



Biographical Information

From Little League Baseball pitcher all the way to Miss America . . . Deidre Downs captured the title of Miss America 2005. A native of Birmingham, Alabama, Deidre grew up not on pageant runways, but on the baseball field. She continued playing sports and earned a full volleyball scholarship to the University of Virginia. When she gave up her scholarship to focus on academics, she began competing in the Miss Alabama Pageant to finance her education. She earned over \$100,000 in scholarships during the five years she competed and won numerous national awards for her community service platform accomplishments. Deidre first realized her passion for working with children when she visited Camp Smile-a-Mile, a camp for children with cancer. She returned for a weeklong camp session as a counselor, an experience that motivated her to champion the cause of pediatric cancer as her platform issue when she began competing in the Miss Alabama Pageant. Continuing her volunteer work at The Children's Hospital of Alabama, she started a high school volunteer program that enabled students to work one-on-one with cancer patients at Children's Hospital. Realizing the importance of research funding in the fight against cancer, she conceived of and designed a specialty license plate for the State of Alabama to raise funding for oncology research at Children's Hospital in Birmingham. The plate is now available statewide and to date has raised over \$95,000 for research. After winning the title of Miss America, Deidre took her advocacy to the national level, partnering with CureSearch National Childhood Cancer Foundation as its official spokesperson. In her role as Miss America, Deidre has spoken to audiences around the country to raise awareness of pediatric cancer and has lobbied on Capital Hill for additional appropriations for pediatric oncology research funding. She plans to continue advocating for children with cancer even after her year of service as Miss America by speaking, raising awareness, and lobbying, and through her career as a pediatrician. She will complete her year of service as Miss America in January 2006 and will begin medical school at the University of Alabama later that year to become a pediatrician.