

# Students take on Washington D.C. on Close Up program



Photo by Jeff White  
*Indiana Senator Todd Young talks to the group about his experience on the Senate, as well as his favorite parts about working in government.*

Lydia O’Riley  
Reporter

Illiana’s annual Close Up trip was held from Saturday Nov. 26 to Saturday Dec. 3. Close Up is a program that allows students to go to Washington D.C., for a week and interact with other students from different schools across the country while also getting an inside view of how the American government works. Illiana has been sending students on Close Up since 1984. Eight students who underwent a lengthy application process took part in this Close Up trip. Each student

had to write an essay on why he or she would be a good candidate and had to submit to an interview process where they had to think on their feet. The interview allowed social studies teachers to see how well applicants could discuss topics and communicate with others. Mr. Jeff White, the history teacher who led the trip, said Illiana sends students to Close Up because “It gives our kids exposure to other students around the country, so they get to see some of the inner workings of the government at a personal level.”

The students experienced field studies, workshops, sightseeing, Capitol Hill day, a theater night, a full day in Colonial Williamsburg, and much more. Junior Alex Tambrini, who attended this year’s Close Up trip, said his favorite part was going to the Korean War Memorial and seeing all the names around it. Tambrini also explained that he applied to Close Up to “expand his efficacy of politics and grow closer to the people around him,” and he mentioned how he learned to never “[make assumptions about] people based on their appearances.”

# Students light candles, sing songs at annual Christmas Praise Crowd

Danielle Rancifer  
News Editor

On Dec. 9, the Praise Crowd Committee held its annual Christmas Praise Crowd. This year’s Praise Crowd theme is “Marvelous Grace” which is based upon the Marvel franchise. The event took place after the boys varsity basketball game, and included classic Christmas songs like “Christmas Day,” “He Shall Reign,” and “O Holy Night.”

Praise Crowd Committee sponsor Rachel Drost spoke about the “marvelous” mercy of Christ, and showed a clip from the film “Black Panther” which was meant to demonstrate the mercy that God showed to people by sending Jesus to earth. She ended her message by encouraging students to place Jesus as the forefront of their mind during the Christmas seasons, and to be thankful for the amazing mercy he has shown all people, even before they knew

they needed it. Senior Caleb Rozendal said, “I really liked the message because it made me feel good and it was able to remind me what’s important during the holiday season.” The evening ended with everyone in attendance singing Silent Night and lighting candles. Sophomore Heather Boss said, “I really enjoyed lighting the candles and singing at the end, it was just a good ending to the night.”



Photo by Emily Hillegonds  
*Theo and Eowyn both enjoy life at home, happy and healthy.*

# Hillegonds returns from maternity leave

Emily Bantsolas  
Reporter

After starting her maternity leave early and facing an unexpected setback with one of the twins, Mrs. Hillegonds has returned to Illiana. Mrs. Hillegonds began her maternity leave in September, just over a month before planned. Hillegonds explained, “My doctor told me I was too sick to keep teaching. Also, I was in constant pain and falling asleep at my desk, which is not a good way to be a teacher.” After spending a lot of time relaxing on the couch and swimming, Hillegonds gave birth to twins Theo and Eowyn on Sept. 28. Not long after Theo and Eo-

wyn were born, however, Theo became ill and had to be taken to the emergency room where he spent eleven days in the NICU. “He was not gaining weight, so things were shutting down,” Hillegonds said. “He couldn’t keep his temperature up, so he was cold all the time. He would puke whenever he would eat, so we had to take him to the emergency room, which was rough. It was not fun at all.” Theo did recover and is now doing well. Hillegonds returned from her leave when school resumed the Monday after Thanksgiving break. While she was away, Hillegonds said she missed seeing her co-workers and students every day, but she did enjoy watching the twins grow each day.



Members of the Praise Crowd Committee and other instrumentalists sing “O Holy Night.”  
Photo courtesy of Abby West



# Overcoming Struggles with Dance

Many people know I'm a competitive dancer, but what they don't know are the struggles I've been through to be the dancer I am today. At two, I started off with ballet classes. That developed into a love for it and at six, I switched to a different studio for better training. In seventh grade, I danced for my middle school team. After experiencing severe bullying, I transferred to another school, and competed on their team. I endured an injury that



**Kailyda Anderson**  
Co-Sports Editor

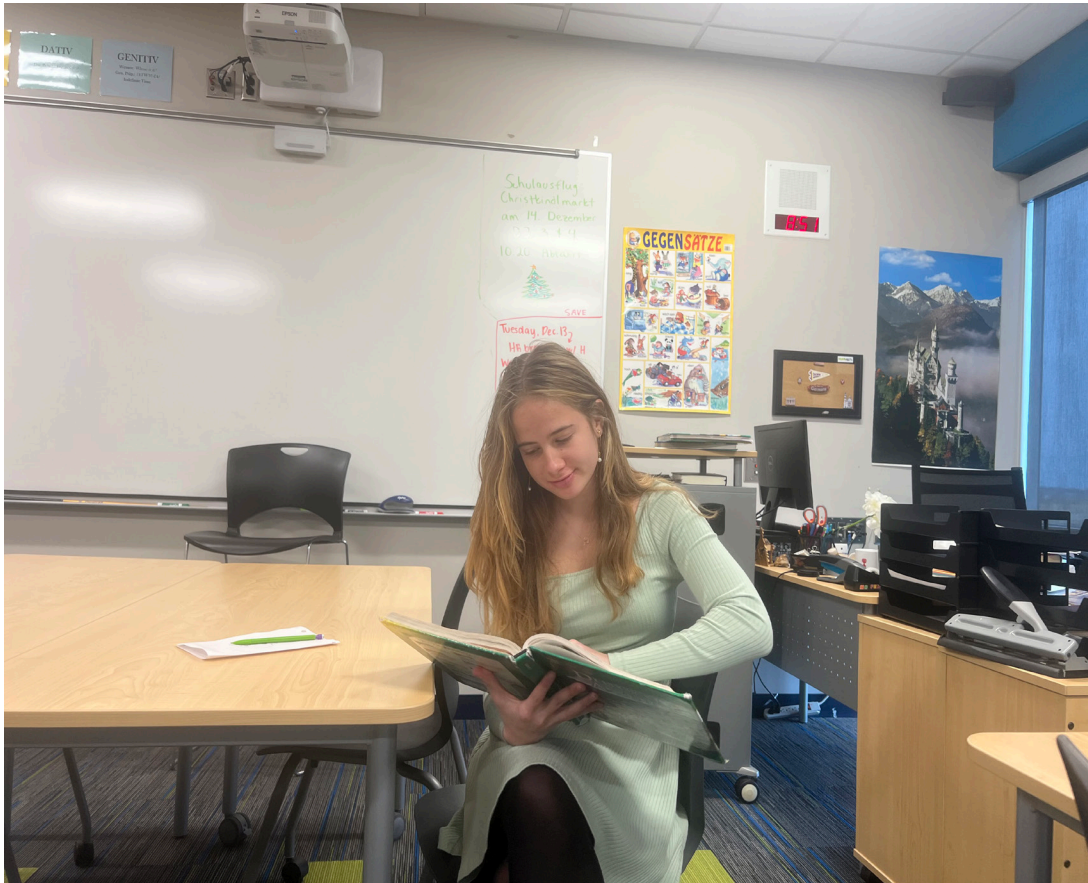
year to my foot, causing me to be out for the rest of the season. What I didn't realize was that not dancing for a long time resulted in me having to relearn everything. It was difficult for me to accept, but I pushed myself, and eventually regained all mobility. I made my old high school's dance team my freshman year. That was when my struggles began. I never felt good enough. I thought the girls that surrounded me were prettier, skinnier, and better than me.

I wanted to be like them. I started working out excessively, skipping meals, and practiced everyday so I could be like everyone else on the team. I developed an eating disorder which was extremely hard to overcome. Along with other struggles I was going through, I was diagnosed with depression and anxiety, which made it even harder for me to be motivated to dance. I experienced another foot injury that year, leading to another season of not competing. Not being able to dance was something I hated more than anything.

After my foot healed, I began my sophomore year on the same team. That year was even worse for me and my struggles. I eventually stopped trying to be the best dancer I could be. I wanted to quit because I felt like there was no reason to keep going. I felt like everyone hated me, and I didn't want to be around people who made me feel bad about myself. After my sophomore year, I quit the team because of my mental health. It wasn't a good environment, and I lost my love for dance.

I thought my dance career was over until my mom told me about a new studio she heard about from a friend. After visiting twice and starting private lessons, I enrolled. As soon as I walked into the studio, it felt like home. No one judged me for the way I looked, my past, and welcomed me with open arms. Since then, I've learned so many new things, and even learned a lot about myself.

Looking back, I realize this was the plan God made for me. I am beyond grateful for the path he has set me on. I couldn't do anything without having God in my life. He's helped me overcome all of my struggles and provides me with strength every day. No matter what I face in the future, I know he has the right plan for me, and whatever I go through will make me stronger.



Josephine Jullie studies in German three

*Photos By Danielle Rancifer*

## Illiana intergrates more cultures

**Giannia O'Neal-Schultz**  
Reporter

Illiana has an international student program that has welcomed so many students from all over the world. Illiana is a place where different cultures are embraced and where students can be comfortable in their own skin.

Josephine Jullie is an Illiana junior and an international student from France. Jullie is from the North of France. She used to live in the city close to the Palace of Versailles where the March on Versailles happened during the French Revolution.

Jullie said, "I wanted to

study abroad because I wanted to break my routine and discover something new. I especially wanted to come to Illiana because it is a Christian school and there are mostly Catholic and non religious schools in France. I want a Christian education because I think it is important for me to have good morals and to be a good person and a Christian education can help me do that."

"Illiana is very different from French schools," said Jullie. "Schools in France are more old fashioned, and we really show respect to our teachers more. At Illiana the students are close with their teachers, but in France the teachers

don't have close bonds with their students. In France when a teacher arrives at the class you have to stand up and speak to them in a formal way."

"I like Illiana because of the many different extra curricular activities like winter running; there are a lot of activities we can participate in and it's really cool," Jullie said.

Being in the USA has also opened Jullie to new holidays such as Thanksgiving. She said, "My favorite American food is Thanksgiving dishes because we don't have that in France, and my favorite French food is Raclette and Crepes."

## Winter Running Club takes off

**Angelica Voyles**  
Reporter

As we reach the month of December, where the days grow shorter and colder, Winter Running Club comes for those who are interested.

German Teacher, Luke Fennema, who also coaches Cross Country and Track and Field, loves the club himself. In fact, he and Deb Top first created this club 10 years ago. The club used to have students run 1-2 days a week, but now he leads runners every Monday-Thursday.

Fennema said, "Winter Running Club is for all," not just for trained runners. Runners go at their own pace. Fennema also provides healthy snacks at the end of the runs.

Sophomore Al-

exa Mercuri is a consistent runner in the club, this year being her first as a part of it. The main reason why she enjoys Winter Running Club so much is because it gets her fit, and she just enjoys her time overall. She is able to hang out with her friends and enjoy Fennema's snacks at the end.

Senior Aliza Nelson has been going to the club since her freshman year.

"I really love it," Nelson says. She loves running in the cold and says that "Herr Fennema is a great coach and part of why it's so fun."

Nelson would love to see more people find the joy she's found in the Winter Running Club. She added, "We invite all people to join. We'd love to have you."



New lights hang up in the Arc

*Photo By Kayla Bosman*

## New LED's light up the Arc

**Tristen Bell**  
Reporter

New LED lights now hang above the stage in the Arc where they will brighten the state and enhance visual effects during plays and future events.

The Drama Department acquired the lights in December of 2017, originally purchasing them from the Star Plaza Theatre of Merrillville after it closed.

According to Mr. Jim Kamphuis, the technical director for the Drama Department and the person who hung the lights, they were meant to be part of lighting

## Hot Chocolate returns this winter season



**Sophia Oostema**  
Reporter

Hot chocolate, a limited-edition winter treat, is back at Illiana's Common Grounds for \$2.50 and students are more than excited about its arrival.

Illiana Christian's hot chocolate is one of the most popular items sold at Common Grounds. After buying a cup of hot chocolate, there are different topping options to add into your beverage. Add-ons for the hot chocolate include whipped cream, chocolate syrup, and peppermint.

Grace Van Ek, a junior, says she likes the hot chocolate because you can add peppermint toppings.

Lines at Commons are long during break time, full of students and staff waiting for a warm cup of hot chocolate.

Van Ek stated, "Illiana hot chocolate is so good because it helps warm you up in the winter."

system in the ARC from the beginning, but there was some confusion because the ARC actually has two different lighting systems, and in one of them, the electronics were not wired properly for the LED lights. Only recently did he discover that the other system was wired correctly.

The installation of the new LED lights offer more diverse colors which can help set the tone for different scenes that need it.

"This is going to change how we light shows for the next few years at least," said Kamphuis, who is excited for new lighting effects he'll be able to achieve in "Lion King, Jr." this spring already.



# Crown Point Schools get system hacked, raises questions about ICHS computer security

Korina Johnson

Reporter

Crown Point High School closed down due to a network outage and possibly compromised network on Monday, Nov. 28. This raises concern about security regarding networks at Illiana and if proper precautions are being set in place to prevent these

things from happening.

At Illiana, multiple precautions were set in place to prevent compromise of the network from happening. However, this doesn't mean it isn't a concern and it isn't something that is kept in mind. There is always a chance network problems can happen.

"No network is perfect," said Al Dykshorn, IT direc-

tor at Illiana. "It could happen here." Just because nothing has happened yet, doesn't mean it won't. Proper precautions need to be taken to reduce the chance of threats to our network. The school has set a few precautions in place to prevent such things from happening. "Firewalls, anti-virus, and even Go Guardian help block

infected sites from being visited," said Dykshorn. With precautions set in place, while it may not completely get rid of the possibility of compromise, it helps lower the chances of things like hackings happening. However, just because precautions are set in place, doesn't mean our chances are at zero and doesn't mean stu-

dents and teachers shouldn't have concerns.

"It is definitely a concern that anybody who's running a computer network of any type should be thinking about," said Dykshorn. "There are definitely improvements to be made; security is one of the things I'm going to focus on a lot this coming summer."

# Illiana's most famous couple prepares to make final exit

Kayla Bosman

Reporter

Math teacher Rob Lagerwey and Bible teacher Mary Lagerwey have announced their plans to retire from teaching after this school year.

The Lagerweys both joined the Illiana family in 1996. For those who haven't taken humanities and therefore have not had the pleasure of hearing the love story between Illiana's math and Bible teacher as told by the Bible teacher, they met in the love capital of the world, New Jersey. Before entering Illiana's halls in Lansing, they taught together at Eastern Christian. They weren't always a package deal, though. Mr. Lawgerwey started there first in 1979 and met Mary Boerman, an Illiana gradu-

ate, at his home. He said "I bought a house with my wife's sister and brother-in-law, a two-family house and then when she came to visit her sister. That was how I met her."

Though both satisfied in New Jersey, the lure of family drew them to Illinois. Mr. Lawgerwey says it was because "Both of us have more family here, we started having kids and thought it would be nice to be closer to family."

While Mrs Lagerway agreed with her husband, she added, "The short answer is God.... We were not looking to leave [New Jersey]. We were not dissatisfied; we loved our jobs there. It just happened. Doors opened. [Illiana was willing to] offer us two part time jobs. The timing will work out great."

They have made Illiana their home these past 28 years, and their best memories include coaching the Illiana math team to numerous regional victories(their best being 8th in-state), directing several musicals and plays and making many amazing memories with the staff members they call friends.

On his 66th birthday Mr. Lawgerway announced their retirement. Their future plans include taking care of the new grandchildren and traveling. Specifically to the only state Mr. Lawgerwey hasn't seen, Hawaii.

Lagerwey said of Illiana, "It's been a wonderful place, and that's why I've stayed here this long. I'm going to miss the students. I'm going to miss the wonderful faculty but it's time for a new stage of life."



The Lagerweys pose in front of their home in South Holland. They have taught together at Illiana for over 27 years.



Senior Anneka Zylstra poses with family and teacher Rick Veldman

Courtesy of Illiana Facebook

# Reindeer Run attracts more than 100 supporters

Kelsee Smit

Reporter

The first-ever 2.2-mile Reindeer Run on Dec. 10, was, according to Development Director Cassie Siersema, a fun and successful way to get the community involved with Illiana's fundraising for phase two in the Illiana building project. All participants received a Santa hat from the sewing class, snacks from the food and nutrition class, and ornaments made by the STEM class.

Mr. Veldman dressed as Santa

and cheered on all the participants. This Reindeer Run started with music from the pep band and then ended with food and fellowship. There were hot beverages, muffins, cookies, fudge, and fruit available to all the participants in the commons.

There was a large turnout of students, staff, and people from the community. Participant Abby West said, "I had a great time being able to walk and talk with my teammates. I think it was a fun way for people from the community to get together for a fundraiser but also a

good morning with friends."

Another participant Karina Mulder said, "The girl's basketball team walked together and even though it was a little cold, it was a great time supporting Illiana and spending time with the team."

The three departments that were involved in the run are the departments that will benefit the most from phase two with the addition of the family and consumer science room, expansion of the STEM department, and the music departments with a band and choir rooms.

# Inflation dampens holiday spirit in some

Sophia Oostema

Reporter

Higher inflation rates may make Christmas presents beneath the tree look more scarce this year and take a toll on families' bank accounts.

As the holiday season is approaching, many people are scrambling to buy gifts for family and friends. According to the U.S. Labor Department in November, the annual inflation rate was up 7.7% over the last 12 months, reflecting higher prices on gas for Christmas travels, food for family get-togethers, and presents for loved ones. Although some people are going to reduce their Christmas allowance, many people are not.

Sophomore Joy Ramsey believes that individuals are not going to decrease

spending this year for Christmas.

Ramsey stated, "If someone really wants to buy a certain item, they are going to, whether the price is higher or not."

Junior Jenna Landman stated that she was not going to cut back on spending for the Christmas season.

Landman does not believe that higher inflation rates will affect the way she shops and spends for the holidays.

Landman said, "I think people are going to buy the same amount of stuff regardless of inflation."

Junior Kaylin Buczkowski has a different view on inflation and the holidays. She will be spending less and will be more aware when buying gifts.

"I'm going to be more cautious with spending this year," Buczkowski stated.



# Creative Christmas traditions

## An inside look into Christmas traditions around the world

Cameron Evers

Feature Editor

Around the world, every culture celebrates Christmas differently. Whether they enjoy different meals, games, stories, or decorations, every country makes the Christmas season unique to them.

A rather scary tradition in Icelandic folklore is the story of the yule cat. The story is told that if a child has not received new clothes to wear before Christmas the rather vicious Yule Cat will sneak over and eat the child. The origins of this story are unknown, but it is rumored to have started as a way to get children to complete

more chores. Children were rewarded for their chores with a new pair of clothes, saving them from the Yule cat. The lazy children who didn't do their chores, didn't receive a new pair of clothes making them subject to the cat's wrath.

December 24 is commonly known as Christmas eve, but for KFC in Japan, it is known as the highest grossing day year after year. KFC's "Kentucky for Christmas" marketing campaign struck gold in Japan during the 1970's with many families continuing the fried chicken dinner tradition today. The original idea was launching the sale of a basket of chicken paired with

a bottle of wine. The goal was to appeal to the younger and older generations in one buy. Colonel Sanders greets his customers outside of the restaurants dressed as Santa and advertising the special Christmas menu items.

Oaxaca México holds a unique Christmas tradition on December 23 called "Night of the Radishes." The tradition dates back to 1897 when city mayor, Francisco Vasconcelos, started a radish carving competition in one of the local Christmas markets to celebrate local Mexican agriculture. The tradition lives on today and many people compete to show off their best radish creations.

One of the more heart warming Christmas traditions is found in Poland. Many Poles leave an empty chair and palace setting at their table for Christmas dinner in case of an "unexpected visitor." This place setting is left open in case a weary traveler knocks on the door. This custom is a reminder that no one should be alone on Christmas. While this tradition's origins are unknown, the Poles pride themselves on their hospitality.

Instead of putting the Halloween decorations away, embrace this Ukrainian tradition of decorating the family Christmas tree with spider webs! The origin of this tradition is from a story of a widow and her



Photo courtesy of Newsweek

Colonel Sanders gets dressed up as Santa Claus to welcome the big Christmas Eve crowds found in Japan

children who lived in a very modest hut. They wanted to embrace the Christmas spirit so they dragged in a pine tree from outside to serve as their Christmas tree. The widow and her children were still disappointed with their barren tree but couldn't afford to decorate it. When they went to bed on Christmas eve, the spider heard their cries. They woke up to a beautiful tree covered in elegant webs. Now this tradition is celebrated by using spider web ornaments. It is now believed that these webs will bring good fortune in the upcoming year.

Being on the naughty or nice list is a very big deal in Austria, not because of

the fear of getting a lump of coal, but because of the fear of seeing Krampus, the scary version of Santa. Children hope to be visited by St. Nick, but if they are naughty the half-man, half-goat named Krampus will come and hit children with a tree branch, kidnap them, or even drag them into hell. That lump of coal sure sounds more appealing after hearing that. This story has been around for hundreds of years and has origins in folklore from Austria's Alpine region. Krampus is said to come on December 5, the day known as Krampusnacht. Many Austrian celebrate this with "Krampus runs" where people dress up as Krampus



Photo courtesy of Food service

This is a raddish carving of people and dancers celebrating "The Night of the raddishes"

# Illiana students share their favorite holiday traditions

Cameron Evers

Feature Editor

Every family celebrates Christmas differently. Some celebrate with gingerbread house competitions, special tree decorations, cookie decorating, singing Christmas carols, or maybe watching ELF for the tenth year in a row. In a recent Echo survey, students responded with the traditions their family follows to make their Christmas special.

For the Montalvo family, they participate in the annual "chicken under the tree." Senior, Hailey Montalvo, said this tradition started when her grandpa was caught eating chicken under the Christmas tree. Now her family celebrates by eating chicken and participating in a grab bag.

The Helmus family cel-

brates by going to breakfast on Christmas Eve at Caraway Cafe with her extended family. Junior, Abby Helmus, credits her great grandma for starting this tradition. She said it's a great way to reunite with family from out of town and enjoy some hot breakfast. Helmus said, "I really appreciate my great grandma for doing this. Christmas Eve wouldn't feel right without it."

Sophomore, Levi Alons, celebrates Christmas with his family by driving out to his grandparents' house in Iowa. When he gets there he reunites with his cousins by riding go-karts and a UTV. Alons hopes for snow every year because then his grandpa ties the UTV to the hood of an old car and whips him and his cousins through the cornfields.

Sophomore Hannah Hammer enjoys her family's annual homemade ravioli and seafood during the Christmas season. Sophomore Tess Hensley travels to South Carolina during the holidays and also enjoys seafood because her family participates in a shrimp boil.

Over five participants recorded that their family uses a pickle ornament on their family Christmas tree. This tradition may seem weird for some, but this is how the game goes. The pickle is hidden in the tree and the first one to find it gets to open their presents first. This pickle tradition has strong German roots, and has made its way into many of our Illiana families' homes.



Photo courtesy of World Market

The German tradition of hanging a pickle ornament on the Christmas tree has made its way into many students homes



# Where is the peace?

Cameron Evers  
Feature Editor

Seasonal songs and hymns can be heard in every supermarket, church service, radio station, but for a sea-son preaching about peace on Earth, we have to ask, “where is religious persecution, and violence this mes-sage doesn’t resonate with Earth’s state. This Christmas sea-son, we should take a step back and remember countries that are dealing with unrest and pray for peace during this holiday season and beyond.

## Tension in South Sudan:

Due to fighting and gang violence in South Sudan, many citizens’ lives have been put at risk. Most of the fighting stems from political tension and tension between ethnic groups. People are frequently reported as missing from their villages and many women have been subject to sexual assault and rape. Many citizens have also been caught in the cross fires of the fighting and have been killed. Children have also been forced to join the fighting. Humanitarian assistance was offered to the country, but they denied.

- 1. Pray for safety for children benign forced to fight
- 2. Pray for the women and children who have endured sexual assault
- 3. Pray for a revival in South Sudan’s government and an end to the corruption

## War in Ukraine:

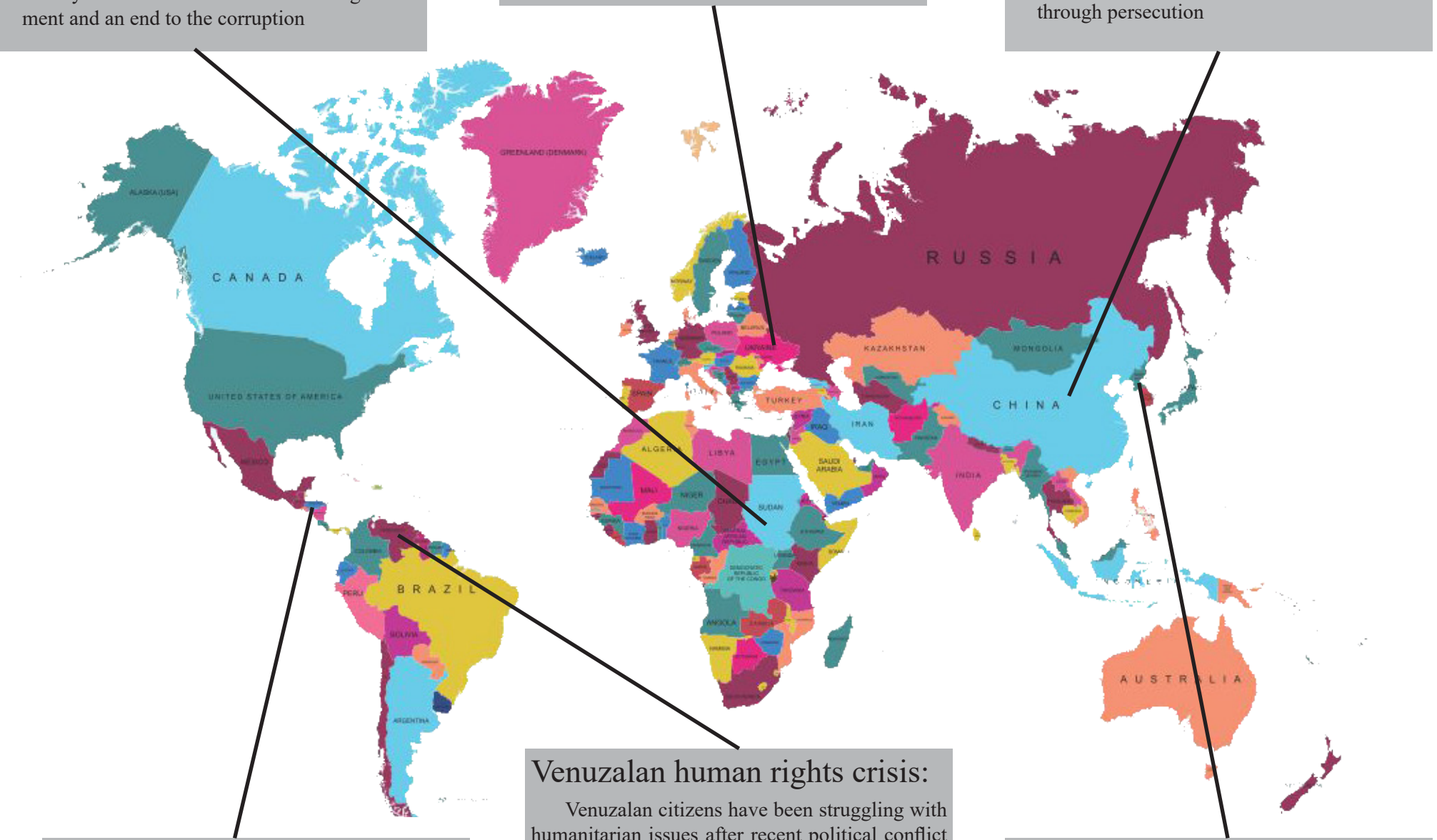
After Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, many Ukrainian citizens have had to live in fear for their health and safety. Food and water supply has become scarce and the health system has reduced capacity. The fleeing of millions of Ukrainian citizens has led to them living in over-crowded environments reducing good hygiene and health. In addition to the harsh physical effects of the war, these events can have lasting effects on citizens mentally such as anxiety, depression, and PTSD.

- 1. Pray for an end to the war
- 2. Pray for safety for the people of Ukraine
- 3. Pray for improved physical and mental health while living through war

## Christians in China:

Christians in China have been subject to religious persecution for years. China’s Communist Party has been involved in destroying churches and removing public images of crosses. Muslims and Buddhists have also been subjected to the CCP’s harsh steps to control religion. All three groups have had religious buildings destroyed by the CCP and have been “encouraged” into attending reeducation camps where they are forced to renounce their religion under harsh conditions.

- 1. Pray for protection for those dealing with the harsh effects of the CCP
- 2. Pray for more religious freedom and improved human rights
- 3. Pray for boldness for Christians living through persecution



## Violence in Honduras:

Honduras has been struggling with gang violence in rural ares for many years putting children, women, and members of the LGBT community especially at risk of sexual abuse. Honduras also has one of the highest youth homicide rates often relating to the presence of gangs. Citizens have been afraid to stand up against crime and violation of human rights for fear of death threats and violence. Honduras’s justice system has been known to turn a blind eye to some of these issues. Journalists are particularly at risk in this country because of the power they hold in speaking truth about crime and corruption.

- 1. Pray for those affected by gang violence
- 2. Pray for an improved justice system
- 3. Pray for families who have fallen victim to homicide

## Venezuelan human rights crisis:

Venezuelan citizens have been struggling with humanitarian issues after recent political conflict and decades of poor economic policies. Citizens have been dealing with severe inflation, famine, and a failing healthcare system. The country also ranks as one of the countries with the highest nationwide crime rates. These humanitarian issues have caused many children to lack shelter and protection. Children in transit are especially at risk of being subject to criminal activity or being separated from their families. The lack of work has forced many children into child labor and many girls have sadly been trafficked to sex work.

- 1. Pray for an improvement in resource availability and for wise and compassionate political and economic leaders
- 2. Pray for the families who have been forced to separate
- 3. Pray for the children forced into harsh labor and sex work

## North Korea’s missile threats:

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has been working to create a more and more threatening nuclear force. The country recently tested its newest ICBM, intercontinental ballistic missile, which is North Korea’s biggest missile yet and rumored to travel up to 9,320 miles. North Korea has launched at least 88 ballistic and other missiles this year which is more than any year previous. The country is using its growing nuclear arsenal to threaten South Korea, Japan, and the United States. Meanwhile, the North Korean people continue to live under oppression and suffer from physical want. Many countries are fearful of what North Korea’s power will mean for them.

- 1. Pray to end the corruption in North Korea’s government
- 2. Pray for wisdom for other countries’ leaders as North Korea continues its saber rattling
- 3. Pray for boldness and protection for the Christians in North Korea



# Top 5 Christmas movies



Photo courtesy of tvguide.com

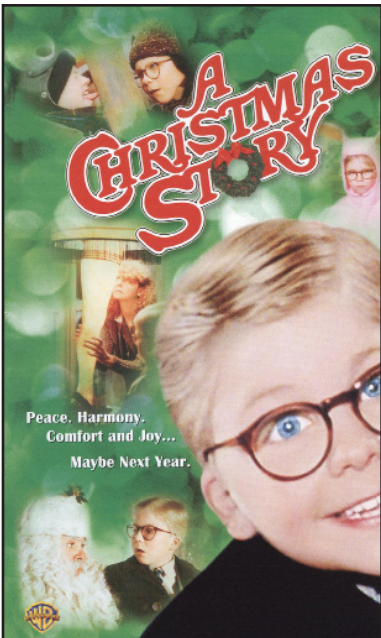


Photo courtesy of bestbuy.com



Photo courtesy of tvguide.com

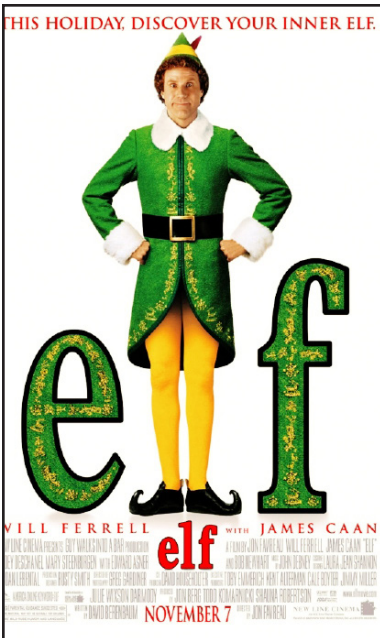


Photo courtesy of imdb.com



Photo courtesy of amazon.com

## 1. Home Alone

Lucas VanderWoude  
Arts Editor

You can't go wrong with this Christmas classic. My family has a tradition of watching it every year, and even though I have seen it 10+ times, it never gets old. My personal favorite scene is when Kevin tricks the pizza delivery man by pausing and playing the Angels with Filthy Souls movie at the exact right time. I mean, that's just genius.

## 2. A Christmas Story

My dad's family had the tradition of watching this one every year, so it's only fair that I include this one to inform others about it. This movie's odd format consists of a series of vignettes narrated by Jean Shepherd about his life. Yes, they are slightly exaggerated, but they are all very believable. Ralphie and his parents are played very well, which makes the movie very relatable to older and younger audiences alike.

## 3. It's a Wonderful Life

This one has been around for a long time, so if you haven't seen it yet, you have no excuse. I'm just kidding, but seriously. Go watch it. This movie follows the story of George Bailey, who attempts to commit suicide but is saved by his guardian angel, Clarence, who helps him see how valuable he is to his community. Our school also did a radio version of it in place of the 2020 fall play, so be sure to listen to that as well!

## 4. Elf

I actually watched this movie for the first time a couple years ago, and when I did, I unabashedly laughed my head off. Will Ferrell shines in this one as a human taken in by Santa and his elves. However, when he finds out that he is a human, he leaves the North Pole tries to find his real family. As he does this, his infectious love for the spirit of Christmas helps everyone truly realize what Christmas means.

## 5. How the Grinch Stole Christmas

No, no, no, not the most recent one with Benedict Cumberbatch! And not the Jim Carrey version either! I'm talking about the original one made in 1966, the one that follows the book so faithfully that the script is literally copied from it. No modern version will ever beat this one, and I will die on this hill. The magic of Dr. Seuss' book about a grumpy creature who learns the spirit of Christmas is still alive today, so I'm asking all of you to watch this version.

# Top 10 things to do this Christmas break

Lucas VanderWoude  
Arts Editor

### 1. Make Christmas Cookies

This is a great baking project to do with your family, and all you need is dough. some Christmas-themed cookie cutters, frosting, and an oven.

### 2. Go Sledding

This one obviously can only be done when there is snow on the ground, but even if it doesn't snow for the entirety of Christmas break, it still doesn't hurt to be prepared.

### 3. Go to a Christmas Concert

There are so many different options for this that all you have to do is pick one (my family's personal favorite is Tower Brass in Chicago).

### 4. Watch Christmas movies

If you need recommendations, see above.

### 5. Read a Good Book

This one is for my fellow book-lovers. I know you're out there.

### 6. Listen to Christmas Music

I don't care if it's Mariah Carey



Photo courtesy of Mom.com



Photo courtesy of bestproducts.com

or Trans-Siberian Orchestra. Just find your favorites and get in the mood.

### 7. Make Coffee Filter Snowflakes

It's super easy. Just get a coffee filter, cut a pattern into it, unfold it, and voila- a snowflake is born.

### 8. Go Shopping

Still haven't found that perfect gift for your family member or friend? Well, you have two weeks off, so you've got plenty of time.

### 9. Study For Exams

I know most of you aren't going to follow up on this, and I probably won't either, probably being the key word here. However, every little bit helps, even if it's only a couple hours. Or minutes. Or seconds. Or never.

### 10. Celebrate Jesus' Birth

Wait, I almost forgot the whole point of this! This holiday sometimes gets a little too commercialized, so be sure to remember why we have a break to celebrate our Savior coming down to earth.



# World Cup fever sweeps through Illiana's halls

Kailyda Anderson  
Sports Editor

World Cup fever has swept through the halls of Illiana. Students catch games on Chromebooks and phones, and occasionally they even see them during class.

As soon as the World Cup started, students and teachers started watching. Ms. Sara Johnson even allowed students to watch on a big screen during her study hall periods in the media

center.

Juniors Nolan Flipse, Zander Weemhoff, Josh Turkstra, and senior Daniel DeBoer have even gone home during the school day to watch the games in the comfort of their living rooms. Those that couldn't go home have enjoyed watching at school.

Zach Davids, junior, said he watched the USA game in German, and other games in study hall. "Most teachers don't mind when I ask to watch on my chrome-

book during freetime," Davids stated. While Flipse and Davids were at a soccer tournament in Florida, they still continued to watch.

"We're very dedicated to this and can't wait to see who wins," Flipse said. Flipse also stated that Mr. Vermeulen even projects games on the board sometimes. Another teacher very dedicated to the World Cup is Mr. Gorter. He says Brazil has a pretty good chance of winning this year, and is excited to see how the game plays out.



Photo by Jim Kamphuis

Senior Cameron Evers drives to the hoop in a home game against Morgan Township on Nov. 8.

## Lady Vikings on roll in conference play

Kyla Bennett  
Sports Editor

Illiana's girls' basketball team has been improving a lot this year. Their coaches Denise VanRyn and Raleigh West are always encouraging the girls to strive harder. They have many games ahead of

them to win in the season, but their most important games so far have been all of the conference games because they won each game.

"Though we don't have the best record yet, we can learn from our mistakes to keep improving," said senior Abby West. "I have a lot of faith in us."

The team has practice anytime they don't have a game. They start with fast paced drills, then run through plays, play pretend games, and end practice with a shooting game.

"This has to be one of my favorite seasons out of all my four years of being on the team," said senior Kaitlin Dykstra.



Photo by Jill Rozendal

Freshman Renee McClenahan drives her opponent's head into the mat at Illiana's first ever home girls wrestling match on Dec. 9.

## Wrestling teams continue to improve

Kyla Bennett  
Sports Editor

**Girls**

Illiana's girls' wrestling team has been improving. This season, the team has a lot of new wrestlers. Each day at practice, the team starts with running and stretching drills, a team discussion, and practice drills with coach Matt Vanderlaan. Their most important meet so far has been the 2nd tournament where each team player got a pin, achieving a victory by holding an opponent's shoulders on the wrestling mat for a period of time three seconds.

"Though there is room for improvement, the team gets better and better the more they practice," said sophomore Amy Bosman.

**Boys**

Illiana's boys' wrestling team, which has a lot of new wrestlers, is continuing to grow more as a team. On a typical day at practice the wrestlers stretch, run, practice wrestling, partner up and then learn new moves for their next tournament with their coach Dean Bosman.

Caleb Roozendal, who has been on the wrestling team for four years, mentioned that "the new wrestlers are really continuing to learn, but it's good to see them grow in their skills." Their most important competition so far was their meet at Calumet, the first tournament of the season, where they won.

## Boys basketball battles injuries

Danielle Rancifer  
News Editor

The varsity boys basketball team has had quite the season, from new team leaders, to dealing with injuries, and overall team dynamics.

After winning the Greater South Shore Conference last year, this year's boys varsity team has high expectations. As of December 11th, the team has a record of 1-2.

The team lost a number of important seniors such as Ian VanBeek, Tyler Barker, Adam Gibson, and Adam Walters, but it has also gained some new players such as juniors Dylan Polak and Isaac Sherwood.

Senior co-captain Kevin Corcoran, who has been on varsity

for two years, said about the departed seniors, "I feel like a lot of that leadership is lost; we had some really strong players, and it's been hard adjusting without them."

Coach Tom Roozeboom explained some difficulties the team is facing in the young season. He said, "We are working through injury right now; we dealt with it last year too, but it was a little later in the season, so the guys are trying to navigate and deal with that right now, and so are we [coaches]."

Senior Cody DeYong, a returning senior and a leader on the team, said, "In practice my goal is to try and push everyone, communicate, and encourage people to push as hard as they can."

### Female Athlete of the Month

Faith Van Ryn, a senior at Illiana Christian and member of the girls' varsity basketball team has been outstanding this season. Coach Van Ryn mentioned that "she is always smiling and works hard giving 100%."

Faith is a scholar athlete and has been on high honors every quarter while at Illiana. Faith represents Illiana with a cheerful heart, a competitive spirit and has been recognized for having good sportsmanship.



### Female Athlete of the Month

Taylor Stasny, junior, has accomplished so much as a competitive swimmer. December 8th-11th, Taylor attended nationals in Greensburrow, North Carolina. Her peers created posters that were put all over the school, and Illiana's student body was very supportive.

Some teachers broadcasted the meet on screens during class. She placed 1st in her 100 meter freestyle heat. She will be advancing to summer junior olympics is southern California next June. She has worked very hard to get where she is today, and Illiana is proud.



# Editorial

## Spreading awareness for those who struggle during Christmastime

In the opening line of her song, “Christmas Tree Farm,” Taylor Swift explains what her Christmas season consists of. She writes, “My winter nights are taken up by static / Stress, and holiday shopping traffic.” Most of us can relate to this statement since Christmas brings a lot of chaos surrounding gift-giving and party-planning, leaving little room to consider other things.

What slips our minds most often is that there are people with bigger things to worry about, especially during this time of year. While we continue to let our minds overflow with constant anxiety over making Christmas perfect, we should shift our minds to those with inevitable problems, like the elderly, the lonely and grieving, the less fortunate, and the mentally and physically ill.

Growing old is something we know is going to happen, yet probably don’t fully comprehend. Imagine going through the motions of the holidays, like being grateful at Thanksgiving, to celebrating

and appreciating the excitement of Christmas, all while missing the presence of some of your friends and relatives. As you get older, those closest to you, like your best friends, spouse, and parents trickle off, meaning that there is a possibility of

of a loved one. Remembering past Christmases spent with them versus without them now can be heartbreaking.

Simply walking down the streets of downtown Chicago can put things into perspective for many. During Christmas

make the holiday season even harder to endure is mental illness. Not being able to explain how you’re feeling to others, especially when the media makes you think that you should constantly be happiest during the holidays, is frustrating and lonely. This holiday string of Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Years can turn into a drag, and no one is there to fully understand your situation.

True, we don’t have a way to fix these problems. There is no Christmas magic that makes the problems go away. But we can be a faithful presence to those for whom this season is difficult. Like Christ, who left the comforts of heaven for a stable to be with those in need, we can turn our gaze outward. We can look not just to friends and family but to those who stand in sore need. We can hurt with those who are hurting and who need words of comfort and encouragement. We can serve like Jesus.

And in doing so, we just might rediscover the real joy of Christmas.

We can be a faithful presence to those for whom this season is difficult.

you spending Christmas alone, even possibly without being in the comfort of your own home. Nursing homes can be some of the loneliest places for the old folks, especially around the “most wonderful time of the year.”

Along the same lines, being without a grandparent or other relative would make any memory of the holidays hard to remember or experience. It doesn’t matter how many presents you get each year— they will never make up for the loss

time, it’s so easy to get wrapped up in buying an excessive number of gifts for others, but what we don’t take the time to think about is that there are people who don’t have the means to buy proper coats let alone presents. Instead of focusing on the true meaning of Christmas, we shift our focus to materialistic things, which can make it unrealistic for those with limited financial resources to provide a happy Christmas for their families.

Another thing that can

## Reflecting on 2022 resolutions

Last year, on January 1, 2022, I remember thinking hard about my New Year’s resolutions and writing them down on a piece of paper.

Looking back on this past year and all that has happened, I thought it would be appropriate to reflect on my 2022 resolutions. Before writing this column, I dug up the paper and recorded them here to comment on.



Gracie Jania  
Editor-in-Chief

1. Lower your expectations for others. This lesson was hard for me to accept over the course of my high school experience. Up until recently, I had always set such high expectations for my friends, and was constantly disappointed when they didn’t live up to them. I remember my dad once telling me that if you love someone, you have to love every part of them, and this helped me to decide what I was willing to forgive in friendships. It’s only helped to make my friendships stronger and I can definitely look back on this year and know that I lived by this.

2. Wake up with your alarm every morning without snoozing. Long story short, I did not fulfill this resolution.

3. Do your devotions every day. This is a lot harder said than done. I didn’t keep up with this resolution, but it will be showing up in my list of 2023 resolutions for next year.

4. Don’t let Hollywood’s standards define yours. As someone who is unhealthily obsessed with romantic comedies, it can be a struggle for me to appreciate the life I have, especially when things don’t happen for me the way they probably would in movies. But I’ve come to realize that if you expect nothing from a situation, you’ll never be disappointed; and if it turns out to be everything and more, it’s only a bonus. I’ve definitely learned to live by this resolution this year, as I have felt so appreciative of the good things that have come along with this year, and less disappointed by the things that haven’t happened that I wanted to.

5. Take advantage of every opportunity. This is something my parents raised me by. This year especially, I wanted to make my senior year one to remember, and so far I’ve done this by roping my friends into getting involved in things with me. Before the summer, Dani Rancifer and I agreed to sign up to go on the Close Up trip together, and we ended up having a great week in Washington, D.C., learning about the government. Not too long after school started, I got to spend a couple more days in D.C. with some of my best friends on the class trip. I am having the time of my life cheering on my classmates in basketball. This year has been full of opportunities and I’ve had so much fun getting involved in so many of them.

These are just a few of my resolutions from last year, but they are all so important in the fact that I want to better myself, in physical, spiritual, and mental aspects. Just reflecting on this list makes it apparent that I need to carry these resolutions over into 2023 to work on them even harder, and continue to better myself going forward.

### the Echo

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Arts

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Sports

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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 Echo



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