Stillwater Senior Living Female Athletes Of The Month: Granite City Dancers Earn Recognition for Supporting Fellow Athletes

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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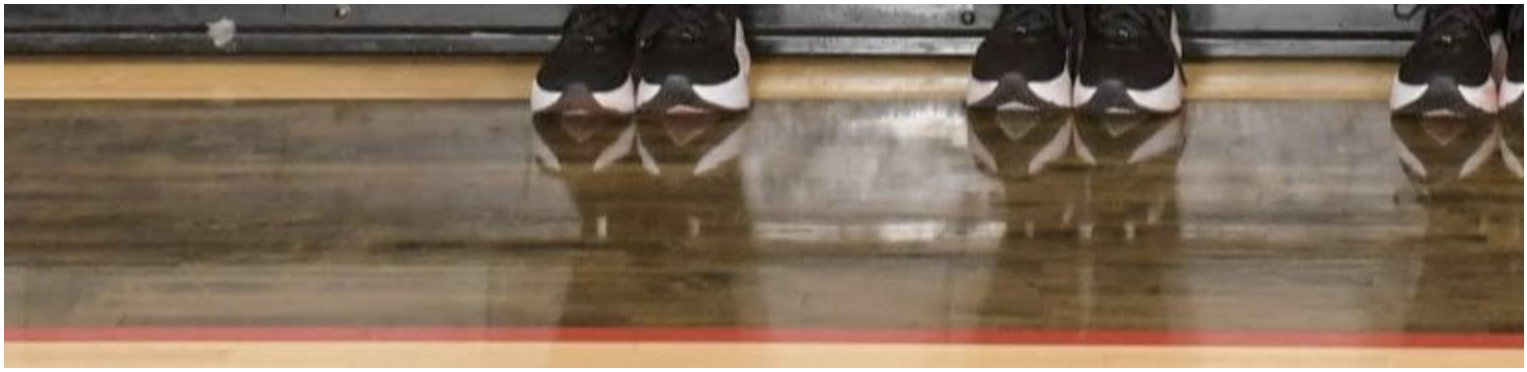


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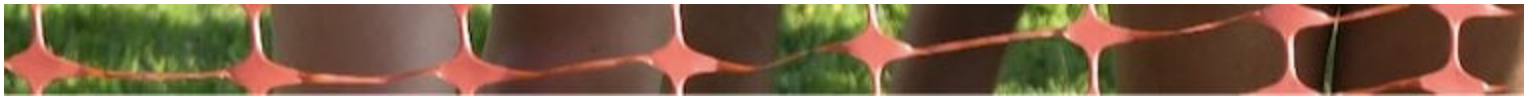

GRANITE CITY - For the Granite City High School dance team, supporting school athletes extends beyond performances at home games. The 2026 team, led by beloved coach Melissa Kimble, also cheers on runners at the Granite City Invitational cross-country meet as part of a philosophy centered on supporting others.

The annual appearance gives dancers an opportunity to recognize the training, stamina and dedication of runners, Kimble said. The team also participates in other service projects.

Granite City School District Manager of District Communications - Transportation Director Chris Mitchell praised the dancers' commitment to attending the meet to cheer on the runners and for all the work the squad does throughout the season.

"I think it is super cool that the dance team comes out every year to support all the athletes," Mitchell said. "This and all their service efforts and performances shows a lot of dedication."

The Granite City High dance girls are Stillwater Senior Living Female Athletes Of The Month.


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13



Kimble said supporting boys and girls in school athletics is central to the dance program. She described a team whose members bring varied experiences rather than extensive formal dance training. Those activities include band, volleyball and debate, she said.

That mix can make competing difficult, Kimble said, but the dancers enjoy supporting fellow students. At the cross-country invitational, they also see parents and grandparents watching runners’ training come to fruition.

One moment that reinforced the value of attending involved Landon Harriss, whom Kimble taught in second grade. After finishing first in a race, Harriss returned to the finish line to encourage other runners, she recalled.

Kimble said that kind of support is what she wants to see from athletes and helps explain why the dance team returns each year.

Her approach also draws on her experience as a professional cheerleader, including with the St. Louis Rams. Kimble said she tries to carry lessons about community involvement, hard work and kindness into her coaching.

“I am just so proud of all our team members,” Kimble said. "The group has a lot of special girls involved."

The 2026 team includes Gaby Brasher, Avalyn Bratten, Emery Cope, Alaina Hansen, Abigail Huniak, Gabrielle Huniak, Mahlia Ishum, Elexis O’Dell, Jaylee Penrod, Ava Relleke, Lydia Randazzo, Camryn Schaeffer, Jessica Spicer, Hannah Taylor, Hannah Trower and Emilia Vasques.

Christy Taylor is the assistant coach, and Jennifer Connolly is the volunteer coach.