



Jessie Kay's dramatic success

Time for an update from Jessie's mum, Di

While most other teenagers were relaxing during the summer school holidays, my daughter Jessie spent weeks in Sydney learning more about acting for screen and theatre. When she wasn't concentrating on acting, she was one of the team working in the busy Braidwood Bakery dealing with thousands of customers during the busy holiday period.

"I love spending time in Sydney because it gives me a chance to watch how city people behave. I won't get many acting roles if I only know how to be a country girl," Jessie laughs. "We don't learn how to kill time in a shopping mall or jostle onto a train during peak hour in Braidwood." After attending performances and workshops for a week during the Sydney Festival as part of a full schol-

FROM BRAIDWOOD

arship from the *Australian Theatre for Young People*, Jessie played a key role in the ATYP group's public performance. Originally scheduled to appear on stage outdoors in Sydney's Hyde Park, their performance was moved to the ATYP indoor theatre due to bad weather.

The following week Jessie attended a Screen Acting Boot Camp at NIDA, the *National Institute for Dramatic Art*. She received funding for the NIDA course as recipient of last year's BCS Drama Scholarship.

While performing at NIDA, Jessie received encouragement from a Sydney-based casting director who encouraged her to actively pursue a professional acting career while she is still a teenager. It was a turning point for Jessie, building her confidence.

"I was really surprised when she said. 'You nailed it!' and gave me praise. Listening to her be so encouraging and sharing so many tips made me feel that becoming an actor just might be achievable."

Jessie scooped an impressive number of last year's BCS annual awards including the prestigious Long Tan Award for Leadership and Community Service and the Drama Scholarship to NIDA. However, Jessie was absent from the BCS awards night because she was busy working at the Canberra Theatre Centre.

Principal Nerida Mosely says Jessie's success on stage is evidence of her hard work, tenacity and dedication. "Not only is Jessie an incredible student leader showing her imaginative and exuberant spirit, she is an amicable young woman whose self-assurance, thoughtfulness and generosity of spirit infect all who meet her."

It is an interesting process to watch a child grow and make their way in the world. Some parents beam proudly at each small achievement, while others tend to downplay their successes. Having been a mother for nearly 40 years now, I've learned along the way how important it is to allow your child to accept praise and learn from constructive criticism.

Life is a journey, and because Jessie's

TO THE WIDE WORLD BEYOND

siblings are now adults, I can sit back and reflect on how decisions I made in their youth have influenced their adult lives. I've never expected my children to apologise for being clever, and always allowed them to pursue their passions. Most importantly, I encourage them to work hard and learn from every opportunity they encounter. Jessie's current passion is acting, and she's been granted lots of opportunities to learn.

Work experience at the Canberra Theatre Centre gave Jessie valuable experience in aspects of marketing, front of house and technical work within the theatre. She helped rig the lighting for a Jimmy Barnes concert plus spent a couple of nights as part of the front of house team for the prestigious *Circus 1903*. The world tour for *Circus 1903* began in Canberra.

Always an ambassador for the Braidwood region, Jessie shared stories about local drama productions with staff at CTC.

"I was in the right place at the right time," Jessie smiles. "Canberra Theatre Centre just upgraded their lighting system and their Technical Manager kindly decided to gift their second-hand lights to BCS so we can recycle them in our local productions." Because there's so many lights, the school had to arrange a truck to collect them.

Jessie has performed in many of Braidwood Central's theatrical productions including *The Nutcracker*, *Wizard of Oz* and *Legally Blonde* musicals. "Our drama students are extremely lucky to have Ms Elisa Bryant as our teacher."

Jessie is enthusiastic in her praise of Ms Bryant. "She encourages us to push ourselves and expand our skills and experience. That includes entering competitions. After all, if we want to be actors we'll need to have the confidence to audition for roles, so we need to get used to rejection."

To date, Jessie has not experienced rejection. She's had dramatic success with all her endeavours associated with stage and screen since her first short film when she was just ten, made with friends undertaking home schooling. They entered it into a competition associated with ABC3, and were placed among the top six from hundreds of entries.

Now in Year 11, she is part of a strong group of drama students at Braidwood Central School. They are all supportive of each other and work well as a team. Jessie performed twice at the ISER Drama Festival in Wollongong in

recent years when her group succeeded in making it through to regional acting finals.

Staff including Principal Ms Nerida Mosely are fully supportive of Jessie and other BCS drama students.

"Ms Mosely came to Sydney to watch Abbey McDonald and I perform at the Seymour Centre when we both won places in the NSW State Drama Ensemble," Jessie says. "And Ms Bryant came to watch the Braidwood contingent perform during the Sydney Festival."

To help cover the significant expense of accommodation in Sydney during two weeks of workshops as part of the elite NSW State Drama Ensemble, the owners of Braidwood Bakery allowed Jessie and Abbey to put collection tins on the bakery's counter. Many customers from Canberra and the coast made donations to the girls.

"There are so many advantages to living in our small town and working at the Braidwood Bakery," Jessie says. "I'm lucky to not lose my job when I travel away for drama, debating, sport or public speaking. My boss just takes me off the roster until I get back."

Community support has been overwhelming for Jessie. She's often approached by locals, and bakery customers from Canberra and the coast, asking for updates. She's often stopped in the street to be quizzed by people, and I'm getting used to being asked if I'm Jessie's mum.

Today Jessie's a young girl living in a small country town. But who knows what tomorrow holds? One of my older kids was just 14 (living in a different small town) when she was given the chance to learn fire dancing. Despite

our fears, my husband and I allowed her to try. Then, when she proved to be skilled, we allowed her to continue. Soon my teenager was working as a professional fire dancer on weekends. At just 15, she was flown to Melbourne to perform at the VIP after-party on the opening night of a *Cirque de Soleil* tour.

Living in a small town doesn't need to be an obstacle for children with the will and skill to succeed.

Too often, parents fail to allow their kids to reach their full potential. I believe it is important for us to be able to see the horizon, and allow our kids to do the same. The world is a very big place, filled with opportunities.

I was pleased to hear Ms Mosely predict, "Jessie Kay is a name we are bound to hear more often in the coming years." Kids need educators to keep one eye on the future.

Our family knows it is too early to tell just how successful Jessie will be in the world of drama, but we don't have a problem with her following her dream. Much to our surprise, she's already been invited to audition for a major international film as a result of her participation in one of the Sydney acting workshops, so she's practicing her American accent.

Thanks for your support, Braidwood. Jessie will keep striving to do her best, and continue being an ambassador for Braidwood every chance she gets.

