

# The



# Signal

*The Official Newspaper of Fenton High School*

**Friday, January 29, 2016**

## *Freshman Verenice Ruiz Named Miss Teen Illinois Latina*

**By Karsen Idelman**

Here at Fenton we have our very own Miss Teen Illinois Latina! Verenice Ruiz, class of 2019, was crowned Miss Teen Illinois Latina earlier this year. Verenice will now go on to represent the state of Illinois at the National Pageant this year.

Prior to the MTIL pageant Verenice practiced tirelessly for two weeks in order to prepare. Ruiz would be competing in three different categories, evening gown, swimsuit and a Mexican heritage themed portion, where the girls wore Mexican costumes and gave a speech about it.

The pageant festivities lasted a whole weekend, beginning on Friday, October 30th and ending Sunday, November 1st. The actual pageant itself was on Sunday, while some preliminaries were on Friday and Saturday. On the 30th each of the contestants had individual interviews with the panel of judges. Then, following that was the Mexican Costume Runway.

Another portion of the preliminary competition was a speech. Each of the contestants had to give a short explanation in front of audience members and judges as to why they should and/or want to be the next Miss Teen Illinois Latina.

On the final day, the girls competed in swimsuit and evening gown; once again in front of an audience and panel of judges. After that, the judges picked the top three girls in the teen category, and Verenice was one of them. The final three girls did one last walk in their evening gowns before the final results.

When the MC announced Verenice as the new Miss Teen Illinois Latina she was overjoyed, "I was in shock and desperately looking into the crowd trying to find my mom. I got crowned and got my sash then I saw her, her teary eyes met mine and she said 'I'm so proud of you.' I think sobbed harder when I hugged my mom that day than any other day of my life."

Some events that Miss Ruiz has attended as Miss Teen Illinois Latina have been charity events to raise funds for less fortunate kids, a toy drive, and a Winter Gala hosted by the current Miss Pre-Teen Illinois Latina and Miss Little Illinois Latina.

Verenice is honored to have been chosen as Miss Teen Illinois Latina and hopes she can represent the Miss Illinois Latina Organization well, "It's been a dream come true and I cannot wait to see what this year has in store for me!"



Photo courtesy of Verenice Ruiz

## **Fenton Joins Democracy Schools Civics Program**

**By Ava-Clare Steed**

In your time at Fenton, have you ever felt as though you had no power over the system? That school was the boss and you were a slave? Alas, a new era is peeking over the horizon for Fenton High School! Welcome to Democracy Schools, an innovative program meant to enhance Civics in our curriculum, offer more opportunities for community service, and to broaden the student voice!

In the effort to prepare students for life after high school, many changes have been made to Fenton, including creating a more collegiate setting (what with the fancy new Commons), so why not bring to light

the civility of adulthood- or at least prepare the youth to be the foundation of a more civil civilization?

We have nothing to lose, but much to gain, by becoming a Democracy school. The program is already in its Assessment phase (Phase 2 of 3), and is led by the Mrs. Ward and the equally sensational Social Studies department. What changes can you expect will be made in the next year or so? Mrs. Ward is looking forward to implementing some extra curricular opportunities that further expound the realistic application of civics- such as Amnesty International (examining human rights violations) or Model UN.

Those of you currently en-

rolled in social studies classes may have noticed a survey sent to you to gain your opinion on where Fenton performs its strongest and weakest as an institution. Apart from the occasional survey, one can expect monthly meetings with the principal in which a few randomly selected students may enjoy a lunch with Mr. Ongtengco to discuss whatever comes to mind.

Democracy Schools also places an emphasis on making the study of civics itself a more prominent theme in social studies classes, but lucky for us, Fenton already has that in place (think Intro to Soc). Fenton has also been exceptionally progressive compared to other schools simply because there is a community service require-

ment of 25 hours to graduate, and we offer services like the Food Pantry that transforms Fenton into a beacon in the center of the community. The main idea is to amplify community outreach opportunities for students and therefore bring the entire community together.

Being a Democracy School isn't just beneficial for the students, however, once the school is recognized as a Democracy School, there are opportunities to receive grants to carry out the "5 Common Elements for Democracy Schools": Vision and Leadership, Curriculum, Staff Development, School-Community Connections, and School Climate.



# 'It's a Sign of Respect': Hats, Hoodies Off in School

By Rina Focht

Here at Fenton, there is a specific part of the dress code that is violated on a daily basis. This one simple rule is as follows: "Head coverings; hats, bandannas (unless for religious or medical reasons) and sunglasses are to be removed as well. Head coverings and sunglasses are not to be worn in the building at any time including afternoon and evening events. Head coverings of any kind worn on campus out of doors must be worn as intended and may not reflect gang affiliation" (Fenton student handbook).

This rule is also considers hoods, which is where the rule tends to be broken the most. Once you enter the school, you should remove your hat or hood immediately. The rule includes before and after school as well.

While in an interview with Mrs. Pomahac, I asked her about wearing them to basketball games,

considering they are not during school hours, but they are at school.

She simply told me, "We do not allow hats at basketball games. Football games we don't police that as much. If a student is wearing it in an inappropriate way, which is really what lead to the rule, then yes we probably would address it, but we do not prevent them from wearing them."

If you are caught wearing a head or hood in school, usually you are given a detention. If the issue is being repeated often, your dean will call your parent and discuss how to avoid the situation again.

When I asked why you could not wear them she replied with, "I have been here 29 years and we never allowed kids to wear hats and hoods. Hats are typically removed when a student enters a building as more of a polite thing to do. There was a time when kids would wear hats for after school and they would use

them in an inappropriate way. They would use them to almost to identify themselves with a particular gang, or a particular group. We found if we didn't allow them at all, it removed that opportunity."

If you think the rule is not fair, you are not alone. Although there are not many schools around here that do allow them, still many students wish they were allowed to wear them, while other students don't feel phased by it.

Alyssa Silva, a freshman says, "It doesn't phase me. I don't think it is unfair, it is just a sign of respect."

When it is very cold in the school, there are some exceptions to wearing them in school.

I asked Mrs. Pomahac about the days when our classrooms are sometimes really cold too, "You know what at that point I have allowed teacher discretion, if your room is 50, and a student wants to put a knit cap on, I am not going to argue that point.

But those instances are very rare."

The only time that a student is allowed to wear a hat or hood during school, is if you are going out for gym class.

Also, when I asked if you could wear a hood if it is only about halfway up, I was told, "I don't push that as much, I don't think teachers fight that fight as much as the full on hood. Some kids just like the way it feels around their neck, I have gone as far as to call their parents to talk to them to see if maybe their child just should not wear clothing with hoods, because they cannot control themselves in keeping the hood off of their head."

Other than those times, hats, hoods, or any other head coverings (other than for religious or medical reasons) should not be worn in the school at any time.

## Big Fish Swims to Fenton

By Aleksandra Brzys

Every year, we look forward to Fenton's drama department and the show that they will put on in the spring. This year's musical, *Big Fish*, is no exception and runs April 21-23. The work starts months in advance. First off, the directors need to choose a musical.

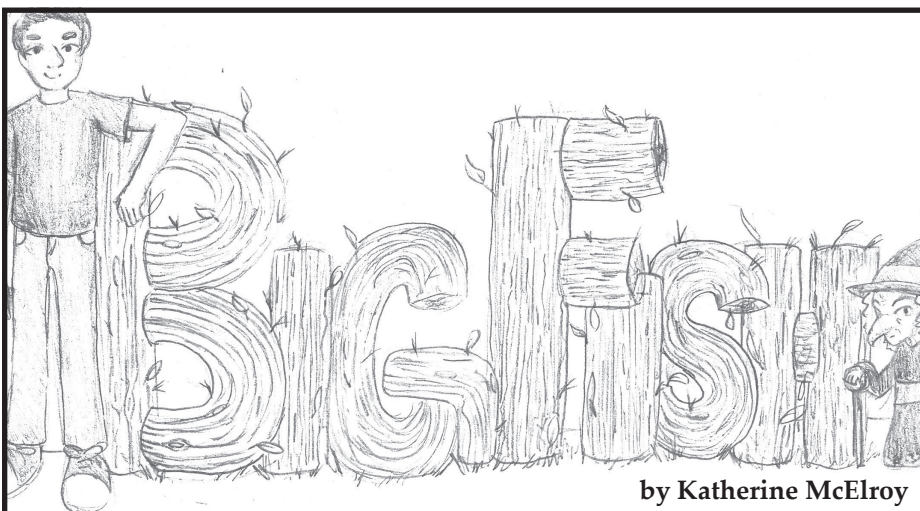
When asked about this process, director Dr. Mussman said, "We look for shows that we think would show off the talents of our students. We have very talented students and try to choose a larger cast to show off that talent."

Luckily, *Big Fish* does just that. It features a large cast to tell a young man a very intriguing story about his dad's life. *Big Fish* is an emotional story, plus it has great music that will be able to show off the great voices we have here. Finding the perfect cast involves auditions.

Dr. Mussman said, "Every student has something they can offer. Our job is to figure out what each student's talents are and what they can bring to the show. We then try to figure out how we can use everyone to make the show better."

Everyone involved in the musical also gets used to spending a lot of time with each other.

This time together really bonds the team, as junior Lauren Gadomski said, "Being in the musical is great because you really form a bond with everyone and you become like a little family."



by Katherine McElroy

## Competitive Theater Gears Up

By Emily Patterson

Contest Drama and Group Interpretation (GI) are in full swing. For those who don't know, Contest Drama and GI are competitive theater in which the shows have certain restrictions put upon them and then compete with those shows in March.

The GI show this year is *Big Fish*, the same title as that of Fenton's Spring musical, but a different presentation entirely. As described by Ms. Hendricks, the story is that of a child and parent relationship in which the two are trying to understand each other. For anyone who has seen the movie or the musical, the lead of *Big Fish*, Will, is originally a male part. However, GI has changed the character to Willa, played by senior, Chelsea Cabanada. The plot follows Willa as she attempts to discover the reality of her father's life as compared to the mythology that he told her while she was growing up. "But maybe the mythology is more interesting than real life," Ms. Hendricks said.

This year's Contest Drama show is "Elephant's Graveyard," a based-on-a-true-story tale of an elephant and her circus when they wind up performing in a small Tennessee town in the early 1900's. Mr. Mitchell describes this story as

the clashing of two groups of people and how they deal with their actions, as well as a cautionary tale. This is the first time that Fenton's Contest Drama will be performing a show based on real events.

Both Ms. Hendricks and Mr. Mitchell are very excited for this year's competition. "We will be in a new sectional after more than a decade going to Fremd High School," Mr. Mitchell said. "I really enjoy working with the people at Fremd and am a bit disappointed that I will not be working with them on the sectional committee. However, I also am really looking forward to working with a group of different people and being a different site." As well, this year's Contest Drama has a lot of new faces, with only two seniors and over 80% of the cast having never done Contest Drama before. In contrast, Ms. Hendricks's cast is made up mostly of seniors, so she is excited to see their last GI.

With all of the effort and passion that's going into these shows, they're bound to be exceptional performances. Both GI and Contest Drama will be showcased in the Fenton auditorium on March 17th, and the sectional competition will be on March 19th. The sectional competition is open to public viewing.



# Franke, Galindo to Represent at All-State IMEA Festival

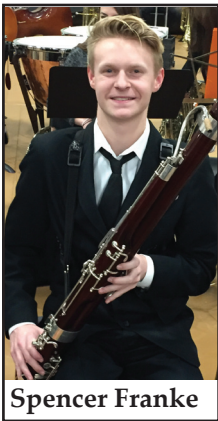
By Ava-Clare Steed

Congratulations to Spencer Franke (and his bassoon) for the new title as an All-State Band student (the first representing Fenton High School since 2012), and to Anthony Galindo for being the first ever competitor from Fenton High School in the composition competition- not to mention winning first place in the remix category.

Both of the aforementioned students are gaining valuable experience and a head start on their future careers. IMEA (Illinois Music Educator's Association) hosts festivals for music students to partake in from across the state. In order to qualify, both of these young men nailed their

audition for the district festival where only the most talented musicians are chosen to participate.

Spencer, since he scored very highly on his audition, qualified to be a part of the All-State Band ensemble. These rigorous auditions are amazing practice for students to truly understand what to expect at a high stakes, college level music audition. Not only that, but Spencer will be



Spencer Franke



Anthony Galindo

participating in collaboration and sit ins with other musicians at around the same skill level and preparation as him. What's next for Spencer? Yet another audition- this time is to ascertain the chair placement of the All-State band.

Anthony's experience, although slightly different, was just as rigorous (if not more so). He sent in a remarkable recording of a remix he produced from a Jackie Greene song and left it to a panel of judges to de-

cide his fate. Thanks to his innovative arrangement, his interpretation of the song won him the limelight. What does this achievement mean for him? He can look forward to instruction from a professional composer and collaboration with other composers. Moreover, he will have the opportunity to network, grow as a composer, and learn numerous new compositional techniques at his workshops.

Stay tuned in folks, because the IMEA All-State convention will be happening January 27th-30th. Again, both Spencer and Anthony: wonderful work and know that we're all proud of you for your dedication and impressive skill.

## "What Do You Like Best About the School Improvements?"



"My favorite part about the new cafeteria is the high tables and chairs so I can sit back and relax while I enjoy my lunch." -Jill Mrugacz

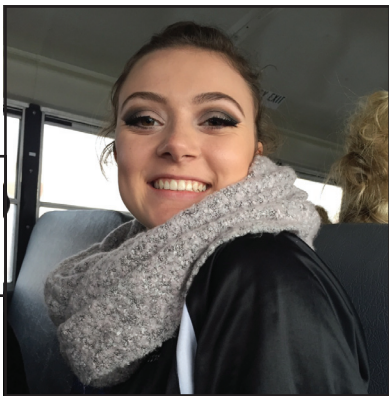


"I am very excited about the new cafeteria and commons area. I think that it a great thing for the students." -Mrs. Williams.

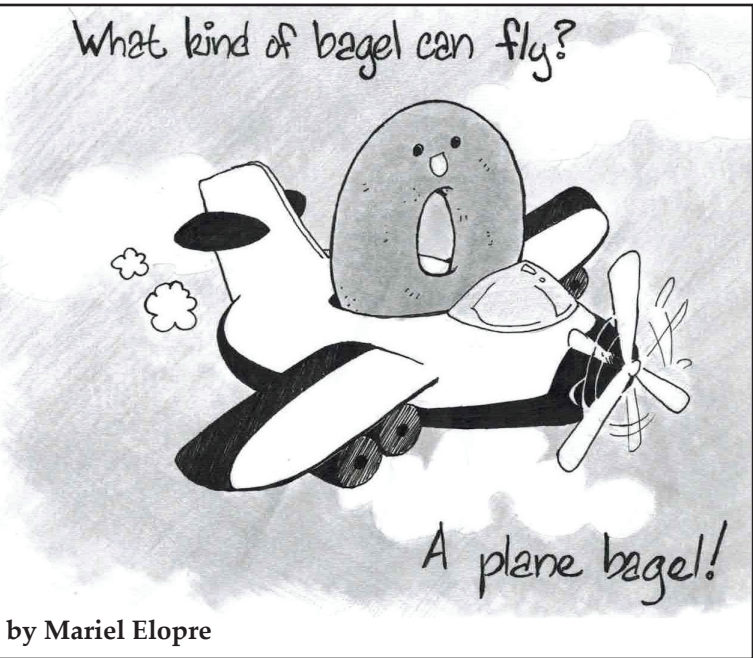


"I like how open it is and now I can get to my classes faster." -Elmer Alvarez

"I really love the new commons area with all the couches and tables." -Oliwia Bochnacka



"I like how the new cafeteria and commons area are both very spacious and there is a lot of natural lighting." -Jake Utterback



by Mariel Elope

## STUNT, BRAVE Host About Face Theatre

By Sonya Martinez

There are many different ways people choose to express themselves. From writing to drawing to music or anything really. About Face Theatre is a group that uses acting to "advance the national dialogue on gender and sexual identity, and to challenge and entertain audiences in Chicago, across the country, and around the world". To put it more simply, About Face Theatre is a theatre group that put on plays that focus on asking thoughtful questions about the LGBTQIA community.

This year STUNT and Brave have invited About Face Theatre to perform their original play *It's For Real*. *It's For Real* is based on real life experiences of the actors and connects issues around race, class, sexuality, age, gender, self esteem, and family. "We're excited and hope students take advantage of this opportunity," says Mrs.Valente. Both her and Ms. Rajendran are excited to bring the group to Fenton because they talk important issues and inspire healthy conversations.

This project has been a coordinated effort between STUNT and Brave to bring awareness to the school as both groups are committed to social justice for all students. The play will be performed at 2:20 -3:20 pm at the Lewis-Huffman auditorium on February 2, 2016. Admission is free. We hope to see you there!



# 'Positive Attitude,' 'Improved Chemistry Aids Basketball

By Gerardo Garcia

It's halfway through the basketball season and despite some tough times, things are beginning to look up. Starting with the freshman boys, coach Williams says, "Every year it seems like the kids get a little more talented," though he also said that this year is, "One of my toughest freshman classes so far. The effort is always there, but we need to work harder."

Despite the greater starting skill the team has been slower to develop in certain areas. Colin Norris said, "Myself as well as the team need more hustle."

Hustle is currently the team's main concern. "If you hold some stuff back then, you're going to walk out of there not feeling proud about wearing that bison jersey," said coach Banks.

While the team works to improve they've been having a difficult season. Despite some tough losses Diante Dale said "we're good at bringing each other up, and looking at the positives."

After a loss to Aurora Central Catholic, there has been a noticeable increase in effort. Hopefully this will help the team get over the hump as individual players begin to show personal growth. Coach Will is excited about seeing B team players getting time in on A team games, and coach B. has been noticing "sparks of

potential."

Moving up, the sophomores are 9-8. Coach O'Connell says the team has "done a great job at playing defense and really playing hard."

Players performing particularly well are: Andrew Hill and freshman Jeff Andrews. Coach OC. says Andrew, "does it all," from rebounds to scoring, while Jeff is their main ball handler and also very capable of scoring.

Andrew says their good defense has contributed to their record, and that Coach OC. has done a good job at preparing them. Now coach is working with the team to improve offensively and become, "more of a threat."

The boys recognize the need for this improvement so they can better keep the leads they earn in games. Otherwise the team has been doing a great job at rebounding and playing as a team.

With performance in combination with effort, Coach O'Connell. says the boys "Are never out of any game, and never give up."

Also performing well, the varsity team has already almost scored as many wins as they did last season.

"In the games you can tell that we're getting out there and running more," said Bryan Larsen.

Coach Payton said, "Everyone



Photo by Gerardo Garcia

is doing a good job of being positive, at being teammates and being ready when their name is called to step up."

Payton credits some of this to the team's improved chemistry. Bryan testified to this saying, "When we say family on six, we really mean it now."

Some of the players also give credit to the new coach, coach Kopp. Bryan says, "He brings a lot to the table," and Joe Andrews added, "We love you coach Kopp!"

Even with the improvements so far the boys still know there is work to be done.

The varsity team has an

aggressive and dedicated approach to improvement as Payton mentions. "We always want to improve...skill work, performance, attitude, abilities; we want all of those things to get better every single day."

In addition their everyday strides, Tyler Santagata wants to see the team develop a more consistent starting line-up. Others want to work on starting games just as strongly as they finish them. As the season continues, one can only expect to see increased improvement and performance from the Fenton basketball players.

## Wrestling Approaches Season with 'Unwavering Focus'



By Gerardo Garcia

Coach Butz says it's "a tribute to prior success that freshmen from last year are performing exceptionally well as sophomores."

Returning wrestlers, now veterans of the program, have been getting in practice time with Varsity level wrestlers. With this experience and improving skill the Frosh/Soph team has been performing well.

"Situational awareness has improved. If we get into certain scrambles or situations our guys have a pretty good idea of what they need to do to get points or to get out," said coach Butz.

Butz also added that he's seen improved commitment from wrestlers, and has seen leaders on the team emerge from surprising places. As a result the team has a record of 13-0-1. Having suffered no losses, save one tie, the Frosh Soph boys are undefeated. The win over Riverside Brookfield brings the team to at least its tenth consecutive conference victory.

The Varsity team has also been keeping up the pressure, despite losing

a large and talented group with last year's graduating class.

Sebastian Kacper said that "everyone is willing to cut and make weight," which is an important part of the commitment.

The effort the boys put forward contributes to their record of 18-5, and rank of 15.

"Overall the guys are working harder, getting tougher and improving fundamentals, with that seeing more consistent success," said Hastings.

Something else that contributes to their success is Hastings' work to keep the techniques in the program up to date. "Different levels of competition use different techniques that will trickle down."

As different techniques like scrambling gain popularity the program has to adapt to them. To be able to keep up, Hastings says, they will "attend clinics, college meets and talk to college coaches to continually improve what we're doing."

It's cool to see coaches put in the extra homework to improve the program, but of course it always comes down to the performance on the mat. Angel Nava says that the team has been good at supporting each other, as well as stepping up their intensity. At the same time Sebastian would also say that there could be an increased sense of urgency.

At times lacking a sense of 'urgency' could land wrestlers in uncomfortable positions. Kyle Higgins says that when the boys find themselves in these positions, "they fight it off and try their best."

Areas for improvement vary from athlete to athlete, but what won't vary is their commitment. Angel wanted to express how much the wrestlers do.

The daily practices are, "a commitment. You give up time with your friends and girlfriends," but the wrestlers wouldn't do it if they didn't love it. The individual sacrifices and hard work of every athlete have all added up to an overall formidable program.

The focus of the Bison wrestlers is sure to remain unwavering as they set their eyes on their next goal.