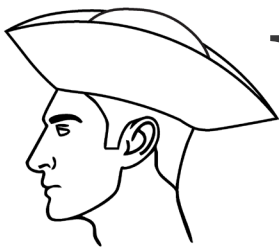


THE VOICE



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FEBRUARY 2025



Staff and students make their way to the exits as the fire alarm goes off. Photo by Michelle Barkin

Why are the fire alarms always on test?

By Rithvik Hari
News Editor

Picture this: You're sitting in class taking a quiz, when you hear the announcement: "The fire alarm is on test. If the alarm should sound, there is no need to evacuate the building." Instead of going back to your quiz, you begin to think about what they could possibly be testing now.

Even though the administration knows the real reason behind the fire alarms always being on test, many of the staff and students remain uninformed, but they do have some theories.

"I believe the school is too broke to get a new system, so they keep testing it to fix a very old system," Senior Keira Kruchowy said.

Similarly, Freshman Adam Novello said, "I think the maintenance people are testing every single alarm individually throughout the entire building. That's why it's always on test."

Mr. Eric Puma, an English teacher, offered a different take. "Although it can interrupt the class flow, it often offers my students a much-needed break from hearing me speak," Puma said. "I can only assume it is absolutely necessary, and if it keeps everyone in the

building safer, then I'm all for it," he said.

"At this point it doesn't bother me too much," said Mrs. Elizabeth Watts, a Math teacher at HHS. "I usually just have to stop talking for a couple of seconds, but that's it. I feel that it happens so much that I don't really notice it anymore."

The real reason why the system is always on test is because HHS was built in stages, with the original section being built in the 1960s, the addition of the 100s and 200s coming in the 1980s, the 500-600s coming in the late 1990s, and the 700s and 800s coming at the turn of the century. When the additions were being built, all of the different

fire systems had to communicate with each other and to one main system.

"The system all together is very elaborate. The system includes fire sprinklers, smoke detectors, heat detectors, alarms, lights, and the new integration with the display," Dr. Steven Jablonski, the Vice Principal in charge of Facilities and Security, said.

With a building that is so old and constantly being improved upon, the safety of the staff and students is of the utmost importance. "Safety is our top priority and we are legally obligated to fix all issues, even the smallest ones," Jablonski said.

With the combination of new and old technology, the system must be frequently tested so the administration can be sure that separate systems from different areas communicate with one another. Ensuring that all of the fire alarms and the additional systems are working and that the building is following the fire code are just two key steps to keeping the staff and students safe, even if the tests seem repetitive.

So the next time you hear this message, you can feel secure knowing that these tests and the announcements that follow are necessary for your safety, not just a nuisance.

Mass hysteria or mass threat: Are the drones sighted in Hillsborough dangerous?

By Bella Muriuki
Staff Writer

According to reports from a resident, a drone struck a powerline in a field near the Lowes in Hillsborough on the night of December 12. Hillsborough, Millstone, Somerset and Somerville, Fire, Hazmat and Police authorities searched the area throughout the night and had the perimeter secured until the next morning when the conditions allowed more visibility. The Millstone Police Department deployed drones over the area to complete an aerial search of the area December 13 at approximately 7:30 a.m, which yielded negative results.

Somerset County Hazmat also completed a foot search of the area yielding negative results as well.

Drones have been seen all across the state, but especially in northern and central New Jersey. Senior Emma Ortiz tells The Voice of her personal experience witnessing a drone right outside her house. "The first time we ever saw them they were directly right above our house and they were pretty low and we could hear them," Ortiz said. "The drones move in circles around my house, like they were hovering." Ortiz's mother was the first in her household to see them about two weeks before Thanksgiving near Woodfern Elementary School. Ortiz then started seeing the flashing red

and green lights from the drone flying lower than a plane would. Ortiz mentioned that drone sightings have since decreased.

With the rising concerns, The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) implemented no fly zones across the state November 18. The newest restrictions have affected residents in parts of Atlantic Highlands, Belford, Highlands, Linden, Fort Hancock (Middletown), Paulsboro, South Kearny, Westville, and Port Reading (Woodbridge). Government officials assured residents that these drones are not a threat and they are actively investigating these sightings.

"Right now, the FBI has assured us that there's no reason for

concern," Hillsborough Township Mayor Mr. John Ciccarelli said. "They've been investigating, and their findings show no evidence that these drones pose a threat to our community."

Captain Scott McCarthy with the Hillsborough Township Police Department urges residents to reach out if they see anything. "If there are any drone sightings, residents can call Hillsborough Township Police Department at 908-369-4323 and report the incident for officers to respond to and investigate. They can also call the FBI and report the drone sighting at 1-800-CALL-FBI," McCarthy said. "At this time there is no known threat to the community."

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Mr. Eberle is recognized as a recipient of the “Extra Yard for Teachers” award, winning HHS \$10,000

By Ava Clarke
Business Manager

Mr. Christopher Eberle, a teacher of social studies at Hillsborough High School was called to the principal’s office on October 1 where he was surprised to find a camera crew along with his former student, Jon Seaton awaiting his arrival. Seaton, a 2020 Hillsborough High School Alumna turned social media influencer with over 2 million followers across multiple platforms and Rutgers varsity football player,



Photo by Ava Clarke

nominated his former teacher for the award, gaining Eberle a box of Cheez-Its paraphernalia and \$10,000 for the high school.

According to the College Football Playoff Foundation, the “Extra Yard for Teachers” award is dedicated to “elevating the teaching profession by inspiring and empowering the most dedicated teachers.”

“I was gratified,” said Eberle of Seaton and the words they shared during their reunion. Eberle recalled Jon Seaton as a highly charismatic and talented public speaker.

Eberle has spent 26 years connecting with students, 24 of which were here at Hillsborough High School. Eberle said his philosophy for keeping students connected and engaged is finding the balance between calm and laid back, while also fostering an environment curated towards learning. “I take history very seriously. I don’t take myself very seriously,” said Eberle. Eberle says he uses a lot of humor to help kids feel relaxed and to

maintain a habitat for respect that is also lively and fun. Eberle found that students, like Seaton especially, responded well to an environment like this.

Other former students seem to agree. Lauren Daniels, a senior at Hillsborough High School, called Eberle, “the perfect example of a teacher with a class that has a balance between fun and learning.” Daniels went on to say that Eberle never shied away from his responsibility as a teacher to make class fun or amusing, and he always maintained that equilibrium. Though Daniels had him her sophomore year, she says she would still call Eberle one of her favorite teachers. “We always had fun,” she said.

Eberle won thousands of dollars for the high school and for his classroom. When asked what he’d do with his classroom’s portion of the money, he –in true Eberle fashion– said he intends to use the money to benefit his students by putting some of it towards his annual trip to the Intrepid Museum.

Student cell phones docked during class

By Sanjith Gnanajothi and
Jaslyn Londono
Staff Writers

To enhance focus and promote genuine interactions in the classroom, Hillsborough High School has introduced a new cell phone policy this school year. Principal Mr. Jeffrey DiLollo announced the change, which has sparked discussions among students, teachers, and parents. “We made it universal,” DiLollo explained when asked about the new policy’s core principles. Unlike in previous years, when the guidelines were set by individual teachers, this year’s policy aims to provide a clear and consistent approach for everyone.

All students are required to keep their phones off and away during class, regardless of the subject. “At the start of class, they are put in their designated cell phone pouch that is provided to all teachers,” DiLollo said. Compared to last year, the most significant difference lies in how the new policy is enforced. “This year, we wanted to see the impact of this shift,” DiLollo explained. “Our main focus is on eliminating distractions in the classroom and encouraging more authentic conversations.”

For students who are caught for the first time, the approach is simply to have a chat and issue a warning. However, if the same students keep breaking the rules, the consequences can get tougher, like Saturday detention. “It’s not about punishment,” DiLollo emphasized. “It’s really about helping students grasp why staying focused in class is so important.” When asked what prompted the school to make the change this year, DiLollo said it wasn’t in response to a specific event but rather a growing trend in digital distractions. He said he is following the pattern other schools are placing against phones. “Conflicts can be created through messages and social media, which takes away from students’ learning,” he added.

So far, the reaction from students and teachers has been mostly positive. “Teachers who didn’t initially think the policy would have much impact have been pleasantly surprised,” DiLollo shared. “Many of them are now saying it’s been really positive in their classrooms.” As for the students? “There hasn’t been any pushback,” DiLollo said. The policy in action has affected the student body and their behavior with little to no resistance. “I’ve noticed that students are using their phones less during lunch, and there are more face-to-face conversations happening,” he observed.

Teachers agree that the new phone policy has had a positive change. “It has a positive effect. It reduces stress and opportunity for people to meet up, whether it’s a fight or hang out. It’s just better focus,” David King, a math teacher, said.

Although teachers and administrators may view this policy to be positive, some students have mixed opinions about it. “I personally am not a fan of the phone policy because I think there are times where we should have it on our person in case of emergencies. If there is an emergency or anything related to that I won’t know about it until passing time, but it gives us, students, more focus on our education,” Samantha Manfready, a senior, said.

Several other members of the school community shared their thoughts as well. Brian Mumper, a Latin teacher, said the policy is “an overall positive,” noting that it helps students stay focused and reduces distractions.

“It’s a good way to keep distractions low and encourage students to talk face-to-face,” said Physical Education teacher Dallas Rowley added,

Sophomore Christian Soi said, “The phone policy helps me keep my screen time and use of my phone down.”

Not all students view the policy as favorable though. “I think the phone policy is unreasonable. Most kids don’t use their phones during class anyway, unless there’s nothing going on,” Joe Schneider, a sophomore, said.

Vice Principal Steven Jablonski shared further positive results. “So far this year it has had a positive impact on the school. From an empirical standpoint, students are leaving class less to use the bathroom and spending less time when they get there. From an anecdotal perspective, teachers are reporting students are less distracted and they are having fewer issues in their classroom. Also, students are reporting that it has helped them focus more in class,” said Jablonski.

The success of this new policy isn’t just due to the school’s efforts alone. According to DiLollo, parents have played a crucial role in making sure the policy is taken seriously and followed through. “We sent letters home, updated the student and parent handbook, and highlighted the policy in school communications,” said DiLollo. “The response from parents has been overwhelmingly supportive. I’ve received at least two dozen emails from parents who are thankful for the change.” DiLollo said he hopes that by mid-year, the administration will see real changes in how students are interacting and performing in class. “I really think that as we move through the year, we’ll notice a boost in students’ focus, which should help improve their grades,” he said.

It’s hard to say for sure if this new policy will truly shake things up at Hillsborough High, but the administration looks forward to seeing the feedback and scores. “The best indicator of success will be what both teachers and students have to say about the changes they’re experiencing,” Mr. DiLollo noted. “If our overall test scores go up, then we’ll know it’s working.”



Popular courtesy busing returns to Boro prior to cold weather

By Isabella Blanco
Staff Writer

Some high school students may have been forced to walk, catch a ride from a friend or parent, or even bike to their school in Hillsborough. Since 2019, the Board of Education only offered courtesy busing, busing for all students despite their homes distance from the school, for students up to sixth grade. The HHS and HMS students that lived within two miles of their school were forced to find a different method of transportation to get them to and from school.

However, at the December 16 board meeting, the lack of courtesy busing was raised as a major concern.

“I felt it was crucial to reinstate it as a commitment to our students and families,” Superintendent Michael Volpe said. “This adjustment allows us to provide transportation to more students, while ensuring their safety and timely arrival at school.”

The change, which is part of the district’s strategic plan, was implemented on January 2, the first day back to school from the 2024-2025 school year’s winter break. Courtesy busing was cut in the past due to budget constraints.

“The change has been relatively smooth with the exception of a few hiccups with buses,” Vice Principal Colin Simpson said.

Vice Principal Steven Jablonski shared that courtesy busing positively affected traffic at the

high school. “It definitely led to less lines in the morning and less backup,” he said.

The new busing changes affected approximately 640 HHS students and 900 students in the district as a whole. Freshman Brandon Lopez who has not had a bus since sixth grade just began taking the bus once again. “The bus has helped because I am able to take it in the morning, and it’s really cold,” he said.

Senior Daniel Renaud agrees that riding the bus is a good option during the winter. “The new busing is very helpful for me,” Renaud said. “Busing provides a warm travel home and more opportunities to talk with my friends. I get home quicker and don’t feel frozen by the time I open my front door anymore.”

Others have had contrasting experiences with new bussing. Sophomore Durga Maheshsethulekshmi, who also recently started using the bus said, “I haven’t gone on it a lot, but I’d say that they can get better. They stop really far away from my house, so I am still walking,” he said.

Overall, the new courtesy busing has seemed to help many students, reduce traffic in the school parking lot, and improve organization, making it easier for students to get to school on time and in comfort.

“Having a bus is a blessing,” said junior Ciara Blair. “I no longer have to wake up one-two hours before school and walk in 10-degree weather.”

Select Boro seniors prepare to vote (or not) on election day

By Rithvik Hari
News Editor

As we entered into fall, many seniors at Hillsborough High School began preparing for a big decision they may have made on Election Day. Eligible voters were able to vote for the President of the United States, US Senators representing the state of New Jersey, US House of Representatives for our congressional district, two County Commissioner Positions, and various positions at the township level Nov. 5. “Voting is an important part of our democracy and being an American citizen,” said Blair Yusko, an eligible senior voter. 140 out of 592 of his peers were eligible to vote this November.

During the last few months of the 23-24 school year, students in Robert Fenster’s AP US Government and Politics class held a voter registration drive. Students went to the Health classes of Seniors and provided a step-by-step guide on how to register to vote for this election. “The AP Gov classes have been doing voter registration annually for over 20 years. Data proves that voters who cast a vote at age 18 overwhelmingly become habitual voters. While we can’t force anyone to vote, the one thing that is indisputable is that if you’re not registered, you can’t vote,” said Fenster.

With top positions of our nation’s government open and the balance of

the Senate in question, this election was considered an important one. Candidates were vying for positions at federal, state, and local levels. “A functioning participatory democracy relies on its citizens to actively participate. Voting is just one of many ways citizens can participate, but it is one of the most important as we choose the people who represent us at the federal, state, and local level,” Fenster said.

Although some eligible seniors voted this year, some have decided not to. Senior River Lefkove said, “I’m choosing not to vote because neither of the presidential candidates align with my personal beliefs.” Lefkove is considering voting in future elections.

With Hillsborough Schools closed on election day, Tuesday, Nov. 5th, eligible voters were able to vote at one of five locations in Hillsborough between the hours of 6 am and 8 pm. Voters had the options of Hillsborough Municipal Building, Auten Road Intermediate School, Hillsborough High School, Hillsborough Middle School, or the Woods Road Firehouse depending on the district that they live in. Eligible voters unable to vote in person were able to submit their ballots between Oct. 6 and Nov. 3 at the Municipal Building.

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For business inquires: thevoicehhs@gmail.com



Students in period 10 AP Computer Science Principles place their phones in holders before class
Photo by Rithvik Hari

HHS’s new cell phone policy is a temporary solution at best

Editorial Board

HHS joins schools across the country with the adoption of a stricter cell phone policy— every classroom now features brand new cell phone holders (or jails if you ask some students) where every kid has a designated place to put their phone at the start of class. The new policy comes as a shock to returning high schoolers, but for many freshmen it is a continuation of the HMS’s out-of-sight, out-of-mind approach to technology. In the age of covert technology, cell phones are only the beginning of teachers’ problems. Apple watches, airpods, and all types of gadgets make their way into the classroom. It’s becoming obvious that students who welcome distractions in class will find a way out of their course work. Students that place higher value on their studies will continue

to use their class time wisely in class, even when tempted by their cell phones. Outlawing device usage for all students is not an effective measure. In a modern classroom, assignments are undoubtedly tech-oriented, so seizing cellular devices will not affect the rate of plagiarism in HHS. The policy prevents some students from cheating on assignments in class, but there are only so many assignments that can be overseen by staff. Cell phones can also be used as resources in many classes, with the use of applications such as cameras, timers, and access to academic resources currently blocked by school filtering software. Cell phones, while distracting, also offer a convenience not supplied by chromebooks or in-class tools. In preparing students for life after high school, the new policy

doesn’t address the need for self control in a student’s routine. The first thing a student does when a bell rings is head to their phone holders to check their notifications. Entry into college and the workforce doesn’t permit an individual to hand in their devices at the start of the day. High schoolers need to be able to build routines on their own, so they will be able to manage an everyday lifestyle in the future with a phone in hand. The problem isn’t eradicating cell phones, but integrating them into the lives of students. The attempt to control device usage is warranted. Walk through any hallway during passing time, you will find the majority of kids staring at their phones. But the new policy doesn’t solve this problem for incoming high schoolers — it just avoids it for the next four years.



Thank you to Hillsborough's Just Subs for sponsoring the HHS Publications Program!



Photo by Rithvik Hari
Varsity football players stand on the field during the pledge of allegiance

The Hillsborough Raiders finished their 2024 football season with an overall record of 7-4. The hope for this year was real, even if the final result went against expectations. After falling in the playoffs, 35-30 to Rancocas Valley, the Raiders can take pride in what they achieved this past fall. “I am very proud of the way the football team performed this season. This team overcame a tough start and finished very strong, winning every home game,” Coach Kevin Carty said. “We had awesome

leadership and had so many different players step up throughout the year. Jackson Jankowicz's record-setting season, which included ten playoff touchdowns, really propelled our offense to some huge late season wins” he said. The Raiders started the season with some ups and downs and then found their rhythm midyear. They then put together a run of five straight victories, showing what could be done with that team. The offenses, spearheaded by a strong running game, consistently moved

the ball up and down the field. The offensive line helped keep the ground game strong, and the defense stepped up when needed to keep opponents in check. These key factors helped the team gain momentum and secure a solid spot in the postseason. One of the bright spots of the season was senior running back Jackson Jankowicz, who had an unforgettable performance in the playoffs, running 256 yards against Rancocas Valley. Jankowicz's effort was one of the highs of the year as he showed leadership and skill. During the regular season, he was a motivating factor in the Raiders' offense and frequently took the burden onto his shoulders when needed.

Going into the playoffs against Rancocas Valley, the Raiders had a positive outlook and were ready to compete. The two teams battled it out, putting up big points on the board against each other. In the last minutes of the game, the Raiders needed just a few more plays. Although they lost, they continued to work to the end, and the fans stayed lively in their support. It was intense on the field and fiery in the stands, showing how hard the team worked throughout the game. The Raiders had much to be proud of this season. One was how dominant the running game could be at times. Another was the way the defense made big stops in their efforts to keep the team in contests. Of course, passing was sometimes

inconsistent, meaning the aerial attack will need to be tightened in the future for it to pose an even greater threat to opponents. The Hillsborough Raiders took a step forward in the 2024 season, finishing with a winning record, winning several key games, and earning a spot in the playoffs. With some adjustments-especially in the passing game-they should remain competitive for years to come. Carty already has a plan. “I hope that our strong junior class will be able to take advantage of their opportunity next year and have another exciting season. We will have to replace a lot of very good players, but we have some great candidates to do it,” he said.

Raiders Football Wraps Up Season with Winning Record

The Hillsborough Varsity Football Team excelled in their running game, making it to the playoffs and finishing the season 7-4.

By Sanjith Gnanajothi
Staff Writer

Boro students make their mark on and off the ballot this election season



Photo by Jasmaina Hameed

Senior running back and highlight of the Raiders' offense, Jackson Jankowicz, on the field.

From running as political candidates in local elections to advocating for legislative change, the youth of Hillsborough work to get their voices heard in local politics.

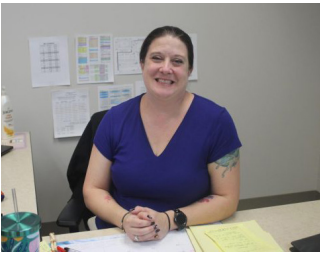
By Leanna Joju
Editor-in-Chief

As some students head to the polls, others have embarked on the campaign trail as NJ local election positions were up for grabs, a growing trend as a new generation vies for political office positions across the nation.

Most notably, Jannah Hameed, HHS Class of 2023 alum and candidate for Hillsborough Township's Board of Education (BOE) is an aspiring politician that wants you to know that she knows what she's doing. Hameed's campaign is backed by boro youth, from the high school students that canvas neighborhoods

to the alum that designed her perfectly-pink lawn signs placed all across town. But her campaign doesn't come without its challenges. "There are also people that assume that I can't handle the position, that I don't know what it entails," Hameed said. As a young muslim American woman, she says she has to be self aware of how she presents herself to voters. During her time as an HHS student, Hameed said she was inspired when learning about issues in the school system from teachers. As a student at Rutgers University, majoring in Communications and Environmental Studies, Hameed stresses the importance of gaining the perspective of a student of voting age, presenting her platform as easily accessible and transparent to voters. "It's already hard enough to find out information about Board of Education candidates, let's not make it more difficult than it has to be," Hameed said. "I think students don't realize how easy it can be to reach out to the BOE or come to a BOE meeting and talk about issues they are concerned about." Her campaign reflects a shift in the way younger voters digest political information, evident from her recognizable branding on Instagram to her "Balloons for BOE" meet and greets. Hameed acknowledges that a substantial number of students may

disregard local elections. "They're often shoved under the carpet," she said, in favor of national elections. "Take the risk," she said to potential future politicians, reminding students that she isn't that much older than them. "All it takes is determination, a firm handshake, and a consistent color scheme," Hameed said. "The best thing about running for office is seeing other people encouraged to run for office." Students also use this election season to speak out on issues important to them on a state level. Senior and HHS student BOE representative Sanjana Bhatta serves as an advocate for Vote16NJ, a push by NJ Democrats, including Governor Phil Murphy, to lower the voting age for school board elections to 16. Bhatta comments on the importance of political engagement in young voters. "The youth are often underrepresented in important decision-making processes, and thus need to speak up to get their opinions considered on a federal scale," she said. Hameed was not elected to the board of education, but she did win over 5,300 votes. The growth of student political participation in Hillsborough suggests an ambitious generation of potential voters to come in future elections.



Meet Christine McCabe, HHS's Newest Vice Principal

HHS welcomes Christine McCabe to their administration team for the 2024-2025 school year.

By Essence Kelly
Staff Writer

Christine McCabe joined the school's administration staff as the new vice principal. McCabe said she was inspired to become a VP once she stepped out of the classroom as an instructor and did a lot of one-on-one professional development with the teachers. McCabe transferred to Hillsborough from Bernards High School, where she taught for two years after moving to New Jersey from Arizona. There she taught science for 10 years at the high school level, including a variety of sciences like earth science, biology, and physical science. She taught on the Apache reservation in Arizona for one year.

McCabe had prior experience being an administrator in the Arizona school district where she was a principal. When she moved to New Jersey, she started to apply to different administrative positions around the area and ended up getting a job here at the high school.

McCabe grew up in Roxbury, New Jersey and graduated from Roxbury High School. She then went on to college at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, Arizona. McCabe earned a bachelor's degree in Geology and then moved on to the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. At the University of Nevada, she got her master's in education degree for curriculum and instruction. After working in Arizona as an instructional coach, she went back to school and got another master's degree in education for educational leadership.

McCabe describes Hillsborough staff and students as amazing and super friendly, she said it was a challenge for her to adapt to her new environment because the schools in Arizona were run differently than they are at HHS. She also said, "Arizona schools were smaller compared to HHS. It was tough having almost 2400 students the first couple of days." She said her main goal as a vice principal this year is to get to know the students and staff and build long lasting relationships.

Principal DiLollo and Vice principal, Christine Cilio both state that Ms. McCabe has been a great addition to the team so far. "I'm super excited to have a female administrator," Cilio said.

Since she said she missed the Jersey Shore during her time in Arizona, McCabe said she enjoys going to the beach with her 12-year-old son. Her other hobbies include riding horses, hiking, and anything outdoors. McCabe enjoys being out and about with her son and spending quality time with him.

Spotlight: Aimee Thomson

HHS's College and Career Counselor sits down with The Voice to discuss her biggest tips for applying to college

By Ava Clarke
Business Manager

After attending Rutgers-New Brunswick from out of state pursuing a management degree, Mrs. Aimee Thomson went on to work at a consulting company until Thomson began to feel unfulfilled in her position. "I don't want to make money for the man for something I don't really care about. I don't want to do this forever," Thomson said of her feelings at the time. So, for Thomson, it was back to the drawing board. She left her job and was unemployed for a couple months, while trying to find something new. Channeling some of her experience working in the information referral office at Rutgers, Thomson got a job working as an admissions counselor at Rider University, while simultaneously getting her masters in school counseling. Now, Thomson is in her eighth year at Hillsborough High School, and she loves it. She truly feels she has found her calling. "This position is really great because it has the things I liked about working in admissions, helping kids figure out their future and change the course of their future, and the things I liked about school counseling." Thomson, the college and career counselor as well as the lead school counselor at Hillsborough High School, is familiar with the overwhelming and indecisive feelings students are experiencing while deciding what to do with their lives. With her ample experience in

mind, Thomson said she is here to help seniors at Hillsborough High School figure out what steps they can take right now to set them up for success and fulfillment. Thomson said she encourages the students she meets with to take the time to self reflect on who they are as a person and a student. She has found that one of the biggest roadblocks in the college journey is the outside influences that can put harmful expectations on students to make a decision that isn't right for them, like going to a school just because it's a big name. Thomson believes there are no bad schools, just bad-fit schools. This is where that personal inventory comes in, Thomson recommends considering size, distance from home, and competitiveness. She recommends students ask themselves, "Is that a place where you are going to be able to truly flourish?" Thomson's philosophy is that just because a school has all of the "things" -like your sport, your major, and notoriety- doesn't mean it will make you happy. "The prize isn't getting in," she said. According to Thomson, this way of thought is detrimental, and it's the reason so many kids don't stay at the school they start at. Some students might not even belong in college, so it's important for them to know what they want to do and not make a decision based on the expectations of others. "You know what you're gonna take. The same thing you are taking now, except now you are paying for it," she said. Speaking of outside



Photo by Ava Clarke
Mrs. Thomson in her office with her myriad of college pennants.

misinformation and influence, lots of students feel they have to apply to over 20 schools in order to be successful, but Thomson has had countless students only apply to a couple schools. It's all about who you are personally, said Thomson, and what your situation is, especially financially. This year, the FAFSA form is available December 1st, 2024. Along with federal aid, Thomson said students should be cognisant of the amount of state aid, and need- or merit-based aid. Finances are an important part of making a college decision. In Thomson's experience, out-of-state schools are way less likely to give comparable amounts of aid to students from other states. This is because these schools are responsible for the students of their state and are less concerned with students from out of state. New Jersey would be a great decision for families with a net income that is under \$65,000, because of

programs like the Garden State and Scarlett Guarantee (available at Rutgers only). As far as private scholarships, Thomson recommends waiting until later to find more specialized scholarships to apply to, since most of the scholarships in early fall are more broad in their scope of eligible applicants. Thomson encourages students to make smart decisions and not allow outside influence to cause students to make detrimental decisions like unpayable loans. "I will never say it's worth it to take \$40,000 dollars a year in loans in your undergrad," she said. Thomson had one final message for the seniors of Hillsborough High School: Don't be shy to email her and set up a meeting. "Every year I really look forward to getting to know that year's group of students," she said. Thomsons added, "It's such an exciting time and I want them to be able to take that time to make great decisions for themselves."

Project Graduation

Patriots Concession Schedule



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The cast of "Radium Girls" takes a final bow.



The Radium Girls (left to right: Lily Duaa-Ebner, Elsie Kirwan, Corinne Kramer) assemble around Grace Fryer (Julia Sauers). **Photos by Bryan Rodriguez**



Arthur Roeder (Brandon Javier) joins Grace Fryer (Julia Sauers) onstage in a moving portrayal of grief and guilt.

HHS Theatre’s Fall Play Shines Bright

By Afreen Sultan
A&E Editor

Lights dim. Audience members settle down. Actors take their places on stage. There is pin drop silence. Then, finally, lights-camera-action. HHS Theatre’s most recent production—“Radium Girls”—was performed in the Hillsborough High School auditorium on November 15 and November 16 by the theatre cast and crew to share the heartbreaking, true story of factory girls who suffered radium poisoning from painting clock dials. “Radium Girls” is based on the lives of girls living in NJ during the years of 1918-1928 working in factories producing military clocks. The girls were told to use their lips to shape the brushes that apply toxic, radium based paint. The main character, Grace Fryer (played by Julia Sauers) first watches the effects overtake the lives of her friends before gradually experiencing them herself. While Grace and other factory workers visibly and painfully began to battle bone fractures,

necrosis, and other symptoms the company denies all responsibility. However, the architects behind the radium industry soon learn to never underestimate the power of a determined voice. From the minute the lights first began to dim to the moment they re-lit and the crowd erupted in applause, the entire audience was captivated by the plot, and more importantly, the performance of “Radium Girls” (excluding the short intermission). The entire play was conducted flawlessly around a single platform, used as the set design, and two-four tables, eight black chairs, and other small items, used as props. For more than two hours the entire ensemble worked together to immerse everyone in attendance into the significance of the themes portrayed through this story. Every detail from the dialogue to the costume design and even the lightning design—that perfectly illuminated not only the characters but also their emotions and actions—worked to amplify

the play’s fourth wall. It truly felt as though the auditorium often became a place in which two time periods were co-existing. Arthur Roeder (Brandon Javier) joins Grace Fryer (Julia Sauers) onstage in a moving portrayal of grief and guilt. (Bryan Rodriguez) A special mention is necessary for leading actors, Julia Sauers and Brandon Javier, who played Grace Fryers and Arthur Roeder. Both impeccably communicated their roles and immersed the entire audience into their characters. Especially in the scenes in which they portrayed strong and prominent emotions, with notable assistance of the sound and light design, they kept the crowd at the edge of their seats with the anticipation of the play's upcoming events. To many a “happy ending” would have been ideal, but it is important to note that this story is more of an emotional appeal. Those unwilling to be seen shedding a couple tears during the play’s final acts, might want to bring a blanket,

hoodie, or friend to hide among. The director excellently used a true and heartbreaking story to remind its viewers of the dangers of corporate deceit and manipulation. As someone who has never seen an HHS theatre production in the past, it is safe to say that I was more than pleasantly surprised. Even parents in the audience, who have probably attended dozens of plays in the past, were beyond impressed with “Radium Girls.” When Alison Whitman, an attendee, was asked what she thought of this play overall she said, “It was excellent. They are all very talented.” Another attendee Aleezah Khan said, “It was very entertaining. There were some parts that were scary and intense, but, overall, it was very good.” If after reading this you're upset that you missed out on “Radium Girls,” which was the new director Christian Confalone’s first production, make sure to stay vigilant for when tickets go on sale for HHS Theatre’s Winter Musical, “Pippin.”

Spotify Wrapped At HHS

By Isabella Blanco and Lara Reilly
Staff Writers

With countless different genres, millions of listeners, and artists, another musical year has now come to an end as the well awaited Spotify Wrapped officially arrived once again on Wednesday, December 4th, 2024. Spotify Wrapped gives listeners an annual recap based on music or podcasts that they have streamed. Spotify allows users to see their top artists, top songs, and how their taste in music varied over the course of a year. The annual feature of Spotify Wrapped has become a tradition that sparks conversations in the hallways and classrooms of HHS yearly. To commemorate the 2024 Wrapped, we polled HHS students to find out their top artists and listening habits. This year, the students of HHS have been quick to share their Wrapped on many social media platforms and with friends and peers, as most of the students at HHS utilize Spotify as their favorite streaming app, according to HHS students polled. All of the attention to the Wrapped has created a snapshot of the school’s diverse music taste as a whole. Collectively, most of the students of HHS participated in listening to mostly hip hop, rap, pop, and rock music in the past year, while a fewer number of individuals also enjoyed some country, indie, and bollywood tunes. Many students had different top artists with similar overall genre interests, however some of the more popularly listened to artists among the students of HHS include Taylor Swift, Travis Scott, Drake, Frank Ocean, SZA, Tyler, The Creator, Chappell Roan, Kendrick Lamar, Don Toliver, Charli XCX, and Lana Del Rey. Students at HHS also had a huge number of different top songs, however according to our poll, many students have the following songs in their top five: 505 by Arctic Monkeys, Red Wine Supernova by Chappel Roan, and Suburban Legends by Taylor Swift. Focusing more on the quantity of music that HHS listened to this year, on average, each student at HHS listened to about 46,726 minutes of music. However, outlying students in HHS exceeded that average substantially, listening to a far greater number of minutes. In addition, on average each student at HHS listened to about 662 artists over the course of this past year. HHS Students feel that music is important to individuals, community, and life overall. Sophomore Adam Khashab said, “Music gets you through the tough nights when nobody’s around”, and freshman Lilly Bandi said that “Music can express things that our language cannot”. As the year winds down, Spotify Wrapped offers an exciting way for students to reflect and connect on their year through music. Music is not only for fun and entertainment purposes, but also provides serious connections in communities. Music, a universal form of expression, has the ability to bring people together and in HHS, Wrapped provides a perfect reason to chat with others and discuss music experiences, and to discover new artists and songs. No matter what peoples’ music tastes may be or how many minutes of music each person listened to that year, one thing is clear from our data: music plays a big role in bringing the students of HHS together.



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By Ava Clarke
Business Manager

Musical and movie fans alike have been racing to theatres to catch this highly anticipated adaptation of the timeless “Wicked.” After two long years of filming, the brand new movie interpretation of the Broadway show, Wicked: Part 1 launched in theatres November 22, 2024. The story goes like this: After the death of the Wicked Witch of the West, Elphaba Thropp, Glinda Upland reminisces with the people of Oz on her friendship with the fallen witch. On a journey of mastery over her emotions and sorcery, Elphaba learns lessons pertaining to friendship, integrity,

The Wildly Popular Wicked Movie; is it worth the hype?

and discernment. This was the best movie rendition of a musical I have ever seen. Other recent stage-to-screen productions were lackluster, like the recent “Mean Girls” (2024) which I hibernated though in theaters. Even musical remakes with beloved actors weren’t safe. “Wonka” (2023) with Timothee Chalamet was a huge disappointment as well. These failed movies had two pitfalls—they did not market themselves as musicals, leaving moviegoers confused (and annoyed) when actors burst into song in the middle of a scene. Second, directors and actors did not make any interesting choices that set the movie apart from just a remake of the same story fans have seen over and over again. “Wicked,” delivers a fresh take. One of my favorite parts of “Wicked,” were the choices that the director and actors made that deviated from the Broadway show. Cynthia Erivo’s soulful voice made for a hair-raising delivery of the iconic runs in “The Wizard and I” and the “Defying Gravity” battle cry. The best deviation from the play was by Erivo in the Ozdust ballroom scene. In the musical, when Elphaba walks into the party with the hat on that Glinda gave her, she expects to be laughed

at and taunted. In the movie Cynthia Erivo portrays Elphaba as a shunned person expecting to finally receive the inclusion she has craved her entire life. This deflation is what moves Glinda to dance with Elphaba. Erivo’s choice added more meaning to the lyrics in Defying Gravity: “Too long I’ve been afraid of/ Losing love, I guess I’ve lost/ Well, if that’s love, it comes at much too high a cost.” This created a full circle moment in the plot, the shift between Elphaba’s attitude toward acceptance at the Ozdust ball versus in the Emerald City by the end of the movie is even more polarizing and adds so much to the meaning of Elphaba as a dynamic character. The moment where Ariana Grande as Glinda wipes Elphaba’s tears as they dance was the first of many tear jerking moments throughout the film, and one of my favorite parts. I had chills during “Defying Gravity.” The pauses in the song forced viewers to hold space for the lyrics, and developed the scene as well as characters so well, revealing so many complex movies and . The set design of the thundering sky and the lights in the emerald tower flickering then bursting all added to the intensity of the scene. This scene was the epitome of all of the aspects

of a production working in tandem to create a moving scene. Ariana Grande’s performance was also stunning. I had no doubt in her ability to sing the songs given her past experience on Broadway in the musical “13” (2008). Contrary to what I expected, she also brought the bubbly humor needed to Glinda’s character, while still portraying her as a dynamic person with unique hopes and motives. I’m a musical enthusiast, but one place movies trump plays is in their ability to really develop a setting and background. On a stage, a lot of the background is left up to the imagination, with one set encompassing a myriad of different scenes and destinations. It is obvious that the set designers took their time building Shiz, the Emerald City, and Munchkin land. It was so satisfying to get to actually see these places and not have to imagine them. I — surprisingly — have no bad things to say about this movie. It was a theatre kid’s dream. I actually had to go see it a second time. I am beyond excited to see the second movie installment, projected to come out in November of 2025. Based on the overwhelming success of “Wicked: Part 1,” the potential of “Wicked: For Good” is unlimited.



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Raiders Hit the Ice

By Alexis Varneckas and Jaslyn Londono

Last season, Boro hockey ended the season with a 18-7 overall record and 4-2 in the Skyland division. Head coach, Matt Janos, led the boys to many successful victories, hoping for many more to come in this upcoming season.

Friday night hockey showcases school spirit for many fans. “I’m really excited to see all the teamwork and skills on display. Hockey is a thrilling sport, and I enjoy interacting with the rest of the fans,” senior Isabella Caramico said.

The Raiders also took on Watchung Hills at the much-anticipated, annual Teddy bear toss game where fans toss stuffed animals on the ice that are donated to charity.

This season, the team has implemented several practices and strategies to prepare players to match last year’s success. “I prepared for this season by staying active and working on my skills,” Ansh Angrwal, a junior, said.

Both head Coach, Matt Janos, and assistant Coach Noah Anatoff, get the team ready by watching videos. “When preparing film on opponents for our scouting purposes, I first figure out what systems the other team is running and highlight this to the team. Then, I’ll go over our gameplan to exploit those areas on the ice that will be vulnerable. When looking at our team’s performance on film, I like to highlight not only where we were out of position or the breakdowns in our game, but also like to show them the things they did correctly. More positive reinforcement will hopefully lead to executing at a high level, when the games become more important,” Janos said.

The Raider players agreed with their coach. “This season we will make changes into our game based on the other team’s gameplan. Giving us the step ahead,” senior Jeremy Wachnachter said.

Janos also shared how motivation affects them when going onto the ice and getting ready for the anticipation of puck drop. “Myself and our assistant coach Noah are not too big on the yelling or rah rah approach,” Janos said. “We take each game and opponent as an opportunity, and present a path to success to the lineup. My goal is to make sure the team is loose, the music in the locker room is playing loudly, and that we are focused and ready to execute our gameplan from the moment we hit the ice,” he said.

The players are most looking forward to the matchup against Pingry, a game the team is putting a lot of time and effort into playing to their full potential. “Pingry, December 20th,” Wachnachter said, showing that this game is the one he is waiting for.

Students support the team in other ways. Junior Bailee Wolfe who records statistics for the team spoke of her family as why she decided to join the statistics group. “My brother played hockey my whole life, which meant I grew up in the rink. My family also loved it, so I was always surrounded by it. Watching my brother play high school hockey growing up was always so much fun, and it made me want to be a part of it myself. Which is why once I got to high school, I decided to join hockey stats,” Wolfe said.



Photo by Paul Chen
Varsity soccer players move quickly to take control of the game

Varsity Girls Soccer comes to an end: A season recap

By Lara Reilly
Staff Writer

As the weather got colder and the first marking period came to an end, the soccer season wrapped up. Girls varsity soccer has officially finished their season. Ending with a 12-5-2 record, Coach Lennaert Bitter has had the goal of building the team skills and team bonds. Lennaert said his goals are “making sure the girls develop their game and enjoy playing soccer.”

Coach Bitter has been coaching for almost thirty years. Though he started in the Netherlands, he has spent most of his coaching career in the US. Bitter was not

disappointed in this year’s team. “The girls really surprised me. After a great last year, we lost a lot of seniors. But the team had the best season in the last 15 years or longer,” he said.

To the players, soccer has been a force in many people’s lives. “It’s a great stress reliever,” senior veteran Sydney Krempasky said. Playing since she was four and also playing at Players Development Academy (PDA), Krempasky has been an essential part of the team.

Playing soccer at only four years old, Krempasky shared her thoughts on the season. “I love being a part of the team

because they are all family to me, and we always have an amazing time,” she said.

The team usually practiced every weekend, either at the High School, or at Iron Peak, on the report of Bitter.

Fresh faces on the team have also had an impact on the team’s performance. Freshman Taelyn Fedo had her first year of high school sports as a varsity athlete playing as center mid. “This season showed serious promise in results. The girls and coaches are beyond amazing. We truly are a lifelong family, and I will forever be extremely grateful I got this opportunity to join this family as a freshman,” Fedo said.

HHS Girls Volleyball celebrates seniors



Photo by Patrycja Skoczylas
Senior outside hitter Neha Tolpadi warms up before the big game against West Windsor-Plainsboro South.

By Bella Muriuki and Patrycja Skoczylas

The varsity girls volleyball team celebrated their seniors at the October 15 game with packed stands decorated with vibrant ribbons and balloons. This annual event had attendance from Friends, family, and superfans holding posters for each senior player with pictures of their past memories in the sport. As part of the annual senior night traditions, seniors walked out with their parents as the crowds cheered. The night is designed to recognize

their determination and hard work towards the program, honoring their last time playing together as a team before they go off to college.

“It’s very sad to know that this is the last year playing with my team,” Neha Tolpadi, a senior and the outside hitter, said. “I’ve loved getting to know everyone and creating long-lasting memories. I’m really going to miss all my teammates. But, I know the underclassmen will keep working hard to make our program better and better.”

The team won the game 2 to 0 against West Windsor-Plainsboro South, ending the season with a 7-11 record.

Coach Cheryl Iaione summed up the season. “After a slow start to begin the season the team has been on a mission and continues to get better every day,” she said. Iaione said she also wanted to remember Aileen Xue, a student who was unable to play this year due to injury. “We all love Aileen and pray for her to make a full recovery and return to the volleyball court again,” Iaione said.

Hillsborough dominates Westfield during their homecoming game

Despite a tied score during halftime, the Raiders capture a big victory, overcoming the competition.

By Alexis Varneckas
Sports Editor

Friday Night Lights represent a big part of the Fall sports season for Raiders. Boro Superfans pack the stands to cheer on their home team, closely clustered together dressed in the black Hoco shirts, prepared to root for the hometeam. Amid the support of their fans, the Hillsborough High School Varsity Football team secured a win vs The Westfield Blue Devils during their Homecoming game on October 7.

Along with the rest of the student section, the Raiders Cheer team amped up the team by hyping the crowd with chants like Y-E-L-L and others. Senior Nayana Downing said, “Homecoming was different from other games because the crowd makes it more hype and enjoyable.”

As the first period clock began to tick away, the boys gave it their all to score a Touchdown with strong plays by the defense and offense. Senior Garret Meyer and Junior Anthony Guerrero made successful runs and passes, but the score remained 0-0 as the first period wrapped up.

As the second quarter began, Senior Roberto Santiago received a 36-yard pass from Jackson Jankowicz off the Andrew Advani kick. Westfield got the ball back, quickly responding with a touchdown, making the score 7-7.

Senior Nate Drab said, “I was worried, knowing its tied is never a good feeling, and meant we needed to not just make changes, but to step it up in every way possible.”

The third period came quick, but so did the Raiders, when Santiago received a 23-yard pass, making the score 13-7, putting Boro in the lead. The outcome of the Homecoming game was a concern for the team..

“The coach’s ideas on how to stop the other team lead us to victory,” Drab said.

Coach Waiter said that the season is progressing well. “Both offensively and defensively we have had some well-executed game plans. The team has had a nice balance and has played for each other. Having individuals that are willing to sacrifice the glory, so a teammate can make a big play always leads to success. We have a bunch of unselfish players that are a ton of fun to coach,” Wiater said.

As the last period approached, the Raiders hoped to hold onto their lead. Senior Chimmy Ozokopor received a 4-yard line pass from Ryan Seamon, increasing Hillsborough’s lead for a score of 19-7. The crowd grew louder with fans anticipating the action.

“The best part is starting the chants and having a crowd,” Senior Veronica Stefanczuk said.

Westfield got the ball, receiving a 17-yard pass, and scoring a second touchdown, making the scoreboard 19-13 Hillsborough. Minutes shortly ran out, and Hillsborough pulled through with a win. Players celebrated, fans cheered, and the 2025 seniors shared their excitement for the win. Drab said, winning his last Homecoming game was, “Unforgettable, it was such a great experience.”

The game ended with a 19-13 victory for Hillsborough.