



# Prepping for the mane event

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VALPARAISO | Barack Obama will have a pretty big day on Jan. 20.

So will Sam Costas.

Atop her horse "Rambo," the Valparaiso resident and senior at Culver Girls Academy will lead her school's equestrian team in the inaugural parade honoring the new president.

"I'm so excited," said Costas, who is the 18-year-old niece of Mayor Jon Costas and the daughter of Jay and Cheryl Costas. "We've looked forward to this since our freshman year."

As co-captain of the team, Costas will be calling out commands along Pennsylvania Avenue to the 16 riders of the Equestriennes.

The team will ride with the 80 members of the Black Horse Troop of Culver Military Academy, which first took part in presidential inaugurations with those of Woodrow Wilson in 1913 and 1917.

The Culver contingent, from the paired college preparatory schools in Culver, Ind., is one of only 49 invitees in the inaugural parade from among thousands of applicants.

Two other local members of the Equestriennes will ride in Obama's parade: Nina Karas, of Chesterton, and Kim Asenbeck, of Valparaiso.

During an upcoming practice, the team will ride by rows of yelling and screaming students -- with a few sirens thrown in -- to acclimate the horses to all the noise they will hear along the parade route.

Sam's parents, brother David and sister Calli plan to travel to the capital to witness her role in the inauguration. They will stay at, and watch the parade from, the historic Willard Hotel, two blocks from the White House on Pennsylvania Avenue.

Costas, who worked long and hard to earn a spot as a member of the Culver boys wrestling team, will miss a meet on Inauguration Day, but obviously the choice of events that day was an easy one.

She's especially pleased to be riding in the inauguration of the man for whom she cast her first presidential vote.

"I'm definitely a supporter of Barack Obama," she said. "It's an honor to be invited to the parade."

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