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## Carrollwood Woman to Compete for Ms. America Crown

Kellie Lightbourn leaves today for California

By Deb Kelley 12:00pm

The week is hectic as auburn-haired Kellie Lightbourn prepares for her flight this morning to Anaheim, California for the 2011 Ms. America pageant. But she doesn't hesitate to make time in a busy day to discuss her passion.

Sitting barefoot at her kitchen counter, Lightbourn keeps a watchful eye on the toddlers dancing in the background to Mickey Mouse on the television.

A wife, a mother to twins, an attorney, an animal rights advocate, community volunteer, a popular spokesperson and a business entrepreneur, the Carrollwood resident is an example of what a role model should be.

Possibly best known as the host of TV's ABC Action News' weekend "Consumer Update" and "Life. Style. Home Television," Kellie is committed to positively impacting her community.

On Sunday, she will compete against 27 women - two from Florida - for the title of Ms. America.

Pageant President Susan Jeske explained that beauty is only part of what makes a contestant a candidate for queen.

"We want our pageant to empower women and our queen to take the pageant to the next level," she said. "We want her to use her crown for a purpose, to make a difference. Each contestant has to be well-prepared, willing to promote and grow the pageant, make appearances and work with me. Being the queen comes with privileges but also responsibility."

**Patch:** *You are involved in so much. I was looking for the letter "S" emblazoned on your shirt. Do you consider yourself a superwoman?*

**Lightbourn:** I think women in general are superwomen. I don't think I'm doing anything different than any of my friends, except that I have twins - double the handful. We have to balance a lot more than our male counterparts. I really don't know any other way because my mother is like this.

**Patch:** *What made you want to try out for Ms. America?*

**Lightbourn:** Really, it was as soon as I had kids. I was looking out in the world and realized, who's going to be their role model? I want to be. That was what prompted me to do this. We are lacking role models these days.

**Patch:** *The Ms. America pageant contestants don't have "platforms," but what is your focus for the pageant?*

**Lightbourn:** While I understand that Ms. America is focused on advancing and empowering women and getting the name out in a positive way for the Ms. America organization, I also think I have to be true to myself. Since community service is such a huge part of me - I mean volunteering is not something I do, it's who I am - I don't think you could take it away from me.

**Patch:** *If you come back to Florida as Ms. America, what is the first thing you want to do as its ambassador?*

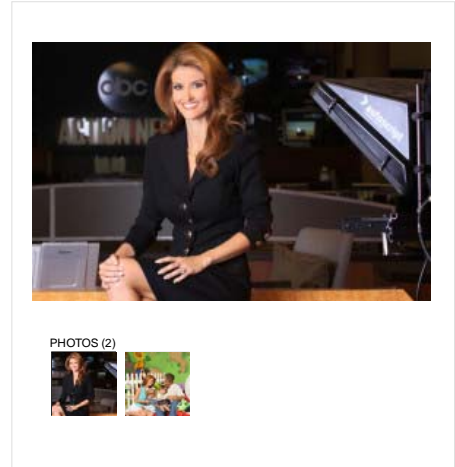
**Lightbourn:** Hug my little baby Americas. As far as the job, as it would start immediately, I would like to empower the other women who would compete the following year. As not everyone knows how to get their message out, I'd like to help. I'd like to utilize these other incredible women because we are all Ms. America.

**Patch:** *What are your plans for the future? What haven't you done that you still want to do?*

**Lightbourn:** I want to make more of a national impact, which sounds weird because I founded the National Humane Society and Teen Edge is going national. I just feel deep down inside that I was put here for a specific purpose. I don't think that I've done what I am supposed to do yet and this (Ms. America) is my path to do it. With Ms. America, you have instant notoriety, and I can tell you I would hit the ground running and wouldn't stop until I crown my successor. This is a chance of a lifetime and I'm not going to waste a minute of it. I'm not here to wear the crown. I'm here to share it.

**Patch:** *What is the most important thing you want to be remembered for?*

**Lightbourn:** First and foremost, I want to be remembered as being a great mom. To me, that's the most important job. I see it as a job because I'm raising two incredible kids that basically will go into the world and hopefully do as much, if not more, than what I do. As far as a universal concept, I want to just be remembered as the person who would be there if you needed them. To me, it's that simple.



PHOTOS (2)



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