# The Prairie Press PRESENTS

# THE OFFICIAL PCHS May Fete Guide

MEET THE SENIORS OF

# THE 2025 COURT



## A celebration of tradition

#### THE PRAIRIE PRESS TEAM info@prairiepress.net

Every May since 1927, the city of Paris comes alive with a timeless tradition that honors beauty, grace and the vibrant spirit of youth—May Fete. For generations, this beloved event has held a special place in the hearts of locals, offering high school students a unique opportunity to step into the spotlight and represent the best of their school and community.

Held beneath the budding trees and blue skies of May, the celebration is more than just a pageant—it's a rite of passage. With roots stretching back decades, May Fete is a cherished tradition that blends elegance with heartfelt pride, bringing together students, families and community members for a night of joy, nostalgia and recognition.

At the heart of the festivities is the May Fete Court—a group of outstanding senior students chosen for their character, leadership and involvement. These young individuals are more than just familiar faces in the hallways of Paris Cooperative High School; they are role models and representatives of the values that make our community strong.

In the following pages, we invite you to get to know this year's May Fete Court eight remarkable students who embody the spirit of this cherished celebration: Emerson Barrett, Natalie Burger, Brysen Huie, Claire Kirby, Addison Martin, Piper Mitchell and Graci Watson.

Courtney Miller was also nominated as a member of the court but elected not to participate in this feature.







merson Barrel

When Emerson Barrett found out she'd made the May Fete Court, she barely had time to react before her sister, Ava, called and shouted, "I TOLD YOU SO!!!"

That moment set the tone for what's been a meaningful experience.

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JUST BECAUSE

YOU'RE A TROUBLE

MAKER DOESN'T

MEAN YOU CAN'T

CHANGE"

"To me, it's an opportunity for some lovely senior girls to come together and represent Paris. We all come from differ-

ent walks of life and yet all of us were voted for a reason," she said.

From donating blood at school and the VFW, to engaging with friends at the gym, Emerson is always up to something that connects her to her community. She's also a fan of reading, music, watching shows and playing video games with friends-a well-rounded mix of energy and downtime.

Her favorite extracurriculars have included wrestling and tennis, and one of her proudest accom-

plishments was winning her senior night wrestling match against Olney-a mic-drop moment in its own right.

She credits Mr. Stefan Aydt, her math teacher, tennis coach and church friend, as someone she truly looks up

to.

"He sees past my troubles and looks at me for what I can be," she said. "I get heated in tennis, and I struggle

with math, but he always meets me where I'm at."

Friends would describe her as spunky, funny and outgoing, and anyone who knows her probably won't be surprised to learn that she once had two pet raccoons—Jimmy Carter and Buddie—both of whom left her with stories and scars.

Her favorite May Fete memory? "When the senior boys in choir sing to the girls—it's so sweet, and a lot of them are my friends," she said.

After graduation, she's heading to Tulane University to major in Psychology and minor in Music Performance, ready to embrace all the new adventures that college life brings.

If she could give advice to younger students, it would be this: "Just because you're a troublemaker now, doesn't mean you can't change."

Spoken like someone who knows a thing or two about transformation-with a bit of raccoon chaos along the way.

For Addison Martin, being selected to the 2025 May Fete Court came as both a surprise and a joy.

"I was so excited to be a part of such a huge tradition," she said "I remember gasping but trying to hold in my excitement!"

Addison sees May Fete Court as something truly unique.

"Unlike other courts that can feel popularity-based, I think May Fete is about kindness and support. It means a lot to be chosen for those reasons," she said.

A passionate and dedicated student, Addison's high school years have been filled with creativity

cheon with Elite Harmony and performs for Kiwanis meetings.

"It's important to me that my community sees me as someone willing to help and support others," she said. "It helps get my name out there in the best way possible."

She looks up to her mom as her greatest role model.

"She's one of the strongest, sweetest, and funniest people I know. I hope to be just like her when I grow up," she said.

Addison's friends would describe her as positive, sensitive and thoughtful—a description that mirrors her bright spirit and kind heart. She believes in the power of patience and perspective, offering this advice to younger students: "Everything happens for a reason—even if you don't see the reason right away, you'll understand eventually."



and community. She's been actively involved in the Beacon Brigade, theatre and Elite Harmony, three activities that have deeply shaped her high school experience.

Her love of music and performance shines both on and off the stage.

That passion for music is carrying her forward, too—Addison plans to attend Eastern Illinois University this fall to pursue a degree in Music Education. She hopes to one day inspire young musicians just as she has been inspired throughout her own journey.

One of Addison's proudest accomplishments is her academic success: she plans to graduate as a Valedictorian this May. It's a reflection of her dedication, perseverance, and love of learning.

Community service is also close to Addison's heart. She regularly volunteers at events like the Rec Auction and Cookies and Canvas, sings at the retired teachers' lun-

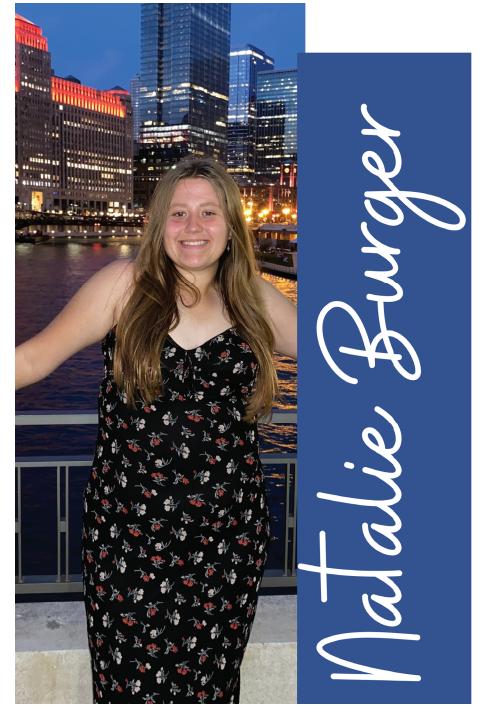
Her favorite part of May Fete? The chance to bond with classmates across all circles.

"I love that it gives everyone from different classes the opportunity to hang out, get to know each other, and just be together," she said.

And if you ever want a little burst of joy, just ask her favorite color-yellow.

"It's seen as the positive, happy color and when I see it, it helps brighten my mood," she explained.

With her voice, her heart and her sunshine-colored outlook, Addison Martin is ready to make a lasting impact on every stage she steps onto-starting with this unforgettable May Fete season.



When Natalie Burger found out she'd been selected for the 2025 May Fete Court, her first reaction was surprise.

"It was unexpected and kind of put me in disbelief," she said. "Still, I am very thankful to be part of such a special tradition."

For Natalie, May Fete is more than just a ceremony—it's a celebration of community, appreciation, and the meaningful connections shared with classmates.

To be chosen among such a strong group of senior girls is an honor Natalie doesn't take lightly.

"I'm grateful others see me as someone who can represent our class," she said. Her humility and sense of responsibility reflect her dedication not only to her peers, but to the broader community.

Natalie is deeply involved in school through her participation in Key Club, Interact Club and BI-ONIC Club—all of which give her opportunities to serve others.

"Helping people is one of my favorite things to do," she explained.

She also volunteers in-

dependently, including helping out at the Knights of Columbus fish fries. Whether she's supporting school events or giving her time to the community, Natalie finds joy in making a difference.

Outside of academics and service, Natalie stays active and engaged with a wide variety of hobbies. She enjoys playing tennis, cooking for her loved ones, drawing and working on independent STEM-related projects.

One of her proudest moments came when she placed first in Engineering Graphics at the regional Academic Challenge in Engineering and Sciencesan impressive feat in her first year participating.

A student with a creative mind and a quiet confidence, Natalie is described by her friends as quiet, goofy and creative. She credits much of her personal and academic growth to her teacher and tennis coach, Mr. Stefan Aydt.

"He's taught me so much-both in the classroom and on the courtand he's someone I truly look up to," she said.

Though this year marks

her first time participating in Mayfete, Natalie is excited to experience the tradition firsthand.

"I'm really looking forward to seeing all the dances the other classes choreographed," she said. "It's such a special way to honor the senior girls."

Looking ahead, Natalie will be attending Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology to study Mechanical Engineering, with hopes of building a career in robotics or aerospace.

"I want to be able to innovate and help others," she said—a goal that perfectly captures both her brilliant mind and her generous spirit.

One fun fact most people may not know about Natalie? Her artwork was once selected for a traveling art show, and she was even commissioned for it-proof that her creativity is as boundless as her ambition.

Her advice to younger students is simple but powerful: "Manage your time wisely." Spoken like someone who knows how to make the most of every moment.



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FRIDAY, APRIL 25, 2025 ≫ 5C

For Graci Watson, being selected for the 2025 May Fete Court is more than just an honor—it's a legacy.

"I was very excited when I found out I was chosen," she shared. "My mom was on the May Fete Court and was selected as queen in 1995, so this moment is really special to both of us."

Carrying on a family tradition, Graci is proud to join the court alongside her classmates, and she's looking forward to fulfilling this role with grace and excitement.

Graci's high school journey has been marked by outstanding involvement across academics, athletics and community service. A dedicated student and passionate leader, she's participated in Basketball, Tennis, Cross Country, Track, Interact Club, BIONIC Club, Key Club, FFA, Leadership Club, National Honor Society, Prom Committee, Powderpuff, May Fete and Livestock Judging.

She's especially fond of Little League Challengers, a program close to her heart outside of school.

Whether she's on the court or in the classroom, Graci finds joy in making connections.

"I love getting to know different people," she said.

Her kind and approachable nature is echoed in how her friends describe her: Kind, Happy and Carefree.

Graci's admiration for her mother runs deep.

"She's always there for me. She

would do anything to make me feel loved and supported," she said.

That same strength was reflected in Graci's own perseverance—she's most proud of coming back strong from an ACL injury, refusing to let the setback define her.

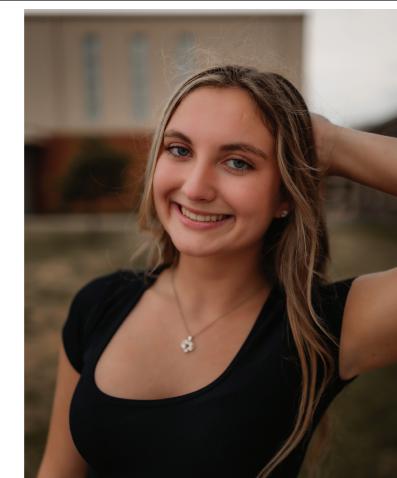
Her favorite May Fete memory? The fun and creativity of the maypole dance to "Ghostbusters."

This year, she's especially excited to see the teacher dance—a beloved highlight of the celebration.

After graduation, Graci will attend the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, where she plans to pursue a career in Speech-Language Pathology, with hopes of specializing in pediatrics. Her passion for helping others and love for children make this career path a natural fit.

Her advice to younger students is simple but impactful: "Get involved in as much as you can and always stay true to yourself."

And here's a fun fact that might surprise you—Graci can say the ABCs backwards!



Graci Watson

For Piper Mitchell, being named to the 2025 May Fete Court is more than a title—it's a meaningful moment of recognition.

"My first emotion was gratitude,"

she said. "I couldn't believe there were so many girls who felt I was kind and deserving enough. I'm so thankful to those who saw goodness in me." To Piper, May Fete is more than an event—it's about being a role mod-el.

"You're one of the big kids little girls look up to. It's an honor to be that person in someone's life."

A talented artist and performer, Piper has filled her high school years with rich experiences in the arts and academics. She's a proud member of National Honor Society, Tri-M Music Honors Society, Drama, Band, Elite Harmony, Choir, Beacon Brigade, Art Club and ACES. Her passion for creativity has led her to countless hours of performing and crafting memories on stage.

"Drama is like a big family that also happens to sing and dance," she said. "I've always known I could count on that "He sacrifices so much and still finds time to be there. I admire that more than I can say," she said.

She's also proud of her personal academic journey. Piper is currently the valedictorian of her class—an accomplishment born from years of dedication. She also recently earned first place in English at the ACES regional competition, a category with fierce competition.

"I didn't expect to win, but I found myself beaming," she said.

Her friends describe her as honest, ambitious and creative—a fitting trio for someone with such vision and heart.

Her favorite May Fete memory is from childhood, watching the sparkling dresses with wide-eyed excitement alongside her cousins.



#### community."

Outside of school, Piper continues to shine. She's a familiar face in Paris Community Theater productions each summer, a dedicated reader, an avid crafter and a repeat traveler to Walt Disney World, where she finds magic and inspiration. Piper looks up to her dad, who balances long-distance work with unwavering support for her performances. "Now I understand that May Fete is about celebrating one another. I can't wait to walk alongside some of the most wonderful women I've ever known,"she said. After graduation, Piper plans to attend Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, where she will study radiology, specializing in MRI/CT technology, with a minor in theater. She dreams of moving to Florida and continuing to blend science with artistry.







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When Brysen Huie found out she had been selected for the 2025 May Fete Court, she was completely taken by surprise.

"I wasn't expecting it at all," she said, "but I felt super honored that I got the opportunity."

Throughout high school, Bry-

sen has been involved in cheer-

leading, the prom committee and

has danced in May Fete all three

years. Outside of school, she loves

to read books and listen to music,

finding comfort and creativity in

Among her many accomplish-

ments, one stands out right now:

she recently passed her CNA exam

and is now officially licensed—a

major step toward her future ca-

reer in healthcare. After gradua-

tion, she plans to attend Illinois

State University to study Nursing.

Her mom is her biggest inspi-

"She's my best friend, and every-

thing I have in life is thanks to her,"

on the court is extra special for her—"I've always been so excited for my own May Fete, and

dition!"

her quiet time.

ration.

66 LIVE IN THE MOMENT! TIME MOVES FAST, AND **TAKING IT FOR GRANT-**ED IS SOMETHING YOU'LL REGRET."

she shared. "Even as a single mom, she always did everything for my brother and me. She was strong through her toughest times, and I admire that so much."

Her friends would describe her as bubbly, outgoing and emotion-

> al, and her favorite May Fete tradition is watching the May Pole. "It's so

beautiful to see all the colors weave together and everyone dancing-it's

now that I'm part of it, it just feels something I really look forward amazing. It's such a beautiful trato," she said.

> If she could offer one piece of advice to younger students, it would be this: "Live in the moment! Time moves so fast, and taking it for granted is something you'll regret."

> And one fun fact many people don't know?

base in Missour i — a unique detail in her story that reflects her strong n d a grounded nature.



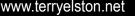




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When Claire Kirby learned she'd been selected for the 2025 May Fete Court, she was overwhelmed with excitement.

"It meant a lot to me that I would even be considered," she said.

For her, May Fete is about more than just tradition—it's about kindness, community and connection.

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CHOOSE QUALITY

**OVER QUANTITY** 

WHEN IT COMES

TO FRIENDS."

"It's a recognition of being thoughtful and a good person, which makes this such an honor," she

said.

A dedicated student and vibrant community member, she's been deeply involved throughout high school in Key Club, Interact Club, National Honor Society, Powderpuff, Drama, Tennis, Cheerleading and of course, May Fete.

She's just as committed outside the classroom, volunteering for events like the Kiwanis pancake tent, Trunk or Treat, Challengers League, Faith in Action Spaghetti Dinner and many more.

"I love giving back, and I plan to keep volunteering even after high school," she said.

Some of her favorite personal

hobbies include baking and reading, and she has a unique love for classic pop and jazz music—a charming and unexpected passion.

Her most cherished May Fete memory is being a flower girl in first grade, a moment she describes as "one of my best memories."

This fall, she will attend Saint

Mary-ofthe-Woods College on the Saint Mother Theodore Scholarship, which covers full tuition. She plans

She plans to study Nursing, with the goal of becoming a Nurse Practitioner specializing in Women's Health, all while continuing her cheerleading career at SMWC.

She credits her mom as her biggest inspiration.

"She's loyal, thoughtful and always has my back. I aspire to be just like her," she said.

Her friends would describe her as loyal, thoughtful and kind-hearted, and if she could pass on one piece of advice, it would be this: "Choose quality over quantity when it comes to friends."



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