

Smoke Signals

FEBRUARY
2024

ISSUE 4
VOLUME 18

Vero Beach High School

1707 16th Street
Vero Beach, FL 32960
Main: 564-5600
Attendance: 564-5555

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Principal
Shawn O'Keefe

Vice Principal
Rahshard Morgan

Assistant Principals
Greg Ahrens
Juliette Carroll
Vanessa Gonzalez
Joy Griffin
Denny Hart
Meghan Teachout

www.vbhs.org

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Indians"*

'Smoke Signals'
Published Five Times Per Year
Apr, Jul, Sep, Dec, Feb 2023-24
School District of
Indian River County
1990 25th Street
Vero Beach, FL 32960
Issue #5

A Message From The Chief

Dear Parents and Friends,

February marks a point in our school year where a great deal of progress has been made and there is still more to come. Our focus remains on cultivating a positive climate and create the best learning environment possible. High quality instruction and student learning are our highest priorities. Everything that we do at VBHS is designed to help students learn in all areas and be successful well beyond their time in high school.

On Friday January 26th VBHS experienced a watershed event as we rolled out a new school safety pilot program, on our main campus employing metal detector safety checkpoints for students as they enter campus. The world we live in is rapidly changing and we must quickly adapt for the safety and protection of our children in Indian River County. Our workload has grown exponentially with this new deployment, but I find myself sleeping better at night knowing our school is safer than it was. Still, social media, the vaping epidemic (including THC vapes), and destructive decisions are all good conversations to have with your student regularly at home. Together we may foster better decisions and behaviors, so that students learn to "think before they act" and make fewer poor choices. Consistency, predictability, and a calm learning environment allow for better focus on learning. Our partnership between school and home is a key ingredient for student success. With that said, we hope that your students are feeling safe and supported.

This month, our VBHS Band, Orchestra, and Chorus begin their extensive concert seasons. Our VBHS Drama Department has prepared our school musical, "Into the Woods". at the Performing Arts Center as we see Jack, Little Red Riding Hood, Cinderella, and more of your favorite story book characters come to life and find their way as they go, "Into the Woods". Our Vero Beach High School Math Team competed in the 46th Annual Mu Alpha Theta State Math Competition. Winter sports seasons are finishing up in Vero tradition with strong seasons by all our teams. This month, spring sports get underway, so stay tuned for more sports action. We recognized our Top 10 Seniors with a luncheon here at school with further accolades to be presented to them, as well as our Top 10% in each class at our annual Scholar Ceremony on April 3rd at 6PM in the PAC. Invitations are being sent.

We want our students to realize the tremendous importance of attending school daily, and the terribly negative impact that "non-attendance" has on a student's academic outcomes. Parents, we ask that you closely monitor your student's attendance. We find too often, that parents of truant students do not realize how much school their child is missing, until it is a big problem with irreparable repercussions. Please encourage your child to be in school every day and every class period throughout the day.

With so much ahead of us to be accomplished, we can all look forward to a "breather" in the name of Spring Break set for the week of March 25th. Also, an activity letter is being mailed home to seniors as a reminder for all the important events coming their way in the final third of this school year.

It's great to be A Fighting Indian, as we forge ahead into the renewal of spring, embracing the work at hand with grit, Indian pride, and spirit!

For the VBHS Family,

Shawn O'Keefe

Principal



Shawn O'Keefe

Top Ten Seniors

Congratulations to our Class of 2024 top ten by weighted GPA in alphabetical order: Kamila Branka, Rachel Estillore, Rygel Estillore, Remi Heyer, Mollie McCain, Bailey McCollom, Marcos Viloria, Andrew Bickel (Salutatorian) and Rowen Wilke (Valedictorian).



2023-2024 School Calendar

2/19/2024 All Presidents Day; No School
 3/19/2024 End of Quarter 3
 3/25-29/2024 Spring Break
 4/5/2024 Quarter 3 Report Cards
 4/19/2024 No School
 5/17/2024 Graduation
 5/27/2024 Memorial Day, No School
 5/29/2024 Modified Instructional Day
 5/30/2024 Modified Instructional Day
 5/31/2024 Modified Instructional Day/Last Day of School

Scholar Ceremony

The Scholars Ceremony will be held on April 3, at 6:00 pm in the Vero Beach High School Performing Arts Center.

Please arrive by 5:15pm.

The ceremony will start promptly at 6:00 pm.

"The Pride of the Tribe!"

This elite group represents those who have risen to the academic challenges and high expectations of all curricular areas.

We will be recognizing the following categories for Seniors:

- John B. Witt Award
- National Merit Finalists
- Salutatorian & Valedictorian
- Top 10 Seniors
- Unweighted 4.0 GPA
- Unweighted 3.75 GPA

We will be recognizing the following categories, Juniors, Sophomores, Freshman:

- Unweighted 4.0 GPA
- Unweighted 3.75 GPA

SCHOLAR NIGHT PLEDGE FORM

Each year at Vero Beach High School, we honor our highest achieving scholars with an evening of recognition and celebration. We would greatly appreciate your generosity in recognizing the "Pride of the Tribe" at the 2024 Scholars Ceremony.

Ceremonies like these cannot happen without your support. Any donation is appreciated. We will use this to create the program which serves as a keepsake for our scholars and their families.

Thank you again for your continued support!

Donations: scan the QR code to make your donation.



- Business information: email Carolina Davila at carolina.davila@indianriverschools.org
- Subject: Scholars Ceremony Sponsor
- Please include a picture of your business card and the message that you would like printed.

For any questions please contact: Carolina Davila, 772-564-5698, carolina.davila@indianriverschools.org.

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Attendance Matters!

Chronic unexcused absences will negatively affect a student's progress in high school, keep them from eligibility to participate in extracurricular activities, suspend privileges, and in fact the State of Florida may suspend their driver's license. In addition to all this, there is a new district wide attendance policy for secondary students (grades 6-12) who are "habitually truant" which is defined as; "10 unexcused absences in any one core course per semester". According to policy; for habitually truant students, the school attendance committee will meet at the end of each semester and may withhold credits for students who are habitually truant. Students are regularly reminded of this policy at school and encouraged to attend their classes, so that they do not lose credits towards graduation due to habitual truancy.

90% Attendance, Tardy Policies, and Procedures

VBHS has a 90% Attendance Policy, which means students must attend 90% of their classes in order to participate in sports, extracurricular activities, clubs and/or privileges (parking, dances, Grad Bash, Prom, etc.). Students may participate in practices, rehearsals, etc. but may not participate, compete, or perform in athletic games, performances, and extracurricular events until they are in compliance with the 90% Attendance Policy.

Please note that for a tardy to be excused, a parent/guardian must physically sign the student in at the attendance desk or the student needs to provide a medical or court note for the time missed. NO phone calls to excuse a tardy. If a student has been called out of class by attendance to be able to leave campus, the student must sign out at the attendance desk and receive a pass to leave campus for the absence to be excused. To have a student called to leave campus, you must be on the contact list in Focus. There is also no early release for students after 1:22pm.

Important Upcoming SAT/ACT Testing Dates

ACT Test Dates (National)

Test Date	Registration Deadline	(Late Fee Required)
April 13, 2024	March 8	March 22
June 8, 2024	May 3	May 17
July 13, 2024	June 7	June 21

SAT Test Dates (National)

Test Date	Registration Deadline	Deadline for Changes
March 9, 2024	February 23, 2024	Coming soon
May 6, 2024	April 19, 2024	Coming soon
June 3, 2024	May 17, 2024	Coming soon



A2 Tutoring

A2 tutoring at the Main Campus and the FLC is to provide your student academic support in the core areas of English and Math. If your student is struggling in other areas, please contact the teacher.

Bus Transportation Available – Students must have a pass from the A2 Tutoring Teachers to ride the bus home and remain in the library until the bus shows up between 4:15pm- 4:30pm. Tutoring is available on Tuesdays and Thursdays at both campuses from 2-4pm.

IRSC Promise Program

The IRSC Promise Pledge opened on 1/24. We have partnered with IRSC to ensure that our students have completed all the steps necessary to start IRSC in the fall tuition free. IRSC representatives will be on campus in Media A during both lunches on the dates below to help students complete the required steps. For the FASFA sessions, any student can attend.

- February 06: FAFSA Information Session
- February 13: Applications/ Promise Pledge Signing
- February 20: Applications/Promise Pledge Signing
- March 5: Residency
- March 19: FAFSA Information Session

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AP Female Diversity Award

VBHS earned the College Board's AP-Computer Science Female Diversity award. Only 57 private and public schools out of 6,791 schools in the state of Florida received this award for having female diversity in the Computer Science classes.

Senior Information

All Seniors need to check their Obligations in Guidance and Media Center because we do hold Diploma's and Transcripts!

As your high school career winds down, your next adventure awaits you. Wouldn't it be nice to have a little extra financial support when you begin your college career? The VBHS Local Scholarship Program opens today. All applications are located on the Guidance Canvas page. You just need to click on the scholarship button.

You must download and print out each application. It is your responsibility to assemble all the requested documents and then mail them prior to the application deadline.

Most applications require a counselor report, you must report to guidance and complete the request form and attach your resume. Please request these ASAP and give your counselor at least 1 week to complete your request.

If you have any questions, please reach out to your counselor or to Mrs. Wood.

- 4/3/24-VBHS Scholar Ceremony-6pm in the PAC
- 4/15/24-Order AP, Honors Regalia in Guidance
- 4/20/24-Grad Bash-Universal Studios
- 4/25/24-Scholarship Night-6-8pm in the PAC
- 4/27/24-Prom-8-11pm at the IG Center
- 5/6-5/17/24-AP Exams
- 5/10/24-Senior Celebration-in the courtyard
- 5/13-5/17/24-Senior week/Senior Catch Up Week
- 5/14-5/16/24-Graduation practice at FLC from 8-9:30am
- 5/17/24-Graduation- 7pm in the Citrus Bowl



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Science Fair

On January 30, 2023, the Indian River Regional Science Fair held its Secondary Awards Ceremony. Congratulations to all of our Vero Beach High School representatives: Kimberly Ung-Davy, Nora Bumgarner, Ella Kilman, Jaya (Jay-uh) Vernese, and Aniela Kelly. Kimberly's research on solutions to citrus greening brought home a \$80,000 Florida Tech scholarship, Society for In Vitro Biology award, and the first place prize in the Microbiology division. Ella Kilman and Jaya Vernese's research on the impact of microplastics on mangrove germination earned them \$400 Florida Water & Pollution Control Award, the NOAA 'Taking the Pulse of the Planet' Award, and 1st place prize in the Earth and Environmental Sciences division. Nora Bumgarner's research on the influence of personality on climate change perspective earned her an \$80,000 Florida Tech scholarship and the 1st place prize in the Behavioral Sciences division. And Aniela Kelly's research on the impact of Roundup on seagrass growth earned her the Sunrise Rotary Environmental Resilience Award, the Harbor Branch Award, the US Air Force Research Laboratory Award, and 2nd place in the Plant Sciences division. Kimberly, Ella, Jaya, and Aniela will continue to compete at the State Science and Engineering Fair in April.

WINNERS!

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*Standards for Class of 2023 may change for Class of 2024

MARK YOUR CALENDAR AND SIGN UP
FOR THE UPCOMING TESTING DATES

SAT TESTING DATES for 2023-2024

Aug 26, October 7, Nov. 4 and , Dec 2*

ACT TESTING DATES for 2023-2024

Sept 9, Oct 28, Dec 9*

*last testing date accepted for SF application

Scholarship Applications Available Online Beginning November 1, 2023 @ www.sfindianriver.org • Absolute Deadline January 31, 2024

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Vero Beach High School Athletics

National Signing Day

Our National Signing Day was on December 20, 2023 for all high school sports. VBHS proudly had 6 student athletes from 2 different athletic programs sign scholarships. Congratulations to the following students:

- Football: Tyler Aronson-SMU, Xavion Griffin-Western Kentucky University, Kevin Pollock-West Point, Amar Reynolds-University of Illinois, Chase Stevens-University of Florida
- Golf: Marissa Weaver-Allegheny College



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Vero Beach High School Athletics

Boys Wrestling

The Boys Wrestling Team continues to compete in this year's tough competition schedule. Since December the Fighting Indians team has done quite well taking 7th at the Mt Dora Invitational, 2nd at the Villages Invitational, Team Champions at the Marine Corp Challenge Invitational and Team Champions at the Davenport Invitational.

Standout wrestlers are Matt Haake, Gregori Rodriguez, Maverick Mock, Kevin Benjamin and David Benjamin. Rodriguez and David Benjamin are currently unbeaten while Kevin Benjamin has only one loss to date.

The team enters in to the final third of their schedule with 3 Tournaments and 2 Duals left before post season begins.

Seniors on the team are:

- David Benjamin, Lakhi Williams, Daschle Ferguson and Jon West

Girls Basketball

The Lady Indians are coming up on the end of their 23-24 (12-7 record) season. We highlighted our seniors on Senior Night at our last home game against Westwood. Our Seniors put on a great show, putting up 70 points on the scoreboard to beat Westwood. Each one of our seniors are performing not only on the court but in the classrooms with GPAs to over exceed the minimum 2.0 requirement to participate. Each one of them has plans of attending a College or University, even planning to play basketball or participate in track. As we approach the end of our 23-24 regular season game, February starts our Districts tournament where we will be traveling to West Palm Beach to take on Palm Beach Lakes High and Palm Beach Garden High.



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Performing Arts Department Happenings

The first part of the second semester has been eventful for the VBHS Performing Arts Department. In January, approximately 40 band and orchestra students participated in the Four County Honor Band and Honor Orchestra hosted by Indian River State College. These students rehearsed for two days and presented concerts that included students from six surrounding counties. The VBHS Orchestra participated in the Florida Orchestra Association District Solo and Ensemble MPA that was held at Oslo Middle School during the last weekend in January.

The VBHS Band presented the Big Band Bash Jazz Concert on February 1st. This concert featured all three VBHS Jazz Bands and the Gifford Middle and Storm Grove Middle Jazz Bands. Throughout January, band students have been preparing for the Florida Bandmasters Association District Solo and Ensemble MPA. Both our Symphonic Band and Philharmonic Band are currently preparing for the FBA District Concert MPA which will be held in March. Our Choir is also preparing for their concert MPA that will be held in early March.

The entire department has been preparing for our All School Musical which is "Into The Woods." This production is a collaboration between Band, Choir, Drama, and Orchestra and ran February 16th through the 19th.

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