

From the studio to stardom

Freshman Victoria Wood dances her way to Lifetime Network show "Dance Moms"

Photos by Jami Bechard and Rebekah Barnes

Rebekah Barnes | Staff Writer

As the show "Dance Moms" grows in popularity on the Lifetime Network, Mason High School freshman Victoria Wood earns a spot as a dancer for the second season of the show and is thrust into the limelight and pirouettes that the show has gained.

The season premiere was on Tuesday, January 10 at 9 pm and Wood said immediately after the second season starts, third season filming begins.

The show "Dance Moms" follows the dancers and their mothers of the Abby Lee Dance Company, and Abby Lee herself. The show has received notoriety for the, "friction between doting and driven mothers and Miller, the straight-talking, sometimes-abrasive alpha-female dance instructor," according to the *Pittsburg Tribune*.

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Wood has danced since she was four years old, she said, and is a member of the Starstruck ADA (Amy's Dance Academy) studio. According to Wood, her coach currently is very "supportive" of her being on the show.

Wood said that she auditioned against about 200 other applicants to be a dancer on the show at Abby Lee Dance Company in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. According to Wood, this opportunity is once in a lifetime for a dancer.

"[I'm] excited, I mean, it's a big deal that I can actually see myself on TV," Wood said. "I never really [have been on TV], I mean I've done a couple things, but [nothing] like a show...and it's [been] my dream to be on TV."

Wood said that she was nominated to try out for the spot and traveled to Pittsburg where she earned a spot along with another girl. While the other girl will be moving out to Pittsburg to live, Wood said that she opted out of moving and decided to be a returning character for now.

"This year I am only doing ['Dance Moms'] part time...because I want to go school...this year and really don't want to leave," Wood said. "I am doing a taping and then I'll do a couple more, but pretty much

[Abby Lee] is making a story line where [I'm] going to come in randomly."

According to Wood, Miller said to her "I will make you a star" through her training.

"[Abby's] really nice...she's a really creative person," Wood said.

According to Wood, she knows the reputation the show and the mothers on it have, and understands that she'll get a lot of questions about the moms on the show, but she said she knows all the drama is not really what it seems on TV.

"People will probably be like, 'Oh my gosh... your mom's probably going to be psycho' and I'm like, 'No, my moms really not like that.'"

Wood said. "They make it up as they go, and my mom did say, 'I'm not changing what I act like to just be on the show.' People will probably say stuff, but you kind of just have to tell them, 'no.'"

According to Wood, her family shared mixed reactions, but were all happy for her to earn the spot and accomplish this in her dance career.

"My brother was so psyched," Wood said. "My mom, she was really excited, but she was like, 'I don't want to be on that show, they'll make me look bad' and I was like, 'Don't worry', because my mom's not like that, but you know how the parents are, [some of the drama is] just kind of scripted in a way."

Miller has worked with numerous Broadway and professional dancers, forming them into the dancers that they've become. According to her site, abbyleedancecompany.com, she has alumni working in Broadway shows such as *Wicked*, *Lion King*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and has dancers on the competition television show, "So You Think You Can Dance?"

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One goal Wood said she has for

"Dance Moms" is to get her name out in the industry for future opportunities. When she is older, Wood said, that she hopes to major in dance and minor in business so she can run and teach her own studio.

"[My goal] is to, I guess, to get seen by other people, do more things on TV and...to get my name out there," Wood said.

Wood said that getting on the show is the biggest accomplishment in her career as a dancer. She also said she participated in many events with the show, "So You Think You Can Dance?"

"I do a lot of stuff with 'So You Think You Can Dance' people," Wood said. "They teach and it's...a neat

experience because you kind of get [noticed by people] to work with, and then Mia Michaels, who is a judge for 'So You Think You Can Dance' [has] a clinic... that I go to every year."

Wood said that she competes in all styles of dance, while contemporary dance has grown to be her favorite over the years.

Dance and competing can be stressful with school, according to Wood, as she dances 25 hours a week on top of going to school. Wood said that it can be hard, but she goes home, gets her homework done, goes to dance and comes home and is still a straight A student.

"I'm really excited [for the show]," Wood said. "It gets really hard traveling a lot too. ...[and] with homework...and I get really tired with me dancing at another studio and then driving back and forth and I've been driving to Canton, Ohio to do filming."

Although it can be hard at times with dance, Wood said that her family at the studio helps her get through anything.

"Dance has been there like all my life, so I guess it's kind of like my second family; if I have a problem, I know where to go," Wood said. "People there are always there for me...you can tell them anything...it's

