



Wednesday, September 17, 2003

Student to compete for Miss Michigan title

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

When Courtney Dolecki sat in a photographer's studio to have her high school senior pictures taken, little did she know those shots would take her down the path toward glitz and glamour. Two years later, Dolecki, a sophomore business major, finds herself on the verge of becoming a statewide and possibly nationally known figure as she competes for the title of **Miss Michigan USA**.

"I really didn't think those photos would lead to something like this," Dolecki said. "My senior pictures turned out so well, the photographer encouraged me to look into modeling."

Along with her mother's encouragement, Dolecki sent the photos to the Talent Shop, a model agency based in Birmingham. After earning a few extra dollars from part-time modeling, Dolecki received an unsolicited letter inviting her to apply for the Miss Michigan USA pageant. It's the first beauty pageant Dolecki has entered.

"I filled out the application and sent it in. A few weeks later, I was informed I was among the girls selected for the pageant," Dolecki said. "I figured, why not enter? It's something new to try. The experience will be phenomenal, and it's an opportunity to win scholarships."

Dolecki and 67 other girls, ages 18-27, will compete for the Miss Michigan USA title Sept. 25-27 at the McMorran Place Theater in Port Huron. As with other beauty pageants, the contestants will be judged during onstage swimsuit and evening gown segments as well as an interview segment.

"We won't be judged on how slender we are, but on our physical fitness," Dolecki said. "You need to have the traditional hourglass figure, and you need to display a lot of poise and confidence. The swimsuit portion makes me a little nervous, but we're all going to be out there doing the same thing."

The pageant winner will be crowned Miss Michigan USA 2004 and become an ambassador for the state through multiple public appearances. Among the prizes are scholarship funds, jewelry and fashion accessories, a wardrobe allowance, professional photo and fashion shoots, and automatic entry into the Miss USA pageant, which is televised live on NBC, to compete for more than \$100,000 in cash and prizes.

"I'm taking 18 credit hours now, so I'm short on time," Dolecki said. "But I'm in the process of shopping for clothes and preparing for the pageant. I had a one-hour session with a coach who taught me how to walk, turn and stand. I practice every night in front of mirrors with tape on the floor. I also work out on campus at the Rec Center at least three times a week."

Aside from her studies and occasional modeling, Dolecki works as an intern for Allied Advertising in Ferndale, teaches private piano lessons, and coaches forensics at Waldon Middle School in Lake Orion. The Miss Michigan USA titleholder is obligated to making multiple personal appearances as an ambassador for the state. But Dolecki will not abandon her studies should she win the pageant.

"I'm going to go with the flow and see what happens in the pageant," Dolecki said. "If I win, I'll have a couple of months to learn about my commitments. What I'll have to cut from my life and what I can keep. I'm not sure how demanding my commitments will be, but I will definitely not leave college for good. I love Oakland University, my classes and my professors. It would take a lot for me to leave Oakland. Education comes first. You can't substitute a prize for an education."

Visit the **Miss Michigan USA** Web site for more information on the pageant, including contestant profiles, judging criteria and prizes.

SUMMARY

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Created by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Wednesday, September 17, 2003

Modified by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Wednesday, September 17, 2003
Article Start Date: Friday, October 3, 2003

