

Cambria teen will ride on Rose Parade float

BY KATHE TANNER
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17-year-old Sophie Pierszalowski is a Coast Union High School senior and Interact Club president

Online

The Rotary-float theme is "The Magic of Caring." To check out the float's design, visit www.rotaryfloat.org.

Bernice Vandergrift, who now lives in Cambria, was a Rose Parade princess in 1939, before she moved to Cambria for the first time in 1943.

The parade will wind down its 5½-mile route in Pasadena two days before Pierszalowski turns 18.

"What a birthday gift!" the excited teen said Wednesday. "I can't believe this is happening!"

The lifetime Cambria resident hopes to become a marine biologist.

As president of Coast Union's 25-member Interact Club, she helped focus its 2005-06 fundraising efforts so the school could buy biodegradable lunch trays rather than plastic foam ones, to donate food to the homeless shelter and give money to the Heifer International foundation.

Nancy Thompson, a Coast

Union teacher for 28 years, called Pierszalowski "the absolute dream student, a sweet girl, smart, with a 4.0 average, a good athlete. But she spends a lot of her time doing good, volunteering to feed the homeless or raising money for various Interact projects. She's just a sweetheart."

Her father, John Pierszalowski, said he doesn't think his daughter realizes yet the full significance of the honor.

"I think it will hit her," he said, "when she sees how big those floats are and compares them to Pinedorado," Cambria's much smaller annual parade and event on Labor Day weekend.

Sophie Pierszalowski will ride a float in the Tournament of Roses Parade on Monday, making her one of the first, if not the first, Cambria residents to do so.

The 17-year-old has a spot on the Rotary Club International float. A Coast Union High School senior, Pierszalowski is president of the school's Interact Club, a Rotary-sponsored service club for ages 14-18. Rotary's past district governor, Chungsam Doh of Morro Bay, drew her name by lot to represent Rotary Club's four-county District 5240. It's one of eight districts that will be represented on the float.