

## Two Caledon girls to compete in Rising Star event

By Bill Rea

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the Rising Star Talent Competition at the Canadian National Exhibition, and there are two girls from Caledon taking part.

Maria Carabajal of Bolton will be competing in the Junior class, and Palgrave area resident Julia Gentile will be in the Youth competition.

She is scheduled to perform Aug. 19.

Maria, 12, will soon be entering Grade 7 at St. Andrew School in Woodbridge. She said she's been singing for about two years, getting her start at the Toronto Singing Academy.

"My dad used to sing in a band," she said. "When I was little, we used to sing together."

This will be Maria's first experience competing at a level like this.

She said her singing coach encouraged her to do an audition video which was submitted, and she go in.

"I was really excited," she declared.

"I'm nervous because it's my first time," she added. "I'm nervous and excited at the same time."

She's going to be performing in a 500-seat auditorium, which is a new experience for her. Maria added her coach is encouraging her to go ahead.

"It's a great experience," she remarked, adding she also expects it will be fun.

"I love singing," she said. "I hope to become a singer when I grow up, and have a singing career."

She is also involved with musical theatre and dance, training at Dance with Mara, an academy in Woodbridge.

Julia said she heard about the competition about five years ago, but was a little shy when it came to giving it a try then.

The 15-year-old is about to start Grade 10 in the drama program at Mayfield Secondary School

Julia said she submitted one of her tunes in the audition, Call Me When You're Sober.

She said she likes rock music, especially songs by Evanescence.

She too confessed to being a little nervous at the prospect of this competition.

"I'm a little scared," she said, commenting she's been in competitions before, as well as performing at her music studio. "This is kind of the first big, big competition I've been in, so it's a little scary."

But her mother Trudy sees the benefit to be gained from the experience. "We're excited," she said.

Her first performance in the competition is scheduled for Aug. 25.

Music and singing have been a big part of Julia's life. She said she used to sing all the time around the house, and started learning to play the piano at three. About five or six years ago, she said she started getting more into pop music, as well as rock.

"I love to make my own sounds," she said, adding she's put together an EP with four songs she composed. It's called Push Me Down.

Julia is active in the drama program at Mayfield, and auditioned for a part on the TV show Backstage. She was also one of two students from Palgrave Public School to perform at the 2015 Caledon Day celebrations, singing a song written by two of the teachers at the school. It was called Reins of Glory, and was in honour of the equestrian events at last year's Pan American Games.



Maria Carabajal



Julia Gentile