

Highland Central School District

2026-2027 Budget

MAY 2026



Highland Elementary School Celebrates Diversity at Parade of Nations

This winter, Highland Elementary School (HES) proudly hosted its first-ever Parade of Nations, celebrating the many cultures that make up its vibrant school community. The event was originally planned to coincide with the closing ceremony of the Winter Olympics. After weather-related delays, the celebration came to life in spectacular fashion on February 27.

Students from all grade levels were invited to participate by marching with their family's nation of origin. Many proudly represented their heritage by wearing traditional attire or carrying their country's flag. The colorful procession filled the hallways with



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Proposed 2026-2027 School Budget Maintains Staffing and Student Programs; Meets Tax Cap Criteria

The Highland Central School District Board of Education is proposing a \$59,608,963 budget for the 2026-2027 school year—a spending plan that continues to provide students with all existing levels of programs and services. The proposal reflects a 2.68 percent increase in the tax levy and meets the requirements of the New York State (NYS) tax levy limit calculation for a simple majority voter approval.

“The ability to present a budget proposal that meets the tax cap requirements without the need for reductions reflects the thoughtful planning and strong collaboration among our building leaders, department administrators, and the Board of Education,” said Superintendent Joel Freer. “This outcome reflects everyone’s commitment to developing a fiscally responsible budget that continues to support the high standard of education our students deserve while staying within the State’s tax cap limits.”

In addition to being asked to consider the budget proposition, members of the community will also weigh in on a separate request to establish a Repair Reserve Fund for the purpose of proactively addressing future significant repair needs without creating undue impact on the annual operating budget.

Two Board of Education seats are also available. Current school board members Heather Welch and Alan Barone, along with newcomers Jocelyn Swart and Shawna Newkirk-Reynolds, are seeking election.

Eligible voters can participate in the budget vote and school board election on Tuesday, May 19, between 6 AM and 9 PM, in the Highland High School Band Room, which is located at 320 Pancake Hollow Road, or vote early with an Early Mail or Absentee Ballot.

Careful Planning Shapes Budget Proposal with No Staffing Cuts

The development of this year’s budget was guided by a collaborative process focused on protecting student programs while remaining fiscally responsible. The Board of Education approached this year’s budget cycle with a clear goal of avoiding the need to cut positions to balance the budget, which continues to be impacted by rising costs—just as homeowners are experiencing. The Business Office worked closely with building principals and department heads to review the current year’s budget line by line, identifying areas for reduction that would not significantly affect students or programs. Through these efforts, along with a careful review of additional revenue sources, the District was able to reduce an initial \$1.8 million budget gap to \$576,204, which was ultimately closed through the use of reserves and fund balance.

“Our team approached this year’s budget process with a strong commitment to protecting our students’ experience,” said Freer. “By examining every aspect of the budget, we were able to close a significant gap while avoiding reductions that would impact our programs.”

Revenues and Expenditures

This year’s budget proposal represents a \$2,283,678 increase over the current year’s budget. Contractual obligations for salaries and benefits, along with rising utility costs such as fuel and electricity, are the primary factors driving this increase.

As of the printing of this newsletter, NYS has not yet adopted its budget; however, based on the

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- Sarah Hathaway, Director of Pupil Personnel Services
- Desmond Barnett, School Business Administrator
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Proposed 2026-2027 School Budget Maintains Staffing and Student Programs; Meets Tax Cap Criteria Continued from page 1

most recently available data included in the proposals, it is anticipated that the District will receive an estimated \$21,472,754 aid package this year. That is an increase of \$826,579 from last year.

Use of Fund Balance and Reserves

The Board has approved applying \$1,650,000 from the District's fund balance to reduce the budget proposal's impact on the tax levy. After consulting with the District's financial advisors, the Board also approved the use of \$76,204 from the Employee Retirement System (ERS) reserve to offset eligible expenses and prevent the need to make program cuts.

"We remain committed to making thoughtful financial decisions that put our students first while being mindful of our community's investment in education," said Freer.

If the State's final budget provides more aid than projected, the District will reduce the use of fund balance. If aid is lower than expected, additional reserves may be used to offset the difference.

Tax Cap Requirements Met

Under NYS law, a school district must plan its budget around a complex formula that calculates its maximum allowable tax levy increase before needing a super-majority voter approval.

With a tax levy increase of \$907,928, Highland's budget proposal is within that limit and meets the requirement for a simple majority voter approval of 50 percent plus one.

What Will the Budget Cost Me?

The tax levy represents the total amount of taxes a school district needs to support the school budget. The tax levy amount for 2026-2027 is \$34,817,153. The cost of the tax levy is shared among all taxpayers included in the tax base. Factors such as overall assessed property values, equalization rates, and exemptions are all used to determine actual taxpayer impact.

The following information represents the estimated increase to a homeowner in the Town of Lloyd and is based on the most current information available. Towns typically do not finalize assessment rolls until early July, so these calculations are estimated based on 2025-2026 equalization rates.

ASSESSED VALUE IN TOWN OF LLOYD	ANNUAL INCREASE	MONTHLY INCREASE
\$100K	\$69.89	\$5.82
\$200K	\$139.78	\$11.65
\$300K	\$209.67	\$17.47
\$400K	\$279.56	\$23.30

What is a Contingency Budget?

If the proposed budget fails to receive approval, the Board of Education has the option of resubmitting the same budget or a revised version to voters, or adopting a contingency budget. If the budget is defeated a second time, then the District is required to adopt a contingency budget.

Under a contingency budget, the tax levy cannot be increased from the prior year. Equipment purchases would need to be reduced by \$230,000, and an additional reduction of \$677,928 in expenses would be required. In addition, only essential maintenance on facilities would be permitted and no community use of facilities without fees would be allowed.

Proposition 2: Repair Reserve Fund

Proposition 2 asks voters to consider establishing a Repair Reserve Fund to help the District plan for and manage the cost of major, non-recurring repairs

to facilities and equipment. If approved, the reserve could hold up to \$500,000 and would allow the District to set aside funds over time—using sources such as unassigned fund balance or other legally available funds—so that unexpected repair needs can be addressed without placing added pressure on the annual budget.

Creating this reserve is intended to support long-term financial stability by reducing the need for sudden budget adjustments or spikes in spending when significant repairs arise, which our voters have expressed as a priority. The use of any funds from the reserve would follow strict legal guidelines, including a required public hearing and approval by a two-thirds vote of the Board of Education, except in the case of emergencies as defined by law.

"This reserve would provide a responsible way for us to plan ahead for larger repair needs while protecting our annual budget and minimizing the impact on taxpayers," said Freer. "It also ensures we can address critical facility needs in a timely manner without disrupting the educational experience for our students."

"By examining every aspect of the budget, we were able to close a significant gap while avoiding reductions that would impact our programs."

SUPERINTENDENT JOEL FREER

Please Vote

The community is encouraged to participate in the school budget vote and Board of Education election on Tuesday, May 19, between 6 AM and 9 PM, at the High School Band Room.

Absentee ballots and Early Mail ballots are available for eligible voters who are unable to vote in person. Please visit our website (highland-k12.org) or call (845) 691-1000 for more details.

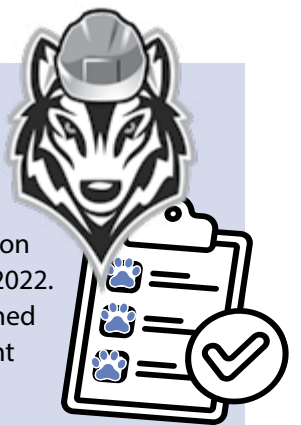
Capital Project Completed on Time and Within Budget

The District is proud to announce the successful completion of our Capital Project, which was approved by voters in 2022. We are especially pleased to share that the project was finished on time and within our budget parameters—an achievement that reflects careful planning, strong oversight, and a shared commitment to fiscal responsibility.

Most of the remaining work on the multi-year project was completed during the summer of 2025. A small portion of the infrastructure upgrades extended into the fall to ensure that all improvements met the highest standards.

The project was completed in two phases. Phase I focused on essential upgrades across all school buildings, addressing aging infrastructure and improving daily learning environments. Phase II centered on transforming the High School athletic field. Improvements included the installation of a new turf field, the replacement of the track with added perimeter drainage, updated bleachers, and the construction of a concession stand, press box, and restroom facilities.

We are deeply grateful to our community for its continued support. This project represents a meaningful investment in our schools and our students, and it would not have been possible without the trust and partnership of our voters. Together, we have created improved spaces that will benefit the District for years to come.



Highland High School Names Top Students of Class of 2026

Highland High School (HHS) is proud to announce that KaiLani Angiolillo has been named valedictorian of the Class of 2026, and Abigail Paserba is this year's salutatorian.

KaiLani, the daughter of Mark and Lina Angiolillo, earned an outstanding grade point average (GPA) of 103.74. She has taken 14 Advanced Placement (AP) and college-level courses during her time at HHS.



Highland High School Class of 2026 valedictorian KaiLani Angiolillo (right) and salutatorian Abigail Paserba.

A Highland student since Kindergarten, KaiLani has been deeply involved in school life, holding leadership roles across numerous

organizations. She serves as president of the National Art Honor Society and Peer Leadership Club, co-president of Mathletes, and treasurer of both the Multicultural Club and the Spanish Honor Society. She is also an active member of the National Honor Society and the Interact Club.

In athletics, KaiLani has excelled as a multi-sport athlete. She competed in volleyball, basketball, and track and field. In basketball, she earned recognition as an All-Star in the Mid-Hudson Athletic League National Conference and helped lead her team to a Section IX Class A championship.

Outside of school, KaiLani volunteers with the Warwick Area Farmworker Organization, supporting migrant families, and assists at a local dental office. She has also been a mental health advocate, organizing activities to promote

awareness of mental health issues and using art and social media to support others.

While she is still considering her college plans, KaiLani intends to pursue a career in the health field. Reflecting on her high school experience, she shared, "I am incredibly proud of the Class of 2026 and grateful for the friendships and memories that made these years so meaningful."

Abigail, the daughter of Suzanna Ellison Paserba and Todd Paserba, achieved an impressive GPA of 102.96 while handling a rigorous course schedule of 12 AP and college-level classes.

A Highland student since Kindergarten, Abigail has been very active in both academics and athletics. She is an editor for the school newspaper and a member of the Yearbook Club, Mathletes, Interact Club, National Honor Society, and Spanish Honor Society.

A standout athlete, Abigail has played Varsity Softball since her freshman year and served as team captain in JV Basketball. Her Softball team achieved significant success, including two Section IX Class B championships, a regional championship, and a Final Four appearance. She has also been recognized as a scholar-athlete throughout High School.

Outside of school, Abigail volunteers through the Ascension Holy Trinity Mission Center. She also works part-time as a server, a Summer Fun camp counselor, and a Game Day Crew member for the Highland Central School District. She will attend Russell Sage College in the fall, where she plans to major in Sports Management on a pre-law track while continuing her softball career at the collegiate level. Her long-term goal is to become a sports lawyer, with a focus on advocating for and empowering athletes.



The Top 10 students of Highland High School's Class of 2026. They are (in rank order): KaiLani Angiolillo, Abigail Paserba, May Maddalena, Rylie Klein, Elizabeth Harris, Kyle Menezes, Saniya Shahid, Samuel Ellis, Alessia Wallen, and Victor Dahowski.

Looking back at her time at Highland, Abigail said, "At the end of the day, it's the people and the memories we created together that I will miss most."

Each year, HHS also recognizes the accomplishments of its other high-achieving graduates. Rounding out the Top 10 for the Class of 2026 (in order of rank) are May Maddalena, Rylie Klein, Elizabeth Harris, Kyle Menezes, Saniya Shahid, Samuel Ellis, Alessia Wallen, and Victor Dahowski.

Principal Brandon Opitz commended the students for their achievements. "KaiLani and Abigail, along with the rest of the Top 10, exemplify the dedication, leadership, and perseverance that define Highland High School," he said. "Their accomplishments are a source of great pride for our school community."

Highland Elementary School Students Celebrate 100 Days of Learning

Highland Elementary School marked a special milestone on February 24 as students celebrated the 100th day of school in a fun and engaging way. The day was filled with creativity, laughter, and hands-on learning—especially for the school's youngest Huskies.

Students in Grades K-2 joined in the celebration by dressing up as if they were 100 years old. From gray wigs and colorful suspenders to fancy pearls and sturdy walking canes, the hallways were filled with "centenarians" eager to mark 100 days of growth and achievement. Their imaginative costumes brought smiles to classmates and staff alike.

Throughout the day, students participated in activities centered on the number 100. They counted, created, built, and explored through interactive lessons designed to reinforce math skills and highlight how much they have learned since the start of the school year. The celebration blended fun with learning while helping students to recognize this important academic milestone.

The 100th day also provided an opportunity to reflect on progress, perseverance, and the excitement of learning. It was a day full of smiles and memorable moments—another example of the joyful spirit that makes Highland Elementary School such a special place for students to grow and thrive!



School District Budget Notice

OVERALL BUDGET PROPOSAL	Budget Adopted for the 2025-2026 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2026-2027 School Year	Contingency Budget for the 2026-2027 School Year *
Total Budgeted Amount, Not Including Separate Propositions	\$57,325,285	\$59,608,963	\$58,701,035
Increase/Decrease for the 2026-2027 School Year		\$2,283,678	\$1,375,750
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		3.98%	2.40%
Change in the Consumer Price Index		2.63%	
A. Proposed Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount	\$ 33,909,225	\$34,817,153	
B. Levy to Support Library Debt, if Applicable	\$0	\$0	
C. Levy for Non-Excludable Propositions, if Applicable **	\$0	\$0	
D. Total Tax Cap Reserve Amount Used to Reduce Current Year Levy	\$0	\$0	
E. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy (A + B + C - D)	\$33,909,225	\$34,817,153	\$33,909,225
F. Total Permissible Exclusions	\$1,793,194	\$1,833,317	
G. School Tax Levy Limit, <u>Excluding</u> Levy for Permissible Exclusions	\$32,116,031	\$32,983,836	
H. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy, <u>Excluding</u> Levy to Support Library Debt and/or Permissible Exclusions (E - B - F + D)	\$32,116,031	\$32,983,836	
I. Difference: G - H (Negative Value Requires 60.0% Voter Approval - See Note Below Regarding Separate Propositions) **	\$0	\$0	
Administrative Component	\$5,537,960	\$5,873,282	\$5,776,485
Program Component	\$42,845,811	\$44,510,487	\$43,804,273
Capital Component	\$8,941,514	\$9,225,194	\$9,120,276

* Provide a statement of assumptions made in projecting a contingency budget for the 2026-27 school year, should the proposed budget be defeated pursuant to Section 2023 of the Education Law.

A contingency budget would eliminate all equipment purchases which are currently budgeted at \$230,000. There would need to be a further budget reduction of \$677,928 to maintain the tax levy at the level in effect for the 2025-2026 school year. There would be only essential maintenance performed on the facilities; no community use of the facilities without fees would be allowable.

** List Separate Propositions that are not included in the Total Budgeted Amount: (Tax Levy associated with educational or transportation services propositions are not eligible for exclusion and may affect voter approval requirements)

Description	Amount
Repair Reserve Proposition	\$0

Under the Budget Proposed for the 2026-27 School Year

Estimated Basic STAR Exemption Savings ¹	\$617
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¹ The basic school tax relief (STAR) exemption is authorized by section 425 of the Real Property Tax Law.

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2026-2027 by the qualified voters of the Highland Central School District, Ulster County, New York, will be held at Highland High School in said district on Tuesday, May 19, 2026 between the hours of 6:00 am and 9:00 pm, prevailing time in the Band Room (D-10) at the Highland High School, at which time the polls will be opened to vote by voting ballot or machine.

Polls will be open on Tuesday, May 19, from 6 AM to 9 PM at the Highland High School Band Room

Am I Eligible to Vote?

In order to vote you must be:

- ★ 18 years of age or older.
- ★ A citizen of the United States.
- ★ A resident of the Highland Central School District for at least 30 days immediately prior to the vote.

Voter registration is required to vote in the School District Budget Vote and School Board Election. Unregistered voters should call Lisa Cerniglia at (845) 691-1005 no later than Thursday, May 14, to complete a voter registration form. Voters currently registered with the County Board of Elections may also vote in the School District Budget Vote and School Board Election.

Are Copies of the Budget Available?

Copies of the proposed budget are available at all of the District's buildings, as well as at the Highland High School Band Room. As required by law, copies of Part I of the District's School Report Card, as issued by the New York State Education Department, are also available for public review and are attached to the District's budget document. The report includes the State Accountability Status for all schools in the District, as well as a Fiscal Accountability Supplement. Part II of the mandated Report Card is not scheduled for release until June. Please contact the Business Office for more details or to review the State's report.

What You'll See on the Ballot

PROPOSITION #1: SCHOOL BUDGET VOTE FOR 2026-2027 SCHOOL YEAR: \$59,608,963

"SHALL the Board of Education of the Highland Central School District be authorized to expend for budgetary purposes in the 2026-2027 school year the sum of \$59,608,963 and to levy the necessary tax therefore?"

PROPOSITION #2: ESTABLISHMENT OF A REPAIR RESERVE FUND

"SHALL the Board of Education of the Highland Central School District be authorized to establish a Repair Reserve Fund pursuant to New York General Municipal Law §6-d for the purpose of financing the cost of non-recurring repairs to capital improvements and equipment, the ultimate amount of such fund to not exceed \$500,000; and that such funds shall be transferred from available fund balance, budgetary appropriations, and/or other legally available funds of the District; and that expenditures from such fund shall be made in accordance with the provisions of General Municipal Law §6-d?"

TRUSTEES FOR THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

You may vote for any TWO candidates:

- Heather Welch
- Alan Barone
- Jocelyn Swart
- Shawna Newkirk-Reynolds

Write-in: _____

Write-in: _____

PLEASE
VOTE

May 19, 2026
6 AM to 9 PM

Highland High School
Band Room

Parade of Nations *Continued from page 1*

energy, creating a powerful display of unity and cultural pride.

Students who did not march took part by lining the hallways to cheer on their classmates. Their applause and encouragement helped foster an atmosphere of support and appreciation, reinforcing the spirit of inclusion that defines HES.

“Our first Parade of Nations was a beautiful reflection of who we are as a school community,” said Principal Ian MacCormack. “Seeing our students celebrate their heritage while supporting one another truly captured the spirit of Highland.”

We are incredibly proud of the diversity that makes our school such a special place.”

The success of this inaugural event has already sparked excitement for future celebrations, as Highland continues to honor and uplift the cultures and traditions that enrich its community.



Highland Students Get a Sweet Lesson in Maple Syrup Making

Grade 2 students from Highland Elementary School visited Highland High School in March for a hands-on look at how maple syrup is made, turning a local tradition into an engaging learning experience.

During the visit, High School students from Kevin Rizzo’s science classes led the younger students through a series of interactive learning stations that explored the science and process behind maple syrup production. The Grade 2 students learned about tapping maple trees, gathering and storing sap, and measuring sugar content, as well as the role of reverse osmosis and the boiling, filtering, and grading processes that turn sap into syrup.

Rizzo said that the experience provided a meaningful opportunity for his students to apply what they’ve learned in class while sharing their knowledge with younger learners.

“Having our students teach the process of making maple syrup helps them deepen their understanding while building confidence and communication skills,” he said. “It’s also a great way to connect with younger students and spark their curiosity about science.”

The visit also highlighted the cultural traditions connected to maple syrup.

Students spent time with High School French teacher Kyle Welch, who introduced them to the Canadian Winter Carnival and its maple-themed celebrations.

In addition, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) teacher Elyssa Dewitt led an activity on phase changes, which occur when matter transitions between states (solid, liquid, or gas) due to changes in temperature or pressure. The activity helped the students understand how temperature affects the production of maple syrup. The lesson concluded with a sweet treat as students sampled maple taffy, a classic winter confection made by pouring hot syrup onto cold snow.

The day offered a unique opportunity for cross-grade collaboration, allowing Elementary and High School students to learn from one another while exploring science, culture, and a beloved regional tradition.



IBM Engineers Lead Hands-On Design Challenge at HHS

Highland High School (HHS) students had the opportunity to think and work like engineers during a special visit from two professionals from IBM in March. As part of National Engineers Week, the engineers led an engaging, hands-on design challenge that encouraged students to apply creativity, teamwork, and problem-solving skills.

Working in teams, students were tasked with designing and building a structure that could block a cardboard box “goal” while standing on its own—using a limited budget and a selection of everyday materials such as notecards, straws, rubber bands, and tape. Each material carried a cost, requiring students to carefully plan, collaborate, and make strategic decisions throughout the design process.

The activity highlighted key engineering concepts, including working within constraints, learning from trial and error, and balancing creativity with practicality. Students were also recognized for coming up with innovative designs and demonstrating strong teamwork.

This interactive experience provided a valuable connection to engineering principles and careers, inspiring students to explore future opportunities in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields.

“This was a great opportunity for students to experience real-world problem-solving and see how creativity, teamwork, and perseverance all play a role in engineering,” said HHS STEM teacher Elyssa DeWitt. “It was exciting to see students collaborate, think critically, and approach challenges the way engineers do.”



HMS Students Tap Into Science with Maple Syrup Project



Students in Cornelia Harris's Environmental Science elective at Highland Middle School were hard at work late this winter and early spring—tapping trees, collecting sap, and exploring the fascinating science behind maple syrup production.

The Huskies engaged in an innovative learning experience that brought classroom concepts to life outdoors. As part of the project, the Grade 6-8 scientists investigated how tree diameter impacts sap production, examined the role temperature plays in sap flow, and explored why trees produce sap in the first place. Through observation, data collection, and discussion, students gained a deeper understanding of both environmental science and the natural processes occurring in their own community.

In addition to exploring the scientific aspects of maple syrup-making, students also made meaningful connections to history. They learned about traditional Native American methods of sap collection and maple sugar production, gaining an appreciation for the origins of practices still used today.

"This project really allowed students to see science in action," said Harris. "They weren't just learning about concepts in a classroom—they were outside, collecting data, asking questions, and making real-world connections."

To culminate their work, students took on the role of teachers themselves. In March, they welcomed Highland Elementary School students in Grades K-5 for guided tours of the project. The Middle School students proudly demonstrated their knowledge, explained the process of tapping trees and collecting sap, and shared what they had learned through their hands-on experiences.

The opportunity to present to younger students not only reinforced their own learning but also fostered confidence and communication skills. It was a powerful example of how learning can extend beyond the classroom and into the broader school community.

The maple syrup project is a sweet reminder that when students are actively engaged and given the opportunity to explore, discover, and share, learning becomes both meaningful and memorable.



Highland Students Benefit from Rotary Club's Book Project

Members of the Highland Rotary Club have once again made good on their commitment to community service, this time by donating hundreds of brand-new books to Highland Central School District students in Grades 4 and 7.

A group of Rotarians visited Highland Elementary School (HES) on January 21 to drop off several titles, including *The Tiger Rising* by Kate DiCamillo and *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry. The books were selected by the Grade 4 teachers, who chose works that not only built upon the students' prior reading experience, but were also closely aligned with the curriculum.

"We are so grateful for the Rotary Club's continued support of our students and our literacy initiatives," said Jill Berger, a Grade 4 teacher at HES. "Providing students with their own books helps foster a love of reading while also reinforcing important classroom learning."

Several of the donated books were also stocked in the Elementary School's Book Vending Machine, giving students access to high-quality literature in a fun and engaging way.

Later that day, the same group of Rotarians stopped by Highland Middle School (HMS) to deliver a variety of books for the library, along with copies of a historical fiction novel for the students of Grade 7 English teacher Sean Donoghue and Grade 7 Social Studies teacher Elise DeGiacomo. The two teachers had jointly selected *Chains*, by Laurie Halse Anderson, with the goal of developing a cross-curricular unit. The novel is the first title in the *Seeds of America* trilogy, a series set during the Revolutionary War that follows Isabel, an enslaved teenage girl in New York City, as she fights for freedom for herself and her sister.

"This novel will allow students to explore a pivotal period in American history through a powerful and personal story," Donoghue said. "Having a copy of the book to call their own will help students engage more deeply with the text and the themes we discuss in class."

According to Steve Laubach, a Highland Rotary Club member and former Club president, the annual Book Project has been a tradition for many years.

"At its core, this project is about investing in our students and our community," Laubach said. "We're proud to support literacy and learning in the Highland Central School District, and we look forward to continuing this tradition for years to come."



A pair of Grade 7 students flip through their new copies of "Chains" by Laurie Halse.



Highland Rotary Club members pose with Highland Elementary School administrators, Grade 4 teachers, and students, showcasing the new books generously donated by the organization.

NEW SLATE OF HONOREES INDUCTED INTO HUSKY HALL OF FAME

Highland's Husky Hall of Fame was created several years ago to recognize the achievements of accomplished alumni and dedicated faculty and staff, and to inspire today's students to do great things with their education. Like previous inductees, this year's honorees exemplify an outstanding commitment to the Highland community. Their biographies are available on the District's website, but here are a few highlights:

Dennis Bragg

Bragg, a 1972 graduate of Highland High School, was a standout scholar-athlete who helped lead the Varsity Football team to Ulster County Athletic League championships in 1971 and 1972. He continued playing football at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, where he earned a degree in Electrical Engineering. Bragg later led his family business, Bragg's Electrical Service, until his semi-retirement in 2005. A lifelong Town of Lloyd resident, he has supported his community through projects like field lighting installations, as well as through his involvement with local



organizations. Most notably, during his 30 years as Highland's Junior Varsity Football coach, he helped shape generations of students, emphasizing the importance of character while building confidence and nurturing leadership skills.

Gina Hansut

Hansut, a member of Highland High School's Class of 1981, is a former Ulster County legislator representing District 10 (Lloyd and Marlborough). First elected in 2022, she served two terms, chairing the Law Enforcement and Public Safety Committee and serving on several key committees. In 2026, she was appointed as a Highland fire commissioner, overseeing departmental operations and planning. Hansut previously worked for approximately 20 years in the Marlboro Central School District's Special Education Department. A lifelong resident of the Highland area, she has been active in local civic, church, and youth organizations. In 2024, she received a Distinguished Friend of Education Award in recognition of her support for students and school funding initiatives.



Alan Barone

A Highland native, Barone has devoted much of his life to community service and leadership. As owner of Barone Construction Group, Inc., he combines a deep dedication to his profession with an unwavering commitment to giving back. His service began in 1973 with Highland Little League, an organization that he eventually guided for decades in his role as president, mentoring generations of youth. Barone has also coached local basketball and soccer programs and served over 40 years with the Highland Fire Department, responding to more than 5,000 calls and later becoming fire commissioner. Additionally, his long tenure on the Highland Central School District Board of Education, including 15 years as president, has helped shape and improve local schools.



This year's Husky Hall of Fame inductees will be honored at the Highland Educational Foundation's annual Spring Gala dinner dance and silent auction on June 5. Proceeds will support the enhancement and development of future programs across all schools. For tickets, call or text (845) 234-1522.

Middle School Students Design, Build, and Play Their Own Mini Golf Course

This winter, Highland Middle School students teed up for a unique, hands-on learning experience that brought classes together for an exciting interdisciplinary project. Through a collaborative effort led by Physical Education (PE) teachers Matt Earley and Cathy Bowman, students designed and constructed a fully functional miniature golf course—then put their skills to the test on the course they had created.

Grade 7 Family & Consumer Science students, under the guidance of James Conklin, spent approximately two weeks working in small groups to design and build portable mini golf holes based on parameters provided by the PE department. "The students worked diligently every day, problem-solving and refining their ideas with support when needed," Conklin shared. Their efforts resulted in the creation of nine of the course's 21 holes, all thoughtfully designed to be easily transported from the classroom to the gymnasium.

Meanwhile, Grade 8 students in Sean Banks's Technology classes took a more structured approach, using the Engineering Design Process. Students were challenged to ask questions, imagine solutions, develop detailed plans and blueprints, create their designs, and continuously make improvements. Working in teams of three to four, students constructed the remaining holes, demonstrating creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking throughout the process.

In PE classes, students were introduced to the fundamentals of golf, including rules, proper form, and the use of different clubs. "Golf was a new experience for many of our students," explained Earley. "We wanted to give them a strong foundation before bringing everything together in a culminating event." The project came to life when the student-built mini golf course was assembled in the gym.

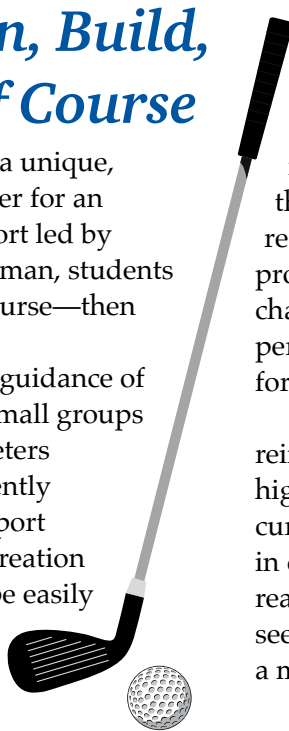
Using materials ranging from gym equipment to cardboard and other

creative resources, students transformed their ideas into playable holes. Once the course was completed, PE classes rotated through it, applying their newly learned skills while recording scores along the way. The project concluded with an exciting championship round, in which top performers from each class competed for the title.

The collaboration not only reinforced physical skills but also highlighted the power of cross-curricular learning. Students engaged in design thinking, teamwork, and real-world problem-solving while seeing their ideas being carried out in a meaningful way.

"This was a very successful project and something we hope to build on in the future," said Earley. He also recognized the contributions of student teacher Matt Shoemaker, noting that he was "a pivotal piece in allowing this to come to fruition."

The Middle School's mini golf project is a shining example of innovation in education—where creativity, collaboration, and hands-on learning come together to create something truly memorable.





Highland High School Presents *Bye Bye Birdie*

A talented cast and dedicated stage crew composed of Highland High School students recently thrilled audiences with their polished production of the classic musical comedy *Bye Bye Birdie*.

After months of rehearsals and preparation, students delivered two lively performances in the High School auditorium on March 20 and 21, entertaining the crowds with unforgettable songs, energetic dance numbers, and plenty of humor. The production highlighted not only the performers' stage presence, but also their commitment, teamwork, and passion for the arts.

Leading the cast were Cameren Thibault-Edmonds as Albert Peterson, Vex Pinho-Burns as Rose Alvarez, Noah Thibault-Edmonds as Conrad Birdie, and Ava McNamee as Kim Macafee. They were joined by a strong supporting cast, including Joshua Benson as Mr. Peterson, Maddox Thibault-Edmonds as Harry Macafee, Lila-Maeve Brown-Theriot

as Doris Macafee, Fernando Nieves as Hugo Peabody, and Hope Williams as Ursula Merkle, along with a talented ensemble that helped bring the story to life.

Behind the scenes, stage crew members worked tirelessly to ensure that every detail—from set design to lighting and sound—came together seamlessly, creating a polished and engaging production for the Highland community.

"I am incredibly proud of the dedication and effort our students put into this production," said Director Erin Matthews. "From the first rehearsal to opening night, their growth, teamwork, and enthusiasm were truly inspiring."

The success of *Bye Bye Birdie* was made possible through the guidance of Matthews, the direction of Band Director Daniel Shaut, and the support of families, staff, and community members who came out to cheer on the Huskies.

Congratulations to the entire cast and crew on a fantastic performance and a memorable theatrical experience!

HONORING THE CLASS OF 2026

With graduation just around the corner, please join us in acknowledging the efforts and achievements of the current graduation candidates for the Class of 2026. We are so proud of their hard work, determination, and spirit.

To our seniors: you are almost at the finish line! Keep the end in sight and reach for that bright future that is ahead of you. We are so happy for you and can't wait to see you in your caps and gowns, crossing the stage and beginning the next chapter of your lives!

Ava Madison Acampora
Cameron William Albers
Ayla Paige Albright
KaiLani Elle Angiolillo
Joseph Estevan Antonio
Marcos Gael Antonio Perez
Ahtziri Arroyo
Luke William Auchmoody
Anastasios Efthimios Bakatsias
Chase Jeremiah Bennett
Emily Grace Berean
Alex Paul Bergeron
Keira Belle Bishop
Ava Elizabeth Bonelli
Violet Marie Brienza
Lila-Maeve Hazel Brown-Theriot
Annabella Marie Bruschetti
Justin Michael Caballero
Alexandra Emily Carey
Logan Weston Carle
Owen Paul Casado
Sophia Margaret Cascio
Madison Avery Chaffee
Garand Lee-Brasey Cockburn
Desirae Rose Colon
Wyatt Lawrence Coon

Victor John Dahowski
Ryan Thomas Davies
Destiney Angel Decker
Adrianna Lynn DeQuarto
Magdalena Susan Diaz-Medina
Sean Patrick Doyle
Cameryn Rae Dutra
Jahmaiah Anthony Eliassaint-Narciz
Connor Joseph Elliott
George Cameron Elliott
Samuel Isaac Ellis
Logan Edward Ellison
Eileen Catherine Fitzgerald
Anthony Joseph Forzano
Nicholas David Forzano
Anthony Ricardo Francis
Jesse Cash Freeman
Elizabeth R. Fuller
Zayetzi Mariola Garcia
Marco Matteo Garrity-Mangi
Alexis Skye Gertz
Christopher Gertz III
Dion Gjakaj
Roxanne Rose Goldsbary
Michael Lee Grant
Emelia Celeste Halbijohn

Bruce Peter Hanlon Jr.
Isabelle Rose Harder
Elizabeth Kate Harris
Ariston Wolfgang Hayes
Brandon Joseph Herbert
Lucas B. Hoagland
Daniel Hollifield
Payton Renee Hons
Logan A. Howard
James Richard Jackson
Graydon J. Jayson
Lily Rose Jowers
Natalie Grace Katsaitis
Aidan Michael Kinsch
Rylie Margret Klein
Michael Lawrence Koehler
Paige Elizabeth LaForge
Carina Luz Larroy
Michael Marshall Lindsey
Gabiella Marie Lockhart
Zachary James Long
Antonio Alberto Lopez
Jair Hernandez Lopez
Caleb Y. Lopez
Skyler A. Lopez
May River Maddalena

Zackary G. Maroney
Elijah Joseph Martignetti
Lake Mastny
Julianna Marie McCrory
William Daniel Melara
Ely Mariela Meneses
Kyle Christopher Menezes
Charles William Meuser V
Michael Anthony Miano Jr.
Douglas Nickolas Miller
Lucien Jude Niles
Kelly Orellana Flores
Benjamin William Osterhoudt
Ryder Owen Otayek
Gavin Brian Pagentine
Abigail Caroline Paserba
Gianvito Joseph Pecore
Kylie Mae Perillo
Cameron Joseph Peters
Makayla Katherine Petreshock
Elizabeth Riley Petrosoff
Connor John Pickett
Nicholas Stephen Quirk-Hall
Abigail Harlynn Redner
Delainey Rose Reid
Zachary Thomas Rozzi

Richard John Schneider
Trevor George Scott
Aasiya Shahid
Saniya Shahid
Brenna Elizabeth Sheeley
Oliver Scott Sims
Christopher Charles Smith
Sierra Lynn Spinelli
Reemah Eman Suleiman
Kieran Jason Michael Surprise
Luciano Marcello Tasker
Jenna Lynn Taylor
Myles Aubry Terhune
Maddox Elijah Thibault-Edmonds
Hunter Antonio William Tomlin
Emma Lillian Turner
Jude Patrick Vankleeck
Alexis Nancy Violaris
Madeline Mary Violaris
Timothy Ernest Violaris
Alessia Anna Wallen
Alexander Bennett Weiss
Hope Williams
Gabiella Brianna Wisch
Belicia Nevaeh Woods

Taste of Success Program Connects Highland Students with Real-World Careers

Highland High School's Taste of Success – Lunch and Learn program continues to provide students with valuable opportunities to explore a wide range of career pathways through direct engagement with local professionals. Held monthly, the program highlights successful businesses and organizations within the community, offering students meaningful conversations and real-world insights into various industries.

Throughout the year, students have had the opportunity to hear from a diverse group of presenters, each sharing their unique career journeys and expertise. Representatives from the Ulster County Emergency Services Department launched the series in December, giving students an inside look at careers in emergency response. Students learned about the many pathways within the field and even participated in hands-on “mock 911 call” activities using AI software.

The following month, Matthew McDermott,



owner and CEO of Rider Painting, along with Elliot Earle, director of the company's business and development operations, introduced students to careers in the skilled trades. Their presentation highlighted the importance of having a strong work ethic, growth opportunities within the company, and the wide range of roles available in the industry.

In February, Dr. Michael Bywater of Highland Optometry spoke with students about his career as an optometrist, offering insight into his daily responsibilities and the educational path required to enter the profession. His presentation provided students with a deeper understanding of careers in

healthcare and the skills needed for success.

The program continued in March with a visit from a local business leader. Gary Beck Jr., owner of Z3 Consultants, shared his experience building a Poughkeepsie-based company specializing in fire safety testing, electrical inspections, and safety consulting. The session concluded with an engaging question-and-answer period, giving students the opportunity to learn more about entrepreneurship and career development.

Through each session, students gain a broader perspective on the many paths available after high school, including careers in trades, healthcare, public service, and entrepreneurship.

“The Taste of Success program gives our students a meaningful opportunity to connect classroom learning with real-world experiences,” said Principal Brandon Opitz. “By hearing directly from professionals in our community, students are able to explore career options, ask questions, and begin to envision their own futures.”

The High School looks forward to continuing the program and expanding opportunities for students to engage with professionals who inspire, inform, and empower the next generation.

Middle School Students Explore Music Through Piano and Ukulele

Students at Highland Middle School (HMS) have been building their musical skills this spring by learning to play the piano in their Music classes. Through hands-on practice, students are developing foundational skills such as reading music, understanding rhythm, and playing simple melodies.

Music teacher Cailin Fiengo has been guiding the students through engaging lessons that make learning a musical instrument both accessible and enjoyable. “Learning piano gives students a strong musical foundation and helps build confidence as they see their progress,” Fiengo shared.

In April, students expanded their musical experience by beginning instruction on a new instrument—the ukulele. This addition has brought fresh excitement to the classroom while continuing to reinforce core musical concepts in a fun and interactive way.

HMS is proud to offer students opportunities to explore music, creativity, and self-expression through a variety of instruments!



Taso Bakatsias Honored with Rotary's “Service Above Self” Award



Congratulations to Highland High School student Taso Bakatsias, who was among the distinguished individuals honored with the Highland Rotary Club's “Service Above Self” award this year. The award recognizes people

who exemplify Rotary's principal motto through a strong commitment to serving their local community.

Taso learned of his selection this winter, during an Interact Club meeting that was attended by several Highland Rotary Club members, including former Club President Steve Laubach. He was formally recognized, along with the other honorees, during a Rotary event in April.

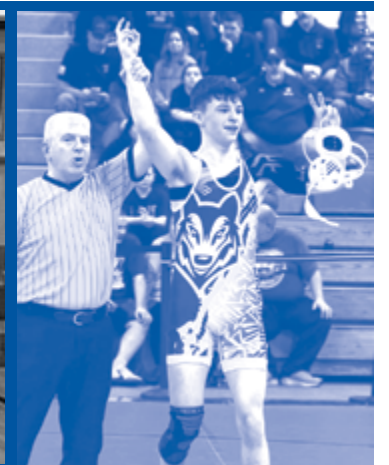
Taso was nominated by Rotarian Pat Roza in recognition of his exceptional dedication to service both within the Highland Central School District and throughout the broader community. A committed leader and volunteer, he has served as an officer in the Interact Club throughout high school, consistently going well beyond required service hours.

As a member of Boy Scout Troop 70, Taso has taken part in numerous community clean-up efforts and has mentored younger scouts as they worked toward their own achievements. For his

Eagle Scout project, he designed and built a kiosk at the Black Creek Canoe and Kayak Launch. The project involved collaboration with several community partners, including the Highland Rotary Club, and created a lasting resource for residents and visitors alike.

In addition to his scouting work, Taso volunteers at Highland Elementary School, serves as an altar server at his church, and participates in a Greek Cultural Dance group. He is also actively involved in a variety of school activities, including athletics. Despite his many accomplishments, Taso is widely known for his quiet, humble demeanor and his genuine desire to help others without seeking recognition.

“Taso reflects Rotary's ‘Service Above Self’ motto in everything he does,” said Roza. “He is known and admired by his peers, teachers, and family for his kindness to everyone and consistency in his care of himself, his family, his friends, and community.”



Kudos to These Highland Husky Superstars!

- ★ The **Cheerleading** team had a strong season this fall, both on the sidelines and on the mat. They showcased their skills at multiple cheerleading competitions, placing among the top teams in the region. They earned third place at the Minisink Valley competition, second place at the Highland competition, third place at the Cornwall competition, and fourth place at the Monroe-Woodbury Sectional competition.
- ★ The **Varsity Football** team competed in the Section IX Class C division and showed great determination and growth throughout the season. Several athletes received honors from the Section IX Football Coaches Association for their outstanding performances. **Logan Ellison**, **Daniel Hollifield**, and **Connor Elliot** also played in the Section IX Senior Game in December.
- ★ The **Varsity Girls Tennis** team had a competitive and rewarding season, demonstrating growth and sportsmanship throughout. The team participated in the Mid-Hudson Athletic League (MHAL) tournament, where the following student-athletes earned recognition for their performances: **Ella Fuller** (singles), **Ava Piazza** (singles), **Alivia Horace** (doubles), and **Quinn Atterbury** (doubles).

- ★ The **Varsity Girls Soccer** team demonstrated great chemistry and earned multiple individual honors for their standout performances. **Ava Acampora** played in the MHAL Super Senior Game, and the team was recognized with the Volunteer of the Year Award by the Hudson Valley Youth Soccer League. **Alyssa Bonelli** and **Sophie Valentino** were named Section IX All-Stars, and **Coach Rebecca Palmatier** was named MHAL Coach of the Year.
- ★ The **Varsity Boys Soccer** team had a solid season, competing in a challenging Section IX Class B division. Several athletes earned individual honors for their strong performances throughout the year. **Kieran Surprise** was named to the All-Section team and was a Class B All-Star, while **Skyler Lopez** earned Class B All-Star recognition. In addition, **Kieran**, **Benjamin Osterhoudt**, **James Jackson**, **Joseph Antonio**, and **Timothy Violaris** were all recognized as Exceptional Seniors.
- ★ The **Varsity Indoor Track** team had a strong showing this season, with **Scarlet Lovell** and **Laurina Ventriglia** advancing to the State qualifiers and representing Highland at a high level.
- ★ The **Varsity Boys Basketball** team won its first Sectional game since 2019, advancing to the

Section IX Class A quarterfinals, where they faced Red Hook. **Michael Koehler** reached 1,000 career points and was named Conference Player of the Year, while **Danny Scalo** earned MHAL All-Star honors.

- ★ The **Varsity Girls Basketball** team won the Section IX Class A Championship with a victory over Red Hook, marking Highland's 10th Sectional title in the past 21 seasons. The team advanced to the New York State Public High School Athletic Association (NYSPHSAA) Girls Basketball Championships, where they faced Tappan Zee.
- ★ The **Varsity Bowling** team had a successful season, competing well at the Section IX tournament and finishing fourth in the Small School Division.
- ★ The **Varsity Wrestling** team had a strong season, with multiple athletes placing at the Section IX Championships and earning All-Section honors. **Jacob DeClair** was a Section Champion and State Qualifier. On the girls' side, **Melody Jones** placed third and **Danica Acampora** placed fourth, earning All-Section recognition. Additional All-Section and Section IX place finishers included **AJ Nugent** (2nd), **Trevor Coates** (3rd), **RJ Schneider** (4th), **Tucker Vett** (4th), **Jayden Grey** (5th), **Daniel Hollifield** (5th), and **Dylan Gatto** (5th).



High School Students Showcase Civic Readiness Through Capstone Projects

Highland High School students in Christina Saylor’s Citizens in Action class have once again made meaningful impacts through their capstone projects, each designed to foster civic engagement and strengthen community connections.

These projects not only benefit the school and local community, but also help students earn the New York State Seal of Civic Readiness—a prestigious distinction recognizing proficiency in civic knowledge, skills, mindset, and experiences.

The projects addressed a diverse range of topics, from improving childhood literacy to promoting cultural awareness. Several students focused on environmental issues, while others explored ways to support mental health. In addition, some projects raised much-needed funds for community organizations like the Ulster County SPCA, for example.

“Our students identified issues

they care deeply about and took the initiative to create positive change,”



said Saylor. “This work reflects not only their understanding of civic



responsibility, but also their ability to collaborate, problem-solve, and lead.”

Students will host a Civics Showcase at the High School on May 19 to present the culmination of their efforts. The event will provide a platform for these young leaders to publicly share their projects—initiatives that they spent the year planning, organizing, and executing. Each project will be evaluated by a panel of judges using a scale of “Did Not Pass,” “Pass,” “Pass with Honors,” and “Pass with Distinction.”

Students who meet the requirements for the Seal of Civic Readiness will be honored with an official medal and a sticker on their diploma at graduation in June.

We are proud of all of our students for their dedication, creativity, and commitment to making a difference!

HES Turns Pages and Builds Excitement During First-Ever Read-A-Thon



Highland Elementary School (HES) students embraced a love of reading this winter during the school’s first-ever “Read Your Way to the End of the Rainbow” Read-A-Thon. The two-week event, which kicked off with a school-wide assembly on March 5, encouraged students to read in a variety of ways—independently, with family members, or by listening to audiobooks—all while working toward team and individual goals.

Each class was assigned to a themed team, adding an element of friendly competition and excitement throughout the event. Students tracked their reading progress at home and in school, while optional activities such as a Read-A-Thon Bingo board provided additional opportunities to boost page totals.

Throughout the two weeks, the school community found creative and meaningful ways to support student reading. Students participated in spontaneous Drop Everything and Read (D.E.A.R.) time, allowing both students and staff to pause during the day and enjoy a good book. Cross-grade “reading buddy” sessions paired

older and younger students together, helping to build confidence, strengthen fluency, and foster connections across grade levels. Students also enjoyed reading to their stuffed animals, creating a fun and relaxed environment to practice their skills.

Special guests joined in the excitement as well. School Resource Officer Brian Scott visited a Grade 5 classroom to read *The Couch Potato* by Jory John, sharing an important message about balance and the value of “unplugging.” His visit provided students with both encouragement and inspiration as they worked toward achieving their reading goals.

By the conclusion of the Read-A-Thon on March 20, HES students had read an impressive combined total of 1,012,064 pages. The winning team, the Moons, was rewarded with an ice cream party on March 26.

“This event was a wonderful way to bring our school community together around a shared goal,” said Principal Ian MacCormack. “It was inspiring to see our students excited about reading, supporting one another, and taking pride in their accomplishments.”

PLEASE VOTE

May 19, 2026
6 AM to 9 PM

Highland High School
Band Room

FAREWELL, 2026 RETIREES

As the 2025-2026 school year comes to an end, the Highland Central School District would like to salute this year’s retirees. Our heartfelt gratitude goes out to our retirees for their hard work and dedication during their time with the District.

Our retirees include:

- Joel Freer, Superintendent
- John Brennie, Elementary Teacher
- Karen Super, Elementary Teacher
- Stephanie Wells, English Teacher
- Denise Santangelo, Typist
- Mary Ann Ingraham, Typist
- Valerie Schmidt, Typist



Students Shine at Annual Scholarship Concerts

The Highland Central School District recently celebrated the talents and dedication of its student musicians during two annual traditions—the Choral Scholarship Concert on March 9 and the Band Scholarship Concert on March 11.

Featuring performers from across all three District schools, the concerts showcased not only the students' musical skills, but also the strength and continuity of Highland's Music program.

CHORAL SCHOLARSHIP CONCERT

The Choral Scholarship Concert, held in the Highland High School (HHS) auditorium, brought together student vocalists from multiple grade levels for an evening of standout performances.

Audience members enjoyed a wide range of musical selections, from the Fourth and Fifth Grade Choruses' performance of "Die With a Smile" to the Sixth Grade Choir's rendition of "Don't Stop Believin'." The Seventh and Eighth Grade Choir energized the crowd with "Ain't No Mountain High Enough," while the High School Choir delivered a moving performance of "Wake Me Up."

The evening concluded with a powerful combined

finale featuring students in Grades 6-12, highlighting the unity and progression of the District's choral program.

BAND SCHOLARSHIP CONCERT

Two days later, the spotlight shifted to instrumental music during the Band Scholarship Concert held in the HHS gymnasium.

Students performed a diverse selection of pieces, including "Havana" by the Middle School Jazz Ensemble, "Morning" by the High School Jazz Ensemble, and "The Chase," performed by the Sixth Grade Band. Additional highlights included "Furioso" by the Fifth Grade Band, "Anomaly" by the Seventh and Eighth Grade Band, and a crowd-pleasing performance of "The Lord of the Rings" by the High School Concert Band.

The concert concluded with a combined performance of "Theme from New York, New York," featuring students in Grades 5-12.

A TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE

Both concerts support the Highland Music Department Scholarship program, a tradition dating

back to 1959 that honors graduating seniors who demonstrate leadership, musicianship, dedication, and professionalism.

"These concerts are a special opportunity to celebrate not just our students' musical growth, but also their commitment and passion," said District Music Coordinator Karen Adamec. "It's incredibly rewarding to see students from across all grade levels come together and perform at such a high level!"

Adamec also emphasized the importance of community support in sustaining the program's success. "Our Music program is built on years of tradition, but it continues to thrive because of the support from our families, staff, and community," she said.

The District extends its appreciation to Adamec for coordinating the events, as well as to the dedicated music educators who support students throughout their musical journey. Let's give a huge round of applause to Choral Directors Jodie McCaffrey (Elementary School), Cailin Fiengo (Middle School), and Erin Matthews (High School), and Band Directors Karen Adamec (Elementary School), Vincent Rizzi (Middle School), and Dan Shaut (High School).

Too Good for Drugs Program Empowers HMS Students

This spring, Highland Middle School (HMS) students participated in the Too Good for Drugs (TGFD) program, a comprehensive, evidence-based substance use prevention curriculum provided in partnership with the Ulster County Prevention Council (UPC).

The TGFD program is designed to reduce risk factors and strengthen protective factors related to the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other substances. Through engaging, interactive lessons, students build essential life skills such as the ability to make healthy choices, develop positive friendships, communicate effectively, and resist peer pressure.

UPC educator Olivia Depuy visited HMS once a week to deliver instruction to students across all grade levels. Her lessons incorporated games, hands-on activities, and role-playing scenarios that encouraged active participation and real-world application.

The 10-week curriculum emphasized positive reinforcement, helping students strengthen their knowledge, attitudes, and confidence in making healthy decisions. In addition to substance use prevention, the program supports character development and self-efficacy (the belief in one's ability to achieve specific goals or complete specific tasks)—skills that benefit students both in and out of the classroom.

"Programs like Too Good for Drugs give our students practical tools to make positive choices and build confidence in themselves," said HMS Principal Andrew Carnright. "We value our partnership with the Ulster County Prevention Council and the meaningful impact this program is having on our school community."

