

SJ Magazine
KIDS 2 Watch 2009
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EVERYDAY MAKEOVERS • CHASERS' CHOPPER • ROCKIN' DADS



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RESOURCE GUIDE**



KIDS 2 Watch

2009

MAN-OPAUSE
Now look who's moody!

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You'll soon see three SJ stars on the silver screen, when the movie they just completed filming is released this summer. Co-produced by James Brolin, *Standing Ovation* is a Disney-esque movie shot entirely at the Shore, and many of its stars live right here in SJ.

Rocco Fiorentino, 12

At 12, Rocco Fiorentino is an accomplished jazz singer and pianist, bringing audiences to their feet in clubs like the famed Birdland in New York City. He's also an effective advocate for the blind, serving as Ambassador of The Little Rock Foundation, an organization started by his parents. (Rocco has been blind since birth.) Last year, Rocco appeared before the state legislature after Governor Corzine proposed slashing services for the blind. His speech helped land \$1.2 million in funding for Braille services and education.

Rocco, a sixth-grader at Voorhees Middle School, has racked up plenty of honors: Build-A-Bear Workshop's Huggable Hero Award, the Helen Keller Award of Independence, and the Hands On Award from the National Braille Press.

But his passion, he will tell you, is music. He plays a record producer in *Standing Ovation*. And he happily recalls meeting icons Tony Bennett and Stevie Wonder, who sang *You are the Sunshine of My Life* while Rocco played the keyboard.

In the fall, look for him on *Sesame Street* teaching Elmo about blindness. And in the future, look for his name in lights.

Pilar Martin, 11

Cast as a lead in *Standing Ovation*, Pilar Martinez says she can't get enough of performing. "I like to pretend," she says. "I like acting like a different person. And I like bringing out my emotions when I sing."

Pilar does it all - acting, singing and dancing since she was 7. She's performed at the NOKIA Theatre in Times Square and locally at the Walnut Street Theatre and Bucks County Playhouse. She's also done commercials and special performances, like the Guinness World Record television special on Food Network and an instructional juggling video for Comcast Interactive TV. (Yes, she knows how to juggle.)

For Pilar, a sixth-grader at Moorestown Friends School, the movie role was her break into motion pictures, and she hopes it's just the beginning. "I loved everything about it. We spent about a year filming, and in the end, we were all hugging each other and crying, saying we were going to miss each other. We became like a family. I definitely want to go on with my acting, singing and dancing."

Dexter Darden, 17

He had his first break at age 8 when Paul Newman saw him in a talent show and told him to get into show business. (Yes, the Paul Newman. Dexter was attending a camp sponsored by the veteran actor.) It was good advice; Dexter has spent the past 9 years training, auditioning and appearing in various shows. Look for him as Chester in *Minutemen*, airing now on the Disney Channel. Off screen, Dexter has modeled for Louis Vuitton and Salvatore Ferragamo, played harmonica with Paul McCartney and spent three years performing for Carnival Cruise Lines. He's had supporting roles in *Law and Order*, *The Sopranos* and *Third Watch*, and appeared last year in *Cadillac Records*, starring Beyonce.

Dexter has an apartment in L.A. for when he is working there, and he commutes to New York jobs from his home in Sicklerville. "I don't know if I will ever move to L.A. or New York," he says. "I like Jersey. I grew up here. It's my home." ■

