

Smoke Signals

DECEMBER
2024

ISSUE 4
VOLUME 19

Vero Beach High School

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

ADMINISTRATION

Principal
Shawn O'Keefe

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 #4

A Message From The Chief

Dear Parents,

I hope you had a wonderful Thanksgiving with family and friends. Here at school, we can feel the energy during this short but busy month of December. We are proud of the outstanding achievements of our students so far this school year. As the holiday season continues, I am grateful to have a talented and energetic staff who have a tireless commitment to students. We give thanks to all our supportive parents, and surrounding community that we couldn't do without. I am truly grateful to be working in such a wonderful school community.

As we move into December and approach Winter Break, the end of the semester (12/12/24) will be here before we know it, as we work with our students to remain focused and make the most of these last few days remaining. Please encourage your student to take advantage of the wide range of academic supports we have in place, whether it is emailing a teacher for extra help, A2 and Tribe Tutoring, Counselor support, assistance from our academic coaches, and more.

The second semester is a "fresh start" for students to keep up good academic habits and make improvements where needed. Our 90% Attendance Policy continues with everyone starting fresh at 100% for the start of the second semester. Please keep track of your student's attendance on focus and call in any necessary absences, so that they are excused. Being in school is essential to positive academic outcomes.

Thank you for your continued support of our educational mission at Vero Beach High School and for sharing your children with us! I hope you and yours have a wonderful Holiday Season and joyous New Year.

For the VBHS Family,

Shawn O'Keefe

Principal



Shawn O'Keefe

Christine Rogers Chosen as School Related Employee of the Year

We are proud to announce Vero Beach High School's School Related Employee of the Year, Christine Rogers. We are so fortunate to have her with us. Ms. Rogers has been the cafeteria manager at the FLC for 15 years. She has fed approximately 6,500 children! Ms. Rogers said "My favorite part of being the FLC cafeteria manager is when a student that I have fed comes to me years later and tells me that I helped them get through their freshman year or was a positive role model for them. Nothing like it!" We are extremely lucky to have Ms. Rogers as part of school family. Thank you for all that you do to support of faculty, staff, and students!



Gabriella McKay Chosen as Teacher of the Year

Mrs. Gabriella Darcangelo McKay has worked at Freshman Learning Center at Vero Beach High School for 2 years as a Digital Information Technology teacher after graduating from VBHS in 2014. She has also spent 5 years as asst lacrosse coach for Sebastian River High School and now for VBHS under head coach Shannon Dean.

She has been a member of the Career & Technical Education department and has been a standout from the beginning. She has taught many creative ways to have students of all levels excel. Her pass rate for her Industry Certification test, WordPress, has exceeded 85%! Mrs. McKay has even offered many afterschool sessions and sessions on the main campus to reach all students, not just her freshmen. She is a teacher that has very high expectations for her students. She works with them to meet those expectations which often are above what the students themselves believe they can accomplish.

The lacrosse field is an extension of her classroom. As the girls' lacrosse assistant coach, Coach McKay shows the same time and dedication to her players that she does in the classroom. Coaching is a key part of her contribution to the school.

While not busy with all things VBHS, she is spending time with her 4-year-old twin boys and husband, Brandon McKay, also a VBHS graduate.

She is creating a lasting legacy of academic and athletic achievement here at VBHS.



Greg Ahrens Chosen as Assistant Principal of the Year

We are also proud to recognize Mr. Greg Ahrens, Assistant Principal of Vero Beach High School, as our Assistant Principal of the Year. Mr. Ahrens has been with our district since 1993 and has served as an Assistant Principal at Vero Beach High School since 2003. His contributions were instrumental in helping Vero Beach High School achieve an "A" grade for the first time since 2015, reflecting his dedication and impactful leadership.




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MARK YOUR CALENDAR AND SIGN UP FOR THE UPCOMING TESTING DATES

SAT TESTING DATES for 2024-2025
Aug 9, Sep 20, Oct 18, Nov, 22*

ACT TESTING DATES for 2024-2025
Aug 9, Sept 20, Nov 11, Jan 3*

*last testing date accepted for SF application

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2024-2025 School Calendar

12/19/2024	Modified Instructional Day
12/20/2024	Modified Instructional Day/End of Quarter 2
12/23/2024-1/7/2025	Winter Break
1/8/2025	Students return from Winter Break
1/20/2025	Dr. M.L.King, Jr Day; No School
1/31/2025	No School/Staff Professional Learning Day
2/11/2025	High School Conferences
2/14/2025	No School
2/17/2025	All Presidents Day; No School
3/17-21/2025	Spring Break
3/25/2025	End of Quarter 3
4/18/2025	No School
5/17/2025	Graduation
5/26/2025	Memorial Day, No School
5/28/2025	Modified Instructional Day
5/29/2025	Modified Instructional Day
5/30/2025	Modified Instructional Day/Last Day of School

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Performing Arts Department Happenings

The VBHS Performing Arts Department has had a fantastic first semester. Our Theatre program presented their Fall play, Arsenic and Old Lace and hosted the District One Acts. The VBHS Orchestra program presented their annual Spooktacular concert in October. VBHS Senior Violist Isabella Eastwood won the orchestra concerto competition in November.

Voices of Vero gave several community performances through the holiday season including the Indian River Chamber of Commerce tree lighting. Additionally, the choir performed at several elementary schools in the county.

The VBHS Band hosted the 43rd Crown Jewel Marching Festival on October 19th. On October 26th, the Fighting Indians Band performed at the Florida Bandmasters Association District Marching Music Performance Assessment at Jensen Beach High School and received straight superior ratings. The concert and jazz bands presented the 32nd annual Red White and Blue concert on November 10th and 12th.

The entire department closed out the semester with the Deck the Halls holiday concert on December 15th and 16th. We hope to see everyone at the first performance of the second semester, the Big Band Bash Jazz concert on January 30th at 7:00 p.m.

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Attendance Matters!

It is important for your student to be present and on time each and every school day. Students with regular attendance are more likely to be successful in all academic areas. Research shows that missing 10 percent of the school year – just 18 days – negatively affects a student’s academic performance.

Attendance matters here at Vero Beach High School. Parents, to obtain an excused absence for your student, report the absence in writing or by phone within 48 hours. The attendance line at the main campus is 772-564-5555. The attendance line at the Freshman Learning Campus is 772-564-5676. A list of approved excused absence types can be found in the SDIRC Code of Student Conduct.

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.

TARDY POLICY

The following Tardy Policy is in place for the 2024-25 school year. We want all parents and students to be aware of it. This is a concern that we do all we can to help assist students getting to class on time!

All late students who are not signed in by a parent/guardian at the attendance desk or do not have verification of a medical appointment will report to the cafeteria and then be escorted back to class. If a student arrives at the tardy room twenty or more minutes after the late bell, the student will be coded as ABSENT for the entire period. Parents/guardians CANNOT phone in a tardy excuse. Upon the next class change the tardy students will then transition to their next class. When a student receives their 4th tardy (total, not per class) they will be assigned a detention or a Saturday School. If a student receives their 5th tardy they will receive another Saturday School. If a student receives 6 or more tardies per grading period, the student may be suspended for defiance/non-compliance for up to 2 days

Definition of Tardy per School Board: A late arrival is defined as arriving to school after the designated starting time. A tardy is defined as an arrival to class after the designated starting time or the tardy signal has sounded. When tardies become excessive (4) or more times per nine week grading period, the parent/guardian will be notified by administration and appropriate consequence administered. If the problem continues, a progression of actions will be taken by the administration to address the problem.

At Vero Beach High School, tardies are now concurrent for all classes (not per class) and will run through each nine weeks grading period. Teachers will be instructed to close their doors when the tardy bell rings and no student will be permitted in after the bell rings. All late students will report to the cafeteria and sign in and receive the generated pass so they can gain entrance to that period. Students will not be permitted into a class after the late bell without a generated pass in an effort to maintain student accountability.



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CTE Programs

Automotive

The Indian River Region Antique Automobile Club (AACA) sponsored the Vero Beach High School automotive program by providing all seniors with program shirts. Pictured are members of the Antique Auto Club Association with students and staff. Many thanks to the automobile club for their ongoing support. Members of the club brought their antique cars for students to explore.



Vero Bean Cafe!

The Business Entrepreneurship class at VBHS had a Ribbon Cutting for the school's coffee shop, Vero Bean. It is in a new location on campus, attached to the newly remodeled Media Center. The new café location has more of a Starbucks feel and has proven to be a real draw for business as well as a place for students to relax and study or hang out. In addition to getting the new café open, the Business students felt compelled to help those affected by the recent hurricane

and tornadoes in our area. Proceeds from a soft opening of Vero Bean and a Pickleball tournament resulted in a class donation of \$721 to the United Way disaster relief fund.



Biotechnology

Fifth grade Fellsmere Elementary School students teamed up with the Biotechnology 2 students at Vero Beach High School to learn how to micropipette.



Career Tech at VBHS
If you are interested in any of the 9 Career Tech program offerings at VBHS, please call Allison Moody for information (772) 564-5429



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Vero Beach High Athletics

Bowling

- The boys team ended the regular season with a record of 11-3, and 16th in the state.
- Senior Tyler Rilling ending with the highest average of 206 and senior Asher Oliver bowling the highest game of 290.
- The girls team ended the regular season with a record of 14-1, and 12th in the state.
- Angeli Atayde bowling the highest average of 170 and the highest game of 235.
- The Girls and Boys bowling teams each came in second place in the district championship tournament at St. Lucie Lanes and both qualified for states at Boardwalk Bowl in Orlando, a first in school history that both teams qualified for states in the same year.
- At the state tournament, both girls and boy's teams both made it to the second round, also a first in school history for either team.
- Junior Shayne Bender qualified for the second round as an individual and ended the season as number 9th individual in the state.

Cross Country

- Boys and Girls teams qualified for Regionals this year, and the boys team qualified to compete at the State Championships, where they placed 12th.
- The girls team has been led by seniors Anna Cobb and Sindy Moncada.
- The boys' team is led by seniors Parker Banzhaf and Kenan Willard, who have each broken the school record this season and who are both currently ranked in the top 10 in the state for class 4A. Parker currently holds the school record, a 15:23, and finished 3rd overall at States. Kenan has also broken the school record multiple times, with a best time of 15:39. Junior Andrew Youssef set a school record for juniors with a 16:00 and finished 28th at State.

Football

- The Varsity Football Team finished the season with an 8-4 Record and District Champions.
- After winning its first two State Playoff Games, the team came up short in the third round with a 21-14 loss to Dr. Phillips High School.
- The team finished as one of the top 8 programs in the state and had an overall team GPA above 3.0.

Girls Golf

- The VBHS Girls Golf Team finished a successful regular season with a 15-2 record.
- They finished 1st Place in the Treasure Lakes Conference Golf Tournament
- 1st Place - District Championship
- Tied 1st Place - Regional Championship
- The team finished 6th in the state for Class 3A schools.
- Competing in the FHSAA Girls Golf State Championship were: Seniors Dounia Bezzari & Maggie Twardowski, Junior Darci Wagner, Sophomores Laney Ryan - Isabella McCabe. Other members of the team with varsity experience included-Yishan Jiang - Maevyn LaBelle - Charlotte Benson.

Boys Golf

- 6th place finish at the Regional Championship at Stoneybrook West Golf Course in Orlando.
- Connor Sloss, Sophomore, qualified for the State Championships where he just competed in the 3A High School State Championship at Mission Inn north of Orlando. Connor finished in 33rd place overall with rounds of 81 and 75 as he competed as an individual representing Vero Beach High School.
- This year's team included four seniors: Parker Heaney, Derek Pickerill, Jesse Little and Ty Olea with the team competing in multiple 36 hole Invitationals including the Brophy Ping Invitational in Scottsdale, Arizona in August.

Swimming

- The girls swim team took 3rd place and the boys swim team took 4th place at the District Championships.
- Kylie Jelfinmow was runner up in the 50 free and automatically qualified for the Region meet.
- The team qualified the most amount of 12 swimmers to the 4 A Region 2 meet which was held in Orlando.
- Our qualifiers included: Kylie Jelfinmow, Jett Fields, Danica Felton, Ola Branka, Lavin Tangel, Jack Gambino, Noah Kondek, Savannah Bradley, Emma Shields, Megan Rebentisch, Hailey Rankin, and Lylah Mullen
- Kylie Jelfinmow (50 & 100 free), Megan Rebentisch (100 back), and Noah Kondek (100 breast) were individual qualifiers.

Volleyball

- Season Record of 19-5
- District Champions
- Regional Finalists
- Finished season with a ranking of 8th in Class 7A
- Recognized as the top team in their classification for FHSAA Academic Team Champion based on GPA



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National Signing Day

Our National Signing Day was on November 14, 2024, for all high school sports with the exception of football. VBHS proudly had 8 student athletes from 3 different athletic programs sign scholarships. Congratulations to the following students:

- Girls Lacross: Jazmyn Morris-Gardner Webb University, Lily Rhue-Piedmont University, Bronwyn Segal- Benedictine College
- Volleyball: Mikayla Lamb-Eastern State, Maleeah Mutterback-McNeese State, Ari Sanchez-University of South Florida
- Baseball: Cole Morgan-Presbyterian College, Ashton Wetmiller-Palm Beach State College



Unified Flag Football

VBHS Unified won their 4th consecutive flag football state championship at ESPN Disney on November 8th. It was the 13th state championship in program history.



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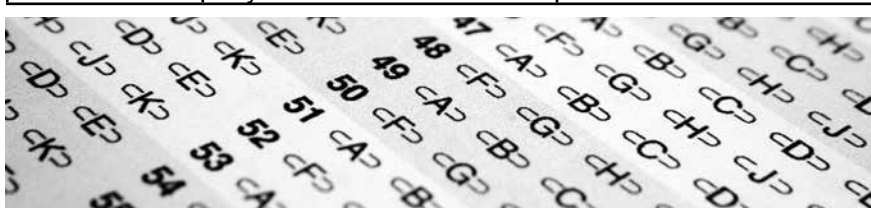
Important Upcoming SAT/ACT Testing Dates

ACT Test Dates (National)

Test Date	Registration Deadline	(Late Fee Required)
February 8	January 3	January 20
April 5	February 28	March 16
June 14	May 9	May 26
July 12	June 6	June 20

SAT Test Dates (National)

Test Date	Registration Deadline	Deadline for Changes
March 8	February 21	February 25
May 3	April 18	March 21
June 7	May 22	June 20



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and AP of the Year**

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