

# HIGH SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL

Powered by Danville Area Community College



## PARTY ON!

Blue Ridge's 'Knight to Remember' hits all the right notes

Karisa Yeagle and Bentley Choate

To spotlight the talent in the Blue Ridge community, the **Marching Knights** — with the great help of **Shari Eubank** — hosted the annual **'Knight to Remember'** talent show. Many singers took the stage, as well as pianists and even a few actors. To help fund the band's upcoming trip to Florida, the crowd was encouraged to vote for a staff member to get pied in the face by putting money in the assigned jars. As **Chris Mitchell** was one of the 'winners,' everyone awaited his turn. At the last second, he backed away, and **Angela Mitchell** ended up getting whipped cream to the face. Overall, the community shared many talents and laughs.

— **Karly Warner**



Kelly Weiss



Alliya Berry, Lana Malsberry, Indra Nolan, Maddison Grider, AJ Brown and Crystal Chambers



Shari Eubank and Romero Fernandez

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# YEAR 10 OF HIGH SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL: POWERED BY DACC



## Meet the crew

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

**Academy High:** Evie Price  
**ALAH:** London Dugan  
**Arcola:** Addee Mulligan  
**Armstrong:** Aubrey Self  
**Bement:** Kianna 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  
**Hoopston 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](mailto:jrossow@news-gazette.com).



### Westville

On Feb. 25, 15 freshmen participated in the Career Blitz put on by Danville High School, a great experience to learn about opportunities and be educated on various topics. Photos via **Chad Sollars**.

— OLIVIA TROGLIA



### St. Thomas More

Seniors received their votes for senior superlatives, with many winning in different categories such as Most Likely to be President (**Joe Schwenk** and **Kaitlyn Ballard**), Best Duo (**Brooke McMahon** and **Nicolette Burton**) and Most Athletic (**Owen Yeager** and **Audrey Gooding**). All seniors took part in the voting, and pictures were taken this week during Saber Block.



— DUNCAN OLIVEIRA



Clockwise from left: Gabe Kurtenbach in his tractor after driving it to school Tuesday; Lukas Miller and Bre Ploense posing with the animals that they found around the school; and Joshua Stierwalt and Reagan Stierwalt making some delicious pancakes for the farmers.

# HERITAGE A SPECIAL OCCASION

The Heritage FFA chapter made National FFA Week very special for everyone.

There were agriculture-related games as well as dress-up days for the students. Monday was 'Farmers Day Off,' everyone wearing pajamas. The FFA chapter also hosted a schoolwide kahoot where students were asked questions about agriculture. The winner was **Joao Vega**.

On 'Tractor Tuesday,' people wore green for John Deere and red for Case IH. The Heritage FFA officer team hosted a breakfast for farmers.

For Wednesday's 'Class Animals,' each class wore a different color depending on what animal they were given, and there was a school-



wide scavenger hunt for two plastic animals.

For Thursday's 'Country vs. Country Club,' people dressed up as a farmer or like they were golfing. The FFA chapter hosted a member lunch for bonding time.

For Friday's 'Blue and Gold Day,' the officer team wore their official dress, and students wore blue and gold. Students and staff also participated

in Ag Olympics with 10 stations with different agriculture challenges that needed to be done. The staff team won the Golden Chicken with a time of 4:58. Sophomores won the Golden Shovel for earning the most points throughout the week.

— RYLAN WHITE



Teachers celebrated with the Golden Chicken (left) while sophomores won the Golden Shovel.



### Salt Fork

At the 2026 Masonic Academic Bowl, the Scholastic Bowl competed against seven teams from the county and finished fourth. The students went 4-3 for a strong start early in the season. It will be exciting to watch this group continue to progress with each new meet they compete in. Pictured, from left: (back) **Kaliyah Shaffer**, **Daniel Surowka**, **Alexis Coffman**, **Oliver Kelly** and **Ashton Jeffers**; and (front) **Sadie Byrom**, **Peyton Hatcher** and **Evan Gentrup**.

— ANNA MCCOLLUM

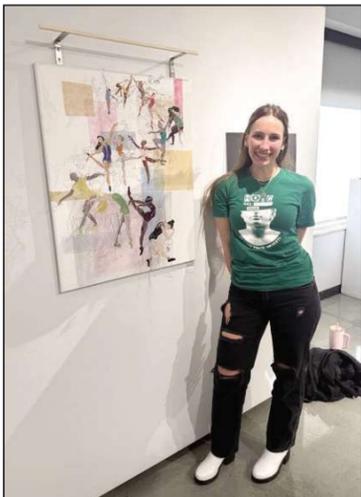


### Tuscola

FFA hosted the Ag Olympics. This included agriculture-related games that students signed up for: tug-of-war, a hay-bale toss, identifying tools, a lassoing contest and others (pictured: an egg-toss competition).

— CLAIRE LEONARD

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## LeRoy

Art students submitted various pieces to the HOIC Art Festival. Senior **Isabel Vance** won Best in Show, junior **Peyton Ford** won Best in Drawing, and senior **Katie Masterson** and sophomore **Tianna Larsen** received an honorable mention. In addition to these honors, sophomore **Joslyn Baughman** and Ford's creations were selected to be on display at the Illinois State University Student Gallery throughout February. Nine students attended the HOIC art conference where all submissions were on display.

— MOLLY SCHEUER



## Villa Grove

National FFA Week overlapped with Winterfest, making the week even more eventful. Students participated in lunch games, macho volleyball for the boys, dodgeball for the girls, themed dress-up days, hallway decorating and the well-known 'Kiss the Pig' assembly to wrap it up. With the winter dance theme centered around the Olympics, each class competed to earn the VGHS medal.



The assembly featured a variety of competitive games, including relay races, a pudding-eating contest and a hay-throwing competition. **Henry Osborne** competed in the horse race and kept a smile on his face despite the loss, while **JJ Duke** took part in hay throwing. **Garrett Knierim** claimed victory in the pudding-eating contest. In the end, the juniors brought home the gold medal. **Elizabeth Nieto** was voted to kiss the pig, a crowd-favorite tradition that had the gym roaring with laughter.

Throughout the week, FFA members focused on their goal to 'MOVE Out Hunger,' raising \$1,282.00 for the Snack Pack Program. **Lilly-Lynn Davis**, **Ellie Oberg**, **Landyn Millsap** and **Jack Jones** presented the check on behalf of the organization. Under the leadership of FFA sponsor **Callie Wegeng**, the week was a great success, bringing energy, competition and generosity to VGHS.

— EVA PIERCY

# FISHER TAKIN' THE PLUNGE

Students had the opportunity to jump in the freezing water to raise funds for Special Olympics Illinois, taking part in the annual Polar Plunge at Lake of the Woods in Mahomet. It was also FFA Week, as officers decorated the school, dress-up days and games during lunch, including one where students were blindfolded and had to guess where the emblem went on the jacket.

— **Kesiah Musick**



## Mahomet-Seymour

Last week's choir concert included five performing groups, and a band concert featured three performing groups. At the band concert, longtime director **Michael Stevens** was honored. All of the band's pieces were by some of his favorite composers to celebrate his 33 years at Mahomet-Seymour. Pictured: **Harlow Carolan** and **Liam McMinn**.

— **ABBY EDEN**



## Arcola

For National FFA Week, students took part in Ag Olympics with an assembly and games. Pictured: **Canton Wesch** and **Brody Philips**.

— **ADDEE MULLIGAN**



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## BHRA

To celebrate National FFA Week, students took part in activities like relay races that included dressing like a farmer, stacking hay bales, doing the chicken dance, tossing a cowboy hat and hammering nails into a board. In Hungry Hungry Hippos, classes competed to collect the most dodgeballs, tennis balls and wiffle balls. Students also participated in spirit days and a fundraiser that allowed them to vote for a staff member to kiss a pig. By the end of the week, BHRA's resource officer, student resource Officer **John McFarland** and teacher **Michael Packard** were selected, wrapping up the week with plenty of laughter.

— LAHNA BENJAMIN



# MONTICELLO BATTLE IT OUT ON THE COURT

What's COOL in SCHOOL

On Feb. 24, high school staff and the Piatt County Golden Eagles — a competitive Special Olympics basketball team — faced off in an enjoyable matchup at Sievers Center. The game was sponsored by MHS Pep Club, which announced after the game that they would be giving \$1,756 to the Piatt County Special Olympics Program. The crowd was eccentric with family members of the Golden Eagles, students and supportive community members who gathered to cheer on their favorite players. The Piatt County Golden Eagles return to action at the state tournament in Bloomington on March 14-15.

— Mady Melton



## St. Joseph-Ogden

The school's We the People team hosted its annual pasta night. The event was a success and featured a meal of pasta, salad and garlic bread, followed by an engaging trivia game where a record 30 tables competed. A silent auction, with over 40 donated baskets, was also held. The funds raised support the talented team's travel expenses for April's national competition in Washington, D.C. Pictured, from left: (front row) **Addie Brooks**, **Lily Rice**, **Delaney Nekolny** and **Logan Xiao**; and (back row) **Christopher Coffey**, **Patrick McMahon**, **Kayla Osterbur**, **Kaleb Peoples**, **Cameron Schluter**, **Cade Crozier**, **Hannah Mock**, **Claire Hartman** and **Sydney Steinbach**.

— KATIE ERICKSEN



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## Maroa-Forsyth

There were multiple events to celebrate National FFA Week: Chapter members read to kindergartners and first-graders, taught lessons in middle-school science and hosted a Putt-Putt night. Pictured, from left: **Hallie Wilson, Katelyn Chapman, Morgan Crouch, Anna Toalson, Alexa Hurst and Aubrey Stewart.**

— AUBREY STEWART



# CHRISMAN FUN ALL WEEK LONG

National FFA Week started with 'America Monday' and a teacher breakfast prepared by FFA members. For Tuesday's 'Blue and Gold/Yellow Day,' members wore FFA jackets and served pork-burger sandwiches, hot-dogs and chips as a free-will donation was taken for the **Eric Dixon** Memorial Scholarship. Wednesday was 'Pajama Day' and Thursday was 'Country or Country Club' as well as 'Barnyard Day,' as many students brought in a variety of animals: chicken, quail, hamster, turtle, cow, lama, donkey, turkey, duck, bunny, pig and goat. Elementary and junior-high students visited to see the animals in an event that was open to the public. Friday was 'Teacher Appreciation Day.' FFA members packed bags of treats and included an appreciation note to deliver to each teacher's classroom. Students also drove tractors around town, to the grade school and back to the school. It was also the Ag Olympics for the junior high. Finally, two FFA members each day got to read the daily announcements — and did a fantastic job!

— Morgan Simpson



## Urbana

Last Tuesday, the Jr. MANRRS club had its annual strawberry fundraiser distribution. The group spent January collecting orders and were finally able to distribute them. The fundraiser was taken over from FFA last year and has been a success ever since. On Thursday, the club partnered up with Urbana's FCCLA to make chocolate-covered strawberries in the school's kitchens! It was a berry sweet time.

— RUBY PITTENGER



## Sullivan

The Sullivan Singers hosted their first invitational in three years, several groups showing up to compete last weekend at the high school.

— LILLY MOXLEY



## Uni High

On Monday, the joint Spring Initiative and Habitat for Humanity club Sprabitat held its annual bake-off to fundraise for the Fuller Center for Housing in Clarksdale, Miss. The bake-off is a competition between students to present the best dessert, with bakers making desserts and tasters voting on the most creative and the 'yummyest,' says senior **Chloe Noronha-Hostler**. Noronha-Hostler baked a matcha crêpe cake for the event. Other desserts included banana pudding, pizookies and s'mores cookies.

— SIMRAH KHAN

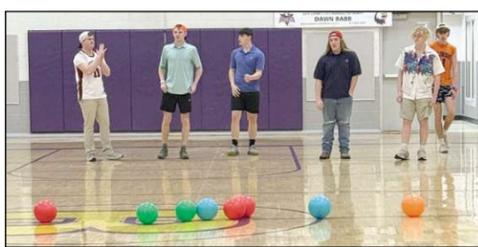
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## Champaign Central

Interact Club hosted its annual trivia competition. Parents, students and teachers alike formed teams for a battle of wits for charity. The event raised over \$1,000 for Habitat for Humanity. Out of 16 trivia groups, Team Werewolf Bar Mitzvah (pictured) took the win.

— ADELAIDE KOTA



## Rantoul

During National FFA Week, Rantoul's FFA chapter held a dodgeball tournament. Everyone was invited and able to join. There were six teams battling bracket style, and the black-out team won in what was an amazing event.

— TAMIA BELL

# JUDAH CHRISTIAN



# SUPPORT BY SHOPPING

On Friday, the senior class spent the night at the school, sorting through thousands of donations for the annual community sale, which takes place from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday. Each item in the sale is priced low to support the community: gently used clothing, electronics, toys, accessories, household items, kitchenware, arts and crafts, furniture and more. After the sorting ended at 12:45 a.m., students ate snacks, played games and watched movies all night. In the morning, everyone went to breakfast at The Original Pancake House.

— Jack Dalbey



## Gibson City-Melvin-Sibley

On Saturday, GCMS/Fisher wrestlers finished in third place at IHSA team state, battling through illness and injury. The team finished strong with a 63-16 win over Dixon in Class 1A. A huge shoutout to coach Josh Carter for leading the team with grit and passion.

— ADDISON FARMER



## Unity

During National FFA Week, students participated in dress-up days, which included 'Farmer's Day Off' (pictured: Leah Watson and Ginna Stierwalt), 'Country vs. Country Club,' 'Blue and Gold,' 'USA Day' and 'John Deere vs. Case IH.' On Wednesday, FFA had its annual porkchop lunch open to the public. Finally, on Friday, students were able to drive a tractor to school. Pictures courtesy of Stierwalt

— CLAIRE MEHARRY



## Bement

At Friday's annual blood drive — held every February during an SIP day — students 16 and above and community members donated their blood and time with proceeds funneled to a senior class scholarship.

— KIANA HUNTER



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## Milford

During National FFA Week, FFA alumni held fun games and activities, like dress-up days, trivia questions, a teacher breakfast, a bags competition and a scavenger hunt. Pictured: 'Pajama Day' (from left, **Jay-Lin Parham**, **Katie Meehan**, **Sylvia Espindola**, **Jackson Wallace** and **Brady Brassard**); the bags competition (**Kailey Orozco**, **Hailey Rieches** and **Molly Coffey**); and the teachers breakfast (**Quentin Schaumburg** and **Lucas Bonds**).

— KAMI MUEHLING



## Paxton-Buckley-Loda



Students and community members got a hands-on look at agriculture during the annual petting zoo on Friday. According to agricultural teacher and FFA adviser **Mike White**, the tradition dates to the late 1980s. 'This happens to be National Ag Week, so it's a good tie-in to provide some exposure to elementary students to some of the animals that are part of the ag industry,' White said. 'Our main goal is just awareness of a little bit of the ag industry.'

The event was made possible by agriculture teachers **Kirsten Wyatt**, **White** and **Kelsey Potter**, student-teacher **Koda Maguire** and student leaders **Jackson Cahill** and **Meredith Foster**.

— BRAYDEN KIEF

# GEORGETOWN- RIDGE FARM AG AWARENESS

The school celebrated National FFA Week with dress-up days, a pie-eating contest and corn hole tournaments, as well as pie-in-the-face and a pig roundup. Pictured, from left: **Kim Sparrow**, **Anthony Stephens**, **Dane Hemker**, **Hunter Meeker**, **Jordyn Fourez**, **Cheyenne Orr**, **Dirk Fruhling**, **Tyland Trussle**, **Ava Alvarez**, **Flori Hughes**, **Alaina Nale**, **Madi Spesard**, **Jordyn Brooks** and **Crislyn Arnold**.  
— **Tiffany Taylor**



## Oakwood

Students and staff came together to celebrate both achievements and appreciation as the winter season wrapped up. Several players on the girls' basketball team attended an Illini basketball game, enjoying the experience together and reflecting on the hard work and dedication they put into their own season. FFA members hosted a special breakfast for staff members to show appreciation for all that they do.

— SOPHIA AQUINO



## Iroquois West

FFA hosted its annual alumni auction. Benefits from the auction go back to the organization, where funds are used for things like transportation and conferences. Members of FFA worked to collect auction items as well as craft them in their prospective classes.

— TRAEH KISSACK

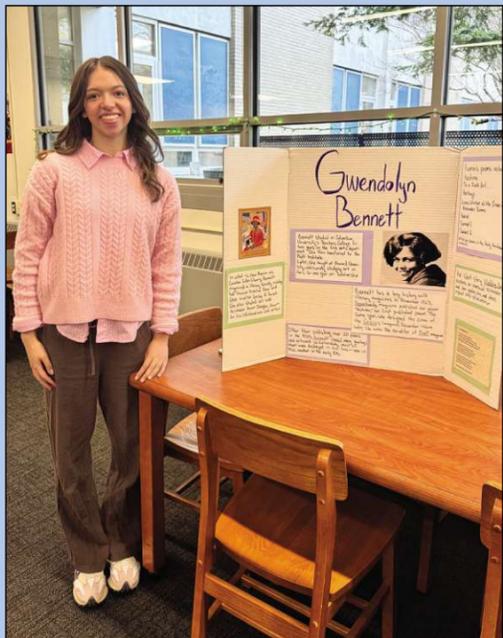


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**Cerro Gordo**  
On Feb. 19, boys' basketball (**Cooper Benson**), cheer (**Caydence Brown**) and band (**Hayden Rice** and **Tyler Szczelasczyk**) celebrated Senior Night to recognize all their accomplishments. That the team played great in a 50-22 win against Judah Christian made for a great last night for the seniors.

— JESSA CROSS



## CENTENNIAL ESTABLISHING TRADITIONS



National English Honor school tradition by first Harlem Renaissance gathered in the library, displayed and food, music were provided. **ident Claudia Lundsgaard** wanted to honor Black and highlight the turn-of expression at this week for the library staff, who also hosted a Japanese Tea Ceremony. Representatives from Japan House visited the school and demonstrated the techniques and procedure for a formal ceremony. Pictured: Lundsgaard, **Sofia Marquez**, **Mallory Borden** and teacher **Greg Stock**, who tried matcha for the first time.



Society started a new hosting Centennial's sance Party. Students where posters were drink and live jazz Senior and NEHS **Pres-gaard** said the club modernist literature ing point of freedom time.' It was a busy week for the library staff, who also hosted a Japanese Tea Ceremony. Representatives from Japan House visited the school and demonstrated the techniques and procedure for a formal ceremony. Pictured: Lundsgaard, **Sofia Marquez**, **Mallory Borden** and teacher **Greg Stock**, who tried matcha for the first time.

— Kennedy Borden



### Cissna Park

Teachers had an 'Institute Day' and toured Incobrasa, a soybean-processing and biodiesel-manufacturing company in Gilman. Incobrasa is hoping to encourage more job shadowing, partnering with schools for opportunities in future employment.

— SOPHIE DUIS



### Danville

On Friday, National Honor Society hosted its third annual trivia night fundraiser, consisting of 12 categories with 12 questions each. NHS raised over \$2,000, exceeding the 2025 amount by \$1,000. A total of 14 teams took part. A special feature was added for this year's fundraiser: a bonus round in honor of the late **Gary Gritton**. 'Mr. Gritton's Homeruns' were a set of 10 questions that he would have gotten correct. The round added \$200 to the overall Gary Gritton Memorial Scholarship fund, raising the total of the scholarship to \$5,000.



The theme for this year was 'Animals,' each team sporting different looks ranging from cats and dogs to dragons and unicorns. Pictured: the North Ridge Middle School National Junior Honor Society; NHS officers (from left) **Rylee Jack** (president), **Nadia Gamble** (VP of communications), **Da'Sani Lewis** (VP of service), **Kylie Swearingen** (parliamentarian) and **Austin Brown** (treasurer); NHS volunteers; the winning team, St. George's Dragons; moderator **Josiah Williams**; and moderator **Serenity Reed**.

— RYLEE JACK



### Hoopeston Area

At the Class 1A wrestling sectional, **Aiden Bell** placed first, **Dylan Warner** was second and **Earl Kelnhofner** third. Bell, a Millford High student competing in the 126-pound weight class and co-oping with Hoopeston, ended his high school career with a 14-1 record after defeating **Isaiah Perez**. He earned a fifth-place finish at the IHSA state finals. Bell is coached by **Chris Kelnhofner**, **Filipe Martinez**, **Andy Atchie** and his father, **John Bell**.

the IHSA state finals. Bell is coached by **Chris Kelnhofner**, **Filipe Martinez**, **Andy Atchie** and his father, **John Bell**.

— WILLAMINA CLAYTON