

Terrific Teens TO WATCH

There seems no better way to celebrate the start of another school year than highlighting a few noteworthy students from our community!

by Lisa Lelas
photography by Christine Paluf

We selected eight bright and dedicated young men and women, all recent graduates or

students from the four West Hartford high schools, to see what makes them shine.

Indeed, each one of them is a star. And you will see a common denominator in their drive and pursuit of excellence in all that they do. Whether top competitive athletes, philanthropically driven teens, or seekers of academic excellence, all possess mental and physical discipline, and all seem to grasp the value of hard work. In addition, they have all noted that they would not be where they are today if not for the love and support from their families as well as opportunities afforded to them from their school and their community.

These eight teens are already, in their own way, role models and pillars of our community.



▶▶ SAMANTHA UDOLF | “Champion with Heart”

At just 17-years-old, Samantha Udolf has accomplished more than many do in a life time! A lifelong skier, she is this year’s Berkshire Womens Ski League Champion in slalom and giant slalom, and the 2011 NEPSAC Class B Womens Champion of Slalom!

And her passion for skiing has become a family affair. “Both my sister and my brother also ski. My dad has been to every single ski race since I was 8. He’s pretty amazing. My mom is just as supportive!”

The oldest of three kids, Samantha has combined her love for skiing and her desire for helping others with a blog, www.SamsRaceForAPlace.com; on it, she charts her ski fundraising efforts and volunteer work at the Ronald McDonald House Charity, benefiting children who are patients at Shiners, Bay State Hospital in Springfield. To date, she has raised over \$53,000. “The Springfield Ronald McDonald House does great things for so many people. It was my way of doing even more to help.”

Now entering her senior year at the Kingswood Oxford School, Samantha is captain of her school’s ski team, and also

the only girl on the school’s golf squad, a sport she loves to play with her father. “He’s my favorite golf partner!” she adds.

Elected student government speaker, Samantha cites her Latin teacher, Mrs. Amy Neilson, and her parents as being her biggest role models. “Mrs. Neilson really helped inspire me through a very difficult class with a sense of humor and fun and exciting ways of teaching, which got me fully engaged in the class and taught me to look at things from all sides.”

She’s an extremely well-rounded student with a penchant for math, calculus and biology,” she says, “I’m thinking about molecular biology. Possibly to do research in that field, which would lead me in the pre-med track.” Samantha Udolf, for sure, is one amazing teen to watch in this community! She recently returned home from Oxford University, where she had the opportunity to be part of their art history program, studying in England, France and Italy this past summer.

“I was able to study important parts of art history right where they happened,” she says. “Very educational and lots of fun!”



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