

Student Ambassador Spotlight: Christina Allen of River Dell

Christina Allen packs a lot into her day.

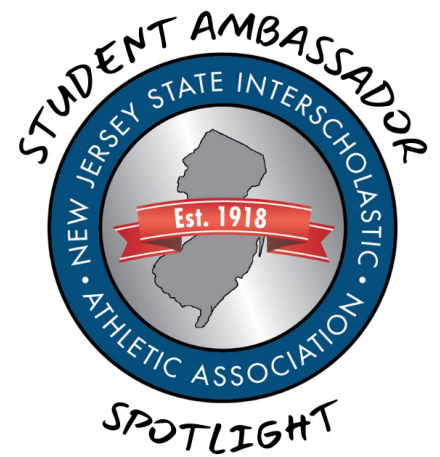
The junior from River Dell is a honor student and standout in cross country, indoor track and outdoor track. She's one of the state's top performers, where among her many accomplishments are victories in the 3200 meter run at the 2021 outdoor NJSIAA Meet of Champions and the 800m at the 2022 outdoor MOC.

This year, she's also one of 19 student-athletes from around the state serving as a NJSIAA Student Ambassador. By taking part in both virtual and in-person meetings and discussions, the ambassadors are a valuable resource in helping the NJSIAA understand the needs and concerns of the state's student-athletes.

Christina was eager to submit her application to become a Student Ambassador.



**Christina Allen after winning the 800 meter run at
the 2022 Meet of Champions
Photo credit: Andrew Mills/NJ Advance Media**



"I wanted to be a part of making high school sports as enjoyable as possible for student athletes as well as representing my school throughout New Jersey," she said. "I hope we can help all high school athletes enjoy their four years more, and make competition fair and friendly."

She's enjoyed the dialogue with her fellow ambassadors, as well as learning about statewide issues and the thought processes which go into developing NJSIAA policy.

"The transfer rules have definitely been the most interesting to me this year," she said. "It's made me realize how having student athletes transfer can affect teams and the level of competition. Rules and consequences are needed for people who transfer more than one time, so that it keeps everything fair."

School and sports are only a part of her story.



Christina also devotes much of her time to serving as a volunteer firefighter in her home town of River Edge. It's something that gives her much pride, enjoyment and satisfaction.

"I've always thought about giving back to my community and being involved in the town," she said. "One of my friends was involved in the fire department and introduced me to it. Ever since, it has been my second home and my most valuable experiences to date. The River Edge Volunteer Fire Department has drills once a week on Tuesday's and rig checks once a week on Sunday's. On top of that, we are on call 24/7, meaning if we are available when a call comes in, we have to report to the firehouse.

"In order to become a regular member, I have to attend Fire One, which takes place at the fire academy over the summer. It's a six week course from 9 to 4 every day. This is the minimum requirement to be a fireman/firewoman. It is a grueling course where we are put through simulated fires and training to prepare us for our department. Serving my community is very rewarding, especially when you respond to the house of someone you know. It is very rewarding to know you helped someone with something as small as a false smell of a gas odor to as large as a structure fire. I think every call is memorable. Every call you never know what to expect, and you learn something new every time."

The interactions with her fellow volunteers are also very fulfilling for Christina.

"The fire department family I have is one of the most important things to me," she said. "People from ages 14 to 80-plus all share the same interest and bounce ideas and questions off each other, as well as positive training. They are all very supportive of me and everyone around, which makes it a very positive place to be. In reality, when working with something so dangerous, you have to be able to trust another person with your life, because that's often how it is. Being in a group that feels like family makes this a lot easier."

Getting to know Student Ambassador Christina Allen:

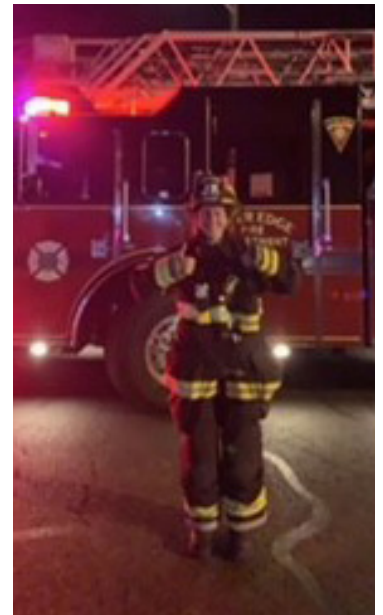
Favorite school subject: Math. "I find problem solving therapeutic and it gets me thinking."

Favorite athlete: World champion middle-distance runner Emma Coburn. "She works hard toward her goals and sets a great example for young girls who want to be like her."

Favorite team: "I know I should really answer this with a professional sports team, but in all honesty, my favorite team is my own team. We are a close knit group of girls who push each other to succeed. Being around them every day makes hard work and difficult days a lot more enjoyable."

Do you have any superstitions or pre-meet rituals?

"For any big race, I need to have rigatoni broccoli rabe and sausage the night before. I also wear the same sports bra for every single race. The most important thing I do before a race is write a smiley face on



Photos courtesy of Christina Allen

my left wrist. The first thing I will do when I turn 18 is get it permanently tattooed on my wrist. It's been a symbol of good look to me for a long time."

How do you spend time on the bus on the way to a meet? "If the meet is more than 20-30 minutes away, I try to take a nap. If it is a close meet, I listen to music on the way. On the way home from meets, I usually stay awake and talk to my teammates."

Favorite food: "My favorite food is tortellini carbonara from the Italian place around the corner from my house."

Favorite lunch at school: "Usually for lunch at school, I bring a deli meat sandwich with a veggie and a fruit. My favorite thing from the school cafeteria is the french fries and cookies."

The best thing about my school is... "My friends. Having classes with friends makes the periods go by faster, and makes them more enjoyable."

Favorite thing about being a high school athlete: "My favorite thing about being a high school athlete is representing my school at competitions."

What's the best quality in a teammate? "The best quality of a teammate is to be supportive. A supportive teammate motivates you to do well and it creates a positive team environment."

What's been your proudest moment so far as a student? "My proudest moment so far is just having good grades."

Do you have a favorite sports memory? "My favorite is winning the NJSIAA Meet of Champions in the 800 in my sophomore outdoor season. I then went on the next day to place 8th at New Balance Nationals in the mile."

Is there a sport you don't play that you'd like to try? "I used to play soccer up until 8th grade. I would love to one day go back to playing soccer for fun."

If you could have a super power:

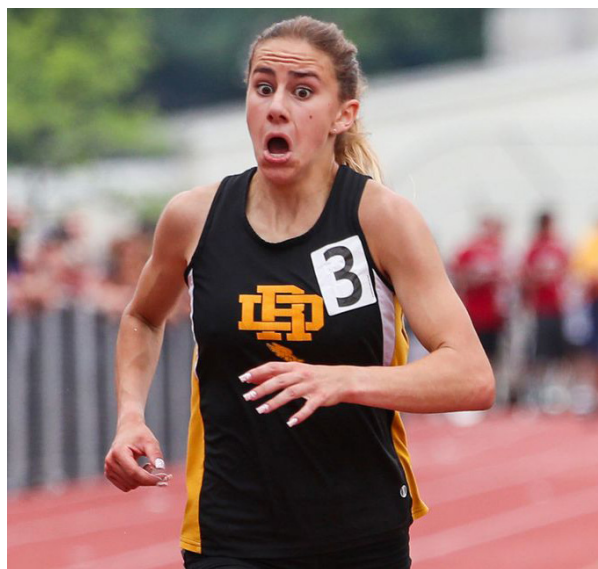
"If I could have a super power, I would want to read people's thoughts, because I always wonder

why people act the way they act and what they are thinking about."

If there were 25 hours in a day, what would you do with the extra hour? "I would spend the extra hour sleeping or at the firehouse. As a high school athlete, I definitely don't get as much sleep as I could, so an extra hour would be nice. I would also spend it at the firehouse, because it is my second home."

What's the best place you've ever traveled to? "Maine. My relatives have a cabin in the Forks, and it has no cell service, running water or electricity. It is a good way to get away from reality and relax. My relatives also have a house on Long Island, Maine. Spending a few days in either location is the most enjoyable and relaxing thing I have done."

Do you have a career ambition yet? "I would love to become a police officer or do something in the criminal justice field. Being a volunteer fire fighter has immersed me in the careers of many different first responders and I would love to help out my community as a career."



**Christina Allen after winning the 3200m
at the 2021 Meet of Champions**
Photo credit: Andrew Mills/NJ Advance Media