

THE HIGHLAND FILING

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Highlands Graduate Alexis Hamm dancing at prom in 2019

Photo Courtesy of Doreen Albano

BYE FINALS! No finals again for this year Mitsuki Uehara '22

Highlands has announced that there will be no final exams again this year. The plan was brought up during a meeting among the administrators, directors, and supervisors.

"Given the circumstances that we are under at this time, and the fact that our students have not been in the building on a consistent basis, we thought it would be best to cancel final exams again," stated Principal Joseph Occhino.

He stressed that the school's "purpose is to really take care of our students and do what's best for them." Although there will be no final exams, students will still take regular exams throughout the year that are of "high quality" in preparation for the future.

Assistant Principal Michael Koth also added that "to take a final exam in a school year that is unconventional" would be "unfair to both students to take that exam, but also teachers to construct an exam."

A lot went into the decision; it was followed by many students' happy cheers, while others expressed some concerns. Junior Allison Chong said that in the past, finals "were a large source of stress towards the end of the year," and is glad that she does not "need to worry about them."

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IT'S TIME TO BUILD A PROM! School announces the 2020-21 Junior/Senior Prom

Sania Sadarangani '21

At the January 25th Board of Education meeting, the conversation surrounding Junior and Senior Prom changed. School administrators announced that their decision to cancel both proms had been reversed.

As of now, Junior Prom has been moved from March 12 to May 21, because administrators believe that, given the current circumstances and guidelines, it would not be possible to host the event in March. The function is still set to take place at the Pearl River Hilton.

"The safety of our staff

and students has been paramount, and we will continue to follow the guidelines set forth by the CDC. If the guidelines still require social distancing and limits the number of people

Junior Prom Coordinator Michele Zungoli said.

Principal Joseph Occhino reinforced this sentiment, explaining that the status of both proms are dependent on the stipula-

tions.

Senior Prom is scheduled to occur on June 4th at The Rockleigh, as it has in years past. Just like the Pearl River Hilton, The Rockleigh adheres to all current state sanctioned COVID guidelines. Although this is the school's current plan, Senior Prom Coordinators Dr. Jessica Verdicchio and Robin Burton have said that they are open to adjustments, if need be.

"As of today, our plan is to hold the Prom at the Rockleigh. However, we are working closely with the school administration and the senior class council to consider some alternate

options, should we need to shift our plans," Verdicchio stated. School administrators have expressed that, given the time of uncertainty, both events are entirely dependent on indoor and outdoor gathering limits.

"Last year, we were able to have graduation because the limits were lifted to 500 people. If that were the case, we could do something outdoors, but even then we had to wear a mask and keep a 6 foot distance," Occhino said. Occhino also included that, if the indoor event was not permitted, they would absolutely consider having an outdoor prom at Highlands.

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"The safety of our staff and students has been paramount."

2022 Class Council Adviser
Michele Zungoli

for an indoor gathering, we will then have to re-evaluate what we can do," 2022 Class Council Adviser and

tions and guidelines at the time of the events, not only in New Jersey, but also in New York, due to the loca-

INSIDE

Race, Culture, and Curriculum

POC students share their perspectives through this critical look at cultural awareness in our school curriculum.

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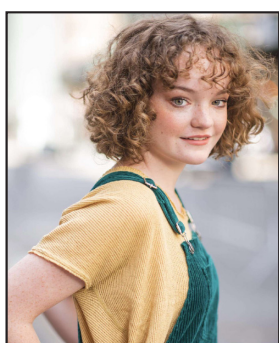


Photo Courtesy of Maggie McAuliffe '21

Artist Spotlight

Senior Maggie McAuliffe discusses her pursuit of acting and dreams of Broadway

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Photo Courtesy of Jamie Atchison

Faculty Corner

Teacher's Corner is expanded to Faculty Corner as we here from Director of Buildings and Grounds, Jaime Atchison

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BLACK HISTORY MONTH AT HIGHLANDS

How we can further support and celebrate Black History Month



Photo courtesy of Chahat Arora '22

Chahat Arora '22

In recent months, the Black Lives Matter movement has come to the forefront of our everyday life. With awareness of these issues increasing, our country has changed a lot. Black History Month is a continuation of the awareness and change being made.

If you look back into our history, many defining characters have been people of color. This includes Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks, two people who many look up to. Even looking into the re-

cent history of our country, one of the most important presidents we have had, Barack Obama. To celebrate Black History Month is to honor those who have made a long lasting impact on our community and country, and therefore it is extremely important to celebrate this event.

If we get a whole break for events such as Presidents Weekend, honoring Presidents who have changed this country, it seems just as important to at least celebrate those people of color who have also impacted us.

The pandemic has been a huge change in all of our lives. However, the Black Lives Matter movement prevailed, showing exactly how important the Black community is, and how they stand united.

And due to this, changes have been made for the benefit of the Black community. It is important for

us to keep acknowledging the Black community, and Black History Month is the way to do so.

We get taught in our history classes about the past in regards to slavery, abolition and so much more and all that relates to the history of black people. We learn about the “I Have a Dream” speech that was given by Dr. King; we learn about the underground railroad; we learn about how Rosa Parks sparked the Civil Rights movement; we learn about all the things that these people have done for the benefit of the country.

If they had not done these things, it is quite likely that the world we live in today would not be the same.

While Highlands is a school that tries its very best to be inclusive and a school full of students of all backgrounds, we have to do better to celebrate this

month. Where we usually see announcements on our canvas pages announcing important events and other things, I didn’t see anything about Black History Month.

That being said, there was a tweet marking the beginning of Black History Month by the school, however not everyone has twitter, so not everyone would be aware of this event.

Granted, we are in a pandemic, but Highlands has the power to do more. Black History Month is not being regarded as an important event in our community and it is essential to do more.

This is not something that is just happening this year, every year, Highlands does not bring much celebration with the fact that it is Black History Month

and there is something that we should be celebrating.

There are a lot of things that Highlands can do, simply posting a canvas announcement, or having a zoom assembly highlighting the importance of Black History month and how all the students can have some sort of participation in it.

As we continue moving forward in our lives, it is important to focus on the things and the people that have contributed to the way that we live life today.



Art courtesy of Nina Evans '21

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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.

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 interestested in placing an ad or subscribing, please contact the email listed above.

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National Suicide Prevention Hotline:
1-800-273-TALK (8255) [24/7 hotline]
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From the Desk of the Editors-in-Chief

Our last issue on staff. We didn’t want to say something cheesy like “time flies!” or “we can’t believe it’s over.” But, time *did* fly and we *can*’t believe it’s over, so fair warning, this might be a little cliché.

Now that we are writing our last official piece, we want to recount our first experiences with the paper and thank the people that supported us along the way.

Melissa: I’m not sure if there’s anything that I’m more proud of than my first headline. It was the summer of 2017, and Taylor Swift’s “Look What You Made Me Do” was *everywhere*. The song was so prominent that I even found myself humming it while finishing up my first story—a piece on school renovations. Wanting to impress my editors with a killer headline, I thought... and thought... and thought, until it hit me: as with most problems in life, Tswift was the answer. Thus, “Sorry, the Old Highlands Can’t Come to the Phone Right Now” was written into existence.

Api: Ahh yes, that’s your most iconic title to date, which is saying something because you’re the queen of headlines. My first article was a cute piece on Martha, a beloved lunch lady who was leaving Highlands. At the time, I was a freshman who had never spoken to Martha or even ordered lunch from the cafeteria. Nonetheless, I scheduled interviews with Martha and Chef David, pulling together my first official piece for *The Highland Fling*.

Over the years, we have interviewed *many* students and faculty, and we truly appreciate you taking the time out of your day to respond to our emails, sit down for a chat, or even write for our Faculty Corner. Interacting with all our amazing interviewees and learning from their unique perspectives has truly been a pleasure.

Another group we want to thank is our past Editors-in-Chief. Stephanie Reifman taught us InDesign when we were barely able to locate the app on our Surfaces. Mary Golden showed us how to ask the tough questions at press conferences. Claire Brassil was just... an icon. Anthony “Tony D” D’Iorio and Victoria Maung constantly encouraged us to go for the more provocative pieces, put together more creative spreads, and just generally push boundaries. Katie Shea motivated us with her continuous aim for improvement and detail-oriented approach to design. From all our EICs, we not only learned how to produce a paper, but also how to be effective communicators and strong leaders.

Another person we learned so much from and definitely could not do this without is the one and only Mr. Kaminski.

Api: My first interaction with Mr. Kaminski was my first day of freshman year during Journalism. It was... life-changing.

Melissa: Couldn’t agree more. Aside from it being one of the most entertaining classes I’ve taken, Mr. Kaminski did such an amazing job of instilling the tenets of journalism. He taught us that news stories should be “inverted pyramids,” opinion pieces should spark lively debate, profiles should be meaningfully unique, and so much more.

Api: His class also sparked our interest in investigative journalism and in doing so, helped us see newspapers in a different light. Watching *Spotlight* and researching Pulitzer Prize winning articles filled us with a sense of purpose, demonstrating that a newspaper’s job is to convey important messages to the community.

As part of *The Fling*, Mr. Kaminski has been a steady guide for us, providing encouragement, advice, and, of course, a healthy dose of humor to brighten our mornings.

On the subject of people who make this paper possible, we would be remiss if we didn’t thank Mr. Occhino, Mr. Koth, and Mr. Williams as well as Dr. Beckerman and the Board of Education for their unwavering support.

To our wonderful staff, thank you so much for all of your hard work this past year. Even through these less-than-ideal circumstances, your creativity, passion, and dedication were at an all-time high. We are really proud of your meaningful content, beautiful spreads, and exemplary leadership. Many of us joined the staff as freshmen and over the past four years, we grew up together. It has been an absolute pleasure to work alongside you not only as editors but as friends.

Now, we are excited to leave the paper in the capable hands of the underclassmen. We know you will continue to uphold Fling traditions, while improving it with your own creative touch.

And finally, we want to thank *you*, the readers, for offering us this platform. We hope you have read a News article that informed you, a Voices piece that challenged your perspective, an A&E story that sparked your creativity, a Features piece that made you think, or a Sports article that brought you a unique take on our student athletes. More than anything, we hope the 2020-2021 Fling has impacted you as much as it has us. Farewell, Highlanders.

WHO ARE WE, GEN-Z? PROBLEMATIC CELEBS?

How would you describe the latest generation? Your hero turns out to be a not so great person, now what?



Photo courtesy of Ciara Schulmann '23

Ciara Schulmann '23

Gen Z, or the newest generation, consists of people born between the late 1990s and 2015. In other words, all current highland students' are a part of Gen Z.

This age group has accumulated many nicknames because of the groups familiarity with technology, the internet and social media. Along with being the tech savvy generation, Gen Z is categorized as a technology-addicted, antisocial generation.

Some people may argue that the generation is generally chaotic because of their ability to navigate the world and discover things about one another so effectively. However, in a more positive light the generation can be considered the most outgoing generation because of their ability to reach out and communicate with others

so easily. Their insight on technology has enabled them to use the resource to meet new people and improve relationships comfortably.

As much as parents, teachers and guardians may try to limit it, Generation Z is completely exposed to the world through their devices. They have 24/7 access to the world at their fingertips starting at age 10, the average age when children get their phones.

While scrolling through browsers and apps, adds and manipulative statements, questions and images are encountered. Some people stereotype the generation to be easily manipulated and more likely to play into the ads, calls and false claims, but their exposure trains them to be highly cautious and familiar with the internet, actually making them less susceptible to manipulation than other generations.

Believe it or not, regardless of what parents or guardians may say about the overuse of technology, it has actually come to benefit the generation in terms of intelligence. We know how to navigate the internet so effectively, and obtain information effortlessly, allowing us to

gain knowledge subconsciously. Gen Z's digital intelligence also makes us pragmatic and analytical, training us to make smart, reasoned decisions.

Though the internet can be a useful learning tool, the information it offers can be invalid, and people can be falsely informed. Gen Z is so dependent on social media and the internet that it could be problematic. Some of us tend to not compare the information we get from social media to other resources, let alone ever get data from any source other than our instagram feeds, causing our generation to be frequently misguided, explaining the common conception that they are easily manipulated.

Gen Z is a generation that has many controversial traits. Some think this generation could advance the world, while others see us as "screenagers" who are anti-social and often manipulated. I would say that technology has definitely defined this generation, but there is certainly more to the generation than just that.

Gen Z is unpredictable and only the future can tell where this generation will take the world. ■



Photo courtesy of Rebecca Steinfink '22

Rebecca Steinfink '22

Monday, my favorite musician, Marilyn Manson, was accused of some pretty horrible things by several women. Everyone knows how much of a fan I was of Marilyn Manson— I followed several fan accounts, wore his t-shirts, listened to every song he has ever written (even the demos for them), commented on his posts, drew portraits of him, and even dressed up as him for Halloween. He meant the world to me.

This week has been more difficult for me than you can imagine as not only have I had to deal with the fact that my hero may have done some pretty despicable things, but I also had to deal with tons of messages about it (some being really mean and accusatory towards me, even though I could not have possibly known that, I was just a fan).

So what exactly do you do after something like this? You cannot really just erase them from your life as much as you may want to, as they have been a part of your development.

First, you cannot blame yourself for liking someone before you knew about the bad things they may have possibly done.

You also should not expect yourself to immediately disregard them. It is difficult and you need time to process. Other people should understand this too.

You are allowed to feel your feelings as you are a human being with a heart and a soul, not a shell like some may think.

I think the primary thing a person should keep in mind when going through something like this is that their feelings are valid, and they are not a bad person.

Additionally, it's important to stop blaming yourself for things out of your control. I know in my case, people have told me I should have known this due to his lyrics and violent music videos. But the thing is, art does not reflect reality, as we all should know, and people who create violent art are not necessarily violent. Do not tell yourself that you should have known better as you

simply did not and that is the extent of it.

Lastly, is the question of whether or not it actually is possible to separate the art from the artist. It really does depend on who you ask, and neither answer is wrong.

You do not have to support an artist to enjoy their art.

You are allowed to still like a person's art without liking them as a person. Nonetheless though, it can be very difficult to separate the art from the artist as often when you consume their art you cannot help but be reminded of the bad actions.

This one is completely up to you, but never make yourself feel bad for enjoying art. You can stop supporting a person and simultaneously retain your opinion that they make good music, or movies, or paintings, or anything!

Onlookers who see someone going through this should be compassionate as opposed to judgemental. Do unto others as you want them to do unto you! That is the golden rule I think we all should live by! ■

HOPE RESTORED AT LAST

How Inauguration Day 2021 changed lives across the country

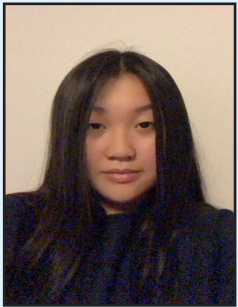


Photo courtesy of Mia Wang '23

Mia Wang '23

After the violent and chaotic insurrection at the Capitol, a peaceful transition of power was made, in Washington D.C, on January 20th. This day sparked a range of emotions for republicans and democrats alike, a day of apprehension, relief, acceptance, and much more.

With the powerful speeches, the first Asian and African American female as Vice President, and the large strides to battle COVID-19, a sense of reassurance and change drifts in the air.

One of the most powerful moments during the inauguration was the

American poet and activist, Amanda Gorman, performing her inaugural poem. As she recited 'The Hill We Climb' I was truly touched by the striking energy of her voice, yearning for peace and a bright future. The passion in her voice mixed with the strong connection between her and President Biden (she has experienced speech impediments and auditory processing disorders) influenced approximately 200,000 constituents there and the millions watching and listening at home.

Moreover, President Biden's plan to aggressively tackle COVID-19 led by ambitious scientists and peers shines a bright light on our future. I believe that the expansion/manufacturing of COVID vaccines, mandated masks, and the closing of schools and offices across the nation, will benefit America greatly.

Last July, Donald J Trump began withdrawing from the WHO (World Health Organization), as

various health experts said it could cost lives. One of Biden's first moves was joining back into the WHO and re-entering the Paris Climate Agreement. I believe that having international connectivity is crucial when in a global health

crisis, so I'm pleased with how Biden is starting his presidency.

Biden's inaugural speech emotionally moved me, as he incorporated a hope for respect for both parties, the deadly virus that stalks this country, and more than 400 years of racial injustice and prejudice. I think the message of this speech wasn't to

threaten opposers, or have the intention of dividing our country, but to unite us all as American citizens.

He pledged to have everyone view America as one unified nation, rather than divided parties and political enemies. Also,

As a person of Asian descent, I now have a newfound sense of safety when it comes to POC rights

President Biden mentioned several times the history-making Vice President Kamala Harris' election as the first woman in American history to be sworn in.

108 years ago, we stood there at the same Capitol, except 108 years ago heroic women were silenced and pushed back for the protest of inequality and the pursuit of gender

rights. The first Asian and African American female president sparked a range of emotions for people of color, females, and minority groups who feel misrepresented.

I was very relieved since this is truly a victory for me, as I can emotionally and physically feel the connection between Kamala and me. Both of our parents pushed themselves to build a better future and life for their children.

As a person of Asian descent, I now have a newfound sense of safety when it comes to POC rights. People of color finally get the representation they deserve—a voice for when they're stranded in the dark.

Kamala Harris' speech truly drew me to that light. Vice President Harris' wise words elicited American aspiration, optimism, and determination.

Overall, our generation is looking at a better and brighter future socially, economically, and envi-

ronmentally.

Additionally, inauguration day was a day of style, fashion, and bright colors which displayed the excitement of the day. These bold colors showcased by Kamala Harris, Michelle Obama, Jill Biden, Amanda Gorman, and others made me look at the bigger picture.

These fashion statements correlate with the daring moves these women were able to make, the attractive colors resembling fearlessness and prominent gestures.

Our country has faced a lot in the past year and even more the past few months with Covid, with it being an election year, social justice movements getting the recognition they deserve, and the insurrection at the Capitol. However, on January 20th, the Capitol seemed untouched, clean, and ready for a transition of power.

This day will always hold a special place in my heart. ■

VALENTINE'S DAY: YAY OR NAY?

Students discuss their opinions of the February holiday



Photo courtesy of Jana Dabbagh '24

Jana Dabbagh '24

It remains a mystery as to how Valentine's Day began. Thought to have originated from a Roman festival, it has drastically changed over the years. From a crazy sacrificial ritual to a time of celebrat-

to make everything perfect. It's like a day in Hell.

The exact words "What if they don't like it?" probably go through everyone's mind on Valentine's Day. There's people trying to figure out if it's a day to be their best self with their significant others or wallow in a bouquet of loneliness. But what makes Valentine's day so difficult is the fact people have to be constantly be reminded of how much love and affection they are receiving—or a lack thereof.

Valentine's Day is seen as a fantasy of what love should look like. May-

You can enjoy the holiday all by yourself with just a box of chocolates, or two, and rom-coms. Make it your own! Valentine's Day could be a day of appreciating others around you instead of desperately trying to prove your love to others. And maybe this is just me, but at least seeing others happy on this day gives me hope that there is so much love in this world. Seeing the positive side of this holiday is what we should be focusing on, especially since it's something we need now. ■

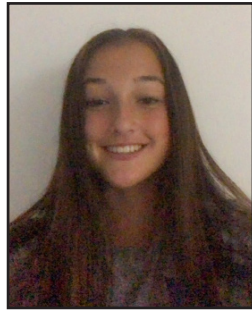


Photo courtesy of Hannah Blacher '22

Hannah Blacher '22

Everyone knows that Valentine's day means a rise in sales at the local florist shop and seeing happy couples holding hands across the table in every restaurant you can think of.

It's a holiday based around love, which sounds great and enjoyable, but is this holiday all that it is cracked up to be?

To start off, if you love your significant other, you should show them your

Thursday. It would be much more meaningful.

This holiday creates wild expectations and leaves a tremendous hole in people's wallets. It's a lot of pressure to get your significant other something

It's a holiday based around love, which sounds great and enjoyable, but is this holiday all that it is cracked up to be?

Seeing the positive side of this holiday is what we should be focusing on, especially since it's something we need now.

ing love, many hope to celebrate the holiday with the people closest to them. However, there are some who don't look forward to celebrating. Claiming that it's only for people in relationships, have people to spend the day with, or how it takes so much effort

be take your friends out to dinner, do something romantic for your significant other, or do nothing because you have no one. Sounds harsh, right? But Valentine's day can be celebrated however you like. No one is forcing you to celebrate the holiday.



Art by Nina Evans '21

affection throughout the year, not just on this "Hall-mark Holiday" 2 weeks into the month of February. There doesn't need to be a special day to show your appreciation of the person you are with. If February 14th is the only day you do something special for your partner, you probably shouldn't be in that relationship to start with. If you want to buy flowers for your significant other to display your love for them, rather than doing it on a day where numerous women and men are receiving flowers, do it on a random

meaningful. Especially these days, people don't need more stress and pressure to buy the right things. Not to mention the fact that it completely leaves single people out. Although it is totally respectable to buy your friend a box of chocolates to show your admiration for them, imagine going outside and seeing happy couples everywhere. Valentine's day just puts pressure on people in relationships and sadness on people that aren't. ■

THE NEW COVID VACCINE IS HERE

To take or not to take? That is the question on everyone's minds



Photo courtesy of Karen Bae '23

Karen Bae '23

The infamous Coronavirus disease has truly transformed the world in all aspects. The pandemic has changed how we work, learn, and interact with others and how we coexist with new social distancing guidelines. There are now a total of 104 million cases world-wide and more than 2 million deaths.

It's already been a year since my life (and the lives of everyone at Northern Highlands) completely turned upside down. Lives have been taken, jobs

have been lost, schools have been closed, our mental health has been compromised, politics has exploded into chaos, and so much more. However, hope seems to have finally emerged from the devastation, like a light in a dark tunnel.

Developing a new vaccine normally takes years or even decades. But in desperation for a cure, researchers in several countries have created a vaccine in just under 12 months. Now in February of 2021, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has given emergency use authorization for two COVID-19 vaccines. This vaccine might prevent people from getting the virus or prevent them from becoming seriously ill from the virus.

As of now, only health care personnel, adult residents of long-term care facilities, frontline essen-

tial workers, such as first responders and teachers, people age 75 and older, people ages 65 to 74, people ages 16 to 64 with underlying medical conditions, and other essential workers can receive the vaccine.

Although the vaccine

contains microchips being implanted into people by the government. Others are skeptical of the possible side effects that may result. Alyssa Talmo, a Senior at Highlands, has received the vaccine (as required while working to become an emergency medical

I do believe that it would help tremendously if the majority of the public did receive it to help flatten the curve. You can still spread the virus with the vaccine, so I believe if the majority receives it we can work toward a better COVID-19 response."

At first, I was skeptical to sign up to get the vaccine because I used to think the vaccine would give me the virus. However, this is not the case at all. The vaccine actually helps our bodies develop immunity to the virus that causes COVID-19 without us having to get the illness. The process of building immunity can cause symptoms so I know the possible symptoms are normal and nothing to be worried about. Talmo reassures that when she received both doses of the Pfizer vaccine, she did not have any side effects other than a sore

arm. As for the crazy theories about microchips in the vaccine, it simply isn't true because there's no evidence to support this!

Therefore, I will be taking the vaccine to protect myself and I definitely believe others should take the vaccine to stop the number of cases from growing. If more and more people become immune to the virus, there's a chance our world may return back to a normal where face masks and social distancing guidelines are eradicated.

I think it's safe to say this vaccine holds the potential of being a miraculous gift. As we rely on scientists to save the world, we must do our part to stop the spread. Wear your mask, wash your hands, social distance, and please consider receiving the vaccine. I believe we're almost there! ■

"I do not think that everyone should be required to get the vaccine as it is the person's choice, however, I do believe that it would help tremendously if the majority of the public did receive it to help flatten the curve."

Senior Alyssa Talmo

seems promising, there are many people against taking the vaccine. Anti-vaxxers have gone as far to believe that the vaccine

technician) and she says, "I do not think that everyone should be required to get the vaccine as it is the person's choice; however,

GAMESTOP: THE UNDERDOGS STRIKE

How the meme stock became hedge fund managers’ worst nightmare



Photo courtesy of Liam Cassidy '21

Liam Cassidy ‘21

One can only imagine the faces of the hedge fund managers poring over internet forums, trying to decipher what is causing them to completely plummet. They’d find themselves delving into new vocabulary words to the formal financial world- vulgar vocabulary, or outright strange ones. “Tendies,” meaning financial gain- or, chicken tenders; a term derived from a series of ironic posts on the infamous internet forum 4chan in which a middle-aged man with no job or prospects of obtaining one who also lives with his mother belligerently demands chicken tenders.

You may be thinking,

what do chicken tenders have to do with finance? Well, forums adjacent to and including 4chan, full of eager, chaotic posters, have made headlines recently for causing one of the biggest culture-jams to the finance community- a severe price increase in the stock of video game retailer Gamestop, traded under the ticker GME.

Intrepid users on the Reddit.com “subreddit” /r/WallStreetBets- a miniature forum within the greater scale of the site- started this whole scandal by just looking at the market. The forum had been known as a popular place for “retail investors”- working-class investors who use their own personal savings funds to invest- to post their personal opinions on the market and suggest stocks to others given their expected future.

In the advent of the pandemic, “retail investors” grew majorly in number because of the distribution of stimulus checks, affectionately known on /r/WallStreetBets as “stim-

mies”, along with the low fees and accessibility of the stockbroking app Robinhood. These “stimmies” were the fuel for stocks like Tesla to rise to insane new prices despite potential delays due to the pandemic, driven heavily by speculative “due diligence” analysis posts.

The prospect of investing in Gamestop initially seemed to be somewhat silly. Even though next-generation video game consoles were heading to market this holiday season, hype along with the Coronavirus pandemic have severely limited consumer access to these hot-ticket items. As well, many Gamestop locations are in the process of shutting down, potentially due to overinvestment in non-video game products, such as toys or apparel.

The rise of digital video games, rather than physical copies, is also a key factor. The lowest-price versions of the newest consoles do not allow the use of physical discs. All in all, Gamestop’s future seemed

dim. Hedge funds took this as an opportunity to short (bet against the success of a company by borrowing and selling a share when it attains a lower price) a company who would obviously fail.

So what do you, a retail investor, do when someone claims that a stock will fail against all odds? Invest in it. In December 2019, User DeepF---Value on

tors. Along with the hype around next-gen consoles, Redditors found a common enemy in Citron Research and Melvin Capital, two huge hedge funds shorting the stock.

Quickly, the “meme stock” grew to an all-time high of \$325. Online stock exchanges began forbidding the sale or purchase of the stock, most notably Robinhood. Many users

Were all of these people in the right? It can’t really be said, given that the forum is of people from all walks of life. This action exposed a lot of corruption within financial institutions like Robinhood, and revealed how the market can be shaped by common people. However, there were people who chose to use this platform as an opportunity to make money off naive investors.

A coup erupted amongst the moderation team of /r/WallStreetBets due to inactive moderators seeking to promote shady trading groups with this newfound popularity or become the one to sell the rights to the story to movie companies. The future is uncertain, as governmental discussions about the proper actions to be taken are still in the works, and a similar scenario is occurring with cryptocurrencies Dogecoin and Bitcoin. Will the hype sustain itself, or will the economy collapse due to a speculative investment bubble? Only time will tell.

Quickly, the meme stock grew to an all-time high of \$325.

Reddit made stock “calls” on Gamestop with a strike date of January 2021 that would give him profits if the stock was \$8 or more by that date. He began making monthly posts of the status of his calls, investing more each month. On January 11 2021, the founder of pet food online realtor Chewy joined the Gamestop board of direc-

felt betrayed, and an all out ideological war of posts against what users perceived to be a cabal of Wall Street rich people broke loose on Reddit. Notable people voiced their support for the Redditors, including senators Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Ted Cruz, as well as entrepreneurs Elon Musk and Mark Cuban.

JUST HOW “BASIC” ARE YOU?

How the term all of a sudden applies to everything girls do



Photo courtesy of Emily Gan '23

Emily Gan ‘23

Lululemon? Basic. Iced coffee? Basic. Nike Air Forces? Basic. When a certain product or service becomes popular amongst teens, it only takes a couple of weeks for the media to call this trend “basic”. The term “basic”, according to Dictionary.com refers to someone or something as “unoriginal, unexceptional, and mainstream” and is intended to be used as an insult.

One “category” where the term “basic” is often thrown around is in music. In the eyes of most people, if you listen to an artist’s top song, you have a “basic” music taste.

However, if you listen to a smaller artist, you will also face criticism because you aren’t conforming to the norm or what other people listen to. You will also receive backlash for listening to smaller artists because in the eyes of others, you are only listening to them to be different.

Girls are often victim to being called “basic”, one example is the way they dress. In the summer of 2019, a huge craze called the “VSCO girl trend” happened. This prompted many teenage girls to purchase oversized t-shirts, shell necklaces, and other summer related products.

Soon after this trend skyrocketed, there was a lot of judgement coming from people who wanted to bring these girls down. Recently, there has been a trend in clothing that includes y2k items (2000s style clothing), vintage clothes, and clothes that

people obtain from thrift stores. It hasn’t taken society long to call this new style in clothes, the new “basic”. Branching off of this, girls are frequently questioned about make-up. If a girl does decide to wear makeup, people assume she is doing it to impress someone, or for attention. However, if she doesn’t wear makeup, she might get told that she’s not trying hard enough.

Girls can also get mocked for their interests, where the primary fans are young women. Some instances include boy bands such as One Direction, or tv shows and romcom movies such as Gossip Girl or 10 Things I Hate About You. Either way, whenever girls advocate the things that they like, there is always a side of ridicule that they face.

Women even experience judgement on the way they express themselves. If a woman is assertive, she is seen as “bossy”, but if she doesn’t speak her mind, she is too “reserved”. I don’t think there is anything that a woman can do without being taunted or called “basic” because society always finds a way to judge.

However, that just proves to show if people ridicule your every move and interest, why care about their opinion? The actions you take are not their responsibility. So go paint that album cover, buy those pair of thrifted jeans, and buy a caramel iced coffee from Dunkin because if it makes you happy, just do it!■

FACULTY CORNER

From the perspective of Highlands’ Facilities Manager



Photo courtesy of Jamie Atchison

Mr. Atchison

In my mind, the building has a pair of two distinct sounds and energies. I would describe one as unoccupied and alive

while the other would be occupied & living. The building speaks to us each day and we’re always listening because what we hear impacts our day-to-day activities.

In the unoccupied & alive state, the sound and energy of the building is more mundane—just a bunch of equipment for us to listen and respond to such as boilers, circulating pumps, air compressors and other HVAC equipment—just to name a few. While our ability to effec-

tively listen and respond to our building is just as critical to the useful life of the building itself as it is to our own personal and professional lives, things can definitely begin to feel more routine when the building is unoccupied.

In the occupied & living state, however, the sound and energy of the building is more vibrant—the sound and energy of the hallway as soon as the bell rings after each class or at the end of each school day; the sound and

energy of the cafeteria during lunch; the auditorium during a performance; the gymnasium or the field during a game or a match; all of the energy and sound that breathes life into our building and into our lives; the sound and energy that we all continue to remember and utilize in order to get through this pandemic; the sound and energy that we all look forward to experiencing again soon, on a daily basis; for good this time.■



Art by: Emily Cespedes '21

BYE FINALS CONTINUED

What 2 years without finals could mean for the future of Highlands

Continued from cover

Sophomore Chase Fishman views finals as “unnecessary stress for many students, as students would spend lots of time cramming notes, equations, and other materials into their head for multiple tests that take place in the same week.”

Spanish teacher Lisa Whalen notes it provides students with a sense of relief, knowing that they will

not be weighed down by tests at the end of the year.

In addition, teachers and students aren’t together on a daily basis which makes it hard for teachers to gage where they should be.

Whalen added that “it just calms everybody to know that they don’t have that hanging over their heads.”

Nonetheless, finals are still an important part of the typical high school

experience, and it is crucial to think about the changes that need to be made on how to test the material.

Whalen is “an advocate for performance-based assessments” and believes that “students demonstrating their ability to do something in a particular subject area” is much more meaningful than giving out a traditional test.

Although they are “all good things,” what teachers want to see is whether the

student is learning.

“I think that performance-based assessments give us a better feel for that. So in one way, [having no finals] might be positive because it will move us in that direction faster.”

Without having the opportunity to take final exams this year, Fishman expresses some of his concerns, along with many other sophomores. “Having never taken a final, I don’t know what to expect or

what to prepare for.”

He feels as though he is “going to be walking in empty handed to the most important tests of the year with no experience taking a finals-type test.”

As for the future of finals, many believe that Highlands should not get rid of them entirely.

“Taking a cumulative exam helps enhance overall understanding of the course,” and is a way for students to “review every-

thing” they have learned.

Whalen believes that more classes should implement performance-based final exams rather than following traditional exam structures.

This two year precedent of not having final exams may not mean much for future finals. “Will this be a trend for years to come? We can’t say that just now, but time will tell,” Koth said. ■

A GUIDE TO AP EXAMS: PANDEMIC STYLE

The College Board announces the current plan for exams in the Spring

Emma Ciocon '22

As we all know, this pandemic has altered the way teachers have presented their lessons and the way students have learned.

Since the beginning of March, the pandemic has led the College Board and AP exam administrators to find a suitable test form that would be best for both students and teachers.

The College Board has been burdened with balancing the wellness of the community while also offering students the opportunity to fairly take the test and receive college credit.

The College Board made it clear that unlike in 2020, AP testing this year would include the entire curriculum. Many teachers and students were upset with this decision given that

class time has been severely shortened.

Nonetheless, the College Board ultimately had to make this decision because they received push back from colleges who stated that they would not offer college credit if AP tests did not cover the full curriculum.

After considering opinions gathered from AP educators, coordinators, and school leaders, they found a way to offer school districts greater flexibility for testing students.

The 2021 AP Exam schedule has three different testing dates for each subject between early May and the middle of June.

The first is Administration 1: which includes testing dates from May 3-7, 10-12, 14, and 17.

This administration takes place in school and

provides a traditional, full length paper and pencil exam for all subjects.

The second is Administration 2, and this includes testing dates from May 18-21 and 24-28.

This administration is a hybrid test taking form. AP tests involving math and math-based science classes are on paper, while most humanities subjects will be digital.

Regardless of whether students are taking a digital or paper test, as of now, Highlands plans to administer all AP exams at the school.

The last is Administration 3, which is administered from June 1-4 and 7-11. For Administration 3, all tests will be administered digitally.

For every administration, tests will be procured at the school, unless

extenuating circumstances require students to take it from home.

One benefit to this change in the exam schedule is that schools may choose a combination of administration windows and testing modes.

The AP coordinators can selectively authorize, based on the class and students’ needs, a combination of at home and in person exams and mixed testing dates.

For any students who experience any difficulty during the earlier administrations, they can utilize later administrations as a make up exam date. For the subjects that have digital exams, there will be an additional make up exam date that will occur after Administration 3.

The College Board has done everything in their

power to ensure an easy and most suitable test taking approach in regards to the global pandemic.

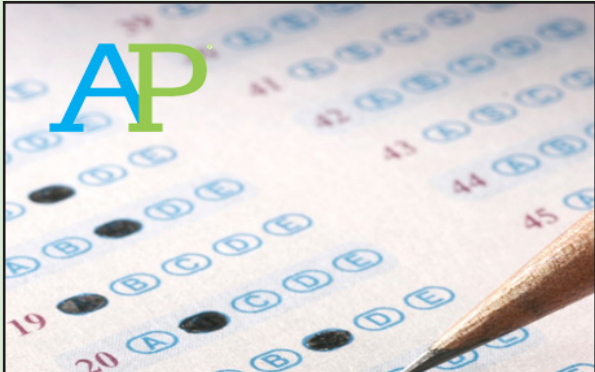
For instance, they have offered additional exam preparation resources to students that supplement classroom and virtual instruction, including AP Daily live review sessions through April 19-29.

This review is designed to go over the content of each of the courses

and the skills associated with them prior to the exam.

Additionally, the college board has also made the decision to waive all cancellation fees to provide students with greater flexibility.

Overall, students who are signed up for an AP exam should be prepared to have a safe and accommodating testing experience in the spring. ■



AP exams have strayed away from their traditional format in order to accomidate the current pandemic.

Photo courtesy of the College Board

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NORTHERN HIGHLANDS GIVES BACK

How Highlands students are giving back to their community in times of need

Clare O'Connor '22

One of the hallmarks of the Northern Highlands community is the overwhelming generosity of its members. Here at Highlands, there is always an opportunity to get involved and improve the lives of others.

While it is difficult to participate in normal activities, students have found ways to help. Principal Joseph Occhino believes that “this pandemic has height-

ened volunteerism.”

Due to the pandemic, many families in this area are suffering the consequences. Occhino adds that “now, more than ever, we need to try and support certain charities,” especially those that provide relief for pandemic victims.

There are always groups running community outreach projects at Highlands. Right now, Love for our Elders is working to bring happiness to the older portion of the community.

Love for Our Elders is a national organization that provides kind and heartfelt letters to the elderly as a way to bring them joy in a time of such darkness.

At Highlands, this initiative is spearheaded by sophomore twins Serena and Simran Dhupar. For their inspiration, Serena remembers “volunteering at the senior center by our home for about two years,” and that, “it was the highlight of our days every time we visited.”

After spending so much time in the senior center, they quickly “realized how lonely senior citizens became due to staying inside all day with limited communications to other people. Even though our senior center offered bingo, games, and other activities, we still noticed that many of the citizens were ultimately isolated.”

This isolation was a result of their inability to be with their loved ones. Sere-

na adds that, “since Covid hit in March, many elders haven’t been able to see their families and we haven’t been able to see them.”

Then, the sisters had a brilliant idea. Serena recalls that they, “decided to

students, Serena believes that, “our charity has had an everlasting effect on the Northern Highlands community as we started the Love for our elders club through Highlands cares. Many students have per-

groups in society.”

If you would like to write a letter to an elder, please check the email sent by Mr. Occhino for letter requirements and drop it in the box in front of the school before February 28th.

Lastly, be on the lookout for future events regarding the Love for Our Elders club. Serena mentions that, “we are going to be featured in an upcoming podcast with another organization (can’t give out more details right now), and many other exciting events with the Love For Our Elders team and CEO.”

In this unprecedented time of darkness and loneliness, it’s heartwarming to see so many great clubs, projects, and other charitable groups spread love and positivity to those who so desperately need it. ■

“Many students have personally told us that they felt more inspired to give back to the community.”

Sophomore Serena Dhupar

search online for unique ways to stay connected. After searching through Google, we found Love For Our Elders (a nonprofit organization) and decided to host a letter drive for our elders in local senior facilities.”

Although the letter drive does not directly impact the lives of Highlands

sonally told us that they felt more inspired to give back to the community.”

Additionally, it’s important to remember those who are forgotten so often. Serena notes that many students felt touched that, “we decided to cater a charity to the elderly, as they can be one of the most forgotten



Collection boxes set up outside of Highlands placed for participants.

MODEL UN HAS MADE ITS MARK

Members of Model UN triumph at the recent Yale competition

Anara Pollak'23

From January 21-24, the Model UN club participated in the Yale Model UN conference. For the first time, it took place virtually. Northern Highlands came out with three winners—

Regional Bodies organ and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) committee. It centered around the economic dispute between China, Japan, Korea, and the US. Abuladze represented China, which certainly allowed him to

Ling and Dhadda helped lead Highlands to success.

Aside from their regular obligations, like collecting forms and assigning committees to people, this year, the co-presidents started holding workshops.

Knowing how unnerving attending a committee meeting can be without preparation. Ling and Dhadda wanted to put in place a support system for the team.

Ling stated that “we really wanted to be able to give new kids and returning kids the opportunity to develop their skills in the same environment but without the same pressure.”

Since the conference was completely remote, there were some significant differences this year. Although being virtual is not ideal, there were a few upsides.

Unlike the in-person conferences where everything had to be hand-written and without the use of technology, this year’s YMUN conference allowed the use of computers. Ling stated that “typing everything was so much faster and more efficient than hand-writing it.” She also emphasized that it was easier to establish relationships and to get closer with people in her committee since there weren’t any distractions.

For anyone interested in joining Model UN in the

future, she says that “it’s such a great way to meet people from anywhere in the world and it really broadens your world view and how you see the world and interpret these current events.”

She continued to state how it prepares you to be a well-rounded speaker who can critically think on-the-spot. Although the majority

of people participating in this year’s YMUN conference were from the United States, there were also participants from Israel, the Philippines, and China.

The hard work and achievement the Model UN club has displayed was truly impressive. Principal Joseph Occhino stated that he was very happy to see that they were able to transition

from an in-person to a virtual conference.

“It allows our delegates this high-quality engaging and deep involvement, despite moving to all virtual.” Additionally, Occhino congratulates them on a job well done and is proud of their accomplishments and for representing Northern Highlands. ■

Northern Highlands came out with three winners:
**Api Dhadda (1st),
Luka Abuladze (2nd), and
Jessica Gao (2nd.)**

Api Dhadda (1st), Luka Abuladze (2nd), and Jessica Gao (2nd).

There are a large range of organs (primary groups) and committees (sub-groups) within the organs. The organs range from broad-based, like the General Assembly (GA) which is the largest organ, to more focused, such as the Crisis Committees.

Dhadda was a part of the Crisis Committee and specifically was in the Council of Olympus focusing on the influential mythological figures living in the modern world and saving it from chaos (a fictional scenario based on the Neil Gaiman novel, American Gods.). Api represented Anansi.

Abuladze was in the

take a different perspective than we typically get here in the U.S. Gao was also in the Regional Bodies organ, but was part of the Organization of American States (OAS) and represented Canada.

To win these conferences, participants must be prepared think on their feet. Students also form “blocks” within their committee, by establishing relationships with other people countries to form groups with similar goals.

Abuladze has placed in the competition for three consecutive years and says “if you speak the most, you automatically have a competitive advantage.”

Club advisor John Kaminski as well as club co-presidents Michelle



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“TO BE OR NOT TO BE?” - PROM EDITION

Northern Highlands plans for multiple contingencies for the Junior/Senior Prom

Continued from cover

As for the atmosphere of Northern Highlands, most would say there are many changes to come. To start, Biden has coordinated a Coronavirus task force and plans on implementing tighter mask regulations.

Juniors and Senior

have expressed that, if the event is safe and abides by all state guidelines, they would be open to attending prom.

Junior Ayana Amin said, “Especially during this time, it is important to consider how a large event might introduce various concerns... Under the right

conditions, junior prom would be a great way to reconnect with my peers and experience what it’s like to

I would attend, but only if I believe that it’s COVID restrictions would be strict enough... I think that al-



Photo Courtesy of Doreen Albano

Picture of students at prom in 2019



Photo Courtesy of Doreen Albano

Picture of students at prom in 2019

“I think that I would attend, but only if I believe that its COVID restrictions would be strict enough.”

Mari Kamidoi

be among other students again!”

Senior Mari Kamidoi held a similar opinion, stating that “If a prom was to take place, I think that

though seeing my entire grade may be strange at first, it will be nice being with my class as a group again.”

The school would not

be permitted by the state to have a prom if, at the time of the event, there were two roughly unrelated confirmed cases of COVID-19.

In this situation, the school would close and be unable to have in person classes or co curricular activities, thereby having an in person grade wide event

such as prom would be out of the question.

Given this information, the school board is hopeful that, by May, the curve will flatten enough that certain restrictions and guidelines will be lifted. ■

JUST KEEP SWIMMING, MOCK TRIAL

The Mock Trial team has a winning streak becoming the Bergen County champions

Rebecca Hoffer ‘22

The Mock Trial club at Northern Highlands had a winning streak in their competition session throughout the month of January. In this club, students simulate a real trial and compete against other schools.

Students involved in this club have to learn the law and prepare their case. They prepare the Defense and the Prosecution cases, as well as the witnesses.

The case that the Mock Trial is competing on is a civil case where the plaintiffs, Eli Adam, the late Nancy Adam, and Kai Cruz were suing the police department of Metropol-

itan. The plaintiffs were handcuffed and taken to the police station on their way home from a Numerians demonstration, which is a peaceful organization.

A Metropolitan officer,

courtesy beep, then Moun-ty proceeded to slam the brakes of his car. Kai was driving behind Eli and lightly tapped Eli’s car due to the officer slamming his brakes.

get out of the car and began yelling at Eli and Kai to report the accident, despite the fact there was no damage done on the car since it was lightly tapped.

This process caused

help her and while he’s doing that Moun-ty goes to the ground and proceeds to pull a gun out of his pant leg. Eli, acting out of self-defense, pushes Moun-ty. But Eli is charged with assaulting a police officer. However, the charges are dropped. Eli suspects this because of his social status. Eli ends up being released, but he still wants actual justice and doesn’t want to be released just because he’s privileged.

Mock trial helps with learning the law and debate skills and public speaking. Students learn how to deliver cases in a more professional manner, and can learn skills that will help

them develop a persuasive argument relating to their case.

This can also help with debate skills for other classes and professions in the future.

Now that the Mock Trial team is the champion for Bergen County, they will be heading to regionals where they will compete against the other counties champions.

Assistant Principal Michael Koth, recommends for students to continue breeding success, “They should stick with that formula because it’s made a difference thus far, and we wish them luck moving forward.” ■

“They should stick to that formula because it’s made a difference thus far, and we wish them luck.”

Assistant Principal Michael Koth

Moun-ty, was driving in front of Eli and Kai on the highway kind of slowly, and they would not let Eli pass him on the road.

Eli gave the Moun-ty a

Eli and Kai speculated that Moun-ty was under the influence due to the dangerous patterns he bestowed whilst driving.

Moun-ty proceeded to

Eli’s mother, who was also in the car, to fall. Something to note about Eli’s mother is that she had dementia.

Eli bends down to

BOARD OF EDUCATION ELECTION RESULTS

Northern Highlands welcomes three new members and President to its Board of Education

Amy Tullett ‘23

On November 3, 2020, the annual school election caused three new members to be voted onto the Board of Education. Matthew Hernandez and Andrew Prince won the two Allendale seats and Rachel Milston won the Upper Saddle River seat. Also confirmed was the appointment of Christine Ferrarie as the President of the Board of Education.

The job of the Board of Education is to create policies, oversee and approve the school budget, set the visions and goals of the district and take on the responsibility of hiring superintendents.

“They want to make sure the school is well run and they leave the daily operations of the school

to the administrative team. They help put systems in place to make sure that we run an efficient school that’s fiscally responsible and provides a high-quality education for our students,” Vice-Principal Michael Koth said.

In order to get on the Board, Trustee Rachel Milston had to apply and interview with the Board and then file her petition with the County Clerk. For Christine Ferrarie, the process of being appointed President looked a little different. The Board holds a ‘reorganization meeting’ in January while there is technically no President or Vice-President at the meeting and the Board Members will give their nominations.

“It’s actually kind of strange...you’re not real-

ly supposed to talk about it amongst Board Members...I think it’s more people kind of have an idea who they’re all thinking about and then you have to hope the person’s interested,” Ferrarie said.

Ferrarie had already served as vice-president of the Board for the past two years and in the ‘reorganization meeting’ was nominated to be President. That nomination was seconded and she was voted in.

“I never planned on being president and I’m kind of still one of the new members... I worked very closely with Jill Webb who was the president so, in that sense I think I was kind of the obvious pick because I had been shadowing her in a way, not even knowing I was,” Ferrarie said.

Ferrarie is excited

about the new wellness program recently introduced to Northern Highlands, the continuation of the Career and Academic Pathways program and more importantly, getting Northern Highlands students back learning in the building full-time.

Milston is most excited to learn about what makes a school run well after only seeing it from the perspective of a mom and helping every kid in the community.

“I do feel passionate about public education, we moved here about 11 years ago for the schools, really. This community has given so much to us since then and I just felt like this would be a really meaningful way to give back to the community,” Milston said.

For the first time, the

Board also has a Northern Highlands graduate, Matthew Hernandez, sitting on it.

“We’re looking for-

Principal Joseph Occhino said.

Having a Board of Education is the law but Highlands is, “very fortunate to

“This community has given so much to us since then and I just felt like this would be a meaningful way to give back.”

Board Member Rachel Milston

ward to hearing what Matt will bring to the table and his insight...as a person who went through Highlands, he has seen it from a different perspective so I think that’s going to add a lot to what Matt does,”

have a Board of Education that really does support our school and does allow for all the resources that really make Northern Highlands a special high school,” Occhino said. ■

RECENT RELEASES AND RE-RECORDINGS

A look at new and old music released in February

Nina Evans '21

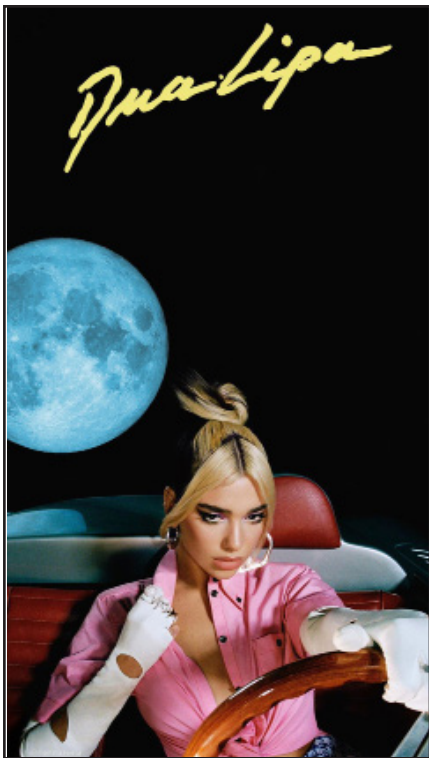


Image courtesy of Genius

**FUTURE NOSTALGIA:
MOONLIGHT EDITION**

Pop artist Dua Lipa amassed six Grammy nominations in 2021 for her album *Future Nostalgia* and singles from the album. On February 12, 2021, she released *Future Nostalgia: Moonlight Edition*, which featured eight new bonus tracks not featured on the standard edition. This reissue of the album includes songs with artists like Miley Cyrus, Bad Bunny, J Balvin, and DaBaby.

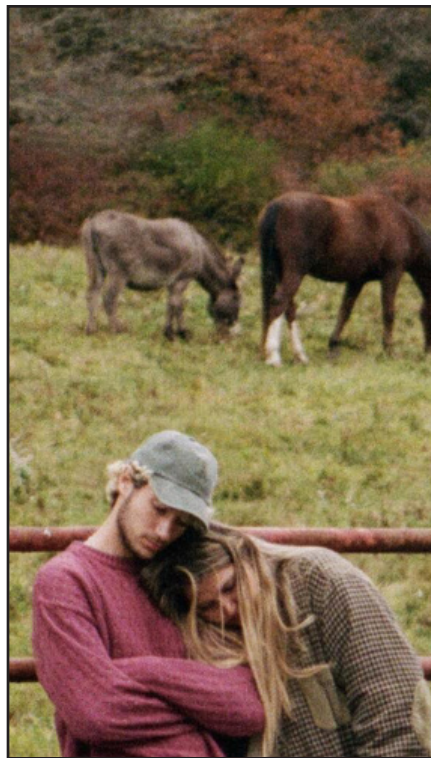


Image courtesy of Genius

BRENT II

Musicians Jeremy Zucker and Chelsea Cutler teamed up to create *brent ii*, a follow up to their 2019 collaboration, *brent*. The two created the project over the summer, writing songs and taking film photos and footage in a secluded rented cabin. Zucker and Cutler's melancholy melodies released on February 5, 2021, following their previous single from the EP, "this is how you fall in love."

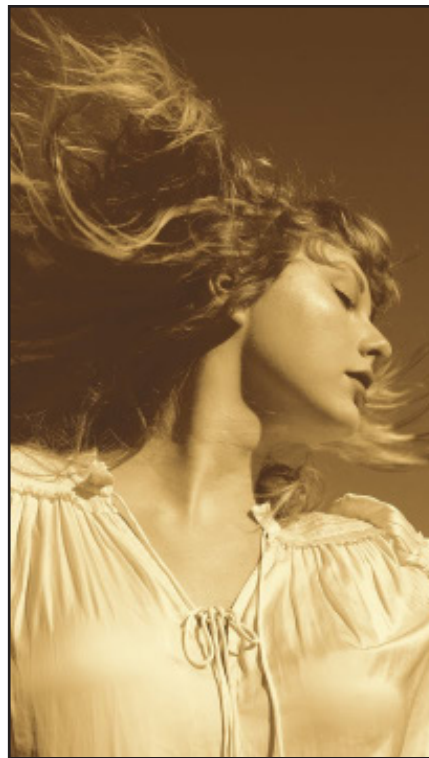


Image courtesy of Genius

**LOVE STORY
(TAYLOR'S VERSION)**

Taylor Swift, just months after releasing two full studio albums is back yet again. After a long battle for ownership of her own masters, Swift's contract with her former record label Big Machine Records has finally allowed her to re-record her first five albums. As a Valentine's Day surprise, Swift dropped her classic hit "Love Story" and announced via Instagram that she has been working on a re-recording of her album *Fearless*.



Image courtesy of Genius

**DIRTY LAUNDRY (SLOWED)
AND OTHER SINGLES**

Rap artist Blackbear has also decided to re-release old work. An edit of his song "dirty laundry" of his sophomore album *Deadroses* blew up on TikTok. Blackbear decided to officially release this version in December so fans could listen on official streaming platforms. "Cheers," his new collaboration with Wiz Khalifa, is also a memorable release. His recent single, "Sleep 4Ever" by MAGGIE ANDREW and himself, dropped February 12, 2021.

SO... GOT ANY WEEKEND PLANS?

Activities and trends to try out while you're stuck at home

Caleigh Amano '23

During the past few months there has definitely been a sense of extra free time on our hands due to new lockdowns and snow days. With all this extra time there are various types of activities that can be done from your own house safely.

Amidst the boredom many have devoted their time endlessly scrolling

through Tik Tok, which is a very popular social media app.

Since there are millions of users on Tik Tok posting numerous videos daily, there have been many new trends introduced.

One trend that has definitely gained popularity are all the cooking and baking videos. A recipe in particular that has blown up recently is the feta pasta.

The base of this pasta

consists of tomatoes, feta cheese, and pasta. This has been a popular trend as many users have eagerly recommended this pasta, making the masses want to try it for themselves.

Many have put their own twist on it when trying for themselves and posting their new recipes for others to try.

Another baking trend that has blown up are minimalist cakes. These cakes

and their simplistic decoration have enticed viewers, some describing it as cake from a cartoon or movie.

Since the only thing required to recreate these cakes are simple designs, people can be as creative as they want, some adding cute quirks like frogs made of frosting.

There are many great tutorials on Tik Tok that make it easy for users to try right from their own home.

Aside from the introduction of new trends, people have also returned to the classic things to do when stuck at home.

DIY clothing, video games, bingeing entire TV shows, and drawing and painting are just some of the popular activities that are done when forced to stay inside.

Tie dying clothing and embroidery have recently gained popularity as famous influencers have started to wear these trends. From tie dye sweat sets and handmade embroidered sweatshirts, social media has popularized old activities through modernization.

Some people have even started up new Instagram businesses specifically to

sell these types of products.

Watching tv shows and movies through Netflix, Hulu, Disney Plus, and more will always be a pop-

and positivity during this crazy time.

Working out or doing yoga have been some of the many ways people have ex-

During the past few months there has definitely been a sense of extra free time on our hands due to new lockdowns and snow days. With all this extra time there are various types of activities that can be done from your own house safely.



Nina Evans '21

ular option when staying inside.

New TV shows like *Bridgerton*, *Cobra Kai*, and *You* that were recently released on Netflix have captivated viewers from all over, while old shows such as *Criminal Minds*, *Greys Anatomy*, and *Vampire Diaries* still rack up viewers daily.

From the first lockdown to now, people have been hooked on their TV's and computers, bingeing these shows like no other.

Lastly, during the pandemic, people have tried to work on their mental health

exercised to get their mind off of things.

Mindfulness activities aside from yoga include journaling, meditation, and just taking time for oneself, all of which can be easily done from one's own house and will help with overall well being. It is important to be mindful and participate in activities that reduce stress for you or help you to relax.

Whether it's cooking, painting, or exercising anything that feels right to you should be done in an attempt to stay sane while we are in this tough time. ■

A look into Cultural Awareness at Highlands

Article by Ayana Amin '22
Personal essays by
Api Dhadda '21, Jessica Gao '23

How can we make sure that all cultures are recognized and held with the same regard going forward? What can we do to build a more inclusive community?

Like many other high schools across the nation, we are encouraged to promote individual expression and embrace diversity. While these are core values of a school community, there is still so much more we can do to be more empathetic and accepting at Highlands. The question is, to what extent can we call ourselves a diverse population if we do not fully succeed to appropriately educate ourselves about other cultures?

During an interview, senior Anaya Rawoot said, “I am comfortable [with] expressing my racial/cultural identity at Highlands. However, I don’t think Highlands makes an active effort to ensure that all students’ cultures are represented and done so respectfully.” She goes on to mention that “until last year, Gandhi’s name under his quote in the faces hallway was spelt wrong.”

Acceptance and respect towards others can be communicated in many different ways, and instances like this make us wonder if Highlands students are culturally aware. Being a relatively homogenous community, there is no doubt that we may lack awareness and an understanding of various cultures, but how can we make sure that all cultures are recognized and held with the same regard going forward? What can we do to build a more inclusive community?

During an interview with Senior Shanzeh Malik, she explains that “I do feel comfortable expressing my identity at Highlands although the opportunities are limited of when I can share... students and just about anyone else in this world should understand the beauty of cultures before going along with what anyone else may say.” Parallel to Malik’s perspective, Rawoot explains how “I don’t remember experiencing or witnessing any racist interactions at Highlands but stereotypes about cultures definitely exist... I think Highlands can do a better job at exposing the student body to different cultures.”

The common thread between Rawoot and Malik’s perspectives concerns the absence of cultural engagement. Malik indicates that “...although no one has ever directly said anything [inappropriate] to me, that doesn’t mean I’m not aware of what’s going on around me.” We cannot force students to accept each other, but we can provide students with opportunities to share and learn. We must embrace what we envision and encourage what we preach.

Sophomore Jess Gao writes:

I believe that highlands is an exemplary school. All our students are well educated and the majority are well meaning. However there is a culture that can cultivate hostile environments under the right conditions... I remember learning from a close friend that her group, as well as others, had named the “covid clique” as one of their stereotypes, implying that friend groups of Asians, East Asians in particular, were their targets... Overall, Highlands is full of respectful and kind people, and if there would have been any form of conflict between a person wanting to express their identity and having a hard time with it, I think it would be an issue of someone being uniformed rather than malicious... In general, I don’t think people really learn about or know the history of systemic racism against Asian people in the US, whether it be to the curriculum or general perpetuation of the “model Minority” myth. We need to talk more about the impact of things like the Japanese internment camps, the Chinese exclusion act, the way the Chinese were first brought in as coolies to replace slaves in plantation fields after the Civil war, or how they labored to build the first transcontinental railroad. The way how the largest mass lynching in America was the hanging of 18 Chinese men and boys—just to name a few.

Senior Api Dhadda Writes . . .

India in the Classroom

I want to begin by explaining that I have the highest regard for the Highlands curriculum. In my four years at this school, I find myself constantly challenged by the material and encouraged to explore new ideas. That said, it is the same values I learned here—of questioning the status quo, speaking truths, and constantly improving—that implore me now to make some suggestions of my own.

As an Indian-American student in a predominantly white neighborhood, I haven’t had a lot of exposure to Indian culture in the classroom setting. There have been no Indian teachers and minimal representation in class. In fact, the first time I read anything by an Indian-American author in school was this year when we read “A Temporary Matter” by Jhumpa Lahiri in AP Literature.

The only time my classmates and I really dove deep into studying India was freshman year in World History and Cultures. I think it is important to recognize that Highlands has a fairly inclusive World History curriculum because unlike most schools in America, it focuses on countries outside of Europe.

We began our exploration of India with a unit on eastern religions that was fairly thorough and then ventured into a “Modern India” unit. The latter started with a brief discussion of the Mughal Empire (1400s to 1700s) and then flowed to a deep dive into Britain’s colonization of India. To wrap up the unit, we had another lesson on “current issues” regarding poverty as depicted in the movie *Slumdog Millionaire*.

The Limits of *Only* Studying Colonialism

Now, don’t get me wrong, I truly believe that learning about the Indian Independence Movement led by Gandhi and the current issues affecting the country are incredibly important. However, the problem arises when we limit ourselves to just discussing colonialism and poverty.

India is one of the oldest civilizations known to man. There is a whole history of discovery—including breakthroughs in atomism, the use of the integer zero, philosophical ideals, and even games like chess—that is simply not discussed in the classroom setting.

As an introduction to AP US history, I read “The Nature of the Past” from *From These Truths: A History of the United States* by Jill Lepore. In the passage, Lepore stresses that our understanding of history is shaped by the limited perspectives and events we study. In this case, by focusing our education system on the effects of colonialism and poverty, we are painting a picture that depicts India as a nation that needs to be helped.

Once again, I want to clarify that studying colonialism is important for recognizing past mistakes. However, by limiting our unit on India to the impact of the British, we are inadvertently stating that the only relevant piece of Indian history is when they were subjugated by white people.

We are choosing to ignore thousands of years of history, culture, diversity, and accomplishments, in favor of a shorter history of oppression. When we break other nations down to their flaws, we send a message to students. At best, we implore them to help these “poor” victims and, at worst, we teach them to actively look down upon other countries. We are perpetuating the narrative that brown people need to be saved by white people, a notion known as White Man’s Burden—something I find ironic given that students first learn this term in World History.

We are choosing to ignore thousands of years of history, culture, diversity, and accomplishments, in favor of a shorter history of oppression.

The Harmful Effect of *Slumdog Millionaire*

The most clear example of this message is in the *Slumdog Millionaire* lesson. In the months after we watched the movie, peers would come up to me and ask with wide eyes if there really were piles of poop all over India. As an insecure freshman, I had no clue how to answer, so I laughed it off—a method I would use for the next few years when faced with similarly awkward situations.

Movies in the classroom setting are extremely impactful because they present information in a way that is different from the average lesson. When we use that potential to stress the poverty of another nation, we are quite literally leaving students with an image that paints the nation as “dirty” or “poor” or “gross” or a thousand other adjectives I am sure I have heard at some point. This picture reinforces the ideology that paints brown people as savages who need to be saved.

This is not a new story and it is certainly not the fault of this school. The association is deeply ingrained into our society, and though perception has started to change, I still see it in some of my everyday interactions. I see it when students talk about moving their desks because they think an Indian girl smells. I see it when people stare at my food because it is “exotic” or “smelly”. I see it when friends react loudly and negatively at the thought of dating an Indian boy because they think it would be “gross”. The connection is everywhere, and while I am not blaming the school, studying movies like *Slumdog Millionaire* certainly doesn’t help the narrative.

Slumdog Millionaire was written, directed, and produced by white men. Instead of using this movie in the classroom and unintentionally reinforcing the white perception of India, I would suggest playing a Bollywood movie that illustrates India from Indian perspectives. *Jodha Akbar*, an iconic period piece about a Mughal emperor and a Rajput princess, would provide a powerful, accurate depiction of India’s history. Modern films such as *Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani* and *3 Idiots* offer a more representative display of India’s rich culture today.

Changing the Lesson Tone

The bottom line is that our curriculum is riddled with rhetoric that feeds into the White Savior Complex. As an Indian-American, I feel most strongly about how India is portrayed, but I did still notice pieces of that message in the other units. For instance, the curriculum’s focus on imperialism and violence in Africa and China suggests the same tone of inferiority as the India unit.

There is this implicit notion in the education system that history classes are meant to teach the negatives, in other words, the huge wars or horrible atrocities. When we learn about America, this is less of a problem because we usually already have a deep respect and nationalistic pride cultivated from being American. However, especially in towns that lack diversity, World History classes become students’ primary interaction with other cultures and countries. For many, the World History class may even constitute as their entire education on international affairs. Thus, only discussing the negatives will teach students to associate these countries with these harmful views.

Instead, let’s teach our students to help while still valuing other countries as equals. Let’s encourage our students to become culturally sensitive, so they can have successful international careers, but also so they learn to treat people kindly. Finally, let’s simply ingrain our students with a sense of respect—for other countries, other cultures, and other people.

SMILE!...WAIT, MY WI-FI IS DOWN

What Highlands’ photography classes have looked like during virtual learning

Serena Dhupar '23

During the pandemic, many students at North-ern Highlands take a pho-tography class as their elective for numerous reasons. Photography can be a form of artistic self expression, a way to de-velop your photographic vision, a stress reliever, and a way to document precious memories. High-lands does a phenomenal job at providing students with the best education in photography possible.

The school offers many photography class-es for beginners all the way to college level AP photography classes. Highlands offers a begin-ners class labeled Photog-raphy 1, which is offered to students in grades 9-12. The next class Highlands offers is called Honors Photography. This class requires a prerequisite

mandating students to complete Photography 1 and have a good teacher recommendation upon

be required.

Esha Agarwal, a soph-omore at Highlands, is taking Honors Photogra-

“Being in an art class, communication and active peer feedback is so important.”

Junior Ayana Amin

completion of that class. Honors Photography is provided to students from grades 10-12. The last photography class of-fered at Highlands is AP Studio Art: 2D Design (Photography). This class requires numerous pre-requisites consisting of a minimum of two years of art classes, portfolio sub-mission, and departmen-tal review. Additionally, a summer assignment prior to taking this class may

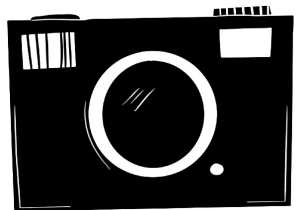
phy. She loves the class and says, “we learn about styles of photography and how to edit using photo-shop... in Photography 1, we learned how to photo-graph using a film cam-era and how to develop the film to a real tangible image.” Highlands equips its students with amazing technology, giving stu-dents an opportunity to handle high-quality pho-tography equipment.

However, COVID-19

has limited the amount of hands-on contact students can have with photog-raphy equipment. “This year because of covid and classes being virtual, we don’t have the opportuni-ty to go in the darkroom as often therefore we can’t really use our film camera. Instead, most of our projects are done on our phones. Some of our projects we do during the hybrid schedule are por-traits, nature and refractions,” Agarwal says.

The pandemic has also tremendously affected students in other photog-raphy classes, such as ju-nior Ayana Amin. Amin is taking AP Studio Art. Amin says, “the pandem-ic has definitely affected my photo class. Especial-ly since we are at home, we are limited to the sub-jects and atmospheres we can photograph in.” But Amin doesn’t let the

pandemic stop her from learning photography to her highest potential. As she says, “due to these limitations, I am pushed to be more creative and open to experimenting with new techniques.” Amin adds, “this year our main focus has been on building our AP Portfoli-os.”



Nina Evans '21

explaining, “Virtual learning has also affect-ed the overall climate of the class. Being in an art class, communication and active peer feedback is so important. I love being able to see my classmates work and be inspired by their constructive crit-icism, but this active communication is defi-nitely harder to achieve when we are all virtual.” However, Amin continues pushing through and con-querer these new obsta-cles.

As you can see, North-ern Highlands provides a great selection of photog-raphy classes to teach all types of photography to beginners and advanced students. The pandemic has definitely taken a toll on this hands-on class, but nonetheless students are working hard to suc-ceed in this class to the best of their abilities. ■

Currently, Amin and many other students tak-ing AP Studio Art are learning this challeng-ing but interesting class virtually. Amin opens up about the extra challeng-es that she is facing while taking this class online,

CHOCOLATE, PAJAMAS, AND A TV REMOTE

Highlands students’ picks: movies that will make you laugh and believe in love

Simran Dhupar '23

Sit back, relax, and laugh! Deciding on mov-ies to watch with family and friends, or on your own, can be a difficult en-deavor. Some Highland-ers have their personal favorites, and these op-tions can make the movie decision-making process much easier.

Sophomore Karen Bae recommends an older movie from 1993 called *Sleepless in Seattle* star-ring famous ‘90s actors Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan. This movie is a classic rom-com and was a hit at the time of re-lease. It follows the life of Chicago architect Sam Baldwin, played by Tom Hanks, who loses his wife to cancer and starts a new life with his son.

While Sam is heartbro-ken, he begins a search for a new lover. Meanwhile, a beautiful woman living in New York named Annie Reed, played by Meg Ryan, is unhappy with her current relationship. Al-though the two live in dif-ferent cities, with the help of some friends, Sam’s son, and a talk radio show, the two create an unlikely bond.

Bae says that this is her favorite rom-com because the main characters have “this ‘love at first sight’ relationship.” She contin-

ues that this “relationship keeps me so invested to the point when they fi-nally meet. I love how [Annie] falls in love with [Sam] just by hearing his voice and him being vul-



Nina Evans '21

nerable about his past. I also like the message that the movie conveys about never settling for someone who is barely enough.”

A character deserving of more recognition is Sam Baldwin’s son, Jo-nah. According to Bae, “[He’s] my favorite char-acter because he cracks so many smart jokes throughout the movie and he’s only 8 years old.”

Bae will never forget the line from this mov-ie; “Destiny is something we’ve invented because we can’t stand the fact that everything that happens is accidental.”

She adds, “I like this quote because it talks about this life lesson that we get to choose what our future will be like and

the type of people we’ll meet.” Bae remembers this quote to help aid her in her own personal re-lationships.

Another rom-com fa-vorite is *Just Go With It*, which was released in 2011 and is viewable with a Netflix subscription. While this movie is not a classic, freshman Amrita Singh states that this is her favorite movie. This movie stars two famous actors Adam Sandler and Jennifer Aniston.

Singh says, “I think these two actors work well together. They both act extremely well and know how to make each other laugh!” Specifically, she notes, “My favorite char-acter from the rom-com is Danny Maccabee because I think he is extremely funny. I love the way he jokes around throughout the movie.”

In *Just Go With It*, Adam Sandler plays a recently heartbroken sur-geon named Danny Mac-cabee. He is unmarried but begins a web of lies telling people he is mar-ried, so he can date around without having to stay with one person.

When he meets Palm-er, a woman he would be willing to date for a longer period of time, he finds himself stuck and unable to escape from his lie. This is when he asks his job as-

sistant, Katherine, played by Jennifer Aniston, to pose as his wife to solidify his facade. But he begins to find himself growing closer to Katherine. The audience becomes invest-ed in Danny’s story when they wonder whether he will enjoy a long term relationship with his as-sistant, Katherine, or with the supposed woman of his dreams, Palmer.

A final Highlander fa-vorite is a newer one, released in 2019, called *Isn’t It Romantic*. Junior Ayana Amin says, “I haven’t watched many ro-mantic comedy movies in the past, but one rom-com that I remember enjoying was *Isn’t It Romantic*. I liked this fantasy rom-com because it was light-hearted and emphasized the message of self-love and self-worth.”

Isn’t It Romantic is

not only a rom-com but has fantastical elements when the main character Natalie, played by Rebel Wilson, finds herself in an alternate universe after she is mugged. She begins as someone who is unable to advance in both her ca-reer and social life, and does not feel confident in herself. She discovers that in this alternate reality, the only way for her to return to the present world is if she finds someone to love and who will reciprocate that love.

She catches feelings for someone who is already married, and is heartbro-ken to realize that this re-lationship may not work. Natalie begins a journey of self-love, and perhaps this is how she escapes the fake world.

Amin adds, “My fa-vorite quote is, ‘You can search the entire universe

and never find a being more worthy of love than yourself,’ a Brandon Scott Jones quote who plays Donny. This quote per-fectly summarizes the theme of the movie and the importance of embrac-ing self-love.”

Amin says, “I think that Rebel Wilson does a good job of portraying her character Natalie. Overall, Wilson’s bubbly and vi-brant personality definite-ly humored the cliches in the film.”

Rom-coms may seem to be the cheesiest of genres, but these light-hearted movies always lay out a happy and satisfying ending perfect for any oc-casion. Whether the mov-ie is a blockbuster hit from years past or a not-so-cli-ché movie from today, romantic comedies come in diverse forms. Which movie will you pick? ■



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SING!..HOLD ON, AM I ON MUTE?

A Cappella season spearheading in the right direction despite COVID

Isha Korgaonkar '24

For many, 2020 has proven to be one of the toughest years that we may ever experience. So, it doesn't take much to lift us up, and one of the best ways to do that is through music. Highlands' a cappella groups have got our backs!

As said in the November issue, a cappella did return strong amid COVID. All three groups have also recently been featured on the Best of High School A Cappella 2021 album available on Spotify and Apple Music. For an update, I asked members of Highlands' three a cappella groups, Harmonics, Belles, and Voices, how the season is going so far.

Harmonics member freshman Dylan Yu is keeping busy with a cappella during COVID. He said, "...It has given me something to work on at home...It has also given me the chance to improve at a skill, singing, that I haven't really worked on for a while."

Senior Riddhimaa Kothari, a Belles member, said that "A cappella has been going well. There hasn't been much going on since COVID and we got lucky this year to

even have a cappella even though we aren't able to meet as a group."

For freshman Emma Pereira on Belles, "...it has definitely been hard to learn parts in this setting, but Ms. Falcone

national Championship of High School A Cappella) this year, and must adjust to the challenges of virtual rehearsals and competitions.

Voices member and junior Fifi Alao explained



Highlands Belles performing at a competition.

and the other girls in our group have been super supportive."

Freshman Nicolette Carcara said, "...We are [all] just wrapping up our first song... Everyone worked super hard and we all have been very dedicated, which makes the outcome so well worth it."

With the emergence of COVID and the need for safety and health precautions, a cappella is running very differently this year. All of Highlands' a cappella groups are still competing in ICHSA (The Varsity Vocals Inter-

how a cappella rehearsals are different this year, saying, "Since we can't really practice over Zoom, our director just sends us the music and learning tracks and then we meet during the allotted club times on Friday to discuss ideas and questions that we might have about the music."

Yu explained how a cappella competitions have changed as well, noting, "...we've had to record our parts, and we're putting together a video to submit. Normally, we'd be [having] three hour long rehearsals...

and we'd be performing live in front of a panel of judges."

Carcara explained how Harmonics is working through the submission process, "Now, we are all working on the video aspect of the song from the comfort of our own homes. We are coordinating what colors and backgrounds to incorporate in our videos. This year may be challenging, but we are making things work to the best of our abilities."

A cappella has played an important role at Highlands over the past years. COVID regulations have certainly been an unexpected change, so I asked members if COVID has affected their a cappella experience and if they have still been able to bond virtually.

and working on our songs and videos becomes a lot more independent because of COVID. Despite this, it's still a really fun experience and I've had fun getting to know some of my other team members."

"It definitely is harder...to bond virtually since it is hard to make friends and get to know others through a screen. So that being said, COVID has made my a cappella experience a little less fun since I don't get to actually sing with people," said sophomore Minha Park, a Harmonics member.

Kothari agrees that COVID has made bonding virtually difficult, and is "just thankful [they got] the opportunity this year to have a cappella groups even if [they] aren't do-

make new friends."

Pereira agrees that COVID has affected her a cappella experience as well, noting, "...all the shut downs we've had have halted our recording, so getting something to send into the competition is really hard."

For Yu, "...it has made it much more difficult to learn parts." He noted, "I haven't been in a choir for a few years, so I don't know much about singing with the right technique. And with COVID, I haven't been able to ask all of the questions to improve my singing even more, and to learn my part faster."

Carcara looks at it all on a positive note, saying, "Although we can't socialize in school right now, we are utilizing the resources we have. We are doing things such as making group chats via text, snapping each other, and bonding over zoom... We all clicked immediately and really have become an a cappella family. Even from home, we have all formed a bond over our love for music."

As can be seen, Highlands' a cappella groups are making it work virtually, despite the challenges. ■

"We all clicked immediately and really have become an a cappella family."

Freshman Nicolette Carcara

For Harmonics member, freshman Carter Pataki, "The virtual environment definitely makes collaborating and bonding a little more difficult,

ing much." She adds, "It really is sad to think that we may not go back to normal and be able to actually go to competitions, meet new people and

SENDING HUGS... SIX FEET APART!

COVID-safe ways to celebrate your loved ones this February

Serena Dhupar '23

As February 14th rolls around, people are looking for COVID-friendly ways to celebrate Valentine's day. Valentine's Day, also called Saint Valentine's Day or the Feast of Saint Valentine, is celebrated yearly on February 14th.

This holiday represents love and affection and is often signified by hearts, candy, gifts, chocolate, flowers, and the colors red and pink. Couples celebrate their endearment for each other by going out on dates and spending time together. Single ladies can also celebrate "Galentine's Day" by spending time together with their girl friends!

During this pandemic, going out to dinners or going on vacation may not be a safe option. But there are still countless COVID-safe Valentine's or Galentine's Day activities to do! Firstly, going on a peaceful picnic re-

treat with your friends or loved ones is a great way to spend quality time together and celebrate this holiday. You can pack Valentine's Day themed snacks and meals, pack board games and other outdoor activities, and maybe even bring canvases to paint.

You can also elevate this experience by creating homemade charcuterie boards, driving across town to pick up all your favorite snacks and foods, dressing up for the occasions, and planning an itinerary filled with fun DIY activities or games to play with your friends.

Some DIY activities are baking Valentine's Day themed red velvet whoopie pies or doing a Valentine's Day themed puzzle with your loved ones. This picnic date is extremely versatile and customizable to your preferences. You can even host the date indoors by setting a picnic blanket

on your living room floor.

Going on a picnic is certainly a great way to stay safe and still celebrate. However, make sure to still follow all COVID safety precautions such as wearing masks when in close contact with others, using hand sanitizer, and refraining from cross-contaminating.

Another fun Valentine's Day activity is to create a full dinner with friends or a significant other. This date would start off with taking a trip to the grocery store, while making sure to wear a mask and follow all precautions. After you pick up ingredients for a full course meal, including an appetizer, main course, a side dish and dessert, you can get started preparing the meal.

I recommend playing fun, motivating music in the background to make the preparation enjoyable. Throughout the cooking process, you

and your loved ones can spend time together, talk, sing, laugh, dance, and teach each other what you know about cooking.

A sample meal would be pigs-in-a-blanket as an appetizer with a homemade ranch and dill dipping sauce along with grilled chicken, steak, or salmon cooked with a lemon sauce as the main course accompanying a mixed-greens side sal-

ad. For dessert, you can make a red velvet lava cake. This date idea may

more Karen Bae says humorously. Her plans for Valentine's Day are very

sound intimidating, but it is always fun to take up challenges with friends or your significant other by your side.

Although these ideas are particularly extravagant, it is perfectly fine to keep your Valentine's Day more on the low-key side. "Genuinely all I'm doing is eating good food and watching my favorite shows. My date for valentine's day is me," sopho-

relatable as sometimes it is nice to simply relax at home. Some students at Highlands, however, have more intricate things planned for Valentine's Day, as it is the perfect day to spend time with family. "My plans this Valentine's day are doing a zoom with my family and friends and giving gifts, ordering the Chick-Fil-a Valentine's Day meal for my brother and I, and making chocolate covered strawberries with my mom! I'll probably watch some movies as well," sophomore Catherine Corrado says excitedly.

Valentine's Day is all about love and appreciation for your family, friends, significant others, and yourself. Regardless of what your plans are for February 14 this year, don't forget to relax and enjoy yourself. Have a great Valentine's Day! ■



Nina Evans '21

RED LIGHTS! STOP SIGNS!

Students share their thoughts on Olivia Rodrigo’s new hit single

Eleanor Ha '23

It seems like everyone has either heard the latest hit single “drivers license” by Olivia Rodrigo or heard someone else mention it, but what exactly is all the hype about? Olivia Rodrigo is a 17-year-old actress and songwriter from Temec-

lead Joshua Bassett... which brings us back to the drama behind her new hit single. The song “Drivers License” was released about a month ago and immediately became a huge hit. The detailed story-telling seems to be inspired by none other than Taylor Swift, who even com-

helped her message about something many people can relate to, breakups, shine through. The relationship drama surrounding the song contributed to it becoming such a hit. It was alleged that Olivia Rodrigo and Joshua Bassett were dating, although not publicly, during the shooting of the first season of High School Musical: The Musical: The Series. Fans had always speculated they were in a relationship, but whenever asked, the two would always say they were just really good friends.

This seemed to be quite the opposite of the truth when fans started to realize the meaning behind the lyrics in Rodrigo’s song, and how a lot of the events described things she had done with Bassett. When Rodrigo points out how the boy she’s addressing in the song (Bassett) is “probably with that blonde girl,” it’s quite clear that she is referring to Sabrina Carpenter, Bassett’s new girlfriend at the time of the song’s release. The messy love triangle caught the attention of so many people, which

helped boost the song’s popularity. In addition, TikTok trends made with the song in mind played an important role as well in gaining the public’s attention. Hannah Apsey, a senior at Highlands, shared her opinion on the song, saying, “I definitely like the song. It’s just one of those songs that gets stuck in your head and you find yourself singing throughout the day. TikTok and the drama surrounding the song definitely played an important factor in its success on top of Rodrigo’s obvious talent in both singing and songwriting.” Apsey went on to mention how Rodrigo is one of few break-through artists of our generation, saying, “I also think people really enjoyed the fact that Olivia Rodrigo is so young yet so talented and they were just proud to see her find such success and top some of the most popular artists today. I can’t say that I really connect with the song, but I think the connection that [others] had with the song came from the relatability of Olivia herself in that she’s just another young teenage girl writing about

her relationship experiences.” Emily Gan, a sophomore, points out how glad she is that there is more representation for Asian-Americans because of Rodrigo’s success, as Rodrigo is half Filipino. Gan added, “It’s insane how she surpassed the mainstream artists in a day and broke records for most streamed songs in such little amount of time.

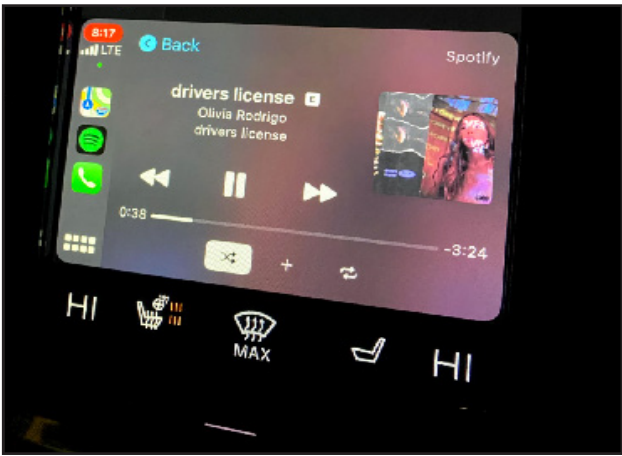
On the other hand, sophomore Leah Rimland claims that “because [the song] has been played so much, it is becoming gradually worse.” However, she acknowledges “...the publicity stunt with the love triangle was a smart move for boosting the song, but also the fact that Rodrigo is so talented at such a young age is appealing to many people.” She also mentions that,

“It’s just one of those songs that gets stuck in your head...”

Senior Hannah Apsey

ula, California. She has been singing since she was a little girl, beginning to pursue acting and booking her first lead role for American Girl Doll’s Grace Stirs Up Success. In 2016, her Disney career began when she was cast as Paige in Bizaardvark alongside her best friend Madison Hu. She continued to gain success in her acting career as she was the lead in Disney’s original show High School Musical: the Musical: the Series in November 2019 alongside male

mented about Rodrigo’s song saying she was really proud. Rodrigo has mentioned several times that she is, in fact, a huge “Swiftie,” and this really shines through in her debut single. The song’s bridge is also reminiscent of many of Lorde’s songs, which isn’t surprising considering she is also one of Rodrigo’s musical inspirations. Rodrigo’s honesty and vulnerability that comes through in the lyrics and the raw emotion and power behind her vocals



Song “Drivers License” being played in the car.

I think it became such a hit because of how relatable the situation she is in is to so many teenagers around the world and although I personally don’t have an actual experience tied to the situation she is in, something about the song made me feel as though I was in her shoes.”

like Gan, despite never having been in a situation similar to Rodrigo’s, she felt a connection. This proves that Rodrigo’s complete vulnerability in her writing has helped many teens feel a strong connection to her and “Drivers License.” ■

FOOD & COFFEE FOR THE “SOL”

An inside look into the new coffee shop “Rey Sol Coffee” in Ridgewood

Grace Paolillo '22

With the COVID-19 pandemic spanning over the last year, many local restaurants have been struggling to gain loyal customers and stay open. Many people regard this current state as a difficult time to start a business and to gain new customers, but Rey Sol Coffee in Ridgewood has not had this issue. Rey Sol is a Colombian cafe with the “seed to cup” motto. The restaurant originally gained traction

from a TikTok video that reviewed the restaurant’s food and space. The video, posted by @throughacamerallens, racked in about 78,000 likes and approximately 500,000 views. After it was posted, people from all over Bergen County were rushing to visit the trendy restaurant and to try specials like the Seasonal Smoked Latte. One of the key attraction points for Rey Sol is its diverse menu. The restaurant features Colombian and Latin American cuisine, which

is unique compared to the other restaurants in Ridgewood. Senior Maren Spence said, “The main thing that caught my eye was the Latin-inspired menu and the trendiness of the restaurant.” Rey Sol offers three different menus, one for food, another for drinks, and one specifically for hot/iced coffee. Some popular items off of the menu include the chicken caprese sandwich, the cranberry prosciutto salad, breakfast panini, and much more. The restaurant also offers many foods that are perfect for those who are vegetarian, vegan, or gluten free. Junior Clare O’Connor noted, “I liked that they have a wide variety of food and cater to different food preferences (specifically vegetarians and vegans).” Due to the unique menu variety, many people have quickly found favorites. One of the

most popular items is the cranberry prosciutto salad. Sophomore Alexandra Paolillo described, “The cranberry vinaigrette and ricotta cheese blended so nicely together. The salad was also both sweet and savory which was really nice and made each bite different.” Both Paolillo and Spence listed the salad as one of their top recommendations. Paolillo’s must haves are “the caramel iced latte and the creme brûlée. The veggie panini [is] also amazing.” The veggie panini is made with mozzarella cheese, eggplant, onions, spinach, grape tomatoes, mushrooms, and topped with a fresh pesto. Another favorite from the menu is the breakfast panini. The panini is made with a scrambled egg, pesto aioli, and either cheddar, swiss, or mozzarella cheese. For a couple dollars extra, customers can add bacon, spinach, mushrooms, or Colombian chorizo. This sandwich

is the perfect way to start your day along with a nice cup of coffee. Speaking of coffee, Rey Sol offers a variety of Colombian style coffees, and a popular item on the menu is their signature iced latte. The latte can be customized with a variety of milks and syrups, including dulce de leche, vanilla, pumpkin, and el campesino (a rum and brown sugar flavored syrup). The iced coffee also has cold brew ice cubes to ensure that the coffee fla-

vor remains strong as time goes on. Apart from the unique menu, Rey Sol attracts customers due to their cute and trendy restaurant space. The restaurant has bright, white walls with brown and turquoise furniture. O’Connor noted that “the place has a quaint and cozy vibe.” Rey Sol offers indoor and outdoor seating, along with curbside pickup and DoorDash, making it convenient for everyone. Though the pandemic has been difficult on many new and old local restaurants alike, Rey Sol has been very fortunate to have a smooth and successful opening. Guests can expect to wait on a 10-20 minute line before even getting a table! Over the course of the next few months, look to support local restaurants and businesses, whether it be by attending in person or by picking up food. You will not be disappointed! ■



Rey Sol’s trendy interior



Rey Sol’s cranberry prosciutto salad

DO YOU WANT TO CATCH A SUNSET?

The best places to see a beautiful sunset throughout Bergen County

Karen Bae '23

At the end of every day, the sky gives us a sunset: the daily disappearance of the sun below the horizon due to Earth's rotation. But why is watching the sunset such a universally loved activity?

Well, Simran Dhupar, a sophomore at Highlands, explains, "Sunsets have so many pretty colors and I love admiring them in the sky. The beauty of sunsets calms me at the end of the day and helps bring the day to a close." When the

vibrant colors in the sky seamlessly mix with one another, there's a moment of peace that you can't help but appreciate.

Senior Joanne Shin says, "I like watching sunsets because the beautiful view gives me a break from all the problems...I'm going through in life. It reminds me to enjoy my current living, breathing, moment." Who knew that sunsets could hold so much hidden meaning and comfort for people!

As we're already halfway through the school

year, the students at Northern Highlands are busy keeping up with their academics, extracurriculars, and more. As a result, most of us are too occupied to notice the natural beauty in the sky. However, there are so many plac-

weekends.

Another perfect location near Bergen County is next to the Weehawken Edgewater Channel.

Shin says, "I like it there because there's a killer view of Manhattan, the beautiful water, and

"The beauty of sunsets calms me at the end of the day."

Sophomore Simran Dhupar

es, only minutes away, in Bergen County to watch the spectacular sunset!

The Celery Farm in Allendale is a great place to watch the sunset, it's free to enter, and it's only five minutes away from Northern Highlands! The Celery Farm is a freshwater wetland that's open to the public during daylight hours every day of the year. As of now, it is open from 6:00 AM - 8:00 PM. The preserve has quiet, easy, and short trails that you can follow while watching the sunset. It's usually busier on the

the sunset. It's a great photo-taking hotspot." This location is a little farther from Highlands with about a 37 minute drive, but it's definitely worth checking out because there are also shopping malls and restaurants nearby. This location is open at all hours of the day and has free admission. It's also busier on the weekends.

Another sunset spot in Bergen County is Ramapo Reservation in Mahwah. It's free to go and is open daily from sunrise to sunset. Ramapo Valley Reser-

vation is the largest park area in Bergen County and is a 12 minute drive from Northern Highlands. The park is usually busier on weekends like the other locations, and it has trails where you can get high enough to see a beautiful sunset and get back before it turns dark. The Castle Point Trail in particular is known to have a nice lookout point.

One more location to watch the sunset is Crestwood Lake in Allendale. Crestwood Lake is free to go to during this season and is only three minutes away from Northern Highlands by car, or about a 12 minute walk! The park area of Crestwood Lake is open to the public daily at all hours of the day, and Crestwood has steep, grassy hills surrounding the lake where you can get a perfect viewpoint of the sunset. Again, this location is busier on the weekends, but it's usually rather empty during the colder months. Crestwood Lake is the perfect place to lay out a blanket and have a picnic while watching the sunset. However, since the weather is consistent-

ly colder now, you can watch the sunset here in the trunk of a car and lay out blankets and pillows!

If it's not possible for you to visit these sunset watching spots, Dhupar suggests that taking the time to simply look out the window during a car ride is a great way to spot all the different colors in the sky just as if you were outdoors. It may seem obvious and insipid that you can watch the sunset from your car window, but you'd be surprised how often we miss the little things in life while we're stressing out over our day-to-day.

Furthermore, during the winter, the sun sets much earlier than in the summer, so I suggest planning to arrive at these locations by a little earlier than 5:00 PM if you want to catch a beautiful sunset. Additionally, watching the sunset in any of these locations would be a really simple and cute Valentine's or Galentine's day activity! ■



A view of a stunning sunset.

Photo courtesy of Cassidy Fishman

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT: MAGGIE MCAULIFFE

How senior Maggie McAuliffe is working her way up in the world of acting

Simran Dhupar '23

A theatre is home to a variety of performers, especially actors. Highlands senior Maggie McAuliffe is one who lives on the stage under a bright spotlight. With her bubbly personality, McAuliffe is able to portray any emotion or role with conviction. She says that acting is a special time for her to enter a fantasy and become a new person through her acts.

McAuliffe notes, "I like acting so much because it's an escape, when you take on a character you can completely become that person and leave your own life for a few hours." McAuliffe says she owes thanks to her mother, who introduced her to acting at a young age and led her to be in love with it ever since.

She explains, "I grew up with a mom who took my sisters and I to see Broadway shows all the time; the first one I saw was *The Addams Family*, and I kind of always knew it was what I wanted to do."

McAuliffe is involved in acting with several different companies and programs around the New York-New Jersey area. She has been committed to Nyack Community Theatre for a long time.

"I have been doing shows at the Nyack community theater Helen Hayes Youth Theater for a few years, I've done about seven shows with them." Along with performances in Nyack, McAuliffe says, "I've done shows at the YMCA a couple times and some at St. Joes. I've also done two shows with different companies in NYC and do cabarets there occasionally." With the practice and experience gained from her roles across New York and New Jersey, McAuliffe has been able to be involved with shows at Northern Highlands as well—she was also a part of *How To Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* at Highlands last year. Evidently, McAuliffe has a lengthy list of experiences that have helped shape her acting style and become

well-trained in her craft.

McAuliffe's memory of roles she has performed stems back to as early as middle school when she was a part of shows such as

able to also learn from their performances while giving out her own expertise. As a high school student, McAuliffe has been part of several pro-

Brown. At the YMCA, McAuliffe "did *The Little Mermaid* and *You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown* (again!)."

McAuliffe's greatest acting accomplishment thus far was recent and took place during lockdown, as she shares, "During quarantine I was lucky enough to be a part of my first (virtual) Off-Broadway show *Sticks & Stones*, with Broadway Equity Fights AIDS!" Despite restrictions on performing, McAuliffe found a way to branch out and pair with a larger organization.

McAuliffe's list of involvements and achievements with acting don't end there, however. She says, "My favorite show has to have been *Runaways* in 2019. It's a musical that takes place in the 80s about the runaway children in NYC. We were able to incorporate fully sign language monologues and have the actors play their own instruments (I played the trumpet and ukulele). It was an incredibly emotional show

to put on and was a cause that was really close to mine and my friend Lucy Rattner's hearts, and we decided to make the show a kind of fundraiser and raised almost \$2,000 for The Covenant House in NYC for homeless youth." Not only is McAuliffe involved with acting, but she uses her love for the arts to support a greater cause and hopes to spread awareness and joy.

McAuliffe is certainly not going to give up her love for acting and the arts after high school—she will carry her passion with her into her future, bringing positivity and personality everywhere she goes. She wishes to attend college for either Musical Theater or Drama, and shares, "even during the admissions process I'm continuing to audition for students and short films virtually. It's not over yet!"

McAuliffe is definitely someone to look out for—be ready to buy those Broadway tickets when she makes her debut! ■



Senior Maggie McAuliffe

Photo courtesy of Maggie McAuliffe

The Lion King, *The Snow White Variety Show*, and *Bye Bye Birdie*. McAuliffe has also "done two musical reviews at Broadway Theater Workshops along with a production of *Footloose*." Through viewing others' acting, she was

ductions alongside Helen Hayes, a youth theatre in New York. Among her experiences include acting in *Heathers*, *42nd Street*, *Zombie Prom*, *Mamma Mia!*, *Runaways*, *Head Over Heels*, and *You're A Good Man, Charlie*

SWIM TAKES THEIR MARK

What this swim season is expected to look like during the pandemic

Emma Hekemian '22

Patiently awaiting updates, the Highlands Swim Team has been ready to start since November when they normally would. Numerous orders from the state and COVID delays have pushed the season, and the team hopes that this pre-season delay is their biggest road-block.

Now that the four-month delay is coming to a close, fingers crossed, swimmers were asked a few questions about their long awaited season. Despite the delayed start to the season and the shortened meet schedule, athletes of Boys' and Girls' Swim remain laser focused on achieving goals and improving their performances.

However, simply being with each other seems to be the highlight of the upcoming season. As senior Vanessa Shoenholz explains, "I'm looking forward to seeing my teammates every day and making the most out of a weird year." Reilly Fox, another senior, also gave us her input: "I am looking forward to spending time with my

teammates and going out of my last season on a high note," she told us.

"I'd like to see our boys' relay beat the county record we set last year," explains Jack Krause, a junior. Last year at the County Championships, then-junior Michael Horkan and then-sophomores Jack Krause, Taite Lee, and Matthew Haddad took first place in the 200-free-style relay with a time of 1:28.96.

Meghan Rourke explained her own hopes for this season. "If we were to have counties this year, I would want to try and place in the top three in my events but since we probably won't, I want to try and break some of our team records," she explains.

In her freshmen season alone, Rourke found herself in the top five best-swims of all time for the Girls 50 free and top ten for the girls 100 free. With the times she's been making recently, 24.1 in her 50-free and a 53.2 in her 100-free, Meghan is definitely on course to reach both of her goals during her sophomore season.

"I would love for our team to be Sectional Champs for the 7th year in a row," says Fox. For the past 6 years, the girls' team has been crowned State Sectional Champions. Every year surrounding teams compete fiercely to win the title, but relinquishing

would send to the freshmen and sophomores is don't be afraid to challenge yourself," says Krause. "If you push yourself, you will be surprised by the outcome."

Shoenholz also offered some wise words to younger athletes. "Definitely take a step back to

"I'm looking forward to seeing everyone and working together as a team. It's a great group of individuals and I enjoy and appreciate the opportunity to coach them."

Coach Tom Viscardi

the streak is not something girls' swim is willing to do.

"It feels like you are on top of the world," Fox describes. "You work so hard to get to that point and you exceed all of your goals."

"The message I

enjoy all aspects of being involved in the team... It's so important to cheer each other on and make the effort to get to know everyone because a strong team bond is so important to success!"

For years, the largest

rivalry in the Patriot League for swimming has been the battle between Highlands and Indian Hills. This competition is one that results in a lot of screaming, high tension, fast swims, and the post-meet voice loss.

The March 13th date could not be approaching faster. Haddad voices his opinion on what is arguably, the most anticipated meet of the swim season. "Coincidentally, the meet I'm looking forward to the most is also the one I'm the most worried about. The meet against Indian Hills is always one that is very close, especially for the boys' team. I think we have a good shot at winning again, and I'm super excited to see how it turns out. It's always the most exciting meet of the year for me."

Despite the team's optimistic attitude coming into this season, there is no doubt that this will be different from any other. Swim is one of the few high school sports that has a co-ed team. During the season, both boys and girls swim at the same meets. Typically, this creates an awesome

team dynamic on the deck. Highlands swim quickly becomes a second family.

However, this season, due to capacity rules, boys and girls meets will now be separated by gender. When the change was announced, Coach Viscardi sought out the silver lining in what most swimmers view as a downside of the season, "It will be different for sure, but it might make the individual teams closer."

This optimistic attitude is something that carries through directly into the swimmers and is going to be the key to a successful season this year. "...I'm looking forward to seeing everyone and working together as a team. It's a great group of individuals and I enjoy and appreciate the opportunity to coach them," Viscardi explains.

For Highlands swimmers, the feeling is mutual: passionate, excited, motivating, and enthusiastic are all words that they describe Viscardi. With this optimistic attitude and drive to achieve their goals, it's safe to say that this swim season will be one to remember. ■



The team celebrated their sixth-straight sectional win at the end of the 2020 season.



Junior Emma Lomuti (18) and senior Athena Georgiades (25) celebrate during a game in 2019.

VINDICATION FOR VOLLEYBALL

After being pushed back by several months, the girls' volleyball season is finally slated to start

Carly Simmel '22

It is no surprise that with the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, there was an abundant amount of uncertainty about what the girls' high school volleyball season would look like.

Although the volleyball season typically begins in mid-August and concludes during November, the dates for this year had to be changed, due to the rules made by the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association.

As of now, the team will hold tryouts on March 1st.

No matter the sport, preparation is key when heading into the season. Senior Elizabeth Frassetto, who had a total of 125 digs for the team last year stated, "Personally, for this season I've been preparing by working out a lot more and have started to lift and gain muscle in the off season."

Frassetto continued, "I've been able to stay motivated by thinking to myself that one day everything will go back to normal and with the time given I don't want to waste it."

She continues, "I learned to use my time

wisely by using my extra free time to become stronger mentally and physically."

It is clear that even though the season is starting much later than usual, the coaches and players will not take any opportunities that they are given for granted.

Overall, the players and staff have put in countless hours into the sport, and although this year will be one like no other, this will not stop them from putting everything that they have into both all of their practices and games.

In terms of what vol-

leyball looks like during the pandemic, Frassetto explained, "In the time of covid volleyball is very difficult since it is an indoor sport, which makes it very high risk. This leads to limited practices and games this season."

Senior year is extremely special to sports players, and for some of them it may be the last time that they are ever on the court.

Last year, there were only two seniors on the team. However, this year, Coach Schanstine states, "I have the largest senior class since I have been coaching.

There are 11 returning seniors, who have all dedicated 4 years to the program."

She continued, "I am excited to give them the opportunity to have a final season and play together again before they graduate."

For Frassetto, volleyball is a very important aspect of her life. She has been playing for about six years now.

She describes, "Every moment on the court counts and every good and bad memory I will cherish for the rest of my life. The drive, determination, and excitement from the game

is the best feeling."

It is clear that Frassetto is not the only one who feels this way, and the drive and determination that comes from each player is what will allow for yet another successful season.

Frassetto states, "The friendships I have made through volleyball are unbreakable which is why I love the sport so much."

We wish the girls the best of luck heading into their season and cannot wait to see them leave it all on the court! ■

COURT'S IN SESSION (WELL... KIND OF)

Highlands' Girls Basketball Season Delayed Once Again

Shannon Flatt '21

With fall sports still occurring during COVID-19, it seemed as if winter sports would go off without a hitch, or so we thought. After yet another anticipated starting week, the Highlands Girls' Basketball team's season has been postponed yet another two weeks. The team's season has been postponed since mid-December and the team has yet to play in a single game or scrimmage.

"I think as a senior, it's very tough to hear once again that we can't play for another 2 weeks" begins captain, four year varsity starter, and Rowan University commit Kelli Kuenzel.

She continued, "We had our first 6 practices that were high intensity and everyone was getting in really good shape and to have that taken away again is very hard. I think that once we get out of this 2 week delay again we will definitely be able to play some games, I don't think it will be that many but it will be something. The most important thing that we need to do is continue to stay healthy."

Although there has been little to no COVID cases on the team, the program has continued to shut down due to the increase in cases at Highlands.

"I'm very frustrated that there is another cancellation in the season,"

explains senior captain Lindsay Sparago. "This cancellation puts us behind many other teams [in the league]."

Senior Varsity basketball player Kiana Stavish states that "it's frustrating, but it is what it is, and I plan on making the most of whatever is given to me."

Not only have the cancellations put the girls behind other teams, but it's putting a strain on senior players' final season. One of the nine seniors on the Varsity roster this year, Victoria Booth, looks on the brighter side. She said how "it's sad that we don't get to experience a senior season like in past years, but at the same time we're making history with a COVID basketball season and I think that's just as cool."

The team's senior night was scheduled to be on February 2nd, which was the day that Highlands announced yet another two week all-virtual period, thus meaning that winter sports were placed on another two week hold.

"Majority of us have dreamed of this year for our whole basketball career," states senior, four year varsity athlete, and Muhlenberg College basketball commit Megan Winters. "It sucks not having a full season like we all wanted for our senior year, but we all understand what is going on and that we have to be

safe with everything happening in the world."

"I feel extremely bad for the seniors," begins sophomore Lauren Flatt, another essential player on the varsity basketball team. "[They] have worked so hard these past four years and they deserve a proper final season to end their NH basketball career."

"We were all upset to hear the news of shutting down once again, but we are using it as motivation to keep moving forward and getting better."

Sophomore Emma Starr

With no clear indication or view of the future, it's unknown if the team will be able to have a proper senior night to close out their season.

If it wasn't enough change with COVID, the girls' basketball team experienced another big change: a new head coach. Coach Justin DeFeo has taken over for former head coach Rich Micallef after coaching the JV team for three years.

DeFeo writes how he

is "thrilled to be the varsity coach. Northern Highlands is a great school, with a rich tradition in girls basketball. So it is an honor."

The girls have welcomed DeFeo as the new head coach. "Having a new coach always takes some adjusting, but it really helps that Justin was already in the program," says senior

doing at practice and prints it out so we can all see it. This helps us to stay active and focused throughout practice."

Coach DeFeo played high school basketball at Hawthorne High School and then went on to play at Centenary University. Although assisting alongside Micallef in previous seasons, DeFeo takes a different approach on the court.

"My style is a little different than previous coaches," DeFeo begins. "I tried to focus more on concepts and skills instead of 'plays.' I try to make everything as game-like as possible so I'd also say less 'drills.'"

As Coach DeFeo has moved up to the position as head varsity coach, freshman coach Maggie Ely will also be coaching the JV team.

Ely says how "while we have only had one week of practice, I am super optimistic! We will compete and be successful because of how hard our girls are working and how much fun we are having. The varsity program is a healthy mix of veterans and new faces and the JV group is strong and skilled. I am looking forward to what this roller coaster of a season will bring as well as looking forward to upcoming seasons with these girls in our program."

Ely played high school basketball at Pascack Val-

ley High School and then collegiately at New York University and the University of Chicago. This will be her third year coaching at Highlands.

"I've been lucky to have coached with a great staff since being at NH, so it is bittersweet [having a new head coach]. Coach Micallef, LeBlancq, DeFeo, and I have had a lot of fun working together the past three years, and Coach D taking over has been an exciting and smooth transition for the girls."

This year's varsity team has a roster of 16 girls with a mixture of both seniors and younger players who are excited to step out onto the court and gain experience.

With all athletes in the program hopeful of a start (and possible extension) of the season, the girls basketball team is hungry to take the court. Kuenzel said, "I think that this year's team is looking good," begins Winters. "We all have a great mindset of wanting to be there and that every practice could be our last so we push ourselves."

Sophomore Emma Starr explains that "the team is continuing to stay in shape while shut down. We were all upset to hear the news of shutting down once again, but we are using it as motivation to keep moving forward and getting better." ■

Boys Basketball Season Update

Jake Fishman '23

Big plays, excitement, and much more is underway as the NHRHS Boys' Basketball team takes the court once again despite a late start to the season due to increasing COVID cases and shutdowns.

Varsity Coach Ponchak says that the late start isn't going to affect him or his team, as "challenges and obstacles are opportunities to work on your flexibility and resiliency. The team will adapt and make changes as needed to have the best season we can have given the circumstances."

He wants to cherish every moment that he has with his team on the court, and he wants to make the most of the limited season.

Coach Ponchak also expressed how much of "an honor it is to have the opportunity to coach here."

Coach Ponchak's main goal is to make the players

better and stronger athletes. He also demonstrated the importance of "leav[ing] the gym better than when we entered it. We will focus on developing our skills and executing our systems and strategies to be the best team we can be. As a coaching staff, we will provide a positive environment for our student-athletes to

landers this season.

In preparation for the upcoming season, Phillips says he has "done a lot of work training and getting my shot under control and on fire." Phillips has high hopes for this season, as the Highlands are coming off a very successful year last year winning the BIT championship.

"Challenges and obstacles are opportunities to work on your flexibility and resiliency."

Coach Ponchak

learn and grow as players and people."

A team isn't a team without its players. Senior player Ryan Phillips is hoping to help lead the High-

Sophomore player Jack Boydell says that to prepare for the season he has "been running to get into shape while also playing basketball with some of [his]

teammates."

Sophomore Gavin Phillips also says that he has "prepared for this season by training with all of [his] friends and with [his] old coach."

What Phillips fears the most this year is an even shorter season than the one that they are already having, as he hopes to get back onto the court and play as much as he can.

Throughout all that is happening, Coach Ponchak maintains a positive mindset. While it is frustrating that the boys are unable to practice and play games at the moment, he understands that these decisions have been made to protect the health and safety of the players. He, along with everyone else on the Northern Highlands basketball team hopes to play as quickly as possible. We wish the best of luck to the players on this team and that they will return to play soon. ■



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COMMITMENT CORNER

Senior Nick Lapi commits to the University of Pittsburgh

Nicole Dreznin '23

The University of Pittsburgh is home to many incredible athletes, and it was recently announced that one of Highlands own would soon be a Pittsburgh Panther. On January 24, Senior Nick Lapi announced on his Twitter that he had committed as a preferred walk-on to further his football career at Pittsburgh.

For Lapi, this opportunity to play from Coach Tim Salem was a dream come true. He had spent years working towards his goal to play Division I football, doing everything and anything to turn this dream into a reality.

Football was always on his mind, ever since he began playing in the second grade. Even at such

a young age he knew that football was his game, explaining "I had no interest in other sports and just focused on football." The bonds that he is able to create with teammates and coaches, along with the physicality of this game has built his love for football.

Once he stepped on the campus at the University of Pittsburgh, there was an instant love and connection. Lapi explained, "I just felt it in my gut that this was the place that I wanted to be." From the restaurants and town areas, to the campus itself, it was all just perfect. The mixture of academics and athletics was very important to him and at the University of Pittsburgh, he would have the opportunity of both.

We are all living



Lapi running onto the field during a night game.

"I had no interest in other sports and just focused on football."

Senior Nick Lapi

through an insanely hard time right now, especially athletes like Lapi. His whole senior season was shortened, and he lost the opportunity to get back to MetLife and win it all. The Highlanders ended with a 5-2 record.

Not only was playing impacted but with COVID restrictions, the recruitment process was severely changed. Lapi speaks of the lack of scholarships available, and the inability to see coaches.

At Highlands, Lapi has started at both running back and linebacker. He is a 6'2", 210 pound powerhouse on the field and has tremendously impacted the Highlanders as a player and teammate. His position for the Panthers has yet to be determined, but the coach-

es Salem and Narduzzi are in agreement that he is the kind of athlete that can succeed anywhere he is put.

While he is saddened to leave Northern Highlands football behind, he looks forward to his future, and finally being able to fulfill his dream. Lapi thanks his mother for never leaving his side, and to his sports hero Saquan Barkley.

He went to Twitter to state, "I would like to thank my friends, family, and coaches that helped and supported me." The Highlands community wishes Lapi luck as he pursues his football career at the University of Pittsburgh! ■

Utica College football gains Highlander Luke Barthel

Chahat Arora '22

College commitment season is full of excitement, as students commit to various schools in order to continue their academic and athletic careers to their fullest potential. On January 14, 2021, senior football player Luke Barthel committed to Utica College to continue the sport he loves for another four years.

Growing up as a student athlete, football has been a big part of Barthel's life, having started playing in second grade, and continuing that passion to

today. Like anyone, it was important to find the college that he would do best in.

Barthel committed to Utica College which is a private university in Utica, New York and was established by Syracuse University. When asked why he chose Utica, Barthel responded by saying that the school was the best fit for both his academic and football career.

He added on by saying that he is very excited to have a new chapter in his life and also to be in a different atmosphere, but also added that he will miss

Highlands. Playing football at Highlands for the past four years, Barthel was a punter, with 26 punts in the 2020 season and a total of 810 yards, clearly being an accomplished player.

However, Barthel didn't bind himself to one sport. Along with being a football player, Barthel played basketball for Highlands, as well. It didn't take long for him to realize that football was the path for him. All the hard work Barthel has put into his athletic career over the past few years has paid off, and we wish him the best of luck in his future endeavors. ■



Barthel punts the ball down the field during a game in the 2020 season.

Senior John Haemmerle becomes a Muhlenberg Mule

Viv Jones '21

As of this year, senior football player John Haemmerle made his commitment to play his longtime sport at Muhlenberg. He made his mark on the football field during his freshman year, and as he continued his academic and athletic career, he grew as an athlete. Now, he is excited to start a new chapter of his life in Allentown, Pennsylvania.

Haemmerle began playing football in the eighth grade, as he stated that he started pretty late compared to most of [his] friends. Before moving to the quad district, he played various sports in Paramus such as lacrosse and soccer, where football acted as another hobby.

When he moved, he said that he "wanted to pursue football at first because all my friends in my new town were playing football," but as his talent grew, he realized during his sophomore year that he fell head over heels in love with the sport.

He didn't mind the six hour practices each day or the endless reps of weight lifting, for he was enamored by the team atmosphere.

As for a future in football, Haemmerle thought nothing of it for most of his high school career. Growing up, he stated that he didn't even think he would play a high school sport, but after his defining sophomore season, colleges became curious of what Haemmerle had to offer on the

field.

When he got his first visit from a college at school one day, he said that



Haemmerle catching the call in a game against River Dell.

"that's really the first time it hit [him] that [he] could play at the next level."

Throughout copious amounts of college offers, Muhlenberg soon rose to his top choice. Haemmerle stated that he "chose

Muhlenberg because it had everything I really wanted in a school." When becoming more acclimated with

fore deciding he wanted to become a Mule was upon his first visit. When he stepped on campus and then the football field, it "gave [him] butterflies in [his] stomach because [he] knew this was a place [he] was going to succeed in the classroom, on the field, and grow as a young man."

Haemmerle wasn't the only one who felt like his success lied at Muhlenberg, for his family, teammates, and coaches were supportive along the entire journey. Both of his parents were "super supportive throughout the recruiting process" and they feel at ease now that he has secured his spot on the roster.

The Highlanders coaches also showed signs of support, by planning a honorary dinner for other fel-

low teammates who had committed. Haemmerle felt that this night was deserved in the midst of the pandemic, and "seeing the coaches and spending time with them off the field was awesome."

Since the football season was cut short due to the impact of COVID-19, Haemmerle wishes he hadn't taken his time on the field for granted. He reflects on his four years, and stated that "If [he] could do it all over again, [he] would in a snap of the fingers."

As he leaves the NH field for another, he says that "he loved playing under those Friday night lights with those fans, cheerleaders, and with [his] family by [his] side." ■

ICE HOCKEY SEASON SHUTDOWN

Highlands hockey players talk about their short season

Leah Rimland '23

After only four games, the ice hockey season has unfortunately shut down due to COVID-19 exposures. The first four games went very well, ending with a record of winning two games, losing one and tying another. When asked about the first couple of games, freshman James Massimmi states, "they were very competitive," and that he feels "very optimistic about next season."

This shutdown was not abrupt, but it occurred after two or three postponements. Sophomore Constantine Manos describes it as, "not the greatest feeling in the world." However, he believes that hopefully, "next season won't be as crazy and hectic as this season and we actually get to play and not get postponed every week."

Even though this shutdown has upset every player on the team, it has impacted the seniors the most. Since their freshman year, they have been looking forward to playing ice hockey for our school as seniors.

During these confusing times seniors captain Joseph Daloisio says, "the games we have played were truly meaningful and I am glad we at least had something." Fellow senior captain Mason Prugh says, "it's definitely tough with it being my senior year and all, but it is just how it is now."

These two seniors will be missed a lot by the team

and the feelings are mutual. Prugh says, "the thing I will miss most about high

skill, but trusts the coaches and each other to ensure a successful season."



Highlander taking the puck down the ice in the 2020 season.

"The games we have played were truly meaningful and I am glad we at least had something."

Senior Joseph Daloisio

school hockey is representing my school and seeing my peers in the stands root for me. It really is something else scoring in front of your friends that don't understand hockey but are excited to be there and witness the game for school spirit. I will also miss the overwhelming support from the school and the team bonding trip to Lake Placid."

When asked his favorite part about ice hockey in high school is, Daloisio says it's "the team bonding. Northern Highlands has a reputation of being a very close and well-knit team that may not have the most

Prugh continues to say, "my favorite thing is definitely in the locker room talking to the team and getting ready for games and practices and playing 'sew' in the parking lot before games." The sense of pride for representing the Northern Highlands ice hockey team is strong.

Daloisio shares his school pride when he says, "I have been very thankful to play for a school that truly cares about its student-athletes and I am more than thankful to be able to have gone on the team bonding trip to Lake Placid last season." Continuing, he says, "high school

hockey as a whole was an unforgettable part of my life and I will cherish it into college."

Ice hockey is an amazing sport that teaches valuable life lessons to students that they will use later in life. Manos says, "the most valuable lesson I've learned from playing ice hockey is to always keep your head up because you never know what can happen when your head is down."

This can be used later in life to know to always be aware of your surroundings. Massimmi also states, "the most valuable lesson I have learned from hockey is to be humble and to stay calm during the final minutes of the game."

Seniors Prugh and Daloisio will use the life lessons they have learned from their high school ice hockey experience in col-

lege and later in life. Prugh says, "I have learned that it doesn't matter what year you are, if you work hard and want to play, you will get rewarded for it. I can take this with me through life by working hard and wanting to succeed."

Many different students find different meanings in the sport, but everyone has learned something valuable that they will always remember.

Daloisio also says, "The values and lessons that I have learned from high school hockey are that nothing in this game comes easy and you have to work for everything whether that be a spot on a team or as simple as working hard in practice to prove your worth."

Both seniors plan to continue their ice hockey careers by playing club at

the college they choose to attend next year. Prugh says, "I am excited in college to play for a new school and to represent Northern Highlands in a positive way."

Unfortunately, the season was cut short due to the Coronavirus, but the few games and practices that did occur were a glimpse of normalcy during these troubling times. Hopefully by next season everything will be back to the status quo and the Northern Highlands ice hockey team will be successful.

For the seniors, we wish them all the best for next year and we hope they will continue to play ice hockey and represent Northern Highlands wherever life takes them. ■



Highlands player fights for the puck against St. Joe's in a game last year.

WHO'S IN THE SPORT-LIGHT THIS WEEK...

Athlete of the Week: Junior ice hockey player Will Fuller

Emma Starr '23

The Northern Highlands hockey team got off to a fast start being the only winter sport at Northern Highlands who were able to get in a few games before the school closed.

The Highlanders had an opening record of 2-0-1 with wins against Pascack Valley and St. Peter's Prep. The team was definitely excited for their first game beating Pascack Valley 6-1. They merely escaped St. Peter's Prep with the final score of 1-0.

Junior hockey player Will Fuller who dominates at center on the varsity team has been an outstanding varsity player since his

freshman year. Fuller leads the team with three goals in only three games. On top of that Fuller has three assists, a very impressive stat line. Fuller has been a very large

Fuller leads the team with three goals in only three games.

contribution to the teams overall success so far.

Fuller explained that he started his hockey journey at age five - twelve years ago now. It is clear that Fuller has put in the

work since a young age to become great at the sport he loves.

He mentioned that he is looking to further his academic and athletic career playing hockey in college although he is not sure where he would like to spend the next four years playing.

The hockey team's impressive start came to a complete halt when all winter sports were paused until after February break. Fuller explained that the team was disappointed. He noted, "everyone was upset, but we will be training to stay in tip-top shape for when we can get back on the ice."

Game days in the time



Fuller fighting on the ice during a game last season.

of COVID-19 have significantly changed with the most obvious change being no fans are able to attend and watch in person. Fuller explained that, "fans would normally be there, so we

have to get ourselves even more pumped up because there is no one to cheer us on."

Clearly this has not affected Fuller and the team too much based on their

outstanding performance so far. We wish Fuller and the team the best of luck as the restart inches closer and closer. ■

Highlands' Homemade Starbucks Drinks

Layout by Noreen Hosny



TM



Cinnamon Dolce Latte

1-2 Tablespoons of dolce syrup

1 cup of milk

1 cup of coffee

Cinnamon and whipped cream for garnish

**Adapted from sugarspiceglitter.com*



Vanilla Bean Frappuccino

2 scoops vanilla bean ice cream

1 cup of milk

1/4 teaspoon of vanilla extract

1 cup ice

**Adapted from snacksandsips.com*



Peppermint Mocha

1-2 Teaspoons of peppermint syrup

1-2 Teaspoons of mocha syrup

1 cup of steamed milk

1 cup of coffee

Whipped cream for garnish

**Adapted from copykat.com*