

## HARD WORK EARNS DANCER A SUMMER WITH BOLSHOI BALLET

Point Loma High student wins scholarship for N.Y., Moscow studies

*By Lisa Deaderick, News assistant - Listings  
Thursday, June 16, 2011 at midnight*



*Margo van den Helder*

Although Margo van den Helder has been taking ballet since she was 3 years old, she didn't get serious about it until a few years ago when she began working with a new ballet teacher.

"She was Russian and she really pushed me," said Margo, now 15 and a freshman at Point Loma High School. That led to her participation in a ballet competition. "That really opened my eyes to the world outside of San Diego and other dancers around the world. And that motivated me and I started working harder and seeing how I could improve. I liked the new work ethic that my teacher showed me." That new work ethic contributed to Margo being selected as one of 16 recipients from across the country of a full scholarship for the National Security Language Initiative for Youth program this summer.

The program is funded by the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. It provides merit-based scholarships to qualified high school students to learn foreign languages and cultures that aren't taught as commonly as others. The nine-week program through the Russian American Foundation and the Bolshoi Ballet Academy will allow Margo to train with the academy in New York City and Moscow and also study Russian language, history, arts and culture. Margo is a previous participant in the Bolshoi's summer program in New York, which has added to her excitement for this new program.

"One of my goals in life is to be bilingual. I think that'd be awesome, so this gave me a chance to do that. And then, obviously, going to another country and experiencing something so different from what I experience every day," she said. "And also the chance to dance at the Bolshoi Academy in Moscow. Some of my favorite dancers all train there, so it would be cool to train in the same room that they were in."

Margo loves dance because it allows her to express herself through movement and because "I just have this sense of freedom because I can let go and do things that I would never do on the streets." This summer, she's hoping to not only learn another language, but also to learn about herself by being so far from home. "I also hope that when I come back here, I'll be able to somehow put what I've learned and what I've experienced to good use," she said.