

# HIGH SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL

Powered by Danville Area Community College



## NO ONE WALKS ALONE



### 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**



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

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## Meet the crew

This year group includes 43 students from 42 schools (visit [news-gazette.com](http://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:** 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  
**Hooperston 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 Erickson  
**St. Thomas More:** Duncan Oliveira  
**Salt Fork:** Anna McCollum  
**Schlarmann:** 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



### 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 Styen**. Pictured, left to right: Little Royalty **Theo Ault**, Styen, Smith and Little Royalty **Jade Lutz**. Photos courtesy Jennifer Meyer.

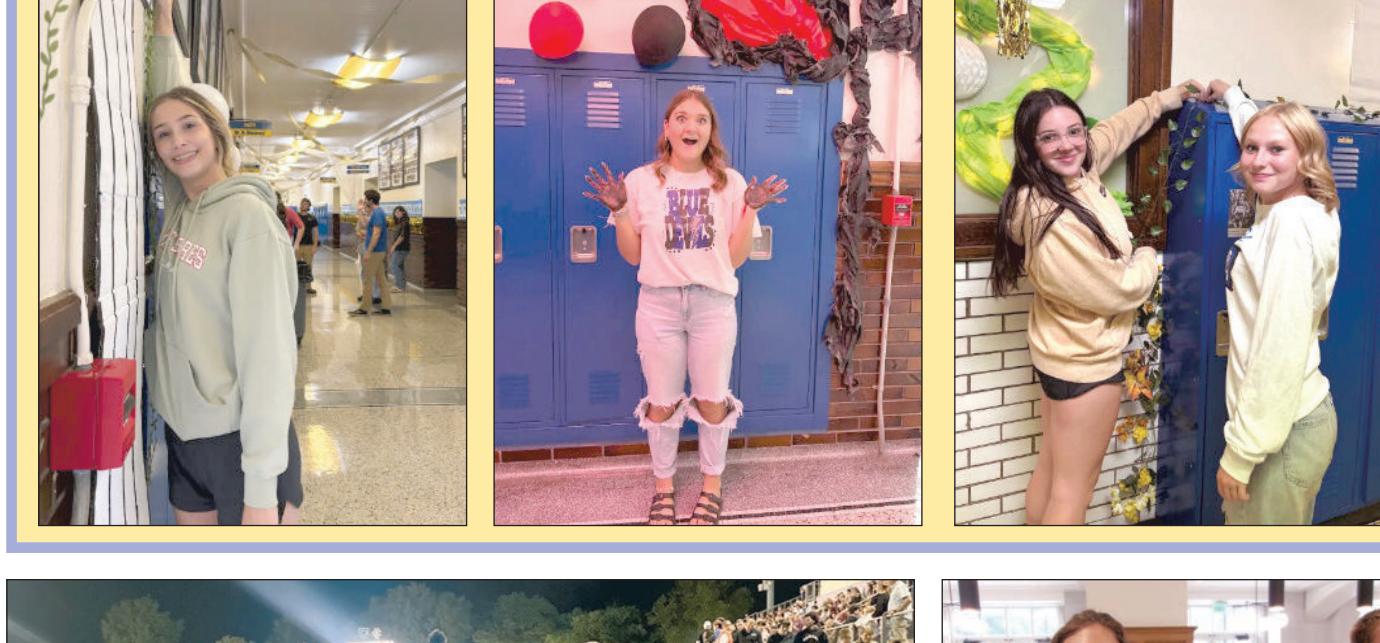
— CLAIRE MEHARRY



## 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



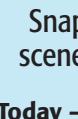
### Centennial

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



## 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 — Schlarmann  
 Tuesday — Cissna Park  
 Oct. 8 — Armstrong  
 Oct. 9 — BHRA



HOMECOMING AT SJ-O

## Catching up with ...

Since High School Confidential started in 2016, more than 340 students have served as News-Gazette correspondents. We'll 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.

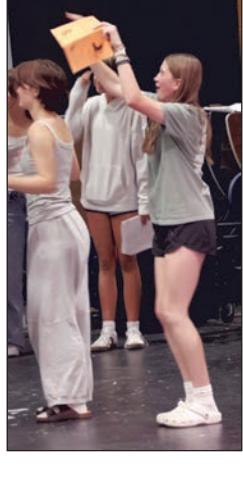
At Illinois Wesleyan (Class of '23), J.D. did a little bit of everything: He ran cross-country and track and served as Student Senate vice president. He was just as involved in high school, including his role with us.

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 helped me become the person I am today.

# YEAR 10 OF HIGH SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL: POWERED BY DACC



## 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 Kittivanichkulkrat, 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



## 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 PITTINGER



## YEAR 10 OF HIGH SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL: POWERED BY DACC



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 Cornjoker Spirit Day. Midweek, students gathered for a bonfire, where the Marching Cornjokers 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 video games, music artists, politics and more. Pictured (left to right): **Hannah Walker** and **Hayden Jenks**.

— EVIE PRICE



### 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: Gatsby Party (dress your best), Tuesday: Elphaba vs. Glinda (green or pink), Wednesday: Greasers & Pink Ladies, Thursday: Class Colors and Friday: 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



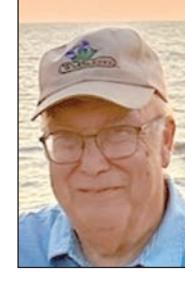
— KIANA HUNTER

## YEAR 10 OF HIGH SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL: POWERED BY DACC



## 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 is open to all and is scheduled for 3 p.m. Saturday at the high school gymnasium.



## 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

— KESIAH MUSICK



# DANVILLE GONE BUT NEVER FORGOTTEN

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 super-sectional. 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, extracurricular



ulars 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 is 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.

— 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.

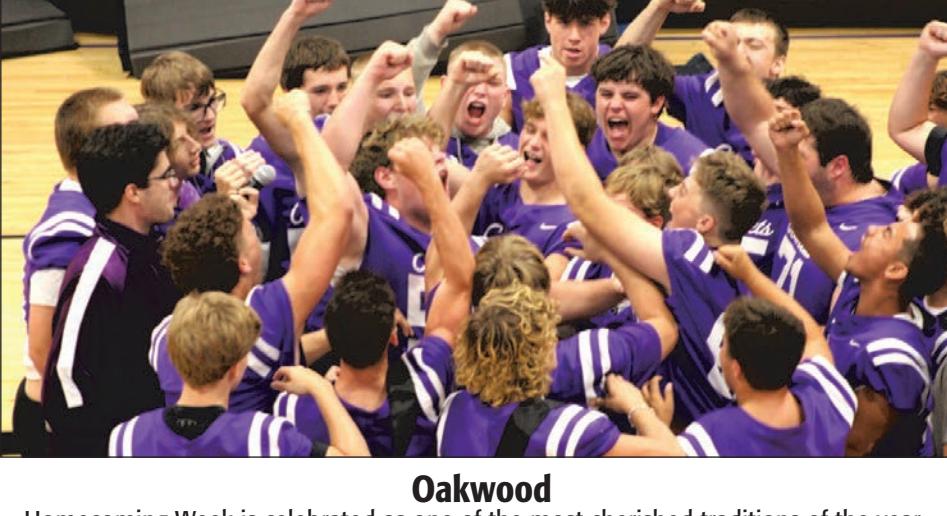
— KATIE ERICKSEN



## GCMS NEW CLUB ON THE SCENE

The brand-new Spanish Club is led by first-year Spanish teacher Beronica Sanchez. The club 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.

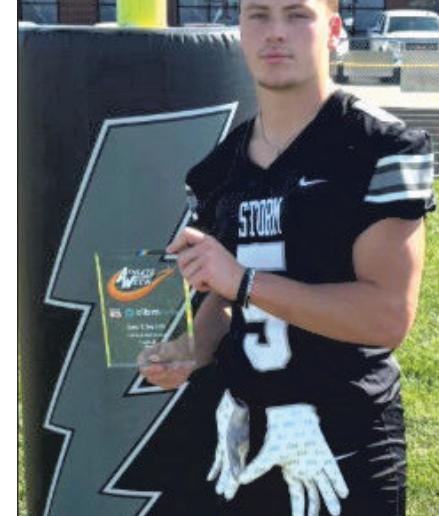
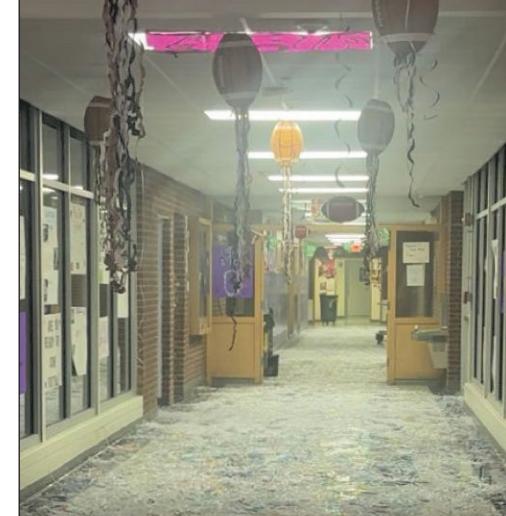
— Addison Farmer



### 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 Cometfest, 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 current record of 4-1.

— ANNA McCOLLUM

## YEAR 10 OF HIGH SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL: POWERED BY DACC



## 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**.

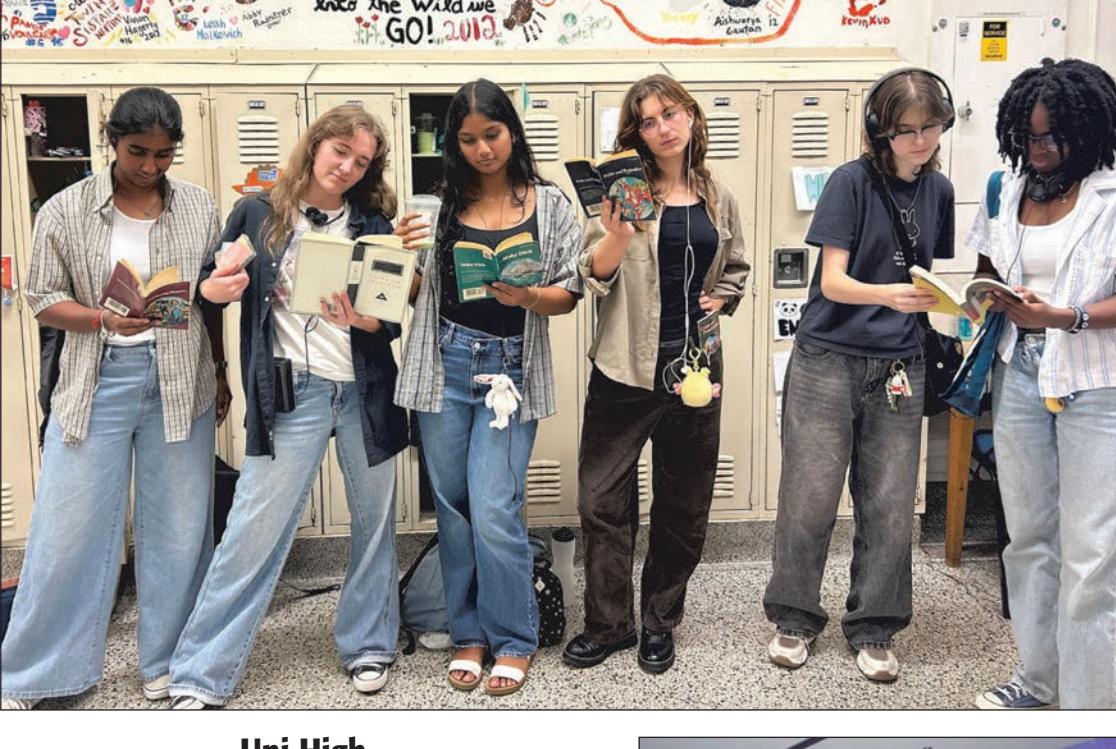
— SOPHIA DUIS

# 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 Torrenga** and **Jayden Conatser**.

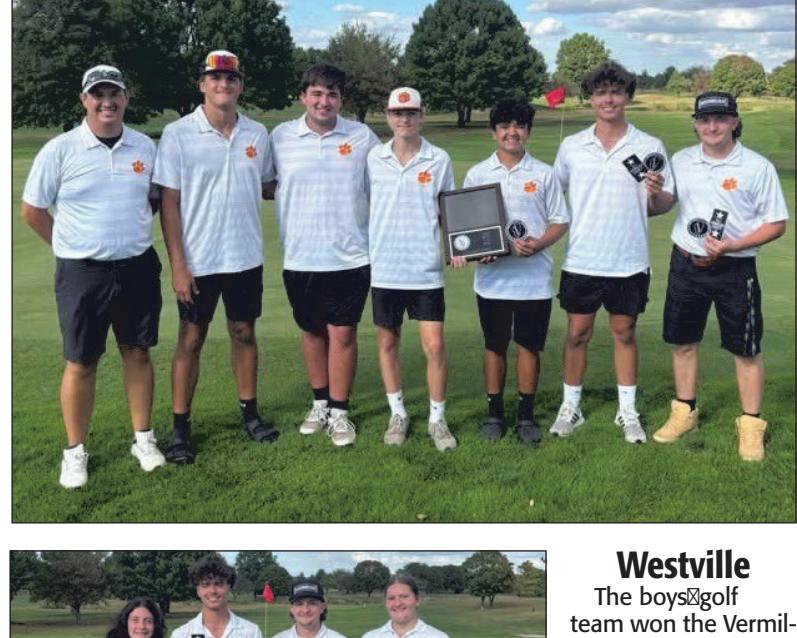
— Mady Melton



## 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 the 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 **Damian Alvarez**. It also marked the Tigers' first year having all-county honorees: **Jacob McCool**, **Johnson**, **Shelby McCool** and **Lani Schlunaker**.



— OLIVIA TROGLIA



### 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.



— RYAN WHITE

