

## The Island Packet

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Candice Glover prepares to sing the nation's song on PBS Sunday night

### 'American Idol' season 12 winner Candice Glover: 'For some strange reason, I just knew it would work out'

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St. Helena Island native Candice Glover sings on "American Idol."

Submitted photo

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*Editor's note: This is the first of a two-part series on "American Idol" winner Candice Glover. Next Sunday will look at what lies ahead for Glover.*

Candice Glover's journey to Hollywood began on a dirt road.

It's a peaceful road off a country lane, surrounded by untamed nature. It leads to Glover's St. Helena Island home, the one her family moved into when she was 5; the one she moved out of when she left for college. From there, Glover's parents and cousin Lindsey Middleton drove her in the family's white Suburban to drop her off at the Savannah airport to compete in the Hollywood rounds of "American Idol."

It was a December morning, and they left before the sun was up. Her suitcase was packed with the 11 outfits "Idol" had instructed her to bring, her essentials and her purple Snuggie.

At the airport, her parents hugged her, said goodbye and told her they loved her. She went through security, found her gate and boarded her plane, indistinguishable from any other passenger.

Four months later, Glover flew back to that same airport in a private jet, with hundreds of fans waiting to see her and on the verge of becoming a household name. The next afternoon she returned to her childhood home, slowly riding down that same dirt road -- in a limousine, with a police escort and accompanied by a bodyguard.

When Glover returned to Beaufort on May 4 for the "Idol" Top 3 hometown parade and concert, it was a moment of realization for Glover's mom, Carole: Her daughter's life had changed, possibly forever.

It was the first time Carole was brought to tears over her daughter's "Idol" success. "It was just so emotional," she said.

Candice returned to Hollywood after that weekend and advanced to the finale. On May 16, she was crowned this season's "American Idol."

Her rise to stardom has quickly taken her from a sleepy sea island to a national stage full of promise and fame.

And it still hasn't set in.

"I don't think I'll ever, ever grasp the fact that people call me 'famous,'<2009>" Candice said in an interview last week. "The morning I left for Hollywood week, I did not expect any of this to happEN."

## **BEFORE THE WIN**

Candice's road to the "Idol" finale wasn't smooth and never a sure thing.

After all, it took her three tries to make it to the live rounds of the show.

Candice first auditioned for "Idol" in 2008 while on a family vacation in Orlando, Fla. She made it into the show's Top 70 but was cut the last day of Hollywood Week.

Simon Cowell, the blunt, crude and often offensive "Idol" judge for the show's first nine seasons, made his opinion of the 19-year-old's ability evident, saying Candice's singing career wouldn't take her beyond a lackluster lounge singer.

"He said ... I would, like, sing in a hotel lobby, and people would eat peanuts and turn their heads," Candice said in a May 17 interview on "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno."

"He pretty much painted a picture of how unsuccessful I would be."

Two years later, Candice auditioned again. There was a new pan judges, one that didn't include Cowell, but she was again cut.

The rejection was less harsh this time.

She was cut in the show's Top 60 after a group performance with Jessica Sanchez and DeAndre Brackensick, eventual runner-up and eighth place finisher, respectively. For Candice, season 11 ended with then-judge Steven Tyler saying, "Candice, I'm so sorry, baby."

When Candice returned to her job booking excursions on Fripp Island after being cut from season 11, her boss, B.J. Parrish, saw the disappointment.

But he was still proud of her. To show his support he hung a March 18, 2012, Beaufort Gazette article, "Singer Candice Glover goes from St. Helena Island to 'American Idol,'" next to her desk.

Customers would see Candice at her desk, see the article with her picture and do a double-take. Many asked for autographs, pictures and for her to sing them a song.

Parrish said Candice was uneasy during that spring and summer, her shyness causing hesitation. She would laugh and squirm when people asked her to sing.

"But by the end of the summer, she'd belt it out for them," Parrish said. "It made her become a more open person, singing in front of people she didn't know."

Candice hadn't yet figured out what her next move would be, and her music career wasn't progressing past the local gigs she had, singing at weddings, funerals and restaurants.

For a moment, she told herself she wasn't going back to "Idol." But she found herself looking up what cities the next auditions would be in, nonetheless.

"Ultimately, I knew I was going to audition for 'American Idol' again," Candice said. "There's this gut feeling ... like, well, maybe one more time."

The rejections from the previous seasons had hurt her, but they'd also given her time to grow. She felt more confident the third time.

She also was receiving guidance from many of the finalists from season 11, with whom she'd kept in touch, and their advice was unanimous: Stay true to yourself.

"I just focused on being myself more and being different and not worrying about being accepted," Candice said. "In the previous two years, I cared about that a little more than I should have, and I think that's why it didn't really work out."

By the third time, she left the Lowcountry with no strings attached, canceling the lease on her Beaufort apartment and moving her things back into her parents' house.

"I knew at some point my goal -- everyone's goal -- is ultimately to win, so I knew I wouldn't be home for a while," Candice said. "I was ready to leave. For some strange reason, I just knew it would work out."

#### **'NOBODY ... EXPECTS TO KEEP ON MAKING IT'**

The goal was always Top 10.

If Candice could make it to the finals, America would be voting. She could start to build a fanbase and would get to go on tour with the rest of the finalists.

As she kept advancing each week, things started to get surreal for her.

"I was so shocked because nobody that's gotten cut twice before expects to keep on making it," Candice said.

And each week, people would tell Carole how they were moved to tears when Candice sang. But Candice's mother hadn't cried -- not yet.

Not until Candice returned for the Top 3 hometown visit, with deputies lining the country road and a police escort leading her limousine down the dirt road to her home did the tears come.

"It's hard to see your own child coming home in that big limo," she said.

That weekend, her daughter's newfound fame hit home. Seeing Candice on the stage in downtown Beaufort, holding her very own concert for thousands of fans, Carole couldn't believe she was watching her daughter.

"I mean, this is the little girl running around here, that was heard in the shower singing, in church singing," Carole said. "It's a feeling only a mother knows. Your mom would know, and when you have a child, you will know. It's a feeling about your child. Any mother would know what I'm talking about, the feeling I felt inside."

As "Idol" judge Randy Jackson stated, "She's in it to win it!" after Candice's performances, the people around Carole would say, "Oh, she's going to win." And they'd ask, "Are you ready?"

Carole wasn't.

And she still isn't.

"I never realized that if Candice was going to win, this thing was bigger than we ever could imagine," Carole said.

She said the week after Candice was crowned the winner was the hardest for her.

"I guess because I realize Candice is gone," Carole said. "This girl has really left town. Candice is not coming back right now."

## **A NEW LIFE**

In Los Angeles, where Candice has been living since leaving for the show in February, people walk fast, never looking up from their cellphones to say hello. They're always in a hurry to get somewhere.

With an album set to be released July 16, and the IDOL Live! tour beginning June 30, Candice's life is now on a big-city pace.

On her island in South Carolina, life is much slower. Strangers say hello as they pass each other on the street. And the feeling of being connected to family is always present because they are never far.

Candice's is the kind of family with no "distant" relatives, where third cousins are tuned into each others' lives. Candice is as close to her three cousins Lindsey, Ashley and Melony, as she ever could be to a sister or best friend.

Sundays are spent at the Church of the Harvest on St. Helena Island, which Candice's family started in 2003 and where her uncle Jerome Middleton is the pastor. The service starts at 10:30 a.m. and ends hours later. And the Glovers are always there.

Candice's six younger siblings are all still in school. They are the sort of well-behaved children who say "excuse me" when reaching for something and who immediately give their father his favorite seat when he walks into the living room.

Taped on the bedroom doors are handwritten notes with a Bible verse from the Book of Psalms: "I will praise You for I am fearfully and wonderfully made." On the side of the refrigerator are the Ten Commandments, written on a piece of stationery, bordered with American flags and teddy bears.

The Glover children were raised to mind their manners, respect their elders, be responsible, be polite, love others and love God.

Growing up, Candice spent much of her time playing outside with her siblings and cousins -- but not until her chores were done.

"I remember growing up, I couldn't do anything until the dishes were washed and the floor was swept," Candice said.

As Candice's fame rises, those lessons and values remain.

When Candice performed in the "Idol" finale, her siblings stayed and watched from Beaufort because Carole didn't want them missing school.

"School comes first," Candice said as if repeating a family motto.

During her hometown visit, Candice went home for a big family dinner. The kids hurried to clear the table, wash the dishes and sweep the floor as their older sister left for her performance at Penn Center.

They couldn't leave until their chores were done.

"That's how my parents are," Candice said. "I was raised right. I really appreciate them teaching me that stuff early on."

For Candice, the distance from her family is the only part of her life that isn't picture perfect right now. She knows that's part of the deal, though. Her life is forging ahead at full speed. And while she has no desire to slow down, she'd like her family along for the ride.

"I know there's going to be a lot of sacrifice I have to make with being in the position that I'm in," Candice said. "But I think, if anything, I would like to move my family out here. I'd love to do something like that and have them out here with me."

### **'CANDICE RICKELLE GLOVER'**

The week Candice competed in "Idol's" Hollywood Week rounds, Parrish, her boss on Fripp Island, was searching the Island Excursions office for an article he'd read about her.

Flipping through the June 2012 issue of Pink magazine, a Beaufort County women's magazine, he found something more: Candice's daydreams.

On the pages of the magazine, he saw what was really on Candice's mind during her workdays -- rough drafts of her autograph and gospel lyrics were mixed in with a note to have Parrish call a customer back.

She'd practiced her autograph about 50 times in the empty spaces of the pages.

And in the middle of page 29, one was circled: "Candice Rickelle Glover."

Parrish now keeps that magazine in his office but says he takes it out about five times a day for people to see. He showed it to Candice when she visited the resort during her Top 3 hometown visit, and they shared a laugh.

"You weren't supposed to find that," she told him, but later said the gesture moved her to tears.

It's a visual illustration of what the singer has dreamed of for years. Even before she'd filled those pages, Candice was dreaming of fame and what it could be like.

When she'd find herself alone in her St. Helena home, Candice would sit in her living room and blast music from her computer, holding the remote as a microphone so she could sing along. She'd record videos of herself singing and upload them to YouTube.

"I just imagined there being a sea of people below me, reaching for my hand. Me being on tour or in a place of 7,000 people like I was (on 'Idol')," Candice said. "I would fantasize about what would actually happen or what it would feel like to have people ask for your autograph."

"And it's finally happening."

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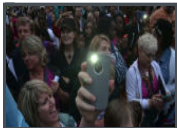
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