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Congratulations Maya Delamater and Amanda Dye on your selection to the Senior Hall of Fame.

— Love, Mrs. Humphrey

Karl and Charlotte Eschmann

*Go Eagles!*

— Bay Browne, Max Browne

Thank you to Mr. Hernandez for your generous support of the Eagle Echo!

Shawna Crist

Keith Lamm, Edward Jones Investments

Elisa Mitchiner, Niceville historian

*In loving memory of Connie Norton Gal, Class of 1982*

— Mary Norton

*In honor of all JROTC students.*

— Lt. Col. James Tucker, U.S. Army retired

*In loving memory of Tim Jennings, Class of 1981*

— Tami Jennings Ofenloch, Class of 1980

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— Betsy Christianson

Vivien James

*Best wishes from the Class of 1980.*

— Donna Lilly Wicks

*Go Eagles!*

— The Farabaugh family

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*Good luck Eagles!*

— Deborah Duncan

Ada Lisa Bellomy

*Go Eagles!*

— Mary Taylor Sims, Class of 1980

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Tom and Martha Woodcock

*Congratulations Eagle Echo and good luck!*

— Sherman and Laurie Eller, Class of 1980 and 1982

*Best wishes to the Eagle Echo staff.*

— Okaloosa County School Board member Linda Evanchyk

*Congratulations on another year of reporting!*

— Okaloosa County School Board member Tim Bryant

*In honor of the Class of 1980: Go Eagles!*

— Deanna Hodge Gelak

*Keep up the great work you all are doing to keep the NHS community informed.*

— Hope McCormick





NICEVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

# EAGLE ECHO

*What we do in life echoes in eternity.*

- Maximus in "Gladiator"

Volume 4, Number 3

January 2024

## Eagle Pride on Parade



More than 200 members of the Niceville High School Eagle Pride marching band represented the school and the greater Niceville community at the Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, Calif., on New Year's Day. This is the third time that the band has been invited to participate in the prestigious event. See story on Page 3.



NHS Principal Charlie Marello is recognized as one of Okaloosa's top principals. See Page 2.



# Hail to the Chief! Marelo Honored

Congratulations to our own Mr. Marelo, who was recently named Secondary Principal of the Year for Okaloosa County. Mr. Marelo was kind enough to answer a few questions from the Eagle Echo.

**Q: What year did you graduate from NHS?**  
**A:** 1990

**Q: You played baseball at NWFSC and UWF, correct? What year did you graduate?**  
**A:** I did play baseball at both. Graduated NWF in 93 and UWF in 95.

**Q: What was your first job in education? What year? Where was your first principal assignment? What year?**  
**A:** ESE Teacher, assistant football and head baseball coach at Freeport High School in 1998. My first principal assignment was at Emerald Coast Middle School in Walton County from 2011-2013.

**Q: You've been the principal at Niceville since 2016, correct?**  
**A:** Correct, this is my eighth year.

**Q: What was your favorite subject in high school?**  
**A:** English/Writing. I actually enjoyed writing essays.

**Q: When you're not at school, what is your favorite pastime?**  
**A:** I like outdoor stuff - exercising, yardwork, golf, etc.

**Q: What's something that no one at NHS knows about you?**  
**A:** I was born in New York and later lived on a tomato farm in Kentucky.

**Q: Can you sum up your feelings about being named Principal of the Year in a few sentences?**  
**A:** I was honored to be named Principal of the Year, but the credit for that award goes to our faculty, staff and students, who make our school the very model of Excellence in Education that we are. GO EAGLES!



Okaloosa County School District Superintendent Marcus Chambers, left, congratulates Charlie Marelo on being named Okaloosa County Secondary School Principal of the Year.

## Welcome to 2024: New Year, New Developments

Welcome back from Winter Break and Happy New Year! As we kiss the first semester goodbye and embrace the last half of the school year with open and reluctant arms, I hope the first month of 2024 has brought new beginnings and resolutions that may actually last until May.

The new year has brought a new addition to the *Eagle Echo*: a podcast! The first episode of our podcast is out on streaming platforms for you to enjoy our content without having to read. More episodes will be released intermittently, and we will announce the next episode



Maya Delamater

on our Instagram @niceville\_eagleecho, so make sure to follow our account and keep your eyes peeled!

The Eagle Pride has also rung in the new year with their participation in the Rose Bowl Parade in Pasadena, Calif. You can read more about the preparation process in Lily Suttlemyre's article on the Pride's achievements and hard work.

Winter sports are still persever-

ing as the temperatures drop and the rain continues to pour. Basketball is dominating the court, soccer is ruling the field, wrestling is pinning the mats, and girls weightlifting is hitting PRs—Andie Warmack hit a 165 bench. Spring is approaching fast, and we'll have plenty of showers to bring May flowers.

With only two quarters left of the 2023-24 school year, don't lose sight of the light at the end of the tunnel—graduation will be here before you know it. Don't succumb to the dangers of senioritis, and keep those grades up!

## The Eagle Echo Staff

- Publisher:** Charles Marelo
- Editor-in-Chief:** Maya Delamater
- Assistant Editor:** Hannahlaura Schuchhardt
- Sports Editor:** McKinsey Lamm
- Digital Editor:** Lillian Suttlemyre
- Advertising Director:** Kenley Lafitte
- Graphics Editor:** Cassie Price
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- Faculty Sponsor:** Kelly Humphrey

The Eagle Echo is produced by the members of the Niceville High School Newspaper Club. The opinions expressed by individual writers are theirs alone and do not represent the Newspaper Club, the faculty and administration of Niceville High School, or the Okaloosa County School District.

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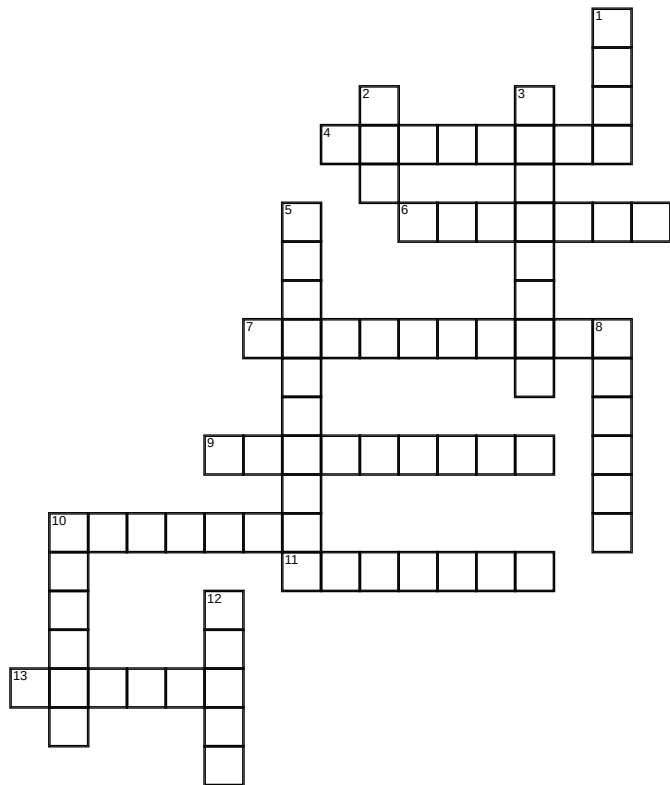
### Chains of Gratitude

PHOTO BY SOFIA RUIZ

Mental health providers Ms. Peck and Ms. Heald set up a table near the cafeteria once a month to promote mental wellness. Right before Thanksgiving break, they invited students to create gratitude chains.



# NHS Puzzler



Are you a puzzle master? The first person to bring a correctly completed puzzle to Mrs. Humphrey in Room 618 will win a \$10 gift card!

### ACROSS

- 4 This month is an extra day long this year.
- 6 What some kids did at the beach.
- 7 We honor them on Feb. 19.
- 9 Cupid's special day.
- 10 Our girls team lifts lots of these.
- 11 Okaloosa County's Secondary Principal of the Year
- 13 Taylor Haugen Trophy winner Garrison \_\_\_\_\_.

### DOWN

- 1 Our new podcast is called Eagles Off \_\_\_\_\_.
- 2 Club that took kids on a shopping spree for Christmas.
- 3 Home of the Tournament of Roses Parade.
- 5 Scholastic \_\_\_\_\_ Week is Feb. 19 - 23.
- 8 Our next big break.
- 10 Eagle Pride band director.
- 12 This team has won the state championship four years in a row.

# NHS Comic

by Cassie Price



## Quill and Scroll

Members of the Quill and Scroll Journalism Honor Society conducted a toy drive before winter break to benefit the children at Opportunity Place, an Okaloosa County shelter for unhoused families. Pictured from left to right are Shar Nelson, Opportunity Place's Felicia Waters, Hannahlaura Schuchhardt, and Cassie Price.





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Once you have opened a checking account here are a few tips that will help you manage your account responsibly:

**Download the Mobile App:** You will want to monitor your available balance in your checking account on a daily basis. Never spend money you do not have. Set up an Alert Notification on your account to notify you when your available balance is below \$10.

**Understand when and how fees are charged:** If you accidentally spend more money than what you have available in your account, you may be charged a Non-Sufficient Funds fee which can cost anywhere from \$25 to \$35 for each occurrence. Overdraft Protection options are usually available which will transfer money from your savings account to cover a purchase that exceeds your balance in checking. This is OK once in a blue moon, but you only want to tap into savings for emergencies.

**Automate your deposits and payments:** Check with your employer and set up direct deposit of your paycheck to go directly into your account. You can set up with your bank for a percentage of your paycheck to automatically go to savings with the rest going to your checking account. You can also set up your monthly payments to automatically come out of your checking account so you never pay a late fee. Systematic savings and checking deposits help you to manage your finances responsibly.

Remember to always make sure you maintain a positive balance in your account, and never spend more than you have. Wise money management now will give you an excellent head start at building great credit.

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**Courtney Dollson**



### Teacher of the Month

Congratulations to English teacher Ms. Merriott, who was named the 850 The Wharf Niceville Area Teacher of the Month in December.





PHOTO BY LILY SUTTLEMYRE

Before leaving for Pasadena, members of the Eagle Pride put on a performance for the community in Eagle Stadium.

# The long, long road to Pasadena

By Lily Suttlemyre

It's the evening of December 26, 2023, five days until the Eagle Pride takes one of the biggest stages for a high school band: The 135th Tournament of Roses Parade. It's been 22 months of planning and preparation, and the excited energy in the air tonight is palpable.

5:30 p.m.: Tragedy has struck the band. Drum major Maddy Middleton has recently broken her arm, and the team is scrambling to rework a particular salute they perform on the parade route. Band parents are beginning to trickle into Eagle Stadium. If you peer down onto the field, the drumline is playing their pre-practice game of pickup football, though it appears as if they are not following any particular set of rules. The band volunteer coordinator is set up at a small folding table by the press box, selling lanyards and pins imprinted with rose parade graphics.

5:45 p.m.: The music starts. It's a medley of classic crowd pleasers, from "Love Shack" to "Thunderstruck." The crowd is pouring in now, slowly filling the stands. Talking to trombone player Cannon Stringfellow, he notes the chill in the air. It's a cool 56 degrees in the Nest tonight, and everyone seems to be bundled up accordingly. Well, almost everyone. While the Eagle Pride operates with military-like precision in almost everything they do, the practice dress code is not one of them. Attire ranges from flannel pajamas, to Lululemon athleisure, to a few bold trumpeters wearing gym shorts.

6:00 p.m.: Drum major Aurora Mendenhall blows her whistle. The band snaps to attention, assembling into parade formation at a speed that would rival most militias. While most warm-ups are casual and haphazard, this one is most definitely not. The band launches into an array of scales and chorales, complete with a synchronized march in place.

6:04: A crying color guard member is escorted to the sideline, having been struck in the head by a wild flag. Turns out band does come with a risk of injury.

Band Director Dan Wooten then begins his welcome speech, addressing the now well-packed cheering section. He lays out the agenda for the evening, before describing the journey to get here, recounting the physical conditioning the band has done, as well as the intense marching practice. He also emphasizes the one particular feat they must perform along the parade route: TV Corner. This 105-degree turn comes about a quarter mile into the parade route, where every major television network positions their cameras. Wooten remarks, "We all get together and do a little seance at the first directors' meeting and hope the blimp doesn't show our band." (He's of course referring to the famous GoodYear blimp that has been aerially covering the event for 67 years.)

The band makes three parade loops around the field before being excused to get water and prepare for halftime. The band dads move in, pulling out podiums and setting up field markers on yard lines. There's at least 10 of them on the sideline, and the one I happen to be standing next to is aggressively talking into a Bluetooth earpiece. The whistle sounds again, and the band launches into halftime. But they don't even make it 30 seconds into "American Salute" before Wooten stops them. It appears the tubas are having a volume issue, which he makes clear to them by declaring, "If the tubas are playing, then I'm the Pope." They make it through the next song, but 15 seconds into "Hey Pachuco" they are stopped again. This time, the issue lies with the



Percussionist Caden Charlton prepares for the show.

PHOTO BY LILY SUTTLEMYRE

trumpets. "I believe I heard a potato head come in early from the trumpet section," says Wooten. The trumpet resolves their issue, and the Pride finishes a run of their halftime show to thunderous applause from the audience.

Then, it's time to get sentimental. Wooten thanks the community members and businesses who have made the Rose Parade trip happen, and shouts out the alumni in the audience, going all the way back to the 2005 Fiesta Bowl trip. He notes that siblings are standing together in the parade formation, and happily embarrasses Sarah Marelllo by recalling her attendance to the Rose Parade as an 8-year-old spectator, and now as a sophomore marching in the band.

Following his speech, the band heads inside for one last trip information meeting. There one can find Doug Woodley, the Band Booster President and Rose Parade Committee head. He deftly walks students through the security process and cautions them against two prohibited items: vapes and video games. The trip is so large that they've chartered a Boeing 777, a three row, wide-body airplane typically used on long-hauls. Even that plane can't fit everyone, with an additional 25 flying commercially. Those on the charter flight will be bused directly onto the Eglin Flight Line, escorted by two Niceville police officers joining the band on the trip. Woodley comments that NHS isn't even the largest band going, with some bands up to 500 members.

As one can expect, the operation is costly. The band's total trip cost is \$1.25 million, for all approximately 400 people going. Students paid for some of that cost themselves, but much of it was subsidized by the band. Woodley filled me in on the fundraising operations, noting that most came from football concessions, which generate anywhere from \$10k-12k a night for the band. From their enormous efforts, the band was able to offer a multitude of scholarships, ensuring finances wouldn't be a barrier to attendance.

Dec. 30, 5:00 a.m.: The band room has been turned into a miniature TSA, screening kids and bags for contraband. At around 6:00 a.m., the band boards their fleet of school buses and heads off, receiving well wishes from an army of parents and supporters lining John Sims Parkway. After arriving in sunny Los Angeles, the band embarks on their charter buses, and head off for

some sightseeing. A stop at the farmer's market and some photo ops at the Chinese Theatre later, the band heads to the Long Beach Westin to stay the night. The next few days are full of attractions: the California Science Center, building floats for the parade, an LA Kings hockey game, and a visit to Knott's Berry Farm.

The band also performs at BandFest, a showcase for all of the bands that march in the Rose Bowl. Pasadena City College's small football stadium is absolutely packed, both with traveling band fans and locals eager to see this year's talent. Following performances by the Tournament of Roses Honor Band and the Japanese Toho Marching Band (which interestingly included band members dressed up as Power Rangers), it's time for Niceville.

Easily the largest band at the event, the Pride gives their best halftime performance yet, and are rewarded with booming applause (and unceremonious banging of the souvenir drums provided by Remo). Not only that, but a standing ovation by much of the stadium. At least one person was brought to tears, overcome with school spirit (me). As the band marches out of the stadium, those surrounding me begin to murmur about how incredible the band was, and in these moments I have never felt prouder to be an Eagle.

Then, on New Year's Day, it's time for the main event: The Rose Parade. TV commentators note the band's military setting and often unconventional roster, and one particularly proud anchor even shouts out Niceville for representing the small towns of America. Following a 4 a.m. wakeup and almost 6-mile parade march, the band feels it's time for In-N-Out Burger and a nap. That night, they celebrate their accomplishments with a dinner/dance on the famous Queen Mary ship. Many Niceville students might have noticed their Instagram feeds flooded with trip posts from proud band kids shortly following this.

As the band heads home, it's hard not to reminisce about the journey of this trip. From the announcement in Spring 2023, to the endless fundraising through the fall, to the chilly December practices, it seems as if it all has gone by so fast. As the band begins concert season preparations, and this reporter departs Pasadena to go tour colleges, I hope that we all can remember the joyous experience that was Rose Bowl 2024. GO EAGLES!



# Student Journalism is Alive and Well

By Kelly Humphrey, Eagle Echo faculty sponsor

During the week of Feb. 19-25, the world will observe Scholastic Journalism Week. During this special time, student journalists and their supporters will celebrate the hardworking young people who take part in journalism activities at high schools and colleges around the country.

Here at Niceville High School, we have so much to celebrate. For decades, our yearbook journalism students have carried out a tradition of excellence, producing award-winning editions of the *Aquila*. For the past four years, a dedicated team of young journalists have set about to reinvigorate our school's newspaper legacy with the relaunch of the *Eagle Echo*, which premiered in its new form in December 2020.

Starting with a six-person team of students under the direction of then-editor Ashlee Robinson, the Echo has grown from an eight-page print product with limited color to a 12-page, full color newspaper that will print five issues this year. Under the leadership of current editor Maya Delamater, the Echo now features a staff of around 15 student journalists, including writers, photographers, artists, and graphic designers. That outnumbers the amount of professional journalists at all of the newspapers in Okaloosa County combined. Is it any wonder that our team dominated at the Troy University Student Journalism Competition last fall, winning mul-

## Stay Informed

You can keep up with everything that's going on at NHS by visiting the Eagle Echo's website (which can be found on the NHS school site), our Instagram Page at Niceville\_Eagle Echo, or our Eagle Echo Facebook page. Be sure to check out our Eagles Off Duty podcast on Spotify, Apple podcasts, iTunes, and other podcast platforms.

multiple individual awards as well as Best Overall Newspaper and Best Multimedia Program?

In recent months, our students have expanded the Eagle Echo's footprint into the digital realm. Under Digital Editor Lily Suttlemyre's leadership, we now have a website that features breaking news and sports reports, as well as a digital archive of our previous print issues. Lily also oversees our Instagram presence, where we have more than 500 followers and have recorded more than 6,500 impressions.

Right before the Christmas break, our students achieved a goal that they set for themselves on the bus trip back from the Troy Journalism Conference in October. On Dec. 13, the first episode dropped of our new podcast, "Eagles Off Duty." Produced by Kenley Lafitte and written by Hannahlaura Schuchhardt and Annelyse

Smedley, the podcast is hosted by Echo staffers Sam Knight and Lily Suttlemyre, with reports from Sports Editor McKinsey Lamm and others. This new addition to the journalism program at NHS will drop new episodes every other month, with the next one scheduled for Feb. 29.

Last year, in order to recognize the academic excellence of journalism students at NHS, we reactivated our chapter of Quill and Scroll, the international journalism honor society. Last semester, members of our chapter hosted a toy drive that collected two grocery carts worth of toys for the children at Opportunity Place, an Okaloosa County homeless shelter.

In addition to their editorial duties, our students our learning about the business side of journalism. Each student is responsible for recruiting advertisers and sponsors to help pay the bills of printing a full-color newspaper five times a year. We are deeply indebted to the many businesses and individuals who help us with this enormous task, and acknowledge their help on our sponsor page at the back of every issue.

I'm incredibly proud of the student journalists who work so hard to bring you the Eagle Echo in all its forms. We appreciate the support that our publisher, Mr. Marelo, gives to us, and are grateful for readers like you. We look forward to celebrating Scholastic Journalism Week this year, and for many years to come.

# A Shopping Spree with NHS Key Club

By Hannahlaura Schuchhardt

Every year, Niceville High School's Key Club collaborates with Kiwanis, a nonprofit organization, to embrace the holiday season. Last year, children from all over Niceville - Plew Elementary School, Ruckel Middle School, etc. - were invited to participate in the Kiwanis yearly Christmas event at Walmart. This holiday "shopping spree" is one where children are able to sing along to Christmas carols, meet Santa Claus, make friends, and cross some gifts off of their wish-list. As the children arrived at Walmart, they were welcomed with a nice breakfast before the gift buying commenced. As the children enjoyed eating donuts and fruit, they sang along to popular and classic Christmas songs such as Rudolph the Rednosed Reindeer, Frosty the Snowman, and Jingle Bells. After they finished their meal, a surprise visitor, Santa Claus, greeted the children. They were all given the opportunity to speak individually with Santa as he handed out goodie bags filled with chocolates and candies.

As the time for picking out presents approached, the children were each given a budget of \$60 to spend. From there, the Key Clubbers and children went throughout the store in search for the perfect gift. Emma Lopez-Santamaria, the Social Media Manager of Niceville's Key Club, voiced her experience with the event.

"It was my first year participating in the Kiwanis Shopping Spree, and I had a lot of fun," she exclaimed. She noted that working together with the children to budget their money and pick out small or large gifts was very entertaining and a great way to start the winter season. Emma was paired to help two very excited twin boys pick out their gifts. Overall they bought a Mini Etch-a-sketch, a Nerf gun, a board game called Operation, and some mini blind toy bags.

Meya Martin, the president of the NHS Key Club, has worked with Kiwanis on this special event for three years.

"My favorite moment is actually from this most recent Christmas, because as I was walking down an aisle past a high-schooler and this little boy, I overheard them having the most passionate conversation about Beyblades. I loved how the older boy used his years of knowledge to help the younger one decide what to get," she said. "It was the cutest thing ever and it really just reminded me of what it was like to be a kid."

Meya mentioned that watching the children come out of their shells and connect with teens over toys brings her an immense amount of joy.

As 2024 begins, Key Club is getting ready for another year of serving the community. Their upcoming events feature supplying goods for homeless kids and teens in Okaloosa County at Crosspoint Church, collecting supplies for the Alaqua Animal Refuge, and making fleece tie blankets at their upcoming meeting. Anyone is welcome to contribute to the cause! For more information about Key Club's service projects and community involvement, you can visit their Instagram page @nhs\_key\_official.



A little boy spends his shopping spree looking for the best Star Wars present.



Above, As Key Club members assist the children in picking out toys, silliness ensues.

At right, Santa greets the children with goodie bags and Christmas spirit!







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The corps celebrated its change of command ceremony at the start of the new semester.

## JROTC REPORT

The FL-33rd AFJROTC Change of Command was completed on Jan. 10 when C/Col. Payton Hill assumed her position as the new Group Commander. Her Deputy Group Commander, C/Lt. Col. Matthew Jackson, was with her as they became the new cadet leadership for the second semester of the 2023-2024 school year. The foundation set by the outstanding leadership of Group Commander C/Col. Elizabeth Killman and Deputy Group Commander, C/Lt. Col. Noah Scopac will propel the FL-33rd to success.

**Here are the parting words from the outgoing Group Commander, C/Col. Elizabeth Killman:** During my tenure as Niceville High FL-33rd Corps Commander in the first semester of the 2023-2024 academic year, leading a remarkable group of cadets provided me with a profound understanding of the AFJROTC mission: “Building Better Citizens for America.” Seeing each cadet wear their uniform with pride and exude confidence was a powerful testament to our shared mission’s impact.

Engaging in activities like Cadet Orientation, ARGO, Wreaths Across America, and various field trips immersed me in the essence of our JROTC community. Cadet Orientation was particularly enriching, instilling core values and fostering camaraderie among incoming cadets. The ARGO program, emphasizing teamwork and leadership development, reinforced AFJROTC principles.

Participating in events like Wreaths Across America not only honored heroes but also underscored our role in shaping better citizens. The sense of duty displayed by every cadet during such activities was inspiring. Field trips added a dynamic element, allowing us to apply skills gained in real-world contexts, contributing to each cadet’s overall growth.

Reflecting on my time as Corps Commander fills

me with gratitude for contributing to the “Building Better Citizens for America” mission. The bonds forged, lessons learned, and collective spirit of the cadet corps have left an indelible mark.

Serving in this role was a privilege, and I’m confident that the foundation laid during my tenure will continue shaping tomorrow’s leaders within the AFJROTC community at Niceville High.

**Now, a message from the new FL-33rd Group Commander, C/Col. Payton Hill:**

“Life is divided into three terms—that which was, which is, and which will be. Let us learn from the past to profit by the present, and from the present to live better in the future.” - Wordsworth. To know what to do for the future, you have to learn from the past, you have to learn from failures. I’ve had seven corps commanders and eight deputies. I have watched them from the beginning. I’ve watched, learned, grew with and apart from others, seen trials and errors, achievement, and failure. I’ve seen the highs and the lows. I have learned from

them. I truly don’t know what this semester holds for me as a leader, but I know for a fact I will take all my knowledge and apply it to everything for the next 18 weeks. Cadet Jackson and I plan on building upon the foundation that Cadet Killman and Cadet Scopac have laid, and furthering it, for next semester. For myself it is not about “leaving a legacy.” It is more about making sure that everyone continues to succeed and excel to the best of their abilities. I am so thankful for this opportunity to be the new Corps Commander of the FL-33rd Unit.

Congratulations to both Payton Hill and Matthew Jackson and a big “thank you” to the Elizabeth Killman and Noah Scopac for a job WELL DONE!

Aim High and GO EAGLES!

### FL-33rd AFJROTC Change of Command

- New Group Commander: C/Col. Payton Hill
- New Deputy Group Commander: C/Lt. Col. Matthew Jackson
- Outgoing Group Commander: C/Col. Elizabeth Killman
- Outgoing Deputy Group Commander: C/Lt. Col. Noah Scopac



Members of the NHS Junior ROTC participated in the annual Wreaths Across America ceremony in December. The event honors deceased veterans by placing wreaths on their gravesites.



### Beachy Clean

Members of the Beach Cleanup Club braved the cold recently. Pictured from left to right are Avery Williams (president), Mia Navarre, Callie Colfer, Amari Sabatel, and Madison Merrill.

## COLLEGE CORNER

### What to Consider When Choosing a College

By Morgan Stewart

College application season is here, and this can be a stressful time for many students. It is crucial that students are aware of important factors to consider when choosing a college that suits them best.

One of the most important things that should influence your decision when choosing a college is choosing your major as well as minors.

A major is a specific subject or area of study you want to specialize in. It is necessary to know what types of classes you plan on taking and what types of majors and classes each college offers. The major you choose will also factor into the degree you will earn.

Another factor that should be considered when choosing a college is the types of academic and extracurricular activities that colleges may offer. You should consider the types of academic programs and extracurricular activities colleges offer because it can benefit you in many ways.

Extracurricular activities can help you expand your interests and also allow new social opportunities.

Academic programs and activities can help you further your knowledge or even give you a boost when it comes to credits and your degree.

Participating in extracurricular activities and academic programs can help you become a more well-rounded student.

When choosing what college you want to attend, you should also consider the location and setting. Location and setting can make a big difference when considering what college is the best fit for you.

Things to consider about the location include distance from home, along with campus atmosphere.

Distance from home is something that should be considered, especially if you plan to visit often.

Campus atmosphere will have a big impact on life after classes, or when you aren’t on campus. It is important to research the activities, places, restaurants and services near the college site.

Another factor that is one of the most important things you should consider when choosing a college is the cost and whether or not financial aid is available.

It is important to know the cost of the college you plan to attend for both the semester or year along with the total cost for the entirety of how long it will take you to earn your degree.

Knowing the costs will allow you to consider the affordability of the college or university you plan to choose. Having knowledge of the cost will also allow you to create a financial plan so that paying off costs will come easier.

Considering these major factors when choosing what college to attend will allow you to find a college that fits you and your interests.

Choosing a college is a life-changing decision that determines your future.

It is important to research all of these factors and acknowledge all of the pros and cons of each school you are interested in.

You should discuss these factors with parents and guardians as well as guidance counselors so you can make the best decision for you!



# HERE TO STAY

SCHOLASTIC JOURNALISM WEEK

FEB. 19-23, 2024



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Poster design by Mel'Quia Malone, 12,  
Sparkman High School, Harvest, Alabama



# Eagle Sports

## Cheerleaders Prep for State, Nationals

By McKinsey Lamm

Although football season has come to an end, the Niceville High School cheerleaders are far from finished for the year. In fact, their season has only just begun. Since learning their competition routines in October, the cheerleaders have been working tirelessly, racking up about 15 to 20 hours worth of practice per week.

The girls compete in about four to five competitions each season, including the FHSAA Cheerleading State Championship and the UCA National High School Cheerleading Championship. In years past, the Eagles have excelled at both the state and national competitions, placing first in the state for the past four years and earning fifth place for their traditional routine and second place for the game day routine at nationals in 2023.

The cheerleading team learns, perfects, and competes two different routines - one in the traditional category, and the other in the gameday category. Traditional is a technically difficult and fast-paced routine packed with elite stunts, tumbling and a short cheer, often involving signs.

According to senior cheerleader Haley Sage Stillings, the most difficult elements of this year's traditional routine are, "the running fulls and the hand-to-hand pop through to lib."

The gameday style routine places a higher emphasis on execution of motions and includes a dance choreo-



graphed to band music and a cheer completed with signs, flags, and megaphones. Although both competition categories are equally difficult to win, Niceville has a knack for executing a captivating and high-energy game day routine, enabling them to bring home first place at various competitions time and time again.

As with years past, this season's team is extremely talented and close-knit - two components necessary for success in the world of elite cheerleading.

"We have to be extremely bonded and trust one another so that we can perform well," Stillings said.

On Feb. 3, the team will venture to Lakeland, Fla., to compete in the FHSAA State Championship in pursuit of defending their four-year reign as state champions. Soon after the state competition, the team will travel to Orlando, Fla., to compete for a national title at the UCA National High School Cheerleading Championship, held on Feb. 9, 10, and 11.



PHOTO BY LILY SUTTLEMYRE AND MCKINSEY LAMM



## Winter Sports Roundup

By Athletic Director Daniel Griffin

The winter sports are having an incredible season. Many of our programs are at the top of their districts and regions as we progress into the playoffs and state competitions. It is a great time to be an Eagle watching all of the sports flourish.

Our **boys' soccer program** this year is sitting with a 16-2-1 record to date. As the playoffs approach, they seem prepared to make another deep run into the state playoffs.

Our **girls' soccer program** is showing great promise. They have an 11-2-4 record thus far on the season. They are looking very seasoned and strong heading into the post season and will most likely host a game in the districts and regionals in the coming weeks.

Our **girls' weightlifting team** is putting together a strong performance on the season. Fresh off of third-place finish at last week's tournament, they are preparing for Districts at home. Amber Gregory, Karmen Holley, and Carmen Freeman to name a few have been putting in the work and showing great promise in both traditional and Olympic lifts.

Our **competitive cheerleading program** continues to push the envelope. The defending state champions are well on their way to successfully defending their titles. Their routine is packed with a great degree of difficulty and creativity. They are spending the last few weeks in preparation for both state and nationals. They are fresh off a competition victory in which both JV and varsity teams won. The varsity team finished with the highest score of the day regardless of division.

Our **boys' basketball team** is standing at 8-11 heading into district play. They have showed tremendous growth and resiliency all season long. They have been very competitive in all their games.

Our **girls' basketball program** is on the rise and looking to be in strong contention as we approach the state finals. Their record to date is 15-4. All year long, they have shown tremendous determination and depth. Led by Anna Kimball, Carson Fayard, and Kayiah Hatcher, the Lady Eagles show tremendous promise toward the playoffs.

Our **men's wrestling program** led by Briar Cliff College Signee Asa Adams is off to a tremendous start. Week after week the men's wrestling team has shown that hard work and determination pay off. They are improving at an alarming rate and look poised to place many wrestlers on the podium come districts and regionals in the coming weeks. Their next home match will be on Jan. 31 in the gym.

The **Lady Eagles wrestling team** is full of young talent. Armed with one of the biggest ladies' teams in the Panhandle, the Lady Eagles wrestling team has high expectations moving into state competition. This team is very exciting to watch and is a very fast-rising sport that Niceville continues to increase participation in in the coming years. Led by Alexius Krummnow and Alexis Orcutt, the Lady Eagles will next be on display at home on Jan. 31, which is also senior recognition day.





# Eagle Sports



## Taylor Haugen Trophy

Brian and Kathy Haugen, parents of the late Taylor Haugen, present the Taylor Haugen Trophy to Niceville lacrosse player Garrison LeMire. The trophy is awarded each year to a student who, like Taylor, demonstrates a balance between academics, athleticism, leadership, community service and faith.

PHOTO BY LILY SUTTLEMYRE

## Future College Stars



PHOTO BY LILY SUTTLEMYRE

Congratulations to Aspen Young, who recently signed to play tennis at Colorado College, and Payton Hill, who will play lacrosse at Huntingdon College.



PHOTO BY MCKINSEY LAMM

A whopping 13 student athletes signed letters of intent to play their sport at the college level during a recent signing ceremony. Congratulations to Jeremiah Blair, who will play baseball at Pensacola State College; Aidan Broussard, who will participate in track and field at the University of Florida; Yaremi Figueroa will participate in track and field at Troy University, Ava Floro, who will participate in acrobatics and tumbling at Baylor University; Gracie Grant, who will join the golf team at Dallas Baptist University; Macey Kidder, who will play softball at the University of Mobile; Anna Kimball, who will play basketball at Rollins College; Elaina Perkins, who will participate in track and field at the University of Florida; Terrance Powe, who will participate in track and field at Florida International University; Deont'e Smith, who will participate in track and field at Florida A&M University; Colin Sorenson, who will play football at Charleston Southern University; and Samuel Trube, who will participate in track and field at Southern Mississippi.

