

First Out Lesbian to Compete in Miss America

The first openly gay candidate competes this weekend in the Miss America contest, a first in the competition's 95-year-history, organizers said.

Erin O'Flaherty, 23, represents the Midwestern state of Missouri, where she was crowned the first openly gay Miss Missouri in June.

O'Flaherty, who owns a clothing store, said she represents a platform of suicide prevention. Contestants select as platforms causes that they aim to raise awareness of or promote.

She is slated to sing in the contest's talent competition.

"Through every major milestone of our nation's evolution, Miss America has provided a voice for women from all walks of life, and this year, we welcome our first openly gay contestant," said Josh Randle, chief operating officer of the Miss America Organization, in a statement.

The annual event, first held in 1921, will be held on Sept. 11 in the beachfront town of Atlantic City, New Jersey. Its longtime theme song, "There She Is," has become known around the world. {eo}

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