PAGEANT PLATFORM SPEECH

FOR

TIFFANIE LeBLANC

Hello everyone. I am Tiffanie LeBlanc and it is an honor and a privilege to present myself to you as this year’s Ms Wheelchair USA \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (**state**). This is a wonderful and innovative pageant and although we all love to channel our “inner glamour girl” and meet all of the wonderful people associated with this event, this pageant means so much more to me. I believe in the power of self confidence and positive personal presentation, and I really believe in the potential for all of us, no matter what, to make a lasting and positive impact in the world. As Ms. Wheelchair USA, I plan to use this platform to advocate for people with disabilities throughout the US to be able to be gainfully employed.

Many of us may know Thomas Alva Edison’s life changing inventions and his famous quote, “Genius is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration,” but how many of us know that Edison was considered physically and developmentally disabled? He had learning disabilities, poor concentration, and due to having scarlet fever at an early age, he was almost completely deaf. Imagine-if someone hadn’t advocated or him, we’d all be sitting in the dark!! Thomas Edison did not have a traditional upbringing. He was forced to be home schooled, but thanks to his determination and perseverance, he persisted and his limitations only inspired him to create and innovate in order to improve conditions for humanity.

I am inspired by Edison’s tenacity and vision, and as Ms Wheelchair USA, I plan to take **my** inspiration-that of employment advocacy for the wheelchair-bound, and work to improve workplace conditions for those of us in this country with physical challenges. I have done work with Goodwill and the Arc of Acadiana, using their resources to assist employers to make modifications in the workplace to support wheelchair access. My contribution at the local level is very gratifying, but there’s an entire country out there, and the potential for outreach and improvement of work conditions for all Americans is almost limitless!

I consider myself fortunate to have found this wonderful organization and your mission to promote glamour, self-confidence and community service is just the beginning! I am also blessed to have been born with determination and focus and I am quite sure that as Ms. Wheelchair USA, there will be **NO** stopping me and the difference to be made in the workplace as we expand our outreach and support all communities throughout the US to adapt offices, schools, factories and retail establishments to suit **all** employees. The greatness of this country has been built on the skills and character of its people. The workforce is always looking for exemplary employees, and I know the talent pool in so many fields would be greatly supported and enhanced through workspace modification.

Thank you all for your support and I look forward to the day when we all have infinite and viable opportunities for employment for all Americans.