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CACHE VALLEY NATIVE SEEKS MS. WHEELCHAIR AMERICA TALE

July 18, 2012 by JoLynne Lyon

Brittany Cox, a Cache Valley native, has accomplished a lot already, but next month she will try to add yet another achievement to the list: gaining the title of Ms. Wheelchair America.

The winner of the pageant receives more than a crown. She also gets a long to-do list, since she hasn't won a beauty contest so much as a competition to find the best spokeswomen for people with disabilities.

You can find information on how to support her by joining the Brittany for Ms. Wheelchair America! Facebook group.

Cox is ready for a national role, now that she's over the shock of winning the Ms. Wheelchair Utah title. “I was blown away that I won,” she said. She was just in the contest for a chance to meet people and make friends, but since then she has realized that along with the title, she has gained a chance to influence others for good.

Her platform throughout the pageant: You can. And by that, she means not only that you can do what you truly desire, but also that you can be happy doing it.

Cox has earned her mantra. Fourteen years ago a car crash took the life of her best friend and should have killed her, too. She wasn't expected to live, but if she did survive, doctors warned her lifespan would go on for about five more years.

She went from 13 months in a hospital to five years in a nursing home. It was a depressing time. From there, she took the scary move toward independence, out of the facility and into her own place. A friend who worked at the nursing home told her some fellow employees were taking bets on how quickly she'd be back.

"That just made me more determined to prove them wrong," she said. And she did. Along the way she discovered she could be really, truly happy.

And what was the big epiphany that helped her find joy?

There wasn't one.

Instead happiness came in small moments, Cox said. She's seen other people experience big challenges and become bitter. She wonders if it's because they are waiting for one of those astounding experiences that makes everything clear. They get angry when it doesn't come.

She has learned to appreciate the smaller things. "There's so much happiness and joy," she said. "You just have to look for it."

In the years since she gained her independence she has sung in a choir, climbed in Arches National Park, even sung from the top of a potato cellar—all with the help of some friends. She managed life on her own and then moved onto new adventures as a married woman.

Since winning Miss Wheelchair Utah, she has since appeared in parades (including some where she has represented the CPD’s Utah Assistive Technology Program), spoken to groups (the title requires her to do it for free) and realized that people look up to her. Every time she shows up for an event, it seems everybody knows her.
"It has shocked me a little bit," she said. "I can't believe that I actually have that influence... I can actually change people's lives for good."

Now she will try to extend that impact to the national level.

We're thinking it couldn't happen to a nicer woman.