

# THE HIGHLAND FILING

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## THE EMPATHY BEHIND HIGHLANDS

Cathy Berberian has been selected as the teacher of the year  
**Anara Pollak '23**

This year at Northern Highlands, child study team (CST) member and student coordinated Cathy Berbarian won the teacher of the year award. Berberian is a guiding resource for students and their families, teachers, as well as other faculty members. She holds the responsibilities of student coordinator, CST school social worker, and homeless liaison.

As the social worker, she provides emotional, social, academic, and behavioral support to any member of the Highlands community in need of it.

Principal Mr. Occhino expresses that “Mrs. Berberian has a nice blend of nominations and builds tremendous relationships with students and their families, so she is very deserving of this award.”

When asked what the best part of her job was, Berberian stated that it was wonderful to see “growth and development in the kids [she] works with”, as she sees many of them from freshman year up until their senior year.

Even more, she continues making an impact beyond the Highlands community by working with some students up until they are twenty-one.

She adds that, “to look back on students who didn’t start off so strong

Continued on page 8

## GOOD NIGHT, GOOD NIGHT! PARTING (WITH MR. LEIB) IS SUCH SWEET SORROW

Read this Q & A to explore his final reflections on his career at Northern Highlands before he retires this coming June

Amy Tullett '23

**Q: How long have you been teaching at Northern Highlands?**

**A: This is my seventeenth year at NHRHS.**

**Q: What classes have you taught over the years at Highlands?**

**A: I’ve taught English 9 every year but one during my career, both at NHRHS and elsewhere. I’ve also taught Honors British Literature, Honors Humanities, Honors American Studies and Modern Fiction.**

**Q: Of the classes you’ve taught at Highlands, which has been your favorite to teach?**

**A: My favorite class has always been Honors British Literature. I spent a significant amount of time studying Shakespeare, including a college semester working at the Shakespeare Library in Stratford-upon-Avon.**

Continued on page 8

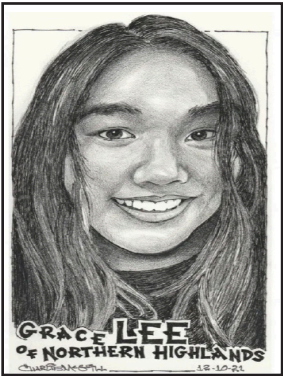
## INSIDE



### Going for the Gold

Learn about junior Bella O’Callaghan’s gold award project: a volleyball clinic for young girls run right here at Highlands.

Page 16



### Athlete of the Week

Sophomore Grace Lee broke a school record in the 100 Freestyle race and was named Athlete of the Week.

Page 16



### A Capella Ends

The Northern Highlands Voices placed at semi-finals earlier this month and Highlands hosts its A Capella festival.

Page 13



# JEEEEEP NATION

## The Highlands parking lot is home to a favorite car: Jeep Wranglers



Photo courtesy of Bozana Bozovic '22

Bozana Bozovic '22

As an incoming freshman at Northern Highlands, I noticed a popular car in the student parking lots. When students in my grade began to get their licenses, Jeep Wranglers took over our class and became a popular and prominent car choice .

Before I moved to Upper Saddle River, I never realized how many people owned Jeep Wranglers. When I became a student at Highlands and noticed its popularity, I was surprised to see that such a

unique car had taken this school by storm.

I think Jeeps are a common car choice among high school students because of the look of the car, inside and out, and all of its special features. The

for the car’s reputation; students want space for all of their friends and family inside of their car, which makes the wideness of Jeeps more of a necessity for teens. Not only have Jeeps taken over the senior

about Jeeps that made her choose it over other brands is the Jeep wave. “I love how I could be driving in the middle of nowhere and see another Jeep and then wave at them. It makes it feel like I’m a part of a

Yasmin also adds, “Another quality [I like] is the removable top. During the

most common cars in the parking lot. Owning a Jeep is spe-



Art by Emily Gan '23

more recently manufactured Jeeps include lots of space in the driver’s seat, passenger’s seat, back seat, and trunk. This seems to be one of the main reasons

parking lots, but plenty of teachers have a Wrangler as well!

According to Yasmin Chakhman, a fellow senior, one of the qualities

Jeep family.”

The Jeep wave is also another unspoken rule that comes with buying a Jeep, but it’s something both Yasmin and I grew to love.

summer when I would go down the shore, I would take off the top and go to the beach with my family and friends.”

Jeep Wranglers have always been popular among Highlands students, but never to this degree. From the rectangular box shape, all the way to the heated steering wheel, Highlands have chosen this car as their number one choice and it remains to be the one of the most

cial in its own way, thanks to the small community it creates at Highlands and the fact that it was the first car I drove. We, as a class, have the opportunity to enjoy little moments like these— buying the same car— before we graduate. Although it’s strange to think about now, these small similarities are what connects the class of 2022. ■

## The Highland Fling

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## From the Desk of the Editors-in-Chief

We are stressed.

Our spring breaks were full of college tours instead of Florida, further reminding us of the fact that the biggest change in our lives thus far is basically only a year away. As cliché as it sounds, we can vividly remember coming to Highlands freshman year and overhearing seniors and juniors talking about the SAT and looming college applications. It seemed basically unfathomable to our fourteen year old minds that that would be us in a couple of years, but here we are. We’re now living in it, and the surrealness was only amplified when we officially toured potential colleges just two short weeks ago.

After our days of accumulating too many pamphlets to carry, hitting ten thousand steps every day, and hearing about how incredible the unlimited swipe plan at the dining hall is, we returned to Bergen County to face what was mostly masked (and forgotten) by break-testing. Cumulative exams, AP exams, the SAT and ACT, state testing, unit testing—the list goes on. The weeks after break have quickly snowballed into the most stress we’ve probably ever faced.

To seniors, this definitely sounds ridiculous. And this fact in itself is ultimately contributing to the long term pressure we’re feeling, because we’re witnessing that what lies even farther ahead of us isn’t so far, and soon we’ll be laughing at the juniors who think the end of April is hard. Basically, it just feels like there is so much to do, so little time to do it, and our somewhat daunting and unknown future is a lot sooner than we initially thought. Saying that becoming seniors in less than two months feels unreal is too much of an understatement, and however exciting or scary that might be, as we’re learning in real time, the path there is rocky—and prepare yourself for this shock-stressful.

With that being said, we hope you can find time to spare from your likewise stressful day and enjoy the April edition of *The Fling*. Immeasurable amounts of collaboration and effort went into it, and we are so excited for you to read it.

The Editors-In-Chief of the Highland Fling

If you are interested in joining *The Highland Fling* or have any questions, comments, or concerns, please contact [fling.eic@gmail.com](mailto:fling.eic@gmail.com). If you are interested in placing an ad or subscribing, please contact the email listed above.

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1-800-950-6264

National Suicide Prevention Hotline:  
1-800-273-TALK (8255) [24/7 hotline]  
(Spanish) 1-888-628-9454

# LEND A HAND, HIGHLANDS

## Learn how you can make an impact in your community



Photo courtesy of Sienna Shrier '25

Sienna Shrier '25

One organization that I hold close to my heart is WGTNJ. WGTNJ is a non-profit organization that helps provide food to those in need.

During the pandemic, many workers lost their jobs and the number of people who became food insecure increased drastically.

To help with this rising conflict, two women in two different New Jersey communities created a local Facebook account called Button Soup.

People from all over New Jersey can sign up to prepare meals for this organization. The prepared

meals are then delivered to WGTNJ to help the people in need.

Since WGTNJ is a non-profit organization, they rely on volunteers to aid them with their cause. It is up to us as students

banana chocolate chip bread for dessert.

I first started volunteering for Button Soup because of my sister. For the past few months, my sister has been working on her Bat Mitzvah project.

**Three to six hours of your day can make the biggest difference in someone else's life.**

to help.

During the past few months, I have signed up to prepare meals for Button Soup. I have made breakfast, lunch, and even multiple desserts.

I have also spent time making breakfast foods such as eggs and muffins, soups full of nutritious beans and hearty vegetables for lunch, and brownies, cookies, pumpkin bread, and

At first, I only assisted her and did minimal work. Then, I realized how much of an impact my sister was having on her community, so I signed up to prepare meals and join the cause.

On the weekends, I work around six hours in order to create twenty-four individually packaged meals or desserts.

My experience with Button Soup has been amazing so far and I have

realized how much I can contribute to the growing hunger disparity.

Helping others in need is so important, and students at Northern Highlands can take action by preparing meals for Button Soup, for example.

The hungry can use all the help they can get, so volunteering your time at local food banks is a great opportunity for my fellow classmates to participate in.

Not only do you get the joy of helping other

people, but you can also get community service hours which you can put on your resume when you apply for colleges.

Colleges love to see how you give back to your community and these hours can be a great way to boost your application.

Volunteering can also teach you the true values of life and how we should be more appreciative of the resources that we have access to.

Not everyone can acquire food as easily as us,

so we should never take it for granted.

Three to six hours of your day can make the biggest difference in someone else's life. However, it is not just the community service hours you get, but the joy you feel when you know you are helping those in need.

To all students at Northern Highlands, it's up to you to help your community. You can take action and be the reason someone can eat today. ■



Art by Emily Gan '23

# TEACHER'S CORNER

## Follow Ms. Lardiere and her pursuit of finding her passion in teaching



Tia Charney '23

Mary Lardiere

When I was 26, I worked in Manhattan at an agency that represented some of the world's top photographers, fashion stylists and make-up artists.

I had started there as an intern, worked my way up to portfolio manager and was on my way to being promoted to photographer's agent.

Over the course of my three years with the

company, I went to all the elite photo shoots, met celebrities, and attended lavish parties.

It was an exciting lifestyle but I often found myself unhappy that I was becoming part of an industry that forced you to compromise your integrity and not utilize the skills that I had worked so hard to develop.

In addition to assisting with portfolios and agents, my position with the company also included the role of personal assistant to the CEO.

He was a nice enough person, bought me breakfast daily from his favorite macrobiotic restaurant and introduced me to all his fancy clients and friends, but he exuded an attitude of self importance that was difficult to ignore and

sometimes expected me to display the same self important attitude to those who worked in positions below me.

Additionally, being his assistant often had me completing mundane tasks such as arranging for his car service, ordering his lunch, and in one instance, arranging an intern to bring his shoes to a repair shop, which proved to be a pivotal moment in my life.

My boss was leaving later that night on a flight to London, and wanted his shoes repaired before leaving for the trip.

Now I am fairly positive he owned more than one pair of shoes, and I am even more positive that he owned more than one pair of these specific style shoes. But this particular pair needed immediate re-

pair. He handed me a bag and asked for me to send an intern to the repair shop to drop the shoes off.

I managed to make it to tenth avenue, traffic at a stand still, when my cell phone rang.

It was my boss, in a

**I wanted a job where I could interact with people on an authentic level, be myself and share my skills.**

Later that afternoon, it began to snow... hard. I sent the intern back to the shop to retrieve the repaired shoes, confirmed my boss's car service at the airport and politely asked him if I could leave early because of the weather.

At the time, I would often take my car to work from NJ because my hours often kept me there late and I liked the convenience of not having to plan around a train schedule.

He said I could leave as soon as I finished up some calls, which took an additional hour. By the time I got my car from the underground parking garage, the streets at Union Square were snow cov-

panic, stating that only one of his shoes was returned from the repair shop.

He simply couldn't understand how myself, the intern and the repair shop didn't realize a shoe was missing. He asked me to call the intern and repair shop to ask what happened.

After about 8 phone calls trying to figure out the location of the missing shoe, my boss begged me to turn around and go to the repair shop myself to search for his shoe.

I looked out the window of my car, red brake lights blazing around me against the nearly six inches of snow that had already fallen, with a prediction of another ten, I took a deep breath and told him that I

can not turn back.

He was dissatisfied with my response.

After two hours, I finally arrived home. The drive home was long and dangerous and I imagined what would have happened if I did turn around to find the missing shoe, and how I may have gotten stuck in the city, in my Dodge Neon, with no snow tires.

That night I decided that I needed to find another job. I couldn't continue to work in an industry where there are little to no boundaries unless you are a top level CEO or a 'somebody'.

I wanted a job where I could interact with people on an authentic level, be myself and share my skills.

I wanted to do something that made me feel good about what I was doing and left me with a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction.

When my boss returned from London five days later, he unapologetically told me he found the other shoe in his closet. The following week, I gave him my two weeks notice. The following year, I started teaching. ■

Art by Emily Gan '23





# PROTECTING OUR MOTHER (EARTH)

## The importance of taking care of our planet and everything on it



Photo courtesy of Samantha Samimi '22

Samantha Samimi '22

Each year on April 22nd, we celebrate Earth Day to demonstrate our commitment to a greener and more sustainable future.

Earth Day was first celebrated in the United States on April 22, 1970, but today it is one of the most

widely celebrated secular holidays around the world.

In 1970, shortly after the massive Santa Barbara oil spill in 1969, Senator Gaylord Nelson had the

active that you take the time to consider your responsibility in protecting and caring for your environment, as well as in spreading awareness about enduring

**I feel most connected to nature when going on a long scenic run or hike, and being aware of my natural surroundings.**

idea for Earth Day, a day where teach-ins would take place in colleges across the country to increase awareness on pollution and climate crises among students.

There are a myriad of ways to participate in Earth Day, but no matter how you choose to do it, it is imper-

environmental issues.

Spending time outdoors reminds us of the beauty of nature and the importance in taking care of ourselves, our community, and our environment. Outdoor activities are advantageous in many ways, both to our minds and bodies.

I feel most connected to nature when going on a long scenic run or hike, and being aware of my natural

says.

Every year, Earth Day should serve as a reminder of the ways in which we



Photo Courtesy of Bozana Bozovic '22

A beautiful view of the Tara River in Montenegro

surroundings. Sometimes even after a short walk outside, I find myself feeling revitalized and gaining a sense of clarity and calmness that carries me through the day.

In fact, the Environmental Club plans on going on a nature walk to celebrate Earth Day this year. As president of Environmental Awareness Club at Highlands, Sydney Hintz spends a lot of time bringing awareness to environmental crises in the community.

She says that the best way Highlanders can participate in Earth Day is simply by being more mindful in what we consume. "Reducing is the key to solving climate crises, recycling can only do so much," she

can conduct our lives in a more sustainable fashion.

**"Reducing is the key to solving climate crises, recycling can only do so much."**

*Senior Sydney Hintz*

Among the many ways there are to reduce waste in your community, one of the simplest changes you can make is opting for reusable tote bags, water bottles, produce bags, etc. as opposed to plastics or disposable products.

Carpooling to school, or biking or walking if that is an option for you, is another small habit you can implement in your daily life which can reduce your

carbon footprint overtime. Another lifestyle change you might consider making is simply eating more plants.

Plant-based diets are undeniably one of the easiest ways to reduce your negative impact on the environment, but that doesn't mean everyone can and should entirely eliminate meat and dairy products from their diet.

With that being said, it is also important to be mindful of how your animal products are being sourced and processed.

However, if you are looking to get more in-



Photo Courtesy of Samantha Samimi '22

Peaceful scenery of hill tops captures the beautiful parts of our Earth.

# NATIONAL STRESS AWARENESS MONTH

## One student discusses her experiences while coping with stress, school, and other things

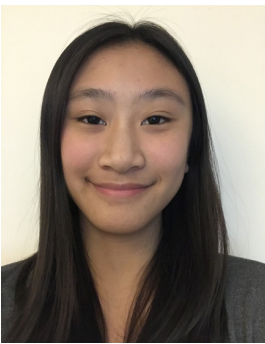


Photo courtesy of Emily Kam '25

Emily Kam '25

Highlands is a busy place. Every day, in school and after school, Highlanders are bustling around in the cafeterias, the halls, and out on the fields do-

As a student with many extracurricular activities, I'm one of the many who are rushing in and out of school to go from one activity to the next.

With all that rushing, what time do I and many others have to slow down and take a breath?

Well, let's all take a moment right now to slow down and talk about Stress Awareness Month. Established in 1992, Stress Awareness Month is recognized every April to bring attention to the causes of stress and healthy ways to cope with it.

As a freshman, I'm already feeling the stress of

ing up my academics. With the start of spring, it seems the academic expectations

breaking point. So, with all this stress, what can I do to cope with it?

deal in the moment, but it is important to step back to look at the bigger picture.



Art by Jana Dabbagh '24

for students have been ramped up with many tests and projects.

I myself have four tests, a state taekwondo competition I've been training for months for, and a few class project deadlines all in one week. I did well in my taekwondo competition, but I hardly had a chance to celebrate because I had so much work to do.

I love doing all my extracurriculars and I want to do them well, but I've realized that I put too much on my plate. I'm reaching a

Recently, I had a talk with a teacher who saw me in a particularly distressing moment. He pulled me aside and we had a long talk about stressing out about so many activities. He told me some very important things to keep in mind, and one of them was that life is short.

Overworking yourself, especially at a young age, will make you regret how you lived that adolescent period when you are older. This hit home for me. Everything can seem like a big

Will these tests affect me in a week? Maybe. In a month? Possibly. But in a few months to a year? Probably not.

Taking the time to step back and see things from this perspective was helpful. It calmed me down to be able to focus on my tasks. I am so grateful this teacher took the time to have this talk with me.

Dealing with stress alone can be difficult. If you are in a situation where you feel extremely stressed and

you need to talk to someone, please do. It helped me to talk to someone. Try talking to a friend, a family member, or a teacher. Highlands Wellness Center also has mental health professionals who are there to help you.

Even if you aren't super stressed, it's good to do small things that can reduce the amount of stress you have so it doesn't pile up later. Listening to music or exercising may help calm yourself down and release some stress.

For me, both of these methods work. I can clear my mind by listening to music and going to taekwondo to work out with friends. Doing little things like these may help you de-stress to stay mentally and physically healthy.

Just know that whatever you're stressed about will pass. Until then, make sure to take care of yourself, go get your favorite snack, and manage your stress so it doesn't manage you. ■

**If you are in a situation where you feel extremely stressed and you need to talk to someone, please do.**

ing school events, clubs, sports, and other activities.

juggling multiple activities and clubs along with keep-



# IT'S NATIONAL SIBLINGS DAY

## Recalling and reflecting on the memories from our childhood



Photo courtesy of Emma Pereira '24

### Emma Pereira '24

Every April 10th, National Siblings Day comes around, usually not to many people's knowledge.

Occasionally, you might see an Instagram story featuring family pictures and a "Happy National Siblings Day!" caption, but usually that is the extent of celebration.

I would be lying if I said I did much differently to celebrate this holiday, but I will say National Siblings Day does bring me to think about my relationship with my siblings.

I am the youngest of four children. My siblings, Sophia, Laura, and Miguel are all much older than me, and in college. Our age gaps range from 4-7 years,

which has both advantages and disadvantages.

When we were younger, my siblings spent as much time with me as they could. But, when they went to high school and became preoccupied with school, activities, and responsibilities, I stayed in elementary and middle school and we became more and more separated.

Ultimately, we were just at different stages in life, and not as connected.

As we got older, and I entered high school while my siblings went to college, my bond with them grew stronger and stronger. Fights over the TV remote ended, and I started to learn and care more about them.

I connected with my oldest sister through baking, exploring coffee shops and new places, and Girl Scouts.

I connected with my second sister through late night ice cream runs, screaming our favorite songs, and her guiding me through many Model UN conferences.

I connected with my brother through him teaching me how to beatbox, us



Photo Courtesy of Emma Pereira '24

Emma Pereira '24 poses with her siblings for a photo

cooking together, and playing card games.

My siblings are also always there for me to talk about anything going on in my life.

Through any troubles that may arise, I know I can reach out to them and they will give advice, bring my spirits up, or even just listen.

Also, having older siblings has been such a blessing through high school. Since my siblings all went

to Highlands, I can always ask them about teachers, classes, and clubs. Having



that guidance has been such a big help to me in navigating school.

Still, my bond with my

out struggles. Being the youngest isn't always as easy as it seems. Now that they are in college, I am the only one left in the house with my parents, which can be lonely at times.

Not to mention, having three older siblings often leads to a lot of comparison. People are always asking if I will follow in my siblings footsteps, whether that means going to the same colleges as them, pursuing similar careers, or even which sibling I will look the most alike.

It can be hard to feel like my own person when my decisions are always being looked at in comparison to their's.

Despite all these struggles, I wouldn't change or

have with my siblings for anything in the world. My siblings and I have an unbreakable bond that can never be recreated.

Going from a full house of six people to three people was definitely an adjustment, and connecting with my siblings can be difficult.

Between different time zones and busy schedules, there are often long periods of time that I go without speaking with them. I often wish I could walk into my siblings' room and talk with them face-to-face.

Through everything, my siblings are there. They are my built-in friends, and I know they will always be there for me. I love them more than words can describe.

So, this National Siblings Day, reflect on your relationships with your siblings. You might realize they are more special than a simple Instagram post. ■

**Through any troubles that may arise, I know I can reach out to them and they will give advice, bring my spirits up, or even just listen.**

siblings doesn't come with- give up the relationship I

# #SIBLINGSDAY

Students of Highlands show appreciation for their siblings by snapping a timeless photo!



Photo courtesy of Theresa Deana '23



Photo Courtesy of Meghan Rourke '23

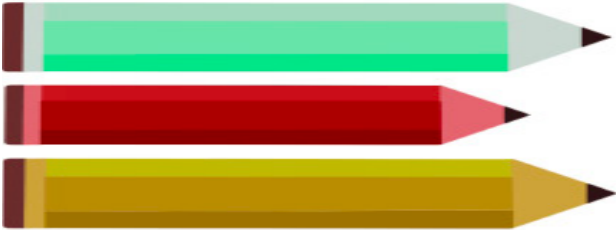
Meghan Rourke '23 (middle) with brothers Ryan Rourke '25 (right) and Connor (left), in front of The White House.

# IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR AGAIN...

## The effects of standardized testing on mental health



### Mia Wang '23



Art by Jena Dababagh '24

Although junior year is full of opportunities for exploring career options, interests and more, it is also the year of standardized testing.

With the disparities between students being able to take the test or not, and some colleges going test optional, the SATs and

ACTs hold a new meaning to students.

Now, many students are opposed to taking the test since the colleges they are aiming for are test optional schools.

I am personally taking the ACT, which has a math, reading, English and science section, as opposed to just the math, reading, and English section on the SAT.

I like the ACT much better since the questions are more straightforward, and the whole math section is calculator-based.

Although the pace and timing of the ACT is much

quicker than the SAT, with testing, taking it and getting

**Preparing for these tests greatly affects the mental health of students like me, since most people have to study and practice for a great amount of time before they start seeing the scores that they want.**

practice, it should get easier to complete and work through problems.

My top college is not test optional, leaving me with no choice but to take the ACT. However, despite the pain of standardized

a good score will place me at a higher advantage than most applicants.

Preparing for these tests greatly affects the mental health of students like me, since most people have to study and practice

for a great amount of time before they start seeing the scores that they want.

Especially when we don't get the score we expected, it may lower our self-esteem or hurt our mental health.

However, there are other ways to succeed in these tests if one does not get the score they wanted. The key is practice and learn test taking strategies.

Overall, my one message to everyone is to not stress out, and one test does not define who you are. ■



# FULL STEAM AHEAD FOR SNOWEE

## Robotics Clubs’ Snowee robot moves from regional to state finals.

Cat Corrado '23

The Northern Highlands Robotics Team has made it to the State Finals after an admirable display on March 30, 2022 at the state regional STEAM TANK Competition. Their idea for “Snowee”, the automated snow shovel, was very well received by the NJSBA and US Army, according to club advisor, Purvik Patel.

“Snowee” was built to be operated by almost anyone, be economically

received by the judges that they informed the Highlands Robotics Team in a mere twelve hours that they had made it to the state competition.

The Supervisor of the team, Purvik Patel, explains that “as an advisor I am really proud of our team. In my four years of participating in this competition, I’ve never had the judges reply back to us so quickly, it was definitely a pleasant surprise.”

Patel also shares some insight on the experience



Robotics Club members putting together Snowee.

efficient, convenient to use, and be good for the environment. This achievement took over five months to piece together as well as an immense amount of planning, on-the-spot critical thinking, creativity, and teamwork.

The robot was so well

at the regional competition as well as the team’s future plans. Patel comments, “the regional competition went extremely well. I think our robotics team members presented flawlessly. They were really well prepared to deliver their presentation and they



Robotics Club members, Snowee and a snow plow.

made sure to show all of their thought-processes behind how the robot would work and all of the decisions they had to make along the way.”

The presentation took place over zoom and was a five minute summary consisting of how their robot came to be and how they worked on it over the course of a five month period. With much of their procession into state competition riding on this performance, the team was careful to execute it to the best of their abilities.

However, these challenges were just the beginning for the robotics team, especially as state competition approaches.

Patel ponders on the improvements that need to

be made. “When you take on projects like this, they don’t exist yet, anywhere, at least not for the goal and market for which you’re building this robot, so what we have right now is very much a preliminary prototype made out of legos and

make a more durable robot, finalize the sizes and shapes of several parts, and work on improving the overall functionality of the robot and taking it from a basic concept to a working prototype.”

Patel claims that, “The



Snowee in the snow.

basic microprocessors.”

He goes on to expand on this, explaining, “The next step now would be to

team is really excited, and so am I. I’m really glad that we made a good impression with the judges

# CONCERNS OF STUDENT CONCERNS

## How the student government handles concerns as election season nears

Jessica Gao '23

The student government is in charge of lots of special events, such as the 90 minute lunches, morning announcements, and music on Fridays. However, most well known is their responsibility in responding to student concerns.

This work is delegated to all members of the student government, but corresponding secretary, junior Aditya Kumar, is the one at the forefront of relaying this information.

Typically, the student government convenes monthly to go over the many concerns forwarded to Kumar.

Then, they set up a second meeting with Principal Joseph Occhino and other faculty to discuss these concerns.

According to Occhino, it is important for the student government to handle concerns rather than going straight to the administration because, “they are the spokespeople for the student body.”

Recently, there has been an uptick of concerns being reported to Kumar, where he acknowledges that, “With virtual classes ending and people coming back to school, the past couple months have seen an increase in concerns, which is pretty normal.”

Kumar recognizes that with this increase, there has also been a rise in dissatisfaction among students about the way the school and the student government has been responding to these concerns.

He explains that, “I mean, we get repetitive concerns too. For example, we have a lot of problems with juniors parking in the senior parking lot, but there’s only so much we can do.

We bring the issue to the school, but if it isn’t resolved right away the blame is pointed at us and people keep asking about it.”

Kumar is quick to point out that he understands though. “As a junior, I get the frustration. I think our student govern-

ment is doing the best we can, and what people don’t realize is that we have limited power. We try our best to be advocates for the

doing alright. It’s good that we have a place to voice our opinions instead of going straight to administration.”

their problems. They send in their concerns, and then the solutions aren’t advertised, or if they are addressed, it feels like they

will be ones that truly listen to student concerns and advocate for them loudly, no matter if they are from a small minority or are popular opinions.

Kumar agrees with both Fuchs and Hoffer. He details this, saying, “I think a person who people know already and trust, as well as someone who is good at advocating for everyone is what we’re looking for in the elections. I, along with many other candidates, hope to bring that.”

Overall, it seems that there are mixed opinions about the student government and how they address the student body. While many concerns are valid, it seems as though some forget the limitations the faculty and government have over many issues. With elections coming up, Highlands students will soon be able to see through with their concerns by voting for who they believe will represent them best. ■

**“What people don’t realize is that we have limited power. We try our best to be advocates for the student body, but things like the understanding in the cafeteria and other problems are out of our control.”**

*Recording Secretary junior Aditya Kumar*

student body, but things like the understaffing in the cafeteria and other problems are out of our control.”

When asked about her personal views on this, junior Rebecca Hoffer said that she thinks the student government should communicate stronger. She points out that people tend to glance over the emails and forget about the responses, prolonging miscommunication.

However, she acquiesces that, “The student government seems to be

When asked about some specific responsibilities that the student government should hold, junior Devon Fuchs highlighted the need for more representation for minority students.

They pointed out the multiple requests from them and their parents for gender neutral bathrooms to be accessible to all students, as they have been locked from access in the past. Fuchs goes on to detail that, “I think an issue is that students aren’t aware of the solutions to

are being dismissed rather than actually fixed.”

They go on to expound on this, saying, “Due to this, kids get frustrated and start sending in requests directly to administration like I did to Dr. LaRocca. Sometimes we don’t feel represented.”

When asked about what they hope to see with candidates in the upcoming student government elections with these issues in mind, both Hoffer and Fuchs agree that representation is key. They think that the best candidates



# MOVING AWAY FROM THE QUAD DISTRICT

## Northern Highlands Quad District Agreement ends, taking away title.

Amy Tullett '23

As of June 30, 2022, the Northern Highlands Quad district agreement is ending. The Quad consists of Northern Highlands and the three school districts that automatically attend Northern Highlands: Allendale, Ho-Ho-Kus and Upper Saddle River. However, according to Principal Joseph Occhino, all this means is “we are

no longer considered a quad district by name...I don’t see it hurting us in any way.”

Until now, the school has always had a Quad District Coordinator, who made it necessary to title Northern Highlands and the three other school districts under the Quad District title. In the wake of losing the current coordinator, the districts “decided maybe it would

be best not to replace a quad district coordinator and just let the individual districts work with their own curriculum directors,” Occhino explained.

The Northern Highlands curriculum director, Robin Knutelsky, and the other districts’ curriculum directors are still responsible to meet to talk about the “vertical articulation” as Occhino described it, of the elementary and middle

schools and the high school, seeing how, “it’s very important to really have a good understanding of what we all do” Occhino said.

In keeping up this understanding, Occhino is “confident that that will continue and all the principals, assistant principals, administrators will also continue to meet as we once did, or actually we’ll maybe even meet more.”

Alongside keeping up meetings among the principals, assistant principals, and administrators of members of the former Quad District, some more unique meeting ideas have also been proposed where “assistant principals from the quad and people who are involved with wellness from the quad are meeting to discuss how are we dealing with anything ,such as wellness or

discipline, so that we can have a coherent message” said Assistant Principal LaRocca.

The only real effects that this will have on Highlands is that the school will no longer having a Quad District Coordinator or be titled a Quad District, but Occhino assures that “the districts will still be meeting regularly.” ■

# HEROES IN ACTION

## Highlands Heroes host outreach at Brookside

Kait Karoleski '23

Highlands Heroes is a club that has been running at Highlands for years to help ease the transition from middle to high school. One of the club members’ many responsibilities is to give middle schoolers the opportunity to hear advice from seniors.

Jennifer Ferentz, the club advisor, says that “Highlands Heroes meet with seventh and eighth graders from the middle schools [Brookside, Cavallini, and Ho-Ho-Kus]

have an ambassador program here to help freshmen, we thought that it was still important to have an outreach program for middle school students.”

Although this is a very exciting opportunity that many Highlands students would like to participate in, it is only offered to a handful of seniors every year.

In order to become part of this group, students must get into the ambassador program (run by The Boomerang Project) as a junior. Because students

from ‘Can you chew gum in school?’ To ‘Is it hard to balance academics with all of the activities?’” Whether these questions are about school, extracurriculars, or social life, these are all questions that can be best answered by current high school students.

Over the past few years, Highlands Heroes has run a little differently than usual because of COVID-19, but this didn’t stop the mission to help middle schoolers prepare for high school.

According to Ferentz,

“Having these conversations and helping kids find their place has been a truly rewarding experience. I love finding out their interests and giving class or club recommendations.”

Senior Clare O’Connor

to discuss topics like the transition from middle school to high school, the importance of communicating with teachers, counselors, and parents, and strategies to de-stress. We also discuss how to find a balance between the academic, extracurricular, and social demands of high school.”

This program is extremely helpful for students entering high school. Talking to Highlands students is a perfect way to learn more about the school and give incoming students a glimpse into what high school life is like.

Mr. Occhino says that this program has always been important to Highlands, so much so that when the previous program—Heroes and Cool Kids—ended, Highlands Heroes was founded to continue this type of outreach to middle schoolers.

Occhino also explains that, “Even though we

can only be ambassadors for one year, those who are accepted their junior year automatically get the opportunity to be a Highlands Hero.

Clare O’Connor, a senior, is part of Highlands Heroes this year. She says that it is “important to educate and inform middle schoolers on an array of topics like social media, study skills, making friends, and decision making.”

These are all information and skills that are vital to know going into high school. O’Connor goes on to say that “it is helpful for middle schoolers because they may not have an older friend or sibling to ask personal questions to. It’s also good for them to start having ideas about what clubs to become involved in or what classes to take.”

Ferentz adds onto this, saying, “The middle school students have the opportunity to ask seniors questions about anything,

“COVID-19 did prevent us from visiting the schools in person, but we ran virtual outreaches for two years.”

As of very recently, normal visits to middle schools within the district have resumed. Ferentz expands on this, explaining, “[On April 6th] We went to Brookside school in person, without masks, and it was phenomenal. The 8th graders were excited and eager to learn from the seniors, and the seniors had the best time answering the questions and reflecting on their own high school experiences.”

This shows not only how helpful the programs can be for middle schoolers, but also how enriching it is for seniors as well. O’Connor agrees with this, expounding that “having these conversations and helping kids find their place has been a truly rewarding experience. I love finding out their interests and giving them recommendations.” ■

# BRACELET BENEFIT

## Senior Sydney Hintz hosts Ukraine fundraiser

Jessica Gao '23

On April 4, 2022, Northern Highlands senior Sydney Hintz sent out a mass email about a fundraiser raising money for aid in Ukraine. On the google form she forwarded, students can purchase handmade bracelets from Hintz.

By selling them, she plans on donating all profits to the Ukraine Humanitarian Fund, which is an organization under the United Nations and partnered with the Red Cross that provides relief and resources for those caught in the crossfires of the Ukraine-Russia conflict.

This is not the first time that Highlands students have contributed to social activist issues like this. Principal Joseph Occhino recalls how “sisters Serena and Simran created a drive for elderly in the US as well.” Occhino goes on to agree that, “[drives like this] are things that we will allow” and encourages students to get involved with giving back to different communities.

However, Occhino also notes that many Highlands students already do, and commends those in clubs like Highlands Cares, taking initiative and volunteering.

Hintz is familiar with

doing projects like this. She is a member of the Central Jersey Consortium for Excellence and Equity (CJCEE) which is a social justice organization with a branch at Northern Highlands. Hintz has also presented about microaggression to the faculty at Highlands this year, and has, “always been active with social justice issues and giving back to other communities.”

Hintz attributes some of her interest in starting the Ukraine fundraiser to

things during quarantine and always having to be doing something with her hands while attending online school. Making bracelets and other arts and crafts has always been a passion of Hintz’s, so it was only natural for her to use it for a cause like this. She discloses her thought process, explaining, “Why not use something that brings me joy to help others? I decided to just throw it out there and see if it works.”

Hintz goes on to

“I knew that I could help, even if it was with something small like this.”

Senior Sydney Hintz

her participation in organizations like the CJCEE. However, she believes that this was also a bit of a spur of the moment idea. Hintz claims that, “Honestly, I was distraught over reading the media about Ukraine—as I’m sure many other people were—but I knew that I could help, even if it was with something small like this.”

Hintz explains that she has always been a hands-on person, fidgeting with

expand on this, expressing her excitement and saying, “It’s going really well now and I’m so happy to see this passion of mine also helps others. I think this is really special.”

As for what she would say to others who might want to take part in helping with these real world problems, Hintz agrees that the issues sometimes seem daunting. She explains that it’s hard to “just jump in and help, especially when it seems like we can’t do a lot”. However, she also notes that “it is so worth it”. Something so pressing like the Ukraine situation may seem too large for one teenager to make a difference, but Hintz believes that everyone must start somewhere. She leaves on this note: “For our generation, I think starting young is worth getting out of our comfort zones. Every little thing helps, especially as we grow older and learn to use these skills as our power in society grows.” ■



Photo courtesy of Sydney Hintz '22

College bracelets made by Sydney Hintz to support Ukraine.



# MR. LEIB RETIRING AFTER SEVENTEEN YEARS

Continue reading for an exclusive Q & A and hear from student testimonials

*Continued from cover*

**Q:** What made you want to become an English teacher in the first place?

*A: In some ways it was an accident. I hadn't planned to be a teacher when I was in college. When I decided to become a teacher a bit more than 20 years ago, my original plan was to teach social studies. But I had been an English major as an undergraduate, so that's where my credits were, which meant that's what the state would approve for my licensure. I am also certified as a social studies teacher and an elementary school teacher (can you imagine me teaching second graders?!?).*

**Q:** What has been one of your favorite memories in your time teaching at Northern Highlands?

*A: One of my favorite memories was the "church service" we held several years ago in Honors British Literature. I have a picture of my "preaching the gospel of Shakespeare" in front of my Elsinore wall hanging that a group of students created for their Hamlet project.*

**Q:** What will you miss most about teaching?

*A: What I'll miss most is what I love most—being in a classroom having a discussion with a group of young people making discoveries about literature and life.*

"I always struggled in English class and I've never found it particularly engaging but when walking into Mr. Leib's class, I was always excited to learn because of the way he teaches. His classes are always so entertaining even when the material isn't necessarily riveting."

*Junior Leah Rimland*

"I had Mr. Leib my freshman and junior year and what I loved about his class is if I ever had a question about something, he would always give me an answer even if it was a little off topic. We were in class to learn instead of just following the curriculum. We wanted to be there and it was just a good class."

*Junior Brigid Keating*

## TEACHER OF THE YEAR GOES TO...

Cathy Berberian has been picked as the Northern Highlands teacher of the year

*Continued from Cover*

who end up becoming amazing students and people is one of the most rewarding things."

As an educator, she believes that it is crucial to be genuine and empathetic to the students she works with.

Berberian states that she chose to enter this field of work because "[she] always wanted to do something worthwhile and help others." Additionally, she always knew that she wanted to work in a school environment.

She finalized by emphasizing how "[she] feels so honored to be awarded as the teacher of the year."

The process of nominating the teacher of the year is unbiased and equitable. Principal Joseph

Occhino emails a form out for students, faculty, and parents to fill out their nomination.

Once the submissions are received, Occhino nar-

a state rubric in order to tally up how many criteria each candidate hits."

The tallies are counted by reading the nomination forms and scoring the ru-

**"Mrs. Berberian had a nice blend of nominations and builds tremendous relationships with students and their families, so she is very deserving of this award."**

*Principal Joseph Occhino*

rows the candidates down to teachers who have a high number of nominations.

Occhino adds that "these candidates are then sent to a committee of six or seven people who use

bric based on what was written.

Some examples of this criteria include how involved the nominee is with the community and how they build relationships with students.

If one teacher receives 100 nominations, but the forms say that "they are a good teacher" without giving further explanation, the criteria will not be met as it fails to include how or why the candidate is a good teacher.

Clearly, this is not the case for Berberian, as she had both a large number of votes and detailed submissions from students detailing the positive impacts she makes within and outside of Highlands. Berberian's sheer warmth and kindness does not go unnoticed, and Highlands is lucky to have such a caring educator in the community.

Once again, congratulations to the well-deserved teacher of the year Mrs. Cathy Berberian. ■



Cathy Berberian, this year's teacher of the year.

Tara Charney '23



# CELEBRATING EARTH DAY

## We devote the month of April to caring for the Earth

**Margaret Bainbridge '23**

Every year, Earth Day is celebrated on April 22nd. This holiday is commonly forgotten, however, it is important to celebrate to honor the achievements of environmental movements and raise awareness for ecological sustainability

**Sam Shulman '23**

Earth Day is a day where many people come together to do what they can to help the environment.

No matter how big or small, it is important that everyone does what they can.

A way that Highlanders can take part in this holiday is to plant something. This can mean starting a garden or just

into the future.

Earth Day was first celebrated in 1970 and is now celebrated in over 193 countries all over the world.

For each of the 52 years this holiday has been celebrated, a different theme is announced.

The theme for this year's celebration is "Invest

planting a tree or two in the backyard.

Something else that can be done is organizing a clean-up of a public place.

This can be done with others or alone and it is a great way to support a local community while also participating in the Earth Day festivities.

Another way that students can participate is to write an email or a letter to a local or state politician to campaign for the environ-

in Our Planet."

As Highlanders, we can celebrate Earth Day by doing acts of good for the environment.

One way we can do this is by recycling plastic bottles and paper to reduce waste.

We also can carpool or even walk to school to help

ment.

Students can campaign for more funding or more laws to protect the environment.

Finally, students can raise money towards protecting the environment.

They can donate money towards protecting wildlife, pollution research or other causes to improve and protect the Earth.

The environment is people should think about everyday, not just on Earth Day.

reduce carbon emissions.

It is important for us, as a Northern Highlands community, to be aware of the effects of our actions on

the environment inside and outside of school.

Although Earth Day is only celebrated one day a year, as members of our

planet we can do acts of good for our environment year-round. ■



Art by Caleigh Amano '23

There are many ways that students at Northern Highlands can help the environment throughout the year.

Some ways that students can do this are by reusing single use items such as plastic bags and

by recycling plastics and other materials detrimental to the environment.

Also, choosing reusable items such as reusable batteries or water bottles instead of single use ones help to minimize pollution.

Even though it might seem difficult to make these changes, it is important to remember that they have the ability to help better the environment. ■

# NATIONAL POETRY MONTH

## Highlanders' poetry celebrating Earth Day and National Poetry Month

**Esha Agarwal '23**

From the ground we walk on  
To the stars we see in outer space  
Planet earth has been around for so long  
Giving a home to the human race  
Beautiful plants and animals too  
Earth is a planet filled with endless sights  
The animals beyonds the zoos  
And the moon at night  
We are grateful for everything it provides  
Because we take great pride in planet earth.

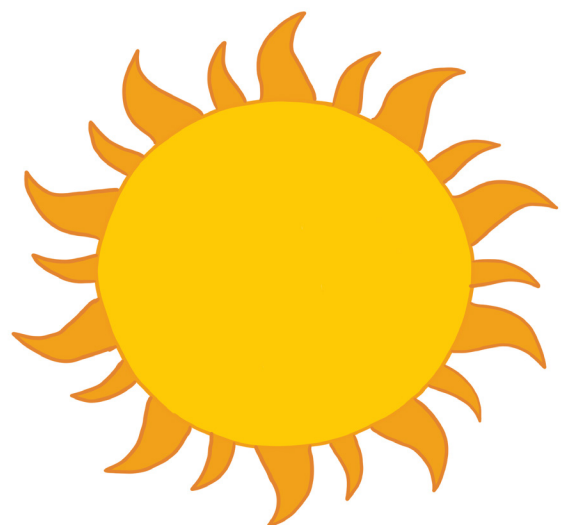
**Bella O'Callaghan '23**

The vast fields of grass  
The monster waves of the sea,  
The biggest grizzly bear  
The littlest honeybee,  
The crisp clean air  
The baby blue sky  
We love our Earth and these  
are some reasons why  
We need to help preserve the  
Earth to retain its beauty  
We need everyone to join in,  
starting with you and me  
So help save the planet  
And celebrate Earth Day the  
right way.

**Emily Bulko '23**

Today we celebrate Earth  
And everything it has given us.  
But we also have to remember  
This old Earth needs our help  
To stay clean  
And green.  
So make sure that today  
And everyday,  
You pick up your trash,  
And recycle your bottle  
So all the plants and animals  
Will be here tomorrow.





# Spring Break

Layout by Ciara Schulmann '23

Art by Izzy Levine '23



Many students went away over spring break. Some juniors and seniors took advantage of this time to visit colleges. Junior Allie Paganessi traveled to North Carolina to visit some colleges. She not only loved the schools there, but loved the towns outside of the schools. Paganessi also appreciated the nice weather which really enhanced her views on many of the schools. She was grateful to be able to use this time to visit instead of having to miss school. If Paganessi weren't visiting colleges she would have loved to visit Aruba so she could relax in the nice weather.

**Remi Strauss '23**



For some seniors, spring break is the perfect time to take a long-awaited vacation after the stressful college applications and admissions process finally ends. Senior Clare O'Connor traveled to Puerto Rico during spring break for her mom for a week of adventuring and relaxation. O'Connor said she was "excited to go on vacation during spring break because it was the first big trip I've taken since the start of the pandemic." She adds that "I enjoyed spending quality time with my mom that I will remember for a long time." These memorable vacations are what makes spring break so special.

**Kait Karoleski '23**

The long awaited Spring break is now in the past, but it's so exciting to see how students spent the week off. Elisabeth Mueller, a freshman at Northern Highlands, is going to Saint Marten. Elisabeth shared that her family "celebrated Easter the day they came back from their vacation." It is so nice to get away, go to the beach, and then come home to spend time with family. Spring break is a perfect time to do just that. Elisabeth also explains, "If I could travel anywhere in the world, I would want to go to Los Angeles. It seems like such a pretty place and has a lot of nice beaches." It is important for Highlanders to dream big. Who knows? Maybe someday they will come true.

**Ashlyn Kersting '25**

Spring break is right around the corner and many Highlands students have fun plans. I interviewed Kate Pedicano, a student and athlete here about her plans for spring break. Kate is a junior at Highlands. She is on the girls lacrosse team, so with spring sports in full swing, Kate shared that she will be staying home for break. Practice, Practice, and more practice are in store for the week with upcoming games. Aside from sports, Kate plans on spending the rest of her days hanging with her friends, teammates, a shopping day with her grandma, and eventually at the end of the week, celebrating Easter with her family.

**Ava Marino '23**



# SPOTTED LANTERNFLIES ON THE LOOSE

## Junior Leah Rimland works towards her Girl Scout Gold Award

**Kait Karoleski '23**

Leah Rimland, a junior here at Highlands, recently began working on her Girl Scout Gold Award project. A Gold Award is the third and final award that a Girl Scout can earn by finding an issue that she is passionate about and creates an individual service project to address and spread awareness about that issue.

After brainstorming many project topics and working through numerous obstacles, Rimland finally found an issue to center her project around: the Spotted Lanternfly. The lanternfly is an invasive species that

ruins plant life by feeding on many different trees and producing a sticky substance called honeydew, which attracts bees and wasps, grows mold and fungi, and can even kill the plant.

Additionally, the Spotted Lanternfly also mass-populates, making an infestation very hard to control once it begins. This specifically affects Bergen County because there have already been infestations in this area as well as thousands of eggs laid that will hatch in the spring/summer, meaning that Spotted Lanternflies will soon begin to ruin the quality of outdoor life.

The main goal of

Rimland's project is to troops and creating a "raise awareness about the Spotted Lanternfly in social media." She is

**“My hope is...when they see a spotted lanternfly, it will trigger a memory and they will know what it is and what to do.”**

*Junior Leah Rimland*

[her] community.” She has done this in multiple ways; for example, “meeting with adult clubs in Upper Saddle River and younger Girl Scout

currently working on “creating an informational video, meeting with younger students in the USR school district, and reaching out to state and

local government representatives.”

One of the most important aspects of a Gold Award project is making sure that it is sustainable. According to Rimland, “the main aspect of [her] project is that education is incredibly important and lasts forever, so when [she meets] with all these groups, [her] hope is that even if they forget a majority of what [she] says, when they see a Spotted Lanternfly, it will trigger a memory and they will know what it is and what to do.”

In addition to this, her work will be accessible through videos and the website that she has cre-

ated, and she will continue to meet with younger children after her final proposal is submitted.

If you are interested in learning more or have any questions about the Spotted Lanternfly, you can visit Rimland's website at:<https://sites.google.com/st.northernhighlands.org/thespottedlanternfly/home>.



Rimland posing with some of the girls she worked with.



Rimland advertising her cause through flyers.



Rimland talking to the adult clubs about her project to spread awareness.



Rimland speaking with younger girl scout troops about her project.



Rimland teaching girls how to combat the lanternflies



Rimland holding workshops to spread awareness meeting with both children and adults (pictured left)



# THE END TO THE A CAPPELLA SEASON

## Highlands Voices places semifinals and Highlands hosts an a cappella festival

Isha Korgaonkar '24

The Northern Highlands a cappella season this year has been exciting and eventful. Especially after last year's mainly virtual a cappella season, Highlands' a cappella students have enjoyed singing and competing in-person throughout the last several months.

Drishti Chauhan, a sophomore and member of A Cappella Group Highlands Belles, says, "the season has been really fun so far. I've made so many new friends and learned new things about music through a cappella."

Another Belles member Emma Pereira agrees. She adds, "it has definitely been challenging at times with learning lots of music in a short amount of time, but overall we've had a great season!"

Dylan Yu, a sophomore and member of Highlands Harmonics, says, "I love the challenge of singing without any backup instruments, and I love singing with everyone in my group."

All three Highlands

school. The group then went on to deliver another incredible performance at semifinals, which gave them their third place win.

Senior Fifi Alao, a member of Highlands Voices, expresses how exciting it was to compete in and place at semifinals. She says that the group "felt really good about [their] performance" and felt "pretty confident and happy to be there."

Nicolette Carcara, a sophomore and another member of Highlands Voices says, "placing at semifinals was the highlight of our year. We really bonded as a whole team and put a lot of hard work and effort into our performance and we were very pleased with the outcome. It was the best feeling walking off the stage so confident in our performance."

A unique part of Highlands Voices' set was that all three songs were titled "I'll Be There," although each one was by a different artist.

Alao explains that "it is a Voices tradition that

year's seniors had aimed for actually started to make sense. More than we had realized before, quarantine had a detrimental

are struggling. This theme emphasizes unity, empathy, and kindness in times of hardship.

As Carcara said,

This day was filled with exciting workshops with a cappella professionals, useful masterclasses during which each group

for the a cappella groups as well. Alao says, "we learned so much in the amazing masterclasses given by Black To Gold, the guest group, and we were able to see the skills they taught us upfront during the concert which was fire."

Pereira adds, "it was a great master class. Getting an outside perspective is definitely helpful, especially when you are singing the same music frequently."

Yu also believes "the masterclass was really helpful. The instructor was so much fun to work with and he was so helpful. He worked with us on one of our pieces, 'Grenade' by Bruno Mars, and he helped us use dynamics to really convey the emotion of the song."

A cappella groups also had the opportunity to listen to professional groups as inspiration for themselves. Carcara states, "Black to Gold was a high level, professional group who put on a great performance from whom we learned a lot of things."

Overall, the Highlands A Cappella Festival was a huge success. It was a great experience for



Photo Courtesy of Tiaa Charney '23

Highlands Voices performing "I'll Be There". Highlands Voices wanted to "bring everyone together, encourage inclusivity, and spread kindness and love to those who need it most."

After winning third place at semifinals, Highlands Voices was invited to submit a recording of their set, called a wildcard, for a chance to compete at finals. Other a cappella groups who won second or third place in their semifinals were also given the opportunity to submit a wildcard.

The group chosen to advance to finals was "Walk the Line" from Rockwall High School in Rockwall, Texas. Nonetheless, Highlands Voices, as well as Highlands Belles and Highlands Harmonics, all did an amazing job at the Varsity Vocals International Championship of High School A Cappella (ICHSA) this year.

Following ICHSA, the A Cappella Festival took place, lasting two days.

The first day of the festival was on Friday, April 1. All three Highlands groups and groups from other schools performed during Friday night's headliner concert. This concert was intended to be relaxed, as the singers got the chance to perform just for fun. It was also a great chance to meet students from the other groups.

Alao "connected especially with Scarlet Sound from Neptune High School and the Ram Jams from Ramsey High school."

The second day of the festival was on April 2.

could get feedback and another chance to perform in the evening.

Pereira's favorite workshop was the vocal percussion workshop, mentioning because she got to witness "a professional show off his skills and get a glimpse into how vast the vocal percussion world really is."

She adds that the workshop focused on how to work with vocal per-

could get feedback and another chance to perform in the evening.

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She adds that the workshop focused on how to work with vocal per-



Photo Courtesy of Tiaa Charney '23

Highlands Harmonics performing during the intermission.

cussionists in a cappella groups to "really use them to your advantage... and it was definitely helpful not just for vocal percussionists, but for directors and singers as well."

Both Alao and Carcara enjoyed the audition prep workshop. Carcara learned "that you shouldn't let small mistakes ruin your whole performance. You need to learn from them and persevere."

Both Chauhan and Yu enjoyed the riff-off workshop because it was "interactive, fun, and got everyone to participate."

The masterclasses were immensely helpful

both a cappella students and the audience. It was a chance to learn, sing, and listen.

Additionally, the Highlands Belles recently performed at the National Honors Society Induction Ceremony at Northern Highlands on April 20, 2022, keeping up with the Belles' annual tradition.

The Highlands a cappella groups performed countless times, amazing their audience every time. They will be performing again at the Spring Choir Concert on May 11, 2022 as well, which will be exciting for the audience to see. ■

**"We wanted to create a space that would be able to comfort people with whatever they were going through."**

*Senior Fifi Alao*

a cappella groups; Highlands Harmonics, Highlands Belles, and Highlands Voices; competed in The Varsity Vocals International Championship of High School A Cap-

the seniors choose the songs for the next year." Last year's seniors were aiming to spread awareness for suicide prevention through this theme, and especially with the



Photo Courtesy of Tiaa Charney '23

Highlands Belles competing in the Varsity Vocals International Championship of High School A Cappella. pandemic, believed the reminder that somebody is always there for support was extremely reassuring. "The idea that last

horrific world events like the pandemic and the recent Russian invasion of Ukraine, it is important to be there for those who



# WHAT IF TIME TRAVEL WAS POSSIBLE?

## Students share their thoughts on Netflix’s new movie: *The Adam Project*

Michaela Powell '22

In recent years, Netflix has poured their energy into releasing a series of romantic comedies, however, they have finally expanded their horizons to creating more science-fiction and dystopian movies. Following the success of star-stacked *Don't Look Up* in 2021, Netflix released *The Adam Project* on March 11, 2022.

Starring Ryan Reynolds, the movie sucks viewers into a world where time travel not only exists, but is the highest valued technology in society in 2050. It soon becomes clear this is not necessarily a positive thing, as the story starts off with Adam Reed, Reynold’s character, in a high-speed spaceship chase.

In his haste to escape, Adam punches in the wrong coordinates and ends up in 2022 instead of 2018. Here, he encounters his younger self, played by Walker Scobell, who is still grieving the death of his father, played by Mark Ruffalo, in addition to

navigating the difficulties of middle school.

Due to his injuries and his urgency to save an unnamed “who” from his pursuers, Adam must reluctantly accept the help of his younger self. Despite

way to grab the audience’s attention.

Overall, the movie is the perfect combination of the action and feel good genres. Senior Ally Gido summed it up in three simple words: “exciting,

“It was super cute and kept me entertained the entire time.”

Senior Ally Gido

the ominous presence of future consequences, both Adams engage in quippy, self-deprecating dialogue that both entertains the audience as well as reveals character motivations and developments.

This sets *The Adam Project* apart from previous timetravel movies, since the plot centers around Adam’s emotional turmoil. The trauma that he endures in the present and must reflect on in the future moves the plot forward, while the dangers he faces only serves as a

sweet, endearing.” However, Gido admits that “it was super cute and kept [her] entertained the entire time, but, at some points, the plot was a little hard to follow.”

Although the rushed plot contributed to the sometimes confusing details, these flaws can easily be overlooked, as it is the perfect movie to curl up and watch on a rainy day. ■



Official movie poster for *The Adam Project*.

Photo Courtesy of IMDb

# MAKING HISTORY AT THE GRAMMYS

## Here are the iconic moments of the 64th Annual Grammy Awards

Izzy Malley '23

On April 3, 2022, the 64th Annual Grammy Awards aired on national television for the American public to tune into. Since 1959, the Grammys have presented musical artists of all genres -- rap, pop, R&B, rock, etc. -- with the awards they deserve. Artists are nominated for certain categories, such as best album, and throughout the night a winner from each category is announced and recognized for their outstanding achievements in

the music industry. This year, the Grammys were broadcasted live from the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas and hosted by popular TV show Host Trevor Noah. Although there weren’t punches thrown from Will Smith, the show had many moments and performances that kept viewers captivated.

First and foremost, the performance tribute to Ukraine: John Legend took the stage singing and playing the piano to his song “Free.” As the

performance continued, Ukrainian singer Mika Newton, Ukrainian musician Siuzanna Igidan, and Ukrainian poet Lyuba Yakimchuk joined Legend on stage in this affecting moment.

Later on, Justin Bieber performed his song “Peaches” with Daniel Caesar and Giveon. Bieber started the song out slow, contradictory to the song’s upbeat tune. But after wowing the audience with his piano skills, Bieber resumed the song’s typical beat.

Olivia Rodrigo, the up-and-coming pop artist, performed her hit song “Driver’s License.” Not only was Olivia’s performance astonishing, but the outcome of her night was amazing as well.

At just 18 years old, she brought home three Grammy awards. Junior Leah Kovar says, “she totally deserved it,” and she’s “surprised [Rodrigo] didn’t win Album of the Year. Everyone listened to and loved *Sour*.”

A personal favorite moment of the night was when Bruno Mars and Anderson Paak accepted the award for Record of the Year for their chart-topping song “Leave the

Door Open.” When their duo, Silk Sonic, was an-



Olivia Rodrigo with her awards.

nounced as winner, the two smoothly accepted the award.

They went into hug each other, swiftly pulled away, and started dancing in a way to say “yeah, we won.” Walking onto the stage, they kept their speech short with Anderson Paak saying “We are really trying to be humble right now, but in the industry, we call that a clean sweep.”

Bruno Mars was quick to light up a cigarette, mimicking that of a ’70s music star, and the two walked off the stage with their heads held high. Junior Sydney Vandersnow

says “for almost every category that I saw Silk Sonic was nominated, I thought for sure they were going to win. I’m surprised they didn’t win more. Everyone loves both Bruno Mars and Anderson Paak and together they make amazing music.”

Of course Olivia Rodrigo and Silk Sonic weren’t the only ones who went home with awards that night. Best Album of the Year went to John Batiste for “We Are.” Not only did John Batiste win Best Album, he won four other Grammys including Best Music Video.

Despite his absence, Kanye West won best rap song for “Jail,” and SZA and Doja Cat went on stage to accept their award for Best Pop Duo for their song “Kiss Me More.”

Not every viewer was happy at the end of the night, however. We all hoped for our favorite artist to win an award of some sort and were let down when they lost.

This moment for junior Nikki Dreznin was when Taylor Swift didn’t receive any awards. “Taylor Swift’s album *Evermore* took over TikTok. I’m surprised she didn’t

win and I wished I could have seen that. I think she definitely deserved a win.”


In the end, no matter who wins or who loses, watching the Grammys is always entertaining. Though this year’s show had so many amazing moments and talented musicians, next year’s Grammys will wow us once again with more to come. ■



Bruno Mars and Anderson Paak accepting their award.



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# LIONS, TIGERS, AND GIANT RED PANDAS

## The intriguing new animated film from Disney: *Turning Red*

Karen Bae '23

Recently, Disney has been releasing an array of animated films like *Luca*, *Encanto*, *Soul*, *Raya and the Last Dragon*, and now *Turning Red*. *Turning Red* is a two-hour film that was released on February 21, 2022.

The film was beautifully animated, humorous, heartwarming, and culturally enlightening. It included diverse characters of different races and body types, beautiful colors of Toronto scenery, and very catchy music.

*Turning Red* is about a thirteen year old Chinese American girl named Meilin "Mei" Lee. One day, Mei wakes up to discover that she has turned into a giant red panda.

As she hits adolescence she becomes easily overcome with emotion, which triggers the peculiar trait, which includes menstruation, puberty, and entering womanhood.

This ability is passed down to all women in her family from an ancestral spirit: Sun Yee. In the legend, Sun Yee asked the gods for the power to become a red panda to protect her family.

Although in the beginning of the film, it seems like a childish plot and backstory with an ex-

cessive amount of fantasy, you realize as you continue to watch that the film covers a lot of complicated issues like family, adolescence, generational trauma, and even the culture war.

*Turning Red* was praised for its unique elements such as the early 2000s setting in Toronto, its celebration of teenage womanhood, and a beacon of cultural appreciation and understanding.

The film isn't afraid to show the aspects of growing up like being smelly, having body hair, feeling gross, becoming moody, and even using feminine hygiene products, which are all topics in children's films that are traditionally avoided. However, Disney is taking a step forward in having important conversations with children that need to happen.

Many Asian Americans feel a sudden pang of nostalgia and maybe even heartache with the film's cultural details. Out of all of Mei's friends and classmates, she struggles with an overbearing Asian mother: a character with dialogue and actions that Asian viewers may recognize in their own homes.

The mother, Ming Lee, is the pinnacle of an overprotective Asian

mother that many Americans refer to as a "tiger mom" stereotype. Ming unknowingly puts pressure on her daughter to be perfect.

Mei forces herself to get good grades, constantly takes care of her family's temple, initially hides her obsession with a hip-hop boy group and

her mother's standards. Ming's success is defined through a perfect daughter.

As a fellow Asian American, I've heard hundreds of stories of immigrant parents who put pressure on their children.

I have friends who aren't allowed to go out often and have to constant-

ents and get into the most prestigious colleges. If their expectations are not met, some kids are told they're not good enough.

There is a particular academic and professional pressure on children that specifically comes from Asian parents. If you don't actually grow up in this culture it's difficult to truly understand, but this film perfectly captures this dynamic.

From these stories, strict Asian parents are often represented as an obstacle from the beginning that kids want to break free from, but Mei, like a lot of us, truly loves her parents. To immigrate to a new country takes a lot of hard work, which results in high expectations for first-generation Americans who want to honor the sacrifices their parents made to give them opportunities in new countries.

As Mei grows up she realizes how repressive her mother is, who is pulling her away from her friends and shunning all her interests. Filial piety and the desire to make parents proud can motivate these children to achieve but put too much pressure on themselves as well. Filial piety is a Chinese-cultural specific value in Confucianism that

emphasizes virtue, duty of respect, obedience, and care for one's parents and elderly family members.

Immigrant parents want what's best for their children. In the end, they love their children more than anything else in this world, and this family love is beautifully revealed in this movie.

*Turning Red* is a must see for everyone at Highlands. Sophomore Emma Pereira said "I think, even as a high schooler, the things that the main character goes through are relatable and remind me of things I experienced in middle school."

I hope Asian students at Highlands feel as proud as I am as our voices emerge in the industry. It's an indescribable feeling watching movies and shows where we can see ourselves and our families on screen.

With studios like Disney and Pixar releasing films amplifying Asian stories, there's hope that the AAPI (Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders) will be silenced no longer and develop a new level of confidence in their voices. ■



Photo Courtesy of Disney Studios

# WAS IT THE OSCARS OR THE MMAs?

## A night of broken records for underrepresented groups with a side of physical violence

Aarna Arora '23

The Oscars, also known as the Academy Awards, is an award show for artistic and technical merit in the film industry worldwide. The Oscar Awards are given by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS).

The nominees are assessed by the Academy's voting membership who then declare the winner. The trophy given by the Academy is officially known as the "Academy Award of Merit," however, it is known today as the Oscar.

This year's Oscars took place on March 27 at the Dolby Theatre Holly-

wood in Los Angeles, California. This year's ceremony had a 52% increase of TV viewers since last year's - probably because of how iconic it was.

Troy Kotsur made Hollywood History by being the first deaf man to win an Academy Award for his role in the movie *CODA*; this win was huge for the deaf community.

Samuel L. Jackson, one of Hollywood's most favored actors, won his first ever Oscar. Jackson was presented with an Honorary Academy Award by his close friend Denzel Washington, making it all the more special.

Ariana DeBose was the first openly queer woman of color to take home an Oscar. What makes this award even more groundbreaking is that Rita Moreno won the same oscar for the same role as Ariana 60 years ago, making it the first time an Academy Award has been given out for the same role.

As special as these

moments were, the event that popularized the Oscars the most occurred between Chris Rock and Will Smith.

Rock and Will didn't always have a bad relationship. In fact, Will and his wife, Jada Smith, have spent time with Rock as friends in the past.

This all changed back in 2016, ironically at the

ceremony, Rock came up to the stage to present the award for Best Documentary Films, and during his monologue he made a joke about Jada Smith and *G.I. Jane 2*.

For those that don't know, *G.I. Jane* is a movie featuring a bald Demi Moore as the lead actress, and Smith shaved her head last year, hence the

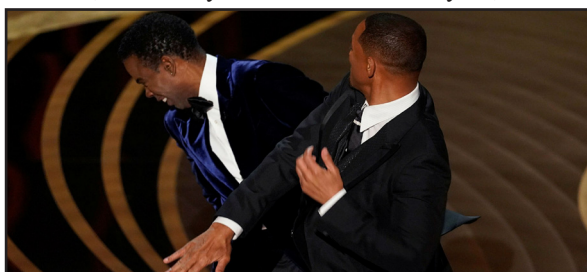


Photo Courtesy of Financial Times

Oscars, when Rock made his Oscar monologue commenting on how the Smiths were boycotting the award ceremony in a negative way.

While it is not clear if this monologue was the start of the so-called antipathy between the two parties, it was the first time tensions between the two were made public.

At this year's Oscar

correlation.

At first, nothing seemed wrong except for a roll of the eyes from Jada; Will was even laughing at the joke.

But then, his reaction to the joke made a complete 180. He abruptly stopped laughing, walked up to the stage, and slapped Rock across the face.

Most of the crowd ini-

tially took the slap as part of Rock's skit, but when Smith started yelling at Rock from his seat, shock ran through the crowd as they realized what just happened.

Jada Smith struggles with Alopecia, which is why she shaved her head. Alopecia Areata is an autoimmune disorder that causes one's hair to fall out. The hair loss experience varies; for some, only a little falls out and for others, many clumps of hair fall out.

These different experiences with alopecia may also come from the fact that there are 4 different types of Alopecia Areata that each have different symptoms. Alopecia is a struggle for many which is why many believe that Rock's joke was distasteful and that Will Smith's anger was justified.

However, others believe Smith's actions can't be justified because physical assault, no matter what the case is, is never the answer.

Junior Janice Kim believes that "Chris Rock shouldn't have made a joke about a disease that negatively affects Jada, but Will shouldn't have slapped Chris because that wasn't the time or the place, nor was it the right call."

Smith has every right to defend his wife but when violence comes into play, especially on such a big platform like the Oscars, it turns into assault.

Smith's slap has led to conflicting opinions from the public on deciding his punishment, but the final decision has been revealed: Will Smith is banned from the Oscars for 10 years.

This decision may be controversial to some, but the Academy decided that this was the right thing to do and Smith respected the organization's decision.

This whole fiasco was definitely one for the books and hopefully will not be repeated on the Oscars stage again. ■





# HOME-RUNNING TO FLORIDA

## Highlands baseball takes a trip to Florida for scrimmages and team bonding

Roman Dario '23

This past March, the Highlands varsity Bbseball team made the trip down to Orlando, Florida.

Led by senior captain Joey Spaccavento, a total of 20 players and 3 coaches spent 5 days in a process known as “spring training,” where players scrimmage teams in preparation for the regular season.

Expectations were through the roof for the return of the trip, which has been canceled for the last two years due to COVID.

Senior catcher Sheldon Wright was eager to share his opinion on his excitement towards the trip.

“I’ve been looking forward to it since I was a freshman when I first heard of it. Being invited as a sophomore, I was very excited. However, Covid canceled our trip that year.”

“Being able to experience this trip my senior year was an excellent experience for me, and it’s something I’ll never forget.”



NH baseball scrimmages against Masassapequa in Florida.

Aside from playing baseball, the team also enjoyed the many activities at Disney World.

Junior shortstop Chase Canariato claims, “when [they] weren’t playing baseball, [they] were on rides. In the short amount of days [he] were there, [Canariato] must’ve been on Splash Mountain at least a dozen times.”

Junior pitcher Justin Sammarco describes, “we hung out around the hotel. We would go to the pool, hot tub and play beach volleyball together.”

Sammarco adds, “this was a great bonding experience for the team. [He] became so much closer with everyone and made a lot of new friends.”

Head Coach Paul Albarella gave his thoughts when asked about the success of the trips over the years, “I feel like it’s added to how we start the season, being able to play 6 games while other teams aren’t, under the palm trees playing baseball in beautiful weather. It always gives us an edge for the start of the

season.”  
Sophomore pitcher Marc Putrino believed

nearby theme parks.  
Whether it was playing baseball, hanging out at

team.”  
Similarly, Wright claims he’s “going to miss

together.”  
Canariato also stated, “I really became closer



NH baseball team bonds at Disney World.

that “the experience was unforgettable from playing baseball on a minor league field to having fun on our off time at Disney parks.”

He emphasizes, “after the trip, it’s like we have been playing together our whole lives. The trip was a great bonding experience for our team.”

Hopes are high for the Highlanders, boasting a crew of two Division-1 and two Division-3 baseball commits; scouts will be watching very closely this season.

In the top-tier baseball area of Bergen County, Northern Highlands is hungry for success since its last state championship title in 2016.

In addition to playing 6 games, the team also made it to 3 of the 4

the pool, or enjoying rides there was not a single second without action during the trip.

When asked about his excitement for next year’s trip, Sammarco said,

everything about the trip. One thing in particular is playing a doubleheader, racing back to the hotel, and going out to the park with [his] teammates and coaches. Even though [he’s] graduating this

with some of the other kids on the team. Some kids I’ve never met in my life, and now we talk all the time in school. Every person in our lineup is friends with each other because of this trip.”

The obvious common trend between everyone on the team is that once they returned from the trip, everyone felt more connected and comfortable with others.

Wright believes, “this trip was a great way to be together and hang out as a team which [he thinks] will help towards [their] goals this season.”

Northern Highlands is excited to follow the baseball program this season. ■

**“I really became closer with some of the other kids on the team. Some kids I’ve never met in my life, and now we talk all the time in school. Every person in our lineup is friends with each other because of this trip.”**

*Junior Chase Canariato*

“I’m excited to meet the younger kids on the team and be a leader for the

year, [he] will always feel like a part of the team. [They] had a fantastic time

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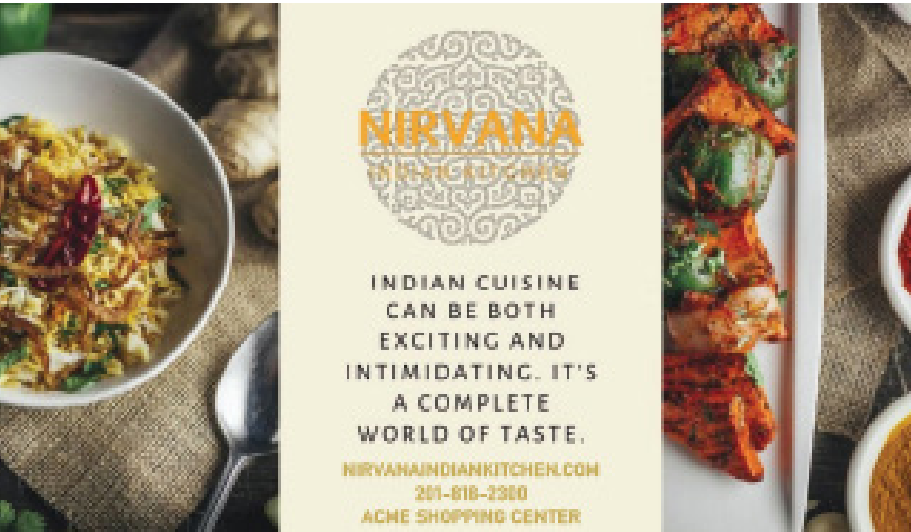
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# GRACE LEE SWIMS TO SUCCESS

Sophomore Grace Lee breaks record and is named Athlete of the Week.

Eleanor Ha '23

Grace Lee is a sophomore at Highlands and was named Athlete of the Week in December after she broke the Highlands school record in the 100 freestyle race. She did this by completing the race in 53.8 seconds.

The 2022 winter season was the first normal high school swimming experience Lee was able to have due to the pandemic. She explains how she was

ly I didn't even know what the record was and I wasn't trying to break that record. I was simply just trying to swim my best and win the race that was at hand. I didn't go into the race thinking 'oh, I need to beat this record'. It's just a bonus that I was able to break it since I had achieved my goal of winning my races against Demarest."

She remembers that she had another goal in mind, but clears that she definitely wasn't disap-

tively swimming for about eight years and she claims it has always been her favorite sport since childhood. Other sports had tried to take her attention, but her heart had always been saved for swimming.

"It has by far always been my favorite sport. I used to play basketball and run in track, but swim has always been my top priority."

As any experienced athlete, Lee has a routine when preparing for big

positive mindset no matter what happens. "I try to be as positive as I can. No matter what happens, I know that I did my best

energy isn't the only thing Lee appreciates. She attributes the team's success to his meticulous planning before meets.

be a part of such an amazing team."

As a sophomore, Lee has completed a feat that many athletes do not get to



Grace Lee swims for Northern Highlands against Demarest.

Photo Courtesy of Grace Lee '24

**"I try to be as positive as I can. No matter what happens, I know that I did my best and at the end of the day, that is all that matters."**

## Sophomore Grace Lee

thrilled to finally get the full high school swimming experience.

During the race, Lee not only set the school 100 freestyle record but she also won all four of her races against Demarest.

She had no idea that she topped Madeline Wolf's historic record for the 100 yard freestyle until someone told her long after the race.

Lee explains, "honest-

pointed with the outcome. "I had my eyes on a different record, but it just happened to be the 100 free that I broke."

Breaking a school record is a huge deal and Lee claims "I was excited when I found out. My team was also really happy for me and also my coach. This was my first record on the team so I was very happy with the results."

Lee has been competi-

experience for their entire careers.

The future is looking bright for Grace Lee as a record-breaking swimmer for Northern Highlands. ■

and at the end of the day, that is all that matters."

As a freshman, Lee was not able to have the typical high school swim team experience at Highlands. Due to the state having certain restrictions, such as having virtual meets which were extremely quiet compared to the environment of pre-covid swim meets, swimmers lacked the support from a big crowd of supporters.

Lee describes the more traditional 2022 season as "really fun and loud. A lot of people were at the meets and it seemed a lot more serious. But I loved the support I was able to have with a live audience being allowed at the meets again this year. The energy of the crowd definitely helped motivate me and it felt more like a team sport again."

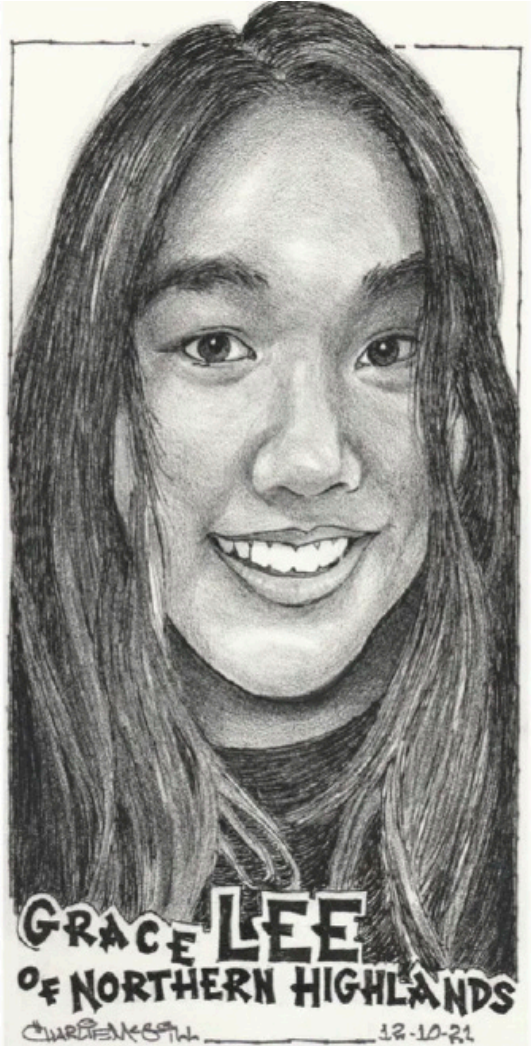
Lee gives credit to her wonderful coaches for contributing to her success. They serve as her role models when she is in the pool. "Coach Viscardi is definitely someone I look up to. He is always so involved and energetic."

Viscardi's positive



Grace Lee swimming in race with Northern Highlands

Photo Courtesy of Grace Lee '24



Grace Lee portrait drawn when she was declared Athlete of the Week

Photo Courtesy of Grace Lee '24



# COMMITMENT CORNER

## RACHEL KOO COMMITS TO DUKE

Hayoung Sohn '24

The Duke fencing team received its fourth signee for the 2022-23 recruiting class as foilist Rachel Koo signed a National Letter of Intent to join the Blue Devil family. From a young age, Koo demonstrated outstanding athletic ability.

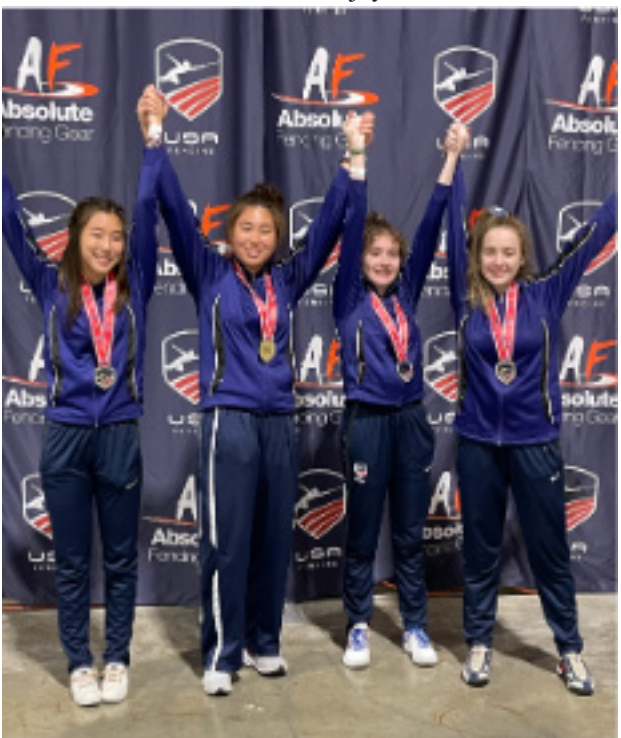
She explains, “I started fencing when I was nine years old after a family friend suggested I begin. My sister fenced which interested me as well.” Throughout her high school career, Koo has earned numerous first-place finishes in Districts, State Squads, and at the Cetrulo and Santelli Championships.

Outside of fencing, she was named with the AP Scholar Award in 2021, a member of the National Honor Society, and earned the President’s Volunteer Service Gold Award. She is a three-time high honor

roll honoree and competed at the Congressional Art Competition where she won the category of Sculpture Choice in 2019.

Despite being one of two talented fencers in the family, Rachel has managed to prove her skills to both herself and

others. She has been traveling both nationally and internationally to attend high-level competitions from a young age. Koo mentions, “the most recent tournament I attended was in Peru. It was a very good experience for me and I enjoyed it a lot.”



Rachel Koo and her teammates win a fencing tournament.

It is clear that this athlete is an extremely talented individual, traveling worldwide to compete against other top-level fencers.

In addition, Rachel’s sister, Haley Koo, has also shown phenomenal fencing talent. She was recruited to Stanford University for fencing, qualified for the NCAA, and has won countless competitions in her career. “Not being the only fencer in the family has also brought some difficulties,” Koo says. “Since I was little my mom used to compare me with my sister which caused me to see her only as my competition and not my sibling. Over the years, however, I have come to realize that the only person I should be competing with is myself,” Koo explains.

With a hectic schedule, it is no surprise that Koo has little to no free time. She is in school during the day and attends

long fencing practices during the night. After many years

mentions that she has her weaknesses, just like every other person.

**“Over the years, however, I have come to realize that the only person I should be competing with is myself.”**  
*Senior Rachel Koo*

of experience, Koo has learned how to balance her busy life.

She describes, “during the weekdays, I usually come home from school and take a nap before going to practice. My practices are from six to nine-thirty, and I get home at around ten which is when I get all my work for school done.”

As for the weekends, Rachel dedicates most of her days to fencing.

Although Koo tries her best to show the strongest version of herself, she also

She states that she has “been working on persevering.” Koo recognizes the importance of resilience in her fencing career and continues to master perservance regardless of how easy giving up would be.

There is no doubt that Duke has gained a phenomenal student and athlete. Koo has played a huge role in the Northern Highlands fencing program and will continue showcasing her talents as she represents Duke in the next few years. ■

## BRENDEN CONNOLLY BECOMES A PHOENIX

Stephen Weiner '24

Senior Brendan Connolly’s hard work has paid off, as he recently committed to the elite University of Chicago for wrestling.

It takes a lot of hard work and dedication to achieve such a great feat of playing any sport at the collegiate level.

Brendan committed last fall and has a lot to say on why he chose to wrestle in the Windy City. “In the fall, I committed to wrestle at the University of Chicago,

and I’m very excited to continue my wrestling and academic career at such a great school. I love the sport of wrestling and I feel very fortunate to have the opportunity to continue playing the sport at a higher level.”

Throughout his childhood, Brendan had switched between sports, but upon entering high school, he decided to fully commit to wrestling.

“I started wrestling in second grade, but I really started taking it seriously

my freshman year. That is when I stopped playing football and lacrosse, and decided to devote more of my time towards wrestling.”

Connolly feels that Northern Highlands should be credited for some of his success. “I believe my experience at Highlands has definitely prepared me for college. Throughout my high school athletic and academic career, I have come to learn the importance of teamwork, diligence, and perseverance and I feel I’m ready to take on the challenges college will pose to me.”

As well as having to maintain a positive outlook as an athlete, Connolly also had to prove his wrestling skills to receive offers from prestigious schools.

Tournament.

When speaking on his accomplishments through-

out his career, he said that he came in “County Third, Districts First, Regions Second, [and] State Top

many leadership skills such as giving my teammates advice, and encour-



Brendan Connolly wrestles to victory against an opponent.

out his career, he said that he came in “County Third, Districts First, Regions Second, [and] State Top

wrestling success.”

Of course, the senior had to credit his coaches who have helped

aging them when they are down.”

Being around high-level teammates, Connolly is excited to be able to contribute to an elite wrestling program.

In the past, the university has had multiple national championship wrestlers and is a force in Division III year in and year out.

Off the wrestling mat, Connolly is looking to achieve a lot in college. Saying that he hopes “to continue learning and pushing [himself] to become a better wrestler and student everyday.” ■

**“Throughout my high school athletic and academic career, I have come to learn the importance of teamwork, diligence, and perseverance and I feel I’m ready to take on the challenges college will pose to me.”**  
*Senior Brendan Connolly*

Connolly came in second place in the NJ-SIAA Region One Tournament, then first place in the NJSIAA District Two

12.” Connolly says that the people who inspired him the most were hard working Highlands wres-

him along the way. “My coaches have helped me improve by teaching me to become a leader on and off the mat. I have developed



Brendan Connolly wins his match.

Photo courtesy of NJSports.com

Photo courtesy of NJSports.com



# MENZELLA & MCCABE BRING THE MEDALS

## The path to Northern Highlands girls' lacrosse victory

Charlotte Riley '24

The lacrosse season has officially started this April. The Northern Highlands girls' lacrosse team is six games in, with eight to go. They are going strong so far with an outstanding record of 4-2.

Head Coach Michael Menzella has played a huge role in the girls' victories. Menzella has been the head of the NHGL community since 2011. In 2012, he was named the Bergen County Coach of the Year.

During the first couple years of his career, the

team had earned two division championships.

Menzella works as a physics teacher at Northern Highlands as well.

Although Menzella has made a huge impact on Northern Highlands girls' lacrosse history, Assistant Coach Michael McCabe has also made a significant difference. The pair has worked together in the last few years to create a supportive environment for their team.

Today, McCabe teaches social studies and coaches here at Highlands. McCabe specifically focuses on goalie and defense training.



Juniors Carly Simmel and Rylee Hulack battle against a Glen Ridge opponent.

Photo courtesy of NISports.com

**“Highlanders have done an amazing job at supporting NHGL and building off the stellar reputation past players have built, and will hopefully continue to do so.”**

Now, let's talk

about the stats. Unfortunately, Glen Ridge hit the girls hard. With a losing record of 9-10, the girls didn't give up. They proved their determination during their next game against Ramapo.

For several years, Ramapo High School has been considered a rival for a list of sports at Northern Highlands. During this competitive game, junior

Abby Henderson scored a total of 3 goals.

Interestingly, this game had two overtimes. The game ended in a 9-9 tie, but after the overtimes, Highlands earned their victory.

During the following game against Ramsey, Henderson scored a total of 4 goals along with 2 assists by Julia Buono, freshman.

Highlanders have done an amazing job at supporting NHGL and building off the stellar reputation past players have built, and will hopefully continue to do so.

The Northern Highlands girls' lacrosse team is projected to continue their season showing hard work and determination. ■

# BELLA GOES FOR GOLD (AWARD)

## Junior Bella O'Callaghan creates girls' volleyball clinic for her Gold Award

Ava Waller '23

It's no surprise to see Northern Highlands students going above and beyond to help the community. One of whom is junior Bella O'Callaghan, who has been working on completing her Girl Scouts Gold Award project over

with a great dedication to succeed. The amount of effort needed to successfully complete a Gold Award shows how dedicated these Girl Scouts are to helping their community.

O'Callaghan decided to focus on something she knows very well: volleyball.

“During the clinic, I had the help of the Northern Highlands Volleyball team to teach the girls the basics of volleyball. The website contains the same information but is accessible for anyone to use in order to learn the basics of volleyball.”

O'Callaghan was able

had the chance to learn how to play volleyball from a young age because my mom played,” O'Callaghan elaborates that “other girls don't have this opportunity so I wanted to give them a chance to learn the game that I have grown to love so much.”

To show how committed she was to the project, O'Callaghan even took the extra step to familiarize the girls with volleyball by providing two zoom sessions before the in-person clinic.

She explains that “this was so the girls would go into the in person clinics knowing what I and the other coaches looked like, and a little bit about us. I wanted them to feel comfortable before the sessions started so we could get as much done as possible.”

the basics of the game like how to pass, set, and hit a volleyball, so they could walk into the session with the confidence of having a

part of the project was the clinic. Meeting these young girls and teaching them how to play volleyball was very fulfilling. It



Team picture with the girls and the volunteer coaches

Photo Courtesy of Bella O'Callaghan '23



Northern Highlands volleyball team helping teach the girls in the clinic

Photo Courtesy of Bella O'Callaghan '23

**“..other girls don't have this opportunity so I wanted to give them a chance to learn the game that I have grown to love so much.”**

*Junior Bella O'Callaghan*

She also gave the girls an introductory lesson on

for herself. “I believe my favorite

the past year.

A Gold Award is the highest achievement one can complete within the Girl Scouts of the United States and it is achieved when a girl scout creates a project that will improve or help their community. The gold award requires a minimum of 80 hours of volunteer work, along

She wanted to provide a space for young girls to learn how to play volleyball, which has been limited in opportunity. She explains that she “created a volleyball clinic and website. The clinic was for four sessions and was for girls in 3rd-5th grade.”

Solely creating the clinic wasn't the end,

to use her years of experience playing the sport, both for the high school team and for a club team, in order to teach younger girls who had interest in the sport. She was especially interested in helping girls who may not have the chance to do so otherwise.

She explains “I love playing volleyball and I

didn't feel like something that was mandatory I had to do for a project, I had fun the entire time.”

While the clinic may only have been for girls in the quad district, O'Callaghan's volleyball tips and tricks will be accessible to anyone on her website, which is currently being created.

Her efforts to help the community and resolve a current issue will not be unnoticed and are a great example of making a difference. ■



# How are Highlanders Spring Breaking?

We asked ten Highlanders from each grade what they are doing over Spring Break

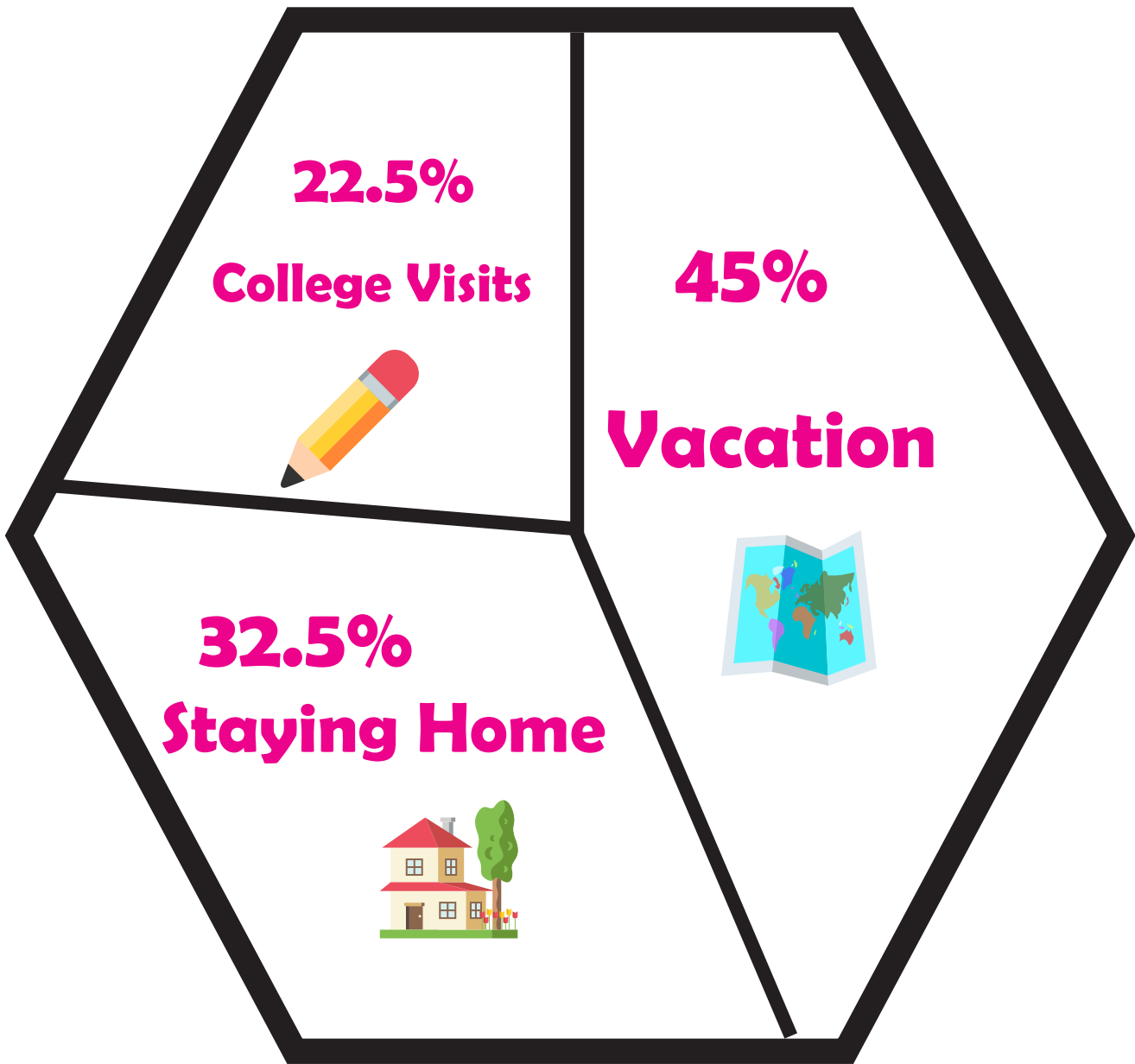
## Check Out These Facts

 32.5% said that they are staying home to do road trips, hike, or go to sports practice.

 45% said that they were going on vacation  
Popular destinations: Florida and South Carolina.

 22.5% said that they were going on college visits.

Most popular destinations: Boston University and Clemson University.



Layout by Kaitlyn Harle '23