

# THE HIGHLAND FLING

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

Northern Highlands Regional High School | 298 Hillside Avenue, Allendale NJ 07401 | Volume 58, Issue 08|



Photo Courtesy of homes.com

## SCHOOL SPIRIT SLUMP

A look into the level of student participation in school spirit weeks

Olivia Benyola '28

Last week, Northern Highlands held the first spirit week and 90 minute lunch of the school year. The main purpose of spirit week is to create memories, generate excitement, and unite students and staff in a way that deviates from normalcy to allow for relaxation and fun. Although these days are created to instill spirit in students, the most notable things about this event included hundreds of students leaving campus during the 90 minute lunch and a lack of people dressing up for spirit day.

So what are some ways we can reinstate spirit in the student population? Possibly, adding a competition aspect to the dress-up days.

In an interview with Mr. Witowski, the student council advisor, he expressed that he notices a difference in student participation in spirit week now versus participation when spirit week was a competition.

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## SURVEY SAYS: NHRHS GETS AN A+

NHRHS rose to #14 public high school in New Jersey according to Niche.com

Elena McCrossin'26

Recently, Niche.com released their lists of the best public high schools in the state of New Jersey and Northern Highlands Regional High School rose to the ranking of the fourteenth best in New Jersey and the third best in Bergen County.

In addition to the increase in rankings, Niche also named Highlands the number one public high school teachers in New

Jersey and the fourteenth highest school for student athletes in New Jersey.

The ranking is a combination of multiple academic factors, including standardized testing performances, graduation rates, the number of Advanced Placement (AP) courses offered and the pass rate of students who take AP exams, and SAT and ACT scores. In all, Highlands earned an A+ rating from Niche for their proficiency in the above categories.

Specifically, the average graduation rate at Highlands is 94%, and according to NJ.com, the statewide graduation rate is 90%. This puts Highlands above the state average. In addition, standardized test scores are also high, with 82% of students who took standardized tests being proficient in reading and 69% being proficient in math.

At Highlands, 22 AP courses are offered across a wide variety of subjects, and the school has a 90%

AP passing rate (with a 'pass' being a score of 3 or above). 33% of students are enrolled in AP courses, and many others are enrolled in other advanced courses such as math. One advanced course type that Highlands does not offer, however, is IB programs.

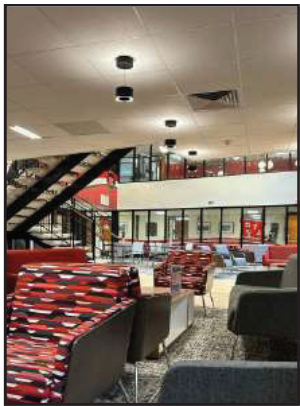
Finally, Niche reports on the average SAT and ACT scores at hHighlands, with the average SAT score being a 1340 and the average ACT score being a 29.

The Niche rating is calculated from a variety of factors and primarily relies on the input of public data sets and personal reviews.

Although the ranking and statistics provided are complementary of Highlands, they are not guaranteed to be accurate as any user can input inaccurate reviews into the website and some public information sources may be providing false statistics.

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# POLITICS, POLITICS, MORE POLITICS

## What can Highlanders do, regardless of age, to stay informed on the upcoming election

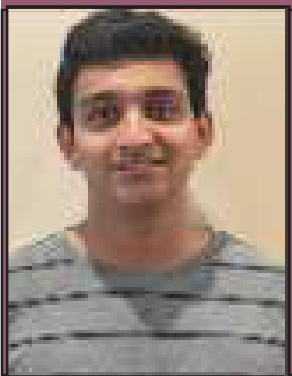


Photo courtesy of Reet Sachdev '27

Ram Raghunathan '25

The Presidential Election is only a month away. Yet early on, this campaign proved itself to be conten-

tious. In early July, former President Trump, the Republican candidate, came within an inch of death in a failed assassination attempt on him. Another attempt occurred on September 15. This campaign is also pretty unique.

President Biden is the first incumbent President in 50 years to not run for re-election. His withdrawal meant current Democratic candidate, Kamala Harris, had far less time to prepare a campaign than is normal. But she quickly raised many millions in a very short amount of time.

That's a very brief recap of what's happened so

is going to count. That means Seniors who are eligible should not hesitate to go out and cast their votes. Highlanders should not feel apathy, as a lot of younger people generally feel towards politics.

Instead, they should feel a sense of urgency, as both candidates promise to make major changes on various issues, such as abortion, the border, the economy, foreign affairs, education, etc. In such a monumental election, we can't just sit back and throw our hands up. Highlanders especially should be concerned, because these issues can have long-term effects we'll have to deal with when we're adults.

Highlanders need to keep up-to-date with current events. But they should be careful where they get their news from; most of us get our news from social media, where misinformation is rampant.

Social media is also not great, because it incites extremism and divisiveness.

Northern Highlands has already been doing a lot to ensure Highlanders are politically knowledgeable. Mr. Meizys always

events, like Model UN and Debate Club. But to do more, maybe Highlands could start some sort of specifically political club, where Highlanders could discuss recent political events and their opinions.

active when it comes to politics. We can't just ignore politics till it starts to directly affect us as adults. We should all take at least 15 minutes a day to check up on the latest news. I know it's difficult to find time in our very busy day-to-day lives, but we have to be engaged, informed citizens if we are to shape the future we want to live in. And we have to start now. Let's not wait till it's too late.■

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

talks about current events in his AP U.S Government and Politics class, and makes sure to relate Gov topics to the modern political world. History teachers do the same. I remember in my World History class two years back my teacher spent a class talking about the war in Ukraine. Also, there are some clubs at NH that deal with current

Highlanders used to be able to do this at Model Congress, but I don't think that exists anymore. It was a great club, not only because Highlanders could share their opinions freely and in an organized way, but also because they could debate students from other schools at conferences.

Highlanders, teens in general, need to be pro-

**“Right now the campaign seems to be neck and neck.”**

tious. In early July, former President Trump, the Republican candidate, came

far. Right now, the campaign seems to be neck and neck. So, every vote

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## From the Desk of the Editors-in-Chief

October breezed by for many of us stressed about college applications, maintaining grades, and overall, trying to survive this first semester.

For many seniors, application deadlines are approaching or have approached for early action and early decision. Whether it is applying to your dream school since middle school or to safeties, this is a nerve-wracking time as all 4 years of work have led to this moment. While it is easy to get lost and off track during this time of the year, it is also important to note that you can't change anything now and all of your hard work will pay off!

For all the juniors, sophomores, and freshmen out there, we just want to congratulate you for completing 2 months of school! The fall season is challenging because we are getting acclimated. But, as the school year progresses, it will get easier.

And of course, the end of October means Halloween! Halloween is definitely one of our favorite holidays as Editor in Chief as our hard-working students and staff can take a moment to relax and have fun. Remember to have a treat to reward yourselves for all your hard work.

- Editors-in-Chief Brook Xu and Nolan Rota

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

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

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1-800-950-6264

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1-800-273-TALK (8255) [24/7 hotline]  
(Spanish) 1-888-628-9454



# WITCHING HOUR AT SCHOOL

## What do all the colored lights and Halloween decorations mean to students



Photo courtesy of Reet Sachdev '27

**Anna Russo '26**

Halloween is one of the most popular holidays, especially among teens and younger children. During October, many people watch scary movies, visit haunted houses, plan their costumes or trick-or-treating routes, and stock up on candy.

As the leaves change, more and more spooky statues and Halloween-themed decorations appear everywhere you look. You can even find some decorations at our school. Sometimes you can see different decorations in classrooms and hallways.

Near the end of the month, you can even see students attending classes in costumes.

I see Halloween as something to look forward to and something that brightens up the boring

routine a lot of people may relate to. Life can often be mundane and uninteresting and daily life can get repetitive.

When you do the same thing every day and have your life dictated by a bell or a paycheck, you may find the things that you once looked forward to start becoming tedious.

When I was younger I would look forward to school and even begged my teacher for homework. Now that I've done the same thing for over 10 years, school has become

a chore.

Whether it be work or classes, many people - myself included - find that the excitement of life dims with the mundanities that come with it.

The world can be quite gray and bland sometimes. However, I find that the blandness is broken when something new happens. New things allow for a bit of surprise and spice in the day. The previously gray world starts to be filled with color yet again.

I remember last year I trudged through the doors

and hallways of the school, ready for yet another day of learning. When I walked up the stairs to homeroom I was surprised to see the hallway decked out in colorful lighting and cobwebs. I heard excited chatter throughout the hallway and students expressing their surprise and approval of the changes. It ended up being the highlight of my week.

Throughout the weeks the decor was up, I found myself looking forward to going through that hallway. When the decorations were

**“The world can be quite gray and bland sometimes. However, I find that the blandness is broken when something new happens.”**



Photo courtesy of Sebastian Tabakov '26

Depicted above is a photograph taken last October amid the Halloween decorating frenzy in the history wing. The decorations were done by last year's student council. 6

taken down, I was a little disappointed.

When I was younger my favorite part of Halloween was the candy I would get simply for existing and looking cute. Now that I'm older (and know what calories are) I am less excited about the candy aspect but I still enjoy the sweet treats that the holiday brings. A little bit of sweetness can brighten your day. For example, having a lollipop while studying can raise your spirits and help you do what needs to be done.

Now that I'm older, my favorite part of the season is the decorations and the smiling people I see near the holiday. It's hard to not smile when you see a little group of kids in costumes bragging to each other about how much

candy they got or trying to pawn off their unwanted snacks to someone else (Almond Joy).

Even though those parts are my favorite, there are countless other things you can do to celebrate the season. You can watch a horror movie, stock up and snack on your favorite candy, dress up in a costume, or you can take a metaphorical seat next to me and join in just enjoying the atmosphere.

Overall, I find that Halloween is so beloved because it brightens your routine. It adds time to be silly and wear costumes and shakes up life. Halloween is a time to look forward to for many, myself included. ■

# NEW ADDITIONS GALOR

## Take a look at all that was recently added to Highlands



Photo courtesy of Sebastian Tabakov '26

**Gabe Benyola '28**

Many Highlanders may have noticed that some of the spaces around the school have had a bit [or a lot] of a facelift. From an upgraded space to study in the library, to a stylish new gym for our athletes, High-

lands is making moves to modernize and grow with a changing academic and social environment.

The addition that stood out to me the most were

were annoyed that they are no longer able to cut through the upstairs part of the library or between the student lounge and the actual library. Clearly, it

**“Something strange I noticed though was that a lot of the athletes I asked had never used the field house.”**

the changes to the library. There have been mixed reviews.

The most common thing I heard about the library was that people

can't be that bad though, because that library is always packed with groups of friends hanging out and studying together.

Highlands is following

a trend I've seen among libraries of becoming third spaces for kids to connect and socially interact with each other.

To make space for the new study areas, some of the books have been removed. But it's not all bad because libraries across the country have been digitally focused spaces as well as databases. So despite my grievances about the removal of some of the books in the library, I think it's worth it for Highlands to embrace modernity.

On the athletic side of Highlands, the new fitness center inside the field house supports teams through this year's season. "It's very convenient because it's right next to the football field," a football player said to me.

The placement of the field house cuts out the long trek from gym to turf. Something strange I noticed though was that a lot of the athletes I asked hadn't used the field house yet. The consensus seemed to be that it was either unnecessary or needed better accessibility. I can't help but agree because it leaves me confused.

Why would the school spend so much money on the field house for it to be used so little by the people it was made for?

Back inside the buildings, the ceramics and art rooms got upgrades in their facilities. I spoke with Mrs. Thompson as well as a couple of seniors to get their opinions on the changes.

The seniors told me

standing up.

Mrs. Thompson told me that the new design of the room was tailored to the needs of the teachers and students that use it. She had similar remarks, saying that the organization of the room was improved and stated previously that "once the cabinets and everything are complete, it will have a nice modern look."

**“The seniors told me how they missed the art that was around the room and how it lacked the color it used to have.”**

how they missed the art that was around the room and how it lacked the color it used to have. But one also said, "I like the organization," as well as the tables. "The new tables let me work while standing," the other told me. They also liked the new tables that allowed them to work on their projects while

All things considered, it seems to me that new additions to the school have been regarded with mixed emotion. I think it remains to be seen whether feelings change and the new additions have a positive impact for those that use them. ■



Photo courtesy of Northern Highlands X

The image above was taken off of the Northern Highlands "X" page. The image is of the newly built field house.



# SCHOOL SPIRIT OR A LACK THERE OF?

A deeper look into why less students are participating in school spirit week



Photo courtesy of Gabriel Tejada '26

Gabriel Tejada '26

If you've been on the internet the past couple years, you've seen videos of high school students participating in their spirit week, with hundreds of participants going all out. Yet strangely, in the Highlands hallways, the only day most seem to participate in is pajama day (because they would all wear PJs anyway). But why is that?

Some might attribute it to our lack of in-school pep-rallies. Many other schools take time out of their school day to have

pep rallies, so that every kid shows up no matter what. Well, I say that with more

**Yet strangely, in the Highlands hallways, the only day that people seem to participate in is pajama day.**

what. This amps up not only the sportier kids, but instead the entire student body.

Others may blame it on our lack of homecoming or grade-wide dances. Without dances, the student body tends to feel more disconnected from each other and the school. Freshmen and Sophomores could hypothetically go an entire year without all being in the same room together. This disconnects Highlanders from each other, and creates a general disinterest in the school's activities.

You may be wondering- what does this have

school or grade-wide events, more people will be interested in having true Highlands school spirit.

This might not be all that's needed to convince our student body. Four out of five people I asked believed that the school doesn't participate enough in spirit week because the prompts are boring.

On TikTok, we tend to see very interesting and fun spirit week activities, such as "dress up as a student/teacher", "Y2K day", or "dress as your favorite artist" that many more students would be interested in. Things like

PJ Day, Jersey Day, and Beach Day just aren't cutting it anymore in our social-media world.

Highlands needs to delve into the trends, the things that students are genuinely interested in. This way, more students will feel interested in participating.

There should also be more advertisements for spirit weeks if we really want people to participate. Things like signs in the hallways, announcements over the loudspeakers, and real, desirable awards for grades who participate the most would likely increase our spirit week participation drastically.

This doesn't just affect the one week though. More school spirit means

more people at sporting events, especially football games, coming to represent Highlands. It also means more people at the plays and musicals, supporting every aspect of the school.

I won't blame it completely on Highlands, though. We do have pep rallies, but they're essentially just sports events that happen after school. However, in terms of dances, only having junior and senior prom is a little bit rough.

Even though we have had semi-interesting spirit weeks before, they tend to be the same with similar, if not the exact same prompts, such as beach day or USA day. I think we need to diversify it and

cater towards students' interests.

Overall, Highlands isn't bad when it comes to school spirit. Many students attend sports games and support our school. However, spirit weeks are almost depressing, as you walk through the hallways and see every teacher going all out but every student wearing a hoodie and sweatpants.

This can be changed, just with some advertising, time spent together as a class, encouragement, and trendier prompts. Once this changes, Highlands spirit weeks could live up to those that we see on TikTok. ■

**I think we need to diversify it and cater it towards teenagers.**

# ALMOST THE PERFECT LIST OF CLUBS

Does highlands have enough extracurricular activities?



Photo courtesy of Henry Roberts '26

Henry Roberts '26

Highlands has a decently long list of extracurricular activities that students are able to participate in alongside the time they spend working in and outside of school. Whilst the list is long and the types of clubs offered are very wide in scope, are there any areas missing?

If you look at the club list you might be shocked by how many clubs there are. Some are high-school staples like the Varsity and Junior Varsity sports offered, and some are a little more niche. These clubs range from improvisational clubs where students get to work on their

on the fly acting skills, to the stock market club that learns about how the stock market works and how to invest intelligently. There's even more offerings that people would never imagine, the newly instated Fashion club will be one to watch out for, and there's even student publications like the Highland Fling!

See what I did there?

Even if you're not necessarily interested in a specific niche, there are clubs like National Honors Society, LEO club, and Highlands Cares that

class council that allow for students to more directly get involved at the school.

The options we provide here truly do seem to be endless. Emphasis on the word seems. With all the sports and activities in the performing arts, publications, and other interest based clubs, there are clubs that lots of people would love to exist, but sadly they don't. The main sport really, to be discussed is boys volleyball. Currently we only offer volleyball for girls in the fall, and their current

though has been meaning to change that. Jack Reilly so far in his journey he

**"I've been looking for the chance to play volleyball at Highlands for a while."**

Jack Reilly '26

spoke on his experience with trying to get a volleyball team instated when he said, "I've been looking for a chance to play volleyball at highlands for a while, I know people really enjoy it, as do I. So I really tried to get a boys team instated here. As of now it looks like we can't go straight to being a real team, so we are going to

shared that, "Every year in the spring since my Freshman year we have run pool play and elimination bracket tournament to build support and interest and to introduce the sport, and last year we had over 100 boys participate."

As it's been shown, our activity offerings are almost perfect, and if you disagree there is actually

under the clubs and activities section there is a document detailing all of the steps in detail on how to start a new club, such as finding a teacher willing to advise the club and students willing to participate in it.

With what information has been given to you I hope you know all there is to know about the clubs here, and use that knowledge to shape your high school experience to how you want it to be. ■

**If you look at the club list you might be shocked by how many there are.**

are all about helping the surrounding community in towns near us as well as helping each other. There are also positions like the Student Government and

season success has proved the incredible strength of our girls volleyball program. Sadly though, we don't have a boys team.

One junior here

**Sadly, we don't have a boys team.**

make a club and play this spring instead."

As to what Reilly has

something you can do to fix that. On our northern-highlands.org website,



# COLLEGE VISITS? THE ULTIMATE SCOIR

How the platform SCOIR helps students get a feel for the college process



Photo courtesy of Maggie Burchell '26

**Maggie Burchell '26**

Balancing school work, sports, and the ACT/SAT is hard enough without considering the stress of finding the right college. To make this process easier, Highlands offers a wide variety of college visits through Scoir.

Scoir is an online website that helps students connect with colleges. It allows students to discover and research any type of college, ranging from four-year universities to career and trade schools.

Not only does it give you a descriptive overview of the college, but it also allows you to view their student life and majors, help-

ing you find where you fit in best. Highlands allows students to meet college representatives from numerous colleges at school. This program lets students ask specific questions to representatives about their interests, and overall learn more about the colleges.

At the school, juniors and seniors can sign up for 5 visits through Scoir per year. This means

can access a calendar filled with numerous upcoming visits from colleges and universities.

Since I had little previous knowledge of the topic, I checked out Scoir to see what it was all about. The opportunities to talk to college representatives from schools across the country were endless. The only thing I didn't understand about Scoir was why

ed multiple visits through Scoir. When

says that college visits allow her to, "ask more per-

od. When students are having trouble managing their time, they can't afford to miss a lesson and make it up after school.

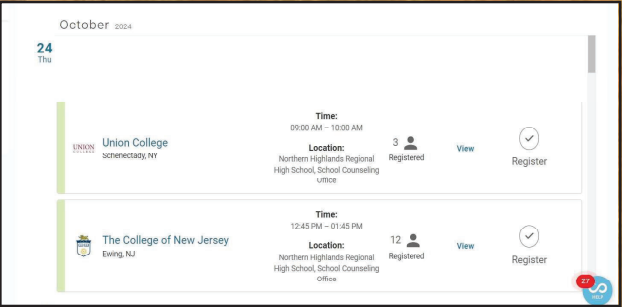
Overall, although I only recently became acquainted with Scoir, I think that it is a great resource for high school juniors and seniors to explore different colleges. In today's day and age, students are constantly occupied with school work and extracurricular activities, so they don't always have the time to go on college tours.

Therefore, Scoir makes it easy for students to get a feel of a college without actually traveling to the campus. ■



2023 College Fair where students met with representatives in school

Photo courtesy of wearehen Instagram



The SCOIR homepage where students can register for visits

Photo courtesy of Emerson Rossi '26

asked if she thought the experience benefitted her, she responded immediately: "Definitely." In further detail, she explained how it works and how I can sign up for a college visit soon. Grace said each visit was about an hour, which you miss class for. During the visit, the representative talks about the school they are representing, and questions are taken after.

As she walked me through the process, she highlighted the importance of speaking one-on-one with representatives. She

I am considering and have a better understanding if I can see myself at the school or not."

However, other students feel as if visits through Scoir could be better. For each visit, up to 40 students are allowed to sign up. Therefore, these visits are filled up quickly, and some students miss the opportunity to meet with a college they want to attend.

Another reason students are hesitant to use Scoir is because each visit is an hour, which means they miss a full class peri-

# TRUE JUDGEMENTS OF JUNIOR YEAR

How bad is junior year and what can you do to navigate it?



Photo courtesy of Laney McCrossin '26

**Laney McCrossin '26**

Every school year comes with new obstacles. Freshman year is infamous for injecting unsuspecting students into a completely new environment. Sophomore year is a time for ramping things up academically, filling all spare hours with volunteering and studying, and securing leadership positions in clubs and extracurriculars. Seniors are burdened with the stress of college applications and absorbing the last of high school days.

Junior year, however, is notorious for being the hardest year. From rigorous school work to endless extracurricular activities, countless students enter the year petrified. Although I have only been

a junior for a month, I feel as though I already have a gauge for what this year will entail and how it will unfold. With that, I feel inclined to respond to the question plaguing the thoughts of many students and parents alike: is junior year really as bad as it seems? No. It's worse.

When choosing classes for my junior year, I was given relatively the same advice from my parents, mentors, and older students: take the hardest possible classes that you can handle. Throughout my freshman and sophomore year, I accustomed myself to taking difficult courses, so I wasn't too afraid of having a heavy workload when I walked into the building on September fourth (despite numerous warnings from my guidance counselor). However, after sitting through one day of school, I quickly realized how wrong I was. One of the biggest issues regarding the coursework of junior year is how ill-prepared you can be. Freshman year, unless you are in Honors Math Analysis, you

can only take a maximum of three honors



Laney and friends having fun to take a break from junior year stress

classes. Sophomore year, students on a standard-track for math can take only one Advanced Placement (AP) course. When you enter junior year, you can take, in theory, seven AP classes (disclaimer: not every student is capable of this as it would require taking summer courses). Although not every student takes AP or Honors courses, there is a general trend of a spike in the course loads from sophomores to juniors. Such a substantial leap in course work leads to many students feeling overwhelmed.

Such a tremendous level of stress so early on in the year isn't good for anyone, but many students feel obligated to push themselves over

the edge so their coursework is 'rigorous enough'

for colleges. While pressure can create diamonds, it can also break you, and junior year treads a fine line between pushing yourself and punishing

yourself. In addition to the extensive course load, juniors face pressure to excel in a plethora of fields. Juniors are expected to participate in many activities from clubs, sports, to jobs, and a lot of

the time, more hours are demanded from them than there are in a day.

To add to their never-ending to-do lists, juniors are also expected to take and prepare for various forms of standardized tests such as the PSAT, SAT, and ACT. While many schools stopped requiring SATs and ACTs after the COVID-19 pandemic, others still encourage students to take them and some colleges have reinstated their mandate in the application process.

Undoubtedly, junior year



Laney getting involved and running with the Cross Country team

is difficult (arguably the most difficult year), but there are also many positive aspects of it. By this point in highschool, students have gained respect and privileges for having a solid understanding of what

high school entails which provides them with more freedom.

One example of this freedom is a greater choice in picking classes. Although many classes at this point are more challenging, they are also more specific and allow students to discover and hone in on what they are interested in.

As the stress of junior year looms over current juniors, they should know that they aren't alone in their struggles. Although the year is bound to be difficult, there are many ways for students to tackle it.

My advice to any juniors (including myself) is to take everything day by day. By focusing on the present and what task is on hand, you are less likely to be stressed over insignificant future possibilities. Also, take advantage of every opportunity given to you and embrace challenges with an open mind. Finally, enjoy the process as these are years you won't get back. ■

Photo courtesy of Laney McCrossin '26

Photo courtesy of Syracuse University



# SCHOOL SPIRIT SLUMP

A look into how highlanders participate (or don't participate) in school spirit weeks

Olivia Benyola'28

... Continued from page 1

Principal Occhino and Vice Principal LaRocca explained that homerooms used to be rewarded points based on how many students dressed up, and at the end of the week, the homeroom with the most points would get small rewards,

such as being let out first for the 90 minute lunch. When interviewed, Mr. Witowski said "We've noticed year after year, that not as many students participate in the dressing of days, but when we used to make it a competition, they did. We removed the competition aspect of it, because it was logistically very hard to count who was wearing

what, and so with the competition part of it removed, we naturally expected less people to participate." Maybe if competition was reinstated, possibly at a larger scale, such as homeroom, grade, class category, etcetera, then the participation of spirit week would rise as well. However, adjustments would need to be made on how to figure out how many people are participating and how to award the points.

Another way participation could be generated is if students were surveyed on what they wanted the themes to be by the student council. Being able to choose what the themes are could create more excitement in dressing up and showing school spirit.

Right now, themes are decided on by the student council based on comfort

There seems to be more school spirit among the younger students,

the upperclassmen and can also increase school spirit.

Regardless of adjustments that could be made, spirit week is still a very exciting and fun experience. It gives students something to look forward to and unites them in the simplest of ways, such as sending your friends a picture of what you're going to wear, or waiting in line for the food trucks. In the stress and business of the new school year, spirit week is a welcome break that reminds students to be proud of their school.■



Photo Courtesy of Reet Sadev '27

Although students don't participate, many teachers do dress up on spirit days

and how likely students are to participate. Keeping this sentiment while giving students choice could get students feeling more motivated to participate and show school pride.

which makes sense because they are new to the school and everything is still a new experience for them. Creating new spirit day themes could make spirit week more exciting for

**In the stress and business of the new school year, spirit week is a welcome break that reminds students to be proud of their school.**

# CREATING COUNTLESS CLUBS

Even though Highlands has a wide offering of clubs, students are still able to create their own: here's how

Bella Zrebiec'26

Northern Highlands has around 50 clubs to choose from, and this number only continues to grow with more clubs continuing to be created. Clubs range in topics from Robotics to Animation to Table Tennis and everything in between. Clubs can focus on languages, events, school subjects, sports, activities, issues, and more.

Assistant Principal Tony LaRocca explains that clubs at Highlands are formed on the basis of "interest and uniqueness," meaning they must have an original component to their goals or ideas. If a proposal for a club has the same idea or goal as another club that already exists, that would not be considered a unique club. People with new ideas for clubs "come with a purpose," as LaRocca points

out, because many people don't have a space at the school that currently allows them to express themselves in a way that aligns with an interest that they have.

Creating a club is simple, as long as the criteria are met. If you have an idea for a club that is of interest and is unique, you need to

find a teacher that is willing and interested in advising the club. Once you have all of that, the next step is to reach out to Dr. LaRocca. LaRocca will discuss the proposal with other administrator who will either approve or deny the request. If the proposal is approved, the club can officially

start holding meetings.

Junior Abby Koudinov is just one of the many people who have created a new club. She created an Entrepreneurship Club for the purpose of sharing ideas about business and entrepreneurship, and additionally for freshmen to gain experience before being able to join DECA.

Abby highlights how her club will be very interactive and exciting, including a "Shark Tank showcase" at the end of the year, when students involved will present their business ideas to the other people in the club for a prize.

When talking about the process of creating a club, Abby emphasizes the importance of "leadership skills, but also being able to work in a team." These qualities are essential to making a successful club

**Abby emphasizes the importance of "leadership skills, but also being able to work in a team."**



Junior Abby Koudinov poses in front of her and her partner Seerat Dhir's (not pictured) "booth" for their club at the freshman activity fair

Photo Courtesy of Seerat Dhir '26

because it will allow you to communicate effectively and present your ideas well. Not only will these skills help you become a better leader of a club, they will improve social skills and leadership ability in other settings in school and even outside of school.

Creating clubs can be beneficial because, as LaRocca points out, it "gives students a home to be in," where they have a community of people with shared interests and common goals. It also gives students

an opportunity to obtain leadership positions or participating roles within clubs that they are interested in.

By finding or making a club that suits and recognizes your interests, you will feel more involved, represented, and included at the school. LaRocca notes that many students capitalize on this opportunity, so if you're feeling like you have an interest that isn't already being represented in a club, go ahead and make one yourself.■

# SURVEY SAYS: A+

Elena McCrossin'26

Continued from page 1

The Niche rating is

calculated from a variety of factors and primarily relies on the input of public data sets and personal reviews. Although the

ranking and statistics provided are complementary of Highlands, they are not guaranteed to be accurate as any user can input in-

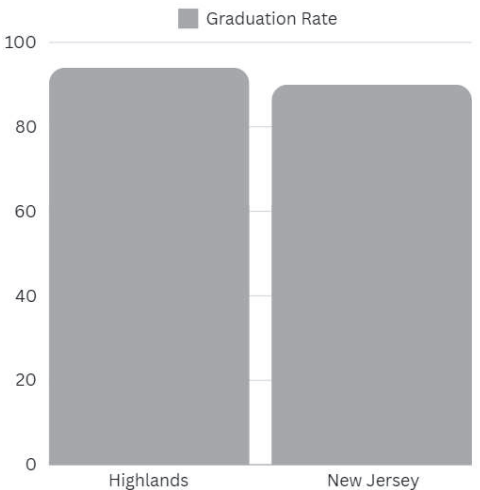
accurate reviews into the website and some public information sources may be providing false statistics. Regardless of the

precision, the rise in ranking can be taken as a complement by the administration, faculty, and students alike. Through the hard

work of all of these parties, Highlands has shown excellence, benefiting not only current and future students but the whole community.■



Percent of Highlands Students proficient in reading and math on standardized testing according to Niche vs. percent of New Jersey students proficient in reading and math in 2022



Percent of Highlands Students who graduate according to Niche vs. percent of New Jersey students who graduate according to NJ.com



According to Niche.com



# Crafting Tomorrow's CEOs Today

## The club that empowers students to soar in business and leadership

Emerson Rossi '26

DECA is one of the largest clubs at Northern Highlands, offering compelling opportunities for students. It focuses on helping students succeed in business and provides real-world experience for sophomores and upperclassmen to discover their passions. DECA is available to schools worldwide, with approximately 220,000 members globally and over 300 participants at Highlands.

Students are well prepared as they attend the mandatory training sessions, roleplay stimulators, and complete many practice tests to ensure their success. Students participate in roleplays, tests, and presentations specific to their chosen events, covering various areas in the business world.

There are many different cluster events in DECA including finance, marketing, management, and hospitality. Each roleplay and group event has over 60 different categories to choose from.

The DECA administration and leadership team is very devoted to ensuring that the participants are prepared for their events. As they lead and organize many meetings that assist students in preparation, practice, and business skills to ensure their success. Along with the students involved in the club, the advisors, administrators, and leadership team are just as dedicated to see success in DECA members.

Students undergo mandatory training sessions and roleplay stimulators to help them prepare for competition.

During roleplay competitions, contestants receive a prompt, have ten minutes to prepare for it, and present it to a judge for an additional ten minutes, who then scores them. Additionally, students take a mandatory test, with the results contributing to their overall score.

Those in prepared events have their presentations created well in advance and present at the state and possibly national level of competition. The options are endless and this non-profit student organization gives participants the freedom to find an event that best aligns with their interests.

DECA's popularity is evident from its large number of students involved in the club. The competitive levels add to its appeal, allowing all

members to compete regionally, and then progress to states, and potentially the national level.

The state level of competition is typical-

make sure to balance competition and enjoyment by engaging in all sorts of fun activities.

Seerat Dhir, a junior on the DECA leadership

helped me educationally, but it has created so many friendships for me and helped me find a group of people who I am so grateful to have in my life."

Overall, DECA has had an enduring impact, preserving student creativity and curiosity. It is not simply an addition to a college application; it requires genuine participation, passion, and dedication. The surreal experience that DECA provides for students is unmatched by any other

club that Highlands has to offer. Northern Highlands DECA continues to garner excitement from students and looks to build on its competition legacy.■



Photo taken by Raya Baghal '26

Above shows DECA members attending the first DECA meeting of 2024

ly held in Atlantic City while the national state conference is held in Anaheim, Orlando, or Atlanta. DECA goes beyond a traditional club in its various travel opportunities. The advisors

team, shares her DECA experience. She states, "DECA has made my high school experience so eventful and has truly helped me follow my passion into business. Not only has DECA

# Student Feedback is Needed on the New Library

## Have the major changes been useful to enhance daily students lives?

Dara Kotz '27

Our new library is officially open to students and staff members! With all the excitement comes questions, concerns, and feedback. Large funds were used to renovate our old library and make it into a new space that is perfect for the student body.

The most controversial ideas and topics are brought to the table to show the administration what the students expect going forward. Conversations about seating, a cafe, volume levels, and doors finally being unlocked have been discussed to focus on our mission to further advance the student experience in the library.

The library was created to address student recommendations and concerns. Northern Highlands administrators and staff want to ensure that students' voices are heard. Assistant Principal Tony LaRocca confirms the talk about a possible cafe by stating, "There is talk about a

small barista" being added to the library. The possibilities are endless and changes can occur, but only with student input.

While we wait for further advancements, many students have lots of commentary about the new library. The library serves as the center of our school community, as it is a comfortable space where students can get their schoolwork done, study, read, and engage in conversation. For some, the new library is an adjustment that will take getting used to. However, incoming freshmen do not know what the library used to look

past couple of months. One freshman stated, "The seating options are endless, everyone always can find a space that meets their needs." Many are amused by the decoration and our school spirit that is displayed throughout the entirety of the library.

For all returning students there is no doubt that this new facility is more high-tech, accommodating, and visually appealing. Many have stated, "Watching the progress over the past few months has made this reveal so exciting".

Through the past school year and the start of this one, the transformation has been

**One Freshman adds**  
**"The seating options are**  
**endless, everyone always**  
**can find a space that**  
**meets their needs."**

like and are unaware of the major changes that have occurred in the

extreme. While being very inconvenient at times the result was well



Photo taken by Reet Sachdev '27

Above shows the newly renovated portion of the Media Center formerly the Quiet section

worth it. Or was it? This is why we need students' help in ensuring we are maximizing the possibilities in this stunning new facility. While others are hoping to use the facilities more in their day-to-day classes. As the adjustment to the new library continues it would be nice to see this facility being used as a classroom to give students a change of scenery.

One of the things that has not been spoken about is the divider between the silent section and the talking section. Although it serves as a disruption to quickly get from one place to another. The distinction in volume is much better than in the old library. All students are now able to find the proper use of each section that suits their needs.

Sophomore, Lucy

Chung, phrased it best, "I won't be missing the old library." As our school community punches out the last few hiccups in this beautiful new facility we must do our part in contributing to a successful library that will suit everyone's wants and needs.

We are very fortunate to have this library that has so many configurations to let us lounge on a couch, study at a desk, sit at a table with our friends, study in silence, and serve as our tech department. These accommodations are beyond generous and truly allow for optimal learning.■



# 90-MINUTE LUNCHES: CONSISTENCY OR HISTORY

With student interest dwindling, will this be our last 90 minute lunch?

**Jiya Bhadra '25**

This past week was our first 90 minute lunch of the year featuring five different food trucks, the student and teacher kickball game, music, and an exciting photo booth in the main entrance. However, with all the fun that came with the first 90 minute lunch of the year also came rumors of this potentially being Highland's last one ever.

The administration and student government who organize this event

and even some vendors, like cars for example, not deciding to come back because of a lack of revenue at the event.

In recent years, 90 minute lunches have been a hallmark event at our school featuring a variety of food trucks including Rolling Yatai, Empanada Guy, Amanda's Bananas, RainBao, and Moes who came to this past one, and plenty of others in previous years.

Clubs also take this opportunity to fundraise by running bake sales, ka-

together as a community.

Alongside all the fun activities at the 90 minute lunches, there have been

question if the administration will be willing to continue providing these events for the student body,



Students and staff enjoying a game of kickball during 90 min lunch

rumors around if they will continue to occur. Mr. Occhino sets the record straight saying, "it's not a rumor, it's a fact." And according to Mr. Occhino, that fact is that if we cannot keep our promises to the vendors on the number of students attending, the food trucks will stop showing up.

There has been a continuous problem of seniors leaving campus during the event which is what caused this lack in support to the vendors. This brings into

if the vendors will continue coming to the lunches, or even if this past lunch was their final straw.

Senior, Sanjna Limaye explained, "I'd rather have it and not be able to leave than not have it at all," in regards to the event, a sentiment likely shared by the greater student body.

Furthermore, Senior and Board of Ed Rep, Autumn Chiu has given us some insight on the student government's feelings on the issue stating, "We really want all highlanders

to stay because the student government works really hard to produce these 90 minute lunches for the students." Their opinions show how important this event remains to be to the student body.

It's an integral experience at our school that would be a major loss if it were taken away. Though it is a unique event, it is a definitive part of our school, allowing us as a student body to come together and celebrate our community, which we all hope continues.

one who participated in it had fun, I wish the seniors participated in it." Furthermore, the administration has demonstrated interest in making changes to the event by bringing in other vendors more students are interested in, like Chick-fil-A or Chipotle, if that's what it takes to retain students at 90-minute lunches. They value the opinions of the student body on this subject, with Mr. Occhino asking, "What will it take for you to stay here?"

So, what will it take you to stay? Your choice

**"It's not a rumor, it's a fact."**

*Principal Joseph Occhino*

have been getting increasingly frustrated with the number of students leaving 90 minute lunches to get food off campus, as it poses a plethora of issues, including liability issues

raoke booths, and a photo-booth for students to enjoy.

These 90 minute lunches act as a great experience to have fun, take a break from learning, hang-out with friends, and come

**"I'd rather have it and not be able to leave than not have it at all"**

*Sanjna Limaye '25*

To help this remain tradition, Mr. Occhino urges, "Seniors, we would like you to participate, we would like you to remain here" Dr. LaRocca concurs, stating, "I think that every-

to stay or go might end up being one of the deciding factors on if this event remains constant in the community, or if it becomes history. ■

# DON'T STRESS, IT'S JUST A TEST

The SAT is coming and here is what you need to know

**Anisa Parves '28**

Every year many high school students take the SAT during college application season. Taking a standardized test can be nerve wracking as the pressure to perform well can be overwhelming and stress inducing. But what should you be expecting?

The Scholastic Aptitude Test, or the SAT, is a standardized test that high school juniors and seniors take to demonstrate their academic abilities to colleges and universities. The SAT helps admission officers assess a student's potential for higher education. Similarly, the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test, or the PSAT, is a test that most sophomores take as a practice run of the SAT which helps determine their college readiness.

The SAT can be taken during almost any month but it might not be hosted by Highlands. When hosted by Highlands, the SAT can

be, or was taken during October, December, March, or June for the 24-25 school year.

Many students find the SAT to be a stressful experience. Senior Salma Hassan described feeling "nervous and discouraged" despite studying for over a year and a half. Some students even experience "SAT burnout," leading to declining performance. "It just wasn't as good as I wanted it to be so at this point I was just discouraged," Hassan further remarked.

A lot of juniors

And on top of that, they have to deal with the SAT's. An anonymous junior commented "I don't think the timing of the SAT is the best because it's also coinciding with the hardest year of highschool and it makes it so difficult to balance schoolwork and SAT prep." Overall, it makes the whole experience time consuming.

Despite its importance, some students question the value of the SAT because they think that it doesn't really showcase their true potential. Another

though a lot of people

However, the SAT

ly struggled with last year." Developing the ability to work under pressure is essential for feeling confident about the test. "For the most recent SAT, I approached the exam with the mindset that I had done everything within my power and tried my best, and whatever happens, happens," Hassan explained. Approaching the test with a positive mindset can definitely better your overall experience.

It's important to remember that it doesn't capture your abilities and potential to the fullest. By maintaining a positive mindset and understanding the SAT's role in the college admissions process, you can approach the test with confidence and minimize its stress.

Remember, the SAT is just one step on your educational journey, and it doesn't define your worth as a student or as an individual. ■

**"It just wasn't as good as I wanted it to be so at this point. I was just discouraged"**  
*Salma Hassan '25*

**"If we make everybody sit and take the same questions, then you throw everything else out. It's not fair, but it's the only thing that they can do to compare fairly."**

*Vice Principal Tony LaRocca*

are getting very overwhelmed as junior year is arguably the hardest year of high school.

anonymous junior stated "I feel like it's kind of pointless because it's just a test. And even

given more weight because some people are simply not good test takers.

provides colleges with a standardized way to compare applicants from diverse backgrounds. Dr. LaRocca noted, "If we make everybody sit and take the same questions, then you throw everything else out. It's not fair, but it's the only thing that they can do to compare fairly."

It's important to remember that the SAT is just one part of the college admissions process.

While it can be stressful, maintaining a positive attitude can significantly improve your performance. As Salma Hassan shared, "It's challenging not to let your score define you, and that's something I personal-



# FASHION THAT MEANS BUSINESS: VIRTUAL VOGUE

Students get a sneak peek into the new fashion club

I'm so excited about this new club. I'm really interested in fashion and also want to know more about the business aspect of it, so I'm excited for the first meeting.

*Katie Lee, '27*

**Tess Han '27**

Sports, music, theater, language, art, even fishing--Northern Highlands has clubs for pretty much every interest. All except one very important interest: fashion. To fill this gap, junior Krithi Vedam, junior Emerson Rossi, and junior Seerat Dhir decided to make a change.

Vedam stated, "We wanted to create a new club, and we were just brainstorming at first. Then, we realized we all really enjoy fashion, business, and marketing, and there was no fashion club at Highlands, unlike other schools. So we

took that idea and ran with it." As students participating in DECA, Vedam, Rossi, and Dhir all have years of experience handling business interactions and have much knowledge on the topic of fashion.

Many students have expressed interest in the club, especially with fashion rising as one of the more popular topics of interest in the student body. The rise in popularity of fashion seems to come from social media, with many influencers inspiring people with upcoming trends and fashion hacks.

This seemingly has worn onto the student

body, with the increase of interest in fashion. Sophomore Katie Lee stated, "I'm so excited about this new club. I'm really interested in fashion and also want to know more about the business aspect of it, so I'm excited for the first meeting."

The new Business in Fashion club was created with the intent to invite more students to learn not just about fashion itself, but how fashion is advertised, marketed, and incorporated into the world of business.

Business is a crucial part of fashion, and many of the brands people know today are known due to the mar-

keting behind them. This includes famous logos such as Chanel, Nike, Gucci, Louis Vuitton, and more.

Although the meeting dates itself haven't been decided yet, the three founders have many ideas for their new club. Some examples are a Met Gala watch party, clothing drives, and teaching those how to put marketing to real-life use through the club's Instagram account.

Using the club's Instagram to practice marketing is a great opportunity for students to use their marketing in a real-life setting. Not only do the participants get to

learn about the business in fashion, but they also get to apply their skills. One opportunity that stood out to me was designing clothes for the school store. Mrs. Diane DeVoe (school store manager), provided the opportunity for this flourishing club to design potential clothes for school sports and school merchandise. This is a great opportunity for students to use their passion to create new things.

Not only does fashion seem to be the reason why people are attracted to the start of this club, but the business portion plays a big role in

attracting students. Although the Business in Fashion elective is also a popular choice among students, many who aren't enrolled in the class now have an opportunity to explore their interest in the topic.

Not often do people have the opportunity to learn about both fashion and business at a high school, which shows how Highlands has really grown to cater to everyone's interests. ■

## Sports Business Management Club Kicks Off

A glimpse into the school's first ever athletics-related club with co-founder Harrison Rosner

**Madeleine Knapp '25**

The popularity of sports has surged in recent years, evident in the expansion of college recruiting networks, the growing engagement with professional teams and player's social media accounts, and millions tuning in to televised matches. This rising interest has led to an increased demand for jobs in the sports industry, inspiring sophomores Harrison Roser and Corey Begleiter to establish a new Sports Business Management Club.

When asked about their motivations for starting the club, Rosner explained, "The sports industry in this country is rapidly growing. As the profiles of college students going into the world of

sports grow on social media, our generation is becoming more and more interested. With no representation of sports outside our teams, we saw an opportunity to implement something that can last a long time here."

Rosner and Begleiter seek to introduce their members to this multi-billion dollar industry through a variety of engaging activities. "Our goal is for the club to be an opportunity for students to learn and gain knowledge on the real-world industry of sports. We don't want to assign work and create a burden for our members. Instead, we want to be seen as something positive for people to take part in and commit to while participating in fun competitions for prizes."

One of the activities Rosner and Begleiter have in store is inviting guest speakers at least once a month who can talk about their career paths in sports management and provide valuable tips for success. In addition, the club plans to organize school-wide competitions related to major professional sports events, such as an NFL Playoff Pool and a March Madness bracket competition, with prizes including free tickets to professional sports games.

While the club is based in the school, Rosner and Begleiter also have their sights set on expanding the scope of its activities beyond the school, with Rosner mentioning plans to attend industry conferences and tour notable sports venues in New Jersey, including

MetLife Stadium. Due to our proximity to New York City—a major professional sports hub—and several historic stadiums located less than an hour away, there are ample opportunities for year-round engagement with industry professionals.

Overall, both Rosner and Begleiter are confident that the club will be a hit among students. "I think the club will provide many kids with an opportunity to learn about something they are passionate about and interested in doing in the future," Rosner commented. "The presence of a Sports Business Club at Highlands diversifies the genres of activities we offer and is something new everyone can look forward to participating in during the



A flyer advertising the Sports Management club to students.

coming years."

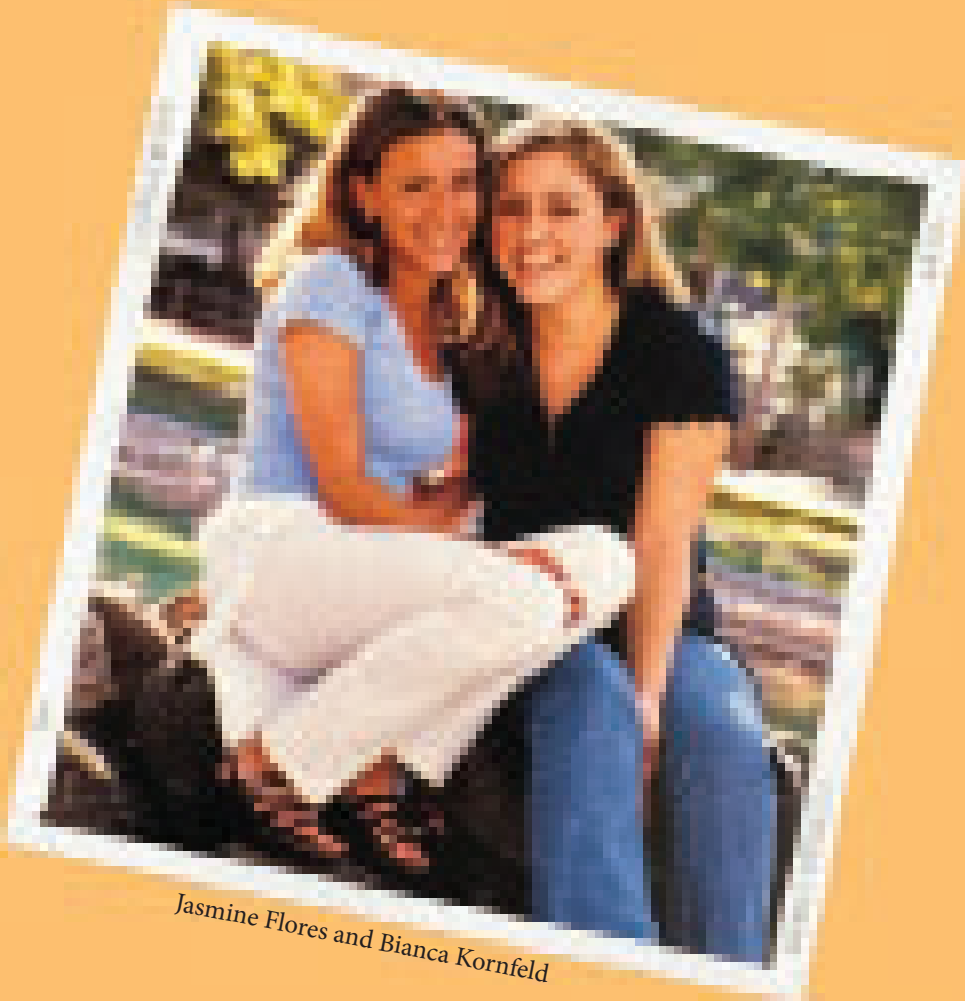
Though the Sports Business Management Club is new this year, it is poised to become a valuable addition to the school community, leaving a lasting impression on students and staff alike. To engage with the club and its future events, follow the club's Instagram page

@nhrhssportsmanagement. ■



# THE END OF A LEGACY: SAYING GOODBYE TO BUDDY PHOTOS

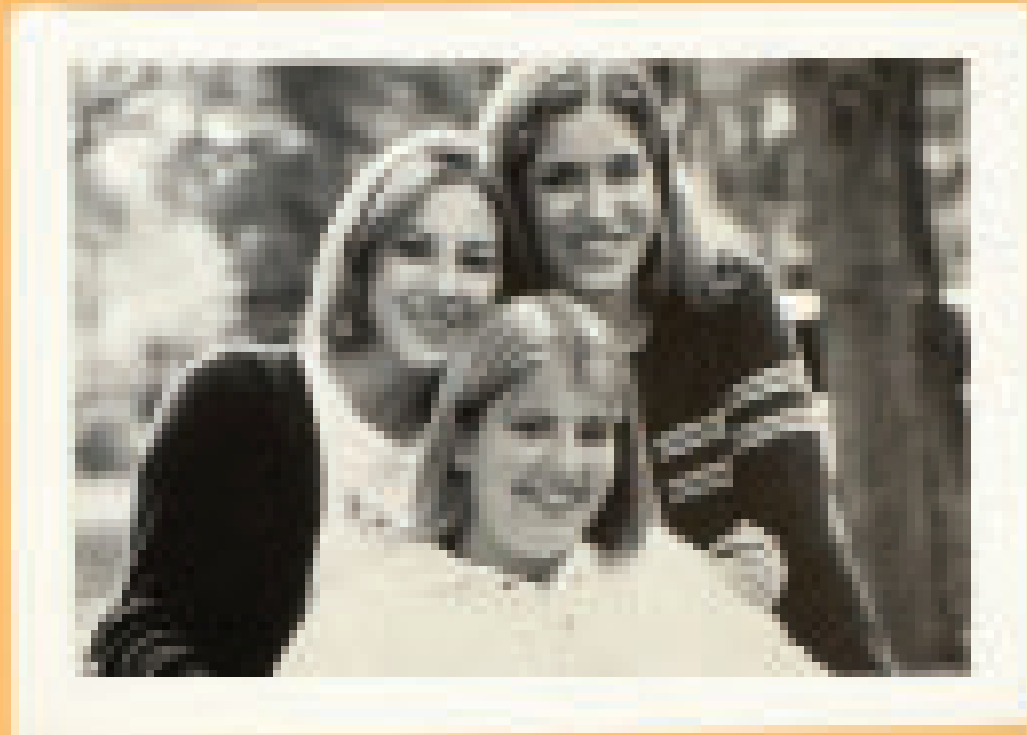
Cameron Waller '26



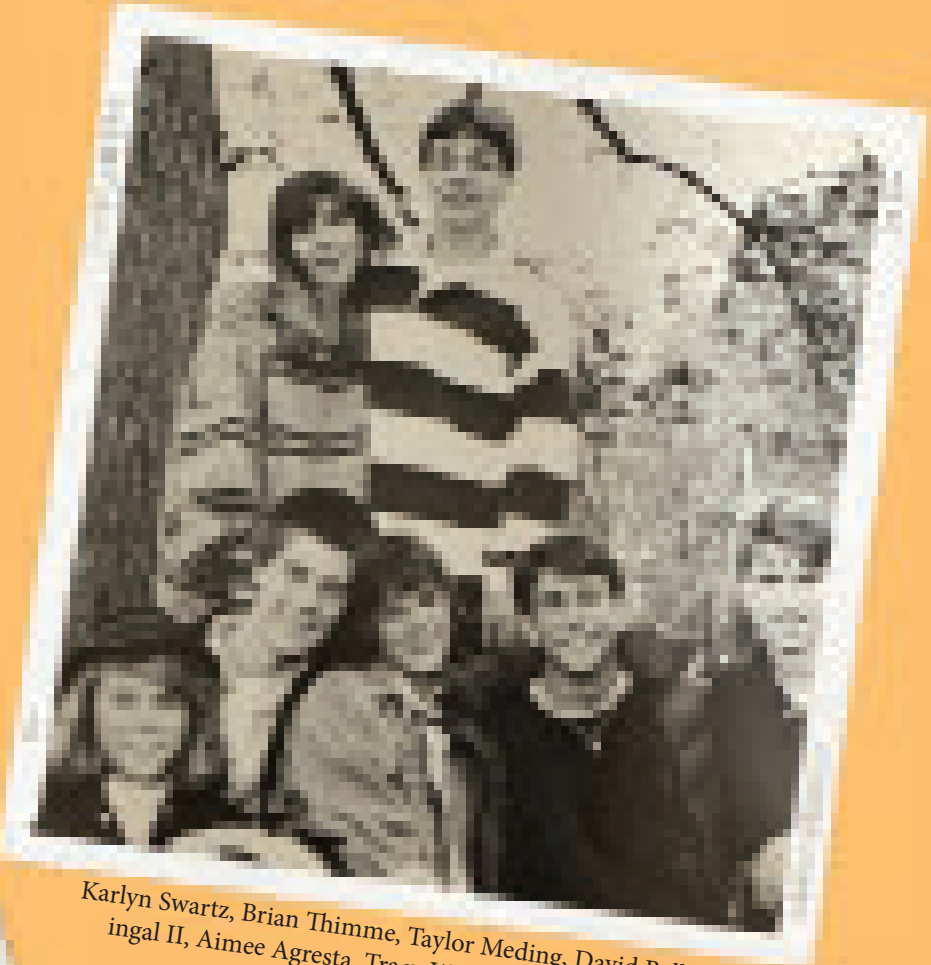
Jasmine Flores and Bianca Kornfeld



Amir Zolghard, Brett Johnson, Chardo Richardson, DeShawn Rawlings, Daniel Santiago

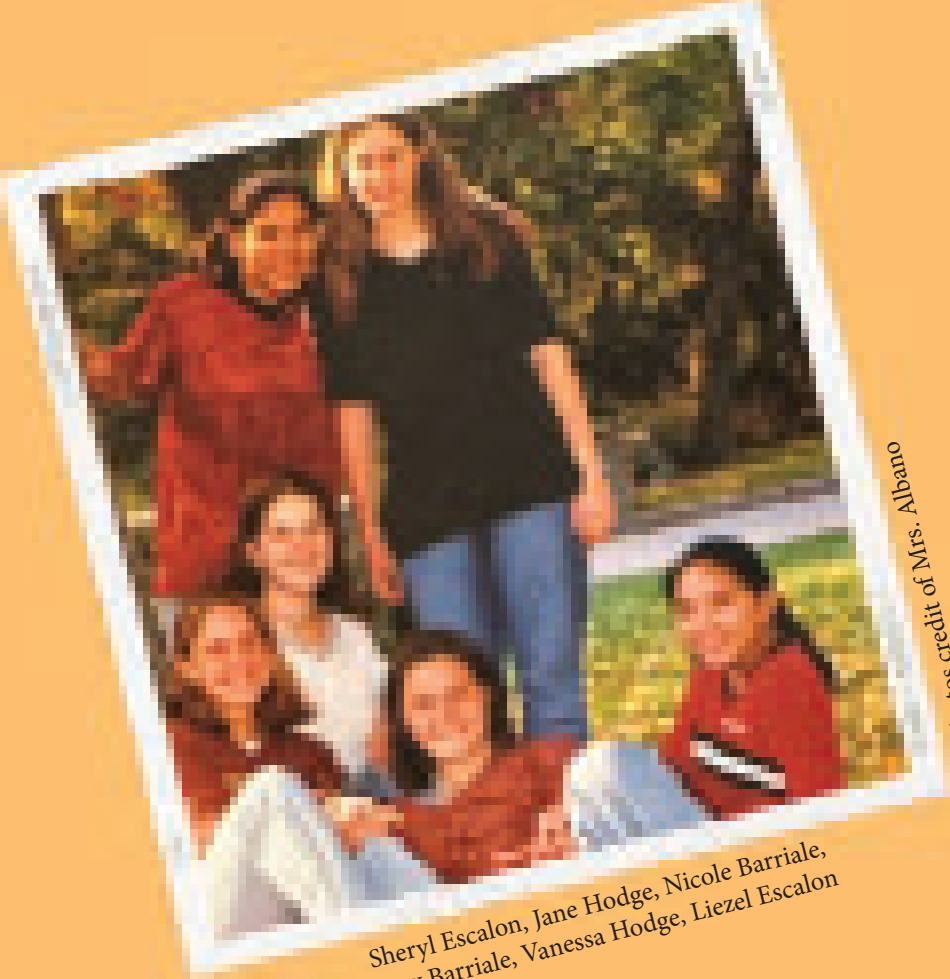


Marissa Regante, Michelle DiMauro, Elizabeth Fayerweather



Karlyn Swartz, Brian Thimme, Taylor Meding, David Ballingal II, Aimee Agresta, Tracy Weiler, Todd Butchko

Starting 50 years ago, our school offered buddy photos to fundraise for the photo booth on Spirit Day. However, sales have dropped recently, meaning this may be the last year they will occur. Mrs. Albano, the Yearbook club advisor, said, “With smartphone cameras and social media, students no longer see the value in taking a traditional posed group photo on the Rockwall, as has been done since the 1970s here at Highlands.” Even though this tradition will be ending soon, we can go back and look through past photos to honor it.



Sheryl Escalon, Jane Hodge, Nicole Barriale, Amy Barriale, Vanessa Hodge, Liezel Escalon



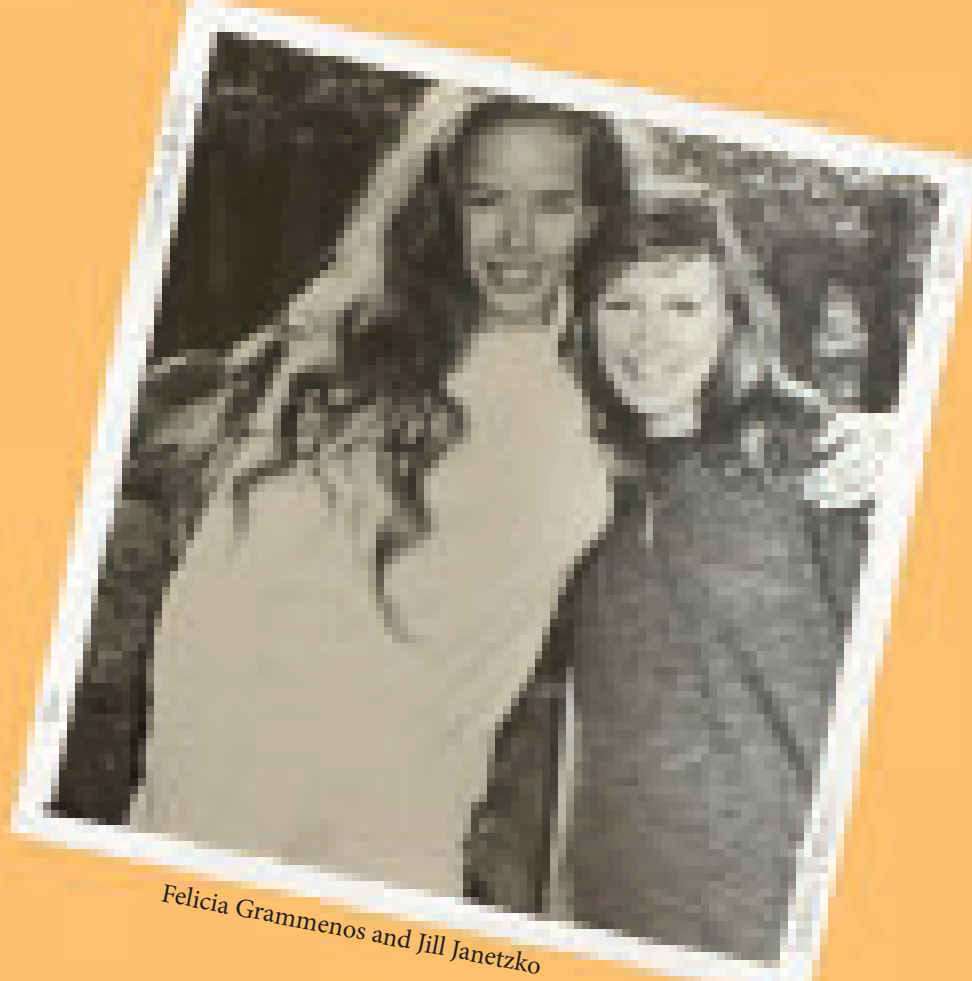
All photos credit of Mrs. Albano



Nicole DeMelia, Dina Tortorelli, Barbi O'Conner, Mary Beth Morris, Jen Cream, Bridget Jennings, Jason Retger, Kevin Cunningham



Tina Dean, Tara Gustafson, Chardo Richardson, Julie Grippa, Dan Santiago, Sierra Steele



Felicia Grammenos and Jill Janetzko









# MARCHING BAND’S SEASON OF STYLE

Delve deeper into this season’s theme and the commitment put in

Gabriel Tejeda ’26

Seasons of Style, this season’s marching band theme, features a dramatic, multi-genre adaptation of Vivaldi’s “Four Seasons.” Each segment of the show features a different season, all played using different styles or genres in comparison to Vivaldi’s original piece. It’s an impactful, striking show that features some of our best musicians and mixes them together to create a wonder-

quickly able to develop a skeleton of the piece, allowing for practices focused on improvement rather than learning. “Band camp,” Rehe says, “was very productive.” Vigorous practice is absolutely required for this year’s intensive yet fun arrangement. When you play through all four of Vivaldi’s seasons in genres ranging from dance to rock to ballads and all the way back to classical, intensive preparation is crucial to

erwise unvaried classical piece. The show begins in spring, which is a dance movement featuring no solos, yet still an amazing introduction to the performance. This is followed by summer, a rock/heavy metal adaptation that junior Peter Strandes and freshman Shant Soultanian have heavy guitar solos in, contrasting the usual idea of marching band and taking audiences by surprise. After summer comes autumn, a ballad featuring sophomore Jack Bryan-Jones on flugelhorn that encapsulates the feeling of autumn through a smooth ballad. Lastly is winter, a typical classical movement that highlights the drum corps and features junior Morgan Yoo on Flute.

“exactly where we need to be.” Rehe doesn’t say this lightly- the band is

and the next day drilling autumn. Not only does this allow for focused

goes back to the beginning, symbolizing that the seasons always go on.

The show is a must-watch, featuring an incredible ensemble full of talented people who make the show something to be very proud of. Make sure to tune in to one of the home games! ■

**Rehe believes that this year’s band camp featured the best improvement that any band camp since Covid has seen.**

improving every day, and already has amazing statistics and spent the entirety of October getting ready for one event: state championships.

By the time this article is released, state championships will have already happened. In October, the marching band participated in this championship. And although the results are unknown now, it’s clear that hours upon hours of practice have been put into this performance.

Every rehearsal, the band focuses on one section of the show. For example, they’ll meet one day and spend that entire day drilling spring,

rehearsals without the chaotic nature of changing songs rapidly, but it also encourages improvement on the small things, which eventually make or break the show.

However, the State Championship isn’t their final show. Depending on how long this year’s football season lasts, the marching band will be performing at every home game.

So, if you ever feel inspired, make sure to listen for the ⅞ section during the Winter season, which is Rehe’s favorite part of the performance. Also pay attention to the end of the piece, which essentially



**Each segment of the show features a different season, all played using different styles or genres in comparison to Vivaldi’s original piece.**

ful symphony of sound. Bands director Ms. Taylor Rehe believes that this year’s band camp featured the best improvement that any band-camp since Covid has seen. The band was

developing a good show. Each separate season features a sound that feels both incredibly different yet strikingly similar to each other, blending genres and allowing for creativity in an oth-

Additionally, performances and competitions so far have been great. Working on the show through weekends, the band competition performance has shown to be

# SENIOR SPOTLIGHT: FALL PLAY

A behind the scenes look into the roles of the student director and costume designer

Henry Roberts ’26

As the performance of the fall play Arsenic and Old Lace edges closer, there is an incredible amount of work being done to get the show on the road, whether it be from the actors or the production team. In specific, there are two important roles that have been taken by seniors this year: the student director and the costume designer.

These jobs require incredible amounts of responsibility, and they are given many different jobs as a part of those responsibilities. The student director, senior Zari Veres Royal, had this to say about what her position entails: “I’m at every rehearsal, I block a

scene and I also take notes on all the blocking the director does. I take attendance at every rehearsal, and I answer general questions that everyone has.” With all that on her plate, she states, “at first I was really nervous because I had never blocked a scene before, but I worked with some great people to help me with the process and it was really fun. Now, I’m

really excited because it’s nice to see how the show is playing out, and it’s getting better every rehearsal.” Being able to co-direct a show must be one of the coolest experiences for someone who has been on the stage before. Veres Royal agreed with this idea when she said, “I’ve only ever been on stage in .the cast or in the crew, so this is my first time in a

position like this.” When asked about the differences of be-

when I’m on stage.” The other senior staff member this year

**“I’m at every rehearsal, I block a scene and I also take notes on all the blocking the director does. I take attendance at every rehearsal, and I answer general questions that everyone has.”**

*Zari Veres Royal*

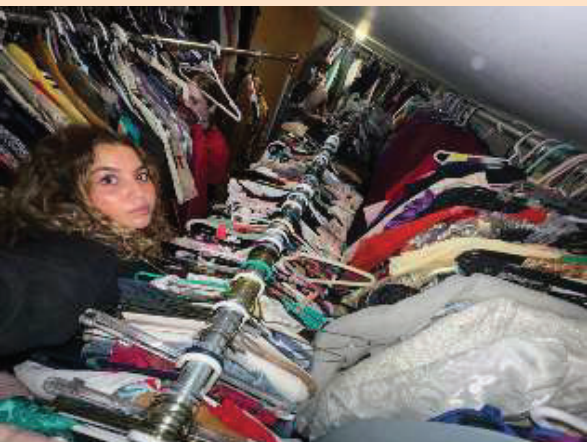
ing an actress to being a director, she said, “being on-stage is definitely a lot more nerve racking because there’s obviously a lot of people looking at you, but this position is definitely harder in a different way because it’s a very big responsibility. I’m in charge of a bunch of different things, and I have to pay attention to different things then

is Salma Tari. When asked about her position, she said, “I am the costume technician for the fall play.” Tari talked about her experience going into the position when she shared that, “this is my first time officially costuming but I’ve always had a love for telling a story through clothes and sewing.”

As someone who’s performed on the

school stage, Tari was able to speak about the differences between her jobs in the past and her job now when she explained, “you get to really focus on the little details that the actors don’t really think about. It’s also a different way of telling the story that no one really recognizes.”

With the hard work that is being put in by these two seniors, and the rest of the cast and staff of the fall play, the only way to really appreciate the work they have put in is to go to the fall play on November 21, 22, and 23. Theater company hopes to see you there! ■



Costume designer Salma Tari in the costume closet

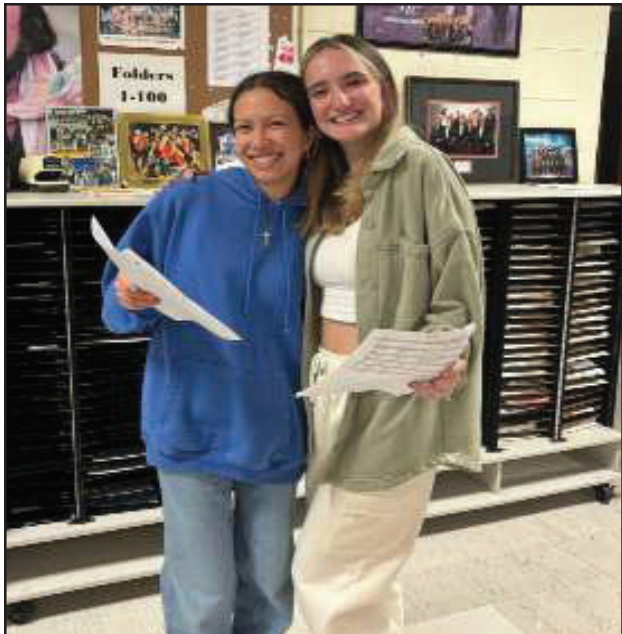
Photo Courtesy of Henry Roberts '26



# A CAPPELLA IS BACK IN SESSION

## Rehearsals begin for the 2024-25 Voices and Belles Season

**Ben Sherlock '26** is] so excited to perform with an all-female group.” Belles Director, Ms. Taylor Rehe shares similar feelings to Misantonis, stating “I’m really



Gabby Beyer '27 (left) and Willow Farquhar '27 (right) with their new music at the first Voices rehearsal

SA competitions. The two groups, Belles and Voices, have begun their own competition process by recording and submitting their auditions for the ICHSA. Both groups are meeting every monday from 6:00 PM - 9:00 PM, with added rehearsals



at the same time when competitions approach. Students and teachers alike are ecstatic to begin the a cappella season. As Belles Member senior



(From Left to Right): Henry Roberts '26, Joseph Larsen '28, Ben Sherlock '26 at Voices' first rehearsal.

Nina Misantonis puts it, “[She’s] really excited because [she] thinks that Belles is going to be really good this year and [she

excited to also see how a larger group will change our place in the competitions. It will definitely help change our sound.”

The change that Delo Russo mentioned is the fact that Highlands is going from the usual three group format, down to only two; which eliminates Harmonics in the process, whilst simultaneously making the groups grow in size to around 16 members each from the previous 12. This is due to Mr. Thomas Paster– the usual Voices director– taking a one year hiatus from directing a cappella in order to focus on his education once more, making Rehe the new Belles director and Lahr the new Voices director.

“Honestly, I was a little hesitant when Mr. Paster asked me about directing Voices this year.” Lahr vocalized when asked about the new responsibility, “He’s done such incredible work with Voices over the years and I’m thrilled to be carrying on the tradition.”

Rehe adds “I’m especially excited about taking over Belles this year. A part of my background in a cappella-style singing is barbershop quartet style stuff. I spent my entire high school singing in a female barbershop quartet; so I am used to the female voice and how to make it sound full, even when missing the bottom half of the sound.”

The members of a cappella share both feelings of nervousness and elation when it comes to the changes in directors.

Misantonis asserts, “I think that the change almost makes the groups better in a way. Because there are less spots, it was definitely slim picking when it came to casting these groups. They [the directors] definitely made the decisions very carefully and put a lot of thought into them. It’ll definitely be for the better, both for my group and the overall performance.”

Delo Russo, on the other hand, is slightly more nervous, stating “I do think it could cause a few issues, but I think that we will work past them and have a really strong group.”

One thing that everyone involved has their mind on is what the competition set for both groups will be. Luckily, both group’s directors have decided to chip in a small insight about what to expect to see over the course of the next few months.

“As much as possible, I give the group mem-

bers some agency in determining the direction of the competition set.” Lahr explains, “So, as of this moment, I have no idea what the set will be.”

Rehe has a little more planned out when

are many goals that people have for this year’s season.

Belles member junior Krithi Vedam shares a similar goal with a lot of people. She says her main goal for Belles this year is to “win quarterfi-

every member to have a positive experience connecting to one another, and with the community, through music,” states Lahr, “Singing in an ensemble is fun, but it’s also hard work. I would love

**“The main goal is for every member to have a positive experience connecting to one another, and with the community, through music.”**

*Ms. Irene Lahr*

it comes to the set, sharing that “[She] has a couple different ideas. Two of the songs [she’s] considering are Maneater by Nelly Furtado and maybe Just a Girl by No Doubt.”

Rehe also says that she has “some really

nals and reach semifinals.”

Voices member freshman Joseph Larsen– who is also the first freshman to be on Voices since its founding– has a simpler goal in mind however, stating “I want to contribute to the better portion of the bass

for the group to reach their highest potential through hard work and dedication. If every member does that, success will follow.”

The groups have great potential this year, and things are looking up for the rest of the season. So



The Voices at their first rehearsal with their director, Mrs. Lahr (middle). Missing: Gabe Tejeda '26, Avery Hirsch '25, Bradley Hogue '26, Paige Ellis '26.

fun, female empowerment style arrangements that always works really well for Belles as an

part. I feel I can get a few notes that others can’t, and especially with the help of junior Bradley Hogue (the

make an effort to come out, support your fellow peers, and have fun!■

**“They [the directors] definitely made the decisions very carefully and put a lot of thought into them. It’ll definitely be for the better, both for my group and the overall performance.”**

*Nina Misantonis '25*

all-treble voice group.” As many of the a cappella members and directors alike have expressed, there

other bass on Highlands Voices) we can get some really good things going.” “The main goal is for

Photo courtesy of Nick Franchi '25

Photo courtesy of Nick Franchi '25

Photo courtesy of Hannah Altman '24



# CELEBRATING THE SPOOKY SEASON

## Preview the Halloween costumes being worn this year

Henry Roberts '26

The second the calendar flips to October you're sure to see houses decorated with the most elaborate statues and decorations in order to usher in some people's favorite holiday,



(From left to right:) Ben Granas '25, Jacob Alvelo '25, and Addison Pavone '25 from last year's Halloween!

Halloween. Since the holiday is so popular it would be only natural to have some fanatics of the day to be excited for the com-

ing of the spooky season. Even in front of the festivities that take place on the 31st the most important thing in the whole world on Halloween is the costumes. The first question you get asked when you say you're celebrating

ing a scarecrow, because my son chose our costumes this year. He wants to be a big giant pumpkin with a big belly, so he wants me to be a scarecrow. At work I am being a secret thing because the departments all battle over our costume contest, so I am not at liberty to divulge to the press what the English department is being yet."

Junior Sophia Aristizabal said, "I will be dressing up as either Carrie and/or the narrator from fight club, because I enjoy both the movies and it's a fun way to show it. We only have one day a year to dress up so might as well make it fun."

Junior Jenna Finkelshteyn said that for Halloween, "I am gonna be a pirate because I have the base for the costume and I only need to buy the accessories. I'm not doing a theme with my friends, I just wanted to be a pirate. I'm really excited

because I'm actually going and dramatic person, it's

**"I think it's really cool that it's one of the only holidays where we really embrace strangers regardless of what they look like."**

*Mrs. Shaina Strang-Wolf*

to go trick or treating with my friends on Halloween."

Of course, those who love Halloween truly love everything about the holiday. Strang-wolf, a Halloween fanatic and enthusiast of everything spooky shared that, "I've always been a spooky person, I have always been interested in spooky things stemming from my teenage years. I love Halloween, I think it's a wonderful holiday. I think as a theatrical

really fun to dress up and have costumes, but I also



Addison Pavone '25 showing off her clown costume from 2023!

think it's really fun to celebrate the darker elements of life. I also really love Halloween because it's a real community holiday. I think it's really cool that it's one of the only holidays where we really embrace strangers regardless of what they look like so I love the symbolism of that as well."

Along with the costumes that usually take center stage, the festivities such as trick or treating or costume parties are also what have carried Halloween to its level of popularity today. When asked about her plans for the 31st, Aristizabal said, "On Halloween I'll probably go out with my friends or go to a party."

As you can see, people will be celebrating the holiday to the fullest this year, so get into your costume, go trick or treating, spend time with your friends, and have a happy Halloween.■

# HIGHLANDS' OWN LIVE CONCERTS

## Check out the performers from October's 90 minute lunch

Ben Sherlock '26

The Highlands music scene is thriving, and not just in the music department! Many young instrumentalists have taken it upon themselves to be individualists and perform at extended lunches!

These performances have ranged far and wide: people form bands and perform covers or even original songs, go to Mr. Justin Nadal's Karaoke Stand, and have small solo performances.

"I performed 'Lazarus' and 'Blackest Eyes' by Porcupine Trees with my friend Matt Altman ('26)," said Junior Henry Roberts when asked about his performance, "I

was pretty fun. I played guitar with my sister [Class of 2024 alum Han-

Both members of this dynamic duo have stated that you can expect



Gabe Tejeda '26 performing a solo with his guitar.

nah Altman] in June last year, but this is my first time being front and cen-

to find them performing in future lunches, so be sure to look out for them!

Roberts and Altman are not the only instrumentalists who decided to showcase their musical talents during this day.

Juniors Mila Gaglio, PJ Strandes, and Gabe Tejeda have formed a small band under Mush. The trio have performed at many past lunches, often garnering quite an audience.

"Unfortunately, we could not perform today," Gaglio says, "We were supposed to, but were unable to because one of our band members got his guitar strung upside down. Gabe Tejeda did perform some Elliot Smith songs though." Tejeda comments, "I

am definitely bummed about not being able to perform with the rest of the Mush members today. We all look forward to performing at these 90-minute lunches, as they are always a good experience to have."

When asked about what he had to say about his own performance, Tejeda noted that "It was a good performance all around. I believe that I both sang and played well, and the entire audience was really supportive. It was full of both my friends and people I didn't know, which was nice."

The most popular form of live performances at the 90-minute lunch-

the table, listening and singing along with whoever

ety, but a lot of my friends said I was very good so

**"I believe that I both sang and played well and the entire audience was really supportive."**

*Gabriel Tejeda '26*

is holding the microphone.

One student who participated in the karaoke this past extended lunch is freshman Abby Acer.

that made me happy."

Be sure to look out for more performers, and maybe be one yourself. You will not regret it!■

**"It was a very nice crowd and that definitely made it a much more comfortable experience."**

*Matt Altman '26*

think it went pretty dang well. This is technically my first 90-minute lunch but I have done some impromptu stuff in the past."

"I played guitar and sang for the first time in front of everybody, so this

ter during a performance."

Altman shared, "I was pretty happy with it. Henry sounded great when he was singing. It was a very nice crowd and that definitely made it a much more comfortable experience."



Henry Roberts '26 (left) and Matt Altman '26 (right) preparing for their performance.

es is, without a doubt, Nadal's karaoke stand.

Students and teachers alike often crowd around

"I think I did good, but it was very scary," Acer shares. "I have severe performance and social anxiety."



# VARSITY GIRLS SOCCER SEASON READY

The varsity girls soccer team has kicked off to a great start to the season and shared feedback.

Erik Koo '26

Northern Highlands Varsity Girls Soccer stands out as one of the most successful throughout the school year. Holding a 7-2 record, the girls led by Coach Madigan have been cruising with a combined 35 goals. Following a record of 18-5 the previous year, the Highlanders are expected to be one of the top teams in Bergen County. The Highlands girls' soccer program has been a top team for years, largely due its abundance of talented players whose work ethics are unmatched. The players also boast determination and athleticism. The team's unmatched chemistry is also a driving factor in which sets them apart from other teams in their division. Players who have a G/A

(goals or assists) for the Highlanders include Senior Meghan Buchanan (14 G/A), Senior Lyla Geller (12 G/A), Senior Norah Marron (6 G/A), Senior Ava Andicoechea (5 G/A), Senior Sophia Mamunes (5 G/A), Junior Cameron Waller (4 G/A), Senior Sophia Galgano (4 G/A), Senior Julia Buono (4 G/A), Junior Sorch Powell (2 G/A), Senior Emerson Campbell (2 G/A), Senior Sophia Patel (1 G/A), Senior Maddie Knapp (1 G/A), Senior Cass Gallagher (1 G/A), and Sophomore Felicia Dillon (1 G/A). After talking to both juniors Cameron Waller and Sorch Powell, two current members of the girls soccer team, we were able to tell that this squad runs off hardwork and trust between teammates. Here is some informa-

tion about the girls team from Waller and Powell. When asked when fans should arrive to watch games, Waller says, "Counties are starting to get seeded, so once our county tournament starts those would be great games to come to." Powell states, "Fans are appreciated at all and any games but definitely rivalry games like Ramapo. Those are the most exciting to watch. County and state games are also super important to attend because they are tournament games

and always super exciting to watch and cheer on." When asked what some important things the team values, Powell explains "As a team our most important values are hard work and dedication. We always make sure to

show up for one another and put our best foot forward. Soccer is a team sport and we need to constantly make sure we are all dedicated and push each other so that we can reach our goals." Waller replied similarly, saying "we value hard work and trust. If we work hard in practice, then the games will be easy. We also need to trust ourselves and our teammates." It goes without saying that the girls have been practicing and playing hard to keep the reputation they have boasted for years. We wish the girls good-luck for the remainder of the season. Their full schedule can be found on NJ.com, as well statistics and powerpoints. Go Highlands

Photo Credits: Instagram account tag @highlandsoccer



Image of Varsity Girls Soccer together for a team photo.

# CROSSING THE FINISH LINE

The Runners Take Their Mark as the Season Comes near its Close

Vallerie Kalekar '28

The Varsity Cross Country season is now officially in full swing as the fall season continues. This year, they have a pleasant mix of all grade levels, with a rare number of freshmen running Varsity. Since August, all the runners have been training hard for their meets. They have a strict schedule to meet every day after school, starting at 3:15, so that every runner has time for extra help before their practice. Each practice differs in workouts, but

the same. The coaches alternate between a good round of distance runs, short runs, and workouts. Their workouts tend to be "800 repeats", which is sprinting for 800 meters to improve speed endurance. Some days, the athletes run three to five miles a day, the others: six to seven miles. They've done runs on the stands to help better stimulate the meets. Head Coach DeStaso and his assistants each help improve the physical and mental aptitude of all their runners; giving them

their confidence. Varsity senior member Farrah Della Russo says "Our coaches care a lot. They always tell us to listen to our bodies, and to take time off if we're in pain." Despite their hardcore training and tough-loving coaches, most athletes on the team are not feeling too confident about the outcome of their season. Unfortunately, 'tis the season of injuries for many, especially the girls. "Yeah, there are some higher profile injuries," senior Michael Grimberg commented. His teammates and coaches all seemed to be in agreement with him.

Most athletes are getting back on their feet, but are still struggling to regain the same strength and agility they had before. But each member of the team is more determined than ever, and many of them are excited for the upcoming state races. Freshman Abby Skripak spoke the praises of cross

country. New to the team, she has already been able to offer some empathetic insight and advice. "I think all we can do is try our best and work through our injuries and struggles together." The injuries still can't seem to break the strong team morale each individual in Cross Country has. Cross Country is a sport where individuals will compete against each other, but the Highlanders still believe that teamwork is equally as important as individual wins. When asked what was one of the biggest things he valued and believed in, junior Varsity member, Alex Dyki, said that he tries to uplift his teammates. "If we see someone falling behind in practice, we shouldn't make fun of them. We should instead help them to get back to their original level." The team describes themselves to be very close and they each value similar things.



The runners making their final push to the finish line

Senior Varsity member Andrew Levinsohn further complimented Dyki's way of thinking by saying that he valued dedication not only to each respective running event but also to the team and its participants. Both Levinsohn and Dyki believe that as Varsity upperclassmen, it is important that they recognize their fellow underclassmen runners and try to boost their spirits.

We can also help boost their spirits by

cheering Highlands at their meets. Most of the upperclassmen agreed that the meets set in Darlington or Mahwah were the best to go to because of their proximity to Allendale. Anyone willing to put in the hard work and commitment should also consider joining the tight-knit team of Cross Country next year. As Coach DeStaso likes to say, "We like to win." ■



The girls running to the finish line

its intensity remains pep talks to increase



# NFL OPINIONS FROM OUR POV

## National Football League Takes Over Highlands With Different Opinions

Addison Menzell ‘28

The NFL season consists of a 3-week pre-season, an 18-week regular season, and a 14-team single-elimination play-off, ending with the Superbowl. Being that we are week 5-6 into the NFL season, I went around and interviewed for some people’s predictions on the 2024-2025 football season.

First I asked one of our defensive linemen, number 69, Joey McDermott, who is a senior here at Highlands what his thoughts are. He stated that ever since he was a kid his favorite team has been the New York Jets, as the same was for his father who also grew up loving the Jets. When asked for his prediction of this year's NFL season he

about 9 games, lose about 8.” The Jets currently have 2 wins and 3 losses, so he might be on the right track. Joey’s overall prediction of the outcome of this year’s season was that; the Jets will make it to the wildcard for playoffs—but lose and also that the Minnesota Vikings, he feels have a good chance to win. His extra take on some other teams like the Cleveland Browns or the Atlanta Falcons, is that the Browns are to be the worst in the league, and the Falcons are to be a sleeper team.

Second, I asked our Vice Principal and Head of Athletics at our school Mr. Koth his opinion. His favorite team is the New York Giants, he said being a fan of the Giants just came naturally, as his grandma was a Giants

bring some parody to the games, but it does seem that the Kansas City Chiefs are the team to beat. However, Mr. Koth does say that they have some competition coming their way like; the Ravens, and Bills, who he says are “pretty common players these days”. He does think that the Chargers are a sleeper, but the 49ers could make a push if they got healthy, and also that the Vikings are a surprise team. Mr. Koth says there isn’t much else he can say about this season as it’s too early and a lot could happen. Nonetheless, he says he’s excited to see what happens going forward.

Finally, I just had to ask our Head Coach of the Varsity Football team, Coach Cord, a Special education teacher, for his idea for this NFL season. He shared that his favorite team was “unfortunately” the New York Jets, and he says it is because his father grew up watching the Jets. He said overall that “the best part of the NFL is that there is parody.” Meaning that there isn’t a big difference between the best and the worst teams making the season unpredictable.

With an unpredictable season, comes an entertaining one as well. When asked about this season his thoughts were that it is a good bet, to bet on the best quarterback. Since the Chiefs have a quarterback who is playing at

Superbowl, yet again. Before the interview ended, he remarked that he would like to see the Jets and the Giants more competitive, as I’m sure many of us would love our local teams to do so.

There seems to

cause of family and predictions for the Vikings or Chiefs to play well. However, until we reach the Superbowl on February 9th, will we be able to see if these predictions are true or not? ■



Steelers player, number 90 T.J. Watt, urging the crowd to cheer louder



Football team getting ready to hike the ball



Baltimore Ravens player, number 22 Derrick Henry

said that the Jets are going to go about 500, “probably going to win

fan and he had friends who were too. He says the NFL tries to

the highest level, Patrick Mahomes, Coach Cord feels that they are most likely to win the

be a pretty common opinion on this year’s NFL, with supporting New York teams be-

# JV GIRLS SOCCER GOALS AND ASSISTS

## The JV girls soccer team shares their ambitions toward the new season and accomplishments.

Charlotte Ohnegian ‘26

Temperatures dropping, and an array of foliage covering the surface means... fall ball.

The girls JV soccer team has been absolutely killing it this season and has been competing to beat last year’s top tier record.

Last year the girls lost against IHA in the third round of counties, so this year the stakes have been high. Center midfielder Ashley Cho on the JV girls team says:

“Sportsmanship, dedication, a positive attitude, and respect are very important things the team values. We compete in every game with integrity, and the team WINS and loses together.”

Compared to a lot of the other JV teams in the area, this team has put in the work from the beginning of summer all the way until now. Their summer features a strict schedule of four workouts a week, with the rest of the Highlands soccer program. This schedule also allows

them to meet each other and get in shape to prepare for an awesome season. With these mutual values that the team holds, they are able to come together to attack every practice and game. Cho adds some information about the atmosphere at practices and how their coach, Coach Goldman, specializes in preparation in almost everything the team does: “Every practice, Coach is extremely prepared for every single drill we will

do, our fitness, and the plans for our future games.

Coach Goldman comes with a fun and ambitious attitude, reflecting his vibes to the practice.” With a supportive, strategic coach, the girls already have a solid foundation under their feet to propel them through a great season.

So far this season, the team has witnessed many wins, and a tie against their big rival, Ramapo.

Looking at the well awaited county tournament, junior Rachel Shulman says:

“I predict we will make it very far in the county tournament with a winning record. We are a great team and are only getting better.” This year, the team has a wide range of players, all the way from freshmen to juniors, which helps the team’s talent and bonding even more.

To sum up the team’s mindset for this season, Shulman also adds:

“As a team we value winning, working together on and off the field, and hard

work. Also having fun.”

If you want to see the girls JV team this season in action, feel free to stop by the grass fields at Highlands. Although they don’t have that many games left, their county tournament is in play, where they will face many competitive teams including their biggest rivals.

Let’s go Highlands.■



# ONE OF A KIND FRIDAY NIGHTS

## Friday night football games will be games that you remember

**Emma Degenars '25**

As the 2024 football season kicks off at Northern Highlands, many highlanders look forward to attending Friday night games. Games bring students together with coordinated themes such as USA Out, Black-out, and Redout, chants, and celebration. At home, students bring there all with a crowded student section from all grade levels, flags, big heads, and loud cheers with every play.

At away games, although less of a turnout occurs, the ones who make the drive represent our school in the best way possible. The Highlanders also show their appreciation to our school store by wearing the pride pack clothing.

Senior Fiona Jama shared her thoughts on this year's student section. She believes that the student section has been

more exciting than ever. Jama has been "shocked by the number of people that show up and are loud for our home games". She enjoys the themes the most, believing that "The themes bring us together as a school. They allow us to not worry about what others are wearing and make us feel more comfortable with our peers. They allow us to bond and create connections through the themes."

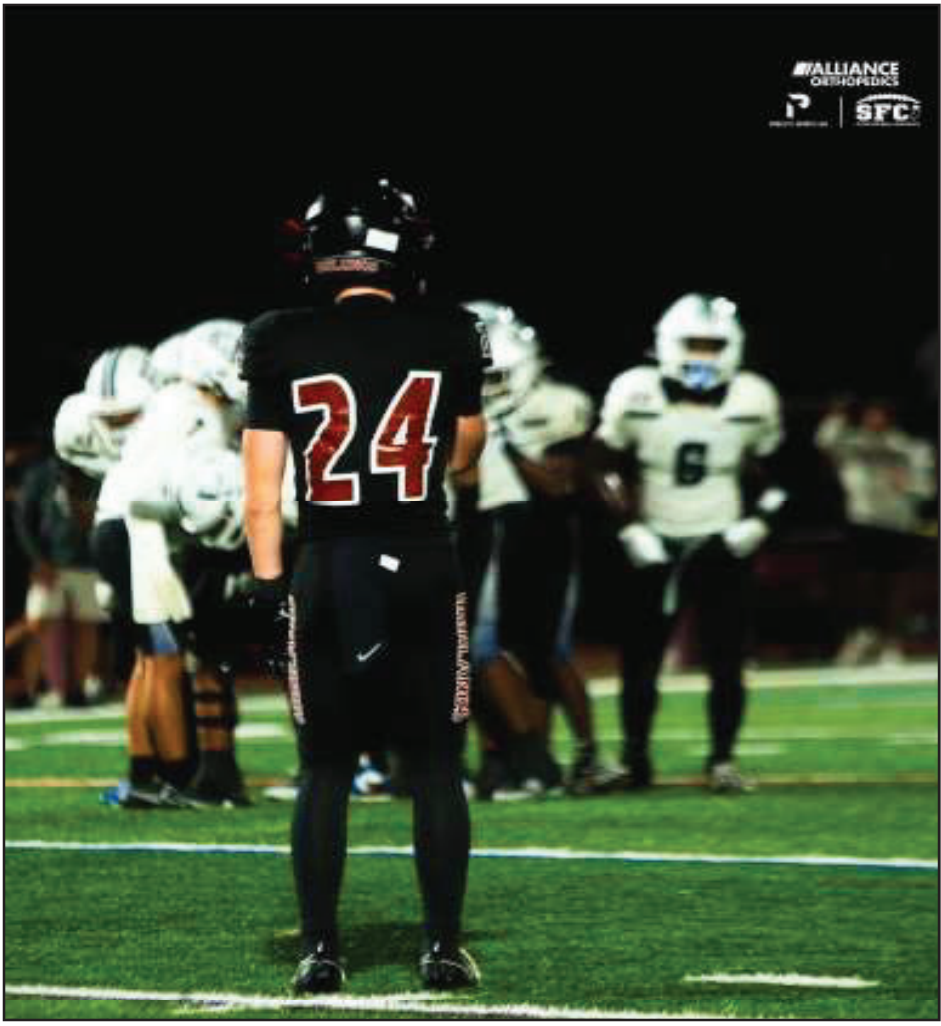
She goes into more detail about the themes by saying, "There is a lot of preparation that goes into figuring out what to wear for the themes. The themes are usually posted a day before, or the day of, so it can be challenging pulling together an outfit last minute, but this makes it all the more exciting."

She also went on to say "Preparation comes in the form of figuring out what time to go. If

you show up when kickoff happens, there are many spots available to stand but if you show up any later you may not be able to see the game. It is also difficult for students who participate in after-school sports as practices may end only 20 minutes before kickoff."

She describes the experience in the student section as "crazy, there are a lot of people who show up for home games, even some out-of-town people. The senior section in particular can be very crowded but very fun as everyone is having a good time. At away games, not many people go so the student section isn't as exciting but still fun if you are there with your friends."

She expects our varsity football team to have a great season. She stated, "We've had a great start to this season on the field. Although we have a lot of injuries I feel like



Football team just finished a play

we will still have a great season and be successful as a team, and hopefully win states this year!"

Lastly, she explained, "I am hoping for a great season and for playoffs to experience

more Friday night lights, especially as a senior." ■

# JV GIRLS TENNIS HITTING THE SEASON OFF

## The JV girls tennis team dominates this fall season as they remain undefeated

**Gabriella Ragazzo '26**

This year, the girls are giving their all this season. With their competitive drive and overall determination toward the sport, they are likely to make progress this year.

To get more input on the JV tennis team, I interviewed Ava Lowry. Lowry is a junior at Highlands with a lot of talent and potential.

She explains the team situation and overall playing field that the girls go through during practice, matches, and as a solid team member.

Overall, her interview and answered questions helped me better understand her and the foundation of the team. We are truly excited to see what the girls have in store for us. I asked Lowry about her overall feelings towards this season.

She states, "I feel very confident about our tennis season this year. We have a bunch of great tennis players on our JV team and all of us have been training over the summer/practicing as a team

to improve our playing." This gains a lot of

baseline, and overall confidence as tennis players.

tough wins and hard losses. "As a team, we all



Image of JV Girls Tennis together for a team photo.

positive feedback from the coach and how hard the girls have been working and training.

"Coach Quinn, our JV coach this season has been helping us during practice and correcting our volleys, playing at the

Coach Quinn also gives us helpful advice during matches and is very encouraging and supportive"

Lowry explains. It's helpful to know that a strong coach is staying on the side of the team and will help them through

value team bonding and getting to know each other better. To do this, we always participate in a big sister/little sister where upper and lower classmen pair up and get each other candy/gifts before playing on a match day.

We also are constantly getting together as a team whether that be having dinner together, riding on the bus, etc." This is a great bonding exercise that the girls participate in to get to know each other better.

Later she explains, "If I could predict the season, I would see us performing well and improving as tennis players all together. When each player is confident and strong individually, it will make us more successful as tennis players and a team in the long run."

Then Lowry states, "Overall, I think the team has improved a ton throughout the season so far. I think we are getting better at communicating with one another on the court, being confident in how we play, and hitting more accurate shots. These are all things that make us stronger as individual players and as a team."

Their overall preparation for the season is undoubtedly a victory win off the racket.

Finally, she explains, "Our main goal as a team is to improve as tennis

players (hit more accurate shots, be more confident, and communicate well with our doubles partner) and develop/establish connections with coaches and other players on the team."

This is nice to know that the girls have it under control this season and will continue to make Highlands proud.■



# BOYS SOCCER BLAZING ON TURF

## Boys soccer hits the turf to make their finals play of the season

**Samantha O’Connell ’26** there’s soccer. This year the boys soccer team has played their hardest with the teams Seniors leaving after this year. We

Soccer is one of the most popular sports here. I call it the quad here. I mean theirs



Photo Credits: northern\_highlands\_boys\_soccer

Jack Henderson '25 takes the ball upfield

football, basketball, make it a priority to see baseball, and then every game we can and

support our school. Will Raman is the leader in goals so far. He has scored 5 goals over the course of the season and is only a sophomore this year. Our leading goalie is a junior with 57 saves this year and his name is Sean Dean. Both have played excellent this year. Along with all the rest of them with a high number of goals and an even number of assists and passes to one another. Will Raman who is our leading goal scorer has still two more years to go before he leaves our school. Soccer games are all ones we need to see because they are very competitive.

Our Seniors are leaving us soon and this is their last season.

On the boys soccer team the seniors are Rohan Amin, Cooper Brodie, Copper Cosgriff, Jack Henderson, Jakub Lenczewski, Colin Murphy, and Rishabh Tolani. We can all con-



Photo Credits: northern\_highlands\_boys\_soccer

Rohan Amin '25 coming in to receive the ball

gratulate them on their last season of high school and to many

more soccer games played. This years soccer team although they don’t have the greatest record they put all their effort into all the games played for Highlands. I hope they can continue and win some before

and cheering them on. I hope they have a great rest of the season and we are rooting for them. ■

the end of the season. All of us should be out their supporting

# HEAD COACH TALK ON VARSITY CHEER

## An insiders look into the new preparations for our cheerleaders for fall season

**Gabriel Tejeda ’26** of the girls got. Practices typically begin with a run, followed by a warmup focused on stretches to better their jumps, such as kicks. But Paige admits, “It depends on the day.” Sometimes, they’ll work on stunts, drilling them to get them perfect. However, other practices will be spent working on dances, jumps, formations and more. Usually, practices are either on the field by the senior lot or inside the gym. In the 2022-2023 season, they used to use the old weight-lifting center. This year, they have yet to use the fitness center. “I really want to,” Paige comments, “we might do it to

As the Friday Night Lights turn back on and the football team gets back on the field, the cheerleaders follow with elaborate cheers, dances, and stunts made to bring life into the student section. The dedication that goes into being a cheerleader for our school is admirable. In this article, Paige Ellis will recount her experience as a junior on Varsity, going in depth about team bonding, field trips, practices, and football games. In August, cheer practices began.. This year, they were able to hold tryouts in the Spring, allowing freshmen to join the team earlier and get the

on a completely different form. It goes from a show made for the football games to a series of intense competition with other cheerleading teams. This can be very stress-

the “Top Gun Competition” against each other with their own self-made dances, jumps, or stunts. During this competition, each team has fun and everyone “hypes each other

later adds on, “you’re together all the time.” It was especially special this year because, since tryouts were earlier in the spring, Freshmen were able to

feeling of, “dancing in the night along with the band,” and the, “eyes of the student body,” that make the season something magical. The student section could always use more people to



Photo creds to Northern Highlands Fling Photo Staff

Our fall cheerleaders gathering at a Friday night football game.



same levels of practice before the season that the rest prepare for winter cheer.” In the winter, cheer takes

ful, but most teams are prepared for the competition during the summer retreat that teams from Pennsylvania to New York attend. The summer retreat prepares the JV and Varsity teams by intensive practice with cheerleading professionals, team bonding to the point of sleeping in the same cabin every night, and a fun competition at the end where girls compete in

up.” The NCA camp does a good job of breaking the ice prior to the season beginning, because each team gets to be around each other and become friends, easing tensions between teams and helping create a cheer community. During this camp, each team sleeps in the same cabin. Paige describes it as, “24/7 team bonding,” and

come on the trip. Since there were so many new Freshmen this year, it was incredibly helpful to the team to get to know each other and practice together before August. The best part of the fall cheer season happens every Friday, when they’re able to perform the show they’ve worked so hard on to support the football team. Paige recounts the

support. The band, team, and cheerleaders could all use more encouragement to make this amazing season even better. Remember, this football season is not one to miss. ■



# Ghoulshy Good Times

Students discuss their favorite Halloween traditions as they prepare for the spooky season.

By Misha Chhada '27

Halloween is right around the corner, a holiday rich in its roots and dark, twisted tales; it is a wonderful opportunity to represent one's creativity and individuality.

"I feel like the costumes this year are going to be super unique," sophomore Tess Han offers. There is a lot of costume inspiration online, and students are eager to see what everyone comes up with. From the classic witch with a tall hat and broomstick to the trending characters from the latest TV shows and movies, there is an unlimited amount of possibilities.

Genevieve Henry, another sophomore says, "I've heard, or have talked to a lot of people that are going as Alvin and the Chipmunks." Finally, freshman Ayanna Granda guesses, "I think some popular costumes will be from the new Descendants movie."

Costumes this year seem to mainly revolve around the popular trends seen on social media and other current fashions. Han predicts, "I feel like [the costumes] are going to be the Sabrina Carpenter - Jenna Ortega music video. I also think that there's going to be a lot of leopard costumes too."

Beyond the costumes, Halloween is the ultimate time for decorating one's house, with many students starting this process as early as September.

Students transform their homes into haunted houses, a mess of cotton cobwebs, brittle skeleton bones, hanging vampires, orange-hued lighting, and many other eerie decorations. Granda remarks that she takes pride in this Halloween tradition, and enjoys the reaction of passing young trick-or-treaters when they come to her door, visibly frightened.



Photos courtesy of the NH Education Association

Every year, the fall girl's sports teams have a themed costume, with girl's soccer featured above. What will the themes be this year?



Photos courtesy of the NH Education Association

Another fun Halloween tradition is the department costume competition. Last year the winner was the History department, pictured above.

embellishments like wigs and glitter. The eager anticipation of candy as well, presumably the most beloved part of this holiday. Han concludes that her favorite candies are sour, "...I love Skittles." Granda adds, "Some of my favorite Halloween candies are Twix and 100 Grand." And Henry enjoys M&Ms.

The youth and delight surrounding Halloween will always be there. Although we've grown up, the joys of celebrating have not yet diminished. This year, students have many plans for the upcoming holiday. Han states, "I'm going to go trick-or-treating with my friends, and after, we're going to watch horror movies together." Henry and Granda also share similar plans of seeing their friends at Halloween parties.

Ultimately, Halloween is a holiday that encourages artistry through imagination. It is a holiday that unifies fear with the comfort of a community. It provides us with fleeting moments of nostalgia that are otherwise hard to find, but most importantly, it allows us to create new and exciting memories. No matter what you choose to do on this special day, make sure to have fun and remain safe.