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## Miss Illinois Competes at Miss America

February 7, 2011

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – On May 20, 2010, a mere month after graduation, Illinois Wesleyan University alumna Whitney Thorpe-Klinsky'10, was enjoying time off from school. Her future seemed set; she had earned a bachelor's degree and would begin medical school at Southern Illinois University School of Medicine that August.

But Saturday, June 19, everything changed. The then 22-year-old Thorpe-Klinsky was crowned Miss Illinois, earning herself a spot in the Miss America pageant recently held in Las Vegas, Nev. at the beginning of January.

"It was very unexpected," said Thorpe-Klinsky, who added that she had only competed in a handful of pageants before claiming the state title. "I came into the pageant hoping to at least make the top 10, learn some things and try again next year, and I ended up winning."

Thorpe-Klinsky impressed the judges with her eloquent answers, confidence modeling, and her involvement during her college career. A biology major and psychology minor, she was also a cheerleader for four years, Vice President of Scholarship of Alpha Gamma Delta, and a member of the scholarship fraternities Alpha Lambda Delta and Phi Eta Sigma.



*Whitney Thorpe-Klinsky, Miss Illinois*

Once she was crowned Miss Illinois, the New Baden, Ill., native deferred her acceptance into medical school until August 2011. Since then, her life has been a whirlwind of public appearances and preparation for the national contest.

On Thursday, Jan. 6, Thorpe-Klinsky arrived in Las Vegas for the Miss America pageant. She was greeted by the pop vocal group Boyz II Men, who performed for the 53 contestants outside of the Planet Hollywood Hotel/Casino. The next nine days were packed with competition preparations and formal appearances.

"The mornings were early," said Thorpe-Klinsky, who noted if a contestant wanted to workout they had to do so at 6 a.m. "Then all day was filled with rehearsal, and in the evening we would have an event. Sometimes we wouldn't get back to the hotel until 10 p.m."

Events included a trip to the top of the Eiffel Tower to watch the Bellagio Fountains and seeing Barry Manilow at the Paris Hotel/Casino. Tuesday, Jan. 11, the preliminaries began, which had Thorpe-Klinsky walking the runway in Planet Hollywood, competing in the evening gown and swimsuit competition first, talent competition second, and finally the onstage question.

"It felt great to be done with the swimsuit competition," said Thorpe-Klinsky. She prepared for the contest with her team, comprised of an image consultant, hair and nail stylists, personal trainer, interview coach and business manager. "However, my favorite part, the evening gown competition was immediately following, so that was fun."

For the talent competition, Thorpe-Klinsky slipped on her tap shoes to perform a number by David Guetta and during the onstage question, she exhibited her knowledge of the breast cancer awareness movement.

Although Thorpe-Klinsky didn't make the top 15, she sat with the other eliminated contestants on stage to watch the remainder of the competition.

"At first I was a little bit disappointed because I had worked so hard," said Thorpe-Klinsky. "But I know that I did the best that I could, and I just wasn't what they were looking for this year. I think it's awesome that Miss Nebraska won. She is such a focused young woman and has such high goals and aspirations. I think that really carried her through with the pageant."

Now that the Miss America pageant is over, Thorpe-Klinsky will resume her duties as Miss Illinois, traveling across the state making appearances for her five different service platforms. The platforms include the Miss America national platform, The Children's Miracle Network, Support the Troops, Triple Threat Mentoring based in Aurora, Ill., Character Counts, a mentoring program which talks to students about the character education program, and her personal platform, Breast Cancer Awareness, which targets young women to help them identify and decrease their risk factors.

"I have been working and advocating for breast cancer awareness since I was 14," said Thorpe-Klinsky who explained that her mother is a nine-year breast cancer survivor. "But people were much more likely to listen after I won Miss Illinois. It's amazing the power a crown can carry."

In June, Thorpe-Klinsky will crown the next Miss Illinois, receiving a few months of relaxation before heading to medical school. While this will be bittersweet, she says that "The experiences I have had as Miss Illinois have been so meaningful, life changing and uplifting."

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