

# LINNE

DECEMBER EDITION

## Taking time to find best college fit for you pays off

By Lauryn Klahn

Although the 2017-2018 school year isn't yet half over, Linn-Mar High School seniors are starting to make the difficult decision about where they will go to continue their education after graduation. So where should you start the search for the best college for you? This can be a very stressful time in one's life so following a few steps to get to where you want to be can be beneficial. Thinking about your future career, assessing the cost of school, starting to visit colleges, and making a pros and cons list are all great steps to aid in making the decision of which college is best for you.

Ask yourself what you would like to get out of college. What would you like to study? Are you looking to get a job right out of college, or would you like to go onto a graduate program?

Raigan Reilly, a Linn-Mar senior, says, "I want to get a good education that will lead me into medical school."

Reilly, like many high school seniors, knows what she wants to do with her future, but for others it can be a much more difficult process because they are unsure of what they would like to study. If you are having trouble figuring out an area of study that is interesting and applicable to you and your goals, ask a parent, school counselor, or another adult you trust for some advice.

## Variety Show to hold February auditions for March 22-23 show

Auditions will take place on Friday, February 16 and Tuesday through Friday, February 20-23 for the 16th annual Variety Show. Sign-up audition spots will be available starting Wednesday, January 31 beginning at 7:30 AM. Spots are first come-first serve and typically fill up quickly.

"Last year, I believe all the spots were taken and we had a lengthy waiting list by the second day of sign-ups," said Dee Wesbrook, sponsor of the show.

"The show has kind of developed a reputation for being a fun time to showcase new and exciting talent from students who haven't necessarily gotten to shine in other

After choosing an area of study, it is time to start thinking about where you would like to go. Do you prefer to stay close to home or go to the other side of the country?

Emma Behrens, Linn-Mar senior, says, "Growing up I always wanted to go out of state but when the time came to start looking at schools I realized staying in Iowa was a much cheaper option."

Price should definitely factor into this decision-making process. Most people would love to leave the state they grew up in and get their education elsewhere but it's just not something a lot of people can afford without ending up in an enormous amount of debt after graduating college. According to George Washington University, on average, out of state tuition is \$8,900 more expensive than in state tuition at most universities.

Your parents are the best people to talk with about the price of college because they might be able to help you out with costs. If they are not able to help out with the cost, scholarships are available and taking out a loan is always an option.

Visiting schools can be the most important part of your decision when deciding where you might want to attend.

Matt Condon, a 2017 Linn-Mar graduate, says, "I started visiting

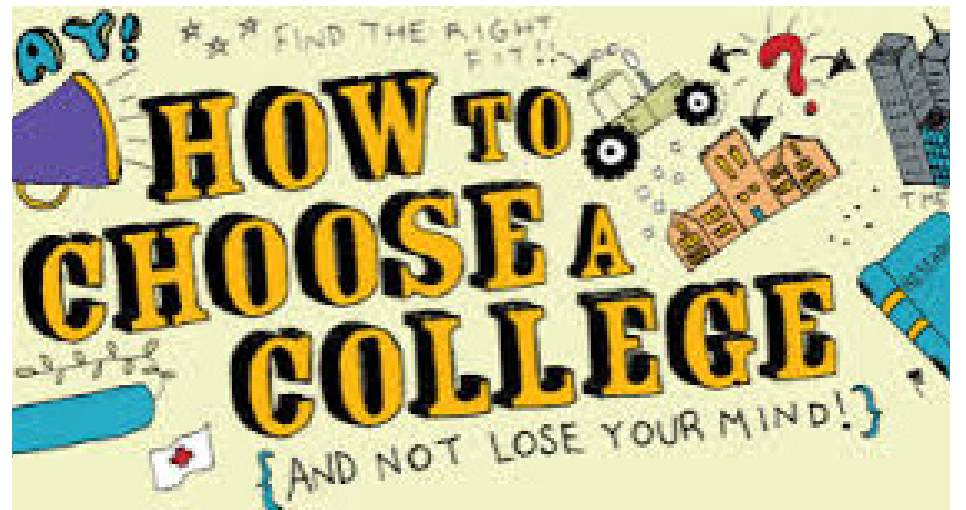
school productions," said Wesbrook.

"Each year I am pleasantly surprised with new talent that I didn't know existed inside the walls of Linn-Mar High School. I love that we can give students a chance to share their talents with others."

There are 30 sign-up slots, not including the waiting list.

"As the show has gotten more popular, we have extended the number of acts that can try out, which is great, but which also makes it harder because we have to cut more groups and turn people away," said Wesbrook.

There is a tendency every year to have a lot of singing acts: solos,



schools the winter of my junior year so I could start getting an idea of what schools were like early on."

Colleges offer day tours for students who are interested in attending the school. This day is filled with an information session with an admission counselor, a walking tour of the campus, and a complimentary lunch. Don't be afraid to ask questions on a visit, the people leading the session or tour are there to help you make your decision.

After a visit, an important question to ask yourself is, "Did I feel comfortable here?" The size, location, and atmosphere of a college are all details you should highly consider. If you are uncomfortable on a campus that is too large you won't be having the best college experience that you could have had if you had chosen a smaller school where you feel more comfortable.

Gabi Martin, a Linn-Mar se-

nior, says, "I fell in love with both Iowa and Iowa State after visiting. I couldn't stop stressing over the way I was going to choose the right school because both had great programs for what I wanted to do."

A great way to narrow down your decision is to make a pros and cons list for your top college choices.

Martin says, "My mom suggested making a pros and cons list and I suddenly felt some of the stress lifted off of my shoulders. I haven't quite gotten to the final decision but listing all the pros and cons has definitely gotten me a little closer to that step."

Choosing the right college for you should be an exciting time in your life; don't let stress ruin an experience that is supposed to be fun. There are many steps that can help to make your decision easier and which may also help to alleviate any stress you may have.

duets and even ensemble groups.

"Each year we hope we get even more variety," says Wesbrook. "We are continually looking for new acts such as dancing, acting, spoken word poetry and humorous acts."

Certain groups have almost become a tradition in the show, such as the DrumLine, the Color Guard and the Indian Bollywood dancers, but these groups must continue to try out each year.

"Nobody gets a pass; everybody must try out each year to keep things fair. I think it is admirable that these groups have kind of made it a tradition that they want to continue to try out and represent their group each year," said Wes-

brook, who cautions groups to not just "assume" they will make it into the show because they have always made it before.

"The tryouts are getting more competitive. We cut a group just last year who had a long tradition of appearing in the show. They weren't prepared when they auditioned, however. I felt bad cutting them but it wasn't fair to the other groups who had prepared to just let them into the show simply because they had always been in it in previous years.

The show is a fund-raiser for the Linn-Mar journalism department and is hosted by English teachers Dee Wesbrook and Kathleen Kelley.

# Ally Edwards says trip to Africa changed her

By Annika Menges

Everyone wants a vibrant, warm-hearted, and reliable friend in their life. Someone who they could turn to for sound advice, who would never judge a soul, and who would be there for you through it all. Senior Ally Edwards is the friend that everyone desires. She is a young woman who has the determination to change the world by radiating kindness to all.

Growing up, Ally was close with her mom, Julie, and her sister, Ashley. She was born in Kansas City, Kansas, but faced a few hardships at a young age. Her dad had multiple affairs and left her family when she was only three years old. At that age, she says that she did not remember much, only that her mom was hurt for a very long time. It wasn't until she was seven years old that her family moved to Cedar Rapids, Iowa, due to her mom's job transfer.

"I loved my small family that I had, and it made me closer with my mom. I never really knew any different until I moved to Cedar Rapids where everyone had two parents rather than one. It made me insecure: my mom was always at work, we had less money than others, and in my perspective it looked like I had less love because it was only coming from one instead of two."

In third grade Ally became involved in taekwondo. Her neighbor, who had behavior issues, was going to try it out and she wanted to go too, and ended up loving the sport and the people surrounding her. It was an individual sport which intrigued her independent personality, and being a stubborn girl, she loved how it was different from everyone else's sport. Today, Ally is a fourth degree black belt and instructor at Bruce Taekwondo Academy and could definitely kick your bum if provoked.

Over Ally's high school years she says she has enjoyed the aspect of learning, but being overwhelmed with work, extracurricular activities, and school is never fun. Ally joined cheer in the ninth grade because she knew she wanted to be involved in something at the high school. The reason she chose cheerleading was because cheer utilizes some of the same aspects as taekwondo, such as flexibility.

Religion was introduced to Ally in the seventh grade by her best friend Delaney Akiens. Ally began to attend church every Sunday with Delaney's family. Ally has been attending ever since then and has

become actively involved at the Lutheran Church of the Resurrection and classifies herself as a non-denominational Christian.

"My religion has changed everything for me. I grew up with not a lot of good influences, and with having a single mom, I became very self-reliant at a young age. I didn't treat people kindly until I found God. Having a lack in an earthly father, the idea of a heavenly father sounded so good and changed everything. I now have a God who adores me and pursues me, so I want to pour that on other people who want and need it."

Ally began attending EDGE, a high school youth ministry right away in ninth grade. She says she knew she needed a youth group and just went because of that. Soon, she realized that she enjoyed the community and began seeing the Lord more through that aspect. EDGE is where she met Katie Kascal, the youth group leader.

"Katie has been in my life ever since I started going to EDGE, and has basically been my mentor and life teacher. It has been a relationship that has led to being super beneficial for both of us as we try to do life according to how Jesus calls us to. Now I am a leader of one of the small groups, and one of the main leaders of the ministry where I get to speak truth into people's lives."

Camp Chisomo is located in Malawi, Africa. The camp was created by Katie Kascal and Adam Lau in hopes of creating a place where kids could be kids, and learn about God's grace, mercy, and hope for them. This camp had been on Ally's heart for a long time coming. It wasn't until about a year and a half ago when she began praying about it, and had conversations with Katie about the camp, that Katie encouraged her to apply, which was the beginning of a new look on life.

Camp Chisomo lasts for about three weeks in the month of June. It takes around two days to get to the village where the group of 12 to 16 people work. Once the group gets there, they spend the first week running the kids-camp in the village.

"A normal day of running the camp looked like this: at around noon the kids would be off at school and would start coming to our land, where the first hour we spent teaching a different Gospel story. A translator read the story while our counselors acted it out. Malawi is a storytelling culture so we wanted to create an environment that was sim-

ilar to that. After that, we spent the next two to three hours playing with the kids, including crafts, games, Frisbee, and more. Our goal was to instill the love of Christ through lots of hugs, I love you's, and through wiping tears away."

The second week, counselors went over to a friend's house who works for a global missions organization. They saw his farm and his children's ministry where a lot of orphans find homes. They ended their trip there and spent time with the American missionary family that was there before heading home.

"Malawi was my first time out of the country, so the cultural shock was big. It was awesome because I got to work as a counselor at a kids camp. I got the same feeling I get when I teach my taekwondo kids, that high excited euphoria. I realized children are just children, even across the world. Growing up, my mom always told me 'the world isn't about you,' but I totally thought it was. Seeing the poverty changed my perspective completely. I arrived home and I felt guilty even taking a shower every night, when I knew I didn't need one. I felt guilty sleeping on my bed, when I knew the floor was perfectly okay. The phrase 'first world problems' felt so real to me."

Ally plans to attend Iowa State University next year and plans to major in child family services and sociology, with a minor in international studies.

"I figure if I study something I'm interested in, and that I am good at doing, a job will naturally come out of that. Since I've grown up in a broken home, I'm very interested in helping others through their experiences that I may be able to relate to. I love to learn about different cultures and how people work together in communities and I want to take all of that internationally."

Ally Edwards is excited about her future as a Cyclone, and about



helping others in the future around the world. She plans to continue traveling back to Malawi each summer, as it was an eye-opening experience for her. If you ever need someone to lean on, have a fun time with, or look up to for inspiration, Ally's your girl.

### Other Facts about Ally

**Favorite color?** "White, because it is clean."

**Least favorite color?** "Black, because it's scary and orange. I'm not a fan of Halloween."

**Favorite food?** "My mom makes some bomb lemon chicken."

**Favorite dessert?** "Definitely Ben & Jerry's half-baked ice cream."

**Biggest pet peeve?** "I hate when people get distracted when you're talking to them, especially on their phones, it feels rude to me."

**Best item in your closet?** "My KILLER olive colored heels."

**Desired place to travel?** "Italy with my best friend Sydney Smith."

**Craziest pet you have owned?** "I had two rats named Dabby and Dibbles. Everyone thought they were gross but I loved them."

**Upcoming Events  
at Linn-Mar  
SuperNova:  
Saturday, January 13, 2018**

**State Speech Contest:  
Friday and Saturday,  
February 2-3, 2018**

# The Office sustains wide audience appeal

By Ethan Schmidt

Seven Emmy nominations, seven Golden Globes, seven Teen Choice Awards and three People's Choice Awards. This is the TV show many high school students know and love called *The Office*. *The Office* is an American television comedy series that aired on NBC from March 24, 2005, to May 16, 2013 but that now is widely watched on Netflix. The series takes place in Scranton, Pennsylvania at a fictional paper company called Dunder Mifflin. *The Office* has brought a different style of comedy to the table and has risen the bar in terms of TV show comedy in America all while providing countless hours of humor for almost a decade.

*The Office* uses a sense of awkward humor that has remained unmatched in the recent decade. The show uses no laugh track or audience reaction you might hear in other shows and moves away from traditional comedy where it's just set-up joke-punchline format. The

humor is more of the awkward and odd behavior that gives the show its trademark comic appeal. They use very few jokes, and different camera angle tricks to give insight to the characters emotions and perspectives. A character might say or do something and the camera will zoom in or on a different character to capture their reaction.

"I feel like Steve Carell does a great job at playing Michael Scott. He presents a really funny, sarcastic personality. The plot is really long but once you really get into it, it gets really good. There are a bunch of plot twists that you do not expect, unlike other TV shows, which makes it super interesting. Episodes are only like thirty minutes, but still super addicting and fun to watch.

The show is really relatable and you develop sort of a relationship with the characters, you feel like you know them," says Linn-Mar Senior Catie McMahon.

The characters each have very

unique and differing qualities that add to the overall story and comedic appeal with Michael Scott as the branch manager at Dunder Mifflin

According to AV News, "It's no surprise that Steve Carell's character, Michael Scott, is reigning champ in terms of lines spoken, with nearly twice as much dialogue as the second-most-talkative character, Dwight."



# Show Choir band gets little recognition for hard work

By Nathan Wylie

Show choir is a very popular activity at Linn-Mar, with students participating from grades 7-12. Typically, Linn-Mar show choirs do very well at the events attended during the competitive season and while things may seem to happen naturally, what happens behind the scenes is a lot less magical.

Being in a show choir band is the textbook definition of a thankless job. A regular 10th Street rehearsal (about 3 hours) for the band consists of standing and/or sitting around for most of the time listening to the choir get roasted by whomever is directing, and then cumulatively playing for about 30 minutes. In addition: any sort of tempo issue is automatically our fault until proven otherwise. If you don't like the people in your combo that sucks because you're stuck with them for the next five months, and the choir directors, whose expertise is usually non-instrumental, ask us to play in ways that benefit the singers, leaving us to work it out amongst ourselves. Because of these issues, fewer and fewer people sign up each year.

Junior Matt Helberg, a trumpet player in the 10th Street band, said "**Most people see show choir band as a waste of their time. Many band members do not wish to join show choir band**

**due to the time commitment that it requires. You need to be at multiple rehearsals and you also have to show up and spend four full Saturdays dedicated to the choir that you are assigned to. Many band members find this unappealing, especially since the band is considered to be not as important. They tell us different, but we all know the truth. Still, it is plenty of fun to play the music and the amount of fun you have playing with the people around you, it truly is something special."**

**-Matt Helberg**

Adam Bergen, who is also a junior and trombone player in the 10th band said "The directors in each band seem to have 100% of their attention towards the choir, and whenever they do pay attention to us it's usually not very good. For the first four rehearsals this year we had student teacher Luke Sanders assist the band and he was great, but now that he's gone, it's back to the same old, same old. It's really frustrating sometimes with the requests the directors have for us. Many times, they request us to do things that are very counterintuitive or simply impossible on our instrument. They're great people, but sometimes rehearsals are so frus-

trating I don't want to keep coming. The only thing that really keeps me there is all the great memories I make goofing off with friends like Matt backstage."

But this is just the opinion of the band. What do others think? According to Junior Kenzie Jensen, an alto in the 10th Street choir, "I think the show choir band is very important to the show, it literally gives us our pitch and I'd probably call it the backbone of the show. In rehearsal they [the band] mostly seem focused but with a little chatter whenever Buggy isn't there. They're usually pretty funny and fun to talk to but they usually stay in their own little world. I think all the crap they seem to get is definitely a part of why fewer people are signing up."

And finally, the man to blame or praise, Trent Buglewicz, director of 10th Street. I asked him a variety of questions including why he chooses to have a band, what a typical rehearsal is like from his perspective, the overall importance of having a band, as well as what can be done to encourage band signups.

**"Audition numbers this year have actually been higher than usual but there are always aspects that are missing. From my perspective there are a lot of people who can get behind that work dynamic but the main turn away**

A spin-off to the series was proposed in 2008 with a pilot episode expected to debut as the Super Bowl lead-out program in 2009. *The Office's* creative team instead decided to develop the well-known Parks and Recreation as a separate series. With the many hours of comedy this show has provided, and with a vast array of awards, *The Office* will remain untouched for years to come.

**seems to be the non-constant attention. Having a band is important to the production, we need to create that music to truly create the show and it benefits band members who plan on working in ensembles later in their lives. I think we are consistently trying to better rehearsal effectiveness, making sure that time is being used wisely. My goal overall would be to give the music to the band and have them work independently until it's time to play it. We've also been using lots of outside sources such as the band directors to work with the band."**

**-Trent Buglewicz**

It seems that the second-class citizenship the band is treated with is responsible for the drop in band member signups. New rehearsal schedules and practices are being put in place so as not to waste the time or energy of the group. The show choir experience is truly unparalleled as far as activities go, but the question of 'is it worth it' appears to be what drives away curious band members. The truth is, the band and choir need each other and must work together as a family to succeed. Without one, the other simply can't exist.

# Linn-Mar Robotics rises to the challenge

By Samuel Rettig

Robotics is an experience bound to change all those it touches, in more ways than any other single club can. Students learn technical skills such as problem solving, and also learn to understand hardware, software, and how to use certain other advanced features in programs. Robotics also teaches soft skills, such as how to talk in front of groups, be a good team member, and how to communicate effectively.

The creation of Robotics stems all the way back to 1989. That year, Dean Kamen, the inventor of the Segway, created For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology, (better known as the company FIRST) with the vision to create an invigorating experience for kids all around the world. No less than a year later, Woodie Flowers, another founding father of FIRST was helping Kamen with his vision. Less than two years later, the FIRST Robotics Competition was born. In the years following this creation, other levels of competition such as FIRST Lego League Jr., FIRST Lego League, and FIRST Tech Challenge were made to create opportunities for students of all ages.

Linn-Mar Robotics was created in 2002, when several Rockwell Collins employees traveled to Iowa City to see a robot. Originally, Linn-Mar Robotics only consisted of a FRC team called 967 Iron Lions. Eight years later, 4324 Super

Ninjas and 4150 Outrageous Finger Socks were created. These teams were made just in time for the FTC game, Bowled Over. All of the teams would go on to achieve great success, going to state and further several times. Both FTC teams would go under a rebranding effort. The Outrageous Finger Socks was re-named to Dark Matter in 2012, with its sister team, Super Ninjas, doing the same two years later. The final addition to the Linn-Mar Robotics roster is 10107 A League of Their Own, which has a 60-40% female to male ratio. This was an effort to increase the number of female FIRST participates, and in doing so, has made a step in a more equal representation of women in the STEM field.

A large part of Robotics is learning and applying technical skills. The expansive list includes but is not limited to designing and manufacturing parts, programming, 3D modeling, and problem solving. All of these skills can not only help someone in their work field, but in their everyday life. It is for this reason that Robotics is extremely impactful, leading to highly competent people in today's society.

While a large part of Robotics is the application and the teaching of technical skills, more lessons are taught in the form of soft skills. These are skills that aren't necessary based in tools, more so, they elevate other positive aspects of individuals. Group presentation,

improved communication, gracious professionalism and how to act as a team member are all considered soft skills. In fact, one of these values is part of the core experience and expectation that FIRST provides. This value is gracious professionalism. It is the expectation that each team member not only does high-quality work, but that they also value others and their opinions. In the competition field, it leads to something unique in the sports industry. "With Gracious Professionalism, fierce competition and mutual gain are not separate notions. Gracious professionals learn and compete like crazy, but treat one another with respect and kindness in the process. They avoid treating anyone like losers.

No chest thumping tough talk, but no sticky-sweet platitudes either. Knowledge, competition, and empathy are comfortably blended."

The blend of all of these elements make for an exciting competition, while simultaneously teaching the students and mentors who participate. But this sometimes comes at a cost in how people receive Robotics. It is seen as a "nerds group", or a place where you are not welcome unless you have required skills already at hand, however, everyone in Robotics started somewhere, with skill or not. If someone is interested, they should join. The benefits are numerous, and you just might have the time of your life.



# Crumley known for original Twitter content

By Lincoln Currie

The rise of social media has brought on a whole new kind of celebrity, allowing anyone with access to social networks to become "Twitter famous". One such "Twitter famous" individual is Ian Crumley, a junior at Linn-Mar High School. Crumley's account is very popular at Linn-Mar High School, amassing over 1,500 followers, many of whom are students at Linn-Mar.

Crumley likes to come up with his tweets on the spot, utilizing no drafting process.

"I do not have a drafting process for my tweets, they are normally spur of the moment, very spontaneous."

Crumley commented on why he thinks his tweets have become so popular.

"I'd say most of my tweets are

relatable, but honestly I don't know why people like them, I'm not much funnier than anyone else."

According to Nathan Wylie, a junior at Linn-Mar High School, Crumley's tweets are so popular because of their originality and timeliness.

"His tweets are always fresh and original, you can really count on Ian for good content. Some people have a pretty good tweet every once in a while, but Ian's level of consistency is pretty rare."

Crumley also voiced frustrations about copycats on Twitter. Crumley tweeted out a response to a tweet from a different account that praised country music. Crumley claims that other popular accounts copied his original tweet.

"I tweeted this and a popular twitter account tweeted the exact same thing, and fished hundreds of thousands of likes and retweets."

Crumley is known for having original content, and likes to incorporate humor into his tweets, always keeping the mood light. He thinks other tweets should do the same.

"A good tweet is original, in season, and humorous. You cannot steal someone else's tweet and expect to get famous, although it does happen, it's cringy and not appreciated. I take advantage of social trends that surface, example: the redbone meme. Finally, you cannot tweet something depressing because I feel uncomfortable liking it, but we can all relate to humor."

Junior Lucas Rodriguez views Crumley's Twitter account as a really positive form of entertainment.

"You look at something like the LM hoes account that was so negative, then you compare that to the positive way Ian uses humor. It shows that social media really can be a tool used for good."



## What traits does a great teacher possess?

By Annika Menges

Teaching is a very challenging job. There are intellectual demands such as knowing the material one teaches, plus understanding various curriculums and standards. However, there are also personality demands of a good teacher, such as enthusiasm, caring, a good attitude, a love for learning and teaching, and a desire to help kids succeed. After talking with seniors at Linn-Mar High School who have experienced many different teachers throughout their school career, we identified five characteristics of a teacher that were most important to the students.

A good teacher is caring and understanding. This teacher is approachable to not only students, but to anyone at the school. Students are able to go to a teacher and confide in them with any problems, concerns, or even with a funny story that happened to them. A good teacher will have great listening skills.

“When your teacher is considerate, caring, and helpful it makes them feel more approachable to you, and makes you want to do well in the class,” Senior Kristen Harding said.

A good teacher respects their students. Respect is earned, and it goes both ways for students and teachers. Students will respect their teacher, and the teacher will respect their students. Each student’s opinions in class should not only be heard, but also valued.

“I think when a teacher is respectful of your ideas it makes you want to speak out more and be more involved in class and in discussions,” said Senior Catie McMahon.

**A good teacher knows the material, but is also able to teach it well.**

Most teachers know the subject and material they are teaching by heart, however they must be able to teach other people. A teacher should be able to answer complicated questions on the subject, be concise and clear when explaining the material, and have a variety of teaching strategies to help and teach each unique learner.

“When teachers are constantly coming up with fun and new ways to teach material, it makes it easier for the student to want to learn,” said Senior Kennedy Hannan.

A good teacher cares about a student’s success, and sets high expectations. This teacher knows

that their expectations and the environment they set will affect student achievement. They will push the students to produce the best work they can, and help them along the way. They will create a positive environment where it is easy to learn.

“A hostile environment makes students anxious and takes away their ability to learn and try new things. I think it’s important to always try and make it a positive and warm environment,” said Senior Ally Edwards.

**A good teacher has their own love for teaching and is enthusiastic about it.**

This teacher inspires their students by showing them their own passion for the job they have and learning about what they teach. They are open to new ideas and always are wanting to improve their teaching

## Linn-Mar swimmers continue success

By Ethan Schmidt

Six and a half points is what separated the Linn-Mar Lions and the Washington Warriors at the 2017 District Swim Meet last year. Washington High School had won the district meet for the past 53 years in a row. They were undefeatable. They had depth, they had talent, and they had a full arsenal and had proven themselves year in and year out. But Linn-Mar soon showed that they had a special array of determined swimmers that edged Washington off their District throne.

The pool was packed when Linn-Mar came head to head with the Warriors at the District Meet, which was moved to Coe College after a glass panel fell into the Linn-Mar Aquatic Center pool. In one of the tensest and closest meets of the year, Linn-Mar, in a series of nail-biting close races and unpredicted disqualifications, rose above the occasion and ended the Washington Warriors 53 year streak, 380 to 373.5 points.

“We had been discussing all year that it would take a team effort to beat Washington, and the team stepped up. Coaches were proud of every swim, no matter the result. We saw each of you doing your best to help the team accomplish its District goal and get as many swims to State as possible,” said Head Coach Tom Belin after the win over the Warriors.

As the Linn-Mar Men’s Swim Team pushes through the 2017-18 season, the momentum is being continued. With returners Matt Peng, Brycen Snell, Nick Cavannah

to benefit the students.

“I love when teachers are engaging, hands-on, and really portray how they love their job through their teaching. It makes you want to pay attention in class,” Grace

Brennecke said.

Even though some teachers may only possess a few of these characteristics, most strive to become a better educator every day and enjoy learning as much as students do..



and a strong line-up of experienced swimmers, Linn-Mar is looking at a strong finish to this year’s season as well.

“I think Linn-Mar swimming this season can step up and win Districts again. Last year’s class had a lot of depth in terms of swimmers so the team is short on depth this year, but I think other swimmers will step up and be prepared to swim fast when they need to and win another District championship,” says Linn-Mar swimmer Zach Vana.

Matt Peng is one of Linn-Mar’s biggest assets this year. With a 3rd place finish at last year’s State swim meet in the 100 fly and a 6th place finish in the 50 free, he has eyes set on State titles this year. Peng has also stamped a time .01 seconds faster than the school record in the 100 fly at a USA Swimming Regional Meet earlier this year. The

current record belongs to Justin Clossen, set in in 1994. With a Metro record set already this year in the 100 fly, nothing is stopping Peng.

With the annual state swim meet moved to the University of Iowa this year on February 10th, swimmers are excited to swim fast and furiously. And Linn-Mar once again has the home field advantage at this year’s District Swim Meet on February 3rd. Now it’s a waiting game to see if Linn-Mar can add to their new streak or if Washington will regain their title.

“Yes, swimming is a hard sport to compete in. It’s one of the most physically and emotionally taxing sports out there. That’s why when you win, it’s more than just a win. It’s knowing all your hard work paid off. And that’s all the reason why it keeps bringing us back,” says Zach Vana.



Linn-Mar swimmer Matt Peng shares a congratulatory conversation with a Washington Warrior swimmer.

# Higgins says mistake doesn't define him

By Nathan Wylie

Senior Riley Higgins is a starting lineman for Linn-Mar's varsity football team, a fantastic musician, being third chair trombone in the top band and Colton Center Jazz Ensemble's guitar player, and an all-around great guy. So, when he stood up on a Thursday afternoon before CCJE's rehearsal, and told us he had been arrested for drug possession, some of us laughed a bit. We thought he was just kidding and was just playfully getting to whatever he wanted to tell us. He wasn't kidding and it came as a bit of a shock. The purpose of the following interview isn't as an exposé, but rather as a PSA or warning that something like this could happen to anyone. That includes you.

**How would you describe yourself?** "I would say overall, I'm a pretty driven person. Unfortunately, sometimes I see myself as a perfectionist, and sometimes it stresses me out, but I think it's a good quality. I think I'm also a caring person. I like to [consider] what others are thinking. I could have cared less if we actually did El Pajarito, the feature song, ultimately. I was more concerned from an ensemble standpoint- being able to get through a contest set. Basically, to show off our ensemble's ability, and if my actions were to prohibit that I would feel awful."

**What are some of your interests/hobbies?** "I love music. I love getting to listen to music, play music, and write music every day. I love working out and athletics. I play football, I throw shotput and discus in track & field. Another thing most people probably don't know about me is that I also like playing cards. And another thing I love is watching anime, kind of a guilty pleasure of mine."

**What do you plan to do after you graduate?** "I've already been accepted into the University of Iowa and I'm going to study biomedical engineering."

**What are some of your long-term goals?** Long term goals... Are to sit back and be content with my life.

**Are you worried about your arrest affecting anything in the future?** "Oh, for sure. One of the first things I thought about, (you get time to think in the back of a cop car) is will I still be able to apply for federal aid. I got a couple scholarships so will I get to keep those? Fortunately, I was arrested as a minor, so my scholarships should be okay but that's about it. Honestly, I'm most-

ly worried my relationships I have with the people around me. Right now my relationship with my parents is strained."

**Do you think this will be a long-term strain or will they get over it?** "Ya know, it's hard telling. I know it'll be something that isn't easily forgotten. My mom said it was the most hurt she's ever been in her whole life. That was rough. She said some other things, mostly out of spite but I don't blame her because I played her. Overall, I think the relationship will get better."

**When did the incident happen?** "December 26th, at night. Right after Christmas. Merry Christmas, right?"

**What were the circumstances of the incident?** "I was with four of my friends, we were just out on some back road in a new housing development and apparently someone was actually living there at the time and called us in for a suspicious looking vehicle. The police showed up and the questioning began. We decided to just be straight up with them. And if I have to be honest with you, I was driving while high and some people argue that it's not as bad as drunk driving, but it's still impaired driving and it's illegal. It was a lapse in judgement on my part. I put other people at risk; it was selfish and stupid."

**What are some immediate repercussions of what happened?** "All freedom is gone. I can't even go on my phone or do what I want like that. I can't go wherever I want or even have people over for the time being."

**What are the financial implications of this?** "Originally, my parents paid for my car insurance and I would pay for gas but now I'm paying for my insurance. The legal fees for a minor could be anywhere from \$800 to \$3000, it's all coming out of my pocket, and I had to pay the impound fee to get my car. My parents were thinking about making me pay them back for what I spent on drugs, so best-case scenario would be about \$1,000 (it could be much more) and I have to pay for all this."

**Knowing what you know, how would you handle yourself if you got a do-over?** "To be honest, I wouldn't have even tried marijuana. I would have waited until it was legal. But I think it was for the best that it played out how it did. There are a lot of things I am responsible for and until I can be responsible, I should not be doing such activities .

**Is there anything you would like people to know?** "I am the exact same person that I was before anyone knew about this. Unfortunately, I know there are people who won't see it the same way. But in reality, I haven't changed, and a lot of the people I respect don't respect me as much anymore, and it is a big deal, but it's not defining. I just want people to know I'm still the same person."

**Author's note:** Riley is a good man who made a bad call, and he paid for it with his money, his freedoms, and the respect of his peers. It's a mistake you hopefully only make once, but even if you're lucky, you won't come out anywhere close to unscathed. Be smart, and think about how your actions may impact those around you, or how you might be impacting your future by doing drugs, regardless of if you get caught.



## Various studies, CDC urge high school start times to be adjusted to begin later, allowing for more sleep

By Jace Winders

On the surface, starting school later sounds great. No more waking up at the crack of dawn to rush off to school, the school day could potentially be shorter, and you have some time to yourself before you have to head off to school. There is research to support the idea of starting later. The CDC urged high schools to set start times later, reasoning that it is unhealthy for students to get less than 8.5 hours of sleep a day, and that students who are not well rested won't actually end up getting much learning out of school. Dr. Carskadon, a researcher in a 1998 sleep study at Brown University, put it simply, "Everybody learns better when they're awake." Studies have been done for over a decade now, and the CDC made their official statement on the issue in 2014. Is this change necessary at Linn-Mar?

Students not getting enough sleep has consequences outside of academics as well. Studies show that sleep-deprived drivers have an exponentially higher chance of getting in or causing an accident. Aside from this, sleep-deprived people have a higher risk of suf-

fering from mental, and emotional exhaustion. In addition to mental issues, lack of sleep also causes a higher risk of physical issues, such as heart disease, strokes, high blood pressure, diabetes, and more.

As for drawbacks to starting the school day later? The only really prevalent drawback seems to be that school would then have to be finished later in the day. This might not even be an issue, either. The 2017-2018 Linn Mar schedule shows that Linn Mar will be in session for 1,167 hours. In 2014, the Iowa Department of Education dictated that the minimum number of hours in classroom per year is 1080, which means that Linn Mar has almost 100 more hours than the requirement. Aside from this, there maybe a few smaller issues that could arise with a later start time, but the drawbacks seem quite limited. The benefits of starting school early heavily outweigh the drawbacks. Research supports a later school start, the CDC has even requested this later start. Why don't we listen to the experts? Without a doubt, school should start later.

## 8 Healthy Lifestyle Life Hacks for Your Busy Life

By Catie McMahon

Living a healthy lifestyle isn't always the easiest when you have a job or are a full time student. Whether it be the excuses we all tell ourselves to get out of the exercise we promised to do, or the crazy diets we restrict ourselves to but can never manage to finish, all of our actions have consequences. In response to feedback from a survey conducted at Linn-Mar High School, I created eight life hacks that are sure to help anyone with their healthy lifestyle struggles.

At Linn-Mar, a majority 75 percent of the 130 respondents believe they live a healthy lifestyle. 67 percent of individuals reported that they exercise regularly and 62 percent said they have tried health and fitness apps to try and aid them in their journey to a healthy lifestyle. 57 percent of respondents say that the Cedar Rapids/Marion area offers enough resources to live a healthy lifestyle. The majority that say they live a healthy lifestyle indicate that they are more motivated to do so if their peers are also.

What's stopping the remaining survey respondents from living healthy? Time and a lack of motivation seems to be the answer. Whether you are a student, too busy with a job, or just lazy, here are eight simple life hacks that are sure to help those with the busiest schedule.

Time is almost always a factor for why people don't live a healthier lifestyle. Consider the following responses to the survey:

-Not enough time, too much homework and work

-Difficulty in preparing healthy meals or getting ideas for meals

-Oftentimes, after-school activities get in the way of getting into our school's weight room, which is only open until 4 pm

-My schedule is full and I am not in a gym class and do not own a gym membership.

-Without tools that help motivate you to work out or people you are able to go to the gym with, it is hard to set aside the time work out when you live a busy life." are just a few of the reasons why people find eating healthy difficult.

**Meal Prepping:** Applications like Pinterest and YouTube make it easy for anyone to plan a week's worth of breakfast, lunch, and dinner with the push of a button. Meal prepping involves making an entire

week's worth of meals ahead of time ensuring that you are making correct portions, saving time, and staying healthy. Having the perfect balance of nutrients is essential for living a healthy lifestyle. Start cooking your meals for your week on Sunday. Meal Prepping recipes are all over the internet so you don't have to worry about whether you are making too much or too little. Storing all of your food in the refrigerator and labeling containers is essential for staying on track for the week. Even planning out things like the snacks you will be having in between meals can make the world of difference in staying on track.

**Water:** Having a reusable water bottle not only helps save the environment, but it also keeps you motivated to drink more water. Staying hydrated is essential when it comes to being healthy and staying energized. Hydration replenishes electrolytes you lose from working out, and drinking a full glass of water before dinner can help you feel fuller faster and can prevent over-eating. Fitness apps like FitBit and Myfitnesspal have features where you can keep track of how much water you have drank and even send you reminders if you aren't meeting your daily goal.

**Fresh Foods:** We all struggle with the cost, the potential for waste, and the availability of fresh foods when it comes to our diets. Putting fruits in the refrigerator can keep them riper, longer. Vegetables like spinach, romaine, and kale stay fresher, longer in plastic boxes rather than bags. If spinach and greens or fruit is about to go bad, put them in a juicer or blender and incorporate them into a smoothie.

**Snacking:** Snacking often kills even the most well-planned diet. Whether we think we are hungry or just want something to hold us over, sweet and salty treats are what we all reach for. Snacking can be healthy, but needs to be done in moderation. Many healthy yet tasty snack substitutes exist for some of your biggest cravings. A simple substitute for the fatty potato chips are vegetable chips that offer customers that same great taste, crunch, and saltiness that they are craving. If you are craving something sweet, instead of grabbing cookies, or a candy bar, try fruits, yogurts, and even juices, which can definitely hold you over until your next meal. If you are craving something sweet and salty, instead of reaching for those Salted Caramel Bugle chips, grab a bag of a dark chocolate, fruit, and nut mix! It is sure to satisfy those cravings.

### HEALTHY LIFESTYLE



**Going Out to Eat:** Telling your friends and family no when they want to go out and have a good time is simply impossible for most of us, but portion control can solve this problem. Instead of walking into a restaurant with the mindset of thinking you can only eat two things on the menu, an attitude change and the belief that you can have anything you want, but in moderation, can prevent cravings from taking over. Starting off with a salad and a glass of water before a meal is the best way to not overeat. When your meal comes, immediately cutting the portion in half and asking for a doggie bag can help as well. Many restaurants even offer the opportunity to order a half portion or will split meals between two diners if you ask. Another way to avoid going out to eat is to stock your fridge and pantry full of nutrient rich food and plan a dinner for you and someone else. Staying at home and cooking a meal saves you money, gives you a sense of accomplishment, and promotes a healthier lifestyle.

**Friends and Fitness:** 75 percent of people say that they would join a workout class if their friends were interested in doing it with them. A partner that keeps you motivated and hypes you up all throughout your fitness journey is very beneficial for most individuals who are just getting started. Making exercise a learning experience for both people takes away the fear of embarrassment and giving up. Having someone to workout and live a healthy lifestyle with significantly increases an individual's sense of motivation. Being responsible for showing up to a class and not letting your friend down makes exercising much more important to people. Having a workout buddy makes exercising, something many people dread doing, something that's fun for both individuals.

**Motivation:** Staying motivated to live a healthy lifestyle can be very hard. Fitness experts say that the simple task of waking up early and making your bed in the morning gives you a sense of accomplish-

ment and encourages individuals to start their day on a positive note. Drinking a healthy amount of caffeine can also help boost a person's morale and give them a head start to their day. Having someone to keep you accountable to your goals is a great way to stay motivated. "Loss aversion" is a great way for people to stay motivated. Websites like Stikk and DietBet use your money as a way to keep you motivated. Put any amount of money (preferably something you would be upset about losing) into the website and use that as your motivation. If you don't reach your end goal, simple, the website gets your money. If you meet your goal, you get your money back. Recent psychological studies show that loss is twice as powerful as gains when attempting to keep someone motivated. People are more likely to work harder and stay accountable to something if money is involved. Motivation comes in many forms, you just have to look for it sometimes.

**Social Media:** Social media is a great way to keep yourself motivated and inspired to stay on track. "Foodies" are people who dedicate a significant amount of their time towards creating social media posts to inspire and help others live a healthy lifestyle. Many YouTubers are also following this trend and are creating videos to help motivate individuals. Videos like, "What I Eat in a Day" and "My Healthy 5 Minute Recipes" help prompt people to live healthier lives. Actively posting about what you are eating and your exercise progress throughout the day on social media will also help motivate individuals because of the positive feedback you receive from friends, family, and sometimes even strangers. Try looking for inspiration and recipes on popular social media pages and use those accounts to try and guide you to a better lifestyle. Having a place to document everything keeps you mindful of your habits.

Staying motivated isn't always easy, but with these 8 simple life hacks your chaotic day can get a little easier with a few minor changes.

## Customer service workers share their hilarious stories

By Annika Menges

For those of you who have worked in customer service, we can all agree that we've had some unexpected and eventful days on the job. Some encounters with customers are happy, some are mean, and others are plain creepy. I interviewed five high school students who have some of the most outrageous tales to tell while working in customer service. Catie McMahon, senior at Linn-Mar High School, found herself dealing with an impatient, angry customer while working at Sky Zone.

"When I was cashiering at Sky Zone a lady called and asked if she could make a reservation for ten jumpers. I informed her about our deal where she could get ten jump times for the price of eight and she purchased the deal. Ten minutes later she called back telling me that two of the jumpers may not make it, and if she could get a refund for the two that wouldn't be there. Without thinking, I said yes and that she could get the money back when she came into the store. She came in at her reservations time and asked for me specifically. As I was trying to process a refund the cash register wouldn't let me. She immediately started freaking out and I called my manager and that's when I realized I had screwed up. I promised her a refund for two jumpers she technically didn't pay for. She started yelling, "But she SAID I could have my money back!!" My manager argued with her for ten minutes over why we couldn't give her money, and we ended up giving her two free jump passes. Afterwards I walked back out and she stopped me and handed me a pocket size Bible and said, "the Lord forgives you."

Hannah Garcia, junior at Linn-Mar High School, worked at TJ-Maxx when a man was flat out creepy.

"I was working in the dressing room area and one dude came back to try on some clothes. He asked, "does this outfit look good on me?" I told him yes to be nice and went back to hanging up clothes. He left but proceeded to come back another four times, each time asking me for my opinion on how his outfit looked. The last time he came out and asked, "how about these?" I turned around and he only had underwear on. I didn't answer and walked away to get my manager, but when we came back he was gone, and never came back."

Kat Widmer, senior at Linn-Mar High School, has worked in customer service for many years, and has multiple odd customer stories. Once she was working at Target and a strange man came through her line.

"He told me I have long pretty hair, and afterwards he stayed around another five minutes. He came back to show me a picture of his girlfriend who's hair was past her butt."

Another time at Target, Widmer ran into an odd man with a tiny squirrel on his head.

"I asked him why he had a squirrel on his head and he said, "he's my emotional support animal." I didn't know what to do so I got my manager and he proceeded to tell the man we couldn't have animals in the store. He got very angry and started babbling how we can't discriminate against certain animals and yelled, "I'm never shopping here again, this store sucks!!" and stormed out."

Widmer also has another job at Tomaso's, and one night a lady came in 45 minutes after closing time to pick up her pizza.

"She didn't even have enough money to pay because she lost her credit card. She said it was okay because she was a regular, and walked out before any of us could say anything."

Kayla Micek, a senior at Linn-Mar High School, was working at Old Navy when a girl stopped her to apologize.

"When I asked why she was apologizing she just kept saying she was so sorry so I said it was okay. When she left the store I walked into the bathroom and there was pee all over the floor and since I found it, I had to clean it up."

Another incident happened when Micek was working at Old Navy and helped a pregnant woman.

"I heard her start panting and breathing really hard in the dressing room. I knocked to ask if she was okay and she said she felt contractions and her water broke. I had to call her husband and wait with her until her husband came to take her to the hospital."

Customer service jobs may be difficult at times, especially dealing with customers, but they sure do make for great stories to look back on and laugh about.

## New fitness trends catch on

By Annika Menges

Recently there has been an increase in the number of health and fitness trends across the nation. These range from diets and food schedules to fitness trackers to workouts. Some health fads may be very beneficial, while others may actually end up harming your body in long term. These five trends are some of the most common in 2018.

**1. Keto Diet** The ketogenic diet is well known for being a low carb, high fat diet. When your body is not using carbs as its primary fuel, it resorts to making ketones, which are produced from the breakdowns of fats in the liver. This trains and forces your body into a metabolic state which allows you to drop pounds fast. The down side to the diet is it may be hard for people to stick with it long term due to completely cutting out an entire food group. It is also not a diet that is recommended for long-term use.

"I feel like eliminating entire food groups restricts your mind from believing that you are able to eat whatever you want, which in turn makes you crave more food because you know you can't have it. I think in moderation you can cut a food group out, such as carbs, but I think you need to talk to a professional in order to do it right otherwise you'll go back to your old habits," said Catie McMahon, Linn-Mar senior.

**2. Intermediate Fasting** Intermediate fasting has become one of the most popular health and fitness trends in recent years. It is essentially a timer, where you have alternating cycles of fasting and eating. This allows your body more time to digest your food, and ultimately, stop you from overeating. One of the most popular intermediate fasting is the 16:8 program, where you technically fast for sixteen hours, and eat for eight hours.

**3. Multivitamins** According to Livescience, about 52 percent of adults take some form of a dietary supplement. There has been a decrease in the percentage of adults taking a multivitamin every day, and an increase in the more trendy multivitamins such as the Sugar-BearHair, which claims to grow your hair faster, and collagen dietary supplements that claim to keep wrinkles and fine lines out of your life. Whether they work or not, these vitamins have become more popular primarily due to the advertisement by famous figures

such as Khloe Kardashian.

"When I was younger I never cared about vitamins. I didn't have to because I got all the vitamins I needed from my diet. As I have gotten older, I realize that my diet is for crap and I need to supplement with vitamins to stay healthy. Ironically, even though I'm well on my way to old-age, I still prefer the gummy vitamins," said Dee Westbrook, English teacher at Linn-Mar.

**4. Matcha Everything** Matcha tea is said to enhance calm, boost memory and concentration, increase energy levels and endurance, and burn calories, according to Natural Living Ideas. This tea also has other health benefits including high amount of antioxidants. Matcha tea is now being added to all sorts of foods and drinks such as matcha ice cream, pudding, and Jell-O, and is becoming a go-to base ingredient in many recipes, rather than water or milk.

**5. HIIT (high intensity interval training) Workouts** HIIT workouts are a form of interval training and a cardiovascular exercise strategy alternating short periods of intense anaerobic exercise with less intensity recovery periods. These types of trainings have become popular especially among adults who work, due to a low time commitment, usually at most around 45 minutes.

"In a lot of the high school sports I do I'm seeing more and more types of these trainings. They're very effective and get your heart-rate up really quick. Since high school sports are a short period of time, you have to get in shape really fast, and these trainings help you do so in such a short amount of time," said Ethan Schmidt, a three sport athlete and senior at Linn-Mar.

Some of the health trends may be easier to accomplish and stick with for long term, such as HIIT workouts, where others may pose more difficulty and may be unreasonable, like the Keto-diet. The most beneficial way to form a health habit is to ease yourself into it and to keep yourself accountable. If you are not very active, even walking 30 minutes a day will have good benefits to your health. Some easy ways to make your life healthier is to drink more water, increase your sleep, eat more whole foods such as fruits and vegetables, and try to make your daily lifestyle as active as you can.



## Harms to retire at year end

By Dylan Taylor

If you are a Spanish student at Linn-Mar, chances are you've had Barb Harms for a teacher. Harms is a favorite of many and is well known among students. This is her last year teaching because she decided to retire. Here are a few questions to get to know your favorite Spanish teacher a little better.

### Why did she become a teacher?

She was always interested in education and originally wanted to be a gym teacher but fell in love with Spanish when she needed to take it in college. She wanted to be a good role model for other people.

### How long has she been a teacher?

33 years, 25 at Linn-Mar.

**Why is she retiring?** She is just ready to move on.

**What does she want to do after she retires?** Spend her time volunteering and using her Spanish ability to help others in the community.

**Who are some well-known students she has taught?** Marcus Paige and Jordan Bohannon

**If she could make one change to Linn-Mar what would it be?** Have early outs on days that PLC meetings take place and move them so they are not in the mornings

**What is something she is passionate about besides teaching and Spanish?** She loves to read books, especially ones that are historical fiction because of how interesting they are. Harms also loves to go on walks around her neighborhood and around the community.

**If she had to have learned another language instead of Spanish what would she have chosen and why?** Harms would want to learn German because she would love the opportunity to travel the world.

**What is one place she still has not been to and hopes to visit one day?** Washington D.C, to see all the historical monuments

**If she won the lottery what would be the first purchase she would make?** It took her a couple minutes to come up with an answer to this because she is happy with what she has. She ultimately decided on plane tickets to Mexico because she has always wanted to go back.

**What are some of your favorite qualities that you see in students?** She likes students who are very open and outgoing, and have an open mind to learn and be productive.



**What is one thing that people would not know about her at first glance?** She was a high school state champion in softball

**How many people are in your family and what do they do?** There are 4 people in her family. Her husband is a gym teacher at Bowman Woods. One daughter is also a Spanish teacher and the other one works with computers/social media.

**What are the best teaching qualities that you have?** Harms says she is organized, consistent, fun and friendly

**Describe yourself in one word?** Caring, even though it sounds cheesy, Harms says she is always willing to help anyone who needs it.

**What is the most annoying thing she sees students doing in the hallways?** Talking too loud, pushing, and over-all childish behavior.

**What made her want to learn Spanish?** She needed foreign language credits to graduate from UNI and she was encouraged to take it.

**What was the most awkward moment she has had while talking to a native Spanish speaker?** She tried to call someone a chicken but accidentally said Pollo instead of Gallina.

**What is the one thing she will miss the most about teaching?** Going places in the community and realizing that she no longer recognizes anyone working anymore

**What will she miss the least about teaching?** Having to get students to do something they don't want to do

**What is the dumbest thing you did as a kid?** She once ate tree bark because her brother told her that it would taste like toast

Barb Harms is an amazing teacher and an incredible human being and even though she is retiring, her influence at Linn-Mar won't disappear anytime soon.

## Hanson enjoys sharing environmental interests

By Rachel Gulick

Hidden away in a downstairs hallway of Linn-Mar High School resides Dr. John Hanson, a quirky AP Government teacher with a fascination for wildlife. Upon entering his room, one sees a tree in the corner near his desk, a coffee pot heating in the back, posters of fish, stacks of newspapers, and various duck calls. The atmosphere is casual, and students look forward to the class discussions about environmental issues, and his knowledge about almost any topic.

**How many years have you taught at Linn-Mar?** 18 years.

**What made you want to teach?** "It is a way for me to do my civic duty. To do something positive for my community," said Hanson.

**What is your favorite thing about teaching high school students?** "You really expose someone's mind to something new. You have students come back and tell you how much your class impacted them," said Hanson.

**Describe your teaching method.** "I'm trying to have students practice scholarship because being a student is hard. It's unnatural. To practice taking notes, write down study time, to demonstrate knowledge in another way besides an essay," said Hanson.

**What is your level of education?** A doctorate in education from the University of Northern Iowa.

**What made you have an interest in teaching sociology and government?** "That's what I was told to teach when I first started here. Been doing it ever since," said Hanson.

**When did you teach in Norway?** 2015 and 2016.

**What are some ways their teaching practices differ from here?** "The emphasis on personal relationships between teachers and students is much stronger. Also, their high schools are not hesitant to fail you. No parent is going to call the teacher, and the school doesn't call parents or send home progress reports. It would be shocking," said Hanson.

**What are your thoughts on the American schooling experience?** "The American public-school system... I'm impressed by it. The American public schools will take anybody, where not everyone does in other countries. We want to educate you and make your life bet-

ter. What's frustrating is that it's chronically underfunded. My atlases and government books are 20 years old. Schools have to have big donations. The FBI doesn't solicit donations," said Hanson.

**What organizations/groups are you part of?** His interests in the environment tie into what he involves himself in during his free time. "I am a board member on the Linn County Conservation Board and an officer in the Marion Masonic Lodge #6," said Hanson.

**Why did you join the military?** "Somebody has to and I could. It goes back to my ideals of public service. How can I contribute? The military is one of those ways," said Hanson. He was a rifleman in the infantry for six years.

**How long have you gone without driving to work?** Dr. Hanson has gone an entire school year without driving to work, and even has a spreadsheet where he logs his way of transportation. "I

walk because I can. It's relaxing, free exercise," said Hanson.

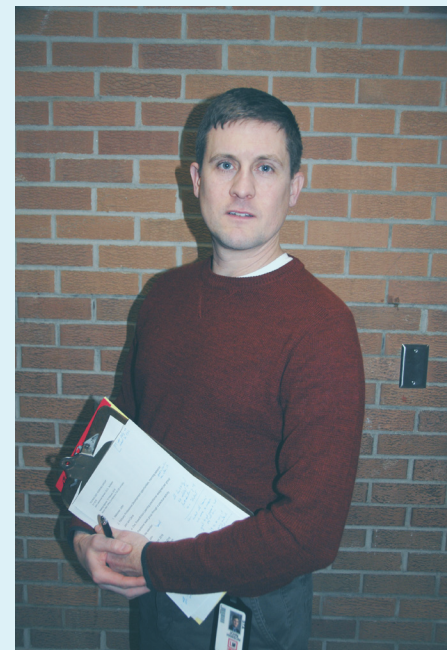
**Pet peeves?** Wind chimes and idling cars.

**Hobbies?** Birding and writing.

**Favorite music genre?** "Everything except Top 40 music. I can't stand pop rock or pop country. I grew up on rap and old school music," said Hanson.

**Favorite TV show?** "I'm really looking forward to the final season of Game of Thrones," said Hanson.

**Favorite vacation spot?** "I love Glacier National Park in Montana. Been there twice and I still haven't gotten enough," said Hanson.



## Gym class no longer needed, useful at high school level

By Annika Menges

Gym class is a necessity at the elementary and middle school levels in America. It teaches kids how to stay fit and healthy, and also highlights the importance of living a healthy lifestyle. However, once students enter high school, gym class becomes more of an inconvenience rather than a necessity. Gym class in high school should be optional because it does not provide any new information, it takes away from other academic opportunities, and it ultimately does not help to improve obesity problems.

In a survey with 100 Linn-Mar High School respondents, 77 percent of the students said gym class should be optional. There were many reasons as to why they thought gym should be optional, however 63 percent of the students felt like gym takes away from other academic opportunities. Having a block of gym class freshman and sophomore year eliminates the ability to add another elective class into your schedule, which many students want to do. Also, even though junior and senior gym class is only 45 minutes, it takes away time they could be doing homework or even taking an online class.

“Gym class should be optional, most people would rather use their credits in other ways, such as learning center for those who don’t have time for homework, and other educational classes. I feel gym should be optional for those who don’t care to learn more and just want a way to get out of the classroom for a bit during the day. For those who want to learn more and don’t mind being in the classroom, they should have the option to replace that class with something else,” said Olivia Smith, a sophomore at Linn-Mar.

By the time students enter high school, they will have already been taught the importance of a healthy diet and exercise, and they should be responsible for maintaining them on their own. 81 percent of the 100 Linn-Mar respondents believe that gym class is not effective in high school. Students at the high school age have already formed their own habits relating to diets and exercise, and a required

gym class one quarter a year will not greatly influence their habits.

“Gym class does not do much for students. Even though they have you fill out goals for your diet and fitness, there’s no change in my lifestyle during gym and it is the same for many other students,” said Kylee Stock, a senior at Linn-Mar.

Many people opposed to optional gym see the class as a necessity in order to help solve the problem of obesity in America. While this has good intentions, having gym for only a quarter of the year in high school will not ultimately solve obesity issues, and 86 percent of the students surveyed agreed. Another problem with this theory is that the students who are deemed overweight tend to have easier workouts and do not get pushed as hard in gym.

“Gym does not help with the obesity problem. The larger the person, the easier gym class gets for them. I had to run two miles on the treadmill compared to the half mile they had to walk. I have nothing against overweight people, however not pushing them will not help them in the long run,” said Trot Carey, a senior at Linn-Mar.

Many people also see gym as a way to instill self-worth and self-esteem in students. This is true, but works best in elementary and middle school. Those were the days where you proved yourself to be the best in matt ball or at the pacer test. However, in high school, that’s not the case. Gym is not taken seriously at the high school level because we’ve naturally all found where we fit in, and we don’t need gym to prove ourselves.

Gym should not be taken away completely, it should just be optional instead of mandatory. Also, rather than having different fitness classes, gym should have fun games again, like old times where participants could play matt ball, flashlight tag, sports units, and more. This would allow students a stress relief in the day and a fun breather from schoolwork, eliminating the dread of gym every day.



## The Checkbox that Saves 33,611 Lives Each Year

By Ethan Schmidt

There is an option on everybody’s driver’s license in the United States that has the power to save someone’s life. It is not your birthday or height, it is whether or not you are an organ donor. Agreeing to donate your organs to either science or to someone who is on the brink of death has many misconceptions, many of which can be the deal breaker on someone’s life. Being an organ donor is common sense, and everybody should make sure they have the organ donor box checked.

According to the U.S. Government Information on Organ Donation and Transplantation, in August of 2017, more than 116,000 people are on the waiting list for a vital organ, with another person added to the list every ten minutes. With this being said, only 54 percent of the U.S. population is registered as organ donors, and on average, 20 people on that list die every day.

Some people are hesitant to say yes to being an organ donor because they are uninformed about the process.

“I’m not an organ donor because when the lady asked me at the DMV I wasn’t really sure what it was, so I said no, but like I really don’t know what it means,” says one Linn-Mar junior.

Some individuals fear becoming an organ donor.

“No I am not an organ donor. That’s just weird to me. I don’t want my organs in someone else’s body, that’s just weird to think about,” says a Linn-Mar senior.

So to clear some things up and to ease common concerns here are some things you should know about what happens when you become an organ donor. First, organs can only be donated if the patient is entirely brain dead with no possibility of

recovery. So do not worry, they’re not going to donate your heart just because you are a match with someone on the list.

According to the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, “If the patient is dead and is not responding, physicians will perform a series of tests to determine if brain death has occurred. A patient who is brain dead has no brain activity and cannot breathe on his or her own. Brain death is death and it is irreversible. Someone who is brain dead cannot recover.”

Secondly, anyone, regardless of age or medical history, can sign up to be a donor. Just because you have some weird bacterial infection on your toe, doesn’t deny you from being a donor. There are actually only a few illnesses that would discount you from organ donations, such as HIV/AIDS, systemic infections or active cancer. There is no age cap, the oldest recorded organ transplant was a man of 93 years old.

Some say they are not a donor due to religious reasons.

“My dad is a Mormon and won’t let me sign-up for that. I have to wait until I’m 18,” says a Linn-Mar senior.

But actually, almost every major religion condones organ transplant, even the Mormon faith, and they see it as an act of love.

There is no extra cost to donating organs and yes, you can still have an open-casket funeral, and no, nobody is going to sell your organs on the black market.

There’s a lot of misconceptions regarding organ donation, but it is something we all need to be aware of and consider. Being an organ donor is common sense, and you should make sure you have that organ donor box checked on your license.

## Physician-assisted suicide gives terminally ill peaceful option

By Harper Crockett

Physician assisted suicide, the act of a doctor helping someone to end his or her life, is a moral issue that is gaining more attention lately. As of June 2017, only five states have legalized physician assisted suicide. According to a CNN report, these five states are: Oregon, Vermont, Washington, California, and Colorado. The District of Columbia also allows the act. In order for physician assisted suicide to be legal in these states, the individual must have a terminal illness and must go through psychological counseling and follow prescribed rules and regulations.

In most of these case, these people are not deemed suicidal, but rather want to take control over their own dying process. One patient, Brittany Maynard said in a CNN report, "I do not want to die. But I am dying. And I want to die on my own terms." Brittany Maynard was 29 years old when she found out that she had a very aggressive, non-operable brain tumor. She was given six months to live. Her possible treatment called for brain radiation, a process which would not have guaranteed additional time, but which would have guaranteed physical pain and discomfort. According to her statement to CNN, if she went through with the treatment, "the hair on my scalp would have been singed off. My scalp would be left covered with first-degree burns. My quality of life, as I knew it, would be gone." After talking with her husband, she decided that instead of letting her young body painfully deteriorate, she wanted to die on her own terms. Instead of prolonging her physical and emotional pain, she opted against it. Most people want to pass away peacefully, surrounded by friends and family. That's what Maynard wanted too. She didn't want to be surrounded by nurses and machines, stuck in a hospital.

According to her website, Maynard took medication to end her life under Oregon's Death With Dignity Act. Maynard's case garnered national attention because she had to move from her home state of California and become a resident in Oregon in order to legally die as euthanasia was illegal in California at the time.

"Brittany chose to make a well thought out and informed choice to Die With Dignity in the face of such a terrible, painful, and incurable illness," said a statement from her website. According to Compassion & Choices, an end-of-life choice advocacy group, Maynard, "died

as she intended -- peacefully in her bedroom, in the arms of her loved ones."

Physician assisted suicide has been legal in Oregon since 1997. According to CNN, as of January 23, 2017, 1,749 prescriptions have been written for people who intend to use them to aid in dying, and 1,127 people have used these prescriptions to kill themselves or "die with dignity."

In most states that allow Physician Assisted Suicide, a Medical Doctor (MD) is the only one who can prescribe this kind of medication, according to a CNN report. In California and Washington D.C. two verbal requests as well as a written, signed and dated request are required before medication is able to be prescribed.

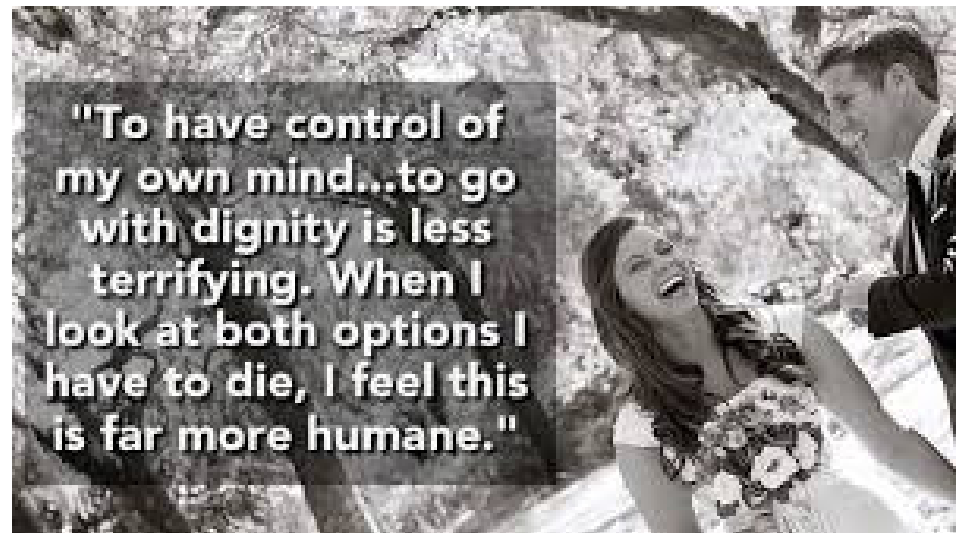
Ethan Rimmel is another example of a patient who chose to die with a physician assisted death. According to an NBC report, he was 41 when he passed away after being diagnosed with terminal colon cancer that spread to his bone. According to his widow, "he didn't want to deteriorate to the point where he couldn't interact with his kids." After receiving

the medication, Rimmel kept the medicine safely locked away until he decided when to use it. According to his wife, Rimmel found relief in knowing that he had some control in his dying process.

In both of these cases, the individuals kept the medicine locked away until they decided if or when to use it. When faced with a terminal disease with no possibility of a cure, or a very painful procedure that may not work, doctor assisted death can bring some relief. Instead of prolonged physical and emotional suffering for both the individual

and their family, along with extensive medical costs, patients in these states are allowed to make the decision they deem most appropriate for themselves and their families. They are allowed to have some say over how they will die.

Although it is a controversial topic, it is becoming more common. While some people might be against physician assisted suicide for moral reasons, both Maynard and Rimmel found relief in knowing they had this option, the option to pass away peacefully and to stop suffering.



## Politics and Twitter seldom mix

By Lincoln Currie

Teens at Linn-Mar, as well as any teens on social media, need to stop talking about politics on Twitter. Twitter is a great outlet for posting so many things, from cute baby animal pictures to highlights from last night's basketball game, be it from Linn-Mar or the NBA. Twitter is a terrible outlet for intelligent conversation, especially when that conversation involves politics.

It is very common for many students to see on their Twitter feed, some "expert" (also a Linn-Mar student) tweet something political. This excludes retweets from reliable news organizations or politicians themselves; this matter only concerns when someone feels the need to share their politics in a tweet, rather than taking action.

As the President of Linn-Mar's Young Democrats Club, it incenses me to see countless Linn-Mar students tweet about how much they hate Donald Trump, only to see two other members consistently show up to the Linn-Mar Young Democrat Club meetings. Elections are won by taking action, be that through making

phone calls to representatives, going door to door, writing letters to the editor, or giving money to campaigns. All of the aforementioned actions are ways to get involved in the political process and make a real difference. Those actions are much more effective than tweeting out how terrible you think the current president is at his job.

Junior Noah Gilkes also believes that political tweets from Linn-Mar students have engulfed too much of his Twitter feed.

"I go on Twitter so I can see things like sports highlights, pictures that my friends post, and other relatable things. I really don't like it when someone, especially someone who goes to Linn-Mar, feels the need to write a political tweet that is likely to make other people mad. The person usually isn't very well informed either. I don't think that kind of thinking solves anything or helps anyone."

However, unfollowing the person who tweets out the inflammatory remark is no less problematic, as Gilkes explains.

"If you unfollow someone, especially if you know them personally, that might start drama. I feel like a

lot of people put up with people they know personally tweeting out political stuff, because they just don't want to deal with drama."

I have yet to see a political tweet from a Linn-Mar student that was genuinely insightful or well-informed. For that reason, Linn-Mar students should remain silent about politics on Twitter. This is not to say that they should not get involved with the political process; just do it in an effective way. People at Linn-Mar should not be dissuaded from posting pictures of their dogs or talking about something funny they overheard at lunch that day; they just should not tweet every angry political thought that pops into their head.

I ask myself this question every time I see a politically charged tweet from a Linn-Mar student: what do they think this will accomplish? Perhaps they post to get attention, or maybe as a way to create an echo chamber for their like-minded followers to voice agreement. Either way, in regards to the students at Linn-Mar, neither leads to a path to action or change.

## Political divide getting larger in age of Trump

By Samuel Rettig

Ever since the inauguration of President Trump, a political divide has been an ever-present force in the lives of our nation's teens. Whether one is a Democrat, a Republican, or an Independent party supporter, this divide is getting bigger. In fact, according to Mackenzie Ryan from the Des Moines Register, the situation is so hostile that friendships have been lost and some students say they have been shunned. The reasoning behind the situation is quite simple. Due to the ever-present nature of news and social media in today's world, shutting out politics is impossible. Everywhere teens interact is filled with politic talk and issues. And, with no clear answer on key questions, hostility rises and many issues are debated. Whether it is gay rights, immigration, or civil rights, we all seem to know someone who the issue affects. This inadvertently causes strong feelings to be present, and no one is willing to give up their own beliefs. This results in some adverse effects. Classrooms around Iowa and the nation hold debates, which devolve into name calling. Social media is now a platform for broadcasting political views, causing online fights that have the possibility of spilling into the real world. Regardless of how the political debate starts, the topic is causing high stress and anxiety, which is now more prevalent in teens around the United States.

In eastern Iowa, after the 2016 election, a student protest took place at East High School in Waterloo. Students walked out of class and protested President-Elect Donald Trump's victory. However, the situation became much more than a single protest. Those that chose not to attend, or otherwise supported Trump, were reportedly labeled racist and homophobic. Eclatt, a student at East High School, said "I've heard of people bashing on other students for wearing a Trump hat, they're immediately out casted. Not that I necessarily agree with Trump, but that's not fair at all." On the other side of the divide, those who lean liberal reported that they were the target of jokes and insults about deportation. In fact, according to a study by the UCLA, nearly 28 percent of teachers report hearing derogatory terms being used in classes and the hallways.

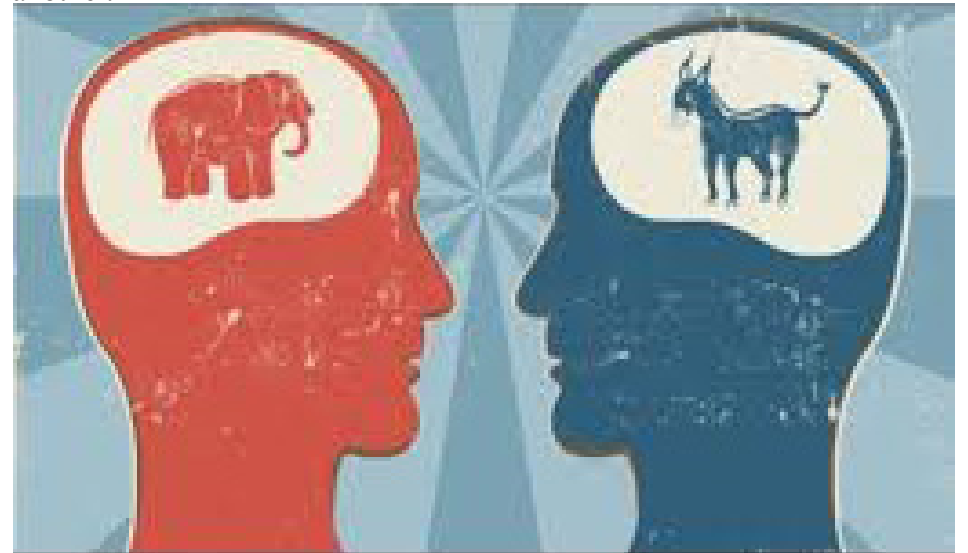
So, where does this political divide lead to? According to Gillian Flaccus from the Associated Press, the end result of all of this is a pessimistic and disillusioned feeling towards the present and future state of the nation. However, one key factor is represented in those who feel the full effects of the political climate. Nearly 57 percent of teenagers feel that they still have the chance to achieve the American dream; this in contrast to the 52 percent of adults who feel the best times of the nation have already passed.

Nyles Adams, a 14-year-old from New York, said "Sometimes it does get you down, but I try not to focus on it too much because I see myself as someone who, despite all the odds that are against me, I'm still going to prevail."

Like Adams, teens often have a source of youthful optimism. They try to direct their energy towards a positive future; in fact, many are steadily working towards this goal. Jessi Balcom of Bend Oregon puts her energy into trying to create open-minded debates, and feeding the homeless.

Of the political divide that seems to exist among teens, she said: "It's not you versus me, it's us versus the problem and the problem isn't other people. There are a lot of really big problems that we need to solve, but I think that getting angry is the worst thing that we can do. It doesn't matter what side of politics they're on, conservative or liberal. I don't want to hate anyone."

Good advice from one teen to another.



## Budget cuts could hurt students at Linn-Mar

By Nathan Wylie

Earlier this year, our president announced that for this next fiscal year he would make huge budget cuts in order to bolster our already massive military. But what he plans to cut has much of the country in outrage. In a shocking reveal, Trump said he would make major cuts to the Commerce, Energy, and Transportation departments. He also proposed that the Corporation for Public Broadcasting would be privatized, and the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities would be eliminated entirely. Obviously, this has many people worried for the future of our country's artists. But it wouldn't affect us right here at Linn-Mar, right? Wrong.

Established by Congress in 1965, the NEA is the independent federal agency who's funding and support gives Americans the opportunity to participate in the arts, exercise their imaginations, and develop their creative capacities. Through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector, the NEA supports arts learning, affirms and celebrates America's rich and diverse cultural heritage, and extends its work to promote equal access to the arts in every community across America. If Trump goes through with eliminating this program entirely, we won't have any more gov-

ernment-funded arts programs.

As Iowans we are incredibly susceptible to this cut due to a law passed in 1921 known as the "Iowa Band Law." This law was lobbied for by legendary composer and director Karl King, who spent most of his life in Iowa. If this law were to be cast aside due to the disbanding of the NEA, we would lose all our municipal bands here in Iowa. Arts Midwest is also a huge supporter of the arts but surprise, they get most of their funding from the NEA. This doesn't just apply to bands and orchestras however, any musical group wishing to perform here must be funded by someone. When Pentatonix and Straight No Chaser came to Iowa, they didn't do it out of the goodness of their own hearts. They're getting paid, and it would be nearly impossible to pay out of pocket for an attraction like that.

What some people forget, is

that most schools are government funded, and that means their arts programs are technically federally funded as well. That means that if these massive cuts are made, Linn-Mar's arts programs will suffer dramatically. We have four concert bands, four jazz bands, three concert orchestras, two chamber orchestras, six concert choirs, three show choirs, a huge marching band, three pep bands, plus an entire theatre department that puts on a winter show of one-act plays and a large Spring production. If we lose funding from the NEA, we would have to turn to private investors to fund these activities. Normally that wouldn't be a huge issue except that every other school in the United States would be doing the exact same thing.

One must wonder what goes through our president's head, especially what would lead him to believe that these programs do not deserve to exist anymore.



NATIONAL  
ENDOWMENT  
FOR THE ARTS

## Standardized tests not indicative of intelligence

By Annika Menges

Every year students dread the days where you have to sit in a desk for hours, filling in bubbles to answer questions that supposedly measure your intellectual abilities. Standardized tests have become a very controversial topic due to many people believing that they do not accurately measure a student's abilities. Despite the controversy, there are both positives and negatives to standardized tests.

### The Pros:

1. They hold teachers and students accountable. Standardized tests ensure that the teacher is held responsible for teaching the material the students need in order to succeed on the tests. Students are also responsible for trying their best on these tests, and if they do not try at all on the tests, in some situations, they may be required to retake it. This is primarily due to the fact that these standardized tests often help to determine school funding.

2. Standardized tests give teachers guidance to help them determine what to teach and when to teach it. Having these established set of standards lets the teacher focus on the material that the students need to know in order to perform well on the tests. Without these standards, a student may not be learning all the essential concepts of a certain subject in order to score well on the standardized test.

3. They can give parents a reliable idea of how their child is doing in school that year in a given subject. These tests can also give the student a look at the skills they are doing well and the skills where they may be lacking or need to improve.

### The Cons:

1. Testing can create a lot of stress for the students and teachers. Many teachers may stress about the testing because if the students perform poorly on the subject they taught, they can be held responsible because they were the ones teaching the material. This may seem fair and reasonable on the surface but students come to teachers at different levels of preparedness. A teacher may not be able to teach a student effectively if they are behind to begin with. These tests can also create a disadvantage to students who get very anxious before tests and end up not performing well on them.

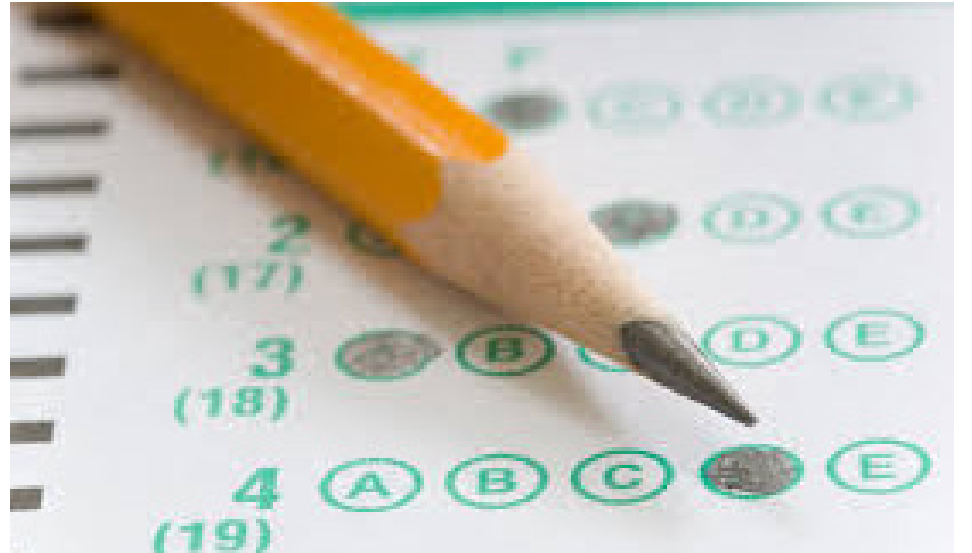
2. Teachers may end up just "teach-

ing to the test" rather than deepening a student's knowledge on a certain subject. This creates a gap in a student's learning because rather than learning about real life situations they can use later on, they are just learning information to get a good score on a test.

3. They only test the individual performance, rather than the overall growth of the student's academics. Standardized tests are held usually in one sitting (Such as the ACT or SAT), however some are spread across a week such as the ITBS tests. In either situation, you are only looking at how a student performs that single day or week, which may not accurately measure their abilities at all.

Standardized tests have positive qualities such as accountability, guidance for teachers, and providing somewhat reliable statistical information, but they also have some negative qualities such as creating

stress, teaching to the test, and only measuring an individual performance. Both of the positive and negative qualities of standardized tests have the ability to make or break a student's educational career.



## Grade inflation a problem at Linn-Mar

By Lincoln Currie

Linn-Mar has a grade inflation problem. With so many A's being given out, a 4.0 GPA is beginning to lose its meaning. This is due to a variety of reasons, including an increasing access to educational resources outside the classroom. The solution is simple, schools need to start calculating GPA's in a different way. The new GPA should be calculated by taking the normal GPA divided by the class average GPA.

According to Inside Higher Ed, grade inflation is becoming more prevalent, as the number of A's given at the college level has increased from 15 to 42 percent from 1940 to 2006. This information is especially troubling, considering that grade inflation can seemingly be found all the way up to the highest levels of education.

Doctor Jeff Gustason, the Principal at Linn-Mar High School, recognizes the presence of grade inflation at Linn-Mar High School, saying "Anybody would have a hard time defending saying that there is no grade inflation."

Angela Axeen, a Linn-Mar English teacher, explains some of the reasons that grade inflation occurs.

"I think we have scaled back in a lot of areas in our curriculum where we should not be scaling back, writing being one of them. I don't think that even in Comp class you write enough. Your generation also has access to things that make learning easier. You have that advantage. You have access to things like the Flip Classroom. Doing well in school is becoming easier."

However, not everyone thinks there is much that can be done about grade inflation.

"Our curriculum is as hard as it has ever been. Kids have been required to do more than they've ever had to do," said Gustason.

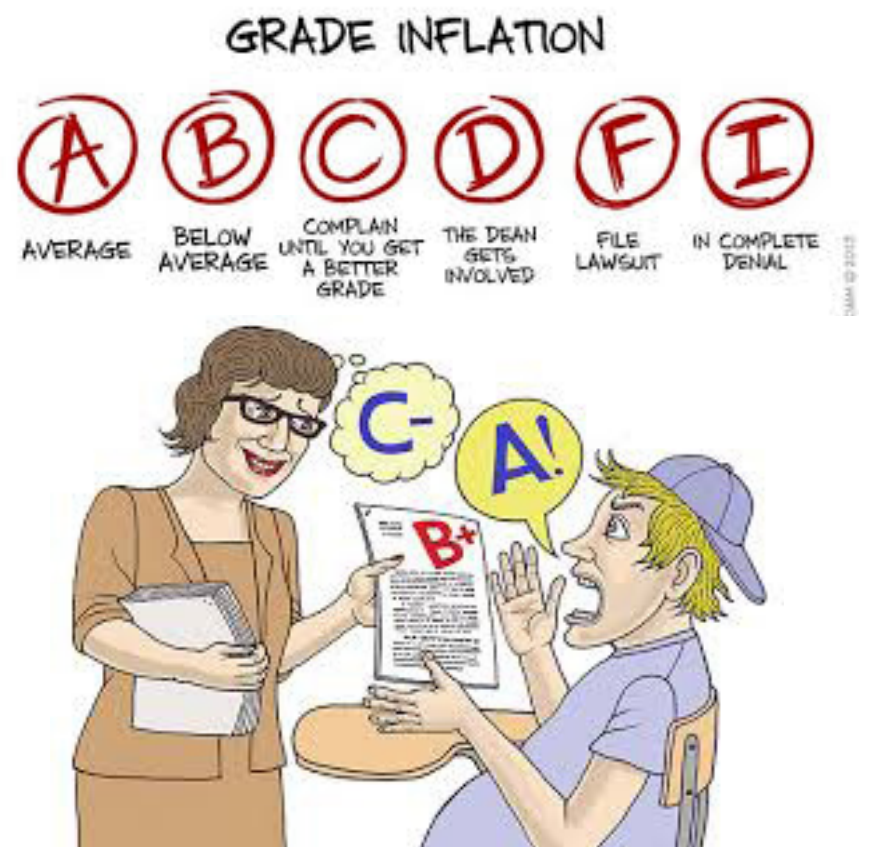
Gustason also connected grades increasing with ACT scores over the years. "If you look at the ACT scores over the years, what you notice is the scores have gone up as well in terms of the averages."

Kids are seemingly getting better at school, that much is undeniable, but there has to be a way to better sort students so that colleges stop seeing so many 4.0 GPA's when they have to select the top students.

GPA should start being calculated by taking the student's raw GPA and divide it by the classes' aver-

age. This should be done so that somebody can be more accurately compared to their peers. If you have a good GPA in a class with a weaker GPA, you will be rewarded more for being ahead of the pack. If you have a good GPA in a class with a stronger GPA, you will be less rewarded for not standing out as much.

That being said, should not have their grades curved down, and curriculum should not be made too much more difficult just to ensure that grade inflation does not happen. This system would assure that students can still work hard and get good grades. However, it allows the best students at each school to stand out when it comes to being selected to a college or university, so that they do not have to be just one of the forty plus people in their class with a 4.0 GPA or higher.



## College football playoffs currently highlight best teams

By Jaren Nelson

Ever since the first college football playoff, which began in 2014, fans and critics of the sport have been begging for an extension of teams allowed in. The current states that four teams are selected by a group of thirteen experts at the end of the season. Those four teams are then seeded one through four, and play a semi-final game in which the winners then play for the college football championship. Many complain that the four-team system excludes other worthy teams. Others also say that the dominance of some programs turns the playoff into an invitational, since certain teams have made multiple appearances. Also, many do not trust the selections and decisions made by the committee that picks the four teams, claiming them to be severely biased and looking to complete their own regional agendas. While all of these complaints do have some credibility and merit, the college football playoff should remain at only a four-team tournament. No, the system is not perfect, but instead of complaining for an extension, the media and committee should focus on getting the best four teams in.

College football has never been as exciting and important to the sports world as it is now. Much of the recent popularity and success is because of the switch from the BCS system to the college football playoff. The BCS bowl system only allowed two teams to compete for the championship, and it was based off of a machine that programed stats. Now, four teams are allowed to compete, and it is based off of human thought and interest. Not only does the new playoff create a more competitive ending to the season, but it also helps maintain interest during the regular season. On any given week, any team's playoff chances could be busted if they do not perform.

"It establishes a really tense and competitive environment every week around the country," says Scott Nelson, an Iowa Football season ticket holder. "Iowa is never in the discussion for playoff contention, but it is sure fun to play and try and knock those in contention off the rankings."

Not to mention, this system creates certain qualifications for each team to get in. Yes, the qualifications can vary and not be very clear, but in the end, all teams know what they need to do to have a shot at be-

ing selected. After all, the playoff is supposed to be a selective bunch. It is meant to be exclusive. The more teams you allow in, the more teams get upset because they feel they deserve to be in also. No, the system does not please everyone, but it needs to be elite. Teams should not be allowed in just for the sake of having more teams. The teams selected need to be able to compete at the highest level.

As Colin Cowherd, sports journalist and radio talk show host says, "You can't start letting millionaires into the billionaire country club, because then the thousandaires start thinking they belong also."

While the college football playoff has created so much hype and competition around the sport, it is by no means a perfect system. Many argue it is too exclusive, and that more than four teams have a chance to win the championship year in and year out. Others do not trust the committee that selects the four teams.

Fox Sports Analyst Joel Klatt claims, "The committee is so biased towards the south region that it is laughable and totally exposable."

While Klatt's take has some merit, the years of the playoff have ultimately proven the south region has produced the most qualified and competitive teams. Others, like Nick Wright, another Fox Sports Analyst, suggest that the playoff should be extended to eight teams.

Peyton Weber, a college football fan, says "The playoff should include the conference champions from the power five conferences, and then have three wildcards based on the national rankings."

The problem with that "solution", however, is who will be those next three teams? That controversy alone will stoke more fires than the four-team debate ever will. Also, teams that have multiple losses and not the right credentials often have chances to compete for a conference title. On an even more personal level, many player's parents do not have the resources to travel continuously for an extra month after the already expensive regular season. Not only will it cause more problems than it will solve, but it is also not an economically practical solution for teams and parents.

Yes, the system is not perfect, and it would be interesting to see more unique cross conference match-

ups, but an eight-team playoff is not the way to do it. It is not practical, nor is it a cure-all solution. The elite should stay elite, and the rest should aim to become elite. So,

the fans and media need to quit the complaining and begging for an extension. After all, what would you rather watch, billionaire football or millionaire football?



## Is Brady best NFL QB ever?

By Michael Chambers

Tom Brady is debatably the best QB to ever step foot in the NFL. Brady was drafted the 199th pick in the 2000 draft, with a compensatory draft pick. Six quarterbacks were selected before Brady, and every team had a chance to draft him. They soon realized that was a very huge mistake. Brady and his family thought he would be drafted in the 2nd or 3rd round, but they never lost confidence. He sat on the bench his first year in the league, but as soon as QB Drew Bledsoe went down with an injury, it was Brady's time to shine. Brady did not disappoint, and the year he replaced Bledsoe at QB he led the Patriots to a Super Bowl win against the St. Louis Rams, but that was just the beginning.

Tom Brady has led the Patriots to Super Bowl wins in 2002, 2004, 2005, 2015, and 2017. He has the most Super Bowl appearances with

7, and his record in those games is 5-2. Tom Brady is 40-years-old and still putting up record numbers against defenses that have never been better.

Brady was never known for collapsing under pressure, in fact, he is mostly known on his performance in big games such as the playoffs and the Super Bowl. Brady owns many different records and his accomplishments are everlasting. He owns records for the most regular season wins, most playoff wins, most Super Bowl wins, most Super Bowl MVPs, and those are just a few of his records.

Brady is a competitor and makes everyone around him better. The way he just thinks on the football field and what he does is just unbelievable. Brady continues to lead the league in most of the stat categories every season even in his 40's, and he shows no sign of slowing down anytime soon.



## NCAA tourney time provides hours of excitement

By Jaren Nelson

Every single year the NCAA Basketball Tournament leaves fans in awe, whether that is being overwhelmed with pure joy, or more commonly, completely heartbroken. With only sixty-eight teams getting in, counting the first four, many fans around the country do not even get to cheer for their respective teams, simply because they do not make the tournament. That increases the popularity and importance of bracketology, or filling out selective brackets based on who you think will win each game of the tournament. What was once a light-hearted hobby has turned into a national phenomenon. There are countless websites and companies that do bracket challenges, with the overall winner being awarded a prize. Warren Buffett announces every year that a perfect bracket will earn a person one-billion-dollar reward from him. Yes, one billion dollars. So, if so many people participate in these challenges each year, why does a perfect bracket never occur? One word, sleepers. Sleeper teams bust brackets and break hearts every year during the NCAA Tournament. This year, however, you do not have to lose your mind over these sleepers, because this list will explain which sleeper teams you need to pick in your bracket this year.

The first sleeper team that is already showing signs of a great tournament run is Texas A&M. Led by star players DJ Hogg and Tyler Davis, this team is well sized and very balanced. Five of their six top minutes leaders are averaging double figures in scoring, and three of those six are over six foot nine inches tall. They already have collected impressive wins to start the season, beating both Oklahoma State and Penn State by double figures. Not to mention, their display of complete dominance against one of the best teams in the college basketball, West Virginia, beating them 88-65 in the season opener. Texas A&M has been a team on the rise ever since Davis stepped onto campus three years ago, and this year just might be the right time for them to pop in the tournament.

The second team poised to win multiple games in the tournament in the Xavier Musketeers. This team is loaded with scoring, led by Trevon Bluiett and J.P. Macura, who are both shooting over fifty percent from the field and averaging dou-

ble figures. Bluiett is a superstar, averaging over twenty-one points per game. They are one of the best shooting teams in America, and have a very deep bench. "Xavier is a tough coached and tough-minded team. Toughness is needed to get through a season, but it is needed even more in the tournament," states Scott Nelson, assistant varsity coach for Linn-Mar High School and a big-time college basketball fan. Xavier exhibited their toughness in a clutch road win against Wisconsin earlier this season, when they ended the game with a fourteen to four scoring run that resulted in a ten-point victory. Xavier's ability to shoot, their toughness, and Trevon Bluiett are all tremendous reasons to have them go deep into this year's tourney.

The final team that could stir up some brackets is TCU. Now, out of all three of these teams, TCU is considered the biggest sleeper. They are not as highly recognized on the national level as the other two, they will have the hardest time making a huge tournament run. That does

not mean to count them out, however. The Horned Frogs are inexperienced, no doubt, but they have been fantastic since halfway through last year. Last season they finished strong, beating a top of the conference Kansas team in first round of the Big Twelve Tournament, and just missed the NCAA tournament. They were selected to play in the NIT, and put on an absolute show in the tournament, beating Iowa and winning the whole thing. An Iowa fan, Peyton Weber says, "They played really well last year, even at Iowa. I know they don't get much publicity right now, but this team is

one to look out for. They can only get better from here." Weber is right, TCU is continuing to build off of a successful season last year, and make their mark in school history by punching their ticket to the tourney for the first time since 1998.

The NCAA Tournament is still somewhat far away, but it is inching closer every week. Head to head matchups and conference play will tell a lot, so it will be best to keep an eye on the world of college basketball, and these teams specifically, if you want your bracket to be victorious come March.



## Is no-cut policy practical in high school?

By Reed Zahradnik

There is an Iowa law that prohibits schools from "cutting" players from their high school athletics teams. Whether it is football, swimming, baseball, or one of the many other sports that Iowa high schools offer, coaches and schools are not allowed to cut players from participating in a school sport. This rule is very controversial throughout high schools everywhere; some coaches, players and parents think this policy is good, while others think it is outdated and needs to be eliminated.

The rule was put into effect around 1924 and has not been overturned since. It was made back when schools had as many roster spots as they had players that want to play. Parents and school executives say that the no-cut policy keeps everyone involved. The law allowed everyone to participate, stay active, and enjoy building friendships with their many teammates. Many parents say that their kids have a right to play on their high school teams, no matter their skill level. Some kids would be lost without sports and the friends they make there. Their social lives would be nothing like they are if they didn't have the platform to make friends like they do during sports. For many kids there is a lot of truth to this. Sports

allows them to meet people with similar interests as them.

The drawbacks are the most apparent to players and coaches who are experiencing problems with this rule. Players who are far less skilled than the rest of the team will often hold back the development of the other players. If they aren't playing, that leads to them not paying attention in practice and during games, distracting other players, and not having a good attitude. Those kids being at every event just means it is one more thing the coaches have to pay attention to. Linn-Mar has around 2,000 kids attending the high school, and approximately 16 out of the 40 kids played consistently on the varsity baseball team. This often left the other 23 kids uninterested and distracting. With only 4 coaches, players were often bothersome to those who were trying to become better players, and the coaches were unable to stop it due to the massive amounts of players. There is no need to get a bus big enough to carry 40 kids when you can get a substantially smaller bus that carries 25 kids and is far cheaper.

Schools and the state often get around this rule in certain ways as well. When a baseball team goes

to "state" to play in Des Moines, they can only travel with 25 players, leaving the other players unable to be with the team. A lot of them attended just as many practices as other players who get to go, but they don't get to be in the dugout during the game. This left many parents outraged that their kid spent all summer playing baseball and now they don't get to be in the dugout for their biggest game of the year.

For many sports, the JV team is a total joke at Linn-Mar. Coaches don't pay attention, or even attend these games in some sports. JV players are not coached the same as varsity players because of their perceived talent level. They are just there as practice tools for the varsity team. Some kids would rather not be there than just be the whipping boy for the higher players.

Cutting players is very controversial for a number of reasons. Every parent and student has their own opinion. Some states do allow this, Iowa is just not one of them. It would be worthwhile for the Iowa High School Athletic Association to take a look at this rule to see if changes need to be made. Some schools get around it anyways, it might be worth it just to eliminate the rule all together.

## Baseball needs to address luxury tax for good of league

By Reed Zahradnik

Baseball is my favorite sport, and the MLB is my favorite league to follow and watch on TV. That being said, the MLB has one huge factor that really can be a game changer every season. In the MLB, one thing sticks out as giving teams an unfair advantage, for no apparent reason. Unlike the NFL and NBA, where every team has the same payroll to spend, MLB has their payroll set based on their market size and team wealth. This gives teams based in enormous markets such as New York or Los Angeles far more money to spend on management, executives and players than smaller markets such as Kansas City or Oakland. Throughout other professional sports leagues, like the NFL and NBA, there are many things that give teams the upper hand. Good coaching and management, developing young players, or sometimes just pure luck when selecting young players from the draft can give some teams a competitive edge. All of those can be considered fair, some teams are better than others at some aspects of running a professional franchise. Some teams having more money to spend, however, is ridiculous and needs to be changed. The very easy solution to this is to give every team an equal amount of money for payroll to employ players and staff, along with harsh punishments for overspending on a team's allotted amount.

Every professional sports league has a Collective Bargaining Agreement. Massachusetts School of Law describes a CBA, in a professional sports league, as "an agreement that establishes specific elements of how the league will operate, such as: division of league revenues, team salary caps, free agency requirements, restrictions on player mobility, provisions regarding the drafting of players, disciplinary rules, and other general regulations of the league." Every five or so years, they all come together to negotiate how the league will work, and what changes need to be made to give players all the rights they need, while still keeping the owners happy. Team payroll is always a huge debate when new CBAs are being worked on, especially in the 21st century with salaries getting higher and higher for players.

According to award winning journalist Sean Lahman, baseball was first played around 170 years ago, in the mid 1840's. The first player to ever get paid to play base-

ball was Ty Cobb. The Tiger's outfielder made \$2,000 in 1913, and that was monumental. A person was getting paid over double the average American salary to swing a piece of wood at a baseball. Just 50 years ago, the highest annual salary of the entire 1960's, was St. Louis Cardinals Center Fielder Curt Flood. His yearly salary was \$572,164.95. The average American made \$5,893.76 in 1968, only 1% of Flood's salary. The current highest paid player in the MLB is Los Angeles Dodgers pitcher Clayton Kershaw. He made an absurd \$33,000,000 in 2017 alone, that doesn't factor in the total value of his contract. Americans have an average salary that is .2% of Kershaw's earning this year. Kershaw is getting paid more than the entire Padres active 25-man roster (\$29,628,400). Professional sports have become billion dollar industries in the USA and players' salaries reflect that. Players' salaries will only increase, and that puts small market teams at a disadvantage that grows more every year.

According to CBS Sports, the Los Angeles Dodgers had the highest team payroll to start the 2017 season at \$242,065,828. This season is a great example of this issue, as the New York Yankees had the second highest payroll in the MLB at \$201,539,699, over 40 million dollars less than the Dodgers. The lowest payroll in the MLB last year was the Milwaukee Brewers at a stunning \$63,061,300, and they competed for a playoff spot for a lot of the year. The Dodgers had an opening day payroll that was almost 4 times higher than that of the lowest team. How is that fair to the teams in smaller markets? How can these smaller markets compete with teams that can spend 4 times more money than them? It creates an incredible imbalance in the MLB that really isn't fair to teams.

Professional sports, like a lot of things, are all about money. Teams that are located in big cities are key to the revenue of the MLB. Teams like the Dodgers and Yankees that are located in New York and Los Angeles are substantially more marketable to fans than teams in smaller areas like the Oakland Athletics and Cincinnati Reds. Former Marlins star right fielder, Giancarlo Stanton, was traded to the New York Yankees. He declined trades to the St. Louis Cardinals and San Francisco Giants, and it couldn't have gone any better for the MLB. The slugger hit 59 home runs last year, then proceeded to win the NL



MVP, and now he is going to the MLB's most marketable team. The imbalance that it creates is good for the profit of the MLB, but not as much for the fans. Fans of the teams that "only" have 100 million dollars to spend, know that their favorite team won't be able to sign the big free agent. Every once in a while a star player signs with a small team, but often times, he is only signing with them because they are his hometown team, which is rare.

The only thing that keeps teams from overspending their budget is the "Luxury Tax". This tax was implemented to punish teams from spending more money than their owner gave them to dole out to players. The only catch is that it is so minimal that it really doesn't discourage teams from going into the Luxury Tax. The rule was implemented to give small market teams a chance to keep up with teams with big pockets, but it is set around \$195,000,000, so that for teams with a 63 million dollar payroll, it doesn't affect them at all. The LA Dodgers spent \$242,065,828 on players last year, obviously not bothered by going over the cap by almost 50 million dollars.

The easiest solution to this strange problem in the MLB is very simple, and could be fixed in 2021 when a new Collective Bargaining Agreement will need to be negotiated. Give every team a competitive payroll. Although every team having an identical payroll cap would be ideal, it may still not be realistic. Just giving every team a payroll within about 20-30 million dollars would make it far more equal for everyone. The mean payroll for MLB teams in 2017 is \$137,746,636. On the high end, maybe the Dodgers get \$160 million to spend and on the low end, the Brewers would get \$110 million to spend. Not only would that create a more competitive landscape all across the MLB, but it would also help grow struggling fan bases in smaller markets

with better teams to follow. A harsh luxury tax would also be necessary to keep teams from completely disregarding their limit. From 2012 through 2016, teams who exceed the threshold for the first time must pay 17.5% of the amount they are over, 30% for the second consecutive year over, 40% for the third consecutive year over, and 50% for four or more consecutive years over the cap. A record 7 teams exceeded the luxury tax in 2017 for the very first time, while the Dodgers have gone into the Luxury Tax 4 times, and the Red Sox 6 times. The Yankees have gone into the Luxury Tax 14 times, which means they have overspent from their budgets every year since it was put into effect. The Yankees have paid out over \$325 million, or 73.78% of the total fines assessed since the luxury tax began. Raising the tax on teams going over their spending limit would give other teams, who don't want to pay the fines, an equal chance than those who far over spend past their limits.

An incredible imbalance is impeding the MLB from having an even more competitive spread across the league. Small market teams having substantially less money to spend on players and management gives the MLB "big name" teams to market more than others, but it is unfair to teams that aren't located in a massive city. The easiest way to fix this is close the gap between top and bottom teams in player payroll. Give them a somewhat comparable amount so the MLB still has their big market teams that have a better chance of signing big name players, but also give lower teams a chance to land the big players. A harsh Luxury Tax on teams that go over their allotted spending is also necessary to control teams from overspending with their new lower budgets. Although it would take a lot to get something like this passed, it would be very beneficial to the future of the MLB for all teams to stay competitive.