

The Spotlight

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The Season of Giving

By Izzy Johnson

Once December starts and the holiday season comes around, the season of giving also begins. There are many ways that you can contribute to those around you whether they are your neighbors, family members, or members of your community. Whether you are donating your time, money, or physical objects, there is always some way you can help out. There are many charities or organizations that you can donate to that need some extra help especially during this time of year. Here are just a few:

Whether you are running to a store or shopping in a mall, you can hear those bells ringing this time of year and you know that someone from...

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Check out our December Song of the Month!



Winter Sports

By Claire Wiggernhorn

Winter sports are off to a great start this year. From basketball to swim to gymnastics, the bulldogs are surely going to have a successful season! I decided to reach out to some of our star players and see what they were most excited for this season.

Leading the gymnastics team, Senior Carley Abbott remarks, "I am the most excited for competing with my team and seeing how much we improve throughout the season!"

This year, the OFHS swim team consists of 24 incredible teammates. Swimmer Andrew Surtman is "looking forward to ... seeing all the improvements on the team and hitting all of our goals." Meanwhile, fellow senior swimmer Abby Rebraca is definitely most excited for "wake ups!" ...

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Holiday Traditions

By Hailey Johnston

Many people look forward to the holidays because of the traditions that have been passed into their family. Traditions can bring families together and connect/strengthen group and generational bonds. In case you didn't know, family traditions are beliefs and customs that are passed down to the younger children in the family so they can be carried on by future generations. Traditions create closeness between family members, provide stability, and create feelings of belonging. Our values and beliefs are often reinforced through family traditions. During the holiday season, many families look forward to the traditions they have within the family they gather together with. This could be from the games that are played or the food and treats they eat...

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Holiday Traditions

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Within my family, we always have dinner together on Christmas Eve and we always eat pasta and shrimp, and the other sides vary each year. After dinner, we watch Christmas movies and periodically check the Santa tracker provided on the TV. Christmas morning, we have a huge breakfast all together with my family with the best food ever including my mom's homemade sticky buns which are just so delightful and then later a dinner with the same people. For dinner, we eat homemade pasta and ham. My grandma and I always make the best cookies for both Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. It's so enjoyable to make the same cookie recipe that has been in my family for years. For New Years Eve, my family and I go bowling at night and we bowl until the clock strikes 12. We celebrate, eat, and have so much fun spending time together.

Claire Wiggernhorn, a senior at Olmsted Falls High School, states, "The day after Christmas, my family has a big soup cook off with all of my extended family members. Those family members include aunts, uncles, and cousins. We are able to try a ton of different soups and rate them based on our liking. Not to pat myself on the back, but I have won two times with Zuppa Toscana and Loaded Baked Potato. On New Year's Eve, I typically go to my friend's house and eat so many delicious appetizers while watching the ball drop. It's so much fun starting the new year with all of my friends, and spending quality time with them is something I would never want to change. These traditions I have keep

me excited looking into the holiday season and keep me motivated slowly heading into the long-awaited break."

Not only do the students have traditions to look forward to, the teachers also have events they look forward to during the long break. Algebra teacher Mr. Linder says, "Each year, my family hosts a baking day with all my relatives. We find a weekend before Christmas and all get together to bake holiday cookies. Between cousins, grandparents, aunts, and uncles, there are sometimes 15-20 people in the kitchen/dining room, but we all have an awesome time making memories...and eating way too many cookies. I also have this tradition my immediate family has begun on the 23rd each year. We begin the evening by driving around and looking at Christmas lights. The night ends with the best Christmas movie (no competition), The Polar Express!"

With the long-awaited break coming up for students and teachers at Olmsted Falls High School, there are so many traditions people look forward to with so much time on their hands. This is a time where all of us can take a step back, relax, and focus on ourselves before coming back to school and finishing the second semester of our school year.

Winter Sports

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Check out Aiden Hurt on the wrestling team who is "most looking forward to competing in tournaments and getting better throughout the season." This year's senior wrestlers consist of Aiden Hurt, Blake Theriot, Jamie Anderson, Nate Corrigan, and Conner Russell. Good luck to the boys as they take the mats!

This year at RollHouse, senior Ben Scheeff isn't just a star golfer! Ben remarks that "bowling lets me let go and just have fun!" Olivia Rousek on the varsity bowling team says, "I am most looking towards being a captain this year. Being able to see my girls team grow has been a great experience, and I hope to see the improvement continue. I am excited to be with my girls this year and provide the support that was given to me. In addition, we are in a different conference this year, so I am super excited to face new opponents."

Playing together for years, the seniors on the girls basketball team have a bond like no other. Paige Kohler, Erin Birch, Alanna Tighe, and Mia Kalich have been playing their beloved sport together since middle school. Mia Kalich can't wait for "our trip to Tampa this year." The girls will travel to Tampa, Florida over winter break to play in the Tampa Bay Christmas Invitational.

Stay warm on December 20th and watch the boys basketball team take on Avon to see Michael Candow "get closer to my team and be a leader".

Additionally, Alyssa Hexter on the varsity basketball cheer squad says, "The thing I am looking forward to the most this season is cheering one last time with all my friends and having fun! This is my first time cheering for basketball, and I'm excited to learn all the new cheers!" At all of the boys basketball games you

can find the cheer squad pumping up the entire gym!

If you dig your winter coat, go watch Tyler Pletcher and the hockey team take on Mentor on January 5th. Tyler is "looking forward to spending one last year on the ice." He also says, "It's going to be emotional, yet I can't wait."

Not only is it fun, but it's important to our peers that we support each other. So try to make it out to some sporting events this winter! Good luck to all of our seniors this season on their winter sports journeys!



The Season Of Giving

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The Salvation Army is nearby collecting donations. The Salvation Army is a huge organization that helps provide food, shelter, clothing, and assistance to those that need it. One thing you may not know about them is that they have an Angel Tree program. This program gives children in need an opportunity to receive a present from a generous donor. Donors receive a list of the child's needs, whether it be clothes, shoes, or a winter coat, and a list of a few toys they would like to receive. Once the donor purchases the gifts, they drop them off at Angel Tree receiving stores. Some major stores like certain Walmart locations partner with The Salvation Army and display Angel Trees in their stores. If you are looking to donate, you can easily find participating stores online.

Feeding America has provided meals for over 40 million people and they help ensure that people have food to eat over the holidays. They have food banks nationwide and are easily accessible through their website if grocery help is needed. Some ways you can help them reach even more families is to donate or volunteer some of your time to the organization. If you are interested in volunteering, you can go to their website and click on take action and then click on volunteer. If you are interested in donating you can go to the website give.feedingamerica.org/a/donate/ or you can look up "donate to feeding America" and

select the first link that comes up.

Holidays can be a stressful time for people, and this stress is magnified for people who do not have a place to stay for the holidays. Men's, women's, and children's shelters are always in need of donations, but this need increases around the holidays. There are plenty of things that you can donate besides money that will be greatly appreciated. Toiletries, hygiene products, grooming supplies, baby items, food, cookware, plastic utensils, and paper products will all generally be accepted. It is important that you check what is not accepted before trying to donate as this can be shelter specific. There is no need to go out and buy things as some of these items can be found brand new and unused in your house. With a quick online search, you can find local men's, women's, and kids' shelters and find out what they do and do not accept. Anything that you could give to a shelter to make their job easier would be appreciated.

The season of giving can make things difficult for families, seeing as everyone has their struggles. Any part you could play in making someone's holiday season less stressful and difficult would be very much appreciated. Remember to look out for one another, and have a great holiday season!

Vanilla Bean "NO"elle

By Halle
Sonson

It's that time of year again! Bath and Body Works seasonal candles, fragrance mists, body lotion, and more are back! From Winter Candy Apple to Vanilla Bean Noel, many choices exist. I was curious about what Olmsted Falls students believed were the best and worst of the seasonal fragrances. This is what they had to say:

I think the best fragrance is...

Junior Karen Dougher says, "Rose because it smells expensive even though it's \$13."

Senior Kylie Urban states, "Vanilla Bean Noel because it feels Christmasy to me."

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Senior Jordan Bauman answers, "Marshmallow Fireside because it's a nice smell that isn't too overpowering."

Freshman Gabriel Zielinski answers, "Frosted Cranberry. Crantastic!"

Freshman Brooke Largent states, "Snowflakes and Cashmere."

Senior Claire Wiggernhorn says, "Twisted Peppermint is the best because it's so refreshing after a hot shower."

Sophomore Danica Marshall agrees with Kylie Urban: "Vanilla Bean Noel is my personal favorite. It smells sweet and nice and is a perfect scent for the holidays!"

Sophomore Hannah Jacobs says, "Frosted Coconut Snowball."

Senior Hailey Perkovic states, "I think Champagne Toast is the best."

Senior Elena Strozewski answers "Sweater Weather because it is subtle and woody. It is absolutely my go-to fall scent. It's not super overpowering or anything. It is just simple but still smells awesome!"

I think the worst fragrance is...

Sophomore Adria Hebovia says, "Moonlight Path because it smells like baby lotion and not in a good way."

Senior Christian Lyon answers, "Lavender because it seems to be extremely common and very faint."

Freshman Alyson Harhay says, "Strawberry Pound Cake because it gives you a headache."

Senior Israel Gole states, "Into the Stars, it's too strong and doesn't smell that great. It should be called 'Headache in a bottle.'"

Junior Montana Goodnough states, "Frosted Coconut Snowball because the other seasonal scents are better."

Freshman Ava Pikel exclaims, "Winter Candy Apple; it is not the best scent and it is way too fragrant."

Freshman Evie Pemberton answers, "A Thousand Wishes; it smells very cheap and it's like a knockoff perfume."

Freshman Abbey Riley suggests, "Frozen Lake genuinely just burns your nose and smells like the world's strongest mouthwash and Vicks VapoRub."

Junior Madison Bond says, "Japanese Cherry Blossom because it smells really gross."

Freshman Jillian Haller exclaims, "Peppermint Sugar Cookie."



OFHS LLS COMPETITION

By Nora
Barnard

Approximately every nine minutes, someone dies from blood cancer in the United States. This type of cancer takes the lives of too many people each year, so Olmsted Falls is participating in the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society's competition. The competition consists of thirty high schools in northeastern Ohio battling to raise money for cancer research. The campaign will last from January 27th to March 18th.

Junior Kyleigh Briggs is our school's LLS Visionary through this year's competition. When asked about her position, she says, "With the help of the community, the school, and the Olmsted Falls family, we can all work together to make a difference for the LLS's cause." The public will be able to donate through a website which will be sent out after the coming winter break. Briggs has a committee of students and adults on her side to work together through this process. The student committee includes juniors Maya Smith, Katie Vormelker, and Nora Barnard, and seniors Alex Palmer, Roger Thoma, and Alanna Tighe. The student committee is filled with wonderful people ready to

fight for the cause. Committee member Katie Vormelker says, "I'm really excited that our team gets to work together to support such a great cause!" Along with the students, another part of the team consists of Kyleigh's parents, Jason and Lori Briggs; the principal Mr. Spagnola; and the superintendent of our school district, Dr. Lloyd. The LLS cause is very near and dear to Mr. Spagnola's heart because someone very close to him is strongly fighting the battle against cancer. Mr. Spagnola thinks the association is "absolutely fantastic because we have a young lady who wants to do more and pay it forward. I got so enamored with the cause that I am actually in the fall taking a leadership opportunity with LLS where I will be an advisor."

The team will reach out to businesses and people in the community to give them an opportunity to donate as a way to help the cause. Everybody can donate by going to the website which will begin to accept donations on January 27th. Donating is not the only way to help. Another very important thing is spreading the

word and the mission across town and even further. By reposting on social media or just telling relatives and friends about the organization, people would be helping immensely.

Everybody has been touched by cancer in some way. Either directly or indirectly, cancer has taken a toll on every person in the world. You can help in the fight against cancer by working with the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society and Kyleigh Briggs's team to raise money in support of the fight against blood cancers.

Pitiful Presents

By Rachel
Whiteman

Christmas is often associated with giving and receiving gifts, and they say that when it comes to gifts, it's the thought that counts. But sometimes, no matter how kind the thought, the present can just be awful. I asked some of my classmates what gift that was for them. Let's hope whatever you get this year, it's better than these!

Shelly Allen (Class of 2023): "A Furby. It would talk in the middle of the night saying it was hungry, and it would try to talk to its friend that it didn't have. I'd lock it in the closet to make it shut up but it would still go off."

Adelyn S. (Class of 2025): "A bible. ...I'm not religious."

Natalie Golier (Class of 2023): "We were doing Secret Santa, and I got unicorn earmuffs. If you look at me, do I look like someone who would like unicorn earmuffs?"

Pizza With the Principal

By Halle
Sonson

This 2022-2023 school year, "Pizza With the Principal" was introduced. This is a way for students who performed with good behavior to be recognized and rewarded. Mr. Spagnola describes Pizza With the Principal as follows: "We created Pizza with the Principal because we often catch those that are doing wrong. However, this created an opportunity to catch those who doing something right. It also allows us to interact with those that we don't normally interact with on a daily basis."

Each month, teachers recognize students who have had a positive impact on our high school. These students then receive certificates to be part of the "Pizza With the Principal." One day each month during fourth period, students are rewarded with Angelina's pizza and enjoy lunch with the principal. Sophomore Dominic DiFilippo says, "There were a lot of people there that I normally would not have met that have done great things for our school. I'm glad I was able to celebrate their achievements as well



Kevin Mali (Class of 2023): "Basically I got a bunch of Jesus items and one of them was a mourning card that you give to someone when someone dies."

Evelin Werman (Class of 2025): "Three Easy-Bake Ovens. One from my parents, one from my grandparents, and one from my cousins. The one my cousins gave me was broken."

Jay Powers (Class of 2023): "Fake Judge Judy tickets. I got a big box in a smaller box and in that smaller box was fake Judge Judy tickets that my mom made."

Alex Keller (Class of 2026): "I got this dress. It was the ugliest thing ever. It was black and gold, and it had ruffles. The ruffles were purple. I don't know how that worked, but it was burned that night. It was also two sizes too small."

as my own."

This is a great way for students to be recognized for their good behavior during the school year. In addition, "Pizza With the Principal" gives students down time during the day. Perhaps one day a teacher will catch you being kind and you will be part of "Pizza With the Principal."



A Look Into Hanukkah

By Hadley Allen and Rachel Neumann

It's finally the most wonderful time of the year, the holiday season! A lot of Olmsted Falls students know the story of Christmas, but perhaps they lack knowledge regarding Hanukkah, an equally important and popular holiday that comes around this time of year. Olmsted Falls senior Rachel Neumann has volunteered to share some information on her faith and holiday celebrations!

What is Hanukkah and what is the importance of this holiday to your faith?

"Hanukkah is a Jewish holiday celebrated either in late November or December and commemorates the Maccabee victory over the Assyrian Greeks and the reclamation of the Second Temple in Jerusalem. It also celebrates the miracle of the oil as there was a minimal amount of holy oil used to light the Ner Tamid or the eternal flame. Miraculously, the oil lasted for eight days, which gave enough time to get more holy oil. This is why Hanukkah lasts for eight days. This year, Hanukkah starts on December 18th."

What are your plans for Hanukkah this year, and are there any specific traditions that you are looking forward to?

"Hanukkah is known as the "Festival of Lights" so light has a lot to do with this holiday. Each night of Hanukkah, we light the menorah which is a nine-handle candleholder. It has nine holders because there is the helper candle called the Shamash which we used to light the other candles. We light the number of candles corresponding to the specific day of Hanukkah. We sing songs such as "I have a little dreidel" and "Hanukkah O Hanukkah". And yes, we do get presents for eight nights. In addition, we eat oily foods like latkes and sufganiyot to commemorate the oil. Latkes are potato pancakes and sufganiyot are jelly donuts dusted with powdered sugar. Finally, there is the ever-iconic Olmsted Falls tradition of passing out dreidels to everyone. I would say passing out dreidels is my favorite tradition I look forward to because everyone always has so much fun playing dreidel."

What are some of your favorite activities surrounding your faith to do

with friends and family throughout the year?

"I am very involved in the Jewish community in Cleveland and around the Midwest, so there are many activities I am involved with. My absolute favorite is going to Goldman Union Camp Institute or GUCI in Zionsville, Indiana each summer. I have been going to GUCI for nine years and I look forward to going every year. In Cleveland, I am involved with a program called "Shin-Shinim". It is a worldwide program where Israeli teens live in a specific city and teach the community about Israeli culture and their Jewish lives. I have been a part of this program for two years and have met so many incredible Israelis and learned so much about their Jewish lives. Finally, I love celebrating holidays such as Purim, Passover, and Rosh Hashanah because these are holidays where everyone is in a festive mood and we get to have fun and eat lots of amazing food. I think you can realize that Jews love food."

Are there any other interesting facts about or aspects of your faith that you would like to elaborate on?

"I want to use this platform to thank all of you for always getting excited each year about the dreidels. Each year, I have been reminded time and time again about how much you all appreciate the dreidels. I am so thankful that I have been able to share a piece of my culture with you all for twelve years."

Finally, 'tis the season of holiday music! What is your favorite Hanukkah song to listen to this time of year?

"I have mentioned a few Hanukkah songs but my favorite Hanukkah song is "Candlelight" by the Maccabeats. The Maccabeats are a Jewish acapella group that are known for the Hanukkah parodies of popular songs. "Candlelight" is a parody of Taio Cruz's "Dynamite" and many Reform Jewish teenagers know and love this song."

Thank you to Rachel for once again sharing your faith with us this holiday season! Make sure to find Rachel on that special day this December for a dreidel!

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