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## Judith Kim Eckerle '98 speaks out on life, post-Miss USA

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If she were to sum up her experience competing for the title of Miss USA in one word, Judy Eckerle '98 would describe it as “intense.”

Over the more than two weeks she spent with fellow contestants in San Antonio, Eckerle says she experienced elation, stress, exhaustion, and curiosity, but this roller-coaster ride had to come to an end. Although she did not place in the top ten finalists, she said she does not regret competing for the title.

“This was definitely not the easiest thing I’ve ever done, but it made me stronger in a lot of ways,” Eckerle said. “It was a world I had never known or been a part of, and, while my pageant days are over, it was nice to be a ‘member’ for a little while and experience something that a lot of girls don’t get to see.”

It is now back to the status quo for Eckerle, who plans to return to her psych and then neurology rotations, and has been invited to speak with some Korean-adoptee groups. She also hopes to visit the children’s hospital in Milwaukee often.



Eckerle, shown above, has returned to life as a third-year medical student. (Photo by Kari Shuda)

Despite not moving on to compete for the title of Miss Universe, Eckerle’s search for her birth parents (she had hoped the coverage from her competing for Miss USA would aid her quest) will continue. Her state director has been in talks with the Miss Universe Organization to start a P.R. campaign in an effort to locate Eckerle’s birth parents, both overseas and in America.

“I cried when my director told me they might take charge of this search,” Eckerle said. “Because honestly, I have great faith in their talents and abilities to take my search so much farther than I ever could do alone.” — *Sarah Hedgespeth '04*