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State's Junior Miss heading to Alabama for national finals

By CATHERINE BAUM
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EASTHAMPTON - Massachusetts Junior Miss Samantha Lyman, 18, of Easthampton, flew Monday to Mobile, Ala., where she will spend the week preparing for America's Junior Miss National finals.

She joins 49 other young women, and will compete from June 26 to June 28 for a share of \$150,000 in cash scholarships and the title of America's Junior Miss 2008. America's Junior Miss is a nonprofit organization and scholarship program for college-bound women. Lyman will also be eligible for scholarships to more than 200 colleges and universities throughout the country.

"I'm very excited to meet people from all over the country," Lyman said Friday.

"I love the Junior Miss experience through the local and state level so I'm excited to get to do it all over again."

The daughter of Thomas and Pamela Lyman, of Easthampton, Lyman has never been to Alabama before, nor has she been away from her family for two weeks.

"This will help me to prepare for college," said Lyman, who plans to attend Springfield College in the fall to pursue a career as a physician assistant.

The 2008 EHS grad will be evaluated in scholastics, interview, fitness, self expression and talent.

Her talent piece, which she practiced a couple of hours a week for months, is a lyrical dance and gymnastics routine to "Why Walk When You Can Fly" by Mary Chapin Carpenter. That routine is the same as it was when she competed for the Greater Easthampton Junior Miss at the Academy of Music Theatre in Northampton on Nov. 18 and the state competition in Franklin on Feb. 23.

"I feel much more confident with the routine - I've been doing it since October," Lyman said. "Right now I feel really good about it."

A Greater Easthampton Junior Miss has never taken the national title, nor has a Massachusetts Junior Miss. Lyman could be the first on both counts. While winning would be nice, Lyman, who was surprised to win both the Easthampton and Massachusetts titles, said she will go into the national competition thinking of it not as a win/lose situation, but as "a chance to have a good time."

"I try not to think about going and winning... if it's meant to be it's meant to be," Lyman said.

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2008 Greater Easthampton Junior Miss Samantha Lyman is shown in November.



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But, of course, the thought of winning has crossed her mind.

"If I won it'd be pretty overwhelming and quite an accomplishment," Lyman said.

Lyman will post photos of her trip and journal each day's events in a blog, where people can keep up with her schedule, wish her luck and post her comments. The 51st America's Junior Miss finals will be available online Saturday, June 28 at 7 p.m. To watch the finals and see photos and blogs of the contestants, visit www.nbc15online.com.

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