

LOCAL NEWS

Local granddaughter makes it big in Hollywood

By **MICHAEL GARRETT**
The Chronicle-News

A rising young Hollywood actress who has a strong tie to Trinidad, has a new starring role in a new Disney Channel series "Jonas" that airs at 9 p.m. on Saturdays Comcast Cable.

Nicole Gale Anderson, 18, granddaughter of eight-year Trinidad residents Christie and Gil Valdes, will have a starring role in what will be a regular Disney Channel series. Last year she had a starring role in the ABC Family movie, "Princess, A Modern Day Fairytale," that aired in April 2008. She will also have a significant role in an upcoming movie, "The Dark Side of Nowhere" scheduled to start location shooting in Los Angeles next week.

Nicole plays Macy Misa the Jonas Brothers No. 1 fan on the Disney series. For more information on the series, a c c e s s <http://tv.disneygo.com/disneychannel/jonas/>.

Grandmother Christie Valdes said Nicole has always been a talented overachiever in school and go-getter almost from her birth, says Christie. "She always had a great personality and achiever in anything she set out to do. It just blows my mind how smart she is in handling all of this stuff. I don't think she will ever do some of the stupid things that some of these other actor kids do."

Anderson was quite proficient in gymnastics in school before she injured her back, deciding she couldn't attain her Olympics goal, Valdes said. She then decided on an acting and modeling career. "Her parents (Kevin, Christie's son, and Anami) have always been behind her and her brother and sister have always been there for her.

"I think she will go a long way because she has a lot of talent," said Christie, who met her husband in Monterey, Calif., before moving to Trinidad. "She has always taken a part in what is going on with her career with her managers. And her mom (originally from the Philippines) is fantastic as far as putting together all of her stuff she does. She has always been right there with her to make sure those kids are safe from the word go."

Christi said she and Gil moved to Trinidad to retire. "Trinidad kept coming up for us as far as being one of the safer, more affordable places to live and the climate was good because I can't stand humid weather. We traded the ocean for the mountains."

As for her granddaughter's burgeoning film career, Nicole said in a telephone interview from her Los Angeles area home in San Marcos last week that she wants to grow as an actress and make it a lifelong career. "I really look at Reece Witherspoon and what she has done with her career. Right now I'm in television work but I definitely would like to have a film career in movies to last me until I'm an old woman."

She said her Jonas series character Macy is a huge fan of the Jonas Brothers and "plays every sport you can imagine. She is very athletic and is involved in sports that require good hand-eye coordination. It's acting and they (directors) make it work."

Despite her great athletic abilities, she turns into a klutz and gets so nervous when she gets around the Jonas brothers, Nicole relates. "A lot of physical comedy is involved and she's a huge goofball and klutz. She's a lot of fun to play.

"I don't know how I survived 10 years of gymnastics because now I'm always falling and am this huge klutz, I guess something happened with my equilibrium." One scene will require that she walk on her hands and another



Photo by ©DISNEY CHANNEL/BOB D'AMICO

Nicole Gale Anderson

er has her wired up and climbing up and down a pole.

Nicole said her upcoming independent movie "is a great opportunity for me because I'm a comedic actress as a lot of the work I've done in the past. But this is totally different, a dramatic piece that will be a really cool learning experience for me as an actor." She plays a character whose boyfriend cheats on her with another girl. "My character and her two best friends start playing pranks on this other woman. And the pranks start going horribly wrong and my character doesn't know about it. So they start trying to frame my character for those pranks and so my character has to start proving her innocence.

With Christi pointing out that Nicole was raised in a Christian home, Nicole acknowledged that she wants to take roles that hopefully have wholesome redeeming qualities that will lead to a lifelong career. She said she has a good relationship with her manager and agent and will have script approval of anything they bring her.

Away from the cameras, Nicole said she loves to read a lot, with historical fiction her favorite. She said she takes after her grandmother in being a lover of arts and crafts. "She taught me a lot of that stuff when I was growing up." She also likes going in her cruiser out to the beach, hiking and riding her bike with her dog and other physical activities to stay in shape.

Nicole said she visited her grandma in Trinidad two Christmases ago. "I love it there, it's so clean and adorable. I really love the history behind the city. And living in LA we don't get any snow. And I'm from a small

town in Georgia so I love small towns."

According to information supplied by her mother, Anderson was born in Rochester, Ind., and has an older brother Kenneth and a younger sister, Nadine. She has previously lived in Jacksonville, Fla., and St. Mary's Ga., near where her father was stationed aboard the USS Tennessee Naval Base at Kings Bay. She enrolled in gymnastics at the age 3 and competed for 10 years. Her gymnastics achievements include state and national all-around championships at Disney World in Orlando, Fla. In junior high, Nicole was vice president of her Junior Beta Club and secretary of her student council.

At 13, Nicole entered a beauty pageant where she was awarded a scholarship to the Barbizon Modeling School in Atlanta. Nicole was subsequently discovered when she represented the Atlanta region at the Los Angeles International Modeling and Talent Association (IMTA) in January 2004. Nicole and her mother then left St. Marys for Hollywood where she began her career by modeling for print advertisements and appearing in TV commercials for Mary Kate and Ashley Apparel, Lands End, Robinson's May, Lil Bratzl and Mercury Insurance.

Her other film credits include appearances on popular television shows "Hannah Montana," "iCarly," "Zoey 101," and "Unfabulous." She also filmed a pilot for Disney's Jetix Network called "Sunday! Sunday! Sunday!" in New Orleans, playing the role of Dana as a series regular.

Colo. Senate votes against repealing death penalty

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they said there's no connection between those violations and unsolved murders.

Howard Morton of Pine Junction, executive director of Families of Homicide Victims and Missing Persons, defended the decision to unite with death penalty foes, including defense lawyers and religious groups. He said that alliance

has finally brought more attention to the issue.

In 2004, Morton said, lawmakers didn't write back to any of their pleas for funding to solve the state's 1,400 cold cases. This year they ended up arguing about the best way to pay for it, he said.

Morton's eldest son was killed at age 18 more than 30 years ago, and his killer has

not been found.

"We're going to be back with this type of bill next year, and we're going to win," he said.

Gov. Bill Ritter never said whether he would have signed the bill if it made it to his desk. The former Denver district attorney unsuccessfully sought the death penalty seven times.

Nursing home meeting today at TSJC

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help out with \$1.2 million dollars in operational funds. Hopefully this would still be on the table if another plan is selected.

For a long time the state has wanted to wash it's hands of the TSNH claiming it has not been making money and that it has been using veterans' money to help keep the home open.

The state has been claiming depreciation as a loss, this is, in all reality a loss on paper. On top of that the home must pay over \$240,000 in quasi-consulting fees.

The state has said the community does have the first right of refusal. Locally, the community can come up with an offer to buy the nursing home.

The transfer will ultimately involve the state transferring

all of the assets of the TSNH including the 100,000 square foot building, nine acres of land, and the viability of TSNH as a business.

Remember that it is still open for other local offers to be presented and considered.

There are still many questions left to be answered. All concerned Las Animas County residents are encouraged to attend today's meeting.



Photos by Cynthia Berresse Ploski

Left: A.R. Mitchell's "Driving Off Rustlers." Right: Co-Directors Paula Little and Joanie Hessling.



Grand Opening of the Mitchell Museum tomorrow

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eclectic gift shop and work the front desk. It's a great way to meet people who are visiting our hometown, and to visit with those neighbors who come by. Perhaps while attending the gala reception, some of you will be tempted to

sign up and make Paula and Joanie's load a little lighter. You'll get lots of appreciation.

It's a wonderful thing to muse upon that Mitchell, the man who came back home with cancer ready to die, went on to live, become one of Trinidad's most famous sons, and lives on in this museum

memorializing his work and life. It's sort of a positive theme song for Trinidad, which has come back time and again from the brink of extinction. The little town that refuses to die - and, as it is doing now - simply transforms itself.

TSJC dedicates renovated Pioneer Room in gala celebration

By **MICHAEL GARRETT**

The Chronicle-News

In a match seemingly made in heaven, Trinidad State Junior College's student Sullivan Center All-Purpose Room officially became the Pioneer Natural Resources Room April 29 during gala dedication luncheon ceremonies honoring the occasion.

TSJC and its retiring President RuthAnn Woods wanted to ensure that Pioneer was publicly recognized for its many financial and instructive contributions to the college's EPIC and other industrial arts and trades programs. Pioneer executives, led by Dave Holmes, regional operations manager of its Rockies Asset Team, in turn, wanted to thank TSJC for launching trade curriculums and classrooms specifically designed to teach students the ropes of learning how to be more skilled and trained workers in the oil and gas industry.

Woods acknowledged at the luncheon that Pioneer remains Las Animas County's largest employer with more than 500 despite the Raton Basin's substantial downsizing in gas well drilling operations since last fall. She noted that Pioneer has been an award winner in TSJC's Captains of Industry recognition program that honors companies who have made extraordinary contributions to the college's industrial arts curriculum.

Woods noted that the new Pioneer room is testimony to the great business-higher education teamwork, collaboration and partnerships that went into its symbolic renovation and

renaming.

Vern Paulson's TSJC welding students were also recognized for their creative artwork on the room's westwall.

Woods, noting this occasion marked the last big public recognition gathering before she retires at the end of the semester, will likely remain the college's leading ambassador in touting its innovative programs throughout the state. She continually bends the ear of Colorado Gov. Bill Ritter to the urgent needs of state higher education, finally getting him to see the light on her Proposition 50 position to not allow the state Legislature to cut higher education funding, then getting everyone in his office to sing happy birthday to him even when it wasn't officially his birthday.

At the urging of interim TSJC President Felix Lopez, Woods was recognized with a standing ovation by the packed room of attendees for her many innovative ideas and contributions to making TSJC one of the state's higher learning crown jewels during her 4 1/2-year tenure. "We're the state's oldest and best community college," she repeated one of her often heard comments, and stressed that customer service and serving and meeting the needs of the students should always be priority No. 1 at the college. After responding that TSJC has left her with many happy memories she will never forget, Woods then got everybody to sing, "Happy Pioneer Day to You."

Holmes said Pioneer was proud to be associated with TSJC and to be recognized by

the college with the room name change. He acknowledged that both Pioneer and TSJC are going through challenging and tough economic times and that achieving success in today's recessionary economy is "all about controlling costs."

He assured the lunch crowd that the economy and gas drilling industry is going to soon turn around with many indicator signs already pointing in that direction. "We are going to be here and ready to go back to the fields and get the rigs running again when that happens," he said. "Although we have a hiring freeze now, we hope to start rehiring again later this year."

Holmes joked after the luncheon in agreeing with an observation that if Pioneer really needs to get Gov. Ritter's attention to start seeing too restrictive environmental rules and regulations issues the way the gas industry sees them, Pioneer should resend Ruth Ann up to his office to see if he can ever say no to her persuasive ways and her smiley face.

And to offer hope for the future, Woods touted current in the works behind the scenes efforts to bring alternative energy geo thermal programs and partnerships "that could be huge for our college. We will keep everyone posted on all the stuff going on as things progress," she promised.

Woods may be stepping down as TSJC president this month. But she has put forth lots of evidence that her creative steel trap fertile mind will continue to operate on all eight cylinders on behalf of TSJC and higher education.