

Big Apple Experience

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
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Swede cheerleaders march in NYC parade.

While most people were waking up to the smell of roasting turkey, Swede cheerleaders Carlin Daharsh and Kennedy Wahlgren were freezing in New York City on Thanksgiving Day.

“It was so cold our bones hurt,” Wahlgren said, noting that the wind whipped through the tall buildings they passed.

The Gothenburg High School seniors marched in the 87th annual Macy’s Day Thanksgiving parade with 648 other cheerleaders who were part of Universal Cheerleaders Association Cheer and Spirit of America productions.

Wahlgren and Daharsh and the other cheerleaders waited for four early-morning hours by Central Park for their turn to join the parade as the wind chill hovered around 14 degrees.

Once they started walking and cheering for an hour and covering 2 miles, conditions improved but not much as they were shaded by towering structures, they said.

Upon their arrival at Macy’s Herald Square, the country’s largest department store, the group performed a minute and a half dance routine which was captured for only 20 seconds for television viewers.

Daharsh noted that the theme “Superheroes” was reflected in the dance that contained four songs mixed together.

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She and Wahlgren said they were frustrated with the limited air time after cheerleaders practiced the routine for several hours nearly every day they were there.

In fact, Daharsh said they had no music when they first started rehearsing the routine in the ballroom of the New York Hilton Midtown hotel.

“They counted and drilled the dance in our heads because they wanted it sharp and crisp,” she said.

Besides practice, the group had several sightseeing opportunities.



A highlight for both Daharsh and Wahlgren was seeing two Broadway shows—“Newsies” and “Cinderella.”

Daharsh said it was also fun seeing all of the people in the parade and those watching it from the street.

For Wahlgren, a high point was having her family in the city at the same time although she didn’t spend time with them for the first few days.

Several hours after the parade, the Wahlgren family, Daharsh and local cheerleader sponsor Chantelle Krepcik met for Thanksgiving dinner at a diner called Lindy’s.

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“We all said what we were thankful for and I said that my family could afford to come,” Wahlgren said. “They made it a vacation rather than a thing I went off and did.

“It was nice to make memories with them.”

Wahlgren and Daharsh also enjoyed shopping along Canal Street, a bustling commercial district crowded with low-rent open storefronts and low-priced goods.

“It was eye-opening to know such a place exists,” Daharsh said.

She said she also noticed how New Yorkers from all socioeconomic backgrounds walk along streets.

“I liked the feeling of not knowing everyone,” Daharsh said.

What was most surprising to Daharsh was how expensive meals were, noting that dinner one night cost \$30.

Wahlgren said she learned about a different style of living in NYC and depending on other people and transportation like the subway to get to places.

The girls traveled to New York City on Nov. 23 and returned home Nov. 29

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