

Star in the Making

Fairfax Station resident wins national dance competition.

Lauren Long's dance talent won her a sparkling tiara and medal, as well as a national title. The Fairfax Station resident has been dancing since she was a young child, and for the last several years has spent her summers at intensive dance camps everywhere from New York to Richmond.

In February, Lauren — a rising senior at Paul VI High School — won the Dance Makers Regional competition in Richmond. In June, she went on to the Dance Makers National Finals Competition in Myrtle Beach, S.C. and won the title of Miss Starmaker. Lauren dances at Buffa's Dance Studio in Burke and is a member of Tom Alexander's award-winning Dance Company. She is this week's People Profile.

How long have you lived in the area? My whole life.

Family: I have a little brother named Billy, he's 15. He's going to be a sophomore. I have a mom and a dad.

Do you know where you want to go to college? No, we're still trying to research dance programs, because I want to major in dance.

We're still trying to find the right dance programs. Fordham University in New York, that would be my first choice. There's Point Park University in Pittsburgh, University of the Arts in Philadelphia, North Carolina School of the Arts.

You recently took a trip to New York City.

What did you do there? I had auditioned for a Summer Intensive Program at the American Academy of Ballet and that was in New York, so I just spent three weeks there, dancing with them. It was a lot of fun. I learned a lot and I had a lot of amazing teachers: from the New York City Ballet, the Royal Ballet in England, teachers from all over.

When did you start dancing? When I was 2. I started out like every little girl, in ballet. Pretty much every year I would add more classes, I just loved it so much: tap, jazz, lyrical, pointe, modern, everything.

Activities/interests/hobbies: Dance is my life. But I am in the French club in my school. I'm going to my fourth year of French. I'm in the National Honor Society in my school. Oh and Dance Team, I'm on the Dance Team. That's like 10 hours a week with them.



PROFILE

Describe the Dance Makers competition, and winning the big award.

February was the regional competition, and I decided to enter a solo with my studio [Buffa's Dance Studio in Burke]. It was a solo I had choreographed myself and won at a competition at my studio. I decided to enter that one, and in the Richmond regionals, there were 15 of the other girls. We did our solos Friday night and on Sunday they announced that I was the winner. They had also gone to 15 other cities and picked regional Starmakers. So then I decided I wanted to go to nationals. At nationals, they did the same thing, all the regional winners competed against each other. I guess I won.

What was your choreographed dance like? It's contemporary dance, to the song "Cannonball" by Vienna Tang. I pretty much choreographed it in my bedroom. It's lyrical, very emotional to the words of the song.

What makes you dance? I love performing. I love it. That's my favorite part. That keeps me going. I love getting the audience to feel the mood of the song and the emotion, whether it's happy or sad. I love trying to convey emotion and pumping the audience up.

Favorite place to hang out in the community: I live at my dance studio.

Community concerns: I didn't really have anything until I was watching the news this morning and it said our schools were drug-infested. Dance is my anti-drug. Why do anything? I have to dance. With dance, your body is your instrument and you have to keep it. You only have one body your whole life, you have to use it your whole life to get all your jobs. If more kids had things to keep them busy and stuff they love like I do, there's no reason to do [drugs].

If you could go anywhere in the U.S. on a road trip, where would you go? New York City. It's my favorite. I want to live there.

Last book you read or the last movie you watched: "Pride and Prejudice," it's my summer reading for school. I watched the movie too for supplementary reading, the one with Keira Knightley. It was really good.

What music is in your car radio right now? Top 40; 99.5 is my radio station.

Personal goals: To find the right college for me and to major in dance. And from there, try to get a professional job [in dance]. And after that, I want to teach and pass it on. And I must make "So You Think You Can Dance." They inspire me to dance, so I want to inspire others.