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McKenzie: A Chance Of A Lifetime

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McKenzie: A Chance Of A Lifetime

*By Annabeth Miller,
ShowMe Times Editor*

When you first meet McKenzie Mitchell you see a typical teenage young woman: starting her senior year in high school, excited about cheerleading competition, a vigorous and important part of the varsity volleyball squad, in the stands cheering her team on to victory on Friday nights, active in church and community groups, has a good time with her friends. If you would ask McKenzie to write the typical essay, “What I Did For Summer Vacation,” you would then see something special and unique.

Since she was a young girl, McKenzie has shined in front of a camera, and she always dreamed of modeling professionally. She has had incredible opportunities – such as being on the cover of a brochure for Busch Gardens, on billboards, in specialty clothing catalogs and other ventures. As a teen, those opportunities expanded to a much larger stage.

In the last year, McKenzie received a pair of prestigious national modeling honors: In September 2010 she was one of only 10 girls in the country selected to be in the 2011 Varsity cheer catalog. Then, earlier this year, the international designer Jovani named the Dexter teen the 2011 “Face of Jovani” – a once in a lifetime experience.

“I love travelling and meeting new people,” McKenzie said. And this was the summer of travel, meeting new people, and unique experiences. “I’ve always wanted to do this and I

love modeling. It's my greatest passion."

Varsity is the top cheer uniform company in the country – if not the world – and their catalog has more of the look and feel of a high-end quality magazine than just the run-of-the-mill catalog. The girls modeling are photographed "in action" – just like any cheerleader in high schools and colleges across the country. Varsity is the world's largest designer and manufacturer of cheer and dance team uniforms; and schools and colleges look to Varsity for the latest and greatest trends in the sport.

McKenzie was one of 12 young ladies chosen by Varsity to be featured in this year's catalog – 12 out of more than 1,200 who originally submitted applications for the honor. In October the girls gathered in Dallas for a weeklong photo shoot.

McKenzie explained that not all the girls were able to come together at one time due to their individual school commitments, but the Varsity personnel treated them royally while they were in Dallas. They stayed at a 5-star hotel, had their own chef, and could order room service when they wanted ... quite an experience!

"It was an experience of a lifetime," McKenzie said. "It was an incredible experience. I still keep in touch with all the girls."

Varsity called the Dexter teen on Christmas Eve 2010 with an incredible "Christmas gift" – Varsity selected McKenzie as one of two cheer models to fly to Orlando, Fla., for a national convention unveiling of the 2011 catalog. The convention was the first of February, and McKenzie and the other girls modeled the Varsity clothing at the convention.

This summer, McKenzie and her mother, Ann-Marie, got to fly to <images/Blog Images/NewsAugust2011/mckenzie1.jpg> California to work with the Jovani team as the 2011 Face of Jovani. Jovani is one of the world's premiere designers of prom and evening wear. "The photo shoot for Jovani was in Los Angeles, because that's where the photographer is," she said.

So in June, McKenzie and her mother flew west for the Jovani photo shoot. This upcoming prom season, when girls all across America pick up the 2012 Jovani book, McKenzie will be featured.

"She's shot six dresses so far," Ann-Marie said. "As he (Jovani) designs the dresses he ships them out there (to California). She's seen those six, then there are other girls who

are also in the book.”

The book will be on the Jovani **website**, on **Facebook**, and in every Jovani retailer’s store.

In addition to Varsity and Jovani, McKenzie works with a modeling agency in St. Louis, West Model & Talent Management, and through West she landed a job with Life Uniform - she worked at a photo shoot for Life Uniform in June, which adds another element to McKenzie’s modeling portfolio.

“As a model you have to ‘range’ ,” she said. ‘Range’ is the ability to adapt from one situation to the next, and in McKenzie’s case ranging in age from possibly a young teen to a mature-looking professional young woman. She said she enjoyed the challenges and opportunities with Life Uniform as well.

“You get to meet new people and see their experience and where they’ve been and learn from them too,” she said.

This summer also found McKenzie working for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* in a bathing suit feature in the metropolitan newspaper. The theme was “swim suit that fits your body”, and the “swimsuits were so fancy you could almost wear them anywhere.” The feature had McKenzie in some places that – well, you might not see someone in a bathing suit. She was shown in locations like a grocery store and a theater performance.

“I was in a grocery store and people were coming in, and some were taking pictures of me on their iPhone,” she said. “In the theater, people were all around and they were acting like they were watching a show and I was trying to find my seat but I was in a bikini.”

It was a large feature in a Sunday edition of the *Post-Dispatch*, and then two weeks later the feature was published again in the *Chicago Tribune*.

The summer also included showroom modeling for Jovani and video production shoot for the dressmaker in Atlanta.

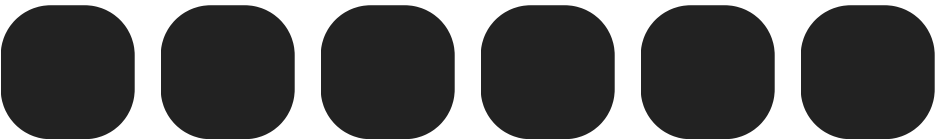
“Mr. Jovani has been watching her all this time on Facebook, and he has been so impressed with her and how she’s representing his company, “ Ann-Marie said. “He wired her a \$1,000 check for her to spend on herself in Los Angeles – to buy herself something special for herself.”

“I’ve been so blessed,” McKenzie said. “I have been given so many opportunities – it’s a dream come true!”

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