

BIG CITY



BIG DREAMS

Randolph County teen hits the catwalk in New York Fashion Week

Jill Doss-Raines
The Courier-Tribune

TABERNACLE — A recent trip to New York for Randolph County teenager Josie Perdue was more than a sightseeing adventure. It may end up being a trip that changed the course of her life.

Perdue, whose typical week involves cheerleading practice at Southwestern Randolph High School and dance les-

sons at Pointe South Dance and Tumble in Asheboro was a model in designer Marc Defang's New York Fashion Week show in early September.

The 16-year-old spent the week taking in the sights and opportunities available in New York that just aren't possible back home. While she has always thought she would pursue a nursing degree and career after high school graduation, now she is pondering a ca-

reer in the arts as a dancer in New York. In fact, she is eyeing the possibility of attending AMDA College of Performing Arts in New York.

"New York is a small piece of land, but there is so much there," she said. "It was an amazing experience."

Perdue spent Sept. 9-12 in New York with her parents, Julie and Andy

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Perdue. When not rehearsing for the fashion show or attending fittings, the trio pounded the streets of the Big Apple to see as much of the city as possible, and take hundreds of photos. Perdue laughs now at her mistake of wearing high heels on many of these walks, which gifted her with blisters on her feet.

The road to New York Fashion Week began on the beauty pageant circuit in North Carolina. In 2020, the teen decided to compete in the Randolph County Outstanding Teen Pageant, which she won. The next stop was a trip to compete in the Miss North Carolina Pageant. She did not win there, but was named Miss Congeniality and received the health and sportsmanship scholarship.

She took note that a designer's name kept coming up at the pageants when the female competitors talked about the shoes they were wearing in the contests — Marc Defang. Then she learned the designer was holding a contest to have one of his new shoes named after one lucky winner. Perdue sent in a resume listing her accomplishments and awards and wrote a small essay about why she wanted a shoe named for her.

She won. On the Marc Defang website, you can see a photo of a beige patent leather stiletto studded in rhinestones named Josie. Now the small-town girl was on the big city designer's radar. He asked her to come in to model prom dresses and activewear he designs for his website. She did and now there are pictures of her on the website, also, modeling clothing.

At the photoshoot, Defang asked Perdue to consider coming to New York during Fashion Week to walk in his shows.

"I'm from the country," said Perdue. "To be able to be in a big city was amazing. It felt like I belonged there.... I want to be there. It was really life-changing. It was an amazing opportunity.

Before Fashion Week, Perdue competed in the Miss Thomasville Outstanding Teen Pageant, which she also won. She will get a second shot at the Miss North Carolina title in 2022.

Perdue said she has not given up completely on becoming a nurse and will spend the rest of her junior and senior year of high school mulling her



Randolph County teenager Josie Perdue shows a photo of herself on designer Marc Defang's website modeling activewear. The 17-year-old recently traveled to the Big Apple to walk in the designer's show during New York Fashion Week. Here, she sits in a conference room at her former school Tabernacle Elementary, where her mother is a teacher. JILL DOSS-RAINES/THE DISPATCH

choices carefully. Her desire to be helpful also comes out in the platform she adopted for the pageant circuit — overcoming obstacles.

She has used this to spread awareness about scoliosis, an abnormal lateral curvature of the spine. Perdue was diagnosed with the condition while a student at Tabernacle Elementary School, where her mom is a teacher. Dance has been a tremendous help with her condition, she said.

Perdue promotes awareness of the condition on social media and reads books about it to students in elementary schools. Other North Carolina teens and adults have shared their "overcoming obstacles" experiences on her Instagram page, such as a young woman who overcame drug addiction to meth.

This platform expanded in 2021 into a Blessing Box service project for Randolph County. With the help of a Boy

Scout earning his Eagle Scout badge who built the boxes, Perdue has planted the boxes in four different locations in Asheboro, Ramseur and Seagrove. The boxes are stocked with non-perishable foods and toiletries for the homeless and anyone else in need.

"I want to do four Blessing Boxes for Thomasville, now," she said. "Everyone has an obstacle in their life. Everyone needs to be encouraged to be confident to share their stories about overcoming their obstacles."

Jill Doss-Raines is The Dispatch and Courier-Tribune's trending topics and personality profiles senior reporter and is always looking for tips about businesses and entertainment events, secret and new menu items, and interesting people in Davidson and Randolph counties. Contact me at jill.doss-raines@thedispatch.com and subscribe to us at thedispatch.com.



Perdue, who has been a competitive dancer since she was 5, strikes a pose in Times Square in New York. PROVIDED BY JULIE PERDUE



Josie Perdue is pictured with designer Marc Defang when she walked in the designer's New York Fashion Week Show in September. PROVIDED BY JULIE PERDUE