

The hunt is on for Aurora's next Teen Idol



By Brock Weir

Do you have what it takes to be Aurora's next Teen Idol?

The hunt is on for Aurora's 2013 Teen Idol, who will be crowned during this year's Canada Day Celebrations. If you're between the ages of 12 and 17, and have a penchant for singing – whether before large crowds or even in the shower! – you just might be the right person for the job.

Few people know this better than Taylor Mansillo. Taylor, a Grade 12 student at Aurora High School, was crowned 2012's Teen Idol at Lambert Willson Park on July 1, after making her way through a series of preliminary rounds. Sealing her victory with a stirring rendition of Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah", she has been a mainstay at Town events throughout the year, recently performing God Save The Queen at the Aurora 150 Tattoo, held at the Aurora Community Centre on May 5 to mark the Town's sesquicentennial.

Over the course of the year in performing at awards ceremonies to large scale events, it is this last one she feels is probably going to be the pinnacle of her reign.

"This has been a really good year," she says, noting a year of firsts, including taking a chance as the emcee for the ice carving events held at this year's Arctic Adventure on Family Day. "I liked being a presenter and I enjoyed singing for the Tattoo as it was such a big event.

"When I am singing, I am a bit different. I like singing in front of bigger crowds; I am more intimidated singing one on one."

This is no exaggeration. Before plucking up the confidence to take another shot at becoming Aurora's Teen Idol – after making it through a number of rounds in the 2011 competitions – she considered her singing primarily a hobby, bringing out her talent primarily at school events. It was not something she did in her spare time at home.

"[We were surprised] because we never hear her sing in our household," says her mother Debra, with a laugh. "She had a kindergarten teacher named Mrs. Winters, and I remember her saying, "Taylor can really sing!" and we were like, "I don't think so!" We were pretty happy with it and this has been a good experience."

Over the course of the year, the events at which Taylor has been asked to perform have afforded her a unique insight into many areas of Town. She says she has learned about many events you can get more involved with and encourages other people to follow suit, get out, and explore Aurora.

"I was able to actually live in more of the community, especially as I am going away this year," she says. "I got to know Aurora a lot

better and I got to know Aurora as my Town.?

By going away, Taylor is only going as far as Kingston, beginning her first year at Queen's University this fall with an eye towards psychology. Although she has until the end of her first year to declare her major, her strategy is to keep her options open with psychology, which will give her the option of deciding whether to go in the direction of law or medicine.

As she prepares to hand over the reins as Aurora's Teen Idol, she has a few more things to do, including emceeding the final round on July 1 and possibly some of the preliminary rounds. As application forms, available at www.aurora.ca, must be received by Tuesday, June 18, she encourages everyone to come out and give it a shot.

?Don't just sing and go out for it as it is a competition; do it because you love to sing,? she says. ?It's a good experience and going through it, even if you don't win, it is just something to be proud of because you had the nerve to go out and do it in front of people. It is just a new step in your singing career and anything you want to do.

?I would be looking for confidence. It is not whether someone can sing, it is whether someone can perform. If you have confidence while you're up there, and you're happy to be up there, it just changes the performance.?