



PHOTOS PROVIDED COURTESY OF LINDA REST

# Keeping the Dream Alive

Growing up Angus helps Lorissa Harris capture crown as Miss Teen Rodeo Montana 2007.

by *Helen Redli*

**O**ne day a 12-year-old girl named Lorissa Harris saw a pageant flyer sent out by the Montana Angus Association and a dream began to form. She knew right away that she wanted to compete. Her mother, Linda Rest, at first wondered if Lorissa knew what she was getting herself into.

“The flyer came in the mail while I was out of town. I told Lorissa that I’d be out of town again and that she’d have to take care of the application herself. Lorissa said ‘No problem. I can handle that,’” Linda recalls.

That self-confident attitude has worked well for Lorissa. Now 18, she has already gathered quite a few pieces of her dream. She has held the titles of Montana Angus Princess 2003-2005, Miss Dillon Jaycees Rodeo Princess 2004-2005, Miss State Fair Pro Rodeo Princess 2005-2006 and Montana Angus Queen 2005-2006. She is currently Miss Teen Rodeo Montana 2007.

“I think Lorissa’s desire and passion got her so far,” Linda says. Lorissa’s next goal is to represent Montana as Miss Rodeo Montana.

She plans to compete in that pageant when she is of age.

If Lorissa realizes her dream of becoming Miss Rodeo Montana, she will receive a \$10,000 scholarship, a Western wardrobe and the opportunity to travel all expenses paid around the United States to represent professional rodeo. She would also represent Montana at the Miss Rodeo America pageant held each year in Las Vegas, Nev. Montana has had a few Miss Rodeo Montanas in the

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top 10, even some who made the top five. Perhaps Lorissa will be the first to make it all the way.

### Learning to compete

There is a lot more to pageantry than is apparent when you see rodeo royalty ride in with flags flying during the grand entry. Lorissa and her mother began to investigate the pageant process. They attended a one-day workshop for parents and contestants where the pageant procedure was explained.

“No one in our family previously had anything to do with pageants,” Linda says. “Lorissa took the initiative and called some girls who she knew were involved in pageants. She found a web site with advice, too.”

Lorissa found that pageant contestants have to show that they are more than just pretty faces. The contestants are interviewed extensively. Sometimes the interviews are one-on-one. At other times the contestants answer questions before a panel of judges.

Some questions are impromptu and are meant to show how quickly each girl thinks on her feet. All of the questions are designed to demonstrate the contestants’ knowledge about current events, rodeo, horses, cattle, and in the case of the Montana Angus pageant, knowledge about Angus cattle and the Montana Angus Association (MAA). Contestants must be MAA members in order to compete.

The competition requires contestants to give speeches. The young ladies demonstrate their ability to communicate, knowledge about the topic and poise. The judges evaluate the contestants on clarity of speech, proper grammar, organization and how well they connect with an audience.



► All of Lorissa’s activities, particularly her participation in Angus activities and competitions, have helped her achieve her goals to date, she says. Lorissa is pictured above with her stepfather Andy Rest.



► Lorissa Harris speaks at pageants and fundraisers and appears at a different rodeo every weekend. Her rodeo duties range from the glamour of the grand entry to pushing cattle during the timed events.

The interview and speech elements of the competition help the judges decide if the contestant has what it takes to live up to the responsibilities that come with the job, including being interviewed by the media and giving speeches in various settings.

For the rodeo title, contestants are also judged on their horsemanship skills. The judges evaluate mount and dismount, how the contestant sits the horse, her hand and

body position, whether she can handle the horse to complete movements and set patterns, and how she carries a flag. The judges also take note of how the contestant treats her mount.

Lorissa has nothing to worry about. She has been horseback since the tender age of 4 months, riding with her mom. She won her first belt buckle in barrel racing at three and a half years of age.

The horsemanship outfits are spectacular. The young ladies wear jeans of

various colors with matching or coordinating fitted shirts adorned with embroidery, fringe, crystals, beadwork, rhinestones and, of course, feminine-style cowboy hats.

The contestants also model leather or suede skirts and dresses. “The dresses aren’t what people might imagine when they hear the words ‘leather dress,’” Lorissa says, smiling. “It’s called ‘Western Elegance.’”

The clothing is Western in style, but feminine and beautiful. The clothes are often hand-embroidered and, like the horsemanship outfits, may also be decorated with fringe, crystal, beadwork and rhinestones.

The contestants have to let their personalities shine through all the glitter. The ability to interact with all kinds of people in many different situations is crucial. Contestants must demonstrate the ability to talk about any subject, have a good sense of humor, show a positive outlook and have a genuine interest in other people.

Ladylike behavior and strong moral character are also required. In the photogenics competition, the contestants are judged on appearance and on how well their personalities come through in photographs.

All of Lorissa’s hard work, and the things

that she learned about pageantry and about herself since she started competing as a preteen, paid off during her latest competition. Lorissa won her current title after several intense days of competition at the Miss Rodeo Montana pageant held in Great Falls, Mont.

In addition to the Miss Teen Rodeo Montana title, Lorissa won all the category awards, including Horsemanship, Personality, Appearance, Projection & Presentation, the Speech Award, the Style Show Award, and the Photogenic Award.

### Responsibilities of the crown

When she began to win titles Lorissa quickly learned that certain duties come along with each crown.

“When you hold a title, sure it is fun and you get to do what you love — be an ambassador for the sport of rodeo,” Lorissa says, “but it’s also a job that comes with certain responsibilities and obligations, as well as being a role model for youth.”

Lorissa speaks at pageants and fundraisers and appears at a different rodeo every weekend. Her rodeo duties range from the glamour of the grand entry to pushing cattle during the timed events.

One of Lorissa’s duties as Montana Angus Princess, and later as Montana Angus Queen, was to attend the Beef Expo in Lewistown, Mont., each year. She gave out ribbons and posed for pictures with the winners. Lorissa says she particularly enjoys giving out ribbons because it gives her a chance to congratulate everyone and tell them what a good job they did.

Lorissa has a wide range of interests beyond pageantry. She was recognized by the National Honor Society for outstanding performance in the areas of scholarship, service, leadership and character. She was active in drama and speech. And she was one of the top-10 state speech finalists in 2006.

Lorissa is athletic, too. She was a member of her high school varsity tennis and cheerleading teams. She enjoys skiing. Her high school golf team took second in the 2007 state tournament, and Lorissa came in eighth overall.

Lorissa was an active member of 4-H for five years. She participated in many projects, including beef breeding and horsemanship projects. Her 4-H group read to the elderly, did roadside cleanup, conducted bake sales and put on annual Christmas programs.

Lorissa’s 4-H activity has been a big plus in her development, Linda says. “The 4-H kids

had to judge pens of steers and pigs and give explanations about their decisions. I know that 4-H is a stepping-stone to talk in front of people and to research things out.”

The Montana Angus Association sponsored the 4-H purebred Angus breeding project. Lorissa started with a heifer, bred it and then showed the calf. That calf was 2004 reserve grand champion at the Blaine County Fair.

Lorissa was a member of FFA and the Family, Career and Community Leaders of America Inc. (FCCLA). She received the FFA Star Greenhand award in 2005 and was awarded a Montana State Farmer Degree in 2007.

She is a lifetime member of both the American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA) and the American Angus Association. Before she became occupied with the responsibilities of her titles, Lorissa participated in barrel racing, pole bending and goat tying at small, local rodeos. She also shows reining horses and enjoys trail riding.

Lorissa and her mom are members of the Northern International Livestock Exposition (NILE) Rodeo Committee, which annually hosts a livestock show and rodeo in Billings, Mont. As Montana Angus Queen 2005-2006 she attended the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) in Denver, Colo. She participated in the Auxiliary-sponsored All-American *Certified Angus Beef*® Cook-Off and the quiz bowl contest, where her knowledge about Angus cattle and the Angus association were put to the test.

In Denver Lorissa met other Angus Queens from around the country. She made new friends and got to know what the other queens’ roles and responsibilities are in their states.

At a luncheon for royalty, each young lady stood up to tell what she had done for her state. Lorissa spoke about the fun she has meeting people, giving out awards, and congratulating and encouraging young people.

All of Lorissa’s activities, especially the activities she became involved in thanks to growing up Angus, have helped her to achieve her goals to date, she says. Showing her calf from the Angus-sponsored beef breeding project taught her how to present herself in front of judges and crowds.

Each step forward in Angus competitions helped her gain poise and confidence. The pageant in which Lorissa was crowned Miss Teen Rodeo Montana was held in conjunction with the Montana Pro Rodeo



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Circuit Finals. On the evening of the very day she was crowned she was handing out saddles and buckles for awards and posing for pictures with the winners.

Thanks to her experience as Montana Angus Princess and Montana Angus Queen, she knew exactly what to do. Lorissa says the people she met, and the things she experienced, gave her the confidence she needed to compete.

“I feel that all of the leadership activities and pageantry work I have been involved with for the past five years of my life are all stepping-stones shaping me into the person I’m becoming and will definitely help me in the future with my career and life goals,” Lorissa says.

Maybe on one of these hot summer days another young lady will see Lorissa at one of her appearances, or see a flyer for a pageant — and a new dream will begin to grow.

Lorissa is the daughter of Todd Harris and Linda and Andy Rest. Andy Rest is the American Angus Association regional manager for Alaska, Montana and Wyoming.

Lorissa recently graduated from Shepherd High School. In addition to becoming Miss Montana Rodeo someday, she plans to attend Montana State University in Bozeman, Mont., to study pre-law and business.

