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CONTACT: Paige Crane, VisitHATTIESBURG
601.410.6508, 601.296.7476
pcrane@visithburg.org

Marlo Dorsey, VisitHATTIESBURG
601.498.1098
mdorsey@visithburg.org

MISSISSIPPI MISS HOSPITALITY COMPETITION OPENS AT-LARGE CONTESTANT APPLICATIONS

HATTIESBURG, MISS (Dec. 6, 2018) – The Mississippi Miss Hospitality competition is officially opening at-large contestant applications on Dec. 7, 2018. At-Large contestants are permitted from Mississippi communities that do not currently have a local director. This year the competition will be held in Hattiesburg, MS, July 26-27, 2019.

Now in its 70th year, the Mississippi Miss Hospitality program brings together the best and brightest young women from across Mississippi to annually compete for the state title and provides more than \$100,000 in college and university scholarships. One young woman is selected to serve as the state's goodwill ambassador for economic development and tourism for a full year. Once crowned, the winner will travel the state and nation to promote Mississippi through ribbon cuttings, special events, organized appearances, and speaking engagements.

"Last year, we introduced the at-large contestant program for the first time, and we are thrilled to offer it again to encourage all 82 counties to be represented at the state level. The winner of Mississippi's Miss Hospitality serves as the spokesperson for the state, but all local contestants also represent their hometown areas throughout the year. In addition to earning scholarships, this is a great public service opportunity for Mississippi's young women while gaining life skills they will keep with them throughout their careers," Marlo Dorsey, executive director of VisitHATTIESBURG, said.

To be eligible, a Mississippi Miss Hospitality applicant must be a young woman between the ages of 18 and 24, a resident of Mississippi, a high school graduate and have a 2.5 or higher scholastic average. Additionally, she must represent her hometown, not the community where she attends college.

Women interested in competing as an at-large participant must submit an application to the State Office by March 18, 2019.

The 2019 competition guide, contestant requirements, local directors list, and application can be found at MissHospitality.com. A panel will select contestants from the at-large candidate pool based upon a published scoring criterion.

"The Miss Hospitality competition has continually grown since its founding in 1949. We are proud of its direction and look forward to meeting this year's contestants. We believe the contacts, friendships, and skills contestants gain during competition week lay a foundation for success as they return home and continue their education," Kristen Brock, Programs and Promotions Manager for VisitHATTIESBURG, said.

This year's Mississippi Miss Hospitality competition will be held at the Historic Saenger Theater in Downtown Hattiesburg on July 26 and 27, 2019. Ticket sales will be announced on the program's Facebook page and website in late spring.

The Mississippi Miss Hospitality tradition began in 1949 under Gov. Fielding Wright and the Mississippi Legislature. Presented by the Hattiesburg Tourism Commission (VisitHATTIESBURG), City of Hattiesburg, University of Southern Mississippi, Forrest General Hospital, and Hattiesburg Saenger Theater, the Mississippi Miss Hospitality competition has called Hattiesburg home for 22 years.

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