

Confessions of a Meredith Pageant Contestant

Jillian Curtis, Staff Writer



image via facebook.com

Olivia Izze is a communication and Spanish major at Meredith College. She is currently serving as Miss Capital City for Raleigh, N.C. She is training to compete in next year's Miss North Carolina competition. These are her words:

"I competed in my first Miss America preliminary pageant when I was 16. It was something that I always wanted to do. For as long as I can remember Miss America has always been a huge role model to me. She is a woman of confidence, a leader, she gives while asking for nothing in return, and she inspires people to make a difference in the lives of others. I knew that I wanted to be a role model like her and that I wanted to become Miss North Carolina one day.

It is hard to compete in pageants, but the positive definitely outweighs the negative. I feel so blessed that God has given me the opportunity to hold the title of Miss Capital City within the Miss America Organization. People don't realize that this organization is the world's largest provider of scholarship assistance for young women, and is based on four basic ideals: scholarship, style, success, and service. Young women are given the opportunity to pick a personal platform and serve in their communities. My personal platform deals with obesity prevention and awareness. I have struggled with my weight throughout my entire life and was bullied as a young girl. Today I am using my involvement in pageants to help lead the war against obesity. My main goal is to help spread the awareness and increase the education that a healthy lifestyle is within reach for everyone. My own

personal motto that I live by is "If you believe it, you can achieve it."

The worst thing about being in pageants is that people really don't understand what the organization is about. Unfortunately, I think people judge me for competing, but hopefully after meeting me and getting to know me better I can help show them a new perspective about girls who compete in pageants. I think that once people open their eyes and look at what this organization is all about they begin to understand it isn't just a beauty pageant. Community service is our number one priority. I wish that more girls would get involved. You can receive scholarship money to put towards your education, have a positive impact in the lives of others, and I promise you that you will be empowered and will grow in more ways than you can imagine.

It can be very difficult trying to balance being Miss Capital City with being a student. First and foremost I couldn't do it without my faith and the love and support from my family (especially my mother), my friends, and the Miss Capital City Committee. Time management is essential just like with any other extracurricular activity students participate in. It can be very difficult to balance class, work, training, appearances and service, but it is incredibly worth it. I feel honored to represent the title that I do, so I continuously try to remind myself that this is a once in a lifetime opportunity. I believe if it wasn't hard it wouldn't be worth it.

Training is definitely what takes the most time. When preparing for a pageant it takes a lot of discipline, commitment, and heart. My training program consists of talent preparation, working out, interview preparation, platform work, and much more. Normally my mornings will begin around 6:00 am. I will wake up, eat a hearty healthy breakfast, read at least three newspapers and watch the news. My day will consist of class, practicing my talent, another workout, and a service opportunity in my community. It is hard work, but I enjoy every single minute of it.

I understand that there are negative assumptions about Miss America, but I just ask you to open your mind and heart to what it's all about. I know it may sound cliché, but if you look deeper I think you'll see all of the wonderful things that young women can gain from competing in pageants. It's a lot harder than people think, but it's a blessing that I thank God for every single day."

Benefit Event for Tsunami Orphans

Lizzie Wood, Staff Writer

On September 24, the Meredith community extended its condolences to victims of the recent tsunami who lost loved ones, especially the children of Japan who lost one or both parents, through a benefit performance. The event was organized by Dr. Michiko Yamada of the communications department at Meredith. Yamada, who is from Japan, had spoken to victims of the devastation and knew she wanted to help; "I'm from the west side of Tokyo, and the earthquake and tsunami happened in the East and Northern parts of Tokyo, but I have talked to people who have lost their loved ones. I also read and saw many sad stories in various newspaper articles." Yamada explained that, "After hearing the constant news about the devastation of Japanese March earthquake and tsunami, I just wanted to do something. And when I had a chance to talk to the Taiko [drumming] organization in Raleigh, they said they had been working on raising money for orphans and tried to have a benefit concert. I thought it'd be great if we can have this fundraiser concert in our campus."

Although the event was organized in less than a month, Dr. Yamada and the communication department were able to find individuals and groups willing to help. "I sent an email to all faculty and staff and an article to various newspapers, post[ed] an article on campus ...the Taiko drumming group sent an announcement to their mailing list of 1,500 people. So we just hoped to get many people." With the help of the Taiko Drumming group, many performers were found to participate in the event, held in Meredith's auditorium. JUNKO, a singer/songwriter, served as the tour guide for the night's festivities and also performed her original songs and played piano. Other performers, also pianists Machiko Saegusa-Cole and Akiko Yamazaki, and Meredith dance students. Yamada says she was thrilled with the performances. "I loved all of them! The Taiko performance was energetic, the singer/song-writer lady had a great voice, [and] the piano duo was fun to listen [to]. A combination of koto [a Japanese instrument], flute, and viola was something I didn't expect to hear together, but it was great, and our department of dance performance fit perfectly with the theme of this concert."

The money raised will be sent to Japan to build a Rainbow House through the Ashinaga Organization. The Rainbow House will "provide mental, emotional, and financial support for earthquake/tsunami orphans. Ashinaga means long legs in Japanese. It refers to the story of the American novel Daddy-Long-Legs, by Jean Webster, about an anonymous supporter of an orphan girl." With donations accepted at the door, the Meredith community and local audience members were able to raise about \$1,500, which will go directly to the Ashinaga Organization.

While the money from this year's event will be helpful, Dr. Yamada hopes to make the concert an annual event. She says, "I hope to continue to hold this concert because, as I said in my opening remark, orphans need long-term assistance. It's also a great opportunity for our students to realize and be aware that orphans need not only a short-term but also a long-term and constant assistance." With the money and awareness raised, Yamada says she feels the concert was "a great success."

Learn about Triangle Taiko Drumming at <http://www.triangletaiko.org/taiko/>

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