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## Daily Messenger

By Kathryn Rybczak

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### From 'Primetime' to big-time?

Canandaigua, N.Y. — Nikole Blowers bursts through a dorm door at Finger Lakes Community College after doing a somersault in the hallway.

She is determined to stop a college student from eating a frozen Hot Pocket, one of those microwavable meals that come in flavors like pepperoni pizza and meatball.

"Drop that Hot Pocket!" Nikole, 15, yells at Troy Bennett in the dorm on the Hopewell campus.

That scene, played out in April, wasn't just some random day-in-the-life. It was actually a well-thought out, rehearsed skit Nikole calls "Kitchen Crashers." It was filmed for a television show pilot called "Cooking with Me, Kole Lee."

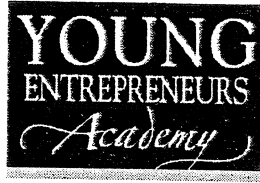
Nikole, a Canandaigua Academy sophomore, has long dreamed of having her own cooking television show in the tradition of Sandra Lee or Rachael Ray. Pilot in hand, she and dad Terry will travel to the Big Apple this summer to pitch her idea for a television show to producers from major television networks like ABC, NBC and the Food Network.

There's much interest, in fact, after Nikole was featured on an episode of ABC's "Primetime" about people who live with Tourette syndrome, a neurological disorder characterized by uncontrollable tics. Nikole — Nikki to her friends and family — has suffered with it her entire life.

The "Primetime" show, part of a series called "Family Secrets," aired in July and illustrated the daily life of someone who has Tourette syndrome. Just a few weeks back, "Primetime," aired a follow-up episode offering updates on Nikole and others featured on the original show. Her cooking show aspirations were highlighted in the update.

Nikole started getting inquiries from producers after the update aired.

"We got an e-mail from the season-two winner of 'Hell's Kitchen' who wanted to see the show," said Nikole's mother, Mary Blowers of Heather West, who also has Tourette syndrome. West told Mary she "is going to make a couple of calls to NBC."



The meetings with producers will be held primarily on Saturdays — since Nikole has school — and she and her dad will travel to the city as many times as she needs to meet with them.

Nikole wants to host a cooking show to expose the too-often unhealthy eating habits of college students. Her hope is to enlighten students and their parents alike that it is not difficult or expensive to cook healthier meals.

Forget the Hot Pockets, she urges, instead go for a parfait made with yogurt, granola and fresh fruit.

“Out of the five major networks, none of them had a cooking show that targeted this kind of crowd,” Nikole said of the networks including ABC, NBC, FOX, and the Food and Fine Living networks. “I had a vision and I knew what it would kind of look like.”

With the help of the Young Entrepreneurs Academy, a program geared toward helping middle and high school students promote their business ideas, Nikole was able to put her idea into action. YEA students receive assistance from graphic designers, their teachers and marketing agents to help create and produce their business ideas. Blowers spent nearly three-and-a-half months researching the market.

“I mostly used the Internet to help me figure out what kinds of cooking shows were out there,” she said.

Then, independent of the YEA program, her family contacted a friend, Dave LaBarge, who runs LaBarge Media, a Canandaigua company that creates promotional videos. With the help of six other production crew members — Jamie Beaujon, Jason LaBarge, Kyle Krenzer, Josiah Moore and David Connel — LaBarge offered his services in helping Nikole create a pilot of her show for free.

In addition to FLCC, the show was filmed at the New York Wine and Culinary Center with a live audience of college and high school students. In that particular show, Nikole welcomed Chef Greta Pagorek to cook three different types of “hot pockets” from scratch — to prove that making “hot pockets” was not only cheaper but healthier to eat than the frozen ones.

It only took three days in April to tape the show — including a day of rehearsal. LaBarge said the real work began after the cameras stopped rolling.

“For two weeks, we worked on editing and digitizing it,” said LaBarge, adding that six coworkers pitched in on the project. “The actual shooting took 15 to 20 hours and editing took another 40 to 50 hours.”

LaBarge — who is a long-time friend of the Blowers — estimated the cost of creating and producing the show would be around \$40,000.

“I wanted to keep the pilot more generic,” Nikole said. “This pilot is a stepping stone and I think any network will be surprised at what they see.” Now comes the waiting game.

“It was all worth this,” LaBarge said. “It was a labor of love for me.” Nikole, meanwhile, said she will continue to be vocal about her struggles with Tourette’s in hopes of helping other sufferers.

“This is a part of my life and I want people to know that I’m human like everyone else,” Nikole said. If the show doesn’t come to fruition, Nikole said she might try to launch the show online.

No matter what happens, Mary Blowers is an extremely proud mom. “She just blows our mind,” she said. “She has taught us so much.”