



MIDLAKES.ORG

# MIDLAKES JOURNAL

PHELPS-CLIFTON SPRINGS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

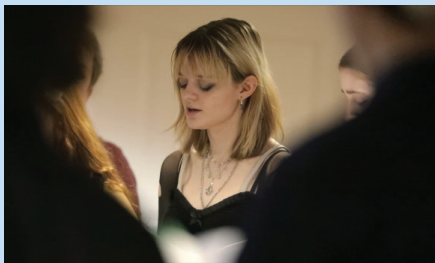


**VOLUME XXXI, ISSUE II**  
FEBRUARY 2026

## INSIDE THIS EDITION

- SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE ..... PAGE 2
- BOE CANDIDATE PACKET INFO ..... PAGE 3
- SPELLING BEE COVERAGE ..... PAGE 6
- ATHLETICS ..... PAGE 8-9
- MIDLAKES THEATRE EXPERIENCE... PAGE10
- ALL-COUNTY HONOREES ..... PAGE 13
- UPCOMING EVENTS ..... PAGE 15

## FIND MORE AT MIDLAKES.ORG



With Music in Our Schools month coming soon, Band and Chorus have already been busy. Read more on Pages 10-13



Kindergarten and UPK registrations are open for Fall 2026-27 enrollment. Have you begun the process yet? Read more on page 4.



### CABARET 2026

The annual Cabaret night featured a total of 20 acts on stage, capped by Senior Justin Herman's rendition of *Extraordinary Things*. The event was again sold out, with additional seating added to the Middle School Cafeteria.

## A STUDENT'S VIEW



## CAPOZZI SHARES EXPERIENCE AS EX OFFICIO BOE MEMBER

**S**erving my first six months as the ex officio student member of the Midlakes Board of Education has been both an honor and a learning experience. As the first student ever to hold this role, there hasn't been a clear roadmap to follow, and navigating that uncertainty has been challenging at times. I've had to learn how to speak in spaces not traditionally designed for student voices, balance responsibility with representation, and figure out when to listen and when to speak up.

At the same time, being the first has given me a unique sense of freedom. Without precedent, I've been able to shape the role in ways that feel authentic and meaningful.

One of the biggest challenges has been finding creative ways to connect with the entire student body. Students have diverse concerns, priorities, and questions, and it takes intentional effort to reach beyond the most vocal voices. I've experimented with different approaches to gather feedback and make sure students feel heard, knowing that this process is still very much a work in progress.

These first six months have taught me that leadership is not about having everything figured out, but about being willing to adapt, reflect, and grow. I'm proud of the foundation that's been built and motivated to keep improving how student perspectives are represented at the board level. ■

- Jonathan Capozzi,  
Student Ex Officio Board  
Member; Class of 2026

## A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

# TIME WELL SPENT

**A**s in years past, I am thrilled to report that our students in grades 3 through 8 continue to make significant gains in both ELA and math, as measured by state assessments.

Official test results from the spring of 2025 show a **14.9-percent increase** in ELA proficiency and **7.6-percent increase** in Math proficiency across grades 3 through 8.

As you may know, there were also statewide increases in these measures. However, in **Midlakes we doubled the state-wide gains** in ELA and Math (Statewide ELA increase 7-percent and Math increase 3-percent).

Test results also show at least **65 percent** of students showed measurable growth in the 3-8 grade ELA/Math testing cohort, indicating **two out of every three students are showing growth**. We are seeing an increase in success and the number of students succeeding, and will continue to seek measurable growth for 100 percent of students.

In the fall, we celebrated the hard work of all district employees, no matter their role, and their work to support student achievement. We also celebrated the role our parents, guardians, and families play in student achievement. Knowing that the collective efforts of students, parents, teachers, and school staff are producing measurable results assures us that our time is well spent.

In fact, "Time Well Spent" is the theme across the district this school year. We are taking time to evaluate our internal systems (department/grade level meetings, students support meetings, and leadership meetings) to ensure that the times spent in those settings directly supports not only student achievement, but also student behavioral, social, and emotional health.

As spring approaches, there are two particularly important things for our community to be aware of: first, the annual New York State ELA and Math tests for grades 3 through 8. The second is the creation of our next 5-year strategic plan, Midlakes 2031.

**ELA and Math State Tests:** 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.

**Midlakes 2031 (5-Year Strategic Plan):** This spring, the school district leadership, staff, and the wider school community will come together to chart our course for the next five years. It is hard to fathom the growth of our children over the next 5 years. However, time keeps moving and before we know it the year 2031 will be here. What do we hope to accomplish by then? What will the world be like for our graduates? How can we best prepare our children for the future? What changes does our district need to make to best ensure that we prepare our children for the lives ahead of them?

All these rhetorical questions need to be asked and explored, and our community will have the opportunity to provide their opinions and ideas. Be on the lookout for official communication later this spring and be sure to participate in this critical process. Together we will be sure that our time is well spent now and in the future!

Go Eagles!

**With hope and optimism,**

**Nick Ganster**  
Superintendent of Schools  
Phelps-Clifton Springs CSD



# MCAFEE PUBLISHED IN EDUCATION JOURNAL

Chris McAfee joined Midlakes as the Middle School Band Director in September 2025. He took over the position after spending time teaching at Ogdensburg Free Academy and Norwood-Norfolk High Schools; he filled an opening left when former Middle School director Joe Godfrey retired.

Adding to his Midlakes duties, McAfee continues to coach track and field. He is a 2018 Graduate of West Genesee High School and a 2021 Graduate of the Crane School of Music at State University of New York Potsdam. He just finished his Master's work through Columbia University in December's graduating cohort.

While this is a typical teaching resume, it is McAfee's teaching philosophy - and recently published piece in collaboration with Columbia University Professor Dr. Drew Coles - that explores teaching in a new and unique way.

Together, Coles and McAfee took a deep look at learning through a quantum mechanics lens. Their paper, titled 'Quantum Degrees of Formality in Learning Facilitation: Interrogating the Space Between Formal and Informal Learning' has been published in the peer-reviewed *Journal of Educational Thought* (Vol. 58, No. 2).

"It's exciting," McAfee said. "With Dr. Coles, we collaborated as part of my Masters work, and it blossomed from a student-teacher connection to being truly collaborative."

The original research challenges, in McAfee's words, "the commonplaces of formal instruction and informal learning" and subsequently, "develops an experiential learning model."

Take the following scenario: A student is sitting in a musical ensemble. While the group is playing, the student sees the teacher raise their hands and hears the ensemble get louder. The student infers that the gesture means 'get louder.' After playing ends, the teacher inquires if any students noticed anything. The student raises their hand and describes their experience. From there, the teacher can introduce a lesson about the gestures of a crescendo.

"In this lesson, we can see knowledge suspended in the student's experience which the teacher is successfully able to make concrete and reinforce for the rest of the classroom," McAfee explained.

He elaborated with energy - infectious, bubbling with animation - into a discourse about not simply teaching, but how teaching occurs, and how learning happens.

"The way popular musicians learn - listening, discovering, engaging - it offers weight to say you don't need to apply formal training to be musically educated," said McAfee. "But that really devalues a lot of the training that did happen. It may be informal to a degree -- but they still have some formal training. Even if not a full-on classical scholarship in music, there was some formal tuition happening."

So, McAfee and Coles landed somewhere in between, saying sometimes you have fully immersive, formal training. Sometimes, you have informal training. There is, however, always a degree of both; education and training is a spectrum.



"It's the idea that a student has experiences - they listen to what is going on, they discover something as they go along, they hear another student. They do not know how to apply or use that suspended knowledge yet, so we draw it out and anchor it through questioning; drawing it out and using it among their peers," McAfee said.

McAfee presented the topic during this research at the International Society for Sociology in Music Education's 2025 Conference in Wayne, NJ. He was also a presenter at the New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA) Conference All-State Professional Development sessions, but did not present on this topic.

"I want to be a researcher, a student and an educator. It is all a two-way street. I want to interact with the class. I want them to interact with me, my findings, which leads to more research," he said. "You make sure you are working *with* the students and find out what is working *for* them, what will make them grab onto that rope and fly with you.

"That is really important." ■

## HIGHLIGHTS

### CANDIDATE PACKETS AVAILABLE

Board of Education nominee packets will be available at the Phelps-Clifton Springs Central School District Office at the end of February.

Two of the seven Board of Education seats will be vacated on June 30, 2026. Voters will elect two Board members to three-year terms at the School Election May 19, 2026.

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.

For prospective Board of Education members, the Four County School Boards Association is offering a free virtual informational seminar. The two-hour course will feature panel presentations talking about the relationship between the BOE and the Superintendent, what the BOE does, needed skills and additional roles and responsibilities. Registration is required to receive the virtual meeting link. Sign up online at [FourCountySBA.org](http://FourCountySBA.org), or email [4CountySBA@edutech.org](mailto:4CountySBA@edutech.org) by March 6. ■


#### Important Dates:

**April 20:** Nominating petitions are due, and first campaign expenditure reports are due.

**May 14:** Second campaign expenditure report is due

**May 19:** Election Date

**June 8:** Third and final expenditure report is due.



**Budding Readers**  
A love of reading - from the start!

## FREE BOOKS FOR BABIES

Is your baby **36 months of age or younger**? Do you know a baby of this age in our school district? Budding Readers has free "bundles of books" with tips for parents about reading to babies and toddlers ready to deliver. **To request a free "bundle of books"**, you can call, email, place a request on our website, or scan the QR code. One of our volunteers will contact the parent to arrange a mutually convenient time to deliver the bundle of books.

Email: [books@buddingreaders.org](mailto:books@buddingreaders.org)  
 Website: [www.books@buddingreaders.org](http://www.books@buddingreaders.org)  
 Phone: (585) 900 - 1725

Thank you for helping us provide books for babies.

Budding Readers offers free bundles of books in the following school district communities: Bloomfield, Canandaigua, Honeoye, Marcus Whitman, Midlakes, Naples, Red Jacket & Victor.

HIGHLIGHTS

**REGISTRATION OPEN FOR FALL 2026-27**

Families residing in the Phelps-Clifton Springs Central School District may begin the 2026-2027 registration process for incoming kindergartners by completing an online form at [Midlakes.org/StudentEnrollment](http://Midlakes.org/StudentEnrollment) to receive important updates and information on enrollment, screening, and more.

Children turning 5 years old by December 1, 2026, are eligible for kindergarten in the fall of 2026. All incoming kindergartners must register with the District.

Families can complete the Kindergarten registration process in-person, from 7:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m., April 7, 7:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., April 8, 7:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m., April 9. 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](mailto:kmaher@midlakes.org) or (315) 548-6900. Families interested in the Universal Pre-Kindergarten offerings can find more information at [Midlakes.org/StudentEnrollment](http://Midlakes.org/StudentEnrollment). ■

# TEAMWORK *Makes*



The fall and winter seasons were full of collaborative efforts, with classes working between the two buildings and across grade levels. Our music department was even able to bring holiday cheer to our community during several holiday events.

The collaborative efforts focused on joint creativity, skill building and fellowship.

The importance of cooperation was not lost; when the older students were able to work with younger learners, they embraced their position as role models.

The younger students also made it clear they were looking up to the examples set by the students in the higher grade levels, both within their home building and across the high school. Jennifer Baxter and Jocelyn McConnon worked together to bring life to Baxter's kindergarten 'Felt Friends.' The Family



# The DREAM WORK



and Consumer Science students took the student's sketches of their imagined monsters and created felt friends, sewing and stitching them into existence.

Students Council again visited the primary grade levels to read with the younger students. Kindergarten joined together to host a grade-wide sing-a-long before the arrival of Santa Claus.

The Interact Club was part of the Festival of Lights, and ran a Holiday Food Drive at the end of the month.

Several Jazz Band students visited Ashton Place and Vienna Gardens to spread holiday cheer.

Our High School musicians joined Elementary Band Director Bethany Cripps for the continued tradition of 'Open the Case' day, an afternoon where new elementary musicians see their instruments for the first time.

Team work... makes the dream work.





## WAKLEY CHAMPION IN ANNUAL SPELLING BEE

At last, at last! After five years of trying, Graham Wakley has finally scored a win in the annual Midlakes Spelling Bee, part of the Scripps National Spelling Bee Competition.

Wakley, an eighth grader at Midlakes Middle School, won following a challenging 90-minute duel with runner-up Noah Mullard and Heick Polmanteer. Mullard is in third grade; Polmanteer is in fifth grade.

The Spelling Bee featured 28 students in grades 3-8 on the Midlakes High School Auditorium stage. Contested annually at Midlakes, 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.

The field was wide open, with four-time defending winner Alejandro Caraballo having aged out of eligibility.

However, the path was not an easy one. Word intensity escalated quickly in the 2026 edition,

ramping up pressure on the contenders.

The panel was whittled down to just three spellers by the sixth round; past editions have included round counts into the upper teens, even low 20s.

Polmanteer made his exit in that round, challenged by the word 'whittled' to rank third overall. To start the seventh round, Wakley aced 'memoirs,' putting the pressure on Mullard. Mullard missed on 'ominous,' setting Wakley up for the championship word, 'substantially.'

He rocketed through the final word, collecting his first championship in his final year of eligibility. He took runner-up honors in the last two competitions.

The Midlakes Spelling Bee is a part of the Scripps National Spelling Bee and is sponsored by Wayne-Finger Lakes BOCES, which will host a regional competition on its Newark campus in March with winners from area schools. Wakley and Mullard will compete in the March spelling bee. Polmanteer will serve as an alternate. ■



## DEJOHN WINS LEADERSHIP AWARD IN NIAGARA FALLS



Sophomore Alivia DeJohn won a Student Leadership Award at the 2025 New York State Council on Leadership and Student Activities in Niagara Falls.

DeJohn was part of a delegation of Midlakes students attending the conference. Through the weekend, students participated in breakout sessions focusing on leadership and community service while sharing ideas with students from other schools across the state. Their work also included roundtable sessions hosted by other schools, highlighting their work and best ideas.

The opening session focused on "Work2BeWell," a teen-led mental health and wellness initiative. The Work2BeWell program works to provide mental health resources to educators, teens and communities at no cost. The Work2BeWell program helps foster and create inclusive environments, and encourages participation among groups typically underrepresented in mental health dialogues.

Alivia has been involved in several leadership programs through her Midlakes career, participating in clubs at both the Elementary and Secondary buildings. She is a multi-sport athlete, playing with the varsity volleyball team, which reached the Section V tournament finals this past season, winter cheerleading and varsity lacrosse. She was previously included in Midlakes' National Elementary and National Junior Honor Societies. ■

## 2025-26 NEHS INDUCTIONS



2025-26 National Elementary Honor Society Inductees are: Coraline Akin, Addyson Briggs, Jack Crowley, Hartley Frost, Tyler Gage, Bennett Garrison, Cooper Hepler, Owen Hemenway, Olivia Janney, Sunny Lanterman, Malachi Llano, Ethan Miller, Brockton Mitchell, Emma Ross, Alexa Sinack, Vincentino Springer, Maci Taylor, Violet Tornow-Coffee, Aria Trickey, Olivia VanDamme, Shea VanDamme, Eva Williams, Elliott Wyjad and Graham Wyjad. Fifth and sixth graders are eligible for the National Elementary Honor Society after receiving a nomination from a teacher and earning a grade point average of at least 85 percent.

# FARM (TO SCHOOL) TO TABLE

Culinary instructors were on campus to work with Food and Nutrition in preparation for an upcoming FLX Harvest of the Month featured meal, chili.

Midlakes is part of a group of Ontario County school districts - including Bloomfield, Geneva and Victor - who participate in a Cornell Cooperative Farm to School grant to Ontario County.

"The Food and Nutrition department was approved for a grant that supports farm-to-school and local producers providing fresh foods in our school," said FFA member Chris Schuster Jr.

The goal is to help incorporate fresh, local produce in meals. The entry-level, one-day-a-month program is helping drive connections, so local produce can appear on menus on a regular basis.

"Recipes are derived from a Healthy School Food site and from Brigaid company that provided the culinary training in December," said Jil Swarouth, Director of Food and Nutrition.

Swarouth is joined by several Midlakes FFA members and local producers on a FLX Harvest of



the Month Farm to School Committee, including Schuster and Ana McConnon.

"The response from local farms is tremendous. We have had some [local farms] come and talk to the classes. We have also had some folks from Cornell who come and share," McConnon said.

At Midlakes, Genecco Produce Company is able to source some of the products that have been offered from local farms, with Cornell Co-Op's assistance.

The chili was offered as a taste-test before being officially added to the menu; Eric Blowers out of Geneva will have his beans featured in the Beef Chili next month.

September featured locally sourced watermelon, served at the Elementary School while fresh sweet corn on the cob was offered at the Secondary School. In October, both buildings shared in Apple Salad, featuring local honey, cucumbers and apples. November offered various takes on butternut squash.

After a taste-test and some refinement, roasted butternut squash was served at the Elementary School, with several students asking for seconds.

Cabbage was a highlight in December, with a holiday coleslaw offered at the high school while a 'cowboy dinner' was the featured meal during one of the Elementary School theme days. The Elementary Building was hosting a flannel day, and was served hot dogs and coleslaw.

The FLX Harvest of the Month began as a parallel to the Midlakes courses that produce lettuce, served in salads at the high school cafeteria. Now, that lettuce is part of the FLX Harvest committee discussions.

"FLX harvest is working with the 8th grade AG classes and the newly formed plant science class. This lettuce was grown in a hydroponic tower and is grown without pesticides," explained McConnon.

"The plant science class grew the lettuce during the first semester, and the AG class will take over. The lettuce is freshly picked for that day's lunch and has great benefits. Not only is it beneficial but it overall tastes better and more kids are taking salad because they know where it comes from."

The lettuce is used every five to six weeks in the kitchen, but with greens being the highlighted produce in May, the school-grown lettuce will have a more prominently featured position on the menus.

The trainings were offered at no cost through the New York State Department of Education Farm to School grant. ■



## IN THE WILD

### FFA VISITS COUNTRY MAX

The Small Animal Science and Career Exploration classes made the trek to CountryMax and the Phelps Veterinary Hospital.

At the Fairport Country-Max location, the students learned about how the retail location acquires pets, cares for them in store, what sells well, and about their climate controlled rooms. Students also learned about roles individuals play at the various locations.

After, Dr. Wright offered a tour of the Phelps Veterinary Hospital. Students visited the exam room, x-ray room, and surgery suite. The students asked a ton of questions and learned a lot about veterana-ry medicine and careers.

Overall, the trip offered an interesting look at the careers and businesses in the small animal science field while helping students learn a little more about their community. ■

### STUDENTS VISIT SALMON RIVER HATCHERY

Mr. Doan's Gemini Environmental Science class was joined by Mr. Clement's Outdoor Education class in a joint field trip to the Salmon River Fish Hatchery in Altmar, NY near Pulaski in Oswego County.

The trip focused on the importance of sustaining the population through hatchery efforts, and the students saw the process of harvesting eggs for future stockings. Salmon River Hatchery was opened in 1980, and focuses on chinook (king) salmon, coho (silver) salmon, steelhead, and brown trout.

In all, the hatchery supplies more than 100 public waters including Lake Ontario.

The hatchery stocks approximately 3.5 million trout and salmon annually, and helps with local warm water fish stockings. ■

# A MOMENT FROZEN IN TIME



**F**or Midlakes volleyball, this is the moment the ball hit the floor following an improbable rally and the team punched their ticket to the program's first trip to the New York State Public High School Athletic Association State Championship Tournament.

Midlakes Volleyball defeated Spencerport in a five-set thriller, facing elimination in the Unification game before rallying to sweep the final three sets and advance. Midlakes won the Class B2 Sectional Championship before squaring off with six-time defending Class B1 Champions Spencerport.

Fittingly, Aiden Bryant was at serve when Spencerport lobbed the ball back in the final moments of the fifth set. Sophomore Kaiden Guillaume made contact, then Braxton Wilkes

set the ball up, and Jesse Bennett drove home a kill through blocks, cementing the cinematic finish.

Bryant finished with the Section V Class B2 Tournament MVP award, and an All-Greater Rochester Nomination. Wilkes earned First Team All-League status, and the NYS Sportsmanship award. Jake Deckert was named to the First Team All-League with Jesse Bennet, and Declan Reed. Kyle Salisbury finished as the AGR Coach of the Year and Section V Class B2 Coach of the Year.

**Midlakes volleyball extends their humble thanks to the community for their season-long support, through the Section V Class B Championship and their first bid to the State Tournament.**



## MILESPPLIT NY COVERS BRYANT TRAINING

Bryan Deibel visited Midlakes to film a special feature highlighting Aiden Bryant for Mile Split NY in association with Flo Track ahead of the Virginia Showcase.

Bryant went to the Virginia Showcase at the Virginia Beach Sports Center in Virginia Beach, VA. There, he powered to fifth in the triple jump, leaping 47-feet, 4-inches.

While filming practice, Deibel had crophones on Aidan Cort and Bryant, filming walk-throughs and 60-meter/40-meter sprint

drills. Deibel filmed warmups and stretches, interviewed Cort and Bryant, and recorded the various sprint drills through the evening's practice.

"We had a chance to film the top returning triple jumper in the country," Deibel said. "It's hard to not say yes to that."

The evening's plans included the speed-focused drills needed for jumping success, both indoor and outdoor. Cort described the indoor season as Bryant's "grind" season, where he works

on building raw speed before the more specialized technique-focused work that comes with the outdoor season.

Bryant has won six New York State Public High School Athletic Association Championships.

Bryant will study Aerospace Engineering at Princeton University after graduating this spring. He pocketed his fifth PrimeTime585 Player of the Year award, backing up his Section V Volleyball Tournament Most Valuable Player Award. ■

## WATCH HERE



# ALUMNI RETURN FOR SWIM CELEBRATION

**M**idlakes Varsity Swim and Dive teams welcomed over 100 fans and supporters to the first Alumni Swim Event.

The highlight of the morning was the unveiling of the Wall of Champions; a series of plaques recognizing former Section V Champions and swimmers who qualified for the New York State Public High School Athletic Association State Championship Swim Meet.

In all, nearly 60 alumni were in attendance.

Of the returning graduates, 50 alumni swimmers were in the pool, participating in a racing card that included the 200-meter individual medley relay, 50m freestyle, 50m butterfly, 50m backstroke, 50m breaststroke and 200m free relay. Diving contestants were also showcased, completing three dives. Current Midlakes swim and dive roster team members were swimming in the timed exhibition races.

Notably, Katie Baldwin (Class of 2010) and 2022 Midlakes Athletic Hall of Fame inductee, dashed to a winning time in the 50 freestyle during the exhibition; she stopped the clocks in exactly the same time as her efforts in 2009 (25.20 second), when she raced in the NYSPhAA State Qualifier Meet. That time was also only a tenth of a second off her



school record of 25.10 seconds, which has stood for a decade and a half.

Jack Hauber shared remarks to open the Alumni Day. He recapped the extensive upgrades completed at the pool over the last year and offered recognitions to the record-setting performances and past champions who have represented Midlakes Swim and Dive. Proceeds from the event will benefit Midlakes Swim and Dive Program. Permanent plaques are on order and will arrive soon. ■



## CHASING 100

Abigail Hargather is on the fringes of becoming the first female Midlakes wrestler to tally 100 varsity wins. A win in January put her within sight for the current season, with a high school record of 91-32. She is 26-8 this year. Hargather is Section V's top ranked 132-pound wrestler. She won at the Red Jacket Invitational Tournament and the Bill Andersen Memorial Tournament. ■

## GIRLS WRESTLING CELEBRATES UNDEFEATED 2025-26 SEASON

On January 14, the team took a 40-15 win over Dundee-Penn Yan-Bradford, completing the first undefeated season in the young program's history.

In December, 286 wrestlers signed in to compete in 520 bouts across 13 weight classes at the second edition of the Frosty Freestyle II tournament, hosted at Midlakes on December 28.

The grapplers represented 33 different schools from Section III, IV, V and VI. The tournament took over the Secondary School, featuring five mats of simultaneous action in the middle and high school gymnasiums.

Leading the charge for the Screaming Eagles, Elizabeth Boughton (Class of 2029) battled to third in the 145-pound class. She finished with a pin of Niagara-Wheatfield standout Laila Ferguson in the third-place bout, winning in 34-seconds. ■



### SCHOLAR ATHLETES

## FALL SCHOLAR ATHLETES & TEAMS

Seven athletic teams and 68 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 2025 fall sports season.

In all, 44 girls and 24 boys reached the individual threshold of carrying a GPA of at least 90.

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

### GIRLS

**VOLLEYBALL: 95.61**

### GIRLS

**SWIMMING: 95.22**

### GIRLS

**TENNIS: 94.59**

### CROSS

**COUNTRY: 93.68**

### GIRLS

**SOCCER: 93.56**

### BOYS

**VOLLEYBALL: 91.50**

**GOLF: 90.08**

## HIGHLIGHTS

MAHER WINS  
DAR AWARD

Midlakes Senior Aeryn Maher has been named the recipient of the Good Citizen Award, sponsored by the Daughters of the American Revolution.

Maher was selected as the winner among the three finalists at Midlakes Secondary; schools awarding the Good Citizen honors ask faculty and staff nominate up to three seniors who display the qualities of:

**Dependability:** truthfulness, loyalty, punctuality and being worthy of trust

**Service:** cooperation, courtesy, and contributing to the welfare of others

**Leadership:** personality, self-control, ability to assume responsibility, ability to inspire others, and a decision-maker

**Patriotism:** devotion to and support of one's country, supporting service members and veterans, working for causes that make one's community stronger, and appreciating the cultural and historic importance of America's unique population

From the nominees, the senior class then selects the recipient of the school's DAR Good Citizen Award. This year, following a tie in the round of student voting, three students were on a tie-breaker ballot with staff casting votes that led to Maher's selection.

Maher, who plans to study dance and business after graduation, has declined the option to enter the DAR's competitive scholarship competition. ■

MIDLAKES THEATRE PRESENTS  
'ONCE UPON A MATTRESS'

The award-winning Midlakes Theatre Experience is proud to announce its spring musical production, 'Once Upon A Mattress,' coming to Midlakes High School Auditorium in March.

Directed by Marie Fischer (Class of 2015) with Mikayla Wilkes and Lindsay Douglass as Assistant Directors, 'Once Upon A Mattress' is set in a fictional, medieval-like kingdom. Most of the production takes place in the castle, home to the irritable Queen Aggravain, who has banned marriages until her son, Prince Dauntless, takes a bride. Stefan Uveges (Class of 2013) joins the team again as choreographer with vocal and music direction brought to you by Adam Chandler and Will Hope.

The technical elements for this production are led by Charlie King and Cris Brown (Class of 1994), with lighting design by Ross Gifford (Class of 1997) as well as props and set dressing curated by Trevor Barcomb (Class of 2018). Production staff is rounded out with costumers, Nancy Denisi (Class of 1975) and Susie Bonawitz.

'Once Upon a Mattress' is a comedic musical based on the fairy tale, 'The Princess and the Pea.' A brooding Queen imparts a marriage restriction on her subjects - including her son, the Prince - until she finds a suitable princess for her son to wed. Princess Winnifred arrives, and the Queen develops a crooked 'sensitivity test' to prove Winnifred is not delicate enough to marry the prince. The Queen stacks 20 mattresses - and under those, places a single pea - which any princess would surely detect, and then be unable to sleep comfortably. Interestingly, the Minstrel



and the players help frame the story, and reveal the true story is different from the legend commonly told in the kingdom.

Liesl Dorr (Class of 2029) will portray Queen Aggravain, with Brian Cannan (Class of 2028) playing Prince Dauntless. Robert Lally (Class of 2026) will play King Sextimus the Silent, and Maeve Jankowski (Class of 2027) is Princess Winnifred the Woebegone. Additional players include Allison DeRuyter (Minstrel), Ellie Dorr (Lady Larken), Blake Jensen (Wizard), Gavin Ruggles (Jester), Justin Herman (Sir Harry), and an ensemble cast of Mattea Brodman,

Alexander Burnett, Hayden Bump, Brooke Carnright, Alivia DeJohn, Lee Henderson, Hayden Lawson, Anna Lightfoote, Aubrey Rodriguez, Sophia Schutt and Mackenzie Weitzel.

The Midlakes Theatre Experience prides itself on fostering talent and producing quality performances for the community. Performances will be 7:30 pm Thursday, March 12 through Saturday, March 14. A 2:00 pm matinee is scheduled for Sunday, March 15. All performances will be at the Midlakes High School Auditorium.

Tickets will be available at the Midlakes High School Main Office, and will be sold to students and staff during secondary lunches. Tickets can be purchased ahead at Sandy's Floral Gallery (Clifton Springs), Phelps Hometown Pharmacy (Phelps), Renaissance-The Goodie II Shoppe (Canandaigua) and Finger Lakes Goods (Geneva). Advance sale tickets are \$10, and \$8 for students and senior citizens. Day-of tickets will cost an additional \$2 and will be available at the door. ■



# Cabaret Night



The winter performance staple 'Cabaret Night' includes transforming the Middle School Cafeteria into a jazz lounge. Individual and group performances filled the evening, with 20 acts crossing the stage. Seniors Aeryn Maher and Makenzie Davis served as hosts. Both the Middle School and High School Jazz Bands were on stage. The popular evening was sold out again; the format offers the students a chance to try different styles or parts that may not fit more traditional concert settings. ■



## BELL, CANNAN EARN STATE NOMINATIONS

Kyle Bell and Brian Cannan earned nominations to the Area All-State Festival for Zone 2, and Bell earned a nomination to play with the All-State Symphonic Band.

### BELL SELECTED FOR NYSSMA ALL-STATE

Kyle Bell was selected to perform Tuba with the New York State School Music Association Conference All-State Symphonic Band.

This is the highest honor for a New York State high school band student, equating to the annual New York State Public High School Athletic Association (NYSPPAA) State Championships athletic events.

"Kyle represents the absolute best that we strive for in our bands at Midlakes. He is hard working, incredibly kind, and is always contributing his best every day," said Midlakes Secondary Band Director, Will Hope. "We are incredibly proud of his accomplishments and look forward to seeing him take the stage in Rochester."

Bell (Class of 2026) earned an A+ rating on a level VI solo at this year's Solo Festival.

A testament to his musical dedication, performed at this year's NYSSMA Winter Conference in Rochester, December 4-7, working with Dr. Courtney Snyder from the University of Michigan.

### BELL, CANNAN QUALIFY FOR AREA ALL-STATE

Brian Cannan and Kyle Bell represented Midlakes at the New York State School Music Association Area All-State Festival for Zone 2 at Gates-Chili Central School District.

Brian Cannan (Class of 2028) will play French Horn and Kyle Bell (Class of 2026) will play tuba with the Symphonic Band, under the direction of Dr. Jared Chase from Nazareth University.

Their acceptance to the festival demonstrates their commitment to musical excellence at Midlakes and NYSSMA Solo Festival.

"We are incredibly proud of these two musicians," said Will Hope, Secondary Band Director.

The festival is a high honor for students in the region. Midlakes is part of Zone 2. Zone 2 includes eight counties, and is the second largest NYSSMA section. Local counties of Ontario, Seneca and Wayne are joined in Zone 2 by Monroe County, and the GLOW region's Genesee, Livingston, Orleans and Wyoming counties.

The pair played during the festival in November at Gates-Chili. ■



## RPO KICKSTARTS BUSY HOLIDAY CONCERT SEASON

The Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, under the direction of internationally-known Maestro Gerard Floriano, made a return to Midlakes in December.

The concert was again un-written by G.W. Lisk Co. and supported by the Clifton Springs Rotary Club. Proceeds of the concert to benefit Rotary.

The concert featured seasonal music and classical orchestral pieces. Midlakes graduate Lisa Albrecht, a member of the RPO and Midlakes Graduate of Distinction, was performing with the RPO.

Later in December, the Secondary and Elementary ensembles were on stage for Holiday showcases in the auditorium. ■





## THIRD GRADERS SHARE IN 'NEW INSTRUMENT' FUN

**B**y far one of the most anticipated events of the year is New Instrument Day, where the third grade band members open their instruments and see their lesson schedule for the first time.

This is the student's first look at their new gear, and their first experiences with handling and assembly. The High School band members visit the Elementary School, and join the elementary students as they learn proper handling and assembly, and how to make the beginnings of notes and sounds.

Band director Mr. Hope brought Ali Gallagher, Jamie Lawson, Sydney Rodriguez, Maddie Stratton and Duke VanSavage to meet the elementary band students. Mrs. Kenyon and Ms. Cripps were also supporting the students as they tried out their new instruments.

This event is a bright spot for the department district-wide, giving the young students a connection to the present high school stars while the older students stoke the flames for the future of our music department.

This is the unofficial kick off of 'Music in our Schools' month, which goes through the end of March. ■



## CONGRATULATIONS MIDLAKES ALL-COUNTY NOMINEES



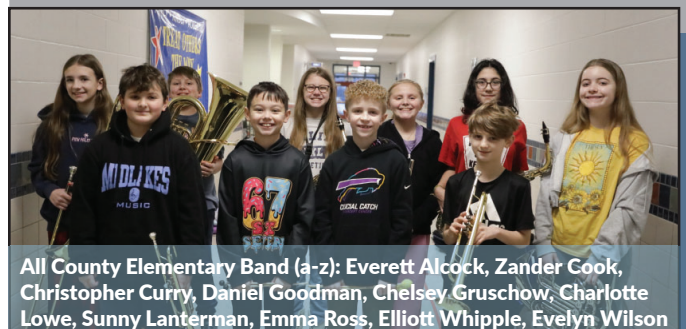
Senior High Chorus: Allison DeRuyter, Ellie Dorr, Brian Cannan, Bobby Lally, Gavin Ruggles, Liesl Dorr, and Anna Lightfoote.



Senior High Orchestra: Kyle Bell, Duke VanSavage, Ian Gonzalez, Sydney Rodriguez, and Ali Gallagher.



Middle School Band: Elijah Payne, Eleanor Foster, Sammy Bishop, James Stratton, Shelby Cummings, and Aubrey Rodriguez.  
Also (not pictured): Ellen Lincoln



All County Elementary Band (a-z): Everett Alcock, Zander Cook, Christopher Curry, Daniel Goodman, Chelsey Gruschow, Charlotte Lowe, Sunny Lanterman, Emma Ross, Elliott Whipple, Evelyn Wilson



Elementary Chorus All County (a-z): Benjamin DiPronio, Hartley Frost, Nina Hicks, Riley Hixson, Autumn Rogers, Toby Martin, Isabella Pedersen, Kate Schrader, Autumn Schuiling, Olivia VanDamme, Shea VanDamme and Donovan Weaver



# BUSY FALL, WINTER FOR MIDLAKES FFA

**M**idlakes FFA has had a busy winter season so far. Midlakes FFA sent nine members to the Ignite Conference, hosted by New York State FFA Officers and staff.

At the Ignite Conference, students focus on individual growth, 'sparking' interest in their future and upcoming FFA activities, 'Fueling' their focus and motivation with guidance in helping their communities, and 'Illuminating' their FFA membership, following a path to leadership roles.

The Midlakes High School delegation 'Fueled' their leadership, and the Middle School representatives 'sparked' a fresh interest in FFA Activities.

FFA Advisor Jessica Spence attended a workshop focusing on new benchmarking guidelines.

The club was also active in the Manchester-Shortsville Lighted Tractor Parade.

Students built a float and rigged holiday lights to tractors. The involvement heightened overall awareness of Midlakes FFA, and included of community involvement, a pillar of FFA activities.

Midlakes FFA was highlighted at a recent board meeting, talking about their upcoming events, and the Career Development Events (CDE). FFA Week falls Feb. 21-28.

## WHITE TO VISIT ALBANY

Emma Mae White is attending the New York State Leaders event in Albany at the beginning of February. She will participate in

leadership workshops and meet with elected officials.

## AG LITERACY WEEK

Ag Literacy Week is March 16-20th. The book this year is Seasons on the Farm by Chelsea Tornetto. FFA members will be reading the story to elementary school youth K-3 and guiding them through an activity about farming at various times of year.

## MIDLAKES SENDS SEVEN TO DISTRICT 8 LDES

Seven FFA members participated in the District 8 Leadership Development Events (LDE) on February 7th, including Creed Speaking and Job Interviews. Qualifiers move on to SubStates competitions.



## MATHALETES POST PODIUM FINISHES

The multi-day Mathalon has come to a close, with both Midlakes teams finishing on the podium.

The team of Penny Schwilk, Jack Everson and Addyson Briggs took second, while the trio of Connor Gage, Sammy Bishop and Owen Hemenway placed third.

The Midlakes teams stayed among the top performing teams throughout the three days of competition.

All six of these students represented Midlakes well.

Congratulations on a superlative effort!



## LOOKING AHEAD



## GET IN THE POOL

The Midlakes Aquatic Center is a gathering place for the community as a whole. It is a site for swim and lifeguarding lessons, local CPR and underwater training. It is used by the Phelps Community Center, Clifton YMCA and Ontario County Sheriff's Department. Morning, family, lap, and open swim as well as water aerobics are offered throughout the week. Classes fill quickly.

**Family/Open/Lap Swim:** 6-8 p.m., Friday.

**Morning Swim:** 6-7:30 a.m., Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

**Water Aerobics:** 7:30-8:30 a.m., Mon., Wed., & Fri.

For more information, call (315) 548-6451 or visit the District's website at [Midlakes.org/AquaticCenter](http://Midlakes.org/AquaticCenter). ■

## CAN'T MISS HAPPENINGS



## MUSIC IN OUR SCHOOLS CONCERT

Show your Midlakes pride and support the performing arts as we celebrate Music in Our Schools Month in March. The Secondary School will host a concert March 24 at the High School Auditorium, featuring the High School Chorus, High School Band and Middle School Band.

**DATES:** March 24, 7 pm; High School Auditorium. ■

## MIDLAKES WINS 2025 NYSPRA WRITING AWARD

Midlakes Schools and the Phelps-Clifton Springs Central School District earned a New York Schools Public Relations Association Honors award for Excellence in Writing, for the piece *History Making Season*.

The piece recapped the stellar season and resurgence of the Varsity Boys Lacrosse program. The story was shared to local media, and appeared on [Midlakes.org](http://Midlakes.org).

Midlakes Schools will be recognized at the annual NYSPRA Spring Conference next month, held at Turning Stone Resort and Conference Center in Verona, NY. ■

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### » FEB.

**END OF 2ND TRIMESTER, UPK-6TH,** February 27

### » MAR.

**PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES, K-6**  
March 10-12  
Elementary Half-Day Schedule

**SUPERINTENDENT'S CONFERENCE DAY**  
March 13 (NO STUDENTS)

**THEATRE PRESENTS 'ONCE UPON A MATTRESS'**  
7:30 pm, March 12-14; 2 pm, March 15

**BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING**  
6:30 p.m., March 16

**SPRING JV AND VARSITY SPORTS BEGIN,** March 16

**BLOOD DRIVE,**  
9-2 pm, March 18  
MHS Gymnasium

**MUSIC IN OUR SCHOOLS SECONDARY SCHOOL CONCERT,** March 24,  
HS Auditorium

**SPRING BREAK**  
March 30-April 3

### » APRIL

**END OF THIRD QUARTER, SECONDARY SCHOOL,** April 10

**ROLLERSKATING PARTY**  
April 13: UPK-2nd  
April 14: 3rd, 4th grade  
April 15: 5th, 6th grade

**BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING**  
Wayne-Finger Lakes Component  
Vote; 6:30 p.m., April 22

Events subject to change. Find school calendars, sports schedules and more under the "Community" tab at [Midlakes.org](http://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 visit the District job board, at [www.midlakes.org/jobs](http://www.midlakes.org/jobs) or scan the QR Code below.

## OPENINGS

- **BUS DRIVERS** are needed for multiple openings. Competitive salary and paid training. There are driver, trainee and substitute driver positions open.
- **CUSTODIAN**, Custodial and substitute openings.
- **SCHOOL MONITOR**, Bus positions open.
- **SPEECH and LANGUAGE THERAPIST or PATHOLOGIST**, probationary listing, with two openings.
- **TEACHING ASSISTANT** probationary listing, with three openings.
- **TEACHER AIDE** probationary listings, with four openings.
- **SUBSTITUTES** Substitute positions are open throughout the district. ■

