Hundreds flock to Vacaville for ‘Top Model’ casting call

By Amy Maginnis-Honey
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VACAVILLE — There was a sense of urgency in Lisa Patterson’s voice.

“I’m gonna be on with Tyra (Banks),” she said. “I’m 27. I don’t have any more time to do this.”

Patterson, a Fairfield resident, was one of about 500 people who showed up Tuesday for an “America’s Next Top Model” casting call at Blake Austin College Beauty Academy in Vacaville. Banks is a judge on the show, as well as its host.

The line began forming shortly after 3 a.m. when Fairfield’s Dilpreet Virk staked out the first place. The line stretched around the building when the doors opened at 9 a.m. A steady flow of hopefuls continued to show up throughout the morning.

Rashad Davis, 22, flew up from Los Angeles to take his first shot at joining the cast.

“I’m obsessed with the show,” he said. He got in line at about 8:15 a.m. and was finished about 2½ hours later.

“I’m excited,” Davis said, picking up the last of his photos.

His support friend, Chandler Stewart, 21, flew up with him. She wasn’t allowed inside, but said her friend has what it takes to make the cut.
“He’s pretty passionate,” Stewart said of Davis. “He’s hard-working. He could do some innovative things. That’s my unbiased opinion.”

Anna Wade, 19, was easy to spot in the crowd with well-coiffed hairdos. The 19-year-old Sebastopol resident has alopecia, an autoimmune disease that caused her to go bald.

“I’ll push the standards,” she said.

Most people assume she’s dealing with cancer and will ask her how treatment is going, Wade said.

“I’m perfectly healthy, I just don’t have hair,” she said.

Vincent Powell, 19, was primed to claim the award for traveling the greatest distance. He flew in from Hawaii. Powell said during his video interview that he hadn’t considered a career in modeling until a few years ago.

“I didn’t believe in dreams at the time,” he said. Then, someone approached the 6-foot-1-inch Alabama native and asked him to model. “That brought me true happiness,” he said.

Saying he didn’t see himself as different from other contestants – females outnumbered males by about a 20-to-1 margin – Powell said it was all about proving he could do it for himself and showing the naysayers they were wrong.

“I won’t give up,” he said. “All I ask for is opportunity.”

Blake Austin College closed for the day to host the casting call, said Michelle Trippi, marketing, public relations and media coordinator at the college. She had a staff of about 40 helping with everything from doing hair and makeup to answering questions.

Sacramento TV station CW 31, which is home to “America’s Next Top Model,” had about 25 people on hand, handling tasks that ranged from swim suit photography to video interviews.

Michael Ball, sales and promotion director for station, found time for humor with Virk, who didn’t bring swim trunks for the swim suit photo sessions.

“Are they lovely boxers?” Ball joked with Virk, who opted to pose in his underwear.

“I didn’t wear the pink ones today,” Virk answered.

Ball has worked every “America’s Next Top Model Casting Call” in the area. Prior venues have included a nightclub and department store. The 16,000-square-foot Blake Austin facility made things go much smoother as there was room for three video and two photo booths, he said.
Past contestants from the region have made it as far as the top 16, he said.

Trippi was feeling very hopeful the show’s next winner had passed through the door Tuesday. “I believe ‘America’s Next Top Model’ is coming from the Vacaville (casting call),” she said.

Tuesday afternoon she was told that it was the second most popular casting call for the show, Trippi said.

The Vacaville casting call was the first of 30 slated this month. There will be one Sunday in San Francisco.

All photos and information gathered in Vacaville is forwarded to the casting directors. They will decided on callbacks.

The waiting game has begun.

Jessica Knedel waits in line, Tuesday, during an "America's Next Top Model" casting call at Blake Austin College in Vacaville. Contestants arrived as early as 3 in the morning for the casting call. (Aaron Rosenblatt/Daily Republic)
Laura Baryak models, Tuesday, during an "America's Next Top Model" casting call at Blake Austin College in Vacaville. About 500 people showed up for the casting call. (Aaron Rosenblatt/Daily Republic)

Sergio Romero, left, takes Vincent Powell's picture, Tuesday, during an "America's Next Top Model" casting call at Blake Austin College in Vacaville. Powell came from Hawaii for the casting call. (Aaron Rosenblatt/Daily Republic)