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Bethel High School graduate wins "Hair Battle Spectacular"



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Jasmaine Cook, a graduate of Bethel High School in Hampton, moved her two sons to New York City to become a celebrity hair stylist. Right before, she had a dream catcher with seven spots tattooed in the middle of her chest to symbolize the time it would take to manifest her dream.

That was in 2003.

"That actually happened much faster than expected, and I was not fulfilled in that," says Cook, who went on Madonna's 32 country tour, 'Sticky & Sweet' in 2008-09. "I styled for celebrities and thought, 'I don't love this.' "

So, the freelance stylists' dream takes on new meaning, and seven years later so does her tattoo.

Last week, she stood before a group of cosmetology students at the very school that issued her license, New Horizons Career & Technical Education Center in Hampton, and told students that it was her imagination and

willingness to take risks that claimed her first place win on the first season of Oxygen's reality hair show, "Hair Battle Spectacular."

"I wanted to be a celebrity hairstylist, but what I didn't know was that 'I' would be the celebrity," she says. "I am happy seven years later."

The final episode aired Oct. 5 and Cook, or "Minista," was awarded \$100,000. The first episode aired Aug. 10 and followed 10 of America's hottest fantasy hair stylists battling it out in the part-sculpture and part-pop-art competition.

Vickie Servais, who has been teaching cosmetology at New Horizons for 25 years and is Cook's former teacher, was happy when she read Cook was going to be on the reality show and speechless when she won. She brought in a taping of the final episode for her students to watch.

"It was the best 55th birthday present and retirement gift anyone can give me," Servais says. "It's really rewarding when you see your students are successful."

Cook asked Servais' class, a group of about 40 juniors and seniors from high schools all over the Peninsula, to imagine where they would be in five years.

Jovani Burch, 17, says she is going to be the head nurse of Baldwin Hill's biggest hospital making eight figures, Minista is going to be her stylist and live in her mansion, and she's going to own two Yorkshire Terriers.

The senior at Phoebus High School has a lot of imagination and that's what Cook, 30, says is the key.

On the show, Cook was limited to the supplies on set. To make up for the lack thereof, she had to use imagination.

"Hair is art," she says. "What we do, we are artists."

"I was interested in how they could make stuff out of Styrofoam and how quickly they did it," says Jovani, who tuned in every show.

One of Cook's favorite pieces was the Rasta hat she made on episode five that was inspired by her West Indian heritage. Her mother, Celia, is from Trinidad and Tobago. Cook grew up watching her make hats and direct weddings.

"My mother cultivated my creativity," she says. "It's more about creativity than just doing hair. Standing behind the chair is just that."

That mindset is what inspired Cook, who follows the motto "the bigger the hair, the better," to audition for the show in the first place. She had just returned home to her boys in New York City from tour and moved to Philly. She didn't know how to break the news to Celijah, 12, and Jziah, 10, so she took a leap of faith.

"I told my boys I was coming home with this money," she says. "That's the only way they would let me leave."

She knew she had to win and she imagined it every night.

And when it happened she couldn't help but think she was still dreaming.

"I feel I was rewarded for my risks," she says. "I had the conviction that I needed to go above and beyond the call of duty every time I entered the ring. Because of that, I took risks, and sometimes that resulted in my pieces falling."

Before autographing textbooks for the students, Cook told the students she plans to speak to youth about the importance of exercising imagination, publish a book early next year and aspires to have her own TV show.

"But then like I said, God can take me to the moon instead. Every time I desire to create a "what's next" in my life, God has something so much better planned out."

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