

Close Up students get up close, personal with D.C.

Olivia Oostema
Reporter

Eight juniors had the privilege to travel to Washington D.C. to participate in Close Up, a program that, according to its website, “informs, inspires, and empowers young people to exercise the rights and accept the responsibilities of citizens in a democracy.”

As sophomores, interested students wrote essays to convince judges that they would be an exceptional representation of Christ at Close Up. Judges interviewed those with outstanding essays and chose eight who would have the privilege of participating

in the program. After engaging in numerous meetings about politics and policies, students finally embarked on their journey to Washington D.C.

In D.C., students from all over the country interacted with one another, each with their own opinion on political and social issues. The program engaged students in public policy topics such as homelessness, the environment, gun violence, criminal justice reform, immigration, and health care. Mr. Darren DeBoer, history teacher and this year’s Close Up chaperone, said that the program pushes students to examine the perspectives of others through conversations,



Photo courtesy of Kate Ohm

History teacher Darren DeBoer and Close Up students pose in the United States Capitol rotunda.

debates, and workshops.

Junior Kate Ohm said that through the program she learned about how our government works to serve its people and how busy congressmen actually are.

While students learned about the U.S.’s government system and their responsibilities as U.S. citizens, they also made friends and enjoyed

sightseeing.

Illiana junior Emily Feikema said the best part of the trip was the people she met: “You meet such great people that you don’t want to say goodbye to at the end of the week, and it’s cool how different everyone is from each other.”

Students watched “A Christmas Carol” at Ford’s theater where President Lincoln was

assassinated, saw the Changing of the Guard at Arlington National Cemetery, and toured the White House. Besides seeing numerous well-known monuments and landmarks like the Lincoln Memorial and Colonial Williamsburg, students visited what DeBoer referred to as D.C.’s “hidden gems,” including an Underground Railroad stop in a cemetery.

Assembly illuminates toxicity of social media overload

Jessica Bergfors
Reporter

Illiana invited Collin Kartchner to speak to students and parents on Dec. 9

about the effects that social media can have on teenagers’ mental and physical health.

Director of Spiritual Development, Lance Davids

first heard about Kartchner from a parent who recommended him. Davids followed up by researching Kartchner, ultimately decided that the school community should hear him, and he booked Kartchner six months ago. Along with a student assembly, Kartchner led a parent meeting. A donor gave money to fund Kartchner’s visit. Mr. Davids said that he wanted Kartchner to speak to students because he hoped to “give a fresh and different perspective on how social media impacts students.”

Kartchner told students about his social media journey that started in 2017. Originally, he created an Instagram account to poke fun at social media and the pressure it places on people to appear perfect. His wife Lizzy, whom he later said suffered depression from social media, inspired him to start the parody account. His account blew up, and Kartchner decided to use it for good. He

used it to raise awareness about the toxic side of not only Instagram, but all social media platforms. He used the money he earned from the sponsorships he received to send to those in need.

Sophomore Amanda Kooyenga said, “[His talk] changed how I think about social media and made me think more about how social media was affecting my life.”

Danielle Rancifer, freshman, said she thought Kartchner was funny and that he should come again, but he made some controversial comments. These comments were when Kartchner made a joke that throwing up protein powder is a good way to lose weight, along with a joke later about communist China.

Senior Felix Obialor said he loved the jokes and thought the assembly was great, especially since Kartchner spoke about more than the excessive use of phones.

“It was not meant for me, but he knew his audience really well and knew his material,” said Mary Lagerwey, Illiana Bible teacher. Lagerwey added that she liked his message of using social media for good, especially since we are Christians and are to be in the world, not of it.

Lauren Hedgepeth, junior, said Kartchner’s talk was different from other social media assemblies because usually it’s the same thing every time. It’s usually people not connecting with us, but she said Kartchner did. “His stories touched me in a way to make me actually want to limit my screen time,” Hedgepeth said.

“I have one goal today and that is to make your life happier,” Kartchner said at the beginning of his speech to students. Really, that is the whole idea behind his “#SavetheKids” campaign, which started in April 2018.



Photo by Jim Kamphuis

Speaker Collin Kartchner tells a story about his wife during the assembly.

Truth hurts

Music plays a big role in most people's lives. Whether it is playing in the background while we're getting ready to go somewhere, driving in the car with the radio playing, or even taking a shower, music matters to us. Music can be soothing, uplifting, angry, sad, or happy. Sometimes the music we listen to depends on the mood we are in. When I am feeling happy, I listen to fun, loud music. When I am sad, I listen to slow, quiet music. But no matter what kind of music I am listening to, I am supporting the artists and writers by listening. By listening, I am helping to give a platform and a degree of financial reward.



Sophie Thompson
Sports Editor

This reality struck me the other night while I was watching the American Music Awards. My mom, who was watching with me, made a comment about the artist Halsey as she was receiving her award. My mom mentioned that she read an article about how a bunch of artists, including Halsey, just joined together to support abortion rights. I could not help but wonder, why am I supporting people who do not believe the same thing I do, who, in fact, believe the exact opposite of what I believe.

The artists joined together to create an ad for Planned Parenthood called the #Bansoffmybody campaign, a campaign telling people that the abortion bans should not be allowed. LIZZO, Ariana Grande, Lady Gaga, Beck, Billie Eilish, Bon Iver, John Legend, Nicki Minaj, Demi Lovato, G-Eazy, HAIM, Sara Bareilles, Troye Sivan, Macklemore, Hayley Kiyoko, Megan Thee Stallion, Miley Cyrus, Kacey Musgraves, Carole King, Dua Lipa, Meghan Trainor, Selena Gomez, Halsey, and more signed on the campaign. The artists listed above are also encouraging their fans to support the project.

In order to support the ad, these artists need to donate money. Some may think that listening to these artists' music is not the same as supporting their political views. But all the times your music gets interrupted by an ad serve as a reminder that the music industry is a business. Our listening habits get translated into dollars, and many of those dollars go to the artists performing. So next time you share a playlist or play your favorite song in the car with someone, think about what you and that person are supporting. When you buy a concert ticket, or pay to listen to your music without ads and unlimited skips, your money may be going towards this campaign.

Ephesians 5:11 says, "Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but rather expose them." So tell me, Illiana, why are we still supporting these artists when they believe something we don't? According to the Bible, we should be exposing their deeds to the world and calling people to believe in what is right.



History teacher Rachel Drost's homeroom brings in many cans of food for the Lansing Food Pantry.

Photo courtesy of Illiana Christian High School's Facebook page

Illiana reaches globally, locally

Kylee Cruz
Reporter

Working with World Vision and the Lansing Food Pantry, student council made a goal of collecting \$55 and a bagful of canned goods per homeroom this Christmas season.

Canned goods went to the Lansing Food Pantry. Some canned foods donated included peanut butter, cereal, fruits, vegetables, and soups.

Monetary donations

will go to World Vision to provide families abroad with goats and chickens. With these animals, families can get food such as eggs, milk, cheese and yogurt to consume and to sell for income.

Junior Jenna O'Brian and Freshman Greg Goodfellow advised students of the World Vision fundraiser at a chapel on Friday, Dec. 6. Illiana students got the opportunity to hear and watch a short film on how life changing just a small amount of

money can be for families struggling with food scarcity.

"One goat and two chickens cost \$110, so every two homerooms would supply enough money to provide one family with these animals," said student council sponsor Dave Bosman.

Bosman added, "When I was younger, I remember my parents donated money and started sponsoring kids. Ever since then, helping kids in other countries has al-

ways been a passion of mine."

Senior Lizzie Knot said, "We wanted to do something local and not just in other countries. Student Council decided giving to the Lansing Food Pantry would also be a good idea."

The school wide goal for the World Vision project is \$1,500. If the student body reaches the goal, students will be rewarded with an early dismissal in the week of exams in early January.

Benes wins big in essay contest

Olivia DeYoung
Reporter

A second place winner of the First Amendment Freedoms Art and Essay Contest sponsored by the Anti-Defamation League Midwest, senior Taylor Benes proudly represented Illiana Christian at a banquet for the contest held in Chicago at the Palmer House on Dec 4.

Benes first heard about the contest through her Journalism 1 class when she had to answer the essay prompt about the First Amendment as an assignment.

"The First Amendment is fundamental to journalism, which is why I've always given it as an assignment," Illiana English and journalism teacher Jeff DeVries said.

After completing the assignment in a mere two days and only light revision, Benes submitted her

essay.

"I didn't think anything of it at first," Benes said.

On November 1, Benes received an email, informing her that she had placed second in the high school essay division, which had about 600 applicants. Benes was surprised.

"[...] with my subject matter being the Right to Life March and anti-abortion, I assumed I was already at a disadvantage because many people have biases against the pro-life position," Benes said.

With the email came an invitation to read an excerpt of her essay at a banquet for the Midwest chapter of the Anti-Defamation League.

About 400 people from a variety of backgrounds, ethnicities, and religions attended the banquet.

Benes read her essay except along with the other winners, all of whom hap-



Photo courtesy of ADL Midwest

Senior Taylor Benes reads an excerpt of her winning essay during the ADL Freedom Award Dinner.

pened to be women.

DeVries said, "It was really fun to see one of our own being acknowledged."

"I was really honored to represent Illiana, Indiana, the Echo staff, and the English department as a whole," Benes said.

In addition to the contest winners, a former white supremacist and the former mayor of Charlottesville also

spoke about fighting hate.

Benes said, "I was exposed to many wonderful individuals seeking to fight hate with good. There's so many people fighting for kindness in our world, which gives me hope for a brighter, less hateful, future."

DeVries said he was proud and happy for Taylor.

DeVries added, "Taylor is proof it's possible to win."

Neon Night gives Loud Crowd season glowing start

Madie Ceponis

Feature Editor

As basketball season has approached, so has Loud Crowd. Loud Crowd is a board of 14 students, sponsored by athletic director Deb Kamp, that gets the student section excited during the boys varsity basketball games.

Loud Crowd includes many chants, arm motions, yelling and coordination of themes. They have made

some changes though, as in those on the board have lanyards with IDs, to show that they are the only ones allowed on the court leading us in chants. This year's board also brought in some alternative themes. USA night has been replaced with Zoo Crew, to introduce something new.

On Friday, Dec. 13, the boys played Saint Anne High School and Loud Crowd deemed the game Neon night.

The theme was a hit, the whole student body, awash with vibrant colors, cheered on the boys.

Sophomore Gabe O'Connor, "I enjoyed the game on Friday. I got to hang out with my friends, watch the game and cheer on the boys along with Loud Crowd, to show our school spirit, a little more."

Junior Lauren Wicklund said, "I absolutely loved the game on Friday, and being on Loud Crowd, I can be on the floor in my neon gear cheering on my classmates, by directing the student body with signs and chants."

"The neon theme was really good," said junior Levi VanDrunen. "It was easy to see who was a part of the student body. It was a little disappointing that the only people allowed on the court are Loud Crowd Board because it took some of the unexpectedness out of it. It was always fun to be surprised at who would run onto the floor."

According to Kamp, Loud Crowd is important to our school because it brings us together as a whole. Kamp added that it brings the school to commit to an event that is bigger than just a game, and it gives students a sense of belonging.

Loud Crowd originated



A group of seniors smile before the game starts.

Photo by Deb Kamp



Photo by Deb Kamp

The front rows of Loud Crowd excitedly pose at halftime.

when 20 years ago, Kamp realized students would sit in the rafters, as far away from the game as possible, and barely be involved. Therefore she gathered a group of students to start chants and get other stu-

dents involved in the game. Years ago, junior high students would be down on the bleachers close to the game and ICHS students would sit toward the back, but with the advent of Loud Crowd that began to switch.

Lack of student response leads to Night Ministries cancellations

Sophia Thompson

Sports Editor

Lauren Woo

News Editor

Illiana has been volunteering for Night Ministries, a ministry that prepares and distributes food to the homeless in Chicagoland, for about ten years.

Sara Johnson, who coordinates trips to Night Ministries, is very passionate about these service opportunities.

"We step into a larger world [at night Ministries]," Johnson said, "We live in a society of similarity, and I think it is so important for step into that larger world."

"It's an awesome opportunity to see God's handywork," she said. "We can take a look and see what God is doing in the whole world."

"And," Johnson continued, "we're commanded to serve."

For years Illiana has been participating, but recently the lack of volun-

teers has forced Johnson to cancel last minute on the organization several times.

Johnson blames the lack of volunteers on the fact that GO club, the club that usually planned trips has been shut down so there are no members of the club signing up to go. Also Johnson noted that the student body is smaller in comparison to last year, and the scheduled nights have conflicted with other school functions like choir concerts.

"I was really embarrassed about cancelling on them twice because we have such a great relationship with them," Johnson said. "We have been working with this ministry for ten years; however, I do not think the cancellations will have any effect on our relationship."

The next Night Ministries will be held on Feb. 6. Johnson hopes that students will realize that it's the "right thing to do."

Music students celebrate season

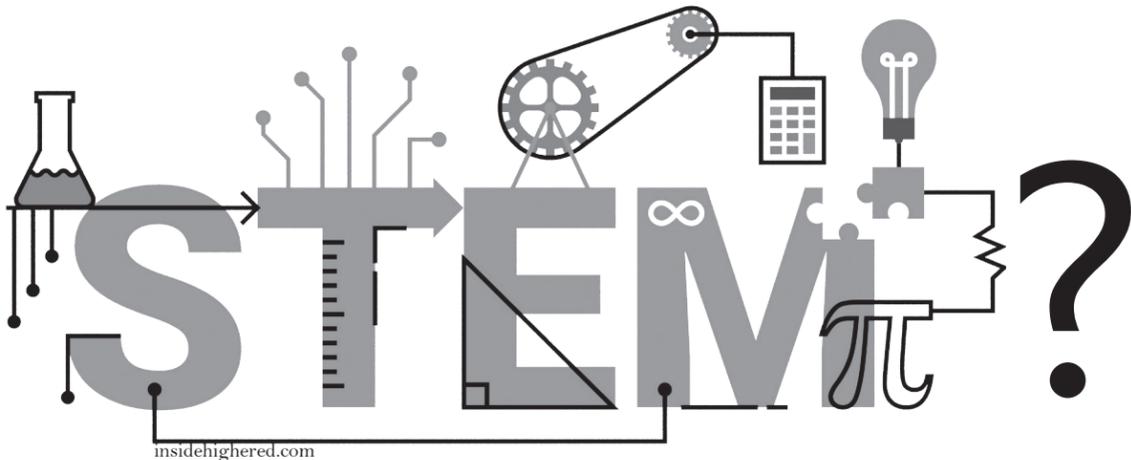


Photos courtesy of Jeff DeVries

The Christmas season is a busy time of year for our music department. All the choirs and the orchestra performed at Community United Reformed Church in Schererville on Dec. 12. Band students held their concert at school on Tuesday, Dec. 17. In addition to the concerts, the Acapella choir sang at the University Club in Chicago on Friday, Dec. 15 and the Women's Chorale caroled at a couple of elementary schools on Tuesday, Dec. 15.

Senior Sydney DeVries said of the choir concert, "It was very festive and fun lots of friends and family came and saw it and it was an enjoyable night for all."

What is



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Second high altitude balloon soars to success

Liz Aje
Reporter

Students piled into the outside bleachers on the brisk morning of Nov. 20 to watch the 2nd attempt at the launch of the high altitude balloon worked on by the Engineering, Design, and Development class, a part of our STEM program.

Mr. Vermeulen, the teacher who led the project and five seniors—Ben Meter, Trent

DeVries, Zach Rozendal, Adam Swets, and Logan Frederick—spent two-and-a-half months to get the balloon ready to be launched into the atmosphere, starting this project at the beginning of the year. The goal was to send the balloon 100,000 feet into the stratosphere. The payload, the box under the balloon, held all the equipment for tracking data.

There was also another goal according to Vermeulen. He said, “EDD is designed to take

all your skills in the STEM program and apply them to a real world project.”

“We had to do a bunch of online simulations of the launch, talk to air traffic control so they would not take the balloon out of the sky, figure out what material was best for the balloon since it couldn’t be above 6 pounds, and [decide] how much helium to put in the balloon,” said Meter.

When the first balloon popped, the group was devastated. “The day of [the balloon popping] I was like ‘we’re going to wait till spring,’ but with the love and support of the community, the teachers, staff, students, community members, they were like ‘Let’s still get it done this year.’ It lifted me and my students up. And that’s when you learn the most, when you have adversity in your life,” said Vermeulen.

Each member of the group had a specific role in the project. DeVries was the power team, Meter the data team, Rozendal the tracking team, and Frederick the structure team. All had certain things they had to check off minutes before the launch of the balloon.

After the balloon was launched, the group then drove about three hours and fifteen minutes to retrieve the balloon which landed near Fort Wayne.

“We got all the temperature data for a bunch of different altitudes, and we have video evidence of the clouds and the curvature of the earth,” said Vermeulen.

Meter said, “I learned from this experience not to give up on something if it doesn’t work the first time but to push through.”

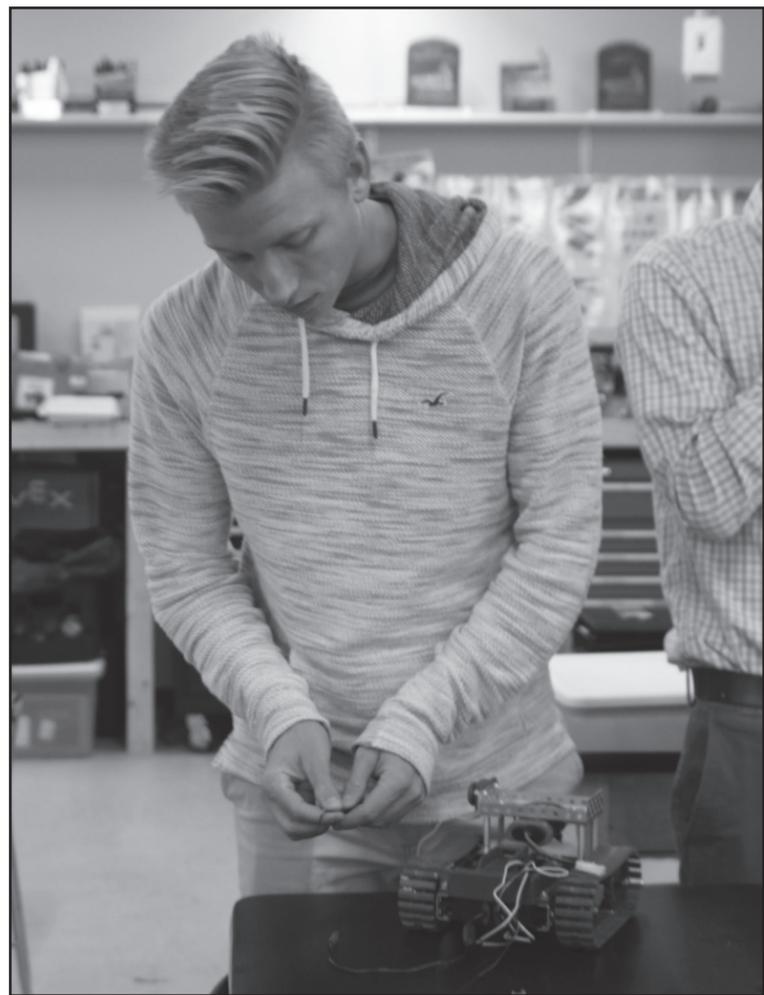


Photo by Jeff DeVries

Junior Justin VanDrunen works on his robot.

STEM at Illiana

Valentina Lopez
Reporter

A November Echo survey revealed that only about 65% of Illiana’s students know what STEM is. STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math. According to Illiana’s website, the schools program uses curriculum from Project Lead the Way. The school currently offers five STEM courses in addition to the basic math and science classes every student must take.

When asked how STEM is beneficial, Mr. Vermeulen, Illiana STEM teacher said, “It teaches cutting edge problem-solving skills, which is what companies are looking for. Also, it incorporates core classes together through real world, project-based learning.”

Freshman, Allison Holleman, who might go into a STEM career, said “I think it’s beneficial depending on what you are going to college for.”

The courses offered at Illiana include IED (Introduction to Engineering Design), POE (Principles of Engineering), CIM (Computer Integrated Manufacturing), CEA (Civil Engineering and Architecture), and EDD (Engineering Design and Development). All courses, except the Senior Capstone course, provide free college credit through Ivy Tech Community College in Indiana. The competitive robotics team and the laser cutting club provide extracurricular STEM options for students.

Junior Sydnee Tuuk, who

“loves engineering and building things,” said that she wishes Illiana offered more STEM programs.

Illiana plans to develop the program further, and although many students want the program to grow, Mr. Vermeulen said that he thought the program would take three years to create and develop. Still, so far actions have moved faster than he anticipated.

Even though around 40% of Illiana’s students are taking or have taken STEM classes, only 15% of students want to pursue a STEM career. Overall, most students who have taken the class said they want more students to take STEM classes, even if they don’t want to pursue a career in STEM.

Senior Jacob Gibson, who took a CIM class, said that although he is not going into a STEM career, he would recommend the class to other students.

The STEM class that most students have taken here at Illiana is IED. IED stands for Intro to Engineering Design. This course gives students the opportunity to develop skills they will need in the future, whether they’re going into a STEM career or not. IED is a very hands-on class. Students learn everything through projects, activities, and problem solving.

“STEM classes are great for Illiana and they are great for students,” said senior Kayla Sylvester. “You learn how to creatively solve problems and how to work with other people. Plus, STEM jobs are huge right now.”



Photo by Jeff DeVries

Seniors Ben Meter, Adam Swets, and Zach Rozendal fill and tether the balloon before its launch on the morning of Nov. 20.

Robotics students compete, succeed

Olivia DeYoung
Reporter

Illiana Robotics is one of Illiana's newest extracurricular programs, combining STEM concepts with competition.

In its third year of existence, Illiana Robotics offers students the opportunity to build, control, and modify robots. Unlike the other robotics class or club Illiana offers, Illiana Robotics focuses on preparing for the VEX Robotics Tower Takeover competition.

This type of competition involves four robots in a square arena trying to score points by moving cubes into certain zones. The arena is divided into two sides, with one alliance on each side. Each alliance is composed of two teams. Each match begins with fifteen seconds of pre-programmed actions for the robot before moving on to the driver-controlled portion, which lasts one minute and forty-five seconds.

Because of the competition's design, the robotics team



Junior Sydnee Tuuk, senior Max Wegner, and junior James VanDrunen work on their robot in the pit area at the Portage High School competition on Dec. 14.

must be able both to build a robot and to program it.

To accomplish this, the robotics team divides into two smaller teams, said Maddux Wiersma, sophomore and team member. One team focuses on coding while the other focuses on building.

Currently, Illiana Robotics is

composed of ten students, ranging from freshmen to seniors.

Freshman Abigail Kooy, one of only two girls on the team, said she joined the team because she "wanted to break the stereotype" of robotics being only for boys.

"We're not as nerdy as we seem," Kooy said. "We're just

students who want to build a robot and hope to get to the championship."

"We're almost like a sports team, except we build stuff," Wiersma said. Kooy said she enjoys competitions and thinks that it's cool to go to competitions that are mainly guys.

This year, Illiana Robotics

will participate in at least two competitions. On Dec. 14 at Portage High School, the team had what sponsor Jack Rudenga called a great outing. In qualifying rounds, one of Illiana's robots placed fourth out of 51 robots. The team competes again on Feb. 15 at Crown Point High School.

Before competitions, the team has to prepare. Illiana Robotics meets Wednesdays after school.

Sophomore and team member Andrew Kloosterman said, "We're continually making little changes to be ready. We're hoping to get a lot of practice in so that we won't be in the dark."

"Robotics encompasses a lot of skills that I think will be important in today's society in the 21st Century," said Brent Vermeulen, the STEM director at Illiana.

Vermeulen explained that these skills include things like teamwork, problem solving, and collaboration.

Kloosterman said, "If you enjoy programming, if you enjoy being part of a dedicated team, you should join."

Illiana integrates new STEM class, considers others

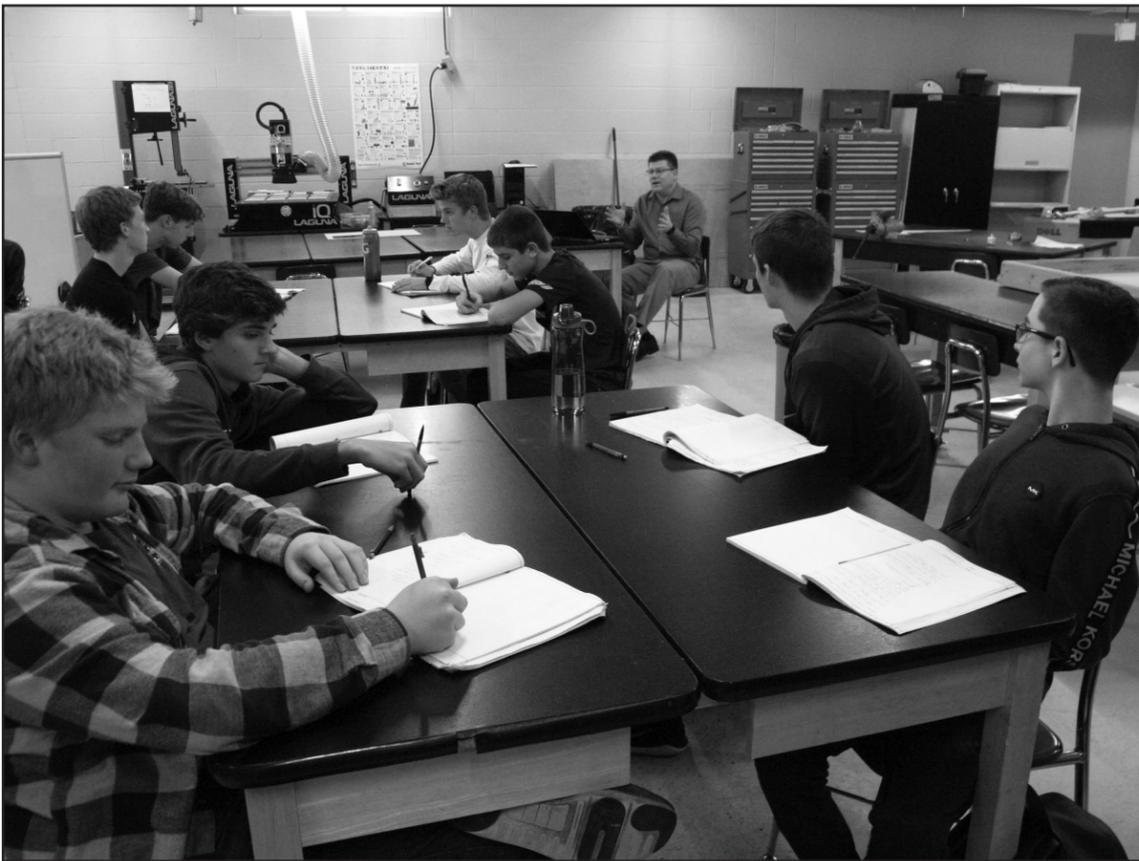


Photo by Sydney DeVries

Principles of Engineering students take notes while science teacher Brian Sylvester explains a concept.

Adam Gibson
Reporter

Christian Jaco
Reporter

At the start of this school year, Illiana introduced a new STEM class, Principles of Engineering (POE), and hopes to add another STEM class in the future.

Illiana's POE class is

available to those who have taken or are currently taking Introduction to Engineering and Design. According to Mr. Brian Sylvester, the instructor, the class covers gears, simple machines, static forces, bridges, and a little bit of robotics. In this course, students have to solve electrical and mechanical problems. Course-

work features tools and calculations that are applicable to the engineering world. Project Lead the Way is the author of the curriculum besides a few add-ons that Sylvester and Mr. Brent Vermeulen decided to include as well.

Sophomore Cole Rappold, a student in the class, said, "It is engaging with the



Photo by Sydney DeVries

Freshmen Shia Cudjoe and Tony Ren work on assembling a robot together.

hands-on style of learning that we do."

Illiana is hoping to add another class to its engineering program in the future because of all the interest other classes received last year. One possibility under discussion is some type of aviation class. It would try to use tools that put students ahead of the technology and STEM curve, according to Vermeulen. One such trend is the increasing commercial use of drones.

By studying trends, Vermeulen hopes to keep Illiana students well-prepared for the job market.

"There will be more and more jobs within the STEM

fields," Vermeulen said, "and hopefully we can teach and help students gain the knowledge and skills to pursue those jobs."

Any new course would likely offer college credits or be dual credit.

Vermeulen added, "I think for Illiana to keep up with other local high schools, we need to add more dual credit classes."

Vermeulen added that he hopes students will see that engineering is not just for prospective engineers or those interested in STEM jobs, but for anyone who wants to further his or her problem-solving skills because such skills are highly applicable in any field.

5 Worst Christmas movies

Lauren Woo
Arts Editor

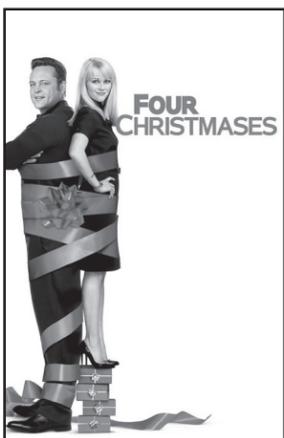


Photo courtesy of Gstatic.com

Four Christmases 5

This movie was funny, and, of all the others listed, I actually did find myself enjoying this one at times; however, this movie was straight up bizarre at times. The two leads, a couple in a long-term relationship played by Reese Witherspoon and Vince Vaughn, were not convincing as a couple. And, at times, watching the movie would get frustrating simply because the couple's families, with both sets of parents being divorced, were just so weird. They followed crazy stereotypes of white families in the south, either fake Christians or rednecks.

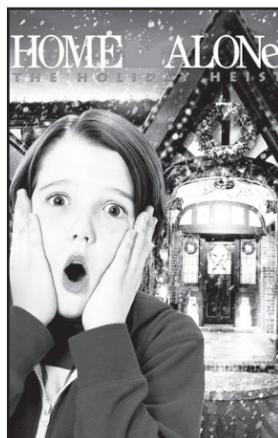


Photo courtesy of Gstatic.com

Home Alone: The Holiday Heist 4

Well, when a movie series reaches its fifth installment and no longer has no one from the original cast, it's safe to say it won't be the best movie. That was definitely a safe assumption here. It follows the theme set up in the previous films, where a child (Finn and this time his sister) are left alone in a beautiful house that is targeted by thieves, but of course Finn sets up traps to thwart them. However, this doesn't add anything to the Home Alone series. Finn isn't even alone, his sister is there, and the actor isn't at the same level as Macaulay Culkin in the previous films. This film was just unnecessary.

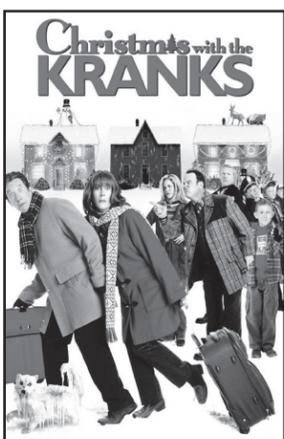


Photo courtesy of Gstatic.com

Christmas with the Kranks 3

I genuinely don't understand how the idea for this movie was conceived. It felt like it went on forever. At first, it seemed fairly normal. A middle aged couple, the Kranks, sends their daughter off to join the Peace Corp, and, instead of celebrating Christmas at home, they decide to go on a cruise, but their neighbors' reactions are what is crazy. They harass the Kranks, going as far as to stand outside their house and yell at them, and send people up to their windows to sing at them. The acting is rather painful to watch, much of it being over exaggerated and forced.



Photo courtesy of IMDb.com

The Knight Before Christmas 2

Netflix delivered with good costumes and realistic settings, but the storyline was not up to par. It was a plot I'd seen before: a young woman struggles finding a relationship (in this case, she was cheated on), so she becomes cynical about love, but then her prince charming (in this case, a knight from the 1300s) comes along and melts her heart. It included cliché lines like, "I thought he was my prince, but turns out he was just a frog." And, on top of that, this all takes place in five days. Maybe I'm over critical, but I don't think anyone goes from distrusting all men to being madly in love in five days, especially not with the culture clash that 500 years of history would bring.

And, for worst holiday movie ever, the Grinchie goes to....

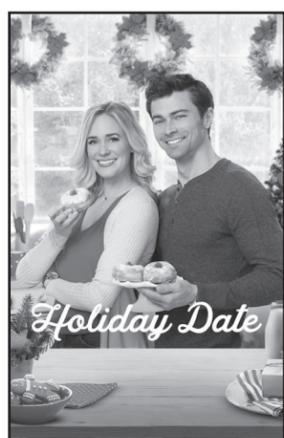


Photo courtesy of Gstatic.com

Holiday Date 1

As a Hallmark movie, I didn't expect too much from it, but it disappointed beyond my wildest expectations. The plot was a direct copy of The Proposal, a well-known romantic comedy. Brooke gets dumped by her boyfriend right before Christmas, and, instead of going back to her parents house alone, she asks an actor, one she met that night at a party, to come back home with her and pretend to be her boyfriend. Naturally they end up actually getting engaged by the end of the week. If you're a fan of painfully predictable and cheesy movies, this is the holiday film for you.



The Grinchie, a combination of Madie Ceponis and the Grinch, only watches abysmal holiday movies as a reminder of how they crush holiday spirit.

AVGO: fresh, tasty, fun

Lauren Woo
Arts Editor

AVGO, located on 41 in Saint John, offers a variety of unique and fresh breakfast and lunch options. They're open from 6 am to 3 pm every day

of the week. Entrees range in price from \$7 to \$15, which we found to be quite reasonable, since they deliver large quantities with high quality.

The interior is bright, with mostly natural lighting. There is lots of light wood and cool, paler colours, like green and cream and gray. The furnishings are clean minimalistic, creating a calming space.

They offer a variety of homemade beverages like their fresh squeezed juices (the orange beet juice was amazing) and cold brew, both of which are delightful and can be bought in jugs to bring home. The juice is fresh and obviously not sugar-filled, with bold, clear flavors. The cold brew is smooth and flavorful.

The service was fast, despite

how busy it was when we went. Our waitress was attentive and friendly, and our food came out quickly.

Their Monte Cristo was a unique take on the dish, with thick slices of French toast instead of bread. It came with a helping of tasty waffle fries and homemade ranch, all of which were wonderful.

The Cali Crepes were

great, with fresh salsa and guacamole, and sweet thin crepes filled with creamy, cheesy eggs (they provided three stuffed crepes for \$9.99). The chicken sausage was also very tasty, savory, and bursting with flavor.

Overall, it was an excellent experience, and I would highly recommend it to anyone who enjoys brunch.

Sports Highlights



Photo courtesy of Jeff DeVries

Senior Lizzie Knot dribbles past her defender towards the basket.

Despite rough start, girls' chemistry strong

Lauren Woo
News Editor

Illiana has two girls basketball teams for the 2019-2020 season, varsity and junior varsity. Varsity, coached by Lisa Blocker, includes eight girls, two of which also play on junior varsity. Varsity has a record of 3-11 and junior varsity's record is 2-11.

Faith VanRyn, a freshman that plays on both teams, said, "It's great," but that she likes playing on junior varsity more because she gets more playing time. Both teams are playing

on Friday night, Dec. 20, at Illiana against North Newton High School.

Senior Lizzie Knot said, "The team is a lot of fun. We have a lot of good girls and a lot of good athletes."

"Everyone works really hard in practice," Knot added. "Everyone knows the plays."

Kennedy Gaddis, a senior, said, "For the past three games we've played better as a team."

Gaddis also added that if there is any frustration within the team, "We don't stay mad [at each other] for a long time."

"Team chemistry is really

good," Knot said.

Senior Kaylee Evers said one of the varsity team's strengths is "driving and kicking," or dribbling down the open lane towards the hoop and passing to an open teammate, resulting in a basket.

The varsity team is close on and off the court. Cameron Evers, the only freshman that plays solely for the varsity team, said, "It's really fun. We do a lot of team bonding. We always go to each others houses."

"I like my teammates," said Gaddis.

Wrestling team yields promising future

Madie Ceponis
Feature Editor

The wrestling team opened its season with a tournament at Seneca and meets against Warsaw Community and Hammond Baptists.

On Dec. 7 the team competed at the Seneca Tournament and placed 7th with 110 points. Individuals Alex Bosman and Logan Frederick, both with the record of 2-1, placed 2nd in their weight classes, Brandon Schutt, record of 3-1, placed 3rd, Benjamin Kramer, record of 2-2,

placed 4th, Zachary Rozendal, record 3-2, placed 5th and Brandon Boone, record 2-2, also placed 5th.

Senior Benjamin Kramer placed second but believes he could have done better. He added that the team is still trying to learn and perfect moves and to maneuver to learn their own wrestling style.

They had a meet on the 10th with Hammond Baptist and won with their score of 57 to their opponent's score of 24. Out of the seven that wrestled, 6 won their individ-

ual matches, including Dante Girolimon, Marc Rozendal, Alex Bosman, Dante Sullivan, Benjamin Kramer and Jacob VanderZee.

Sophomore Marc Rozendal got his first pin of the season and says that this season has been good for him to grow both individually and with his team; he hopes for more wins in the next month.

In the next month, the team will face Whiting, Munster, Unity Christian, Boone Groove, and Hanover. They will finish with the GSSC Tournament.



Photo courtesy of Jeff DeVries

Senior Logan Frederick takes down an opponent.

Boys basketball continues to improve

Sophia Thompson
Sports Editor

Illiana boys basketball is playing well, despite the high player turnover from last year and playing a lot of games on the road.

"I think a lot of people were questioning how the team would look coming into the season considering we lost eight seniors, but our chemistry continues to grow and we have the talent to be a very successful team," said junior Fletcher Bandstra.

So far in the season, the

boys are four and one. They beat Hammond Academy of Science and Technology, Portage Christian, Hammond Clark Middle, and Saint Anne High, but they lost to Timothy. The junior varsity won its first two games.

"The season has started out a little rough at practice because we have so many new guys and are all trying to learn how each other plays and just getting to know each other," said junior Leighton Foster. "We are getting better and better each day and we are becom-

ing more like a family."

With only ten home games scheduled, the boys are trying to make the most of the Loud Crowd opportunities they are being offered.

"It stinks not having too many home games. It is definitely easier to play in front of a home crowd. But as a team we have great coaches that keep us focused, and I know we'll be just fine," said Foster.

Bandstra added, "The team has really bonded this season and we're continuing to bond."



Photo by Kaleb Dennis

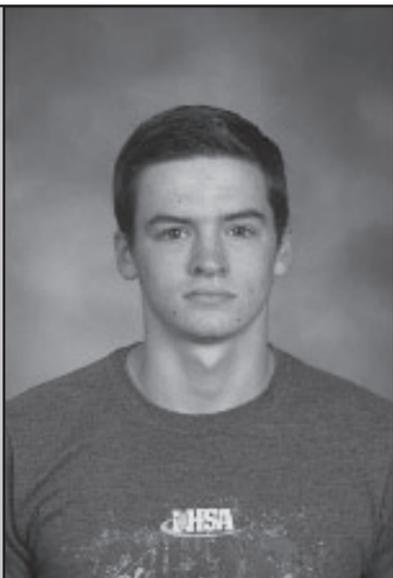
Senior David Gomez receives a pass.

Male Athlete of the Month

Senior Logan Frederick has wrestled four years and has been team captain for three.

Teammate, senior Zach Rozendal, said Frederick is the best wrestler on the team, due to how hard he works and practices. Frederick starts practicing before everyone else and even stays after official practice is over. He also encourages others by cheering for teammates while they are wrestling in a meet, and he will stop what he is doing to help others if they are doing their moves wrong.

Senior Greg Leystra has been on the wrestling team for the past two years during which he has witnessed Fredrick as a great leader. Leystra added, "If great leader, if the coaches are not there or are late, he takes action in leading us in our stretches and even into moves we are working on that practice."



Female Athlete of the Month

Sophomore Natalie Scott, a guard on the varsity girls basketball team, has played both of her years at Illiana. Her freshman year, she was on JV and now as a sophomore plays varsity.

"Natalie is a hard worker at practice and you can see it on the court," said teammate Lizzie Knot. "She always makes shots when we need her to, and she comes in clutch for the team often."

Junior Varsity player Katherine VanDrunen, who played with Natalie her freshman year, said, "It has been really fun to see Natalie move up to varsity; she definitely deserves it. She is extremely hard working, includes everyone, always carries a positive attitude, and shows an excessive amount of effort."



Editorial

Don't change yourself for others

Cassie frowned as she slowly slid her audition form for the spring musical into her folder so her friends would not see. They had just declared that the kids who are involved in the play are weird. She did not want her "friends" to know she was thinking about auditioning. As they walked down the hall to their next class, she quietly slid the form into the trash bin and decided to forget about it. It felt wrong. Desperate for friends, Cassie was willing to change anything just to fit in.

Cassie's experience is all too typical of the experience of many high schoolers. Too many of us make the same mistake, hiding who we are in our desperation to fit in. We change our clothes, our tastes, our appearance, just to get the approval of others. We pretend to hate classes we like or to adore music we dislike, we compare ourselves to others who seem to have lots of friends, and in the end, we lose ourselves along the way.

Of course, not every change we make to our personality is a mistake. Changing oneself to show love to a friend is different than compromising oneself to fit in. There is an important distinction here to be made. For example, if you hate a band, but your friend who loves that band asks you to join her at the concert and

you say yes, not because you are pretending to like the band, but because you know it brings your friend joy, you are positively changing yourself. On the other hand, pretending you love the band just to fit in with your friend would be an example of compromising yourself.

Having a friend whose personality is totally opposite of you is okay and can actu-

If someone is expecting you to change yourself to better fit in, they are not being your friend. If you have to change yourself to hang out with them, then you should find new friends. Having different friends that all get along can eliminate this problem. Someone is bound to enjoy the same thing as another.

Having a certain group of friends that you hang out with

thy group of people. We think there is a limit to how many people we can hang out with, but there isn't. The more people, the more opportunities to grow and help each other. Especially in high school, kids are in constant need of reassurance and help that they might not be receiving at home. Having an open friend group opens the opportunity for you to make more friends and build more relationships. Having a strong group of a couple friends you can trust is great, but you can open that up and receive even more love and support from others around you if you keep your group open.

Friends are people who accept you for who you are, not people who want you to be something different than what you are. In other words, good friends are people who prove trustworthy. They love you for who you are, and you can trust they have your best interest at heart. If you can't count on a person, the person is not your friend. Mutual trust between friends is foundational to real friendship that could last a lifetime, and you don't build that kind of trust by living lies.

Be courageous enough to be you. And be compassionate enough to allow others to be themselves. If we could all learn to do that, the relationships between students in this school could flourish.

Too many of us make the same mistake, hiding who we are in our desperation to fit in.

ally open your eyes to new things you might enjoy. Having friends that are opposite of you only becomes an issue when your identity changes to fit in with them. Your identity lies in Christ, not who you hang out with. Changing who you are as a person takes away from how our creator made us to be. He intended us to be unique. If everyone was the same, life would be incredibly boring. Think about what draws you to a person. It's something that makes them stand out, something that is different than what you are.

pretty often is healthy and natural. Of course we tend to be drawn to people with similar interests. Furthermore, groups have many benefits to them. They can help you grow in your spiritual life, emotional life, and social life. Having a group of people you trust is vital to having constant support, and someone to go to in times of trouble. Groups become unhealthy when they are closed off. Like Mr. Davids brought up in chapel a few weeks ago, friend groups should be horseshoes, not circles. Everyone should have access to a supporting, trustwor-

Empty seat stark reminder to love

One of my cousins searched for an open seat after piling her plate with Christmas lunch. Scanning the room, she couldn't find a place. Every seat was filled.

But this year, there's an empty seat at the table.



Taylor Benes
Editor in Chief

After a long-fought battle with alcoholism, my Uncle Tim passed away this past May. His organs failed, and though he battled through his last days, he lost the fight.

My family travels to Ohio every Christmas to spend time with my

mother's parents and brothers. Having over 20 people in a small house, it's often hard to find a place to sit unless you rush to the counter and fill your plate before anyone else.

But this year, there's an empty seat at the table.

Dealing with loss around the holidays is difficult. I often think about my uncle, my grandma, my grandpa, and other people who have passed away. There's a void that can't be filled when you lose someone near to you. One less plate, one less seat, one less story.

Spend time with your loved ones during the holiday season. Play one more game. Listen to one more story. Give one more gift. You never know when the last time you will see your loved ones is.

While traveling home from my uncle's funeral in Ohio, we received a call saying my grandpa back home was found unconscious on his bedroom floor. The paramedics didn't know if he was on the floor for minutes, for hours, or for days. My father turned around from the front seat and said, "Guys, I think grandpa died."

I immediately felt guilty. Guilty that I wasn't there. Guilty that I didn't spend more time with him. Guilty that I should've done more.

My grandpa had a stroke, the second in his life, and miraculously, he survived. He is now living at Park Place. Ever since that scare, I visit him as often as I can. I hug him more. I sit next to him while he eats dinner more. I buy him milkshakes more. I watch Jeopardy and Ellen with him more. I spend more time with him because I don't know when I will see him for the last time.

Sometimes, I would rather read a book or text my friends, but while I am with my loved ones, I try to spend more time with them. I show them that they matter, share my love for them, and give them my attention.

I admit that I am selfish with my time. I'd often rather tend to my own wants rather than those of other people, but I'm challenging myself to turn this around. I plan to set myself aside and seek out other people, looking for ways I can bring joy to others during the holidays.

I'll bake with my aunt if she wants to make cookies. I'll play hide and seek with my younger cousins who yearn for my attention. I'll tell my grandpa about how school is going this year. I'll take extra moments in this season to spread love to the people I care about.

There will be an empty seat at my family's table this year, but I plan to fill that seat with new memories and lasting stories with my loved ones.

the
Echo

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Letters to the editor can be submitted to the advisor or sent to the school. All letters must be signed and must not exceed 250 words. They will be printed provided there is enough room and content is not offensive to the general public.

Merry Christmas



from the editorial staff!

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