

A detailed illustration of a hawk's head, showing its sharp beak and intense orange eyes, set against a yellow and blue background.

HAWK TALK

Newsletter

January 31, 2025
Issue #25



“New year — a new chapter, new verse,
or just the same old story?
Ultimately, we write it.
The choice is ours.” — Alex Morritt

Greetings from The Hill,

As the quotation above says, the new year and new winter season give us motivation to tell our own stories – individually and as a community. While other schools may be content to remain static, Hill Top’s distinctive mission of serving neurodiverse students invites us to tap into our unique gifts and abilities and continually strengthen ourselves for the changes that are happening all around us. It’s our story, our time.

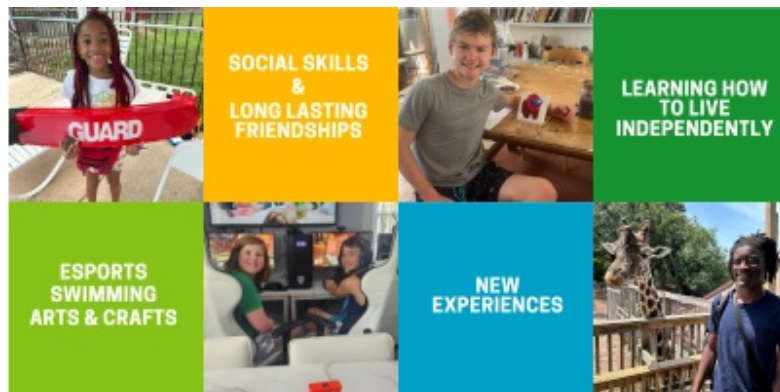
After a great fall semester on campus, we begin anew with a new semester. We returned from our Winter Holiday Break with snow and very, very cold weather. While the temps may have dropped, enthusiasm and engagement on campus have never been higher. As you’ll see in this issue of Hawk Talk, January has been a busy month. Whether it’s intriguing projects in the classroom, exciting athletic competitions on campus and in our region (Go Birds!), upcoming trips and events, or celebrating the many wonderful college acceptances of our seniors, the colder weather hasn’t slowed

our community down or cooled our enthusiasm. This was especially true at our *Fire & Ice* event last week which celebrated the completion of mid-term exams - so much fun!

Here's to a great semester and year ahead.



Kevin M.R. Mayne
Head of School



Summer Camp - Registration Open!

It's hard to believe, but it's time to start planning for summer! Hill Top Prep's summer camp registration is officially open, and spots are filling up fast. Don't wait—secure your spot today!

We're thrilled to offer three unique programs designed to engage, inspire, and support our neurodiverse students:

1. **Summer Adventures (Grades 2–9):** A traditional camp experience with an exciting twist—social skills training built into every activity.
2. **eSports & Technology (Grades 6–12):** The perfect blend of gaming, teamwork, and tech exploration for students who love all things digital.
3. **Pathways 2 Independence (Grades 10–Post-Grad):** Focused on building independent living skills while having fun with peers.

Register soon—spaces are limited, and we'd love to see your student there this summer!

Secure your spot!

Print Fest held in the J.R. Porter Gallery

Print Fest 2024 was a week-long collaborative and cross-curricular art event that took place in the J.R. Porter Design Studio and Gallery. We celebrated “prints” which are

images that can be made repeatedly by creating a stamp or stencil. This event held hands-on workshops for students during the school day where teachers and learners collaborated on numerous projects including, silkscreening, potato printing, nature printing, mono printing, and small artist books called "Zines". This event is one of many in the Porter Gallery; a space that works to bring people into this unique environment to share ideas, creativity, and community.



All student prints are now on display for the community to enjoy. Shoutout to our amazing art department, especially Mr. Psulkowski & Ms. Decker-Haynes, for making this event possible and inspiring our students. Their talent and imagination continue to amaze us!





Classroom & Club Fun!



Sweet Science in Action

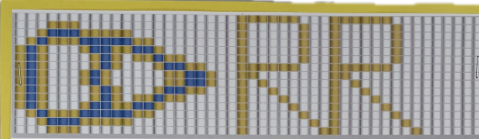
At Hill Top, learning is always hands-on and engaging! Our 6th-grade Life Science class explored genetics by building DNA models using gummy bears and licorice. This fun and creative activity helped students make real-world connections while learning about DNA—one tasty base pair at a time!

Exploring Iroquois History

Our 8th graders have been diving into the rich history and traditions of the Iroquois Confederacy in social studies. As part of their learning, they've explored the cultural significance of Wampum belts—beautiful, intricate designs that go beyond art to tell



stories and preserve heritage. To bring this history to life, students have been creating their own Wampum-inspired designs, blending creativity with a deeper appreciation for Iroquois culture.



Rufus Reynolds
The design represents me going to the hilltop for the first time. It's meant to have the hilltop logo, but I absolutely butchered it. I put my initials down because I know I couldn't make a small design to represent me. The reason why the event is important to me is because I was going through tough times before I went to the hilltop.



Diving into Earth's Oceans

Did you know that over 70% of Earth is covered by water? Our middle school science students explored this fascinating fact with a hands-on “globe toss” activity. By tossing globes and counting how many fingertips landed in the ocean, they calculated that 68% of Earth's surface is water—a result impressively close to the actual 70%! It was a fun and interactive way to bring Earth science to life!

Employability & Transition Dress Drive Donations Needed!

Our E/T 2 students are hard at work on this incredible annual project! From designing flyers to managing pickups, sorting donations, and even repairing dresses, they're handling it all. They're collecting new or gently used prom dresses to sell this spring for just \$10–\$20, with all proceeds benefiting the American Red Cross Southeastern Pennsylvania.

Have a dress to donate?

Email kphillips@hilltopprep.org or DM us to coordinate drop-off. Pickups can also be arranged.

Thank you for supporting this amazing student-led initiative!



Happy Gotcha Day, Bob!

Hill Top is so lucky you "hopped" into our halls all those years ago, Bob! ☐☐

Students, stopped by Bob's room to celebrate his Gotcha Day with a bunny themed treat—straight from the big 'ol bunny (BOB) himself!



Bunny fidgets from Bob!

Student Spotlight: Hunter '25

What's more impressive than this Eagles playoff run? Our incredible student, Hunter, and all his accomplishments on and off the Hill!

Hunter's hard work and dedication truly shine both on and off the field. We're so proud to see him recognized for his achievements as the Eagles Autism Foundation's Star of the Game! In addition to his outstanding contributions, we're excited to share that Hunter has recently received his college acceptance to Harcum College—his future is looking as bright as ever.

We're cheering you on every step of the way, Hunter.

GO HUNTER & GO BIRDS!



Field Trip Fun!

Our 8th graders visited the Kimmel Center to experience the inspiring performance, ***Jazz for Freedom***.

This dynamic presentation featured a jazz band, singing, tap dancing, and poetry, all woven together to teach students about the origins of jazz and its deep connections to African-American life, culture, and social justice. It was an unforgettable blend of music and history!



College Acceptances & Commitments Class of 2025

The Class of 2025 is truly SOARing and we're thrilled to celebrate our students' hard work and dedication as they receive college acceptances! While this list is impressive as is, there are more acceptances to come. Congratulations to all our amazing Hill Top seniors!

- Cairn University
- Chestnut Hill College*
- Delaware Valley College
- Farleigh Dickenson University
- Harcum College
- Kutztown University
- Landmark College
- Mercyhurst University
- Millersville University*
- Neumann University
- Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology
- Seattle University
- St. Joseph's University
- Thaddeus Stevens*
- University of Delaware
- University of Scranton
- West Chester University
- Widener University

**Denotes schools where students have committed to attending*

Fire & Ice Afternoon

At Hill Top, every milestone is an opportunity to grow and celebrate! Recently, we wrapped up midterm exams and took a moment to reflect on the incredible first half of the school year.

To mark the occasion, we hosted a fun-filled 'Fire and Ice' afternoon! Students enjoyed a bonfire with s'mores and hot chocolate, snowflake art, sledding, karaoke, and even some exciting floor hockey.

It was the perfect way to foster community spirit and celebrate our students' hard work and achievements!





ADVIS Campus Visit



We welcomed the ADVIS President to campus, where she experienced firsthand our innovative approach to education. The visit highlighted our dynamic learning spaces, engaged students, and dedicated faculty who create an environment where neurodiverse learners thrive.

Alumni Corner

Winter Events

In December, alumni had the incredible opportunity to watch the Philadelphia Boys' Choir perform at a church in Wayne, featuring the talented Darien Nelson '28. The performance was absolutely phenomenal, and Darien was AMAZING!



A special moment came when alum Joseph Brennan '17 congratulated Darien after the show—Darien truly appreciated the kind words from a fellow Hill Top graduate.

In January, we hit the ice at the River Rink in downtown Philadelphia for an ice-skating adventure. Despite a little rain, everyone had a fantastic time. A highlight of the day was watching Jonah Fox '23 glide across the rink like a pro—he made it look effortless!

Stay tuned for more exciting outings ahead!

Alumni Panel



Our alumni recently returned to campus for an inspiring panel with our juniors and seniors! They shared their journeys through college, careers, and life beyond Hill Top, offering valuable advice and encouragement to the next generation of grads. It was a wonderful opportunity for our current students to learn from those who have walked the same path—and of course, our alumni enjoyed reconnecting with some of their favorite teachers, too!

Looking to reconnect?

Are you a Hill Top alum looking to get more involved with the Hill Top community? We would love to welcome you back to campus! Whether it's taking a tour, speaking with students, volunteering at events, or exploring other ways to contribute, there are plenty of opportunities to reconnect. Click the button below to let us know how you'd like to get involved!

Reconnect with Hill Top!

Hill Top Hawks Show Their Spirit!



Shout out to our Hill Top Hawks! This basketball season has been filled with determination and teamwork. While not every game ended in a win, our students embodied the Spirit of the Hawk—showing courage, perseverance, service, and leadership every step of the way.

Go Hawks!



Level Up Lives: Game, Learn, and Empower Neurodiverse Youth

March 29, 2025, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Attend

Tickets Are Now FREE!

This year, everyone can attend HawXpo at no cost!

Grab your family and friends and get ready for a day of gaming.

Don't wait! Tickets are free, but registration is required.

Compete

Whether you're a seasoned gamer or just starting out, this is your chance to shine. The Esports tournament at HawXpo is open to all skill levels—and it's completely FREE to participate!

Act fast! Spots are limited and filled on a first-come, first-served basis.

Sponsor

This exciting, free event is made possible by the generosity of our corporate sponsors. Their support doesn't just bring HawXpo to life—it helps fuel Hill Top's mission year-round through impactful philanthropic contributions.

Click the button to let us know you are interested in making an impact.

Percie's Path: Student & Alumni Vendors

Reserve Student/Alumni Vendor Table

Are you a current student or alumnus with creations to showcase and sell?

HawXpo is the perfect opportunity to share your talent!

We're now accepting reservations for student and alumni vendors.

Vendor tables are completely FREE, but space is limited, so be sure to reserve yours today.

Have questions? Email Ms. Gushka at kgushka@hilltopprep.org or stop by her office (LM 2) during mentor or lunch periods.

Don't wait—sign-ups close on March 3, 2025!

Hill Top Parents' Association Wants YOU!



Are you a new parent to Hill Top? Maybe your schedule freed up? Do you only have a couple hours a month to volunteer? In any situation, The Hill Top Parent Association (HTPA) wants you!

The HTPA helps with school events, fundraising, and much more! You can be as involved as your schedule permits. Volunteer opportunities range from planning fundraisers, to being an Open House greeter, to helping us with gardening and painting around campus.

If you have questions or would like to get involved, please email parentsassociation@hilltopprep.org.

Join the HTPS Parent Facebook Group!



Squish the Peas: Life Lessons from Toddlers on How to Live a Happier, Healthier Life

Presented by Hasan Merali, MD, MPH
McMaster Children's Hospital, McMaster University & Author

Wednesday, February 12, 2025 | 7:30-8:30 ET

ISAAC Webinar

Did you know Hill Top has launched the Neurodiversity Success Center to provide even more support for our



Neurodiversity Success Center

at Hill Top Preparatory School

community?

While our students benefit from Social-Emotional Learning (PEERS®), Executive Function Coaching, and College Advising during the school day, the NSC offers additional, personalized services for those who may need extra

help.

The best part? The NSC is open to neurodiverse adolescents, young adults, and adults throughout the Main Line and greater Philadelphia area—even those who aren't Hill Top students.

Current Hill Top students receive a 25% discount!

To learn more or to enroll, contact Mia Henry, Coordinator of the Neurodiversity Success Center, at mhenry@hilltopprep.org or visit www.hilltopprep.org/nsc.



The NSC was recently highlighted for their work during the Philly Friendship Walk! Be sure to check it out and learn more about the Center!

Learn About NSC

Request More Information

Campus Improvements

Thanks to a generous donor, we've replaced our worn fences with new, sturdy ones, enhancing both safety and aesthetics on campus. We are grateful for this support in keeping Hill Top a welcoming and secure environment!



Grants Awarded



We're excited to announce that Hill Top has been awarded three grants to enhance our campus! The PA Safety Grant will fund a new camera system to strengthen security, the Hamilton Family Foundation grant will support essential kitchen renovations, and the Wawa Grant will expand our wellness programming.



These generous grants directly contribute to a safer, more functional, and enriching environment for our students and staff.

A heartfelt thank you to Ms. Ott, Director of Advancement, for her dedication in making this possible!

Dorm Update

This month's dorm theme focused on Building Healthy Habits and Communication, starting with an escape room outing where students showed improved teamwork and cooperation.

The dorm welcomed Juan back, and his famous French toast has been a hit once again. A new schedule now includes fitness activities on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays, followed by board games like Jenga, Battleship, and Stratego.

Evenings have been filled with games, puzzles, and shows—though the search for a dorm-wide favorite series continues. In the meantime, students have enjoyed UNO, Super Smash Bros., and virtual obstacle

courses together.



- **February 6th** - Basketball Game (Home)
- **February 11th** - 7th Grade Trip to Penn Museum
- **February 12th** - Senior Day
- **February 12th** - Field Trip to Chester County Food Bank
- **February 12th** - HTPA Monthly Meeting
- **February 12th** - Admissions Open House
- **February 14th** - Holiday; NO SCHOOL, OFFICES CLOSED
- **February 17th** - Holiday; NO SCHOOL, OFFICES CLOSED
- **February 26th to March 2nd** - Dress Sale; 12-4pm daily

**Full Event
Calendar**

**Review us on
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**UPDATE YOUR INFORMATION TO MAKE SURE YOU'RE
CONNECTED**

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Serving Neurodiverse Students Grades 5 - 12

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