



MIDLAKES.ORG

# MIDLAKES JOURNAL

PHELPS-CLIFTON SPRINGS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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## FIND MORE AT MIDLAKES.ORG



Midlakes celebrated Music in Our Schools month with a riveting concert last month. Read more on page 7.



A winter to remember: 10 athletes qualified for the NYSPHAA State Tournaments in their respective sport. More coverage on page 10-11.

TUESDAY,  
May 20

# Annual VOTE

NOON - 9 P.M.

Old Middle School Library

**D**uring its April 23 meeting, the Board of Education adopted an approximately \$47.4 million budget for the 2025-2026 school year that goes to a vote on Tuesday, May 20.

The proposal calls for a tax levy increase of approximately 2.00%, which is below the District's tax cap limit of 5.15%, set by the state.

This year, voters will be asked to elect two candidates to the Board of Education, approve the purchase of four 70-passenger diesel school buses, one 30-passenger diesel school bus, and one sport utility vehicle using funds from the Bus Purchase Reserve and the Transportation Capital Reserve, and approve a separate proposition to fund the community libraries. The District hosts the vote for the libraries, but the funding does not impact school property taxes.

Additional details on the annual vote can also be found on the District's website at [Midlakes.org/AnnualVote](https://Midlakes.org/AnnualVote).

## 2.00%

Proposed 2025-2026  
tax levy increase

### BUDGET HEARING

6 p.m., Monday,  
May 12, Middle  
School Cafeteria



Scan the code with your  
device for budget materials  
and Board of Education  
meeting videos.

## AWARD WINNERS



### SUPERINTENDENT AWARD RECIPIENT

Senior Jonah Spangenberg was among 25 students from the Wayne-Finger Lakes region honored in March with a Superintendent Award during a celebration at Wayne-Finger Lakes BOCES in Newark.

Spangenberg was chosen to receive the award by the Phelps-Clifton Springs Central School District. Recipients must demonstrate leadership, citizenship, and outstanding scholarship by achieving a GPA of 80 or higher by the end of their junior year. W-FL BOCES District Superintendent Lynne Rutnik presented Spangenberg with the award, which makes the Midlakes student eligible for various scholarships. ■



### LEADERSHIP AWARD RECIPIENT

Junior Makenzie Davis was among 24 high school juniors from four counties recognized in March with a Youth Leadership Recognition Award for demonstrating exceptional leadership and achievement in academics, music, arts, and community service.

Davis is an talented singer, and participates in multiple extra-curricular activities - including Student Council. School counselor Krystina Brooks nominated Davis for the award, which was presented by state Senator Pam Helming. ■

## 2025-2026 SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET

# SUSTAINING OUR STUDENT SUCCESS

Each year we invest considerable time with the Board of Education to craft our annual budget. Together, we realign priorities for the upcoming school year to address student and program needs, cultivate a safe and welcoming campus environment for all, and deliver high-quality learning experiences to every student all while remaining mindful of our responsibilities to local property taxpayers.

Our school district continues to grapple with challenging inflationary trends, substantial hikes in health care costs, utility and retirement costs, and the unpredictability of Foundation Aid from the state. These factors all play a key role in mitigating the local tax burden on our property owners.

Over the last several months, we made significant progress to ensure we are presenting a responsible spending plan that bolsters academics, supports social emotional learning, sustains extra-curricular activities and maintains our facilities while preserving a staffing model that meets the needs of our students and community. Through retirements and analysis of overall student enrollment and student needs in special education, we have been able to absorb four teaching positions in key areas without impacting the overall quality of our educational program. Absorbing these po-

sitions proactively places the district in a stronger financial position this year and into the future with uncertainty in Foundation Aid and/or a slowing economy potentially causing larger than expected budgetary gaps.



We intend to achieve our goals with a spending plan that continues our trend of staying below the tax cap threshold of the district and current inflationary figures while prudently managing the use of reserve funds to support the budget.

This year, voters will be presented with two additional ballot propositions. First, to continue the scheduled replacement of older buses and second, to allocate funding to our community libraries (a measure that is separate from the school budget).

Building a budget involves input from many different stakeholders. We welcome everyone to learn more about our Annual Vote taking place on May 20 in the old Middle School Library. Those interested in sharing their thoughts may attend our annual budget hearing at 6 p.m. on Monday May 12 in the Board of Education Room (room 103) at Middle School Cafeteria. ■

— Nick Ganster, Superintendent

## ITEMS ON THE BALLOT

### DISTRICT BUDGET

To approve the proposed 2025-2026 school budget and authorize the requisite portion therefore to be raised by taxation on the taxable property of the District.

### BOARD OF EDUCATION

Elect two members to the Board of Education, to fill seats beginning July 1, 2025 for three-year terms, ending June 30, 2028.

The seats are currently held by Lindsay Marino and Michael Dorr. The Board of Education of the Phelps-Clifton Springs Central

School District is made up of seven volunteers elected to serve three-year terms. Responsibilities include:

- Hiring and evaluating the Superintendent of Schools, who is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the District and administration of Board policies.
- Establishing the direction of the District by developing a shared vision and goals.
- Setting policy and adopting a budget for voter approval.

Community members may learn more on the District's website at [Midlakes.org](http://Midlakes.org) under the Board of Education tab.

### BUS PURCHASE

Authorize the Board of Education to purchase five diesel school buses and one utility vehicle. The diesel bus purchases include four 70-passenger, and a 30-passenger model, including related equipment, not to exceed \$888,237.

### COMMUNITY LIBRARIES

A separate proposition for the approval of \$194,000 annually to be contributed to support the Clifton Springs Library in the amount of \$97,000, and to the Phelps Community Memorial Library in the amount of \$97,000. ■



## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Included are responses to some commonly asked questions regarding the Annual Vote.

For additional responses, visit [Midlakes.org/AnnualVote](https://Midlakes.org/AnnualVote).

### What are some of the highlights of this year's budget?

On January 21, 2025, the Governor released the Executive Budget proposal and state aid runs for the fiscal year 2025-26. The Governor proposed a minimum 2% increase of Foundation Aid as well as several changes to the Foundation Aid formula, including two recommendations from the Rockefeller Institute's Aid Study. No changes were proposed to expense-based aid. Phelps-Clifton Springs was one of many districts that is projected to get a 2% increase in Foundation Aid. While this number is less than the increase in the Consumer Price Index (inflation), the District anticipated this and has prepared over the last few years. This year's budget-to-budget increase will be the smallest we have seen since the 2021-22 school year. The District has been carefully working with its departments and buildings to look for efficiencies to close some of the anticipated budget gaps as a result of increased expenditure in several areas of school-district operations.

### What expenditures are increasing the most?

More than 50% of this year's budget increase is due to benefits. The two areas in benefits that are impacted the most are healthcare in the Finger Lakes Area School Health Plan which is expected to increase 14.3% and state contributions for the Employees Retirement System which is increasing just over \$200,000.

### How will the proposed budget affect property owners?

The \$47,386,760 budget proposal calls for a 2.00% increase in the real property tax levy. Based on \$100,000 assessed value and overall assessments and equalization rates from the 2024-25 school year, residents can expect to see an average increase of the following amounts: \$49.40 with no STAR exemption, \$36.08 if they qualify for the STAR exemption, or \$12.22 if they qualify for the enhanced STAR exemption. Keep in mind that the equalization rates and overall assessments across the seven municipalities will not be released for the 2025 calendar year until this summer.

### How is the tax levy limit for the District calculated?

State law mandates that an eight-step formula be used to calculate the District's tax levy limit. This calculation accounts for growth in the local

tax base, the rate of inflation, and provides the District with certain exemptions (capital expenditures, retirement contributions, court orders, and judgments). The District may also carry over the unused portion of the tax levy limit from previous years. However, it can be no greater than 1.5% of the prior year's tax levy limit. The District has \$242,950 in carryover from 2024-25. This coupled with a 1.0172% tax base growth factor and a 2% levy growth factor results in a tax levy limit for the upcoming school year of \$16,659,870 for a 5.15% annual increase. For 2025-26, the District is proposing a school tax levy of \$16,160,997 representing a 2.00% increase over the previous year. The above increases are based on the 2024-25 tax levy of \$15,844,115.

### How are reserve funds being used in the proposed budget?

The District plans to use \$809,787 of its reserves to balance the budget. This amount represents a \$69,787 annual increase from the 2024-25 budget. The District will allocate \$394,787 from the Employees Retirement System Reserve and \$20,000 from the Teachers Retirement System Reserve to offset any contributions to the retirement systems. In order to offset certain contractual obligations for retirees in the coming school year, \$95,000 will be used from the Employee Benefits Accrued Liability Reserve. The District will also use \$300,000 from its Debt Service Fund to offset the local share of capital debt payments from previous capital projects.

### What kind of buses is the District looking to purchase?

To ensure the safety of students and staff the District is working towards a 5-year rotation of school buses as it phases out aging models. In order to achieve this cycle, the District is proposing to spend up to \$888,237 out of its 2019 Bus Purchase Reserve Fund and 2024 Transportation Capital Reserve Fund to purchase five diesel buses and one utility vehicle. These buses are as follows: four 70-passenger and one 30-passenger and one sport utility vehicle.

The state provides 90% aid reimbursement over five years for the purchase of buses resulting in a net cost to the District of \$88,824. The 2019 Bus Purchase Reserve Fund is nearing depletion and contingent on a favorable vote in May, will be no longer in use after this year. ■

## HIGHLIGHTS



## ANNUAL VOTE SUMMARY

**BUDGET:** \$47,386,760

**TAX LEVY INCREASE:**

2.00% from 2024-25

**STATE AID:** \$29,157,895

(\$414,353 more than 2024-2025)

**RESERVE SPENDING:** \$808,237

(\$69,787 more than 2024-2025)

**BUDGET HEARING:** A budget hearing will be held in the Midlakes Middle School Cafeteria at 6 p.m. on **Monday, May 12.**

**IN-PERSON VOTING:** Noon to 9 p.m., Tuesday May 20, former Midlakes Middle School Library), 1554 State Route 488, Clifton Springs.

**ABSENTEE BALLOTS:** Absentee ballots must be received by the District Clerk by 5 p.m., May 20. Ballots may need to be hand-delivered if not sent to the Post Office in a timely manner.

**BUDGET STATEMENT:** A detailed budget statement may be obtained by any District resident from 8 a.m. - 3 p.m. during weekdays, excluding holidays, during the fourteen days immediately preceding the vote.

**ELIGIBILITY:** Residents qualify to participate in the annual vote, provided they are:

- A U.S. Citizen
- At least 18 years old
- A resident of the District for at least 30 days prior to the vote.

**\*\* No property requirement to vote. View website for other requirements.\*\***

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Contact District Clerk Pam Mann at (315) 548-6423, email [pmann@midlakes.org](mailto:pmann@midlakes.org), or visit [Midlakes.org/AnnualVote](https://Midlakes.org/AnnualVote). ■



# BUDGET PROPOSAL

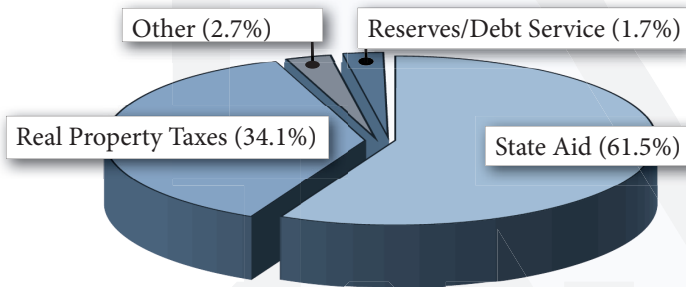
The following charts and figures detail the sources of revenue and expenditures of the proposed budget.

Further information can be found on the District's website at [Midlakes.org/AnnualVote](https://Midlakes.org/AnnualVote).

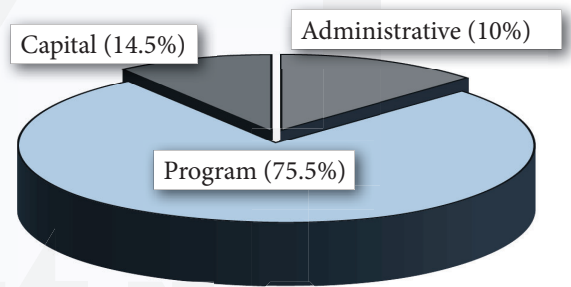
## PROJECTED REVENUE

CATEGORY	2024-2025	2025-2026	INCREASE (DECREASE)
State Aid	\$28,743,542	\$29,157,895	\$414,353
Real Property Taxes	\$15,844,115	\$16,160,997	\$316,882
Reserves/Debt Service	\$740,000	\$809,787	\$69,787
Other	\$815,301	\$1,258,081	\$442,780
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$46,142,958</b>	<b>\$47,386,760</b>	<b>\$1,243,802</b>

### REVENUES



### EXPENDITURES



Figures rounded. May not equal 100%

## EXPENDITURES

### ADMINISTRATIVE

CATEGORY	2024-2025	2025-2026	INCREASE (DECREASE)
Board of Education	\$102,475	\$106,870	\$4,395
Central Administration & Finance	\$868,945	\$902,765	\$33,820
Legal, Personnel, Public Information	\$243,488	\$202,000	(\$41,488)
Central Services & Special Items	\$987,436	\$1,034,936	\$47,500
Curriculum, Supervision, Research & Planning	\$1,335,656	\$1,305,568	(\$30,088)
Employee Benefits	\$1,102,126	\$1,174,950	\$72,824
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$4,640,126</b>	<b>\$4,727,089</b>	<b>\$86,963</b>

### PROGRAM

CATEGORY	2024-2025	2025-2026	INCREASE (DECREASE)
Staff Development & Training - Regular School	\$12,713,774	\$13,015,879	\$302,105
Programs for Students with Disabilities	\$7,967,961	\$7,877,273	(\$90,688)
Pupil Personnel, Guidance & Health Services	\$1,129,348	\$1,208,371	\$79,023
Athletics	\$698,228	\$727,359	\$29,131
Transportation	\$2,035,689	\$2,174,163	\$138,474
Employee Benefits	\$10,236,572	\$10,797,989	\$561,417
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$34,781,572</b>	<b>\$35,801,034</b>	<b>\$1,019,462</b>

### CAPITAL

CATEGORY	2024-2025	2025-2026	INCREASE (DECREASE)
Operation & Maintenance of Plant	\$2,647,978	\$2,744,127	\$96,149
Employee Benefits	\$738,801	\$780,028	\$41,228
Debt Service & Bus Purchases	\$3,334,481	\$3,334,481	\$0
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$6,721,260</b>	<b>\$6,858,636</b>	<b>\$137,377</b>

## TOTAL BUDGET

	2024-2025	2025-2026	INCREASE (DECREASE)
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$46,142,958</b>	<b>\$47,386,760</b>	<b>\$1,243,802</b>

Expenditures rounded to the nearest whole dollar



# BOARD OF EDUCATION CANDIDATES

*Voters will elect two (2) individuals. Board members serve without pay and are listed in order of appearance on the ballot.*



## AMANDA FROST

**Family:** Husband, Jason; children, Lane and Hartley.

**Occupation/ Career:** AT/ EMOD/VMOD

Supervisor at the NYS Office for People with Developmental Disabilities.

### Qualifications and Activities:

For more than 20 years, I've devoted my career to supporting individuals with disabilities—both children and adults. Clifton Springs has been my home for most of my life, aside from my time at SUNY Geneseo and during my husband's military service at West Point. In my current role with the State of New York, I've developed a strong understanding of government funding, budgeting, and accountability, and I also serve on the Wayne County Community Services Board. As a lifelong resident and dedicated advocate, I care deeply about the future of our schools, our students, and the entire Midlakes community.

### Personal Statement:

As a proud Midlakes graduate and parent of kids currently in the district, I know how important it is to prepare our students, not just for academics, but for the real-world social and emotional challenges they'll face too. I believe being a good Board of Education member starts with being willing to listen, learn, and stay connected to what's happening in our schools and community. My goal is to bring an open mind, a thoughtful approach, and a strong sense of purpose to the board, so that every student feels supported, seen, and set up for success.



## NICHOLAS HARGATHER

**Family:** Wife, Stacy; children, four daughters and one son.

**Occupation/ Career:** Sales

Engineer/Account Manager/Business Owner.

### Qualifications and Activities:

Degree in Engineering Fields. Active participant in innovation and community outreach programs. Experience as a

substitute teacher across multiple grade levels. Wrestling coach promoting youth development and leadership. Organizer and speaker at technical seminars and workshops. Facilitator of STEM education programs from elementary through college level. Advocate for hands-on learning and real-world skill development. Collaborator with local schools on enrichment and mentorship initiatives. Supporter of inclusive education and student engagement strategies. Committed to fostering academic excellence, creativity, and opportunity for all learners.

### Personal Statement:

As a coach, substitute teacher, and dedicated community member, I've spent years working hands-on with students, helping them grow through encouragement, structure, and support. Whether in the classroom or on the wrestling mat, I focus on building confidence, character, and strong values in our youth. I'm running for the Board of Education because I believe every student deserves a safe, inclusive, and inspiring environment to learn and thrive. My experience working directly with students, teachers, and families gives me a unique understanding of the real challenges in education today. People should vote for me because I lead by example, listen with purpose, and act with integrity. I will advocate for transparency, accountability, and programs that support both academic and emotional development. I'm not here for politics—I'm here for the kids, the teachers, and the future of our schools. Let's build a better tomorrow by supporting those who need it most today.



## LINDSAY MARINO

**Family:** Husband, Bill Hunter; children, Nicholas, Natalie and Judah.

**Occupation/ Career:** RN

(Pediatric Emergency Room RN) for the past 20 years at Strong Memorial Hospital.

### Qualifications and Activities:

Youth basketball coach (current); member of Phelps youth baseball, active member of Midlakes athletics, Midlakes football boosters board member.

### Personal Statement:

I will be running for re-election to the

Midlakes school board in May. We have made great progress with our current goals and initiatives and I would be honored to have the opportunity to continue on with this trajectory. I am a district parent and community member and I want what is best for our children academically, socially and emotionally. I will continue to advocate for our children with their needs as my priority. I appreciate and thank you for your support on Election Day.



## JACKIE (GALLAHAN) BLAKE

**Family:** Husband, Jerry; children, Barrett, Cash and Tate.

**Occupation/**

**Career:** Business Owner and Stay at home Mom.

### Qualifications and Activities:

Having graduated from the Midlakes School District in 2001 and as the mother of 3 boys who currently attend Midlakes, I am well versed in the experiences of students, parents and taxpayers. Prior to having my first child, I worked for GW Lisk in a dual administrative role. Currently, my husband, Jerry, and I operate an outfitting business which has given me the tools and knowledge to successfully manage and maintain a budget. As a member of the Midlakes School Board I will bring my expertise to the table to best serve our residents.

### Personal Statement:

As a lifelong resident of the Midlakes School District, I'm proud to raise my family here and want to give back to the school community that gave me so much. Having participated in soccer, cheerleading and track during my time at Midlakes, I'm passionate about keeping sports and extracurricular activities strong for all students and believe in creating opportunities that allow every child to thrive. I approach every decision with an open mind and a level head, always keeping our children's future at the forefront. I'm here to listen, learn, and serve - whether it's volunteering at the Boy Scouts Dinner Dance or reading in Cash's 3rd grade classroom, I'm committed to supporting our schools and staying involved in the community. That is why I'd be honored to have your support!

## POOL UPDATE



## POOL PROGRESS CONTINUES

The pool repairs are deep into the second stage, where contractors are focusing on the surface, filtration system and plumbing.

After the humidification system was installed during Winter Break, the focus of the pool work moved indoors.

The pool was drained, and work began to remove the surface of the pool from the deck to the bottom. A scaffold has been placed in the deepest part of the 12.5-foot diving end.

Parts of the new plumbing system for the filtration unit are installed, with the filtration unit itself next on the to-do list.

The old starting blocks and diving board have been removed.

Contractors are on pace for a late June/early July reopening. ■

# FROSTBITTEN BY THE BUSINESS BUG



**T**he 2024-25 school year marks the third year of the Frostbite Parlor, a student-run frozen treat shop overseen by Agriculture and CTE teacher Jessica Spence.

"The goal is to educate students in money handling, customer service, budgeting, ordering, scheduling... running a business," said Spence.

The work experience is now tied to the Career Exploration and Development class. Initially, the work experience sold coffee in the afternoons. The cafe is now a middle school work experience offered under Donna Borelli.

At the high school, the Career Exploration and Development students saw interest and response changing, and their business model had to adapt.

The students were adamant they had to adapt so their experience could be more hands-on, and increase their potential customer base by including students - not solely teachers.

"We noticed there was a shift... Not everyone wants ice cream at lunch time, but they want that boost at the end of the day," said Josh DeCook. "Being open weekly, we see the same sales week to week, and that means more profits because we are open every week."

The addition of a portable freez-

er has increased visibility, and subsequently, sales. The class sets up near the auditorium, which is a fairly central location in the school.

Everything is offered on a fixed price point. Students learn how to calculate profits, deducting overhead costs from the revenue brought in. That is then used to purchase new stock, and they make the decisions on what to purchase more of so the inventory doesn't run out.

The early trials of the Frostbite Parlor helped define roles, and streamline the processes.

Originally, there was an online order process. That was eliminated, and now orders are in-person and part of a manual system. Students will divide jobs - one of which is to go to student and staff common areas - Library, study halls, cafeteria. The orders are brought back and processed, with one student serving as 'the grabber' and another running deliveries.

"It gets really busy at the end of the day," said Ben Hibbard. "One teacher brings a whole class down sometimes. We're right by the PSO and the Tech office. Two of the busiest places in the school."

"Having the mobility really increased sales, we are near more traffic," said Jax Bruder.

Last spring, the Frostbite Parlor

revenue was used to grab lunch at Ling Lings in Geneva following a tour of Finger Lakes Community College.

"The previous program coupled the coffee shop and work in the community," explained Spence. Students would work cleaning windows at Clifton Springs Hospital or vacuuming at Ashton Place. "They would get a paycheck, and budget a trip to the mall."

The community work placement element now includes the students active with Frostbite Parlor coming to the Elementary building to work with K-6 students.

"That has made some good memories. The children there seem to like it," Alexis Bailey said.

The students have found positives on multiple fronts in working with the Frostbite Parlor. For business-minded students, money management, cost and profits are at the forefront.

For those looking to branch into customer service-type careers, they have customer care and order accuracy. For students looking to move into service fields or education, there are opportunities to interact with young students.

"It's good experience for everyone," said Hibbard. "Even if you're not going into business, it lets you see those parts."

"It's a good learning experience. It keeps us focused." ■





## MUSIC IN OUR SCHOOLS CONCERT



## UPCOMING PERFORMANCES

- Elementary School Band & Chorus: 7 p.m., May 15.
- Middle/High School Chorus: 7 p.m., May 21.
- Middle/High School Band: 7 p.m., May 28.
- Middle/High School Jazz Band: 6:30 p.m., June 12, United Church of Phelps.

## EXCELLENCE

### CAPOZZI ADVANCES IN HISTORY DAY COMPETITION

Jonathan Capozzi (Class of '26) represented Phelps-Clifton Springs Central School District at the World History Day competition in Auburn in March.

His 20-minute presentation focused on the Rights and Responsibilities in the Middle East, a topic close to Capozzi.

His grandfather, Saadallah - or Gidday, translated to grandfather - emigrated to America from Syria in 1956.

The theme this year was Rights and Responsibilities in History, challenging students to consider questions of time and place, cause and effect, change over time, and impact and significance.

He cruised through the first round at the Case Mansion in Auburn, advancing to the Affiliate Competition at the State University of New York at Oneonta. From there, the top performers will compete at the National Competition in June at the University of Maryland.

Capozzi is enrolled in Angela Simmons' AP/Gemini United States History class. The process of becoming eligible is no small feat. The steps included rigorous work and revisions to a formal paper and a preliminary production.

Capozzi wrote, edited and voiced a 10-minute documentary as part of his efforts. ■





## ACTIVITIES



## BREAKFAST SALE HELPS RED CROSS

This spring, ENL instructor Sara Reynolds' students were selling breakfast foods at arrival as part of a fundraising effort to support the American Red Cross.

The students sold donuts and additional healthy-choice breakfast items during arrival.

Funds were collected and donated to the American Red Cross, and will be used to support those rebuilding their lives after the devastating effects of January's California wildfires.

Students were up and ready, reaching campus 90-minutes early to prepare for the sales. The students tapped into their math, customer service, business and cooperation skills.

This marks the second year of Reynolds' class adopting a cause. Last year, the students sold donuts, collected recyclable bottles and cans, and took in cash donations for Water for South Sudan.

The donut portion of last year's sales were so popular the students went all-in on breakfast, offering healthy-choice options such as apples, yogurt and cheese sticks on top of the pastries.

Dunkin Donuts in Manchester donated as many as six dozen donuts each day in support of the group. Yogurt was donated by Upstate Farms, where many of our local dairy farms ship to.

Brayan Vasconcelos-Velazquez, Leo Gonzalez Rojas, Billy Perez-Gonzalez, Edziel Trejo, Yowee Castillo Camilo and Ginni Correa were active in learning about the impacts of the wild fires during science lessons, and pushed to help those affected.

Natasha Delgado Guzman, Isabella Trejo, Alma Bartolon-Mejia, Jacob Arenas Martinez, Fernanda Gonzalez Rojas, Arleth Diaz Castro, Camila Orellana and Keicy Colon Rodriguez helped with the breakfast sale. ■

# HELP, GIVE A

## MIDLAKES STUDENTS USE THEIR

### Cannan helps improve Music Suite storage

**T**he new music suite at the Secondary School was a tremendous project. Updated facilities, state-of-the-art sound systems, modernized recording areas and new teaching classrooms were welcome – and needed – additions to the campus.

But something struck a chord with freshman Brian Cannan (Class of '28). The guitars were still stacked in a way that was less than friendly.

Cannan sprang into action, and by way of his efforts, the suites have a little more customized storage. A new guitar storage rack has been constructed and installed. The project was designed to fulfill the Eagle Scout service requirement for Eagle Scout Rank in Troop 46.

"You could do a community clean up, or you could do a building project," said Cannan. "Basically, you need to show your abilities to lead and what you learned as a Scout."

Cannan oversaw every element of the service project, from concept to completion as part of his Act of Service project. He helped plan and design the racks themselves, and the district covered the cost of materials. He recruited help for final construction, and was responsible for communicating changes, design modifications and final delivery with both the volunteers and the school.

The final product is double-stacked rack with eight total bays. Each bay can house three guitars comfortably, with as many as five fitting in each rack if needed. The shelves are constructed of plywood and 2-by-4 lumber beams. It's been painted to match the walls of the new music suites.

Cannan also persevered through



the various changes to the design. Initially, the design called for a horseshoe shape. Then, there was a debate about the rack being mobile, and constructed on wheels. The double-decker rack was the final version, with each shelf base wrapped in carpet to help protect the instruments.

"It feels good to give back," said Cannan. "It feels good to give back to the school."

Cannan is very active in the music department. The freshman was accepted to the New York State Music Association (NYSSMA) All-State last fall and qualified for this year's Finger Lakes Music Educators Association (FLMEA) All-County with Midlakes' Winds Ensemble, hosted in January 2025 at Midlakes. He will be participating in NYSSMA Solofest. Cannan was on stage during the Midlakes Theatre Experience's production of 'The Little Mermaid,' starring as Prince Eric.

With his music skills blending with his sense of service, Cannan joined Midlakes band and chorus efforts to spread cheer during the holidays, performing at both Vienna Gardens in Phelps and Ashton Place in Clifton Springs during the annual caroling event hosted by the music department. He performs with the school's Vocal Jazz and Jazz Band.

Cannan hopes to continue with Scouting. Technically, Eagle

Scout is the highest rank one can achieve in scouting overall; with a requirement of 21 merit badges along with planning, organizing and executing a large service project. This project was his final requirement to becoming an Eagle Scout. Additional merit badges beyond the 21 help Eagle Scouts earn palms – awarded in five-badge groupings for bronze, gold and finally, silver. The metal designations are modeled after military rankings, where silver designations are positioned higher than gold.

Cannan has been elected to the Order of the Arrow, scouting's Honor Society.

Cannan is already working to finish his next merit badge, finishing Bird Studies. The task includes being able to articulate the importance of studying birds and how they can be an indicator of environmental health. The scout would also be able to demonstrate bird-watching techniques, identify species and finally, sketch and label parts of a perched bird and an extended wing.

"Brian, he's our guy," said Music Department Chair Joe Godfrey, "These racks are going to be a huge help. Brian is well-rounded. He's a good student; great kid and he is involved in a little bit of everything."

"He is what we always talk about at Midlakes, the character and the well-rounded student. I can't say enough about him." ■

# ND EDUCATE

## SKILLS AND SERVICE ON CAMPUS

### FFA teaches students about pumpkins, planting

**M**idlakes FFA Chapter celebrated Ag Literacy Week in conjunction with National Ag Week, reading with primary school homerooms.

Two groups of Midlakes FFA Members - including President Ana McConnon (Class of 2028), Student Advisor Maryalice Busby (Class of '28) and Charlotte Curran (Class of '30) - visited Midlakes to read about pumpkins. The students then held a short question-and-answers session about the book. The busy afternoon culminated with the younger students planting their own pumpkin seeds.

The Midlakes FFA members talked about varieties of pumpkins, their uses and growing time, and tied the discussion back to the young students' real-world experiences.

### FFA STUNS AT SUNY COBLESKILL

Midlakes FFA participated in the Milk Quality Testing and Products CDE Competition at SUNY Cobleskill, finishing 11th out of



55 teams. It was Midlakes FFA's first dive into the tough State-Level competitions, with additional opportunities coming during the NY FFA State Convention, held May 7-9 at the New York State Fairgrounds in Syracuse.

### JACKET CEREMONY SCHEDULED FOR MAY

As the NY FFA State Convention looms, Midlakes FFA is looking forward to May 8, where two Midlakes FFA members will receive their own personalized official FFA Jackets as finalists for the Individual FFA Jacket Award. At present, Midlakes has been borrowing jackets from Whitman and Penn Yan. On May 9th, the chapter will

be recognized on the state stages as a new FFA chapter and will be awarded a set of FFA jackets for members to wear for years to come.

Both Superintendent Nicholas Ganster and Principal Dan McAlpin were nominated by Midlakes FFA for Supportive Administrator Awards. The week prior, Midlakes FFA held their annual Ag Spring Fest for K-3 students, featuring their popular apple cider making stations during lunch periods at the high school.

Midlakes FFA will again host their agriculture station with animals at the Elementary Summer Fun Day, scheduled for the end of June. ■



### ACTIVITIES

## FFA SHARES CONTEST RESULTS

Midlakes FFA hosted a coloring contest for Elementary School Students during the annual National Ag Week.

National Ag Week overlapped Ag Literacy Week this year.

The artwork and finished coloring projects from several Elementary aged students were prominently featured on the display board near the Elementary Cafeterias.

*Top artists from each participating grade level are:*

**FIRST PLACE:** Carlos Rojas Mazariegos, Evangeline Lawson, Abel VanCamp, Lainey Rojek, Eviana Payne, Gracelyn Burnisky and Cole Dennie.

**SECOND PLACE:** Aurelia Featherly, Abby VanDeMortel, Emmajay Lebrecht, Emily Worden, Madison Smith, Sunny Lanterman and Monique Briggs.

**THIRD PLACE:** Nora Kesel, Hannah Smith, Brantley Scherbyn, Iris Cummings, Phinly Frankovitch, Addison Monroe and Lily Fegley. ■



### 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.



## SCHOLAR ATHLETES

# WINTER SCHOLAR SQUADS

Three athletic teams and 45 varsity student-athletes from Midlakes have been recognized by the New York State Public High School Athletic Association for outstanding achievements in the classroom during the 2024-25 winter sports season.

Individual scholar-athletes (by sport) are recognized with a certificate. Individual student-athletes must earn at least a 90 GPA to be recognized. A team needs at least 75 percent of its roster to earn an overall GPA of at least 90 percent to be recognized.

## SCHOLAR TEAMS

GIRLS BASKETBALL

# 93.4

GPA

GIRLS INDOOR TRACK

# 93.1

GPA

BOYS SWIMMING

# 90.7

GPA



Scan the QR Code to  
meet the individual  
Scholar-Athletes.

# WINTER



Jess Westfall Photo



# WONDERS

**A**iden Bryant has made Track and Field his personal playground for several seasons. His dominant effort has brought the Midlakes Junior to another PrimeTime585 Small School Boys Indoor Track and Field Player of the Year award.

Bryant was celebrated during an awards show April 8, with specials airing on WROC News 8 Rochester April 11 and 12. This marks the second consecutive season Bryant finished with the PrimeTime585 Player of the Year honors.

Recognized with the top hops in the long and triple jumps in National standings - both indoor and outdoor - Bryant qualified for another New York State Public High School Athletic Association Indoor Championship in a total of three different disciplines.

His excellence in Long and Triple jump were almost assuredly bound for states after wins in the Section V Championship. He set a new Wayne-Finger Lakes record in the 55m dash, taking second and the accompanying State qualifying spot. Aiden also set the Section V Indoor Triple Jump record of 50-feet 8.5 inches while in his qualifying showcase at Nazareth University.

His bid at States didn't materialize quite as expected as an injury sidelined him on Long Island. However, a little rest and recovery has Bryant back in form for the outdoor campaign.

While Bryant grabbed headlines for his jumps, Midlakes varsity student-athletes completed an incredible winter campaign.

An unprecedented total of 13 athletes across four sports qualified for the New York State Public High School Athletic Association State Championships in their respective disciplines, the most ever for Midlakes Athletics.

## BOWLING

**Alivia Miller** (Class of 2027) bowled with the State Composite team, and then joined her Section V Champion teammates in a push to third in NYSPHAA Division II. Miller earned additional honors while posting the third-highest single game in the team tournament. She won the Section V Individual Championship with a record-setting pinfall total that ranks as the top for a female bowler, and in the top four all-time, male or female. **Emileigh Cardin** (Class of 2027) earned a Sportsmanship recognition during the team tournament. The team won Sectionals for the first time this winter. Coach Scott Monagle earned Coach of the Year honors.

## WRESTLING

**Abigail Hargather** (Class of 2027), **Clara Bond** (Class of 2026) and **Elizabeth Boughton** (Class of 2029) wrestled in the first recognized State Championship Tournament. This was Abigail's second trip to states, with her first visit under an invitational format. Hargather was recognized as Armdrag's No. 1 Most Dangerous 114-pounder, while Armdrag ranked Boughton second (138-lbs) and Bond third (145-lbs) on the 'Most Dangerous' list. Sophomore **Jorge Garcia** took home an individual Section V Championship at 170-lbs and was fourth at Super-Sectionals.

## SWIMMING

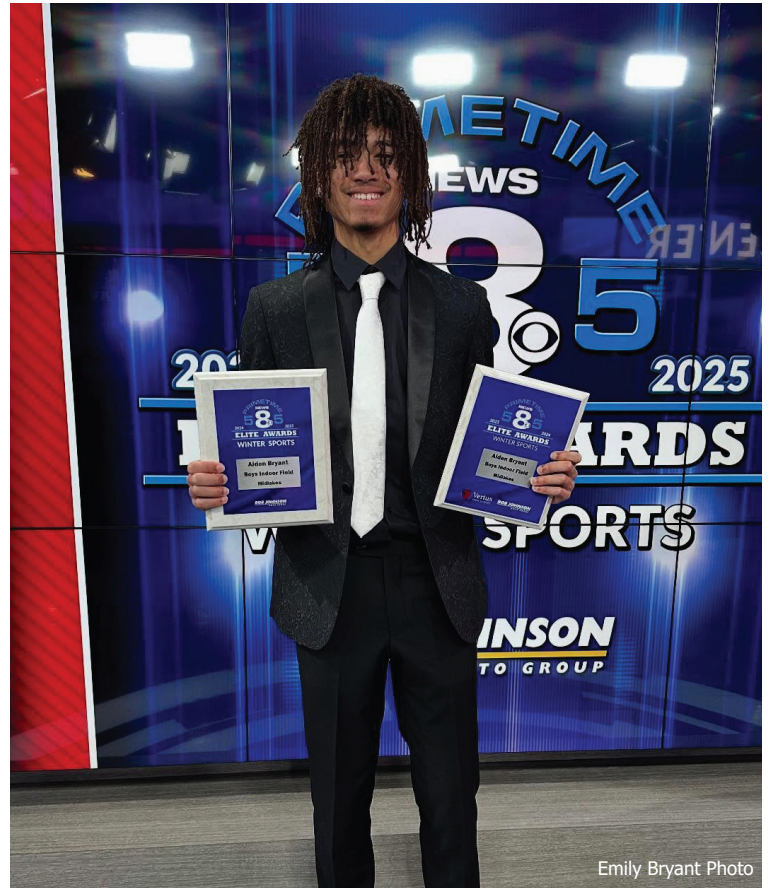
Senior **Ethan Brodman** qualified in two swimming events - the 50 and 100m freestyle - a Midlakes first. Jack Hauber earned Finger Lakes Coach of the Year accolades.

## TRACK AND FIELD - POLE VAULT

Senior **Hayden Wells** won the Section V Championship in Indoor Pole Vault (9-ft, 3-in).

## CHEER

Senior **Candiz Contreras** was invited to the Ronald McDonald All-Star Cheer Competition.



Emily Bryant Photo







## NEHS INDUCTS 10 NEW STUDENTS

The National Elementary Honor Society inducted 10 new members this year, bringing their running membership to 32 students.

The membership was capped to sixth grade due to overwhelming applications and interest.

New inductees included Jesse Babcock, Mariam Cieslak-Laguer, Raigan DeBrock, Jacob DeRuyter, Hannah Gray, Nicholas Hurtado, Margaret Kirsch, Ellen Lincoln, Reid Quku and Kloey Reynolds.

Students begin the application process while in fifth grade. Fifth grade teachers recommend students, and students fill out their applications and collect additional statements of recommendation from other educators in the building.

Members are then selected based on a GPA of 85% and also their demonstration of the four pillars of NEHS: Responsibility, Leadership, Service and Scholarship.

Current members spoke about the new inductees as part of the ceremony. Speakers included: Piper Akin, Sammy Bishop, Riley Casper, Ryan Cunha, Danika Curran, Jack Everson, Leah Godkin, Judah Hunter, Hailey Kimber, Emmie Kuhn, Aubrey Lincoln, David McConnon, Cameron Miller, Emma Morlang, Mya Overslaugh, Ava Rojek, Sophia Root, McKenzie Stewart, James Stratton, Sophia Weegar, Catherine Worden and Amelia Young. ■

# A SEAT AT THE



## A 'TIME' TO COLLABORATE

The spring season is highlighted by Midlakes Elementary's changing of character traits, moving from Honesty to Cooperation.

Each month, the building focuses on a particular trait during Eagle Time lessons, working to build character, resilience and flexible thinking while keeping in mind the core values of Respect, Responsibility, Independence and Kindness.

Focusing on Cooperation, the second grade classes and the Secondary tech and shop classes worked together to bring back one of the more memorable projects: building clocks.

This collaborative program ended five or six years ago, and the second grade team worked with Mr. Clement to offer this once again.

Mr. Clement and his students visited second grade to trace the shape of the clock on wood panels.

Then, the second graders went to the high school

in the following days.

There, the older students cut the shape out while the younger students watched from a safe distance. The second graders decorated the faces and once dry, the older students helped assemble the hands and time-keeping mechanism.

After the band saw was put away, Mr. Clement helped the students finish the edges of their clocks. Several Secondary students were helping hand out cups of paint and wash brushes when needed.

Two students were at the drying station, using handheld blowers to dry the paint so the clocks could be finished in a single trip to the school.

The Secondary students had a different bell schedule than the second graders' block of time, so students were filtering in and out. This allowed different faces to offer the young learners a helping hand. ■





# LEARNING TREE

## LEARNING THE ART OF TREE-GRAFTING

Students in the Outdoor Education, Ag Business, Floriculture and Plant Science courses had the chance to work on tree grafting during a recent collaborative effort among educators at the Secondary School.

Students were given the chance to try their hand at cleft

grafts and whip and tongue grafts.

Several stations were setup with various root bases and donor scion (small live-wood sticks), including Honeycrisp, Gala, Wild Apple and Liberty

Students then used roots bases and scions to mix and match their own apple trees.

The finished grafts will be planted in the elevated boxes in the courtyard adjacent to the Ag Suite, and will hopefully grow into fruit-producing trees after a final transplant.

Greg Mahns was the lead in most of the demonstrations, working with Ethan Sleeman and Rich Doan through the day. ■



## DO-IT-YOURSELF SEED PAPER

Greenhouse club members at the Elementary School worked with advisor Erica Motzer to create their own seed paper.

Meeting early on a cool spring morning, the students pressed seeds into paper pulp before letting the items dry. The pads will have a variety of spring-bloom flowers just in time for Mother's Day.

Motzer had prepared the pulp

mixture ahead of time, taking shredded paper and running it through a blender with water. Students pressed the pulp into cookie cutters, making pads that looked like lobsters, race cars, stars, hearts and a Tyrannosaurus Rex. The students used a screen sitting atop heavy towels, and using towels to blot the top of pads while pushing extra water through the screen.

The group of fifth and sixth graders broke into two groups. While one group finished seed paper, the others were finishing seedling pots, filled with various home-garden vegetables.

The seedlings should be breaking through about the same time the seed paper has dried. Both should be available as part of the Mother's Day event the Greenhouse Club hosts each spring. ■





## LOOKING AHEAD

## SUMMER SCHOOL, ESY, SKILLS PLANS TAKE SHAPE

The Phelps-Clifton Springs Central School District has finalized plans for the academic offerings over the summer recess.

Midlakes High and Middle Schools will be participating in the Regional Summer School program this year, which will operate out of Canandaigua Academy (435 East St., Canandaigua).

Classes will run from 7:55 am to 12:10 pm, starting July 8 and ending August 20. Students will be dropped at Midlakes High School and transported to Canandaigua. Midlakes provides transportation from the Secondary School to Canandaigua and back; students will be required to provide their own transportation to Midlakes Secondary.

Students will be served breakfast at the regional school at 7:45; they will be dismissed back to Midlakes from Canandaigua at 12:10 pm each day.

Regional Summer School will also offer a two-week AIS program that is dedicated to August Regents prep.

Summer Skills dates for the Elementary K-6 cohort are scheduled from 9 am to noon; classes will open July 14 and continue through August 14.

Each class will receive one hour of ELA instruction, one hour of math instruction, and 30 minutes of SEL Instruction. Midlakes will not be able to offer busing, so K-6 Summer Skills will be parent transport only.

The Extended School Year program offered to recommended K-12 students will open July 10 and continue through August 20. They will be on a 9 am to noon schedule, Monday to Friday. Transportation for those recommended students will be provided. ■

**Important Dates:**  
**Regional Summer School**  
**Secondary Students**  
**July 8-Aug. 20: 7:55-12:10**  
**pm, M-F.**

**Summer Skills K-6**  
**July 14-Aug. 14: 9-12 pm M-Tr.**  
**Parent pick up and drop only**

**Extended School Year (ESY)**  
**for K-12 (if recommended):**  
**July 10-Aug 20: 9-12 pm**  
**M-F, with Transportation.**

# READING HORIZONS RECOGNIZES MIDLAKES

## RH President sees Midlakes educators as beacon

The Phelps-Clifton Springs Central School District was visited by the President of Reading Horizons.

Tyson Smith had asked to visit Midlakes to see the good things happening in the Elementary classrooms, first hand. Smith cited the strength of the program, and held a round table with K-3 educators, a CSE representative and administrators.

"He loved seeing students active and participating in the program of Reading Horizons," said Elementary Assistant Principal Brianne Raes.

Reading Horizons started as a reading intervention, but the effectiveness of the program resulted in school-wide K-3 implementation. Smith applauded the growth Midlakes is seeing as gaps are shortened and overall numbers improve.

Reading Horizons Discovery describes their program as a multi-sensory tool, leveraging both technology and in-class instruction to build a science-based approach to build the skills every student needs to read proficiently by grade 3.

The Reading Horizons style



integrates auditory, visual, and kinesthetic instruction. You might see the words being marked up on the board, focusing on the features and patterns of the English language. Students develop visual cues and create predictable patterns for pronunciation. Students use hand gestures to 'throw' words back and forth, helping identify sounds, syllables and emphasis.

A marking system is employed to draw students' attention to the features and patterns of English and give visual cues for pronunciation.

Adapting Reading Horizons to use across classrooms K-3 has helped align language both horizontally and vertically during

instruction.

That means students are hearing the same terms and teaching styles working in their rooms, working with interventionists, and the same language and is used from kindergarten through third grade.

"The same language goes a long way vertically toward creating viable curriculum," said Raes. "Mr. Smith said he liked seeing the strength of our program, our classroom culture."

Raes expressed pride in Smith reaching out to Midlakes.

"It's an honor," she said. "It's an honor when the president of a company sees you as a focus school. He wanted to see the good things happening at Midlakes." ■



## LOOKING AHEAD

## DISTRICT CALENDAR

The Board of Education approved at its March meeting the District Calendar for the 2025-2026 academic year. Below are a few highlights:

**First Day of School:** Students to report on Thursday, Sept. 4.

**Superintendent Conference Days:** Staff only on Tuesday, Sept. 2 and Wednesday, Sept. 3; Friday, Oct. 10, and Friday, March 13.

**Thanksgiving Break:** No school on November 26-28.

**Winter Break:** No school on Monday, Dec. 22 - Friday, Jan. 2. School reopens Monday, Jan. 5.

**February Break:** No school from Monday, Feb. 16 - Friday, Feb. 20. School reopens Monday, Feb. 23.

**Spring Break:** No school from Monday, March 30 - Friday, April 3. School reopens Monday, April 6.

**Holidays (No School):** Columbus/Indigenous People's Day, Oct. 13; Veterans Day, Nov. 11; Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Jan. 19; Memorial Day, May 25; Juneteenth, June 19.

**Elementary school half days:** December 2-4, March 10-12, June 23-25.

**Graduation:** Saturday, June 27.

All school events and dates are subject to change. Contact your child's school for additional information. View district calendars and sports schedules at [Midlakes.org/calendars](https://www.midlakes.org/calendars). ■

## MEMORIAL DAY TRIBUTE

First-graders at Midlakes Elementary School will once again present a tribute honoring local servicemen and women who protected our country. Contact school for more information.

**DATE:** Thursday, May 22. ■



## COMMENCEMENT

Show your pride in all that the Class of 2025 has accomplished during Midlakes High School's annual Commencement Ceremony, where students will walk the stage to receive their diplomas. Additional details to be released. Contact Midlakes High School for more information as it becomes available.

**DATE:** The ceremony is scheduled to begin at 7 p.m., Saturday, June 28. ■

## THIS MONTH &amp; NEXT

## MAY

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
ROLLER SKATING

May 5: Grades K-2  
May 6: Grades 3-4  
May 7: Grades 5-6

## BUDGET HEARING

6 p.m., May 12  
Middle School Cafeteria  
(Regular BOE meeting follows)

ELEMENTARY BAND &  
CHORUS CONCERT

7 p.m., May 15

## ANNUAL VOTE

Noon - 9 p.m., May 20

MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOL  
CHORUS CONCERT

7 p.m., May 21

## BOARD MEETING

6:30 p.m., May 21  
(Only if budget is defeated)

## MEMORIAL DAY TRIBUTE

May 22

## MEMORIAL DAY

May 26 (NO SCHOOL)

MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOL  
BAND CONCERT

7 p.m., May 28

## JUNE

## SENIOR BALL

6:30 p.m., June 6

UPK-GRADE 6  
END OF TRIMESTER

June 13

## BOARD MEETING

6:30 p.m., June 16

## JUNETEENTH

June 19 (NO SCHOOL)

## ELEMENTARY HALF DAYS

June 23-25

## COMMENCEMENT

7 p.m., June 28

Events subject to change. Find school calendars, sports schedules and more under the "Community" tab at [Midlakes.org](https://www.midlakes.org).

## CAREER CORNER

WE ARE  
HIRING

JOIN OUR TEAM



## 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](https://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.

• **PROBATIONARY SECONDARY SPECIAL EDUCATION** probationary listing for Grades 7-12. A second long-term sub position is also listed, working as a part-time 1:1 educator.

• **PROBATIONARY DAY SHIFT CLEANER** One position is open, working on-campus.

• **SUBSTITUTE ELEMENTARY PSYCHOLOGIST** long term sub appointment

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

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

• **SUBSTITUTES** Subs positions are open throughout the district. ■



## HIGH SCHOOL RECOGNITION

# VALEDICTORIAN MATTHEW CANNAN

**MATTHEW CANNAN**, son of Scott and Melissa Cannan, plans to attend college at SUNY Oswego for adolescent education with a focus in history in hopes to become a high school history teacher.

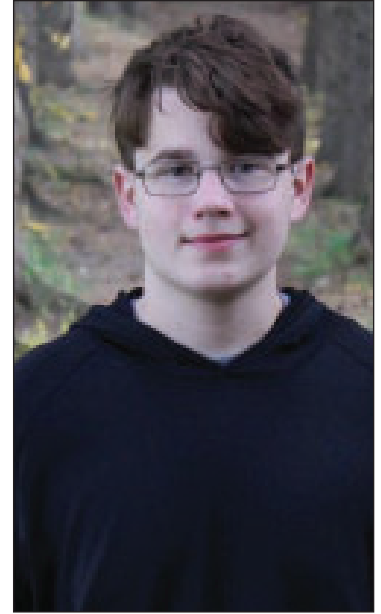
**Activities and achievements:** Matt has participated in numerous extracurricular activities, including jazz band and vocal jazz. He has been selected for both All-State and All County band multiple times. Outside of music, Matt has served as the captain of the Masterminds team and as the French Club president, is a member of NHS, and became an Eagle Scout in December 2023. ■



# SALUTATORIAN JACKSON ALAMOND

**JACKSON ALAMOND**, son of David Alamond and Melissa Murphy, has decided to attend college at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute for a dual major in civil and Environmental Engineering.

**Activities and achievements:** During his years at Midlakes High School, Jackson did not participate in many sports or clubs, but instead, has chosen to focus on his academics. He has participated in a few forms of volunteer work, and outside of school, he prefers to spend a majority of his time on his hobbies. ■



### PHELPS-CLIFTON SPRINGS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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



**PHELPS-CLIFTON SPRINGS  
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