



Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Milton's Alaina Brouwer is currently splitting her time between leading a theatre camp and portraying Lady Jane Seymour at the Ontario Renaissance Festival. Here she is seen in costume, checking out some of the crafts at the local theme park.

Young acting coach gets rave reviews

By STEVE LeBLANC
The Champion

Alaina Brouwer is appearing on neither stage nor screen these days but her acting talents are nevertheless gaining rave reviews.

The 19-year-old thespian is busy with two very different and distinct local gigs this summer which have combined to test her overall ability.

On weekends she caters to a broad-based audience at the Ontario Renaissance Festival, where she brings to life Lady Jane Seymour, one of King Henry VIII's future brides.

Initially cast as a member of the village ensemble last season — her first at the local theme park — Ms Brouwer's aptitude for improvisation and English dialect quickly landed her a spot in the Royal Court, which comprises mainly American performers.

"I love it," enthused the E.C. Drury High School graduate. "It's not work, it's paid play."

While the Ontario Renaissance Festival represents her first regular gig, it's by no means her only experience in the spotlight.

A long-time student at the Milton Centre for Music and Theatre Arts, Ms Brouwer had already been in half a dozen school plays by the time she entered E.C. Drury. While in grade 10 she gave an inspired performance as Rosie Alvarez in the time-honoured classic *Bye Bye Birdie*.

She lent out her talents three more times during a fast track through high school. It was this early training period that set the stage — figuratively of course — for stardom at the highly prestigious Sears Drama Festival.

Part of a production of Dan Cock's *Dance*, she played an eccentric and paranoid female lead to critical acclaim and won the festival's Acting Award of Excellence in 1996 during her freshman year at the University of Toronto.

Recalled Ms Brouwer, "That was one of the first opportunities I had to do straight acting. I'm really not sure if I prefer that to musical gigs. It would be nice to have a career that combined both."

Yet a third avenue open to her involves offer-

ing guidance and encouragement to aspiring young actors and actresses — something for which she's also demonstrated a knack.

According to many local youngsters and their parents, Ms Brouwer has been a wonder in her first summer leading the town's theatre camp, a job she stumbled onto during a visit to the local employment centre.

"Alaina's just amazing with the kids. She makes the camp so enjoyable for them," said one mother, who couldn't stop praising the actress/instructor.

At first Ms Brouwer didn't think she had enough experience to lead such a camp — having only helped choreograph a few school plays last year — but says teaching has quickly become second nature.

Along with camp assistants Megan Anderson, Kristen Harding and Chris Marinangeli, she instructs eight to 14-year-olds in everything from singing and dancing to character development.

Classes are held from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily

• see BROUWER on page 16

HASS deal is reached

A deal has been reached ending a bitter three-week strike by social workers at Halton Adolescent Support Services (HASS).

The three-year agreement affects about 55 employees, members of the Ontario Public Employees Service Union, who were to be back to work on Monday. They've been off the job since July 17, leaving troubled teens without housing and family counselling services.

"It's a huge relief," said Ugo Filice, HASS executive director. "The first order of business is to get things running as soon as possible and act professionally."

Darrell Baudoux, the union rep, said 68 per cent of the membership ratified the deal Friday. The pact offers no wage increase, but gives an extra day of vacation and double time-and-a-half pay for residential workers and relief staff on statutory holidays.

The employer received a phased-in reduction in vacation time for six fulltime mentors. There was also an agreement to set up committees allowing the union to discuss problems with the volunteer board.

NEWSLINES

Dino days at museum

Halton Region Museum is going prehistoric.

From August 13 to 18, 12 to 5 p.m., Dino Days will feature sights and sounds of the creatures that wandered the earth 70 million years ago.

Visitors will have the opportunity to build a dinosaur from real bones, watch movies and dig for fossils.

Renowned children's performer Doug Barr will stage a dinosaur theme performance on Saturday, Aug. 15.

All seats cost \$5.

To reserve tickets, or for more information, call 875-2200.

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