



# The Highland HIGHLIGHT

ISSUE 3 ■ MARCH 2011

*Published by Highland Local Schools to promote our students, staff and programs.*

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

MAKING HEADLINES, P2   RACHEL'S CHALLENGE UPDATE, P3   HIGHLAND HAPPENINGS, P4-5  
COMING EVENTS CALENDAR, P6   YOUR MONEY MATTER\$, P7   HIGHLAND FOUNDATION NEWS, P8

**MEET:**  
LUKE ALLEN, 8th grade, Highland Middle

## BOE moves ahead with May levy

*Dear Highland Community,*

The Highland Board of Education has placed an emergency 6.9 mill operating issue on the May 3rd ballot. This issue will help fund educational programs, textbooks, technology and teachers – the day-to-day costs associated with running an excellent school district. Every dollar of this levy is for classroom instruction and is critical to maintaining our excellent education.

Our schools have cut more than \$2 million from the budget and reduced staff by 40 positions. It has been 12 years since Highland Schools has past a new operating levy, and in the meantime, our enrollment has grown by 1,000 students. Our per pupil costs remain the lowest in Medina County and 20% LESS than the state average.

Despite our sound fiscal management, we must increase funding in order to make ends meet. Forecasts anticipate a 10%-20% reduction in state funding for the 2011-12 school year due to the \$8 billion state deficit. That will devastate our school district.

The reality is that a levy alone will not help our schools overcome this huge decline in funding. While awaiting the news of the state budget, the Highland Schools will continue planning responsible reductions while providing a solid education to the children of our community. To learn more about the May 3rd issue, please visit our web site at [www.highlandschools.org](http://www.highlandschools.org).

*Thank you,*  
**Catherine Aukerman**  
*Superintendent of Schools*



Seated from left: Andrejs Manteniaks, Logan Fisher, Seth Scheetz, Andrew Wueller. In back: Stephanie Sexton, Meredith Taylor, Hannah Buehrle, Riley Stewart, Cassandra Dellacorte, Taylor Schultz, Amy Tabar.

## Highland juniors chosen to attend state program

Congratulations to 11 Highland High School juniors who have been chosen by the Medina American Legion and Women's Auxiliary as representatives at the American Legion's 2011 Buckeye Boys State and Buckeye Girls State programs. Students include:

- BOYS STATE:** Logan Fisher, Andrejs Manteniaks, Seth Scheetz, Andrew Wueller
- GIRLS STATE:** Hannah Buehrle, Cassandra Dellacorte, Taylor Schultz, Stephanie Sexton, Riley Stewart, Amy Tabar, Meredith Taylor

These programs provide high school juniors across Ohio with hands-on experience in the operation of state government and the organization of political parties. This year's Buckeye Boys State will be held at Bowling Green State University from June 11-19. Girls State will be held at Ashland University June 12-18. American Legion Auxiliary Units, assisted by high school principals and guidance counselors, evaluate leadership qualities of young men and women to be interviewed for selection as Delegates or Alternates. Students are eligible if they meet the following criteria:

- Have completed their junior year of high school;
- Are interested in government and current events;
- Have high moral character;
- Possess strong leadership abilities;
- Have an above average scholastic standing;
- Have a desire to learn.

# MAKING HEADLINES...

## NATIONAL MERIT FINALISTS!

It's official! Highland High School seniors Scott Fink, Matthew Guzik and Ellen Wiecek have been named National Merit Scholar Finalists. This is the highest number of scholar finalists attending Highland for over a dozen years or more. An extremely time-intensive application and evaluation process is required. Those receiving the highest ranking of National Merit Scholar will receive notification in April/May. Congratulations and best of luck! Pictured above, from left, are Matthew, Ellen and Scott.



## HIGHLAND TEAM OF WRITERS TO ADVANCE

Highland Local Schools received awards and honors at the District Power of the Pen Tournament on January 22. Ron Hall, coach, said teams of six from both 7th and 8th grade levels competed at the event with 20 teams from surrounding areas participating. The Highland 8th Grade Power of the Pen Team placed 3rd overall and will advance to regional competition. Rachel Boedicker placed 11th overall for 8th grade writers and Nikki Kobak placed 2nd overall for 7th grade writers. Several team members are expected to advance to the regional competition. Eighth grade team members include Tanner Steinbacher, Mark Van Weese, Jeremy Hardman, Lauren Boedicker, Rachel Boedicker and Abbey McMaster. Seventh grade team includes Elizabeth Pearson, Amanda Finucane, Nikki Kobak, Scott Staten, Maison DeWalt and Julianne Holt.

## SPELLERS ADVANCE TO REGIONAL EVENT

Highland Middle School Spellers recently competed in the Medina County Spelling Bee on February 3. In total, 47 spellers from schools across the county participated in the competition held at Medina High School. Of the final 10 spellers in the competition, Highland had four students standing including Zoe Penko, Jeremy Hardman, Melissa Bakes and Chris Wright. Highland students Zoe Penko and Jeremy Hardman placed in the top six and advanced to the Akron Regional Spelling Bee on March 12, 2011. Congratulations!

## FOUSEK WINS ESSAY CONTEST

Justin Fousek, 6th grader at Highland Middle, was recently selected by the Ohio Education Association and Clear Channel Radio as the winner of the Black History Month Essay Contest. Justin wrote his essay on Frederick McKinley Jones and was presented with an award and \$50 check from OEA, as well as a pizza party for his class! Justin also had the privilege of recording a commercial that was played on radio stations across Ohio. Nice work, Justin!

## HINCKLEY STUDENTS TEAM UP WITH AHA



Hinckley Elementary students enjoyed their annual Beach Day Party on January 28 and took time to raise money for the American Heart Association in the process. They held a Jump Rope for Heart event and raised \$2,739.25! Wow! Great work to everyone involved!

*Pictured taking his turn at mastering the jump rope is Hinckley 2nd grader Alex Beal and parent helper Simona Mason.*

## HMS PRESENTS 'ALICE IN WONDERLAND, JR.'

Tickets are now on sale for the Highland Middle School production of "Alice in Wonderland, Jr." Performances are at 7 p.m. on March 17-19 in the middle school's West Gym. Reserved seats are \$7 and \$5. General admission (bleacher seats) can be purchased at the door for \$5. Reserve your seats through Barb Killeen: [barbandterry@zoominternet.net](mailto:barbandterry@zoominternet.net) or at (330) 416-8006, or download the ticket order form at: <http://www.highlandschools.org/schools/middle-school>.

## KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION MARCH 17

Parents should come to Highland Middle School on Thursday, March 17 to register their kindergarten child for the 2011-12 school year. In order to register, a child must be five years old by September 30, 2011, and the following items are needed at the time of registration: personal identification with a picture I.D. of the adult registering the child; proof of residency; the child's original birth certificate or passport; child's complete immunization records; and certified custody papers (if applicable). Parents are asked to park in the front parking lot and enter through the east wing door. Please note the following times to register. Last names beginning with:

**A-L: 8:30-10 a.m. / M-R: 10 a.m. to 12 noon / S-Z: 1-3 p.m**

Registration forms are available online at [highlandschools.org](http://highlandschools.org) and will expedite the process if you bring them filled out. Forms will also be available at registration. Children may accompany parents to the registration, but it is not necessary since we will NOT be doing screening this year due to budget cuts. Principals from all three elementary schools will be present to meet our future parents and students. Nurses will be on site to review immunization records and building secretaries will help verify the necessary paperwork.

# Students take lead role in 'kindness campaign'

By Dawn Marzano, Communications Director

**Treat others as you want to be treated.** It's a simple, well-known golden rule that has been influential among people of diverse cultures and beliefs for many ages. As the world continues to evolve into a single interacting global community, the need for such a common standard is becoming more urgent. It's a standard that the students at Highland Middle School are taking very seriously.

On October 11, 2010, Highland Middle School students were captivated as they learned about the life – and tragic death – of Rachel Scott, the first person killed at Columbine High School on April 20, 1999. Rachel's acts of kindness and compassion, coupled with the contents of her six diaries, have now become the foundation for one of the most life-changing school programs in America. An evening assembly was also held in an effort to engage parents and community members. The program was made possible through a grant from the Highland Foundation.

Rachel's Challenge motivates students to create and maintain positive change in the way they treat others. These ideals include eliminating prejudice and looking for the best in others; daring to dream by setting goals and keeping a journal; choosing positive influences; using kind words and small acts of kindness; and finally, starting a chain reaction.

This chain reaction is carried forth through the Chain Links Club, which provides students with the opportunity to continue this movement of kindness and compassion demonstrated through Rachel's Challenge. The goal of the Chain Links Club is to help create a permanent cultural change in schools across America.

A monumental task indeed, but it is a task not taken lightly by the Rachel's Challenge Ambassadors at Highland Middle School. Five students have been chosen to take a lead role in this kindness campaign, and according to the group, their efforts are being met with open arms by their fellow classmates and teachers. Ambassadors include 8th graders Kyle Wissel and Mary Gillentine, 7th graders Cate Antonius and Abbey Dragich, and 6th grader Austin Levan.

Currently, over 100 students are active in Highland's Chain Links Club, which is broken down into four smaller groups. "We all work together, but each of the kids in the club has a different job," explained Kyle Wissel. "We all come up with different ideas on how to target kindness in the school." On any given day these acts of kindness range from preventing an act of bullying to recognizing a staff member or assuring that no student feels alienated or alone during lunch periods and recess. "It's important for everyone to feel included," he said.

For each of the Ambassadors, it's also about the bigger picture. "I encourage the kids in my group to not only do good things in school, but also in the community," stated Abbey Dragich. "Rachel's Challenge reminds people to do good deeds for others and hopefully those deeds can help start a chain reaction."



**Rachel's Challenge Ambassadors at Highland Middle School include from left: Mary Gillentine, 8th grade; Austin Levan, 6th grade; Kyle Wissel, 8th grade; Abbey Dragich, 7th grade; and Cate Antonius, 7th grade.**

They are all about spreading the news...good news that is. "With everything going on today, with all the violence in the world, this program is a great way to remind people that good things do happen each day," said Cate Antonius. "And, maybe one act of kindness by one person can change the way another person thinks and hopefully they will pass it on," added Austin Levan. "We need to remind people of the good."

The Chain Links Club meets once a month after school and is co-supervised by Sandy Schilling and Becky Watson, 6th grade teachers at HMS. Kyle is responsible for regular communication with Dana Scott, Rachel's sister. He emails her photos and news updates to keep her current on how Highland is working to maintain the positive momentum first created by the assembly they watched back in October. Since its inception students have noticed some big changes. "I think everyone is more outgoing because they realize that having differences or being different isn't that big of a deal," said Mary Gillentine. Students are more likely to seek help when they need it, try different activities at school and seem to be more forgiving of others.

So what's the most telling sign that the Club has had a positive impact at HMS? According to the group, that's easy to answer. "Everyone here just seems much closer to each other," they said.

Highland Middle School Principal, Dr. John Deuber, said he couldn't be more proud of these young people. "They are learning to acknowledge what effect our actions may have on the lives of others – they are imagining themselves in the other person's place on the receiving end of those actions," he said. "It really is inspiring to see the often subtle yet powerful acts of kindness in our school. These students are role models not only for their peers, but for the entire Highland community as well. We can all learn something from them."

To learn more about Rachel's Challenge, please visit [rachelschallenge.org](http://rachelschallenge.org).

# Highland

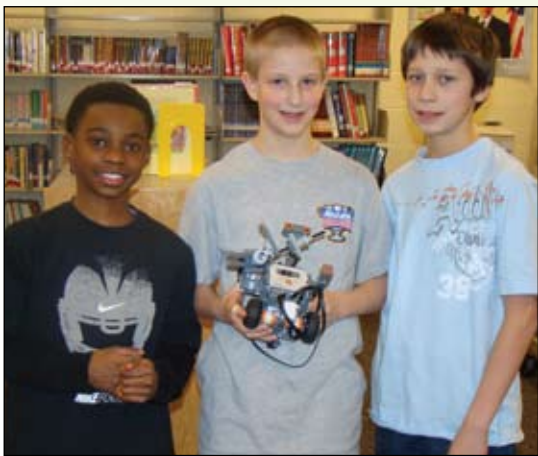
## Two advance to national speech competition

Congratulations to Highland High School Speech and Debate Team members Ellen Wiencek and Jennifer DeLozier who have advanced to the National Speech and Debate Tournament set for June in Dallas, TX. The Public Forum Team of Wiencek and DeLozier had their qualifying run at the National Forensic League's (NFL) Eastern Ohio District Tournament held February 18-19 and bested teams from across the area to earn their national qualification slot. Great work!

*Pictured are Jennifer DeLozier (left) and Ellen Wiencek.*



*Working with their robot, "The Magnifier," are Granger 5th graders Anna Marie DiGiacobbe and Emily Lyon.*



*Granger 5th graders from left, McKyan James, Nick Ager and Collin Rittman proudly display their robot named "Flashy."*

## Students embrace robotics challenge

Thirty-five Highland 5th graders have been participating in a robotics class four times a week under the direction of Jeff Nicholas, Brenda Magier and volunteers Allen Collins and Dan Lyons. Students have built and are programming LEGO robots to perform a number of different tasks. The students first learned the basics, such as programming the base model robot to drive forward, follow a line and maneuver through a simple maze. They are now working on a more creative challenge of designing a robot to participate in a robotic talent show. Ten of the students in the class have also formed three teams and will be representing Granger Elementary as they participate in the 2011 Robofest competition on March 26 at the Medina County University Center. Robots and software were purchased through a grant awarded by the Martha Holden Jennings Foundation as part of The Medina County Robotics Network Project.

## HHS Spring Play is March 24-26

Highland High School will present the Mark Brown comedy/adventure of "Around the World in 80 Days" at 7 p.m. on March 24, 25 and 26 on the high school's main stage. Tickets are \$8 for adults, \$5 for students and senior citizens will be admitted free of charge.

Thirty-three cast members and almost as many student techs are involved in this entertaining production. Based on a Jules Verne book, minus the music, the story is about Phileas Fogg and his trusty man-servant Passepartout who are out to set the world's record in traveling around the world in 80 days. This is after Fogg makes a wager with the other British gentlemen at the Reform Club. Detective Fix intends to foil Fogg's trip because Fix believes that Fogg has just robbed the Bank of London. They encounter many misadventures in each foreign land only to return to London to what Fogg thinks is too late. Along the way they meet an Indian suttee and save the woman, Aouda, who eventually asks Fogg to marry her.

Does he agree? Do unforeseen circumstances allow him to still win the bet? You'll have to come to the play to find out! For more information or to purchase tickets, please call 330-239-1901, ext. 5314. Tickets will also be available at the door.

# Happenings



## STUDENTS CREATE THEIR OWN SPECIAL 'PET ROCK'

Students at Sharon Elementary School had a blast creating their own pet rocks on March 24 with the help of several parent volunteers. Students earned this unique privilege for reading 1,000 minutes at home during the months of December and January. The annual reading theme has been a tradition at the elementary schools for the last decade. The goal is to encourage students to read at home and, hopefully, to develop a life-long love of reading. This year's theme, "Reality Rocks," has focused on children enjoying non-fiction and informational text. Their next bi-monthly incentive is creating their own rock candy! Yummy!



**Alex Zarkovacki, 2nd grader at Sharon Elementary, displays a variety of the pet rocks that were created by his classmates.**



*"Clendaniel's Brilliant Bracelets" were a big hit with Hinckley students. Pictured from left are Zach Wojtonek, Harrison Truitt, Nicholas Choueiri and Zach Nash.*



*Showcasing their "Bubble Buddy Magnets" are Hinckley 2nd graders from left: Elise Nayman, David Petruziello, Jace McNulty and Bennett Kolda.*

## A LESSON IN BUSINESS

Second graders at Hinckley Elementary have been planning and operating their own businesses by selling unique products to the student body during school lunch times, with the help of parent volunteers. This annual lesson in business and economics teaches the students to learn, plan and then execute a small business and turn a profit. Each year the students have earned enough profit to purchase t-shirts and other fun items for their class.



# Thank You Bus Drivers!

Highland Local Schools celebrated "Love the Bus" on February 14. This annual campaign, founded in 2007, is coordinated by the American School Bus Council (ASBC). As part of this program, Highland Schools recognized its 34 bus drivers and their many years of service to students and the District. Coffee, donuts and refreshments were served as elementary and middle school students presented personalized Valentine's Day messages to the bus drivers as a way to say thank you for keeping them safe. Highland bus drivers take nearly 2,300 students safely to school each day and drive more than 475,000 miles each year.

## Sefcik named new head coach of boys soccer team

Robert Sefcik has been named Highland's new head coach of the boys varsity soccer team. He replaces Billy Zufall who served as head coach for six years. Zufall stepped down at the end of the 2010 season.

Sefcik is a Highland graduate and former soccer team member. After high school he played soccer for Baldwin Wallace College. He has been an assistant coach with the Highland program for the past three years.

"Robert brings a strong soccer background to Highland, being taught by former head coach Zufall," stated Highland Athletic Director Curt Johansen. "He has familiarity with the program and the players and we are confident that he will make the transition successful. We look for him to continue to build and strengthen the boys soccer program and to continue with the success that they have experienced in the past few seasons."

### BOARD OF EDUCATION

Dr. Norman Christopher, M.D. Mike Houska  
Robert Kelly Dan Petek Diane Thomas

### CONTACT US

Administration Office 330-239-1901  
3880 Ridge Road, Medina, Ohio 44256

## UP and COMING

### APRIL 2011

- **APRIL 4-8:** Spring Break / No School.
- **APRIL 11:** Conference Comp Day / No School.
- **APRIL 12:** Students Return to School.
- **APRIL 13:** Hinckley PTO Flat Sale.
- **APRIL 18:** Highland Board of Education Meeting, 7 p.m. (HHS).
- **APRIL 21:** Hinckley Garden Day.
- **APRIL 22:** Good Friday / No School.
- **APRIL 26:** 3rd-8th Grade Reading Achievement Testing; High School Percussion Ensemble, 7 p.m. (HHS).
- **APRIL 27:** 3rd-8th Grade Reading Achievement Testing; Middle School Spring Sports Pictures; District Jazz Concert, 7 p.m. (HHS).
- **APRIL 28:** 5th & 8th Grade Science Achievement Testing.
- **APRIL 29:** Sharon and Hinckley Volunteer Appreciation Programs; Highland Speech & Debate Team Banquet.

### MAY 2011

- **MAY 3:** Election Day! Please Remember to VOTE!; Hinckley 1st & 2nd Grade Music Concert.
- **MAY 5:** Granger Celebration of the Arts, 5:30 p.m.; Granger 4th Grade Concert, 7 p.m.; 5th Grade DARE Graduation, 6 p.m. (HMS).
- **MAY 6:** Interims; Granger Volunteer Breakfast; Highland Hosts State OMEA Contest (HHS).
- **MAY 7:** Highland Hosts State OMEA Contest (HHS).

VISIT [WWW.HIGHLANDSCHOOLS.ORG](http://WWW.HIGHLANDSCHOOLS.ORG) FOR MORE EVENT DATES.



# YOUR MONEY MATTER\$

Published quarterly by the Financial Advisory Panel

## Members of the Financial Advisory Panel:

### Granger Township

- Bob Businger
- Richard Pace

### Hinckley Township

- Diane Dermody
- Rob Smykal

### Montville Township

- Christopher Schaefer

### Sharon Township

- Dan Fousek
- Paul Kelly
- John Leach

### Administration

- Catherine Aukerman  
Superintendent
- Neil Barnes  
Treasurer

## Online

Each issue of "Your Money Matter\$" is posted on our District web site at [highlandschools.org](http://highlandschools.org), click on the "Administration" link then click on the "Treasurer" tab.

## Feedback

If you have comments to share, questions about Highland's finances or inquiries about District operations, please contact Dawn Marzano, Director of Communications, via email at [marzano@highlandschools.org](mailto:marzano@highlandschools.org), or 330-239-1901, ext. 1261. You can also contact any Financial Advisory Panel member. We will try to address all questions in the next edition.

# CONTROLLING COSTS = TAXPAYER SAVINGS

The Highland Local School District has remained committed to spending your tax dollars wisely and controlling expenditures. To sustain our schools and our communities, Highland Local Schools has placed a 6.9 mill, emergency levy on the May 3rd ballot. This levy, which will generate \$4,634,300 annually, will cost home owners under \$18 per month per \$100,000 of home value.

**DESPITE INCREASING EXPENSES AND ENROLLMENT, THE DISTRICT HAS BEEN FINANCIALLY PRUDENT, CUTTING MILLIONS FROM THE BUDGET AND MAINTAINING LOWER STUDENT AND TEACHER COSTS.**

- It has been 12 years since the last new operating levy passed.
- Enrollment has increased by 1,000 new students since that time.
- Per pupil costs are the lowest in Medina County and 20% less than the State average.
- Pay-to-participate fees are in effect for students involved in sports and extra-curricular activities.
- Since 2006, the District has saved over \$2 million by changing the health insurance plan.
- Administrators pay has been frozen for two years.
- Since December 2010, the District has cut an additional \$2 million and 40 staff members.

**THE DISTRICT ALSO PARTICIPATES IN A VARIETY OF PROGRAMS TO OBTAIN COMPETITIVE PRICING ON SIGNIFICANT BUDGET LINE ITEMS TO SAVE THE DISTRICT MONEY. LISTED BELOW ARE SOME NOTABLE EXAMPLES.**

- The SchoolPool electricity program has resulted in a savings of \$86,881 since September 2009.
- The Ohio Schools Council natural gas program saved \$84,568 during a five-year period ended June 2010.
- Participation in a group rating program for workers' compensation saved \$33,032 for the 2010 policy year.
- The District has utilized several purchasing cooperatives in order to secure competitive pricing on operational supplies and equipment.

The Highland Local School District continually seeks out ways to save taxpayers money. Unfortunately, the District cannot cut its way out of the current budget situation without impacting the quality of education provided to the children of Highland. A balanced approach that includes additional operating revenues through the passage of a new levy, further responsible budget reductions and continued cost containment measures will be necessary to sustain the District into the future.

The Highland Pride Committee has a levy web site that offers more information. To learn more, feel free to visit [www.highlandlevy.org](http://www.highlandlevy.org).

# THE HIGHLAND FOUNDATION

## Sharon students get literacy boost thanks to Foundation grants



Sharon 2nd grader Shea Skinner.



Sharon 2nd grader Bryant Adkins.

### PLAYAWAY SYSTEMS HELP IMPROVE READERS OF ALL LEVELS

Ninety 2nd grade students at Sharon Elementary School are utilizing Playaway Systems this year thanks to a grant from the Highland Foundation. These systems help to improve literacy and allow for greater differentiation in reading instruction for both struggling and advanced readers by utilizing technology to meet the needs of individual students. According to 2nd grade teacher Penny Reed, students actively engage in reading fiction and nonfiction books. "It is amazing to see how engaged the entire class of diverse learners becomes in reading chapter books. Students choose books that they are interested in reading, even if the book is above their independent reading level. Listening to the story professionally read while following along in the book allows students to read and comprehend material at a higher level than reading alone. This helps increase vocabulary, comprehension, fluency and time spent reading. Most of all, every child enjoys reading, when Playaways are involved!"

### THE RADIO SHOW: A RESIDENCY WITH LOCAL ARTIST JIM GILL

"The Radio Show" is a residency with artist Jim Gill where students engage in conceiving, writing and performing a 30 minute radio program. The final performance is recorded through microphones then burned to a CD and duplicated for sharing.

All 4th grade students at Sharon Elementary will participate in this five-day residency this April. The project will encompass inter-disciplinary curriculum pertaining to the 2010-11 school-wide reading theme of "Reality Rocks...Reading Keeps it Real," which emphasizes non-fiction reading.

Mr. Gill, a Parma Heights native, is an active singer-songwriter folk musician in the Northeast Ohio music scene and a busy freelance illustrator and cartoonist. Mr. Gill is a member of Young Audiences of Northeast Ohio. He develops programs relating to literacy and the arts.

This residency will impact 90 students, but will be available on the web site so that others can listen.



From left are Colin Rininger, Collin Vozar, Tyler Bloniak, Adam Kluk and Dan Mirman.

## WRESTLERS COMPETE AT STATE TOURNEY

GO HORNETS! Five Highland wrestlers advanced to the Division II state wrestling tournament March 3-5 in Columbus. The group received a heart-warming send off from the Highland High School student body on March 3 before boarding the bus. Congratulations to senior Daniel Mirman, 135 lb. weight class, with a record of 39-2; senior Collin Vozar, 285 lb. weight class, 37-10 record; junior Colin Rininger, 140 lb. weight class, 36-8 record; senior Tyler Bloniak, 152 lb. weight class, 33-6 record; and sophomore Adam Kluk, 160 lb. weight class, with a 24-5 record. Both Mirman and Bloniak placed 4th in the D-II competition. The Highland Wrestling Team is coached by Paul Casey, head coach, and Bruce Hulme, assistant.