

# Up and Coming: Emily Riggs

Haskel Burns, American Staff Writer 8:03 p.m. CDT August 9, 2014



Meet Emily Riggs, 23, communication coordinator at the Hattiesburg Convention and Tourism Commission and the pageant director for the Mississippi Miss Hospitality Pageant.

As communication coordinator, Riggs helps promote events at the Saenger Theater, [Hattiesburg Zoo](#), [African American Military History Museum](#), [Lake Terrace Convention Center](#) and the Hattiesburg Visitors Center.

As pageant director, she gets the opportunity to meet young ladies from across the state while planning the pageant, which is held at the Saenger Theater at the end of July. She has secured scholarships, planned things for the contestants to do while in Hattiesburg, and had a hand in production aspects.

Riggs earned a bachelor's degree in mass communication and journalism with a minor in history from the [University of Southern Mississippi](#) in 2013.

She lives in Hattiesburg with her toy poodle, Cooper.

• **What advice would you give people who want to get into the same line of work as you?** My best piece of advice would be to get as much experience as you can, no matter how big or small. Everything thing you have a hand in helps you build upon your talents and abilities.

Whether you are asked to simply take tickets at the door, write the press release or even plan a whole event, your whole heart should be in it. A positive attitude is key to being successful. Keeping your head up and a smile on, even on the tough days, makes your work that much better.

I would also advise to find a mentor. The people that have been in your field longer than you have so much to give. From helping you determine your career goals to giving you a pat on the back, mentors have played a huge role in where I am today and they continue to influence me day after day.

• **Why did you choose to live and work in Hattiesburg?** I came to Hattiesburg for the first time in 2009 as a high school senior from [Shreveport, Louisiana](#). I knew no one here, knew nothing about Hattiesburg and I wasn't even sure what drew me to Southern Miss, but from the first time I walked onto the campus, I knew I loved this city and its people.

Hattiesburg and Southern Miss have now become something that I treasure so much. The people that I have met here have become family to me and I love the fact that there is so much local pride. No matter where my life takes me, I will always consider Hattiesburg home.

• **What do you do in your free time?** My family and friends are the biggest part of my life. I take advantage of long weekends and travel back to Louisiana when I can. Shreveport will always be one of my favorite places, and nothing is better than walking into your home after months of being away.

I also love to travel, whether it is a small day trip or a week-long adventure. Exploring new places and finding out what makes them so unique is exciting. My travel bucket list grows longer each day.

• **If you could meet anyone, living or dead, who would it be and why?** I would want to meet both my paternal and maternal grandfathers. They both passed away before I was born.

I have always loved hearing stories about them and going through old photos. Their faith and values have influenced my family in such a tremendous way, and I would love to hear about all of their life experiences from them.

• **If you could go back 10 years and give a younger you tips or advice on life, work or anything in general, what would it be?** I would tell myself to take life day by day. Enjoy the places it takes you and cherish the people you meet along the way. Life can always take you by surprise, but don't be afraid to jump in head first to new things.

Haskel Burns, staff writer