

THE HIGHLAND FLING



Art Courtesy of Derek Chen '25, Brook Xu '25

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Photo Courtesy of Reet Sacdev '27

The view from a room inside the field house which is currently under construction and set to be done soon

TAKING WORKOUTS TO THE NEXT LEVEL

An inside look into the field house construction and more

Chloé Muller '26

Many of the sports teams and gym classes will be seeing a change very soon as Highlanders will be able to access the Field House located in front of the football field. The 7,600-square-foot building will provide two team locker rooms with attached athletic training rooms, a brand-new workout gym with fresh equipment, a conference room, bathrooms, and a show-

er, as well as a reflection pond in the years to come.

As some Highlanders may remember, the plot of land where the Field House is currently was once the old tennis courts, which were replaced by new courts in the front of the campus a few years ago. In an interview with The Fling, Superintendent Scot Beckerman explained that "there were several options for what the land would be used for. We were thinking about creating our own bus station

and expanding the number of buses in our district."

Northern Highlands also supplements part of its income from renting out buses to other school districts for athletic events, thus this idea was viable, but it was decided that the Field House would be constructed as part of a desire to build "facilities [that] enhance learning," as per the 2022 Referendum.

Beckerman added that during game half-times, "Many teams sit on the

field because they think 'what am I going to do, walk back to the school? I've only got twenty minutes for half-time and most of that will be spent walking to and from the school' so they sit there shivering. Now, with the field house, they just walk to the facility and take a break in the warmth." Therefore, the Field House helps keep athletes healthy while providing a restful break.

The inside of the facility is close to completion

and although it is past the April 1 completion date, Beckerman noted that it will be "a great place for students to go during practice, gym, and games," once finished. In terms of layout, the first floor of the building is symmetrical with each half of the building having a team locker room, one for Highlands and one for the visiting sports team. Attached to each...

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HOCKEY STATE CHAMPS

A breakdown of the hockey team's win at the Prudential Center

Arisa Costakis '27

On the third day of March, the Northern Highlands Hockey team visited the Prudential Center Practice Rink to prepare for the big game the following day. The team had practices twice a week for an hour plus the time dedicated to film, watching the game play and discussing strategy. After winning the sectional game vs. Randolph with a final score of 8-3 they moved to the Prudential Center in Newark where they vs. Manalapan.

After a long season with a total of 21 wins and only 5 losses, they finished up the season with the NJ-SIAA Public championship game at Prudential Center where they won 4-3. Jake Barrata with a goal assisted by Brent Beswick and Vincenzo Capano scored the first goal in the first period. Following Barrata's goal, the defenseman Daniel Kulbanskiy scored with the passes made by Matt Gershengorn and Blake Klein.

While starting the second period with a lead of 2-0, within the first few minutes, a player on the Manalapan team snuck the puck into the net where the score...

Continued on page 16

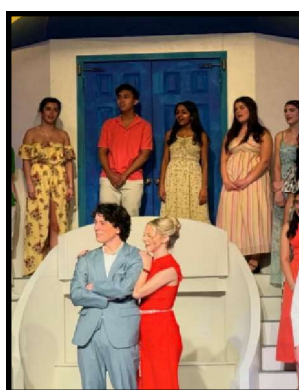
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SCRO THE HERO

Jake Scro, an on call firefighter and student, wins a massive reward

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NH Theater puts on 3 nights of vibrancy for musical Mama Mia

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JACK REILLY STARTS A TEAM

Reilly puts together a long-awaited team

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Mission Statement

The Fling staff is dedicated to producing high quality, exemplary student news media for the community to become more informed about the activities of the school. There are strict standards for maintaining relevant and unbiased stories that are curated on a pleasing spread. The goal is for the community to become more involvaed in the Highlands community by being aware of the achievements and events that go on each month.

Content

The Fling covers news related, but not limited, to the school community. All arti- cles are tied back to the Highlands community. The Fling encourages the explora- tion of different ideas, themes, concepts, trends, and recent developments within and beyond the campus that are relevant to all members of the community.

Commentaries & Reviews

Articles with these bylines are opinion articles and represent the personal opinions of the writer only. Views are not necessarily the staff of the Fling or any other indi- vidual or group in the community.

Online Viewing

All issues can be viewed at northernhighlands.org/our-school/the-highland-fling. Highlands students and staff will receive monthly emails at the end of each month when each issue is released.



Follow [@highlandsfling](https://www.instagram.com/highlandsfling) for the most current updates on our monthly newspaper.



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

Hello everyone! As your new editors in chief for the school year, we are delighted to present you our first issue. We are excited to work with our new staff this year and plan on holding more in-per- son and frequent meetings to encourage collaboration and creativity. In general, we wanted to incorporate more casual, artistic spreads that would allow the reader to escape reality and be immersed in the Fling’s world. This also gives us opportunities to feature the talent- ed artists and photographers in our school.

We also wanted to say congratulations to our staff last year! The 2023- 24 Highland Fling received the Gold Standard award from Columbia Scholastic Press Association, which we haven’t been awarded since prior to Covid-19. This award marks that we are re- covering from the hit our staff has taken during the pandemic. Using the constructive criticisms that Columbia has given us, we’ve taken the initiative to further refine and tweak small things in the paper including the artwork, images, formatting and quality of articles.

Several noticeable changes have already been made. As you may have no- ticed, we started using a newspaper flipper to mimic reading a newspaper in real life instead of a pdf file. In addition, all section editors were encouraged to integrate graphics and unique formats to optimize aesthetic appeal.

In an awkward period of transition from winter to spring, sea- sonal depression glooms over us and days become long. For our students, March is a month of hard work and dedication. The same could be said for all of our staff and community members. With that, take a moment to forget your worries and flip through these pages. We hope that you enjoy taking a look at what the Highland’s community has been up to and all of the hard work that the Fling staff has put into this issue!

- Editors-in-Chief Brook Xu and Nolan Rota

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

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

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

MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS IN AMERICA

How has the crisis affected the school community, and what can we do about it?

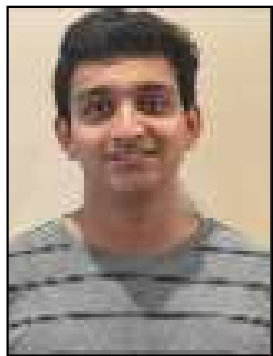


Photo courtesy of Reet Sachdev '27

Ram Raghunathan '25

In spite of the increased availability of mental health services, statistics indicate that the mental well-being of Americans is declining. Suicide rates have increased 30 percent since 2000. A third of adults in America have reported symptoms of depression and anxiety. As of 2022, only 31 percent of adults regard their mental health as “excellent.”

This may be because increased availability of mental-healthcare due to its destigmatization has allowed for more diagnoses. While, of course, such care is very expensive (that is why poorer citizens in particular suf-

fer from mental illness), to one-on-one therapy that isn’t an issue for sessions. I see two rea-

“I think our mental health crisis is so prevalent because Americans prefer medication to one-on-one therapy sessions.”

most Highlanders. But that doesn’t mean all is well for us.

Many diagnoses turn out to be incorrect, because mental-illness evaluations are mostly subjective. Mental health is an abstract and intangible concept. Therefore, mental health metrics have often been inconsistent; solutions for mental illness, unhelpful. For instance, a review conducted by BMJ Journals in 2019 concluded that the effects of anti-depressants are “minimal.”

I think our mental-health crisis is so prevalent because Americans prefer medication

sons for this. We tend to think depression is simply due to some chemical imbalance in the brain, not because of external factors.

“So, Highlanders are given a few “mental health days” off every now and then to take a break from all the anxiety and hustle-and-bustle of out daily lives.

While it is true depression is sometimes the result of biologic- al circumstances, such

as low serotonin levels, that, according to Dr. Joanna Moncrieff, founder of the Critical Psychiatry Network, is not primarily the case.

In a larger sense, I feel this view goes hand in hand with America’s individualist philosophy. We see most problems such as mental illness as personal, and disregard how others or society at large could have been their cause. Thus, solutions that will address larger societal issues—improving access to

tal health crisis.

Most Americans are busy, and simply don’t have the time to sit down and have a one-on-one conversation with a therapist. Worse still, therapists are even busier. Thus, many therapists nowadays opt for electronic communication with their patients. While this has increased the quantity of their daily appointments, it has degraded the quality of their services.

People in dire mental straits cannot be cured by a 20-minute Zoom session with someone they’ve never even met in person. Though difficult, longer in-person sessions can allow therapists to better bond with their patients, and thereby provide more successful care.

In short, the offering of mental health services in a mass-market, for-profit system has not fared well. This subject will probably hit close to home for many Highlanders.

High school can often be a highly stressful environment. So, Highlanders are given a few “mental health days” off every now and then to take a break from all the anxiety and hustle-and-bustle of our daily lives.

While many students complain this isn’t enough, I feel this is a step in the right direction. Perhaps a further step would be to establish peer-support groups, or something along those lines.■

HONORS SOCIETY TUTORING

Is tutoring through the school more beneficial than finding an outside tutor?



Photo courtesy of Miguel Granda '24

Miguel Granda '24

Here at Highlands, a student-to-student tutoring system has been created to not only bene-

to reach out and connect with their peers.

All of the tutors at highlands are National Honor Society members, who have gained their positions due to their exemplary scholarship, service, leadership, and character. These traits make up the four pillars of the club itself.

To become a tutor, you must be a member of NHS beforehand. Being inducted into the club requires a certain

Induction ceremonies take place for both juniors and seniors who meet these requirements. The NHS tutoring program begins once you become a member; you must satisfy one hour of tutoring in order to stay in the club through graduation.

Having student tutors is a very important and helpful part of Highland’s after-school activities, and they help in many ways. Firstly, the NHS tutoring system allows struggling students to connect with peers in a short amount of time. Once you contact NHS for help, tutors can volunteer to help you and get in touch with you within a matter of minutes.

Secondly, NHS tutors are very qualified, and will make sure to show how to understand and complete your work to the fullest extent. Lastly, student-to-student tutoring enables

“NHS tutoring system allows struggling students to connect with peers in a short amount of time. “

students to reach out and form connections with one another, and further encourages interaction between peers. Overall, it is a system in which both the student and tutor learn and gain new experiences.

While getting a professional tutor could help if you are strug-

seen the material more recently than a professional tutor just by being in the same age range as their peers, which helps them help you.

Additionally, NHS tutors have gone through the same curriculum—and maybe even the same teachers—as you, so they may remember

work, and will teach other methods instead.

The various benefits that come with student led tutoring sessions demonstrates why NHS tutoring has such an important role in the school community, and why you should take advantage of its opportunities.■

“Student-to-student tutoring enables students to reach out and form connections with one another, and further encourages interaction between peers.”

fit students who may need assistance in certain subjects, but to give tutors new opportunities

minimum GPA, a position of leadership, a certain amount of volunteer hours, as well as a clean record.

“NHS tutoring has such an important role at Highlands”

gling with a subject in the long term, there are many reasons as to why consulting with an NHS tutor could be the better choice.

NHS tutors may have

how your teachers want you to complete your work. A professional tutor may not know the ways in which certain teachers want their students to complete their

HOLDING ONTO MEMORIES

Mr. Grabelsky leaves Highlands better off than he found it



Photo courtesy of Reet Sachdev '27

Henry Roberts '26

Mr. Grabelsky, known as Mr. G by many people, has sadly left Northern Highlands to pursue work at another school. He was one of the wellness counselors here at Highlands, oversaw GSA, and also for the first time this year he helped coach the fencing team.

If I was asked to describe Mr. G with any word, that word would be kind. He was a kind man that knew how to make others feel wanted, and was able to bring a smile to my face many times.

Over the course of my freshman year I visited Mr. G a lot—I confided in him

about my stresses, my anxiety, and the struggles I had with my own identity.

Within the past year and a half I've got to share with him at Highlands, he has helped me more than anyone I know.

I am forever grateful.

Whilst he has helped me so much throughout my time here, my experience with Mr. G has always been more positive and more lighthearted.

I personally visited his office quite often, most times not of my own accord, called into his office

going. These little chats school that were too much

He[Mr. Grabelsky] had a knack for making people feel safe enough

with him are something that I will cherish forever.

Mr. G had a profound impact on almost everyone he talked to at Highlands whether it was as a counselor or as a friend. He had a knack for making people

to deal with alone. He was always there to listen.

He has made me a bet

person. He has had similar impacts on others here at Highlands, spreading positivity while being one of the most relatable and funny people I know, and helping others with what was stressing them. However, to think about his leave in a negative light wouldn't do his time here at Highlands justice.

Mr. Grabelsky has left a trail and a legacy of

I personally will miss Mr. Grabelsky. He was a wellness counselor that helped me through a lot, but I view him more as a close friend. He is someone who I could talk to about virtually anything, no matter how small. I know many people will miss him just as much as I do.

To Mr. G, from me and all the people here at

Mr. G had a profound impact on almost everyone he talked to at Highlands.



Photo courtesy of Northern Highlands EA Instagram

Mr. G dressed as a Taylor Swift era for Halloween

just because he wanted to chat. I was always greeted with a smile, and an easy going conversation about how each of our days were

feel safe enough to open up to him. Whether it was issues with friends, struggles and stresses that came with school, or issues outside of

ter person, a more confident person, and a person who feels comfortable with his identity as a queer

kindness behind him, and I know that the people at his new place of work are in fantastic hands.

Highlands whose lives you have transformed, thank you for everything. ■

SHOULD THIS BOOMERANG COME BACK?

While the Boomerang Project is helping Freshmen, what does it still lack?



Photo courtesy of Reet Sachdev '27

Anna Russo '27

The Boomerang Project is a program in many schools including Northern Highlands. It is a program where upper-classmen volunteer to mentor their younger peers. The program aims to connect students and make school environments safer.

The ambassadors' duties include visiting certain homerooms of the students they advise, leading their designated groups through outreach activities with pre-planned lessons, and helping freshmen navigate the transition from middle school to high school. I found it to be useful at first. However, as time passed, the program often felt forced and awkward.

The program was most helpful when freshmen had toured the school for the first time.

Having the ambassadors give you a tour of the school and an idea of what to expect helped prepare you for the school year. Seeing where your classes were in person helped students when they eventually had to find those

judging others based on appearances" and "being careful about what you post online." These are life lessons many have already learned, and as freshmen, we have already heard them from our parents or teachers.

The period feels more like a break from regular class than a period when students are supposed to participate in per

environment that can feel forced. Even though my experience has been lukewarm, I understand how new students may find the periods helpful and uplifting. However, for me, the program can feel overly controlled. A truly meaningful conversation cannot be created from a repetitive prompt or prodded out by a supervisor.

A few suggestions I have are as follows, have the conversations prompted be more open-ended and relevant rather than forced with basic questions. Participation in the outreaches results in extra points in the freshman seminar, so there is more of an incentive to keep the conversation going and have the life lessons be up to date rather than lessons taught since elementary school.

If the conversations in outreaches are more open-ended and relevant, students have a higher chance of taking an interest in them and joining in. It will feel more interesting rather than corny and awkward. This would encourage conversations

A truly meaningful prompt cannot be created from a repetitive prompt or prodded out by a supervisor.

I understand how new students may find the periods helpful and uplifting. However, for me, the program can feel overcontrolled.

classes on their own.

However, the activities that followed seemed cliché and a bit corny. For example, the lessons taught were about "not

sonal discussions.

While I appreciate the period for the reminder of a lesson and a time to unwind, it still creates an

to continue and extend The ambassadors should let the conversations continue rather than stop them when they reach the crux of the lesson. Additionally, if extra points are given, the effort of students who participate more won't be ignored and will be formed into a reward that encourages further participation. Finally, if the life lessons are more up-to-date, the period will feel more rewarding, rather than a recap of a lesson they have heard thousands of times.

Although I understand what the Boomerang

Project aims to accomplish, it falls short of some of the goals it strives to achieve. Additional thought should be put into the outreaches so that meaningful conversations start. I believe these suggestions will fix the minor problems I encountered during the Boomerang Project. ■

SPECIALIZE, NOT WELL-ROUNDED

Does being well rounded really create better enviroirments for students?



Photo courtesy of Reet Sachdev '27

Sebastian Tabakov '26

The importance of being well rounded, especially in a competitive high school environment such as Northern Highlands, cannot be understated. From the plethora of rigor-

thing for everyone—for lack of a better phrase; however, this can create overwhelming standards for students, leading to many over-looking specialization.

First and foremost, the anxiety of being well rounded simply stems from many thinking colleges want their future applicants to be “well rounded.” Yet, what is the context of “well rounded?” Does it mean to know tidbits of information in most subjects, possibly taking part in various and differing extracurriculars, or neither?

Being “well rounded” is a term used to describe someone with a fully developed personality and

rounded, rather than creating a well rounded student body.

The latter of the two is

feasible, so there needs to be a center of focus within extracurricular activities and classes for every

tion expand at a rate that is unparalleled to anything we have seen and experienced before, the demand

In essence, the concept of a necessity for students to focus on their well roundedness is counterproductive to putting emphasis on one’s talents and specializations. In contrast, we should celebrate the differences we all have and encourage adroitness.

Having the facility to be a master at whatever sector you chose is what creates the opportunity for students to truly excel.

Now is the time to tear down all the misconceptions students have in terms of being well rounded to unlock the full potential we all have in what we do best.■

Does it mean to know tidbits of information in most subjects, possibly taking oar in various and differing extracurriculars, or neither?

ous courses the school has to offer to the impressive number of clubs Highlands oversees, there is some-

skill set. And it is commonly misconceived that universities are looking for students who are well

what’s true. And recognizing the misconceived notions of well-roundedness allows students to shine in their unique paths and showcase their talents.

This creates specialization in subjects, which leads to more knowledge and quality in one’s work. For instance, when focusing on one path, one will gain greater expertise on the aforementioned subject rather than making an attempt at excelling at every subject.

Because, in high school one can not enjoy nor be subjectively good at every activity—it isn’t

student. So again, expertise and centered focus is what’s most important.

Especially since expertise is what is valued most in the world past school,

the world has for deep mastery in specific domains is at all time high.

Therefore, by encouraging students to do what they are interested in and

Now is the time to tear down all the misconceptions students have in terms of being well-rounded.

ascribed to the rapidly growing environment that society today is: where technology and informa-

successful in, there is an increase in general knowledge ability.

HIGHLANDS NEEDS HOMECOMING

Many schools have a homecoming dance except Highlands: how come?



Photo courtesy of Reet Sachdev '27

Eden Holy '26

The Homecoming dance—an event seen all the time on cheesy tv shows and movies but never here at Highlands, in our real life. Here, it’s a football game, but Homecoming on the big screen is never just about football, it’s also a dance; providing a night for all students to remember—even those who don’t really

looked forward to Homecoming—a dance that you could attend all four years of highschool. While now I see that life is obviously no movie, going to a school dance still gives students an experience that they will never forget. Much like prom, getting to have that magical night is something that has a great impact on the student body.

It’s not only an excuse to get ready with friends and get all dressed up, it’s a time to appreciate the hard work of the school’s students and make memories that will last a lifetime. Just being able to interact with others can majorly boost a student’s mental health. Having a care-free night like this helps relieve stress and encourages the student

When I was a freshman and I first learned that Homecoming had been shrunk down to just a football game rather than a school dance at Highlands, I was incredibly disappointed.

Homecoming was formerly a chance to live out the highschool experience that I, for one, was

have that option. What was even more upsetting was that when I talked to some of my friends in other areas about it, they told me that their school had also gotten rid of Homecoming as well.

In schools such as Paramus high school and Ramapo high school, Homecoming has also been “canceled” in a way, wheth-

It’s[homecoming]not only an excuse to get ready with friends and get all dressed up, it’s a time to appreciate the hard work of the school’s students and make memories that will last a lifetime.

looking forward to. Whether that meant I was going to be asked out to the dance, or spend that night with my friends, that memory would have been cherished forever.

These hopes my friends and I had for this “movie moment” had been completely crushed by the fact that our school doesn’t

er its discontinuation was due to lasting effects from isolation and safety protocols during Covid or low attendance rates in the past.

The thing is, Homecoming has been a tradition for years—it is supposed to be a part of everyone’s highschool experience.

While I know that Northern Highlands has its

Every generation is different and while the last decided that they didn’t want a Homecoming dance anymore, this one agrees that Highlands needs one.

reasons for getting rid of the Homecoming dance, it’s just not right—we Highlanders need a Homecoming. I’m aware that attendance rates have been low in the past—many students just blew off the school event altogether. However, knowing that the dance doesn’t even exist anymore makes students long for a magical night such as the one portrayed in the movies.

Every generation is different and while the last decided that they didn’t want a Homecoming dance anymore, this one agrees that Highlands needs one.

Ask anyone; most students will tell you that they would 100% attend the dance, no questions asked.

Having a Homecoming dance would provide a chance for my peers to reconnect with each other and have the opportunity to make these memories that will last them forever. It should be greatly considered that Homecoming be reinstated.■

...it’s a time to appreciate the hard work of the school’s students and make memories that will last a lifetime.

care much for football. Ever since I was in middle school, I’ve always

body to come together as one with a sense of belonging and community.

SPRINGING INTO ACTION THIS MARCH

New turf fields by the lower lots open just in time for usage by the spring sports teams, band, and other activities

Bella Zrebie'26

For the past several years, Highlands has been working on developing new turf fields by the lower lots for all teams to use. Starting in the middle of March, these fields will now be open for use just in time for spring sports to begin. The idea to create the new turf fields at Highlands was formed around 5 years ago, but only really started being talked about 2-3 years ago. Superintendent Scott Beckerman explains that the “fields were becoming unplay-

age issues,” and since so many teams played on the near the fields, giving any school or community team

These new fields are a tremendous upgrade from the muddy swamp...

grass fields, they were no longer beneficial to use. The turf is a huge upgrade for the teams at Highlands. Beckerman explains that the turf is not only to be used by Highlands athletic teams, but there will also be a practice field there for the band to use instead of the parking

lot. Lights are also installed the opportunity to use the fields, even at night. These new fields are a tremendous upgrade from the muddy swamp that was situated by the lower lots before. Equipped with the proper lines for almost every sport, it can be expected that the fields will see a far greater usage.

Despite this, it is not predicted that the new fields will cause more traffic because the existing space was just repurposed and there is not a greater amount of land or fields. Beckerman says that there will probably not be much “more use...just better use,” of the fields. Along with the open-



Photo Courtesy of NH Referendum

One of the rendered images of the new turf fields that will be replacing the old grass fields

ing of the fields in mid-march, both sides of the parking lots are ready to be reopened as well. Seniors who were previously relocated to different parking lots now will be located back to their designated parking lot freeing up more spaces for teachers, visitors, and other staff like those who work in the kitchen.

The updates on the fields are exciting for both students and staff. Sophomore lacrosse athlete Zoe Heins explains why she is excited to use the new turf fields, stating that she and her team won't “have to worry about the patchy grass” or other sports taking their playing area. Many coaches, athletes, and even the band

are excited to use these new fields, and it's easy to understand why!■

Equipped with the proper lines for almost every sport, it can be expected that the fields will see a far greater usage.

able because of drain- lot. Lights are also installed

RENOVATING HIGHLANDS: WHAT TO KNOW

Updates on the field house, when it will be ready, some of it's features including a new fitness area, and the parking situation

Chloé Muller'26

Continued from page 1

...locker room are bathrooms for the team to use, but the facility also houses two public bathrooms for visitors of Highlands to use.

The visiting team's room is attached to a small storage room for supplies. The locker room designated for Highlands also has a trainer's room attached to it where athletes can have their injuries treated by Athletic Trainer Pete Koeniges and Assistant Athletic Trainer Lisa McNerney, both of whom currently work at Highlands. “We won't be adding or removing any staff, but we will be moving current qualified staff members around,” Beckerman explained when asked about who would run the facility. This room will be equipped with two sports training tables, an ice machine, and storage cupboards. A small conference room is also being added in the center of the first floor.

Additionally, Highlands will be removing the old weight room in favor of the newer weight room being constructed on the second floor of the Field House. With this new space, the school hopes to construct two new classrooms. This new fitness center on the top floor of the Field House will fea-

ture brand new equipment, but “fewer bikes and other cardio equipment as [the school] finds that students don't use those as often,” Beckerman said. The floor of the new weight room is made of lithe black and red rubber flooring designed in the Northern Highlands logo, while the ceiling of the building has several sound tiles, which soundproof the weight room to some extent. The front of the weight room provides a spectacular view of the field, especially for students who come earlier in the morning to work out. This floor features a bathroom with a shower as well as an office.

With the grand opening of the Field House getting ever closer, many students have been won-

dering who will be able to use the facility. “Of course, our high school athletes and teams will have access to the facility before, after school, and during games, but so will students who want to work out before or after school,” Beckerman added, “Gym classes are also welcome to use the field house if they want to use the gym to work out or the locker rooms to change before going onto the field.” The hours of operation are currently under discussion for security purposes, but Principal Joseph Occhino explained that a staff member would certainly have to be present at the facility when students are using it.

The facility will also be open for use by local organizations who ask for permission from the BoE,

“but they'll likely use the facility on the weekends,” Oc-

chino states. These groups will have access to the facility through swipe cards distributed to the organizations after their applications are approved. This is

one of the reasons the back relax and de-stress from everything going on in

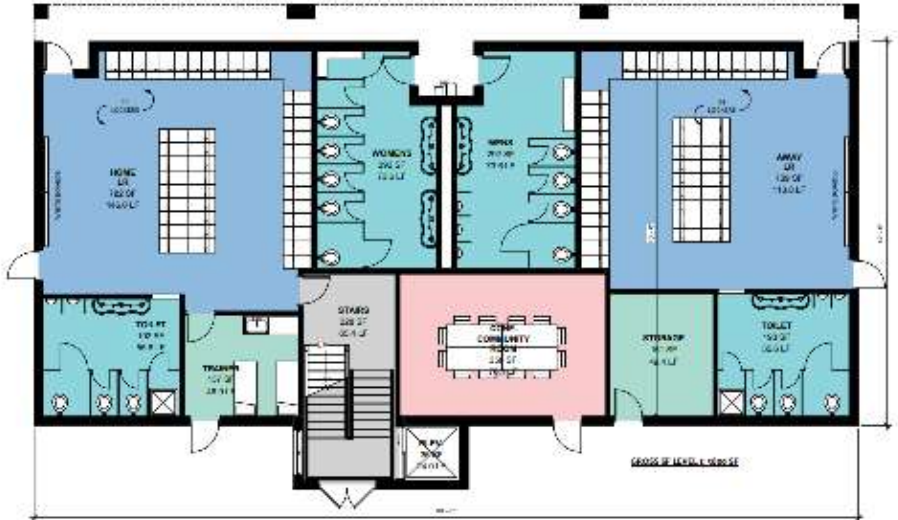


Photo Courtesy of NH Referendum

Ground floor proposed floor plan for new field house with lockerrooms, restrooms, and more.



Photo Courtesy of Reet Sadev '27

The view from a room inside the field house which is currently under construction and set to be done by April

ture ten new parking spaces. Beckerman stated that the spaces “won't be used by students during the day, but [students] will have access to the parking lot after school if they want to move their car or leave school and come back.” Occhino added that “anyone using the facility is welcome to park their car in the lot.” Finally, the left side of the facility will feature a reflection garden, which will be constructed to, “add more green space to the campus,” Beckerman said. The reflection garden will feature a fountain with the Northern Highlands logo, a small pond, and walkways for students alongside shrubs and trees. Beckerman hopes this will give students, “a place to

their lives.” More updates will be available on the reflection garden as its construction continues. With only three weeks to go until its unveiling, construction on the Field House will continue into the end of March. The administration hopes this new addition to the campus will create a more welcoming environment to work out, relax, and play as a community. ■

JUNIOR STATE TESTING

The Junior State Testing requires Juniors to pass in order to graduate...Should exemptions be allowed?

Jiya Bhadra '25

This week, the juniors are taking their New Jersey Graduation Proficiency Assessments on Math and English. This assessment known as the NJGPA is a state licensed requirement for all high school students to take in their junior year.

This test began being administered once more starting with the Class of 2023, however their test was taken out of account and deemed not to be required for their year. For the Classes of 2024 and 2025, the NJGPA has made its return in full force.

It tests knowledge up to that learned

in one's sophomore year with the math test testing concepts in Algebra I and Geometry and the English test testing comprehension and essay writing capabilities. On Tuesday juniors took the two math sections of the test each being 90 minutes long. On Wednesday they will be taking two English sections also 90 minutes each.

However, for some juniors taking more advanced classes the state testing con-

“State testing was extremely repetitive...”

Sanjna Limaye '25

cepts can feel very far removed from what they are learning. Junior Sanjna Limaye feels that “state testing was extremely repetitive... especially for students in advanced class who have not been doing that type of work in years. Al-

though it's required, they should have some exemptions in my opinion.” Since the state tests are geared towards the students in the entire state of New Jersey, some Highlanders might find that it lacks relevance to their education, regardless they remain a requirement for graduation.

Due to the testing occurring, freshmen, sophomores, and seniors have delayed openings on testing days and will be attending presentations

planned by the school from 9:45 until testing ends. As well as this, there has been a modified schedule making

this week quite the interesting week especially for the juniors whose prom is this Friday.■

“Although it's required they should have some exemptions in my opinion.”

Sanjna Limaye '25



WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH DECA?

The unwavering dedication and remarkable achievements at this years DECA state conference

Dara Cotz '27

Northern Highlands is proud to congratulate everyone who was a part of our DECA program and all of the accomplishments at both the Regional and State conferences.

We started the year with a little over 250 participants at the Regional Conference and saw 56% of our students advance to SCDC (State Career Development Conference) which was located in Atlantic City, NJ.

Moving forward to the ICDC (International Career Development Conference) in Anaheim, CA is 55 students. The national conference is extremely coveted, and it is fantastic to see our students compete at the highest level representing Highlands.

DECA prepares students as future leaders and entrepreneurs in fields such as marketing, finance, hospitality, and management. Beyond that, DECA helps students with communication skills and thinking on their feet. As Jennifer Ledermen explains, “Students learn to think on their feet when given the role play scenario, with only 10 minutes to prepare a presentation they have to use good time management and be creative with their ideas to really stand out.” Another skill that DECA improves upon is communication as students have to

clearly articulate solutions and ideas to a judge with an easy to follow presentation in a short amount of time. All skills practiced in DECA are meant to be applicable to all aspects of life, as Ledermen states, “They gain the confidence to apply those skills in so many other ways, whether it's a college interview, a job interview or just networking with other people.”

This unique experience outside the typical classroom setting allows the students to expand their education and create everlasting memories. The time spent in a community oriented environment, with emerging leaders, and ambitious/poised individuals helps each student grow. DECA also hopes to enhance students' skills to be better equipped for daily challenges in the 21st Century. Problem solving, being a part of a team, communicating ideas, and improving professional behavior are all skills that DECA strengthens. Ledermen proudly stated how “so many students have come back to tell me that DECA prepared them for life outside of school and that makes me really proud and happy.”

Since the fall, students preparing for DECA have had to plan over the summer, host fundraisers, con-



Courtesy of @weareheav

All the participants at DECA states

tact local businesses, plan events, and go above and beyond to maximize their success. Ledermen states that some students even “wrote 20 page papers about their research, accomplish-

an award super special.

Join us in applauding four students who received first place. Nicole Fox and Leila Shamash- Integrated Marketing Campaign Ser-

“[Some students] wrote 20 page papers about their research, accomplishments, suggestions and ideas for judges to read.”

Jennifer Ledermen

ments, suggestions and ideas for judges to read.” All of the behind the scene efforts leading up to each conference is what makes watching each student win

vice. Luca D'Iorio- Quick Serve Restaurant Management Series. Mackenzie Murray- Sports and Entertainment Marketing Series. Not only did each of them

advance to Nationals, they outperformed everyone else in their categories.

Along with the outstanding achievements made by our students one of our very own DECA Advisors, Mrs. Devoe, has received a certificate of Appreciation. She is celebrating her 10th year as a DECA officer at Northern Highlands. Her love and passion for DECA has provided so many students with this incredible opportunity. In addition to the expertise and guidance she adds is unmatched. We are extremely fortunate to have Mrs. Devoe

as a DECA Advisor and a member of our community at Northern Highlands.

To summarize all our school's success at the SCDC we had 50 qualifiers for ICDC, 79 Finalists, 22 Top Three Honors, and 47 Role Plays/Test awards. We would like to further acknowledge all of the DECA advisors for their support and role in each student's success. And we wish the best of luck to Northern Highland's 50 qualifiers in their final and most important conference yet.■



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A BRAND NEW LOOK FOR THE SCHOOL LIBRARY

The library is expecting a big renovation to be finished for the school year in fall 2024

Madison Koenig '27

Attention all Highlanders - get ready for a brand new look for our school library! Starting just after AP testing, the crowded shelves will be taken down and replaced by a fresh area for students to work, relax, and meet up with classmates.

The library needed an update, and the renovations will definitely do the job. Goldberg also says that the new "lounge area" won't really be a part of the rest of the library, but students will certainly appreciate the update to the school. Being separate from the

rest of the library may even help students feel less stressed when hanging out in the new area.

In addition to the renovation itself, students will also be receiving a comfortable place to study, do their homework, and hang out with their friends once the redevelopment of this sector of the library is complete. Ninth grader Cate Mamone adds onto this idea by saying that students may discover, or rediscover, a love for reading. Hopefully with the new touch to the library will also come an opportunity for students to get into books, especially if they

have lost that passion over the years.

Hopefully with the new touch to the library will also come an opportunity for students to get into books.

Most students seemed surprised to learn that the library was getting renovated; Mamone said she hadn't learned about the remodeling of the library until very recently. However, students should expect a fun area to lounge when they're not in the classroom.

Goldberg isn't taking part in the renovations herself, so most of it will be a surprise to both the

students as well as the staff. Goldberg predicts the renovations, which are starting after AP testing, "should be done by the time the students come

another thing to look forward to and explore once they come to the school. Additionally, students are undoubtedly excited about the new look of the library,

school year, [she doesn't] really mind." Renovating the library will hopefully make the school a better place.

Like Mamone pointed out, students may get more into reading, and in addition to that, all students will have a place where they can focus and converse with others. Bamboat adds to this by pointing out that "It will be a new place for kids to be social and make new friends." This new sector of the school will certainly encourage more students to connect with one another and meet new people. ■

"Hasn't been updated in at least twenty years, probably longer."

Julie Goldberg

back in the fall."

Unfortunately, this means the class of 2024 may not get to see the new area.

On the other hand, incoming freshmen will have

despite the fact that there will be a long wait until they can see the update. Ninth grader Aria Bamboat states that "although the renovations will carry into the beginning of the next

A CHANGE IN THE ADMINISTRATION

An overview on Mr. Novak, the soon-to-be new director, and his ambitions in office

Dara Kotz '27

With every new school year comes tremendous change, and starting in September, Micheal Novak will be replacing Dr. Knutelsky as the new Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

He will be guiding the department supervisors and assisting staff to ensure the schools Curriculum will maximize student's education over their 4 years at Highlands. As soon as he starts this new position in August, he will help ensure the students are getting viable and relevant education on a day to day basis. Additionally, Novak is

bringing a vast amount of knowledge and experience to his position. He attended Ramapo college for both his undergrad and graduate degrees in teaching and social studies along with his Masters in Educational Leadership in 2014.

His current position is at Lakeland Regional High School as the assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction. When compiling his very impressive qualifications, Novak is destined for success with his new position here at our school. We are very fortunate to have a wide array of elective and core class offerings. Each interest or hobby students

may have is somehow woven into the curriculum. As the world continuously changes, so do the necessities in each course.

Often, the in depth planning and process that goes into developing such a flawless curriculum is overlooked. Of course, this success cannot



Headshot of Micheal Novak

Photo Courtesy of LinkedIn

happen overnight, so each and every day, the Director of Curriculum,

Instruction, and Assessment works to ensure that the curriculum is perfect.

As you can guess, Novak will be in charge of helping everyone in the school find the best way to ensure our academic success.

Novak is no stranger to New Jersey and has always admired the success at our school. The "Electric atmosphere" as Novak describes in both the classroom and on the sports fields is one of the most exciting parts of joining the Highlands community starting next year. Novak remarked that our education system has been "The Golden Standard for school districts across the state

"There aren't enough words to describe the positive impact Novak is bound to have on the school community."

of New Jersey" In order to have the best education possible, the school would always benefit from an additional experienced and well-rounded staff member.

A new perspective is just what we need entering a new school year. With a fresh set of eyes getting involved in the development of our Curriculum he will be able to add new opinions, advice, and feedback.

This is only the beginning for Novak and we

are excited to welcome him to Northern Highlands for the 2024-2025 school year. ■

WAIT - THE SAT IS GOING DIGITAL?

The Inside Scoop on the New SAT Structure that has never been tested before

Misha Chhada '27

As spring is approaching, many juniors and seniors are preparing to take the SAT. Originally created in 1926, the SAT was used to measure a student's college and career readiness.

The SAT is now going completely digital, in an attempt to keep up with society's rapid technological advancements. This modern exam was created with the hope of being more accessible and accommodating so that all students receive equal educational opportunities.

Other than the new digital format of the SAT, further changes have also been made. First, the digital SAT will be an hour shorter than the paper-based version. Second, the digital test will have shorter reading passages, with only one question tied to each.

Additionally, the digital SAT will consist of two equal-length modules. The SAT will no longer acquire the same questions for all test takers. Instead, the digital format will adjust difficulty based on the individual's performance.

This essentially means that if a test taker does well on the first module, they will receive a second module that is more challenging.

Contrary to popular belief, the SAT is still an important part of college admissions. Ms. Spencer, a staff member here at Highlands says, the rationale

returning to requiring SATs is that there is no way to have one standardized test measuring students against one another.

You can look at a student's GPA, you can look at their activities, you can look at the classes they take...but without having a standard measure then they can't really compare apples to apples. There has been a return to this, at least in elite schools. I would imagine that that trend may continue."

With the pressure of the digital SAT, it is essential that students follow

"The Ivy League schools are returning to the emphasis on taking these standardized tests."

Susan Spencer

behind Ivy League school

beneficial study habits.

Ms. Spencer offers some helpful advice, "There is an extensive pre review online that is available through the College Board's partnership with Khan Academy. You get a lot of feedback from them, in terms of what kinds of questions you're doing well on and what kinds of questions you're not. The other thing, if students are not so motivated to do online review by themselves and they kind of need to be in a place physically to do that kind of work... our summer academy offers an SAT review course."

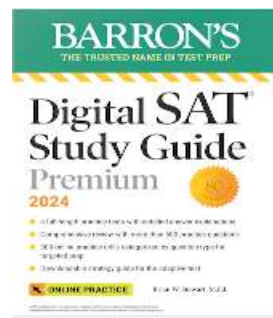
The digital SAT is a hard format to adjust to, especially if you've previously taken the paper-based version as well. Some students may feel more comfortable with the convenience of the digital format, while others like the freedom of the pa-

per-based version.

Ninety one Highlands students have already taken the digital SAT this March. Junior, Anvi Gupta, is one of these students. While she understands the importance of the SAT, she believes that it isn't a good representation of a student's knowledge.

She doesn't think that the, "SAT in general, written or digital, assesses your skills. It doesn't test how good you are at math, it doesn't test the concepts. The SAT only tests information on the SAT, it doesn't test the stuff that you've learned. I have felt that way for a long time."

The SAT can be intimidating for many, as it is often outside of a student's control. Dealing with time pressure and high expectations from yourself and your peers demands a lot. However, it's still import-



SAT textbooks are also adapting

ant to note that the SAT can help in ways beyond school, such as a student's problem solving skills and critical thinking. In some instances, the SAT can also boost a student's confidence.

Whether or not you decide to take the SAT, remember that Northern Highlands provides many resources for students to succeed in their other endeavors. ■

JAKE SCRO THE UNSUNG HERO

Senior Jake Scro named Unsung Hero by the Bergen Record

Gabriel Tejeda '26

Early this March, our favorite student firefighter, Jake Scro, was given the amazing opportunity to participate in a state-wide vote for Student of the Week.

Every week, the Bergen Record highlights ten exceptional students from Bergen, Essex, Hudson, and Passaic counties. For the week of March 4th to March 8th, Jake Scro was one of the ten students highlighted for the award.

After receiving a staggering 19,912 votes over four days, Scro secured the victory. However, he couldn't have won without

the support from our school community.

For starters, to be nominated for this award, principal Joseph Occhino has to personally send in your name. However, for Scro, it wasn't just Occhino supporting him.

On top of the support from teachers, he also received much of his support from his best friends. People were sending around the link, posting it on their social media, and sharing it within group chats. Finally, the place where people put their all into making sure that Scro won this award was the firehouse. "All my friends over there really wanted me to win, and their



Photo Courtesy of Northern Highlands Education Association

Senior Jake Scro ready to serve his community in full uniform.

support means a lot to me."

After winning, Scro shared that he was, "Very grateful for the win because it's given me a new perspective." Since his victory, he has been given a new perspective on his work as a firefighter. He now understands his importance to the community, and how proud Highlands is to

have a student like him.

However, Occhino couldn't have nominated him without cause. Scro has multiple accomplishments that have made him an amazing candidate for this award. Along with being a firefighter at the Saddle River Fire Department since he was 16, he is an EMT in both Waldwick

and Saddle River and is president of the Northern Highlands' First Responder Club. He was also acknowledged for earning multiple certifications related to topics like FE-MA's Hazmat Awareness/Operations and more, all concerning his work. Despite all of these accomplishments, he shares that, "I'm not used to being recognized for my efforts, and I'm incredibly grateful for this recognition." Along with this, he's never really been an awards person, so his victory truly shocked him, but he is incredibly happy with his victory.

Winning this means a lot to Scro and only

motivates him to continue on his path. He even said, "This is only the beginning, I just need to keep on chugging," hoping that his continued effort only brings more awards and allows him to help more people in his chosen career path of firefighter and first responder.

As a community, we should be incredibly proud of Scro for his victory in this category, and he deserves to be congratulated for his work. So, if you see him in the hallways (or fighting fire and saving lives), make sure to show your appreciation for his work within our Highlands community.

"I'm not used to being recognized for my efforts, and I'm incredibly grateful for this recognition"

Jake Scro '24

"This is only the beginning. I just need to keep on chugging."

Jake Scro '24

ANOTHER YEAR OF MADNESS

How Did Students Participate in March Madness This Year?

Willie Steinfink '25

The month of March was yet again... MADNESS. This year's NCAA tournament was as surprising as always, for both the men and the women. Once again, upsets in the men's bracket occurred, the most surprising being Jack Gohlke's record-breaking 32-point performance to

to have correctly predicted 30 out of the 67 total games. Many students at Northern Highlands filled out brackets. Some went to extreme lengths to attempt to defy the 1 in 9.2 quintillion odds of getting a perfect bracket.

Ethan Levine, a junior at our school, stated that he filled out "75 brackets on ESPN". To be able to

Slabosevicius. He described the competition this year as "one of the most exciting ever". Jeremy's bracket did not end up remaining perfect, as unfortunately, he chose 2-seed Iowa State to win. They lost a tough game to the 3-seed Illinois in the Sweet 16. When asking him about the women's tournament he said that "[he] was much more excited for the final games in the women's tournament than the men's". Many others across social media had the same opinion, which marked a significant stride in women's sports.

The women's tournament amassed a whopping 18.9 million viewers which greatly outnumbered the men's championships' 14.8 million viewers. Not only was there an increase in viewership on TV but also the demand for tickets to watch the games in person. According to StubHub, there was a higher demand for women's tournament tickets than for the men's tournament. The ticket prices for the women's games were also pricier being at around



Artwork Courtesy of Cameron Waller '26

Impactful players of the tournament listed from left to right: Jack Gohlke (3), Angel Reese (10), Caitlin Clark (22), D.J. Burns Jr. (30), and Donovan Clingan (32).

\$700 while the men's were at \$540. The popularity of the women's tournament also reached the Women's National Basketball Association. There was

March Madness did not fail to live up to expectations once again this year. The men's tournament was a success with the UCONN Hus-

undefeated South Carolina Gamecocks winning it all. Now the race to make a perfect bracket resumes for next year's march. ■

"Pretty much after one of the first games where Duquesne upset BYU all my brackets were gone, and then after Yale and Oakland both won it was all over"

Ethan Levine '25

help 14-seed Oakland beat 3-seed Kentucky. The women's bracket was not short of surprises either as they had a monumental year. Incredibly, their tournament amassed more viewers.

Before 2024, no bracket had ever remained perfect in the NCAA men's Tournament and this year once again, the streak continued. The closest a bracket has been to perfection was recorded

fill out this many brackets he had to make 3 different accounts. "Pretty much after one of the first games where Duquesne upset BYU all my brackets were gone, and then after Yale and Oakland both won it was all over," said Levine. This was a sentiment that many shared around the world, but there were some exceptions.

One student who had a lot of success with the tournament was Jeremy

Jeremy Slabosevicius described the competition this year as "one of the most exciting ever"

reportedly a 21% increase in the viewership in the WNBA compared to that of 2022.

kies coming out on top. The women's tournament made headway in all female sports and had the

*On April 8, the Moon's shadow dazzled millions
across North America with a stunning view of a total
solar eclipse...*

The Solar Eclipse

**Eclipses don't occur often – the next one
happening in the US is in 2044.**

By Ethan Levine '25

This past April 8th, a solar eclipse was visible across North America. Some traveled thousands of miles, and some didn't care at all.

Here at Highlands, special glasses were handed out to all students to ensure safe viewing and sports were delayed, as the eclipse peaked at around 3 pm. Vice President of the Astronomy Club Junior Linas Chucar-Palubinskas had the opportunity to travel to see totality (when the moon completely covers the sun) in Vermont. He had originally planned to see it in Troy, NY, but with looming clouds he and his family decided to go further north.

When he got out of the car and looked up he described it as a "magical feeling".

"Everything goes dark, everything goes quiet, the birds go crazy and there's just this cold and surreal feeling..."

Eclipses don't occur often – the next one happening in the US is in 2044. New Jersey itself only had a partial one this year. If you'd like to witness one sooner, you'd have to travel to Greenland, Iceland, Spain, or Russia in 2026.

Their rarity is what makes them so special. It's the driving force for why people travel so far. Chucar-Palubinskas described how he saw "the corona around the moon and [that] it just looks beautiful... There were

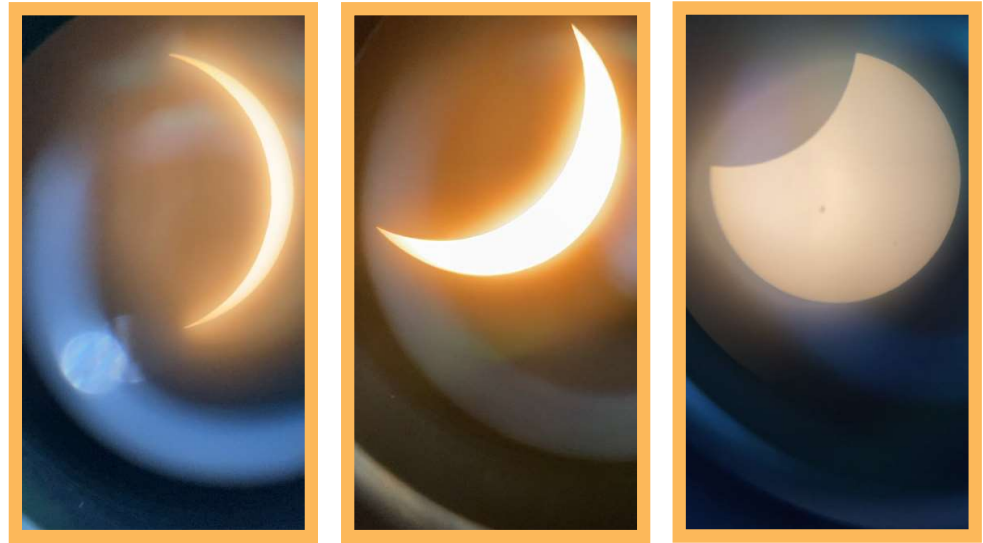
strands of light coming out in different colors, like red, green, and blue."

While Chucar-Palubinskas thoroughly enjoyed this cosmic event, other students such as Junior Nolan Rota simply just "watched it for around 5 minutes."

The eclipse isn't just a celestial occurrence – it also helps us understand our past. Historians and astronomers can pinpoint the exact date and location of past eclipses, which can then be cross-referenced with historical records to validate events or understand the timing of certain occurrences. As Chucar-Palubinskas explained, "we can track history back to when eclipses occur... they were used to prove Einstein's theory of relativity and the day of when Jesus died."

Apart from Chucar-Palubinskas, many other Highlands students also were enthusiastic about the eclipse. Junior Dan Duker told me that he thought it was "really special" and that his father had "driven 4 hours to upstate NY to watch totality." He was also glad that the sports were delayed as it gave him the opportunity to really soak in the moment.

"It was really cool to feel how the temperature dropped for a bit, and the sky darkened. It wasn't much, so I can only imagine what it would be like to see totality."



Telescope images of the solar eclipse.



Highlands students enjoying the solar eclipse.

Duker also noted that he was definitely going to try and see totality during the future 2044 eclipse. The solar eclipse on April 8th not only attracted astronomy enthusiasts, but it also provided an impromptu lesson in the science of our solar system for many. At Highlands, the event was more than just the moon blocking the sun; it was an educational experience that drew many together in a moment of amazement.

If you're interested in space and things like the eclipse, Chucar-Palubinskas added that "a great way of learning about more spatial phenomena is by joining the Astronomy Club."



The Met? The MoMA? Nope, NH Hallways!

Salma Hassan ‘25

The new murals adorning the walls of our school have created an amazing atmosphere at Highlands, and have brought life back into our once bleak hallways. These murals are not merely paintings; they are evidence of the creativity present at Highlands, ranging from landscapes to motivational sayings. It feels like an art gallery when you go through the halls these days, with masterpieces waiting to be discovered at every corner. And these masterpieces are made by our very own Highland-



Windowsill Mural Painted by Gwen Byrne

from these murals. I had the pleasure of interviewing Senior Gwen Byrne, one of the artists responsible for the motivational quote near a breathtaking landscape. Gwen’s art has transformed the once blank and boring hallways into little pockets of beauty for everyone at

artwork with intention. Herself, Sydney Wishick, Gianna Ruggieri, and Mae McGivney, collaborated on the mural next to wellness titled “Every Flower Must Grow Through Dirt” to bring attention to the wellness center and to beautify the hallway. The inspirational quote, surrounded by intricate flowers, showcased these artists’ talent and added a much needed serotonin boost to the hallway.

Murals can add art into a school’s physical environment and can have a multitude of positive impacts. Firstly, they foster a sense of pride and ownership among students and staff who contribute to the creation. For example, Gwen enjoys knowing she has left a positive legacy on Highlands (and she loves the kind compliments people give when walking by).

The process of creating the murals may be long and tedious. However, Gwen expressed that she loved the process and would complete the murals on her own time, mainly whenever she had free time after school. She loved the creative process and seeing her hard work come together,

knowing that it will be a long-standing piece of Highlands. These murals do more than just make the hallway look beautiful. They create a bright environment which can make a student’s day, and as a whole the murals have uplifted the mood and “vibe” of students and staff alike. Before the murals, Highlands just felt like a school, but with these murals it shows our school for the community it is, filled with creative individuals. Personally, these murals make my day, and I have to say from cinder, prison-like blocks to gorgeous creative murals I consider them a major upgrade. The vibrant and engaging visuals uplift Highlanders, creating a welcoming and inspiring learning environment. ■



Mural located by wellness painted by: Gwen Byrne, Sydney Wishick, Gianna Ruggieri, and Mae McGivney

ers. Students and staff alike feel the positivity radiating from the wellness and beautiful painting of a window overlooking Highlands to enjoy. Her inspiration stemmed from her faces for years to come. Gwen created her



FACE THEIR BIGGEST CHALLENGE YET

Henry Roberts '26

In brand new Aca-news, Highlands Voices must face their biggest challenge yet: the Semi-Finals of the ICHSA Competition. After January 28th, when Voices competed in the Varsity Vocals Quarterfinal here in Hopkins Hall, placing second behind Mpulse from Montville Township High School, the group has been preparing relentlessly for the Semifinal where they will face even tougher competition.

In the quarterfinal of the competition, Voices put on a fantastic performance and placed second as previously mentioned. Another outcome of the competition was that senior and 3rd-year member of the group Sam Materesky won best vocal percussionist.

Since the quarterfinal and throughout this acapella season, the group has faced many challenges. The first struggle to mention is that the set they will be competing with has changed. Previously, the set they performed consisted of three songs.

The first of these songs is "Rather Be" by Clean Bandit featuring Jess Glynne, an upbeat dance track

from the mid-2010s, whose solo was sung by senior Antonia Bellapianta. The second song performed by voices was a

the group has decided to change their first song of the set to "Ain't Got Far to Go" by Jess Glynne, featuring solos from

of the musical so we're having to get back to where we were and hopefully surpass where we were, so from that

2023 academic year, the group has had to build its chemistry from the ground up. Mr. Paster had to say that "They've

really want to make it through to the finals, and I'm going to make sure I do everything I can to help make that happen for the group. I have loved performing with this group so much, it has been so much fun, and I don't want it to end yet."

His fellow group members have shared the same intensity, with Mundy saying, "I've needed to be more meticulous about my notes and that I'm giving 100% all the time." If the group truly channels their effort into winning this semifinal Mr. Paster said that "we've made finals a lot and I certainly think we can do it again."

The semifinal will take place on March 23, 2024 here in Hopkins Hall. Voices has worked extremely hard to get to this point so it's important for our Highlands community to wish them the best of luck. ■



Left to right: Farrah Dello Russo '25, Emma Pereira '24, Nikki Carcara '24, Miguel Granda '24, Dylan Yu '24, Antonia Bellapianta '24, Nick Franchi '25, Gianna Mundy '24, Zaara Israni '24, Sam Materesky '24, Isha Korgaonkar '24, & Hansa Suresh '24

mashup of "Beautiful" by Christina Aguilera, and "I'll Stand By You" by Pretenders. The soloists for these songs were junior Farrah Dello Russo and senior Gianna Mundy.

On the experience of having a solo Dello Russo explained that "It definitely is a lot more stressful," and that "After I sing my solo in the set I feel a lot more relaxed." Finally, the last song sung in the quarterfinals was "Waterfall" by Disclosure, yet another dance track, whose solo was sung by senior Hansa Suresh. After consideration

seniors Zaara Israni and Emma Pereira.

"We changed the first song of our set, and therefore have to learn new choreography and clean up the music super fast so it sounds like we've been working on it for months," remarked Pereira on the struggle of adding a new song to the set.

Another struggle that the group has faced had to do with the school musical Mamma Mia! which was directed by Voices director Mr. Paster. On how the musical has affected the group Paster had to say, "We've taken a break because

standpoint it's a little nerve racking."

Other members of the group shared similar sentiments. One of such people being the group's bass, senior Dylan Yu, saying that, "We took a short break for the musical since so many of us were involved in it," which left the group with little "time left, so we're working really hard." The group surely is working hard, rehearsing, "Three times a week," as reported by Yu.

After the majority of the group's members graduated following the 2022-

grown a lot, because this is the first year most of them have sung together."

None of these struggles seem to break the iron will of the group, who have been dialed into the competitive mindset that they truly need to compete at the highest level. Soloist Gianna Mundy said that "the competitiveness from quarter to semifinals is drastically different," proving that the groups really needed to work hard to be able to stand a chance in this competition.

Dylan Yu mentioned on a more personal note that "I

MAMMA MIA! HERE WE GO AGAIN

The spring musical was a raging success

Karina Rosenberg '26

New season, new performance. We left off with the fall play: “A Midsummer Night’s Dream,” and with lots of hard work and dedication, Highlands struck again with their talent and passion.

You may have wondered, *why Mamma Mia?* Well, as Mr. Paster puts it, “It was fun. I thought we needed something that was fun and had a good amount of dancing. Last year’s

end rehearsals to hours upon hours of dancing and singing, the commitment and enthusiasm really paid off when the actors were met

the special appearance of Mr. Meizys’ daughter, Lili. After Mr. Paster sent out an email to the entire staff looking for a 9-10

wouldn’t choose to spend them with any other group.”

Sadly, the seniors who have poured endless energy and time into this program are leaving. However, this

the auditorium—that are definitely not as fun, but I was reminded of them and now I feel prepared for next year’s show.” Following this frequent won-

end of cabaret night, maybe in late May or June.”

Stay tuned in the following months to find out the performance for next year’s musical. In case you

“It was fun. I thought we needed something that was fun and had a good amount of dancing.”

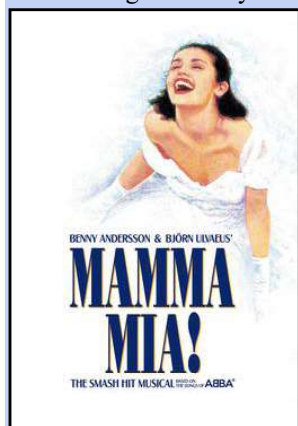
with a full house for every one of the four performances. Some scenes sparked laughter throughout, while others jerked tears, and not only in the audience. Senior Hannah Altman—who played Donna Sheridan—remarks, “As a senior, this was such an amazing final show. I loved how Mr. Paster valued professionalism, but at the same time wanted us to have a great experience. I’m going to miss NHTC so much.”

That great experience was felt all throughout the theater community. In addition to the talent and entertainment from the Highlands actors, these skills continued through

Mr. Thomas Paster year old dancer, Mr. Meizys volunteered his daughter, and after Mr. Paster saw her dance, she got the part. As the cast spent lots of time with her, Lili’s experience surrounded by high-school actors was amazing. As her dad spoke on her behalf, “Lili loved the experience. The Highlands students were so welcoming and her partner KC was especially kind and patient with Lili.” While many may have favored young Sophie and Donna dancing during Slipping Through My Fingers, Hannah’s favorite part of the whole show was, “... growing closer with the cast. We had some very long days together, but I



Hannah Altman and many other cast members performing “Money, Money, Money”



Mamma Mia! musical poster

show—Bright Star—didn’t have much of that, and it was a very heavy subject. I wanted to go the opposite direction—lighter subject, more fun, more dancing!” From countless week-

talent will be passed along to the cast in the following years. As the performers have been questioning non-stop... Will Mr. Paster be the director again next year? Coming straight from the source; “Absolutely, I had a lot of fun! There are a lot of things that I forgot about—like scheduling

der comes the most popular one... WHAT WILL NEXT YEAR’S SHOW BE? Again, right from the director’s words; “I’m hoping to have a cabaret night this year where people can perform a musical theater selection and traditionally, in the past, I have named next years’ show at the

waited too long to snatch tickets to this show, don’t miss out on the next one... or better yet, you can be in it!! Remember, Highlanders— the winner takes it all.



Ben Sherlock, Katie McWilliams, Max Punla, and Anya Poddar



(From left to right) Alexis Cirillo, Hannah Altman, and Gianna Mundy



Hannah Altman and Aidan Walsh



Katie McWilliams and Hannah Altman with other cast members



(From left to right) Alexis Cirillo, Nick Franchi '25, Hannah Altman, Aidan Walsh '24, Gianna Mundy

OSCARS NEWLY FOUND POPULARITY

How do Highlanders feel about the Oscars’ results this year?

Nina Misantonis ‘25

Every year, the Oscars manage to be one of the most prestigious award ceremonies in the world, with popular movies having the chance to receive recog-

The function resulted in the movie Oppenheimer winning the most awards, with Christopher Nolan winning best director, Cillian Murphy as the best actor, and more. Junior Riley Nolan com-

Nolan added onto her statement by pointing out that “I think it was expected that Oppenheimer would win most of the awards during the Oscars as well,” which many people agreed on. However, although some are disappointed by all the wins the film took home that night, other actors and movies definitely got their chance to shine.

For example, Billie Eilish and her brother Finneas won the Best Original Song award, which provided the Barbie fans with the joy they wanted. This wasn’t the only Barbie-related thing that occurred during the Oscars, as Ryan Gosling performed the song “I’m Just Ken” at the event.

Performances at the Oscars were previously not common at all, and people who watched the event agreed that it elevated the evening’s mood ex-

tremely well. Sophomore Paige Ellis expressed her opinion on the performance by stating that “I think Ryan Gosling looked

La La Land. Fans of the actors agreed that it was a cute moment to see both of them shine that evening. Senior Katie

down and watch it but this year it was actually interesting.” More jokes and bits were made at the Oscars this year, which made the occasion even more entertaining than usual.

One of the funny moments McWilliams witnessed was when “Danny Devito and Arnold Shwartznegger presented an award together, and just the way they looked next to each other was hilarious.” People also enjoyed Jimmy Kimmel’s hosting of the occasion, as his jokes and monologue increased the audience’s interest greatly.

With next year’s Oscars, moviegoers believe that Dune 2, Blitz, and Conclave are some likely nominees for the awards. People also hope that next year’s Oscars will be similar to this one’s, with songs from movies being performed and more funny moments taking place.■



Cillian Murphy receiving the oscar for Best Actor.

Photo courtesy of The Hollywood Reporter



From left to right: Robert Downey Jr, Da'Vine Joy Randolph, Emma Stone, Cillian Murphy.

Photo courtesy of abc.com

amazing in that pink suit, and I just loved the whole performance. And I loved when he sang to Emma Stone because they were in La La Land together.”

While on the topic of Emma Stone, many noticed the parallels between her winning an award for acting and Ryan Gosling performing a song and their respective roles in

McWilliams commented on Emma Stone’s winning of the Best Actress award, agreeing that “I really enjoyed Emma Stone winning for Poor Things, I’m a huge fan of her and I thought it was hilarious how she ran out to receive the award.”

McWilliams also pointed out, “I think this was the best Oscars in years, I usually never sit

MURAL CERAMIC CREATIVE

The Allendale Mural is being repainted by Highlands students

Emma Thompson ‘25

In the center of Allendale, there is a well-known mural located near the steakhouse. This mural has been there for a very long time, so much

The Allendale mural has always been a huge aspect and part of the town’s identity. The current design of the mural is intended to highlight Allendale’s past and present. This is shown through elements such as

With the mural having the same design for over 20 years, it deserves to have some new colors and renovations. Art Teacher Meredith Melle explains that the design has been worn down over the years and that “it is very faded and the imagery can no longer be seen.”

Soon, the mural will be repainted and redesigned. This new design will be made with some help from our very own students who have signed up to participate. These students will all be able to use their creative abilities to make this mural unique. Art Teacher Meredith Melle has gathered a bunch of her students to be a part of this project, and it’s a great way to show off their artistic abilities.

This new design will be different from the original; it will contain architectural ceramic relief tiles as well as painted images made by the students. Melle states that “These large-

scale ceramic elements will undergo a process of hand building and relief carving, after which they will need to dry over time before being fired in a kiln.” Students will also be responsible for glazing each of their tiles.

Many students who are currently taking art as one of their electives are planning to help out with this project. Junior Gabri-

With the mural having the same design for over 20 years, it deserves to have some new colors and renovations.

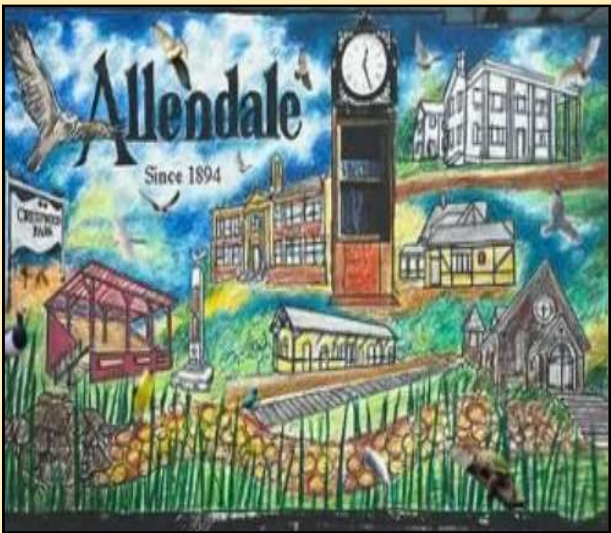


The current state of the Allendale Mural.

Photo taken by Junior Nick Franchi

so that everyone who has been to Allendale has seen it. It is filled with colorful images and bright colors.

the celery farm, the clock found in the center of the town, a church, a trolley, strawberries, and a train.



The previous mural that was taken down nearly 25 years ago

Photo courtesy of www.northerney.com

they’ve had.” The work of these students will leave a lasting impression on the town with its new look.

This project will help give the mural a fresh look and will show the artistic talent that is apparent in so many students here at Northern Highlands.■

“It’s not that often that you see a ceramic mural so I’m excited to be part of the process and to see it complete.”

Gabriella Rodriguez ‘25

ella Rodriguez is one of the many students helping with the new mural, and has taken the time to let me interview her. She explains how ceramics has always been one of her favorite mediums of art.

She stated “It’s not that often that you see a ceramic mural so I’m excited to be part of the process and to see it complete.” She also thought it was great to see Allendale’s history being

recognized in a visual and three dimensional way.

Not only did Rodriguez enjoy the ceramic aspect of the new mural, but she also wanted to be involved in the process because the mural will be up for many years to come, and many people will be able to view and see it. “It gives me the chance to display my artwork to the public, which is not an opportunity that many can say that

WOLF WON BEST ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

Jessie Wolf won best athlete of the week for swimming and expressed her accomplishment

Gabriella Ragazzo ‘26

A sophomore named Jessie Wolf has recently won best athlete of the week. Jessie is currently



Jessie Wolf swimminng live action shot

on the swim team and is an excellent athlete. Due to her determination and credited skills, she was able to earn this amazing accomplishment. Learning about her recognition, Jessie explains, “I felt really proud to have achieved this and my mom and I both were really excited when coach

Viscardi called and told us that I had won athlete of the week.” Her reaction and overall thoughts on the situation was overjoyed and happy due to all of

her hard work paying off. Learning more about Jessie, she explained her reputation with swimming. She states, “I have been swimming for 5 years now, and just last year I moved swim teams to the Wyckoff sharks. Changing teams has allowed me to improve greatly while also making new friends.

I look forward to going to practice everyday which I ing up I frequently attended my sisters club and high



Jessie Wolf, Northern Highlands swimming drawing

think is the most important thing about playing a sport, it’s difficult to be good at something that you don’t really enjoy doing. Swimming has always been a big part of my life, and grow-

school meets, so it was kind of natural for me when I began swimming.” Jessie understands the necessities that apply to sports and how it takes more than hard work, but enjoyment to get

where you want to be. She demonstrates what it’s like to be a great swimmer with a great mindset. Not only does her mentality stay strong, but her training is ongoing and hardwork. Jessie says, “I train 6 times a week in the water, and I do dryland usually 5 times a week where we do strength training.” When receiving a reward, there comes the hardwork and determination behind the scenes. Jessie presents her schedule and how the majority is training for swimming. This proves her undenyng effort and overall preparation for her sport. Winning this accomplishment was the recognition Jessie deserved for all of her hard work. She explains, “I was able to achieve this accomplishment because of my wins at our state sectional quarter-final. Going into this meet, I was a little nervous because I knew there would be a couple fast girls I would have to compete against but I knew that all I needed to do was try my best for my team.” Not only was this pressure on her, but her sister’s reputation was also a leading factor. Later

she states, “I was really excited about getting athlete of the week because my sister also got this award when she went to highlands and so it means a lot to me that I am able to continue this tradition. I was a little surprised when I found out that I won this award because I was not really expecting to win it this year.” Knowing that Jessie has to support her family, friends, and team, she is unstoppable. Thanks to her we all have a role-model athlete to look up to. To conclude she states, “I would like to thank all of the NH swim girls because they are the ones who really make it worth it and I look forward to these meets because of them. I could not have done it without the support and motivation from my teammates. I would also like to thank coach Viscardi for the endless support he gives me.” In the end, her recognition and accomplishments won’t stop here and we are all excited to see what Jessie will do her next two years at Highlands. ■

Photo creds to Charlie McGill/NorthJersey.com

THE ROAD TO VICTORY: SWIMMING CHAMPS

The boys varsity swimming team are now state champions for the 2023-2024 season

Gabriella Ragazzo ‘26

The boys varsity swim team has brought home a state championship win. With hard work and dedication, they had the accomplishment of receiving a high recognition for their great and hardworking season. Due to their undenyng efforts and overall weekly practice, the boys were able to continue to strive throughout the season. Win after win they continued their strike and began marching forward to the championship game of the season. In following the game, they prepared purposefully and strategically in knowing all could be determined off of their individual performance. Anthony Cheng, a sophomore on the team shares the feedback Highlands wants to hear. He states, “The boys had felt a huge accomplishment and relief because everyone had expected us to lose going into the meet. So, ultimately winning states had surprised everyone as we had upset the results of the meet.” Even though some doubted the team, their overall victory was something that everyone was happy to acknowledge. Later, I asked Antho-

ny what led to this huge win, and how they showed everyone how strong of a team they are. He explains, “I think that Coach Viscardi’s hard work in making our lineup had led us to this huge win as he spent hours making the lineup and spent a few more hours with us just to make sure that we had agreed with what he had decided. With the help of the boys and Viscardi we were able to have a chance when we

walked onto the pool deck.” Coach Viscardi’s leadership with the team granted them with a leap of confidence and determination to get the job done. Even with their overall victory and competitive season. I asked Anthony if there was anything he would have changed or done differently this year. He states, “There isn’t much that I would change because we’ve had great support from both the boys and girls and Viscar-



Northern Highlands Boys Swim Team Celebrating in the water



Northern Highlands Boys Swim Team Celebrating in the water

di’s hard work had ultimately led us to the win.” This alone proves that the hard work and determination that the boys had all season, proves that this was a well worthy win. Within this mindset Anthony explains, “We had spent hours on our own time to make sure that we were able to find the perfect lineup to win by just 2 points which was honestly the most that we could’ve have done.” With this type of leadership from the coach and overall game plan, they were able to get the job done and bring home a Highlands victory. To acknowledge the win after the swim meet, Anthony says, “We had celebrated the win with pushing both of our coaches into the pool and as well as a bunch of photos. We had finally been able to get our state title after a very long time.” Looking back on the season and overall years worked up to this moment, nothing could have ended better for the team. It was a great victory and Highlands is proud of the team and how far they have come. It was a well deserved win for a hard working team. ■

Photo taken by Northern Highlands

Photo taken by Northern Highlands

THIRD TIMES A CHARM FOR NH HOCKEY

The varsity boys ice hockey team are state champions for the 2023-2024 hockey season

Arisa Costakis '27

Continued from page 1

...had then been cut close. With only a bit over two minutes after the score was nervously close Brent Beswick got the puck in the net and we once again had been in the lead by 2 points. With penalties being called and power plays being taken advantage of the third period rolled in. The student section filled nearly 3 sections of the large hockey stadium diagonal from the loud Manalapan student section that had been near the players.

All the eyes had been going back and forth along with the puck. One minute into the third period, Sam Gankin on the opposing team shot their second goal. 3 minutes later another goal had been scored for the Manalapan team. The game was now back at the start, a tie and the next goal could determine the state champion.

With 6 minutes left in the last period of the season, Vincenzo Capano scored the final goal. Northern Highlands Hockey won their 3rd championship in the 2024 season. One of the team captains, Vincenzo Capano, replies to the feeling of the score being tied with only minutes left in the period, "It was stressful losing the lead, but you

are not thinking about it too much, you're just thinking about the next shift and getting the next goal."

Stressing over the tie was broken within 5 minutes as he scored the game-winning goal. He says, "It was an amazing feeling to get the job done

captain playing as a defenseman, Daniel Kulbanskiy, who scored in the second period states, "Being someone who doesn't score much, having that goal in the championship game was an amazing feeling. It was only my 3rd goal of the season, but it couldn't have

minutes approached in the third period with the score tied there was more stress in the air for all the players and fans. Kulbanskiy says, "I was slightly nervous when they tied the game since they had the momentum, but I believed in our team and you could just tell

Leading up to the big championship game had been full of emotion, working hard to even get the opportunity to play in the Prudential Center, but as other teams versed Northern Highlands they had been knocked out one by one.

Brent Beswick, one

scored the third goal in the second period. While his teammate Vincenzo Capano scored the game winning goal a period later. Beswick describes the buzzer ringing as unreal and still doesn't. He says, "I think the feeling of winning is great at the moment, but the next day is a new day and you move on to the next goal. I think from losing last year we knew the pain of losing which still hurts to this day and we didn't want that to happen again." Besides the big win he goes forward and says, "Seeing the seniors go out on top was the best part and seeing our captains lift the trophy was something that really stood out for me in the whole experience." Beswick is currently a junior, but next year he will hopefully be the senior to lift the next trophy.

After the championship, the tradition of going to AB&G continued. Players showed up along with the Northern Highlands Sports Association and several parents. Even with all the food being served and all the celebrating they continued celebrating until 1 am on March 5th. Where they woke up the next day to go out for breakfast at a Matthews Diner until 9:30 to walk into the building proudly with their championship hats and smiles. ■



Championship game winning photo on the ice

Photo creds to Northern Highlands

with my teammates, the joy of scoring and winning didn't set in until the final buzzer rang." Hockey includes the involvement of teammates and the friendships made in the sport, while winning the sport each player loves, they did it as a team. The team

come at a better time." Kulbanskiy is graduating this year and with this being his final season, getting a goal in the championship game will forever be memorable.

With his goal, the score had left Northern Highlands at a score of 2-0 in the first period. When the last few

everyone was on the same page... we weren't going to let a tied score stand." The Northern Highlands Varsity hockey team worked hard for months whether it had been practices being planned last minute or even warming up in the cold. The dedication each player had put into the season paid off.

of the starting players says, "Leading up to the game there were definitely nerves. We had confidence we could get the job done, but like any championship game, anything can happen. I think once the game starts you just get in a flow and play your game and try to take it all in." Beswick

JACK REILLY'S PUSH FOR BOYS VOLLEYBALL

Jack Reilly believes we should have boys volleyball due to popularity here at Highlands

Gabriel Tejeda '26

For years, Highlands sports have been top-notch. However, there's always been one thing missing. And Jack Reilly, a sophomore, has the cure.

Thanks to him, we will finally have a boys volleyball team. Reilly had the bright idea to establish a boys volleyball team after playing the sport in a club during his freshman year. He calls volleyball, "A good way to have some fun and work on your skill."

Currently, they are still searching for teachers who are willing to coach the real team. There are around 90 students and ten teams within the club, so the demand for a coach is high. Reilly himself would take on a leadership role, likely becoming team captain upon the formation of a real team.

Along with the high attendance rates, Reilly also shares that, "People are really into it, they're com-

petitive, they play well, and a lot of girls from the girl's team are helping us referee, which is helping everyone learn a lot about the game."

Within the club, there are many different skill levels. Some boys play volleyball in a club, providing them with the extra knowledge to excel in the sport. Others have never touched a volleyball outside of gym class.

However, the club is enjoyable for all due to its physical yet enjoyable atmosphere. There are many benefits to volleyball, most notably an increase in your physical fitness and teamwork skills. Reilly says himself, "I think a lot of people would benefit from it [volleyball] for the rest of their lives." The skills acquired from a sport like volleyball are unmatched. That's why Reilly thinks it's essential for Highlands to have a volleyball program for boys and girls.

Now, the boy's volleyball team is limited to



Boys practicing volleyball in the gym

being just a club. They are currently running a tournament, and are hoping to get a team running next year.

According to Reilly, there are three different options for the volleyball team's future. He says, "There could be a JV team within Highlands, a shared JV team with another

school, or just a club." If the JV title was shared with another school, that would open up a world of possibilities and opportunities for Highlands that we have never really seen. However, a Highlands JV team would also be amazing as it would mean we would finally have an official volleyball



Boys practicing volleyball in the gym

team, able to compete in competitions while branding our logo. If it remains a club, it will still be the fun, welcoming, and amazing environment it is today.

The future of volleyball at our school is bright, and Reilly is campaigning it all. It took work, and he's still working hard to get approval for a real team. For the time being, running a tournament just requires

gym time. "We're not fundraising or anything, so we don't need approval for that, we just need gym time." Once approval is given, coaches are decided, and teams are settled, our community will finally have a boy's volleyball team. With a promising 90 members, this club has a bright future and hopefully an amazing JV team for next year's season. ■

Photo creds to Northern Highlands

GIRL'S FLAG FOOTBALL TEAM ON THE RISE

Sienna Lippert and Devon Gallo start Flag Football Club

Samantha O'Connell 26'

Sienna Lippert and Devon Gallo have decided to start planning and forming the idea of a girl's flag football club at Highlands. A lot of girls have been interested in playing flag football and now with their work, we might be able to. When asked about why she wanted to start a team Sienna answered,

our area like Ridgewood, Ramapo, and Paramus will have girls' HS flag football clubs and I thought that it would be cool for Highlands to have one too." This gives more girls a chance to find a club, have fun, and try a sport they have not played as much. Girls' flag football has been expanding all over the world and NJ has had a lot of high schools inter-

pilot program starting this Spring. We are meeting with the athletic department towards the end of March and would like to have more information on the club advisor and the next steps." Sienna and Devon hope that this club can be turned into a varsity sport here at Highlands as it has for some other towns. They have gathered signatures



In a friendly match, #14 is on the offensive at the 30 yard line

"I've always been interested in football and I've seen all the press about Nike, the NFL, and the Jets expanding the Girls High School flag football league in NJ. I did some research and found that other schools in

ested in starting girls' flag football. Sienna explained, "We are hoping to start as a club in the Spring to turn it into a varsity sport at Highlands if and when approved by the NJSIAA. It's currently a

within the school on girls interested and have had a strong showing of support. They believe this will be an opportunity for all girls wanting to play a sport in the spring that's not currently offered even if you're



A young athlete is making a diving grab for a flag

already playing one. "Even if an athlete does play a spring sport, they could still play flag football since it's only a pilot program for the next two years according to the NJSIAA. 'Pilot program, athletes will still be able to play another spring sport along with flag football, as has been permitted to date, as long as the school allows it," stated Sienna. So it not only is for girls who can't find a sport that they are interested in

during the spring season, it is also for girls who play other sports to join the fun and get to know people interested in the same thing. "Adding flag football as a sport at Highlands increases the amount of sports that girls can play in the spring and gives our students more opportunities to participate in activities with their classmates. Highlands also has such a strong athletic program that we felt the club would have powerful interest

from prospective members," Sienna said. Girls flag football is more than just offering another sport to girls, it is also building a community around a sport we can enjoy. Highlands is very excited to see this sport get started and see how fast it will grow in interest across the school. We wish good luck to Sienna and Devon as they start their new girl's flag football club. ■

FISHING AROUND THE STATE WITH THE FISHING CLUB

Mr. Krzysik's Fishing Club Takes Trips Around NJ To Fish

Gabe Tejada' 26

Fishing, a lifetime sport, is one of life's greatest joys. To sit by a lake with friends and family waiting for a fish to bite is a calming yet entertaining and enjoyable experience that Matthew Krzysik, the Northern Highlands Fishing Club's owner since 2016, wishes to share with the community. The club goes on multiple trips throughout the year, including but not limited to fishing in Point Pleasant, viewing Edison's Salt-Water Fishing Show, and high school fishing competitions down the Jersey Shore. Krzysik shares that his favorite part of these trips isn't fishing, but rather, "Seeing students, the club members, smile, have a good time, interact with other teenagers and learn new things." Throughout the year, there are about 6

fishing trips scheduled. In the fall, the club could go to the Gambler, an important fishing spot in Point Pleasant, New Jersey, to fish. On that trip, there were close to 30 people, including faculty members and parents, on the trip. They also went to a fresh-water fishing show at Rockland Community College a couple of weeks ago. They will be going to the Hudson River in May to look for stripers, which are big fish that can reach up to 30+ inches. On Sunday, March 17th, they went down to Edison to enjoy a salt-water fishing show. "It's nice to have parents out there enjoying a day with their son or daughter," Krzysik shares. The joy of a fishing trip is unmatched, especially with loved ones. An interesting aspect of the club is that parents and other faculty are

allowed to join on the trip. There are many different activities to enjoy on fishing trips, but the highlight of a trip is always the memories shared with friends and family. Since both faculty and family come together to join the student club members on their fishing trips, it becomes a big celebration of fishing. The fishing spirit is alive within multiple high schools since they plan to go to the Jersey Shore this May to compete against other schools. They also plan to go down to Echo Lake and have a fishing derby in April and the beginning of June. To those who don't understand what a fishing derby is, Krzysik explains it as, "Everyone's going to fish, and we're going to see who has the biggest fish." A fun yet competitive time to fish for a winner.



Above is a picture of a person fishing

The club is also a learning place for all aspiring fishers where they can learn about different types of fishing like fly fishing and ice fishing. A friend of Krzysik came to the Highlands to explain the joy of ice fishing, and there are many lessons to be learned from different people who come in every so often to teach the students. "Typically, we

do things on a Sunday because kids are busy with sports and different activities, and it's worked in the past." Krzysik shares. Sundays are classic days for activities and sports like fishing, and it makes it easier to bring in more people, especially family and faculty. The Fishing Club is sharing the love of fishing with as many

people as possible, taking trips to different fishing spots, and enjoying beautiful days with each other, fishing and having fun. ■

Photo Courtesy of Sports Illustrated

Photo Credits: New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection

COMMITMENT CORNER

EVA ANDERSON OFF TO SARAH LAWERENCE

Catherine Main '27

Highlands senior, Eva Anderson, has been a superstar athlete at Highlands during her four years here, and she has decided to continue her volleyball endeavors at Sarah Lawrence College in the fall. Last month, in February, she officially announced at a public signing that she would be committing to Sarah Lawrence next year as a student-athlete.

Eva started her volley-

locally, she decided to take her talent to the next level and tried out for a competitive club team.

She played at CutShot first before transitioning to the Digs club during her freshman through Junior years. It was on these club teams that she was given opportunities to play in a more competitive forum and challenge herself against stronger opponents. She not only rose to the occasion on these teams but truly excelled

team where she was scouted and recruited to play in college. These experiences on club volleyball teams allowed her to meet other players from around the state, get opportunities to play talented teams from around the country, and grow as an individual player as well as a teammate.

The skills Eva learned from first playing in Ho-Ho-Kus through the more competitive club teams, set her up for the success that she has had playing at



Eva Anderson commits to Sarah Lawerence.

Photo Credits : @nhrlclassof24



Eva Anderson commitment with family members.

Photo Courtesy of Catherine Main '27

ball career as a 6th grader in HoHokus where she played simply for recreation, fun, and learning the ins and outs of the sport. After two years of playing

and proved herself as a force to be reckoned with on the volleyball court.

During her final Senior year, she played on the Capitals club volleyball

Northern Highlands over her four years here. Eva has had an amazing career all four years at Highlands academically as well as playing volleyball.

As the varsity libero this year, Eva said, "It was amazing to work with such dedicated coaches and such fun girls on and off the court." For those readers who do not know what a libero is in volleyball, it is the sole back defensive player who stands out since they wear a different color jersey.

Teams can only have one or two liberos on a team, so it is a very spe-

cialized position that only came to be in the mid-to-late 2000s. The libero is typically the best player on a team and can set up scoring opportunities. Eva is so happy to have made such amazing friendships and the volleyball family that she has made during her four years at Highlands.

Eva shared that she is forever grateful to Highlands for preparing her to play college volleyball and to succeed academically at the next level. She is also thankful to her coaches and teammates at Highlands who made her experience here so special.

Eva's highlight of her Highlands career was when her team this Senior year won the State Sectional Championship. Eva was re-

cruited by several colleges based on her volleyball prowess, but in the end, decided that Saint Lawrence was the perfect fit for her.

She is thrilled that it is not too far from home, and her brother who attends Columbia. She also really connected with Coach John at Saint Lawrence and her future teammates there when she visited. Eva said that she fell in love with the "small-town feel" of Saint Lawrence when she visited the school.

So off to Bronxville, NY Eva will be heading during the summer to get ready for her freshman college volleyball season. Good luck next year Eva and make us all proud. ■

AJAY SERVES HIS WAY TOWARDS EMORY UNIVERSITY

Samantha O'Connell '26



Photo Credits : @nhrlclassof24

Ajay Kartik commit to Emory in preparing me for being a student-athlete in college, as I've had to work hard on the court while keeping up with a rigorous academic schedule. Emory's a

Ajay is committed to Emory University for boys' tennis.

"I've been playing tennis since I was around 5. Maybe even earlier if you include

playing with my dad in our basement with foam balls," said Ajay.

He is very excited about his new upcoming experiences at Emory and knows it is going to be a tough start. He also had a great experience on the campus as he got to visit the players and coaches. Ajay also enjoys the warm weather.

"Northern Highlands has been great



Photo Courtesy of Ajay Kartik '24

Ajay Kartik playing tennis ball at practice.

tough school and #1 nationally for D3, so it's going to be tough, but I know Highlands has prepared me well," stated Ajay.

Northern Highlands boy's tennis program has helped

build his skills and confidence in playing tennis. Not only is Emory ranked well in sports it is also a great learning school. Ajay is ready to make new friendships inside the classroom and outside

while playing tennis.

Ajay says, "I like tennis because it's individual, so you have to take full accountability all the time. This means if you lose, there's no one to blame other than yourself.

But if you win, you can take all the credit. I think that although it's lonely sometimes, and it would be more fun playing on a team, learning how to problem solve has helped me in life in general."

We wish you all the best at Emory and can't wait to see your success. ■

DELEGATE DOMINATION

Model UN sweeps the floor with stellar performances at first on-site conference in four years

Jiya Bhadra '25 and Madeleine Knapp '25

After a 4-year hiatus, Model UN made their epic return this Spring with a delegation of 16 rookies at the two-day Seton Hall Conference.

One delegate, junior Fatimah Alsaleem, commented on how she “was really nervous because it was my first time going to a Model UN conference and I didn’t really know what to expect.” However, after the conference, she stated that she “ended up having a lot of fun.”

On day one, the conference kicked off with an opening ceremony that gave an overview about what to expect over the next two days. After the opening ceremony concluded, delegates were split into different committees that are representative of those within the actual United Nations.

Junior Jiya Bhadra explained how “Depending upon which committee [delegates] were in, students acted as people on different boards or representatives from a variety of



All of the Model UN Delegates dressed for success at the Seton Hall Conference.

“It was a very fun and relaxed environment and everyone was very supportive of each other.”
Fatimah Alsaleem '25



An inside look at a committee session in Model UN.



Award winners J. Bhadra '25 (left), H. Shuresh '24 (center), and M. Buchanan '25

Photo Courtesy of Meghan Buchanan '25

countries, working with delegates from other schools to pass resolutions that would solve the problems their committee was working against.”

Within the committees, delegates are given specific problems that they must work together to solve, whether it be regarding human rights, environmental concerns, or even the fate of the Star Wars Empire. Students were then tasked with presenting their positions on these issues and brainstorming solutions to them.

To celebrate after a long first day of conferences, the students attended a delegate dance hosted by Seton Hall. The delegates rocked out to some awesome tunes (as stated by Meghan Buchanan) while making friends with delegates from other schools. Delegate Fatimah Alsaleem added that “It was also a good way to relax after the long day and have some fun.”

Junior Meghan Buchanan explained how even though the sessions can be 3-4 hours each, “you are with friends you make along the way, so it doesn’t have to be 100% serious. Even meeting up with friends during lunch and recapping all the funny things that happened in the committee sessions was really fun.”

Day two involved several committee sessions in which delegates presented their solutions in front of their peers and voted on the solutions they thought should be passed into official UN resolutions. After this was over, the conference ended with a closing ceremony where standout delegates received accolades for their work.

It should come as no surprise that 3 Highlanders won awards for their outstanding work: Outstanding Delegate - Senior Hansa Suresh in the Salem Witch Trials, Verbal Commendation - Junior Meghan Buchanan in UN OCEANS, and Verbal Commendation - Junior Jiya Bhadra in DISEC. Commenting on her award, Meghan Buchanan stated that “It felt really good winning the award because it was my first time attending a conference and I did really well.”

Reflecting on the conference as a whole, Buchanan stated that the conference was a very unique experience. “It was such an amazing experience. I didn’t know what to expect when I first got there as I hadn’t done anything like this before, but after the first committee session I was like ‘Wow, I like this.’”

Overall the conference was a smashing success for these rookie delegates, setting off the return of Model UN with a bang. Although the club will not be attending another conference this year, they are extremely excited to plan more competitions for students to attend (and dominate) next year. ■

Photo Courtesy of Fatimah Alsaleem '25