

Students become consumed in world of modern technology

GRETCHEN BRODERSEN
Staff Writer

Today, social media and artificial intelligence have consumed countless hours and days with endless doomscrolling and mindless watching. Pius X students often use social media and AI.

In an anonymous poll of over 350 Pius X students, over 42% had an average screen time of three to four hours. 23% were between 5 and 6 hours and almost 10% said they were in the 9–10 hour range.

“Social media is a waste of time because you get no benefit out of it other than dopamine for your brain which is a bad source of dopamine because it only lasts a couple seconds before you scroll to the next reel,” sophomore Luke Reinke said. “I feel like once you get rid of social media in your life, you’ll have a lot more clarity in what you’re trying to do.”

When people post on social

media, it allows their followers to only see the good parts of their life that are worth posting, therefore missing their imperfections.

“It’s pretty addictive and it’s pretty easy to say, ‘okay I am gonna go live in some else’s world,’ rather than allowing myself to live in the silence of my own heart,” counselor Sara Gubbels said. “I think that’s potentially a cause of a lot of heartache.”

In the poll, students were asked to rate themselves on a scale of 1-5 on how anxious they are when away from their phones. 31% rated a one (not anxious), 43% rated a two and the remaining 26% filled the 3-5 range (anxious to very anxious).

According to sophomore Huyen Tran, social media roots insecurity which can lead to thoughts of constant comparison. She says it affects the mental health of teens because it leads

young people to become lazy, to doomscroll and it lessens their attention spans.

Social media plays a big role in the time students spend on their phones. Another problem that arises is the use of AI, especially in the classroom and how it affects students and teachers.

According to freshman Richard Garneau, the use of AI on schoolwork is not good in any way. He says it can be used for good and for the right reasons, but AI is particularly bad when used on homework.

As reported from the poll, 37% of students said they use AI daily or weekly while 63% use AI monthly or never.

“As a teacher, when I see things that are AI, it’s like ‘okay that’s not you,’” speech teacher Stephen Kurt said. “I want to know you because I care about you and I love you as a student. If I don’t know who you are, I can’t build that connection with you in the

classroom. Then our student-teacher relationship starts to suffer because of that.”

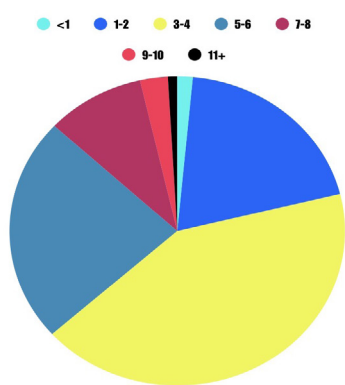
The use of AI not only diminishes a student’s academic integrity and ability to critically think, but adds another job for teachers to do.

“If I have this question that’s asking me to think about my morals, my values and my beliefs and if I just put that in ChatGPT, ChatGPT has no morals, values or beliefs,” Kurt said. “It’s a computer, it doesn’t have a soul. I want to know what’s on your heart, I want to know what you’re thinking.”

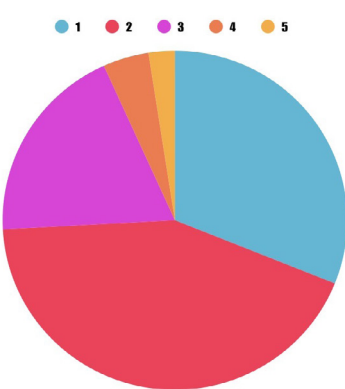
Phones can be used for good in moderation, but without moderation it becomes an idol before anything else.

“If you don’t know who you are first as a beloved son or daughter and are super steeped in that, then it’s really easy to be swayed in the wind and the tumultuous things that happen,” Gubbels said.

Average screen time (hours) of all grades



Anxiousness when away from a phone



Graphics by G. Brodersen

Binge-watching TV affects student health

AN VU
Staff Writer

Binge-watching is the new normal for Americans—but also for Pius X students who enjoy watching a variety of TV shows.

Saying “just one more episode” is what usually is the root cause of staying up all night and watching a TV show.

While binge-watching may be ideal for many people like freshman Noel Watson, many may not recognize the harm and effects on health.

“I don’t really spend time with anyone, and I don’t end up doing anything because I’m locked in on the show and not anybody else,” Watson said.

According to Northwestern Medicine, binge-watching is like a drug. The brain craves more and more and produces

dopamine as a person continues to binge. Some students notice the physical effects too.

“I feel like the effect of binge-watching a series is that it makes me kind of sluggish and tired,” freshman Keisha Suminski said. “Binge-watching definitely affects my health in a sense that I can get really crabby if that’s all I’ve done that day or it makes me tired.”

According to a survey from the United Kingdom, heavy binge-watching can cause mental health issues such as anxiety, depression and loneliness after finishing a TV series.

And though binge-watching may seem like a bad habit, a study from the University of Georgia suggests there may be some benefits to not turning a series off.

“Binge-watching may help viewers build mental worlds where stories continue even after finishing the series,” a study from the University of Georgia said. “And these tales may help them cope in times of stress. It also makes stories more memorable by helping viewers connect plot threads and come away with a bigger picture of the story. This is especially true for longer series, with lots of different plotlines and characters to follow.”

Freshman Caroline Schwartz agreed that the storytelling aspect is part of the appeal.

“It’s good to experience a lot of things, like different plots,” Schwartz said.

Tips for managing binge-watching include limiting yourself to a certain, small number of episodes, setting a time limit by deciding the amount of time TV watched per night, balancing TV viewing with other activities, such as physical exercise, and making it a social thing and inviting friends or family to watch TV.



Graphic by A. Vu



Nails become a popular form of self expression

SARAH VOLKMER
Staff Writer

For many girls at Pius X, getting their nails done has become more than just something for special occasions; it has become part of their routines.

Students like senior Gabby Major have routinely gotten their nails done for many years.

“I think I’ve been getting my nails done since eighth grade, and I get them every two weeks so it’ll line up with my paycheck,” Major said.

For Major, having her nails done is a source of confidence.

“I like getting my nails done because it helps me to feel put together,” Major said. “Whenever I don’t have my nails done, I just feel like a part of me is missing.”

Although Major enjoys the feeling of a new set of nails, she knows that the costs can add up quickly.

“Every time I’d say I spend an average of \$55,” Major said.

After doing the math, Major commented that she has spent about \$7,150 on her nails since eighth grade with about \$1,430 spent per year.

Students including junior Gianna Oldenburg and sophomore Ashley Rodriguez have learned to do their own nails to avoid the cost of nail appointments. Both

students have spent about \$150-\$200 on supplies.

“I didn’t like paying a lot of money to get my nails done, so I just thought I would learn to do them myself,” Oldenburg said.

Oldenburg has been doing her nails about every two weeks for a little over a year, while Rodriguez has been doing her nails once a month for about six months.

“I was introduced to it by my older sister,” Rodriguez said. “She started doing it, and then I bought a kit for my birthday.”

Oldenburg enjoys doing nails because it helps relax her.

“I feel like it’s a fun thing to do,” Oldenburg said. “It helps me relieve my stress. If I need something to do or just something to distract me, I do my nails.”

Doing nails is not a simple process. Oldenburg mentioned that it takes her about two and a half to three hours to do her nails. Rodriguez said it can take her anywhere from two hours to an entire day.

“I think my favorite part is getting to do different designs, and I like to express myself through that,” Rodriguez said. “I like using my favorite colors and patterns.”

Nails are more than just a beauty routine. They’re a way to show self-expression through something small.



Junior Gianna Oldenburg shows off her freshly-painted nails. Oldenburg takes two and a half hours to do her nails. “It helps me relieve my stress,” Oldenburg said. Photos by G. Oldenburg

Rosary crusade unites school in prayer

SARAH VOLKMER
Staff Writer

Pius X organized a “We are Pius” Rosary Crusade in October to celebrate the month of the rosary and pray for all the members of the Pius X community.

“I think it’s a really important thing to do with October being the month of the rosary,” sophomore Samuel Brandl said. “It’s incredible that Mary gave us this gift, and it can help us save souls in purgatory and bring people to heaven, which is the ultimate goal.”

The idea was first proposed by Theology I teacher Sr. Guadalupe DeWispelare. She previously had a meeting at the convent, and her mother superior mentioned Pope Leo XIV’s challenge to Catholics to pray the rosary daily in October.

Her mother superior then asked the sisters to bring the rosary into other areas of their lives such as with their students or families.

“I slept on it and the next morning in prayer, I just really felt the Holy Spirit say, ‘You’re thinking too small, think bigger,’” DeWispelare said. “That’s where the idea of, ‘What if we did something school-wide?’ came from. I asked if I could present it to the leadership of the school and I was able to talk to Jeremy [Ekeler], and Mr. Ekeler really took it and ran too.”

Chief Administrative Officer Jeremy Ekeler was supportive of DeWispelare’s idea and wanted to act on it quickly.

“I immediately put her [DeWispelare], campus ministry, Fr. Ereschl and Mr. Baehr on an email, and I said, ‘Let’s do a

rosary crusade,’” Ekeler said. “And literally within 24 hours, the Holy Spirit had put it all together.”

The hope for the crusade was that the community of Pius X would learn the beauty of Mary’s intercession and begin to pray the rosary every day.

“The Rosary Crusade is the Pius community coming together to invoke the intercession of the blessed mother for all of our intentions,” Ekeler said. “My hope is that it teaches people the daily habit of praying the rosary if they don’t already.”

To contribute to the crusade, students went to the piusx.net/rosary webpage to log a rosary they had prayed. On the site, there was a total count of rosaries prayed, a list of prayer intentions from those who had logged rosaries and where the rosaries were from. There were rosaries from states across the country and other towns in Nebraska as well.

Ekeler would like to continue to do the Rosary Crusade every year. He hopes that the number of rosaries prayed will continue to grow throughout the years. The total count of rosaries prayed was 2,311.

“I would love to grow this year after year, and I would eventually love to get to 10,000 rosaries a month,” Ekeler said.

Students and staff of Pius X contributed to the Rosary Crusade in many ways.

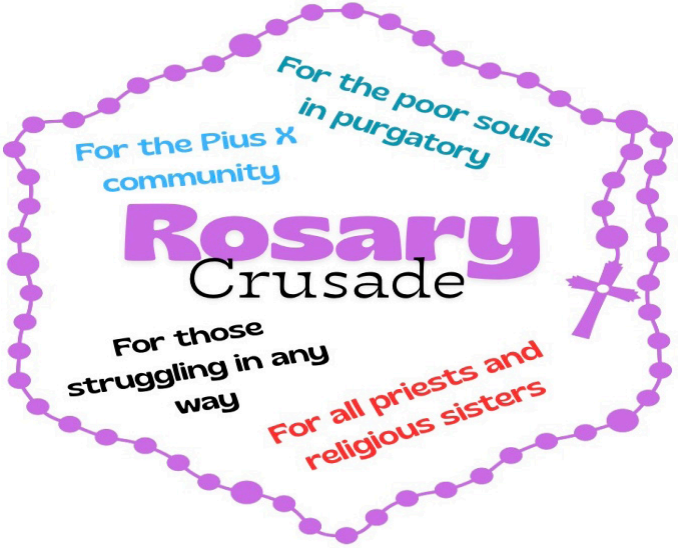
Theology II teacher Sr. Catarina Tang handed out decade cards to students who wanted to participate.

“I know that young people are super busy and sometimes

they can’t pray a whole rosary in a day, so that’s why I kind of broke it up into decades,” Tang said. “Each person would pray a decade, and five people would make a rosary.”

Senior Erica Horne logged personal rosaries along with other rosaries she said with her friends.

“I think it’s a really good way to unite not only the students, but also the family of Pius together in a group of prayers,” Horne said.



Above are a few intentions prayed for during the rosary crusade. Graphic by S. Volkmer

Senior backpacks fill halls with happiness

AN VU
Staff Writer

Almost everywhere you walk around the school, senior backpacks fill the hallways. From Disney princesses to superheroes, the variety of backpacks never fails to bring smiles.

Every year, many seniors choose a children’s backpack to reminisce about childhood and express their desire to hold onto their youth.



Seniors show off their backpacks. They continue the tradition of fun backpacks to celebrate the last year of high school. Photo by R. Prunty

Senior Emily Hastreiter chose a princess backpack for her senior backpack.

“Out of the limited options I had, it was the only one that I felt like I really watched when I was little,” Hastreiter said. “I was obsessed with them when I was little.”

Senior English teacher Abigail Allen enjoys senior backpacks as much as the seniors do.

“I think they’re amazing, and they make me smile. It brings me a lot of joy,” Allen said.

This tradition doesn’t only bring back childhood but also brings the seniors together as one class.

“It brings us together just because we are able to relive past memories from grade school,” senior Maddie Bixenmann said. “If you went to the same grade school as a lot of seniors, a lot of the times having a backpack will bring up funny memories.”

Beyond the fun and memories, senior backpacks have become a way for seniors to celebrate their final year of high school and it is a visual reminder of how far they’ve come since their freshman year.

“It’s a fun way for the senior class to do something that helps them stand out as seniors so you can tell that’s a senior when it happens,” Allen said. “Which I think builds community and I think it’s a fun way for them to connect

with people in their class that they aren’t necessarily close friends.”

Wearing a kid-sized backpack again brings differences including size and storage space.

“As a senior, since a lot of us don’t have eight class periods, we don’t have as many binders and a lot of stuff is on our iPads now,” senior Tyne Black said.

Hastreiter planned ahead of time for her senior backpack and its limited space.

“I just try to get folders for everything and not really binders because I knew that space was definitely limited,” Hastreiter said.

With the many senior backpacks around the school, there are some that stand out.

“I’ve seen a few Hello Kitty ones that are very unique,” Allen said. “Especially the ones that are more like stuffed animals. Those are probably the ones that jump out at me the most. I have one student who has a Spider-Man backpack and the Spider-Man movies are some of my favorites.”

And of course, some backpacks are just funny.

“One of our friends has a Justin Bieber backpack,” Black said. “It’s really funny.”

Bixenmann is one of the many seniors who believes senior backpacks hold more than just school supplies, but also memories.

“I feel like senior backpacks have a special meaning because a lot of people use the same ones they did in kindergarten, so reliving your past backpacks from when you were kids is really special,” Bixenmann said.

WIN retreat allows students to grow in faith

ROXIE PRUNTY
Staff Writer

Pius X recently celebrated their WIN Retreat on Oct 18. Students of a variety of grades were invited to bring back God into their lives or just strengthen their connection with Him.

Students were encouraged to reflect on their journey with the Lord and ask Jesus to meet them where they were at.

“My hope is that Jesus can win these kids over or just continue to let Jesus win in their lives,” campus minister Scotty Sullivan said.

The day started off with expectations and was followed by relays and games with their small groups.

“I always like to see the kids have fun before we have to be serious,” Sullivan said. “A lot of kids seem to be really out of their comfort zone so we will have to try something different next time.”

Next the retreat attendees were given

a talk by St. John’s English teacher Luke Sweeney. He explored the idea of how God opens passages for others’ lives in mysterious ways.

“I have never seen him speak before but his talk was very real and vulnerable, he spoke in a very authentic way,” Sullivan said.

Then the students went into small groups led by a leader to talk about the testimony they had listened to.

“I wish we had more time to speak in our groups, there was a lot to unpack and we didn’t get the opportunity to talk about all of the students points and perspectives,” campus minister Lily Spangler said.

Once small group discussions had concluded, everybody was invited to adoration and confession, followed by another testimony from Pius X alumni Grace Mueller.

“I learned that I just need to continue to

put one foot in front of the other and that the rest will soon follow,” senior Ashley Steckelberg said.

Again, small groups discussed and this time it was followed by lunch and free time to unwind.

After lunch, the students received their last talk from Pius X alumni Grace Raun. To conclude their last talk they went straight into Mass.

“I really liked her talk because it was kind of relaxed and goofy,” Steckelberg said. “She was able to relate to us.”

Lastly, students were required to fill out a survey to help future retreats be more applicable and tailored to the students’ experiences.

“We want the retreats to speak to the students, so they actually get something out of them,” Sullivan said. “It’s important to learn from the retreats.”



Students listen to a talk by Pius X alum Grace Raun. The WIN retreat is a day long retreat, twice a year. Photo by S. Sullivan



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6000 A Street, Lincoln, NE

@PXStudentMedia
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Boys cross country qualifies for nationals

EVAN PREISTER
Staff Writer

Boys cross country made history by being the first ever team from Nebraska to make Nationals. The Bolts’ journey started with a dominant performance in Class B state with senior David Krier taking home the title of fastest in the state. They were able to qualify for regionals and run to go to nationals. Regionals took place in Sioux Falls, South Dakota where the Bolts got second place. The Bolts had seven runners compete: seniors Joe Majerus, David Krier, Lucas Schlautman and Noah Zach, juniors Henry Vrooman and Sam Schlautman and sophomore Joe Norman. “I felt like it flew by and besides the cold the course being flat was probably the best part of the course,” Norman said. They fought through unideal conditions and were still able to complete with high completion. Sam Schlautman said, “The race was covered in snow and really cold and I could not feel my fingers.” The Bolts traveled to Portland, Oregon to compete in the high school cross country national championship on Saturday, Dec. 6. “Knowing that we have to compete at such a high level definitely is the biggest motivator,” Lucas Schlautman said. “This will be our last meet for those who aren’t running in college and that’s been pushing me specifically.” Motivation and preparation were important to help the Bolts cross country team to achieve such goals this season. Vrooman said, “I like to visualize the course and listen to music as I warm up.”

The Bolts also had to deal with adversity to make it to this point. Zach missed state because of anemia, which is a condition where the body does not have enough red blood cells to carry oxygen. This caused Zach to not be able to finish races, most recently in districts. Zach said, “Being able to come back after a hard season feels like a little bit of redemption.” Nike paid for the travels of the cross country team as well as giving them gear to run in on the course. “My favorite thing was seeing the Nike campus and meeting so many awesome people,” Krier said. The Bolts finished the season running at nationals placing 20 out of the 22 teams that qualified. Krier said, “The race was awesome. It was super muddy which made it slow at times but it was very slick.” Krier placed 62nd out of 200 leading the way for the Bolts with a time of 16:02. Majerus placed 87th with a time of 16:19 and they both work better together. “David pushes me by being with me throughout all our workouts and racing against him,” Majerus said.



Boys cross country races at nationals. They were the first team from Nebraska to qualify. “The race was awesome and it was super muddy,” senior David Krier said. Photo by K. Norman

Mock trial competes at state

SARAH VOLKMER
Staff Writer

The mock trial team competed at state on Dec. 3-4. The competition was held at Sarpy County Courthouse in Papillion. The team earned an honorable mention and finished seventh overall. “We know that we did awesome because we had great feedback from judges, but we don’t know our official ranking for a while,” librarian and mock trial sponsor Erin Willis said. Mock trial is an appropriate name as it is essentially a fake trial with proper court proceedings. “Mock trial is a simulated courtroom experience,” Willis said. “Every year, the Nebraska State Bar Foundation releases a case that includes witness statements and the rules of competition. Each team has three attorneys and three witnesses that are either the plaintiff or the defense. They compete against another team from the state on that side of the case, and they try and win the verdict.” Sophomore Gabriel Callahan is an attorney for the prosecution and a timekeeper for the defense. There were ten teams at state. “There are three rounds that all the teams compete in, and then there’s one final round,” Callahan said. “The first round, they randomly match up the regions against each other and then after that they power match.” To prepare for state, legal professionals helped coach the students. “We have three attorney coaches and

one student at the university who’s on a mock trial team,” Willis said. “We have two prosecutors from the attorney general’s office, and they prepare them for the courtroom protocols and teach them about how to argue their case.” Junior Jaxson Hanks is a witness on the team. This was his second year at state, and in preparation, he had to memorize information in order to answer the questions he was asked correctly. “For me, it was memorizing what I needed to, but for the whole team, I helped people come up with some questions and good points for the case,” Hanks said. Callahan enjoyed the atmosphere because of the positivity between teams. “I think the best part of state would probably be being able to compete against other schools in a friendly environment,” Callahan said. “We’re competing, but we also really congratulate each other after it, and that was really fun.”



Mock trial poses for a picture at state. Mock trial is a simulated court trial for participants to practice procedures. “It’s a really fun community,” sophomore Gabriel Callahan said. Photo by E. Willis

Senior uses leadership skills to help student body

THANH NINH
Staff Writer

Leadership is the ability to guide, support and inspire others toward a shared goal. Senior Frances Nebel shows leadership through her hard work and determination. Nebel is not only the president of Student Council but also National Honor Society (NHS). Nebel never backs down from a challenge and is always willing to help out at Pius X. “As president of Student Council, something I have been working on is empowering the underclassmen in Student Council,” Nebel said. “We’ve changed the way meetings are run, so that freshmen get a chance to share their ideas and get things done by themselves.” Nebel bounces ideas from administration to the members of

Student Council. She helps get events and new ideas approved by the administration. “My main job as president of Student Council is to act as a bridge between administration and the students,” Nebel said. Nebel finds a way to make sure that she fulfills her duty as president of NHS and Student Council. “In NHS, I am organizing the NHS night, so I have to find out who is going to speak at it,” Nebel said. Nebel will also be writing and giving a speech on NHS night, when all new members will be inducted into the organization. Senior Vice President Katelyn Tran works with Nebel to help organize events in Student Council. “Frances is so fun to work with because she is just a great person,” Tran said. “I love watching her do amazing things for the school.”

Nebel and Tran work together to create new ideas and overcome challenges that they face. “There is a lot behind the scenes when we’re planning something, but Frances is such a good collaborator and communicator, so she always helps out,” Tran said. Tran and Nebel have meetings every Tuesday with Student Council sponsor Sara Gubbels to discuss how to organize upcoming events. “She is a fantastic leader with a big heart and just intuitively knows people,” Gubbels said. “She genuinely values others’ opinions.” Frances has positively affected the Student Council community and always comes to meetings with a positive attitude. “She is so approachable; people aren’t intimidated at all, so they can come and talk to her,” Gubbels said. “She just has a fun and chill personality.”

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Student council hosts first Overtime of year



Sophomores present routine projects in Spanish



Anatomy students dissect chicken feet



Senior Frances Nebel helps organize bags. Campus ministry did a service project for homeless shelters. “I wanted to become president because I just wanted to help out,” Nebel said. Photo by T. Ninh

Lincoln Pius X

Gretchen Brodersen