December 2023 Vol. 33, No. 2

The Cougar Chronicle

The Student Newspaper of Haddam-Killingworth High School

Holiday Show to Benefit Muscular Dystrophy Fund

By Caitlin Kukta

For the past 34 years, HK students have produced the Haddam-Killingworth Holiday Show, a three-hour telethon during which people donate to a worthy cause. Students are currently preparing the show, which will air Dec. 22 from 8-11 a.m.

This year's hosts are seniors Caitlin Kukta, David Sargent, Damen Ridgeway, Shylee Emigh, Leeha Reddy, and Christopher Palmieri.The telethon is almost entirely student-run with help from Mrs. Topa-Finberg, broadcast teacher, and Mr. Kane, the school's AV technician.



The Curran Family, inspiration for the 2023 HKTV Holiday Show.

The students take on roles such as directing, technical director, camera operator, graphics, and answering phones. Junior Lindsay Blade, who is directing, floor-directing, and assisting in utility work, said, “I like how everyone has something to do and it's all for an important cause.”

This year's beneficiary will be Kindness Over Muscular Dystrophy (KOMD). All money raised will go to KOMD to support their research for a cure for this disease. The decision to name a local family, the Currans, and KOMD as the beneficiaries of this year's holiday show was easy once those involved heard Conner Curran’s story. Diagnosed at the age of four, Conner has undergone several treatments to help improve his condition and was the first patient ever dosed with the Pfizer gene-therapy treatment.

The foundation donates portions of its funding to families in need of financial assistance due to medical costs and other needs such as mobility aids and home renovations. Without these aids those with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy end up very secluded and are unable to attend activities that many of us take for granted, creating an immense emotional toll.

After the beneficiary was chosen, students created posters to advertise the show and letters were sent out asking for donations. Donations are made before or during the show and are added to the fishbowl to win prizes from local businesses.

During the show performances from RSD 17 elementary schools and the high school music department are featured. The show also includes interviews with members of the school community and those from the KOMD organization, including the Currans.

The show will air live on Comcast channel 18 and Frontier channel 6090.

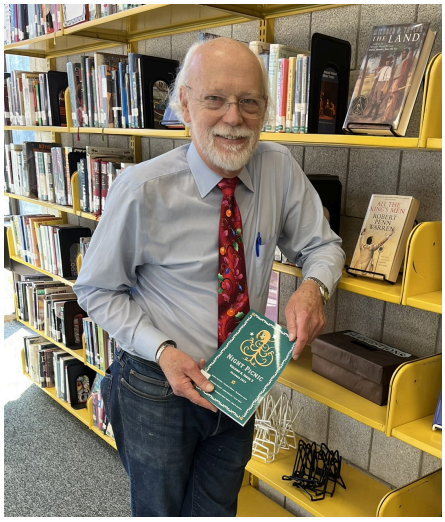
INSIDE…

Teacher Features….page 2
Cougar Bowl…page 3
Sports…pages 3-4

English Teacher Publishes Stories in Literary Journals

By Caroline Ignatuk

Mr. Alan Rice, an English teacher at HK, recently has published two short stories. The first, “The Seventh Wave," was published in the *Night Picnic Journal*. The second, “No, Thank You,” can be found in *Change Seven Magazine*.



Mr. Alan Rice displays a journal in which one of his stories is published. (photo courtesy of the Cougar Den)

Ever since he retired from working full-time at HK, Mr. Rice said he has had more free time on his hands. He started writing fiction stories last fall and has continued ever since.

“Once I got started, I realized there were more stories to be told," he said. He described his stories as “generally mainstream in that they're stories about real people. At least I think of them as real. They are in unusual or unexpected circumstances or face unexpected challenges. And usually, I find that my stories leave some questions unanswered. That's what life is like, after all."

Some authors Mr. Rice considers influential are Ernest Hemingway for "his ability to produce a bold scene" in just a few phrases. Another influence, he said, is Elizabeth Strout for her "skill in handling dialogue and understanding of characters."

You can find Mr. Rice’s stories in the library or online in the listed journals.

Science Teacher Leaves, Then Returns to HK

By Chloe Oboma

Mrs. Alicia Zukowski, aka "Zuk," is a new but not-so-new teacher at HK this year. Zuk had been teaching at HK for 10 years, but decided before last year to work at Vinal Vo-Tech in Middletown. Then, she decided it was time to come back to her "true calling" to teach biology at HK.

Zuk said her main motivation is “the kids. They make me laugh. They're really just great.”

Zuk cares about the overall well-being of her students. She makes the classroom a fun learning environment and takes the time to ensure students understand what is being taught. Zuk said her favorite thing about HK is teaching the students and being around their fun energy.

In addition to teaching, she is also the winter track coach. Zuk says her favorite thing about coaching track is “the kids. I love their energy. It's everything.”



Mrs. Zukowski works with sophomore Isabela Kelly in Biology. (photo by Chloe Oboma)

SPORTS

3rd Annual Cougar Bowl Again Successful

By Reagan Aronson

The 3rd Annual HK Cougar Bowl took place on Nov. 20 in front of a sizable crowd. HK's very own junior and senior girls played an intense game of flag football. Not only was the game itself exciting, but the boys' cheer team put on quite the halftime show.



Members of the winning senior squad. (photo courtesy of The Cougar Den)

After both teams scored in the first quarter, they remained tied 7-7 until the fourth quarter when Layla Hayward and Emmy Kehlenbach each scored off interceptions – "pick sixes" – to bring the seniors another victory after winning as juniors last year.

Senior Leah Walton said, "I think the Cougar Bowl went really well this year. Obviously winning is always a good part but it also is just a fun thing to do with friends. I would definitely recommend participating to others because it gets your mind off of school work during lunches and it honestly just brings everyone closer together. You start to hang out with people you didn't before and even if it is a little cheesy, it builds friendships."

Junior Margaret Robinson added, "The Cougar Bowl was a really fun experience that allowed my friends and me the opportunity to learn and play football. I highly recommend participating as it was such a fun time playing underneath the lights."

Football Team Brings Home the Principals' Cup

By John Moyher

The HK Cougar football team suited up on Nov. 22 for the annual Thanksgiving rivalry game against Valley Regional-Old Lyme and won back the Principals' Cup with a 20-7 victory.

The Cougars jumped out to an early lead thanks to rushing touchdowns from senior captain Wyatt Solosky and sophomore Josh Frith. HK added another touchdown by Frith during the third quarter. On the defensive side of the ball, junior Trevor Dixon recorded three sacks and two tackles for loss. Sophomore Jamien Evans notched his third interception of the season late in the second half.



The Cougars celebrate their Principals' Cup victory over Valley.

The Cougars' season did not start particularly well, as the team went 0-4.

(continued on next page)

(continued from previous page)
The team got its first win against Windsor Locks, a 41-0 drubbing in week five. The Cougars continued to improve and ended the season with three straight wins against Coventry, Capital Prep, and Valley.

The Cougars look to carry the momentum into next year. Head Coach Tyler Wilcox said, “We bring back 20 of 22 starters on both sides of the ball, so there's a lot of excitement heading into the 2024 season. No one is going to be handing us anything. We still need to go out and earn every victory and finish 1-0 every week."

Volleyball Advances to Class S State Finals

The HK volleyball team finished an extraordinary season with an overall record of 15-5 and advanced all the way to the Class S championship game, losing to perennial power Coventry.

"After losing to Valley in the semi-finals of Shorelines, we had a meeting to discuss what we thought went wrong, what we needed to work on, and how we could improve our mindset so that we could go far in States for our seniors," said HK Coach Robin Callender.

Senior Reese Timothy was named to the Shoreline First Team, was awarded Co-Player of the Year, and made the All State team. Junior Ava Mazzotta was named to the Second Team Shorelines, and senior Sammy Minickene was an Honorable Mention pick.

Field Hockey Enjoys Winning Season

By Chloe Oboma

The 2023 field hockey team posted many successes, from making Shorelines to qualifying for States for the first time in five years. Overall, the team finished at 8-6-2.

In addition, many players on the team qualified for the All Shoreline team.

Goalie and captain Tea Norman was the number one goalie in Shorelines, as she was selected to the First Team. Norman received the Shoreline's Patsy Kamercia Award as the "heart and soul of the field hockey team." The award is named for HK's legendary field hockey coach.

Ava Romino was also named to First Team All Shoreline, while Jaimey DiNapoli and Chloe Oboma were named to the Second Team, and Brigitte Battistoni earned Honorable Mention.

Girls' Swim Completes Dominant Season

The HK girls' swim team finished the regular season with a 7-2 overall record, ending with a flourish by winning the final four meets. The team benefited from strong senior leadership: co-captains Layla Hayward and Peyton Tyler, Emma Sajus, and team manager Liza Murphy.

"From the start of our season, this team has proven to be small but mighty," noted Coach Alison Karam in an *HK Now* article. "Every single girl has taken her swimming to a higher competitive level. They work hard, support each other, and have a ton of fun. I love the team spirit and am proud of all they have achieved."

Thirteen swimmers qualified for the Class S meet on Nov. 15 at SCSU.

The Cougar Chronicle

The H-K High School Student Newspaper
Higganum, CT 06441



Staff Members: Sami Pach, Caitlin Kukta, Caroline Ignatuk, Chloe Oboma, Reagan Aronson, Sydney Wrinn, John Moyher, Owen Staskelunas, Madalynn Catalano.
Advisors: Mr. Kish & Mr. Keck