as a loose attempt to get a read on the prominence of vaping in our student body.

Encouraging diversity and celebrating Black History Month matters

I hear this question over and over during Black History Month: “why isn’t there a white history month?” The question has led me to assume that many white people don’t believe promoting diversity or celebrating Black History Month is important.

In 2010, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, 63.7% of the United States population was white, 16.3% was Hispanic or Latino, 12.2% was Black, 4.7 was Asian, and 0.7% was Native American.

Because of those demographics, I don’t expect all races to be equally represented in a room. I do expect, though, for schools, churches, and other social settings to promote diversity for the well-being of minorities and for the edification of majorities.

Imagine being the only person of your race in a room full of people from another race. Feels intimidating, doesn’t it? Most minorities experience this situation all the time. Being a minority means in a lot of situations you’re the only one that looks like you, the only one who knows your subculture. That feeling of alienation is not healthy. Humans were created to live in community. This is why celebrating diversity matters.

Diversity also needs to be promoted so the majority race can grow from exposure to different cultures. Failure to appreciate different cultures can lead to intolerance. Intolerance leads to hate groups like the Ku Klux Klan, neo-Nazis, skinheads, and the Michigan Militia, groups who terrorize others and advocate violence. That’s why diversity matters.

Appreciating different ethnicities led to the creation of Black History Month, which celebrates the many black Americans who have helped make America what it is today. During this month, whether black, white, Asian, Latino, Native American, or any other race, we should celebrate black individuals who have made contributions to our society despite significant obstacles in their path.

Some white people, however, complain of not having a white history month, but they only do so during Black History Month. Doing so shifts the focus onto themselves and defeats the purpose of the month. There is no white history month because every month in America is white history month. Don’t believe me? Open your history textbook and look. Because of their position of privilege, white people have long controlled the historical narrative, ignoring other races’ history. If you still don’t believe me, take a look at our Constitution where a black person was defined as $\frac{3}{4}$ of a person and Native Americans were not even considered people. That’s why diversity matters.

Black History Month does not belittle white people, and promoting diversity does not mean “anti-white.” This mindset comes from both a lack of diversity and a lack of understanding different ethnicities. For example, the Black Lives Matter movement is often perceived as only black lives matter, but in reality, the movement focuses on black lives because they are the ones being oppressed and hurt. It is the same case for Black History Month. Black History Month does not serve to exclude other races, but to focus on one race because of its history.

Race and ethnicity is not something we should ignore. It’s time we embrace all ethnicities and love each other for who we are, “the rainbow people of God” (Desmond Tutu). That’s why diversity matters.



Discrimination hits too close to home

Illiana students of color share hurtful moments from family histories

In light of Black History Month the Echo staff wanted to share stories of discrimination from Illiana students and their families. Many believe that discrimination against African Americans was a long time ago but these stories prove that discrimination against people because of their skin color is closer to present day than we realize. We also recognize discrimination is still a problem today. We ask readers to be respectful of these students and their families.

Beaten for not holding open a door

Maddie Holesinger
Co-Editor in Chief

“My grandma was mixed, but her best friend was black,” said Daniel Chandler, a senior at Illiana. Chandler’s grandma, Mary Roberts, grew up in Aliceville, Alabama. One day at school, Robert’s friend didn’t hold

open the door for a fellow classmate, who was white.

“Because my grandma’s friend didn’t hold the door for a white person, she was beat severely,” said Chandler.

Soon after, her friend moved to the south side of Chicago to escape the toxic environment in Alabama.

Denied acceptance to programs

Kylie Boss

Co-News Editor

Freshman Indya Jolicoeur’s family immigrated to America from Haiti during the 1960s. Her great aunt aimed to advance her nursing career. Despite being black and a woman, Jolicoeur’s great aunt completed her education to be a surgical nurse and traveled across Haiti, America and Canada. Whether working as professor or head nurse, she helped people wherever she went, said Jolicoeur. In 1974, Jolicoeur’s great aunt became a citizen of the United States and settled in Chicago, where she would eventually stay for the rest of her life.

During her lifetime, Jolicoeur’s great aunt was a staff nurse, a certified teacher, a supervisor, a graduate student, a

professor, a head nurse, and a researcher all during the time when being a black woman made advancement extremely difficult. At some schools, she wasn’t accepted into nursing programs because of her race. As Dr. King put it, she was judged by the color of her skin rather than the content of her character. Despite the pushbacks, Jolicoeur’s great aunt kept advancing her education to be the best and most qualified nurse she could be, said Jolicoeur.

“She really pushed education for all of us,” said Jolicoeur.

Jolicoeur family now consists of doctors, lawyers, engineers, and teachers all because of the legacy Jolicoeur’s great aunt left. Sadly, she passed away at the age of 92 in 2017, but her legacy will live on, said Jolicoeur.

Despite growing diversity, Illiana just beginning to market to minorities

Natalie Togtman

Arts Editor

Illiana’s Admissions Director, Marie Limback, goes to feeder schools with the goal of recruiting kids to come to Illiana. Limback uses slideshows and printed material to hopefully appeal to these students and their families. However, the question about the lack of diversity still remains.

Limback said, “I don’t have a specific campaign for recruiting minority students. I visit schools,

wherever they are. I work with kids, wherever they are.

However, Illiana does have plans to begin working with schools and churches in African American communities, according to Director of Marketing Jenna Dutton.

Director of Marketing, Jenna Dutton said, “One of the things the Advancement Committee of the board wants to start doing is reaching out to churches and going to churches (supporting and non-supporting) that have a large



Photo courtesy of Genesis Barlow
Barlow’s mother has faced discrimination because of her skin color.

Followed while shopping in mall

Kylie Boss

Co-News Editor

Senior Genesis Barlow’s mom remembers a time facing discrimination because of her race. Her mom was shopping at a mall used predominantly by white people when she noticed she was being closely followed by a security guard.

According to Barlow, because her mom was black, a security guard followed her around in case she tried to steal anything. This is a common case of racial profiling.

Barlow herself has also dealt with instances only because of her race. When she was little, her sister and her were called a racial slur when crossing the street. Barlow said, “It digs deep. It hurts. I was really young then, too, so it really hurt.”

It also dug deep last year at Illiana when Barlow and her friends hung up posters on lockers for Black History Month. Some students tore down the posters, angry that they were on their lockers.

“It was very high tensions last year,” Barlow added.

Searched, seized because of race



Photo courtesy of Parish Townes
Parish Townes poses with wife Tracy.

Maddie Holesinger

Co-Editor in Chief

Parish Townes’ father, who is also named Parish, was driving along the highway in the summertime, when he got stopped at a random checkpoint. At the checkpoint, police informed him that they had a warrant for his arrest, and then he was apprehended.

“My stepmom, Tracy, knows people in the police, so

[her friends] looked in the system. There was no warrant for him,” said Townes.

Personally, Parish Townes, Jr. has been pulled over by the police four different times in the last nineteen months, and his vehicle was searched three of those times.

“One time, I was pulled over for not using my turn signal, and they pulled me out of the car and said they needed to search me,” said Townes

back.”

Illiana released a new promotional video that was showcased at the homecoming game.

Dutton said, “We try deliberately to reflect the different groups we have here, mainly with our visual marketing. For example, in the new promotional video we just released, we had students from different races, different ethnicities, just so that we are hitting every target market that we can.”



Photo courtesy of Mark Dykstra

Dykstra (bottom) poses with teachers and staff around a disc golf hole after playing in the annual disc golf outing before the graduation ceremony.

Teacher Mark Dykstra discovers peace, joy on frisbee golf course

Kade Bouwer
Co-Sports Editor

Although Mark Dykstra’s tenure as a Bible teacher at Illiana has been long, 15 years, his love for playing disc golf is longer. Around 20 years ago, Dykstra went out with some buddies to play some disc golf. Dykstra said, “[MC Sports] had a starter pack where you could buy three discs, putter, mid-range, and driver. So then I went out to Lemon Lake with Mr. Bosman. After, two holes I lost two of my three discs. I threw them in a lake. I got discouraged and I quit for the rest of the year. Then a buddy that I played vol-

leyball with gave me a real high caliber disc that was easy to control and then I got back into it in 2002.” That same buddy that gave Dykstra the high-caliber disc invited him to a disc golf league and the rest was history. Dykstra’s love for disc golf has only grown over the years. In fact, at his peak, Dykstra was playing in three leagues at once. Dykstra’s home course, Lemon Lake, is one of the best in the world. Lemon Lake has five disc golf courses and has hosted multiple of world championships, some of which Dykstra helped in. Dykstra’s involvement in disc golf doesn’t just stop

there. Every year the day of graduation for Illiana, he hosts a disc golf outing for the staff at Illiana. Dyksta also will be running a disc golf camp over the summer for Illiana. “Sometimes I get really sick of head-to-head sports. Like if you and I play basketball or soccer, my victory is completely dependent on you, whereas, if I play this course ten times I can set goals. Even if I am playing with three other guys who absolutely annihilated me, if I hit my PR or better my score, it feels pretty good,” said Dykstra. “[Disc golf] helped me completely re-evaluate my view of sports.”

Late season skid leaves bad taste

Kade Bouwer
Co-Sports Editor

After a hot start to the season, the boys basketball team has cooled down significantly since late December, losing 7 of their last 12 games, including a three point loss to Covenant Christian High School on Feb. 12. Despite their recent skid, the team has fared much better than last year’s squad which ended its season 9 games below .500. This year, their record is 15-9. Senior Colton DeJong said, “I think we have a better squad than last year. We also got a lot more seniors which is nice. We also got a solid sophomore, Logan [Van-Essen] stepping up. He’s been an asset to the team.” DeJong added, “I think we are playing a lot easier teams than

last year, so I think that is why we have so many wins. Almost all of our losses have been to Illinois schools that we played last year. So, we do have a better record, but I think it looks a lot better than what we probably are.” While this season for the team hasn’t ended very well, next year might take a turn for the worse. A “rebuilding season” may be on the way with ⅔ of their team and 4 out of the 5 starters graduating this year. Despite the impending rebuild, players think that the program will be okay. Senior Daniel Chandler said, “[The boys basketball program] is in great hands with [Tom Rozenboom] and [Caleb Jonkman.] They are great coaches and they’ll help the players [in both] training and becoming a better person.”



Photo by Jenna Dutton

The boys basketball team huddles up before the Homecoming game.

Veteran loaded golf team begins early preparations for first season in Indiana

Alex Wondaal
Co-Editor in Chief

The golf team is preparing to make waves its first season in Indiana with a group of talented and experienced seniors, new equipment for winter training, and a new conditioning program. In fact, senior Lawton Bouwer said his goal for the team is to “never lose, or to always win.” For the golf program, the switch to Indiana will have three significant ramifications: a golf season that now takes place in spring rather than fall which means training has to take place in the winter, a junior varsity/varsity setup which, for Illiana, will mean more underclassmen playing

with the very best, and new competitors whom Coach Jack Rudenga is hoping to impress. “I’m bummed about not having a postseason,” said Rudenga. “This is one of the strongest teams I’ve ever had. ... We have lots of veterans coming back, experienced seniors.” Rudenga added that he hopes to do more indoor training this year because the team won’t be able to practice outside like they did when the season took place in autumn. Senior Matt Lagestee recently fractured his wrist in a skiing accident and is hoping to recover in time for tryouts on March 11. Lagestee said, “The team will need to become more consistent. We can’t have really good days and then really bad days like last year.”

Male Fan of the Month

Although the basketball team has faltered as of late, senior Sam Gaich’s school pride and enthusiasm at basketball games never has. A regular at both Loud Crowd and mid-week games, Gaich really shows what it means to be a super-fan.

“I love showing my school spirit, especially when my fellow classmates do well in a basketball game. It makes me feel happy for the school and their great basketball program here,” said Gaich. “Lots of people go to the game to mess around and talk. I just have to remove all the negative distractions and be hyped because when the fans are hyped, then the team is hyped, and when the team is hyped, the team goes off.”

Female Fan of the Month

Loud Crowd was in need of a person who was able to lead the chants, so senior Rachel Huisman stepped in. Despite not being on Loud Crowd committee, she is the one on the floor leading the cheers at almost every Loud Crowd game. Her voice is one of the few voices that can reach all the way back to the freshmen in the back of the Loud Crowd.

Senior Dylan VanDrunen said, “[Huisman] really gets the crowd going. She has good leadership and no one else does anything, so she picks up the slack for everyone else.”

Editorial

Pro-life movement must be more than political

On Friday, Jan. 18, Illiana sent two buses full of people to walk in the 2019 March For Life in Washington, D.C. We chanted and cheered and then returned home and left it up to the government to make change.

Four days later, New York's Reproductive Health Act was signed on the anniversary of the Supreme Court case of Roe v. Wade. The act allows abortions after 24 weeks of pregnancy if it's necessary to protect the mother's life or health or there's an "absence of fetal viability." The mother's health-care provider is supposed to "use their reasonable and good faith professional judgment based on the facts of the patient's case," to decide whether a mother's health is in danger.

New York's law demonstrates that the pro-life movement must be more than a political fight. If we solely rely on the government and political activists to lead, we will constantly be disappointed by the lack of change.

It would be naive of us to think that even if, one day, the Supreme Court were to overturn Roe v. Wade, that abortions would cease to occur. Many women would turn to illegal and dangerous ways to terminate their pregnancies because legislation and court

decisions will not, in and of themselves, create a culture that values life.

The pro-life movement needs to start with our community, or more specifically us. We should educate women on the grave consequences they are considering and, in the same matter, we should aid the placement of ultrasound machines in clinics across the country, so that women may connect with their unborn child. Instead of shaming teenage girls

these may convince the woman to keep her child and may support her when she has it, but for how long? Even if they help the mother for the first year of the child's life, what about the next seventeen years? Will she be given affordable insurance? Who will help them with childcare, especially when she's working? Not everyone has able or willing family members to help out. What if the child is born with disabilities? Does this community do enough to provide for them?

"If we solely rely on the government and political activists to lead, we will constantly be disappointed by the lack of change."

who find themselves unexpectedly pregnant, we should care and support them so they know that they can take care of the baby.

There are organizations like PASS (Pregnancy Aid South Suburbs) and National Institute of Family & Life Advocate, which are great groups that supply pregnant women with alternative options rather than abortion. But what if a woman believes that she lacks the support she'll need to take care of her child? Organizations like

Do we have adequate schooling, employment opportunities, and living conditions? If these children are brought into the world, will they be given the same opportunities as others? Mothers like these need the love and support of a community. If she feels that still doesn't have enough help, then we have to lead her to think of adoption.

Adoption is one of the "quick and easy solutions" that we like to throw out when a woman considers an abortion. We believe that

giving a child a chance at life is better than talking it away all together, yet we aren't too quick to adopt ourselves. According to adoption-network.com, no more than 2% of Americans have adopted even though more than 1/3 have considered it. This statistic should make us nauseous especially when on any given day, there are nearly 438,000 in the United States' foster system, and we are apart of the problem. Look around our community. How many people do you know who are adopted? How many friends or family members? Even when people adopt, many times it's after they find out that they can not have children biologically. Why is adoption the last resort in our minds? If we really want to promote "adoption or the loving option," then we must be willing to open our houses and families to children who need to be adopted.

We can be so quick to wear shirts with sayings of "We are the pro-life generation," "Adoption is the loving option," "Pro-life, Pro-women." "Every life matters," yet we expect politicians in D.C. to lead the change in this issue that we care and advocate so fiercely for. The pro-life movement needs to start in the hearts of the people in our community, and we need to lead it.

Sick of cold routines? 5 Ideas to spice up your winter slump

As we descend into the long stretch of school days before spring break: where there are no more Friday night Loud Crowd games, winter sports are all wrapped up, but the spring seasons haven't begun, the thought of warm weather is a nice once. The cold still persists, we're all settled into our second semester schedules and it's just a matter of s l o g g i n g through the days. When I start to feel a slave to school, but bored without it, here are some things I do when the waiting for spring break and summer seems eternal.

Plan activities early on it the week so you have something to look forward to. The biggest goal of the week? The weekend. Weeks always become easier for me when I have an event to look forward to. Fun plans for Saturday afternoon, make for a better Wednesday.

Make thirty minute after school plans. It can be hard to focus on homework right when you get home from a full day of school but instead of wasting time (see below), hang out and talk to a friend for 30 minutes before heading home to work again. Grabbing a coffee or jamming to music with someone is a great way to keep yourself sane in these long days.

Limit the amount of time you waste. Every day we are given twenty-four hours, but not one second is guaranteed. So, I urge you to use the time you have wisely. It can be easy to lose track of time sitting on your phone with no motivation to think or move. But if you can get started being productive you'll continue to be. Instead of watching Netflix, clean your room. (Seriously, when was the last time you vacuumed and dusted your room?) Help your parents out around the house. Better yet, do it without asking or telling them - they'll notice.

Be dedicated to your school work. I know the days feel long and the weeks like an eternity, but as students our first responsibility is to school work. Try as hard as you can to work ahead, set goals, and accomplish them. Also to my fellow seniors it may seem pointless to be dedicated to school work right now, but if you focus now, you'll ease the pressure of keeping the senior voucher in the spring.

Change up your routine by taking a risk. Weeks feel the longest when all you do is repeat the same schedule over and over. Try to break your routine by taking risks. It doesn't have to be big: talk to someone new, wear a bold outfit, say yes when you would normally say no.

All us high schoolers are struggling through these months. We're all in the same boat (er building), so let's help each other through. Be friendly in halls, help each other in class, invite people over. There's no reason to make school worse for each other than it already is.



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