

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 09|



Photo Courtesy of Shaina Strang-Wolf

Seniors Ash Kim (left), Nick Franchi (middle), and Ellie Marino (right) in Arsenic and Old Lace.

A KILLER PERFORMANCE

The theater company puts on a tale of posion, laughter, and unexpected twists

Karina Rosenberg '26

With Novemembers leaves falling into view, the school play is reaching sight, as well. For our fall play, the talented students of Highlands are putting on Arsenic and Old Lace, showing on November 21st, 22nd, and 23rd.

With almost two months of hard work and preparation, the cast and crew are giving it their all to

provide the community with a fantastic performance.

Ranging from actors to set designers, from lighting to hair & makeup, the talent our students exude varies.

Senior Addison Pavone said, "What I love about the fall play is getting to have fully designed the set this year. It's been a great way to combine my love for theatre as well as my artistic skills.

"I love contributing to something bigger than my-

self, and I love watching the show—throughout the rehearsal process—grow from just a few words to a full production."

Involvement in the Northern Highlands Theatre Company includes many different skills and requires many different types of students to make the show come together.

With that being said, if you've been debating joining the future shows in

any way, it is recommended by so many to do so.

Junior Addie Harrington—who has been involved in the program for all three years at Highlands—remarks, "I say to definitely participate in theater because it's a lot of fun and it takes a lot of bravery to get on a stage and be vulnerable.

"It shows a lot of people that it's ok to take risks, especially in high school when the stakes are very low and

everyone just wants to put on a good show. And if you don't want to be on stage, there are countless positions behind the scenes that are just as important to make the show run smoothly."

All these factors play a crucial role in making the shows at Highlands so wonderful.

So what exactly is "Arsenic and Old Lace" about?

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NJ ON FIRE

A look into the recent wildfires and what Governor Murphy has to say

Maggie Burchell '26

Flames from the Jennings Creek Wildfire continue to rage along the New Jersey border as firefighters attempt to control one of the largest blazes the state has seen in years. This fire threatens wildlife and communities alike, as the fire has already turned 5,000 acres into ash across two states.

The extensive damage to the surrounding areas, including West Milford, New Jersey, and more of Passaic County has led to evacuations, destruction of property, and the immeasurable loss of 18-year-old firefighter, Dariel Vasquez.

The fire has also caused immense damage to the habitats of thousands of native species in New Jersey. The Last Resort Wildlife Refuge in West Milford is caring for dozens of animals that have been injured and displaced due to wildfire at this time.

The fire has also caused immense damage to the habitats of thousands of native species in New Jersey.

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A sudden influx of underage drinking at games stirs discussion.

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Class of 2021 Alum Bridget Bruchalski rises as a reporter.

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Some students take part in democracy for the 2024 election.

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FIND THAT GRIND WITH BALANCE

Learning to adjust to workloads while prioritizing yourself from a Sophomore student



Photo courtesy of Genevieve Henry

Genevieve Henry '27

For many high schoolers, between classes, homework, sports, clubs, part-time jobs, internships, and family obligations, it can feel that there just aren't enough hours in the day. As much as we wish we could accomplish all the plans we set for ourselves, we have to realize that sometimes sacrifices have to be made to reach our goals. While adapting to the additional workload from freshman to sophomore year has been an ad-

The tradeoff between achieving success in academics and spending time with loved ones can be balanced with the right.

justment, and studying does take up a large portion of my time, it is definitely manageable with the right mindset.

Having a positive support system backed by my family and friends, and prioritizing what is most important in the long run can make a huge difference. The most important part of school is finding what you are passionate about.

Once you do, your studies will start to not even feel like work anymore. For example, this year I enrolled in AP Economics, my first business class at Highlands.

I found that going to class didn't even feel like a task I needed to check

While the topics can be challenging at times, I am so happy to have discovered a potential career path in business through this course.

off my list, and studying did not seem like a chore anymore. While the

topics can be challenging at times, I am so happy to have discovered a potential career path in business through this course. The tradeoff between achieving success in academics and spending time with loved ones can be balanced with the right techniques. Finding a motivator or something you would look forward to in the future,

help cancel out distractions Often we feel as

Meditating, praying, or practicing yoga can help give your mind a peaceful break during a busy week.

and help you focus on the task at hand. Getting exercise, whether that is in the form of weightlifting, taking a short walk, or going on a run, and getting proper nutrition through healthy meals, can allow your body and brain to perform at peak conditions.

Mediating, praying, or practicing yoga can help give your mind a peaceful break during a busy week. Most importantly, asking for help or simply talking with loved ones about your troubles can make a world of a difference.

though we have to be optimizing every moment to make the most of our teenage years and constantly work towards our future. Taking time to find your own hobbies and have fun with your friends and family will be the most fulfilling memories we have when we look back on our lives.■

The Highland Fling

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From the Desk of the Editors-in-Chief

November is always the peak of the first half of the school year... in terms of memorability at least...

At least for us, when November hits, the tendency to hit our beds just exponentially rises. Sometimes dragging yourself out of your cozy bed and strolling to your car while the sky is nearly pitch black at 6 am is painful. But, seeing all of the other students, and even staff, strolling tiresomely to enter the school always gives us a sense of reassurance. Suddenly, the air is fresher with hope!

If you are ever feeling down, don't be afraid to reach out to your friends and community here. The wellness department always welcomes anyone at anytime.

Anyway, the point is— you might be feeling tired right now but you will get through this! And, hopefully, we will as well.

Or, if you are enjoying November so far, know that you are stronger than us and don't let anything bring you down.

That being said, the holidays are only getting closer now. Semester 1 is also almost coming to a close. Of course, the infamous Thanksgiving is ready and near! For us, we are excited to see the type of Turkey that will be pardoned this year and hopefully, our families do not force us to fun any USR Turkey Trots (no shade to any of you who do—you're incredible but couldn't be us).

We hope you all enjoy your time at your chaotic Thanksgiving dinners and reconvene with your family. For us, we're thankful for you all, our wonderful Fling staff, Starbucks fall drinks, and the smell of rain! Take the time to absorb it all in and think of everything that you are thankful for. You deserve it.

-Editors-in-Chief Brook Xu and Nolan Rota

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

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

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

THEY WANT HOW MANY WORDS?

Take It From a Senior, What to Expect for College Applications



Photo courtesy of Farrah Dello Russo

Farrah Dello Russo '25
College application season is underway, and our seniors are learning to deal with the overwhelming yet exciting feeling. Planning for the next four years that pave the way for future success can be a tough challenge, but with simple organizational skills and staying on top of deadlines, the application process can be out of sight and out of mind. Starting August 1st, the common application website opens for the next year's graduating class, but several students begin their process earlier by drafting their personal statements or college essays. Often, Highlands students utilize outside resources for post-secondary education planning through college counselors. Counselors can offer several bene-

fits for students who don't know where to start. Counselors can aid seniors in filling out the personal information section of the common application, including the lengthy activities record, where students input their extra-curriculars with detailed descriptions along with the hours they are dedicated to these activities. Personally, my college counselor assisted in finalizing my college essay and helped dissect the prompts for the college-specific supplemental essays. If you do not have access to an outside college counselor, there's no need to worry,

as the Highlands counselors do a terrific job of assisting students with their post-graduate plans. At this time, most seniors have finalized their college lists and decided on each school's application type. Most students aim to apply to anywhere between 6 and 15 schools and apply in various ways. This can include Regular Decision, Early Action, Early Decision, and Rolling Admission. The application type students select correlates with the deadline of their applications. Deciding how to apply can be a challenge, and it depends per student. Most

highlanders favor applying early to colleges when possible, as this allows you to receive responses faster and can help your chances of acceptance into certain schools. Early Decision is also among the popular application types at Northern Highlands. If students apply for Early Decision to a college, it is binding, meaning that if you are accepted, you guarantee the college you will attend. Because of this, students can only apply Early Decision to one school. Personally, I did not choose Early Decision to any school because I felt indecisive and wanted to keep my options open for all

opportunities. Navigating the college process doesn't come without a little stress, but there are easy steps to take to avoid drowning in piles of unfinished applications due at 11:59 pm. The process can be simple, as it revolves primarily around you. The greatest challenge in the application is typically from the supplemental essays specific to each college. These 250-word statements commonly ask about students' community or background, as well as "Why Us?" essays, which question applicants on why they chose to apply to their university.

Answering the prompts can get tricky, but staying concise yet specific can lead to success. Outside of the supplements, setting up spreadsheets or checklists with required elements and deadlines can be a great tool to combat application anxiety. Getting ahead of the due dates during the summer months also relieves a lot of stress, so there is less overlap between school work, extracurriculars, and the application process. Reflecting on my application experience, I recommend next year's sen-

iors not be afraid to start their applications early. My biggest hesitation about submitting my applications in the summer was the fear of committing to such a big step in my life. I was worried my opinions would change or I would need to add something to my application, and pushed it off until later, which resulted in a stressful start to senior year. Additionally, I urge students to shoot for their dream schools while still applying to many "likely" schools because you never know what might happen. Highlands has a strong reputation among colleges, so don't be afraid to go for it. Happy applying, and good luck to this year's seniors as they navigate the next chapter in their lives. ■

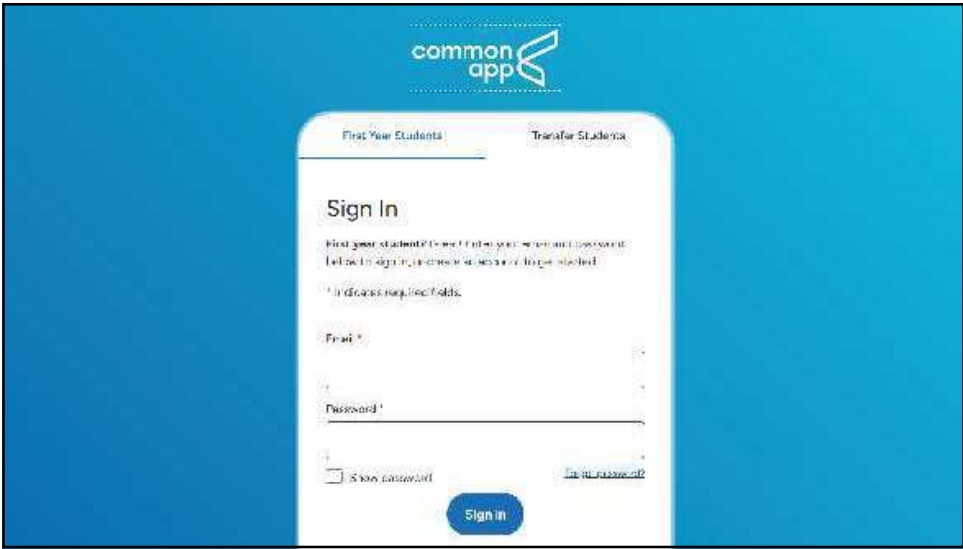


Photo courtesy of Samantha Shuster '26

THANKSGIVING, WHAT'S NOT TO LOVE?

The historical perspective of how Thanksgiving came about and our current holiday



Photo courtesy of Reet Sachdev '27

Henry Roberts '26
Turkey drenched in gravy, cranberry sauce, stuffing, pumpkin pie, and being around the ones you love. Thanksgiving is meant to be a time to celebrate what we are thankful for, a reminder to be humble and kind, as we are all human and we all, if we look, have something to look forward to.

the world where everyone has something to be thankful for, whilst somewhat misguided is something we should strive for. Past the meaning of thanksgiving we have the aforementioned thanksgiving dinner. Outside of being the best meal of the year because cornbread and sweet potatoes are incredible, the thanksgiving dinner is meant to be a recreation of the first thanksgiving dinner that took place when the first pilgrims emigrated to the continent of North America, building settlements in Plymouth, Massachusetts and working with Indigenous Americans in order to hunt and grow their crops. Whilst this is the common understanding of the holiday there is much

more to be discussed about the origins of this joyous fall occasion. In the book Thanksgiving: The Biography of an American Holiday by James W. Baker, we can find some more insight about the origins about Thanksgiving. Peter J. Gomes, the former president of the Pilgrim Society, wrote that, "Thanksgiving is a big deal in America because we Americans believe it to be our unique holiday, hardly found in this form anywhere else on earth." This establishes that there is an inherent bias Americans have towards Thanksgiving, because it is uniquely American. As per the priorly cited text, the story of Thanksgiving goes something like this. In 1620 the Mayflower set sail towards the Americas, the bunch of relative strangers who followed similar Puritan religious beliefs that were tired of mistreatment in Europe landed in November. After exploration and eventual finding of Indigenous civilization they had to face the harsh winter. This winter killed about half of the original

Simply put, this narrative has been spread as a part of the continuous erasure of Indigenous peoples...

people that came over on the Mayflower. After this first winter the settlers met two Indigenous peoples, Samoset and Squanto, who from prior experiences were able to speak both the languages of the indigenous peoples in the area. Meetings between leaders and the harvest the next fall lead to the meal that is commonly known as the first thanksgiving. While ultimately a nice story and relatively true to what we consider the first thanksgiving, the holiday ignores the continuous murder, subjugation, and silencing of Indigenous people. In his book This Land is Their Land David J. Silverman explains so much about Indigenous history, and also talks about the ruining of Thanksgiving. Silverman wrote that, "The English gave the praying indians plenty of assistance in this regard,

because in colonial courts, 'if twenty... honest Indians testified that Englishman had done them wrong, it was as nothing, and if but one of the worst Indians testified against any Indian' in disfavor with the English, 'That was sufficient.' How did any of these developments represent gratitude to Ousamequin and his people?" Silvermans point was that the unfair treatment the English colonists gave to indigenous peoples did not reflect the kindness that surrounds the ideas of Thanksgiving, and the gifts given to the colonists by indigenous peoples. Some may believe that a lot of Indigenous treatment was justified, as they were violent peoples right? Well not really, Silverman also wrote that, "If doing nothing was resignation to a future of impoverishment, exploitation, and

degradation at English hands, warring against the English and their Indian allies put precious lives immediately at risk." Showing that the future for warring Indigenous populations were bleak, as conquest and exploitation were the goals of Colonists. Why has this narrative that Thanksgiving is all sunshine and rainbows been spread? And how can we combat this? Simply put, this narrative has been spread as a part of the continuous erasure of Indigenous peoples, and also to make people feel better about themselves and their histories. We can combat this erasure, though. Through true Thanksgiving values, spreading kindness, being humble, and having the humility to be thankful for all that Indigenous people have done to build our country, despite all the harm Colonists had done to them. Have a happy Thanksgiving. ■

The future for warring Indigenous populations were bleak, as conquest and exploitation were the goals of Colonists.

This idealistic view of

How Artificial Intelligence can both destroy and build our future



These were the causes of the first concerns about AI. They dimmed down after some time until recently, when its powers

We can begin with stricter regulations on AI, specifically chatbots, and what they are allowed to do and say. In the case of Setzer, the AI chat-bot was encouraging and feeding

All schools should enact anti-AI policies, just like Highlands already has

Secondly, all schools should enact anti-AI policies, just like Highlands already has. The use of AI discourages students from actually learning, and makes cheating much easier. AI detection resources should be used on every student paper in order to

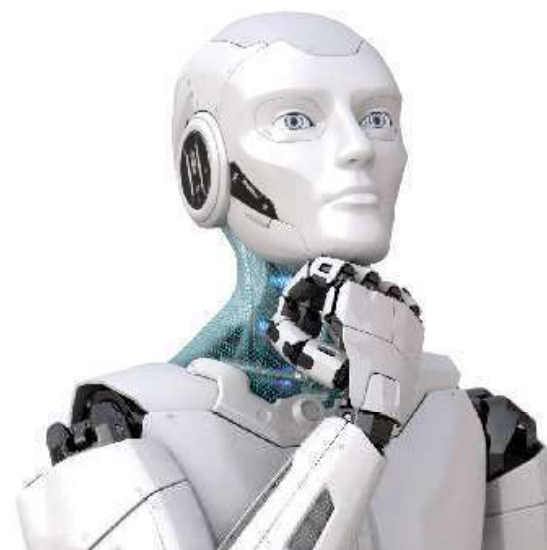
However, all AI use isn't necessarily bad. It can increase productivity and efficiency, as well as help students brainstorm ideas to help lead to their overall point. On that same note, using AI for entire essays, projects, or assignments is completely wrong, and makes school an unfair en-

Finally, the dangers of AI should be taught in school assemblies and classes. For the last many years, the problem has been social media. Now, it has shifted and become something that directly affects school, mental health, and our personal lives.

AI discourages students from actually learning, and makes cheating much easier

the hope is that another life
will never be lost to. ■

AI is an amazingly powerful yet scary technology, and as AI continues to make its way into every app, every website, and every school, we need to be precocious and prepared to



Are school assemblies engaging the student body or are they a lost cause?



Very recently, Highlands had two assemblies relating to this issue; a drunk driving assembly dedicated to the juniors and seniors, and a social media assembly dedicated to the freshman and sophomores. Many assemblies take place at highlands, and these assemblies inform the student body about very serious and important issues that take place in our world and in our school. These assemblies stand for spreading awareness and promoting change and

tern that I noticed is that for the assemblies that do resonate with me, they are guest speakers sharing their

Photo courtesy of Reet Sachdev '27

the end, the guest speaker who shared her personal story on a very important and sensitive topic men-

Another assembly that resonated with me was a

I thought it was extremely powerful and brave of him to admit the betrayal and lies he has done or told his family because not many people admit that they are

Overall, in my opinion, in order for assemblies at Highlands to connect and make a difference in student's lives, the school needs to brainstorm an issue that is common within not only our school, but also within our community and in our world. Then, they should invite a guest speaker who has had a personal story with that problem because that is the most effective way to get the main point across. Our student body would be seeing someone who went through that issue firsthand, and they would hear their struggles. This would make students more aware of the outcome if they performed an action that involved that common issue. ■

LACK OF ENOUGH ARTS EDUCATION

Are the arts taken as seriously as they should? Follow sophomore Misha Chhada’s perspective



Photo courtesy of Misha Chhada '27

Misha Chhada '27

The arts are deeply significant, allowing one creativity, exploration, and

sis, or creative writing, it has a reputation for being a wondrous and accepting outlet in which individuals truly have freedom of expression. So of course it is no wonder that many find their true passion and purpose within this area. Art has forever been meaningful in my life, and I often wonder where I would be without it. It is important to nurture positive relationships with this alluring form of expression, for it stands as a gate-

be devoid of the emotional depths that make us human. Despite its profound impact, many schools prioritize subjects such as the sciences and math instead, believing that they are our future. In doing so, they tend to overlook the arts’ pivotal role in creating well-rounded and emotionally intelligent students. Sophomore, Irene Seo, a student enrolled in the Honors Chorus Class at Highlands says, “A lot of people do other clubs and sports after school. So I feel like they have to choose one or the other. But since art is not a popular choice compared to sports, a lot of people in the arts won’t have as many opportunities to do something big.” Although art may not be as popular as other extra-curricular activities, it shouldn’t suffer as a result of that. Still, Highlands does an exceptional job at in-

tegrating arts within the school through clubs such as the art club, the literary magazine, and the plays. Seo especially admires the plays and how: “...the set and everything is really well organized. People will really practice hard after school for it.” She also mentions, “I feel like without these programs, people with dreams in these areas wouldn’t have an opportunity to get on stage.” The beauty of art is highlighted through various forms in our school. Even if one plays a sport or is not directly involved in

the arts, one should make an effort to experience it. This issue is further exacerbated by the lack of exposure that students have to art programs within the school. Many are unaware that these opportunities are available to them, and they may feel intimidated when searching for means of involvement. Seo adds, “... [students] aren’t thinking about the opportunities that it gives.” Though Highlands does an excellent job at integrating arts into school, these programs are often underappreciated by the student body.

To address this issue, both the administration and faculty could take purposeful steps in raising awareness about art opportunities within the school. There could be more efforts to highlight the achievements of students involved in the arts by giving the same recognition as those in athletics or academia. Artistic pursuits should not be treated as secondary. In the end, arts are more than a source of entertainment, they are fundamental and allow someone to be self-expressive. By continuing to foster arts within Highlands, students can gain a deeper appreciation for them, and live in a world where imagination is just as valued as intellect. ■

“They tend to overlook the arts’ pivotal role in creating well-rounded and emotionally intelligent students.”

“This issue is further exacerbated by the lack of exposure that students have to art programs within the school.”

opportunity. Whether it way to contentment. With- be painting, theater, mu- out art, the world would



TEACHERS CORNER: STRANG-WOLF

Shaina Strang-Wolf on our heatres’ “Drama Mama”



Photo courtesy of Sebastian Tabakov '26

Sebastian Tabakov '26

Mrs. Shaina Strang-Wolf is considered by some to be an eclectic individual. By others who have gotten to know her through calling her classroom home for fifty-six minutes or through spending hours together in the theater, they would classify her as the shining pinnacle of a mentor and friend. Specifically within the sanctuary of Hopkins Hall do students see the unfiltered heroine of Strang-



Photo courtesy of Sebastian Tabakov '26

Strang’s cast and set of her 2024 production of Arsenic & Old Lace by Joseph Kesselring. with her, many do not know the extensive history she shares with drama. Her story does not

keep me the busiest.” An escape is what theater was for her in high school, just as it is for many others participating in it. Her espace grew to become a passion. “I threw myself into it,” Strang-Wolf said herself. She threw herself into it so much so that she inevitably pursued it as a field of study: “My specialty is in classical, medieval, and Shakespearen drama.” What a niche sector of the art world, many might believe; however, Mrs. Strang-Wolf has varying reasons for why this area

of study was her’s, specifically medieval. “Seeing things like the origins of English and linking it to theater is so special to me. Because really, the origins of theater are the origins of humanity,” she tells reporters when asked why Medieval theater. Her experience goes beyond college and high school theater. Before her time as a Highlander, Strang-Wolf choreographed many shows, but “I have costumed, done hair and makeup here at Northern Highlands.”

While participating in theater everyday and not on stage, she has gotten to fully discover what her favorite part of the experience is. In actuality, her preference does not align with any material element of the show: “I love the community elements of theater. Especially how everyone comes together to do this seemingly impossible task—something it seems like the odds are stacked against.” Despite the ephemeral nature of it all, the effect of this art form and what it presents itself as to Shaina Strang-Wolf fuels her to continue being the current director of the fall play. What is of the utmost importance to her is to also ensure that the security the theater provides to its participants is also extended to those in her classes. “Theater means home, to me,” Strang-Wolf admits. Home as she puts it can be anywhere: on a set, in her classroom, or even in a crowded cafeteria. One thing for certain though is that Mrs. Shaina Strang-Wolf will never fail to foster home through what is dubbed the “power of theater.” ■

“By others who have gotten to know her...they would classify her as the shining pinnacle of a mentor and a friend.”

Wolf, or as many call her “Drama Mama.” Though many students are close

begin as director of the fall plays for the Northern Highlands Theater Compa-

FOOTBALL GAME SCANDALS

How recent student intoxication at football games has lead to the administration taking action

Elena McCrossin '26

Many turn a blind eye to the warnings of “inappropriate scenes of teenage drinking or substance abuse” that flash across a screen accompanying the opening of many modern tv shows and movies. In fact, these images of intoxicated teenagers at parties or other social events have become so heavily ingrained into American culture that people are so desensitized to the issue and don’t see anything wrong with teenagers consuming alcohol or other substances. Despite this stoic reaction to observing underage intoxication in the media, many were surprised when The Northern Highlands administration sent a letter to students and parents regarding several recent instances of inappropriate consumption of alcohol and other substances at football games. In light of recent events at football games, the ad-

ministration including Mr. Occhino, Mr. Koth, Dr. LaRocca, Mr. Buono, Mr. Novak, and Mrs. Wegert sent out a letter on October 29th to make parents and students aware of the issue of student consumption of alcohol at football games and the consequences for students who are found to be under the influence at school sanctioned events. Occhino said that there was not one particular instance that sparked this, rather several occasions where students make “spectacles” of themselves by getting taken away in ambulances at the games. Although student substance and alcohol abuse isn’t a new concept, Occhino claims that “for whatever reason, we’re seeing more of it here on Friday nights at football games.” LaRocca notes that the main issue with this is the extent to which students take it. “When you see a student, or anybody that’s at a position where they

need medical attention, that’s upsetting,” he says. The administration’s recent interest in the issue comes from a place of concern for the students and a desire to salvage the reputation of the school. LaRocca says that “as a dad, [the behavior of students at football games regarding alcohol] is upsetting.” Although students’ consumption of alcohol at or before football games has notably gotten worse this fall, the issue of intoxication is not entirely new, with it being especially prevalent every prom season. Occhino claims that prom weekends are “horrificing”, and LaRocca chimes in, saying, “I don’t turn my phone off, I keep it on when there’s proms out of fear because it makes me sick to my stomach.” Not only is the consumption of alcohol at or before school events compromising for the student, but it tarnishes the school’s reputation as a

whole. “Sorry to say, for people who make good decisions, that this is a poor reflection of our students,” says Occhino. “It puts a black mark on our school.” Football games are always swarmed with law enforcement officers and faculty, so if a student is in that dangerous of a situation, they will be able to get the urgent medical attention required. However, school policy requires students to be suspended for a three day period following events such as these. Upon returning to school, the student has a talk with Mr. Occhino and Dr. LaRocca is and is later directed to the wellness department if there is any further concern. Despite the various methods of discouraging students from drinking at or before school sanctioned events, Occhino admits that “we are not going to solve this.” He claims that solving this issue “starts at home” and that the administration “can’t

do it by [them]selves, the where you are, don’t drive,



Photo Courtesy of Principal Joseph Occhino

Students enjoy their Friday evening at a football game

parents have to help too.” In addition, Occhino notes how students’ friends can also help control this behavior by encouraging their friends to stay where they are if intoxicated and not come back to school. Occhino urges intoxicated students to “stay and really just use better judgment and make better choices.” Students and parents can help better the school and its reputation by complying with policies that prevent students from drinking on campus and holding accountability for their actions. n

BERGEN COUNTY IS BURNING UP

A look into the recent wildfires and how they have impacted the state, their cause, and more

Maggie Burchell '26

Continued from page 1...

The Last Resort Wildlife Refuge in West Milford is caring for dozens of animals that have been injured and displaced due to wildfire at this time. However, the Jennings Creek Wildfire is only one of many fires tearing through New Jersey’s forests, plains, and suburban communities. A severe drought due to record-low rainfall seems to be the root of it all. Due to the prolonged streak of dry weather and fluctuating temperatures, Governor Phil Murphy announced a Drought

Warning Advisory. The purpose of this warning is to preserve water supplies needed to combat the fires raging across the state, as well as to bring more attention to the issue. self does not just indicate technical steps that are being taken but it indicates a level of seriousness.” The increased demand for water has significantly depleted water supplies and the advi-

This fire threatens wildlife and communities alike, as the fire has already turned 5,000 acres into ash across two states.

Murphy stated, “The very fact that we’re raising this from a watch to a warning, that in and of it-

sory aims to improve conservation efforts to reduce the risk of a water shortage. One of the main caus-



Photo Courtesy of the New Jersey Forest Fire Service

The previous “watch” was declared a warning, showing just how severe the issue is.

es of concern in Bergen County is the smoke from the New Jersey Wildfires that has drifted this way. The Centers for Disease

Control and Prevention state that “wildfire smoke can reach far away from where fires burn,” which was shown by the poor air quality reports and general haziness over the Teacher’s Convention break. It’s especially important to listen to the authorities regarding directions dealing with the fires at this time. From monitoring your health symptoms to setting up air cleaners or filters, there are many recommendations the CDC makes for combating the effects of wildfire smoke. While New Jersey traditionally has never compared to California or Colorado in the sense of larger-scale wildfires, climate change is turning this around. According to Northjersey.com, Murphy pointed out that the New

Jersey Forest Fire Service “has battled 537 fires this year so far, which is 500 more than during the same time period last year, or a roughly 1,300% increase.” This alarming statistic only contributes to the argument that climate change isn’t a prediction for the future, it’s affecting New Jersey right now. If you are looking for a way to help battle the Jennings Creek Wildfire, the New Jersey Highlands Coalition is asking for donations to support 32 municipal fire departments working around the clock to contain the fire. We encourage you to donate what you can and stay safe.■



Recent wildfires have caused natural devastation for areas throughout New Jersey

SENIOR SKIP DAY: TRADITION OR TROUBLE?

How senior skip day came about and what the faculty thinks of it.

Hayley Carrero '26

Senior Skip Day is a much-anticipated tradition at Northern Highlands Regional High School, representing a sense of freedom among the graduating class.

This unofficial holiday normally occurs in the fall, giving seniors a day to relax and celebrate their upcoming graduation. While

the day is not sanctioned by the school administration, it has become a part of the senior-year experience.

However, this so-called "tradition" evokes frustration among the teachers and faculty at Highlands.

The origins of Senior Skip Day at Northern Highlands are somewhat unclear, but the tradition has been around for years.

It's a day when seniors collectively decide to take a break from their academic responsibilities and enjoy a day off together. The activities planned for the day can vary, but the goal is to create lasting memories with friends before everyone heads off in different directions after graduation.

Northern Highlands has established a strong

reputation, recently being ranked among the top schools in New Jersey. As a result, teachers and faculty members hold high expectations for their students and the overall learning environment.

When these expectations are not met, it can lead to frustration and disappointment. For instance, if students do not perform well academically, it reflects poorly on the school.

Teachers and administrators often find themselves in a challenging position when it comes to Senior Skip Day because ultimately, it is the parents who hold authority over their children's attendance.

While schools can encourage attendance and emphasize the importance of being present, they cannot override a parent's decision to allow their child to participate in this tradition.

Principal Joseph Occhino states "If parents condone it, there is nothing

we can do other than saying it's an absence and counts towards a denial of credit." Parents have the final say in whether their child attends school on this day, making it difficult for school officials to take any significant action.

While the day is all about fun, there are some important considerations to remember. Safety, among all, is a top priority, and students are encouraged to make responsible choices. This includes planning, staying in groups, and ensuring that everyone has a way home safely. Additionally, while Senior Skip Day is meant to be a break from school, it's important to remember that it is still a school day. Missing important classes or assignments can have academic consequences, so students should be mindful of their responsibilities.

Despite these considerations, Senior Skip Day remains a popular tradi-

tion at Northern Highlands Regional High School. It's a day that symbolizes the end of one chapter and the beginning of another. For many students, it's a chance to reflect on their high school years and appreciate the friendships and experiences they've gained. The memories of this day often become some of the most cherished of their high school careers.

Senior Skip Day at Northern Highlands Regional High School is more than a day off. It's a celebration of the journey that students have taken together and a way to mark the transition to the next phase of their lives.

As the tradition continues, it remains a highlight of the senior year, emphasizing the togetherness that defines the high school experience. ■



WATCH OUT! CLASS OF 2021 ALUM ON TELEVISION

Bridget Bruchalski's Journey from our halls to Journalism: A Model for Aspiring Reporters

Evelyn Ha '27

Bridget Bruchalski, a Northern Highlands graduate from the class of 2021, has become an example of how a strong foundation in high school can lead to success in journalism.

Today, Bridget is a news intern at WWSB News and an SGTV News Director, Reporter, and Anchor. During Bridget's years at Highlands, she participated in the Yearbook Club, Varsity Cheerleading, NHTV, and more.

One person who had the privilege of working closely with Bridget during her time at Highlands is Ms. Albano, the Yearbook Club advisor. Ms. Albano

had only good things to say about Bridget, saying she was "always eager, friendly, and outgoing," and that "she was easy to talk to". Bridget also participated in different clubs and always "signed up to help in any way possible".

Ms. Albano believes that being a part of the yearbook club is a good way to gain experience with journalism. She also believes "fearless and outgoing is important because you must be courageous and confident enough to approach a stranger and ask them for their thoughts or opinions". In addition, Dr. LaRocca makes similar claims, stating that Highlands offers many electives

and clubs that contribute to journalism.

He lists a few including, "The Fling, Yearbook, and NHTV." He also believes that Highlands as a whole helps with developing certain skills like public speaking, interviewing, and critical thinking.

Dr. Larocca also states that there is a humongous amount of internships related to journalism available through Mrs. Hayes and through the Career and Academic Pathways program. Devin Jenkins, a 10th grader at Highlands, has always considered becoming a reporter.

When asked why she wants to become a reporter, Devin states "loves learning

about different perspectives of the world and wants to further extend [her] knowledge on current events."

Devin has wanted to become a reporter for quite some time, stating that "it's been [her] goal for a few years now." Devin is a member of the literary magazine club, allowing her to further her knowledge within the media industry. She also states that she "[spends] time looking at the News, usually just to stay informed, but [she] finds it interesting as well."

Finally, after asking whether Highlands has helped her foster creativity that correlates to reporting, she states, "There are many things that Highlands



Recent wildfires have caused natural devastation for areas throughout New Jersey. Offers that help students in general with their future. of many was chosen to be interviewed, Bridget is still a shining example for students who aspire to become just like her. ■

There are multiple clubs and electives offered that would help me move a couple of steps further toward my goals." Overall, Devin discusses how Highlands' classes and extracurriculars are helping her take a deeper dive toward journalism. Ultimately, Bridget Bruchalski has become an example and role model for students here at Highlands. Although only one



Recent wildfires have caused natural devastation for areas throughout New Jersey

SENIORS BEHIND THE ELECTION BALLOT

18-year-old students take participation in the 2024 presidential election

By Abigail Skripak '29

With the presidential election still very close in the rearview mirror, the significance of this vote has become clear.

In the United States, the presidential election allows citizens to cast their ballots for the president and vice president who they think are best fit to run the country. The president holds a significant amount of power and has a huge impact on the decisions that are made for the country, making the election a very important decision for voters.

The election is what gives citizens a voice, and allows them to utilize the miniscule amount of individual influence they hold in deciding who will lead the country. "You feel independent. You're actually doing something, you're voicing your own opinion," first time voter Noah Kingsley said.

This powerful feeling is something a lot of people that are below the age of 18 long for. When a vote equals a voice, not having a vote might make people below the age of 18 feel anxious, especially those that are particularly interested in or passionate about politics.

Others take up the opposite position, understanding the reasoning behind the law of having

to be over 18 to vote. "To be honest, I don't really care that I'm unable to vote, because I think most young people still need

stay informed about current events globally, and staying on top of current events allows me to stay involved in my community in that

site, and we actually have people that come here into the cafeteria just to get people to register," Principal Joseph Occhino explained.

Highlands also offers an elective course, AP Government, that is currently working on a unit related to the election. They're learning about public policy and the concept that popular sovereignty leads to the people getting what they want from the government through an election.

Mr. Meizys, the teacher of this course, provided insight into what conversations about the election typically look like. "We discuss the election through the lens of the curriculum. We talk about these big concepts that elections or linkage institutions link the American people to their government, and what politicians say matters because that translates into policy," Meizys explained.

AP Gov student Laney McCrossin had her own perspective to add about the unit. "In gov, we're learning about how the election process and its various elements work, including the electoral college, and have discussed whether or not it is necessary and constitutional. We've also done research on the candidates' campaign platforms to gain a further understanding of the primary

issues the election concerns as well as predicting what we think the valence issue is. The class has defi-

when it comes to politics and who they're voting for," Principal Occhino reminds Highlands students.



Senior Student wearing a sticker to show that he voted

time to think and develop their opinions before being able to make decisions as important as choosing the next president of our country," Tami Aderemi, who is unable to vote, voiced.

Vallerie Kalekar, who is also unable to vote, has a similar opinion, explaining, "It is a little bit sad that we're not able to vote at our age, because we want to be involved in our community. But I'm trying to

way instead of through voting. Starting this habit now will also help me to build a stronger base of knowledge and opinions that will allow me to make a more informed decision when I'm 18, and finally can vote."

Luckily for those who are over 18, Highlands has made it very easy to become a registered voter. "We provide assistance for students to become registered voters. It's right on our web-

"Young people still need time to think and develop their opinions before being able to make decisions as important as choosing the next president of our country"

Tami Aderemi

nitely helped me learn a lot more about my civic duty and the importance of elections, while still being able to recognize their flaws," McCrossin stated.

With the great importance of the outcome, many people feel quite strongly about their opinions. It is essential to remember to be respectful of others' political views. "You always have people who have differences of opinion. At least recognize that there's going to be two sides, and people are going to vote for whoever they want to vote for, but make sure that you respect a person's opinion

Now that the election is behind us, some people will be happy with the outcome, and others will be disappointed. One of the greatest things about our country is that in a mere 4 years, there will be another election where citizens have the opportunity to make their voices heard once again! ■



AN EMOTIONAL PLEDGE TO SAFETY

Steven Benvenisti delivers a powerful speech to juniors and seniors about drunk driving

By Seerat Dhir '26

Almost graduated from The College of New Jersey, a college frat brother decided to leave his hometown

the dangers of drunk driving, it was a deeply moving experience that none of us will forget any time soon. October 30th 2024. Benvenisti began by



Photo of Steven Benvenisti giving his speech to the school

of Montvale with his "frat bros" and take a road trip down to Daytona beach, Florida. What a lighthearted story right? Well it was until the night one of them almost lost their lives.

This month, students were given the privilege of hearing a speech from Steven Benvenisti, a personal injury attorney and motivational speaker, whose life story left everyone in the auditorium in awe. It wasn't just another assembly about

telling the story of a college student who was hit by a drunk driver during spring break, suffering injuries that left doctors questioning his survival. He described the horrifying details: the brain trauma, broken bones, and months in the hospital fighting. The auditorium listened in stunned silence as he recounted how this student's life was shattered in seconds because of someone else's carelessness. Then came the twist none of us saw coming:

"As the story went on, and pictures accompanied his words, tears started forming. It was such a touching story."

Natalie Nef '26

that college student was him.

The gasps and shocked expressions around the room said it all. This twist was what made his message so powerful. Many students thought based on the story, before hearing the outcome, that the college student had passed away, instantly, or otherwise would be permanently brain dead. Principal Mr. Occhino, who has seen Benvenisti speak multiple times, admitted that even he was moved once again. He says, "the plot twist still gives me a touching feeling every time." No matter how many times he hears it, the

story never loses its impact.

Benvenisti's journey of recovery is not only a story of a miracle, it's also a story of determination. After being in a coma for nearly two weeks, enduring several major surgeries, and months of rehabilitation, he beat the odds. Despite all the setbacks, he not only survived but thrived. He went on to graduate with honors, became a successful attorney, and now dedicates his life to preventing others from making the same mistakes that almost cost him his life.

An important aspect of his presentation was

when he spoke about "The Pledge." It's a commitment that he asks everyone to take: if you're going to drink, you promise not to drive and to stop anyone else from getting behind the wheel if they've been drinking. He told us, "You're going to have so many experiences in your lives where someone might decide to drink and drive. Remember this promise and have the courage to stop them."

The energy in the room after his talk was intense. Students couldn't stop talking about how unexpected it was and how much it hit us. We've all heard assemblies about drunk driving before, but this one felt different. Benvenisti's story wasn't just another lecture; it was a wake-up call that life is fragile, and our choices have real consequences. Some students were even seen wiping away tears, which goes to show just how deeply his words resonated with us. Junior Natalie Nef states, "As the story went on, and pictures accompanied his words, tears started forming,

it was such a touching story."

It's no surprise that Mr. Occhino keeps inviting him back to speak at our school. Every time Benvenisti speaks, he leaves a lasting impression. It's not just about the shocking twist or his near-death experience; it's about the message of resilience, hope, and responsibility. As someone who survived something so devastating, he uses his second chance at life to make a difference.

By the end of the assembly, a lot of students walked away with a new perspective. It's one thing to know that drunk driving is dangerous; it's another to see someone standing in front of you who survived it and turned his life around.

Steven Benvenisti's visit was more than just a talk—it was a call to action. Whether it's making smarter decisions or speaking up when it matters, his story challenged us all to do better, not just for ourselves but for each other. That's a lesson I don't think any of us will forget. ■

FOUR DAY BREAK FROM STRESS

How Highlands Students Like to Spend Their Four-day Weekends

Madison Cirillo '26

School can be a stressful experience for many students, which is what makes four-day weekends

stressful for all students. Four-day weekends have played a key role in students' high school experiences. It allows us to relax, rest, spend time with

stressful. Some Juniors and Sophomores have recently participated in the PSATs on October 26. Seniors are preparing to send in their applications for colleges if

out with friends here and there, who are also around for the break. Elijah thinks it's important to have this break, as school can be very stressful. It's an opportunity to get away from those stressors and enjoy time with friends and family.

Elijah and Gabby are using this time off to relax and refresh from any stresses revolving around school. They also shared a common message between the two of them, revolving around the idea that if these breaks weren't in place, high school would be 10 times harder to manage.

"It is important we get a break to be kids," said Elijah. This perspective is similar for many of the students currently. In addition, many Juniors will be taking this time to visit colleges.

The long break gives students the chance to feel out universities, and their campuses, and also learn a little bit more about their program offerings as they prepare to spend 4 or more years at these schools.

The most common places students go for long weekends are Florida and Miami as many kids go on these trips with their friends or family members. Going on trips to other states allows students to

develop socially. It is important to have these breaks as they need them the most. Even



Raya Baghal '26

A student explores Boston while on a college visit

a staple to our school year.

Some of these could include academic pressure, making students feel they need to perform well under pressure to receive good grades and complete assignments. Time management as it relates to balancing school work and other intertwining activities, like clubs or sports. Time restraints, social dynamics, and future uncertainty play a role in how students apply themselves.

The stress of college applications and the weight of school can be rather

friends and family, or visit different states and colleges.

Sophomore Gabby Beyar's plans for the weekend consist of sleeping in, relaxing, hanging out with friends, and shopping. "It is important because we've gotten to the point in this school year where we need a break," Gabby looks forward to being able to rest and reset before the next two weeks of school begin again before Thanksgiving break.

We are all due for a mental health break as the school year has been

they haven't already done so. Freshmen are still adjusting to the high school lifestyle, and Juniors are working hard during their most stressful year yet.

Elijah Vilsaint, a sophomore, expressed his perspective on why the four-day weekend is important to not only him but the students around him. "Relaxing and taking some time off to catch up on assignments and projects that have been building up in school will take up a portion of my weekend."

He also plans to hang



Raya Baghal '26

A student visits Boston University's campus

so beneficial to keeping their stress levels down as it gives students something to look forward to.

Long weekends are a staple to keeping students focused and motivated during the year. It's important to note that sometimes it does become a little too much for students to take on. This is why implemented breaks always come when students feel they

if your break consists of sleeping all day, shopping, hanging out with friends or simply catching up on work that's been heavy recently, it is your time so go spend it on what makes you happy! ■

LIGHTING UP DIWALI, ONE DIYA AT A TIME

Taking a Deep Dive into How our School's Students Celebrate Diwali with Their Families

Katie Lee '27

Diwali is a major Hindu festival that usually falls between mid-September and mid-November. It symbolizes the light that protects from spiritual darkness. To find out more about an authentic Diwali experience, Sophomore Misha Chada shared how she celebrated it and her personal traditions.

her family "lights the inside and outside of [their] home with lamps called diyas and purchases mithai which are Indian sweets."

Before this grand festival takes place, there must be preparations, and to prepare, people usually clean and decorate their houses and decorate the place with lights, lamps, and flowers.

When the day comes along, Chada describes, "I

ing involving offerings to deities) with my family. Then, we eat Indian food for dinner and dessert. Afterward, we usually light sparklers in the backyard." She then explained how the significance of doing a pooja is to show devotion and sincerity.

It signifies that the devotees seek more than materialistic wealth, inner peace, and spiritu-

as they are often lighted to symbolize strength and light over darkness.

These are traditions that can be very important to the holiday. They create a sense of routine and are done to keep the special essence of the festival. These are things that differentiate Diwali from any other normal day.

The normal traditions most Hindus routinely have are lighting sparklers, doing a pooja, and listening to traditional music. However, there can be a lot more added to this. There can be unique things each family does differently which are ultimately what build a deeper bond between the people and the holiday.

Diwali is a festival that brings families together and acts as a reminder to stay positive. It provides the time to reflect on the past and welcome the future. As this holiday continues in the years following let us not forget the value behind it, seek joy, and have compassion for everyone around us. ■



Raya Baghal '26

Senior Sanjna Limaye (right) celebrates Diwali with her mother, grandmother, and aunt.

Chada explained that even before Diwali,

celebrate Diwali by doing a pooja (a spiritual offer-

al prosperity. Sparklers also hold a big meaning



Raya Baghal '26

Senior Jiya Bhadra (left) celebrates Diwali with her mother.

Turkey, Trot, Repeat.

Insight on how Highlanders Spend their Thanksgivings.



One of the many fun Thanksgiving traditions include the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade in New York City.



This Thanksgiving, the New York Giants will be playing the Dallas Cowboys in what is sure to be an exciting match to watch with all family members.



Madeleine ('25) and Braeden ('27) Knapp enjoying Thanksgiving dinner with their family.

By Ellie Shrier '27

It is the upcoming holiday season at Northern Highlands. As Halloween comes to an end, the air becomes chillier. You can feel the spirit of students and faculty members as you walk through the halls. The holiday season consists of a variety of aspects for every person. Numerous people have a holiday season full of cheerfulness, decorations, and Thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving is a cherished holiday all throughout the country. It is a time for friends and family to come together to exhibit gratitude. Thanksgiving began all the way back in the year

1621. It only started out being known as a large feast, which was a celebration of the current year's harvest. It has long since evolved over the centuries, with more customs being added to the holiday.

Thanksgiving's current most iconic celebration is the 'Thanksgiving Dinner.' This dinner is widely known for its side dishes such as mashed potatoes, stuffing, cranberry sauce, and gravy. All of these dishes are made in order to accompany the highlight of the meal, which is the cooked turkey. Alongside these starters and main courses, many families follow up with desserts such as pumpkin pie, sweet potato pie, apple pie, pe-

can pie, pumpkin cake, and more. Although this is known as the customary Thanksgiving dinner, many families have unique recipes and generation old traditions.

Personally, for my family and I, on Thanksgiving morning, we will watch the TV broadcast of Macy's Day Parade. Following this, we begin to prepare dinner and dessert for our visiting family. I usually host the rest of my extended family for Thanksgiving every year. My family's favorite Thanksgiving food is most likely the mashed potatoes, or the turkey. Some of my family and friends will participate in the local Turkey Trot the morning of

Thanksgiving. We also will go Black Friday Shopping together.

Various students celebrate Thanksgiving in many different ways. While some may celebrate with their immediate family, others may travel far distances to spend time with their extended family. Thanksgiving celebrations also may vary depending on entertainment, favorite foods, and who hosts the celebration every year.

One student and her family usually host Thanksgiving dinner. Her favorite food is beef wellington. She also enjoys celebrating traditions such as playing a certain game yearly along with her family and friends; "We also play Ninten-

do together, which we have been doing since we were little" she stated. Together, they also choose a different craft to make every year.

Another student talks about how she really enjoys a side dish called Sweet Potato Casserole with Marshmallows on top. This is a traditional dish that, no matter where her family celebrates, they always make it. Her and her family also have a tradition to play Monopoly together. Every year, they also buy different types of desserts, consisting of cannolis, carrot cake, and more.

In general, Thanksgiving holds importance to many around the country. It is full of traditions,

high spirits, and togetherness. It plays a large role in the holiday season. A multitude of widely renowned events would not happen without this holiday. These events include The Macy's Day Parade, Turkey Trots around the country, Black Friday, and Friendsgiving. These occurrences all hold happy memories in our daily lives.

Did You
Know?

One of the biggest Thanksgiving traditions in the United States is the annual pardoning of a turkey by the president.



SPRINGING INTO THE MUSICAL

A peek into the audition process for The Prom

Emma Thomson '25

This year at Northern Highlands, the spring musical has been announced to be *The Prom*. This month, students who are interested will be auditioning for the different parts of the cast.

The Prom is a musical surrounding Broadway stars who are desperately searching for a stage to regain the spotlight. They then discover that within a small town in Indiana, a local girl named Emma Nolan has been banned from taking her girlfriend, Alyssa Greene, to their school's prom. This is because the homophobic Parent Teacher Association is against having the

two show up to the prom as a couple. The four Broadway stars, Dee Dee Allen, Barry Glickman, Trent Oliver, and Angie Dickinson, decide to change the town's opinion and provide Emma with the prom she deserves. This gives them a way to be brought back into the limelight.

Senior Ellie Marino is one of the many students planning to audition for the spring musical

This original idea of *The Prom* was by Jack Viertel and the musical itself was written by Bob Martin and Chad Beguelin. The musical eventually moved to Broadway at the

Longacre Theatre in November of 2018. It ran for 309 per-

formances in total, closing in August of 2019. It was very successful, as it was able to receive 7 different Tony Award nominations. This includes Best Musical, Best Original Score, Best Leading Actor in a Musical, and Best Leading Actress in a Musical.

Furthermore, because of how popular the show was on Broadway, there was a Netflix adaptation of *The Prom* that was released in

December of 2020. This stars famous actors such as Meryl Streep, James Corden, and Nicole Kidman.

Our very own senior Ellie Marino is one of the many Highlands students planning to audition for the spring musical. She has been a part of the theater company at Northern Highlands every year since freshman year, and is currently rehearsing for the fall play. She

Marino recalls that Mr. Thomas Paster, the director for the spring musical, announced the musical at the Theater Cabaret. Paster planned to reveal the musical for this spring by singing one of the songs from the show. "When he started singing the song 'It's Time to Dance' from the musical, I was super excited. Especially because I've been obsessed with the

Greene, who is the protagonist's girlfriend. However, she explained that she would be content with any role that she receives.

She also described how enthusiastic she was about the spring musical being *The Prom* for her final year at Northern Highlands. "It's the last musical that I will be doing at Highlands. It will be really sad for me, but also bittersweet and fun!"

Students who are a part of the spring musical place a lot of time and effort learning lines, songs, and choreography during rehearsals. Make sure you buy tickets and stop by to see their rendition of *The Prom*!

Mr. Paster, the director for the spring musical, announced the musical at the Theater Cabaret

has one of the main roles in the fall play, *Arsenic and Old Lace*, as Abby Brewster.

show for such a long time," Marino states. Marino plans to audition for Alyssa

SEASONS OF STYLE COMES TO AN END

The marching band season ends on a high note

Gabe Tejeda '26

This year, the marching band performed their own spectacular arrangement of Vivaldi's "Four Seasons" titled Seasons of Style. Each segment of the show featured a different season, played in four different genres. In the end, they all came together to create an amazing performance.

Now that this season has come to an end, many band members are feeling nostalgic for the amazing opportunities and experiences that the 2024 season had to offer, as this show was a fan and band member favorite. It kept the listener engaged throughout due to the constant genre changes and interesting interpretations of the well-known

piece, "Four Seasons."

Band seniors agree, as drum major Autumn Chiu says that this was her, "favorite [show] out of the four [she's] been in." However, it isn't just the music that influences the show; it's the bonding.

Emma Deppisch, another senior drum major, said that this season was good "mainly because of the people."

Marching band, like many other extracurricular

Marching band, like many other extracurricular activities fosters a family-like atmosphere.

ular activities, fosters a family-like atmosphere.

The band practices together multiple times a week, does performances within High-

lands and outside of it, and takes buses to go to shows. Overall, they spend a multitude of hours a week together. This is why the bonding aspect of the band is undeniable, and this year really shone on the stage. Since everyone made friends, it became much easier to cooperate with each other and create an amazing show.

Students such as junior drum captain Logan Mather don't just

practice during mandated practice times, though. Often, you will see members of the marching band practicing their parts outside

of the school and really perfecting their instrument in order to make the best show possible. The commitment of our band this season was incredibly admirable and showed during the performances.

Outside of playing at football games, our band competes with other marching bands. In these competitions, each band encourages each other, and they're an amazing opportunity to meet and speak to new people. For students like Mather, these were some of the best memories of this past season. Our band was able to place second in a competition.

One interesting thing about the piece "Seasons of Style" was the odd meter section, something typically not experimented with in

Marching band. They were able to march in 7/8, which is an unexpected time signature. This helped to keep the

The commitment of our band this season was incredibly admirable and showed during the performances.

show interesting, and multiple students, such as Mather and junior Nikolai Gaglio, quoted it as one of their favorite parts about this season's music.

Chiu and Deppisch, who have both been doing band for four years, say that marching band is one of the best experiences and an incredible opportunity to establish life-long friendships as well as find a family. If you're thinking about joining the Highlands

Marching band, Depisch says to "soak it all in" and cherish these high-school memories. "Seasons of Style"

was an amazing experience for all those involved and they were able to make a phenomenal show through intensive practice and collaboration. Despite being a big time commitment and a difficult undertaking, this season struck an amazing chord in the life of all the band's members.

HOW ARE THE ARTS AFTER HIGHLANDS?

Spotlight on how graduates are faring after high school

Henry Roberts '26

The arts at Highlands have always been a key component of the school's identity. Whether it's through the a cappella groups, the various theater productions, concert and marching bands, choir, or other creative outlets, students are offered a range of opportunities to explore their artistic passions. While these programs are undoubtedly exceptional, many students and faculty alike often wonder: what happens after graduation? How do the arts evolve for those who leave Highlands? Today, we aim to answer that question by taking a closer look at life beyond the walls of our school.

I had the unique privilege of speaking with 2023 Highlands graduate and current sophomore at Syracuse University, Sanai Fowler, to learn more about her artistic journey in college.

Before we discuss her current endeavors, let's rewind a bit to where it all started. Fowler has an impressive history of involvement in the arts during her time at Highlands. When asked about the programs she participated

in, she said, "I did a lot of arts. I think I explored almost every single performing arts option available. I played the saxophone and was part of the marching band and concert band for all four years at High-

lands. I also participated in jazz band for a year before deciding it wasn't for me. Additionally, I was in the concert choir for four years and a member of Highlands Voices for three years. I even took the Actor's Workshop elective for three years and performed in the musical *Something Rotten* in 2022."

With such an extensive list of accomplishments under her belt, it's clear that Fowler made the most of her opportunities at Highlands. But what has she been up to since graduating? Fowler offered some insight into her current artistic endeavors, saying, "I'm a music education major at Syracuse University. My primary focus is on classical voice, and I'm involved in multiple choral ensembles, which means I have concerts multiple times a week. I'm currently the assistant music director for my treble a cappella group, Main Squeeze

lands. I also participated in jazz band for a year before deciding it wasn't for me. Additionally, I was in the concert choir for four years and a member of Highlands Voices for three years. I even took the Actor's Workshop elective for three years and performed in the musical *Something Rotten* in 2022."

schedule reflects not only her dedication but also her passion for the arts. When asked about her ultimate goals, Fowler

said, "It's my goal to be a music teacher. I know it's something I'm incredibly passionate about, and that ambition grows every single day."

Given her vast experience, Fowler is well-equipped to offer advice to current students interested in pursuing the arts. When asked what she would tell them, she shared, "It's 100% okay to go out of your comfort zone and try new things! Suppose a career in the arts is

something you're serious about—going above and beyond during your high school years can ensure you're ready to enter the field. In that case, what's applying to college or doing professional auditions? Be open to feedback and take the time to learn skills and techniques that will help you better understand the professional field when the time comes. But also, if you're ready to move on from the arts program in high school, take a moment to re-

lax and really enjoy it. Enjoy performing with people who share your passion and learning from your teachers. Those experiences are precious and fleeting. You'll always remember the people, but you'll only be truly with them for so long."

The transition from high school to college is often a big adjustment, and Fowler touched on how this change affected

her experience in the arts. She explained, "I experienced culture shock in a way, being in a college music setting. The music was much more intense."

er reflected on this, saying, "Something that the music instructors at Highlands and Syracuse have in common is that they absolutely want the best for you. They're willing to meet with you, support you, and guide you to perform at your full potential. They also value a diverse program, striving to include pieces by composers from different backgrounds—whether that's in terms of gender, nationality, or race—while still

to learn music. There are also many more performances than I was used to at Highlands. I have a concert or showcase nearly every week, and performing in front of crowds—whether as a soloist or with an ensemble—has become second nature to me."

While college-level arts programs can be challenging, there are also many similarities to high school experiences. Fowler

you're making music, you'll always find a community of people who love the same thing you do. The arts are an incredible way to form meaningful bonds, and I feel like my closest friends—both at Highlands and Syracuse—have been those I met through arts programs."

Fowler's journey showcases the lasting impact that the arts can have, even after high school. From the friendships formed to the lessons learned, the arts provide a foundation for personal growth and professional success. For those considering continuing in the arts after graduation, Fowler's story is a shining example of the dedication, passion, and rewards that come with pursuing your creative dreams.

From the wealth of experiences Fowler shared today, I hope you feel inspired and better informed about the exciting possibilities awaiting those who choose to follow their passion for the arts.■

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"I did a lot of arts, I think I explored almost every single performing arts option available."

Sanai Fowler

ed in, she said, "I did a lot of arts. I think I explored almost every single performing arts option available. I played the saxophone and was part of the marching band and concert band for all four years at High-

A Cappella. On top of that, I've started doing student observations through the university. I visit public schools in Syracuse to observe and even teach elementary general music classes."

Her impressive

"It's 100% okay to go out of your comfort zone and try new things!"

Sanai Fowler

something you're serious about—going above and beyond during your high school years can ensure you're ready to enter the field. In that case, what's applying to college or doing professional auditions? Be open to feedback and take the time to learn skills and techniques that will help you better understand the professional field when the time comes. But also, if you're ready to move on from the arts program in high school, take a moment to re-

Choral professors relied heavily on their students' sight-reading abilities, and the



Shown above is the treble a cappella group, Main Squeeze at Syracuse University where Fowler is currently the assistant music director.

overall skill level was higher, especially with the extreme ranges or the time it took

balancing their love for the classics. But what I really adore is that no matter where

AN UNIQUE DUO IN A CAPPELLA

A spotlight on Voices and Belles’ new Vocal Percussionists

Nick Franchi '25

November has arrived, and both Highlands Voices and Highlands Belles are now in full swing, gearing up for their ICHSA competition seasons! If you're new to the world of a cappella, here's a quick look at what goes into making these groups successful.



Ellie Marino '25 (Left) and Henry Roberts '26 (Right)

Each group is led by a director—Mrs. Irene Lahr for Highlands Voices and Ms. Taylor Rehe for Highlands Belles—who guides a talented team of vocalists covering a wide range of parts, ranging anywhere from Soprano, Mezzo, Alto, Tenor, Baritone, and Bass. On Voices, there are fifteen vocalists, and on Belles, there are sixteen. But no a cappella group is complete without its backbone: VP for Highlands Voices, while Senior Ellie Marino steps up as VP for Highlands Belles.

In case you're wondering what exactly a VP does, think of them as the heartbeat of an a cappella group. While other singers handle the various melodies and harmonies, the VP is responsible for creating all the drum and rhythm sounds using only their voice. They're very similar to beatboxers—and often referred to as such!

Since last year's VPs for Voices and Belles—Sam Materetsky '24 and River Reiss '24 respectively—both graduated last year, the spots were left open to later be filled by Roberts and Marino.

Roberts' journey to becoming Voices' VP is one of dedication, hard work, and a deep love for all things music. Previously, Roberts sang bass for Highlands Harmonics his freshman year, and he made the leap to vocal percussion in his sophomore year.

"I wanted to start VP-ing in 4th/5th grade because I thought it sounded cool," Roberts told the Fling. "But I really started taking it seriously at the end of freshman year when I had to beatbox for a song."

While he wasn't exactly proud of his first performance, Roberts came away with

the drive and passion to improve his skill.

Since then, he's practiced nearly every day. One of his biggest inspirations during this process has been Voices

for that best VP award!"

In case you're unaware, the "Best Vocal Percussion" award that Roberts is aiming for is given out by ICHSA at every competition to

into something so new.

"My friend Nina, who's on Belles, made this hilarious slideshow about all the reasons I should join." And with that extra push, Marino decided, "why not?"

Though she'd "always really loved a cappella and thought it was super cool," Marino says she "never thought [she] would be able to do it." Now that she's part of the group, Marino feels like "the stars seemed to align, and it worked out!"

Marino went on to say, "I am really excited to try something new, but also very nervous." As a fresh face in a cappella, and to VP-ing as a whole, she's prepared to take on the challenge and bring her best to the Belles legacy.

As Highlands Voices and Highlands Belles head into their competition seasons, members like Roberts and Marino are crucial parts of the passion that goes into each performance.

While there are no set performance dates as of right now, keep an eye out for when Highlands Voices and Highlands Belles take the stage. Don't miss the chance to see their hard work and talent come to life—you'll experience firsthand how essential every member of the group can be.■

"I love that I'm good at it; it makes me feel like I have a place in a group as talented as Voices"

Henry Roberts '26

alum and talented VP, Michael Pontecorvo.

Now, Roberts is thrilled to finally be a part of Voices, saying "I love that I'm good at it; it makes me feel like I have a place in a group as talented as Voices."

Being able to beatbox along to his favorite songs is especially fulfilling, and it's even become a way to bond with his dad, as Roberts states: "The way my dad knows I like the songs he's showing me is if I start VP-ing along with it."

When asked about the future, he says "I'm really looking forward to being good...also aiming

to recognize the top vocal percussionist that night.

It's a big honor for VPs. Last year, Voices' own Sam Materetsky snagged the award at quarterfinals, setting the bar high for Highlands A Cappella's vocal percussionists. Roberts is hoping to keep the streak going!

As for Highlands Belles, Marino's path to becoming the vocal percussionist came when Ms. Rehe sent out a call for a VP after auditions had closed.

"I was super on the fence about it," Marino told the Fling, unsure if she was ready to jump

FALL PLAY: IN THE HOMESTRETCH!

A look into the final few weeks of *Arsenic and Old Lace*

Karina Rosenberg '26

Continued from page 1...

Well—without giving away anything at all about the show and totally making you want to come see it—if you're interested in dark comedy with a peculiar twist, you certainly do not want to miss this show. Imagine an odd

"Definitely participate in theater because it's a lot of fun and it takes a lot of bravery to get on a stage and be vulnerable"

Addie Harrington '26

family, dead bodies, unrevealed potions, and plenty of chaos in the mix. There are not one, not two, but three chances to see this wonderful show that your friends and classmates have been waiting to show you.

Be prepared to be on the edge of your seat as you take on a comedic murder story following several old ladies and arsenic laced wine. Tickets have quick-



The entire cast and crew posing for a picture during their Thursday rehearsal!



Henry Roberts '26 and Nick Franchi '25 engage in a heated scenario at dress rehearsal.

ly sold out and family and friends have filled the stadium.

Senior Emma Thomson recalls her experience stating that it was a "wonderful show". Thomson

states that "laughter filled the audience" and she "heard a constant loud laugh throughout the play."

That being said, the theater community has put together a show through

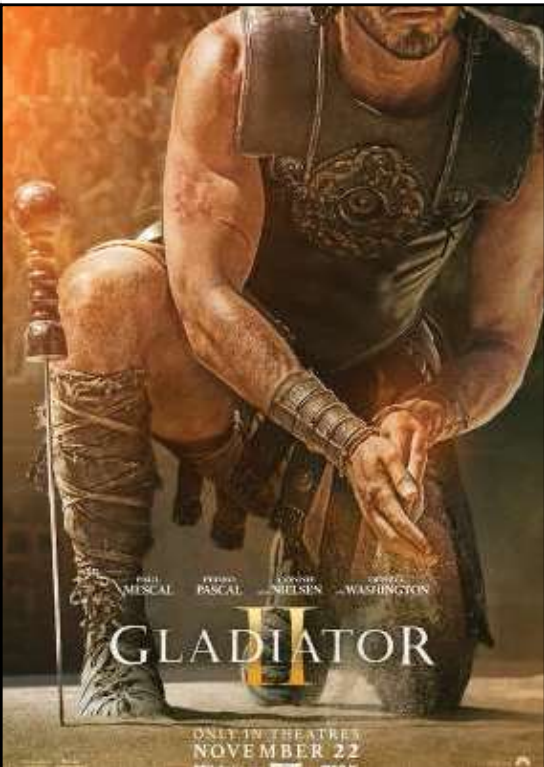
hours of hard work and dedication. The result, is clear as teachers, students, and parents alike have enjoyed the play thoroughly.■

Photo Courtesy of Shania Strang-Wolf

Photo Courtesy of Nick Franchi '25

NOVEMBER RELEASES REVIEW

Take a look at our opinions on some popular new releases



“I saw the play when I was younger and the movie exceeded my expectations. The actors did an incredibly jaw-dropping amazing job.”
Emma Thomson ’25

“In my opinion, I thought that Joker wasn’t as bad as everybody said it was, I just think people were thrown off by the musical aspect of the movie. 4 Booms.”
Matt Ma ’25

“I was in literal tears after the second season, sobbing my eyes out. If you haven’t watched this show I highly recommend it. It is the most beautiful heart wrenching animated series I’ve ever watched.”
Emily Kam ’25

“I loved the animal aspect to the movie, the sharks in the arena really elevated the experience of being a gladiator. I truly felt like I was a gladiator myself watching the movie.”
Derek Chen ’25

RING THE BELLS OF NOTRE DAME...

The choir and band took a field trip to see a collegiate show

Ben Sherlock ’26
Ensemble classes went on a field trip to William Patterson University to watch a production of Disney’s *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* directed by Highland’s own



Austin Sidito (Quasimodo) performing one of his most powerful songs, “Out There.”

teacher, Mr. Thomas Paster. The students attended a preview of the show meant exactly what happened. A group of Highlanders

“The Hunchback...is such a beautiful show and has a really important message.”

Paige Ellis ’26

from the Honors A Cappella and Choir and Honors Wind specifically for the students of William Patterson.

The story of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* follows a disfigured man named Quasimodo who is locked away in the bell-tower of the Notre Dame Cathedral, binded to the job of ringing the bell each hour. He wishes to be with other people and pursue his dream. He finds goodness in the world, no matter what people may think about him or his appearance. “I thought the production was so impressive and it was such a special opportunity to see a college show with our class,” said junior Paige Ellis when asked about her thoughts on the show, “*The Hunchback of Notre Dame* is such a beautiful show and has a really important message.”

Ellis is not the only one with raving reviews. Senior Nina Misantonis claimed she loved the show, stating that “[She] thought it was amazing and beautiful. The voices were amazing, the acting was amazing. [She] got really emotional throughout the show multiple times and almost cried. It is very clear that Mr. Paster worked super hard on it.” Misantonis goes on to explain that “It’s a great, beautiful show about not judging a book by its cover.” It’s not just the mes-



Emily Wynne (Clop) and the ensemble performing “Topsy Turvy.”

sage of the show that has the students praising the performance, it’s also the extraordinary talent shown by the actors on stage. Junior Henry Roberts commented that he found the lead actor who plays Quasimodo to be his favorite. “The lead actor, I got to meet him, his name is Austin. He’s the most genuine guy and he killed the role of Quasimodo,” says



Chase Haffner (Captain Pheobus) in a battle stance.

Roberts. “His voice was so perfect and his physicality along with his acting did the character justice.” Junior Bradley Hogue however, found the actor of Claud Frolo to be the most appealing to him. “The performance of Frolo was amazing, he both had a super amazing and menacing voice which fit his character perfectly. His acting and the effect he had on the show itself was really something special.” All in all, the consensus amongst the students that embarked on this journey of love over hate was that it was nothing but an extraordinary experience. No matter who you ask, there was always a part that they loved, whether it was the set, the actors, the story, or simply going on the field trip with their friends. As for the future, Paster will be directing the spring musical, *The Prom*, here at Northern Highlands. Be sure to keep an eye out for that show, as the performances will be on February 27 & 28, and March 1 & 2, 2025. It is sure to be an amazing experience.■

Varsity Girls Field Hockey Wins The NJG3 Final

The girls hold on to a record this season of 21-0-1 which made them #1

Samantha O’Connell ‘26

The field hockey team this year had an amazing record of 21 wins, 0 losses, and one tie which put them at the number one spot on the ranking list for this season. This is a fantastic record and is in part due to three talented seniors Jenna Livathares, Alexa Birch, and Shannon Arber who are all committed to play Division 1 Field Hockey in college.

One name of importance is Leila Shamash who scored 59 seconds into overtime to beat North Hunterdon who are nicknamed king of the north because they have won the past three titles. Earlier in the game the two other

goals were completed by juniors Kelsey Bennet and Leila Shamash. Kelsey Bennet though was this year's top-scoring girl with 24 goals and 20 assists. The seniors are happy to get the opportunity to win before leaving this school. Seniors like Shannon Arber, Alexa Birch, Frankie Cacciabauda, Ava Chaffin, Olivia Fazio, Jacey Krause, Jenna Livathares, Carly Robinson, and Sienna Shrier.

All these girls will unfortunately be leaving us in the spring. This year was one of the best years for girl's field hockey. In the last few years we have made it to sectionals, but this is the first in

the past few years that we not only made the finals but won them as well. This season has been great for these girls. With plenty of practice, they were prepared for a successful season. It is important to keep a strong team dynamic and be able to work with one another comfortably for the success of the team.

This team has just continued to improve in front of everybody's eyes and we cannot wait to see what they do next year. Tradition is a big thing with this group and each person has their own. It's important to have a routine down before a game because it can give you luck

or at least lessen your nerves about any game played.

Many of the players have built traditions over the last few years while on the team, some of which include creating "an extensive playlist for warmups, trade gifts for big sister, little sister, decorating the whiteboard in the locker room, and more". These players have built their team as a family bonding which is great for any team because that helps with communication and making sure your in sync with the people you play with because if one person is off you can make a mistake to have you lose. Also if one player is off one

day then all of them are going to be off. Its important to stay together and move together. Staying together helps with moving together.

Each part of the team has their own way of doing things, but when brought together to collaborate it can turn into something amazing that they can use for years and years.

Each year these girls experience field hockey is a year for a new group of friends and family they get to be apart of. They have a bond together and it will always be there and the greatest thing is its not all just one age group, its all four years bonding

together to create this amazing group of girls who all fell in love with the same sport. Field Hockey has had an amazing season going undefeated and the girls in Varsity right now are preparing for next year. They are finding the tricks and what they want to teach to the new girls coming in each year.

Next year should be a success because of the foundation they have Girls, congrats on winning the finals and you all had an amazing season that you should be proud of. ■



(Left to right): Alexa Birch ‘25, Jenna Livathares ‘25, Shannon Arber ‘25, Carly Robinson ‘25

Photo Credits: nh.fieldhockey



Olivia Fazio ‘25 and Ava Chaffin ‘25 pointing at the camera

Photo Credits: nh.fieldhockey



Varsity Field Hockey take team photo after win.

Photo Credits: Raya Baghal



Varsity Field Hockey stealing the ball away from other team.

Photo Credits: Raya Baghal

Cross Country Team Training and Daily

With a lot of injured players it made it hard for cross country to compete

Samantha O'Connell '26

Being on the track team is a big commitment, with meets on the weekend and races that could take hours to finish. Either way, it's a big commitment for someone to join any sports team. You have to go to after-school practices, and sometimes you have practices on holidays, which not everyone enjoys. Each practice differs in workouts, but its intensity remains 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.

Whether it is discussing the race day plan, or it is simply talking and hanging out with each other, they value time together and comradery. The team is very close-knit and gets along very well; the runners trust

each other fully, and they trust Coach DeStalo and his assistants. Head Coach DeStaso and his assistants each help improve the physical and mental aptitude of all their runners, giving them pep talks to increase their confidence.

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.

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

The actual race courses are a mixture of flat land and hills, making the routes engaging and challenging simultaneously. The team is currently busy preparing for their upcoming season meets. For those of

you new to the sport, cross-country races are against other schools throughout the area. Highlands is part of the Bergen County, Big North, and NJSIAA Group 1 runners. Highlands competes against other runners from other neighboring high schools.

If you are looking for a fall sport next year and want to meet new people, joining cross country is the way to go. Many different types of people join the cross-country team, you don't have to be the best runner. No matter how fast you can run, you can do it at your own pace. 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.

The team describes themselves to be very close and they each value similar things.

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 for 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.

The team consists of 21 juniors, 16 sophomores, and 16 Freshman. With such large numbers of not only returning varsity runners, but also upperclassmen, the team believes they have a great chance of making it to the county sectionals. The cross country coach DeStalo pushes them hard during their workouts

and then makes sure they let their bodies recover on their days off so that they are at their best on race days. The injuries still can't seem to break the strong team morale that the athletes have.

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. Northern Highlands cross country has been around for a while and is always amazing at what they do.

They have won in past years and just keep pushing despite all of the difficulties their season has brought to them. The injuries put the most damper on the team because they had some key players out of their line up.

The freshman are excited for this new experience to run with older kids and learn lessons from them

that will benefit them in years to come. The freshman are learning tips and tricks to help them do better, race faster, beat their time before hand, and build extra muscle.

Anything they can so in the future maybe they can win a state championship for themselves and their team. Cross country puts in a lot of work to be where they are and to compete at that level each year.

There is a lot of training and discipline that is needed to form this great team that they have. Even though some seniors might be prioritized because they are leaving.

Next years players are just going to be better and better as that knowledge and then their own gets passed down and throughout the years of runners.

Cross country is a great sport and has a great community surrounding them. Great job to all the runners for a special season and good luck to all returning next year. ■



Photo Credits: nhgirlsxc



Photo Credits: nhgirlsxc

Girls Cross Cross counrty on its way to finish the meet.

Cross counrty poses with medals after finishing race.

The fishing club begins another amazing year and shares their trips they went on together

Gabriel Tejeda '26

For the eighth consecutive year, the NHRHS Fishing Club is going strong, encouraging more students to start fishing and share their love for it with their friends and family.

This year, the club is absolutely packed with exciting activities to fulfill everyone's fishing needs. These activities include fishing trips, lessons from skilled fishing experts, and visits to colleges to see fishing derbies and shows and interact with other clubs and people.

Matthew Krzysik, the club's advisor, firmly believes that this club not only fosters a love for fishing, but also a love for spending time with friends, family, and peers.

On each of the club's trips, all members, their families, and whomever else they would like to invite are allowed to join.

Recently, they went to the Joe Jefferson Fishing Club, a prestigious nearly 100-year-old fishing alliance of only 30 members, to teach the students how to

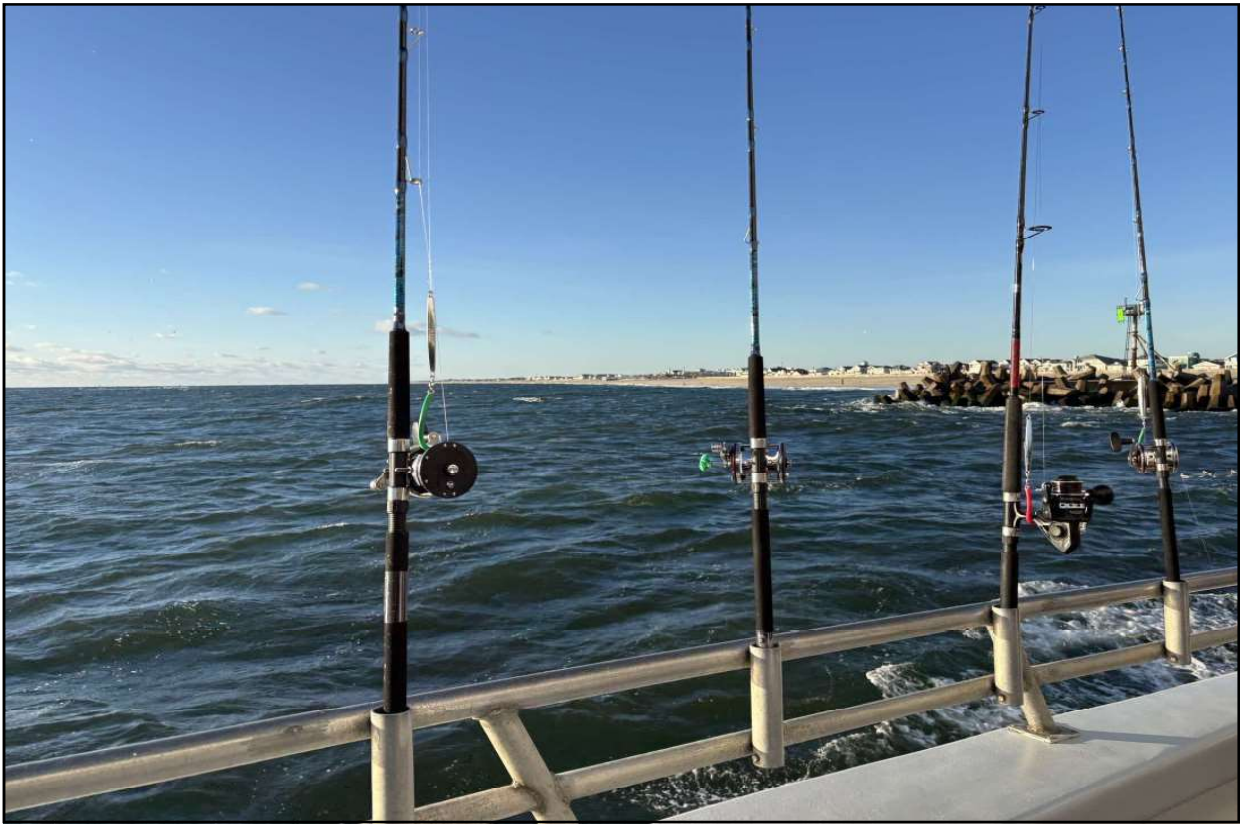


Image of the day the fishing club learned how to cast fly rods

Photo creds to Jacob Berwitz '25

Along with that, they plan to go to fishing shows and derbies in universities as well as fish in Ecco Lake and the Hudson River.

On top of that, they are looking to enter the Governors Cup, which is a salt-water fishing competition that was won last year by freshman Shant Soultanian.

In school meetings, they have fishing experts share their knowledge on a topic and teach the members about things like ice fishing and bass fishing.

Overall, this club is packed with things to do this season. Whether you're a parent, experienced fisherman, or complete beginner, this is the experience for you.■

cast fly rods.

"I've been trying for the last 5-6 years to get invited there [Joe Jefferson Club], and finally last year we did," says Krzysik.

This was an amazing experience for all parties, and as this club is equipped with 3 different lakes stocked with trout, many

members were able to go home having caught at least one fish.

The Joe Jefferson Club was very receptive to the NHRHS fishing club and invited them back in the spring. But you don't need to be a hardcore fisher to join this club.

"I like to recruit," says

Krzysik, because not everyone thinks they'd enjoy fishing until they do, and many find it to be a great bonding experience and enjoy the feeling of being out on the water.

The club is a place for everyone to either learn something new or build on one of their favorite sports.

For the last couple of years, the club has been visiting the Gambler, a spot down in Point Pleasant Beach.



REILLY SETS HER TEAMMATES UP FOR WINS

Allie Reilly reaches 1,000 career assists and provides a great support to the volleyball team

Catherine Main '27

On October 31st, Allie Reilly, setter of the Northern Highlands Girls Varsity Volleyball team, reached the pinnacle- one thousand assists in her career as an NH volleyball player, and she is only a junior.

Assists are awarded when a fellow player sets up her teammates to score in games.

When Allie was awarded her 1000th assist, her team was playing at home, against known rival, IHA. Reilly set up her teammate Delia Van der Heide on the outside to get the kill, allowing her to earn the assist.

All in all, Reilly had an amazing game against IHA, with 22 overall assists, 10 digs, and 4 service points in just a two-set match.

Reilly said this moment was very meaningful to her. She explained how her reaching this goal felt as if all of her hard work was paying off. When talking to her she explained how she wouldn't have been able to accomplish this without her teammates.

"My teammates helped me tremendously achieve my goals.



Image of Reilly celebrating her 1,000 career assists.

Photo creds to Girls Varsity Volleyball Team.

chance to bond with the other players in the grade and to get a feel of what Northern Highlands is like in the sports category. As a sophomore, Allie Reilly tried out in August and was pushed up to varsity.

She recalls that her sophomore year was a turning point in her high school volleyball career.

Not only did she gain a substantial amount of varsity volleyball experience, but her skills became superior. She gives credit to the older girls for truly boosting her confidence and skills to get her to the point she is at now.

Reilly states "Sophomore year was when I truly got to experience the hype." As a junior, Allie Reilly is now starting to decide what her future will hold for her.

Reilly definitely plans on playing volleyball in college. However, she is very short for her position as a setter, which limits her opportunities to college volleyball.

Regardless, she will definitely play college volleyball, intramural, or club while away at the college of her wishes. Keep up the great work. ■

Without them, I wouldn't have any assists at all, and that includes defense too."

ming became too much, Allie was able to find a passion in volleyball.

Fast forward to now,

player averaging more than 25 assists per game.

Allie Reilly has been a key player on varsity

role on the NH Volleyball team in their matches, but she has also gotten recognition because of her unmatched talent. In fact, in 2023, Reilly was named first-team all-league.

For Reilly, she states her volleyball experience here at Northern Highlands has been "exquisite."

As a Freshman in the volleyball program, her love for the sport truly grew because of the fun and great season she had.

She explained how freshman year was a great

"My teammates helped me tremendously achieve my goals. Without them, I wouldn't have any assists at all."

Allie Reilly '26

As a young seventh grader wanting to try something new after club swim-

Reilly has expanded her volleyball career and has become a very consistent

since her sophomore year.

She has not only been super successful in her

HOLLANDER’S COMMITMENT TO ELON

Ele Hollander will continue her academic and lacrosse career at Elon University

Gabriella Ragazzo ‘26

Ele Hollander’s decision to commit to Elon University was a well-thought-out one, driven by her passion for lacrosse and her desire to be part of a supportive community.

She emphasizes the importance of her family and coaches in her journey, acknowledging their crucial role in her success.

Hollander’s commitment to hard work and constant improvement is evident in her statement,

“I have loved lacrosse since I started playing and I loved working hard and trying to constantly get better.”

She recognizes the value of a competitive program and the opportunity to contribute to its success.

Hollander’s posi-



Image of Ele Hollander Instagram commitment post.

Photo creds to Ele Hollander.

“I wouldn’t want to change anything about my recruiting process because it helped me find where I was meant to be.”

Ele Hollander ‘26

itive experience during her visit to Elon, where she felt welcomed and supported, solidified her decision. She highlights the importance of finding the right fit, stating,

“I wouldn’t want to change anything about my recruiting process because it helped me

“Never give up and keep going even if stuff doesn’t work out the first time around.”

Ele Hollander ‘26

find where I was meant to be.” Hollander’s determination and resilience are reflected in her final statement, crosse program and the university community as a whole. Highlands will always be rooting for you.■

“Never give up and keep going even if stuff doesn’t work out the first time around.”

This demonstrated her unwavering commitment to achieving her goals, even in the face of challenges.

Hollander’s Commitment to Elon University is a testament to her dedication, passion, and belief in the power of hard work and perseverance.

She is eager to make a significant contribution to the Elon la-

VAN BIERT’S 100TH CAREER KILL

Sophia Van Biert achieves her 100th career kill on the varsity girls volleyball team

Gabriella Ragazzo ‘26

Scoring the 100th career kill in high school varsity girls’ volleyball is a remarkable accomplishment. For senior Sophia Van Biert, it signifies more than just a milestone;

it represents years of dedication, hard work, and passion for the sport.

Sophia’s journey in volleyball began when she was just a freshman, stepping onto the court with determination and a strong desire to excel.

Over the years, she has honed her skills through countless hours of practice, intense training sessions, and competitive matches.

Each point she scored was a testament to her perseverance and commitment to improving

her game.

Reaching the 100th career kill is a rare accomplishment in high school sports especially in a team-oriented game like volleyball, where individual statistics

“She’s been the real guiding force of the team this year, she was a powerhouse on the court.”

Lauren Bourque ‘25

are often overshadowed by the collective effort.

Senior varsity volleyball player, Lauren Bourque remarks, “Sophia really stepped up as a leader this year, both on the court and off the court. She’s been the real guiding force of the team this year, she was a powerhouse on the court and she just really has just been

so consistent and reliable either if you need someone to talk to or if you need someone set the ball to.”

This milestone highlights Van Biert’s exceptional talent and her ability to

consistently perform under pressure. It also underscores her role as a key player

“For me reaching 100 kills isn’t just something I feel personally happy for but also because I am able to help my team out as much as I can.”

Sophia Van Biert ‘25

on her team, some- journey, the support of her team and community, and the bright of perseverance and the joy of playing

on when it matters.

Van Biert’s significant accomplishment reflects her talent, dedication, and leadership.

Van Biert comments on her achievement stating, “For me reaching 100 kills isn’t just something I feel personally happy for but also because I am able to help my team out as much as I can. I couldn’t have done it without the rest of my team as they have consistently been there for me.”

It is a milestone that celebrates her



Image of Sophia’s on media day.

Photo creds to Girls Varsity Volleyball Team.

future that lies ahead. Van Biert’s achievement is a testament to the power

the game she loves. Congrats on a stellar career.■

Open the Gates!

The Incoming Class of 2029 Tours Highlands during an Open House

Gabe Tejeda '26

On November 2, Highlands hosted an open house for the class of 2029 to tour the school. The attendants could see the different parts and experiences available at Highlands and the school they will call home for the next four years.

Student ambassadors volunteered to give tours to different families and students of the school. They roamed the halls and highlighted the ins and outs of Highlands. There was also a barbecue, sponsored by the Board of Education, to welcome the eighth graders.

On top of that, the marching band and certain choir students were there to serenade students on their tours. The marching band answered questions about their program and played a standstill run of their amazing Seasons of Style show.

One thing that stood out to junior Nikolai Gaglio was the opportunity to “meet potential marchers and see the future of the marching band program.” The eighth graders showed interest in the band and were able to learn about the school’s available programs in music. They were also able to see the quality of our marching band, encouraging those interested to join next year.

Certain students in Highlands Voices also participated in the open house, performing solo songs and taking questions from incoming students. Henry Roberts, a junior in Highlands Voices, believes that “the open house allows for incoming students to feel the vibe of Highlands.”

The ambassador program was a huge help in managing the open house as juniors and seniors showed families around the school and taught the incoming freshmen what our school is all about. Most importantly, they had fun doing tours and speaking about their experience at Highlands to the incoming freshmen and telling them all about the opportunities this school has to offer.



Photo of the new media center, our newly renovated library.

Photo courtesy of Raya Baghal

For the ambassadors, helping out wasn’t even a question. Roberts was called to sing at the last minute but still came. Later, he was able to speak to an eighth grader who was interested in the band/choir program and who he may call a friend next year, which is what the open house is all about. He and all the other volunteers were glad to speak to the future class of 2029 and invite them into the school with open arms.

This group of freshmen marks the first class with full-year access to the new media and fitness centers, allowing them to see the modernized version of Highlands. On the tours, they were shown the renovated areas and the ambassadors could share their thoughts and feelings on them.

Senior Ash Kim, an ambassador who participated in the open house and provided tours, shared that one of their favorite parts about this experience was, “talking about what Highlands has to offer and sharing how Highlands has provided resources and shaped [their] high school experience.”

The ambassadors were able to encourage the incoming freshmen and show them that high school isn’t nearly as scary as it may seem by sharing their own experiences within the school. Speaking one-on-one with upperclassmen and asking them questions allowed for open conversation and an amazing experience for all involved in this open house.■