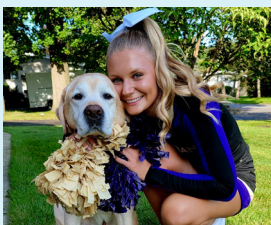




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# An Interview with Mrs. Taranto, Our New Principal

by ISABELLA CIPOLLO

For the Winter 2024 issue of *The Academy Courier*, I had the privilege and honor of interviewing Academy of the Holy Names principal, Mrs. Taranto. Although she is new to the principal's office, she is no stranger to the Holy Names community. Mrs. Taranto has taken on this very important role with grace and confidence. It has been my pleasure to get to know her better through this interview.

**I:** What was your life like before Holy Names? Where did you go to school, and did you have any teaching positions prior to here?

**MT:** I went to Hamilton College, and I majored in math, but I didn't know what I wanted to do after I graduated. I applied to both private school math teaching positions, and to law firms, because I wasn't sure if I wanted to be a lawyer, or a teacher. I figured I'd take whatever job I got first. I accepted a position at a huge law firm in Boston as the bankruptcy paralegal, and I hated it. Meanwhile, while I was there, a private school reached out in the Boston area and hired me to teach math for a maternity leave position. I took



that job and decided to get my Master's in Teaching at Harvard University. I taught at that school in Boston for two years, and when my husband and I moved back here; I taught very briefly at Albany Academy for Girls. Then, I had my first child, and the reality of motherhood set in, and I took a seventeen-year maternity leave from teaching. When my first born was a senior in high school, I was hired at Holy Names.

**I:** You taught middle school math and statistics here before becoming principal. Has math always been your strong suit?

**MT:** Yes, math was always my strong suit. When I went to college I thought I was going to be a psychology major, but then I had an amazing statistics professor, Professor Kelly. He was so exuberant, and just loved math, which I thought was pretty cool. This experience made me want to become a math major.

**I:** What encouraged you to be in the running for our next principal? What was

See **AN INTERVIEW WITH MRS. TARANTO**, page 8



# Senior Service Project

by ALEXA GROSS

The competencies and opportunities afforded to me at the Academy of the Holy Names enabled me to become a strong confident female leader. Being a leader is something I am truly passionate about and I could incorporate these skills in my senior service project! In my senior year, I embarked on a mission to make a difference in the lives of sexual assault survivors. I chose to collaborate with Albany Medical's Division of Forensic Medicine and their annual *We Care* event. Through organizing a softball fundraiser, I aimed to use my passion for sports to raise funds for survivor baskets and become an advocate for those affected by sexual assault.

As the driving force behind the *Swing for A Cause* softball fundraiser, I took on the role of a leader and organizer. I reached

See [SENIOR SERVICE PROJECT](#), page 8



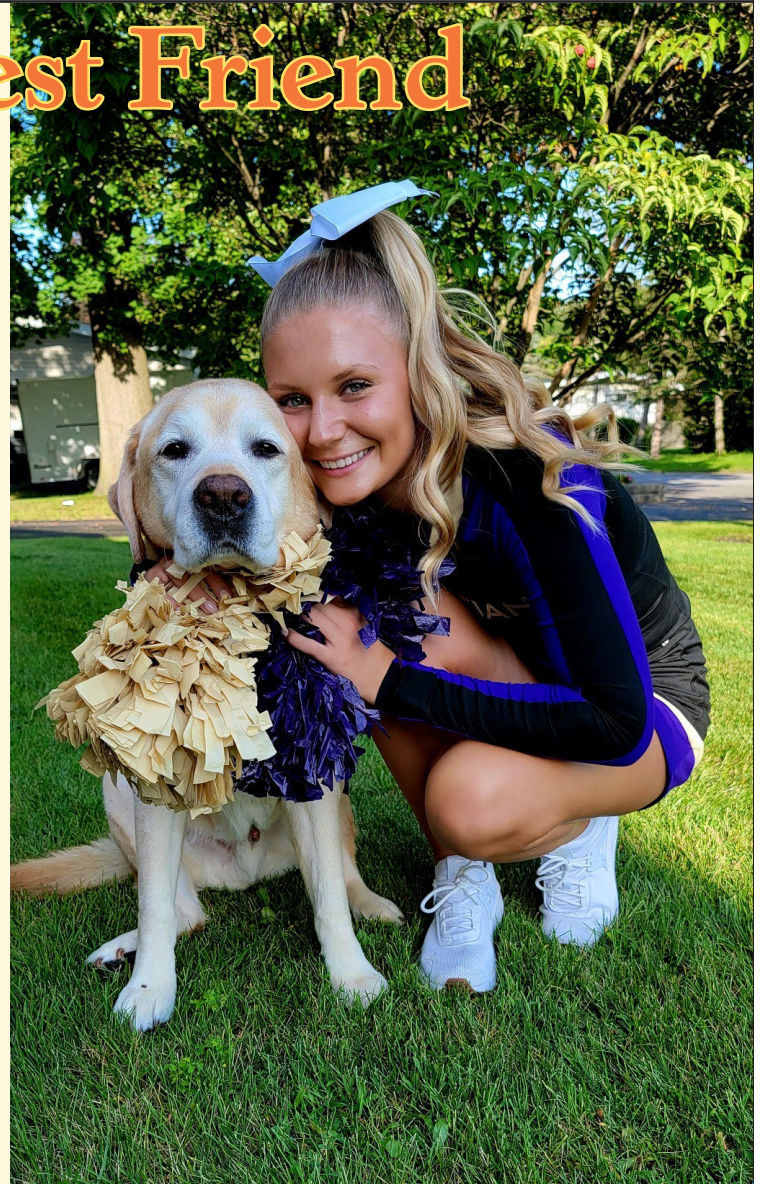
# Four-legged Best Friend

by KENNEDY GAINOR

Since my very first day of kindergarten, my best friend Xander has been by my side. Although my favorite furry friend has four legs, he has always found a way to be my number one supporter. Whether that be at the football field Friday night watching me cheer or cuddling with me after a long day, he always finds a way to bring a smile to my face.

When we got Xander I was five years old. Around the time we got him we had found out that our dog Xena had been diagnosed with a terminal illness and unfortunately passed away a few months later. Xander was our support system who brought a more positive outlook when things were very hard for my family. Being able to go into my senior year with him means the world to me.

Having his companionship throughout the pandemic made my family and I feel a lot less isolated. Especially as an only child, I feel as though he's always been my little brother. I must say he definitely enjoyed getting three walks a day. I couldn't name a single sporting event that Xan was allowed at that he wasn't present for. He's prepared me for every major life event and sent me off to school every year. Even during freshman year which was most important because I was transferring to a new school at this time which was a huge adjustment for me. Coming home at the end of the day to a wagging tail and an exciting greeting never failed to bring a smile to my face. Not only has he provided unconditional love for me, but also my friends. He has even gained a new nickname from each one. Those include, Xan, Xan man, Xanny and even Cooper. Xander is the kind of dog you never forget. I don't remember a time with him not in my life and the countless memories we could never be forgotten. ❀





# Traditions at Holy Names

by SARAH CROSBY

Throughout my years at Holy Names, I have experienced many of the traditions that are special to our school. Holy Names contains traditions that are unique, and enhance our community. One of the first traditions of the school year is the **Ice Cream Social** right before classes begin. Moreover, students and past students come and set up their lockers and have some ice cream. Next, we have our **Thanksgiving Song Contest** the last day before Thanksgiving break, and we change the words to a song to make it Thanks-

giving themed, and this is always a blast. The excitement continues with our **Christmas song contest** as we perform a Christmas song in front of the entire school. This is the last day before our Christmas break and, we dress up in cute dresses and sing.

**Holly Ball** is exciting, and, this is my most favorite event. Preparing all day with your friends, getting your hair and makeup done, then the dance is a sparkling experience. At the dance we eat, take pictures and then we dance. Next, have a sleepover and in the morning we have bagels. **Holly Ball** is

See **TRADITIONS AT HOLY NAMES**, page 8



## Family-Owned Business

by MAGNOLIA VALENCIA



A family-owned business is a commercial organization in which decision making is influenced by multiple generations of a family, related by blood or marriage. Having a family business means having the ability to influence the vision of business and the willingness to use this ability to pursue a successful business.

The Silver Spoon Café located in Ravena, NY is owned by my family, and we come together and work there to help operate the diner. I remember as a little girl that the diner was my second home. I spent most of my time growing up there watching my mother and my father create a successful business and saw firsthand the positive and negative outcomes of this ownership. Throughout my childhood, from a very young age I would always help around the diner busing tables or cashing people out. Eventually, when I became older, I started waitressing, and this taught me life skills. I realized that this was where I belonged, helping my family with their business which brought me joy.

See **FAMILY-OWNED BUSINESS**, page 9

# Friendships at AHN

by CAROLINE BROWN

Can anyone imagine if there was not friendship in the world? Nobody would care about one another. Friends give strength as well as support and comfort in life. One of the things that can help a community come together is friendship. "Friends are the ones who brings out the best in you." These few words of Henry Ford are the best to describe friendship.

Here at Academy of Holy Names, there is a strong sense of togetherness among the students. Friendship is a beautiful relationship between people. Friendship is something that has boundless love and care. Friendship is about having the same mindset for a connection to last a lifetime. Many students at Holy Names are family. My classmates are very good at making me smile. This school is a community and a family because everyone is so friendly here. I have discovered at the Academy of the

Holy Names, people who I can count on, and be friends with for a lifetime.

Academy of the Holy Names community contains deep friendship, love, loyalty, honesty, and compassion for one another. Wonderful companions whom you can consider family. At Academy of the Holy Names, I have found my best friends. My classmates have a great sense of when to make me smile. This school is a community and a family that contains many kind people.

I could not imagine life without my friend group and a community that is so welcoming. Ever since I was a freshman, the Academy of the Holy Names has been very accepting. Finding loyal friends has been an amazing part of my high school years that I will truly be thankful for. ❀



# Christmas in New York City

by RYLEE APICELLI



New York City during Christmas time is truly one of the most magical experiences in my life. The big, beautiful city comes alive with colorful lights, festive music, and overall holiday cheer. When I went to the Big Apple with my family during the holiday season, we shared many different memorable activities together.

One of my favorite memories was ice skating at Rockefeller Center. Gliding on the ice in the chilly weather surrounded by Christmas music and festive decorations really put me in the holiday spirit. While I was skating, I saw the giant, iconic Christmas tree in the middle of Rockefeller Center. This tree is one of the greatest symbols of Christmas time in the city, and people all over the world travel to see it adorned with thousands of ornaments and lights, topped with a magnificent star.

Also, I really enjoyed the countless stores that New York City has to offer. Shopping at places like Union Square, Fifth Avenue, and Times Square was so fun! Many of the shops had beautiful displays in their windows and sold unique gifts and delicious treats. The last thing that we enjoyed was the

See **CHRISTMAS IN NEW YORK CITY** page 9



# SPORTS AT AHN

by ANNA NICHOLS

I believe that participating in sports during our childhoods helps us grow as people. The competitive and team settings set us up to grow into mature adults. Participating in a sport at a young age will teach life skills to help us succeed in social settings and professional settings.

Holy Names has created that environment for its student-athletes, and

it allows students to balance their sports while still maintaining academic excellence.

Engaging in high school sports presents a multitude of advantages for students, encompassing both physical well-being and personal growth. Here are several compelling rationales for participating in athletics during high school. *Collaboration and Teamwork:*

See **SPORTS AT AHN** page 9



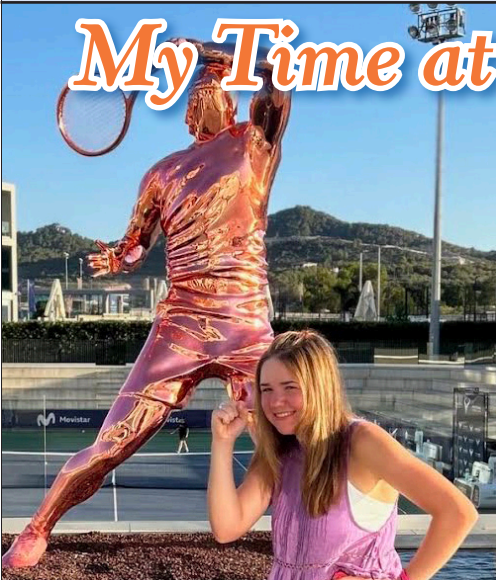
## My Time at the Rafael Nadal Academy

by RILEY SCHMITZ

This summer, I went to Mallorca, Spain for a week, where the Rafael Nadal Academy is situated. The Academy is founded by my favorite tennis player, Rafael Nadal, and he is one of the greatest tennis players of all time. Since I admired Nadal so much, I have wished for years to go visit his Academy to improve my game. I finally had the opportunity this August, and it was an extraordinary experience!

The flight was exhaustingly long, but Mallorca itself is beautiful! The Academy is huge, with 43 tennis courts and several other sports facilities. The day I arrived I practiced, and placed into a group. The next day, I played on

See **MY TIME AT THE RAFAEL NADAL ACADEMY** page 10



## The Cayman Islands

by PATRICIA WHALEN

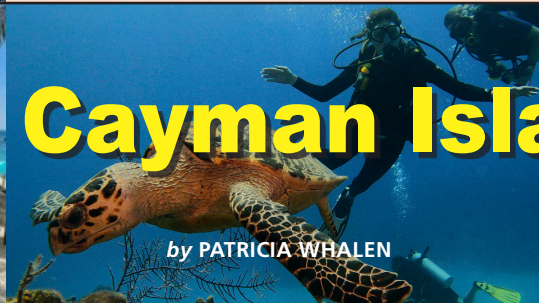
Over spring break last year, I had the privilege of visiting Grand Cayman in the Cayman Islands. Although the purpose of my trip was to scuba dive, I fell in love with the island above and below the water.

The first thing I noticed as I exited the plane, with my warm winter clothes from New York, was the intense heat and humidity. The sun, although bright and joyful, seemed to bake my skin in the late afternoon. I waited in line at the airport, enthusiastic for what awaited me. The exit doors revealed a gorgeous island filled with

clear turquoise waters, white sands, and tropical foliage. Every turn revealed a more beautiful view, forming a perfect paradise. My family and I stayed on the seven-mile beach, at the Coral Stone Club. These rental condos were directly on the beach, with a beautiful view of the ocean, as far as the eye can see.

Over the course of the week, I completed nine dives, each at a different dive site. On my first dive of the week, I was unsure of what to expect. Yet, as soon as I entered the water, my anxiety was overcome

See **THE CAYMAN ISLANDS** page 10





# CHEERLEADING AT HOLY NAMES

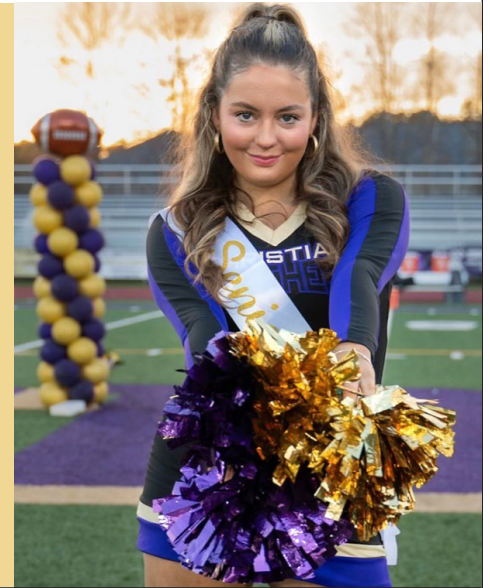
by KATHLEEN MURPHY

Throughout my high school years, cheerleading has been my passion. The bonds of sisterhood in a team have demonstrated true friendship. Due to Covid-19, cheerleading for CBA was not possible, so I took part in All Star cheer outside of school. However, coming back Sophomore year, it became readily available.

Holy Names, being an all-girls school, cheers for CBA's varsity football team. The girls

on the team were so welcoming and taught me how to love cheer again after Covid. We worked as a team and I remember the captains, especially Jacklyn, who would stay after practice to make sure I knew all my cheers for Friday's game. While being on the team from sophomore year to now senior year, I have built many close relationships with the girls and have made forever friends.

See [CHEERINLEADING AT HOLY NAMES](#) page 10



# The Love Of Skiing That Never Melts Away

by MARY MASTERSON

As the leaves turn golden and the air grows crisp, skiers around the world eagerly anticipate the arrival of November. For many, this marks the beginning of the ski season, a time to embrace the thrill of carving down snow-covered slopes. Yet, for me, skiing is not just a seasonal



pastime, it is a lifelong love that began when I was five years old. I can still vividly recall my first ski experience, a memory that is engrained in my heart. I was bundled up in layers of warm clothing, and I stumbled along the snow with my little ski boots. My father, a dedicated skier himself, took me to the local slopes for my very first lesson.

See [THE LOVE OF SKIING](#) page 11

# Golf at Holy Names

by COLLEEN CAREY

As my time as a student at Academy of the Holy Names is coming to an end, I would like to reflect on golf, the sport that I have enjoyed since arriving at the school in seventh grade. When people think of the various sports at Holy Names, golf usually is not the first to come to mind. My parents first involved me in the sport at the age of five, giving me my own small set of clubs with a bright pink golf bag. Since I

first picked up those clubs, I immediately fell in love with the sport and have been playing ever since.

I distinctly remember our first practice, going down the road to our home course, Capital Hills, and working on our swing and technique at the range. My first-year playing was when the team was in a modified stage classified as a spring sport. Returning to the

See [GOLF AT HOLY NAMES](#) page 11



## The Academy Courier Patrons

The Academy Courier would like to thank the following Winter 2024 issue Patrons for their interest and generous support:

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\* The Academy of the Holy Names Winter 2024 issue's goal is to create an excellent paper for the students and by the students.

\* The Academy Courier would also like to thank The Academy Courier Co-Editors for their help as well as support in terms of the editing process, fundraising, and guidance that allows each issue to come to fruition with success. Also, the Academy Courier would like to thank Blass Marketing for their professional, unique, fresh, and stylish design as well as layout of our newspaper issues. We are very appreciative to Margaret Taranto and Reagan Schwartz for their editing assistance.

### The Academy Courier Co-Editors and Staff for the Winter Issue 2024

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*The Courier*  
Co-Editors and Staff work diligently and with enthusiasm to create an innovative, creative, and dynamic school newspaper here at Academy of the Holy Names.



## An Interview with Mrs. Taranto, Our New Principal

From Page 1

that process like for you?

**MT:** I always like to grow. I like change, some people are very scared by it, but I embrace it. I had been teaching for ten years in the same job, so I was searching for a new challenge. I thought I could bring a lot of my strengths into the position, and I had thoughts about how we can make Holy Names even better.

**I:** What has been the most difficult part of being the principal?

**MT:** Enforcing the new cell phone rule. I feel very strongly about the use of phones, and I know it is a huge change. Getting everybody on board has been a challenge, even though I know it's for the better. Learning how to navigate the back end of the school, and things like Blackbaud, has been difficult. I also miss being in

the classroom with everyone and the regular student interaction. I don't know if you've noticed, but I've been lurking in the lunch line, so I get some time to talk to all of you guys.

**I:** What do you see for the future of Academy of the Holy Names?

**MT:** I would like Academy of the Holy Names to be a haven for girls. A place that you come to that feels like home, a place where you are safe, and can be yourself. I don't want it just to be "I'm accepted", but I want every student here to feel like they really belong. When the greater Albany community hears "Holy Names", I want them to think "I want to send my daughter there". My goal is for Holy Names to have a waiting list. I'll retire when we have a waiting list". ❀

## Senior Service Project

From Page 2

out to potential sponsors, proposed the idea, and secured their support. Additionally, I arranged fields, recruited players, held bake sales to raise additional funds, and coordinated the logistics of the entire event. My goal was to ensure that every aspect of the fundraiser was well-planned and executed for the best possible outcome.

Throughout this process, I discovered key qualities about myself. First, my leadership skills came to the forefront as I navigated the challenges of coordinating a large-scale event. I learned to effectively communicate with sponsors, players, and volunteers, inspiring them to contribute to our cause. Second, I

recognized my passion for advocacy. By using my love for softball as a platform, I became a voice for sexual assault victims, raising awareness and fostering a supportive community. This experience enhanced my drive to continue my advocacy skills in my future career.

The softball fundraiser for Albany Medical's Division of Forensic Medicine's *We Care* event was a transformative experience for me. Through collaboration, leadership, and advocacy, I was able to make a tangible difference in the lives of sexual assault survivors. This journey not only empowered me, but also highlighted the collective power of bringing a proactive community together. ❀

## Traditions at Holy Names

From Page 3

my favorite tradition because it is fun and exciting. In the spring, we have **Springfest** which is a surprise day that the student council holds, and we receive ice cream and a tee shirt. During my

years at Holy Names, these traditions have allowed me to enjoy my time here. These traditions mean so much to me and add to our wonderful community. ❀



## Family-Owned Business

From Page 3

Not only did it create social skills, but it also created a great work ethic for me. I admired how my parents worked so hard, and I wish to contribute to help keep the business alive as I am surrounded by my loved ones.

When I interviewed my mom about owning a business, she said that her inspiration for opening a diner came from her husband coming to this country from Mexico as an immigrant at 19 years old. Moreover, he worked his way up through restaurants before owning his own. He worked tirelessly for years working for someone else and that gave him the sense of direction to open his own diner. Eventually, the opportunity arrived to open a diner, and he took the opportunity. My mother's advice to

anyone who wants to pursue business is clear in that it all begins with dedication. One will have setbacks, but these challenges will only make you stronger. Soak it all in and most importantly, do what you love because if you do not love what you do, there will not be success.

Allowing families to come to the company on their own leads to happier employees and better business. Successful family-owned businesses do not let the chips fall where they may. The plan is to create a family business succession in advance. Working with my family is like Christmas morning every day, as it brings me joy in an individual manner as well. ❀

## Christmas in New York City

From Page 4

Radio City Christmas Spectacular featuring the world-famous Rockettes at Radio City Music Hall. The Rockettes are a talented group that performs incredible dance routines. The show had stunning costumes and festive music. I highly recommend going to see the Radio City Christmas Spectacular-if you are in New York City for the holiday season it is a must-see event!

Although Christmas can be magical no matter where you are, New York City soaks up the festive atmosphere

like no other destination. This trip was one of my favorites, as there are so many things to do from shopping to seeing enchanting shows. One can never be bored, and there is something for everyone to enjoy! Christmas is a time for celebration and joy, and all the festivities that the city offered to the Holiday spirit are amazing. ❀

## SPORTS AT AHN

From Page 5

Team sports impart invaluable lessons on cooperation, communication, and collective effort. Students acquire the ability to support their teammates, share responsibilities, and achieve shared objectives. *Self-Discipline and Time Management*: Athletic participation demands unwavering dedication and commitment. Students are obliged to manage their time to balance academic pursuits and sports activities. This cultivates essential time management skills and instills self-discipline.

*Enhanced Confidence and Self-Esteem*: Achieving success in sports can elevate a student's self-assurance and self-esteem.

Victories, surmounting challenges, and skill advancement all contribute to a sense of accomplishment and self-worth. Holy Names makes sure to fulfill all these things regarding all of their sports teams. ❀

## My Time at the Rafael Nadal Academy

From Page 5

red clay courts, which are very rare in America. It is very different from most of the courts in America because you can slide across the court, and it has a softer consistency. The level of my group was very difficult during this week, and I struggled to keep up. However, the conditions of the court and the people that I met made the hard work worth it.

Later in the week, a rumor started spreading around that Rafael Nadal was at the Academy. People began searching for him throughout the facility trying to find him but had no luck. Then, on my way to lunch, my mom called me and told me she saw him at the gym. I hurried

over and found a crowd huddled around the windows into the gym, and I peeked over a few shoulders trying to see him. Then, he came out of the gym, and I was only a few feet from him! I was completely ecstatic, and it is a memory that I still reminisce about months later.

For the rest of my time at the Academy, I enjoyed the beach, the Rafael Nadal Museum, and boating. My trip to Mallorca was full of amazing memories, and I loved the Academy and Mallorca so much. My time at the Rafael Nadal Academy was truly unforgettable, and I look forward to my next visit. ❁

## The Cayman Islands

From Page 5

with astonishment. An assortment of coral, overtop white sands, surrounded by swarms of fish overtook my vision. In every direction was a breathtaking display of colors that formed a picture- perfect scene. On the next dive, I visited the USS Kittiwake, a shipwreck sixty-five feet under the water. The ship seemed gigantic and was covered in rust and algae. Schools of angelfish, triggerfish, snappers, Bermuda chub, and other aquatic animals encircled the wreck. Swimming through the water seemed unreal and almost mythical.

Visiting the Cayman Islands was one of the most enjoyable and interesting experiences that I have had in my life, and I am so grateful that I had the opportunity to travel there. Between the spectacular views on the coast and the dreamlike perspective under water, Grand Cayman is an extraordinary destination. ❁

## CHEERLEADING AT HOLY NAMES

From Page 6

Looking back, I know I will always cherish the memories that having the opportunity to cheer with these amazing girls. Cheerleading is not always easy but, in the end, it forces teamwork and that is one of the most important life skills. As a senior, I took more of a leadership role in the team and I aspire to set the same example for the girls on my team as those who came before me.

Cheerleading will always be a burning passion in my heart because of all that it has taught me to make me the cheerleader and young woman I am today. Furthermore, it is a love that I will carry with me for years to come. ❁



# The Love Of Skiing That Never Melts Away

From Page 6

From that day forward, skiing became an integral part of my life. I would eagerly anticipate the arrival of winter, waiting for the first snowflakes to blanket the ground. As I grew older, my love for skiing continued to evolve. It was not about the thrill of descending a mountain on a pair of skis, it was also about the serenity of the mountains, and the crisp, clean air. As December approaches once more, I find myself filled with the same sense of anticipation I felt as a child. The familiar sound of skis carving through the snow, the cold wind against my face, and the breathtaking views before me, all serve as reminders of my enduring love for this sport.

Skiing has been a constant in my life, a source of joy and adventure that has shaped my identity. It has taught me resilience, perseverance, and the importance of cherishing the moments spent in the great outdoors. Skiing has been a lifelong love of mine, one that I continue to nurture and cherish year after year. As the season arrives, I prepare to hit the slopes once again. For me, the ski season is not just a time of year, it is a celebration of a lifelong passion, a love that started when I was a little girl and has only grown stronger with time. ❁

# Golf at Holy Names

From Page 6

team in eighth grade was when it reached a new level, becoming a fall sport as well as a Section II division sport. This change brought a more competitive nature to the sport; playing many more matches than the prior season, with many different teams and new girls, working to finish all nine holes before the sun sets, and aiming to compete in Sectionals.

I had the opportunity to qualify and play in the Inaugural Section 2 Girl's Golf Sectional as a young eighth grader. I remember the feelings of nervousness to compete in a match this large, with high school girls from all over the Capital Region coming out to play on a cold October day. This opportunity, however, benefited me positively, as it gave me a sense of competition, and taught me to focus on my own game, and allowed me to meet the LPGA golf icon, Dottie Pepper.

Six years have passed since I first joined the Holy Names Golf Team, and I have played in countless matches, the yearly Sectional, and was promoted to the role of Captain my Junior Year. I wrapped up my final season with the team in October, tapping in my last putt on the ninth hole of Capital Hills on my Senior Night with my family, friends, and teammates all present in support, to then playing in my final Sectional competition ever. It is incredible to see how much this sport has grown over the past few years, and how much it has truly shaped me as a person. I will forever cherish my time on the course as a golfer for Holy Names, and I hope to see the golf team flourish in the future! ❁