

The Curvy Revolution!

Plus Pageantry: Who Said You Could Do That?

Society today as a whole is larger in size than it was twenty years ago. This is a fact. There is excessive reporting on the obese by the media today. An overweight person cannot turn on the television or visit any online news page without seeing an advertisement of a report/article about the effects of obesity in society.

As the owner of the Miss Plus America Pageant System, one of the main questions I am asked when giving an interview on television, radio or in print is, "How can you justify having a pageant that promotes obesity?" I cringe when I hear this question because it is spawned from a great misunderstanding of what MPA is all about. I always respond by saying, "I suspect that if any overweight woman could snap her fingers and become a healthy size five, she would do it. But she can't. Contrary to popular belief, the word "obese" does not equal the word "lazy"; and I refuse to hide in a closet because society says I am not acceptable to experience all life has to offer because of my size."

There are many different facets of why I have created the Miss Plus America Pageant. Beyond my love for pageantry which was instilled in me when I was very young, the pageant promotes self-esteem. Self-esteem among obese women seems to be at an all-time low and combating blatant discrimination on a daily basis can become taxing. Several delegates have braved thousands of miles despite the disapproval of their families, friends and/or co-workers to have the MPA experience.

The pageant itself promotes sisterhood and brings women of like minds and nature together for one weekend and creates friendships that will last a lifetime. MPA hosts a Delegate Forum that is exclusive to the Official State Titleholder where she can meet and greet delegates that are competing this year as well as former delegates and former reigning queens. This forum provides a great support system for when a delegate has had a bad day and/or wants to discuss issues of importance regarding weight, current affairs, platform selections and yes, the opposite sex. By the time the State Titleholder arrives at the pageant, she already has a group of tight-knit friends waiting with open arms.

Another facet of Miss Plus America is the promotion of Community Service through volunteerism. Each delegate is required to represent a charitable organization of her choice. These charitable organizations may range from Breast Cancer Awareness to PETA etc. The crown offers an avenue for the plus-sized woman to promote those causes closest to her heart. Before she was awarded the title of Ms North Carolina Plus America, Hansi Holloway was discouraged because she was unable to convince the School Board to allow her to speak to elementary school children about the dangers of speaking to strangers and what to do if someone touches them in an inappropriate place. After Hansi was awarded her state title, she was allowed to make her presentation to several elementary schools as Ms North Carolina Plus America and because of her efforts in promoting her platform, three young girls reported their abusers and are safe today.

That's what MPA is all about. We are not here to make a statement. We are here to make a difference in the lives of others.

-Melissa Stamper

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