

Menees passes her gift of gab and work ethic on to her daughter

By JAHAAAN JONES
Special to The Press

Children naturally learn by watching their parents. Many daughters learn how to cook by watching their moms. Some learn to hit a ball or shoot a basket because of their mom's talent. Others learn to sing or sew by watching their mom's ability.

"My only talent is talking," says Misty Menees. She majored in broadcast communication at the University of Tennessee at Martin and then spent 16 years at WCMT in Martin working in radio.

"It's only natural that my child would inherit the gift of gab," Menees says. "She is much better than me, though. She has this natural ability to show emotion in her voice."

Menees left radio for a career at Edward Jones in 2007 but she missed the creative aspect of working with audio. In 2014, her former co-worker and good friend Chris Brinkley encouraged her to try audiobook narrating. With a make-shift studio in a closet in her room, a laptop with editing software, a pre-amp and a good microphone, she began slowly building a side gig working from home doing voice-over work.

Most of the time, her daughter Jillian, now 6, was quietly watching her.

"She began reading very early and is well spoken for her age so I asked her if she would like to try it too," Menees said. "We set her up with a profile on one of the platforms I use online, and after a while, she was getting way more offers than her mom."

In the past two years, Jillian has really excelled. Of the over 200 orders she has completed, there are several that stand out. She voiced an internationally acclaimed video public service announcement



MENEES

for a Brazilian agency called "Letter to Jack" that has over a half-million views. She voiced a video PSA for the Christian Alliance for Orphans' foster care initiative called "Farmer Herman and the Flooding Barn." She has two children's audiobooks,

"Priscilla and The Sandman" by Anders Roseberg and "The Iceberg Seal" by Rob Mascarelli. All of these can be seen on YouTube. She is also working on the English voices for a Japanese cartoon short to be released this year.

"She really has no idea the resume she is building," her mother says. "I just tell her what to say and she says it. Most orders take her less than 10 minutes to voice and then she is out the door to swing or ride her bike. Menees does all her daughter's post editing as well as negotiating the price and terms of each order.

"I let her keep all the money she earns and I use the Dave Ramsey principals of money (saving, spending, investing and giving) when we talk about it," she says. "We save and invest most of what she makes." She recently

bought some Disney stock. She and her mother talked about the companies that make the food she eats or the toys she plays with and the places they like to shop. "I let her decide which company to buy to keep her interested and she liked Disney the most," Menees said.

"I'm hoping to model for her what a good work ethic looks like. If she works, she has money to buy things she wants," Menees said. "I recently let her buy a Baby Alive she really wanted. She bought it all with the money she had earned. She also gives to her church each week and

last year she made a nice donation to Anna Kate."

"It's not really about the money though. I am trying to give her a sense of pride for a job well done. And to have that satisfaction that comes from hard work," Menees says.

Jillian is 100-percent five-star rated on her profile and she loves to read the positive feedback her customers leave.

"And I love the time that we get to spend together, just us," Menees says. "Laughing and creating together."

Looking forward, she hopes to build Jillian's computer skills by teaching

her to edit her own audio.

During the day, Menees can be found working at the front desk at Edward Jones downtown. She and her husband Jason have two children, Jillian and 2-year-old Townes. As a side hobby, Menees narrates for Audible and is a storyteller for an upstart website and podcast called Storicast.com

Jillian is a kindergarten student in Kim McCaleb's class at Central Christian Academy. She loves YouTube, Baby Alive, and Adele. When she grows up, she wants to be the manager of the candy aisle at 3J's or a forensic scientist. She

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