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Juneteenth pageant raises money for Texas African American Museum

By Ana Conejo aconejo@tylerpaper.com Jun 20, 2021



Ms. Juneteenth pageant contestant Cheslie Thompson receives a standing ovation as audience and contestants watch her video, in which she reenacted Black history figures. The video was black and white and Thompson portrayed Harriet Tubman. As the video played, the audience passed a tissue box around the room.

Ana Conejo / Tyler Morning Telegraph

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Tissues were passed and screams filled the room on Friday night at the first-ever Juneteenth Pageant at Bethel Bible Hope Campus in Tyler.

The event, hosted by the Texas African American Museum, kicked off the weekend of Juneteenth events and raised money for the museum.

"This is a fundraiser, so each contestant went out and raised donations and got sponsorships in their cities and in their community," said museum chairman Dr. Laramie J. Jackson. "In one month, we raised a total of \$12,000. The money is going to go towards the repairs of the building, to get the roof fixed and some things that are needed around to get it up to the state of the art," Jackson said.

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A total of 10 girls and women competed for the Juneteenth Mini, Jr., Miss and Ms. crowns. Contestants from different Texas cities united for the gala.

"What we want is to bring a sense of unity across the state in each city but to empower each woman and each young lady to know that they can embrace their heritage," Jackson said. "They don't have to be ashamed of where they come from, that's what Juneteenth is all about. It's about remembering where we came from and where we are now. We don't look back and dwell on the past but we celebrate where we have arrived to and the contributions that we are making in today's society."

Alongside the crowning of Juneteenth queens, contestants also participated in categories of best smile, best formal wear, best sportswear, best overall and history tribute.

Participants only had one criteria to meet, and it was to be at least six years old.

The history tribute category was the most impactful for the audience. The crowd passed a box of tissues as history tribute winners Laci Hackett and Cheslie Thompson took to the stage.

Hackett performed an original poem titled, 'Black, the silence is loud' in which she expressed the daily struggles of being a Black girl in today's society. As tears fell on her cheeks, the poem emphasized how she feels her achievements are thrown to the side because of the color of her skin.

Judges found it too difficult to pick one winner for the Ms. history tribute category, so they picked two, Phyllis LaRue and Cheslie Thompson. LaRue presented a painting and Thompson, in a video, portrayed important figures in Black history, bringing the audience to tears once again.

The winners were picked by Judges LaTyon Henderson, Jessica Henderson, Shirl Lee, Savoy Fambles, and Tamara Lowery, who are all former Juneteenth queens.

Jackson said he looks forward to bringing the event back next year.

"It's not a beauty pageant, but it's for them to embrace the beauty in the inside of them," he said. "We want to allow them to come and be important because they are all beautiful inside and out and we want to be able to showcase that."

2021 Miss Juneteenth winners are:

Mini Division: Johanna Rostchild — Best Smile, Best Sports Wear, Historical Tribute and Highest Point Scored

Miracle Jackson — Best Formal Wear.

Jr. Division: Laci Hackett — Best Smile, Best Sportswear, Best Formal Wear, Original Historical Tribute and Best Overall

Miss Division: Kayla Lyons — Best Smile, Best Sportswear, Best Formal Wear and Best Overall

Ms. Division:

Phyllis LaRue — Historical Tribute (tie)

Chelsie Thompson — Original Historical Tribute (tie), Sports, Smile, Best Overall, 2021 Directors Award

Davon Ferguson — Best Formal

Royal Court of Juneteenth Queens:

Mini Miss Juneteenth — Miracle Jackson of Tyler

Jr. Miss — Laci Hackett of Tyler

Miss — Kayla Lyons of Houston

Ms. — Davon Ferguson of Henderson

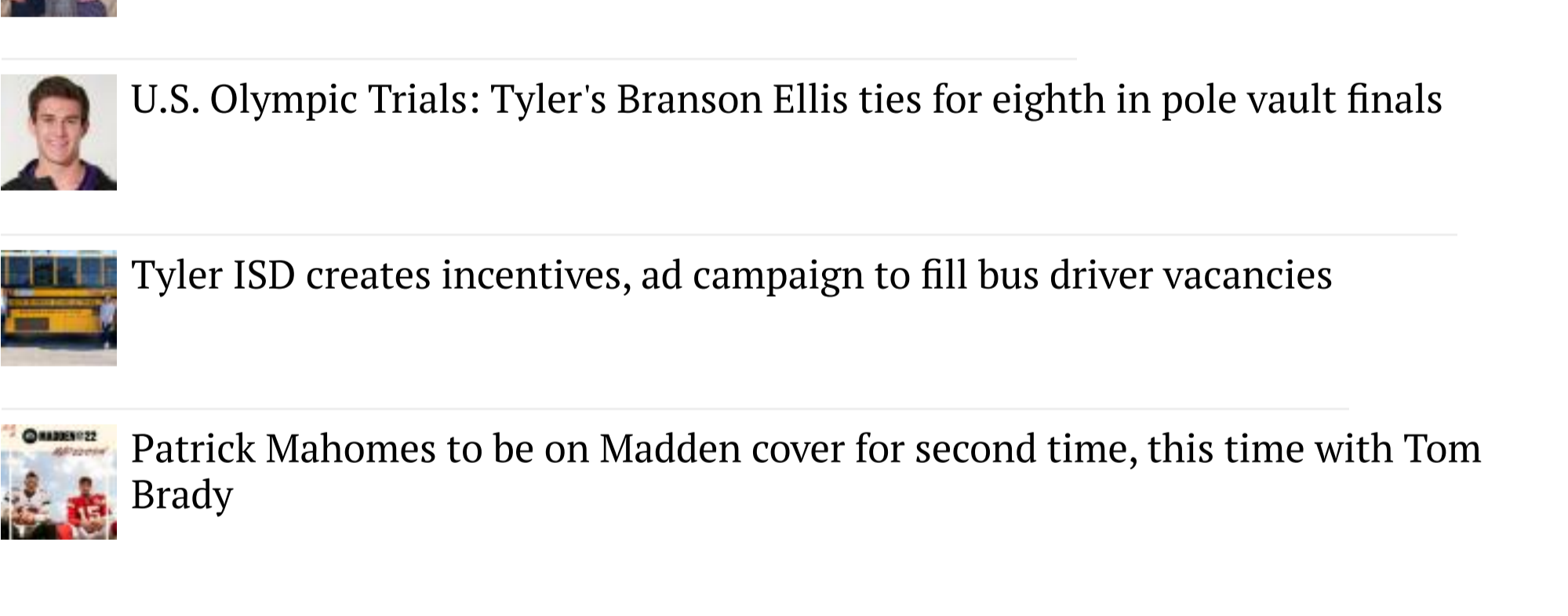
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Ana is a bilingual digital multi-media journalist. She graduated from Stephen F. Austin State University with a focus in Radio/Television Broadcasting. Ana was born and raised in Houston and made the move to East Texas in January of 2021.

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