

# Miss Washington pageant a proud night for county

It was a big night for Clark County at the culmination of this year's Miss Washington pageant Saturday in Burien. Miss Greater Vancouver Jacquie Brown claimed the state title. Miss Seattle McKinley Smith, a former Vancouver resident, was first runner-up for Miss Washington and earned several other awards. Miss Clark County Cassandra Orefice was the top nonfinalist in the talent portion of the competition.

The Miss Clark County Scholarship Organization hasn't had a local representative win at the state level since 1990, so it was an exciting achievement, said Cindy Donowitz, the local organization's outgoing executive director. Donowitz will step down at the end of the month after three years in the role. She will continue to volunteer with the organization but needed to scale back her time commitment. She will be succeeded by Melissa Sutton.

The Miss Clark County Scholarship Organization is already accepting applications for next year's local Miss and Teen representatives. The pageant is Oct. 9 at Fort Vancouver High School. Visit <http://missclarkcounty.org> to learn more.

Brown, a 21-year-old Vancouver resident, waitress and Clark College student, will represent Washington at the Miss America pageant in January. A Miss Washington has yet to win the national crown, Donowitz said. In addition to winning Miss Washington, Brown clinched preliminary evening gown and swimsuit awards.

The chance to earn money for school is what first got Brown interested in pageants at age 17. She's been living on her own and supporting herself since she was 16, and a teacher at Evergreen High School encouraged her to consider the Miss America Scholarship Organization as a means of financing her higher education.

Brown's prize package from the Miss Washington pageant includes \$11,500 in scholarships. She's taking a year off from school, however, to travel the state and country on behalf of the Miss Washington Scholarship Organization and volunteer in youth mentoring, her pageant platform. She's also moving to Seattle to work with the state organization's coaches to train for Miss America.

Brown entered five pageants before she won Miss Greater Vancouver in the fall and now Miss Washington, and is glad she never gave up.

"I'm so happy and excited," she said. "It's been a long journey."

The journey was long, albeit interrupted, for Smith, as well. Smith, a Prairie High School graduate, competed at the state level in 2006 as Miss Greater Vancouver. Then she took a four-year break to attend the University of Washington before returning to the pageant circuit as Miss Seattle 2010.

Smith, 22, didn't win any awards when she competed at state as Miss Greater Vancouver, but last week as Miss Seattle was different. She was the top finisher for interviews and won the preliminary rounds for swimsuit, talent and evening gown. In total, she brought in \$7,000 in scholarships.

"I'm very happy with how well I did," said Smith, who works for Edelman Public Relations in Seattle.

Also with reason to celebrate is Orefice, who won \$1,250 in scholarships at the Miss Washington pageant. Orefice, an 18-year-old Battle Ground resident and Clark College student, had competed at the state level before, but it was in the Teen division. Orefice was Miss Clark County's Outstanding Teen 2008 and Miss Greater Vancouver's Outstanding Teen 2009.

The Miss division is different from its Teen counterpart in several ways, Orefice said. For one, Miss contestants bunk with peers instead of their parents at the state pageant. This living arrangement provided more opportunities to bond with fellow contestants, Orefice said.

"It's different, but I liked it," Orefice said. "There's a lot more maturity."

For her talent, Orefice danced en pointe to "The Kite" from the musical "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown."

Orefice has studied ballet since age 3 and hopes to make dance a career.

"My dream is to be a dancer on Broadway or a Rockette," she said.



**Jacquie Brown**  
Miss Washington  
2010



**McKinley Smith**  
Miss Seattle 2010



**Cassandra Orefice**  
Miss Clark County  
2010