

Classic Beauty

Crowning Beauty: Miss Tri-Cities 2005, Kristin Blair

The term "beauty pageant" has a negative connotation to many people. I've never participated in the pageant circuit, nor been crowned a prom queen, and something about rewarding a person for their beauty seems kind of...shallow. Admittedly, I was daunted at the prospect of interviewing Miss Tri-Cities 2005, fearing she might sense that I'd have a stereotypical impression of "beauty queens" in the back of my mind. Proving again that no one should judge what they don't understand, my conversation with Kristin Blair revealed more than I ever knew about the purpose of Tri-Cities Scholarship Program, and also reaffirmed my belief that brains and beauty truly do go hand-in-hand.

The Miss Tri-Cities Scholarship Program is a preliminary part of the overall Miss America program that most people are familiar with. Although Miss America started as a bathing suit competition in the 1920s, it has dramatically evolved into an actual scholarship award program where young women of all shapes, sizes, interests, and talents display their personal best in categories such as interview and communication skills. Appearance is just a tiny part in the overall judging of contestants, although looking poised, well-kept, and attractive certainly doesn't hurt. Kristin, whose talent was vocal performance and platform was "Building a Stronger Arts Community," recently participated in the Miss Washington program. When she became Miss Tri-Cities 2005, she received nearly \$7500 in scholarship monies that will certainly help when she pursues her degree in Voice with a minor in Elementary Education at the University of North Texas next fall.

CB: Kristin, do you think there's a stereotype about "pageant winners" and "beauty queens?"

MTC: I do believe there is a stereotype and I have encountered it at different events. But I've taken it upon myself to change that stereotype as a titleholder. I'm not offended by being considered a "beauty queen" but right away I want to correct the misconception because it's not about being beautiful. It's so funny because I remember someone told me when I was running for Miss Tri-Cities, "What are your chances of winning when you're 5'4"?" And I thought, just wait! It almost made me want it just to change that. I think it surprises people just how much work goes into wearing the crown. The most important part of being a titleholder is service - your service not only to the community and the organization that you're representing but also those people that don't know what the program is about and those young ladies who don't know there is a program like this out there for them. I've gotten to do more, see more, experience more, and meet more community leaders in one year than most people will do in a lifetime. This past year has been nothing short of awesome.

CB: Would you encourage others to take part in this program?

MTC: Absolutely! It's really and truly for anyone, and it's such an incredible opportunity not only in terms of pursuing your education but just for bettering yourself and your abilities as a young woman to make a difference in your community. The first year I did it, I won a \$900 scholarship for the community service award, even though I didn't place. Even if you don't walk away with the title, there is an opportunity to receive money towards your education. I would absolutely recommend it to anybody.

CB: A few times you have said "I didn't think I was the type" or "I didn't think I could do it." Why do you think that this? Do you think it relates to how girls are raised?

MTC: I grew up my entire life never really thinking that I was a pretty girl and I didn't even fit into the stereotype of being a tomboy. I just accepted the fact that I wasn't going to ever be the "Miss America type" and it wasn't until high school that I began to realize I could really be comfortable in my own skin if I just let myself. When you are very well acquainted with yourself and you feel comfortable in your own skin, then feeling beautiful really goes hand in hand with that. I've learned that this year.

CB: Isn't that great when that happens?

MTC: Yes! Even outside of the pageant world, as young woman it's so important to find an identity as yourself and feeling comfortable with who you are and what you look like. It's so essential to success in life and being happy. If you are radiating your best self, people will see that.

CB: So we've touched on beauty and I want to know some backstage beauty secrets. I've heard about using Vaseline on your teeth, because you have to smile a lot...

MTC: Yeah, we laugh at that stuff, but it's true! Those little things do work! We do put Vaseline on our teeth so your lips don't stick to your teeth. When you're smiling the whole time, your mouth gets dry, your lips stick to your teeth and Vaseline really helps. The other thing we do is called "sticky buns." Obviously, the types of swimsuits we wear are for swimming; obviously, they're not really designed for walking across a stage wearing high heels. So we use adhesive on our swimsuit bottoms to keep them from riding up. Oh, then of course, there is spray tanning. It's so funny - backstage at Miss Washington there's this assembly line of ladies spraying adhesive on our buns and you'll have three people rubbing bronzer on one contestant! On stage your skin is washed out. It's like six shades lighter. Little nit-picky things in the long run are not going to make or break whether you walk away as the winner but it makes you feel more comfortable. You never want to lose your personality and zone out and go flat on stage.

CB: So what are your must-have beauty products?

MTC: I love eye shadow. I usually like to coordinate three shades to what I'm wearing. And, coming from the lip gloss generation, I usually don't wear bright lipstick but I found a shade that I always wear to appearances. It's just the perfect not-too-pink, not-too-red color.

CB: I want to know what it is.

MTC: Raspberry Glacé, from Clinique.

Much thanks to Kristin and Executive Director of the Miss Tri-Cities Scholarship Program, Dot Stewart.

by Jennifer Irlam

www.reactormag.com