

PHOTOS



Submitted photo Barboursville native Derek Keeton is working as a model in New York City. Keeton work for DNA Model Management, the No. 3-ranked modeling agency in the world.

Barboursville native posing for top retailers and designers

Jan 17, 2008 @ 12:16 AM By KAYLIN ADKINS The Herald-Dispatch

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BARBOURSVILLE -- While many young people don't know what they want to do with their lives, one local man has found an unexpected path.

For 21-year-old Barboursville native Derek Keeton, the transition from high school athletics to modeling in New York City was a difficult road, often lacking glitz and glamour. It took plenty of rejection and perseverance before he found his current success.

Keeton, who played a variety of sports as a student at Cabell Midland High School, first got interested in modeling when he was 18. His best friend's sister took him to an open call at what was then the Radisson Hotel. According to his father, Donnie Keeton, modeling became a hobby from that point on.

Keeton advanced at that first open call and then traveled to Ohio and Florida for more auditions. After one year at Marshall, he decided to make modeling a career.

"It kind of all snowballed, and the next thing you know, they wanted him to go to New York," Donnie Keeton said. "It all just happened so fast. He wasn't prepared. I wasn't prepared."

Keeton eventually landed at DNA Model Management in New York, the No. 3-ranked modeling agency in the world. The agency employs about 80 males and 20 females.

He said his big break came when he modeled for the Macy's Back to School campaign.

"I liked the Macy's stuff a lot because it was seen in New York and Boston," he said. "It was on phone booths and subways. A lot of people noticed."

Keeton said he has participated in about 12 runway shows -- anything from Hugo Boss to Jeremy Scott. He has also appeared in publications such as Cosmopolitan, Vibe and Men's Vogue and graced the covers of Complex and D&R.

Recently, Keeton modeled for Abercrombie & Fitch in the Hamptons and said he hopes to do future shoots in Miami and Cape Town, Africa.

"I'm still young in the business, and ethnic, so it may take me a little while to get to Milan, which has a lot of runway shows," Derek said. "In due time, if I stick it out, I know eventually it might take its course."

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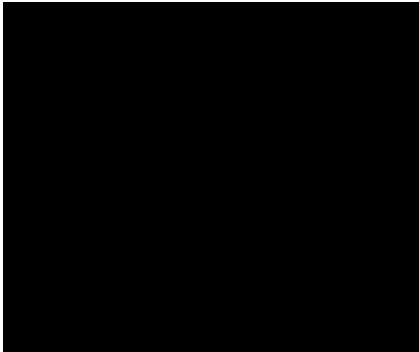
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Keeton has worked with Mya, Katharine McPhee and LL Cool J in advertisements. He has also met stars from various spectrums, including Richard Gere, Uma Thurman, Jessica Simpson, Hulk Hogan, Sheryl Crow and Mary-Kate Olsen.

Donnie Keeton said the shoot with "American Idol" star Katharine McPhee opened up several doors for his son. Tidbits from the shoot were detailed in Star Magazine and on "Entertainment Tonight."

"In the modeling industry, it may not have been that big of a deal, but from an outside perspective, it was a big deal to me," Donnie Keeton said.

Keeton said he hopes to work with supermodels Adriana Lima, Kate Moss and Gisele Bündchen in the future. He also said Jessica Alba would be at the top of his list.

He credits his success to his father, stepmother, aunt and grandmother for always supporting and checking up on him.

"My dad's been very supportive with everything I do," he said.

Many attributes have aided Keeton in an already-successful modeling career, including good communication skills and a memorable personality.

"That's what it's about in New York. It's all about personality and standing out," he said. "Also, being yourself. I've been myself since day one. I haven't changed who I am."

For Keeton, that means sticking to his morals and saying no when asked to do "crazy things."

"I think that says a lot about his character because it's easy for people to get there and to do whatever just to try to make it," Donnie Keeton said. "He calls me and says, 'Dad, this is what they're asking me to do. Do you think this is something I should do?' He's made the right choices. It's always been more important to him that his character and his name are upheld."

Keeton said his faith is also very important.

"I'm a very religious guy," he said. "I don't think I'd be anywhere without God. I've gone through a lot, and I've always come through somehow on the edge of nothing."

Despite his early modeling success, Keeton also works at a four-star restaurant on Barnes Street and bartends for catering parties.

"I don't want people to think that I've totally made it," he said. "I haven't totally made it yet. I'm still young at this. I'm only 21, and I've done all right. I've still got a lot to do, a lot of work to be done. But, I have my foot in the door. I'm a model in New York. I can say that, fortunately."

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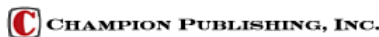
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