

24 Hours – Ottawa Edition
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TELEVISION

Cupcake queens get up close and personal

KATE SCHWAB, 14 HOURS—On the surface, *The Cupcake Girls* appears to be just another behind-the-scenes television series about two friends running their Vancouver bakery. Add in a dash of in vitro, a beak with alcoholism and a girl who used to be a boy and you have a show that's about more than sugary treats.

"There's a personal struggle in every episode," Heather White says during a phone interview with 24Hours.

White admits in the first episode of the show that she's recovering alcoholic and her choice to include this in the show raised eyebrows from friends and family.

"They said, 'You brought this upon yourself!' she said with a bit of laugh.

Her business partner and best friend, Lori Joyce, is facing her own problem. She's having trouble getting pregnant. She says during the 13 episodes, viewers will watch her cop-

ing process through in vitro fertilization.

While she was hesitant to talk about it on the show, Joyce says the producers convinced her to let them film it.

"There's a reason why this has happened," she says, adding she hopes her experience will help other women going through the same thing.

In the first episode, Joyce is brought to tears as she talks about her fertility issues.

"I want to be a mom. I want to have a family. And that's more important to me than dominating the world of cupcakes," she tells the camera, wondering if her career was the reason she can't get pregnant.

Joyce said the fact that the show is on W Network was another reason she was willing to reveal this very personal issue.

"W Network is all about inspiring women," she says. "We really revealed ourselves."

Along with watching the two friends, viewers are introduced



Lori Joyce, left, and Heather White are best friends who went in to the cupcake business together. Their show premieres Friday on W Network.

to White's partner, who works for the two women, and a transitioning transgender employee named Cadence.

Cadence is a fun-loving girl

with bright blue eyes and blond hair who is confident in who she is, despite the questioning looks she often gets from customers. In the first episode, a little boy

staring at her makes her feel self-loved.

"He said something about me looking like a man," she says. "Which is like, really going to happen, but it's like, oh, I know I'm trying to work on it."

She explains that she's had similar experiences, but she's used to the scrutiny now.

"You've got to be brave enough to go through a lot of things that I go through, but a girl's got to do what a girl's got to do."

Cadence is often getting in trouble, mostly for not wearing her hair net.

"There really nice hair for a woman," Cadence says in the first episode pointing to the pink hair she just cut. "This is nice."

Joyce says in one episode, Cadence is forced to clean the tables in the bakery as punishment. "She does it and it's very funny," Joyce says, adding Cadence wants to become "the Paula Abdul of transgendered people. That's her goal."

The two women, who grew

up in Victoria, B.C., admit they had no business plan for *Cupcakes*, their growing franchise in Vancouver when they started it in 2001 and they also had no idea how to bake when they opened their first shop. The idea struck them while they were living in New York City and were out one day grabbing dinner.

"There was something whimsical and different about buying a cupcake," White said.

They were asked to do the show after filming an episode of *The Shopping Spree*, which they say received a "100 percent response."

Despite feeling overwhelmed at times by having cameras follow their every move, the women appear to be good friends, claiming they're like sisters. They say they want to see how the show impacts their business, but, decided to do a second season. "We would absolutely do it again," Joyce says.

The Cupcake Girls premieres with two episodes this Sunday April 14 on W Network.