

# Southeast View, Southwest View & Green Valley View

Oct. 17, 2006

## Girl starts career on patriotic note

*10-year-old sings on sporting event circuit*

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Ellie Smith fans out her fingers, singing the final notes to "The Star Spangled Banner."

At 10 years old, she has already earned the nickname Star Spangled Girl for her various renditions of the national anthem at various local and regional sporting events.

Most recently, Ellie sang the anthem at the UNLV football game against the University of Nevada, Reno, on Sept. 30 at Sam Boyd Stadium. Despite the crowd of approximately 37,000, Ellie said she didn't feel anxious.

"I don't get nervous that much," she said.

Ellie said she began her singing career at age 5, but her mother said Ellie has been singing since she was an infant.

"She came out singing," said Ellie's mother, Geri Smith.

Smith said she remembers putting up Christmas decorations in her home when she heard the then-3-month-old Ellie making noises along to the melodies of the seasonal carols playing on the stereo.

Besides singing for every UNLV sports team, Ellie has performed the national anthem for the Las Vegas 51s, the Las Vegas Wranglers hockey team, the Los Angeles Dodgers and the Arizona Diamondbacks.



In addition, Ellie serves as a cantor at St. Viator Catholic Community. She attends St. Viator Elementary School as a fifth-grader.

Smith said the greatest challenge for Ellie is finding places for her to perform. She said few opportunities exist for young performers in Las Vegas. But because Ellie is 10, Smith said she is eligible to audition for many musical theater groups locally and regionally. "For two years, she's had a big voice," Smith explained. "Now we can finally audition for things."

Smith said Ellie recently signed with an agent in Los Angeles and recorded her first studio track for a CD to be handed out at hospitals for children with cancer.

Smith and her husband, Rick, said they do not want to move to California or New York, but hope more opportunities will arise in Las Vegas.

"There's very limited singing opportunities here," Geri said.

Rick said most of the performances in Las Vegas are geared toward adults. "We want to be able to find more opportunities here," he said.

Ellie currently has three vocal coaches, each specializing in a certain aspect of singing. She works with Frank La Spina for breathing; Lisa Fairweather for bel canto method, staging and song meaning; and Cheri Scott for church songs.

Fairweather, who has been working with Ellie for several months, said Ellie's talent blows her away. "It's not just her singing ability, it's her performance ability. She has absolutely no fear," Fairweather said.

She said Ellie's talent and stage presence come naturally. "I see a star in her. Also, she is a true professional, no matter what the circumstances are," she said.

Ellie said she would like to perform in the future as she becomes an adult. "I'd like to go to Broadway (and) Hollywood," she said.

Ellie said she admires Barbra Streisand and Celine Dion.

Her father said that despite Ellie's busy schedule, the family works together to balance her after-school and weekend activities.

"She's an A honor student," he said. "School is a priority."

Geri said Ellie doesn't let her talent get to her head. "She's a normal 10-year-old," she said.

More information on Ellie, including clips, can be found at [www.hearelliesing.com](http://www.hearelliesing.com).