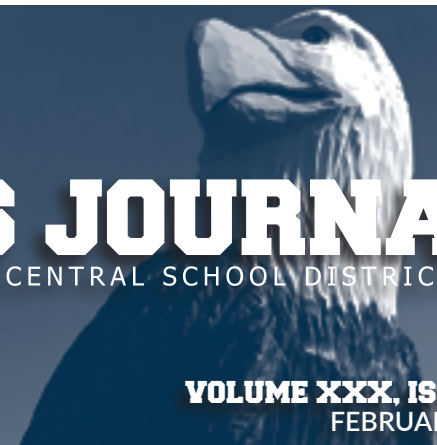




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MIDLAKES JOURNAL

PHELPS-CLIFTON SPRINGS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT



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FIND MORE AT MIDLAKES.ORG



Midlakes Boys Volleyball secured their second straight Section V Class B Championship. Read more on page 8.



Our Middle School cafeteria turned into a jazz lounge for the annual Cabaret Night. More coverage on page 13.



Midlakes junior Aiden Bryant continues to rewrite the long and triple jump record books. He recently swept the Jack Reed Showcase Invitational, winning both the long and triple jumps. He went on to win the Virginia Showcase at the Virginia Beach Sports Center. Amid the success, he stays grounded and humble. Read more on page 9.

HIGHLIGHTS



DEMAND IN SCHOOL MEALS INCREASES

The Phelps-Clifton Springs Central School District Food Services Department prepared 153,214 meals between September 2024 and January 31, 2025.

Last year, 308,180 total meals were prepared for Midlakes students during the 2023-2024 school year. The September-January year-to-date total are approaching 50-percent of the prior year total. Midlakes prepared 57,034 breakfast meals across the two buildings, and another 96,180 lunches.

Meals are provided for free at Midlakes under a federal program. Students are allowed one free meal at breakfast and lunch and are charged for a la carte items and additional full meals.

Year-over-year, the District made 55,180 more meals during the 2023-2024 school year than the 2022-2023. A 2024-2025 meal count will be available in the fall.

To learn more about the food service program and to view menus, visit Midlakes.org/Food-Service or scan the code below with a smartphone. ■



A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

POINTS OF EAGLE PRIDE

One year ago this column ended with the following statement: *"By coming together, I am confident we will see very strong evidence of 'Academic Excellence' in our results going forward. As always, Go Eagles!!"*



be reviewed by our teachers, providing them with insights on how to best address any learning gaps that may exist within their classrooms.

Instructional Council and Distributed Leadership

New this school year, we have established the Instructional Council. This group is comprised of all school administrators, grade level lead teachers

in the elementary, departmental teacher leaders in the secondary and pupil support leadership. The whole group meets quarterly, and each school building group meets monthly. The intent of the group is to ensure that we are establishing and developing professional practices and providing leadership development that will lead to academic excellence for all Midlakes students.

As Spring approaches the annual New York State ELA and Math tests for grades 3 through 8 will be upon us. It is important for all students to take state tests for our district to be judged fairly by the state. The state holds schools accountable based on the number of students that take the exams. There are several reasons why our families should engage in state testing:

- Tests have been reduced in length for students.
- Schools use the results to modify and refine curriculum and instruction to improve student outcomes.
- Individualized student reports are used to target individual student academic intervention services to support student growth in ELA and Math.
- Test scores are strong predictors of academic success in high school.
- 3-8 ELA and math state test scores are no longer tied to the teacher evaluation system.

Once again, we are thrilled to report the academic gains that our district has made on behalf of our students and families. These gains are made possible by the deep commitment of our teachers, staff, students, and parents/guardians.

Our plan is to do it again! I am confident that one year from now I will be able to report more significant growth on our path towards academic excellence in Midlakes. Go Eagles!!!

— Nick Ganster, Superintendent

We are thrilled to present to you the following points of pride:

- 60% of students in grades 3-8 demonstrated measurable growth in ELA and Math as measured by state tests. This is strong evidence that learning gaps are being closed by most students.
- Maintained Regents exam proficiency rates for those Regents exams required for graduation in the face of the passing grade being raised from 50 in 2022-2023 to 65 in 2023-2024.
- 95% graduation rate for the class of 2023, and an expected graduation rate of 94% for the class of 2024.

In addition, the hard work and growth of our students, parents and teachers is a point of pride and should be recognized and celebrated! Our collective efforts are shining through in our student academic data. Together, we have cultivated an increase in proficiency and a significant decrease in the lowest levels of performance. These gains validate our efforts from last year and provide a strong foundation for our continued efforts. This school year we continue to build systems and practices that we believe will lead to even better outcomes for our students:

Consistent Curriculum Across All Grade Levels

We are working towards having clearly articulated curriculums for all grades and all classes to best ensure that no matter which classroom a student is in, they receive an education that is consistent with their peers who may be in a different classroom. This consistency provides a predictable and strong foundation of knowledge and skills that can be built upon year after year as students age (grow) through our school.

Benchmark Assessments Across All Grade Levels

We are working toward having quarterly benchmark assessments in all grades and subjects. The results of these benchmarks will

MIDLAKES STATE TEST SCORES ON THE RISE

Jeff Hamelinck presented feedback to the Phelps-Clifton Springs Central School District School Board, illustrating improvements in multiple New York State Assessment and Regents exam metrics.

"Our instructional staff and building leadership rallied, and rose to the challenge," said Hamelinck, Phelps-Clifton Springs Central School District's Director of Curriculum and Instruction.

Scores showing fluency and mastery were on the rise among Midlakes 3-8th grade test takers. Elementary ELA scores of 3 or 4 were up to 28-percent, an increase of 10-percent over 2023 results. The middle school stayed consistent, with 34-percent of tests scored at a 3 or higher. As a district, Midlakes improved to 29-percent of students scoring 3 or 4 on the NYS ELA assessment, an increase of 6-percent.

"Any gains 10-percent or more is significant growth," said Hamelinck, but he also put the numbers in perspective. "This is one measure in time. Our students are more than just a test score."

Midlakes' 3-8th grade ELA participation in the State Assessments showed an increase as well. District participation was 94.5-percent; the Middle School showed an increase by 14-percent to a participation rate of just over 91-percent, and the elementary building also saw an increase with a rate of 95.77-percent.

ELA gains were stronger than math gains, but our students showed math growth. Both buildings saw a reduction in ratings of 1 on the 3-8th grade Math Assessment. The Middle School increased by 11-percent over the 2023 numbers of students scoring a 3 or higher. Overall, the district was up to 31-percent of test takers scoring 3 or better.

"We made nice gains overall with our all students group, and



we had decreases across the board for Level 1 results. There are some sub-groups that we are monitoring closely; making specific plans for these sub-groups to see the same gains as our all student groups," said Hamelinck.

In 3-8th Science, fifth grade achieved 3 or higher scores at a rate of 33-percent, near the state average of 35-percent. Eighth grade had 47-percent of test takers score 3 or higher which is 13-percent higher than the State average. This was a

new test this year so our district will use these results as a new baseline.

In the high school regents arena, Midlakes showed improvement in ELA and Social Studies. Midlakes high schoolers passed the 2024 ELA 11 exam at a rate of 83.5-percent, up 2-percent over 2023. Global I was up nearly 10-percent, with a passing rate of 83.3-percent. History and Government was passed at a 91.5-percent rate, up by 3-percent over 2023. Science scores were stable with

Living Environment seeing the most gains; New York State is rolling out a new test in 2024-25 for the early-level science courses like Living Environment and Earth Science. Chemistry and Physics are areas of focus along with preparing our students for the new exams.

Similar to upper level science courses, high school math courses are areas of focus to improve students' Regents performance.

While Midlakes is at or above the State Average on 9 out of 10 Regents, the school wants to continue to see high levels of achievement and lead the area in graduation rate.

Going forward, teachers have already been working on developing and implementing quarterly benchmarks that align with end-of-the-course assessments to check in on student learning and respond in their teaching to address what students need.

"We are in the middle of a new process, and we have seen unexpected, early gains. It's encouraging," said Hamelinck.

"It's a credit to the work of the staff, and the administration teams." ■



YOU CAN...

CUSTOMIZE YOUR PARENT SQUARE APP

Users can customize their ParentSquare app to schedule when updates are pushed to their phone, email or dashboard.

No parent wants to miss important messages from teachers, administration, or clubs. However, as ParentSquare becomes more a more common tool, adults can find a multitude of push notifications intrusive.

By going into your settings, and changing your preferences to a 'digest,' you can select an e-mail to direct all communications, and you can schedule the time you want the digest to arrive.

Customizing these settings will not override emergency alerts or special notices.

This means that emergency closings or items the district needs to communicate with caregivers can still make it through.

Those needing help with ParentSquare preferences, or with more questions, reach out to the District Office at 315.538.6400. ■

A NEW ERA IN GRADE REPORTING

This year, Midlakes Secondary School moved to a digital report card system.

The first quarter reports were the maiden voyage of ParentSquare distributions.

Initial reports from Midlakes High School suggest smooth sailing.

"It was super easy, Laurie Schmitt and Dr. Lydia Schadler did it all. Distribution was a breeze," said Dan McAlpin, principal at the Secondary School.

ParentSquare continues to be a primary communication point district-wide, so moving toward an online-based rating and reporting system was a natural progression.

"It's our main tool for mass parent communication, and we saw it as an immense time saver," said McAlpin. "It's quick and easy outreach to families for all things related to school news and updates.

"Parents were appreciative of the change. We were able to navigate a few issues, but

really, we saw a very simple and straightforward process."

ParentSquare is used as frequently, if not more, at the Elementary school. ParentSquare will be used for report cards to a degree, but will not be the lone delivery method there.

Elementary reporting includes additional updates and communications, such as progress gains from service-providers and interventionist. Those documents each need to accompany the report card home.

ParentSquare was the primary means of booking the fall and winter parent-teacher conferences, which was successful.

"The MES parents commented that they like to have a paper copy of the report cards," said Moyer. "They are able to bring the report card with them to ask specific questions. We intend to continue to send paper copies for the rest of this year.

"We may continue sending paper copies next year, this will be discussed."

Ultimately, the world is becoming increasingly digital. So, change is moving across both buildings. So far, the initial steps have been a success.

The challenge is adapting and leveraging the technology so it works for users across the spectrum, from district to guardians.

That said, Moyer suggested it's typically best to walk before running.

"Like all new processes," summarized Moyer, "I like to take it slow and grow along with the staff and community."

The current grading period for the Elementary Building ends February 28. The second quarter at the Secondary School ended January 31. ■

 Have questions about ParentSquare or grading reports that were backpacked home? Reach out to Midlakes Secondary Schools at 315.548.6300 or Midlakes Elementary at 315.548.6900.

If you are **SICK, Stay HOME**

Cases of pneumonia, strep throat, fevers, influenza and stomach bugs have been trending in our schools

STAY HOME IF...

- A child wakes up ill with a fever
- Is ill during the night with vomiting
- Is coughing to the point of vomiting

Students can return after they are fever-free *without medication* for 24-hours

STOP THE SPREAD BY

- Washing hands frequently with soap
- Covering your coughs or sneezes
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth
- Disinfecting surfaces

If your child will be absent from school, please call the Elementary Health Office at (315) 548-6720 or the Middle/High School Health Office at (315) 548-6320

FFA STUDENTS FUEL THEIR SPARK

Midlakes FFA members attended the NYS Ignite Conference hosted by Penn Yan Agriculture and FFA at Penn Yan Academy.

Middle school FFA members attended a workshop called 'Spark,' which focused on connecting FFA activities with interests and talents.

The intention of the workshop was to help jumpstart a student's leadership journey, encouraging them to lean on their FFA contacts and peers and early-level networking.

The goal is to not only explore interests, but to understand themselves, and cultivate relationships and habits that lay the groundwork for success.

Four high school students attended the 'Fuel' workshop.

In this session, the high schoolers were exposed to the concept of self-leadership.

The discussions revolved around being driven, and how communities need individuals who are



propelled and motivated by their own values and real experiences.

Leaning on these skills and motivational factors can help propel high school goals and career plans forward.

The FFA at Midlakes shares space in the Ag Suite at the High School, where several courses are offered. Small Animal Science and Agricultural Exploration are

two of the courses offered at the High School, along with Production Animal Science, Plant Science and Floraculture and Intro to Ag (Middle School offering).

Small Animal Science and Agricultural Exploration focus on the fundamentals of small animal care, such as health and feeding.

The classes took a joint trip to CountryMax in December. The trip focused on the origins of pocket pets. The class followed up on where the adoptable pets come from, how employees care for them, and what sells the best. The trip allowed students to get up-close with reptiles and birds, but also explored the retail side of the pet industry.

FFA members and the Career Development students also visited ARC Flame Center. The class was given an overview of their program, a tour of their facilities, and an opportunity to try MIG welding. ■

Upcoming FFA events:

- FFA Districts, February 1
- FFA Week, February 15-22.
- NY Farm Show, February 27-28 and March 1
- State Convention, March 15
- Ag Week, March 24-28



HOW YOU CAN HELP!

Businesses and community members interested in connecting with Midlakes FFA should contact the secondary school's main office to reach Marina Bartolotta-O'Brien, Jessica Spence, or Ethan Sleeman.

ENROLLMENT

REGISTRATION OPEN FOR FALL 2025-26

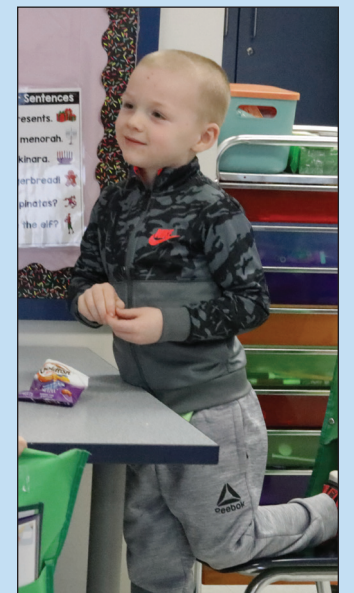
Families residing in the Phelps-Clifton Springs Central School District may begin the 2025-2026 registration process for incoming kindergartners by completing an online form at Midlakes.org/StudentEnrollment to receive important updates and information on enrollment, screening, and more.

Children turning 5 years old by December 1, 2025, are eligible for kindergarten in the fall of 2025. All incoming kindergartners must register with the District.

Families can complete the registration process in-person from 7:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m., April 8 and 9; and 7:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., April 10. Families may use Door 22 at Midlakes Elementary School.

Screenings will be later in the school year with placements announced a few weeks before school starts in September.

For more information, contact Kim Maher at kmaher@midlakes.org or (315) 548-6900. Families interested in the Universal Pre-Kindergarten offered in partnership with Our Children's Place can find more information at Midlakes.org/StudentEnrollment. ■





For the love of learning: Dogs Make Hearts Happy

Roughly three months into the school year, two new additions to the Phelps-Clifton Springs School District have become happily acclimated to the classroom setting.

Toby, a five-year old Golden Doodle, and Willis, a two-year old silver Labrador, are bringing smiles to students as the District's therapy dogs. Toby spends most of his days in the Elementary Building, while Willis is assigned to the Secondary School.

Therapy dogs provide comfort, affection and help relieve stress. Toby and Willis were both trained by RocDog, which has placed therapy dogs in local hospitals, schools, nursing homes, hospices and elsewhere.

"I believe in it," said Bellomo. "We had a little girl who was so sad one day, but when we came into the library, she told [Librarian] Ms. Bradley, 'My heart is happy now that Toby is here.'"

Toby lives with Julie Bellomo, an elementary teacher who retired after 31 years with Midlakes in June. Willis lives with Ben and Sara Clement, teachers at Midlakes High.

Bellomo brings Toby to school about once a week, typically during visits to the elementary school library. Willis visits nearly as often with most of his time spent around

holiday breaks and before standardized tests.

"(Willis) is here during the stressful times for kids. We know those times, and can plan ahead," said Clement. "Kids like him."

Bellomo has long wanted a therapy dog in the elementary school to help melt away the stress bottled up in students.

"This school, it's home to me," Bellomo said. "It's the reason I wanted to do this. The opportunity presented itself last school year when the school board finalized a ther-



apy dog policy."

Toby completed two six-week classes to earn his Intermediate and advanced Canine Good Citizen certificates on top of another eight weeks of therapy training.

"I had never heard about RocDog before training class," Bellomo said. "My trainer had RocDog visit so we could learn about the organization. The owners of Roc Dog offered to give the dogs in class the Therapy Dog test that evening and Toby was one of three dogs that earned their certification that evening."

Willis is also a certified RocDog, enrolling in the program at the age of 10 months. The Clements chose RocDog because the organization offered direct contact with the trainer, and trainers were local. To keep their certification, the dogs must make additional community visits. Toby has visited the State University of New York at Brockport, and the Monroe County 911 Communications & Radio Center. He's also visited Penfield High School, and Quail Summitt Assisted Living Facility. Willis regularly visits a local Veteran and former Military Outreach Farmers Market in the community.

RocDog not only trains but also rescues dogs by working to identify those with



the right temperament to become therapy pet. Since 2021, RocDog has worked with approximately 260 therapy dog teams in 150 locations around Western New York. Teams make more than 300 visits a month.

"As the dogs and students become more comfortable at Midlakes, we are looking for additional opportunities to integrate their support for our students," added Sarah Clement.

Clement ventured down the path of having a therapy dog because of the obedience training Willis was going through. Ben, and Sarah have young children at home. Introducing a puppy in a safe atmosphere for their children and the dog was paramount. From there, the Clements became certified through RocDog at their Mary Cariola Center location.

Commands such as 'place' and 'release' are common to hear in the wood shop where Willis spends most of his day at Midlakes High School. 'Place' directs him on a bed next to Mr. Clement's desk. 'Release' is his cue to drop a Midlakes Blue ball – the students have dubbed it Willis' 'emotional support tennis ball.'

"He's got one all the time," Ben Clement said.

Other training elements include sit and stay, but the trick is working up to a sit and stay in a public setting on a loose leash.

Toby knows a litany of instructions, including 'settle,' and Bellomo can read his body language – and gently reminds Toby to settle when in a louder or busier space. She can tell he is calm when he rolls onto his hip. Popular around the building, Toby always stops to say hello to first graders in Shawna Cody's room, and PSO Secretary Kim Maher.

"And Ryan, he has not missed Toby a day that he has been here," Bellomo said, explaining sixth-grader Ryan Smith knows when Toby is in the building.

"He's TOBY! He's fluffy, he makes me happy," Smith said, explaining he also has a dog named Rusty.

Clement explained Willis – like any therapy dog – doesn't have a set job, as much he goes where he is needed. Looking ahead, Willis is going to be working overtime during Mid-term and Regents Week.

"If you're having a bad day, Willis makes it



better," said sophomore Kenny Baker.

"Kids love him, but it's a little different than the Elementary school," Clement explained.

Anyone is free to approach a therapy dog, sharing 'hello' with a couple pets and – in Willis' case, a toss of the tennis ball. This is in comparison to a service dog, which has a set job and distracting the dog with play behavior is discouraged.

"Every time I am in here, you can see the change," Bellomo said. "Upset kids, they pet Toby or hug Toby, and they calm down." ■



DOUBLE THE FUN

An incredible season came to a close in championship form for the Midlakes boys volleyball team.

For the second straight season, the Screaming Eagles finished atop Section V as Class B2 Champions, defeating the School of the Arts Silverhawks in four sets. The game was contested at Finger Lakes Community College.

The team graduated six seniors after their 2023 title effort, and went into this fall's post season as a second-seed threat.

Midlakes won convincing sets to open the finals, moving to a 2-0 lead in the race to three. Scores of 25-12 and 25-18 set the stage for a decisive third set. The Silverhawks rallied, delivering a 25-15 victory of their own, forcing a fourth set.

There, the Silverhawks flirted with pushing the set to extra points, but the Screaming Eagles closed out the day with a 25-22 win.

"It's nice to come back with a young group and be able come back out on top," Midlakes head coach Kyle Salisbury said about clinching back-to-back sectional titles. "It was a challenging match in the finals, School of the Arts stepped up and it was awesome."

Over the course of the tournament, Midlakes dropped only one set - the third in the finals.

The championship is also a hallmark for Salisbury, who has now coached Midlakes teams to Section V Championships on 12 occasions since taking the over the head coach job in 1997. He led the girls program to titles in 2014 and '12, and won championships with the boys the last two seasons with prior title runs in 2019, '16, '15, '11, '10, '07, '06 and '00. ■

CONGRATULATIONS AND THANK YOU COACH!



Head Coach Dave Whitcomb ranks first all-time in Section V history for career football wins.



GROUNDING THROUGH NEW HEIGHTS

As Midlakes indoor track and field season draws to a close, Aiden Bryant (Class of '26) is continuing to author new chapters as a generational talent for the Screaming Eagles.

However, as the face of the sport, Bryant remains humble and appreciative.

"I try to stay very, very grounded. I like to stay in myself. I want to stay humble," Bryant said.

The junior picked up two significant wins as he paves the way for his athletics career after Midlakes.

He won the Jack Reed Invitational, taking both the long and triple jumps. He added a sweep in the Virginia Showcase, in Virginia Beach, Va.

"It was nice to see those National contenders," Bryant said. "I knew that one jump was a big one. The official said 'you're going to want to see this.'"

The jump was 24-feet, 10-inches. He backed that up a week later in Virginia, winning with a 24-5.75.

"Right next to 24-11," Bryant said, beaming. Last year, he jumped a 24-9. "The sky is the limit."

Bryant kept his plans close to the vest, not because he is protective, but instead because it's



his nature.

"He has not changed," said coach Aidan Cort. "A lot of coaches from pretty big institutions said you can tell he is from a small town. He carries himself different. He still holds open doors, he says please and thank you."

"I don't think we are done with this."

Last year, Bryant not only smashed Midlakes' indoor record in the long jump but also set a Wayne-Finger Lakes league mark

during the meet.

Coach Cort called Bryant "one of the best athletes to ever" attend Midlakes, a notable comparison with Midlakes graduates competing at Division I programs such as the University of Iowa, University at Buffalo, and St. Bonaventure University.

"I think I can jump further than I am right now," Bryant said.

"As long as I trust Coach Cort, and do what I am told, I think it will be even better than it is today."

ACADEMIC ATHLETES

FALL SCHOLAR ATHLETES & TEAMS

Seven athletic teams from Midlakes have been recognized by the New York State Public High School Athletic Association for outstanding achievements in the classroom during the 2024 fall sports season.

A team needs at least 75% of its roster to earn an overall GPA of at least 90 to be recognized.

GIRLS

VOLLEYBALL: 95.85

GIRLS CROSS

COUNTRY: 95.52

FALL CHEER: 94.68

GIRLS SOCCER: 93.29

GIRLS TENNIS: 92.04

GIRLS

SWIMMING: 91.41

BOYS

VOLLEYBALL: 90.82



Thea Lewis (Class of '25) was recognized with the Roger Meadway Award. Named for the longtime Waterloo tennis coach, the honor is presented to a player whose actions and words exemplify character, sportsmanship and teamwork. **Kayden DeMarco** (Class of '27) was celebrated as the Finger Lakes League Golfer of the Year. Athletic Director John Lombardi presented the awards at the December Board of Education meeting. ■

WRESTLING

with history

This has been a history-making winter for the Midlakes Girls Varsity Wrestling.

To start, the program won their first dual meet, defeating Alexander, 37-22.

A week later, the team celebrated an unofficial overall victory in the League Championship Tournament at Waterloo. The team was awarded championship apparel, but the girls were not recognized as full-fledged champions since there were so few all-female programs.

This comes on the heels of a very successful Frosty Freestyle Festival tournament, where Midlakes welcomed 23 all-female wrestling programs from Sections III, IV, V and VI.

On the horizon remains the Sectional Tournament - the first time the girls will have a recognized Section V Champion, complete with a Sectional Block.

At leagues, several grapplers scored recognized, individual championships in their weight class. Abby Hargarther, Lizzy Boughton, Clara Bond, and Miley Smith each brought home individual honors.

"From here, we keep progressing, we keep getting bigger and better. We put in the work on the mat and see the outcomes," said junior Clara Bond.

Mya Walker, Leah Peck and Julionna Carrasquel earned runner-up showings. Kenzie Turner, Suelyan Serrano Rosa, Adrianna Mendez, and Saria Roy took third in their class while Olivia Thorpe posted a fourth.

Hargarther took her weight class at the recent Revolution Tournament in Canandaigua, seen as a tune-up for the final push to Sectionals and the State Tournament.

The State Tournament this year is a true showdown of athletes across the Empire State. Years



past, while there was a State Championship, it was contested as an invitational.

The milestone-filled season has included many firsts, and countless memorable moments.

In January, Midlakes honored Seniors Leah Peck and Grace Bellis. The duo were celebrated before the home dual meet win.

Bellis is a Manchester-Shortsville senior who wrestles as Midlakes. The team would ultimately win Senior Night / Staff Appreciation night.

"This was incredible, winning our first match," said Peck. "I am fortunate to be among the pioneers of this program, and this win... Definitely incredible."

Peck has been wrestling six years and remembered a time when there were only two or three female student-athletes, and they were wrestling on the boys team.

"Now, we have 13 on the team. It's amazing to see them all working on the mat, in the practice room... This is where the

dedication comes in and it pays off.

"I am proud of all of them."

GARCIA WINS 170lb CHAMPIONSHIP AT LEAGUES

Sophomore Jorge Garcia won the 170-lb weight class championship at the Wayne-Finger

Lakes League Championships Tournament.

Other top performers included Danny Weegar, Spencer Fox and Mason Hargrove. Each finished fifth in their respective weight classes.

Nameh Wassouf and Landen Manley had solid days, delivering sixth-place finishes. ■



MALO/NHS UNITED WAY KICKOFF MARCH 6



The Phelps-Clifton Springs Central School District is thrilled to announce its annual United Way Fundraiser Kickoff on March 6. This year's event features a staff volleyball tournament and the eagerly awaited Midlakes Madness basketball game, open to the public.

Join us for the third edition of Midlakes Madness, our exciting student-and-staff basketball showdown. Doors will open at 5:30 p.m., with the game starting at 6:00 p.m. in the High School Gym.

Students and staff will be drafted by student head coaches to compete in four 10-minute quarters. Staff will battle it out for the first five minutes, followed by student shifts for the remainder of each quarter.

This event promises not only fun and excitement but also supports our community and provides scholarships for the Midlakes Athletic Leadership Organization (MALO) and National Honor Society (NHS).

Last year, in total the United Way Campaign raised an impressive \$3,900, and this year, we aim to surpass that goal!

The Midlakes Parent Teacher Organization will run a concession stand, and attendees can look forward to student

recognitions at halftime and a shooting game for elementary students. Admission is just \$3 for adults and \$2 for students at the door.

Join us on March 6 to cheer for your favorite teams, support a worthy cause, and enjoy a fantastic evening together! Donations to United Way are also greatly appreciated. ■



ROLLIN' RECORDS

The Midlakes Girls Varsity Bowling team delivered two new school records in a recent head-to-head match with Newark.

The Screaming Eagle keglers set a new high mark for the school in single-game pinfall totals and total team pinfall. Bowling at Doug Kent's Rose Bowl in Newark, Midlakes put up a single-game total of 927 pins, spurring a team total of 2,809.

Midlakes took the battle 5-0, and ended January solidly in the Section V Class B Tournament, ranked third behind Newark and Penn Yan. The top eight teams make the post-season championship. Midlakes is carrying an 839 pin average behind top-seeded Newark (911) and the Mustangs (880). Rankings will be finalized February 15.

Both the boys and girls teams are coached by Scott Monagle.

The boys team is positioned to make the post season tournament, sitting fourth overall with a team average 866 pins. Penn Yan (981) holds the top seed over Waterloo (957) and Newark (953).

Team seniors include Nate Miller, Jeremy Myhill, Chris Dawley, Amanda Durkee and Team Manager Alexa Davies.

Boys Sectionals are scheduled for 9 a.m. Tuesday, February 25 at Roseland Bowl in Canandaigua.

Girls Sectionals are scheduled for 9 am, Thursday, February 27 at Roseland Bowl. ■

Virtual Seminar for Prospective School Board Members

Saturday, March 1, 2025

9:00 am - 11:00 am

REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED TO RECEIVE VIRTUAL MEETING LINK

To Register, go to www.fourcountysba.org click on Prospective School Board Member Seminar on our homepage under Current Events. That will lead you to the registration link.

Or

Send an email with your name, district, and contact information to: 4countysba@edutech.org

(Please register by Wednesday 2/26/25)

School board elections will be held this year on Tuesday, May 20, 2025

Panel Presentation with Question/Answer Session

Topics Include:

Board/Superintendent Relationship
Communicating with the public
Issues addressed by school boards
Legislative/Advocacy
Roles & Responsibilities
Skills needed and more...

Panel Includes:

Veteran School Board Members
New School Board Member
Superintendent
Legislative Committee Members
Legal Representative

 **BOND** SCHOENECK & KING



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THEATRE PRESENTS 'LITTLE MERMAID' MARCH 13-15



The award-winning Midlakes Theatre Experience is excited to announce its spring production, "The Little Mermaid," the story of a young mermaid, Ariel, who dreams of leaving her under-the-sea kingdom to live in the world above.

Set in an enchanted undersea kingdom, headstrong teenage mermaid Ariel (Ellie Dorr) clashes with her father, King Triton (Justin Herman Jr.). Ariel, with her majestic singing voice, wants what she can never have – a life on land.

Directed by Layna Gray and assistant directors Emily Houston and Lindsay Douglass, "The Little Mermaid" falls in love with a human prince and strikes a cursed deal with Ursula the Sea Witch (Kyra Guest) against her father's wishes, in hopes of the prince falling for her in just three days. In exchange for her legs, she loses her voice – and if the prince does not fall in love, Ursula takes Ariel's soul!

Memorable characters include Sebastian the crab (Gavin Ruggles), Flounder the fish (Liesel Dorr) and Scuttle the seagull (Maeve Jankowski). Theatregoers can expect an evening of laughter, drama and timeless "The Little Mermaid" songs along with heartfelt storytelling.

Midlakes Theatre Experience prides itself on fostering talent and producing high-quality performances for the community, and "The Little Mermaid" promises to deliver.

Performances of "The Little Mermaid" are 7:30 p.m., Thursday, March 13 and Friday, March 14; and 1 and 7:30 p.m. on Saturday, March 15 in Midlakes' High School Auditorium.

The cast will also feature Brian Cannan, Kaylaynn Judson, Sonny Smith, Allison DeRuyter, Hayden Bump, Alivia DeJohn, Sophia Schutt, Lexie Shuiling, Blake Jensen, Yuki Haight and Ella Weykman. Ensemble players include Alexandria Bultron, Brooke Carnright, Cece Clemons, Lee Henderson, Hayden Lawson, Krista Nealey, Claudia Poliso, Aubrey Rodriguez and Natyiah Velazquez.

Christine Cole is the vocal director. Talia Holtzman is the choreographer. Tickets are available at Main Office of Midlakes High School. Cost is \$10 for general admission, \$8 for students and senior citizens.

For more information, contact the High School Main Office at (315) 548-6300. ■

STUDENTS QUALIFY FOR ALL-COUNTY

Midlakes High School served as host of the Finger Lakes Music Educators Association All-County Festival.

As a whole, the Phelps-Clifton Springs Central School District sent a total of 22 honored performers to All-County this year.

Representing Midlakes High School Band: Alivia Miller, Amelia Santy, Sydney Rodriguez, Haven Benz, Aaron Gonzalez, Duke Van Savage, Cheria Caraballo, Brian Cannan, Matt Cannan, Kyle Bell, Ian Gonzalez, Ali Gallagher, Carter Gruschow and Christopher Finewood.

Representing the Midlakes Middle School Chorus: Sophia DelCastillo, Liesel Door, Michael Kent, Hayden Lawson, Logan McGuire, Aubrey Rodriguez, Sophia Schutt and Lily Tidd.

Each school in the Finger Lakes Music Educators Association is asked to take a turn hosting the annual All-County Celebration.

On Friday, January 24, the district welcomed the first wave of rehearsals before the final concerts, scheduled for Saturday, January 25.

In all, 14 member districts visited Midlakes over the two day festival.

That included more than 350 additional performers. The classrooms around the Library were offered as 'homerooms' for the various visiting schools, and performances were held in the High School library, auditorium, Music Suite spaces, the small Middle School gymnasium and former Middle School library.

Friday included practices and rehearsals.

Additional rehearsals followed, with final concerts and performances rounding out the day.

On the Elementary Side, a total of 18 performers were recognized for their talents.

From the Elementary Band: Ellen Lincoln, Elijah Payne, Shelby Cummings, Emma Ross, Sammy Bishop and James Stratton.

From the Elementary Chorus: Evelyn Wilson, Layla Shireman, Danika Curran, Hartley Frost, Delighla Desbrough, Olivia VanDamme, Sunny Lanterman, Hailey Kimber, Catherine Worden, Amelia Young, Aubrey Lincoln and Shea VanDamme.

Midlakes Elementary falls in the FLEMA Elementary West Division, which was hosted by Bloomfield Central School. ■



CABARET



The winter performance staple 'Cabaret Night' includes transforming the Middle School Cafeteria into a jazz lounge. Individual and group performances filled the evening, with the Middle School and High School Jazz Bands taking the stage to play four selections each. Another 14 selections were performed by our Secondary School students. Students look forward to the night as they get to choose their piece, creating a connection and investment. The night also offers the students a chance to try different styles or parts that may not fit more traditional concert settings. The event was again a sellout. ■

BOARD OF EDUCATION

CANDIDATE PACKETS AVAILABLE

Board of Education nominee packets are now available at the Phelps-Clifton Springs Central School District Office.

Two of the seven Board of Education seats will be vacated on June 30, 2025. Voters will elect two Board members to three-year terms at the School Election May 20, 2025.

Serving is voluntary. It requires flexibility in daily, evening and summer schedules. It can be rewarding and can help set the vision for education in the local community. ■

Important Dates:

April 21: Nominating petitions are due, and first campaign expenditure reports are due.

May 15: Second campaign expenditure report is due

May 20: Election Date

June 9: Third and final expenditure report is due.

SENIOR PRAISES FLTCC

White shares insight, success of Diesel Tech Program

At the February Board of Education meeting, senior Dylan White (Class of '25, pictured) discussed his training at Finger Lakes Technical and Career Center (FLTCC) in Flint. He is studying Diesel Tech and Repair. He began studying at FLTCC as a sophomore.

Focusing on college and career readiness, the program provides training needed for entry-level employment in the agricultural, industrial and commercial vehicle industries.

Students learn to operate, service and maintain all types of gasoline and diesel engines and powertrains; hydraulic, electrical, and fuel systems; welding, machining, troubleshooting, and repair of vehicles and ag machinery.

White knew he wanted to attend the Diesel Tech and Repair



program after a 10th grade visit to FLTCC.

Discussing the scope of the program, White said, "There is ample opportunity to learn various equipment and work on machines."

He has been accepted to Alfred State College of Technology for enrollment in the fall, if he chooses.

White's discussion was part of a larger dialogue with BOCES

as a whole, with Lynne Rutnik, Wayne-Finger Lakes BOCES District Superintendent.

The Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) was established in 1948.

The Wayne-Finger Lakes BOCES program has two career education centers, five specialized education centers and 26 component districts. ■

DUMP TRUCK A VERSATILE ADDITION

The Phelps-Clifton Springs Central School District added two new vehicles to the fleet as we turned the calendar.

The most exciting addition is a Chevrolet Silverado 3500HD dump truck. The permanent-dump truck can also carry a salt spreader with a four cubic-yard hopper along with a Fisher XV2 multi-angle V-plow.

The truck features a 401-HP 6.6L/400 CID gasoline engine boasting 464 lb.-ft of torque.

The district has operated without a dedicated dump truck for about four years. Instead, a large dump trailer has been used. While the trailer has its place and purpose, the trailer is not always the most practical option. The dump truck is a more maneuverable choice, more readily fitting into tighter spaces.

The dump bed can carry a load of mulch or material for the ball fields in the spring or be loaded up with classroom furnishings to easily move desks between buildings.

To start 2025, a string of days laden with cold temperatures, stiff winds and nuisance snow accumulations welcomed the staff and students back to the campus. The new 3500HD was working early and often, helping keep campus driveways safe and clear during arrival, dismissal, parent drop-off and parent pick-up.

The Transportation Department also took delivery of a new Chevrolet Suburban. The Suburban can seat eight, with a middle-row bench and a 5.3L, 355-hp gasoline engine.

Bus Drivers play a crucial role in the school operations.



Our drivers are responsible for the safe transport of our students, and help bring our athletic and performing arts teams to other schools in the greater Rochester and Finger Lakes regions.

These purchases were previously authorized by a proposition on the May 2024 budget vote, which passed with 81-percent approval.

The 3500HD was paid for out of the Facilities Equipment Budget. The Suburban was purchased through the General Transportation fund. Overall, 90-percent of the costs of the trucks will be reimbursed to the district. ■

LOOKING AHEAD

SPRING SWIM LESSON ON HOLD FOR POOL REPAIRS

Last April, The Board of Education declared a local emergency to address failing equipment and deteriorating conditions in the Midlakes Aquatics Center.

The emergency declaration authorizes the spending of up to \$2.5m to upgrade the 20-year-old pool, and the state will reimburse 87.7-percent of the cost to the district over the next 15 years, leaving the district to fund \$307,500 of the project.

Looking ahead, the pool will be closed for the second round of repairs in February. This closure will extend to the end of the 2024-25 school year. Resurfacing efforts will begin during Winter Recess (Feb. 17-21).

The pool closed February 8 and draining efforts had begun February 10.

During the resurfacing, a new filtration system will be installed; the current system has reached the end of its serviceable life. There will be no spring swimming session in 2025 due to the more in-depth renovation efforts. Open swims are cancelled for until the upgrades are completed.

To learn more about our Aquatic Center, visit www.midlakes.org/aquaticcenter. ■



MUSIC IN SCHOOLS MONTH INCLUDES PERFORMANCES

Music in our schools month is coming in March.

Our high school band will be taking a trip to Boston, Mass. March 21-23.

Secondary school performers will host a spring concert in the Midlakes High School Auditorium as well, scheduled for 7 pm March 27. The Middle School band and both the High School band and High School chorus will be on stage.

NYSSMA Solofest is scheduled for April 4-5 at Victor High School.

Midlakes Middle School and Midlakes High School will host an in-house solo festival April 8-10.

Our Elementary performers will take their turn with solo performances as the Elementary Music Department hosts an in-house festival, scheduled for April 26. ■

THIS MONTH & NEXT

FEB.

VALENTINE'S DAY/PS I LOVE YOU DAY
Feb. 14

FAA WEEK
Feb. 15-22

NATIONAL SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER APPRECIATION DAY
Feb. 15

FEBRUARY RECESS
Feb. 17-22 (No School)

PUBLIC SCHOOLS WEEK
Feb. 24-28

END OF TRIMESTER (K-6)
Feb. 28

MAR.

ROLLER SKATING PARTY
Mar. 3: Grades UPK-2
Mar. 4: Grades 3-4
Mar. 5: Grades 5-6

DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME BEGINS
Mar. 9

PARENT TEACHER CONFERENCE
Elementary dismissal at 11:30
Half-days, Mar. 11-12-13

SPRING MUSICAL: THE LITTLE MERMAID
7:30 pm, March 13-14
1 pm & 7:30 pm, March 15

BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
6:30 p.m., March 17

SPRING JV & VARSITY SPORTS BEGIN
Mar. 17

HS BAND TRIP TO BOSTON
Mar. 21-23

NATIONAL AG WEEK
Mar. 21-27

SECONDARY SCHOOL CONCERT
HS Auditorium; 7 p.m., Mar. 27

SPRING MOD SPORTS BEGIN
Mar. 31

Events subject to change. Find school calendars, sports schedules and more under the "Community" tab at Midlakes.org.

CAREER CORNER



JOIN OUR TEAM!

The Phelps-Clifton Springs CSD is a positive and rewarding place to work. School employees enjoy many benefits, including competitive pay, paid holidays and training, sick and vacation time, flexible hours for some positions, health and retirement benefits, leadership and mentorship opportunities, support from a great team, and much more. For a list of openings and the District job board, visit www.midlakes.org/jobs.

OPENINGS

- **BUS DRIVERS** are needed with multiple openings. Competitive salary and paid training. There are driver, trainee and substitute driver positions open.

- **SPEECH PATHOLOGIST / THERAPIST** probationary listings, with two openings.

- **TEACHER AIDE** probationary listings, with two openings.

- **BUS DISPATCHER** full-time position.

STAFF UPDATES

- **HEATHER KERR** was granted tenure as a multi-age self-contained teacher. Her tenure appointment was at the December Board of Education meeting. Mrs. Kerr has been in the district for ... and teaches the fifth and sixth grade self-contained class at the Elementary School.

- **CHRIS MARQUART** was elevated to the District's Public Relations Officer position. He has been with Midlakes for over ten years, having worked as a 1:1 Aide, and a tenured Teaching Assistant. He has a background in communications, print journalism and video production.

- **CONNOR WALTERS** has been elevated to a Teaching Assistant in the Elementary Reset Room. ■

CHILLERS, REFRIGERATORS INSTALLED AT ELEMENTARY

While teachers and parents conferred about the opening trimester at Midlakes Elementary, plans for additional success were being made elsewhere in the building.

Pride Refrigeration installed four new drop-in chillers, and new refrigeration units during the half-days, kicking off a busy month for MES.

The Continental refrigerators were rolled into campus Tuesday and already in use Wednesday morning. A new ice cream freezer was also installed.

Four drop-in chillers, used to keep fresh fruit, fruit cups, juice and grab-and-go meals at a safe serving temperature, were installed in both sides of the cafeteria lines.

Studies have supported how learning directly connects with full bellies at school. Being hungry can disrupt cognitive function, and will impair focus, concentration and the ability to retain information.

In 2023-24, the Phelps-Clifton Springs Central School District Food Service Department prepared 308,180 meals, an increase of 18-percent over the same period from a year earlier.



Meals continue to be provided free at Midlakes under the Community Eligibility Provision. Students are allowed a free meal at breakfast and lunch. Students are charged for additional a la carte menu items and additional full meals.

The upgrades were paid for from a Cafeteria reserve fund. To learn more about the food service program and to view menus, visit Midlakes.org/Foodservice. ■

STILL TO COME

100 YEARS OF SPELLING EXCELLENCE

Midlakes Schools are celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Scripps National Spelling Bee.

The annual Spelling Bee competition features 34 students, grades 3-8.

The event helps strengthen student's knowledge of the English language while working on their listening and speaking skills and other techniques to correctly spell more difficult words throughout the competition.

Scripps National Spelling Bee started with nine spellers in the inaugural competition. Now, millions of students compete on the local and regional levels with the hopes of making to the state finals and then, the National competition in .

The Scripps National Spelling Bee is sponsored by Wayne-Finger Lakes BOCES, which will host a regional competition on its Newark campus in March with winners from area schools.

Delayed due to snow, the Spelling Bee was contested at Midlakes High School Auditorium after our print deadline. Look for additional coverage at Midlakes.org and make sure to follow our social media feeds.

PHELPS-CLIFTON SPRINGS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Send tips and suggestions to: Newsletter, 1490 State Route 488, Clifton Springs, NY 14432

NYSRA
New York School Public Relations Association
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