



Lisa Quast

Career coach sets sights on winning pageant

Lisa Quast wants to show women what is possible when they put their minds to it

BY DAVID HAYES

Lisa Quast is hoping to add a unique achievement to her already impressive resume.

The Klahanie resident is a trail blazer in the business community, having broken the glass ceiling in the corporate world, including being the first female executive vice president and general manager of strategy planning for Phillips Medical Systems.

Quast is also the founder and president of Career Woman Inc., an international career development consulting company.

And her book, culled from the best of the lectures she gives to female audiences, "Your Career Your Way! Personal Strategies to Achieve Your Career Aspirations," was recently nominated by Forward Magazine for book of the year in the career category.

Yet, it was at one of her speaking engagements that the obvious next step in her own evolution was suggested by one of her students.

"I was teaching career strategy planning, letting the audience discover that you're never too old to feel you can still achieve your dreams, when someone suggested I should enter the Mrs. Washington Pageant," Quast said.

The audacity, yet simplicity, of the suggestion struck Quast with its obviousness. So, she began talking with past participants, discovering why they entered. Many were married, had

See PAGEANT, Page B3

Pageant

FROM PAGE B1

children, had careers as doctors, professors, lawyers, each with their own reason for entering. One common theme was the boost in confidence the pageant provided.

"Fifty percent of the pageant is based upon interview skills," Quast said. "One woman, with all her skills, was terrified to stand before others on stage. She worked on it, discussing people, the economy, the government. She survived and she loved it."

Becoming involved seemed a perfect fit.

"Especially with what I'm trying to do with working with others helping with their career and personal aspirations," she said.

Qualifications are simple — contestants have to be over 18 (Quast is 42), married and living in Washington. It doesn't matter whether they have children. In the past, contestants have been anywhere from newlyweds to married for 30 years.

Unlike other national beauty contests, the Mrs. Washington and Mrs. America contests are judged in three categories — 50 percent from the interview, 25

percent from the onstage question and 25 percent from physical fitness.

In addition to a personal affirmation of all she's taught and accomplished, Quast said she also sees the Mrs. Washington Pageant as an opportunity to promote her personal platform — Seattle Dress for Success. The organization helps economically disadvantaged women with their careers.

"I'd be able to talk about why I chose them, why it's exciting to have an organization of women helping women," Quast said.

The international agency Dress for Success has helped more than 40,000 women per year in its 11 years, according to spokesperson Suzanne Elliot. The organization helps unemployed women living below the poverty line with career development. Elliot said she is happy Dress for Success will get the additional spotlight as Quast's pageant platform.

"It's great when you have visibility," Elliot said. "Anytime anyone gets involved with helping disadvantaged women is a good thing."

The one area Quast will be stepping out of her comfort zone is the attire required for the onstage segments. The onstage question is asked while wearing an evening gown and the physical

fitness portion is judged while wearing a one-piece bathing suit and sarong.

"I'm shopping now for my evening gown," she said. "Also, I'll have to worry about doing my own hair and makeup, and finding matching earrings. This is actually much more fun than shopping for another business suit."

With so many potential eyes ogling her, Quast said her husband of two years, Brian, is very open to her participation.

"He was so excited for me, I was surprised," she said. "He's become my No. 1 fan. He actually said, 'Oh my gosh. Absolutely I should do this. You'd be perfect!'"

The pageant is June 21 at the Moses Lake High School Theater. Quast would love to win, as she would be able to talk up her charity work. She'll be a Seattle Dress for Success statewide and take it national. She'll be an automatic entrant to the Mrs. America Pageant in August. But she'd settle for using the local pageant as an extension of what she already does.

"I've spent years trying to inspire women," she said. "This would just help inspire them even more. It's just another way to show you can go after the dream you didn't think you could even accomplish."

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