

Dragging by mom pays off for Dakota

Lady Tiger makes it official as she signs hoops scholarship with Olivet

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Shy now and shyer then, Dakota Hack couldn't bring herself to walk into the first session of a youth basketball program for which she registered while in fifth grade.

"I had to drag her in. Jim Thompson saw me dragging her and he remembers it," mom Debbie Hack said Thursday afternoon in the Princeton Community High School library.

That's where 17-year-old senior Dakota Hack signed basketball scholarship papers with Olivet Nazarene University, an NAIA Division I school in Bourbonnais, Ill., about 55 miles south of Chicago.

Hack, 6-foot center and forward who averaged 7.3 points and 7 rebounds for the Lady Tigers last season, announced her decision in the *Daily Clarion's* Sept. 23 edition. All Princeton basketball girls attended Thursday's signing, along with those who have been instrumental in the signee's basketball development.

"Dakota's best basketball is ahead," said Thompson, the Lady Tigers' head

coach

"In college she'll have opportunity to play on the perimeter. We've had to play her inside. She has played outside in travel basketball. She's physically strong and has worked hard on her game at all levels."

Hack, who academically plans to major in "something in the environment or physical therapy," expressed happiness as "happy that so many people who have helped me along the way can be here today."

"Jeffrey Wilkerson and Jesse Watkins are my trainers at the Evansville Basketball Academy," Hack said, noting two of Thursday's attendees.

"I thank mom and my grandparents, Ben and Marlane Bryant and Clyde Doyle. Coach Thompson has been my coach since fifth grade when I played in the Salvation Army League. Ron Hudson (Lady Tigers assistant coach) also coached me in that league." Olivet Nazarene coach Doug Porter, who through 30 seasons has guided women's teams to 275 wins around 198 losses, said Hack is his first 2010-2011 recruit.

"We look for Division I



Photo by Garry Taylor

Princeton Community senior Dakota Hack signs Olivet Nazarene basketball scholarship papers Thursday afternoon in the high school library. Mom Debbie Hack and Princeton coach Jim Thompson flank the signee. Olivet Nazarene coach Doug Porter oversees the signing.

(NCAA) caliber athletes," Porter said. "Dakota received Division I offer and has the ability to play at that level."

"On video she showed good scoring touch around the basket and the ability to shoot outside."

"We also saw the athleticism that it takes to play our running style."

Olivet Nazarene's Lady

Tigers averaged 104 points two seasons ago and 98 last season. "We've played this way the last six years," Porter said.

"I think this style helps develop players' ability."

"Since Dakota is a hard worker, I'm sure she'll be fit and ready for our style."

Hack is the first Princeton basketball girl since 2003 grad Jessica Williams

to sign basketball scholarship papers with a four-year college. No coincidence.

"Jessica took her to the University of Evansville camp when Dakota was a fifth or sixth grader," said Debbie Camp, an analyst with Evansville's Shoe Carnival franchise.

"One of the coaches at the camp told Jessica that

Dakota needed to get on a quality travel team. We found the Indiana Flight, based in Indianapolis.

"Our vacations have been basketball trips, including going to Indianapolis two weekends a month."

In a way, the scholarship money invested in Hack is turnabout. She currently is on the ballot in a Pepsifresh.com program, where the top 10 votegetters earn a \$50,000 grant for a public service program they started.

Hack conceived a program, begun the past summer, in which lunches are served in Lafayette Park to youths 18 and younger.

Administered through her New Life Church of the Nazarene, and funded by grants from the Indiana Dept. of Education and the United States Dept. of Agriculture, free meals are served on Monday and Wednesday.

Princeton Parks & Recreation director Dan Beard made a Lafayette Park shelter house available, Stan Mason brought a grill and Rick Simmons and son Jordan supplied groceries.

If Hack is among the \$50,000 winners, the money will be used to buy a mobile kitchen complete with ovens and a refrigerator so that youths can be fed five days a week.