

She makes the day for some special little queens

Tell us about your bonnet

Dena Raminick's beautiful white teeth accentuate her darling smile and perfectly offset her straight, nearly black hair.

She carries herself with grace and composure - except when one of her two boys are clamoring all over her - and by all definitions is an attractive woman. She is not, by her own admission, a beauty queen. Never wanted to be one and never intended to be hanging out with one.

Yet, in the past nine months, Dena's made a new friend, a beauty queen, and has become an expert at making young girls feel like reigning princesses.

Dena is the director of the Metro Detroit Chapter of Queen For A Day, a non-profit organization that operates out of this 32-year-old West Bloomfield basement. The organization's mission is beautiful in its simplicity: Queen For A Day boosts the spirits and self-esteem of young girls coping with cancer by pampering them with makeovers, manicures, massages, wigs, boas and tiaras.

"Everybody needs to feel like a queen," smiles Raminick. "We do all these girly things girls love, but we always make sure to focus on their smile and not

the nail polish. We remind them that they are a young woman and try to help them forget, at least for a day, that they are a patient."

The idea wasn't hers. Queen for a Day is the brainchild of Dena's new pal, 22-year-old Jenna Edwards, a University of Miami beauty queen who dreamed up the concept after approaching the Children's Cancer Clinic in Jackson, Miss., about donating her pageant tiaras to young cancer patients.

Raminick has done something equally extraordinary; she grabbed hold of the notion and made it come true for girls here in Detroit. She is pursuing it with zeal and passion, refusing to be inhibited by fears and barriers. At an age when her peers are busy reveling in career aspirations and parenthood, Dena chose to pursue a divine revelation, a message of clarity that came to her from the mostly unlikely source ... Oprah.

It was on an April, 2002, afternoon and for some reason the television set in the Raminick household played on. Dena swears she wasn't the type to lock into the show, and if she was then, she certainly doesn't have the time now. But on that afternoon, like the scent of cookies baking in the oven, something in the air made Dena stop and take notice.

She caught the final two minutes of a segment featuring Jenna Edwards receiving a \$10,000 grant for her work. Dena jumped on the Internet,

searching for some Web site for information on the organization, but came up with nothing.

Months went by, months during which Dena herself underwent major surgery and a long recovery period. Yet, she never could forget that spring-time Oprah moment. By fall, Dena decided to find Ms. Edwards. A few weeks later, Dena had been crowned director of the newly founded Metro Detroit Queen for a Day chapter.

Nothing in Dena's life led her to believe that she was the type to launch a crusade. Yet, everything in Dena's life led her to the moment she took on the challenge. "I didn't feel in control of my life," she explained. "I was spending too much time thinking about myself and worrying about my health. I wanted to feel connected to a cause, to make an impact on someone else's life."

The impact is profound. Since launching Queen for a Day last fall, this one-time events planner and public relations consultant, has hosted half a dozen events, ranging from hospital visits to tea parties. She has a basement full of pink boas and make-up bags, and 60 volunteers eagerly waiting to help whenever they can. Her goal of reaching 100 girls in 2003 will be achieved by spring. Recently, Dena along with her team of "QFAD" volunteers hosted a tea party at the Victorian Rose Tea House in Rochester. Nearly two dozen teenage girls were treated to

dinner, manicures, hand treatments and makeovers. Each was crowned with a real tiara, handed down to QFAD from beauty queens across the nation.

Giving these girls the royal treatment is the easiest thing she's ever done. The laughs and smiles are reward enough. It is the tears though, tears shed mostly by the girls' mothers who marvel at the amazing transformation of their daughters, which are the sobering reality. "I'm not afraid to fall in love with these girls," Dena says. "I'm so lucky to be able to do this for them. I don't ask them about their health, they are with us to forget about being sick."

Yet, the cancer is there and already one of Dena's little princesses has lost her battle. Lauren LeRock, 13, passed away last December, just weeks after being featured on the Oprah show, a dream Dena helped arrange. This spring, in memory of Lauren, Dena will gather all the girls and volunteers she can muster and together, pink boas and crowns, they'll walk in the Gilda's Club walk. Meanwhile, bring on the nail polish because Dena, a volunteer herself, has lots to do. Young girls dealing with cancer are calling.

To make a contribution to Queen for A Day, call Dena Raminick at (248) 961-1697 or visit www.detroitqfad.com.

Wendy Rose Bice is a Bloomfield Hills resident.

Do you have a frilly Easter bonnet tucked away in your closet? If so, we want to know about it, perhaps take your picture in it. If you no longer have the hat, maybe you have a picture of that long-ago Easter when you were the grandest lady in the Easter Parade.

The Observer Newspapers is

planning a special article on Easter bonnets for its Sunday, April 13, edition. Contact Renee Skoglund, Observer Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150; (734) 953-2128; fax: (734) 591-7279; e-mail: rskoglund@oe.hometown.com. Contact her by Friday, March 28.

WEDDING



Richter-Martin

Leslie Martin and Volker Richter were married June 1, 2002 in Northern Italy. The bride is the daughter of George and Shirley Martin of Northville. She is a graduate of Farmington High School, the University of Michigan and Wayne State School of Law. The groom is the son of Mrs. Lore Richter of Germany and a graduate of Aachen University in Germany. He is employed by BMW.

The newlyweds honeymooned in Bali and make their home in Munich, Germany.

Tony & Tina's Wedding comes to Hills

Tony & Tina's Wedding is coming to the Costick Center on Saturday, April 5, presented by the Special Services Department.

This is the famous off-Broadway hit, a wild and funny spoof of a Big, Fat, Italian Wedding, where the audience becomes part of the show. Guests attend the nuptials and reception, as the Nunzio and

Vitale "families" come together. Ticket includes the show, dancing to a live band, champagne toast, a pasta dinner, and of course, a piece of wedding cake. The show starts at 7 p.m.; cocktails will be available beginning at 6:30. Tickets are \$52 and available now at the Costick Center, or by calling Leigh in Cultural Arts, at (248) 473-1957.

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