

South Florida Teen to Star in Lifetime's Army Wives

Show premieres March 10



Miami, Fla. (February 14, 2013) – Ella Wahlestedt, 14, of Miami was recently cast as Caroline Hall on Lifetime's "Army Wives."

Remember those crazy high school fantasies? What if you could actually have been that breathtaking most popular girl (or that sweet, hot guy) who everyone wanted to date? Ironically, blond, blue-eyed and heart-breakingly beautiful Ella Wahlestedt, 14, IS living out those fantasies, but she left school to do it.

That's because she's an actor and she can be anyone she wants to be: strong, determined and passionate; gorgeous, mean and manipulative; or bratty, pouty and a pain in the neck. And bratty, pouty and a pain is exactly what she's going to be in her role as Caroline Hall. Season Seven premieres on March 10.

"I come from a broken family and I have a lot of anger and rage in me," Ella says, speaking of her character. "And I take it out on my stepmom (The Vampire Diaries vet, Torrey DeVitto), because I blame her for the divorce."

This, of course, is exactly opposite of her real life situation. Her mother, Lisa, a doctor, travels with her between multiple cities for casting opportunities and spends her time overseeing her daughter's career.

"I was sitting at my computer when Ella came to me and said, 'Mom, I think I want to be an actor.' My heart dropped," Lisa says. "It was not because she chose acting. It was because being a doctor, I didn't know how to help her."

That changed in a hurry. At that time, Lisa was in a private neurology practice, which she eventually had to leave. "When a kid starts acting, the mother does a lot, essentially becoming the manager. It's like running a small business," Lisa says. "I handle her social networking, read a lot, stay up on trends, do the finances and chauffeur her. At every step, my role changes because every step engenders more stuff to learn. I've even taped and edited some of Ella's auditions."

Ella's dad, Claes, an M.D. and Ph.D., is a drug discovery pioneer on University of Miami's Miller School faculty. A professor who runs the epigenetics lab, he would have preferred Ella to study math and science. "But I get queasy around blood," Ella says. "It's not for me."

"He used to call Ella's acting 'my little experiment,' which he graciously funded," Lisa says. "Now he thinks it's cool."

Ella's brother Thor has gotten into the act, too. Currently studying math and science, he played Hansel to her Gretel in a student film three years ago.

There's a trick to landing acting gigs, say Ella and Lisa. You have to figure out your type and play it up. In real life, everyone in this family has his or her type down pat, no matter that they lead in totally different directions. "Through acting, I've had to make choices and face rejection, which has made me grow up a lot," Ella says.

Ella's certainly paid her dues: She started out with modeling, commercials, musical theater and performing in Indies and student productions. She's pictured on covers of Justice and she's co-starred in an episode on

“America’s Most Wanted.” Then success started rolling in. Last summer, she landed a part in a soon-to-be released Disney production (more about that later) and now this, a recurring part in “Army Wives.”

Additional Palm Beach County information on Ella and her family:

Ella Wahlestedt was born in Stockholm, Sweden and moved to Palm Beach when she was 6 years old. She went to the Palm Beach Day School and the BAK Middle School for the Performing Arts. Her teachers included Carole Belcher, voice coach in Palm Beach Gardens and Dennis Sims, an instructor with InterACT Theatre Camp in Jupiter. Her first solo performance was at St. Ann Catholic School summer camp in 2008

Her father, Claes, one of the first scientists at Scripps, Jupiter, started CURNA biotech in 2008, which was sold for \$10 million in 2009. This is significant because the State brought Scripps to Florida in order to create a science hub here.

Her mother, Lisa, finished a year of residency at the Palm Beach County Health Department in 2009 and then worked at a neurology practice in Delray Beach.

In 2009, the Wahlestedts received the Polly Earl Award for their home renovation.

After Claes took his new position with the University of Miami, the Wahlestedts rented their Palm Beach home and moved to the Brickell neighborhood in Miami last year.