



The 55th Annual
Miss USA Pageant



Melissa Lingafelt meets
First Lady, Laura Bush



Kelsey Dreams Big &
Brittany Gives Back



2006 Miss Teen USA
Palm Springs, CA



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55TH ANNUAL MISS USA PAGEANT

The 1st Mariner Arena was the venue for this year's Miss USA pageant. Fifty-one of the country's most beautiful young ladies spent three weeks making appearances, attending rehearsals, and getting to know each other. One of their most memorable appearances was traveling to New York City as guests of business mogul, Donald J. Trump to promote the book *Universal Beauty: The Miss Universe Guide to Beauty*. The event was held at the beautiful Trump Towers on 5th Avenue.

After days of rehearsals and the preliminary competition, the live telecast took place on NBC, April 21st and one young lady had her life changed forever.

Tara Elizabeth Conner, 20, of Russell Springs, KY, was crowned Miss USA 2006 by Chelsea Cooley of North Carolina, Miss USA 2005. Tara competed at the Miss Teen USA pageant in 2002 as Miss Kentucky Teen USA, where she was second runner up and swimsuit winner. She said she was very proud to be the first winner from the state of Kentucky. She will represent the United States on July 23 in the Miss Universe competition in Los Angeles, Ca.

First runner-up was Miss California USA, Tamiko Nash of Los Angeles. Miss Georgia USA, Lisa Wilson was second runner-up, Miss Ohio USA, Stacy Offenberg was third runner-up, Miss Florida USA, Cristen Duren was fourth runner-up.

The other finalists in the top ten were: Miss Rhode Island USA LeeAnn Tingley, Miss Texas USA Lauren Lanning, Miss Alabama USA Haleigh Stidham, Miss District of Columbia USA Candace Allen, and South Carolina's own Lacie Lybrand of Lexington.

Also in the top fifteen were: Miss Illinois USA Catherine Warren, Miss Nevada USA Lauren Scyphers, Miss Maine USA Katee Sterns, Miss Arizona USA Brenna Sakas and Miss Tennessee USA Lauren Grissom.

Special awards were Photogenic given to Miss Florida USA Cristen Duran and Miss Congeniality which went to Miss Minnesota USA Dottie Cannon.



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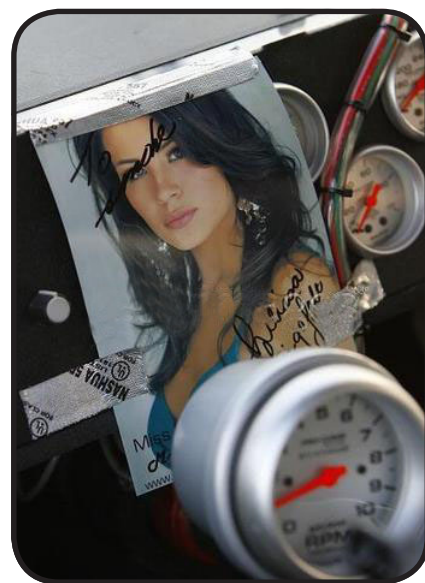


MELISSA LINGAFELT MEETS THE FIRST LADY...AMONG OTHER THINGS

Extraordinary might be a good word to describe the experiences Melissa Lingafelt, Miss North Carolina Teen USA, has been having since being crowned. Most memorable might be the meeting she had with First Lady Laura Bush. She was contacted by Congressman Robin Hayes to see if she would attend a private lunch for the First Lady and lead the Pledge of Allegiance. Melissa says, "I didn't have to even think twice about my answer." Although she reports feeling a little nervous when she saw the body guards, police escorts, and the media, Mrs. Bush made her feel very at ease when they had their one-on-one time together. They discussed her role as a representative for the state of North Carolina and her interest in the American Heart Association. At the end of their meeting, Melissa said the First Lady wished her luck and said she hopes to watch the national pageant.



Melissa feels that her year as Miss North Carolina Teen USA has been more than she imagined or expected. She has enjoyed participating in photo shoots, promotional videos and parades. She was also a celebrity guest at the Coca Cola 600 Pole night during Lowe's Motor Speedway Race Week where she sang the National Anthem. After Melissa sang the National Anthem, crew members wanted their photos with her along with a signed autograph card. One of those cards wound up taped to the dashboard of Tony Stewart's race car. During the race the media picked up on the photo. Following all of the hoopla on the celebrity gossip boards, Melissa was dubbed "Smoke's Teen Dashboard Queen." She really enjoyed participating with Morgan Fairchild and Jeanine Turner at the NASCAR race in Charlotte, NC. She was able to meet all of the drivers and acquire their autograph on a racing helmet for her state gift for nationals. A few days before that appearance she sang the national anthem for the NEXTEL qualifying in front of an audience of over 40,000. It was the largest group of people that she ever performed before and singing in the presence of the crowd in the huge outside super track is a memory she says she will never forget.



Her preparations for the Miss Teen USA pageant in Palm Springs are well underway. She is busy getting her wardrobe together as well as making final decisions on her gown. She hopes attending motivational workshops will help her edge out the competition. The workshops were provided by Eagle "U" as part of her state prize package. The workshops provide growth in communication skills and self-confidence. She is doing all of this while continuing to represent her state in many varied appearances.



Melissa is very proud of North Carolina and promotes her state wherever she goes. If chosen as Miss Teen USA, she wants to show everyone the southern charm and hospitality that North Carolinians are known for. She says North Carolina has much to offer such as the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains and clean sunny coasts. She wants everyone to know it is a great place to visit and call home.

When her year as Miss North Carolina Teen USA is over, she would like to be remembered as an effective and active title holder. She hopes she has brought awareness to many notable causes. She would like people to remember that she worked hard to maintain a high standard in the role of Miss North Carolina Teen USA. Melissa is very grateful to her director and the Miss USA organization. She feels it has been a very positive experience and says she would definitely do it all over again.



KELSEY LAWSON DREAMS BIG!

Since winning Miss Louisiana Teen USA, Kelsey Lawson, has been very busy. She has been traveling around the state making personal appearances and connecting with teens and adults. A few of the many appearances she has made have been for Hurricane Katrina relief, Dare graduations, and walks to raise money for cancer. When appearing at a 5th grade Dare graduation, she spoke to the students about some of her personal experiences and how making the right choices can affect your life forever. She also has a special connection to the work she does for cancer because she had a grandparent die from the disease.

Kelsey is proud of Louisiana residents for staying strong and pulling together in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. She had approximately twenty family members from New Orleans stay at her home for several weeks following the disaster. Her school also gained 500 new students. She is very thankful to everyone who has contributed to the relief efforts.

Kelsey watched pageants on television as a young girl and began dreaming of being on TV in a pageant herself. She began by participating in local pageants. Before winning Miss Louisiana Teen USA in 2005, she had participated in the pageant twice before. She finished in the top five both times. She was inspired to try again in 2005 by her strong performances in the past. She had also competed with Shelly Henning, Miss Louisiana Teen USA. Seeing Shelly go on to win Miss Teen USA was another motivating factor. She knew Shelly was from a small town like herself. Yet, she stayed true to herself and went on to win the national title.

Kelsey believes her participation in pageants has made her a better person. She has gained self-confidence and is more comfortable when speaking in front of groups of all sizes. Her experiences have helped her know who she really is. When asked what she would tell a young girl who is interested in participating in pageants, she said she would say, "Just do it!"

In April of this year, Kelsey traveled to Baltimore to attend the Miss USA pageant. She had a good time with many different experiences. She remembers thinking as she watched Miss Kentucky be crowned Miss USA, that she hoped it would be her receiving a national crown in August.

To prepare for the Miss Teen USA pageant in August, Kelsey has been doing many things. She has been practicing for her interviews with Coach Don Baker. As part of her state prize package she attended a seminar presented by Eagle "U" at Pepperdine University in California. The seminars were very beneficial in improving self-esteem and communication skills. She became good friends with Brittany Smith, Miss South Carolina Teen USA, while attending the seminar. They are now planning to be roommates at the national pageant in Palm Springs. She has also worked with designer Gregory Ellenburg to create the gown of her dreams. She is also hoping her dedication to working out will pay off. She is looking forward to going to California and thinks she will like the dry heat of Palm Springs to the humidity of southern Louisiana.

During this last year, Kelsey has made several appearances with Christina Cuenca, the current Miss Louisiana USA. She is thankful for the advice she has received from Christina. She says some of the memorable advice is, "Have fun, be yourself, and make sure the outfits they give you for competition fit!"

When her year as Miss Louisiana Teen USA is over, she wants to be remembered as a real person, someone people can relate to – not just a pageant girl. As for her future plans, she hopes to attend LSU. She also loves competing and wants to be in the Miss Louisiana USA pageant. Good Luck Kelsey!





BRITTANY SMITH GIVES BACK



Brittany Smith has been busy and enjoying her reign as Miss South Carolina Teen USA 2006. She has especially enjoyed her involvement with the "Queen for a Day" program. She is spokesperson for the Greenville/Spartanburg area. This program exists to raise the self-esteem and self-confidence of girls with cancer. They host parties that give the girls, from age 17 months to 21 years, manicures and makeovers. Each girl is given a tiara that has been donated by a title holder. Brittany does whatever is needed at these parties from putting on make-up to helping with crafts or just talking. She was especially touched by a little girl who had been in remission for three years but then had a reoccurrence of her leukemia. Brittany remembers the little girl was so brave and always smiling. During her reign as Miss South Carolina Teen USA, she hopes to encourage others to become active in this wonderful program.

A friend suggested that Brittany enter a local pageant. She did and won the title of Miss Greater Greer Teen USA. That year she was second runner-up at the state competition. She decided to try again and won the title of Miss Lexington Teen USA and returned to take the state title on her second attempt. She admires Austen Brown, Miss South Carolina Teen USA 2002. She says Austen is like her big sister. She is glad for all the support and words of encouragement she receives from her.

She is also busy preparing for her national competition on August 15 in Palm Springs, CA. Part of her preparation was attending a workshop provided by [Eagle "U"](#) at Pepperdine University in Malibu, CA. The workshops help participants gain self-confidence and better their communication skills. The workshop was part of her state prize package. While there, she met her future roommate for the Miss Teen USA pageant, Miss Kelsey Lawson, Miss Louisiana Teen USA. Brittany says there have become good friends and she is looking forward to spending time with her in Palm Springs. She says realizing that she will be one of the girls on television this year is a dream come true. Brittany has been talking to Miss South Carolina USA, Lacie Lybrand, and received advice and words of encouragement. The best thing she told me is, "Make sure you have fun and be yourself."

At the present time Brittany does not know if she will enter any other pageants in the future. For now, she is focusing on her appearance in August. She hopes she has represented the state of South Carolina in a way that would make everyone want to visit. She wants everyone to know she has been active this year representing South Carolina. The state has many historical places to visit and is full of friendly people. In the fall, she plans on attending Clemson University. She will be studying Marketing and Business Administration.



Be sure to watch Brittany represent the Palmetto state at the Miss Teen USA Pageant, August 15, live on NBC from Palm Springs, CA.



MISS TEEN USA PAGEANT RETURNS TO PALM SPRINGS, CA

Be sure to check out the 2006 Miss Teen USA Pageant. Live on NBC, on August 15th, 2006. The pageant is being telecast from the exotic resort town of Palm Springs, California. 51 dynamic young women will try to make their dream a reality of becoming Miss Teen USA 2006. Outgoing queen, Allie LaForce of Vermilion, Ohio will be on hand to crown the new winner.



GOOD LUCK TO KELSEY, MELISSA AND BRITTANY!

