

Spinning the WHEEL OF FORTUNE

Cy-Fair mom and former Bang Elementary School teacher,
Courtney Canant, wins \$22,750 on game show

Written by Kennan Buckner | Photography by Carol Kaelson

Growing up, Courtney Canant, a graduate of Cy Falls High School, always watched *Wheel of Fortune* at home with her parents in the evenings. When she started a family of her own, Canant, her husband Jimmie, and son Weston would watch the show. “Jimmie realized how skilled I was at solving puzzles,” she shares. “He kept telling me to try out, but I just laughed and said, ‘Yeah right.’ I never dreamed I would get chosen.”

Auditioning for the Wheel

As a fan of the show, she became a member of the Wheel Watchers Club and received an email announcing that the Wheelmobile would be in Austin, TX for contestant auditions. When she mentioned it to her husband, they decided to take a day trip with their 1-year-old son. “At the Wheelmobile, your chances of getting an audition are pure luck. You put an application in the bucket, and hope your name is one of the very lucky few to get called on stage.” As luck would have it, Canant’s name was called. She did a mock interview and took turns with five other hopefuls calling letters of the alphabet. “I was the one in the group to solve our puzzle,” says Canant.

Two weeks later, she got an invitation to a final audition which included two rounds. “The first round is spent calling letters and showing your personality,” says Canant. “Then a difficult written test is given.” Afterward, the producers cut the group down and ask contestants to solve additional puzzles. “At the end, we were told that if we were chosen, we would receive a letter in a few weeks.” Canant left feeling unsure if she’d get chosen, but glad for the fun experience she’d had auditioning. Two weeks later, she was invited to be a contestant on the show. “I was shocked, excited, and nervous all at the same time,” she says.

Going to Hollywood

Once the news came, Canant made sure not to miss a single episode of *Wheel of Fortune*. She even downloaded the game on her phone and played it during her son’s nap time. For the big game, Canant traveled to Culver City, CA, just outside of Los Angeles, to film the show.

She was nervous about being in front of a live audience and on television, but felt the jitters fade away as soon as she answered Pat’s famous introductory questions. “I was so focused on solving puzzles that I didn’t even notice the camera and audience anymore.” Being on stage was a childhood dream realized. “I was in awe standing on the stage of the show I had watched my whole life,” says Canant. She says the set seemed much smaller than she had expected it to be. “As for the wheel itself, it is smaller in person, but so heavy weighing in at over 1,000 pounds.” Canant adds she had a hard time spinning it with force.

Solving Puzzles on Stage

The day of the show, she arrived several hours early along with the other contestants for six episodes which would all be taped that day. Canant did her own hair and makeup and picked out her clothes following the show’s guidelines. The studio makeup artists applied additional lipstick and makeup on top to make sure her look would be compatible with HD cameras.

“The most challenging part was all the things you must focus on at once,” she says. “Playing the game at home is way different and way easier than being a contestant.” As a contestant, she had to keep an eye on the puzzle, plan what letters to call, keep in mind what wedge the wheel landed on, and remember letters others had called. “It is a lot to focus on, and you have to be quick,” she says.

Canant won second place after solving all three toss up puzzles, two of the main puzzles, and took home \$22,750 and a shopping gift card for Victorinox Swiss Army. CFM

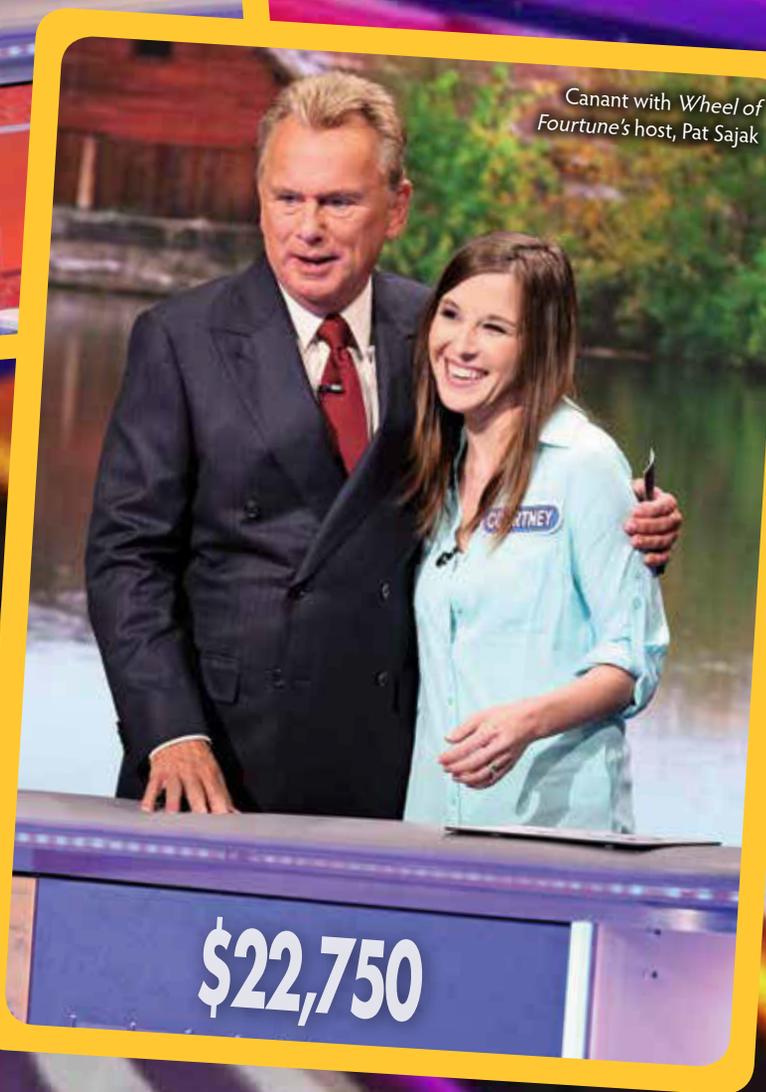
KENNAN BUCKNER has been an avid Wheel-watcher since spending nearly every childhood Friday night with her grandma and papaw.

Cy-Fair mom Courtney Canant was excited to be selected to participate on Wheel of Fortune

Keeping Secrets

She had to keep the results secret until the episode aired. "My friends and family knew I had taped an episode, but I kept my winnings a secret." Canant adds, "It was tough, but it was so worth it for them to find out while watching the show." On the day it aired, Canant had a watch party with close friends and family complete with a Wheel of Fortune cake.

Canant with Wheel of Fortune's host, Pat Sajak



\$22,750