

TALKING WITH TAYLOR

This week, *Countdown to the Crown* is excited to catch up with Miss America's Outstanding Teen 2009, Taylor Fitch from South Carolina, as she shares some valuable insight to help guide and inspire you as you prepare for the upcoming Miss Missouri's Outstanding Teen Pageant.



“In South Carolina, we have a program called the Palmetto Princess program. A good friend and mentor asked me to be her princess when I was around the age of 12, introducing me, for the first time, to the Miss SC Organization. I enjoyed my experience, but never imagined that I would be further involved. As time passed, my desire to go to the college of my choice, and eventually, pursue a career in medicine, began to grow. My family did not have the means to pay for my college outright, prompting me to start seeking out scholarships and networking opportunities. Of course, this search brought me back to the Miss America Organization. So, at 15, I competed for the Miss Greater Carolina's Outstanding Teen local and won. I had no idea what I was doing! I wore my mother's prom dress, parted my hair down the middle (this was before the middle-part made a comeback!) and wore bright red lipstick. I competed twice in Miss South Carolina's Outstanding Teen, taking a year off in between, which proved incredibly beneficial, as it allowed me to really understand who I was and who I wanted to be. I never wanted to morph into a “type” or become “what the judges were looking for.” Rather, I wanted to grow as a young woman and feel solid in my own convictions. I took that time to ensure I was comfortable in my own skin and to further develop the elements of myself that needed a little improvement. In that year, I learned that it was perfectly ok for me to be a nerdy tomboy and that I could still be a leader and positive mentor, without sacrificing those pieces of myself.

Life as Miss America's Outstanding Teen can be a bit weird at times. The best comparison I have is to the show *Hannah Montana*. You are student and a leader, teen and mentor, kid and volunteer, all at the same time. As MAOT, I traveled very frequently and was gone almost every weekend, either to local events or traveling to other states. It can be a bit of a juggling act, maintaining your schoolwork and still traveling on a regular basis. My biggest piece of advice is to surround yourself with people from home who are grounded and will help to ground you. Thankfully, my friends, teachers and classmates never treated me any differently.

People often ask me what I think judges are looking for. Really, there are two things: 1) a woman who is confident and well-spoken and 2) a woman who can lead. Otherwise, there is no magical formula to being MAOT or Miss America. If you look at all of the past MAOTs, each and every one of us is so incredibly different. From our personalities to our interests to our backgrounds to our physical appearances, we are truly a mixture of women that represent the diversity of the United States. So instead of trying to create a list of elements that define MAOT, make a list of the qualities you have that give you confidence and develop those! ”

–Taylor Fitch, Miss America's Outstanding Teen 2009

Top 10 Favorite Foods to Prep for Pageants

Incorporate some of Charlee's favorite foods into your diet as you prepare for Miss Missouri's Outstanding Teen to stay fit, full and focused!

- 1 **Roasted almonds**
- 2 **Extra lean ground chicken**
- 3 **Sweet potatoes**
- 4 **Chobani peach Greek yogurt**
- 5 **Raspberries**
- 6 **Brown rice**
- 7 **Muscle Milk protein shake**
- 8 **Lentil pasta**
- 9 **Dark chocolate (just 1 square to satisfy your sweet tooth!)**
- 10 **H₂O!!!**



FEATURED FORMER



Miss Missouri's Outstanding Teen 2008 *Sydnee Stottlemire*

LOCAL TITLE: Miss Gateway St. Louis' Outstanding Teen

TALENT: Lyrical Dance - "Rock Your Soul"

YEARS COMPETED: 1

PLATFORM: The Healing Power of Pets

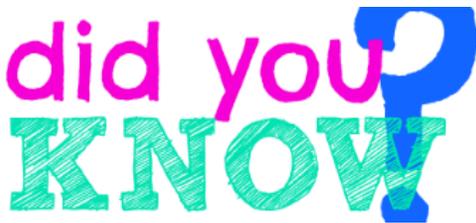
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: 4th Runner Up to Miss America's Outstanding Teen; Preliminary Interview, Talent & Active Wear Winner at Miss Missouri's Outstanding Teen

WHAT ARE YOU UP TO NOW? I am a junior at the University of Missouri studying journalism with an emphasis in TV broadcasting. This past semester I worked for KBIA FM in Columbia and this summer I will produce content for KOMU8 as a part of my upper-level broadcasting requirements. When I'm not in class, I'm tutoring student athletes for Mizzou's Total Person Program. This past November, I placed 2nd Runner-Up at Miss Missouri USA.

WHAT WAS YOUR MOST MEMORABLE APPEARANCE AS MMOT? In 2008, I was awarded the Burger King Hometown Hero award for my efforts with my platform, The Healing Power of Pets. I was whisked away from a local Burger King by none other than the King himself – and brought backstage at the Jonas Brothers concert to meet the trio and attend the concert. Biggest shock of my life!

WHAT WAS YOUR JOURNEY THROUGH THE OUTSTANDING TEEN ORGANIZATION LIKE? During the summer of 2007, I had been researching MAOT online and decided that I wanted to compete for a local. My first and only local title was Miss Gateway St. Louis' Outstanding Teen. I had been so nervous competing that weekend that I almost walked onstage with my active wear outfit inside out, until someone mentioned to me that I might want to change! Getting to MMOT was a dream come true, and winning that title was more than I could've hoped for. Placing in the top 5 at nationals was such a surreal experience - months ago, I had just been hoping to win a local title. When you stay focused and work hard, it's true that anything is possible.

HOW HAS YOUR PARTICIPATION IN MMOT HELPED YOU GET TO WHERE YOU ARE TODAY? During my time as Miss Missouri's Outstanding Teen, I was named the national spokesperson for ReCHAI (The Research Center for Human-Animal Interaction at the University of Missouri-Columbia). Speaking on behalf of a national organization at 14 years old shaped my communications skills, and created a foundation for a life-long love of using my voice to benefit philanthropic causes.



On April 18th, Miss America contestants and volunteers joined forces across the country cleaning parks, visiting nursing homes and CMN Hospitals, and feeding the homeless for Miss America Serves national day of service. As of today, the Miss America Organization has raised **\$84,591.37** as part of the Miss America Serves initiative. #theresheserves

SPONSOR SPOTLIGHT

Miss Missouri's Outstanding Teen would like to thank **Mo-X** for providing transportation during pageant week for our judges!

QUESTION OF THE WEEK

Many feminist organizations argue that pageants are outdated or demeaning to women. How do you respond to individuals with this viewpoint?

Questions or suggestions for an upcoming article?
Email your submissions to MissMissouriOT@gmail.com.

