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April 12, 2007

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MEDIA ADVISORY

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GOVERNOR SCHWARZENEGGAR APPOINTEE CROWNED MRS. CALIFORNIA, UNITED STATES

Tracie Stafford Becomes First African American to Win Mrs. California, United States Pageant

A True Cinderella Story: Underprivileged Youth Grows Up to Become Mrs. California, United States

Sacramento, CA -- Wife, entrepreneur, mother of four and Governor Schwarzenegger appointee, Tracie Stafford was crowned Mrs. California in an emotional & enthusiastic ceremony on Saturday, March 31, 2007 at the Radisson Hotel in Sacramento, CA. Beauty, brains and boldness easily describe 40 year old Sacramentan Tracie Stafford; but those who know her well say that “integrity and resilience” are the keystones to her life and personality.

Stafford shines as a mentor to women of all ages and lifestyles because of her positive attitude and resilience in overcoming adversity. It’s difficult to believe that this successful and polished woman could have possibly known hardships of any kind. When she walks into a room, she owns it, and people are drawn to her radiant smile and effervescent personality. “I don’t dwell on the challenges or problems in my life, but I am not ashamed to share them with others if it helps them gain new perspective on what can be achieved in spite of obstacles,” she said.

Orphaned at the age of 12, along with 4 siblings ranging in age from 14 years old to 11 months, Stafford was taken in by her grandmother and made an early vow to honor her mother’s memory and her grandmother’s selflessness by becoming the best that she could be. “Times were tough. My mother was dead, I never knew my father, I was African American, poor and living in an affluent neighborhood where I certainly didn’t fit in. No, don’t compare me to Oprah…at least not yet,” she laughed.

So how does a wife, mother of four, businesswoman, philanthropist and pageant winner maneuver successfully through life? “The only true boundaries are those that we place on ourselves. My Grandmother taught me that the many challenges we may face due to gender, ethnicity or circumstances are merely God’s way of preparing us for the next step of our journey. Based on my background… I must have quite the journey ahead!!” Said Stafford.

Aside from being an underprivileged orphan, Stafford’s family was one of the first to integrate San Leandro, CA a suburb of San Francisco in the early 1970’s. “It was one of the toughest times in my life. No matter what I did, it was never enough. I was once told by a teacher, that I should strive to be a good maid as that was what my people generally excelled at.” Surprisingly, that was more hope than was given by a nun who said that she’d never amount to anything if she didn’t ‘assimilate’. “To this day,” Stafford began, “I have no idea what exactly she meant by that.”

Filled with insecurity and a strong dislike for herself, Stafford, at the age of 19, entered into a verbally and physically abusive relationship that lasted over five years. “Unfortunately, my mother was abused, so when I was struck for the first time, it didn’t shock me as it might have someone who had never been exposed to such violence.” What got Stafford out of the abusive relationship you might ask? Love for her, then 3 year old, daughter Chanel. “The last time he beat me,” Stafford began, “Chanel was in the room. She calmly walked over to her father, and said, ‘Daddy Go Now.’ She then asked if I was all right. Looking into her eyes, I saw myself and knew that I did not want this life for her. We left the next day.”

“I am so blessed today to have a loving and supportive husband, Bryan. There is nothing more important to us than raising our children to become compassionate and self motivated people who will contribute to the community throughout their lives,” Stafford said. “Our focus is to be of service; to somehow touch the lives of others in

a way that changes their journey for the better.”

To that end, Stafford was the chair of the Hands on Sacramento Leadership Council, which promotes volunteerism; she is a past president of the National Association of Women Business Owners, chair of Sacramento City’s Small Business Board, and just appointed by Gov. Schwarzenegger to the California Small Business Board. If that isn’t enough, she is also on the board of the Black Chamber of Commerce, active with the Girl Scouts and on the Board of the Birthing Project, a national organization providing prenatal care and parenting support for women who otherwise could not afford it.

Stafford can now proudly add to her list of accomplishments that she is the First African American on record, in the 21-year history of the Mrs. California United States Pageant to hold the Mrs. California title. If successful in the Mrs. United States Pageant in July, 2007 in Las Vegas Nevada, Stafford will be the First African American to hold the Mrs. United States title as well.

So, it’s even more amazing that she can find time to run her own business, Exceptional Events, Inc., an event marketing and planning firm based in Sacramento, California. “We specialize in corporate events and non-profit fundraisers as well as high end personal celebrations.” she explained. “The firm also includes an in-house travel agency for events such as tradeshows, conferences, or sales incentive trips.”

And Stafford is well qualified to take the reins of corporate event planning. With a degree in business management she moved up the ranks from data entry operator to senior management for Fortune 100 companies. But in 2001, when the Dotcom’s went bust, she left her prestigious position at Netscape and opened her own business. “At Exceptional Events, we are extremely proud of our client list, which includes Ronald McDonald House Charities, Sun Microsystems and the Magic Johnson Foundation, to name just a few.”

Stafford’s ultimate goal is to take her ‘lessons learned’ and use them to inspire others. “It’s important to realize that circumstances do not define us; they merely strengthen us if we are in the right frame of mind.” Stafford began “Was I abused, was I penniless, was I discriminated against? Absolutely! But I refused to be held back for long. I always had faith that there was a better tomorrow… and there always was.”

Tracie Stafford is available for interviews and public appearances. Please contact Chelsea White at 916-443-3800 for more information.

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About Mrs. United States Pageant Line:
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California Pageant Producer: ShowCom (916) 985-8877 showcom@sbcglobal.net
Since 1986, the Mrs. United States National Pageant® has assembled annually to celebrate the achievements of married women throughout the 50 states and U.S. territories. The Organization believes that married women should be recognized for their ability to integrate intellect and beauty.

About Exceptional Events, Inc.:
www.exceptional-events.com 916-443-3800
Exceptional Events, Inc. a Sacramento Based Corporation founded in 2001, is an Event Marketing and Event Management firm specializing in the design, promotion and delivery of corporate events, tradeshows and special events.