



## REALTALK@GUNN: An Innovative Approach to Conversation

By Chris Kwon '27

Collaborating with MIT and a non-profit organization Cortico, the Student Belonging and Inclusion Council at Gunn launched a new conversation as part of the RealTalk@GUNN to share students and faculty stories about their experiences on campus.

The Inclusion and Belonging part of the RealTalk@Gunn Series will be led by three students in the Student Belonging and Inclusion Council: Ezekiel Hatcher '26, Zhanibek Bekov '26, and Lilla Trotta '27. In August, they completed a dialogue methodology program and were certified to initiate this program. RealTalk@GUNN combines group conversations with AI technology analyzing recorded voices to make conversations more digestible for listeners. It will be a space for Highlanders to improve communication and trust building skills.

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realtalk@Gunn

RealTalk@GUNN combines group conversations with AI technology analyzing recorded voices to make conversations more digestible for listeners. It will be a space for Highlanders to improve communication and trust building skills. The Student Belonging and Inclusion Council, which was formed last year, aims to make all of the Highlanders feel comfortable and welcomed in the Gunn community regardless of gender, race, and religion.

Similarly, Cortico delivers hidden voices of people in group conversations using human controlled AI tools to connect people and expand their view of understanding.

“We planned 7-8 conversations about belonging and inclusion. We are going to prepare some questions for it and find people who can contribute to RealTalk@Gunn,” said Zhanibek Bekov '26, a member of the Student Belonging and Inclusion Council and a leader of Gunn Global.

“We planned 7-8 conversations about belonging and inclusion. We are going to prepare some questions for it and find people who can contribute to RealTalk@Gunn,” said Zhanibek Bekov '26, a member of the Student Belonging and Inclusion Council and a leader of Gunn Global.

In the spring, Michael Copen and Mr. McMann will work with the Cortico team to create an online portal for the RealTalk@Gunn dialogue series. Gunn community members, alumni, and prospective families will all have access to the conversations and Michael will use Cortico's AI tools to help structure and organize the information. According to Cortico, “The portals go beyond traditional data outputs like bar graphs and pie charts. Instead, portals vividly illustrate the story of the stories, integrating voice-based visualizations that bring data to life.”

- U.S. Politics
  - Zorahn Mamdani wins the NYC Mayoral
  - The longest government shutdown in American history
- Economy
  - Fluctuating tariffs have played an important role in the daily lives of Americans
  - Federal Reserve has cut interest rates twice in two consecutive months
- Technology
  - AI is rapidly evolving "digital world is competing with the real world"
  - AI generated images and videos on social media have become popular among teens
- Global Affairs
  - The conflict in Gaza is a major point of tension in the Middle East and the rest of the world
  - War in Ukraine continues to be an active conflict
- Culture
  - Cancellation of The Late Show causes political speculation
  - Art Heist in the Louvre has been a moment of excitement in pop-culture worldwide
- Sports
  - LA Dodgers win World Series



## Junior Varsity Boys Soccer Dominance

By Thomas Hagymasi '28

As the Frederick Gunn School's athletics have been starting off, one team stands out the most: The JV boys soccer team. Led by their incredible coaches, they are undefeated through their first six matches, threatening to vanquish any foe who stands in their way.

Led by coaches, Mr. Alan Leathers and Mr. Andres Sovero, this team is not a team to underestimate. Mr. Leathers has been coaching soccer at the high school level for over 20 years, including varsity at Westminster School, after also coaching his three children's travel soccer teams. He played throughout high school, eventually leading to a semi-professional career after college. Growing up with two older brothers, one older sister, and one younger sister brought a competitive spirit to him that he now shares with the soccer team. Mr. Sovero was directly assigned the role of assistant coach by the previous Director of Athletics, Mr. Mike Marich.

Although they focus on passing, dribbling, and shooting, they also teach the students to put in their full effort and create chemistry throughout the school community.

Players are unable to always control their performance, but they can always control their effort. Mr. Leathers often stresses the importance of this idea, leading the students to push past their limits, creating opportunities for success.

He also pushed for the idea of a strong bond between the players. This bond helps form communication, gaining an advantage on the field. While these ideas help win games on the field, it also helps them within the school environment. The idea of putting full effort into everything helps students take more out of the classroom. The idea of bonding helps increase communication in a classroom setting, allowing students to understand concepts. Leathers has been entrusted with this role since his second year as a teacher and has driven to coach the team since.

Reached for comment after 2-0 win against Kingswood-Oxford School, Mr. Leathers had this to share. “I think the players have bought into emphasizing effort and skill building in order to be successful. I am extremely competitive as I mentioned and they see the passion that I have for competing and pushing themselves to reach a goal.

The best coach I ever had was my high school soccer coach and I use his philosophy in my coaching: challenge players to excel, give them the tools to succeed, push them to get the most out of them and reward them when they do succeed with praise. I don't coddle my players and I will let them know when I don't feel like they are giving me full effort, but I also will not hesitate to tell them when they are giving their best effort. This philosophy carries over into my teaching math as well.”ond year as a teacher and has driven to coach the team since.

These coaches prepare students to not only play hard on the field, but also work hard in the classroom, through communication and effort. Looking forward, the Frederick Gunn School is excited to have these two amazing coaches help lead students through challenging experiences.



# The Highlander

## Meet the Highlander

By Thomas Hagymasi '28

The Frederick Gunn School welcomed a new devastatingly handsome face to campus, a Highland cow, which is the first living mascot on campus in decades. Gunn's new furry friend is an inspirational moment of celebration for the whole Gunn community.

Charlie is no ordinary cow. With 62.8 thousand followers on Instagram, he is also a social media celebrity. He made his first appearance on the Gunn campus in the 2024-2025 school year while filming the first Film Guys video. Charlie is from Amana, New York, about a 45 minute drive from campus. While that may seem far, he is willing to lead the Highlander battalion into battle against other schools in the NEPSAC (New England Preparatory School Athletic Council) league. This enormous mammal represents the warm and caring nature of the Gunn community through its fluffy fur, while also showing dominance through its size and horns - threatening to the bystanders who stand in its way.

Since the appearance of the Gunnery Goat in the 1950's, the Frederick Gunn School had been absent of a living mascot. The school's old mascot, a "Highlander," was more of a symbol, or an abstract figure, representing Frederick Gunn's Scottish roots, but never actually being able to be seen on campus. This old mascot left a gap in the Gunn community, as it was missing a large piece of being part of the school. Charlie's presence brings a sense of connection and contentment that the community can rally with at school events.

According to Ms. Rachel Duffy, Director of Social Media and Video Content, "Our hope as a school was that the introduction of a mascot, would spark spirit and pride among the community. This symbol gives us all something to rally behind as faculty, current students, and alumni. This will create energy at school events, opportunity for new traditions, and promote unity."

Charlie will be greatly appreciated on campus as he represents the strength the Gunn battalion has, and their ability to show up for each other, rain or shine. Looking forward, they are excited to invite Charlie to school events to build up the Gunn Community.



## Celebration of Fall Family Weekend

By JonJon Feliciano '26

The Frederick Gunn School is buzzing with excitement as Fall Family Long Weekend is coming up. Students and their families come to campus to celebrate success that has been accomplished throughout the community this school year while engaging in activities. A heart warming vibe is spread throughout the weekend creating memories families will be able to cherish forever.

To start off the weekend, students and families will be able to gather on the glade to enjoy fun fall activities such as pumpkin painting, and enjoying food from local food trucks. Families are also given the opportunity to connect with faculty by scheduling a parent-teacher conference meeting where they get to learn about their child's classes and progress in each course. Throughout the weekend, families are welcomed to watch electric, athletic games. Tours are also given allowing families to watch the resilient determination that is showcased at The Frederick Gunn School. During these social activities, families are encouraged to engage with one another giving them the chance to celebrate the school's history together.

Fall Family Weekend brings lots of joy and excitement, as many students haven't seen their families since the start of the school year. Families visiting campus also remind students of the support that they have behind them, motivating them to continue to work harder. This experience gives parents a chance to see their child's perspective of school, where they'll be learning for the rest of the year and striving to become a Force For Good.

"I love family weekends because students can show off our school spirit, and show parents why we love going here so much," shared Robbie Happy '26.



This special weekend at The Frederick Gunn School strengthens the connection of trust between families and faculty as students share their pride in the institution. As Fall Family Weekend arrives, it reminds students to feel inspired and keep pushing more than ever.

## Students Challenge Themselves in the Fitness Center

By Abdul Meite '26

The Frederick Gunn School fitness center gives students the chance to push themselves further, offering modern equipment and training spaces that encourage healthy choices, discipline, and peak performance.

The fitness center provides students with access to treadmills and weights and any modern equipment that students need to improve their physical attributes and help them mentally as well. Coach Bannon, Gunn's expert Strength and Conditioning Coach, makes sure every athlete at The Frederick Gunn School follows a workout plan posted on the big screen. While various teams have their own workouts throughout the week, even non-athletes can work on their health and fitness with Coach Bannon. He is willing to help everyone. "My job is to make sure everyone is in good shape in season or off season," Bannon told The Highlander staff.

This is important because students at the Gunn school are able to have more confidence because of the work they put through in the gym. Students are encouraged to push past their limits to have ultimate success on the field. Three students, Isabella Reichert, SeBella Dubach-Corrigan and Jonathan Feliciano love working out at the Fitness Center. "The gym is a place where you can workout and compete with others," said Isabella. SeBella shared, "It's a place where I can stay healthy and stay fit during the off season." Finally Jonathan commented, "I like to stay strong and healthy as well as compete with my friends to push each other to our limits."

The Frederick Gunn fitness center shows how a school can invest in more than academics by supporting the whole student. With a space dedicated to health and growth, Gunn empowers its students to train their bodies and minds for success. Whether the goal is winning on the field, improving confidence, or simply staying healthy, the fitness center helps every student take meaningful steps toward becoming the best version of themselves.



Think boldly, fearlessly





# The Highlander



## New Boarders, New Beginnings: Global Students Arrive At The Frederick Gunn School

By Charlie Hutchison '29

The time is here, and a fresh wave of boarders from around the globe arrive on campus at The Frederick Gunn School. The new students at The Gunn School are ready to make their impact and find their place in a community filled with character, tradition, and connection. For many this is not only the start of a new chapter in their educational journey but also the start of their life away from home.

Each year, The Frederick Gunn School welcomes new boarding school students from different cultures and countries. Students don't only adjust to life at Gunn, but also to athletics, academics, and activities. Every student at the FGS has an opportunity to show what their skills are and learn new things. From playing on the soccer field and exploring outdoor education or joining the theater program, each student is encouraged to try a new activity.



Having students from all over the world shows Gunn's commitment to global education. Having boarders from different backgrounds allows others to learn more cultures, traditions, and to think differently. Also, the international community creates a sense of unity which will help students succeed in a connected world. Understanding different viewpoints and traditions equips students with the adaptability and empathy needed for their future success.

For many, the transition to boarding school can be both exciting and scary, Zephyr Fasman '29 reflected, "I finally feel like I'm in a place where I'm supported and loved." Zephyr captured the heart of what FGS strives to provide for its students: That feeling of belonging is the FGS experience - Turning the campus into our home.



## The House of Gunn

By Elizabeth Parent '26

At The Frederick Gunn School, house parents are an important part of daily life on campus. Whether a student needs advice, someone to hang out with during study hall, or isn't feeling their best, House parents are often the first person students turn to.

Typically, there are four to five dorm parents per house. At The Frederick Gunn School, they are responsible for the care and well-being of residential students and for providing a safe, secure, nurturing and structured dormitory experience.

At The Frederick Gunn School, the students' relationship with their house parents are quite unique. House parents obviously play an important role in students' day to day lives, however house parents in some cases, can be advisors, coaches, and even teachers. The Frederick Gunn School is unique in this way because the relationship between teachers and students do not end when a student walks out of the classroom, but that relationship continues onto the field, or into the houses.

Mr. Gorman, a house parent in Teddy House, a first-year boy house, serves as Director of Residential Life. Gorman said that he enjoyed being a house parent and he strives to make positive connections throughout the building. Gorman shared, "I like to make the house feel like a home, so I try to make [Teddy] feel as much of a family as possible." A graduate of Gunn, Gorman came back to work at the school to replicate the experiences his own mentors created when he was at the school. "The Baudos and Badgers were elite house parents who baked brownies, played games of Connect 4, and created at home for us which I will always remember."



The Frederick Gunn School seeks to create a sense of rootedness and place, and that could not be accomplished without the help of our amazing dorm parents.

## New Dean of Students Brings Veteran Experience to Office

By Alaiya Pagani '26

Change is in the air at The Frederick Gunn School! Not just with students, but also with faculty leadership positions. Student Life Leadership will never be the same with everyone's favorite Glastonbury native taking her talents to the Dean of Students Office.

After over a decade in academics, Amy Paulekas has stepped away from the textbooks and has stepped into a bigger role: the complicated minds of today's adolescents. Ms. Paulekas' has always been fueled by connections with students beyond the classroom. She has become Gunn students' greatest supporter in all aspects of their lives on campus. Meanwhile, Ashley LeBlanc, the former Dean of Students, has stepped into a new role as Director of Student Life and Wellness. This shift is more towards a broader role of focusing on the bigger picture of wellness around campus and focusing on a holistic approach towards student support.

Timing is everything within change, and Ms. Paulekas stated that it "simply felt like the right time to try something new." The timing lined up perfectly for both Ms. LeBlanc and Ms. Paulekas to try something new and step into roles allowing them to work together to create a dynamic, innovative office. Their collaborative work on the Student Success Team has strengthened student wellness and support, and it was a - brainer teaming them up in DOS.

So what does this look like for us students? DOS is not something to be scared of. Many students may receive an email for a meeting but DOS is not there to get students in trouble. With Mrs. Leblanc's new role, student life and wellness is her top priority to be able to ensure that every student is offered the support needed and wanted.

Ms. Paulekas stated that being in DOS is a learning curve and that they are still figuring out whose role is who but that she loves working with Mr. Gorman and Mr. Perkins. She highlighted how good their communication is and how they are setting some goals for the school year. The student body is excited to work with Ms. Paulekas in her new role!





# The Highlander

## The Value of School Meeting

By JonJon Feliciano '26

The long-lasting tradition at The Frederick Gunn School, School Meeting, heavily encourages students and faculty to come together to create a sense of community. By giving every member an opportunity to share their ideas, values, and announcements, the Gunn community recognizes and celebrates one and another's voices.

The exciting experience of School Meeting helps students gather thoughts and feelings about how important it can be for a school to have a strong community. Throughout the academic year, students in the junior class give a Junior Speech about different lessons that either they have experienced or want to teach others beyond the community. The Junior Speech can impact people's perspectives in a personal way.



Another sensational part about School Meeting is the House Challenge, where each house on campus competes for the House Cup by participating in games that raises school spirit and encourages students to be active within the community. In addition, an important part of School Meeting are Announcements, where members announce events such as Games of the Week, so members can bring the fire and show support.

School Meeting is valued by both faculty and students, due to its impact on the school's community, allowing Prefects to present the week's agenda to their peers. This event during the school day also gives students a break from classes and allows them to interact with other students creating a stress free environment. In addition, it is a long upheld school tradition, making everybody come together.

"To me, School Meeting is a fun time during the day to take a break, see my friends and get informed about upcoming events at school," mentioned Isabella Reichert '27.

School Meeting is more than just a time for the community to gather during the week at school but it is a time where culture increasingly grows throughout the years creating inspiring leaders, and role models. Not only does it give students the opportunity to show leadership by taking on the role of faculty but also shows support. It isn't only a meeting at school but a chance to connect, inform and have fun.

## All-School Walk

By Charlie Hutchison '29

The All-School walk began in 1861, led by Frederick Gunn himself. Mr. Gunn led students on a trek to Milford, where they camped for several days. In 1886, five years after Frederick Gunn's death, the commemorative first all-school walk was started by his son-in-law and the second Head of School. The walk continues to this day, even with a different route and destination, the premise has remained unchanged. The whole community gathers to participate in an eight-mile hike through Steep Rock Preserve to the summit. Reaching an elevation of 776 feet, hikers can see the valley of the Shepaug River.

This tradition stands as a reminder of Gunn's vision of education which is one that went beyond the classroom. Gunn believed in learning through experience and he saw the outdoors just as valuable as any book or class. The walk encouraging students to bond with nature and strengthen the ones with one another.

From that point looking out to the valley, students and teachers are reminded not just of the physical journey they have just completed but of the generations who have done the same before them. The all School Walk connects the present to the past. The walk honors Mr. Gunn who valued courage, curiosity, and community.



Over 160 years later the school walk continues to be one of the most valued parts of life at Gunn. It is a day when the school comes to honor its founder, enjoy the outdoors, and remember that sometimes the best way to learn is to be outside with friends, fresh air, and connected with nature.



## The Highlander Athletics Transformation

By JonJon Feliciano '26

The Frederick Gunn School Athletic Department is off to a charging start with new personalities, new uniforms and even a new Highland cow mascot.

The Highland Cow, previously introduced during the last school year during the Film Guys production, officially became the school mascot this year, resembling the school in strength, courage, and perseverance, which is what it means to be a Highlander. New uniforms have some slight changes in color as some jerseys are navy blue and cardinal, instead of black and red. The Athletic Department has also hired new staff such as a new Athletic Director, Colleen Fink, a new Head Baseball coach, Noah Martinez, and a new Head Soccer coach, Antony Howard. The new hires are excited to build more competitive teams and create memorable moments for the future Highlanders.

The future of Frederick Gunn School Athletics is looking bright as the school is committed to advancing its athletic program and raising its school spirit. By adopting the new mascot, the school expects to strengthen the community's support.



The new uniforms also bring new life to the community, as it boosts confidence to show what it means to be a Highlander and feel united as a team. Lastly the hiring of new coaches shows the potential for the highlanders in athletics as they are experienced coaches who can play the roles of a mentor and teacher.

"Coach Howard brings a great skill set and passion that is needed to help push and uplift the soccer program's future and culture," shared Justin Robinson '27 Gunn Boys Varsity Soccer central defender.

These new additions are very important to the school as it supports the student-athletes and faculty bringing the community together. With the new upgraded facilities and redesigned uniforms, students are influenced to be more proud of representing The Frederick Gunn School and show what it takes to be a part of a unique program like this one.

## The Frederick Gunn School Host Annual Fall Events

By Abdul Meite '26

Students and faculty members at Gunn come together for the annual fall tradition, and long standing event celebrated near the start of the school year. Play for the Cure, a special athletic fundraiser supporting breast cancer awareness, takes place in late October. The event features an under the lights field hockey game, music, food and a bake sale, drawing excitement across campus.

The event features a field hockey game with students wearing different colors depending on their grade. Donations collected at the bake sale and online fundraiser go directly to the cancer research foundation. Coaches emphasize teamwork, compassion, and community impact: values that expand beyond the field.

Play for the Cure reflects Highlanders' commitment to service and empathy, encouraging them to use sports as a platform for positive change. The event not only raises important funds but also helps students learn about unity and leadership through action.

"Play for the Cure embodies the Gunn values and displays what it means to be a Highlander," said SeBella DuBach '27. "We're playing for something that affects so many families, and it feels good to be part of a school that cares," said Ashley Edmonds '26.





# The Highlander

## First-Year Camping Trip

By JonJon Feliciano '26

The Gunn First-Years experienced the freedom of being offline as they started their overnight trips through the Appalachian Trail with Gunn Outdoors. They learned how to face challenges head on as a group and built resilience for the coming academic year. The tradition hosted by Gunn Outdoors originated in the 2024-2025 school year for new first year students to bond over challenges. Students learn how to pack effectively and conservatively as they have to carry a 20-35 pound backpack on a long hike through the Appalachian Trail. The distances of the hike can range from 3 miles all the way to 8 miles depending on weather conditions. After they pack, they are sent off to South Street, where they spend their first day learning how to set up their tent and make their dinner on a portable stove. At night, they sit around a campfire and spend quality time with one another. The second day is when the trip truly begins, with a long hike up a hill to the campsite. At the campsite, the students learn how to purify the water from the nearby stream.

This challenging experience helps prepare students for not only the future backpacking trips, but also for stressful situations in general. Gunn Outdoors creates this event so that the students will reflect on their experiences and learn from them. Walking miles with heavy backpacks is not meant to be easy. Instead, it's meant to help people connect through the difficulties they experienced. Filtering water, setting up tents, and cooking food on a tiny, portable stove was never meant to be a simple experience; but these journeys allow first-years to work in groups and rely on each other for help when needed.

Evan Quin, a first-year who participated the first trip in the 2025-2026 school year said that "Over the course of this trip, I have learned not only the importance of teamwork through the hike up to the camping ground, setting up the tents, but other small things and tasks that we had to do as a collective. In addition to teamwork we also had to learn important leadership and communication skills related to anything from talking to each other, to making sure that all the needs of every person are heard and met."



These trips allow first-years to become open to teamwork instead of being independent learners all the time. Looking forward, this tradition will continue to connect first-years through challenging adventures and learning experiences.

## New English Faculty Bring Fresh Voices to Gunn

By Abdul Meite '26

The Frederick Gunn School welcomed two new English teachers this fall, a move that brings both fresh perspectives and veteran experience to its curriculum while strengthening the school's commitment to student success. Their arrival represents more than just staffing changes, it highlights Gunn's ongoing investment in a dynamic, engaging learning environment.

The new hires join a faculty known for its dedication to both academics and character development. Entering a teaching environment that differs from their previous schools, they find themselves navigating unique classes, expectations, and extracurricular responsibilities. While such changes present challenges, they also create opportunities to experiment with new approaches to instruction, connect with a new community of students, and improve Gunn's academic and social life.

Administrators note that these appointments are not simply about filling positions but about enhancing the student experience. Smaller class sizes, a hallmark of Gunn's program, are expected to allow for more personalized instruction and meaningful class discussions. At the same time, the diverse backgrounds of the new teachers bring a wealth of perspectives that encourage students to think critically and reflect on ideas from multiple angles.

Beyond the classroom, these faculty members are contributing to the broader community. Among the additions are not only English teachers but also educators in other core subjects and a coach who will serve as a faculty advisor. This blend of roles goes into Gunn's educating the students, ensuring that learning extends into athletics, clubs, and advisory programs.

"There's a lot of learning on the fly, and while it's a lot to take in, but it is a lot of fun," said Ms. Abigail Weiss, reflecting on the excitement and challenges of transitioning into her new role. Her enthusiasm captures the spirit of growth and exploration that characterizes both new faculty members and the students they teach.

By welcoming these educators, The Frederick Gunn School continues to affirm its mission of academic excellence balanced with personal growth. With new voices in the classroom and new mentors on campus, Gunn's students gain not only knowledge but also fresh perspectives that prepare them for challenges beyond the school's walls.



## Boys V1 Crew on the 3rd Place @ Head of Housatonic

By Chris (Taeyun) Kwon '27

The first-years of Frederick Gunn experienced the freedom of being offline as they started their overnight trips through the Appalachian Trail with Gunn Outdoors. They learned how to face challenges head on as a group and built resilience for the coming academic year.

In this race, there were three boats participating on the boy's side: Argo (V1), Reich (V2), and Mecha (Novice). It was the first and last race for Reich and Mecha this season. The weather was harsh with wind and light rain. Argo was in third place, winning the bronze medal, and they were only two seconds behind the second place St. Joseph's Prep. In each of their races, Reich was in 20th place, and Mecha was in fourth place. Regardless of the results, all of the Highlanders fought hard for their boats.

Rowing is a sport that builds up cooperation. If all of the rowers believe in each other and row all together with coxswain's direction, their boat will move forward and be faster. On the other hand, if they only focus on their own strokes without following the person in front of each other, the boat might flip, ending a race. Unlike other sports, the powerful performance of some individuals does not determine the result of the race in rowing; instead, togetherness is the key factor that brings the victory. Rowing is a great way to strengthen friendships and mutual bonds with trust.

"Rowing equals discipline. Rowers and coxswains do the same thing repeatedly, aiming to get better every time," said Matthew Marchiony, a new coach who joined the Gunn Crew this school year. "I think that the medal-winning performance of the V1 crew in Housatonic came from what they learned from their previous race in Riverfront, where they didn't place. They took each practice with a more serious mentality to be fully prepared. For all three boats, it was great to see everyone's presence in launching and landing."



The Gunn Crew has two seasons in a school year: fall with long distance race and spring with sprint race. Every May, they host the Founders Day Regatta on Lake Wamaug.





# The Highlander

## New Athletic Director Colleen Fink Sends Highlander

By Elizabeth Parent '26

The Frederick Gunn School hired Division 1 Field Hockey coach, Ms. Colleen Quinn Fink, as the school's new athletic director, bringing fifteen years of NCAA Division 1 coaching experience onto campus to help elevate and accelerate the student athletic experience.



Fink recently completed her fifteenth year as the Head Field Hockey Coach at the University of Pennsylvania. During Fink's coaching career at UPENN, she recruited and coached 43 All-Ivy league players. As well as two Ivy League Rookies of the Year and 14 Academic All-Ivy players. Fink was looking for a new type of leadership role, as she had spent the last fifteen years in the same position.

The Frederick Gunn School opened the position of Athletic Director after former athletic director, Michael Marich, retired. Marich served in this position from 2016 until spring of 2025. During this time, the Frederick Gunn School's athletic program has thrived. Many of our teams, including ice hockey, and field hockey have gone on to represent the Highlanders NEPSAC postseason tournaments.

Coming from a Division 1 Ivy League school, Fink brings a new level of expertise onto campus. Students have already noticed Fink's exuberance cheering on the field hockey team and supporting the coaches and referees from the side lines. However, Fink's love for sports does not just stop at field hockey, as she is seen at many of the home games for other Gunn teams.

When asked about her hopes for the future of The Frederick Gunn School's athletic program, Fink said, "My biggest thing that's going to be the most impactful for the students is creating a sense of pride, belonging, and fun through co-curricular activities." Now that the fall term is underway, we are already seeing a high number of students coming onto the sidelines and cheering each other on, one of Fink's main goals.

## Bringing the Harlem Lacrosse Mission to Our Campus

By Abdul Meite '26

Harlem Lacrosse, a non-profit sport and education program, helps students in cities like New York, Boston, and Baltimore develop leadership and academic skills through the game of lacrosse.

Founded in 2011, Harlem Lacrosse works directly in public schools providing academic support, mentorship, and athletic training to over 1000 students nationwide. The program focuses on using lacrosse as a tool to build confidence and open pathways to higher education. Many participants have earned scholarships to private schools and colleges crediting the program for transforming their goals both on and off the field.

Programs like Harlem Lacrosse highlight how sports can break social barriers and create opportunities in underserved communities. By combining academics, mentorship, and athletics, Harlem Lacrosse gives students a safe space to learn teamwork, discipline, and responsibility. Its model shows that success in sports can be a powerful gateway to academic achievement and leadership development. Across the country, similar programs are starting to adopt Harlem Lacrosse's approach, recognizing that when young people are given structure, guidance, and belief in their potential, they can overcome obstacles that extend far beyond the playing field.



One Harlem Lacrosse participant at Cheshire Academy Nizay Smalls had this to share. "Harlem Lacrosse has had a big impact on my life because it demonstrated to me what leadership is and knowing that a program is gonna have your back until the end."



## Mid-Autumn Festival: Spread of Asian Culture in FGS

By Chris (Taeyun) Kwon '27

On October 6, the Asian Students Association (ASA) at The Frederick Gunn School hosted an annual Mid-Autumn Festival in the Hall of Flags to introduce holiday celebrations in Asia to the FGS community.

The tradition of celebrating the Mid-Autumn Festival in FGS started in 2019, and it is mainly about three East Asian countries: South Korea, China, and Japan. Like how Americans celebrate Thanksgiving, Asian countries celebrate Mid-Autumn Festival to spend time with family and relatives, having special meals and wishing for the success in harvest under the full, bright moon. Students in ASA representing those countries brought popular snacks and ran entertaining events to enjoy their holiday with all the members of the FGS community. The Chinese section brought mooncakes, which is the full moon shaped pastry filled with red bean paste. The Korean section ran a workshop of writing names in the Korean alphabet Hangul, and the Japanese section had mochi and ramen.

The celebration of holidays around the world plays a key role in a boarding school life. For international students, it is a great opportunity to feel rooted to their countries through food and traditional games while studying in the United States, far away from their families. For domestic students, it can make them expand their view of understanding by experiencing cultures they are unfamiliar with. Celebrating holidays provides a great moment for memorable interaction among international and domestic students.

"My favorite part during the festival was looking around and seeing people from different countries gathering together and sharing their own cultures," said Ahram Kim '26, a leader of the Asian Students Association. "I would describe this festival as connection and inclusion because it connects people, and brings everyone together through food, traditions, and shared joy. I hope ASA can also become a safe zone and welcoming place to students away from home, and where they can learn and experience."

Throughout the school year, students in ASA host multiple events to share Asian cultures with domestic students as well as faculty members. For example, they have dumpling making sessions in winter during Lunar New Year, and they take part in the global fair in spring. ASA is open to any Asian-identifying Highlanders.





# The Highlander

## The Highlanders Own The Turf “Under The Lights”

By JonJon Feliciano '26

Cheers echoed throughout The Frederick Gunn Schools campus this Saturday as the Highlander football team dominated Albany Academy on the turf in their annual “Under the Lights” game that had the school’s student section going electric.

The student section kept the energy buzzing, students dressed in Halloween costumes and led coordinated chants, keeping the Highlanders momentum alive throughout all 48 minutes of the game. After every touchdown, the crowd erupted in excitement, music blasted, and waves went up and down across the crowd. “Under the Lights” was more than just a game for the Highlanders but it was a battle for them. This team is a family that supports and motivates each other on and off the field. By the final whistle, not only were the team’s skills highlighted, but that shows when the community comes together, a strong sense of pride is created and support for everyone.



The Highlander Football team has officially secured a winning season with two games left, possibly having a chance of a championship game, hoping to bring back a trophy to Gunn. Members of the school community supported the team, fueling the team’s motivation on the field, influencing the Highlanders to go all out and show who owns the turf. Ava Mason '26 had this to say about the contest. “The game was a great way to bring the community together and bring fun Halloween spirit to campus. I loved cheering on my friends who played in the game.”

For the team, this night was more than just a game for them, the players showed their dedication and hard work they have put in the whole season. The support from the crowd created many memories and truly showcased what it means to be a Highlander. The Highlanders are on track to accomplish greatness, holding their passion at their hips, helping them run through the night.

## Spooky Season at Gunn

By Elizabeth Parent '26

It’s almost Spooky Season! If you listen closely, you may catch some Highlanders howling at the full moon or girls in Van Sinderen arguing about Halloween costumes during this time of year, as campus begins to adjust to colder temperatures and a different style of living.

Each year, the prefects host the Halloween Dance: a time when students and even some faculty dress up as whatever their hearts desire. Despite all the hype centered around the Halloween dance, there are also plenty of other things to do on campus. Every year, each House competes in a House Decorating Challenge, in which they gather Halloween decorations and try to make the outsides of the dorm as festive as possible. Mrs. Low had started a tradition to include children from Washington and surrounding communities to enjoy the Halloween spirit and see an entirely different side of Gunn. Lucy McMann, age four, says that she loves Halloween because “I like candy.” She intends to be a witch this year.

Although Halloween on campus is undoubtedly one of the best times here at Gunn, there are also plenty of off-campus trips and activities many students participate in. JonJon Feliciano, 26, says he “loves going pumpkin picking with his friends and turning them into Jack-o’-lanterns.” In addition to pumpkin picking, there is also apple picking, Averill Farms apple cider donuts in the library on Sundays, and, perhaps most excitingly... Long weekend!

A long weekend allows students some needed rest and recovery. Many students go home, yet some stay for the weekend, which involves more fun activities for students who decide to remain on campus. Many parents also come down to campus during the preceding Fall Family Weekend, in which they visit classes, meet teachers, and get a sense of life as a student at Gunn. After all, fall is one of the most exciting times on campus for Gunn students, faculty, and children in the Washington community.



## Peer Tutoring

By Chris Kwon '27

Led by the Academics Office, The Frederick Gunn School officially launched a peer tutoring program starting from the 2025-26 school year to support any of the Highlanders who are struggling with their assignments or upcoming exams.



Recently, the Academics Office checked applications and selected 26 peer tutors consisting of first-years to seniors. They work until the end of fall term, and the Academics Office accepts new applications every term. The peer tutors are divided into groups of 4-5 and assigned to different times on weekdays: Monday meeting block (2:25 PM - 3:10 PM) or Tuesday/Thursday study hall (8:00 PM - 9:00 PM) in the Tisch Library quiet room. The session on Monday is available for all of the Highlanders, and the sessions on Tuesday and Thursday are only open to sophomores, juniors, and seniors who are permitted to use the library during study hall.

For high school students, academic growth is critical for their future learning in college. Asking peer tutors for help is one of the efficient ways to gain knowledge and understand difficult concepts because they create a comfortable learning environment by giving less pressure compared to adults. They are well aware of many academic struggles high school students encounter. This opportunity also benefits peer tutors themselves to learn how to be a responsible, supportive citizen. The motto of The Frederick Gunn School is “A good person is always learning.” Following the motto, peer tutoring allows both tutors and other students to learn something new.

“I would describe a peer tutoring program as building a community. Peer tutoring is not about preparing for an assessment or just understanding a concept. The goal of the program is about fostering a culture where students lift one another up and take ownership of their learning,” said Mr. Koza, the Dean of Academics in The Frederick Gunn School. “I want to help build a community where we champion the process of learning. I know we have so many amazing students at Gunn and this is an opportunity for them to improve their own understanding as well as help others.”

The peer tutoring program at Gunn is available starting on September 22, 2025.





# The Highlander

## Halloween Dance

By Thomas Hagymasi '28

With Halloween right around the corner, The Frederick Gunn School's annual Halloween Dance kicked a week of revelry, tricks, and treats. The dance is a tradition where students come together, dress up in costumes of all sorts and spend quality time with one another on the dance floor.

Led by the prefects, this school wide event is always a favorite. It took place in TPACC where the students were very thrilled to see the amazing scenery, with tons of blowups, fake candles, and snacks. In addition to these items, there was an amazing DJ who helped bring the hype to the party. The upbeat music helped encourage people to dance and jump up and down, helping form an exciting environment for everyone.

The Halloween Dance allows students to express themselves through their lively costumes. Duo or group costumes are quite common. Effective communication and teamwork are necessary to pull off these feats. Students bond through this challenge of creativity, as they normally spend lots of time before the event planning out what they will wear. At the event, it is common that classmates will give out compliments to each other for their amazing outfits, creating a sense of positivity throughout the whole night. Students also take lots of photos to store the memories as the event was full of joy and creativity.

According to Caden Crowley '28, a student who attended the school dance, "The Halloween dance really brought everyone together because it gave us a chance to just have fun and connect outside of the academic classes. A lot of people went with their friends in duo or group costumes, took photos together, and we all danced to music with everyone in one space. It made the whole night feel like a celebration with the FGS community. The Halloween dance was truly one of my favorite activities yet."

The Halloween Dance is a very effective way of sharing creativity and kindness with classmates as students gain confidence through the costume they bring to the party. Looking forward, FGS is excited to continue this tradition, allowing people to show off their creativity every year.



## Fall at Gunn



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