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ENTERTAINMENT *guide*

Murrieta teen films educational webisodes aimed at middle-schoolers

By Amy Bentley, on April 16, 2013, at 12:28 am

For much of last week, the Freeman home in Murrieta was transformed into a movie set as filming wrapped up for a new global children's educational program aimed at exposing children to careers in science, technology, engineering and math.

Kaela Freeman, 17, of Murrieta stars in a new 12-episode comedy series geared for middle school students.

Kaela, an actress and singer who has appeared in commercials and music videos, plays Diamond Wilson, a pampered Southern California teen who wants to be famous.

In the story, her mother, a scientist, forces Diamond to take a work-related trip with her to Africa and at first, Diamond is upset because she doesn't want to leave her friends. But Diamond ends up having many adventures, learns about science, and has a change of heart.

Taping took place April 7-12 at the Freeman home, which subbed as Diamond's house; at Vista Murrieta High School, which was transformed into the fictitious "Maven High;" at the Robin's Nest café in Old Town Temecula, where Diamond and her friends hang out; and at the Wooden Nickel Ranch in Menifee, which was used to replicate Africa.

The webisodes – each about six to 10 minutes long – will air in June on a new website to be called www.swivetzone.com.

The series is called "Swivet Zone," after the word swivet, which means nervous excitement, or in a fluster.

In the storyline, Diamond and her pals are creating their own website called, "The Swivet Zone."

"We hope it will go global. It's a Web-based initiative so kids all over the world can see it," said Kaela's mother, Elisabeth Freeman, a former scientific researcher for Amgen and the series' executive producer.

"It inspires kids on the Internet," she said. "They're sitting on the Internet anyway. Let's give them content in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM)."

Freeman is president of the non-profit International Center for Professional Development (ICPD).

"Swivet Zone" is a STEM program of the ICPD, which offers continuing education programs, mentoring and Web-based support for students, veterans and science professionals.

ICPD also seeks to expose students of color to the sciences and encourage workforce diversity in the biotech industry. The ICPD is funding "Swivet Zone," which also stars several actors from Los Angeles.

A committee of science educators planned the content for "Swivet Zone," which will include interactive online games. Freeman plans to take "Swivet Zone" to high schools nationwide as an educational tool to promote STEM education.

The series includes video footage that was shot in 2010 in Africa when Kaela accompanied her mother on a trip to South Africa and Zimbabwe. Freeman's 19-year-old son Tyler, a college student at Cal State Fullerton, is creating the music for "Swivet Zone."

Kaela said her trip to Africa was a great experience. She met many interesting people and saw plenty of wildlife on safari.



Diamond Wilson's mother, played by Los Angeles actress Zondra Wilson, tells Diamond, seated in bed, and her friend Debbie about the trip to Africa. (Amy Bentley/SWRNN)



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“I would love to go back,” said Kaela, who is homeschooled and graduates from high school this spring. “You don’t even know how other people live on the other side of the world.”

Kaela said she also had fun working on “Swivet Zone.”

“People will follow the story and subliminally follow science. You can’t help but learn.”

Amy Bentley is a local writer and regular contributor to SWRNN.

Taping took place April 7-12 at the Freeman home, which subbed as Diamond’s house. (Amy Bentley/SWRNN)

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Zondra Wilson
May 11, 2013 at 1:51 pm · Reply
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