

White takes student group to IN, IL state capitals for "close-up" look

Kailyda Anderson

Sports Editor

On Monday, March 6, Mr. Jeff White took eight students down to Indianapolis, Indiana and Springfield, Illinois for a "close-up" look at state government.

Their first stop was at the Tippecanoe Battlefield, where White explained the site's historical significance.

Upon arriving at the Crown Plaza Hotel at Union Station in Indianapolis, the students were surprised to learn that they would be lodging in train cars. The hotel offers some accommodations in authentic, re-

stored 1920s Pullman train cars that are parked on the tracks on which they once ran.

"I thought staying in a train car was very cool," said sophomore Alexa Mercuri.

In the morning, the students went to the Capitol building and met with many representatives. They also toured the building.

"The Capitol was amazing. Everything wowed me and it was nice to see how our representatives do their jobs," stated junior Emily Bantsolas. After a quick lunch at the Old Spaghetti Factory, the students journeyed to Benjamin Harrison's house for a tour.

"Harrison's house was beautiful. That was defi-

nitely one of my favorite moments from the trip," said sophomore Morgan Smith. After a long day, they loaded into the bus and made their way to Springfield, Illinois.

Wednesday morning after breakfast, the students drove to the Illinois Capitol building and toured there. They continued their day by touring Abraham Lincoln's home, followed by his tomb and the Lincoln Museum. They stopped at Route 66 diner on their way home for dinner and made it back safely to school Wednesday evening.

"The trip was worth every penny and very memorable," said sophomore Josh Bunker.



Photo courtesy of Illiana Facebook

The student group poses with Michael Frerichs after he explained his job as the Illinois state treasurer.

Uganda summer mission trip cancelled

Ms. Sara Johnson made the decision to cancel summer 2023 trip due to low levels of student interest.

Emily Bantsolas

Reporter

Because of a low number of students planning to attend the Uganda Mission Trip, Illiana on Missions has decided to cancel the trip this summer, the second cancellation of a trip that was originally going to Ireland.

The international mission trip to Uganda, one of two international trips planned for this summer, has been postponed due to low student commitment; only three students had signed

on to join the trip.

Despite the trip being canceled for this summer, Sara Johnson, Illiana on Missions coordinator, said that the trip will be rescheduled to summer of 2024, when the trip was originally supposed to occur.

The Uganda Mission Trip was put together after the cancellation of the original trip to Ireland, due to unexpected setbacks with the host family there.

On this mission trip to Uganda, students would have worked with the Uganda Orphanage Re-

lief Fund in schools and orphanages; students would also have gone on a few safaris.

Isabella Engler, a junior who had planned to attend the trip, said, "I'm disappointed, but there are always other opportunities to grow in the Lord, and maybe some great things will pop up in other areas of my life this year."

Students signed up for the trip were given the option to join the Dominican Republic trip. In the Dominican Republic, students will work closely with the Pathway to Jesus School, an organization that Illiana has helped with for well over a decade.



Photo by Jim Kamphuis

In this scene, Mufasa (played by Ryan Smith) explains to Simba (played by Kevin Truong) the boundaries of their land. He says that they rule over the sun touches.

"The Lion King" nearly sells out all performances

Giannia O'Neal-Schultz

Reporter

The Illiana Drama Department performed "The Lion King, Jr." for its annual spring musical on March 8-11 to nearly four sold-out audiences and to critical acclaim.

The popular Disney story found a warm reception in the community. The Friday night and Saturday matinee performances sold-out, and the other two performances were close to sold-out. The cast and crew also performed on Friday morning, March 9, for elementary students from the local feeder schools.

Audience members found different things to love about the show. Sophomore Jaden Portinga said, "My favorite part was the hyena Ed jumping off the stage. It was so unexpected, and it was really funny. My favorite characters were the lionesses and Rafiki because they were so cool."

Hannah Brusima, another sophomore, enjoyed the moment when Simba sees the image of his father Mufasa in the water.

Sophomore Lauryn Holleman said she enjoyed the singing, especially from senior Audrey Yonkman, who played Rafiki. Holleman added, "The

costumes were really good too."

The production also made many lasting memories for the cast.

Freshman Landon Worries, who played Ed the hyena, said, "My favorite part of being in the musical was getting to be with fellow people who love what we are doing and share the same passion."

Junior Elliot VanDerGriend, the actor playing Scar, said, "I love just being able to hangout with friends but also actively doing something."

The Illiana Drama Department has a reputation as a tight knit community, and their connection to one another helped them work together to perform a great musical.

Freshman Gabriella Costello said, "Everyone is so nice; the people in the Drama Department really helped me have a good experience."

Many Illiana students want to be a part of the drama department next year and the returning drama department are excited for future performances.

Sophomore Sam Franco said, "If you are interested in theater, then you should at least try it once during your years at Illiana."

Costello said, "Heck yeah, I will want to do more things with Illiana's Drama Department again next year."

Getting ready to grow up

The realization of growing up didn't hit me until I remembered that I'm turning 18 in six months. My perspective of life and how it should be has changed so much since I was little.

When I was six, I wanted to be a teacher. Now, I want to be a physical therapist. When I was nine, I wanted to get married young and have a ton of kids. Now, I'm not in a rush to get married or have kids. When I was 12, I couldn't wait to be a teenager. Now, I wish I was still 12. When I was 15, I couldn't wait to get my license. Now, I get tired of driving everywhere.



Kailyda Anderson
Co-Sports Editor

Here are some things I wish my younger self knew before growing up:

1. Finding yourself takes time. You go through different personalities and phases throughout your life. I went through different phases of music genres to which I listened, clothing brands which I wore, makeup and hairstyles which I tried. Each time I tried something new, I thought it would last, but something new always came.

2. You don't need a best friend or relationship to be happy. The idea of being in a relationship was super intriguing during middle school and the beginning of high school. I went through a couple, but each one ended badly, and ruined friendships. I thought being in a relationship would make me happy, but that was not the case. You do not need to date in high school to be happy. Fall in love with yourself instead. I didn't necessarily have a best friend growing up. I always wanted one, but never built the type of friendship to call someone a "best friend." I wouldn't say I have one now either, but God has blessed me with a few people that I'm very close with and fortunate to have in my life.

3. Stop caring too much about what others think. This one was really hard for me to get over. I always wondered what people thought about me too much. I changed for other people because I thought they would like me better if I acted more like them, which wasn't true at all. Be the real you, and the people who genuinely like you will stay. Don't pretend to be someone you're not for the approval of others. Between the cyber bullying and insecurities, I was always pleasing others. But once I got the strength to get over it, I was so much happier. Be the bigger person and ignore the hate, no matter how hard it might be.

4. Social media takes a big toll on your mental health. My first ever social media app was Musically (now called Tik Tok). I was influenced by social media so much that my screen time was out of control. Snapchat really took a toll on my mental health. Sometimes I wish I hadn't downloaded it so young. You don't need social media to be happy either. Sometimes it's better off not knowing what others are doing or what's going on.

5. And lastly, grow closer to God. God does many amazing things and provides so many blessings. Once you get into a routine of reading the Bible everyday and learning more about Christ, it will change your life. I have become much happier by doing this, and wish I would have done it sooner. Once you build that relationship with him, you become a different person.

It's nice to look back on your childhood every once in a while, but it is also good to recognize the way life's experiences, good and bad, have helped me to grow.



Photo courtesy of Illiana Facebook
Kayla Misch jumps over a hurdle while riding on her faithful horse, Luna.

Freshman shows talent, passion for showjumping

Lydia O'Riley
Reporter

Kayla Misch, a freshman at Illiana Christian, not only is a volleyball player, as we have seen earlier this year, but also participates in show jumping on horseback.

She started riding eight years ago when she was in third grade and has been competing for the past five years. Misch has lived by a racetrack, and once her neighbors moved in next to her she was introduced to show jumping. Her neighbor worked at the racetrack by her house and was converting it into a show jumping arena. Misch started practicing in a little barn and eventually moved up to the barn where she currently rides.

Misch bought her horse, Luna, last year in October. Misch was not the person to name Luna though.

"Normally, when they're around a certain age, and you buy them, you just don't change their name and just keep it," explained Misch. Her horse, Luna, is ten years old now. Misch trains a lot throughout the week to ride at the level she does, and practices around twelve hours per week with her horse.

Misch said that making friends is another wonderful part about show jumping. She said, "My little show team at my barn, they are all really really nice. Everyone's really fun."

She added that show jumping has also brought her to new places for competitions, bringing her into a wider world.

Veldman's Econ 2 class plays stock game

Sophia Oostema
Reporter

Illiana students in the Economics 2 class are currently participating and "investing" in Mr. Rick Veldman's stock game.

The stock game takes place from the beginning of February to the end of May. Students open an online account that gives them access to "buying" a stock with \$10,000. This is a simulation activity, as the students do not actually spend real money or invest in stock.

Veldman stated, "It is a great learning exercise... Statistically, over 50% of Americans own stock either directly or indirectly

with retirement accounts or mutual funds".

After the 3 month contest is over, the class gets to see who made and lost money.

Veldman said that there are Christian principles in the game, one being giving. The game teaches students to grow their money by investing wisely so that they can give more.

Altogether, the game is to help students at Illiana get an overall familiarity about the stock market and how to navigate it wisely.

"This exercise we do in Econ 2 is a tremendous way to experience the stock market without actually making or losing money."

Wind Ensemble plays "Song of Loudest Praise," places eighth

Tristen Bell
Reporter

Wind Ensemble competed at the Midwest Band Festival on Feb. 24, taking 8th place overall and 3rd place in its class.

"We performed great," said Mrs. Rachel Monroe, band teacher and conductor. She explained that the competition was tough, but said that they placed really well.

Senior Audrey Yonkman compared the Wind Ensemble's performance this year to the previous year's. She said, "This

year I feel like we improved a ton. We [also] have more people in the band." Yonkman added that the performance helped build teamwork and expressed the glory of God.

The band performed "Song of Loudest Praise." The song received positive reviews by the judges and was, to some, a favorite piece to play. Senior Ellie Kamphuis, a member of Wind Ensemble, said that one part of the song gets loud and invokes worship to God and allowed all of the band members to come together as one.

Illiana holds first schoolwide testing day

Angelica Voyles
Reporter

On March 1, 2023, Illiana had its first schoolwide "Testing Day" with testing for freshmen, sophomores, and juniors that day while the seniors got a day off. Illiana's student services and counselors had heard that the other schools were doing this type of test day and decided to try it this year.

Freshman Marie Wil-

liams said "it was tiring" and that she had finished 30-40 minutes prior to the end of the test. She and other freshmen took a form of the PSAT test. Williams added, "[The test] was scary" and some of the questions looked like work for a higher grade level.

Junior Jose Casillas, who took the SAT with the rest of the junior class, also said that it was a long day for him. Casillas added that he felt prepared and

that was mainly because of teacher Mr. Doug Gorter.

"Mr. Gorter was a big help for math," Casillas said.

Mrs. Heidi Teach, the testing coordinator, stated that the freshman test was shorter than the others. The school, however, couldn't let the freshman go earlier just because it would make too much noise for other grade levels who were still testing. Teach called the testing "beneficial for the school and our students"

and she is "grateful for the system."

Mrs. Rachel Drost, the school's curriculum director, played the role of just being a test proctor on that day. She said that the experience was overall great and she was "very happy with it." To make it happen, she said "a lot of work... came together," and she gave credit especially to Mrs. Teach, Mrs. Benes, and Mr. Zandstra for coordinating the day.



Photo by Kayla Bosman
Guest speaker Rachel Jones sits beside junior Janna vanBelle during a round table discussion.

Creative writing invites guest speakers

Korina Johnson

Reporter

Creative writing is a class offered at Illiana every other year. Mrs. Hillegonds, who teaches the class, arranges for speakers to come in and give students a chance to see what can be done with an English degree.

Many people don’t realize how many jobs are writing-based, but these speakers show the variety that exists.

“It’s been really interesting learning about all the different jobs that involve writing, and

it’s stuff I’ve never heard of before,” said Janna vanBelle, a junior.

Hillegonds finds the speakers in a variety of ways. “Some of them are friends of mine, some suggested by others, and some of them are former students,” said Hillegonds.

Speakers so far have included Illiana grads and journalists Russel Dorsey and Juliana Knot, grant writer and marketer Rachel Jones, and poet Jake Schepers.

“I plan [the schedule] a semester ahead of time,” said Hillegonds, creative writing

teacher. “I’ll email the person to see if they are willing to talk and then plan a time for them to come in or do a Zoom interview.”

Of the four visitors so far this semester, two of them were Illiana grads, a fact which has impacted the way students see the world of writing, making it seem a more realistic opportunity.

“Several of them have been Illiana graduates and it’s cool to see and easy to relate to stuff they talk about because it feels like more of a possibility,” said vanBelle.

After leave of absence, singing telegrams to return in April

Marissa Krause

Reporter

After their absence during Valentine’s Day the past three years, singing telegrams are back. Illiana’s Student Council has moved them to April 17 in honor of Principal Peter Boonstra’s birthday.

Singing telegrams are a message sent to someone of your choice in song form. Students have the option of a \$5 singing telegram to whomever, or a \$10 happy birthday telegram to Boonstra. The songs are performed by student groups who auditioned to secure their role.

Singing telegrams have a long history connected to Valentine’s Day celebrations at Illiana, but in recent years, due to COVID and to a lack of performers who actually prepared in advance for performance, the institution died off.

Student council has seven groups participating, a big turnout after 3 years of no singing telegrams. Vice-President Anneka Zylstra said, “I think that we have a larger number of groups signed up this year than in years past because the student body wants this long-standing tradition brought back. In the past, we haven’t had enough people sign up to even do them. So, when students heard that we were bringing them back this year, there were more people coming to sign up.”

Proceeds from this event will be going to the charitable organizations of Boonstra’s choice. Those organizations include “Living Water International”, Illiana Missions, and “Indiana Non-Public Education Association”. In addition to that, a donor will match the proceeds of any singing telegrams sent to Boonstra, and donate that sum to Illiana’s Phase 2 building campaign.

Olson, Truong win gold at ISSMA for vocal performances



Photo courtesy of Illiana Facebook
Justine Olson and Kevin Truong stand for a picture in front of the Perry Meridian High School wall after successfully securing gold medals.

Kayla Bosman

Reporter

This year was Illiana’s first time having students make it to state finals of the Indiana State School Music Association (ISSMA) with junior Justine Olson and senior Kevin Truong winning the gold.

To get to the state finals Truong and Olson first had to first try out at ISSMA’s event at Munster High School. Olson said, “You can pick a song from a certain list then they critique you on that song and then they determine whether or not you can go to state with that song. Kevin and I both qualified for that.”

The day of their gold medal performance started with a two-hour drive, during which they warmed up by singing Disney songs. After their arrival at Perry Meridian High School, near the heart of Indianapolis, they separated to the practice rooms where they warmed up for the judging. The place was packed with fellow singers and musicians alike.

Truong said, “I really liked seeing more people who sing and are committed to singing. I liked examining other people and what they can do and what I can to match their level or exceed their level. Its a good learning experience.”

Kevin sang an Italian piece and received a score of 12. Justine sang the famous Ave Maria, which has an appearance in Batman 2022, and received a score of 12.5.

Olson said, “The critiquing was higher up because it was state. If you score a nine to thirteen, it’s gold. Nine is the best score you can get, a perfect score. We were close to not getting a gold, but that was expected because it was state finals, where it’s really hard to even get a nine.”

After the whole experience the two went out and celebrated at Red Robin.

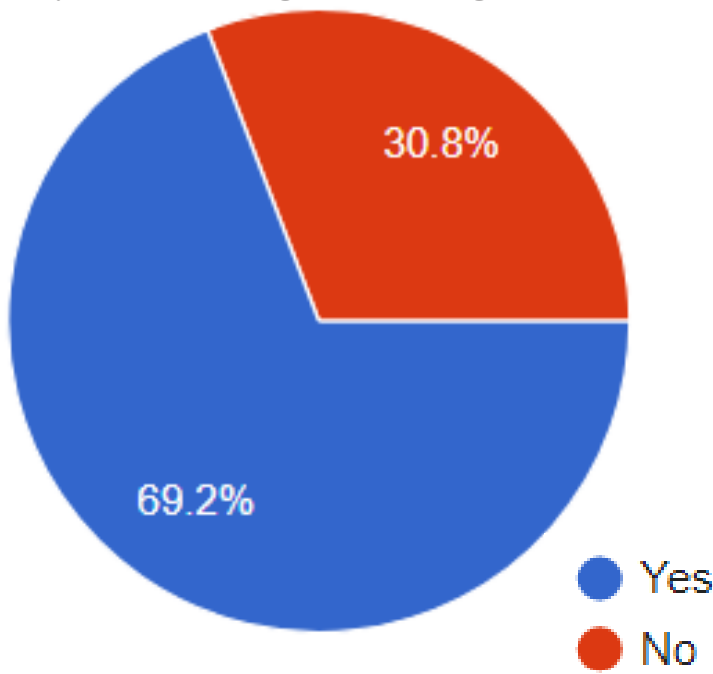
Illiana Students’ Spring Break Plans

Danielle Rancifer

News Editor

Illiana students have a wide variety of plans lined up for the spring break year of 2023. The school is sponsoring two mission trips going on, with some students going to Los Angeles and others to West Virginia. Other students have plans to travel to popular destinations like Florida and Arizona, and a few are even leaving the States. The remainder are spending their spring break right here at home, and having a “staycation”. An Echo survey to which 133 students responded revealed that 70.7 percent of students plan to travel for spring break, with 9.9 percent of those students traveling outside the states.

Are you traveling for spring break?



Survey conducted by Echo staff



Tips for staycationing

Danielle Rancifer

News Editor

Although some people have chosen far off destinations for their spring break, others have chosen to stay

at home in Indiana or Illinois.

There are many fun activities to do around this area without having to go too far. You can take a short drive to downtown Chicago to enjoy popular sites like “The Bean ”, enjoy the Field Museum, or the city's nightlife.

Those who aren't up for traveling quite literally make a vacation in their own backyard, and take this break as an opportunity to explore nature, read books, and just take a breather before the last few weeks of the school year.

English Teacher Kristy

Medema decided to stay home this year, and she has planned fun activities for her spring break.

Medema said, “I like to have some down time and just stay home. I’m going to clean one day...We are going to try and get out, find some place to go hiking, probably go to the Museum of Science and Industry, and try to do something else out in Chicago. So a little bit of nature and Chicago...[My advice] is that you should explore this great city. Go to the museums; with student IDs places like that are often cheap or free.”

Traveling with friends

Danielle Rancifer

News Editor

Spring break is already a well anticipated and enjoyable time for school students, but these vacations are even more enjoyable when they are spent with friends. Many Illiana students have decided to take their friends along on their family vacations, with some students going to Florida, Arizona, and even out of the country to places like Mexico.

Josie Plank is bringing her longtime friend, Faith VanRyn

with her to Cabo San Lucas. Plank said, “I think her being there will be a lot of fun; we’ve been friends for a long time, and our families know each other, and it’ll be like a sleepover every night.”

Audrey Yonkman who is going to Florida with Jenna Norman and her family said about the upcoming trip, “I think this idea kind of came to us when we were talking about vacation plans, and she invited me to go along. We are just excited to go spend time at the beach, do a little shopping, have fun, and just spend time together.”



Danielle Rancifer

News Editor

Spring break looks different for many Illiana students, and some have chosen to go on a mission trip. The two trips

that are happening consist of one group that is going to Los Angeles, supervised by Principal Peter Boonstra, and his wife, and another group going to West Virginia that is supervised by Sara Johnson .

The students started preparing for these trips months in advance, with meetings on how to interact with the people that they will be helping, as well as going over a general itinerary. The students also held fund raisers such as the pulled pork dinner on March 11 which helped to raise money for the cost of the trips.

The Los Angeles spring break trip will consist of students first staying at a church for a few days and helping out with a block party. The students will then go to the D.R.E.A.M center, which is an organization that helps homeless people, drug addicts, and other people in need. While there, Illiana students will help with general chores, as well as neighborhood outreach programs, and they will even go visit Skid Row, which contains one of the largest homeless populations

in the country.

Senior Maddy Smith, who went on an Illiana mission trip to West Virginia last year, decided to go to L.A. this year. She said, “I realized that I would be doing the same thing in Virginia that I did last year, and I wanted to do something different. I think L.A. is more of a growth mission trip and service work, so I wanted a little more of the growth part.”

She also talks about advice she would give to those who are considering attending a mission trip in the future.

“I would say do it. It helps you meet new people... I would also say that it is our duty to serve people, we are all children of Christ and our goal should be to go out and serve others.”

The West Virginia trip will involve Illiana students going down to help and interact with

victims of sex trafficking. The students will attend church services and bonding sessions, they will help clean and build different areas that the organization hopes to use, and they will have fellowship with some of the children from the area.

Junior Heidi Gorter, who has been on the West Virginia mission trip previously, explained what inspired her to return to this trip a second time: “West Virginia really had an appeal to me because the people there are so desperate for help and for the gospel. I’m going to go back because I had a good time the first time, and I want to go and help again...this trip has taken me from the perspective that most people here have, and has shown me how different life can look based on what you have, and how lucky I am.”



Photo Courtesy of Illiana Facebook

Students pose for a picture after serving at the D.R.E.A.M center in Los Angeles in 2022.

The Echo Staff investigates to determine:



Cameron Evers

Feature Editor

Question: Does cracking your knuckles cause arthritis?

Whether the sound of cracking knuckles makes your body cringe, or it releases the stress on your body, it may be a good habit to drop. The old myth has it that cracking your knuckles will cause arthritis, however, this has been debunked by Harvard Medical School, which said, "Cracking your knuckles may aggravate the people around you, but it probably won't raise your risk for arthritis."

But, this habit may not be the best for your health. Most people enjoy cracking their knuckles as a stress reliever, but researchers at the Northern Inyo Healthcare District report that when done too frequently you could put yourself at risk of tearing a ligament or even dislocate a finger. Harvard University researchers and NIHD researchers also found that frequently cracking knuckles may also reduce grip strength.

Question: If you cross your eyes for too long will they get stuck that way?

The myth that crossing your eyes for too long will make them stay that way has scared many people away from this silly habit. However, Fort Lauderdale eye institute says, "When you cross your eyes for humor or amusement it may cause a few laughs but it will not cause permanent damage to your eyes and once you are done your eyes will return to

normal placement.

Our eyes naturally come together when we look at something closely so when you purposefully cross your eyes you are just exaggerating your eyes' natural response." Crossing your eyes for too long may cause muscle fatigue and make your eyes feel tired or sore, but after uncrossing, they will go back to normal, making this a harmless habit.

Question: Does drinking coffee stunt your growth?

While seeing a child walking around drinking a venti cold brew from Starbucks may raise multiple concerns from passersbys, should the development of the child's height be brought into question.

The myth that drinking "coffee" at a young age will stunt growth has been debunked by Harvard researchers. They found that there is no connection between osteoporosis, a condition that is associated with height loss, and coffee consumption, which is the misconception that started this myth.

Decades ago, a study was done to try to confirm that coffee drinkers were at a higher risk for developing osteoporosis. The results of the test found that caffeine does not have a strong enough effect on calcium excretion to affect height, and therefore isn't accurate. Lack of calcium and vitamin D is confirmed to make one more susceptible to osteoporosis, but their uptake is unrelated to caffeine, which is good news

for all the coffee drinkers reading this.

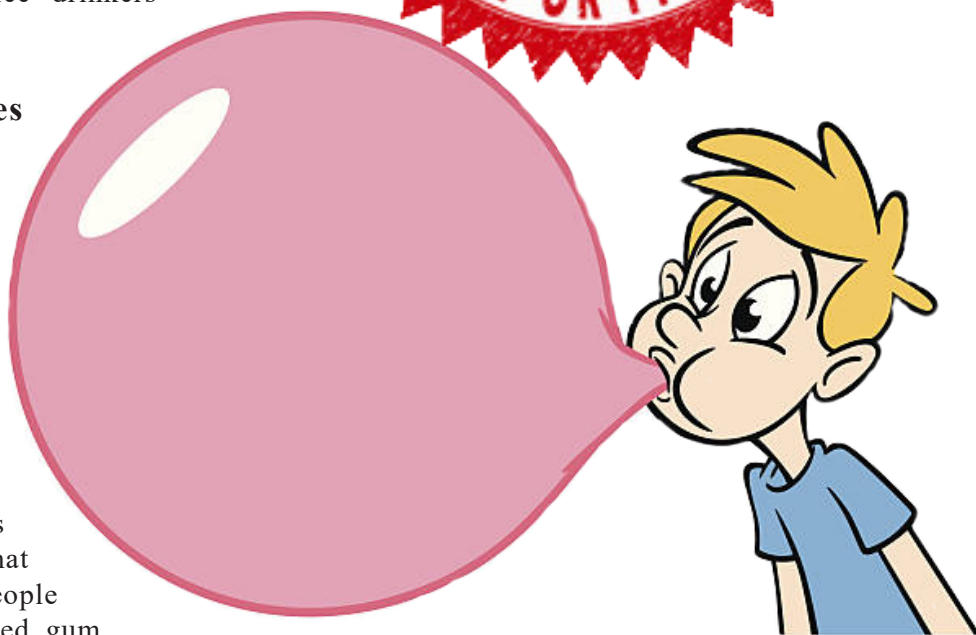
Question: Does swallowed gum take 7 years to digest?

Have you heard the myth that if you swallow chewing gum, it will take seven years to digest? This myth is likely what has motivated people to stick their used gum underneath public tables. However, this myth has been debunked by Mayo Clinic's Dr. Elizabeth Rajan who said, "Although chewing gum is designed to be chewed and not swallowed, it generally isn't harmful if swallowed."

While it is true that your body can't digest gum the same way it digests food, your digestive system still takes care of the gum much faster than seven years. So the next time you need to get rid of your gum, swallowing it may be better than placing it under the table. Or just go find a trash can and save the people who use the table next

Question: Will swallowed watermelon seeds grow in your stomach?

When enjoying a fresh watermelon, many people may avoid eating the seeds because they don't enjoy the taste or the texture. Some, however, avoid the seeds out of fear. What could be so scary about a watermelon? Well, the old urban legend has it that if swallowed, watermelon seeds will sprout themselves in your body and sport into a full-grown water-



melon all within your stomach.

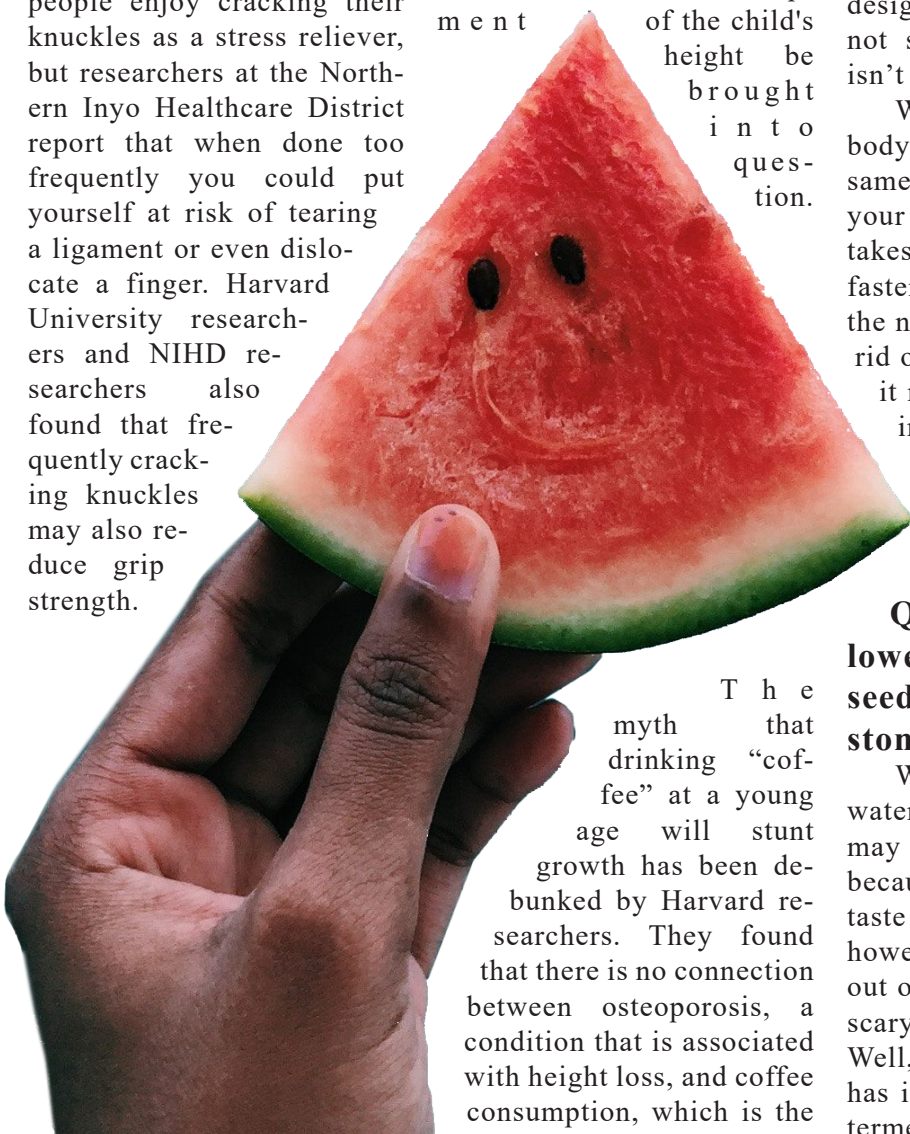
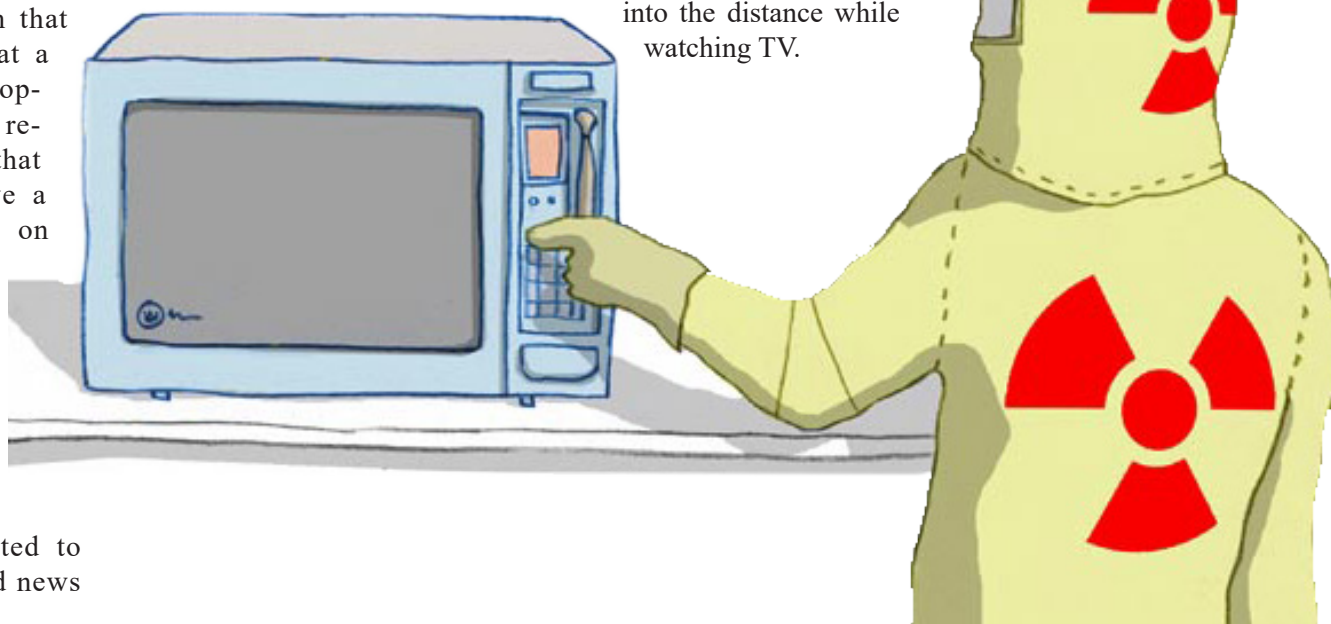
While the origins of this ridiculous, yet creative, myth are unknown, the story is proved absolutely false. The National Library of Medicine claims that watermelon seeds are safe to eat and even provide the body with nutritional proteins and additional fiber. These seeds can be digested just like any other part of the watermelon, and yes that even includes eating the rind.

Question: Will sitting too close to the TV damage your eyes?

Sitting too close to the TV Whether you are watching a big game or completing the final level of your favorite video game, sitting too close to the TV may be a part of these intense moments, but is sitting too close to a TV damaging to eye health? Interestingly enough, Montreal Children's Hospital found that this is just a myth, "There is no evidence that sitting too close to the TV can damage children's eyes. It may, however, lead to temporary eye strain." The eye strain is caused by not blinking enough, so to reduce the strain they suggest blinking more often and periodically staring into the distance while watching TV.

Question: Is it harmful to watch the microwave when its running?

The true test of patience comes down to two simple words: the microwave. If you are able to place your frozen meal in the microwave and walk away with no problem, then congratulations, you have officially passed the test. For the rest of us, counting down the last 30 seconds on the microwave can feel like an eternity. However, does standing in front of the microwave while it's running harm our health? The U.S. Food and Drug Administration advises us to avoid standing in front of a running microwave due to radiation exposure. However, according to researchers at Pennsylvania State, the amount of radiation a microwave leaks is about 5 milliwatts. For reference cell phones leak about 1.6 milliwatts. Although it isn't advised, standing in front of the microwave while it's running is not something to be overly concerned about, but doing your waiting a few feet away would still be a sensible precaution.



Who at Illiana observes the Lenten season?

Illiana survey yields surprising results

Lucas VanderWoude

Arts Editor

Easter is almost here: the holiday is celebrated with chocolate eggs, fluffy bunnies, and- in the case of Christians- going to church to celebrate Jesus' rising from the dead. However, the Church calendar marks a time before Easter that not as many people think about nowadays: Lent. Lent is supposed to be a time to reflect on your sins and shortcomings before God, and in some cases a time of fasting or giving up a certain indulgence in order to physically draw one's attention back to the sacrifice of Christ. So, how do people at Illiana observe Lent?

In a poll sent out to Illiana students, 58.6% of the 70 students that responded said that their church did



Photo courtesy of wikipedia.com

Many people, such as these U.S. Navy members, receive ashes on their foreheads for Ash Wednesday. This is often seen as a Catholic tradition, but many Protestant churches do it as well.

not observe Lent in any way, and 72.9% said that they were not doing anything to observe Lent individually either. However, several students responded with specific things that they gave up for Lent.

One of these students

was Lidia Ploszaj, a sophomore. She is currently giving up soda and sweets for Lent, and she received ashes on her forehead on Ash Wednesday.

"It made me feel like I was closer to God," said Ploszaj. "Since Jesus gave

up his life for us, it's the least I could do for 40 days. [Lent is] a time to reflect on what a sacrifice Jesus made for everyone, and his giving up his life for us so we could live free from sin."

Another student that

gave up something for Lent was Jaylyn Podlin, a freshman. She decided to abstain from bad music and listen to more worship music after attending a church retreat. "It is connecting me with God and growing my faith," she said.



Photo courtesy of thedredger.net

'Outer Banks Season 3' review: disappointing, but more still to come

Kelsee Smit

Reporter

Warning: there may be spoilers. "Outer Banks: Season 3" arrived on Netflix on Thursday, Feb. 23, causing many excited fans to binge-watch the long-awaited episodes.

In the new season, we meet a new series villain. We also see Big John and John B reunite and create a new plan for an adventure while running into many obstacles along the way.

Senior Christina Rynberk said, when asked about

her thoughts on season 3, "I think it was mid because the first and second seasons were so good."

Out of 91 Illiana students who responded to an Echo survey, 64% said that the first season of the three was their favorite, and only 13% said that Season 3 was their favorite.

Senior Arden DeGraff said, "The first season was really good, so I had high expectations for the 3rd season but it wasn't quite there. The first episodes were kind of slow

but it picked up towards the end. It taught me a lesson in patience."

Junior Nolan Flipse said, "It was good. I would say it wasn't as exciting as the other seasons. It was more predictable, but I was surprised that Rafe burned the cross."

Netflix has announced that there will be a season 4 of Outer Banks. Junior Jenna Landman said, "I am excited to see where the storyline goes in season 4. I am also excited to see the relationships continue to develop."

Tis the season of... Shamrock Shakes!

Kyla Bennett

Sports Editor

Now that we're done with the boxes of chocolates and flowers, it is now Shamrock season! One of the most exciting foofaraws about St. Patrick's Day are the Shamrock shakes sold at McDonald's. A delicious mint dessert served for a limited time around St. Patrick's Day, the Shamrock shake is made from vanilla soft serve ice cream, shamrock shake syrup, and whipped cream. Customers even have the option to add special ingredients to their shake, like oreos or chocolate syrup.

The Shamrock Shake was created in 1967 by Hal Rosen, a Connecticut McDonald's

Owner and Operator who made the delicious, mint shake in celebration of St. Patrick's Day. It debuted nationally in 1970 and was an instant success across the country.

A humongous shamrock shake is made each year for the Chicago St. Patrick's Day celebration, with the illusion that is pouring into the green river. More than 60 million of the shakes have been sold since 1970.

Two sophomores, Izzy Girolimon and Tiffany Nieves, mentioned that they have tasted Shamrock Shakes before.

"I would most definitely recommend it for something to scratch off your bucket list, but there are much better milkshakes out there," said Girolimon, and Nieves agreed.



Photo courtesy of today.com

Shamrock Shakes like these are a fun and colorful way to celebrate the season of St. Patrick's Day.

Boys varsity basketball ends season with 19-6 overall record

Cameron Evers
Feature Editor

On March 6, 2023, the Illiana Christian Boys Varsity basketball team’s season came to a close after a defeat during the IH-SAA 2A sectional championship. The team finished with an overall record of 19-6.

After an unforeseen loss during the first round of sectionals last season, the Vikings fought their way through this year’s post-season and won two close games. The first game of the tournament was against North Newton which finished its season 12-11. The Vikings won 59-54, led by Luke VanEssen, scoring 17 points and Andy Spoelman, giving the team one game closer to the championship.

The Vikings then faced the Eagles of Bowman academy, which finished its season 11-13, and pulled out another victory with the

leading scorers being Luke VanEssen, scoring 28 points, followed by his brother Zeke VanEssen scoring 12.

These two victories brought the Vikings to face the 21st Century Cougars in the sectional championship. The Cougars currently hold a record of 21 wins and 6 losses and beat Whiting High School by 36 points and Andean High School by 8 to make it to the final round of sectionals. The Vikings fought hard, but despite 16 points from Andy Spoelman and another 15 from Luke VanEssen, they ended up losing the game 52-71.

Tom Roozeboom, the varsity head coach said, “We knew we had our work cut out for us but never had the mindset of being inferior. Although we didn’t like the outcome and how we sometimes let the game get away from us, the guys showed grit and battled to the end.”



Junior Andy Spoelman shoots a three-pointer during the Homecoming game. Photo courtesy of Mr. DeVries

Track prepares for first outdoor meet on April 4

Kyla Bennett
Sports Editor

The track teams had an indoor meet at Portage High School Saturday, March 11, with about 62 athletes who competed. The Vikings competed against some big schools and held their own, often finishing around the middle of the pack.

Coach Deb Top said, “One thing we really emphasize is a proper warm up to make sure the athlete is ready for his/her event, good hydration before the meet and during the meet, and good nutrition. We have different phases in our training programs in order to help our athletes peak at the right time and to be ready to do

their best at these meets.”

“What makes our team different from others is that we are really supportive of one another and are always positive,” said senior Aliza Nelson, who’s been a member of the team for 4 years.

Coach Luke Fennema said, “I love to see the hard work pay off at meets. Our athletes go through quite rigorous training, which isn’t always fun, but when it pays off with a big performance, it’s very rewarding and exciting. I also like seeing how they use their gifts to glorify God. Our theme for the year is ‘Press



Coach Fennema times runners in the shuttle run warm-up. Photo by Debbie Ohm

On,’ based on Philippians 3:12-14. We are encouraging our team to put the ideas of this verse into practice and to consistently strive, no matter the obstacles, to serve God, others, and the world.”

The next meet will be the first outdoor meet on Tuesday, April 4, at River Forest High School.

Cheer competition cancelled

Whiting backs out of last cheerleading competition despite plan to host all schools in conference

Grace Jania
Editor-in-Chief

The competition cheerleading team was planning to compete in a conference competition on March 18 at Whiting High School; however, the competition was recently canceled due to low levels of participation from teams and difficulty finding judges.

Only three of the nine teams in the conference wanted to participate. When Whiting, the host school, was one of the teams to back out, the conference decided to not have a competition at all.

Illiana’s cheerleaders dealt with the sudden

change easily. According to Coach Carisa Beezhold, “[Our team) only got in one full practice for it, so it was no big deal.”

According to freshmen varsity cheerleaders Alise Evenhouse and Karlee Klee, the cancellation was a relief since the competition season was supposed to end in November, and tryouts for next year are planned to be in about a month.

“I’m proud of all of the athletes on the team,” senior varsity cheerleader Audrey Girolimon said. “I feel like we competed very well throughout the season and would have competed our best at conference.”

Male Athlete of the Month

Junior Owen Bandstra is March’s male athlete of the month. As a hurdler and sprinter, Bandstra learned how to prepare himself in the offseason by lifting weights and working out to be the best he could be coming into the track season.

Track coach Deb Top said that she thinks he picked up this season where he left off last season by preparing himself in the fall and winter.

“It says a lot about [Bandstra] that he spent that time on his own making sure he was in the best shape he could be in, so he could be the best for his team this year,” said Top.

“He’s shown leadership characteristics this year [and a] great work ethic,” Top said, “and it’s really paying off for him.”



Female Athlete of the Month

Senior Alex Vis is March’s female athlete of the month. Track coach Luke Fennema describes her as a “talented runner,” as she runs mid-distance and distance, and has been in the team’s top 4 for cross country every year.

In track last year, Vis was a regional qualifier in the mile, running her fastest time in the last race of the season.

“We’re counting on her this year to be a senior leader on the team,” Fennema said.

“She’ll be a big point-getter in anything from the 4x4, the 4x8, the open 800m, the mile, and even the two mile,” said Fennema. “She can score points in any of those events.”



Editorial

What is the American Dream all about?

For many years, people have pondered what it means to live the American Dream. The American Dream isn't a one-time thing, it's a lifestyle that everyone regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion, and race is capable of living. In order to achieve the goal of living the American Dream, humans must dedicate themselves. It's never too late to start dreaming, but it's great to start building a strong mindset for your future at a young age. Most people believe that the American Dream is all about what a person has. Yes, valuable possessions play a part in it, but humans shouldn't be so fixated on having the biggest house, the newest car, or the fanciest boat with a truck to pull it.

The American Dream is about what you are doing to better yourself, your future, and your community. If people spend their days procrastinating, they will never get anywhere. Saying you're going to do something is one thing, but actually putting in the work to make it happen is another. To achieve this dream, everyone needs a

vision and a plan. For example, if someone wants to start a biking club, they have to have the picture already in their head. They would also need to organize a way to get people to come together and join. This is how humans with

effit themselves, then they are not living properly. It's natural to want riches and fancy things, but the moment you start to believe that this is what it means to live the American Dream is the moment you start to fail.

panic/Latino, Native American, men, women, all have the same rights. There is no discrimination because the American Dream assures that all have the right to pursue life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. If we all embraced that dream for everyone, there would be more people progressing and fewer people living unhappy lives.

The American Dream isn't impossible, but it doesn't just happen overnight. Living the Dream requires dedication. To live the American Dream means to awake each morning and dedicate yourself to it anew. The American Dream isn't a one-time thing; it's a lifestyle that every gender, ethnicity, religion, and race can live.

It's never too late to start dreaming, but it's great to start building a strong mindset for your future at a young age. If people spend their days procrastinating, they will never get anywhere. Saying you're going to do something is one thing, but actually putting in the work to make it happen is another.

“To live the American Dream means to awake each morning and dedicate yourself to it anew.”

the desire to live the American Dream need to think from now on.

Though the American Dream is about living your best life, it isn't selfish. Instead, it's about having an impact on those who are around you. You don't have to be famous to make an impact in this world. Everyone can contribute to things that can help them help others. If someone is only doing things to ben-

The American Dream is about living in freedom. This means letting go of burdens, mental and physical. If something isn't bringing you peace, then let it go! A person with the desire to live the American Dream will not succeed if they have a troubled mind or burdens to carry. There is no room for inequality or injustice when it comes to the American Dream. White, Black, Asian, His-

Growing up can be scary

Getting older's getting scary. That was a lyric in a song I listened to the other day. At first it went in one ear and out the other, and I just barely caught it to rewind the song in time. As I thought about the line, it resonated with me that I felt the same way: I was scared to grow up.

But I'm not the only one. I can guarantee that if you ask a few upperclassmen about college, at least one will voice some concern about getting older.

And it's not about the fact that with each new day you are one step closer to dying or anything like that. It's realizing that you have more responsibilities and are expected to take care of them diligently.

I didn't fully understand the gravity of that song lyric until a couple months back when I turned eighteen. On the first day of the new year, I became an adult. Usually when you turn a year older, people ask if you "feel any different?" This birthday was the same; my relatives asked that worn out question, and like every birthday prior to eighteen, I said, "No, I feel the same," but really, I did feel different.

It was as if the next decade of my life hit me.. All of a sudden, the weight of college decisions, the potential career opportunities I could pursue, the possibility of marriage, and the thought of having kids were on my mind. I couldn't shake that overwhelming feeling.

With eighteen years of life now in the books, it was apparent that I wasn't a little kid anymore. I was still the same person, just an adult, expected to make adult-decisions. This was unsettling to me. What happened to the days of no responsibilities? No jobs? No homework? No college? Nothing on my own?

I'll be honest—I don't want to grow up. But at least it's comforting to know that I'm not alone in the feeling.

And as much as I don't want to admit it, it's good to learn some responsibility in growing up. I looked to the Bible for some insight, and Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:11 writes, "When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me."

I get what Paul is saying here. It's important to make that transition from childhood to adulthood, and with that comes a healthy, newfound maturity and personal growth.

Though they might not completely fit together, my favorite Bible verses work well with this passage from 1 Corinthians. Ecclesiastes 3:1 and 4 say, "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens... a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance."

In my interpretation of this excerpt, time calls for children to grow up, but there will always be moments for adults to act like little kids.

Getting older shouldn't be scary. If we invest our energy into the positive aspects of growing up, it becomes easier to make the adjustment. Being an adult doesn't mean we can never have fun like little kids sometimes. With this new freedom, it will be even easier to grow in maturity and still channel our inner-child more often than not.



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the Echo

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Find words in this Echo-themed word search!

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