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Sunday, January 30, 2005

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LIVING

A show of faith

Saturday, January 29, 2005

Camden 10-year-old expresses love of God through gospel skating

By KIM MULFORD
Courier-Post Columnist

The lights dimmed, the floor cleared and 10-year-old Anina Tyler skated out onto the wooden rink at Millennium Skate World in Camden.

A disc jockey played "Hosanna" by Kirk Franklin.

"The angels bow down at the thought of you

The darkness brings way to the light for you

The price that you paid gives us life brand new

Hosanna forever, we worship You."

This is her kind of music. For the next several minutes, the fifth-grader lost herself in spins and little jumps. She swung her arms wide, embracing the air as it rushes past her.

Anina is a gospel skate dancer. For the last two years, she has been taking private lessons and already has performed exhibitions for churches, a wedding and a mayoral function. Within the next few years, says her coach, she could perform competitively.

But this isn't so much about competition. Her performance is a blessing to her family and anyone who watches her.

Her great-grandmother, Violet Rogers of Winslow Township, said the family is thrilled to see her do so well.

"It's an inspiration and an encouragement for (other) children," said Rogers, who attends Cecil Baptist Church in Winslow. "A lot of encouragement and a lot of time and effort has brought her as far as she has in what little time she has been skating."

Anina is a fixture at the rink, where she has made many friends, said her skating coach, Pat Tice of Haddon Township.



DOUGLAS M. BOVITT/Courier-Post
Anina Tyler strikes a prayerful pose as she begins her routine at Millennium Skate World in Camden.

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CLOSE TO THE EDGE

"The kids like to try to copy her," said Tice. "She's very helpful with the other children, very outgoing and helpful. She loves it when other kids are interested in what she's doing."

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Columnist
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CASINOS

After her song, Anina rolled into the rink's office. She said it's gospel music that moves her best. It's what her grandmother, Gwendolyn Howell, plays at their home in Camden.



Columnist
Candy Grande

"Most people listen to hip hop and all that kind of junk," said Anina. She prefers gospel because it's about God, someone "very special."



Columnist
Matt Katz
THE BACHELOR PAD

"He's not a regular man from around today," she said. "He can do a million things that we can't."

Her opinion is a reflection of her upbringing.



Columnist
Christina Mitchell
TIES THAT BIND

"I really don't want her getting caught up in that other music," said Howell, who has raised Anina since she was 6 months old. "It has a way of changing kids, swaying them away from their beliefs and being dedicated as far as God goes."

Faith is important in Anina's family. She attends Camden Forward School, a private Christian school. They visit different churches on Sunday mornings.



Columnist
Kim Mulford
KEEPING THE FAITH

Rogers said they hope faith will always be important to her.

In Our Community

"She's so young," said Rogers. "Sometimes they go astray but they normally come right back. Right now, her faith is really instilled in her."

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Back in the rink office, Anina popped a DVD of her performances into a portable player. The disc was compiled from home videos shot by Howell. It shows her skating in outfits, hand-stitched by Howell: one has floaty pink skirts, another sparkles with gold sequins, still another is edged in white marabou.

"I am very proud," said Howell, who works at the rink. She watched the DVD five times before she could view it without crying.

"She tells me she feels (the music) when she's out on the floor," said Howell. "She forgets everything." IF YOU GO

- 'Gospel Night' is from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. Thursdays at Millennium Skate World, 1900 Carman St., Camden. Call (856) 757-9460.

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