



# Staten Island Advance

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## Miss New York pageant workshop held at St. George Theatre

By JOELLE M. MORRISON

They came, they saw, and they prepared to conquer.

Twenty-five lovely young women arrived at the St. George Theatre yesterday morning, carrying their dreams of that magical June night when Miss New York 2012 will be crowned.

In the gilded and gorgeous surroundings of the lavishly restored theater, they attended workshops covering everything from strategies to make their platforms and service programs a success, to events that help fund scholarship aid, to handling interviews with judges and everyday people.

Any butterflies they had on arrival soon dissipated under the guiding hand of Ken Mack, executive director of the pageant, and Kaitlin Monte, Miss New York 2011, who expertly shepherded them through an agenda of projects and events and ideas that will fill their schedules — and their lives — from now until the pageant.

On a more personal note, Ms. Monte described the impact her interactions with people around the state, especially children, had on her life, and how that inspired her to do more. Her own service work built on that of her predecessor, Claire Buffie, Miss New York 2010, and will continue to grow with their efforts, she told the group. “The bar keeps getting raised,” Miss Monte said. “You are more than just a bunch of pretty girls, you are success stories in the making. You have the opportunity to walk into a room and change people’s minds about who you are and what you represent.”

The Island is well represented by four homegrown beauty queens, all bubbling with excitement and anticipation at the prospect of pageant festivities.

**Maria DeSantis** of Todt Hill, 23, is currently Miss Brooklyn and was Miss Staten Island 2011. The **Wagner College alumna** received her master’s degree in accounting from the Grymes Hill school.

“I was a little anxious, but the excitement has taken over completely,” she said. “It is a wonderful experience.”

That was seconded by **Jamie Lynn Macchia**, 20, of Eltingville, Miss Staten Island 2012. The **Wagner College undergrad** is happily anticipating pageant week.

“It will be amazing!” she said. “It’s unlike anything else!”

Stephanie Accardo, 21, of Dongan Hills, is Miss Richmond County 2012. A student at St. Paul’s School of Nursing, she also confessed to a little nervousness, but excitement ruled the day, she said.

“And once you get here, you realize you want this more than you ever expected,” she said.

Jaleesa Peterkin, 23, of Grasmere, is Miss Kings County 2011. A broadcast journalism major at Hofstra University on Long Island, she also studies dance.

“It’s so exciting,” she said. “What’s more, it’s an opportunity to be a positive role model.”

At the lunch break that followed, Borough President James P. Molinaro, a major force in having the pageant moved to Staten Island, cheered on the contestants with words of encouragement.

But soon it was back to business. The contestants had their first walk on the big stage, to help them become familiar with the impressive surroundings as well as technicalities like lighting. They practiced their swimsuit and talent presentations, and were given practical advice on improving their performances by pageant officials and supporters.

When it was all over, Ms. Monte's words stayed with them: "The pageant hands you the keys, but you are the driver," she said. "Let us know what you need, we are here to help you, but you are the one in charge of your success."