

## Local teens launch their own magazine



Stepsisters Megan Praat (left) and Olivia Jensen, and mother Laura Jensen-Praat, have started We-Be Magazine.

By [Alina Konevski - Chilliwack Progress](#)

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Wanting to provide a positive outlet for teenagers, two girls in Rosedale have launched their own fashion and lifestyle magazine. Into its section issue, We-Be Magazine delivers glossy fashion photos, and inspirational stories of surviving teenage-hood, all free online.

The magazine launched so that teens "can have a voice in our community," says 15-year-old Megan Praat. The Grade 10 Chilliwack Secondary School student started the magazine with her stepsister Olivia Jensen, a Grade 8 student at Rosedale Traditional Community School.

Their [second We-Be issue](#) launched last week. The first one generated over 6,000 views online.

Megan and Olivia are backed by powerhouse mom Laura Jensen Praat.

"This is the age where I feel you need to wrap your arms around them, and get them involved, and keep them busy," says Laura. The self-proclaimed "momager" – a portmanteau of mom and manager – spends at least as

many weekly hours on the magazine as the girls do. Laura piped in frequently during the interview to explain the purpose of the project.

"One of the things kids don't want to hear from, is adults. They want to hear from the youth inspiring the youth, and youth talking to youth," she says.

Olivia and Megan wanted to combine their interests in modelling, photography, and writing in a fun after-school project that also taught them skills they can use later on.

They work out of their home office at the Bloomz n' Herbz farm, famous for its annual Tulipmania event. The girls have a small two-storey building separate from the main house that they use as a studio. It comes fully equipped with two high-end Apple desktops, two professional photography studio lights, a clothing rack, and a makeup and accessories stand. The lower floor will soon become the hair, makeup, and dressing salon.

Olivia and mom Laura moved to Canada three years ago from Seattle, and mom brought with her many years of fashion industry experience.

"I produced the top faces out of the Northwest, for New York, L.A., and Japan as a personal trainer in the modelling industry," she says.

Laura helped the girls trademark the magazine name in Canada and U.S., find a publisher and an editor, purchase equipment, and launch the website.

Megan and Olivia have been learning how to take and edit photos, use lighting for shoots, and write – all skills they will use later on, says Megan. They found sponsors by knocking on the doors of businesses at the mall, and were rewarded with an inventory of loaned clothing, and hair and makeup services.



As foundation for every issue, the "momager" provides a theme. The inaugural magazine launched in February, and under the Valentine's Day theme, Megan and Olivia took photos of their boyfriends holding flowers.

One of their favourite assignments took them backstage at a recent Maroon 5 concert in Vancouver. With their VIP backstage and press passes, Megan and Olivia received a set tour with the band's stage manager.

"It was incredible," says Megan with a big smile. There was a really nice lounge and spread, they saw how the lights and music worked, and how everything was set up before the show. Later on, the girls sat in the first few rows of the concert itself. Megan says that during the performance, lead singer Adam Levine pointed at them and smiled.

One of the key lessons from the project so far has been that creating a publication is a lot of work. Megan and Olivia jointly put in about 20 hours per week. At one point, Laura even had them on a "cell phone diet" to unplug, and focus on tasks at hand.

"You really have to commit to what you're doing, and make time for it," says Olivia. "And there's a lot of little things, and detail, that goes along with designing a magazine. All the little knicks and knacks of the page, and the way it looks."

They're still enthusiastic about We-Be, and are still having fun while working to inspire other youth.

"We write about whatever inspires us, or (whatever) we're called to write about. We feel like it would be good for a youth magazine to share with and inspire youth in our community" says Olivia. The girls found a fellow student,

Lauren Head, to voluntarily write for the magazine, and encourage more young writers and models to step forward.

In line with their mission, Megan has an article in the current issue about losing her biological mom a few years ago.

"I wrote one on coping with depression and grief, as that hits home, and so we, as a group, really want to help youth...deal with such a common thing as sadness. If people try and push it away, nothing happens to it. It just stays there. And so I really wanted to find words to help others on how to cope with such a struggle," she says.

The girls are proud to distribute some donations from their website, sponsors, and from events, to three charities: Youth Services at Chilliwack Community Services, Free the Children, and Tanzanian non-profit Noorkiramat's Daughters, which helps teen mothers.

What started as a teaching opportunity for mom Laura might evolve into a full-fledged business, as Laura and the girls plan to create an anti-bullying commercial, and branch out into a product line. Although the three wouldn't spill details, they did confirm that one product available for sale would be jewelry.

*akonevski@theprogress.com*  
*twitter.com/alinakonevski*