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## Miss New Jersey Katharyn Nicolle brings literacy to local schools while enjoying her reign

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By Jim Cook Jr.





**MissNewJersey.net**

Miss

New Jersey 2011 Katharyn Nicolle, 20, of Wenonah in Gloucester County, rides in the Night in Venice parade in Ocean City last July. She won the pageant in June and is preparing for the Miss American pageant in January.

WENONAH — It started with 23 girls.

Eleven were chosen.

Five girls made the final round.

Then, in a flurry of anticipation and excitement, the judges chose Katharyn Nicolle.

"I say it all the time, but it really is a dream come true," Nicolle said of her big win, taking the title of Miss New Jersey, 2011, last June at the pageant in Ocean City.

She's only 20 years old, but she's no stranger to the pageant scene.

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"This is only my second Miss New Jersey pageant," said the now-former Miss Coastal Shores, the title that took her to the state-level pageant.

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The soon-to-be Dickinson College junior said the pageant “takes a lot of preparation.”

The year prior, when she was represented at Miss Liberty 2010, she did not win, but said she felt she learned plenty about herself.

“It takes a lot of guts to stand up on that stage in a bikini, or do a live interview or talent.”

Her talent was a dance ballet en pointe to “Assassin’s Tango,” from the movie “Mr. and Mrs. Smith.”

Prior to making the 17 to 24 age requirements to compete in Miss New Jersey, she represented her fellow New Jersey teens at the 2008 Outstanding Teen pageant, an affiliate of Miss New Jersey.

There, she took the top title.

“That was an incredible experience. But when you win something like Miss Outstanding Teen, you’re never 100 percent sure if you’ll take Miss New Jersey. It’s a big dream to have,” Nicolle said.

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Now, she has her dream job.

“Who gets their dream job at age 20? It’s wild. I’ll need to find a new dream jobs once I give my crown up next year,” Nicolle said.

Her back-up plan, however, does not involve going after another crown. She’ll be entering her junior year at Dickinson once her reign is complete.

“I’m studying international studies with a concentration in security studies,” Nicolle said. “I’ll also be studying abroad in Bologna, Italy.”

During her time off from school, Nicolle will be utilizing the platform that helped her clinch the crown: Reading for the Right Reasons.

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“I’m gearing my work toward helping kids become more literate, as well as battling illiteracy in the country,” Nicolle said. “We need to get New Jersey school children to enjoy reading. They should not see it as work or as a chore, but as an improvement on who they are.”

With her platform, Nicolle has been visiting local schools, elementary through high

school level, and speaking at assemblies and reading to the younger students.

“I also bring books with me, especially the schools that have less books, or don’t have the budget for a large library,” Nicolle said.

The store Five Below sponsors many of her visits, which include using the funds provided to her platform to bring more books into the classrooms Nicolle visits.

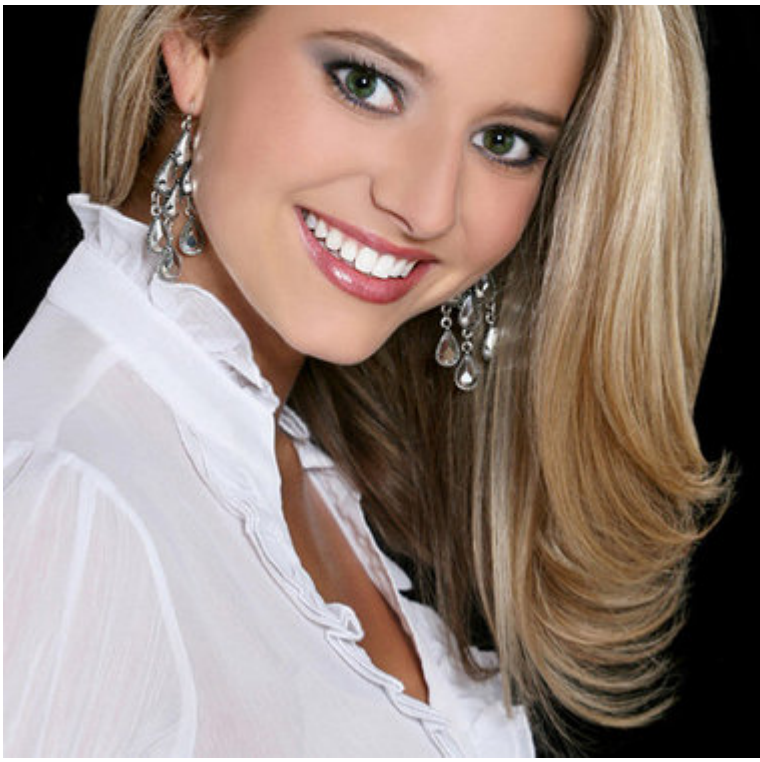
“I want the young people to say ‘Miss New Jersey reads, I want to read,’ and make it a positive experience,” Nicolle said.

She has plans on visiting Indian Avenue School in Bridgeton in the coming month, as well as the Woodbury Childhood Developmental Center.

Nicolle also has booked appearances in Atlantic County, Philadelphia’s Thanksgiving Day parade, and many events and schools across the Garden State.

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Katharyn Nicolle, Miss New Jersey.

Regarding the bad stigmas that often accompany beauty pageants, she said they couldn't be further from the truth.

"It's not a beauty pageant, it's a scholarship pageant," Nicolle said. "I love being in Ocean City. It's such a fun week. My favorite part is the relationships I build with the other girls. We all go to other pageants together and the Miss New Jersey pageant really strengthens those relationships."

"It's like a big week-long sleepover," she said.

One of her favorite parts of the pageant, Nicolle recalled, was the interview. She was asked about her adopted pet.

Her pet, however, is not the normal adopted cat or dog that comes from a local SPCA.

"I have an adopted pet whale named Crystal," Nicolle said.

Nicolle went through a whale adoption program similar to the adopt-a-star program to get the whale.

"I've done it every year," Nicolle said. "The funds raised go to protect marine biology. I've always been fascinated with marine biology."

Looking ahead, Nicolle will represent the Garden State in the Miss America pageant on Saturday, Jan. 14 in Las Vegas, Nev.

Though the pageant is three months away, Nicolle says she's ready.

“I’m excited to compete. I’m not nervous,” Nicolle said. “I’m ready for the challenge.”

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More information regarding Miss New Jersey, including Katharyn Nicolle’s blog, can be found at [www.missnewjersey.net](http://www.missnewjersey.net).

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