

THE HIGHLAND FILING

Northern Highlands Regional High School | 298 Hillside Avenue, Allendale NJ 07401 | Volume 55, Issue 01 | September 2020



Veronica Torriani '21

With only a third of the student population in the building, the one-way hallways are practically empty.

(ECO)VID-19

The economic impact of COVID-19

Anara Pollak '23

COVID-19 has affected everyone in some way, shape, or form. Whether realized or not, one of the ways it has had a direct impact on all of the students and staff at Northern Highlands is the school budget, which was created in March 2020, before the outbreak of COVID-19 in the US.

Highlands has received \$44,164 from the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Funds through the Cares Act and \$25,865 from the Coronavirus Relief Fund Grant. Both of these funds come from the Federal Government.

With these funds, the school was able to purchase personal protective equipment including PUREGREEN24 disinfectant for the whole year, as well as 14,000 disposable masks, and 20,000 disposable gloves.

Despite the additional federal funding, Highlands also experienced a reduction of less than \$95,000 in School State Aid.

Through a tremendous amount of time and effort, the school was able to figure out how to distribute the funding needed to successfully begin hybrid learning. ■

HIGHLANDS GOES HYBRID

Due to COVID-19, school is a little different this year

Grace Paolillo '22

After a six-month absence from school due to COVID-19, many members of the community were left curious as to how the school would be operating in the fall.

In order to prepare for the 2020-2021 school year, administrators and faculty drafted the Restart and Recovery Plan to reopen the school.

This plan details the many new safety features that Northern Highlands would put into place in order to keep students and staff as safe as possible.

Given the circumstances of COVID-19, Principal Jo-

“Some school is better than no school”

Principal Joseph Occhino

seph Occhino describes the process of drafting the plan as difficult for contributors, given that “things were changing almost weekly,

and it was a tremendous team effort in order to put the plan in place.”

For instance, just a week before school started, the schedule was altered from full days to half days. This was because conducting lunch safely was proving to be challenging.

One of the biggest changes this school year is that the student body is divided into three cohorts. Each school day, a different cohort attends school in-person, while the other two cohorts attend virtually.

After the first week of school, Vice Principal Mi-

chael Koth said that even though being grouped in cohorts was unusual for both students and teachers, cohorts “are better than what we had experienced in the spring.”

In fact, many students have approached both Occhino and Koth with their belief that some school is better than no school.

One challenge involving the cohorts lies with the teachers, who have to juggle teaching both the in-person students and virtual students at the same time.

At any given moment, there may be five students

in a classroom and twenty students online listening to the same live lecture.

Koth says that the structure of the hybrid system makes teaching difficult for educators because “to give attention to both [in person and virtual students] at the same time is virtually impossible...how do you assess their learning, are they getting it, do they not get it, should I move forward or should we stop and go over something?”

Continued on page 8

INSIDE



Photo courtesy of NH Yearbook

Teacher's Corner

Leib shares his perspective on the global pandemic as a part of the new Voices section, Teacher's Corner.

page 4



Photo Courtesy of Bridget Bruchalski

TikTok Famous

NH students gain a large following on TikTok, including senior Bridget Bruchalski.

page 13



Photo courtesy of Matt Hamrah

Commit to College

Seniors Matt Hamrah and Megan Winters commit to colleges for Lacrosse and Women's Basketball.

page 12

UNMASKING THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR

How masks have affected our lives and become a form of self expression



Photo courtesy of Victoria Campos '21

Victoria Campos '21

A new school year has begun! Back to waking up early, homework, and cafeteria coffee—but this year it’s a little different. This year, we are living through a global pandemic.

Due to the circumstances, new procedures have been put in place in most public locations to keep COVID from spreading, including wearing a facial covering, staying six-feet apart, and washing our hands as frequently as possible.

Wearing a mask has become essential in today’s society. We need to continue to wear masks to protect our fellow citizens. Although it can become difficult at times, there are definitely ways to spice up your look.

A few weeks ago, I saw a stand with hundreds of different masks. There was every color and design imaginable, including some with political statements and messages on them.

I thought it was a unique form of self-expression that could be reworked as a fashion statement. I even saw a few online that had noses and smiles drawn on them. Nowadays there is every mask imaginable out there; everyone just has to find what’s right for them.

About a month ago, it

was announced that kids would be returning to schools across the nation. The cases were rising rapidly, and there were still many people refusing to wear their masks due to political battles happening across the US. When I saw that the debate of wearing masks became political, I was concerned for the safety of the children attending school.

I think that it’s our duty as a collective society to wear a mask. This disease attacks people’s lungs, and across the world, there are people dying because some people refuse to wear their masks.

I had a chance to speak with a few kids from Highlands to get to know how they were feeling about having to wear a mask all day in school.

Junior Tegan Kingsley said that wearing “masks can be frustrating at times but wearing them is better for society.”

Luckily, the students at Highlands definitely seem to understand the importance of keeping our masks on throughout the day.

Teachers and students around the world find themselves feeling frustrated in the classroom, but after watching the news and seeing the number of cases go up, we remember that wearing a mask is our responsibility.

With every new solution comes one more problem. Masks are definitely beneficial to our world now and they need to be worn at all times. However, we need to be careful not to waste them because a single mask can produce

millions of potentially dangerous particles.

For example, it has been reported that in the Mediterranean, masks have been seen floating like jellyfish. This is extremely dangerous to our oceans and the animals in our food chain. While wearing a mask has become the new standard, people haven’t been instructed on the severity of disposing of their masks incorrectly.

While everyone may not have the resources to buy a reusable cloth mask, they seem to be the most environmentally-friendly option. Buying a cloth mask, with a filter, that can be rewashed is crucial to saving the ecosystem.

And if you can’t buy one, make one! There are millions of youtube videos and TikToks going around

on how to make your own mask and filter at home. Remember not only to stay safe but stay conscious about our environment while doing it!

When looking at the future and what could come from all of this, I’m not completely sure what will happen, but I do know that COVID is not going away anytime soon. I believe that masks will be the future. Masks have been used, especially in Asian countries, for years now and I think that it’s definitely possible for it to become popular in America.

If everyone continues to wear their masks and advocate for a cleaner and healthier America, I believe that we will eventually achieve the end goal of returning to normal times. ■

THE HIGHLANDS HYBRID SCHEDULE

The pros and cons of virtual learning



Photo courtesy of Chahat Arora '22

Chahat Arora '22

One year ago today, we were living life as normal. No masks, no virtual school, and no need for self-isolation. Now, here we are, sitting at home and learning, going to school without all of our friends, and living life in a way that we have never known.

When COVID-19 struck, we had no idea what consequences we had to endure. We were all taken aback, but many of us believed by this school year, everything would return to normal. Sadly, that did not end up happening. Nevertheless, we have learned to adjust to the new normal in school now... hybrid learning.

Being completely virtual for the last few months of the previous school year was weird, to say the least, and it was honestly pretty hard not to see our friends or our teachers. Completely cut off from the outside world, we didn’t know what was to come.

With the hybrid program this year, going into school has been a game-changer. The first day I went back, it felt as if things were looking up and the finish line was near.

Right as I walked into Highlands, I saw everyone get their temperature checked with their masks on. This made me feel safe, knowing that everyone was being cautious. The hybrid model gives us the opportunity to be in school, while also staying safe. It also allows us the opportunity to interact with our classmates more.

Teachers have also found another way to mend the classroom by putting us into Zoom breakout rooms, so we can work collaboratively with people at home and in school. Considering the circumstances, it seems like Highlands made the best out of the circumstances.

I have always loved being in school. Therefore, the ability to do in-school learning is something that I enjoy. I don’t really like virtual learning just because I can’t grasp the concepts as easily. Virtually, I have more to get distracted by, but at school, the environment motivates me. When you are at school, you are surrounded

by your peers, making you determined to learn.

Like everything in life, there are pros and cons to the hybrid learning system. One con is the fact that we are unable to go back to school with all of our friends. This definitely was a big part of my high school experience.

Another con is the fact that even though we have ended up getting a shorter school day, we have longer classes. Sometimes it gets a little hard to concentrate in one class for an elongated period of time.

That being said, there are also some pros to this program, including the fact that we are safer using this method. If we were in school with all of us there every day, there would be a much higher risk of infection.

Another pro is that we are now learning in half days. To me, this is really cool, because I get time in my day to do other things now that we only have school for about four hours.

School has definitely been different, but so is the world that we are living in. The hybrid day is a huge positive in this negative situation and I know as we continue, we will find ways to make it better. ■

A DIFFERENT TYPE OF COVID TESTING

COVID-19’s impact on SATs and ACTs

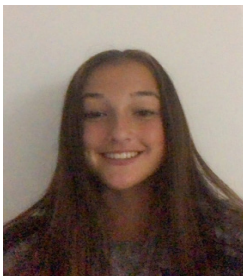


Photo courtesy of Hannah Blacher '22

Hannah Blacher '22

For high schoolers, the SAT and ACT are a constant source of stress.

We all have to take these tests or, we were supposed to take them before most schools became test-optional. But how much of an impact does standardized testing have on our lives? And, how is testing affected by the pandemic?

There’s so much uncertainty when it comes to these tests. Many schools, even before the pandemic, were test-optional schools, and now that number is only increasing.

Many students have considered not taking the tests at all due to test-optional college applications. However, I believe that there is a disadvantage to those who do not complete these tests. Although some colleges say that submitting scores for the SATs and ACTs is, in their words, “optional,” submitting them can give you an

advantage. Even if some of the schools you are applying to don’t require them, it’s always a good idea to take one or the other and see how you do.

Not submitting test scores may hurt your chances when it comes to college acceptances because and you are putting yourself behind other students who are trying to achieve the same thing as you.

As of right now, a lot of tests are canceled due to the pandemic. I had planned to take the PACT last April before it got canceled. Many of my friends had tests planned that got canceled as well. This puts everyone in a tough spot and adds a lot of stress to

everyone is sitting in the same room for 3+ hours. I am not a scientist, nor a doctor, but I believe that with masks and proper social distancing, we can achieve our goals of taking the tests safely.

I know, it’s frightening and there is so much we don’t know about the virus, but we are all in the same boat with standardized testing and college admissions.

We are all going through the same pandemic together. The lack of knowledge we have about when it is ending, or if it will, is a big source of stress for students at our school. Ideally, we could all take the SATs and ACTs in person, but we all know

I believe those who do not complete these tests are at a disadvantage.

an already stressful time. We also have to consider the safety of in-person testing. I believe that if everyone takes the necessary precautions, there is a safe way to go about completing these standardized tests. I know some people may question the fact that

that life does not always work out the way we want it to.

We all have to remember that we’re in the same messy, complicated situation and that these times will pass. Hopefully, we get to submit our test scores next fall. ■

The Highland Fling

Editorial Staff

Editor-in-Chief Api Dhadda '21 Melissa Reifman '21	News Samantha Lever '22 Michael Reifman '23
Sports Kiki Riley '21 Isabella Torriani '21 Mikayla Walsh '21	Arts & Entertainment Ariana Eftimiu '21 Kira Eske '21
Features Nina Evans '21 Noreen Hosny '21	Photography Veronica Torriani '21
Layout Editor Jed Katz '22 Kaitlyn Shang '22	Business Manager Jake Fishman '21 Kassidy Fishman '21 Vivian Jones '21
Adviser John Kaminski	Copy Editor Olivia Burchell '23 Steven Johnson '21

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

From the Desk of the Editors-in-Chief

When we began our term as Editors-in-Chief in March 2020, we never expected to be putting out our first issue in September. These past few months have been strange, to say the least, and unlike anything we have ever experienced during our four years on *The Fling*.

In February 2018, our freshman year, the Parkland shooting occurred, sparking student walk-outs throughout the nation. Highlanders were no exception, as they united to exercise their right to protest America’s growing gun violence. Our students stood up for their beliefs, and *The Fling* was there to report it.

In November 2018, the start of our sophomore year, tensions surrounding teacher contract re-negotiations led to widely-attended Board of Education meetings. Students, parents, and alumni filled the library, and then later the auditorium, delivering speeches in support of their teachers. The community came together, and *The Fling* was there to report it.

In March 2019, toward the end of our sophomore year, Highlanders grappled with mental health and began the difficult conversation about the stigma embedded in our culture. We, as a school, took steps to continue the dialogue, and *The Fling* was there to report it.

In March 2020, our junior year, COVID-19 completely transformed the way we learn, interact, and do, well, everything. Our entire world changed, and for once, *The Fling* could not be there to report it.

Now, after months of planning, we are back and ready to inform the community and preserve their stories within our pages. Our goal for the remainder of our term is simple: be there for every step forward, every step backward, and everything in between.

News will provide school-related COVID-19 updates, breaking down regulations and diving deeper into the rationale behind decisions. Voices will continue capturing the underlying student sentiment, while beginning to highlight faculty perspectives as well. Features will address beneath-the-surface issues, tackling social justice in our community. A&E will explore the creative minds of our students, ranging from those of Tiktokers and trendsetters to artists and musicians. Sports will follow the experience of athletes working through these uncertain times. And, the two of us will share our point of view as longtime student journalists navigating the changing landscape of Highlands.

We began our newspaper careers together back in Cavallini Middle School and have remained partners even through the transition into *Fling* reporters, Co-Editors, and now, Editors-in-Chief. We have pursued countless stories, conducted endless interviews, and spent innumerable hours editing articles.

As we look towards the future, we hope to see a lasting impact on how we publish content. *The Fling* has been a print newspaper for decades, but the pandemic has made our need for an online platform abundantly clear.

This is just the beginning of the changes, but no matter what happens, just know *The Fling* will be there to report it.

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

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

PANDEMIC SHAMING: A YES OR NO?

Should we be shaming our peers into social distancing?



Photo courtesy of Haley DiMara

Ayana Amin '22

The 2020 COVID-19 outbreak has shaken up the world. As a nation, we went from being a fast paced society to almost stagnant in every aspect of our lives. Within a matter of six months, students were introduced to a new system of learning, restaurants transitioned to outdoor dining, and businesses formulated safer means of operating.

We have been forced to adapt to new regulation, one of the most jarring being social distancing. This heavily stressed concept has unearthed a discord among our population,

bringing forth debates over science, religion, political affiliations, and more.

With so many different perspectives on the severity of the pandemic and how we should respond, the question is how do we maintain some normalcy and civility while staying safe?

We have been exposed to new procedures, and we are all still adapting and coping in our own ways — some of us more cautiously than others. Despite our level of precaution, it is safe to say that the concept of remaining six feet apart is abstract and, unfortunately, not always followed.

With schools and other facilities opening up, many Americans are becoming more at ease with the virus, in an effort to return to their old lives. If you are on social media, you may have started to see more people going to social

gatherings, sporting events, or even the beach. It is one thing to be safely surrounded by a small group of people; however, many of the participants are surrounded by large groups where social distancing is often disregarded.

This brings us to the topic of pandemic shaming. Pandemic shaming is the action of calling someone or a group of people out for not following social distancing or taking appropriate safety precautions. Thousands of people are responding to “non-social distancers” with an influx of hostility and vitriolic comments all over Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.

These critics have become so vocal to the point where the term “covidiot” started trending on Twitter. According to an article published in *The Guardian* (a British newspaper), “the term “covidiot” was

first uploaded to the online slang decoder Urban Dictionary on March 16 and was defined as: “someone who ignores the warnings regarding public health or safety.” The hashtag reached thousands of people, and nearly 3,000 tweets were posted overnight to call out people who are noncompliant. The rationale behind these messages is understandable, but how effective is pandemic shaming after all? Many psychologists and sociologists have been responding to the criticism, stating that pandemic shaming is not as effective as we think.

According to an article published in the *Smithsonian Magazine* by Theresa Machemer, “‘Some cajoling might be useful if directed at people in the same group, like friends and colleagues,’ sociologist Erich Goode tells *Vice*, ‘because these people

value each other’s opinions. But that energy won’t be productive if it’s spent yelling at a stranger.’”

Many other experts express similar opinions, indicating the importance of having a relationship with the person you are trying to persuade.

That being said, many experts are recommending critics to take other measures to express their concerns. The “wear a mask” campaign is a prime example of a persuasive public message. The campaign raises awareness about proper mask and pandemic etiquette in efforts to help keep people safe from the virus.

Encouraging others to participate in these safety precautions is important because it makes them feel good about “engaging in protective behaviors as a way of becoming part of what the new social norm is,” rather than making

them feel bad about their actions, according to Machemer.

I think that the bottom line is to acknowledge the science and listen to the experts. We are living in such unprecedented times that the only thing to do is take a step back and assess the situation. While social distancing is very important, that does not mean that you have to put your social life on hold.

I believe that there are many appropriate ways to be out in public, educate others about proper pandemic etiquette, and convey a message. With this being said, I do not think that pandemic shaming is the answer.

While some may disagree with this stance, it is in our best interest to come together and maintain respect and civility. ■

FAKE NEWS AND CONSPIRACIES

How our reliance on social media has conjured up widespread theories



Liam Cassidy '21

Photo courtesy of Haley Dillara

the virus. The radio waves of 5G do not have a high enough wavelength to be able to affect the human body, nor can viruses spread through radio waves.

A common type of conspiracy theory that has gained high attention alleges that drinking highly concentrated alcohol or

being fake news through fact-checking agencies.

However, this can exacerbate the belief that fake news-orientated groups, such as conspiracy-based cults, are being targeted and discriminated against by those in power, reinforcing existing beliefs. These groups allege that figures such as Bill Gates

narratives that simplify the complex issues of life and provide black-and-white worldviews that are easy to get addicted to.

It is important that those who know friends or family members who believe in conspiracy theories understand where the root of their conspiratorial beliefs reside in order to help them move to a healthier mindset.

Another reaction to the coronavirus has been an increased wave of skepticism regarding the Chinese government and technology. This has displayed itself in President Trump's attempt to ban TikTok, a widely popular entertainment video app.

There are legitimate grievances to be had with the origins of many apps that arise from China, considering the Chinese government has collaborated heavily with its local technology corporations.

The country's controversial social credit system was developed alongside Alibaba and Tencent. There have been numerous proposals for an American company to buy out TikTok's American

operations; offers have been made by Microsoft, Oracle, and Apple.

A consequence of TikTok's rise in popularity has been the invention of a prank called Zoombombing, in which students will post their school Zoom link on TikTok, or any majorly popular social media platform, and encourage people to join and say or post inappropriate things.

While Zoom has implemented many security features such as passworded rooms & the "Waiting Room", teachers that are not as acclimated to the technology may be vulnerable to getting Zoom-bombed.

Although Zoom has provided a meaningful way

for students to interact in a similar manner to the way they would be interacting in person, it does not completely replace in-person interaction. Students may feel more socially awkward or afraid to respond in fear of interrupting another person and may struggle to pay attention to class.

While it cannot be said as a blanket statement that social media has helped or hindered the reaction to the coronavirus, it has certainly helped draw attention to important issues during these times. We can only hope that as we progress through this difficult era, technology will evolve and so will the people using it. ■



Art by: Emily Cepeda '21

It is important to understand where the root of their conspiratorial beliefs reside in order to help them move to a healthier mindset

bleach will get rid of coronavirus (which is highly dangerous and medically inadvisable). Many have been heavily injured or died due to this myth, particularly through menthol poisoning.

A common approach to combat these conspiracy theories from spreading is to simply ban the content or label popular images as

and Mark Zuckerberg have created COVID-19, and intend to install malicious technology such as microchips through a future vaccine.

Other theories allege that COVID-19 is a bioweapon of some sort invented by China in order to sabotage the upcoming presidential election. Conspiracy groups offer

ABANDONED AFTER-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES?

Struggling to find the answer to which clubs are still functioning



Amy Tullett '23

Photo courtesy of Amy Tullett '23

service acts without being able to have face-to-face interaction.

I was a part of Project Senegal/TEEM last school year, and I thoroughly enjoyed doing my part to help those less fortunate in Senegal. The club was planning a special

running, other clubs have made some big adaptations to continue running at some capacity.

One of those clubs being yours truly, *The Highland Fling!* One of our largest adaptations is our distribution platform shifting from paper to

Highlands.

These interviews were mostly done in-person. However, we are now doing Zoom interviews. We are lucky enough to be a fully functioning club, reporting to you from your computer screens!

With the never-ending changes when dealing with COVID-19, there is a lot of uncertainty.

For example, Model UN, a club that has primarily revolved around traveling and meeting students from all over the world, is running virtually this year.

Last November, I attended the Brown University simulation of the United Nations with Northern Highlands Model UN. At the conference, I interacted with students from a large variety of schools while on the committee. Without international students and one place to join together thousands of ambitious students, it is difficult to gain the same experience.

Nevertheless, I am hopeful that it will return back to normal by the beginning of 2021 for a spring conference. For

now, there is a possibility of a virtual conference to keep the spirit alive.

The Debate and Mock Trial seasons don't start for a couple of months. There is more time for these clubs to work to adapt to the current situation or function as normal depending on how our ever-changing lives play out with the pandemic.

If one thing is evident, it's that no one is really sure of what is going to happen in the future, so everybody is just trying to make the best of the

situation. The number one priority is the safety of students and staff. For these reasons, there haven't really been many releases on which clubs are running and which aren't.

This is a scary and uncertain time that has brought forth a lot of change in our extracurricular activities.

Although it is disappointing that the activities we love may not be running the way we are accustomed to, it is important to remember that everyone is trying their best to adapt,



Art by: Shana Li '21

No one is really sure of what is going to happen in the future, so everybody is just trying to make the best of the situation.

event for the spring. Unfortunately, it was canceled due to COVID-19. Sadly, I haven't heard anything in regards to the club recently.

In addition to community service clubs, we also have four student written and produced publications; The Literary Magazine, the Freshman Literary/Art Magazine, the Yearbook, and finally our newspaper, *The Highland Fling*. Although most clubs aren't

digital.

A large component of writing for *The Fling* is conducting interviews. Especially in sections such as Sports and News, articles are mostly composed of direct quotes from interviews with students and staff.

For example, news writers heavily depend on attending a monthly press conference with Principal Joseph Occhino and Vice Principal Michael Koth to get the inside scoop on

A SENIOR YEAR TO REMEMBER?

The Class of 2021 is missing out on Highlands traditions



Yasmin Chakham '22

Photo courtesy of Yasmin Chakham '22

It's probably been a long time since you've read a *Fling* article. It's been a while since I, myself, have written an article for the paper. Half a year to be exact.

As of Sunday, September 13, 2020, officially six months have passed since we first went into quarantine due to COVID-19. A lot has happened in that time. At the same time though, a lot has not happened. Events such as prom, sports seasons, or even Decision Day at the 90 minute lunch.

Many students believe that the senior class of 2020 had the worst year, but I beg to differ. If anything, the class of 2021 and 2022 drew the shorter stick. Everything is still up in the air and uncertain. The class of 2020 got a junior prom, whereas the class of 2021 did not.

Not only that, but the class of 2021 might not even get a senior prom this year. Nobody knows what the upcoming year will entail, so you can understand why not only seniors but a majority of the student body are feeling unsettled.

Personally, one of my favorite parts about the school year is seeing all the seniors dressed up in their college attire at the 90-minute lunch.

The Holiday Hoopla is one of the best parts about the holidays. Throughout the week leading up to the Holiday Hoopla, the student body is encouraged to dress up for spirit week. I love seeing all the grades dressed up and showing their school spirit.

I also enjoy watching the seniors play a volleyball game against the teachers. Unfortunately, this year I don't think we will be having any 90 minute lunches.

So many privileges the seniors were supposed to get this year might not even end up happening.

Even little things that don't even look like they have any significance are not the same, such as foot-

ball games, senior ditch day, sitting in the senior cafe, laughing and eating lunch with all your friends, and finally getting to park in the parking lot.

Friday home football games are the most exciting days of the week. Everyone comes out to support the Highlanders on the field, cheering them onto victory. Now, the spectator section will look very different. This means no crazy themes, no crowded student section, and no booming chants.

Another thing that is uncertain right now is how college admissions is going to work. The SAT and the ACT are a huge part of getting into college. They help you stand out amongst your fellow classmates.

However, both the ACT and the SAT have been canceled and rescheduled multiple times. Many seniors who should've taken them last year were unable to.

Now, they are forced to stress and study during their senior year, which is not how "senioritis" is supposed to work.

Many colleges are not requiring SAT or ACT grades for the upcoming year. I feel like this makes things even more difficult for the class of 2021.

They need to try extra hard now to make their transcripts stand out, and that's hard to do this late in the year.

Going off of football games and sport-related topics, many sports aren't going to be able to have a senior night.

Senior night when each sports team honors their senior athletes. Usually there is food provided and all the players, parents and coaches are gathered to enjoy one last hoorah for their graduating athletes. There are speeches given, and everyone just takes time to reminisce on the season and the players.

This year, many sports will not be

having a senior night due to safety issues, which is once again very unfortunate for the seniors who went through four years of a sport.

social interaction, which is better than having to do everything online.

In addition, some schools don't have the luxury to participate in the

Many students argue that the senior class of 2020 had it worse, yet I beg to differ. If anything, the class of 2021 and 2022 have it worse.

Although there are many negatives and downsides to this year, there are also positives.

For example, we are still able to come to school and have some form of

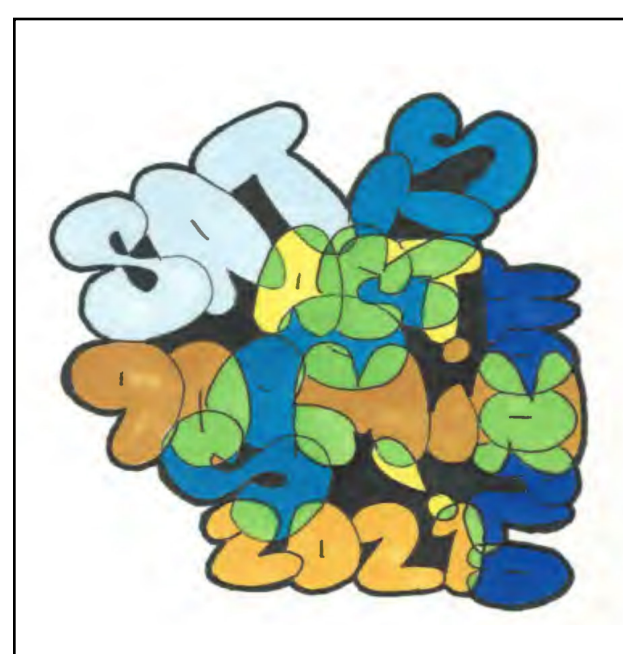
hybrid program, but we are lucky enough to do so.

Another positive aspect

is that sports are still going on for the most part. I've heard of some sports being postponed, yet there

is still a season happening, which is great.

The moral of all of this is to always look on the positive side and have hope that this will all be over soon! ■



Art by: Shana Li '21

TEACHER'S CORNER:

Mr. Leib's thoughts on the Great Pandemic of 2020



Mr. Leib

Photo courtesy of NH Yearbook

The expression, "May you live in interesting times," has been glossed as a traditional Chinese curse (It's not; the attribution is apocryphal). But in many ways the "curse" sums up our times and lives.

As climate change brings average temperatures not seen in thousands of years, forest fires destroy large swaths of land, large swaths of society rise up to protest what they see as injustice and policy in many places ignores obvious science, we find ourselves in the midst of the deadliest pandemic in a century.

We also have more information (and misinformation) available at our fingertips than ever before. It's too much. We cannot focus on any one thing because we are assaulted on all sides.

The faculty, administration and staff have done

a remarkable job trying to follow the requirements laid down for them by various levels of government.

But I worry that all our efforts may be in vain. I understand, perhaps better than many members of our community, how isolating the experience of the last six months has been.

After all, I'm the official Northern Highlands geezer. That means I'm one of those most at risk from COVID-19—and one of those whom many people seem to believe are expendable.

That means I've seen my almost four-year-old grandson once since February. That means I spent the summer at home instead of travelling around the country. Yet as a country we squandered the opportunity to squelch this thing back in the spring. We have no clue what (if any) the long-term effects of COVID-19 may be; some early work suggests that young people with even mild cases may suffer potentially debilitating health problems for the rest of their lives.

Because I fall into several CDC high-risk categories, I'm conducting my classes remotely, and I assume I will continue to do so until we return to our normal school environment

(whenever that may be).

Based on my early experience and discussions I have had with my fellow faculty members, I may actually be in a better position than they are. All of my students are equally remote to me; I don't have to split my attention between students in the room and students on the screen. And I can use some techniques I successfully employed last spring.

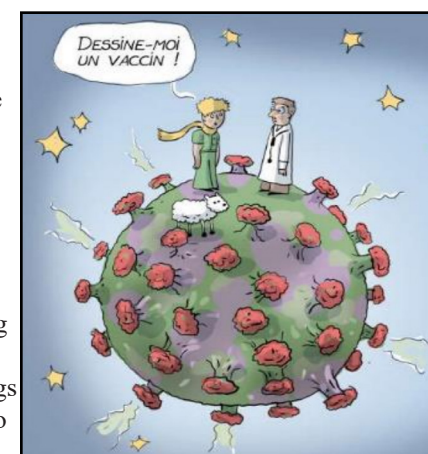
Everything we know about education teaches us that in-person instruction is significantly superior to distance learning. But distance learning is infinitely superior to death or lifelong disability.

Studying history can often mislead us as to how history works. Nothing is preordained; we see how events unfolded only because we know how history turned out. But the people alive at the time did not, could not, know what would happen. Nor do we. All of us living in these interesting times cannot know how things will turn out. So all we can do is stay flexible. Go

with the flow. Make the best of our situation.

And if you are a student, think of this: Sixty years from now, when you may have achieved geezerdom, your grandchild will come to you and say, "Granny (or Gramps, as the case may be), my history teacher said we have to interview somebody who lived through the Great Pandemic of 2020. What was it like?"

And like your Great Uncle Elmer at Thanksgiving, you can tell your grandchild, "You kids have it so easy. You don't know how hard I had it when I was your age. And take that virtual reality headset off when I'm talking to you," because we cranky geezers can get away with stuff like that. ■



"Draw me a vaccine!"

Art by: Cole

TEACHERS TALK SCHOOL CHANGES

Teachers share changes they made in their classrooms this year

Mitsuki Uehara ‘22

It goes without saying that classrooms this year look a lot different than in previous years.

The Highlands staff has been working hard to make school life seem as normal as possible in these unprecedented times.

Biology teacher Alexandra Chicherchia explained that she is “trying to keep as much normalcy as possible in the classroom and maintaining a routine,” which “has been helping this very un-normal time.”

They sanitize their desks in between periods, make sure the hallways remain one way, ensure that all students are as socially distant as possible, and enforce the rules.

Additionally, all the teachers participated in professional development sessions from September 1 to September 4, where they trained on topics such as ice-breakers, student engagement, and technology programs such as Zoom and Canvas.

Math Teacher Danielle Ferrante Aldea, noted that “those four days were really important to starting the school year this year.”

English teacher Zachary Stephens felt that “one of the things that was most

helpful was being able to try a lot of that stuff out and get additional guidance when we found that there was something we weren’t expecting.”

The training and previous experiences helped alleviate some concerns.

For instance, Chicherchia noted that she felt more prepared “because we were exposed to this in the spring, and had some experience teaching virtually and how to deliver things online.”

Along with the new health and classroom procedures, testing may look slightly different.

There are many academic integrity issues with testing due to virtual learning. Some teachers have responded to these concerns by working to come up with a more performance-based approach.

Stephens remarks that his “emphasis is typically on projects and performance-based assessments,” and that he has “forgone the traditional testing structure that is required in some other classes.”

In this way, he hopes to use this opportunity as a chance to assess students’ progress through activities rather than conventional testing.

As for science labs, Chicherchia emphasizes that students “will be doing lab activities because as a whole department, [they] feel like the lab experience is very important for students.”

Students may use resources online and Chicherchia said that “another way that science teachers may style their labs is that one student in the class will do the lab and be in a break-out room with other students online and share the data with students that are home and demo it for the students.”

Many teachers will be having open-note testing in order to test students’ understanding of the topics covered in class

If this pandemic has taught us one thing, it is to not take every day for granted.

Chicherchia says that just waking up and going

somewhere was something that she didn’t realize she missed the most out of all

There is no doubt that teachers at Northern Highlands are willing to do

We are more prepared “because we were exposed to this in the spring, and had some experience teaching virtually and how to deliver things online.”

Biology Teacher Alexandra Chicherchia

of the changes that have occurred.

Like many others at Highlands, Ferrante “missed seeing [her] students and co-workers every day and having conversations,” while Stephens did not realize “how much actually being in the building changes [his] motivation.”

whatever they can to listen to students’ voices and be a helping hand during these unique times.

Although the school year is going to look extremely different, many students and teachers can agree on the fact that they have never been happier to be back in school. ■

COVID-19 COMMUTE CHANGES

Changes in school transportation policies due to COVID-19

Julia Boydell ‘22

Many changes have occurred this school year due to COVID-19. Since only one-third of the students are in the school every

rules have been changed to include juniors who have their licenses.

Many juniors expressed feeling ecstatic about this. They stated that being able to drive to school is more convenient than having to get someone to pick them

could fit up to 54 students at a time before COVID-19 hit. Now, the school was told the buses could only fit up to 11 students while following proper social distancing guidelines.

This is a drastic change in numbers. Initially, there was no way that everyone who needed to be bussed to school could have fit on the limited number of buses Highlands has access to.

However, the school took action to reduce the number of students taking the buses every day.

Koth explained that “we broke students up into cohorts: we have three cohorts of students, so we diminished, hypothetically, the number of students that needed to take the bus to the school by one-third.”

He also went on to explain that many parents have elected to drive their own children to the school.

The school also broke up the entrances, so that each mode of transportation taken by students uses a different entrance to get into the school.

This helps eliminate congestion in the school and keeps students dis-

tanced from each other.

The school has also changed school commutes by staggering the arrival times of the students.

“Underclassmen and students who are bused to school arrive first, and those who are driving themselves we ask to arrive later,” Koth stated.

This staggering of times will help keep students from walking into the

school at the same time.

One thing to consider is what will happen as the school, hopefully, slowly reopens. As we move through the phases, the same entrances would be open around the school to keep things spread out.

In regards to junior parking, Koth said, “If students elected to take the bus, that would free up space in the parking

lot for juniors and seniors, and if needed, we do have an additional parking lot that’s being stationed for construction right now that can have spillover parking.”

From what has been said, it seems like there is hope for junior parking, even after COVID-19 subsidies. ■



Juniors and seniors alike park to get their days started,

HIGHLANDS ISN’T ALL THAT’S NEW FOR ‘24

The reasons why the freshmen class recieved new devices this year

Amy Tullett ‘23

The freshman class received new laptops, different from those that the other grades have. This is the second year that the school has changed the computers introduced to freshmen. Students went from using Microsoft Surfaces to the HP 1013 to now the HP X360.

When asked why the freshmen recieved new computers, Principal Joseph Occhino said, “like anything else, there are other devices that come out

that have better features... One of the key features to this device is that there’s nothing that’s detachable. So the old surface, you could pull apart the keyboard. That came to be a little bit of a problem.”

He continued to say that “one of the issues we ran into is that the kickstands, which came out to prop up the devices, frequently broke. In order to fix a kickstand, it would cost almost \$500... so, as we started to learn more about different devices, we realized that trying to

find something that would be sturdy, and not cost so much to repair if it was damaged, was something that would interest us greatly.”

The new HP X360 also boasts a brighter screen, a much greater battery life, and full-size ports that allow for plugging in any HDMI connection .

In addition to those features, these new computers do not hurt the school’s wallet.

“Believe it or not, it’s less expensive than the ones we have currently,” Occhino said.

Although these new computers are valuable to the administration, there have been some mixed feelings from students regarding the new computers the freshmen received.

“It’s just a little bit annoying... All the other grades have been here longer. I feel like the upperclassmen deserve it more than the freshmen because they’re brand new to the school, and now they have brand new computers...I don’t think that’s fair,”

sophomore Grace Martin said.

However, some upperclassmen did not share the same opinion as Martin.

“I think it’s really good that we’re updating our

my pen doesn’t work,” Martin said.

“I think they get the job done, but I don’t personally like it that much because my computer always has issues; I’m always at tech.

ing and staying charged, so hopefully these same issues will not arise among the freshmen.

“It’s hard to learn from our new students. Thus far, we have not heard from our freshmen with regard to the devices,” Occhino said.

“It’s been really good, I haven’t had any issues with it. I really like how it’s not too heavy so you can just carry it around and it doesn’t weigh you down in your backpack. It has a bunch of things on it, and it’s really fast,” freshman Savannah Goulet said.

As the school year continues, the freshmen will find out if their computers live up to their high expectations. Especially since these computers were bought with the intention of being, as Occhino said, “a better device and something that we think is a bigger bang for the buck, so to speak.” ■

“It’s been really good, I haven’t had any issues with it. I really like how it’s not too heavy so you can just carry it around and it doesn’t weigh you down in your backpack.”

Freshman Savannah Goulet

computers each year,” junior Krysia Reyes-Guerra said.

One thing that Martin and Reyes-Guerra could agree on was that their computers could be better.

“My laptop is ok. It doesn’t hold a charge at all, it always breaks, and

Also, their battery is super low. Mine dies all the time, and I just feel like they have a lot of issues with them, and I’m not the only one that experiences that,” Guerra said.

Both sophomores and juniors tend to have trouble with their laptops break-



Students are often found typing away on their school devices

WHAT’S UP WITH WELLNESS WING

A look inside of Highlands’s newest mental health initiative

Sania Sadaragani ‘21

This year, Northern Highlands is introducing a new wellness initiative to the school. This venture is being headed up by Dr. Jessica Verdicchio, Supervisor of Wellness and Special Projects.

Joining her in this project are Allison Rocca and Jason Grabelsky, both of whom make up the SAC (Student Assistance Counseling) team.

While Rocca is new to the Highlands commu-

can include drug abuse, family issues, school stress, mental illness, and pregnancy.

Further referrals can be provided if Grabelsky and Rocca feel as if a situation is beyond their control.

All information shared during sessions with them are confidential, with the exception of any threat of harm.

When asked about the creation process, Grabelsky said, “There was just a lot of brainstorming. A lot of getting together,

wellness, Verdicchio said, “I don’t think this was ever something that shifted or changed. I think, more so, we dedicated a lot more time, energy, and people to make sure that we were more consistent in addressing and working with students on wellness and mental health.”

She emphasized that the primary objective of this initiative is to allocate more time, effort, and resources to students’ mental health.

Verdicchio also spoke

for students and parents to feel safe and comfortable communicating with faculty whenever it is necessary.

Rocca described the details of their aim: “My overarching hope and goal for the community is that, yes we’ll be able to do all of these things from our department, but I hope that what we do and our efforts kind of spill out to all of you. In that sense, you are all more comfortable talking about mental health and wellbeing, and making sure that if one of your friends is really stressed, you say, ‘Hey, why don’t you take a minute and go take some self-care?’”

With everyone uncertain about the near future due to COVID-19, many members of the Highlands faculty believe that this is a time when a wellness initiative could prove extremely beneficial.

When asked about how the current pandemic is playing into this initiative, Rocca responded, “I think that most people have felt some feeling of anxiety and discomfort, or irritability, or uncertainty during this time... coming back to school, being a freshman, or even in your case,

a senior, can create a lot of stress in general, whether or not it’s mental health

members of the community to discuss any concerns or anxieties they may have,

The primary objective of this initiative is to allocate more time, effort, and resources to students’ mental health.

nity, Grabelsky has been working here for the past six years.

The Student Assistance Counseling program is intended to help students and parents through any issues they may be struggling with.

The term “issues” is purposely vague in order to encompass a variety of situations.

Some of these situations

throwing out ideas, seeing what we liked, what we didn’t like, and visiting other schools to see what they did.”

Every decision made was extensively thought out in order to prepare for any possible situation that a student may face.

When asked what prompted the school to make a change to its approach towards student

of how supportive Principal Joseph Occhino has been throughout the entire process.

“With the pressures that are placed upon our students and the difficulties that some students have to face, we thought it was a good time to put this program in place. We’re very proud of it,” Occhino said.

The administration’s goal with this program is

“That’s kind of what we do here — you don’t have to have a diagnosed medical condition, or be diagnosed with depression or anxiety, it could just be like, ‘Hey, I’m feeling really stressed; I don’t know what’s happening with graduation.’”

SAC Allison Rocca

related. That’s kind of what we do here — you don’t have to have a diagnosed medical condition, or be diagnosed with depression or anxiety, it could just be like, ‘Hey, I’m feeling really stressed; I don’t know what’s happening with graduation.’

This new wellness initiative will be creating a more safe and secure learning environment that urges

no matter what the issue may be.

To visit a Student Assistance Counselor, one can visit the SAC office in Room 109 at any time of the school day. Students can also reach out to them over email to set up a virtual meeting time. ■

DON'T TURN AROUND, ONE WAY ONLY

New safety measures are enacted to protect against COVID-19

Continued from cover

Both Occhino and Koth look at the new school schedule as a trial-and-error process and learning experience for both teachers and students.

In school, students are all required to travel one direction in the hallways. The same system has been set in place for the staircases as well, so that there are no crowds.

Although one-way hallways may make it difficult to maneuver the building,

Koth states that one-way hallways are “one of the steps that we took to try and promote social distancing and not have people brush up against one another and be too congested in certain hallways.”

Although the school year has started with only 33% of the student body in the building at a time, there is hope to slowly raise this number as the year goes on. The Restart and Recovery plan outlines three different phases of reentry.

The school year has start-

ed out in Phase 1, which incorporates the three cohorts into the schedule. Phase 1 has one-third of the Northern Highlands student body in person each day, with the alternating cohort colors in a three day rotation. Each school day will begin at 7:45 AM and ends at 12:30 PM. After classes are finished, there is an optional extra help period from 2:00 to 3:15. In Phase 1, there are approximately 650 students, staff, and administrators in the school at one time.

Phase 2 may combine

the cohorts into two bringing 50% of the student body back onto campus. There will be approximately 900 students, staff members, and administrators in the building. This phase will begin once the district feels that it is safe and when more state restrictions are lifted. If any students feel uncomfortable about coming into school, they can remain fully virtual throughout both phases.

The ultimate goal is a fully in person schedule, which is a reflection of the typical Northern Highlands

schedule with the full student body, ABCD rotation days, and full days.

The hope for the year is that the student body and staff will be able to return to the normal Highlands schedule. However, if people test positive for COVID-19, then the school will shut down and go fully virtual.

To prevent anyone who may be sick from entering the school, the school has bought thermal temperature scanners that have been placed at all of the entrance.

All teachers, students, and visitors must scan their face to be permitted into the school. Any teacher, student, or visitor with a temperature over 100.4 degrees will not be allowed to enter the school for two weeks.

Overall, Northern Highlands has implemented many changes in order to reopen for the 2020-2021 school year. The Highlands community will continue to operate safely under the current hybrid schedule until further notice. ■

CARING DURING COVID-19

A look into students' volunteering projects amidst the pandemic

Ayana Amin '22

2020 has been a rollercoaster for us all, and during these unprecedented times, there is no better way to do your part than help out. Many Highlanders decided to take action this summer by engaging in community based initiatives. Let's take a look at the volunteerism of five Highlands students: Sania Sadarangani, Simran and Serena Dhupar, Julian Rosenberg, and myself.

Book Drive for Children

After realizing that certain schools in New Jersey have limited access to books due to disproportionate fundings, Senior Sania Sadarangani wanted to make a difference.

To begin her initiative, Sadarangani contacted Oasis, a Paterson-based social services organization through which she identified her target audience and the types of books requested by schools for summer reading. Sadarangani reached out to her network of family, friends, and community members, and over the next few weeks, she collected 500 books to be sent to Oasis and Nassan's Place, a non-profit corporation for children with autism. During an interview, Sadarangani explained how her donation to Nassan's Place felt especially rewarding, as she “was able to give the books to the kids in person... [and] talk to them about their favorite subjects in school.”

Especially during these times, where students are out of school for months on end, book donations can go a long way. Sadarangani's volunteerism was a notable effort that provided hundreds of students with a book over the summer. She “would love to do this again next summer” and continue her efforts.

Letters for the Elderly

For the past two years, Sophomores Simran and Serena Dhupar have volunteered at a senior center. Due to the limited human interaction caused by the pandemic, they could only imagine how lonely the seniors were feeling. It was then that they found Love For Our Elders (LFOE) and decided to collect cards for senior citizens.

“In May, we began by reaching out to friends and family to make just one or two cards each ... we advised card writers to be kind and thoughtful because that is what writing cards [is] all about,” Simran Dhupar explained. After bringing the initiation to Highlands and getting featured in the northjersey.com and nj.com newspapers, the two were able to donate around 600 cards.

“We were extremely grateful for all the support... we could not have reached our goal without [it]. Our key takeaway from this project was that you can help make a difference... It's the little things that can cause others to feel appreciated,” Serena Dhupar comments. The two hope to continue working with LFOE and recruit other Highlanders to get involved.

Backpack and School Supply Drive

As of early June, Pew Research Center confirmed that in the U.S., “unemployment rose higher in three months of COVID-19 than it did in two years of the Great Recession,” with more than 14 million Americans unemployed. With unemployment rates rising and school starting, many families are struggling to provide their children with school supplies.

Having always advocated for the education of children, I partnered with Oasis to collect backpacks and supplies for students in need. With the ground-work laid, I created a flyer, set up a Gofundme page, and shared my cause on social media. By the end of August, I was well beyond my goal and delivered 100 backpacks filled with school supplies to Oasis.

The support I received was tremendous and looking back, this was definitely a community effort. I plan to continue working with Oasis through their after school STEAM program to keep students motivated and engaged to learn. ■

Face Shields for Communities Nationwide

During these devastating times, the need of the hour is face coverings. Recognizing this, Senior Julian Rosenberg wanted to help. With the launch of his father's medical supply company, Rosenberg and his family printed vinyl in the shape of face shields.

Rosenberg and his brother reached out to community members, set up a GoFundMe, and organized a page to get others involved. For days on end, the Rosenbergs brought the materials to the Saddle River Elementary School, where volunteers helped construct the masks. In the end, they donated 10,000 face shields to hospitals, nursing homes, and other facilities nationwide. He indicated that “As a family, we've always tried to help out anyone in need to the best of our ability.”

Rosenberg explained how the experience of helping others during these devastating times brought him joy and taught him “so much about how to use any experience and turn it into an opportunity.” While this initiative is complete, this is not the end of volunteering for Rosenberg. He currently volunteers at his temple, supporting and engaging seniors with mental disabilities.

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ZOOM!

What's the commonplace etiquette for online school?

Sarah Renee Bakal '21

As we begin the school year, our classes are either two thirds or completely virtual, and on a new platform we have all heard a lot about in the last few months: Zoom.

It's fairly easy to use, but certainly different from BigBlueButton, last year's online classroom platform. The etiquette is also different, as there are many more options. Mute or microphone on? Video or no video? Virtual background or not?

The school released a video series before school started on expectations for basic etiquette. Instructions include showing up on time, staying muted until speaking, keeping video on, and refraining from eating and drinking during class. There

is also an expectation that the video feed is well lit and properly framing a student's face.

Teachers are allowed to choose between using the chat and using audio. But how do the students feel? The video feed can feel awkward at times and the chats can be forgotten or left unseen. There is no clear consensus.

Sophomore Wesley Kestenbaum likes having his video on for school every day, citing that it allows him to prepare for school every day.

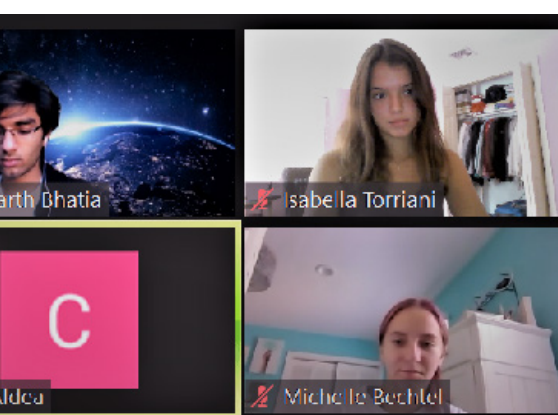
Senior Emily Backos agrees, and noted that it makes her feel like she can connect better during class being able to see everyone: “I get to see everyone during class, and they get to see me, which is nice.”

The desire to see other students and teachers

is a common sentiment among the student body. Senior Shanzeh Malik expresses that her least favorite part about online classes is that she doesn't see people in person. “It's harder for me to learn when it's online, and I just miss seeing my peers, friends, and teachers,” Malik said.

For privacy reasons, freshman Alex Goldfarb would rather have the camera off, though he understands the reasoning behind staying on video.

Many students have had to work around a crowded house or a noisy setting in order to properly participate



Should students have to put their cameras on?

in Zoom meetings. This is the type of problem virtual backgrounds and the mute option are supposed to remedy, but even these features have their faults.

In terms of class participation and asking questions, there is a divide in opinion on whether or not students should unmute. Malik elects to use the microphone because it's more noticeable than sending a chat in a crowded chat. Back-

os likes to use the chat because the microphone can be overpowering and interruptive during class time, lest she interrupt a teacher while they are talking.

Adaptations to the new version of school have been difficult to navigate for both staff and students. Etiquette and social rules have changed, and each person seems to establish their own. ■

HIGHLANDS WELCOMES NEW TEACHERS

Rich Micallef



Veronica Toriani '21

Samantha Lever '22

The Northern Highlands Physical Education Department welcomes Rich Micallef to the staff this year. Micallef has been

the girls' basketball coach for the past 2 years and is excited to be teaching physical education.

He attended Brooklyn College and later became the head mens' basketball coach at the school. He has previously worked as a foreign investment trader, a real estate agent, and he has run a music business.

The one thing that Micallef would not be able to live without are his kids, who he misses dearly since they are off at college.

Micallef's favorite hobbies are basketball and music. He plays the piano and the guitar and finds that music is a great form of release. His favorite food is lobster and loves to eat seafood when he eats out.

When asked what he is looking forward to most this year at Highlands, Micallef discussed being excited to face the upcoming challenges that the community is facing this school year. ■

Purvik Patel



Veronica Toriani '21

Samantha Lever '22

The Northern Highlands community is so excited to welcome applied technologies teacher, Pur-

vik Patel to the staff. Patel graduated from The College of New Jersey. He got his first masters degree from Murdoch University in Western Australia and will soon have his second masters degree from The College of New Jersey. Patel taught at Northern Highlands for 3 years and then left to become a teacher at Victoria International School in Dubai. Once he returned, he worked for 4 years at Westwood Regional High School.

He has previously worked as a sign maker, a bag boy, a tool seller, a camp employee, a construction worker, and an architectural intern.

Patel loves to play tennis and golf in his free time, as well as make small projects and travel. Patel is most looking forward to seeing the changes that have occurred at Highlands since he's been gone. The Highlands community welcomes Patel back and wishes him the best. ■

Melissa Decarlo



Veronica Toriani '21

Clare O'Connor '22

Melissa Decarlo joined the Northern Highlands faculty this year as a business education teacher.

She teaches both Marketing and Honors Management.

Decarlo attended Fordham University for her undergraduate and MBA. She decided to become a teacher in order to share her wealth of knowledge and experience with her students.

Decarlo worked in finance at Goldman Sachs before ultimately deciding to switch to retail. She worked for various fashion retailers such as Dress

Barn, Ann Taylor, and Ralph Lauren. Outside of the classroom, Decarlo enjoys yoga and running to balance out her busy schedule.

Decarlo is looking forward to the chance to develop strong relationships with her students. She hopes to make an impact on their lives and possibly their future career choices. Stop by room 103 or the business education office to say hello to Ms. Decarlo. ■

Kayla Consalvo



Veronica Toriani '21

Clare O'Connor '22

This year, Northern Highlands welcomes Kayla Consalvo, an English teacher, to the school. She

teaches Honors Modern Fiction and Nonfiction, Honors Humanities, Honors American Literature, and Literature about Society. Consalvo graduated from Ramapo College with a degree in English and a certificate in teaching.

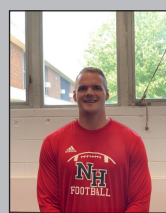
She has previously taught ninth grade Honors English and AP Language and Composition at Bergen County Technical High School for four years and English in Ringwood for one year.

Currently, she is a graduate student at William Patterson and enjoys reading, hiking, and spin classes.

She also has a passion for drinking coffee and favors Dunkin Donuts due to their light roast coffee.

She looks forward to engaging and working with her students and the rest of the English department. If you're in school, look in rooms 212, 213, or 216 to say hello to Ms. Consalvo. ■

Jonathon Schmitt



Veronica Toriani '21

Michael Reifman '23

Jonathon Schmitt, previously a teacher's aide, now returns to Northern Highlands as a full-time

Physical Education teacher. Schmitt teaches Drivers Education to tenth graders as well.

He also coaches football here at Highlands. Schmitt earned his college degree at Kean University, where he played football for the school. After college, Semitt knew that he wanted to coach the sport. His desire to coach led him to become a teacher.

He became a teacher's aide at Northern Highlands and coached basket-

ball, football, and girl's lacrosse during his time here. He then left Highlands to teach at Paterson High School and later on at Lodi Middle School before finally returning.

Last year, Schmitt helped coach the Northern Highlands football team all the way to MetLife Stadium. He can't wait for the next season that the team is able to win the championship. ■

Caitlyn Shurminsky



Veronica Toriani '21

Clare O'Connor '22

The Northern Highlands Math department welcomes Caitlyn Shurminsky to the school this

year. She teaches Algebra 2/Trigonometry, Algebra 1, and Basic Geometry. Shurminsky graduated from Ramapo College and ultimately decided to pursue becoming a math teacher.

Outside of school, Shurminsky enjoys playing tennis and singing, having been involved in a choir in the past. She also has a passion for musical theatre and loves to attend plays and musicals whenever she can.

Previously, Shurminsky worked at a greenhouse and worked with various different types of plants and flowers. Shurminsky loves playing with her dogs and eating pierogies, which stems from her Russian roots.

She has been involved with the Habitat for Humanity in the past and would like to include Highlands in that initiative. She is eager to immerse herself into the Highlands community. ■

school and in her community.

Math wasn't always a strong subject for Cummiskey. During her high school years, Cummiskey was frequently found attending extra help sessions for the

subject. The passion that her teachers held for the subject and the joy that came with understanding a new topic ultimately inspired her to teach the subject herself. ■

University. After completing her Masters Degree in December, she taught briefly at River Dell High School before the pandemic. Cummiskey worked in the field of finance and also tutored other students at her

department and teaches Basic Algebra I, Algebra II, and Algebra III.

Cummiskey received her bachelor's degree in Mathematics from St. Francis College and a Master of Arts in Teaching from Rider

Annais Cummiskey

Aden Jama '22

Annais Cummiskey is one of several new teachers at Northern Highlands this year. She works in the math



Veronica Toriani '21

THE BABY BOOM

Nina Evans '21

Recently, the Highlands family has grown, as many of our very own teachers became parents within the past year! Here's a little insight on their new lives.

Tony LaRocca, a math and computer science teacher, is one of these new parents. Ellis Ryan LaRocca was born on January 26, 2020. Both LaRocca's parents and his wife's parents came through Ellis Island when they came to America, so the name Ellis resonated with the two. LaRocca says though the communication barrier between Ellis and him has been a very hard part of parenting, “the best part, by far, is watching her grow up and acquire new skills...it is amazing to watch!”



Photo courtesy of Tony LaRocca

Lindsey Beatty, a math teacher, and John Beatty, a science teacher, also had a baby! Kaelyn Lee Beatty was born on April 15, 2020. “We honestly started knowing her middle name first because Lee is Mrs. Beatty's middle name as well as her mom's middle name... we came across Kaelyn as a name of Irish descent and we both fell in love with the name,” Beatty said. Having a baby in the midst of a global pandemic was difficult for the two, as they weren't able to rely on friends and family during this time. However, there's a silver lining: remote teaching has given them more time to spend with Kaelyn and watch her milestones.



Photo courtesy of Lindsey and John Beatty

Joseph Kiely, an English teacher became a father, as well. Beckett Kiely was born on May 12, 2020. “My wife and I looked at a bunch of different names and it was just the one that stuck with us,” Kiely explained, adding, “as an English teacher, the connection to the playwright Samuel Beckett was an added bonus.” The most difficult part of becoming a new parent, similar to the Beatty's, was dealing with the complications of the pandemic, and not being able to properly introduce Beckett to family and friends. The best part for Kiely? Beckett's morning smiles! ■

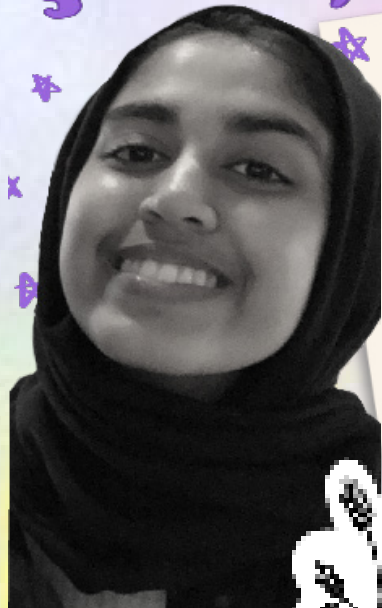


Photo courtesy of Joseph Kiely

Humans of Highlands

By Nina Evans '21, Phoebe Kaufman '22, and Noreen Hosny '21

shanzeh



If you could describe yourself in three words, what would they be?

"If I could describe myself in three words, they would be, friendly, compassionate and optimistic. I'm friendly because I like to be kind to everyone and be approachable. Com-
passionate because I love to help people and listen to them and help them in any way I can. Lastly, optimistic because I try to always look on the brighter side of things and hope for the absolute best."

-Shanzeh Malik '21

What do you aspire to be? How would you describe your aesthetic? If you could live anywhere in the world where would it be and why?



"I aspire to be a person who is expressive and creative. My "aesthetic" is pretty much just whatever is comfortable and convenient. If I could choose to live anywhere, it'd be somewhere like New York, since it's a vibrant city that also has a lot of history."

-Zoe Zimmerman '23

nicole



What are you proudest of yourself for?

"I have been taught that you get out of something what you put into it so I have always worked very hard to have stable, strong, and meaningful relationships with the people in my life. I think it is rare for someone to be able to say they have never had drama or a toxic relationship with a friend. I would do anything for my friends and the nice thing is that I know they would do anything for me too."

-Nicole Eisenberg '21

sydnee



What's a longshot dream you have?

"This is kinda simple and sounds like duh, but honestly, for the longest time one of my biggest dreams is just to be happy. I want to grow up and just be happy. I want to love my job, and my family, and my home... I want to look back at my life and be proud of what I did and appreciate everything I got to do."

-Sydnee Newsham '21

CHRISTIE



What do you aspire to be? If you could live anywhere in the world where would it be and why?

"I aspire to be someone who is kind and generous. If I could live anywhere, it would be San Diego because I love the beach and the weather is really nice."

-Christie Mihatov '22

HIGHLANDS' MUSIC FUTURE...

Amidst a 'new normal,' how will the musical community press on?

Nicole Eisenberg '21

COVID-19 may have impacted the Northern Highlands 2020-21 school year, but it has yet to alter the passion that the students and faculty share for the musical community.

While musical classes and extracurriculars will look different this year, the teachers have expressed a strong desire to continue growing their students' love and understanding of music, even through alternative measures.

Band teacher and marching band instructor Kyle Kubicki has adjusted his class to adhere to the new classroom protocol and is determined to keep his students playing their instruments no matter what, even if it means taking the class outside.

Social distancing will be enforced, masks will be required, and all wind instruments will have a specialized cover to prevent the spread of aerosol particles when played.

Due to the hybrid schedule this year, Kubicki will be using Flexband compositions, which are used for bands with un-

balanced instrumentation.

Essentially, Flexband pieces are arranged to allow different instruments to play the same part. This is beneficial for the class because no matter which instruments are physically present, the composition will never lack a musical section and will always sound as intended.

On virtual days, students have been asked to select and prepare a solo piece that will challenge their abilities and help them grow as a musician. These pieces can be of any category, whether jazz, pop, Broadway tunes, or traditional. Further into the year, these pieces will be performed in a quasi talent show.

Since marching band is regularly outside, the 2020 marching band season will be relatively similar to those of previous years.

As enforced in band class, masks will be worn on the field with the exception of those playing wind instruments, however, they too will have the specialized aerosol covers.

While the marching band will continue to pro-

vide music and entertainment during the football season, they will only be doing so at home games.

The biggest change this year is the new competition format, which is now by virtual submission only.

All changes aside, Kubicki is pleased with the band and marching band's progress as they "have been having productive rehearsals." He is glad to be able to "bring back some sense of normalcy."

Northern Highlands has a large community of singers as well, and choir teacher Thomas Paster's class is at the center of it all.

As expected, students will social distance and wear masks. Paster is looking into purchasing specialized singer masks to accommodate the choir. These masks provide extra space around the mouth to allow for greater comfort and better sound.

In place of singing, the class will be focusing on other areas of music, such as musical theater, specifically Broadway productions. Paster has selected *Hamilton* as the first



Members of the Highlands Regiment playing their instruments while masked.

show to study. The class will learn more about Lin-Manuel Miranda and the other performers. They will also learn what is fact and fiction in the show, and then they will watch it.

Discussing this shift toward theater, senior Penny Keeble said, "I'm a fan of theater, so I'm excited to study shows and get a different approach."

Aside from theater, Paster has created what he refers to as the "Masked Singer Project." Students will be given randomly selected artists and must find and present information about the artist to the class without giving away the artist's identity.

The Highlands A Cappella program has found itself in a bit of a gray

area, but is determined to push forward and keep students singing despite the budget cuts. A possibility for this year is to have the group members learn and record their parts individually and later mix the recordings together into a music video.

If the Highlands A Cappella groups decide to compete this year, all competitions will be by virtual submission only.

The freshman play, fall play, and musical are also currently "on pause," but their status may change at any moment.

Laura Rokoszak, the head of the theater department, stated, "My feelings, like those I collaborate with, are complicated. We are all missing this part of our after

school life, however, all of us involved are full-time classroom teachers, and that primary job is taking 'center stage' for all of us right now."

Junior Emily Pellechia shares Rokoszak's sentiment. "I don't even want to think about everything not running... I love performing so much, and I've been lucky enough to be a part of some outside productions, but nothing beats being on the Highlands stage."

COVID-19 has given the musical activities at Highlands a run for their money, but even through the challenges that this year has presented, the students and faculty are ready and eager to do the best they can. ■

...AND PRESENT

Highlands Regiment still able to have band camp despite pandemic

Tiffany Yang '22

While many other sports and clubs have been temporarily canceled, the marching band has been hard at work.

As per usual, the Regiment regrouped for a five-day intensive band camp, but there were some significant changes.

Firstly, the ten hour band camp schedule was cut to a mere two hours.

Drum Major and junior Julia Guarnaccia stated, "Although this was a significant cut in our time, we still accomplished so much because of the hard work and dedication of each and every member [of the band]."

Despite the many cuts in music/marching instruction time, community bonding, and practice time, the Northern Highlands Regiment persevered by making up for lost time outside of band camp.

Section leaders and staff conducted virtual meetings over Zoom and Google Hangouts, the student leadership team sent out instructional playing

and marching videos, and section leaders and staff conducted playing tests.

Leadership was also

tor so that the whole band can watch us."

Leaders are also expected to enforce social

"It was pretty stressful to hear there was a positive test in the band."

Senior Rachel Shames

very different this year. With social distancing, reduced time, and other challenges, student leadership and staff were faced with many new problems.

Usually, the Highlands Regiment only has one Drum Major conducting at a time; however, the new, spread-out, socially distant marching formations called for two drum majors.

Guarnaccia stated, "Although I have the same position as last year, my responsibilities and duties as a drum major drastically increased... Because everyone is so spread out on the field, we need another conduc-

distancing rules and remind students to maintain regulation-abiding behavior.

During band camp, many safety precautions were taken in order to reduce the likelihood of the spread of COVID-19.

Instrument covers were placed over the bells of the various brass and woodwinds, while the pit and drum majors wore masks the entire time they played. The members of the marching band also remained six feet apart at all times, and the marching drill itself was written to maintain social distance.

When the brass and woodwind members of

the marching band were not playing, they put their masks on.

Other precautions, like remaining solely outside during rehearsal, also helped reduce the likelihood of a COVID-19 outbreak.

However, even with all the precautions taken, a temporary closure was necessary in order to prevent the spread of the coronavirus within the band.

One student tested positive for COVID-19, so the entire marching band was placed under quarantine. The sudden shut down of the regiment came as a surprise to many members of the band. With one month left until the start of school and only two hours of band camp practice a day, many members were upset about this halt in marching band activity.

Color Guard Captain and senior Penny Keeble stated, "At first I was devastated. I actually cried when Mr. K told us the news of the show change [to] virtual competitions. My heart just hurts for all

of the band and my fellow seniors."

Others shared similar sentiments to the shutdown of the band.

Drum Major and senior Rachel Shames commented, "It was pretty stressful to hear there was a positive test in the band. This whole season has been full of uncertainties, and the possibility of being shut down at any minute is scary."

Fortunately, with the precautions the marching band has been taking, there was no further

spread of COVID-19 within the group.

Drum Major and junior Tim Conlon remarked, "With everyone, there is never a dull moment, there's always stuff happening even when we aren't practicing, which definitely brings us closer together."

Along with the rest of Highlands, the Regiment will inevitably face challenges during 2020, but it is clear they are prepared for whatever will come their way. ■



Flautists playing while social distancing.

TO DINE OUT OR NOT TO DINE OUT?

Highlands students share their favorite safe eateries near the Quad

Serena Dhupar '23

Throughout the pandemic, many businesses, stores, and restaurants have unfortunately shut down.

However, as people start to take proper safety precautions, companies and restaurants have slowly started to reopen.

Most of these businesses have placed mandatory rules for staff and customers to wear face-coverings, maintain 6 feet apart, and use hand sanitizer.

Restaurants in Ridgewood NJ have been fairly popular among Highlands students, as they offer hand sanitizer and require face-coverings.

It's Greek To Me, located in Ridgewood, has done a particularly excellent job with outdoor dining. They set up outdoor tables in small tents that are open from one side to let air circulate. These breathable tents do a fantastic job keeping parties isolated from each other.

In addition, the tables

are placed 6 feet away from each other to ensure safety, and the waiters wear face-coverings and latex gloves to protect customers and themselves. Like the majority of Ridgewood restaurants, It's Greek To Me additionally offers takeout for those that don't feel safe outdoor dining.

After interviewing many students, I came to the conclusion that many students recommend Raymond's in Ridgewood; it seems to be a popular favorite.

Although sophomore Mia Wang recommends Raymond's, she believes that it is unsafe to dine outdoors at the moment. Wang said, "You are putting yourself and others at risk" when you dine outdoors.

Other students also mentioned Raymond's because of its "beautiful and vintage" ambiance. Raymond's caters to customers for breakfast, lunch, brunch, and dinner. Students recommend eating

there during brunch or lunch as there is usually a live band performing in front of the restaurant for the outdoor patrons.

Similar to It's Greek To Me, Raymond's also takes precautions during the pandemic by making sure all hostesses, waiters, and customers are wearing masks and arranging tables 6 feet apart.

Ultimately, students at Highlands love outdoor dining at Raymond's because of the variety of food, including popular comfort food, "baked mac-and-cheese" (sophomore Simran Dhupar's favorite). Another delectable favorite of Dhupar's at Raymond's is the brioche french toast with berries and Vermont maple syrup.

Along with It's Greek To Me and Raymond's in Ridgewood, junior Ayana Amin highly recommends Blue Moon Mexican Cafe in Wyckoff. She believes that Blue Moon Mexican Cafe "has done a really great job with reopening during the pandemic."

Amin stated, "My family friends have gone and they said that all of the waiters and waitresses are really good at taking the necessary precautions when serving and taking orders."

Much like other restaurants, Blue Moon requires their workers and customers to wear masks and provides hand sanitizer.

Amin has also "heard that they have dedicated a section of their parking lot to outdoor dining, which allows for well-distanced tables and seating arrangements."

If you are looking for an outdoor steakhouse during this pandemic, sophomore Karen Bae noted, "the Allendale Steakhouse does outdoor dining well."

Bae recommends this restaurant because of how well they maintain necessary safety by enforcing face coverings on their waiters, cooks, hostesses, and customers. The Allendale Steakhouse also mandates every table to be 6 feet apart.

Thankfully, many local restaurants are taking proper precautions to help decrease the risk of infection while still allowing

people this bit of normalcy.

For those still dining in, many of these restaurants offer takeout too. ■

cko
kickboxing

3 CLASSES & GLOVES
FOR ONLY-
\$29.99!

LOSE WEIGHT, GET FIT, RELIEVE STRESS & HAVE FUN WITH OUR ONE-HOUR FITNESS KICKBOXING CLASSES!

REAL BAGS. REAL PEOPLE. REAL RESULTS

CKOALLENDALE.COM • 47 W ALLENDALE AVE., ALLENDALE, NJ 07401
201-236-1000 • @CKOALLENDALE
*Offer valid at listed location only. Booking fees are required for our classes.

Ryan Gottlieb '23

Got a cramping thumb? Breaking out in random dances in the middle of class? 15 second clip of a song stuck in your head? If these symptoms apply to you, you might be addicted to TikTok.

TikTok is a fairly new platform that has gained an immense amount of popularity in the past year, most likely having to do with the app's bizarre trends and innovative humor.

TikTok is unique in the way that its users make content and share jokes, and seems to be truly unlike any other platform; it has undoubtedly launched a new era of comedy.

TikTok is very abstract, but one thing is consistent throughout the whole app: going viral is easy, but you must significantly stand out.

Something has to set you apart from everyone else; maybe it's a cool talent or a new dance trend, but whatever it is, it must be unique.

One way to go viral

is to have a captivating charm and an entertaining appeal—this description accurately depicts Highlands senior, Bridget Bruchalski.

If you know Bruchalski, you'll definitely know how much of an outgoing, extroverted person she is. With her approachable charisma and sociable attitude, she's definitely a friendly face to many.

Because of her bubbly personality, she makes a great fit for TikTok fame.

Many people have clear memories of their favorite birthday parties or their first days of school. Likewise, Bruchalski vividly remembers starting her TikTok account and posting for the first time.

She recalls "watching TikToks in October 2018 after a friend introduced [her] to the app [her] sophomore year."

Shortly after making her TikTok account she "decided to start making videos for [her] friends to see," and didn't expect much with the account. To her surprise, it started to gain a lot of attention.

Bruchalski's first posts racked up about 2,000 views each, but after a few weeks of making videos, she consistently reached an average of nearly 15,000 views a video.

ary 22, 2019. It was me, a few friends from Highlands, and another friend from a different school. We made up a silly dance to the Spongebob song called "Ripped Pants," Bruchalski said.



Bruchalski smiles for her cheer photo.

The raise in viewers was a very different feeling for her and she can specifically recall what it felt like to go viral.

"My first video that got popular was Febru-

She continued, "It was really weird to see the notifications roll in so fast. I had videos before that specific one that gained some attention too; this video was different and

kept getting more attention. I still get likes and comments on this video today, so it makes it kind of fun."

Right now, the video with the most views on her account has 1.3 million.

As mentioned, TikTok generates a lot of pretty strange trends. Most trends originate with one famous usage of an audio, and more and more users make videos using the same sound clip.

Bruchalski has a favorite trend of her own, and it has some personal history, too.

She says one specific trend "got [her] on the app in the first place." It was along the lines of a lookalike trend, to a song called "Pretty Boy Swag." Someone would come into the camera frame and then it would transition into a cartoon character or celebrity that looks like them.

Bruchalski said, "I made this video of me and transitioned into a photo of ramen noodles. This was because many people

make comments about my hair looking like ramen."

Regardless of the humorous nature of the app, TikTok sets up so many opportunities for people.

Bruchalski's favorite part is that "literally anyone can go 'viral' and gain an audience," saying, "this aspect is different from other social media where it's harder to create a following."

Adding on to what she has enjoyed most, Bruchalski said, "Another thing [important to me] is all the friendships I made through the app. I'm in group chats with creators from all over the country and we talk all the time."

For anyone interested in trying their hand at some online fame too, Bruchalski's best advice on going viral is to "post as often as possible and follow the trends. But most of all just have fun with it." ■

A TIME OF ENTERTAINMENT

How Highlanders have been keeping entertained during quarantine

Nicole Natale '21

Quarantine, despite being long and arduous, was a very good time for TV shows.

Over the course of this lockdown period, streaming services like Netflix, Hulu, Disney+, and Amazon Prime collectively gained a substantial amount of viewers.

However, these increased hours weren't only because we were stuck inside. From *Tiger King* to *The Umbrella Academy*, viewers were provided with an incredibly wide variety of genres and new shows to binge-watch.

This streak in viewer growth continued throughout the summer, and streaming services--especially Netflix--have gone on to release some of their most successful shows.

Coming in at number one for the most popular TV show over quarantine is *Tiger King*, possibly the most successful documentary series Netflix has ever released. Centered around the eccentric former zoo

owner Joe Exotic, this documentary covers not only his feud with fellow zoo owner Carole Baskin, but all of the shocking stories and occurrences all leading up to his eventual arrest for murder for hire. From the mysterious "disappearance" of Carole Baskin's husband to Joe Exotic's presidential campaign, this show is bound to leave you speechless and wanting more. Anyone who wants to binge-watch something filled with twists and shocking events should definitely take a look.

If documentaries aren't your thing, or you've already binged watched *Tiger King*, another one of the most popular TV-shows released over quarantine was Netflix's *Outer Banks*. This show focuses primarily on 16-year old John B and his friends' hunt for possibly the most valuable treasure on the island, led by clues from John B's father before his mysterious disappearance. Almost every episode is left on a cliff-hanger, and this show is most definitely

ly a binge-watch for those who love both mystery and drama.

The summer also provided a lot of renewals and brand new shows. Netflix's *The Umbrella Academy*, one of the streaming service's most successful original tv-shows to date, released its second season in late July.

With over 45 million streams within the first month of its initial release, *The Umbrella Academy*'s second season was a huge success. The show centers around a dysfunctional family of superheroes who, after reconnecting with their missing sibling of 40 years, learn that the world is ending in eight days and it's up to them to stop it. Extremely entertaining with a thick plot, *The Umbrella Academy* has an incredible way of incorporating everything you love about action, drama, comedy, and superhero movies all into one; think *The Avengers* but make it a dark comedy.

Streaming platforms have thousands upon

thousands of other shows and movies to watch, such as *The Office* or *Friends*, that have been favorites for years on end. "My favorite show over quarantine was most likely *Dynasty* on Netflix! I flew through seasons one and two. I also mainly binge-watched Disney movies from the 2000s on Disney +," senior Alex Almenara said. *Dynasty* focuses on a feud between two extremely wealthy families and their fight to remain in power. If that interests you, seasons 1-3 are streaming on Netflix, and season 4 will be premiering live on the CW channel later this year!

According to senior Kiki Riley, "Over quarantine, I watched both *One Tree Hill* and *The 100*. They're so good and I definitely recommend them!"

While *The 100* is a newer show, *One Tree Hill* is a great example of one of the more "classic" TV shows and is currently streaming on Hulu. Those who are interested in a show with a more dystopi-

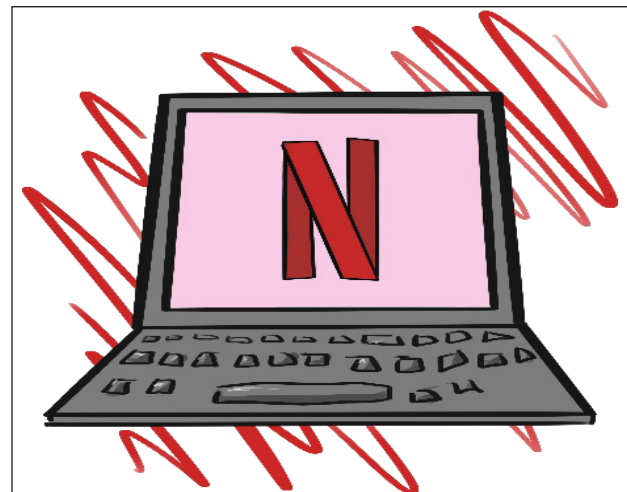
an background, however, should definitely look into the CW's *The 100*--currently streaming on Netflix--which is very similar to other famous dystopian movies and TV shows like *The Maze Runner* or *The Walking Dead*.

Even though this has been a great year for TV, there has also been a surprising amount of success in the movie industry. Because movie theatres were (and in most states continue to be) closed, the movie industry decided to release these brand new movies to platforms such as Amazon Prime and Disney +, just at a higher rent

price than usual.

Disney has taken this route with their new live-action movie, *Mulan*, which has just recently been released onto their site and can only be accessed by those with a Disney + subscription.

As crazy as this year has been, it really has been one of the most successful years for streaming platforms worldwide. Even though things are not quite entirely back to normal, at least we can take comfort in the fact that there's an unlimited amount of entertainment available to us during these times. ■



Streaming service Netflix

Nina Evans '21

ENTREPRENEURS ON THE RISE

Highlands students discuss their growing Instagram businesses

Kassidy Fishman '21

While going shopping has become difficult during the past months, students at Highlands have found ways to accommodate. Many students have started their own Instagram businesses using simple materials and DIY techniques. Some popular businesses amongst the student body include Six World, Simply Sisters Designs, Wizzy Dizzy Izzy, Salt Merch, and Let Me Drive The Boat.

Six World was created by senior Luke Robertiello and senior Andrew Maita. Robertiello has always been interested in fashion and clothes, so when Maita proposed starting a clothing brand, they launched the business together. They sell hoodies, t-shirts, stickers, and masks with unique designs.

The store sells its clothing through a website but advertises primarily on social media. Robertiello stated, "We have been pretty successful and made close to 100 sales, but most of these sales

have been from people in the area. We are currently trying to expand the company and have people around the world purchase our clothes." In the future, Six World plans to create even more designs and continue to advertise on Instagram.

Simply Sisters Designs was launched in early March of 2020. Senior Kaitlyn Sullivan and her sister are partners. Sullivan stated, "From taking Digital Arts and Graphic Design at Highlands, I found such a passion for designing."

The sisters initially launched their business when her sister was at the University of Alabama and Sullivan was home. When quarantine hit, the sisters came together, allowing their business to flourish. Their clothing and additional products, each with unique designs, are sold through Instagram, Facebook, and their website.

Not only is Sullivan involved in the designs, but she also handles a lot of the business aspects. She and her sister have

worked together to collaborate with businesses in New Jersey and Alabama.

In addition, they have made hundreds of sales to various states and hope to expand their business across the nation. Sullivan and her sister especially love interacting with their customers via social media and are greatly thank-

ed that goes to waste." She cuts patterns and letters out of clothes that will never be worn again to give them another life to help the environment and also create one-of-a-kind clothing for shoppers.

"My favorite thing about my business is that I personally hand sew and cut each letter out on my

in charge of the spreadsheets; senior Kenny Morrissey, the designer/manufacturer; senior Andrew Zorian, the handyman; and senior Tommy Leahy, who handles finances. The boys started the business to make some money and donate to COVID-19 relief since they have personally been affected by the virus. The business launched in June, and by late July and early August business began to boom.

Horkan stated his "favorite thing about the business got [sic] to be the boys. More time hanging out and chillin [sic]. And it's never bad to make money. And that cash is lovely."

The Salt Boys hope to one day have their own clothing department and become as big as Vineyard Vines.

Let Me Drive The Boat was created by senior Emely Cespedes. Cespedes explained her inspiration came from a video of Kodak Black on social media saying, "Let me drive the boat."

As she began to repeat the phrase in school,

her friend, senior Athena Georgiades, doodled a logo. Cespedes stated, "That's when it all happened. I had a vision, I wanted this on a shirt. And so I drew an anchor on the little guy's hat and the brand was born."

She is now the CEO of her brand Let Me Drive The Boat, and she sells t-shirts with her friends. The store was launched in March and Cespedes continued to add designs to the brand, but she explained that it was mostly a fun summer business.

Above are just a few of the businesses that the inventive students of Northern Highlands spent their time on during quarantine, and it has been exciting to watch their businesses grow and become more successful.

Although COVID-19 brought a lot of stress to the community, many students made the most of the spare time they had and used their creativity for the best. Keep an eye out for these businesses on Instagram when looking for something different for your closet! ■

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT: EMILY BACKOS

A deep dive into senior Emily Backos' impressive artwork

Kristiana Dedvukaj '23

Judy Dater, a proud feminist and photographer of over 40 years, considered one of America's foremost photographers, stated, "I like expressing emotions--to have others feel what it is I'm feeling when I create art." This is one of the things she has in common with senior Emily Backos, an artist here at Northern Highlands.

During an interview, Backos explained that she enjoys creating art because there are no rules when it comes to making her pieces. She can freely and creatively express herself on the blank canvas without dwelling on any possible limitations. She can create her pieces until they are perfect in her eyes, which is one of

her favorite aspects of being an artist.

Backos began taking art more seriously when she was in the sixth grade, and over the years she continued to improve in regards to her drawings, developing her own art style and improving her skills. She explained that watching herself grow and get better continues to be one of the things that motivates her to continue creating art today.

Backos grew as an artist by creating her art style, something that individualizes her work. She stated that her art style mainly grew from Instagram-- a platform where challenges such as "Draw This In Your Style," more commonly referred to as DTIYS, began to circulate, and even-

tually becoming a more mainstream challenge in the online art community.

explained that she prefers to use colored pencils or pencils in general, but she

other, more experienced artists. This isn't something foreign to Emily Backos. Backos explained that she did this when she was just starting out as an artist, making her feel as if she wasn't that good of an artist herself. Over time, she grew to learn that every artist is different, and is now much happier with her creations. Backos urges newer, aspiring artists not to compare themselves to others, as every artist is different and no two pieces of art are alike.

When asked how much further she is going to take art, she stated, "I'm going to minor in art, but I don't think I'm going to make it into a career." Though art is something Backos values greatly and will continue to enjoy in the future, it isn't something



Photo courtesy of Emily Backos

Senior and artist Emily Backos poses for a photo.

Other challenges include INKtober and Illustration Friday. When asked what her medium is, Backos

is open to experiment with other mediums as well. New artists tend to compare themselves to

SPILL THE TEA!

Instagram shade account created as part of recent TikTok trend

Cat Corrado '23

Suddenly, many students from Northern Highlands have been getting follow requests from accounts that are known as "shade accounts." During quarantine, it has become a TikTok trend to create a shade account for one's school or another known or randomly selected one. These accounts spread funny and interesting facts about students and are commonly a place for jokes. A&E was able to interview two girls that created an Instagram shade account for Northern Highlands, and they

had a lot to share.

First, they explained what shade accounts truly are and what they are used for. "At first our account started with gossip and confessions, but later on we asked people who they could see dating, any compliments they'd like to give, and who they thought was a Northern Highlands 'Heather,'" one of the girls said.

The definition of 'Heather,' a term that grew popular after the release of Conan Gray's song of the same name, is someone who "is perfect and everyone wants to be. Someone who's attractive, sweet,

caring, and generally a good person." Gray wrote the song about someone he loved, but who did not have eyes for him. Rather, they preferred Heather.

One of the girls said, "I'd guess that we'd get DMs from around 15-20 different accounts a day and most of the time we'd have full conversations with the people that DM'd us." The girls tried to post every DM they received on the account while keeping everything anonymous. They also made it clear that they would happily remove any post if someone asked for them to delete it.

Addressing how they came to make the account, the girls said, "We both live in British Columbia, Canada and go to school together." They explained that they "researched about some schools in NJ and came upon Northern Highlands." To send out follow requests, they needed to find students that went to Highlands, so they "looked at the Northern Highlands location tag on Instagram and found public accounts and people that went to NH, then [would] look in people's follower lists and their bios to see if they had Northern Highlands listed

there."

They also stated that their account "definitely" caused a reaction, in both positive and negative ways," saying, "Some people were unhappy with some of our posts and apparently talked about our account with their friends. We tried to not post anything that was really mean or insensitive; for the most part people would send in silly jokes about their friends."

"We definitely think that depending on how these accounts are run, they can tear apart or bring a school together. As long as it's run in a light heart-

ed way, accounts like this can definitely... promote more positivity," one of the girls said. The creators appreciate all of the new friends they have made and the fun they had, but the account will most likely not be active anymore.

The shade room accounts on Instagram and TikTok have definitely stolen some spotlight for a while at our school, but luckily they have not caused drama. It's safe to say that this Highlands shade account has brought the school community together. ■

TRIP TO SPACE OR SCHEDULE SUPPORT?

Saturn app used by students to keep track of their daily classes

Satoka Shibasaki '23

School is starting, and we can certainly agree it's stressful. Especially this year with the hybrid system and confusing schedules, students might be struggling with which classes they have next, or what time classes end. Luckily for all of us, there is a new app that seems will soon be an essential for the upcoming school year: Saturn.

You may have heard of the name somewhere, whether it may have been through friends or social media, but there is a reason why this new app is so popular.

Firstly, what is Saturn? The Saturn app is a highly

convenient app that helps students understand and organize their schedules. Upon downloading the app, one simply has to type in the school name, and the structure of the schedule is already set up customly for the respective person and their selected school. All that needs to be done then is to select the specific class and period (which is already inputted in the app with the teacher name).

It also offers users the ability to share and view other students' schedules, but there are privacy settings added for students who don't want their schedules seen by others without a request. Students can even share their

schedules on social media platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat.

Secondly, what exactly is so special about Saturn, and how might it benefit students? One of the many Saturn ambassadors at Highlands, junior Isabella Fernandez, said that "With Saturn you know when your next class is and where, what teachers you have and who's in your class."

She went on to add, "This year [they] have a new feature called 'tasks' where you can easily write down any assignments or test days and date them accordingly."

Northern Highlands Saturn also has an Instagram account where

students can learn more about the app.

Another active user and ambassador of the app, sophomore Isabella Levine, said "Our schedules can be difficult to understand sometimes, especially at first. Saturn makes it so you can see what class you're supposed to be in at every time of the school day. It's also just easier than going back into your camera roll or logging into Genesis to see your schedule. Saturn will really help students, freshmen especially, at the beginning of the school year."

Many people also believe that this app will be embedded in Northern Highlands school culture

moving forward.

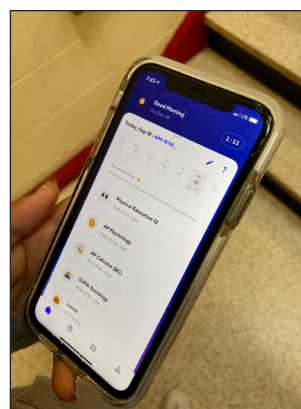
Fernandez said, "I think Saturn will most likely be a part of Highlands culture, as so many people are already using it. I know a good amount of people had it last year, and that number is only increasing this year."

Sophomore Brianna Schulstad, another ambassador of the Saturn app, states that so far, there are about 300-400 active users on the app. She also said during the upcoming school year there will be more features added to the app which will hopefully incentivize new people to join.

Sophomore ambassador Joy Navarro also stated, "The app is extremely

helpful...clearing up any confusion in [students'] schedules."

It looks like Saturn is the new rising app for Highlanders. Download it on the App Store to make your school life so much easier. ■



The Saturn app

Veronica Teran '21

ATHLETES TO MASKLETES

An updated look into the 2020 fall sports season

Isabella Torriani '21

The NJSIAA has issued new guidelines for a return to fall sports based on the current health climate of New Jersey in accordance with information provided by the CDC. Outdoor fall sports including football, cross country, field hockey, girls tennis, and soccer have been permitted to begin practices starting on September 14.

Here at Highlands, competitions are set to begin on Friday September 25. Girls tennis will be playing an away game at Westwood and girls soccer is set to play Westwood at home. In addition, football is set to play a scrimmage that evening at Ramapo.

Despite the pandemic, there are not expected to be too many changes in terms of roster sizes, but there will be adjustments for travel squads based on league discussions. Most details are close to being completed, but everything is still changing on a day-to-day basis, making it difficult to provide details early on.

Right now, comparisons to different conferences and leagues are taking place to determine if any details have been missed. Every school is

unique, meaning leagues must consider different factors in terms of planning games with diverse facilities. Officials have been struggling with some schools not having enough space for away football teams' spectators, as well as the issue of there being no bathrooms for teams to use.

One of the primary issues in terms of opening up for this season was the issue of masks. Towards the beginning of the school year, neck gaiters were generally accepted as an alternative to the standard disposable or reusable Duke masks. A study from Duke came out, however, claiming that they were actually more prone to spreading the virus (a study that *The New York Times* later refuted as having faulty evidence).

This ordeal brought up a conversation about athletes and masks, as most simply do not have anywhere to keep their masks between wearing it. As of September 17, however, the national federation for sports made a statement permitting neck gaiters for athletes.

Athletic director Rob Williams commented in an interview, "When it comes to situations like this, just wait it out. Give everyone

a couple of days to talk things through and wait for whatever new information comes out later."

Social distancing has also played a major role in making many of the decisions pertaining to spectators and game audiences. Governor Phil Murphy put a limit on crowd sizes not to exceed 500 people, all

students, have struggled in coming to terms with this new reality of smaller games. Williams noted that "some decisions are easy because we have no choice. Some are much harder to make because you don't want to disappoint the kids, but your hands are tied."

The most notable of changes issued in the

ject to change and could potentially include outdoor fall sports should they be unable to participate in this first season.

Winter sports are currently set to begin practicing on December 3, with competition beginning on December 21. Of course, because these sports are indoors, this information is also subject to change as conditions regarding COVID-19 in New Jersey change.

The most difficult aspect of this entire situation has been the sudden need for scheduling changes, especially when these schedules come out months in advance. Fall schedule takes months to put into place in terms of officials, practices, games, etc., but teams are not forced to wait for guidance. In fact, schedules were so late this year that they were not able to be finalized until September 18, scrimmages beginning not even a full week after.

"It's a new timeline for everyone," Williams commented, "I always work weeks, if not months ahead as most athletic departments prefer." Another issue with scheduling comes up if opponents develop positive cases, and it is likely that this already condensed season will be

even shorter if this becomes the case. Despite this, Williams insists that we should look on the bright side. As he says, "I'm just excited for our student body that we might have somewhat of a sense of normalcy."

While this year will unquestionably take some getting used to, we must remember how lucky we are to be back. "I'm really excited that our kids are back in school and that we have the opportunity to provide what we can, add what we can, and change what we can," says Williams. "We have been forced to be very creative and the students have been at the forefront of every decision we have made. The administration will continue to make these changes as we can, and we hope that the kids are as excited for these opportunities as we are."

As we know, the student body controls the outcome of this situation. Wash your hands, stay masked, and social distance. Nothing this year is guaranteed, but we have to give it our best shot; it's in our hands to control our destiny. ■

"Some decisions are easy because we have no choice. Some are much harder to make because you don't want to disappoint the kids, but your hands are tied."

Athletic Director Rob Williams

of whom must maintain social distancing. That said, a married couple and their child can sit close together, for example, which throws off the seating for those next to them.

It's a difficult scenario in terms of plotting out seats, one which will likely include standing room only, but different schools and stadiums will undoubtedly have different policies. Most schools, especially

last few weeks is the new four-season schedule. This schedule change is to account for the indoor volleyball season, which has been cancelled for this fall and postponed to a new "season three" that will begin with practices starting on February 16 and games starting on March 3.

As we receive new information regarding the COVID-19 health crisis, this schedule will be sub-

QUARANTINE COMMITMENTS

Matt Hamrah and Megan Winters on their recent college commitments

Jake Fishman '21

Senior Matt Hamrah recently committed to play lacrosse at Franklin & Marshall College, a Division III liberal arts college in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

A close defender, Hamrah has been playing lacrosse for roughly seven years, switching from baseball at the beginning of middle school.

Being a student athlete was nothing new to Hamrah, who grew up always playing sports, and he knew that this part of his life would not change once he started looking towards college and beyond. He states, "Freshman year, I decided to make the practical plan to pursue college lacrosse because recruitment for college basketball is extremely competitive—not to say that lacrosse recruitment isn't. The truth is,

I am extremely lucky to see my goals come to fruition."

Hamrah is feeling pretty pumped to be playing at Franklin & Marshall, but of course there are other emotions going through his head. After all, this decision had a huge impact on his future. Meeting the coaches definitely made a large effect on his recruitment process. According to Hamrah, the coaches were "very approachable and likable, which helped [him] make [his] decision."

Hamrah makes it clear that although there were bigger problems going on in the world, the recruitment process went out the window for a majority of the players looking to be recruited, and many of them were forced to turn to alternative options as a result.

Once the pandemic began to die down, college



Senior Matt Hamrah

Vivien Jones '21

Senior Megan Winters is a newly-committed basketball player at Muhlenberg College, an NCAA Division III college for Women's basketball. From freshman year, she has made her mark on the varsity basketball team at Northern Highlands with her fair share of recognition throughout games, school intercoms, and town publications.

Winters began playing basketball in the third grade, but it wasn't the only sport in which she competed. Soccer, softball, and dance also took up a good chunk of her childhood, but when asked about why she had chosen basketball for high school competition, she explained that she "loved the fast pace and the environment that the sport created."

In the interview process, family was brought up various times in regards to Winters' college decision. When asked about major deciding factors that brought her to choose Muhlenberg, she stated it "was the family bond that the team had with each other" that really drew her in.

After talking to the coach and seeing the team interact, it "became clear to [her] that [Muhlenberg] was the place [she] could see [herself] going to for the next 4 years." In the near future, Winters will be traveling to various countries with her team as a part of her position as a student athlete. For now, Megan Winters continues to celebrate her successes with friends and family.

Although there are obvious excitements about joining her new college community, Winters had



Senior Megan Winters

expressed sorrow in leaving her girls at Northern Highlands. The memories made on NHGB will be unforgettable to Winters, and "though [she] knows those team bonds won't end once [she] goes to college, [she] will miss seeing [her teammate's] faces everyday at practice." ■

NEW COACH ALERT: JORDAN PATON

Field hockey receives new addition to coaching staff

Charlotte Riley '24

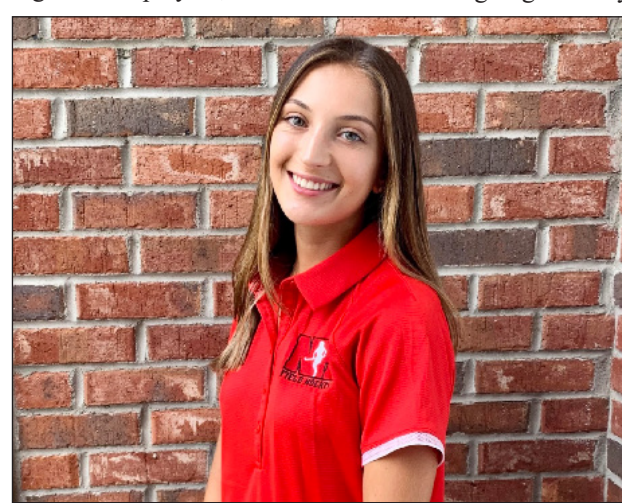
Last fall, the Northern Highlands Field Hockey Team finished the season with an overall record of 19-3. Led by head Varsity Coach Richard Smith, the team only lost to Ramsey, Westwood, and West Morris.

Smith retired from his coaching position this past year and one of his former high school players, Jordan

Paton, stepped in to fill his big shoes as the head Varsity coach for this upcoming season.

Paton first picked up a field hockey stick in eighth grade and continued to play on Smith's team in high school.

Paton stated, "The fast-paced speed of the game drew me in, and [I] immediately fell in love with the NHFH atmosphere during the summer going into my



Varsity Coach Jordan Paton poses for a picture.

freshman year."

Her passion for the sport only grew, as she stated, while playing in high school, so she decided to continue competing for another four years at The College of New Jersey.

Even after over eight years of playing the sport in middle school, high school, and in college, Paton was not ready to leave field hockey in her past.

"I always admired the field hockey coaching staff during my career at Highlands..." Paton continued, explaining how she wanted to continue to be a part of the sport she loves and coach for the program that helped her become the player she is today.

Paton's many years of experience with the sport will lead the team to success. However, due to the current global situation with COVID-19, there are more than a few obstacles

that the new coach will have to face.

"Our summer practices were impacted by COVID-19. Changes, such

as number of athletes per practices, spacing, and types of drills were made to make sure everyone was safe," Paton said.

Just like every fall sport, Paton faces many changes to the program to ensure the safety of all of the coaches and players. Other safety precautions

is accurate, as players are eager to compete against other schools again on the field.

Paton commented, "I'm most excited to be back on the field with the entire field hockey program this fall. Now more than ever, it's so important to take advantage of every opportunity."

Paton and the rest of the Northern Highlands community are thrilled that it is possible that the team will compete this October.

For more information regarding the team's game schedule and practice times, check out the Northern Highlands website. ■

"Now more than ever, it's so important to take advantage of every opportunity."

Coach Jordan Paton

ATHLETIC TRAINER SAVES FALL SPORTS

Coach Koeniges works to keep athletes coronavirus-free

Chase Fishman '23

Due to COVID-19, fall sports are going to be tremendously different this year.

Athletes, coaches, and fans have to be extra cautious when either attending or participating in athletic games against other schools. As a result, Northern Highlands has set numerous guidelines to ensure the safety of its athletes and coaches.

Athletic Trainer Pete Koeniges plays a crucial role in keeping the athletes at Northern Highlands COVID-free.

Koeniges shares his advice and knowledge with all athletes at Northern Highlands and makes sure that they are healthy to participate in sports and gives them assistance when they are injured.

This year, Koeniges' main priority is to keep all athletes safe from COVID. "Wear your masks and wash your hands," Koeniges said.

He also advises athletes to "make sure [they] remain socially distant when they can."

Koeniges only sees athletes two hours a day at most, so he hopes that they will listen to his advice

when they are on their own.

As stated previously, Northern Highlands has set numerous guidelines to ensure the safety of its students and athletes. For example, before any athletic practice, each athlete has to hand in a COVID form and take his/her temperature.

Koeniges also agrees with the school that athletes should "wear their masks when not on the field competing."

Even on the sidelines or walking to practices/games, players should wear their masks for extra protection.

Not only are there restrictions on the field, there are also some in the school.

"The Athletic Training Facility is by appointment only for treatments, and one athlete taped at a time. There are no locker rooms or water coolers this year, so athletes will meet on the field bringing their own water bottles and practice gear," Koeniges said.

Regardless of all of these new restrictions and rules set in place, fans of Northern Highlands athletics are still excited for the fall season.

Koeniges will continue to keep all athletes safe, and will always be available to anyone with any questions

about the new changes.

"[I choose] to remain optimistic. If our athletes

are able to remain socially responsible, wear a mask, and stay socially distant,

we'll be fine. I have faith that our athletes will do the right thing." ■

"If our athletes are able to remain socially responsible, wear a mask, and stay socially distant, we'll be fine. I have faith that our athletes will do the right thing."

Athletic Trainer Pete Koeniges



THE NEW SENIOR SEASON STRAIN

FIELD HOCKEY FEELS

Shannon Flatt '21

With everything crazy that is COVID-19, high school sports are thrown into the mix of events that are affected. Athletes all over the country are overwhelmed with constant schedules and rules changing. However, one of the biggest aspects of high school sports is honoring the seniors during their last season as a high school athlete.

With the many

restrictions and unknown changes of COVID-19, many seniors at Northern Highlands have been affected, especially those that have played a fall sport all four years. They've seen three years of team traditions and senior nights go off without a hitch, yet don't know if their senior season will even be close to the same as previous years.

Four year varsity starter senior Maggie Batenhorst is one of the

four captains for this year's field hockey team. She explained, "I'm sad that my field hockey career at NH is coming to an end this way, but I know that we're lucky to even play." Many sports programs around the county and state have canceled fall sports all together. "We're going to make this season unforgettable and carry on as many NHFH traditions as we can," Batenhorst comments. Batenhorst also

compares her senior season to her freshman season. "Freshman year started earlier in the summer and consisted of more large person drills and scrimmages, while this year we don't start tryouts until September 14th and drills are more focused on conditioning." She adds, "a positive is that it is not as hot out this year as it has been on the turf during previous seasons!"



Senior Maggie Batenhorst shooting on goal during the 2019 season.

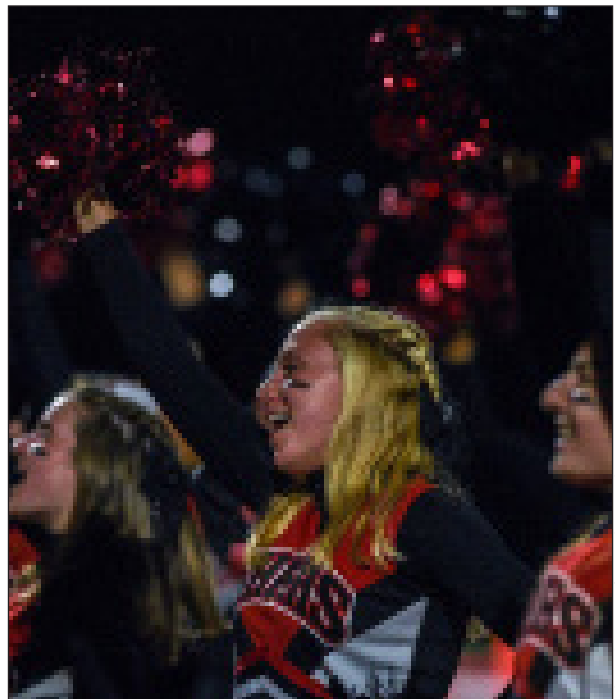
Photo Courtesy of Virginia Shea

FOOTBALL AND CHEER CHANGE THINGS UP

Four year football athlete, senior Hunter Cabrera, expresses how, "it couldn't be anymore different. With COVID-19 going on, there were a lot of restrictions put on us. Whether it be no locker room or having to go

through pre screening before practices, a lot has changed for sure."

He compares his freshman season to his senior, stating how "a lot has changed since then, both physically and mentally for me. I am now starting safety for our defense."



Northern Highlands cheerleaders cheering on the NHFB team.

Photo Courtesy of Lane Photography

Cabrera also adds that "what's great about being a senior is that we all have mutual respect for each other. Everyone's voice is heard, and we all pick each other up when anyone gets down. We have all been extremely motivated for however much of a season we are able to have."

"Northern Highlands Cheer is the biggest program in the school," four year varsity flyer senior Bridget Bruchalski claimed. She continued, "With those numbers, we have to be super careful regarding the COVID-19 guidelines." Bruchalski is one of the two captains this year for the NH Cheer team.

She explains how, "my co-captain and I found ways such as creating group chats with each grade level and using the NH cheer Instagram more often to keep in contact with all the girls."

One big aspect

missing this year is that the cheer team is not allowed to stunt, travel to away games, or have a halftime routine.

is what she misses most. "I love performing and stunting for my school and in front of our spectators. I

called NCA [National Cheerleaders Association] camp every year after tryouts, which is where we learn a ton of new skills and it is an amazing team bonding experience. Unfortunately due to COVID, NCA was canceled which was really upsetting."

Bruchalski continues to say, "We also have to be in pods, and we just had two weeks of virtual practices. This really hurts the potential to form a close team bond. In the past, we would have team bonding nights and sleepovers. We are trying our best to make this season as normal as possible but it is really difficult."

"What's great about being a senior is that we all have mutual respect for each other. Everyone's voice is heard and we all pick each other up when anyone is down."

Senior Hunter Cabrera

"Our warm ups, stretching, jumps, and conditioning have been consistent," she began, "The only thing that has changed is that we can't stunt and we don't have a routine to practice," which Bruchalski mentions

will miss the halftime experience the most this season."

Bruchalski also mentioned a fear of it being hard for the team to bond.

She stated, "re-turning cheerleaders go to a sleep away cheer camp

HIGHLANDS SOCCER STANDING OUT

Three year varsity athlete, senior Nick Weber, notes that the NH Boys Soccer team is continuing to pursue their intense fitness drills, including, "two miles in 12 minutes, a 300

previous years in the program, and nothing is the same.

According to Weber, there is "no normal start time, no county tournament, less games, less teams, and no locker room."

"It's hard being motivated when there is constant uncertainty and changes, but I'm excited because we will still be able to have somewhat of a season."

Senior Brynn Madonna

yard sprint in 55 seconds, and a body test with 100 push ups and 250 sit ups." However, compared to his

Girls soccer athlete, senior Brynn Madonna, explains how, "training during the summer was the

same, working together, and meeting new players and coaches, but there's no contact during the summer, no scrimmages, no pep rally, having to be cautious of who is coming and where you have been, not having a true preseason, less games, different drills, maintaining social distancing."

Madonna adds how it's "hard being motivated when there is constant uncertainty and changes, but I'm excited because we will still be able to have somewhat of a season." She has been a part of the girls soccer program for four years and says how it's difficult this year because, "I know how fun and rewarding being on a sports team is at Highlands."



NHGS goalie Anna Sciuto with the ball.

Photo Courtesy of Tom Hunk

TENNIS AND XC RACING TO THE START

There are some sports, however, aren't as restricted as others, like Girls Tennis and Girls and Boys Cross Country.

Four year varsity runner and cross country captain, senior Olivia Delorenzo, states that, "we are still running, doing warmups, and splitting up into groups based on our running ability. Also, we are in 'pods' so we don't really have the option to run with whoever we want to keep things safe during COVID."

With cross country being more of an indi-

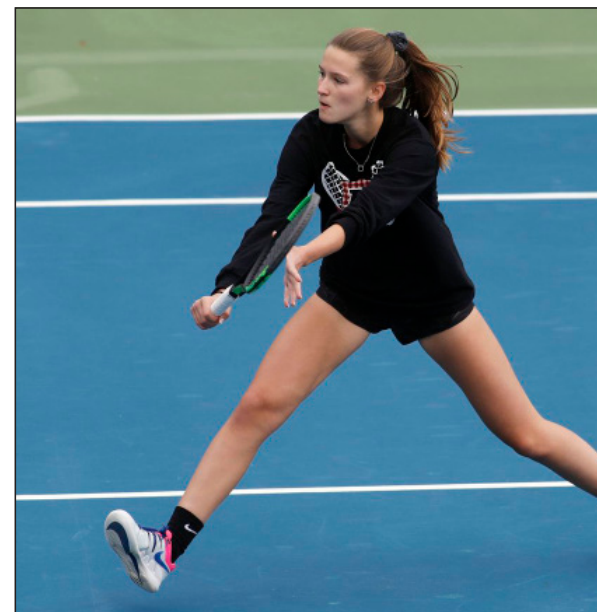
vidual sport, it's easier for restrictions to be followed by the team. Compared to previous seasons, "I feel that preseason is about the same due to corona restrictions," Delorenzo starts. "The only hard part is having to run the warm up laps with the mask on." Girls Tennis team captain, senior Hannah Apsey, has been on the varsity team for four years. "I think tennis is slightly different compared to some of the other sports like soccer and football where there's a lot more interaction with your opponents," she be-

gins. Apsey continues, "I think our matches should run relatively the same as previous years just with the addition of masks, getting our temperatures checked, and remaining socially distant when watching other people play their matches."

One downfall this year for Apsey was not having postseason tournaments. "It was super upsetting when I heard that we weren't going to have a county tournament because I was really looking forward to playing 1st singles this year, but I'm super happy that we were even allowed

to still have a season."

Apsey adds how the team is, "still running tryouts the same way in terms of who challenges who. We still get to play other schools and take the bus. We still get to play tennis relatively the same with only a few safety precautions put in place. However, each person trying out has to bring their own can of balls and only touch their balls. We all have to wear masks and remain socially distant."



Senior Hannah Apsey playing in a match last season.

Photo Courtesy of Virginia Shea

GIRLS' VOLLEYBALL HITS A BUMP

With all other sports teams starting their

seasons, one fall sports team unfortunately re-

ceived the short end of the stick: Girls' Volleyball.



Northern Highlands volleyball junior Emma Lomuti setting the ball during a 2019 game.

Photo Courtesy of Bonnie Deliber

"This season is different because it got postponed and it was really upsetting," begins senior captain Athena Georgiades. "I can speak for all of the seniors that we were looking forward to a season."

It was recently announced that girl's volleyball programs across the state of New Jersey would have to postpone their season until at least February due to COVID-19 restrictions. Since the sport is typically played inside, certain guidelines wouldn't

be able to be followed, thus the postponement.

"We have been practicing all summer and during the off season and we were ready for a season to begin in the fall, but now it's starting in February," says Georgiades. "Now, we have to work until February which isn't necessarily a bad thing [because] we are going to be beasts in February. We are going to be training as a team on outdoor courts and open gyms that are available and doing team drills and team bond-

ing during the off season."

This fall sport's season is definitely different from the rest. Restrictions have set back many teams and affected its seniors greatly. It's hard as an athlete to see four years of hard work, dedication, and sacrifice crumble in front of you. It's a hope for the near future that senior athletes will be able to properly finish out their time as a Highlands fall athlete with senior nights and the recognition they deserve. ■

COVID & COLLEGE COMMITMENTS

Will Yallowitz '22

With the beginning of the school year nearing, a question on many student athletes and fans' minds is, "What are sports going to be like this year?" Some athletes even wonder how they're going to commit to a college for their sport. One of those athletes is senior Carolyn Weinberger, who played on the Northern Highlands Varsity Girls soccer team for four years.

Weinberger is currently interested in attend-

ing Lehigh University for girls' soccer, although she is uncommitted. "I have visited Lehigh as well as many other campuses and Lehigh is my favorite," Weinberger says about her current college commitment process.

Even during a pandemic, Weinberger and many other student athletes are able to continue their commitment process via zoom and virtual tours. "I've been in communication with different schools for a while, and all of the coaches I've spoken to

have been very professional...I've received private virtual tours from coaches and players on the collegiate team on zoom calls which I found very helpful," Weinberger states.

These virtual tours help the bonds between new teammates to coaches and older teammates. Although the colleges can't meet each other in real life, they try to make the best out of a bad situation and hold these Zoom meetings and virtual tours.

"The biggest concern about looking to com-

mit to a school during a pandemic is that the dates of times you can communicate with coaches got all shifted," Weinberger shares.

NCAA rules have a set dead period, usually on June 15, that was pushed back to September 30. The dead period is when a student can't visit a college or talk to a coach.

For someone like Weinberger, an uncommitted student athlete, this year will be difficult when it comes to communication. But, a student like senior Reagan Klarmann, who has already committed to Fairfield University, will face similar challenges.

Klarmann is a four year varsity starter for the Northern Highlands Girls' Soccer team. Klarmann has played soccer for ten years. "I was very lucky and committed my summer going into my junior year, so luckily I didn't have to worry about the recruitment process," Klarmann said. Students like Klarmann were lucky enough to commit to a college before the pandemic, but they still have issues with communicating to their coach because of COVID-19.

"The communication was very different be-



Senior Carolyn Weinberger during a match against Ramapo.

Photo Courtesy of Virginia Shea

tween my coach and I because we weren't allowed to attend campus for any reason whatsoever, so all necessary conversations needed to be completed via Zoom," Klarmann said. Because of COVID-19, all camps and official visits were cancelled, and Klarmann "struggled with getting video footage of [her] sent to them, so they could keep track of [her] performance." She added, "I spent hours cutting footage

from games and making it into one big highlight video, for my head coach to take a look at."

Klarmann also said, "We did as much as we could to stay in touch, whether that be talking on the phone once every two weeks or taking a Zoom call. As it was definitely difficult, we made it work in the best way possible." ■

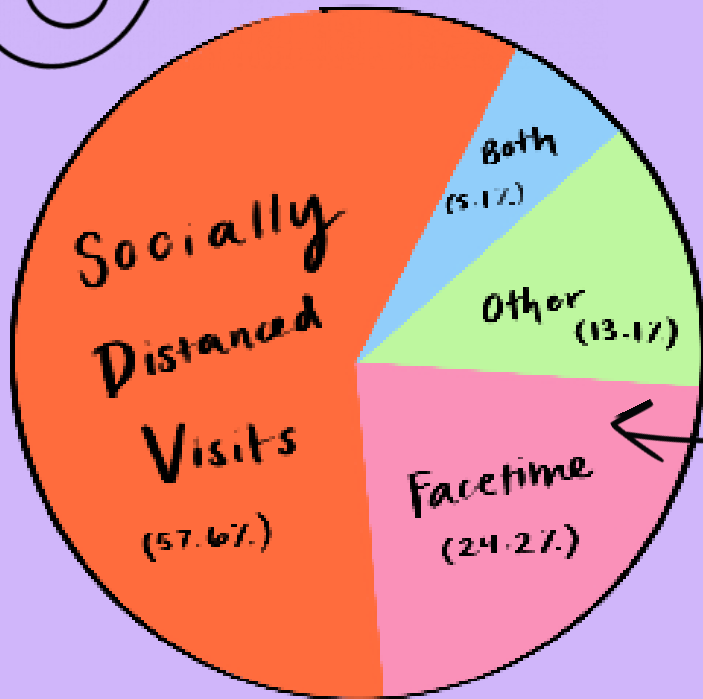


Senior Reagan Klarmann takes the ball down the field.

Photo Courtesy of Tom Hunk

Pandemic-Friendly Activities!

Layout by Noreen Hosny '21 and Nina Evans '21
Art by Nina Evans '21



Question: How did you hang out with friends during quarantine?

Question: Favorite quarantine pastime?



Video Games



Question: favorite movies you watched over quarantine?

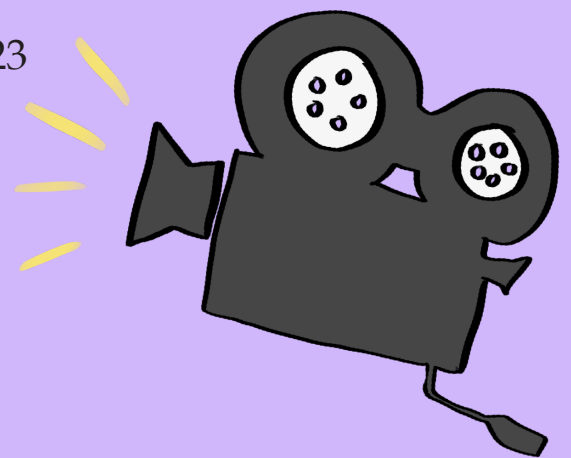
"Definitely Maybe" -Adam Soell '24

"Murder Mystery" -Haley Krell '21

"Kung Fu Panda" -Joshua Chong '23

"Perks of Being a Wallflower" -Claire Trainor '22

"The Room" -Neil Acer '23



I Am Malala by Malala Yousafai
- Natalie Missagheigh '22

Harry Potter Series by J.K. Rowling
- Mary Ruffolo '22

The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes by Sir
Arthur Conan Doyle
- Gavin Gonzalez '24