



## Attendance issues Excused absences more than tripled during recent years.

Lucas VanderWoude  
Reporter

Absences are rising at Illiana Christian High School, which could be due to the recent Covid pandemic and the new voucher system.

Between the 2019-2020 school year and the 2020-2021 school year, the attendance rate declined from 98.13% to roughly 97%, according to Mr. David Boer, who keeps attendance at Illiana.

“The data is difficult to find and interpret with all that’s gone on in the last couple years,” Boer said. He explained that the attendance rate would reflect the total number of days that every student could have been in school.

Another and perhaps easier way to see the decline in school attendance is to look at the average number of excused absences Illiana students took. In ’19-’20, students averaged 3 days of excused absences. Last school year, that number jumped to 10.

Teachers at Illiana have learned how to adapt to this shift in attendance. “In the past year, I’ve done fewer group projects,” said Kristy Medema, an English teacher. “For example, my juniors used to do a partner or small group project for a public speaking unit, but last year and this year, I cre-

ated a different, more individual unit to work on speaking skills. I post more stuff to google classroom... I’ve learned to be more flexible for sure!”

One of the reasons for the drop in attendance is the change of the exam voucher. Students now have to perform 10 hours of service to obtain a voucher instead of only having a certain number of absences.

Principal Peter Boonstra has several ideas of how to encourage attendance instead of the voucher system. He said, “The best thing we can do to encourage good attendance is to make sure that attending school in-person is engaging, rewarding, and necessary... An important tool of the school to encourage good attendance is simply communication. And, of course, there is still the threat of consequences—detentions, loss of credit. However, these are used sparingly as we still need to be encouraging students to stay home as a precaution to prevent illness.”

“The previous voucher had its benefits and its drawbacks,” said Mr. Kamphuis, art teacher at Illiana. “There was an incentive not to miss school, but then we had kids at ‘death’s door’ showing up in fear of losing their voucher. Now with the new system, we have very little incentive for kids to not miss school.”



Neil Zandstra, Lance Davids, and Melanie Benes talk with parents about social media. Photo courtesy of ICHS Facebook

## Meeting held to discuss pitfalls of teen social media usage, tips for parents

Danielle Rancifer  
Reporter

Lance Davids, Head of School, called for a meeting Jan. 11 between parents, guardians, and community members in order to address the growing presence of Social Media within the lives of young people, and to discuss how it should be addressed.

Davids made the announcement through an email, that he would be having this event in order to help improve Social Me-

dia culture at Illiana.

Davids explained the need for this meeting, pointing to some problems with bullying on social media and saying, “Enough is enough; we need to address this.”

During the event, Davids showed parents TED talks from various experts regarding social media. Students and parents alike attest to the impact of this meeting. Some students even said that parents came home for the meeting and asked to see their phones

to monitor the amount of screentime their children had been logging.

Davids is hopeful that this meeting will have an impact on all those that attend and how they let social media affect their lives. He said, “Things don’t change unless you address them. We must change our habits to be more positive.”

In the future Davids hopes to continue hosting meetings like this and using them to make a positive and effective change within the Illiana community.

## New marketing director uses social media to share vision statement

Cameron Evers  
Reporter

After seven years of writing at ABC news and 17 years of working as an investigative producer at Channel 2, Dan Blom is switching gears as he becomes the new Director of Marketing at Illiana Christian High School.

Blom is an Illiana alumnus (1992) and even served as an editor of the Echo while a student here. He has always had a fondness for Illiana and enjoyed keeping up with the school, so he said his return as a staff member is fitting.

He graduated from Bradley University with a journalism degree, but he was later drawn to marketing because, he said, “It’s another way of telling a story” similar to the

way he can write a story through journalism.

Mr Davids, the Head of School, said that Blom’s “sole responsibility here at Illiana will be marketing” and that he is “extremely qualified” to take on this position. Davids says the goal of a marketing team is to “try and pull back the curtain to show how great Illiana is to the community” and to “show off the great kids and staff we have here.”

Written on the white board in Blom’s office is the phrase “developing students with a passion for God, people, and the world” and he has a passion for getting this vision



Photo by Olivia Oostema

statement out to the community through his marketing tactics.

Blom said he is “excited by this new opportunity” and is aiming to “get Illiana’s mission out to the community” primarily with social media.

## School updates Covid protocol to match CDC changes

Aubrey Porter  
Feature Editor

An email from Principal Peter Boonstra on Jan. 2, the day before school resumed after Christmas break, made clear Illiana’s COVID-19 protocol changes in accordance with the recent CDC guideline changes.

Students and teachers who have been vaccinated are still not required to quarantine. As far as isolation goes, unvaccinated students still must quarantine if they have either been in contact with someone who had COVID, have COVID symptoms, or test positive for COVID.

However, the length of the isolation has changed. Earlier, a 10-day quarantine was required for anyone in contact with, symptoms of, or positive test for COVID. Now, the CDC has shortened this requirement to a 5-day quarantine, and Illiana, in turn,



Graphic courtesy of CDC

has changed its policy to reflect the change. A 5-day quarantine is required for unvaccinated students exposed to the virus or having tested

positive for it. The changes are minor, but they will reduce time missed from school. Illiana as a whole is still doing what it can to prevent the spread of the virus and to keep school a safe and healthy environment for students to learn.

## New semester brings fresh start

**T**abula rasa has to be one of the most reassuring Latin terms I've ever heard. It means "clean slate." As said very often, everyone makes mistakes; it happens to the best of us. But tabula rasa offers up a fresh start that you can apply to any area of your life.

The best part is that we are given clean slates all the time: a new year, a new quarter, a new semester, and even a new day. It gives us the opportunity to start fresh and challenge ourselves to grow out of old habits and better ourselves with discipline and dedication.

I first heard this Latin phrase in the third episode of my favorite TV show, *Lost*, which was titled "Tabula Rasa." Just a few episodes prior, a plane full of passengers crashed on an deserted island. Though we later find out just how different each person's past life was, full of mistakes and backstories, the crash symbolizes a slate being wiped clean, as these people would find themselves on an incredible journey of survival and self-discovery on the island.

What gets to me most about this Latin phrase is that it connects directly with the Bible. In Lamentations 3:22-23, Jeremiah writes, "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness." Like the verse says, God's mercies are new every day. When we wake up in the morning and get ready to begin our schedule, we can find comfort in the fact that yesterday was in the past and we can start new with a tabula rasa.

Plus, as Christians we are familiar with Jesus washing away our sins when we repent. This is another way we are given a fresh start when we mess up: through our recognition of our own sins, followed by repentance, and God's forgiveness gives us a blank slate.

In Isaiah 1:18, the Lord says, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool." We are made pure again because of God's grace, and He will continue to make us clean when we repent. He makes it available to everyone, so we always have the opportunity to have a new beginning.

When we make mistakes, we have to realize that we are sinners and mistakes are inevitable, though that doesn't mean we should abuse God's forgiveness; we can take what we learn from our mistakes and try our best not to make them again. But one thing is for sure: each day we are given a clean slate. Every quarter we start out with all A's. Each year we can make a resolution to set a self-growing goal for the new year.

The possibilities are endless for a fresh start, but it takes steps of action to execute these goals. Without staying true to who you want to become and what measures you must take to get there, those plans fall through, and your slate needs to be wiped clean again.

This past semester didn't go exactly the way I wanted it to; some grades slipped, some friends drifted apart, my car hit one-too-many bumps in the road (literally, and multiple times). But this coming semester is going to be a freeing moment for all of us; it will be a time to set goals for ourselves with the idea in mind to better who we already are. Here's to 2022 and a new semester!



Grace Jania  
News Editor

## Homecoming spirit week brings forth new events

Citlali Sanchez

Reporter

The much anticipated homecoming week finally arrived on Monday, Jan. 24 with the annual spirit week kicking it off.

This year's overall theme was inspired by the upcoming Winter Olympics and everyday there were new dress ups with some element of competition. On Monday students wore their favorite travel outfit as well carried their school books in anything but a backpack. Student

Council awarded points to the strangest, most creative carriers. Students brought wheel barrows, bikes, fertilizer spreaders, strollers, and more to carry their things.

Tuesday's theme was for students to dress in the color of the country they support during the Olympic games. Wednesday was the day where students dressed as athletes from their favorite Olympic sport from either the summer or winter games, and whoever impressed an Olympic official would win points for their grade level.

Thursday students wore an assigned color representing their grade with the top three home-rooms with the most participation winning points towards a medal. On Friday the entire school wore Green and Gold, with the Dress up days Podium announced at the pep rally.

"Student council has done a good job picking this year's themes," said senior Brandon Helmus. "It's something different and we get to see the creative minds of students."

Apart from having spirit week, student council is bringing back the Class Olympics, which was done back in the day. The games will feature mul-

iple "minute to win it" games, such as paper airplane contest, that will put students from the different grade levels against each other. This will conclude the week's competition, and the grade level with the most points will get its name memorialized on the Spirit Flag. Student Council will announce the winner at the homecoming game before the presentation of the homecoming court, and a representative of the winning class will wave the flag as he or she runs around the gym.

"The winning class will have access to the Spirit Flag whenever they ask for it," said Sara Johnson, a Student Council sponsor.

## Students attend March for Life in hopes of overturning Roe vs. Wade

Danielle Rancifer

Reporter

"It was a great opportunity to be with [so many] other people to fight for the life of babies, but also for . . . their mothers," said senior Christine DeYoung, who joined 29 other Illiana students to attend the 49th annual Right to Life March in the Washington DC, on Jan. 21.

The trip lasted three days and two nights. The students experienced a plethora of events while there such as presentations, museums, and the March.

During the first day, one group of Illiana students went site seeing while another attended a workshop hosted by five influential women who lead the Pro-Life movement. These women spoke about the historical court case of Roe V. Wade, and the potential impact the overturning of it could have on abortion laws across the

country. They also talked about their experience working for the Anti-abortion cause.

After that workshop, parents, sponsors, and students had the opportunity to meet with the head of the National Pro-Life organization. They were also able to have conversations with the organization's marketing director who presented various facts like total abortions since Roe v Wade was decided,

money the National organization has received over the years, and how the national Pro-Life organization operates on a daily basis.

Friday, students went out to march, and joined forces with thousands in order to show their support for the Pro-Life movement. Before the actual march took place, dozens of speakers which included congressmen and women, celebrities, and everyday

people who shared their stories on how abortion affected their life, and why they felt moved by the Right to Life movement. The march was a nationally covered event, and gained attention from thousands around the country.

Senior Jane Peterson said, "This experience was life changing and incredibly effective in helping further my passion for the cause."

Students were also able to enjoy some historical and interesting sites around DC, and add some lighthearted fun to this trip that dealt with serious topics.



A group of students pose for a picture at a pro-life workshop.

Photo courtesy of Illiana's Facebook page

## Robotics team takes sixth place in tournament

Lucas VanderWoude

Reporter

The Illiana robotics team placed 6th at its tournament on December 18 at Portage High School.

The competition had 59 teams from all over Indiana and Illinois that participated. The game that the competitors participated in was called tipping point. Competitors would use their robots to lift circular rings and put them on a tree-shaped goal, or at the base of the goal in a basket. The goal was the main object that was used to score points. There was also a teeter-totter in a different part of the arena that competitors could put their robots on to score extra points.

The competition officials consisted of 10 referees and

10 field resetters. The referees tracked scoring and points with tablets. After a match, each team would either agree or disagree with the number of points that the referees had given them. Then the resetters would set up the field for the next round.

Christopher Kinkade, a junior member of the robotics team, weighed in on his team's strategy for the game: "The main strategy of the game from our experience was to pick up the goals and place them onto the teeter totter. This gave a total of 60 points for each goal. The competition went very well for us, our robot was not quite working how we wanted so we ended up being more of a defensive bot. We mostly pushed other robots out of the way or ran into goals to de-score rings off the top."

## Background on spring musical, "My Fair Lady"

Cameron Evers

Reporter

Singing and dancing fills the ARC as students and directors work to perfect this year's spring musical titled *My Fair Lady*. Kathy Sliemers, a co-director of the musical, said, "Students are doing well learning music and choreography. I'm excited for the students and I'm excited to watch them get better and better."

This musical brings up topics of social class, language barriers, and individuality and is a musical version of the play *Pygmalion*. Audrey Yonkman, a junior playing the lead role of Eliza Doolittle, said, "The musical is relatable to high schoolers because it's about

people's differences. It's also about a girl who realizes she is not fully appreciated in her endeavors [so she] finds her independence."

Even with these heavier topics, Mary Lagerwey, a co-director of the musical, said, "It's funny and fun, but it still brings up some questions of who we really are and how we treat each other." She added that the musical "uses the talent that we have really well."

Due to some scheduling issues, a date for the musical has not yet been set, but the hard work doesn't stop for this cast. Yonkman said, "So far, things are looking really promising. Everyone is putting in their effort and as far as I can tell, it's going really well."



Tyler Barker sits on his bike for Win a Gold Wednesday.

Photo by Jeff DeVries

# Homecoming soon to happen

Kyla Bennett

Reporter

Bust out the fancy clothes and the spirit wear! Homecoming is here! Friday, Jan. 28 the boys' basketball team will face Victory Christian Academy and the school will crown a new Mr. and Miss Illiana. Saturday, Jan. 29, students and friends will gather in the ARC for the Homecoming dance from 7:00 - 10:30.

Hosted by Student Council sponsors Mrs. Kelly Aardsma, Mrs. Sharon Praveen, and Ms. Sara Johnson, this year's homecoming theme is "Bringing Home the Green and Gold." Students and faculty also participated in an Olym-

pics-themed spirit week. Monday was Traveling to the Games Day. Students dressed as if they were going to the airport, but they had to bring anything other than a bookbag. Along with that, each homeroom had a 20-minute door decorating competition. Tuesday was Country Day, where students wore the colors of their country's flag. Wednesday was Win A Gold Day, where students dressed up to celebrate their favorite sport. Thursday was Colors of the Ring. Each grade had one specific color to wear. Friday is Green & Gold Day. All the students and faculty will wear green and gold attire. Each class will earn points based on

how well they participated in the spirit week.

There will also be a pep rally held in the gym on Friday. The seniors on Homecoming court will do a performance and afternoon games will be played. One student from each grade will be chosen to represent their grade level. During the Homecoming game, points will be calculated to see which grade won. The winning grade will get the privilege of taking home the spirit flag!

During the games on Friday, alumni of Illiana will gather over refreshments, old pictures, and their old Spires in the commons to reminisce about their high school memories.

## MLK Day celebrated with chapels, devotions

Citlali Sanchez

Reporter

Illiana has decided this January to mark Martin Luther King's birthday with a series of chapels and special homeroom devotions.

That decision is a departure from last year's special day set aside to promote a Christians understanding of race relations. That day included sectionals on different topics, guest speakers, and a film.

"We received lots of positive feedback from the students who also said that they had gained an understanding on how to appreciate each other," said Vice Principal Rachel Drost.

Drost is also a member of the school's Race Relations Committee, a group of teachers, administrators,

and school board and community members. Drost explained that the committee has the same goals as last year, but wanted to approach those goals differently this year.

Morning devotions and chapels will be covering the celebration of cultural diversity and unity in Christ in the new subtheme: love.

Teacher Jeff DeVries, another member of the committee, said, "Last year was great, but we don't want to just do the same thing every year. Doing so will lose its effectiveness. We might do days like that again in the future, but this year we are hopeful that chapels and devotions will continue to promote and build on the good work we've done already."

## Debt Reduction Drive exceeds donation goal, reducing debt by more than \$1.5 million

Kyla Bennett

Reporter

In an effort to knock out some of the debt Illiana owes on the Dyer campus, Illiana held a debt reduction drive titled the "1:1 match for Debt."

Led by Mr. Lance Davids and Mrs. Cassie Siersema, the debt reduction campaign ran from late November to the end of 2021. The campaign's goal was to knock about \$1.2 million from the school's current debt.

Before the campaign started, the school was carrying about \$5 million in debt that the school took on when building the new campus. Davids and Siersema challenged the community to donate specifically towards reducing the debt with the hope of raising

\$625,000. They had secured a special donor who was willing to match all contributions 1:1, which would ultimately result in the debt

**"It shows how much our community supports Christian education; it always goes above and beyond."**

being reduced by \$1.2 million.

The campaign surpassed expectations. With broad support from the community, Illiana raised over \$750,000, Davids secured another donor to match the funds in excess of the \$625,000, and

the school reduced its debt by more than \$1.5 million.

Siersema said, "If we weren't able to raise some of the money for debt on our own, the burden would have been put on tuition and [the school] would have had to increase [tuition] over the next few years significantly."

Reducing the debt also allows Illiana to focus on looking towards expansion of the current campus a lot quicker as student enrollment grows.

Davids said, "It shows how much our community supports Christian education; it always goes above and beyond."

Siersema added, "The end of the year campaign to reduce our debt was a huge success! Our community came out in a big way for Illiana."

## Exams: constants, changes

Hailey Ross

Arts Editor

Students buckled down for exams on January 12-14. Exams have long been part of Illiana culture, and not a lot seems to have changed over the years.

Students who've experienced exams before seemed to take them in stride.

"Honestly, my exams were pretty easy," said Danielle Bonnema, a senior.

Sophomore Savannah Sampson said, "My exams went well."

There seems to be some mixed feelings from the freshman who experienced finals for the first time. Megan

Paluch thought her exams were "kind of hard" while Isabella Girolimon thought they "were really good."

For the most part, teachers are sticking with tried and true methods for their exams. Math teacher Dave Bosman said, "I am not doing anything different than last year."

Still, in one or two classes, exams took at least slightly different form. Mrs. Karrie Roeda had her students in Nutrition and Wellness make a pizza for their final exam. In drama class, Mr. Jeff DeVries required his students to perform two monologues, and their performance grades made up half of the final exam grade. Such an exam seems



Students in Miss Top's second period class take their exam on their laptops.

Photo courtesy of Illiana's Facebook page

fitting, DeVries said, because the class is performance-based.

Vouchers for service hours

once again allowed students who had a voucher to elect one class where they could skip the exam. PE teacher Er-

inn Behn received a voucher and said, "I have never had anyone vouch my exam until this year."

# 4 different ways to go loco for Hoco

Figuring out plans to accommodate your vibe, budget, type of people, and group-size can be a hassle, so here are some ideas to plan your special night according to whatever criteria you may have.

## Romantic

If you're bringing a date to homecoming, make the night even more special and romantic afterwards with various activities!

Take your date ice skating after the dance for a fun activity. **Midwest Training and Ice Center** has an indoor ice skating rink open on Saturdays from 10 PM to 11 PM. Non member admission is \$8 and skate rentals are \$4. Crown Point also offers open skating at **Bulldog Park** till 10 PM on Saturdays. Admissions is \$5, and skate rentals are \$3.

If ice skating isn't your thing, go to a restaurant for food and dessert instead! **The Lighthouse** in Cedar Lake, **Burgerhaus** in Schererville, and **Cafe Borgia** in Munster are all close by, and offer various selections of food and dessert for everyone to enjoy.



Photo courtesy of Dissolve.com



Photo courtesy of Unsplash.com

## Inexpensive

Dances can be expensive, so if you're looking to save some money, try these activities that won't break the bank!

Instead of going out to eat, have dinner at home! Make a home cooked meal and set up a nice dining area for all your friends to enjoy. After the dance, come back to someone's house, and hang out together. Either buy a cheap meal, like WingStop, McDonald's, or Domino's, or have snacks already at the house. Watching movies or playing different games are just some things the group can do.

Bowling is also a fun and cheap activity. Various places such as **Up Your Alley** in Schererville, **Stardust Bowling** in Dyer, and **The Super Bowl Inc** in Crown Point, have open night bowling on Saturday's. All these places have prices for under \$45 for a night of bowling!

## Just friends

No dates? No problem! Homecoming festivities that are friend-exclusive can be just as fun if not more. For dinner, opt for a laidback restaurant like **Buffalo Wild Wings** or **Station 21**. The chill atmosphere allows for a group that just wants to talk and have fun. For the sportswatchers, both restaurants stream sports games live, so for those wanting to watch the Raptors v. Heat game, these are for you. After the dance, head over to **Accelerate Indoor Speedway** in Mokena for a chance to drive go-karts up to 50 mph, making for a high energy, action packed, racing experience. For the ones who want a brain-boggling challenge, drive up to **NWI Escape Room** in Schererville and solve a puzzle while locked in a room with some friends. Both a great way to tire out your body or your brain to get some rest after a long night of dancing.



Photo courtesy of eEnjoyIllinois.com

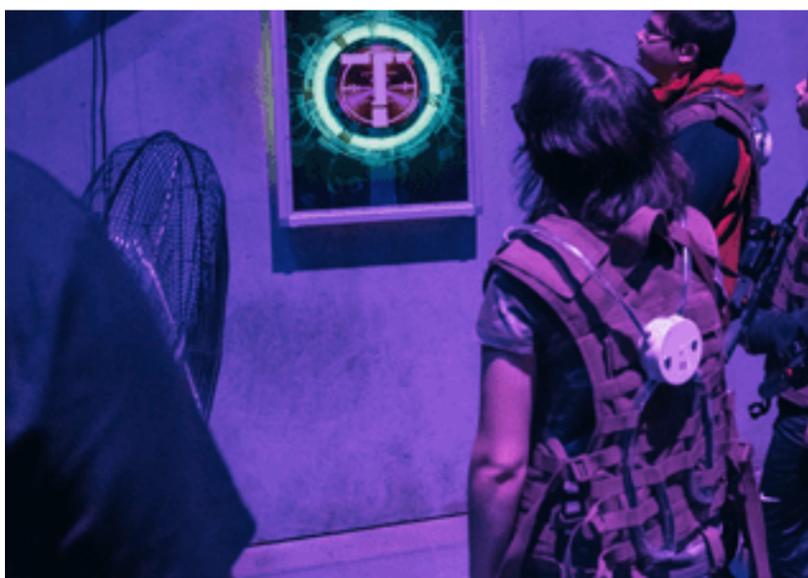


Photo courtesy of Hobart.TeamCombat.com

## Large groups

For groups that struggle finding plans that can accommodate their number of people, these are the ideas for you! Pizza restaurants are great for people who want to split a big meal. **Aurelio's** in Cedar Lake fits the classic-family restaurant vibe. **Tomato Bar** in Schererville for the people who want a spin on classic pizzas, serving pies that have names all the way from "Holy Cow" to "Counselor Tripper." They also offer calzones and sandwiches. If your group is feeling deep-dish, head over to **Giordano's** in Schererville. After the dance, take on your group members in a game of lazer tag at **Team Combat** in Hobart, a perfect activity where the more people involved the better.

# Malls in the 21st century: a glorious past, uncertain present, and possible future



Photo courtesy of Facebook

Century III Mall in Pennsylvania during its prime in the 1980's.



Photo courtesy of Facebook

Century III Mall in recent years looking as empty as ever.

## The past and present

Jessica Bergfors

Sports Editor

Malls used to be all the rage in the past years. For teenagers, the mall was the place to meet and hang out with friends, while being able to shop and eat. Many teens even worked at malls.

According to Madeline Veira from NPR, "There were about 3 million retail jobs for 16- to 19-year-olds in 1990, but today, it's closer to 1 million, according to the Labor Department." Malls used to play a huge role in teens' culture.

In the '80s, the shopping mall was in its prime, and this lasted until the early '2000s. In an era before people could shop online or keep in touch via social media, the malls thrived because they met various needs. Starting in 1982, the term "mallrat" was even used to

describe people who would constantly spend time at the mall, according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary.

T.V. shows, movies, and celebrities all seemed to reflect the mall culture as well. The classic movie "Mean Girls" has multiple scenes where the characters are seen hanging out at the mall. The Blues Brothers drove their car through a mall. Marty McFly even time-traveled from a mall parking lot in "Back to the Future." Singer Mariah Carey also performed at the Mall of America in Minnesota. Malls seemed to have everything you needed and wanted at the time, all under one roof.

Today, malls are slowly dying and dropping out of teen culture. Not as many teens are hanging out or shopping at malls, or even working there.

Social media and online shopping has made staying home easier and more comfortable for many

people. COVID-19 has also had a huge impact on malls, as many people would rather stay home to avoid the health risks found in crowded spaces. The initial shut down that happened in 2020 affected malls since no one was allowed to shop in person.

Sapna Maheshwari from the New York Times said, "Similar declines have been playing out for years at many of the roughly 1,150 enclosed malls in the U.S., as people have turned to the internet, strip-center chains and outlets." Many malls are either closed, or starting to become run down. And perhaps the final nail in the coffin is that crime rates at malls are increasing. Oak Brook Mall, South Lake, and Orland all have had some crime incidents happen in the recent years. To combat that problem, many malls are also enforcing age restrictions at certain times, making younger teen shoppers unable to visit the mall without an adult of age with them at all times.

## Fear of crime, justified or not, keeps some away from malls

Olivia Oostema

Editor-in-Chief

In November, thieves stole \$120K in Louis Vuitton merchandise from Oak Brook mall. In December, there were shootings at both Oak Brook and Southlake Mall. These events and others have led people to question the safety of their local shopping centers.

Theft isn't only affecting malls in Chicagoland. Organized retail crime is surging in San Francisco, according to self-described nonprofit, nonpartisan newsroom CalMatters. Overall, there has been an increase in 'smash-and-grab' crimes in major US cities, said CNN.

In the country as a whole, property crime is on a decline while violent crime is rising, according to The Atlantic. The FBI's "Uniform Crime Report" for 2020 shows that America is in the midst of a "violence wave, not a broad crime wave," the site added. In downtown Chicago, shootings were up 220% late last year, according to the Chicago Sun Times.

However, the BBC took a different tone on crime in the US, comparing current crime to crime in the '90s. "Across the US, there were 25% more murders recorded in 2020 than the previous year. This is a steep rise, but the murder rate is still far lower than in the early 1990s, when it was almost double the current figure." The site also said that "over the last 20 years, both New York and Chicago, along with most other US cities, have seen overall violent crime drop significantly."

So whether crime is a growing problem in malls may be partly a matter of perception. Still, if you're worried about going to malls because of crime, take a few simple precautions:

1. Let someone know where you're going, or bring a friend with you.
2. Carry your phone in case of an emergency. Besides being able to make calls, many phones offer an "Emergency SOS" function (features may vary based on brand and model).
3. Don't stay out too late, especially because it gets dark out early in the winter.



Photo courtesy of tripadvisor.in

One area mall which has adjusted to the need for content-driven shopping centers is Fox Valley Mall in Aurora, IL. The mall's unused central courtyard was remodeled into a gathering place with art, seating, greenery, and a tree-house-like tower. In 2020, the mall demolished the abandoned Sears and built luxury apartments on the property.

## The potential future of malls

Olivia Oostema

Editor-in-Chief

Dying malls hold the possibility of a new kind of consumer experience. Design and consulting company Stantec said that because malls are often located near main highways and have their own infrastructure (access to water, power, and parking), they are "phenomenal candidates for redevelopment." Struggling malls have the potential to become big again if they focus on "content."

"When it comes to the future of malls, content is king," said Stantec.com. "Content [not only] refers to the look and feel of the space but also what happens there. Content comes in the form of art, patterning, people, places, information, entertainment, culture, video events, data, sound, hospitality, and texture." Content is what makes shoppers want to spend time in a place because of its aesthetic appeal. While no one wants to spend time in a drab mall courtyard next to

the obligatory carousel, many would spend time in a hip, artsy greenspace. In an online age with vast numbers of styles accessible with a click, content is key to staying current.

Whereas malls used to be rows upon rows of stores, innovative malls (especially in affluent areas) feature an array of entertainment options such as fitness clubs, bowling alleys, concert venues, micro-breweries, and roof-top pools. Some malls even include residential areas, medical centers, and churches.

The stores that remain in futuristic malls like these focus on brand-building. If a shop can increase a customer's loyalty to their brand, whether the customer shops in-person or online doesn't matter. According to Stantec.com, "Overnight delivery won, and physical retail is no longer about the distribution of goods. The physical store is... a place where brands make a personal connection with the consumer." Stores are able to attract customers in brick and mortar stores through interaction, whether one-on-one (individual-

ized shopping assistance) or through technology (stations at which customers can try on products virtually).

Said the Washington Post, "These days, the most successful malls tend to be dominated by brands that appeal to higher earners, like Nordstrom, Apple and Lululemon, as well as up-and-comers like Untuckit and Peloton. They also tend to have invested heavily in restaurants, spas and specialty gyms that keep customers coming back, week after week, even if they're doing more of their shopping online."

It's worth noting that lower-tier malls have a worse time staying afloat. Because they generated a great deal of income from now failing anchor tenants like JC Penney and Sears, these malls don't have extra funds to reinvent themselves to adapt to content-seeking customers. It seems that to adapt to the desires of shoppers, malls must spend money to make money. Without the funds to attract customers, many smaller, less affluent malls will continue closing across the country.

To stay in business, malls must act quickly.

# New Year's resolutions date back millenia

Hailey Ross

Arts Editor

According to the website History.com, the tradition of New Year's resolutions started in Babylonian times during Akitu, a 12-day New Year celebration. During this celebration, Babylonians would pay tribute to their gods and pledge loyalty to their king.

The Babylonians were not alone in marking the new year with resolutions, however. Trafalgar.com reports that by 46 B.C., Julius Caesar used New Year's resolutions as a tribute to Janus, the two-faced god whose

spirit inhabited doorways and arches. As New Year's Day was like a doorway between the past and the future, the tribute seemed fitting.

The word resolutions first appears connected to the new year in the 1600s, and many Christians began to hold both Old Year's and New Year's services, occasions at which people could consider past mistakes and resolve to do better in the future (History.com). By 1813, a Boston newspaper first used the phrase "New Year's resolutions" (refinery29.com), and in the time since, resolutions have largely lost spiritual connotations and become more of a secular tradition



<https://static.vecteezy.com>

## Some students New Year's resolutions include the following:

- Eat less: *Sam Knight*
- Be more kind to sister and read the Bible more: *Jessica Roznowski*
- To be less stressed and worried: *Callie Boss*
- To live for myself and do what makes me happy and not care what others think: *Jenny Beedle*
- Practice music more often: *Elliot VanDerGriend*
- To be me: *Katherine Bonnema*
- To not let people get to me and not care what people think: *Kelly Stegenga*
- Set tiny goals and accomplish them one at a time: *Danielle Rancifer*
- To bake more: *Seth Neumeyer*

## "Spider-Man: No Way Home" webslings across the multiverse, brings excitement home

Grace Jania

News Editor

Awaiting the release of Spider-Man: No Way Home was a different type of challenge when it came to fans of the web-slinging superhero. The mowwvie, directed by Jon Watts, starred Tom Holland as Spider-Man. With a plot that tied into characters of the other spider-verses, the movie was an interesting and unique watch for a variety of audiences.

In the movie, the man behind the mask, Peter Parker, applies for colleges with his friends but is turned down due to his identity having been exposed. He goes to Dr. Strange, hoping that some kind of spell might make people forget who Spider-

man is. Instead, the spell malfunctions and tears a hole through reality, opening the

lains and few surprise guests pour through that hole and mayhem ensues.

put in a spoiler alert. Read no further if you want to be surprised when watch-

film in theaters the weekend it came out. As a big fan of Andrew Garfield's The Amazing Spider-Man movies, I was thrilled to see him appear once again on the big screen. I even felt that as someone who never fully watched all of Maguire's Spider-Man movies and the Dr. Strange movies, I followed the storyline and jokes pretty well and loved seeing all three Spider-MenZtogether in one movie.

Overall, I would definitely recommend this film to anyone that enjoys watching action movies and just those who are fans of Spider-Man, whether it be the character himself or the character played by a certain actor. It was a film that kept me interested and made me love the superhero even more



<https://www.cine.com>

chance for multiple spider-verses to collide. Past vil-

And now, before you read any further, I needto ing.

I enjoyed seeing the

## Vikings basketball marches toward conference championship

Jessica Bergfors

Sports Editor

With 11 wins and 2 losses so far, boys basketball athletes are working on both their strengths and weaknesses as the season progresses.

They are 3-0 in the Greater South Shore Conference, and have been scoring 61.5 points per game while allowing only 42.5 points per game defensively. Coach Tom Roozeboom said, "We are playing at a high level with multiple contributors on our team both offensively and defensively."

Roozeboom said that the team's strengths lie in its defense and aggressive play, and the quick

transition from defense to offense. However, Roozeboom said that with such aggressive play comes the chance for turnovers on offense and overplaying defense, leading to easier points for the opponents. The team is working daily on how to keep offensive players at the front, while still working on their defense, communication, and rotation.

"This will hopefully benefit the team as they finish the season and make a deep run in the state tournament play," said Roozeboom.

"We are progressing nicely as a team on the court as well as off," Roozeboom said. "Guys are stepping into their roles and pushing each other to succeed."



Photo courtesy of Illiana Athletics Facebook

The boys huddle together during the game to figure out their game plan and their next steps.



Photo courtesy of HR Imaging

Junior Kaitlyn Dykstra prepares to pass the ball during the Victory Christian Academy game on Nov 30.

## Girls basketball works together to build confidence, improving their game

Aubrey Porter

Feature Editor

The Illiana girls varsity basketball team has a record of 6-14 and has "improved tremendously playing as a team" so far this season, said head coach Lisa Blocker.

"The start of our season wasn't too strong," junior Karina Mulder said. "However, learning about each

other's strengths and supporting each other's weaknesses definitely helped us grow as a team."

Mulder said assistant coach Lance Davids has encouraged good attitudes because "one team member's attitude makes a difference."

Senior Natalie Scott said that she has had a lot of fun playing with a lot of returning players this sea-

son. "We have also picked up our defensive intensity which has made games a lot more fun," Scott said.

Working together has been something the Lady Vikings continue to practice. "Being young, it's hard to mesh all different levels of skill together," Blocker said, "but our daily training has brought us to be more confident and to work as a cohesive unit."

## Wrestling anticipates sectionals, works on skills daily

Olivia Oostema

Editor-in-Chief

Illiana wrestlers prepare for the IHSAA sectional tournament while looking back on a historic season.

The team is "practicing every day to sharpen up techniques and become competition ready," said senior Faith VanderLaan.

At the IHSGW state tournament on Jan. 14, VanderLaan

said she performed the best she ever has, placing fourth overall. Senior Grace Goodfellow also qualified for the tournament. Although Grace did not place, making it to state is a great accomplishment for a first-year wrestler, according to Coach Dean Bosman.

VanderLaan said she's "incredibly proud of [Grace's] growth and success this season." She added that both girls are satisfied with how they performed.

On Jan. 16, the team ranked ninth at the GSSC individual tournament with Alex Bosman taking first, Caleb Rozendal taking third, and Graham Goodfellow taking fifth.

The team placed fourth in the Seneca tournament.

Bosman added that seniors have done "a fantastic job of mentoring" teammates with less experience. He said that the number of new wrestlers on the team this season "will translate into a successful future."



Photo by Jill Rozendal

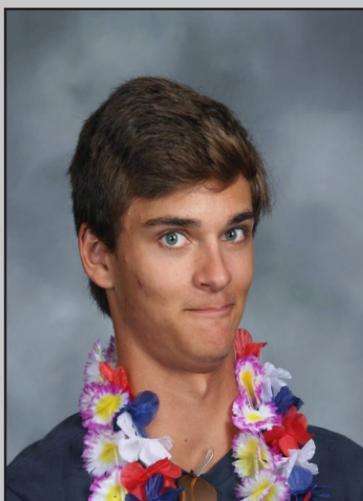
Senior Marc Rozendal gets ready to wrestle against his opponent from Highland High School on Nov 17.

### Male Athlete of the Month

Senior Tyler Barker, a floor general on the boys' varsity basketball team, is January's male Athlete of the Month.

"[Barker] has demonstrated by way of example what it means to have strong character to those around him," said coach Tom Roozeboom. "He brings his goofy nature to the team every day, which keeps his teammates loose and energized."

Roozeboom added, "His importance to this year's team is not only found in scoring and distributing the basketball but also in his defensive presence and intensity."



### Female Athlete of the Month

Sophomore Cheyenne DeJong is January's female Athlete of the Month.

DeJong was awarded the title of top rebounder in the region for averaging 8 rebounds per game.

According to girls' varsity basketball coach Lisa Blocker, DeJong "will never give you anything but her best."

"Her kind demeanor is what makes her special to her teammates," Blocker said. "Her tenacity and aggressiveness on the court is what helps drive our team to push every day."



# Editorial

## In praise of snow days

Ah, snow days! The blessing of inclement weather, the gift of weary winter weeks. Pure, bright joy after gray slush and sleet. The background of treasured memories and lovely days to come. The comfort of sleeping in after weeks of waking up before the sun.

The weatherman predicts severe weather, and snowday hope is conceived.

Newsflash! “Due to an extreme winter weather warning beginning tonight, the following school districts will be closed....” Could it be? Sure enough, the phone rings within the hour, and it’s from school. Yesss! There’s no school tomorrow; no reason to wake up at the unearthly hour of six o’clock.

The next morning, simply waking up floods your face with joy, the beaming happiness of childhood birthdays and laughing with friends. The glowing hope of the day ahead illuminates your morning routine. Instead of entering the cold, dark world, you

stay in bed, snuggling deeper into the blankets and wondering how many inches of snow cover the ground outside your window. (“I bet the snow’s piled so high we couldn’t even leave the house if we wanted!”) As

the moment; one day to relax. The day is a blank slate, an ordinary day to make extraordinary.

You run across the snow, imprinting footprints in its perfection. Watching your warm breath cloud against the

cal dunes on each side of the driveway. All of these possibilities sparkle like snowflakes as you mold them into a great day.

After thoroughly freezing your fingers, you come inside to shed a wet coat for warm blankets and hot chocolate. You watch a movie or read a book while cuddled on the couch, light illuminating the tiny dots of ice still melting in your hair. In the evening, after a delicious hot meal, you gather on the rug by the fireplace to play games like Spoons and Slap with your family.

At the end of the day, you tuck yourself into bed, exhausted from the fresh air and exercise, knowing you were productive in doing nothing at all. The day has been a gift, a pure gift of grace, and in the bleak midwinter, you are so thankful for it.

As the temperature drops, the hint of a smile comes to your lips as you drift to sleep. You reflect on your day of nothing—of everything—and fall asleep content.

Ah, snow days! The blessing of inclement weather, the gift of weary winter weeks. Pure, bright joy after gray slush and sleet.

you get up, you imagine the white, wind-dusted pine trees and the peaceful stillness of a world sleeping under a blinding blanket of possibility.

After breakfast, you enter the new world thinking: “I have one day to make the most of.” One day to focus on

frigid sky, you jokingly call yourself a dragon. And an angel, as you impress yourself on the flat expanse. The scrape of skates on ice. The taste of snowflakes on your tongue. The cold of a snowball in your palm. Sledding into a frigid wind teary-eyed. Shoveling snow into symmetri-

## The benefits of nurturing your sense of adventure

I have always been an active person, and the phrase ‘I’ll sleep when I’m dead’ definitely describes me. Anywhere and everywhere (with my family, just getting in the car, just going to school where singing karaoke of the Spice Girls “Wannabe” is a normal thing, and especially having fun with friends) I seek to be active, so much so that the motto is that if my feet are not sore and my voice isn’t gone then did I really have any fun?



Hailey Ross  
Arts Editor

Always adding more experience and adventure to one’s day-

to-day life can be very rewarding in so many ways. It can bring about happiness. Adventurous people tend to have stronger feelings of satisfaction about how they’re living their lives.

“They have a sense of flourishing,” says Frank Farley, Ph.D., a professor at Temple University and a former president of the American Psychological Association. “People who are drawn to thrill-seeking activities have a high tolerance for uncertainty. They enjoy engaging with unfamiliar things, are innately curious about the world, and creatively adapt to change instead of being fearful of it.”

Other researchers who have studied this phenomenon say that participating in something challenging is associated with happiness, and that even when the activity itself is difficult, accomplishing it brings joy.

Another good thing about keeping active is it helps with physical and mental health. Feeling lonely is common, but too much of it can harm your health more than you know. Loneliness can lead to unhealthy behaviors that cause high blood pressure, obesity, and elevated cholesterol levels—increasing your odds of early death by 26%. One study found that a long-term lack of social connections carries health risks equal to smoking 15 cigarettes a day says the website of health insurance provider Kaiser Permanente. And that’s just physical health. Spending too much time apart from others can also put your brain at increased risk for depression, cognitive decline, and even dementia. says the same website.

To nurture your sense of adventure, seek out situations that feel new and edgy to you, whether that’s taking a drawing class online or signing up for a workout you’ve never done, Farley says. Afterward, cement the experience in your mind by thinking about what you gained from it: meeting new people, learning a skill, pushing past your trepidation. Getting out and having fun is a huge part of life and nothing is worse than looking back in time and regretting all that was never done.

Oh, and if you’re looking for me, just follow your ear. I’ll be the one singing karaoke at the top of my lungs.

## the Echo

### Editor-in-chief

Olivia Oostema

### News

Grace Jania

### Feature

Aubrey Porter

### Arts

Hailey Ross

### Sports

Jessica Bergfors

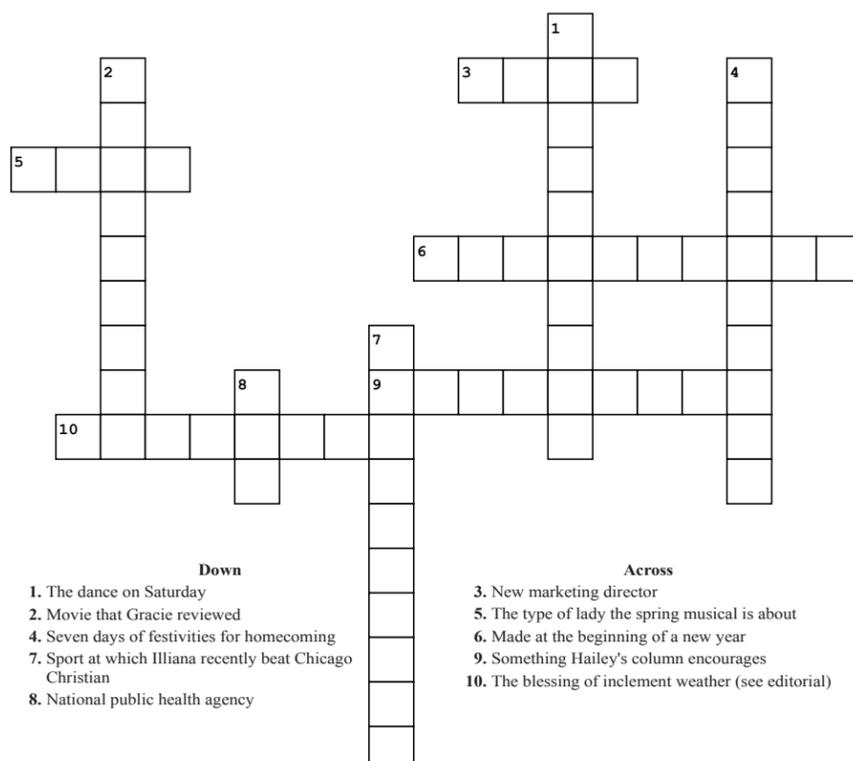
### Advisor

Jeff DeVries

Editorials, unless otherwise stated, have been written by an editor and reflect the opinion of the majority of the Echo staff. Opinions expressed are not necessarily that of the administration, faculty, or student organizations.

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

## Enjoy an Echo themed crossword puzzle!



### Down

1. The dance on Saturday
2. Movie that Gracie reviewed
4. Seven days of festivities for homecoming
7. Sport at which Illiana recently beat Chicago Christian
8. National public health agency

### Across

3. New marketing director
5. The type of lady the spring musical is about
6. Made at the beginning of a new year
9. Something Hailey’s column encourages
10. The blessing of inclement weather (see editorial)

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