

HIGH SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL

Powered by Danville Area Community College

HAPPY RETURNS!

St. Thomas More: A warm welcome back from winter break saw different games and competitions, including a gingerbread-house contest, other minute-to-win-it games in the gym, and the crowd favorite — teacher musical chairs.

— Duncan Oliveria



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Meet the crew

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 Troglia
Questions? Email N-G VP Jim Rossow at jrossow@news-gazette.com.



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.



LeRoy

Thespian officers attended the Illinois Theater Association's 50th Theatre Festival at Illinois State University. They saw the production of 'Between the Lines,' a musical about finding one's place in society and the power of connections. They attended breakout sessions and classes led by ISU theater students and staff. **Ashlie Marcy** leads the Thespian Troupe. Officers include seniors **Emma Wiechman** and **Addi Creech**, and juniors **Gabe Sutter** and **Devin Heap**.



— MOLLY SCHEUER



Tuscola

Tessa Brucker was named Key Club Member of the Month. She completed five hours of community service in November. Additionally, Varsity Scholastic Bowl won first place in the Central Illinois Conference Tournament, beating Meridian, Clinton, Shelbyville, Warrensburg-Latham and Central A&M.

— CLAIRE LEONARD



Gibson City-Melvin-Sibley

The girls' and boys' basketball teams had a game on the same night at home. The atmosphere was uplifting and fun, and — even better — both teams brought home a win. The girls played Paxton-Buckley-Loda, and the boys' faced Seneca.

— ADDISON FARMER



MAROA-FORSYTH TALENT ON DISPLAY

On Friday, Art Club students were recognized at the Decatur Area Arts Council, and multiple students received ribbons for their art. **Lilly Wehking** (pictured) received Artist of the Month for her work and was recognized at the event.

— AUBREY STEWART



BHRA

On Jan. 10, the junior high's fifth-grade class held its annual DARE graduation attended by eight BHRA seniors. DARE role models, the students had previously spoken to the fifth-grade classes, answering questions they might have about going into junior high and high school. The questions varied from, 'How have you said "no" to peer pressure in high school?' and 'What is the hardest thing about being a senior?' to 'What is your favorite color?' Seniors pictured, from left: **Connor Powell**, **Kaemyn Brown**, **Gavin High**, **Cruz Dubois**, **Ella Acton**, **Lexie Hall**, **Eva Ronto** and **Lahna Benjamin**.

— LAHNA BENJAMIN

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Mahomet-Seymour

Intramural basketball, which started last week, meets Wednesdays in January and February. This year, there are over 70 students and 10 student-picked teams. The teams don't have official coaches, although some teams do have 'coaches.' The top four teams will qualify for the playoffs, with the goal of advancing to the championship game. Pictured: coach **Parker Henry**.

— **ABBY EDEN**



Provided

Oakwood coach Jeff Mandrell talks to his team at Monday's practice. He was recognized for win No. 600 at Tuesday's home game.

OAKWOOD HITTING A MILESTONE

In addition to academic enthusiasm that was apparent upon returning from winter break, winter sports have been going strong, too. A major highlight: boys' basketball coach **Jeff Mandrell** earning his 600th career win, an impressive milestone that reflects his leadership, commitment and long-standing impact on the athletic program.

— **Sophia Aquino**



Fisher

As students returned from break, they were reminded of the excitement of being a part of clubs and sports. Scholastic Bowl prepped for upcoming meets, Academic Challenge has started back up this year, and play practice continues as students prepare for their big show in March. Also, the Principal Advisory Council started to share announcements each week to get students excited for each day. Pictured: **Addilyn Bent** and **Perzee** and **Ellie Emberson** started the semester off with the new tradition, each member of PAC taking a turn on making announcements.

— **KESIAH MUSICK**



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Uni High

From Thursday to Saturday, theater students traveled to Illinois State University to participate in the 50th annual Illinois High School Theatre Festival (IHSTF). At IHSTF, students from over 190 Illinois high schools engage in theater-focused opportunities, workshops and performances. Every year, Uni students travel to the university to improve their theater craft and learn more about the art. Photo by **Cecilia Calfas**.

— **SIMRAH KHAN**



Monticello

Ever since Dr. **Lindsay Andrews** (photo courtesy **Ellen Rider**) joined the Monticello High School Media Center squad, she has been hard at work incorporating creative and engaging activities throughout the school. Her first efforts were put into establishing a new club — the Library Advisory Board. A big focus for Andrews was to understand how students and staff currently use media center resources, as well as promote additional education and collaborative learning. Andrews shared, 'The (Library Advisory) board helps me get to know MHS students and to rationalize how they want to engage with the media center — and I can count on them to give me feedback on the kind of programming, outreach and material inventory that suits their needs,' she said. Andrews emphasized the importance of the board in representing their peers by adding, 'In other words, the benefit of an advisory board is that there will be change over time, and as interests change, so too can the library accommodate.' The club is fueled by an assortment of students, but there are a few who have taken on special leadership roles: **Sena Johns** serves as president, **Sabrina Christman** vice president, **Lexi Cole** treasurer and **Addi Johns** secretary.

— **MADI MELTON**



Centennial

Last Saturday, Future Business Leaders of America traveled to Normal Community High School for the Central Area Conference. Club sponsors **Eric Springer** and **Mindy Borden** helped to facilitate at the event. Students had the opportunity to present in front of judges, compete in 59 different events, and network with members from other schools. The 35 Centennial students in attendance finished the day off strong with 21 participants placing top three in their events.

— **KENNEDY BORDE**



Armstrong

Cala Reifsteck and **Aubrey Self** have been named State Scholars by the Illinois Student Assistance Commission. To be eligible, students must have ACT scores that are at or above the 95th percentile, and they must be in the top half of the graduating class. Also for 'Tie Tuesdays,' the boys' basketball team dresses up in dress pants, a button-up shirt and a tie. Coach **Caleb Gossett** said it gives the players confidence with a 'look good, play good' mindset.

— AUBREY SELF



Blue Ridge

With the junior high volleyball season in full swing, many cheerleaders are involved, too. To help out the remaining junior high squad on Jan. 8, the high school team made an appearance and brought school spirit. Pictured (courtesy **Kristi Woliung**): **Chase Ellis**, **Ellie Clark**, **Aidan Hawn** and **Addie Browning**.

— KARLY WARNER



Unity

It's the last semester for two longtime teachers at the high school. **Dave Fink** has been teaching for 33 years — 32 at Unity. **Denise Warner** has been teaching for 35 years at Unity. We are grateful for the education these two have provided.

— CLAIRE MEHARRY



Bement

On Jan. 6, Bement held a senior signing day for **William Fuson**, who committed to run at Southern Illinois in Carbondale. Throughout his high school years, Fuson has enjoyed many accomplishments in track and field and cross-country.

— KIANA HUNTER



Academy High

In anatomy and psychology class, taught by **Natasha Capell**, students are studying the inner workings of skeletal muscles by creating representations of the layers with plastic straws. Pictured: **Tey Eagles**.

— EVIE PRICE



ST. JOSEPH-OGDEN SECOND IN STATE



The We the People team experienced an exciting week. They traveled to Chicago Kent Law School to compete in a state-level competition, securing a second-place finish and a spot in nationals in Washington, D.C. Each unit showed dedication and commitment, which showed through their success. Above, from left, back to front: **Cooper Kietzman**, **Patrick McMahon** and **Christopher Coffey**; **Logan Xiao**, **Hannah Mock**, **Cameron Schluter** and **Kaleb Peoples**; **Addie Brooks**, **Kayla Osterbur**, **Sydney Steinbach** and **Claire Hartman**; **Ally Schmitz**, **Madeline Wells**, **Cade Crozier** and **Landon Roberts**; and **Allison Ochs**, **Lily Rice**, **Delaney Nekolny**, **Amber Ruppel** and **Marshall Schacht**. Left: **Mock**, **Wells** and **Nekolny**.

— KATIE ERICKSEN



Champaign Central

Last weekend, the drama troupe attended the Illinois High School Theater Fest. The festival brought in troupes from all across the state and held various workshops in singing, dancing, acting and technical production. The all-state production of 'Newsies' featured actors from various high schools in Illinois, including Central senior **Jordan Rinkenberger**.

— ADELAIDE KOT...

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Salt Fork

Despite harsh weather, FFA members showed up and offered assistance to Danville National Cemetery during Wreaths Over America. This act of community service is one of the group's most valued events, a chance to take a moment and pay respect to the local veterans. It's an annual tradition the chapter has participated in, serving during the event itself and the ceremony beforehand. This year, students placed wreaths on the graves of fallen soldiers, taking the time to read over their name and rank, respecting the remarkable life they lived. Pictured: **Lucy DeAth** placing a wreath and **Isaak Bemis** paying his respect to the fallen soldier.

— ANNA MCCOLLUM



GEORGETOWN-RIDGE FARM CHECKMATE, SENIORS



The chess team faced Mattoon in its regular-season finale — the varsity winning twice, including one clean-sweep match — as seniors **Ashton Pilkington**, **Cale Cavanaugh** and **Tiffany Taylor** were celebrated. From left: **Anthony Stephens**, **Cavanaugh**, **Tegyn Grant** and **Taylor**.

— TIFFANY TAYLOR



Danville

Theater students traveled to Illinois State for the Illinois High School Theatre Festival (IHSTF). The 50th anniversary of the largest noncompetitive theater festival took place over the weekend. Around 4,000 high school theater students from all over the state watched shows and participated in various skill-building workshops that touched on acting, tech skills, directing, singing, dancing and more. Students also had the opportunity to audition for an all-state-level production. Also, juniors and seniors could audition for theatrical and technical programs through various colleges throughout the Midwest.

— RYLEE JACK

Rantoul

The high school has recently completed its largest building project to date, significantly expanding space for students and staff. The renovation added elevators, making all three levels of the school more accessible. In addition, new office space was created for student services, allowing the former student services area to be converted into an additional classroom. The project also included the construction of a new concession stand, enhancing the experience for students, families and community members attending home games.

— TAMIA BELL



Urbana



The first meeting for the Student Feminist Union was Friday, hosted by co-presidents and founders **Allison Beller** and **Hannah Bouchama**. They focused on introducing new members, discussing various volunteering and fundraising opportunities, working with local women's shelters, etc. The plan for the club is to provide a safe space for feminists to express their ideas and opinions on feminist literature, current events and helping the community.

— RUBY PITTINGER

Milford

On Friday, the FCS Club gave out soup and salad to students, parents, coaches and anyone else who attended the boys' basketball game against Hoopes Area. The club provided chili, ham and turkey sandwiches, potato and bacon soup, and Texas flat cake and vanilla cake for dessert. The club took donations and raised over \$700. Pictured: **Evie Morts** making a plate to give to a customer; **Eliana Salinas** making sandwiches; and **Xavi Cintora** helping make food.

— KAMI MUEHLIN



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Heritage

The Heritage Hawks and Villa Grove Blue Devils matched up on the court on Jan. 6. Both teams were represented by multiple 1,000-point scorers ranging from the Class of 1968 to the Class of 2026, who were recognized before the game. Graduates from Heritage, Villa Grove, Homer and ABL (Allerton-Broadlands-Longview) all had the bright lights on them. Pictured: **Alan Miller** (Class of 2002), **Jeff Messman** (Class of 2003) and **Brad Wilson** (Class of 1998), who holds the all-time leading scoring record, represented Heritage. It was a great night for basketball, recognizing these athletes and listening to the Heritage pep band play tunes.

— RYLAN WHITE



CERRO GORDO BRONCOS BATTLE

TAKE TWO
Following up on our stories

On Friday, students made their way to Arthur for the Cornbowl Classic. Varsity girls started their game at 10 a.m. At halftime, there was a battle between drummers from both bands as well as a game of knockout with five boys and five girls from both ALAH and Cerro Gordo. After the girls' game — won by Cerro Gordo/Bement — everyone ate lunch. The varsity boys' game started at noon. At halftime, there was a game of knockout with mascots (Bucky won). The Varsity boys also won, 57-40.

— Alexa Rodgers



Sullivan

The National English Honor Society loves to take the time to appreciate teachers, each of whom received a handwritten note and a bag full of goodies to welcome them back from winter break. Pictured, from left: **Eiley Poe**, **Riane Bear**, **Nevaeh Wilson** and **Mae Dawkins**.

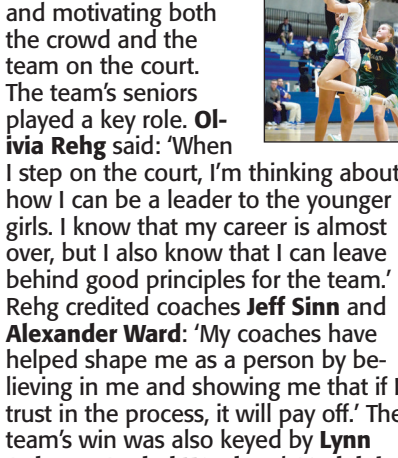
— DANICA BELL



Villa Grove

The teacher appreciation breakfast is a tradition put on by student council members to show their gratitude to the faculty. Student council members wake up early in the morning on a school day to provide an assortment of tasty breakfast foods. **Evalina Kincaid** was in charge of making her famous round pancakes, while **Bailey Keith** was in charge of the coffee bar, providing other juices to drink as well. **Noreen Acton** and **Eric Brooks** were among the teachers who participated in the event, enjoying and showcasing the variety of delicious food that was prepared. After all teachers came down to eat, students got to eat their breakfast before the 8:15 bell. **Kendrick Roy** wasted no time and dove straight into the scrumptious food.

— EVA PIERCY



Paxton-Buckley-Loda

Last Friday night, the girls' basketball team delivered an exciting performance in a win against St. Thomas More. The atmosphere was pumped with the energy brought by the PBL Pep Band. Conducted by director **Joshua Breen** and drum major **Brayden Kief**, the band played throughout the night, keeping spirits high and motivating both the crowd and the team on the court. The team's seniors played a key role. **Olivia Rehg** said: 'When I step on the court, I'm thinking about how I can be a leader to the younger girls. I know that my career is almost over, but I also know that I can leave behind good principles for the team.' Rehg credited coaches **Jeff Sinn** and **Alexander Ward**: 'My coaches have helped shape me as a person by believing in me and showing me that if I trust in the process, it will pay off.' The team's win was also keyed by **Lynn Rubarts**, **Rachel Ward** and **Madeleine Wachowski**. Pictured via **Alex Jones**: Rehg (left), **Audrey McCoy** (above) and **Hallee Johnson** (far left).



— BRAYDEN KIEF

Westville

At the annual Alumni Pep Band Night on Jan. 6, alumni performed with the high school band at a home basketball game. This year's alumni turnout was the largest it's ever been.

— OLIVIA TROGLIA



Cissna Park

Once again, Cissna Park High School pulled off an amazing Madrigal Performance. A group of 15 singers and four actors made up the Madrigal group, which began practicing in August. When the night finally came, over 220 guests showed up to watch.

— LILY HEATON

