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Mr and Miss USF Pageant 2012

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The sashes

Last Spring I participated in the Mr and Miss University of South Florida Scholarship Pageant, taking home the USF Miss People's Choice 2012. I never really got to tell the story from my end, and I figure this will be the perfect opportunity to do so from the beginning.

During winter break last year, I saw a post on the *USFSP Know it All Guide* (Facebook group) with a flier mentioning the Mr and Miss USF Pageant were looking for contestants. This was the first year that the pageant was being open to all of the USF institutions, rather than just the USF Tampa.

My whole life I have always wanted to participate in a pageant, but never had the courage to do so, I believed this was my chance. I thought, "Hey, I will be killing two birds with one stone, not only am I finally doing a pageant but I will be representing my campus!" With that mindset, I sent the pageant director an email requesting for more information. Days later I got a response and the pageant packet to fill out. Oh, and not only does the Miss USF just win the title, she would also be able to participate in the Miss Florida Scholarship Pageant under the Miss America Organization! Let the nerves begin!

After completing the packet I had to sign up for an interview with the directors of the USF Pageant. I wasn't as nervous because the interviewers were students and some faculty, not so intimidating. The one thing I can remember that left me feeling absolutely amazing was when one of the interviewers said, "With all the applicants, you are still the only one from another USF institution to apply. You are not only representing USF St. Pete, you are now representing the rest of the campuses other than Tampa." Talk about pressure! About a week later I got the final confirmation that out of the 18 women that applied- I was one of six that were officially a contestant.

"I don't want to do this anymore..."

The contestants were 6 men and 6 females to have an even 12 contestants of the pageant. We had our first meeting together that were basic ice breakers. Everyone seemed nice and friendly but I couldn't help feeling out of place because I wasn't from the Tampa campus. They would talk about greek functions or the latest campus event, and I had to just smile and nod like I knew what was going on. I didn't let that get to me too much though, not at all!

There were many rehearsals and meetings to attend to. As everyone had a car, I did not. It became frustrating for me to figure out how to get over to their campus whether it was carpooling with a friend or calling a family member. Between all of that I was also balancing school and organizations. At this time my head became congested with negativity and I wanted to quit the pageant. I didn't feel like I could put in as much effort as I wanted to- I was beyond stressed out. I worked up my nerves and sat behind my computer typing out an email to resign from the pageant. This was one of the hardest things I had to do. After I had hit 'send' I collected myself and returned to my everyday schedule.



Meeting all the contestants

The next day I got an email response from one of the pageant directors, Sarah, telling me that she was going to call me so we could discuss it together. She reassured me that everything would be alright, and filled me with positivity, which was what I needed. She even told me a similar situation that she was in, on wanting to quit something she put so much work into but having to continue so all the work wouldn't be for nothing. It was a phone call I wouldn't forget. She helped me back on my feet and I decided to continue the pageant with a new mindset. I worked with friends with carpooling and made the meetings on time. I was finally ready to go and show the pageant what a student from USFSP has to bring to the table.



5...4...3...2...1...GO

After the final weeks of preparation for the pageant, it was officially time to freak out. The pageant consisted of a swimsuit/fitness portion, formal wear, onstage interview and also a private interview. I had plenty of support from my friends here at USFSP, my friends from home back in Tampa, and of course my family.

The day of, I had an all day schedule beginning with a private interview with the BIG judges (who were not USF affiliated), practicing the talent portion, making sure the swim suit and formal attire were free from rips and stains, and being in the dressing room until called. During this time the ballroom in the Marshal Center was quickly filling up with students, parents, and photographers. The lights slowly dimmed- it was officially curtain time.

All of the contestants got on stage dancing the choreographed opening number to Pittbull's "*Run the Night*".

After that was concluded all the ladies and I returned backstage to the dressing room while the men did their Mr USF pageant first.

While I was practicing my talent silently my music stand broke!

I wasn't sure what I was supposed to do for my talent with a broken stand so I had to quickly improvise with the piece I taught myself in 3 days. I had no choice but to do my talent from memorization.

Before I knew it, it was time for the Miss USF portion. All the ladies got in line to go on stage, one by one to answer the onstage interview question in 30 seconds. As I was called on stage, I remained calm while I was read the question. There was no time to freeze up or stutter. I just answered with what ever popped in my head, said 'thank you', and walked back behind stage. That part was finally over and now the fun begins: modeling swim suit and formal wear! Those sections went by like a breeze. Standing alone on stage, lights on me as I hear the MC telling the audience about my accomplishments... it made me feel like a star.



At that very moment, I realized that even if I didn't win, I accomplished my original goal of representing USF St. Pete.

Results

After all the ladies have gone and done the categories, it was now time for the results. We were all called back on stage, both the men and ladies, as they were announcing who won USF Mr and Miss People's Choice. I was biting my lip and looking down during this because I knew I didn't win People's Choice. To win that you had to have had the most 'facebook likes' on the pageant photo and the most money donations towards the "Don't Stop Don't Drop" charity. "...and your

USF Miss People's Choice is Solange Gorleku!" I couldn't tell you what my expression was when my name was called. I most likely made 3 different faces! I really didn't think I could win that title, but I did!

The other winners were announced and I did not take home the Miss USF title, though taking home USF Miss People's Choice was something I could accept over anything. Originally I told myself that just being on the stage I represented USFSP, even if I didn't win anything- but I did win a title and I did represent to the USF system that we are USF Bulls too! **Give us the opportunity to show it and we will!** This event will be something I will never forget being a USFSP student and I hope others will decide to do the same in the future.



Expression being made after hearing I won USF Miss People's Choice



I had reached my goals

About the blogger



Hey there! I'm Solange, also known as "Solo". I'm a junior majoring in Biology, class of 2014. This year I am the Vice President of the Harborside Activities Board as well as the Programming and Marketing chair of the Residence Hall Association. I also served as an Orientation Leader this summer!