

## A Choice to Make

Stephanie Culberson, Miss Tennessee USA, appeared at a breakfast at Life Care during Administrative Professionals Week and told of her experience at the Miss USA Pageant, in which she finished fourth runner-up, in Hollywood, California. Stephanie is a beautiful young woman -- as you would expect, or she would not have won such honors -- with a heart to match. The Lee University business and piano performance graduate (two degrees, no less) had a 4.0 average since grade school. A woman of profound faith, she is truly a role model for young girls.

When I think of beauty pageants, the name of Heather Whitestone often comes to mind. Representing Alabama, she won the Miss America title in 1995. But what surely everyone knows is that Heather has been profoundly deaf since her 18th month of life. That hasn't stopped her, for Heather always focused on what she did have instead of what she did not have. She determined that she would develop her ability and not be sidetracked by her disability. Fortunately, Heather has parents who ardently believe in her and have supported, loved, encouraged and worked with her in everything she has done.

Like Stephanie, in addition to her beauty, Heather has a keen mind, a tremendous spirit and a solid faith, and she has been a persistently hard worker all of her life. She is a skilled lip-reader, and over the years, many professors and others have helped her. Some of them have even taken the time to make copies of their notes for her.

All of us know people who have problems, but who choose to focus on the problems instead of the solutions. That statement is intended to be an observation and not a criticism. No one knows how other people feel, and some problems are beyond human solution.

It is a fact of life, however, that people with a cooperative, loving, enthusiastic, gentle, positive attitude will attract individuals by the score who not only are willing to help them, but are anxious to do so. The attitude about one's condition, on many occasions, is even more significant than the condition itself. Put another way: When you are the right kind of person, doing the right thing, help and encouragement come from all directions.

--Beecher Hunter