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Press Release

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GYMNASTS ON TO NATIONALS

ALLEN, TX: A snowy Denver, Colorado was host to the USA Gymnastics (USAG) Level 10 Region 3 Championships the weekend of April 17-19. This competition brought together the top athletes from seven states - Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas and Wyoming. Five young women from Eagle's Wings Athletics in Allen competed in the meet, with several advancing to the Junior Olympic (JO) National Championships to be held near Seattle in May.

Jessica Howe earned an amazing 9.8 on balance beam to take first place on that event. She was also the champion on the uneven parallel bars with a score of 9.575. Jessica tied for fifth place on floor exercise (9.55) and tied for ninth place on vault (9.4) to earn a total of 38.325 and second place all-around for the Junior A age group of 28 gymnasts. She missed tying for

first place by .05. The top seven all-around athletes in each age group advance to the National competition May 15-16.

Makenzie Johnson, who competed in the Junior C division, won bronze on vault with a 9.675 and placed sixth on balance beam with a score of 9.2. She tied for eighth all-around (36.65) and was named the first alternate for the Region 3 team going to Nationals.

Nickie Guerrero, was also named to the team as second alternate, having placed ninth all-around (37.45) in the Junior A group. She tied for fourth place on vault 9.7, tied for fifth place on floor exercise (9.55), and earned seventh place on balance beam (9.5). Teammate Tia Allbritten tied with Nickie for fourth place on vault, and also earned a 9.55 on balance beam to tie for fifth place.

Junior B Casey Dreyer, also from Plano, tied for seventh place on floor exercise (9.5) and on balance beam (9.425), and earned tenth place on vault (9.425). This was her first full meet of the season due to a foot injury a few months ago.

The National Championships give athletes the opportunity to be named to the Junior Olympic National team. NCAA coaches also attend the meet to scout athletes to recruit to their colleges. This year, USAG has added a National Invitational Tournament (JO-NIT) to allow more gymnasts to be seen by the coaches. The

USAG website explains it this way. "Only 448 athletes out of the almost 1500 Level 10's competing at the State Championships level have the opportunity to qualify to the Jr. Olympic National Championships. The JO-NIT was developed to allow an additional 192 athletes an opportunity to compete at the National level.

"In many of the larger populated regions, the 8-10th ranked gymnasts achieve very high AA scores but are not able to qualify to JO Nationals. Sometimes an excellent athlete has made uncharacteristic mistakes at the Regional Championships and doesn't qualify to Nationals. This new competition will allow these excellent athletes another chance to participate on the National level.

"For the athletes who are in High School and aspiring to earn a college scholarship, this competition will also provide them with an opportunity to perform their routines for the NCAA coaches who will already be in attendance for JO Nationals."

Makenzie, Nickie and Tia will compete in the JO-NIT on Sunday May 17.

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