

NEWS

[Business](#)
[Blogs](#)
[Campus](#)
[Capitol](#)
[Celebrations](#)
[Columnists](#)
[Data Connection](#)
[E-Technology](#)
[Forums](#)
[Local News](#)
[National/World](#)
[Obituaries](#)
[Opinions](#)
[Photo Store](#)
[Schools](#)
[Travel](#)
[Xtras](#)
[Corrections](#)

SPORTS

[Golf](#)
[Lugnuts](#)
[Outdoors](#)
[MSU Sports](#)
[Prep Sports](#)
[Running](#)

LIFE

[Faith & Values](#)
[Family](#)
[Food & Drink](#)
[Health & Fitness](#)
[Home & Garden](#)
[Worship Directory](#)

ENTERTAINMENT

[Arts](#)
[Boredom Busters](#)
[Comics](#)
[Dining](#)
[Escapes](#)
[Events](#)
[Movies](#)
[TV Listings](#)
[Music](#)
[People](#)

COMMUNITIES

[Bath](#)
[Charlotte](#)
[Delta-Waverly](#)
[DeWitt](#)
[East Lansing](#)

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 [From Holt Community News]

Pageant candidate backed by Delhi Twp. business

By DAWN PARKER
 Lansing Community Newspapers

OKEMOS — Angel Adelaja wants to make the world a better place, whether from a doctor's office or a summer campground.

The Okemos resident will try to do the Lansing area proud at the Miss Michigan USA pageant, set for Sept. 20-22 at the McMorran Place Theater in Port Huron. If crowned, Adelaja would be the first greater Lansing resident to win since 2001 and the second consecutive representative of Michigan State University at the Miss USA pageant.

She decided to become a candidate after watching the Miss USA pageant in March.

Advertisement "I thought, 'I could do this,'" Adelaja recalled.

Since then, she's discovered she has more in common with the other pageant candidates than she might have expected.

Adelaja, a native of Princeton, N.J., is a graduate student in epidemiology at MSU. Her long-term academic plans include doctoral degrees in epidemiology and neuroscience. She earned a bachelor of science in biology from Temple University in Philadelphia.

Her father, Soji Adelaja, is the John A. Hannah Distinguished Professor in Land Use Policy, while stepmother Frances Adelaja works with MSU Extension.

Angel's mother, Alero Kidd, is a lawyer who recently relocated to Nigeria to further her work on civil rights issues.

While she didn't know what to expect at first after leaving the East Coast, Adelaja has been pleasantly surprised by the friendliness of Michiganders and Midwesterners in general.

"From the moment I came here, everyone is so much nicer. It takes some getting used to," she said.

"People are so friendly and so accessible."

Adelaja's career aspirations include becoming a medical doctor and an epidemiologist.

"I want to change health practices here and in other places as well," she said.

Right now, she is juggling classes and work in the university's epidemiology department with preparations for the pageant.

Adelaja has already raised \$1,000 for two charities, including Birmingham-based Camp Casey. The camp is a one-day horseback riding retreat for cancer patients and their families which travels statewide.

Adelaja has invited a number of the campers to the pageant, and has arranged for the girls to be pampered. One sponsor, for example, will provide manicures and pedicures for the young patients.

"They will see me on stage, and hopefully I'll be able to acknowledge them," she said.

"That's my goal — to make them feel like they are (a) princess for the day."

Camp Casey is part of the Beneva Foundation, of which Adelaja is an active member. Its areas of emphasis this year include sickle cell anemia awareness and helping children of displaced Michigan factory workers.

Adelaja has gotten a boost in other areas as well. Lansing resident Natalia Villafana will make her pageant dress.