

## MET supervisor ready to shine in 2017 Summer Deaflympics

We all know that our associates shine every day in the aisles of our stores and in our communities. One associate is getting ready to shine brightly in a totally different but equally demanding role. Next year, Jennifer Haag, Merchandising Execution Team (MET) supervisor at Store 1072 in East Brea, California, will be competing in the 23rd Summer Deaflympics Games in Turkey as point guard for the USA Women's Basketball Team.

Jennifer has never let her deafness slow her down. Her diagnosis came when she was just 3 years old and her daycare teachers noticed she didn't acknowledge the bell ringing at the end of recess like the other children. "That was a tough year for my parents," Jennifer said. "They found out my younger brother would need a wheelchair. Then, during my hearing test, they learned that both of us are deaf."

Although her family faced challenges, Jennifer fell in love with basketball. She picked up the game quickly and played in middle school, high school and college. In 2005, with the help of her college coach, Sandy Simpson, she received her first invite to try out for the Deaflympics.

Jennifer wears hearing aids, but in the Deaflympics, athletes are required to play without them to establish an even playing field. After making the team, Jennifer faced another challenge – she had never learned sign language. Fortunately, her teammates introduced her to a new way of communicating that strengthened her skills on and off the court.

Jennifer joined THD in 2010. "What I've learned from basketball over the years, I've carried over to my MET supervisor role," she said. "I've received tremendous support from everyone in the Company, including MET Vice President Tim Wilkerson, District Execution Manager Beatriz Gonzalez and my incredible team. I am truly honored."

The USA Deaf Sports Federation, a nonprofit organization, sends USA athletes and coaches to the Deaflympics and requires them to raise \$4,500. To raise funds and reach her fundraising goal, Jennifer's team will make and sell bracelets.

Jennifer's story is inspiring other deaf associates to excel in everything they do. "I've had coaches doubt me because I'm deaf," Jennifer said. "Never let your deafness stop you from pursuing your dreams." View the image gallery at right to see Jennifer in action on the court and wearing her many medals.

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