

NHHS Huskies continue to break records



By Bill Kilpatrick

Last year the North Hastings High School track and field team had what coach Barb Gillis described as an "outstanding year," adding that the current group of athletes gave her "lots of hope for future successes." Well, the future is here, and her prediction has come true as the records keep falling. Last year 40 athletes from North Hastings competed at the Bay of Quinte qualifier and 33 moved on to compete in 68 events. This year on May 15, 35 athletes competed and all of them moved on to the Central Ontario qualifier in at least one event. "I can't tell you the last time that has happened," stated an exhilarated Gillis. Last year 10 athletes qualified for COSSA in all three of their events, but this year 13 athletes qualified in all three of their events. Then on May 23 those 35 athletes competed in a total of 72 events at the Central Ontario qualifier, including four relay teams. Last season 14 athletes finished in the top five in their events and moved on to the Eastern Ontario Secondary Schools Athletic Association regional qualifier. For 2024, 15 athletes managed to qualify for the east regionals in 23 events. The 2024 Bay of Quinte qualifier saw three records fall, two records for individual sports and one for team points. In 2023 athlete Jessica Boyd broke the novice girl's 2006 shotput record of 9.27 metres, not once, but twice, throwing 9.45 metres at Bay of Quinte and then breaking that record with a 9.66 metre throw at COSSA. Boyd had a repeat performance this year by breaking not only her personal record but the junior girls record for shotput throwing 10.04 metres at Bay of Quinte. Celeste Renshaw also continued to break personal and school records. Last year Renshaw broke the 23-year-old novice girls javelin record of 26.31 metres throwing 27.08, and this year she topped that record by throwing the javelin 28.06 metres earning her a first place at Bay of Quinte. In 2023 at the Bay of Quinte meet the boys and girl's teams managed to accumulate 334 total points finishing fourth in the district, but this year they finished with a total of 362 points breaking the 2006 team point record and coming in second place in the district to Northumberland. "Northumberland wins Bay of

Quinte and COSSA every year, but for us to come in second, that's huge," said Gillis. At COSSA the Huskies continued to have successes winning medals and achieving personal bests. Boyd broke the school and her personal record, yet again, with a massive 10.58 metre shotput throw at COSSA that earned her a silver medal. Renshaw won gold in javelin and moved onto the Eastern Ontario Championships. Other highlights from the meet included Jacob Lawrence who qualified in all three of his events, achieving a second place in the 200 metre, third in the 400 metre, and sixth in the 100 metre. Brodie Poulain won silver in Javelin and Sara Wannamaker won bronze in the 80 metre hurdles. "We have lots of hopefuls for the Ontario championships," said Gillis, "our team is awesome." For educator and coach, Andrew Edgar, watching these young people compete is awe-inspiring. "They're good. I feel like I'm coaching superheroes," he said. Edgar said that the group is full of athletes who are both "strong and fast" with natural talent and who work very hard to master techniques, so he's not surprised that they are having success. Edgar spoke about one athlete, Stephen Hill, who was continually trying to break his own personal best. "He's come out and run what is arguably the most grueling race in track and field called the steeple chase," explained Edgar, "he said that he wanted to break seven minutes and 30 seconds and sure enough, he does the race in seven minutes flat, smashing his personal goal. That's just superhuman." Regardless of how they do at the East Regionals, their coaches, Gillis, Edgar, Alex Comrie, and Jessica Hicks cannot be happier with their performances so far. "Going to the east regionals is such a big accomplishment," said Comrie, "the athletes make it look easy, but it's not." Comrie, who gives what time he can to help coach, is amazed at what Gillis, Edgar and Hicks, have done to help the athletes reach new heights of excellence. "It's just incredible that these students come out of small-town Bancroft where we don't have all the training amenities, like rubber tracks and other equipment. Barb, Andrew, and Jessica are just phenomenal. They know how to get the most athletic performance out of our students." The Eastern Regional championships take place Thursday, May 30 and Friday, May 31 in Belleville at Mary Anne Sills Park.