MS. WHEELCHAIR AMERICA 2004



"Wheels Of Dreams" Des Moines, Iowa July 22-26, 2003



THOMAS J. VILSACK GOVERNOR

SALLY J. PEDERSON LT. GOVERNOR

July 2003

Dear Ms. Wheelchair America 2004 Participants:

Welcome to the great State of Iowa for the 31st Annual Ms. Wheelchair America Program. Iowa is proud to host this event, featuring talented and accomplished women from 24 states throughout the country. We hope you will enjoy all the warm hospitality, delicious food, and lively entertainment that Iowa has to offer.

The Ms. Wheelchair America Program is an ideal opportunity for women from across the nation to learn from each other and have a most memorable and positive experience. You all will be able to go forward from this event with renewed energy and focus to be forceful advocates for people with disabilities. Regardless of which one of you is crowned the winner, you all deserve sincere congratulations for your talents, achievements, and dedication.

I hope you all have a fun and memorable week at the Ms. Wheelchair America pageant, and I wish you all the best for continued future success.

Sincerely,



515 281-5211



UNITED STATES SENATE WASHINGTON, D. C.

TOM HARKIN

July 9, 2003

Dear Friends:

I am pleased and honored to welcome the 24 contestants to the 31st annual Ms. Wheelchair America Pageant 2004 from all over the country, to the great state of Iowa and to our fair capital city of Des Moines. I wish for you a wonderful experience while you are here.

All of the contestants here represent the best efforts of women in wheelchairs to promote accessibility and to educate the public about disability issues. You have each already proven your abilities as advocates, communicators and educators. I deeply appreciate you sharing your talents with the greater community to make the world a better place for all of us.

Congratulations to each of you for having been chosen from many others to be part of this national pageant. Please accept my best wishes as you continue to shine, each in your own way.

Sincerely,

Tom Harkin

United States Senator

TH/mmv



Mayor Preston A. Daniels

July 22, 2003

Greetings!

On behalf of the City Council and the citizens of Des Moines, please accept this very special welcome to you, your families and friends, as you participate in the 31st Annual Ms. Wheelchair America Pageant. Des Moines is proud to host your event and we are confident you will find our community a perfect setting for you meeting.

I hope you will find the time to enjoy some of the many attractions Des Moines has to offer. Gray's Lake Park and Recreational area, just south of downtown, is a great place to visit and offers a scenic two-mile walk with a footbridge crossing the lake. We are also home to the Science Center and the Art Center, and we are proud to announce the addition of the Myron and Jackie Blank Discovery Center at the Des Moines Zoo that is open year round. And, of course, we have many great shopping opportunities as well.

I hope your stay in our city will be a memorable occasion, and that your pageant will be a complete success!

Sincerely

Preston A. Daniels, Mayor

City Of Des Moines

Cay Hall 400 East First Street

Des Maines, IA 50309-1891

Ephone: (515) 283-4944

S15 237-1645

ci des-moines.ia.us



Pat O'Bryant, Executive Director KENTUCKY

> Gail McKoon, President GEORGIA

Robert Watson, Vice President

MARYLAND

Judy Hoit, Secretary IOWA

Vicki Kerkvliet, Treasurer SOUTH DAKOTA

July 26, 2003

To:

Contestants, Independent Delegates, State Coordinators, Companions, Judges, Family Members,

Sponsors, Supporters and Friends

From: Gail McKoon, President

Welcome to Iowa! Special thanks to Judy Hoit, our Host State Coordinator, and her wonderful Ms. Wheelchair Iowa Committee for inviting us to be their guests during this very special week for the Ms. Wheelchair America Program. I believe you will find that Iowa is a beautiful state, rich in history and hospitality. Judy and her very capable staff have worked many hours to make sure that we will be able to take home many wonderful memories of this week.

Thanks also to Catherine Gugala for all the good things she did as Ms. Wheelchair America this year. I do believe this is the first time we have ever had a titleholder who gave birth during her reign!

Our contestants this year are wonderful! Whether you are a contestant by virtue of winning a state pageant or an independent delegate who will start a program in your state next year, we are grateful to you for the efforts you put forth to be able to compete this year. Best of luck to each of you!

We also have great judges this year! Please accept our appreciation for taking time from your busy schedules to join us this week as you make some of the toughest decisions you will ever make.

I have always heard "if you need to get something done, you should give the responsibility to someone who is already busy." That statement used to puzzle me UNTIL I started trying to recruit State Coordinators. What I learned was that every successful State Coordinator we were able to recruit was already a very busy person who just added the Ms. Wheelchair Program to his/her list of responsibilities! Thank you so much, State Coordinators, for the great job you do for us. This year, I honestly feel we have the best group of State Coordinators ever.

If you are a sponsor, please know that without your contributions, this program would not be possible. Thanks so much for the faith you have placed in this organization and in the achievements of the women who are competing this week.

Last, but by no means least, I would like to thank our Board of Directors: Pat O'Bryant, Robert Watson, Judy Hoit and Stacey Hubbard. No finer group of people ever served Ms. Wheelchair America. They give countless volunteer hours to this program. They never grumble (well, almost never!) and they are always willing to take on extra responsibility when needed. Words could never express my gratitude to each of you for the personal commitment you have made to Ms. Wheelchair America.

A Message from the Host State Coordinator



Welcome to Iowa!

In 1972 an educational process was begun that would highlight the fact that the only difference between a person utilizing a wheelchair for mobility, and an able bodied person – is the wheelchair! Thus the Ms. Wheelchair America Program was organized.

This week 24 accomplished women, using a wheelchair for mobility, will compete in our country's 31st annual Ms. Wheelchair America Program.

I welcome all that are involved in this year's program - contestants, companions, families, friends and sponsors, and I thank you for your commitment to this program.

I know that everyone involved this week, will share their experiences with others, and soon all 50 states will send a contestant in the coming years.

Good luck to all the contestants and may you always have "Wheels of Dreams".

Judy Hoit

Host State Coordinator

Ms. Wheelchair America Program



It is difficult to know where to begin. So very many thoughts run though my head when I think of the past year and what it has meant. So many, many thoughts about where MWA will go from here and who will be the person to take it there.

Whirlwind. There isn't a more perfect word to describe my year. MWA took me to many places that I had never seen before: Oregon, Maryland, Washington D.C., Georgia, Wyoming, Virginia, and South Dakota. It also gave me the chance to get to better know some places that I have been: Minnesota, Illinois, and Colorado. I could tell you about the technology that I found is out there or the places that are becoming more and more accessible, but that is not the story. The real story is people. People who hold the door open, not out of pity, but out of kindness. People who seat you close to the front of the plane even though your ticket says 20D. People who hunt for a bath chair and when one cannot be found are actually sincere in their regret. In today's society there are times when it is difficult to see the good that abounds. I am here to tell you that it IS out there. I have seen it first hand this year and by far it is the thing that has made the biggest impact on my life. Please do not misunderstand. I realize that there is much work to be done creating a higher awareness of disability issues, but there are people out there who are willing to help. We, as a group, need to use the resources that are already available to us and people are one of those resources.

As my year is about to come to an end, I am grateful for the opportunity I have had to attempt to make a difference. It is my hope that I have been successful, not only for individuals disabled, but for the children I set out to reach. It has been a year that I will never forget. I can only wish and pray that all of this year's contestants will find their reigns as fulfilling as I have found mine.

Catherine Gugala Ms. Wheelchair America 2003

Ms. Wheelchair America Judges - 2004

Vicki Nisich - Head Judge



Vicki graduated from Augustana College in Sioux Falls, SD with a BA in religion and a minor in psychology. She has worked in the disability field for the past 10 years as Director of Disability Ministry, a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Aide, and the Development Director for an Independent Living Center. Currently she is a Benefits Specialist for Black Hills Special Services Cooperative, working with Vocational Rehabilitation consumers.

Vicki holds the title Ms. Wheelchair South Dakota 1999 and was one of the 10 finalists in the Ms. Wheelchair America Pageant of that year. For the past four years she was the State Coordinator for Ms. Wheelchair South Dakota, and served as treasurer on the Board of Directors for two years.

Vicki is married to Terry Nisich, Sr., and has two stepchildren. Vicki enjoys traveling, swimming, playing flute, skiing, and scrapbooking.





John is a former Hospital Corpsman in the US Navy, holds a degree in Hospital Administration from the University of Pennsylvania at Philadelphia. He is a Human Resources professional specializing in diversity with American Airlines. John is responsible for developing and implementing strategies that ensure that all employees are treated fairly and with respect at American Airlines.

John currently works as a Senior Analyst, at American Airlines. John resides in Dallas, TX with his partner and has two daughters, Katherin Rose and Bethany Ann.

Becky Cadwell - Judge



Becky is originally from Sioux City, Iowa where she graduated with a double major in Business and Sociology from Morningside College in 1994. She worked for seven years for Gateway Computers and a year and a half for Three Rivers Independent Living Center as a Benefits Specialist. She has been a board member for the Iowa Program for Assistive Technology for eight years. She has attended workshops, seminars, and training all over the U.S. focusing on disability issues. She was honored with the Civic Service Award for outstanding efforts in calling attention to the barriers faced by persons disabled in her community.

Becky has been married to her husband, Dave, for 28 years. Currently living in Panama City, Florida. They are parents to three children. Becky also holds the title of Ms. Wheelchair Iowa for 2001.

Rudolph Simms, Jr. - Judge



"Rudy" is currently the Executive Director, Iowa Region of the National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ) in Des Moines, Iowa. The main focus of NCCJ is to transform communities by empowering leaders through institutional change so that "all people" will have access to our nation's opportunities and be included in its promise. His career has brought him many awards and honors including the Iowa Prism Award in 1996, Yitzhak Rabin Memorial Peace Award in 1997, and the Martin Luther King Jr. Lifetime Achievement Award in 2002.

Rudy is married, has two adult children, one grandchild, and another one on the way. He was born in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. He enjoys movies, sports events on weekends, and takes great pleasure in baking and cooking.

Roy B. Morgan - Judge



Roy is Deputy Director of Affiliate Services at the national headquarters of United Cerebral Palsy in Washington, D.C. He has twenty-five years of experience with NGO's, as well as ten years as a senior professional with the U.S. federal government in the National Center for Health Statistics and the Medical Services Administration. Roy has been executive director of four national public interest organizations, including the National Autism Society, and is am member of the Board of Directors of DateAble in Bethesda, MD.

Roy and his wife, Pat, reside in Bethesda, Maryland and have three adult children, David, Todd, and Heather.



Linda Jones - Judge Coordinator

Linda graduated from Columbus State University in 1985. She was employed as a Therapeutic Recreation Specialist for 17.5 years with Columbus Parks and Recreation Department. She is a member of the Mayor's Committee for Persons with Disabilities, and serves on the boards of Miss Wheelchair Georgia and Miss Columbus.

Linda and her husband Bill live in Columbus, Georgia. She has two adult children, and two grandchildren. She enjoys travel, home improvement projects, quilting and making crafts.

Ms. Wheelchair America Board of Directors

President

Gail McKoon

Vice-President

Robert Watson

Treasurer

Judy Hoit

Secretary

Stacey Hubbard

Executive Director

Pat O'Bryant

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* *

Ms. Wheelchair America State Coordinators

Arkansas Ida Esh't Missouri Jennifer Blakovich South Dakota Kati Seymour

California Ruthee Goldkorn Nebraska Crystal Childers Tennessee Sofi Maneschi

Colorado Anna Johnson Nevada Yvonne Manriquez Texas Barbara Blair

Florida Ethel Haskins

New York Denise DiNoto Virginia Debra Willis

Georgia Gail McKoon North Carolina Crystal Upton

Washington,DC Jeri Wasco

Illinois Kristy Traynor Ohio Stacey Hubbard Wisconsin Heidi Evans

Indiana Jean McCutchan Oklahoma Kristen Garrett

lowa Judy Hoit Oregon Patti DelCastillo

Kentucky Pat O'Bryant Pennsylvania Kara Aiella

Maryland Robert Watson South Carolina Renee Walsh

Purpose And Goals Ms. Wheelchair America Program

The Ms. Wheelchair America Program is in no way a beauty contest. It is, instead, a competition to select the most accomplished articulate spokesperson for other persons with disabilities in the United States. The selected representative must be able to communicate both the needs and the accomplishments of her constituency to the general public, the business community and the lawmakers. She is charged with a continuing effort to educate the public regarding the dignity, productiveness and basic value of disabled people. She assumes the responsibility for the ongoing effort to eliminate the architectural and attitudinal barriers that prevent people with disabilities from assuming their rightful place in society.

As Ms. Wheelchair America, her duties are numerous. Each year she has the opportunity to travel, visiting advocacy groups, making public appearances and conducting television, radio and print interviews in the fulfillment of her major responsibilities. These include promoting awareness of the needs of disabled persons, creating an awareness for the need to eliminate architectural and attitudinal barriers and informing the able-bodied public of the achievements of physically disabled people across the nation.

We plan and conduct a four-day event to select our new Ms. Wheelchair America. The program is more than just the judging panel and one 'winner' is named. We schedule workshop sessions where we offer interesting topics of personal enhancement for the women, whether about grooming, communications and inter personal skill development, networking with community programs and other educational topics. We offer 'free time' to allow for information exchange between contestants to take place. Many new friendships are started from the program, as women validate the fact they are not the only one to use a wheelchair and experience some of the things they share with each other. The program offers an opportunity to enjoy five days at a luxurious hotel setting- here the contestants are really treated as special guests. The program is much more than just a healthy competition...it's an opportunity to see the potential within and to challenge personal growth.

The planning board for Ms. Wheelchair America is made up of volunteers from many different community organizations, businesses, private citizens, and previous title holders. There are few administrative costs to the program. All expenses for hosting the program, travel for Ms. Wheelchair America and expenses associated with he national Ms. Wheelchair America Program must be secured through various fundraising efforts, donations, etc. We welcome your assistance.

Judging Criteria Ms. Wheelchair America

The Ms. Wheelchair America judging is based upon criteria established by the Board of Directors of the Ms. Wheelchair America Program.

Accomplishment

1. Personal achievements/accomplishments since onset of disability only in the areas of:

Academic Vocational Personal

2. Adjustments to disability

Communication Skills

- 1. Ability to deal with media, peers, civic groups, etc.
- 2. Public relations skills
- 3. Advocacy for persons with disabilities
- 4. Self-confidence/motivation/initiative/creativity

Self-Perception/Projection

- **Poise/demeanor
- **Appropriate attire/personal presentation
- **Ms. Wheelchair America *is not a beauty contest* and therefore this is not license to choose the most attractive entrant. Instead, the items in this category are simply to express a desire to have a pleasing appearance capable of obtaining favorable responses from any audience before which Ms. Wheelchair America would appear.

Ms. Wheelchair America Presents

The Peoples Choice Award

Vote for your favorite Ms. Wheelchair America Contestant

\$1.00 per vote

Vote as many times as you wish throughout the course of the pageant week.



Ms Wheelchair Iowa Proudly Presents

Ms. Wheelchair America 2004 Schedule of Events

Tuesday, July 22, 2003 through Sunday, July 27, 2003

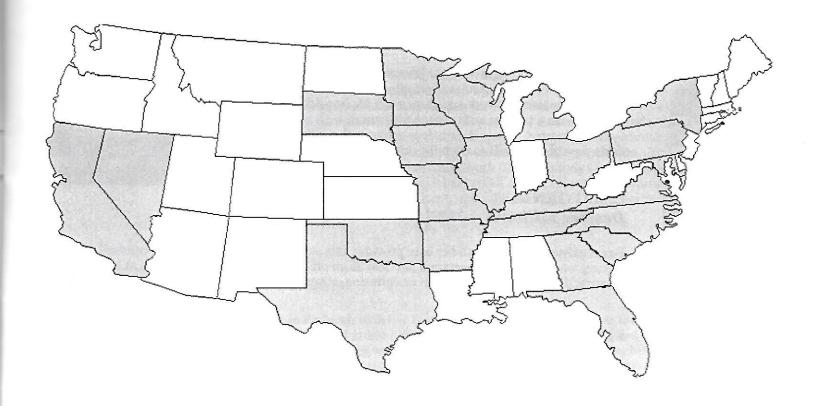
Embassy Suites on the River, Des Moines, Iowa

		Embass	y Suites on the Ri		OWA	
Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Fri/Contestant	Fri/Coordinat	Saturday	Sunday
Hospitality	Hospitality Suite	Hospitality Ste	Hospitality Suite	Hospitality Suite	Hospitality Suite	1. 6
Suite 2 to 6	10-5	10-5	10-5	10-5	10-3	
Arrivals all	Hotel Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Weekend	Queen brf
day	6:00-9:00 a.m.	6:00-9:00	6:00-9:00	6:00-9:00 a.m.	Breakfast	9:30 a.m. ↓
	MATERIAL PROCESSION AND AND AND AND AND AND AND AND AND AN				7:00-10:30	
Sign in and	Fun day	First judging	Third judging	Annual	Rehearsal	Please go
distribute	Gather in	session/ADA	session /	Business		to the Hotel
autograph	front lobby	workshop	Workshop	meeting and		breakfast↓
books	10:00 a.m.	*8:00 a.m.	*8:00 a.m.	*election 9:30a	10:00 a.m.	
DOORS	Botanical	Break	Break			Room, get
	Center	10:15 a.m.	10:15 a.m.			your
	Contor	Resume	Resume			breakfast,
		judging at	judging at			meet 1
		10:30 a.m.	10:30 a.m.	S. Charles		
	Lunch at the	Lunch for:	Lunch for:	Lunch for:	Lunch on your	Reserved
	Botanical	(participant,	(participant,	(participant,	own	room
3	Center	companion,	companion,	companion,	3) (**00)	At
	Center	judges, Board	judges, Board	judges, Board		10:00
		and State	and State	and State		
		Coordinators)	Coordinators	Coordinators		
	12:00 p.m.	12:30 p.m	12:30 p.m	12:30 p.m		
	12:00 p.m.	Second	Fourth judging	Coordinator	Free time	Newest
	•		session /	and I.D.	1 100 thine	MWA &
		judging session/ADA	workshop	workshop 2:00		Board
		The Control of the Co	Workshop	WOIKSHOP 2.00		meeting
		workshop	1:30 p.m.	+		2:00
	<u> </u>	1:30 p.m.	Break at 3:30	"Whatever you	Hair &	1 2.00
	Return to	Break 3:30	Resume	never wanted	make-up	
	Embassy Suites	Resume		to know about	appointments	
		judging at	judging at		to be scheduled	
		3:45 p.m.	3:45 p.m.	being a State Coordinator!"	to be scheduled	
Welcome	50's Theme	Country	Moonlight	Moonlight	Cash Bar	
Dinner	Dinner	Western	Dreams Theme	Dreams Theme	Cocktails	
Dime	D IIII.Ci	Dinner	dinner	Dinner	6:00 p.m.	
		D IMMO	(no tuxes)			
			Platform		Crowning	İ
			speeches		Event	
6:30 p.m.	6:30 p.m.	6:30 p.m. *******	6:30 p.m.	6:30 p.m.	6:30 p.m.	
	100			1		
Contestant	Judge's	State Gift				
Orientation	Orientation	Exchange				
8:00 p.m.	7:45 p.m.	7:45 p.m.	10.00	1		282

Former Ms. Wheelchair America Titleholders

Dreams Inc. would like to recognize our former titleholders and wish them well. May your wheels of dreams never stop turning.

Catherine Gugala – Wisconsin Candy Marsh – Colorado Nicki Ard - South Carolina Tracy Charlton-O'Conner - Wisconsin Terri Cecil – Kentucky Elaine Stefanowicz – Washington Amy Baxter-Ley - Texas Wendy Petzold - Wisconsin Dawn Blodgett-California Kim Mensi -Alabama Deanna Green-Van Hook - Texas Mercedes Rodrigues-Fowler - Florida Kathy Garcia-Farnsworth – Utah Jewell Massey - Georgia Peggy Simpson - Alabama Sandra Honbaier - North Carolina Donna Cline - Nevada Lori Cottam – Utah Gaynell Colburn - Maryland Barbara Crozier – Alabama Marian Schooling-Vessells - Maryland Vivian Thompson – Massachusetts Nancy Pudvin - Georgia Marge Chmielewski – Michigan Margie Sloan – Georgia Beverly Chapman - Florida Dixie Lee Etheridge – Mississippi Kathy Smith-Tiley – Alabama Janie Robinson – Texas



States	Contestants	States	Contestants
Arkansas	Carla Cate	New York	Jerina Porterfield
California	Desiree Milburn	North Carolina	Kimberly Harvey
Florida	Courtney Santiago	Ohio	Melissa Day
Georgia	Stephany Glassing	Oklahoma	Cinda Hughes
Illinois	Theresa Campbell	Pennsylvania	Jaclyn Kratzer
lowa	Debi Scharf	South Carolina	Jennifer Parker
Kentucky	Melissa Jenkins	South Dakota	Monica German
Maryland	Jennifer Rechsteiner	Tennessee	Julia Hollenbeck
Michigan	Monica Smith	Texas	Cathy Moravec
Minnesota	Jen Onsum	Virginia	Christina Draper
Missouri	Margaret Railton	Washington, DC	Darnise Henry Bush
Nevada	Yvonne Manriquez	Wisconsin	Lisa Wartchow

Ms. Wheelchair America 2003-2004 Contestant Biographies



ARKANSAS Carla Cate

Carla lives in Paragould with her parents. Carla sustained Freidriech's Ataxia, a hereditary and progressive form of muscular dystrophy, in 1985. Carla works at Paragould Health & Fitness Center. She also has work experience as a McDonald's manager and a Christian bookstore owner. She has been a teacher and mentor with junior high school girls. She has volunteered with Special Olympics. Carla currently is active in the ladies ministry including leading bible studies. Carla describes herself as friendly, outgoing, honest, real, and determined.



CALIFORNIA Desiree Milburn

Desiree lives in Fresno with her care provider and aunt. Desiree was born with cerebral palsy. Desiree works at Social Vocational Services as an office assistant. She volunteers at her aunt's daycare. Desiree describes herself as enduring, strong, wise, beautiful, and intriguing.



FLORIDA Courtney Santiago

Courtney lives in Fort Lauderdale with her parents. Courtney sustained reflex sympathic dystrophy in 1993. Courtney volunteers for the Miami Project, Miami Children's Hospital, Blessed Sacrament Church, Dr. William Schantz's office, and in play therapy. Courtney describes herself as compassionate, athletic, adventurous, spiritual, and courageous.



GEORGIA Stephany Glassing

Stephany lives in Smyrna with her children and boyfriend. Stephany was in an automobile accident in 1984. Her occupation is a freelance graphic artist including design ad layouts and photo restoration. Stephany's other work experience includes being a production manager for Retouching Studio, photographer, and an owner and operator of a tanning salon. She volunteers through the Shepherd Center with water-ski clinics. Stephany is on the Board of Directors as the secretary for the Water Skiers with Disabilities (WSDA). Stephany describes herself as spiritual, passionate, simplistic, caring, compassionate, and as a survivor.



ILLINOIS Theresa Campbell

Theresa lives in Chicago. Theresa has a spinal cord injury which was caused by spina bifida at birth. Theresa works as a life planning coordinator. She helps newly injured spinal cord injury patients reintegrate into the community. Theresa helps clients achieve education goals through assessment, GED tutoring, and college placement. She volunteers at the Trinity United Church of Christ as the chairperson of the young adult ministry. She is also the facilitator for the Youth

Sexuality Project/Keeping it Real Program. She helps feed the homeless at Inspiration Café. Theresa describes herself as confident, determined, reliable, open-minded, and optimistic.



IOWA Debi Scharf

Debi lives in Altoona with her husband; two children, Matt and Niki; and her dog, Raider. Debi is an incomplete paraplegic with a spinal cord injury at t-12 resulting from an automobile accident in 1993. Debi works as an assistant teacher for Kids Klub. Her other work experience includes: in-home day care professional, administrative asst. for Amanda the Panda, dietary cashier & manager at IMMC, and a pharmacy technician. Debi's volunteer & community activity list is the following: Girl Scout leader (13 years), PTO secretary, homeroom mom, Junior Achievement President, MYF President, Sunshine Kids Youth Choir, Melody Chimes director, vacation bible school director, teacher, girls and boys basketball coach, volunteer coordinator, camp counselor, exercise instructor, disability consultant, and a PR manager. Debi describes herself as friendly, enthusiastic, honest, positive, and a leader.



KENTUCKY Melissa Jenkins

Melissa lives in Paducah with her three college roommates. Melissa is a paraplegic from the aftermath of a shooting at her high school her sophomore year. Melissa works at Pharmacy Inc. as the manager. Her other work experience includes babysitting two children. She is a member of the Alpha Omicron Pi Sorority. Melissa is President of Student Association of Social Work at Murray Sate University. She has volunteered at Calloway County Headstart. Melissa was a Youth Crime Watch of America advisor in Miami, FL. She is a speaker for the Family Career and Community Leaders of America STOP the Violence. Melissa describes herself as dedicated, caring, approachable, out-going, and blessed.



MARYLAND Jennifer Rechsteiner

Jennifer lives in Bowie with her husband and two children. Jennifer was born with cerebral palsy. Jennifer has work experience as a transition relocation manager for the U. S. Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security. She co-authored the book "Taking Charge", which is about teens with disabilities. Jennifer is a Coast Guard mutual assistance spouse representative. She is a Girl Scout fund raising chair. Jennifer volunteers as the church project manager, and is the coordinator for teacher appreciation week. Jennifer describes herself as friendly, energetic, motivated, independent, and happy.



MICHIGAN Monica Smith

Monica lives in Dearborn Heights with her parent. Monica was a breech birth. She has work experience at Summit Pointe which deals with individuals with mental impairments. She also was a general merchandise clerk at Meijer. Monica is the founder of a non-profit transit service for senior citizens and people with disabilities, Transpiration Impaired, Inc. She is on the Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council, Michigan Protection and Advocacy program,

Student Alumni Association, and the Regional Agency coordination Committee. Monica describes herself as ambitious, determined, goal-oriented, focused, and independent.



MINNESOTA Jennifer Onsum

Jennifer lives in Minneapolis with her parents. Jennifer has spinal muscular atrophy. Jennifer is a freelance web designer and on-line promotions manager. Her other work experience includes: Sanburg swimming asst. supervisor, sales associate at Old Navy, and a clerical job for the school district. Jennifer in the former local and state Ambassador for Muscular Dystrophy. She had held local MDA telethons. Jennifer has done fundraising for U. S. E. W. H. A. (power hockey). She has been a volunteer program staff member at MDA Summer Camp. She has been involved in service projects with Gamma Sigma Sigma. Jennifer has also organizes and manages annual on-line auctions on behalf of country singer, Lita McCann, to benefit children's health charities. Jennifer describes herself as dedicated, hardworking, friendly, cooperative, and helpful.



MISSOURI Margaret Railton

Margaret lives in Columbia. Margaret was born with spina bifida. She works as a weekend resident manager at the Guest House at the University of Missouri. Other work experience includes: communication coordinator at UMC Charter Hospital, University of Missouri in telecommunications, and a financial analyst at Maly Commercial Real Estate. Margaret is a spokesperson for the American Cancer Society. She is a board member at "Seize the Day Volunteers" and for "March of Dimes". She is the fundraising coordinator for several local cancer patients. Margaret is the support group facilitator for the Center for Women's Ministries. Her volunteering continues with: Special Olympics, University of Missouri outpatient surgery, Ellis Fishel Cancer Center, and the Macher Swim School. Margaret describes herself as outgoing, ambitious, resilient, dynamic, and vivacious.



NEVADA Yvonne Manriquez

Yvonne lives in Las Vegas with her husband. Yvonne was born with spina bifida. Yvonne owns her own business involving Barbie dolls. She worked on two Naval Bases: San Diego in accounting, and South Carolina placing orders in the submarines. Yvonne volunteers at Sunrise Hospital. She helps find homes for animals. Yvonne volunteers for the Election Board on election days. She also managed a dating service. Yvonne has volunteered for the Spina Bifida Associations in Las Vegas and South Carolina. Yvonne describes herself as positive, motivated, caring, independent, and a leader.



NEW YORK Jerina Porterfield

Jerina lives in Bohemia with her housemate. Jerina has congenital cerebral palsy. Jerina works at the UCP of Greater Suffolk in Hauppauge from 1995 to present as an administrative clerk. She also assists in the purchasing department. Other work experience includes a swimming pool monitor/cashier in 1981 at the L. I. State Park n Montauk. From 1995 to currently, Jerina and her housemate are working on a family-based treatment program. From 1990 to 1995, she assisted

her housemate with child care fro an Office of Mental Health program through a local children's hospital. Jerina was a teacher's aide, tutor, and receptionist at Praise Christian School. She also volunteered at the Love Christian Academy from 1983 to 1987. Jerina describes herself as caring, inquiring, thoughtful, giving, and motivating.



NORTH CAROLINA Kimberly Harvey

Kimberly lies in Durham with her mother and brother. Kimberly was born with cerebral palsy. She works at Becker and Associates as a bilingual human resources manager. Other work experience includes a translation manager for two years at Paten Translations, Inc. in Brooklyn, NY. Kimberly does weekly volunteer work with her local Chamber of Commerce, and helping out with the local Shriner's Club charities. Kimberly describes herself as loving, responsible, fun, goal-oriented, and a "people-person".



OHIO Melissa Day

Melissa lives in Hilliard with her parents. Melissa is a quadriplegic with a spinal cord injury resulting from an automobile accident in 1994. Melissa volunteers at her church. She reads at preschools and daycares. She helps candidates run for city council. Melissa describes herself as courageous, persistent, ambitious, and as someone with faith and love.





Cinda lives in Oklahoma City with her two boys and her sister. Cinda was born with arthrogryposis multiplex. She works as a receptionist/research asst. Cinda also works for the Oklahoma State Senate from 1995 to present. Other work experience includes: from 1993 to 1995, Cinda was an office manager. From 1985 to 1993, she was a private English tutor. Presently, Cinda is volunteering with AIDS Walk in Oklahoma City on the Public Relations Committee, and for the Affirmative Action Committee of Oklahoma Democratic party. Other volunteering in past years includes: organized the raffle for a Christmas fund drive; motivational seminar speaker for teens at the Oklahoma Indian Methodist Youth Conference; a crisis line with answering calls, training new volunteers, and leading group meetings. Cinda served as Vice-chair for Red Earth's American Indian Film Festival. She has also been involved as an affirmative action representative, the American Civil Liberties Union, and the Oklahoma Office of Handicapped Concerns. Cinda describes herself as tenacious, empathetic, service-oriented, energetic, and goofy.



PENNSLYVANIA Jaclyn Kratzer

Jaclyn lives in Reading. Jaclyn was born with cerebral palsy spastic and a diplegia developmental disability. Jaclyn works at Abilities In Motion as a peer counselor. She organizes and maintains consumer supports services. She was a former tutor for people with special needs at a community college. Previously, she was a Content Editor for Bella Online. Jaclyn is enrolled in Penn Sate University in organizational leadership and is currently finishing a novel about her personal

experiences as a woman with a disability and a service provider. Jaclyn describes herself as compassionate, honest, strong-willed, and friendly.



SOUTH CAROLINA Jennifer Parker

Jennifer lives in Florence with her sister. Jennifer has cerebral palsy. She is a reading tutor for people with special needs. Jennifer is a peer supported for people with disabilities. She is on a Florence County DDSN Human Rights Committee. Jennifer has volunteered in a rehabilitation center as an activity assistant. Jennifer describes herself as determined, outgoing, dependable friendly, and caring.



SOUTH DAKOTA Monica German

Monica lives in Sioux Falls with her roommate. Monica sustained muscular dystrophy in 1978. She works as a medical transcriptionist. Monica is also a piano instructor. Other work experience includes: a teacher in a combined classroom of seventh and eighth grade, high school world history teacher, Spanish teacher, and a Spanish Club advisor. Monica is involved in with the Church in the following ways: Sunday school nursery, bible study facilitator, singles' group social committee chair, pianist, organist, ladies' groups, youth group director, Christian's education committee, and vacation bible school. Through the MDA, Monica helps with organizing food for telethons and assists at various fundraisers. Monica describes herself as loyal, godly, people-oriented, positive, and outgoing.



TENNESSEE Julia Hollenbeck

Julia lives in Clarksville. Julia had a spinal cord injury at c-5 in 1987, post-polio in 1995, polyneuropathy in 1997, and DDD: cervical fusion reinforcement at c-5 to c-7 in 1998. She is an AmeriCorps*VISTA volunteer: (Resource & Development Coordinator) who analyzes and evaluates need for a proposed Center of Independent Living. Other work experience includes over thirty-five years of business management, public speaking, and professional marketing to promote corporations in the U. S. She formerly owned and operated Hollenbeck & Associates. Julia volunteers for Wheel Me On by increasing awareness programs, peer counseling, activities, and education. She is a strong advocate for Americans who serve in the U. S. Military. She also has done photojournalism for Paralyzed Veterans of America, Disabled American Veteran, and the American Legion. Julia describes herself as determined, cosmopolitan, active, ambitious, and happy.



TEXAS Cathy Moravec

Cathy lives in West. Cathy is a complete paraplegic at t-7 from an automobile accident in 1995. She is the head instructor for Sokol West Gymnastics. Other work experience includes a floral designer. Cathy is a member of: the West Longhorn Club & Rodeo, Hill/McLennan County Czech Heritage Club, McLennan County 4-H Club, SPJST Cottonwood #6, Southern district Sokol American, Lone Star Hall, and Wheelchair Sports, USA. Cathy describes herself as funny, cheerful, responsible, dependable, and easy to get along with.



VIRGINIA Christina Draper

Christina lives in Fieldale with her parents and siblings. Christina was born with cerebral palsy. Christina is working with the arts & science technology department. She worked with Student Support Services, and as a switch board operator. She is the president of Black Student Association. Christina is a member of: Martinsville & Henry County handicapped Association, National Youth Leadership Council, STAR, and Youth Leadership Council. Christina describes herself as honest, funny, compassionate, hard working, and trustworthy.



WISCONSIN Lisa Wartchow

Lisa lives in New London with her husband and children. Lisa has chronic progressive multiple sclerosis (symptoms 1990 and diagnosed in 2002). Lisa owns a craft store. She and her husband started a construction company which specializes in accessibility. She was also a supervisor at Bankard Credit Union. Lisa volunteers at the Wisconsin Sate Veterans Home with her service dog, Max. She belongs to a local MS group and society chapter. Lisa volunteers at her church. She taught a kindergarten and first grade youth group. Lisa describes herself as faithful, spiritual, determined, outgoing, and caring.





Darnise lives in Washington, DC with her husband and son. Darnise has a chronic degenerative hip disease which was onset at age 11 from bilateral slipped epiphysis and bilateral hip joint removal. She is employed by the District of Columbia Government as a staff assistant for the Mayor's Committee on Persons with Disabilities. Her duties include researching legislation, conference planning, identifying service providers and providing aid to persons with disabilities while promoting independence. Past work experience entails: tutoring, clerk-typist, vouchers examiner, accounting technician, and procurement specialist. Darnise's majority of her career has been with the Rehabilitation Services Administration, an agency that provides vocational and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. She is the Vice Chairperson for D. C. Statewide Independent Living Council. Darnise is a member of D. C. State Rehabilitation Council and American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD). She promotes knowledge for affordable and accessible housing. Darnise describes herself as optimistic, creative, humane, empathic, and resilient.

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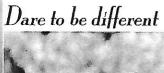
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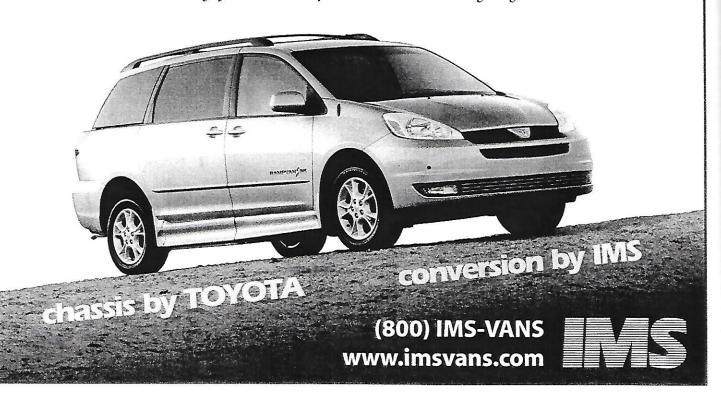
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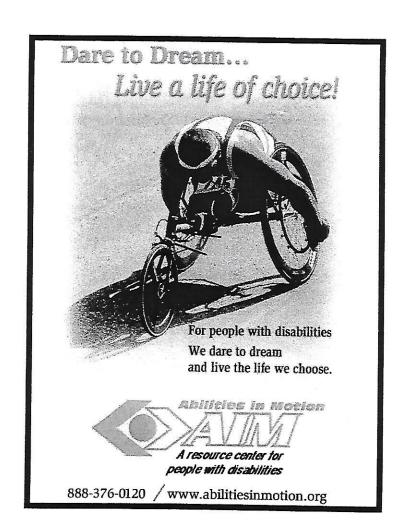


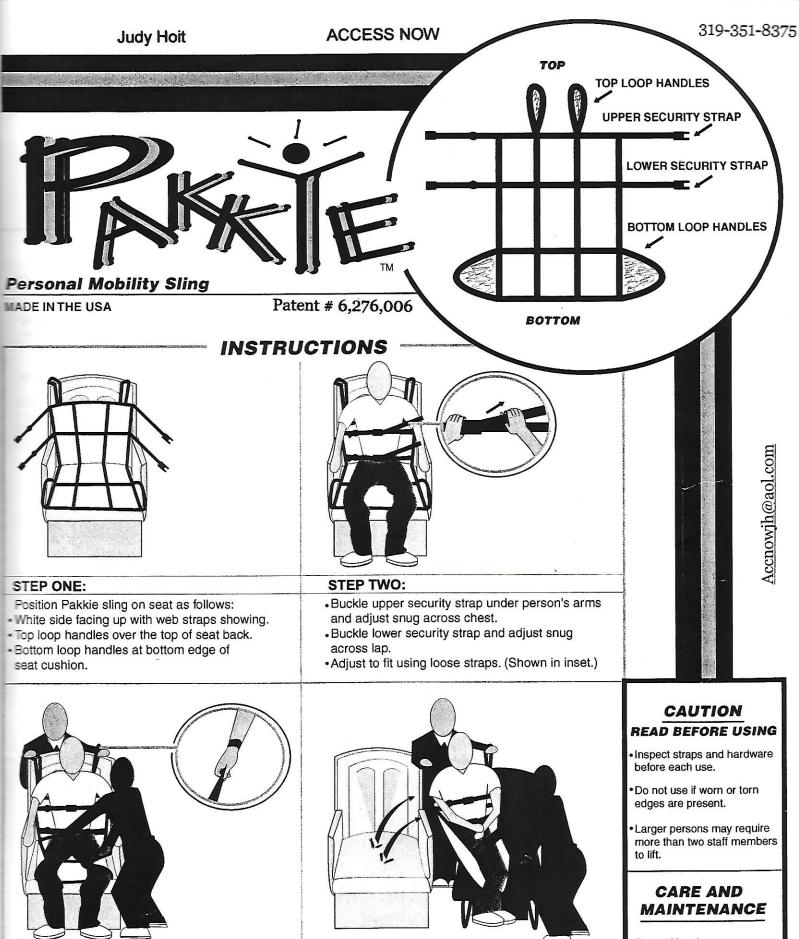
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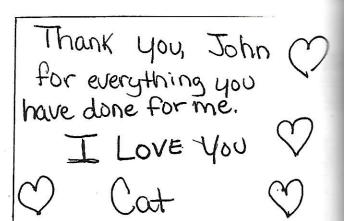
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in Des Moines. Scharf won first runner-up and was named Miss Congeniality. **Crowned:** Ms. Wheelchair Iowa, Debi Scharf of Altoona, right, poses with Ms. Wheelchair Oklahoma, Cinda Hughes of Oklahoma City, who was crowned Ms. Wheelchair America 2004 Saturday ANDREA MELENDEZ/THE REGISTER

Ms. Wheelchair graces Iowa

While top honors went to Ms. Wheelchair Oklahoma, an Iowan came in second.

By DAKARAI I. AARONS REGISTER STAFF WRITER

The Ms. Wheelchair America Pageant came to Iowa on Saturday, the first time in its 31-year history. Contestants from 23 states and

Washington, D.C., came to the Embassy Suites on the River hotel in Des Moines for the chance to wear the crown.

The women, who represented

The women, who represented every age group and occupation, were all state-level winners, coordinator Judy Hoit said.

Contestants had spent the week practicing platform speeches and gearing up for the event. They also got to meet Mayor Preston Daniels. "It's an exciting week," said Hoit,

who was the first Ms. Wheelchair

Iowa in 1996.

The 24 contestants were first introduced individually, then the judges announced five finalists, each of whom was required to answer two questions — one serious, one fun.

Before the crowning moment, Denise DiNoto, New York's state

coordinator, performed a selfwritten song that might have summed up the evening: "My Life Is Too Good to be a Country Song."

U.S. Sen. Tom Harkin, D-la,, attended the pageant to help commemorate the 13th anniversary of the Americans With Disabilities Act.

Breaking barriers and changing attitudes is what the act is about, Harkin said, and the contestants embody that spirit.
Christina Draper, Ms. Wheel-

Christina Draper, Ms. Wheelchair Virginia, said the law has allowed her to live an independent life.

"If it wasn't for that act, I would probably be living in an institution," she said.

After more than 30 minutes of anticipation, Cinda Hughes, Ms. Wheelchair Oklahoma, was crowned Ms. Wheelchair America 2004.

"I'm completely overwhelmed and so honored," she said. "I've had the most wonderful week of my life."

Ms. Wheelchair Iowa, Debi Scharf of Altoona, was the first runner-up. Scharf was also named Miss Congeniality and received the People's Choice Award.



Good Luck Carla Cate! We're proud of you! Ms. Wheelchair Arkansas Board

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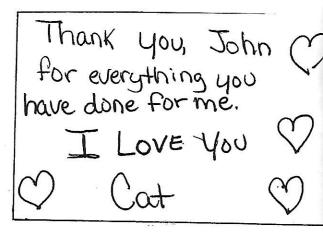
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Christina Draper

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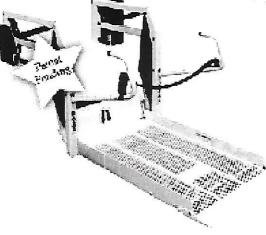
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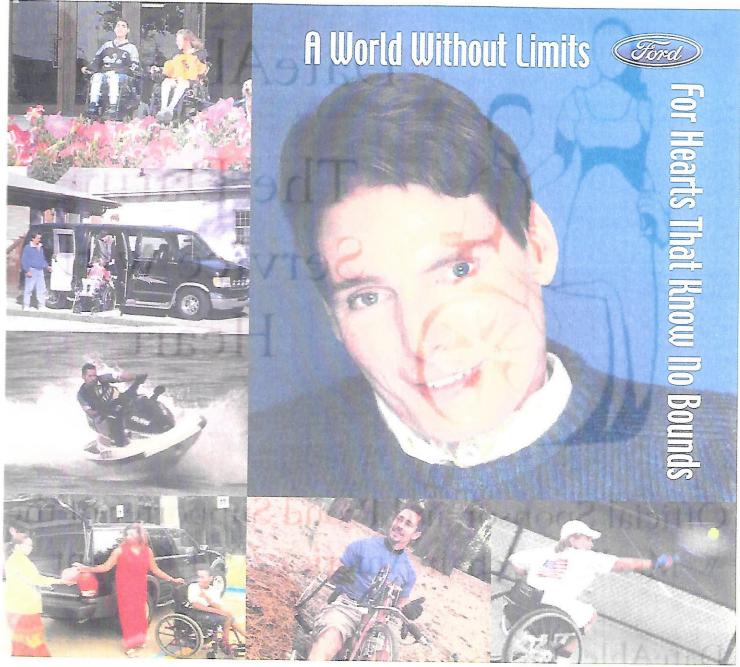
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