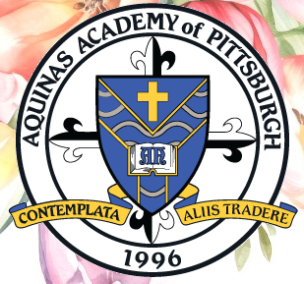


The Dumb Ox

April 2026



Excellent Electives: Journalism vs. Yearbook

By: Jules Shemer

Aquinas Academy offers many electives, including Journalism, led by Mrs. Mullican and Doña Lynch and Yearbook, led by Señora Heffern and Ms. McGrath. Both classes meet during lunch time and do not interfere with either science lunch classes or each other.

What are Journalism classes like? Journalism classes are built around a four-class cycle. In the first class of the cycle, every student picks a topic that he or she would like to write about. They then write an outline for the next class, which consists of writing a lead, getting quotes, and gathering pictures. For the second class of the cycle, journalists start writing their first draft, which is due the third class. In the third class, each student picks another student's first draft to edit and the editors give each student their edits to incorporate into their final draft. For the fourth class, the final draft is due and writers and editors spend the class reviewing "Snips and Quips" that they have gathered over the month.

Junior Aurora Predis, praises Journalism stating, "I love the ability to write in a school newspaper, and even though there is added workload, it is not too hard to manage. I would definitely recommend it to all who are interested."

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Alexa Risdon

Julianna Shemer

Laila Tuffiash

What are Yearbook classes like? Ms. McGrath explains, "During Yearbook class, students select backgrounds, create page layouts and set templates, fonts, and titles. Students also collect, edit, and place photos for all lower, middle, and high school events, clubs, sports, and activities throughout the year."

Senior Leah Anthony, who has been in yearbook since sophomore year, exalts it saying, "Personally, I really enjoy designing the cover and creating an image that represents something the whole school can relate to. It's also the highlight of the year for little kids as well. It's been fun designing it for three years and seeing how much I've improved. I recommend more people to take it because we could always use more help." Rising sophomores through seniors are able to enroll in Yearbook, and rising juniors and seniors are able to select Journalism. If any eligible student is interested in either course, he or she is encouraged to sign up for the class. If a student recognizes that the class is not a good fit, he or she is able to opt out before the first quarter ends.

Any student looking for a creative outlet can sign up for one or both of these electives. Both electives are always looking for more students to join and to help support the newspaper and yearbook.



Called by God

By: Lucy Flynn

On the weekend of March 26th, the juniors and seniors went to Jumonville for the Koinonia Retreat. Lucy Keverline was a leader for the first time this year and loved every bit of it, commenting "I absolutely loved my first year at the koinonia retreat. I got so much closer to God and being a leader allowed me to build better friendships with so many people. I loved the small, Christ-centered community so much that I was honestly so sad to leave, especially because all the seniors will not be at next year's retreat. However, I am so excited to go back and cannot wait for next year!"

The retreat leaders consisted of both juniors and seniors who did an amazing job! Miller, Aurora, Lucy K., Jack S., Lara, Tess, Daniel and Louis, with the help of Mr. Kuniega, Deacon Kurzawski, Ms. Ligouri, and Ms. Amon, created a beautiful religious getaway for these students. Mr. Kuniega said, "It has been a true joy to be able to assist with the planning and chaperoning of both the 2025 and 2026 Koinonia retreat. While they both have required many many hours of planning and preparation, the fruit which I believe they've borne has been tangible in the participants. I never had the opportunity while I was in High School to attend retreats like these and, in all honesty, it is just as much a retreat for the chaperones as it is for the student participants. This year was the perfect time set right before the holiest week of the year and served as an amazing preparation for Holy Week and the Sacred Triduum."

Brad Moore went on the retreat both years, and said that Koinonia is the peace he needs at the end of the year. He said that it was cool to be led by the juniors this year instead of being a junior. "It was different, since I'm a lot closer with the people in my grade, so I could really feel like I could talk to anyone!" His favorite part of the retreat has always been the 'Emmaus walks,' where two people privately talk to each other about their own personal lives and struggles. Brad has been waiting for the Emmaus walks, saying that "ever since Koinonia last year, I've been dying to know who I would get this year! I also really enjoyed small group at night, where we sat on the playground and talked while it was too dark to see anyone's faces, so you could just listen and speak more freely."

Overall, the general consensus of the juniors and seniors was that Koinonia was a blast this year, and the current juniors cannot wait to be able to participate in it again next year.



Almost Late for a Very Important Date

By: Aurora Predis

Middle school students put on an astounding display of talent in the captivating fairytale performance of *Alice In Wonderland* combined with *Alice Through the Looking Glass*. The cast came together in just two and a half weeks going to rehearsals non-stop with Addie Phelps working hard to memorize nearly 70 pages of lines with multiple dialogues and interactions with other characters.

One of the most memorable acting duos, Luke Patterson and Max Predis, returned to the stage as partners again this year as the Mad Hatter and the March Hare. Their confusing and pointless banter along with Mark Swift as the Dormouse provided lots of laughs. This was not the only duo to create memories this year; Gabby Boright and Judah VanVickle played the Queen and King Of Hearts in a wonderful contrast bringing delight to the audience. When asked about her final year in a middle school play, eighth grader Ella Lesnefsky said, "The play is always a highlight of my year because I love acting and I especially love doing it with my friends. But this year it was especially amazing because everyone gave their all to make Wonderland a reality and I'm so happy that I got to be a part of that."

Both Friday and Saturday night had an extremely high attendance rate filling up the entirety of the gym floor and most of the bleachers with family and friends of the cast. The feedback was all positive with glowing reviews by every parent, sibling, grandma, and aunt that attended. The set pulled the audience in with intriguing visuals the moment you walked in and kept them captivated with minimal but impactful set changes.

The costumes, created by Mrs. Meland, were above and beyond as usual, especially with the time constraint put on her and the overwhelming size of the cast. They contributed to the whimsy feel and made each character come alive as if viewers had really stepped into Wonderland. Some costumes were elevated by cheery and bright makeup that made characters such as the caterpillar, played by Mary Stivoric, and others come alive in their acting.

Not enough can be said about this cast and how hard they worked for this amazing result. Mr. Flynn also deserves a large thank you due to all the time he puts into each play and the magic he brings to life through them. This play was no exception, and he worked through numerous setbacks and last minute crises with calm and control keeping the cast on task to put on a weekend of stunning shows.



Easter is More Than Just Candy

By: Grace Chrobak

What pops into your head when you think of Easter? I bet you think of chocolate bunnies, colorful eggs, and jelly-beans. But, we cannot celebrate Easter without going through the 40 day Lenten journey.

Easter is the highest liturgical celebration regarding Jesus' resurrection from the dead. During Lent, we are to abstain from using the word "Alleluia," because it is a joyful phrase and it is our "verbal fast." Lent is a time for spiritual reflection. We build anticipation for Easter during our 40 day journey through fasting and prayer. Lent helps us strengthen our faith through the Eucharist as we break bad habits and deepen our relationship with God.

Easter traditions bring joy and fun to families. A popular Easter tradition is the egg hunt, where colored eggs filled with treats and trinkets are hidden outside so children can find them. High school student Claire Urban shares her personal experience, mentioning that "Every year we go down to our grandparents, and they fill tupperware with candy and the uncles go and hide them on the property, and they range from being under slides to on top of roofs."

Easter is more than just candy. The Lenten journey helps us grow in our faith as we anticipate Easter Sunday. Easter traditions help us celebrate Jesus' resurrection as we gather with our friends and family.



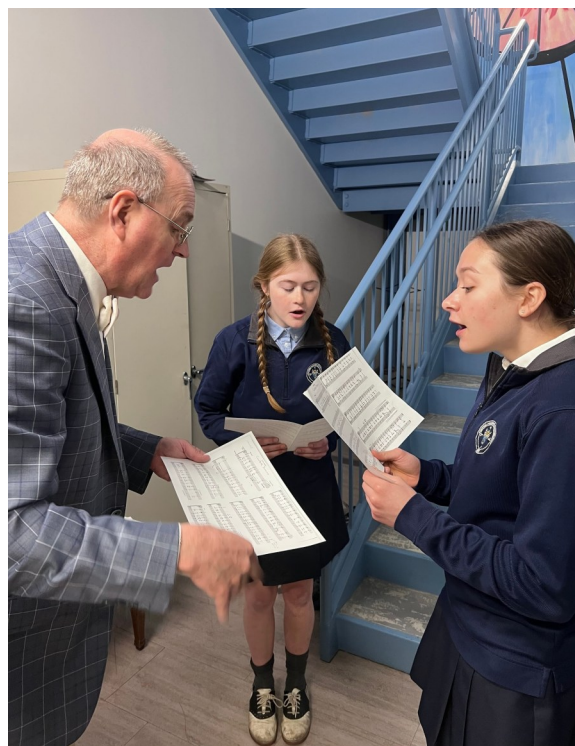
In Harmony

By: Katrina Kedzierski

As anyone listening to the morning announcements can tell you, Chapel Choir meets in the stairwell at lunch almost every day as it has been for years.

Middle school participation has grown in the past few years, and now they make up the majority of the choir. 8th grader Evelyn Rich shares, "I love Chapel Choir, because, when we sing at church, it makes me feel closer to God, just being lost in the sound of the music helps me feel the presence of God more during the mass."

High schoolers are still a vital part of Chapel Choir, and are often the ones to sing the more difficult songs. Every so often, more musically-inclined faculty members will join to sing with the Chapel Choir. One of these faculty singers is Mr. Kuniega, who connects Chapel Choir here with his experience in the seminary, reminiscing that, "Chant was an integral part of our life at the seminary, with a daily 45 minute class for three years, singing the Divine Office four times a day in common with the nearly 100 seminarians present, and full Gregorian sung Masses multiple times a week. It has been a blessing to be able to bring that experience back to a place where it has use again!"



The show *Bluey* centers around the daily life of a six year old Australian Blue Heeler dog and her exciting adventures with friends, family, and nature.

Created in Australia in 2018, *Bluey* encourages imagination and friendship shown through daily interactions. Bluey is an extremely popular show including in the United States, where 45.2 million minutes were streamed just in 2025 alone. The show does an exceptional job of highlighting the realistic sibling dynamics between Bluey and her younger sister Bingo. Many of the characters in the show are very relatable, making the episodes both funny and emotional as the characters work through real-life problems. For example, Bluey's dad Bandit is an inspiring father figure who is present for his daughters and is active in their daily lives, an idea that directly contrasts the portrayal of fathers in other kids shows. Other characters also serve as positive role models to Bluey as well as to those who watch the show. *Bluey* pivots from the conventional kids show template, discussing topics easy enough for kids to understand but that also carry weight for adults who view it. When asked what makes *Bluey* different from other shows, junior Claire Urban emphasized the fact that "it actually teaches good lessons to young kids instead of just filling time with noise."

Bluey is also very special because it has a nostalgic aspect to it, often reminding teenagers and adults of the simple arguments that would happen between them and their siblings when they were younger or the various pretend games they would play. *Bluey* teaches life lessons to both children and adults, something that seems to be lacking from other kids shows shown on TV, like *Paw Patrol*. Some popular episodes include "Sleepytime", "Camping", "Grannies", "The Weekend", and "Mini Bluey". *Bluey* resonates with many of its viewers, including junior John Dolan, who shared that "I love *Bluey* because it's a show that I can put on when I'm with my little cousins and siblings, but still enjoy myself." Some funny quotes from *Bluey* include "Oh, biscuits!", "I don't want a valuable life lesson, I just want an ice cream", "For real life?", "Dollarbucks", and "I slipped on ma beans!"

Bluey stands out as a show that promotes very real messages of kindness and encourages the use of imagination in many everyday situations. It also serves as a reminder to appreciate the little things in life that seem to go unnoticed as you get older and grow up.



Spring Sticks and Sprints

By: Aarona Casas

Spring has finally sprung, and as part of “Spring Cleaning,” the Crusaders are dusting off their lacrosse sticks and track shoes to return to the competition.

The girls’ lacrosse team has had a fresh start this season with the addition of fourteen new varsity players, and a new coach, Jen Roberts, who played lacrosse in college and has coached teams to WPIAL championships. Senior Captain, Elliot Keverline, said that the team has “had an excellent start to the season, with considerable wins. We are really coming together under our new coach. We are super excited to have her because she knows the game so well. We have lots of new players who are adjusting really well, and several of our returning players have improved so much in the off-season.”

The team has three senior captains: Ava Lefsnesty, Francesca Hite, and Elliot Keverline, who are greatly contributing to the growth of each player in the sport, and are leading the offense and goals scored. Senior captain Francesca Hite, shared that “The team is off to a good start. We started this season with a new coach, strong returning players, and a multitude of new players, so we are definitely in a rebuilding season. However, we’ve made a lot of improvement during practices and hope to make a good run down the stretch.” The team has also created a tradition of rewarding outstanding players in a game by giving them a golden goat to pose with in a picture. With victories over Yough (17-4), and Knoch (14-2), they look forward to a great rest of their season.

The track team is preparing for competition with the help of Coaches Mike Grese (distance running) and Allison McGrath (sprints and throws). The team is glad to welcome nine new varsity athletes this year. Aquinas’ track athletes enjoy a very positive atmosphere, as senior captain Abigail Irvin highlighted, “Everyone’s so encouraging regardless of your times. In a short time, I’ve improved so much thanks to my coaches and teammates.”

With a majority of freshmen athletes, the Crusaders enjoy pep talks with coaches about upcoming meets, easy runs with friends, and hitting personal marks on workout days. Senior captain Caitlyn Abbett is “really happy about the addition of so many enthusiastic freshmen, and more distance runners and throwers, who are a great addition to the team.” The team’s captains are seniors Lex Ridson, Abigail Irvin, Caitlyn Abbett, Brad Moore, and Owen McKernan. The track team has a unique tradition of having pie to celebrate a good meet, a holiday, or an end of season accomplishment. Here’s to many pies for them this spring!



Prefect elections are one of the most anticipated parts of the school year at Aquinas. Teachers and students in grades 8-11 are put in a position to select Aquinas's next board of student leaders. This year, 28 sophomore and junior students ran for a prefect position, and although the winners have been announced, all 28 candidates had extremely strong campaigns.

Candidates began the campaign process by speaking to groups of students about some of their main ideas and passing out various sweet treats and toys, arguably as bribes. A few notable "bribes" this year included Campus Ministry candidate Clare Feeley's plastic Jesus figurines, Fine Arts candidate Alice Dingle's mini artwork, and her competition Sophia Beaven's bubblegum crayons. Around the same time, candidates created their own campaign posters and hung them up around the school to catch voters' eyes. There were many creative signs this year, including Academic candidate Asher Buchanan's polls for students concerning classes and Ambassador Candidate Brooks Trischler's creative photoshopping skills.

The next big step for prefect candidates was to deliver a campaign speech in the gym. In these speeches, the candidates outlined their platforms to the whole voting body. Speeches have always been limited in delivery time, but with such a large number of candidates this year, students were extra crunched for time, their speeches confined to being just over a minute. Still the students pushed through and delivered top-notch speeches for top notch campaigns.

Not only were the candidates excited for the year ahead, the voters were as well. Eighth graders were very excited to get to vote for the first time. Eighth grader Lilly Hayden expressed that she was "very excited for the campaigns, especially the part where the candidates hand out candy. I'm really excited to see what the prefects can do for the students next year!" The entire student body is incredibly excited for the year to come. If you ran for prefect, no matter if you won or lost, the effort and time you put into your campaign was admirable and worth it.



The Last Battle

By: Caitlyn Abbett

As the end of the school year approaches, the game of Senior Eliminations begins among the graduating class. The game is played in teams of two people, and the goal is for each team to track down their designated target and eliminate them with a water gun within a week. Multiple rounds are played until one team remains, winning the grand prize of \$670. The game is run by senior Brad Moore, who created all the rules and approves of each elimination.

Some new rules added this year include the use of goggles to protect yourself and an app called *Splashin* that tracks your targets' location every ten minutes. While you can not eliminate your target at school, sports, work, or church, a popular spot has been parking lots, with players Jonah Burchill, Zander Beaven, Marielle Dillner, and Andrew Giancola getting out on the way to their car. Other strategies include some betrayal, especially when a friend is the target. Unfortunately, Tess Duer, Anthony Rossi, and Alex Aulacio were eliminated by trusting the wrong players.

Brad admits that the game is stressful to run, but watching it play out is a lot of fun. He says, "I think it's really cool to see the different team dynamics; some being super active and getting out targets, while others are laying low and trying not to get out." Based on how everyone is playing, he estimates the game will last about 4-5 rounds.

Senior Owen McKernan, who is playing with his cousin Alexa Risdon, has had a fun time tracking down his targets, but he admits that he dislikes the overuse of goggles. "After sitting behind the gym for two hours only to have Patrick come out with his googles, it was pretty disappointing to see my effort go to waste. Fortunately, Alexa and I bounced back by getting his partner, Alex, out in a well thought out setup." Round two set more boundaries on how often players can use goggles, and if they get hit with them on, they can no longer wear them for the rest of the round.

Senior Eliminations has been so far enjoyed, whether it's camping outside a friend's house, or waiting it out in a parking lot to surprise your target after a shift at work. The game is a fun way to highlight the end of the year and to bond with the graduating class through friendly competition.

"Can't Steal My Joy" at the Josiah Queen Concert

By: Alexa Risdon

A group of Aquinas students had a great time at Stage AE, a theater and concert hall on the North Shore, for a night of worship with Josiah Queen on March 17th.

Josiah Queen is a young Christian artist and is quickly becoming very impactful. He blends raw authenticity with deeply resonant melodies, and has over 1.3 billion global streams. His music continues to inspire a wide-reaching and rapidly growing audience. His debut album hit first on Billboard's Top Christian Albums Chart, marking one of the most significant debuts in Christian music.

His follow-up releases have continued to build on that momentum including "Can't Steal My Joy," which reached number one on Christian radio, cementing him as one of the leading artists in the genre. Josiah has sold over 160,000 tickets across tours, and has garnered more than three million followers across Instagram, TikTok, Youtube, and Facebook. With a heart that wishes to serve both God and people, he strives to help people grow in faith and have fun doing it through his music alone.

The concert in Pittsburgh was "super crowded, there were people all the way back near the entrance," according to John Dolan. Becca Guillen, a senior who was also in attendance, said her group "pushed to the front, and then we had a good amount of space around us." She loves the song "Yesterday is Dead," which happened to be the song he opened with, so she knew it would be amazing from the start. Ava Lefnysky, another senior who went to the concert, mentioned her favorite song is "Cloud and Fire" and "it was so cool to see live." Ava also "loved the setup for it, because they had clouds in the background while he played the piano and sang." John Dolan mentioned, "It was a really fun concert, and his new song 'Judas' was amazing. The music he sings is really easy to relate to and very uplifting," and he would "love to see a show again."

Overall, everyone who went to the concert agreed that he is an amazing Christian artist to hear live, and that if they had the chance to go again they would, as he was a great performer and they love his music. So, give Josiah Queen a listen, because he could become your new favorite Christian artist.



A Step Back in Time

By: Abigail Irvin

Antique stores are known for their eclectic mix of unique treasures from the past. One of the best places in Pittsburgh to find them is Wexford General Store Antiques. Senior Meghan McGee and I had the opportunity to visit and explore this store together.

The shop is home to 20 antique dealers, offering everything from stained glass and furniture to glassware, decor, books, vinyl, jewelry, and much more. The building itself dates back to the mid-1800s, giving the store the perfect nostalgic charm. The floors creak as you walk throughout the store and the air has the classic musty and old smell. The floors are covered from top to bottom with antiques and collectibles, making it almost impossible to truly take in everything the store has to offer. Meghan recalled that “There was seriously just so much stuff and so much to see, I could spend days in there.”

Each room of the store has its own distinct theme. One space featured farmhouse, kitchenware, wooden bowls, and kettles, while another was full of vintage clothing. My favorite room of the store was filled with old music boxes, artwork, and delicate china dishes. Meghan, on the other hand, was drawn to the library area. “I loved the library area,” she said. “They had several rooms full of books and I got a collection of short stories that I’m currently reading and really enjoying! I also really liked browsing through the collection of records, even though I didn’t buy one.”

The most memorable part of our visit was buying an antique mystery bag. Meghan said, “It was a really fun idea even though it was obvious that it was just a collection of random stuff that they couldn’t sell all wrapped up in tissue paper. It was worth the \$10 just for how much fun we had opening it and seeing all the different things!” We ended up with a plastic cow, dollhouse furniture, a handkerchief, marbles, a butter knife, a thimble, a grape juice bottle label, and a charm bracelet.

Overall, our visit to Wexford General Store Antiques was a memorable and enjoyable experience. From the endless variety of items, to the unique atmosphere of the building, there is something there to capture everyone’s interest.



Malchano on the Move

By: Elise Metzler

With a heavy heart, the *Dumb Ox* announces that history teacher Mr. Malchano is moving from Pittsburgh to Berlin, Ohio. Mr. Malchano will not be returning next year, but instead will be starting a business venture in his new community.

Berlin was chosen not only for its relation to Germany, home of Mr. Malchano's favorite historical personality, Otto von Bismarck, but also its location. Berlin is in the middle of Ohio's Amish country, a people Mr. Malchano has great admiration for. For his reason to move, Mr. Malchano stated, "I'm moving to the homestead with my family. I wish I could join the Amish, but they wouldn't accept me." Although he's disappointed his application was denied (since there is no application to be Amish) he's still excited to interact with his new neighbors.

Mr. Malchano will take up new work in his new community. On previous visits to Amish communities, he observed a certain product was in high demand. Many of the Amish were gravitating towards ebikes as an Amish-friendly way to get around a bit easier. Acting early in what he believes will be a growing trend, Mr. Malchano is looking to create an ebike empire out of Berlin that he hopes to expand across Ohio and into the Pennsylvanian Amish country.

Overall, we wish him and his family the best as they move.

Fortunately, this article was an April Fools' joke. Mr. Malchano is not moving to Ohio, and he will continue to teach at Aquinas. Happy April Fools'!



GOOD BYE and GOOD LUCK

Snips n' Quips

"Savannah, your backpack is manspreading all over here." -Lara H.

trying to open door in high school that sticks "Whoever is the next head prefect, can you just fix the door?? I will literally vote for you" -Morgan R.

"Sapientia, sapientiae, feminine. This noun means wisdom." -Mr. Salinas

Talking about Senior Elimination
"Ivo, who are you after?" -Caitlyn A.

"The voices...THE VOICES!" -Ivo S.

"Of course it does. That's why it's feminine." -Cici G.

"I need to breathe in as much air as physically possible in order to maximize my aura output" -Andrew D.

"I feel like I'm gonna see the real Rocco on this retreat because he's like nocturnal" -Mr. K.

"You guys aren't going on the retreat?!" What are you, a bunch of pagans?" -Mr. Blume

Writer's LEAST Favorite:

Abigail: Dogs in grocery stores

Alexa: Slow walkers in the hallway

Aarona: The smell of oranges

Aurora: Meatloaf

Brigid: When someone loads the dishwasher the wrong way

Caitlyn: Walking into a room and forgetting what you came to get

Grace: Homework

Elise: Slow walkers

Laila: Blue cheese

Lara: The College Board

Lucy: Slow walkers in crowded hallways

Felicity: When the butter is so hard it shreds up your bread

Jack: When all the silverware in the drawer is oriented the same way except for one single utensil

Katrina: Loud chewing/breathing

Jules: Brussel sprouts

"Who's your favorite rapper?" -Roman

"I don't really care for the raps" -Mr. K.

Band plays two measures "It's not garbage...it's garbage with a little bit of febreze on it." -Mr. Croskey

"I would love to see a French man make a dino nugget as bomb as me." -Lucy F.

"My goal is to be the high, low, and the buffalo of your day." -Savannah D.

"Mr. Thornburgh would make such a great man in the yellow hat with curious George...or Superman" -Jude C.

Please send articles, ideas, corrections, or Snips and Quips to:
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Aquinas Academy

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