

POSITIVE PLAYOFF Elisabeth Bull '24 dribbles the ball up the court, ready to make a great play with her teammates. Bull has played soccer since middle school and the experience has brought her new friends, accompanied with a love of scoring goals. "When I was playing in playoffs, I got a goal and it was exciting," Bull said. "I joined soccer because I thought it would be fun and I get to know more people." Photo by Maxwell Barton



BALLING WITH THE BOYS The Unified Sports team takes a celebratory picture following their great performance in regionals. The bocce ball experience brought pure joy to everyone who played and those who had the opportunity to watch. "Bocce ball was awesome. It didn't even matter who won, everybody was just having fun," Tyler Westerlund '23 said. "The athletes that lost still had smiles stuck on their faces." Photo courtesy of Tonya Sands



Elisabeth Bull '24 cheers ecstatically on top of her teammate's shoulders. Photo courtesy of Joanne Johnson

united & excited

Unified Sports bring together athletes from all walks of life

The Unified Sports program prides itself on bringing students from different backgrounds together. The athletes love competing in a variety of sports, ranging from floor hockey to snowshoeing to bocce ball.

"I wanted to interact with more people," Elisabeth Bull '24 said. "My favorite part about hockey is being more active and being on the floor with my friends."

The influence these sports have is much deeper than celebrating a victory, making a great catch, or scoring a high-pressure goal. For many, Unified Sports are about relationships, being part of a team, and pursuing a common goal.

"My favorite part is how fast everyone can go at their own speed," Alexis Plamann '23 said. "It's so fun to see how fast people are and how competitive they get."

The participation of students with disabilities in sports and recreational activities promotes inclusion, minimizes isolation, optimizes physical health, and enhances overall well-being.

"Everyone there is so nice and inclusive," Harrison Klaphake '24 said. "They try to make you feel as welcome and comfortable as possible."

Buffalo's past and present activity directors have worked diligently to instill the ideals of inclusion and belonging among their staff, coaches, and athletes.

"Being a part of the unified community has had a large impact on me. It brings out the kindness in everyone and allows those with disabilities to show off their strengths," Alexis Plamann '23 said. "It's a great social activity for those with disabilities and allows them to be seen in a positive way. Unified Sports creates an environment to smile, laugh, and support others."

Story by Elijah Zumbusch and Maxwell Barton



STATE CHAMPS Charles Vaale '24 aims his shot, strategically trying to throw the ball. Vaale and his partner Harrison Klaphake '24 were dominant with their shots and placed first in their section in the regional tournament. They later went on to win state as well. A rush of pure excitement washed across their faces as they danced after the win. Photo courtesy of Tonya Sands



ROLLING RYAN Ryan Broughton '24 focuses on his shot while listening to his partner Tyler Westerlund '23. The community rallied around Unified Sports for this fantastic experience. Broughton and Westerlund were happy to be competing in regionals, placing first within their section. They will remember this achievement for years to come. Photo courtesy of Tonya Sands



CHEER NO FEAR Caleb Kruse '23 and Madison Johnson '24 help Brooke Flaata '24 prepare before the cheer meet. Kruse participated in unified activities his entire life with his brother and it has opened a lot of doors for him. "I got offered a job working with people with special needs. It's been a great experience," Kruse said. Photo courtesy of Joanne Johnson

snow much fun

Athletes make the most of frigid Minnesota weather by participating in snowshoeing

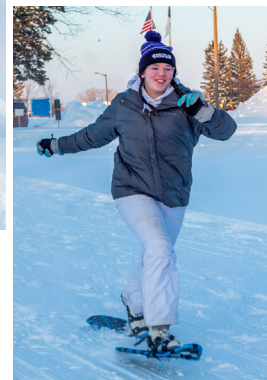


FUN IN THE SUN Elisabeth Bull '24 and Olivia Telecky '24 run down the track with smiles plastered on their faces. "I wanted to give snowshoeing a try. My friends joined, so my mom signed me up," Bull said. "I like being with my friends and having fun with them in the snow." Photo by Maxwell Barton



COLD & COURAGEOUS "I was cold at practice and had to run a race. I didn't want to run but I had the courage to try because my friends kept encouraging me," Aubrey Sands '23 said. Photo by Maxwell Barton

FUNNY FALLS "I joined snowshoeing to spend time with my friends. My favorite memory was when I fell and Aubrey [Sands '23] just sat there and laughed at me," Brianna Plamann '23 said. Photo by Maxwell Barton



TRIPPIN' & SLIPPIN' "Unified is a big part of my life and snowshoeing is all about having fun. There are so many laughs," Abigail Strong '23 said. "We all fall on our faces and it doesn't hurt." Photo by Maxwell Barton

RY TOO FLY Ryan Broughton '24 looks at the track as he prepares for the scavenger hunt. Snowshoeing is a great opportunity to have fun competitions while being out in the snow. Photo by Maxwell Barton