

F THE HIGHLAND FLING

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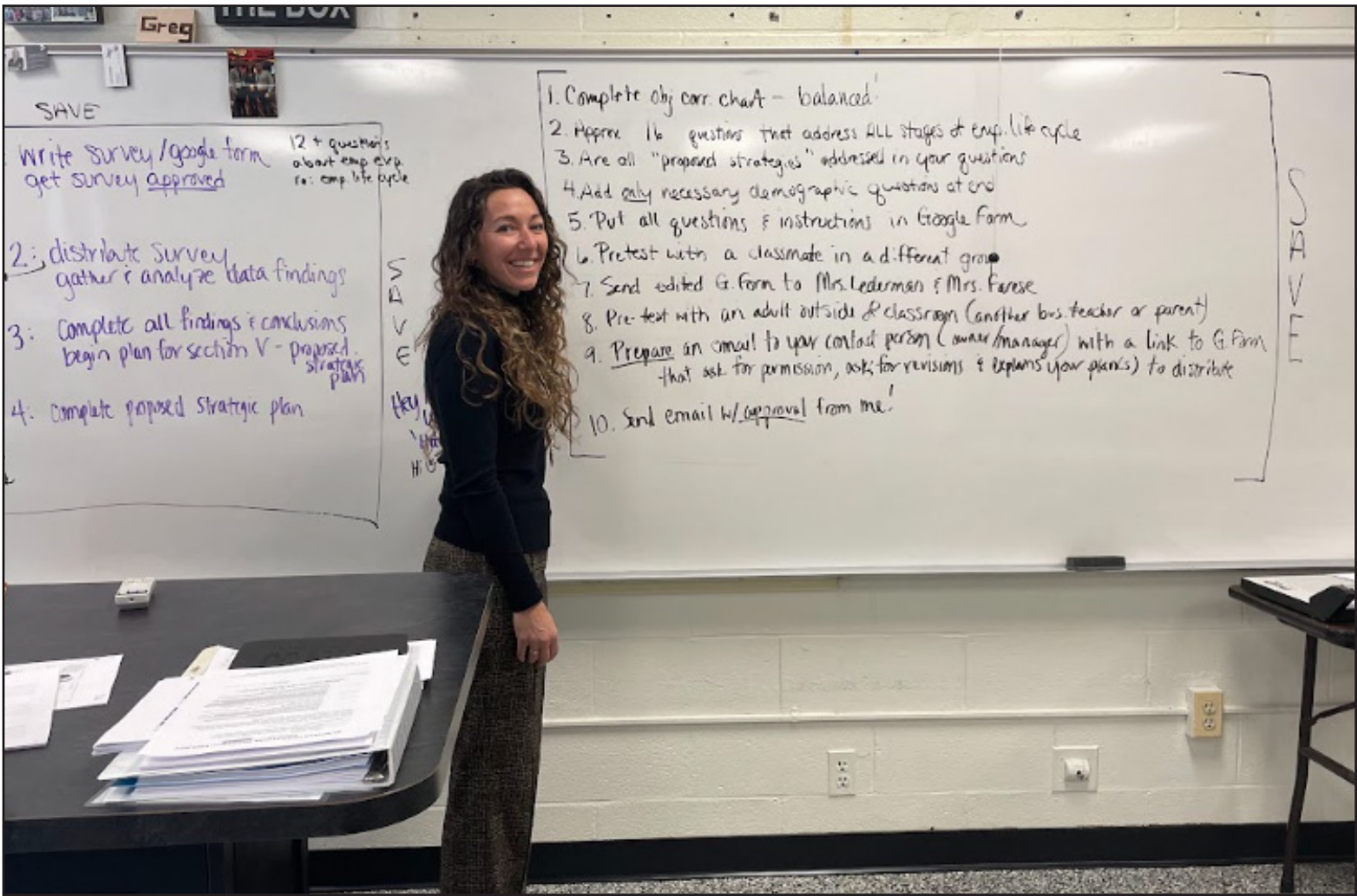


Photo courtesy of Raya Bhagat '26

Mrs. Lederman, Educator of the Year, posing in the classroom.

TEACHING THE FUTURE

Mrs. Lederman wins Northern Highlands Educator of the Year for her exceptional skills

Laney McCrossin '26

Recently, the Northern Highlands Educator of the Year award has been presented to Mrs. Jennifer Lederman for her excellent work both in and out of the classroom.

Lederman has made her mark as a club advisor to DECA and the Boomerang project, two of the largest and most successful clubs at Highlands. She is also the advisor for the sophomore class council and for-

merly was a cheer coach.

She was able to display her dedication and passion for the school community by using her clubs as an outlet to reach students.

"She touches two of the largest clubs, and with her teaching Freshman Seminar, she has a huge impact on our freshman," Principal Joseph Occhino stated.

He continued by saying, "What she does outside of the classroom is phenomenal and that's how she gives back to the com-

munity and how everyone knows her. [Her work in and out of the classroom] means a lot, and people remember that. So when you ask people for nominations, it's very easy to be able to write something about Mrs. Lederman."

In terms of the actual qualifications for Educator of the Year, glowing recommendations from past students certainly help, but a wide range of criteria exist, such as having a certain summative rating, being an

expert in the subject they teach, working collaboratively with other faculty members and students, as well as demonstrating leadership and innovation in and out of the classroom.

Students, parents, teachers, and staff members get sent a nomination form and after the nominations are tallied, the most frequented nominations get sent to a committee for review.

The committee, composed of administrators,

supervisors, teacher(s), the Educator of the Year from the previous year (who was Mr. Meizys), and a representative from the HSA, reviews the applications and goes through a state-designed rubric that scores each application. The teacher with the highest overall score wins the award...

Continued on page 6

WHERE DID MY MONEY GO?

See what the administration has done to implement a new lunchroom policy

Hayley Carrero '26

Whether it is standing in long lines for International, making your own panini, going to The American Grill, or getting your favorite pasta, the Northern Highlands cafeteria is a popular spot for students to get their favorite foods. Students will race into the lunch lines, grab food, and wait in lines to pay.

Students will verbally offer their Student ID code while the cashier will enter the amount of money their food costs. However, in the past few months, Highlanders have been experiencing money stolen from their lunch account. Additionally, parents have reported unauthorized food purchases made by their children.

The cafeteria at Highlands has taken measures to address lunch money theft. A policy requiring students to present their identification cards for food purchases has been implemented. Although this policy has been in place for some time, it is now strictly enforced. Both parents and students have received emails regarding this change in the Highlands cafeteria.

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INSIDE



Photo courtesy of Tyler Halperin

A WONDROUS NIGHT

The Theatre Company closes out their 3-day run of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with a bang.

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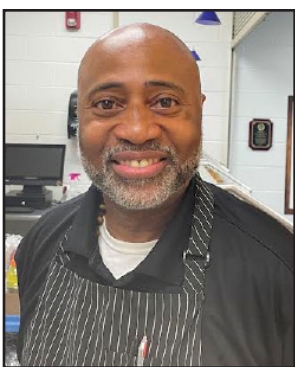


Photo Courtesy of Raya Bhagat '26

CHEF BANNISTER COOKS UP AN AWARD

Inside, a deeper dive into the great achievement made by a wonderful member of our lunch staff.

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NH BOWLING TAKES THE LEAD

14 straight wins, and they're not backing down.

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THE TIME OF THANKS

It's time we ask the classic Thanksgiving question: What are you thankful for?



Photo courtesy of Ellie Shrier '27

Ellie Shrier '27

A public favorite holiday is coming up soon: Thanksgiving. What is it best known for? Thanksgiving is a celebration that brings together friends and family, but the main purpose is to recognize what we're thankful for. It is also a time to appreciate what you have.

Thanksgiving reminds us of things we may take for granted daily; things as simple as how lucky we are just to have a school, where we receive an edu-

cation and a home where we live.

Throughout our everyday lives, we will always find lots of things to be thankful for. Some people are fortunate enough to be thankful for luxurious items, while others struggle to afford necessities such as food, water, hygiene products, and a place to live.

There is a huge difference between needs and wants, and Thanksgiving is a time when you can be thankful for all of these things at once. The necessities for life can be the bare minimum for a person, such as food, water, oxygen, safety, and warmth. However, we need so much more to live a healthy and fulfilling life.

For teens, our interests include more material items to be acquired throughout holidays, birthdays, and other occasions.

I am extremely thankful for these items. In the present, we have so much to want and consume, that it's all too often material items are treasured. I am thankful for all of the above and having a school to go to every day and

coffee from Starbucks. There are so many other things to be thankful for, such as all of the negative and positive situations that have happened throughout my life. I appreciate my friends, my family, and the wonderful opportunities

“Living my life is at the top of this long list of things that I am appreciative for.”

learning valuable information, along with a warm home to live in, food to eat, and clothes to wear.

I am also thankful for everything else I have received, including presents over the years, luxuries, or even the simple pleasure of buying a

that I have had

I am thankful for the positive experiences, and even the negative ones. Any occasion to learn or help others creates important moments that you can be a part of.

People take some things in life for grant-

ed, but Thanksgiving is a time when we can stop ourselves from doing that. Living my life is at the top of this long list of things that I am appreciative of. Being fortunate enough to splurge on something random or even just buying lunch, are privileges that I recognize.

These simple options and freedoms I have may be taken for granted daily, yet I am still grateful for these things as well. Highlands also has a lot of things that I am grateful for. We receive an amazing education, for free! It is a great school that offers so many opportunities.

Highlands has supportive teachers and amazing students. It serves as a place for stability, for those who may have a more chaotic lifestyle. Everybody should be grateful for this school community. Being thankful means

showing your gratitude toward everything in life. In addition, it is also showing your appreciation towards all the things, people, and moments given to you. If you ever wanted to show your thankfulness for actions, objects, or just life there are many opportunities to give back to less fortunate communities.

Volunteering your time and making donations may help people in need of life necessities or otherwise give hope to people. In the long run, be mindful of everything you have achieved. Whether easily attained or constantly worked for, it is all-important. Every small and insignificant part of life is a tool to recognize. I am thankful for everything that makes up my life, and hopefully, you recognize all that you appreciate too. ■

The Highland Fling

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

From the Desk of the Editors-in-Chief

As the holiday season approaches, the atmosphere is typically filled with warmth, joy, and anticipation. However, for high school seniors, this time of year brings an additional layer of complexity—college admissions decisions coincide with festive celebrations. The emotional roller coaster experienced by these young individuals is often overshadowed by the twinkling lights and holiday cheer.

Seniors find themselves grappling with the dual challenge of eagerly awaiting college acceptance letters while trying to immerse themselves in the spirit of the season. The pressure is palpable as they balance the excitement of potential opportunities with the uncertainty of their future paths.

This intersection of personal aspirations and family traditions creates a unique blend of emotions.

In the midst of this turbulent period, it's crucial to empathize with these young minds navigating the intersection of endings and beginnings. The support of family and friends becomes paramount as seniors seek reassurance and encouragement to weather the storm of expectations.

As the holiday lights twinkle, let us also be beacons of encouragement, reminding them that their worth trumps the contents of an acceptance letter.

But hey, it's finally here- we've made it. The holiday break has arrived. So let's set aside the work and unplug for a while.

Wishing you all a compassionate and joy-filled holiday season.

- *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.

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National Suicide Prevention Hotline:
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OH NO, CUMULATIVES...

Mid-year tests are coming up after this winter break. How can we best prepare for them?



Photo courtesy of Sam Shuster '26

Sam Shuster '26

Winter break is around the corner, but the raging monster that is cumulative assessments directly follows. The ideal way to study would be to plan and allot a certain amount of time for each subject to ensure you are fully prepared. But who's going to do that.

I am as bad a procrastinator as the next average high school student, so I have some study tactics that have proven to work well for me if I end up needing to cram the night before. I am in no way advocating for cramming, however, it is only a reality that this situation could occur. My tried and true method of studying is called blurt-ing.

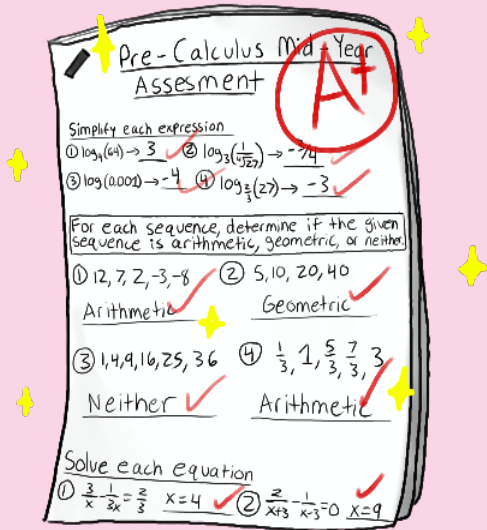
All you have to do is gather your notes from the semester and look over

them a few times. Then grab a piece of paper and write down everything you recall from your notes. Compare your recall with your notes and write down everything you missed in a different color. If you

me ninety percent on some big tests.

This method works well in a cram, but of course, the ideal way to study is to spread it out over time. Going into these cumulative assessments, I will be

“The ideal way to study would be to plan ahead and allot a certain amount of time for each subject to ensure you are fully prepared.”



Art by Emily Kam '25

repeat this a few times, it takes about thirty to forty minutes, and it has gotten

making note of the dates of all exams and slowly reviewing my notes four

or more days in advance simply because there is so

studying in advance into my routine as a chronic



Art by Emily Kam '25

“As students, we are responsible for a lot of our success. But our teachers play an important role and need to be aiding us in our first midterm.”

much material. It also allows enough time for me to ask a teacher questions about topics that made I didn't understand when they were being taught. I have yet to incorporate

procrastinator, but it's a goal for me.

As students, we are responsible for a lot of our success. But our teachers play an important role and need to be aiding us in our

first midterm. The worst thing a teacher can do is not inform their students or glaze over the format and details of a test. Not only is it a shock when we get the test, but another stressor is not knowing what we are preparing to see on test day.

To add, teachers should also be polling their students on material covered throughout the semester to assess weak areas and hosting review sessions during the school day and after school if needed for some students. It doesn't look bad on only the students when bad test scores are collected but also reflects negatively on a teacher.

Finally, cumulative assessments are not for nothing. cumulative assessments are a way of determining whether or not students are absorbing the material given to them so that teachers can adjust their way of teaching or their curriculum accordingly.

These tests are a way of reinforcing the information we were taught no matter how provoking they seem to be. For your and your teacher's sake, plan, and study hard. ■

THE HANUKKAH HOLIDAYS

Hear how one student is spending her Hanukkah this winter season



Photo courtesy of Sophie Bergman '25

Sophie Bergman '25

Hanukkah is the Jewish holiday observed for eight nights and days, commonly referred to as the “Festival of Lights.” According to the Hebrew

Calendar, the holiday starts on the 25th day of Kislev, which could occur anywhere between late November to late December on the Gregorian calendar.

This year, Hanukkah is celebrated from the evening of December 7 through December 15. I would say the most notable difference people are aware of between Christmas and Hanukkah is that while Hanukkah is celebrated for multiple days, Christmas is only celebrated for one day.

More importantly, religiously, Christmas is weighted more and is considered a central holi-

day. The Jewish religion considers Hanukkah to be more of a minor holiday in terms of the religious aspects compared to the other high holidays celebrated which require more religious obligations.

Some common traditions include lighting the menorah, playing dreidel, giving Hanukkah gelt, eating fried foods such as latkes, and listening to Hanukkah music. In my family, every night after dinner, we sing the blessing while lighting the menorah, and then we get our gifts. Another tradition I partake in is my family's annual Hanukkah party at my cousin's house.

We eat latkes and receive gelt and presents from our grandparents. Additionally, my youth group and I always go somewhere and do a winter-themed activity. This year went ice skating and then lit our giant menorah at the temple as a community.

Lastly, every year the members of my temple

In my family, every night after dinner, we sing the blessing while lighting the menorah and then we get our gifts.

join together one night to cook a meal for the men's shelter our temple sponsors, and we also play Hanukkah-themed games. Along with celebrating this holiday, I usually go to my

family friend's house to engage in a small, intimate Christmas celebration. I am comfortable participating in this because we don't do anything religious instead we just enjoy each

other's company and do festive activities such as making gingerbread houses and exchanging gifts.

All in all, Hanukkah is a fun holiday that is looked forward to by many. I believe Highlands could do a better job incorporating more related decorations and spirit into the school. Here at Highlands, there are plenty of Jewish and half-Jewish kids and staff who celebrate this holiday, so make sure to wish them a Happy Hanukkah. ■



Photo courtesy of Reform Judaism.org

A photo of a menorah. In a specific order, each candle is lit over the course of the holiday's eight days.

All in all, Hanukkah is a fun holiday which is looked forward to by many.

FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS: DIWALI

This holiday originated in India, hear how the traditions continue



Photo courtesy of Misha Chhada '27

Misha Chhada '27

Diwali, the Festival of Lights, is one of the largest and most important celebrated holidays for Indians. Diwali typically occurs during October or November and lasts over five days. Spending time with family, lighting clay oil lamps called “diyas,” creating patterns on the floor called “rangolis” using colored powder, and going to a temple are just some of the traditions that people do to observe this holiday.

The significance of Diwali can be best expressed through the many legends surrounding it.

These generational stories add definition to Diwali’s universal truths. These legends vary in different religions and cultures.

Northern Highlands should aim to incorporate more inclusivity surrounding Diwali and other religious holidays that students celebrate.

However, the one I most commonly heard growing up involved three Hindu gods. Lord Rama was banished from his kingdom along with his wife, Sita, and his brother, Lakshmana for fourteen years.

They found shelter in a forest and lived there happily. That was until Sita was kidnapped by the evil, ten-headed demon king Ravana. Lord Rama searched the forest for a long time until he finally found Sita held in captivity. Rama managed to successfully defeat the demon king and save Sita. Afterward, Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana proved victorious as they returned home to their kingdom of Ayodhya. The gleam of many diyas, providing bright light, offered them guidance to find their way back home.

This legend symbolizes the true meaning of

Diwali, the triumph of light over dark, good over evil, and the significance of overcoming unexpected challenges. No matter how people celebrate Diwali, they are still commemorating the principal values that it teaches us.

I have many wonderful memories of this holiday that I still recall very fondly.

For me, taking part in Diwali festivities brings me closer to these values. I remember lighting bright sparklers in my backyard with my friends, eating Indian sweets with my grandparents, taking pictures in colorful sarees (traditional Indian clothes), and attending lively parties. Taking part in those special moments reminds me of the warmth, vitality, and vividness that Diwali never fails to provide.

This holiday reminds me that it is essential to

embrace your culture and religion to live a meaningful life. Our school should do more to celebrate Diwali because of what it teaches us.

Although Diwali is mainly celebrated in South Asia, its morals can be valued worldwide and should especially be valued in schools. Diwali is a story of hope and perseverance.

Students can learn a lot from this holiday, such as the idea that all bad things do gradually come

to an end. We should aim to incorporate more inclusivity surrounding Diwali and other religious holidays that students celebrate. They can provide more awareness about the significance of Diwali on the school news show or hold school events to celebrate this holiday.

For example, an after-school fundraiser in the cafeteria with Indian music and food would provide awareness about Diwali, while also raising money.

By showing support for all cultures and religious backgrounds, our environment will feel like a more inclusive place for all students.

Whether or not you celebrate this holiday, you can still make an effort to stay true to all that Diwali teaches. Be aware that all obstacles will have to eventually come to an end. And finally, be reminded that good intentions will forever defeat bad ones. ■



Photo courtesy of Misha Chhada '26

Misha Chhada (left) as a child celebrating Diwali.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE FRAMERS

The Founding Fathers couldn’t have predicted this: ‘Social Media v. 1st Amendment’



Photo courtesy of Ram Raghunathan '25

Ram Raghunathan '25

The Supreme Court has been hearing arguments on what differentiates an official Government account from a private one. How much, for instance, does one need to post about policy for their account to be directly connected to their Governmental duties—to be a place for public discussion from which nobody can be blocked?

Such are the questions the Court must answer. They must hear cases about a city representative from Michigan, California school board members, and their constituents, who feel their rights had been violated. The local court

ruled in favor of the Michigan city manager; this was not so for the board members. The city administrator posted about his private

media. I also believe in the right of social media users to block those who are irritating or antagonistic. But bureaucrats must realize

I believe people should have free speech on social media.

life on his social media. Whereas the board members used social media exclusively to fulfill their duties: to correspond with their constituents, plan for future meetings, etc.

They, therefore, had to abide by the First Amendment. The city manager, however, was free from that burden. His account was personal; he was not obliged to conduct formal discussions and could block whoever he wanted.

I believe people should have free speech on social

that when they post about policy, they inevitably create a forum for public discussion. They should not, therefore, be able to block users due merely to disagreements in opinion. But they should have every right to block a user who makes personal attacks or threats.

Officeholders should be required to create an account for communication with their constituents. Any other account must solely be for personal use. Moreover, they should

have to request the social media company that someone be blocked.

It is difficult right now to distinguish between accounts carrying out official duties and casual ones. Indeed, a clearer distinction such as that I have outlined could save the Court much time and trouble. However, Justices Sotomayor and Roberts believe it is impossible to separate one’s personal and professional life on social media. They, therefore, seem to think that bureaucrats should be able to restrict commenters’ speech.

I contend that there must, of course, be restrictions on hate speech and misinformation on social media. Not so doing forms echo chambers in which extremism is exacerbated.

I think, therefore, the Court should allow the Biden administration to coordinate with social media companies for this purpose. (This is another First Amendment case they will soon be hearing). But the Court must clearly distinguish between those who promote prejudiced

or hateful views or lie outright and reasonable critics.

I am concerned that the First Amendment rights of Gen Z-ers and teenagers, many of whom use social media to express their views, are in danger. Already, some political figures want to silence the political voice of younger generations. Republican Presidential candidate Vivek Ramaswamy, for instance, wants to raise the voting age to twenty-five.

Highlanders and younger generations, as a whole, should keenly observe how these rulings play out. Especially as we near an upcoming election,

we must not let ourselves be muzzled. Young Ohioans, in Tuesday’s election, enshrined abortion rights in their state’s Constitution.

Last year, the first Gen Z-er, Maxwell Frost, was elected to Congress. We have been able to bring about real change, lasting change. We have stood resolute in the face of obstinate resistance. We must continue to do so. If not, the waves of progress will stagnate, never again striking fatal blows at the shore of rigidity. ■

Younger generations, as a whole, should keenly observe how these rulings play out.

WHERE IS THE WINTER WONDERLAND?

We might not get any snow this season, but winter is still on its way



Photo courtesy of Gabe Tejeda '26

Gabe Tejeda '26

Every winter, we dream of snow. Just about nobody likes freezing rain, slush, and gray days. We all really want the dreamy version of the season,

the one that comes with a white coated ground, a snow day, and the beautiful look of white snow getting beamed at by the sun.

My favorite season is winter for a multitude of reasons. However, I might say that the main reason lies in the beauty of the season. Honestly, there is no beauty like a frozen lake, a couple of inches of snow on your lawn, and little icicles hanging from the roof. To me, the beauty of a dead tree with snow on it surpasses that of a leafy green tree.

Nature is a large part of the joy of winter. If you don't like winter, there are many things that you can

do throughout the season in nature that might

ful, and we get fun snow days, but it's too cold to do

...there is no beauty like a frozen lake, a couple of inches of snow on your lawn, an little icicles hanging from your roof.

change your perspective on this cold couple of months. For example, skiing or snowboarding.

Before I skied, I never really thought much about winter. Sure, it's beauti-

anything and the sun sets at 4:00. However, once I started to ski, I started to see the little things about winter that really make it my favorite season.

From the top of a mountain, looking down on a bunch of people, snow, and beautiful views is an unbeatable feeling. Some of the most beautiful nights I've ever experienced with beautiful sunsets and clusters of stars were on a ski mountain, lightly glazing on top of the snow

It is truly a beautiful sport, and I encourage all Highlanders to try it at least once because my life changed for the better the day I put on my first pair of skis. It is an individu-



Photo Courtesy of Gabe Tejeda '26

Gabe Tejeda's dog playing in the snow during the past winter seasons.

al sport, which is likely my favorite part about it, as you can go at your own pace and really do whatever you want as you glide through a mountain.

Outside of skiing, Highlands make winter very fun. Holiday Hoopla is one of the most fun days of the entire school year, and I look forward to it for the rest of my time here. Along with that, there's just no other feeling like being at school during December. Everyone is excited about the holidays, and excited for break, and overall it is just a positive time for our school.

There are also many activities to be excited about this winter. Just in December, multiple holi-

day-themed activities are held, leaving Highlanders for an interesting month. Winter sports are also starting to gain traction, and yet another successful season is underway.

This winter will be a good one for the Highlanders. Hopefully, we can see some beautiful white snow graze our grounds. If not, I am still so excited for this season, and I am beyond ecstatic to see what Highlands has in store for this season academically and athletically. ■

This winter will be a good one for Highlanders. Hopefully, we can see some beautiful white snow graze our grounds.

MAKE A CHANGE, MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Educating oneself can create an environment that fosters love and inclusivity, learn how



Photo courtesy of Sebastian Tabakov '26

Sebastian Tabakov '26

In a time of diversity and globalization at its peak, Northern Highlands must make it a priority to ensure the well-being of all students—regardless of background. The pursuit to shed ignorance into knowledge and understanding is vital, unquestionably vital. An open-minded perspective that comes from appreciating different demographics from one's own serves as a prerequisite for the much-needed inclusivity that the world outside of adolescence craves.

There have always been students, educa-

tors, and administrators with differing cultures and traditions. Respecting this diversity is not a challenge. Respecting this diversity nurtures learning outside of a classroom, by learning from peers and one another.

It is apparent that the administration is attempting to create a difference through events like the Diwali-themed luncheon the teachers had in their cafeteria and the diverse artwork such as the rangoli sand art students may have seen on the floor of the lobby. Exposing to what may be deemed "out-of-the-norm" customs for a predominantly Caucasian school, demonstrates attention to December holidays other than Christmas, which most celebrate.

The purpose of such implementations is not to force cultures and traditions on those who do not care for them but rather to negate demonizing notions of what minorities are. Cultivating a respectful and safe environment for all those who may walk the halls at Highlands,

may minimize the effects of discrimination within the school and community.

Thus far, NHRS includes current event lessons in social studies classes, and these lessons provide crucial, real-world examples of what is occurring around the globe to comprehend the world adolescents are marching into, and all those in it—especially the ones that do not look like the majority of children at Highlands.

If the incentive to simply respect is not enough for those who are deeply rooted in ignorance, there are policies in place—set by the administration and approved by the Board of



Photo courtesy of Sebastian Tabakov '26

Snapshot of the front of the school.

spect towards any person. Principal Joseph Occhino said it best: "Anytime

gate that immediately."

That is through the laws that we, as administrators, have to investigate incidents of the H.I.B (Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying) Program. And this should deter anyone from this sort of behavior because by law we must take action. I find these systems of diminishing harassment, intimidation, and bullying not to have the intention and objective to harm offenders; however, it is to teach and create a difference for

the better. It is a harsher form of encouraging social reform and growth. In essence, it is necessary to learn and grow to understand others and their cultures at a school and anywhere else. The simplicity of an inclusive community cannot be overstated. Do your research by experiencing what others and the world have to offer. Becoming more equipped with the knowledge to be respectful is one leap forward into a less cruel and kinder world. ■

The simplicity of an inclusive community cannot be overstated.

Education—to reprimand offenders of violence against minorities, undifferentiated from disre-

there is an incident that can be construed as bigotry, as an administrative team we would investi-

THE TEACHER OF THE YEAR AWARD GOES TO...

Educator of the Year, Mrs. Lederman’s outstanding accomplishments and impacts

Laney McCrossin ’26
Continued from page 1

Although numerically Mrs. Lederman was deserving of the award, her impact on the community was immeasurable. Lederman, who has worked tirelessly to serve her school community for the past 22 years, has made an incredible influence on her students. Lederman, the founder of the Northern Highlands outreach program and a teacher of Freshman Seminar, has made significant contributions to all of her students, especially to her freshmen. Her mentor persona combined with her genuine empathy and enthusiasm for her students made the acclimation to the busy Highlands school environment a nearly seamless transition for so many students. Lederman puts emphasis on connecting with her students. Vice Principal Tony LaRocca is in agreement, stating, “She makes it a point to know every student’s name. She makes every student listened to, acknowledged, and heard.” Some qualities of hers that allow her to do this, as described by LaRocca include her “ability to build positive social relationships with staff and students” and “her ability to be a friend.” LaRocca states, “What she brings to the table in the way of her compassion and genuine concern for her students is what

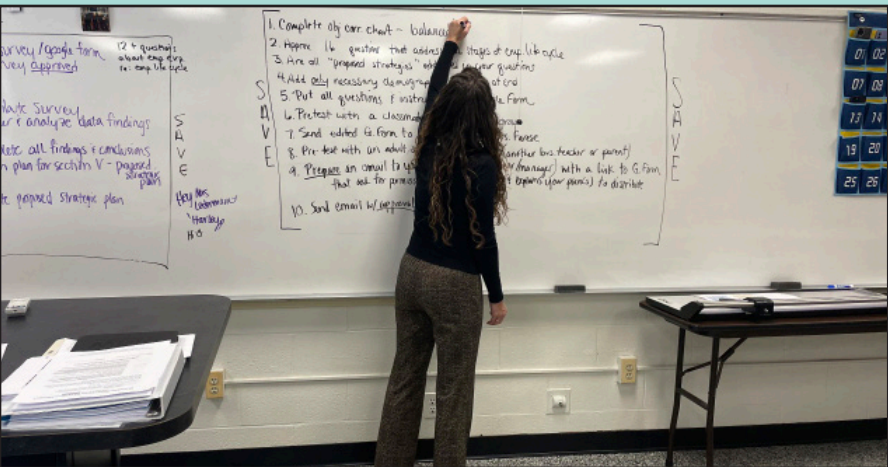
“What she does outside of the classroom is phenomenal and that’s how she gives back to the community and how everyone really knows her.”

Principal Joseph Occhino

“What she brings to the table in the way of her compassion and genuine concern for her students is what makes her really special.”

Vice Principal Tony LaRocca

makes her really special.” Evidently, Lederman impact on the Highlands community. We want her continue to be an incredible role model. is beyond deserving of offer our sincerest congratulations to her and



Mrs. Lederman in the classroom, teaching.

Photo Courtesy of Raya Bhagal '26

WHERE DID MY MONEY GO?

A look into some of the new lunch policies imposed as a result of numerous lunch money thefts

Hayley Carrero ’26
Continued from page 1

Throughout the school year, Vice Principal Tony LaRocca and Principal Mr. Occhino have received many reports regarding the theft of lunch money. It is important to consider that using someone else’s identification code is not only against the cafeteria policy, but can also result in serious consequences. The issue of lunch money being stolen has not only caused a problem for parents but has also created problems for Assistant LaRocca and Occhino. Occhino stated, “Parents [were] emailing both Dr. LaRocca and I saying ‘What are you going to do about this? My kid didn’t

“Sometimes it’s an honest mistake, sometimes it’s a user error on the person saying the number, and sometimes it’s a user error on the person entering the number. Using the digital ID removes all of that.”

Vice Principal Tony LaRocca

order \$50 worth of cookies.’ It is just a hassle.” He added, “Dr. LaRocca has to look at the cameras because everything is time-stamped to find out who this student was using someone else’s account number. It just takes a lot.” LaRocca described the disorganized process of paying for lunch, stating that, “Everyone gets an ID and there’s chaos in the cafeteria where students just

out that point of potential flaw. You can scan your ID and move on.” By using digital identification cards, the cafeteria aims to create a more organized and secure process for purchasing food. Students can now scan their digital ID, which is linked to their Genesis account, instead of verbally process fast and efficient. The old system had difficulties in accurately tracking students’ food choices. However, the newly implemented digital identification system can now effectively monitor and record their purchases. Enforcing the use of the digital identification card system in balance was gone. When I found out I decided to stop adding any money and let the account sit. After a little while, I added a bit of money to see if it was stolen again and the person didn’t take out any money after so it worked out well.” Many students have been victims in the case of their lunch money be-

The old system had difficulties in accurately tracking students’ food choices. However, the newly implemented digital identification system can now effectively monitor and record their.

stating their ID numbers. This eliminates the possibility of mistakes and misuse of identification codes. LaRocca mentioned that the prior system led to chaos in the cafeteria, with students sometimes making honest mistakes or encountering errors when stating their ID numbers. With the digital ID system, all of the errors are put to an end. Students can easily access their ID cards on their phones and quickly scan them to pay for their food, making the cafeteria promotes a well-structured process and reduces wait times. Moreover, with the previous system, students would often wait in long lines while their ID numbers were manually entered. But, with the new digital ID system, the scanning process is quick, allowing students to make their purchases swiftly and return to enjoying their lunch break. When interviewed, a sophomore student stated, “I realized that my lunch money was being stolen after my whole account

“Parents [were] emailing both Dr. LaRocca and I saying ‘What are you going to do about this? My kid didn’t order \$50 worth of cookies.’ It is just a hassle.”

Principal Joseph Occhino

CHEF DAVID BANNISTER WINS NBCA AWARD

The National Black Chef's Associations recognizes Chef Bannister

Brooke Xu '25

Head Chef, Chef David Bannister, from the Pomptonian Food Service, has recently won a national award for his outstanding food service. He was selected to be the winner of the 2024 Annual National Black Chef's Association Awards by the Pomptonian Food Service. Bannister explains his

Bannister is well appreciated by all members of the Highlands community whether it be students, teachers, or fellow cafeteria staff members. He is commonly seen working a sweat in the kitchen, serving pasta, or setting up lunch displays for both teachers and students.

He is referred to as the "Soup King" by many. Principal Joseph Occhino

ular soups are the Loaded Baked Potato Soup and Corn Chowder Soup. Junior Sanjna Limaye explained, "[She loves] the Baked Potato Soup... every time [she sees] that it's posted, [she gets] so excited to go to lunch. It's so good."

Assistant Principal Tony Larocca stated, "The one thing that is so impressive is the quality of food that is made here for 1,300 students, and the factory, and staff. It's easy to get the stuff off of the truck and heat it, but the

hometown community in Paterson, New Jersey. Bannister has his own catering business called David Catering and cooks for local agencies in the town during the holidays.

At his own expense, he would make a large cauldron of soup for the community. Occhino mentioned that he heard that it was gone in an hour. Immediately after the soup was devoured, people asked for more and Bannister went home to get them a new batch in an hour.

Northern Highlands prides itself on having one of the best public high school cafeteria services in all of North Jersey. This notoriety can be credited to the outstanding cafeteria staff.

Whether it is outside of school or at school, Chef David Bannister has touched the hearts and blessed the taste buds of many. As Occhino mentioned, Bannister is truly a "special person" that our community wouldn't be complete without.

"Chef David makes the best soup imaginable... the soup he makes is among the best."

Principal Joseph Occhino

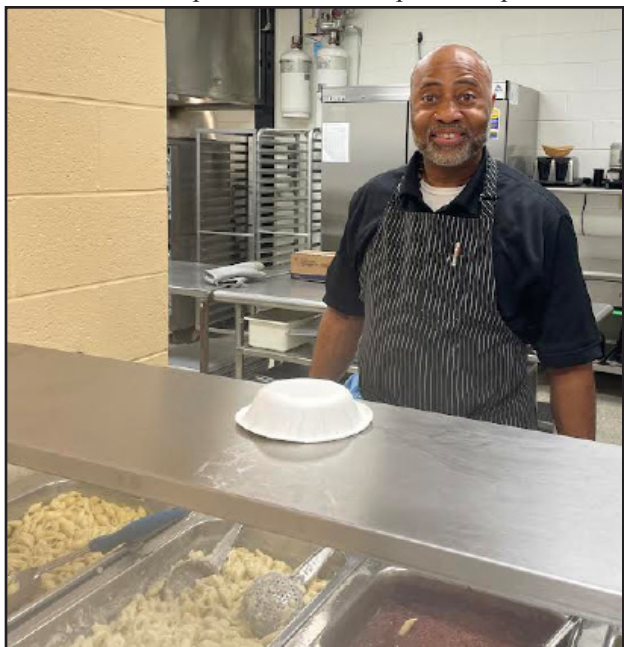
What might surprise you is that Bannister uses no measurements for his spices. Every day, the soup has a different taste. When Occhino stopped by to watch him cook, he was astonished that Bannister instinctively knew exactly how much spice was needed to make a perfect blend for the soup.

In addition, Bannister makes his food almost from scratch with fresh ingredients. Upon entering the kitchen at 7 a.m. on a Monday, you may find him chopping up fresh celery for the day's food.

quality of the food that they make is amazing... they use fresh ingredients."

It is certainly not an easy task to cook for such a large number of people. Bannister arrives at the school at 5 am just to begin his busy preparation for lunch. He has to set up the grilled chicken, hash browns, international food, and pasta as well as the pasta station, the teachers' lunch room, and the slides for food display.

Not only is Bannister a highly appreciated staff member, but he is also appreciated in his



Chef Bannister working the pasta station.

reaction to receiving his award, saying, "It was a surprise, I didn't believe it until I called one of the chefs on the board, and he told me."

no stated that "Chef David makes the best soup imaginable..the soup he makes is among the best."

Some of the most pop-

Photo Courtesy of Raya Bhagal '26



Chef Bannister preparing food in the kitchen for student's lunch.

Photo Courtesy of Brooke Xu '25

BURKINA FASO TO ENGLEWOOD

T.E.E.E.M goes on a trip to Englewood to educate people on the water shortages in Burkina Faso

Amani Patel '26

On November 16, the T.E.E.E.M. Club went to Englewood's French American Academy. Led by Madame King, a group of student volunteers went to different classes throughout the school to educate young kids about Georgie Badiel's (the T.E.E.E.M. organization's founder) phenomenal mission.

Georgie's mission is to help provide wells closer to villages in Burkina Faso. Before this organization started, children around three years old and older, and women would walk many hours just to provide water for the family in 100-degree weather. However, this water doesn't even last them a while due to the large number of people in families.

Georgie wants to help the people of Burkina Faso by not only creating wells but by creating safe spaces for kids to study as they don't have places to do so. The T.E.E.E.M. club has made it possible as well as educating young minds on the importance of the issues in Burkina Faso.

During this trip, the volunteers went to classrooms at the French American Academy in Englewood and did art and crafts relating to multiple aspects of a village in Burkina Faso. They were separated into groups each focusing on a different aspect.

The children decorated masks with authentic

buckets, dolls, and houses. Once the children from the French American Academy finished decorating and painting, the students collected all of these projects and spent time creating a beautiful village.

Georgie met and talked to some students, getting to know them better and talking with the children

the purpose of the crafts.

Lilah Wainland, a student volunteer, loved this experience, stating.

"I felt excited to see how French American Academies worked and I was interested to meet the kids." She added, "One of my favorite experiences on this trip was when the kids would speak to their

to see how they were bilingual at such a young age".

Another activity that was done was reading a story about a village in Burkina Faso to the little kids. This book showed the cultural aspects and how a village looked, giving the kids a sense of what is valuable to the people. Another book that the kids enjoyed was The Water Princess.

Georgie Badiel personally wrote this book which is about Princess GeiGei, a little girl who walks miles to collect water for her community but then figures out a way to improve this system and make it better. Georgie wrote this book about her experiences in Burkina Faso and how she created the Georgie Badiel Foundation.

T.E.E.E.M. has helped support this by doing multiple events such as a 5K walk raising over \$5,000. The leaders of T.E.E.E.M. and Madame King have put in a lot of time and effort to help with this cause and should feel proud of what they have accomplished.

Jenna Finkelshteyn, a leader for the T.E.E.E.M. club believed the mis-

sion to help the people of Burkina Faso was impactful, explaining that "I feel that this mission has helped people in Burkina Faso because as we raise money, by bake sales, 5ks and more, it goes directly towards building wells."

Mr. Occhino, who has been a great help throughout this program, is proud of what the T.E.E.E.M. club has accomplished. He expressed "It was outstanding how much work they put into the projects and the craftsmanship was amazing. This visit was really impactful and well received, we raised a lot of money, which is fantastic and I am happy to see a lot of good coming out of it with building schools, wells, etc."

T.E.E.E.M. wanted the students at the French American Academy to take away that there are many countries out there that need our help and we should try to support and help others in the best way possible. This experience was impactful and the students, leaders, and advisors should be applauded for their hard work.



T.E.E.E.M at Englewood for their event to educate people on Burkina Faso.

Photo Courtesy of Raya Bhagal '26

fabrics from Burkina Faso, painting animals, water

about why she was helping people of Burkina Faso and

teacher in French but to me in English. It was cool

AROUND THE WORLD WITH DUMPLINGS

The Global Citizens Club hosts a dumpling feast to share a bit of every culture with club members

Fatimah Asaleem '25

There are always many activities that various clubs and organizations at Northern Highlands are organizing. Most recently, the Global Citizens Club held a dumpling dump, where club members brought in dumplings from different cultures and countries. Dumplings themselves

cultures and regions. Some notable types of dumplings today include Mandus, Samosas, and Wontons. A variation of the pierogies originated in Pennsylvania. Pierogies are semi-circular dumplings filled with potatoes or cheese. Overall, the most notable differences among all these various dumplings are the fillings inside depending on each cul-

ture. Many different types of dumplings were served at the Dumpling Dump. Mrs. Azevedo, the advisor of the Global Citizens Club, was extremely happy with the turnout of the event and had a lot of fun getting to try foods from different cultures. Being a Spanish teacher herself, Ms. Azevedo always

looked forward to teaching her students about Spanish culture through food. Through the Dumpling Dump, she made this application to various cultures. Many club members participated in the event and brought in foods from their own cultures. The event was marked by spreading awareness about various cultures through food and socializing with others. Food itself can serve as a way to tell a story of a certain culture's history, traditions, values, and way of life. It helps you learn more about the people who make up a culture as well. Lastly, it's a fun way to socialize with others and maybe even discover a new food or two that you like!

Mr. Occhino also mentioned the importance and significance of events like the Dumpling Dump and their impact on students. He specifically mentioned that "it is important for students to embrace their own cultures", especially in a fun way with others which is what happened during the Dumpling Dump. Overall, the Dumpling Dump was a very fun and interesting experi-

ence for all who attended and participated. It was a way for students to try new foods that they might not have tried before had this event not happened.

As a social event, the Dumpling Dump also provided many opportunities for students to get to know new people from similar or vastly different cultures.

In general, the Dumpling Dump was enjoyable for all who attended and was a learning experience as well. ■

"Food itself can serve as a way to tell a story of a certain culture's history, traditions, values, and way of life. It helps you learn more about the people who make up a culture as well."

originated in Northern China, and later on spread around the world, including the U.S. Throughout time, many variations of the original dumplings were developed in various regions and countries.

These variations reflect the different cultures of the regions and the values of the people who make up these

ture. Many different types of dumplings were served at the Dumpling Dump.

Mrs. Azevedo, the advisor of the Global Citizens Club, was extremely happy with the turnout of the event and had a lot of fun getting to try foods from different cultures. Being a Spanish teacher herself, Ms. Azevedo always



Profesora Azevedo (left) serving cultural dumplings to a club member.

Photo Courtesy of Brook Xu '25

CIAO TO THE HOLIDAY SEASON

The Italian Club hosts a large gingerbread house competition to spread holiday cheer

Amaani Patel '26

The Italian Club recently hosted a highly anticipated Gingerbread House Contest, festively showcasing the students' creativity.

Groups of three to four were formed and each team was given a deconstructed gingerbread house.

To build the gingerbread homes, teams were provided with icing and various festive candies. The process took a little over an hour, and soon the teams had constructed elaborate gingerbread creations.

Antonia Bellapianta, a leader of the Italian Club, spoke at the event. Bellapianta stated, "[The event] started as something to get everyone together, but snowballed into something so much better." That being said, the contest was a huge success for the club.

Club member and senior Olivia Ingrassia was also interviewed as a participant. She attended the event because "it seemed like a fun way to stay involved with clubs after school and also spend time with my friends".

The social aspect this

event provided attracted a significant amount of students to the contest. The contest not only showcased the talent and creativity of the students at Highlands but also brought them together as a community. Vice Principal Tony LaRocca explained that, "Events like these

bring people together under the premise of something light and festive.

Having a contest that isn't academic related is a fun break for many students at the school. After an hour of creating, the winning house was one titled "Candy Land." Team members senior Antonia

Bellapianta, senior Anastasia Argyros, sophomore Luciana Bellapianta, and sophomore Lourdes Ordonez came in first place with this unique house.

This is the second year of the contest as it continues to be a success and club favorite. The Italian Club has a lineup of events to come in the future that all members can enjoy. Some activities to look forward to are a movie night and a soccer tournament with the French Club.

Both Principal Joseph Occhino and LaRocca especially love this event because of their personal gingerbread-making experiences and the change of getting to see the students enjoy Highlands for what it offers. The bonds made and the creative thinking the students display are things that benefit the Highlands community.

While students crafted their homes, they had the opportunity to catch up with friends and even meet some new ones. The importance of connecting with others within the club shone through during the event. The Italian club is one of the largest and well-known



A top scoring Gingerbread House from the event.

Photo Courtesy of Raya Bhagal '26



Italian Club members Anastasia Argyros '24 (far right), Luciana Bellapianta '26 (right middle), Lourdes Ordonez '26 (left middle), and Antonia Bellapianta '24 (far left) building Gingerbread Houses.

clubs at Highlands, which is why it's not surprising how many members showed up for the event.

The turnout was everything the club hoped for and hopefully, this event will make its return for the third year next December. An anonymous student stated, "This was the first event I attended as a member of the Italian club. Out of all the clubs I

have joined, the Italian Club is my favorite because it's a great way to not only experience the Italian culture but also socialize with my classmates who share a common interest."

Although the Gingerbread House Contest is just one of many significant events that take place in this club, it undoubtedly stands out among most others. ■

RING POPS, BOW TIES, VEILS, AND VOWS

Ms. Ade’s AP Research class “marries” their research topics through a fun-filled surprise ceremony

Reet Sachdev '27

Ms. Victoria Ade’s AP Research class “married” their research topics through a fun-filled surprise ceremony.

Before the first period, students gathered for class outside room 247, a typical routine for the AP Research class. They walked into the class as if it were any other day. By 8:15 a.m., they were married.

On October 31, several students in Ms. Victoria Ade’s AP Research class walked into a surprise-their wedding! Ade provided her students with a fun-filled opportunity to

on their AP exams in both classes, they will obtain an AP capstone diploma.

AP Research involves students drafting their research questions and studying their topics extensively. The question must explore a gap in a body of knowledge that hasn’t been investigated before. They will collect and analyze data to provide a knowledgeable and accurate response in the form of a paper. Students will then draft their 4,000-5,000 word research paper that models a college thesis. The paper will be submitted to the college board in April 2024. Once the paper is submitted, each

lowed by an oral defense. This involves presenting their research to a panel of Northern Highlands teachers who will fire questions at the students. They will challenge the information and data that will require the students to utilize the research that they have done. They must defend their work and provide accurate information to answer the questions. To start this process, they will first finalize their topic and question. For the past couple of months, the AP Research students have been brainstorming and narrowing down their topics and possible questions. On October 31, each stu-

to be honest and dedicated towards their work and the AP Research class. The fun days where we can just do something silly.” The event came to fruition when Ade had seen it done before in other AP Research classes at various schools. She wanted to replicate this for her students here at Northern Highlands to create a

The course is intense and holds the students to a high standard which is celebrat-

fun days where we can just do something silly.” The event came to fruition when Ade had seen it done before in other AP Research classes at various schools. She wanted to replicate this for her students here at Northern Highlands to create a



Ms. Ade (right) and the AP Research class poses with their “marriage” certificates.

students were then given veils and bow ties for the ceremony. They came to the “altar” one by one and placed their hand on a book that served as the Bible while accepting the vows.

To seal the deal, ring pops, and wedding certificates were presented to every bride/groom/spouse. When the students said “I do” they were officially married to their chosen research question. This officially marked the beginning of the research journey for Ade’s class.

In the planning of this event, Ade wanted to surprise the students with something lighthearted and exciting.

She explained how AP Research is serious which can become monotonous for the students over time. Ade communicated her intentions by saying, “I try to incorporate some

tion when Ade had seen it done before in other AP Research classes at various schools. She wanted to replicate this for her students here at Northern Highlands to create a

“Every field of knowledge has the ability for us to find out something new and relevant and meaningful.”

memorable experience for an important embarking.

Due to the 2023-2024 school year being the first year of AP Research being offered as a course, this is the first time the marriage ceremony has taken place.

things and that this doesn’t have to be that last research that they ever do.”

Ade hopes that the students will apply the skills learned in AP Research in their college journey and in their lives beyond that. ■



Alex Begleiter '24 (right) seen marrying her topics.

“marry” their research topics.

This is the first year that Northern Highlands Regional High School is offering AP Research as a full-year course. The course is paired with an AP Seminar, and if the students receive above a 3

paper will have the ability to be published by the author. This is an incredible opportunity for high school students because this will set them apart and ahead of their peers. The students will also give a presentation fol-

lowed by an oral defense. This involves presenting their research to a panel of Northern Highlands teachers who will fire questions at the students. They will challenge the information and data that will require the students to utilize the research that they have done. They must defend their work and provide accurate information to answer the questions. To start this process, they will first finalize their topic and question. For the past couple of months, the AP Research students have been brainstorming and narrowing down their topics and possible questions. On October 31, each stu-

dent married the question that they will spend six months exploring.

To officially start this process they had to take an oath. Each student placed their right hand in the air and repeated the pledges after Ade. They promised

TEACHER’S CORNER

Jump back into the rhythm with Mr. Paster as he returns to direct the Spring Musical, *Mamma Mia*

Sebastian Tabakov '26

“I love storytelling, and the musical is storytelling. Instead of with one person, it’s with tons of people and music,” Thomas Paster responded when asked why he loves musical theater.

Paster is the Director of Vocal Music and the Director of the Musical at Northern Highlands. After a decade-long hold on directing the musical, he has finally returned to the position as the “new and old director,” as he put it.

Leaving the position of NH Musical director wasn’t an easy feat for him. He resigned during the rise of a cappella in music departments all around the country and as Paster put it, “I couldn’t keep both a cappella and the musical going at the same standard they were at. It was either

lower the bar for both or choose one to do.” For both to maintain their stature, Paster chose to pick one.

Nor was sacrificing a family like theater an easy task, “And I chose the musical [to give up] because I had already done it for so long I wanted to try something new and exciting like a cappella.” An additional issue was that he “had to balance school with kids that were young.”

Despite the original conflicts with continuing to be on the administrative end of the musical at Highlands, time—with most things—worked its magic. His children grew up, becoming rather self-sufficient enough for him to devote focus to more extracurricular activities.

He explained, “Now my kids are older, my youngest is sixteen, so I

can give more effort to both because my kids are more self-sufficient now.”

However, it was not an immediate shift into “musical mode” for Paster. “When you think about things you’ve done a while ago, you [tend] to look at them through rose-colored glasses—you only remember the good things,” he highlighted. “So I had to sit down and try to remember the difficult aspects. This is a massive undertaking, and there are so many people to be responsible for.”

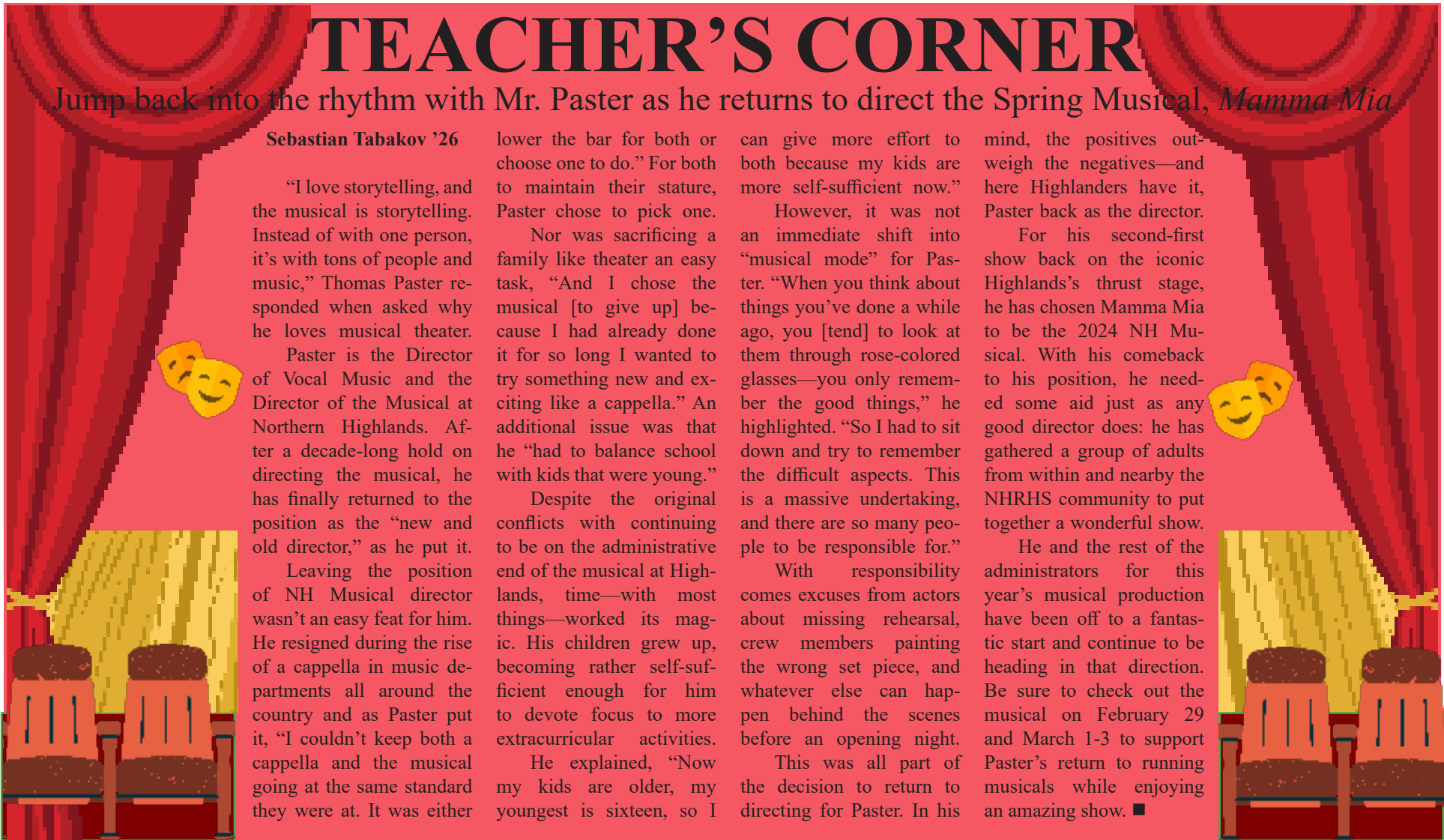
With responsibility comes excuses from actors about missing rehearsal, crew members painting the wrong set piece, and whatever else can happen behind the scenes before an opening night.

This was all part of the decision to return to directing for Paster. In his

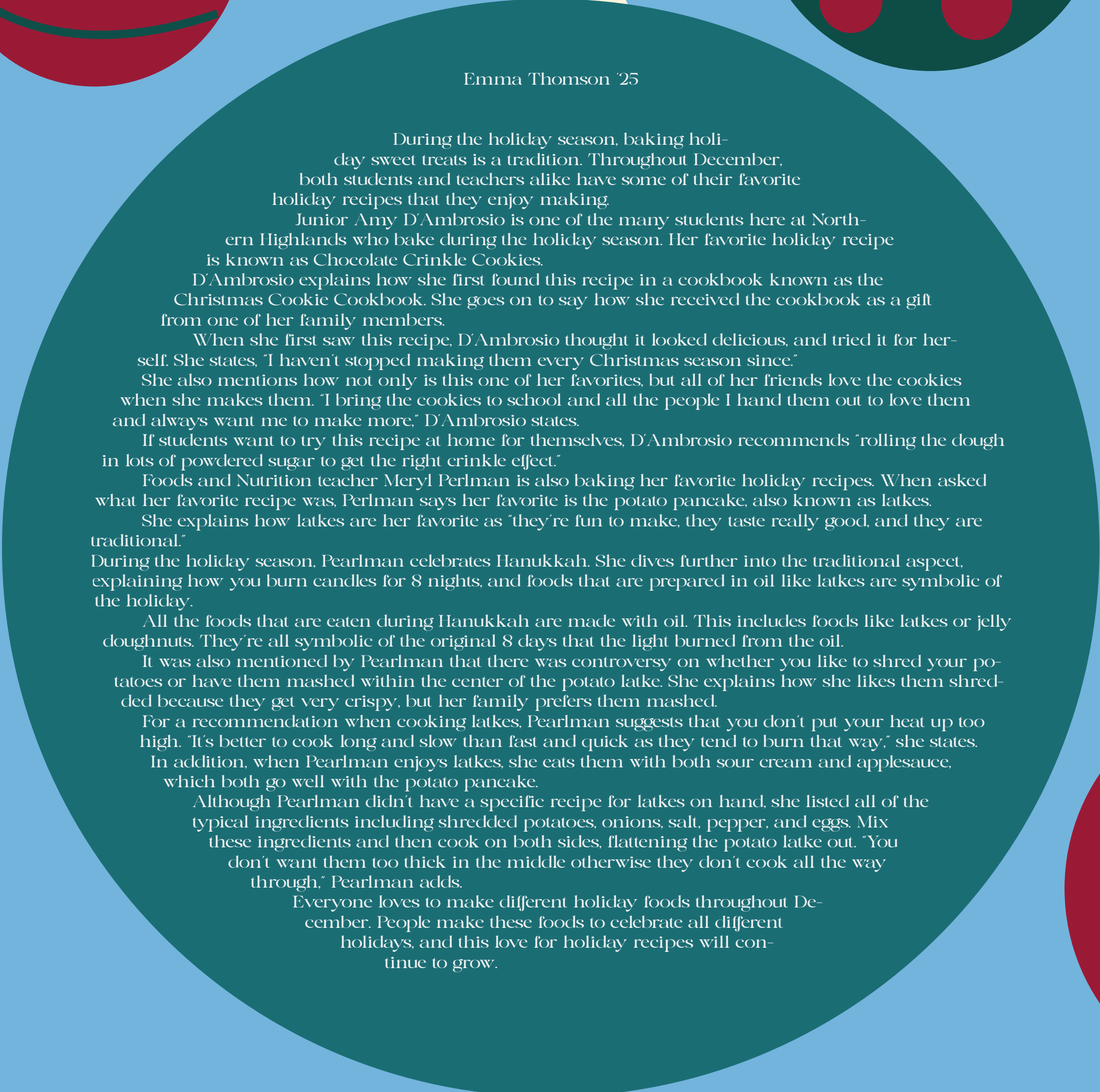
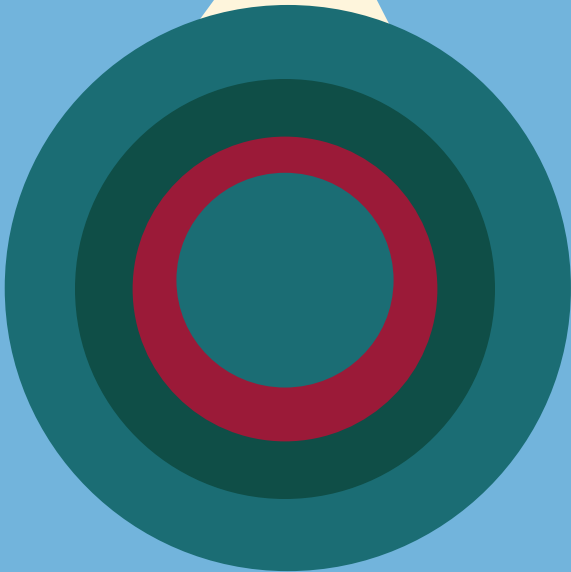
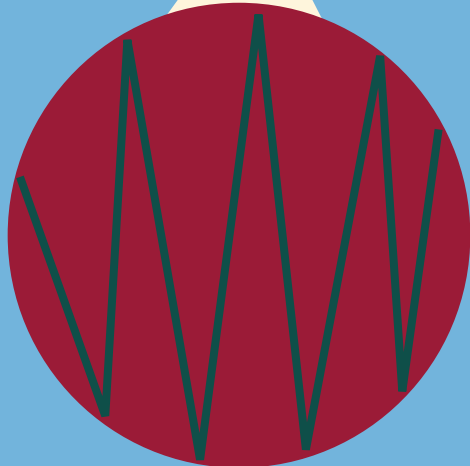
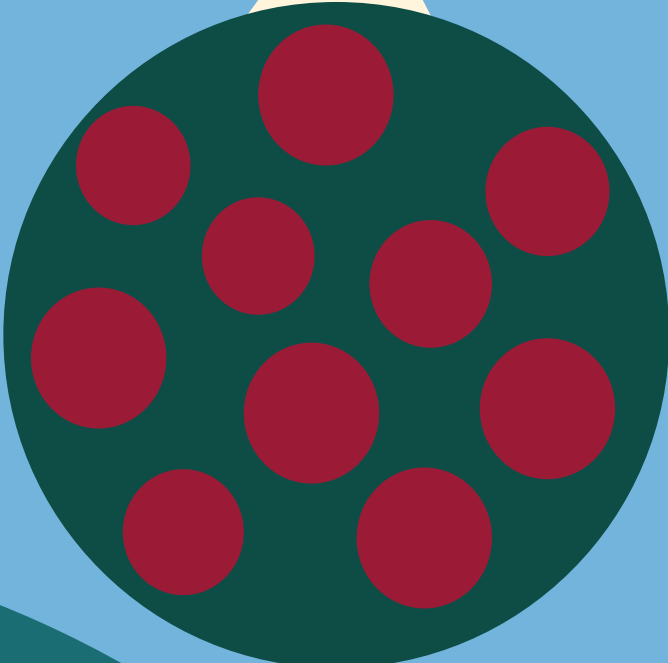
mind, the positives outweigh the negatives—and here Highlanders have it, Paster back as the director.

For his second-first show back on the iconic Highlands’s thrust stage, he has chosen *Mamma Mia* to be the 2024 NH Musical. With his comeback to his position, he needed some aid just as any good director does: he has gathered a group of adults from within and nearby the NHRHS community to put together a wonderful show.

He and the rest of the administrators for this year’s musical production have been off to a fantastic start and continue to be heading in that direction. Be sure to check out the musical on February 29 and March 1-3 to support Paster’s return to running musicals while enjoying an amazing show. ■



Satisfying Holiday Hunger With Students' Favorite Recipes



Emma Thomson '25

During the holiday season, baking holiday sweet treats is a tradition. Throughout December, both students and teachers alike have some of their favorite holiday recipes that they enjoy making.

Junior Amy D'Ambrosio is one of the many students here at Northern Highlands who bake during the holiday season. Her favorite holiday recipe is known as Chocolate Crinkle Cookies.

D'Ambrosio explains how she first found this recipe in a cookbook known as the Christmas Cookie Cookbook. She goes on to say how she received the cookbook as a gift from one of her family members.

When she first saw this recipe, D'Ambrosio thought it looked delicious, and tried it for herself. She states, "I haven't stopped making them every Christmas season since."

She also mentions how not only is this one of her favorites, but all of her friends love the cookies when she makes them. "I bring the cookies to school and all the people I hand them out to love them and always want me to make more," D'Ambrosio states.

If students want to try this recipe at home for themselves, D'Ambrosio recommends "rolling the dough in lots of powdered sugar to get the right crinkle effect."

Foods and Nutrition teacher Meryl Perlman is also baking her favorite holiday recipes. When asked what her favorite recipe was, Perlman says her favorite is the potato pancake, also known as latkes.

She explains how latkes are her favorite as "they're fun to make, they taste really good, and they are traditional."

During the holiday season, Perlman celebrates Hanukkah. She dives further into the traditional aspect, explaining how you burn candles for 8 nights, and foods that are prepared in oil like latkes are symbolic of the holiday.

All the foods that are eaten during Hanukkah are made with oil. This includes foods like latkes or jelly doughnuts. They're all symbolic of the original 8 days that the light burned from the oil.

It was also mentioned by Perlman that there was controversy on whether you like to shred your potatoes or have them mashed within the center of the potato latke. She explains how she likes them shredded because they get very crispy, but her family prefers them mashed.

For a recommendation when cooking latkes, Perlman suggests that you don't put your heat up too high. "It's better to cook long and slow than fast and quick as they tend to burn that way," she states.

In addition, when Perlman enjoys latkes, she eats them with both sour cream and applesauce, which both go well with the potato pancake.

Although Perlman didn't have a specific recipe for latkes on hand, she listed all of the typical ingredients including shredded potatoes, onions, salt, pepper, and eggs. Mix these ingredients and then cook on both sides, flattening the potato latke out. "You don't want them too thick in the middle otherwise they don't cook all the way through," Perlman adds.

Everyone loves to make different holiday foods throughout December. People make these foods to celebrate all different holidays, and this love for holiday recipes will continue to grow.

Latkes



Cookies



THE THEATER COMPANY LIVED THE DREAM

The musical cast and crew finish their run of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Drishti Chauhan '24

The Highlands Theater Company put on an amazing production of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* this

which allowed for quite a bit of mischief in the scenes. Additionally, the play allowed for a fun opportunity for the student actors to let loose and have a bit of fun with their characters.



Photo courtesy of Tyler Halperin

Sophomores Sam Hoffert and Henry Roberts pictured on stage.

past month. This play is a comedic show about love and understanding the balance between the known and the unknown. As Director Shaina Strang-Wolf described how she thinks, "This is an important play because it talks about the fine line between order and disorder, sleeping and waking, order and chaos, human and non-human."

She continues, "The binaries that exist in the play or the play tell us don't exist create an in-between area that is something we as human beings are uncomfortable with. We like it when things fit in neat little boxes. The play reminds us that life doesn't often fit in those little boxes."

The play created a simultaneous sense of wonder and confusion for the audience, similar to what Strang-Wolf described,

Senior Alexis Cirillo, who played Helena, described how her "fa-

one knew their lines. [He] was able to watch everyone else act, which was a great experience because he could watch the show and watch his friends act."

Senior Katie McWilliams stated that "[She] loved the bed set piece and everything [she] got to do with the fairies. They were just so beautiful and fun to watch and prance around with. It was really, really fun."

Junior Nick Franchi said that "[Demetrius] was a very different role from what [he] usually played. [He] usually plays more out there, happy good guys. This was a more reserved bad guy that [he] turned into [his] own interesting take on the character."

Sophomore CJ Einhorn said, "rehearsals and hanging out with everybody—the cast and crew—and creating the set and working on makeup was such a blast. Getting to know everyone better and working on it together to create this amazing show was the best."

Senior Antonia Bellapianta stated that her

tendance for the show. McWilliams, who created many of the cos-

Senior Shreya Sivasubramaniam, who was an audience member, stat-

Whether a person went to see the show with a prior understanding of the play or a completely fresh slate, they all left with a new perspective on Shakespeare thanks to the amazing acting and design as well as the hard work of the cast and crew of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

tumes for the show, stated that she wanted the costumes "to look very vibrant, very full of life and texture, and make sure they moved with the actors themselves. [She] used a lot of flowy fabrics such as tulle to give them as much movement as possible." Einhorn, who did much

ed that she "really liked the costumes and the set design, which really brought the fairy element of the show together." Senior Gianna Mundy, another show watcher, stated that she "really liked the costume designs. [She] thought they were really cool, and

felt] like there were some parts where [she] was a bit confused about the relevance of certain characters, but overall [she] did get the main gist of it."

Mundy mentioned that she "did have prior knowledge. In fact, we read it in Lit class. [She] thinks it did help [her] understand the show better. [She] did a project on it in Lit, which helped her understand the scenes very well. It also gave [her] a new perspective on the scenes [she] didn't clearly understand."

As Strang-Wolf aptly concludes in her Director's Notes, "The play makes commentary on inequality, laughs at order, but never, as Bottom begs, "grows to a point." Real life, like the play, dwells in the gray area, though we too often take comfort in our retreat from the woods and back to sterner, serious stuff."

Whether a person went to see the show with a prior understanding of the play or a completely fresh slate, they all left with a new perspective on

"We like it when things fit in neat little boxes. The play reminds us that life doesn't often fit in those little boxes."

Shaina Strang-Wolf

vorite part of the show was performing it. [They] had spent so long working on the show, and seeing it all come together was phenomenal."

Sophomore Henry Roberts explained that he enjoyed "getting to work with all the people. [His] favorite part was really the tech process because the show was complete and blocked, and every-

favorite scene was "the transition where Nick Bottom transitions into a donkey because it's so funny seeing the audience reaction because they don't know what's coming."

Many behind-the-scenes aspects, such as the wondrous costume, makeup, and set design efforts, were led by Highlands students and applauded by many in at-



Photo courtesy of Tyler Halperin

Senior Katie McWilliams as Titania pictured posing on stage.

of the makeup, said they "started off with sketches. One of the biggest challenges was making sure that the elements that [they] drew would be big enough to read on stage, so [they] tested during rehearsals with many edits."

Bellapianta, one of the prop masters, stated, "one of the hardest things was coming up with all the props and putting them together because a lot of it was handmade, which was tricky. But overall, it wasn't too bad, and it was fun."

the lights. [She] liked the mystical feel of the set."

When asked if she had any prior knowledge of the show, Sivasubramaniam said she "had never heard anything about the show before watching. [She

Shakespeare thanks to the amazing acting and design as well as the hard work of the cast and crew of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. ■

Correction

In the October 2023 issue of *The Highland Fling*, quotes from play director Shaina Strang-Wolf were incorrectly attributed to Joseph Kiely. This error occurred in the article about the production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. We sincerely apologize for this error.



Photo courtesy of Tyler Halperin

Senior Aidan Walsh as Oberon and Sophomore Addie Harrington as Robin Goodfellow (Puck) pictured on stage.

A WONDERFUL PERFORMANCE TO FIT THIS JOYOUS SEASON

Choir and band ensembles perform marvelously for this year’s winter concert

Nick Franchi ‘25

Following the Jazz Ensemble was Highlands’ first ever String Ensemble. These three astoundingly gifted Highlanders

In a resounding celebration of musical prowess, Wednesday, December



Photo courtesy of Raya Baghal

The choir and string ensemble preparing for a piece, led by Tom Paster.

6 marked an unforgettable evening at Hopkins Hall, as the stage came alive with a symphony of talent during Highlands’ annual winter concert. The diverse and enchanting program featured a spectacular array of performances, showcasing the extraordinary skill and dedication of Highlands’ musical ensembles.

The first group to take the stage was the Jazz Ensemble, performing “The Most Wonderful Time of the Year” by Andy Williams, “Greensleeves” by Greg Yatsinitsky, and ending off with “Overture, the Nutcracker Suite” by Peter Tchaikovsky.

performed three pieces, one of which being the premier of “Phoenix” by senior Miguel Granda.

Next to perform was the twenty-person Chorus, an all-freshman choral group that delivered a captivating performance featuring two enchanting pieces skillfully accompanied by the talented pianist, Susan LaFever.

After the Chorus went the Honors Concert Choir, with enthralling pieces such as “Ave Verum Corpus” (performed with the String Ensemble), their annual “Parade of the Wooden Soldiers,” and the world premiere of “Oasis”

by senior Miguel Granda.

After these three pieces, the Chorus and the Honors Concert Choir collaborated on a performance of “White Winter Hymnal,” arranged by Pentatonix. This particular piece resonated with several choir members, including junior Farrah Dello Russo.

“It’s more of a pop-A Cappella piece,” Dello Russo noted, “And in the past, we’ve done more classical choir pieces. It’s a nice change of pace.”

This piece also had five featured body percussionists, one of which was sophomore Ben Sherlock.

“My favorite piece is most definitely ‘White Winter Hymnal,’ ” Sherlock told the fling. “I love rehearsing my solo part, and I think it’s a fantastic song and arrangement by Pentatonix.”

The first half of the concert ended with a brief intermission, and following its conclusion, the concert bands took center stage, beginning with the Symphonic Band with two powerful pieces: “Benediction” by John Stevens and “Sparks” by Brian Balmages.

After the Symphonic above Band, the Honors Wind Ensemble took

the stage, comprising twenty-nine Highlanders ranging from 10th to 12th grade. One of their pieces, “Galop” by Dmitri Shostakovich, struck a chord with junior Catherine Deana.

“My favorite piece is ‘Galop,’ ” Deana remarked. “It’s fast and fun to perform.”

The concert reached its conclusion as the Symphonic Band and the Honors Wind Ensemble joined forces to present the final two pieces: Leroy Anderson’s “A Christmas Festival” and their annual rendition of “Sleigh Ride.”

The preparation for this year’s winter con-

of recording videos and practicing after school weekly, as well as a lot of practice during class.”

“It was slow,” junior Ash Kim noted when asked about concert preparation, “but it was nice to piece it all together [and] see the improvement over time.”

“My favorite part about the concert” Sherlock mentioned “was getting onstage and performing songs that I worked hard on with my friends, and watching all the other groups get onstage and perform music. It’s nice seeing people engaging in what they love.”

Senior Aidan Walsh, a

ing it come together, as well as seeing how people came to like certain songs, turning these pieces into something more than just notes on a page.”

“I liked working with my section,” Dello Russo noted. “I think they’re very helpful when I don’t know a specific note. They’re always there to back me up.”

While many of these artists will persist in their musical pursuits throughout their years at Highlands, for seniors like Aidan Walsh, this concert marked one of the final occasions to grace Hopkins Hall with their musical brilliance.

Following his last winter concert at Highlands, Walsh reflects on his musical journey and time spent in these esteemed ensembles.

“I definitely enjoyed these past few years,” Walsh told the fling. “It can often be a bit of a break during the day, especially if you have a very rigorous course load.”

Walsh, along with all other members of the ensembles, will still have one final performance coming up in the Spring. Stay tuned for more information regarding that date. ■



Photo courtesy of Raya Baghal

Taylor Rehe directing one of Highlands’ spectacular band ensembles.

cert spanned four months, beginning from the first day of school back in September. According to Deana, “It required a lot

member of both the Honors Wind Ensemble and the Honors Concert choir, said that his favorite part of the concert was “see-

THE SPRING MUSICAL IS IN FULL SWING (ABBA STYLE)

Preparations have begun for the much anticipated production of *Mamma Mia*

Karina Rosenberg ‘26

The Northern Highlands fall play, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, has officially come to a close. You know what that means... the weather shifts, the leaves fall to the ground, and preparations for the spring musical commence. Mark your calendars for the NH Theater Company’s anticipated production of *Mamma Mia*.

The auditions for the musical took place on Monday, November 27, and Tuesday, November 28, and after about forty

idan; Ben Sherlock as Sky; Nick Franchi, Sam Materetsky, and Aidan Walsh as Harry, Bill, and Sam. Make sure to see the show in February to discover the other roles the Highlands students are playing.

When asked what she most looks forward to in the show, senior Katie McWilliams responded, “I’m really excited for all the sets and costumes to be done. I love the Greek setting and the fun summer clothes we will wear.” If you have not watched *Mamma Mia* (which you should do right now), the

wait to bring it to you.

Senior Hannah Altman says, “I’m most excited to be back with my favorite people. *Mamma Mia* is such a fun and exciting show, and I know this will be such a fun experience.” The Northern Highlands Theater Company is filled with such wonderful, kind, and talented students who constantly support one another. The relationships in the community definitely make the show perform at its best.

However, it’s not just the students and their skills that make the show go on. Without Director Tom Paster’s devoted time and effort in directing this show, we wouldn’t have one to watch. As many may know, Paster used to direct the Highlands shows but stopped after *Legally Blonde* in 2013. Ten years later he’s back.

We’ve all heard the notorious *Mamma Mia* soundtrack, and the works come from the fantastic ABBA. The music began its debut in the 1970’s. Following this, the *Mamma Mia* musical was put on in 1999. 2008, the show was

made into a movie, and a sequel followed in 2018.

As the Highlands actors begin their work on their own show, everyone seems to have a favor-

favorite song in *Mamma Mia* is ‘Lay All Your Love on Me.’ I love the whole vibe of the song and how chaotic it gets when Sky’s friends join

caption for the show, it will be a lot of fun to choreograph and perform it.”

It’s no secret that the *Mamma Mia* cast can’t contain their excitement,



Photo courtesy of Darshita Chauhan

Some students posing on stage with the choreographer.

talented students tried out. The roles were announced. Katie McWilliams will act as Sophie Sheridan; Hannah Altman as Donna Sher-

show takes place on a fictional island in Greece. As this is the dream destination for many, our Highlands actors can not

ite ABBA song of their own. Junior Nick Franchi said “ I think my favorite song in the show has to be ‘Our Last Summer.’ It’s a very sweet and nostalgic song, and it’s sung by my character, Harry Bright, which makes me like it even more.”

Another opinion from senior Alexis Cirillo, playing Tanya, is, “My

in. It’s a song that lives in my playlists, and I genuinely never get tired of it.”

Another view on this ABBA craze is offered by sophomore Addie Harrington, who plays Lisa. She adds, “My favorite song from the show is ‘Does Your Mother Know,’ because it’s enjoyable and there’s a big dance break. As the dance

and neither should you. Be sure to see the production on February 29, March 1, March 2, or March 3. Although the process has only just begun, the enthusiasm, talent, and time being put in by all the students make it easy to believe that this year’s winter musical will be one you don’t want to miss. ■



A few students pictured outside the Cultural Arts Center before their audition.

Photo courtesy of Darshita Chauhan

MASTERPIECE IN THE MAKING

Illuminating Ky Gray, a senior enrolled in AP Studio Art

Nick Franchi '24

In the halls of Northern Highlands, where creativity flourishes like paint on a canvas, one senior stands out as a beacon of artistic brilliance.

Meet Ky Gray, a passionate artist whose journey through the world of art has been nothing short of inspiring. As Gray navigates the challenges and

younger, my aunt showed me some Studio Ghibli films, which really inspired my passion for art."

"I got really into art in middle school," Gray shares, attributing their initial inspiration to a friend who excelled in art. "I wanted to be like her, so I kept drawing like her."

Since then, Gray has loved art, and has pursued higher-level art courses

ers are very helpful. It's a great community once

for art, Gray points out a discrepancy in the develop-

rolled in AP Art classes are aware, the AP portfolio process is on the horizon, making some Highlanders a bit nervous, Gray included.

Yet, in the face of this challenge, Gray finds comfort in the guidance of Ms. Melle, their AP Studio Art teacher.

"I'm a little nervous," Gray remarked. "But I'll get through it. Ms. Melle is helping me a lot."

Looking towards the future, Gray's ambitions are broad and expansive. While not having concrete plans at the moment, they eventually dream of creating a comic book—an endeavor that encapsulates the fusion of storytelling and visual art.

This ambitious goal reflects Gray's desire to explore diverse mediums

scape of social media.

"Finding artists on Instagram is always helpful," they shared. "It's also cool to find an artist you really like, and [then] find out you're close in age. That's always something that inspires me."

The discovery of artists close in age adds an extra layer of motivation, proving that creativity knows no bounds.

As we delve into Ky Gray's artistic universe, we witness a senior whose journey through the halls of Northern Highlands transcends the ordinary. With vivid dreams and a canvas that knows no limits, Gray's artistic journey is a testament to the power of passion, perseverance, and the boundless possibilities that unfold when cre-



"Portals" inspired by the album by artist Melanie Martinez

wonders of their AP Studio Art class, their artistic prowess and dedication to the craft shine brightly.

From brushstrokes that tell powerful tales, to an intricate dance of colors that breathe life onto the canvas, Gray's journey in art is nothing short of a masterpiece in the making.

When Gray was younger, animated movies became the gateway to their lifelong love of art. "I loved watching animated movies," Gray told the Fling. "When I was

as the years progressed.

From art experiences to honors drawing and painting, Gray now finds themselves immersed in the challenges and rewards of AP Studio Art: Drawing and Painting. "I never wanted to stop taking art classes," Gray noted.

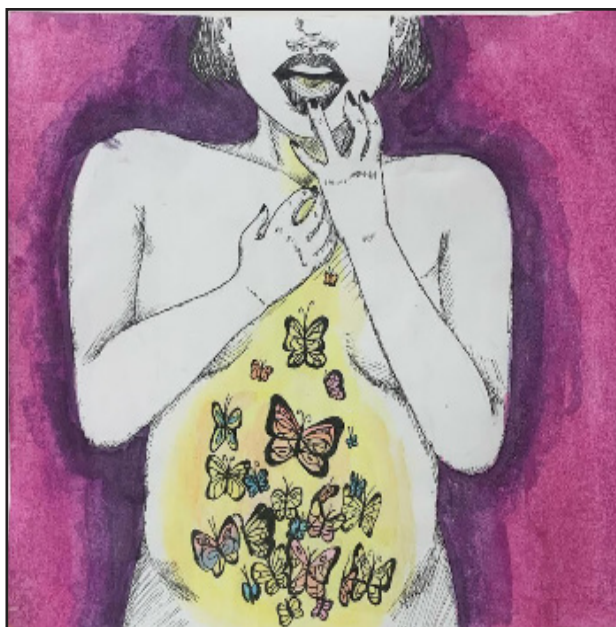
Gray's continuous enrollment in art classes doesn't solely stem from their delight in the subject, but is also deeply rooted in the sense of community it provides.

"I think the art teach-

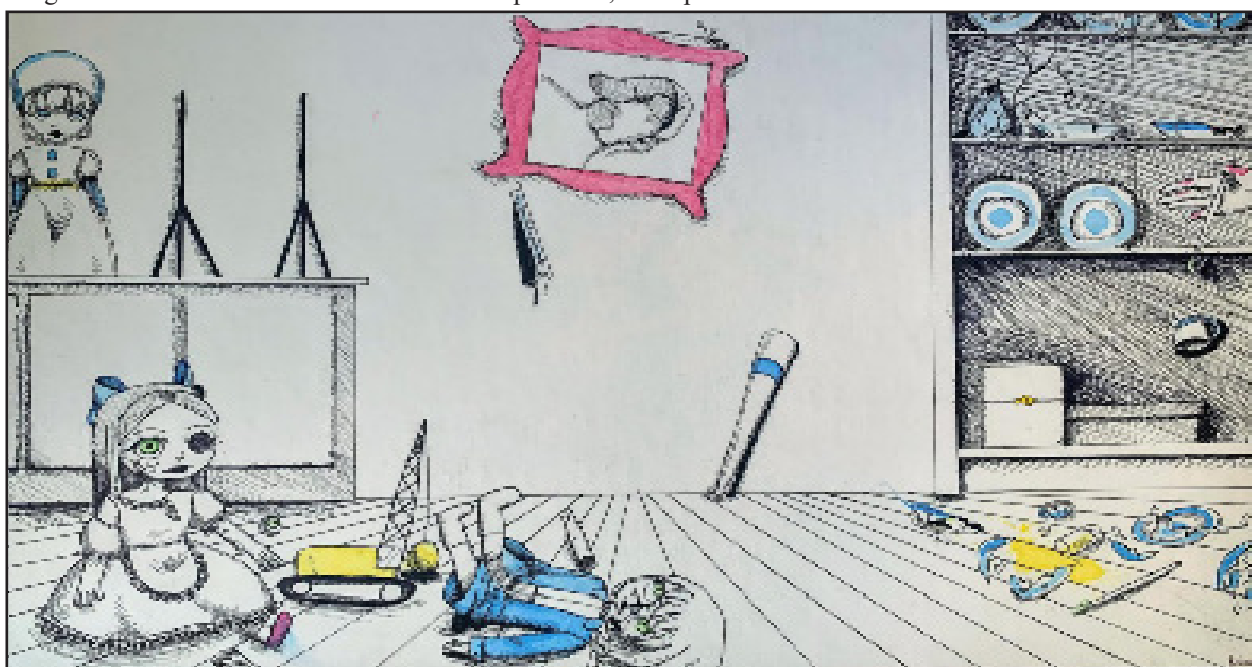
you start to get involved."

Gray's journey is not just about personal growth but also about

ment of the art department at Highlands. "I don't think there's as much promotion around the art department,"



"Butterflies in the Stomach"



"Wrecking Ball" inspired by the song of the same name by Mother Mother

finding a community of like-minded individuals who share the same passion for artistic expression.

Despite an excitement

Gray shared, "Which is really sad. Everyone there is really nice, again, especially the teachers."

As many students en-

and leave a permanent mark on the world of art.

When it comes to inspiration nowadays, Gray turns to the vast land-

activity takes center stage.

Please enjoy a glimpse into Gray's artistic world through the artworks provided on this page. ■

TWO AP CLASSES GO TO THE MET

Students get the opportunity to experience the artistic wonder of the MET

Zarin Veres Royal '25

This past month, the AP Art History and AP European History classes went on a trip to the Met in New York City. The classes had the opportunity to walk around and explore the museum, some seeing pieces they had learned about in school. "I had high expectations for the trip because I heard it was really fun in the past. I was hoping that we would be able to see most of the museum," junior Sofia Akkaway says.

Since Northern Highlands is in such close proximity to New York City, students had a great opportunity to physically see a lot of the pieces they were learning about, which helps the students build a connection with what they're do-

ing in class. This is something that many people taking the same class aren't

this trip even more exciting.

"It was cool to see how what we're learning

things that we can see in the museum, not just stuff we do for homework,"



Art history and European history students pose for a group picture outside the MET.

able to do, which makes

in class applies to actual

said Addie

sophomore Harrington.

"We went to the Met to look at art from the time periods we studied in class. Some of the pieces in the Met were a part of our 250," said Akkaway.

In AP Art History, students are required to learn about 250 art pieces from all around the world. Some of the pieces even date back to before the year.

"We were learning about Byzantine art and there was actually a piece there that we were studying. It was the Virgin Mother in between two saints and we actually got to see it," said Harrington.

A part of the students' assignment was to walk around the museum to find certain pieces that were a part of, or related to, one of their 250 art pieces. The extra credit was

to find the Virgin Mother in between two saints.

"Ms. Carpino made us these adorable personalized notebooks and we had to draw a few pieces and write about them. It was pretty fun," said Akkaway.

"We had little notebooks and we had to choose pieces of art to write about and make connections with what we're currently learning," said Harrington.

Overall, the students had a great time at the museum. Not only did they get to see some familiar pieces, but they were also introduced to a lot of other great works of art and artists. While the museum is extremely large and not everyone was able to see everything they had hoped to, it was a great experience for all involved. ■

WRAPPING UP OUR LISTENING ACTIVITY

Students share their thoughts on Spotify and their favorite music

Gabe Tejeda '26

As of Late November, Spotify Wrapped and Apple Replay have taken over the Instagram stories and music lives of a large majority of Highlanders. As music recaps that come out towards the end of the year, these phenomena display the

music you enjoyed the most. They tell you your top songs, the artists you like the most, and more! But why is the Highlands community so interested in finding out these statistics? "It shows me my stuff, you know? I wouldn't have known before, so it's cool" sophomore Eric

Loksant stated. He shared that his favorite part about the Spotify Wrapped is that he finally knows what he's been listening to. This might also be tied into the beauty of this only being a yearly recap. If they had one every month, people would start to ignore them and ultimately be uninterested.

Although this might be the case for most people, sophomore Sebastian Terrizzi has a different perspective.

"Honestly, I have an app that kind of does it [wrapped] for me all year round." Terrizzi shares, which he believes, ruins the fun of the Spotify Wrapped.

However, he still appreciates the tool because, "it's fun to see it all in one place."

This brings us to the essential question: what were Highlanders listening to the most this year?

The results were all over the place. Some students were listening to Indie/Alternative Rock artists like Mitski and Keane while others were listening to Rap artists such as

Travis Scott and Drake. Our student body listens to a wide array of music, but no artist

shined through as much as one: Taylor Swift. Taylor Swift herself was a large figure in many people's recaps, and it really goes to show how similar we all are without even knowing it. Personally, she wasn't on mine, but I did indulge in her music once or twice.

"I have so many phases. Like, I haven't listened to my top song in months but it's still my number one."

Sophomore Sebastian Terrizzi

est. Spotify is not the main thing that I listen to music on, so I think it was not perfectly accurate."

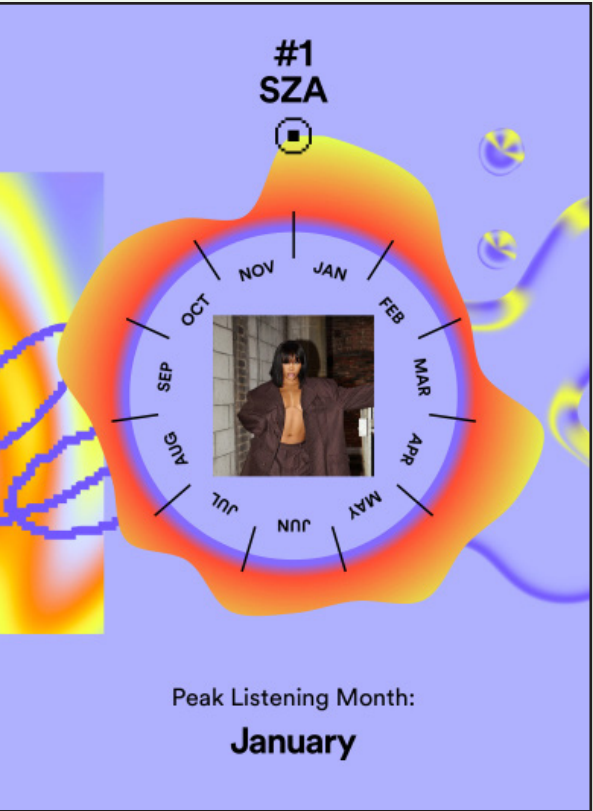
This may be difficult, especially if you're not fully committed to Spotify or Apple Music and still want that same feeling of a Wrapped or Replay that everyone else seems to get. Other students have similar issues where they feel it's inaccurate as they listen to music to go to sleep or get homework done that they feel doesn't actually represent their music taste.

"I would've liked to see a little bit more consistency. The app can't tell the difference of my music taste, and I wish it could separate, in categories, what you listened to the most. Like, if you listened to indie, this is your top artist from the indie genre, etcetera." Muller says, proposing introducing an interesting solution.

There are definitely things about these recaps that people don't like, but overall, they do a pretty good job at encapsulating everybody's year.

"I have so many phases. Like, I haven't listened to my top song in months but it's still my number one." Terrizzi shares, adding onto Muller's point regarding the fact that the algorithm isn't able to truly tell the difference between genres, and that it would be beneficial to see a more specific breakdown of your tastes.

These recaps have taken Highlanders by storm, as it's very exciting to see your friends' music tastes. Hopefully, your wrapped/replay was up to standard, and happy music listening. ■



A screenshot directly from a Highlander's "Spotify Wrapped"

Photo Courtesy of Jyoti Singh '24

LAUFHEY'S CONTRIBUTION TO JAZZ-POP

Members of our Jazz Band react to a popular new "Jazz" artist

Emily Pushnya '26

Jazz is a genre of music that has served as a prominent form of expression in traditional music since its origins in the late 19th

and early 20th centuries. While its influence is very visible in much of modern music, the commercial use of jazz has declined considerably in the current day. Despite this, it holds a position of importance in the development of the music industry and a special place in many people's hearts. A contemporary case of this is Icelandic-Chinese singer-songwriter Laufey, who gained popularity and even a Grammy nomination in the early 2020s for her jazz-inflected discography.

"A lot of our jazz band, especially for the spring concert, plays more contemporary pieces, which fits in with her style."

Senior Jake Scro

Senior Jake Scro shares his opinion by saying, "I would consider her music jazz, as I don't think there's one right or wrong way to describe jazz, especially with how many styles and subgenres of jazz there are." Others indicate that her music is more closely related to various other types. Included in this group is sophomore Henry Roberts, who states, "I think Laufey's music is a type of jazz. It's like pop jazz, while someone like Nina Simone would be closer to my definition of pure jazz." Adding to this is sophomore Brad Hogue, stated that, "Laufey's music isn't traditional jazz, but instead a sort of mix between pop and jazz. It certainly contains some elements of jazz, as jazz is a very large genre, but it also contains

heavy elements of pop that, to me, make it more of a pop song than a jazz song." Senior Caleb Oehler shares his opinion on the matter by instead saying, "The production of her music reminds me a lot of modern indie pop but it also has elements of bossa nova. It's pretty unique. I think it's probably closer to indie pop than it is to jazz." Not only subsections of jazz but entirely distinct genres have been called into comparison with Laufey's music among Highlands students. Highlands Senior Zach Zimmerman brings one to light, stating, "If I was asked to say what genre her music is, I'd say bossa nova."

This is a genre developed in the late 1950s and early 1960s in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and made up of a relaxed style of samba.

Zimmerman continues with, "However, the harmonic and melodic styles of bossa are very jazz-inspired. Her music is far closer to jazz than pretty much any other big names of today." Despite the discrepancies in the exact category Laufey's music falls into, her jazz-inspired tunes seem to be pushing the genre back into somewhat of a spotlight.

A timely vision of jazz we can compare and contrast Laufey's music to is that of Highlands' very own jazz band, which recently performed a winter concert. According to

music Laufey makes is perfectly comparable to

cently performed a winter concert. According to

music Laufey makes is perfectly comparable to

"It certainly contains some elements of jazz, as jazz is a very large genre, but it also contains heavy elements of pop that, to me, make it more of a pop song than a jazz song."

Sophomore Brad Hogue

Scro, also a bassist in the jazz band, "a lot of our jazz band, especially for the spring concert, plays more contemporary pieces, which fits in with her style."

Jazz band guitarist Oehler points out that "her music may sound entirely different from what we play, but a lot of the chord progression choices that she makes are common in jazz music, and some of the rhythms seem like they're inspired by jazz."

Others, such as tenor Hogue, would say "her music doesn't really relate to the music played by our jazz band, as we usually play more blues, swing, or Latin music."

Whether or not the

the jazz genre as a whole, all those asked about her agree that her music is one of a kind. Zimmerman showed this best when he said, "Her music is beautiful and has a deep passion and style that's absent in a lot of pop music of today."

Laufey's discography is one that spans many styles of music, making the most of each one and turning them into her own. Her music is a special blend of the best parts of all of these genres, which largely played a role in her achieving the level of admiration she has in mainstream media today. ■



The cover of Laufey's latest album, *Bewitched*.

Photo Courtesy of Laufey's Official Website

ANOTHER SPECTACULAR SOCCER SEASON

Our amazing girls' soccer team has advanced to the State semi-final

Elena McCrossin '26

The Northern Highlands Varsity Girls Soccer team is notorious for being one of the state's most tough and talented teams. They proved this on Monday, November 6 when they defeated the reigning Group 3 champions, Ramapo, in the state sectionals final.

The game was certainly action-packed with a game-winning goal scored by junior Ava Andicoechea in the 26th minute. The highly competitive game was met with nothing short of excitement from the highlanders. Sophomore Ava Zjawinski looks back at the night with delight.

"The game was full of cheering us on. The night games are always the best types of games, especially on our home field." The team's reaction to their victory was almost as entertaining as the victory itself!

Zjawinski recalls the memory as one of her favorites from the season, stating "The dog pile was filled with happiness and proud teammates." Highlands victory in the tournament is only a reflection of how well they played throughout the season. With only five total losses, the Northern Highlands Girls Soccer team ended the season with a record of 18-4.

Their success is not a result of lucky plays or shots, but of their ef-

son. Their practices might seem daunting to some, but for the girls on the soccer team, it is just another chance to improve. "Individually, everyone has to bring their absolute best effort to practices," states Zjawinski. "Every day we have to practice like champions to become them."

She says that some of their practices include drills, fitness, or watching films of other teams. It is obvious that the team puts in effort both on and off the field, but their victories can not be attributed to that alone. Their coach, Tara Madigan plays a massive role in the team's success.

"Coach Madigan is a very dedicated coach,"



Girls varsity soccer run out on the field after win. excitement with hundreds of people in the stands fort at both practices and games throughout the sea-

VOLLEYBALL SERVES A WIN IN THE FINALS

Girls Volleyball wins the state sectional championship this season

Samantha O'Connell '26

This years girls volleyball team was amazing and they came out and aced their way into the finals. Their end of the season record consisted of twenty one wins and eight losses. They also had team leaders in kills, blocks, and assists. Junior, Chloe Anselmi had the highest amount of kills

this year with the number being two hundred and six. The second team leader was for blocking and it was number six, a junior named Delia Van Der Heide, who had forty-two blocks this season. Lastly, their team leader in assists was sophomore number eleven, Allie Reilly, with five hundred and sixty-six assists.

These girls have worked all year and have pervered through a lot of training and practice in order to get where they are now. The training and conditioning taken to get good at footwork and speed in takes a lot of time and effort to complete, but it is crucial.

Volleyball had a great team this yeat that was built off great players and great coaches. The team was also



Junior Chloe Anselmi going for a spike.

not only with her planned drills but with 150% effort, which makes a huge difference in the team's commitment." Madigan has been the head coach of Northern Highlands Girls Soccer for 18 years (only not coaching during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 seasons) and has led her team to 8 won a state championship in 2020 and their program has continued to stay strong over the past few years. If Northern Highlands beats Chatham, they will go on to play in the Group 3 state championship.

The team has worked incredibly hard throughout the season and doesn't want to success so far this season.

They always play with a sense of urgency and a competitive spirit, even when the pressure is heavy. One reason Highlands has been so accomplished is because of how hard they work, even when there is no score. Performance in practice has been



Girls soccer celebrating their win as a team.

state titles, 10 state sectional titles, and 9 Bergen County Championships.

The last time the girl's soccer team won a state sectional title was in 2020, so their last victory was an immense accomplishment. So, where does the team go from here? Their next stop is the state semi-final, which they play in against Chatham on Thursday, November 9th. Chatham will be a tough opponent, boasting a record of 18 wins and two losses. Chatham last

to see their dreams of winning states go away, so they are working harder than ever to advance even further. Although they certainly have enough skill, some of the soccer players still feel apprehensive about their upcoming games.

"The state tournament has pressured me because I want us to win the whole tournament. However, this type of pressure makes me want to win even more and work even harder," states Zjawinski. This mentality has driven the Highlanders

just as important to the team as their performance in games. When asked why practicing matters so much, Zjawinski responds by stating, "Every day we have to practice litos to become them." The Northern Highlands Girls Soccer team's season can teach everyone a valuable lesson in effort and commitment.

Although they lost to Chatham, we are so proud of their accomplishments this season and can't wait for the next one. ■

built off of team communication and coordination. Volleyball ended up losing their last game to Mill-



Sophomore Allie Reilly celebrating with her team.

In a team sport like volleyball the most important thing for a team to have is communication. Without communication it would be difficult to win a game or make it through a serve, because you would just be crashing into eachother.

burn is the NJSIAA Group Tournament. The score was two to one, and it was not a complete shut out.

Volleyball at Northern Highlands keeps growing, as more people have interest in the sport. This years girls team has juniors and seniors all around and they

leyball team. They should be proud in all of what they accomplished, and wining State Sectional Champs. Northern Highlands girls volleyball stepped up their game this year and aced their competition. ■

SPARES, STRIKES, THEY DO IT ALL

The bowling team has dominated their competition with 15 wins in a row

Gabe Tejeda '26

This December marks the beginning of Northern Highlands' bowling season, and we couldn't be more excited. The team is equipped with a new coach, Justin Nadal, and some amazing players like junior Joshua Alvelo, and they are set for an amazing season.

New coaches can be stressful for a team, but captain Alvelo shares, "I think the team is going to improve this year because of the new coach and the new vibe he's going to bring to the team." He believes that Nadal will bring a positive energy to the team, encouraging everyone to do their best, be their best, and have the most fun.

But no team would thrive without bonding. Alvelo shares that every Sunday, the guys team tries to go bowling together. "We excel at teamwork. We keep each other in good spirits...and there's an amazing sportsmanship that Nadal will make even better." Alvelo states, emphasizing the importance of bonding and compassion within the team.

Bowling can easily be

a solo sport. However, the push of your teammates always helps. While recreationally bowling, we

typically bring family and friends to boost us with highfives, excited screams, and even intricate handshakes.

On the topic of handshakes, our bowling team has their own personalized handshake. Not just one, two separate movements for strikes and spares. They also are equipped with an inspiring chant to build up team morale.

As Nadal says, "We're going to be the most cohe-

sive, fun team that there is."

"My favorite thing about coaching bowling is that it hasn't been corrupted by competition as much as other sports have. It's largely looked upon as something more recreational than competitive, but that makes it fun! If you want it to be competitive, it will be, and if you want it to be fun, it will be!" Nadal excitedly shares, showing his passion for the sport and setting an amazing precedent for his coaching career.

As Alvelo said, he

will truly bring a positive, fun, and compassionate energy to the team.

Currently, the team stands at 15 wins in a row for their division, the Freedom division, and 27 in a row overall for the last couple years. These are some impressive stats, showing how the team has and will continue to excel.

This season is expected to go well, and Nadal states that there are a number of students who are, before the season, averaging between 140 and 180 with each game, which is more than enough to compete but also room for

improvement. It is incredible that the team has had the opportunity to begin the season at such a high level.

The captain, Joshua Alvelo, also has high ambitions for this season. "Recently, someone on the team got a new high game of 233." A game with such a high score takes dedication, effort, and real commitment. Alvelo says that, for players with lower scores, "As captain, my job is to help those who need my help."

The resolve of Nadal and Alvelo is incredibly admirable and I believe it will spread throughout the entire team. Nadal gives an inside look on practices, showing how intense they truly are, "During practices, we bowl, and then bowl again, and then bowl again... we do drill work, tweak our technique individually, and honestly, the one thing about bowling in particular is that you need to do it a lot. It is a constant, repetitive motion that you have to be able to consistently replicate. It's a challenge!"

This simply goes to show that the bowling team has to put in high amounts of effort for their

practices and need to practice as frequently as possible.

Due to this, bowling is an incredibly difficult sport. However, there does tend to be a negative stigma around it. Nadal says this, "When you mention bowling, people laugh. It's because bowling can be looked at as recreational and not taken seriously, but it's as serious as all the other sports." And this is evident by how frequently and accurately professional or varsity bowlers bowl. The average person bowls a 70 while an average highschool varsity bowler might double that. It takes determination and countless hours of practice to reach the level that some students have reached.

Nadal wants students to understand that bowling is a true sport, takes years to master, and that this season will be amazing. December marks the true beginning of the bowling season and we couldn't be more excited to see what they all have in store. So stay tuned, support the team, and get absolutely pumped for this next season. ■



Senior Matthew Covello bowling during a match.

Photo courtesy of Raya Baghal

TRACK TEAM EXCELS THIS SEASON

Let's hear from a few stellar track team members and how they succeed

Eric Koo '26

Out of the various sports Northern Highlands offers during the Winter time, Winter Track stands out as one of the most participated sports throughout the school year. Winter track, also commonly known as indoor track, is a potent and vigorous sport that allows the athletes to participate in various events, such as running, jumping, shot putting, etc. Although inside indoor facilities to keep the temperature bearable for the athletes, there is still lots of gruesome work for these athletes to adapt and overcome.

Throughout the other seasons of the year, athletes for winter track strive to become faster and stronger in order to improve from their previous years, or in an attempt to make a great first impression and a love for a new sport.

When asked about how these athletes would like to improve, various responses flew in. "I am looking forward to com-

peting and the long meets spent with my team. I want to improve my times this year and work on improving our relay group. The training is designed to build up our strength and allow us to reach full potential," Sophomore Kelsey Bennett says.

The main goal is in fact to improve on time and overall create a great impression, but as Bennett states, something that these athletes are looking forward to is spending time with their teammates. Winter track is an amazing time to create friendships with new people, who you may have never had the chance to meet and talk to personally.

Winter track is also the sport that many strive to have redemption in, as perhaps in previous years something had occurred which suspended their season. When asking senior Maxwell Gurkovic on what he anticipates this season, he states "I am looking forward to setting some new personal bests and competing at states and nationals. As

well as, the great memories and friendships. In regard to last season I was on an off with injuries and because of this I couldn't compete at any of the state level meets. However, I am looking forward to hopefully staying healthy and helping my team win some titles."

He adds, "My training is similar to last years. It consists of some hard

sprint days where I am repeatedly running 300, 200, and 100 meters and we also incorporate some lighter days to recover."

The students of Northern Highlands wish Gurkovic best of luck this

season, and are looking forward to seeing him back on the track.

Another stellar track team member is Cruz Canariato, a sophomore who had an outstanding freshman year, being the second fastest freshman 110m hurdler, with a full description of his events, his practices, and more! "I'm a sprinter, hurdler, and a jumper (long jump

and triple jump)," Canariato said.

She adds, "Our practices have been pretty much the same from this year compared to last year but I have noticed that the intensity of what we do

has gone up. For example we have been running faster for longer at practices. My sprinting coach is great and always leaves us super tired at the end of practice but we know it made us better runners."

When asked about the upcoming meetings for these athletes, Canariato explains, "We have a meet coming up on Saturday at the Armory in

NYC which is always so cool and Teddy Goebbert and I are looking forward to seeing who will run faster times. Teddy and I have always been super close with all events on track. It's been really

cool having someone to always run with and jump with. Personally I think I'm going to crush Teddy this Saturday but we will see soon."

When asked what makes track enjoyable, Canariato says, "One thing that's fun with track is that we always draw on our arms with a sharpie, and we also prepare for the meets by simply running a lot. One other thing is plyometrics which helps with overall athleticism and also strengthens our legs."

Even in the harsh, cold conditions, winter track offers valuable experiences for athletes to seek new and different experiences. The experience of being with friends, meeting new people, and the focus of becoming faster and stronger is what makes Winter track important to many. Whether you are doing hurdles, long distance, or discuss, winter tracks give athletes the opportunity to become more explosive and well conditioned. ■



Highlands' girls track team pose for a picture at Garrett Mountain after winning state sectionals.

Photo courtesy of NH Track Instagram

A RED FOX IS BORN: A NEW BEGINNING

After years of training and hard work, Rebecca MacLaren is off to Marist

Maddie Knapp '25

Joining her first track and cross country team in the sixth grade, senior Rebecca MacLaren's long distance running career has since flourished through years of hard work, support, and dedication. Now a standout athlete for Northern Highlands, MacLaren has gained numerous accolades for the Highlanders.

For track, she was part of the 4x400 relay team who won their heat at Penn Relays, and was invited to the New Balance Nationals for indoor track. For cross country, she earned 2nd team All-North New Jersey, Second Team All-Bergen County, and played a vital role in the girls' recent cross country state sectional victory.

Since beginning to run, MacLaren has always loved the relationships she has built with her teammates over the years.

When asked for her favorite thing about running, MacLaren shared, "My favorite thing is the people who I have made great relationships with. High school running brought me my closest friends so I'm super excited for this new chapter and to meet

so many new people."

And MacLaren will certainly be a welcome addition to the Marist track program. When asked about what made Marist a great fit for her, MacLaren shared how she had instantly loved her future teammates she'd be running with in the future. "The girls on the team were all so welcoming and I felt so happy with the campus," Rebecca expressed. "I clicked with everyone instantly."

MacLaren also credits much of her success to not only her teammates, but also the amazing coaches she has had over the years. "All my coaches have given me so much advice and I have learned so many new things that I'm so grateful for and can bring with me into college next year."

And it seems that the coaches at Marist will be nothing short of excellent. When talking about her reasons for why she chose Marist, she expressed how much she had also loved the coach there. "He had a similar personality and coaching style as my coaches now so I knew it would be a great fit and I would be happy," MacLaren stated.

Through running, MacLaren has enjoyed not only

the friendships she's made and the coaches she's had, but also seeing her personal improvement over the course of her career. "Work-

the college stage, MacLaren is ready to tackle the challenges that come with transitioning from high school to college-level run-

mitted. "But I know what my body needs now from my high school experience so I'm very excited."

And this unwavering

and happy for me as they have been supporting me from the beginning,"

MacLaren shared when asked about people's reactions to her commitment. "My friends, who some of them it was a surprise for, made their reaction so exciting, and others who helped get me to this point were so supportive and happy for me as well."

Beyond running, MacLaren has expressed how location had played a big role in her college decision. When asked about some of her reasons for picking Marist over other schools, she stated, "I wanted to stay close. I didn't want to go to a school too far away and Marist is the perfect distance for that." And with Marist being just over an hour from home in Poughkeepsie, New York, Marist is certainly a great fit.

Though MacLaren will be missed next year at Highlands, she will definitely go on to achieve bigger and better things in the future. It is without a doubt that the Marist track program has gained a great addition to the team, and that MacLaren will fit right in. The highlands community is rooting for you, MacLaren, and go red foxes. ■



Rebecca MacLaren posing for a picture to celebrate her commitment to Marist College.

ing hard at something that you love and then being able to see the improvement is always the best feeling," MacLaren stated.

Now moving on to

ning. "I'm nervous about the adjustment between high school running and running at the college level because it is a lot more competitive," MacLaren ad-

support from not only her coaches and teammates, but also her family and friends will undoubtedly carry over to her career at Marist. "My family was very proud

RUNNING OFF TO EMORY UNIVERSITY

Senior Maxwell Gurkovic's commits to college for track and field

Cameron Waller '26

Northern Highlands has fantastic sports programs that have produced many athletes who have gone on to play at the collegiate level. Maxwell Gurkovic, a Senior at Highlands, became one of these athletes.

Earlier in the fall, he committed to Emory University for track and field in which he will specialize in the 400m, 200m, and 800m races. He has run track at Highlands for 4 years but has also played soccer his whole life.

"I have never completed a full [track] season since soccer was always my main sport. Although I was grateful to receive offers with soccer to play for some teams that were athletically very competitive, the schools that offered me for the track were more in line with my long-term goals," explained Gurkovic.

Emory displayed qualities that fit these goals. With an acceptance rate of 11% and ranking 24th out of all national universities, Emory provides a lot of academic promise to its students. Not only did the

educational rigor exhibited at the college impress Gurkovic, he also said, "During my official visit, I was able to stay in the dorm with some of the track athletes, attend a class at the Goizueta Business School, and see every corner of the beautiful campus. After my visit, I knew I wanted to call Emory my new home."

Being able to spend time with students who were living a life he would soon live in less than a year, the Highlander was able to see himself as a student at the school. However, going to college is a big change and an important chapter in life.

Nonetheless, Northern Highlands does an excellent job of preparing all its students to move away from home and take the next step in their academic careers.

"I know that Emory University has consistently been ranked within the top 25 national universities and the business school is ranked even higher, so there is no doubt that I will be put to the test intellectually," said Gurkovic. He then continued to talk about how the variety of rigorous courses that

Highlands has to offer has helped to prepare him for next year. He then went on to describe how the athletes depended so much on their soccer careers. These

gave me a transformative insight that I carried back home with me and shaped my life. I now complete everything I do with purpose and full effort out of re-

Emory, as well as throughout his entire life. The things that he learned from the players in Serbia are what reminds him of how lucky he is for everything

spiring story, and how she plays a big role in his athletic career. "My biggest role model is my mother. My mother grew up in Serbia and later moved to Jamaica, Queens in her youth. She had to work extremely hard and paid her tuition at Columbia University to be able to later place me in a school like Northern Highlands," he explained.

Just like his experience playing soccer in Serbia, the determination that his mother showed in overcoming adversity, exposed him to the hard work that is needed to become successful. "I always felt very grateful and felt I needed to make something of myself because it would be a shame to waste the opportunities that many of us take for granted," Gurkovic finished off by saying.

He wants to honor the hard work and sacrifices that his mother made to give him the life he has and to carry that same grit with him in his athletic career. ■



Maxwell Gurkovic posing for a picture to celebrate his commitment to Emory University.

players only had two options, to become successful professionals or to end up struggling and uneducated.

"The driven mindset of the Serbian players

spect for those players who do not have the opportunities that many of us take for granted and myself."

This drive is something that he is going to bring to

that he has. It is a reminder to work hard because a lot of people haven't received the same opportunities in life.

Gurkovic also told us about his mother's in-

Photo Courtesy of MacLaren's Instagram.

Photo Courtesy of Gurkovic's Instagram.

BASKETBALL SEASON HAS BEGUN

New teammates and new coaches show incredible potential for success

Matthew Reichert '24

I'm excited about the highlands basketball season. You should be excited. The reason is, the players are excited. There is a new coach and he has a wonderful opportunity. Coach Schmidt is like a president in his first 100 days: people are ready for a new regime, he is popular, and because of those facts he can make fast and significant changes that set the tone for his tenure. He presently has the total support of his team—a factor as empowering as his coach title—and can use this collective enthusiasm to get his players to buy into a new program, one that can lead to the kind of success the team wants and is good enough to have. It may seem like a given that the players will support the coach, however, there had been some frustration with the success of the team in prior years, and the need for more players. Not in the sense that the team didn't have enough players, the numbers were more than sufficient to fill out a roster. The problem

was they were missing players; several quality athletes had, in the past, opted to play with the Highlands rec league instead of the Highlands varsity team. There is no such issue this year. The talent is here, and much of it returning. This team has the right personnel, or at least the players feel that way, and believing is half the battle. The scheme is well-tailored to that personnel: the wildcat offense. It's what Jay Wright ran (and won two championships with) at Villanova. It situates four players around the three-point line and relies on cutting and getting to the middle of the court. This kind of offense is one in which great guards can flourish; guys like Jalen Brunson and Donte DiVincenzo played their way to a national championship and the NBA in it. Highlands has a lot of talent at the guard spot: Sawyer Chapler, Zach Bibi, Dylan DeLuise, Jason Kim, and Lucas Dipasupil are among the returning players. With all these pieces in place, I have high hopes. I want to see a team that feels free, hopeful, ener-

getic, and plays like it. I want to see a fast-moving, fastbreak sets installed

teams in their division in points scored. They had a

team can put the ball in the hoop; aside from the guards I mentioned who can swing and spin the defense as they rotate around the wildcat set, There are players like Freddy Kanning, who provides the height and rebounding to balance this roster without sacrificing shooting. If this team plays up to their potential in this scheme, they should score in bunches. Just because this group will be fast-moving and running all over the court doesn't mean it won't be focused. Playing that way requires a lot of discipline, which comes from the top down, not only from Coach Schmidt but also from Coach Hunt. He has, like Coach Schmidt, received great admiration from his players; one said when he speaks, it's wisdom. The success of the program will lie in the ability of these new coaches to take many of the same players from last year's team in a new direction, one that fulfills their potential. With so many pieces in place they have to believe they can—the players certainly do. I think you should too. ■



Photo Courtesy of @nh_boys_basketball

Senior basketball players take their last media photos at Highlands.

neg-rip-roaring, high-scoring, shot-takin' (and makin'), runnin', gunnin', well-oiled basketball team fill for this offense: they're ready to push the pace. Last year the team was fourth among the five

active point differential. If they've addressed the former problem, they'll have fixed the latter. This



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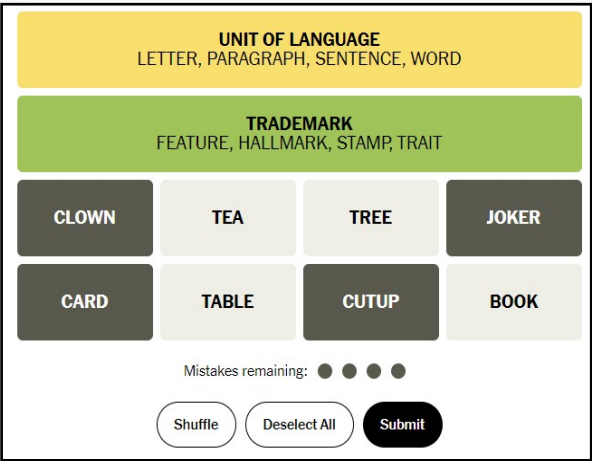
NEW YORK TIMES WEB GAMES

ACADEMICALLY VALUABLE OR SIMPLY A DISTRACTION?

Emma Twhomson '25

Wordle has been a popular New York Times game ever since its surge in popularity starting last year. However, other New York Times puzzle games have begun to take over the screens of students here at Northern Highlands. Some NYT games that are being played by many students here at Highlands are known as Wordle, Spelling Bee, Connections, and the Mini Crossword. These games are played all over the world, and are very enjoyable.

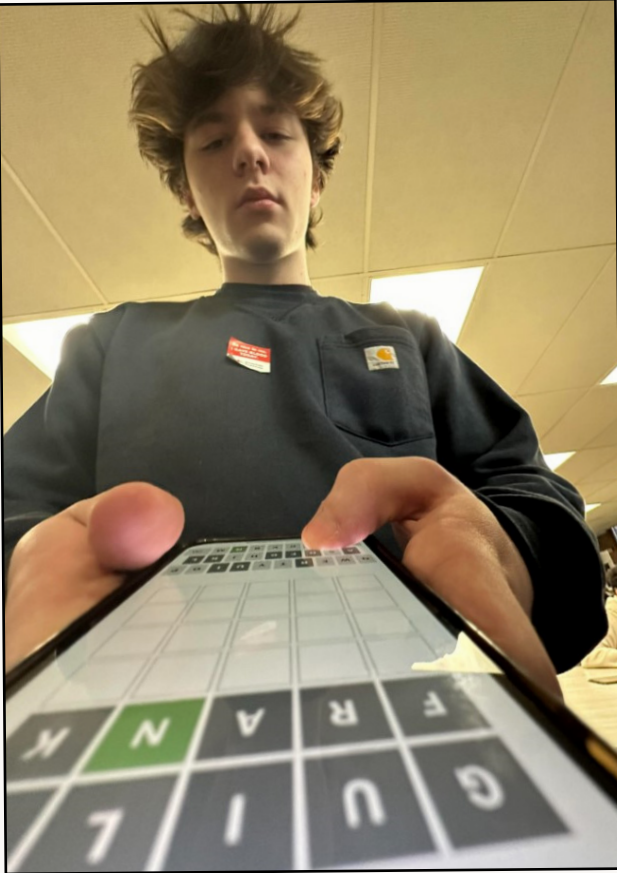
Junior Ellie Marino states that her favorite game is Wordle. This is because “not only is Wordle fun but there’s this great sense of achievement when you finally get it.” The rules of the game are fairly simple, where you have 6 attempts to guess a valid 5-letter word. If a letter turns green, the letter is in the word and in the correct spot and if a letter turns yellow, the letter is in the word but in the incorrect spot. If a letter turns gray, the letter is not in the word at all. Wordle was one of the first of the games that most people discovered before finding other games. In ad-



A gameplay of the New York Times Connections. In addition, there is a competitive edge to the game as players try to guess the word in less attempts compared to their friends. There is also another well-known game that is played by many is Spelling Bee. Junior Salma least once, known

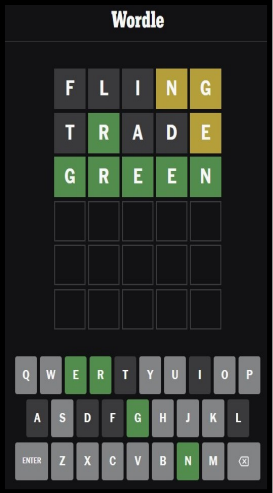
“Spelling Bee is my favorite because it’s almost endless and it’s a lot more challenging than most of the other games”

Tari explains that as the Pangram. The premise of Spelling Bee is to construct as many words as you can with the letters provided, however, you must include the center letter of

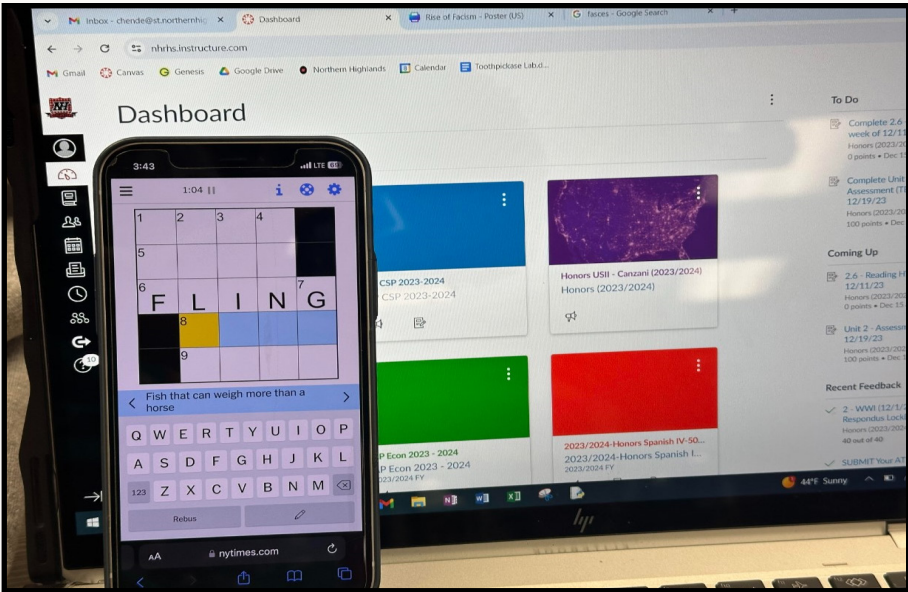


Junior Ethan Levine immersed in the Wordle.

Junior Nicole Komenda says that Connections is one of her favorite games. She states that “Connections is more challenging compared to some of the other games, but at the same time it’s fun trying to guess the different categories” she states. For the game, you are given 16 different words and you have the goal of finding groups of 4 items that share some-



A gameplay of the New York Times Wordle. NYT website is the Mini Crossword. This is almost like any ordinary crossword puzzle ex-



A gameplay of the New York Times Mini Crossword. thing in common. You have to find all the groups without making 4 mistakes. This game can be difficult as some categories are straightforward while other categories can be tricky and harder to find. In the instructions for this game, it states to watch out for words that seem to belong to multiple categories. This is because there can be red herrings that throw you off and can be placed into more than one category, which makes the game entertaining and a brain teaser. Lastly, another popular game that can be found on the

cept that it is miniature, and smaller than a normal crossword which makes it unique. This means it takes less time and can be easier to solve. These games are some of the more popular games on the NYT website. These games change everyday with different categories and words, so that the player never gets bored of them. This website also has sudoku, the daily crossword, and other fun games to play. Although these games are extremely entertaining, some may wonder whether these

games have any educational value within them. This is because the majority of these games are working with words. Many literary experts believe that these games can help engage young learners and help them identify rules and patterns within writing and language. For example, Wordle, one of many liked

NYT games, consists of learning new vocabulary, which is important when reading or spelling. These games are a fun way to keep your brain active and entertained. Many students from Northern Highlands have their favorite games on the website and Highlanders continue to play them every single day. ■