

"Natural born ham" takes top acting prize

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STAFF WRITER

When Heather Price was chosen from among 200 children as top child actor at Talent Rock Holidayfest in Orlando, Fla. on Dec. 9, she was just doing what came naturally.

The petite 11-year-old with swinging long, dark brown hair down to her waist, turned "it" on and clinched the competition.

"It," according to her mother, Denise Price, is Heather's outgoing, bubbly personality and charm.

"She's always 'on.' She's a natural born ham," her mother said during an interview at the Price home in Ocean Township (Waretown). Heather is the daughter of Denise and John Price. She has an older sister, Sarah, 14.

Heather, a sixth-grader at the Frederick A. Priff Elementary School, actually traveled to the talent search event with her eye on winning the singing category.

"But her asthma was bothering her and she wasn't feeling her best when we went down to Florida," said Denise Price, who traveled to the event with Heather and Heather's singing teacher, Nancy Valerina Korecky.

"I was happy to go there with Heather. She has a strong voice," said Korecky. "Even though she didn't win for singing, she won for acting and has a chance to return to compete again."

About 1,500 aspiring actors, comedians, dancers, models and singers came to the talent search at the Gaylord Palms Resort, according to the Talent Rock Web site. At the event, there were more than 100 industry professionals from around the world.

Heather said she sang Whitney Houston's song "I Have Nothing" from the film "The Body Guard" during her singing audition at the talent search.

Because each contestant must audition for two events, Heather's mother also signed her up for the acting category.

Heather has been taking singing lessons for a year with Korecky at Valmonte Center for Performing Arts in Stafford Township and she also began taking acting lessons this fall at the center. She takes ballet, jazz and tap lessons at Ovations Dance Studio in Ocean Township and Heather said she likes tap the best.

The acting audition required her to memorize a script for a commercial for a fictional cereal named Fruity Flakes, Heather said.

"She had that (the script) down pat in an hour and a half," Denise Price said as Heather demonstrated her animated "selling" of Fruity Flakes.

When Heather learned she was one of five finalists for Top Child Actor she said she and her mother turned to each other and screamed and then started jumping up and down.

"This is exactly what we did," Heather said as she recreated the scene at home turning to face her mother and clutching her hand. "We said, 'Oh, my God' and couldn't believe it.

"And when I was up on stage and found out I won, my mom really went crazy in her seat," Heather said.

Heather won two trophies, a \$330 watch, a copy of the video tape of the event which aired as a one-hour television special on Fuse Network in Florida, and a spot in next year's competition for her and a guest to accompany her, which is a prize valued at \$1,990.

She also received callbacks from several casting agents at the event, including Coast to Coast Talent, Nickelodeon Talent, Agency DSI, and MP Management, her mother said.

"Now we will have to get head shots to send to them and decide where to go from there," Denise Price said.

Heather and her sister can be found singing at the Lighthouse Tavern in Ocean Township during karaoke on Thursday nights, her mother added.

"We love karaoke and I take the girls there so they can sing," Denise Price said.

Heather and other Valmonte students also will be performing at the Family Expo today at King of Kings Church, Route 9, Stafford Township at 12:30 p.m. The expo is from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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