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Does Participating In A Beauty Pageant Have A Positive Influence On Individuals?

The first beauty pageant was held on September 25, 1920 by the Businessmen's League of Atlantic City when they organized a Fall Frolic. The glittering spectacle was a success and the Businessmen's League quickly went to work on planning the next year's event. Despite the League's attempts to advertise beauty pageants, they soon died out due to the growing criticism and a lack of financial footing. However, by 1940 the beauty pageants regained their respectability and financial funding. The national executive director, Lenora Slaughter, shaped the modern pageants by adding features such as state competitions, the scholarship program, and a judging category based on personal interviews ("Miss"). And to this day, beauty pageants remain a place where women can compete to better their life. Because of the long, enduring hours of daily exercise and volunteer work that the women undergo, beauty pageants are an excellent way to build long-lasting friendships while women prepare themselves mentally, emotionally, and physically for the future.

By participating in beauty pageants, females gain self-confidence. Beauty pageants are not just about an individual's physical appearance. Most of the times the way a contestant carries herself is what wins over and captures the judges' attention ("Pros"). Moreover, a participant can win by proving she has what it takes in both the character and talent portions of the competition. Pageantry requires each participant to project the best image possible of themselves, provoking one to beam with confidence through their every word and motion

(Bailey). Furthermore, pageants help young women grow emotionally. Sometimes when asked certain questions, young women may become emotional; however by participating in pageants, contestants learn how to control their emotions (Garner). The fact that many participants are a nervous wreck on the inside does not matter, because they are able to conduct themselves perfectly on the outside. In the end, knowing how to control one's emotions is the ultimate key to building confidence in any field (Bailey). Stress, pressure, and disappointment do not have to be viewed as negative things. In fact, they can be powerful motivators to accelerate you to the next level (Shappert). If a contestant can learn from her failures and improve, the next time she performs, she will be able to obtain victory. According to yoga instructor, Jennifer Paremke, "You need stress to a certain degree. Just try not to let take control of you" (Weaver). The attitude and thoughts of the contestant around these reactions is crucial. In pageantry, participants learn how to flip these emotions to work them to their own advantage (Shappert). Therefore, beauty pageants are an excellent way to develop self-confidence and grow emotionally.

Beauty pageants provide women an opportunity to build on their confidence. For example, Kim Josie Emery was physically disabled and therefore, always mocked by her classmates. Finally one day, she became tired of all the teasing and decided to participate in a pageant. After winning many beauty titles, she became hooked and loved the pageant experience. Emery stated, "You can take the girl out of the pageant, but you can't take the pageant out of the girl" (Emery). There are plenty of girls who enjoy entering beauty pageants and find that they gain confidence from participating. The main aim of beauty pageants is to boost self-esteem in the contestant ("Benefits"). By receiving recognition for their hard work, participants feel valued and appreciated. The more a contestant recognizes and understands their

strengths, values, likes, dislikes, and personality style, the greater fulfillment and satisfaction they will experience in their life (Shappert). Beauty pageants helps a contestant build self-confidence and learn more about themselves.

Pageants help a woman to tone her body and become fit. To prepare for a pageant, a participant must learn how to walk, how to present themselves on stage, and how to improve upon their weaknesses (Garner). Society has a certain view on beauty; in order to be beautiful, one must be a size 0 and blond. In reality, society has room for more than one standard of what is beautiful. Women, who have been anorexic, such as Kate Dillon, only stopped hating themselves after seeing plus-sized and short models finding ways to show their bodies in a beautiful manner (“Beauty”). Beauty pageants do not dehumanize, but lead to the joy of discovering the art of using one’s body and inspiring others to do the same. Thanks to pageants, different body types have the potential of greater acceptance. Pageants are a healthy competition in which women can celebrate their physique and appearance (Bailey). Contestants can be judged based on their physical power in competitive sports, where fitness and strength are the major determinants of success. Although pageants are thought to objectify the participants, they are no more objectifying than taking an exam and being judged on one’s intellect. Every competition, of any kind, values certain qualities over others; it is possible to give a prize to a beautiful woman without implying that beauty is all that matters (“Contests”). Moreover, different people have different views on what is considered beautiful. A cursory scan of today’s beautiful people reveals women of all ages and ethnic groups, with no one body type or style of dress; emphasizing that the beauty of one women does not force another to conform (McElroy). Beauty pageants are a great way to teach a participant how to appreciate her body and use it to her advantage.

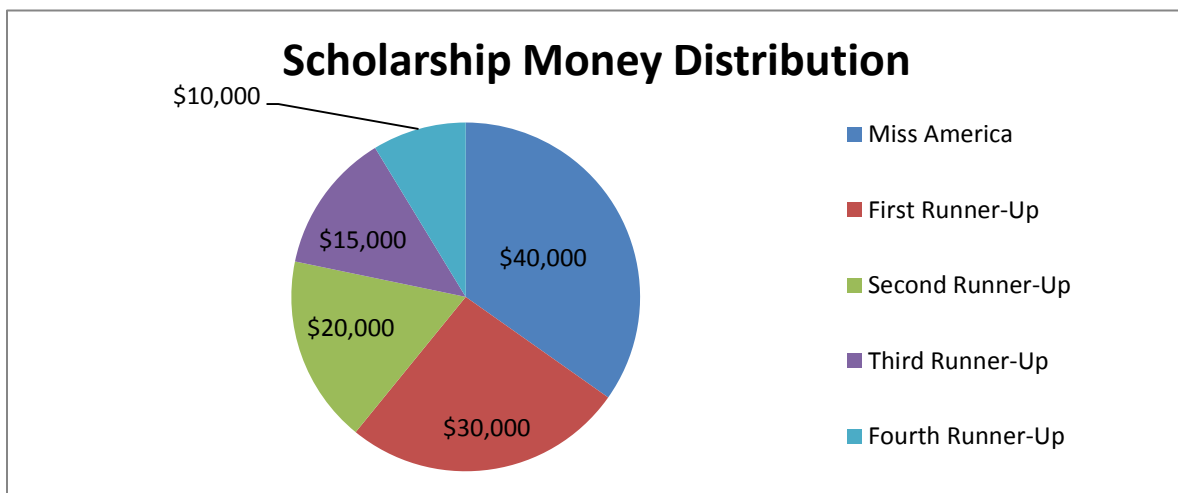
In pageantry, through the interviewing process and meeting a variety of new people, participant's communication skills will blossom. Rhonda Shappert once stated, "As a pageant coach and judge, I regularly encounter contestants with poor writing and verbal communication skills. This is very apparent in the paperwork that is submitted" (Shappert). In addition to technology having greatly diminished the meaningful face to face conversations individuals have with each other, speaking in front of a crowd is also a common fear, which makes it easier for individuals to refrain from speaking publicly or engaging in a large amount of social interaction. With a beauty pageant however, there are plenty of opportunities for contestants to get in front of large groups of people on a regular basis and become comfortable with being on stage. Even though testing participants on how well they communicate is a common standard in pageants, contestants tend to improve their communication skills and their relationships will further develop (Shappert). Beauty contests help a contestant develop writing and verbal communication skills.

Beauty pageants also assist in the development of the participant's social or interpersonal skills. Pageants are a place where friendships that last for a lifetime may be created. Because participants' are exposed to more people, they can engage and establish friendships with a more diverse group of people than just those that live in their neighborhood (Garner). In addition, because a participant is forced to interact with various personalities, he or she would be capable of understanding that all people are unique and ought to be respected. Females who enter beauty pageants can actually gain relevant career advantages if they later pursue the entertainment industry (Bailey). Beauty pageants share similar qualities to the steps taken in gaining a job in the entertainment world, therefore helping a participant have a great advantage over others. Pageants can also open doors in the business and political world (Garner). Many Hollywood

actresses are former beauty queens, and they would have been less likely to have reached their success without participating and winning numerous beauty contests. In an environment where women are valued solely on their appearance, and in which there are more opportunities for men, beauty pageants give women an opportunity to improve their situations (“House”). The networking opportunities at beauty pageants can help a contestant obtain her ideal career. Contestants are introduced to people who have certain connections and can provide leads into who is looking for what, which areas need work, and the types of looks that are in demand (Bailey). Moreover, contestants could meet someone who could offer them a job. Many pageant participants are hired as models, dancers and singers on cruise ships and as actresses on Broadway (Garner). Beauty pageants have maintained a tradition for many decades of empowering young women to achieve their personal and professional goals through scholarships and other awards.

Pageants give scholarships as special prizes for certain attributes shown during the competition. The “Miss Congeniality Award” is an example of this. The Miss America Organization is the world’s largest provider of scholarships for young women. Since founding the scholarship program in 1945, the Miss America Organization has given more than one hundred fifty million in educational grants (“Miss”). Some pageants systems also offer prizes for many other aspects of the competition. For example, many pageant systems offer cash prizes along with on-stage recognition for optional areas of participation such as talent, speech, commercials and modeling, community service, scholastic letters of recommendation, career achievement, and creative arts (Shappert). Contestants can then use this money towards their education or anything else that could benefit them and their family. Scholarships have been the cornerstone of pageants since 1945 when Bess Myerson was the first Miss America to receive a

scholarship from the organization (“Participate”). Scholarships, as stated before, became the foundation, the base for beauty pageants helping many participants reach their life goals. This assistance is not just for the contestants who win, but it is also available to the over twelve thousand young women who compete in state and local competitions as well (“Participate”). These scholarships have benefited many young women in their lives. Scholarships especially helped Kaye Lani Rae Rafko, a young woman from the small town of Monroe, Michigan. Kaye Lani Rafko entered a Miss America local competition to earn scholarship money to pay for the nursing school bills. To Kaye’s surprise, she won not only a local and state title, but was ultimately named Miss America in 1988. Kaye Lani used the scholarship money she earned to pursue an advanced degree and fulfilled her dream of opening a hospice for the terminally ill in her hometown (“Participate”). Scholarships gained from participating in beauty pageants are a great help for the contestant. They enable her advance further in her career than she would have if on her own. Pageants distribute scholarships on the national level as well. The winner, for example, Miss America, receives forty thousand dollars. The first runner-up takes thirty thousand dollars; the second runner-up receives twenty thousand. The third runner-up obtains fifteen thousand and the fourth runner-up gets ten thousand, as seen in the graph below.



Participants may also receive scholarship money for many other reasons. Each of the forty contestants receives three thousand. Each of the five semi-finalists also wins eighteen thousand. The three preliminary talent winners get two thousand and the three preliminary swimsuit winners gain five hundred each; one non-finalist interview winner is awarded one thousand (“Miss”). Scholarships given by beauty pageants are a great help in helping a contestant achieve their life long goals and dreams.

Beauty contests also allow a participant to do some charity work and help others. For example, the state winner spends a year advocating her chosen social issue to the media, businesses, public officials, and civic and charitable organizations (“Miss”). Most winners even are given the duty of becoming ambassadors of the worthy causes. Some of these causes may be world peace, ending world hunger, and banning fur (“Benefits”). People watching look up these causes and some even donate time or money to them, therefore benefiting others. Pageants continue to fulfill the role of promoting the common good and general welfare of the community.

Funds for sponsoring the pageants and providing the prizes traditionally are drawn from individuals, small businesses, corporations, civic groups, foundations, and universities. When a contestant wins, she has the obligation to represent the pageant sponsor’s commercial interests. Therefore, allowing the business sponsors to reap favorable publicity generated from their association with the popular pageants (Copeland). Pageants also open a public mass discourse on beauty. They educate the people who only judge by looks and offer a recreational outlet for participants and community members (Copeland). Nowadays, most communities also organize their own pageants as they believe they are an excellent method of displaying talents. Therefore, beauty pageants are an excellent way to provide entertainment and help to the community by attracting spectators to the beauty pageant.

Beauty pageants are a memorable experience for females to develop themselves for the future. Participating in pageants not only helps a participant pay for college and prepare for a career, but they also provide an opportunity to gain additional life experience by working on issues of importance to society. Pageants moreover help a participant enhance their personal and professional skills and develop performance and other talents. What America should realize is that beauty pageants are a unique opportunity for females to portray their inner beauty, express themselves, and become role models. Everyone is encouraged to participate; after all, it's not all about beauty. Beauty pageants are expected to provide women with an extraordinary experience, which allows them to establish life-long friendships. Pageants are a marvelous opportunity for females of all ages.

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