

December 2020

Faculty: M. Ryan & J. Reckard

Sleigh Bells Ring

By: *Matthew Trosino*

Winter in Bloomington is beautiful. Snow covers the flat cornfields and roads for miles, and each year the biting air tries to set a new record for how fast it can give people frostbite. One major joy given for the residents of this frozen tundra is sledding. What might appear to be a relaxing childhood activity is actually an intense lifestyle for Bloomingtonians. Given the paramount importance that sledding carries in Bloomington, it is only natural that every resident is educated on the correct place to go sledding.

Often compared to the Civil War, this debate has torn families and households in two. The only thing Bloomingtonians can agree on in the discussion is that there are only two acceptable locations to sled: Highland Golf Course and Jersey Hill in Ewing Park I. Both of these locations provide different sledding experiences depending on the person. Olympic skiing prospect JJ Jongky weighed in on this topic: "Jersey hill provides an absolutely legendary sledding and skiing experience. The slope of the hill is a perfect 23 degree decline which results in optimal mathematical sledding. Anywhere else is a complete mockery of the sport I hold so dear to my heart." Despite this very convincing argument by JJ, many people still disagree with his professional opinion.

Kalin Schmitt, a sledding radical, was fuming with anger when I told him Mr. Jongky's opinion. "Sledding at Jersey Hill is for children. It's like going to six flags to ride the merry-go-round. Want a real thrill?? Drive 10 minutes down the road to Highland and see what real sledding is like. It's nothing like the bunny hill you call Jersey Hill. Despicable." Many who prefer Highland give similar testimony about Jersey Hill, slandering its slope.

Despite the heavy-handed opinions this debate produces, both locations do provide a solid sledding experience. Highland is steeper and therefore offers faster rides, but Jersey Hill offers a longer sledding experience. Also, Mr. Schmitt's emotional testimony about children at Jersey Hill does hold water. Jersey Hill usually is more crowded and boasts more family sledding; however, when people find themselves enjoying an extra long ride at Highland, they must watch out for the creek that is at the bottom of the hill. The creek has "claimed" many who try to brave this hill and adds a thrilling danger aspect to sledding here.

Contrarian Adam Bonefant claims both sides are wrong: "Sledding is boring. Building snow igloos is a much more enjoyable, safe and exciting activity to do after snowflake precipitation." This opinion however, resulted in societal ostracization for Adam.

All in all, Bloomington provides many amazing sledding experiences despite the seemingly boring landscape! Where will you be sledding this winter?



Best Places to Get Christmas Decorations

By: Grace Hartrich

Christmas is just around the corner and families are frantically trying to find the perfect decorations to spice up their homes. If you live in Bloomington-Normal, you may come to find that there are numerous options of stores to choose from. I'm here to make your life easier by telling you which stores you should shop at based on what you're looking for, the variety they provide, and the price range. I went on the hunt to find the best selection possible for not only my family but yours as well.

To start strong, I discovered that Hobby Lobby had the widest selection of Christmas decorations. From wrapping paper, artificial trees, ornaments, tinsel, mantel decorations, stockings...you want it, Hobby Lobby's got it in stock. My family has always gone to Hobby Lobby specifically for their holiday decorations, and we have never been discouraged by the pricing or quality of the products we purchased. There are primarily two things that have always made Hobby Lobby stand out to me. The first one is their everyday discounts. This year, they are having a 50% off sale of all the Christmas decorations, and if that isn't a deal, what is?

The second thing that sets them apart from the competition is their ornament section. The ornaments at Hobby Lobby are all unique and not only make great Christmas decorations but also great Christmas gifts. Hobby Lobby is a universal choice for anyone who celebrates a particular holiday during this time of year (as in, they even have Hanukkah decorations too!).

Another store I would recommend going to is, surprisingly, Menards. Menards can be underestimated in all its holiday glory and I'm here to tell you to stop underestimating them! Their prices may not be as low as Hobby Lobby's, but I also found that their variety of decorations run wide as well. They had just about the same products in stock that Hobby Lobby had. Menards had a forest of fake trees of all siz-



es and colors, and they had more outdoor decorations than any other store I visited.

The stores Hobby Lobby and Menards are by far my top picks when it comes to shopping for Christmas decorations. Both of the selections have a wide variety of products, don't price their items outrageously, and have quality-crafted products that can be used not only for this Christmas season, but for the next and the next and the next!

Christmas Songs

by: Jacob Bickett

As the final leaves fall and the world around us slowly turns brown, the air becomes cold and crisp; autumn fades away.

The days get shorter and the temperatures start to drop, but the Christmas season doesn't start until you turn on your radio and hear Mariah Carey's "All I Want for Christmas Is You."

With the holiday comes the themed music that we all have heard. Many people have very different takes on music this time of year. Every household is heavily divided on the subject--some would even say it is splitting the nation in two.

Junior Sarah Vose loves Christmas and remarks, "I like a lot of the classic Christmas songs because hearing them every year is what makes me a big fan of Christmas time." She brings up one of the many hotly debated topics: should Christmas songs be remade by current artists? She states, "I'm not a big fan of the newer Christmas songs that are remade as pop songs because to me they take away the nostalgia around the classic ones." Many of her Holiday favorites include "Jingle Bell Rock" by Bobby Helms and "Winter Wonderland" by Bing Crosby.

The classic Christmas music is favored by many, but there are still some that believe the new versions are good. Senior JT Welch states, "'Jingle Bells' and 'It's the Holiday Season' are my favorite songs by far. I can also vibe with some Ariana Grande Christmas music."

This opinion is not respected by those who believe Christmas music is far too repetitive. Junior Macie Perring points out, "I don't hate Christmas music, but there can be times where the songs are on constant repeat and it can be very annoying. My family plays it all the time."

Whatever your view is on Christmas music, we can all come together and agree that Christmas is a great way to raise our spirits despite all the disappointment this

year. Senior Bella Rohrig calls out for peace among the debaters: "Christmas music is a way to lift our spirits in these crazy times especially and should therefore be accepted by everyone." So no matter who you are and what kind of music you like, we should celebrate together all the blessings that we have received this year.

Favorite Christmas Movies

by: Sierra Godsey

"*The Polar Express* is my favorite Christmas movie because every year when it first snows, my family and I watch it together," exclaimed senior Madeline Schnierle.

"My favorite movie during the holidays is *Christmas Vacation* because Chevy Chase is a pretty cool dude," commented senior Ella Larson.

"*National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation* is my favorite holiday movie because it has a big family coming together and traveling from all over the country to one house for the holidays," said senior J.R. Bellis.

"My favorite Christmas movie of all time has to be *Elf* because of the funny characters," said senior Megan Becker.

"*The Grinch* (animated version) is my favorite Christmas movie because it is a beautiful story that shows a lot of character development throughout the film, and Max (the dog) is very cute," said sophomore Mariana Garcia.

"The best Christmas movie is *Die Hard* because it's one of the only action-packed Christmas movies, and the others are boring," commented sophomore Danny O'Brien.

"My favorite Christmas movie is *Elf* because it reminds me of Christmas from when I was younger," commented freshman Bennett Summers.

"The best Christmas movie is *The Grinch* because it's so funny and really makes me laugh," exclaimed freshman Izzie Niepa-gen.

Keefers Kwerky Questions

by: John Keefers

Question: What is your favorite Christmas memory of all time?

Freshman Luke Allen

“When I was 8 years old I really wanted to get a foosball table and my parents told me I probably wasn’t going to be able to get one. Then, for Christmas, they surprised me with it!”

Sophomore Colin Karr

“My favorite memory was when I got a gaming console. It was the Xbox 360 and I played it almost every day.”

Junior Kate Morris

“On Christmas morning of 2018, my family and I woke up and drove to my cousin’s house. We all celebrated Christmas together and exchanged presents and stories with one another. It was the year where I found out my family was going to Europe, making it the best holiday memory.”

Senior Abbey Davis

“My favorite memory is when my family watches the movie *Elf* every year. We eat spaghetti and drink coke while we watch the movie.”



Favorite Hot Chocolate

By: Angela Haynes

Every day should be a reason to drink hot chocolate! Many have different preferences for this specific topic so let’s find out whose favorite is the best. Hot chocolate addiction has no cure! During the Christmas period, many people contribute by drinking hot chocolate mainly to keep warm in the cold winter months, especially in December.

There are many different kinds of chocolate like peppermint, dark chocolate, white mocha, regular hot chocolate, gingerbread, and cinnamon hot chocolate. Senior Meghan Smith expresses her feelings by sharing, “My favorite is probably peppermint chocolate because it always reminds me of Christmas, which is my favorite season and holiday!”

Some take the traditional route of their favorite hot chocolate, like senior Charlie Adleman: “My favorite is milk chocolate because it’s a good drink for a cold winter day.” Others may have a favorite hot chocolate that is connected to their childhood. “My favorite is salted caramel hot chocolate,” mentioned sophomore Aidan McCoy “This is my favorite because I think it tastes the best. When I was little, we would bring some in the car and go drive around town and look at Christmas lights!” Lastly, some of the hot chocolate needs a “kick” to it.

Senior Madeline Schnierle prefers “peppermint hot chocolate because it spices up the normal hot chocolate and the shot of peppermint is really refreshing!” Hot chocolate can be formed in many ways with toppings, Hot chocolate could be for all the season if you want it to be, but others may prefer having it only during the winter season. Even though everyone thinks differently about the best or favorite hot chocolate, I hope you have a fantastic holiday season.

At the end of the day, everyone should sit down and enjoy a cup of hot chocolate.



The Real St. Nick

By: Kylie Hundman

We all know the guy named Santa Claus. He’s the jolly old man that brings us presents to open on Christmas day. He’s the man we leave milk and cookies for, and when we wake up on Christmas morning, they are gone. So, we are all very familiar with Santa Claus, but not many people know Saint Nicholas. There wouldn’t be a Santa Claus without Saint Nicholas!

St. Nick was a very kind bishop who lived in the fourth century. He is the patron saint of children, sailors, and wolves. He would go around helping the people less fortunate than himself and would even leave behind secret gifts for them. There are many legends of St. Nick. One story tells of how he helped three poor sisters by secretly leaving bags of gold in their home because their father didn’t have enough money.

Stories of his miracles and works done for the poor spread to parts all over the world. St. Nick eventually became Santa Claus in popular culture over the ages, leading many to still celebrate St. Nicholas Day in America, as well as many other countries. On December 6, children lay out a pair of their shoes at night. They wake up the next morning to find candy and gifts in their shoes left by jolly old St. Nicholas!



Christmas Jokes

by: Lilyana Alvarez

What does Santa suffer from if he gets stuck in a chimney?

Claus-trophobia!

What kind of Christmas music do elves like?

“Wrap” music

What do you get when you cross a snowman with a vampire?

Frostbite!

What do you call an obnoxious reindeer?

Rude-olph.

What do snowmen eat for breakfast?

Frosted Flakes or Ice Crispies.

What's the difference between the Christmas alphabet and the ordinary alphabet?

The Christmas alphabet has No-el.

What's the best Christmas present?

A broken drum - you just can't beat it!

What did Adam say to his wife on the day before Christmas?

It's Christmas, Eve!

Christmas Word Search



Christmas
star
sled
merry
December
angel
bell
eggnog
gifts



Best Places to view Christmas Lights

By: Kylie Klepec

Christmas time brings a lot of joy and cheer, but what really ties the season together are the outstanding light shows. What is Christmas without the miles of lit up streets?

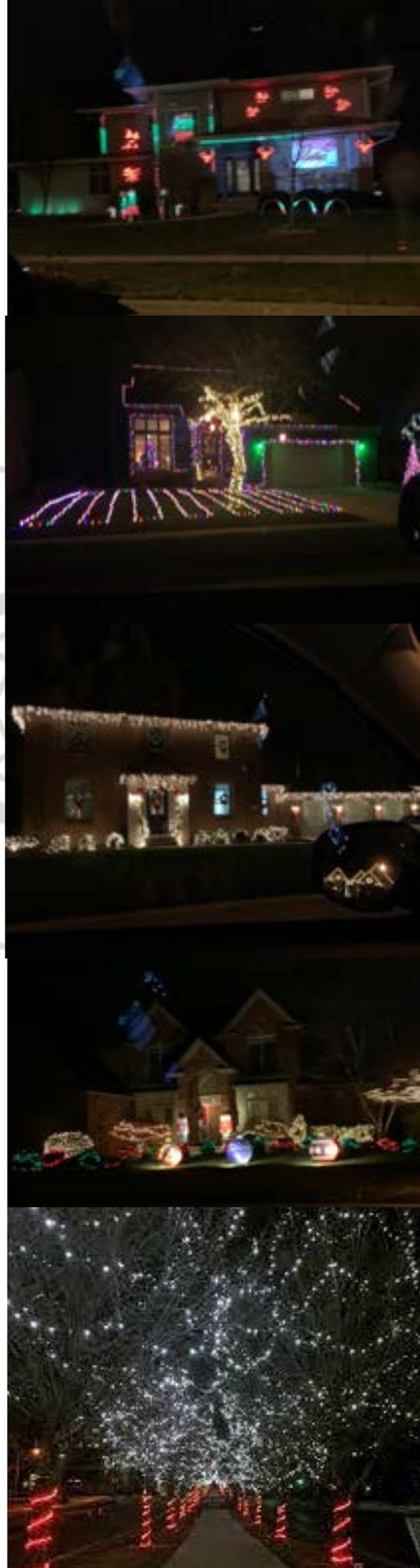
Stonebrook is a great neighborhood to see beautiful lights. These houses look like they are right out of a Hallmark movie. With lights that reach all the way up to the highest peak. Each house is dressed with traditional decorations. This neighborhood definitely captures the Christmas spirit.

Off of Rave Road, there is a house you do not want to miss. This house is the first house on the left in this neighborhood. When I went to look at their lights, there were cars lined up everywhere. Obviously, this is a popular attraction, as it should be. Not only is this house coated with colorful red and green lights, but there is a projector playing Christmas movies. They have a radio station you can tune into to hear music and audio for the movie. This house is very unique, fun, and festive. I recommend checking this place out.

Next I went to my personal favorite attractions in Old Farm Lakes. The first house is very lit up, with many colors. It was very interesting to see their whole yard covered with various bright lights. To capture the beauty and sentiment of Christmas, they have a big Christmas tree lit up in their front window. Part of this attraction's charm is its distinct uniqueness compared to other houses.

Last but certainly not least, my other favorite attraction is also in Old Farm Lakes. I watched the owners prepare their light show since September. They put in a lot of hard work, and it paid off. Like the house off of Rave Road, this house has a radio station to tune into to listen to holiday classics. But what makes this sight so special is the marvelous light show. There are flashing lights, lights spinning around, and Mr. and Mrs. Claus sitting on the porch. This house has the best light show. An observation I made is the house across the street is for sale. How ironic!

Each sight displayed the Christmas magic and brought positive vibes. Make sure to check out these attractions before Christmas is over! You do not want to miss out on the experience this Christmas season!



Out with the Old and in with the New (Year)

By: Sofia Calvert

Times Square has been officially closed to the public, but New York plans to host a virtual ball drop in order to welcome the new year. Covid-19 has spread more than ever this year, and it's hard to have a big celebration this coming New Year's Eve.

Because this year has been difficult, everyone is ready for a fresh start with a happy new year. Times Square is trying their hardest to keep the New Year's celebration alive, but they, as well, want to keep everyone safe at home for the amazing virtual event.

A new year coming up brings New Year's resolutions! A few common New Year's resolutions from high school students are staying organized in school, working hard, committing to get good grades, trying something new, and stopping procrastinating, among other things. A few common New Year's resolutions in general are exercising more, getting organized, living life to the fullest, and learning a new skill or hobby. These New Year's resolutions are always a great way to motivate oneself to keep working hard and pushing forward, especially through these hard times.

The year of 2021 will still be uncertain with Covid-19, but it's certain that we as a community will try our best to have a great new year.

Odd Ornaments

By: Will Foley

Christmas season is here, and with that comes all sorts of decorations and festivities. One of the most popular--if not *the* most popular--decorations is the Christmas tree, which most families decorate each year.

On the tree, lights are cast up, a star or angel is mounted at the top, and the rest of it is blanketed in ornaments. Most ornaments hold some significance to each family, whether it be passed on from generations or if it applies to a current family member. Some ornaments, however, just don't seem to fit in yet still make it to the tree. I asked some students if they had any odd ornaments, and I was pleased to hear the responses.

Senior Madeline Schnierle sent in an ornament her family has of a grill. With the seasons not really matching up, I was curious to know why it was there. "My dad just likes to grill for our family for dinners," she said, "but I still don't really know why it's on the tree." An interesting choice with clashing seasons, but still understandable. This is certainly not an ornament everyone has hanging on their tree!

Senior David Broadbear showed me a couple from his tree: one of a mouse and one of a jack-in-the-box. Broadbear said, "They really have no business being up there. I don't know where or how we got them, but they still go up on the tree." These ones are interesting to me, as they don't relate to Christmas nor do they hold any significant meaning in the Broadbear household. I actually find it impressive that they somehow found a jack-in-the-box ornament; so unique!

Last but not least, senior Keira Hadley sent a snowman that has a lot going on. Holding a candy cane as if it was a guitar, with stars over his body, and his hat on the side of his head, it is confusing and almost distracting. "I don't know why we have him, but he doesn't take anything away from the tree so we keep him up there." I still can't make sense of what exactly the snowman is supposed to be doing, but at least it's festive.

All in all, almost every family has at least one Christmas decoration that adds some unique flavor to their tree. What odd ornament does your family have?



Return to Remote

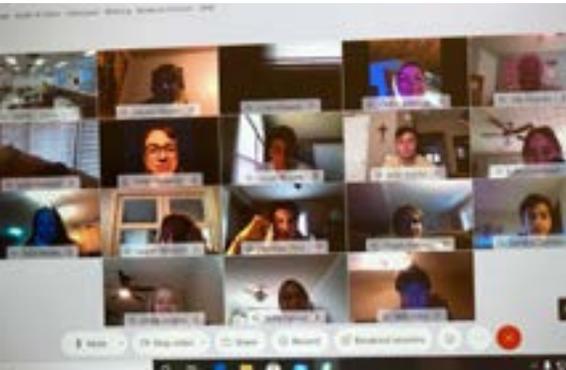
By: Owen Mackrowski

As the calendar year has been nearing a close, students have been facing a new beginning. The first few weeks of remote learning have shown mostly positive signs from last year's equivalent thanks in part to the help of special tv screens in all of the classrooms, but also the teachers themselves for standing up to teach almost like normal.

This new style of remote learning has proven more effective and sustainable than what most of the students went through to finish their 2019-2020 school year. "This year is definitely easier," senior Josh Vogel says. "The school has a good system for classes and the teachers are better prepared for it this time." Students still follow their normal schedules, but instead of walking to them, they instead will simply click a link directing them to each respective hour. "I feel like I am eating healthier because I can choose more low-carb food options at home," shares senior Grace Hartrich as one perk of home learning.

Obviously, for classes like homeroom, lunch, and study hall, students do not have to be in a class, but for the most part, it's just an abridged school day. "School has definitely been different," continues Vogel, "but the teachers are doing a really good job of trying to keep things normal and making sure that the students are doing well."

One thing students have had to adapt to is the way they keep track of their assignments. "I keep tabs on my computer of homework I have to do, and then when I finish it I close the tabs," explains Vogel. Now that all assignments are online, keeping track of them is that much more important. Another approach being taken is by Tobey Havens, who uses a physical planner to compliment his learning. "I've used one of these since sixth grade and it is especially useful for not overlooking minor assignments." Making sure that everything is properly turned in can mean the difference between getting straight A's and mid to low B's.



Christmas Traditions

by: Santino Sartoris

The Christmas season is one characterized by many fun activities and all around good times. Whether it is spending time with family and friends or even just a strange tradition, it adds to that excitement of Christmas time.

Some of the more familiar celebrations of Christmas are just being with close friends and family. Lots of people can relate to this experience. For example senior Conall Rhodes describes Christmas day with his extended family as "the single greatest day of my life." He also added that when he gets to make his "special Christmas cookies" he can't help but feel like he is "living his best life." Similarly, senior Meg Lantz describes how on Christmas Eve she and her family have dinner with family friends. "It is a great day because everyone seems to feel the holiday cheer and it makes for a good time."

Taking a stroll to the more unique side of Christmas traditions, we land in the Greek camp of senior Matthew Trosino. "Each year my family celebrates the joy of the Christmas season by building a boat out of the sturdiest tree from our backyard. We then take this boat and decorate it with various Christmas style lights and colors. This is obviously a fulfillment of an ancient Greek tradition carried out by the many generations that lived before me. I love Christmas!" he added with a smile.

Another great Christmas tradition comes from bass fishing legend Joshua Jonky. He actually prefers to spend his Christmases "out shredding powder" with his family--by "powder" he means skiing. He says that the "grind never stops" and Christmas is a great time to take advantage of perfect skiing conditions. Along with skiing, Mr. Jonky also makes time to go fishing. In fact, he even makes a trip every 5 years to the frozen waters of the Lule River, Sweden.

From Sweden to Greece, these different traditions truly demonstrate how unifying the Christmas season is, whether it is building a boat or just hanging out with some family.



Real vs. Fake

by: Colm Powers

Real or fake Christmas trees? There is a lot of dispute over which Christmas tree is better for the modern day family, and hopefully this will shed light on it.

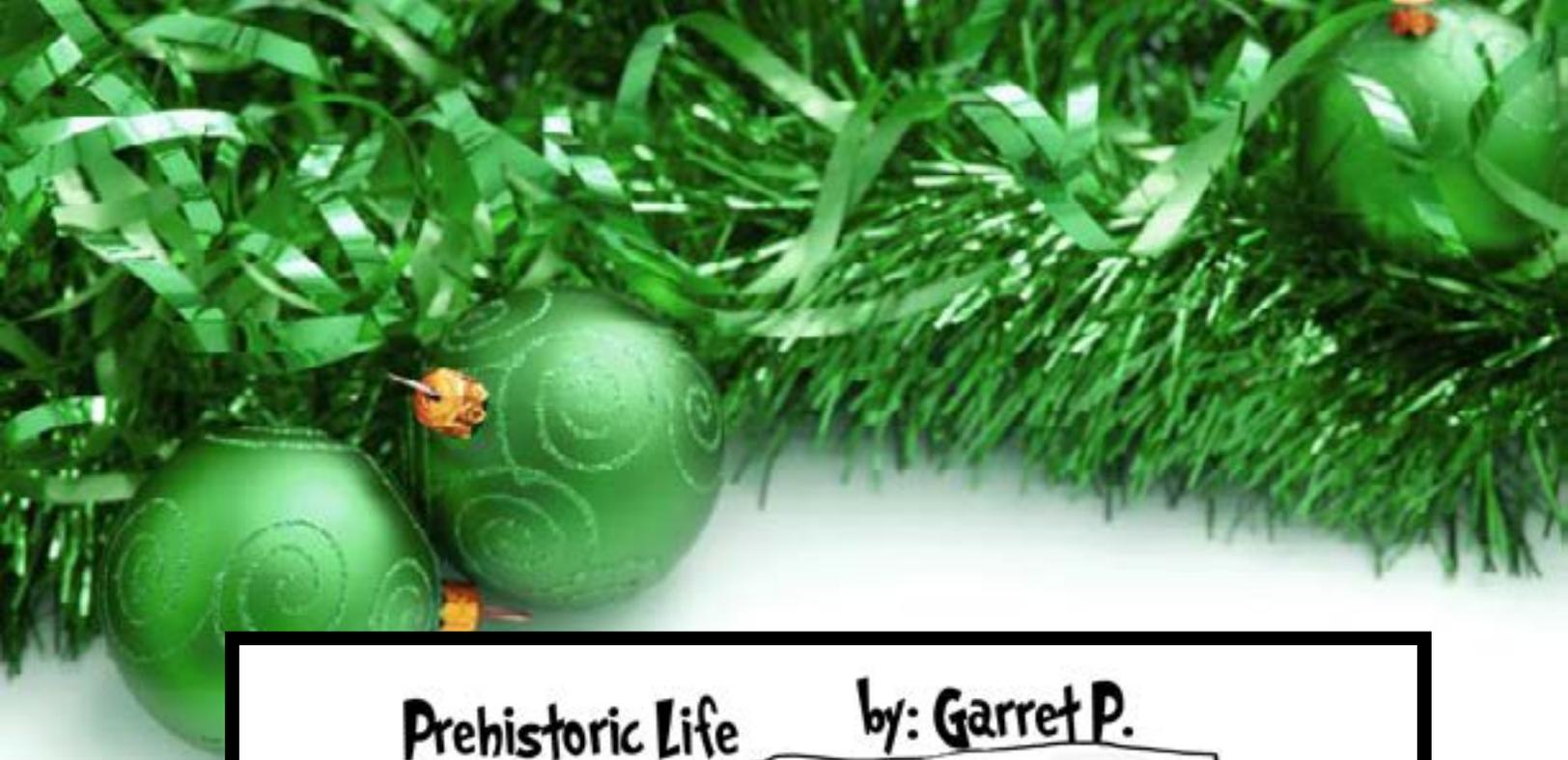
There are a lot of benefits from one to the other. The real Christmas tree has been used for decades and the fake one has just started taking off in the last 10 years. The real Christmas tree you can go out with your family and cut it down yourself and bring it home and decorate it, so for tradition's sake I can understand that. Also for the fake Christmas tree it will be very hard to keep going with family tradition because all you have to do is to pick it up from the store one time. The only real tradition you can do with a fake Christmas tree is decorate it.

Now for a look at the environment. The fake Christmas tree is not the best for the environment, being made up of plastics and metals, but since you can use it every year it really doesn't matter. On the other hand, you can purchase a fresh Christmas tree every year and still not hurt the environment since most Christmas trees are grown the year before ahead of time.

Many people prefer the real Christmas tree. Senior Diane Tomczak's family does not feel like it's truly Christmas until they bring the real Christmas tree home. Senior Meg Lantz's family also chooses a real Christmas tree because they believe it provides more Christmas cheer when picking it out.

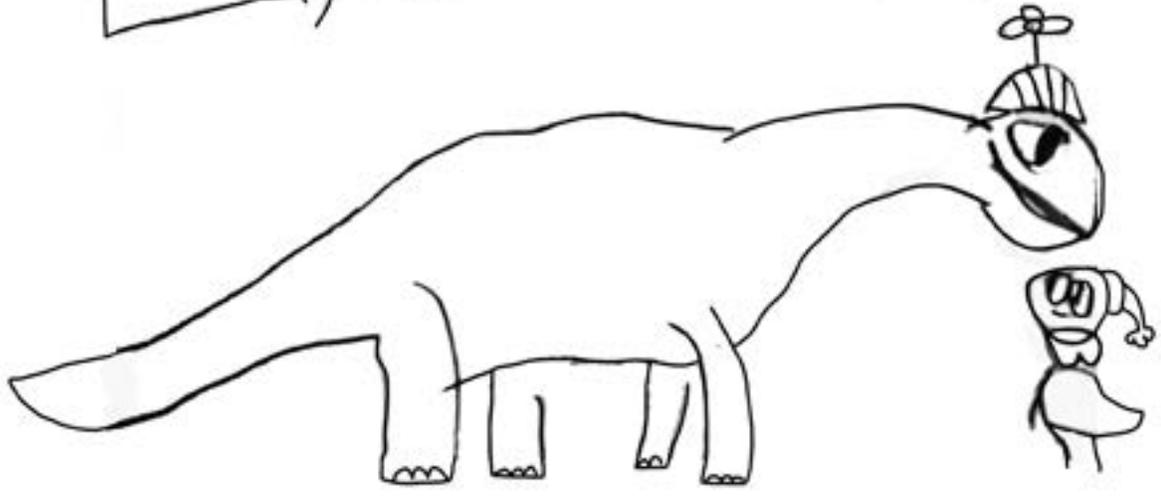
Senior Nathan Gallucci wants a fake Christmas tree. He says it is cheaper and easier to keep the house clean without having to deal with all the needles. Finally my family prefers fake trees because we have a lot of animals and they are nosy and like to bite off needles and even sometimes branches. Also it's a lot safer to have a fake Christmas tree because it's less of a fire hazard.





Prehistoric Life

by: Garret P.



Christmas Cookies

by: *Diane Tomczak*

Since most of us are going to be home for the holidays, here is a fun Christmas cookie recipe to make.

Crème Brûlée Sugar Cookies

INGREDIENTS:

3/4 c. (1 1/2 sticks) butter, softened
1/2 c. packed brown sugar
1/2 c. granulated sugar
1 large egg
1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
2 c. all-purpose flour
2 tsp. cornstarch
1 tsp. baking soda
1/4 tsp. kosher salt

FOR THE FROSTING

1 (8-oz.) block cream cheese, softened
1 1/4 c. powdered sugar
1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
1/4 c. granulated sugar

DIRECTIONS:

Preheat oven to 350° and line two cookie sheets with parchment. Cream butter and sugars until light and fluffy, 3 to 4 minutes. Mix in egg and vanilla.

In another bowl, whisk together flour, cornstarch, baking soda, and salt, then add mixture to wet ingredients and mix until smooth. Dough will be thick.

Using a small cookie scoop, place tablespoon balls of dough onto parchment-lined cookie sheets. Press down lightly on each cookie to flatten slightly. Bake until edges are just starting to brown, 9 to 10 minutes.

Remove from oven and let cool 2 to 3 minutes, then transfer to a cooling rack to cool completely.

Make frosting: Beat cream cheese until smooth. Add powdered sugar and vanilla and mix until smooth.

Put sugar into a small bowl. Spread about a tablespoon of frosting onto tops of each cookie, then press into granulated sugar, coating frosting with sugar.

Just before serving, use a kitchen torch to caramelize sugar on top, then set aside to cool. Store cookies in the fridge for up to 4 days.



Adelman's Christmas

by: *Lilyana Alvarez*

Where is your favorite place to look at Christmas decorations? Have you ever stopped by the Adelman's when looking?

Tradition is something that is supposed to live on forever, and alumni Billy Adelman is doing just that with his family. With over 300 Christmas decorations, the Adelman's house is now one of Bloomington-Normal's favorite places to see during the Christmas season. Billy Adelman has been decorating his house and accumulating hundreds of Christmas decorations for 24 years and counting so that eventually he can give at least 100 to each of his six children.

From little toy soldiers to multiple nativity scenes, the Adelman's house is not one that you want to miss when you are looking at Christmas lights. When talking to Charlie Adelman (a senior at Central), he said, "We usually start decorating the weekend after Thanksgiving; it's usually done by the weekend or two after."

Considering how long the process is, the family said the work is always worth it in the end and the community thanks them since it brings so much joy to people's faces. With the pandemic going on a lot of people are feeling down right now and need some cheering up, so we are very grateful for the Adelmans and everyone else that decorates their houses for the season to help keep spirits alive after a rough year.



Chess Club Update

by: *Henry Cowser*

Despite all of the restrictions and problems caused by COVID-19 this year, the Chess Club had a very successful start to its season, boasting a seven-member team until the school went remote just before Thanksgiving.

In the first two months when school was in person, they practiced every week with long-standing chess coach Mr. Douglas Micklich on Tuesdays. Unfortunately, the members have not been able to meet as an in-person group since then.

With almost entirely underclassmen, the team has plenty of room to grow in numbers and skill throughout future years.

On Thursdays they still managed to play in several tournaments against other schools through an online program called LiChess which they are now using to keep their skills up by practicing with each other.

The team has done well this year, especially against older and more experienced opponents. In the words of Mr. Micklich, "The season has been challenging and rewarding in several ways. To start off, our team is comprised mainly of freshmen, with only two upperclassmen. The teams we are competing against have primarily juniors and seniors." Micklich also explains, "I am quite pleased with the progress we have made with our play against these teams. The second challenge is how we compete. The onset of COVID has changed the method as the chess league uses the LiChess platform for all competitions."

Though the team does not know if the State competition is happening this year, the members are happy they had such a successful season so far.





Merry Christmas



from the Herald Staff

