



DISTINGUISHED YOUNG WOMEN

MISSISSIPPI

For Immediate Release

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McKenzie Irish, Distinguished Young Woman of Harrison County, will be one of 40 Mississippi high school seniors competing for more than \$42,500 in college scholarships when the Distinguished Young Women Program of 2012 begins Thursday, July 21, in Meridian, Mississippi.

The state program, now in its 55th year, celebrates and spotlights the outstanding achievements of the state's best and brightest high school girls. The three nights of competition in Meridian's Temple Theater for the Performing Arts concludes on Saturday, July 23. The curtain opens at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday and Friday, and 8 p.m. on Saturday.

Reserved tickets for the 2012 Distinguished Young Women Program are available for \$60 for a three-night package. General admission tickets are available for \$45 for a three-night package, or they may be purchased for individual evenings: \$15, Thursday; \$15, Friday; and \$20, Saturday. Tickets go on sale Monday, July 11 and may be obtained by calling 601-693-5353. Visa and MasterCard are welcomed.

"We are extremely excited about this year's program," said Marc Fisher, Distinguished Young Women of Mississippi State Chairman. "This program celebrates what is right with today's young people and offers them cash scholarship opportunities to further their education." At the conclusion of the state program this year, Distinguished Young Women of Mississippi will have awarded close to \$272,000 in cash college scholarships through its state and local programs this year.

McKenzie, the daughter of Kimberley and Troy Irish of Biloxi, attends D'Iberville High School. Her academic accomplishments, memberships and hobbies include the following: Captain of the swim team, President of Junior Leadership, Chairman of Teenage Republicans, Student Council Vice President, Junior Class Vice President, Letters from Gulf Coast Women's Center for Nonviolence volunteer, AT&T Pioneers volunteer (100+ hours), Gulf Coast Women's Center for Nonviolence volunteer (100+ hours), art and writing. She plans to attend Louisiana State University to pursue a career as a Marine Mammal Veterinarian.

During the weeklong program in Meridian, program contestants are evaluated on scholastic achievement, fitness, self-expression, talent and interview. Irish has chosen a vocal performance of *Ave Maria* for her talent.

Last year, Hannah Roberts, Distinguished Young Woman of Covington County, took the title of Distinguished Young Woman of Mississippi and a total of \$12,000 in scholarships. She was awarded a \$1,000 Mississippi Coca-Cola Bottlers scholarship and was the overall winner in talent.

The Distinguished Young Women Program was founded as America's Junior Miss in 1957 and is the oldest and largest scholarship program for young women. More than 6,500 high school girls participate each year. Past participants include Diane Sawyer, Debra Messing, Deborah Norville, Julie Moran, the late Mary Frann, Kim Basinger and Kathie Lee Gifford.

Distinguished Young Women national sponsors include Mobile County and the City of Mobile. National category sponsors include Alabama Power, Encore Rehabilitation, Mobile Gas, Regions Bank, Eastern Shore Toyota and Master Boat Builders.