

Miss Teen to Elon scene

Michaela Jacobs began entering pageants at the age of 17. Now, the Elon University Freshman is continuing to pursue her dreams as a member of the Music Theatre class of 2021.

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Michaela Jacobs is reigning Miss Florida 2017, a past Miss Teen USA 2016 and as of this year is a member of Elon University's class of 2021.

With such major accomplishments in the pageantry world, it may seem like Jacobs is experienced in participating in beauty pageants. But that isn't the case.

NATIONAL WIN

Freshman Michaela Jacobs became Miss Teen USA 2016 after competing in her first pageant and is the reigning Miss Florida 2017.

Jacobs first entered a beauty pageant on a whim at 17 and proceeded to win on a national level.

Jacobs still describes the event as a surreal moment.

"There is that initial moment where you are like, 'OMG, is this me?'" Jacobs said. "Did this really just happen? Just utter elation. And sheer joy. I still can't believe it."

At her first pageant, when Jacobs became Miss Teen USA 2016, her career as a beauty pageant queen took off. She traveled across the United States where she met other important figures in the pageantry world. From there Jacobs added to her growing resume the title of Miss Florida 2017, which she still holds.

Jacobs said the pageantry world changed her life for the better.

"I was so pleasantly surprised," Jacobs said. "It really has shaped my path, who I am and the choices that I've made. I am just so honored to be involved in a community of women who are so driven, so passionate and so committed to their platform topics — whatever they may be."

Jacobs acts as an ambassador for beauty pageant queens across the United States, and platform topics is one of the requirements of being a contestant. Platform topics are causes that



Michaela Jacobs holds the title of Miss Florida 2017, after winning Miss Teen USA last year.

contestants choose to stand for and represent while competing. Throughout her years competing, Jacobs has represented two causes, one of which being The Crown Cares.

The Crown Cares, or otherwise known as Creating A Respectful Environment in School, is specifically designed to promote awareness about bullying in schools in students of every grade. Through social clubs, anti-bullying books, and various craft activities, Jacobs says there is so much more to being a beau-

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FRESHMAN

ty queen than meets the eye. It's about being a role model.

"I like to say there are 'trials and triumphs,' and I know that defines my story. I've had so many trials in my life leading up to this point," Jacobs said. "That the triumph that I have to now hold the title of Miss Florida and to encourage young girls who are going through trials of their own, that there's hope for them."

Jacobs has faced many trials throughout her life including scoliosis. She was first diagnosed during her freshman year of high school, and was told to not dance

during the talent competitions.

"When I was diagnosed, I was initially told that I shouldn't dance. That it wasn't healthy for me. That it wasn't recommended," Jacobs said. "But it was my passion, and how could I walk away from that?"

Instead, Jacobs uses her scoliosis as her strength, using it to connect with children who also live with the condition. She is an ambassador of Scoliosis Awareness and uses her position as a beauty pageant queen to gain more awareness for the cause.

For Jacobs, the point of being a beauty pageant queen is so she can help encourage younger girls all over the country.

"Now I can encourage other girls who are facing issues of their own whether it is with a health issue like scoliosis, a mental issue that they are facing, or whatever it might be. That there is hope for them, and that they can overcome it," Jacobs said. "They can be the best versions of themselves, too."

But being a beauty pageant queen isn't just about bettering others, but also herself. Jacobs suffered from insecurity all throughout her middle school and high school years, and being a beauty pageant queen gave her the confidence boost she needed to hold her head up high.

"It really just taught me that the only thing holding me back is myself. That my fears can't stifle my passions," Jacobs said. "And once I was able to overcome those and then win that national title, the sky was truly the limit."

For now, Jacobs has decided to take a short break from the pageant world to focus on her education in Musical Theatre at Elon, which currently has one of the most prestigious Musical Theatre programs in the country with more than 800 applicants applying and only 20 accepted. As a member of this elite group, Jacobs said she is happy to be here, but will not forget her pageant roots as it is a part of her now.