The News-Gazette

Thursday, November 12, 2026

HIGH SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL

Powered by Danville Area Community College



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

AT BEMENT: Students active in Family, Career and Community Leaders of America, led by teacher **Angela Corum**, participated in their annual Foods for Families food drive. Groups of four to five students drove different routes in Bement and went door to door collecting nonperishable food items. After each route was completed, students met at Bement's food pantry and sorted through all of the items. Each year, this activity allows students to get out in their community and work together to lend a helping hand to their local food pantry.

— Makenna Kindred





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YEAR 11 OF HIGH SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL: POWERED BY DACC

Meet the crew

This year's group includes a record 46 students from 44 schools (*visit news-gazette.com for our photo gallery*). We'll spotlight each correspondent in Top of the Morning on Wednesdays.

Academy: Nicolle Scifres
ALAH: Leighton Poulos
Arcola: Aymara Leal
Armstrong-Potomac: Myah Bartlow
Bement: Makenna Kindred
BHRA: Addie Kruse
Blue Ridge: Cheyanne Smith
Centennial: Kayla Boyd
Cerro Gordo: Jessa Cross
Champaign Central: Sophie Nixon-Gasyna
Chrisman: Morgan Simpson
Cissna Park: Ava Henrichs
Danville: Ashanti Conaway
DeLand-Weldon: Michael Rogers
Fisher: Emily Coulter
Georgetown-Ridge Farm: Liz Walls
Gibson City-Melvin-Sibley: Kasen DeFries
Heritage: Micah Sommer
Hoopeston Area: Hallie Allen
Iroquois West: Jordyn Meents
Judah Christian: Kelsi Drollinger, Xavier Russell
LeRoy: Adrienne Underhill, Jacey Hageman
Mahomet-Seymour: Abby Eden
Maroa-Forsyth: Riley Hackleman
Milford: Kami Muehling
Monticello: Rory Cooper
Mount Zion: Macie Veale
Oakland: Olivia VonLanken
Oakwood: Sidney Dunavan
Paxton-Buckley-Loda: Alex Jones
Rantoul: Jayla Allen
St. Joseph-Ogden: Alivia Learned
St. Thomas More: Quinn Miller
Salt Fork: Anna McCollum
Schlarman: Reagan Troglia
Shiloh: Ali Cash
Sullivan: Claire Kursell
Tuscola: Emma Spillman
Uni High: Krishna Jaswal
Unity: Grace Wherley
Urbana: Sophia Sheyko-Frailey
Villa Grove: Maya Garner
Watseka: Vanysah Hickman
Westville: Myla Mackiewicz



School tours

Carrying on a social-media tradition, each student will take over The News-Gazette's Snapchat account to go behind the scenes at their school (**above**: Milford homecoming).





MT. ZION
THE VERDICT IS IN: NOT GUILTY

AP U.S. history class, taught by **Rich Hansen**, held a mock trial. The defense won, keeping President McKinley from being impeached. There was a jury made up of students not in the class and teachers. The mock trial lasted two days.

— Macie Veale



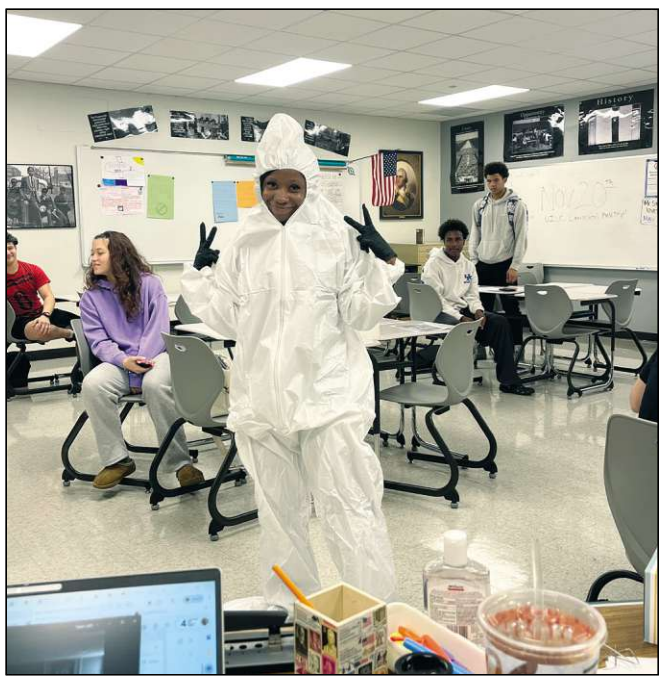




Champaign Central

Months of practice and competing paid off last Thursday when the varsity chess team went undefeated against Bismarck-Henning Rossville-Alvin. **Saad Bhutta** won both of his games in his first time playing varsity, while **Sohum Gurrapu** and **Dennin Meyer** also went 2-0 in their JV matches. Pictured after the win (from left): **Alvaro Juarez**, **August 'Gus' Jordan**, **Drake Holcomb**, **Maddox Todd**, **Daniel Chen** and **Ellis Goddard**.

— SOPHIE NIXON-GASYNA





Centennial

Social-studies classes taught by **Greg Stock** had the opportunity to meet Champaign Police Department personnel, including a crime-scene officer.

— KAYLA BOYD





Westville

Dannika Hamer was named Student of the Month for Westville High School. She is involved in many clubs and is dedicated to the community.



— MYLA MACKIEWICZ

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Gibson City-Melvin-Sibley

On Friday, the music department hosted its annual variety show, giving students the opportunity to showcase their talents and share their love of music with the community. This year's theme was 'Music Legends,' featuring songs from well-known artists such as Michael Jackson, Queen, Dolly Parton, Prince and many more. Along with the group performances, the show highlighted individual student talents through several solo performances. Those taking the stage included **Keiragan Young**, **Lana Racheill**, **Kaitlyn Whitehouse**, **Bradley Fields**, **Grace Steidinger**, **Emery Summers**, **Evan Killian** and **Logan Racheill**. The annual show provides students with a chance to step into the spotlight, share talents that others may not have known they had, and celebrate music together.

— KASEN DEFRIES



ALAH SWEET SUCCESS

The high school was awarded an ISBE 'exemplary' award for achieving the overall highest level of performance under the Illinois accountability system. Students and staff celebrated with ice cream.

— Leighton Poulos



At news-gazette.com

ISBE REPORT CARDS: 28 area schools celebrated exemplary status.



Arcola



Students spent a night around the campfire at student **Mady Lyons'** house while bonding, playing games and enjoying yummy food for this year's AFS fall tailgate. AFS is one of the biggest clubs at the high school, showing school pride, building relationships, and fundraising money to take the seniors on their annual senior trip.

— AYMARA LEAL

Maroa-Forsyth

Two weeks after a first glance at 3D paper mache masks made by **Ashlyn Britz**'s eighth-hour design class, students got to show them off. Troll Face, Batman, 'Zendaya hat' and Coraline were some of the designs.

— RILEY HACKLEMAN







Monticello

On Saturday, the boys' and girls' cross-country teams competed at the Class 1A state meet in Peoria. The boys team brought home the] runner-up trophy. Junior **Eli Anderson** said '(state) means everything to all of us on the team. You can't get through a season of cross-country without having a super tightly knit team like ours, and having all of us continue to run at state is all we could ask for. The coaches all work super hard to ensure that we're feeling our best when it matters most … They ensure we peak at the right time perfectly and that is a very hard thing to do.' Photos courtesy **Noah Hettinger**.

— RORY COOPER



The News-Gazette
Champaign-Urbana, Danville and East Central Illinois

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Blue Ridge

The theater department had its first show of the year last week, 'Maid to Order.' Students who participated (from left): **Jay Phelps**, **Sam Matakis**, **Kindle Johnson**, **Kynlee Row**, **Emily Drozs**, **Chase Moore**, **Sebastian Cox**, **Jonah Hawn**, **Haylee Dean** and **Violet Mintz**.

— CHEYANNE SMITH





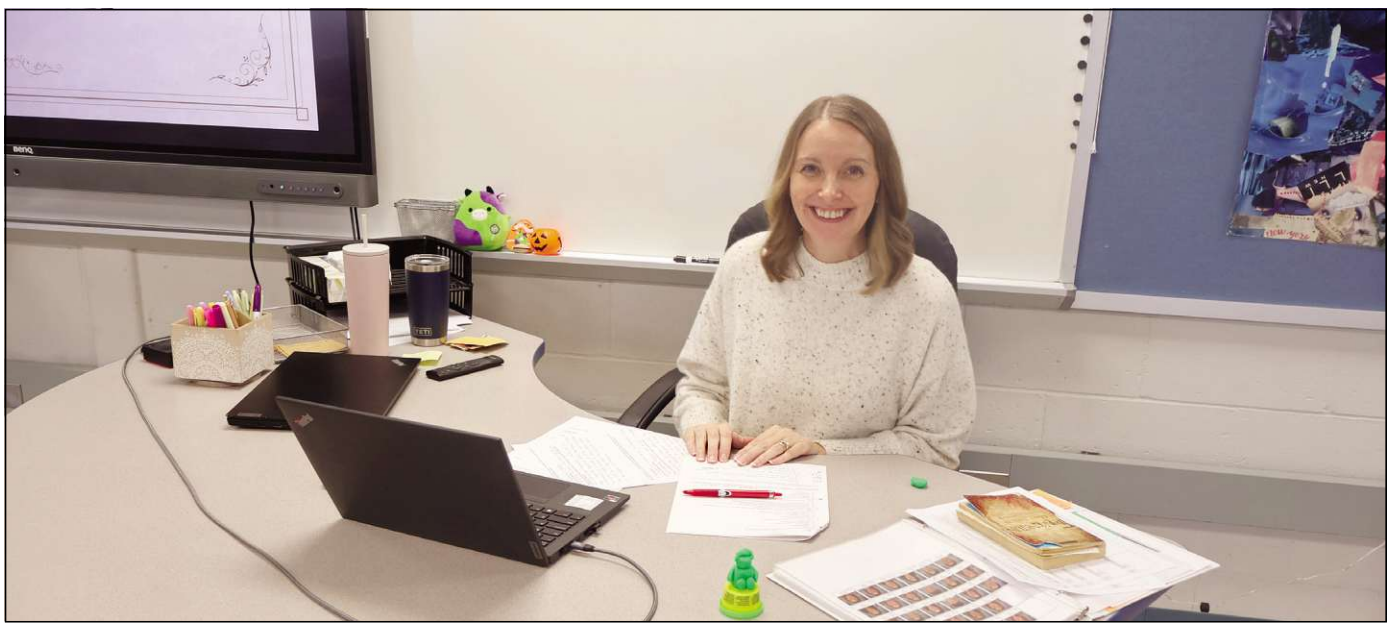
MILFORD
PINT-SIZED HEROES



Last Thursday, National Honor Society helped run the school's annual blood drive, produced by Red Cross. Thanks to the FCS committee, they provided food for blood donors as our NHS members provided care before and after giving blood. Nine students also donated. Pictured: **Noah Bennet** giving blood; **Nolan Ulitzsch**, **Xavi Cintora** and **Molly Coffey** working the registration table; **Nolan Garcia** preparing to donate; and **Ava McCain** recovering after giving blood.

— Kami Muehling





Mahomet-Seymour

AP English literature and composition, taught by **Jamie Colbert**, is studying 'Frankenstein' by **Mary Shelley**. Students led discussions about the novel, and last week, students continued leading discussions in addition to student historian (background information) presentations and novel symbolism quote analyses. All projects include fun activities, such as cookies, making their own creatures, or other activities, and showcase students' creativity. All in preparation for the AP test in May. Pictured: Colbert and **Alba McFarlane**.

— ABBY EDEN





Unity

Student council made Thanksgiving food drive money boxes that were placed throughout the community to raise money for families in Unit 7. Also, there is a competition to see which class can raise the most money. It's a great way for students to give back to the community during the holiday season.

— GRACE WHERLEY

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Cerro Gordo

Senior Night for the volleyball team was memorable and emotional — not only for the seniors but for the crowd who watched them play throughout the years. As seniors **Marissa Gentry**, **Cassie Block** and **Rylan Petty** walked out with their parents, a rose was gifted to them for their hard work and dedication. They played against Blue Ridge and took home the win in two easy sets. The student section's theme was 'Blackout,' and they kept the energy up throughout the entire match.

— JESSA CROSS



URBANA BUTTERFLY EFFECT

Spanish language arts classes participated in a project, Butterflies Our Heritage, a bilingual, cultural and artistic initiative celebrating Hispanic heritage and diversity at the high school. Students created large monarch butterflies using their handprints to symbolize transformation, resilience and connection between cultures. Pictured, from left: **Maestra Montañola**, **Jazmin Gomez-Castro**, **Michaela Hutton** and **Amanda Montoya-Solano**; and **Ezra Chynoweth**.

— Sophia Sheyko Frailey







Tuscola



Forensics classes, taught by **Paula Linker**, have been learning how to search a crime scene all over the school building by using these seven steps: 1) Securing the crime scene; 2) Separate the witnesses; 3) Scan the crime scene; 4) Seeing and photographing the crime scene; 5) Sketching the crime scene; 6) Searching the crime scene; and 7) Securing and collecting evidence. Students pictured: **Aiden Greenstone**, **Makayela Sexson**, **Kalvin Brazzell**, **Kylie Mann**, **Kyndra Hollenbeck** and **Tytus Hornaday**.

— EMMA SPILLMAN





Hoopeston Area

Sophomore **Noah Lambert** competed at Saturday's IHSA state cross-country meet, earning a personal best in the 3-mile race with a time of 16:06. Lambert finished 97th out of 260 runners, capping off his season with an impressive performance.

— HALLIE ALLEN



Schlarman

National Honor Society had its induction ceremony. Along with inducting new members, a new National Junior Honor Society was created for freshmen. The ceremony wrapped up with seniors being honored for their dedication to the chapter.

— REAGAN TROGLIA



Academy High



In **Natasha Capell**'s environmental science class, students have been making their own ecocolumns to model how nutrients and matter cycle, as well as the energy flow in an ecosystem. The most recent additions to these ecocolumns are worms and isopods, our detritivores that are meant to recycle nutrients back into the soil by breaking down dead organic matter.

— NICOLLE SCIFRES

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Watseka

Amy Bandur took her civics class to experience a morning at the courthouse. Students received a tour of the facility and then were able to sit through a few cases. Students spoke to Judge **Michael Sabol** and Iroquois County Sheriff **Clinton Perzee** about their roles at the courthouse.

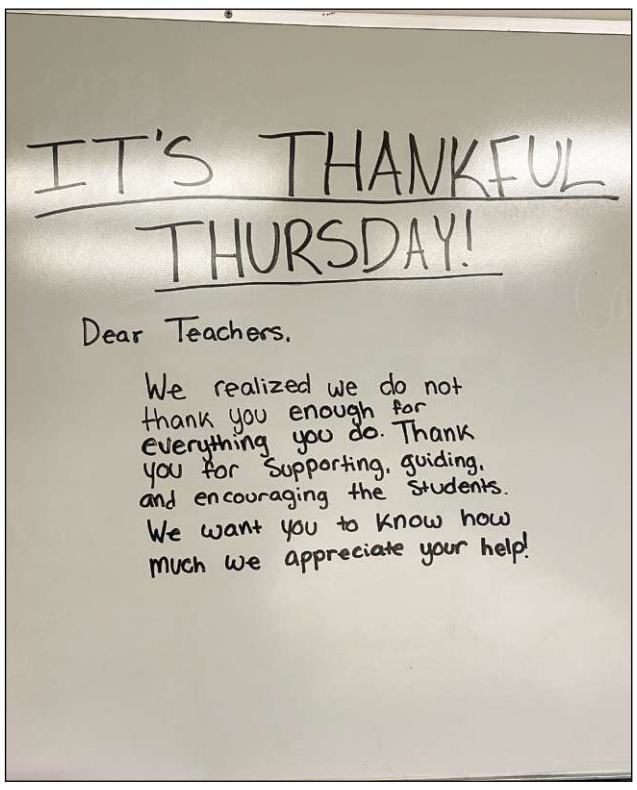
— VANYSAH HICKMAN



Armstrong

Student council recently decided to celebrate teachers all school year. A small committee of members started this month, deciding on a slogan: 'Thankful Thursdays.' On the first Thursday in November, they decorated the teachers' lounge with things they made, along with leaving a note to show the teachers how much the students appreciate them.

— MYAH BARTLOW







VILLA GROVE TAKING FLIGHT

Students involved in FFA hosted a 'SOAR Night' (SOAR is the old Science Night). Students designed interactive booths to demonstrate various science concepts. Elementary students attended and participated while FFA members taught, a fun and informal way for the chapter to inspire incoming classes about science and technology. Especially exciting this year: The Parkland Pathfinder, which is an interactive set of simulators and experimental lessons on aviation, robotics, precision ag and circuits. It was geared for grades six through eight. The FFA leadership team designed stations for wind-energy exploration, water movement through soil, Bovine Rumination, plant stem uptake, pH's role in foods, the science of hydraulics, and how to make plastic from milk protein. It was a fantastic way for FFA members to learn how to plan and organize a large event, present to many different levels of audience, and work together as a team to accomplish a goal. Pictured via **Callie Wegeng**: **Graham Hudson**, **John Morrow**, **Lilly-Lynn Davis**, **Marshall Keigley**, **Wyatt Kamerer**, **Emma Elston** and elementary students.

— Maya Garner









St. Joseph-Ogden

Members of student council traveled to Newman to attend a leadership workshop. They listened to a motivational speaker, played fun council-bonding games, and worked together to create entertaining group cheers. This workshop was a fun and rewarding experience for the members who attended to grow as leaders.

— ALIVIA LEARNED







Fisher

Spanish 4 students had the opportunity to visit the National Museum of Mexican Art in Chicago, where they learned more about Mexican culture and how it's represented through artwork. They were also able to see some well-known art pieces on display. It was an amazing opportunity for the students, who participated in a visual, hands-on learning experience that helped them better understand the culture they had been learning about in class.

— EMILY COULTER

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Uni High

Statistics class, a year-long math course taught by **Emily Buhnerkempe**, hosted its annual Statistics Carnival in Uni Gym during lunch Oct. 28. Students designed and created their own carnival games by incorporating statistical concepts they had learned in class. The carnival was open to all other students. Non-statistics students visited the gym to play games and win prizes. Each game had an entry fee, and participants were given a set amount of fake money to spend during the lunch period. Games offered different levels of rewards, with grand prizes including a Harry Potter Tri-Wizard Tournament game, journals and calligraphy pens. Smaller prizes included stickers, bubbles and bouncy balls. Photos courtesy **Jenny Nham**.

— KRISHNA JASWAL



BHRA FUTURE EDUCATORS

Students **Cami Carpenter**, **Callie Carpenter**, **Tristan Milliken**, **Joshua Pickett**, **Kendra Bray**, **Jayleigh Creamer**, **Hanna Vargas**, **Jazmaya Gerrity**, **Alexis Valenzuela**, **Cary Carpenter**, **Olivia Drullinger** and **Emily Balla** attended the Future Teachers Conference hosted by Illinois State University. They began with an opening general session and a keynote speaker, then attended different meetings all over campus based on their interests. Seeing the many different teaching routes inspired the students' possible career paths.

— Addie Kruse





Cissna Park



In science, **Lacy Renteria** and other students learned the chemistry of baking pumpkin muffins. In construction class, **Austin Kaeb** worked on his boat motor stand. Students had to work on following clear instructions in order to build a project. **Easton Boyce** (left) and **Ayden Schafferchose** work on their project together in construction to build a table.

— AVA HENRICHS





St. Thomas More

Students from Spanish classes contributed in making an ofrenda for El Día de Muertos. The ofrenda, set up by members of the Spanish Honor Society, honors past students, family members and others who have lost their lives. It is a cherished STM tradition.

— QUINN MILLER





Heritage

The high school recently had a multitude of endorsers and donors giving to the 'Hawks Nest,' a room where students can receive free food, health items and hygiene products. Students describe the Hawks Nest as 'delicious and precious,' making it loved throughout the school.

— MICAH SUMMER



Iroquois West

At Saturday's craft show at the high school, different vendors set up in the gym, and many performers got to showcase their skills on stage. Clubs like entrepreneurship and the music department both helped set up and participated in selling goods.

— JORDYN MEENTS

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Oakwood

Student council held its annual fall blood drive with ImpactLife as staff, students and community members had the opportunity to donate. Senior **Karsyn Vogel** chaired a blood drive that had 18 successful donors, including 14 first-time donors. Pictured**: Kaylee Dieu**; **Bella Martin** and **Harlow Woodard**; **Victoria Dunavan** and **Sidney Dunavan**; **Tegan Rogers** and **LuAnn McMasters**; and **Leah Rhinehart**.

— SIDNEY DUNAVAN






SALT FORK FRIGHTS FOR ALL

Art Club brought the community together with Halloween excitement by organizing a 'Fright Night' fundraiser. It combined a haunted basement with carnival games to offer an event that appealed to all ages — from young children to adults. The haunted basement blended humor with spooky elements as student guides developed a script they memorized when leading guests. In preparation, Art Club members met weekly to brainstorm ideas and create realistic props. Both high school and junior high art classes pitched in to make props, too. Upperclassman student leaders such as **Vivian Hunter**, **Brylee Filicsky** and **Raina Conner** also played an important role in bringing the event to life. **Bailey Knilands**, Salt Fork art teacher, said, 'It was really exciting to see the students take ownership of the project and watch all of their hard work come together. We are so thankful for all the students, parents and community members who helped make it happen!'

— Anna McCollum



Georgetown-Ridge Farm

The FFA crew recently traveled to Gallatin County High School, where they had a great time meeting new people, making friends, and building connections with other FFA members. Even though the visit was short, everyone made the most of the experience and enjoyed getting to know one another. The group was proud to represent G-RF and show what our FFA chapter is all about. Pictured (from left): **Cheyenne Orr**, **Alayna Nale**, **Layla Portis**, **Jordyn Fourez**, **Madi Spesard** and **Hunter Meeker**.

— LIZ WALLS



LeRoy

At the first Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) meeting of the school year, a large group of students gathered on Friday morning to learn more about their faith and connect with other students who share similar beliefs.

— JACEY HAGEMAN, ADRIENNE UNDERHILL

Judah Christian

The boys' basketball team went on a weekend retreat to Open Arms Laughlin Center in Lincoln. Through workouts, open gyms, bonding exercises, Bible studies and prayer sessions guided by coach **Delandis Beck**, the players learned to strengthen their teamwork, grow personal skills, and, ultimately, give God the glory through their sport. Beck said: 'After a strong off-season and a lot of new editions to the roster, my hope for our time together is that God would seal all the hard work the young men put in through a dedicated weekend of fellowship.'



— KELSI DROLLINGER, XAVIER RUSSELL