



# The Highlander Press

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## SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE



Welcome to the third issue of our newsletter, The Highlander Press. Spring is a very busy time of year, and we have a lot to share with you. In this issue you will find articles from all of our schools and departments, important dates, special programs, and much more.

The District has its annual Budget Hearing scheduled for tonight, April 30, 2024. Mr. Scholts and I shared the 2024-2025 Preliminary Budget in March and will be presenting the version of the budget that was approved by the Executive County Superintendent, at tonight's Board of Education meeting. You will find an article about the budget later in this issue. Our students and teachers continue to engage in exciting learning experiences, and there are many celebratory events scheduled to recognize the efforts of our students. We continue to work on our District Goals, and the Strategic Plan Action Plan in order to ensure that our schools are moving forward for the benefit of all of our students. I hope you enjoy this issue of The Highlander Press!

### *Our Mission Statement:*

**The West Milford Township School District recognizes that each student is an individual with unique educational needs.**

**The District is committed to challenging and helping each student maximize his or her personal potential to promote academic excellence, good character, and physical fitness in a safe, supportive learning environment, as well as providing a positive school climate based upon mutual respect and responsibility.**

**The District further recognizes the need to support and develop a professional, dedicated, accountable staff that will partner with parents to foster the emotional, intellectual, social, and physical maturity of each student, and to encourage a lifelong love of learning and discovery.**

*(Continued on page 13)*



## Curriculum News: Exploring New Horizons in Elementary Literacy: A Journey with the District Literacy Committee

by Daniel Novak

As we embark on a journey toward enhancing literacy skills in our elementary schools, the District Literacy Committee, alongside dedicated volunteer teachers spanning kindergarten through 5th grade, has been diligently reviewing an array of language arts curriculum materials. Our mission is clear: to ensure that every student has access to engaging and effective resources that foster a love for reading and writing while nurturing their language proficiency.

Over the past several months, our committee has engaged in extensive discussions, evaluations, and trials to select the most suitable programs for our classrooms. Among the innovative initiatives being piloted are two promising programs: Magnetic Reading and Wonders.

**Magnetic Reading:** This program captivates young minds through its interactive and multisensory approach to literacy. Designed to cater to diverse learning styles, Magnetic Reading employs magnetic letter tiles, interactive games, and vibrant visuals to bring language arts to life. Through hands-on activities and collaborative exercises, students are encouraged to explore phonics, vocabulary, and comprehension skills in an immersive learning environment. Early feedback from pilot classrooms has been overwhelmingly positive, with teachers praising its effectiveness in engaging reluctant readers and promoting active participation.

**Wonders:** Embracing a comprehensive approach to literacy instruction, Wonders empowers educators with a wealth of resources and tools to cultivate strong readers and writers. With its balanced blend of fiction and nonfiction texts, scaffolded instruction, and differentiated support, Wonders caters to the diverse needs of students at various proficiency levels. From shared reading experiences to guided practice and independent exploration, this program fosters a culture of literacy that extends beyond the classroom walls. Teachers piloting Wonders have observed notable improvements in students' reading fluency, comprehension, and critical thinking skills, affirming its efficacy in nurturing lifelong learners. As we continue to assess the impact of these programs through ongoing evaluations and feedback mechanisms, our commitment to enhancing literacy outcomes remains unwavering. We recognize the invaluable contributions of our dedicated educators, whose passion and dedication fuel our collective pursuit of educational excellence. Together, we are laying the foundation for a future where every child has the opportunity to unlock the boundless possibilities that literacy affords.

We extend our gratitude to the entire community for their unwavering support as we embark on this transformative journey. With your partnership, we are confident in our ability to empower every student to become confident, capable, and compassionate communicators.





## Marshall Hill APEX Fun Run by Patrick O'Donnell



Marshall Hill hosted its first PTA-sponsored Fun Run on Wednesday, April 16th. Prior to this event, students had daily leadership lessons from the APEX team, after the initial kickoff pep rally. After two weeks, we arrived at the big day and students had a blast! Parents and guardians were able to attend the run to cheer on and support their children. Some of our teachers also ran alongside the students! It was a memorable experience for all.

The final number is still being calculated, but the amount raised for Marshall Hill is about \$15,000! Some of these funds will be put towards installing a Gaga Ball Pit to help enhance our students' recess experience. Thank you to all who donated, the staff and parents for supporting this fundraiser, as well as Amanda Batson and the PTA for organizing this opportunity.



## Chick Hatching at Paradise Farms

by Jennifer Miller



During the month of April, Paradise Knoll students were able to experience having baby chicks in our school! "Chicken Nugget" and "French Fry" were two chicks rented from Kallo Farms in Sparta. Classroom teachers signed up to have the chicks in his or her classroom for the day so that students could observe them for the day. Once they were returned back to Kallo Farms, for the second year now, we also hatched eggs from an incubator. Students were able to observe the live hatching via Google Meet, as all of the teachers logged into a live stream throughout the day. Students were able to see seven live hatchings that day! We have a total of fourteen chicks in a large brooder box that students are able to visit each day. April was an exciting month at Paradise Farms!



## School Bus Safety - Know what the lights mean!



### RED LIGHTS mean:

#### ALL DIRECTIONS MUST STOP!

(unless the bus is on the other side of a median  
OR on the other side of a 4-lane highway)



### YELLOW LIGHTS mean:

Slow down, bus is about to stop!

Violation: Up to \$1,000 & Points



## TRANSPORTATION

### BUS DRILLS

We will hold our second round of bus evacuation drills : May 2024!



### Human Resources Update

The West Milford Township Public Schools have the following positions available. Please apply on [Applitrack](#) found on the District website under Employment Opportunities:

- ◆ Special Education Math Teacher (ERI) – Highlander Academy/ Prep
- ◆ 0.5 Nurse – Highlander Academy /Prep
- ◆ Door Attendant - WMHS
- ◆ Special Class Aides
- ◆ Cafeteria Aides
- ◆ Bus Drivers, Van Driver, Vehicle Aide

### Did you know?

- ◆ **Kindergarten Registration is still open. Please be sure to register your child who will be five (5) years old on or before October 1, 2024. Use this link to access [Pre-registration materials](#), or visit our District website.**

## WE'RE HIRING... SCHOOL BUS DRIVERS

#### BASIC REQUIREMENTS:

- NJ Driver's License
- Excellent Driving Record
- U.S. Citizen or Legal Resident in accordance with State and Federal regulations
- CDL Training Available

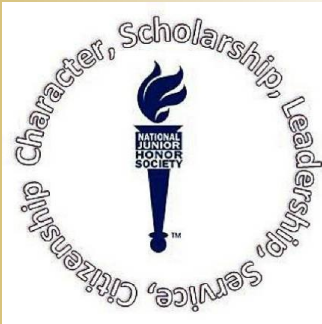
Apply Online at:  
[WWW.WMTPS.ORG](http://WWW.WMTPS.ORG)  
or CALL (973) 697-0777





## National Jr. Honor Society Ceremony April 18, 2024

By Dr. Gregory Matlosz



A HUGE CONGRATS to Macopin's National Junior Honor Society inductees!

Thank you Mrs. Fritz, Mr. P, Mr. Ryerson & the NJHS Committee for all of your work. Congratulations to our speakers last night: **Isabella Kling - Scholarship, Alex Racano - Leadership, Lauren Harmen - Service, Phil Stinziano - Character, and Natasha Blauvelt - Citizenship**

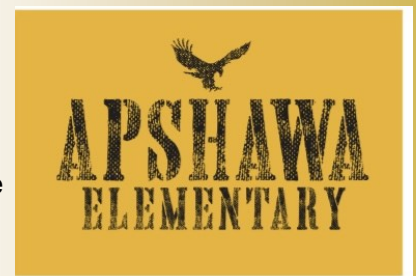
Congratulations to our inductees:

Dylan Becker	Rebecca Montena
Nick Blakesley	Amber O'Connor
Natasha Blauvelt	Marco Petrosillo
Ethan Clarke	Madison Piecuch
Emma Dan	Delaney Piecuch
Skylar Dempsey	Alex Racano
Gigi Dent	Samantha Reams
Trevor Docwra	Eleanor Redner
Logan Down	Sloane Reed
Sarah Foley	Kathryn Rockefeller
Erin Frey	Kali Russ
Emily Gonzalez	Anthony Sierra
Ella Goodell	Maycee Sondermeyer
Ana Haggerty	Henry Space
Lauren Harmen	Phil Stinziano
Truman Kane	Addison Tyburczy
Logan Kannaley	Blake Tyburczy
Kiernan Kelly	Ava Valletta
Flynn Kennedy	David VanTassel
Isabella Kling	Chloe Vicioso
Kylie Lewandoski	Sydney West
Luke Maslanek	GiannaWhite
Maya Maver	Willa Zachar
Avery Mett	

## Apshawa Students SOAR!

By Dr. Dana Swarts

Apshawa students have been hard at work in our after-school Apshawa SOARS program. Grade 3-5 had the opportunity to participate in academically engaging activities in an effort to build stamina, skills, and test-taking strategies before the NJSA testing that is coming in May. Students came before or after school in the testing grades to meet with teachers and participate in hands-on learning to build their preparedness for testing. Students raved about having fun while learning! Sleep well, have a good break-



## A Message from Special Services by Dr. Derek Ressa



Greetings! The West Milford Township Department of Special Services is proud to share a number of updates as it relates to the exceptional students, staff, programs, and services that makes us proud about everything Highlanders! Thank you for your ongoing support, and we hope you enjoy it!

Sincerely,  
Derek Ressa, Director of Special Services &  
Chrissy Porochniak, Supervisor of Special Services

### 18-21 TRANSITION CLASS NEWS

March came in like a lion! The Transition students met with Butler High School's Transition class at Panera Bread for a lunch social. We celebrated St. Patrick's Day with another social in Jefferson Township with Boonton, Roxbury and Jefferson Township! Our students made cookies and Lucky Charms treats. The socials are a great way to enhance communication skills and help the students interact with their peers! In addition to the social piece of the program, the students have been working hard at all of their job sites and learning skills to help them navigate employment in the future. The Career Awareness class has been doing a great job with our coffee cart in the morning. The Cove has been serving the students during periods 3 and 8. The interaction with the student body and our



students is amazing! Important math, social and language skills are enhanced by using the cash register, taking inventory and calculating nutritional values of the food and beverages. Personal and dental hygiene have been a focus as well and a part of the Life Skills component of the program.

Lauren Bladek who is the Dietician at Shoprite taught a lesson about healthy eating and made yogurt and cottage cheese parfaits with the students! The snack covered all of the essential food groups on My Plate! The Transition class met with Butler again at the Dairy Queen in Butler! We all enjoyed a nice afternoon learning more about each other's hobbies, favorite sports and other interesting facts. The students in both schools talked about what they are learning on the community work sites.

We are looking forward to having lunch at the student-run Bear Cave Cafe with the Hawthorne 18-21 students next month.





## Highlander Academy News

By: Emily Kaminskyj and Tricia Montano

On Tuesday March 12, 2024, The West Milford Unified Basketball Team took on the West Milford Faculty and staff in an intense game of Basketball. West Milford unified team won the game. The final score was 54-27. Emily Kaminskyj received the Most Valuable Player award for both the game and the season. She scored 10 points in Yesterday's game. Highlander Academy's teachers, Mr. White, Mr. Milko, Mr. Nowacki Junior (and Senior)



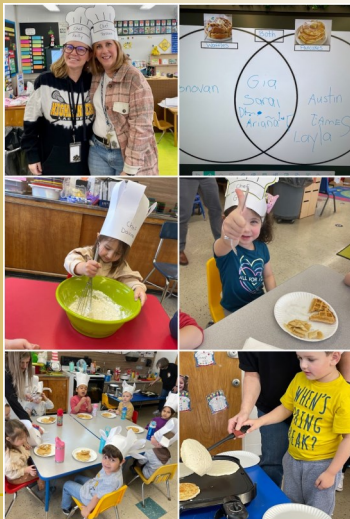
## Marshall Hill Preschoolers love Pancakes!

### Pancakes vs. Waffles

Submitted by Dr. Ressa

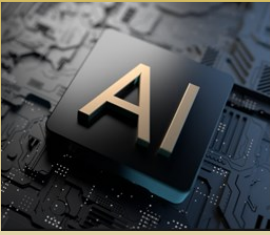
We celebrated spring's arrival this year with pancakes. After reading several stories about how to make them and where the ingredients came from, we made pancakes. Dressing the part with self-made chef hats everyone got to measure, stir, pour, and flip pancakes. To help with our celebration we invited Mr. O'Donnell, Mrs.

Tenhove, and Nurse Reilly to join us in the taste test. It was unanimous they were delicious. In addition to eating the pancakes, the preschoolers tasted waffles made by Miss Daga and Miss Danielle. With full stomachs the preschoolers recorded their preferences in the pancake - Waffle Venn diagram. Everyone loves pancakes and some like waffles too.



# Artificial Intelligence At a Glance

by Robert Winston



In the ever-evolving landscape of technology, one phenomenon stands out as a beacon of innovation and promise – Artificial Intelligence (AI). From science fiction dreams to real-world applications, AI has made remarkable strides, transforming the way we live, work, and interact.

## Understanding Artificial Intelligence:

At its core, Artificial Intelligence refers to the development of computer systems that can perform tasks that typically require human intelligence. These tasks include learning, reasoning, problem-solving, perception, and language understanding. Unlike traditional computer programs, AI systems have the ability to adapt and improve their performance based on experience.

## Types of AI:

AI can be categorized into two main types: Narrow AI and General AI. Narrow AI, also known as Weak AI, is designed to perform specific tasks without possessing the broad capabilities of human intelligence. Examples include virtual assistants, image recognition, and language translation. On the other hand, General AI, or Strong AI, refers to a theoretical system with the ability to understand, learn, and apply knowledge across diverse domains, akin to human intelligence.

## AI in Everyday Life:

The integration of AI into our daily lives is already evident in various applications. Virtual assistants like Siri and Alexa are now commonplace, offering hands-free control and assistance. AI-driven algorithms power social media feeds, recommending content based on user preferences. In healthcare, AI aids in medical imaging analysis, diagnostics, and drug discovery, enhancing the efficiency and accuracy of healthcare professionals.

## Challenges and Considerations:

While the benefits of AI are undeniable, it is essential to acknowledge and address the challenges associated with its implementation. Ethical considerations, data privacy concerns, and the potential for job displacement are all factors that demand careful attention. Striking a balance between innovation and responsible development is crucial for a harmonious coexistence with AI.

## The Future of AI:

The future of AI holds exciting possibilities. As technology continues to advance, we can anticipate further breakthroughs in natural language processing, robotics, and machine learning. The development of ethical guidelines and regulations will play a pivotal role in shaping a future where AI serves humanity responsibly and ethically.

Artificial Intelligence is a captivating force reshaping the technological landscape and influencing every facet of our lives. As we journey into the future, embracing the potential of AI while addressing its challenges will be paramount. In our classrooms, workplaces, and homes, the partnership between humans and AI promises to unlock new realms of innovation and progress. As technology enthusiasts and learners, let us embark on this adventure with a sense of wonder and responsibility, shaping a future where AI enriches our lives and fosters a more connected and intelligent world.



## Family Math & Literacy Nights at Maple Road School

By Bill Kane

Maple Road School proudly hosted Family Literacy and Family Math Nights over the past couple of months. Our school community came out in full force to enjoy these fun, academically focused events. The Family Literacy Night theme was “Reading is Snow Much Fun!”. To start off the night, we kicked off our school’s participation in the Sussex County Miners Reading Club. We were fortunate to have guest appearances by Miners representatives, including their mascot, Herbie! Students who participate in the club and meet designated reading goals will receive two free tickets to a Miners game this summer. Throughout the evening, students and parents were able to participate in developmentally appropriate literacy-themed activities in the All Purpose Room and Media Center.



We had “Glow” much fun at our recent Family Math Night. Once again this year, our teacher leaders created glow-themed math activities for students and parents. The hands-on, glow-in-the-dark activities reinforced critical foundational math skills. Students were also able to estimate the amount or weight of candy jars at the Estimation Station. Students with the closest estimate won the candy jars at the end of the evening.

Our amazing teacher leaders for the Family Literacy and Family Math Nights did such an excellent job of creating a fun, student-friendly learning environment for both events. Thank you to all who came out to enjoy both fun and learning filled evenings! Go Mustangs!!



## Eagle Scout Candidate Completes Walkway and Podium Project for Maple Road School

by Douglas Glenn

Eagle Scout candidate and former student Aidan Cimbric recently completed his Eagle Scout project, leaving a lasting impact on Maple Road School. He got the inspiration for the project on a rainy day. While witnessing elementary students navigating through puddles and mud, he envisioned a solution that would not only alleviate their struggles but also contribute positively to the school community. He formed a plan to craft a walkway from the library exit door to the front sidewalk. Drawing from his experiences at Passaic County Technical Institute, Aidan applied essential skills in budgeting, planning, and scheduling to meticulously craft his project proposal. The walkway and podium project served as a real-world application of the lessons learned in the classroom. From securing necessary resources to coordinating with volunteers, every aspect of the project reflected Aidan's dedication and leadership qualities.

When asked about his future endeavors, Aidan expressed his intent to pursue a college education focused on cyber security, showcasing his continued commitment to personal and academic growth. However, his dedication to community service remains unwavering. Aidan expressed his desire to assist future Eagle Scout candidates with their projects, emphasizing the importance of giving back and fostering a culture of service.

Principal Kane expressed heartfelt gratitude towards Aidan for his invaluable contribution to Maple Road School. The newly constructed walkway and podium not only enhance the school's aesthetics but also serve as a testament to Aidan's character and dedication. Reflecting on the completion of the project, Aidan shared a poignant moment of joy, stating, "I saw kids walking on the walkway and I was so happy." This sentiment encapsulates the essence of Aidan's Eagle Scout project – a selfless act of service aimed at enriching the lives of others.

As Aidan embarks on his journey towards higher education, his legacy at Maple Road School will endure as a shining example of the transformative power of service. and serves as an inspiration to future generations of Eagle Scouts.





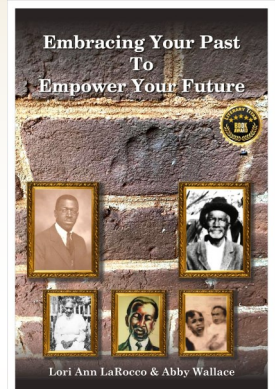
## Literary Award Winner By Matthew Strianse

## West Milford High School Named NJ School of Character by Matthew Strianse



Abby Wallace, a senior, recently received the Gold award for non-fiction by Literary Titan. Abby, is the co-author of "Embracing Your Past to Empower Your Future." Abby worked with four families who are descended from slaves to tell their stories. Abby worked on the book for three years with her mother, journalist and author, Lori Ann LaRocco. Families in the book are Clotilda survivors and Africatown cofounders Pollee and Rose Allen, the Madison family who are descendants of President James Madison, the Quander family, one of the oldest Black American families in US history who can trace back their history to the 1600's in Colonial America, and the Brooks Family, the only Black American Family in US History with three generals in the immediate family (a father and two sons.)

Abby, is planning on studying in an Honors Psychology Program and would like to be a social psychologist.



## History Award at Macopin

Submitted by Dr. Gregory Matlosz



And the Richard Gilder Prize for Macopin's promising and passionate history student goes

to... Truman Kane!! A job well done!

## WMHS Distinguished Scholars

Submitted by WMHS Guidance Department

Congratulations to our many **Distinguished Scholars** honored on April 18, 2024! Your dedication to learning and commitment to excellence is evident in the awards you received. Students in grades 9, 10, 11 & 12 were recognized for top class rank, awarded departmental medals and the Seal of Biliteracy, and honored by the colleges of RIT, RPI and St. Johns. At this event, our **Graduating Class of 2024** Valedictorian and Salutatorian were formally announced. Our sincere appreciation and congratulations go out to **Ava Murphy ~ Valedictorian** and **Colin Iwaszczuk ~ Salutatorian**.

## Macopin Students Visit Philadelphia by Dr. Gregory Matlosz

Grade 7 had the opportunity to visit Philadelphia for an overnight stay. What an experience to have a hands-on learning opportunity within American History!



## Love of Reading Month-Wild About Reading!: An Animal Study Through Book Characters

By Jennifer Miller

This year, Love of Reading month in March was themed "Wild About Reading!: An Animal Study Through Book Characters." Each week we focused each week on a specific animal. Our weekly themes included: "Reading Gives You Wings"--a study of birds (this includes ducks, geese, swans, etc.); "Hibernate with a Good Book"--a study of bears; "Dig Into a Good Book"--a study of dogs; and "Reading is the Puurfect Past Time"--a study of cats. A particular highlight of the month was during our study of dogs, Mrs. Becker, our School Social Worker, coordinated a visit with Kayla, a therapy dog with Bright and Beautiful Therapy Dogs. Students visited with Kayla in the Media Center throughout the day and were able to learn about the process and function of therapy animals as well as ask any questions they may have had.

Kayla also received a lot of love and many gentle pets from our students at Paradise Knoll. We look forward to having Kayla back to PK some time soon!



## Family Math Night at Apschawa School

by Dr. Dana Swarts

The Apschawa Math Committee held its annual Family Math Night for grades K-3 on April 11th. This exciting and well-attended event was called "Hocus Pocus on Math We Focus". Students came out with their parents in Halloween costumes to engage in spooky hands-on math activities and games. The game and activities enable parents and students to engage in standards-based math instruction that is guided by the principles of Eureka 2 and our professional development through Conquer Math. Everyone had a "frightfully" good time with ghosts and witches galore!



## On Book One School Celebration

by Dr. Jared Fowler

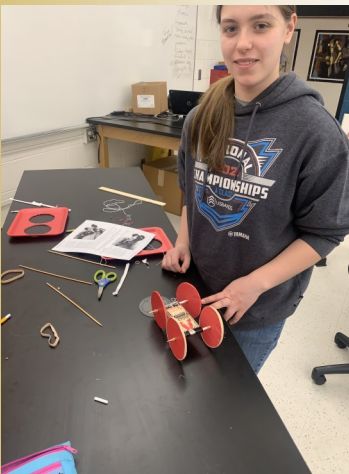
On April 15th (after many rescheduled due to weather) UGL celebrated the completion of their One Book, One School reading with a walk through of class projects and a petting zoo in line with the themes of the book that they read, *Bat and the Waiting Game* by Alana Arnold.



## College Prep Physics

by Dr. Bryan Belser

College Prep Physics students in Mr. Mike Rose's classes at West Milford High School designed cars from mousetraps. The cars were designed to help students learn about elastic energy and how it can be converted into kinetic energy. After completion, students drove the cars in the hall and marked the distance traveled. The project was engaging for students and allowed a hands-on approach to the topic.



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## West Milford Guidance & School Counseling Submitted by Karen Johnson

On Friday, March 15, 2024 NJSCA honored school counselors from the different counties within the State of New Jersey at the annual “**Counselor of the County**” Awards Program. School counselors are nominated by their colleagues and are selected by their own county’s School Counselor Associations for this award.

The award honors the professionals who devote their careers to serving as advocates – and often lifesavers – for the nation’s students. **Melissa Csengato**, a school counselor from West Milford Township High School, was selected as the **2024 Counselor of the County for Passaic County**.

Candidates are selected for the Counselor of the County Award at their county-level school counselor associations. They are selected because of their ability to deliver an effective school counseling program which focuses on academic development, career counseling, and personal/ social support. They further distinguish themselves by proving to be leaders of systemic change, advocates for students, and collaborative professionals who seek the success of the “whole” student in school and in life.

Congratulations to Melissa for this well deserved recognition.



*Be sure to check out our bi-weekly newsletter that is emailed to all WMHS families and shared via Twitter (@wmguidance). It shares important information for all grade levels. **WMHS GUIDANCE NEWSLETTER***

The Department of Guidance hosted our **Post-Secondary Pathways and Planning** event on April 4, 2024. This evening program provided students and their families with a rotation of small group info sessions and an opportunity for Q & A. Topics included a focus on trades, the military, community college, 4 year and accelerated degree programs, tips for finding the right fit, building the wish list, and then applying to and financing college. It was an informative, engaging night for the many families in attendance.



## Macbeth at Pax Amicus Theater

By Sharon West



High School Juniors attended dramatic live performances of Macbeth at Pax Amicus Theater on February 14th and 16th. The Freshmen will get to see Romeo and Juliet on April 17th and 18th. English teachers organized wonderful opportunities for Shakespeare's tragedies brought to life as The Bard of Avon intended!

## Strategies to Support Multi-language Learners

By Sharon West

During the **February 20, 2024 professional development day**, English teachers were joined by World Language teachers and school counselors to collaborate on **strategies for supporting multi-language learners** in the classroom and school. Scaffolding strategies included the use of visuals, peer collaboration, sentence frames, and total physical response. Tools for reducing language complexity for MLL students in order to address grade level standards included AI to assist with differentiation of instruction, making implementation of those strategies more accessible and timely.

## Kindergarten & WMHS Monster Buddies

By Dr. Jared Fowler & Sharon West

On April 3rd, our UGL Kindergarteners and West Milford High School Ceramics Classes completed their Monster Buddies project. Kindergarteners were paired up with a West Milford High School buddy and drew their own monster. The HS buddy then created a 3D version of the drawing to bring them to life. The final product was amazing! Our kids loved that they got to keep their real monsters. Thank you Ms. Pires and Ms. Gallagher for putting this event together. A wonderful collaboration between elementary and high school students. The smiles tell the story!



## Updates from the Business Office

by **Bill Scholts**



The 2024-2025 Public Budget Hearing will take place tonight, as part of the West Milford Township Public Schools Board of Education Meeting. Dr. Furnari and I will present an update on the Preliminary Budget that we shared back in March 2024. The budget was approved by the Passaic County Executive Superintendent, and is now ready for the Board's consideration. This budget was crafted with a critical eye on identifying efficiencies, which enabled us to include several positions that will enhance programming at all of our schools.

The District received a reduction in State Aid for the 2024-2025 school year in the amount of \$81,537, bringing the total reductions since the implementation of S2 to a total \$9,121,140. This has made maintaining the fiscal health of our schools challenging, but we are confident that this budget meets our District's vision, mission and goals. The District also absorbed instructional support positions that have been paid for using federal grant funds (ESSER). The ARP ESSER III grant period will conclude at the end of September 2024, so these Encore positions will now be partially funded using our local budget. The Encore program is essential to our ability to provide instructional support to students in Reading and Math. Other areas addressed in this budget include class-size at all schools, program enhancements in Language Arts and Math, special education programming, instructional technology, and facilities improvements.

I would like to thank the entire administrative team, the Board Operations & Finance Committee and members of my staff for their hard work and input regarding the 2024-2025 budget.

## Play Ball!

by **Douglas Glenn**

With the arrival of Spring, baseball and softball seasons are here! A big shout out goes to the Maintenance Department for their hard work and dedication to preparing and maintaining the ballfields on a daily basis.

Thank you for doing what you do to keep our players safe and the fields looking great!





## Paradise Knoll Celebrates ALL KINDS OF MINDS

By Jennifer Miller

On March 28, 2024, Paradise Knoll kicked off April's Autism Awareness Month by holding our own celebration of "all kinds of minds!" Our assembly was led by teachers and staff members: Mrs. Fahnstock, Ms. Branagan, Mrs. Cullen, Mrs. Janitz, Dr. Hill, Mrs. DiCaterina, Mrs. Keil, Mrs. Hogue and our 5th grade PK Ambassadors. Additionally, members of the building-based Character Education Committee (including Mrs. Collins, Mrs. Frasca, Mrs. Cohen, Mrs. Jensen, and Mrs. Becker) were instrumental in planning and preparing for our celebration. Paradise Knoll is committed to helping all of our students understand that every child deserves respect. During the beginning of the month of April, students completed assignments and projects related to celebrating people with many different types of neurodivergent minds. Students also are always encouraged to celebrate their own minds and embrace their own differences no matter what they are.

*"Paradise Knoll is committed to helping all of our students understand that every child deserves respect."*



## All North Jersey Intermediate Chorus

By Sharon West

Eight of Mrs. Kaczor's 7th and 8th grade students represented Macopin School in the All North Jersey Intermediate Chorus under the direction of Joanna Scaragello and Tom Voorhis on Sunday, March 24, 2024 at Clifton High School. This is the highest level of auditioned Chorus available to Middle School students.



## Battle of the Books

By Dr. Gregory Matlosz

Congratulations to the Macopin Battle of the Books team as they competed in the Passaic County Gifted and Talented Consortium's Battle of the Books Competition. Today, grade 7 earned 3rd place after dominating the three way tie breaker! Thank you Mrs. Cheshire!

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## James & The Giant Peach

Submitted by Dr. Gregory Matlosz

A huge shout out to the cast & crew of Macopin's *James & The Giant Peach!* Thank you Ms. Ziegenbalg, Ms. Kaczor, Ms. Poat, Mr. Paccione, & Ms. Rizzo for another wonderful musical at Macopin.



## Unified Bowling

Submitted by Dr. Gregory Matlosz

Congrats to our unified bowling team for taking 1st place in Division 1 and Division 2!



## Algebra Readiness Club

By Dr. Bryan Belser

The Algebra Readiness Club began on Wednesday, April 3rd. The club allows Macopin Middle School students to review Algebra concepts after school at West Milford High School. The club advisors, Jill Nitkinas and Melissa Welch, analyze data and differentiate instruction to create meaningful help for the students. The club serves 7th and 8th grade Macopin Middle School students. Attending students are enrolled in a variety of courses ranging from Math 7 to Geometry Honors. The club has been well attended each week and parent response has been very positive.



## More from Performing Arts

By Sharon West



The West Milford High School Jazz Choir participated in the Roxbury Invitational on Saturday, March 23 at Roxbury High School. The ensemble earned a GOLD rating and first runner-up in the Jazz & Show Choir Division. The group will perform at the New Jersey Association for Jazz Education State Festival at Princeton High School on Friday, April 26.



Our WMHS Theatre Arts put on a nearly sold out production of Footloose! March 6-10, 2024. The performance was outstanding and just in time for the 40th anniversary of the movie release. Audiences were treated to singing, dancing, acting and set/lighting design at the highest levels we know to expect from our outstanding department, showcasing the many, many talents of our students!



## Performing Arts (Continued)

by Sharon West

The West Milford High School Jazz Ensemble participated in the New Jersey Association for Jazz Education State Jazz Preliminary Festival on Monday, March 4th at Liberty Middle School in West Orange. The ensemble earned a GOLD rating and qualified in the top three of their division for State Jazz Finals. Brennan Coulton's performance on the tenor saxophone alongside Kaitlyn Campbell on vocals was extraordinary and the ensemble as a whole was one of the highlights of the evening. The group then traveled to Lenape Valley H.S. and earned the only Gold rating of the entire evening. In addition the band won best overall trombone section, best overall trumpet section, and Brennan Coulton was named one of the outstanding soloists for the entire evening. You can catch the band after spring break as they will be hosting a festival at West Milford H.S. on May 2

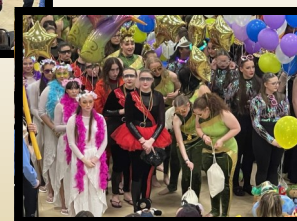
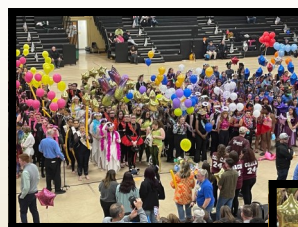


## Regional Jazz Choir

The West Milford Indoor Percussion group performed their 2024 show, "Outlaw" for numerous audiences this season, even hosting their own showcase. They completed their season as WGI (Winter Guard International) Trumbull Finalists and WGI East Power Regional Finalists. Enjoy the outstanding performance through on [this link](#), expertly documented by West Milford TV Science students.

## West Milford Indoor Color Guard

The WM Indoor Color Guard had an amazing 2024 competition season. They became the 2024 Musical Art Conference Scholastic National A Class Champions at the MAC Championships in Trumbull Connecticut on April 6th. The team put on many fantastic performances throughout the 2024 competition season by winning one championship title, being a 3 time Winter Guard International Regional Finalist (which gives our guard a national ranking), plus adding six first place awards to their record. They also won two "Spirit Awards" during the season. What a way to end a great competition season!





## West Milford All District Arts and Empty Bowls

by Sharon West

The West Milford Empty Bowls 2024, an international project to fight hunger took place on Wednesday, March 27th at West Milford Township High School, from 5 pm to 7:30 pm. For the first time, the Art and Culinary Departments hosted the event during the All District Arts Festival, making it a true celebration of the Arts. Sculpture students, faculty, and staff, along with the National Art Honor Society, Art Club, and many art students, made



bowls and ran the event, including set up, ticket sales, serving soup, drinks, bread, bowl selection, and education. Culinary students made the soup and ran the kitchen during the event. Special thanks to the Bekiers Family for their generous donation to the Empty Bowls Project in memory of Rita Bekiers (WMT HS Class of 1977). The record proceeds benefited the Our Lady Queen of Peace Church and West Milford Presbyterian Church food pantries.



The All District Arts Festival was very well attended this year, showcasing, for the entire district, the diligence, commitment and talent of our elementary, middle and high school visual, technical and performing arts students and teachers, district wide. On display was work by students in Kindergarten through grade 12 in art, photography, digital design, wood-working and 3D printing; students in choir, band, color guard and theater arts showcased a few of their best selections, as well as some specially selected and practiced for this event. This evening truly illustrates how music and the arts empower our students to come together to bring beauty and wonder into their own lives and the lives of others!



## Macopin Unified Percussion

by Sharon West

Throughout the month of March, we celebrate Music in Our Schools Month, our focus remained on two key pieces: "Tap Out" by Carl Strommen and "Scotland The Brave", arranged by Robert Philbin. "Tap Out" has been an exciting endeavor, showcasing the percussion section in a tap-dance style change-of-pace number. We've been diligently honing our performance to ensure a cohesive and dynamic presentation. Additionally, we dedicated significant rehearsal time to perfecting the finale piece, "Scotland The Brave," which featured a three-part percussion arrangement involving bass drum, snare drum, and crash cymbal.

On Wednesday, March 27th, we had the privilege of showcasing our hard work and musical talents at the annual All District Festival concert. The evening's program was a testament to the richness of musical education in our district, featuring performances by the 5th Grade District Band, WMHS Highlander Pipes and Drums, WM Indoor Color Guard, Macopin Middle School 7th Grade Band, Unified Percussion Ensemble, and WMHS Symphonic Band. The finale was a mass band's performance of "Scotland the Brave", where each band was featured for 18 measures and then played together for the last 18 measures. It was truly inspiring to witness the progression of musicianship from elementary to high school levels, highlighting



the inclusive and universal nature of music as a language that transcends boundaries.



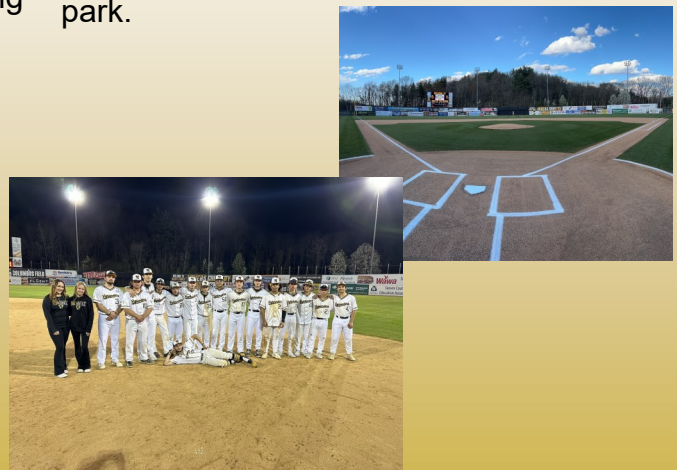
## WMHS Athletics Department

by Joe Trentacosta

PE Pickleball Tournament at the Rec Center 3/22/24. 36 high school students competed in over 80 pickle matches against the WM Rec Center Pickleball Group.



4/15/24 West Milford High School Baseball plays league game vs Wayne Valley at Skylands Stadium in Augusta, NJ. West Milford lost to a hot Wayne Valley team but got to play on a beautiful field in front of a ton of fans at the Sussex Miners home park.





## WMHS Athletics Department

by Joe Trentacosta

The West Milford Girls Track Team finished second place at the Passaic County Relays with 106 points.

The 4x100m and 4x400m competed at the Penn Relays, with both relay teams posting season best performances.



Junior Vincent D'Andrea recorded his 100th career point!

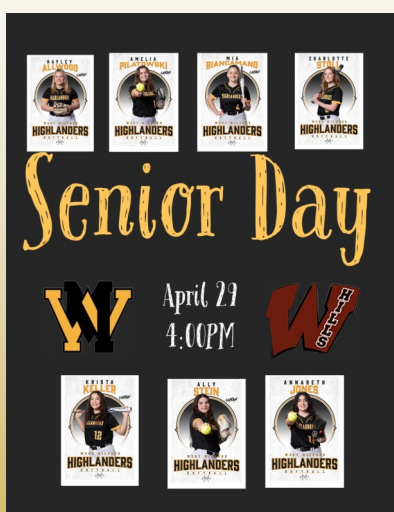


Sophomore goalie Tyler Acanfrio record his 300th career save!

Overall the team is 3 and 3 and 2 and 0 in league play!

## Highlanders Softball News

The softball team is off to a great start this season. The Lady Highlanders are a great group of student athletes on and off the field. There have been many big wins, including Lakeland and PV. Also, many Highlanders gave back by volunteering at the Youth Clinic. Senior Day was held on Monday, April 29.



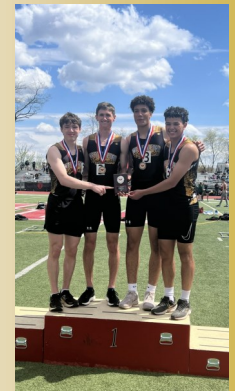


## WMHS Athletics



West Milford Boys Track and Field team is off to a great start this spring! Not only are the Highlanders 3-0 as of right now but they also took 2nd place at the Passaic County Relay meet by only 3 points!

Senior and Captain Noah Traverso is unbeaten in his events this year! He has taken first place in the 100, 200, Long Jump and Triple Jump at every meet so far. He is also the new owner of the Triple Jump school record! He jumped 44 feet 9 inches to overtake the long standing record of Bobby Gamble of 44 feet 4.25 inches.



Another record broken this season was the Spring Medley (a relay made up of two 200 meters, a 400 meter and an 800 meter). The old record of 3:38 is now gone and is 3:36.24 held by the team of Lorenzo Andrade (200), Julian Pierre (200), Noah Traverso (400) and Colin Menier (800)



The Highlanders also competed in one of the largest meets in the world, the Penn Relays. The Highlanders competed in the 4x100 meter with the team of Dan Marquez, Noah Traverso, Kyle Gloria and Tyler Meier with a 45.63 taking second place in their heat. They also competed in the 4x400 relay with Noah Traverso, Julian Pierre, Colin Menier and Lorenzo Andrade taking second place in their heat with a 3:31.64, their best time all season!





## Athletics (Continued)

### Girls Lacrosse



The WM girls lacrosse team is currently undefeated in their division following a victory over previously undefeated divisional rivalry, Ramsey. Captains Paige Fava and Kailey Maskerines lead the team in goals and assists and have achieved personal milestones during the season. Kailey Maskerines was selected as the North Jersey Lacrosse Player of the Week. Maskerines broke the Highlander record for career assists which was originally 64 and finished that week with 71 in her name. Paige Fava totaled nine goals and one assist, including the 100th goal of her career, during our 20-8 victory over Fair Lawn on

April 5. Captain Ashley Czczuga leads the defense in forced takeaways with 17, holding Ramsey to only 5 goals.



### Boys Volleyball - 4/13/24

As a part of our team goals for this season, a portion of our Saturday practice was focused on men's health, as the team engaged in a yoga class. The class was taught by a local practitioner, Cindy Taylor.





## **Parent Organization Information**

- Apshawa PTA meeting, May 16th @ 7:00pm
- Maple Road PTO meeting, May 2nd @ 7:00pm
- Marshall Hill PTA meeting, April 30th @ 7:00pm
- Paradise Knoll PTA meeting, May 16th @ 7:00pm
- Upper Greenwood Lake PTA meeting, May 16th @ 6:00pm
- Macopin PTO meeting, TBD
- WMHS PTSO meeting, TBD
- SEPAC meeting, May 15th @ 7:00pm

***Visit Your School's Website  
and the District Calendar for  
Updates and Information***

***Special School Programs  
Board of Education Meetings  
And many more events!***

**[www.wmtps.org](http://www.wmtps.org)**

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***The West Milford Township Public Schools are pleased and proud to partner with our parent organizations. Please support your school's PTA/PTO/PTSO. Become a member!***

## **Highlander Education Foundation Supporting Our Schools**

The Highlander Education Foundation , a non-profit organization has formed to support the West Milford Township Public Schools through a variety of fundraising events, sponsorships and committee work, focused on advocating for our schools and our students. HEF, has been meeting regularly to engage the community in discussions and has published its first newsletter called Highlander Highlight, where alumni and staff are featured. The organization has upcoming events planned this spring that can be found on their website. The District is looking forward to a long and continuing partnership with the Highlander Education Foundation.

**<https://www.highlandereducationfoundation.org/>**





## District Calendar 2023-2024

April 30th—Annual Budget Hearing & /regular BOE meeting @7:00pm

May 2nd—NJSLA Testing window opens

May 6th—AP Testing window opens

May 21st—Regular BOE meeting @7:00pm

May 27th—Memorial Day: Schools Closed

June 17th & 18th—Early dismissal

June 19th—Last Day of School for Students Early Dismissal)

June 25th—Regular BOE meeting @7:00pm



*Look for our next  
issue in June  
2024!*

# Board Notes

Welcome Dr. Kitchin!

The West Milford Board of Education appointed Dr. Brian Kitchin as the District's next Superintendent on March 28, 2024. A Meet & Greet reception is being planned for the near future. More information to follow!

## Board of Education

- Claire Lockwood, President
- Tara Racano, Vice President
- William Cytowicz
- Teresa Dwyer
- Miranda Jurgensen
- Peter Lippe
- Stephanie Marquard
- Kate Romeo
- Lynda Van Dyk

## [ *Contact Us!* ]

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We're on the web! [www.wmtps.org](http://www.wmtps.org)