

COMMENTARY

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MARGHERITA BELGIOCO

Through An Artist's Eye

BY JONATHAN KANE

Margherita Belgioco has many passions, including painting, fashion, tennis, piano and astronomy. The Italian exchange student arrived in the Wood River Valley on Aug. 27, 2016, and will say her goodbyes on Feb. 4.

At Wood River High School, Margherita has carried an ambitious academic course load, including precalculus, U.S. history, French 7, Advanced Placement Physics and Language and Composition, art and botany.

From Bologna, Italy—a sophisticated and ancient mid-sized city—Belgioco applied for an exchange program, but had no say over her destination.

“A family chose me,” she said. “I could have gone anywhere. That’s the fun part.

“You can do everything and anything in Bologna,” Margherita said. “The point is having time. Sometimes it can be boring because you are doing the same things over and over, so I wanted to come to the U.S. and have a different life.

“I was a little scared when I found out I was going to Idaho. It’s small and there are not a lot of opportunities, but the place doesn’t matter—it’s the people.”

Living in the mountains wasn’t the issue; every year Margherita goes to Austria to hike and ski.

“It was going to be a new experience, so I just decided to get my act together and make the best of it. I knew there would be things to overcome, so I prepared myself psychologically. Making friends turned out to be a little difficult.”

To Margherita, Italians are much more open.

“We like to hug and kiss,” she said with a laugh. “People here are



Italian exchange student Margherita Belgioco. Photo courtesy of Margherita Belgioco

more closed and can be a little cold, so it’s difficult to get to know them and build relationships.”

But she is primarily a city girl.

“At first I didn’t like it, but now I love it here,” she said. “It’s so quiet and peaceful, like taking a breath of fresh air. It’s a total change of life and that’s what I wanted. Now I have many friends and I’ve made strong ties and I love my host family.”

The beauty of the late summer and fall won her over, too.

“It was amazing—like a painting. I was able to take a lot of photographs.”

Margherita also loves to paint and was able to pursue that passion while she was here.

“I’ve always painted, beginning in elementary school. I was the girl that the teacher asked to make posters.”

Margherita started with hand paints and crayons and then moved into building pieces and painting them.

“Today, I’m into landscapes and whatever I feel like painting. With landscapes, I like the details and like to challenge myself. I’ll paint and then I’ll add to it. It’s all about where to add and to make the painting richer.”

Recently, she painted a landscape that now hangs in the high school.

“It was the hardest and most challenging [art project] of my life. It took at least a month longer than usual. I used acrylic paint and painted an Idaho landscape. It’s a painting that I will always cherish.”

As she does her time in the U.S.

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