

Highland Central

School District

2023 - 2024 Budget

MAY 2023



KUDOS TO THESE HIGHLAND HUSKY SUPERSTARS!

Hundreds of athletes from Highland High School participated in sports during the 2022-2023 school year, playing for Modified, Junior Varsity, and Varsity teams. Here are some highlights from the Fall, Winter, and Spring seasons:

The Highland Girls Modified Basketball team finished out its season with a perfect 12-0 record. The future is bright for these Husky players and their coach, Ray Melendez!

Continued on page 11



Proposed 2023-2024 School Budget Preserves Programs and Continues Support for Students; Meets Tax Cap Criteria

The Highland Central School District Board of Education has adopted a \$52,476,480 budget proposal, which meets the requirements of the New York State tax levy limit calculation for a simple-majority voter approval. Highland's calculation for this year permitted a 4.17 percent levy increase to meet the cap.

"Each year we are tasked with putting together a budget proposal that not only addresses the academic, social, and emotional needs of our students, but also remains fiscally respectful to our taxpayers," said Superintendent Joel Freer. "Our team was committed to accomplishing each of the goals that were outlined at the beginning of this year's budget development process and ensuring that students were the focus of all decisions."

In addition to being asked to consider the budget proposition, members of the community will also weigh in on a separate request for the purchase of two school buses to replace older buses with high mileage. Two Board of Education seats are also available. Current school board members Alan Barone and Heather Welch are running unopposed.

The community can participate in the budget vote and school board election on Tuesday, May 16, between 6 AM and 9 PM, at the High School Band Room.

Preserves Programs & Continues to Provide Support for Students

This year's budget proposal maintains all current programs and continues current levels of academic and mental health supports for students that were put in place during the pandemic using federal grants, which are expiring. The cost of these services has been incorporated into the proposed budget and includes the funding for District-wide teaching and support positions designed to combat learning loss and to help meet the growing social and emotional needs of our students.

"We feel it is important to continue to provide the types of services and supports to our students that can help close learning gaps and support their social and emotional well-being."

SUPERINTENDENT
JOEL FREER

Continued on page 2

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School District
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PLEASE
VOTE!

Tuesday, May 16, 2023
6 AM to 9 PM
Highland High School Band Room

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Alan Barone, President
Tom Miller, Vice President
Camille Adoma
Michael Bakatsias
Jeanine Gemmell
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Proposed 2023-2024 School Budget Preserves Programs and Continues Support for Students; Meets Tax Cap Criteria

Continued from page 1

Among the positions supported by the proposed budget are two Academic Intervention Services positions at the Elementary School (one in Math and one in Reading); one Special Education teaching position at the Elementary School and one at the Middle School; and one Social Worker position at the Elementary School and another at the High School.

"The loss of in-person school during the pandemic really impacted our students," said Freer. "We feel it is important to continue to provide the types of services and supports to our students that can help close learning gaps and support their social and emotional well-being."

Incorporating these positions into the general budget, Freer said, ensures that the District will be able to continue these efforts.

School Resource Officer Program Continued

The proposed budget also supports the continuation of the District's School Resource Officer (SRO) program, which was launched in September after months of discussions between the school board and the community. The purpose of the program is to help provide safe and secure learning environments for students and staff. It has also been effective in helping to bridge the gap between the local police department and the school district.

Currently, the SRO program includes one uniformed police officer who is shared between the Elementary, Middle, and High School campuses. The Town of Lloyd Police secured a grant to help fund the first year of the program, but that funding is not available for the next school year. The proposed budget incorporates the full expense.

"The SRO program is something that the District has considered for some time, and we are grateful to the Town of Lloyd for helping us get it off the ground this year," said Freer. "Being that the safety and security of our students and staff is among our top priorities, we believe that the SRO program is extremely important for our school district to continue."

According to Freer, the District continues to explore options to expand the program to provide additional SROs and an increased presence.

Tax Impact Reduced by State Aid and Fund Balance

As of the printing of this newsletter, New York State has not yet adopted its budget; however, it is anticipated that the District will receive an estimated \$18,561,269 aid package this year. In addition to the State Aid, the Board has approved applying \$1,150,000 from the District's fund balance to reduce the budget proposal's impact on the tax levy.

If the State's final budget includes more State Aid than anticipated, less fund balance will be applied. Likewise, if less State Aid is received, the fund balance will be increased to cover the difference.

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 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 2022-2023 equalization rates.

| Assessed Value in Town of Lloyd | Annual Increase | Monthly Increase |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| \$100K | \$101.36 | \$8.45 |
| \$200K | \$202.71 | \$16.89 |
| \$300K | \$304.07 | \$25.34 |
| \$400K | \$405.43 | \$33.79 |

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 budget to voters, or adopting a contingency budget. If a budget is defeated a second time, then the District is required to adopt a contingency budget.

Under a contingency budget, reductions would need to be made to maintain the 2023-2024 tax levy at the same level as the 2022-2023 school year.

By law, all equipment purchases would be removed from the budget and there would only be essential maintenance performed on the facilities. The District would also be required to eliminate free community use of facilities.

Proposition 2: School Bus Replacement

In order to minimize the cost impact of replacing many vehicles at once, the District strategically proposes annual fleet upgrades to retire aged vehicles on a schedule. This year, the District is requesting voter approval to purchase one 65-passenger school bus and one 30-passenger school bus.

The new vehicles will replace aged ones with high mileage. The cost of the vehicles is estimated to be \$266,756 and will appear as Proposition 2 on the ballot. Reimbursement through New York State Transportation Aid is expected to defray 66.9 percent of the cost, which leaves \$88,296 to be funded through local taxes.

CAPITAL PROJECT UPDATE

The District would once again like to thank members of the community who participated in the Capital Project referendum in October. Voters overwhelmingly approved the tax-neutral project to upgrade aged infrastructure and end-of-life systems throughout the District. A second proposition to make improvements to the High School Athletic Field and Track was also passed by voters.

Plans for Phase 1 of the project were submitted to the New York State Education Department (NYSED) in January, and are awaiting review. Phase 2 plans are expected to be submitted to the NYSED by the end of June. Once the plans receive NYSED approval, the District can move forward with the bidding process and work can begin.

We appreciate the community's support of this project, and look forward to the making some much-needed improvements to our District.

Farewell, 2023 Retirees

As the 2022-2023 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 (to date) include:

Eileen McElroy, *Special Education Teacher*
 Madelyn Smith, *Elementary Teacher*
 Colleen Giametta, *Elementary Teacher*
 Dana McGrath, *Reading Teacher*
 Kelly Nelson, *School Counselor*
 David Cunningham, *Science Teacher*

Middle School Students Cook Up Dishes from Around the World



Highland Middle School students have been cooking up something special in their Multicultural Cooking classes this year.

The course, which is taught by James Conklin, is giving students the opportunity to become comfortable in the kitchen, while also learning about different cultures from around the world. During this elective, which is offered once per quarter, students spend time researching a particular country, and then choose a food from that country to prepare for their classmates.

Foods that were “on the menu” this year included spaghetti (Italy), ratatouille (France), quesadillas (Mexico), and pancakes and maple syrup (Canada).

Conklin said that he was pleased with how well received the class has been among the Middle School students.

“It’s good exposure for them—not only to cooking in general but to different types of food that they may not have had an awareness of or might not have had any interest in trying otherwise,” he said. “It’s been a great experience for everyone.”



Huskies Help Spread Love and Kindness

New York State Senator Michelle Hinchey stopped by Highland Elementary School this winter to pick up Valentine's Day cards that students had made for local nursing home residents. Senator Hinchey explained how the Huskies' acts of kindness would go a long way in showing the senior citizens that the students are thinking of them. “Thank you for helping to spread love across the community!” she said.

Highland High School Names Valedictorian and Salutatorian

Highland High School (HHS) is proud to announce that Alisha Mokal has been named valedictorian of the Class of 2023, and Erica Angelillo is this year’s salutatorian.

Alisha, the daughter of Sultaan Mokal and Javeria Sultaan of Highland, earned a GPA of 103.58. She has taken advantage of the Advanced Placement (AP) courses offered at HHS, enrolling in more than 10 throughout her high school career.

Alisha is president of Model UN, co-president of Science Olympiad, and secretary of the Future Medical Professionals club. She is also a member of Peer Leadership, Mathletes, the National Honor Society, the Spanish Honor Society, the Tri-M Music Honor Society, and the High School Fed Challenge. She has performed annually at the New York State School Music Association Solo Festival, and was selected for the All-County and Area All-State Honor Bands this year. In addition, she serves as the student conductor of the HHS Band and tutors students in Biology and Geometry.

Alisha is deciding between attending SUNY Binghamton, SUNY New Paltz, or SUNY Stony Brook in the fall. She plans on majoring in Biochemistry and following a pre-med track.

She said that she appreciates the supportive faculty members who have helped her throughout her time at HHS. “Many of my teachers have taught me meaningful life lessons and are a source of inspiration for me,” she said. “Each of them has contributed to my academic character in a unique way, and I am incredibly grateful to have the opportunity to learn from such amazing people.”

Erica, the daughter of David and Mary Angelillo of Highland, earned a GPA of 102.33 while maintaining a rigorous course schedule of AP classes. As a HHS student, she competed on the Cross Country, Winter Track, and Spring Track teams. She also serves as secretary of the Spanish Honor Society and is a member of the National Honor Society, Model UN, and Book Club.

When reflecting on her years at Highland, Erica said that many of her favorite memories are tied to sports. “I made such amazing friends on the Cross Country team, and I will miss practices and meets with them,” she said. “I also accomplished so many things that I am proud of in Cross Country and Track. I will miss knowing that my friends are so close to me and that I can see them any time.”

This fall, Erica plans to attend either SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, SUNY Binghamton, or the University of Vermont. She hasn’t decided on a specific major yet, but will likely study something within the field of Environmental Sciences.

HHS also recognizes the accomplishments of its other high-achieving graduates. Rounding out the Top 10 for the Class of 2023 (in order of rank) are Kevin Zheng, Gabrielle Minard, Diana Brouillard, Panagiotis Bakatsias, Sanaa Omondi, Gavin Landry, Jakob Bishop, and Trevor Ebert.

Principal Kevin Murphy is very proud of the seniors and their accomplishments. “The Top 10 students of the Class of 2023 are an impressive group,” he said. “They each have made us proud during their time at Highland High School, and we look forward to seeing what the future has in store for them.”



The Top 10 students of Highland High School's Class of 2023.

Highland High School Class of 2023 valedictorian Alisha Mokal (right) and salutatorian Erica Angelillo.



School District Budget Notice

| OVERALL BUDGET PROPOSAL | Budget Adopted for the 2022-23 School Year | Budget Proposed for the 2023-24 School Year | Contingency Budget for the 2023-24 School Year * |
|---|--|---|--|
| Total Budgeted Amount, Not Including Separate Propositions | \$48,998,581 | \$52,476,480 | \$51,199,190 |
| Increase/Decrease for the 2023-24 School Year | | \$ 3,477,899 | \$2,200,609 |
| Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget | | 7.10% | 4.49% |
| Change in the Consumer Price Index | | 8.0% | |
| A. Proposed Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount | \$ 30,636,752 | \$ 31,914,042 | |
| 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) | \$30,636,752 | \$31,914,042 | \$30,636,752 |
| F. Total Permissible Exclusions | \$1,347,595 | \$1,574,466 | |
| G. School Tax Levy Limit, <u>Excluding</u> Levy for Permissible Exclusions | \$29,289,157 | \$30,339,576 | |
| H. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy, <u>Excluding</u> Levy to Support Library Debt and/or Permissible Exclusions (E – B – F + D) | \$29,289,157 | \$30,339,576 | |
| I. Difference: G – H (Negative Value Requires 60.0% Voter Approval – See Note Below Regarding Separate Propositions) ** | \$0 | \$0 | |
| Administrative Component | \$5,058,771 | \$4,980,775 | \$4,975,760 |
| Program Component | \$36,568,492 | \$40,149,319 | \$38,987,044 |
| Capital Component | \$7,371,318 | \$7,346,386 | \$7,236,386 |

* Provide a statement of assumptions made in projecting a contingency budget for the 2023-24 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 \$202,275. There would need to be a further budget reduction of \$1,075,015 to maintain the tax levy at the level in effect for the 2022-2023 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 |
|--------------------------|-----------|
| Bus Purchase Proposition | \$266,756 |
| | |

| | Under the Budget Proposed for the 2023-24 School Year |
|---|---|
| Estimated Basic STAR Exemption Savings ¹ | \$692 |

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 2023-24 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 16, 2023 between the hours of 6:00am and 9:00pm, prevailing time, at which time the polls will be opened to vote by voting ballot or machine.

Polls will be open on Tuesday, May 16, 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 845-691-1020, ext. 3137 no later than Thursday, May 11, 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 District Office for more details or to review the State’s report.

What You’ll See
on the Ballot

PROPOSITION #1: SCHOOL BUDGET
VOTE FOR 2023-2024 SCHOOL YEAR:
\$52,476,480

“SHALL the Board of Education of the Highland Central School District be authorized to expend for budgetary purposes in the 2023-2024 school year the sum of \$52,476,480 and to levy the necessary tax therefore?”

PROPOSITION #2: SCHOOL BUS PURCHASE
PROPOSITION

“SHALL the Board of Education of the Highland Central School District be authorized to: (1) acquire two school buses at a maximum cost of approximately \$266,756; (2) expend such sum for such purpose; (3) levy the necessary tax therefore, to be levied and collected in annual installments in such years and in such amounts as may be determined by the Board of Education taking into account state aid; and (4) in anticipation of the collection of such tax, issue bonds and notes of the District at one time or from time to time in the principal amount not to exceed \$266,756, and levy a tax to pay the interest on said obligations when due?”

TRUSTEES FOR THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

You May Vote For Any TWO:

☐ Alan Barone

☐ Heather Welch

Write-in: _____

Write-in: _____

PLEASE
VOTE!

TUESDAY,
MAY 16, 2023

6 AM to 9 PM

Highland High School
Band Room



HIGHLAND STUDENTS Drop Everything and Read!

Highland Elementary School celebrated the National Education Association's Read Across America Day in March by encouraging students of all ages to bring their favorite books to school and wear their comfiest, coziest clothing. Then, upon hearing a school-wide signal given over the PA system, classes were told to "Drop Everything and Read!"



Highland Students Celebrate Being 100 Days Smarter

Kindergarten students at Highland Elementary School had lots of fun celebrating their 100th day of school on February 15.

To mark this special occasion, Kindergarten teachers decorated their classrooms with creative signs, colorful balloons, and festive streamers, and excited students wore handmade paper crowns, which they had decorated with 100 stickers. But the fun didn't stop there!

Parents were invited into the classrooms and watched as the young Huskies spent the day participating in a variety of fun learning activities, all revolving around the number 100. They practiced writing 100 words, counting 100 objects, completing 100 exercises, creating 100-themed craft projects, and more.

We're proud of our Kindergarten students—and their hardworking teachers—for reaching this important learning milestone and for all that they've accomplished this year!



Highland Exceeds Fundraising Goal

Late this winter, Highland Elementary School Principal Ian MacCormack made good on a promise to kiss a pig if students in Grades K-5 met their collective goal of raising \$8,000 through the Kids Heart Challenge. It turns out the Huskies didn't just meet their goal—they crushed it—raising more than \$10,000 for the American Heart Association!

While "Lucky" the pig was unable to make it to the school in person, MacCormack (donning a tutu, which was the second most popular reward choice) gathered the students for two grade-level assemblies to watch a short video of the smooch. (See it for yourself at www.youtube.com/watch?v=YCMpt--3O-8.)

During the assemblies, students were also introduced to the school's new PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) "Paw Print" system, which was designed to reinforce the B.A.R.K. values of Being safe, Acting responsibly, and displaying Respect and Kindness. Students were told that throughout the remainder of the year, they would have the opportunity to earn paper paw prints for exhibiting various positive behaviors. Teachers would track the paw prints earned by each student, and top classes would be rewarded with fun prizes such as extra recess, dance parties, ice cream, and more.

We know that our young Huskies have been working hard and earning their paw prints. We are also proud of them for learning about heart health this year, and raising some much-needed funds for a worthy cause!

Highland Elementary School Principal Ian MacCormack dons a tutu as a reward for students exceeding their fundraising goal.





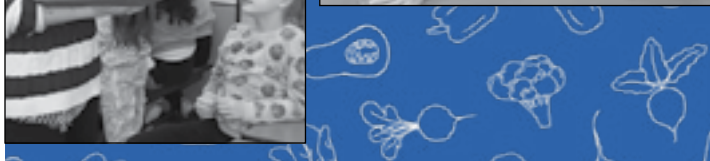
Highland Students Enjoy Local Food Tasting

Representatives from the Rondout Valley Growers Association (RVGA) visited Highland Elementary School this winter for a special Farm to School program called "The Share Table."

Through a collaboration with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County and the RVGA, students were able to participate in a food tasting of local delights during their lunch periods. On the menu were honey-roasted sweet potatoes, with the potatoes coming from Tributary Farm in High Falls and the honey from Damn Good Honey in Kerhonkson. After tasting the food, the Highland students were encouraged to share their opinions about the experience.

John Matthews, Highland Central School District's Director of Food Services, explained that the purpose of the Farm to School program is to give students the opportunity to try new things and to expose them to food that is grown locally. While this particular event was limited to students in Grades 3 and 5, the District later offered similar tastings to other grade levels in the building.

Thank you to these local partners for sharing this delicious and educational experience with our students.



High School Students Treated to Several Helpings of Popular "Taste of Success" Program

Highland High School's new "Taste of Success" program was, well, a success!

As part of the program, representatives from various local businesses were invited to the school each month to help educate students about the different trade industries and career options available to them after graduation. During each session, students were able to take in information and ask questions, all while enjoying a complimentary pizza lunch.

Kicking things off in October, Matt Bahr, owner of TRC Auto, met with students to discuss various career paths in the automotive industry and share some practical car-care tips. In November, Domenic Baiocco, a commercial loan officer at Wallkill Valley Federal Savings and Loan, and Michael Horodyski, the bank's president and CEO, met with interested students to discuss the banking profession and share basics about savings accounts versus checking accounts, credit cards, college loans, and more.

The third installment of the program took place in December and featured representatives from Barone Construction Group, a family-owned general contracting and construction management firm based out of Highland. Alan and Joe Barone, along with Project Manager Brian Cunningham, spoke about how they got involved in the construction business and how it has changed over the years. They also detailed some of the many jobs that are available within the industry and shared a few "tools of the trade."

Kevin Graham and Cassidy Clay from Taconic Rehabilitation and Nursing at Ulster treated Highland students to another helping of the program in February. Graham, who is an assistant administrator at the Highland facility, and Clay, a house recruiter, discussed their careers and shared information about the healthcare industry. They explained how healthcare workers have been in high demand since the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic and that working in healthcare can be extremely rewarding.

Most recently, students were "enlightened" by a visit from Ken Breitman, Director of Human Resources for Zumtobel Lighting Incorporated. The Huskies were surprised to learn that while Zumtobel is a large, international company that provides corporate lighting products to several high-end clients, including Google, Facebook, and Apple, its North



Domenic Baiocco from Wallkill Valley Federal Savings and Loan gives students a lesson about money.

American headquarters is actually located right in Highland.

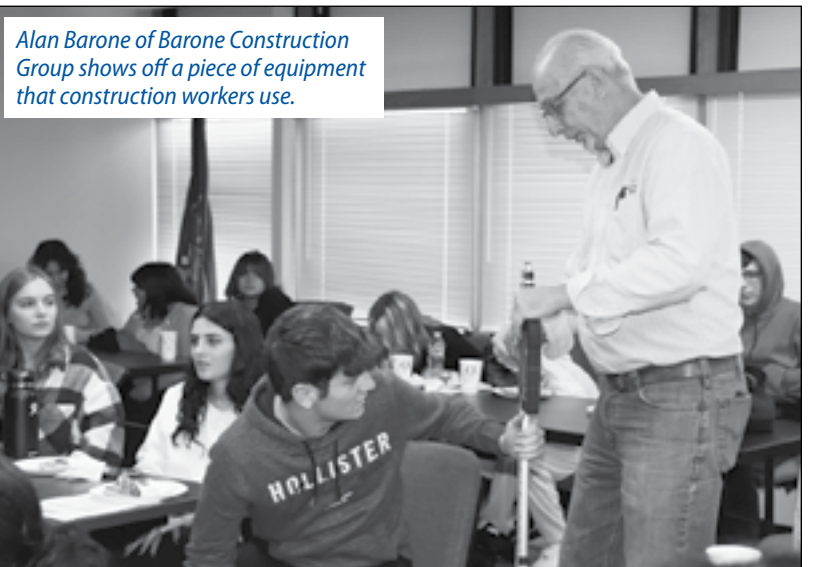
Breitman spoke about the various job opportunities available at Zumtobel, and explained how many of the company's employees worked their way up from entry-level positions to become managers.

During each presentation, students asked thoughtful questions about education, certifications, and salaries, and left with an abundance of knowledge about a different career option.

"Each session was an eye-opening experience for our students, who are either in the process of thinking about or just beginning to consider life after high school," said Principal Kevin Murphy. "We are extremely grateful to all of the local professionals who took the time to come in and encourage our students to think about their futures."



Matt Bahr, owner of TRC Auto, discusses car-care tips with students.



Alan Barone of Barone Construction Group shows off a piece of equipment that construction workers use.



AFRICAN ACROBATS WOW AUDIENCES IN HIGHLAND

Lots of “oohs” and “aahs” and plenty of enthusiastic cheering and applause could be heard throughout Highland in March, as Elementary and Middle School students were treated to several live performances by the visiting ZUZU Acrobats.

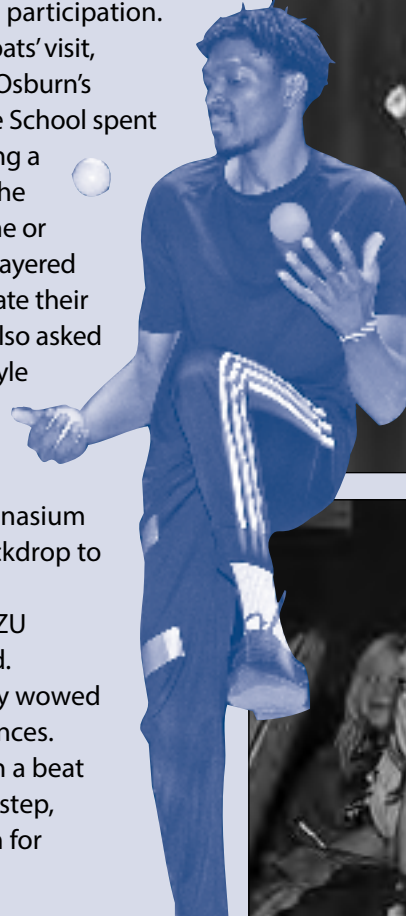
Hailing from East Africa, members of the troupe showed off their unique talents while simultaneously celebrating the beauty of Tanzanian culture. In addition to jaw-dropping acrobatics and gravity-defying stunts (which included contortion, chair balancing, juggling, and jump roping, to name a few), the interactive shows featured music, dancing,

comedy, and lots of audience participation.

In anticipation of the acrobats’ visit, Grade 8 students in Christina Osburn’s Art classes at Highland Middle School spent time creating artwork depicting a wide variety of animals from the African savanna. Working alone or in small groups, the students layered and blended oil pastels to create their vibrant drawings. They were also asked to incorporate bold African-style patterns around their work to help tie the pieces together.

The colorful artwork was displayed in the school’s gymnasium and served as the perfect backdrop to the group’s performance.

We are thankful to the ZUZU Acrobats for visiting Highland. Students of all ages were truly wowed by their impressive performances. Each Husky walked away with a beat in their head, rhythm in their step, and a newfound appreciation for another culture!



Highland High School Students Get Lesson on Internet Safety

Retired New York City Police Department Detective Thomas Grimes visited Highland High School (HHS) in February to speak to students about internet safety.

During two grade-level assemblies, Grimes discussed the dangers of social media, online predators, cyberbullying, and more. He urged students to be cautious about who they interact with online, and what kind of information they share publicly. He also made sure that the Huskies understood the concept of a “digital footprint,” and how things they post on the internet never truly go away.

“Make sure what you do today is not going to hamper your future tomorrow,” he warned the students, adding that colleges and future employers would likely be monitoring their social media at one point or another. “Pretend that everything you share online is going to be stapled to your résumé,” Grimes said. “You are a

searchable, marketable brand. Your social media presence can be something that you’re proud of. It doesn’t have to be something that hurts you.”

Grimes encouraged the High School students to start curating their online presence now and to police themselves into making good choices when it comes to their digital words and behavior.

Shifting gears to discuss online predators, Grimes shared a few real-life stories that sadly ended in tragedies for teens who became involved with the wrong people online.

“You decide who you interact with, and you control who you give access to your life,” he told his audience. “Make sure you choose wisely.”

On the topic of cyberbullying, Grimes reiterated that words are powerful and should be used to build people up, not tear them down. He urged anyone in the audience who might be experiencing online bullying to not suffer in silence.

“Speaking up about bullying should not take an extra amount of courage; it should be the expectation,” he said. “Tell someone, and don’t stop telling them until you get the help you need.”

HHS Principal Kevin Murphy said that he was grateful to Grimes for his visit and was hopeful that his messages resonated with students. “The presentations were informative and enlightening, and featured powerful advice to help keep our Highland students safe,” he said.

Retired New York City Police Department Detective Thomas Grimes speaks about internet safety during a presentation at Highland High School.





New Slate of Honorees Enter **Husky Hall of Fame**



Highland's **Huskey Hall of Fame** was created five 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. As in the past, this year's honorees display an impressive level of commitment to the Highland community. Their biographies are available on the District's website, but here are a few highlights:

CARL RELYEA

Relyea graduated from Highland High School in 1972 and worked as a physical education teacher and coach in the District for 38 years before retiring in 2016. He led the Boys Varsity Basketball team for several years and was also the head coach for Varsity Baseball, helping the team amass more than 300 wins and four Section IX Championships. He helmed the Varsity Football program from 1986 until 2015, and his team's Section IX title in 1991 provided Highland with its first football trophy in two decades. This past fall, Relyea was presented with the inaugural Coach Carl Relyea Award, which will be given annually to an individual who has positively impacted the football program in Highland.



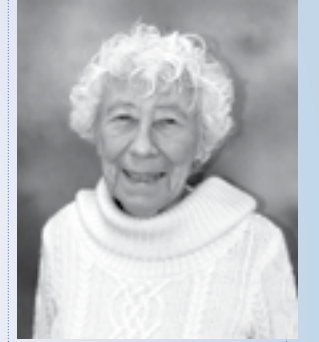
PAUL HANSUT

Hansut graduated from Highland High School in 1982. He spent his professional career in law enforcement, working for both the Town of Lloyd and the City of Poughkeepsie Police Departments in various capacities. Shortly before his retirement from police work in 2012, Hansut transitioned to politics, first serving four years as an Ulster County Legislator, then eight years as Town of Lloyd Supervisor. During his time as Supervisor, he worked tirelessly to bring in new businesses, expand events throughout the community, and help local organizations meet their fundraising goals. He devoted his life to public service and loved helping the people of the Highland.



ANGELA GRIECO

Grieco was born and raised in New York City and worked as a Social Studies teacher in Newburgh for many years. After retiring, she relocated to Highland and began subbing at both Highland Middle School and Highland High School. She continued to work throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, even teaching herself to use modern video communications software like Zoom. Grieco possesses a wealth of knowledge and experience, and she is happy to share her wisdom in her classrooms. She has the love and respect of her students, whom she affectionately calls "her kids." When she is not volunteering for the Town of Lloyd Events Committee or the Highland Public Library, she can often be found attending school sporting events, concerts, foreign language nights, and more.



HONORING THE CLASS OF 2023

With graduation around the corner, please join us in acknowledging the efforts and achievements of the current graduation candidates for the Class of 2023. These students were freshmen when the buildings closed for the pandemic, and they missed much of their high school experience. Despite it all, though, they persevered. We are

so proud of their strength, resiliency, 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. We can't wait to see you in your caps and gowns crossing the stage into the next chapter of your lives!

Cassandra Morgan Acosta
Avaise Abigail Adams
Cameran Lynn Almodovar
Erica Lynne Angelillo
Jeremy Edward Angelone
Jorge Antonio
Marissa Elizabeth Anzalone
Arturo Aragon-Gutierrez
Panagiotis Efthimios Bakatsias
Timothy Alan Baker
Michael William Henry Birch
Jakob Kade Bishop
Keith Edward Bohlinger
Gavin Alexander Bonner-Fantauzzi
Mckenzie Sue Brooker
Athena Elizabeth Brouillard
Diana Elizabeth Brouillard
Olivia Judith Casabura
Jonathan Ernesto Casco Romero
Danica James Childs
Tyler John Chorvas
Gabriella Elizabeth Coates
Chayne Steven Conklin
Robert Dinan Conway
Haiden Xavier Corless
Kathleen Rose Cruz

Samuel Antonio Cruz
Taylor Olivia Cruz
Samantha Marie D'Aragona
Katie Jane Dauenhimer
Jamaya Marie Davis
Devon Dawes
Isabella Julieanna Helena DeMatteis
Jason Michael Dewitt
Tiffany Rose Dewitt
Matthew John Dubois Jr.
Dylan Garvens Durandis
Trevor Mason Ebert
Meriah Izabella Faircloth
Eric Fernandes Jr.
Jada Anika Gardener
Hayley Elizabeth Gensch
Macayla Goodenough
John W. Gorden
Daniella Anne Grant
Jason Miguel Guerrero
Christopher Shawn Haight
Joziyah Jena Hall-Crowley
Najira Elise Hanson
Jacob Herman
Jaydn Ron Hernandez
Sean Carlos Hernandez

Robert Anthony Hinspeter
Saathvik Hulgundi
Marissa Incorvaia
Joshua Jones
Leonard Cameron Joyce
Richard Raymond Kane
Kayleigh Gabrielle Kaplan
Jasleen Kaur
Abigail Kearney
Gavin Cole Landry
Mollie Anne Lass
Daiven Schamarr Leath
Michael Lindsey
Bianca Dalila Lopez
Annicia D. Lowe-Murray
Kalia Maduro
Pete Malena
Alisha Marie Martinez
Jonathan Evan Martinez
Ava Rose Mazzetti
Addison Patricia McDowell
Alan David Mendez Matias
Aidyan Meyer
Gabrielle Joy Minard
Alisha Zahraa Mokai
Isabella Lynn Monteverdi

Logan More
Richard Susumu Louis Motai
Emily Yatziri Munoz
Sreeja Nallamothu
Erik Steven Nelson
Ashley Nicole Nesheiwat
Grace Renee Nielson
Savannah Milan Nielson
Julien D. Niles
Daniel Walter O'Dell
Michaela Jamie Oates
Shamara Renee Oates
Sanaa Marie Omondi
Ihuoma Adlynn Onyema
Stephen Origene
Cedric Petilos
Adrienne Riley Post
Joseph Vincent Precour
Isabella Angelina Reid
Jonathan Dean Rhodes-Bloomer
Blake Rockwell
Ava Luciana Rodriguez
Matthew Rose
Ava Danee Rosso
Kiera Elizibeth-Michelle Rowe
Marissa L. Santos

Alec Schlosser
Victoria Sela-Olivari
Alex Anthony Silverio
George Simmons
Sydney Nicole Simpson
Dominick Sorbello Jr.
Jayden Taylor St. Clair
Matthew B. Steuber
Jasmine Sullivan
Jonaah-Violet Hope Super
Brayden Donald Surprise
Jonah Robert Thibault-Edmonds
Emma Catherine Thompson
Elainah Paige Towsley
August Emma Trombetta
Kylie Ryen VanZandt
John George Vett V
Nickolas John Violaris
Ian Reyes Warren
Maura Kathryn Westover
Jeaton Williams
Joann Veronica Williams
Alexandria Ruth Winters
Kevin Zheng

Highland Drama Club Presents: **You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown**

Highland High School (HHS) students showed off their theatrical and musical talents this spring when the Drama Club presented *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*, a musical based on the comic strip *Peanuts* by Charles M. Schulz.

The cast and crew spent weeks preparing for the show, which took place in the High School auditorium on April 14 and 15.

The memorable production followed Charlie Brown, played by Highland's Cassandra Acosta, and other beloved *Peanuts* characters including Lucy (Sofia Valerie), Sally (Mary Tomlin), Linus (Jenna Merced), Schroeder (Richard Motai), and Snoopy (Emily Fitzgerald). Throughout the show, the gang explores life's great questions as they play sports, struggle with homework, sing songs, pine over their crushes, and celebrate the joys of friendship.

The show, which featured lots of great musical numbers, including "My Blanket and Me," "The Kite," "Suppertime," and "Happiness," was led by Director Lorelei Amato with assistance from Student Stage Manager Lily Belle Sgroe.

Amato, who is also a Social Studies teacher at HHS, said she is proud of all of the students who were involved in the production. "Everyone put in so much time, hard work, and dedication, and it really shined through in the performances," she said. "We all had a great time working on this show, and we are so grateful to everyone in the audience who came to see it!"



How Sweet It Is: Middle School Students Learn How to Make Maple Syrup

This winter, Highland Middle School students in Grades 6, 7, and 8 spent time learning about the maple sugaring process, which is used to produce maple syrup. The student-led project was completed under the guidance of Science teacher Cornelia Harris.

Before tapping several maple trees along the school's property line, the students spent time researching the process, studying the history of making maple syrup, and learning techniques and best practices. Once they had a firm understanding of the steps involved, the students got to work, immersing themselves in everything from designing and building an arch—which is the stand used to hold the evaporator pans that are

needed to boil the sap—to actually tapping the maple trees and harvesting the sap.

The Huskies even invited a few Highland Elementary School classes over one day in March to learn firsthand how maple syrup is made. The older students acted as teachers, demonstrating key points of what they had learned from their project. Highlights for the Grade 4 and 5 students included sampling the syrup and getting an up-close look at tree-stump cutting during an interesting discussion about plant anatomy.

By the time the five-week project was complete, the Middle School students had collected approximately 35 gallons of sap. They used 10 of

those gallons to produce one quart of maple syrup.

Harris said she is proud of her students, who quickly learned that the lessons involved in the maple sugaring process had ties to several different academic subjects.

"By tapping our own trees for sap, students learned not only how to make maple syrup but also the biology and history behind it, including how Native Americans processed sap and why real maple syrup is so expensive," she said. "They did a great job!"

Harris would like to thank Lowe's of Highland, the Highland Hannaford, and the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies in Millbrook for donating or lending the materials needed for this project.





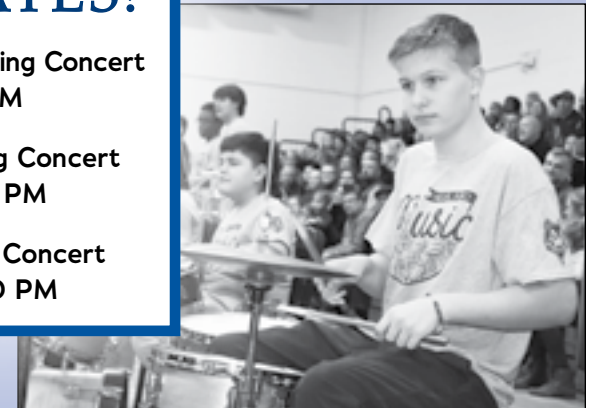
Highland Scholarship Concerts a Success

The Highland Central School District held its annual Scholarship Concerts in March, giving music students from the Elementary, Middle, and High Schools the chance to shine on stage.

The instrumental concert took place on March 1 and featured high-quality performances by the Fifth Grade Band, Sixth Grade Band, Seventh-Eighth Grade Band, Middle School Jazz Band, and High School Jazz and Concert Bands. The event was a wonderful lead-up to the Districtwide choral concert, which took place on March 8. The evening gave members of the Fifth Grade Chorus, Sixth Grade Chorus, Seventh-Eighth Grade Chorus, and High School Concert Choir the opportunity to showcase their impressive vocal talents.

Thank you to our hardworking music teachers—Jodie McCaffrey, Matthew Hogan, Erin Matthews, Vincent Rizzi, Dan Shaut, and Karen Adamec—who once again conducted memorable performances for appreciative audience members. The Scholarship Concerts, which happened to take place during Music in Our Schools Month, also raised money to be awarded to graduating Highland seniors who have demonstrated leadership, musicianship, and dedication in the music program.

Bravo, Highland!



SAVE THE DATES!

Highland Elementary School Spring Concert
Monday, June 5, at 6 PM

Highland Middle School Spring Concert
Wednesday, June 7, at 6 PM

Highland High School Spring Concert
Thursday, June 8, at 6:30 PM

Huskies Prepare for Transition to High School

One of the many goals the Highland Middle School (HMS) Guidance Department had this year was to improve the readiness of Grade 8 students as they prepare to make the transition to high school in September.

To help achieve this goal, a small group of seniors and guidance counselors from Highland High School (HHS) visited HMS this spring to meet with Grade 8 students in the gym. The panelists shared stories about their experiences, as well as some practical tips to help the future freshmen be successful in high school.

Directly following the presentation, HMS Guidance Counselors Vanessa Sheldon and Conor Kenny spoke with their students about Grade 9 scheduling. Topics covered included credit requirements and course options.

The purpose of the presentation and course selection discussion, Kenny explained, was to give eighth graders enough time to prepare for high school. "It is a big transition, and we want them to feel as ready as possible," he said.

At the end of March, the Grade 8 students hit the road, taking a field trip to HHS on two separate days. There, the younger Huskies met with high school administrators, guidance counselors, teachers, and other staff to learn about behavioral expectations, after-school activities, and more. The soon-to-be Middle School graduates also took a tour of the building, familiarizing themselves with many of the areas where they will be spending their time in the future.

"The purpose of the readiness activities this spring was to get students excited and thinking about high school, while also giving them the opportunity to learn about things such as expectations and rules and regulations," said Kenny. "Being able to tour the building in person was a nice bonus."

Next up on the calendar is Grade 9 orientation this summer. Good luck to the HHS Class of 2027!

Highland High School Girls Varsity Basketball players **Danica Valente** and **Grace Koehler** were named to the Mid-Hudson Athletic League's National Conference



All-Star Team. The girls also made the list of the Basketball Coaches Association of New York's Top 50 players in Section IX Girls Basketball. Both honors were well deserved for these two Husky athletes, who gave it their all on the court this year!

KUDOS TO THESE HIGHLAND HUSKY SUPERSTARS!

Continued from page 1

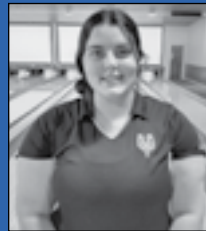


Highland High School's first-ever Flag Football team kicked off its inaugural season this spring. There are 18 girls on the team, and their head coach is **Samantha Valentino**. The program is supported by the New York Jets, and team members got the opportunity to prepare for their upcoming games by attending a camp at the Jets training facility in March. Good luck this season, Huskies!



The Highland High School Junior Varsity (JV) Volleyball team finished its fall 2022 season with an impressive 14-0 record. According to Coach Cheryl Angelone, the Huskies were the only undefeated JV team in their division. Now that's something to celebrate! Special shout-outs to team captains **Kelcey Whalen** and **Danica Valente**, who did a great job leading the winning team on and off the court.

Highland Grade 10 student **Reid Berean** was named to the following Boys Basketball all-star teams this year: 3rd team (*Daily Freeman*), Small School Dutchess County Coaches Association team, and the Basketball Coaches Association of New York's Class B team. Congratulations, Reid!



Highland High School student **Olivia Casabura** came in 9th place with her composite team at the New York State Bowling Championship in March. She was also awarded the Sportsmanship Award for Section IX.

Highland High School junior **Caitlin Becker** was selected by American International Sports Teams (AIST) to represent the United States this summer as part of the 2023 AIST UK Laxfest Tour for women's lacrosse. Caitlin will be joining a team composed of 20 players from all across the country and will spend eight days competing in games/tournaments in both England and Scotland. We wish her luck as she prepares to take the field abroad this summer!



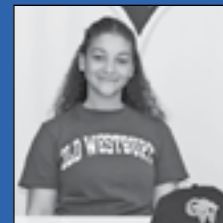
Four Grade 11 students from Highland High School represented Section IX at the New York State Public High School Athletic

Association's Student Leadership Conference in Albany on March 30. **Connor Gemmell**, **Craig Elliott**, **Grace Koehler**, and **Navya Ruparelia** participated

Highland High School senior **Danny Fratz** came in 4th place at the Mid-Hudson Wrestling Tournament, which was held in December. **Reese Greathouse**, a Marlboro High School student who wrestles for Highland, placed 5th.



Highland High School seniors **Joann (JoJo) Williams** and **Ian Warren** have each committed to playing sports at their chosen colleges next fall. JoJo will play Girls Lacrosse at SUNY Old Westbury, while Ian committed to playing Baseball at SUNY Plattsburgh. Each student-athlete was praised for their talent, hard work, and dedication during two separate signing events this year.



Middle School Students Know Where to Go When They Need a Break

Highland Middle School (HMS) students who are looking for a break this year need to look no further than the Break Room, a new sensory area designed with the purpose of giving students a space where they can de-stress, decompress, and unwind.

Located down a busy hallway on the first floor of the building, the Break Room has already become a popular place for students to go to calm their bodies and their minds, said School Social Worker Victoria Barone.

Barone, who is now in her second year at HMS, recalls bringing up the idea for the Break Room back when she interviewed for her position as

part of the school's support staff. "I used to work for Astor Services for Children & Families, and sensory rooms were a big part of the programs there," she explained. "I thought it was something that could really benefit the students of Highland."

Fortunately for Barone, school administrators agreed, and thanks to a generous grant from the Highland Educational Foundation, the Break Room was able to get up and running this year.

Perfect for addressing behavioral issues and supporting students' social and emotional needs, the room is home to an assortment of tools and resources designed to help students develop and engage their senses. Examples include stimuli such as lights, colors and sounds that promote calmness; equipment like a trampoline and balance board that encourage movement; a coloring

pad to inspire creativity; and various fidget toys to improve focus, decrease restlessness, and strengthen fine motor skills.

The Break Room experience is different for each student, Barone explained. "While some visit for a quick 'brain break,' or to relieve anxiety before a big test or presentation, others come to help manage larger 'crisis-type' issues such as a falling out with a friend or problems at home," she said.

Many students explore the room quietly on their own, but others come specifically seeking an adult to talk to, Barone continued. Most students spend about 5-15 minutes at a time, but longer visits can be accommodated, if needed, she said.

Walk-ins are welcome, but students can also schedule one-on-one sessions with Barone, whose office is attached to the Break Room.

"The most important thing for students to understand is that the Break Room is there for them," said Barone. "We encourage everyone to take advantage of this very important school resource."

Highland Middle School Social Worker Victoria Barone (left) spends time with Grade 6 student Sarenity Farris in the Break Room.



Science Olympiad Team Shines at Regional Competition



Kudos to the 20 Highland High School students who participated in the Mid-Hudson Regional Science Olympiad competition, held at John Jay High School in February. The students spent the day working in teams to compete in science labs, take tests based on months of research, and demonstrate devices, from Wi-Fi antennae to catapults, which they had built in advance. The Highland group finished in 11th place out of 34 schools, and team members were awarded medals in the following events:

- **Anatomy & Physiology (2nd Place):** Alexander Papazov and Lena Tran
- **Cell Biology (2nd Place):** Alexander Papazov and Alice Dong
- **Environmental Chemistry (7th Place):** Alisha Mokai and Grace Koehler
- **Green Generation (3rd Place):** Alice Dong and Grace Koehler

Ecology and Cartology Come to Life at Highland Elementary

In March, Grade 1 students at Highland Elementary School were treated to a thought-provoking visit from Rebecca Houser, an education and outreach specialist with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's Hudson River Estuary Program.

As an environmental educator, Houser works with schools and communities to enhance individuals' understanding of the Hudson River. During her visit to Highland, she spoke to students about the local estuary and what makes it unique. She also led the young Huskies in a map-drawing activity to help illustrate where key sites are located along the river.

Before wrapping up her program, Houser invited the first graders to visit the banks of the Hudson River later this spring to study water quality, plant and animal life, and more. Sounds like a great opportunity to bring ecology to life!



SOCCER INSPIRES MIDDLE SCHOOL ROBOTICS LESSONS

This year, students in Sean Banks's Robotics classes at Highland Middle School put their engineering skills to work by building VEX robots.

Known for being a simple and accessible solution to teaching coding and engineering principles to young students, VEX robotics programs also encourage creativity, teamwork, and problem-solving.

Once they finished building their robots, the Huskies put their designs to the test, having them compete in soccer-type drills in honor of this winter's World Cup. The drills required the young engineers to quickly navigate their robots around a series of obstacles that were set up in the hallway.

Then, after they got enough practice under their belts, the students played some soccer, robot style! In the Grade 6 class, students played one against one, while the Grade 7/8 Huskies tried their hands at two against two contests.

Banks reported that the activity was a great way to connect what the students had been working on in class to a popular current event. "The students enjoyed the soccer theme and really rose to the challenge of designing and building competitive robots," he said.



Highland Students Benefit from Rotary Club's Book Project

Members of the Highland Rotary Club stopped by Highland Elementary School (HES) and Highland Middle School (HMS) this year to drop off donated books as part of the group's annual Book Project.

Started in 2017 as a replacement for its previous dictionary and thesaurus project, the Rotary's effort involves purchasing enough books for all of the students in one grade level at the Elementary and Middle Schools each year.

This year, Grade 4 teachers at HES decided to order various non-fiction titles including *What is the Constitution?*; *What Are the Paralympics?*; and *What Was the Harlem Renaissance?*

The books were used for student research throughout the year.

The Rotary also delivered copies of the novel *The Forgetting* (by Sharon Cameron) to Grade 7 students at Highland Middle School.

Thank you to the Rotary for continuing to support literacy throughout the Highland Central School District!

