



U.S. Olympic snowboarder Gretchen Bleiler, in the halfpipe event in which she took silver in 2006, grew up in Oakwood. She tries for another medal this week in Vancouver.

Associated Press

A sweet homecoming

Gretchen Bleiler stays in touch with Oakwood

By Tom Archdeacon
Staff Writer

OAKWOOD — The limo pulled up to Ashley's Pastry Shop some nine months ago and a young woman got out of the back and hurried inside, looking not so much for her favorite cookies and pie as she was a sweet slice of her past.

"Gretchen," beamed Theresa Hammons, who owns the shop with husband Greg.

"You remember me?" gushed Gretchen Bleiler.

Recounting that meeting, Hammons smiled: "I said, 'Well, it helps that you won a silver medal at the Olympics and you've been on all the magazine covers.'"

Then, too, Hammons had not forgotten the last time the two had spoken. Now 28, Bleiler was just 10 years old.

"She came in the shop and said, 'Miss Theresa, I'm moving to Colorado 'cause I'm going to be in the Olympics one day.'"

This Thursday, Feb. 18, Bleiler — one of the most accomplished, photographed and diverse women athletes in the country (she's also a clothing designer, sports promoter and environmentalist) — is favored to medal in the snowboard halfpipe at the Vancouver Winter Olympics, which she did at the Turin Games four years ago.

Bleiler spent her first 10 years



Gretchen Bleiler gave this autographed copy of ESPN the Magazine to Theresa Hammons, who owns Ashley's Pastry Shop. Staff photo by Jim Witmer

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in Oakwood, where her mom, Robin Gorog, graduated from Oakwood High and her granddad, the late Bill Gorog, was the founder of LexisNexis.

When her parents split up, Gretchen moved with her three brothers and mom to Aspen.

"She was in Cincinnati doing some work for Procter & Gamble and before going back to Aspen, she wanted to take a trip down memory lane," Hammons said.

"She went past her old house, Harman School and then stopped in here — just like when she was a little girl. When she left, she took along some of her favorite treats."

A couple of days later, Hammons received a package from Bleiler, who had penned a message on the 2008 ESPN the Magazine cover she had appeared on:

"To Theresa ... I've been all over the world and I've never found a bakery that even compares to Ashley's. Thanks for the delicacies ... Gretchen Bleiler."

That autographed cover now stands on the counter at the popular Park Avenue shop.

"A few weeks ago I'm flipping through TV stations and I see Gretchen win gold again at the X Games," Hammons said.

"And so I sent her another box of treats and she responded again."

This week Hammons will take down the Valentine's Day decor and decorate her shop with an Olympics theme.

There will be ice skating and snowboarding cookies in the display cases. There'll also be a hometown message to savor coming out of Vancouver:

"Gretchen is proof — dreams do happen."