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2019-nCoV
coronavirus

SCHOOL TOWN OF HIGHLAND SPECIAL REPORT

Vaccines bring hope to keeping schools open

We have begun 2021 with high hopes that there is an end to the virus that has so impacted our lives. Our teachers and staff have been recommended by the Centers for Disease Control to be next in line to get the vaccine that will protect them in the classroom.

That takes us one step closer to putting the virus in our rearview mirrors and getting our students back to some kind of normal.

Make no mistake: We're not there yet. With your help, though, we can get there.

I want to thank everyone who has abided by the rules, masked up when it was the last thing they wanted to do, stayed home at the holidays and otherwise kept safe, social distancing.

It hasn't been easy. I speak from personal experience. What those sacrifices have accomplished is more than you can imagine.

You have helped keep our students in the classroom where experience and data shows they learn best.

A 2019 Harvard study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences demonstrated that classrooms designed to encourage students to participate in the learning process produces better educational outcomes.



TOP 10 IN STATE SPELL BOWL

Warren's Elementary Academic Spell Bowl team finished in the top 10 in the state's Red Division. Fifth-grade teacher Rachel Paplomatas, who has been coaching the ASB team for 10 years said despite the changes prompted by COVID-19, said the event was different, but just as exciting as other years. "Hayleigh Rodriguez, Jacob Callegari, Libby Coddington, Osmar Kpoffon, Jovan Uzelac, Khushi Patel, Jacqueline Mai, and Joshua Moore handled the remote venue really well," Paplomatas said.

[photos provided]

Highland's Science Technology Engineering Arts and Mathematics curriculum was designed to do just that; to help our children become academic problem-solvers as teams and individuals participating in their own education.

Without that structure and ability to participate in person, many of our children have fallen behind.

Our hopes and plans for 2021 are to keep our schools open and moving forward to help our kids catch up.

Our fingers are crossed for a fantastic and productive 2021.



Brian Smith
Superintendent
School Town of Highland



HIGHLAND'S 5th SCHOLAR IN 6 YEARS



Highland High School's newest Lilly Scholar spent her Christmas holidays deciding on whether she will be heading to Butler University, Purdue University or

Notre Dame to study finance and economics.

Allesandra Gonzalez joins five other local students as recipients of the prestigious Lilly Scholar designation, which provides selected candidates with a full-tuition scholarship, required fees and up to \$900 per year for books and equipment to the Indiana university of their choice.

As it turns out, the wildly busy senior almost didn't apply.

"I had vaguely heard about it, but didn't think I would be successful so I wasn't really thinking about applying until my mom told me I should give it my best shot," she said.

"When I was surprised during my first period class with the news, it felt like a dream."

Class president for all four years of high school, a member of Highland Student Council, Spanish Honor Society, National Honor Society, tennis and marching band, Gonzalez has big plans post-college.

"My parents are both immigrants; my mother studied accounting in Mexico," she said.

"She used her accounting education to put together a financial plan that helped them buy our house in Highland. I want to do the same – to use the knowledge I receive in college to help the immigrant community in living the American dream."

FREE MEALS = BIG MONEY



The federal government is reimbursing the food service department \$2.26 for every free breakfast and \$3.60 for every free lunch that the School Town of

Highland serves to both in-person learners and virtual learners.

"This is crazy and will only happen in this unprecedented year," Food Services Director Lisa Hayes said. "So save yourself time (not making lunches) and money (not shopping for groceries) and help support our food service department. There could be no easier way for you to help us help you!"

Thanks to the USDA, students are receiving free breakfast and lunch whether they are in-school or enrolled in the virtual classroom through the end of the school year.

VIRTUAL COACHING SAVES PROGRAM



When all of the girls varsity basketball coaches were sidelined by a single case of COVID-19, Athletic Director Ryan Harrington urged a couple of former coaches

out of retirement to help out.

"We had planned on shutting the program down until the coaches could return, but the girls didn't want that. They wanted to keep going," Harrington said. "Luckily for us, former head basketball coach Tracie Mezera-Juarez was right down the hall."

Mezera-Juarez and Ty Fulgham were quick to agree to the plan. It turned out to be an ideal work-around for the team.

"It worked out to be an ideal situation," Mezera-Juarez said. "I had a Google Meet with the coach every day before practice," she said. "Tapping into technology we already had provided a live feed from the gymnasium. The coach texted comments I accessed on my iWatch. Truth is, we had a lot of fun and I got to know a whole new group of girls who are so driven on the court."

Harrington, who assisted, said it was a great opportunity to do what was best for the team in challenging circumstances.