

Capital District



Sports Women of the Year

2020 2020 2020 2020

August 18, 2020 | **The Desmond** | 6:00 pm



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*The 2020 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. Photographs provided by family members of the honorees. Special thanks to our generous sponsors, advertisers, and donors for their support of CDSWOY.*

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This event marks a graduation, if you will, as well as a celebration. For tonight, all the fruits of the labor since the first thought of this program in the Spring of 2018 will now be enjoyed. The Capital District Sports Women of the Year program honors the best and brightest young women from the high schools and colleges in our area. These ladies will get the recognition they richly deserve. Their excellence in the classroom, in the community, and in the sports arena have been rewarded with releases, a website, and the culmination of the first ever Awards Event for our inaugural recipients.

The young ladies selected for this unique program were chosen from hundreds of ladies nominated by Athletic Directors. These 13 recipients are already role models, who strove for excellence during their high school and college years. They will receive special recognition as they prepare for their future in their chosen career path.

This program would never have come to fruition without the support provided by so many wonderful people. First, I start with our CDSWOY Board, featuring Alissa Gormley, Jennifer McDowell and Brendon Phillips. Their thoughts and input, efforts at the fundraisers, other events and here tonight are appreciated. Proctors Theatre provided the site for our August press conference, when CDSWOY made its debut. The Desmond Hotel Albany has welcomed us as the host of tonight's inaugural Awards Event. Our M.C. and my friend, Spectrum's Marisa Jacques, has been a tireless talent promoting women's sports. We are honored to have Chris Plonsky as our guest speaker. A past president of NACDA and the Women's Leaders in College Sports, Chris is the Chief of Staff & Executive Senior Associate Athletics Director at the University of Texas, and as a friend I am so pleased that she will join us this evening to address our honorees.

Numerous businesses and supporters provided kind donations for our Silent Auction Event at Glennpeter Jewelers. Throughout the academic year, we were hosted by restaurants and entertainment venues for fund-raisers that provided necessary income for our program to succeed. Thanks also to Hoffman's Car Wash for their long running donation program. I appreciate Sports Editor Michael Kelly and his staff at *The Daily Gazette* for their marvelous feature stories about our recipients, written exclusively for this publication.

As I stated at the press conference, "Someday, we may vote for them. Someday, they may keep us healthy. Someday, they may keep us safe. No matter what their chosen career path may provide, they will succeed. Today, they are already our heroes."

Enjoy our event and bask in the glory of their achievements.

Sincerely,



Eric McDowell  
President, Capital District Sports Women of the Year, Inc.  
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*Senior  
Women's Lacrosse  
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute*



**College - Lacrosse**

2020

**Liz Brady**  
**Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI)**

by Ken Schott  
*The Daily Gazette* - Associate Sports Editor



RPI women's lacrosse senior Liz Brady's mind was already made up well before the NCAA awarded an additional year of eligibility for all spring sports student-athletes after this year's campaigns were canceled because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Brady missed the 2018 season because of a torn ACL, and she is planning to return to RPI next year as a graduate student.

While her college career has included its share of obstacles, it's also included numerous accomplishments. The latest is that Brady, who is from Bradford, Massachusetts, is one of the three college recipients of the inaugural Capital District Sports Women of the Year, while 10 area high school athletes are also being honored.

"I'm really grateful for it," Brady said. "It's a really cool honor. I know it's the first time that they've had this award. I think it's really cool to be a part of the inaugural class. It's one of those things that I didn't do alone. I honestly had my team and my coaches, all of RPI athletics kind of with me.

"It's really humbling to get that, but also really cool. I didn't do it alone. I did it with my team."

Brady is a biomedical engineering major and has a 3.10 grade-point average in that. Her GPA for the fall semester was 3.55. She will pursue her MBA next year and looks to go into the medical device and orthopedic field.

"I was actually planning on getting my master's at RPI, so I will already be there for a fifth year," Brady said. "I had an extra year because of my torn ACL. That was also in the back of my brain, depending how my body made it through the [2019] season."

The torn ACL she suffered was the second of her career. The other one happened in high school. Going through the rehab process after the first torn ACL helped her get through the second one.

"The first time I did it, it wasn't 'if I'm going to come back, it was 'when,'" Brady said. "The second time when I was there, I was in the same mentality, where like, OK, it's not fun, but now I know what I have to do. I already knew what the road was like, and I recovered well from my first one. I'm just like, 'All right, it's not going to get better until I have surgery.' I just went for it. I went to Boston, had surgery and was rehabbing. I was able to run before the season ended, but was able to be with my team the entire time. They also made a difference because I was still traveling with them and still a part of everything that we did."

Away from the field and classroom, Brady is part of the RPI sports information department, working as a photographer. It's a relaxing job for her.

"I've always enjoyed taking pictures," Brady said. "I love working with them. The sports information staff is amazing."

Brady participates in several community activities too. She is proud of the projects that take place with the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC).

"That includes the Special Olympics days," Brady said. "That's been one of my favorite events. I have a couple of cousins who are special needs. I grew up going to their Special Olympics events. As I got older, I volunteered at them."

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On Twitter, follow Associate Sports Editor Ken Schott @slapschotts and Daily Gazette Sports @dgazettesports. Email Schott at [schott@dailygazette.com](mailto:schott@dailygazette.com).

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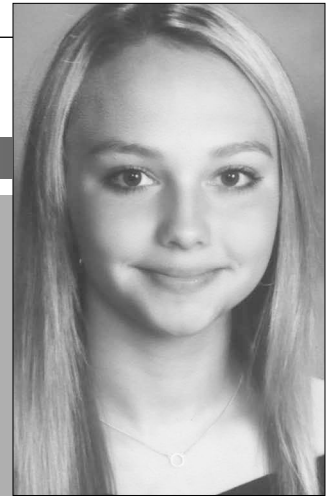
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## **MacKenzie Brown** **Rensselaer High School**

by Adam Shinder  
*The Daily Gazette* - Staff Writer



MacKenzie Brown's secret for playing three varsity sports while excelling academically and undertaking internships that will set her on the path to a law career?

"I sacrifice a lot of sleep," Brown said.

That's just the way Brown, a senior at Rensselaer High School, likes it.

"It's been a lot of hard work and time management, but I wouldn't have it any other way. It's really what I love to do," she said. "It's just an amazing experience to be a three-sport athlete, and it's honestly an honor."

A three-sport athlete at Rensselaer in track and field, soccer and basketball, Brown is one of 10 high school honorees for the inaugural Capital District Sports Women of the Year awards, which also sees three college athletes recognized.

It's on the track where Brown has made her biggest athletic impact, holding three Rensselaer school records — one on her own in the steeplechase, two as part of the 4x100 and 4x400-meter relay teams.

Brown, who said her favorite event is the hurdles, is willing to stretch herself over any distance.

"Each race has its own challenges," Brown said. "Steeplechase is so hard because it's a long race with the big barriers, and then there's the water, but 4x1 is also hard because, even though it's a shorter race, you put all of your energy into that and you have to get the baton perfectly. You don't want to be the one that messes that up for the rest of your team."

The melding of the team and individual is what attracts Brown to track and field the most.

"I can win a race by myself," she said, "but you have relays and you can also win as an entire team. Personal achievements are good, but the team achievements are the better ones."

Brown was also a team captain and starter for the Rensselaer soccer team and maintains a 95 average in the classroom as a member of the National Honor Society. She's received numerous awards for her athletic and academic achievements.

Outside of school, Brown is a dedicated volunteer whose community service includes assisting as an organizer for a youth summit through the Troy Drug Free Community Coalition, collecting clothes for Jeans for Teens through Circles of Mercy and volunteering with organizations like the Red Cross Blood Drive, Rensselaer Christmas in the City, Trunk or Treat through RADAR and the Kiwanis Club Community Pancake Breakfast.

"I always like to stay moving, stay doing something," Brown said. "There's 24 hours in a day, and if I can volunteer and make someone happy, but also be part of a team, I'd rather do that than anything else."

Brown also gets immense satisfaction from her internships at Albany Law School and Rensselaer City Court, which she hopes will pave the way for studying criminal justice in college and eventually attending law school herself.

Brown interns in the domestic violence clinic at Albany Law School, getting to both sit in on classes "with actual college kids who are in law school. That's amazing," and assist students in the clinic with their casework.

"They don't treat me like I'm just some high school kid that doesn't know what they're talking about," Brown said. "They realize that I have potential and I have the drive to know where I want to go in life. That has been a great tool to help me get there."

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Reach Adam Shinder at [ashinder@dailygazette.net](mailto:ashinder@dailygazette.net) or [@Adam\\_Shinder](https://twitter.com/Adam_Shinder) on Twitter.

Chris Plonsky has worked in college athletics since 1976 and is in her 32nd year at The University of Texas. She is Executive Senior Associate Athletics Director/Chief of Staff and is UT's Senior Woman Administrator for Big 12 Conference and NCAA governance.

She supervises staff leaders in student services (academics, career/leadership/personal development), equipment, compliance/risk management and sports medicine/health and wellness/strength performance. The latter area includes staff experts in nutrition, behavioral health and applied sports science.

Plonsky is a USA Basketball board member, a USOC Collegiate Advisory Council member and an emeritus board member of the National Football Foundation/College Football Hall of Fame. She is past president of NACDA, NACMA and Women Leaders in College Sports (formerly NACWAA).

She is a past member of the NACDA Board, the LEAD1 board (formerly Division 1AD Association) and has served NCAA committees on Academic Performance, Women's Basketball competition and NCAA Commercialization activities. She chaired the NCAA Division I Management Council in 2003.

At Texas, she was women's athletics director from April 2001-December 2017. From 1993-2017, she also supervised revenue areas in sponsorship, marketing, licensing and television. She worked in communications/media relations at Iowa State University (1979-81), Texas (1982-86) and The BIG EAST Conference (1986-90). After three years in administration at The BIG EAST as associate commissioner (1990-93), she returned to Texas in October 1993.

Born in Pittsburgh and raised in Greensburg, Pa., and northeast Ohio, Plonsky earned a B.S. Journalism degree in 1979 at Kent State University, where she was a three-year basketball student-athlete, undergraduate KSU athletics media relations assistant and editor of The Daily Kent Stater.

In Austin, Plonsky is a member of many University campus committees and serves as a volunteer on the University Federal Credit Union supervisory committee.



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**College - Soccer**

2020

**Morgan Burchhardt**  
**The College of Saint Rose**

by Ken Schott

*The Daily Gazette* - Associate Sports Editor



Morgan Burchhardt experienced a lot in her six years at The College of Saint Rose.

There were two appearances in the NCAA Division II women's soccer tournament Final Four.

There were also two major knee operations.

Burchhardt wouldn't trade those experiences for anything.

The sixth-year senior and Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake High School graduate who had three goals and 14 assists for the Golden Knights last season is one of the three college recipients of the inaugural Capital District Sports Women of the Year, which also honors 10 high school athletes.

"I just think that it's an amazing honor," Burchhardt said. "It's a great way to showcase young women in the area and their accomplishments athletically and academically. It's just such a great way to recognize The College of Saint Rose women's soccer program."

Burchhardt appreciates all she went through, and that drove her to succeed.

"When I started as a freshman in 2014, on the first day of preseason, I gained the respect of the upperclassmen by passing my physical test and producing on the field," Burchhardt said. "Because of that, they really took me under their wing. I was extremely fortunate for that because that leadership — especially because some of them were national champions [in 2011] — really carried with me throughout my time."

Burchhardt was named a captain her sophomore year. But then in 2016, she suffered a torn ACL that kept her out the entire season. She tried to return in 2017, but after playing one game, Burchhardt reinjured the knee and had to have another season-ending operation.

There was never a point that she wanted to give up.

"I always wanted to represent Saint Rose on a national stage for soccer, as well as individually," Burchhardt said. "I always wanted to be an All-American. I saw the honor my freshman year when the upperclassmen were receiving it. I knew I was going to be an All-American at Saint Rose, and I was going to do anything to achieve it. I knew, in order to achieve that, I needed to lead this team as far as I could. Not only was it me leading, it

was my co-captain Nina [Predanic] leading. It was a lot of the upper-classmen leading for this past year.

"I knew we could get a team back to the Final Four. It was just a matter of when the parts would come together. It came together my last season.

She returned in 2018. Burchhardt is the only player in the team's history to record 10 or more assists in four seasons. She's fourth all-time in career points (114), second all-time assists (52) and tied for 11th all-time in goals (31).

At the end of last season, Burchhardt was a United Soccer Coaches third-team All-America pick.

"Just getting that appreciation and showing the girls what it's like to get to a Final Four is exactly what I tried to do during my time," Burchhardt said. "My knee injuries, obviously, took a dominant role for two years and it did impact the team, obviously, on the field. However, I always tried to keep my leadership there as much as I could on the sidelines during games and practices. My teammates' support has been amazing throughout my time. I was so fortunate to play with so many different players and the background that they're from. It's crazy that a little school in Albany completely widened my eyes to that opportunity."

One of the community service projects that Burchhardt was involved in and proud of was her work organizing Penny Wars, a fundraiser for the Strength in Numbers non-profit organization.

"It raised over \$700 collecting loose change in about a 10-day period for a couple of hours a day," Burchhardt said. "All that money went back to Strength in Numbers. Blake Snyder's father, unfortunately, passed away from cancer. It was really nice to give back to another Saint Rose alum and also a soccer player."

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On Twitter, follow Associate Sports Editor Ken Schott @slapschotts and Daily Gazette Sports @dgazettesports. Email Schott at [schott@dailygazette.com](mailto:schott@dailygazette.com).

# Amelia Canetto

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**HS - Field Hockey, Track & Field**

2020

**Amelia Canetto**  
**Taconic Hills High School**

by Michael Kelly  
*The Daily Gazette* - Sports Editor



She succeeded in so many things during her high school career.

There's a natural talent that's needed to do that, but also a curiosity and willingness to take on new challenges.

Amelia Canetto, a senior at Taconic Hills, combined all that throughout her high school career, which saw her star athletically, achieve academically and make her mark within her community.

"I put a lot of time and effort into athletics, but I also tried to balance my time in the classroom and outside of school," said Canetto, who will attend Coastal Carolina University next school year.

The evidence supports that Canetto did more than try to maintain balance in her life. She succeeded, and that success was rewarded with being named as one of 10 high school honorees for the inaugural Capital District Sports Women of the Year awards, which also see three college athletes recognized.

Athletically, Canetto set school records on the track and led her school's field hockey team. In the classroom, Canetto was a high honor roll student who challenged herself with difficult classes and academic opportunities outside of school. Within her community, she spent hours volunteering at a library, food pantry and more, plus worked as a camp counselor.

Everywhere Canetto went, according to Taconic Hills Athletic Director Angela Webster — who taught Canetto in math and coached her in field hockey — she made a positive impact.

"The first thing that comes to mind when I think about Amelia is that she is a workhorse," Webster wrote in a CDSWOY letter of recommendation for Canetto. "She works hard, wants to improve and holds high expectations for herself."

During her seasons competing for Taconic Hills, the 17-year-old Canetto set program records as a solo sprinter and in relays and competed at the state championships. Meanwhile, Canetto first started playing field hockey as a freshman, but finished her career as a high-scoring star. After earning her

program's Most Improved Player award as a junior after scoring 24 goals, she was named the team's Most Valuable Player after scoring 21 goals.

At Coastal Carolina, Canetto will compete in track and field.

"As her coach, I have had the opportunity to witness an exceptional work ethic and competitive spirit," Taconic Hills track and field coach Paula Voight-Jause wrote in a CDSWOY letter of recommendation for Canetto. "Amelia always seeks help with all aspects of her performance and works tirelessly during the season to improve. She spends extra time preparing for each competition, seeks out other team members to encourage, and leads by example."

Canetto, a member of the National Honor Society, will study marine biology in college, a field she's always been thrilled to learn as much about as possible. That stems from spending time on Cape Cod with her family. "I've always just had this love and fascination for the ocean," Canetto said. "I'd read all these books and learned when I was older that there is still so much that we don't know about the ocean."

As part of a course through the University at Albany, Canetto did a research project and paper on the migration habits of sharks. Last summer, she participated in a program in the British Virgin Islands that saw her earn her scuba certification and help conduct research about a local turtle population.

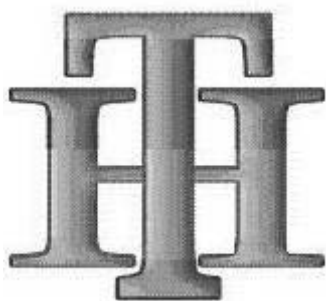
Her dedication and enthusiasm fueled Canetto's success during her high school career.

"Amelia is a remarkable young lady that will be missed in our classrooms and athletic fields next year," Webster wrote. "She is driven to be a success."

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

**CONGRATULATIONS AMELIA CANETTO!**



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## HS - Basketball, Volleyball

2020

### **Morgan Fish** **Fort Edward High School**

by Adam Shinder  
*The Daily Gazette* - Staff Writer



Morgan Fish grew up idolizing the girls' basketball players at Fort Edward High School who got to celebrate Section II Class D championships at Hudson Valley Community College.

The Flying Forts were a dominant force in Section II small-school girls' basketball during Fish's younger years, winning area crowns five times from 2011 to 2016. Back in March, Fish got to join that legacy as a team captain when Fort Edward topped Whitehall to capture the Class D title, ending a four-year drought.

"Finally getting that chance to run out on the court at the end of the game was a huge highlight for me," Fish said.

A four-year varsity athlete in both basketball and volleyball who is the valedictorian of Fort Edward's Class of 2020, Fish is one of 10 high school honorees for the inaugural Capital District Sports Women of the Year awards, which also sees three college athletes recognized.

She carries a 99 average in the classroom and served as a team captain in both volleyball and basketball, all while balancing that with rigorous coursework as part of the New Visions medical program, part of her pathway to a planned career in medicine.

Finding a balance between every aspect of her life required a lot of work.

"It was tough. A lot of late nights," Fish said. "I stay after with teachers and I talk with them about things and get things off my chest. I tell them what's bothering me — especially my New Visions teacher, Dr. Julie Ross, she would always listen and make sure I was doing all right — [and] just talking through things with my coaches, too. Being able to let everything go, get everything out there [helped me]."

In the athletic world, Fish not only won the Section II Class D championship on the basketball court as a senior but was also a key part of a Fort Edward volleyball team that also advanced to the area final.

"I'm definitely proud of my teams," she said. "You can't do anything without your team. You build such a strong relationship with every single one of them, and that means more to me than any of it."

A member of the National Honor Society, Fish has spent her senior year immersed in the New Visions Health Careers program through Capital Region BOCES.

The program involves two days a week of classroom work "learning about the basics" of medical ethics, medical terminology, anatomy and physiology, plus three days of the week taking part in clinical rotations and getting immersed in various aspects of the medical profession.

"I saw a spinal surgery, I rode in an ambulance with EMTs, I saw cardiac catheterizations in the hospital," Fish said.

That experience has helped Fish understand her career ambitions.

"Not just learning about them in the classroom, but actually getting to see them is such a great experience — especially for kids our age," she said.

Fish fills up her breaks from school with community service, largely through the Upward Bound program at SUNY Adirondack, through which she's an annual volunteer at the Double H Ranch in Lake Luzerne, which provides programs and year-round support for children and their families dealing with life-threatening illnesses.

She's also a dedicated fundraiser for Fort Edward volleyball's Side Out Foundation to support breast cancer research, and has worked with the Regional Food Bank of Northeastern New York, both helping to prepare food for distribution and working at the Patroon Land Farm in Voorheesville that supplies the Food Bank.

"We planted almost 3,000 plants for them," she said.

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Reach Adam Shinder at [ashinder@dailygazette.net](mailto:ashinder@dailygazette.net) or [@Adam\\_Shinder](https://twitter.com/Adam_Shinder) on Twitter.

# Congratulations Megan!

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We love you!

Mom, Dad & Emily



**Megan  
Flynn**

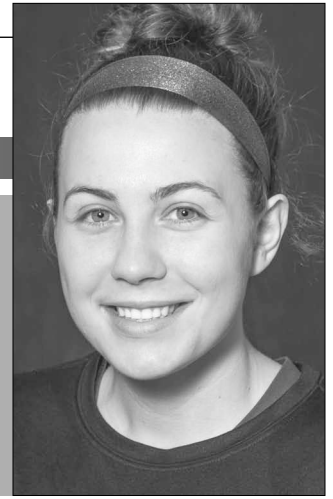


## College - Basketball

2020

### **Megan Flynn** **The Sage Colleges**

by Ken Schott  
*The Daily Gazette* - Associate Sports Editor



As Megan Flynn was preparing for her freshman season with the Sage women's basketball team in 2016-17, she was feeling some discomfort in her right foot.

It turned out that the Hoosick Falls High School graduate had broken it.

That could have set her college playing career back.

Probably should've.

It didn't.

Instead, Flynn produced a stellar career, one that now includes being honored as one of the three college nominees for the inaugural Capital District Sports Women of the Year, for which 10 high school athletes are also being recognized.

Flynn is appreciative of being a recipient.

"It's an indescribable feeling," Flynn said. "I knew that the award had started last year. I heard about it mid-season, not that I was in the running or being considered. I thought, 'Wow, this is really awesome.' My coach called me with the news, and my jaw kind of dropped because it's something you don't think of yourself as a contender for."

Flynn, though, developed into a double-digit scorer during her college career, and always excelled away from it. Flynn has been active in community service, including Chomper's Reading Program, Humane Society, Halloween 5K, Centennial 5K, Sage Engaged, Sage SAAC Toys for Tots, Thanksgiving food drives, Make-a-Wish Santa Letters, MS Walk and the Breast Cancer Walk.

Academically, she had a 3.99 grade-point average as an undergraduate majoring in business administration. She completed her undergraduate degree early. She currently has a 4.0 GPA as she pursues a masters'

degree in business administration. She's a seven-time member of Sage's Dean's List, and was recently named to the CoSIDA Academic All-District First Team and the Academic All-America NCAA Division III Team.

On the basketball court, Flynn missed most of her freshman season after having surgery to repair the break.

"I did summer league with the team," Flynn said. "I was really excited. Coach [Allison Coleman] was excited about me. She had high expectations, as I did myself. She told me I had a lot of potential. I was super excited to come into the season and prove myself.

"It was before the season, and I was having pain in my foot. Turns out I broke it. . . . I eventually needed surgery. I missed three-quarters of my freshman season. I ended up coming back in the second semester. It was kind of on and off because I wasn't completely healed."

But after averaging 7.8 points per game her sophomore year, Flynn's game took off. She averaged 12.5 ppg her junior season, and then had a team-leading 13.6 ppg this past season.

"Our team usually, after the season, does pick-up [basketball], and then we do it in the summertime, too, in a local league," Flynn said. "I think once I was able to play my team during the summer in pick-up leading into next season, I felt really comfortable. I was getting back to where I was before the injury had happened, and I knew I could still make an impact and play my game."

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On Twitter, follow Associate Sports Editor Ken Schott @slapschotts and Daily Gazette Sports @dgazettesports. Email Schott at [schott@dailygazette.com](mailto:schott@dailygazette.com).

**“Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.”**

**– Ralph Waldo Emerson**

**CONGRATULATIONS TO RACHEL HUNSICKER AND ALL OF THE 2020 NOMINEES ON YOUR DESIGNATION AS ONE OF THIS YEAR'S CAPITAL DISTRICT SPORTS WOMEN OF THE YEAR!**

**Your Leadership, Team Spirit, and Empathy for others has made a positive impact on so many! A special thank you to Coach Todd Smith for all of your encouragement and support over the years and to Ms. Skellie for being such a bright light in Rachel's life. Best of luck to you as you attend Colgate University this fall. Keep on Bowling!**

**Love, Mom, Dad, Jessica, and your RV Park family!**



**Rachel Hunsicker  
Lake George High School**

by Jim Schiltz  
*The Daily Gazette* - Staff Writer



Lake George High School bowler Rachel Hunsicker really got it rolling this year, both on the lanes and off.

The singer, actress, editor and star student spearheaded a cultural showcase as well as a lecture series as part of her ongoing effort to “provide people opportunities to learn about one another and the world around them.”

The president of her school’s Spectrum (Gay Straight Alliance) Club and an active participant with its online GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network) Street Team, Hunsicker chaired Eyes on the World which in February brought together students, teachers and community members for a cultural gathering that featured music, foods, interactive displays and the arts.

“She is a thinker who thinks beyond the box,” Lake George Bowling Coach Todd Wood said of the senior who is one of 10 high school honorees for the inaugural Capital District Sports Women of the Year awards, which also sees three college athletes recognized.

Among the objectives for Eyes on the World, Hunsicker said, was to “have kids increase their cultural confidence,” and “to increase understanding and empathy for other people in the community, and in other communities.”

With the Hunsicker-led Being Human Project, panelists were set up to discuss issues prominent to the youth in Warren County. Two sessions were held before the coronavirus shut down schools and put a hold on social gatherings.

“The first three lectures were about mental health, and mental health awareness,” Hunsicker said. “What teens and adults face.”

Hunsicker has worked with teens as a Rock Solid Mentoring Program team leader and as a Student to Student peer counselor. She has also worked for teens as a member of the Lake George Leadership Council and the school’s Breakfast Club, which offers ideas that would enhance the overall school experience, and as a member of SPARC (Strategic Planning and Review Committee), which offers teachers ideas that would enhance the learning experience.

“She goes above and beyond when she sees someone needs help,” Wood said of the Capital District Sports Women of the Year scholastic-division honoree. “She has a compassionate, sensitive, calming nature.”

The versatile Hunsicker played one of the lead characters, Jenna Rolan, when the Lake George Drama Club staged “Be More Chill” in November, and she was also a member of the Cabaret Club, Senior Select Choir and Castleton Select Choir. Yearbook editor and treasurer and school newspaper editor also line her resume, as well as French Club, Senior High Art Club and Astronomy Club.

“My schedule is still full, but not as full as it was,” Hunsicker said of her routine since schools were closed. “I used to get up at 6 a.m. and go straight through until 11 at night.”

Hunsicker ranks seventh in her class of 84 with a 94.53 average. She will attend Colgate University and major in international relations with a double minor in economics and gender studies.

Hunsicker was among the January honorees for *The Glens Falls Post-Star’s* 2020 Teen Excellence Awards. The Teen Excellence Awards look to go beyond academic subjects and athletics to identify outstanding young people between the ages of 13 and 19 who have demonstrated personal growth, leadership and innovation along with a commitment to the community.

“We are so proud of Rachel and all of her characteristics, and we know that she will continue to grow beyond her high school and is bound to do great things in her life,” Wood said.

Hunsicker bowled on the Lake George varsity team for five years and served as a team captain.

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## **Brytney Moore**

*We are so proud of the powerful, loyal,  
and morally sound woman you  
have become.*

*Your passion, dedication, and drive  
are simply beyond comparison.*

*You are the Greatest of all Time!*

Love,  
Your Family

## **Brytney Moore** **Northville High School**

by Adam Shinder  
*The Daily Gazette* - Staff Writer



Growing up in the small lakeside community of Northville, Brytney Moore has always understood the value of a close-knit group.

It's something she's relied on throughout her life, both on and off the athletic field.

A three-sport standout at Northville in soccer, basketball and softball who is the valedictorian of her class, Moore is one of 10 high school honorees for the inaugural Capital District Sports Women of the Year awards, which also sees three college athletes recognized.

Moore? She's leaned on a supportive community to get where she is.

"It can be hard, at times, but most of the people around you are doing the same thing and they're motivating you," Moore said. "All of your teachers are checking in on you, and all of your coaches are interested in what you're doing. It's really just time-management and making sure you surround yourself with the people that are pushing you to succeed. I've had support from all of my coaches in everything that I do, and my athletic director is pushing for the best for me."

Moore's greatest athletic achievements came on the soccer field, where she spent five years establishing herself as one of Section II's top small-school strikers. She finished her career with 111 goals, and was part of the Falcons' Section II Class D championship teams in both 2017 and 2019.

As a senior this past fall, Moore was a first-team all-state selection after captaining Northville back to the state semifinals for the first time in nine years, scoring both the game-tying and go-ahead goals in the Falcons' regional final win over Mount Academy.

It was a crowning achievement for a group that had grown immensely during its time together.

"We'd been building that for three or four years, starting really young," Moore said. "I'd been on the team for five years, so I knew the capability of everyone on the team and I realized that we could really get it done."

In addition to her athletic achievements and her academic exploits, Moore is deeply involved in the communities of Northville and neighboring Edinburg

through various outlets, including the Adirondack Cycle Event, the Northville Youth Program Halloween Carnival, the Regional Food Bank of Northeastern New York and the American Red Cross.

"Our community is so behind us in everything," she said. "Whether it be me helping with the booster club for fundraising money, or working with different programs in Edinburg and Northville with the younger kids, it's really important to give back to the community because you realize how much they're supporting you in everything you do."

Though she plays three sports, Moore said "soccer's definitely my No. 1," and relished her team's accomplishments this past season beyond anything else in her athletic career.

"This was the year, if we were going to do anything, because we had such an incredible team and an incredible bond," she said. "We pushed ourselves as far as we could go."

That spirit of community carried into Northville's basketball season, where Moore helped the Falcons to their deepest run in many years, reaching the Section II Class D semifinals.

She's also helped to revitalize softball as a varsity sport at Northville as part of a group that started together as a modified program and built for several seasons before bringing the sport back to the varsity level in 2019.

When practice opened this spring — before things were halted by the COVID-19 pandemic — participation was at a new high.

"We have that bond going from sport to sport," she said, "which is a plus of being in such a small school."

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# Brooke Pickett

We are so proud of you! Keep shooting for the stars and the back of the net! Love, Mom and Dad





## **Brooke Pickett** **Stillwater High School**

by Jim Schiltz  
*The Daily Gazette* - Staff Writer



In her high school career, Brooke Pickett of Stillwater High School achieved so much on the soccer field.

She scored more than 200 goals, served as a captain for three seasons, and led her squad to state championships in both 2018 and 2019.

"But I feel like soccer, it's not the center of who I am," Pickett said. "I think people at my school, though, know me for who I am."

So while the 17-year-old Pickett appreciated all of the awards — and there were tons of them — she earned during her high school career for her exploits on the soccer field, being named this year as one of 10 high school honorees for the inaugural Capital District Sports Women of the Year awards, which also sees three college athletes recognized, held special meaning for her.

"It was such an honor to represent girls that are doing well academically, in their community and with athletics," Pickett said.

Pickett will continue her athletic career next season with the University at Albany women's soccer program, but her resume suggests she'll do more on the UAlbany campus than simply score some goals. A strong student in the classroom, Pickett also has been involved in a variety of community service activities during her high school years that also saw her compete in basketball and track.

"Within the school community, she was a member of band, art club, yearbook club, SADD treasurer and Link Crew," Stillwater varsity girls' soccer head coach Christine Ihnatolya wrote in a CDSWOY letter of recommendation for Pickett. "One of Brooke's most exemplary qualities is her willingness and passion to help others in need."

Pickett, a senior, was also involved in student government at Stillwater, and volunteered with the New Country Toyota Food Drive, Wreaths Across America, and in elementary school classrooms. Calling her a "role model for her peers and fellow teammates," Stillwater athletic director Mike Kinney commended the work ethic Pickett displayed throughout her high school years.

"In addition to her academics, volunteer work and athletics, Brooke also puts in endless hours working with a personal trainer to improve her strength, conditioning and overall fitness," Kinney wrote in a CDSWOY letter of recommendation for Pickett. "This is just another example of Brooke's work ethic, and the time she puts forth in order to be the best she can be."

And, on the soccer field, it's difficult to find anyone in the state who was as consistently great as Pickett these last few years. After leading Stillwater to an appearance in the Class C state championship game as a sophomore, Pickett led the Warriors to undefeated seasons as both a junior and senior. Stillwater finished 43-0-3 in Pickett's junior and senior seasons, campaigns that ended with her recognized as the state's player of the year. In her career, she scored 208 goals, which is No. 2 on the all-time Section II list.

"Brooke has many aspirations, as well as the drive to be the best she can in anything she does in life," Ihnatolya's letter, in part, reads. "Some of the qualities you can't teach as an educator or a coach are hard work, determination and just an overall tremendous personality. Brooke possesses each of these qualities and has made a great impact on me both as an education and as a coach. The great qualities she possesses will lead her to continue her success as a college student as well as in the career path she wishes to pursue."

At UAlbany, Pickett said her plan is to major in human biology. Eventually, her goal is to become a pediatric dentist.

"As a kid, I was always excited to go to the dentist," Pickett, laughing, said. "So I want to make that a good experience for other people, too."

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# Makenzie Terrell



- MCS Class of 2020 – Ranked 4th overall
- MCS Class of 2020 Award of Top 5 Students in Rank – 4 times
- High Honor Roll Certificate of Achievement – 4 times
- Timothy Murphy Scholar Athlete Award of Citizenship
- Basketball Captain, MVP and MIP
- Treasurer – MCS National Honor Society
- SADD Organization
- Rotary Interact Club
- Tutor for Liberty Partnership
- Youth as Leaders Athletic Association

***Congratulations on your Capital District Sports Women of the Year honor!***

***We are proud of you!***

***With love, your family***



**Makenzie Terrell**  
**Middleburgh High School**

by Jim Schiltz  
*The Daily Gazette* - Staff Writer



Makenzie Terrell said her dream job would be as a high school counselor, where she could help students grow while steering them on the right path.

The Middleburgh Central School senior has already gotten plenty of practice doing such things in athletic circles and as a leading voice in several organizations.

"I just really like to give back to the school," the 18-year-old said. "If I didn't have those things in the first place, I wouldn't have grown into who I am."

The academic standout who is one of 10 high school honorees for the inaugural Capital District Sports Women of the Year awards, which also sees three college athletes recognized, is active in SADD, tutors at-risk students in the Liberty Partnership and also lends her skills to Youth as Leaders, the Middleburgh Athletic Association and the Rotary Interact Club. She is also the treasurer of the MCS National Honor Society.

Terrell finds her work with Middleburgh's SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions) organization particularly rewarding.

"I enjoy that because I get to influence a lot of students," Terrell said.

Terrell made a difference this past basketball season, even after breaking a wrist on the first day of practice, which forced her to miss all but a handful of games.

"Obviously, she was disappointed," Middleburgh co-athletic director Melinda Narzymksi said of Terrell, whose basketball marksmanship helped her reach an Elks Hoop Shoot Foul Shooting regional final a few years back. "Basketball is her thing, and even though she couldn't play, she was there at every practice helping out every way she could."

Terrell was one of only two seniors on a young Middleburgh squad.

"I went to all of the practices and encouraged the other players, and at the same time I got an opportunity to see the game differently," Terrell said. "That helped me understand the dynamics of the team, and I was able to see what we needed to do collectively to be better."

Getting better is a trademark of Terrell's. She won the basketball team's most improved award in 2017 to go along with the defensive most valuable player award she received in 2019.

"Makenzie not only perseveres, but takes on a leadership role in all she does," Narzymksi said.

Terrell plays softball as well as basketball, and competes despite an autoimmune disorder and circulatory issues.

"I have to be careful," Terrell said. "It makes playing both basketball and softball a little difficult, but I want to play."

"She plays it down and doesn't want extra attention," Narzymksi said. "That's her way, but it's commendable how she's overcome so much." Down the road, her goal is to see others overcome obstacles, too.

"I want to help," Terrell said.

Terrell is already taking college-level courses and will study psychology at SUNY Cobleskill.

"Makenzie demonstrates the qualities we encourage all of our young female athletes to aspire to," Narzymksi said. "Makenzie is an exemplary student and excellent role model."

Terrell ranks fourth overall in her MCS Class of 2020, and has been recognized numerous times as a New York State Public High School Athletic Association and Western Athletic Conference scholar-athlete. She received the MCS Class of 2020 Award of Health Science Achievement, and has received the High Honor Certificate of Achievement in each of her high school years.

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**Lydia Ware**  
**Averill Park High School**

by Adam Shinder  
*The Daily Gazette* - Staff Writer



As a sprinter, Lydia Ware is one of the most decorated competitors in Averill Park track and field history.

On her own merit, she's got individual school records in four different events — the 100-meter and 200-meter dashes outdoors, and the 55-meter and 400-meter dashes indoors — and qualified for the state championships during both the indoor and outdoor seasons.

But for Ware, it's the six Averill Park relay records she holds a share of — three indoors, three outdoors — that mean so much more.

"It's more than you," Ware said. "It's you working with your friends, and I think that's cooler than just individual records. I have a couple of relay records with my friends, and that's super cool. You get to practice together, and then when you get to a meet and you know you broke a school record, it's the most exciting feeling in the world."

Ware, who also competes for Averill Park in soccer and is the valedictorian of the school's Class of 2020, is one of 10 high school honorees for the inaugural Capital District Sports Women of the Year awards, which also sees three college athletes recognized.

She's had a record-setting career on the track for the Warriors, reaching the state meet in the 55 meters during the indoor season and both the 100 and 200 meters outdoors. She also earned a third-place finish at the indoor state meet as a member of Section II's intersectional medley relay team.

"I've been to the state meet a couple of times," Ware said. "That's always a really cool experience, and I'm proud of that, because it takes a lot of extra work and time."

But for all her athletic accomplishments, Ware's biggest focuses have always been in the classroom and the community.

Academically, in addition to being her class valedictorian, Ware is a member of the National Honor Society and participated in the Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth program, where she earned High Honors after finishing in the top 30% of selected students.

She plans to attend Roberts Wesleyan University in Rochester, where she'll run track and study medicine.

"Track is really exciting, but it's not the biggest part of my life," she said. "I work really hard outside of practice to make sure I'm getting all the stuff done that I need to do."

Ware said she relies on a strong community network to keep balance in her life.

"There's a lot of people that I'm friends with that overlap between school and track," she said. "I have people on the track team who are in my classes, and we all get together and have study parties and help each other out."

In addition to serving on the Averill Park Student-Athlete Advisory Council and co-founding the APHS Science Club, Ware is a dedicated volunteer at Brunswick Church, which she's attended "since probably a couple days after I was born." At her church, Ware is heavily involved in Music Ministries, Child Nurture Ministries and Vacation Bible School.

It's her way of giving back to a community that's given so much to her.

"The fact that I've grown up with all those people makes it even more special that they're sharing all of my life's events with me and I'm sharing all of their life events with them," Ware said. "I love all the people in my church, and it's really important to me to give back to them, since they've given so much to me since I was a young child. I think that's what they deserve. I'm really happy to be giving them everything I can."

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**Lauren Willis -  
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**– Lillian, Jillian, Jordan, Mom and Dad**

**Lauren Willis**  
**South Glens Falls High School**

by Jim Schiltz  
*The Daily Gazette* - Staff Writer



Lauren Willis' plate may be full, but as the South Glens Falls junior sees things there's always room for a little more.

So with all of her academic and athletic work and volunteer activities, the 17-year-old go-getter is also making a push these days for a girls' ice hockey team at her high school.

"I'm in the process of starting a team. That's one of my big things. The [Section II] athletic directors know about it, and someday, it could happen," said Willis, who has played ice hockey in the Adirondack Youth Hockey Association since she was 2 years old. "Having a hockey team would benefit others, including my younger sisters. If I had that, I might be taking a different path."

Willis' has decided that field hockey will be her sport at the college level, and her studies will center around the medical field. Even further along, her objective will be to assist others like she already often does.

"I love working with younger kids," said Willis, who is one of 10 high school honorees for the inaugural Capital District Sports Women of the Year awards, which also sees three college athletes recognized.

Willis lends her ice hockey and field hockey knowledge to youngsters in and out of school, and come Christmas time, you'll find her ringing a Salvation Army bell, and wrapping gifts and passing them along as part of the Ben Osborn Fund.

"You don't realize how many people in your community need help," Willis said. "It opens your eyes and makes you not take what you have for granted."

What Willis has is an awfully bright future, and a resume that's already full of athletic and academic accomplishments, like honor roll recognition every year since 2017 and a spot on the all-state field hockey team in 2018. "My dad [Jeffrey] has high expectations, and I want to exceed them all," Willis said. "From now on, the work doesn't stop. I want to keep going."

Willis is a member of the Spanish Honor Society and National Honors Society and has earned scholar-athlete status in field hockey, lacrosse, and bowling.

"Academics are very important to her as can be seen by her 94.18 GPA," South Glens Falls athletic director Matt Griep said. "It's nearly impossible to look through her transcripts and find a teacher that hasn't stated she's

a pleasure to have in class, strives to do her best, or displays a positive attitude."

That positive attitude has helped Willis thrive as a field hockey player. Among her stats that stand out are 10 successful penalty strokes after missing the first one she attempted during her freshman season.

"I talk to myself," Willis said. "I'm always saying, 'I got this. I can do this.'"

Willis scored 17 goals this past fall season, and for the third time was selected a first-team Foothills Council field hockey all-star and her team's most valuable player. The center midfielder captained the Bulldogs as both a sophomore and junior.

"Lauren is a natural leader," South Glens Falls field hockey coach Mary Ponda said. "This characteristic was very much evident during her freshman year on the varsity team. With a strong group of seniors, Lauren did not hesitate to speak up when needed, whether she was asked to or not. I knew that she would be capable of handling the leadership role and was elected team captain every year thereafter."

Willis will be leading offseason practices before the fall field hockey season, which she is already looking forward to. She'll be joined by her younger sisters Jillian and Lillian.

"It's going to be some fun games," Lauren Willis said.

Willis played on the South Glens Falls boys' ice hockey team for four years before shifting to bowling as a junior.

"Because it's always go, go, go, I did bowling to kind of relax," Willis said. "Plus, it gave me more time to work out, and work on my field hockey and lacrosse skills."

Willis enjoys cooking and often makes a ziti dish for team meals. She also enjoys painting.

"It's the time where I let out everything," Willis said.

Reach Jim Schiltz at [jims@dailygazette.com](mailto:jims@dailygazette.com) or [@Jim\\_Schiltz](https://twitter.com/Jim_Schiltz) on Twitter.



Take pride in how far you have come,  
have faith in how far you can go.



**RACHEL AUBREY WNUK**

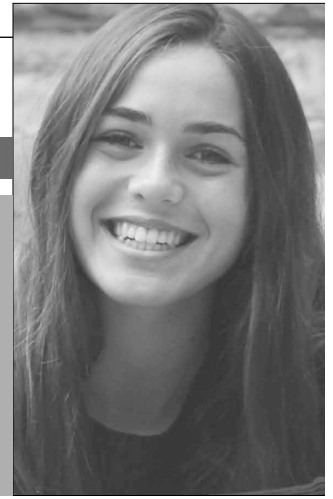
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**Rachel Wnuk**  
**Galway High School**

by Jim Schiltz  
*The Daily Gazette* - Staff Writer



Rachel Wnuk doesn't seek out the spotlight, but it keeps finding her.

That will happen when a teen continually delivers in so many ways like the versatile and popular Galway Central School senior does.

"She is quiet," Galway Booster Club president and girls' soccer coach Rob Martin said. "She leads by work ethic and example rather than by being boisterous."

Yet what she has done as an academic star, a three-sport team leader, and volunteer in and out of school speaks so loud, and so well of her.

Earlier this school year, Wnuk was recognized with soccer and basketball Section II Scholar-Athlete honors prior to being named as one of 10 high school honorees for the inaugural Capital District Sports Women of the Year awards, which also sees three college athletes recognized.

For four years she has been a National Junior Honor Society member, and she's assembled a 99 classroom average. Among the organizations of which she belongs is Things of Our Very Own, which is a crisis intervention task force that works to assist fellow students.

"When our athletic director called me to the office my thought was, 'What did I do wrong. What's going on?'" the 17-year-old Wnuk said of receiving the CDSWOY award. "When she told me about it, oh my gosh, it was so incredible. I'm thinking, 'How did this happen.'"

An inquisitive nature and willingness to dig in has helped. "I like to learn," Wnuk said. "It fascinates me when someone says a fast fact. I have to know, 'Where did you learn that? Where did you see that?'"

Wnuk is already taking college level courses and is heading to RPI with a long-term goal of becoming a chemical engineer.

"Last year, I was considering the Peace Corps after high school because I love helping people," Wnuk said. "After college, I'll revisit that."

"There is no doubt in my mind that Rachel has a bright and successful future ahead of her," Galway athletic director Elise Britt said.

Wnuk serves as co-president of Galway's Science Club and is a Student Senate member. Her vast resume also includes GTV anchor and writer for the school newspaper, Drama Club, Do Something Club, Leo's Club and Best Buddies, which is a friendship club that pairs students with and without disabilities.

"It gets hard sometimes," Wnuk said. "Weekends get busy, but it's always worth it."

"Rachel is an asset to the Galway Central School District, our community, and each program she chooses to be a part of," Britt said. "What is striking about Rachel is her personality, empathy, and kindness. She always has a smile on her face and is always ready to reach out a helping hand."

That reach extends to athletic circles, too. Last fall with the soccer team, Wnuk gladly shifted from forward to center midfield because she knew it would make the Eagles a more effective team. She also knew she would score fewer goals.

"She was our leading scorer as a junior," Martin said of the two-year team captain. "We had a younger team this year and I needed her athleticism and experience at midfield. I moved her and she had no problem with that. She always tries to do the right thing for the team."

"I just wanted to have a fun senior season and enjoy the team atmosphere," Wnuk said. "I wanted to make memories with the girls. That was the most important thing to me."

Along with soccer and basketball, Wnuk has lettered as a multi-event track and field performer, and as a sophomore she qualified for the outdoor state meet in the high jump. As a junior, her long list of highlights included being named Prom Queen and receiving the Rensselaer Academic Medal Scholarship.

"I want to thank all of the coaches and my parents for pushing me," Wnuk said. "I wouldn't be here without them."

Reach Jim Schiltz at [jims@dailygazette.com](mailto:jims@dailygazette.com)  
or [@Jim\\_Schiltz](https://twitter.com/Jim_Schiltz) on Twitter.



# Congratulations Rachel!

We are proud of you!

"Rachel is very committed to the classroom, community and the sport of basketball. She works as hard as any player I have ever coached and is the ultimate example of sportsmanship."

-Phillip Meashaw, Galway Girls Varsity Basketball Coach



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"What is striking about Rachel is her personality, her empathy, and her kindness. She always has a smile on her face and is always ready to reach out a helping hand."

-Elise Britt, Galway CSD Athletic Director, Assistant Principal



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# The Eric Idea Agency



## EVENTS

*An awards banquet.  
A family reunion.  
A wedding reception.  
A large fund raiser.  
Whatever the event, Eric's  
Management and M.C.  
skills before, during and  
after the event will provide  
you with the time to relax!  
Eric has it under control.*

## PUBLIC RELATIONS

*Eric will find that tidbit about your company, your employees.  
He will take that feature and run with it. He also provides  
web content services for "great P.R." This includes a bio,  
experiences, soliciting testimonials, and updating LinkedIn,  
and Facebook pages for specials, sales, and other timely  
and important happenings with your business. Nothing like  
keeping it fresh!*



THE ERIC IDEA AGENCY,  
THE OFFICIAL "HOME IDEA" OF



Capital District Sports Women of the Year

**Public Relations, Event Management & M.C. Services**  
**[theericideaagency.com](http://theericideaagency.com) \* [eric@theericideaagency.com](mailto:eric@theericideaagency.com)**  
**Call 518-588-8016 or write for a free consultation!**