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A break with the Boss

Newark woman spends unique day filming Springsteen music video

By BETSY PRICE, The News Journal

A camera-loving Newark woman with cerebral palsy recently spent a day filming at Orange Beach, N.J., for Bruce Springsteen's next music [video](#).

Brigitte Hancharick was picked for the gig -- the video for Springsteen's song, "Girls in Their Summer Clothes" -- after her [mother](#), Terry, heard a Heery Casting radio ad looking for area women from 15 to 80, with diversity.

"When they said 'diversity,' I wasn't sure they meant disabilities, but that was the first thing I thought, that it would be great for Brigitte," Terry said.

She wrote Heery and told them all about her daughter and her daughter's love of the camera. She even got her daughter-in-law, Karen Eller, to send some photos of Brigitte.

Almost immediately, she got a call back from the casting company, saying they were sending Brigitte's pictures to the director. Then the casting company called and said the director



Brigitte Hancharick, 20, of Newark, who has cerebral palsy, works with the film crew on the boardwalk at Orange Beach, N.J., while her mother, Terry, looks on.

Courtesy of Karen Eller



The smile never left Brigitte Hancharick's face during filming for Bruce Springsteen's next music video, according to her mother, Terry.

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wanted to use Brigitte in the shoot.

The family was thrilled for Brigitte, 20. Her cerebral palsy is severe enough that she is nonverbal and visually impaired. She can't walk, but can stand with a lot of support.

"But she loves the camera," Terry said. "She's always loved having her picture taken."

Terry says she wrote the casting company because of a technique she's employed ever since attending a University of Delaware Center for Disabilities seminar a couple of years ago.

"It was on one-person-centered planning," she explained. "From that I learned every day to ask two questions, and they are, 'What's important to Brigitte?' and 'What's important for Brigitte?' "

What's important for Brigitte is easy, Terry said. She has health care and daily care issues that have to be dealt with.

"But what's important to Brigitte is a little more difficult," Terry said. "After 21 years, I know how to read if she's happy and enjoys things, so I follow her lead on what she wants to do in life. For someone who is nonverbal, it's a little more difficult, but she's happy doing this kind of thing."

The family met the shooting crew the Sunday before Thanksgiving in Orange Beach, N.J., where they met with the assistant director and wardrobe director. The wardrobe director asked Brigitte to change into a blue shirt.

Out on the boardwalk, the crew blew some smoke behind her, and they played the "Girls in Their Summer Clothes" for Brigitte as they filmed.

"The smile never left her face," Terry said. "It was very cold on the boardwalk, and they had her in short sleeves. It didn't matter at all. She was happy."

The director then took the camera and sat close to Brigitte to do a lot of close-ups of her.

Brigitte was paid \$150 for her afternoon's filming.

The video is due out in December, Terry said. The director promised to send her a copy of the video and of pictures taken during the filming.

Terry hopes to build her daughter a portfolio that she can use to get more work.

Finding things for people with severe disabilities that they really

like to do and that's available to them is difficult, especially as they get older," she says.

"Brigitte couldn't even do a typical job," Terry said. "But I think she could do modeling. I think she could do acting. They couldn't be verbal parts, but to have her out on TV and out in the public would be wonderful."

The daughter of Terry and Joe Hancharick, Brigitte is the only girl in the family of six children, who range in age from 6 to 31. They are Kevin and Adam Eller, and Joey, Ryan and Christian Hancharick.

Children with disabilities as severe as Brigitte's frequently didn't live into their 20s. Now more do, because of better medical care and better schools, Terry said.

But that can create problems, too.

Brigitte turns 21 in May. She'll lose her medical care at A.I. duPont Hospital for Children, where she's been a patient her whole life, and will have to travel to visit doctors in Philadelphia because of her complex orthopedic problems, her mother said. She also must leave John G. Leach School, which she's attended for 17 years, and most likely move on to the Adult Action Center in Newark, a new day program that's "person-

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centered," her mother said.

"As parents, we now just want to experience the joy in life that other young people experience as they go out into the world," Terry said.

"This video shoot has made us a little more hopeful that the world will be accepting and allow her to experience the joy of living a full life."

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Posted by: tyler- Tue Nov 27, 2007 12:25 pm

What a touching story. It is so inspiring to think about what that mom 's life is like. When I think abut complaiing, I'll think of her.

Posted by: onamission- Tue Nov 27, 2007 11:08 am

Beautiful story! Every person deserves happiness....no matter what. 😊

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