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Dear Residents

The red-winged blackbirds have returned and the first flowers are beginning to bloom. March 20 will mark the first day of spring! Sunshine, warmer temperatures, and renewed growth inspire us to spend more time outdoors. In Hinckley, Granger, and Sharon Townships, that might mean working in the yard, playing spring sports, visiting or volunteering in one of our beautiful parks, or attending one of the many events featured in this March issue of *Hinckley, Granger, and Sharon Living*.

This spring, I challenge you to try something new. When we have the courage to leave our comfort zones, we stretch and grow in meaningful ways. Whether it's exploring a new trail, meeting a new neighbor, or volunteering at a local event, small steps can lead to lasting connections. Here's to a season of growth, discovery, and community.

Happy Spring!

Lisa Boucher

Lisa Boucher
Content Coordinator
Hinckley, Granger, and Sharon Living



These yellow daffodils brighten up the landscape.

Photo courtesy of Lisa Boucher

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March



Throw back to the 2019 Granger Elementary Art Show. PHOTO BY LISA BOUCHER

HIGHLAND SCHOOLS

Mon., Mar. 16 and Apr. 20
Board of Education Meeting
 @Highland High School Media Center
 TIME: 6pm

Mon., Mar. 16
Family First Night

Thurs., Mar. 19
Junior Jumpstart Meeting
 @Highland High School Media Center
 TIME: 6pm - 7pm

Thurs., Mar. 19
Granger Elementary 4th Grade Concert
 @Granger Elementary Stage
 TIME 6pm - 7pm

Thurs., Mar. 19
Granger Elementary 5th Grade Concert
 @Granger Elementary Stage
 TIME: 7:15pm - 8:15pm

Thurs., Mar. 19 - Sat., Mar. 21
Highland Middle School Musical: Annie Jr.
 @Highland High School Auditorium
 TIME: 7pm
 AGE: All Ages Welcome
 TICKETS: www.cur8.com

Wed., Mar. 25 - Sat., Mar. 28
8th Grade Washington D.C. Trip
 @Washington D.C.
 TIME: All Day

Mon., Mar. 30 - Mon., Apr. 6
 NO SCHOOL
Highland Schools Spring Break

Sat., Apr. 11
Mr. Hornet Competition
 @Highland High School Auditorium
 TIME: 7pm - 10:30pm

Tues., Apr. 14 - Wed., Apr. 15
English Language Arts State Testing
 @All Elementary Schools and Highland Middle School

Thurs., Apr. 16
Highland High School Orchestra Concert
 @Highland High School Auditorium
 TIME: 7pm - 8:30pm

Thurs., Apr. 16
Granger Art Show Open House
 @Granger Elementary School
 TIME: 5pm - 7pm

IN THE COMMUNITY

Thurs., Mar. 19
Tales for Tots
 @Oenslager Nature Center
 Become a little scientist and study animal grossology. Get the scoop on poop (scat) and discover what we can learn about animals by what they leave behind through a story and investigation. Don't worry, this will be a sanitary program!
 TIME: 10am - 11am or 1pm - 2pm
 AGE: 3 - 6 with adult companion
 COST: FREE
 REGISTER: Between Mar. 1 - Mar. 18 at medinacountyparks.com

Thurs., Mar. 19
Pysanky Egg Decorating
 @Bella Moxie Art Gallery & Boutique
 Decorate real blown eggs using a wax-resistant pysanky method & dye beautiful colors with vibrant dyes. Stands are provided for your two decorated eggs.
 TIME: 6pm
 AGE: 16 - Adult
 COST: \$40
 REGISTER: linktr.ee/bellamoxiestudio

Thurs., Mar. 19 and Apr. 2 & 16
Crochet and Knit Drop-in
 @The Highland Library
 Stop by to crochet or knit with other crafters in your community. No formal instruction provided. There will be plenty of books and yarn to go around!
 TIME: 6pm - 8pm
 AGE: Teens and Adults
 COST: Free

Sat., Mar. 21
Giving in Style - Timeless Fashion
 @The Galaxy Banquet Center, Wadsworth, OH
 Join us and come dressed in your favorite era. It's brunch and a fashion show! All proceeds benefit the Medina County Senior and Adult Foundation.
 TIME: 11am - 2pm
 AGE: Adults
 COST: \$82.50/person
 TICKETS: tickettailor.com/events/mcsaf/1975086

Sat., Mar. 21
Basket Weaving 101: Fruit Bowl Basket
 @Oenslager Nature Center
 When life gives you lemons, come make a fruit bowl basket with us! This is a pink lemonade-themed basket, but other colors will be offered when registering. No experience is necessary. All supplies are provided. Class size is limited and registration is due by March 7.
 TIME: 9:30am - 12pm
 AGE: 7 - Adult
 COST: \$35/Basket
 REGISTER: Emily Smith - basketweavingcreations@gmail.com or (573) 694-4126



Sun., Mar. 22**Natural Discoveries Hiking Series: Frog Chorus**

@Green Leaf Park

From the wooded wetland of Green Leaf Park come the calls of male frogs including spring peepers, wood frogs, and western chorus frogs. Join us as we listen to this spring chorus and discover the life history of these amazing amphibians. Prepare for muddy trails.

TIME: 3pm - 4pm

AGE: 7 - Adult

COST: Free

Sun., Mar. 22**Photographers of the Park Club Meeting**

@Oenslager Nature Center

This is a great opportunity for nature photo enthusiasts of all skill levels to share knowledge with like-minded folks, gain special access to programs and events related to photography, and support the park district. The club will emphasize, but not be limited to, nature photography. Please contact club leadership at medinapotp@gmail.com with questions or for more information.

TIME: 3pm - 5pm

AGE: 18 and Up

COST: Free

Wed., Mar. 25**Highland Book Club**

@Highland Library Community Room

This month's read is *The Names* by Florence Knapp

TIME: 6:30pm - 7:30pm

AGE: Adults

COST: Free

Wed., Mar. 25**Watercolor Patterns 2**

@Bella Moxie Art Gallery & Boutique

Learn some simple tips to create beautiful patterns in watercolor and create your very own journal cover. Learn how to mix colors and how to use your brush expressively. You will receive a journal and watercolor supplies for your artistic creation. Bring a friend and come prepared to experience the joy of watercolor!

TIME: 5:30pm

AGE: 12 to Adult

COST: \$55

REGISTER:

linktr.ee/bellamoxiestudio**Sat., Mar. 28****A Visit to Cornell Lab of Ornithology**

@Oenslager Nature Center

Ever dreamed of visiting the Cornell Lab of Ornithology Visitors Center and Sapsucker Woods? Now's your chance! Join the naturalists as they share their experiences about this bird paradise complete with videos, photos, and insights. Also, learn about the park's contributions to the Project FeederWatch community science initiative, including a chance to observe birds at our active feeders.

TIME: 10am - 11:30am

AGE: 7 to Adult

COST: FREE

Sat., Mar. 28**Line Dancing Class to Benefit Access the Arts**

@Thirsty Cowboys

Bring a friend and come to Thirsty Cowboys to learn some line dancing steps with our instructor and DJ. Appetizers at 5:30 and open bar. Full Kitchen menu available at 7:00pm

TIME: 5:30pm - 7pm

COST: Suggested \$15 contribution to help

Access the Arts

Mon., Mar. 30 - Sun., Apr. 5**Gnomes on the Roam**

@Medina Public Square and South Town

Gnomes are on the Roam! They're ready for a spring scavenger hunt and are hiding in Medina. Can you spot them hanging out inside local shops or peeking out of the store windows? Join in on the fun for a chance to win prizes!

TIME: Local Business Hours

AGE: All Ages Welcome

COST: Free

Tues., Mar. 31 and Thurs., Apr. 2**Spring Break Junior Naturalist Camp**

@Oenslager Nature Center

Spend the morning exploring what it is like to be a naturalist at Medina County Park District. We will cover topics like ambassador animal care, citizen science, nature journaling, and nature observation. Primarily outdoors, these drop-off programs are designed for your nature-loving youth. Citizen science may include use of the iNaturalist app.

By registering for this program, you are registering for both dates 3/31/26 and 4/2/26.

TIME: 9:30am - 1pm

AGE: 10 - 15

COST: Free

REGISTER: Before Mar. 29

medinacountyparks.com**Thurs., Apr. 2****Spiral Sea Glass Trees**

@Bella Moxie Art Gallery & Boutique

Create a beautiful sea glass tree using a spiral technique taught step-by-step. Light up your creation with fairy lights and choose up to three colors to blend. Trees vary from 6"-10" tall

TIME: 5:30pm

AGE: 16 to Adult

COST: \$60-\$85

REGISTER: linktr.ee/bellamoxiestudio**Sat., Apr. 4****Hinckley's Easter Eggstravaganza**

@Hinckley Preparatory Academy

Sponsored by the Hinckley Women's Club. All-new egg hunt, bunny hop competition, face painting, and live animals!

TIME: 11am - 12:30pm

AGE: Walkers - 4th grade

COST: Free

Sat., Apr. 4**Sharon Township Easter Egg Hunt**

@Sharon Community Park

Sponsored by the Sharon Women's Club. Bring your kids to the Sharon Community Park for a visit with the Easter Bunny and an egg hunt with thousands of eggs and extra prizes.

TIME: 10:15am - photos with the Easter Bunny,

11:00am - Easter Egg Hunt

AGE: All Ages Welcome

COST: Free

Tues., Apr. 7**Rustic Resin River Coasters**

@Bella Moxie Art Gallery & Boutique

Craft your very own set of 4 River Coasters. Learn the process of dying resin and adding in elements to make your pieces shine! Bring your friends or come solo to unwind, get crafty, and create.

TIME: 6:00pm

AGE: 16 to Adult

COST: \$65

REGISTER: linktr.ee/bellamoxiestudio**Sun., Apr. 19****Cars & Coffee**

@Medina Public Square

Join us for a morning on the square where cars of all shapes, sizes, makes, models, decades, and designs will be displayed for a car show! While you look at all the cool cars, enjoy some coffee, pastries, and breakfast at the array of brunch spots, coffee shops, cafés, and diners the square and South Town have to offer.

TIME 8:00am - 12:00pm

AGE: All Ages Welcome

COST: Free

Sophomore Visitation to Medina County Career Center

Story and Photo by Jackson Kase

Highland sophomores (along with sophomores from Brunswick, Buckeye, Medina, Cloverleaf, and Black River) had the opportunity to visit the Medina County Career Center (MCCC) this past February. For those who do not know, the MCCC is a high school for juniors and seniors to get career focused education alongside their academic studies.

Students who visited got to explore the labs and get a firsthand experience on how the school operates. Sophomore Allie Green said, "It was a great way to experience some of the different opportunities that you could be interested in for your future." The MCCC prides itself on preparation for the future and getting students ready for the next steps out of high school.

Visitation day is an important day for MCCC, and the enrolled juniors and seniors, along with their lab instructors, worked hard to put together hands-on activities that would show sophomores some of the things learned in the lab. The labs range from construction



The Medina County Career Center

trades, to healthcare, to visual media, and so much more. When visiting the nursing program, students got to go through different stations such as CPR and reading diagnostics; in the media program students got to produce a Coca-Cola photoshoot and commercial.

Overall, students saw the vast amount of opportunities for the future, and were able to attend one of the First Chance Application Nights to submit an early application for the next school year.

For more information on the Medina County Career Center, visit: mcjvs.edu.

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The Historical Oviatt House located on Route 303 was part of the underground railroad.

Historical Accounts Connect Neighbors and Friends

By Chris Unaitis Naizer, Social Media Manager of the Friends of Richfield Heritage Preserve Photos by Chris Unaitis Naizer

The legend of The Big Hunt is one of the stories that connects Hinckley and Richfield across generations. Although Hinckley did not become a township until 1825, The Big Hunt inspired traditions that endure today, including the name of the Buzzard's Roost in the Hinckley Reservation of the Cleveland Metroparks and the Hinckley Buzzard Day celebration, which just took place this year on Sunday, March 15.

Each spring, locals and visitors gather to enjoy pancakes, sausage, and the return of the buzzards, celebrating a piece of history that has taken flight for more than 65 years. The tradition began in 1957, when a Cleveland Press reporter shared the story of the buzzards' return on March 15, drawing thousands of visitors and giving rise to Buzzard Day. Today, the event continues to celebrate community spirit and the area's unique natural and historical heritage.

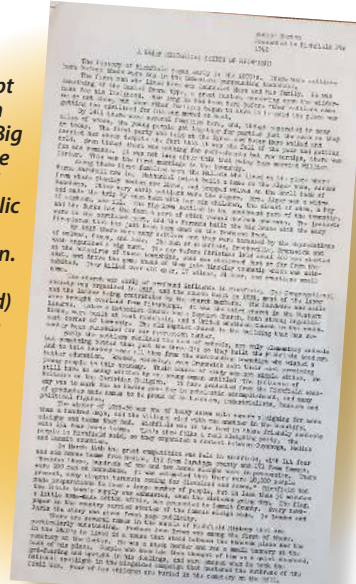
Much of what we know about The Big Hunt and its inspiration for Buzzards' Day comes from the work of Eunice Merton, a local writer and historian who captured the stories and spirit of our community. Her writings helped preserve tales like The Big

Hunt, which later became part of the area's cultural identity. In her Historical Sketch of Richfield presented to the PTA in 1942, she wrote:

By 1818 there were many settlers, and they were harassed by the depredations of wolves, foxes, and bear. The men of Richfield, Brecksville, Brunswick, and Bath organized a big hunt. The day before Christmas 1818, about six hundred men started at the outskirts of these townships, each man stationed just so far from the next, and drove the game ahead of them into Hinckley Township, which was uninhabited. They killed over 400 deer, 17 wolves, 21 bear, and countless small game.

Merton also preserved the history of local families such as the Oviatts. Her collected stories from Jennie Farwell Oviatt became part of the documentation that led to the preservation and restoration of the award-winning Oviatt House, located on Route 303 in the Camp Crowell Hilaka Historic District, also known as the Richfield Heritage Preserve (RHP). The Oviatt House is connected to the Underground Railroad

Page one of the original transcript of Eunice Merton who recalls The Big Hunt of 1818. The transcript is held in the Akron Public Libraries Special Collection section. Eunice Merton wrote (and typed) this document in 1942 and presented it to the PTA of Richfield.



and John Brown. The road to freedom connects Richfield to Hinckley, and you can imagine a wagon traveling west up the Route 303 hill.

Stewardship, historical preservation, and friendship have no zip code. Our neighbors in Richfield and Summit County would agree, as they share so many extraordinary gems that connect us through history and community. The stories of The Big Hunt, Buzzard Day, and the Oviatt House remind us that preserving the past keeps our shared heritage alive for future generations.

We invite you to stay curious and get involved with local history. It is the fabric of our community, giving us a sense of belonging and pride in where we live. One way to connect is by attending the Annual Friends Meeting at the RHP in The Lodge on Wednesday, April 8, from 7 to 9 p.m. Enter at the Broadview Road entrance near the former Country Counter, now Giant Eagle.

If you would like to learn more, visit the website of the Friends of RHP and discover more about Ohio's Hidden Treasure™, Richfield Heritage Preserve, at friendsofrhp.org.

"It is good to live in the country and be close to the land." - Eunice Merton

Sharon Township Easter Egg Hunt

By Jane Back | Photo Courtesy of Janet George

Bring the kids to the Sharon Community Park on April 4th for the annual Sharon Township Easter Egg Hunt. Sponsored by the Sharon Women's Club, the festivities begin with a guest appearance by the Easter Bunny at 10:15 am, followed by the egg hunt at 11:00 am. Bring a basket or bag to collect some of the thousands of eggs in the field stuffed with candy and tickets for larger prizes. This free family event is made possible by generous donations from Sharon residents, local businesses, and the Sharon Township Trustees. ☺



Janet and Michael George pose with the Easter Bunny at last year's event!



The Rapp Family Six Kids, Countless Adventures

By Lisa Boucher | Photos Provided by the Rapp Family

For the Rapp Family, life has always been an adventure. What began with a blind date grew into a life filled with purpose, faith, and the kind of everyday moments that make life truly rich.

In 2002, Phil's co-worker, who was also a client of Kelly's, convinced the couple to go on a blind date. "I picked up Kelly at her small Cape Cod in West Akron and saw her for the first time," Phil reminisced. "This was before social media, so it truly was a

blind date. We went to dinner at Beau's Grill in Fairlawn, which at the time was located in Marc's Plaza. Then we went for milkshakes at Swensons."

From that very first evening, one thing became clear: Phil and Kelly were stronger together. The couple married in the Dominican Republic in 2004. They knew early on in their relationship that they wanted a large family and both had a heart for adoption. Over the years, their partnership has grown into a family full of love and support.



A family trip to Harbor Island, South Carolina in July 2025. Back row L to R: Louis, Heidi, Kelly, Phil, and Owen. Front row L to R: Isaiah, Victor, and Leah.

They raise their children, run a business, cheer from the sidelines, and care for their many animals. Together, they navigate life as a team, creating a home filled with purpose, a little chaos, and endless adventure.

Phil is a Regional Manager for a donor tissue bank. "We distribute allografts to hospitals all over the world," Phil explained. "An allograft is a transplant of tissue from one human donor to another, often used to help patients heal after injury or surgery."

Kelly, along with Denise Riley, co-owns Nolas Salon and Day Spa in Fairlawn. They opened Nolas Salon in 2002 and are celebrating their 24th year as small business owners. "My favorite part of working at the salon is the friendships I've formed with my clientele," said Kelly. "I love that my job involves meaningful conversations every day. It has definitely helped having my business partner, who is more like a sister to me, share the ups and downs of running a small business."

Nolas Salon is located at 25 Ghent Rd. in Fairlawn, Ohio. For more information or to make an appointment, visit nolashairsalon.com or call 330-869-0602.

When not working, the couple spends time with their children and supports them in their many activities and sports.

Owen, 18, is a senior at Highland High School (HHS). He plays soccer, competes in high jump for the track team, and also plays GTE club basketball. For work, Owen serves as a substitute custodian at Highland Schools. "After graduation, I'm looking forward to taking summer trips with my friends," said Owen. "I'm also excited to start studying neuroscience and pre-med at Bowling Green State University."

Phil added, "Owen was awarded the Alumni Laureate Scholarship from Bowling Green, providing a full academic scholarship. We are extremely proud of his academic achievements."

Currently a junior in the cosmetology program at the Medina County Career Center (MCCC), 16-year-old Heidi plays outside hitter and middle back row for her club team, Ignite Volleyball. She has worked at Casa Del Mar in Norton for the past two years. "I really like going to school at MCCC," informed Heidi. "I've made so many new friends and appreciate the kind and helpful teachers in the cosmetology program." Heidi is very social, whether at school, playing volleyball, working, or attending church.

Louis, 14, a freshman at HHS, enjoys playing rugby and working out. He is making a comeback after a torn ACL last season. "I'm excited to finally play rugby again," said Louis. "I'm ready to get back on the field." Louis also looks forward to choir class each day at HHS. He values the camaraderie with his peers, and his choir teacher, Mr. Ilg, has been a positive influence.

A sixth grader at Highland Middle School, Victor, 12, plays midfield for Highland soccer. He is an exceptional student. "History is my favorite subject," admitted Victor. "I'm particularly interested in learning about WWII and the Holocaust." Victor has had a smooth transition from elementary to middle school.

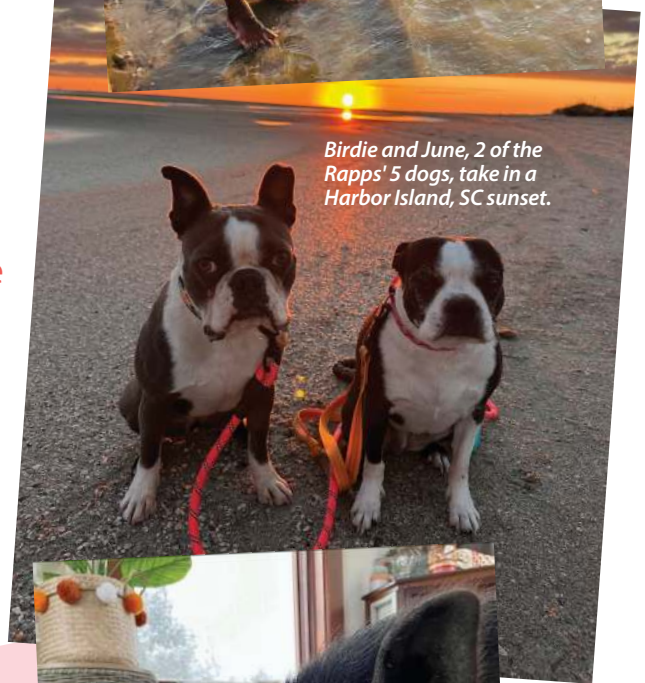
Ten-year-old Leah is a fifth grader at Sharon Elementary. She participates



"It's never a dull moment at our house with so many children, activities, and animals," Phil laughed. "Whenever there's an animal on the loose, we're usually the ones neighbors call to ask if we're missing a funny-looking bird. Sorry for the peacock named Todd, who screams in the spring. He is very loud!"



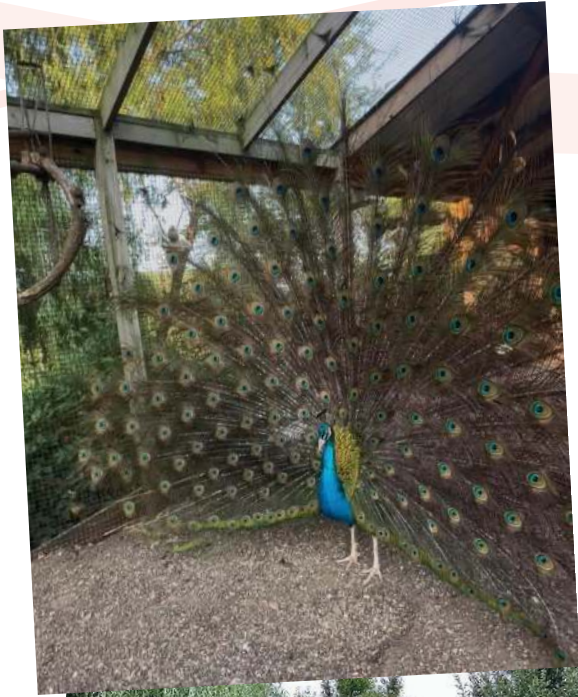
Isaiah catches a shark from the beach!



Birdie and June, 2 of the Rapps' 5 dogs, take in a Harbor Island, SC sunset.



Fern, one of the family pigs, settles in for an afternoon nap.



Todd, the Peacock can be very loud in the spring!



The Rapp family aviary

in Highland rugby and school plays. Her most recent role was a Dalmatian in *101 Dalmatians*, and this year she will play Banyan in *The Jungle Book*. Leah also takes part in MCPAL, the Medina County Police Activities League, an organization that connects youth with positive role models in law enforcement. “I had a lot of fun in MCPAL. My favorite was Shop with a Cop at Christmas,” said Leah. “I got to go Christmas shopping with the sheriff.”

Isaiah, 8, is a second grader at Sharon Elementary who is passionate about football, basketball, rugby, and fishing. “Football is my favorite sport,” said Isaiah. “I watch everything football, but the best is watching Jeremiah Smith catch one-handed passes for Ohio State.” Isaiah especially had fun fishing in South Carolina, where he caught his first shark from the beach. His mom was swimming at the time and didn’t believe he actually had a shark on the line.

Moments like these are what make some of the family’s best memories, and many occur during trips to the beach in their 12-passenger brown van, affectionately nicknamed the “Yoder Toder.” They travel to Harbor Island, South Carolina, several times a year to relax and spend time together in the Low Country. “We love fishing at the beach,” said Phil. “We sit in the evenings to talk, eat, and fish.”

After their adventures at the beach, the Rapps return to a home that is just as full of life and activity. The family loves animals. They have a bird aviary with chickens, ducks, a peacock, pheasants, doves, pigeons, and quail. Kelly likes sharing videos of the aviary on TikTok at @all_birds_welcome. The family also has two small pigs, five dogs, and three cats.

“It’s never a dull moment at our house with so many children, activities, and animals,” Phil laughed. “Whenever there’s an animal on the loose, we’re usually the ones neighbors call to ask if we’re missing a funny-looking bird. Sorry for the peacock named Todd, who screams in the spring. He is very loud!”

Living in Wolf Creek Estates for 19 years, the Rapp family has built a home in this quiet neighborhood with a lake and plenty of room for the kids and animals. “Our close friends live in the neighborhood, and our parents live next door. They even mow a path between our houses,” said Phil.

At home, with family, friends, and their many animals, the Rapps find shared meaning in their daily adventures. Through every season, this family lifts one another up, nurturing strength and happiness along the way. Their story is a testament to the beauty of family and a life well-lived together. ☺

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Ridge and Rail Brings Local History and Community to the Table

By Jane Back | Photo Provided by The Smicklas Family

Sharon Township has a new gathering place, and it's one rooted deeply in local history and community pride. Ridge and Rail, which opened its doors last year, is the passion project of longtime residents Brian and Sarah Smicklas, who transformed an old Amish bank barn into a warm, locally-focused restaurant.

Brian, a U.S. Coast Guard Academy graduate, spent nearly 22 years on active duty, with deployments overseas including Iraq. Now working as a civilian for the Coast Guard in Cleveland, he is a big supporter of veterans and first responders. He envisioned the restaurant as a meaningful post-military venture—one that celebrates the community he lives in.

His wife and co-owner, Sarah, brings a different but complementary expertise. A California native and CPA licensed in both California and Ohio, she describes herself as a devoted foodie with a love for wine and whisky. After raising four daughters across the country during Brian's service, the family settled in Sharon Township in 2019. Their two oldest daughters, Mae and Emma, graduated from Highland High School and are now in college, while twins Izzie and Cate are seventh graders at Highland Middle School.

Opening in Sharon was an intentional choice. Their goal was to preserve a piece of township history while offering high-quality, locally sourced food at a fair price and creating a neighborhood spot where memories are made.



Owners of Ridge and Rail, the Smicklas family: Mae, Izzie, Sarah, Cate, Emma, Brian

In its first year, Ridge and Rail faced its share of challenges, from restoring the old rubber factory to managing the heating and cooling of a historic Amish bank barn. Still, the owners say the rewards far outweigh the hurdles. "Our favorite part is definitely the connectedness we feel with our community," says Sarah. "We love Sharon Township, the Highland schools, and living in Medina. The best part of the day is when folks come in for a few minutes, or a few hours!"

Looking ahead, the restaurant has ambitious plans: expanding offerings, enhancing the patio and outdoor spaces, and eventually restoring the 1860 wheat granary on the property to create additional room for events and daily use. Their long-term vision is clear—to become a true pillar of the community. And if you stop in for lunch or dinner you will see they are well on their way. ©

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COMMUNITY SUBMISSION

Hinckley Women's Club Happenings

Story and Photos by Heather Liccardi

“Whatever good things we build, end up building us.”

-Jim Rohn

Hinckley Women's Club (HWC) has many talented members who share their talents and special skills. Here are some examples:

- Member Heidi Dyke is our local Girl Scout Leader. Her daughter, Anna, attended our last meeting and gave a very classy presentation about buying Girl Scout Cookies and how this fundraiser benefits the Scouts. Anna received much appreciation - and a lot of orders.
- Member Connie King and her daughter Rachel own ABBA Dance Studio in Hinckley (ABBADANCE.COM). She invited us to a complimentary Mothers' Day Ballroom Dance Lesson on May 5 - to learn a bit and see how we like it, and if we would like to learn more, Connie can make that happen.

“Great things are done by teams of people.”

-Steve Jobs

Together in March, HWC members joined Hinckley Chamber of Commerce and other community groups to achieve a stellar 69th annual Buzzard Day celebration at Hinckley Prep. Academy.

And, last but not least, get ready for the 2026 EGGSTRAVAGANZA! Yes, HWC members put their heads together and transformed our annual Easter Egg Hunt to be more “KIDCENTRIC.” Oh sure, there will still be eggs to find, and treats to hunt, and, of course, the Easter Bunny. BUT changes brighten up the day - like taking Bunny selfies, playing kid games, and giving baskets as prizes to kids who win.

The Eggstravaganza will be held on Saturday, April 4 from 11:00a.m. to 12:30p.m. at Hinckley Prep Academy. All New - for kids from 0 to 10 years old. Won't you join us?

For more information on membership and events, visit: hinckleywomensclub.com.

“I can do things that you cannot. You can do things that I cannot. Together we can do great things.”

-Mother Teresa



Heidi Dyke with daughter, Anna.



Leah Barboza and family enjoy a Happy Easter Greeting from the Bunny at last year's Eggstravaganza.

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Marching in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade

By Tara Kildoo | Photo Courtesy of GroupPhotos.com *Used by Permission

Some opportunities are described as “once in a lifetime” so often that the phrase can lose its meaning. But marching in the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade is one of those rare experiences that truly earns the title. This past November, I had the opportunity to travel to New York City and perform as part of the Great American Macy’s Day Marching Band, an experience that felt both surreal and unforgettable.

Like many families, mine grew up watching the Macy’s Parade every Thanksgiving morning. It was a tradition; one that always felt distant and untouchable from the other side of the television screen. It wasn’t until I began taking marching band more seriously that I learned there was a way to be part of it. On a whim, I auditioned by submitting a video of myself playing and marching. I didn’t expect much, just the satisfaction of trying.

Months later, while sitting on the couch in my basement, my mom came downstairs smiling. She told me I had been accepted. It took a full minute for the news to sink in. I was really going to New York City. I was really going to march in the parade.

The trip itself was both exciting and overwhelming. My mom rented a car and drove my grandmother and me to the hotel where the band was staying. That first night was nerve-wracking; I was placed in a room with complete strangers, something far outside

my comfort zone. After an awkward start and an unexpected room change, I ended up with roommates who became some of my closest friends during the trip, a reminder that sometimes setbacks turn into the best outcomes.

The days leading up to the parade were packed with rehearsals, drills, and long hours of practice, some lasting up to eight hours. It was exhausting, but the kind of exhaustion that comes with knowing you’re working toward something extraordinary.

Parade day began early, very early. We were up at 1 a.m., fueled by energy drinks, minimal sleep, and sheer adrenaline. As a sousaphone player, we had a lot more equipment to work with than the other members of the band, but by the time we stepped onto the streets of Manhattan, none of that mattered. Marching down the same route I had watched on television for years felt unreal. The cheering crowds, the music, the smiles, it was unlike anything I had ever experienced.

Seeing the parade from the inside changed everything. Details I had never noticed before, like the numbered markings on the street guiding performers, made the moment feel even more real. Even now, the experience feels almost dreamlike.

Throughout the entire journey many people gave their support, and I thank them all, but there was one constant: my mom. From driving us to New York to supporting me every step of the way, she never wavered. I could not have done this without her. ☺



Tara Kildoo plays sousaphone and marches in the 2025 Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. Photo Courtesy of GroupPhotos.com

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Highland Community Comes Together for “Just Desserts,” Raising \$10,000+ for Senior Scholarships

By Theresa Wright, Executive Director, The Highland Foundation for Educational Excellence
 Photos provided by The Highland Foundation for Educational Excellence

What began as a simple pop-up fundraiser quickly grew into a much bigger celebration of community generosity. The Highland Foundation for Educational Excellence hosted Just Desserts, a Valentine’s weekend event inspired by its traditional Great Gifts Dinner Dessert Auction, with one goal: to raise scholarship funds for Highland seniors. By the end of the weekend, students, families, teachers, and local businesses came together to help generate more than \$10,000 in support of the Class of 2026.

Hosted at Coco Café in Hinckley, owned by Laura Baciú, the event featured dozens of homemade and professionally crafted desserts donated by local bakers, parents, students, and staff. Guests selected treats while enjoying coffee, wine pairings, raffles, and a welcoming atmosphere. Baciú also created two elaborate cupcake bouquets, contributed approximately 20 bags of freshly roasted coffee beans, and matched the first \$2,000 in contributions.

The effort, however, reached far beyond one location. Highland student liaisons produced a promotional video that ran on the high school morning announcements, spreading excitement throughout the school. The story even caught regional attention, with FOX 8’s *New Day Cleveland* highlighting both the partnership and the spirit behind the fundraiser.

Local businesses embraced the cause enthusiastically. Sean Leatherman, owner of Galaxy Wine Room, hand-selected and donated 24 bottles of wine for pairings. Thyme 2, 111 Bistro, and Blue Heron contributed a \$200 “Date Night Dinner” raffle package. Mia Bella decorated the space with Valentine balloon columns and donated an additional custom column for raffle, while Catalyst Farm hand-wrapped 100 carnation bouquets for guests.

Additional auction items included a Blanton’s bourbon basket, a Voudoux vodka gift set, a Landry Family Dentistry exam package, and reserved graduation seating. Each donated by community supporters dedicated to making a difference for Highland students.



Highland High School Principal Carrie Knapp picks-up some sweets for her Valentine.



Shana Boggs McCarthy, Highland High School class of 1998, donated 2 dozen of her fabulous homemade sugar cookies.



Carnation bouquets donated by Catalyst Farm.



The Spec Family enjoys time together over coffee and desserts.



Highland Foundation student Liaison, Chase Piazza and VOF's Lauren Avarello help distribute sweets during the Just Dessert event at Coco Café.

Executive Director Theresa Wright said the event was a true reflection of the Foundation’s mission in action. “Just Desserts reminded us that scholarships are not funded by one big moment; they are the fruit of many caring hands. Students told the story, community businesses gave generously, and families showed up. It illustrated ‘community’ in its purest form.”

The pop-up was created after the Foundation was unable to host its traditional dessert auction at the Great Gifts Dinner in November, which took place at the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame this year. Rather than pause, volunteers adapted and discovered a new way to connect directly with the community.

All proceeds will fund scholarships awarded to graduating Highland seniors this spring. The Highland Foundation thanks all those who graciously contributed to making the event such a wonderful success for Highland’s Class of 2026. ☺

About The Highland Foundation

Founded in 2000, The Highland Foundation for Educational Excellence has invested over \$2.5 million into Highland Local Schools and the broader community. Through grants, scholarships, and special initiatives, the Foundation champions academic innovation, enrichment, and equity in education. Learn more, support, or explore scholarship opportunities at highlandfoundation.org.

Hinckley Garden Club SPRING DELIGHTS

Story and Photos by Linda Fussi, Hinckley Garden Club President

Finally, we are out of the single digit temperatures. Spring is certainly on the horizon.

I attended the Great Big Home and Garden Show in February which was refreshing. There were many hardscaping ideas together with plant ideas. I do love the steel accent pieces (see picture insert). One of the plant ideas which caught my attention was the living wall or vertical garden (see picture insert). This example is made up of house plants and would do great on a covered patio in the summer. There are many DIY videos online or you can also purchase already made wall mounted planters. It's an art piece.

Our first meeting was on seed starting. Mario's presentation was great! Looking forward to seeing the results of the seeds I started shortly after this meeting. The following link is a video to start seeds outdoors now: youtu.be/RbSup_1xLHI. If you take a look at the video, you will see that starting seeds outdoors is very simple.

In late March or early April, I will be planting my coleus, which I started last fall and kept alive this winter under grow lights. Coleus are great annual plants which brighten up partly sunny locations under trees. The color selection is immense. There are many coleus varieties that do well in sunny locations, too. I will put them in large pots 14" deep and set them around the bottom of my maple tree. It is hard to dig around this tree and the pots are an instant focal point!

Enjoy!!☺

Our Next Meeting

March 23rd @ 6:30 p.m.

Guest Speaker – Joann Wallace

The Gardens of Stan Hewitt Hall

Meet at Hinckley Town Hall, 1410 Ridge Rd., Hinckley



An example of plants together with hardscaping and steel accent pieces from the Big Home and Garden Show.



A display at the Big Home and Garden Show of a living wall or vertical garden.

COMMUNITY CORNER

Maintenance Department

Seeking Summer Help: Sharon Township is seeking summer help in the Maintenance Department. The position would require 30-35 hours a week, and duties would include mowing, string trimming, cleaning, traffic control and general maintenance. Applicants must be 18-years-old and have a valid driver's license. Please send resumes to Sharonroads@gmail.com.

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