

STUDENT BY DAY, CELEBRITY OVERNIGHT

Teen becomes known nationwide in one week after photo posted on Twitter goes viral

Story by Demi Manlandro

Junior Alexander Lee went to work like he had for months and did his job. Then he became famous for it. After a seemingly normal shift, he went home to find that hundreds of thousands of people followed him on Twitter. The next day at school, students in the hallway-- that he'd never seen before--were calling his name with smiles on their faces and asking to take a picture with them. "Good Morning America," "The Ellen DeGeneres Show," and several other news stations across the country wanted to meet him. His life quickly changed.

Alexander became a trending internet sensation known as #AlexFromTarget on Nov. 2, when his picture was taken unknowingly at work and went viral on Twitter.

"It was really exciting because I got to meet Ellen," Alexander said. "The pressure was overwhelming; I had such a big audience, and I didn't know what to say."

During his shift on Nov. 2, Alexander's manager at Target showed him his picture on Twitter, which had 20,000 retweets in just a few hours. Alexander went from 144 followers on his personal account to 750,000 followers in a matter of days.

"There's a big audience," Alexander said. "We kept it in control. My stepdad, my mom, this guy named John and I managed my tweets."

Through Justin Bieber on Twitter, Alexander and his family were introduced to Shots CEO John Shahidi (a photo sharing app), whose advising with fame and business endeavors has helped Alexander realize his potential.

"I hope that he keeps this going," Alexander said. "Not just 15 minutes of fame, but hopefully for a couple years. Right now I have a platform; I just need to use it."

Alexander's parents, Marci and Eric Fooks, were taken aback by how quickly he became known.

"We were kind of surprised that it was happening, especially with the scope that it was happening," Mr. Fooks said. "We were familiar with social media and had concerns with the pace of it. We were making sure that it was positive and safe for Alex."

The junior wanted to use his recognition to make a difference in kids' lives who have been bullied although he did not have any

concrete plans yet.

"Anti-bullying is a really big deal," Alexander said. "I want to encourage them and make them feel like they're important." Alexander and girlfriend Lindsey Diers were bullied on social media at the height of his popularity. People threatened to physically harm them.

"You have to take them somewhat serious, but a lot of people tend to say things they don't mean because they can hide behind a computer screen," Mr. Fooks said.

Because of the threats and recognition, Alexander had limited his time in public.

"We are very selective with when we go and where we go," Mrs. Fooks said. "He likes to have a parent with him (at all times)."

Alexander's parents' personal information such as social security numbers, phone numbers and credit card information were stolen and leaked onto Twitter in the following weeks of Alexander's rise to fame.

"It was scary, but we handled it very well," Alexander said. "We contacted John, and he got our information off of Twitter." Alexander left the house in his free time, but not without constant bombardment from girls wanting a photo.

"It's annoying; I'm afraid to go out in public," Alexander said. "I want to be able to go out with Lindsey without people asking for pictures."

Lindsey tried not to let the attention Alexander receives affect her. "I'm not really a jealous person," sophomore Lindsey Diers said.

"He's still Alex; he's a normal person."

Alexander's parents believed that he handled his fame well and had the potential to remain in the public eye for a long time.

"We don't feel this could have happened to a better kid,"

Mr. Fooks said. "He has the positivity, the charisma and the personality to do it."

According to Alexander, people who know only his face and his name have misunderstood his character.

"A lot of people think that I'm cocky and arrogant," Alexander said. "They say that I don't deserve to have this happen to me. I didn't ask for this; it just happened."

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WITH IN VARSITY GOLF



Photos by Demi Manlandro

1. "It was very exciting to represent the school in the first fall cup (Frisco Lakes Golf Club-K-Cup on Nov. 23) of the year and do good things for the athletic program," sophomore Alec Garcia said.

2. "I felt really nervous because it was my first tournament, but I think I did pretty good compared to what I usually shoot," freshman Samika Lewis said.

3. "It was fun trying to compete with all the other schools," junior Melanie Whittemore said. "I was just hoping that the rest of my team played well."

4. "My team had high expectations," senior Kelby Bowker said. "We didn't exceed them, but we were going in the right direction."

WITH IN NOVEMBER 3-7
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