



Illiana students brave cold weather and icy conditions to protest abortion in annual March for Life

Cheyenne DeJong

Reporter

Thirty Illiana students attended the Right to Life march in Washington D.C. along with Jeff White, Rachel DeVries, and other chaperones on the weekend of Jan. 19-20.

A major change for the 2024 trip was that students flew. In previous years, students took a coach bus. Junior Jaylee Hanks and senior Avery Olthof, second year attendees both, compared their first trip to their second in this way.

"It was a lot faster getting there and we didn't have to sleep on the bus. Despite our delays in the airport on the way back, flying was a lot more fun compared to our long bus ride last year," said junior Jaylee Hanks, a repeat marcher.

"I loved flying, and sleeping another night in a hotel and not on the bus was re-

ally nice," said Avery Olthof, a senior attending for her second time.

Students left school on Thursday, January 18, at 2:30 a.m. for their flight. Many who went also explained their experiences with walking ten miles after a few hours of sleep, layering their clothes for the snow, forming blisters from all the walking, and seeing D.C. in the snow. One girl even burned holes in her socks from hand warmers.

"It was cold," explained Hanks. "On the march, it snowed a lot and it was slippery. I was warm enough with leggings under my jeans, and Under Armour fleece under my sweatshirt, which was under my coat and my hat, scarf, gloves, and two pairs of socks under my boots. My feet went numb for a bit."

On their last day, the Right to Life students took



The students of the Right to Life March stand with their signs on the day of the March, which took place from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Friday, January 19.

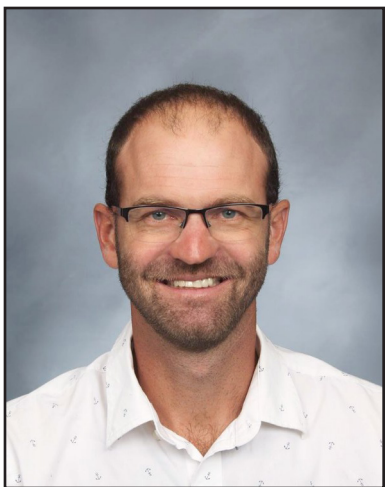
an unexpected visit to three Smithsonian museums.

Olthof encourages other students to attend this march in the future: "It's just a re-

ally cool experience to march for life and to see how many people are pro-life who take the time to drive or fly to come out."

"Go next year!" Hanks advised. A number of students agreed that they would do it again despite the weather struggles.

Illiana's lead STEM, engineering teacher to become eighth principal



Brent Vermeulen will become Illiana's new principal on June 3.

and made a recommendation. The executive committee of the board then considered that recommendation and made its own to the full board of directors.

Lance Davids, Illiana's Head of School, explained why Vermeulen was chosen for the job: "If you hear him talk, he talks a lot about having a passion for learning and design.... He's always been about creating and having kids work really hard figuring things out, and those are all things that we want our educational leader to show our students."

(See page 2 for more)

Lucas VanderWoude

Editor-in-Chief

Brent Vermeulen, one of Illiana's current STEM and engineering teachers, will succeed Mr. Boonstra and become Illiana's eighth principal on June 3, 2024.

Illiana's process for selecting a new principal included multiple steps. First, the search committee made up of faculty, staff, and board members searched for possible candidates

Illiana celebrates 78th Homecoming with games, festivities, costumes



Jarvis Mickles and Cheyenne DeJong celebrate being crowned Mr. and Mrs. Illiana.

Joy Ramsey

Reporter

With a theme of Illiana Studios, this year's homecoming week of events took place from January 22-27.

Starting the festivities was this year's spirit days. On Monday stu-

dents roamed the halls with wagons, shopping carts, and many other things for Mary Poppins anything but a backpack day. Tuesday, the school was filled with white lies on tee shirts for Pinocchio day. Adam Sandler look-alikes took over all the halls for Wednesday. On Thursday the school turned into IllianaLand with Disney characters all around

the school. Friday the classes assembled into their grade colors for Avengers day.

On Friday the games began. During the school day all grade levels participated in the annual tradition of the Viking Games. This included the court dance, cheer routine, games presented by student council, and the annual shooting competition.

Friday night the spirit flag was awarded to the class with the most stars from this week's festivities including dress up days, door decorations, and the Viking Games. This year's flag was awarded to the class of 2024 by student council president Avery Olthof.

Next came the big moment, as Illiana's court was announced. The winners from 2023 winners, Audrey Yonkman and Caden Buxton, announced this year's Mr. and Miss. Illiana, Jarvis Mickles and Cheyenne DeJong.

Afterward, the varsity basketball team capped the night with a win against Victory Christian. With a final score of 58-52 the Vikings defeated the Lions.

Living life backward should be more than chapel challenge

As Christians we are told to be set apart from the world. The whole theme of chapel is to live life backwards. So why is it so hard for us to be set apart and to live life backwards?

We live in a world of social media where it is simple to hide behind a screen and say horrendous things about other people. We think it's funny or that there will be no consequences for what we post or say about someone; however, in my opinion, this is cowardice. If you cannot say these things to someone in person, then don't say them at all. If the statement you are making is not true, don't make it. This advice seems easy to say, and it is, but I know it is not always easy to follow. I'm not saying I never make fun of someone or make a mistake because that is far from the truth. I find myself getting caught up in social media and what other people are saying as well. We should hold ourselves accountable and make sure that what we are saying is kind and truthful.

Just as important, we should not be an audience to others who, in person or online, are disparaging others. Everyone is worthy in the eyes of the Lord and we need to treat them as such.

We are told to encourage one another in love, so why can't we do that? Why do we feel a need to tear people down? Maybe because it's a situation of "If they're not talking about me it's fine" or "Who cares it's not true? What's the big deal?" It is a big deal. God wants us to care of one another and watch out for each other.

We need to take a step back and realize that we are all human, we all make mistakes, and we shouldn't judge people out of hate or out of our own insecurities. We need to love everyone. We need to care if people are being made fun of. We need to care if people feel left out at lunch. We need to care if people are walking alone in the halls. We need to put more effort into loving people.

People may be asking themselves "Why should I put in the effort of loving people and treating people well if I never get the same effort back?" It's a valid question, but at the end of the day we should treat other people the way we want to be treated; it's the Golden Rule. If you want change to happen, be the change. Be the change you want to see in the world. And then be patient. You might be surprised to find that, given time, you'll get more of that love and encouragement pointed back at you too.

I'm giving myself a challenge this year that I hope you all will join in on. "How can I show someone a little more love today than I did yesterday?"

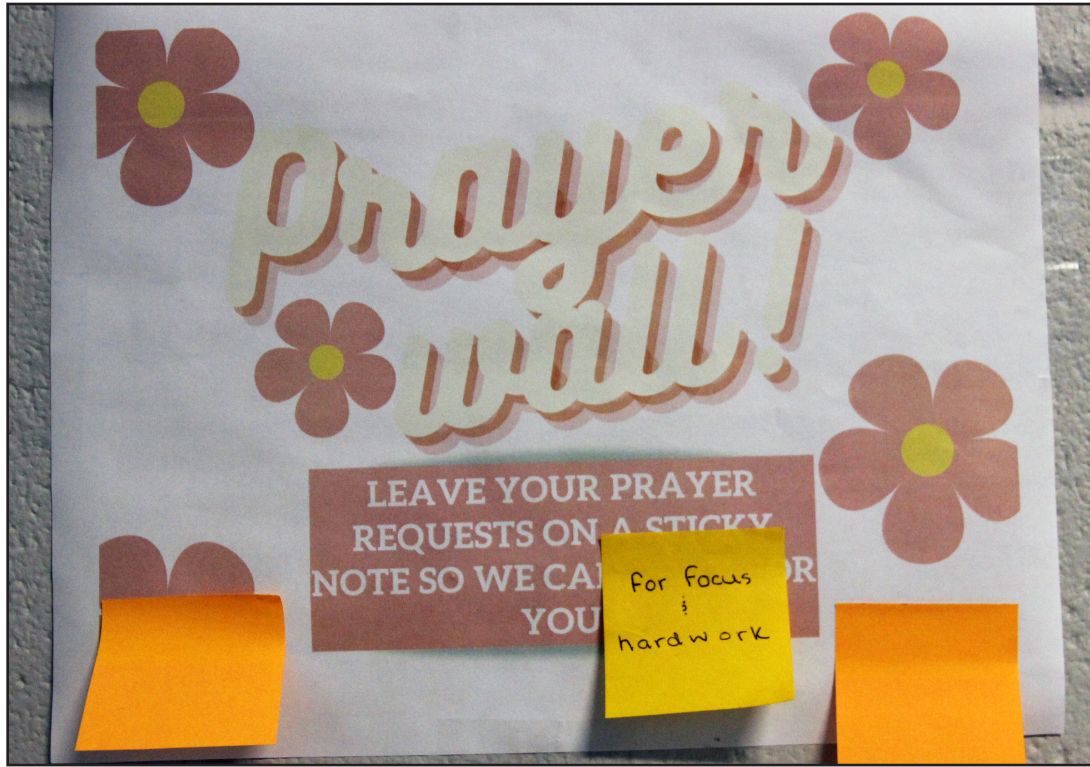


Photo by Jeff DeVries

The Prayer Wall in the girls bathroom on Jan. 23 included a request from one student for focus and diligence. The prayer walls in the two girls bathrooms mysteriously appeared in the fall semester of this school year.

Prayer walls bring girls encouragement, build community,

but the people behind the walls remain a mystery

Kaelyn Yonkman

Reporter

Something that not everyone knows, especially the males in Illiana's building, is that both girls' bathrooms in the academic wing feature prayer walls that feature sticky notes in a myriad of colors and pens where someone can write down a prayer request that she has.

The prayer walls are a bit of a mystery: From students to even guidance counselors, no one knows anything about their origin.

They are also com-

pletely anonymous. Girls who desire prayer for something write their requests on sticky notes and put them on the wall. A girl can write down something specific that she's struggling with, or a general request that can be applicable to everyone at our school. The prayer walls provide young girls a safe place to entrust their struggles to a fellow student who may either share that same struggle or who just has a heart to keep that person in their prayers. If someone is struggling and she doesn't feel comfortable sharing it out loud, she can be completely anonymous and put trust in other Christian girls at our school to pray for her and look out

for her.

Not only are students sharing their struggles or challenges, but many also use the opportunity to write uplifting messages in response to the requests that they see. At one point, there was even a message from a mom of a student at our school, encouraging every girl at our school.

Sophomore Kati Dobrijevic thinks that the prayer walls are a great thing, and that they can really help to boost confidence. Sophomores Delaney Kelley and Annabel Kamphuis have put sticky notes up to request prayers for tests and the anxieties that come along with them.

Current juniors, seniors offer suggestions for new courses

Reese Jansma

Reporter

As Illiana's student body and its physical presence both continue to grow, new classes are an opportunity. The Echo polled juniors and seniors to ask about classes they would like to see offered in the future.

Senior Tyler Mock said, "I would like to see new engineering/STEM or some sort of class added for people who want to go into the trades." A fair number of students in the poll mentioned the desire to have a larger selection of vocational classes for students not planning on college.

Shawn Kramer, a junior, said, "I want to see more shop classes such as woodworking, welding, and mechanics for kids who aren't going to college and want a head start."

Other students expressed an interest in adding other language such as French, Chinese, and American Sign Language options to the curriculum. Junior Lily Huynh said, "Many students want to learn other languages besides just German and Spanish."

Other suggestions included a music theory class, a coding class, biophysics, home construction/remodeling, and 3-D modeling and animation.

Illiana is planning on offering a number of new classes next year, including more vocational classes.

Q-and-A with Mr. Vermeulen, Illiana's next principal

What attracted you to apply for the job of principal at Illiana?

After much thought, prayer, and consideration, what influenced me to apply was when others around me told me what my gifts were and the leadership skills that God had instilled in me. Sometimes it takes God to speak to you through others.

What do you think are some of Illiana's strengths, and how do you plan to build on them as the next principal?

Illiana has countless strengths to encourage and teach our students how to love God and love others. I love how Illiana teaches God's design in every subject area and how we can apply that to better the kingdom of God. The bigger Illiana community and the outside sup-

port that we receive through others' time, treasures and talents is amazing here at Illiana, too.

What are areas where you think the school could be stronger or better, and how do you plan to address them?

One specific area that I plan to

be better at is to connect our local business with our students and be able to inform them about the opportunities available for them besides just going off to college. In a few of our new courses we will have business owners and workers connected to our school come and speak to students. In the near future I plan to develop a job fair where local businesses and trades come in and actually hire our students. At the very least this will be a great networking opportunity for our students and our community. I want to continue the academic excellence that our students are held to so we can continue to develop students who are college and career bound and be a people that grows the kingdom of God in wherever God places them.

What strengths do you think you bring to your new position?

Some strengths that I bring to this new position are my ability to adjust to any situation that arises, my efficiency with technology and also my problem-solving skills. I think that I have the ability to lead with humility.

If you had one deep desire for Illiana going into the future, what would that be?

My top desire for Illiana is exactly what we all want and that is to continue in this wonderful tradition with the staff and teachers to teach and empower students to love God above all and then to love others around them. We know that if this happens then everything else falls into place.

I am extremely excited to be able to serve in this way at Illiana Christian High school. I am looking forward to what God has in store in this next chapter of Illiana.

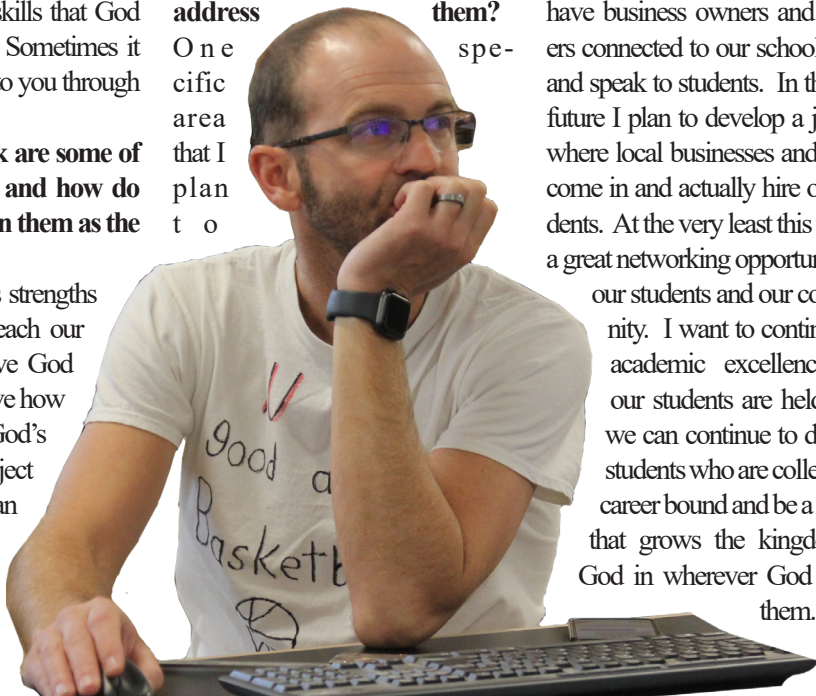




Photo by Dan Blom

Illiana’s 2024 homecoming court. Back: Jarvis Mickles, Zander Weemhoff, Isaac Sherwood, Andy Spoelman, and Isaac VanderWoude. Front : Abby DeBlock, Maisy Vroom, Cheyenne DeJong, Justine Olson, and Kelsee Smit.

Getting to know Vikings ‘24 homecoming court

Ellie Ratliff

Reporter

- 1. What advice would you give someone new coming to Illiana?
- 2. What is something you want to see change within Illiana?
- 3. What’s your favorite memory here?

Abby DeBlock

- 1. Get involved and get on your teacher’s good side. Go to all the loud crowd games not just the Friday night ones
- 2. Less division between grades and more community
- 3. The trip to semi state is one of my favorite memories. It made the team so much closer. We spent the entire day together which we usually do.

Cheyenne DeJong

- 1. I would tell them that your circle is not going to stay the same and that you should branch out and meet new people and just be kind to everybody.
- 2. I’d say more kindness. We’re pretty good overall with that but there’s also a lot of people putting others down, especially over social media.
- 3. Class trip, that was a blast. We

talked to everybody and got along with everybody and saw new things.

Justine Olson

- 1. Just put yourself out there. It’s a small school so it’s easy to make relationships with people. Be bold in your faith and do what you want to do.
- 2. Bringing people out of their comfort zone by inviting them to games or events. See more people from certain groups or like lunch tables inviting people from different groups and get more together.
- 3. There’s so many great ones! I remember this year’s loud crowd, I think it was my first time coming, it was just the loud crowd, hyping everyone up, and going to praise crowd. It just felt so homey.

Kelsee Smit

- 1. Join as much as you can, be friendly to everyone. Put yourself out there because you never know who you’ll meet or what opportunities you’ll get through just doing things.
- 2. I would love for there to be a Right to Life club. I was talking to someone in DC about it and she is willing to help set up a club at Illi-

ana for Right to Life which I think would be amazing.

- 3. My favorite memory is definitely class trip!” it was so much fun, I got to get closer with a lot of my fellow seniors.

Maisy Vroom

- 1. Get involved! Illiana has so many different opportunities.
- 2. I can’t really think of anything which is a good thing!
- 3. My favorite Illiana memory was going to DC for our class trip. Not only did I get to explore our capital and learn some history, but I also got to have a great time with my classmates. Also the teachers make it a lot of fun.

Jarvis Mickles

- 1. Embrace the high school challenges, make memories. Enjoy every single moment.
- 2. I want more kids to become friends and for there to be fewer arguments.
- 3. Winning the Christian cross country meet to represent our school!

Isaac Sherwood

- 1. Join a sports team and find a group of friends that you can fit in with.
- 2. I would like to see more people

step out of their comfort zone and find new friends that are outside of their friend group.

- 3. Either winning the state championship for baseball my sophomore year or going on the senior class trip.

Andy Spoelman

1. Definitely find the right friend group. Being surrounded by great friends really made my experience way better at Illiana and it was one of the biggest things that I did, was find the right friend group for me. We stayed together throughout the 4 years and have grown very close.

- 2. I don’t know; I kind of like everything. I can’t think of one certain change. I would say putting exams before [winter break], but I know that’s going to change soon so that’s about it.
- 3. Loud crowd games are always fun and the dances. And just talking to friends in the hallway.

Isaac VanderWoude

- 1. I would say try new things; be comfortable being uncomfortable. Put yourself in situations you aren’t typically in. Try to figure out what you do and don’t like and find your way that way,
- 2. I think it’s changing but taking sports more seriously as a community. Every sport from tennis to basketball to whatever sport. Just taking more pride in our athletics here.
- 3. When the baseball team won state. And when we went on the class trip this year.

Zander Weemhoff

- 1. Try to find friends in activities you do and things you relate to because there’s a lot of good people at Illiana. Get involved in activities like sports. If you like a teacher, try to get as many classes with him or her as you can because it makes school more fun. Just have fun.
- 2. For people to be more on fire for the Lord and for students to be less involved in worldly things.
- 3. The class trip was super fun and also when I was playing soccer we won the sectional final at home and it was raining and all the students ran onto the field and we were going crazy.

Some students looking forward to exams prior to Christmas in years ahead

Abigail DeBlock

Reporter

Illiana Christian High School announced that the 2024 fall exams will occur before Christmas break instead of after break like previous years.

Head of School, Lance Davids, says that the switch happened because the board is “trying to balance the semesters” and they feel it is “better educationally to finish the semester before Christmas.” He thinks that “leaving for Christmas break knowing the semester is over is going to be a relief for students.”

Teacher and Assistant Principal Rachel Drost said that it doesn’t matter academically when exams fall, but it is important that each semester is as close to 90 days as possible. Drost explained, if the semesters were to be uneven, “students taking a one semester class [in the shorter semester] might not get the same opportunities as students who take the course in the longer semester.”

Illiana freshman, Mya VanderWoude, thinks it “was a very good idea to move exams because it will be much easier for the students.” She said that currently students have to “re-learn” their material after coming back from the break. She added, “Students can also come back to school with a fresh start” with new schedules because of the semester change.

Sophomore Caleb Kieft agreed with VanderWoude, adding that he can “chill over break instead of doing review guides and studying.”

Vikings robotics team ‘rumbles’ to school best in Portage High competition

Gabriella Costello

Reporter

Illiana’s robotics team made a strong showing at the Region Rumble at Portage High School on Dec. 16, advancing one of its groups to a fifth-place finish. That team consisted of senior Ethan VanDrunen and senior James Noble. These two gentlemen secured the highest placing of any robotics team in Illiana history by making it to semi-finals in the tournament. Sixty-four teams competed at the tournament.

ment.

“The tournament starts out with a bunch of matches to get your ranking,” explained Mr. Joshua Gabrielse, one of the team’s coaches. “Once you get past the ranking matches you then do elimination matches. If you are an alliance captain or get picked by one, then you go on to the elimination rounds.”

Alliance captains are selected by the ranking their teams earned in the opening round. After Noble and VanDrunen joined an alliance, the advanced to the semi-finals.

The tournament consists of qualification matches, a round of 16, quarterfinals, semifinals, and finals. In the competitions themselves, student-designed robots are controlled by the team that designed them, and the machines must perform certain functions, such as putting a ball into a goal or climbing a pyramid. The robots that perform best score the most points and advance.

“Matches become harder when your opponent has a more advanced robot or when the driver is more experienced,” said VanDrunen.



Photo courtesy of Joshua Gabrielse

Seniors Ethan VanDrunen and James Noble pose with their robot at Portage High School’s Region Rumble on Dec. 16. The duo advanced to semi-finals.

New year, new me: how to keep those new Year resolutions

Kelsee Smit

Feature Editor

It's the beginning of a new year, a fresh start, and a great time to set new goals and commit to better habits, but what happens when spring begins and life gets more busy? The excitement of a New Year's resolution wears off quickly and leaves you with feelings of failure.

For 2024, the Forbes Health/OnePoll survey found some resolutions to be more common than others, with the most popular goals including

Resolution:

"Be healthier/ no sugar, half iron man"

-Lance Davids

improving fitness (48%), improving finances (38%), improving mental health (36%), losing weight (34%), and improving diet (32%). Less popular resolutions include traveling more (6%), meditating regularly (5%), drinking less alcohol (3%) and performing better at work (3%).

So for those who

have created new goals for themselves but feel like those goals are slipping out of reach, here are some steps to make sure you keep that resolution.

Start by choosing a specific goal.

Every year, millions of adults resolve to "lose weight," "be more productive," or "get in shape" during the next year. Instead of selecting such an ambiguous goal, focus on something more concrete that you can realistically

set your sights on. In other words, choose a very specific, measurable, and achievable goal.

Limit your resolutions

While you might have a long list of

potential New Year's resolutions, Richard Wiseman, a professor of psychology at Hertfordshire University, suggests that you pick just one and focus your energies on it rather than spreading yourself too thin among a number of different objectives.

Focus on one goal at a time

Achieving even one small goal can boost your belief in yourself. For larger goals, consider breaking them apart into manageable chunks to work on one at a time. Instead of trying to lose 15 pounds all at once, for example, focus on losing one pound per week. The American Psychological Association (APA) also suggests focusing on just one behavior at a time is more likely to lead to long-term success.

Put time into planning

Don't wait until the last minute to choose your goal. Picking wisely and putting in extensive planning are essential parts of achieving any goal. Experts suggest that you brainstorm how you will tackle a major behavior change, including the steps you will take, why you want to do it, and ways you can keep yourself on track.

Make a detailed plan

If you start working toward a goal without any type of plan in place, you may quickly find yourself giving up when faced with any sort of obstacle, setback, or resistance. For example, if your goal is to run three times per week, what will you do if you've missed four days in a row, and how will you proceed if you need to take time off for an illness or injury?

Start with small steps

Taking on too much too quickly is a common reason why so many New Year's resolutions fail. Starting an unsustainably restrictive diet, overdoing it at the gym, or radically altering your normal behavior are surefire ways to derail your plans. Instead, focus on taking tiny steps that will ultimately help you reach your larger goal.

Small steps lead to

success

If you have resolved to run a marathon, start out by going for a jog two or three times a week. Slow-

Resolution:

"Do devotions everyday"

-Autumn Polak

ly, work up to longer runs and exercising more days per week. If you are trying to eat healthier, start by replacing a few less healthy foods with more nutritious options. Then, tackle another element of your diet, such as adding in a greater variety of vegetables, reducing portion size, and/or cutting back on fried food or eating out. While it may seem like a slow start, these small incremental changes make it easier to stick to your new healthy habits and increase the likelihood of long-term success.

Avoid repeating past failures

Another strategy for keeping your New Year's resolution is to not make the exact same resolution year after year. "If people think they can do it, they probably can, but if they've already tried and failed, their self-belief will be low," Wiseman explained in an interview with The Guardian.

Remember that change is a process

Those unhealthy or undesired habits that you are trying to change probably took years to develop, so how can you expect to change them in just a matter of days, weeks, or months? Be patient with yourself. Understand that working toward your resolution is a process. Even if you make a misstep or two, you can restart and continue on your journey

towards your goal.

Get support

Yes, you've probably heard this advice a million times, but that is because the buddy system actually works. Having a solid support system can help you stay motivated and accountable.⁸ Camaraderie makes sticking to your resolution more fun, too. So, ideally, find a like-minded pal or loved one to join you in your goal.

Renew your motivation

During the first days of a New Year's resolution, you will probably feel confident and highly motivated to reach your goal. Because you haven't really faced any discomfort or temptation associated with changing your behavior, making this change might seem all too easy. Don't get lulled into a false sense of security.

Keep working on your goals

By March, many people have lost that initial spark of motivation that they had in January. Keep that inspiration alive by continuing

Resolution:

"Get bigger quads"

-Julia West

to work on your goals, even after facing setbacks. If your current approach is not working, reevaluate your strategies, and develop a new plan. Being flexible with your plan—and even your end goal—will help you be successful.

Learn and adapt

Encountering a setback is one of the most common reasons why people give up on their New Year's resolutions. If you suddenly relapse into a bad habit, don't view it as a failure. The path toward your goal is not always a straight one, and there will often be challenges along the way. Instead, view relapses as learning opportunities.



Homecoming traditions evolve across decades

Kelsee Smit
Feature Editor

Homecoming is a tradition that goes way back in Illiana's history. Before the Lansing campus had its big gym built, Illiana would host the homecoming game at Thornton Fractional South High School because the small gym in the Lansing campus couldn't hold the crowds.

In the early 60s, the school crowned a Miss Illiana and a runner-up, but there was no homecoming king. Different student organizations also made floats to celebrate.

In the 80s, the homecoming committee would take multiple days to

decorate the gym. The themes were huge and every class would have homecoming floats that they would pull out on homecoming night.

Illiana never had a Mr. Illiana until 2000 when Phil Rienstra became the school's first.

Another huge difference was that in the past, homecoming events happened on a single night. There was no dance, so students got dressed to the nines and sat in bleachers that way to watch the homecoming game. People would then start drifting off around halftime or slightly later to go out for dinner with the dates or friends. Freshman and sophomore year students tended to



Homecoming court of the year 2002 sitting watching the basketball game in the elaborate European Escape-themed decorations.

eat more locally. Junior or senior year they would often go downtown for dinner.

Over the years parents introduced a parent-sponsored dance. Initially the dance was the same night as the game, afterward, but after about five years, the dance was switched to Saturday night and homecoming began to resemble more and more what today's students recognize.

Mr. White, who has taught at Illiana for over thirty years and who graduate in 1987, said,

"The decorations now are not near the scale they used to be. Kids would be in school throughout

winter break painting the backdrops. People would come to homecoming to see all the decorations."



Ms. Illiana of 2000, Melissa DeVries gets crowned by Robin Sutorius. First Mr. Illiana Phil Rienstra in the background.



Float from the year 1961 that was created by the Echo staff and received 2nd place.

Student councils planning technique for 2024 homecoming

Kelsee Smit
Feature Editor

Student council does all the planning for homecoming that impacts the entire student body. They are in charge of picking the theme, planning Viking games, planning the dress up days, and organizing the court.

The last two years student council has started the planning for homecoming in October by dividing into four groups with someone from each grade working in each group to create a theme and presentation of everything they would like to do. Then the four groups make their pitch to the rest of the

council. The full council narrows it down to two themes and continues working on those themes to expand and suggest changes. Finally the two ideas get presented to the full group again for a final vote, and the theme for that year is set.

Student Council has a fundraiser from singing telegrams, fundraisers for Valentines day, and a portion of the admission into the homecoming game. These revenue streams contribute to the planning and paying for homecoming.

Student Council sponsor Ms. Sara Johnson said, "I care very much that homecoming is memorable for you (students), so if students ever have ideas about things to make it better, please

come let Mrs. Aardmsa and I know. We really work and try to be the most inclusive for the most people. And just participate in it; things are more fun if people participate."

Members of student council spend time coming during break to finalize Viking games and paint the

posters for the dress up days.

Senior Student Council President Avery Olthof said, "My experience has been great. It is super fun to pick all the themes and be creative with it. Everyone is super nice and we agree on things easily."



Seniors battle against juniors but come up short in tug-of-war.



Homecoming court 24' does the annual pep rally dance

“Mean Girls” Movie Review

Lydia O’Riley
Sports Editor

The new 2024 “Mean Girls” seems to forget how cruel girls can really be in high school.

Cady Heron is a sweet 16 year old girl who has moved back to the United States from Kenya. She goes to North Shore High School where she quickly makes friends with Janice Ian and Damian Hubbard. Janice and Damian are quick to warn Cady about the “Plastics,” the mean girls of the high school. The “Queen Bee” is Regina George followed by Gretchen Wieners and Karen Shetty.

Janice influences Cady to join the Plastics and get inside info on Regina George. Regina introduces Cady to the Burn Book, a place to write innermost thoughts and feel-

ings about people to later be “burned” so no one can read them.

Tension builds between Cady and Regina, so Cady makes it her mission to take Regina down. Over the course of a few weeks rumors are spread and Cady learns a valuable life lesson of owning up to one’s mistakes.

In this rendition of “Mean Girls,” the plot of the original movie is told through music with bits of dialogue to keep key lines from the movie intact. The music they chose was from the 2018 Broadway show of “Mean Girls.” While the music was a nice touch, it was somewhat unexpected considering it was unmentioned in the trailers.

The characters seemed softer than the original film which questioned the “mean” aspect of the movie. Yes, the

movie was overall enjoyable, but it left an unusual feeling of something missing since the “mean girls” were a lot nicer than in the original. In that sense, the musical remake doesn’t quite capture the tension and drama that surrounds catty girls in high school, which is why I’d give my nod to the original film as being the superior one.

Reneé Rapp, pop star sensation, played Regina George. Chris Briney, star of “The Summer I turned Pretty,” played Aaron Samuels, and Auli’i Cravalho, voice of Moana, played Janice Ian.

This movie showed us how using a role in society can be beneficial to people or detrimental. It shows character development and the importance of owning up to one’s mistakes.

Running time: 1 hr 52 min
Age rating: PG-13



Photo courtesy of Google

Illiana Drama Deparment welcomes middle schoolers into cast of “The Sound of Music”

Giannia O’Neal-Schultz
Arts and Leisure Editor

This year in Illiana’s spring musical “The Sound of Music,” two middle school students, Oliva Edwards, a student at Crown Point Christian, and Isabelle Abbasy, a student at Highland Christian, are playing the

roles of Gretel and Marta Von Trapp. This is Illinana’s first time including middle students in an Illiana production since the last time the school did the same musical in 2001, and working with children presents some unique challenges and joys.

Mrs. Emily Hillgeonds, one of the directors, said, “It has been challenging get-

ting practice time together. We practice with them on Mondays and Tuesdays and changed some of the times during tech week because we don’t want them staying up all night.”

Isabelle and Olivia have been a great addition to the cast, added Hillegonds. Over 20 girls auditioned.

Hillegonds said, “ It was so hard trying to de-

cide who would be cast as Gretal and Marta because everyone did so well, but we chose the girls who we thought best fit the characters.”

The Illiana Drama Department has welcomed the girls and included them as a part of the department.

Junior Adia Falvey said, “ It is so fun being able to work with them.

When we [the high schoolers] were first told that the directors were casting younger kids, I was surprised and it feels really special to be able to mentor them.”

Sophomore Daniel Pomeroy said, “It has been more fun having the little kids presence there. They have a lot more joy and energy than what we have after school.”



Junior Adia Falvey helps middle schoolers Olivia Edwards and Isabelle Abbasy mark changes in one of the song they are performing.

Photo by Jeff DeVries

Bosman, Costello go downstate, each bring something different to team, building up girls' wrestling program

Lydia O'Riley
Sports Editor

The girls' wrestling team capped a great year by winning state regionals and ultimately advancing two girls all the way downstate.

Illiana held regionals for the first time on Dec. 30. The team won first place, and 13 of the 14 girls advanced to semi-state. Juniors Amy Bosman and Khiari Robinson, sophomore Gabriella Costello, and freshman Kaleigh Bennett each placed first in their weight classes. Senior Sam Banks, junior Hannah Hammer, freshman Ella Hammer, and sophomores McKenzie Bell and Renee McClenahan each placed second in their weight classes.

The girls' competed at semi state on Jan. 5 at Penn High School. Junior Amy Bosman and sophomore Gabriella Costello advanced to the state tournament.

Indiana's state tournament was held at Kokomo High School on Jan. 12. Bosman and Costello put up a good fight, but sadly lost each of their first matches leaving them out of the running to place.

Girls' wrestling coach Matt Vander Laan said that the team had a goal of placing in the top three at Regionals, so advancing two wrestlers to the state level was "beyond our wildest expectations."

Vander Laan added that to get Costello and Bosman ready for state, they went over the fundamentals and worked on being mentally prepared. "From a coaching perspective, this isn't the time to learn new things, but to remind them that it's 'just another tournament' and to trust their training."

Bosman and Costello each brought something different to the

team. Vander Laan explained, "Gabriella is unbelievably strong for her size and can really push an aggressive, always attacking pace in her matches. Amy has a more laid-back, but unconventional style with a lot of funky moves that tie her opponents up in knots. She makes great use of her length and [wrestling her is] like wrestling a boa constrictor."

To build on the momentum next season, Vander Laan said the team needs "to attract more athletes from other sports by showcasing wrestling as a legitimate women's sport and path to valuable college scholarships. We need to build a feeder system in the grade schools. We need to keep our best athletes engaged in camps, clinics and clubs to make sure we take advantage of the nine month offseason to keep getting leaner, faster and stronger."



Photo courtesy of Gabriella Costello
Junior Amy Bosman, sophomore Gabriella Costello, coaches Matt Vander Laan and Dean Bosman pose with trophy at state on January 12.

Taking their shot at Cougar Classic Tournament, boys basketball wins first place

Lucas VanderWoude
Editor-in-Chief

During Christmas break, the Illiana boys varsity basketball team dominated the Cougar Classic tournament, which took place on Dec. 29 and 30 at the Manahan Orthopedic Capital Center located on the campus of Grace College.

The tournament consisted of two brackets with 3 teams in each bracket. On the first day of the tournament each team played the other teams in their bracket,

and on the second day of the tournament the first, second and third place teams from each bracket played each other. Illiana was the first place team in its bracket and narrowly beat Bethany Christian, the other first place team, by only two points with the final score 54-52.

Tom Roozeboom, the boys varsity coach, said that the tournament was a momentum boost for the team.

"[The tournament] gives them something to play for," he said. "Otherwise they

have this long break and they lose a little momentum and don't get to work on some of the skills that they should be working on."

Andy Spoelman, a senior at Illiana and a member of the team, received the Most Valuable Player award for his performance in the tournament. He said, "Most of our team's success in the tournament came from our shooting. We simply couldn't miss... The bench was also able to step up when needed and give solid playing time."



Photo by Jeff DeVries
Senior Andy Spoelman drives toward the hoop against Victory Christian at homecoming on Jan. 26.

Molding new wrestlers, a key to showing off improvement

Lucas VanderWoude
Editor-in-Chief

The boys wrestling team has done well so far this season, with both Carson Ulrich and Gage Bambic as standout wrestlers.

Ulrich's record is currently 25-1, and Bambic's is 28-6. Coach David DeBoer praised their "really hard work and trust in the process." DeBoer also said that the two areas in which the team has improved the most this season are conditioning and movement. "We create a lot of action which helps our conditioning shine. We have used our conditioning as a weapon and used it to mold better wrestlers in the last period," he said.

The main struggle that the team faces is lack of weight classes. DeBoer spoke on this problem: "Every dual we give up 3-4 forfeits against teams that fill every weight class. It's hard to overcome giving up a 24 point lead. We have done it, but it makes things difficult. To overcome this we are looking to continue building the size of the program. We would like to get from 23 guys back to 40."

Girls basketball improves during season, focuses on team's four core covenants

Giannia O'Neal-Schultz
Arts and Leisure Editor

The Illinana Girls Varsity Basketball team has been on a 7 game win streak with a win on Jan. 25 against Victory Christian by a score of 53-14.

The team's overall record this season is 13-8. This season there has been a lot of im-

provement and development within the team.

Girls Assistant Coach Aubrey Colvin said, "As a team, we strive to improve with each passing practice and game. The girls have improved their passing, scoring, and rebounding from where it was at the beginning of the season to now."

Junior Amariah Allison said, "One improvement I have seen is us having a better record this year and playing better as a team."

Colvin added, "Early on in the season, we played some tough opponents in class 3A and 4A. We saw that we could make it a competitive game with these teams

at times, and that is what we are looking for. Our goal is always to continue to grow and develop throughout the season. We want to be a better team at the end of the season than we were coming in. Our team has four core covenants (faith, unity, grit and attitude) that we have committed to living out."

Male Athlete of the Month



Greater South Shore Conference record breaker, junior Zack Vervlied is January's male athlete of the month.

As Illiana's only member of the swim team, Vervlied is doing a fine job of representing Illiana well.

On January 6, Vervlied competed in the Greater South Shore Conference Championship and came in 1st place in both of his events, the 50-yard freestyle and the 100-yard butterfly. He broke the 100-yard butterfly conference record by almost four seconds.

Female Athlete of the Month



Senior Cheyenne DeJong, ranked #1 in the state IH-SAA for taking charges, with an average of one charge per game, is January's female athlete of the month.

DeJong is one of the team captains on Illiana's girls' varsity basketball team. She is also ranked #2 in the state for IHSA for rebounding at an average of 12.4 rebounds each game and is only .2 away from being #1 in the state.

Denise Van Ryn, girls' varsity basketball coach said of DeJong, "She is genuinely happy to see others succeed and cheers louder for them than for her own accomplishments. Cheyenne is a hard worker and has a no quit attitude. She is no doubt a superstar walking the halls of Illiana in terms of basketball, but what stands out even more to me as her coach is her admirable Christ-like character."

Editorial

Leaping forward into new year, extra day can put time in perspective

This year is an important year. Why, do you ask? No, it's not because it's an election year. No, it's not because it's the 60th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It's a leap year! We know that you are probably thinking, What's the big deal? It's just one extra day of school. Well, exactly-- it's one more day. That makes it a big deal. One day-- 24 hours, 1,440 minutes, 86,400 seconds. That's how much extra time you have this year. We know that you will probably spend a quarter of this time sleeping, but the numbers still talk. What can you do with 1,400 minutes? A lot of things, probably. Think of how many words you could read, how many songs you could listen to, how many games you could play-- the list goes on. This leap year, we need to be reminded of something that we don't think about very often: What do we do with our time?

Most of us don't really think about how important time really is, and

sometimes we waste it by doing things that won't benefit us in the long run. Think about if you sat and stared at a screen for 1,400 minutes. How would you feel afterwards? Your brain would probably feel like

things that have no positive effects on your life, you will soon feel a lot of regret when you are older. On the other hand, if you use your time wisely doing things that provide nourishment to your soul, you will be a

the best use of the time, because the days are evil." Christians are not supposed to emulate the sinful ideology of "eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die." This might seem to some people to be a good usage of time, but this is not what God requires of us. Instead, we are called to live as Jesus did, walking in love and being messengers

Time is a valuable thing if it is used wisely, and if you spend it wisely, you can change your life.



for the good news of the gospel. This won't just give us earthly gratification; it will be recognized when Jesus returns and says these words to us: "Well done, good and faithful servant."

So as you go out into another year, keep these things in mind: Don't waste your time. Instead, use it to God's glory in the best way you can. Don't let your extra day go to waste this year, or you will regret it. Think of things that you can accomplish by using every single day of this year. All 527,040 minutes of it.

lot happier and have a sense of fulfillment later in life. Time is a valuable thing if it is used wisely, and if you spend it wisely, you can change your life.

Using our time wisely isn't just a good piece of advice that we should consider; it is also part of our calling as Christians. Ephesians 5:15-16 says: "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making

mush, and you probably wouldn't have any sense of vindication. What if you spent that time doing something that filled you with a sense of accomplishment? A lot of us spend our time with instant gratification, but what if we spend it with something more important, something that gives us long-term gratification? As the old saying goes, time flies, and if you keep wasting your time with useless

March for Life built character through trials

I have had the honor to represent Illiana Right to Life for 3 out of my 4 years at Illiana at the annual March for Life. It was an experience that I will remember



Kelsee Smit
Feature Editor

and carry for the rest of my life. I made so many memories that I wouldn't trade for anything. I believe that the Right to Life March is something everyone should experience at least once

in their life.

If you attend the march there will be trials that you will face. People will curse out the windows of their cars at you, security guards will give you trouble while you enter buildings, ice will literally almost fall on your head while you walking on the sidewalk, or anything else that could delay or challenge you while you are standing for God's unborn children.

These trials are just a "coincidence" it is best said in scripture. 1 Peter 5:8-9 ESV says. "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world."

I am saying all of this to not discourage or scare anyone but rather to push for people who attend to persevere and keep pushing until abortion is unthinkable. This goes for many things other than being Pro-Life. It says in the Bible the devil is on the prowl and wants Christians to be devoured and fail in all ways.

That is exactly when you have to turn back to scripture Ephesians 6:11 ESV says, "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil." Only with God by our side, we are able to walk through life.

Only with God by our side, we were able to go to and from DC safely, we were blessed with beautiful snow, and we were surrounded by thousands of like-minded people. We may have faced trials but there is always the sun after a storm. The positives will outshine any negatives.

I encourage everyone reading young and old to make this short but rich experience to their bucket list if they haven't been before. You will be a part of something far bigger than yourself. As I close this column I want to say a big thank you to Illiana Right to Life and all who support, pray and donate for students like myself to experience the March for Life.

the Echo

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Advisor

Jeff DeVries

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

January Echo Word Search



U G J G C M N E L U E M R E V
T F P N P H W Y V R G L O J I
S M W I D W C P T X S H Q Y W
S S N M L A T R A X E J Z B H
U N X O N T B T Y E H H J C O
U O H C S T H N L M L U R F Q
R I C E V K Z E P U T A U R S
H T S M C C T M R S M Q G O W
U U V O I Q W A A I O N U B B
F L L H G U Q N Y C V V S O H
Y O V T J Q R R E A M K C T B
G S I V G T Z U R L P P A I P
B E N N Q U B O N G P U O C H
J R Y X E K E T B O D G G S X
B O K V P D C F L T H I N F X

Word Bank

- | | | | |
|----------------|-----------|-------------|--------------|
| 1. tournament | 2. prayer | 3. leap | 4. musical |
| 5. homecoming | 6. march | 7. robotics | 8. vermeulen |
| 9. resolutions | | | |

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