

It can be done

Written by By Dee Velasco For the Sun
Friday, 11 December 2020 10:01



It can be done

Written by By Dee Velasco For the Sun
Friday, 11 December 2020 10:01



Dine model/photographer creates positive life out of adversity

When Shundeen Modell was a young Diné girl living in Arizona, she faced a lot of obstacles. In her home, she dealt with alcoholic parents, domestic violence, and abuse. At school she was bullied by children who made fun of her for being too thin.

“I remember kids would tease me because I was so skinny,” she said. “They would trip me and push me into the lockers and now it’s funny because when they see me now (laughing), they [guys] try to hit on me on Facebook.”

“I’ve forgiven them, but I just want to move on. But [I am] watching my boundaries.”

Raised in Teesto, Ariz., then relocated to Sanders, Ariz., the full blooded Diné model and photographer recalls living in a world of chaos and now uses that to improve her life and help others.

The 40-year-old said she overcame her background and learned to trust people in front of the

It can be done

Written by By Dee Velasco For the Sun
Friday, 11 December 2020 10:01

camera, and behind it, too.

It's part of something she described as "body positive."

"'Body positive' is feeling good about how your body looks, even if your body is not perfect like those you find on fashion magazines," Modell said. "If you simply can be confident in who you are, you can get anywhere, and don't care about what others think."

This was what her late brother Jake Modell told her when she was sixteen years old. That's also when he suggested she get into modeling. She said it was her brother who really pushed her to become what she is today; even when her family fell apart.

At the time she said she didn't quite know how to connect with her brother's words.

"He would tell me to not be shy around people," she said. "He kept pushing me to tell the world — 'This is who I am', to be comfortable in my skin and to have a high esteem."

Modell says her name Shundeen means "*my light*" in Navajo, but she was always portrayed as the black sheep in her family.

She said that her family has objected to some of her photography portraits.

"Some of my photo shoots are implied nude or boudoir, but I never go further," she said. "I'm just pushing out of my tradition and telling others that you can do whatever you want. Push for whatever you want. It's like a tease and putting it to the imagination. When I'm modeling, I'm not doing it for myself, I'm doing it for body positive."

Modell says little girls are brought up to think that you must be what they see on magazines and

It can be done

Written by By Dee Velasco For the Sun
Friday, 11 December 2020 10:01

television, even if this means starving yourself to have a body like those models.

“You can be beautiful no matter what size you are. You don’t have to be photoshopped either,” she said.

Modell said in order to do what she wanted, she sometimes had to veer off the traditional Diné path.

MODELL AS PHOTOGRAPHER

Modell said when she posed for photo shoots, she often wondered why the photographer would move all over the place. That curiosity motivated her to get involved behind the camera.

Modell recalled that at the beginning she felt awkward with a camera in her hands. But with some help from a seasoned photographer, she became more comfortable with the craft.

“When I take pictures, I see it in a different perspective,” she said. “I’m showing the world what I see, and it feels pretty good, I capture people’s memories. I love it and I’m always with my camera wherever I go.”

She said she now she loves taking pictures and seeing something different in what she shoots. Whether it’s taking pictures at car shows or scenes from her native land, she wants to capture these moments and hold them in time. That’s true especially with family portraits.

“It’s fun when I capture family moments on my camera. These are memories that they can look at always, and that makes me happy.”

Modell’s photography work primarily consists of low rider cars, family shots, and random

It can be done

Written by By Dee Velasco For the Sun
Friday, 11 December 2020 10:01

subjects.

Modell came up with the name Mountain Cove Photography, which in her Diné language is Dziłglaahnii.

Modell lives in Denver, Colo. When she is not modeling or taking pictures, she works as a Certified Nursing Assistant and a phlebotomist.

For more information on Shundeen Modell, you can contact on Facebook/Shundeen, or emails n8v3modeling@gmail.com for my modeling, and for photography mountaincovephotography@gmail.com

By Dee Velasco
For the Sun