

Daniel Ninth Student Competes with USA Basketball Team in Italy



Elizabeth Allanach, a freshman at Daniel Ninth Grade Center, recently traveled to Reggio Emilia, Italy, as a Youth Ambassador and a member of Team USA Basketball to compete in the Giochi Tricolore Sports Games. Elizabeth and her teammates defeated both Italy and France in the medal round, and brought home Gold for Team USA.

"I love basketball and it was great to be invited to participate in the games in Italy," Allanach said. "It really was a great experience."

Allanach currently plays volleyball for the Aledo Ladycats and looks forward to representing Aledo in basketball and in track & field events as well. She plays AAU Basketball for Texas LoneStar, which is headed by Jimmy Stellato, a former AISD student teacher and coach.

The Games are held every four years in Reggio Emilia, and draw nearly 5,000 athletes from around the world. In addition to the exposure to the culture and rich history of the area itself, all athlete ambassadors were housed in an Olympic-style sports village where they interacted with athletes from more than 30 different

countries. The games create an opportunity for student athletes to appreciate the many cultural differences of others while recognizing their common bond through sport.

Through Fort Worth Sister Cities International, nearly 100 athletes and coaches from the Fort Worth area were invited to participate. Teams represented include girls' basketball and volleyball, swimming, and baseball. Fort Worth was the only U.S. city invited to participate in the games.

The Honorable Lucca Vecchi, mayor of Reggio Emilia who presided over the opening ceremonies, said the following, (through a translator): "Here in 1797, the National Italian flag was adopted, and the principals and values that inspire that flag are why we are here today. Sports plays a central role in bringing different people from all over the world together to be friends. Sports and culture are a permanent exchange offering a constant dialogue between people from different cultures. As you look in each other's eyes before and after the competition, you will see yourself and the dedication, discipline, sacrifice and ambition that brought you here. You are the seeds of tomorrow."

While in Italy and not competing, Team USA Basketball took in many of the sites in and around Reggio Emilia. On a trip to Florence, they visited the Galleria dell'Accademia di Firenze, where the original David, by Michelangelo is housed. Another excursion took them to Venice where they explored the Rialto Bridge and the Grand Canal via a water-taxi that the team helped to pilot.

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