

THE HIGHLAND FILING

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Photo Courtesy of Reet Sachdev '27

The Black Poster Project’s memorial for the residents of Bergen County pictured here as set up in the Main Gym located near the front lobby.

WELLNESS ASSEMBLY: ADDICTION AND DRUG OVERDOSE AWARENESS

The Black Poster Project and Alumni in Recovery speak to the student body

Arisa Costakis '27

The Black Poster Project and Alumni in Recovery organizations were kind enough in late October to bring several guest speakers share the story and knowledge on such a deep and important ongoing issue in Bergen County, as well as all over the country.

Both are based in New Jersey and work to give local voices a chance to speak out about a family member, a friend, or their struggle and recovery while dealing with addiction.

Their mission: to spread awareness to teens and young adults all over about the horrific and consequential act

of the overuse of drugs.

The Black Poster Project was founded after Dorothy Gillen sadly lost her son to drug addiction in 2015. She suffered greatly and found a healing feeling while preparing for an overdose awareness event in 2019.

She believed it would have a greater impact if those who were lost to such tragedy were memorialized on blackboards with each person’s story marked on it. Bringing humanity and reality to the cause would increase awareness.

Our school had been lucky enough to have several guest speakers share their own story, or that of their loved ones.

Joe L spoke about his son’s life and how his family dealt with the loss of such a lively boy to addiction.

An Allendale native, Chris D shared his story of addiction and his recovery from it. His story brings to light how close this issue is to Highlands.

Gary M, and Melissa D shared the story of their journeys to recovery and sobriety. Their stories provided students an emotional and personal perspective of drug abuse, as well as give advice on how to ask for help if needed.

Chris D and Gail C, who lost her son to addiction, also spoke at the parent presentation later that night.

Hearing from a few

students throughout Northern Highlands, answers had been quite similar. John Morin from the class of 2027 states, “Hearing about the loss of a child due to drugs, directly from their parents made me realize that drugs change a person inside and out. Their parents are the ones who have seen them grow up, but due to an uncontrollable addiction, the growing up gets cut short.”

John’s words uncover the harsh reality of the suffrage some families experience after the loss of a kid. The feeling of having little to no ability to fully help a loved one as we had been told, their parents blame themselves.

Another student from the freshman class, Ellie Shrier states, “It’s great that the project is bringing awareness to this issue. It may influence many people positively.” The Black Poster Project impacted many students and taught them a lot about the negative effects of drugs. It was evident in the deep emotional reactions seen by many students and staff.

People that are suffering and attempting to recover are truly in denial. The unpleasantness of not wanting to admit...

Continued on page 7

TRAVEL ABROAD

In partnership with CIEE, students were able to travel all over the world

Tanvi Koduru '25

Recently, Northern Highlands has held its first travel abroad program where kids over the summer got to travel to different countries and experience life there for a few weeks.

When asking Career and Academic Pathways coordinator, Kimberly Hayes about this experience, she stated that it was an excellent program where kids got to learn about different cultures, meet new people and make memories.

Both Principal Joesph Occhino and Dr. Tony LaRocca recommended the program and thought that it was an amazing opportunity for students to broaden their horizons and get a whole new perspective on life in different places in the world.

Since many students only have experience living in America, both of them thought that this experience would give them more exposure to the world.

Occhino said that he would have loved to have this opportunity when he was in school and that he would have wanted to go to Italy because he’s Italian and it’s a beautiful country. LaRocca would have wanted to go to ...

Continued on page 6

INSIDE



LGBTQ+ HISTORY

Spotlighting the important history of the LGBTQ+ community, as well as the Highlands GSA Club.

Page 9

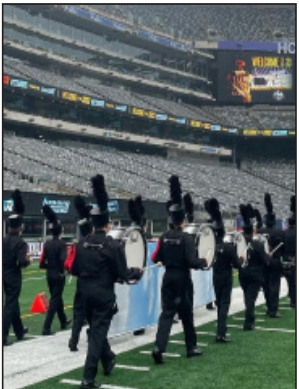


Photo courtesy of Taylor Rehe

MARCHING BAND SUCCESS

Kicking off the year with electrifying performances, the NH marching band takes to the field by storm.

Page 12



Photo Courtesy of Tara Madigan

WIN AFTER WIN

The Girls Soccer team dominates this season, each winning game getting them one step closer to the championship.

Page 16

THE HOUSE ON “HALLOWEEN” AVE.

Read about an abandoned house that no one dared venture to in this scary story



Photo courtesy of Arisa Costakis '27

Arisa Costakis '27

Each year on October 31st, Halloween, we dress up, run around, and get lots of treats. I am currently 14 years old, but at a younger age, we all had our experiences. At a young age, I would try to get away with being cool enough to walk alone with friends.

Every year walking through our neighborhood with a group of friends, trick-or-treating, was a tradition. There was a house at the end of one street though that never

opened up on Halloween night each year. Someone had lived there, but no one ever saw them.

Me and my closest friends growing up came to a dramatic conclusion that there had been “ghosts” lurking around. But back then, we were younger, so each assumption we made truly meant absolutely nothing.

Year after year we would walk past this house: dark, small, and surrounded by trees. In our silly costumes, we would dramatically run past it. One friend would always make up some rumor about how someone was watching us, but they were just having fun messing around with us.

The lights were never on and we were gullible, but each year we were always creeped out. The spooks became believable, but it was all for the laughter. Still young, how-

ever, we continued to be afraid of something people assumed was creepy. On Halloween, we would walk down streets filled

ing colorful leaves, a cold icky weather with a drizzle, that was Halloween to me... creepy things always appeared,

“There was a house at the end of one street though that never would open up on that night each year.”

with people but then eventually walk down the dead end with hardly anyone

but part of it had been the house we all feared. Other kids, along with my



Art by Emily Kam '25

walking.

It added to the plot. With trees that were los-

friends and I, agreed that we would stay away. We believed that something

bad would happen if we went near it.

One year, though, to curb our fear, we suddenly had a great idea to “get over it” and go up to the front steps. As silly as it sounds, we felt brave and agreed we would walk up to the front and ring the doorbell because we were trick or treating.

We knocked on the door and rang the doorbell, but with the darkness in each window, no one answered. We stood there, waiting as if something was going to change, and then walked away confused.

It had been one thing for the house not to do the whole trick-or-treating thing, but it was another to completely ghost everything and everyone each year on Halloween. Everyone was so festive and excited, but the dead silence from that one house seemed to mean a lot more

each year.

The older and older we got though put us back into sense. Through COVID-19, we hadn’t been around too much to go trick-or-treating. We were more fearful of getting sick than going up to the dark creepy house. Growing up also meant not caring as much. Walking past that house now, it seemed like there was just no one home.

We don’t assume that ghosts or people are watching us like we have done for years. Nowadays, me and my friends dress up in simple costumes rather than a 60-dollar witch outfit that we would use once and never see again.

We enjoy walking to each house to get a few things then go home and just relax, but being younger and whispering about scary rumors brought lots of thrills. ■

The Highland Fling

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From the Desk of the Editors-in-Chief

As high school students, we’ve gotten used to managing all sorts of things at once. School, family, friends, fun? We almost have to do multiple things at once to get everything to fit in. That said, sometimes being busy is better. We grow restless when we have nothing to do - always keeping our hands tied in some assignment, club activity, or hanging out.

And for us seniors, this month is the epitome of this busy-ness. It’s never been more difficult to manage college work and school work, while doing both to the standard we want to. It’s funny that Halloween falls the day before our dreaded November 1 deadline, the ultimate example of how fun and stress intertwine constantly in our busy schedule.

We start to enjoy the little breaks, because that’s often the perfect amount. Just a chance to talk with friends in school, catch up with a teacher, go out to eat with a family member, chill on our phone. It’s how we reboot. Highlands fosters an environment where amid the learning, stress, and pressure, there are moments of happiness and connection.

We learned in AP Lit this year that food often symbolizes communion. Some of our fondest memories this year are in the cafeteria - eating and laughing with our friends, a momentary break from all our worries. It’s these small moments of joy that get us tough days, and we’re very lucky to be in such a supportive environment.

For all of those reading who are overwhelmed, we hope the October issue of the Highland Fling is a nice break from all the stress you’re dealing with. We hope you enjoy this issue and we look forward to being back for another one next month.

- Editors-in-Chief Isha Korgaonkar and Jana Dabbagh

If you are interested in joining *The Highland Fling* or have any questions, comments, or concerns, please contact thefling@northernhighlands.org. If you are interested in placing an ad or subscribing, please contact the email listed above.

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

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

CLIMATE CHANGE IN OUR FALL

How come it's eighty degrees in October? And what can we do to fix it?



Photo courtesy of Lauren Perez '25

Lauren Perez '25

Climate change has been a rising issue for quite a while, and yet somehow a good portion of our population fails to recognize it. It sometimes feels like a distant issue to deal with later on, as we don't often see the effects of it. For starters, here in Allendale, the weather has been ranging from the low 50s - to mid-80s throughout late September and early October.

It's crazy to believe that it's already fall, but the weather doesn't seem to be following suit. This is only a small example of the big picture, but it is starting to be more prevalent in our everyday lives.

There are many effects of climate change and

some we might not even be aware of. These effects can consist of "droughts, water scarcity, severe fires, rising sea levels, flooding, melting polar ice, catastrophic

houses and cars were ruined, and nearly 6 in 10 students were marked absent in schools. Not only does climate change have an impact on our land, but

affected by these conditions and many aren't able to survive them.

These important elements of ecosystems work harmoniously to survive, and without them, many populations are threatened to go extinct. Food chains

estimated that about 3 billion birds have been lost from 1970 up to the date the study took place.

Isn't it crazy to believe that 3 billion birds have been wiped out, even though we still see them all the time?

more environmentally friendly ways of transportation like walking or biking, consuming less meat and dairy, or even reducing the amount of water you use to brush your teeth and shower.

I know I am most certainly guilty of letting the water run so my showers can be nice and warm, or even taking extra time in the shower to double shampoo. However, we must make a conscious effort to help our environment even with small things like these.

Our community at Highlands also plays a big role in climate change.

Every school around the world is making varying impacts too. Here at Highlands, we as students and staff can help contribute to the environment.

We can do so by using fewer paper copies for class handouts, reusing our electronics as much as possible, using recycling bins throughout the schools, and planting trees around the school. There is so much we can do to make a difference, all it takes is a quick habit. ■



Photo courtesy of The Washington Post

Flooding in the NYC suburbs of Mamaroneck. Emergency services paddle on rafts to save any victims.

"[Climate change] is starting to be more prevalent in our everyday lives."

storms, and declining biodiversity," as stated by the United Nations website.

You might wonder, as it begins to get colder, is climate change making an impact then? Well of course. You can see the effects of climate change with the recent "torrential" flooding that just occurred in the New York City area.

A state of emergency was called by Governor Kathy Hochul, due to the severity of the flood; train services were suspended,

it can affect important aspects of our lives, in this case, students' educations.

Another recent climate change effect that is hurting us and our planet, is the decline of biodiversity: "the variety of life on earth," as put by NASA. Climate change is resulting in higher global temperatures, more acidic ocean water, and impactful weather conditions. Plants, animals, and other forms of life crucial to ecosystems around the world are being

will be broken, the population balance will be thrown off, and humans will, in turn, be affected as well. In addition, NASA reports that in a 2019 study, it was

"Not only does climate change have an impact on our land, but it can affect important aspects of our lives, in this case, students' educations."

THE GREAT FALL DRINK DEBATE

Which is better, Starbucks or Dunkin' Doughnuts fall drinks? Read about one student's opinions



Photo courtesy of Ellie Shrier '27

Ellie Shrier '27

It's a controversial topic among teens: Dunkin or Starbucks fall-themed drinks. Which ones are better? I prefer Starbucks drinks, especially when it comes to their fall-themed ones. Normally, during any other time of the year, my top drink choice would be the Strawberry Acai Refresher with Lemonade, which many teens claim is their favorite drink from Starbucks.

But, during the fall season, my top drink choice

would probably be the Pumpkin Spice Latte. You can get it hot or iced, and it's perfect if you're looking for something sweet

and you're just looking to get your money's worth from your Starbucks drink order, I would recommend getting the Venti (large),

an extra charge of only about \$.25 per size up. If I could order a drink everyday before school, I would 100% choose Starbucks.

Their customer service is amazing, and their drinks are consistent and taste unbelievable. Dunkin may not be my favorite, but it is some other people's favorite place to buy their favorite fall drinks.

Some claim that Dunkin is better than Starbucks due to their drinks' unique and tasty flavors. Some people say that Starbucks drinks are bitter

"During the fall season, my top drink choice would probably be the Pumpkin Spice Latte."

and tasty, or just something to keep you awake on early school mornings.

Some other fall drinks on Starbucks's menu are the Pumpkin Cream Cold Brew, Apple Crisp Frappuccino, Caramel Apple Spice, and many others. If I was forced to choose between the 2 different popular chains, I would choose Starbucks over Dunkin for any drink. However, it may be extremely expensive, averaging at about \$5 per grande (or medium-sized) drink.

On the other hand, Dunkin's medium-sized drinks average about \$3-\$4 per drink. If the price range doesn't bother you,

or Trenta (XL) sized drinks. It contains a larger amount of the drink with



Art by Emily Kam '25

when it comes to their caffeinated drinks. This means that Dunkin coffee drinks seem to be better infused with caffeine, without the unsweetened taste.

Many rated Starbucks coffee as the worst-tasting coffee, and Dunkin as the best by far. Dunkin is also extremely competitive with Starbucks based on the drinks' prices. While both have record-worthy

kin Coffee, Iced Pumpkin Swirl Coffee, and the Hot Pumpkin Spice Latte. Dunkin has a slightly bigger selection of fall drinks than Starbucks.

On the other hand,

"If you're looking to try something new, maybe get something from the place you don't usually go to."

customer service, in most cases, many other factors simultaneously decide which of the two is better.

Starbucks only offers 5 fall-based drink items on their menu as of 2023, while Dunkin offers 6 fall-based drinks. Dunkin's fall drinks include the Hot Nutty Pumpkin Coffee, Hot Pumpkin Swirl Coffee, Iced Pumpkin Spice Latte, Iced Nutty Pump-

Starbucks's drinks are healthier, containing up to 2 grams more protein than Dunkin's drinks. In conclusion, your favorite place to get a fall drink may vary depending on what your priorities are.

If you're looking to try something new, maybe get something from the place you don't usually go to. Either way, both places are amazing in different ways.■



Art by Emily Kam '25

Art by Emily Kam '25

TOO OLD TO TRICK-OR-TREAT

The debate of whether teens should trick-or-treat, and some insight



Photo Courtesy of Misha Chhada '27

Misha Chhada '27

Halloween. It's a mysterious holiday—at least the movies make it appear that way. There's always a frightening jump scare, a spirit enveloped in a shadow, or a hazy fog hover-

the thrill of running house to house with my friends, our pillowcases brimming with candy as the darkness collapsed in on us. But as Halloween comes and goes, and children grow up... they stop trick-or-treating. The idea that Halloween is meant strictly for children creeps into their mind, forcing them to conform to society's false standards. They create excuses to justify themselves. And it seems they all find reasons to avoid this October ritual, so they can avoid getting judged, and so they can save themselves from the "embarrassment."

"I find that trick-or-treating is a custom that should never get old."

ing over a ghost-town. As a kid, Halloween was my favorite holiday. I loved the frightening stories and haunting past experiences surrounding it. I loved

I find that trick-or-treating is a custom that should never get old, even as we grow older. Despite certain beliefs, high schoolers can still find the

"...no matter how old you are, no one should be removed from such a time-honored tradition..."

thrill in it. Some cities have age restrictions for trick-or-treating. For example, Chesapeake, Virginia set the cutoff at fourteen years old. Towns in New Jersey also suggest that trick-or-treating should be limited to children twelve and under. However, if teenagers find ways to roam the streets safely and maturely then they can still find excitement during this spirited night. Trick-or-treating can be especially fun for teenagers and it serves as a considerably fun option for the night. Halloween is a feeling of nostalgia as well, of watching other kids experience the same carefree memories you did. It is one of those holidays that you will always remember, where the excitement you once felt will be forever long-lived. Halloween al-

lows you to reconnect with your inner child through trick-or-treating too. As people grow up, they tend to overlook the past, or leave it behind completely. These days, high school students are an example of this. We are all so focused on the future, dreaming about our future car and future college and future house. The future seems to have found a way into the present. But trick-or-treating is one of the few things you can do to bring some of the past back, to relive memories from long ago Halloweens. In my opinion, Northern Highlands should do more to normalize Halloween and the fun activities that come with it. Even something as simple as teachers giving out candy in every class or the option to wear a costume



Photo Courtesy of Misha Chhada '27

Photo of Misha when she was younger dressed as a cat for Halloween,

to school (regardless of being on a sports team), would encourage more students to take part in fun Halloween festivities. I believe that no matter how old you are, no one should be removed from such a time-honored tradition such as Halloween. ■

A.D.H.D. AWARENESS MONTH

Break away from A.D.H.D-related misconceptions and hear about



Photo Courtesy of Gabe Tejada '26

Gabe Tejada '26

Every October, ADHD Awareness Month takes place all around the world and specifically the United States. It is important to

support our peers by acknowledging stereotypes and erasing them. Every human being is different, the same way every person with ADHD is different. ADHD Awareness Month is there to debunk myths, spread facts, provide answers to those with questions, and share people's experiences. There are websites, specifically adhdawarenessmonth.org, that share information regarding the importance of this month. It strives to push people to step out of their comfort zones and learn things they wouldn't

"So Highlanders, take time out of your day to do some research regarding ADHD."

have known otherwise. There are plenty of stereotypes that come along with ADHD, one being that kids can't focus in school, and the other being the idea

that kids affected by it are somehow less intelligent than ones without it. One common misconception people make about students and people with this disorder is that they are not good at school. Kids with ADHD are not dumb. The theme this year is "Moving Forward with ADHD". What does this mean, though? This slogan refers to embracing your ADHD and making the best out of it. The goal is for everyone to embrace themselves and do what is best for them, too pay attention to the positive as opposed to the negative. Typically ADHD is known to make people less social and in-

crease their anxiety. Highlanders' goal is to accommodate students at all times, including but not limited to those with ADHD. The wellness center is always open throughout the school day, so make an appointment and let it all out. ADHD Awareness Month is important because it encourages people to be proud of themselves and never doubt they're amazing. So Highlanders, take time out of your day to do some research regarding ADHD. You may learn something about yourself, your peers, or just life in general. More information is never a bad thing, and knowledge is power. Happy ADHD Awareness Month. ■

One common misconception people make about students and people with this disorder is that they are not good at school.



FITS THIS FALL AND SO MUCH MORE

The fall fashion scene is always changing, what’s this year’s trend



Photo Courtesy of Salma Tari '25

Salma Tari '25

As the seasons change, so does our sense of style here at Highlands. The vibrant hues of summer are

gradually giving way to the warm, earthy tones of fall. This shift in fashion is prevalent in the hallways of our school, where students are embracing the latest major fall fashion trends and some that cater directly to our school. Fall fashion is all about comfort without compromising on style. Students adopt a “comfy chic” approach by wearing oversized sweaters, hoodies, and tees. These loose-fitting tops are perfect for staying cozy while still looking fashionable.



Image of Gilmore Girls character, Rory Gilmore from season one, This imagine represents a very popularized fall style for teenage girls.

Paired with jeans or leggings, they create a laid-back yet trendy ensemble. Footwear takes center stage this fall with the resurgence of Uggs slippers. These cozy and comfortable slippers have become a staple for those looking for simplicity and comfort. Whether pairing them with sweatpants, leggings, or even jeans, Uggs slippers are a must-have for the season. Fall is synonymous with warm, earthy tones. Shades of brown, rust, mustard, and deep greens dominate the fashion scene. Many students incorporate these colors into their outfits, creating a harmonious blend with the changing leaves outside. While fall typically brings cooler temperatures, this year has seen a slower transition from summer to autumn. As a result, some students are holding onto their summer wardrobes a bit longer. Lightweight clothing, like shorts and tees, still appears as students adapt to the warmer-than-usual fall. When thinking about wardrobe adjustments for fall, I’ll be swapping out my

“This fall, students at our high school are embracing comfort, warmth, and style. Fall fashion is about staying cozy while looking your best...

summer attire for more season-appropriate clothing. Sweaters, cargo pants, and high-top shoes have become wardrobe staples as the temperature drops.



Picture taken off of Pinterest showing the extremely popular “Ugg slippers.”

But of course, fashion choices depend on the occasion. Students are selective about when to display their new fall outfits. On

days we don’t have PE, jeans or cargo pants paired with oversized t-shirts or sweaters are popular choices for school. When PE is on the schedule,

tunity to showcase your fashion-forward choices. A favorite going-out outfit of mine includes a baby tee paired with cargo pants and shoes that match the color scheme. It’s a combination of casual and chic, perfect for nights with friends. In conclusion, the changing seasons bring a shift in weather and a transformation in our fashion choices. This fall, students at our high school are embracing comfort, warmth, and style. Fall fashion is about staying cozy while looking your best, from Uggs slippers to oversized sweaters and earthy tones. So, whether you’re dressing for school or a night with friends, don’t be afraid to flaunt these trendy fall fashion elements or wear none of them and create your new fashion trend here at Highlands. ■

Photo Courtesy of Misha Chhada '27

TEACHER’S CORNER

Welcome a brand new Highlander, Ms. Shovlin, to the teaching scene as an English teacher



Emily Shovlin

Nice to finally meet all of you, Highlanders—I’m Ms. Shovlin and I am a new English teacher here at Northern Highlands! I teach Science-Fiction/Fantasy and Honors American Literature. I recently graduated from Montclair State University with a Masters in Teaching after

“...I’m Ms. Shovlin and I am a new English teacher here at Northern Highlands! I teach Science-Fiction/Fantasy and Honors American Literature.”

many years of environmental/outdoor education, as well as working with students with autism in a local district program. Although I love the outdoors, I found what I was really missing was having that daily connection with students. In outdoor education, I worked with the kids for a maximum of a few weeks. More often than not, I was only working with them for a few hours while they visited the environmental center for school field trips. This was fulfilling and exciting, but it lacked one of the things I love most about working with kids: building relationships and connecting with students so that I have the opportunity to really make a difference and understand how best to help them in their academic career. So far, Highlands has given me exactly what I was looking for. We are halfway through October and working here has been a really wonderful experience for me. I’ve worked in schools in the past and, outside of the classrooms I worked in and the teachers I worked closely with, I never had the opportunity to meet many of my colleagues or students. This can become quite isolating and create many miscommunications between departments. Something I’ve been loving about Highlands is how inclusive and companionable the staff is, as well as how friendly the students are. It has been great to see both staff and students getting so involved in school events, from athletics to the arts to academic extracurriculars. It creates a beautifully positive environment for everyone in the building. As much as I love the lessons and teaching all my

marvelous students, I really look forward to the conversations I have with students and colleagues outside of class time. This kind of interaction—whether discussing what we’re reading outside of the classroom, debating Gilmore Girls, or talking fantasy football—is what makes Highlands stand apart from the other districts I’ve worked with, as well as from the field I was previously a part of. In addition to the positive environment that staff and students create here, I have also loved how collaborative and supportive my fellow English teachers have been. This level of collaboration has allowed me to see so many different ways to approach the same topics and how to incorporate various teaching styles within the classroom. It’s been really cool to talk with other teachers about how to approach the skills we teach. It provides a great foundation of support, which is extremely helpful for me as a first year teacher. This year, my goals are to integrate some of

these methods into my own classroom and start determining what works best for my students and me! Coming in, I did not have any preconceived notions about Highlands. I’ve always heard that Northern Highlands was a great school, but otherwise I did not have much information. However, I will say that as soon as I interviewed for the position, I knew it was the school I wanted to teach for. During my interviewing process with other districts, I was excited for the opportunity, but pretty relaxed about whatever the outcome may be. None of them struck me as a district I really felt passionately about. After walking out of my interview with Mrs. Schumacher, Ms. Consalvo, and Mrs. Chiang, I knew I would accept an offer with Highlands the second I (hopefully!) received one. I remember feeling so ecstatic about the conversations I had during the interview, along with the jitters of post-interview nerves. It was the only school I interviewed with that gave me that gut feeling that I belonged here. I am so proud to call myself a Highlander.■

“It was the only school I interviewed with that gave me that gut feeling that I belonged here. I am so proud to call myself a Highlander.”

CRISIS IN THE MIDDLE EAST: THE IMPACT

The effects of this long lasting conflict extend beyond the Middle East- to our school

Jiya Bhadra '25

On October 7, 2023, conflict flared in the Middle East after Hamas, as designated by the US Government as a foreign terrorist organization, fired into Israeli towns surrounding the Gaza Strip. Consequently, Israel retaliated, and as a result, many lives have been lost on both sides. As a community, this is a time to come together and support one another, especially those who may have connections in Israel or Palestine.

Principal Joseph Occhino says, “As a school administrator, we have to worry about what’s going on here in this high school ...and how people react to it.” Junior Salma Tari shares her experience, “The conflict hasn’t directly impacted me or my schooling, but it has impacted my loved ones in my family throughout the years. My dad’s side of the family is originally Palestinian and were forced to evacuate their homes a while ago. That means

most of what’s going on is just hitting kind of close to home especially since

Sophomore Jenna Finkelshteyn also has familial relations to the conflict,

in Israel...He sends pictures and sends updates, but it’s very scary to think

“As a school administrator, we have to worry about what’s going on here in this high school ... and how people react to it.”

Principal Joseph Occhino

my family currently lives in Jordan and that’s really close to the conflict areas.”

“My dad’s cousin is actively serving in the IDF... we have family that lives

that he’s doing that.” Occhino says that as a school it is important to

stay open to students or staff who may be impacted. He says that, “people who may be struggling, students, families; let us know, so that we can offer support services whether that be wellness or school counseling.” The school aims to keep this environment a safe and open place for students who may be impacted in various ways by the ongoing conflict. We stand together and hope for world peace. ■

THERE’S SOMETHING FOR EVERYBODY

A look at some of the new clubs that students have added to the extensive list of club offerings

Madison Koenig '27

Continued from page 1

One of the best parts about Northern Highlands is the vast array of activities offered to students. There are countless clubs that students are able to join. Getting involved is a great way to meet like-minded people and find your hobbies here at Highlands. Every year, the school has added some new clubs to its long list of club offerings. This year, eight new clubs have been added to the list, such as the Animations Club, Women’s Empowerment Club, E-sports club, Astronomy Club, and much more. Ninth-grader Laith Cavanaugh, member of the table tennis club (another one of the new clubs), shared

some important insights on what it means to be a member of a club and how everyone is brought together. When asked what he believes brought everyone together at the first table tennis club meeting, Cavanaugh stated, “Apart from interest in ping pong of course, I believe that everyone at the meeting had a common goal: to make new friends they could vibe with.” Cavanaugh, along with his club mates, certainly all had a common interest that brought them all together. He also pointed out that compared to the clubs he participated in at his middle school, the clubs here offer a “surprising amount of freedom.” Freedom and a variety of privileges are of great im-

portance to teenagers, and receiving those things here at Highlands makes them feel even more like part of the school community. It is easier for them to try new things and figure out what they the same things as them. Assistant Principal Tony LaRocca had some interesting ideas about which clubs offer great opportunities to students. For example, he stated that the CIEE Global Navigation Club, better known as the Travel Abroad Club, run by Mrs. Wager and Ms. Hayes really stuck out to him. “The opportunities offered to students (in this club) are a great experience,” LaRocca reveals. LaRocca had posi-

tive views on the outcome of joining an activity at school, whether it be by participating in a club, playing a sport, or even doing volunteer work. LaRocca feels that it is crucial to get involved at school; a club, after all, is a gathering for a “group of like-minded students working towards a common goal or for a common cause.” For LaRocca, being in a club means having a positive mindset. He believes that since it is not a requirement to take part in a club, the people who show up actually enjoy being there and can do what they enjoy. “You align yourself with the people who have the same values as you, and I think that’s the most important part.” Principal Joseph Oc-

chino adds onto this idea by discussing that the school’s large number of club offerings allow each and every student to find a new hobby or keep up with an existing one. He states that the vast amount of club offerings at Highlands “allows our students to find something that they might be interested in.” The variety of clubs, sports, etc. offered at Northern Highlands does much good for the students. Everyone can find something they enjoy, build on a talent or skill, and develop relationships with other students that they share interests with. Of all of the amazing things about Highlands, the opportunities given to students is one of the best. ■

Freedom and a variety of privileges are of great importance to teenagers, and receiving those things here at Highlands makes them feel even more like part of the school community.

LEARNING ACROSS CONTINENTS

Over the summer, several students were able to bring their studies to a variety of foreign countries

Tanvi Koduru '25

Continued from page 1

.....to Ireland because he wanted to see their culture and his family is from there. There were also many students who wanted to

participate in the program this upcoming summer. They want to be a part of the travel abroad program because they like to travel and want to experience something new. Many of them want to go to Spain and France to practice the language that they

were learning in school. Many teachers say that being able to practice a language in context with a native speaker is an excellent way to become more fluent in it and so they agree that this travel abroad program is a fantastic opportunity. Lastly, we interviewed a student who has done the travel abroad program: Anamika Choudhary. She went to Rennes, France during her program where she was housemates with one of her friends from Northern Highlands. She said one of the most memorable parts of her trip was the hours of free time that she got where she was able to walk through and experience the various aspects of Rennes. She noted that there were a few difficulties in the beginning because she had to get accustomed to her host family and to an

environment where she couldn’t communicate using her first language which was a little frustrating. For example, her host family would tell her certain rules that they had in their house that she had to follow and she had to do her best to understand them and adjust to their customs for the few weeks that she lived with them. But, she mentioned that at the end of the trip she was grateful for the difficulties she experienced because it helped shape her into a better listener and communicator. She thought that the experience was really freeing because she was in a completely new environment where she was able to learn the second language that she loved. Choudhary liked being able to meet new people and hang out with the new friends

that she made everyday. Adding to that she learned new French every day and got to use it constantly. For any Highlander who is thinking about what to do next summer and would like to make memories that will last them a lifetime, this opportunity is perfect for you. ■



Junior Ava Rome and other High Schoolers from CIEE in Prague

Photo Courtesy of Ava Rome '25



Landscape of Prague, one of the travel abroad destinations

Photo Courtesy of Ava Rome '25

EMOTIONAL WELLNESS ASSEMBLY

Bringing awareness to how drug addiction and abuse has affected victims in Bergen County

Arisa Costakis '27

Continued from page 1

...the truth, or even not wanting to admit the reality of an issue. 7 of the 10 people out of the 46.3 million drug users try to recover, states the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

In tandem with the visual aspect of The Black Poster Project, a memorial of Bergen County residents who passed from drug use was presented in the main gym of the school. The space was nearly filled with black posters of individ-

uals, and sometimes even families of the deceased. schools and teens across New Jersey that this issue

“Eyes had gone from board to board, mirrors propped up with motivating words, and it made everyone more aware of what had been told to them.”

The purpose of this was to put into perspective for students just how many people are affected by such a disease. Though it is a difficult site to see, it teaches and gets the message across to high

is very real and ongoing.

When Highlanders had seen this, the moment of silence had people circling multiple times to honor and view the posters. Eyes had gone from board to board, mirrors

propped up with motivating words, and it made everyone more aware of what had been told to them. Drugs are beyond powerful and it has become too easy for teens and adults to get addicted to them.

The definition of addiction from Merriam Webster is “A compulsive, chronic, physiological or psychological need for a habit-forming substance.” The “need” is why according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), the rate at which people end up relapsing is 40-60% after 30 days in an inpatient drug treatment center. Additionally, 85% of drug

addicts relapse after a year, according to the National Institute of Health (NIH).

Awareness is necessary to maintain a healthy mental state. The Black Poster Project and Alumni in recovery are part of the solu-

tion to lower those terrifying numbers. It is crucial to educate people around us to avoid the consequences of drug use. Making smart choices and being informed is what keeps our communities safe. ■



Students observed reading the many posters of those who passed.

Photo Courtesy of Reet Sachdev '27

HALLWAYS, PAJAMAS, AND COWBOY HATS

How Northern Highlands emphasizes school pride with the first Spirit Week of the year

Sachi Kaisare '25

Spirit Week is a week that Highlanders look forward to every year, with days like Pajama Day, Country vs. Country Club Day, Beach Day, and Color Wars.

One of Spirit Week's famous features is the tradition of each grade decorating their respective hallways. This year, the class council of each grade came up with unique and creative themes to kick off the 2023 spirit week.

The sophomore class council came up with the amazing theme of Hallow-

een, a fun way to start off the spooky season. The junior class came up with the idea of a beach themed hallway, which you can think of as a continuation of our past summer. Finally, the senior class represented their bittersweet last year of high school with a senior hall of fame, complete with a red carpet and fancy setup.

Many people thought these ideas were very creative and that seeing them come to life was an amazing experience.

Zari Veres Royal, a member of the Junior Class Council, says, “We had a photo op area, sun-

glasses and leis for people to take pictures.” These picture-perfect displays can be found throughout the school - the junior class' decorations are located by rooms 125/126, right by the library.

The seniors' display is located in the main hallway of the science wing, and the sophomores' hallway is by the upstairs library, in the History wing.

The effort put into each exhibit is truly commendable, and everyone did a wonderful job decorating. But what about the history of this tradition? When asked about their opinions on hallway decorations, Dr. LaRocca and Mr. Occhino had nothing but great things to say about these displays.

Mr. Occhino said candidly about the tradition, “It started long before I got here.” He also elaborated that he couldn't wait to see what each grade did



An image of the Senior Class Council's Hollywood hallway

Photo Courtesy of Raya Baghal '26

with their hallways, seeing as the tradition did change one year and has now been reverted back to its original idea. That one year, Occhino said, students combined classes and “freshmen and sophomores had one wall of the cafeteria while juniors and seniors had the other.”

This was an experiment in participation, to see if participation changed when decorations were in a central space like our cafeteria.

Dr. LaRocca expressed his opinion on the hallways as well, saying he was “always a fan of whatever theme that they had...

integrating it into Northern Highlands somehow”.

The best part about all this is we get to enjoy seeing these displays every day this week, adding a little excitement to our everyday walks to class. These efforts made by our hard working class council and club members do not go unnoticed, and help to brighten the atmosphere, making us a little more enthusiastic about our Spirit Week.

Many people in the upper classes remember these weeks as some of the most memorable and fun of their years here at Highlands.

Remembering to participate this week, even in the tiniest things like wearing Uggs to school on pajama day, a polo shirt to show off the fact that you're team country club on Country vs. Country Club day, or your grade's color can make a big difference in making your high school experience more fun and memorable.

Another tradition of spirit week and hallway decorating is that the winner of the best-decorated hallway gets to go outside early during the 90 minute lunch.

This year, the win shockingly went to the sophomore class council, so every sophomore was let outside early for the 90 minute lunch.

“This was a great way to start my week,” says an anonymous sophomore. “It really made spirit week more engaging and rewarding.” ■



A part of the Sophomore Class Council's Halloween themed hallway.

Photo Courtesy of Raya Baghal '26

PAY IT FORWARD WHENEVER YOU CAN

Northern Highlands students get involved with volunteer opportunities, new and old, as the school year begins

Haley Corerro '26

The start of the school year is an opportunity to meet Mrs. Hayes, who manages our Career and Academic Pathways system. Northern Highlands is the only high school that formalizes community service hours on your transcript, along with a variety of other clubs that offer volunteer opportunities.

Our Career and Academic Pathways program provides opportunities for high school students to engage with their community each year.

From volunteering at a soup kitchen to participating in a charity 5K

race, every effort counts.

To get your volunteer hours published onto your transcript, you need a minimum of 28 completed hours. Additionally, 28 hours of volunteer work counts as 1.25 credits on your transcript.

Northern Highlands Career and Academic Pathways system has introduced an easy way to participate in your local community. VOMO is an app for finding and logging volunteer opportunities. VOMO is available to all students attending Northern Highlands Regional High School who are in-

terested in providing help to various organizations.

Assistant Principal Tony LaRocca states, “I think the notion of volunteering your time provides a sense of service to your community that our whole society is based on. Giving back, helping, and being a part of something bigger than yourself is a character trait that we strive for in all of our students.”

Being involved in your community makes a difference, whether you've volunteered over the summer or just started now.

Assistant Principal Tony LaRocca emphasizes the importance of volunteering, which benefits indi-

viduals, communities, and countless organizations.

Volunteering highlights an individual's compassion and willingness to help. Career and Academic Pathways Supervisor Kimberly Hayes states, “VOMO is a cloud-based management volunteer database.

We add all the volunteer opportunities there personally so they have all been vetted by us. We have all the contact information in there for the people and application forms...”

Career and Academic Pathways Supervisor Kimberly Hayes has worked especially hard on the Northern Highlands vol-

unteer database, VOMO. She wanted to do the best she could to create an easy, accessible database for students who are interested in volunteering.

On VOMO, you can not only find volunteer opportunities near your community, but you can also log your community service hours.

Sophomore Isabella Sigalov makes an effort to volunteer every Sunday at Ramsey's Farmers Market. She says, “After you volunteer you can see a change, and when you know you are a part of a change it makes you feel really good about yourself.”

If you volunteer to

give back to your community or make a difference, all hours count.

Isabella Sigalov, like many other Highlanders, want the opportunity to bring about a positive change in their community.

Whenever given the opportunity, students like Sigalov slowly create a better environment and stronger community.

While volunteering and offering your free time to different organizations and communities, you are slowly making a difference. Even helping out with the slightest things makes a change. ■

THE NOT SO PEPPY PEP RALLY

The annual pep rally at Highlands was again poorly attended by students and student athletes alike- will this ever change?

Emerson Rossi’26

The annual Northern Highlands pep rally is a chance for all fall sports teams and students from the school to share their school spirit. The pep rally is always highly anticipated by the athletes and a great way to start off the school year.

This event encourages team bonding and demonstrates a sense of community among the students. Some students even come in full-out school spiritwear with Highlands tees and face paint to show their support.

Besides the actual sports teams, the student observers are extremely important to helping this night run smoothly. The observers’ energy during the cheer routines and celebrating of the seniors for each sport connects the Highlands family.

Many teams come in matching apparel created together and some wear specific clothing

to represent their sport.

The Northern Highlands pep rally differs from many others because of when it takes place and how the tradition of it being after school was created.

Although Principal Occhino states that the pep rally may have more participants if the event took place during the day and was open to more than just the fall sports teams, it would be difficult to maintain the group and keep them on campus. LaRocca agreed, responding, “It wouldn’t be fair to ask the athletes to stay

and have them be celebrated while a quarter of the student body leaves”.

The pep rally is at night for those who truly have the desire to be there and show their school spirit outside of school hours. Although the night is not well attended by non-athletes, it’s still a memorable night for those participating in a fall sport.

An anonymous sophomore, a part of the tennis team at Highlands explained, “The team bonding leading up to the pep rally is also incredibly special”. This student felt

“It wouldn’t be fair to ask the athletes to stay and have them be celebrated while a quarter of the student body leaves”

Assistant Principal Dr. LaRocca

that the making of the team t-shirts and getting together as a team outside of school and off the court brought them closer together.

She further stated, “the pep rally made us feel like we were a part of something special and as-

sisted us when we played on the court because we felt more connected”.

Those in attendance were given pizza and ice cream. Mr. Occhino compared this night to others saying, “this pep rally was similar to most in the past, however, less and less athletes have been in attendance”.

It’s difficult for students to get back to school at seven, meaning there’s less and less attendees every year.

Although most participants, especially Freshmen love this event and see it as a good way to feel acclimated to the Highlands

environment, the timing of the event closes it off to having more attendees. Both LaRocca and Occhino hope for a bigger student body presence in the future because the energy students bring really helps the Highlands community as a whole.

An anonymous Freshman on the JV Cheer team stated, “I was so excited to go to the pep rally because I got to perform the band dances we have been working hard on for all the other sports”.

The pep rally is such a fun experience for new students because it demonstrates what Highlands stands for.

Highlands continues to share its school spirit through this event every year, keeping the traditions of the school alive. ■

“This event encourages team bonding and demonstrates a sense of community among the students.”

PARKING PROBLEMS IN SENIOR LOT

As construction on the new field house increases, the remaining parking spots of seniors are being taken away

Dara Kotz’27

As many students have most likely observed, there are many renovations to be looking forward to at Northern Highlands. With all the construction taking place we are anticipating an exciting revamp to our athletic facilities.

Northern Highlands is advancing in the athletic department like never seen before. With new turf fields and a brand new field house the possibilities are endless.

There are state of the art cardiovascular equipment, fresh locker rooms, advanced strength/ lifting equipment, along with conference rooms.

The new field house offers a new level of possibilities for all of our student athletes.

In an interview with our very own Assistant Principal Of Athletics at Northern Highlands, Michael Koth, had expressed his positivity and excitement regarding the new renovations. Koth had stated that the upcoming field house will give our school community “ A sense of pride”.

When designing this new space it was in the best interest of the athletes, coaches, and spectators. Koth explained the three basic principles of the field house was for it to be “More



Photo Courtesy of Raya Baghal '26

A picture of what the field house construction currently looks like

convenient, practical, and supportive” for all people involved in our High School athletic programs.

Our old athletic facilities, although sufficient, are lacking an edge to it that our field house will have. The old facilities are outdated.

With the resources and research on athletics in our society constantly innovating and advancing it is only right to offer the best to our students. As a result, the new field house will replace the 15 year old equipment which will hopefully benefit our athletes’ success in their respective sports.

This upcoming field house is a communal space with the purpose

of building up our community starting with the athletes and all of their coaches and spectators.

toll on our seniors parking.

The turfing of our fields requires a staging space to set up equipment.

moved to a parking space on the west side of campus near the tennis courts.

Dr. LaRocca has even found that by moving 24 parking spaces to the west side of campus it has “ created a lot of air” which has allowed for the congestion in the senior lot to decrease.

But for many, the pounding question still remains; when do the seniors get their parking spots back? The estimate, according to Mr. Koth and Principal Occhino is that all parking spaces should be available again in the spring. The turfing of the fields and the Field House construction is also expected to be finished in a similar time period. Hopefully, this will allow spring sport athletes at Highlands to experience the new innovations to our athletic facilities.

Our new field house doesn’t only enhance the athletics of Northern Highlands but also the safety and convenience.

Despite all of the great advancements to our athletic facilities it has taken a

This required 24 parking spaces from our seniors. Those 24 seniors have been

The new field house doesn’t only enhance

LGBTQ+ HISTORY MONTH

Deep diving into the history of the LGBTQ+ community and spotlighting the GSA club

Gabe Tejada '26

October marks the beginning of LGBTQ+ History Month, not to be confused with LGBTQ+ Pride Month. This month is in observance of important historical events that made the community what it is today.

But what is the main difference between History Month and Pride Month? Pride Month acknowledges not only the history of these citizens but also the pride that comes from being LGBTQ+. This is why events like parades are held, to celebrate this pride that many of the world's citizens may feel.

History Month, on the other hand, acknowledges just the history and encourages people to learn more about the community. This month was created by a high-school history teacher, Rodney Wilson, who believed that learning this history is incredibly important. And Rodney was right.

In our personal lives, it is essential to support all of your peers, LGBTQ+ or not. During this history month, learning new information about the

community is a way you can increase your knowledge and begin to accept everyone more valiantly.

Senior Hannah Altman, GSA President, said, "Learn more about our history. Nothing helps more than being educated on these topics. Fear and discomfort only come

(1979), and the Obergefell v Hodges (or the federal legalization of gay marriage) (2015).

All three of these events were monumental in advancing America's perspective on the community, and we recommend researching them on your own time

"Learn more about our history! Nothing helps more than being educated on these topics. Fear and discomfort only come from being uneducated."

from being uneducated."

Since the early 20th century, gay rights in America have been a hot topic. There are many different historical events that built the foundation of the LGBTQ+ community, evolving it into what we know today.

Some examples of events that shook the world are: The Stonewall Uprising/Riots (1963), The National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights

from reputable websites. It is especially important this October to acknowledge historical events to show unity with your LGBTQ+ peers.

At Highlands, the GSA is up and running better than ever. They have big plans for this year, and some have already been completed. For example, on October 9, some GSA members held an open panel discussion for the staff, educating them on how to be more

inclusive in the classroom. The purpose of this panel was to open staff members' eyes to what goes on out of earshot in the halls of Highlands.

This event wasn't specifically coordinated with LGBTQ+ History Month, but it was incredibly important as it taught our teachers very important information about how to correctly treat students in this community. They've done more than just that, though.

"We love to participate in some of the 90-minute lunches," says Hannah Altman. Another goal of the GSA is to encourage people to join our club (and buy our cookies), which they did on Friday, October 13.

The GSA, led by Mr. Jason Grabelski, a Student Assistance Counselor, is a safe space for students, and involves teamwork, and a willingness to stand up for the community. It creates an environment where Highlanders can speak their minds and sort out their issues with identity, sexuality, and any other important topics relevant to us.

For its members, this club entails a safe space.

This club is open to all Highlanders no matter what sexuality or gender identity they follow. It is a safe space and a home to all those who respect it, and it is an incredibly informative club.

One interesting thing about the club is that it does not keep track of the names of the members who come and go. This is to respect anonymity, as some students feel uncomfortable with others knowing. Nothing spoken about in the club leaves, and any student can feel safe going to the GSA.

"I love the connections I make with the people in the club," Altman shared. This just goes to show that this club isn't just a safe space. It's also a home."

In recent years, talking about the LGBTQ+ community has been much easier, and out of that came multiple pieces of media that took the world by storm. Things such as Heartstopper, a TV show featuring two boys, Nick and Charlie, became one of the top ten shows on Netflix within two days of release.

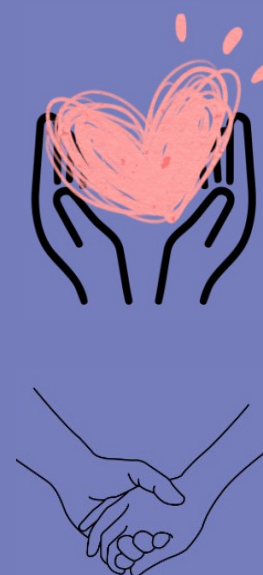
Altman said, "The TV show Heartstop-

per is so special to me."

Media is the easiest way to gain knowledge about the community, and luckily for us, there is an entire universe of information available at our fingertips. If you don't like to read, watch a show. Both show support, and support is always appreciated.

Acknowledging LGBTQ+ history and showing support is just one step of the way to opening your worldview, and the month of October is just the time to do it.

Happy LGBTQ+ History Month, Highlanders ■



WHAT A MUG-NIFICENT OCTOBER

Exploring the significance and multiple benefits of drinking coffee

Emma Thomson '25

International Coffee Day is an occasion that occurs on October 1st. Coffee is consumed by millions of people every single day, and International Coffee Day allows people to promote and celebrate the beverage.

Not only is coffee popular worldwide, but it's also enjoyed by lots of the students here at Northern Highlands. Hundreds of students line up early in the morning to grab coffee before the day begins. In fact, many students choose

coffee everyday, but the beverage is still enjoyable. Junior Ellie Marino says that she doesn't drink coffee everyday, but she still enjoys drinking coffee when she does. She states, "When I drink coffee, I start craving it and maybe even think about getting coffee the next week."

Other students, on the other hand, have a high dependency on coffee. For example, Junior Matthew Steinfink explains how he chooses to drink coffee. Coffee is known for giving people that extra

amount of energy in order to help them focus, and to enhance their mood. There are many studies that show the impact caffeine has on

a teenager. For example, not only does coffee provide this boost of energy, alertness, and awareness, but it also contains side effects such as restlessness and nervousness. In addition, coffee is also known to stunt the brain development of teenagers. This is because as a high school student, the brain is still growing and developing, and it will continue to mature until the person is in their mid-twenties. When people drink coffee starting at a young age, it causes the development of the brain to slow down.

School Nurse Anne Rutkowski shares her thoughts on coffee. She explains how she herself loves coffee and she drinks a cup of coffee every morning. When she was asked about what caffeine does to the body, she explains how there are mixed results when it comes to the research of coffee. However, if you are someone who is hyper-

tensive, meaning you have high blood pressure, coffee is not the best option for you. This is because caffeine can in-

"I have students that come in sometimes carrying a very tall Dunkin Donuts coffee, complaining of abdominal discomfort and it's because they're drinking coffee."

crease your blood pressure.

A personal choice of hers is where she chooses to only drink one caffeinated cup of coffee in the morning, and then switches to decaffeinated coffee. If she doesn't do this, it starts to have an effect on her sleep.

Rutkowski dives deeper into side effects of caffeine, explaining that caffeine can make you jittery and keep you awake. She also introduces some positives of coffee as she

you more alert during the day, and can help alleviate migraine symptoms. She also mentions that many students have stomach pain in Highlands due to coffee.

She noticed that coffee consumption here at Highlands as well as other high schools has started earlier in life. She recalls that there was a time where people started to drink coffee when they were in college in order to stay awake late and

study. However, she then goes on to point out that academics have changed and now there are more tests and studying, which has caused the increase in coffee consumption.

When asked the question of her favorite brand of coffee, Rutkowski recommends this brand that her son orders from a health site. It is called Laird Foods and it is a mushroom based coffee. She explains how it's very good for your brain and is a healthier option of coffee. n

Coffee is loved by many. People drink it everyday, or even just for enjoyment. International Coffee Day allows us to reflect on our relationship with coffee. ■



"Every morning before school, the first thing I do is wake up, eat breakfast, and drink a cup of coffee, every single day"

to bring their coffee with them in class and throughout the rest of the day.

There are some students who don't rely on

amount of energy in order to help them focus, and to enhance their mood. There are many studies that show the impact caffeine has on

NATIONAL BOOK MONTH READ ALL ABOUT IT

Zari Royal '25

While October is most popular for the start of fall and spooky festivities, it is also National Book month. This month-long celebration focuses on the importance of literature, discovering new stories or authors, and much more.

There are multiple ways to celebrate National Book Month. Some examples include reading a new book, discovering a new author, or trying your hand at writing.

Junior Nina Misantonis shared her plans for the month. "I will probably celebrate this month more in terms of writing," said Misantonis. Misantonis "like[s] to write a lot, and it's something [she does] pretty consistently, so [she'll] definitely keep this month in mind when [she] write." To change things up, Misantonis might even "try a new form of writing this month."

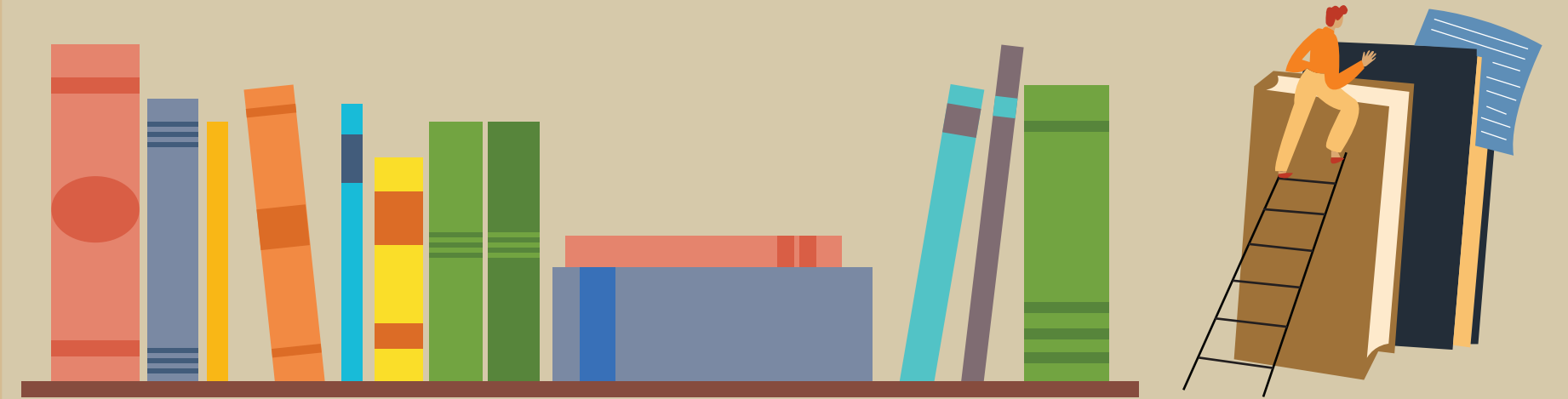
In addition to her writing endeavors, Misantonis shared that for this month she will enjoy some of her school-assigned reading as "in [her] Honors Sci-fi and Fantasy class [they] are currently reading 'Kindred' by Octavia Butler, a book that [she's] really enjoying right now." Between writing and reading, Misantonis will surely have her month filled with literature.

Another reason to celebrate this month is to reap the many benefits from books. While reading and writing may not seem more than good pastimes, they also greatly improve mental health. To start, reading a genre like fiction can decrease stress levels. If you're stressed, picking up a book and reading for about thirty minutes per day has been proven to decrease the amount of cortisol (a stress hormone) in your brain. It also increases your empathy, creativity, sleep, and memory, which as a result makes you happier.

"I value reading for the same reasons I value fitness" remarked English teacher Darrel Norrell. Norrell added that "we all know about the benefits of regular exercise and the risks of not getting any. Reading supports brain fitness. The same benefits and risks apply. On one end of the spectrum is wellness, mental health, and growth. You open many doors. Your memory improves. Different areas of your brain become more connected. The risks, on the other hand, are that your natural gifts for things like creativity, empathy, openness or critical thought can atrophy."

Librarian and teacher Julie Goldberg also had some remarks to share in regards to the benefits of reading. While she thinks that "students should read primarily for the joy of it" she also shared that "if you need more motivation than that, then know that people who are regular readers tend to know more about the world, empathize more with others, develop a richer vocabulary, and even become better writers. Reading widely and deeply is also one of the best ways to prepare for college, careers, and citizenship"

Additionally, it is important to note that reading books has become increasingly more valuable as the access to information has expanded. ■



English teacher John Wodnick finds that "too often, we're in search of quick, snappy answers to simple questions we can google" but "reading encourages us to ponder questions that require us to think more deeply, in ways that require more imagination than information. This is becoming a lost art."

Norrell also had an interesting viewpoint on the topic and shared that "social media isn't the empty junk food that some suggest it is. It has a language, a culture, and creative value. But if we allow it to be the only type of "text" we consume, we hurt ourselves pretty profoundly. Among other things, we risk killing our attention spans, losing our curiosity, becoming self-absorbed. Books of any kind are medicine for those ailments."

Highlands staff surely proposes convincing arguments for why students should dive deeper into the world of books, not just during National Book Month, but all year around. Luckily, Northern Highlands has plenty of resources for students looking to get into reading.

Goldberg shared the process for getting books at the school library. She instructs students to "check out books by bringing them to [her] if [she's] there, or signing them out using a simple form in the red binder kept at the front desk."

As an important reminder, Goldberg noted that "It is really important to sign your books out and not to simply remove them. Otherwise, [they] list the books as stolen, and that creates all kinds of problems." Be sure to follow the necessary steps when grabbing a book.

Goldberg also shared that "students can check out multiple books at a time and renew the books if they need more time with them" so there are plenty options for students to start their reading journey.

With all this information about the benefits of books and how you can access them, you may start to wonder where to start. Well, when asked about book recommendations, here's what a few members of the English department had to say.

Wodnick recommended "Walden by Henry David Thoreau" which "encourages us to slow down, observe the world around us, and trust our own inner voice (once we're quiet enough to actually hear it)." He "can't recommend it highly enough."

Norrell finds that "authors who are darkly funny always appeal to [him]." If that sounds like it would interest you, then "try Cat's Cradle by Kurt Vonnegut."

Even with all these facts and tips, reading can be difficult. Some people don't know where to start or simply don't have the motivation to do so. Goldberg has some advice for this issue. Goldberg said that "if you have friends who tend to like the same shows, movies, and games that you do, chances are, you'll like the books they enjoy. Start with a recommendation from a friend whose taste you trust."

Alternatively, Goldberg suggests to "come to the library and browse [their] current displays." You can even "come and talk to [her]" for "a good book to start with." There are also online resources such as the "NoveList Plus database" and "Sora" which are "accessible through the library webpage" as Goldberg notes.

Reading is so much more than what meets the eye, so students should take this month as an opportunity to introduce themselves to new authors, books, and writing styles to enhance skills and qualities that will be sure to help them throughout their lives. ■

Art, Photos, and Layout by Emma Pereira '24

MARCHING BAND IS OFF TO A GOOD NOTE

Shining a light on an underrated, yet extremely talented part of Highlands

Kristiana Dedvukaj '24

As the school year goes into full swing, so do clubs and teams within Northern Highlands. Within these clubs/teams is the Northern Highlands Marching Band, which, along with their weekly performances at football games, has already taken part in two competitions and looks forward to participating in (and hosting) many more. The Marching Band season begins even before

which rehearsals take place to prepare them for performances at Highlands athletic events and competitions throughout the school year. Their first competition of the year was at Ramsey High School. Being the very first of the season, the high energy paired with high effort across all schools joined together to create amazing performances. Six bands, all from different schools, came out to RHS to attend and compete here.

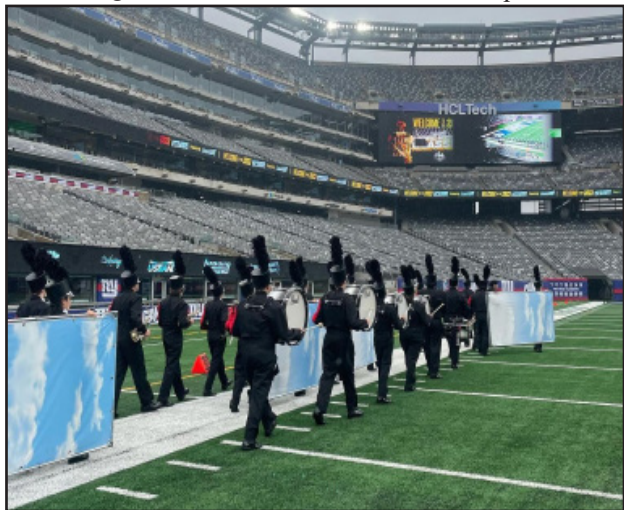


Photo courtesy of Taylor Kehe

The NH Marching Band during the competition at Metlife Stadium. In the end, Highlands was ranked fourth place; band members have explained

that although this ranking isn't what they would have been aiming for, this placement was impressive as the majority of the band was comprised of freshmen. At the moment, their most anticipated competition of the year is the annual one located at MetLife Stadium. Being able to play in a stadium as opposed to a school football field is an experience most, if not all, members of the band bask in and consistently look forward to.

This competition was at the beginning of the month and was categorized by majorly high energy. Multiple percussionists even mounted a camera to their drums so they could have footage of the show from their perspective. Alongside this, the home show is highly anticipated as bands across Bergen County travel to Northern Highlands to compete against each other. Being on their home turf, the energy for the Northern Highlands band is unmatched. Band members have explained the excitement and enthusiasm that come with the ability to introduce other bands to our school and watch them perform here.

The marching band community, across different schools, is very supportive of one another. They enjoy each other's sets, cheer, and have no bad blood between schools. Senior percussionist Zachary Zimmerman describes these competitions

of the band have faced harassment from many different individuals as the season has progressed; they've described it as having happened "about once a week this season" and "creating a sense of pure embarrassment." They have not allowed this to stop them, nonetheless, from expressing their pure love and fascination that comes with creating music.

The marching band community, across different schools, is very supportive of one another. They enjoy each other's sets, cheer, and have no bad blood between schools.

as being, "probably one of the healthiest competitive environments in the world." However, within Northern Highlands, support of the marching band is not as great. Members

Zimmerman explained that he used to attend band rehearsals and events solely to play music, and that this experience has helped to create a newfound appreciation for the marching arts.

He went on to talk about Drum Corps International (DCI), which he described as, "the major leagues of marching band." The DCI provides a show for everyone, he says, and he urges people, band members or otherwise, to check it out. According to him, "it's more than likely there's a show out there that you'll enjoy." In the end, like any other team, the band thrives off of support. Whether it is from fellow members of their band, from members of other bands, or other students from their high school, support facilitates the highest level of performance ability from any musicians. As the seniors graduate, they look forward to being able to provide this support to incoming freshmen and current students, and highly anticipate future years of performances, competitions, sets, and wins. ■

HIGHLANDS HAS ITS VERY OWN MOZART

Senior Miguel Granda composes a musical piece warning about climate change

Nick Franchi '25

Miguel Granda, a senior at Northern Highlands, recently composed his first-ever choral piece entitled *Oasis*. It features five voice parts plus one solo, and a melodic tune coupled with thought-provoking lyrics, all composed by Granda himself. Granda has had a profound interest in composing for a while now. "I realized I had an interest in composing when I

ed to write them down." For years, Granda has composed all types of pieces, from piano, to band, to strings, and he's loved every note, tune, and rhythm he's crafted along the way. *Oasis* is, however, his very first piece to be sung by a choir, which he is very excited about. "My choir piece is about the possibility of our world becoming a dystopia," Granda explained, "If we continue down our path of harming life around us,

"I realized I had an interest in composing when I first started new melodies in my head. When I realized they wouldn't leave, and how emotional I felt about them, I decided to write them down."

Senior Miguel Granda

"While there isn't an exact thing that gave me inspiration, I felt concerned just by looking at current events and stories of what humans are doing to the planet and other people." This concern for our fragile planet and future generations is what gave Granda the idea to write *Oasis*, aiming to communicate this message through a soothing, yet powerful sound. "The message I'm trying to convey is that we need to be careful of how we treat the natural world around us since it is the only thing we have," he said. With Granda's knowledge of composing, and this message of environmental care and protection in the forefront of his mind, *Oasis* was born.



Photo courtesy of Miguel Granda '24

Miguel Granda, the composer of the Choir piece *Oasis*.

"While there isn't an exact thing that gave me inspiration, I felt concerned just by looking at current events and stories of what humans are doing to the planet and other people."
Senior Miguel Granda

first started new melodies in my head," Granda said in an interview, "When I realized they wouldn't leave, and how emotional I felt about them, I decided

it will be too late to ask for mercy, and there will be no safe havens left." While being asked about his thought process, Granda explained that,

SHARING SOME MOVIES THIS SPOOKY SEASON

Highlanders welcome fall by discussing their opinions on popular films

Emily Pushnya '26

Autumn is beginning, and with it, the Halloween season, bringing the trademarks we know and love. Cooler weather, crisper air, warmer drinks, cozier clothing, crunchier leaves, and, of course, better movies.

Though a real definition can't be placed on a "fall movie," there is a certain vibe shared between the most popular movies around this time of year. Whether it's a good scare from a horror movie or a good cry from a rom-com, these fall movies give us assorted feelings of comfort, cuteness, nostalgia, and thrill that are unparalleled. This sentiment isn't lost on the students of Highlands.

Sophomore Jenna Finkelshteyn loves watching horror movies, especially psychological horror. She stated, "I like this genre because it gets my adrenaline pumping, and it gives me something besides school work to think about." Whether you prefer horror movies for the excitement or the distraction, they serve their purpose well.

Finkelshteyn speaks for a plethora of students

who share her enjoyment of the horror genre. Included in this group is Junior Riley Nolan, who expressed her love for the 2001 movie *Donnie Darko*. "I like this movie because Jake Gyllenhaal is an incredible actor and... I think it's a perfect combination of scary, funny, and romantic for the fall season," Nolan said. Sophomores Tanaya

to today's movie standards or are hilariously bad, they make for an enjoyable watch with your friends. McCarthy sees this in *Friday the 13th*, pointing out that, "It's a silly movie," even remarking that he laughs when the killer "gets" his victims. Shah adds to this sentiment by saying she enjoys the movie *Scream* for its good characters.

Montayne's fall favorite is 1993's *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, a movie she's been watching since she was a little kid. She stated that she loves it because, "I like the aesthetic... and it makes me feel happy and comforted in a way because it's a childhood movie."

Sophomore Savana Levi appreciates *The Nightmare Before Christmas* as well as 2009's *Coraline*. Just like Montayne, Levi said, "I really like these movies because I grew up watching them with my friends, and rewatching them every year is almost a tradition."

Though these spooky movies can seem to be representative of the autumn months, there are a handful of romantic comedies that evoke the same cozy feelings within us. Junior KC Suchkova shared, "My favorite fall movie has got to be *When Harry Met Sally*. I love the slow burn of it all, and the movie is just so aesthetically pleasing to watch."

When explaining the reasons she likes this movie, Suchkova said, "It makes me feel very cozy and happy, even

though I always cry at the end. The imagery of

Suchkova all shared their fondness for the

Though a real definition can't be placed on a "fall movie", there is a certain vibe shared between the most popular movies around this time of year.



A scene from 1999 rom-com *10 Things I Hate About You*

Shah and Austin McCarthy add to the collection of horror favorites with 1996's *Scream* and 1980's *Friday the 13th*. Older horror movies such as these have a "campy" feel that many people associate with this time of year.

Whether they hold up

Old horror movies can bring a feeling of nostalgia and comfort for anyone watching them, plus they are a ton of fun. Similarly, animated Halloween movies are very cute and popular for this season.

Sophomore Helena

EXPLORING THE RISE IN VIDEO ESSAYS

Tune in to learn about a new form of media growing in popularity among Gen Z

Gabe Tejeda '26

"Video essays are a really popular type of YouTube video where the creator sort of reads an essay, going into detail around their thesis statement about the subject," Emily Pushnya, sophomore and video essay enjoyer, stated.

The basic definition of a video essay is as follows: a video essay is a genre of video content that, much like a written essay, advances an argument.

While an essay may seem uninteresting, there's a reason this type of video is becoming so popular within Highlands and rest of the world today. When asked, sophomore Jenna Finkleshteyn said, "I like [video essays] because I don't like to read."

For a reason as simple as that, this type of content already manages to draw in an incredibly large audience. Naturally, this begs the question: what is so interesting about this new form of media?

As Finkleshteyn said, a common theme for these video essays is a dislike of reading. As members of Gen Z, it's no secret

that we all seem to enjoy watching videos, especially those in the 15-second form. But video essays tend to be pretty long, or at least much longer than 15 seconds. So why do we enjoy them so much?

"It's interesting to see some random person talk about something that they care about or know a lot about," Pushnya commented, adding the final piece to the video essay puzzle.

Apparently, a large portion of the enjoyment of video essays comes

But we wouldn't watch such a long video without some sort of drive, right?

As Pushnya stated, the drive seems to stem from the creator of the video, and watching their drive when talking about the subject.

If a video essay consisted of someone with a monotone voice speaking about something they seemed to have no passion for, it's likely that fewer people would be interested.

But since most video essays tend to have someone speaking from

But who are some of the best recommendations for Highlanders to get into video essays? Pushnya stated, "Wendigoon. I love Wendigoon. My favorite essay of his focuses on the Monument Mythos, and it's awesome."

When asked if she had heard or known anything about the Monument Mythos ARG (Alternate Reality Game) before watching Wendigoon's two and a half hour long videos on the subject, she said no. So why is it that a subject she'd never before heard of interested her so much?

Well, according to Pushnya, "Wendigoon makes his points in a digestible yet thought-provoking way."

This is very important to her, as it helps to keep her interested without making her confused, but also stimulates her just enough that she stays hooked. The main goal of the video essay, from a creator's standpoint, seems to be to get the viewer to enjoy the subject just as much as you do.

And it works. Multiple Highlanders have shared their love for video essays, and some of

videos they love have upwards of fifteen million views. This form of media

ly becoming this generation's documentary, and it's an amazing advancement.

The main goal of the video essay, from a creator's standpoint, seems to be to get the viewer to enjoy the subject just as much as you do. And it works... Video essays are quickly becoming this generation's documentary"

is consistently growing, and reaching out to people who could have never even imagined sitting down for two hours watching the same man talk about a video game or historical event.

And they aren't just making things up for these essays either. "I think video essays generally tend to provide a lot of good information," Pushnya said to further prove the point that video essays are a growing form of media.

Video essays are quick-

This new form of media is growing fast, so Highlanders are hopping on the band wagon and finding a new love of video essays. There seems to be a video essay for everyone, so happy watching, Highlanders. ■

"So why do we enjoy them so much? 'It's interesting to see some random person talk about something that they care about or know a lot about.'"

Sophomore Emily Pushnya

from watching someone speak about something they're passionate about. Because, as already established, we all know we love to watch videos.

the depths of their heart about a thesis statement that they developed using all of their knowledge of the subject, it makes it all the more interesting.

HIGHLANDS A CAPPELLA GROUPS GEAR UP

The A Cappella groups have begun rehearsing for the competition season

Drishti Chauhan '24
The Highlands A Cappella groups have begun



The Belles filming their ICHSA Audition.

Photo courtesy of Drishti Chauhan '24

competitions.” She also stated, “It’s always fun to see what other people have prepared and worked really close with them, just like last year, and prep for competition season.” For some members, it is their first time join-

cited to be a part of it and make some new friends on the team. [She’s] really happy [she] joined because [she] is gradu-

“It’s so much fun and it’s such a good community.”
Junior Nick Franchi

“[She’s] really excited because this is [her] first year doing A Cappella at Highlands, and [she’s] really excited to get to know everyone in the group. [She’s] a big fan of the movie *Pitch Perfect* so this is [her] living that out in real life.”

Senior Antonia Bellapianta spoke about her experience as well, explaining that, “this is [her] fourth year doing A Cappella and [her] first year in

explained that “[He] loves it. It’s so much fun and it’s such a good community. Everybody’s learning their music so fast... and everybody sounded amazing. It really feels like more of a home in A Cappella right now, so [he’s] really happy.”

For the seniors, this can be a bittersweet moment. Bellapianta explained that, “[She’s] kind of sad. A Cappella and

rehearsals for the year and are ready to rock the stage at ICHSA. The groups began the competition process by recording two songs for their ICHSA audition.

The students are very excited to begin a new season. As senior Nikki Carcara puts it, “[She’s] really excited to compete with everyone and get to know new people. [She loves] starting a new year and getting to learn new songs and start a new set. The sets are the best part of [her] year.”

Junior Ava Rome expanded, explaining how she is “excited about being in Belles and bonding with the group, as well as meeting other teams, at

this whole year for.” Sophomore Paige Ellis said, “[She’s] probably most excited to get to know the Belles and get

ing the A Capella family. Senior Hannah Altman explained, “It’s [her] first year doing A Cappella, and [she’s] just super ex-

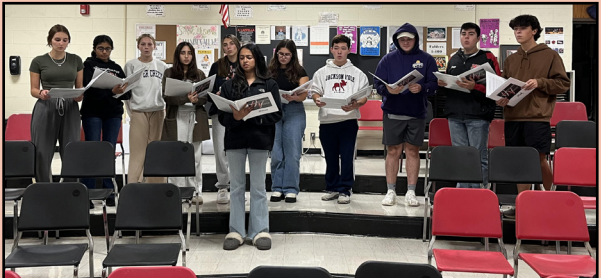
ating, so [she] thought why not just give it a go.”

Junior Zari Veres Royal also spoke about her hopes for the year, stating,



The Belles having fun during a quick break.

Photo courtesy of Drishti Chauhan '24



The Voices filming their ICHSA Audition.

Photo courtesy of Isha Korgankar '24

Voices as a senior. [Her] freshman year, [she] was in Harmonics, and sophomore and junior year [she] was in Belles. It’s only the second rehearsal in voices, but so far it is absolutely amazing.” Bellapianta also stated that she is extremely excited about the new year.

When asked about his experience with A Cappella, junior Nick Franchi

singing have always been so big and [she knows] that [she’s] going to continue it in the future because [she plans] to do it in college and maybe elsewhere.”

But at Highlands, she will really miss her team members and the memories they made. ■

THE ERAS TOUR MOVIE TAKES THE WORLD BY STORM

Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour is a hit across the world and at Highlands

Nina Misantonis '25
Ever since Taylor Swift first stepped into the spotlight as a young country singer, she has grown to be one of the biggest pieces of modern-day pop culture. With the Eras Tour, she has broken countless records and has been all over the news.

country, as many people who were struggling to get tickets for the concert and didn’t get to go now had the opportunity to mimic the experience. The movie premiered on October 13, and many people had different opinions on the movie. Some were nervous that watching the movie wouldn’t

opportunity to bring a lot of friends with them. However, when the movie was first announced, there was controversy as to how viewers were supposed to watch the movie. But since then, many movie theaters stated that they are okay with standing up, singing, and dancing during the movie and were trying to make the experience similar to actually seeing her perform in person. They also encouraged people to dress up and trade friendship bracelets, which had been done during Swift’s concerts.

songs having been performed, fans were curious about which two would be the ones that

every day since, and I’m so excited to see it again.” Although many people who are going to see the



Movie go-ers danced and sang in front of the big screen.

Photo courtesy of Alexis Cirillo '24



The official movie poster of Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour.

Photo courtesy of IMDb

On August 31, she announced on her Instagram the premiere of her new movie *Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour*. This excited many fans around the

exactly have the same effect as being at the concert, but others were glad that they had a chance to enjoy the concert for a lower price and had the

Along with this, in her show, Swift included two surprise songs that weren’t on the setlist for every night she performed, and they were different songs for every night (except for a few repeats.) With so many

because I saw it at MetLife stadium back in May. I’ve thought about the show

Junior Riley Nolan, shared, “I’m most excited to see “All Too

“Taylor Swift is a performer. She puts on these amazing shows, these dances, these sets, these props, and these costumes.”

Senior Katie McWilliams

Well” or maybe “Style.” Nolan also voiced, “I was obsessed with “Bad Blood” and all her older songs, but then I didn’t like her for years because she was on the radio constantly. But recently I heard “All Too Well (10 Minute Version)” and I’m dabbling back into her old songs and starting to like her more.”

Even though Nolan may not be the biggest fan of Swift, she still admires her talent and some of her songs. Senior Katie McWilliams agrees with Nolan on this as she voiced, “Taylor Swift is a performer. She puts on these amazing shows, these dances, these sets, these props, and these costumes. And I think that’s honestly what I’d be most excited to see in the whole production of it.”

Swift’s tour is on track to becoming the highest-grossing tour ever, and this movie is an amazing opportunity for the fans who couldn’t see the actual show to still be a part of it all.

Swift’s level of talent is off the charts, not only in a musical aspect but also as a performer and as a businesswoman.

This concert film is only more proof of that. ■

ALERT: SPRING MUSICAL INCOMING

The spring musical was announced and is officially coming

Zarin Veres Royal '25

A few weeks ago, it was announced that this year's school musical would be *Mamma Mia!* The show is an upbeat, jukebox musical that follows Sophie and her mother, Donna, on the search for Sophie's birth father. All of the music is hits by the band ABBA that propels the unforgettable story of love, friendship, and family forward. It is a show full of highs and lows, fun dance numbers, and amazing songs. There was a lot of anticipation about the announcement of this year's spring musical. In past years, the musical was directed by Mr. Kiely and announced at the end of the school year. However, this year the musical is going to be directed by Mr. Paster, who used to direct the shows several years ago. Despite the change, members of the Northern Highlands Theater

Department are excited to put on the show. "I'm super excited", said senior Katie McWilliams "I've been dreaming of this being my senior show since freshman year. Anyone who knows me will know I've been preaching this since day one. It's truly a dream come true." Sophomore Ben Sherlock also shared his opinion on the show, stating, "While this show wasn't my first choice for the musical this year, I am still quite happy with this choice. I know tons of seniors wanted this show and just as many underclassmen also wanted it. At the musical announcement, there was so much screaming and jumping, and it was just really fun and awesome to see that much excitement come out of my friends." When asked what they're most excited about for the show, here's what some members of the theater company had to say: "I am most excited to be

in it, I've always wanted to do *Mamma Mia!*, and considering I'm going to Greece this summer for Mamma Mia, and now I get to be in it, it's a full circle, and I'm so excited!" said senior Alexis Cirillo. "I'm most excited for the ensemble group numbers, just to be with everyone dancing and singing makes me feel so happy on stage!" said senior Ella Gorga. "I think audiences are going to love it and have such a good time seeing it. And it's so much fun to perform, you can honestly tell that the cast is having a good time anytime you see a production of *Mamma Mia!*" added McWilliams. As mentioned before, the show is a jukebox musical, meaning that all of the music is popular hits rather than original songs. Some ABBA songs featured in the show are "Dancing Queen," "Mamma Mia," and "The Winner Takes It All." Sherlock explained "There

are so many good songs in this show. And while "Dancing Queen" is a lot of people's favorite song from this show, mine would have to be "Lay All Your Love on Me." I think that it is just more fun for me to listen to personally. With its upbeat tempo and capturing melody, "Lay All Your Love on Me" has won my heart." McWilliams also shared her favorite songs, stating, "I love "Money, Money, Money" and "Winner Takes It All." Also "Dancing Queen" obviously." Another part of the show that is celebrated is the characters. Whether you're a fan of Donna, Sophie, or Tanya, there is a huge mix of different personalities found in the show. Cirillo stated, "My favorite character from the show is Donna. My grandma passed when I was young, and my mom says Mamma Mia was her favorite show of all time, and she was a



Mamma Mia (2008) movie poster. carbon copy of Donna. I've always been connected to my grandma, and my mom says with every year I become more and more like her so that connection with my grandma translates to Donna as well." Whether on stage or behind the scenes, you can get involved. Every show needs running, lighting, sound, and a prop crew to

make the show run. Once auditions start in late November (after the fall play finishes), students can begin signing up for crew positions, and more experienced students may be able to become stage managers. The more people get involved, the better the show will ultimately be. ■

FINALLY FALLING INTO THE FALL PLAY

Rehearsals continue for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Maya McGeechan '26

You can expect great things from the Shakespeare classic, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Let's start with the plot. This story is unique with having two plots: one plot is of four friends converging on a wedding, while the other focuses on six actors getting ready to perform for the same wedding. You will find yourself immersed in a forest full

Mr. Kiely, the play's director stated, "Rehearsals are going well! [He is] always and forever proud of my theater kids. They always are attentive and hardworking, but their commitment to the massive undertaking that is Elizabethan theater has truly blown me away. The trust they have in [him,] in each other, and the process is inspiring." Mr. Kiely adds that, "[He] always look forward to our final dress rehearsal.

["his"] and transitions into being "theirs," so it feels like one of the last times we have this special thing all to ourselves before inviting in our community." *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is one of Shakespeare's most popular works. This is not the first time Highlands has done a Shakespeare play, as William Shakespeare is a well known writer, and his stories inspire young writers and directors even to this day.

make the show perfect. Not only will they have to memorize all of that, they will also have to find or make the clothes and

the educational experience. Because of plays, students can connect with their creative side, as well as get the opportunity to perfect their

hearsals, it will take lots of hard work and materials to make this play perfect. The show will be performed from November



Student actors performing a scene in the play.

of fairies where Oberon and Titania, the king and queen of the fairies, live. As for the real-life actors and their experiences,

That's usually the moment it all comes together. [He] also always [tells his] actors and crew that that is the last night the show is

The cast and crew will prepare for a little over a month, and during that time, they will have to memorize scripts, actions, and expressions to



Student actors posing for a picture with their director.

props for the show, ranging from the background to a little pencil. It's clear that everything will be hard work for these students. Despite all the hard work, many members understand the importance of this play. Fall plays are important because we have to understand that acting and performance are a part of

skills while enjoying the process. These experiences give opportunities for these students in the future by expanding their skill set and showing off their talents to the audience. We all should be there to support all of the hard work from the crew of this play, and although they have only started re-

16 to 18. Highlands is definitely excited to see what the play has to offer. Good luck to the cast and crew. ■

GIRLS SOCCER IS ON FIRE

Girls soccer has a record of 11-3 as they get closer to the Championship Game

Gabe Tejeda '26

“We are so close, it truly feels like a family on and off the field”, Sophomore Sorcha Powell said in an interview, giving a perfect insight into the team’s companionship. To be a Highlander, we have to follow four very important moral codes: integrity, respect, kindness, and resilience. And this reaches out to every aspect of our school, especially sports and extracurricular activities.

As of October 18, 2023, the Highlands girls varsity soccer record is 12-3, and they’ve certainly been working hard for this amazing record. According to Powell, their best game was that against

so much,” Powell proudly stated, referring to their win against Ramapo.

Overtime is a sports term, meaning a time addition to what is normal. For example, if games typically last two hours, the overtime will add another 20 minutes, but only under circumstances such as a tied game. Double overtime, though, would mean that 40 minutes would be added to this two-hour game, and the only way this could happen would be if the game remains tied within the 20-minute overtime period.

Against Ramapo, Highlands fought valiantly for all this time and strived through it all, showing Ramapo and all the other soccer teams in the Big-North

they face today? Well, it all stems from the team members. To have a good team, the members need to be satisfied with each other and be willing to cooperate.

“From practices to pasta parties, we spend time with each other every day and there is never a dull moment. We all care about each other so much which makes us want to perform well on the field for each other,” Powell expressed, a powerful example of the importance of teamwork in the program.

As Powell said, there is no team without love between members and a willingness to participate and support each other. Especially in a game like soccer, which emphasizes

mates to play well together and have that team chemistry needed to be successful,” Powell said, emphasizing that soccer is a very

Powell mentioned, adding to the teamwork narrative.

If the entire team, including yourself, is giving maximum effort, it doesn’t

the necessity of pushing others and making sure everyone is doing their best.

She likes to cheer and support her teammates on



A Highlands girls' soccer team member races against her opponent.

Photo courtesy of Tara Madigan



Girls' soccer team members work hard during a game.

Photo courtesy of Tara Madigan

Ramapo, where they had a double overtime win. “It proved that hard work pays off when we play together. We are capable of

Standings that Northern Highlands is not to be messed with. But how did this team reach the level of success

es passing, assists, and teamwork, this aspect is incredibly important.

“Soccer is a team sport, and you have to practice every day with your team-

large team sport. This is evident when taking sports such as soccer in comparison to other sports, such as basketball. In basketball, the average team size is five per side. In soccer, the average is eleven per side.

This just goes to show that in soccer, since you are constantly working with more than ten people, you have to be in tune with every single one of them.

Powell’s case is an interesting one, as she went from a freshman-level team straight to varsity within a year. But for Powell, she’s unbothered. “It shouldn’t matter what level you are playing at as long as you are giving your maximum effort,”

matter if you’re playing varsity or just beginning to play soccer, you will all thrive. Sports, extracurricular activities, group projects, and anything else involving teamwork of more than one person will always be better when all members of the party are giving it their all.

This is why it is important to always participate, even if you feel that you aren’t as good as the others, as everyone helping is always appreciated on teams. “The responsibilities I have on the team are working hard and pushing my teammates at every practice to make them better players,” Powell explained, emphasizing

and off the field, making sure they are always doing their best. “Nothing is more satisfying than playing good soccer, where you always know where the ball will go next, just because of how connected the team is,” Powell proudly said, only adding to the importance of teamwork here at Highlands and within the sports and other activities.

That is pure teamwork, and the Northern Highlands Girls Varsity soccer team is the prime example of this. They work together to create an amazing team for Northern Highlands, showing Highlanders a perfect example of teamwork and sportsmanship, and simultaneously becoming a pride of our school. ■

FIELD HOCKEY DEFEATS DEMAREST

Field Hockey puts up a 6-0 score to secure a win in the Bergen County Tournament

Samantha O’Connell ‘26

Northern Highlands field hockey has been on a roll this season. They have been undefeated and hope to continue this streak all the way. On October 8, they played their first game in the Bergen County tournament, and they killed it, winning six to zero. They were very prepared for the game and went in without nerves.

“We played Demarest

earlier in the season, so going into our first county game against them we knew our style of play would work against them. We went into it planning to work off of each other, utilizing our strengths, passing around them, and shooting as soon as we entered the circle”, said junior Shannon Arber, a member of the varsity team.

Arber continued by saying, “We weren’t nervous since we played them

before and dominated our last game against them. Although it was the first round of the county tournament, we focused more on the opponent than the magnitude of the game, because if we go in with a lot of nerves we won’t play as well.”

During the Demarest game, the six goals came from Daphne Latera, Kelsey Bennett, Jacey Krause, and Emma Deraney. Though there is certainly a lot of hard work

that went into winning this game, the season isn’t all hard work without reward. When asked about her favorite part of the season, Arber mentioned, “My favorite part of the season so far was winning the Pompton Lakes game because we all worked so hard leading up to that big game.... I am so lucky just to be a part of such a great team on and off the field; we are close, and I am so excited for the rest of the season together.”

The team worked very hard for this game and won 3-2 in a close match. This was the best game they won all season because it was against their toughest competitor. Pompton Lakes put up a tough fight, but Highlands got the better of them. The people who scored against Pompton Lakes were Carly Robinson and Cassie Lee, who had made amazing goals to win the game for Northern Highlands.

The field hockey team made it a blowout without Demarest scoring a single goal. Field hockey is reaching new heights this season as they are nearing the Bergen County Tournament Championship against Ramsey. We wish them the best, and hopefully, they can keep that undefeated streak running. ■



Girls field hockey team members smiling on the field.

Photo courtesy of @gnhfieldhockey



Girls field hockey team members pose for a team photo.

Photo courtesy of @gnhfieldhockey

THE GAME OF THE YEAR

An in-depth recap of the Northern Highlands vs. Ramapo football game

Cameron Waller '26

There is one football game that the Highlanders look forward to every year: the Ramapo game. This matchup has always been a highlight for Northern Highlands football as these two schools have arguably some of the best programs in Bergen County, if not the state.

There was a lot of anticipation leading up to September 29, as the Highlanders haven't lost to the Raiders since 2019, with the last game being a thrilling overtime win in the state playoffs.

These games always bring out big crowds, big emotions, and big plays: this year proved to be no letdown. "The energy during the game was indescribable," said one of Highlands' players, adding that, "During such a rivalry game, there are so many great emotions going on."

We interviewed three Highlands players to get a better understanding of how the team prepares for important games. They told us that the coaches take a lot of time out of their lives to direct the team tactically.

Hours of film review and scouting go into the

strategy of the team. When asked about how the players prepared for the game, one of the Highlanders said, "[The kids] just listened to the coaches and recovered [their] bodies."

One of the best things about the team is the great coaching staff which is led by Dave Cord, who has been coaching for twelve years. He, along with his colleagues, put their all into training the team.

Another player stated that, "the team and coaches practiced hard the whole week to prepare." Challenging the players at practice is one of the ways that the coaches help to improve the team and grow their level of play over the season. It is clear that the Highlanders wanted the win badly, and were going to stop at no length to come out victorious.

"Our goal for the game was to give 100% effort and to play as physically as possible. We did not want to leave anything out on the field", said one of the offensive linemen. Northern Highlands came out strong by scoring 14 points in the first quarter. Junior and quarterback Nate Johnson threw a collective ninety-nine

yards to junior Shane Hanlon, to give the team their two-touchdown lead.

when both teams returned to the field, the Raiders had a fire lit under them.

the game, Ramapo's offense scored a touchdown giving them a one-point advan-

Ramapo scored a touchdown ending the game in a dramatic 34-33 scoreline. This was a great display of football, ending in a big play, but this time, the Highlanders falling short.

"After the game, [they]ere all disappointed with the loss", said one of the defensive players on the team, "but the only thought was what's going to happen when [they] play [the Raiders] next." This is a testament to the team's spirit and drive. Yes, it was a difficult loss, but it doesn't do any good to dwell on the past.

The defensive player continued by saing, "[They] will get back to work during practice and bounce back against Hackensack", and that they did. The Highlanders put up an impressive 35-0 win at that game, showing their resilience and ability to come back after a tough loss. Congratulations to our Highlanders, and keep up the good work. ■



A Highlands football player successfully tackling an opponent.

The first half ended in a 21-0 lead by the Highlanders, with a second-quarter touchdown from senior Gavin Soares and an extra point from junior and wide receiver Joey Francica. The defense had a phenomenal first half, holding Ramapo to no points.

The exciting energy carried into the Highlanders locker room as they discussed how they were going to start the second half. But

They scored three unanswered touchdowns in the third quarter, tying the game.

This is another display of the competitiveness and drive from both teams, as yet another game became close in such a short time. The quarter ended in a touchdown from Nate Johnson, however, the kick was blocked. This gave Highlands a 27-21 lead to start the final quarter. With less than eleven minutes left in

tage over the Highlanders.

But three minutes and fifteen seconds later, the Highlands quarterback rushed for his second touchdown of the game, with a two-point conversion incomplete, once again putting Northern Highlands in the lead. In the eyes of the Raiders offense, the game was not over yet.

With just five minutes left in the fourth quarter,

Photo courtesy of David Cord

NHXC RACES THROUGH THE SEASON

Cross country teams are blazing their way to the finish line this fall

Catherine Main '26

The weather is not the only thing that is hot at the start of the school year -- the Northern Highlands cross country teams are blazing to the finish line at each meet they have been part of this season so far.

The varsity, junior varsity, and freshman teams each competed in the Freedom Batch Meet, Garrett Invitational, and Shore Coaches Invitational. With only the first month of the season behind them, the teams are on pace to become competitors in the upcoming county and state meet.

Most recently, both the boys' and girls' teams competed in the Garrett Invitational meet, where the girls' team came in first place overall.

Helping to lead the team to victory, Autumn Ritter placed second in the race, while seniors Allison Courtney and Rebecca Maclaren finished fifth and sixth in their race overall. Other noteworthy Highlands runners include Sadie

Meloro (placed 8th), Farrah Dello Russo (placed 12th), Abigail Gamarello (placed 23rd), and freshman Sophie Smith (placed 30th).

Going into the Bergen County Meet of Champions, the team has a strong chance of coming out first as they are currently ranked sixth in the county and several of their runners are getting press for their times in the meets that have been run to date.

The boys' team is having similar success this season as well. They finished third overall in the league and have had tremendous success at their meets earlier this season.

When asked about being a part of the team, a member stated, "Being on the cross country team for the last four years has led me to realize the social aspect of being on a team, especially for that long..." He continued by saying, "But the best part for me was getting to improve and train with my friends every year and getting to see the improve-

ments that we all made."

Freshman Jack Leiman has been impressive as a

ning of the season, Leiman ran it in 19:07 minutes which is a solid pace



Northern Highlands cross country girls posing for a picture.

freshman on varsity who has competed in some races against top-notch runners around the county. When interviewed, Leiman shared that running the 5000 meters is his favorite event.

In the Darlington 5000 meter race at the begin-

ning of the season, Leiman ran it in 19:07 minutes which is a solid pace

When asked how the team is doing overall, Leiman shared that the numbers of runners this year are low this year for both boys' and girls' teams. The teams are looking for

anyone willing to join.

Coach DeStaso has been coaching cross country at Highlands since 2004 and is a driving reason why the team is competitive each year.

Senior runner, Carter Monaco, said about his cross country coaches, "I will definitely remember my coaches that I've had throughout the years and for what they've done for me but also because they make our team what it is and have helped to shape us into the runners that we are today."

For anyone who may be interested in running cross country next fall at Highlands, here is what you need to know: the teams practice every day, but you don't run the long distance every day. Practices consist of fun warm-ups and alternating distance runs with short runs.

Senior, Rebecca Maclaren was interviewed regarding her experiences with the team. She said, "The best part about being on the Highlands cross country team is how close

[the members] all are. [They] all want each other to succeed and improve. [They] all help each other to do that while also being so close." She shared that ten years from now, she will look back on being part of the Northern Highlands Cross Country team, and "... remember the close friendships [she] made and also the huge success the team accomplished that [they] never realized [they] could make happen."

If you haven't had a chance to check out a meet, mark your calendar for the upcoming Bergen County Championship as well as State Sectionals in the coming weeks.

Whether you decide to cheer your fellow Highlanders onto a victory, or you decide to lace up your running shoes and join the team next season, you will be glad you made it out to a meet. ■

Photo courtesy of Raya Bighal '26

GIRLS TENNIS CONTINUES THE LEGACY

A closer look at what Highlands girls tennis team has to offer

Gabe Tejeda '26

Highlanders, tennis is back and ready to hit us all out of the park. Girls tennis, specifically, is doing amazing right now with a win-lose streak of 8-5. Sophomore Julianne Ma, a member of the girls' varsity tennis team said, "I'm very excited about the tennis season."

This season has nowhere to go but up for the girls' varsity team, and as Highlanders, we are incredibly proud of that fact. There have been some rocky games, but in the end, the tennis team has pulled through and accomplished amazing things.

"Last year, I had an amazing experience playing on varsity", Ma stated, followed with the statement that teamwork was a crucial part of this enjoyment.

Although many tennis matches are played in a one-on-one environment, it still helps to know that your teammates are watching with full support every step of the way. "[The team is] so nice, and it was an amazing and welcoming experience that helped me get comfortable in high school", Ma expressed. Ma was on varsity in her freshman year, which is an amazing achievement and an experience she is unlikely to forget. She later mentioned some seniors driving her home from practice, proving again how kind the tennis team is.

When asked what she is looking forward to this season, Ma stated "I'm looking forward to hanging out with the team and playing tennis together." While a large aspect of high school sports is

meeting new people and having fun, the largest part of sports that drives everyone to participate is the sport itself.

To be on a varsity team, there has to be a lot of drive and determination behind the sport. It takes

a lot of practice and dedication to achieve high levels such as varsity. Tennis itself is an incredibly difficult sport to master. While on the outside it may seem simple, it can take years to master.

Tennis games can be team bonding experiences, pasta nights, big-sister little-sisters..." Ma not-

come incredibly intense, especially during doubles (two-on-two games). This is where teamwork becomes crucial. "Every year we have

ed. Big-sister little-sister is where everyone gives each other gifts, which is an amazing team bonding experience. Experiences like this help the team work better as a group and grow as one.

As a team, it is essential to have team bonding experiences, not just for the aspect of making friends, but also to improve relations on the court. This is why at Highlands it's incredibly important that every sports team feels like a family. Sports are an essential part of the Highlands experience, and joining a few you may be interested in is a good decision.

You may meet people who you'll know and love for the rest of your life. So Highlanders, get pumped for the varsity girls tennis season as they crush their way through each game. ■



Senior girls' tennis team members pose for a picture.

Photo courtesy of Chris Broking

DIVING INTO A SUCCESSFUL SEASON

An update on the volleyball team's dominating season

Roop Somal '24

Just like every other successful team, the Northern Highlands' volleyball team is built on a foundation of strong leadership and a shared sense of purpose.

This dynamic is thanks to their dedicated co-captains, Tessa Deki and Anna Bryan-Jones. Both of them are remarkable leaders who have not only guided their team to numerous victories but have also fostered a close-knit, supportive, and spirited community within the group.

Deki, an integral force of the team, especially being captain, approaches her role with responsibility and warmth. Her commitment to the team's success is reflected in the diverse tasks that she sets up. "As co-captain, [she is] responsible for running stretches, offering support, organizing color-themed practices, keeping others motivated, and helping plan team bonding events", she stated in an interview.

With plenty of varsity experience spanning almost three years, Deki is a source of guidance and inspiration for the younger members and the team, often providing valuable insights and support to help them thrive in their competitive volleyball games.

Reflecting on the team's journey, Deki

reminisces on the joy of organizing team bonding activities. She ex-

a role model for the rest of the team Bryan-Jones and Deki have to keep

their best foot forward and keep pushing through any

and their ability to unify the team and bring excellence on and off the court.

Their combined efforts have contributed significantly to the team's cohesion, making the sport not only competitive, but enjoyable for everyone. Anna also highlights the team's remarkable experiences during various bonding activities, citing the visit to Princeton and the escape room challenge they undertook there.

"[They] did an escape room, which was very stressful, but [they] also learned to trust each other

laboration, along with the tradition of uniting to decorate shirts for the pep rally. These events not only foster strong friendships, but also strengthen the team's collective spirit and resilience, which is why Bryan-Jones and Deki place so much emphasis on them.

As the season unfolds, Deki and Bryan-Jones continue to guide the team with their unwavering dedication and play with infectious enthusiasm, which will hopefully take them to much higher leagues.

Their profound impact extends beyond just the

their exceptional leadership and unwavering commitment, serving as an inspiring example of how unity, passion, and camaraderie can drive a team towards unparalleled success.

As Deki entered her final year, she expressed her heartfelt desire to leave a positive legacy and create lasting memories with the team. "This being [her] final year with a program that has done so much for [her], [she hopes] that [she'll] leave this year on a positive note and with memories [she] can cherish," she shared, acknowledging the deep emotional connection she has forged with the team and the sport overall.

Bryan-Jones and Deki's joint efforts have not only elevated the Northern Highlands volleyball team's performance, but also have created a trend of togetherness and resilience, setting the stage for a future where the team will continue to flourish.

We hope the younger players on the team will be able to learn not just from both captains' playing skills but also their leadership skills and ensure the same success for the team as Bryan-Jones and Deki have been doing this year. ■

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Girls' volleyball team celebrates during a match.

Photo courtesy of Raya Baghal '26



Seniors on the girls' volleyball team pose for a picture.

Photo courtesy of Raya Baghal '26

MARRON SCORES HER WAY TO ELON

Norah Marron will continue her lacrosse career at Elon

Sophia Bergman '26

Elon University is a four year private university located in North Carolina with distinctive professional schools and graduate programs. Elon is known for being one of the “best run colleges,” and having a beautiful campus, and exceptional career services.

Norah Marron has been playing recreational lacrosse since third grade for the Highlands Lacrosse Association, and by fifth grade she joined her first club team.

Marron has been an important part of the Highlands varsity lacrosse team since 2021, playing defense and midfield. Since her sophomore season, she has started and played in nearly every game, making it to the county and state championships. Last year alone, she scored five goals, eight points, had three assists, thirty-five ground balls, ten draw controls,

and twenty forced turnovers. She has also ranked as high as number six in

a few years, and she could not imagine playing anywhere else. Marron decid-

ed for making her feel prepared for her next step. At Highlands, she learned how to effectively manage her time and workload, and she believes she will have a smooth transition because Highlands has pushed her.

Marron is slightly intimidated by this big step up from playing in high school to playing in college because the rules change dramatically in terms of the rules. She knows that it will take her some time to adjust, but she’s overall very excited. It is a crazy and humbling feeling for her because she has looked up to collegiate players throughout high school, and now she will be competing against them.

Besides lacrosse, Marron expressed her excitement for the new school. Marron said, “[She looks] forward to the people at Elon. [She] was able to visit the school two times before [she] made [her] final decision, and both

times [she] had an amazing experience getting to meet the students down there. Everyone was so welcoming and kind.” Marron also said, “[She looks] forward to the small classes. Elon’s biggest classroom goes up to about twenty-five students, which personally is my ideal learning environ-

Marron’s biggest inspiration is her dad, who taught her to always work her hardest, have a good attitude, and only focus on controlling what she has the power to control.

Marron’s friends and family are supportive of her choice, as they knew how hard she had worked to reach her goal.



Photo courtesy of Norah Marron '24



Photo courtesy of Norah Marron '24

Marron poses celebrate her commitment.

New Jersey.

Marron is very excited to continue playing lacrosse for Elon. It has been her dream school for

ed she wanted to pursue lacrosse in college only a few years ago.

Marron gives a lot of credit to Highlands

Marron will be continuing her lacrosse career at Elon! ment where [she] will be able to develop relationships with my professors and peers.”

Best of luck to Marron in her college journey. ■



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UNDERREPRESENTED CLUBS

FEATURING NEW CLUBS AND SOME UNDERAPPRECIATED GEMS

Sofia Akkaway '25

Joining a club at school is a great opportunity to meet new people and get involved with the things you love, and Northern Highlands offers a club for everyone. From DECA to Guitar Club, there are so many ways to join something that interests you.

Because of the number of clubs available in the Highlands, sometimes it may be hard to find the one that's right for you. Every one of the groups featured here is a great choice, so don't hesitate to check them out.

This year, Sophomore Ava Zindel is president of the JROTC club, a group that focuses on teaching students about the military and providing the necessary connections to get involved with service.

Zindel said she has, "been interested in going to West Point since eighth grade and that JROTC can help achieve [her] dreams." JROTC also brings in guest speakers occasionally to give club members a better understanding of the military. They meet once or twice a month in staff member Kimberly Hayes' room.

Another club at Northern Highlands is the Coding Club, run by senior George Giakouminakis, junior Jus-



Members of the Coding Club with Douglas Schemly as their advisor.

tin Sheih, and junior Lincas Chacar-Palubinskas. This club is targeted towards anyone with an interest in coding and computer science, no matter their skill level.

In this club, you will receive basic exposure to coding, and apply real-world applications to computer science. In addition,



Two Highlands students code together.

They meet every other Tuesday in room 234, so feel free to stop by.

Furthermore, if you have a passion for theater, Improv Club might be the right fit for you. The club meets every Wednesday from 3 p.m. to 4 p.m. in room 215. The Improv Club is run by John Wodnick, an English teacher here at Highlands.

This club has a long history, spanning 20 years. Wodnick started an Improv Club in another school, and that carried over to our school. One of the earliest participants was

a current teacher, Joseph Kiely, back when he was a freshman.

Improvisation can help future actors practice their skills without the full-time commitment of production, and this club does not require tryouts. No scripts are required either.

Wodnick says that this club is a great way to, "lose yourself in a story

and become a character with people who are willing to take the risks with you." He also shared that it is therapeutic and liberating to share with people.

Finally, one other club perfect for art lovers is the Animation Club. Run by juniors Canon Chiu and Derek Chen, they teach the twelve principles of animation. The first meeting was on October 16 and from



Members of the Improv Club pose for a photo.



Members of the Animation Club hard at work.

then meetings will be held a few Mondays a month. More information will be posted on their Canvas page. In order to join, scan the QR code that will be posted on the Canvas homepage later this month.

The two juniors decided to form this club together in freshman year after realizing they both had a shared interest in animation. Chiu says that "many people would like to join and work on their own art projects or animations, and talk with like-minded people".

More experienced members will be given a chance to practice their skills on their own and have a more relaxed environment while less experienced members can learn from the club leaders.

Chiu and Chen have both used animation for many projects before, so they are very familiar with the software. This year, Adobe Animate will be introduced for drawing and animating.

Joining a club in Northern Highlands can be a good way to make new friends, develop your skills, or just have fun. It's never too late to sign up, so consider joining these amazing clubs and diving deeper into all the club options that Northern Highlands has to offer. ■