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Media Contact: **Paige Robertson**
VisitHATTIESBURG, Communications
probertson@visithburg.org, 601.410.6508



MISSISSIPPI MISS HOSPITALITY AWARDS 2025 PRELIMINARY COMPETITION WINNERS & SCHOLARSHIPS

HATTIESBURG (July 18, 2025) — During night one of on-stage competition, the Mississippi Miss Hospitality program announced winners of one preliminary competition area and numerous other scholarship recipients.

A preliminary area of competition, the Mississippi Speech counts for 20% of a contestant's overall score, with the other 80% consisting of commercial competition, evening gown, panel interviews, and one-on-one interviews.

Three Mississippi speech winners were awarded the Jay Slaughter Memorial Scholarship for their 90-second speeches creatively showcasing the state's history, tourism resources, and business assets. Winners were **Taylor Griffin, Attala County; Taylor Garretson, Greene County; Malee Davidson, Ridgeland; and Molly Kate Carley, Sumrall.**

"Each of these young women brought something uniquely powerful to the competition this week. Their speeches were a testament to the heart and soul of Mississippi — its people, places, and potential," said Kristen Brock, program director. "We're incredibly proud of the dedication all 47 contestants have shown over the past several months and can't wait to see how they shine in the final night of competition."

The competition established a new scholarship in 2023. Named for the 1983 local representative for Oxford Felicia Manley Horton, the scholarship was awarded to **Mariah Evans, Jefferson Davis County**, for her commitment to her hometown through community service as a local titleholder. Following her passing in 2022, Felicia's loved ones chose to honor her legacy and unwavering passion for service and community through a Miss Hospitality scholarship endowment.

Additionally, the 47 contestants were provided a social media challenge starting two months before competition week that highlighted their hometowns, the program's sponsors, and more. This year's social media scholarship winner, which is awarded by the Mississippi Tourism Association, is **Allyson Beard of New Albany.**

The Southern Miss Image Center provides a scholarship for the Most Photogenic contestant each year. **Charlsee Smith, Jones County**, was selected as the 2025 recipient.

The program awards one young woman a top ad sales scholarship for generating the most community support for the State Competition. The 2025 winner is **Ali Hargett, Greenwood**.

For more information, visit misshospitality.com. Keep up with competition updates on the Mississippi Miss Hospitality Competition Facebook and Instagram or live stream the final night of competition on the program's YouTube, a service provided complimentary by Mississippi advertising agency Maris, West, & Baker. On-stage competition begins at 8 p.m. The live show is sold out.

About the Mississippi Miss Hospitality Program:

Presented by the Hattiesburg Tourism Commission (VisitHATTIESBURG), the Mississippi Miss Hospitality program brings together the best and brightest young women to annually compete for the state title. Contestants must be young women between the ages of 18 and 24, enrolled in college, and represent their hometown. The program supports more than \$100,000 in college and university scholarships. The winner serves a full year as the state's goodwill ambassador for tourism and economic development by traveling and promoting Mississippi's assets to visitors and industries. The Mississippi Miss Hospitality tradition began in 1949 under Gov. Fielding Wright and the Mississippi Legislature.

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