

ClackamasReview

Send in the crown

Locals competing in Miss Oregon competition in Seaside this weekend

BY ELLEN SPITALERI

The Clackamas Review, Jul 7, 2009

Three young women with ties to Clackamas County will be participating in the Miss Oregon 2009 pageant in Seaside, culminating in the crowning of a new Miss Oregon on July 11. Jessy Burris, 22, last year's Miss Clackamas County, will compete this year as Miss University of Oregon; Julia Pidasheff, 18, a student at **Clackamas Community College**, is this year's Miss Clackamas County and will compete for the first time; and Anna Prosser, a Milwaukie resident, will compete as Miss Tri-Valley – she was Miss Portland last year and was one of the top-five finalists. All three will compete in swimsuit, talent, evening gown and interview.

Jessica Elizabeth Burris

Miss University of Oregon 2009, Miss Clackamas County 2008

Jessica Elizabeth Burris, 22, who goes by Jessy, is a senior at the University of Oregon Lundquist College of Business, majoring in Business Administration with concentrations in Entrepreneurship and Marketing, with a minor in Art.

Her family moved here in 1986 from Oakland, Calif., and she was raised in Lake Oswego, where she was home schooled in grades K through 12. **She graduated from Clackamas Community College in 2007.**

At the upcoming Miss Oregon pageant, she will play a classical piano piece by Cuban composer Ernesto Lecuona, titled "Malaguena."

Burris said, "Growing up playing piano and bass guitar has had a profound impact on my life, giving me the chance to play in several local bands, travel throughout Oregon and touch others' lives through music. Therefore my platform is After School Education: Keeping Music in the Community."

She added, "Now as a music teacher in Clackamas County, I want our community to have the same opportunity to learn and grow through music like I did. I'm now beginning a program through the Lake Oswego Parks and Recreation Department teaching the basics of piano, which is a great instrument to develop musical skills."

Burris said she is looking forward to being in Seaside with several close friends who are also competing in this contest.

"In my teens I remember seeing my peers react to the struggles of growing up differently, and I personally struggled with being 6 feet 2 inches tall at age 15. However, I saw an opportunity to take the lead as a role model, working with kids as a music instructor and swim teacher to help be a 'big sister' to my students.

“Learning about the scholarship opportunities through the Miss America Program was a blessing I know God directed me toward, to develop my public speaking and platform,” Burris said, adding that the competition has helped her improve her stage presence, poise and confidence.

Julia Victoria Pidasheff

Miss Clackamas County 2009

Julia Victoria Pidasheff, 18, is a student at Clackamas Community College, earning an Associate of Arts Transfer Degree. She has lived in Clackamas County for about six years and attended both Clackamas and Oregon City high schools.

She was born in Odessa, Ukraine, and came to this country when she was 1 year old. She speaks three languages: English, Russian and Spanish.

For the talent portion she will perform a piano piece by Anatoly Liadov, who was a Russian composer.

“Playing the piano allows me to express my inner soul and emotions and to relay those feelings to the audience, in a language which all can understand,” she said.

Pidasheff’s brother, who was diagnosed with autism about 12 years ago, inspired her platform which is Improving Special Education Programs in Public High Schools.

“As Miss Clackamas, my role is to be an intermediary between parents, their children and the teachers in our public high schools. It is my goal to promote change in our public education system, which is currently dwindling and, as a result, the minority population is receiving the bare minimum.

“This platform involves the improvement of IEP’s, the responsibility of the schools to help diagnose children who have autism and the requirement of a separate certification of Autism Specialists in order that special needs students have teachers that are properly equipped to treat and properly educate in each area,” she said.

As for the pageant, Pidasheff said she was most looking forward to the interview portion, “because that is where intelligent and talented young women are met by recognized leaders of our community in a surrounding which supports leadership, encourages action and offers a platform for young women to speak up and voice their opinions.

“That is why I entered the Miss Oregon Scholarship Program ... It gives young women a voice which empowers and has the capacity to change our society on all levels.”

Anna Christine Prosser

Miss Tri-Valley 2009, Miss Portland 2008

Anna Christine Prosser attended Seattle Pacific University her freshman year, and then went on to graduate from Oregon State University with a BA in Speech Communication and a BA in International Studies with a minor in Spanish.

“I graduated from Cleveland High School in 2003, and have lived my whole life in and around the S.E. Portland area, currently living in Milwaukie. As a young child, I spent many fondly remembered weekends at my grandparents’ beautiful home in Damascus,” she said.

For her talent presentation at the pageant, she will sing “Live Your Song,” by an up-and-coming band out of West Linn called Cloverdayle.

Her platform, Reaching Out, Rocking Out, focuses on creating innovative after-school programs in order to reach at-risk youth who may be uninterested in usual after-school programming.

“Last year, when I competed at Miss Oregon 2008, I was fortunate enough to make it to the finals. When I came backstage after that had been announced, I expected to find girls sullen, sorrowful, maybe even angry at me, the new girl who was standing in the place that they had worked so hard to reach. [But] the second I stepped into my dressing room, girls were everywhere congratulating me.

“A mere competition couldn’t change my peers from what they truly were: compassionate, genuine, loving young women who truly want to leave the world a better place than when they found it. For that reason, I can honestly say that I am most looking forward to spending time with my good friends, old and new, this week,” Prosser said.

Last year, after competing in her first pageant, Prosser found the pageant to be a “competition for real, motivated, intelligent and compassionate young women who need a way to pay for school. Most of the judging is based on skill in interview and talent,” all good ways of measuring the young women’s communication skills, knowledge of current events, commitment to a social platform and discipline to develop their strengths, she said.