

Beauty with a Purpose

Maura Spence-Carroll, a 14-year-old former student of Beckendorff Junior High, honors the nation's heroes with her charity organization

Written by Christina Hoo Fung | Photography courtesy of Maura Spence-Carroll

Spence-Carroll works with special needs students to prepare care packages for veterans



Spence-Carroll began her own charity organization, Heroes for Heroes



Maura Spence-Carroll is not your typical teenager. In fact, she's quite the outspoken philanthropist. The pint-sized powerhouse can walk into a packed boardroom and hold her own. She actively seeks donations and sponsors, while speaking with resolution about her cause, Heroes, a charity she has created that recruits special needs children who want to make a difference in the lives of veterans.

"I want these kids to know that they are making a difference in the lives of veterans, and that they are important to them," says the passionate 14-year-old.

It is her chosen platform for Miss America Outstanding Teen, as she currently holds the title Miss Katy Outstanding Teen. Seven and a half

years her senior, Spence-Carroll's brother Sam is autistic. He is her inspiration for the organization.

The Usual Stereotype


Yes, Spence-Carroll is a "pageant girl," but she's quick to defend the usual stereotypes that go with the title. Scholarship, success, service, and style - the four points on the crown - are what she aspires to. She is known for exhibiting style and grace while serving others. "We're not just pretty girls," says Spence-Carroll. "We are girls who want careers, who want to make a difference, and be successful."

Her goal is to achieve, and she firmly believes that being a part of the Miss America Outstanding Teen team is the platform to get there. Still growing, Heroes for Heroes is in its second

year of delivery, and is the brainchild of Spence-Carroll, who has recently graduated from Beckendorff Junior High, and will be heading to Seven Lakes High School in the fall.

Along with volunteers from the Elks Lodge, the group puts together care packages for patients at various local hospitals. They collect simple necessities such as toiletries, socks, tissues, razors, playing cards, and books for the veterans' hospital stays. The recipients are grateful for the gifts, but also that someone was thinking about them.

Spence-Carroll's mother, Cidnie Carroll, is the designated driver for the drop-off. She says, "I think the thing that matters most are the sweet notes our special needs heroes tuck inside for the veterans - notes of encouragement,



Maura Spence-Carroll currently holds the title of Miss Katy Outstanding Teen and hopes to inspire others

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“We’re not just pretty girls. We are girls who want careers, who want to make a difference, and be successful.”

- Maura Spence-Carroll

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Spence-Carroll recently graduated from Beckendorff Junior High School



Spence-Carroll with Miss America 2011 Teresa Scanlan

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a 'thank you' for their service, or just a reminder that someone cares for them, is praying for them, and is thankful for the sacrifices they have made for our nation."

At Your Service

With numerous extracurricular activities, in addition to her charity work, Spence-Carroll still finds the time to maintain her grades while serving the community. It's a characteristic that has been instilled in her from an early age. Her grandparents, Bob and Sandi Boyett, who are active members of the Texas Elks, are huge supporters of the Texas Elks, are huge supporters of Heroes for Heroes and assist her with recruiting participants and donations.

"I want to use my title to help open more doors for this cause," Spence-Carroll says. "When people hear you do pageants, they tend to not take you seriously. But when you put on the crown, suddenly people are willing to listen."

The message and goal of Heroes to Heroes has long been on her heart. "This is not just something concocted," she says. "I will always be doing this because I am devoted to it. I want to see it grow, to expand throughout Texas, and ultimately to a national level."

The group will be making more donation drops in August. On their last outing, they distributed about 150 care packages to the veterans' hospital and Stand Down Weekend, an event providing meals, career counseling, and medical help for homeless veterans. This year, Spence-Carroll hopes to increase the amount of care packages given to veterans to thank them for being true heroes. **KM**

CHRISTINA HOO FUNG is a writer and photographer from Kingston, Jamaica. She moved to Katy in 2011 and enjoys discovering exciting things about her new home.



For information on how to participate in *Heroes for Heroes*, visit facebook.com/MissKatyOT2014

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