

HIGH SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL

Powered by Danville Area Community College



SHOWING FIGHT



At **VILLA GROVE's** 11th annual **Fight Like a Blue Devil** assembly, **Blake Swan** and **Breleigh Eversole** presented a check of \$4,696 to **Mills Breast Cancer Institute**.

There were several fundraising events leading up to the assembly including Tattoo a Teacher, cotton candy sales, shirts, pink bracelets and more. The football cheerleaders and Villa Grove Devilettes both did performances in front of the school to show their support. One of the stunts included **Addison Burris, Emma Carroll, Taylor Duke, Teaghan Henderson, Sarah Bloom and Lyndsay Zoch**.

Band member **Allison Eisenmenger** wore a Fight Like a Blue Devil shirt to display her support. Following the assembly, the football team had an incredible Pink Night game ending with a win against Sangamon Valley to become playoff eligible.

— **Eva Piercy**



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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: 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
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 Trogia

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. Next: **Bement** (Friday)



Lahna Benjamin showed us around BHRA during homecoming week.



Academy High

To celebrate the end of the first quarter, student council organized a Spirit Week. From Dress Like a Rock Star Day to Anything But a Backpack Day, students went all out with creative and unique costumes. On Tuesday, Twin Day, freshmen Mia Emswiler and Miriam Thompson made sure to wear matching outfits. For Friday, Halloween Costume Day, freshman Ezra Zook wore a ghillie suit complete with real leaves and pine cones.

— EVIE PRICE



HERITAGE LIFTING SPIRITS



The FFA chapter provided lunches to hardworking farmers and their local donors. FFA officers and members helped prepare a meal to lift the spirits of the farmers during harvest season. Reaghan Stierwalt and Addison Hopper (left) put together over 150 bags to be served. The meal consisted of pork chops, chips, Twinkies, candy and a water bottle. Joshua Stierwalt, Landin McComas and Tyler Lisanby were the members in charge of making sure the pork chops were at a safe temperature so they could be served. As a grain truck pulled up to the scale to get weighed, members provided them with multiple sack lunches to take back to the farm they were working at. The rain did not stop the farmers and members from having a smile on their faces the whole day. Top: FFA members, left to right: (back row) Lisanby, Stierwalt, Rylan White, Kaden White, Dylan Kirschner and McComas; (front) Hopper, Peyton Curry-Varner and Stierwalt.

— RYLAN WHITE



Blue Ridge

National Honor Society students hosted Blue Ridge's annual blood drive and had a good turnout. In an effort to help save lives, both students and teachers donated blood. Pictured: Jaxon Berkler and Brandy Hansen.

— KARLY WARNER



Maroa-Forsyth

The girls' tennis team is having another outstanding season. Katie and Lexie Nilles advanced to the state finals last year and are currently ranked first in the state for doubles. Postseason play starts at sectionals on Friday.

— AUBREY STEWART



Mahomet-Seymour

At Fellowship of Christian Athletes, students discussed John 2:13-25. In groups, they shared observations, went through questions, and talked about how it applied to their lives. Pictured: Hadley Carolan and Lillian Elder; and Silas Campion and Grey Young.

— ABBY EDEN



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Tuscola

Youth motivational speaker **Cory Greenwood** and his team visited with the message *Your story matters.* Greenwood was accompanied by a band to provide entertainment. Also, **Emma Spillman** won Key Club Member of the Month. Over the summer, she completed 55 service hours.

— CLAIRE LEONARD



ARMSTRONG WE'VE GOT SPIRIT

During Homecoming Week, there was an assembly every day as games were played, fall sports teams were announced, and students linedanced. Also, there was competition for the spirit stick, won daily by participating, winning games, and showing good sportsmanship. Seniors won Wednesday's ironman volleyball and then played and lost to the staff team. Thursday's homecoming parade saw each class with a float that included their attendants, as well as community floats. The senior class won best float and overall took home the spirit stick. The theme of Saturday's dance was *Angled*, where **Aiden Blackford** and **Makenna Ackerman** were king and queen.

— Aubrey Self



Oakwood

Students participated in an ALICE lockdown drill to practice safety procedures in case of an emergency. In **Lauren Gherna's** Spanish classes, students have been taking part in the annual *Locotubre* competition, where they vote on their favorite Spanish songs. Several upperclassmen were selected to join the mentoring program led by Oakwood Grade School Assistant Principal and athletic director **Nicole Johnson**. Juniors and seniors will help guide, encourage and support their elementary student buddies as positive role models throughout the year.

— SOPHIA AQUINO



Centennial

Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) hosted guest speakers from the University of Illinois student organization SPROUT. Students had the opportunity to learn about financial literacy, various business majors and college advice. Orchestra also hosted its fall concert, and students were accompanied by members of Parkland Community College's orchestra.

— KENNEDY BORDEN



Arcola

At last Tuesday's assembly focused on mental health, some amazing musicians performed for students.

— ADDEE MULLIGAN



Oakland

FFA had a pumpkin carving contest, each officer forming a team and carving pieces of agriculture into a pumpkin. Voting for the best pumpkin took place on the Oakland FFA Facebook page.

— SOPHIE VONLANKE



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Cissna Park
Homecoming Week included dress-up days like Formal Day, Disney Duos, Pajama Day and Career Day. Homecoming games last Thursday included races between classes, a balloon relay race, a hula-hoop game and knockout. Pictured: **Addi Tip-sord**, **Addison Lucht**, **Owen Overbey** and **Lauryn Hamrick**; and teachers dressed as emotions from Inside Out.

— SOPHIE DUIS



ST. JOSEPH-OGDEN BREAKFAST OF LEADERS

Breakfast Club is a quarterly event that honors students who demonstrate acts of kindness and leadership qualities. It celebrates those who help improve the school's culture, and **Hannah Nirider** is a perfect example. She is in choir and was nominated by music teacher **Nathan Waterson**. Hannah's classmates describe her as a person who lights up every room she enters. She shows great character and never fails to make people smile.

— Katie Ericksen



BHRA

It was an unforgettable Homecoming Week full of energy and school spirit. Each day brought new excitement, from friendly class competitions and lively pep rallies to evening bonfires, float building and powderpuff games. Students from all grades joined in, making it a week to remember. Friday's parade featured multitudes of lively decorated floats from each class, businesses, clubs and sports teams. To cap it off: a Friday evening win over Mommence in the homecoming football game.

— LAHNA BENJAMIN



St. Thomas More
Prayers continued in the morning, during lunch and at the end of the day in Spanish to celebrate National Hispanic Heritage Month. Also, the March for Life group met last week to begin planning for its annual trip to Washington, D.C., to advocate for the rights of the unborn. Planning also started for Box of Joy, where houses fill shoe boxes with items such as toothbrushes, coloring books or small toys for underprivileged children. At last Friday's Senior Movie Night, students watched Ferris Bueller's Day Off.

— DUNCAN OLIVEIRA



Champaign Central

On Oct. 6, the marching band performed in the annual CU Marching Showcase, which featured performances from Centennial and Urbana, as well. After being introduced by Principal **Montia Gardner**, the Marching Maroons took to the field. Their performance this year is entitled For the Birds and was composed by **J.R. Trimpe**.

— ADELAIDE KOTA

At news-gazette.com
GALLERY: Photo Editor Robin Scholz attended the CU Marching Showcase.



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Milford

On Oct. 9, the volleyball team held its annual Pink Night game against Cissna Park for breast cancer awareness. The volleyball team had a bake sale and silent auction that raised \$1,710! Both teams honored fans, family members and other people who have battled breast cancer.

— KAMI MUEHLING



Danville

On Friday, the high school pompettes supported the football team in all black attire. The theme for the game was "Blackout," and every pompette showed up with their best school spirit. Pictured: Senior captains, left to right, **Macy Musgrave**, **Rylee Jack** and **Serenity Reed**; and coach **Kassie Thomas** and crew.

— RYLEE JACK

LERROY MM, MM GOOD



Pancakes are back! Last year, student council officers created Playoff Pancakes as a way to celebrate the football team's postseason run. Renamed Postseason Pancakes, student council officers hosted the event again to recognize the boys' golf team heading to state. Post-season Pancakes are free to staff and students. **Doug Larson** (lower left), the high school's student dean, has been a huge supporter, donating time and money to the cause. Without him, it would not be possible. Larson is head chef, manning one of the two grills used. His generosity doesn't go unnoticed as he graciously gives student council supplies like batter, drinks and sides. In total, more than 400 pancakes were enjoyed.

— Molly Scheuer



DeLand-Weldon

Seniors had the chance to show their creativity through their parking spots. **Lorenzo Hagerty** created his own twist with the band logo of Slayer; and **Nathan Smith** painted a camouflage ode to the U.S. Marine Corps.

— NATHAN SMITH

Bement

The Family, Career and Community Leaders of America club had its monthly meeting to outline activities in October. Students have the opportunity to volunteer for the Sunday Fall Festival and run activities for the children attendees. With Homecoming Week around the corner, Spirit Grams will be delivered by student volunteers. Face painting will be the first among fun activities to fill homecoming Friday. Throughout the month, students can donate socks or office supplies to create Jamie Bags to support mental health. All these activities allow students to earn points that will allow them to participate in an end-of-year school field trip.

— KIANA HUNTER



Westville

On Oct. 8, the high school and junior high band and chorus performed in the old high school gym. It was a concert that showcased the hard work these groups have been putting in and drew a big crowd. Congratulations to **Lainey Wichtowski**, a senior setter who reached a volleyball milestone of 2,500 career assists. The Tigers started 2026 and will compete in the Vermilion County tournament Saturday at Danville Area Community College.

— OLIVIA TROGLIA

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Rantoul
Cheerleaders hosted a kids clinic for 900+ children, who performed at halftime during Friday's football game (photos by **Abigayle Phillips**).
— TAMIA BELL



Hoopeston Area

An interview with golf coach **Thomas Sage** (above):

Tell me about your golf team this year.

The team of seven men and four women was a small team this year, but it was able to claim 53 head-to-head victories. For the first time in the school's history, a full men's team advanced to sectionals. As for the (girls') team, it was a young team, but they were fierce, with two new golfers repeatedly breaking their personal bests and two veteran golfers advancing to sectionals. The men's team took third place at the Grant Park Invitational, and they also tied for first at the Vermilion Valley Conference championship.

How do you help your golfers handle the mental side of competing?

I tell golfers the truth. The reason they are here is not to produce a specific score — we keep accurate scores because that is the rule of the game, not because producing scores is the goal; rather, our goal is to grow; to practice overcoming or adapting to great challenges ... that's exactly what life is like, so strong skills in golf translate well to the skills we need in life. I hope, when players see that the expectation on this team is to grow as a person and as a golfer (and not simply to produce a specific score for the team), attitudes shift from "I can't" to "I will." Obviously, I can't eliminate the inherent stressors associated with competitive sports; but what we as a team can do is orient our goals on personal growth.

Golf can be very technical. How do you balance teaching technique with making sure players enjoy the game?

Enjoy it first. If you cannot find the beauty in the early morning dew on blades of freshly cut grass, you're likely not able to appreciate the aesthetic value of golf. That is very much an internal journey; every player needs to find a love for themselves and the game if they really want to maximize the benefits golf has to offer. I find the best approach is often the simplest; choose a skill, show the golfer the steps to using that skill, and then allow the golfer to experiment with that skill. I'm not a good enough golf coach to be able to point to a player and say: do that and your problem is fixed. I recognize my own limitations as a coach, and so I often have to remind myself to take my own coaching advice.

— WILLAMINA CLAYTON



SHAY LAYDEN, CY TUGGLE



MUSIC AND LYRICS

On Thursday, the PBL choir and chamber choir held their first concert of the school year. For some students, it was their first time performing with the group, making it especially rewarding to see the night go so well.

Said choir director **Tiffany Howard**: "We always hope our audience enjoys our performance and can take pride in the students' musical accomplishments. Additionally, choral music offers us the ability to not just share beautiful sounds but lyrics. It is my goal that the audience is able to join us in experiencing the meaning of each piece."

Thanks goes to the Gibson Area Music Foundation for helping with the uniforms featured in the photo.

— Brayden Kief



Salt Fork

The Oakwood/Salt Fork girls' cross-country team has been on a roll this season. The team won the Vermilion County meet and placed third at the Cumberland County Invitational at Lake Land College. Junior **Callie Richardson** was county champion for a spot on the All-County team. She also came out on top at the XC Town Twilight meet in Terre Haute, Ind., where she placed first out of over 200 girls.

— ANNA MCCOLLUM

Judah Christian

Junior **Kelsi Drollinger** spoke at Judah's annual Pastor Appreciation Event, sharing about the importance of letting go of pride and trusting God's plan. The event brought pastors and church leaders from across the community together for breakfast, encouragement and fellowship. Each year, one of the pastors preaches to the group, and a student from Judah shared a personal testimony, while student council helped hand out prizes during the event. It was a morning filled with gratitude and reflection.

— JACK DALBEY



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Monticello

After reading 'Their Eyes Were Watching God' by **Zora Neale Hurston**, **Casey Crowhurst's** advanced literature class took a tour through part of the Champaign County African American Heritage Trail in order to connect lessons from the book to real-life experiences. The tour covered many notable destinations, including Douglass Community Center, the North First Street Corridor, Skelton Park, the Frederick Douglass Marker at One Main Plaza, and the Bruce D. Nesbitt African American Cultural Center. Each stop focused on aligning with themes from this literary classic — identity, community, resilience and voice. Students were able to take on an interactive role throughout the tour, whether it was by viewing murals, reading informational signs or playing with built-in instruments found in the park.

— **MADY MELTON**



GIBSON CITY-MELVIN-SIBLEY SHOWCASE THEIR SKILLS

The cheerleading team hosted its Tiny Talons Cheer Clinic, welcoming students from pre-K through fifth grade. Throughout the week, students learned a variety of cheerleading skills and routines in preparation for a special halftime performance at Friday night's football game. The clinic took place on Tuesday and Thursday, with each high school cheerleader mentoring a specific grade level: Pre-K: **Cheyenne Whealhon** and **Kerrigan Young**; kindergarten: **Emery Summers** and **Jordan Kadeing**; first grade: **Addison Farmer**; second grade: **Ava Fehr** and **Alyssa Morgan**; third grade: **Evan Killian**; and fourth and fifth grades: **Kelsey Whitehouse** and **Hadley Doman**. With the help of the high school and middle school cheerleaders, students worked hard to perfect their cheers and a group dance to 'Walking on Sunshine.' Their halftime performance was a highlight of Friday's football game, showcasing their enthusiasm and new skills to an excited crowd. The clinic was a tremendous success, with 99 students participating.

— **Addison Farmer**



Uni High

Last Thursday, the boys' soccer team held its Senior Night game against Bloomington Central Catholic High School. The last home game of the season resulted in a 1-1 tie, with speeches and celebrations following for the team's graduating seniors, **Robert Tu**, **Leo Yan** and **Aldo Zepeda**. Pictured, right to left: **Jax Richmond**, **Henry Guan**, **James Yan**, **Niel Roy Choudhury** and **Belal Alawini** give a speech for senior Yan. Photos by **Hannah Elshen-nawi** and **Emmie Vargas**.

— **SIMRAH KHAN**

Unity

Friday's football game marked Senior Night for many fall sports as well as Pink Out Night for Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Senior athletes from football, dance, marching band, cross-country and golf were honored before a game against Paxton-Buckley-Loda, won by the Rockets 47-0. Pictured courtesy of **Emma Swisher**: Senior marching band member and drum major **Isaac Neverman** and his mother exchanging a rose; senior football player **Caden Stierwalt** and his parents; senior dancing member **Olivia Egelston** and her mother; senior cross-country member **Eli Crowe** and his parents; and senior cross-country member **Mackenzie Pound** and her parents.

— **CLAIRE MEHARRY**



Urbana

Urbana's well-known poet laureate emeritus visited creative writing students this past week while they indulged in a poetry workshop to strengthen their skills.

— **RUBY PITTINGER**



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Sullivan

Spanish Club had a picnic and enjoyed fun Hispanic games. Each member had to bring a different Hispanic dish to the picnic. Students also took a trip to Lake Land for dual-credit classes, researching upcoming projects. Finally, marching band competed at Saturday's Mt. Zion Marching Music Games. The band finished fourth in a competitive Class 2A.

— LILY MOXLEY AND DANICA BELL



GEORGETOWN-RIDGE FARM DEBUTING A NEW LOOK

The marching band performed in new uniforms, showing them off at Friday's homecoming football game against Salt Fork. The band members not only sound good on the field but look good, too. Photos via **Makayla Waterman** and **Bre Flessner**.

— Tiffany Taylor



Iroquois West

The volleyball program recognized Breast Cancer Awareness Month by hosting a Pink Out game against the Cornjerkers of Hoopston Area last Thursday, ultimately sweeping from freshman to varsity. The girls invited women close to them who have fought breast cancer to be honored by fans. The team not only took home two-set wins across the board, but also the pride of recognizing these brave women.

— TRAEH KISSACK



Shiloh

Junior year is for starting the college application process and thinking about the future. Guidance counsel **Megan Evans** and business teacher **Julia North** took the junior class to Lake Land's College Fair Day, where students learned about colleges from around the country. Afterward, juniors attended mini-lectures taught by Lake Land's professors. Students could attend nursing, mechanics, psychology, agriculture and many more sessions. This allowed students to explore careers and majors they may consider for their future.

— ALI CASH



Fisher

At volleyball Senior Night, **Sophie Moore** and **Colleen Strohl** were recognized. In art class, students learned how to paint with watercolor, draw with pens and pencils, and make collages. Also, band and choir had a successful fall concert. Finally, when asked about the best advice he's heard, new business teacher **James Watts** said: "There's never a bad time to listen, talk less, listen more."

— KESIAH MUSIC

