



Katherine Lacaze

The crowning of Miss Oregon takes place Saturday.

TALENT AHEAD!

Miss Oregon pageant comes to Seaside

By **KATHERINE LACAZE**
For Seaside Signal

When the candidates step onstage during the Miss Oregon Scholarship Pageant, they are encouraged to stay focused on one primary goal: Beating their own best.

"I've personally never felt in competition with my sisters," said 16-year-old Lilly Boothe, Miss Clatsop County's Outstanding Teen from Clatskanie. "I truly believe it's a battle against yourself. ... I think we'll all be happy and supportive of whoever wins."

The Miss Oregon and Miss Oregon's Outstanding Teen Competitions kick off with a variety of preliminary events Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. The final competition and crowning takes place Saturday night at the Seaside Civic and Convention Center.

Twenty-five titleholders from across the state are in the running to win the Miss Oregon crown and advance to the Miss America competition, while 20 younger candidates compete for Miss Oregon's Outstanding Teen.

The areas of competi-

tion for the Miss Oregon candidates include personal interview, onstage interview, evening wear and social impact, and talent. The top five finalists also participate in a final conversation with judges, where they express why they are best for the job of Miss Oregon and how serving in the role will set the stage for becoming a future leader.

The Outstanding Teen categories also include private interview and talent, along with lifestyle and fitness in active wear, onstage questions in evening wear, and scholastic achievement.

'Practice, practice, practice'

Miss North Coast's Outstanding Teen Sydney Rapp, of Gearhart, has prepared rigorously for the state competition over the past few weeks leading up to it.

"I take a section of the competition every day and practice, practice, practice," she said.

Not only has she reviewed her tumbling routine for the talent portion and the group choreography, but also honed her public speaking and interviewing skills by having her friends or mom ask her random ques-



Sydney Rapp

Lilly Boothe (from left), Miss Clatsop County's Outstanding Teen; Ranisha Speed, Miss Clatsop County; and Sydney Rapp, Miss North Coast's Outstanding Teen are competing in the Miss Oregon Scholarship Program's state competition, which takes place through Saturday at the Seaside Civic and Convention Center.

tions, mostly pertaining to her platform of financial literacy for kids. She is tying her platform into her upcoming senior project at Seaside High School.

Rapp's favorite part of the competition is the talent category, as she's been tumbling since she was 8 and finds it exciting to share her love for the activity with the audience.

Although she is focused on the state competition at hand, the Outstanding Teen candidates also are aware of the Miss

America's Outstanding Teen competition coming up July 23 through 27 in Florida.

"Whoever is going to be Miss Oregon's Outstanding Teen has to go to the national level right away," Rapp said. Although she hopes to be that person, she reminds herself, "If you don't get Miss Oregon's Outstanding Teen, someone else will get it, and they've also worked their hardest."

Boothe, who has been competing in the pro-

gram since she was 12 and advanced to state for the first time this year, agreed she has never felt animosity toward the winners in the past.

"They've always been the most deserving young ladies I've ever seen," she said.

Making a difference

Miss Clatsop County Ranisha Speed, of Tillamook, who is competing in the scholarship program for the first time, said the workshop held in May was especially useful for familiarizing the candidates with everything entailed in the state competition. The candidates also receive ample support from their local directors and other participants, who are touted as a sisterhood by the Miss Oregon Scholarship Program.

"Because a lot of these girls have competed before, they really offer support for us first-timers," she said.

Although Speed and the other two dozen candidates are all vying to be Miss Oregon, she feels staying devoted to her own improvement and self-empowerment enables her not to feel "the pressure of competitiveness."

"All I can do is focus on myself and appreciate the

women next to me at the same time," Speed said. "I don't think any person who doesn't take away the crown of Miss Oregon is at a loss, because we still have our local title."

She will continue to represent Clatsop, Tillamook and Columbia counties and advance her social impact platform, The Better Me, a nonprofit she helped establish that is "designed to bridge the gap between young adults and reality."

The organization, based out of Richmond, Virginia, offers a mentoring program targeted toward people ages 15 to 30 who are struggling with independence. Through the program, mentors provide support and guidance to empower young adults in areas such as financial planning, social and life skills, academic support, college preparation, career counseling, and job and employment training skills.

Regardless of what happens with the Miss Oregon competition, Speed feels each candidate still benefits from participation and can continue working toward the goals they created in the process.

"We don't have to have a crown to make an impact," Speed said.

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