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Young Actress Working Her Way to Houston Stardom

By Eva Ruth Moravec
Houstonian Maureen



Maureen showed off both her acting ability and her sense of humor on a recent *LeadAmerica* program in Washington, D.C.

12, entered the scene of a murder and was tasked to solve the crime with fellow participants of *LeadAmerica*, a 10-day conference for young leaders in Washington, D.C.

It was a departure from her normal routine, which in Houston includes murders... but only on stage!

A seventh grader at St. Anne's Catholic School, Maureen been seen on stage since she was seven. But when a flyer came to her home advertising *LeadAmerica*, she decided to try it out.

"I said, 'Oh, look at all of this stuff,'" Maureen said. "I was highly attracted to the CSI stuff, the investigations, it was like what I see on T.V."

LeadAmerica allows participants to choose an academic field, which they then studied for the program's duration. Maureen lived in Georgetown University dorms, and the experience marked the longest time she's

spent away from her family.

"Every morning, we would sort of be on our own," Maureen said. "My roommate and I organized our schedules to wake up at 6:30, and I have an alarm clock on my watch that I set. If that didn't wake us up, my roommate's mom called her cell phone."

Participants ate breakfast on their own, then "rallied"

See Star page 12

with the rest of the group. From then on, the participants were thrown into real-life scenarios. On the first day, Maureen's group walked into the scene of a murder.

"We had to question all eye witnesses and such until we got an answer, which they didn't tell us until the last day," Maureen said.

Maureen learned how to take fingerprints, compare bullet casings, and collect other clues, with the help of mentors. In addition, *LeadAmerica* participants went on several field trips, including visits to Union Station, the U.S. Capitol, the Library of Medicine, the Museum of History, past the White House, and "quite a bit of monuments," Maureen said.

"I highly enjoyed the field trips," she said, "but my favorite part was actually living the experience of CSI, and all of the adventure."

The adventure was a little much

at first for Kathy who stayed in Maryland with a friend until the program ended.

"I couldn't bring myself to just dump her on the east coast,"

"But I can't describe to you the independence [she gained], it's amazing."

The program was unlike most of Maureen's activities in Houston, all of which are related to the arts. Her first theater experience was in the ensemble for "There's No Business Like Snow Business," a Theatre Under the Stars (TUTS) production.

Since then, Maureen's career has blossomed to include the role of Dorothy in the St. Anne's Catholic School production of "The Wizard of Oz," Marta in Masquerade Theatre's "Sound of Music," and even an Alley Theatre Young Performers commercial with Time Warner Cable, among many oth-

ers.

In addition, Maureen has had training in jazz, tap, ballet, singing, piano, violin, golf, swimming and photography; but Kathy Fenninger doesn't let her daughter's after school activities impede on her education.

"Maureen ended sixth grade with a 97 average and is a whiz at math,"

"She knows the priority is school and theatre is the first thing to go if grades go down. She wants theatre so badly that her time management skills are incredible."

Most recently, Maureen was on stage at The Alley Theatre as Gloria in "Wait Until Dark," a Scott Schwartz production.

"It was sorta weird being the only kid on the cast, but it was really fun," Maureen said. "I enjoyed working with all of the pros, they really helped me out."