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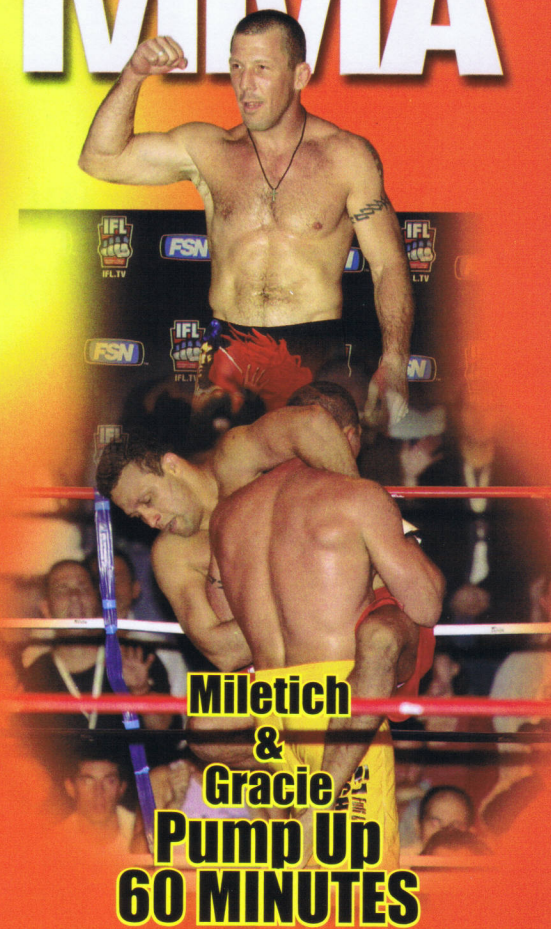
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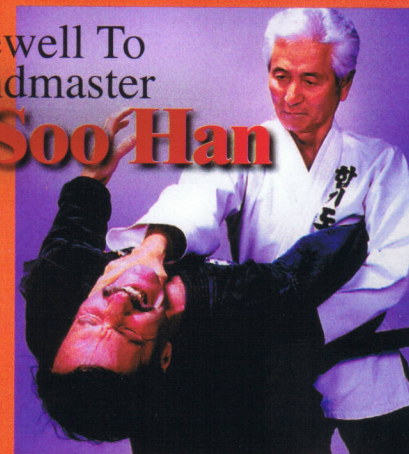
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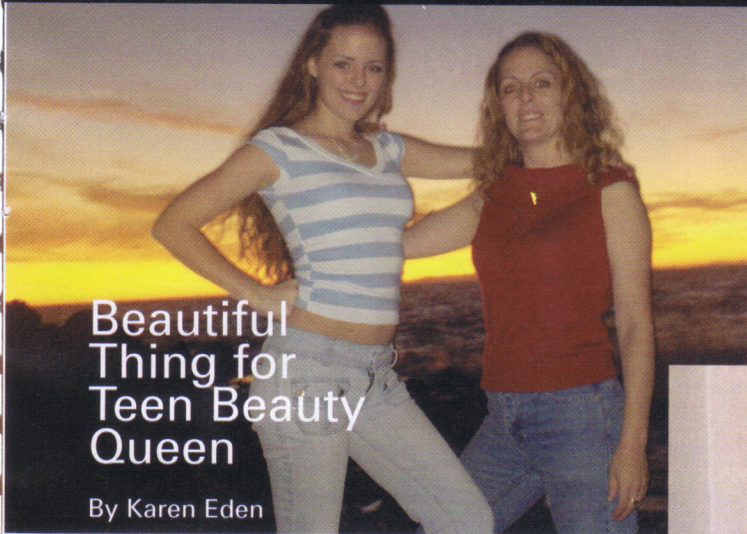
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## Beautiful Thing for Teen Beauty Queen

By Karen Eden

Brittney Colliflower received roses when she was crowned a Maryland State Junior Teen beauty queen. But life for the 15-year-old has been no bed of roses. It was her martial arts training that helped her deal with feelings of rejection and self-doubt.

### A Broken Home, A Broken Heart

When Brittney was nine-years-old, her father walked out on his family and never came back. "She was traumatized, and I didn't know what to do." Says Tammy Abner, Brittney's mother. "It was bad enough when there was no more relationship and no more money, but Brittney literally went from this sweet, outgoing little girl, to crawling into a shell. She immediately lost all interest in things she once loved doing, and started dropping out of activities" Says Ms. Abner.

The now honor-roll student says she still remembers that day, and how upset she was. "It was like, one day he was in my life, and the next day, my dad didn't want anything to do with me anymore. I really took it hard." Brittney says.

### Karate Puts the Pieces Back Together

Not far from where they live in southern Maryland, Tammy Abner signed up for kickboxing classes at Mile High Karate. Brittney shyly tagged along having no idea how that day would change her entire disposition. Head Instructor Doug Mooney took Brittney aside with her mother, and started working with her. "I remember her being a very well-mannered and quiet girl." Says Instructor Mooney. Brittney took to Karate instantly. "The determination she presented, even to this day was that of someone far beyond her years." Mooney says.

And as it always does, Brittney's martial arts training started to change her internally. Soon she was walking a little taller and holding her head high again. "Within about a year of training, I noticed that I was starting to get my daughter back," said Tammy Abner.

### Shin Guards Friday, Formals on Saturday

"I never would have thought about entering a beauty pageant a few years ago when my parents first separated." Says Brittney. But strangely enough, it was my Karate training that encouraged me to just

'go for it.'" Said the now vivacious teen.

Brittney was crowned the 2006 Maryland State Cover Girl, and was first runner-up in the National Cover Miss in Anaheim, California. When first meeting this young lady, you can see that she is very polished in communication and people skills. Skills she says she learned through her Karate training.

"Martial arts teaches you to shake hands with confidence, to look people in the eye and to stand at attention." Brittney says. "These are things that are hard enough for any teenaged girl to do because you're so afraid of being rejected." She adds. It was this young

girl's training at Mile High Karate that she says helped her overcome such fears. "I am learning through training to truly respect myself for who I am, regardless of what may have happened to me in my home life."

What's more important, Brittney says that her training has taught her how not to be afraid of losing. "Just like in class, you don't take losing as hard as long as you know that you did your best." She says.



Brittney poses with her mother (top and right) and in her crown during an event.



### Taking the Lessons Home

Brittney says she still has feelings of abandonment when it comes to her father. She says what makes it worse is that most of his family lives near by, and she feels that they too have written her off. "Karate is helping me to deal with this too." She goes on to say. "I am learning to focus on what I do have instead of what I don't."

Brittney hopes to compete in some of the larger pageants in the next few years, and she's on schedule to test for black belt by the time she graduates high school.

"I've seen her become much more confident over the years," says Mile High Instructor Doug Mooney. "And I'm sure that there'll be no stopping her when it comes to her going for whatever she wants in the future." He adds.

For more information on Mile High Karate schools, visit [FreeKarate.com](http://FreeKarate.com)