

# Grant-ing a dream

Young gymnast on road to success

by Terron Hampton  
Staff Writer

Eleven-year-old Ebone Grant said that she lives by five words: persistence, perseverance, patience, courage and faith.

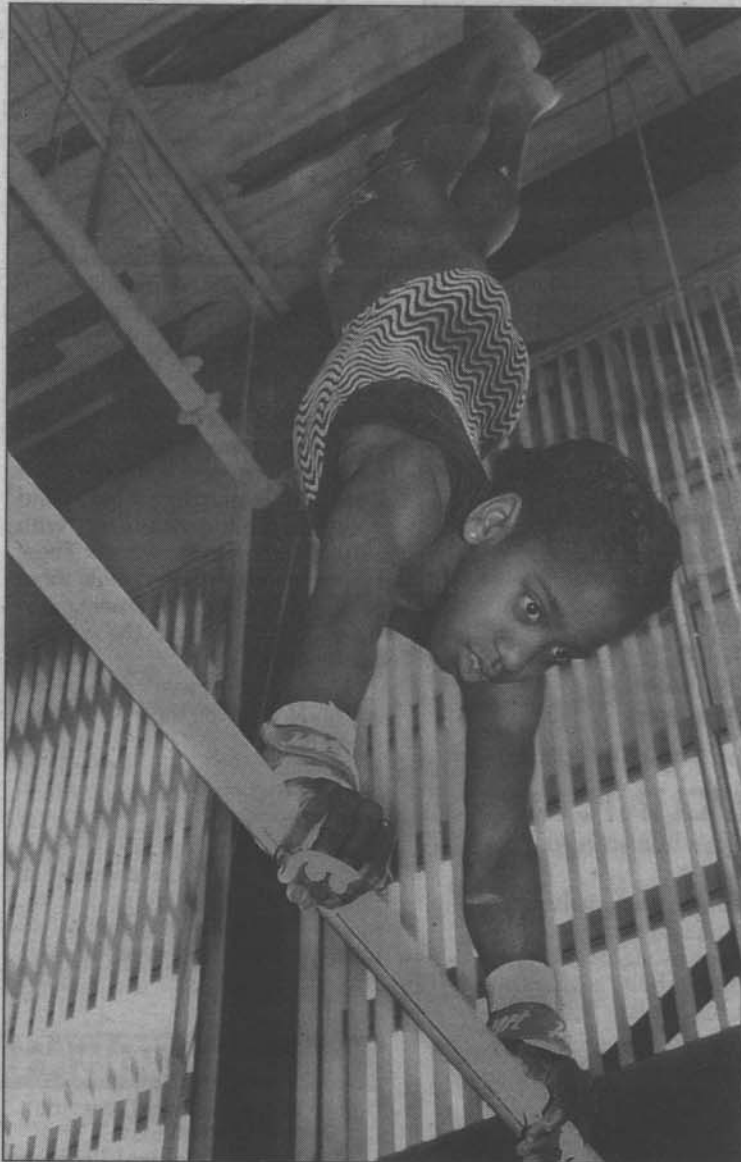
Grant, a Silver Spring resident, had to write a thesis on those words in order to earn her first-degree black belt in Kung Fu. But it is in her career as a gymnast that the credo has served her best. Without persistence, perseverance, patience, courage and faith, what Grant accomplished earlier this month may not have been possible.

Grant, who trains at the Fairland Sports Complex in Laurel, earned the Level 8 United States Gymnastics Association Region 7 all-around championship May 3 at the West Virginia Gymnastics Training Center in Morgantown, W.Va. Grant beat out a field of gymnasts from Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, Delaware, Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

She won top honors in the all-around competition, which includes all four events: vault, uneven bars, balance beam and floor exercise. She also placed first in the individual vault competition.

In the last six years of training, Grant has overcome her own fears. When she was five, she had difficulty mastering a skill essential to competing in the uneven bars. Grant, who carries a short body packed with visibly powerful arms and legs, could not make the jump from the low bar to the high bar.

"I was scared," Grant said of conquering the uneven bars. "It was really scary for me because I'm so short and I didn't think I could make it. I had to stay back



Bryan Haynes/The Gazette

**Ebone Grant, 11, of Silver Spring practices the uneven bars at the Fairland Sports and Aquatics Center in Laurel. Grant recently won a Level 8 regional title in the all-around competition.**

[in development] a year because I had trouble making the jump."

The situation became so serious that Grant's mother, Sheila, considered withdrawing her from the Fairland gymnastics program.

Grant had the skills to continue advancing in gymnastics, but had difficulty making the literal "jump" to the next level.

See **Grant**, page A-39

## GRANT

Continued from A-37

She persisted and eventually made the jump, which she now performs effortlessly. At the breaking point, where Grant was either going to have to make the jump or withdraw from the program, she knew what had to be done.

"I had to just do it," Grant said during a break from practice Monday afternoon. "Usually, I just have to go for it because if you don't, you can hurt yourself. You just have to get it."

Ping Wang, head trainer at Fairland, was also uncertain of Grant's future in gymnastics.

"She scared me," Wang said. "It's mental with her. She's a pretty fast learner. She has to learn to get past her fear when she learns a new skill."

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Grant hopes to ascend to level 9 status and have a chance to compete in the USGA East regional competition next year, an event where she will have broader competition that spans along the Eastern portion of the country.

Grant said she uses the lessons that she learned while studying Kung Fu at Bam's Kung Fu Academy in Laurel, taught by world-renowned martial artist Will "Bam" Johnson, to excel in gymnastics. She said she also hopes to one day reach the status of Olympic champion gymnast Dominique Dawes, also a Silver Spring product.