

# HIGH SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL

Powered by Danville Area Community College



# PROUD WARRIORS



## TUSCOLA

It was a spirited homecoming week as energy filled classrooms each day. Finding time to volunteer, Key Club helped at the Pancake Breakfast. The week ended with a homecoming dance themed “A Night in Rio.”

— Emma Spillman



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# YEAR 11 OF HIGH SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL: POWERED BY DACC



This year's group includes a record 46 students from 44 schools (*visit [news-gazette.com](https://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 Trogia  
**Shiloh:** Ali Cash  
**Sullivan:** Claire Kursell  
**Tuscola:** Emma Spillman  
**Uni High:** Krishna Jaswal  
**Unity:** Grace Wherley  
**Urbana:** Sophia Sheyko-Frailley  
**Villa Grove:** Maya Garner  
**Watseka:** Vanyah 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:** Arcola's homecoming).



### Mount Zion

FFA President **Addison Flannery**, along with other officers **Veronica Ballweg**, **Briar Barnes**, **Luke Perona** and **Zane Pharis**, served homemade ice cream at last month's home football game against conference rival Mahomet-Seymour. It was the third year FFA has sold ice cream as a fundraiser for its chapter. The officers helped to make the ice cream as well as sell it.  
— **MACIE VEALE**



### Iroquois West

The boys' and girls' golf teams won the Iroquois County Conference golf tournament last month. Special congrats to medalists **Kaia Kimmel**, who shot a 41, and **Brody Mueller**, who shot a 37.  
— **JORDYN MEENTS**

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# MAHOMET-SEYMOUR BONDING EXPERIENCE



The Marching Bulldogs had their annual Allerton Retreat. Together, the band played games, took walks, had campfires and practiced this year's show, "Absolute Power." With a new director, **Christian Torres**, the Allerton Retreat — a student favorite — was an opportunity for band bonding and fun together. Photos courtesy **Kathi Gorrell**.  
— **Abby Eden**



### LeRoy

Congratulations to the homecoming court, which was announced last week. The boys: **Deven Bollhorst**, **Tyler Coddling**, **Brett Helfrich**, **Lucas Hendren** and **Brycen Umstatt**. The girls: **Annie Conn**, **Macy Dean**, **Ella Mennenga**, **Sadee Owens** and **Adrienne Underhill**.  
— **JACEY HAGEMAN** and **ADRIENNE UNDERHILL**

### Champaign Central

At the homecoming football game against Normal Community on Sept. 18, seniors **Quincy Payton** and **Maeve Ellis** were crowned this year's king and queen (photo courtesy **Liz Brunson**). The homecoming court was also announced during halftime. The ensuing dance, held in Combes Gym, featured concessions and a performance by **DJ Silkee**.  
— **SOPHIE NIXON-GASYNA**



### St. Joseph-Ogden



Even though the annual homecoming powderpuff games were postponed due to weather conditions, it did not stop the classes from playing as hard as they could last Wednesday night. Coached by classmates, each team had been preparing for the games, practicing into the late hours of the night, making up their own plays and also customizing team T-shirts. Celebrating the hard-fought win for their second year in a row was **Addison Knight**, **Olivia Edington**, **Avery Lappin**, **Atleigh Miller**, **Ava Gallo**, **Brooklyn Stevens** and **Ashlee Jannush**. The team of juniors beat the freshman 40-0, then won it all when they beat the senior team 13-12. Photos courtesy **Frank Alexander**.  
— **ALIVIA LEARNED**

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Rantoul

Celebrating homecoming with a spirit week, teachers and students alike participated in fun themes of the day. On Monday, it was Safari Day (animal print/khaki/camo); Tuesday was Twin Day; Wednesday was Neon Day; Thursday was Pajama Day; and Friday was Class Color Day (freshmen wore yellow, sophomores purple, juniors gray and seniors black).

— JAYLA ALLEN



SCHLARMAN MEANINGFUL TRIP



Grades 6-12 had the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to attend the beautification of Blessed **Fulton J. Sheen** at The Dome at America's Center in St. Louis. In Catholicism, beatification is the step before sainthood, which is the highest honor that can be received (only four people in the U.S. have been beautified). At the event, there were hundreds of seminarians, deacons and priests — as well as over 50 bishops. Students had the opportunity to see the beatification process and have Mass with thousands of others.

— Reagan Troglia



Fisher

The FFA program is putting together a composting program. They've designed a 5-gallon bucket to be placed in the cafeteria with the intention of collecting scraps of fruit and vegetables. At the end of the week, they will throw the scraps they have gathered into their compost bin located in the school's greenhouse to help grow more plants and encourage recycling.

— EMILY COULTER



Academy High

**Gabriel De La Cruz Crespo, Asher Watson** and **Liam Sears** competed in the Cow Chip Classic cross-country meet in Chrisman. Despite the intense heat, they completed the 3-mile invitational before the event was cut short by officials out of concern for the runners.

— NICOLLE SCIFRES



Oakland

The FFA chapter competed in a forestry competition, placing third as a team. Individually, **Kaison Howard** placed in the top 10. Pictured: **Alivia Krabel, Levi Shaffer, Elliot Tillis, Charlie Cummins, Jaxon Snyder, Jayden Weaver, Madison Merrington, Grace Edwards** and Howard.

— OLIVIA VONLANKEN



Westville



Captain **Maddy Doggett** celebrated her 1,000th career kill in volleyball. The first-team News-Gazette All-Area choice was presented a game ball as coaches, teammates and fans acknowledged her feat.

— MYLA MACKIEWIC



BHRA

The student body continued its competitive float building tradition during homecoming week. Each class based the theme of their floats after a variety of 1970s movies. Seniors picked "Star Wars," juniors chose "Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory," sophomores followed with "Jaws" and freshmen ended with "Grease." The community voted and seniors took the win. Seniors credited sponsors **Lori Frerichs** and **Nancy Heidrick** with special thanks to their parent sponsor, **Deanne Clapp**.

— ADDIE KRUSE



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## Sullivan

Band and color guard, respectively, led by director **Ian Kinkley** and coach **Kaylee Taylor**, won third place in their first competition at Sage City. They performed arrangements of Malagueña, Sway and Fireball in their show, “Latin Fire.” Drum major **Gavin Wade** (left) and assistant drum major **October Artrip** (right) were recognized for Best Drum Major.

— CLAIRES KURSELL



## Arcola

**Brody Phillips** and **Sofia Martinez** were crowned homecoming king and queen last Saturday at Hocoche-la.

— AYMARA LEAL



## Blue Ridge

During homecoming week, students enjoyed playing games, dressing up and supporting the community. It started with powderpuff football on Sunday, where sophomore **Olivia Jones** led her team to victory against the other classes. Tuesday’s dressup day — “Dress Your Age” — saw seniors being “senior citizens” — and **Shawn Christie** and **Tyler Holtz** took it to the extreme.

— CHEYANNE SMITH



## Maroa-Forsyth

It was a great week to be a senior. After taking the win in powderpuff against the juniors and winning field day, the Class of ‘27 enjoyed another year of victories.

— RILEY HACKLEMAN



## Cerro Gordo

Students have enjoyed getting to know three new teachers: **Lauren Kyburz** (anatomy physiology, biology, earth science, environmental science), **Andrew Willinski** (history, psychology) and **Julia Perrish** (com 3, library).

— JESSA CROSS



# UNI HIGH GOOD TIMES ROLL

On Sept. 19, Uni’s Sprabitat Club, sponsored by **Ben Leff**, hosted its annual costume dodgeball tournament in Kenney Gym. The tournament raised money for the Fuller Center for Housing in Clarksdale, Miss. Before the event, students formed teams and organized costumes. Group costumes featured Marvel characters, “Men in Black” agents, cowboys and chess pieces. Teams first played in friendly round-robin games before moving on to a double-elimination bracket. Players voted for the best team costume and best team spirit. The night ended with the winners of the tournament, best costume and best team spirit receiving baked treats.



Above, left to right: **Jiya Bargaonkar**, **Isabella Sanchez Wilson**, **Janny Knutson**, **Clara Knutson**, **Olive Jan Mathewson-Smith**, **Cadence Scheunemann** and **Bridget Yasunaga** impersonate history teacher **Leff** by wearing button-up shirts and beards. Right, from left: **Penelope Renie**, **Karena Hurst** and **Yixin Jemina Feng** suit up as Marvel characters with their teammates from the swim team.

— KRISHNA JASWAL



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Hoopeston Area

The boys' golf team took second place at the annual Grant Park Invitational at Minnie Monesse Country Club. The Cornjerkers are enjoying a stellar season, compiling more than 40 head-to-head victories in the regular season, a championship at the BHRA Opening Drive Tournament in Danville, and a third-place finish at the Westville Tigers' Invite while playing short-handed. Pictured via **Thomas Sage**, from left: **Jackson Silve**, **Cy Tuggle**, **Felix Cantu**, **Owen Field** and **JJ Martinez**. Not pictured: **Eizen Pyle**.

— HALLIE ALLEN



DeLand-Weldon

Homecoming week featured plenty of school spirit, a major victory by the volleyball team, a Friday assembly and the dance on Saturday. Pictured: Cheerleaders welcoming elementary students to school on Friday.

— MICHAEL ROGERS

CISSNA PARK WINNING WAYS



Volleyball coach **Josh Landon** achieved his 500th career win — and the program reached 1,000 wins — milestones that represent years of dedication, hard work and commitment from coaches and players. Pictured at the 500-win celebration: (front row, left to right) **Hannah Kuester**, **Kinley Blank**, **Grace Bohlmann**, **Ella Schluter**, **Landon**, **Kendyl Neukomm**, **Emily Karas**, **Emma Kohl**, **Olivia Diskin**, **Raegan Thilmony** and **Laura Eisenmann**; (back row) **Gabby Wessels**, **Nicole Trumble**, **Mady Marcott**, **Kloe Clauss**, **Brianna Thilmony**, **Marina Day**, **Kaelyn Smith**, **Evie Niebuhr**, **Annika Stadel** and **Ava Henrichs**.

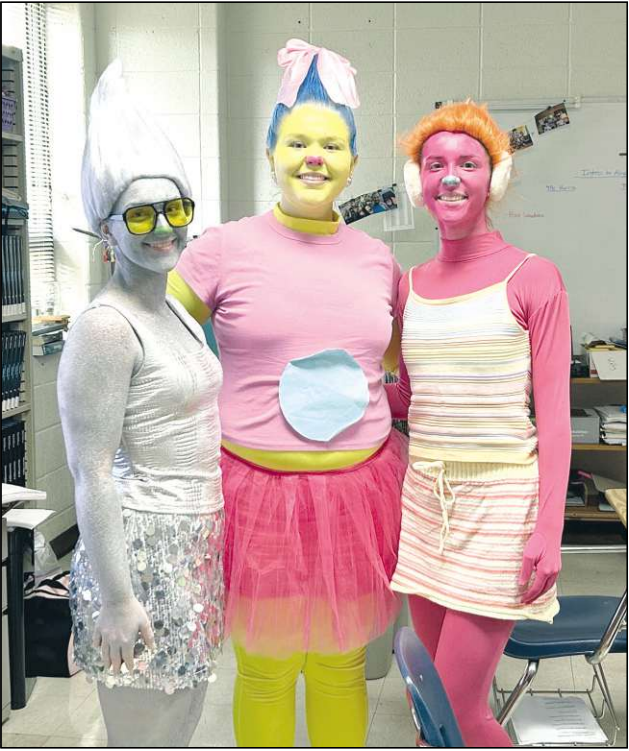
— AVA HENRICHS



Georgetown-Ridge Farm

A few changes to the usual homecoming week activities did not stop students from making the most of it. One of the highlights was Friday's powder-puff game. The reigning champion seniors (right) kept their title on a night that brought students, families and community members together. Students also did a great job participating throughout the week, from different dressup days to each class coming up with their own ways to show spirit. Pictured: (left to right) **Madeline Nevels**, **Maddy Willis** and **Madi Spesard**.

— LIZ WALLS



Bement

The school announced this year's homecoming theme and preparations are underway. Students voted to select the seniors for homecoming court (left to right): **Jack Hentz**, **Anthony Carver**, **Makenna Kindred**, **Gus Mann**, **Cassie Block**, **Claire Loftus** and **Cooper Winkelmann**. Not pictured: **Anna Block**.

— MAKENNA KINDRED



Monticello

The Sages celebrated homecoming with an assortment of activities, ranging from homeroom volleyball to sumo wrestling. A fan favorite is always the powderpuff football games. The winners of this year's event was the Class of 2027, marking their third consecutive and final win.

— RORY COOPER

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## Centennial

Interact Club geared up for its annual Chili Supper which took place during last Friday's homecoming football game. The club kept the audience warm and full with homemade chili and special drinks

— KAYLA BOYD



# CHRISMAN GROUP EFFORTS PAYING OFF

FFA members hosted the 2026 Leadership Training School, participating in leadership activities organized by the school's Section 18 officers. Special guests included state FFA officers **Haven Cash** and **Levi German**. Members helped put together special buckets that included snacks, drinks, shop towels and gloves to thank local farmers. FFA also participated in a section forestry competition, identifying trees such as oak, maple, pine and more. They also had a section where they identified forestry equipment like an axe, a biltmore stick and even a bulldozer. Students choose sombreros to wear to forestry to kick off a year of dress-up themes for events and contests. The high school team placed second overall with individual placings as follows: **Autumn Ellis** (first), **Storm Miller** (seventh), **Izzy Barrett** (eighth) and **Sandra Burmood** (10th). Finally, the boys' cross-country team won county, led by **Aidan Morgan** (first), **Casen Rogers** (third), **Bennett Sands** (fourth) and **Adyn Alvarez** (seventh).

— MORGAN SIMPSON



## Milford

The Milford/Cissna Park football team enjoyed back-to-back shutouts: 48-0 against Peoria Heights and 32-0 against Flanagan. Said running back **Mario Martinez**: "It definitely feels great holding a team to zero points on the whole night. I'm so proud of our guys, we've put in so much work into our defense and to see the results on the scoreboard definitely means something." Tight end **Noah Brittenham** added: "It was definitely a wonderful feeling especially coming off a bad week before that but I knew that our team definitely had it in us. Every person helped that shutout happen with some help from God, too. I'm excited for what this season holds for us." Pictured: **Lucas Summer** shaking hands; and quarterback **Maddox Muehling**; and Martinez and Muehling celebrating a touchdown.

— KAMI MUEHLING



## Heritage

This school year, Heritage is going all in with the "CharacterStrong" curriculum: a required private educational program meant to provide a safe environment for students, allow for social-emotional education, help students understand personal relationships, and act as an overall push to fight back against the teen mental health crisis in the United States. It is described as "a curriculum that impacts engagement, connectedness, and student well-being." Every other Friday, students gather during study hall to engage with the program as teachers handle providing the material.

— MICAH SOMMER

## Armstrong

Students who had perfect attendance in the month of August were honored. School social worker and student council sponsor **Billie Hayes** created rewards each month to recognize these students, and 68% of the student body was in attendance every day in August. Their names were announced at the monthly assembly, and



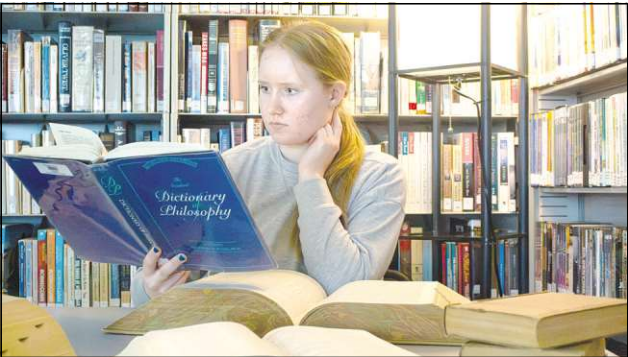
the following Friday they got to spend homeroom in the cafeteria eating ice cream and talking with friends.

— MYAH BARTLOW

## Judah Christian

The number of Advanced Placement (AP) and Dual Credit classes offered to students this year has been doubled. New opportunities include Dual Credit Psychology, Dual Credit Physics, Dual Credit Chemistry, Dual Credit Environmental Biology and AP Comparative Government (available even to freshmen). There are now more than 15 courses that offer students the chance to earn college credit, letting them push themselves further than they could have imagined. As junior **Peighton Joines** said, "It's all about how much effort you put in."

— KELSIE DROLLINGER and XAVIER RUSSELL



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Paxton-Buckley-Loda

The FFA chapter's September meeting was the annual Ice Cream Social for alumni and members. As part of a grain bin simulation for National Farm Safety Week, students were tested if they had enough strength to pull themselves out of a grain bin. Also, Heritage FS shared about farm safety. Pictured (middle): **Harper Swinford** (left) and **Kyla Grohler**. — ALEX JONES



DANVILLE PARTY TIME!

At the homecoming pep rally, students participated in class competitions to determine which class had the most spirit. Staff members like **Kelly Yohnka** and **Scotland Vogel** also participated. The juniors ended up landing on top and took home "GOAT" medalions. Afterward, fall sports like boys' golf, girls' tennis, boys' soccer, volleyball and girls' and boys' cross-country were recognized. — ASHANTI CONAWAY



ALAH

An amazing group of seniors took advantage of a beautiful day and decorated their hallway for homecoming, which this year was held at Lovington Grade School. Despite the uncontrollable changes due to renovations, ALAH still made it possible to decorate hallways, have a parade and even enjoy an air-conditioned homecoming dance. Pictured left to right: (top) **Nathan Rafferty**, **Billy Lieb**, **Coye Grant**, **Maxton Boddy** and **Hadden Fabert**; (bottom) **Embrey Reardon**, **Sophie Monts**, **Kaley Hershberger**, **Kate Wiley**, **Brynlee Moore**, **Mckenna Blaudow**, **Isabetta Zampieri** and **Leighton Poulos**. — LEIGHTON POULOS



St. Thomas More

On Sept. 24, students attended the beautification of now Blessed Archbishop **Fulton J. Sheen** at The Dome at America's Center in St. Louis. This was a major event for the high school and students, who had a wonderful and fulfilling experience. — QUINN MILLER



Unity

On Friday mornings, members of a sports team visit Unity East and West elementary schools, uplifting the younger students' mornings with fist-bumps from high schoolers. It is a tradition that has become a cherished part of school culture, brightening the elementary students' morning and providing them with role models from high school sports teams. Photos by **Patrick Striegel**. — GRACE WHERLEY



Urbana

Senior yearbook staff member **Ananyah Tangmunarunkit** (pictured) added the finishing touches to a senior checklist. The staff's goal was to bring more school spirit throughout the school year. Pictured: Seniors **Tehilah Mbala**, **Savannah Finley** and **Mya Sessi** check for what's coming next. — SOPHIA SHEYKO-FRAILEY

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Gibson City-Melvin-Sibley

Homecoming week was filled with fun activities and school spirit. Each class competed for the Falcon Cup, awarded to the class that earned the most points. The winners were announced Friday during the pep assembly in the following order: senior class, junior, sophomore and freshman. During the assembly, the cheerleaders taught students new chants to build school spirit, and the king and queen were announced: **Tucker Mueller** and **Lilyan Sizemore**.

— KASEN DEFRIES



# SALT FORK SOUNDING GOOD

For the third consecutive year, the Storm was invited to participate at the University of Illinois Band Day. On Sept. 19, 22 band members left early that morning for Gies Memorial Stadium, where they played in the halftime show that was viewed by over 60,000 fans at the game against Southern Illinois. The Salt Fork students played alongside hundreds of band students from 21 organizations across the Midwest and more than 350 members of the Marching Illini. Band director **Timothy Knilands** said it was “one of the more memorable events we do for our marching season every year as it allows our band students to see what band can be like outside of a small community. It helps bring some fresh motivation for our marching program back into the Salt Fork community.”

— ANNA MCCOLLUM



Shiloh

Approximately 7 million Americans are living with Alzheimer's, a disease that slowly destroys the memory, thinking skills and the ability to do daily tasks. Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) has donated more than \$65,000 toward research and care programs this year alone. Shiloh's FBLA chapter participated in a fundraising walk for the first time in Charleston. Nine FBLA members as well as family and friends walked at the Sept. 19 event, raising more than \$300. Pictured, left to right: (front) **Lakota Thompson**, **Payton Scott**, advisor **Julia North** and **Devin Wright**; (back) **Leah Wood**, **Taylor Hepburn**, **Corinne Heintz**, **Haylee Buckler** and **Payton Keys**.

— ALI CASH



Oakwood

During homecoming week, student council hosted Comet-Fest, which is an annual competition between the classes. Won by the senior class, the competition included dodgeball, basketball free throws, tug-of-war, musical chairs, a balloon pop relay and a lip-sync battle. During the pep assembly, senior football players joined cheerleaders in an annual performance with dancing, stunts and a lot of school spirit. **Lucas Tyas** and **Amber Betzviser** were crowned homecoming king and queen. At the conclusion of the pep assembly, the senior class was awarded the spirit stick. Photos courtesy **Courtney Dudley** and **Shannon Wallace**.

— SIDNEY DUNAVAN



Watseka

Twenty students enrolled in dual-credit classes were given the opportunity to tour Kankakee Community College's campus and learn about the programs offered. Students learned how to access and utilize the KCC research database, toured the library, received an overview of each major offered at KCC and saw where classes were held. Students received a KCC ID card, giving them access to the school's library. **Claire Henneike** and **Amy Bandur**, dual credit teachers who have been taking students on this tour for several years, acknowledge how beneficial this event is.

— VANYSAH HICKMAN



Villa Grove

Biology 2 students took a special field trip to explore ecosystems in the principal's pond. They collected Daphnia, a tiny but important keystone to species. The hands-on experience gave students the opportunity to observe organisms in their natural environment. Pictured: **Bailey Keith**, **Cameron McGaughey**, **Zeva Kirkman**, **Wesley Woller** and **EJ Brown**.

— MAYA GARNER

