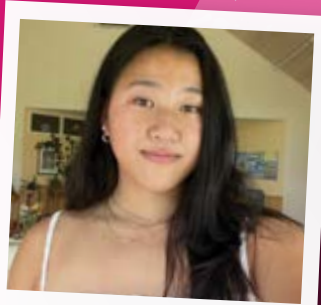
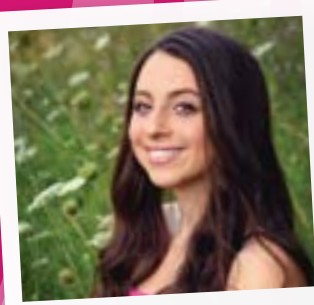


Capital District



Sports Women of the Year



2022
Capital District
Sports Women
of the Year
Awards Gala

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The 2022 Capital District Sports Women of the Year Awards Program was edited by Eric McDowell. Feature stories written by members of the sports staff of The Daily Gazette of Schenectady, NY. Printing services provided by Miller Printing of Amsterdam, NY. Cover design by Alex Jarvis of Goldilocks Promos of Latham, NY. Photographs provided by family members of the honorees and Lauren Hull Photography. Special thanks to our generous sponsors, advertisers, and donors for their support of CDSWOY.

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Yes, it's hard to believe today, but it's true.

There was a time when young women could not compete in scholastic or collegiate sports. There were no opportunities. If they attempted to put a club team together, and succeeded, they did it by borrowing supplies, uniforms and other items that "the boys" had. If they could find a court, field or pool that is.

When I started my work in collegiate athletics as a student in college, the passage of Title IX was only six years old. I saw the opportunity to dedicate my career to making sure that women, like men, received the media attention and the honors and accolades that their male counterparts enjoyed for years. I appreciated the AIAW (Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women), that provided college female student-athletes the opportunities they deserved. Later, the NCAA embarked on women's championships that we see today. And the NYSWCAA opened the door for high school female student-athletes, which led to numerous championships and honors for the scholastic stars in our region and throughout the state.

Four years ago, after embarking on my own business (The Eric Idea Agency), I realized that I could continue to support women's sports. The Capital District Sports Women of the Year organization will now add 13 superstars to our 25 previous honorees for the most successful, undefeated team in sports.

CDSWOY would not be possible without the support of our sponsors. I also appreciate Michael Kelley, the Sports Editor of The Daily Gazette in Schenectady, for him and his staff providing us with exclusive features in tonight's Awards Gala Magazine. Thank you to New York State Senator James Tedisco for providing us with recognition for each of our recipients. And thank you to the CDSWOY Executive Board, Alissa Collins, Jennifer McDowell and Brendon Phillips.

We are pleased to announce that Morgan Burchhardt will join our board this year. Morgan was the first recipient of the CDSWOY Grand Collegiate Sports Woman of the Year in 2020.

We are delighted to welcome members of the Empire State Youth Orchestra. These are exceptional and talented individuals who have very bright futures in the music industry.

If we put today's recipients of the 2022 Capital District Sports Women of the Year Awards into a time machine back to 1972, they surely would have had determination, dedication, and grit to pave the way for the future.

We are fortunate that these remarkable young women are with us tonight. They make their families, coaches, teammates, and communities proud. We are honored to have them join us, as they sit back (imagine that!), chill (there's a first!) and bask in the glory of our evening to honor them for greatness. For determination. For dedication. For grit.

To the members of the Capital District Sports Women of the Year Class of 2022, you are role models paving the way for remarkable young women of the future. Tonight, with your academics, athletics, and community service, we celebrate Title IX with 13 ladies who each score a 10.0.

Sincerely,



Eric McDowell

President

Capital District Sports Women of the Year, Inc.



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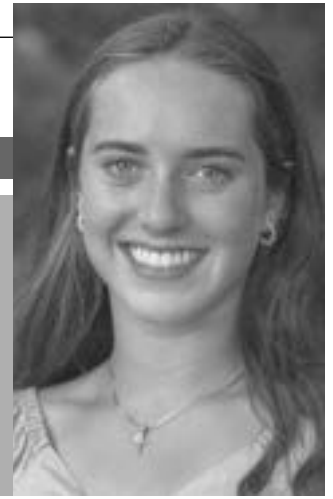
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Capital District Sports Women of the Year*

Brigid Duffy **Queensbury High School**

by Will Springstead
THE DAILY GAZETTE



When it comes to Queensbury senior Brigid Duffy, there seems to be no such thing as too busy.

Duffy committed to attend the United States Military Academy at West Point in the beginning of her junior year. The idea was to play women's lacrosse while she served the country. At the beginning of this past fall season, however, she asked the Army coaches if it would be OK to add women's soccer. They gave their blessings.

Just being a plebe at West Point is more than most freshmen could think of handling. But add two sports to that and you have something that sounds like it fits in Duffy's wheelhouse.

One of 10 high school honorees for the third-annual Capital District Sports Women of the Year awards, Duffy was a five-year varsity girls' lacrosse starter, a five-year varsity girls' soccer player and a three-year varsity girls' basketball player. And that's just for Queensbury. She participated in ice hockey outside of school and was selected to participate in a selective USA National Camp.

"I played four sports my entire high school career. It'll definitely be a challenge for me, but I'm willing to take it on," Duffy said.

Academically, Duffy has a 95 grade-point average, ranks in the top 25 of her class and is a member of the school's National Honor Society and Future Business Leaders of America.

Athletically, she is one of the most decorated athletes in school and Section II history. In lacrosse, she has been an All-American the past two seasons and is a USA Lacrosse U18 National Team member, as well as a numerous-time Foothills Council All-Star.

In soccer, she's a five-year player, an East Region All-American, an All-State second-team player, Section II Class A Player of the Year, Foothills Council MVP and the school's all-time assists leader and second in career scoring. She is a Foothills Council All-Star in basketball.

Duffy also has served the community by volunteering at Queensbury Parks and Rec. youth soccer and basketball programs, as well as at Our Lady of the Annunciation Catholic Church.

Queensbury athletic director Richard Keys said Duffy is his prime example of what it means to be a student-athlete.

"She is often the first person to practice and the last to leave," Keys said. "Her participation in our zero block physical education class requires her to train multiple days a week prior to the start of school. Her work ethic is unmatched by any other student-athlete I have been around in my 28 years of education."

As decorated as she already was entering her senior year, Duffy achieved an important goal: to be a captain in all three varsity sports.

"I've always been very focused and determined," Duffy said. "It's definitely a lot of responsibility. I feel like I'm a leader by example. I'm very vocal as a teammate, but I like to lead by example. I think that's something the younger girls can see for themselves and relate to."

Keys said Duffy's leadership shined through at the school's weekly Captain's Club meetings.

"Brigid has not only participated and contributed to the group discussions, but she has also been a leader of leaders," Keys said. "She has worked to evolve her skill set to not only be a leader by example, but to also be a vocal leader who brings out the best in everyone around her."

When she looks back on her now-concluded high school career, Duffy said that senior-year accomplishments top the list, primarily because she and her teammates were able to achieve major goals.

"Definitely our sectional championship soccer team," Duffy said. "We had never done that before and we did it this year. And, of course, this year for lacrosse was amazing. We've never been regional champions, and we did that — or made it to the final, and we did that."

Duffy credits her parents, Tim and Gretchen Duffy, for setting the bar high. "Our parents were very hard on us academically and athletically," Brigid said, "but I'm glad because that will set me up well for the future."

There will be many in Queensbury and the Capital Region who eagerly await to see what Duffy's future will entail. As for her past, Keys said that will be awfully hard to top.

"It comes as no surprise to me that Brigid will be attending the United States Military Academy at West Point," he said. "She exemplifies the values of that institution. I am extremely proud of the standard she has set for our programs. She is a generational student-athlete."

Contact Will Springstead at wspringstead@dailygazette.net or @Will Springstead on Twitter.

Katie Falotico



Congratulations on your academic and athletic success!
You have always stayed true to yourself and let your determination and character shine through! We are so proud of your accomplishments and can't wait to see what your future has in store.

Love, your biggest fans,
Mom, Dad, Jamie, & Jake



College - Softball

2022

Katie Falotico University at Albany

by Adam Shinder
THE DAILY GAZETTE



Katie Falotico tends to take a lot on her plate — but that's intentional.

And, even when it seems overwhelming, she feels confident she can conquer any workload.

"If there's something that I want to be involved in, I can do it, I just have to have a plan in place," Falotico said. "That's kind of how it went for me throughout the years, making adjustments if I was struggling in one area, and kind of finding time being able to put as much effort, and time and attention, into everything I wanted to participate in as possible."

That's how Falotico — who is one of three college honorees for the third-annual Capital District Sports Women of the Year awards — managed to succeed in every facet of her five years at UAlbany — in the classroom, on the softball field and in the community.

Falotico was a three-time All-America East Conference first team selection — in 2019, 2021 and 2022 — on the softball diamond, and led the conference in both doubles and triples during her final season with the Great Danes.

Academically, she finished an undergraduate degree in business administration with a 3.92 grade point average in 2021, then completed a master's in organizational communication with a 4.0 GPA this past May while earning a spot on the UAlbany Dean's List on seven occasions and being named to the America East All-Academic Team four times.

In the community, she was a member of UAlbany's Student-Athletic Advisory Committee, including three years as that organization's community engagement chair, helping to organize community events both among UAlbany student-athletes and in the broader America east.

"Katie Falotico has spent her collegiate career rising above and has truly demonstrated what it means to be a Great Dane," UAlbany athletic director Mark Benson said.

As the SAAC's community engagement chair, Falotico's initiatives included UAlbany's annual Food Frenzy canned food drive, helping to launch the America East's Better Together games to raise mental health awareness and volunteering at local homeless shelters.

Her favorite work in the community, however, was getting the chance to read to local students in elementary schools. She also helped take that initiative online when the COVID-19 pandemic stopped in-school visits. "The kids loved to see us, and they got really excited for Read Across America and stuff like that," she said.

On the diamond, Falotico said she learned immensely from UAlbany's 2021 season, when the team had to play under stringent COVID-19 guidelines. "The season coming back from COVID, it was definitely different," Falotico said. "We were kind of limited in the things that we were doing. We were submitting saliva samples every week. It was a stressful time."

It helped, she said, being naturally organized.

"I think being a Division I student-athlete, time-management and prioritization is very important," she said. "And I think I kind of had that instilled in me before I even got to school. But that kind of gets put to the test once you get going with sports and school, and you kind of figure it out as you go. But, for me, I knew that there were a lot of things that I wanted to participate in, and I wanted to have a hand in."

Falotico also interned in the UAlbany athletic department in both marketing and promotions, and a rotating internship that saw her work with the athletic business office, student-athlete academic services and athletic compliance. "Katie saw the value in gaining a holistic experience," UAlbany associate athletic director for compliance Melissa Peach said. "She took it upon herself to set that up and made it happen. Katie is ambitious, well-rounded and always has a positive attitude. She sees the glass half full, and her positive energy is contagious."

"She was doing this internship each day with the different areas while juggling the time demands that come with being a Division I student-athlete with classes, practice and a rigorous travel schedule for competition," UAlbany athletic business manager Matthew Fischer said.

Falotico — who was honored this year with the America East Elite 18 Award, given to the student-athlete with the highest GPA competing in the conference championship of their respective sport — has taken the lessons learned in every aspect of her college career into the professional realm. Even after finishing her master's degree at UAlbany, Falotico is staying engaged in the sports world. After graduation, she started a position with the NFL's New York Giants as an intern with the team's player engagement department, with her first duties including helping the team's rookies prepare for the rigors of life while playing pro football.

"We kind of take a holistic approach," she said, "and look at all the players and help them with things on and off the field."

Contact Adam Shinder at ashinder@dailygazette.net or @Adam Shinder on Twitter.



🎉 Congratulations Rebecca Hall



We love you for all
you are, all that you
have been, and all that
you are yet to be. We
are so proud of you!

- Love Mom, Dad,
Kyle, Tyler, and
Connor

Rebecca Hall Maple Hill High School

by Paul Wager
THE DAILY GAZETTE



Though it is a small school, Maple Hill is no stranger to athletic success. The Wildcats are perennial Section II contenders in several sports.

With that in mind, Rebecca Hall wasn't expecting to be among those nominated for the Capital District Sports Women of the Year.

"I was surprised when my athletic director told me that he nominated me," Hall said. "My school is not that big, but we have a lot of amazing athletes. To have the coaches and athletic director pick me is great."

Hall is familiar with the award having seen one of her best friends - Jenna Hoffman - nominated last year.

"One of my closest friends [Hoffman] was chosen last year," said Hall, who is one of 10 high school honorees for the third-annual Capital District Sports Women of the Year awards. "I watched her go through it all. I never thought that it could be me this year."

While Hall may find it hard to believe that she was nominated, her athletic director Mike Silver, girls' basketball coach Michael Oliver and girls' soccer coach Sheila Golden offered plenty of reasons for the selection.

"Rebecca is not only an outstanding athlete, but also a great all-around student," Silver said. "She has had many achievements and has also contributed greatly to the Schodack Central School District and the Schodack community."

On the court and field, Hall excelled for the Wildcats, serving as a captain this year for both the girls' soccer and girls' basketball teams.

"In my first year as the girls' varsity basketball coach at Maple Hill high School, Rebecca displayed exceptional leadership and positivity throughout the 2021-2022 season," Oliver said. "As team captain, Rebecca took on the role of communicating important information, allowing her teammates — ranging from grades eight to 12 — to receive the best experience."

She earned the Most Improved Award for girls' soccer and was named a second-team Patroon Conference all-star in girls' basketball. Hall also earned a New York State Public High School Athletic Association scholar-athlete award and was part of the NYSPHSAA's Student Leadership Conference in 2021.

"I have been a coach in the Schodack Central School District for 33 years. I can confidently say that Rebecca's hard work and dedication has enabled her to excel as an athlete and student," Golden said. "It has been my privilege to have Rebecca on my varsity soccer team for the past two years. During this time, Rebecca has demonstrated a willingness to learn, work hard and strive for success."

In school, Hall was a Student Council officer in each of the last four years and served as the National Honor Society President this year. She also was a part of instrumental band and chorus all four years of high school.

"In addition to sports, Rebecca participated in many extra-curricular clubs and activities at school," Golden said. "Rebecca has been able to balance her busy schedule and challenging academic course load with a high level of success. Rebecca's success both in and out of school is the direct result of her desire to produce quality work through quality performance."

Outside of school, Hall is a member of the Castleton Volunteer Ambulance Squad and recently completed the New York State Emergency Technician (EMT) certification course. She also is part of the squad's membership committee, which interviews and recruits new members.

"When I turned 16, I became a junior member of the Castleton Volunteer Ambulance Squad," Hall said. "After the first call, I went on, I decided that it was something that I wanted to do."

In addition to her work with the ambulance squad, also was part of the Tulip Project, which made more than 150 Christmas ornaments and 100 felt spring flowers that were distributed to local nursing homes during the pandemic. She also has fundraised and participated in the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation in the annual Walk to Cure Diabetes.

The disease is one that has affected Hall on a personal level. "When I was 4, I was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes," Hall said. "I was always around doctors and patients. That's what sparked me to want to be a nurse or doctor."

With that in mind, Hall will attend Siena College in the fall, where she will attend the Belanger School of Nursing to obtain her bachelor's in nursing. Hall also has been a part of the Susan B. Komen Breast Cancer Walk and participates annually in the Street Soldiers II of Troy to help distribute food, toiletries and other necessities to families.

"My dad has always been involved in the community as a coach," Hall said. "I've always seen how important being involved in the community is." Like her father, Hall also has served as a coach in the Sacred Heart CYO Basketball League for first- and second-grade teams.

Contact Paul Wager at pwager@dailygazette.net or @paulwager on Twitter.



Congrats Grace!



We are so proud of you.

**- Paul, Michelle,
Zach, Chloe,
Mema and Poppop**



Grace Heiting Union College

by Adam Shinder
THE DAILY GAZETTE



Grace Heiting crammed enough into her time at Union College to make anyone's head spin.

Her secret to not just getting through it, but thriving while doing so, was fairly straightforward.

"Plenty of sleep," Heiting said. "And a lot of coffee. That's kind of how I rock."

Heiting, who is one of three college honorees for the third-annual Capital District Sports Women of the Year awards, spent her years at Union with dual focuses on both the athletic and academic fronts.

In the classroom, she was a double major, carrying a 3.83 grade point average while pursuing a difficult course load in both Biology and Spanish.

As an athlete, too, Heiting decided to double up. Recruited to Union to play on the Dutchwomen's Division I hockey team, she also made the choice to play for Union's Division III women's lacrosse program — and, just as she did academically, excelled on both fronts.

"I have known Grace for five years now and she's one of the most articulate, most creative, most involved, and most committed student-athletes that I've ever had during my coaching career," Union women's hockey coach Josh Sciba said.

In three hockey seasons — Union didn't play in 2020-21 due to the COVID-19 pandemic — Heiting was consistently among the Dutchwomen's top performers. She led the team in goals scored as both a freshman and a senior, and topped Union in overall points as a sophomore while finishing her time with the program with 19 goals and 18 assists. She also served as a team captain in her senior season.

But, for the ever-ambitious Heiting, that wasn't enough. She had a passion for lacrosse as well, and during her freshman season made the decision to become a two-sport college athlete.

"My entire freshman year, I kind of had it in the back of my head," Heiting said. "I didn't know if that was something that was realistic or possible. I remember when my hockey season ended, that was when I was really poring through the lacrosse schedule, and I was able to bring it up to my hockey coach Josh Sciba. And I remember I was a little bit nervous; you know, I didn't know how he was going to react. I didn't know any other women's hockey players that had done this.

And?

"He had the best reaction. He went to his laptop and pulls up the lacrosse schedule and was like, 'Alright, I think we can make this work. I'm going to get you in touch with your coach.' I think having that support from the higher-ups was incredible. He helped set me up with the lacrosse program,

and after I had a little tryout and met the girls, it was just a no-brainer. I was so grateful for that opportunity."

That decision paid dividends, especially in 2022, when she was named to the IWLCA All-Region first team after producing the third-highest single-season points total and fifth-highest single-season goal total in Union history, while also establishing a program record of 5.18 points per game.

"I can't say enough about what Grace Heiting meant to the Union College women's lacrosse team this year," former Union interim women's lacrosse coach Jessica Davos said. "A kind, caring and fiercely competitive young woman who performs just as well in the classroom as she does on the field, Grace is the epitome of 'student-athlete.'"

For Heiting, academics has always been just as important as athletics. An aspiring doctor, she was a part of Union's Beckman Scholars Program, a 15-month mentored research program for undergraduate students in the STEM fields. She was honored a combined seven times by the the Liberty League and ECAC Hockey All-Academic teams, and received Union's Lee, William, Dr. Norman and Dr. George Wrubel Memorial Prize given to a senior preparing for a career in dentistry or medicine, based on both their academic achievement and their character.

As a senior, she presented at the Experimental Biology Meeting in Philadelphia, where she received the Comparative and Evolutionary Physiology Section Travel Award.

"It was such such an incredible opportunity," she said, "to just see what other schools and other people are working on and what they're passionate about."

In the community, Heiting served as a campus ambassador for the Gift of Life Campaign, a nonprofit that recruits donors to join the national bone marrow registry, and served as a member of Union's Honor Council.

Since graduating from Union, she's moved on to the University of Maine, where she'll wrap up her college hockey career and pursue a certificate in Arts & Humanities in Medicine before moving on to her ultimate goal of medical school.

"One thing I know for sure," Union athletic director Jim McLaughlin said, "is that she is going to have a very positive impact on every patient she comes in contact with, just as she has done as a student and athlete on our campus."

Contact Adam Shinder at ashinder@dailygazette.com or @Adam Shinder on Twitter.

Congratulations Michelina Lombardi!

- From Your Averill Park Athletic Family



AP



AVERILL PARK

Michelina Lombardi **Averill Park High School**

by Michael Kelly
THE DAILY GAZETTE



During her years at Averill Park High School, Micheline Lombardi reached impressive heights and helped lift those around her, too. A standout student, a top athlete and a frequent volunteer, Lombardi packed an incredible amount of achievement and memories into her high school career.

"She is punctual, diligent and genuine. She is willing to put her own interests aside to help her fellow peers and teammates," said Sean Organ, whose varsity basketball team won a state championship in 2022 with Lombardi helping to lead the way. "Micheline is the kind of student-athlete teachers and coaches hope to work with on a daily basis. She demonstrates a tremendous work ethic in her quest to succeed academically and athletically."

"At all times, I have found Micheline to be self-motivated, reliable, hard-working, dedicated and courteous," said Nathan Luskin, who coached Lombardi in soccer and track and field. "She consistently acts as a role model for younger teammates and classmates, and has been a tremendous asset to our school community."

One of 10 high school honorees for the third-annual Capital District Sports Women of the Year awards, Lombardi ranked eighth in her graduating class, accumulated a 4.0 GPA, received numerous academic honors and was a member of the New Visions Scientific Research and World Health Program her senior year. Actively involved in several clubs, Lombardi was also a class president throughout her years at Averill Park.

Lombardi credited her teachers with making it possible for her to have such a rich academic experience.

"They are all there for one goal, and that's to help the students," Lombardi said. "They look at us as a whole, but they really strive to help each of us individually."

In her community, Lombardi developed a significant presence, particularly through her work volunteering with Young's Pharmacy to help conduct COVID-19 vaccine clinics and with St. Jude the Apostle Church.

The Wynantskill resident volunteered to check-in people at area vaccine clinics, helping to keep the clinics organized and on schedule.

"I was very humbled to be asked to volunteer and help serve the community," Lombardi said. "That was so important to me."

So, too, was her volunteering with St. Jude the Apostle. Through her church, Lombardi said she "realized how important volunteering is," and applied that lesson. She spent countless hours helping seniors, coaching youth basketball players, and preparing food baskets for those in need, among a variety of other volunteer activities, as part of her work through the church.

"St. Jude's is a community that I'm very fond of," said Lombardi, who attended the church's school through sixth grade. "They've done a lot for me over the years, and it's been really great to give back to that community, and those students since I was one of them."

Athletically, Lombardi was an all-star level performer in soccer and track and field, as well as one of the top standouts on this year's basketball team that won a state championship. A four-year varsity starter on the basketball court, Lombardi's team had its postseasons shortened in 2020 and 2021 due to restrictions related to the novel coronavirus pandemic, and the goal to make the most of 2022's full postseason helped drive her to be her best.

"All I wanted to do was win a state championship," said Lombardi, who scored 11 points in Averill Park's 54-48 Class A championship win against Tappan Zee.

For Lombardi, attending medical school and becoming a doctor are future goals. Later this year, Lombardi will attend Le Moyne College. She will play basketball while she majors in biology and minors in Spanish at the college.

"I'm just really thankful to Averill Park for everything they've given me and how they've prepared me for Le Moyne," Lombardi said. "These last four years have been nothing short of amazing."

Her high school will certainly miss her presence.

"Micheline is one of, if not the best, leaders that I've come across during my 13 years in athletic administration," Averill Park athletic director Mark Bubniak said. "She is a great student, talented athlete, and serves her school and community in a variety of ways."

"Her community looks up to her," Organ said.

Contact Michael Kelly at mkelly@dailygazette.com or [@ByMichaelKelly](https://twitter.com/ByMichaelKelly) on Twitter.

We love you Kelsey!!

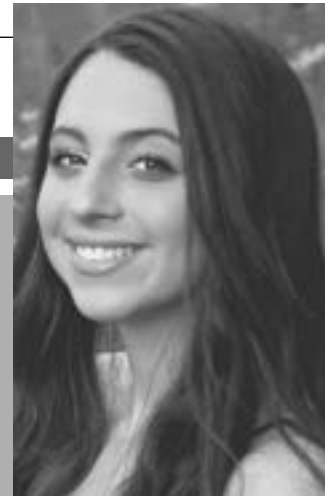


We are proud beyond belief of all your accomplishments Kelsey! Keep reaching for the stars and chasing your dreams. We will always be your biggest fans – no matter where life leads you.

Love - Mom, Dad, Ryan, Cailey, and Camryn

Kelsey Meca **Mayfield High School**

by Ken Schott
THE DAILY GAZETTE



Balancing school work while playing three sports should be difficult.

However, Mayfield High School's Kelsey Meca made it look very easy, and that's part of why she is one of 10 high school honorees for the third-annual Capital District Sports Women of the Year awards.

In the classroom, Meca had a 99.6 average, and she was ranked third in her class. On the playing surfaces, Meca excelled playing soccer, basketball and softball.

Meca credited her parents with telling her the importance of doing well in the classroom.

"Honestly, ever since I was young, my parents instilled in me that school comes first," Meca said. "Do good in school, and then sports. Sports comes next, and then working. I've always had this schedule, a routine that I've been able to manage my time really well."

Being able to balance her time between school and sports came naturally to Meca.

"My practices were usually earlier in the day," Meca said, "so then when those were over, I would come home, I would study if I had to or I would do any homework that I had, and then I would go to bed."

Meca has been a standout in the three sports she played at Mayfield. In soccer, Meca was a first-team Western Athletic Conference all-star and the team captain. She was a first-team WAC all-star and the team captain for the basketball team. She was also the team's most valuable player, the WAC Top Scholar-Athlete and a 10th-team all-state. She holds several team records and was an Exceptional Senior representative.

For softball, Meca was a second-team WAC all-star and the team captain. The sport Meca said she loves the most is basketball.

"I have had the same coach since I was in fourth grade," Meca said. "And I have played with the same girls since around that same age. So we just really have this awesome bond together, and we play so well together out on the court and it was just the most fun I've ever had in a sports season."

She greatly enjoyed playing soccer and softball, too.

"For soccer, I really like how intense it is," Meca said. "It's a lot of running. You have to be super in shape in order to play the entire game. And it's a physical game, so I like that aspect of it as well. You really have to work as a team. And as a captain, you have to have leadership as well. You have to be good with talking, communicating with your teammates in a positive and respectful way. So it's really given me an outlet to stay in shape, and create new relationships.

"And, as for softball, I don't want to say it's an individual game because you're still working as a team, but it's not as much teamwork-like related in the fact that you can't, like in basketball, pass it to somebody, they shoot, they score. But, for softball, you're responsible for your own batting and making plays in the field."

Meca will attend SUNY Poly in the fall, and she will play for the women's basketball team. She wants to become a nurse practitioner. The reason Meca wants to become a nurse practitioner is because of her sister.

"When I was about 12 years old, my sister was diagnosed with narcolepsy and cataplexy, and my family went through a ton of obstacles and struggles because no doctors around here really had an idea of what that actually was," Meca said. "We had to fly her out all the way to California just to get her diagnosed. And that inspired me as a young girl, because I saw what my family was going through. I said to myself, 'I don't want any other children to have to go through this.' So my goal as a nurse practitioner is to not let that happen."

Mayfield athletic director Jon Caraco said: "Kelsey is eager to volunteer for any and all community service projects done through the school. I have seen her volunteering to clean up local historical sites... She leads activities to raise money for the Stanford Sleep Center and the Children's Miracle Network.

"If there is something Kelsey cannot do well, we have not found it yet."

Contact Ken Schott at schott@dailygazette.com or [@slapschotts](https://twitter.com/slapschotts) on Twitter.

Congratulations Zionna Taylor!!!



Psalm 46:5
God is within
her, she will
not fall; God
will help her
at break of
day.

Love, Mom, Dad, Trevor,
Xavierre, Duwayne,
Audrey Mae, Gram,
& Family

HS - Track & Field

2022

Zionna Perez-Tucker
Mohonasen High School

by Stan Hudy
THE DAILY GAZETTE



Zionna Perez-Tucker made her mark on high school tracks throughout the Capital Region and beyond, along with standing up for friends, competitors and peers during her time at Mohonasen High School.

She is the 2022 Mighty Warriors senior class president, vice-president of the student council and an active member of the school's No Place for Hate organization. Perez-Tucker is also one of 10 high school honorees for the third-annual Capital District Sports Women of the Year awards.

"I've been busy just keeping the senior class together because for the last two years, we have been separated due to COVID," Perez-Tucker said. "Just trying to get everyone back together and get these festivities back on." The No Place for Hate club was a natural draw for Perez-Tucker.

"I've always been someone who sticks up for other people," Perez-Tucker said.

With more than a dozen other students, Perez-Tucker looks out for others. "I like being able to talk with others who also are very ambitious and know what's right from wrong, and know what we can do to help other people," Perez-Tucker said. "We fight for people who don't want to or can't speak up for themselves."

Her passion for others was recognized by the school's administration. "I have known Zi for the past two years. In that time, I have seen her truly amaze and inspire our students, coaches, community and beyond," Mohonasen athletic director Dave Bertram said. "Zi is truly a well-rounded and special talent."

The Section II record holder in the girls' 45-meter and 200-meter races earned a gold medal in the New York State Federation 100 race, and silver medals in the Division 1 100-, 200- and federation 200-meter races to cap her high school career in June.

Perez-Tucker holds five Mohonasen records and won two state titles during the winter indoor season.

"Beyond the track, Zi is such an incredible human being," Bertram said. "As a lead member of our Athletic Council, she has volunteered in our Mohon Cares, Anchor room and on-campus food bank. She has traveled for the Albany Toys for Tots the past two years to help in any way needed. She treats people with respect and is the first to stand by their side."

Perez-Tucker has been a conduit for her peers at Mohonasen High School and beyond.

"When new students enter the high school, our guidance and social work staff often reach out to Zi asking her to mentor and introduce new students to their classmates," Mohonasen track and field coach Bill Sherman said. Her passion led to her support of other female track athletes in the Capital Region. She was vocal and part of a protest among her track and field peers to have a rule changed regarding allowing athletes to wear beads in their hair during competitions.

"It came from a ruling that seemed to just pick on people of color," Perez-Tucker, who identifies as Black, said. "In general, an athlete was told the beads had to come out. But other girls . . . had barrettes, little hair bows, and other accessories. So why were they allowed? And not beads?"

Sherman supported the girls' squad decision to wear beads at an upcoming meet in protest, and filed a formal complaint with the New York State Public High School Athletic Association.

"Even though I personally don't wear beads in my hair anymore, when I was a kid, I did," Perez-Tucker said. "I know cousins, family, and friends who did. It's part of a culture, especially mine. We just had to find a way because getting loud and visible is not going to help us — so we took a calm but loud approach to it."

One day later, the NYSPHSAA lifted the prohibition on hair adornments. "She is the best well-rounded student-athlete I have ever coached," Sherman said. "I believe she is a 'once in a lifetime' athlete and person."

Contact Stan Hudy at shudy@dailygazette.net or [@StanHudy](https://twitter.com/StanHudy) on Twitter.



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*Congratulations,
Colleen Quaglia!*

For your outstanding accomplishments and your selection to the *Capital District Sports Women of the Year* honors!

College - Swimming

2022

Colleen Quaglia

The College of Saint Rose

by Adam Shinder
THE DAILY GAZETTE



In and out of the pool, versatility has always meant a great deal to Colleen Quaglia.

The lessons she learned as a star swimmer at The College of Saint Rose, where she spent her collegiate career rewriting the Golden Knights' record book, have been valuable in every other aspect of her life.

"My coaches always said that, if you're going to be a breaststroker you have to be able to match up. So that's the same thing in life," said Quaglia, who is one of three college honorees for the third-annual Capital District Sports Women of the Year awards. "If you're going to be good at one thing, you have to try and excel at the other thing, too. If you're not great at something, you just have to always power through it, push through and try to excel in everything that you do."

Quaglia departed Saint Rose as one of the most decorated swimmers in program history. Over the course of her career, she set 11 program records — eight individual records, and three as part of relays — twice qualified for the NCAA Division II women's swimming and diving championships, and earned All-American status on three occasions.

She did so while swimming a diverse program of events, and while pairing that with high academic achievement and serious commitment to her community.

Throughout her entire time at Saint Rose, as both an undergrad and graduate student, Quaglia maintained a spotless 4.0 grade point average. She earned three academic All-America honors from the College Sports Information Directors of America and two from the College Swimming Coaches Association of America. She was a three-time Northeast-10 Academic All-Conference selection, a two-time winner of the NE10 Elite 24 award as the top scholar-athlete at the conference championship meet, and made the NE10 Academic Honor Roll every semester.

This past year, she was both the NE10 Sports Excellence Award winner as the conference's top scholar-athlete in her sport, and the recipient of the Saint Rose Athletics Department Female Scholar-Athlete of the Year award. "I've never come across a student-athlete as dedicated as Colleen before now," Saint Rose women's swimming and diving coach Kevin Walsh said. "Colleen is a remarkable student-athlete and has proven through her actions what is possible when you put your mind to it."

Quaglia's 2021-22 season in the pool was exemplary. Six times this past season, she was named the NE10 women's swimmer of the week, en route to posting the conference's fastest times in the 200- and 500-yard freestyles, 50-yard backstroke, 200 butterfly and 400 individual medley. At the conference championship meet, she took first in the 500 free, 400 IM and 200 butterfly, Quaglia finished her career with her name prominently listed on Saint Rose's record board.

"There's a lot of names up there that I love to have my name next to," she said. "There's so many alumni that I get to have my name next to. It's just really an awesome feeling to be able to be on the record board at Saint Rose, and especially in so many different events that are versatile. I think it just shows that I did work hard throughout my college career."

Setting those records across multiple strokes and disciplines was a point of great pride for Quaglia.

"To do distance freestyle, and then do the sprint strokes, then all the long-distance individual medley strokes — it's about being able to balance it all," she said. "I think it makes you a more unique swimmer."

Quaglia was often at her best at the biggest meets.

"She always rose to the occasion," Walsh said, "and proved to be a great leader on our team as well."

Beyond her athletic and academic accomplishments, Quaglia also took part in a number of community service efforts. Among her activities, she raised money and cleaned cancer patients' homes with Cleaning for a Cause, and helped provide more than 5,000 pounds of pasta for shelters around the Capital Region through the Saint Rose Business Professionals & Sales Organization's pasta drive.

"What impresses me the most about Colleen, outside of her academic and athletic achievements, is her passion and commitment to always be her best," Saint Rose athletic director Lori Ancil said. "She is a leader by example with an intense passion and desire to achieve success while inspiring others."

Quaglia credited her organization and time-management skills for allowing her to successfully combine her athletic, academic and community service work.

"The time-management that swimming provided me was really valuable," Quaglia said. "That totally helped me with my academics. Academic-wise, I was able to have really great relationships with all my professors. They really helped me through everything, and I was able to go to them if I had questions or concerns about something in the class."

Contact Adam Shinder at ashinder@dailygazette.net or @Adam Shinder on Twitter.

Congratulations Carlie Rzeszotarski!

BHBL
Spartans



You continue to amaze us
with all you have
accomplished!
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can't wait to see where
the road takes you next!

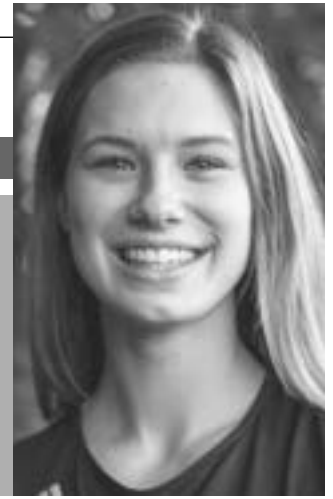
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hard... keep
chasing your
dreams... and
keep smiling!
We love you!

COLGATE
RAIDERS



Carlie Rzeszotarski **Burnt Hills Ballston Lake High School**

by Jim Schiltz
THE DAILY GAZETTE



When Carlie Rzeszotarski was brought up to the Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake varsity girls' volleyball team as an eighth-grader late in the 2017 season, Spartans coach Gary Bynon was certain that her natural talents combined with diligence and commitment would lead to grand accomplishments.

He was correct.

"As a volleyball player, she is arguably the most decorated player that the Capital Region has seen," Bynon said.

Rzeszotarski excelled as a volleyball hitter, defender and distributor for the Spartans, but also did so much more in her high school days as an athlete, student leader and youth sports advocate.

"In my 34 years in education I have not had many players like Carlie," Bynon said of the Colgate commit, who graduated with a career classroom GPA of 4.0 and with two state volleyball championships. "She does great things in the school community and academically, she is an outstanding athlete in two sports, and most of all she is a role model for the future women athletes of our sports. One of the greatest things that you can do as a female athlete is having young athletes want to follow in your footsteps."

Rzeszotarski was herself one of those young followers.

"Since I made the varsity at such a young age, there were a lot of girls I looked up to, and now I realize how much of an impact they had on me," said Rzeszotarski, who was a sixth-grade team manager for Burnt Hills' 2015 state title team before starring in the program's next two title runs. "I'm in that position now and it means so much to set that good example. It's something we emphasize here."

Burnt Hills volleyball is synonymous with championships, too, and Rzeszotarski was named the state volleyball tournament Class A MVP as a sophomore and again as a senior after leading Burnt Hills to its seventh and eighth NYS PHSA titles.

"Looking back, I had a perfect senior year," said the 18-year-old, who as a 12th-grader was named a MaxPreps first-team All-American. "We had a great basketball season and volleyball had the perfect ending."

When there were no state competitions her junior year due to COVID restrictions, Rzeszotarski anchored a Spartans squad that capped a 20-0 Fall 2 campaign with the Suburban Council tournament championship. Afterward her numerous accolades included Gatorade New York Player of the Year.

"Carlie is the type of athlete that all coaches try to build a team around," Burnt Hills athletic director Joe Scalise said of the four-time New York Volleyball Coaches Association Section II Player of the Year and three-time Suburban Council MVP. "A hard working, dedicated, driven, team-first type of person."

"It's all about the final outcome, and to get there you need that connection with everyone out there," said Rzeszotarski, who is one of 10 high school honorees for the third-annual Capital District Sports Women of the Year awards. "I try to help my team get to 25. I don't care if I get the big kill. I don't care about personal stats as much as winning. I'll remember the state championship game and not how many kills I had."

An outside hitter and middle blocker, Rzeszotarski became Burnt Hills career leader in kills during her senior season (1,683) when she was tabbed a first-team All-American, an All-Region 1 selection and a second-team Best and Brightest pick by the American Volleyball Coaches Association.

The 6-foot-1 Rzeszotarski was also difference-maker on the basketball court this past winter with her scoring, rebounding and defending in the Spartans' drive to the Section II Class A title game.

"I hadn't touched a ball in a year," said Rzeszotarski, who did not play basketball as a junior when the season overlapped with the Fall 2 volleyball campaign. "I wasn't sure if I was going to play. I didn't expect us to have such a great season."

Rzeszotarski has shared her sports knowledge as a coach with Junior Diggers Volleyball, at the Spike Mountain and Skidmore volleyball camps, and with Spartan Junior Basketball. Her background also includes camp counselor at Vacation Bible School and a teacher's helper at Stevens Elementary School.

"She has a great rapport with the young players and they love working with her," Bynon said.

Earlier in her athletic career, she was named MVP of the BH-BL modified and JV softball teams.

"Carlie is the type of athlete that excels in whatever she puts her mind to," Scalise said.

Rzeszotarski's busy senior year included working on the BH-BL yearbook and serving as president of the Math Club in which she has been a member throughout high school. Rzeszotarski academic participation list also includes National Junior Honor Society and National Honor Society, World Language Honor Society, Math Honor Society, Science Honor Society, Suburban Council Leadership Summit, BH-BL Student Government Leadership Day and Fall Sports Leadership Team.

Contact Jim Schiltz at jims@dailygazette.com or @Jim Schiltz on Twitter.

**The Niskayuna Athletic Booster Club
would like to congratulate Heather Schmidt
and all other recipients of the
Capital District Sports Women
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Congratulations on your accomplishment.**



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HS - Basketball | Rowing

2022

Heather Schmidt
Niskayuna High School

by Stan Hudy
THE DAILY GAZETTE



Rowing has taken Niskayuna High School senior Heather Schmidt to New Jersey, Florida, California and even Bulgaria.

Next, the sport is taking her to Stanford University.

Schmidt will row as part of the Stanford women's rowing team in the fall after a six-year career with Niskayuna Rowing.

"If you told me my freshman year that I'd be talking to someone at one of the best schools and the best rowing programs, I wouldn't believe it," Schmidt said at her final senior practice on the Mohawk River at the Niskayuna Rowing boathouse.

One of 10 high school honorees for the third-annual Capital District Sports Women of the Year awards, Schmidt is a four-time New York State Scholastic Rowing Association champion, a two-time Stotesbury Cup Regatta champion, a three-time Scholastic Rowing Association of America champion and a two-time silver medal winner at the USRowing Youth National Invitational regattas.

During her sophomore year, Schmidt recorded the fastest 2,000-meter time for a high school female on a rowing machine, referred to as an erg.

"The school record was 7 minutes, 11 seconds and I just wanted to beat the record," Schmidt said. "I beat that by four seconds and then I beat my [personal record] again last fall."

With a GPA placing her in the top 5% of students at Niskayuna and her new school record, she became a top rowing recruit.

"Our women's rowing program has a storied tradition, each year competing for scholastic state and national championships," Niskayuna athletic director Larry Gillooley said. "We have scores of young women who have continued their rowing careers at some of the finest colleges in the country. I can state without hesitation that Heather Schmidt is one of the best women's rowers who has ever rowed here at Niskayuna."

An avid skier, Schmidt is also part of the Gore Mountain ski patrol. "My entire family are ski patrollers," Schmidt said. "I took the ski patrol course during the spring rowing season which is a lot to handle — practical exams, written exams."

Schmidt also played three years on the Niskayuna girls' basketball varsity squad.

"In the winter, I would be in the weight room for crew in the mornings twice a week, play basketball six days a week and then on the seventh day I'd be skiing the whole day," Schmidt said. "I've definitely kept myself active with a lot of things."

Schmidt still had time to be the secretary of the Niskayuna Outing Club.

Completing her senior year, Schmidt rowed to a national title in the girls' double at the SRAA national championship regatta in New Jersey in late May and earned a silver medal in her last high school race at the USRowing Youth National Championship regatta at Nathan Benderson Park in Sarasota in the girls quad. She then flew to California for the US Rowing National Selection Camp for an opportunity to row at the World Rowing Championships in Italy in July. Last year, she rowed for the USA in Bulgaria.

"Rowing has given me such an opportunity to study harder, to train harder and go to really cool places," Schmidt said. "It blows my mind every day what I've been able to do and I'm only 18. It's super fun to think about."

Contact Stan Hudy at shudy@dailygazette.net
or @Stan Hudy on Twitter.



Cameryn,

We are so very proud of all of your accomplishments this year. You have amazed us with your talent, passion, teamwork, patience, and drive in the goal on the soccer field, on the bowling lane, or behind the plate on the softball field. Your contributions on Middleburgh's athletic teams coupled with your academic success have amazed us. Stay focused and apply all of the skills you developed in school and on the fields and you will continue on the path to success. These skills will pave your way to fulfilling all of your hopes and dreams. We will be here to support you on every step of your journey.

**With all of our support and love,
Mom, Dad, and Carolyne**

Cameryn Shultes **Middleburgh High School**

by Will Springstead
THE DAILY GAZETTE



Middleburgh's Cameryn Shultes doesn't get caught up in the many honors she has earned. She'd rather talk about the little moments, such as all the practices and time spent with her teammates. And she's glad she got to do it in a town that cares as much about its kids as Middleburgh.

The three-sport athlete is, in the words of Middleburgh athletic director Gregg Johns, "loyal, reliable and hard-working." She has excelled in the classroom, in athletics and perhaps most noticeably, in community service. Shultes has done most of her service with St. Peter's Hospital.

"I participated in a program through school this year with St. Peter's [New Visions Health Careers], where instead of just straight education, everything is tied into health services, so I got to follow the doctors on rounds, see different aspects of the healthcare industry, and it also ties in to giving back to the community," said Shultes, who is one of 10 high school honorees for the third-annual Capital District Sports Women of the Year awards.

In addition, Shultes has volunteered at St. Peter's Hospital making Christmas/holiday gift baskets for all the staff. She also volunteered at Becky's House cleaning the house and yard. (Becky's House is a house affiliated with St. Peter's to provide housing for families with relatives or children in the hospital for extended periods of time.) She also will be volunteering at the St. Peter's Cancer Care Center in the upcoming few weeks.

"She has the drive and desire to do her very best, while always finding time and willingness to help others succeed," Johns said.

Athletically, Shultes has been bowling for the longest, since the 2016-17 season. She was a Section II first-team all-star from 2017-22, a Western Athletic Conference first-team all-star from 2017-22, the team's most improved player in 2019, the WAC MVP in 2022 and had the league's high average in 2022. According to her coach and father, Richard Shultes, she had a high series of 754 this past season, which was the highest for boys and girls in the WAC.

"Cameryn led the team to a fourth consecutive sectional win," Richard said, "and a second trip to small-school states, where they placed second statewide. Cameryn and the [Middleburgh] team has not lost a match in the WAC for the last four years."

In soccer, as a goalie, she was the team co-defensive MVP in 2020, won the Coach's Choice Award in 2021, was a Section II first-team all-star in 2020 and 2022 and was the WAC Mohawk Division Defensive MVP in 2022. In softball, in which she is the catcher, she won the Coach's Choice Award in 2021.

Academically, Cameryn Shultes was a NYSPHSAA Scholar-Athlete in bowling from 2016-22, in soccer from 2018-22 and in softball in 2019, 2021 and 2022. She is the salutatorian and will attend SUNY Geneseo, where she plans to major in biology on the pre-med track.

Looking back, Shultes said she had to learn how to develop as a leader.

"I always wanted to be a leader, but obviously when you're young, you're not built for that yet," she said. "I certainly think as I got older, I did learn to become a leader for the younger girls, especially in soccer. Your goalies aren't usually going to be your captains because they're not involved in every bit of the up-and-down that other players are, but I learned how my voice could be heard as a goalie and a leader for others. I worked very hard."

When discussing athletic memories, Shultes doesn't mention the headlines, but rather the day-to-day moments. Those are what sports are all about for her.

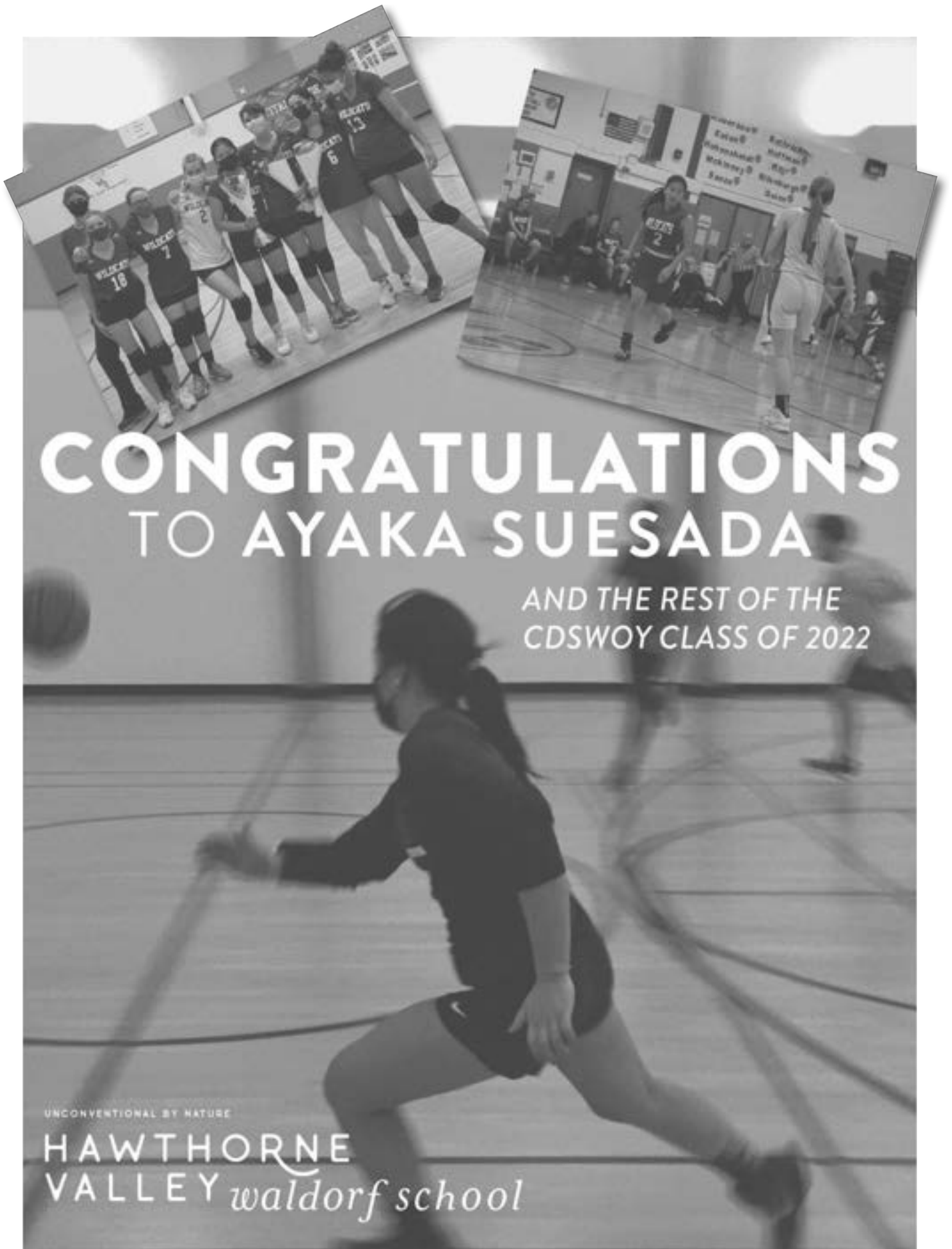
"Just the excitement of playing, the release of being able to play and to put all your energy into something," she said. "Plus, one thing about sports is all the emotions that come out of them. Another thing I enjoy is the team aspect. I've made lifelong friends through them. And just the excitement of doing something all the way through."

Give her hours of practice and time spent with friends any day of the week. And by all means, let it be in Middleburgh.

"Thankfully our school is very community-oriented because it's not very big, and being able to compete in front of a lot of the community members and having it be a big deal in our town is nice," Shultes said. "Not all schools can be that way because they're so big."

"She is the epitome of what, as a coach, we look for in a student-athlete," Johns said. "She is well-rounded in academics, athletics and school activities. Cameryn is a great teammate, a great leader and just a solid and respectful young woman."

Contact Will Springstead at wspringstead@dailygazette.net or @Will Springstead on Twitter.



CONGRATULATIONS TO AYAKA SUESADA

AND THE REST OF THE
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UNCONVENTIONAL BY NATURE

HAWTHORNE
VALLEY *waldorf school*

Ayaka Suesada
Hawthorne Valley Waldorf School

by Mike MacAdam
THE DAILY GAZETTE



Ayaka Suesada's school encourages everyone to explore their creative side, and although she called herself "not the best artist necessarily," a school administrator credited Suesada for her "beautiful works of art in drawing, painting, sculpture, weaving, wood, iron and stone."

When it came to Suesada's senior season playing basketball for the Hawthorne Valley Waldorf School, she needed to tap into that creative side like never before.

Her graduating class totaled all of 11 students, so perhaps it was no surprise when numbers came up light to field a girls' varsity team.

Not to be deterred, Suesada hatched the idea of playing on the boys' team, and the result was a rewarding season that capped a career in which she played varsity basketball since seventh grade, while thriving academically, embracing the unique culture at Hawthorne Valley and helping her parents, who are caregivers at Triform Camphill Community, look after residents with special needs there.

With all that on her plate, missing basketball senior year would've left a gaping hole in Suesada's high school career, but the so-called "gym rat, first to arrive and last to leave," as Wildcats boys' coach Jason Middlebrook described her, was able to find a way to fill it in an unusual way.

"When I was a senior, I guess a lot of girls weren't interested in basketball, and I still wanted to play, so I was talking to the coaches and kind of joking around, 'Oh, maybe I could be on the boys' team, that could be fun,'" Suesada said. "My coach was like, 'No, yeah, let's make it happen.' I'm really thankful that I was able to play, and it was really fun, probably one of my favorite seasons."

That, despite the fact that Hawthorne Valley, one of the smallest schools in the entire New York State Public High School Athletic Association, did not fare well on the scoreboard while playing in the Central Hudson Valley League. Still, Suesada said that by the end of the season, the Wildcats had improved substantially, to the point where teams that had beaten them by large margins earlier in the season found themselves in very tight games the second time around.

Middlebrook credited Suesada, who was a captain on the team while playing point guard, for setting an excellent example for teammates to follow.

"Ayaka was fearless throughout her senior year, competing with and against young men and never backing down," he said of Suesada, one of 10 high school honorees for the third-annual Capital District Sports Women of the Year awards. "She was a vocal leader on and off the court throughout her school career – but especially this year.

"After every practice this past season, Ayaka went to the weight room, while the boys on the team went home."

"At our school, everyone is super-accepting and welcoming, so they were very down with me being one of the captains," Suesada said. "And it was really fun, also, being a senior. You have a little more confidence, so you don't feel as shy to say, 'Hey, stop doing that' or 'Come over here so we can stretch.'"

"I usually don't think of myself as competitive, but then when I start playing games, I'm a little bit competitive, and I don't like losing. So I try my best, and I think everyone tries their best and puts everything on the court. We fight hard, and it's really fun."

Suesada carried a 4.0 GPA in the classroom and plans to study sports management at Syracuse University.

Besides basketball, she has competed in cross country, club soccer and varsity volleyball, for which she earned all-CHVL honors despite the fact that this was her only season playing the sport.

Besides having been exposed to the Waldorf School philosophy at Hawthorne Valley, where students are taught and encouraged to adopt principles of diversity, equity and inclusion, Suesada enjoys helping her parents at Triform Camphill.

"For me, most of my involvement is during the summer, when they need more help and I'm off school," she said. "I'll help in different work areas, often the bakery, because I enjoy that area. I do a lot of childcare for the other families.

"During the year there are events where I help out. I love the community. It's very tight-knit. Everyone is so welcoming and friendly, and you meet new people all the time. I feel a lot of fulfillment in many ways, and I'm so happy here."

At Hawthorne Valley, Suesada has served as a mentor to younger kids in athletics, academics and social justice issues.

"I tell them to enjoy the present," she said. "Be in the moment, because I think nowadays kids are very accelerated in their development in a lot of ways, and I think it's important for them to live in the moment and enjoy being young and having this freedom to do anything when you're young, and have fun with it."

Contact Mike MacAdam at mikemac@dailygazette.com or @Mike MacAdam on Twitter.



Congratulations
Sadie Tavares

Capital District Sports Women of the Year
Class of 2022

From your friends and family at
Saratoga National Golf Club



Sadie Tavares
Schuylerville High School

by Mike MacAdam
THE DAILY GAZETTE



Schuylerville High School girls' lacrosse and field hockey coach Erin Lloyd said Sadie Tavares "has always been a bull. She is the girl that will go through a brick wall to get the ball."

"That's a fair assessment," Tavares admitted, with a laugh. "In basketball, I once ran through a door, and I didn't know it was unlocked, and I fell right outside and almost got locked out of the building."

One of 10 high school honorees for the third-annual Capital District Sports Women of the Year awards, Tavares surrounds herself with doors, and welcomes the opportunity to step through all of them, perhaps not so loudly as the one in the gym, but forcefully enough. A hard-hustling three-sport star who helped the Black Horses win the Section II Class D championship in girls' lacrosse the last two seasons, Tavares has immersed herself in a variety of outside activities while maintaining an academic record that earned valedictorian honors in her class.

An imposing presence as a defensive midfielder in lacrosse and field hockey, Tavares has been a co-captain in all three sports and was a Foothills Council first-team all-star in lacrosse.

She has shown an equally wide range academically, as the National Honor Society student has served as Senior Class President and been involved in Math League, Spanish Club and Environmental Club, and has received awards such as the Rensselaer Medal & Scholarship for outstanding achievement in math and science, among others.

That speaks to her aspiration to study biomedical engineering at Vanderbilt University in the fall of 2022 as a path to a career in neuroscience. Tavares has already served an internship at the Neural Stem Cell Institute in Rensselaer.

"I knew I loved biology and wanted to help people," Tavares said. "I went there all this year to intern with Dr. David Butler, studied things like Huntington's Disease and how horrible all these neurodegenerative diseases are, like Huntington's, Parkinson's and Alzheimer's. So I wanted to improve the lives of those people if I could."

Tavares' community service spans such organizations as Students Against Destructive Behavior (SADD) and has included coaching young kids, but she said her favorite is peer mentoring with special education students her age.

"I work with the life skills class at my high school, and every single week I go into the classroom, and we talk and play different games, and it's really fun to interact with those students," she said. "It's very relaxing for me, as it is for them, to just unplug from all the honors courses that I'm taking and just talk to people who want to talk about things other than school."

If it doesn't appear there are enough hours in a day to participate in the various activities and organizations she does while maintaining excellent academic and athletic careers, Tavares said that's the way she prefers it.

"This is actually a question I get a lot," she said. "The thing is, I really like to be busy. If I'm sitting down and on my phone, I feel like I'm not being productive. So I love to be out talking to people. I'm extremely extroverted, so I love to talk to people and interact with people and play sports against people. I like to give back to my community, so it's not so much of a burden to me as it is something that I really want to do, something I want to incorporate into my everyday life."

Tavares had played soccer for seven years before being convinced by Lloyd to switch to field hockey as her fall sport two years ago, especially since the workouts and weight training had much more carryover into spring lacrosse, Tavares' favorite sport.

The Black Horses won their second straight Section II championship by beating Cohoes 18-4 this spring.

"Winning the sectional championship this year and last year for lacrosse, it was just really nice to see all your hard work pay off with the people you spend the whole year conditioning with and training with," Tavares said. "Oh, we're going to get that white patch, and it's so nice to finally be validated and get it."

"Her presence in the halls and on the fields of Schuylerville High School will be greatly missed next year," Lloyd said. "We are proud of her as a school community, and cannot wait to see what her future holds."

After all her accolades and achievements, Tavares said she was especially gratified to be nominated for the Capital District Sports Women of the Year award.

"I just found out about this award this year, but once I saw it, I was immediately drawn to it, because you don't see a lot of women in sports coverage, and it was really nice to see that, with the 50th anniversary of Title IX and everything," she said. "I was so overjoyed and not expecting it at all. But it's so awesome to be a part of this amazing group of people that I'm going to be joining."

Contact Mike MacAdam at mikemac@dailygazette.com or @Mike MacAdam on Twitter.

Congratulations Carlie Rzeszotarski!!



BH  BL
Spartans

We are proud to be joined by talented young ladies from the Empire State Youth Orchestra to entertain our recipients and our audience during tonight's CDSWOY Awards Gala. Thank you to Dr. David Bebe, the Director of Education for ESYO, for his assistance.

Empire State Youth Orchestra engages more than 600 youth from across New York's Capital Region and Western New England in the joyful pursuit of musical excellence. Guided by outstanding teaching artists, coaches and conductors, members explore their potential alongside like-minded peers in an environment that is musically daring and seriously fun!

Let's meet our four guest performers.



FAITH BORKOWSKI

Faith Borkowski has been playing violin for the past 14 years. A recent graduate of Niskayuna High School, she will be attending Manhattan School of Music in the fall to major in classical violin while studying with Peter Winograd. During the past eight years, she has performed with the Empire State Youth Orchestra, serving as concertmaster of Symphony for the past three years. When not playing music, she enjoys playing video games, watching shows, and hanging out with friends.



MADILYN CONNOR

Madilyn Connor is a flutist and a graduate of West Canada Valley High School. She has performed in All-County and Area All-State Bands on both flute and piccolo, and she was a flute soloist in the NYSBDA Virtual Honor Band in December 2020. Madilyn performed at Kodak Hall in Rochester as principal flutist in the Conference All-State Symphonic Band last December. She was a member of ESYO performing in the Troy Savings Bank Music Hall and here at Proctors. Madilyn's ESYO season ended in June 2022 with a performance at Tanglewood's Ozawa Hall. She will pursue a musical performance degree at Ithaca College this fall. Madilyn is a student of Leslie Kubica.



GEORGIA BURTT

Georgia Burt has been a violinist for 13 years and a pianist for 15 years. She just completed her seventh and final year in the Empire State Youth Orchestra, being awarded the Helen Cha-Pyo Baton Award for her work in the organization and community. She will be attending the University of Miami Frost School of Music this Fall as a Violin Performance Major under the direction of Scott Flavin. She enjoys playing chamber and orchestra music, composing music, and conducting. In her spare time, she likes to bake, swim, dance, and golf.



KATE SZUMOWSKI

Kate is honored to be representing ESYO this evening. She began her work with ESYO in the eighth grade and graduated from Broadalbin-Perth High School as salutatorian as the first person in her school's history to attend an All-State convention. She has performed in 25 musicals: co-directing, musically directing, and working as a crew member in several others. Kate takes great pride in her summer vocal studio, in which she provides private vocal instruction to aspiring performers. During the school year, she teaches music to young drama students and helps them learn the basics of stage performance. In June, she received ESYO's Barry Richman Careers in Music Scholarship and will study French horn performance at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland; one of the top three performing arts schools in the world.

WELL DONE!

Kelsey Meca



Basketball

- Captain 10-12
- Rookie of the Year (9)
- Second Team WAC All-Star (10)
 - Offensive MVP (10)
- Section II record for 40 3-pointers in a season (10)
 - Leadership Award (11)
 - Senior Award, MVP (12)
- First Team WAC All-Star (12)
- Section II record for 100 career 3-pointers (12)
- Top Scholar Athlete 2021-22
 - 10th Team All-State (12)



Soccer

- Captain 11-12
- First Team WAC All-Star (9)
- Rookie of the Year (9)
- First Team Hudson Division (10)
- Most Dedicated (12)
 - First Team WAC Hudson Division (12)
- First Team WAC All-Star (12)
- Senior Award



Softball

- Captain 11, 12
- Honorable mention (9)
- Most Improved (9)
- Achievement Award (11)

Congratulations!



THE MAYFIELD COMMUNITY IS PROUD OF YOU!

Lindsey Jacobellis, an Olympic medalist and six-time world champion snowboarder, is the virtual guest speaker for the 2022 Capital District Sports Women of the Year Awards Gala.

A four-time Olympian, Lindsey is the most dominant SBX (snowboard cross) rider of all time. She is an Olympic medalist, six-time world champion and 10-time X Games gold medalist. After winning the World Cup for the 31st time, she became the winningest snowboarder in history. She is a member of the U.S. Snowboardcross Team and is the inspirational leader and mentor for Super Girl Snow Pro.

At the 2003 Winter X Games, Lindsey won bronze in slopestyle. She made her Olympic debut at the 2006 Winter Olympics in Turin, making her first Olympic final in the process and earning a silver medal. Lindsey earned the gold medal in snowboard cross at Winter X Games XII in 2008. In 2011, Jacobellis won her fourth straight gold in snowboard cross at the Winter X Games, adding to her gold medals in 2008, 2009, and 2010.

At the 2015 World Championship, Lindsey won gold in snowboard cross. She also won the 2017 World Championship and finished with a silver and two golds in the first World Cup races of the 2017–2018 season.

In her fifth Olympics, Lindsey became the Olympic champion in snowboard cross at the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing. This was the first gold medal for the US in Beijing, ending a five-day gold medal drought. She followed up her individual gold by winning the debut of the mixed team snowboard cross with partner Nick Baumgartner.

Lindsey has snowboarded competitively in snowboard cross, snowboard slopestyle, and snowboard halfpipe competitions. She is a native of Danbury, Connecticut, and grew up in southern Vermont. She attended Stratton Mountain School in Stratton, Vermont, a college preparatory high school with a sports focus on training winter athletes, graduating in 2003.



Congratulations Becka!!!

**The Maple Hill Athletic Department
wishes you all the best!**

**We are proud of all your hard
work and dedication!**



Congratulations Grace!



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Sports Women of the Year



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Congratulations Sadie.
Schuylerville Athletics are so very proud of
you and all you have accomplished.
You are so very deserving of this honor,
and we look forward to watching you
soar to new heights at Vanderbilt.

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2020 GRAND COLLEGIATE WOMAN OF THE YEAR:
Morgan Burchardt, The College of Saint Rose

2020 GRAND SCHOLASTIC WOMAN OF THE YEAR:
Lydia Ware, Averill Park High School

The other members of the CDSWOY Class of 2020:

Liz Brady, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
MacKenzie Brown, Rensselaer HS
Amelia Canetto, Taconic Hills HS
Morgan Fish, Fort Edward HS
Megan Flynn, The Sage Colleges
Rachel Hunsicker, Lake George HS
Brytney Moore, Northville HS
Brooke Pickett, Stillwater HS
Makenzie Terrell, Middleburgh HS
Lauren Willis, South Glens Falls HS
Rachel Wnuk, Galway HS



2020 Grand Recipients: Lydia Ware of Averill Park High School and Morgan Burchardt of The College of Saint Rose

2021 GRAND COLLEGIATE WOMAN OF THE YEAR:
Hallie Klosterman, Russell Sage College

2021 GRAND SCHOLASTIC WOMAN OF THE YEAR:
Clare Howard, Taconic Hills High School

The other members of the CDSWOY Class of 2021:


Naseyah Dix, Bryant & Stratton College
Phoebe Fox, Glens Falls HS
Riley Gibbons, Germantown HS
Jenna Hoffman, Maple Hill HS
Beth Irwin, Guilderland HS
Anna Jankovic, Averill Park HS
Sara Langworthy, Warrensburg HS
Isabella Mancini, Galway HS
Madison Relyea, Mayfield HS
Kate Sherman, Mohonasen HS



2021 Grand Recipients: Clare Howard of Taconic Hills High School and Hallie Klosterman of Russell Sage College

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Congratulations Cameryn!



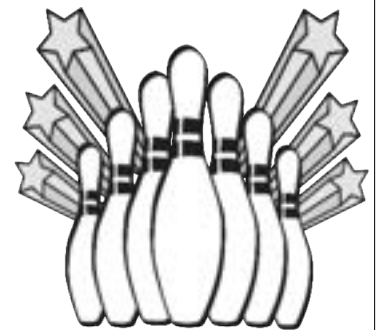
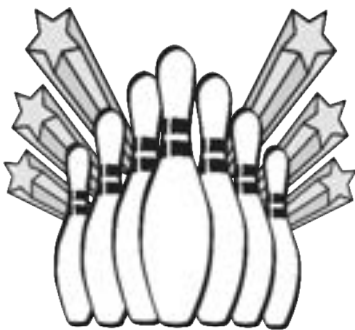
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The Capital District Sports Women of the Year Executive Board: Brendon Phillips, Eric McDowell, Jennifer McDowell and Alissa Collins. (Photo by Lauren Hull Photography).



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2021 CDSWOY Awards Photo Gallery

Photos by Lauren Hull Photography



Ashley Miller of WNYT-TV News Channel 13 Sports served as the host.



Naseyah Dix of Bryant & Stratton.



Phoebe Fox of Glens Falls.



Riley Gibbons of Germantown.



Anna Jankovic of Averill Park.



Warrensburg's Sara Langworthy joined by her parents.



Madison Relyea of Mayfield with her parents.



The Class of 2022 received a standing ovation.



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