



TROJAN TODAY

YOUR SCHOOL TOWN OF HIGHLAND SOURCE FOR NEWS AND EVENTS | NOVEMBER 2020

2019-nCoV
coronavirus

SCHOOL TOWN OF HIGHLAND SPECIAL REPORT

Please, help our students stay virus-free!

One month back in the classroom and I am happy to report, for the most part, things are going well.

Students who fell behind during virtual learning are getting up to speed now that they are back in the classroom. Our students are getting used to wearing masks and we schedule breaks throughout the day to make that all a little easier.

Where we are having some issues has nothing to do with school and everything to do with students, families and the community at-large. Too many folks are ignoring the guidelines and attending large parties and other outings, which put everyone – including our students – at risk.

We need your help. While our everyday world is consumed with trying to prevent the spread of the virus throughout our classrooms and schools, we can't control what happens outside of school – but you can. One student who tests positive can mean 40 others who are forced to quarantine at home for two weeks, which disrupts the routine we are working so hard to re-instill.

The Highland School Board and administration are giving parents, who believe their children would be safer learning at home during the pandemic, the option of



TREE-MENDOUS WORK! Come spring, the green space just south of Duluth Street at Johnston Elementary will come alive with new growth thanks to the efforts of the fifth-grade class, Student Conservation Association, Communitree organization and Krooswyk Materials. The students spent the waning days of the planting season, digging holes and lovingly planting 11 new trees. Next up are plans for trees at Warren and Merkley elementary schools. Fifth-graders Lily, Kyle, Lela and Leo said it was most definitely a team effort. "I liked being part of the tree planting," Lily said. "It was fun, but it was even more important because it will help the environment." In just three years, the Communitree organization has planted and is caring for more than 5,000 trees in Northwest Indiana. "It was a great project," Johnston Elementary Principal Amy Harrington said. "Our fifth-graders were so proud of the work they did!" [Photos provided]

leaving the classroom for a virtual experience. The one caveat: once a student leaves the classroom, they may not return until the new semester begins.

Please, during the upcoming holidays and throughout the winter,

please wear masks. Be particularly mindful of handwashing. You can help our kids stay virus-free.



Brian Smith
Superintendent
School Town of Highland

COVID-19 DASHBOARD

The School Town has created a dashboard that documents the number of COVID-19 cases among staff and students along with those who have not tested positive, but have been asked to quarantine because of exposure to someone who has the virus.

Ryan Erdelac, director of human resources, spearheaded the initiative designed to provide detailed facts for the community and dispel rumors. The dashboard – provided as a link at highland.k12.in.us – will be updated on Fridays with the number of staff and students who have tested positive in the prior seven days as well as those who are quarantining out of an abundance of caution.

“Our hope is that the dashboard will be a mechanism for transparency,” he said. “There is a perception that everyone out of school is a positive case, which isn’t the reality.”

WINTER SPORTS UPDATE

Athletic Director Ryan Harrington breathed a sigh of relief when fall sports concluded relatively unscathed by the pandemic. After taking lessons from football and cross country and modifying safety protocols for wrestling, basketball and swimming, Harrington and his winter sports coaches are moving forward with the winter lineup, particularly for the contact-intensive sport of wrestling.

“We’re alternating matches between two mats to allow for additional cleaning,” he said. “Right now, we are not registering a lot of positive cases and that’s giving us hope we can continue to keep our athletes safe while they participate in the sports they love.”

CROSS-COUNTRY WIN

Congratulations to Lucas Guerra, the HHS senior who ran away from the field with the cross-country title at the New Prairie semi-state meet. Following a run for the state championship and the conclusion of his senior-year studies, Guerra will be heading to Georgetown on a cross-country scholarship.

REMEDICATION GRANT

A state grant and a cadre of high school volunteers are helping students regain skills to reach their academic potential.

Dr. Sherri Mitchell, assistant superintendent of academics and student services, was successful in tapping into the program, which is intended to eliminate the COVID-19 learning gap for elementary students and provide service learning opportunities for high schoolers.

High School Teacher Brenda Richardson is spearheading the program, which began the last week of October and continues through the third week of May.

“We are excited to get this going,” Richardson said. “Our 18 student volunteers will provide tutoring assistance after school two days a week under the supervision of our elementary school teachers and principals.”

VIRTUAL TRIVIA NIGHT

Highland Education Foundation’s virtual Trivia Night raised \$2,800 that will be awarded to teachers for in-class projects later this school year. In all, Foundation President Judi Caddick said the group intends to provide \$10,000 in funding for education-enhancing projects in 2020-2021.

“This is an annual event we look forward to all year. It was disappointing when we had to cancel in April,” Caddick said. “As soon as we put Trivia Night on pause due to the pandemic, we began looking for other options. What we came up with was this virtual version that brought all participants into each other’s homes – virtually.”

Gap Straddlers led by Middle School Media Center Specialist Barbie Beanblossom bested 12 other teams to take home the win.

“An unexpected bonus of the virtual Trivia Night was having children participate in what has been an adults-only evening,” she said. “A huge thank you to our event sponsors – Strack and Van Til, Rite Way Auto and Regional Federal Credit Union. We couldn’t have done it without them.”