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Contact: Debra A. Carr – (515) 830-1622 or (515) 991-1651



Deidre Howard – Miss Black Iowa USA 2009 & Alexis Edwards – Miss Black Iowa USA Talented Teen USA 2009

**ANNOUNCING THE 2009 MISS BLACK IOWA USA AND MISS BLACK IOWA
USA TALENTED TEEN
AND THE LEGACY LIVES ON...**

Miss Black Iowa USA is proud to announce our 2009 Miss Black Iowa USA - Ms. Deidre Howard and the first Miss Black Iowa USA Talented Teen - Ms. Alexis Edwards, both of Des Moines, Iowa. These rising young women were selected for their outstanding achievements, poise, talent, and beauty. The official crowning ceremony is planned in collaboration with the Coalition for Black Students at Drake University in February 2009 – Des Moines, Iowa.

Deidre Howard set forth her journey in the great state of Iowa 4 years ago, when she began her studies at Drake University and since arriving has been empowered by many people and numerous organizations who inspired her to give back and help others. From organizing local events to helping in nursing homes, Deidre finds fulfillment in serving others, especially our youth. For example, she helped start the "Back to School Bash", an event that fosters educational development for youth. Beyond that, Deidre is a volunteer coach for Des Moines East High School Girls Basketball.

Comfortable on main street and on the main stage, Deidre is no stranger to pageantry. She is

Miss Black Iowa Juneteenth 2006, Miss Black Iowa USA 2007 1st Runner-up, and 2004 Miss American Teen of Oklahoma 4th runner-up. And in her new reign, as Miss Black Iowa USA 2009, Deidre promises to commit herself to the state of Iowa and to her platform entitled "PATHS - Preparing Adolescents To Harness Success!" Deidre says *"My plan, my dream, is to help young people of Iowa realize their full potential in what looks to be a very exciting and promising time for America. Through my dedication to all youth, excellence, and service to community, I know together we can accomplish great things! I plan to use every opportunity at my disposal as Miss Black Iowa USA 2009 in that effort. It is with great humility and gratitude, that I proudly wear the crown."*

And for the first time ever, the Miss Black USA pageant system announces, Miss Black USA Talented Teen competition! For the seeds of greatness are sown in the developing minds and dreams of our most precious resource, our youth. Alexis Edwards exemplifies the heart, spirit, and promise of America's future and holds the distinguished title of the first Miss Black Iowa USA Talented Teen!

Alexis Edwards is a 17-year old junior at Des Moines Hoover High School who enjoys basketball, vocal performance, and serving in her church. She will graduate from Hoover in May 2010 and plans to go to college majoring in musical performance, psychology and therapy. Her dream is quite simply to "be a superstar". And quite frankly she has the ability to accomplish exactly that. Alexis was a semi-finalist for "Showtime at the Apollo for Kids" (Harlem, NY) and she is a regular songstress for the Iowa Stars (now Iowa Chops) Hockey team. Beyond that she was featured lead vocalist representing Hoover High School at the University of Northern Iowa's vocal musical festival.

Alexis says *"I believe in the power of one and in having an attitude of gratitude. For me, it is important to have a positive view of oneself and an optimistic outlook on life. When good things happen to me, I believe in "paying it forward" and helping someone else."* Her trailblazing reign will be exciting as she strives to keep her *"promise to do my very best"*.

Debra A. Carr, founder of Miss Black Iowa USA, is committed to keeping the 22 year old tradition alive. *"We have always had outstanding representation from Iowa at the national Miss Black USA pageant and 2009 will be no different. I look forward to working with Ms. Howard and Ms. Edwards and for the exciting things they will do here in Iowa to promote our mission of scholarship, leadership, and community service"*.

About Miss Black Iowa USA

The Miss Black Iowa USA organization exists to provide a forum for African-American women to showcase their knowledge and talent on a state platform while promoting education and public service. The organization develops women who are educated, self-disciplined, empowered, and who serve as positive role models. Founded in 1987 by Debra Ann Carr, the Miss Black Iowa USA organization celebrates strong, committed women of color. By developing young African-American women today, we strengthen our collective tomorrows. For contact or more information, visit our website, www.missblackiowausa.org.

About Miss Black USA

For over 21 years, the Miss Black USA organization has celebrated the achievements of outstanding young African-American women from across the nation. It is the mission of the Miss Black U.S.A. Pageant to provide educational opportunities to outstanding young women of color and to develop the "whole woman mind, body, and spirit."

Miss Black U.S.A. Pageant celebrates scholastic achievement and believes that education is the key to lifelong success and empowerment. The Miss Black USA Pageant promotes education and leadership by providing scholarship opportunities to its winners.

In addition, the Miss Black USA Pageant is a community-driven organization that is committed to addressing health and education, two leading social issues in the African American community. The winners of the official "Miss Black USA" state pageants will use her civic platform to promote awareness of these issues during her reign.

This year, Miss Black USA is joining forces with State Farm insurance to promote the benefits of the 50 Million Pound Challenge, a nationwide effort to encourage Americans to shed excess pounds that inhibit health and well-being. In fact, 2009 reigning queens are being challenged to lead the efforts in their respective states and for the most successful queen; a \$5,000 cash scholarship awaits her. Registrants will sign up on the State Farm website, where their name and state will be listed. State Farm will keep track of the registrants and totals. The delegate with the highest percentage of individuals from her state to sign up for the challenge between January 1 and June 30th, 2009 wins the \$5,000 scholarship.

Current Reigning Miss Black USA 2008



Lights, Camera, Action! All her life Kristen E. White was told if you can dream it, you can achieve it. On June 23, 2008 under the bright lights of Las Vegas, Kristen White, Miss Black Georgia's dream came true when she captured the coveted crown of Miss Black USA 2008 and won a \$20,000 academic scholarship, along with a walk-on role on Tyler Perry's hit sitcom, the House of Payne, a 7 day/6 night trip to the Grand Bahamas Island, a 4-week acting summer intensive scholarship to the New York Conservatory, School for Television and Film, a year-long membership to Bally's Total Fitness, a personal training package and a host of other prizes and opportunities.

The 27 year old Georgia native attended Tennessee State University where she majored in Business Administration with a concentration in Marketing. While most pageant queens dress up only when they're on camera, looking good off-camera is Kristen's full-time job. Her modeling career landed her in several national publications and she has walked the catwalk for Betsy Johnson, Diane Von Furstenburg and Sherri Hill for Jovani. The American-Idol semi-finalist says her greatest passion is serving others, especially children.

Several years ago, Kristen founded Project Protect, an educational reference program she developed to spread the message of awareness and prevention of missing and exploited children. For every Elizabeth Smart, Samantha Reunion or Jessica Lunsford, there are countless others we never hear about; Kristen's best friend being one of them. She says, although they are adults now, the discovery of her frightening abduction at the age of 8 simply floored her. She was returned safely, but there are so many children that are not as fortunate. With the ubiquity of the Internet, children and teens have become even more vulnerable, as 1 in 5 children will be sexually propositioned over the Internet before they turn 18. A force is needed to bring these issues the attention they merit and galvanize the public and private sectors to work as partners to eradicate this problem. Protecting children from abduction and exploitation is an issue of universal relevance and importance on a local, state, national and international level.

In addition to serving as the national representative for the Miss Black USA organization and promoting their national partnership with the Heart Truth campaign, Kristen plans to continue her work with Project Protect.