

# The Comet Chronicle

Abington Heights High School — Where students are the focus, and excellence is the standard.

## Fall Sports at AHHS Set Records as Soccer, Golf, Cross Country Go to States

By Zorina Boersma

The Abington Heights Girls Soccer team has concluded their record-breaking season. First the first time in school history, our team qualified for the PIAA State Championship.

Not only was it the first time for the school, but for any school in the Lackawanna Interscholastic Athletic Association.

The team put up a good fight against last year's champions, the Moon Area Tigers in the final on November 18, but ultimately lost 3-1. This left them with an incredible 23-1 record for the season.

The team's goal was scored by Lilia Calvert, bringing her to an impressive 65 goals for the season, a school record.

Congratulations to all the girls on the team and Coaches Mannick and Noone.

This was also the first time that AH had three teams finish in the top five in their respective state leagues. Boys Golf finished fifth in the state and Girls Cross Country finished their 2023 season as state runner-ups.

Girls Cross Country will now compete

in the Nike Cross Country Regionals in Poughkeepsie, NY where they will have the chance to qualify for Nationals in Oregon.

This year was the most successful fall season Abington has seen in quite some time with football, field hockey, girls volleyball, and girls tennis all meeting with success and making it to the postseason.

Congratulations to all teams regardless of their final standing. We are looking forward to what we can do in the coming seasons, and hope we can continue to set records as winter sports kick off in the coming weeks.



Emily Hoban



Ethan Flynn



Ethan Flynn

Members of the NHS raked leaves as one of the many tasks during the park cleanup.

## NHS Cleanup at Hillside Park

By Vance Dotterer and Carly Miller

On Friday, November 10th, the National Honor Society (NHS) went to Hillside Park to give back to our community by helping rake leaves, trim trees and clean up the hiking trails. The Comet Chronicle was there, interviewing the members behind the scenes.

With how focal Hillside Park is to the Abington Community, NHS president Geoff Brock put plans in motion to organize a massive cleanup on Friday morning.

When asked about his thoughts on the cleanup taking place, he said, "This park has been useful to all of us, everyone's come here at least once in their life, I'm assuming. It's just a big part of our community and

we wanted to give back to that by cleaning it up for them before the winter hit."

The students working to clean up the park had created their own method to clean leaves off of the turf. They raked the leaves three feet from the fence, then had a tractor come by to take them away. The students also helped maintain the hiking paths through Hillside, clearing debris and branches from the storms that have hit our area recently.

Despite the cold weather, the NHS members were more than happy to give back to their community. McKenna Stugus, a member of the NHS, said that "I think it's fun, I think it's a good opportunity for us to get outside."

See our website for a full photo gallery.

# Sports & Activities

## AH Students Make Their Debut in Performance of 'The Nutcracker'

By **Gia Vachino**

It's that time of the year where snowflakes are falling, chestnuts are roasting, hot chocolate is brewing, and jingle bells are ringing. Christmas is right around the corner and there is no better way to get into the holiday spirit than to sit down and enjoy a beautiful performance of the classical ballet, "The Nutcracker."

This year is the Ballet Theater of Scranton's 48th annual production of "The Nutcracker" and the cast consists of multiple talented students from Abington Heights High School. Junior Elizabeth Schneider will be dancing the beloved role of the Sugar Plum Fairy. Ribbon Candy lead will be performed by junior Gabrielle Snyder. Trepak from Russia lead will be performed by senior Ryanna Avisato. Tea from China lead and Chocolate from Spain lead will be performed by Freshman, John Roman Vachino. I will be performing the role of the Dew Drop Fairy accompanied by Junior Lauren Lockett, Junior Emma Wagner, Sophomore Meredith Duffy, Freshman Anna Flynn, Chole Pugliese and Amelia Davis who will be dancing in the Waltz of the Flowers. Wagner, Duffy, and Flynn will be dancing as the Spanish core and Lockett and Davis will be dancing as the Russian core as well. Lastly, junior Brennan Connor will dance the role of the one and only, the Nutcracker.

Over the past couple of weeks these dancers have been working extremely hard to make this production a priceless piece of art for the audience coming to watch them perform.

"Each week the rehearsal time increased, which meant our nights became longer," says Connor. "We work until we reach perfection so that we can ensure that our audience gets the performance that they deserve," Connor adds on. "All the hard work is worth it in the end because it is always so exciting to see the audience's reaction to what we have prepared for them."

The dancers have exclaimed that the preparation process for this production can be extremely tedious.

"I have been rehearsing with the ballet instructors at BTOS and with my partner

George Sanders in both New York City and Scranton as he lives in New York City and dances professionally with Twyla Tharp Ballet Company," says Schneider. "Along with this I have been taking the time outside of my rehearsals at the studio to go on runs and participate in pilates classes to build my strength and stamina for the upcoming performances."

The production level of The Nutcracker involves an accumulation of costumes, scenery and props, and stage effects. These attributes bring life to the stage and help the dancers tell the story.

"I feel like two dances that everyone raves about are the Waltz of the Snowflakes and the Waltz of the Flowers," says Snyder. "The community loves the synchronization of the performers on stage and they love how the props and light effects help bring the show to life."

The Nutcracker is a staple piece in the ballet world and it has become a prevailing tradition for the holiday season. Each performance is a surprise to the community because they never know what kind of excitement the dancers have in store for them. Overall, it has become evident to recognize that these dancers have put in the dedication to make this year's performance of The Nutcracker an unforgettable one.

Performances will be held at The Theater at North in Scranton, on November 25, 26, and 27 at 2 and 7:30 p.m. Tickets are free at the box office.



KHart Photography

AH junior Brennan Connor will play the titular role of the Nutcracker.

## Athletes Sign Their Letters of Intent



Kaitlynn Clark/AH Media

By **AH Media Staff**

Wednesday, Nov. 8 was National Signing Day for high school students. While not all athletes sign on this day, it is the earliest possible day to sign a National Letter of Intent and commit to participate in athletics at a specific university.

This year, eight Abington Heights athletes signed letters of intent to continue their sports careers.

The Athletics Department held a special event for the students, along with their families, coaches, and friends. Each of the students donned merchandise from their future school while they sat surrounded by their loved ones and supporters and signed the letter finalizing the decision of where to go after AH.

There will be at least one other signing event at the high school in the spring, when more athletes have accepted offers.

Front row:

Kaylyn Elliot who will play field hockey at Bloomsburg University.

Maggie Ratchford who will play soccer at Saint Francis University.

Caly Yankow who will play lacrosse at Saint Francis University.

Peyton Pallman who will play field hockey at Central Michigan University.

Back Row:

Jake Lenahan who will play baseball at College of the Holy Cross.

Hailey Hirtz who will run track and cross country at Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

Madison Zalewski who will play field hockey at Old Dominion University.

Caleb Marzolino who will wrestle at Indiana University

*See our website for a full photo gallery.*



# Sports & Activities

## The Effect Blows to the Head Have on Athletes

By Liam Fenton

Contact sports are a popular form of entertainment, and are participated in by 2 million kids and teens nationwide every year. Sports provide enjoyment, fun, and healthy habits for many people everywhere.

With sports like football, basketball, soccer, MMA, boxing, hockey, wrestling, rugby and lacrosse, people recognize which they prefer to play, to watch and to invest their time in.

There is one unfortunately common predicament throughout each of these sports, one that can disable players and set back teams. It can hospitalize many and create long-lasting effects that can alter the life of the athlete.

Head injuries are one of the most common injuries in sports, especially these contact sports. According to Michigan Medicine, 3.8 million athletes per year suffer from concussions and other head-related injuries. These injuries can cause permanent changes to the health of these athletes that can be detrimental to their lives and lives around them.

Declan Walsh, a senior at Abington Heights High School, has a particularly interesting story. Declan has suffered from five different concussions in his sports career. Walsh has played football for almost his entire span of high school, taking a break junior year due to this common harmful occurrence. Football has a higher concussion rate than any sport, usually featuring pretty intense symptoms.

"They definitely are not fun," says the athlete. "Every concussion is pretty similar. At first, you almost feel like you can see stars. Your vision is blurry, you just feel like garbage. Then for the next week you just feel out of it, you feel sick and weak and you don't want to get out of bed."

Walsh was getting over his 5th concussion at the time of the interview.

When asked in hindsight the things to do to prevent them, he explained, "It is kind of different for every sport, but a universal rule is to keep your head up, stay aware, try not to use your head when tackling or hitting."

These are all important things to be aware of. When a person gets a concussion, the head is jolted in such a way that the brain shifts rapidly inside the skull, and this can



Ethan Avery

AH senior Declan Walsh has sustained five concussions over his time as a student athlete. This lead him to miss the entire football season his junior year and part of the season this year.

disrupt the brain from functioning properly.

The days, or even weeks, following often include painful and agonizing symptoms, and school can be difficult for suffering athletes. The Abington Heights concussion protocol, according to our school nurse, Ms. Stone, is useful and caters to injured athletes.

In order to qualify, the student must be diagnosed with a concussion. If diagnosed, you must have 48-72 hours of rest. When returning to school, the student is allowed 50% of homework in all classes, time and a half for tests and quizzes, and no gym or sports are permitted until symptoms are gone and the athlete feels better. Students may wear sunglasses as well, due to light sensitivity.

Even more than treating concussions, prevention is key. But preventing concussions can be an extremely difficult thing. It is impossible to prevent them entirely, but there are steps that coaches, athletes, and even parents can take to try to limit and educate players when it comes to head injuries. Prevention varies from sport to sport, but can ultimately save lives.

It is extremely important that all athletes have well fitted equipment in protective and working condition, tackling should be taught and practiced correctly with the heads-up technique, all players should be good sports and respect each other on the

field, helmet to helmet contact should be avoided when unnecessary, and players should be taken off the field when they suspect a concussion.

If every team and player sticks to these rules and makes them a habit, concussions and head injuries in general can be limited and prevented much better. Though football exhibits a large number of concussions, soccer, basketball, wrestling, and most other physical sports have high concussion rates.

After anyone gets a concussion, they are only more likely to face another one. After a second concussion, symptoms worsen and take longer to recover, as well as an increase in vulnerability to another one. It is evident that frequent head injuries cause long-term effects that should not be taken lightly. Michigan Medicine says, "Researchers have also discovered microscopic brain changes in people exposed to repetitive mild head trauma. This condition is called CTE, or chronic traumatic encephalopathy." CTE is permanent brain damage that does not go away, and it is clear to have occurred and currently occurs in many athletes.

It is clear that concussions and head injuries of all sorts are both dangerous and detrimental to athletes around the world. It is important to take proper measures to prevent and try to avoid such trauma, for the good of the health of many.

# Arts & Entertainment

## Movie Review: “Five Nights at Freddy’s”

By Marek Laskowski

This movie has had a troubled development cycle to say the least. This movie was first teased all the way back in 2015 with one image of the name Scott Cawthon, the name of the original creator of the franchise of games, placed on a director’s chair.

In the last few years, the rights to the movie have switched companies multiple times before, finally, Blumhouse Studios announced that they would be the ones creating and financing the project. After a few minor rewrites and the halt on the movie industry due to the Covid-19 pandemic, “Five Nights at Freddy’s” was finally released on October 27th, 2023, over eight years since it was first teased.

To summarize the basics of the plot, the movie follows Mike, a security guard living paycheck to paycheck to support himself and his younger sister Abby. After being fired from his most recent job, he is given an opportunity to work at an old, shut down restaurant called Freddy Fazbear’s Pizzeria, working as a nighttime security guard monitoring the property throughout the night.

His goal is to find out who kidnapped his little brother when he was young and uncover the dark past surrounding the restaurant while being stalked by the animatronic performers, Freddy Fazbear, Bonnie, Chica, and Foxy, who are haunted by children who went missing in the 80s.

The movie takes inspiration from the video games of the same name. In its respective franchise of games and lore- driven stories, it has a deep and complex storyline that will most likely leave casual moviegoers confused.

The main story is fed by eight years of storytelling that spans nine games, nearly 30 books, and now a movie. What the writers decided to do was take elements from several aspects of the main story and fit them neatly into the movie’s plot.

For most of the film, this worked out well. However, there were certain moments where these elements didn’t create a cohesive narrative, often leaving a scene feeling disconnected.

While the story occasionally fell short, its set design and practical effects are nearly flawless. The animatronic performers were built by the Jim Henson Creature Shop. They created these characters in the spirit of the original designs, remaining very faithful to the source

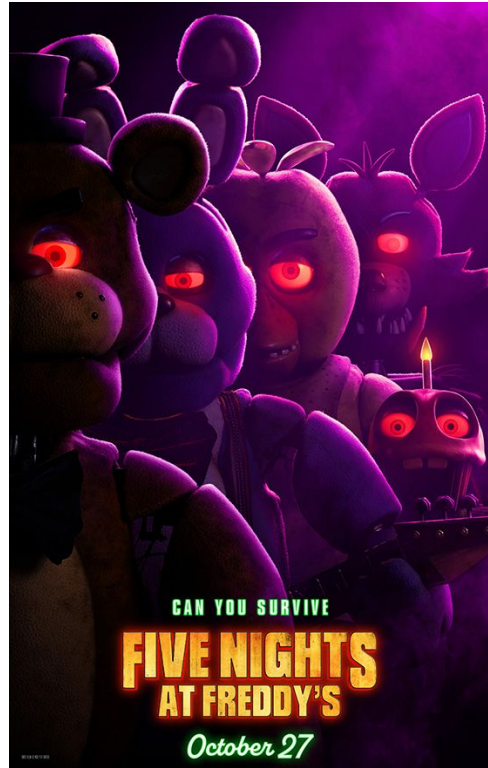


Photo Courtesy of Universal Pictures  
Official poster for “Five Nights at Freddy’s”  
featuring the possessed animatronics.

material. They built suits of the animatronics that actors could wear to capture a more fluid performance on camera, and actual animatronics for the characters that could be controlled by special remote controls for their faces, arms, and legs.

When it comes to the actors, everyone looked like they were deeply invested in their roles. There was great chemistry between many of the actors and it made their performances incredibly entertaining to watch.

While not perfect, “Five Nights at Freddy’s” is an entertaining film with a well done, but sometimes disconnected, narrative. The actors’ excellent chemistry with each other and with the animatronic performers make it satisfying to watch.

Even though it might not resonate with general audiences, longtime fans of the franchise will love seeing their favorite stories and characters brought to life on the big screen in this faithful adaptation.



## Leo’s Entomology Corner

*The Daddy Long Leg: The spider is not a spider at all.*

By Leo Mascia

I’m sure we’ve all seen the well-known and common Daddy Long Leg, or Harvestman, spiders, and have heard the old wives’ tale that they are extremely venomous, but it turns out that they are not.

That also is not the only common misconception about the Daddy Long Leg. This creepy crawler is actually not a spider at all. The Daddy Long Leg is more closely related to a scorpion. Spiders have two body sections: their abdomen and their cephalothorax (the section of the spider that is both the head and the thorax).

As I’m sure many have seen, the Daddy Long Legs body is just a sort of an ovular shape, not a defined two sections.

One thing it shares with neither the spider nor the scorpion is venom. Despite what you may think, the Daddy Long Leg is 100% non-venomous, though they do have fangs.

Spiders, on the other hand, use the venom on their fangs to inject venom into their prey to break them down and kill them before ingested. Daddy Long Legs will either eat their prey alive, which I think that’s pretty metal, or they will scavenge for something already dead and decaying, and that’s pretty gross.

So do not fear when you see one of these peaceful creatures, this house guest is a docile non-spider, not a venomous threat.



Photo Courtesy of Pixabay  
For several reasons, including it’s lack of two separate parts, Daddy Long Legs are unlike other type of spider you might have around your house.



# Summit Spotlight

## Abington Heights Senior Lights the Way for Others

By **Gia Vachino**

In the bustling halls of Abington Heights High School, senior Ryanna Avisato stands tall amidst the whirlwinds of responsibilities and chaos that make up her daily life.

Recently, I had the opportunity to sit down with Avisato to discuss her prominent role here at Abington Heights and her drive toward her goals and cooperation with the student body.

Avisato's journey into involvement at Abington Heights started with a passion for planning, a trait she has possessed ever since she was a little kid.

"I've always just liked planning things," Avisato shared.

"Ever since I was little, our family has always hosted Easter," she goes on. "When I was maybe 6 or 7, I would plan elaborate Easter egg hunts for my family and cousins to participate in. I've been planning them forever, even now I still plan them. My parents tell me that they should have known that this was me, like this is what I have been doing ever since I was little."

Avisato's passion for planning has extended into involvement with many clubs

at Abington, including Student Council, Student Government, Interact Club, National Honors Society (NHS), Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), Environmental Club, Period Club, Transition Team, and HELP Club.

Along with these clubs she also holds many notable roles within them. Avisato is president of the 2024 senior class, vice president of Student Council, and the former secretary of HELP Club.

Reflecting on some of her notable leadership roles, Avisato outlined her progression.

"Freshman year I was class historian, sophomore year I was secretary, and these past two years, my junior and senior year, I have been class president."

When I asked about her motivation to seek leadership positions each year, Avisato emphasized her genuine interest in connecting with her classmates.

"I don't know. I feel like me, more than the other candidates, I talk to everybody," she says. "I want to hear what people have to say. I don't really care who you are, I just want to hear your opinion and I want your voice to be heard."



AH Media

Avisato helps to plan many school events, like dances.

Looking ahead to her post-graduation plans, Avisato expressed, "I want to major psychology... I would really like to work in a mental hospital or even a prison and someday I would love to own my own business like a clothing store or makeup store or even just a side event planning business."

As we wrapped up the interview, Avisato fondly recalled her most cherished memory at Abington Heights High School.

"I think Gym Class Heroes would have to be one of my most favorite memories. I think just planning that whole week like spirit week, Gym Class Heroes, the homecoming game, homecoming court, and the homecoming dance, it's just all my favorite part and my favorite memory."

## Not Your Ordinary, Run of the Mill Teacher

By **Maeve Ludka**

There are some high school math teachers that nearly everyone in the school admires and respects. Mr. Vincent Pricci is at the top of that list.

As a child, Mr. Pricci was unsure of how he wanted to spend his life. He had always had a love for mathematics, and though he went to school for business, he later realized that he needed to put his love for math to good use.

When asked about the moment he knew he wanted to become a teacher, Mr. Pricci stated that he did not know until he was taking his last math class.

While recalling that math class, he stated, "I realized I did not want to stop being in a math classroom."

He knew at that moment he would probably become a teacher.

After graduating from the University of Scranton in 2000, Mr. Pricci started teaching at Abington Heights. He was 22 when he first taught in a classroom, and has now been teaching for 24 years. Over these years, he has collected many accomplishments and accolades that support his teaching career and

philosophy.

After his first year teaching, Mr. Pricci received the Lee Boyer Award from the Pennsylvania Council of Teachers of Mathematics, for the most outstanding first year math teacher in the state of Pennsylvania. He has also been chosen multiple times to give the senior class commencement speech, which is a great honor. But, Mr. Pricci is not in it for the awards and recognition.

Being able to teach everyday and get to know "all different types of people and personalities" is what Mr. Pricci loves most about his job.

When asked, Mr. Pricci's students have nothing but amazing things to say about him.

Robby Lucas, a current junior in Mr. Pricci's AP Precalculus class, had a million compliments to give the math teacher.

He described him as kind, outgoing, patient, and understanding.

"I am so excited to have Mr. Pricci as my math teacher this upcoming year. So far, he has been so patient, and has made some very difficult and confusing concepts seem easy."

Though Mr. Pricci is most at home in the classroom, he has a son and a wife who he

loves spending time with outside of the school atmosphere. Anytime he is not grading papers or making a lesson plan, he is spending time with the people he loves.

"I love to watch baseball, and play baseball with my son. Golfing and skiing are fun, too. Really anything active sounds like fun to me."

Clearly, Mr. Pricci is known as a well rounded, respected, unordinary and intelligent teacher and person.

"I love teaching everyone," Mr. Pricci stated at the end of the interview. "I love teaching you!"



Fiona Long

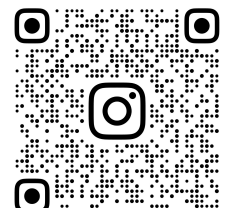
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