

Wednesday, Jul 05, 2017

Musical theatre major wins Miss Congeniality in Miss Michigan Scholarship Pageant

Erica Kennedy, a musical theatre major at Oakland University, was recently named Miss Congeniality in the 2017 Miss Michigan Scholarship Pageant. The award, which comes with a \$500 scholarship, is given to the contestant voted by her peers as "friendliest or most welcoming."

"To me, winning Miss Congeniality is as meaningful as winning the title of Miss Michigan because words and actions matter whether onstage or backstage, and people will remember kindness long after the competition is over," Kennedy said.

"I feel that it is important that everyone has a positive experience, so I attempt to make everyone feel included since I have such a long history in the program. "

Kennedy has been competing in the Miss America Organization for seven years. The program focuses on four main ideals: scholarship, style, service and success.

Kennedy says that being a musical theatre major has helped her in her pageant competitions. The long hours and rigorous rehearsals have helped her develop stamina for the long pageant days. At the same time, her pageant experience has helped improve her public speaking and performance skills for theatre. Earlier this year, the sophomore took part in the theatre program's production of "A Chorus Line," and she will be among the cast of "Bullets Over Broadway" this fall.

"We are super proud of Erica's talent, kindness and all-around awesomeness," said Fred Love, coordinator of OU's musical theatre program. "She carries herself with grace and warmth on stage and off, so it's very fitting that she would be voted Miss Congeniality by her fellow pageant contestants."

Kennedy says she learns a lot from the pageants, even those she doesn't win.



By a vote of her peers, Erica Kennedy recently was named Miss Congeniality in this year's Miss Michigan Scholarship Pageant. This photo shows her in an Oakland University musical theatre production of "A Chorus Line."



Kennedy takes pledges for Children's Miracle Network during a WIOG Cares for Kids radiothon at Hurley Medical Center in Flint.

"I've also learned tenacity from competing in pageants. People don't often understand that I have lost pageants far more than I've won. I've discovered that I've learned far more from losing than from winning, and the experience of 'losing' has strengthened my resilience, which is so important if I want to be successful as a musical theatre performer. "

Kennedy has competed in more than 30 pageants, winning the crown five times.

She has been a teen titleholder in Miss America's Outstanding Teen program four times, and currently holds the title of Miss Midland.

Besides devoting time to pageants and theatre, Kennedy also is active in her community. She has helped raise funds for Children's Miracle Network and also speaks to high school students about financial literacy required to navigate college expenses, a platform she calls "Get A Grip: Strategically Reduce Student Debt."

To learn more about the Miss America Organization, visit missamerica.org.