

inside

Winter 2016

HIGHLANDS



Highlands Middle School Named "School to Watch"

HIGHLANDS SCHOOL DISTRICT



COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER



HIGHLANDS MIDDLE SCHOOL

Receives National "Schools to Watch" Recognition

Highlands School District is proud to announce that Highlands Middle School, the district's Grades 6, 7 and 8 building, is now a recognized Pennsylvania Don Eichhorn "Schools to Watch" Program school. This prestigious recognition only includes 35 other schools in Pennsylvania and only 400 nationwide in the Schools to Watch program, an initiative of the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform.

As a School to Watch, it will be a model school that schools throughout the state will visit to experience first-hand what a high performing middle grade school is like while working on its trajectory towards success. Each school selected to be a Schools to Watch school is unique in appearance, population and technique, but according to Bruce Vosburgh, the Director of the PA program, "Each is a place that's special, and a place that any of us would LOVE for our children or grandchildren to attend!"

Highlands Middle School principals **Mr. Charlie Mort** and **Ms. Debbie Beucker** worked diligently with Superintendent **Dr. Michael Bjalobok**, the School Board of Directors, faculty, staff, parents and students during this three-year process in transitioning the Middle School to a true middle grades program. The school will be officially awarded in February.

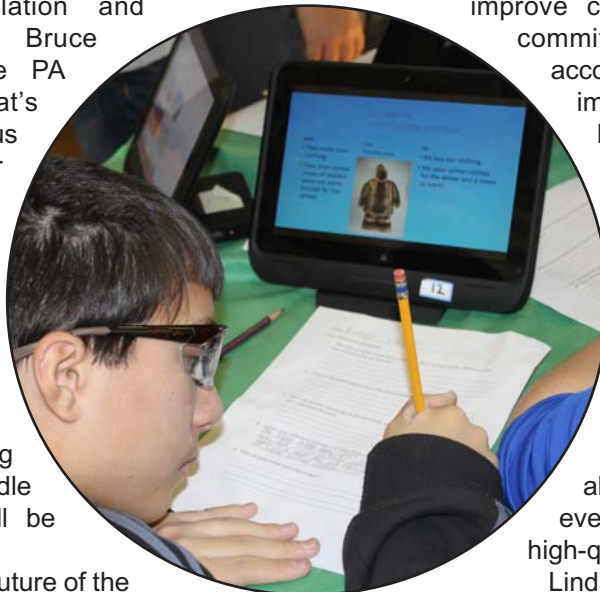
"This is a significant step to the future of the Middle School and a prestigious award," Dr. Bjalobok said. "It has been a progressive project that we are very proud of the Middle School administration and staff for accomplishing in order to bring Highlands Middle School back to a true middle school model. We are also grateful for the support from the School Board, parents and community in helping to achieve the designation."

PA Don Eichhorn Schools: "Schools to Watch" (PA STW) is part of a recognition program developed by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform. In partnership with the Pennsylvania Department of Education, the Pennsylvania Association for Middle Level Education, Duquesne University, Edinboro University, Shippensburg University, Horace Mann Service Corporation, and

Vibra Life, the Pennsylvania "Schools to Watch" team announced that Highlands Middle School has met the strict STW criteria, joining 28 other Pennsylvania middle-grades schools recognized previously. The six newest schools as well as the six re-designated schools will be recognized at the Pennsylvania Association for Middle Level Education State Conference at the Penn Stater Conference Center in State College on February 28.

State leaders selected each school for its academic excellence, its responsiveness to the needs and interests of young adolescents, and its commitment to helping all students achieve at high levels. In addition, each school has strong leadership, teachers who work together to improve curriculum and instruction, and a commitment to assessment and accountability to bring about continuous improvement. Dr. Irv Howard, Past President of the National Forum stated, "We congratulate these schools for being places that do great things for all of their students. These schools demonstrate that high-performing middle grades schools are places that focus on academic growth and achievement. They are also places that recognize the importance of meeting the needs of all of their students and ensure that every child has access to a rigorous, high-quality education."

Linda Hopping, Chair, as well as other members of the National Forum Schools to Watch Oversight Committee, explain that selection was based on a written application that required schools to show how they met criteria developed by the National Forum. Schools that appeared to meet the criteria were then visited by state teams, which observed classrooms, interviewed administrators, teachers, students, and parents, and looked at achievement data, suspension rates, quality of lessons, and student work. Schools are recognized for a three-year period, and at the end of three years, they must demonstrate progress on specific goals in order to be re-designated. Unlike the Blue Ribbon recognition program, "Schools to Watch" requires schools to not just identify strengths, but to also focus on areas for



continuous improvement; thus the three year re-designation.

“We are pleased that our Schools to Watch program has shown that schools can meet high academic expectations while preserving a commitment of healthy development and equity for all students,” said Ericka Uskali, National Forum Executive Director. “These Schools to Watch are indeed special; they make education so exciting that students and teachers don’t want to miss a day. These schools have proven that it is possible to overcome barriers to achieving excellence, and any middle-level school in any state can truly learn from their examples,” Uskali said.

Highlands Middle School’s STRENGTHS Identified by Schools to Watch

1. Family Resource Center
2. Student artwork displayed throughout building
3. Partial Hospitalization Program
4. Highly respected Administrative Team
5. Grants secured to supplement local funding
6. Interdisciplinary units (ie: Inuit Culture Day)
7. Integration of diversity concepts
8. RAMbassador Program
9. Supportive District Administration and School Board
10. Private Industry Council’s after school programs
11. After school activity bus
12. 6th Grade Student/Parent Transition Camp
13. Effective Co-Teaching
14. High School Student Mentoring Program

About “Schools to Watch”

Launched in 1999, Schools to Watch began as a national program to identify middle-grades schools across the country that were meeting or exceeding 37 researched based criteria developed by the National Forum. The Forum developed a website <http://middlegradesforum.org> that features online tours of schools, as well as detailed information about the selection criteria used in the recognition program. There are now 17 states across the country, which have trained Schools to Watch State Teams, with more than 4000 schools recognized across the country.

The National Forum sponsors the Schools to Watch program along with the Association for Middle Level Education, the National Association for Elementary School Principals, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, Learning Forward, ASCD, and State Schools to Watch affiliates.

Beucker Named PAESSP Outstanding Principal



Highlands School District is proud to announce that **Debbie Beucker**, assistant principal at Highlands Middle School, has been named *Pennsylvania Association of Elementary and Secondary School Principals’ (PAESSP) 2015 Outstanding Assistant Principal*.

Ms. Beucker has been an educator for 21 years and an assistant principal for 12 years. In her career, she has been a librarian and English teacher in Boca Raton, FL; a librarian in Franklin Regional High School in Murrysville, PA, and an assistant principal at Highlands High School.

Ms. Beucker also heads the HMS Data Team, which helps to monitor and track student academic growth on state and local assessments. She works closely with faculty, students and family with the Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) model, which has helped students to model expected behaviors and, she believes, has helped her to reduce discipline by 50 percent.

The award is distributed by the Pennsylvania Association of Elementary and Secondary School Principals in association with the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and VOYA Financial.

Ms. Beucker hopes to leave a legacy of “lifelong learners” at HMS. “Students at HMS will become adults who KNOW that they have a future and that they are capable of realizing it. They will be positive contributors to the community, resourceful problem solvers and effective writers, readers and speakers.”



School Board Reorganizes

The 2016 Highlands School Board of Directors are *front row, left to right: Mr. Heath Cohen, Mr. Jeff Mundy, Mrs. Debbie Beale (President), Mr. Michael Masarik (Vice President), and Mrs. Judy Wisner. Back row, left to right: Mrs. Laura Thimons, Mr. Eric Miles, Mr. Kerry Myers and Mr. Ryan Hanford.* Meetings are the 2nd and 3rd Monday of the month at 7:00pm, Highlands High School.

Remembering 9/11...



Highlands Middle School students display a paper chain to represent the 2,977 lives lost on September 11, 2001 as part of the 2nd Annual Moving Flag Tribute organized by the local chapter of Team RWB (Red, White & Blue). Community members kept the flag moving through our neighborhoods for the entire day of Sept. 11. Several

school groups, teachers and students, including the High School Band, AFS Students, Middle School Choral Program and the Cross Country Team participated in the memorial event. Students at Fawn Primary Center also did their own version of the Moving Flag Tribute on Patriot Day. Students circled the front of the building with hand-crafted flags in their red, white and blue attire. Shown above left are Fawn students **Aliyah Vazquez** and **Jeremiah Haag**, who both have parents currently deployed in the military.

Middle School Student Selected for STEM-Based Ambassador Program

Highlands Middle School sixth grader **Ethan Roberts** was selected to attend the People to People Ambassadors Student World Robotics & Leadership Forum held Nov. 10-13, 2015 in Washington, DC.



Ethan was nominated for the Ambassador Program by Highlands educators because of his scholastic merit, leadership potential and exemplary citizenship.

At the STEM-based Robotics Forum, Ethan participated on a robotics team utilizing Lego Mindstorms® and learned the elements of robotics design and construction. The experience also included a visit to the Smithsonian Museum and other iconic DC sites and memorials to learn about the role of technology in our history and the future. Special guest speakers at the Forum included Dr. Roger K. Crouch, former NASA astronaut and senior scientist for the International Space Station and Anthony J. Nunez, founder/President and CEO of Infamous Robotics LLC.

Ethan is the son of **Al & Dana Roberts** and grandson to **Terry & Sue Fox** and **Nancy Roberts**. In addition to his academic success at Highlands, he is involved in athletics, band, church and community service.

Highlands' PBIS & MTSS Models Receive State, National Recognition

Highlands School District is recognized nationally and by the state for having exceptional programs for the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) models. **Mrs. Deb Lehew**, Director of Special Education, and the administration of Highlands have been awarded grants to develop these programs district-wide, which are behavior management and encouragement systems (RAMS Program) and academic support plans. See below the extensive list Highlands has received for the school year so far and those expected to be received once the state budget is passed.

Highlands Middle School

\$10,000 Awarded Stipend - MTSS Middle School Writing Pilot and research work in the area and roll out of Tiered Writing Instruction for the state of PA
 PBIS Model School - Awaiting grant notification
 PBIS Recognition - Year 2 - Awaiting grant notification
 Project RENEW

Grandview Upper Elementary

\$10,000 Awarded Stipend - MTSS Elementary Writing
 \$10,000 Awarded Stipend - MTSS Elementary Math
 Pilot and research work in the area and roll out of Tiered Writing Instruction for the state of PA
 PBIS Model School - Awaiting grant notification
 PBIS Recognition - Year 2 - Awaiting grant notification

Fairmount and Fawn Primary Centers

\$10,000 Awarded Stipend - MTSS Elementary Writing
 \$10,000 Awarded Stipend - MTSS Elementary Math
 Pilot and research work in the area and roll out of Tiered Writing Instruction for the state of PA
 PBIS Recognition - Year 3 - Awaiting grant notification

Highlands School District

Parent and Family Engagement - Awaiting grant notification
 PBIS Expansion Grant - Awaiting grant notification

Highlands High School

Project RENEW
 Featured state video with students, parents, and staff



District Welcomes New Assistant Principals

Highlands welcomes to its family two new school administrators, Assistant Principal **Molly Skedel** (High School) and Assistant Principal **Kimberly Price** (Grandview).



Molly Skedel

Ms. Skedel arrived to Highlands High School in May 2015 as Assistant Principal to Ms. Cathy Russo. She has a Supervisory of Special Education degree from University of Pittsburgh, her Principal Certification from the University of Pennsylvania, a Master's of Education in Reading from Arcadia University and her Bachelor's degree in Special Education from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Ms. Skedel previously was employed as a Supervisor of Special Education at the Westmoreland Intermediate Unit, a Special Education Department chairperson and teacher at Armstrong School District; a teacher and an Extended School Year Vice Principal at Upper Dublin School District. Ms. Skedel is excited to continue her first full school year at Highlands. *"The most unexpected surprise I received from working at Highlands was the sense of family; a true community dedicated to working for the greater good of students and staff. Each day, I have the privilege of collaborating with professionals, parents, and community members who share a common goal of school improvement, and doing what is in the best interest of our students,"* said Skedel. She can be reached at 724-226-1000 or by email to mstedel@goldenrams.com.



Kimberly Price

Ms. Price joined the Grandview Upper Elementary School team as Assistant Principal to Ms. Heather Bigney in October 2015. She has a Doctorate degree in education administration and policy from the University of Pittsburgh, a Master's in Music Education from Carnegie Mellon University and a Bachelor's in Music Education from Stetson University in Florida. Ms. Price previously was employed as a music teacher at Shady Side Academy and as an orchestra director and music teacher at schools in Tennessee and Texas. Ms. Price enjoys interacting with the staff at Grandview and joining music class with the students! *"I love working at Highlands. The children and adults here work so hard to teach and learn, with their hearts and their heads. It is so exciting to see them grow, and such a joy to be a part of it,"* said Price. She can be reached at 724-224-0300 or by email to kprice@goldenrams.com.

highlands happenings



THANKSGIVING FEAST

Fairmount kindergarteners **Lenlie Baillie**, **Zakary Megats**, **Savannah Cheeseman** and **Exavier Wilson** get ready to eat a traditional turkey dinner at the annual Thanksgiving Feast held by the Kindergarten classes at both Fairmount and Fawn Primary Centers. Teachers, parents and students work together to plan the event and prepare the meal.

GOLD CARD LUNCHEON

Highlands Gold Card Club members enjoy the holiday meal prepared by the Highlands Food Services staff at the annual Thanksgiving Gold Card Luncheon. The event also featured a special performance by the High School Concert & Honors Choirs and Variations Show Choir. An Easter Luncheon will be held in March. Highlands residents 62 and older are eligible for the free Gold Card Club membership (see page 9 for info).



INUIT CULTURE DAY

Accompanied by his mom **Diana**, 7th grade hunter and trapper **Matthew Watts** proudly displays some of his trophies at the Middle School's Inuit People of Alaska Cultural Day sponsored by the Middle School's Aquamarine Team. Igloo building, crafts, caribou stew and Inuit games were among the many unique features of the event coordinated by students and staff.



HIGHLANDS HOMECOMING

The members of the 2015 Royal Court gather in the High School courtyard prior to the Homecoming festivities on October 9: (L-R) **Kara Bowser** (Queen), **Vaughn Hunkele**, **Olivia Ferrante**, **Tyler Alworth** (King), **Katelyn Kuniak**, **Josh Nulph**, **Abby Kuchek**, **Nik Runyan**, **Kayla Beale** and **Josh Gentile**. The Homecoming Parade featured the Highlands Varsity Marching Band, Homecoming Court, Highlands School Board & Administration, AFS Students, Cheerleaders, Rams Youth Football Players & Cheerleaders, Highlands Hornet Football Players & Cheerleaders, Harrison Twp. Police, and representatives and fire trucks from our local Volunteer Fire Departments.



ANNOUNCER HONORED

Highlands Athletic Director **Mr. Chuck Debor** congratulates **Mr. Joe Holliday** for being recognized by the Highlands Gridiron Club for his incredible 57 years of service as the Highlands Rams Football game announcer. Retired Highlands principal and Athletic Director **Mr. William Heasley Sr.** began in August 2015 as the new voice of the Rams.



READ YOUR HEART OUT

Grandview Principal **Heather Bigney** and Assistant Principal **Kim Price** read their hearts out with the students in Grades 3, 4, 5 and Pre-K. The students participated in this huge reading event as part of National Young Readers Week. Many students gave up their recess or free time to read with Ms. Bigney and Ms. Price, who read for the entire school day as part of the Book It! Principal Challenge. Community members, the police, firemen, other principals, School Board, and parents were also invited to read with the principals and students to show our students that reading is an activity enjoyed by all kinds of people they see around them, and not just a school-mandated activity.



MIDDLE SCHOOL GOES PINK

Highlands Middle School showed off their pink on Friday, October 23 in recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Students wore everything and anything pink! The Middle School's store, RAMS Mart, sold pink school supplies, locker accessories, and breast cancer awareness items. Shown in front of the store display are 7th graders **Bella Scolaro, McKenna Bordonaro, Noah Bombalski** and **Luke Beer**. The store raised \$285 dollars, which was donated to the Triple Negative Breast Cancer Foundation in memory of former Highlands elementary and science teacher, **Mrs. Carol Fraser**. School store sponsor is **Mr. Chris Resek** (7th grade science).

CHRISTMAS AROUND THE WORLD

Both Highlands High School and Highlands Middle School hosted Christmas Around the World / Multicultural Events in December for students from Fairmount and Fawn primary centers. Students in **Mr. Pat Hassler's** High School Honors World Cultures and College in High School Psychology classes and the Middle School's 7th Grade students constructed the exhibits, presented information to visiting elementary level students, and engaged them in the cultural differences around the world through ethnic foods, interactive activities and games. The Middle School event was coordinated by 7th grade World Cultures teachers **Mrs. Kala Lenart** and **Ms. Tracy Eck**, MS librarian **Dr. Sandra Reidmiller** and the 7th grade team teachers. The events serve not only as a place where our district students are in a position to teach and mentor younger students; but it also fosters and promotes the central themes of accepting and embracing cultural diversity; understanding and respecting people with different customs or traditions; and tolerance for different religions or beliefs across the globe.

Highlands High School & Oberg Industries: Junior Apprentice Advantage (JAA) Program

The Right Choice for a “Gold-Collar Career” in Advanced Manufacturing



Highlands High School is proud to partner with Oberg Industries through the Junior Apprentice Advantage (JAA) program, an educational initiative offered to seniors at Highlands High School. This program between Oberg Industries and Highlands School District offers students a head start to learning the technological skills required to pursue a career in the challenging and lucrative advanced manufacturing industry. *Currently, 11 High School seniors are enrolled in the program and four recent graduates are employed at Oberg.*

Students who exhibit select aptitudes and continue to demonstrate proficiency in the JAA curriculum work towards placement in Oberg Industries' state-certified Apprenticeship Program. This curriculum consists of Computer Aided Design (CAD), Geometric Tolerance and Dimensioning, Measurement Science (Metrology), Advanced Geometry/Trigonometry, and Academic English 12. With the help of high school teachers **Mr. Michael Santucci, Mr. Matthew Sespico, Mr. John Malobicky** and **Mr. Dan Krynicki**, students take the four courses at school, work with the online learning application “ToolingU” on school-issued iPads and travel twice per month to Oberg to gain first-hand experiences with precision manufacturing tools. This Fall, Highlands received a donation of computer desks, chairs and other furniture from Allison Park Industrial Complex and several pieces of metrology equipment from Oberg for the JAA program.

“The instruction that they are getting from seasoned veterans and the monetary investment provided by the company is like nothing I’ve ever seen,” Mr. Sespico said. Students who complete the JAA program courses in good academic standing and satisfy Oberg’s apprenticeship entrance requirements will be offered preferred placement as full-time apprentices at Oberg Industries upon graduation from high school. In addition, if the student is

selected and completes Oberg’s apprenticeship program, each candidate will receive a college certificate and credits from Butler County Community College that can be applied to a degree.

“This is an exciting opportunity for our students to learn hands-on, develop a plan for their futures, and contribute to a global market right in their hometown community,” said **Dr. Michael Bjalobok**, Superintendent of Highlands School District.

More than 500 yearly job openings are projected for highly skilled precision manufacturing workers over the next decade. **Alex Telford**, a graduate of the first JAA class and current Oberg apprentice, commented, “The JAA classes, especially advanced math, gave me a head start to begin working for Oberg as an apprentice machinist. My senior year was the best because I had a clear focus to achieve an attainable goal while still in high school.”

*Contributing authors:
Cathy Russo - High School Principal & David Getty - Oberg Industries*



You’re invited to attend the
JAA Information Night
Wednesday, Feb. 17, 2016 6-8pm
Oberg Industries

2301 Silverville Rd., Freeport, PA 16229

Tour Oberg’s facilities, meet with Highlands faculty and Oberg professionals, engage in an open panel discussion.

Questions: jaa.program@oberg.com 724-295-2121

Highlands Moves Forward with New District Goals

President John F. Kennedy once said, "Change is the Law of Life. And those who look only to the past or the present are sure to miss the future." Highlands administration, teachers, staff and students are looking to the future with the expansion of school programs, pursuit of professional and student developments and preparation for the use of new, advanced technology that will prepare our students for successful academic careers and lives. Listed below are the Highlands School District Goals. At Highlands, we aim to move the Home, School and Community into the future! Please take a moment to review the district goals, and as always, we welcome your feedback and suggestions.

1. Student Achievement

At Highlands, the student and student achievement is at the center of everything that we do. Offering universal screenings provides us with the information that we need to offer tiered instruction and interventions to the students as individuals. Ongoing data collection and progress monitoring and the use of research-based and evidenced-based instructional and intervention curriculums, resources, and tools allow us to help our students to achieve to their greatest potential. Some of the key components helping us to meet our goals are:

NorthWest Evaluation Associates (NWEA) and Measure of Academic Progress (MAP): Web-based assessment that is administered three times per year. Based on a true growth model, this assessment gives accurate data to drive instruction.

Compass Learning Odyssey: Live data from MAP is downloaded to create and individual learning path for each student. Elementary and Middle School students access Odyssey to be enriched or remediated at their true ability level. In the Secondary, Compass Learning is more of a course that can be used for credit recovery.

Dibels is a measure of reading fluency utilized in the elementary to guide instruction. **Ed Insight** is a curriculum mapping software utilized to provide updates to the District curriculum.

2. Safe and Welcoming Learning Environment

Highlands School District is committed to providing a safe and welcoming environment for our students, our staff, our parents and families, and for our community stakeholders. Through ongoing planning and our safety measures, we continue to be cutting edge when it comes to keeping our students safe.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS): PBIS is endorsed by the PA Department of Education as a highly effective strategy to help the struggling learner. Highlands has fully embraced this concept.

Respectful, Accountable, Motivated and Safe (RAMS): Allows all stakeholders to learn and practice these tenets each and every day. In addition, our Anti-Bully program for K-12 ("Second Step") frames learning to acknowledge and accept diversity and differences.

Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate (ALICE) training for all building K-12 for the active intruder.

3. Dynamic Curriculum

Curriculum Teams are formed in the specific content areas K-12. Curriculum mapping and gap analysis occurs. Content specialists from the Allegheny Intermediate Unit will be utilized to guide this ongoing process. Math Curriculum will be completed in the 2015-16 school year. These curriculums will be living documents, allowing teachers and staff to access, to utilize, and to update as needed for our student population. Skills sets should be developed that allow for our students to be successful citizens in their post-high school experiences.

4. Professional Development

"One size fits all" is not an effective means to educate and enrich the faculty. We need to meet the individual needs of the staff just as we do with students. Working within a **Multi-Tiered System of Support** allows our staff to experience and develop skills that will help the effectiveness of their teaching and will foster a culture of learning for all of our students. Professional Development in the 2015-16 school year is differentiated and driven to advance the growth of the teaching staff. Highlands utilizes consultants for staff professional development. **Dr. Mitch Nichols** works with the High School staff to address the transition from 8th to 9th grade, focusing primarily on the freshman class. **Mr. Rich TenEyck** is consultant for professional development who works primarily with the administrative team. Mr. TenEyck is a former Department Secretary of Education in New Jersey.

5. Teaching and Learning

The PA Department of Education has provided a new evaluation for teachers. Our goal is to ensure that the teaching staff and administration work collaboratively and utilize the new tool effectively. **Student Learning Outcomes (SLO)** training will be provided and time will be given to accomplish this task. The **Educator Effectiveness Model** will be implemented and support will be provided to the teachers as the new evaluation is implemented.

6. Technology Integration

The Highlands Virtual Academy/Technology Committee will focus on a **1 to 1 initiative** for Highlands High School that will be implemented in the 2016-17 school year. The goal is to transform instruction and define what a device can do for instruction before it is purchased. There will be a focus on hybrid learning, which is a combination of on-line and traditional course offerings. The district will be working toward implementing a new student data management system for our staff to utilize as well. Highlands uses the **Apple Leadership Team** and **Questeq** in the development and exploration of a 1 to 1 initiative in the High School. Students also are incorporated into this development.

7. Collaborative Culture

The culture of the Highlands School District must be built on cooperation and collaboration. These two essential elements build trust in the school district for all stakeholders. Additionally, the administrative team and all teachers in the **New Teacher Induction Program** receive **Diversity Training**.

Disney
THE LION KING
DIRECTED BY RENEE SHREFFLER
JR
**HIGHLANDS
MIDDLE SCHOOL**
MARCH 18 - 7:00pm
MARCH 19 - 2:00pm & 7:00pm
Ticket info will be available soon on
www.goldenrams.com

Highlands "Home" to Six AFS Students This School Year



Contributor: Robert Alcantar, Highlands HS
Rampages Newspaper Reporter

Thanks to the dedicated efforts of local American Field Service (AFS) Coordinator **Kathy Harenski** and Highlands High School administration and staff, Highlands and these host families are proud to welcome six outstanding students from across the world for the 2015-16 school year!

Erika Bedoya - Colombia

Host family: Noel & Jennifer Collins, daughter Hadley (6th gr.) Erika is 18 and would be due to graduate in December in Chile. She plans to study International Business or become a flight attendant. Erika's favorite things about being at Highlands are meeting new people and creating new friendships.

This year's Highlands High School AFS students are (L-R) **Fabian** (Sweden), **Marie** (Norway), **Valentina** (Italy), **Alexandra** (Ukraine), **Erika** (Colombia), **Felipe** (Chile).

Felipe Lorca - Chile **Host family:** Brian & Marsha Campbell, daughter Brett, son Braden (both 11th gr.) Felipe is 18 and would be due to graduate at the end of this school year in November in Chile. He enjoys hanging out with friends, reading, playing cards, acting, high school pep rallies and being the Rams mascot! Felipe was on the Highlands soccer team this year and is looking forward to dances and the prom.

Nils "Fabian" Pettersson - Sweden **Host family:** Jeff & Karen Vanderhoff, sons Johnny (9th gr.), Jason (8th gr.) and Jeremy (6th gr.) Fabian is 17. He would normally graduate in June of 2017 in Sweden. Fabian spends most of his time playing football and hanging out with his friends. Football was a priority for Fabian; he didn't have much time for other things after school. He really enjoys all of the school spirit and the student dedication to sporting events at Highlands.

Valentina Rossi - Italy **Host family:** Krieg & Colleen Williams, daughter Maera (6th gr.) Valentina turned 17 in December. She would normally graduate in June 2017 in Italy. Valentina enjoys dancing and hanging out with her friends. She plans to pursue a career as a Child Psychologist. Valentina likes how much friendlier the teachers are here and the enthusiasm for our sports teams at Highlands.

Marie Soelvik - Norway **Host family:** Jeff & Tracie Santicola, daughter Marina (11th gr.) Marie is 17 and would normally graduate in June 2017 in Norway. Marie enjoys photography, singing, hanging out with her friends and playing soccer. Marie loves the enthusiasm about sports, the art classes, and the free lunches at Highlands. She is considering a career in teaching or engineering (renewable energy).

Alexandra Kotsyriy - Ukraine **Host family:** Mike & Kathy Harenski Alexandra is 16 and would normally graduate in May of 2016 in Ukraine. She enjoys dancing, writing, and hanging out with her friends. Alexandra says that in Ukraine she was not able to choose her own classes and that the teachers at Highlands are much more helpful. She likes how friendly all of the people are, and is looking forward to making more friends.

Willing to Give Hosting a Try? Host Families Needed for April Event

Highlands AFS is currently seeking event host families for International Days in April 2016. Families host an AFS student for two nights (Wed/Thur). Specific dates yet to be determined. Don't miss out on this unique opportunity! Please contact Kathy Harenski at 412-848-3952 or kharenski@verizon.net for further information.

Salvation Army Partners with HSD for Kids



PHOTO: WWW.PENGUINS.NHL.COM

The Pittsburgh Penguins take 20 Grandview Upper Elementary students to Dick's Sporting Goods in Cranberry Twp. for winter coats, boots, scarves, hats and gloves as part of the Salvation Army's Project Bundle-Up event in November.

don't receive breakfast and lunch at school. The program assists students through the year or temporarily, if a family has a short-term need due to financial hardship.

Members of the Board of the Salvation Army of Allegheny County notified the Armours of the Blessings in a Backpack program and they believed it could benefit the Highlands School District families. Through discussion, Highlands Middle School was selected to pilot the program in hopes that HMS students could learn RESPONSIBILITY for their involvement in receiving and returning the backpacks; COMPASSION by sharing with siblings in the home who also may be hungry; and could observe a community in ACTION to help each other as they are being helped. The program continued at the Middle School as well as extended to Grandview last year.

"We aim to reduce hunger in a child and create some kind of food security in a child's home," Capt. Armour said. In addition, such programs have been proved to improve a student's health and nutrition, test scores, attendance, social skills, personality growth and development and create a deeper connection between home and school.

"It's getting pretty expensive, and we're not getting the amount of donations we were before," said Capt. Armour. "We're extremely grateful for these donations. They really keep us going."

Capt. Armour said it costs about \$5 to feed one child for a weekend. Some parents have donated the money that they would have paid for their students' school food to the backpack program since the schools now benefit from a free food federal program. Several community organizations, such as the Natrona Catholic Daughters of America group, have also collected food donations for the program. Anyone who would like to donate to the program can leave donations at the Salvation Army, 917 Brackenridge Avenue in Brackenridge or call 724-224-6310.

In addition to the weekend food program, the Salvation Army provided more than 350 free backpacks stuffed with school supplies at its annual Back to School Bash in August, which also hosted several service providers for students to have their vision checked, receive haircuts and meet local emergency service providers. Capt. Armour also treated 20 students from Grandview Upper Elementary School to a shopping trip at Dick's Sporting Goods in Cranberry Township to meet some of the Pittsburgh Penguins and shop for coats, boots and other winter necessities. During the school year, the Salvation Army also provides homework help and other faith-based programming for after-school activities and involvement.

The Allegheny Valley Salvation Army in Brackenridge for a number of years has assisted Highlands School District families by providing weekly programming, weekend food, annual school supply and services giveaways, winter clothing and other holiday-time support. This year, **Capt. Rickie Armour** and his wife, **Pam**, have continued the "Love in a Backpack" program to provide 60 students at Highlands Middle School and Grandview Upper Elementary School with easy to prepare food items for the weekend, as well as take 20 students shopping with the Pittsburgh Penguins for winter gear in the "Project Bundle-Up" event in November.

"Love in a Backpack" started three years ago at Highlands Middle School as a pilot program based off of the nationally modeled Blessings in a Backpack program. The program supports students throughout the school year by providing snack foods, easy to prepare foods, boxed or bagged beverages and other items that will sustain them through the weekend when they

GOD is Love. 1 John 4:16

LOVE
THE SALVATION ARMY
IN A BACKPACK.

The items listed below are suggested for donations to the Love in a Backpack program. Monetary donations are also accepted at the Allegheny Valley Salvation Army.

- Pop Tarts**
(or toaster pastries of any brand)
- Juice Boxes or Pouches**
- Cereal**
(must be individual size boxes)
- Granola Bars**
- Applesauce or Pudding Cups**
- Microwaveable Popcorn**
- Fruit Snacks**
- Can of Soup or Ravioli Items**
(Easy Open Pop Top lids—no can opener needed)

highAccolades

Below are just some of the many special achievements of Highlands students and staff!

congratulations!

- ★ **Mr. Jon Rupert** (*Highlands Board Secretary / Business Manager*), was granted a renewal of the status of a Pennsylvania registered School Business Administrator for four years. The PA Association of School Business Officials commended Mr. Rupert for meeting the rigid personal, ethical and professional standards established by the program.
- ★ **Dr. Sandra Reidmiller** (*HMS - Librarian*) and **Ms. Michelle Brown** (*Fawn PC - Behavior Specialist*) received the 2015 Lauretta Woodson Awards at a PA Association of School Retirees event. The Lauretta Woodson Recognition Program honors one educator and one support professional for doing an outstanding job within a district or school. Award recipients are presented with a medallion, certificate and PASR pin.
- ★ **Mr. Pat Hassler** (*HHS - World Cultures, Psychology and Sociology*) penned the recently released book, Reaching Today's Teens. The book offers advice and tips for parents and educators on how to better connect with adolescents in their lives. Connecting with teens may seem difficult, but Hassler offers hope for coaches, grandparents, teachers and parents who learn the lingo and the manners in which to connect with their kids. The book is available on *Amazon.com*.
- ★ **Highlands Middle School** was named as an 'on the cusp' school by the Pennsylvania Campaign for Achievement Now. This announcement indicates that out of 102 high-poverty schools in Allegheny County, Highlands Middle School was one of 15 that met their rigorous criteria. Principals are **Mr. Charlie Mort** and **Ms. Debbie Beucker**.
- ★ Congratulations to Highlands High School principals **Ms. Cathy Russo** and **Ms. Molly Skedel** and the **High School Staff**, who received notification by Middle States Association that Highlands High School will be accredited through Dec. 2018.
- ★ A school-wide attendance incentive program at Fawn and Fairmount primary centers was implemented this year by **Mrs. Beth Hurley** (*District Attendance Officer*) and **Mrs. Diane Phelps** (*Social Worker*). The program, which is funded through a grant from the Highlands Community Education Foundation, awards classrooms that reach attendance goals. Several homerooms have won prizes so far; and each homeroom has a "star chart" that tracks progress towards the goal.
- ★ Highlands 8th grader **Christopher (CJ) Thimons**, son of **Jeff & Laura Thimons**, competed in the 2015 USA Track & Field National Junior Olympic championships in Jacksonville, FL. He placed #25 in the High Jump event and competed and qualified for the national event after a series of local and regional meets. CJ combined his passion for running with his support for cancer patients by hosting a successful Highlands First Annual American Cancer Society 5K Race and 1-Mile Family Fun Walk in October. In December, **CJ** and high school Cross Country team member **Cameron Malcolm**, son of **Cam & Laurie Malcolm**, participated in the National Junior Olympic Cross Country Championships in Albuquerque, NM. Cameron ran the men's 5K event and CJ placed #41 of 345 participants in the 4K Run for the 13-14 boys division.
- ★ **The Highlands Cross Country Team** won the Yough River Trail Cup Invitational, with junior **Kyla Kelley** breaking the course record by 29 seconds. The teams also had five girls in the top 20. Junior **Cameron Malcolm** was Highlands' top boys finisher. In October, team members **Cameron Malcolm**, **Drew Wiley**, **Lysle Reichenbaugh**, **Noah Hetler**, **Kyla Kelley**, **Rhiannon Helgert**, **Grace Johnson**, **Ashlyn Jonczak**, **Renee Cebula**, **Julia Bond**, **Alexandra Kotsyriy**, **Emily Strzesieski** and **Sarah Young** competed in the WPIAL Championships at Cooper's Lake. The team coach is **Mr. Tom Abbott**.
- ★ **Highlands Girls Softball Team** players **Michaela Geracia** (senior infielder) and **Olivia Graff** (junior catcher) competed in the 2016 Cup International Indoor Softball Tournament in January in the Netherlands. Geracia played for Chaos United and Graff played for Avengers United, two teams in the 16-team tournament.
- ★ **The Girls Varsity Soccer Team** won against Montour in the first round of WPIAL playoffs under Head Coach **Mark Duffield**. Six girls from the team were named All Section winners: **Kara Bowser**, **Kayla Beale**, **Taylor Gunn**, **Jocelyn Gillette**, **Sam Gildner** and **Alexis Bengel**.
- ★ **The Highlands 7th & 8th Grade Football Team** completed an *undefeated* season under the coaching leadership of **Mr. Michael Foster**, **Mr. Chris Nowicki** and **Mr. Ray Urbanski**.
- ★ **The Varsity Football Team** had a very successful season under Head Coach **Sam Albert**, making playoffs again this year. AA Allegheny Conference All Conference winners included Co-Defensive Lineman MVP **Lamaar McKamey**; 1st Team Wide Receiver **Jordan Lineburg**; 1st Team Tight End **LaVontae Martin**; 1st Team Fullback **Isaac Gillette**; 1st Team

Defensive Back **Jamison Nee**; 1st Team Outside Linebacker **Mitch Dezort**; 1st Team Linebacker **Brayden Thimons**; 2nd Team Punter **Ryan Barr**; 2nd Team Defensive Lineman **Lamaar McKamey**; 2nd Team Offensive Guard **Jameson Smith**; Honorable Mention Kicker **Taylor Gunn**; and Honorable Mention Center **Adam Ekas**.

★ **The Varsity Golf Team** made the playoffs for the first time since 1979, finishing 12-4 and 10-2 in Section 1-AA. Coaches are **Mr. Joe Novak**, **Mr. Zac Wells** and **Mr. Carl Tutak**.

★ **Highlands Wrestlers Christian Lechner** (120lb), **Cameron Clark** (152lb) and **Jordan Lineburg** (195lb) represented Highlands at the Allegheny County Wrestling Championships in January. The boys are coached by **Mr. Grant Walters**.

★ **The Highlands Middle School Basketball Team** named schoolmate and 13-year-old cancer patient **Matthew Watts** as Honorary Captain for the remainder of the season at the team's game against Valley.

★ **Bailey Bonnett**, a junior WPIAL and PIAA champion swimmer and daughter of **Brad & Jennifer Bonnett**, qualified for this summer's Olympic Trials in the 200-meter breaststroke at USA Swimming's Arena Pro Swim Series event held in Austin, TX. The 2016 Olympic Trials, which take place June 26-July 3 in Omaha, NE, will determine the members of the 2016 U.S. Olympic Swim Team for the Summer Games in Rio de Janeiro. Bailey also qualified for the U.S. Open in the 400-meter individual medley and the Speedo National Junior Championship.

Highlands' Helping Hand



Highlands School District staff and students collected \$659.36 for *Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh Foundation* through the Wear A Hat Day for Cancer fundraiser on Oct. 2. Students donated at least 50 cents and wore hats to show their support for children fighting cancer. Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh Foundation is the sole fundraising arm of Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC.

Highlands High School junior **Danielle Basista**, daughter of **Mark & Sondra Basista**, joined forces with the **Dolmajer family** to honor *veterans* this Christmas with a basket of food items and a turkey or ham to prepare a holiday dinner for themselves and their family. More than \$800 and hundreds of food items were collected and donated.

The **Grandview Upper Elementary School Student Council**, together with the students and staff, hosted a Thanksgiving Food Drive in November. The food drive was held to sponsor the *Grandview Food Pantry* and the *Allegheny Valley Salvation Army* in Brackenridge. Together as a school, they collected over 1,500 non-perishable items in one week. Student Council Advisors are **Mrs. Jody Shumaker**, **Mr. Sean Dicer** and **Ms. Vickie Nania**.

Highlands Middle School Onyx Team English classes and teacher **Ms. Renee Kuhns** wrote letters and made holiday and get well cards for the *wounded soldiers at Walter Reed Medical Center in Washington, DC and our local VA Hospital*. In addition to letters and cards, the classes collected items such as candy, gum, toothbrushes, toothpaste, razors, shaving cream, shampoo, conditioner, socks, fleece blankets and many other toiletries to send to both WRMC and our local VA.

The **Highlands High School Fire Service Training class** and instructor **Mr. Mike Krzeminski** forwarded more than 500 holiday cards collected for *Safyre Terry*, a young burn victim from Schenectady, NY. This effort was made possible due to the generosity of the Highlands community and the creativity of our students who designed handmade cards with heartfelt messages and encouragement for the brave little girl.

Highlands National Honor Society students with advisors **Mr. Jordan Thompson**, **Mrs. Sherry Armstrong** and **Mrs. Mindy Eckenrod** hosted a Stuff A Bus event for Toys for Tots in December, collecting hundreds of toys and dollars in donations from the community for the Marine Corps program. NHS will host the annual "Spring Sanity" in May, a dodge ball and sumo wrestling tournament that benefits Make A Wish Foundation. NHS students are also selling raffle tickets for a week of gallery passes to the 2016 US Open at Oakmont Country Club. Contact Mr. Thompson at jthompson@goldenrams.com or call the school office 724-226-1000.



Nominate your positive athlete or team coach to the Hines Ward's Positive Athlete Pittsburgh program from **now until March 30!** Send the name, sport and why you believe the

student-athlete is deserving of the nomination by email to **Misty Chybrzynski** at mchybrzynski@goldenrams.com.

The student-athletes that are nominated are eligible to win Positive Athlete awards for their sport AND corporately funded scholarships. Ultimately, the 28 most positive high school athletes in Western PA are crowned by Hines and other high-profile Pittsburgh Sports personalities at the Heinz History Center in June 2016!

GRAND celebration

Grandview Celebrates 100 Years

Many Tarentum High School, Highlands Junior High School and Grandview Elementary alumni, staff, student, former Highlands educators and community members gathered at Grandview Upper Elementary on Saturday, August 29, 2015 to celebrate the Grandview building's 100th year as a school and reminisce about the "good old days".

Hosted by the Tarentum Recreation Board, former Highlands School Board President **Carrie Fox**, Grandview Principal **Heather Bigney**, Highlands staff and the Allegheny-Valley Historical Society, the event featured building tours, memorabilia, entertainment from the Highlands Alumni Choir and Middle School Choir, and free shuttles to the Historic Society Heritage Museum.

One of the highlights of the event was being able to go on the vast, flat roof of the building for a different vantage point of the Tarentum community and bridge. The roof tour also offered a close up view of the ornate gargoyles that adorn the Grandview facade.

Grandview school was designed by Press Dowler, and built in 1915 as an elementary school. It served as Tarentum High School from 1927-1968; Highlands Junior High School from 1969-1982; Grandview Elementary from 1982-2012; and Grandview Upper Elementary from 2012-present, housing grades 3-5. "I will always remember how Grandview and the community are so entwined...we all worked together to make Grandview a wonderful place to learn and grow," said retired Highlands teacher **Debbie (Dobrzynski) Cordera**.

Alumni and families browse through the many Grandview/Tarentum artifacts on display in the cafeteria.



Circa 1950s



Highlands Superintendent **Dr. Michael Bjalobok** and former School Board President **Carrie Fox** welcome visitors to the building.



Stay Connected to Highlands!

For current events, announcements and news features, check out our website at www.goldenrams.com.

Find Highlands School District on Facebook, Twitter & Instagram!



Schools Receive Grants for Supplies

Grandview Upper Elementary School and Fawn Primary Center received \$10,000 each in school and classroom supplies from The Education Partnership in Pittsburgh. These schools are two of three schools that attended a Special Distribution Event in November to pick up items from Mead, Yoobi and other brands, with items for teachers, organizing classrooms and everyday needs such as wipes, dusting cloths and post-its.

"The Education Partnership understands that the State Budget Impasse has compounded the need for school supplies in many schools in our service area," a representative from the Partnership said. "We will be working diligently in the coming months to raise funds with the hope of bringing on additional schools."

Highlands Implements ALICE Defense Program



TRAINING INSTITUTE

Highlands School District places school security at the top of its priority list. The administration team regularly reviews security procedures, potential improvements and available programs that could enhance or support the current security program already in place in our district's schools.

This year, Highlands staff have been trained in the ALICE defense program and students will experience ALICE training drills during the school day. The Alert, Lockdown, Information, Counter and Evacuation program is a crisis training program being introduced this year to give staff and students insight and response options when encountering an active shooter.

Highlands School District places the safety and security of our buildings at a top priority. Through the years, we have installed metal detectors, vestibules at the entrances, Raptor scanning software for visitors, shatterproof glass film on windows, more than 200 security cameras and large screen monitors in offices, staff identification, radio systems, numbered doors and windows for police identification, additional security personnel and a school resource officer in efforts to secure our campuses. The district also received exceptional reports from a Pennsylvania State Police security audit. The ALICE training is yet another program that will enable our staff and students in the situation that an intruder is announced.

"This training allows us to make students and staff aware that active shooter or violent intruder situations are, unfortunately, very real and serious possibilities," security director and ALICE certified instructor **Mr. Jay Morgan** stated at an initial training held for school personnel at the beginning of the school year. Since that district-wide training, teachers and staff received additional instruction, training exercises and guidance on age-specific conversation regarding ALICE drills in order to communicate with their students.

The ALICE program was created by two Texas law enforcement officers soon after the Columbine High School shootings occurred in Colorado. The training has since been adopted by many educational law enforcement institutions throughout the United States. The Columbine staff reacted to the 1999 shooting, which left 12 students and one teacher dead, in accordance to the training they had received – a typical lockdown, duck-and-cover method – despite having access to an outside exit. Proponents of ALICE, after studying many of the active school shootings since Columbine, believe their program can reduce the number of victims.

"Are we prepared when today is different than yesterday?" Mr. Morgan said. "Are our protocols, training, knowledge bases updated to best protect our schools now?" Mr. Morgan presented the break-down of the ALICE

training to parents at the district schools during Back to School Night and Parent-Teacher Conference events prior to the ALICE drills being conducted at each school in November and December.

Alert - *Immediately let as many people as possible know about the danger, using any method to communicate such as phones, texts and social media.*

Lockdown classrooms - *Doors are locked and barricaded and students are trained to get low and pull things, such as a desk, between them and the classroom door.*

Inform - *Relay information within the school building on the whereabouts of the active shooter, using school radios and public address systems can alert others in the building where the shooter is. This could provide an opportunity to move students out of the school toward safety.*

Counter - *This means a teacher or student should use any means necessary to create distance from the shooter and also distract a shooter. It also means to use any means necessary to defend oneself.*

Evacuate any way possible - *Understanding when and where to evacuate a building is important. Staff and students also need to know where safe rally points outside the building are located.*

Trainings will be presented in age-appropriate ways at each school building, with teachers communicating the program along with safety personnel and school resource officers, if on-site. Guidance counselors also are available for students to discuss concerns with, and parents / guardians are able to opt their students out of the ALICE drill, if necessary.

The ALICE training, drills, handbooks and other materials have been shared with the four police departments in the school district. Several police officers attended the initial school personnel training and parent presentations. Sergeant **Brian Turack** of the Harrison Township Police Department concurred with Mr. Morgan that the best plan is to have a plan. "One of the best things we know is to develop an emergency response plan. I'm glad Highlands is taking initiative to prepare for an incident such as this – we want to be involved with the school in being prepared."

For more information about ALICE training, visit the website: <http://www.alicetraining.com/alice-101/faq/>



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 Dr. Karen King, Director of Pupil Personnel Services
 Debra Lehew, Director of Special Education

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Eric Miles	

POSTAL PATRON

This newsletter is published by Highlands School District and distributed to district residents and parents.
 Newsletter Design/Editors: Jennifer Goldberg & Misty Chybrzynski - Highlands School & Community Relations Office

PRE-SALE Ticket Pricing: Feb. 29-Mar. 10

Orchestra - \$9.00
 Mezzanine - \$8.00
 Balcony (General Admission) - \$5.00
 Gold Card - Orch.- \$4.00 Mezz. - \$3.00 Balcony - Free

Pre-Sale tickets will be sold Feb. 29 through Mar. 10 from 3:00-5:00pm, Highlands High School Auditorium Lobby. Tickets requested after Mar. 10 will be sold one hour prior to the show with different pricing options.

Ticket Questions:

Contact Robin Davis rdavis@goldenrams.com

Ticket Sales AT THE DOOR: Mar. 11-13

Orchestra - \$10.00
 Mezzanine - \$10.00
 Balcony (General Admission) - \$6.00
 Gold Card - Orch.- \$4.00 Mezz. - \$3.00 Balcony - Free

Box Office will open ONE hour prior to shows.

VIP Backstage Tour - \$5

Includes VIP Lanyard, "All Shook Up" Souvenir Program, ONE Free Concession Item, Backstage Set Tour of "All Shook Up", Pictures with "All Shook Up" Cast, Autograph Opportunities