

# Martinez receives All-American recognition



## Feel-Good STORY

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Marlina Martinez, a seventh-grader at Claggett Creek Middle School, was the only softball player from the Salem-Keizer area that was selected to compete in the 12U All-American games.

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After watching her sister, Ali, participate in an All-American tournament in 2019, Marlina Martinez got the opportunity to participate in the event two years later.

Martinez, a seventh-grader at Claggett Creek Middle School, was the only player from the Salem-Keizer region that was selected to play in the 12U USA Softball All-American Games at the National Softball Hall of Fame Complex in Oklahoma City, Okla., which took place Aug. 13-15.

“When (Ali) first went, I knew that I wanted to come back and play on that field. I was really happy I made it. I worked really hard to get there and I was very excited to go,” Martinez said. “Being on the field and actually experiencing it all was the best part. Seeing all the different talent was incredible.”

The tryout for the Region 9 team

featured over 100 players from Oregon, Washington, Montana, Alaska and Utah. In the end, 30 girls were selected to form two teams, and Martinez was thrilled when she discovered that she was getting the chance to follow in her sister's footsteps.

“It felt like all my work had paid off. But I know that I have to keep working to get better,” Martinez said.

Martinez feels like she has grown a lot as a softball player over the last couple years, and credits Ali — who was one of the best players on the McNary varsity squad last season as a freshman — with helping her get better.

“Sometimes, she will see something that my dad doesn't see and she will help me with improving,” Martinez said. “We practice with each other a lot.”

“They are never practicing alone. They are always practicing together,” added Martinez's mom MandaJean. “It

is amazing how far Marlina has come at such a young age.”

In order to make the trip, the Martinez family spent months fundraising for the trip, holding yard sales, collecting pop cans and selling enchilada and tamale plates to people.

“A lot of friends and family from the community brought us a ton of stuff so that we could have a big yard sale. Keizer always helps us and gives us a lot of support,” MandaJean said. “We couldn't do it alone. It is nice to see how much support we get. It really means a lot. That is why we are big about thanking Keizer, because if it wasn't for everyone's support and help on this, we wouldn't be able to do it as a family.”

Martinez played shortstop, third and second base over the long weekend and helped her Region 9 team to a 1-2-1 record over four games — they won their opening game 11-2, making it the first time in five years a Region 9 team

was victorious in their opening game.

Martinez was most proud that she didn't make an error in the infield.

“I played really well in the field,” Martinez said.

Martinez got the opportunity to play with four of her travel ball teammates from the 14U NW Vandals squad, but one of her favorite parts of the trip was being able to meet and connect with players from different areas.

“I got to know all my (Region 9) teammates from everywhere. I still talk a lot to some of the girls from Alaska and Montana,” Martinez said.

Despite being only 12 years old, Martinez has some big aspirations for her future in softball.

“I want to play in college someday. I don't know which one, but I am going to start looking into that,” Martinez said. “And when I get to McNary, I want to be on varsity, so I can play with my sister.”

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