

Fans hold rally for Canadian Idol star

BY DANIEL SCHWAB

"Ashley Coulter's *Madness*" gripped her fans during a rally for support of the Canadian Idol contestant at Lakeview Park in Belle River Sunday.

Dozens of supporters showed up to cheer on the Emeryville native, who was preparing to compete against six other contenders Aug. 7 on the popular TV show on CTV.

Although she's staying in Toronto during the competition, Coulter phoned in to thank her fans for their loyalty.

"I love you all and I hope to hear from you Monday night!" Her message boomed over a loud speaker to deafening cheers from

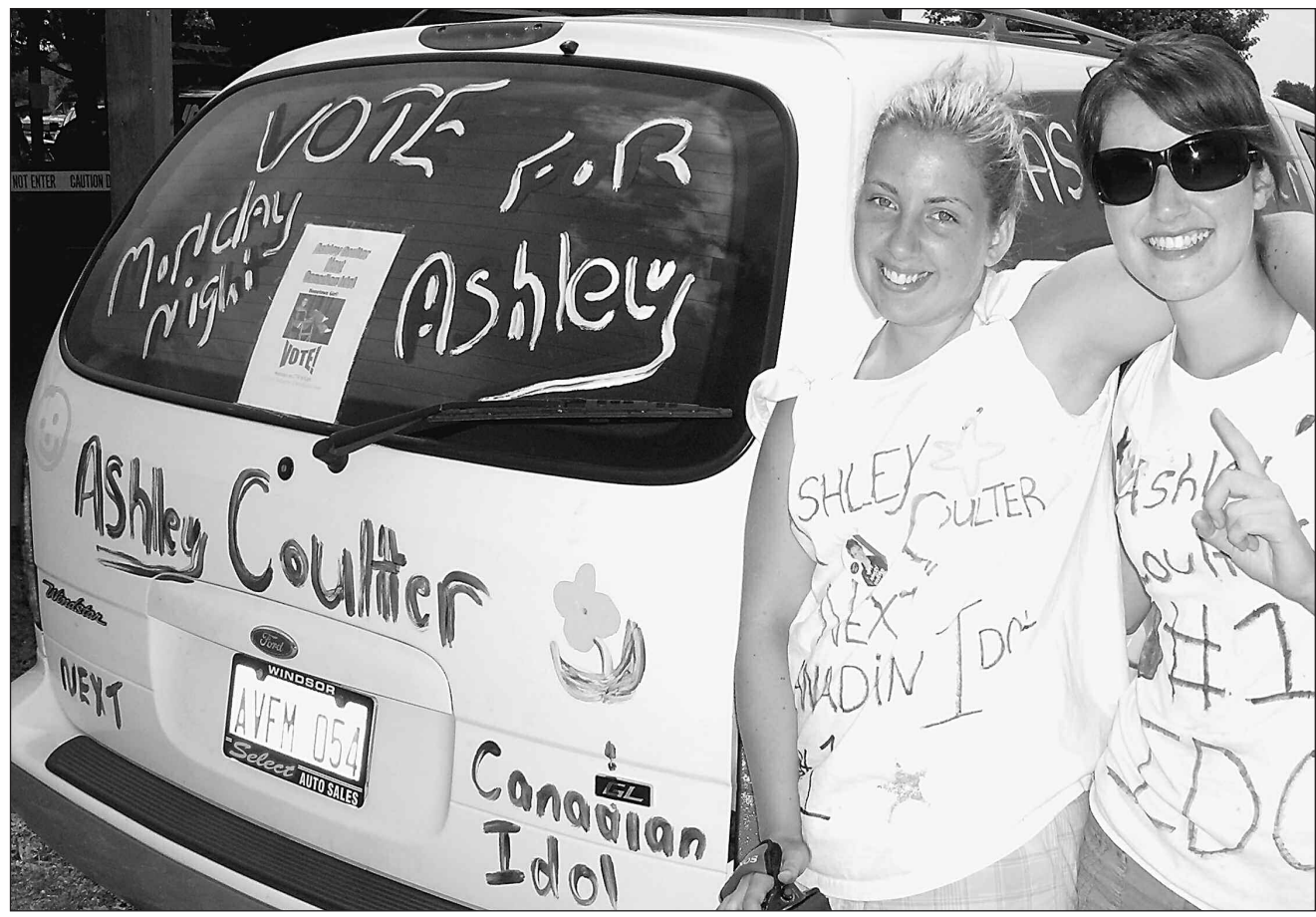
the crowd.

Local radio station CHYR 96.7 hosted the event, which also included singing from Ashley's younger sister, Amberley.

Amberley said she speaks with her sister regularly by phone.

"(Ashley) is taking this experience one day at a time," Amberley said. "She doesn't want to get ahead of herself. She also knows that every person she meets in this competition might be able to help her out in the future."

The girls' mom, Kimberly Coulter, said seeing the amount of local support her daughter is receiving is "extremely



CRAZY ABOUT COULTER – Brianna Wood, 16, and Samantha Myer, 17, show their support for Canadian Idol hopeful Ashley Coulter during a rally at Belle River Lakeview Park Aug. 6. Dozens of fans, friends and family showed up to cheer for Coulter, who phoned from Toronto to thank them for their support.

overwhelming."

"I'm so grateful and thankful," she said. "From the bottom of my heart, thank you so much."

Ashley, 23, has enjoyed a string of successful performances on Canadian Idol, singing such songs as "I'm The Only One" by Melissa Etheridge and "American Woman" by Lenny Kravitz.

Coulter's cousin Brianna

Wood, 16, is convinced Ashley has the talent to become the next winner on the show.

"She's very unique in her own way," Wood said. "She has a wide vocal range and can hit all the notes."

The rally was held in conjunction with a yard sale benefiting Doug and Jenny Mullen of Leamington.

After the birth of her son

Sean last year, doctors diagnosed Jenny with having pulmonary fibrosis. Last week she was admitted to Windsor Regional Hospital in Windsor, and later moved to Toronto General Hospital.

She is now awaiting double-lung transplant surgery, while living in a Toronto apartment.

"We don't know how much money will be needed," her husband Doug said. "There are a lot of expenses not covered by OHIP or benefits."

Mullen said he expects his wife will be staying in Toronto for a minimum of six months, and the yard

sale is an attempt to offset some of the costs for rent and medical bills.

"You take things for granted until something like this comes along," Mullen said, getting a little choked up. "But the support of the people in this area is just great. Not just in our hometown, but people from many communities."

As of press time for this edition of the Essex Free Press, Ashley Coulter was a contestant on Canadian Idol. Contestants perform and fans vote on Monday nights. Results are revealed on Tuesday when contestants are voted off the show.

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