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THE SOFTER SIDE OF THE CITY'S Reigning Queen

MISS EL PASO TEXAS 2014

VICTORIA SINCLAIR

| By: MEAGAN KINLEY *photography by: DAV ANMED* |

We've all heard Mahatma Gandhi's inspiring quote, "Be the change you wish to see in the world," but very few people ever live up to the mission and vision behind Gandhi's challenging ideal. But in our own city of El Paso, there are amazing young people right here in our midst, seeking to create equality, encourage opportunity and give hope to all. Victoria Sinclair is one such woman, known most recently for her new title as Miss El Paso Texas 2014; Victoria is so much more than your average beauty queen. With a vision for El Paso that includes expanding and developing the city's YWCA programs and empowering women everywhere, Victoria is using her platform as the new Miss El Paso to pour into the city she knows and loves.

When talking to Victoria about her journey to the crown, it's easy to sense her spirit

of humility and love. She is eager to credit her success to the many people in her life, who she says, have helped her every step of the way. "First of all, I wouldn't be here today without my mother. She is everything to me and I owe who I am today to her," said Victoria. Victoria's mother, Liz Sinclair has held numerous positions for different charities all over El Paso including the YWCA, and most recently as the chair of the Polo Real Tournament this past May. When it comes to Victoria's heart of service, the apple certainly hasn't fallen far from the tree. She would also like to thank Laura Rayborn who has given so many young women a platform in the pageant world to become the best possible versions of themselves. Victoria also admires the great Laura Harring, a former Miss El Paso, Miss Texas, and Miss USA (1985). "When Laura Harring won Miss USA, it was so inspiring. As a woman she

really interested me; as the first Latina to be crowned Miss USA, it was amazing to see someone reach that level of success, who like me, is proud of the Latina beauty. When I looked at her I saw beauty, poise, and intelligence – beauty queens are very well rounded, they are women of the community, they are involved and do everything they can to create real change. As I grew up this was always in my mind and I think it's what really lead me to pursue Miss El Paso."

Victoria grew up with Harring and other powerful women as her role models. With direction and guidance from her mother, Victoria dived into volunteering for various organizations around the city from a very young age. It was here that she developed not only her fervent love for the people of El Paso, but also her vision to make an impact in the lives of the young women of



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the YWCA. "I'm a Y girl and I'm so proud of the organization and our chapter. Working and learning from Dr. Sandra E. Braham (CEO of the YWCA El Paso Chapter) has been amazing," Victoria said. Victoria not only volunteers for the YMCA, but she is the YMCA's youngest benefactress.

With these goals in mind and such a promising future, Victoria began modeling for different companies and boutiques here in El Paso from a very young age. Her first real modeling job was actually with NoNo's Boutique on the west side. From there she participated in various fashion shows, and other charity events . . . but when the 2009 Miss El Paso Teen Texas competition rolled around, Victoria entered ready to take the stage by storm, eager to transition from model to titleholder. "The difference between a model and a pageant girl is: a

model walks with attitude and a beauty queen walks with grace. I love modeling, but there is something truly special about pageants. In my first pageant, and I came in the Top 15. Doing that well my first time really gave me so much inspiration to keep going. Back then, I knew I had a lot of growing up to do, so I waited till I was ready and in 2012 I entered my first Miss El Paso Pageant. It was such an amazing year; I finished as first runner up.

But despite Victoria's high hopes for the title, 2013 was not her year. When the pageant rolled around the following June, Victoria placed as the fourth runner up. Despite her happiness at coming in the Top 5, placing Most Photogenic and achieving Top Bikini Body, she had still not realized her dream of becoming Miss El Paso Texas. "I would be lying if I said that the loss wasn't hard. But at the end of the day, I knew I had to keep going, I couldn't give

up. So I looked ahead and used the experience to push myself towards Miss Texas," said Victoria. With coaching from Matthew Abraham and countless other supporters Victoria not only achieved Top Bikini Body but also came in the Top 15 at Miss Texas USA. "It was an amazing experience and something I will always remember. I really owe so much to Matthew, he came into my life after Miss El Paso when I was doubting who I was and my ability, he turned me around and really helped me believe in myself."

In these two pageants, Victoria showed love behind the scenes. Shelley Mozelle, a longtime friend and supporter of Victoria, personally knew of two different scenes that occurred, "It was on the first night of the 2013 pageant. Victoria saw one of the other competitors crying in the dressing room. She went over to the young girl and consoled her,





asking why she was upset. The girl explained she'd ridden the bus to the pageant, and that none of her family had been able to show up; she was there alone. It wasn't until further into the conversation that Victoria discovered that the real reason the girl was upset was because the pageant had run late and she had missed the last bus back – leaving her stranded without a ride. Upon realizing this, Victoria immediately stepped in and personally took the young woman home. It was inspiring to know the love her heart felt for a stranger, but that was not the only time that Victoria showed true humility and kindness to her peers. The following August, at the Miss Texas USA pageant in Houston, we were biting our fingernails on the day of interviews because Victoria had not come down from her hotel room. We were sure she was going to be late, miss her interview and at the very least have critical points deducted — but at the last moment, Victoria and her roommate came down the stairs just in time. We learned later that Victoria had stayed upstairs with her roommate to help her get ready, knowing that she was potentially risking her own points. You see, her roommate didn't have any professional coaching and she didn't know how to prepare. Victoria stayed to give the girl her best shot at the same title she herself was vying for. For these reasons and a million more, I have always believed in Victoria. She has a heart of gold that is reflected on the stage when she performs. This young woman is tough, but she is never too busy or too involved to stop and help her fellow woman."

After competing in Miss Texas USA, Victoria returned home to El Paso and immediately began pouring herself into training for the 2014 pageant season. When in pageant prep mode, her daily training consists of completing one hour of cardio a day, one hour of weight training, as well as other activities like hot yoga, Pilates and more. "I really love working out whenever I can. Yoga is amazing because it helps with stress, but I also play tennis, run and go on hikes — we have amazing trails here in El Paso, the Franklin Mountains are

beautiful and any excuse I get, I go up there and soak in the beauty of our great city," Victoria said. Victoria also makes almost all of her own food, ensuring that she eats clean. "In the last few months, I made a little fitness guide that's geared toward young women. It was neat because it started as just something I did for myself to stay on track, but it's been really cool because my friends and others have asked to use it too. It feels good to help other people on their journey to full health."

But even this year's preparation was full of its own challenges. "Three weeks before Miss El Paso Texas 2014, I tore a ligament in my ankle — I had taken every step to be healthy, but one day I was helping my friend move some boxes and I just slipped. I was in a brace for all the rehearsals, and for those three weeks I wasn't able to do cardio or wear heels, but I just kept going. I knew this was just another test. On the first night of the pageant I woke up and felt better than I had since before the injury. It was such a blessing. Happiness is a choice, we can either fall to the mishaps when things don't go as planned — but what really defines us is how we rise from these challenges. Failures mold us into who we are and who we become in life."

Victoria's positive attitude carried her through the pageant and when the winner for the 2014 Miss El Paso Texas was announced on the final night, Victoria came out on top. After years of hard work, Victoria was at long last the Miss El Paso Texas titleholder she had always dreamed of becoming.

"I am so honored to be Miss El Paso. It is a dream come true for me and I am so excited for the year ahead. As a woman of faith, I am thankful to God for this opportunity. Everything in my life — all the struggles, challenges — all of it was preparing me for this and what lies ahead. When people look back on me as a titleholder, I want them to remember me as the Miss El Paso that really made a difference in her community. I want





to be remembered as the Miss El Paso who did everything she could to get involved. This title is not about going to events and wearing pretty dresses, being in these pageants and attaining this platform is a privilege and I don't want to take it for granted. I want to start a movement of service, learning and serving other people. If the young women of this city see that I'm excited, maybe they can get excited about service too. I hope to spread the message that life is not worth living without purpose."

Looking ahead, Victoria is still hard at work training for Miss Texas USA, which will occur on Labor Day weekend of this year. Following in her hero, Laura Harring's footsteps Victoria admits that she has her eye on the state title. "I'm a Texas girl through and through and I'm very proud of my state. To be the best, you've got to beat the best. I would love to win a title in the state I believe in most."

In the meantime, we at The City Magazine are so excited to see Victoria as the 2014-2015 reigning Miss El Paso Texas. As her year in the crown begins, we are eager to watch as she creates real change in not only our beautiful city, but for women everywhere. Congratulations, Victoria Sinclair! We look forward to your promising future.

Miss El Paso Texas and Miss El Paso Teen Texas is directed and produced by Laura's Productions. Laura Rayborn is the official state recruiter for the Miss Texas USA and the Miss Texas Teen USA pageants.

