

Agbowu wins Miss Benton Harbor

By **RALPH HEIBUTZKI**
HP Correspondent

BENTON HARBOR — Winning a pageant title can be a way to pursue bigger ideas and pay tribute to others, according to the newest Miss Benton Harbor.

Jurnee Agbowu won the Miss Benton Harbor title Sunday at Lake Michigan College's Mendel Center, where she took her first walk in a glittering red dress.

"This is my first pageant. It's humbling and overwhelming, and I'm so happy," Jurnee said moments after leaving the stage, where she thanked God for her victory.

Jurnee will represent Benton Harbor in the Miss Blossomtime pageant on March 13.

As far as the year ahead goes, however, Jurnee plans to promote the cause of water safety, which holds a personal meaning for her.

"I lost a friend this year, Travone Shannon, to drowning," she said, adding that winning the Miss Benton Harbor crown feels like a tribute to Travone.

Jurnee, 17, is a senior at Benton Harbor High School and daughter of April Eddie and Dwayne Jackson of Benton Harbor.

Her activities at Benton Harbor include varsity basketball, soccer, track and tennis, as well as the Boys & Girls Club and Tiger Set.

After graduating, Jurnee plans to attend a historically black college or university and pursue a dual major in law and sociology with the goal of becoming a lawyer and a philanthropist.

"Whatever I do, I want to make a difference," she said.

Elisha Thomas, 17, is first runner up. She's the daughter of Robbie Thomas and Christina Williams of Benton Harbor and a senior at St. Joseph High School.

She plans to go Lake Michigan College this fall and plans to become a nurse practitioner.

"It's a big responsibility to take on, and I think I can do that. The crown was well-deserved, and I will work hard to do whatever I need," Elisha said of her title.

Harneet Singh, 17, is sec-

ond runner up. She's a senior at Berrien Springs High School and the daughter of Diana and Rupinder Singh of Benton Harbor.

Harneet competed in the National American Miss pageant in 2015, but sharing the stage as part of the Miss Benton Harbor court is a whole different experience, she said.

When asked what experience she's most anticipating this year as she makes the Blossomtime rounds, Harneet said, "Supporting my queen and doing whatever I can to make my community better."

She plans to study pre-med this fall at Siena Heights University and plans to become a neurosurgeon.

Jenna Dolezan, 17, is Miss Congeniality, which she earned through a vote of her fellow contestants. She's a St. Joseph High School senior and the daughter of Linda and Leonard Dolezan of Benton Harbor.

"It feels amazing. My mom won Miss Congenialty too when she was running for Miss Berrien Springs in 1984. Now I have the same title," Jenna said of her showing.

Jenna plans to study communications this fall at Grand Valley State University and plans to become a TV producer.

Davieonna Nichols won the Miss Entrepreneur title, which traditionally goes to the contestant selling the most tickets.

Naomi Gullede and Hannah Bredeweg were the other finalists.

La'Tara Davis, Caylie Harden, Ashley Mitchell, Lanece Moffitt and Shanece Moffitt also competed.

This year's court will have to wait and see which young men share the stage with them at Blossomtime. The Mr. Benton Harbor pageant will run on Jan. 22 at Benton Harbor High School.



AGBOWU



THOMAS



SINGH