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Neighbor Spotlight: Pine-Richland fifth grader crowned Miss Pennsylvania Preteen, heading to national pageant



TONY LARUSSA | Thursday, May 6, 2021 3:01 p.m.



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Pine-Richland fifth grader Lola Schlafhauser, 11, recently was crowned Miss Pennsylvania Preteen. The pageant sponsored by American Royal Beauties included an interview process, community service project, stage introduction and formal wear. Lola is planning to compete for the national title in August 2021.

Editor's note: Neighbor Spotlight is a monthly feature that aims to let our readers learn more about the people in their communities who are working to make them a better place, who have interesting stories to tell or who the community feels deserve "15 minutes of fame." If you would like to nominate someone as a Neighbor Spotlight, visit pinecreekjournal.com, select the "Post Story" button in the upper right corner, click the "New Article" button and complete the form to publish your nomination. Questions? Email Neighborhood News Network editor Katie Green at kgreen@triblive.com.

Lola Schlafhauser wasn't aware of the world of competitive pageants when she attended a fashion show five years ago at age 6 with her mother.

But the experience opened a door that led to the Pine-Richland fifth grader's recent crowning as Miss Pennsylvania Preteen at a competition in Harrisburg sponsored by American Royal Beauties, where she competed in an interview process, community service project, stage introduction and formal

"There were pageant girls at the first fashion show I went to," she said. "I thought they were really cool, and they looked like they were having a lot of fun," said Lola, 11, who attends Eden Hall Upper Elementary School, where she plays the baritone in band and loves math.

Lola's fascination with the fashion wasn't lost on her mother.

"Lola's always had a penchant for performing," said her mother, Virginia Sorce. "She was always singing, dancing and putting on little magic shows for me and her dad.

"So we thought this (pageants) could be kind of a catch-all that would give her the opportunity to dance, to wear a nice gown and talk to people. And she really seemed to shine whenever she did it."

Lola said she enjoys all aspects of pageant competition, especially dancing.

"It's fun but also hard work," she said. "I had to learn to walk in heels and how to talk in front of the judges."

She said preparing for pageants has been aided by her training at LDI DanceWorks in Gibsonia, where she is a competitive junior in modern, contemporary, tap, jazz and hip-hop styles.

"I think the recitals we do are a big help because there's a lot of people out there and the lights are on you," she said. "You also have to perform in front of judges and work on things like timing and facial expressions."

Sorce said while she was wary of pageants involving young girls, she saw something different in the one Lola entered.

While fashion, makeup and performance are part of the competitions, pageants sponsored by American Royal Beauties place a strong focus on community service, Sorce said.

"What I like about it is that it's a natural pageant," she said. "There's not a lot of glitz and crazy makeup like some of the other ones. It's very community-service oriented, which aligns with our family's values."

To answer the pageant's call for girls to "use their crown to serve," Lola has made the Mary Claire Foundation part of her platform.

The organization was created in honor of a family friend who died suddenly. It's mission is to help parent grieve the loss of a child.

To compete for the National Miss Preteen pageant in August, entrants must complete at least 12 community service projects.

Lola's community service includes volunteering at food banks, animal shelters and retirement communities as well as making personal appearances.

She recently added another project to the list working with fellow Junior Girl Scouts to clear debris from the grounds of an abandoned cemetery in Allison Park where a number of veterans are buried.



Born prematurely, Lola was unable to walk until she was 18 months old and struggled with speech. But with the help of early intervention experts and support services, “she has flourished,” Source said.

Lola scored well and received high praise from all of the judges during the statewide competition, and she received the overall highest scoring on stage introduction for the entire pageant, across all age groups.

Overcoming her early challenges to score higher than her peers, teens and adults in the competition “are why we are so proud of her.”

Lola said the upcoming national pageant will be special because another member of the family will be participating.

“One of the competitions at nationals is pairs modeling,” Lola said. “I’ll be dressed as a little girl and my dad, Michael, will be dressed as the Kool Aid Man. I think it’s going to be fun.”

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