



# TROJAN TODAY

YOUR SCHOOL TOWN OF HIGHLAND SOURCE FOR NEWS AND EVENTS | OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 2022



## Choir, orchestra, band students to get hands-on Disney experience at performing arts workshops

After a four-year hiatus, members of a trio of Highland High performing ensembles – choir, band and orchestra – will be spending their fall break with Mickey and the gang in Florida.

For the first time, the more than 100 students and adult chaperones will fly to Orlando.

Instead of performing at a Disney venue, students will participate as part of Disney's Educational Performing Arts Workshops at Imagination Campus.

"Our department feels strongly about these overnight field trips, particularly with the experiences

that Disney offers beyond just the 'fun' potential," said David Markley, Department Chair for Fine and Performing Arts at Highland High.

"Overnight trips enrich the curriculum, strengthen observation skills and help students develop new and lasting skills within their particular ensembles.

"I have personally seen the emotional and social growth of students on these trips," he said.

"Students express themselves in new ways and develop new interactions that would have otherwise gone unfulfilled."

## New directors of transportation, food services join the Trojan family

Superintendent Brian Smith is pleased to introduce two key new leaders.

"We expect great things from Dominic Nieblas, who will be heading the Transportation Department and Britni Luster, who has taken the reins at Food Services. Both of these individuals have already proven themselves assets to the district."

### MEET DOMINIC NIEBLAS



After six years keeping Highland's buses in top-running condition, Transportation Director Dominic Nieblas is learning the ropes of how to best deploy the fleet and help students arrive at school safely – and on time.

"I've been training with Norbert Schlessler to learn the fine-points of the district's transportation system," Nieblas said. "Highland parents should not expect big changes when Norb retires later this year. The system is working well."

### MEET BRITNI LUSTER



With a love for nutrition that began in college, Britni Luster has worked her way up to becoming the Food Service Director for the School Town of Highland.

"As the mom of an autistic son and a year-old toddler, I see firsthand how food impacts their day," Luster said. "A child's education is directly impacted by what they eat. Our challenge is to provide healthy, appealing options to make every day a good day to learn."

## ADMINISTRATION

**Brian Smith**

Superintendent  
bsmith@highland.k12.in.us

**Ryan Erdelac**

Asst. Superintendent  
rerdelac@highland.k12.in.us

**Cindy Adams**

Chief Financial Officer  
cadams@highland.k12.in.us

**Britni Luster**

Food Service Administrator  
bluster@highland.k12.in.us

**Andrea Warner**

District Nurse Coordinator  
awarner@highland.k12.in.us

**Kris Besch**

Special Education Director  
kbesch@highland.k12.in.us

**Mike Sukta**

Facilities Manager  
msukta@highland.k12.in.us

**Dominic Nieblas**

Transportation Director  
dnieblas@highland.k12.in.us

**John Zack**

Highland High School Principal  
jzack@highland.k12.in.us

**Justin Fronek**

Highland Middle School Principal  
jfronek@highland.k12.in.us

**Amy Harrington**

Johnston Elementary Principal  
aharrington@highland.k12.in.us

**Eric McMahan**

Merkley Elementary Principal  
emcmahan@highland.k12.in.us

**Kevin Beveridge**

Southing Elementary Principal  
kbeverid@highland.k12.in.us

**Christina Davis**

Warren Elementary Principal  
cdavis@highland.k12.in.us

## SCHOOL BOARD

**Robert Kuva**, President**Victor A. Garcia**, Vice President**Patrick Krull**, Secretary**Luanne Jurczak**, member**Allencia Ballard**, member

The school board meets the third Tuesday of the month at 6 p.m. in the Administration Building, 9145 Kennedy Avenue, Highland.

**INFO:** Visit [highland.k12.in.us](http://highland.k12.in.us) for the latest information, including meeting agendas, school policies, board mission, beliefs and values.



## Drivers must come to full stop before approaching school bus or face traffic tickets, stiff penalties

As the days get shorter and temperatures drop, Transportation Manager Dominic Nieblas is asking all motorists to be especially cautious when it comes to students on their way to and from school.

“It takes the entire community to keep our students safe,” Nieblas said. “We ask everyone to take their time when they are traveling, particularly during the hours when children are arriving or leaving school.”

All Highland yellow school buses are equipped with front and rear alternating flashing RED signal lamps. A person operating a vehicle shall, except when approaching from the opposite direction on

a divided highway, bring his/her vehicle to a full stop before reaching a school bus and shall not proceed until the warning lights are deactivated.

Inclement weather can happen at any moment especially in Northwest Indiana. Leave a little bit earlier and travel with caution to arrive at your destination in plenty of time. Thank you for your help and effort to make this school year a great one.

**INFO:** If you have questions or would like to report a problem, call the Transportation Department at (219) 924-4730.

## LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

*“Join me in wishing two of our administrators well ... their contributions have made us Trojan Strong!”*

**ON THE MOVE ...**

Two invaluable members of your School Town of Highland administrative team have moved on to other endeavors.

As head of transportation, Norbert Schlessler took his responsibilities to keep every child safe to heart. He revamped bus routes, ensured buses were kept in top working order and was the first in the building on days when inclement weather made safety getting to and from school a challenge.

As Food Service Director, Lisa Hayes was a force before, during and after the pandemic. She organized tens of thousands of meals that were prepped on site and dispersed from key locations around town. She guaranteed that no child would go hungry on her watch and she delivered.

We can never thank Norb and Lisa enough for all they did for Highland students.

**IN THE GROOVE ...**

A year after we returned to the classroom, our students have regained their equilibrium, thanks to the partnership between our parents and educators.

They are enjoying school again and working within the structure schools provide. It bodes well for our students' ability to put the pandemic behind them as they continue making strides in excellence.

Parents, please give yourselves a well-deserved pat on the back. You have been invaluable in making this all-important transition easier for your children and the School Town of Highland.



**Brian Smith**  
Superintendent  
School Town of Highland



## HIGHLAND EDUCATION FOUNDATION GRANTS



“My kids loved this project and learned so much they will be managing the ‘Worm Friends’ composting this year,” Special Ed Teacher Julie Whitney (pictured middle right) said. “Our plan is to give some of our worms to the Fishing Club at Johnston Elementary School in the spring. I am grateful to the Highland Education Foundation for providing the grant that made this all possible.”

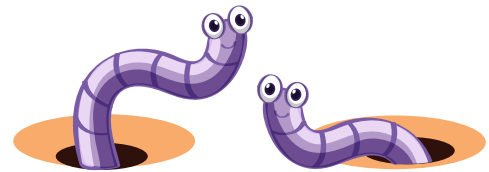
## Worms wiggle their way into students hearts – and pockets

When Special Education Teacher Julie Whitney brought the makings of a composting bin to Southridge Elementary in February, students weren’t quite sure what to make of it.

Whitney, who teaches students with autism in grades K-5, said it didn’t take long before they embraced worms in the classroom as they learned the vital role wigglers play in converting vegetable and fruit leftovers, even newspaper into nutrient-rich soil.

Along the way, they collected food scraps from the school cafeteria, learning by trial and error that worms love bananas, but shun citrus and tomatoes. They munch leafy greens, but turn away protein and dairy.

“We started with a few worms,” she said. “By May, we had thousands. Students planted flowers in the dirt their worms created. This was a hands-on science project my students embraced and they weren’t alone. Students we presented the project to – even the ones who thought worms were icky – were so enamored we had to retrieve several worms from their pockets as they were leaving.”



### FUNDING INNOVATIVE GRANTS

From wiggly works and drones to alternative seating and a sensory room, the Highland Education Foundation funds innovative educational grants to teachers to enhance learning and achievement.

This year’s application deadline closed Sept. 30. The 2022 award recipients will be announced October 14 and featured in a future edition of Trojan Today.

Learn more at [highlandef.org](http://highlandef.org).

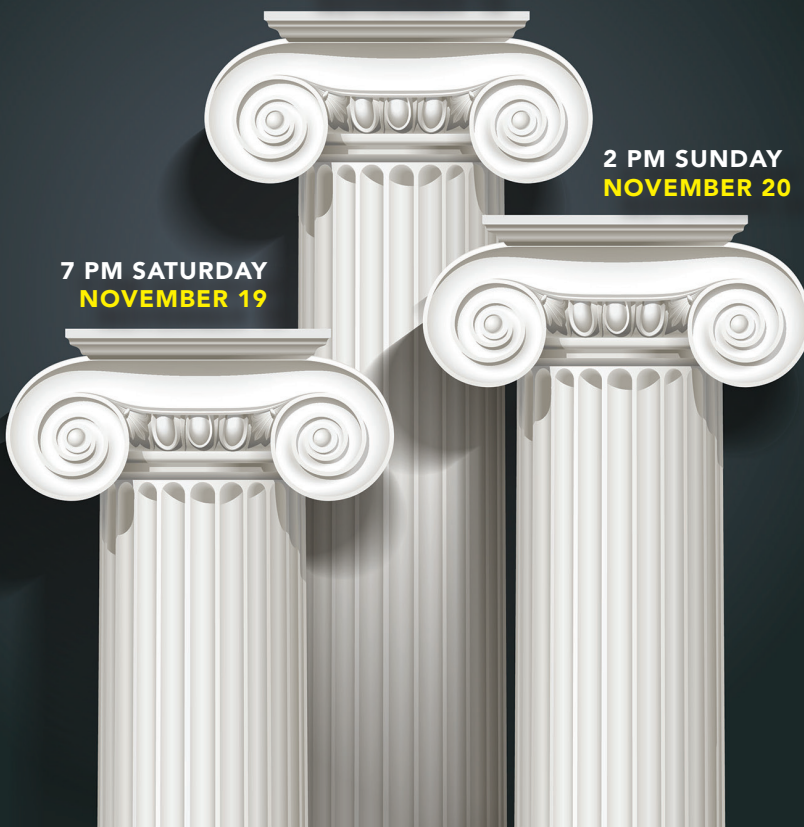
HIGHLAND THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS ...

# A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE FORUM

7 PM FRIDAY  
NOVEMBER 18

2 PM SUNDAY  
NOVEMBER 20

7 PM SATURDAY  
NOVEMBER 19



[www.HIGHLANDTHEATRECOMPANY.ORG](http://www.HIGHLANDTHEATRECOMPANY.ORG)

FOR MORE INFORMATION & TICKETS

## FALL CRAFTER & VENDOR FAIR

Support the Highland Band Boosters at their annual Fall Crafter & Vendor Fair. The event features handmade jewelry, purses, blankets, tumblers, books, crystals, home decor, beauty products and so much more! Raffles, a bake sale and food truck vendor will also be onsite.

**WHEN:** 9 a.m.-3 p.m. **NOVEMBER 12** and 11 a.m.-3 p.m. **NOVEMBER 13**

**WHERE:** Highland Middle School, 2941 41st St.

### CRAFTERS & VENDORS:

Text (708) 935-7827 if you are interested in participating.

## HONOR AN EDUCATOR

Make a contribution to the Highland Education Foundation – and an individual of your choice – will be honored with a special card with your name as well as an apple pin. The Honor an Educator program is held in conjunction with American Education Week **NOVEMBER 14-18**. Minimum donation is \$11 per honoree and forms must be received no later than **NOVEMBER 4**.

**INFO:** Forms are available at [highlandef.org/fundraising](http://highlandef.org/fundraising).

## RAISE SOME DOUGH

Bring in a flyer or order online from MOD Pizza on **NOVEMBER 30** and the Highland restaurant – 10441B Indianapolis – will donate 20 percent to the Highland Education Foundation. Use fundraiser code: MODF11982.

## TRIVIA NIGHT FUNDRAISER

Save the date and join us **FEBRUARY 25** for a night of trivia, food and fun at Lincoln Center! All proceeds fund grants to support teachers and students.