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From Art to Advocacy

For most people, a migraine is a temporary headache. For Madeira High School Class of 2026 graduate Isabella Sammut, chronic migraines have been a part of daily life since she was just eleven years old. What began as a personal struggle eventually became a source of purpose.

Seeking a way to process the physical pain and emotional challenges that accompanied her condition, Isabella turned to art. With the encouragement of Madeira High School art teacher Jill Dulgeroff, she began creating pieces that reflected her experiences living with chronic migraines. Through her artwork, Isabella found a voice—not only to tell her own story, but also to help others better understand a condition that is often misunderstood and invisible to those around them.

"Isabella has truly found her voice, navigating the physical and emotional challenges of chronic migraines through her work," said Dulgeroff. "Rather than letting these obstacles define or limit her, she has transformed them into a source of creative strength. Her artwork not only shares her journey but also shines a light on the experiences of countless others facing similar struggles." What started as artistic expression soon evolved into advocacy.

Today, Isabella serves as an advocate for the Alliance for Headache Disorders Advocacy (AHDA), a national organization dedicated to raising awareness, increasing research funding, and advancing public policies that improve the lives of individuals living with headache disorders. Through AHDA, Isabella has shared her story with state and federal lawmakers, advocated for legislation such as the HEADACHE Act, testified before the Ohio House Insurance Committee regarding insurance barriers to treatment, and traveled to Washington, D.C., to meet with legislators. Her willingness to speak openly about her experiences has helped turn personal hardship into meaningful change for others.

That advocacy, combined with her artistic talent, recently led to a remarkable opportunity. Through connections she developed within the migraine advocacy community, Isabella was invited to have one of her original pieces featured on the cover of the May/June 2026 issue of *Practical Neurology*, a nationally recognized scientific journal. The artwork—a striking close-up portrait depicting her hand pressed against her forehead—captures the reality of living with chronic migraine and serves as a powerful visual representation of her journey.

"I'm passionate about advocating for more research and better access to treatments in pediatrics," Isabella said. "AHDA is why I chose to major in neuroscience on the pre-law track. I want to continue advocating for healthcare equity in America with scientific and legal expertise, in addition to my perspective as a patient."

As she prepares to attend Loyola University Chicago, Isabella carries with her the same determination that transformed pain into purpose. Whether through art, science, or advocacy, she hopes to continue helping others find understanding, support, and hope. For Isabella Sammut, a challenge that once felt deeply personal has become an opportunity to make a difference far beyond herself.

*Pictured right: Isabella's
art on the cover of
Practical Neurology.
Far right: Isabella Sammut.*

