

# Roswell

## ROSWELL BALLET DANCER TAKES ON AMBASSADOR ROLE IN RUSSIA

By Rachel Kellogg

[rkellogg@neighbornewspapers.com](mailto:rkellogg@neighbornewspapers.com)

Roswell High School junior Alexis Collins recently returned home from Moscow where she served as an ambassador and finalist of the National Security Language Initiative for Youth programs.

Alexis, a ballet dancer, participated in the first U.S. Department of State sponsored Language, Culture and Ballet Program with renowned Bolshoi Ballet Academy, located in the capitol of Russia.

“The Bolshoi Ballet Academy is one of the oldest and most prestigious ballet companies in the world,” Alexis said. “I have been avidly following their dancers for years and consequently, learned a little about the Russian culture.”

The 16-year-old was one of only nine dancers from across the United States to be chosen to participate in the program.

“When I heard that this program not only offered an opportunity to train at the academy but also a chance to learn the language and interact with Russian citizens, it was like a dream come true.” Alexis said she was given a unique and exciting opportunity to live and interact with the people of Russia and to experience first-hand the power of language to create bonds across cultures.

“I was also able to promote a positive image of the United States and my community as well as learn more about their culture and language,” she said. “I feel like this was accomplished through not only my interactions with the Russian students from the academy but also my experiences with my host family.”

Prior to her departure for Moscow, Alexis and the other students spent three weeks in intensive ballet training in New York City as part of the Bolshoi Ballet Summer Intensive Program, now in its third year a highly-acclaimed U.S. summer youth program, organized by the Russian American Foundation.

Alexis began dancing at age 2 at Roswell’s Tolbert-Yilmaz School of Dance. She has been a student there ever since under the direction of Nancy Tolbert- Yilmaz and Mary Lynn Taylor.

“Within this studio, I am a member of the ballet company, Roswell Dance Theatre, and have been a dancer in the Pre-Professional program for six seasons,” Alexis said. The young dancer has studied with companies around the country, such as the Joffrey Ballet in New York, Kansas City Ballet and Harid Conservatory. Alexis said she hopes to return to Moscow to visit the academy, and in the meantime she is looking to enroll in a Russian language course.