

children

# Model kids



By DENISE FRANKLIN  
Sentinel staff writer

**F**OR ANY KID, chipping three permanent front teeth would be a bummer. But for Troy Malmin of Santa Cruz, it was a calamity.

When the freckle-faced 11-year-old fell off his skateboard last week, he lost more than teeth; he lost a chance to audition in Los Angeles for a TV commercial.

Troy, along with his 7-year-old sister Hayley, is a child model. The Malmins and three other local children who trained with modeling consultant Lorraine Caton, recently returned with 35 awards from the International Modeling and Talent Association competition in Los Angeles.

Prizes aside, life in the fast lane of child modeling is not filled with glamour, pampering and limo service. Parents must be ready to drive to LA or San Francisco with only a few hours notice; kids must give up playing with their friends to make modeling and acting assignments; money must be spent on training and photos for the child's portfolio.


"Sometimes, I don't know until 6 the night before that they have to be in San Francisco by 9 in the morning," said Joanne Malmin, Troy's and Hayley's mom. "If it is a photo session, sometimes it will last an hour; if it is a fitting, sometimes it lasts just 15 minutes. Sometimes, we drive all the way to San Francisco and they say, 'Sorry, you're not right' or the clothes don't fit."

There have been times when Joanne and Jerry Malmin have driven their children to Los Angeles for a 15-minute audition, driven all the way back to Santa Cruz and received a phone call to come back the next day. They try to make each trip an adventure, with a stop at a zoo, the circus or museum after the assignment. By owning their own business, they can pick up and leave town on a moment's notice.

The Malmins make sure the kids keep up with their schoolwork. To retain their work permits, children must maintain a "C" average. California law also requires three hours of school instruction a day on the set of a job.

The Malmin kids are "veterans." They have been modeling for over two years and have signed contracts with Taie modeling agency.





Siblings  
Hayley and  
Troy  
Malmin  
are the  
'veterans'  
among local  
child  
models.  
They've  
been  
at it for two  
years.

Laura Aldridge

ifornia law also requires three hours of school instruction a day on the set of a job.

The Malmin kids are "veterans." They have been modeling for over two years and have signed contracts with Taafe modeling agency in Los Altos and San Francisco and with Cunningham modeling agency in L.A.

A table in their family room groans with the 22 awards they picked up this year in L.A. and 14 they won last year.

The kids especially like the fringe benefit of meeting other kids who model. "I made a best friend," boasted Troy, who now sports capped front teeth. "We were going to an Emporium audition and I didn't notice him the first time. But on the same day, we were both called back for a Macy's com-

mercial and became friends. We keep trying to get to sleep over at each other's house."

"It's fun," his energetic little sister echoed. "You get to try on clothes and stuff. At this one audition, me and this girl became friends. We took a picture where the jump rope was tied on us. One time, a frog was jumping over my foot and after the picture, I got to hold it."

**F**OR THE kids, this life is filled with opportunities to see themselves in magazines and on television. And it is filled with money to put away for a college education and to spend now on that two-wheeler bike of their dreams; that's what the Malmins did with their earnings.

According to Caton, "They can make \$95 an hour. They can make \$450 a day. If they make a com-

*Please see MODELS — E4*



# Models/ Kids win prizes in LA

Continued from Page E1

mercial, they can make thousands of dollars a year."

Parents are required to put the child's earnings in an account in the child's name, according to a spokesman from Taaje agency.

Parents say the money is not the primary reason their little Justin, Elizabeth, Kevin, Hayley or Troy stepped into modeling.

The kids definitely have to enjoy it, stressed their moms. There's little room in the business for pushy "stage" parents and uncooperative children.

Justin Neill of Scotts Valley, now 7, begged his mother Tammy when he was 5 years old to let him be on television like his favorite actor, Ricky Schroder of "Silver Spoon." Justin still makes a point of watching the sitcom's reruns in the afternoon.

Justin has been acting since age 4, when he was selected to be on a Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk com-

mercial. Since then, he's done a public service commercial and an Easter commercial for the Boardwalk with his 5-year-old sister, Lindsay. Both children recently signed with the Taaje agency.

In LA, Justin received a second-place trophy for a Cherrio commercial, won ribbons in the dance and fashion print competition and generated the interest of agents.

Commercials are his favorite, Justin said, "because I like talking in front of people."

**K**EVIN MOON, 12, also prefers commercials over modeling. "I like being on TV. I like my face being shown on TV," said the sixth grader at New Brighton Middle School who won first place in monologue and \$100 at the recent Los Angeles competition. He also won honorable mention in the Child Star of the Year contest and three ribbons.

Kevin wanted so much to study modeling and acting that he put

\$100 of his own money toward the cost of classes.

"We took things real slow," said his mother Donna Moon. I wasn't going to go into anything unless I was sure he really wanted to. If I figured that if he put his own money into it, he was serious."

Kevin actually began working when the children at his day care were given the chance to appear in commercials and as extras in movies. At age 7, Kevin appeared in the film "Lost Boys" and in a Boardwalk commercial. He also appeared in a documentary filmed at the Monterey Bay Aquarium with Doris Day and in the television movie of the week, "Whisper Kills" with Loni Anderson.

When Kevin was 10, he expressed interest in modeling, according to his mom. So, she took him to a talent search put on by Nouvelle modeling school, which has since

Please see **MODELS** — E5

# Models/ Agents show interest

Continued from Page E4

moved from the area. Although Nouvelle was interested in Kevin, his mother decided to send him to classes with Caton last February. In August, he contracted with Taaje.

He signed up too late for the busy back-to-school period, but he has modeled for Mervyn's grand opening sale ads.

"As long as Kevin is enjoying it, I want him to pursue it," said Donna. "He feels that even if his career goes nowhere, it will help him with his self esteem. He is much more of a disciplined child because he has had to learn discipline."

**E**LIZABETH Gusarson's mom, Claudia Gusarson, says her 6-year-old daughter also has learned discipline from modeling classes and from the recent competition.

"She's learned patience," said her mom. "At this age, being patient is difficult. At the competition, she had to wait in line for her turn. She was all dressed up, so she couldn't play around. She had never been on a runway before."

The kindergartener at Vine Hill School in Scotts Valley came away

with four ribbons and a trophy as first runner-up in the monologue competition. Before the judges, she recited "Everything I Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten."

"I wasn't nervous," Elizabeth said of the monologue competition. "There weren't many people. There was just a little teeny bit of people. I thought because there weren't many people, it was just a practice and all of a sudden, nope, there wasn't anymore monologue (competition)."

Claudia and Don Gusarson never thought of putting their only child in modeling classes. But Elizabeth was "discovered" by Caton when she was playing with Caton's granddaughter at a McDonald's restaurant. Elizabeth now has an interview set up with the Taaje agency and another agency in LA is interested.

"They want you to be down in LA

at the drop of a hat, but we aren't ready for that," said Claudia. "We want to take this in stages. If Elizabeth ever gets to the point where she really enjoys modeling, then we'll consider it. We'd like to enhance her abilities, let her learn and grow..."

"We are so new to this, we don't know what is in store."