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Lindenwood's AJ Surrell Crowned Miss Missouri Volunteer

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Lindenwood University Social Media Specialist Aj Surrell was crowned Miss Missouri Volunteer by the Miss Missouri Volunteer program on January 6 at the Kirkwood Performing Arts Center.

The Miss Missouri Volunteer program is part of the Miss Volunteer America program, which was founded in early 2021. The program aims to empower young women across the country through educational scholarships, networking opportunities, performance and meet-and-greet opportunities with industry professionals, among others.

Surrell, who earned a bachelor's degree at Lindenwood in advertising and strategic communication in 2020, also took home the Overall Interview Award and Overall Fitness and Wellness Award. Additionally, she was awarded more than \$10,000 in scholarship funds to further her education goals.

Not only did Surrell win these honors, but she did so while juggling a full-time position with the University and working toward her MBA. Her platform of inclusivity in creative arts ties into Lindenwood's core values.

"Winning the title of Miss Missouri Volunteer means that I am afforded the opportunity to continue the meaningful work that I have previously started," Surrell said. "I am so excited to continue creating accessible arts opportunities across our state while promoting the importance of scholarship, education, and volunteerism. I am thankful for the experiences and incredible community that I have found here at Lindenwood – they have helped shape me into the woman I am today."

With a passion for philanthropy, Surrell will spend the year focusing on her S.E.R.V.E. (Service. Education. Responsibility. Volunteerism. Empowerment.) Initiative, "Arts for All: Improving Mental Health Through the Arts."

In 2018, Surrell produced her first production with Stages St. Louis Children's Production. She has trained more than 400 local performing artists on how to create accessible arts opportunities. Additionally, she has given more than 600 individuals with disabilities opportunities to be involved in the arts. Her mission is to bring the "Arts for All" curriculum into every school and develop

partnerships with professional theater programs to create accessible arts opportunities.