

## Canton girl wins national title

### Erica Wu leaps to first place at Rhythmic Gymnastics Junior Olympics

#### Special to the Journal

Canton resident Erica Wu, an 8 year-old rhythmic gymnast, won first place in the all around at the Level 4 USA Compulsory Junior Olympics Championship, June 6 in Columbus, Ohio. To capture this coveted National Championship title, Erica had to beat out the top 50 gymnasts from all over the country. In the individual events, Erica took first place on Floor (9.1), first on Hoop (8.6) and second on Rope (7.8).

This National title was the perfect ending to a season full of victories for Erica. To qualify for the Junior Olympics, she placed second at Regionals, which were held in Newton in April. Before Regionals, Erica was undefeated this year, placing first at the State Meet, Coaches Cup, Boston Cup, Aviator Meet, Rhythmic Stars Invitational, and the Beachside Meet held in Florida.

Wu practices at the New England Sports Academy (NESA) and is coached by Varduhi Naphetyan. Varduhi is a three-time National Champion rhythmic gymnast from Armenia. She started NESA's rhythmic program five years ago and has built it into one of the most successful programs in the country. In addition to Erica, Varduhi also qualified nine other girls to Nationals and has produced a pair of other National Champions in her short time in the America.

#### About Erica Wu

Erica has been doing rhythmic gymnastics for almost two years.

She was born in America, but her parents are from the Canton area of China (quite a coincidence that they now reside in Canton). Her parents originally involved her in piano, which she did not enjoy. Her piano teacher suggested that perhaps her talents might be in sports not music. The Wu family visited NESA to enroll their older daughter Elizabeth in gymnastics. Little Erica came along for a trial class. The gymnastics instructor quickly noticed how exceptionally flexible Erica was and suggested that she would be better suited for rhythmic gymnastics. Erica practices three hours a day, four times per week. When she is not participating in NESA's rhythmic gymnastics program, Erica also practices Chinese dance and acrobatics. She is a second grader at Lt. Peter Hanson Elementary School in Canton.

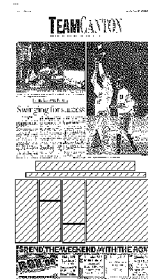
#### About Rhythmic Gymnastics

Rhythmic gymnastics is a sport in which single competitors, pairs, trios or more manipulate one or two apparatuses, including rope, hoop, ball, clubs and ribbon. It combines elements of ballet, gymnastics, theatrical dance, and apparatus manipulation. The victor is the participant who earns the most points, as awarded by a panel of judges, for leaps, balances, pivots, flexibility, apparatus handling, and artistic effect.

#### About NESA

The New England Sports Academy (NESA) is a unique, comprehensive, multi-activity sports facility for children, with over 2,000 students in numerous different

sports and activities. Headquartered in Westwood, NESA provides sports instruction, training and related activities for children of all ages, abilities and backgrounds. Programs are designed to provide children with world-class training and instruction. NESA is located at 345 University Drive in Westwood, MA.





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**Canton's Erica Wu**