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AUTHORING LIFE: A LITERACY INITIATIVE

The “3rd Grade Benchmark,” is indicative of future success a child will have in school. It was a benchmark that I missed. Living in poverty during my 2nd grade year, we struggled with access to basic necessities of life, including books. I never dreamed that someone like me could one day attend college, much less write a book, or compete for Miss Texas. My father came into this country with a Spanish-English dictionary and struggled to learn English as a second language. The literacy journey happened generationally for my family, but now I am proud to say I am living the American dream. Today, I am a graduate student who is on track to begin my PhD in 2026. I am an author, having self-published eight children’s books. I even delivered an address at the World Literacy Summit in Oxford, England. I beat the statistics.

My initiative as Miss Texas will expand my own educational and governmental advocacy to eradicate childhood illiteracy through early intervention. *Authoring Life* expands upon work that began in an elementary classroom in 2019 to address the rising illiteracy rates in the state of Texas. Today, only four out of ten Texas students can read at their grade level by third grade. Low-income, students of color, and English language learners struggle even more. It’s inexcusable. It’s also changeable. Research shows that early intervention is key to ending the epidemic of illiteracy. I am on a mission to ensure that every child, regardless of zip code, has the opportunity to acquire the literacy skills and books they need to become all they were created to be.

For the last four years, my 501c3, *Authoring Life*, has been actively involved in early literacy intervention providing books, resources, scholarships, and educational opportunities to children across Texas and beyond. Since then, I have been selected as a World Literacy Foundation Ambassador and appointed to serve on the World Literacy Task Force. Using years of experience in elementary classrooms and my global advocacy network, as Miss Texas, I will continue to expand *Authoring Life* through (1) teaching children the importance of reading with engaging programming, hosting book drives with partners like Dollar General, Follett Higher Education, and Pwc, and providing free literacy solutions to every Title 1 school with international partner, Literacy Planet, and Texas-based company, Edsoma. Taking advantage of my creative writing background, I will (2) equip students with the fundamental skills to write through high school and college writing workshops, while also using this as an opportunity to bolster recruitment efforts. And finally, I will develop & broaden Miss Texas by (3) equipping women to hone their ability to publicly share their stories, as I have through my daily short form videos, paid social media partnerships, speaking and media tours, and through personal/professional development seminars.

As Miss Texas, I will continue to help children acquire essential literacy skills, empower them to access better opportunities in life, to break the cycle of poverty, and to write the story they want to read. Miss Texas must be a difference maker, a course-shifter, and a future builder. She must be a woman who leads. Most importantly, she must inspire women everywhere to chase their dreams and imagine who they might become. I have developed a plan for my year of service that breaks down programming from my first day to the completion of my year. I am excited to write the 86th chapter of the Miss Texas Organization.