

# That's So Merrill!

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News for students, by the students!

Since 2015

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## Winter Weather Predictions for Iowa

~Claire Brown

Iowa varies when talking about weather, it can go any way and is unpredictable. This year it is predicted to be a pretty average winter. The weather will be very mild compared to last year. The temperatures will be nowhere as cold and the wind will be far less chilling. Although it is predicted to be cold and snowy it won't compare to last winter.

For December we will have highs ranging in the 30s and 40s and lows ranging from the 20s to negative 10, with medium wind chill and around average snowfall. The precipitation will range from 1-2 inches. January is predicted to be above average with highs ranging from high 40s to low 30s, with lows ranging from the high 20s to the low 10s. Precipitation is predicted to be about 1.5-3 inches. Finally, in January there is predicted to a relatively large and quite significant ice storm due to all of the moisture moving north.

This winter is predicted to be fairly long. It is predicted to start in late November and last until late March. In November we will have temperatures that are warmer than average and in December the temperatures will be about average. January temperatures will be colder than average with a few big storms predicted to hit in the middle of January as well as a couple at the end of January. Over all, this winter is predicted to be a little different than last winter, because it won't be as cold and we will get a little more snow, but it won't really be much different.

## *Downtown Farmers' Market!*

*Merrill students should enjoy a taste of the downtown Winter Market, November 20-21, 2015 or December 18-19, 2015.*

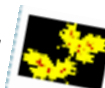
*Local farmers and people in our community are participating in the Winter Farmers' Market.*

*In this event farmers and others are selling crops they grow and hand crafted items made right here in Iowa.*

*There will be a contest to find the best pie, a dance contest and MUCH MORE!*

*Come on down and enjoy the downtown Winter Farmers' Market*

*November 20-21 or December 18-19! We'll be waiting!*



## Meals from the Heartland

Meals from the Heartland is a year-round, non-profit food packaging project composed of volunteers to help feed people all over the world. The organization has provided nearly 50 million meals to people in Iowa and around the world. One thing **YOU** can do to help is individually volunteer at the Meals from the Heartland Center and Warehouse located at:

**357 Lincoln Street  
West Des Moines, Iowa  
50265**

In addition to individual time **YOU** can dedicate, Merrill Middle School comes together on April 29th to help package meals for Meals from the Heartland.

These meals packaged at our school, as well as at the warehouse, will be going to places like Haiti, Africa and homeless shelters in the U.S.



## International News: Russian Plane Crash ~Samira Gado & Eva Button

The tragedy surrounding Russian passenger plane 9268, is no longer a mystery. Russian officials have confirmed that the plane crashed due to a homemade explosive device that was made inside a soft drink can. Although ISIS has claimed responsibility for this event, authorities believe that it was a "homegrown" terrorist, simply a radical citizen taking their own

actions. The plane crashed in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, specifically in the desert. Among the 225 passengers whose lives were lost, 25 were children. The victims' bodies have been sent back to Russia; returned to their grief stricken relatives. Many Russians left flowers, candles and stuffed animals around the airport to serve as a memorial. In addition to outdoor memorials, there was also a service

held in a cathedral in St. Petersburg.

The Russian Government is offering a 50 million dollar reward for information about those who planned the attack. Russian president Vladimir Putin said, "We have to do it without any period of limitation; we need to know all their names." He continued by stating, "We will search wherever they may be hiding. We will find them anywhere on the planet and punish them."

## How Sanitary Is Our School?

In Our Opinion

Merrill Middle School is not very sanitary. We state this because bathrooms are extremely dirty. Not only has that, but the whole school in general had a lack of cleanliness. The building often has bugs in the hallways, in the classrooms, and even the cafeteria. Sometimes when we as students need a drink of water and there is mucus and spit in the water fountain. A majority of the time people do not even take time to flush the toilet which is not very sanitary at all. The bathroom appliances at Merrill, in the boys' locker room is our primary concern. In the boys' locker room and bathroom some of the toilets and sinks don't

work. The boys' locker room isn't fully up to date, having no mirror, no soap, an outdated sink that barely functions. Even though the motion censored sinks are up-to-date the sensitivity settings are set so that it takes almost a full minute to actually turn the water on. Given that we also only have three minutes for passing, actually washing your hands takes a long time which is a problem, because after you go to the bathroom, you need to wash your hands, it's only sanitary.

The Merrill Middle School Custodial Staff works hard to clean the school every night, but

that doesn't guarantee that the school will stay clean. We, the students of Merrill, have to also put our effort into it to make sure it stays nice and neat. Students need to help around the school by watching to see if people are making the school dirty and reporting it to the adults in the office. In short, we all have a responsibility to help keep Merrill clean. This has been our own opinion on what needs to change, in terms of the school and how sanitary it is.

Sincerely, Concerned  
Merrill students.

## Lights, Camera, Action!

Movie Reviews for the Savvy Cinematic Consumer

Guardians of The Galaxy was a wonderful movie. It had interesting characters, an action-packed plot and it had a lot of humor to help keep the movie from going bland and mind-numbing the audience. I had never even heard of these characters before seeing the movie, yet it was easy to understand their backstory. The story was very compelling and the conflict was epic. All in all, we believe that Guardians of The Galaxy scored a solid four stars.

~Foster Lloyd

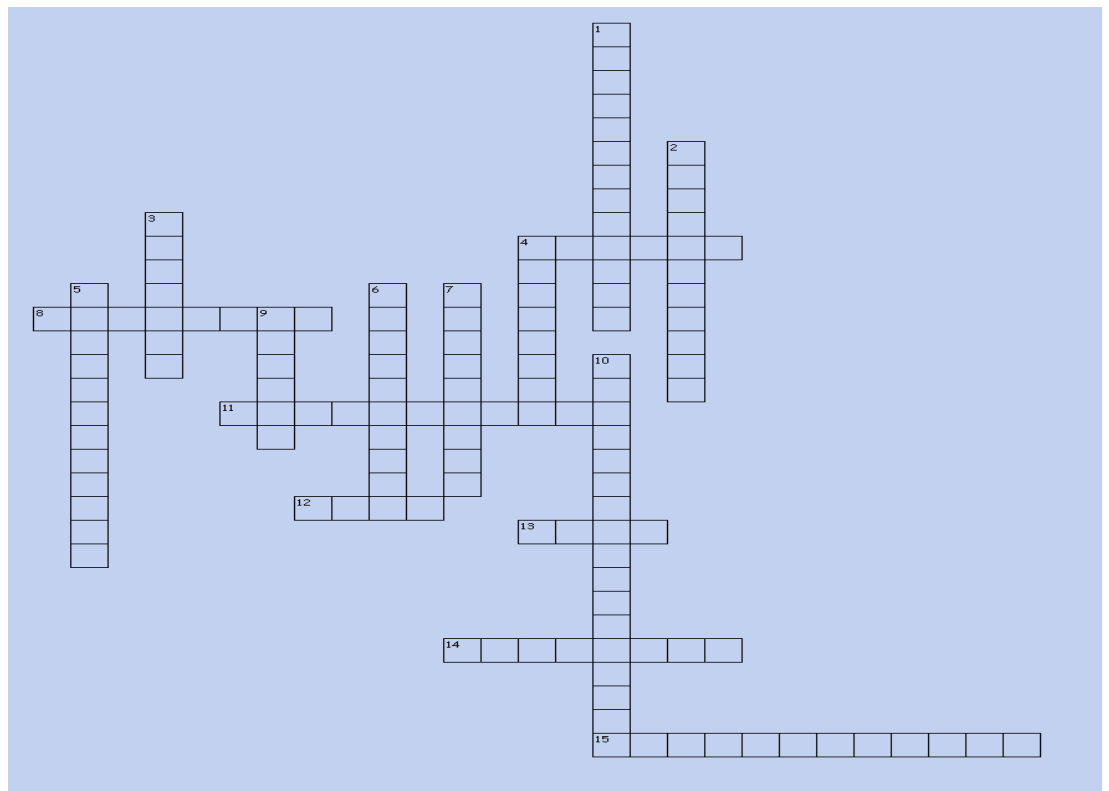
At some points, it felt like the movie dragged on a little bit too much and left some holes in the plot unanswered. Granted, that is a logical thing to do so you can maximize profits on the sequel (that I really hope they make). Plus, personally I felt like it kind of rushed to the final battle with an ending that left me a little bit disappointed. They spent too much time on the rising action and quickly plummeted through the falling action and resolution. Not one of Marvel's best works, but far from the worst. Regardless, Guardians of The Galaxy was a solid four stars out of five stars.

~Sara Gruver

## That's So Merrill! Crossword Challenge

"The nice thing about doing a crossword puzzle is, that you know there is a solution."

~Stephen Sondheim



### Clues:

#### Across

4. The athletic director here at Merrill.
8. "You are who you choose to be".
11. The street where Merrill is located.
12. Copic "That's a YOU problem." Chorus teacher.
13. Choir Blue sparkly dresses and blue suspenders.
14. The Orchestra teacher.
15. The Iowa teacher of the year in the year 2014-15

#### Down

1. The 6th grade class president.
2. The 8th grade class president.
3. A type of horse.
4. The band teacher.
5. The 7th grade class president.
6. The purple Spanish books.
7. The High school that Merrill feeds into.
9. Mr. Merrill's first name.
10. It is played or sang every Monday morning.

## Politics in Iowa

~Grant Sanford

Iowa! What a complicated state. We don't look at what side they are on, but their quality as a human being. The Presidency this year is very 'special, because there are three Democratic candidates running, and fifteen Republicans running. Since



## Spotlight on Bullying

~Mary Cecil & Mia Jansen

Bullying is a larger problem than most people realize. The action of teasing and taunting can be happening closer than expected. It is not just between children and teens, but also adults. Some teachers say they believe staff at schools get bullied as well by the way students act when they are present. There are many different types of bullying, for example; cyber, physical and verbal. "I don't see it very often, but bullies can be sly, and sneaky and now use social media," says Merrill staff member, Mr. Rosin. Some students get made fun of simple because of their choice in clothing.

Many teachers here at Merrill think bullying isn't as big of a conflict compared to other schools. Even though it isn't that common here, teachers still witness it every once in a while. Staff have different ways of dealing with the problem, but try their hardest to put it to an end. Mrs. Kehm says, "Investigate, Educate, Illuminate." She is referencing to the way she deals with a report of bullying. Most teachers, after witnessing it, report it. "I stop it when I see it. If I know it's an ongoing issue, I refer the students to the office. I suggest the target talk to the counselor. Sometimes I call or email the parent of the bully," says Mrs. O'Connor. The term "target" is used to describe the person being a bullied, rather than identifying them as a victim. The reason behind this is

because bullying can easily go both ways. So, while bullies might not be a huge issue here at Merrill, it still can cause pain and unhappiness for those unfortunate enough to have to deal with it on a daily basis.

Sometimes the act of taunting, teasing or physical abuse in school can really take a toll on how kids think about school. When a student is being bullied at school, they really try to avoid having to attend. Mrs. O'Connor explains that some kids come to school in their gym clothes just to avoid changing in the locker rooms. The gym teachers here at Merrill try hard to crack down on the negative actions that occur in the locker rooms. It may be challenging at times, but they do a very good job. Even though not many complaints make their way to our physical education teachers, they still hope that it isn't a big problem.

Kids find that the "snitches get stitches" saying has gotten old. Many people don't enjoy being harassed or bullied, so, to fix their problem they decide it is best to tell someone they trust. In some cases, it causes more harassment and bullying. The bully doesn't want to be told on for their actions. To fix to frustration they have, because of the person who was brave enough to tell what had happened, the bully decides to take it out on the person who told. Except, the "target" doesn't want to be bullied anymore. The cycle that would become endless, makes it so the "target" decides against communicating about the conflicts occurring.

we haven't narrowed it down yet to one Democrat and one Republican, here is a basic birds' eye view of politics in Iowa right now!

***Continued on page***

After looking over surveys that were conducted with students and teachers at Merrill, it was noticed that many students say they haven't experienced much bullying, personally, at Merrill. People haven't witnessed much happening in the halls or classrooms either. There were a variety of answers to one of the primary questions asked; "Do you think bullying is a problem at this school? Why or why not?" One student, in eighth grade, gave much detail on how she thought is indeed a concern. She said, "Yes, I do think it is. People get made fun of all the time. Even though they might laugh along with it, it can still affect someone deep down. Kids are constantly bullying people on things they can't change about themselves". She continued her statement, but ultimately that part rings very true. Regardless if ALL people see it, bullying does occur at Merrill.

Even though bullying it is not very common it is always a problem. People shouldn't be hurt, emotionally and physically, by people who should learn to have more respect for everyone. Even if someone is different, doesn't mean they have to be the target of an act that isn't very caring at all.



**All students should be aware of bullying. Not all students know how serious it is. Kids get bullied all the time around the world, even when it's just making fun of a haircut or outfit. Students should know how to react to bullying. Being either the victim, a bystander, or the bully.**

**Performances at Merrill**

~Vinny Marsh and Tyra Tillman

There are three types of musical performing arts groups at Des Moines's Merrill Middle School: Band, Chorus and Orchestra at all three grade levels. After speaking with several students from the three music groups we discovered what audiences have to look forward to at the upcoming concerts.

The upcoming Chorus concert will be on December 10th, the band concert is December 15th, and the Orchestra concert is on December 17th. Overall, students have enjoyed preparing for this year's performances. The most liked song after interviewing Chorus varied very much between the students in each class. Everyone in chorus had their own favorite song between

Don't Sing Another Fa La La, I Want a Hippopotamus for Christmas and Three Easy Carols The favorite song for Band was hands down the Jurassic Park Theme, while the favorite Orchestra song was a toss-up between *Evening Prayer* and *Brandenberg Concerto No. 3*.

Aside from the actual music many of the Chorus students were unable to decide what their favorite part of the performance will be; they simply liked the whole thing! For Band and Orchestra, the favorite part is the practicing beforehand, to prepare for the performance.

Merrill Performing Arts students prepare for the concerts primarily by practicing the songs on their own time in addition to time spent rehearsing in class. At all grade levels, grade appropriate concert attire for Chorus and Orchestra requires performers to wear black and white; in a variety of performance appropriate dress clothes. For Band, the performance attire requires performers to dress in school appropriate dress clothes. For the Band, there is also always an accent color that is part of the wardrobe.



Our music teachers work tirelessly to prepare for the concerts and make sure the student involved will all enjoy a safe and meaningful performance that delights audiences of all ages.

***Politics, continued from page 4***

**How each candidate hopes to impact Iowa:**

<b><u>Democratic</u></b>	<b><u>Republican</u></b>
<p>On the Democratic side, Clinton is in first and Sanders is not far behind.</p> <p><b>Hillary Clinton</b> - She wants every child to get an education. Less guns which leads to less violence. And a better health system.</p> <p><b>Bernie Sanders</b> - More jobs, upper class paying more, and more money for military.</p> <p><b>Martin O'Malley</b> - Clean energy, increase jobs, and cut drug overdoses.</p>	<p>On the Republican side, Trump is in the lead with 24% of Iowa's Republican voters supporting his ideas, with Carson on his tail at 23.5%.</p> <p>Breaking news- Bobby Jindal dropped out of the Presidential race, Thursday, November 19, 2015!</p> <p><b>Donald Trump</b> - Trade with China, better health care for veterans, and more guns.</p> <p><b>Jeb Bush</b> - Defeat ISIS, 1 trillion dollars to military, and less taxes.</p> <p><b>Ben Carson</b> - Pro-life, keep our guns, and stand by Israel.</p> <p><b>Chris Christie</b> - Build a wall along the Mexican border, more taxes, and kids in New Jersey to get a higher education.</p> <p><b>Carly Fiona</b> - Pro-life, improve job conditions, and wants to help people around the world.</p> <p><b>Jim Gilmore</b>-Border enforcement, better health care, and wants children's education.</p> <p><b>Lindsey Graham</b>- better life for baby boomers, more money to the army, and support for Israel.</p> <p><b>Mike Huckabee</b> - Defend gun rights, secure border, and stop Obamacare.</p> <p><b>John Kasich</b>- Gun rights, create more jobs, and secure border</p> <p><b>George Pataki</b> - Support Paris, end gun rights, and pro-life</p> <p><b>Rand Paul</b>- Pro-life, gun rights, and clean up America.</p> <p><b>Marco Rubio</b>- Gun rights, better life for small business owners, and honoring veterans.</p> <p><b>Rick Santorum</b>- Help kids with special needs, end spending in the U.S, and pro-life.</p>

For right now, Iowa's voters don't pay too much attention to the election excitement. But things will heat up and the people will really get in the action during the Iowa Primary. Currently, Bush has 8 million dollars in the bank and not using it because it would go to waste. Most of the people are just watching and learning while other people are battling it out.

