

MARLEE *excels in dance,*

BANKS *excels in art ...*

these twins put a new spin on “excels”!

Marlee and Banks Brown

Family Members: Garren, Jenny, Marlee and Banks
Grandparents: Marty and Jim Field (live on 76th Street)
Kids' ages and school: 9 years old in fourth grade at Linkhorn Park Elementary

MARLEE

We understand Marlee played Clara in Ballet Virginia's recent performances of the *Nutcracker*. How long has Marlee been dancing? She has been taking dance since the age of 3.

Where did she start dancing, where does she dance now, and what is her favorite style of dancing?

Marlee started dancing at Dance Space on Shore Drive in Virginia Beach. From the beginning, she was really drawn to ballet versus the other forms of dance, and she was very serious about it despite being so young. Her former teacher recommended Ballet Virginia International (BVI), which focuses on training kids in traditional ballet. BVI is more intense, and she attends classes for at least three hours per day four days a week and rehearses for performances both fall and spring. Her training is focused on ballet, but she also takes modern, contemporary and character.

How was she chosen to dance with Ballet Virginia, not to mention star in the ballet?

BVI holds tryouts for the *Nutcracker* each September. Any child can try out, regardless of where he or she dances. BVI has levels that each student progresses through based on effort and talent. Marlee has been fortunate to advance quickly for her age and is presently at level 4, which has been typical for the role of Clara. At age 9, she was very young and felt super lucky to get the part!



“I love being on stage and seeing the audience enjoy the performance.”

cover story

“I really enjoy art and sewing, so I plan on being a fashion designer.”



BANKS

When and who noticed that Banks is an outstanding artist?
 Banks began exhibiting her creativity from an early age at home and in preschool. She would create objects art out of random scraps of paper, delivery boxes, play-doh, bottles, etc. She has eagerly provided handmade gifts to family and friends for most occasions. As she has gotten older, these works have become more sophisticated.

What is her favorite medium?
 Banks loves painting in acrylics.

Can you explain a bit to readers about what Banks's school ODS is and how she was chosen to attend?

Banks attends the visual arts program at Old Donation School once a week. This amazing program is offered through Virginia Beach Public Schools to a small group of kids in grades 3-8 who are selected via an application and assessment process.

Does she take classes outside of ODS? If so, where and with whom?

Banks has been taking weekly private art lessons with Janice Gay-Maker of #working-artistsstudios (formerly with D'Art Center in Norfolk) for the past two years. She also takes private sewing lessons from Karen Newberry (SewBerryKnit) of Norfolk. She has her own sewing machine and creates clothes, bags, dolls and pillows for herself, family and friends.

In what ways are they alike?

They both love music, singing, and dancing.

In what ways are they different?

Marlee likes to be organized and is cautious. Banks is dreamy and carefree.

What other activities do the girls enjoy?

The girls love horseback riding and have taken lessons for several years at Oceana Stables. During the summer, they participate on the swim team at the Princess Anne Country Club and both placed at All-Stars. Throughout the year, they sing in the youth choir and are bell ringers at First Presbyterian Church. Both also love the ocean and surfing with dad.

Are the girls (technically) identical twins?

No, they are fraternal twins and totally different!



What activities do you enjoy as a family?

We love hanging out on the beach, pretty much every weekend from May - September. We also love to travel and started taking the girls internationally at 8 months old. They go with us everywhere.

Where are you guys originally from?

Garren is from Suffolk, and Jenny is a Virginia Beach native, born and raised in Bay Colony.