

# PRETTY AMAZING

After a year-long search for our most incredible readers, five unique girls came to New York City with a common goal—to be a cover star. While they all managed to touch your hearts, only one could be your winner! **BY JANE BIANCHI**



**35,000**  
READER  
ENTRIES!



**5**  
EXCITED  
FINALISTS!



**4**  
GLAMOROUS  
DAYS IN NYC!



**1**  
AMAZING  
COVER STAR!

BEHIND-THE-SCENES PHOTOS: DAVID LANG, HEDI GUTMAN, AND ANNA MARINA KARADIMAS. ON SHANNON: DRESS, HERVE LÉGER; HEELS, L.A.M.B. ON ZOÉ: DRESS, HERVE LÉGER; HEELS, WALTER STEIGER. ON ANN: DRESS, HERVE LÉGER; WEDGES, ZOÉ'S OWN. ON LAUREN: DRESS, HERVE LÉGER; HEELS, ALDO. ON NINA: DRESS, HERVE LÉGER; HEELS, UNITED NUDE.



**banding together**  
Our five finalists joined forces to direct and style this photo—each of them wrote what she stands for on her arm.

**TUNE IN!**  
Watch *MTV Presents Seventeen's Pretty Amazing: The Search for the Next Cover Star*. For dates and times, visit [seventeen.com/prettyamazing](http://seventeen.com/prettyamazing).

PHOTOGRAPHS BY TERRY DOYLE

# zoë damacela

AGE: 19

HOMETOWN: Chicago, IL



# THE WINNER!

With homelessness behind her and high fashion on the horizon, Zoë has proven that she's more than a survivor—she's a success.

**“T**he first time someone offered to pay me to make her a dress, I couldn't believe it! It was my friend Simone—an amazing dancer—so I made it ballet-style, with spaghetti straps and a tutu bottom. I sold it for \$13—and the day she wore it

to school, girls stopped her in the halls and said, 'Cool outfit!' I felt so proud! Growing up, I never fit in. My family didn't have money, and I had medical issues, so I got made fun of for wearing an eye patch, a scoliosis brace, and hand-me-downs. But here I was, designing clothes—*finally* getting the respect I'd always wanted!

## humble beginnings

I had a rough childhood. When my mom emigrated from Ecuador to the US, she had trouble getting jobs. When she got pregnant with me, my dad bolted. We were on our own. By day, she worked as a clown at Six Flags. At night, she took college classes to get a higher-paying job and make our lives better.

It was tough for her to make ends meet. When we weren't crashing on relatives' couches, we lived in low-income housing. When things got really bad, we even had to stay in a homeless shelter. My mom and I slept on one twin cot in a room filled with people, hiding our stuff under our bed so nobody would steal it. I kept thinking, Why are we here?

But Mom taught me that you can't sit around feeling sorry for yourself. When I turned 8 and we were finally living in a house, I was *dying* for a Razor scooter. But it was \$60! My mom said, 'If you earn half, I'll pay for the other half.' So I used art supplies to create greeting cards, and sold them on the sidewalk. I earned my \$30! I realized that I didn't have to accept my situation—I had the power to change it. I was tired of being too poor to get ice cream with my friends or to buy new clothes. From that point on, I was determined to dig myself and my mom out of the financial hole we were in.

When I entered middle school, I got picked on so much about my wardrobe that I felt like a misfit. So when I wasn't selling cards, I'd curl up with a sketchbook and draw dresses I'd wear someday.

Creating pretty things was the only thing that helped me forget the nasty comments.

## passion for fashion

Freshman year, I heard that a sewing class was being offered. Could I turn my ideas into actual clothes?!? As I sewed my first dress, I was shocked at how naturally it came to me. I made a white dress with a black midriff and black straps—it looked awesome!

I bought fabric and made every outfit I wore to school that year. I could finally strut down the halls! Girls would ask, 'Where'd you get that?' After I'd made Simone's dress, other friends asked me to make them one, then my friends' moms, and even the girls who teased me! By sophomore year, I'd earned \$2,000!

## taking care of business

Junior year, sewing was no longer just a hobby—it was my ticket out of poverty. So I took a business class to learn how to price my clothes. Turns out, they were worth hundreds! I decided to enter my business plan into a national competition, and I placed second in the country! The prize? Meeting President Obama! Then *that* publicity landed me on *The Tyra Show*! Being recognized for my hard work felt totally unreal.

But there was still drama at school. As I was sitting in class one day, I heard I'd won Most Likely to Succeed. I was thrilled. But then I heard a girl whisper, 'People only voted for her because of Tyra and Obama.' It stung so badly—that pain of being made fun of all those years came rushing back. But I collected myself. I realized that people were always going to try to cut me down, whether I was on the bottom or the top. I knew then that it's up to *me* to rise above it all.

Today I'm putting myself through Northwestern University, and I devote all my free time to my business. I've sold more than 300 one-of-a-kind pieces—enough to pay for most of my tuition. But my business isn't what I'm most proud of. I donate clothes to fashion shows for the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless. Ticket sales raise money for people who grew up like I did. I know there's a girl out there who dreams of designing but can't afford a sewing machine. If I can show her how to make a better life for herself, then I'll know I've succeeded."

ON ZOË: (MAIN PHOTO) JACKET, ZADIG & VOLTAIRE; DRESS, MARC BY MARC JACOBS; NECKLACE, DANNIJO; SOCKS, HUE; HEELS, WALTER STEIGER. COLLECTION SHOTS: JUBE MANDERICO.



**rocking it**  
Zoë hits the streets to model her most recent collection.



**hard at work**  
In her dorm room at Northwestern University, Zoë sews for three hours a day.

# THE FIGHTER

She's the living definition of driven—and speeding her way to racing history!

## shannon mcintosh

AGE: 22

HOMETOWN: Miamisburg, OH

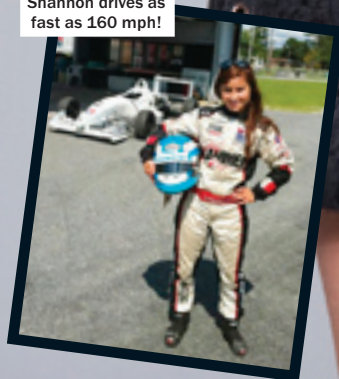
WHY SHE'S PRETTY AMAZING:

"When I was growing up, my friends never understood why I raced cars. The crowd would stare at me like I was a freak—a little girl kicking grown guys' butts on the track. But I never thought of myself as a *female* driver, just a driver. Nothing scared me!

As I got older and more advanced in the sport, I had to learn to be a business woman and network like crazy. Racing can be expensive, and I needed hundreds of thousands of dollars in sponsorships. I got a ton of nos at first, so I couldn't race year-round. But this year, I raised enough to race full-time! I've won more than 100 races in my career, and I'm proud to be the only American woman racing in IndyCar's USF2000 Series. (It's like the Indy 500 minor leagues.) I plan to go pro in 2014 and compete in the Indy 500. No woman has ever won—I *will* be the first!

One day when I was doubting that I'd ever succeed, I was Googling 'inspiration' and found the Japanese word *nintai*. It means to be patient and persevere. It reminds me that there are always going to be obstacles, but that's no reason to give up. That's my mantra—and my message to other girls: You can make your dreams happen."

**a need for speed**  
Shannon drives as fast as 160 mph!



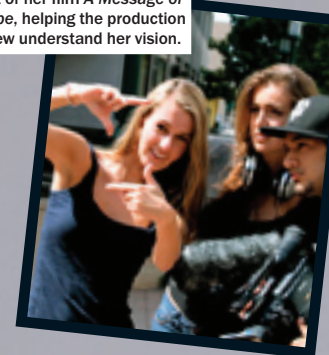
ON SHANNON: JACKET, DIESEL; TEE, MALIBU NATIVE; SKIRT, AMBER SAKAI; NECKLACE, CRUX; BELT, HER OWN.

# THE VISIONARY

Film directing gave her a voice—now she's using it to tell other teens' stories.

**a director is born**

Lauren takes charge on the set of her film *A Message of Hope*, helping the production crew understand her vision.



ON LAUREN: JACKET, DKNY; TEE, PO PORI; JEANS, 7 FOR ALL MANKIND; CHAIN NECKLACE, SEQUIN; PEARL NECKLACE, BELARGO JEWELRY; GEM RINGS, SATYA JEWELRY; GOLD RINGS, DANNIJO; HEELS, WALTER STEIGER.

## lauren lindberg

AGE: 18

HOMETOWN: Danville, CA

WHY SHE'S PRETTY

AMAZING: "Freshman year of high school, I was in a dark place. My grades were down, and for two years, I felt so depressed and unfocused that I thought I'd feel uninspired forever. I even dyed my hair black to match my mood! Then a doctor diagnosed me with ADD and depression. I took medication and went to therapy—but what *really* helped me get back on track was taking a video production class my junior year. I *loved* editing footage and telling people's stories. It was the first time in years I'd felt excited!

I loved it so much that I joined a video club outside of school, where I got to make documentaries about anything I wanted. For my first big project, I focused on an amazing group of blind teens who don't let their disability stop them from reaching their goals. It's such a powerful message! The club helped me get my films shown at 19 international film festivals—and win 9 festival awards! Recently, I finished a film called *A Message of Hope*, which features teens talking about difficult issues, like sexuality, sick siblings, and absent parents. I want teens to know that whenever you feel hopeless, there is someone out there who understands—and there are resources that can help you get out of that dark place, just like I did."

# THE PROTECTOR

Bullies beware: She's on a mission to end online abuse!

## nina montgomery

AGE: 19

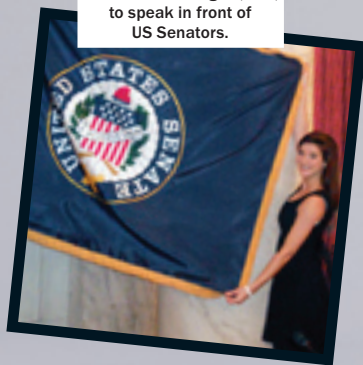
HOMETOWN: Ridgewood, NJ

WHY SHE'S PRETTY AMAZING:

"As I looked around the Ben & Jerry's parking lot in my hometown, I was blown away by the dozens of high school students who had shown up to my rally. They were waving their homemade posters and showing off their painted faces. I realized in that moment that my anti-bullying campaign, 'Don't Stand By, Stand Up,' and its message—that witnessing bullying and staying silent about it is just as harmful as *being* a bully—was actually making an impact.

I'd been passionate about the issue since joining Wired Safety, an Internet education organization, in seventh grade. Each year, I spoke about ending cyberbullying at schools—and even to members of Congress in D.C.! Talking to powerful senators was unbelievable. Who knew that the people who ran the country would actually listen to *me*? But freshman year of college, I became even more committed to the cause when I got tragic news through Facebook: A high school classmate, Tyler Clementi, committed suicide after his Rutgers roommate secretly filmed him and posted it online. I was so shocked that I couldn't move or speak. His death made my goal even more clear: I want to get one million students to join my campaign—the message is louder when we raise our voices together."

**helping the cause**  
Nina has taken her mission to Washington, D.C., to speak in front of US Senators.



ON NINA: TOP, MILLY; SKIRT, WHITE; NECKLACE, LULU FROST; RED BANGLE, LEE ANGEL; MAROON BANGLE, ALEXIS BITTAR; RINGS, BY BOE; SOCKS, HUE; HEELS, CASADEI.

**finding her focus**  
Ann chats with models while she shoots them, so they loosen up and give her carefree, relaxed poses.



## ann he

AGE: 16

HOMETOWN: Dallas, TX

WHY SHE'S PRETTY AMAZING:

"When my parents gave me a camera as a middle school graduation gift, I couldn't stop taking pictures! I'd bring it everywhere, zooming in on anything that inspired me, like a lemon slice delicately hanging on the edge of a water glass. I loved shooting fashion photos best, because models can capture the emotion of a moment with their facial expressions and clothes. So I went online to find models who would pose. I didn't put my age at the time. (I was only 15!) At my first shoot, I captured an image of a model twirling in a tutu with her eyes closed, smiling, as the sunlight shone through the tulle. It was magical! I started posting my shots on Flickr, where photographers 'liked' them. Soon major fashion blogs like Fashion Gone Rogue were praising my work! I couldn't believe it! A girl featured in *Seventeen* earlier this year even pointed to *me* as her fashion inspiration!

Suddenly, I got calls for *paying* jobs—shooting weddings, fashion magazine spreads (like *Elle Girl Korea!*), and ad campaigns (like Nike!). I even got a letter from a teen girl in China saying that my success made her pursue her own passion, writing. Whether you're into dancing, singing, painting: Keep doing whatever brings you joy—and fill the world with even more beauty."

# THE PHENOM

This photography prodigy wants people to see that there's beauty in everything.



ON ANN: DRESS, TRACY REESE; JACKET, YOANA BARASCHI; LONG NECKLACE, DOUBLE HAPPINESS JEWELRY; LION NECKLACE, TWINKLE; BEADED BRACELET, CC SKYE; RHINESTONE BRACELET, LULU FROST.