

HIGH SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL



Powered by Danville Area Community College

DOING THEIR PART

AT FISHER: Students (above) and staff are fundraising for the Mahomet Polar Plunge on Feb. 21. It's Year 15 of the school's participation, the Bunnies raising \$7,000 last year to push the overall total to over \$50,000.
— *Kesiah Musick*

CENTENNIAL HARGERS



AT CENTENNIAL: The archery program's support for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital gets stronger every year thanks to its annual tournament in Champaign. This year, more than \$8,000 has been raised.
— *Kennedy Borden*



AT BLUE RIDGE: National Honor Society students (left: **Haylee Dean**) organized a blood drive that included everyone from the elementary school to community members.
— *Karly Warner*

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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: 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.



Uni High

On Saturday, Uni's Mock Trial club competed against host Normal Community and Normal West in a scrimmage. Mock Trial members **Mariam Mostafa** and **Hazel Taylor** won Best Attorneys, and member **Jemina Feng** won Best Witness. From left: Mostafa, Taylor and Feng pose with medals. Photos by **Hannah Elshennawi**.

— SIMRAH KHAN



WESTVILLE
DANCING TIGERS IN TRAINING



On Jan. 27-29, students interested in dance — pre-K through eighth grade — practiced with the high school dance team and performed at halftime of the junior varsity and varsity basketball games on Jan. 30. Senior dance team member **Tinley Zaayer** shared how much she enjoyed the opportunity: 'The Little Tiger Dance Camp is such a fun way to interact with the younger girls and boys who love to dance! We teach them a routine, and they get to perform at halftime of one of our basketball games. It's such a fun experience not only for the high school dancers but also for the younger kids!'

— Olivia Troglia



Arcola

The girls' basketball team took their first win last Thursday, topping Blue Ridge, led by senior captain **Ema Simpson**.

— ADDEE MULLIGAN



Bement

February brings new opportunities for student council members. The main event: an annual blood drive on Feb. 27. Community members and students 16 and over are encouraged to donate 1 pint of blood in a drive that serves as a way to help people in need and for students to volunteer.

— KIANA HUNTER

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The News-Gazette

Academy High

Sophomore **Shivani Anand** earned silver in the CLASS 22nd Annual National Chinese Essay Contest. The theme was 'AI and Me'. Of the 700-plus submissions nationwide, the winners were selected for their Chinese language skills and their insights on how AI affects their everyday lives, as well as the future.

— EVIE PRICE

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Danville

On Friday night, the girls' bowling team celebrated its seniors against Kankakee Bishop McNamara. Seniors (from left) **Isabella Rocotello**, **Lilah Lopez** and **Kyndal Corley** played their last home match of the regular season, and the girls took home a victory in a season of vast improvement and determination. The girls worked hard through the season to improve and come together as a team to have an overall successful season.

— RYLEE JACK



URBANA JOINING THE FIGHT

On Friday, more than 100 students participated in a walkout in opposition to Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Students created signs and braced the cold to protest for what they believe in. Senior **Valentina Gonzales** (right) was one of the many students who joined the fight.

— Ruby Pittenger

At news-gazette.com
PHOTO GALLERY: Rob Le Cates was on the scene at Friday's student protest in downtown Urbana.



Mahomet-Seymour

M-S had two e-learning days last week. Students join Google Meets with their teachers in the morning, then complete independent work on their own in the afternoon. 'The main benefits of an e-learning day is for the students to be able to obtain instruction from their teachers. This continuity and consistency, in my opinion, is valuable. I also think that students, for the most part, might be more engaged in learning on a computer during an emergency day in January, for instance, as opposed to a makeup day that is added on at the end of the school year when we utilize a traditional snow day,' Superintendent **Kenny Lee** said.

— ABBY EDEN



Fisher

FFA is selling merchandise ahead of FFA Week. To donate to the Polar Plunge (B-1) or buy FFA merchandise, email kesiah.music@gmail.com. Also, FFA had a guest speaker — former state FFA President **Kade Hill** — at its monthly meeting. Hill gave advice on how to not give up and that mistakes are a part of success, strongly advising to stay in leadership and participate in community for as long as possible.

— KESIAH MUSICK



St. Thomas More
Catholic Schools Week was celebrated with different activities, including a school-wide rosary in the gym, with each house picking a few people to say each part, and our annual Construction food drive and house competition. Photos courtesy Sister **Peter Marie** and **Natalie Hesch**.

— DUNCAN OLIVEIRA



Centennial

Archery has long been an active supporter of St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. Over the past five years, the program has donated over \$27,800 to help fight against childhood cancer. At the St. Jude Charger Charity Tournament, senior **Miguel Martinez** (pictured alongside St. Jude representative **Megan Fitzgerald**) shared a powerful testimony about the lifesaving impact St. Jude's treatment had on him as a child. This season, the Chargers have raised \$8,029. To reach out about supporting the team's mission, email chargerarchery@gmail.com.

— KENNEDY BORDEN

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Heritage

Throughout the week, students had the opportunity to participate in a pickleball tournament hosted by the Student Athlete Leadership Club. Sixteen teams competed. Each team got selected into a randomized bracket that **Mary Mcgarigle** (SAL Club adviser) created. Each game was played until a team reached 15 points. The final four teams consisted of: **Addi Hopper** and **Clark Roland**, **Rylan White** and **Kaden White**, **Mary Mcgarigle** and **Ashley Knowles** and **Christian Paul** and **Dylan Kirschner**. A winner will be decided next week. Pictured, from left: Hopper and Roland competing in the first round.

— RYLAN WHITE



MILFORD
EVERYONE’S A WINNER



On Friday, the high school gave out old trophies — some as old as 102 years — to everyone at the boys’ basketball game. Students organized trophies based on their extracurricular activities. Donations were given for trophies, and people had a great time finding trophies — and reliving memories.

— Kami Muehling



Unity

On Saturday, boys’ basketball hosted their Alumni Day at their game against Maroa-Forsyth. The program honored the 2001-02 team for its fourth-place finish at state. The Rockets ended the day with the win as well. Photo courtesy **Emma Swisher**.

— CLAIRE MEHARRY



Rantoul

On your mark, get set ... go: The track team has begun its season. Athletes are pushing themselves in sprints, jumps and throws to prepare for upcoming meets. To help pay for equipment, gear, food and other expenses, the team is hosting a fundraiser for the community to help! Support from staff, community members and family is very much appreciated.

— TAMIA BELL



Cissna Park

Lauryn Hamrick scored her 1,000th point in basketball. On the boys’ side, **Dierks Neukomm** became the all-time leading scorer in program history.

— SOPHIE DUIS



Cerro Gordo

On Saturday, National Honor Society hosted a Western-themed Sadie Hawkins dance, where girls asked guys. It included a blowup photo booth, drinks, desserts and an energetic DJ. Students dressed in boots, jeans and hats for the fundraiser, made possible by **James Vogel** and NHS students.

— GRACE HAWK

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LeRoy

Wrestlers traveled to Colfax for regionals, finishing fourth overall with five individuals advancing to sectionals. Freshmen **Hayden Hageman**, **Jake Baughman** and **Ethan Haas** as well as senior **Devan Roberson** placed third in their respective weight classes. Freshman **Jackson Ritch** placed second. Hageman also picked up his 30th win in Colfax. Pictured: Hageman, Baughman, Haas, Ritch and Roberson.

— MOLLY SCHEUER



VILLA GROVE GO TEAM

Resilience Committee (RESCOM) put on its pickleball tournament during study hall, allowing students to choose a partner from their respective ‘houses’ or teams and competing to earn points to win a prize at the end of the quarter. Even if students got out in the earlier days of the tournament or didn’t participate in the physical part of the event, everyone packed into the gym to support those still representing their houses. Proud supporters included **Jacob Golightly**, **Landon Chambers** and **Lauren Carter**, providing their words of encouragement or occasional disagreements with the calls being made. **Ella Schweighart** and **Tucker McGarigle** ended up winning it all, securing points for their house, the Black Mambas.

— Eva Piercy



Hoopeston Area

Lillie Elliot is captain of the Scholastic Bowl team, which is coming off a two-game sweep against Watseka and Salt Fork. When asked about her academic strengths, she said biology is her strongest subject, followed by English. Lillie said the team is supportive of one another. Whenever a member makes a mistake, the others reassure them, describing errors as ‘water off a duck’s back.’ She shared that being part of Scholastic Bowl has increased her confidence. Pictured (via **Ginger Gonzalez**), from left: **Ashton Kasallyis**, **Sarahanne Baldwin**, **Elliot**, **Landon Youhas** and **Landon Blakey**.

— WILLAMINA CLAYTON



Paxton-Buckley-Loda

Congratulations to choir members **Dylan Otto** and **Brayden Kief** for making the 2026 All-State Choir. It marks Kief’s first time earning a prestigious spot, while Otto has been selected twice in addition to Honors Choir once, highlighting years of dedication and growth within the program. The seniors left Wednesday evening to stay in Peoria and rehearsed Thursday, Friday and Saturday morning. Special recognition goes to **Tiffany Howard** for her dedication and support in helping both students prepare and



work toward this accomplishment. The students also thanked the high school for providing choir robes this year, something the program had not had previously, which helped make the All-State experience more meaningful.

— BRAYDEN KIEF

Sullivan



The school’s Mirror Images crew put together an impactful play on cyber bullying that saw students bused to the theater in town to watch their peers perform. National English Honor Society started its annual Pen Pals with the classes at Sullivan’s elementary school. National Honor Society is putting on a pork chop dinner to raise some money for its organization. Finally, FFA is preparing for FFA Week and upcoming competitions.

— DANICA BELL



Tuscola

Key Club officers were invited to a local Kiwanis Club meeting where they introduced themselves and let club members know about upcoming events. Pictured, from left: **Phoebe Wilkins**, **Lidia Manzella**, **Nicole Tschopp**, **Claire Leonard**, **Christy Kerner** and Kiwanis President **Kim Higgins**.

— CLAIRE LEONARD



Oakwood

The Oakwood/Salt Fork wrestling team had a record-breaking season, producing seven regional champions, the most the program has ever had. The historic accomplishment reflects the hard work of the athletes and coaches. Also, cheerleading continues to shine light on the athletic program as the team advanced to the state finals. Beyond sports, **CeCi Liggett** is pursuing her musical talents at a national level after being nominated by band and choir teacher **Madeline McQueen**. Liggett has been accepted into the prestigious Carnegie Hall High School Program in New York. She will attend a Broadway musical, rehearse with world-class conductors and perform alongside other selected students from across the country.

— SOPHIA AQUINO



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Gibson City-Melvin-Sibley

Members of the FFA chapter competed at the section competitions at Parkland College, with Parliamentary Procedure and Quiz Bowl CDE teams participating. **Jeff Reale** is the adviser for the chapter, which enjoyed the opportunities to expand and grow their skills.

— ADDISON FARMER

BHRA
POWER IN PRAYER



On Sunday, Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) groups from across Vermilion County gathered at the Fischer Theatre for an evening of worship and fellowship. Students, athletes, coaches and parents came together to praise and worship the Lord. During the event, **Brian Carpenter** shared an overview of FCA's mission and explained the impact the organization has on schools and communities. The evening concluded with FCA huddle leaders and student members standing together at the front of the theater as audience members joined them in prayer. The gathering served as a powerful experience.

— Lahna Benjamin



St. Joseph-Ogden

The Spartans choir took part in the Illinois Music Educators Conference, delivering an impressive performance for music teacher **Nathan Waterson** and his colleagues. The group showcased five songs, with **Carlee Taylor** and **Emily Bird** shining as the soloists in two pieces. Pictured, from left: Bird, Taylor, **Madison Farber**, **Claire Hartman**, **Sydney Steinbach** and **Grace Preston**.

— KATIE ERICKSEN

Georgetown-Ridge Farm

The chess team went 2-2 with eight individual wins and four draws to finish 14th out of 19 teams at sectionals. The Buffaloes are ranked 109th out of 153 in the state — the top 128 teams qualify for the state tournament. Pictured (courtesy **Cheslyn Kelly**) from left: (top row) **Daniel Scott**, **Reese Walls**, **Waylynd Baird**, **Zach Willson**, **Ashton Pilkington** and **Cale Cavanaugh**; (bottom) **Adreauna Boettner**, **Tegyn Grant** and **Anthony Stephens**.

— TIFFANY TAYLOR



Blue Ridge

National Honor Society hosted a blood drive, collaborating with Schneider Elementary. Students tried to get community members — in addition to staff and classmates — to donate blood, which resulted in a good turnout. Pictured: **Ollie Yeagle**.

— KARLY WARNER



Schlarman

For Catholic Schools Week, the senior and sophomore classes took a trip to Worksource as other students volunteered around the community.

— IZZY BOGEN

