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[Oyer finds true love on the court](#)

By Nate Beutel [Niagara Gazette](#)

Volleyball helped bring Jessica Oyer and Andrew Carll together and now it's keeping the engaged couple closely connected.

Oyer is a sophomore standout for the nationally ranked Niagara County Community College women's volleyball squad, while L. Cpl. Carll is deployed as a member of the 22nd MEU on the USS Whidbey Island.

The duo met playing recreational volleyball at Trinity United Methodist Church on Grand Island in late 2009 and soon after began dating. Both had been spikers in high school, Oyer at GI and Carll at North Tonawanda.

In March 2010, Carll started boot camp and followed that up with infantry school. Mixed in were just a few short trips home for holidays and special occasions, but during Oyer's visit to North Carolina in Jan. 2011, Carll proposed and Oyer accepted. Soon after, he was deployed, often leaving words as the couple's only lines of communication.

"It's been tough not having him here, but we make it work the best we can with letters, emails and phone calls when we can," Oyer said.

In a recent email exchange, Oyer told Carll that the Thunderwolves had a 14-0 record — the same mark that the Lumberjacks had when Carll was a senior — and were playing very well. In competitive fashion he responded: "stop winning, you're making me look bad."

As Oyer noted in a follow-up email on Monday, NCCC is now 20-0. According to NCCC coach Joe Daigler, Oyer's leadership is a big reason for the team's splendid start.

"Jess is a little older than most of the girls and she brings that sense of leadership and maturity to our team," he said. "And what she's going through with her fiance also shows that she is a leader. The way she handles her volleyball career and personal life is tremendous."

That is the same way Oyer describes her decision to transfer to NCCC after a year at Daemen College. The Sanborn junior college was a much more affordable option for Oyer as she determined what her future held. It also gave her the opportunity to play volleyball, a sport she had played and loved since she was a youngster.

Oyer joined the team last fall and quickly emerged along with fellow freshman Jessica

Crooks as one of the team's top players. But a lack of depth kept the Thunderwolves from advancing in postseason play.

This year, though, the T-Wolves are loaded with talent, allowing Oyer to pick her spots and be much more confident in her approaches as an outside hitter.

"She's having a much better year because the pressure is off her," Daigler said, while noting that Oyer was named MVP of the Thunderwolves Tournament and Region III Player of the Week earlier this season.

Oyer, never one to take in the personal glory, said she's just hoping her team can find it in them to continue this unbeaten stretch, win both the WNYAC and Region III Tournaments and make the NJCAA Division III Tournament.

"I feel like this team can get to Nationals," she said. "We're a team and we work hard. It's definitely our goal to push through the rest of this month right into Nationals and hopefully win Nationals."

Oyer will graduate from NCCC in December, but plans to continue taking classes there until May. At that time she hopes to move to North Carolina and enroll at UNC-Charlotte to finish veterinarian school and be closer to Carll's home base.

