

A heroine's welcome

Granbury goes all out for its very own Olympic champion

By Aman Batheja

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GRANBURY - A parade and a welcome-home ceremony. That's how Dana Vollmer thought her hometown would honor her for winning an Olympic gold medal.

Those were just a warmup.

Monday night in front of Granbury's City Hall, the 16-year-old swimmer also got the key to the city, proclamations and certificates from her school, community, county and state.

Dueling politicians bore gifts. U.S. Rep. Chet Edwards, D-Waco, gave her a flag that flew over the U.S. Capitol. State Rep. Arlene Wohlgemuth, R-Burleson, presented Vollmer a flag that flew over the state Capitol. Wohlgemuth and Edwards are opponents in the November election for the redrawn congressional District 17 that includes Granbury.

Granbury Mayor David Southern declared September Dana Vollmer Month in Granbury.

And he wasn't through.

Granbury's public pool will be renamed the Dana Vollmer Municipal Swim Center, Southern said.

"We couldn't think of a better thing to do in a permanent way to let everyone know how proud we are of our Olympian," Southern said.

The teen-ager, who actually lives in DeCordova on Lake Granbury, was mostly speechless when it was her turn during the ceremony. Her brother and mother did most of the talking.

"You've all told Dana how proud you are of her, but I just want you to know the Vollmer family is so proud to be a part of Granbury," Cathy Vollmer said.

The celebration was planned quickly last week when Vollmer returned home well before the Olympics' closing ceremony. Community groups scrambled to put together something for the parade.

Students from Crossland Intermediate School spent Monday working feverishly to get their float ready in time.

"We had glitter and glue everywhere," said Darlene Cook, a fifth-grade teacher.

Cook said students watched a tape of Vollmer's victorious performance in Athens while working on their float.

"The kids were all excited, like she had just won again," Cooks said.

Vollmer led the parade, sitting in a light blue Thunderbird convertible with her gold medal around her neck.

On Aug. 18, Vollmer swam the third leg of the U.S. women's 4x200-meter freestyle relay, helping her team to win a gold medal and to beat the world record by more than two seconds.

Vollmer also placed sixth in the women's 200-meter freestyle. Southern made a point of congratulating her on that achievement as well.



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Riding through Granbury in a parade held in her honor Monday, Dana Vollmer displays her gold medal from the Olympics.

"I believe in Beijing we'll get a gold medal out of that event," he said, referring to the 2008 Games.

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