

HIGH SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL

Powered by Danville Area Community College



At Paxton-Buckley-Loda, caring community on display

On Sunday, the PBL community came together for a **Down Syndrome Awareness Walk** at the high school track. Students, families and staff showed their love and support, enjoying snacks, games and raffle prizes. Posters of people in the community with Down syndrome were along the route, honoring those in town and those who have passed.

Darla Schall, an event organizer whose son has Down syndrome, shared her inspiration. She explained that since her child was little, she attended local awareness walks to show her support and wanted to bring the idea to PBL.

"I definitely think it has been helpful getting the students to volunteer at these activities," she said. "We've had a lot more kids with Down syndrome participating in activities, such as band and cross-country. Students have gotten the opportunity to get to know these kids and realize they aren't as different as they may appear."

"The walk wasn't just about one afternoon," Schall said, "it was about building a culture of kindness and inclusion that will carry on."

— Brayden Kief



Left to right: Paxton-Buckley-Loda Junior High Principal, Josh Didier, eighth-grade student Trenton Kovell and junior high counselor Stacy Johnson.

Photos provided

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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 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: Allison Baldwin
Cissna Park: Sophia Duis
Danville: Rylee Jack
DeLand-Weldon: Nathan Smith
Fisher: Kesiah Musick
Georgetown-Ridge Farm: Tiffany Taylor
Gibson City-Melvin-Sibley: 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 Troglia



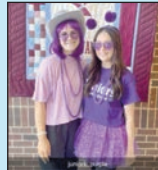
FRIDAY'S HOMECOMING SCENE AT LEROY

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. The schedule:

Today — ALAH
Friday — Milford
Saturday — Centennial
Monday — Schlarman
Tuesday — Cissna Park
Oct. 8 — Armstrong
Oct. 9 — BHRA



HOMECOMING AT SJ-O

Catching up with ...

Since High School Confidential's start in 2016, more than 340 students have served as News-Gazette correspondents. We catch up with our famous formers in each week's special section. Today: **J.D. Barrett**.

J.D., our innovative correspondent from Tuscola in 2018-19, has made the seamless transition from tiny Douglas County to Chicago, where he lives while working as management analyst for the Village of Glen Ellyn.



"I love Tuscola and am glad I grew up there," he said, "but totally different vibes here."

At Illinois Wesleyan (Class of '23), J.D. did a little bit of everything: He ran cross-country and track and served as Student Senate vice president. He was just as involved in high school, including his role with us.

"Best part was highlighting the different things that our school was doing," he said. "Everyone thinks their school is special, but Tuscola had so many things to offer. Most of the coverage down there is sports-related. It felt good to highlight Scholastic Bowl and theater and things like that."

The 25-year-old moved to Chicago after graduation and enjoys his "reverse commute" to work. He's pursuing a master's degree in public administration at Northern Illinois with the end goal of becoming a city manager one day.

"I really value having those well-rounded experiences (in high school and college)," he said. "It's helped me become the person I am today."



Unity

During Homecoming Week, students participated in a variety of festivities. Monday was Pajama Day, Tuesday was Twin Day, Wednesday was Rhyme Without Reason, Thursday was Class Color War Day, and Friday was Spirit Day. Students got out early Friday to compete in pep rally games as a class. Additionally, each class spent all week building and decorating a Greece-themed float for the annual parade alongside floats for student clubs and convertibles carrying homecoming attendants, little royalty and king and queen candidates. Saturday night was the big dance, and students voted on the queen and king: **Shelby Smith** and **Tyler Styan**. Pictured, left to right: Little Royalty **Theo Ault**, Styan, Smith and Little Royalty **Jade Lutz**. Photos courtesy **Jennifer Meyer**.

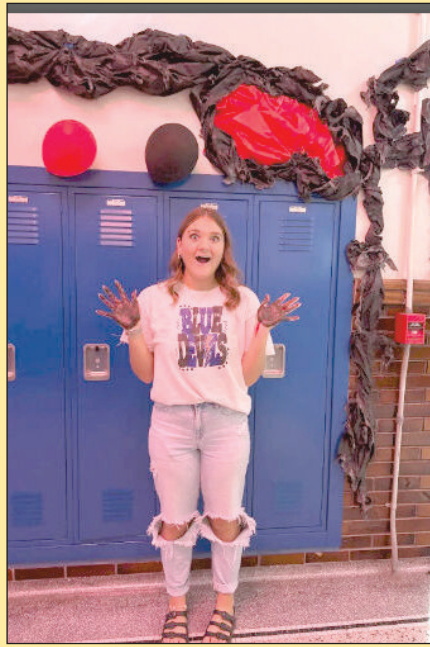
— CLAIRE MEHARRY



VILLA GROVE CLASH OF THE GODS

Students decorated their designated hallways to earn points for Homecoming Week, all hoping to win the coveted Spirit Stick. With this year's theme of Ancient Greece, each grade was assigned a different Greek god to inspire their decorations. The freshmen, led by **Kenna Koeberlein**, hung rain clouds to represent Persephone, while sophomores **Zeva Kirkman** and **Kinleigh Pellum** filled their hallway with greenery to honor Demeter. Juniors **Ollie Oberg** and **Lauren Carter** transformed their space into the underworld for Hades, and seniors **Nadia Callison** and **Cora Wilson** showcased elements symbolizing Zeus. Teachers will cast their votes to decide which class will take home first place.

— Eva Piercy



Champaign Central

Friday was Senior Night for the Marching Maroons. For the last home game of the season, seniors were given roses and escorted down the track at Tommy Stewart Field by friends and family. Afterward, they performed their last halftime show. It isn't the end of the season for the Marching Maroons, though. The band will be performing at the CU Marching Showcase on Monday and the Illinois Marching Band Championships on Oct. 25. Pictured: (left to right) Drum majors **Shinjian Song**, **Audrey Allende** and **Brady Hong** lead their band off the field; color guard senior **Sophia Cowan** receives a poster from the rest of the color guard; and seniors and their escorts line the track of Tommy Stewart Field.

— ADELAIDE KOTA



Schlarman

Seniors and juniors visited Purdue in West Lafayette, Ind., to gather college insight. Pictured: **Ana Johnson** and **Kaitlyn Clark** in the dining hall after taking a tour.

— IZZY BOGEN

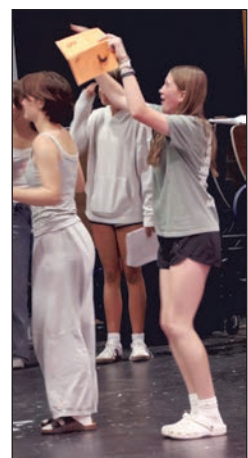


Centennial

Student council members have been preparing for the homecoming parade, which will be a new Spirit Week event for current students. The parade will be held Friday, with Champaign Mayor **Deb Feinen** serving as grand marshal. Student council co-President **Abigail Ham** said she's really excited for this homecoming, because we're bringing back an old tradition from before COVID, and she hopes that the Centennial students enjoy it as much as student council has enjoyed planning it.

— KENNEDY BORDEN

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Mahomet-Seymour

Drama Club ran through Act I of its fall play for the first time last week. The play "Popularity" will be performed in November. Pictured: Leads **Katelyn Schuyler**, **Anneliese Culp** and **Megan Smith**; **Sophia Schuyler**; and **Annika McLaughlin**, **Liam Kittivanichkulrai**, **Gracie Park**, **Kean McFarlane** and **Drew Lambert**.

— ABBY EDEN



BLUE RIDGE SHOW OF SUPPORT

On Sept. 19, students from Blue Ridge High School and Schneider Elementary watched as the Gold Star Mission cyclists biked down John Street. Many smiles and high-fives were shared as the cyclists zoomed past. Pictured: **Devin Wrestler** and **Andrew Schumacher**.

— Karly Warner



Rantoul

Last week's homecoming was a bang, filled with spirit days, volleyball games, a pep rally, a parade and to top it all off a football game, the Rowdies cheering on the Eagles. To end the long and eventful week, the homecoming dance allowed everyone to come together with their friends, show off their beautiful outfits, and create everlasting memories with their peers.

— TAMIA BELL



Sullivan

Homecoming Week kicked off with pep-rally games and a parade. The senior class won the Spirit Stick and float-building. **Lily Morley** and **Aiden Burgess** were crowned queen and king. Student council is preparing for Friday's annual blood drive.

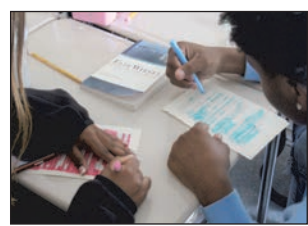
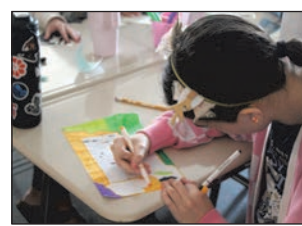
— DANICA BELL



Urbana

Students in World Studies English created blackout poems to practice analyzing figurative language in **Elie Wiesel's "Night."** For the project, students upcycled pages from discontinued books to create a poem of their own from Wiesel's words. Pictured: **June Pittenger**, **Abbigayle Howrey**, **Wynter Elliott** and **Savannah McClain-Crook**.

— RUBY PITTENGER





Iroquois West

Celebrating National Farm Safety Week, FFA members spread their knowledge to children at Gilman Elementary School and Crescent City Grade School. High-schoolers not only talked about tractor safety but livestock safety, as well, sharing their own stories around animals.

— TRAEH KISSACK



Hoopeston Area

Homecoming Week kicked off with spirit days, starting with Pajama Day and ending with Cornjerker Spirit Day. Midweek, students gathered for a bonfire, where the Marching Cornjerkers performed the school song and various stand songs. The week ended with the homecoming parade and a football game against Georgetown-Ridge Farm, which won 27-21 in overtime. **Paul Smith** and **Jacky Resendez** (photo courtesy **Ginger Gonzalez**) were crowned king and queen at halftime.

— WILLAMINA CLAYTON



Academy High

In Art and Social Movements, taught by **Isabel Scott**, students have been learning about Dadaism. It was a movement reacting to World War I that redefined what constitutes art. Students got to make their own Dada art using a technique called photo montage, which combines photos and words from newspapers or magazines, reframing them to mean something new. They created art inspired by videos games, music artists, politics and more. Pictured (left to right): **Hannah Walker** and **Hayden Jenks**.

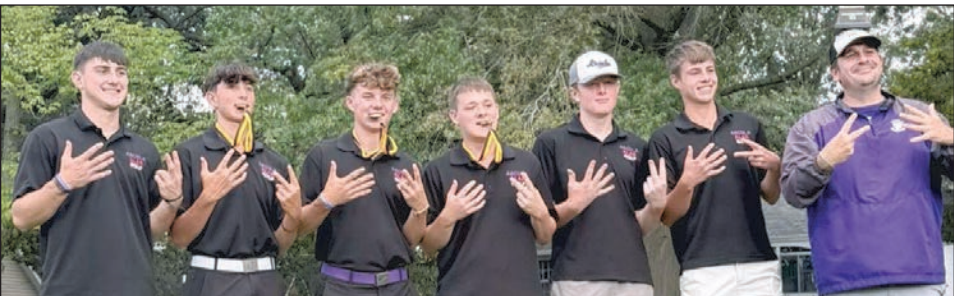
— EVIE PRICE



MAROA-FORSYTH SAFETY FIRST

Student safety has been a focus recently. **Ben Tracy** (pictured) visited to discuss social media's lasting impact, urging students to think before posting or adding someone on social media. Students Against Drunk Driving hosted a crash re-enactment for the student body. Senior **Ace Giles** (pictured) was even able to ride in a helicopter during the event.

— Aubrey Stewart



ALAH

The golf teams enjoyed an incredible week. The girls' team placed second in conference, and the boys brought home the conference title for the seventh year in a row, **Logan Schrock** and **Kole Binder** receiving all-conference recognition. For this week's homecoming, dress-up days include: Monday's Gatsby's Party (dress your best), Tuesday's Elphaba vs. Glinda (green or pink), Wednesday's Greasers & Pink Ladies, Thursday's Class Colors and Friday's Knights on Broadway (Knights pride).

— LONDON DUGAN

Bement

Student council works diligently each Wednesday to prepare for homecoming on Oct. 18. From outlining dress-up days to finalizing dance decorations, the goal is to ensure that everything comes together and to create a memorable week full of school spirit.

— KIANA HUNTER



Judah Christian

Students, parents and community members gathered last Wednesday morning for the annual 'See You at the Pole.' Participants met before classes to pray and reflect on the school, family, community and nation. This nationwide tradition started in 1990 and encourages students to unite in prayer and reflection. At Judah, a mix of students, teachers and community members came to support one another at the start of the school year.

— JACK DALBE

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Arcola

The Purple Riders welcomed a group of visiting educators from Kazakhstan, who were on a tour of schools in the United States.

— ADDEE MULLIGAN

Fisher

The school last week honored **Milton Kelly**, who unexpectedly passed away on Sept. 22. He was a coach, teacher and principal at our school and also served as mayor. Most of all, Mr. Kelly was a man who enjoyed life and loved to help others become the best version of themselves. During Friday's football game, there was a moment of silence. A celebration of life open to all is scheduled for 3 p.m. Saturday at the high school gymnasium.



— KESIAH MUSICK



Former teacher, coach and high school athletic director **Gary Gritton** passed away last week. Mr. Gritton had a profound impact on the DHS family, where he taught for 24 years and coached baseball for several years, leading the Vikings to a successful season. As athletic director, he made sure student-athletes reached their full potential, encouraging each program to succeed.

On Friday, the school and community honored Mr. Gritton and his family at the varsity football game, gathering for a moment of silence (photos courtesy FlickedByLiam Sports Photography). Staff members shared memories and reminisced on his legacy, including:

Teacher **Haley Youhas**: "Mr. Gritton was the kindest soul you could ever meet. No matter how busy he was, he always made time for you. He poured his heart into his career, extracurriculars and relationships. To be in his presence was a gift, and it was an honor to know him."

Principal **Jacob Bretz**: "Gary Gritton dedicated half his life to serving Danville High School students and athletes. He was a creative and innovative teacher whose classroom was a safe place where students thrived. You will not find anyone with a bad word to say about Gary Gritton."

Teacher **David Covey**: "One of the things I keep thinking about was how much he loved a good story. It didn't matter how many times he had heard a story, he would listen attentively and laugh as if it were the first time the story was being told. Gary lifted up the people in his life. Everyone was better for knowing (him). Whether you were a student in his classroom, a colleague, a friend or his family. We were all better because Gary was in our life. It's only right that we continue to lift him up and keep his memory alive."

Former teacher, current District 118 athletic facilitator **Mark Bacys**: "I so admired how Mr. Gritton effortlessly built relationships with students, staff and athletes throughout his career. He always made time for people no matter how busy he was during the day. Mr. Gritton was not only a coworker but a close personal friend that I will miss deeply."

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— Rylee Jack



Armstrong

Preparation is underway for Homecoming Week Oct. 6-11. This year's court attendants: sophomores **Ryah Peters** and **Samuel Lanter**; juniors **Elle Jameson** and **Traxton Roberts**; and seniors **Makenna Ackerman**, **Tinley Parkerson**, **Cala Reifsteck**, **Taylor Smith**, **Aiden Blackford**, **Caden Fitzsimmons**, **Levi Saathoff** and **Luke Townsend**. New for students and the community this year will be the first homecoming parade at 3 p.m. Oct. 9 in Potomac. Student council has worked hard to get this up and going. Also, the golf team had its conference tournament last week. It was **Kolton Morgan**'s first year in golf, and he placed eighth with all-conference honors.

— AUBREY SELF



Tuscola

Last Thursday, students competed in Ironman volleyball. This game featured boys from various grade levels battling against upperclassmen and underclassmen, with the volleyball girls coaching them. Pictured: **Cooper Lyons** and **Kalen Shinn** serving the ball. Ultimately, the seniors were victorious and won the tournament.

— CLAIRE LEONARD





Cerro Gordo

This year's homecoming theme was "Disney." Freshmen "Up," sophomores "Princess" and the Frog, juniors "Moana" and seniors "Tangled." Students worked on floats Monday through Thursday, freshmen winning the decorating contest. At Wednesday night's movie night in the school auditorium, the community joined in to watch "Moana." During Thursday's bonfire—which was modified due to a burn ban—the band, football team, cheerleaders and homecoming king and queen (**Hayden Rice** and **Samantha Sterling**) were announced. At Friday's Spirit Day, students played games such as a wheelbarrow race, a three-legged race, a water-balloon toss, an egg toss and powderpuff football and then lined up for the parade. Friday's football game was followed by Saturday's homecoming dance.

— ALEXA RODGERS



St. Joseph-Ogden

Senior class President **Hannah Mock** and student council member **Allison Ochs** (below) organized a time to decorate hallways for Homecoming Week, which runs from Monday through Saturday. It's an exciting week full of dress-up days, Spartan Olympics, parades, powderpuff games and much more. Above (left to right): Ochs, **Ashlyn Miller** and **Kaitlyn Beyers**.

— KATIE ERICKSEN



GCMS NEW CLUB ON THE SCENE

The brand-new Spanish Club is led by first-year Spanish teacher **Beronica Sanchez**. The club's officers include **Ava Fher** as president, **Ian Tomes** as vice president, **Emery Summers** as secretary and **Kasen Defries** as treasurer. To kick off its fundraising efforts, the Spanish Club sold maracas at last Friday's football game. The event was a success, with a total of 53 maracas sold.

— Addison Farmer



Oakwood

Homecoming Week is celebrated as one of the most cherished traditions of the year, as the school comes alive with shredded paper, decorations and posters throughout the hallways that build excitement for the football game. It included nightly float building (4-10 p.m.) with each class competing to make the most creative design. The work of commendable class sponsors **Jenna Wilson**, **Tyler Petersen**, **Christina Cravens** and **Charity Hirose** does not go unnoticed. There's Comestfest, where students and staff join in a multitude of games and activities. Performances are also a highlight in Friday's pep assembly, featuring the band, dancers, cheerleaders and even senior football players in a special cheer routine. Seniors were appointed as the loudest, most enthusiastic class participating in the pep assembly and received a spirit stick trophy. The community also held a parade to showcase different clubs, teams and representatives. At the homecoming game, the freshman float was announced as the winner. The court rode in Corvettes around the field during halftime, **Ben Darling** and **Makynzie Bruens** winning king and queen! Lastly, the dance was beautifully decorated by student council.

— SOPHIA AQUINO



Salt Fork

Football standout **Ian Church** was named the WCIA Athlete of the Week. He has an opportunity to win WCIA's Athlete of the Year and earn a \$1,500 scholarship. Church, a senior, is a running back/defensive back and has played football his whole life. He has played a major role in the high school football's current record of 4-1.

— ANNA MCCOLLUM

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Oakland

At Saturday's dance, senior attendants took a picture with the crown bearers behind the homecoming backdrop. Left to right: (back row) **Delilah Slattery**, **Andrew West**, **Christian Blackburn** (king), **Dawson Smith** and **Jaycee Cleland**; (front row) crown bearer **Emmett Drake**, **Genevieve Kaufman** (queen) and crown bearer **Evelyn Willis**.

— SOPHIE VONLANKEN



Cissna Park

The FFA ag sales and ag education teams competed last week. **Ashlyn Schmid** debuted in ag ed and finished fourth. In ag sales, the Timberwolves won four rooms individually and a first overall as the team. Left to right: **Ashlyn Schmid**, **Trent Schmid**, **Josie Neukomm**, **Laura Eisenmann**, **Sophia Duis** and **Lily Heaton**.

— SOPHIA DUIS

MONTICELLO NEW GYM BUDDIES



At the beginning of this school year, the high school expanded its physical education curriculum by creating a Unified P.E. class. Special education students are mentored by volunteer student buddies. Said special education teacher **Mandi Issac**: Unified P.E. is an inclusive approach to physical education, pairing students with and without disabilities to participate in activities while promoting social engagement and skill development. Buddies help athletes develop physical, emotional, cognitive and social skills. Issac and the P.E. department hope to continue to build on its success in following years. Our goal is to have a 1:1 buddy-to-athlete ratio, as well as two to three additional buddies to serve as leaders for the class, Issac said. Between the blossoming friendships and the skills improvement, Unified P.E. has been a positive addition. Pictured: **Nolan Christman**, **Allie Dillman**, **Autumn Dillman**, **Mylin Bruhn**, **Autumn Battershell**, **Zoe Torrensa** and **Jayden Conatser**.

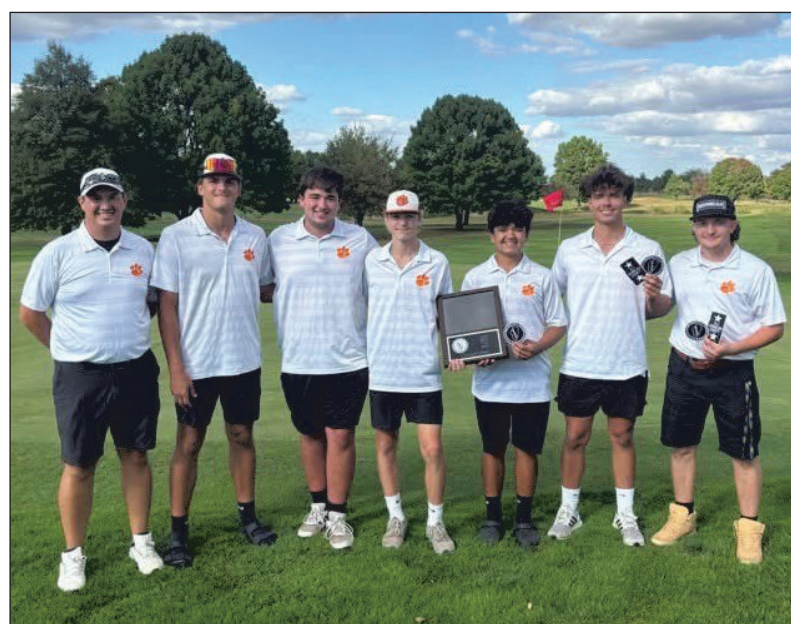
— Mady Melton



Uni High

Students across all grade levels celebrated Spirit Week, with dress-up days ranging from Monday's Pajama Day to Thursday's Dress Like a Teacher Day. Students finished the week off by joining together at Saturday's annual homecoming dance organized at the I Hotel and Illinois Conference Center by senior student council. Pictured, left to right: **Kruthi Ramanath**, **Ruby Mitchell**, **Praachi Mudar**, **Citlali Rundall-Madrigal**, **Alyssa Neubauer** and **Chizara Onyemere** participate in Performative Male Day last Wednesday, honoring the TikTok-based trend with wired earphones, matcha and tote bags.

— SIMRAH KHAN



Westville

The boys' golf team won the Vermilion Valley Conference championship for the first time, finishing on top after a three-way tie. All-conference performers included **Jacob McCool**, **Ben Johnson** and **Dami-an Alvarez**. It also marked the Tigers' first year having all-county honorees: Jacob McCool, Johnson, **Shelbey McCool** and **Lani Schlunaker**.

— OLIVIA TROGLI





Georgetown-Ridge Farm

Yearbook class held a car wash on Saturday to raise money for class shirts. The group set up its state from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and raised \$290. Students said they couldn't have done it without the help of the Georgetown Fire Department, which offered its parking lot for the event. Through the course of the day, over a dozen cars showed up. Pictured (left to right): **Jaleah Howe**, **Jaidyn Portis**, **Marissa Personette** and **Kem Sparrow**. Not pictured: **Kiley-Jo Miller**, **Tony Sparrow**, **Kaydence Kraus** and **Katie Wershich**.

— TIFFANY TAYLOR



MILFORD NEVER TOO YOUNG TO CHEER

At Saturday's Milford/Cissna Park football game against Pawnee, cheerleaders had their Little Kiddie Camp. Coached by **Brandy Laffoon**, the cheerleaders had a halftime show and did a wonderful job.

— Kami Muehling



LeRoy

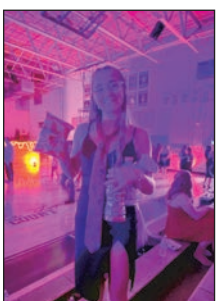
The Panthers celebrated homecoming with two home volleyball wins and a football win. The theme was "Movies" freshmen represented sports, sophomores rom-coms, juniors superheroes and villains, and seniors Disney. Sophomores and seniors won their macho volleyball matches against the freshmen and juniors. The same classes went on to win powderpuff on Wednesday. The homecoming king and queen — **Jack Bogema** and **Kendyl Spratt** (pictured) — were recognized Wednesday. On Thursday, **Sam Edmundson** and **Bogema** (pictured) were the pickleball champions, defeating last year's winners, **Bryce Sparling** and **Gabe Sutter**. Seniors won homecoming by placing first in macho volleyball, powderpuff, pickleball and class skit. The week ended with the homecoming dance at the high school (shoutout to **Nicole Gaddis** for being the DJ). The week was organized by student council and student council sponsors, **Andrea Jefferson** and **Sierra Leinweber**. Student council had a pork-chop cookout on Tuesday and gave out popcorn during lunch on Monday (pictured: Leinweber, Principal **Kelsey Winterland** and Jefferson).

— MOLLY SCHEUER



Heritage

Student council hosted a "Fire and Ice" themed dance for homecoming. All week, students participated in dress-up days, decorated their hallways and played games on Friday. The seniors took home first place for Spirit Week and won the spirit stick that was decorated by every class. The juniors won the annual macho volleyball tournament. At the dance, **Faith Latham** and **Joshua Stierwalt** (pictured) were crowned king and queen that was voted on by students. **Bre Ploense** (pictured) won the limbo challenge, as she was the last one standing. Everyone had a great time dancing and bonding with friends.



— RYLAN WHITE