



KNIGHT TIMES

IC CATHOLIC PREP
ELMHURST, IL
WWW.ICCATHOLICPREP.ORG
2019-2020, VOLUME 6
JANUARY 2020

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THE SCHOOL FOR INDEPENDENT THINKERS



Meeting up With Ms. Cindy Ortiz

By: Maria Marsico

Do you need someone to go to when you have a problem? Do you need help getting organized? Ms. Ortiz is the person you should go to. Ms. Ortiz is one of Immaculate Conception Catholic Prep's school counselors. This is Ms. Ortiz's second year at ICCP. Ms. Ortiz's favorite part about ICCP is its community and how ICCP is like a family.



Ms. Ortiz has been a counselor for four years and a therapist for eleven years. Mrs. Ortiz knew since she was a child that she wanted to pursue a career in psychology. The person who inspired her to pursue a career in psychology is her high school psychology teacher. Her favorite part of her job is getting to know students and being supportive of their social, emotional, academic, college and career goals.

Ms. Ortiz is in charge of ICCP's GirlTalk. GirlTalk is a social group at ICCP that allows ICCP's female students to come together and talk about life as a girl. This academic year, GirlTalk has help spread the word about the Milaan Foundation. The Milaan Foundation tries to help girls and young women in India pursue their dreams. Ms. Ortiz hopes that this social group will transition into a club.

Ms. Ortiz is also a mother of two. What Ms. Ortiz loves about being a mom is, "The unconditional love" and "being challenged to be a better person every day".

When asked what advice she would give to future and current students at ICCP, Ms. Ortiz replied, "Get involved. You will only discover your talents if you experience different clubs and sports". Looking passed high school and onto college, Ms. Ortiz would tell students who are interested in becoming a school counselor, "Develop relationships with staff, students, and outside supports/community. These relationships benefit the students". Ms. Ortiz is definitely a person students should get to know.

What I Wish I Knew About College Presentation

By: Katarina Vorne

The college admissions process can loom over students throughout high school. Stories about valedictorians being denied by their safety schools; foreign acronyms, such as FAFSA, ED/REA/RD, and HYPS; and College Confidential posts by students with perfect 36's on their ACT's, 15 AP credits, and a dozen leadership positions in impressive four-year extracurriculars all fuel applicants' anxiety. The whole process can feel intimidating, and understandably so, but with careful planning and ample time, students can and will get into one of their top-choice schools.

There is no specific "formula" students can apply to earn acceptance into great schools, as the college admissions process is subjective and admissions officers are looking to create a diverse student body. While this might cause students to worry that the process is out of their control, there is a great opportunity in the qualitative factors of the application. Rather than a computer simply ranking students based on their test scores, admissions officers seek out students who are qualified for their school, but more importantly, students who share values with their college or university.

University admissions offices typically have more than one officer read each application or review them with an admissions committee to ensure that every application receives fair consideration. Admissions officers are also talented in identifying applicants who would be genuinely excited to attend their school and would make positive contributions to their community.

When evaluating applications, admissions officers first look at the student's academic record, encompassing everything from standardized testing to the rigor of the curriculum. Some schools even have specific academic standards that applicants must meet to be considered, particularly in GPA and standardized test scores, so it is imperative that students research the average SAT/ACT and GPA of schools they are interested in and set realistic goals for themselves accordingly.

Another important part of the college application is involvement in extracurricular and athletic activities. Two of the most common mistakes students make in this area are joining activities just because they believe colleges want to see them on their application and/or taking on too much and joining too many activities. Universities would rather see students deeply involved in a few clubs, sports, or organizations, showing continuity and progression throughout high school.

They also consider the impact students make in the communities that they are a part of and activities in which they are involved. This can be in the form of leadership, service, or any contribution that benefits the members of those communities and activities in a novel way. Universities are always looking for students that stand out amongst their peers. These unique qualities that help an applicant catch the attention of admissions officers are known as "hooks" and include anything from being a legacy student to winning a national award to having an interesting background or perspective. However, hooks are not necessarily something students are born into; hooks can be created by pursuing passions in unique and impactful ways, such as leading a large-scale volunteer effort or developing a distinctive style of art.

Finally, admissions officers get an image of what applicants are like as individuals, including their character, work ethic, and values, through letters of recommendation and essays. Students should ask the teachers who know them best to write their letters of recommendation. These letters give admissions officers a perspective of the applicant from a reputable source and insights into what the student is like in the classroom. Another part of the application that helps admissions officers form an image of the applicant are the application essays. These essays can help admissions officers gauge how much time you spent on your application, how interested you are their university, and how you would fit in there. These are not something that can be written well last minute and take a considerable amount of planning, time, and effort. Luckily, most universities post their essay prompts the summer before senior year so that serious applicants can get a head start on their applications.

The college admissions process is an exciting part of high school and is certainly not something to be feared. Students have most of high school to figure out what their interests are and to what schools they would like to apply. If those four years are spent well, students are sure to have a great college experience.

Boys Basketball

By: John Falduto

The IC Catholic Prep varsity boys basketball team started off the 2019-2020 regular season with a dominant 4-0 performance at the annual Coal City/Manteno Thanksgiving Tournament, capturing the championship with a 57-51 victory over Morris High School. "We knew we had to start off on a high note," said returning senior guard Zach Jordan. "We worked well together as a team and gave ourselves momentum heading into conference play."

Shortly after the Thanksgiving tournament, the team traveled up to Head Coach TJ Tyrrell's family lake house in Michigan. The annual retreat included games, discussions, movies, and several other team-bonding activities over the one night stay. "Coach is a big believer in positivity and bringing everyone together. The retreat is something we all look forward to and allows us to get to know each other better off the court," said senior Norvice Landon.

As they have in recent years, the Knights continued to load up their non-conference schedule; this season has presented the team with possibly their toughest slate ever, including Fenwick, York, Benet Academy, and St. Patrick High School. Although they have not managed to emerge victorious in one of these highly anticipated matchups, players have voiced how these games have made them better: "We are showing everyone that we can hang with some of the best teams in the state," said junior Chauncey Lee. "We welcome the competition and know that it will only help us in the long run."

As of January 24th, the Knights (14-8) have come to hold conference wins over Guerin Prep, Walther Christian, Riverside-Brookfield, St. Francis, Aurora Christian, and St. Edwards. The upcoming schedule includes Chicago Christian, St. Francis, and Francis Parker, as the Knights look to continue to move towards their first 20 win season since 2017-2018.



Girls Basketball

By: Liz Closterides

Basketball is a fascinating and enjoyable sport here at ICCP. Our basketball teams all focus on teamwork and sportsmanship. The girls have been working and practicing hard for upcoming games. Varsity girls have been up to a good start. Junior Varsity has also been improving and stepping it up on the court. The Freshman girls here at ICCP have become better players, learning new plays and skills every day from new Freshman coach, Ms. Meghan Doyle.

The teams have faced many schools including Aurora Central Catholic, Riverside Brookfield, and Downers Grove North High School. Coaches here play a big part in the girls season. Head Coach Mr. Todd Fisher is always cheering on the girls from Varsity to JV to Freshman. The girls will be working hard for the rest of the season to keep on improving and striving to become better players. Taking on The Latin School of Chicago on January 20th, JV Knights took a big victory with a score of 41-24. Freshman Mia McMillen played up this game and scored 4 points. Sophomore Caterina Calabria scored a total of 19 points, shooting every shot capable.



There are many challenging moments players experiences on the court. For example, during the end of game, every extra second is needed to make one more point for the team. As a point-guard on Freshman team here at ICCP, I have learned a lot and I am excited to keep playing these next four years of high school. However, basketball is a sport that requires hard work, determination, constant practice. This be accomplished with the help and encouragement from coaches and friends on the court. We always encourage more people to come to the games and cheer the Lady Knight's up!

However, perhaps the only expectation one should have prior to going to Kairos is to not have any expectations about it at all. While it has been said countless times, you only get out of it, what you put into it. Thus, the only way to truly involve oneself in something is by eliminating all preconceived notions and allowing oneself to be fully immersed. Maybe the reason why Kairos is more similar to Area 51 than it is to any other class retreats is that it is truly meant to be a transformative and profound experience.

Kairos: ICCP's Very Own Area 51

By: Emilio Ortega

By now, most people have heard of Kairos. Yet, most people only know that it involves upperclassmen and that it happens once a year. That is by design, however, because the very essence of what has made Kairos Kairos for more than a decade is that it is ultra top-secret.

Kairos usually takes place in the first couple of months after Christmas break, but preparations are made months in advance to be ready for the incoming class of Seniors who will take the four-day retreat.

Part of what makes Kairos unique is that it is run by members of the participants' own class, unlike the Freshman, Sophomore, or even Junior retreats. Students wishing to be Kairos leaders have to submit a complete application during their Junior year and attend that year's Kairos retreat with the class above them. Senior Matthew Cira, one of the student leaders for the gentlemen retreat, commented on what a student could expect going on Kairos: "I can't go into too much detail about it, but it's more about finding yourself...it's a four day, overnight retreat...you can expect a fairly life-changing experience."

Arguably, what makes Kairos so intriguing is that the entirety of its events and festivities of it is a heavily-guarded secret. Ask anybody that has gone on Kairos and they will tell you that the only way to find out what Kairos is about is to experience it yourself. Over the years, several outlandish and spicy rumors have even circulated among classes about what exactly goes on at Kairos, only further adding to its legend.



Theatrefest

By: Nora Kenny

On Thursday January 9th, ten ICCP students drove down to Illinois State University to participate in this year's Theaterfest. Theaterfest is an annual weekend long event hosted to bring high school theatre programs from across the state together to learn more about acting, singing, futures in the arts, and how to manage their programs. This year's theme was "I Still Believe". The arts are powerful but sometimes the effort put into it seems fruitless. This theme focused the attention on the fantastic and oftentimes awe inspiring things that creativity brings to the world.

Every year, a musical is chosen for the festival and students from all over Illinois audition to be cast. "Aida" was chosen for this year's all-state show and it was truly incredible to watch. Though the all-state show is the biggest musical at the festival, independent high schools enter to bring their fall shows down to state as well. Some of the big names at state were Beauty and the Beast, Macbeth, and Matilda. The opening ceremony featured Under the Streetlight and their covers of classic rock hits. All five thousand attendees were dazzled by the performances of fellow high schoolers and professional musicians.

Though the shows put on were truly the cream of the crop, students made time during the busy weekend to attend workshops about all things theatre. Students honed their acting skills by learning how the professionals portray deep emotions with a single look. Others learned how to make props to make scenes come to life. Theaterfest was a time of enlightening and wonder and none of it could have been possible without the support of Mrs. Jazwiec and her daughter, Morgan. The attendees would like to give a thank you to the school for allowing them to be a part of this year's event. All are already looking forward to the excitement of next year.

