

ONE WHEEL BIG DREAMS

Student finds a career path over a unique hobby
Story by Preslee Merritt

Hobbies turn into careers all the time, whether someone takes a random class in school, signs up for an extracurricular with friends, or sees someone riding a unicycle in a movie.

Freshman Traeyc Strayer-Roper found joy in a hobby that started Christmas morning this year, when she found her final present hiding by the fish tank: a beautiful, bright red unicycle. She hopes to someday make a career out of her new hobby.

"I honestly don't know where [the idea] came from. I probably just saw it in a movie or something, and then it just stuck with me. All I remember is it sounded cool and funky, and I refused to let it go," she said.

Strayer-Roper wanted a unicycle for around six months before her wish came true. She told her mom about her Christmas wish several times.

"I thought she was joking. I thought she was just trying to be funny. Then I realized she was serious, and then I was like, 'Well ... it's not too far from her personality,'" Jamie, Strayer-Roper mother, said.

Once her dream came true, she started honing her craft.

"It's just trial and error, really. One day I did a quick Google search, watched a 30-second video on how to get on and balance, and now I'm just kind of doing what works."

At the beginning, Traeyc practiced at least four days a week. She fell often at first, but she continued to improve.

"There's not many ways to mess it up. If you fall, you just try again, so it's pretty simple if you just have something to hold onto."

Strayer-Roper has not let failure deter her, and she hopes to someday turn her passions into a business plan.

"It's been a thing in the back of my mind that I wanna do a party clown thing. I'm already planning on moving to a small town near family and opening a nail business, and I think it would be nice to make some money off another weird hobby I have."

Learning to ride a unicycle has brought Strayer-Roper much joy, and she hopes she can spread that joy to others through her future business.

Being able to take that stupid or embarrassing hobby and turn it into something that does something good for people, even if it's just a seventh birthday party."

According to Smart Wheel Canada, unicycling is a unique hobby that dates back to the 14th century, when circus clowns used unicycles to bring joy to their audiences. Strayer-Roper might not be a clown in the 14th century, but she looks forward to entertaining people with her unicycle.

"I think there's something really cool in being able to express yourself and find joy in something that's so weird, like unicycling. But I feel like under the weird hobby part of it, it is honestly a pretty cool and important thing to find joy in the little funny things in life."

