

Miss Mississippi discusses her year with the crown

June 30, 2011



By GWEN SISSON

sdnlife@bellsouth.net

Sarah Beth James said her year as Miss Mississippi 2010 has been full of adventures, successes and surprises.

“There have been so many wonderful experiences this year, from getting to wear the Saints Super Bowl ring, to driving a 70 ton Army tank, to helping rescued sea turtles from the BP oil spill, to performing on the Miss America stage in Las Vegas,” James said. “Those are just a few of the big highlights, but some of the memorable moments came in smaller packages, including a little girl tugging on my dress to tell me she wants to be me when she grows up; the smiles on the faces of the Blair E. Batson Children’s Hospital patients when I come to visit them and hand out teddy bears; the signatures of newly registered organ and tissue donors.”

James said all of these experiences and many more have made her year as Miss Mississippi the experience of a lifetime.

James will take her last walk on stage as Miss Mississippi Saturday night in the final evening of competition in Vicksburg as part of Miss Mississippi Week.

For the girls participating in this year’s competition, James encourages them to enjoy every minute of the experience.

“My first year competing in the Miss Mississippi Pageant, I had no idea what I was doing,” James said. “I simply tried to learn as much as I could and get my foot in the door by gaining experience. My second year, I took myself way too seriously. I faced a lot of pressure to improve, both from others and from myself. It was hard to enjoy the experience as much when I was so focused on the results and whether or not I would measure up.”

It was in her third year that James found the perfect balance.

“I was able to work hard, expect and do my best, and still live in the moment, taking in the experience for all that it was worth,” James said. “I encourage the contestants this year to find that balance. Focus on giving your all, but try not to get caught up in the outcome; and soak up every minute of it because it will fly by.”

And while the competition was a learning experience, she said serving as Miss Mississippi taught her more about who she is as a person.

“I have learned more about myself this year than I have in the past two decades — my fears, my aspirations, my limitations, my expectations, my strengths, my weaknesses, my values,” James said. “I have learned just how far I can push myself, how to ask for help and perhaps most importantly how to laugh at myself. I make mistakes, but I learn from them, and this year has taught me how to not take myself too seriously by keeping things in perspective.”

She said being Miss Mississippi is a team effort and this year she has learned she has many friends she can count on.

“I have been blessed with really amazing friends, but it wasn’t until this year that I was able to see just how incredible they truly are,” James said. “Amber, Kara, Chelsea and all of my sisters in Chi Omega, I want to thank them for being so understanding this year and for supporting me in my many endeavors. I am so grateful to have so many friends I know I can count on to be there, and I can only hope to contribute to their successes and happiness as much as they have contributed to mine.”

While Saturday will be a bittersweet day for James, she is looking forward to a vacation and a time to rest after her busy year.

James will be returning to Mississippi State University in the fall to complete her degree in communication with a double concentration in public relations and journalism, and with a minor in Spanish. After graduation, she plans to earn her masters of business administration in music business from Belmont University.

Heidie Lindsey, associate director of the Colvard Student Union and director of the Miss MSU pageant, said she has been so proud of James for many reasons this year.

“First, that she is one of our former Miss MSU’s, so, she has represented our university and our entire state well,” Lindsey said. “Second, she has been so busy as Miss Mississippi.”

In a typical year, Miss Mississippi makes around 80 appearances. Lindsey said between winning her title last July and November 2010, James had already greatly exceeded 80 appearances.

“Third, throughout her year as Miss Mississippi, she has not only represented our university and our state with grace and dignity, but she has also furthered her passion for organ and tissue donation,” Lindsey said. “She truly enjoys and has an intense passion to spread the word about the importance of this critical issue. I’ve witnessed this on many occasions.”

Lindsey is also proud of how well James represented Mississippi at the Miss America Pageant last January.

“It was the 90th anniversary of the Miss America Pageant, and so Sarah Beth had many opportunities to meet and interact with so many former Miss Americas,” Lindsey said.

Lindsey has the opportunity to attend this year’s Miss America Pageant to support Sarah Beth and delivered the Miss Mississippi cowbells to all of her fans in Las Vegas.

“I felt enormous pride the entire week including when she rocked the swimsuit competition, when she absolutely nailed her piano piece during talent competition and when she presented herself in the evening wear competition,” Lindsey said. “Sarah Beth was so poised and absolutely beautiful from the inside out.”

For more information or for tickets to Saturday’s event, call the Miss Mississippi Pageant Office at (601) 638-6746 or visit the Miss Mississippi Pageant website at <http://www.missmississippipageant.org>. You can look for live pageant updates on Twitter by following @MissMSPageant.