



The Ferris State Torch

95 YEARS OF ILLUMINATING THE TRUTH

Big Rapids, Michigan

Week of Feb. 4 - 11, 2026

www.fsutorch.com

Record setting Red Out

Students raise over \$4,000 for women's heart health



Photo courtesy of Savannah Hewitt

Event organizers stand together at center ice during the hockey game to present the check displaying how much was earned across Red Out.

Blase Gapinski
Editor in Chief

Every year, the Big Rapids and Ferris communities come together for the annual Red Out event, where money is raised for the local Corewell Health Women's Cardiac Unit for American Heart Month.

The Red Out event is hosted and run each year by students within the 489 sports communication seminar and 389 sports communication classes. The event this year was centered around a triple header of home games, including both women's and men's basketball games and wrapped up with hockey. Those who attended the games were asked to wear red in support of women's heart health and could help support the cause through a silent auction bidding on a

variety of donated items from local businesses and Ferris sports teams.

The 20th iteration of this event was held on Saturday, Jan. 31, at the Ewigleben Sports Complex and began at 1 p.m., coinciding with the start of the women's basketball game. The collaboration between the two sports communications classes and Ferris athletics has been an ongoing tradition to give students experience in planning and coordinating a professional event.

The Red Out event has become a beloved tradition by the community and campus alike bringing together a crowd of over 100 people over the love of sports. This year's Red Out pulled in a record-breaking amount of \$4,022.11, the highest that has been raised since the

start of the tradition.

Business administration junior and president of the Sports Professionals Association registered student organization Korbyn Kahl, has been helping run and maintain the Red Out event for the last few years and it is a meaningful event for him.

"This event really means a lot to me," Kahl said. "My mom, before she unfortunately passed away, had a lot of heart problems, so knowing this money is going to a good cause and rehabilitation for that is something really important to me."

This personal connection to the cause goes beyond his role as an organizer, making the work especially meaningful for him. He explained that helping plan and run Red Out each year carries added meaning knowing the support

is going towards something that has affected him and his family's life.

Kahl talked about how the event was being held a little earlier than normal this year to ensure they could coordinate with both basketball games and the hockey game. Typically, Red Out takes place later in February but with the opportunity to showcase a triple header of games, the classes buckled down and got to work on a shorter time frame in hopes of achieving their goal of \$4,000.

"Yes, it was a truncated time. We only had two weeks to put it on, but I think we knew what we had to do. We knew what we were here to accomplish. We knew how to achieve that goal and I think the class is just willing to support that and were willing to do whatever they needed to

do to help and achieve that goal that we have."

Others involved in planning the Red Out said the fast turnaround only strengthened their teamwork and motivation.

This year, the coordinator of sports communication, Dr. Jen Coburn, oversaw the event.

"I am absolutely in awe of the work our students have done," Coburn said. They each have their own areas of expertise, but they've come together as a true cross-functional team in a way that's hard to even explain."

One thing she noted was how the tighter time frame required careful coordination and planning from every student involved. Coburn described how this year was different, as Ferris athletes

were generous enough to donate not only their equipment for the auction but their time as well, with athletes offering lessons in their sport, sharing their expertise.

"I've done focus groups where students say they love having national championship teams but still feel a little separated from them," Coburn said. "This event brings everyone together. Our students, our athletes, and the community, so we can support each other."

This year's Red Out collaboration between the sports communications program and Ferris athletics allowed for a meaningful donation to be put towards women's heart health, all while bringing the community together over a shared love of sports.

News

Learn more about Michigan's rising minimum wage, what it means for students and how local business owners are adapting to this change to combat inflation. **PG. 4**

Culture

Students always find a way to come together and support one another. How do they view community and belonging, and work to cultivate them? **PG. 5**

Opinions

As political polarization continues to worsen, the art of questioning is being lost. Questioning yourself and your beliefs is necessary to make changes. **PG. 9**

Sports

After an 8-1 January, the Ferris women's basketball heads into February, and looks to keep the momentum riding as they take on Wisconsin Parkside and Roosevelt **PG. 10**

News

Blase Gapinski | News Editor | gapinsb@ferris.edu

Michigan

Nolan Matthews
Sports Editor

Burlington, Mich- On Sunday, Feb 1, four horses decided to wander onto the Turtle Creek Golf Course in Burlington, just south of Battle Creek. The horses then fell through the ice on a pond, the pond was covered by several inches of snow, and the pond was not visible. Around 8:40 a.m. According to the Calhoun County Sheriff's Office, the horses had escaped from their nearby enclosure. The Calhoun County Underwater Rescue Team rescued the horses from the shallow water, and all of the horses were able to walk away from the scene and received medical treatment.

National

Nolan Matthews
Sports Editor

Minneapolis, Minn- Five-year-old Liam Conejo Ramos and his father, Adrian Alexander, are back at home in Minneapolis after more than a week at an immigration facility in Texas. The five-year-old and his father were taken from their suburban driveway in mid January by Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and were transported more than 1,300 miles to the Dilley family detention center in South Texas. The family had entered the United States legally and applied for asylum upon their arrival in 2024 the families attorney said. Their release followed a Saturday ruling by the U.S. District Judge Fred Biery, who ordered that Liam and his father be freed, finding there was not enough probable cause to detain them.

Global

Nolan Matthews
Sports Editor

Hakuba Valley, Japan- An Australian snowboarder has died after her backpack became caught in a ski lift and left her suspended in midair, according to Japanese police. Naganoh Omachi Police said the 22-year-old tourist suffered from cardiac arrest after the accident on Friday at the Tsugaike Mountain Resort. The woman was rushed to a hospital, but unfortunately, later succumbed to her injuries according to police. In a statement from the Tsugaike Gondola Lift Co. they said that the waist buckle of the tourist's backpack had become entangled in the lift chair, and this prevented her from being able to get off the lift.

President Pink receives award honoring leadership at Ferris

Highlighting his achievement and journey to the top



Photo by: Blase Gapinski | Editor in Chief

President Pink during Bulldog Spirit Day where he helped celebrate recent athletic achievements.

Davaria Pharr
News Reporter

President Bill Pink became the president of Ferris State University on July 11, 2022, making him the first African American President at Ferris State.

Prior to becoming president at Ferris State, he served as president of Grand Rapids Community College.

He also served as Vice President at Oklahoma State University.

Some of his other achievements include being appointed leader of the Growing Michigan Together Council by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer.

He earned a doctoral degree of philosophy and leadership, a master's of education and a bachelor's of science degree.

On Jan. 7, 2026, Pink was named one of Michigan's Inspiring Leaders by Corp! Magazine.

Highlighting his leadership role at Ferris State, but for Pink, this was just another average day, as he gives all the credit to the students and staff on campus.

"While I'm honored to receive this award, this award to me has everything to do with the people I'm surrounded by, my leadership team, and uni-

versity faculty and students," Pink said. "This is a reflection of the work that happens here at the university as a whole. I just get to be the one to lead it out."

He explains that he wouldn't be in his leadership role if it weren't for others pushing him to be his best. To him, the best part of receiving the award is being able to brag about his school.

Some of the most influential people in his career, including colleagues, family, coaches and professors, citing his faith as a prominent influence as well.

The mentors he had shaped his leadership qualities, such as compassion and assertiveness which has helped him along the way.

"Those are the people I think were instrumental in my leadership and in the person you see today," Pink said.

In his journey to becoming president, at first, he did not think he would go this far. He said that with all the obstacles standing in his way, he did not realize what he was capable of.

"I really didn't think that graduating from college, I would even go on to get a PhD," Pink said. "My plan was to get a master's degree and just coach basketball. But

surprisingly, there was more in store for me and bigger heights for me to reach."

There were two people in Pink's life who said something to him that would always ring in his ear forever.

"The first person was Dr. John Benson, my professor at the time, who said to me he would be disappointed if one day I didn't have a doctorate degree. That one stood out to me because there I was, not even finished with my bachelor's degree, yet this man thinks I need to have a doctorate degree," Pink said.

He explained that at that moment, he thought his professor was just being nice but it stuck with him and that one person believing in him put the idea in his mind.

"I started questioning, am I capable of that? Could I one day be a doctor?" Pink said.

Pink's resiliency is what kept him going along with having a great support system as well. He also mentioned he was the first in his family to receive a college education.

"From having come from a background where growing up with not a lot of resources around us, but having incredibly loving parents to help me accomplish that, that was a defining moment for me,"

Pink said.

Pink leaves some advice for students who hope to become aspiring leaders someday.

"One thing I always tell aspiring leaders is that you go into a leadership role with the understanding that you will never please everybody," Pink said. "Try your best at leadership, but always know that because humans are different from one to the next, we all have different needs and come from different backgrounds, you can't please everybody. I don't believe you can ever please anybody; that means do the best at what you think is the right way to lead."

He suggests that students pull ideas and learn from other people and ask questions.

His final words of wisdom: "There's always going to be people who may not get exactly what they thought you should do or what they wanted you to do, but stay true to yourself."

Pink plans on highlighting and promoting the idea of curating a common unity on campus throughout the spring semester further showcasing why he was named one of Michigan's inspiring leaders.

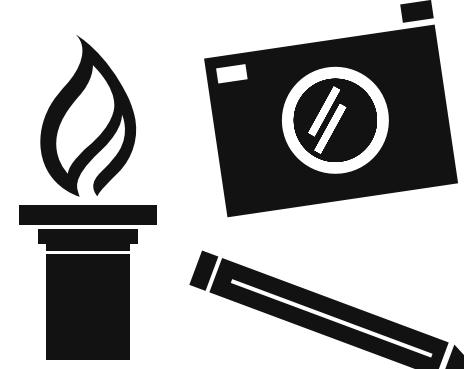
being yourself seem wrong. Even as a child in elementary school, my peers treated me differently. Looking back, as a kid, if the some made. That weird children have they're are thereing school or most tra weiging over. A lot with the the ch didn't c my tea pansexu year of h the anti- in theolo forced to influences negative. One of t's experie realizi a fresh. Each y class nt calle st. Th marily meant to me the practice of ce and the Chris bright light in my Catholic school was that I managed to gather a few quee... your struggle. Friends are made in the most unlikely of places.

Why work for the Torch?

The Ferris State Torch is an entirely student-run publication created by students and for students. We publish 27 Wednesdays throughout the academic year and serve as a platform for student voices. From covering campus news to community stories, our mission is to inform, engage and represent the Ferris community while giving students hands-on experience in journalism and media. We pride ourselves on welcoming any student who is interested in working for the Torch, regardless of prior experience in writing or media. Whether you are an experienced writer or someone looking to try something new, the Torch provides an inclusive learning environment where students can grow their skills at their own pace. Our staff members gain real-world experience in reporting, interviewing, editing and photography while learning the core values of journalism, including accuracy and integrity. Reporters for the Torch have the freedom to choose what they want to cover, from campus news and Ferris athletics to student organizations, events and issues that matter to the community. Working for the Torch is an opportunity to build your portfolio, develop professional skills and actively contribute to campus life while being part of a collaborative, student-led team.

Positions we have open include:

- Copy Editors
- Photographers
- Reporters (Freelance and full-time)
- Section Editors (News and Managing Copy Editor)



For more information and inquiries, reach out to
Blase Gapinski @gapinsb@ferris.edu

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Michigan minimum wage increase

New year, higher pay and how it affects you



Photo courtesy of Quinn Music Facebook

Budd Greenman (right) current operator of Quinn's Music Store has recently taken over during a period where employee wages are on the rise.

Gannon Thomas
Freelance Contributor

The new year brought a pay increase for Michigan's lowest-paid workers and on Jan. 1, 2026, the minimum wage in the state of Michigan rose from \$12.48 to \$13.73 thanks to the Michigan Wage Act.

This is the latest of the scheduled pay increases under the Michigan Workforce Opportunity Wage Act, which was brought into action in 2018. This act is scheduled to continue to raise Michigan's minimum wage to \$15.00 on Jan. 1, 2027.

This act also mandates that in every October, starting in 2027, the state treasurer will calculate a new minimum wage for the following year based on the current inflation rates. These raises aim

to help the minimum wage worker combat inflation.

The Michigan Workforce Opportunity Act was first created in 2018 but faced years of legal challenges and wasn't legislated until 2025 under the name The Improved Michigan Workforce Act. This act became effective on Feb. 25, 2025 and required employers to raise minimum wage accordingly or be subject to consequences like civil fines and even legal action.

This pay increase has also affected students who work on campus. Many student job positions, like dining staff and those in service roles, will see a pay bump, increasing weekly pay for those who can only work limited hours during the semester.

In addition to raising the state's minimum wage, this

act also lays firm rules for minimum wage overtime compensation and raises the wage of employees who are under 18 or have tip-based wages, tying their pay closer to the current minimum wage.

Unfortunately, future raises are not guaranteed. The act also states that the future increases in wages past Feb. 1, 2027, will only happen if Michigan's unemployment rate is lower than 8.5%, a statistic determined by the Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics of the United States Department of Labor.

This increase in wages will positively benefit employees but may worry some small businesses about higher operating costs. Fortunately, a 2024 study done by Carnegie Mellon and the University of Michigan has shown that

a rise in minimum wage has no significant impact on independent businesses.

Still, businesses must compensate by paying higher wages, with many choosing to lower workers' hours or just absorb the cost.

The current operator of Quinn's music store in Big Rapids, Budd Greenman, expressed little worry of rising operation costs but was extremely sympathetic toward the raise in minimum wage, showing how local and small business owners support this pay raise.

"The thing is with the minimum wage is that it has not been a living wage for a long time and it needed to increase," Greenman said.

For Ferris students and low-wage employees across Michigan, these wage raises may help provide relief for

recent inflation and spikes in the cost of things like groceries and rent. Many students rely on minimum wage jobs to support themselves through college, meaning this raise will help students overcome rising prices.

Some Ferris students like Information Security Intelligence senior Jack Pfleghaar working campus jobs have already started to notice this raise in pay. He is a teaching assistant for multiple courses in his major and has spoken positively about the changes even if they are small.

"My take-home used to be roughly \$7 an hour, and now it feels closer to \$10," Pfleghaar said. "It's only a light increase, but it still helps while being in college."

Other Ferris student employees, like sophomore Kate Ritter, who is studying Public

Relation's and works in admissions, have yet to see any change in pay but "anticipate feeling the effects of it because it's a pretty big change."

Ritter also adds "I think that it's still going to be tight because of the way prices of everything are going up" and when asked how she was going to enjoy this pay increase ritter stated she "might get a pig... still up in the air"

Whether working on campus or anywhere else, this raise in minimum wage will affect all Michiganders and put more money in the pockets of people who are paid the least. This act and the steps it will take are a strong tool to help defend all minimum wage employees in Michigan from rising inflation and the everyday cost of living.

Culture

Grace Heethuis | Culture Editor | turnek29@ferris.edu

How to build a village

Students share thoughts on community and belonging

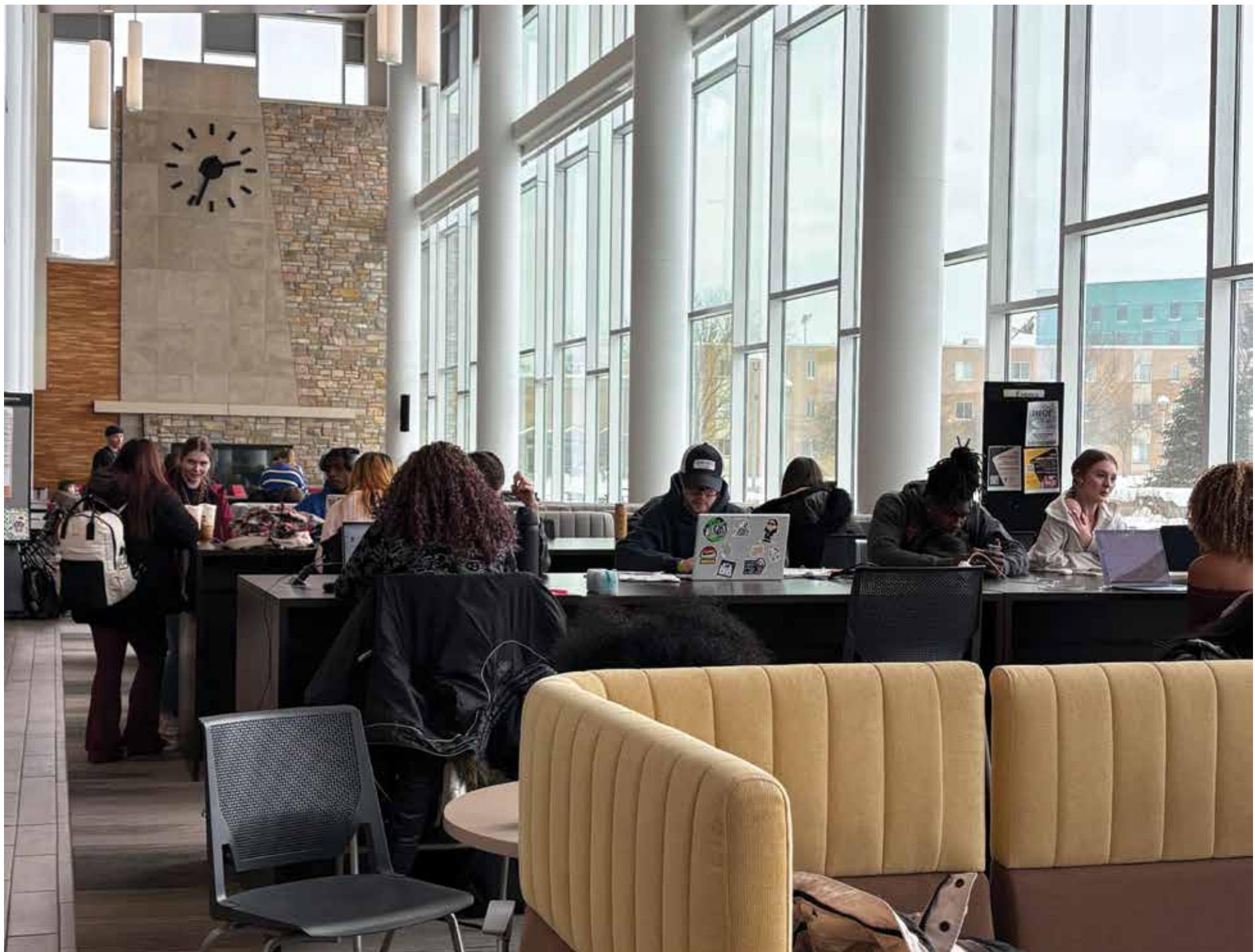


Photo by: Tate Zellman | Culture Reporter

One of the main messages from university administration this semester is coming together and looking for that common unity to build a community.

Grace Heethuis
Culture Editor

Every day lately seems to bear more devastating news of current events around the world. From news stories to campus talk, all of the tragedy can really impact students and their mental health.

However, one of the best ways students have been combating that is by building a sense of community. By defining community and coming together with those around them, they can build a sense of hope on campus.

Senior English major Will Garason spoke about his observations of how people are taking care of each other and building community.

“I think with all the antagonistic shit that’s going

on in the world, I think a lot of people need a reprieve from that,” Garason said. “And so I like to think I see more people trying to take care of each other, do the little things for other people, be they strangers or friends or loved ones or whomever, right?”

Amid so much conflict around them, many students, much like Garason, believe in the importance of supporting one another.

Additionally, Garason wrestled with the complex definition of community and shared his thoughts on what it actually means.

“I always think community indicates that you have certain ideas about your identity, and because of that

identify these groups, and those will be my community, and I will take care of people in my community,” Garason said. “But I see that all as very counterproductive.”

Many people view supporting and loving one another simply as showing up. Students share meals with their friends and give each other rides when needed. Garason has a more unconventional approach.

“I’m very much a give cigarettes to a homeless person type of guy when he asks for it, buy a drunk guy a beer at the bar. Why not? Those are the small acts of love that make the world go round,” Garason said.

Sophomore nursing major Diana Gonzalez briefly discussed how she sees

people coming together as a community.

“You see a lot of protests happening. I’m from Grand Rapids, and there was one that happened in downtown Grand Rapids about the ICE stuff,” Gonzalez said.

Currently, ICE is cracking down and drawing significant controversy. Outraged people have been organizing protests in their cities and leaning on each other for support through challenging circumstances.

Gonzalez revealed what she believes it really means to be part of a community and to belong, emphasizing the importance of being accepted.

“[I think it means] to not be judged in things you do,” said Gonzalez. “It’s good if

people are open to talking to you and being around you. Whenever I’m in class, I make sure to include [people] in the conversation.”

Students at Ferris prioritize supporting one another and making sure those around them feel heard and seen, even through small acts of care, such as including one another in class.

Freshman dental hygiene major Aliza Moeller shed light on how she is approaching community and encouraging others to do the same.

“I’m at the point in life where holding people close to me is big right now,” Moeller said. “Meeting new people, that’s going out of my comfort zone, but I think showing people that it’s okay [builds community].”

Moeller concluded by discussing how she thinks about belonging and how she makes others feel they belong on campus as well.

“Things you have in common with people you can belong in those aspects, but also spiritually, almost like you have those in common, but also making sure you feel comfortable,” Moeller said. “I think just showing them who I am as a person and making sure they feel wanted.”

While students all hold different views of community and belonging and have very different approaches to caring for others, they all believe in the importance of supporting others.

Easing away the stress

Students bring up stress relievers that help them persevere



Graphic by: Hailey Nye | Production Assistant

Tate Zellman
Culture Reporter

College wouldn't be quite the same experience if every student didn't feel stressed at least once. When times feel especially difficult, students can ease their stress to help them overcome the challenges of college.

How can they ease their heavy load by finding stress relievers that help with their mental health status and their academics? Applying stress relievers can help students take their minds off college and refocus on the next phases of their coursework.

There are various activities that students consider stress relievers. Some involve being active, while others involve sitting down and enjoying the pleasure of watching or playing a game.

Digital animation and game design sophomore Robert Wiles listed music and video games as two of his stress relievers.

"Recently, when things got really stressful, I realized one of my favorite ways to recharge is just sitting down, hopping online with one of my friends and playing a game with them," Wiles said. "For music, I started playing my guitar about ten years ago. Ever since then, I've found it very calming because it felt like what I was meant to do."

Wiles has found his stress relievers very beneficial for

improving his academic performance.

"For academics, when I'm thinking about a thousand things at once, I find it very hard to focus," Wiles said. "It's sort of an escape and a distraction. It lets me think about something other than stress and gives my mind a break to think about something more calming. When I come back to doing schoolwork, I feel revitalized to the point where I can get things done and do things to the best of my ability."

Many students' stress relievers are ones they've picked up over time and tried before. This can lead one to understand that a stress reliever is worth using to calm the body.

This is true for social work freshman Leila Leonard. One of her stress relievers is yoga, which she started in high school.

"My senior year of high school, I had a yoga class every morning," Leonard said. "That was my first introduction to yoga and it was great. Once I started doing it, it made my days go so much smoother. It's very good for relieving anxiety. It gives your body a chance to relax, and stretching is just so good for your mental health."

While stress relievers can still work, the thought of having homework is on every student's mind throughout the semester.

Radiography freshman

Hallaway Baumgardner reminisced on the joys of reading books, watching movies, watching YouTube and making crafts. Baumgardner considers these stress relievers for her because they shift her mind away from homework.

"I tend to lean more towards the things that don't distract me, but give myself a break to where I can focus on something," Baumgardner said. "I could read for hours. That gives me something to focus on, and it's good for my brain. I always feel better when I talk to my friends. It's become natural to me to talk things out."

Baumgardner has multiple stress relievers, and she never hesitates to use them when they can be used most effectively.

"I see [stress relievers] as a reward," Baumgardner said. "If I do my homework, then I can watch a movie, or if I get all my homework done during the week, I can do whatever I want during the weekend. I need to find time to take a break, otherwise I can't think straight. I need time to reset."

When stress occurs, students can apply many methods to help them overcome it. Developing or finding a stress reliever can go a long way toward helping students feel more comfortable in their college experience.

Despite the barriers stress creates, students are creative in finding ways to persevere, and they refuse to let it con-

sume them. College wouldn't be quite the same experience if every student didn't feel stressed at least once. When times feel especially difficult, students can ease their stress to help them overcome the challenges of college.

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Despite the barriers stress creates, students are creative in finding ways to persevere, and they refuse to let it consume them.

Annual festival of the arts

Month long arts centered event kicks off in Big Rapids

Festival of the arts Feb 4-11

WED

4 GR Stories panel discussion...7pm @FSU Fine Art Gallery
Bean Around the World...7pm @ Big Rapids City Hall
FSU Marching Band...7pm @ FSU Business Building rm. 111

THURS

5 Brushstrokes
“Saboteur”...2pm @ Immanuel Lutheran Church
Artworks Reception...7pm @ Artworks

FRI

6 You Can Uke...1-3pm @ Artworks
BRHS Drama “Queens”...7pm @ Big Rapids High School
Youngman & Oldmen... 7pm @ Immanuel Lutheran Church

SAT

7 Community Art Project... 9am - 12pm @ Artworks
BRHS Drama “Queens”...7pm @ Big Rapids High School
FSU Theatre...7pm @ The Back Room at Toppings

SUN

8 Cliff Monear and Miguel Gutierrez... 4pm @ Immanuel Lutheran Church

MON

9 Cellphone Editing... 7pm @ Big Rapids City Hall

TUE

10 Harmonicas in Class... 9-10am @ Artworks’ lower level
Woodwackers... 10am-12pm @ Artworks
Knitting Workshop...

WED

11 “Immediate Family”... 7pm @ FSU Williams Auditorium

Graphic by: Harmony Goodman | Production Manager

Harmony Goodman
Production Manager

The nineteenth festival of the arts kicked off on Sunday, Feb. 1. The Big Rapids Festival of the Arts is a long-standing month-long event focused on art and workshops to bring the community and the Ferris School of Art together.

It started the month out with the opening reception and Joni Michell tribute. The festival included over 75

events taking place around Big Rapids, from music, visual arts, physical arts, culinary arts and even video editing workshops.

The annual festival resumed in (Year) after COVID-19 and quickly filled the month of Feb. with numerous events.

The festival encourages both Big Rapids locals and Ferris students to mingle and enjoy the arts together through local concerts and

on-campus arts involvement, such as the marching band and the Ferris theatre department.

For those who want to attend events but aren't sure about their schedules this month, the festival will host three month-long exhibits, featuring “The Making of an Indie Comic” and Tyrannosaurus at Artworks. At the FSU Fine Art Gallery, attendees can view the “GR Stories: The 14th Amendment.” The final

exhibit is located at the Immanuel Lutheran Church, titled “Birds” by Justin Kellner. “Birds” also has a dedicated “Bird Week” during the week of Feb. 16-21, during which other topical events will be held.

The Festival of the Arts also features public art collectives that are seeking submissions. For example, Feb. 20 is the submission deadline for the Minecraft Sculpture Challenge “Build a

Story.” Which has both youth (11-16) and adults (17+) categories. The top three submissions in each category will be awarded and printed for display at Artworks from Feb. 23 through March 7.

The majority of events are free admission for all, including gallery tours, speakers, and concerts from performers who are recognized nationally and internationally. Thanks to the festivals sponsors and local donations,

these events can remain accessible to the public.

The Festival of the Arts concludes with the FSU Band and Orchestra concert on Sunday, March 1, at 4:30 p.m. at Williams Auditorium.

For more information, visit the festival of the arts website at www.brfota.org.

Opinions

Jackie Moglia | Opinions Editor | mogliaj@ferris.edu

The Ferris State Torch is published on 27 Wednesdays throughout the academic year. This student-run newspaper is printed by The Pioneer Group.

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The Ferris State Torch welcomes comments on topics of interest to the general readership. Letters should not exceed 300 words in length and The Torch reserves the right to edit for length. Letters will not be edited for grammar, punctuation or spelling. The Torch will not print letters deemed to be libelous or obscene. All letters must be signed by their authors and include his or her phone number.

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The Torch and fsutorch.com, the student newspaper and its accompanying online version focused on Ferris State University, are public forums for student expression. Student editors have the authority and responsibility to make all content decisions without censorship or advanced approval for both the print and online editions of the student newspapers.

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EDITOR'S COLUMN: Crescendo as a crutch

Learning to expand my listening habits



Graphic by: Hailey Nye | Production Assistant

Blase Gapinski Editor in Chief

Over the last few years, I have become more conscious of the music I listen to and how it quietly shapes nearly every part of my day.

I wasn't always someone who appreciated music the way I do now and I was quick to judge the tastes of others without taking the time to broaden my own. It wasn't until I challenged those assumptions that music shifted from something I barely noticed to something deeply personal and meaningful.

Now, music is something that is rarely absent from my day. If you know me at all, I am always listening to something, whether it's when I'm delivering papers or in moments where I would otherwise be alone with my thoughts.

I constantly switch between genres depending on my mood, the time of day, or the pace of what I am doing. I find myself switching tracks even based on the time of day or even the pace of what I am doing.

Even now, while writing, I find myself switching from artists like Weezer and Faye Webster to help keep myself on track.

What once felt like something that was just there for background noise or entertainment has become something grounding for me. With streaming services like Spotify, music feels like a constant presence that makes everyday routines feel fuller and more intentional.

Over the last six months, I have found myself intentionally exploring music I once overlooked or assumed I would not enjoy. I cycle

through R&B, indie, folk, alternative rock and hip hop without limiting myself to one sound or era. I have started revisiting older music while also seeking out new and lesser-known artists.

I have started finding excitement in taking a chance on music, really giving the artist a chance before forming an opinion. Finding a new artist or getting a recommendation from a friend is another way I stay connected to music. I look forward to that feeling, hearing something new for the first time that instantly resonates with me.

This shift in how I listen to music has also changed the way I think about other people's tastes. I recognize how unfair it was to form opinions so quickly, especially when music is such a personal experience.

Spending more time lis-

tening instead of judging has made me more open, not just to new sounds but to the idea that enjoyment does not need justification.

Music does not have to be universally liked to be meaningful. That understanding has reshaped the way I engage with both music and the people who share it with me.

It is no longer something that I passively consume or dismiss without thought. Music has become that steady presence in my life that I can rely on, filling quiet moments and offering a connection where there otherwise might be silence.

Learning to listen more openly has not only expanded my taste but also challenged the way I approach opinions and the people around me. As my relationship with music continues to evolve, I find value not in deciding

what is good or bad but in remaining curious and staying open-minded. I can honestly say that shifting my listening habits has helped me take a step back in everyday life.

I find joy in simpler moments, like a quiet morning with a song that perfectly fits my mood or a new artist who surprises me with something I didn't know I loved. Music has taught me to stay curious and to listen without judgment.

Music has taught me to embrace both the familiar and the unexpected. It has become a reflection of who I am. Someone willing to explore, learn and grow. Every day, I carry a little of that openness with me, trying to let it shape the way I experience the world and the people around me.

The importance of questioning

The skill that could change everything



Graphic by: Hailey Nye | Production Assistant

Grace Heethuis
Culture Editor

Do you ever stop and consider the reason for the chaos and violence overwhelming our country right now? While there have always been, and will always be, problems, it seems like there is an exceptional amount of unrest right now.

The problems in our country are not a simple fix, but I

think there's a lot that can be done to drastically improve things. However, I believe that in order to truly begin fixing problems, it all starts with the individual.

One of the biggest problems is our inability, or perhaps just unwillingness, to ask questions. Not just any questions, but good questions that will generate solid answers. Asking questions is extremely important.

There is an astonishing number of people who adopt beliefs without even questioning their roots or verifying information. Additionally, many people blindly follow the orders of any person they deem respectable.

This mindset poses several issues. It leads to people being easily swayed and manipulated by people who rarely have their best interests in mind. Often, this is the kind

of mindset that does one of three things: blows issues out of proportion, ignores issues that desperately need to be addressed or intentionally misleads people on important issues.

Next, it leads to the gradual disintegration of a person's ability to think critically and reason independently. It is a sort of numbing of the mind that, the way I see it, makes people considerably more

inept.

I believe that one of the remedies to these issues is to increase our ability to ask good questions and to care about doing so. We need to learn how to get curious, ask questions effectively and pry if necessary.

Good answers are never given when good questions are not asked. Change is not enacted when people don't care enough to question the state of everything around them.

For the most part, it is really important to ask questions in a way that doesn't feel threatening to people. When someone feels threatened, especially if it seems that you are challenging their authority or abilities, they don't respond well.

However, this approach typically works well when you are striving to achieve results in environments such as workplaces and education settings.

I believe there is another very important kind of questioning reserved for more pressing issues, such as those in politics and major societal matters. It is something I would describe as radical, prying questioning.

It is something that makes people uncomfortable, but it is necessary. This is the kind of questioning that protects people, fights for justice and refuses to be complacent in the face of atrocities.

This is the kind I would use when I ask why leaders make certain choices. It is used to pressure people to do better and that is crucial, especially in serious matters. It is intentionally used to make people question themselves because sometimes people

need to reevaluate their decisions.

The ability to ask others questions effectively is important, but questioning yourself is equally important. Not just every so often, but constantly. Self-evaluation is comparable to a good resume: both constantly need updating.

As the world changes and you acquire new information, your perspectives should begin to shift. Now, I'm not talking about reconsidering your morals and fundamental beliefs. Those are essential to who you are as a person.

I mean reconsidering how those morals and fundamental beliefs influence your worldview. You might always value empathy, but in five years, you might see empathy hidden in a belief that you once opposed and change your mind.

If you aren't constantly questioning yourself, it is hard to grow and do better. In short, questioning in any form facilitates growth.

Questioning the beliefs and actions of those around you is necessary to protect others and help society be better.

Questioning yourself is a way of refining your own beliefs, which shape your actions. This will also benefit society because every individual's actions, based on their beliefs, have an impact.

The ability to ask good questions and arrive at good answers matters more than most people ever consider. This ability extends beyond yourself; what you do and do not question determines the course of history.

The car caper



Comic by: Blake Flanery | Cartoonist

Sports

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Road trip

Women's basketball plays GLIAC teams on the road



Photo by: Clark Vance | Photographer

Senior Kadyn Blanchard drives to the basket while taking on multiple Wayne State defenders.

Devin Wardrop
Sports Reporter

The Ferris State women's basketball team starts a four-game road trip this weekend with games at Wisconsin-Parkside on Saturday and Roosevelt on Monday.

No.21-ranked Ferris State (16-4, 9-2 in GLIAC) finished January with an 8-1 record, with its one loss being 88-59 against rival Grand Valley. The Bulldogs are averaging 78.2 points per game on 42.2% from the field and 32.2% from three, while also averaging 39.5 rebounds and 18.6 assists per game.

Head coach Kurt Westendorp talks about playing tough GLIAC teams on the road.

"Looking forward to the next couple of weeks, we still have one more home game on Monday night, but then we've got to be road warriors in the second round of conference," Westendorp said. "We have a lot of road games, so we'll head down over to Parkside and then Roosevelt. These are really big games for us. We've had a great stretch of home games in a row, but now we got to prove that we can win on the road."

Ferris State has four players with ten or more points, with senior guard Kadyn Blanchard leading with 16.2 points per game on 44.6 field goal percentage and 28.9% from 3pt range, as well as 4.1 assists per game.

Senior forward Mya Hiram leads the Bulldogs with 6.8 rebounds per game, as well as 51.1% shooting, with Senior guard Emma Schierbeek leading the team with a 40.0 3pt percentage.

Hiram believes in the team's ability to win the tough games, especially on the road.

"I'm feeling very confident," Hiram said. "I think that the Wayne State win was a very big confidence-building game. We knew that it was kind of a revenge game, and so I think after all that grit and being able to overcome that, I think it's going to propel us forward a lot in the next weekend. And it's always fun to be on the road. We just had eight

home games in a row, so I think that we're ready to be on the road in Wisconsin and Chicago."

Wisconsin-Parkside (11-9, 6-6 in GLIAC) was 6-4 in the month of January, including a 90-96 loss to Ferris State back on January 5. The Rangers are on a three-game winning streak, and are averaging 70.2 points per game on 42.3 field goal percentage and 29.1% from 3pt range, while also averaging 37.7 rebounds and 15.3 assists per game. The Rangers have three players in double figures, with Sophomore Katie Hamill leading with 14.6 points per game on 42.2% shooting and 33.0% from 3pt range. Senior Peighton Nelson leads the team with

4.9 assists per game, with junior Lillie Peterson leading in rebounds with 7.7 a game.

Roosevelt (5-14, 4-8 in GLIAC) was 4-6 in January, including a 60-78 loss to the Bulldogs back on January 3. The Lakers are averaging 58.4 points per game on 33.2% shooting and 27.0% from 3pt range. Roosevelt also averages 34.9 rebounds per game and 11.1 assists per game. Junior guard Kelly Boyle is one of three players in double figures, averaging 12.1 points per game on 32.7% shooting and 34.7% from behind the arc. Boyle also leads the team with 3.1 assists per game. Junior center Isabella Pitta leads the team with 8.7 rebounds a game.

Bulldog guard Mia Riley is looking forward to playing the second round of GLIAC games, starting with the Rangers and the Lakers.

"I'm excited," Riley said. "We have another decent matchup, and we just have to win out the GLIAC now. We've shown that we can be a good team, so I'm excited to see what the second round of the GLIAC looks like for us."

Ferris State will play at Wisconsin-Parkside on Saturday, February 7, at 2 pm before heading to Chicago on February 9 to play Roosevelt at 6:30 pm.

First serves

Bulldog tennis plays home opener



Photo courtesy of Torch Archives

Junior Kevin Kovacs played on a doubles team with his brother Eric and made the round of 16 in the ITAs.

Devin Wardrop
Sports Reporter

The Ferris State men's and women's tennis teams have their home openers on Friday, Feb. 6, against the Spring Arbor Cougars and on Saturday, Feb. 7, against the Findlay Oilers.

Both teams are 1-0 on the season from their spring matches.

Head coach Mark Doren is looking forward to both seasons.

"We are really excited to get going with our seasons," Doren said. "Both teams have been training really hard and are looking ready to compete. We only graduated 1 player from each team

this past year and brought 3 freshman on each team. The freshman came in with outstanding energy and has already made a huge impact on each team. This year, we are very focused on being intentional with our training and teaching our brains and bodies to be quick to learn, but also quick to put negativity in the past. Our focus on having a plan and playing our plan has already shown growth, and we hope to continue that growth in our first couple of matches."

Doren is also excited to have ten home matches this year, compared to five last year, to bring the fans out.

Women

The Bulldogs (1-0) host

Spring Arbor (2-2) and Findlay (0-0) in their first matches since they played Eastern Michigan on January 19 in an exhibition, losing both times to the Eagles. Ferris State's win was against Grace (IN), in which the Bulldogs won 6-1.

The women had two players in the Intercollegiate Tennis Association (ITA) Midwest Championship hosted at Davenport. Both sophomore Vivian Burns and freshman Nadia Baird made it to the Round of 16, with Baird losing in the semifinals.

Senior Ana Sofia Hernandez Ferrer is excited to be back on the court for the first time since the exhibition match.

"We are so excited to be back after a long break," Ferrer said. "Everyone has been putting the work and dedication. The tennis level the team has right now is amazing. We are so ready to show everyone how great we are this season."

Spring Arbor beat Indiana Kokomo and Ashland back in September as their two wins this season, before losing to Davenport on October 18 and Hillsdale on January 30. Findlay is 1-0 after their 7-0 win against Illinois-Springfield.

Men

Ferris State (1-0) hasn't played since its 7-0 win against Grace (IN) back on October 18. The Bulldogs

host Spring Arbor (2-1) and Findlay (0-1). Spring Arbor beat Ashland 4-3 and lost to Davenport and Hillsdale. Findlay is 1-0 after beating Illinois-Springfield 6-1 at home.

Two doubles teams played in the ITAs, with senior Erik and junior Kevin Kovacs making the Round of 16.

Freshman Andrew Vincler is itching to get back on the court.

"If I were to use one word to describe how I'm feeling right now, it would be rowdy," Vincler said. "Coming into Ferris in the fall, I knew that we were going to be a good team this year, but I didn't think we would be this good. Since we have gotten back

from winter break, every day at practice has been a war with one another, pushing ourselves and each other to become the best tennis players we can be. Our tennis team this year perfectly represents what it means to be a Ferris Bulldog. We are tough, gritty, and rowdy."

Ferris women hosts Spring Arbor on Friday, Feb. 6, at 10 am, with the men playing at 2 pm afterwards. Then, on Saturday, Feb. 7, the women host Findlay at 10 am with the men again playing at 2 pm.

Hockey's losing streak reaches 12 games

The Bulldogs look to break the losing streak against the Beavers



Photo by: Clark Vance | Photographer

Senior forward Gavin Best dribbles the puck against Minnesota State on Jan. 31

Nolan Matthews
Sports Editor

Ferris State hockey's struggles continue, after another weekend sweep, where the team lost 6-1 and 4-3 to No.18-ranked Minnesota State, lengthening their losing streak to 12 games.

After the loss on Saturday, the Bulldogs have tied the program's longest stretch of consecutive losses of 12 games, which goes back to the Bulldogs' first season in the CCHA in 1978-79. The program is also approaching their record of longest string of games without a win, as another four losses would match the 2020-21 Bulldogs' 16-game winless streak.

The Bulldogs (4-24, 3-16 in CCHA) look to break the streak as they travel to take on the Bemidji State Beavers (10-15-3, 8-9-3 in CCHA) at the Sanford Center.

Senior forward Gavin Best spoke about the team's struggles so far this season.

"Despite having the results, we feel our game is trending upwards," Best said. "We need to stay focused on our process and continue

growing as a group to play our best this last month. These next couple of weekends are crucial as we look to spark some positive momentum."

In the two teams' history, the Bulldogs have a 23-24-6 record against the Beavers. In the last five seasons, Ferris State holds a 7-6-1 record against Bemidji State.

A standout player on the season for Ferris State has been senior defenseman Xavier Jean-Louis. So far this season, Jean-Louis has four goals and nine assists, which is good for 13 total points. While redshirt junior forward Carter Rapalje, who has five goals, six assists, and 11 total points this season.

At goalie, the Bulldogs are led by sophomore Martin Lundberg and junior Hobie Hedquist. Lundberg has played in 14 games while logging 683 minutes, while having a 2.98 goals against average, and an .884 save percentage. As for Hedquist, he has played in 13 games and logged 655 minutes in the crease, while having a 4.12 goals against average, and an .879 save percent-

The Beavers come into the weekend on a rough patch of their own, as before they took down Northern Michigan on Jan 30, the team had a winless streak of 12 games stretching back to Nov 28.

Bemidji State is led in scoring by junior forward Olivier Peer, who is third in the CCHA in goals with 14, while having 10 assists and 24 total points. While senior forward Adam Flammang has eight goals, 19 assists and a team leading 27 points on the season.

Head coach Brett Riley spoke about how he believes his squad can stifle the Beavers offensive attack.

"Bemidji has a few high-end forwards who produce at a high rate, including Olivier," Brett said. "We must be dialed in defensively and highly alert whenever he's on the ice. When he's going, their team is going so our commitment to playing a disciplined, winning brand of hockey in the defensive zone will be critical."

In the crease for the Beavers, they use a combination of two goalies, junior Raythan Robbins and freshman Max Hildebrand. Hildebrand has

logged 16 games and 904 minutes for Bemidji State, having a 2.99 goals against average, while having an .889 save percentage. Robbins has 12 games and 724

minutes, while having a 2.65 goals against average and a .892 save percentage.

The Ferris State Bulldogs hockey team will travel to Bemidji, Minnesota to take on

the Bemidji State Beavers on Friday, Feb. 6 then again on Saturday, Feb. 7 at the Sanford Center.

EARLY CHILDHOOD INFORMATION NIGHT & OPEN HOUSE

SAVE THE DATE: TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2026



WHAT TO EXPECT:

- INTERACTIVE TOURS: Bring your child to experience our warm, faith-based environment firsthand.
- MEET THE STAFF: Meet our certified, experienced, and passionate St. Mary early childhood educators.
- PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS: Learn about our engaging preschool and kindergarten options.
- FAITH & ACADEMICS: Discover how our Catholic education combines systematic faith formation with outstanding academics.

Discover the faith-filled and enriching educational opportunities at St. Mary Catholic School! Our Early Childhood Information Night & Open House welcomes families to explore programs designed for children aged three and four, and those entering Kindergarten. Join us on Tuesday, February 17, 2026, from 5:00 – 7:00 PM to meet our dedicated staff, tour our classrooms, and learn how we support students' growth in faith, knowledge, and character.

OUR EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMMING CURRENTLY CONSISTS OF:

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