

HIGH SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL

Powered by Danville Area Community College



Kris Graves/courtesy

ALL TOGETHER NOW!

At **Unity**, Fist Bump Friday brings out the best in all ages

On Friday mornings, Unity High School student-athletes meet, greet and give out fist-bumps at the two elementary schools in the district: Unity West and Unity East. Last Friday, senior football players participated in a tradition — Fist Bump Friday — that has become a popular for both high-schoolers and elementary students. 'We love to see these kids smile,' **Brayden Henry** (right) said. 'They bring the energy, and it gets all of us excited to be there, and we all have a great Friday.' Pictured: (back row) **Dane Eisenmenger**, **Coleton Langendorf**, **Desmond Winfrey**, **Coleson Miller** and **Graydin Cler**; and (front row) **Tyler Henry** and **Brayden Henry**.

— **Claire Meharry**



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YEAR 10 OF HIGH SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL: POWERED BY DACC

Meet the crew

This year's group includes 43 students from 42 schools (*visit news-gazette.com for our photo gallery*). We'll spotlight each correspondent in Top of the Morning on Wednesdays.



Academy High: Evie Price
ALAH: London Dugan
Arcola: Addee Mulligan
Armstrong: Aubrey Self
Bement: Kiana Hunter
BHRA: Lahna Benjamin
Blue Ridge: Karly Warner
Centennial: Kennedy Borden
Cerro Gordo: Alexa Rodgers
Champaign Central: Adelaide Kota
Chrisman: Morgan Simpson
Cissna Park: Sophia Duis
Danville: Rylee Jack
DeLand-Weldon: Nathan Smith

Fisher: Kesiah Musick
G-RF: Tiffany Taylor
GCMS: Addison Farmer
Heritage: Rylan White
Hoopeston Area: Willamina Clayton
Iroquois West: Traeh Kissack
Judah Christian: Jack Dalbey
LeRoy: Molly Scheuer
Mahomet-Seymour: Abigail Eden
Maroa-Forsyth: Aubrey Stewart
Milford: Kami Muehling
Monticello: Mady Melton
Oakland: Sophie VonLanken
Oakwood: Sophia Aquino

Paxton-Buckley-Loda: Brayden Kief
Rantoul: Tamia Bell
St. Joseph-Ogden: Katie Ericksen
St. Thomas More: Duncan Oliveira
Salt Fork: Anna McCollum
Schlarman: Isabella Bogen
Shiloh: Ali Cash
Sullivan: Lillian Moxley, Danica Bell
Tuscola: Claire Leonard
Uni High: Simrah Khan
Unity: Claire Meharry
Urbana: Ruby Pittenger
Villa Grove: Eva Piercy
Westville: Olivia Trogia



High School Confidential reporter **Claire Meharry** of Unity (left) and Co. took in the Illini's men's basketball win against Florida Gulf Coast at State Farm Center.

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.



CHAMPAIGN CENTRAL HONORED FOR THEIR HARD WORK

Academic Letter Night took place on Nov. 5. The annual tradition celebrates the academic achievements and perseverance of students. To qualify for the award, 10th-through 12th-grade students must have a certain grade-point average as well as fitting other criteria. Students are encouraged to invite special educators to honor during the event, to whom they present a rose. The chamber orchestra performed, and National Honor Society officers (pictured) **Malak Halabya, Halle Youse, Abigail Avrutin, Brady Hong** and **Allison Williams** directed the ceremony, reading students' names as they walked up to receive their award.
 — **Adelaide Kota**



Oakland

To celebrate Dia de Muertos, Spanish II and III classes brought pictures of their family members, friends or pets who passed away to make their own 'ofrenda.' The holiday is Nov. 1-2, but because students weren't in school then, they celebrated Oct. 31. Pictured, left to right: **Jacob Weaver, Zachary Burch** and **Krystin Lang**.

— **SOPHIE VONLANKEN**

DeLand-Weldon

Wrestling returned to the high school, practice starting Monday on new mats. School resource Officer **Justin Ernst** is serving as head coach, math teacher **Kayla Ross** as an assistant coach.

— **NATHAN SMITH**



Bement

Bement's annual Foods for Families event, held every year on Nov. 5, consists of multiple groups of students traveling throughout Bement, Milmline and Ivesdale to collect nonperishable food items. Students then return to the food pantry to sort the collected donations before enjoying a pizza party back at the school. For years, Foods for Families has been a great way to give back to the community — and this year was no different.

— **KIANA HUNTER**



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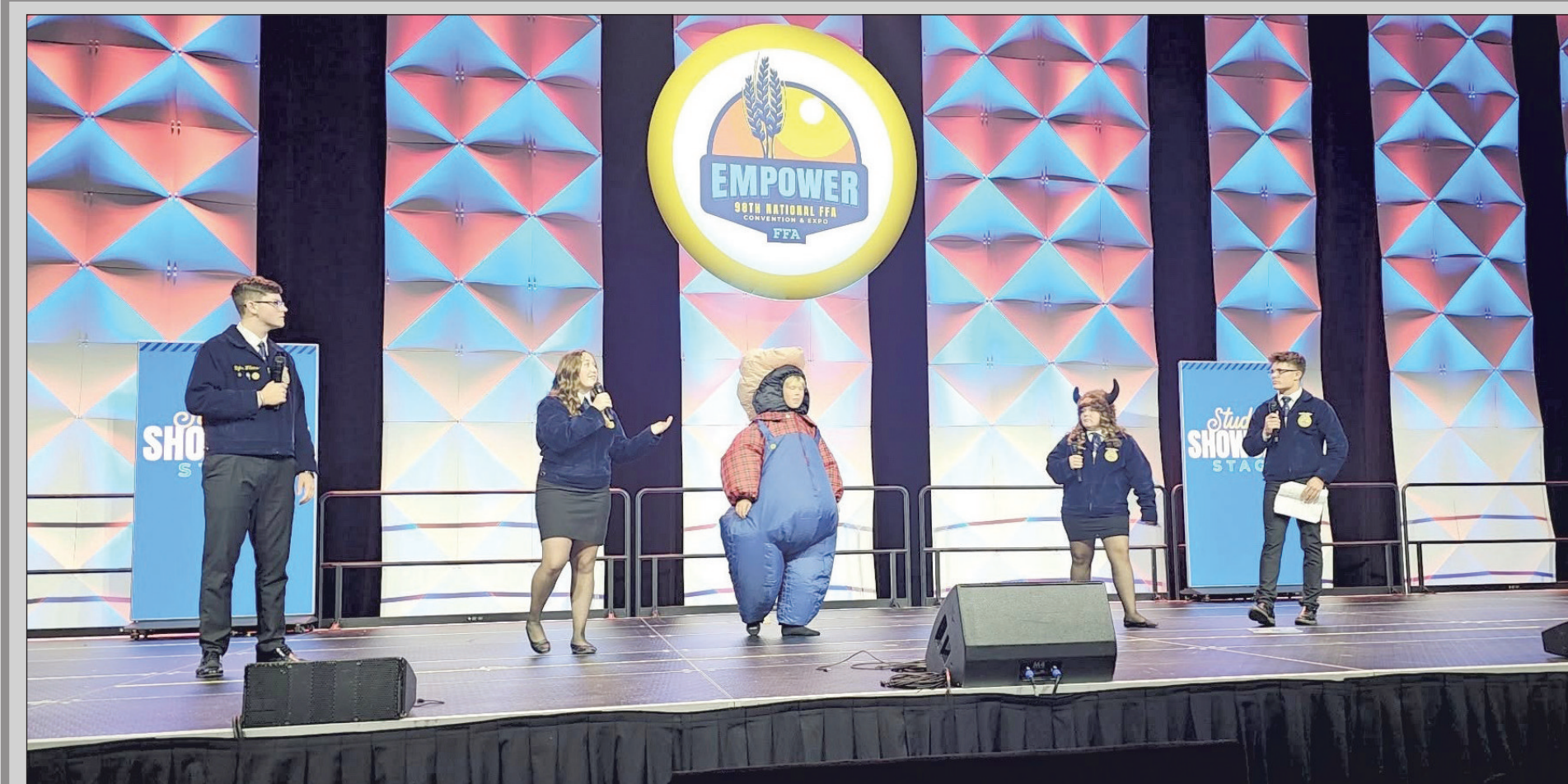
YEAR 10 OF HIGH SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL: POWERED BY DACC



Centennial

On Sunday, students and community members gathered to honor veterans with a Field of Flags Day (photo via **Heather Miller**). Over 700 flags were placed and veterans in attendance were honored by the school. Also, Centennial hosted the IHSA girls' swim and dive sectionals over the weekend. The Chargers had four qualifiers for state in both the 200 medley relay and individual events. Seniors **Brynley Wilber** and **Rebekah Kim**, sophomore **Sofia Marquez** and freshman **Mallory Borden** (pictured, along with coach **Courtney Louret**) will be competing in Westmont on Friday and Saturday. The 200 freestyle relay team of Marquez, **Riti Bhosale**, **Meagan Tsai** and Wilber also broke the school record with a time of 1:39.12.

— KENNEDY BORDEN



SALT FORK YAKKIN' WITH THE YOUNGINS

FFA members represented on the National Student Showcase Stage at the 98th National FFA Convention and Expo in Indianapolis. Salt Fork was one of nine chapters from across the nation chosen to present a service project they had done last school year. (From left) **Ryker Williams**, **Anna McCollum**, **Tucker Pabst**, **Kaitlyn Woodard** and **Devin Ehler** were selected to host a presentation about 'Yakkin' with the Yak,' an activity the FFA members put on at the elementary school. High school students visited elementary classrooms, taught the importance of being different, and brought the lesson to life by bringing in real yaks. The event and its impact was summarized on stage through a skit with the backstory on what inspired it. All five students did a fantastic job speaking both toward the crowd and to the audience watching on TV. This opportunity both enhanced the members' public-speaking skills and showcased their responsibility through the hours spent practicing. Pictured: Williams; and Woodard speaking on the book used for the event with Ehler.

— Anna McCollum



Gibson City-Melvin-Sibley

Last week, the senior and junior class officers attended the annual Youth Advisory Council in Pontiac. Hosted by state Sen. **Chris Balkema**, it brought together student leaders from schools across the region. Officers had the opportunity to network, share ideas and discuss issues affecting both the education system and the state. Through these conversations, they hope their insights will help shape future legislation. Representing GCMS: senior officers **Alex Barnard** and **Ethan Lowe**, and junior officers **Lilyan Sizemore** and **Cooper Brake**.

— ADDISON FARMER



ALAH

For the first time in program history, the football team advanced to the third round of the IHSA playoffs. What began as a small-town merger in 2016 between four communities — Arthur, Lovington, Atwood and Hammond — has transformed into a unified football family, players and fans alike describing the current run as something special. Local businesses have hung banners, fans have filled streets for sendoffs, and alumni have traveled back home to support the team. Pictured: **Kaden Herscheberger**, **Daylon Dogget**, **August Burton**, **Nick Hubster**, **Tristan Keagle**, **Payton Warrior**, **Edik Arwine**, **Brayden Leech**, **Trey Strode**, **Kamden Morfey**, **Jackson Lebetter**, **Easton Fredrick**, **Cruz Hale** and **Cash Hale**.

— LONDON DUGAN



Urbana

Last week's Career Fair featured over 20 small businesses in attendance. Students from all grades were welcomed to come, feel inspired and learn about possible careers.

— RUBY PIT-
TENGE



Monticello

Practice has been in full swing for the MHS Thespians as they prepare for their fall play, 'The Trials of Robin Hood.' From making costumes to memorizing lines to learning how to embody their characters, cast members have been hard at work in order to bring this unique piece to life. The play puts a spin on the classic tale by sharing the story through the perspectives of Maid Marian and Prince John, in addition to Robin Hood himself. Opening night for the show is 7 p.m. today with another performance Friday night. Pictured (courtesy **Thaddeus Rudolph**): **Egan Curry** and **Kyle Wilson** on stage during dress rehearsals.

— **MADY MELTON**



Mahomet-Seymour

Spanish Club decorated skulls for Day of the Dead and ate pan de muerto (dead bread). The club is led by Profesora **Raquel Fernandez** and meets once a month. 'Spanish Club is open to anyone throughout the entire school year, and we always accept new members! There is usually some kind of snack at the meetings, and we usually play a game along with the activities we are doing,' club President **Yoonsung Cho** said. Pictured: **Alannah Smith** and **Kaitlyn Young**.

— **ABBY EDEN**



Judah Christian

On Thursday, senior **Liza Carder** spoke at chapel, sharing her testimony of coming to know Jesus. She opened up about her struggles with self-worth, anger toward herself, the world and God. She also shared how God has transformed her heart to love who he has created her to be. Her message, following senior **Dominic Mortenson's** testimony the previous week, moved the Judah community. Many students were encouraged by their honesty and found comfort in knowing they weren't alone in their struggles. These testimonies have helped students open up, support one another and grow closer together in faith and community.

— **JACK DALBEY**



ACADEMY HIGH

FINALLY READY TO BALL

The boys' basketball team, coached by **Zane Gream**, is ready for its first season, as there are finally enough students interested. The Owls' first game is scheduled for January against Calvary Christian Academy's Knights. Pictured (courtesy **Deborah Bodony**), from left: **Asher Watson**, **Giovanni Bellina**, **Gabriel De La Cruz Crespo**, **Maxwell Milling**, **Ayaan Shah**, **Hayden Chen** and **Lawrence Booth**.

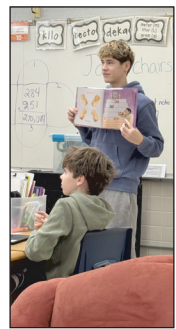
— **EVIE PRICE**



Villa Grove

Students in **Elizabeth Nieto's** Spanish class shared their knowledge of Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) by leading interactive lessons for elementary students. Working in small groups, they created engaging presentations and activities to teach about the holiday's traditions and meaning. Many groups gave slideshow presentations followed by hands-on activities, such as reading interactive books, playing Blooket games, completing coloring sheets and word searches, and making crafts. **Allison Eisenmenger** and **Sophia Shaw** read 'Día de los Muertos Números' to the kindergartners, while **Tucker Shunk** and **Rodrick Martin** read a Spanish story to the second-graders. **Maddox Piercy** also shared the same book with the fifth-grade class. Some groups even brought themed treats to make the lessons extra festive.

— **EVA PIERCY**



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Cissna Park

Students in FFA went to the national convention in Indianapolis. They attended the **Ella Langley** concert and dined at St. Elmo Steak House. Students enjoyed the opening session and touring the Indiana Crop Improvement Association.

— SOPHIA DUIS



GEORGETOWN-RIDGE FARM OFFICIALLY INDUCTED



National Honors Society's induction ceremony took place last Wednesday, five juniors and four seniors joining six current members (pictured: guest speaker **Keagan Wills** with current NHS member **Jace Latoz**). Top row, from left: **Hunter Meeker, Jaidyn Portis, Kyrsten Ross, Madi Spesard, Jordan Fourez, Ben Vice, William Runyan, Milee Elise** and **Liz Walls**; bottom row, from left: **Cale Cavanaugh, Jase Latoz, Spencer Ray, Ruby Fraser-Soule, Tiffany Taylor** and **Katie Wersich**.

— Tiffany Taylor



Blue Ridge

At the beginning of the school year, the yearbook staff attended a workshop to come up with their yearbook theme. After weeks of brainstorming, developing color schemes and picking layouts, the staff revealed their 2025-26 yearbook theme: 'The '26 Mix,' which features a retro look and bold vibe. Students pictured: **Kip Hardwick, Karly Warner, Alissa Edwards, Andrew Bernard** and **Payton Heiser**.

— KARLY WARNER

Fisher

Student council visited the grade school to teach students about activities they can be a part of when in high school student council. Also, National Honor Society and student council are holding a food drive to benefit families for Thanksgiving. Lastly, the cross-country team — coached by **Neil Bidner** — did well at sectionals: **Lila Stauffer** finished in 23:13, **Zander Vincent** 20:40 and **Ellie Emberson** 17:21.

— KESIAH MUSICK



Danville

Last Thursday, the high school hosted the Historically Black College and University experience. Partnering with the **Jelani Day Foundation**, the event included over 20 colleges and universities. Information for FAFSA was also available, as several area high schools — including Urbana, Centennial and Champaign Central — took part in the college fair. Toward the end, **Carmen Bolden** silenced the crowd to explain the meaning of the Jelani Day Foundation. She was inspired to create it after the death of her 25-year-old son, **Jelani Day**.

— RYLEE JACK





Cerro Gordo

FFA members — accompanied by teachers **James Vogel** and **Megan Meade** — attended the national convention in Indianapolis. On Day 1, students toured the Ozark Fisheries koi farm and also watched **Ella Langley** perform a concert. Day 2 started with a presentation by **A'ric Jackson** before students met with different colleges for a look at their ag programs. On Friday, students visited the Indianapolis Zoo.

— GRACE HAWK



Rantoul

The audience enjoyed three nights of the fall play, 'Too Much Light Makes the Baby Go Blind.' The popular Chicago Broadway show works through 30 plays of the audience's choice in 60 minutes.

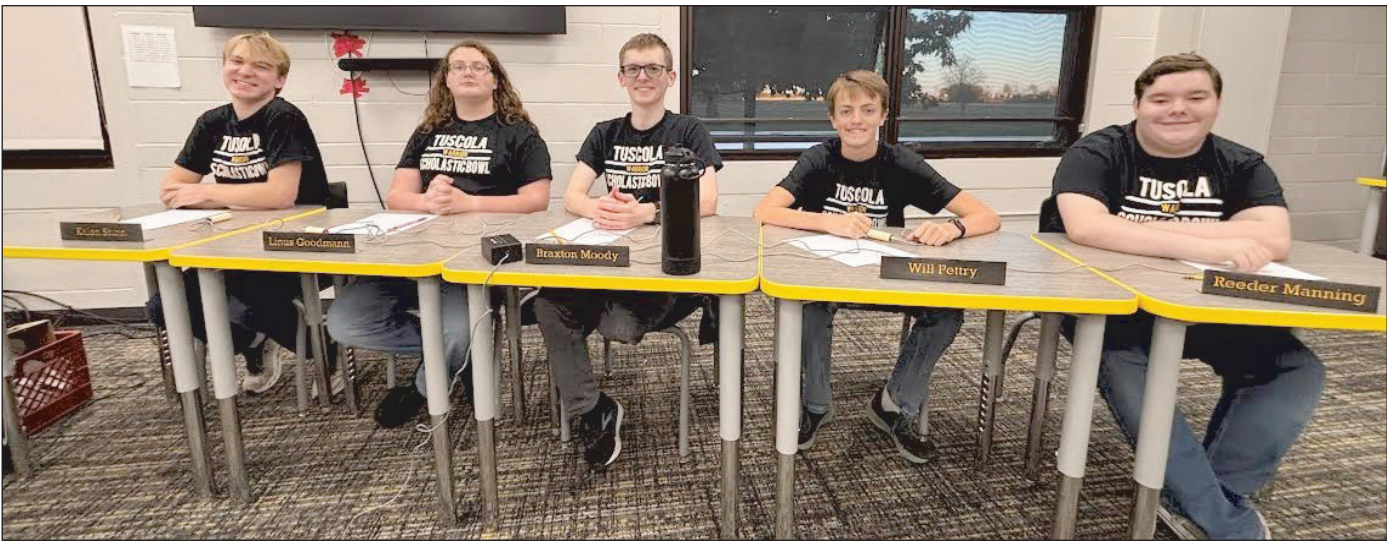
— TAMIA BELL



SCHLARMAN RUNNING FOR VETERANS

A group of seven from Schlarman participated in Saturday's fundraising American Legion Post 210 5K. From left: **Regan Troglia**, **Mark Lehmann**, **Marc Villiaster**, **Jaiden Chiryal**, **Liam Billings**, **Izzy Bogen** and **Dee Freed**. The event raised about \$11,000 for the American Legion's veteran services.

— Izzy Bogen



Tuscola

The Scholastic Bowl team started its season by winning two matches against Clinton, 200-90 and 190-30. Pictured, from left: **Kalen Shinn**, **Linus Goodmann**, **Braxton Moody**, **Will Pettry** and **Reeder Manning**. Also, **Ava Whitson** was named Key Club Member of the Month for completing seven hours of community service.

— CLAIRE LEONARD



Westville

At Saturday's second-round playoff football game, the marching band and dance team performed at halftime, and fans were as loud and energetic as ever, cheering on the Tigers to victory. Westville hosts ALAH in Round 3.

— OLIVIA TROGLIA



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Iroquois West

Local entrepreneurs **Harold and Sandy Wilken** welcomed the Foods 2 and Food Science classes to Janie's Mill. Students were taken on a tour to learn about the benefits of farming organically. The Wilkens shared how a business can represent something larger than itself, as theirs honors the passing of their daughter **Janie**.

— **TRAEH KISSACK**



HOOPESTON AREA A MUSICAL SHOWCASE

At last month's annual fall concert, high school and middle school students showcased their musical talents. Chorus presented a wide range of music from classical to contemporary, concluding with a song combining the voices of both choirs — 'Don't Stop Believing' — before the high school marching band performed their award-winning show 'Frosted Tips Greatest Hits.' Pictures courtesy **Ginger Gonzales**.

— **Willamina Clayton**



St. Joseph-Ogden

The cross-country team had an incredible weekend at state. For about 35 years, the boys have celebrated making it to state by shaving their heads into mohawks, while the girls add color into the bottoms of their hair, a tradition showing team spirit. This year, sophomore **Grace Bressner** (pictured) earned 17th place and all-state honors, sophomore **Collin Burnett**'s time was good for 13th all time, and **Adam Bello** (pictured) ranked No. 2 all time for freshmen. Their consistent dedication, long practices and determination has led them to the successful season they had all year.

— **KATIE ERICKSON**



OUR mission

Helping local families fill their tables this Thanksgiving!
Arcola FCCLA is launching a new community project called **Thankful For You**.
Our goal is to provide families of Arcola CUSD students with a box of ingredients to enjoy a warm Thanksgiving meal together.
We can't do this alone — we need your help!

How You Can Help:
Monetary Donations: Any amount makes a difference.
Food Donations: Local food businesses are welcome to contribute food items for the boxes.

Donation Deadline:
Thursday, November 21st, 2025

Donation Drop-Off / Contact:
If you would like to contribute or have questions, please contact:
Desi Thomas - dthomas@arcolaschools.com

Together, we can help make this Thanksgiving season a little brighter for Arcola families.

Arcola

Students involved in Family, Career and Community Leaders of America started a new program called 'Thankful For You' to help feed local families on Thanksgiving.

— **ADDEE MULLIGAN**



LeRoy

Student council and Key Club members teamed up for a Caramel Apple Bar fundraiser last Thursday. The Caramel Apple Bar was set up during high school and junior high lunch hours. The fundraiser went to LeRoy students **Ryan Sorensen** (eighth grade) and **David Hall** (sophomore). Sorensen has been in the hospital recovering from surgery since September, and Hall has been in recovery since May following a medical scare. The money went to both families to help with the medical costs. These students have been greatly missed, and we hope they continue to progress toward a full recovery.

— MOLLY SCHEUER



BHRA PUMPKIN PROJECT

Students in the FFA chapter have been hard at work crafting and selling handmade wooden pumpkins as a seasonal fundraiser to wrap up the fall semester. The project not only showcases students' wood-working skills but also helps support future chapter activities and agricultural education opportunities.

— Lahna Benjamin

Oakwood

Last Wednesday, guidance counselor **Stephanie Marsh** and business teacher **Amy Brant** accompanied students **Ireland Harrison**, **Rylan Wilson**, **Makenzi Goble**, **Harlow Woodard** and **Lainee Smith** on a career exploration trip to several hospitals, including OSF, the Danville VA and Carle. This experience provided students with a valuable insight into various health care environments and career opportunities within the medical field. Furthermore, **Bella Martin** participated in the Entrepreneurship Career Exploration event, where she learned more about business innovation and leadership opportunities. Student council members hosted their annual blood drive at the high school — an event made possible by a host of volunteers. Finally, English teacher **Jenna Wilson** took her senior classes to La Potasina on Friday. This field trip served as a creative representation of a Mead Hall, a central setting in the Beowulf unit the classes are currently studying.

— SOPHIA AQUINO



Heritage

The Parent Teacher Committee (PTC) hosted 'Meet The Hawks Night' to bring the community together. Athletes from the spring, fall and winter were introduced, marching band played their 'Heartbreaker' theme show (pictured), cheerleaders (pictured) performed the school song 'Hail Heritage,' and a carnival was held where 'Swoop the Hawk' was seen throwing axes (pictured). A community three-point contest was won by assistant girls' basketball coach **Lisa Wilson** (pictured). **Stuart Wolf**, Class of 2018, was inducted into the Heritage Athletics Hall of Fame at the event as well (pictured). Wolf played football at Illinois College, earning a bachelor's degree in kinesiology and sports medicine. Wolf played basketball and football at Heritage.

— RYLAN WHITE



Uni High

On Saturday, Students for a Better World club hosted a volleyball game fundraiser for the American Cancer Society (ACS). Teams of students across grade levels joined together to play games, raising over \$285 for ACS altogether. 'It was so great to see everyone come out together, especially for an athletic event like this one,' Students for a Better World leader **Emmie Vargas** said. Pictured, from left: **Robert Tu**, **Jason Yan**, **Saif Shakir**, **Ian Pan**, **Kyle Fan**, **Tucker Gergen**, **Chizara Onyemere** and **Helen Fu**.

— SIMRAH KHAN



St. Thomas More

Students celebrated Mass on Sunday with grandparents and celebrated All Souls Day, praying for members of the church: living, in heaven and in purgatory. Club meetings last week included the Spanish Honors Society, the March for Life group and the LOGOS retreat leaders group.

— DUNCAN OLIVEIRA

