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PHOTOGRAPHED AT HOTEL INDIGO

GEORGIA ALSO CARES

in the fight against sex trafficking? Visit gacares.org/get-involved. Georgia Cares also provides a 24-hour hot line at 1-844-8GA-DMST.

Georgia Cares is an independent, non-profit organization in pursuit of helping victims of sex trafficking around the state of Georgia. Interested in getting involved

MOUTH OF THE SOUTH

DEANNA JOHNSON

MISS GA CARES

► The passion of Miss Georgia shows she's more than a pretty face.

INTERVIEW: KELSEY TUCKER /
PHOTO: BLAKE CROSBY

► 21-YEAR-OLD SINGER, TITLE-HOLDER AND ANTI-SEX TRAFFICKING ACTIVIST DeAnna Johnson has had quite the exciting and full year. From auditioning and competing on NBC's hit-show *The Voice* to winning the title of *Miss Georgia USA 2017*, Johnson is using her newfound following to fight modern slavery and help victims around the nation, specifically in her home state. Johnson sat down with me to discuss her platform and means of outreach.

KELSEY TUCKER: Congratulations on winning Miss Georgia! When did you start doing pageants?

DEANNA JOHNSON: "Thank you! This is actually my first year of doing pageants. Of course I had always dreamed of going to Miss USA, so early last year I entered a few and prayed that I would make it to Miss Georgia, never fully expecting to win!"

KT: That must have been a great feeling. I know you are very passionate about your platform, fighting sex trafficking. What piqued that interest? When did you begin working with Georgia Cares?

DJ: "Every single Christmas, my dad has taken me to a battered women's shelter. The director of the shelter actually got me in contact with a director of a childhood sex trafficking shelter in Atlanta. I was shocked—I suppose the concept of sex trafficking in the United States was foreign to me. It baffled me that all around me, in a state I so proudly represented, people were being sold and abused. I knew I needed to help put a stop to it. What I appreciate about Georgia Cares is that their main goal is to end the manipulation at an early stage. I have been with them for a year now and I feel so good every day knowing I am helping someone in need."

KT: It's great to hear how devoted you are to the issue! How are you using social media to reach more people?

DJ: "I really just want to bring awareness and education. We don't really think about this as a reality in our states, so my goal is to get people to want to fight it. At Georgia Cares, we do a lot of events to raise awareness, so I post about those events on Instagram (@DeannaJohnson23) and Snapchat (@Deanna-Johnson23) all the time. I think just talking about the issue is the most important thing to start with." ■