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Comms 421—Feature Story

Steps Toward a Brighter Future

The girl’s palms were slightly moist and her breathing was quick. She closed her eyes and tried to focus on what the win would feel like, a mental exercise they had taught her in training. Instead, her mind clouded over and she felt dizzy. Suddenly she felt a soft hand gently grab her own.

“You’ll do great,” whispered the contestant behind her.

The girl’s breathing slowed and she flashed a winner’s smile. The announcer called her name. “Thanks,” she whispered back as she stepped out into the lights of the Miss America stage.

The setting? The 2012 Miss Utah Pageant. The encouraging contestant? Miss Orem Bridget Kreis.

During Kreis’ two-year tenure as Miss Orem in 2011 and Miss Legacy in 2012, she stood for such platforms as fighting childhood obesity and encouraging women to end abusive relationships.

“My 2012 platform was ‘Be the One Who Got Away.’ I’ve personally witnessed the effects of abuse. People assume that women are targeted by low self-esteem, but that’s not always the case,” Kreis stated.

Composed, eloquent and kind, Kreis stood out to the audience—she was chosen as the People’s Choice Miss Utah in 2011. But she considers the impact her platforms had on other contestants as one of her greatest achievements.

“I would have some of the other contestants seek me out and tell me their own stories of abuse,” Kreis recalled. “To them, these experiences were a part of everyday life. They would ask me how they could get help.”

As a child, few would have guessed that Kreis would one day compete in the Miss America circuit. Friends and family recall she was an active little girl who preferred riding a bike to dressing up as a princess. She went through phases, including a hippie era where she was known to belt out Beatles’ classics at the top of her lungs. She had never given much thought to competing in scholarship programs—particularly to parading out on stage in a swimsuit. Through the encouragement of a close friend, Kreis finally decided to give it a try.

Kreis’ passionate work ethic has helped her find creative solutions to solving problems. It also pushes her to achieve her goals. During her campaign to lower childhood obesity, Kreis would visit elementary schools and personally exercise with the students. In 2012, she promoted her platform against abuse through extensive social media, a skill that has aided her university career as she continues to learn more.

“I’ve always been interested in the community,” Kreis said. “It’s important to be strong and passionate about an issue that’s important to you. I want to take the skills I develop through my education and make the community a better place.”

Just like she did as a teenager on the Miss America stage, Kreis will continue to do what she does best: encouraging individuals to take the next step towards a brighter future.