

Miss New Bedford to compete for Miss Massachusetts

Exactly 9 months from the day that Olivia Marques, 19 of New Bedford, won the title of Miss New Bedford, she will find herself in Worcester competing for the coveted title of Miss Massachusetts.

Marques is one of 21 young women across the state who will compete on June 30 and July 1 in the Miss Massachusetts pageant, with the hopes of winning a year of a lifetime, thousands in scholarship money, and the chance to compete further for the national Miss America title.

“It’s surreal,” Marques says, “I’ve wanted to be Miss New Bedford since I was 8 years old. For the past five or six years, I’ve watched the Miss Massachusetts pageant. To know I am one of the youngest competing, and that I am representing my home and my city is amazing. I can’t wait to get on the stage and scream that I am Miss New Bedford.”



However, Marques isn't new to competing. In fact, she's the first ever Miss New Bedford's Outstanding Teen to later go on and become Miss New Bedford. She first competed at 13 years old and then persevered until she won at age 15. Back then, Marques made an incredible 120 appearances throughout New Bedford serving as a role model to teens, and placed 3rd

runner-up at the state teen pageant.

Over the last nine months, Marques has truly made her 'mark' even more prominently across the community. She's given hundreds of hours to service, and further, she's made a very unique contribution which she will proudly bear at the state pageant.

Marques has raised nearly \$4,000 to benefit the Children's Miracle Network (CMN) – the national platform of the Miss America Organization which oversees the Miss Massachusetts and Miss New Bedford competitions. She's done this through direct donations and various fundraising efforts, which includes a cabaret-style fundraiser she hosted in April of this year. She says the event was, "Definitely a highlight!" of her year so far.

In addition to raising thousands of dollars for charity, Marques has spent an impressive amount of time volunteering and serving the local community. In fact, she's made more than 70 appearances throughout the community since her crowning in October – and she's done this all while studying at a college three hours away from home.

Wherever she goes, Marques' primary goal is to advance her platform, "We Rise By Lifting Others" which extols the values of community service and helping those in need. In fact, Marques has been living by this virtue her whole life.

"I've been involved in community service for as long as I can remember, and I think it's especially important to be a spokesperson for the importance of volunteerism – to show that someone my age is still going out in my community and making both a visible difference and a personal difference in people's lives."

Now, in between appearances, Marques prepares to compete for the state pageant. "It's been absolutely insane," she says. "I juggle my job at a law office. I'm on call for another job. I

have family I want to see, and I'm transferring to a new school on top of getting ready to go to Miss Mass."

While Marques says her year has strongly prepared her in many ways, she also must take the time to prepare for the individual phases of competition.

For the interview phase, Marques says she stays up to date with current events and has mock interviews with her program committee, family and friends. However, Marques says the interview is more about personality and being yourself.

"I like to just go in and tell myself, I am who I am. The judges will either like you, or they'll feel that you're not fit for the job. No matter what happens, I know I'll be happy with my performance. I love to speak publicly, and I make sure I go into interview and just treat it as a conversation."

Then of course there's talent, lifestyle and physical fitness, evening wear and on-stage question. Marques is a singer and has been practicing her solo for months. She's also spent time working out, following a fitness regimen, and eating a healthy diet. "It's a matter of taking care of yourself mentally and physically to compete at your best potential," she says.

The state competition entails two nights – a preliminary night with all 21 contestants on June 30th, followed by the finals night of competition where only 11 contestants will continue on as finalists. Marques will head to Worcester on Wednesday for rehearsals and group appearances, while also making friends and enjoying time with a "sister" roommate throughout the week. "I'm just really excited. My ultimate goal is to be able to compete at finals night in top 11."

If she were to win the state title, Marques says she'd have an ambitious agenda. "I want to be able to create a program in schools for all ages to show both the importance of community service and to also make service opportunities accessible to students of all locations and backgrounds. I think starting

community service at a young age is so important, but sometimes elementary and middle schools lack the resources to offer this. This would be great not only for our state, but If I were ever to represent Massachusetts on a national level, this could easily be pushed across the country.”

Marques credits much of her strengths and capabilities to competing in the Miss New Bedford program. She says, “My confidence has skyrocketed. I’ve never been a shy person, but I’ve always been able to point something out about myself that I don’t like. Being Miss New Bedford has given me the strength to feel I can do anything.”

Regardless of what happens, Marques is simply proud to represent New Bedford. She’s from New Bedford, graduated from New Bedford High School, and truly enjoys what’s here. “I love that New Bedford isn’t just a city – it’s a community. I’ve lived in New Bedford my entire life. Going to college on a different side of the state showed me that no place compares to here. My heart belongs on the coast. There’s nowhere else that I’d rather be at this point in my life in New Bedford.”

The Miss Massachusetts pageant will take place on June 30 and July 1 at the Hanover Theatre in Worcester, MA. For more information, visit www.missmass.org. Eleven young woman will compete on finals night – one of which is voted upon by fans at home. If you want to help advance Marques’ opportunity to make it into the “top 11,” you can vote for her online under “Online Voting.”