



February 16, 2011  
Issue 19

# New Illinois Civil Union Law

by Morgan McPartland  
News writer

On Monday, Jan. 31 hundreds of Chicagoans crowded into a downtown ballroom to witness the signing of a new law making civil unions legal for same-sex couples in Illinois.

Democratic Illinois governor Patrick Quinn signed the law, which goes into effect on June 1, as the standing room crowd cheered. This controversial law will grant same-sex couples many legal protections currently offered to married couples. That includes emergency medical decision-making powers, adoption and parental rights, pension benefits, inheritance powers and the ability to share a room in a nursing home.

"From a legal standpoint, it had to happen," said LHS Human Rights teacher Rick Prangen. "From a human rights perspective, I applaud the effort." He also explained how the U.S. is signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The UDHR grants every human being the right to choose a spouse and marry and according to Prangen, "there isn't an asterisk next to that."

For many years, different versions of this legislation have been considered and debated in the capital city of Springfield, but it wasn't until December 2010 that supporters could gather enough votes. At that time, a Democratic-dominated legislature succeeded with a vote of 32 to 24 in the State Senate and 61 to 52 in the House.

"I think [this law] is a stepping stone for what laws can be made later," stated junior Ilona Jablonska.

Some supporters of the civil union law had even hoped for the legalization of same-sex marriage, but stronger efforts have yet to be made. Some opponents were against the passing of the new civil union law, in fear that it would lead to an opening for same-sex marriage.

"The big cultural war is with the word marriage and how you define it," added Prangen. Although he believes the legalization of same-sex marriage may be "a long way off", this new law is "definitely a step towards it."

LHS Science teacher Scott Collins agrees with Prangen and Jablonska in saying the law was "a step in the right direction." Two years ago, Collins helped a former student start the Gay-Straight Alliance, a club dedicated to acceptance and unity within LHS.

"I believe strongly in human civil rights," he explained. "The fact that, in 2011, we oppress our own people because of who they fall in love with is simply unjust."

## IN THIS ISSUE...

P.2) New Year, New You

P.3) Doing Spirit Week Right!

P.4) That's So Gay

P.5) A Class to Pass

P.6) California Dreamin'

P.7) Fox This Winter:

Glee and Idol Return

P.8) Mind Games: Part 1

P.9) LHS Dance Team Prepares for State

P.10) Nagel, Malecki, and Giatris Qualify for State



# New Year, New You

by Brittany Baldwin  
News writer

Upon the start of each New Year, people set resolutions to improve themselves and their lives. With the second month of 2011 concluding, LHS students reflected upon the status of their new year’s resolutions thus far.

Senior, Rachel Anderson resolved to become healthier at the start of 2011. In addition to the health benefits of becoming physically fit, Anderson looks forward to “looking good for spring break.”

In order to transition into a healthier lifestyle, Anderson began taking small steps towards her goal. Anderson stated, “I first started exercising Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays to make [exercising] easier on myself. Then, I started exercising six days a week.”

Anderson finds food to be her biggest obstacle in achieving her resolution, but remains confident she can overcome this distraction. Anderson added, “I’m going to feel a lot better about myself and the bathing suit I picked out is going to look fantastic on me!”

Freshman, Jake Terrazas also began working towards a fitter self in 2011 to assist him in becoming “bigger for sports.” Although “laziness” stands as a major hurdle in his path towards success, Terrazas combats this hindrance through hard work. Terrazas stated, “I go to all of my team workouts and work out in my basement so that I’ll become stronger and healthier.”

In 2010, sophomore Maha Longi felt she did not treat her mother “nice enough,” so she resolved to improve their relationship in 2011.

Longi has begun “calming herself down” in angering situations, and hopes this strategy will assist her in overcoming the frustration “conflicts and different views” can bring.

Longi added, “[This resolution] will help me in the future when I learn to be nicer to everyone.”

Junior, Shane Purtle selected a resolution that challenged him to improve his grades and his golf game. Purtle stated, “I want to play golf in college and Division One would be the best opportunity.”

Purtle finds himself to be his greatest obstacle in getting to the level of ability he desires, and accordingly has begun “practicing golf over the winter and working out” in order to achieve his resolution.

With a large remainder of 2011 ahead, each of these LHS students serves as a reminder that regardless of the resolution, anything is possible with determination and dedication. Good luck LHS!

*Photos courtesy of Google*

# Doing Spirit Week RIGHT

by Dylan Blaha  
Head Editor

Yes, I know, it’s not homecoming week. The dress-up days aren’t very fun either, I know that too. So, as Winter Spirit Week takes over Lemont High School, are you compelled to join in the tradition?

LHS annually celebrates two spirit weeks: Homecoming and Winter. Over these five-day periods, students dress in ridiculous clothes, participate in competitive games and bring food pantry donations to gain spirit points for their class. At the end, student council tabulates the point totals and declares a winner, leaving one class with all the bragging rights.

While Homecoming Spirit Week includes crazy outfits and, more importantly, student desire for victory, Winter Spirit Week lacks the luster. Like a bad movie sequel, it passes without much acknowledgement from the student body (even Alicia Silverstone couldn’t make *Batman & Robin (1997)* watchable).

“Students take Homecoming more seriously because the hype of the big [football] game,” said senior Maclane Nutting. “It really brings out everyone’s school spirit; I don’t think we should have [Winter Spirit Week] for that reason.”

Well there you have it. Unfortunately, I don’t foresee the cancellation of Winter Spirit Week anytime soon. However, I do have some ways to help “fix” the lack of school spirit.

First of all, it’s not that hard to dress and sign in during spirit week. Monday, for example, was Valentine’s Day; all you had to do was wear RED or PINK.

Additionally, while students fail to show spirit by dressing up and parading around the school, hopefully they still contribute to the numerous charitable collections during lunches. I understand that you’re too lazy to create a custom outfit, but what’s wrong with being generous?

Winter Spirit Week may never create the same competition and entertainment as Homecoming, but the Grinch act isn’t really helping. Take advantage of the fun while it lasts; trust me, this week won’t last forever.

# Good Luck Speaks!

The Tom-Tom congratulates Senior Delia Ercoli and Sophomore Aubree Tally for their outstanding performances at the IHSA Reavis Sectional last Saturday. Ercoli finished as the sectional runner-up in both Informative Speaking and Oratorical Declamation, while Tally placed third in Humorous Interpretation. Good luck at State girls!



Senior Delia Ercoli



Sophomore Aubree Tally

## TOM-TOM STAFF

|                     |                    |                   |                            |
|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Head Editor:</b> | <b>Editorials:</b> | <b>Features:</b>  | <b>Design Editor:</b>      |
| Dylan Blaha         | Kelly Lyons        | Andrea Earnest    | Rachel Hunter              |
|                     | Annie Lillwitz     | Rene Tovar        |                            |
| <b>News:</b>        | Maribeth Van Hecke | Lindsay Simonetta | <b>Design Assistants:</b>  |
| Dylan Blaha         |                    | Maddy George      | Mary McKevitt              |
| Brittany Baldwin    | <b>Sports:</b>     | Michael Gaytan    | Alexis Caspers             |
| Caroline Celis      | Gregg Husa         | Bridget Carr      | Haley Haase                |
| Morgan McPartland   | Kyle Griffin       | Katelyn Birtke    |                            |
| Erin O’Connor       | Ryan Peraino       | Mallory Christine | <b>Journalism Advisor:</b> |
| Elizabeth Bernabe   | Ian Stratta        |                   | Sean Clark                 |



*Photos by Dan Franke and Tony Hamilton*



# THAT'S SO GAY

by Annie Lillwitz  
*Editorials writer*

With societal standards constantly changing it's sometimes hard to tell right from wrong. Then again, some things should just be no-brainers.

"This is so gay" is not an appropriate way to describe your distress toward the lack of a second snow day. If you mean it sucks, then say "this sucks."

As it turns out, "gay" and "sucks" have two entirely different meanings, only one, of which, is bad. "Gay" can be defined as two things; having or showing a merry or lively mood, or (more commonly) homosexual.

Now I cannot think of any possible way either of those definitions would make sense in the phrase "that's so gay."

If you don't quite understand, try saying "that's so homosexual" or "that's so merry." Sounds stupid, right? You sound just as unintelligent when you say "that's gay."

Also, an inanimate object cannot be "gay," mainly because it has no sexual preference. When you address such objects as "gay" you sound foolish.

Just the other day I overheard a boy talking about how he "doesn't like to be around gay people." Huh? I thought to myself, I bet you're around gay people every day without even knowing.

Actually, I guarantee it. According to gaylife.about.com, about 1 in 20, which means about 60 LHS students, will one day be a part of the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transexual) community, if they aren't already. And that's nothing to be ashamed of.

"Gay" isn't the only word people seem to have a problem with misusing. "Retarded" is another. "We were so retarded" may have a meaning closer to what you're trying to say, but it is completely inappropriate. Retardation is a mental handicap, not a word to be lightly thrown around.

The definition of "retardation," according to dictionary.com, is "slowness or limitation in intellectual understanding and awareness, emotional development, academic progress, etc." By no means does it translate to "stupid."

Not only is it politically incorrect to say things like "gay" and "retarded," it's offensive to a lot of people. You never know whose family member or friend might be gay or mentally handicapped. Or even who is just insulted by your poor choice in language.

What about those who are gay, bisexual, or suffer from a mental illness? It's just as, if not more, offensive to them when such things are said. You wouldn't want someone saying, "Oh that's so left-handed." Not only does it make no sense, but it's also an insensitive way to single out a group of people because of something that makes them different.

Fortunately, there are many good people willing to stand up for the LGBT community and those with mental illness. We're even more fortunate when these people are influential.

In the wise words of Lady Gaga:

**"I'm gay. My music is gay. My show is gay.  
And I love that it's gay. And I love my gay  
fans and they're all going to be coming to  
our show. And it's going to remain gay."  
You tell 'em girl.**



# A<sup>+</sup> Class to Pass

by Maribeth Van Hecke  
*Editorial writer*



Two sharp number two pencils, calculators, prep classes, tutors, books and countless hours of stress and anticipation. All for one test. Really?

ACT classes have started and plenty of high school students are beginning to feel the stress. Students are recognizing the test's importance and how it can impact their future. Even though the ACT is an important college entrance exam, could there be too much hype? Should you really feel like you need to take a class to pass the test?

The ACT is supposed to prove how much one knows in a variety of subjects, not how much one can learn in a few-month period in a class that he or she has to take outside of school. That's what high school is for, preparing students.

One of the reasons the ACT stresses out students is the amount of pressure it puts on students. Not that it's insignificant. Lots of students are poor test-takers but are extremely intelligent.

"It's supposed to be an assessment of what you do know," says LHS senior Amy Gebka. Nonetheless, she does not believe that it's "an accurate assessment of measuring [a] student's intelligence." She says, "I think people freak out about it too much, but I also think ACT people put too much emphasis on the importance."

Paige Szymanski, a senior who took the ACT class, said, "it really helped me with timing and... how much time to spend [for each section]." As far as timing goes, many students struggle to finish in the last minutes of the test. However, can't one do that without paying for a class?

Another thought is whether each subject has equal weight to prove anything. The four required sections are English, reading, math and science. Half of the test is English related, plus the optional writing portion.

LHS junior Andrea Pehr explains, "I think it's kind of bias[ed]... if you're stronger in English [your] ACT score will be higher [than] if you're stronger in math."

Whether the test is fair toward all subjects or not, it should not be approached as a deciding factor of ones future, like it is feared to be. Students should take the exam and feel confident and do as best as they can. They should not feel like they have to take a class to pass.



## CALIFORNIA DREAMIN' by Andrea Earnest Features Editor



Everyone's heard of her, whether you know her for her slightly racy pop songs or her eccentric British husband. Katy Perry, the twenty-six year old singer, just announced her new tour, The California Dreams tour.

The tour begins Feb. 20 in Lisbon, Portugal. Perry will make her way around Europe, Australia and Asia. Her North American tour dates start June 7 in Duluth, Georgia. The California Dreams will come to a close on Nov. 8 in Dublin, Ireland. Fans around the world will be able to get a chance to see the famous popstar.

Perry hopes to make this her best tour yet and while on promotion for her album has said, "I guess I'm looking forward to making music videos on this new album ... and I'm really excited about incorporating the look and the idea of some of the songs on tour and making a massive production of it. I'm gonna want a lot of visuals. I want it to be 10 times better than when I was on tour last."

The native Californian is teaming up with social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter to make the concerts even more interactive for her fans. Perry has also said that the tour will be very "super girl power" as vocalists Robyn, Yelle and Marina and the Diamonds will be the openers for certain legs of the tour.

No one really knows what to expect from the slightly crazy popstar. I've even heard rumors of cotton candy confetti that you can eat. That is reminiscent of Perry's second album *Teenage Dream* where the physical copy of the CD had a scratch and sniff of cotton candy. No matter what happens, this is sure to be quite a show.

Perry will be performing songs off her sophomore album *Teenage Dream*. The album has sold 997,000 copies as of January 2011. Smash singles "Firework", "California Gurls" and "Teenage Dream" have all peaked at number one on the Billboard Hot 100.

The Chicago concert is July 8 at the Allstate Arena in Rosemont, Illinois. Tickets have been selling out very quickly for the other shows, so I would recommend buying your tickets as soon as possible.

To see other tour dates and purchase tickets, check out <http://www.katyperry.com/tours/>.



*Images Courtesy of Google*



## FOX THIS WINTER: GLEE AND IDOL RETURN

by Bridget Carr  
Features writer

Fox's *Glee* phenomenon has taken television by storm. Anyone familiar with the innovative hit TV show would associate it with the satirical comedy that mocks high school stereotypes and the catchy remakes of popular songs.

The all-star cast is full of vocal, dance and theatrical talent. This combined with the fast-paced dialogue and the nonstop plot twists has drawn in a vastly growing fan-base.

The lovable and unconventional characters have come together to create television's favorite "family." They form a team of outcasts who share a passion for performing and a desire to feel like they belong. The show is full of complicated relationships that keeps fans emotionally engaged and on their toes.

With many imaginative performances, a unique touch of humor and a large dose of drama, *Glee* has come to be an esteemed musical television program.

The second season will continue this February after somewhat of a "half-time" hiatus. Before this mid-season break, secrets were revealed, romantic struggles took place and new characters were introduced.

This lull left viewers interested and waiting for what the upcoming season could bring. After a two-month wait, we're all eager to see what *Glee* will spring on us next.

Another hit series on Fox this winter is the renowned *American Idol*. After many successful years of introducing star singers to the world, this show continues with a few new changes.

With new judges Jennifer Lopez and Steven Tyler, the panel has greatly altered from previous years. The feedback and selection process will change from that of the traditional three judges we've come to know over the years, which causes fans to carry mixed emotions toward the judging panel.

The audition process for *Idol* aired in mid-January, and it will progress to the Hollywood and Las Vegas rounds shortly. Every Wednesday and Thursday, viewers tune in to catch a glimpse of the sometimes ridiculous and sometimes heart-touching auditions.

Now that *Glee* has started back up with a bang and *American Idol* is moving forward in finding America's next singing sensation, Fox TV is worth tuning into this winter.



*Images Courtesy of Google*





# Mind Games: Part 1

by Rene Tovar  
Features writer

“Turn off that TV and go outside!” is usually the generic response to a video game addict, followed by “Video games turn your brains to mush!” But actually, it’s quite the opposite.

Visual improvement is common with those who play video games. In shooter games, for example, the gamer’s visual focus can expand to a wider field of sight which allows for better attention to a wide array of events.

“Shooter games increase coordination,” said junior Kristy Delgado. “They improve your reaction, timing and patience.”

Many video games also involve other players. This can encourage teamwork and leadership. By being able to interact with others, a person can expand themselves socially and individually.

For example, interactive expansion might give the player more focus and control. This can give players a more positive sense of achievement, respect and power.

Video games can also improve children’s and teen’s knowledge of history, power and architecture. They indirectly teach about certain aspects of life in the world.

In war games like Call of Duty or Medal of Honor, the player can create strategies which can aid in the development of logical skills and decision-making.

Communication skills, responsiveness, solving ability and image locating skills are also more ways video games can help video-gamers.

Dr. Sarah –Jayne Blakemore, co-author of *The Learning Brain: Lessons for Education* stated that brain imaging studies have shown the brain can change with practice. By training yourself in a certain task, like you would with a video game, your brain can grow in size and increase in activity.

Video games are designed to be very addictive. However, if used in a fun and moderate way, they can improve certain skills in a positive and peaceful way and provide entertainment for almost everyone.



# LHS

## Dance Team

## Prepares for STATE



by Kyle Griffin  
Sports writer

On Sunday, Jan. 21, the LHS dance team placed 1st at their competition in Romeoville and qualified for state.

The squad now looks forward to state on Sunday, Mar. 6 in Peoria and they hope to improve upon last year’s 7th place finish. At state, the girls will face some tough opposition, such as Riverside Brookfield, who is a big threat.

However, LHS Varsity Dance coach, Stephenie Campanile is “confident [the team] can improve upon last year’s finish [at state].” The girls have been dominating competitions all year and if they perform like they have, the team will certainly place high at state.

Excitement has been building up as the girls work hard to prepare for state, “We get tapes every time we compete and we listen to what the judges say and really take that to heart. We drill our routines, schedule extra practices and make changes to our routines hoping that we will please the judges,” stated junior Alyssa Szymanski.

The team’s theme for its open pom routine is “magic.” “I think it’s a really good idea. I love the choreography and our captains and choreographer did a great job,” said Szymanski.

At basketball games the team can be seen putting on its magic themed routines often dressed as magicians, but at competitions “they put everything out there,” stated Campanile. However, there is still work to be done before the state competition.

“We’re going to be constantly improving,” said Campanile. With all the talent at state, the team is going to need to put on their best performances when it matters most, “We have been working very hard these past few weeks. If we keep it up, there is a good chance we will place well at state,” stated senior captain, Paige Szymanski. “We hope to go out with a bang.”

Going out with a bang would be a perfect way to end the senior’s last competition ever. Senior captain Kaley Sullivan is hoping to bring back a trophy and plans to “give 100% at state and represent Lemont in the best way possible.” The team is anxious to bring their “magic” to Peoria.

Hopefully the team can pull off a great performance and become the 2nd LHS state champs this year.



# Nagel, Malecki and Giatras



by Gregg Husa  
*Sports Editor*

## QUALIFY FOR STATE

For any individual sport, having one state qualifier on the team is great. But having three qualifying is even better.

After competing at this weekend's Lincoln-Way West sectional, the Lemont High School wrestling team will send three competitors to the state competition this weekend Feb. 18-19.

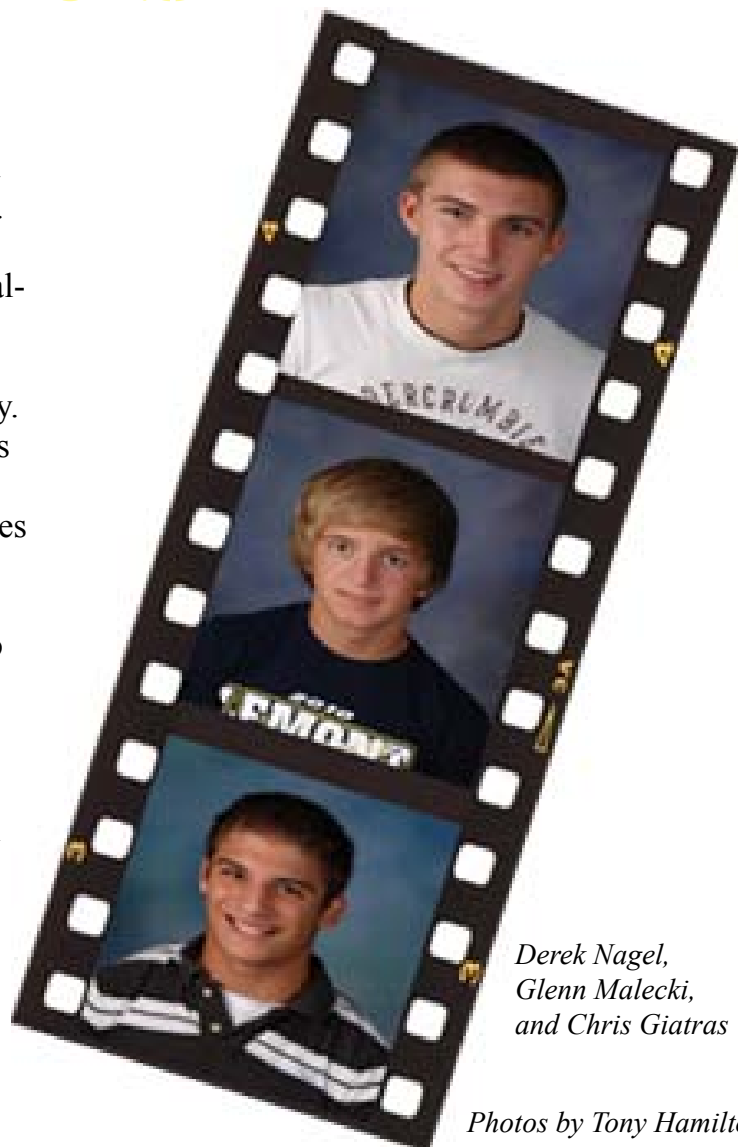
Competitors include senior Derek Nagel, junior Glenn Malecki and sophomore Chris Giatras. Nagel was the sectional champ for the 160 weight class while Malecki and Giatras finished third in the 125 and 189 weight classes, respectively.

Coach John St. Clair gave some thought on this weekend's meet. "Overall I was a little disappointed on how we did, especially on Friday night. But we won our last three matches on Saturday ending on a high note."

In addition, St. Clair was sympathetic towards the seniors who did not qualify for state. "It's tough for the seniors who won't get one last chance to wrestle at state, especially for [Andrew] Mason, because he has worked hard all year and won't get one last chance."

In order for Nagel to capture the state title he would need to win three straight matches, one on Friday night, Saturday morning and then in the evening as well. For Malecki and Giatras they would need to win four straight matches, with their additional match being on Friday morning, in order to win their brackets.

The state tournament will be held at the University of Illinois Assembly Hall in Champaign. The boys leave this Friday hoping to become state champions.



*Derek Nagel,  
Glenn Malecki,  
and Chris Giatras*

*Photos by Tony Hamilton*