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The Comet

SEP. 28, 2026

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Jacob Kephart
isn't letting his
injuries define
his senior year

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World**
by Makaila
Watson



Around the World

By Makaila Watson

From countries thousands of miles away to right here in Bluffton, Indiana, our high school has welcomed students from around the world. Over the years, foreign exchange students have traveled to our community to experience American culture, attend school, make new friends, and share their own cultures and traditions with us. Bluffton High School has helped host exchange students from many different countries, including Switzerland, Bahrain, North Macedonia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Israel, South Korea, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Spain, Mongolia, and Germany. There are three this year alone.

Each student brings a unique story and perspective to our school. They experience American traditions such as homecoming, football games, school clubs, and everyday life in an American high school, while also allowing Bluffton students to learn about places and cultures they may have never experienced themselves. Exchange programs are more than just a student coming to a new school. They create connections between people from different backgrounds and remind us that, even though we may live thousands of miles apart, we can still find things that bring us together.

Bluffton may be a small community, but through our exchange students, a little piece of the world comes to us. I had the opportunity to interview three foreign exchange students and learn more about their lives, their home countries, and their experiences in America. One of the students I interviewed was Doyeon Kim, an exchange student from Seoul, South Korea.

What is a typical school day like in Korea?

According to Doyeon, students in Korea generally study more than students in America.

How is school in Korea different from school here?

Doyeon explained that Korean schools can have four floors, and students typically have lockers inside their classrooms.

What surprised you most about American schools?

One thing that surprised Doyeon was that American students can choose what they want to wear to school, including leggings.

What is one thing you want to accomplish while you're in America?

Doyeon's biggest goal is to make a lot of friends during her time in America.

Doyeon's experience shows how much students can learn when people from different cultures come together. From differences in school schedules and uniforms to food, hobbies, and everyday traditions, exchange students give us a chance to see American life from a different perspective. While Doyeon is learning about America, Bluffton students are also learning about South Korea through her experiences and stories. Her time here is not only about discovering a new country, but it's also about making friendships and creating memories that can last long after her exchange is over.

Stay Tuned for Student-Teacher Decathlon

By Adelyn Atkins

Within Bluffton High School hallways, there are always two sides to an issue. One side: quick-witted, smart, educated giants. The other side?

Our teachers.

They think they're smarter, faster, and just because they're older, mostly better. I'm here to convince you that this is not always true! In the upcoming two-part simulation, teachers and students will go head-to-head to test their knowledge and abilities in a variety of

scenarios. Our first challenge will be a bake-off. Kiers-tynn Reed will represent the student body against our culinary and nutrition teacher, Mrs. Reed, while Jonah Geisel faces off against foreign language teacher, Mr. Miller. What's at stake? The perfect little girl's birthday cake...

Voice your opinion on winners by voting when our next publications poll posts as we cover the riveting decathlon simulation in our upcoming issues!

Still in the Game

By Jacob Ribich | Interview By Lance Moser

athletically * speaking

Leadership isn't measured by points on a scoreboard, but by showing up when you're down. No one has embodied that more than Jacob Kephart, whose devastating injury early in the 2026 season took him out for the rest of the year.

For Kephart, being a captain was supposed to mean leading his team on the field. Instead, an unexpected change in circumstances has forced him to discover how to really lead when you can't be out there. Leadership built on his voice, his presence, his relationships, and his example. "I think my mindset has kind of shifted to just learning how to be a leader, not only with how I play, but with what I say," Kephart said.

Although he can no longer contribute on the field, Kephart has remained heavily involved with the team. He continues to attend practice, meetings, and games, embracing his role as a team captain from the sideline.

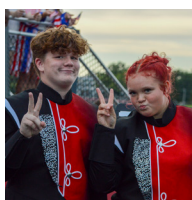
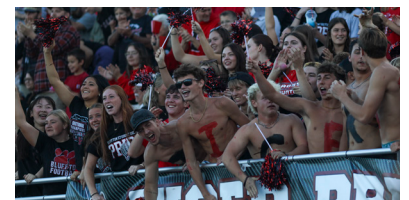
Through his experiences with the team, Kephart is learning the importance of relationships. Kephart said, "I think I've learned how to become more personable and kind of just be that guy for people, especially for my teammates whenever they need something." That role has become especially important on game nights. When a teammate

is down or makes a mistake on the field, Kephart tries to be the voice that helps them move past it. He describes his role on the sideline as being the team's "good cop," someone who can encourage his teammates when things aren't going their way.

Kephart has also embraced being the team's hype man, using his voice to keep the energy high and his teammates motivated. But staying around the team isn't always easy, he notes. Conditioning days particularly remind him of what he's missing, "I'm watching my teammates run the whole time for two hours, so that's obviously hard."

Even still, Kephart continues to show up. As the team's captain he's realized the team is bigger than himself, and even while he battles with his own disappointment, he's found purpose in continuing to lead from the sideline. "I think just understanding that there's a plan for me, and maybe it wasn't playing varsity football. Maybe it's being on the sideline and being a captain."

While his final season may no longer be measured in tackles, plays, or big moments on the field, Kephart is still leaving his mark through the impact he makes and the teammates he lifts up along the way.



Senior Advice for Freshmen

By Makaila Watson

Starting high school can feel like stepping into a completely new world. The building is bigger, the classes can be harder, there are more people to meet, and suddenly everyone seems to expect you to know what you are doing.

As a senior, I can tell you that it is completely normal to feel nervous during your first year. You do not have to have everything figured out on your first day. High school is a learning experience, and you will learn a lot about your classes, your friendships, your interests, and yourself along the way.

Here is some advice I wish every freshman could hear. You are going to make mistakes. You might forget an assignment. You might get a grade you are unhappy with. You might say something awkward in front of your class. You might make a friendship mistake. That does not mean your entire high school experience is ruined. One bad grade does not define you, and one embarrassing moment probably will not matter nearly as much as you think it does. Give yourself permission to learn from your mistakes.

One day, you will walk through the school halls for the last time. You will realize that the classrooms you complained about became familiar places. The teachers you thought were strict may become people you appreciate. The friends you made may become some of your favorite memories. Take pictures. Save funny notes. Go to events. Celebrate your accomplishments.

If I summed up my advice in a single statement, it would be this: Do not spend your entire high school experience worrying about whether you are doing it right. There is no perfect high school experience. You will make mistakes. You will meet new people. Some friendships will last, while others may not. You will have good days and bad days. That is all part of growing up.

So, freshmen, take a deep breath.

You belong here.

You have four years ahead of you, and those years may go by faster than you expect. Work hard, be kind, make good memories, ask for help when you need it, and be yourself. Before you know it, you'll be the senior giving the next freshman class advice.

Dear Class of 2030...

By Ellah Grimes and Khloe Gehrett



National Debt Hits New High

By Madieson Surbaugh

On the first Tuesday of this month, our debt reached a new high of 40 trillion. So, what does the national debt mean to the average person in our country? From national news organizations to local newspapers like this one, money concerns hit home. Graduating seniors must consider funding options for further training or take time to build savings by moving straight into the workforce to help avoid college debt.

Michael Peterson, CEO of the Peter G. Peterson Foundation, told CNN. "On our current path, we're

going to be at \$50 trillion in just six years. If you look backward, we were at \$20 trillion less than 10 years ago. We're really putting our economy and our country's future in jeopardy." The New York Times reported this year that the country is on track to borrow more than \$2 trillion to pay for the war in Iran, tax cuts that have built up from 2025, and rising interest payments to investors.

The national debt is composed of distinct types of debt, similar to an individual who may have a mortgage, student loans, and

credit. The different types of debt include non-marketable and marketable. Non-marketable means that the holder of these, such as Savings Bonds, Government Account Series, and State and Local Government Series, cannot sell them to other investors or private groups. Marketable means that these Treasury Bills, Treasury Bonds, Treasury Notes, and Treasury Inflation-Protected Securities can be traded on the secondary market and have ownership transferred from one person or group to another.



Cierah Hicks and Will Ault Crowned Homecoming Royalty



Student Section Celebrates another Tiger Win against Woodland

Pop Culture News

By Bailey Surbaugh

Let's Talk Lollapalooza! You may have overheard conversations in the hallway at school or caught an Instagram reel promotion, but not everyone is familiar with the event that hosts more people per day than the infamous Coachella. Lollapalooza is an annual four-day music festival that originated 35 years ago in 1991 by Perry Farrell as a goodbye gift to his band, 'Jane's Addiction.' Music enthusiasts have attended this festival, held at Great Park in Chicago, Illinois, since 2005.

This year, the festival ran from July 30th to August 2nd. The venue welcomed over 100,000 attendees and featured over 170 artists, including Charli XCX, Tate McRae, Lorde, Olivia Dean, and John Summit. The very first K-pop group to perform at Lollapalooza, a group called SB19, also made an appearance. Heavy rains and muddy grounds caused some disappointment, including a four-hour delay on day three and the cancellation of popular rapper Lil Uzi Vert.

From Football Games to Wedding Bells

By Namine VanHyfte

Taylor Swift and Travis Kelce's wedding developed into one of this year's most notorious celebrity events. It took place at Madison Square Garden in New York City on July 3, 2026. Over one thousand guests attended the fancy, private wedding.

Some people thought the best parts focused on traditional ideas about marriage and family. Others disagreed, saying it was incredible because of the location and the pub-

licity surrounding it. Supporters in small towns like Bluffton shared in the global anticipation alongside her fans around the world.

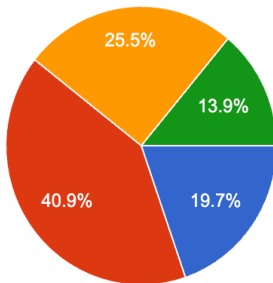
While some fans dug in dumpsters just for a taste of leftover cake, others publicly opposed the celebrities' choices. Some people thought the wedding was too expensive and a poor use of finances that could have benefited communities or charities. Others thought Taylor and Travis

should have picked a quieter place instead of a busy city like New York. Fans felt frustrated with restrictions on using their phones to take and share photos so that the world would feel more included.

Small-town Swifties and committed critics disagree on many aspects of the wedding, but many agree it stirred enough conversation and controversy to validate a place in the news, even if only celebrity gossip.

Pubs Polls 208 Bluffton Students

By Harper Patterson, Tone Kneeland & Caedence Spaulding

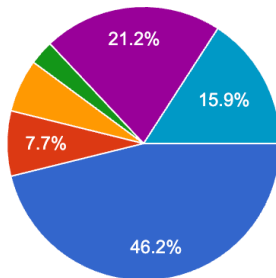


Topics of Interest

- Fashion
- Music
- Movies
- Video Games

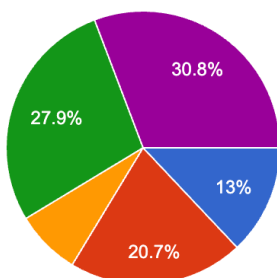
Date Night

- Restaurant or Picnic
- The Zoo
- Farmer's Market
- Museum
- Amusement Park
- An Arcade



Meal of the Month

- Spaghetti
- Pizza
- Hamburger
- Chicken & Noodles
- Tiger Bowl



CONGRATS
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Student Creativity Soars on 'Anything but a Backpack' Day



What's Hot + What's Not

By Charlotte Rhoderick

Music streaming platforms are making billions of dollars annually, much more than movies at the box office. Revenue last year exceeded sixty-three billion dollars. This is an increase of nearly 20% compared to the previous year. Many new songs have come out this year that have gotten extremely popular. Artists such as Olivia Rodrigo, Bruno Mars, and Taylor Swift have released popular music in the last few months, reaching millions of streams in weeks.

Olivia Rodrigo's newest album hit 2 billion streams, making her one of the most-streamed female artists this year while also landing multiple number-one hits, breaking records, and even surpassing Taylor Swift for the top 100 artists of the week. Popular songs such as "Earrings" by Malcolm Todd and "Loser" by Tame Impala reached between six and eight million streams in a single week.

Who Said What?

By Ellah Grimes and Khloe Gehrett

Can you guess which staff member shared which piece of advice for the new school year?

- | | |
|--|------------|
| 1. Be on time. Being tardy isn't worth it. | • Atkins |
| 2. Show up. Shut up. Do your work. | • Hatfield |
| 3. Do your work. | • Kunkel |
| 4. Free to bet. Embarrassment is an un-explored emotion. | • Linton |
| 5. Stay on top of your work. | • Sackett |
| 6. Be the person you want to work with. | • Trout |



Speak Life

By Harper Patterson

There are enough voices
in this world
telling people
what they aren't.

You aren't pretty enough.
You aren't smart enough.
You aren't funny enough.
You aren't worth enough.

So I want my voice
to become something different.

I want to say,
You can do this.
I'm proud of you.
You matter.
Keep going.

You are more
than the worst thing
someone has said about you.

Because words
can become seeds.
And I don't want
to plant thorns
in people
and call it honesty.

I want to plant courage.
I want to plant hope.

I want to plant
the kind of words
someone remembers
on a difficult morning
years later.

We get one voice.
One mouth.
Thousands of chances
to choose what comes out
of it.

So let mine
speak life.
Let mine
build instead of break.

Let mine
be a place
where someone can breathe
for a moment.

Because maybe
the world doesn't need
another voice
telling people
they aren't enough.
Maybe it needs
one more person
willing to remind them
that they are.

This Week in History

By Isabella Byanksi

September 27

- 1964 - After a 10-month investigation, the Warren Commission Report was published, stating a single gunman had been responsible for the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in Dallas on November 22, 1963.
- 1995 - The Israeli cabinet agreed to give Palestinians control of a significant portion of the West Bank, which had been under Israeli control for 28 years.

September 28

- 1066 - Duke William of Normandy reached Pevensey, Sussex, beginning the Norman conquest of England.

September 29

- 1789 - Congress created the United States Army, consisting of 1,000 enlisted men and officers.
- 1829 - At the request of Home Secretary, Sir Robert Peel, Greater London's Metropolitan Police force was established by an act of Parliament. The force later became known as Scotland Yard.

September 30

- 1949 - The Berlin Airlift ended after 277,264 flights carrying over 2 million tons of supplies to the people of West Berlin, who were blockaded by the Soviets.

- 1966 - Nazi war criminals Albert Speer and Baldur von Schirach were released from Spandau prison after serving 20 years. The prison, originally built for 600 inmates, was left with only one prisoner, former Deputy Führer Rudolf Hess.

October 1

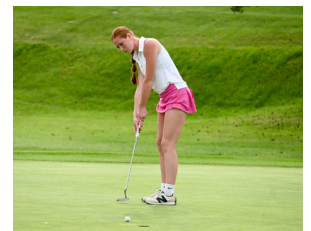
- 1946 - Twelve Nazi leaders were sentenced to death at the International War Crimes Tribunal in Nuremberg, Germany.
- 1949 - The People's Republic of China was founded with Mao Zedong as Chairman.

October 2

- 1967 - Thurgood Marshall (1908-1993) was sworn in as the first African American associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.
- 1975 - Japanese Emperor Hirohito made his first-ever visit to the White House.

October 3

- 1863 - President Abraham Lincoln issued a proclamation that set the last Thursday in November as Thanksgiving Day.
- 1990 - East and West Germany were reunited as the Federal Republic of Germany after 45 years of Cold War division.



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When Water Rises - Indiana Faces Flooding

By Makaila Watson

Indiana has been dealing with serious flooding after several rounds of heavy rain and severe storms moved through the state in August. Communities across Indiana have experienced flooded roads, damaged homes, evacuations, and dangerous river conditions. Some areas received more than a foot of rain. The rainfall caused numerous water rescues, washed-out roads, and property damage. Locally, Wells County and Bluffton were also affected by the storms. Heavy rain caused flooding on roads in Bluffton, with emergency crews working to deal with dangerous conditions.

Homes have been flooded, some residents have had to evacuate, and roads have been closed because of high water. Indiana officials have also been working with emergency responders to help communities recover. The Indiana National Guard has assisted with water rescues, debris removal, and other storm-relief efforts.

Officials have requested additional assistance as communities work to recover from the storms. More than

1,700 structures were reported damaged, according to recent reports. While floodwaters have begun to recede in some areas, recovery will take time. Residents are still dealing with damaged homes, roads, businesses, and other property.

As Indiana begins recovering, communities are coming together to help families affected by the flooding. Emergency crews, volunteers, organizations, and local residents are working to clean up damage and provide assistance. The recent flooding is a reminder of how quickly severe weather can affect our communities. Staying informed, paying attention to weather warnings, and taking flooding seriously can help keep people safe when severe weather strikes.

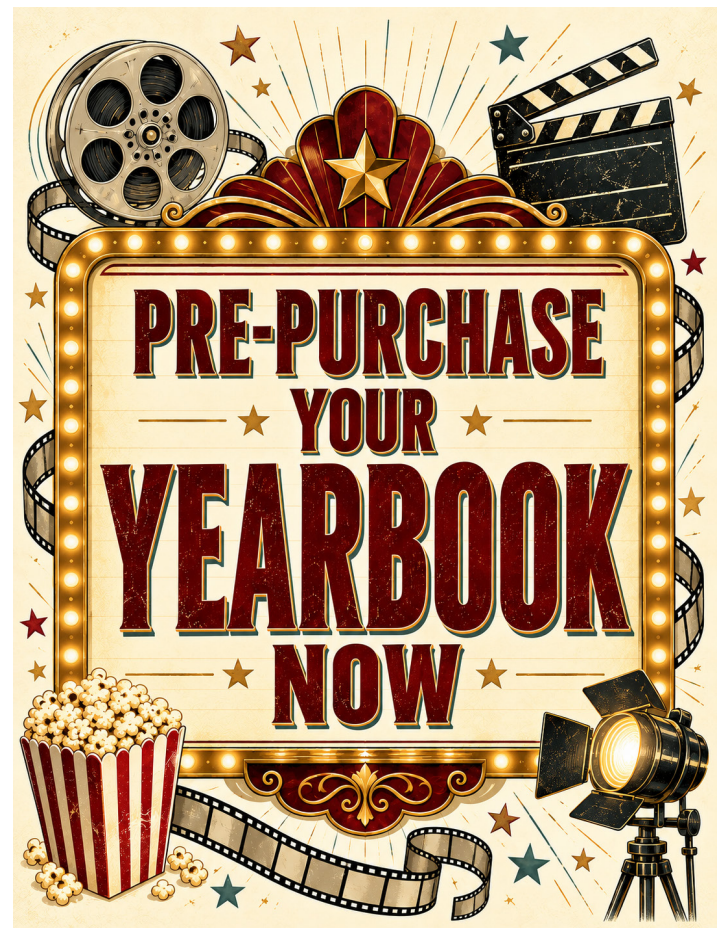
For Bluffton and communities throughout Indiana, the focus now is on recovery, helping neighbors, and rebuilding as the water goes down.

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===== IN THE YEARBOOK =====




We are so proud of the amazing young woman you have become. Dream big, work hard, and always be true to yourself.

Love,
Mom & Dad




Once a little boy... always our biggest adventure. ★

We're so proud of you and can't wait to see what your future holds!

Love,
Mom, Dad & Lily ♥




You have always had a light inside you... and it still shines so bright. ♥

We're so proud of you! ♥

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