

# The Merrill Gazette

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## Exclusive Report

### Don't Panic...It's Ms. Panek!

By Harper Egge

As many of you know, we have a new principal this year and this article will give insight on who she really is. So, who is Ms. Panek? This is her third year at Merrill Middle School and she graduated from Simpson College in 2002 and from Iowa State University in 2009 (please note that even though she went to Iowa State she is a Hawks fan 😊). Her family consists of her husband Jeff and her two daughters Abigail and Eleanor. In addition to a strong background in education, she brings a fresh perspective and positive energy to Merrill Middle School.

She "is so positive that she makes everything positive around her" is what Mr. Johnson, the school improvement leader who works with her everyday

shared with Gazette staff. This basically sums up her whole personality. Mr. Luft says his favorite part of Ms. Panek is her happy attitude. Many students expressed that she seems very nice and that she really cares about kids. As our new leader, she has exceeded expectations and pushed Merrill to improvement every day.

What has she done for Merrill staff and students since taking office in July? She makes people feel welcome and important, she tries to learn every sixth grader's name even though to everyone else it may seem like an impossible task--not to Ms. Panek. She is driven to be a good person. In addition to her welcoming attitude, she makes it her job to make sure students have the freshest food and a lunchtime that is as



enjoyable as possible. She said her best part of her day is being with the students.

Support. Challenge. Push. Wise words from a wise person. Overall, Merrill staff and students agree that our new leader is a positive and caring individual who is proud to be a Mustang and dedicated to supporting all the new and growing Mustangs here at Merrill.

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## Intramurals at Merrill Middle School

By Amanda Hirth

Every Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday from after school until 4:30 pm, you can interact with classmates playing Ultimate Frisbee in the backyard of Merrill with Mr. Hammond. After talking with the kids who

play weekly throughout the year, one participant said "Intramurals is a fun time to hang out with your friends!"



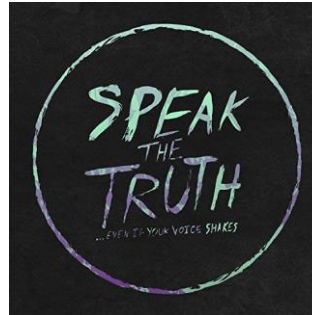
The game, Ultimate Frisbee is pretty simple. All you have to do is try to catch the frisbee, make a touchdown, and keep a positive attitude. Intramurals also does basketball and soccer. Every week they have 30 to 35 6th graders attending this opportunity to play team sports at Merrill Middle School.

## Tessa's Truths: Advice to live by...

Dear Tessa,

*I am not very good in science and I don't know what to do!*

*-Stuck in Science*



Dear Stuck in Science,

Maybe you should try to study at home. Or set up a one on one study time with your teacher, or just to work out what you can do to help you get better.

-Tessa

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## Gamer's Corner

By Chloe Creek

### Tattletail



Tattletail is a single-player game made by Waygetter Electronics, on December 28, 2016. The player must take care of a pet toy, Baby Talking Tattletail, while avoiding Mama Tattletail, who was recalled from stores. Tattletail takes place five nights before Christmas. Game play feels similar to Five Nights at Freddy's.

Reasons to play:

- Tattletail has solid and captivating graphics
- Game play follows a great plot
- Game also featured an excellent variety of recorded sounds

Reasons NOT to play:

- Tattletail is a horror game--be prepared for jump scares, restarts, and some spooky content.

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### Undertale

Undertale is a single-player game made by Toby Fox, published on September 15, 2015. In Undertale you can play three endings.

- Genocide, where you murder everyone mercilessly
- Neutral, where you kill some but spare others
- Pacifist, where you spare everybody, and make them friends.

There are many hidden secrets in Undertale, yet very few of them go unknown. I won't spoil anything though.

Reasons to play:

- Undertale is a complex game and very fun.
- No matter how you play, it's always got its funny, heartbreaking, raging, moments, and the amazing music that makes Undertale what it is today.

Reasons NOT to play:

- Undertale has just a bit of adult language, but nothing major.
- Undertale can have some spooky music, and scenes, depending on the way you play the game.

The makers of this game have just released a brand new sequel! Check out Deltarune, available now!

## Merrill Middle School Holds Annual Science Fair

By Harper Egge

Every year, Merrill Middle School opens its doors and its minds to exploring the grand world of Science. Sixth and Seventh grade students are challenged to dig into the scientific process to design, implement, and analyze the results of a science project completely centered on their own interests.

This year was no exception. From projects about the best kinds of laundry detergents to the results of growing plants to certain types of music, Merrill's Science Department invited over 50 members of the community to see AND hear about the students' projects and scientific explorations.

### Teachers Reflect on the 2018 Science Fair

Mrs. Tonya Swanda has taught 6<sup>th</sup> grade Science for many years and gave an exclusive interview about the process of Science Fair.

"Science Fair is important because it's 6<sup>th</sup> graders only chance to pick their own project to present in front of a group of people. It really gives an example of the Merrill experience." The project is graded using an IB Rubric.

Swanda also highlighted the extra effort teachers put in to guide students through the process of completing the project.

"I feel like a lot of 6<sup>th</sup> graders are stressed more than they should be, so that is why we have all those helping sessions." she said the key thing about science fair is you're telling a story from beginning to end. It becomes a truly immersive experience.

Mr. Blake Hammond is a 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade science teacher that has been actively led the Science Fair process for many years. Like Mrs. Swanda, he expressed Science Fair is important because kids get to explore and communicate through the world of science.

"From what I've seen 7<sup>th</sup> graders don't need as many guidelines and help from teachers or parents. I see quite a few people testing in 6<sup>th</sup> grade also a lot of what consumer product is the best."

Ms. Kimi Evans expressed her excitement for the turnout for this year's Science Fair as well as how proud she was of all the students who participated.

"I'm always excited to see what the students' projects come to life after they have completed all their hard work. They do an excellent job presenting to a variety of community members and really represented the best Merrill has to offer."

All of the teachers would like to extend their congratulations to all of this year's participants, winners, and those who will be continuing on to the District Science Fair In February.

### **Competing in District Science Fair:**

**6<sup>th</sup> Grade:** Sawyer Evans, Alicia Rus, Ruby Clark, Max Riggins, Ava Tyler, Harper Egge, Remi Taylor, Tailyn Howard, Leland Crook, Sean Martin, Price Daley, Finn Huggins, Sam Boes, Sully Davis, Olivia Tolpingrud, Avery Campbell, Aidan Dow, Emme Siever, James Proctor, Will Puri

**7<sup>th</sup> Grade:** Lauren Foxx-Gruensteidl, Camille Page, Ian Campbell, Lily Smith, Margo Green, Marlo Belknap, Sean Nelsen, Kathleen Loder, Alec Fialkov, Owen Hewitson, Maya Kissell, Riley Wells, Lydia Smith, Trey Jackson, A'Taurea Dunlap, Lauren Fox



### Need Homework Help??

Merrill Middle School is pleased to announce a partnership between Merrill and Roosevelt that will provide homework help to ANY Merrill students who would like extra academic support. Times and dates are as follows:

- Thursday Afternoons 3:40-4:30 in Room 118.
- Tuesday Mornings 7:30-8:00 in the cafeteria.



Students involved in homework help need to sign-up with Mrs. Panek the day before so that we are sure to have enough high school students





What Were You for Halloween?  
 By: Chloe Wedgeworth and Lily  
 Murphy

