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## Fancy footwork lands Mineville teen in movie

Skipper a stunt double in Jump In!

By TIM ARSENAULT

TORI LUCAS tried to explain to her friends why she wasn't going to be around very much last summer.

But it took a big leap of the imagination to think that she was going away to help make a TV movie.

"They were curious. I know when I told them about it they did not believe me at all," said 13-year-old Lucas during an interview.

"They were just like, 'Yeah, OK.' They didn't even comprehend the whole thing. I was like, 'No, I'm serious. I'm going to Toronto to shoot a movie.' And they were like, 'Oh, my God.' They were so excited."

Lucas, a Mineville resident and Grade 8 student at Graham Creighton Junior High, is a member of the Eastern Shore Mariner Skippers team. The nine years spent honing her double Dutch prowess made her a perfect fit for Jump In!, a movie made for the U.S. Disney Channel which has team skipping at the heart of its plot. She was selected to perform as a stunt double for one of the stars.

Jump In!, which topped U.S. cable ratings with about eight million viewers when it debuted in January, has its Canadian premiere tonight at 8:30 p.m. on Family Channel and will be repeated on Sunday at 1 p.m.

It follows last year's popular Disney Channel movie High School Musical and shares its lead actor, Corbin Bleu, with that production. He plays Izzy, an amateur boxer who gets roped into the world of competitive skipping, a fast-paced activity that combines jump sequences with elements of dance and gymnastics.

Producers put the word out to skipping coaches across North America that they were interested in talented teams and individuals to help with Jump In!

"They were looking for some groups for the finale. The movie people sent out e-mails to all the coaches in the United States and Canada and got us to send in audition tapes. They were also looking for African American skippers so they could play the doubles. . . . I sent in a video tape and I got picked," said Lucas.

"My dad is the coach so he got the e-mail and called me one day and said, 'How much do you weigh? How tall are you?' I told him and then I just sat there confused for a bit and was like, 'Why do you need this?' He was like, 'Well, they're looking for people to be doubles in a movie.' And I was like, 'OK, you send that information in quick.' "

Lucas eventually got word that she would spend the last two weeks of June and all of July in Toronto doing the fancy footwork for actress Shanica Knowles. Producers instilled a team spirit by keeping the talent together.

"We stayed in the same hotel as all the cast," said Lucas. "We hung out all day every day. We all trained together. We got really, really close. The last day was really sad."

That was probably because filming turned out to be so much fun. On top of that, it sounds like Lucas learned some stuff, too.

"I thought it was pretty cool in front of the camera and then you get to go back and watch on little monitors. I was like, 'Hey, that's me.' I never would have thought I'd be doing that," she said.

"I don't think I'd be an overly good actress. I get pretty nervous in front of the camera, to be honest. I messed up a bunch of times up there. But you just have to keep going. So I don't know if I'd like to pursue acting but I think it would be fun behind the scenes."

The Eastern Shore Mariner Skippers usually practise three times a week for two to three hours a session. All that work paid off when Lucas joined the other doubles, who came from Ontario and B.C.

"We were all pretty good. We all had our strong points. I'm a good speed jumper and I'm a good turner. I'm not an amazingly strong jumper. "

Like any other athletic pursuit, rope-skipping teams focus on goals. This year's nationals are in May in Abbotsford, B.C., and Lucas is keen to get there.

But spectators who come to tournaments based on the slick effects of Jump In! may be disappointed.

"We go to competitions but they're nothing like in the movie. They're pretty boring to watch, actually, unless you're really into it," said Lucas.

"Last year, my team went to the world competition in Toronto. . . . I think overall we came third or fourth in the world."

Lucas hasn't seen the movie yet but she's got big plans for tonight. A room has been rented at the community centre to accommodate a viewing party for about 50 family and friends.

And her pals will finally get to see for themselves what took up so much of Lucas's summer last year. She tried to keep them up to date but seeing will be believing.

"I made sure I stayed in touch with them. I went on MSN and sent them e-mails back and forth because I knew they were all curious to see what I was doing."

( tarsenault@herald.ca)

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