

■ **MODEL:** Grafton teenager successful in auditioning for Canadian Model and Talent Convention

Putting her best face forward in pursuit of a dream

BY CECILIA NASMITH

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Every young person should have a dream, and 15-year-old Dena Gouweloos of Grafton has hers: hitting the runway as a professional model.

The Cobourg District Collegiate Institute East Grade 11 International Baccalaureate student is working hard to make that dream become true, and she hopes to take a giant step forward at the Canadian Model and Talent Convention April 30 to May 3 in Toronto.

“I’ve always had an interest in fashion, of course. I’ve always had my eye on the industry, all the glamorous actors, actresses, models, high-end fashion.”

Dena Gouweloos, aspiring model

“Models from all across Canada come, and there are a lot of seminars and workshops as well as competitions ranging from all kinds of modelling, acting, singing and dancing — very wide-ranging competition,” Gouweloos explained.

“It’s a great opportunity, because there are agencies from around the world present.”

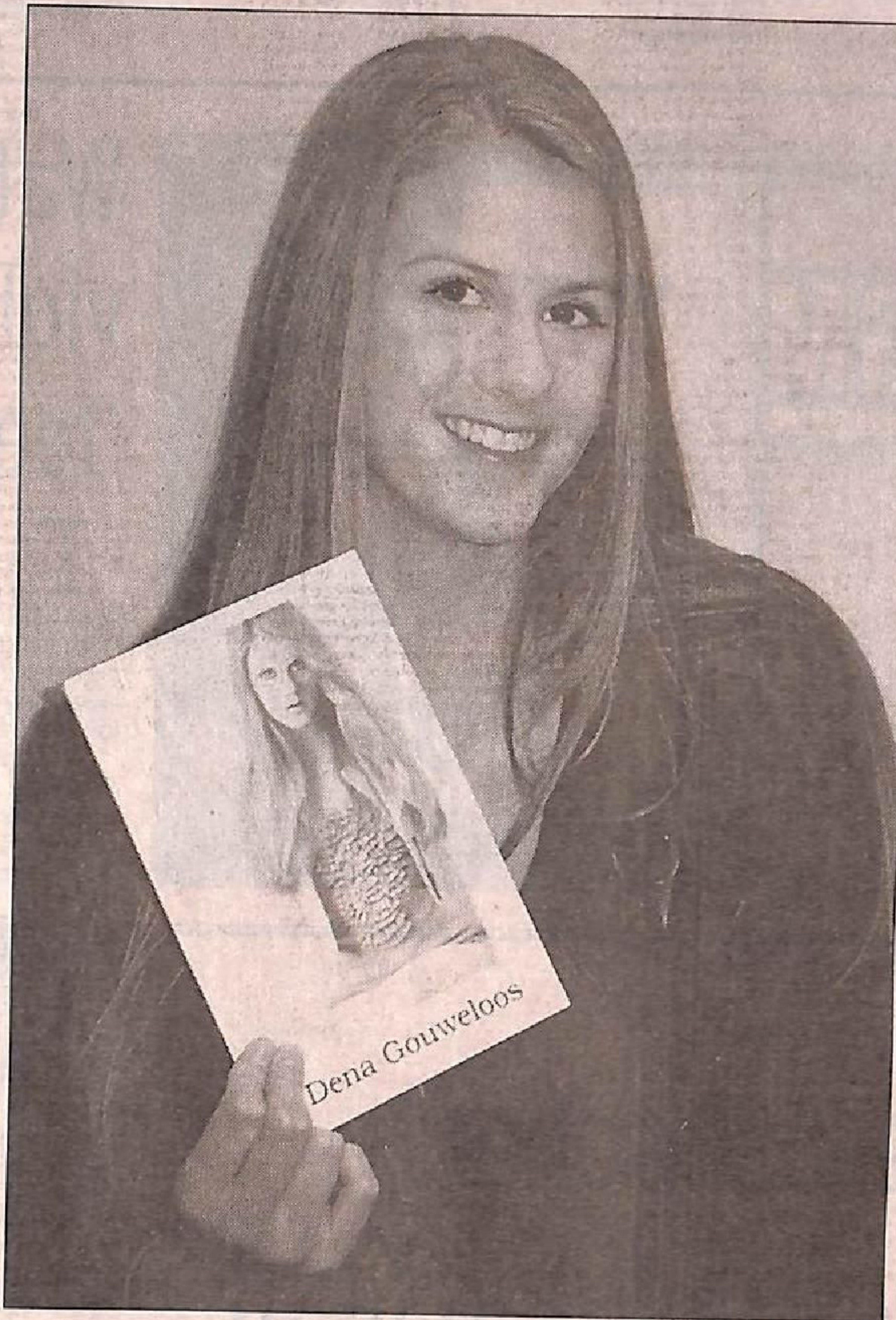
This is not exactly an open event, Gouweloos added. She had to audition just to be allowed to attend, a process that involves photo portfolios and telling why attending is important and how it could be a benefit.

Those who are selected are required to take additional workshops and to continue to audition to participate in specific competitions. Gouweloos has qualified for a number of them, including runway, photography, cover, swimsuit, TV commercial monologue and improv.

“It’s a very long and painfully selective process, but it’s very beneficial,” she said.

“I will have the opportunity to meet with some of the world’s top modelling and talent agents, attend workshops and seminars presented by the agents themselves, and participate in several competitions — this is a rare opportunity for me to jump-start my modelling career.”

The auditioning and attending process are hugely expensive, with



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Aspiring model Dena Gouweloos of Grafton displays the kind of slick promotional material that makes it so expensive to realize her dream — which she will be pursuing at the Canadian Model and Talent Convention April 30 to May 3 in Toronto.

glossy professional material and web posting involved, so Gouweloos is hoping to arrange some sponsorships to help her in this important event. Sponsors will get a mention in the program, she added.

Gouweloos has wanted to be a model since she was a little girl.

“I’ve always had an interest in fashion, of course,” she recalled. “I’ve always had my eye on the industry, all the glamorous actors, actresses, models, high-end fashion.”

She got her start by going on-line and finding the Mode Elle Model and Talent Agency in Belleville, where she enrolled in April 2007

and promptly began their 18-week course on modelling, acting, self-enhancement, and the business aspects of modelling as well as the performance aspects.

“When we first went in to see Audra, the owner of Mode Elle, she said there’s going to be a lot of noes in the industry, a lot more noes than yeses, but don’t worry — every yes is an opportunity to make it big,” she recalled.

Her ultimate goal is professional modelling, and her parents, Ed and Sue, are very supportive — providing that she have a Plan B, meaning post-secondary education. In that case, she figures, her modelling can help pay for her university costs.