

The Highland Fling

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Dr. Tony LaRocca is ready to take on his new position as Assistant Principal.

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THE CAF IS BACK!

Rebecca Hoffer '23

After a year without a lunch period, the cafeteria is back up and running now that all Highlanders are in the building every day from 7:45 A.M to 2:36 P.M..

With this, there are still a few restrictions and changes that have been put in place to keep Highlanders safe.

For example, the famous Highlands cookies now come in individual bags and french fries are in closed containers, compared to being open for anyone to take in previous years. Condiments and salad dressings are also individually packaged, rather than in pumps.

As for the different food stations, the international food station is only open on Mondays rather than every day; the deli pre-order station is also no longer offering hot-pressed sandwiches for the time being.

However, like previous years, snacks are still available in the cafeteria after school.

Students have mixed feelings about the normalcy brought by having the cafeteria back.

"I'm happy we have lunch again but I'm never buying food--the lines are too long," junior Grace Martin said.

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DOC. LAROC: READY TO ROCK

Dr. Tony LaRocca takes on new role as Assistant Principal of Student Affairs

Jessica Gao '23

Northern Highlands is excited to welcome Dr. Tony LaRocca as the Assistant Principal of Student Affairs.

LaRocca has worked at Highlands since 2013, teaching classes including Algebra I and II as well as Computer Science.

LaRocca was the faculty advisor of the Highlands Mock Trial team, leading them to victory at two Bergen County tournaments.

In addition to Mock Trial, he also coached the Highlands baseball team. The team has won the group three tournament under his leadership.

LaRocca's extensive history as a teacher here at Highlands allows him to have an important unique perspective to bring to this role.

"Someone like this just brings that mindset into a team that hasn't been there in quite a while...I haven't been in a classroom in 20 something years ... things have changed," Principal Joseph Occhino said.

One example of this fresh-out-of-the-classroom perspective coming in handy is the usage of Canvas and Zoom when a student has to quarantine if tested positive for COVID-19.

LaRocca is able to apply his experience using these platforms to "help streamline these processes, mak-

cca help with the technical aspects of learning, but he also brings a fresh mindset of what education can be, voicing that "[he] believes that [education is] a collaborative endeavor, and that's what [he] plan on building off of in [his] new role."

He proceeds to explain how mathematics used to be

for computer science to the creativity and passion of his students, declaring that "[he] really tried to foster teamwork and expressing ideas in [his] class.

To see students work together and go in all different directions and come up with something incredible was [his] favorite part of

being involved with clubs, and other immediate issues that may pop up throughout the school day.

As LaRocca aptly puts it, "It's all about whatever's needed at a moment's notice. You roll up your sleeves, and you jump in."

He can often be spotted walking the halls during the school day as well as supervising lunch periods in the cafs.

Students who have engaged with LaRocca in the classroom agree that LaRocca will fit right into his new position.

"I think I speak for a lot of students when I say he'll be an amazing vice principal. To be honest, the only negative is that he won't be teaching our computer science courses anymore," according to Junior Max Rome.

Continued on page 8

Not only does LaRocca help with the technical aspects of learning, but he also brings a fresh mindset of what education can be, voicing that "[he] believes that [education is] a collaborative endeavor, and that's what [he] plan on building off of in [his] new role."

ing it easy for the student at home and the teacher in the classroom," according to Occhino.

Not only does LaRo-

his favorite subject, but after teaching computer science, it quickly became his new favorite class to teach.

He attributes his love

teaching."

This new position includes responsibilities such as scheduling classes, handling disciplinary actions,

BACK AND BETTER THAN EVER?

How in-person learning compares to all-virtual and hybrid learning



Photo Courtesy of Jamison Meyer

Jamison Meyer '23

Last fall, we came into school masked-up and ready to finally be in person. Well, kind of. We had cohorts, splitting our student body into thirds. We wore masks, had one-way hallways, and desks were six feet apart. Now, that's somewhat changed. All students are in school full time, eating lunch, and no longer filling out forms in the morning. We don't have to log into a zoom call or mess around with the mute button anymore. Things seem to be back to normal. Is this

all completely a good thing though? Students have mixed viewpoints. For a lot of people, this year has been so much better already. They were excited for the beginning of the school year and were glad to see all of their friends again. There's also no anxiety about school shutting down again and going all-online. The quality of the in-person instruction is better, too. Students don't have to wait for the teacher to log into a zoom call or combat screen sharing. They can have more exciting and interactive lessons, and it's easier to gauge the best ways for students to learn the material. A lot of teachers and students alike prefer this method of teaching. Additionally, the school has longer days, so students have more time to follow the entire curriculum.

The current day schedule has also made it so that students go to their classes more frequently, decreasing the amount of time spent reviewing forgotten material. The online days also taught us a lot about using technology to our advantage. Now, teachers often offer online worksheets and upload the day's lesson to canvas, while students use programs like OneNote more often. We also know how to navigate many more online applications than ever before. Overall, in-person

school in the 2021-2022 school year is better than last year because of all we have learned from our experiences last year. Another benefit of in-person school that we lacked last year is the collaboration between classmates. It's easier to socialize with people while physically in the school building as opposed to being virtual. It was almost impossible to make friends while home alone every day, and group projects were daunting and complex. Now, anyone can see

their friends, and they might even know others in their classes. However, some students prefer the hybrid model. It was suitable for those who liked some aspects of online learning and some aspects of in-person learning. Some people learn better from home. They felt it was easier to learn by themselves and that there wasn't as much pressure at home as there was in person. Some people liked the shorter days as well. In addition to this, some students are wary of being in school full time because of increased risks of COVID transmission. Some people don't wear masks correctly, if at all. There are no temperature checks, and students don't review their symptoms before coming. Lunch was another concerning aspect for students. Having lunch, where half of the student

population comes together in a densely populated area, not socially distanced, was concerning for some people. Additionally, COVID spreads through respiratory droplets, which could be transmitted while eating due to removal of masks. The Highlands Community can solve this by coming together to wear masks properly, be sanitary, and be cautious of possible transmission. But in the end, the debate of in-person vs. virtual learning all comes down to personal preference. Some like being at school, while others prefer being in the comfort of their own home and organizing their time however they wish. There are pros and cons to each, with many things to consider. In the end, it's essential to get the most out of school, whatever form it comes in. ■

Things seem to be back to normal. Is this completely a good thing though?

The Highland Fling

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The views of the staff do not necessarily reflect the views of the administration. The administration has the right to review and alter an issue of the newspaper for five school days after it has been given to them by the staff. In the process of prior review, the original content of the paper may be changed or deleted. Regardless, the staff of *The Highland Fling* prides itself on delivering the most relevant and accurate reporting it can.

From the Desk of the Editor-in-Chief

There is power in kindness. As we return to the halls of Highlands as a united community, it's imperative that we are aware of the effects that our actions have on our peers. Our school is a special place. The students here are some of the hardest working and passionate people there are. I have seen first hand that sometimes during our quest for perfection, we fail the most important task of them all: ensuring that we treat those around us with kindness and with respect. You have no idea how much your words can impact someone else. For better or for worse, words are our most powerful asset. They can lead to the greatest joys as well as the greatest sorrows. We should all strive to use ours for the former. Make someone's day, tell them you like their shirt or compliment their personality. Use your power for good. As a journalist, I have always understood the power that exists in the words that we speak. I've spent hours on the thesaurus, trying to find the perfect way to describe my feelings. You don't need to change the world to make a difference, you have the potential to change someone's world. Start here at Highlands, make it your goal to become someone's light. You don't have to change the world to do good. If you know that someone's going through a tough time or has a stressful day ahead, ask them if they're okay. Go out of your way to be a little kinder each day, to make Highlands the best place that it can be. We should be striving to make our school a safe and comfortable environment for every student. This is not something that should be up for debate, this should just be a given. There is no reason for a single student to not enjoy coming to school. Whether you're a freshman just learning how to navigate the building, a junior beginning to study for standardized testing, we're all in this together. Be someone known for having a smile on their face as well as getting others to smile. At the end of the day, we are all Highlanders and will be for the rest of our lives. Make a difference while you're here. Leave your mark on the school, have people remember your good actions rather than the bad. For those of you who are already stressed out of your mind, I feel you. Take things day by day and you'll get through this. There are so many people around you who know exactly how it feels and can be a support system for you. Rely on your friends and take a break if you need to. No one expects you to be perfect! If you ever see me in the halls and just feel like you need a friend, please feel free to say hello. I'm more than happy to be a friendly face for you all and would love to chat about anything whenever you need. I love Highlands and want to make sure everyone loves this school as much as I do!

Sincerely,
Sammy Lever
Senior Editor-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. If you are interested in placing an ad or subscribing, please contact the email listed above.

National Alliance on Mental Illness:
1-800-950-6264

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

HURRICANE IDA

A Highlander’s experience during Hurricane Ida.



Photo Courtesy of Mia Wang

Mia Wang '23

On August 26th, Hurricane Ida struck Louisiana as a Category 4 hurricane with winds up to 150 mph. The aftermath of Louisiana led to massive floods and strong winds all over the east coast. Many families like mine were driving when the storm hit and assumed it was just typical Jersey-like heavy rain. However, in the next hour, the whole state’s phones were stormed with flood and tornado alerts. For me, it was around 11 PM when my parents realized most streets had been flooded and our only route out was the highway. At one point, we drove through twelve inches of water. Thankfully, we managed to make it back home

safely after taking multiple detours and routes. This wasn’t the case for my friend, Joshua Clarke. He lives in Louisiana, which was the epicenter of the hurricane. “I was miserable,” he stated. “I had no water or power. It’s hot in Louisiana, so imagine being trapped in your house with no AC.” He was also “scared for [his] own family living near him...afraid they would not make it out alive.” Hurricane Ida impacted thousands of people across New Orleans, leaving at least forty-three people killed (*New York Times*). As it made its way to the east coast, I was thankful my basement was not flooded. However, most of my friends and extended family could not relate. The one lesson we should learn from this storm is that flood warnings should not be taken lightly. I know a few people who have entirely ignored flash flood warnings, which can be detrimental to the people around us as well as them and their families. I used to take flash flood warnings lightly and didn’t think they mattered too much because a good portion of the time, nothing major really happens. However, while it barely matters to us, people in the state next-door are barely making it out of their homes and some don’t. Although this did not directly affect Highlands, the EMT club at Highlands can further educate students on how to survive or help others during a flash flood since it often happens in New Jersey as we’ve recently experienced. I’m glad we have a club dedicated to natural disasters and relief for the people affected by them. We can help the relief effort for the people who have lost their homes, family, pets, and friends due to the flooding. The Red Cross and the Salvation Army are both organizations you can support in multiple ways. ■

WHY FALL ROCKS

Why we should all fall in love with the Fall season

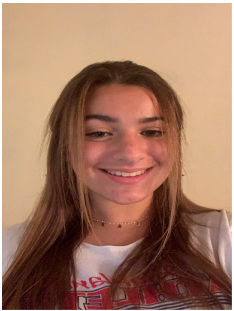


Photo Courtesy of Nina Riccardi

Nina Riccardi '23

For all those who aren’t the biggest fans of learning, all this back-to-school hype may throw you into an early seasonal depression. However, one of the best seasons is making its debut right now. Fall is the best season, and I will always stand by this. I may be a little biased as a September baby, but there are a million reasons as to why you should love fall as much as I do, and here are just a few. The highlight of getting back into the swing of things for most Highlanders and staff is—drumroll please—football! It is no secret that we all enjoy the throw of the pigskin and all the school spirit that comes along with it. Although the season is just starting, I’ve heard our football team is off to a great start and our student section along with in. There is nothing better than supporting our team, watching a good game, and being surrounded by our NHRHS friends and family—other than winning, of course. The food season is another fantastic thing about fall. Warm hot chocolate, pumpkin spice lattes, apple bread, pumpkin pie—you name it. The signature Pillsbury sugar cookies with the fall designs are my family’s personal favorite. There are the ghosts, black cats, pumpkins, turkeys, and more. Fall foods and desserts are top tier. Don’t even get me started on Thanksgiving foods... and that’s just one of the two iconic holidays during this season. The other is one I think we all enjoy at least a little bit. Highlands’ famous tradition where the fall sports teams have hilarious group Halloween costumes is definitely something all grade levels and staff enjoy; I can’t wait to see the different themes! Halloween is the one night a year where you get to pretend to be something or someone else and have total freedom of expression... plus the candy is a bonus. My friends and I love to watch spooky movies and shows to transition into October vibes. There are so many more reasons why fall should be appreciated, and it’s truly disappointing to see the dark cloud of school (no offense, Highlands staff) overshadow it. But, hopefully, some of these reasons have swayed you fall-hating people into the seasonal spirit. ■



Photo Courtesy of Google

MY SUMMER ROAD TRIP AMID COVID

What precautions should we take to continue staying safe?



Photo Courtesy of Isha Korgaonkar

Isha Korgaonkar '24

It is difficult to imagine that we have endured the COVID-19 pandemic for almost 2 years. Just think about that. Almost two years of our lives were spent in times of worry, uncertainty, sickness, and virtual learning. That said, as more and more people get vaccinated, the world is slowly returning to normal. One clear sign of this is that people are traveling again. With the start of the new in-person school year, Highlanders must take the necessary precautions while traveling to keep themselves and others safe. Otherwise, we run the risk of having a school shutdown and returning to virtual learning. In my case, this past summer, my family and

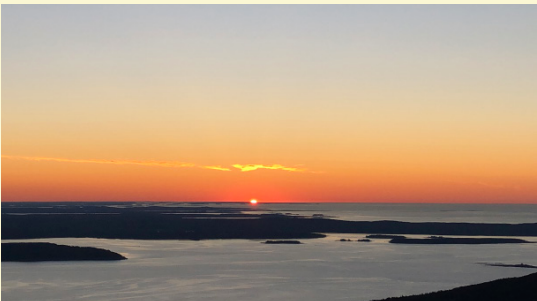
I went on a road trip to Rhode Island, Maine, and New Hampshire. We were able to remain safe due to the precautions implemented in the states we visited and the ones we took ourselves. Our first stop was Newport, Rhode Island—about three-and-a-half hours away from Allendale. The hotel that we stayed in did a few little things to make us feel less worried about contracting COVID: all of the hotel staff members were wearing masks; hand sanitizer stations were positioned throughout the hotel; there was even a tag on our door that stated that our room had been thoroughly cleaned. During indoor activities that we could not wear masks for, such as swimming in the hotel pool, we made sure to either engage in the activity when no one was around or keep plenty of distance between ourselves and others. My family and I also engaged in a couple of outdoor activities, in which we wore masks when less than six feet from people. We walked on a trail that was alongside the ocean and had views of mansions too. However, ultimately, the highlight of the Rhode Island section of our trip was parasailing. This was a new and slightly frightening experience for all of my family members. We were about 700 feet in the air, and the views were absolutely breathtaking. The next stop was Bar Harbor, Maine—about a six-hour drive from Newport. For the majority of our time in Bar Harbor, we explored Acadia National Park. Since we were spending most of our time outdoors and not in huge crowds, the likelihood of COVID infection was significantly lower. Additionally, Acadia National Park implemented a strict policy requiring masks to be worn indoors. We did many things in the national park, but here are my three favorites. Firstly, we hiked the Beehive Trail. It was one of the toughest hikes I had ever done. It included vertical cliffs with iron rungs to climb on, taking us to 520 feet above sea level. The views, as you can see from the picture, were magnificent. During strenuous

activities like this, it was challenging to wear masks. However, we were outdoors and tried our best to remain socially distanced. Secondly, we visited Bubble Rock, which was deposited on a cliff by a glacier many years ago. Even in its precarious position, it is still holding on! Finally, we watched the sunrise on Cadillac Mountain, the highest point along the US East Coast at 1528 feet above sea level. The sunrise was at 5:52 AM, but the beautiful rainbow-like colors started appearing about an hour before that. The final stop of our road trip was Littleton, New Hampshire—almost a five-hour drive from Bar Harbor. Again, we were spending most of our time outdoors. When eating at restaurants, we made sure to ask for outdoor seating. We also visited the White Mountains National Forest, where we saw Glen Falls. It was a stunning 64-foot waterfall at the end of a trail through the forest. We also took a cog railway train to the summit of Mount Washington, a mountain in the Presidential Range and the highest peak of the White Mountains at 6288 feet. One of the most incredible facts I learned was that the highest wind speed ever observed by man—231 mph—was actually recorded at the summit of Mount Washington! Overall, spending time with my family while exploring nature was a great way to spend my summer. I am thankful that we remained healthy, so I could return to school and keep others safe. With the potential for travel later in the year, such as during winter and spring breaks, we all need to follow CDC travel guidelines to stay safe. For starters, Highlanders, please wear masks properly when indoors. Social distance when outdoors. Monitor yourself for COVID symptoms. In this way, we can keep our school doors open and finally have a much-awaited full year of in-person learning. ■



Glen Falls in the White Mountain National Forest. New Hampshire.

Photo Courtesy of Isha Korgaonkar



A sunset captured during Korgaonkar's trip.

Photo Courtesy of Isha Korgaonkar

SO, WHAT ARE WE DOING THIS YEAR?

Three students’ perspectives on their upcoming school year

SOPHOMORE YEAR



Jana Dabbagh '24

As an 8th grader waiting to enter high school, I was not expecting something as major as a pandemic to ruin graduation or my freshman year at Northern Highlands.

But here I am a year later, a sophomore, entering the school for the first time. Yes, I said for the first time. Sure, I went there once or twice in 8th grade for special occasions, but never as a student.

This, unfortunately, was the case for many other students in 2020 when the pandemic worsened everything for incoming freshmen. Between learning on Zoom, social distancing, and the decrease in communication between students and teachers, things were certainly not going as planned.

My experience as a freshman consisted of boring days, poor internet connection, and increased anxiety. To put it simply, it was not fun at all.

I spent my entire freshman year in my room, learning through Zoom meetings. I am part of a large population of students who decided to stay fully virtual instead of participating in

the hybrid learning system because of COVID.

I rarely visited the campus, and I never met my teachers or met any new people. And a lot of what happened during my freshman year spilled over into my sophomore year.

I had to get used to a

take two new classes, including electives.

These allow me to enhance my skills in something that I know I am passionate about so I'm really looking forward to that. Additionally, I get to participate in extracurriculars, such as continuing as a writer in the



Art by Izzy Levine '23

new schedule that confused me more than I could even imagine.

On top of that, honors classes got slightly harder since communication between my teachers and I were limited. However, my freshman year ended on a good note with the knowledge that I'd hopefully be starting my sophomore year at school and with real people... no more foreheads and ceiling fans every day.

That being said, I was looking forward to so much in this coming school year. For example, I never got the chance to play basketball because of the pandemic so I can't wait to try out and (hopefully) make it on the team this year.

I also got the chance to

school newspaper (which you're reading right now!)

With the good things, there also comes the more nerve-racking things, which include my honors classes-- but hopefully those nerves are from excitement than anxiety.

I'm excited to take many new classes including ones that challenge me academically but keep me engaged. I'm also looking forward to meeting my teachers since I never got the chance to do so. You can't meet new people unless you're out there in the world, and from my bedroom, I couldn't meet anyone.

Now is my chance! I can't wait to see what else my sophomore year brings (minus COVID!) ■

JUNIOR YEAR



Emily Gan '23

Junior year-- the infamous point in time for every high school student. The year for taking challenging courses, going on college campus tours, and standardized testing can all be difficult to juggle.

Not to mention, many are partaking in clubs, volunteering, and even working

Not only do students have to keep up with homework assignments and assessments given in class, but they also have to focus on the looming AP exams in early May.

Another factor that I'm worried about, courtesy to Collegeboard, are the SATs. This 3-hour test drives students crazy just dreaming about receiving a 1600.

Since my freshman year was cut short, and a majority of my sophomore year was online, finals have been canceled for the last two years. I know many people in my grade are anxious to take our first finals as juniors.

Junior year is also the time for students to try and stand out with their clubs

ate about, then after-school activities could actually be a getaway from academics.

Besides the standardized testing, grades, and extracurriculars, another component that can eat away at students is the realization that college is right around the corner.

When I was in elementary school, college seemed like a distant fantasy that wouldn't happen in a hundred years.

Now that I'm considered an upperclassman in high school, it's just a matter of time before I'm packing my bags and moving out.

Despite the stress of being a junior and striving to do your best, I'm happy to be back in school this year. I think many people took elements of in-person school for granted when we were stuck in Zoom meetings for hours at a time.

I'm also excited to come back as an upperclassman because we (along with the seniors) are considered the role models for underclassmen.

Now, after a rough year, we can all learn and grow together. Being an upperclassman also comes with more experience regarding work ethic and responsibility. I'm also looking forward to junior-oriented events such as junior prom.

While junior year does have a reputation for being the most difficult year of high school, I think the class of 2023 has the resilience and drive that will get us through it! ■



Art by Izzy Levine '23

part-time jobs.

Out of all the factors, I think AP classes will be a challenge for many people. These introductory college-level courses can be extremely time-consuming due to the amount of material taught.

and activities. Adding this onto the list of things that juniors already have to worry about, many students can feel overwhelmed. However, if people stick to their interests and focus on topics they are truly passionate

SENIOR YEAR: THE LAST HURRAH



Hannah Blacher '22

I, along with the rest of the 2022 class, had only 1.5 years of non-virtual high school before September 3rd of this year.

Even having parked at the school, with a Minnie-Mouse backpack, and having "Physical Education 12" on my schedule, I did not feel like a senior walking into the school a few weeks ago. I still don't. I feel so far from prepared. The last

time school was normal, I was sitting in chemistry as a 15-year-old sophomore, and now I'm about to be 18 and graduate in June.

As much as I didn't feel prepared, I would be a totally different person if we never got shut down in the middle of March 2020.

I had more than enough time to self-reflect, catch up on sleep, and get ready mentally for going back to

to spend with my family and time to talk to my friends without a million things going on. So, maybe in some ways, I was prepared for this year.

Watching my sister (Class of 2020) go through an unfortunate end of her senior year makes me realize that we are beyond lucky to be able to have the things we have now like Friday night football games, junior prom

We watched the two senior classes ahead of us make the best out of their situation, and now it is our turn.

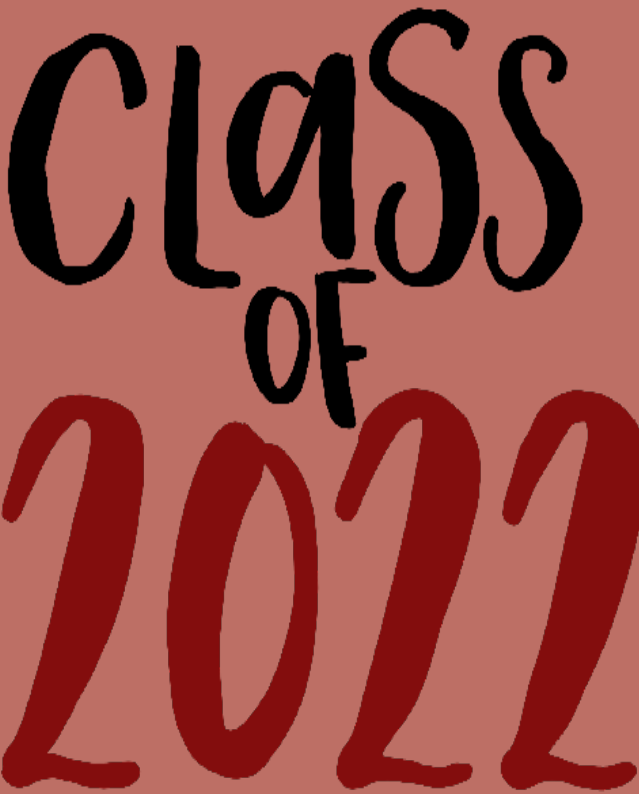
school eventually. I had time last May, classes in-person,

getting to raise your hand in class and not by pressing a button on Zoom, etc.

We watched the two senior classes ahead of us make the best out of their situation, and now it is our turn.

Personally, I think we are very, very lucky that the situation has gotten a lot better since March 2020 and that we are healthy and we have people looking out for us to make the best decision to keep it like that and to give us a great senior year.

I know that one thing that all seniors can agree on is that we will make the 2021-2022 school year the best one yet. ■



Art by Izzy Levine '23

SUMMER FUN: ARIZONA RV TRIP

Why it's crucial to protect our national parks and environment



Karen Bae '23

The summer of 2021 will always be unforgettable for me. In June, my family and I took a plane to Phoenix, Arizona, rented a aa

Monument Valley, and Lake Powell.

My favorite site to visit was probably the Grand Canyon. We stayed at an RV campsite that led to a sunrise/sunset view of the Grand Canyon (only 15 minutes away walking distance).

There were desert cacti, bushes, flowers, chipmunks, rabbits, and even wild elk and stray cats that would walk right up to you to drink from your water faucet!

My favorite part of the trip was that I was surrounded by breathtaking nature

photos you take or how high your camera quality is, I've found that a lens can never capture what the nature there really looks and feels like.

On my trip, I learned a lot about Arizona itself. The sites I visited were all national parks, and the park rangers emphasized how important it is to be environmentally conscious.

I learned that Arizona is expected to be uninhabitable in the next 30 years due to climate change. For examples, the changes in rising temperatures have led to

If climate change continues, the current water source that most of Arizona depends upon (the Colorado River) might not be

Does using a paper straw or recycling one plastic water bottle actually do anything?

And to that, I say yes. Your action does make a

bound to increase if we keep encouraging it.

In addition, it's so important to protect national parks to not only preserve



The view of an Arizona landscape taken on a hike.

sufficient for survival in the future. As I freely washed my face and hands every day during that trip, I realized how precious every drop of clean water was.

When I heard the fate of Arizona said aloud like it was nothing, my stomach suddenly dropped. Everything is melting. And in my opinion, and I think for many others too, trying to tackle climate change can feel overwhelming and hopeless.

I often ask myself, do my minor efforts to be environmentally conscious help in any way?

difference. When you choose to save water or eat less meat or save electricity, you are making a statement that your actions matter, that you have power, and that it's not too late.

We deepen our commitment to environmental sustainability and lay the foundation for how we should act in the future for our children and peers. Up until the 1960s and 1970s, recycling was not implemented in society until conservationists established it.

Today, the approximate recycling rate worldwide is 32.1%, and that number is

the natural areas for future generations to enjoy, but also to assure that people understand the symbiotic relationship between nature and man. Protecting biodiversity is vital to further our economy, cultural and spiritual values, provide homes for plants and animals, and maintain clean air and water. If we don't protect nature, we're only hurting ourselves.

I urge everyone at Highlands to be environmentally conscious. I'm not asking anyone to be Greta Thunberg and change their entire lifestyle, but I ask you to try for the good of not only Arizona, but our entire world. ■



A kayak ride through the canyons.

recreational vehicle for a week, which is where our trip began.

We visited almost every famous canyon in Arizona: Grand Canyon, Cannonville, Horseshoe Bend, Sedona,

everywhere I went. As a fan of wildlife, there was an indescribable calmness about being immersed in such natural beauty.

No matter how many

irregularity in rainfall. Major lakes in Arizona, like Lake Mead, are progressively drying up. However, in totality, all of Arizona is at some level of drought.



TEACHER'S CORNER:

Why We Need the Arts in Times of Hardship and Adversity with Ms. Carpino



Art by Ms. Carpino

Krista Carpino

The Arts are valuable to everyone especially during difficult times. In March of 2020 during the complete shift in daily life as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, many Northern Highlands students discovered how important the Arts are to the value of connection, understanding, expression, empathy, and our mental health.

While teaching and learning the Arts in both virtual and hybrid scenar-

ios looked much different from years previous and admittedly was challenging in many ways, it became clear how important our various elective Arts classes are.

The Arts include the wide variety of branches of human creative activity. Whether enrolled in Actor's Workshop, Graphic Design, Advertising and Branding, Architectural Design Exploration, Foods and Nutrition, Digital Film Production, Symphonic Band, or other Arts courses, students had the chance to express and apply creativity and imagination.

The Arts make close-to-home spaces more inspirational.

Through the Arts in all their forms students are able to bond with others from a distance even with contrasting learning spaces.

While the disconnect through virtual instruction

was present, the hope for Arts students in the past year and a half was that as they were rolling out clay slabs with hairspray bottles at their kitchen table, taking pictures and videos with their cellphones in their backyards, recording

Even when everything in life seems challenging and tests our patience... the Arts provide an opportunity to remember that these "bad" times are temporary.

instrumental or acting practice sessions in their living rooms, making stir fry over their family stovetop, or exploring their thoughts and feelings about our changing world through creative writing... they felt that connect-

tion of creativity knowing that their peers were in similar situations.

The Arts are good for your well-being. The Arts activate the right side of the brain and are proven tools for sustaining good health and reducing anxiety.

Acting, dancing, painting, playing music, and writing all have constructive long-term effects on brain and immune function as well as adding to our mental and emotional health in ways that help us deal with

new forms of stress.

Students were able to use the Arts to process the upsetting events happening around them, find a sense of control in an otherwise out-of-control setting, have a voice to express feelings, and work through unique experiences.

The Arts help prompt appreciation during tough times. Even when everything in life seems challenging and tests our patience... the Arts provide an opportunity to remember that these "bad" times are temporary.

Around the world we all struggled to accept our new reality with the Arts becoming a facilitator for expressing confusion, loss, guilt, or loneliness be it through food, film, or music.

Becoming so aware of these troubles also creates the space to find the good

and happiness in even the smallest places.

The Arts help us understand we are not alone. Highlands students, parents, teachers, administrators, board members, and all of us in the community worked and continue to work together to process these events and find a way to get back to normal.

With the 2021-2022 school year bringing bustling hallways and full classrooms, hopefully students will continue to find the value in all our Arts elective courses and enjoy their creativity and imagination they get to explore and experience each and every day. ■

WELCOME TO NORTHERN HIGHLANDS

COLTON BELLAVANCE

Christina Ahn '23

At Highlands this year, Colton Bellavance will be teaching U.S. History I as a collaborative teacher. Before coming to Highlands, he taught at Arlington High School in Massachusetts for the past four years. At Arlington High School, he taught Algebra 1, Geometry, U.S. History I and II.

For his own high school education, he attended Wilson High School in Pennsylvania. There, he played lacrosse and was part of the art club.

He then went on to receive his undergraduate degree at Alvernia University and his graduate degree from Kutztown University.

According to Bellavance, his own teachers

from high school inspired him to pursue this career path.

He went on that he had some great teachers that made learning fun and had him looking forward to attending their classes, something he hopes to emulate to Highlands.

When he is not teaching, he likes to play video games or read. He is also

working on teaching himself how to cook.

According to Mr. Bellavance, he's ready to take on the year and is "very excited to be a part of such a great school and getting to know [his] students and colleagues!"

If you see him in the hallways make sure to say hi and welcome to Northern Highlands! ■



PHOTO COURTESY OF COLTON BELLAVANCE

TROY BIANCHI

Mitsuki Uehara '22

Northern Highlands introduced a new teacher to the Physical Education department this year: Troy Bianchi. This school year he will teach two freshmen classes and one senior physical education class.

Bianchi has a degree in sociology and previously attended Blooms-

burg University, Passaic Community College, and William Paterson University. Bianchi has been "working in a school [his] whole adult life." Prior to teaching at Northern Highlands, he was a substitute teacher, a teacher assistant for six years, and then went on to teach last year at Glen Rock High School.

Aside from teaching

at Northern Highlands, he currently coaches football at a different school he used to work at in the past. He hopes to one day "be able to coach football" at Northern Highlands. Bianchi also enjoys fishing, going to the movie theater, and surrounding himself with his loved ones.

Bianchi hopes his students take away from

his class the importance of meeting new people. With everyone coming from different towns, it's "important to meet new people and express yourself" in order to create "great relationships."

He wants his lessons to extend beyond the walls of the gymnasium. He can not wait to see what the rest of the year has in store. ■



PHOTO COURTESY OF TROY BIANCHI

LAURA ELISCU

Michael Pontecorvo '23

This year Highlands is welcoming a new guidance counselor, Laura Eliscu. This is her fourth year as a high school counselor. She was employed as an academic and career counselor for ten years before coming to Highlands.

She says that she "really enjoys working with students in the school setting", and even joined clubs in

high school and college that were about peer counseling and advice.

Eliscu went to Binghamton University for her Bachelor's Degree in Human Development. She then went on to Long Island University for her Master's Degree in School Counseling and a certificate in Mental Health Counseling.

She describes herself as "pretty easy-going and

enjoy[s] working as a team whether it's for work or outside projects."

She believes, and wants her students to understand, that "everyone is on their own path...comparing yourself to others will only make things harder. Find what works for you and surround yourself with people who understand what your needs are."

Eliscu enjoys reading and playing tennis, as well

as enjoying reality television and shows like *Ozark* or *Dead to Me* on Netflix.

She expressed her excitement to learn more and participate more of what Highlands has to offer. When asked if she had anything else to add, Eliscu expressed that she was happy to be at Highlands and how she is eager to see our a capella groups perform. ■



PHOTO COURTESY OF LAURA ELISCU

RACHEL WEISS

Michael Pontecorvo '23

Northern Highlands is excited to welcome Rachel Weiss as one of the new school nurses.

When Weiss was in high school, she initially planned on being a teacher. However, she ended up changing her mind and became a nurse.

She went to nursing school at Georgetown University where she received her degree. She then went on to get her school nurse certification at New Jersey City University. She even still takes classes at NJCU.

Weiss wanted to become a school nurse because she felt that becoming a school nurse was a good

combination of teaching and nursing. She has been a school nurse for 4 years now and she "[enjoys] working with the students and the parents."

According to her there is a lot more work that has to be put into public health than there has been before. This includes contact tracing and keeping track of

people's quarantine.

Weiss has 3 kids and a puppy. In her free time, she loves exercising and going to the beach.

She is excited to meet all of the staff and students here at highlands so make sure to say hello if you see her in the halls. ■



PHOTO COURTESY OF RACHEL WEISS

LISA McNERNEY

Michael Pontecorvo '23

This year Highlands is welcoming a new trainer to the athletics department, Lisa McNerney.

She previously attended Kean University where she majored in Health and Physical Education and Athletic Training. She later completed a Master's degree in Exercise Science from Montclair State University. McNerney teaches full-time at Midland Park High School as a Health and Physical Education teacher in addition to her work at Northern Highlands.

She has been a certified athletic trainer for the past 29 years, and says she

pursued a career in training because "I was always active in sports... I knew a career in athletic training would allow me to stay involved in athletics long after my days on the playing field were over."

McNerney played football professionally for the New York Sharks from 2006 to 2008, and says "it was an amazing opportunity to travel the country and play a sport [she] love[s]." McNerney describes herself as personable, funny, and a major dog person.

In terms of tips for learning, McNerney says that organization is key and it can "help reduce stress and save time." She

also suggests that students keep a daily planner to stay organized. In terms of tips for staying healthy, McNerney tells her students to get enough sleep, eat healthy, and to stay as active as possible.

Make sure to say hi if you see her! ■



PHOTO COURTESY OF LISA MCCNEREY

RICHARD HEISSLER

Irene Chen '23

The Applied Technologies department welcomes a new teacher, Richard Heissler, who is very excited to restore the woodshop classroom.

Heissler worked as a carpenter prior to attending New Jersey Institute of Technology for engineering. He taught at Glen Rock High School, Mahwah High School, and Passaic County Technical Institute for a total of sixteen years before coming to Northern Highlands.

Heissler currently teaches Woodworking I, Project Woodworking, and Furniture Design. He has been involved with wood-

working for his whole life and loves it, and found even more joy through teaching his skills to students.

In his free time, Heissler devotes a lot of time to his 3 kids who are in high school and middle school. He also enjoys cooking, playing sports, biking, hiking, fishing, and other outdoor activities.

Heissler's teaching philosophy is "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." Having been a carpenter most of his life, he wishes to provide his students with as much experience as possible.

He adopts a kinesthetic teaching style to cultivate

practical skills students need. He encourages them to perform as much as possible in and around the woodshop classroom, from making their own project designs to building a backpack rack outside the classroom.

You can find him in the woodshop classroom in room 138. Stop by and say hi! ■



PHOTO COURTESY OF RICHARD HEISSLER

DOUGLAS SCHEMLY

Christina Ahn '23



PHOTO COURTESY OF DOUGLAS SCHEMLY

New to the Highlands Math Department this year is Douglas Schemly. This year, he'll be teaching Introduction to Computer Science, Honors Computer Science, AP Computer Science Principles, and AP Computer Science A.

He has previously also taught Algebra 1, Algebra 2, Pre-Calculus, AP Calculus AB, AP Calculus BC, Programming with Visual Basic, and Programming

with C#. Before coming to Highlands, he taught at Wayne Valley High School for 14 years which is where he also went to high school. During high school, he was an all-star athlete, playing soccer, ice hockey, golf, and even pole vaulting. He went on to graduate high school in 2000, and then graduate from Montclair State University with a degree in Mathematics Education and a degree in Computer Science in 2006.

Schemly explained that what prompted him to become a teacher was his desire to help students grow into hard-working, respectful, caring, and resilient adults along with wanting to encourage students to develop an appreciation of mathematics and computer science. That desire is what prompted him to earn both a master's degree in Educational Technology and Education Leadership from Lamar University and even-

tually becoming a teacher here at Highlands. In his free time, he loves spending time with his family, consisting of his wife, and twin boys. With his family, he loves to go on walks, bike rides, playing various games/sports, building puzzles or legos, and going on trips. He also loves to play golf, work out, play video games, read, listen to music, and watch tv. According to Schemly, "I am very excited about starting the next part of

my career at Northern Highlands. I have heard such great things about the students, families, and staff and I am looking forward to being part of the Northern Highlands family!" ■

AXELLE SANDT

Irene Chen '23



PHOTO COURTESY OF AXELLE SANDT

Northern Highlands introduces a new teacher in the World Language Department, Axelle Sandt. As for this year, Sandt teaches French I, French II, Honors French II, and French III. Sandt attended Villanova University and currently studies t Montclair State University for her masters degree. She taught at a French-American Academy for years then worked as a fashion trainer at Net-A-

Porter prior to returning to teaching. Before coming to Northern Highlands, Sandt also worked at Glen Rock High School. Sandt raised 3 children in a bilingual environment. Her experience and enthusiastic passion for the French language and culture drives her to pursue a career in education. She hopes to inspire students by spreading different cultures. At home, Sandt loves to play with her seven-year-old dog, Tobi. She and her family like to go outdoors;

they enjoy biking, traveling, and spending as much time together as possible. She loves to run and plans to enter the New York City Marathon on November 7th. In addition, she runs to raise funds for cancer research. As a new teacher at Northern Highlands, Sandts looks forward to becoming a part of the Highlands community, a great teaching experience, and bonding with her students whom she loves. In the classroom, Sandt

wants to let students have the opportunity to get more exposure to French through creative, engaging, and interactive lessons. As a teacher, Sandt aims to transform her passion for French to her students, encourage and maintain students' interest in a foreign language, and change their perspectives in other cultures and traditions. To find Sandt, stop by the world language wing and say hi!■

ANGELINA HAMADA

Mitsuki Uehara '22



PHOTO COURTESY OF ANGELINA HAMADA

Another new face this year is Angelina Hamada in the Music Department. This year, Hamada will teach band and AP Music Theory, while also directing marching band and jazz band. When asked what drew her to this profession, Hamada explained that she did not realize that a music career was an option for her until her own band teacher encouraged her to do so. For a very long time,

she thought that she would go into something in math or science. However, her teacher's words of encouragement changed her entire mindset. Hamada studied music education at Montclair State University and just recently received her master's degree in conducting at Northwestern University. Prior to Highlands, Hamada taught at a high school charter school in Newark, New Jersey and at a middle school in Lincoln Park, New Jersey. She has

also taught at the Paterson Music Project in Paterson, New Jersey. From these experiences, she said she gained "a lot of respect for her students and what they go through and their struggles." In addition, she learned about creating connections with people no matter how different they may be. Outside of school, she enjoys cooking. Additionally, she loves going out to eat at restaurants, noting her appreciation for "really good food."

She also enjoys video games; "The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild" being one of her favorites at the moment. Hamada would like to create a welcoming environment, such that her students can have a "really meaningful, fulfilling music experience in person with other people where they feel like they can connect with others and express themselves."■

NEW ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL IN TOWN

Michael Koth has been named Assistant Principal of Athletics

Julia Kantzer '23

This September, former Assistant Principal Michael Koth took on the permanent role of Assistant Principal of Athletics. In the early months of 2021, Robert Williams announced his retirement from the role of Director of Athletics and Student Activities at Northern Highlands, leaving an opening for Koth to take over as the acting Athletics Director through the end of the 2020/2021 school year. The responsibilities of the Assistant Principal of Athletics include, "scheduling games, overseeing the

athletic program, evaluating and hiring coaches as needed, making sure that student athletes and coaches meet the proper requirements to play, making sure that everyone holds the rules of fair play and sportsmanship (according to the NSIAA and Big North Conference), and [providing] transportation to and from athletic contests," Koth explained. Additionally, Koth will continue his role as the school's Security Specialist, making sure to "keep our school safe." While working as the temporary Director of Athletics, Koth found himself "reminiscent of when [he]

first started at Highlands as a teacher and a coach." He has coached all three levels—freshman, junior varsity, and varsity—of the football and spring track teams. Koth also mentioned how appealing "being around coaches and kids who were passionate and like minded in their interests," was while filling in for Williams. At the end of the 2020-2021 school year, Koth also led the athletic department through many struggles. "Why should we try to recreate or hire someone else when we have somebody who has covered the

position, is capable of doing the job, and wants the position?" Principal Joseph Occhino rhetorically asked in response to questions about finding someone else for the position. Williams led the athletic program at Northern Highlands successfully for 18 years, and Koth aims to carry this reputation on himself. Rather than coming into this position and trying to make tons of changes, he sees a program running well where he wants to "just keep [his] hand on the wheel, monitor things, and see what might need improvement."

Occhino believes that with Koth's "organizational skills and attention to detail," the athletic department will continue to move in the right direction.■



PHOTO COURTESY OF DOREEN ALBANO

WELCOME TO NORTHERN HIGHLANDS

DR. LARocca's NEW POSITION

From Computer Science teacher to Assistant Principal

Continued from page 1

Rome took Intro to Computer Science with LaRocca last year and with his love of coding recently launched an app called “Parkaroo” that helps drivers in New York City find parking.

Rome goes on to explain LaRocca’s support for

the project, detailing, “he was always available to help, encouraging me to push through and guiding me.”

Rome also mentioned how LaRocca stopped him at school and asked for an update, disclosing, “a year later, and he was like, ‘hey, email me, keep me in the loop’.

I mean, he’s helped me,

“One of the most passionate teachers I’ve ever had.”

Senior Kalen O’Connor

personally, more than any other teacher I’ve had.”

Another former student of LaRocca’s, senior Kalen O’Connor, who took Computer Science Principles last year reveals, “he was a great guy, he was down to earth and one of the most passionate teachers I’ve ever had.”

He then explains how

he plans on studying computer science in college, continuing that “LaRocca definitely played a part in influencing my interests.”

Before taking the class, O’Connor admits that he had no experience in the field, but LaRocca’s passion played a major role in him taking AP Computer Science A this year and choos-

ing the major.

Students and staff alike can agree that with his passion for education and fresh perspective, LaRocca is just the person for this role. ■

MIDDAY MUNCH ALL DAY, EVERYDAY

Full-day schedule brings lunch back Students return to school fully in-person

Continued from page 1

There was talk of potentially not having lunch again this year but the administration realizes that the cafeteria provides so much more for students than just lunches.

It gives students the ability to communicate with their friends and have a break in the middle of the school day.

The social aspects of being in the cafeteria are one of the main aspects of being a student, and looking at the wellness and your social and emotional well-being, we thought it was important to include that in your school day,” Assistant Principal of Student Affairs Dr. Tony LaRocca explained.

To help students who would prefer to be spread out from other students while eating, there are other locations around the campus for students to eat at.

“During the lunch peri-

od, you can go to the cafeteria, eat on both the first and second floor, room 125 and 126 is not a classroom this year, there are...about 30 desks that are in there,

“The social aspects of being in the cafeteria are one of the main aspects of being a student ”

Assistant Principal of Student Affairs, Dr. Tony LaRocca

center. That breezeway’s tables were brought in under the overhang so people can go sit even if it’s...raining out,” Principal Joseph Occhino explained.

The cafeteria not only provides more structure to the school day, but also helps students’ mental health by giving them a break from classes and the chance to chat and connect with their peers in ways that weren’t as easy for the past year and a half.

Not to be forgotten, are Chef David’s famous chocolate chip cookies also available in the cafeteria again. ■

Anara Pollack ’23

Northern Highlands is back to operating on a full-day schedule with all students in the building, following over a year of virtual or hybrid learning with shortened days.

The main reason for this is that “Governor Murphy made it clear that all public school students must start full day, in-person, instruction with no option for remote learning,” principal Joseph Occhino stated.

Occhino adds that contingency plans are already in place for situations in which a state-wide order is released or an outbreak occurs.

“If we are permitted to have some type of remote instruction, then we would pick up on the schedule we had last year (instruction beginning at 7:45 A.M. and ending at 12:29 P.M.)”.

Students and staff have mixed feelings about being

back in school full-time, compared to the shorter days at home.

Freshman seminar and AP Economics teacher, Donna Scrivanich, said that she is now more appreciative of the “quality time with [her] students, having everyone in class be in person, teaching in front of the room, and walking around and seeing [her] students work.”

Although having more or the afternoon was enjoyable, “I lost so much time with my students, and there was so much material that I wasn’t able to get through,” she said.

Scrivanich also feels a lot of topics were rushed and would rather have given up her afternoons if it meant more time with students.

Junior Lily Rodriguez said, “although I definitely have more schoolwork than last year, I enjoy being in-person more. I do miss having a half day, howev-

er, because I had more free time.”

As of now, vaccinations are not required for students-- only for teachers and staff.

There is also the question of what future snow days may look like, now Northern Highlands teachers have proven it possible to educate from home.

“We recently received confirmation from the New Jersey Department of Education that virtual instruction cannot be used in lieu of a snow day,” Occhino said. ■

SETTING GOALS FOR SUCCESS

District approves 2021-2022 goals, including an equity goal

Cat Corrado ’23

District Goal No. 1—stemming from the Wellness Department’s focus on equality and inclusion—along with the other district goals for the 2021-2022 school year were approved at a recent Board of Education meeting.

District goal No. 1 states, “In accordance with the new legislation regarding equity, Northern Highlands will address the political, economic, and social contributions of persons with disabilities and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people throughout our school district.”

With this goal put in place, Northern Highlands is, “going to be working this year not only on taking

a diversity audit, so looking at the things we already do within the school, but also looking at how we can be more open and inclusive to different kinds of student populations,” and “reach out to different student groups and populations to see if there are better ways that we can support them,” supervisor of Wellness, Equity & Digital Media, Dr. Jessica Verdicchio explained.

Members of Highlands staff are going to be working with Monmouth University on a year-long cohort project and seeing how they can redefine some of the goals within the school to meet student needs.

Verdicchio also explained, “we are also going to be opening up and hav-

ing a student social justice group to get input about the things that we can do at Highlands to better support the needs of LGBTQ+ students and students from different race and ethnic

“We are just looking to make sure that we can make Highlands a more inclusive and kind place.”

Supervisor of Wellenss, Equity & Digital Media, Dr. Jessica Verdicchio

backgrounds and also our students with disabilities. Overall, we are just looking to make sure that we can make Highlands a more in-

clusive and kind place.”

To make this possible, “the district has put together several committees that have been established to drill down into programs that we can implement here

at Highlands for the inclusion of our students,” principal Joseph Occhino said.

In addition to adding new programs, some al-

ready existing programs are going to be expanded. The mindfulness room will now be open to the staff and to students before school and during both lunches, functioning as “another space in the school where students can relax and chill as opposed to being in other places in the school that could be loud and social,” Verdicchio said.

The Wellness Club, run by Ms. Alison Rocca, will also be working on different school wide initiatives regarding being kind, respectful and inclusive of all members of the school community.

Another action being taken by Northern Highlands to encourage equality is buying new graduation gowns so all students wear

the same color, regardless of gender.

These initiatives have been well-received by students.

“I think this is a great initiative that will make people feel included and safe in the school. I am excited to see how this helps our school become stronger,” junior Gianna Cabrera said.

All these initiatives are based on helping the Northern Highlands community.

“Know that it is okay to reach out to someone for help when you or a friend is struggling. We are always here for you,” Rocca said. ■

HIGHLANDS ALUM IMPRESSES ON “JEOPARDY!”

Brianna Weck gave *The Fling* an inside look at her experience on the show

Wren Cindrich '22

Former Highlander Brianna Weck, class of 2014, was a recent competitor on “Jeopardy!” The episode, filmed in March and aired in August, features Weck alongside fellow competitors Max Wagner and Matt Amodio.

This September, I got the opportunity to interview Weck and learn about her experience on the show.

Weck is an American University graduate who currently works as a Community Engagement Manager in Arlington, VA. She first applied to be on the show in 2018. After securing an in-person audition, she was set to film in March of 2020.

A week before the filming date, the studio shut down due to COVID-19, and she was told the show would be postponed for six

weeks. A little over a year later, she finally got the opportunity to film.

When asked about how COVID-19 affected the show, Weck described it as a “very strict experience,” while also acknowledging that it was “nice to know they were being so cautious about everything.” A PCR test was required before

leaving her home state, in addition to a rapid test before the filming date. Masks were worn at all times except while filming. Weck also noted that safety measures prohibited on-site makeup artists. Due to this, Weck did her own makeup before going on. She joked that she told people, “If I look bad it’s not my fault, if I look

good it is my fault.”

When asked about the most challenging questions, Weck recalled two. The first one was in Double Jeopardy! (the second round of the show): “Langoustine is a shellfish; this similar word is a tropical fruit.” The Answer: a mangosteen.

This “triple stumper” left even Matt Amodio, the current reigning champ, without an answer. “I hadn’t even heard about [a mangosteen] until after the show,” Weck laughed, “I didn’t even know what that was.”

“Final Jeopardy! was really hard,” Weck added, “I’m not good with flags.” The Final Jeopardy! question was: “The use of red, yellow & green as Pan-African colors began with the flag of this nation, the continent’s oldest independent country.” Answer: Ethiopia. Weck guessed Liberia, and

Amodio was the only contestant to answer correctly.

Weck finished the game in second place and described her overall experience on the show as “bittersweet”; “I am a huge fan of Alex Trebek, always have been,” she explained.

For readers unaware, Alex Trebek was Jeopardy’s legendary former host, active for 37 seasons. In 2020, he passed away. Although Trebek was initially supposed to host Weck’s episode in March, she commends Joe Buck for his role as host on her episode and said that he “did a great job.”

When elaborating on her experience she indicated that “I’m grateful for it, I’m super happy about it, but all-in-all that was kind of the bittersweet moment. COVID really pushed back on what would have been the complete fantasy in my

head.”

Weck ended the interview with advice for any trivia-loving Highlander who would like to be on the show. She urges interested students to do some research and look into Jeopardy’s digital “Anytime test.” She also recommends “reading the news, reading articles, [and] reading things that are interesting,” in order to stay curious and pick up trivia that could be useful.

At the end she admits that the most important thing “...is to never count yourself out, because the phone call I got was a complete surprise...Just go for it, you never know! ■



Art by Ayana Amin '22

“I’m grateful for it, I’m super happy about it, but all-in-all that was kind of the bittersweet moment. COVID really pushed back on what would have been the complete fantasy in my head.”

Caroline Weck

MARK YOUR CALENDAR, FALL IS HERE

A guide for Highlanders to take advantage of all fall festivities this season

Julia Boydel '22

As the weather gets cooler and the leaves fall, Highlands students seem to get a couple of days off in the autumn. In order to take a break from your schoolwork, there are so many festive-fall activities to do this season with friends, family, or alone.

For a Sunday morning adventure consider checking out the Ramsey Farmers Market. Every Sunday from 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM, you can find tons of cool sellers with super good food, jewelry, and maybe even some hot apple cider!

The chill fall atmosphere makes for some of the best weather to have a picnic. If you are ever looking for something to do for lunch with your

friends when bored, consider having a picnic! You can get super creative with it by making a charcuterie board in the shape of a leaf. Consider even having a team picnic one day after a weekend game or practice. This picnic will be a great team bonding experience.

Though it may seem basic, another thing you can do in the fall is going pumpkin and apple picking. Taking a ride up to Demarest Farms in Hillsdale is super quick and easy, and also lots of fun. Definitely pick up some fresh apple cider donuts while you’re up there.

Demarest Farms also hosts a drive-through Halloween Light Show. This is a unique activity to do with friends or family, as you drive through listening to spooky music.

After you’ve gone apple picking, there are tons of fun recipes you can make with your friends and family! You can make apple pie, applesauce, candy apples, and so

much more. Consider bringing these super delicious treats to a friend or family gathering such as Thanksgiving or a movie night. Succeeding pump-

Consider even having a team picnic one day after a weekend game or practice. This picnic will be a great team bonding experience.

kin picking, there are tons of things that you can do with your pumpkins. Grab a simple pumpkin carving kit from your local grocery or convenience store. Have fun carving in faces or designs to your pumpkin, and then light them up with a candle. You can also grab some paint and paint your pumpkin. Be creative with it!

For those that enjoy the scare aspect of fall, you’ll love these next ideas. Brighton Asylum is relatively close to us, and is considered one of the scariest haunted attractions in the nation, and has been featured on

The Today Show, ABC, and more. If you ever have any free time and you like jumpscare, check it out! If being in a haunted asylum isn’t for you, but you still like jumpscare, try a haunted

hayride. Phantobia Haunted Attraction in Montvale is another great option! Though it may be scary in the moment, it makes hilarious memories with your loved ones.

Lastly, you can watch scary movies to get in the fall/halloween mood. You could even get a projector and watch it on a big screen if you want a fun activity to do with your friends! If scary isn’t your thing, there are plenty of fall movies that aren’t scary at all.

Fall is such a fun time of year and there are so many fun activities to do with your friends and family, so take advantage of it while you can! ■



Grace Paolillo '22

Painting pumpkins is a fun alternative to carving them.



Photo Courtesy of Brighton Asylum

Brighton Asylum is a great place to check out as we get closer to Halloween.



Grace Paolillo '22

Homemade applesauce is a delicious way to get in the fall spirit.



Art and Layout by A

「memories,
activities, and
goals for the year...」

Chase Fishman's Summer...

With things slowly returning to normal, many students were hoping to have a fun and stress-free summer. In fact, junior Chase Fishman had an action-packed summer filled with trips, sports, friends, and more.

Fishman took a family vacation to San Diego, California where he spent time on the beach and visited the San Diego zoo. His favorite part of the trip was eating various Mexican-American meals.

Although Fishman had a great time in California, his most memorable activity was going to the beach with his friends. During the day they played football and went fishing and swimming. At night, they played cards.

Now that we are back in school, Fishman is looking forward to a normal year where he can see everyone in person. He further explains that he is also hoping to make it to the playoffs for football. Fishman looks forward to making the best of his junior year.

Caleigh Amano '23



Getting Summer '21

Ayana Amin '22

Julie Diktas' Summer...

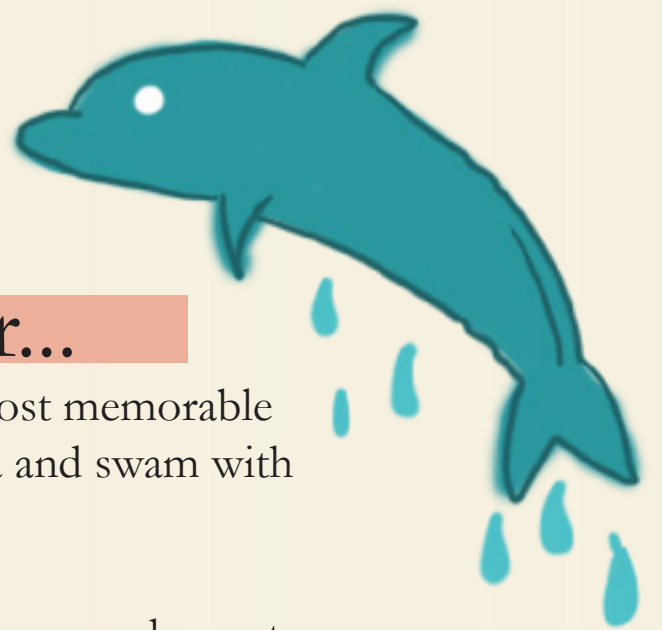
Julie Diktas, a senior, had the time of her life this summer! Her most memorable moment of the past couple months was when she went to Florida and swam with dolphins.

Diktas works at Banana Republic at Tices Corner. Diktas works for many hours to save up for college, along with most other seniors.

Diktas' favorite thing that she did this summer spending time with her sister, Natalie, before she headed back to Fordham University.

Diktas' least favorite thing she did this summer was work on her college applications. She explains that if she could relive this summer, she would love to try cliff jumping.

Phoebe Kaufman '22



Alex Paolillo, a junior, had a very eventful summer vacation. Paolillo started her summer traveling to Block Island, a small island off the coast of Rhode Island, with her sister and cousins. Paolillo enjoyed spending time at the beach and eating at her favorite restaurant, The Oar.

Once Paolillo got home she took various art classes at One River, in Allendale; her favorite being an oil painting class.

Before school started, Paolillo took on a role as a Counselor-in-Training at Tenaflly Nature Center. There, she led a variety of activities and hikes with first through fourth grade students.

Though Paolillo misses summer, she is ecstatic to take Honors Marketing 2 this year with Mrs. Lederman!

Grace Paolillo '22

Alex Paolillo's Summer...



HERE WE GO AGAIN: Return of ABBA

Famous '70s band, ABBA, set to release new album after 40 years

Michaela Powell '22

After taking a 40-year-long hiatus, the hit group ABBA has finally decided to make a comeback with their new album “Voyage,” which is set to debut November 5.

Although ABBA was popularized because of the musical, “Mamma Mia,” very few know the true story behind this Swedish music group.

The band officially formed after many music collaborations between the 4 members (Benny Andersson, Björn Ulvaeus, Agnetha Fältskog, and Anni-Frid Lygstad) after they each paired off and got engaged.

With Andersson on the keyboard, Ulvaeus on the guitar, and Fältskog and Lygstad as lead vocalists, the band Festfolk was born.

It was until they placed third in the EuroVision

song contest of 1973 with their single “Ring Ring” that they began receiving recognition.

Though this brought some attention to their music, the following year’s Eurovision solidified their success.

They entered under their current name, ABBA (standing as an acronym for their names), and won with their song “Waterloo.”

They released their first ABBA album later that year, also titled *Waterloo*.

ABBA’s *Waterloo* album was the beginning of the distinct sound we still know.

In their early music especially, they drew on sound from folk rock and pop rock, with a mixture of reggae, resulting in an extremely diverse and upbeat collection of songs.

However, their music changed with the times, as

they tried to keep up

with the disco renaissance.

Their album, *Voulez Vous*, was heavily influenced by this disco era, causing them to stray from

the disco craze, they returned to their classic sound with their album *Super Trouper*.

It included “the Win-



ABBA group pictured in 1974

their usual Europop and rock blend of their previous albums.

After the passing of

ner Takes it All” and “Super Trouper,” which clearly denotes an underlying sadness due to the combination of lyrics and tone.

Their final album of

the 70s, *The Visitor*, also follows these somber themes in the lyrics, despite maintaining an upbeat tempo, since it was written during the divorce of the other couple, Andersson and Lygstad.

Though the group went their separate ways, Ulvaeus and Andersson later created the famous musical *Mamma Mia*, which featured all of their greatest hits from “Honey, Honey” to “Waterloo” in the ending credits.

Of course, it had to feature their biggest disco jams, “Mamma Mia” and “Dancing Queen” that have become especially iconic today.

Most members of Gen Z actually prefer the movie versions of their songs, since according to junior Ciara Powell, “it is so nostalgic to [her] childhood.”

This is a common thread amongst the students at Highlands, myself

included, since I grew up watching the movie, rather than listening to ABBA songs on the radio as my parents did.

As a result, students’ favorite songs are also usually songs from the movie, even if they prefer the original version of it.

For instance, junior Sarah Cornacchia’s favorite song is the original version of “Slipping Through My Fingers,” which is also featured in the scene before Sophie’s wedding in the first movie.

However, despite Highland’s immense love of ABBA, many students are still unaware of the group’s revival.

Hopefully, this album will continue the ABBA legacy for the following generations to come. ■

LIVE MUSIC FESTIVALS LIVE ON

Highlanders thrilled with the return of popular music festivals

Kaiden Canariato '22

Music festivals have quickly risen in popularity in recent years due to famous artists coming together and all performing in one place.

Festivals with musical guests have been taking place for decades as a meeting place for music lovers from all over the nation. Most notably, the Woodstock Musical Festival in 1969 did just this and set the bar for festivals moving forward.

Today, annual musical festivals happen at different times throughout the year in different cities. For people residing in the tri-state area, Governors Ball

on Governor’s Island, New York is extremely popular. On the west coast, Coachella has become a household name because of the high profile attendees and fashion amongst guests.

In Chicago, people travel far and wide every year to watch their favorite artists perform at Lollapalooza. Since the pandemic, music festivals have temporarily stopped. That is, until this summer. Lollapalooza was immensely popular and had an estimated number of 385,000 attendees. It took place during the first weekend in August 2021. People from all over the United States travel to Chicago for this festival every year, usually

because of the famous performers that headline the event. This year, headliners included Miley Cyrus, Post Malone, Megan Thee Stallion, Roddy Rich; Tyler, the Creator, and many more.

Governor’s Ball is a more popular festival that Highlands students usually attend because it takes place every year on Governors Island, outside of Manhattan. This year, the venue has moved from the island to Citi Field. This enables a better overall experience for attendees because there is less of a walk between stages. Additionally, stages will be placed at different ends of the field which allows for a 360 degree musical



The Governors Ball lineup for 2021

experience.

Due to the pandemic, the festival has not taken place the past couple of years. I got the chance to discuss the experience of GovBall with senior Isabella Marino, who attended the event prior to the pandemic hitting. Marino explains how her “favorite part was seeing performers like Brockhampton and Tyler, the Creator perform live.”

She also mentioned how she loved the fun atmosphere the festival had. Additionally, Marino stated how she would go again “if [she was] a little bit older, it [was] more accessible, and [she knew] and liked more

artists that were performing.” GovBall 2021 took place during the last weekend in September (9/24-9/26) over Friday, Saturday and Sunday. This year’s headliners included Billie Eilish, A\$AP Rocky, J. Balvin, and Post Malone.

Juniors Belle Bennett and Braden Slayne both planned on attending. Both agreed that they were “particularly looking forward to seeing Post Malone and Carly Rae Jepsen perform.” Although the festival was set for the end of September,

Bennett and Slayne explained that tickets to the festival sold out fast, which lead to them purchasing their tickets back in June.



Overhead shot from Lollapalooza 2021

NOW THAT'S MUSIC TO MY EARS

Eleanor Ha discusses the importance of music and her time at Juilliard

Emily Ghan '23

Music makes up a large part of our everyday lives, especially at Highlands. You can see kids listening to their favorite tunes between passing periods, or even hear some faculty picks every Friday.

However, some of the most music enthusiastic people are the musicians themselves.

These are the people who are heavily involved in the art, both inside and outside of school. Marching band, Highlands a cappella, and the performers involved in the school plays are just to name a few.

Eleanor Ha, a current junior, is an avid participant in music, specifically classical music. She was a part of the Highlands band her sophomore year, and now takes AP Music Theory.

She is also involved in Juilliard Pre-College to further her passion for music, namely the bassoon. Some of her favorite pieces to play were "Weber Bassoon Concerto" and "Vivaldi in A Minor."

She said that her favorite thing about playing

these pieces is how "lively" and "full of energy" they are. She finds classical music to be an escape. She emphasizes how "classical music is more abstract in the sense that it's up for interpretation, whereas music on the radio and songs from major artists today have a set meaning that's in the lyrics".

One of Eleanor's favorite parts of being in the band at Juilliard is the relationships that she's built with the people there. She talks about how "everyone is always willing to lend a helping hand" if there is ever confusion with the music or anything in general.

She says how playing in a band improves her life by making it "a calming getaway from all the loud noise". She continues to say, "school is all about balancing your classes with your extracurriculars and everything in between."

We all know that it can be challenging to find time in the day for yourself when there are a lot of things to get done.

I think that being a part of a band is a good community of people to

surround yourself with because they understand the school aspect of life as well as the music oriented part of your life".

She finishes off her statement with, "I think people who are passionate about music have the ability to reflect and project their love for it onto others who may not have seen it as such a necessity for life."

Eleanor is one out of many who see music as an opportunity for them to take a breather from the craziness that's called high school.

She mentions how "listening to music even for a few minutes every day" helps to bring her mood up. Highlands incorporates music frequently into the lives of its students whether you realize it or not.

You could be walking down the hallway and hear the harmonizing of the symphonic band or the weekly pop music blasting over the speakers. These small incorporations of music can uplift the spirits of Highlanders and bring us together like the community we'll always strive to be. ■

"I think people who are passionate about music have the ability to reflect and project their love for it onto others who may not have seen it as such a necessity for life."

Eleanor Ha



Photo Courtesy of Eleanor Ha

Eleanor Ha's passion for music is evident in her involvement here at

SHE'S ON HER WAY TO BROADWAY

Emily Pellecchia is ready to make her mark on the theater world

Isha Korgaonkar '24

Some people are just meant to be on stage. Under the bright lights. Acting as an entirely different character and enjoying every minute of it.

Senior Emily Pellecchia is a shining example of this. Pellecchia is a passionate theater enthusiast, with her favorite class in school being Actor's Workshop because it gives her a chance to "really discover and shape [her] true passion, which is theater and the Performing Arts."

Pellecchia got into singing and acting when she was in sixth grade, "which is relatively late for a lot of people who are very serious," she says. Pellecchia quickly got involved with many performing arts opportunities inside and outside of school.

In her freshman year, she was part of a performance troupe outside of Highlands. She was able to first take Actors Workshop as a sophomore and states that, "the seniors, especially at the time, were incredible and just so welcoming. I keep in touch with half of them still. What a great

group of people!"

Pellecchia then auditioned for the fall play, which was The Government Inspector, and truly enjoyed it. She continued exploring her passion by participating in the musical, How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying. She loved both experiences.

She says, "like I said, because of those seniors—they were so welcoming—I just want to make sure that I'm doing the same thing for these upcoming freshman and sophomores. I think that's something that's really important to me -- is to do that and be that for someone else." Not only is Pellecchia passionate about theater, but she also shares her interest with younger students and further inspires them! As she says, "I love making people feel welcome - it's my favorite thing ever."

At Highlands, Pellecchia is also part of the Honors Concert Choir class and one of the top high school a cappella groups in the country, Highlands Voices.

Pellecchia has also served as a production as-

sistant for Shrek Junior at Rhino Theatre, and helped the choreography, director, and music director. She also stage-managed the show.

More recently, Pellecchia has not been given many opportunities to per-

form at Highlands due to COVID-19. She has found herself exploring various community theaters and

was cast as "Mae Tuck in Tuck Everlasting and Portia in Something Rotten, which were two amazing roles with two amazing companies."

It is clear that Pellecchia has a profound passion for the performing



Photo Courtesy of Emily Pellecchia

Pellecchia's theater headshot.

form at Highlands due to COVID-19. She has found herself exploring various community theaters and

arts, and this passion stems from the reasons why she does theater. In her words, "I love singing because I'm

not the best with words, and I love acting for that same reason. I find that when I am on stage and I am singing, I am being the truest form of myself. I find that I'm able to speak more truthfully and more honestly on stage, with a thousand people watching me."

Another touching reason that Pellecchia loves theater is her brother. "My brother has Duplication 15, and he is such a sweet guy, and he makes me so happy. And just to see him so happy about me being on stage makes me want to do it even more just to make him happy," she says.

It is no surprise, then, that Pellecchia will be pursuing singing and theater in college. This decision did not come easily, though, "I kept saying I didn't want to do it because of this and that, but deep down inside, I did know that I wanted to do it."

Pellecchia was selected for Carnegie Mellon's (one of the top performing arts schools in the country) pre-college summer drama program, and this experience was a real turning point for her. ■

She says, "It was kinda shocking...they were asking me if I was going to send in a pre-screen, which is insane. So it was just really eye-opening for me and they were all asking me if I was going to pursue it, and it was just incredible." For anyone who does not know, a pre-screen is an audition for an audition for college -- so essentially, a double audition process.

Pellecchia further emphasizes, "I'm so ready for it. I've always doubted myself, but I'm ready, and I'm sure of it, and I feel really good about it."

In addition, Pellecchia received some exciting news on September 27. She was cast as Belle in her very first adult show, Beauty and the Beast at Rhino Theatre. Her father also auditioned and was cast as Belle's dad, so she gets to act with her father on stage!

It is clear that Pellecchia is wonderfully talented, kind, and passionate about what she does. Highlanders, let's wish her the best in all her future endeavors and a "break a leg" for her theatre-filled future! ■

MARVEL'S "SHANG-CHI" MADE ME FEEL SEEN

The importance of Asian representation in the movie industry

Karen Bae '23

82 years after Marvel, the most famous publishing comic company in the world, was first created, the first Asian-led superhero film was finally released on September 3, 2021. The main cast includes Canadian actor Simu Liu (Shang-Chi) and American actress

She plays Shaun's friend Katy in the movie and acts as comedic relief throughout the dialogue, keeping the film lighthearted. As expected, Marvel never fails to disappoint when it comes to action. The martial arts in this movie feels incredibly authentic as a viewer. Even though I'm

community and made us all feel seen." Furthermore, the plot has heartwarming messages about love between family and friends as well as themes about self-identity -- accepting the good and bad sides of yourself. The film also touches upon more sullen topics like family conflict and loss in an artful

ica in a predominantly white community, I never saw American movies with people who looked like me. The films that did have Asian characters never included stories I could relate to or they mocked Asians. They either spoke broken English or were insignificant characters. "Shang-Chi" has so many small and significant details that pull at my heart. Shaun and Katy go to karaoke nights: classic trademark of Asian culture. They remove their shoes before entering a house. Katy is embarrassed that she can't speak Chinese well and that she's out of touch with her heritage. Katy's mom pleads Katy to get a "real job" instead of working as a valet parker. These small details have such a deeper meaning for me. According to Korean American poet Cathy Park Hong, in 1965, America needed to extinguish communism in



Photo Courtesy of Marvel Studios

As a result, they don't want to see their children struggle. "Shang-Chi" features Marvel's first Asian-American superhero. allowed nonwhites into the country. This was For my entire life I

That's why for me, "Shang-Chi" is not just any movie. It's an extension of what I want to tell the whole world about what it means to be Asian American.

Awkwafina (Katy). "Shang-Chi" is about a Chinese man named Shaun in the United States who is secretly a martial arts master. His father has amazing power due to ten mystical rings. Shaun is forced to confront his dark past, including his father's organization, when he returns to his mother's old village and fights in an intense war between monsters and people alike. I recommend this film to anyone who loves humor, action, and love in their movies. Awkwafina is a Chinese-Korean American actress who is famous for her comedic personality.

not a connoisseur of martial arts, the Kung-Fu felt so real. This movie has the best fight scenes seen in any of the Marvel movies so far. In addition, the special effects and computer generated imagery of the magical animals and scenery looks beautiful and incredibly real. Meadow Lu is an Asian American junior at Northern Highlands who says, "I would recommend this movie purely because of the cinematography and fight scenes. I felt so immersed while watching the movie. Overall I enjoyed the humor that Simu and Awkwafina bring to the scenes." She also said, "It empowered the [Asian]

manner. Not to mention, the female characters are extremely well-written. Fighting alongside Shaun and giving him strength (physically and emotionally) are a group of strong, smart, independent, and powerful women. The women are all on their own journeys as well. They are not just supporting characters to Shaun. What makes this movie so special is that it's not just one Asian character. It's so many different ones, and they all represent a small piece of the whole Asian experience. You might have heard the phrase "representation matters." Growing up in Amer-

ica in a predominantly white community, I never saw American movies with people who looked like me. The films that did have Asian characters never included stories I could relate to or they mocked Asians. They either spoke broken English or were insignificant characters. "Shang-Chi" has so many small and significant details that pull at my heart. Shaun and Katy go to karaoke nights: classic trademark of Asian culture. They remove their shoes before entering a house. Katy is embarrassed that she can't speak Chinese well and that she's out of touch with her heritage. Katy's mom pleads Katy to get a "real job" instead of working as a valet parker. These small details have such a deeper meaning for me. According to Korean American poet Cathy Park Hong, in 1965, America needed to extinguish communism in

when the minority myth started. America used the success of Asian Americans to promote capitalism and lessen the effect of the integrity of black civil rights. Asian Americans were supposed to be felt invisible. As Hong perfectly explains it, "Asians lack presence. Asians take up apologetic space. We don't even have enough presence to be considered real minorities. When I hear the phrase, 'Asians are next

Being seen for us, means everything. Asian American voices have never reached an impact as tremendous as Marvel.

poor non-Western countries and wipe the racist Jim Crow era from its reputation to prove its powerful democracy.

the "good" ones in exchange to not be discriminated against. History has built this misconception that Asians are to "cleanse" society. Hong says, "We are the carpenter ants of the service industry... We are math-crunching middle managers." Back then, only doctors, engineers, and mechanics were granted visas to the United States. The U.S. government only allowed the most educated and highly trained Asians to survive. This is why a lot of immigrant parents now are against art and music as a career. They

in line to be white,' I replace the word 'white' with 'disappear.' " Being seen for us, means everything. Asian American voices have never reached an impact as tremendous as Marvel. That's why for me, "Shang-Chi" is not just any movie. It's an extension of what I want to tell the whole world about what it means to be Asian American. ■



Photo Courtesy of Marvel Studios

Three of the main characters of "Shang-Chi."

GOOD FOR U, GOOD 4 WHO: OLIVIA RODRIGO

Olivia Rodrigo retroactively gives songwriting credit to Paramore

Jana Dabbagh '24

Following Olivia Rodrigo's first record-breaking release, "drivers license," came "deja vu," and the full album *Sour*, in May of 2021. Since it's release, Highlanders have been listening non-stop. It's filled with all the pop-funk tracks and slow ballads that have us listening non-stop. Audiences were quick to notice the hints of Paramore's 2007 alternative rock song "Misery Business" off their 2007 album *Riot!* in one of Olivia's songs titled "good 4 u."

So much so, that it became a trend on multiple social media platforms, with mash-ups being created for fans to enjoy both songs at once. What started as a trend and speculation that Paramore's Hayley Williams had a hand in the production of the song, became more real this past month.

On August 25, lead singer Hayley Williams posted on her Instagram story a screenshot of a post from Warner Chappell Music regarding "good 4 u's" Number #1 stance on the U.S Top 40 Chart.

The screenshot of the post mentioned both Williams and former band

member, Josh Farro (who left in late 2010), saying "huge shout out to our writers Hayley Williams and Joshua Farro."

Williams responded by captioning the story with "our publishers wildin rn."

Previously, Hayley Williams and Josh Farro were not known to be credited as songwriters before Warner Chappell Music released that post and before the song was released back in May. However, it was stated under the ASCAP Repertory database. Artists and fans were quick to react to this change on Olivia's album.

Since the credit change, Rodrigo plans to give up millions of dollars in royalties to Hayley Williams.



Photo Courtesy of Plugged IN

Since the release of her album, Rodrigo has swept the world by storm.

It is estimated that 50% goes to Williams and Farro, while the other 50% is split between Rodrigo and her producer Dan Nigro. Fans claimed she plagiarized Paramore's "Misery Business," while others criticized Williams for demanding credit and money from an 18-year-old artist for the band's influence on "good 4 u."

Rodrigo faced lots of hate for this claim of plagiarism, and it was never confirmed if Williams demanded credit and money.

Much of what was being said was purely speculation.

Ironically, Hayley Williams announced that the band would be retiring "Misery Business"

from live performances as she claims in an interview from 2018.

She says she no longer Vincent (Annie Clark) were credited retroactively on "deja vu" as well in June. Though band mem-

What started as a trend and speculation that Paramore's Hayley Williams had a hand in the production of the song, became more real this past month.

feels a connection to the song's lyrics she wrote as a teenager. "We feel like it's time to move away from it for a little while," she states.

This comes as one of many changes Rodrigo has made to her songs regarding credits.

Sour listed singing icon Taylor Swift and Jack Antonoff as writers on the fourth track of the album, "1 step forward, 3 steps back" upon the album's release.

This was due to the interpolation of melodies from Swift's song "New Year's Day" on her sixth studio album *reputation*.

Swift, Antonoff, and St.

bers of Paramore never actually had a hand in the production of good 4 u," melodies, rhythms, and other elements of "Misery Business" were interpolated into the song.

Interpolation refers to using melodies, or portions of melodies from a previously recorded song in a new one.

Instead of sampling it, the melody is rerecorded.

Sources finally stated too late to beat fan criticism that Olivia and her production team were in touch with Paramore before "good 4 u" was released.

One artist denied commenting against Olivia

Rodrigo.

After she was claimed to have copied Elvis Costello's guitar riff from his song "Pump It Up" on one of her smash-hit singles "brutal," he released a statement regarding the claims.

"This is fine by me. It's how rock & roll works. You take the broken pieces of another thrill and make a brand new toy.

That's what I did," he states. This could be applied to what many of Rodrigo's fans have been saying.

It is still unclear of Paramore and Olivia Rodrigo's stance on the situation as reps from both have not commented.

We can all hope that whatever the truth of the matter is, it leaves no strained relationships between artists in the music industry. ■

THE MUST-SEE SCI-FI CLASSIC MOVIE: DUNE

Read about one of the most anticipated films of 2021

Taia Charney '23

On September 3, the cast and crew of *Dune* premiered their movie for the first time exclusively in front of critics at the Venice Film Festival, some of whom are calling it the movie of the year.

The movie stars Timothée Chalamet as protagonist Paul Atreides; Oscar Issa as his father, Duke Atreides; Zendaya as Chani, Paul's love interest; as well as Jason Momoa, Rebecca Fergusen, Josh Brolin, Javier Bardem, Stellan Skarsgård, Dave Bautista, and many more.

Dune, based on the sci-fi novel by Frank Herbert, takes place in the year 10191, and tells the story of the Atreides House, who rule over the ocean planet of Caldan.

The Atreides are instructed by the emperor to rule over a new desert planet called Arrakis, home to the most valuable substance in the universe, a spice called Melange.

The appointment of the Atreides to rule over Arrakis, enrages their rival house, the Harkonnens.

Following the first exclusive screening in Venice on August 27, critics are raving, calling it "rousing

"Movie adaptations like Dune are a good way to make people our age want to read."

Junior Daniela Suarez

Heir to his father Duke, the gifted Paul Atreides finds a love interest in Chani, a native of planet Arrakis, and is entrusted with protecting the vital Melange.

After complex interactions of ecology, religion, technology and politics; all Houses, natives of Arrakis, the Padishah Emperor, the female order of the Bene Gesserit, and the dominant Spacing Guild, are led into a confrontation that will change humanity forever.

to experience," "out-of-this-world in every sense of the word and "like witnessing history, this is one of the few films that are bound to shape the decade in cinema."

This excitement has only intensified thanks to the crazy social media frenzy around its cast.

It is safe to say that the social media craze surrounding this film is largely credited to the fixation of users on the film's lead, Timothee Chalamet.

Since the pandemic,

Generation Z has shown a collective appreciation and admiration for Chalamet, his striking looks, his perceived humility and goodness, and of course, his exceptional talent.

After the first press conference at Lido's Casino building, Chalamet emerged in front of a sea of roaring Chala-maniacs, acting graciously and playing to the crowd who were swooning and cheering at his every move.

Also, Euphoria actress and golden-globe winner Zendaya has attracted lots of attention to the film for her collaboration with such incredible co-stars.

Movie adaptations are becoming more popular among the younger generations are reading less.

Recent and popular adaptations such as *Little Women*, *The Devil Wears Prada*, and more, have incentivized viewers to read the books.

Junior Daniela Suarez believes that "movie adaptations like *Dune* are a

good way to make people our age want to read more books, especially if we really like the movies' casts and characters."

With immense anticipation of what we hope will be the movie of the year, fans are already starting to read the novel.

After the original premiere date of December 18, 2020 was delayed, Warner Bros. Pictures has announced the new US release date as October 22, 2021. ■



Photo Courtesy of Behance

Star-studded *Dune* is sure to be a smashing success.

TOUCHDOWN ON THE TURF

Northern Highlands football is back and ready for their season

Connor Darling '24

At 6:30 AM during the hottest month of the year, cars started pulling into the Northern Highlands student parking lot.

This commotion in the early morning is very deliberate and structured to prepare for the football season.

Head Coach Greg Russo is in his third year running Northern Highlands' football team.

Other teams are taller, heavier and quicker, but they are not as tough as the team of Highlanders they face.

The 75 young men who walked out of those cars six days a week all summer would spend the next four to five hours lifting weights, conditioning, watching film, and learning plays, positions, and responsibilities.

They have been preparing to face some of the largest and most competitive public football programs in New Jersey: a state that is known for producing some of the most competitive players and teams.

Coach Russo said, "the team has grown so much in the last 3 years. They all work hard during the off-season and are at a level now where they know what it takes to win."

Russo is in his 5th year at Northern Highlands, serving as Offensive Coordinator his first two years and then adding the title of Head Coach before the 2019 season.

In his first year as Head Coach, Russo and the Highlanders won their first State Sectional title in 41 years and ended the season with a game at MetLife Stadium.

Before joining Northern Highlands, Coach Russo was on the coaching staff at Paramus Catholic, where he helped them win 3 New Jersey State Championships.

Northern Highlands kicked off the 2021 football season on the Sunday of Labor Day weekend with a match against Somerville at Rutgers Stadium in Piscataway, NJ.

The series of games dubbed the "Rumble on the Raritan" brought in the top high school football programs in New Jersey for five games per day over the long holiday weekend. Somerville was the top-ranked public high school football team in New Jersey before falling 32-20 to a Highlanders team that seemed to score almost at will in the second half of the game.

They also boasted a de-

fense that shut down one of the state's most explosive wide receivers when on defense.

This year, Northern Highlands is led by 17 seniors who are determined to win again under Russo's

and Wayne Hills.

The goal for the coaches and the players is to get back to MetLife Stadium. They are well on their way with a current 3-0 start to the season, with wins over Sommerville, PCTI and

saying "Coach Russo is a very determined coach, yet he knows how to build a great relationship with the players. He makes sure everyone on the team has a great time."

The mental and physical toughness that Northern Highlands shows on the field will determine how far they go this year.

An offensive and defensive line that can move their opponents backwards is influential in determining the winner of a football game. The conditioning and strength training that the Highlands team performs shows itself in those trenches.

Late in the 4th quarter when their opponents are tiring, the rapid-paced no-huddle offense that Arjona leads puts out the opposition.

When asked about the 2021 goal for the Highlands football team, Arjona succinctly says "Our goal is what it's always been. To get back to MetLife!"

Arjona shows the maturity and leadership everyone wants from their quarterback, adding "We just need to stay focused and work hard in practice every day. Then, our goal will be obtained!" ■



Nick Branca runs past Sommerville defenders.

Photo Courtesy of Peter Ackerman

The goal for the coaches and the players is to get back to MetLife Stadium. They are well on their way.

lead. Charlie Johnson, a 3-year starting lineman for the Highlanders said "Highlands has been so successful because Russo demands so much out of every player."

Enzo Arjona, quarterback of the Highlands football team and another 3-year starter, describes Russo's coaching style by saying he "is always being positive and always out-scheming other teams. He looks for perfection and he is one of the best coaches I've ever been coached by."

Northern Highlands plays in the very competitive New Jersey North Group 4. In addition to Somerville, the Highlanders' opponents this fall will include Passaic County Technical Institute, West Morris Central High School, Eastside (Paterson), Hackensack, Clifton, NV Old Tappan, West Essex

West Morris Central.

There is a saying that a chain is only as strong as its weakest link. Coach Russo's team focuses as much on the minutiae of a single special teams play as they do on their best offensive play.

To compete in football against the best schools in New Jersey, you have to excel at all aspects of the game. A great drive by Highlands can be offset in seconds by the opponent capitalizing on a small mistake.

Russo and the entire coaching staff's attention to detail and teamwork culture has empowered the players to become perfectionists at their positions and understand the importance of giving their all every time the ball is snapped.

Johnson talks about the balanced approach by

ENZO ARJONA COMMITS TO MONMOUTH

Highlands' Senior Quarterback to continue his career in college

Ethan Squadron '22

Northern Highlands' varsity football team is off to a hot start in the 2021 season after traveling to Rutgers to take down Somerville in a 32-20 contest.

Senior quarterback Enzo Arjona was the driving force behind this victory, totaling 224 yards passing, along with four total touchdowns and a passer rating of 132.1. The highest a quarterback can achieve is 158.3.

Starting at quarterback for Highlands since his sophomore season, Arjona led the Highlanders to a 9-3 record and a sectional championship. According to Arjona, he was able to receive "interest from all of the Ivy league schools, and a few of the major FBS programs" after a solid junior season. Arjona ended up fielding offers from

Columbia and Monmouth. On July 5, Arjona officially committed to play football at the University of Monmouth.

There was some thought by Arjona to wait until after his senior campaign to commit, but he had a chance to meet his goal, and he took that chance. Arjona says that he "was committed to seeking [his] goal to play in college. And Monmouth was the best choice for [him] to play at

beautiful campus and the atmosphere around it." He also stated that "the offense they run fits [him]." The offense Arjona is talking about is the spread offense, one that is typical for dual-threat quarterbacks like himself.

When colleges are looking at high school athletes to recruit, a big factor they consider is the team's success and how a player is contributing to wins. Arjona humbly attributed his

achieving core making plays. Also my tight end." Arjona knows that a player is only as good as the team around him, and a great winning team around him elevated his game to another level.

Senior wide receiver Kyle Major talked about what makes Enzo Arjona the perfect quarterback for Northern Highlands.

"What makes Enzo so good is the chemistry we all have behind our plays," Major said, "It leads him to trust us more, get the ball out to us, and be smart with the ball." That chemistry seems to be working so far, as Arjona and Major have already connected for two touchdowns in the first two games of the season.

Arjona explains that the recruiting process went so smoothly because of the strong support system he had. "Who helped me the most throughout the process was my family,"

Arjona explained, "And my head coach Greg Russo."

Arjona further describes how beneficial it was to have a supporting family

Arjona will look to cap off his strong career with a winning 2021 season. His dedication and love for the sport brings a new level of

"Who helped me the most throughout the process was my family and my head coach Greg Russo."

Senior Enzo Arjona

around him. His family attended numerous football camps and shared wise inputs, which helped Arjona throughout the entire recruiting process.

Head Coach Greg Russo was very involved in Arjona's recruiting process. Russo put together colleges that would best fit Arjona and helped get him the attention he deserved.

excitement to not only the team, but Highlands' sports as a whole.

Congratulations to Enzo Arjona on his commitment, and good luck to Northern Highlands' football team this season! ■

On July 5, Arjona officially committed to play football at the University of Monmouth.

the highest level."

When asked about what made Monmouth the best choice for him, he said it was because of "the

improvement over the years to his teammates.

He states, "My linemen and my skill players, like my running backs, and my re-

ORDER ON THE COURT

Girls volleyball team has high hopes for this season

Will Yallowitz '22

The Northern Highlands girls volleyball team has great potential to surprise everyone. Coming off of a 12-2 season, where they broke Immaculate Heart's 88-game win streak, the team is ranked number seven in the state by NJ.com and is currently 1-0 with a win against Passaic Tech.

Two major players are being replaced this season, Esmee Oehler and Athena Georgiades, who made up for a combined 70% of the kills last season. The team will have to find some new talent up front.

Despite the major absences, Coach Caryn Schanstine doesn't seem to be worried. Seniors Emma Lomuti, Ivanka Sikiric, Abby Chu, and Ruby van der

Heide are ready to take on the challenge.

"We have 11 new varsity players this year," Coach Schanstine explains. "Although we are young at the varsity level, the girls have had experience playing volleyball, and I think they are showing great improvement on their skill level as well as their chemistry as a team."

Nine seniors graduated from the team, and after last year's impressive run, this team definitely has big shoes to fill.

Ruby van der Heide is a senior setter and hitter who committed to continue her volleyball career at Columbia. She earned 1st Team All League and 1st Team All County last year, as well as 2nd Team All state Group 3.

Abby Chu is a senior

libero, who earned 1st Team All League, 1st Team All County and 2nd Team All State Group 3 in last season.

Emma Lomuti is a returning senior as a hitter. She earned 2nd Team All League last year.

skills leader is Ruby van der Heide with seven kills, and Clare O'Connor in second with six kills. Emma Lomuti has also made a major contribution with four kills.

The team's leader in assists is Ivanka Sikiric with fifteen, and a close second

games completed.

The leader of service points is senior Clare O'Connor with twenty three, and Ruby van der Heide with thirteen. Ivanka Sikiric and Emma Lomuti both have ten service points.

ver on the defensive side, Emma Lomuti has nine digs, and Abby Chu and Ruby van der Heide both have eight. Van der Heide and sophomore Anna Bryan-Jones both respectively have a block each. The team leader of aces is Clare O'Connor with seven and van der Heide with six.

Not only is the roster responsible for the team's success, but what really stands out for this team is their game plan. "We hope to improve our communication and build strong team

chemistry because those are two key factors for a successful volleyball team," Coach Schanstine says.

"“Never Fold” is our team motto: never give up and continue to play hard every point!”

Being ranked seventh in the state is impressive enough, but Coach Schanstine isn't satisfied and wants to go further, "It's not where you start, it's how you finish!" Good luck to Northern Highlands' girls volleyball team this season! ■

“I think they are showing great improvement on their skill level as well as their chemistry as a team.”

Coach Caryn Schanstine

Ivanka Sikiric is a returning senior and will have a big impact in setting.

Currently, the team's

being Ruby van der Heide with nine. The two seniors have the majority of the team's assists with only two

LET'S STICK IT TO THEM

Northern Highlands field hockey team is in it to win it

Joey Manberg '23

As the school season begins and sports start, many of our teams have high expectations, especially the Northern Highlands' field hockey team.

Led by Coach Jordan Paton, the Northern Highlands field hockey team posted an astonishing 9-1-1 record last year, placing them 2nd in wins and 1st overall in their respective conference.

The Northern Highlands field hockey team posted an astonishing 9-1-1 record last year, placing them 2nd in wins and 1st overall in their respective conference.

In fact, the field hockey team went undefeated against their conference opponents, with just one tie against Ramsey. The team was also undefeated at home, besides the Ramsey game.

The team was so dominant that they shut out every opponent they played in the regular season, besides Ramsey, outscoring their opponents 44-1.

They eventually lost in the Quarterfinal Round of the North East A NJSIAA Bracket 1-2, ending their season with their only loss.

It was a tough game all around, as Northern Highlands was ranked #5 (out of 13) while Ram

sey was ranked #4.

It could be easily said that the Northern Highlands field hockey team was a powerhouse, only allowing 3 points to be scored in the regular season and post-season combined.

Yet, this amazing run was throughout an up and down season. Field hockey was postponed, starting in October rather than September, as COVID regulations were strict.

The regulations pre-

In fact, friends and family are now allowed in the stands, a big confidence-booster for each person on the team.

Flatt added, "I am extremely happy to have all of my family and friends in the stands. Last season, we all lost our voices because we cheered for each other the loudest due to us not being able to have the support we needed. Now, by having our fans back, it has helped us build off that energy and

sing and have fun with each other to get us mentally and physically ready for a game. We have definitely gotten closer as a team because of the opportunities we get to be with each other."

Now, teachers and students can finally see each other in-person, which is helping the team tremendously. "I feel like it is really important for us to be in-person this year. We are able to fully communicate with our teachers and be fully focused on our academic side of being a student athlete," Flatt stated.

This switch back to in-person learning even has an impact on the team with Flatt saying, "There is a reason why student comes before athlete in student-athlete. By focusing on our grades and school work, it has all helped us have a better performance in our

games, since we know we are all prepared in our classes."

At the time of writing, the Northern Highlands field hockey Team is undefeated, with a record of 4-0,

into the success we've seen early this season. Our team is motivated to continue growing together and improving, with the mentality that each practice and game is as important as the last."

“Our team is motivated to continue growing together and improving, with the mentality that each practice and game is as important as the last.”

Coach Jordan Paton

and has shut out each of their opponents.

It cannot be understated how optimistic the outlook for the season is, with Coach Paton stating, "A lot of hard work has been put

Paton even added, "A huge strength for our team is the ability to transition up the field with speed, which will be a huge advantage throughout the season." ■



Belle Bennett dribbles the ball up the field.

KICKING IT IN COLLEGE

James Lucas to further soccer career after Highlands

Stephen Weiner '24

Senior James Lucas's hard work has paid off, as he recently committed to play Division 1 soccer at Manhattan College. Lucas committed in February of 2021 and had a lot to say why he chose to play in the Bronx.

"There are many reasons why I wanted to play soccer at Manhattan College. When I was looking at schools, I wanted a school that was in the city because of the many job opportunities after I graduate."

A big influence on Lucas's decision was his parents. "Both my parents attended Manhattan

College and they loved their experience there."

Lucas is definitely excited to play the sport he loves at such a high level.

"I have enjoyed playing the sport at a competitive level since I was a young child, and I will continue to push myself to become the best player I could possibly be."

It takes a lot of hard work and dedication to achieve such a great feat of playing Division 1 soccer.

Lucas continued to explain some of the highs and lows during his journey to playing college soccer.

"Being able to achieve this feat was

challenging at times because there were moments when I felt like I was not good enough or moments I felt like I wanted to quit."

There were many games I felt like my coach did not want me playing so I would sit on the bench, but that was all part of the learning process."

Injuries were a significant part of his playing career so far as well, as they are with all athletes at the competitive level.

"Not only did not getting a lot of minutes hold me back, but I had a few injuries as well. It was very hard to recover from some of these, such

as fracturing my ankle multiple times, but I had to stay mentally strong and know that I would recover from those injuries."

Off the field, Lucas hopes to achieve a lot in college.

"Since Manhattan is so close to the city, I hope to find many job opportunities and internships in my field as well. Also, one of the nice things about Manhattan is that they allow players to study abroad in the off season."

Of course, the senior had to credit his coaches who have helped him along the way.

"My coaches have

helped me improve by teaching me to become a leader on and off the field. I have developed many leadership skills such as giving my teammates advice, and encouraging them when they are down."

Being around high-level teammates, Lucas is excited to be able to contribute to an elite soccer program. "I also have learned that when one player doesn't do their job, the whole team suffers which is why you always must be engaged on the field at all times."

Congratulations to James Lucas on his Division 1 soccer commit-

ment! Good luck James!



Lucas's Instagram post announcing his commitment.


Photo Courtesy of James Lucas



Manhattan College is a popular school for Highlanders to commit.

Photo Courtesy of Manhattan College





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COMMITMENT CORNER

What schools committed seniors will attend next fall
Layout by Sammy Lever ('22)



Enzo Arjona is committed to Monmouth University for football.



Ruby van der Heide is committed to Columbia University for volleyball



Carly Riembauer is



James Lucas is committed to Manhattan College for soccer.



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2021

essentials

CHECKLIST

☒

SCHOOLS

Art and Layout by Ayana Amin '22

1. Pencil case (pens, pencils, post-its, etc.)
2. Planner
3. Extra masks
4. Hand sanitizer
5. Water bottle
6. Computer charger
7. Computer stylus
8. Headphones/earbuds
9. Calculator
10. Positive attitude!

