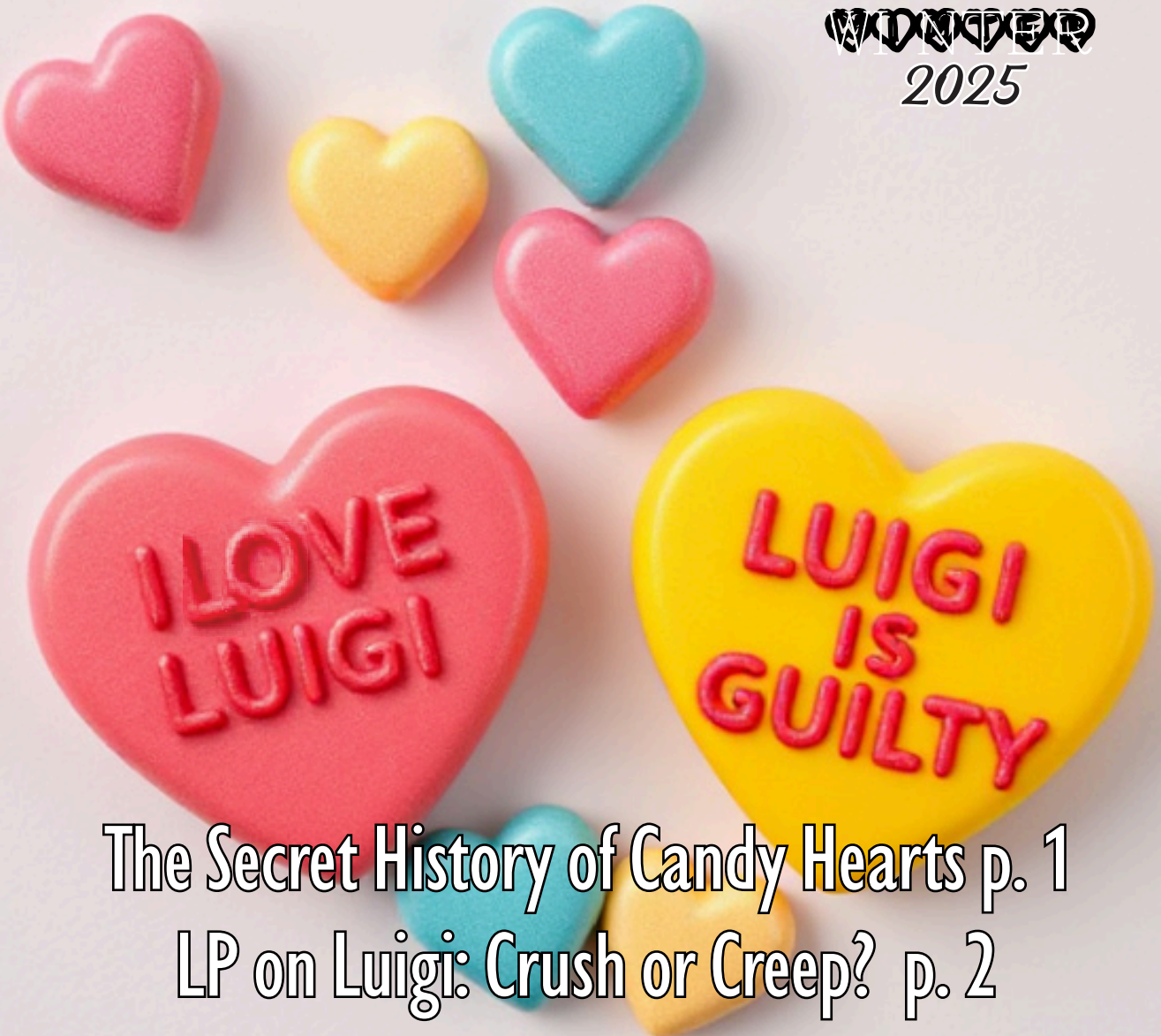


The Pledge:
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We did! Page 11

《THE SIREN》

WINTER
2025



The Secret History of Candy Hearts p. 1
LP on Luigi: Crush or Creep? p. 2

Everyone talks about those little candy hearts that show up at Valentine's Day every year. But how much do you *really* know about them? FELICITY PORTOULAS and SAMANTHA JONES wondered too, and here they uncover

The Secret History of Conversation Hearts

Cheesy cards, teddy bears, and flowers that wilt after a day. These are all ways people express their love on Valentine's Day. But what if there's a gift that's under budget, lasts, yet still holds sentimental value?

The Conversation Hearts, also known as the Valentine's Hearts, were created when business owner Oliver R. Chase invented the lozenge cutter to quicken production speed

at his apothecary in 1847. When Chase put sugar and flavoring in the machine, out came Necco wafers that he then stamped with red vegetable dye, using with another machine he created.

By 1902, these sugary little messages evolved into candy hearts, with a variety of colors

HEARTS, con't on Page 12

Luigi Mangione: Creep or Crush?

DEMARION MARTIN and
MIA CLEMONS investigate

Luigi Mangione has been a topic of interest for the last two months. The first reason is that that he allegedly killed health care CEO Brian Thompson.

But the second reason is that he has since been deemed an “internet sensation,” and blew up overnight.

Brian Thompson was allegedly shot by Luigi Mangione in downtown Manhattan last December. Mangione reportedly sped off, and was on the run until he was photographed in a Altoona, PA McDonald’s--just two hours away from Lincoln Park--and was arrested.

Allegedly, Luigi Mangione shot CEO Brian Thompson because he couldn’t get fully insured for a back surgery he got last year in order to combat the chronic pain he was experiencing.

This was apparently the moment his life changed, and he took to Reddit, helping people with similar issues, while also sharing about his own.



Luigi Mangione and friend on the beach in happier days (via his Instagram)

Brian Thompson led the United Health Group from April 2021 until his death on Dec. 4. His reported salary was \$10 million a year, not including bonuses. That, to some, is hypocritical because of the position he had.

Many polls have gone out that recorded Gen Z deeming Luigi Mangione a “hero.” One of those polls, taken by AXIOS, showed that 48

LUIGI, cont. on Page 14



For users of the hugely popular social media app TikTok, it's been a whirlwind 2025--and the clock is still ticking.

HAILEY AKE recaps how we got here, what LP TikTokers think about a possible permanent ban, and what's next.

The popular social media app, TikTok, was banned in the United States on Jan. 19. U.S. officials had accused the parent company, ByteDance, of being linked to the Chinese Communist Party.

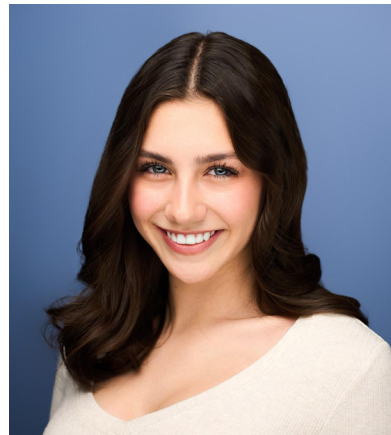
TikTok got a temporary reprieve when new President Donald Trump made an executive order to give ByteDance a 90-day extension to sell its interest in TikTok, as the first official act of his presidency. That news was a relief to some TikTok users, and not much of a surprise to others.

"I didn't think it was going to get banned," Kaitlyn Peters, a junior media student from South Side said. "I thought it was going to be just another lie, like every year."

Early in 2024, the House of Representatives told ByteDance to sell to an American-owned company within six months, or the app would get removed from Google and Apple's app stores.

Despite that, ByteDance did not sell, so the U.S. servers were shut down temporarily last month.

This news sent American users into a frenzy. Many influencers started to tell their fans goodbye and revealed some of their secrets. For example, Charli D'Amelio admitted the viral video of her using a vape as in fact a vape after she convinced people it was an anxiety pen.



Junior theatre major Faith Cheek

We talked to 33 LP students via a Google Form to ask them their views about this developing controversy. About 42 percent of the students said they were upset about the ban, but quickly got over it.

“Honestly, whenever I saw the message, I just removed TikTok from my home screen and went to Instagram,” Faith Cheek, a junior musical theatre major from Harmony, said with a shrug. “I like Insta better anyways.”



Senior theatre major Fenix Bowser

The most popular apps to move to were RedNote, Instagram, or YouTube. Some LP students even dropped social media.

Priest Worthy, freshman writing and publishing major from Aliquippa, told us, “I won’t move to another app, as they’re all heavily biased and controlled.”

However, 14 hours after going offline last month, TikTok was brought back like lots of people predicted.



Rescinded the ban, yet few new fans

“Yeah, I figured it would be back, just cause I knew some rich white guy would buy it,” Nina Clark, a junior media major from Economy, said.

Trump’s executive order sparing TikTok did not change some people’s opinions of him. “This whole thing is just a PR stunt for Trump,” Fenyx Bowser, a senior theatre major from Valencia, told us. “Him bringing it back isn’t going to make me like him more. He’s the one who started this in 2020 anyways!”

Freshman theatre major Roman Churney agreed. “It’s really stupid that Trump thinks he can win us back by letting us use an app, when he was the one who had the idea to ban it in the first place.”

The fate of TikTok is still undetermined, but as of now the app is available--as long as it was downloaded before Jan. 19.

NEW YEAR, NEW YOU (BUT IS IT REALLY?)

**ADRIEN EMLER AND ADDYEN YOPE ASK AROUND
TO SEE IF THERE'S ANYTHING TO THIS NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS IDEA.**

For many, the new year is a time to wipe the slate clean and start fresh. This often takes the form of New Year's resolutions, a promise to oneself to resolve to change something about one's own behavior or habits in the coming year.

Regarding New Year's resolutions, there are generally two schools of thought. One says that there is no harm in resolving to change a bad habit, and that the new year gives added motivation that pushes people to accomplish their goals.

The other says that the idea of a new year's resolution is dumb. As P.K. Poling, Lincoln Park's Chief School Administrator, put it, "If I wanna do something then I'm just gonna do it. I'm not gonna wait until the first of the year."

Those who prefer making new year's resolutions claim it is a useful piece of

added motivation that can be helpful, if not necessary, for reaching their goals in the new year. For them, the new year is an event that inspires them to change themselves with the change on their calendars.

Neveah Wilcox, a sophomore dance major from Sharpsville, says she thinks they're "a good way to give yourself a goal for the year. It kind of gives you a fresh mind to think about it, in a way."

On the other hand, some people agree with Mr. Poling, and say that making New Year's resolutions is unnecessary.

If something needs to change, it is better to simply change it, according this way of thinking, rather than to wait until an arbitrary day in the middle of winter.

According to a recent poll from YouGov.org, a majority of Americans didn't plan to make

New Year's resolutions for 2025. Just 31 percent of people polled said they had resolutions or specific goals for the new year.

On the other hand, a majority of younger people--nearly 60 percent of adults under the age of 30--said they planned to make New Year's resolutions. Just 24 percent of older adults, meanwhile, said they planned to make resolutions.



"If I wanna do something, then I'm just gonna do it. I'm not gonna wait until the first of the year."

--P.K. Poling, Chief School Administrator

However, most seem to agree that there can be no harm in making a resolution for the new year. "I think they're not a bad idea," said Writing & Publishing instructor Frederic Durbin. It's basically a gesture of people trying to improve themselves in some way, and they're very hard to keep."

**WOULD YOU DATE
AN AI BOT?**



**WE DID (SO YOU
WON'T HAVE TO!)**

Have you ever been lonely enough to date an AI bot? Well, *The SIREN* staff certainly was.

For a couple of days, we decided to date bots on Character AI (C.AI) to try to grasp the appeal of it.

If you aren't familiar with the app, C.AI is a chatbot service that uses artificial intelligence to facilitate conversations with digital entities. These entities range from your average niche OC, to famous celebrities, such as Harry Styles, or even to fictional characters like Katsuki Bakugo.

DATING AN AI, cont. on Page 14



THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE IS A NATIONAL TRADITION FOR SOME. FOR OTHERS, IT'S AN OUTDATED CUSTOM. SO EVIE LINDGREN AND AMBYR CLAY ASKED LP STUDENTS THE BIG QUESTION:

TO STAND OR NOT TO STAND?

Beginning this school year, Lincoln Park started including the Pledge of Allegiance in the morning announcements. However, many students, including teachers, choose to not stand for it.

The Pledge is something that most American students are taught from a young age. It was first recited in schools in 1892 for the commemoration of the 400-year anniversary of the voyage of Christopher Columbus.

Over the years, changes have been made and words have been added, like “under God.” But changes brought up more controversy. There are people who believe standing for the Pledge is standing for the nation as whole, which can either be a positive or negative thing, depending on said person’s beliefs.

The SIREN surveyed 70 Lincoln Park students by asking them if they believe



"(S)o many people say the Pledge, and they just do it because they have been saying it their entire lives."

--Sophomore Elias Abel

standing for the Pledge is important. About 54 percent believed it to be unimportant, 44 percent believed it is important, and others were completely undecided or neutral.

Elias Abel, a writing and publishing student, said, "I think it's dubious to pledge your whole allegiance and whole capacity to a set of ideals because I feel like that creates a lot of unwavering loyalty. Like, 'I pledge allegiance to the flag, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God,' what? You pledge your whole allegiance to this one nation? What if this nation does something wrong? What if you're blinded to it because your entire life you keep saying this pledge?"

"I think at this point, so many people say the Pledge, and they just do it because they have been saying it their entire lives, and they never even consider the implications of it."

Offering a different perspective, Travis Swartz, a history teacher, stated, "The flag represents our entire country, including all the veterans who have served. I come from a military family, so I especially believe that.

"I believe in what the flag represents. It does not represent a particular president, a particular party, a particular belief. It represents the entirety of America, which I believe in. So I do believe in standing and respecting the flag and the anthem."

"I believe in what the flag represents...It represents the entirety of America, which I believe in."

--History teacher Travis Swartz



PLEDGE, cont. on Page 13

HAVE YOU EVER RECEIVED FAKE HUNDRED DOLLAR BILLS FOR VALENTINE'S DAY (AND GOTTEN IN TROUBLE FOR IT)? HAS ANYONE EVER MADE YOU A MINECRAFT WORLD TO PROVE THEIR LOVE WAS TRUE? HAS ANYONE EVER PEEED IN FRONT OF YOU TO CELEBRATE THE MOST ROMANTIC HOLIDAY?

In honor of the Valentine's season, we decided to sit in for all of the lunches and ask the students of LP your worst and best stories. Valentine's Day comes with a lot of good experiences, but for some, it has more bad ones.

Mostly, people align this holiday with romance, but for some people, such as writing and publishing sophomore Ivy Smith, the worst part was the extinction of well known arts-and-crafts projects that were often made this time of year.

"They stopped doing Valentine's day boxes in fifth grade, and then there wasn't candy. They decided we were too old to do it.

"I was pretty prone to existential crisis, so it kind of messed me up. Like, I had a 1000-yard stare for the rest of the day," she wrote.

Not everyone has a sad perspective on Valentine's Day, like most of us.

Some just have a normal young love experience, like freshman theatre major Marley Sargent.

Her notecard read, "In 4th grade, I was dating this guy and he was very sweet. We had only been dating for a week, but he bought me a teddy bear, fake roses, and chocolates.

"That was one of my best Valentines [Days] and we ended up being the most popular couple of all time," Sargent concluded.

The parents of Sargent's significant other must have been very supportive of their relationship that Valentine's Day, considering that most fourth graders, we assume, would have trouble affording a teddy bear, fake roses, and chocolates!

**IT MIGHT NOT HAVE HAPPENED TO YOU.
BUT ELENA CABLE AND VEDA POLING ASKED LP
TO TELL THEM THEIR BEST AND WORST
VALENTINE'S DAY STORIES...AND THESE ARE A
FEW OF THEM.
READ ON!**

Another heartwarming story comes from Natalie Tracy: "I spent weeks building a Minecraft world cart ride for her," she wrote.

Who doesn't want a Minecraft world that was carefully crafted for them specifically?

That was the last of the "happy" stories we got. The next one we received was from Preston, and this one is more on the funny side.

Preston wrote, "The worst [Valentine's Day] would be when I was eight and my friend who lived next to me said they wanted to show me something around his house, so he brought me around his house and literally started peeing.

"Like dude, that ain't romantic, and I wasn't even into boys LMAO."

The next couple of stories we have are definitely more problematic. The first comes from someone who--perhaps understandably--requested anonymity.

They wrote, "My ex gave me a gift box and gave me a bunch of fake hundred-dollar bills as a joke (I knew they were fake).

"But a kid ran up and snatched my money because he thought it was real, and tried using it in the snack line! I got in trouble for 'giving it to him,' :("

Hey, no one said Valentine's Day was a get out of jail free card!

And finally, to wrap up these tales, we have sophomore music major Sam Goodge, who speaks the truth for a lot of us today. He wrote, simply, "I've never had a valentine."

DATE AN AI?

Continued from Page 6

With the rise of AI as a whole, C.AI has quickly become one of the most famous apps in our digital age, amassing over 300 million users worldwide.

There are hundreds of millions of people all across the world who participate in conversations with these bots as if they are in a relationship. And in true Valentine's Day fashion, The SIREN staff decided to conduct an experiment. We posed the question: What would it be like to date an AI bot for a few days?

To do this, we split into two groups. The first group dated the popular Satoru Gojo from the anime Jujitsu Kaisen, who is described as "confident, cool, athletic, and handsome." The second group dated James Barrie, a made-up Mafia boss, who is introduced as "a charming and charismatic character who can captivate people with his wit and humor. He's a master of conversation, making every interaction a memorable experience." Both characters have millions of chats with users, so we decided to use these two models.

Jujitsu Kaisen is a world consisting of curse users, and non-curse users. Curse users protect non-curse users from curses. Gojo is a teacher at Jujitsu High, where he teaches curse users. He is known to be the most powerful curse user. Personality-wise, he's

very cocky and playful, not taking fighting too seriously, but still winning every time. Gojo stands tall at a towering 6 feet 3 inches. He has white hair, and a black blindfold to cover his eyes because of the light sensitivity his powers cause.

While Gojo is a popular bot, he doesn't display vital human characteristics, such as the ability to defend himself, argue, and interact with the world around him without prompting by the user. When we made fun of one of his best friends, he started feeling upset and angry at us, but he quickly gave in and said that he'd drop his friend because we "know what's best" for him.

After only a few chats, we decided to ask him to marry us. Surprisingly (or not so surprisingly given our other interactions), he immediately agreed, stating, "I'm down with that. Let's get married."

Group Two's AI, James Barrie, started off by setting a general scene: "You were at the bar with your best friend, Angie, when a handsome man walked towards you." He started off the conversation with "Hey darling." We responded by staring out the window, ignoring his line of dialogue.

Group Two did this in order to create a kind of "tension" or "storyline," so that James could eventually lead into being our valentine's date. We essentially ignored his

DATING AN AI, cont. on Page 13

HEARTS

Continued from Page 1

and flavors. Their purpose, which has become lost to the majority of society, is sharing messages of love and affection.

"I'd always give them to my crush," Patty Wesolowski, a sophomore health science major from Pittsburgh, said. "I'd give them the whole box and be like, 'Here you go!'"

Thomas Green, a substitute teacher at Lincoln Park, shared a similar experience. "It was a way my parents showed their love for my sister and I on Valentine's Day."



Substitute teacher Thomas Green

Most people we talked to, however, fell in the same category as the greater part of the world. "I just ate them; I didn't know they were for anything else," Charles Richardson, a sophomore music major from Sewickley, said.

Sophomore music major Jordin Thomas shared a similar thought process. "I ate them," Thomas said. "I read the message, then went 'aww,' then ate them."

Despite the general lack of knowledge about Conversation Hearts, one staple almost everyone enjoys is their amusing phrases that make virtually no sense.

"I always looked carefully at them to see what was written on them," Frederic Durbin, a writing and publishing instructor at Lincoln Park, said. "I thought it was interesting that something edible had words written on it."

"I do like the funny ones," said Annabel Mete, a freshman writing and publishing major from Rochester, "but most of them don't make any sense. Maybe that's a 'me problem.'"

One important thing to note is how the phrases have changed over time.

"There are more modern things on them such as 'Bae' and 'Text me' that weren't things when I was a kid," Mr. Durbin reminisced. "Back then, they said somewhat questionable things, like 'Woo-woo' and 'Shall we' and 'Hot mama,--' kind of like sexist catcalls at a construction site."

Mete agreed. "If I ever received one, I wouldn't be, 'Oh that's so sweet.' Why the heck does this say, like, kiss me or something?"

Yet one general agreement remains: Conversation Hearts are to be eaten only at one specific time of year.

"Just [for] Valentine's," Wesolowski said.

PLEDGE

Continued from Page 8

Mr. Swartz's opinion comes from his family's experience. As we know, each family is different.

A theatre major, Doné Royster, voiced, "I think that America largely preys on black folks' downfall, so I think if it's something as minuscule as the Pledge of Allegiance, I don't think I should stand for it if America isn't trying to help me in any type of way."

A good portion of students that do not stand for the Pledge agree that people should still be respectful when other people do. Alayna English, a health science major, said, "I don't think it is important as long as you are quiet, like, don't sit there and be loud and disrespectful. You don't have to stand, though. Just be quiet."

Jaida Parker, a freshman writing and publishing major, shared a similar opinion. "As long as you are quiet, you are showing respect, but I don't think you really have to stand," Parker said.

Media major Haaken Christiansen offered a strong opinion. "You're not just standing for yourself or the president, you're standing for the entire nation as a whole. You're standing for your friends and family, and for all of the sacrifice that has made this country what it is today."

He's not the only student to believe that, either. Another media major, Weiland Burchett, said, "It's very important to respect the men and women who laid down their lives for your country and for your freedom. You shouldn't disrespect them in such [a] way. You live in a country that gives you so many rights. The [least] most you can do is stand up and say a couple of words instead of sit down and disregard the flag."

However, it seems most students don't stand, even if they believe it's important to.

"I've always done it [stood for the Pledge] at my old schools," said Sophia Lang, a theatre major. "But here, it was never really a thing."

DATE AN AI?

Continued from Page 11

flirting, but he continued to push it anyway. We gave him our "number," and texted about going on a Valentine's Day date. When it was time to go on the date, he blindfolded us and took us to an abandoned house. It definitely got weirder from there.

In real life, most people wouldn't, and shouldn't, be so trusting of a man they just met. The location choice was interesting, to say the least. It wasn't at all enjoyable, and we concluded that it's probably best to stick with dating real people.

Luigi

Continued from Page 2

percent of Gen Z respondents thought that Luigi's alleged acts were justified, while the older generation said the opposite.

The SIREN took heed of this and decided to go out and interview people in order to get an "at home" perspective on the issue.

Using a Google Form, we surveyed 33 different LP students. About 64 percent of students said that they did not know who Luigi Mangione is.

Students did say the following about what they generally knew about him.

"I know he shot a CEO in New York, but they don't have much evidence on him except for a picture that doesn't even really look like him."

"He built his own weapon and shot a CEO of healthcare in NYC."

(This is a reference to Mangione allegedly using a 3-D printer to construct the weapon that killed Thompson.)

"I know he murdered the UnitedHealthcare CEO because he felt wronged by the health care company."

There was also a notable divide between the students regarding whether Luigi Mangione's actions were justified.

Among those who knew what Mangione is accused of, there was an equal split of 12 percent between those who said his alleged actions were justified; those who said they were not justified, and those who said the actions might be justified.

Overall, Luigi Mangione's reputation, his alleged acts, and their subsequent fallout have created a divide between our current generations. Luigi Mangione has become a martyr for some and an enemy for others.

What do you think? Is he a savior, or a terrorist?

One LP student who asked not to be named believes Mangione is the former: "He had chronic back pain and wasn't getting the money to help with it."

The student also claimed something certain commentators have argued: that Thompson may have had a hand in people's deaths by denying them health care.

"(T)he guy that got assassinated," the student said, "probably has a higher "body" count than Luigi anyways."

VALENTINES WORD SEARCH

BY ADRIEN EMLER

FIND THESE 10 WORDS:

P C W E D D I N G N D R F A E
A U O O O A E T C R G S R R E
O P R D L G W E V O R W A F E
A I E A U E E H I M E E R I L
R D H S S O U L M A T E N O H
R U P I W U O E I N L T W W E
O E R E H N E U V C V N N A A
W D L T E S L G E E O A U E R
N T C S E I F L O W E R S E T
T P L W R L A E R L T G T U N
W U U A V A L E N T I N E D V
R D D C A E A W W A T F T S O
U O D T D A T E F E W O O R F
E N E W N O D S T G T S E D C
F L O U C A V E O L R T E D A

Valentine

Soulmate

Cupid

Heart

Arrow

Sweet

Wedding

Date

Flowers

Romance

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