



Miss America visits Michiana alma mater

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By: Megan Hickey - Email

St. Joseph, Mich. Miss America 2014 returned to St. Joseph High School Tuesday seven years after graduating – and this time escorted by a motorcade.

Nina Davuluri is a 2007 graduate of the St. Joseph, Mich. high school where she was a member of the varsity tennis team, marching band and Science Olympiad team.

She competed in pageants during high school but never thought her search for scholarship dollars would lead her to the Miss America crown.

“I dreamed about it,” Davuluri said. “I just didn’t think it would come true!”

The Michiana native caught up with teachers and toured the renovated school building, but the focus of her visit was a speech on celebrating diversity.

As the pageant’s first Indian American winner, Davuluri experienced a backlash of racist tweets and posts when she was crowned in September.

“I had people flat out call me a terrorist,” Davuluri told the gym full of students. “I’ve always viewed myself as first and foremost American and to me it was just absolutely intolerable.”

Davuluri thanked the thousands of people who came to her defense.

“I have to say I’m also so proud of the younger generations, yourselves included, for really stepping up to those comments because for every one negative comment tweet or post I received hundreds if not thousands of words of positive remarks and support and encouragement,” she said.

Many student body members said they were inspired by Davuluri’s candid remarks.

“As a minority student myself, I think it’s really great,” said Cameron Smith, a St. Joseph High School senior. “Coming in to St. Joe, we are a predominantly white school in the area. I hope her message sticks that cultural diversity and spreading everyone’s different cultures is really going to make our class and our school better.”

Davuluri’s French teacher said she wasn’t surprised to see her former pupil on the stage at the Miss America pageant last fall.

“Not surprised that she won because I can’t think of a more deserving person to represent young people and to represent our country,” Ginny Antonson said.



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