

Team Mario Kart captured the title for best costumes at the annual Dodgeball Tournament on Nov. 17. Photo by Lucas VanderWoude

Fans support missions at annual dodgeball tournament

Reese Jansma
Reporter

Students and community members packed the gym Friday, Nov. 17 for the annual dodgeball tournament, an event

won by The Average Joes. The award for best costumes went to Mario Kart.

According to sophomore Sienna Eenigenburg, “The best part of the night was playing a game of dodge-

ball.”

Miss Sara Johnson said that the funds raised by the event support mission trips. This year, she is planning mission trips to Chicago, West Virginia, Uganda, and the Dominican Republic.

Senior Isaac Sherwood, who predicted correctly that the Average Joes would win all, said, “My favorite part of the night was JJ Alleman getting hyped up by the crowd.”

Vikes competitive cheer team places 5th at state championships

Kailyda Anderson
News Editor

Illiana’s competitive cheer team completed its season at the state finals on Nov. 4 at New Castle High School, taking 5th place in the Division C category.

The Vikings competed in Division C for the first time this year, a result of Illiana’s expanding enrollment. Because of the move to Division C, Illiana had to compete against more teams that represented bigger schools. The team and coaches are pleased with the 5th place finish in the state.

“This was the first time in Illiana history that we hit all of our stunts at state,” senior Brooklyn Pierce said. “It was also the first time the majority of us did back tucks. The energy was insane and crazy, and our coaches were so proud of how far we’ve come, especially in a new division. Working with my teammates this season was so much fun. Everyone’s drive was incredible. We all participated in the season and our commitment and dedication to the team was so strong. We were like a family.”

Pierce added, “If I had to give advice to the upcoming leaders of the team, I would say to soak it all in and have two sides: one to get stuff done and another to have fun. It’s all about balance.”



The Illiana cheer team poses by their 5th place trophy. The team consisted of Alise Evenhouse, Haylie Hutton, Karlee Klee, Jenna Koontz, Brooklyn Pierce, Claire Santefort, Reece Tambrini, and Nolee Van Drunen. Photo courtesy of Illiana’s Facebook Page

Students, faculty participate in fall blood drive

Isabella Girolimon
Reporter

Many Illiana students and faculty members donated blood to Versiti Blood Center at the fall blood drive on Oct. 24. Versiti collected 31 units from the school, and nine of Illiana’s donors were first-time donors.

According to the Red Cross, nearly sixteen million blood components are needed every year. Each unit of blood can save up to three lives, so Illiana’s blood drive potentially impacts 93 lives.

Junior Amy Bosman donated. She reported feeling lightheaded afterwards, almost reaching the point of passing out. Despite this, she has no regrets about donating.

“It was scary, but I would do it again,” said Bosman.

Junior Daniel Persenaire was one of many to donate, saying, “It’s 45 minutes of your time to save three lives... Why not do it?”

Senior Calvin Pierce donated blood, claiming, “I don’t need all my blood... I’ll get it back sooner or later.”

According to the Red Cross, plasma from blood donations is regenerated after just twenty-four hours, although the red blood cells may take four to six weeks to regenerate fully.

Donated blood has even affected the lives of Illiana students and faculty. Mr. Jeff DeVries, an English teacher, said that blood transfusions saved the life of both his sister and his daughter, both of whom needed multiple transfusions when battling illnesses.

“It’s an awesome thing to give blood,” says DeVries. “You really are helping to save lives.”

Holiday offers perfect chance to say thanks



Kelsee Smit

Feature Editor

As we are in the season of Thanksgiving I wanted to take this opportunity to give thanks. First I am thankful to God for giving me life and everything I have today. I am grateful for my parents who helped me so much. My mom who gave me help with a topic for this column—reminded me that every day there is something to be thankful for. I want to give thanks to donors who have continued to bless the Illiana community and make it possible to add a whole new addition. The Illiana community and beyond who pray for students like myself.

I want to thank the amazing Illiana staff who do so much from teaching to working in the office to common grounds. To get more in-depth of people who do different things for Illiana. Mr. Jeff White works so hard planning trips to DC. Everyone in student services helps students with homework and retakes tests. Mr. Lance Davids and everyone who works to find donors. Ms. Sara Johnson does so many things but specifically is a big part of the planning of Mission Trips. Mr. Neil Zandstra and Mrs. Melanie Benes help seniors like myself with endless college questions. Mr. Jeff DeVries is behind the scenes in making the Echo possible and is the best homeroom teacher. Mrs. Rachel Drost does so much and wears so many hats, specifically making chapel run and keeping everything in order and functioning. The office staff, Mrs. Shelly Hoffman who greets me with a smile whenever I come in late, or Mrs. Kathy West who has an endless supply of candy and will let anyone have a piece. These are just a few of the many who work so hard to make Illiana the place it is today.

I want to thank all my friends who have been with me since day one and all the ones whom I have met along the way.

I want to thank my coaches who have helped grow my love not only for the sport but also for my teammates who I know will have my back on and off the field.

I want to thank all the people who've done little things that mattered more than they realized. The women in the Dunkin drive-through who paid for my drink. Jaylee for getting me a muffin from Commons. A note from a woman in my church. An email from a teacher saying they are praying for me. My brother cleaning off the snow from my windshield. A hug from my mom after a long day.

This list just scratches the surface of things I have in my life to be thankful for. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 says, "Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." So my challenge to everyone reading is to thank someone



Photo by Jeff DeVries

Veterans gather around for the raising of the flag.

Annual program welcomes veterans

Cheyenne DeJong

Reporter

Veterans Day at Illiana Christian took place on Friday, November 10, where those who served gathered for an opening ceremony in the morning where Jeff White led devotions. Nick Olthoff, a junior and a sea cadet, was given the honor to raise the flag as trumpeter Mr. Luke Fennema played taps. Olthoff was assisted

by Mr. Bill Venhuizen, a veteran and former history teacher at Illiana. This ceremony was followed by breakfast and a chapel service. The chapel consisted of the choir singing and recognizing each branch of service followed by a reading on the history of Veterans Day from Isaac Olthof and a reflection from Pastor Blake Campbell of 1st CRC of DeMotte.

For many attendees,

this was not the first Veterans Day they have attended here.

Alan Hoeksema, a 1969-1970 Vietnam veteran said, "As a veteran, experiences go with you forever. It makes you appreciate ordinary life better and being alive every day and it gives you the opportunity to glorify God in a different way." He said he enjoys being surrounded by those who have a common back-

ground and talking with other veterans. He also enjoys returning to Illiana as he has been involved on the school board in past years along with speaking at Veterans Day ceremonies.

Larry VanderWoude, another veteran, said, "I am proud to have served my country," after dealing with civil disturbances in the streets of Chicago in the 60s and serving in the Army National Guard.

Attendance improved with new voucher policy, motivates students to go to school

Joy Ramsey

Reporter

Due to Illiana's new policy connecting attendance to an exam voucher, students' attendance has improved this year.

The school's new policy allows students to miss any period of the day six times in a semester before losing their exam voucher. The policy was a response to Illiana's student attendance getting worse in recent years.

According to Mr. Peter Boonstra, Illiana's principal, "We had a whopping 36% of our students miss ten or more days last year. By contrast, the state of Indiana saw 40% of its students

with ten or more days of absence last year. We had 11.6% that were 'chronic' absentees--missing 18 or more days--while the state had 19.3%."

The absentee rate became a major focus and discussion for faculty and board coming into this school year. To help limit the number of student absences, Illiana revived a modified version of its former voucher policy. Before Covid hit, Illiana allowed two days of absence, after which a student was no longer eligible for an exam voucher. That policy did encourage good attendance, but it had its flaws, according to principal Peter Boon-

stra, who explained that this old system resulted in many students coming to school sick, a decision which, ironically, spread illness among more people.

Beside changing the policy on exam vouchers to include attendance, the school has also begun once more to enforce more strictly its attendance requirement for school credit. That policy allows a student 10 total absences in a semester, after which, unless there are extenuating circumstances, students will not receive credit for their classes.

Boonstra added, "It's important for students to know that the 10-day ab-

sence limit is a real applied standard, and it's fair to point out that we have already lost a few students to it.... However, it has clearly been motivating because last year we had around five or ten students with this problem, and this year by contrast we have only had two students who have exceeded ten absences."

Students missing school has placed a burden on many different schools in the area. For Illiana, this new voucher system has overall been extremely effective to this year's attendance rate. Boonstra said that as far as he is aware, this exam voucher is a system only being used by Illiana.

Phase Two funding complete, attention turns to auditorium

Abigail DeBlock

Reporter

The anticipation for Illiana’s new addition increases as ironworkers have begun setting steel in the second phase of the building.

Lance Davids, Head of School, expects the roof to be on the second phase by Thanksgiving and the entirety of the project to be completed by August 1. To keep the inside of the school clean and free from construction debris, the temporary wall in the commons will remain until summer.

Administration plans to use the Reindeer Run fundraiser to raise money for the shell of the auditorium, offering the same morning a “Sip and See” for participants to see the progress of the project. Raising money for the shell of the auditorium now would save the school about \$200,000 in construction costs.

Cassie Siersma, Director of Development, plans

to continue fundraising via invitations to dinners at restaurants where the school can present the plans and the need, and then ask donors to help out. Siersma hopes that once the community sees the need for the auditorium, fundraising will ramp up, especially once pledges are fulfilled for phase two.

A reason for the slow-movement of fundraising for the auditorium shell may be because it is more of a part two to the second phase. However, Siersema points out, there has been no public launch for the auditorium, so she has no concern right now.

The 15 additional classrooms and the vocational wing is \$14.5 million, all which has been accounted for. The completed auditorium is projected to be about \$6.5 million.

A final dedication for phase two will be planned for fall of 2024. Mr. Davids is “excited as we [the school] could use it.”



Iron workers began setting the steel for Phase Two during the last week of October.

Photo by Jeff DeVries

Career opportunity program at Illiana, how it works, and how students benefit from the appointments

Kaelyn Yonkman

Reporter

The Career Opportunities Program, or COP, has been around for 50 years. This program helps students figure out what career is best for them. This program is available to juniors and seniors who want to learn more about real work experience before they graduate. Students are allowed

1-2 appointments per year. On these appointments, students meet with and ask questions of professionals in different careers.

It’s an optional program, but most kids do decide to go. Mrs. Amy Gibson, head of COP, said that students are interviewed in the fall by volunteer moms to figure out their interests and to gauge what places would be good for them to visit.

Gibson said that sometimes students only have a broad view of a job but don’t know about its specifics. She added, “Sometimes kids go in and don’t even know what it [the career] is.”

The students go to places of employment that they’re interested in and spend a while there. They could be there anywhere from 1 hour to a whole day,

depending on the career. This program’s purpose is to “give career exposure to the students. The program helps students in their potential career path because it could tell them whether or not they might like the job.”

There are a lot of resources available to Illiana students, like parents and alumni that can help get students into all different places. According to

Gibson, “the community embraces the kids,” really welcoming student visitors into various workplaces. There is no common place that students visit, and that’s what’s so interesting about this program. The program spans across all different fields, from law to nursing to education to the trades. If students have a career interest, the COP office will seek a partner with whom the students can meet.

Freak volleyball accident leaves one-armed math teacher relying on video lessons in class

Kenadie Piepenbrink

Reporter

Math teacher Dave Bosman is in a sling thanks to a freak volleyball accident on Oct. 1.

Bosman was playing in a co-ed adult volleyball league when

the accident occurred. Bosman was playing defense and went to dig a ball. When the ball hit his arm, he said that “it felt like a shot of electricity went through my arm.”

He later found out that he ruptured his bicep tendon. He

had to have surgery on Oct. 25, 2023.

Because of the surgery, Bosman had to miss multiple days of school. Since he was not able to teach in person, he made videos explaining the lessons for his classes. The surgery went very

well but it has made teaching a little more challenging for him because of his not being able to type or write on the board.

“You don’t realize just how much you use your arm until you hurt it,” Bosman said. The injury has affected his daily life,

making it more difficult just getting dressed and ready in the morning, driving, and cooking for his family.

Bosman expects a full recovery and even hopes to be able to get back to playing volleyball in February for the spring.

Praise crowd undergoes changes to match chapel theme

Ellie Ratliff

Reporter

Praise Crowd, a unique Illiana tradition which encourages student worship after certain sporting events, is undergoing a change this year. For the first time Illianas Praise crowd committee is not going to have a year

long theme like they did in the past such as Marvel and Finding Faith. Instead they are going to connect to our chapel theme for the after game worship.

Craig Slings, co-sponsor of chapel committee and Praise Crowd, said that we want to develop connectivity and reinforce unity by

using the same message. Slings said, “I know myself I often need things repeated in order for them to sink into my head.” By unifying the chapel and Praise Crowd themes, the school believes their impact will go further.

Rachel Drost, the other co-sponsor of Praise Crowd and chapel committee, said

she is not worried about being too repetitive. Drost said, “The world we live in is always changing, so we always need to be thinking about how we can glorify God and enjoy him.”

Praise Crowd is also going to change how food will be served. Instead of getting food at the beginning

of worship events, it will be offered toward the middle of the night. According to Drost, the committee’s idea is that this will allow the students to eat as a community while worshipping God. The first Praise Crowd night, Nov. 17, focused on the concurrent chapel theme of leadership.

Taking the hectic out of holidays

Making a Christmas list checking it twice, saving some time sure would be nice

Kailyda Anderson
News Editor

With the Holidays approaching, it's time to prepare for many things such as shopping, hosting parties, cooking, and cleaning. It can be stressful because of how much time and effort is put into making the Holidays live up to how movies and music portray them. With the right amount of preparation, all the things that make us stressed

can become easy and stress-free.

Here's a plan for removing the stress from Christmas shopping:

- 1. Make a budget:** list all the names of who you're shopping for and how much you want to spend on them. That way when you get to the store, you already know how much you'll be spending.
- 2. Bring the exact amount of money you're planning to spend** so you

don't go over your budget. Use cash instead of a debit or credit card so you have control over what you are buying and can stick to your budget.

3.Shop early!! Do your shopping ahead of time so you're not stressed on Christmas Eve because you forgot to buy someone something. If there are online deals during Black Friday sales, take advantage of those and get your shopping out of the way.



Photo courtesy of Decorator's Warehouse

Store displays might tempt you to spend more than you budgeted. Shop with a list and you'll more readily avoid temptation.

Reduce holiday busyness in four different ways

Lucas VanderWoude
Editor-in-Chief

It's the most hectic time of the year! The holiday season is notorious for cramming schedules and causing stress, which leads many people to dread the season instead of looking forward to it. However, there are ways to reduce the amount of holiday strain:

- 1. Create a schedule/calendar**
This sounds very boring and time-consuming, but it is worth it. You will thank yourself later after you have 4 family gatherings in one week and you don't have any time to spare at all. Organizing is a great tool, and using it during the holiday season helps immensely.
- 2. Don't be afraid to stay home**
Who said that you needed to be doing something every single day during the holiday season? Sometimes it's best to free up a day and spend a day relaxing. Put the day at home on your calendar as a scheduled event so that you don't lose it. You could read a book, do a craft proj-

ect, take up a new hobby- the possibilities are endless.

- 3. Don't procrastinate**
This piece of advice obviously applies outside of the holiday season, but it is even more important when there are endless tasks and social events that are taking up your time. If you have free time to do something, do it-- it will save you less stress in the long run and free up more time for relaxing and spending time with family and friends.
- 4. Make time to meditate on the reason for the holidays.**

The holiday season begins with Thanksgiving, reaches its climax in Christmas, and ends in celebrating the gift of a new year. If you spend the first week or two focused on gratitude, spend the next few weeks contemplating the mystery and miracle of the incarnation, and finally spend the final week seeking joyfully to embrace a new year as a gift from God, you might find that the busyness of the season unrelated to these things suddenly pales in importance.

Beating the holiday blues Battling with seasonal sadness

Lucas VanderWoude
Editor-in-Chief

Winter is here, which means two things--shorter days and longer nights. While many people might be excited for the holiday season, many others might be experiencing Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). This is a period of depression and fatigue that occurs during the wintertime, and it is a major letdown for people when they see everyone having joyful holidays and they can't. Here are some medically researched tips for combating this seasonal sickness:

- 1. Be around others.**
It is true that the long nights and the cold, dreary days don't

exactly inspire the most joy in people, but being around others helps immensely. It doesn't have to be a huge extravaganza either--even a simple get together with friends helps.

- 2. Make the most of the daylight that you have.**

This might be difficult for people in school, so the week-ends are a

good time to do this. If it's not an outrageously cold day, then going outside and getting fresh air, even if it's for only a couple minutes, can go a long way.

- 3. Light therapy**
If these two techniques don't work, then light therapy might be the answer. Light therapy consists of sitting by a light box, which is a special type of lamp designed to mimic sunlight, for an extended period of time. This light is supposed to act as a simulation for the daylight that is lost during the winter months.

If you find yourself suffering from SAD in the coming months, don't be afraid to tell someone. Support from your family and friends is essential to the alleviation of loneliness and depression.



Never alone in the season of stress

Lucas VanderWoude
Editor-in-Chief

During the holiday season, most, if not all, of us reunite with our families and spend time together with food and festivities. However, there are some people who feel very lonely during the holidays. These could be people who are estranged from their families, live far from their family, or simply feel lonely even while surrounded by those that they know and love. For those of you who are feeling down this time of year, here's some things that might help you.

- 1. Recognize that you are loved**

Sometimes we try to trick ourselves into thinking that nobody loves us or cares about us. This is not true. No matter how lonely you feel during the holidays, realize that there are people in your life who care about you and are willing to help you through troubling times.

- 2. Try to find a supportive community**

If you can't find anyone in your life right now who loves you, then maybe a new community is the answer. Try to find people who share the same interests as you or have a skill or talent that you have. A good community is a great way to alleviate feelings of loneliness.

- 3. Take the initiative**
Instead of waiting around for

somebody to invite you to a party, host one yourself. Or ask someone to go for dinner or a movie or a church service. Many, many people would be happy to join you if you only ask. To sit around passively waiting for an invitation is to choose to remain lonely.

- 4. Talk to God**
If you feel like you have nobody that you can talk to, remember that God is always available. It doesn't even have to be during a designated prayer time either. Talk to him whenever you feel like it. Matthew 11:29 says: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."



Photo courtesy of Warner Bros.

Clark Griswold of "Christmas Vacation" is a classic picture of someone succumbing to the stress of the season.



Advice for navigating the path to further education

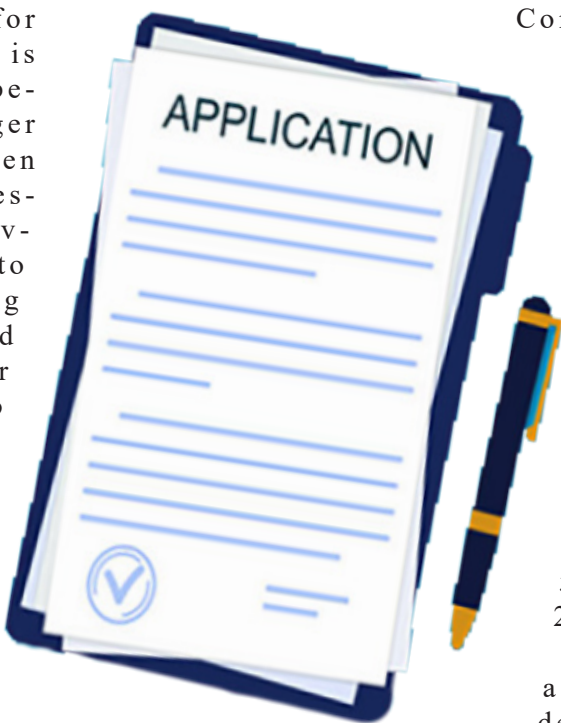
Best things to know when starting college applications

Kelsee Smit
Feature Editor

When starting college applications the best advice according to the College Board is to start early, fill them out weeks in advance, get good recommendations, and be consistent. Mrs. Melaine Benes and Mr. Neil Zandstra strongly advise all college applications to be finished by Nov. 1, which is when many of the colleges' early decision applications are due. An early decision allows students greater opportunity for scholarships that schools offer

or an easier path into honors programs. "Best advice for college applications is to start them early because they take longer than you think. When it comes to writing essays and listing activities you don't want to be rushed with having to complete them and you want to do your best," according to Mrs. Benes. If a student is interested in certain colleges, she should go to that school's website and look into when the deadlines are and how they can apply. Many

colleges now use the Common App.



According to Common App, "Today, Common App is a non-profit membership organization representing more than 1,000 diverse institutions of higher education. We connect applicants and those who support them to a wide array of public and private colleges and universities across all 50 U.S. states and 20 countries." Common App is a great way for students to apply because they need to

complete only one application that then gets sent to multiple colleges. It takes a little while to fill out all the information but it is a huge time saver in the end. Mr. Zandstra said, "Biggest tip to juniors reading this is in September of your senior year, start your essays and ask teachers for letters of recommendation at least 2-3 weeks in advance [of deadlines] so they can do a good job without being rushed. Also start visiting colleges and have it narrowed down to 2-3 schools when you start applying."

Scholarships offer assistance to persistent students

How to get most bang for your buck

Kelsee Smit
Feature Editor

Once college applications are done it is good to start focusing on finding and applying for different scholarships. When paying for college scholarships are your best friend. As majority know college isn't cheap and when coming down to the final choice money can be a big factor in where someone ends up going. Most of the scholarship money will come directly from the school that a student is attending, whether its merit, athletic, arts or any other reason for scholarship money to be awarded, but

there are other ways to get scholarships for college. There are private scholarships that organizations will sometimes give out scholarships through an application process, some include companies like Coca Cola, Dell, Burger King, Dr. Pepper, and Google. Those private scholar-

One good resource for finding scholarships is College Board Scholarship Search, it is a free website that helps you apply to scholarships by connecting to the Common App account. It will require you to fill out a few questions about yourself such as ethnicity, gender, intended major, GPA, and more. Then the website uses this information to help match you to scholarships to which you are eligible to apply. Another good way to find scholarships is through the Remind app, which the counselors use to send out information to junior and seniors as they get it from schools. Also if students check their town they can sometimes find scholarships that their town or city will give to residents of that specific area.



Scholarship opportunities to check out

- Scholarship contests
- CollegeXpress monthly scholarship
- Niche monthly scholarship
- Nitro college Scholarship
- ScholarshipOwl no essay scholarship
- Be Bold Scholarship
- Because College is Expensive Scholarship
- BigFuture Scholarships
- Book recommendation scholarship
- Christian Connector scholarship
- SP Scholarship
- CampusReel virtual tour scholarship
- ScholarshipPoints scholarship
- Smartercollege scholarship
- Agma Foundation Scholarship Program
- Americanism Essay Scholarship
- Frame My Future Scholarship
- Live Bearded Scholarship

Alice in Wonderland confuses, surprises audience with whimsical production

Lydia O'Riley

Sports Editor

The annual Illiana Christian Fall play was presented on Nov. 2-4. The performance was a 70's rendition of "Alice in Wonderland." The play followed Alice's experience after falling through a rabbit hole and trying to climb her way back out by meeting new people and talking to new

creatures.

Senior Justine Olson, who played the lead role of Alice, said, "The play was really fun. I loved how it was 70s. I thought it was a genius idea; it made no sense which was even funnier... It was the wackiest, most phenomenal play."

When it came to difficulties the show brought, Olson said, "I'm a very busy per-

son.... It was just doing a matter of doing all these different things plus the play, but honestly it wasn't too difficult; it was just more of managing my time the right way."

Olson added, "Tech week was kind of crazy because we were just trying to get everything together and remembering lines was a huge thing."

The Illiana Drama Department has worked to include

anyone they can in any way they can. Junior Atikilt Bosman described the parts of the play in a unique way, "Like with the body, there are so many components and there are so many parts with drama. You've got the sets, the props, and the crew obviously and all the directors."

Olson said, "It's (drama department) a huge family... you just get welcomed and

it's like a big hug."

Junior Sam Franco explained that the play was "a very avid experience for the viewer because I had no clue what was going on."

Junior Hannah Sherman said, "It was the craziest thing I ever watched, but it was so good! I think it was so funny and everyone was perfect; it was just a little confusing sometimes."



Justine Olson as "Alice" reads the poem "Jabberwocky" while the other cast members listen.

Photo by Jim Kamphius

'The Inheritance Games' Review: exciting, with many twists and turns

Lydia O'Riley

Sports Editor

"The Inheritance Games," follows Avery Grambs life-changing opportunity. She must play billionaire Tobias Hawthorne's final game by moving to his estate and solving riddles to inherit everything Tobias left after he died; otherwise, she will pass up a life of luxury and go back to living in her car. Tobias Hawthorne has always been a trickster and game player. Is Avery truly the inheritor of his fortune, or is she just a pawn in Tobias's final game?

Avery Graham was a regular teenager until she was pulled out of class and told she inherited over \$40

billion from Tobias Hawthorne, a man she doesn't even know. Avery is sent to live at Hawthorne House in Texas along with the rest of Tobias's living relatives. She must live there for one year in order to receive the money put away in the trust. Tobias's grandsons, Jameson and Grayson, work to find out what Avery is up to; Grayson believes she is a con artist working to steal the family fortune, while Jameson believes she is their grandfather's last big game.

She must solve the riddle Tobias has set for her with the help of all four Hawthorne grandsons. Towards the end of the book a love triangle is introduced between Avery, Jameson, and Grayson, but who will Avery

choose? Will they finish the game Tobias set for them?

"The Inheritance" games is a well written book full of riddles, games, and unexpected plot twists. The book was a mix of playing Tobias's game, working through family difficulties, and pushing through grief while creating new relationships. While the riddles were easy to figure out, they were essential to the plot.

Make no mistake, "The Inheritance Games" is a spellbinding page turner that induces chills right up to the last page. The book, written by Jennifer Lynn Barnes, is the first in a trilogy followed by "The Hawthorne Legacy" and "The Final Gambit." It was published in September of 2020.

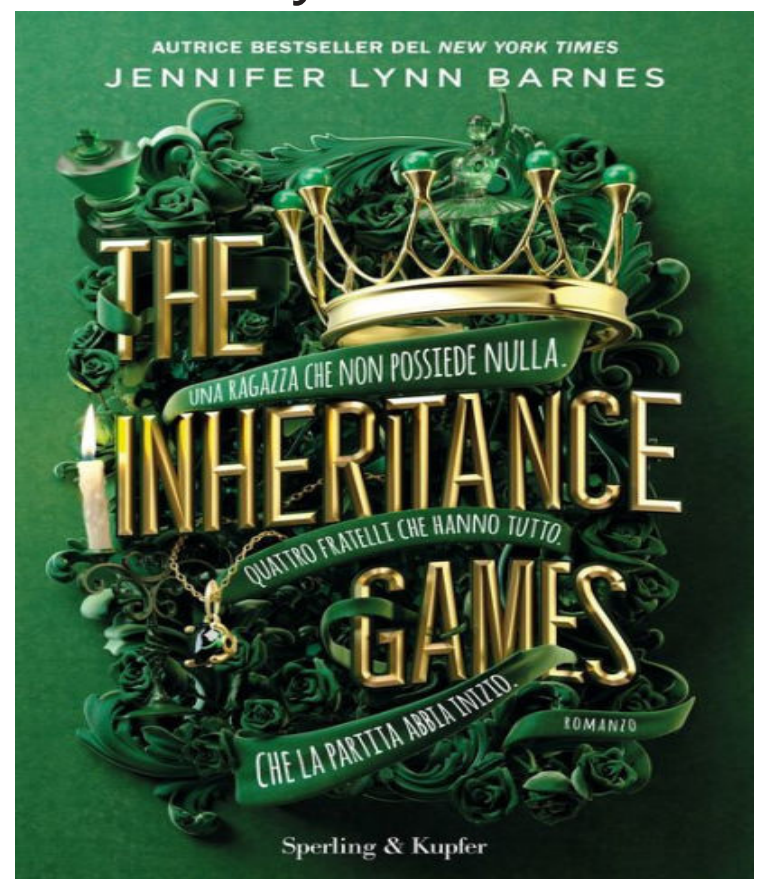


Photo Courtesy of Google

‘Running phenoms’ Ella Olthof, Avery Olthof go downstate

Gabriella Costello
Reporter

Illiana’s very own running phenoms and cousins, junior Ella Olthof and senior Avery Olthof, ran in the state finals for cross country on Saturday, Oct.

28. They both PR-ed by at least 10 seconds, Ella came in 73rd with a time of 19:05, and Avery came in 95th with a time of 19:16.9. The girls left on Friday after Illiana’s student body cheered them out the door with

the school’s traditional send-off chant. Coach Luke Fennema, who accompanied them, explained that the Friday departure allowed the runners to run the course before the actual race. The state finals occurred on the Lavern Gibson course in

Virgo Country, Indiana. The course was packed with nearly 250 girls from over 25 schools. “The stands were also packed,” said Fennema. Illiana had sent 2 mini-buses to the site on race day. The buses consisted of the cross-country

team and other fans who made the trip to support the Vikings. The finish in state finals was the end of a road that started during the off-season. Avery and Ella have worked hard, always pushing to do better and to keep going even when tired.

Girls wrestling doubles in size, goals for advancing to Sectionals

Giannia O’Neal-Schultz
Arts and Leisure Editor

The Illiana girls wrestling team had its first tournament of the season here at Illiana on Saturday, Nov. 4. The team won its tournament against Crown Point with a score of 54-24 and Hobart with the score of 45-30. Junior Hannah Hammer said, “Everyone who was supposed to be there showed up and everyone put in their work and it showed.”

The girls wrestling program has grown a lot here at Illiana, the girls have many goals one of them being to place top three at regionals. Girls wrestling coach Matthew Vander Laan said, “Our goals for the season are to place within the top three in our regional and advance more than half of our girls to sectionals in the state tournament. Illiana will host the girls regional at home on Dec. 30. We encourage everyone to come out and watch!”

As the girls wrestling team grows more improvements have been made, Vander Laan said, “The team continues to grow in size as more girls discover the sport and it gains legitimacy at the high school, collegiate and Olympic level. Our girls wrestling team has doubled in size each of the last four years, with 15 girls now participating. Over the summer, we also had more girls than ever attending camps, clinics and clubs to help take their grappling to the next level.”



Photo courtesy of ichs_athletics
Freshman Kaleigh Bennett, lifts Hobart wrestler in first tournament of the season on Nov. 4.

Illiana’s second largest auction brings in \$83,000

Lucas VanderWoude
Editor-in-Chief

The Illiana Athletic Department raised more than \$83,000 during their auction that took place on Saturday, Nov. 11. The event consisted of a silent and live auction, in which 110 in-person bidders competed for items that were donated to the Athletic Department or bought with monetary donations. Besides the in-person bidders, there were 25 who participated in the live auction online. The items varied widely in value, with the silent auction having the less expensive items and the live auction having the more expensive items. The items in the live auction ranged anywhere from \$100 to \$7,000.

Darren DeBoer, Illiana’s Athletic Director, said that the Athletic Department is constantly changing the auction items to fit the participants’ interests. “I think we’re always trying to find out what people are interested in,” he said. “There’s things that change every year in terms of what’s trendy and what people are interested in doing, so I think it’s important to be in tune with what’s going on and what people want to be a part of.” Overall, the auction was a success. “In terms of money, it was the second largest auction that we have ever had,” said DeBoer. “I also thought it was a success because it ran so well.”



Photo courtesy of Heidi Teach
The freshman team takes on Crown Point.

New basketball coach Heidi Teach talks goals, favorite parts of coaching

Giannia O’Neal-Schultz
Arts and Leisure Editor

The Illiana Girls Freshman team’s new coach is Heidi Teach. Mrs. Teach has been a teacher here at Illiana for about five years, and back in her student days, she was a varsity player in the girls basket-

ball program. Her goals for this season are to help the players grow as people and help advance their basketball skills. Mrs. Teach said, “My goal for this season is for the girls to grow not only in their basketball skills but their faith. I also want them to love basketball.”

Teach has coached before. While she was a student in college she coached high school volleyball and 8th grade volleyball. Her favorite thing about coaching is getting to know the players in different ways and being able to connect with her players.

Boys wrestling: off to a great start despite have many new members

Kelsee Smit
Feature Editor

The boys wrestlers have had a good start to their season. Coach David DeBoer said, “We have guys wrestling in the off season, training which is promising, and we have an experienced group showing up. We have a good group of juniors and a couple of seniors that are experienced that will lead the way, but the core juniors are really hard working and they will be the heart of the team. We are excited for the year.” Junior David Antunez said, “Our season is going pretty good. We have a lot more people compared to last year. Most of our

team is brand new so we can train them and teach them a lot.” The boys competed against Highland in a dual meet losing 60-21 due to lack of wrestlers for specific weight classes; forfeits in those weight classes cost the team a lot of points. After competing against Highland, Coach David DeBoer said, “They performed really well. They wrestled very tough and their condition showed. The struggle was covering all the weight classes. Junior Gage Bambic added, “We lost as a team but we didn’t fill 5 or so weight classes which gives them about 30 points automatically. As a team we did re-



Photo courtesy of Jeff DeVries
Senior Carson Ulrich gets ready to pin wrestler from Highland High on Nov. 15

ally well. We only lost 2 matches for Varsity.” Senior Carson Ulrich said, “It has been good; it’s weird settling onto a new team, but I like most of the guys here and I think this season will be good.”

Male Athlete of the Month

Gage Bambic, junior, is November’s Male athlete of the month. This is Bambic’s third year wrestling for Illiana. Wrestling coach Dave DeBoer said, “Right now, it’s (candidate for male athlete of the month) Gage Bambic because of how much he’s improved since last year. He’s always here.” DeBoer added, “Two things about Gage: 1. He stays out of trouble and 2. He shows what hard work can do. He shows how hard work can show improvement athletically, but also how hard work can show improvement personally.”



Female Athlete of the Month

Abbie Ritzema, junior, is November’s female athlete of the month. Varsity basketball coach Denise VanRyn said, “Abbie is one of the two captains on the team. Abbie is a solid example of what an athlete should strive to be like. Her joy filled spirit lifts up the team and her work ethic is admirable.” VanRyn added, “She can often be found working and putting extra time in the gym. She also is the athlete that is always willing to pick up and help coaches after practice. She led her team at our first home conference game with 19 points. She is in my coach’s opinion what every Viking should strive to be like, humble and shining for Jesus every chance you get.”



Editorial

It’s okay to be sad: How to deal with depression, lack of self-worth

With the season and time changing, so do people’s moods and mental states. Many people, even the students in our own halls, experience seasonal affective disorder (SAD) where they experience seasonal depression. A big question a lot of people ask themselves is “Am I just sad, or am I actually depressed?”

According to the CDC, “You may feel sad for different reasons. You may have experienced major life changes or disappointing events...When a sad mood lasts for 2 weeks or more and interferes with normal everyday functioning, you may be depressed.”

Every person feels sadness. It is a normal emotion to feel when life takes an unexpected or sharp turn. Students can feel sad over hundreds of things such as a break-up, a loss of a loved one or pet, a hardship in their family life, or struggles academically.

Mr. Neil Zandstra, one of the school counselors, explained, “If a person feels worthless, or they lack joy in hobbies or activities they used to love, if they sleep too much

or too little, or have lost energy for everyday tasks, this would be a sign of depression...If the symptoms last longer than a couple weeks..., this person should get help.”

People can feel hopeless when they are stuck in

oneself of purpose is to seek professional help. Talking to someone about what you are thinking and feeling is very important. It is not good to keep all of the emotion you are feeling inside. Zandstra said journaling can also be a beneficial

an activity together, especially physical activities like walking or other sports to get endorphins working. Bake them something, share meals together, basically let them know they aren’t alone in their sadness or depression. Most importantly you can pray with and for your friend who is struggling. Share scripture with them to remind them of their worth in God’s eyes and remind them that He walks with them every day.”

It may feel like be-

ing around people is the last thing you need when you are depressed, but talking to and hanging out with friends and family is a great way to spend your time. They can boost your mood and remind you of how loved you really are.

Zandstra added, “I encourage people not to believe the negative self-talk happening in their brain but to see themselves as God sees them--as his precious child whom He loves very much. It’s easy to run from God when depression sets in, but that is the time to run directly to Him and talk to Him about it.”

Every person feels sadness. It is a normal emotion to feel when life takes an unexpected or sharp turn.

their depression and need to know that they have a purpose. Zandstra said to ask yourself these questions when you lose your purpose, “When do you feel the most fulfilled? What brings you joy? What accomplishments mean the most to you? What goals do you have for yourself?” Also, remember that today doesn’t dictate tomorrow. Tomorrow is a new day and you can make it a good day if you choose to do so.

Another way to remind

way to get your feelings out and then you can look back and see your improvements.

Sometimes, students can feel like they are not seen when they feel depressed. As a school we need to show those struggling with depression that we do care and that we are here for them. Zandstra gave this advice to the friends of students with depression, “Do more listening than talking, be present with your friend, invite them over to spend time with you, do

If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again

In the beginning of my freshman year, I sat at my desk with my head in my hands, feeling helpless and overpowered. My thoughts were clouded with self-doubt and sadness as I felt the old sting of failure sweep over me. I had just failed my math test for which I had studied for so long. I just felt like all the time I put in

was a waste. I just couldn’t believe that I allowed myself to fail. I was just so disappointed in myself. But while I sat there, completely overcome with sadness, a tiny voice inside of me muttered, “It’s good to fail. Always



Giannia O’Neal-Schultz
Arts and Leisure Editor

persevere and give it another go.”

Failure has always been a difficult pill to swallow growing up, but I knew in my heart that it was a necessary component of life. We actually learn how strong and resilient we are through those times of failure.

I finally realized that failure was not the end; it was merely a stepping stone on the path to success. The most extraordinary stories are born out of perseverance, determination, and the ability to rise above setbacks. I reminded myself that some of the greatest minds and visionaries of our time had encountered failure countless times before reaching their goals. Thomas Edison’s light bulb had failed a thousand times before it finally illuminated the world.

With more drive and determination, I stood up and cleared my desk of the past disappointments. I took a deep breath and made a conscious decision to embrace failure as an opportunity for growth rather than seeing it as a dead end. I knew that the journey towards success was often paved with missteps and challenges, and it was up to me to navigate them.

I started by revisiting my goals, breaking them down into smaller, more manageable tasks. I understood that success was not achieved overnight but required consistent effort and a willingness to learn from my mistakes. I surrounded myself with a support system—friends, mentors, and fellow dreamers who believed in me and my abilities. Their encouragement served as a beacon of light in the darkest of moments.

As I tried to reach my goal, I encountered obstacles along the way. There were moments when self-doubt crept in, threatening to derail my progress. But I reminded myself of the lessons failure had taught me—that setbacks were not permanent and that success was within reach if I persevered. I then started to celebrate small victories, recognizing that they were the building blocks of something greater.

A small victory I still think about was in 5th grade. I started doing club track and field for the Five Alive Blazers. I had never run track before that. When I first started running, I used to hate it but then I learned to love it but I always had one event in which I wanted to win first place—the 100 meter dash. I always used to come in second or third but never first. I then started to train hard and get out of my blocks faster. And then, one day I tasted success when I had finally beat my personal record and came in first place.

The journey of life and success may be hard, but the destination will be worth every moment of struggle. Trust in your ability to persevere, for failure is not an end. It is merely a change in direction on the road to greatness.

the Echo)))

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

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

How much do you really know about the history of Thanksgiving? Take this quiz to find out!)))

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Which of these foods was definitely on the original Thanksgiving menu? | 3. Which president established Thanksgiving as a national holiday? |
| A. Turkey | A. George Washington |
| B. Mashed Potatoes | B. Thomas Jefferson |
| C. Stuffing | C. Abraham Lincoln |
| D. Lobster | D. Teddy Roosevelt |
| 2. Who was the governor of the Plymouth colony who organized the first Thanksgiving feast? | 4. Thanksgiving bears a resemblance to which Jewish holiday? |
| A. John Smith | A. Sukkot |
| B. William Bradford | B. Rosh Hashanah |
| C. Miles Standish | C. Purim |
| D. Christopher Columbus | D. Shavuot |

Answers: 1.D, 2.B, 3.C, 4.A

Information taken from history.com

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