

# SCHOOL

A Special Supplement to the Sullivan County Democrat

# SCENE

A look  
at activities in  
The Wayne Highlands  
School District



SECTION F  
SEPTEMBER 6  
CALLICOON, NY



The reviews are in for Honesdale High School's new turf field for multiple sports, and they are very positive!

# Defending the home turf

STORY AND PHOTOS  
BY ALEX KIELAR

Last year, the Wayne Highlands School District undertook a project to redo its high school football field and turn it into a full turf sports field for football, baseball, soccer and field hockey. The project was completed a few weeks into the 2023-24 school year and the reviews have been

positive following nearly a full year under its belt.

Superintendent Mr. Greg Frigoletto said that they got onto the field about three or four games into last season.

"It's fully good to go now," the Superintendent said. "The turf project was a huge success. It is a great facility for our own programs and for community use. It has received rave reviews by the

students that can benefit from playing on it, so we're thrilled about that."

New Assistant Principal of Honesdale High School, Mr. Donald Cook, also raved about the new field.

"It's amazing," Cook said. "It's something that our community, especially in our school district, we were in dire need of. It's something that is not only getting used

## School Scene

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Above: The field is a short walk across a covered bridge from the parking lot.

At left: Included at the facility is a batting cage for baseball which is also turf.

for football. Every single home boys and girls soccer game is being played there as well as field hockey. So whenever that facility can be used for a home event, it's being used."

The field also includes a baseball diamond and attached batting cages, making it a strong facility for all sports.

"No pun intended, but it levels the playing field," said new Lakeside Elementary School Principal Mr. Peter Blaskiewicz. "Our kids have been playing on turf for a really long time and

[they] like to be able to practice and now play games on turf. It's a competitive advantage, plus it's just a beautiful facility and kids love it."

Cook said that student-athletes felt some disappointment the last couple of years having to play scheduled home events at a neutral site or an away site.

"It's frustrating," he said. "You like to have your home turf, no pun intended - you like to defend your home turf. It's nice to be at home in front of your home fans."

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Top row left to right - Timothy Morgan, Mark Granquist, Julie Matz, Katharine Brown  
 second row left to right - Skye Rickard, Jessica Sakmar, Jordan Gallo, Casey Jennings  
 third row left to right - Elliot Zackoski, Daniel Becker, Summer Barrouk, Emilee West, Kathleen Pietraszewski  
 bottom row left to right - Allecia Roche, Sandra Dunn, Larissa Valonis, Andrea Diehl, Gregory Frigoletto

# Wayne Highlands School District welcomes new teachers

On Wednesday, August 14, 2024, fifteen (15) new teachers completed their Wayne Highlands School District orientation in order to begin the new school year.

Those teachers and their assignments are as follows: Miss Summer Barrouk (Special Education - Wayne Highlands Middle School), Mr. Daniel Becker (Special Education long term sub - Wayne Highlands Middle School), Mrs. Katharine Brown (Science - Honesdale High School), Mrs. Andrea Diehl (3rd grade - Preston Area

School), Mrs. Sandra Dunn (5th grade - Damascus School), Mr. Jordan Gallo (Special Education - Preston Area School), Mr. Mark Granquist (5th grade - Preston Area School), Mrs. Casey Jennings (Special Education - Wayne Highlands Middle School), Mrs. Julie Matz (Special Education - Damascus School), Mrs. Kathleen Pietraszewski (2d grade - Damascus School), Mrs. Skye Rickard (Special Education - Wayne Highlands Middle School), Mrs. Allecia Roche (2nd grade - Preston Area School), Mrs. Jessica Sakmar

(Nurse - Lakeside Elementary), Mrs. Larissa Valonis (District-wide crisis counselor), Miss Emilee West (ELA/Social Studies - Preston Area School).

Assistant Superintendent Mr. Timothy Morgan stated that the new teacher orientation is a vital part of the Teacher Induction Program. New teachers are paired with experienced mentor teachers who volunteer from their grade level or content area. The district provides professional support through mentoring for teachers in their first and second years. Mr. Morgan noted that

the main purpose of the day is to explain the educational philosophies, policies, and methods the new teachers will need in providing an exemplary educational program.

Also participating in the orientation were: Mr. Gregory Frigoletto, Superintendent; Mr. Elliot Zackoski, Wayne Highlands Education Association; Mrs. Amanda Kerna, Director of Special Education; Mrs. Erika Cavanaugh, Assistant Director of Special Education; and Mr. Scott Miller, District Technology Supervisor.

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# A deeper look at new faculty and staff at Wayne Highlands School District

STORY AND PHOTOS  
BY ALEX KIELAR

Wayne Highlands School District has introduced 15 new teachers and faculty for the 2024-25 school year that began during the last week of August. That includes changes in administrative positions as well as school teachers at various levels within the district.

## Meet the new Principal at Lakeside Elementary School

Class of 2007 Graduate of Honesdale High School, Mr. Peter Blaskiewicz, has moved into the position of Principal of Lakeside Elementary School following the retirement of Mrs. Sandra Rickard. Blaskiewicz was previously the Assistant Principal at Honesdale High School and is only the third Principal at Lakeside in its history.

After earning his Bachelor's from Misericordia University, Blaskiewicz earned a Master's in Educational Leadership from the University of Scranton. He has been at Honesdale High School for a while in teaching posi-



**Patrick Blaskiewicz, new Principal of  
Lakeside Elementary School.**

tions before transitioning into the Assistant Principal position, which he noted was a natural fit.

"I felt ready to become a Principal because of Dr. [Peter] Jordan," Blaskiewicz said. "Dr. Jordan, from the moment we started together, kind of treated

me as co-principal. When he was doing something, I was doing it with him. The roles were very loose but we were kind of a package deal and I think that helped me transition into this role."

Blaskiewicz said that it has been a full circle moment for him as he began his teaching career in fourth and fifth grade.

"So to be at those grade levels again is cool," he said. "Then just the opportunity to be a principal at a place you went to school. I went to Lakeside, you couldn't have drawn it up better."

## Meet the new Assistant Principal at Honesdale High School

Blaskiewicz's move to Lakeside opened the door for Donald Cook to move into his first administrative role in his 24th year in the district. Cook previously served the majority of his career as a 6th-grade social studies teacher at Wayne Highlands Middle School.

"I was given the opportunity to become the new Assistant Principal of the high school last spring," Cook said. "I was fortunate enough to apply and go



**Donald Cook, new Assistant  
Principal of Honesdale High School.**

through the interview process and get the job. I am thrilled to be here."

Cook said that everyone has been extremely helpful in the transition period to his new role.

"I'm thrilled that I am able to continue my career in this capacity at this time," said Cook. "Each and every day, I discover something. I call it uncovering a new golden nugget. It's just amazing that I get a chance to find out something new and equally impressive every day about Honesdale High School."

## Other new teachers

A number of the new teachers are completely new to the district and are transitioning to Wayne Highlands after holding teaching jobs elsewhere.

One of those new teachers is Katharine Brown who was hired as a 9th-grade Biology teacher. Brown has returned to teaching after leaving the field 15 years ago. Brown previously worked as a 7th-grade teacher at

Western Wayne School District in Waymart, PA before being a business owner for the past 12 years, owning several businesses in Wayne County.

Brown said that she missed being with the kids, in the classroom and teaching in it's entirety.

"I always said that one day I'll go back," she said. "Finally, the occasion arose for a long-term substitute position in the Ag Program. Then it just went from there and I was lucky enough to obtain this position this past year."

On top of teaching the freshman Biology class, Brown is also a class advisor for the freshmen, so she said she is excited to get to know the kids in both the class she is teaching and over the next four years.

Another faculty member who is new to the district is Larissa Valonis who is now the District-wide Crisis Counselor.

Valonis described her ultimate



Larissa Valonis, new District-wide Crisis Counselor.

job as providing support to the students while ensuring that students and their families are connected to services and supports to ensure a smooth transition between hospitalizations and placements, then returning back to school.

"Being there as a constant support for our families as they go through and navigate some challenging times in their life," Valonis said.

The Crisis Counselor said that someone had contacted her about the job posting as she was previously at Forest City Regional Elementary School as their Elementary School Counselor and District Department Chair.

"Wayne Highlands is one of those districts in education that if I ever have the opportunity, I want to be there because of it's reputation," said Valonis. "The community, the staff and everyone you talk to says that they love it here. There's very little turnover; people come here and they want to stay here."



Katharine Brown, new 9th-grade Biology teacher at Honesdale High School.

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