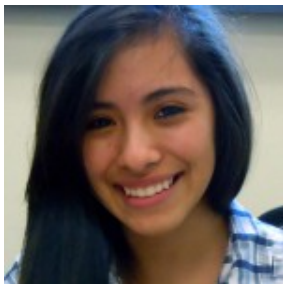


8th-grader eager to use her voice to prove she's got talent

By Kathryn Reed

At 13, Stephanie Hernandez doesn't have the life experiences to write lyrics about the angst of a woman scorned, but she does have the voice and conviction to deliver the words for the world to hear.

The South Tahoe Middle School eighth-grader will be traveling to Anaheim next weekend to audition for "America's Got Talent" – the popular NBC television show now in its sixth season that features potential stars competing in song, dance, comedy, juggling, magic and other talents. The end prize is \$1 million.



Stephanie
Hernandez

Hernandez recorded Christina Perri's "Jar of Hearts" for her demo tape and plans to sing Carrie Underwood's "Before He Cheats" at the tryout Dec. 11.

Considering Perri got her break performing the single on "So You Think You Can Dance" and Underwood won "American Idol", Hernandez may be smart in picking music from established female television winners.

Excitement – at least on Friday – filled her more than nerves or butterflies. She admits that may all change in a week. While Hernandez considers the stage her friend, this audition will be the biggest stage she has performed on.

“I love the feeling of getting to connect with the audience. I embrace the energy and feed off of that,” Hernandez told *Lake Tahoe News*.

She credits her dad’s side of the family for her singing ability. She’s been singing since age 3.

Country is her favorite genre, but she also likes jazz and punk.

She will be on stage today in Stateline as part of Miss Marcia’s Lake Tahoe Shining Stars. Hernandez enjoys dance and acting, but it’s singing that she is passionate about.

Hernandez can’t imagine singing not being a focal part of her professional life in the future. And she wants Lake Tahoe to remain her home base.

She can be heard walking down the halls at school humming. In the shower, it’s full on vocals.

To keep her throat relaxed her former voice coach, Susy Grubb, told her about sucking on black licorice and taking a teaspoon of honey.

“It clears the throat so the higher notes seem more clear,” Hernandez said of the honey. “I do this when my throat is not the greatest and before I perform.”

Hernandez can’t say enough good things about her family, friends and everyone at STMS who have helped her reach this point. It was school receptionist Jo Walker who after hearing Hernandez kept prodding her to send in the tape. Teacher Carol Murdock was integral in creating the video. And Principal Beth Delacour is making sure her grades aren’t suffering with all

of these distractions. She is an AVID student and has people in her corner who want her to focus on going to college, too.

But this week the spotlight is on her voice – and what she is going to wear. That she still hadn't figured out as of Dec. 2. And shoes? And her hair? She admits there are lots of things to finalize this coming week that go well beyond singing.

If she's picked, then it's more tryouts in Las Vegas before going to Los Angeles.

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Hernandez will likely be giving a recap of her experience and a demo of sorts at the Dec. 13 Lake Tahoe Unified School District 6pm board meeting.