

# Spotlight

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**SPOTLIGHT**  
**FRANCIS HOWELL HIGH SCHOOL**  
**VOL. 54, ISSUE 2**  
**DECEMBER 2024**

# Howell Holidays

## When is the right time for holiday decorations?

Imagine seeing people wearing flip-flops while there is a blizzard outside. Weird, isn't it? Wearing flip-flops on a snowy day is basically the equivalent to putting out winter holiday decorations in October, and by putting out decorations prematurely, people gloss over Halloween and Thanksgiving, which are both great holidays and deserve to be celebrated.

The tradition of decorating for the winter holidays can be dated back as far as the fifth century. Many ancient civilizations began decorating in December for the Winter Solstice, which is always between the 21st and 23rd day of the month. This ancient tradition should be upheld and people should begin putting up holiday decorations in December, not in October.

Also, some decorations, such as Christmas trees, typically only last four to five weeks. I understand being excited for Christmas, but having a dead tree in your living room is a little bit depressing and the opposite of holiday cheer. And holly, mistletoe and poinsettias all have an even shorter lifespan than a Christmas tree, causing them to die before Christmas. After all, nothing screams "holiday cheer" like a dead tree

and a bunch of wilted, rotten plants.

Decorating prematurely also kills the vibe for Thanksgiving and Halloween. What are supposed to be holidays marked by pumpkins and ghosts are bombarded with elves and candy canes. Trick or treating while seeing snowmen feels a little inappropriate. Imagine going through a haunted house and getting jump-scared by Santa, or imagine eating gingerbread men on Thanksgiving. It's just strange.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, some people decorate way too late for the holidays. I understand it can take a lot of work to go down to your basement or up in your attic to gather multiple boxes of decorations. Procrastination is also a real thing, but you can't let it get the best of you; decorating for Christmas on the 24th is a little bit pointless.

The optimal time to decorate for the holidays is right after Thanksgiving. A lot of people typically have their family around at that time of the year, and having family around to help you decorate for Christmas can help with the time and effort it takes, while creating a fun new tradition! After all, the holidays are mostly about spending

time with family.

People should begin decorating for the winter holidays between Thanksgiving and the beginning of December. Decorating during this time ensures your holiday display won't be out of place and can help you create new memories with family.

**Taylor Mallett, Staff Writer**



## SPOTLIGHT

### MISSION

"Congress shall make no law...abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press." --The First Amendment

The Francis Howell Spotlight is the official student newspaper at Francis Howell High School. The Spotlight began as a Francis Howell publication in 1971. The Spotlight believes it is essential to preserve the freedom of the press in order to preserve a free society and its purpose is to inform, interpret, and entertain through accurate and factual reports.

Therefore, this school newspaper will serve the best interest of the students of Francis Howell and keep itself free from any other obligation; the staff of the school newspaper will accept guidance from its adviser, but will make its own editorial decision; only the editorial board may veto any material intended for publication, judged to be in violation of the FHHS Publications media editorial policy; and this school newspaper will vigorously resist all attempts at censorship, particularly prepublication censorship; the school newspaper will serve as an educational laboratory experience for those on staff; the school newspaper will run as a designated public forum; the goal of the school newspaper is to cover the total school population as effectively and the staff will strive to be impartial and responsible in its coverage of issues. The full media policy is available at fhhsstoday.com.

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All letters to the editor should be sent to Mrs. Wayne in room D130. All letters must be signed, be under 400 words, and contain appropriate material. Material will not be printed if content is obscene, or if it invades others' privacy, or if it encourages physical disruption of school activities and/or if it implies libel. The editorial board has the right to have letters edited for length, grammar, punctuation, clarity, etc. The school newspaper will only publish one letter per author per issue and all letters become the property of the school newspaper upon receipt and will not be returned.

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We publish at least four issues of the Spotlight newspaper, FHHSToday.com, and the Viking Report broadcast. We serve 1,855 students and 177 staff by distributing a free paper during 4th hour. The publication or adviser is a member of JEA, CSPA, NSPA, MIPA-MJEA and JournalismSTL.

Parker Nordgaarden, Editor-in-Chief (second year); Harper Culbertson, Design Editor (fourth year); Malu Biju, Website Editor (second year); Natalia Fletcher, Social Media Editor (fourth year); ZeRuiah Smith, Social Media Editor (third year); Emily Morisaki, Staff (third year); Taylor Mallett, Staff (second year); Avari Raush, Staff (second year); Luca Butler-Marchetto, Staff (first year); Lilly Caby, Staff (first year); Sophia Cowan, Staff (first year); Ashlyn Richmiller, Staff (first year); Jaidyn Robinson, Staff (first year)

Mrs. Katie Wayne, Adviser (second year).

## Students share their holiday traditions

### **ADRIAN LANDA, 11**

"I celebrate Hanukkah. Usually the first night, we make latkes (pretty much just a potato pancake), borscht (which is a beetroot soup) and challah bread, which are all traditional Jewish foods. Then you get presents every night for eight days."

### **ALEXA SPIESS, 11**

"Every year, during Christmas Eve, we go over to my grandparents' house with my cousins and aunt and uncle, and we watch *The Muppet Christmas Carol* at a really late time at night, and then we drink sparkling cider and eat popcorn."

### **CAROLYN KLEIN, LIBRARY MEDIA SPECIALIST**

"My kids and I hide Olaf (not the elf, because the elf is creepy). Then he brings candy canes and hides them throughout the house, and they do a candy cane scavenger hunt."

### **CHRISTA MARTELL, LONG-TERM SUBSTITUTE**

"Our holiday tradition is that we give each one of the kids \$100. If they have a significant other, they get \$50, but then all of them get one thoughtful gift from us. One of our sons is a hunter, so we bought him a very nice hunting knife, and we had it engraved with his name and the year."

### **JOANNA ZHENG, 11**

"During Christmas, we typically have hot pot [a dish of soup stock with raw meats and vegetables that are dipped and cooked in the broth] for lunch. And because typically it's cold during Christmas, hot pot just warms us up. For Chinese New Year, sometimes we have a family get together, and then we eat hot pot and a bunch of other things, like lobster. Then we get the older people passing out the red envelopes [filled with money] for all the kids."

### **ILLEAN GREEN, ART TEACHER**

"One of my traditions that a lot of people don't celebrate is Kwanzaa, which is an African holiday where we honor unity and the unity of our people in America. It goes from Dec. 26 to Jan. 1, and every day there's a different celebration. The celebration is called Karamu. Every day we give a handmade gift to our family members, and then at the end on Jan. 1 we have a huge feast."

### **SIENNA SCHMIDT, 10**

"We celebrate Christmas. Our family is really big on decorations, both inside and outside. We have a bunch of inflatables and Christmas lights that we decorate the house with. And on the inside, we typically do two Christmas trees, one in the basement, one on the main level. Other than that, we do presents,



like the normal Christmas traditions and everything, typically gingerbread houses. I sometimes make ornaments to put on the tree, rather than just getting store-bought ones. That includes wood burning, painting them and crafting different versions of them."

### **ZOE ENGELHART, 12**

"So normally, on Dec. 1, we start an Adventskalender [an advent calendar]. Some people buy it in the stores, normally there's chocolate in it, but lots of families such as mine [make] it on their own at home. I really love that [tradition]. Also, we have this Adventskranz [a brown stand made of Christmas trees that has four candles on it]. Each weekend of December you burn one candle. That's a pretty common tradition every household has. On Dec. 6 we [celebrate] St. Nikolaus in the evening [by] putting [our] shoes outside. Also, we celebrate Christmas on Dec. 24 in the evening, not the next morning. Going to church, gifts and the big meal, it's all on the 24th. The 25th and 26th are just to visit family, so you don't have to go to work, but it's not 'Christmas Day' so that's going to be weird this year. We also have Christmas cookies, like specific German recipes. I don't know if you have those Vanillekipferl, it's shaped like a half moon and they are really good."

**Lilly Caby, Staff Writer**



# 4 Howell Happenings

## Theater performs *Night Watch*, Oct. 17-19

Howell is known for its athletic reputation, but beyond the tracks, fields and courts, there lies a stage. The Howell Drama Club has been working hard this year to present their shows to the community. In October, the Drama Club performed their first play of the year, and there are still more to come. Whether it's on the stage or behind it, a lot goes into making the shows become the best they can be.

Junior Fynn McDermott has been participating in theater since elementary school and continues to follow those passions as he pursues

“THE SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND WATCHING AS MAGIC FORMS ON STAGE [IS MY FAVORITE PART OF THEATER].”

acting both at Howell and St. Charles Community College. As far as acting goes, McDermott is not a newbie to getting into character.

“I develop my character by going over my script a couple of times as I learn to memorize my lines,” McDermott said. “I think about the situation that the character is in and how he is responding

to it. I find ways that I emotionally connect with it and use my own emotions to connect with that character and act how he is responding to the whole situation.”

Junior Molly Werner entered the stage in October as Elaine Wheeler in *Night Watch*, her first lead role in a show. Werner works on building her role by focusing on her character's experiences.

“I usually look into the characteristics and what this character might be going through, what this person likes, what emotions they are experiencing and I try to really re-enact those emotions,” Werner said.

But not all that goes into theater comes from on stage. Sophomore Natalie Collins takes on the behind the scenes role of Assistant Stage Manager.

“I basically help [the Stage Manager] run everything, and we help get people into character and we help run all the crews,” Collins said. “I like getting to work and collaborate with everybody. Getting to work with [the Stage Manager] and [Mr.] Davis is incredible because they are very easy to work with.”

Between running shows, the theater community greatly impacts the people who are in it. Senior Reggie Richard shares his two favorite parts about being in theater.

“One is the sense of community and the other is just watching as magic forms on stage, and it's beautiful,” Richard said.

Junior Tessa Brink shares a similar sentiment about the close-knit theater community.

“[My favorite part about being in theater is] meeting people and making lots of friends because a lot of the friends I've made are the closest people to my heart,” Brink said.

The Drama Club doesn't always receive as much recognition as sports do here at the H, but that doesn't mean

that there aren't great things happening on the stage. McDermott recommends seeing the shows to support fellow schoolmates.



“I think people should come see the shows here because it's supporting students who aren't particularly interested in doing the athletic side of activities at Howell,” McDermott said, “Our school is mainly sport-based, so a lot of people kind of forget that we even have a drama club.”

As Richard continues his final year at

“I FIND WAYS THAT I EMOTIONALLY CONNECT AND USE MY OWN EMOTIONS TO CONNECT WITH THAT CHARACTER.”

Howell, he suggests that students should come see the theater shows as a way to discover new interests and unlock passions.

“You might want to end up doing [theater], and I suggest it,” Richard said. “I've been doing [theater] for four years now and it's been the most amazing four years of my life.”

**Ashlyn Richmiller, Staff Writer**



## Students share their favorite holidays



**Jackson  
Bridwell, 11**

“CHRISTMAS BECAUSE I GET TO SEE MY FAMILY AND I LOVE THE PRESENTS.”



**Ben Thomeczek,  
10**

“MY FAVORITE HOLIDAY IS CHRISTMAS BECAUSE I LIKE HANGING OUT WITH MY FAMILY AND I LOVE THE SNOW AND GETTING PRESENTS.”



**Katherine  
Merzlicker, 9**

“MY FAVORITE HOLIDAY IS HALLOWEEN BECAUSE YOU CAN DRESS UP AND GET CANDY AND I THINK THE DECORATIONS ARE CUTE.”



**Nathalia Vargas,  
11**

“CHRISTMAS IS THE BEST WEATHER OF THE YEAR, AND I GREW UP IN MISSOURI, SO I LIKE ALL OF MY FAMILY GATHERINGS AND CONNECTING WITH EVERYONE.”



**Dax Sjodin, 11**

“HALLOWEEN BECAUSE IT'S NICE TIMES. THE WEATHER IS REALLY NICE ALL AROUND AND IT'S JUST A PERFECT TIME.”

**Luca Marchetto, Staff Writer**

## Tennis courts renovated over the summer

Senior Sadie French stepped onto the newly renovated courts Sept. 24, ready to play her first match on the FHHS tennis courts since last year.

“It was very thrilling to finally play on our fresh home courts. It was reassuring that all the work it took for them to be done was worth it,” French said.

To get the courts in perfect condition, players helped with general maintenance to keep the courts clean and functional.

“The nice thing about the new courts is that it’s easier to clean them off because the water doesn’t fill up in the cracks. The girls used squeegees to push excess water off, or at least get the puddles to prevent pooling,” coach Tracy Carlson said.

The finalization of the courts was stalled due to the replacement of the nets and the tightening of the straps, which is usually done during the off season. There was also some conflict due to external factors.

“We had a bug issue right before we got all of the courts. There were biting gnats that would distract some of the players,” Carlson said. “We eventually got someone to spray for them, that was the main factor that was the most

frustrating to deal with.”

New features include updated nets and score towers, as well as the relocation of the benches for spectators and players.

“I really like how the benches are placed inside the fence now. It’s a lot easier to watch my teammates without a huge fence in the way,” junior Gianna Nguyen said.

Despite the new additions to the courts, some players had complaints about how long the renovation process took.

“I was a little sad that they took so long, because a lot of my senior season was taken up by practice times on courts at different schools, which ruined the team’s spirit, but I was so glad when they were finished,” senior Sydney Lewis said.

Boys’ tennis will begin their season in February with the new courts.

“I’m super excited to play on the new courts for practice and not have to worry about running out of sunlight because of the new lights the court has,” senior Jonathan Nguyen said.

**Avari Rausch, Staff Writer**



# 6

# The Climate Crisis

## Dreaming of a White Christmas

It's the dream of many children to wake up to snow falling on Christmas Day while they cozy up by the fire and unwrap presents. This is a time when many wear mittens and heavy jackets and build snowmen with siblings to then come inside to have a warm cup of hot chocolate. The joy of these simple traditions has become customary for many across the world. But this reality is slowly turning into a distant memory.

December 2000 was the last year that the majority of Missouri had a "White Christmas." With temperatures as high as 90 degrees in October, the possibility of snow on Christmas Day does not seem probable this year. This dramatic weather has come to not only disrupt typical holiday traditions but also the environment around it.

This isn't just a problem that affects Missouri, however. Countries all over the world are experiencing record-high temperatures for these usually cold months. According to NASA, our planet was an average of 2.45 degrees Fahrenheit warmer in 2023 than in the 20th century alone.

The holiday season is one of many factors contributing to the rising temperatures. With increased travel and families' desire for real Christmas trees, the environment begins to face even harsher challenges. But the holidays aren't the only contributing factor. During the summer, while taking a walk, someone may throw a small wrapper on the ground when

they can't find a trash can. This may seem like a minute issue, but these little actions add up. According to the International Finance Corporation, humans on Earth produce about 2.2 billion tons of solid waste annually, and experts expect this number to increase up to 70% by the year 2050. In addition, 5.2 trillion pieces of plastic are estimated to be in the ocean right now.

Many animals are also feeling the effects of this temperature rise. Polar bears, penguins, seals and other Arctic animals are being put at risk by the rise in temperatures. The land that they live on is slowly melting away, and they are running out of places to go. They are facing the consequences of something that they have no control over. Their fate lies in our hands.

So, this holiday season and beyond, it is crucial to remember the mark you are leaving behind on this planet. Even if it's something as little as picking up a piece of trash on the ground or carpooling with friends, these small choices can add up to one big step towards growth in the right direction. Although we may not see the full impact of the climate crisis in our lifetimes, that should not discourage anyone from trying to prevent this from affecting future generations.

**Parker Nordgaarden**, *Newspaper Editor*



**fhstoday.com**



**Spotlight** *instagram*

## A Call For Change

As we approach a new year, it seems to be an appropriate time to consider if we want to make New Year's Resolutions, and if so, what we want those to be. As of Dec. 9 at 3:08 p.m., the Climate Clock in New York sits at four years, 224 days and 18 minutes. The Climate Clock counts down until the exact moment when all of the damage done

to the planet and its ecosphere is irreversible. My New Year's Resolution is to do my part to make a small difference. Here are some ways you can help combat the Climate Clock:

**Natalia Fletcher, Co-Social Media Editor**



**1** Switch to an electric vehicle

**3** Save your electricity

- Turn off your lights when not in a room
- Turn off water when it's not in use

**5** Unplug appliances when going on long trips or vacations

**6** Respect, visit and protect natural resources, natural parks and wildlife

**2** Consider not taking your car to college or on trips and using public transport instead

**4** Throw away less food

- Feed scraps to pets if it's safe for them or only make as much as you know will be eaten.



**7** Consider growing your own fruits, vegetables and spices

# Fall & Winter Sports

## Fall sport State finishers

Francis Howell has a reputation for high performance in sports. This year was no different, with five fall sports teams qualifying for State competitions. Cheer, girls' golf, girls' volleyball and boys' swim and dive all qualified for State this year.

The cheer team competed in Columbia, where they finished in second place, following their second-place finish during the 2023 season.

"It was good to know that all of our hard work paid off and I feel like we really came together as a team," junior Mallory Rahlmann said. "The week before State we practiced every day. It really made our team come together a lot better. My favorite memory from

State was backstage with us all together and the bond of knowing that we do it for each other, not just to win. I am most proud of the fact that we went out there, we tried our best and we worked together really well. No matter what happened, we all encouraged each other."

The girls' golf team came off a third-place finish at State in the 2023 season. They traveled to Cape Girardeau this year and finished in third place, making this the program's third straight Final Four finish. They also had a record-breaking season with a school match record of 146. This year they competed with four-time State qualifier and two-time State medalist senior Hannah Mottert finishing in 10th place, two-time State qualifier sophomore Kinsley Walton finishing in 28th place, sophomore Dhaara Ponnapati finishing in 29th place, sophomore Phoebe Hoenig finishing in 51st place and three-time State qualifier Jordan Campbell finishing in 63rd place.

"I was so nervous during districts and I was really scared that I wasn't going to qualify, but once I figured out that I did qualify, it was like a relief almost because it's something that I've wanted to do since freshman year," Ponnapati said. "I tried to get out and practice whenever I could and a lot of it was mental too. I had to remind myself to

take it easy. I tried to focus on my weak points just to get better. I didn't do as well as I wanted to, but I also can't deny that for my first year at State, it wasn't bad. I am proud of the fact that my work paid off."

After their final four appearance last year, the girls' volleyball team made it to the State quarterfinals, earning them a fourth place finish. The team had a successful 28-9 season and they became back-to-back district champions as well as conference champions.

“IT WAS GOOD TO KNOW THAT ALL OF OUR HARD WORK PAID OFF AND I FEEL LIKE WE REALLY CAME TOGETHER AS A TEAM.”

"It's really the main goal to get to State, so we were excited to get to State two times in a row," senior Danielle Moore said. "There were a lot of good memories that came from it. Getting to play on the court with my team is really fun because it's a college gym, so it was exciting to do that with the team."

Moore competed on varsity for all four years of her high school career and is now committed to Wichita State University, where she will continue her volleyball career.



Photo by Evie Jungers, Yearbook Staffer

## A look into winter sports

### BOYS' BASKETBALL

Last season varsity boys' basketball went 25-5. They won the district championship and lost in the quarterfinals. This season the Vikings won their first game 66-55 against North Point, Nov. 22. Their next game was Dec. 4 at Cardinal Ritter, where they lost 70-45. After graduating five, the seniors this year are Jack Brettschnieder, Kal Bryant, Preston Goldman, Mo Kaid, Will Paulson and Brody Tharp.

### GIRLS' BASKETBALL

Last season, varsity girls' basketball went 18-9; this season, they had their first game on Dec. 6, an evening game against

Timberland High School, where they won by 22 points. As they kick off this season, they hope to have another impressive year led by their seven captains: Molly Archibald, Reagan Celeste, Emma Hoffman, Lily Payne, Rhianne Toebben, Karley Bonham and Danielle Moore.

### GIRLS' SWIM AND DIVE

Girls' swim and dive went 5-2 last year in the regular season, with one team member placing 19th at State. The Vikings' first game was against Holt, Dec. 3, where they won 123-47. This season's seniors are Audrey Herndon, Addison Purcell and Jaina Woods.





“Next year I’ll play with Wichita State for volleyball and I’m really excited. I’ll just be preparing for college volleyball and trying to get to the next level,” said Moore.

to the State finals 100 backstroke to earn him the 10th place medal.

“It was a fun experience. I slept a lot, ate really

good food and I stretched a lot,” Robbins said.

“There was a guy at Central; he and I were the only people to make it back to finals [the second] night and I talked with him for the

rest of the day. I swam 100 backstroke at finals and then 200 IM in the prelims; I was happy because I dropped a few seconds off of my time going into it.”

In the 2023 season, boys’ cross country had a qualifying team and two girls compete at State with one medalist. This year, senior Holden Black and freshman Jinel Holloman traveled to Columbia to compete at the Gans Creek course. Holloman finished in 105th place and Black finished in 115th place.

“That’s the entire point of cross country, you’re just trying to qualify for State,” Black said. “I had bronchitis and I was really down on everything but I was just happy that I got to qualify. The atmosphere was cool with all of the fastest runners there. It’s just a fun time. I did not do very good, but I’m just happy I got it done. The Gans Creek



Photo by Evie Jungers, Yearbook Staffer

meet was the most memorable because it was the same course as State and it was the fastest I ran this year.”

As the fall season ends and the winter season begins, many athletes are trying out for new sports. Although it can be daunting and scary at times to try out for something new, it often yields a much higher result, creating lifelong bonds and teaching valuable lessons.

“I would just say even if you’re scared I think you should still try because it gives you some of your best friends and someone to lean on while you are doing something you love,” Rahlmann said.

**Parker Nordgarden, Newspaper Editor**

“ I WOULD JUST SAY EVEN IF YOU’RE SCARED I THINK YOU SHOULD STILL TRY [A WINTER SPORT] BECAUSE IT GIVES YOU SOME OF YOUR BEST FRIENDS AND SOMEONE TO LEAN ON WHILE YOU’RE DOING SOMETHING YOU LOVE.

Boys’ swim and dive had nine competitors qualify in both swimming and diving events. Seniors Jaxon Dearing and Harry Hoyt competed in both swim and dive events. Freshman Nathan Robbins, sophomore Grant



Photo by Eleanor Temperly, Yearbook Staffer

Wilson, junior David Neier and senior Max Newman competed in swim events, and senior Ian Curran competed for dive. Robbins competed in the State prelims 200 IM and 100 backstroke and advanced

### BOYS’ WRESTLING

Last season boys’ wrestling placed 21st at State. This year, the Vikings’ first match was Dec. 7 at the Chip Allison Patriotic Classic, where they placed fourth. The seniors this year are Darrion Bass, Gavin Collum, Grady Colombatto, Diogo Freiria, Lemuel Houston, Jacob Maury, Justin Mitchell, Christian Moreno, Felix Niemira, Luke Schneider, Owen Smith, Isaac Thompson, Aiden Woodsmall, Gian Woody and Alex Zhang.

### GIRLS’ WRESTLING

Girls’ wrestling is looking forward to a good season with their biggest program yet. Twenty-seven girls make up this year’s team, with captains sophomore Kennadee McDowell, juniors Miale Copeland and Anna Bowles and senior Jenna Smith.

### HOCKEY

Oct. 1 marked the start of the season for the Francis Howell Vikings Hockey team with a win against Holt (5-2). The team this year consists of 19 students, with junior captain Riley Wright (#15) and senior captains Jonah Vaughn (#19) and Jack Blankenship (#28).

# 10

# Seasonal Spirit

Feeling blue? You're not alone.

## 01. Spend Time Outside Everyday

Getting the needed amount of sunlight can be helpful to the brain, even if it's cloudy



## 02. Seek Seasonal Affective Disorder Therapy

Cognitive behavior therapy can help teach ways to better manage symptoms and negative thoughts

## 03. Keep an Eye on Sleep Patterns

Try to go to bed and wake up at about the same time each day

## 04. Light Therapy

Using a full-spectrum bright light can help increase good spirits within days

## 05. Stay Connected

Stay involved with your social circle and regular activities

Information from [webmd.com](http://webmd.com)

As the temperature begins to drop, the leaves start to fall and the holiday shopping begins, many begin to struggle with the pressure and stress of the busy holidays. The time of year that is meant to be about spreading joy sometimes leaves people feeling helpless and alone. Although the holidays are often seen as a happy occasion, many people would disagree. With higher levels of stress and the cold weather arriving, it can often become an upsetting period for many.

People that feel this way during the winter commonly suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder, which is more well known as “seasonal depression.” Although some people who suffer from seasonal depression feel more effects in summer and less in winter months, it is very common to have these symptoms in the winter. Seasonal depression in the winter is thought to be brought on by less daylight and shorter days. It is believed that when this change begins, individuals experience a chemical shift in their brain that doesn't produce as much of the hormones needed to regulate their emotions. In addition to the chemical change, those that suffer from seasonal depression may often feel a heightened sense of sadness during the holidays due to the emphasis on happiness. With the holidays being centered around spreading joy and being happy, it can make people that suffer from seasonal depression feel like they are different and that they should not feel this way. Seeing the connection between everyone around them can make the sadness of affected individuals feel even more severe.

This time of year can also be hard for those who have lost loved ones

or struggle with their mental health in general. They are often left feeling alone and isolated from those around them. Family gatherings and reunions can be a harsh reminder of the loss that they have faced.

On top of all of this, it is easy to set unrealistic expectations about the holidays. With many wanting to recreate childhood memories, they expect everything to be magical and positive. It is important to remember that the holidays aren't always going to be perfect, and forcing them to be that way can create unnecessary stress.

If you are someone that is left feeling helpless during the holidays, it is imperative to be vocal about how you are feeling and ask for help if you need it. Even if you don't feel this way during the holidays, it is important to remember that those around you might. Checking in on the people you love can help make their holidays more enjoyable and make them feel less alone. The holidays are a time of giving, and the best gift you can give someone is support. Sometimes, simply showing that you care can make others feel seen and less alone.

**Parker Nordgaarden, Newspaper Editor**



## Students and staff work Black Friday over break

Every year retail stores and workers prepare for one of the busiest days in retail sales, Black Friday. Black Friday is an annual shopping event that happens the Friday after Thanksgiving. It is known for significant sales and promotions from retail companies. People wait outside stores for hours before they open so they can be the first to purchase the discounted items before they run out.

"I work at Walmart, I think we are one of the busiest stores during Black Friday because we are such a big retail company and Walmart has really good deals," senior Laonna Davis said. "I'm a cashier so I noticed there were a lot more people buying bigger items that you normally don't see being bought everyday. I didn't really like working Black Friday because I had to work harder than normal, but it was good to see all the deals firsthand and purchase some items for myself."

Originally the phrase "Black Friday" had nothing to do with the deals and the

actual shopping of items but was instead used by Philadelphia police officers in the 1950's to describe the panic and congestion that is caused by the sales.

"I work at American Eagle and I've been working there for about a year and three months. Working Black Friday was really busy but fun," senior AJ Belco said. "My favorite thing about working that day would definitely be my coworkers, they made the day go by faster. The customers were really friendly."

Before it was officially named "Black Friday," the annual event gained popularity in the 1880's. They used to call it "into the black" to emphasize the idea of businesses moving from losses (or "red") to profits (or "black").

"I work at LOFT in Lake St. Louis; [Black Friday] was very busy but also really fun," Business teacher Jennie Guttman said. "We had a lot of staff in every area of the store to help out with the crowd. The deals were so good that it was mainly people shopping for

themselves rather than shopping for others as gifts, even the employees."

Not only is Black Friday filled with the thrill of deals and shopping, but the whole weekend is as well. Many businesses have sales through the whole weekend as well as the following Monday for Cyber Monday, when everything is discounted online rather than in store.

"I work at Dick's Sporting Goods. I didn't actually work Black Friday but I did work the weekend after," senior Aiden Rodell said. "It was definitely busier than usual but it wasn't too bad. After Black Friday we were sold out of a lot of items so I kept having to give customers similar items, but besides that it wasn't a bad experience."

**ZeRuiah Smith**, *Social Media Co-Editor*



**TSHIRT.CO**

# A Day in the Life

## Senior Anika Jain retells her busy day as a student leader

Anika Jain, senior, begins a typical Tuesday by waking up around 5:45 a.m. to get ready for school with the intent to leave her home by 6:30 a.m. Once Jain arrives to school at 7:00 a.m., she may visit with friends or meet with teachers before the first school bell rings.



When reflecting on her schedule, Jain said that one class in particular is more challenging.

“As a senior, I was given a lot of liberty to

choose my classes this year, so I don’t have any particularly difficult courses,” Jain said. “If I had to choose though, I would say AP U.S. History is most challenging for me, as it requires a lot of writing and memorizing.”

Once school is over, Jain typically has meetings for Speech & Debate and Youth and Government.

“Because I’m president of both clubs, I organize meetings and discussions. I help run each club, so I leave school around 4:00 or 4:30 p.m.,” Jain said.

“Once I’m home, I get ready to attend dance practice at 5:00 p.m. When dance is over around 8:00, I head home and do some homework. I usually end my night in bed around 11:30 p.m.”

Due to her busy schedule, Jain acknowledges that she sometimes feels

stressed but that she has found ways to manage.

“I’ve gotten used to the stress and constant pressure and now it motivates me to continue working hard,” Jain said. “I usually wind down later in the week on days that I’m less busy. I take time to step away from school work and do things I enjoy, such as going out with friends, baking or just taking a nap with my dog. The most important thing is to maintain a balance during the week.”

**Jaidyn Robinson, Staff Writer**

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## Science teacher Ryan Painter goes through his daily routine

Ryan Painter, science teacher, begins his work day at 5:00 a.m. by grabbing coffee and a breakfast bar. Once he leaves his home around 6:15 a.m., he enjoys his 30 minute drive to school with a podcast or listening to Spotify.

“When I get into my classroom and make sure that I have all of my materials ready to go for first hour, I usually have a few former students stop in to say ‘hey,’” Painter said. “Most of the time, I’m not as productive as I would like to be.”

When the school bell rings at 7:20 a.m., Painter teaches his lessons for the day throughout his classes. During his fourth hour plan period, Painter spends the time setting up labs, planning future lessons, building assessments, grading work, printing copies or attending an occasional meeting.

“This time flies by,” Painter said. “So I try to get as much done as I can. Sometimes I will eat lunch during this time and also use my lunch time to plan as well.”

At 2:20 p.m., when classes are done

for the day, teachers stick around until 2:50 p.m.

“I have about a half an hour to work on anything else. I sometimes finish up what I couldn’t complete during my plan, or if I feel pretty caught up, I’ll chat with a couple of my coworkers to see what’s going on,” Painter said.

After a long work day, Painter enjoys the rest of his day with family.

“Once I get home from work, I like to workout in my basement and shower until I have to get my kids off of the bus at around 4:20 p.m.,” Painter said. “When they arrive, we work on unpacking their book bags and talking about their day at school.”

Painter really loves to cook, so he usually gets started on dinner around 5:00 p.m.

“Sometimes my kids like to help with cooking as well, so that always makes it fun,” Painter said. “After dinner is finished, we hang out as a family by playing games, going to the park if the weather is nice or taking our dog for a walk. We try to do something as active as possible, but usually on Friday nights,

we stay in the house for a family movie night. Around 7:30 p.m., it’s bedtime for our kids. We usually will let them pick a book for us to read to them

before they go to sleep. After the kids are asleep, my wife and I will most likely watch a TV show or football, depending on the night.”

Painter typically ends his night at 9:30 p.m.

“I usually try to get to bed. I am more of a night person, so sometimes it is hard to get to bed that early,” Painter said. “If I stay up too late then I am not feeling the best when I have to wake up early in the morning.”

After a long week, Painter is sure to balance everything in ways he enjoys.

“In the middle of work and home life, I balance it all by fishing, cooking and disc golf,” Painter said.

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