

Simple style pays off for teen queen

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

VICTOR — In her search for success, Laura Militello needed to keep only two words in the forefront of her mind: be yourself.

By merely displaying her natural personality, the 18-year-old Militello was recently crowned Miss Teen New York from among 105 competitors between the ages of 13 and 18. The pageant took place at the University of Rochester July 24-26.

Militello actually didn't find out about the pageant until earlier this year while a senior at Victor High School. Her only preparation for the pageant, she said, was filling out the application form. In fact, on the final day of competition, Militello donned the same evening gown that she had worn at a school prom two years ago.

"Some girls get a coach, and I can't deal with all that. It's too fake; you're kind of molding yourself into somebody you're not," she observed. "It's funny because I didn't come in (to the pageant) seriously, and there were girls who had been coming back for years."

Her relaxed approach helped Militello through the competition's early stages, which featured formal wear competition and interviews with a panel of 10 judges.

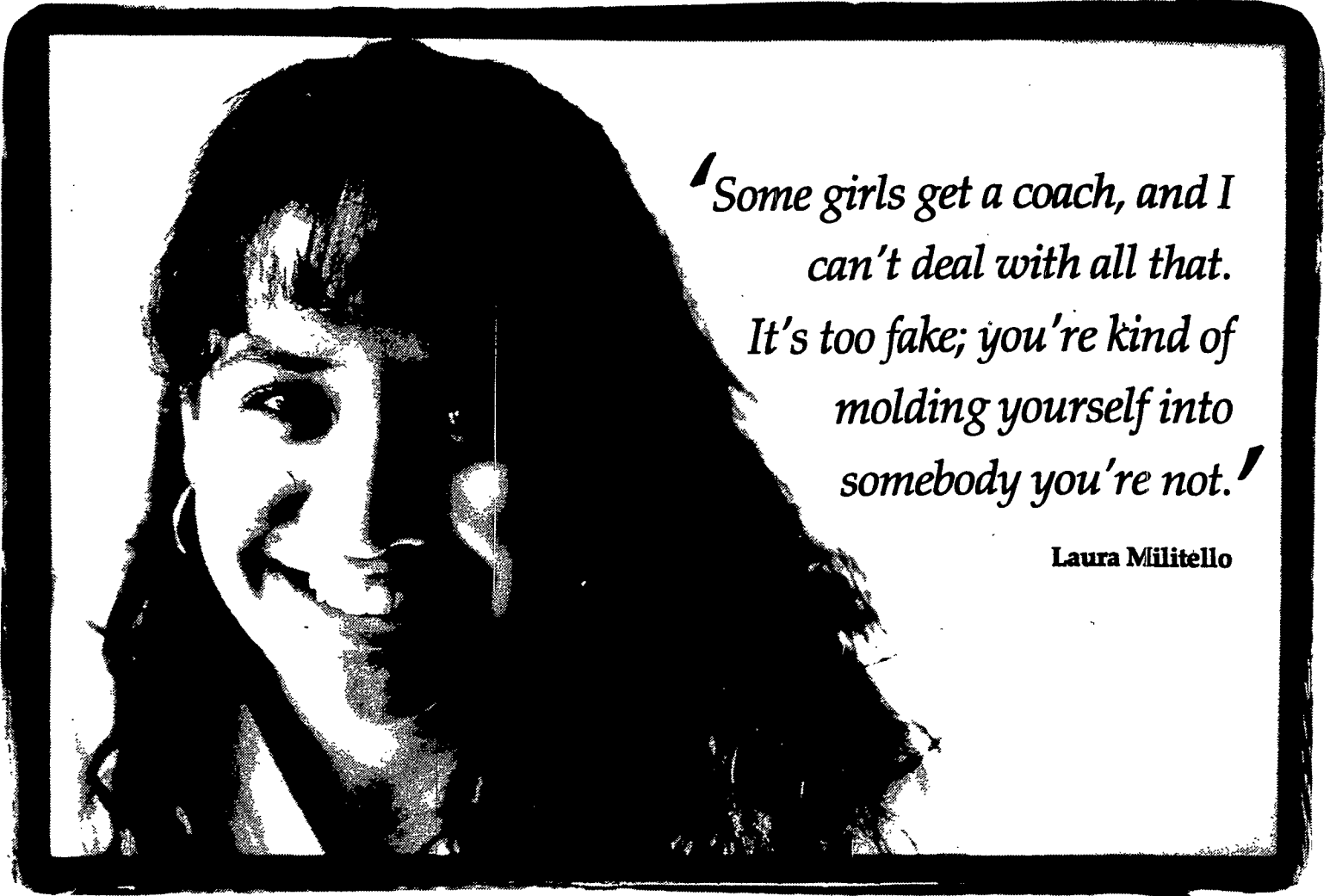
On the pageant's last day, she discovered that she had been selected as one of 12 semifinalists. "Things had gone well, but I didn't think they went that well," she said.

Standing before an audience of about 500 people at Strong Auditorium, she then answered a series of questions concerning an outstanding leadership award she had received. Soon afterward, she was nominated as one of the five finalists.

During the final round of competition, she was quizzed about world affairs. When the runners-up were announced, Militello, in disbelief, did not hear her name called.

Upon her crowning as Miss Teen New York, she said, "I didn't cry, but I smiled a lot."

She had initially been selected for the pageant based on her personal



Miss Teen New York Laura Militello, a 1992 graduate of Victor High School and a parishioner at Mendon's St. Catherine of Siena Church, is slated to attend the University of Buffalo, where she plans to major in biology.

achievement, community service and scholastic records.

Militello ranked 23rd out of 168 students in her Victor High graduating class. A National Honor Society member, she also belonged to Student Council, Biology Club, and Students Against Drunk Driving. She was a cheerleader as well.

During the past four summers, Militello has participated in a two-week science camp at Rochester Institute of Technology. She has served as a counselor at the last three camps, which bring together students in grades seven through 10.

Militello believes that the opportunity to interact with peers at these RIT camps was what molded the outgoing style that carried her through the state pageant.

"When I was younger I was introverted, but after the first year at RIT my attitude changed," she said. "I learned it was much better to speak out for what you want, or you'll never get it."

Militello and her family are pari-



Laura Militello (left) reacts to winning the Miss Teen New York title July 26. The pageant, held at the University of Rochester July 24-26, focuses on contestants' achievements, community service and scholastic records.

shioners at St. Catherine of Siena Church, 26 Mendon-Ionia Road, where the new Miss Teen New York is a eucharistic minister.

She will soon be headed off to the University of Buffalo, where she plans on majoring in biology with a pre-med curriculum. Her tuition costs will be lessened by the \$1,000 scholarship she won for capturing the state pageant.

In addition to the scholarship and other merchandise, Militello's state crown means that she's guaranteed an

appearance on national television next summer when she competes for the Miss Teen USA title at the national pageant in Rock Island, Ill.

Although Militello has considered enlisting with a modeling agency in preparation for the national competition, she isn't about to let her sudden fame take over her entire life.

"It's nice that everybody is congratulating me, but I really don't want to think about it. The last thing I want to do is change," she remarked.

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Youth-ministry training event set for Oct. 2

ROCHESTER — A youth ministry training day is scheduled for Friday, Oct. 2, at St. John the Evangelist Church, 150 Flovertown St.

J. David Stone, a nationally recognized youth ministry professional, will be the featured guest. The president of YMTN Television Network in Shreveport, La., Stone has produced several videos and books relating to youth ministry.

The day will offer three workshops:

Friend to Friend, Barrier Breakers, and Spiritual Growth.

The event will run from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and is open to teachers, volunteer workers, youth ministry professionals, pastors, Christian education directors, youth sponsors and parents.

To obtain a brochure, or to register for the event, call YMTN Television Network at 800/489-8798 or Pat Fox at 716/482-6211.