

Miss Hospitality

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Mississippi's Miss Hospitality 68th Annual Program Set for July 21-22 at Saenger Theater

HATTIESBURG (June 22, 2017) — In its 20th year as host city, Hattiesburg will showcase this year's best and brightest young women as they compete for the title of Mississippi's Miss Hospitality at the Historic Saenger Theater. The program, now in its 68th year overall, is set for July 21-22 in Downtown Hattiesburg. Twenty-five women, who are all currently enrolled in a college or university in Mississippi, will vie for the state title of Mississippi's Miss Hospitality, with the winner serving for a full year as the state's official ambassador for economic development and tourism.

The pageant originally began in 1949 under then-Governor Fielding Wright and the Mississippi Legislature. Since that time, the Pageant has called the Mississippi Gulf Coast, Starkville and, now, Hattiesburg home. Presented by VISITHATTIESBURG™ and Mississippi Development Authority, in conjunction with the University of Southern Mississippi, the City of Hattiesburg, and Forrest General Hospital, the Mississippi Miss Hospitality Pageant offers more than \$100,000 in scholarships and prizes to the top finalists.

"Hattiesburg is delighted to be in its 20th year as host city of this statewide program, which promotes ambassadorship in tourism and economic development. Each year, we have a talented group of young female leaders participating in Miss Hospitality, who eagerly await the opportunity to showcase their love for their hometowns and for Mississippi. As the contestants, along with their friends and family, travel to Hattiesburg for the event, we are also excited to share with them all our city has to offer," Jennifer Parsons, Miss Hospitality program coordinator, said.

Mary Elizabeth Stringer, 22, of Starkville, served as Mississippi's Miss Hospitality in 2016. Stringer graciously wore the crown, sharing her love of Mississippi during various speaking engagements and events as the state's goodwill ambassador. As the State of Mississippi celebrated its bicentennial in 2017, Stringer also created a series of blogs

and several videos showcasing many of Mississippi's overall achievements and recognitions in culture and the arts. Stringer graduated in May 2016 from Mississippi State University with a Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology. She was actively involved in campus life at Mississippi State, including membership in Phi Mu Sorority and acting as a student association senator. Stringer recently served on Sen. Thad Cochran's team as an intern in Washington, D.C.

During pageant week in Hattiesburg, contestants will attend social events, take part in community service projects, and participate in required rehearsals and competitions, leading up to the crowning of the 2017 Mississippi Miss Hospitality on Saturday evening.

Guests will enjoy the entertainment productions on both Friday and Saturday evenings along with the competition. Vocal and dance performances by contestants and local groups, including the Forrest General Spirit Girls, will provide festivities for both evenings. The finale is set for Saturday evening, where the top 10 contestants will compete for the crown.

Every year Miss Hospitality generates approximately \$450,000 in economic impact for the local Hattiesburg economy. During Miss Hospitality week, visitors stay in area hotels, dine in local restaurants, enjoy other tourist attractions, and shop at local retail locations.

Tickets to the 2017 Mississippi Miss Hospitality Pageant may be purchased online at HattiesburgSaenger.com, the Saenger's Facebook page, by calling the Saenger Theater Box Office at 601.584.4888, or visiting the theater in person.

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