

Headline: State and Local Pageant Contestants Attend UTPB

By Iris Foster

Six young women from UTPB competed in state and area pageants last month and have great memories, if not crowns, to share. Two strolled the runway in Houston during Labor Day weekend for the Miss Texas USA pageant. They were Miss Cedar Hill USA Christina Thomas, a graduate student studying clinical psychology, and Miss Midland County Tabitha Davis, a senior communication major.

Christina Thomas said this was her first pageant competition, and it “felt like prom all over again.” She received support from local companies, from the cities of Odessa and Cedar Hill, Texas. Her past modeling experience from a local clothing company in Dallas and the help of her pageant coach prepared her for the competition. She said 110 contestants did their own makeup and hair, and she enjoyed the teamwork backstage. Her interview questions dealt with her being Jamaica American and how she relates the poetry she’s written and published to her desire to help others as she pursue her degree in Clinical Psychology.

Tabitha Davis, by contrast, was a beauty pageant contestant at four months of age, “although until I was 18, I wasn’t really interested.” She won Miss Permian Basin in 2006 after being first runner-up the year before. She also was fourth runner-up in the Miss Permian Basin Fair. As a seasoned contestant—her third Miss Texas pageant—Andrews native Tabitha described the event as “an experience of a lifetime.” She worked with a pageant and interview coach from Houston which paid off in 2006 when she won Miss Photogenic. She also made the top 20 in 2007 and 2009.

Entering freshman Vanessa Pope, an Odessa High graduate, is also a returning contestant—to the mid-September Miss Permian Basin Fair pageant. She considered these competitions to be an extension of the twirling pageants that she entered as a teenager. Modeling, interviews, and twirling among contestants was more intense than what she experienced in the fair’s event. Although she initially signed up last year “for the scholarship money,” she says she’ll probably do it again to meet even more new friends.

Junior Jacy Anderson, a Lee High School alumna majoring in business management, has been on stage her whole life, as a ballerina for 18 years, a Symphony debutante, and RebeLee Court Mistress of Ceremonies. She has won first runner-up in this pageant for the past two years (and the \$2,000 scholarship associated with it), and this year she became the pageant’s first Miss Congeniality. Not surprising then, her favorite part about competing was the emphasis on individuality. After an opening dance number in T-shirts and shorts, the contestants wore a “personality outfit” and Jacy wore her senior ballet recital leotard and toe shoes.

Sophomore elementary education major/business minor Hollie Hutson’s pageant experience dates back to Miss Texas Teen two years ago in Houston. “It was fun meeting lots of girls and getting different perspectives on what’s going on in our state,” she reflected. Before she entered the Miss Permian Basin Fair competition, she took a lesson from a former Miss Texas to refine her walk and interview skills. This former Permian cheerleader and softball player was asked by the judges to describe how college roommates should be selected. A member of UTPB’s Honors Program, Hollie wants to teach kindergarten someday.

In 1995, Linda Morales won Miss Tiny Tot in the Water Carnival in Ft. Stockton. Thirteen years later, she won Miss Ft. Stockton 2008. This year and last, the UTPB freshman chemistry major won second runner-up in the Miss Permian Basin Fair competition (and a \$1,500 scholarship). She’s been a

cheerleader half of her life, and is on the Falcon Squad now. Her interview question dealt with how society can help students, and her answer involved making the music industry more accountable for the influence it exerts on teen lives. This beauty contestant wants to be a pharmacist.

Beauty and brains co-exist in these young women, and they each attend classes in different degree programs at UTPB. Our diverse campus is enhanced by their poise.