



Perris News

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Miss Perris to Compete in Miss California USA Competition

Leslie Lopez tells anyone who asks that the life of a beauty queen involves a lot of hard work.

There's hours at the gym every day, lifting weights and doing cardio training. There are late-night study sessions to keep up with her college course and current events in the news. And

Lopez keeps up a dizzying schedule of public appearances on behalf of the City, where she attends ribbon-cuttings, parades and Chamber of Commerce mixers and other events where she can herald the benefits of living in Perris.

Lopez, 21, is the reigning Miss Perris.

This weekend, steps onto a statewide stage as she takes her place along other contestants in the annual Miss California USA Pageant.

The three-day event begins Friday at the Agua Caliente Casino, Resort and Spa in Rancho Mirage and features 50 women taking part in personal interviews and modeling swimsuits and evening gowns.

"This is the big one," she said. "This has been my dream and I am getting the chance to live it out. I'm really proud and honored to represent Perris at this pageant. I've lived here all my life and I love this City. I am happy with my City. It is a very welcoming community."

Lopez will be going up against contestants who employ personal coaches and trainers who teach them how to walk, talk and look elegant. Some have deep-pocketed corporate sponsorships. One contestant is sponsored by comedienne Ellen DeGeneres' television program.

Lopez doesn't have those financial resources but she's not fazed.

"I don't feel I am the underdog," she said. "I am extremely excited. I am not nervous—yet. I have high hopes I will be well in the competition."

Lopez graduated from Perris High School in 2006 and attends Mount San Jacinto College where she studies psychology. She began modeling at 12. Next year, she will transfer to Chapman University where she plans to study clinical psychology.

She did receive some financial assistance from the City of Perris, which will help cover the cost of entering the Miss California USA Pageant. Other sponsors include the Perris Valley Chamber of Commerce and the Perris Optimist Club.

Her mother, Dolores Lopez, provides a lot of the other financial and moral support. She works at the HanesBrands distribution center in Perris.

"She's a wonderful daughter and I am very proud of her," Dolores Lopez said.

Perris officials say Lopez is a great ambassador for the City. It's hard not to find her at a City-sponsored event or a Chamber of Commerce mixer. Lopez was on hand for the first-ever Relay for Babies sponsored by the March of Dimes in October. She attended the Veterans Day Parade.

"She always does a great job representing the City," said Mayor Daryl Busch. "She's very friendly in her demeanor."



The tiara Lopez wears when representing at the City at community and regional events.

It's obvious she takes her role as Miss Perris seriously and I am sure she will do well at the upcoming pageant."

The days before this week's pageants are particularly busy for Lopez. She continues her studies at school, where her courses include statistics and environmental science. She spends hours watching CNN to stay abreast of the latest national and international news. Fellow students quiz her about current events in mock interviews to keep her on her toes. Daily visits to the gym add to the pace.

"People think that being part of a beauty pageant is the glamour life," she said. "But it's really not. It's not only about being pretty but being smart. Having brains is a big part of the pageant."

People interested in watching the pageant can see it Sunday at 2 p.m. on Channel 5.



Miss Perris Leslie Lopez at her residence. She will represent the City this weekend at the Miss California USA Pageant in Rancho Mirage.



Lopez with her sash from Perris.



Lopez in front of a family portrait. She attends Mount San Jacinto College and will transfer to a four-year school in 2010.