

Wildcat Chronicle

Community High School



326 Joliet St. West Chicago, IL 60185

Volume 40, Issue 4 December 18, 2008

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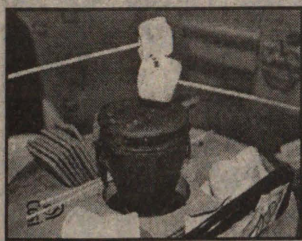
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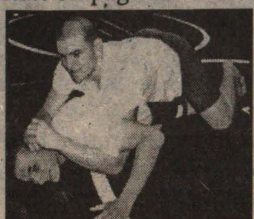
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Looking for a new date spot this winter? Check out some ideas on page 9.



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Wrestling focuses on state and building strong relationships. Read about its strive for state on page 12.



Preparing for the worst

By Alexis Hosticka

During 2nd period on Tuesday, the halls were free of traffic except for school administrators, police and fire department members, and their drug and bomb-sniffing dogs.

Although the recent crisis lockdown drill hardly affected the students' school day, the administration used it as a way to familiarize police and fire department members with the building and each other.

Classes ran as they normally would except no students were allowed into the halls and had to remain in the classroom during the drill.

Ten police departments and 11 dogs participated in the drill.

The administration decided less than a month ago to implement the drill due mainly to a state recommendation.

"The state strongly recommends that we do it," said Assistant Principal Pete Martino.

Last year's threat of violence was not the reason behind implementing the drill, but it did affect Martino.

"The threat heightened my awareness, but [the drill] is

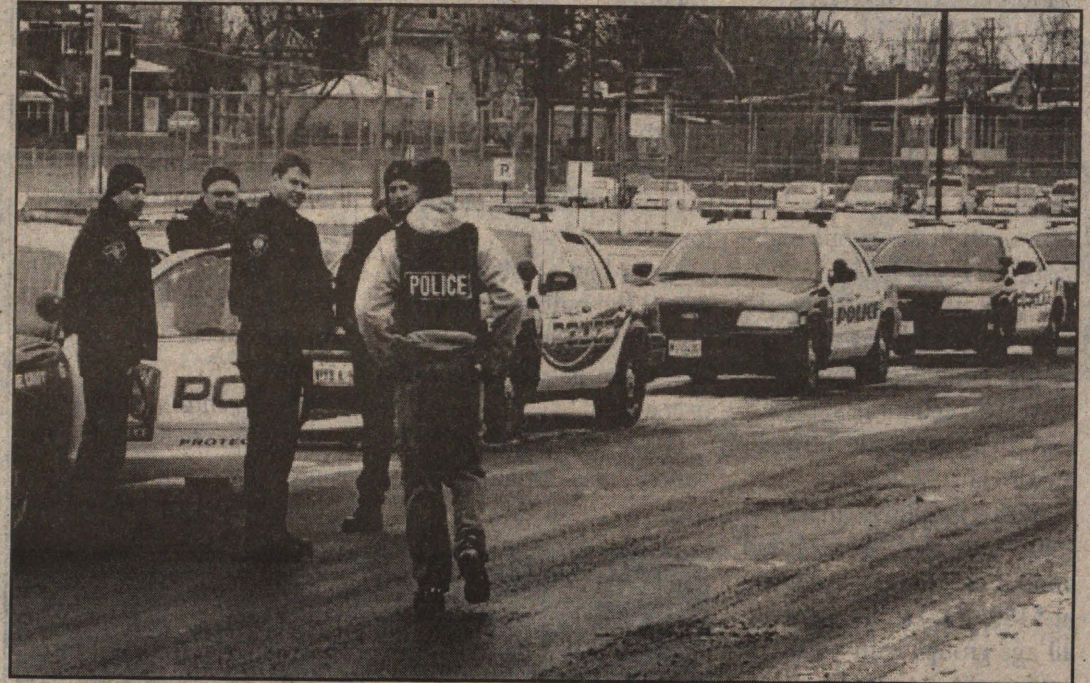


Photo by Alexis Hosticka

Local fire department and law enforcement officers gather at the school Tuesday for the lockdown drill. Officers used this opportunity to familiarize themselves with the building.

something we should do year to year," said Martino.

Martino hopes to have a lockdown drill every year, although they will most likely be slightly different every time.

While in the halls, the dogs sniffed every locker in the building to check for drugs or weapons and acclimated them to the building.

This way, if there is ever a

real threat, it will be easier for the police or fire department to handle the situation.

Immediately after the drill, the administration, school officers, and police and fire department members debriefed in order to receive feedback from everyone.

"We were able to get it done more quickly than I thought," said Martino. "We were able

to meet with fire, police and administration at the same time and talk about safety and security which I think is really important."

Overall, Martino was happy with how the drill went and has a positive outlook for potential future drills.

"The safety and security of our school is our ultimate goal," said Martino.

Former student needs transplant

Demand and cost postpone vital operation

By Alexis Hosticka

After battling end stage liver failure for almost two years, graduate Jayne Zenker ('08) is still waiting for a new liver and a return to her former life-style.

However, due to the high cost of a transplant, over \$500,000, and the number of people on the organ transplant list, it will be at least a year before Zenker can receive a liver. So through the Children's Organ Transplant Association (COTA) local volunteers are helping Zenker and her family lessen the cost by raising money for the transplant.

Since Feb. 8, 2007, the date of her initial diagnosis, Zenker has endured constant pain and has been in and out of the

hospital 26 times. To lessen her continuous pain, she takes about 35 pills a day.

"I don't have very much stamina. Walking for a long distance hurts a lot where my liver is and I have to take morphine. Day to day I just have to live with it and get used to it," said Zenker, who plans to attend COD beginning in January.

Zenker was originally diagnosed with a rare form of pediatric liver cancer and the seven pound tumor was successfully removed.

However, the tumor was analyzed and a few months after the initial eight-hour surgery, Zenker was re-diagnosed with an abnormal form of giant hepatocellular adenoma, an extremely rare liver tumor that occurs in only one in two million people. Her liver had regenerated abnormally causing even more complications.

"The main problem



Photo courtesy of COTA

Former CHS student Jayne Zenker goes for blood tests on a regular basis while waiting for a liver transplant.

with this illness is exactly what I have they've never seen before," said Zenker. "There aren't really any other people with this exact illness."

Besides her liver being 95 percent scar tissue, Zenker's spleen is enlarged, and she has extra fluid accumulation in her stomach, which, according to Zenker, causes her to "look three months pregnant."

Volunteers have a goal of

raising \$60,000; much of the cost of a transplant is covered by insurance. Donations can be made at www.cotaforjayne.com or at a Chase Bank using account number 2914124667. Anyone interested in volunteering can contact Zenker's campaign coordinator Kirby Williams at (630) 736-1006.

Zenker also appreciates when people visit her website, where they can leave comments in her guest book.

Let's get physical

West Chicago Park District plans to open fitness center

By Greg Vodicka

In an attempt to create a recreation center for West Chicago, the West Chicago Park District is ready to launch its new Fitness Station.

Located at the corner of Washington and Fremont streets, the center opens Jan. 3 for open house, while regular hours begin Jan. 4.

"What we've done is create a very attractive environment in the middle of West Chicago at an economical price," said park district executive director Gary Major.

With monthly memberships starting at \$18.95 and annual memberships starting at \$189, the facility caters to all age groups with plenty of equipment ranging from cardio machines to free weights.

"The equipment is the basics people are looking for," said Major.

In addition to weights, classes are also being moved to the Station.

While the park district already offered a variety of classes, the open space in the new building makes the list of featured classes even longer.

"We were working to provide more opportunities for the community," said Major.

From kickboxing to yoga classes, the Station offers something for everyone.

Some classes include a Latin rhythms movement class called Zumba and a class using a stability ball and drumsticks called Drums Alive.

"We're aiming to be a full service fitness center," said Major.

During the week of Jan. 5-10 classes are free for anyone interested in trying them out.

If that isn't enough, a day-care center called Kid Stop is also available for members for a charge.

According to Major, renovating the building, formerly known as Grobe's Hardware, has been in discussion for over a year.

However, the cost of renovation was originally too high.

While the building stood empty for the next months, the city worked out an arrangement with the Park District to turn it into the Fitness Station.

High quality equipment and a friendly environment are two main focuses according to Major.

"It is bigger than we had expected. We have 20 times as much equipment as we thought we would start with," said Major.

The station will be open weekdays from 5:30 a.m. - 9 p.m. and weekends 8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m.

With no enrollment fee and a reasonable membership expenses, the park district expects a successful turn out.

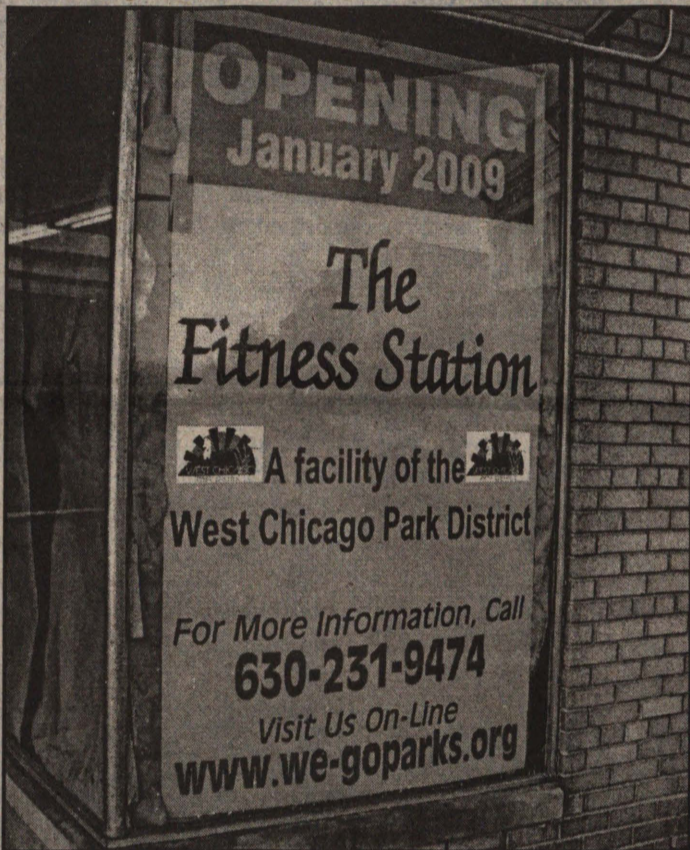


Photo by Greg Vodicka

With a multitude of class options, the Fitness Station hopes to attract a variety of age and skill levels.



Photo by Sarah Berger

Sophomores Thalia Fernandez and Lily Grimaldo practice their poetry reading at a recent Speech Team practice.

Winning competitions one speech at a time

By Sarah Berger

Speech team continues down the road of success with a larger team and underclassmen stepping it up a notch. The team was successful at the Oswego East Invite Saturday, with three students finishing in the top 10, including sophomore Thalia Fernandez and junior Carrie Liszka in poetry reading, and junior Jessica Ledesma in original comedy.

"We're doing pretty well so far. We are in about the middle section of the season. I'm pretty happy with the progress the team has been making. I'm particularly impressed with the new members, which is a pleasant surprise," said speech team coach Jason Kling.

Freshman Shea Rogers snagged first place for his original oratory, which is a self-written speech that he

performed at the Huntley Invite on Nov. 15.

"It's really nice to contribute to my new team," said Rogers.

The growth in the team is also a factor that contributes to the team's success.

"We have a lot more people and I feel like we can make it to state this year. It feels like we are one big family this year, and I love that," said Fernandez.

With a bigger team, bigger goals are set.

This season, the speech team is raising the bar.

"One of my goals for this season is to bring a full team to regionals and to have all the kids prepared for state this season," said Kling.

The speech team's next meet is on Jan. 10 at the Glenbard West Hilltopper Invite.

The team is also preparing for Verbally Yours on Feb. 5.

DVC questions still unanswered

By Evan Morgan

After two decades of discussion and no decision, leaving the DVC is beginning to become more of a serious issue.

The Board of Education passed a motion Dec. 2 suggesting writing a letter to other schools in the area, questioning their views on forming a new conference.

"The DVC is a very difficult conference to compete in. The economic make-up of our competitor's student and family population offers much more club opportunities and training prior to high school," said board member John Jensen.

The board fears that the success of other schools is swaying students to attend

private schools. Last month, St. Francis won their state football championship two years after receiving a new coach.

"With St. Francis building strong volleyball and football programs as well as Wheaton Academy doing the same, we will lose talented players to such programs that encourage students to attend their school," said Jensen.

The board has been debating the issue for almost 20 years and still has yet to reach a decision.

Principal Moses Cheng said, "It's a complicated process, there has to be an opening if we have to create our own conference. We can't just barge our way into another conference, and there aren't

any openings at this point in the school year."

Even though the decision isn't up to them, students are opinionated on the issue of leaving the DVC.

Senior Patrick Stremel said that remaining in the DVC is important.

"I enjoy knowing we play in the best conference in the state. Winning in the DVC means more than winning anywhere else," Stremel said.

Not all students are against leaving the DVC. Junior Kyle Schar said that it would be in the school's best interest to leave.

"Leaving the DVC would be good because we could compete in other conferences and win, overall raising school pride," said Schar.

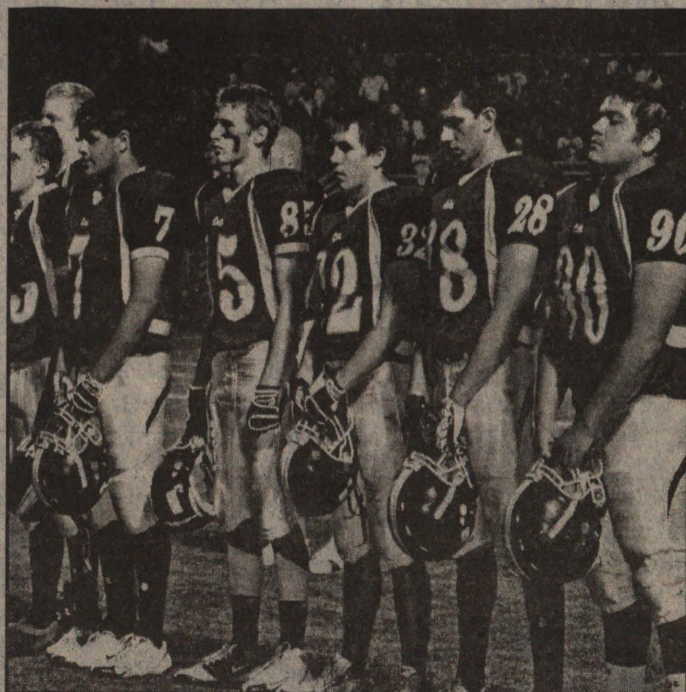


Photo by Jessica Bergmann

The issue of leaving the DVC has been tossed around for 20 years, and the school board is concerned about how conference choice could affect student enrollment.

Around the school

Gifts spread cheer

By Payton Bayless

Key Club is teaming up with the Humanitarian Service Project to collect money and toys for the less fortunate. Along with the donations students give during lunch hours, Key Club will combine the \$500 they received from last year's blood drive.

Members will use the money to shop for presents on their own time.

The Humanitarian Service Project will deliver the toys to children throughout DuPage County on Christmas Day.

Students who would like to contribute can put change in the collecting jars in commons until Thursday.

"This will help out the parents who can't buy many presents for their children this year," said counselor and Key Club adviser Ward Rau.



Photo by Jacob Wucka

Clubs donated to charity for the holidays. Poms adopted children from Simple Gifts. Sophomore Chrissy Jonas helps one of the kids with a craft.

Active in community

By Megan Tennis

Poms adopted three children this holiday season through the Simple Gifts Foundation to make the children's holidays better.

With fundraising money, team members went shopping and bought each child as much as they could off of that child's wish lists the team was given.

On Friday, poms handed

out the gifts to the children and spent time with the families.

"I think it has helped the team to develop more of an understanding for what it means to be an active member in the community. To do something for someone you don't even know feels pretty good, especially when it's a child," said coach Devin Vassar.

Presents for patients

By Payton Bayless

The Teen Associates Board (TAB) sold candy canes in order to raise money for the patients of Children's Memorial Hospital.

The sale lasted until Wednesday. Money raised will fund a party occurring

around Valentine's Day, and will also be used to buy toys for the patients.

"We wanted to do something different that no one had done, so we decided on candy canes," said TAB president senior Abbey Mastroianni.

Sweat and dedication

Student of the Month is based on a solid academic history, commitment in extracurricular activities, and community involvement. Students must be nominated by at least one staff member and the final decision is made by the student activities director and a committee made up of additional staff members.

By Jessica Bergmann

Senior Chrissie Rovtar is setting an example for students everywhere, which is why she was chosen November's Student of the Month.

Rovtar has been involved in Pep Club, Student Council, National Honor Society, and has been a student ambassador, all while playing both basketball and softball.

"What I believe makes high school the best years of my life are all the high school activities I can be involved in. Not only clubs and sports but going to the football games and participating in homecoming week," Rovtar said.

While Rovtar has participated in a wide range of student activities, she said that her most memorable was softball because of the success that the team has had.

"My best high school memory would have to be the softball season last year because of all our accomplishments, specifically when I hit a home run in the sectional finals. I will never forget that," said Rovtar.

Rovtar has also set an example in the school through

her academic success. She has been able to maintain her 4.0 GPA while succeeding in and out of the classroom.

While many juniors stress out over the junior research paper they need to write, Rovtar claims that it wasn't that bad.

"My favorite class was American studies junior year because I really enjoyed all

the hands-on work we got to do as a class. I also really liked how Mr. Kling and Ms. Fikis taught. They are awesome teachers and they both made the junior research paper not so horrible," said Rovtar.

Rovtar is undecided where she will attend college, but she hopes to study kinesiology to become an athletic trainer or a physical therapist.



Photo by Jacob Wucka

From left, seniors Jimmy Laiter, Megan Green, and Jimmy Aramburu sing in their last Madrigal Dinner in full medieval attire

Bringing light to the Dark Ages

By Jacob Wucka

Commons was crowded with minstrels, jesters, and royalty at the choir's Madrigal Dinner and Tea, held on Saturday and Sunday.

"Back in the medieval times, they had baronial feasts, where people would come from all over the countryside to celebrate the holidays. This is our modern take on an old tradition," said choir director Brandon Fantozzi.

Fantozzi enjoys showcasing the choir's talent to the community.

"It's fun, and it gives students the chance to get involved. It also allows the choir to showcase their talents to all of our supporting communities," said Fantozzi.

The dinner, which is one of

the choir's main and most interactive fundraisers, has students preparing for months.

"We've been singing Christmas music since August," said Fantozzi.

Students have memorized 20-30 holiday tunes, a script, and must remember to stay in character during the dinner.

Senior Katrina Beedle enjoys the atmosphere of the Madrigal dinner.

"My favorite part is getting into character and dressing in clothing from the Dark Ages," said Beedle.

Beedle hopes to make the most of her last Madrigal Dinner.

"This dinner has been such an interesting experience. It's definitely been one of my favorite experiences during high school," said Beedle.

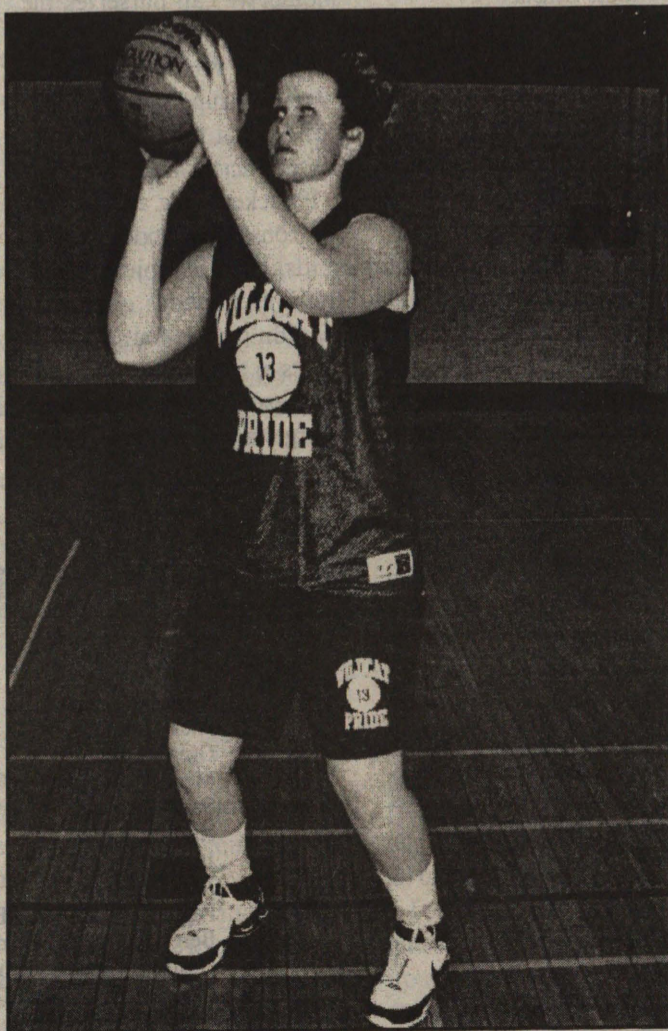


Photo by Jacob Wucka

Senior Chrissie Rovtar dedicates herself to girls basketball, practicing on her free throw and three point shots.

Our View

Same advisories:

The case against the plan to keep advisories together all four years

Advisories and lunch periods are a time when students can eat, relax, and catch up with friends.

This chunk of time is the only time during the busy school day that students are able to talk to the people that they actually want to talk to.

Now, the administration is considering keeping students in the same advisory class and lunch period throughout high school.

The reasoning is if students stay in the same advisory for all four years they will feel comfortable with their class and begin to open up to them.

However, if the plan is to try to get students to reach out of their circle of friends and meet

new kinds of people, it would make more sense to have students in different advisories and lunches every year.

With new advisory classes every year, students will meet four times the amount of new

people than if the advisory stayed the same. Switching up advisory and lunch periods gives students the chance to meet more than one class of people.

Students should be exposed to many different kinds of people, and new advisories and lunches every year provides that opportunity.

Keeping the same advisories is supposed to encourage students confiding in advisors, but academic teachers know the students' work personally and will be able to help them better than the advisor.

Advisories and lunch periods are the only time of the day students can relax and be with their friends.

If you have an advisory class where you have absolutely no friends, those times become stressful.

Sure, you may eventually open up to your classmates, but that's not always the case.

It would be much better if students just got a fair shot at a good lunch period and advisory at the beginning of every year.

Students should have a say, and their preferences should be considered so lunch time can remain a stress free hour.



"After four years in the same advisory, I think the people in my class finally realize I hate them."

Corruption in the Land of Lincoln

A strong storm rages from the Windy City across the entire prairie state as yet another Illinois politician is found to be corrupt. Surprise, right?

Gov. Rod Blagojevich and his chief-of-staff John Harris were indicted on Dec. 9 for corruption charges, including bribery, illegally threatening to withhold state assistance to the certain companies, trying to "sell" President-elect Barack Obama's senate seat, among countless others.

Blagojevich joins a history of indicted governors including Democrats Otto Kerner, Dan Walker, and Republicans George Ryan and William Stratton. So much for the "Land of Lincoln."

The 16th president, Abraham Lincoln, is credited with holding America together during the Civil War, and the abolishment of slavery. Illinois is honored to be recognized as

his home state.

Yet along the way, his ideals of a just government have slipped beneath the piles of money bags secretly being traded in Springfield.

From Kerner's bribery indictment, Walker's forged signatures on loan applications, Ryan's involvement in the driver's license-buying scandal, Stratton's tax evasion charges, and now Blagojevich's staggering corruption charges, why should we call ourselves the "Land of Lincoln" anymore?

Lincoln was known for his statesmanship and his political skill. What political skills do our politicians have now?

If racketeering and bribery are considered good political skills, then Blagojevich and the four previous governors wouldn't have found themselves in trouble.

These recent corruption charges are an embarrassment

to Illinois.

It's remarkable to think that just one month ago, the entire world was watching Grant Park in Chicago as Obama accepted the presidency.

Just one month ago, Illinoisans were proud to declare "Obama is from my state." In the wake of this catastrophe, Illinoisans are hiding their faces in shame.

Illinois had its glory days, but now it's back to old business and corruption. This needs to end.

Chicago should only be known as the Windy City for its lake effect weather, and no longer for its tough talking politicians.

Lincoln served as America's symbol of enduring democracy. Our politicians need to knock off these "behind closed door policies" and make Honest Abe and the "Land of Lincoln" proud.



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THE WILDCAT CHRONICLE is the student newspaper at Community High School. It is a public forum for freedom of expression and encourages readers to express their views. The Chronicle publishes eight times a year, with the student editorial board making the decisions concerning paper's content. Unsigned editorials represent the views of the majority of the staff.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR are welcomed and will be published as space allows. Letters must be signed, although staff members may withhold a name upon request. The paper reserves the right to edit letters for grammar and clarity, and may refuse to publish a letter. Letters to the editor may be e-mailed to Laura Kuehn at lkuehn@d94.org or delivered to room 319 before or after school.

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Discounts not worth disgracing humanity

On Black Friday, Nov. 28, Americans across the country woke up early in anticipation of large sales at local stores.

However, this Black Friday turned particularly black outside of a Wal-Mart in Valley Stream, NY. Beginning as early as 2 a.m., a wild crowd anxiously anticipated the opening of the doors.

However, at 4:55 a.m., when the crowd could no longer wait, they began pushing the doors and pounding the glass.

After shattering the glass, the crowd stampeded into the store like a herd of wild animals, pushing an innocent Wal-Mart worker to the ground.

Not one of these crowd members attempted to help the man, but rather concerned themselves only with the sales which they so greatly needed. The employee was fatally injured.

After hearing this story, I could not help but wonder: "What has humanity come to?"

Since when have human beings begun to act like savages? When did we begin killing one another over

sale-priced items?

While this accusation may be considered extreme, this event should not be considered an accident by any means.

Each and every person who stepped on or over this man's body knew exactly what they were doing, but still none of them attempted to help.

In a time of economic hardship, it is understandable why Americans, particularly on this Black Friday, would wake up early to get to these sales. We need to save every dollar we can.

Yet, is the discounted price of these items enough to cost a man his life?

The answer is plain and simple: no.

Black Friday, as I see it, is the beginning of the Christmas season. It's the time where people search for Christmas gifts while listening to Christmas carols play at department stores.

But it seems that we, as Americans, have forgotten that the holiday season is not about taking, especially not taking the life of an innocent worker.



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Bailing out struggling citizens to correct our troubled economy

This holiday season, America's economy remains lower than ever. As the government is coming to the rescue aiding big corporations, Americans wonder when their super hero will arrive.

Traditionally, the holidays bring happiness and joy, followed by the inevitable credit card bills at the end of the month. While this year's bills may be significantly smaller due to Americans cutting back on spending, this cannot be good for the economy.

Government money should go to the unemployed and struggling citizens in an attempt to recirculate the funds.

Americans are known for their spending, especially during the holidays. With no extra cash and no hope in sight, holiday budgets are hurting everyone; consumers and corporations alike.

Giving money to the struggling businesses will put a band-aid over an economical wound that needs stitches. While companies like General Motors and Chrysler deserve aid for keeping jobs in America, rather than outsourcing jobs to foreign countries,

these businesses going under is inevitable.

Instead, filling the wallets of struggling people would be a step in the right direction.

It is undeniable that consumers will spend the money, ultimately feeding it back to businesses.

Money given to the unemployed might be viewed as inappropriate, and these people are undeserving.

Whether or not you agree with that, there is no denying that these people will use it.

Plenty of hardworking Americans, laid off in the past months, are living off of unemployment checks. For these 10.3 million citizens, holiday spending will have to wait. Any extra money would more than likely be spent constructively.

Consumers are the fuel to America's economical engine. Without spending, bailouts will run dry after a few years, leaving America right back where it is now.

While holiday budgets will still exist, millions of people will get a chance to celebrate, adding to corporate profits.

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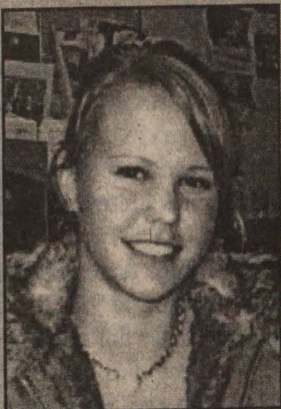
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Students Speak

Compiled by Greg Vodicka

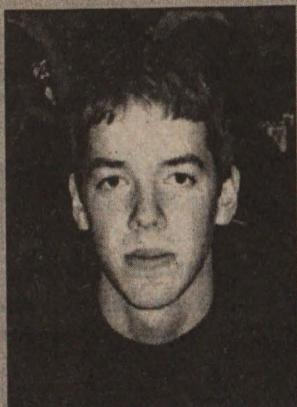
Do you agree with the government bailing out companies?



Senior

Emily Breitreitz

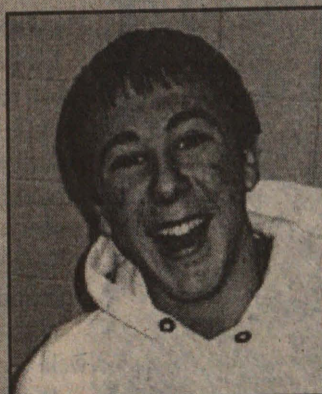
"Yes, bailouts save jobs. Millions of people keep their incomes and have money to spend. This keeps the economy going."



Junior

Dan Singer

"No, if we keep bailing out companies, it's going to be the same thing over and over again. We're wasting tax money."



Sophomore

R.J. Kobriger

"I just think it's wrong to be using tax money to pay for bailouts when it could go towards more important things, like the war."



Freshman

Alex Hund

"No, it's bad that they're using our money to bail other people out. We should have a say where our money goes."



The economy that Santa's lighter toy sack leaves empty spaces under the tree

By Jessica Bergmann

Children across the nation will wake up on Christmas morning to find their stockings less stuffed than last year.

According to a Gallup poll released in November, 56 percent of Americans said they plan to spend less on gifts this holiday season.

Junior Megan Ogorzalek claims that her parents have told her that Christmas will not be extravagant this year.

"It kind of upsets me, but I understand that everything is more expensive and that I get too much anyway," Ogorzalek said.

While Ogorzalek is upset that Christmas will be a bit different this year, she said that the state of the economy has made her more thankful for what she will receive.

Senior Hannah Taylor also said that the economy has affected what she will receive for presents this year.

"My mom is defining how much I get by how much everything costs. She keeps stressing how she cannot buy a lot of expensive items," Taylor said.

Taylor also mentioned that her mother shopped on Black Friday for the first time this year.

"She didn't get up at an extremely early time to beat out all the other crazed moms, but I was surprised," Taylor said.

According to the National Retail Federation (NRF), Black Friday neared 172 million shoppers who hoped to save money on Christmas gifts, an increase from the 147 million shoppers last year.

Senior Hanna Colliander's Christmas will be extremely different.

"My siblings and I aren't exchanging gifts and we aren't getting my parents anything. Money is tight with my sister and me because we can't find

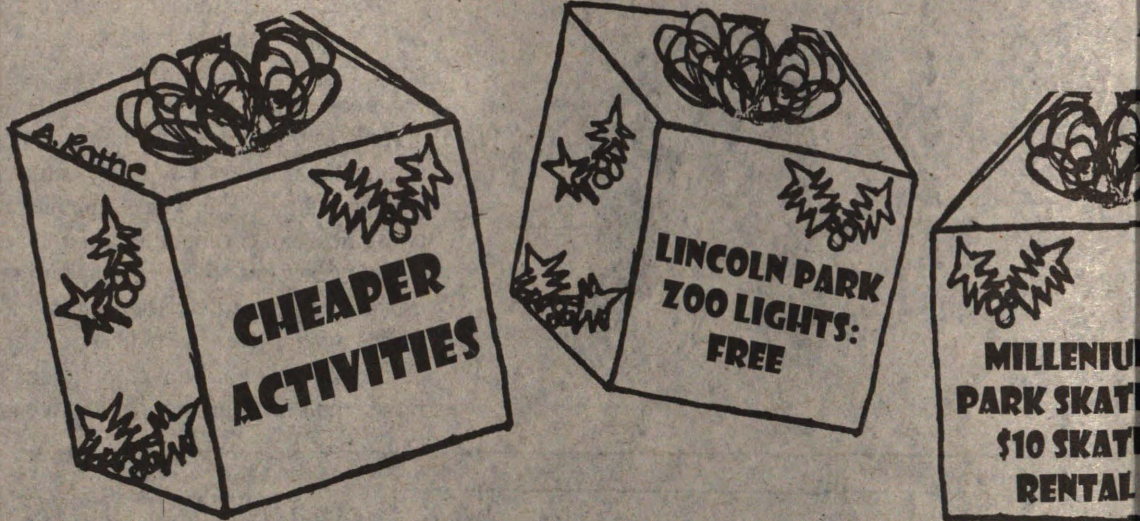
jobs," Colliander said.

Consumers aren't the only ones being brought down by the economy this holiday season. Local businesses and major corporations are feeling the pressure to make a profit and keep sales up.

"Every retailer is suffering right now. Sears had an excellent day after Thanksgiving and we hope to continue with that momentum through the end of the year," said Leslie Thayer, assistant store manager of the Sears at Charlestowne Mall.

With families cutting back this holiday season, Thayer said that Sears is doing everything it can to appeal to customers while offering affordable solutions.

"Sears has adopted the lay-away program for the holidays. Customers can select gifts, pay them off whenever they like, and pick up the merchandise just in time for Christmas," Thayer said.



Fewer donations leave

By Jacob Wucka

It's better to give than to receive. Yet, with a majority of Americans struggling with joblessness, credit crunches, and tight budgets, there are more people needing to receive, creating a problem for charities.

According to ABC News, last year's charitable donations made up 2.2 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP), bringing in \$306.39 billion. This year's shortcomings are expected to be in the billions.

Money is becoming tighter, and according to Gallup polls, the average American family spent \$925 on holiday gifts last year alone. This year, sales are expected to peak around \$715.

With people cutting back—nearly 23 percent these holidays, charitable donations are struggling as well.

According to spokeswoman for the Greater Chicago Food Depository Kate Maehr, there has been a 33 percent increase in the number of people who are in need.

With their goal set at \$25,000, the depository has only reached 3 percent, bringing in a meager \$660 as of Dec. 7, with two and a half weeks until Christmas to reach their target.

Private contributors have slashed donations as well.

Meals-on-Wheels, the charity that delivers meals to homebound patients, has lost upwards of \$500,000 from their largest contributor and troubled mortgage giant Bear Stearns.

parse holiday

Chronicle

December 18, 2008

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at stole Christmas

Holiday plans grounded

High cost of travel makes visiting family into a more expensive affair

By Alexis Hosticka

With air travel costs on the rise, Santa's sleigh may be the cheapest flight this Christmas.

As the economy fluctuates and the stock market swoops up and down, many aspects of life are affected.

Due to the unstable economy, many people are cutting back on spending and one of the most impacted areas is travel, specifically holiday trips.

According to www.worldmag.com, 63 percent of Americans plan to travel less this Christmas mainly due to third quarter decline in gross domestic product, and the U.S. has entered a recession.

Senior Dave Hiltner thinks the economy is negatively

affecting travel businesses through a chain reaction.

"Because people aren't spending as much for Christmas and their budgets are smaller, the air traveling industry will likely suffer," said Hiltner.

Many airlines have lowered ticket prices and are selling fewer seats due to not expecting as many customers. However, a handful of airlines have multiple add-fees after the ticket is bought.

For instance, United Airlines charges \$15 each way for the first checked-in bag and \$25 for the second. Add-ons to these costs include \$2 extra for curbside check-in, and bags over 50 pounds or larger than 62 inches cost more.

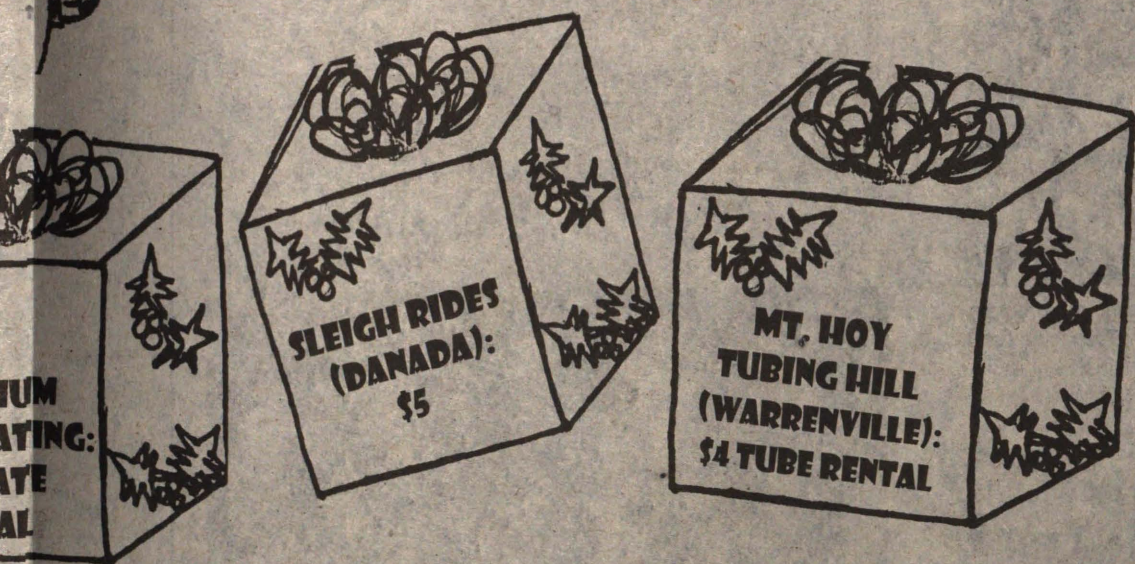
They can also add charges to items considered "special."

Although traveling by plane is expensive, gas prices are rapidly decreasing.

According to www.fuelgaugereport.com, the gasoline prices in Chicago a year ago were \$3.13, a month ago \$2.71, and are currently \$1.81. Although the prices are lower, it can still be difficult to travel due to a tight budget.

Prices on many ways of travel are decreasing, but so is the amount of money in travelers' pockets.

According to www.nytimes.com, many travel companies are offering special deals, packages, and incentives to encourage consumers.



needy out in the cold

However, with the slash in donations, good Samaritans are rallying to get people to donate.

Outside a Jewel-Osco in West Chicago a familiar sound is heard. In freezing temperatures stands a woman bundled in winter garb, ringing the famous symbol of good will. Her name is Beverly Day, and she volunteers at the Salvation Army.

As passersby enter and leave the store, Day greets everyone with a smile and "Merry Christmas and God bless" even to those who don't acknowledge her presence.

"People respond to the smile and care. There are other Salvation Army people that I have seen when I walk into stores that just stand there like they don't care or even want to be there. When I smile and show I care, I can't believe how many people respond and give me a dollar," said Day.

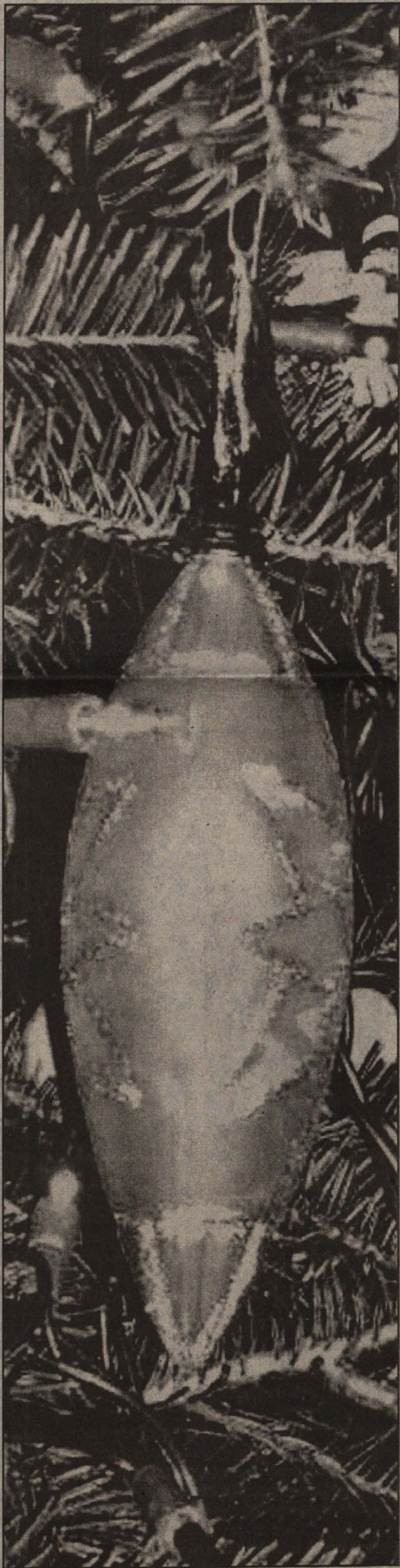
The Salvation Army is a Christian charity that raises money for the poor and hungry, making around \$2 billion yearly. However this year, the charity has seen a 10 percent decrease in donations.

"I think there has been a decrease because a lot of people don't have jobs this Christmas," said Day. "They can't give because they don't have anything to give."

Day is concerned that the decrease in donations and increase in people needing assistance will force some to go hungry and without presents this Christmas.

However she hopes that her presence and her welcoming spirit will inspire people to show their Christmas spirit.

"This is the highlight of my Christmas season; standing here ringing this bell," said Day.



True holiday spirit: *'Santa' reveals secrets of his holiday trade*

By Megan Hernbroth

Every family has holiday traditions like visiting family, opening presents on Christmas Eve, and, of course, going to the mall to visit Santa.

Rodrick Riemersma's own Christmas tradition is to become Santa.

After 11 years of working as Santa at Stratford Square Mall, Riemersma hasn't given any thought to giving up his comfy couch and toy wonderland-inspired set.

"I enjoy working here," said Riemersma. "I thought it would only be for a few years but I've been doing this for 11 years. I hope to be still doing this 10 years from now."

As part of his character, Riemersma dons the traditional Santa suit with hat and gloves, but the beard is all real.

"I started this job because of my white beard," said Riemersma. "People and kids kept asking if I worked as Santa, so I finally decided to try it out."

With so many years under his shiny belt, Riemersma has his act worked out.

"The first thing we do is get their picture," said Riemersma. "Then I ask them what they would like for Christmas and if a few

a clean room so Santa won't trip on his way to deliver presents. A slow economy is expected to put a damper on what



Photo by Megan Hernbroth

Stratford's very own Santa Rodrick Riemersma enjoys listening to children's wishes during the holidays.

surprises may be okay because I can't really promise them anything."

Following the questions are a few reminders to keep

kids expect to see under the tree Christmas morning.

"A lot of kids want a Wii or an iPod and their parents can't afford it," said Riemersma.

"So then I have to let them down very easily and say that my bag may not be big enough or that I let the elves play with too many of one present. It's easier for them to understand this way."

Wish lists haven't changed dramatically. Most kids still want Barbies or Legos with a few higher-tech toys also.

"The boys want an E-Z Bake Oven because they see the Food Network Channel and want to cook like the guys on TV," said Riemersma.

The spirit of the holidays can never be lost on someone who works as Santa during winter months.

"It's always fun to believe in something like Santa," said Riemersma.

Growing up, Riemersma lived in a small town in Minnesota. He remembered his first trip to the mall to sit on Santa's lap and recite his wish list.

"I remember that first time I saw Santa," said Riemersma. "He had that designer fake beard and when he asked what I wanted, I realized it was one of my classmate's

older brothers."

Over his career, Riemersma has encountered different situations.

"The most memorable visit was from this one girl that was concerned that her sister was crying," said Riemersma. "We got a candid picture for the parents and they just loved it."

Riemersma has also dealt with 30-year old twins that requested to sit on his lap for pictures and many kids with slightly damp rear-ends.

Riemersma believes the picture is for the memory of the event to look back on, not a portrait of the kid to hang above the fireplace during the holidays.

"The parents are more demanding than the kids most of the time because they want that perfect picture," said Riemersma.

Riemersma realized the spirit of Christmas hasn't been lost on kids, even now.

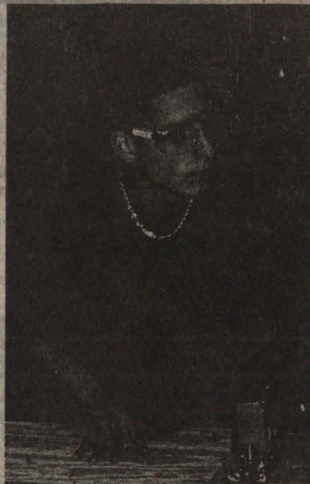
"A kid may not always know what they want," said Riemersma, "but they always know if they were good or bad."

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Baby, it's cold outside...



Warm up with hot winter date ideas

Holiday Magic

By Greg Vodicka

Looking for a new place to take a date this winter? This holiday season, try the zoo experience with Brookfield's Holiday Magic.

Bundle up with your significant other, and revisit one of your favorite childhood hot spots.

As snowflakes begin to fall and holiday lights twinkle around every corner, this new perspective of the zoo is a perfect place for couples.

Most people remember the zoo from their childhood, and things have not changed much. Even though it's winter, the atmosphere is just as friendly and inviting, while the smells of exotic animals brings back all those memories of hot summer days with the elephants or at the dolphin show.

Special hours during the holiday season make for an exceptionally fun experience. After the sun goes down the zoo lights up with over 1 million Christmas lights highlighting walkways and trees until 9 p.m.

In addition to lights, the zoo has additional amusing

events such as a laser show, ice carving, live music, and caroling.

Enjoy a holiday sing-a-long to the animals called Holiday Idol, where visitors can belt out their favorite carols at the polar bear exhibit.

Beating the summer crowds, the animals seem much more active and interested in visitors with less noise and commotion.

Don't let the cold weather end the date early. After roaming the park for awhile, warm up in one of the several indoor exhibits such as Australia House, Baboon Island, and Bear Grottoes. Also en-

joy live entertainment at the Holly Jolly Theatre.

Experience Brookfield's Holiday Magic, all weekends in December, featuring special events such as ice carving, live music, magicians, and laser and light spectacular.

Admission to the park is \$11 a person for non-members, with a parking cost of \$8. Members attend for free.

If money is tight, avoid concession stands. Instead, stop for some hot cocoa on the way home and drive through a few neighborhoods checking out their light displays.

Impress your date with this innovative idea of a night out, while getting a chance to return to the zoo with a twist.



Seniors Chris Jackson and Sadie Roberts take a romantic walk at Brookfield Zoo's Holiday Magic event.

Dazzle your date with a movie in Tinsel Town

By Alex Lima

After going to Hollywood Blvd. in Woodridge, eating popcorn and candy at the movies seems obsolete.

At Hollywood Blvd., movie-goers can choose from appetizers, burgers, sandwiches, and wraps.

The foods are named after movies, characters in movies, and celebrities.

Nibble a Gladiator Caesar Salad, munch a Whoopi Goldburger, sample a Jurassic Pizza, and feast on Malibu's Most Wanted Chocolate Pie. Servers take orders while watching the movie and bring them to the customers.

An enhanced movie-going experience is felt immediately with a lobby filled with movie memorabilia from famous

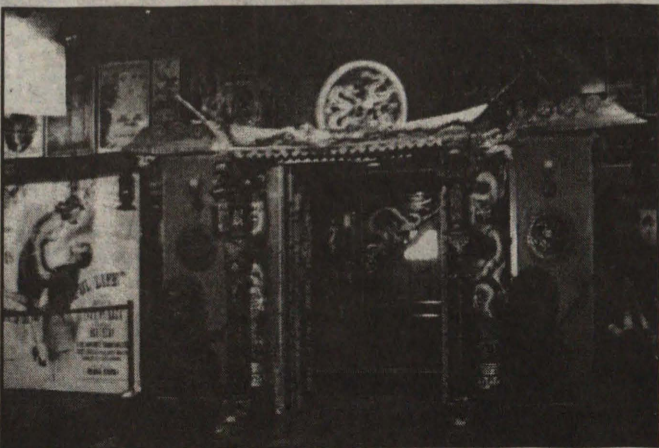
movies such as "The Wizard of Oz," "The Blues Brothers," and "Monsters Inc."

Each theater has a different theme and color. One theater is themed after the Grauman's Chinese Theatre in Los Angeles. Props such as hanging red paper lanterns and suspended Chinese dragons decorate the scene.

Unlike other movie theaters where there is no space between seats, Hollywood Blvd. provides an at-home feeling.

Hollywood Blvd. is a perfect place to take a date during winter break, because dates can watch a movie and eat dinner at the same time instead of traveling between restaurant theater.

All matinee showings before 5:30 p.m. are \$6 for students with identification, and \$8 for adults. After the matinee, admission is \$8 per ticket.



Hollywood Blvd.'s theaters are themed after classic movies such as "The Wizard of Oz" and "The Blues Brothers."

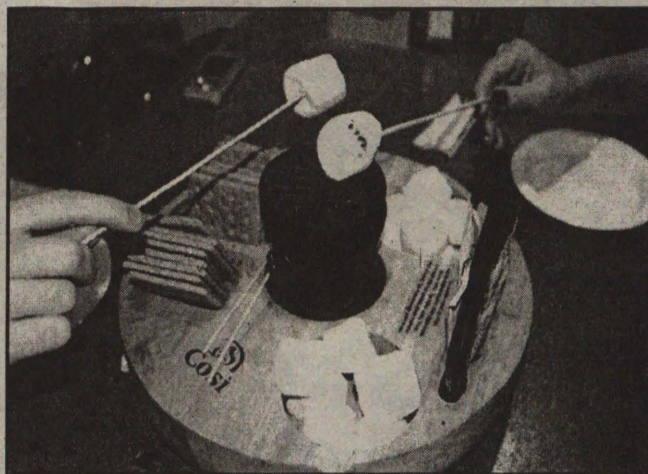


Photo by Jessica Bergmann

Couples can enjoy the unique experience of making s'mores together at Cosi in Naperville.

Cozy up at Cosi

By Jessica Bergmann

Many couples have become stuck in the dinner and a movie rut, and their dates have become lackluster.

Couples hoping to try something new should venture to a new restaurant, where dessert is a top priority.

Cosi is a cafe style restaurant located in downtown Naperville, which offers a variety of different soups, sandwiches, salads, and best of all, desserts.

While Cosi offers the typical desserts like pie and sundaes, there is one unique item on their menu: s'mores.

Couples can order a s'mores kit portioned for two for less than \$8.

The kit comes with graham crackers, marshmallows, chocolate bars, and a small lighted fire to roast over.

While this small flame cannot compare to a campfire or fireplace, it offers the unique ability to make s'mores during the winter season.

Couples seeking an intimate spot for their date should not venture to Cosi because it is too casual.

However, it is easy to communicate with one another without being occupied with anything other than roasting marshmallows.

While buying supplies and making s'mores at home may be cheaper, couples will miss out on the other amenities that downtown Naperville has to offer.

With a variety of other restaurants, boutiques and shops, couples will not run out of things to do.

Couples can find Cosi at 220 S. Washington Ave.

Breaking the ice

By Sarah Berger

Couples can easily fall into the rut of staying in on date night in winter, but one winter activity is almost especially designed to get couples moving: ice skating.

Fox Valley Ice Arena in Geneva is a local indoor ice skating rink that provides ice skating, a restaurant, and hockey games all under one roof.

Couples can enjoy the public skate for \$12, which includes skate rental and admission.

With music blaring in the background, couples can bond while trying to keep from slipping and sliding. Unlike dates that require little to no talking, such as the movies, ice skating lets daters get to know each other better by giving them an interesting experience to talk about.

After skating, couples can enjoy a hockey game played by locals in the ice rink across the lobby. A local hockey game is not as expensive as a Blackhawks game, but still provides the fun of watching a fast-paced sport.

When it's cold outside, the last thing people want to do is go outside searching for a good place to eat. At Fox Valley, a restaurant is available just down the hall from the ice rink. Elliot's offers anything from sandwiches to pasta. Fox Valley is a great place to take a date for various forms of entertainment all under one roof.

Fox Valley is open Monday through Friday and Sundays from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., and Saturdays from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. in December.

Fox Valley Ice Arena is located at 1996 South Kirk Rd.



Photo by Megan Hernbroth

With hopes of matching the girls swimming success, sophomore Neil Hummer (above) and the boys swim team give their all at practice in order to make it to the state competition.

Striving for team's own state successes

By Megan Hernbroth

After a successful season for girls swimming, the boys team is expected to follow suit.

"I'm not going to push them harder this year [because of the girls], but I think now there are some higher expectations on how they should be doing," said coach Nick Parry.

At the 27th annual Wildcat

swam third in the 100 fly at 101.78 and got third again in his 200 individual medley.

Sophomore Neil Hummer added to the team's success with his second place finish in the 500 freestyle with a time of 5:25.46, and the 200 medley relay, where he placed with a time of 2:50.37.

"Overall, we did pretty well," said Nolzco, "but it was more of a training meet

and has been swimming since he was young.

"Last year I acted way too cocky and I didn't really focus," said Nolzco. "This year I have higher expectations, like state."

With only a few seasoned swimmers like Nolzco on the team, the main focus is to develop skills and work on technicalities.

"For the first third of our season we work on skills," said Parry. "Then we move on to endurance and race strategy."

Hummer saw that the team had a lot of potential for improvement over last year.

"We have a ton of fun together but we can work really well when we have to," said Hummer.

Nolzco also wanted to see a victory for more than just him this year.

"Last year was a lot of beginners and there are a lot again this year," said Nolzco. "But those of us that know each other can work well together and push each other when we know we have to."

With so many sights set on qualifying for state, all the swimmers give their all whenever possible.

"My ultimate goal is to get to state," said Pierpoint. "Practice is going to be a lot harder this year but I know it'll pay off."

'I'm not going to push them harder this year [because of the girls], but I think now there are some higher expectations on how they should be doing.'

— Head coach Nick Parry

relay meet on Saturday, the team finished 10th out of 12 with a top five finish in the 200 frosh/soph medley relay.

At the team's first home meet against DeKalb on Dec. 11, many teammates proved successful.

Sophomore Anthony Nolzco took second in the 100 backstroke with a time of 1:00.45 and third in the 50 freestyle at 24.38.

Sophomore Jeff Pierpoint

because it was our first and we just wanted to see people's times."

Since the team dealt with many changes last year, Parry hopes to keep most training aspects during this season the same.

"There were lots of changes last year," said Parry. "I want to stay more consistent with last year so there's a good understanding from the guys."

Nolzco swam last year

Under pressure Girls basketball rebounds after a series of tough losses

By Greg Vodicka

Following several tough losses, the girls basketball team proves they are a force to be reckoned with, beating Wheaton North 55-53 Tuesday.

After three quarters with a tight score, it came down to the final seconds for victory. With the score 53-53, and a Falcon possession, the Cats relied on defense.

Freshman Liz Reyes stole the ball and broke away passing down court to junior Izzy Bruce who made an easy lay-up to end the game.

The win leaves the girls with a record of 2-1 in the DuPage Valley Conference.

Early season games were neck and neck for the girls. However, more recently, the games have been anything but close.

The Wildcats were shut down Saturday against Geneva, losing the game 67-34.

Naperville Central also proved to be a challenge when they defeated the Wildcats 65-44 Dec. 11.

"We just had no composure and no poise," admitted senior Chrissie Rovtar. "They were a beatable team, but no one came out to play."

Focusing on the little things during practice is what Rovtar says will "turn this season around."

"We've played some good teams, and we haven't played as well as I would have liked," said head coach Kim Wallner.

With an impressive conference opener to Glenbard East, the girls had the proper

motivation to begin the regular season.

"It was really exciting to win our first conference game. It shows that we are capable of competing with anyone," said Rovtar.

Prior to the game, Glenbard East was undefeated.

Keeping the lead throughout the game, the team was nothing short of impressive. Tight defense led to a scoreless Rams team until late in the first quarter.

"We talked about cutting off turnovers all week, which is what we did," said junior Katie Staiton.

"They are a tough team, so we knew we would have to raise the intensity level, and we came out strong right from the start," said Staiton.

According to Wallner, the team has balanced scoring, where no individual stands out much above others.

"To me, balanced scoring is when we are at our best," said Wallner.

One area Wallner hopes to improve on is turnovers. In addition to turnovers, the team is looking forward to running and improving on their half court offence.

While they have suffered several losses to strong teams, Wallner admits the Christmas tournament will show what teams are going to be the toughest this season.

"The conference can't be decided by these first few games," said Wallner.

Rovtar agrees saying that the tournament is their opportunity to redirect their focus.



Photo by Greg Vodicka

Freshman Liz Reyes (left) dribbles around an opposing Falcon at the home game against Wheaton North on Tuesday.

Redeeming themselves

By Evan Morgan

Off to a respectable start at 3-5, the boys basketball team began its season with more wins in the first weeks than it had over the course of last season.

"I think we are being doubted because of last season, but we are going to surprise a lot of people because we have a completely different team

compared to last year," said junior point guard and team captain Chad Driscoll.

Last year the team finished with only one win.

Over Thanksgiving break, boys basketball went 1-3 in a Thanksgiving tournament hosted by Oswego.

"The Thanksgiving tournament was a challenge. Despite going 1-3, I think we

played very well," said head coach Kevin Gimre.

It's ready-to-win attitude and ability to play as a team are what Gimre said are the keys to the team's success.

"Our attitude is growing into a winning one. We will gain confidence with every game we play and win," said Driscoll.

So far, it is turning into a good season for the senior players.

"It's sad knowing this is my last season but it gives me more motivation to win," said senior point guard Eli Asani.

The team hopes to finish in the top half in conference as well as winning regionals.

"It is always a goal to win regionals by winning two or three games in the playoffs, but that's a long way away and right now we are focusing on what's best for the team," said Gimre.

The team always hopes for fans to show their support.

Asani said, "I always like playing at home more; it feels like a better advantage having the fans on our side."

The Wildcats hosts Wheaton North Friday at 7:30.

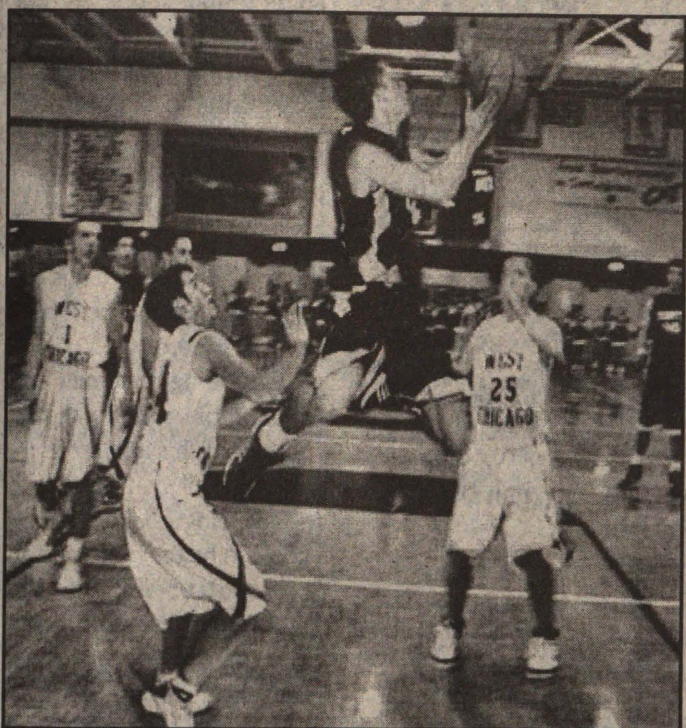


Photo by Jacob Wucka

Senior Tony Quarto (left) and junior Ryan Karg (right) prevent an opposing Panther (center) from scoring when the Wildcats hosted Glenbard North on Dec. 12.



Photo by Jessica Bergmann

Sophomore Jon Gilbertsen (right) attempts to score at a home game against Glenbard.

Building confidence

Wild confronting aggressive teams

By Clark Hudmon

Wheaton West Wild hockey has lost three recent games against New Trier, Lake Park, and the hard-hitting Hinsdale Central, as they battle teams that are not in its league.

Wild has struggled due to the loss of some players from suspensions and injuries. In turn, junior varsity players have stepped up to play for the varsity team.

The team tackled the Evanston Wildkits on Dec. 10, but lost the hard fight, ending the game 5-2.

The boys will get an advan-

tage to playing hard teams in these close games.

When they go into league-play again they will have an upperhand, which was the case for their stellar finish at state last year when they finished third.

Senior leader Kyle Obright looks forward to the rest of the season.

"We are very talented and if we play to our potential we will go a long way in the state tournament," Obright said.

Wheaton West plays Batavia Sunday at the Center Ice of DuPage at 5:20 p.m.

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Swimmer earns All-American

By Alexis Hosticka

Not only has sophomore Kelly Dunn broken a new school record, she made an All-American Time.

In the 100 backstroke at the Nov. 22 state meet, Dunn placed 10th with a time of 57.27, allowing her to place an All-American Time. This means she is in the top 130 swimmers in the country for the race, which is a huge accomplishment for a sophomore according to head coach Nick Parry.

"I wasn't really expecting it," said Dunn about her accomplishment. "State was just really fun overall."

Dunn also came in 12th in the 200 freestyle with a time of 1:52.59, setting another school record.

Junior Caitlyn Madsen, the only other individual swimmer from West Chicago, placed 30th in the 200 freestyle with a time of 1:56.55 and in the 100 but-

terfly came in 37th with a time of 1:00.07.

"State went pretty well, you always feel you can do better, but with our age and experience, everything went pretty well," said Parry. "The relays were really the icing on the cake."

Dunn, Madsen, junior Maria Sedjo and senior Ania Skorupski competed in two relays.

In the 200 freestyle the group came in 14th with a time of 1:39.21, and in the 400 freestyle the girls placed in 19th with a time of 3:39.39.

For the girls, it was a new type of competition with a crowd of 1500 to 2000 people, compared to the 10-20 observers at regular season meets. Parry described it as "people everywhere."

"It was a way different atmosphere," said Dunn. "But it was fun and a good experience."

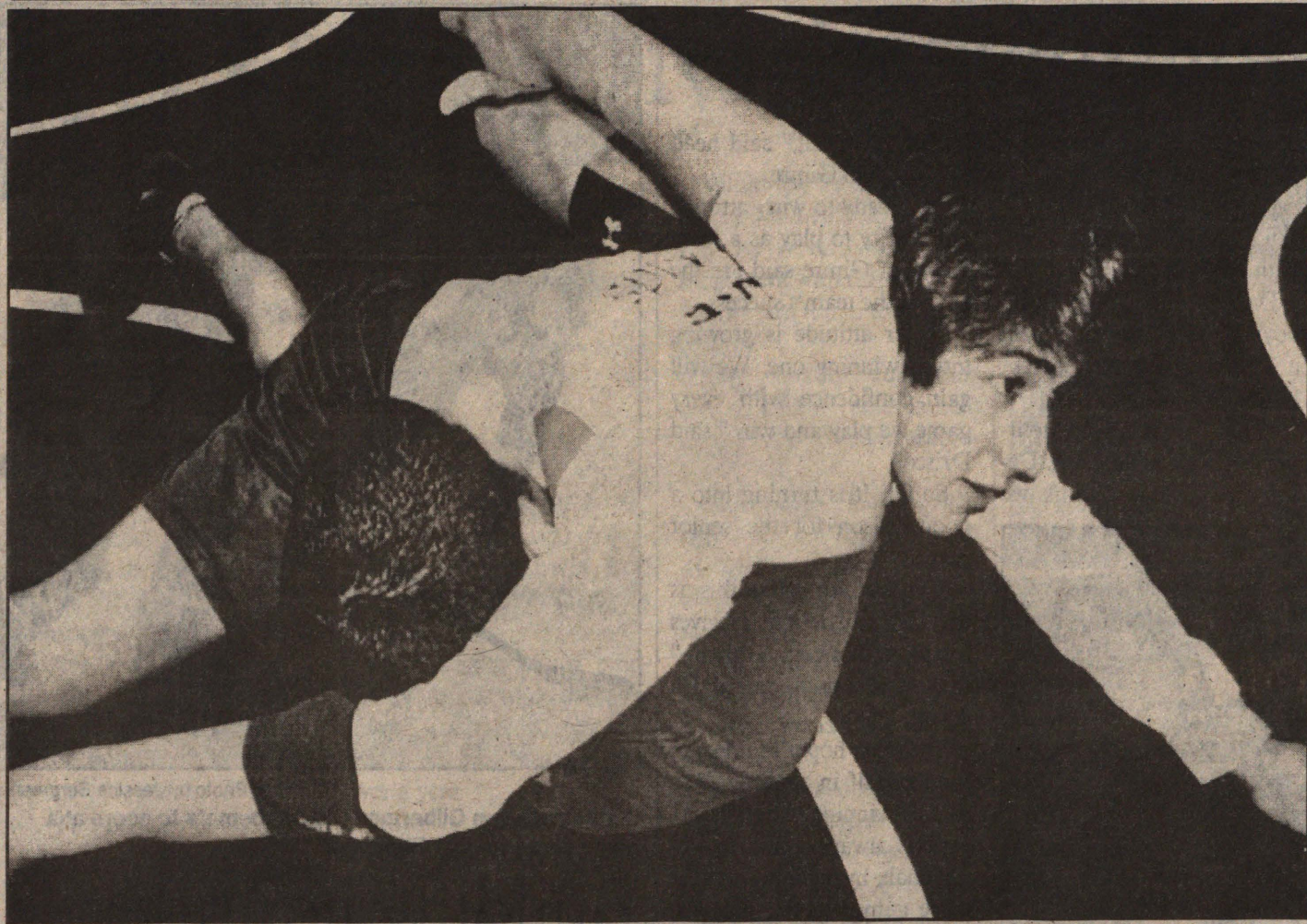


Photo by Jacob Wucka

Being the most dedicated wrestling team in recent years, wrestlers are set on state. Seniors Johnny Padilla (top) and Calvin Holt (bottom) plan to prove the team's potential at the Hinsdale Central tournament on Friday and Saturday.

Champaign or bust

Growing optimism over going to state proves wrestlers' dedication

By Jacob Wucka

In recent years, the wrestling team has struggled with maintaining a full lineup, building team morale, and staying dedicated. That is not the case this year.

"Our practice room looks awesome. This is the hardest working group of kids in the last few years," said head coach James Phillips.

Junior Jon White, who has been wrestling since his freshman year, believes that this is the most dedicated team he has ever seen.

"This is the best team that I've been a part of since I've

been here. Everyone has a mentality of working hard and the harder you work the better in shape and better off you are," said White.

With a team record of 4-5, and many better personal records, the wrestlers are finding ways to improve their skills on and off the mat.

Senior Chris Pierce believes that the team's mentality of working hard and being supportive of each other is boosting team dedication.

"We work hard in practice and all have a hard work ethic and come prepared to matches," said Pierce. "Also, you

don't bring anyone down, and you keep things positive. We all get along here."

The team prepares for its meets in a variety of different ways outside of practice, such as playing pick-up games of basketball before morning practices. According to Phillips, the extra games of basketball and other activities are keeping the wrestlers dedicated to the team.

"We're finding ways to keep it fun, but also ways to get their conditioning in," said Phillips.

Over Thanksgiving break, the team spent time together

in practice and out, working to improve their skills.

"We did a lot of stuff over break as a team. We played water polo against the swim team, and watched wrestling matches at Phillips' house," said Pierce.

Phillips is the main motivation of the wrestlers, as he helps them not only enhance their skills but makes wrestling fun.

"He makes practice fun by joking around with us and having the coaches wrestle with us," said senior George Fortman.

However, it is not all fun and games for the underclassmen and new wrestlers.

"A lot of our team is young. By seeing their upperclassmen peers, it raises their intensity," said Phillips. "[They're] still making beginner's mistakes, but we're working the bugs out and they'll come around."

With their upcoming Hinsdale Central tournament on Friday and Saturday, the wrestlers are beginning to both physically and mentally prepare themselves for the DVC competitions.

"Working hard at practice and staying fit lets me know I'll be in good condition before the meets," said senior Johnny Padilla.

Following the tournament, the team competes at the Glenbard South invite on Dec. 27.

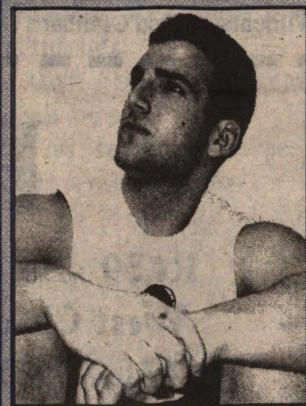
Best times of your life

For senior athletes, there comes a time during senior year when their time has run out and they set the cleats aside.

After four high school seasons of football, I am writing in desperation. What do I do now? Is senior year too late to start a new sport? As competitive as high school sports are, the belief is that it's a mistake to be a multisport athlete, especially a three season athlete. Being a retired high school athlete, wishing I had tried to play tennis or join the wrestling team, it is now apparent what is important to know about high school sports.

One thing freshmen and sophomore readers should get out of this is become involved while you can.

Focusing on a single sport to be the best you can be is not a bad thing. But what's the worst thing that can happen when trying out several sports to find out which ones fits? The chance of discovering a hidden passion is worth it.



Greg Vodicka

Go out for the team you're not necessarily the right size for. Try out for a team your friends tell you you'll never make. And experience high school athletics while there's a chance.

Waiting until senior year and realizing you might have been an all-conference soccer player or a state champion swimmer if you just got involved when you were a freshman is no way to leave high school.

Leave Wego free of excuses as to why you weren't the kid scoring the game winning touchdown or the one who threw a perfect game in the state playoffs.

These four years come and go before you can catch your breath after that last sprint. Believe me when I say take advantage of these opportunities high school athletes have. You may never have another chance to be on a team and feel that feeling as you slide into home.

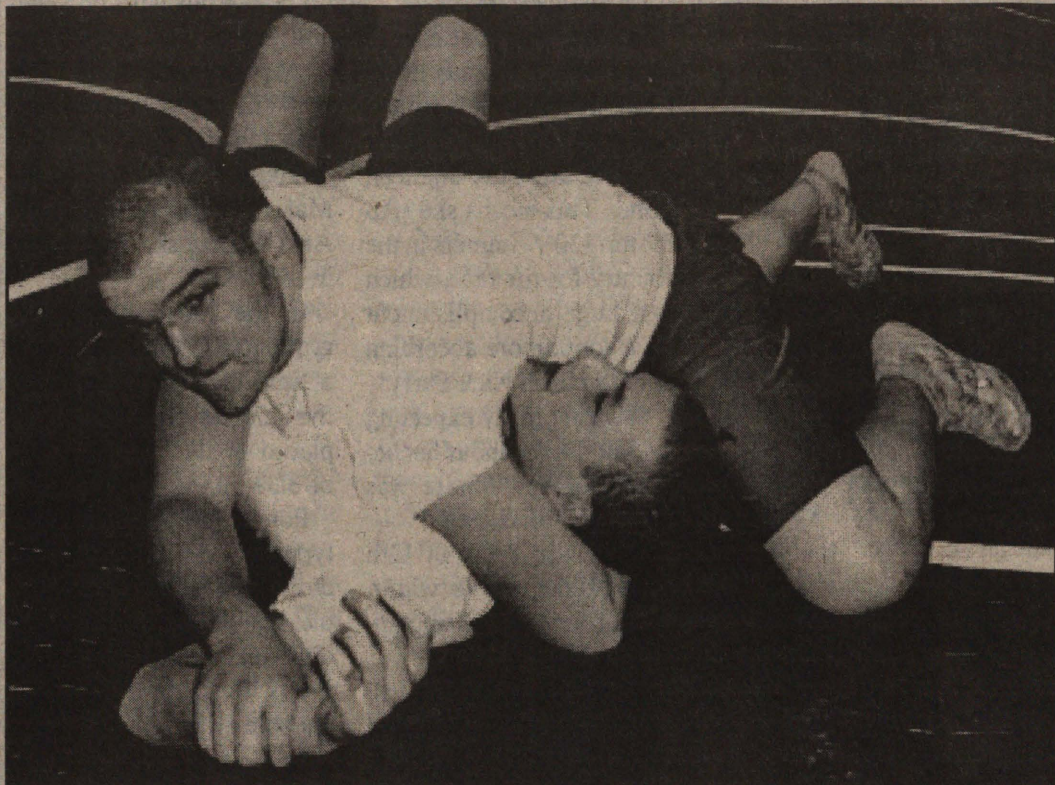


Photo by Jacob Wucka

Senior George Fortman (top) shows freshman Dan King (bottom) how to perfect a pinning technique, by using King as the example.