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Media Contacts: Paige Crane

VisitHATTIESBURG, Communications
pcrane@visithburg.org, 601.410.6508

Jennifer Parsons

Miss Hospitality Program Coordinator
mshosp@hattiesburg.org, 601.408.4300



**69TH ANNUAL MISSISSIPPI MISS HOSPITALITY
COMPETITION SET FOR JULY 20-21 IN HATTIESBURG**

HATTIESBURG (June 26, 2018) — The 69th annual Mississippi Miss Hospitality Competition is bigger than ever with more contestants and the addition of the Little Miss Hospitality program. The competition will take place at the Historic Hattiesburg Saenger Theater in Downtown Hattiesburg on July 20 and 21 at 8 p.m. each evening.

In its 21st 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. Thirty-one women, who represent all regions of the state, will vie for the 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 2018 local representatives are:

- Amory – Carson Avery
- Booneville – Bryce Payne
- Covington County – Molly Speed
- Ellisville – Kaitlyn Warden
- Greene County – Kinley Thornton
- Hattiesburg – Lauren Parker
- Jackson – Brionna Wicks
- Jasper County – Rachel Holifield
- Jones County – Natalie Welch
- Lamar County – Hannah Rogers
- Lauderdale County – Victoria Bean
- Laurel – Katye Avera
- Lawrence County – Miranda-Love King
- Leakesville – Shanna Kay Pipkins
- Lincoln County – Madalyn Oglesby
- Magee – Carley May
- Marion County – Meredith Bass

- Mendenhall – Lexi Cockrell
- Meridian – Anna McDaniel
- Natchez – Joanna Johnson
- Neshoba County – Shelby Greenwood
- Panola County – Maddie Sullivant
- Pearl River County – Jessica Baldwin
- Petal – Nicole Wiggs
- Pontotoc County – Katlyn Thomas
- Rankin County – Hayden West
- Starkville – Kathryn Stringer
- Stone County – Tavia Moore
- Walthall County – Brittney Bergeron
- Wayne County – Savana Mason
- Winston County – Brittany Woods
- Yazoo County – D’Avia Henry-Peyton

For the first time, the Mississippi Miss Hospitality Competition has added a Little Miss Hospitality component. Each local representative has selected a young girl between the ages of 6 and 10 from her hometown to mentor throughout her reign. Little Misses will appear on stage during competition and be invited to official events. If crowned the next Mississippi Miss Hospitality, the contestant’s Little Miss will be able to serve alongside her as she fulfills her duties and responsibilities as Mississippi’s Goodwill Ambassador.

The 2018 Little Miss Hospitalities are:

- Amory – Kinsley Reese Gleghorn
- Booneville – Dani Marie Martin
- Covington County – Carly Jane Gibson
- Ellisville – KeriAna Warden
- Greene County – Anniston Drew Meadows
- Hattiesburg – Norah Abigail Boyte
- Jackson – Mary Elise Byrd
- Jasper County – Natalie Aplin
- Jones County – Brayleigh Thornton
- Lamar County – Lily Reynolds
- Lauderdale County – Lilly Grace Williams
- Laurel – Avery Ladner
- Lawrence County – Tallulah Johnson
- Leakesville – Gabriella Grace Langston
- Lincoln County – Ali Claire Hall
- Magee – Breanna Jones
- Marion County – Marion Jordan
- Mendenhall – Genevieve Grubbs
- Meridian – Kennedy McDaniel

- Natchez – Marella Atkins
- Neshoba County – Cameron King
- Panola County – Alaina Brooke Masterson
- Pearl River County – Abeni Barrett
- Petal – Lillie Grace Hartfield
- Pontotoc County – Hatleigh Hamblin
- Rankin County – Kayden Mangum
- Starkville – Cathryn Ryder
- Stone County – JaeLen Ferris Leidigh
- Walthall County – Kenadie Elizabeth Harrington
- Wayne County – Masie Atkinson
- Yazoo County – Bre'Onna Moore

“As the contestants, along with their friends, family, and Little Miss participants, travel to Hattiesburg, we are eager to welcome them and showcase our city. From the beautiful campus of the University of Southern Mississippi to the Historic Saenger Theater and Hattiesburg Zoo, these young women and their supporters will get to know Hattiesburg quite well during competition week,” Marlo Dorsey, executive director of VisitHATTIESBURG, said.

Arriving on July 15, the contestants will be welcomed to the University of Southern Mississippi before starting their week-long journey to the crowning ceremony on July 21. Throughout competition week in Hattiesburg, contestants will attend social events, participate in community service projects, and attend required rehearsals and competitions. The public is invited to meet the contestants at the Miss Hospitality autograph party at Hattiesburg Zoo on Friday, July 20 from 12:30 p.m. to 2 p.m.

Presented by VisitHATTIESBURG and the Mississippi Development Authority, in conjunction with the University of Southern Mississippi, the City of Hattiesburg, Hattiesburg Saenger Theater and Forrest General Hospital, the Mississippi Miss Hospitality Competition annually awards more than \$100,000 in scholarships and prizes to the top finalists.

“Hattiesburg is delighted to be in its 21st 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,” Jennifer Parsons, Miss Hospitality program coordinator, said.

Emma Grace McGrew, 19, of Booneville, served as Mississippi’s Miss Hospitality in 2017. McGrew graciously wore the crown, sharing her love of Mississippi during various speaking engagements and events as the state’s goodwill ambassador. In June 2018, she also visited Washington, D.C., to attend Mississippi on the Mall, tour the White House, and meet several elected officials. McGrew graduated from Northeast

Community College this past spring and will be transferring to the Mississippi University for Women in the fall, where she will major in Speech Language Pathology.

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.

Guests will also enjoy entertaining productions on both Friday and Saturday evenings during 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 at 8 p.m., where the top 10 contestants will compete for the crown.

Tickets to the 2018 Mississippi Miss Hospitality Competition are available online at HattiesburgSaenger.com or by calling the Saenger Theater Box Office at 601.584.4888. Tickets can also be purchased at the Saenger in advance or at the door.

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