



Highland Falls-Fort Montgomery Central School District

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Highland Falls-Fort Montgomery Central School District once again recognized as a NAMM Best Communities for Music Education for the 2021-2022 School Year

HIGHLAND FALLS, NY

The Highland Falls-Fort Montgomery Central School District has once again been named a National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) Best Communities for Music Education for the 2021-2022 School Year for teaching and creating music under extraordinary circumstances for the past two years.

The Best Communities for Music Education offers national recognition and visibility for school music programs, and honors the efforts of educators, administrators, students and community music education champions who share in the common goal to ensure access to music for all students as part of the curriculum. The Highland Falls - Fort Montgomery Central School District prides itself as having one of the best music programs in the state if not the country. The dedication our staff and students have in making our music program exceptional is truly amazing. Innovative course offerings and renowned ensembles characterize the program at James I. O'Neill High School, while the foundations built at the Fort Montgomery Elementary School and the Highland Falls Intermediate School ensure program continuity for the long term, and set the stage of excellence with the youngest children.

Tom Cunane, Music Department Chair and Band Director, and Christopher Sheehan, Choral Director at O'Neill High School, as well as Amina Thomas and Lisette Banks at the elementary and intermediate school levels, were able to adapt to teaching music using extraordinary methods due to COVID-19 restrictions. Their efforts were rewarded not only with this prestigious distinction; several students

participated regionally and statewide in the OCMEA and NYSSMA conferences this year as well. The O'Neill High School drama department performed *Little Women* in the outdoor arena at West Point last spring, and *The Addam's Family* this past spring. Under the direction of Natalie Arneson, the drama club thrived and flourished, giving the students an opportunity to connect with one another remotely throughout lockdown and live this past winter and spring, producing high-quality performances in spite of a global pandemic.

Mrs. Anne Lawless, President of the Board of Education remarked that, "the Highland Falls - Fort Montgomery Central School District values education in the fine and performing arts as an integral part of a well-rounded education. This recognition shows that this emphasis, in addition to the designation of the high school as one of the top high schools in the nation, bears fruit within our student body. We are all extremely proud of our students and our faculty and staff!"

Dr. Frank Sheboy, Superintendent of Schools, added that "The District is honored by this recognition. It exemplifies the quality of teaching by our faculty as well as the amazing talents of our students. Moreover, it reflects a deep commitment of families and our community to our programs." The support of the faculty and staff, the administration, and the School Board for all of our programs is unwavering. The entire Highland Falls - Fort Montgomery Central School District community has come to expect excellence in all our programs, and we intend to deliver.