

Babies model for Christmas cheer

Commercial photography students offer free children's holiday photos for staff

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Student Life Editor

Holiday photoshoots are usually expensive and hard to book, but the advanced commercial photography class took matters into their own hands with a final exam project.

With eleven students and several models, the shoot was focused on giving the photographers an experience they could use in the real world involving real models and responsibility.

"For the advanced kids I really let them give me their opinions at the beginning of the year on what they want to shoot and the stuff they want to learn about," photography teacher Chanel Henry said. "The majority of them would like to eventually open up their own portrait studio and do family shoots and infant shoots, things like that, so we chose this particular shoot."

From senior Brenda Saucedo's point of view, being able to pick out what they want to photograph was the open door to photographing children.

"Advanced commercial photography is an extremely flexible course and since we all are very experienced, our teacher let us design our own curriculum," Saucedo said. "We all came up with a list of projects we wanted to do and one of them was photographing children."

There were mixed emotions on taking photos of children from the students.

"My first reaction to hearing about the kids shoot was the slightest bit fearful," senior Aubrey Choate said. "I love kids and have taken pictures of babies before but I had a feeling that with a group of eleven or so students, the shoot could become rather hectic."

Saucedo had thoughts on what to expect from the models beforehand.

"Working with kids is a surprise," Saucedo said. "Some toddlers have a natural instinct to smile and cheese for the camera and others, are very impatient and get distracted easily."

Being able to photograph in a business-like fashion gave the students experience they will need for the future.

"I really focus on having them ready for the real world," Henry said. "The last six weeks they created their websites and really started building their business but



Over here, Baby: Cameras click simultaneously as senior Sara Barajas and Brenda Saucedo, and junior Savannah Davis struggle for little Charlie Perry's attention. The photographers had to take numerous breaks to reposition Charlie and had to stay lively and energetic throughout the entire shoot. *Photo by Granger Coats*

with this I just really wanted them to get some experience in taking pictures of children and families so that whenever they start working as a photographer they already know what they are doing."

Before brainstorming began, Henry had to find infant and toddler models for the students to photograph.

"Our teacher emailed the entire faculty, asking if anybody would want to volunteer to bring their kids to the classroom and allow us to photograph them and within a matter of seconds she was overwhelmed with replies," Saucedo said. "Everyone was jumping at the idea of free portraits."

Henry chose the models with a first come, first serve tactic to make it easier.

"I got so many responses that I had to narrow it down, kind of pick and choose which models," Henry said.

The amount of students couldn't take photos and the models couldn't come all in one day though.

"We did this project in three different class days and we booked a certain number of kids on each day," Saucedo said.

All students had to create their own props and backdrop for the shoots as a team which left Henry giving them full responsibility.

"I gave them the responsibility of putting the set together," Henry said. "I just made sure they had the right equipment and all the cords to use in the studio and that everything would work."

To Henry, letting them have total control was a decision worth making.

"I think it's very important for students, not only in my advanced classes, for them to have the sense of responsibility for it because nobody is going to be there out in the real world to do all that for them," Henry said. "They are going to have to do that on their own so I think that's good practice for when they get in real world situations."

The students came together as a whole class and brainstormed different ideas for backdrops.

"To plan for the shoot, we made lists of what we wanted the backdrops and props to be and assigned people to each item that needed to be brought to the school," Choate said.

Ideas for backdrops sparked through the use of social media and online photography blogs.

"We were looking on pinterest and other photographers' websites to see what kind of holiday themed photos they were taking," Henry said.

Even though ideas were thought out and organized, the preparations were still difficult.

"Preparing for the shoot was a long and extensive process," Saucedo said. "We had to build some of our props and it took a lot of dedication."

In the end the students came up with two different backdrops, both related to a winter based, holiday theme.

"We ended up with two set ideas," Choate said. "A blue, silver, and white set with snowflakes and a little white Christmas tree as well as a luxurious stained wood backdrop with bright Christmas ornaments, copper lights, and a furry white throw blanket to cover the mat."

Saucedo and her father built the second backdrop from scratch which ended up being all of the students' favorite.

"My dad and I built a wooden backdrop and we hung ornaments from it and even strung wired lights," Saucedo said. "It ended up looking so amazing, and we were very proud."

Henry believed the wood prop turned out the best but had an extra benefit to it.

"It's really great because Brenda will do this as a career and she already has a prop built that she can keep for next holiday seasons and things like that," Henry said.

When the project days came around, a bump in the plan occurred during the first shoot.

"I got an email during the infant shoot that one of the infants had canceled so I got a little nervous because then we would only have one at that point," Henry said. "We were supposed to have two babies, one canceled and then we just had the one to work with."

The final product was more than just a grade for Saucedo.

"I know that these parents are going to love all of the pictures that my classmates and I give them," Saucedo said. "We are capturing amazing moments that these families will cherish forever."

The project was an opportunity for real-life experience in the photography business.

"Overall, this was one of my favorite activities in the class and it's special to be able to have such a real world experience with clients," Saucedo said. ★



Look at me: Baby Charlie Perry grabs a glistening pink holiday ornament as seniors Jamie Dorsey, Jesus Elizondo, Alyssa Mota, and juniors Ally Bienvenu and Savannah Davis take the shot. Basketball coach Phillip Perry, Charlie's father, stood behind the photographers waving back and forth begging for her attention. *Photo by Granger Coats*

Starlight Theatre Company has a busy holiday season

Avila Dye
Staff Writer

After a whirlwind of rehearsing, the Starlight Theatre Company's senior-directed children's shows toured and performed at local elementary schools, to the delight of the actors and little kids alike. But Bowie's thespians don't have time for a breather—rehearsals for this year's musical, Tarzan, are already in full swing.

The children's shows ran at Bowie from Thursday, November 12 to Sunday, November 15. The following week, the directors and their casts toured in groups to several different elementary schools to perform their plays for the students there.

"The students seem to enjoy performing their shows for the elementary schools more than they do here," theatre teacher and director Betsy Cornwell said. "It's a very different experience because little kids react differently to the performances compared to high schoolers. They laugh at different things, they don't pick up on other things. It's a different dynamic between the performers and the audience."

Though the plays were performed for Bowie audi-

ences, the real target audience was the children. The actors played exaggerated, larger-than-life characters, but they made sure that they were characters the kids could still connect with and relate to.

"It was really rewarding to see the kids so happy after our performances," sophomore Tasha Anslyn said. "They wanted to meet us backstage, so we had to stay in-character, which was pretty fun."

Many of the shows were adaptations of familiar stories like Charlotte's Web or Charlie and the Chocolate Factory as well as fables and folktales. Not only were they fun, entertaining shows that made the kids laugh, they also all had morals behind them.

"The shows taught lots of good lessons," sophomore Anna Seningen said. "The show I was in taught about loving your friends and loving yourself and that you never have to change for anyone else to like you."

There were twelve plays in all, each of them directed by a senior member of the STC. The senior directors for this year were chosen at the end of last year after a rigorous selection process.

"It was a long process," senior director Chloe

Arevalo said. "There were twenty people who tried to be senior directors but only twelve made it, so that was really scary."

The children's shows are the first of two sets of shows that will be directed by the twelve seniors. The second round in the spring gives them a chance to direct more serious one-act plays, but the children's shows are the only ones that tour, making it a unique experience.

"I was really freaked out during tours, but it all worked out in the end," Arevalo said. "Even though it was stressful, everyone was working together as a family and we made it."

Despite the stress that goes into both becoming a senior director and being one, it's a rewarding position that gives the students lots of opportunities they wouldn't get otherwise.

"It's just really fun to direct people because you're working together to create something really cool, and also it's really rewarding to see children's reactions to something you've created," Arevalo said.

But after the children's shows were over, the members of the Starlight Theatre Company jumped straight into rehearsals for



Do Re Me: Gisselle Lozano, Stephanie Hernandez, and Lindsay Lehman stretch both their arms and vocal chords rehearsing for Tarzan. *Photo by Violet Glenewinkel*

their next big project—their biggest project of the year, in fact—Tarzan.

"The musical is always a big undertaking," Cornwell said. "It's the only time in the school year that so many people and different departments come together to create a single show."

The musical requires collaboration from many of the fine arts departments, and it gives students who are both musically and theatrically talented a chance to shine and show off their hard work in a way they usually wouldn't be able to in straight plays or choir concerts.

"I honestly never would

have expected to be a lead, especially since I'm just a sophomore and I was up against so many talented people," sophomore Michael Jefferson, one of the actors playing Tarzan's best friend Terk said. "It's amazing."

With rigorous rehearsals that include learning music, dance numbers, and coordinating complicated chorus scenes, the musical is really unlike any other show Bowie puts on during the year.

"It started out a little intimidating because of all the upperclassmen trying out and I wasn't sure if I was going to make it, but then it started to get really

fun because you get really close with your friends," freshman and Tarzan chorus member Kaedon Solana said.

Tarzan will offer lots of challenges and new experiences not only to students being in the musical for the first time, some of them a bit more surprising than others. But the stress always seems to be worth it.

"I'm nervous about performing only in a loincloth and I'm a little nervous about having to swing on the vine," said junior and one of the actors playing Tarzan Jackson Walker. "But I'm also really excited about just being able to prove that I can do this." ★