

# THE HIGHLAND HIGHLIGHT

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Published by the Highland Local Schools to promote our students, staff and programs.

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## HMS, ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS RANKED AMONG 'BEST'



U.S. News & World Report recently published its first-ever rankings of public elementary and middle schools, and all three of our Highland elementary schools and our middle school earned a "Best School" badge.

Highland Middle School was ranked #69 out of 1,224 middle schools in the state. Schools are ranked on their performance on state-required tests, graduation, and how well they prepare their students for high school. Eighty-six percent of students scored at or above the proficient level for math, and 90% scored at or above that level for reading. This ranking places HMS among the top 30% in Ohio.

Our elementary schools were ranked against 1,637 K-5 schools statewide. Hinckley Elementary stands at #30 due to their performance on state-required tests and how well they prepare their students for high school. At Hinckley, 98% of students

scored at or above the proficient level for math, and 92% scored at or above that level for reading.

Granger Elementary has been ranked at #67, with 95% of students scoring at or above the proficient level for math, and 91% scoring at or above that level for reading. Rounding out the rankings is Sharon Elementary School at #148. Ninety-one percent of students scored at or above the proficient level for math, and 92% scored at or above that level for reading.

"These are impressive statewide rankings and we should be proud of the continued growth of our students, despite these challenging times," stated Superintendent Catherine Aukerman. "Our administration and staff at each of these buildings remain committed to the highest academic expectations for our students so that they have every opportunity to reach their full learning potential. I commend them on a job well done."

## SCHREINER OFFICIALLY JOINS HIGHLAND BOARD OF EDUCATION



Highland Board of Education members from left are: Bob Kelly, Mike Houska, Melissa Schreiner, Christopher Wolny (vice president) and Dr. Norman Christopher (president).

Melissa Schreiner was officially sworn in as a new member of the Highland Board of Education, along with re-elected longtime members Bob Kelly and Christopher Wolny, during the board's Organizational Meeting held on January 13 in the high school media center.

Schreiner, a lifelong area resident and graduate of Highland High School (Class of 1990), has been an active alumnus and community volunteer for nearly 20 years. She has offered her time serving in several capacities including at school events, band and choir boosters, PTO leadership roles, Sharon Township Ski Club Adviser and was a longtime Service Unit Director for Girl Scouts. Schreiner has an associate degree from Bryant & Stratton Business Institute and is currently employed as a merchandising buyer at Signet Jewelers in Akron. She and her husband, Greg, reside in Sharon Township and have two daughters, Abigail and Madalyn, both Highland graduates.

# MAKING HEADLINES...

## CODDING SELECTED FOR OMEA ALL-STATE BAND



*Coddling*

Highland High School junior Alden Coddling, saxophonist and member of The Pride of Highland Marching Band, has been selected for the 2022 Ohio Music Education Association (OMEA) All-State Band. Selection for the All-State Band is determined by a rigorous audition process amongst Ohio's top high school musicians. "This is a big honor and accomplishment," stated Highland Band Director Edward Marquette. "Alden is a very talented and hardworking musician, and we are extremely proud of him."

The All-State Band performs at 8 p.m. on Friday, February 4 at the Huntington Convention Center in Cleveland as part of the OMEA Professional Development Conference.

An academic standout and member of the National Honor Society, Alden is the son of Ken and Kelly Lane of Granger Township, and Brian Coddling of Wooster.

## HMS STUDENTS WIN LOCAL ESSAY CONTEST

Several Highland Middle School students recently entered and placed in the annual Patriot's Pen essay contest, open to students in grades 6-8. Conducted nationwide, the VFW-sponsored youth essay competition gives students an opportunity to write essays expressing their views on an annual patriotic theme. The 2021-22 theme was "How Can I Be A Good American?" More than 138,000 students participated in last year's contest, where national winners received at least \$500 with a grand prize award of \$5,000. Congratulations to the following HMS 8th grade students on their winning essays in the Medina VFW Post Patriot's Pen:

- Braden Gryskiewicz captured 1st place and received a prize of \$750. He is the son of Mark and Lisa Gryskiewicz of Sharon Township.
- Weston Bachtell claimed 2nd place and received \$500. He is the son of Drew and Ashley Bachtell of Sharon Township.
- Alexandria Russell nabbed 3rd place for a prize of \$250. She is the daughter of Dennis and Melisa Russell of Granger Township.



*From left are Alexandria Russell, Braden Gryskiewicz and Weston Bachtell.*

## GRECENUK IS FINALIST FOR SPECIAL SCHOLARSHIP

Congratulations to Highland senior Joey Grecenuk, who is a finalist in the 2022 competition for a corporate-sponsored Special Scholarship administered by National Merit® Scholarship Corporation (NMSC®).



*Grecenuk*

Joey is now included in a pool of high school award candidates based on his performance on the 2020 Preliminary SAT/ National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®).

Every year some 1,000 National Merit Program participants, who are outstanding but not Finalists, are awarded Special Scholarships provided by corporations and business organizations. To be considered for a Special Scholarship, students must meet the sponsor's criteria and the entry requirements of the National Merit Scholarship Program. They also must submit an entry form to the sponsor organization. These scholarships may either be renewable for four years of undergraduate study or one-time awards.

A member of the National Honor Society, Joey also serves as a DARE Role Model and Peer Leader at HHS. He is the son of Frank and Denise Grecenuk of Montville Township and plans to attend college to study business upon his graduation from Highland.



*Max Onopko, HHS freshman and member of The Pride of Highland Marching Band.*

## BOE MEETING DATES ANNOUNCED FOR 2022

At the Organizational Meeting of the Highland Board of Education held in January, the meeting dates for the remainder of 2022 were approved. Meetings are held at 7 p.m. in the Highland High School Media Center. (Please note, meetings are subject to change. Check the website for the most current information).

- February 28
- March 21
- April 25
- May 16
- June 27
- July 18
- August 15
- September 12
- October 17
- November 21
- December 19



### BOARD OF EDUCATION

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## DEPUTY CENTNER RETIRES AFTER SERVING 17 YEARS AS DARE OFFICER

After serving 17 years as the DARE Officer for The Highland Schools, Medina County Sheriff Deputy Sharon Centner announced her retirement in December and was honored for 25 years of service by the sheriff's office.

From a district perspective, Officer Centner has had an impact on literally thousands of students and families during her time in the Highland Schools. Although she's "officially" retired, she will continue teaching DARE classes part-time through the end of the 2021-22 school year.

Officer Centner's investment in students began when they entered preschool or kindergarten -- meeting many for the first time when they participated in the annual Safety Town program -- and maintained a relationship with them through graduation -- and oftentimes beyond.

Deputy Centner has worked tirelessly with the community to provide an excellent education centered on the DARE concepts, which focus on healthy and positive lifestyle choices. Over the years, she also initiated and coordinated many after-school programs such as DARE Skate Night, DARE Bowling Night, and DARE Graduation Night, where 5th grade classes from Granger, Hinckley and Sharon elementary schools assemble for the first time. Each of these activities are always well attended and eagerly anticipated by students and parents alike.

She succeeded in planning lessons that appealed to all ages, engaging students in active learning and participation. Additionally, she utilized middle school and high school students as DARE Role Models to provide a vertical connection between peers, which proved both powerful and effective on a number of levels. She truly wanted to see each student reach his or her full potential.



*Deputy Sharon Centner and husband, Dave, Police Chief of Hinckley Township.*



*Highland Superintendent Catherine Aukerman presents Deputy Centner with the 2017 Highland Pride Award.*

Her daily presence, knowledge and professionalism will be missed among students and staff in the district, but Deputy Centner said she plans to remain an active member within the community. She and her husband, Dave, reside in Sharon Township. They have five grown children and 14 grandchildren.



# HORNET'S NEST



## 239 COATS COLLECTED!

Highland DARE Role Models at both the high school and middle school, along with members of Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD), collected 239 new and gently used coats for the annual "Coats for Kids" drive! In addition to the coats, scarfs, hats and gloves were donated to help "Keep A Child Warm This Winter!" The collection boxes at each Highland elementary school, as well as the high school and middle school, were overflowing with generosity! THANKS to our Highland staff, students, parents and community for the amazing donations that mean so much to a child in need!



From left are NJHS members Elizabeth Coleman, Emma Price, Ava Fox, Heather Hardesty, Joshua Butcher and Colin Keeley.

## 987 CANS COLLECTED!

Wow! Members of the Highland Middle School National Junior Honor Society held a canned food drive to benefit the St. Paul's Sharing Center and collected items through December 17. A total of 987 cans were donated to the drive, which will benefit families in the Highland communities. Thanks to everyone who donated!

## DAVIS, VINCEK TO TAKE PART IN LEADERSHIP BALL ON 4/30

Highland High School seniors Maria Davis and Lauren Vincek were chosen to take part in the 2022 Medina County Spring Leadership Ball on April 30 at Weymouth Country Club. The event is held annually in conjunction with Feeding Medina County. A total of only 26 girls were selected in Medina County for this honor. The girls were chosen for their leadership in school, high GPA, community service and engagement in the community. All 26 girls will participate in a food drive project to benefit Feeding Medina County. Maria is the daughter of Calvin and Tina Davis of Montville Township; and Lauren is the daughter of Frank Vincek of Akron and Pamela Vincek of Montville Township. Congratulations!



Maria and Lauren





# HIGHLIGHTS

## PEER LEADERS VISIT WITH GRANGER 2ND GRADERS

Highland High School Peer Leaders paid a special visit to Granger Elementary 2nd graders in Mrs. Carol Grande's classroom on December 8 to introduce themselves, share their interests and talk about the activities they are involved in at the high school. They also read books to the students focusing on the importance of being respectful to others.



*Pictured above: Highland junior Hailey Kelps with 2nd graders Charleigh Watson and Laney Norman. At right: Highland senior Patrick Flannery with 2nd grader Cael Gibbons.*



*From left: Hinckley 4th graders Parker Ridel, Eleanor Fiala and Grace Minch.*

## HINCKLEY 4TH GRADERS LEARN ABOUT 'STEAM'

Hinckley 4th graders recently used the acronym STEAM to plan and construct gingerbread houses. Teachers led students through this amazing and fun, 5-day discovery process! **SCIENCE DAY:** Students learned about the chemical reactions that happen when baking gingerbread houses. **TECHNOLOGY DAY:** Students recorded the planning process through their Flipgrid app and watched a gingerbread house come to life on a 3D printer. **ENGINEER DAY:** Students researched a variety of careers in engineering. **ART DAY:** Students drafted their blueprints for their house design. **MATH DAY:** Students calculated the arrays, area and perimeter of their houses. All this planning led to the seamless construction of their gingerbread house masterpieces, just in time to celebrate Winter Break!



Scarlett Schindelholz  
Hinckley Elementary School

## KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION OPENS FEBRUARY 8

If you have a child who will begin kindergarten for the 2022-23 school year, **registration opens through FinalForms beginning on February 8.** Highland's kindergarten program consists of an all-day, everyday model. To register, a child must be 5 years old by September 30, 2022. The following items are needed and must be uploaded to FinalForms when registering:

- Parent identification with a picture I.D.
- Proof of residency
- Child's original birth certificate or passport
- Child's complete immunization records
- Certified custody papers (if applicable)

Register your child through FinalForms at: <https://highlandmedina-oh.finalforms.com/>. Also, if enrolling a child in kindergarten, please review the "Welcome to Kindergarten" packet found under the "New Students" tab on the homepage of the district website.

## NOMINEES FOR GREATER AKRON HS SPORTS AWARDS

The Akron Beacon Journal recently announced the nominees for the Greater Akron High School Sports Awards. Winners will be announced this spring at the live awards show, where all nominees will be honored, along with the top three finalists and player of the year. The Greater Akron High School Sports Awards show is part of the USA TODAY High School Sports Awards, the largest high school sports recognition program in the country.

Congratulations to the following Highland standouts who were nominated as "player of the year" in their respective sport.

Girls Soccer:

- **Ella Dinwiddie, junior**

Girls Tennis:

- **Sarah Sgambati, junior**

Girls Golf:

- **Alessandra Goyette, senior**
- **Isabella Goyette, sophomore**
- **Paige McKendry, sophomore**

Boys Cross Country:

- **Elijah Hadler, senior**
- **Logan Warner, senior**

Boys Golf:

- **Griffin Hrabak, senior**

Football - Offense:

- **Aaron Filips, senior**

*(Above list was current at the time of publication. Additional nominees will be posted on the district website and social media pages as they are announced by the Beacon Journal)*

## HHS STUDENTS WIN ART HONORS

The official results of the 2021 Scholastic Art and Writing competition were announced in early January with 19 Highland High School students walking away with 48 awards. Each piece showcases creative talent, originality, individualism, technical skill and unique perspective.

Congratulations to Grace Wojtylak who earned 2 **Gold Keys**, including one for her six-piece senior portfolio. Other Gold Key winners were Victoria Farrell, Lydia Lanier and Evan Novak. Gold Key winners advance to the National level where they have the chance to receive a scholarship in the amount of \$10,000.

**Silver Key** award winners included Victoria Farrell, Sarah Vorndran, Grace Wojtylak, Izabella Zeleznak and Makayla Lyons.

Those students receiving **Honorable Mention** awards included Lillian Barnett, Griffin Bukovina, Sofiya Cole (4), Victoria Farrell (2), Eva Hollingsworth, William Karkoff, Luke Konopka, Lizzy Magoolaghan, Evan Novak (8), Carter Oviatt, Sarah Vorndran, Molly Wagar, Grace Wojtylak (8), Izabella Zeleznak (3), Brooke Boge, Nicole Grimes and Madeline Silver.

Founded in 1923, the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards are the nation's longest-running, most prestigious educational initiative supporting student achievement in the visual and literary arts. The program is today's largest source of scholarships for creative teens.

## ESTERLE ROLLS PERFECT GAME

Congratulations to Dylan Esterle, member of the Highland Bowling Team, who rolled his first career 300 game on January 4, 2022, at Riviera Lanes against Twinsburg! The Highland High School junior is a returning State Qualifier for the Hornets.



# HIGHLAND ATHLETIC NEWS



*Holland*

## 3 NAMED 'COACH OF THE YEAR'

Congratulations to Highland coaches Rick Holland (Girls Varsity Soccer), Mary Becker (Girls Varsity Golf) and Lisa Reynolds (Girls Varsity Tennis) who have been named Medina Gazette "COACH OF THE YEAR!" Becker was also named "Coach of the Year" by Cleveland.com.

A former semipro for Reading Town FC in England as a defensive midfielder, Holland began coaching the Highland junior varsity boys' team in 2011-12 and took over the girl's program in 2020, when the Hornets won their first Suburban League American Conference title. A head coach at Cleveland Force Fairlawn from 2010-17, he was the international boys coach from 2017-19 and is currently the head coach at the Heart and Sole Futsal Academy where he has been since 2010. He is also the director and owner of Dynamic Soccer and Fitness in Copley. Holland is a computer science teacher at Highland High School and Highland Middle School.



*Becker*

Becker began the girls' golf program at Highland in 2007 and has served as its head coach ever since. Throughout her time at Highland, she has grown the golf program, coached a number of talented golfers, and guided the team to several Suburban League Conference titles and State Tournament appearances and finishes. Becker is currently a physical education teacher at Highland Middle School.



*Reynolds*

Reynolds became head coach of Highland's girls' and boys' tennis programs in 2003. She was previously named the Gazette Coach of the Year in Girls Tennis in 2009, 2010, 2012, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 and in Boys Tennis in 2006, 2010, 2012 and 2013. Under her guidance, the Hornets won the Suburban League Championship in girls' tennis in 2012 and have nabbed the SL American Conference the last six seasons. Reynolds owns a 218-117 record in 19 years as coach of the girl's team and 188-91 mark in 17 years with the boy's program, for an overall record of 406-208. She is a 1986 graduate of Highland High School and is currently a language arts teacher at Highland Middle School.

*(Source: Medina Gazette, 12/24/21 Edition)*



*Shaw*

## SHAW TO ATTEND CLARION UNIVERSITY

Highland senior Julia Shaw signed her commitment letter on November 10 to attend and play volleyball for Clarion University next year. She received a partial academic and athletic scholarship to the university where she plans to study health sciences. Julia was named All-Medina County, First Team All-Suburban League, All-District Honorable Mention and All-Ohio Honorable Mention. A scholar-athlete and four-year letter winner, she is the daughter of Tom and Karolyn Shaw of Montville Township.



*Steinbacher*

## STEINBACHER COMMITS TO CSU

Highland senior Kennedy Steinbacher signed her commitment letter on November 10 to attend and play softball for Cleveland State University next year. She received a partial scholarship to the university where she will study pre-physical therapy. A three-year letter winner, Kennedy earned a Suburban League Honorable Mention and is the daughter of Ed and Debbie Steinbacher of Hinckley Township.

## Lippincott to Lead Boys' Track



*Lippincott*

Devan Lippincott has been named the new Head Coach of the Highland Boys' Track and Field Team. He was hired at the Highland Board of Education meeting in December.

Lippincott has nearly 25 years of coaching experience, including his current position as Head Coach of the Highland Girls' Cross-Country Team for which he has served since 2003. Previously, he was the assistant coach of both the girls' track team and boys' track team for several seasons and also has experience coaching boys' basketball.

Currently, in his 25th year as a biology teacher at Highland High School, Coach Lippincott is excited to begin the 2022 season in his new position.

## NY TIMES BEST SELLER TO SPEAK

Getting your student into a top-ranked college has never seemed more impossible, with acceptance rates at some elite universities dipping into the single digits. Ever wonder what the secret is and how to compete – and win – at the admissions game? Well, here's your chance.

Highland High School, in partnership with The Highland Foundation for Educational Excellence, is pleased to welcome New York Times bestselling author Jeff Selingo, at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, February 8 in the HHS Auditorium for a Parent Session offering insights from his latest book, *Who Gets In & Why: A Year Inside College Admissions*.

This event is free and open to ALL Highland parents interested in learning more about the college admissions process. It is not restricted only to parents of high school students. Please note, space is limited, and registration is required. **Attendance is limited to 600 and parents are asked to secure no more than 4 tickets per family. The deadline to register is February 3.** Please refer to the district website for the registration link.

### ABOUT THE BOOK

For his 2020 book, Selingo was embedded in three different admissions offices (a selective private university, a leading liberal arts college, and a flagship public campus) and closely observed gatekeepers as they made often agonizing and sometimes life-changing decisions. He also followed select students and their parents and traveled around the country meeting with high school counselors, marketers, behind-the-scenes consultants, and college rankers. While many have long believed that admissions are merit-based, rewarding the best students, *Who Gets In and Why* presents a more complicated truth, showing that "who gets in" is frequently more about the college's agenda than the applicant. In a world where thousands of equally qualified students vie for a fixed number of spots at institutions, admissions officers often make split-second decisions based on a variety of factors—like diversity, money, and, ultimately, whether a student will enroll if accepted. His book also guides prospective students on how to honestly assess their strengths and match with the schools that will best serve their interests.



JEFF SELINGO

Selingo has written about higher education for more than two decades and is a New York Times bestselling author of three books. A regular contributor to *The Atlantic*, Jeff is a special advisor for innovation and professor of practice at Arizona State University. He also writes a bi-weekly newsletter on all things higher ed called *Next*, and co-hosts the podcast, *FutureU*. He lives in Washington, D.C., with his family.

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*Thank you to The Highland Foundation for their support in making this event possible.*



## INAUGURAL SCHOLARSHIP HONORING WILLIAM KUBINSKI

The William L. Kubinski Student-Athlete Scholarship will be awarded for the first time this year, to a college-bound Highland senior who has excelled in the classroom and on the field of play and also plans to pursue a career in education. The scholarship honors Bill, educator and coach, whose career spanned nearly four decades starting in 1964 as an elementary teacher in Brunswick, which led to roles as principal, director of athletics, and physical education. He helped create the Pioneer Conference. Along the way, Bill took on numerous coaching assignments from junior high to high school, leading teams in football, basketball, and track & field. Sports played a large part in his life and role as an educator. It was his belief that sports provided invaluable life lessons -- win, lose, pick yourself up, work hard and strive for greatness.

Bill was selfless, devoted, and perhaps the nicest person one could meet. He made time to talk, teach and coach anyone who wanted to listen, learn and improve. He truly believed in people and their potential. For him, it was "the people who make the difference." To further his life's work, the Kubinski family honors his commitment to education and athletics through this named \$2,000 scholarship to be awarded annually to a student-athlete of Highland High School.

Applications are due by March 18 and will be reviewed by The Highland Foundation Scholarship Committee, along with representatives of the Kubinski family. The recipient will be recognized at the annual HHS Senior Awards Assembly.