

Some girls don't want to be princess anymore

By Peg DeMarco - Special to The News Herald | Posted: Wednesday, April 27, 2016 2:26 pm

My granddaughter Claire just got home from a wonderful vacation at Disney in Orlando and arrived on my doorstep with sequined mouse ears, a Minnie cuddle doll, and plenty of pictures of her visits with all the Disney princesses. Standing in line for over an hour didn't seem to bother the usual impatient 6-year-old because she knew the end result was posing with Cinderella, the Little Mermaid, Snow White, and her favorite princess, Rapunzel.

So, when I saw a recent story in the Chicago Tribune entitled, "I don't want to be a princess. I want to be a pilot," this was something that intrigued me since I couldn't decide which picture of Claire and a princess would hang in my den.



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According to the article, a woman named Beckie Thompson had been vacationing at Disney a couple of years ago with her family, which included a precocious 4-year old named Keira. Keira came from a long line of strong, barrier-breaking women and apparently those genes had been passed down through the generations in her family tree.

Keira waited as patiently as a 4-year-old could on long Disney lines while Mickey, Minnie, Goofy, and all the other Disney characters passed by greeting her with, "Hi princess," and "Are you having fun, princess?"

This went on a number of times before Keira tugged at her mother's blouse and said, "Mommy, this is so annoying. I don't want to be a princess. I want to be a pilot."

No doubt Thompson probably smiled down at her daughter, amused, and wishing she was anywhere else but on a long line of impatient children. However, later on when she got home and asked her circle of friends if they shared the same moment of appeal with their daughters, she was surprised that it wasn't just Keira that wanted to be something with a little bit more substance than a princess.

Thompson decided to do something about conveying Keira's message by developing a website that "empowers and inspires girls to become anyone they want to be and to accomplish anything they want to do." Thompson's website, www.idontwanttobeaprincecess.com, is devoted to sharing stories of girls and women who have stayed true to themselves and challenged the conventional norm of what a girl should be. There are tributes to women who have changed the world such as Rosa Parks, Helen Keller, Marie Curie and, of course, Amelia Earhart.

What I found especially inspiring is the website's spotlight on current trailblazers and stories of everyday girls who decided to forge ahead with unconventional pursuits, such as in sports and medicine.

This website makes it very clear that it isn't for beauty pageant contestants.

The site also sells T-shirts, which I would like to think is Thompson's way of teaching her daughter how to run a business. The shirts come in a variety of colors and sizes and features just one of a variety of descriptive words in white across the chest that summarizes the little girl wearing it: creative, brilliant, amazing, confident, fierce and strong. Love those adjectives!

And just so mothers don't take a backseat to their daughters' crusade to properly describe themselves on a shirt, there are matching shirts in women's sizes, too.

This is so cool and reminds me of my daughter's quest to play ice hockey on an all-boys hockey team. She couldn't figure out why she was excluded when she could skate and slam the hockey puck as fierce as any boy trying out for the team. On her own, she decided to do something about it and not only did she make the team, but they put her in the coveted spot of goalie.

As I stood on the sidelines praying that the flying puck would not slip through the padded head gear, I figured that somehow I had obviously taught her well. Or was it the family genes at work?

My Polish grandmother stood at 5 feet, a sweet, nurturing woman, but she was also independent for her generation. Not much could get past her and there were no spoiled grand kids in grandma's house. My Mom followed in her footsteps, but in a quieter way that exhibited strength in reason rather than boom.

I'm glad girls are striving to become individuals that don't see bars in front of them, but rather an even playing field.

My only problem now is which one-word T-shirt to order for my granddaughter or whether I should simply order them all.

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