DSU's Dr. Francine Edwards Wins Mrs. Delaware USA Pageant

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DSU's Dr. Francine Edwards, an associate professor of Mass Communications, is now representing the First State and the University as the 2012 Mrs. Delaware USA.

DSU's Dr. Francine Edwards is crowned the 2012 Mrs. Delaware USA by outgoing Mrs. Delaware USA Angie Bell at the end of the May 11 pageant.

Dr. Edwards, who primarily teaches public relations, found out that two times was the charm and the victory, as she won the Mrs. Delaware USA Pageant held on May 11 at Everett Meredith High School in Middletown. The previous year she came close, finishing as the first runner-up.

The 43-year-old wife and mother noted that it was a challenge competing against eight other women in their 20s and 30s.

"You never know what the judges are looking for," Dr. Edwards said. "After finishing first runner-up the previous year, when you get that close and when you want to do it for the right reasons, you know that you have a good chance."

For Dr. Edwards, the "right reason" was to address the need for more role models who value marriage and family while balancing that with career responsibilities.

"I am not perfect, but I have committed myself to my family and have been able to find a balance between that commitment and my happiness in my career," Dr. Edwards said. "I have to invest as much time in the marriage as I do in work; I still have to be there for my husband and my children."

While clearly an attractive woman, Dr. Edwards said she liked the Mrs. Delaware USA Pageant because it doesn't just focus on beauty. "This pageant values intelligence, and there is also an emphasis on service."

Dr. Edwards said her platform for the pageant was titled “Blended and Blessed; Stepparent Support,” a platform she was already well-versed in. She is the wife of Micah Edwards, and she is the mother of two (Tyler, 6 and the only girl; and Joshua, 2) and the stepmother of two others (Jordan, 14, and Madison, 11).

Throughout the year leading up to the pageant she worked her platform by meeting with other stepparents one-on-one and in small groups to discuss the challenges of raising step-children and help them talk through some solutions to issues.

“As I stepparent, I have found that you have to work on communicating,” Dr. Edwards said. “You have to focus on the children and not on the issues that the two parents might have.”

The pageant contest categories included: the interview, evening gown, fitness and on-stage question. She had the highest score in the interview (where she was able to share the work she had done on her platform) and fitness categories.

Dr. Edwards said in the excitement of winning, she never found out how well she scored on the on-stage question: “If you were married for 25 years, what advice would you give a newly married couple?”

Dr. Edwards said that she hopes her accomplishment shows her students that it's good to get out of one's comfort zone to learn and grow.

In her answer, she used some sibling wisdom. “My sister is celebrating her 25th anniversary next month and she would say to keep the lines of communication open, put Christ first in your marriage and keep each other laughing”

As the 2012-2013 Mrs. Delaware USA, Dr. Edwards said that she will continue to promote her platform as well as to promote literacy.

“I also want to recruit more minority women for the pageant,” Dr. Edwards said. “I would love to see a diverse pool year after year, because it would represent the world that we live in.”

Dr. Edwards, a native of Landover, Md., has been a DSU mass communications faculty member since 2006.

As an associate professor who focuses on the public relations discipline, Dr. Edwards said her pageant accomplishment is

reflective of what she teaches her students.

"I tell them that we market ourselves every single day," she said. "I want to present myself as genuine, knowledgeable about whatever I am talking about, and always understand that the first impression is a lasting impression. When I go into the classroom every day that is how I try to present myself."

She hopes the take-away for her students from her Mrs. Delaware USA title is that you can accomplish anything you want to.

"But sometimes you needs to step outside of comfort zone to learn and grow," Dr. Edwards said. "Entering the pageant was new to me, and it gave me a way to grow and learn as a role model."

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