

Life on the hill

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RHMS student has stars in future

Merrick Foune — talented and thankful

By Evelyn Fallon
Bryan County News

Merrick Foune is chasing her dream of being an actress. At 13, the Richmond Hill Middle School student has found a way to compartmentalize and balance family life, school responsibilities, extra-curricular activities and an acting career.

Foune is an eighth-grader and is involved in soccer, track, softball and the Beta Club. Despite her busy schedule on and off campus, Foune sets high academic standards for herself and has maintained all A's. In the fall she will start her freshman year at Richmond Hill High School and plans to pursue post-secondary education at Savannah College of Art and Design.

This may seem like a normal plan for a 13-year-old, but her current daily schedule is anything but normal. Foune wouldn't have it any other way.

"I put school before any-

thing. It is really important to me," Foune said. "The teachers at RHMS fully support my business and I can go work and come back and they always help me through

she is focused there," her mother, Shannon Bocook said. "She will study over the weekend for school or her lines and find a way to make it all work."



Photo provided

Merrick Foune hopes to make acting a career.

Foune's introduction to acting came at the age of 8, when she was introduced to theater. She discovered she had a love for memorizing lines, being with the crew and meeting new people. To date, Foune has 19 films under her belt, acting in lead, support or background roles. She has experience in television, commercial and voice-over work, as

well as supporting and lead roles in theater productions held at the Emma Kelly Theater, GW Carver Theater and SCPS Theater.

And there are more auditions and work coming. Her efforts to grow her craft consist of an acting coach, acting lessons, private lessons and workshops.

In January, Foune launched her own slime shop business on Etsy, SlimeAddicts. She has five-star reviews and has shipped products all over the country. This is just an extension of her desire to work and create. Photography is also on of her passions, and she said she hopes to partner her acting with all her passions for future use to continue developing a platform that will enable her to help others and animals in need.



Photo provided

Merrick Foune stands with actor Jason Ritter

When it comes to acting, Foune said she draws influence from actors Chris Evans and Jamie Foxx.

"I saw Chris Evans working and it was so cool watching how serious he was on set and the dynamic of his personality off set. I can remember watching a role played by Jamie Foxx. He

was so real. I observed how he made me feel and want to be able to do that for my audiences," said Foune.

Stay tuned for more from this young local talent.

"Rejection makes me thrive and want to do better. When I don't get the role, I realize there is something for me to work on," Foune said.



Photo provided

Merrick Foune does voice-over work in a sound booth.



Photo provided

Merrick Foune in her role in the short horror film, "One Man Hide and Seek."

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Q&A WITH RHMS TEACHER, ACTING COACH



Photo provided

Dustin Barnwell has taught Merrick Foune at RHMS

Q: Name & current job title?

A: Anthony Paderewski; actor, acting coach, producer, photographer

Q: How long have you known Merrick?

A: Three years

Q: How have you seen her adapt and balance her career, extra-curricular activities and school load over this past year?

A: Her passion for everything she strives to do is inspiring. From school work to approaching a character in a script to being a big sister, she does everything with passion and persistence.

Q: What sets her apart in the acting scene as an up and coming actress?

A: Her hunger. She not only wants to be an actress, she needs to be an actress. With every role she grows and challenges herself to be better than the last.

Q: How well does she adapt to roles she is assigned to

play?

A: She makes the character different. Taking the role and creating something unique, such as a simple hair twist on her finger when she talks or a special giggle when the character feels awkward. She gives these characters a life of their own.

Q: Over the past few years, how have you seen her evolve in her acting craft?

A: Over the past few years she has pulled away from self-doubt. Confidence has taken the place of it. She now believes she is able to play any role that she has the opportunity to play. That is the battle that most young actors face. Whether they believe they can or cannot – both are correct. When it comes to Merrick, she can.

Q: Name & current job title?

A: Dustin Barnwell; seventh-grade teacher at Richmond Hill Middle School

Q: How long have you known Merrick?

A: Two years

Q: How have you seen her adapt and balance her career, extra-curricular activities and school load over this past year?

A: Merrick is an exceptional student both in the classroom and beyond. Merrick prioritizes her responsibilities in a way that is far more mature than others her age. She is always looking for a challenge and wants to be involved in as many areas as possible. Despite all the things she is involved in, she seems to balance it quite well and keeps an upbeat attitude and smile on her face always. I had the privilege of teaching Merrick last year and saw first-hand the quality of work she produces. Merrick's work on projects and assignments was always exceptional and was consistently among the best work of all my students. This is even more impressive knowing the amount of things she is involved in outside of the classroom.

Q: What sets her apart in the acting scene as an up and coming actress?

A: Although I am not extremely familiar with her acting talents, I would say something that sets Merrick apart is her humility. When you meet Merrick, you can easily understand how talented she is. However, she is a very humble person and does not brag about her accomplishments. I would be willing to bet that there are many students at RHMS that are unaware of her acting successes because Merrick is not one to boast. I imagine this is hard to come by with other actors/actresses her age.