

Saliga, 18, winner of 'Live Your Dream' contest

By WILLIAM F. WEST
The Daily Advance

An 18-year-old Hertford woman on Saturday won the first-ever Live Your Dream competition at Southgate Mall by going the throwback route in her choice of music.

Shannon Saliga, a senior at Perquimans County High School, sang "Oh! Darling," which appeared on The Beatles' Abbey Road album in 1969. As the contest winner, Saliga receives an all-expense paid trip to the nearest American Idol tryout location, where she will get to audi-



tion for a chance to launch her American Idol dream.

Saliga said immediately after winning that she did not believe words could

PHOTOS COURTESY CHUCK PAGELS

Shannon Saliga, a senior at Perquimans County High School, won the first-ever Live Your Dream competition at Southgate Mall on Saturday.

explain her elation.

"My friends and family have always encouraged me through it," she said. "So, with their support, I was kind of confident." At the same time, she said she was still nervous.

Saliga was one of five finalists remaining from competitions that began in February. Also included in the five finalists was Josh Lassiter of Belvidere.

The contest began last month with the first two phases of the competition. In phase one, competitors stood before judges and sang a capella. In phase two, a whittled down group of competitors sang a song of their choice,



Winner Shannon Saliga (third from left) is surrounded by judges (l-r) Tony Stimatz, Judy McCreery (mother of American Idol winner Scotty McCreery), Toby Tate, Paula Gassaway and Walter Swan.

landing five finalists in the final leg of this local singing contest.

The five received feed-

back Saturday from celebrity judge Judy McCreery and from local judges Tony Stimatz, Walter Swan, Paula Gassaway, and Toby Tate before the panel made the final decision.

McCreery, of Garner, is the mother of 2011 American Idol winner Scotty McCreery. Her mother resides in Elizabeth City.

Terri Harrell, marketing manager of Southgate Mall, said McCreery called her office earlier in the week asking if she could be a judge in Saturday's final competition.

"She called me from Las Angeles where she was leaving the Academy of Country Music Awards," said Harrell. "She said she was coming in to Elizabeth City to surprise her mother and asked about being a judge. She said she gets alerts on her cell phone regarding anything pertaining to American Idol and had just received a Google alert about the Daily Advance article on this competition. I was so excited to hear from her."

McCreery gave Saturday's contestants positive criticism and comments that came from her unique insight and experience of being the mother of an American Idol national winner.

She complimented Saliga for keeping her eyes open and looking at the audience.

McCreery advised Saliga to work on the sound coming from her diaphragm so she could come across as more powerful, but she said she believed Saliga did a good job showing off her singing range.

McCreery also noted that, should Saliga get

to audition later, "You'll only get to sing 20 to 40 seconds, tops. I would sing your song choice over and over, video it, watch yourself and find out what the 'money' notes are, where the most power is shown in that song, so you can really showcase yourself in those few seconds that you're given."

Telling judges about herself, Saliga said her Saturday nights consist of reading books and playing video games. She also said that she believes in underdogs being able to relate to her.

Also, she told the judges she grew up in Ohio and has been singing as far back as she can remember. She first participated in a talent show when she was in the third grade.

Saliga plans on attending College of the Albemarle to study nursing. She has a dream that she could rank at American Idol.

When was younger, she would have liked to audition for American Idol she said, but the events weren't close to home. So when she heard about this chance to make it in June, she jumped at it.

"A lot of singing in the shower," she joked about preparing for the final competition.

Lassiter, 27 and director of contracts and grants at ECSU, sang Whitney Houston's, "I Look To You." He is perhaps the only contestant with a bit of professional singing experience, and one that did attend an Idol audition.

He's been playing the piano since age four.

"I learned piano," he says. "I was comfortably playing piano before I was singing."

Lassiter began playing piano at his family's church in Belvedere. But while he was living in the Raleigh area, he played piano and sang on Saturday nights for a restaurant in Cary.

"It was a mixed bag of music," he said. "Rascal Flatts, to Billy Joel to Eric Clapton."

His experience at American Idol, however, was not quite what he had anticipated.

"It's just not how it appears on television," he said. Basically, a whole lot of folks wait 10 hours for 10 seconds he said.

Lassiter's first song in this competition was "I'm Moving" by Rascal Flatts. But during the second round, he surprised the judges by performing a song by Boys II Men.

For the final competition, he accompanied himself on keyboard during his performance.

The other contestants were Rachel Jones, Abigail Freeman and Jessica Musico of Pasquotank and Camden counties.

Robert Kelly-Goss and Cathy Wilson contributed to this story.

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The Perquimans County Board of Elections will hold a Primary Election and the Nonpartisan Election for Board of Education on Tuesday May 8, 2012.

Voters who are already registered need not re-register. **Residents of the county who are eligible to vote and not registered must register by April 13, 2012** to be eligible to vote at this time. This is the deadline for all voter registration changes.

Polls will be open from 6:30 A.M. until 7:30 P.M.

Voters may apply for absentee ballots beginning **March 19, 2012 until May 1, 2012**. Request in writing must be made by voter or by a relative or a verifiable legal guardian. GS 163-230.1 Absentee ballots must be returned to the board of elections office by 5:00 P. M. Monday May 7, 2012.

Request should be mailed to the Perquimans County Board of Elections at P.O. Box 336 Hertford, N. C. 27944.

One Stop absentee voting at the Board of Elections office will begin **April 19, 2012 and end May 5, 2012 at 1:00 P.M.** Persons wishing to register and vote after the registration deadline may do so by appearing in person at a One-Stop absentee voting site, complete the voter registration application form and provide proof of residence by presenting valid documents showing current name and address.

The Board of Elections office is located at 601A S. Edenton Rd. Street. You may call our office at 426-5598 if you need additional information.

Absentee Board meetings: **April 17, April 24, May 1, May 4, May 7, 2012 at 5:00P.M.**

L. Paul Smith, Jr.,
Chairman, Perquimans County Board of Elections

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