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Miss Mississippi Raising Organ Donation Awareness Across State

Mary Margaret Hyer, a 2018 UM graduate, represents the state for 2019

AUGUST 13, 2019 BY MICHAEL NEWSOM



Miss Mississippi Mary Margaret Hyer discusses her organ and tissue donation platform with Dr. Chris Anderson, professor and chair of the Department of Surgery at the UM Medical Center and an abdominal transplant surgeon. Photo by Lindsay McMurray/UM Medical Center

OXFORD, Miss. – **University of Mississippi** alumna Mary Margaret Hyer is using the spotlight as Miss Mississippi 2019 to draw attention to her social change initiative, “Advocate, Celebrate, Donate: Diminishing the Donor Organ Deficit.”

Hyer, a Hattiesburg native and 2018 graduate with a degree in English, plans to enroll in the UM **School of Law** once her reign is over to pursue a career as a prosecutor.

Since winning the crown in Vicksburg in June, she’s been on the road, talking to as many people as possible about organ donation. She’s spoken to more than 5,000 people in 13 states over the last three years about the importance of becoming an organ donor, and continues to do so. She succeeds Asya Branch, Miss Mississippi 2018, who is also an Ole Miss student.

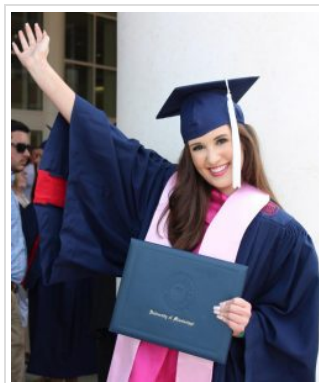
She will compete in the Miss America pageant in December.

“I don’t think there is really any way to prepare for what exactly this is,” Hyer said. “It seemed like a princess job when I was in the moment competing for this, but it is hard work.”

“I’m on my feet 8-10 hours a day, speaking a lot and meeting a ton of people, and enjoying every minute, but it still feels surreal even though it’s been a little over a month.”

Hyer said she’s still somewhat shocked she was crowned, but is thankful for the opportunity to raise awareness about the need for organ donation and continue her work with the **Mississippi Organ Recovery Agency**, as well as the **Mississippi Kidney Foundation**, **Blair E. Batson Children’s Hospital** and signing up Mississippians to become organ donors.

While at UM, Hyer was a member of the UM **Concert Singers**, which gave her an opportunity to perform at Carnegie Hall. She graduated cum laude with a degree in music and was included in the Who’s Who in the 2018 graduating class.



Miss Mississippi 2019 Mary Margaret Hyer celebrates graduating from the University of Mississippi in May 2018 with an English degree. Submitted photo

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Campus Briefs

Donations Sought for 25th Annual Books and Bears Program

OXFORD, Miss. – The University of Mississippi is asking the community to help spread a little joy this holiday season by donating to the 25th annual Books and Bears program. Donations such as toys, books, dolls, bicycles and other children’s play items are being accepted through Dec. 14. All donations will be collected and sorted

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Mississippi Excellence in Coaching Fellowship Aims to Build Leaders

OXFORD, Miss. – Twenty-five inaugural recipients of the Mississippi Excellence in Coaching Fellowship – a program hosted by the University of Mississippi School of Education in partnership with the Mississippi Association of Coaches and the Mississippi High School Activities Association – are expected to increase their impact on student-athletes and their communities. The coaching fellowship

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Ole Miss In the News

Clarion-Ledger: New Essay Collection Tells the Story of Meredith’s Enrollment

Essays celebrate 60th anniversary of James Meredith’s enrollment at University of Mississippi By Lauren Rhoades Oct. 1 marks the 60th anniversary of James Meredith’s 1962 enrollment at the University of Mississippi as the school’s first African-American student.

She was a member of Phi Mu Fraternity, and after graduation, she served as a chapter consultant who specialized in recruitment, new member education and public relations.

She said the university played a major role in shaping her as a person because it gave her ample opportunity to expand her horizons and listen to many perspectives.

"The community you find at Ole Miss is unlike any in the world," Hyer said. "Ole Miss is such a diverse campus. I had a global perspective going into Miss Mississippi because I attended Ole Miss, where I was able to practice those critical thinking skills with my peers from many different backgrounds."



Miss Mississippi Mary Margaret Hyer shares her love of Ole Miss sports with Dan Dyess, a Columbia resident who is on a waiting list for a liver transplant. Photo by Lindsay McMurtray/UM Medical Center

She's excited about returning to Oxford to pursue her law degree in 2020.

"Those were the best four years of my life," Hyer said. "I'm ready to be back home."

Anne Cofer, UM Alumni Affairs accountant, was Hyer's sorority chapter adviser and got to know her during her four years on campus. She was always impressed with Hyer's ability to handle the adversity that comes with being in a leadership role for a chapter of 400 of her peers.

Cofer, who calls Hyer a "great human," is thrilled for her to be holding the title.

"She has a strong work ethic and exceeds expectations; her ability to command a room is undeniable; and her musical training took years of dedication," Cofer said. "All qualities which would be impressive in anyone, but made even more impressive by the work she put in as a teenager and college student."

"She seems to have endless energy with all that she takes on in a day, and I have so enjoyed watching her grow into the woman she is today."

Don Trott, professor of music and UM director of choral activities, worked closely with Hyer while she was at the university. She was a shining example of excellence at the university, he said.

"She was a student who was involved in many aspects of the university and excelled in all of them, including holding leadership roles in many," Trott said. "I and all of Ole Miss are proud of her accomplishments, including winning Miss Mississippi."

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"James Meredith: Breaking the Barrier," a collection of essays edited by UM professor of journalism Kathleen Wickham, honors this historic milestone with

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