



Photos by Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Last year's Miss Oregon Outstanding Teen Emma Ellis performs a musical number.

Miss Oregon: 'It's about empowering other women'

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Kennedy Hjelte, of Tualatin, who competed as Three Rivers Outstanding Teen, won the title of Miss Oregon's Outstanding Teen and will also progress to Atlantic City.

Neither Miss Clatsop County Haylie Moon, of Cannon Beach, or Miss North Coast Aubrey McMahan, of Knappa, progressed to the semifinals.

Miss Lane County Hannah Garhofer, who is from Seaside, landed in the top five, claiming fourth runner-up.

Garhofer has been competing on and off in the pageant system since she was 13, and was thankful for another opportunity.

"This program has raised me," she said.

While she didn't get the crown this time, Garhofer said to expect her back on the stage.

"I'm competitive," she said. "I'm not going to stop."



Taylor Ballard waves to the crowd after being crowned Miss Oregon.

Ballard's platform about confidence and positive body image was particularly relevant, as much of the evening's tone was colored by recent decisions made by the Miss America Organization to rebrand the competition around scholarship by nixing the swimsuit portion and relaxing evening wear standards.

The decision was met with

mixed reviews.

For CC Barber, who won Miss Oregon in 2009 and co-hosted the evening, winning a preliminary award for her performance in swimsuit during the Miss America pageant was another avenue to be recognized.

"Had there not been lifestyle and fitness maybe I wouldn't have been able to

shine a little bit," Barber said. "It's been about being fit and having stamina to do the job."

Harley Emery, Miss Oregon in 2017, saw the change in the organization as welcome.

"I hope it shows the competition is really focused on intelligence and confidence and communication skills," Emery said. "I think it will change public perception."

Ballard sits at the intersection of these two perspectives. Like her own journey suggests, it comes down to finding what gives you confidence.

"I've seen the upsides and the downsides of swimsuit," she said. "I've never been more confident in my own skin than on this stage. But I see the direction of the program and why it's moving that way to be more inclusive. It's a scholarship program, and ultimately, it's about empowering other women."



Brenna Visser/The Daily Astorian

Beachgoers cross a bridge over the Ecola Court outfall in Cannon Beach. Recent samples show bacteria levels higher than state standards.

Bacteria: 'This is a very complicated issue'

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While the federal BEACH Act allows the monitoring program to issue health advisories for readings that exceed the limit in marine waters, there is no equivalent requirement for freshwater sources.

Mike Manzulli, of the Ecola Creek Watershed Council, said the process is "flawed" and that the state should remedy the way findings are noticed.

"The streams from these outfalls are where the children on the beach play and where the dogs drink. Children have most likely got-

ten sick from these waters in the past and will continue to until the problem is remedied," Manzulli wrote in an email. "Tourists don't know their children and pets are playing in contaminated water. Until the source of contamination is fixed, families visiting our beach deserve a proper warning to avoid this water."

St. Denis said the city is working with the Department of Environmental Quality for guidance on proper signage to advise beach goers.

"This is a very complicated issue and is a top priority for staff at this time," St. Denis said.

Oien: School pushing a new initiative on teacher health

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"What stood out to me is her bravery she exhibited in facing those challenges, being the mother of five small children," Astoria High School Principal Lynn Jackson said. "She was truly inspiring in how she confronted that challenge, and she was seen as a source of strength to her students."

Oien is now back to juggling her time between teaching students psychology, world history and finance, raising her children and focusing on her own health

and well-being.

After her experience with cancer, she resolved to incorporate wellness into her everyday life. Astoria High School has been pushing a new initiative on teacher health in the past year, offering cooking classes and memberships to health clubs.

"It's overwhelming. There's always work to do," Oien said. "There's always papers to grade. I used to think, I have to get everything done on this list to relax. But I've come to realize the list never is done, and I've learned to be OK with that."

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