



For Immediate Release

For More Information, Contact Susan Keith, susanms@distinguishedyw.org.

Lila Hanson, Distinguished Young Woman of Petal, will be one of 32 Mississippi high school seniors competing for more than \$36,000 in college scholarships when the 2026 Distinguished Young Women of Mississippi Program gets underway Thursday, July 17, in Meridian, Mississippi.

The state program, which is held in Meridian, Mississippi, is now in its 69th year celebrating and spotlighting outstanding achievements of the state's best and brightest high school women. The three nights of competition at The Evangel Temple concludes on Saturday, July 19. The doors open nightly at 6:30 pm and each show starts promptly at 7:30 pm for the three-night event.

Reserved tickets for the 2026 Distinguished Young Women Program are available for **\$65** for a three-night package. General admission tickets are available for **\$50** for a three-night package, or may be purchased for individual evenings: **\$20**, Thursday; **\$20**, Friday; and **\$25**, Saturday. Tickets go on sale Monday, June 30, and may be obtained by logging on www.purplepass.com/dywofms26 or calling 601-480-3438. Visa, MasterCard and American Express are welcome.

"We are extremely excited about this year's program," said Sid Wilkinson, State Chairman of the Distinguished Young Women of Mississippi Program. "Distinguished Young Women of MS celebrates the outstanding accomplishments of high school women and offers them cash scholarship opportunities to further their education and to develop their self-confidence."

Lila Hanson, the daughter of **Coley & Laura Hanson of Petal**, attends **Petal High School**. *Academic accomplishments, memberships and hobbies include the following: PHS Varsity Cheerleader, ACT 30+ Club, PHS Ambassadors, Forrest Health Spirit Girls, Phi Theta Kappa (through PRCC Middle College), PHS Leadership Academy, Petal DYW Class of 2026, PHS Bowling Team, USM Institute of Disability Studies Volunteer, Petal School District All-In award (recognizing superior academics with extracurricular involvement)* She plans to attend **Southern Miss** to pursue a career as a **CRNA - Nurse Anesthetist**.

During the week-long program in Meridian, participants are evaluated on scholastic achievement, fitness, self-expression, talent, and interview. Lila has chosen a **Tumbling/Cheer Dance to "Champion" by Carrie Underwood & Ludacris** for her talent.

If selected as Distinguished Young Woman of Mississippi, **Lila Hanson** will compete in the National Distinguished Young Women of 2026 finals in June of 2026, held in Mobile, Alabama. There she will compete for the opportunity to win a share of more than \$100,000 in cash scholarship awards, including the \$40,000 national title scholarship award.

Founded in 1958, Distinguished Young Women is a free program that encourages participants to reach their full individual potential. Our mission is to empower young women by providing scholarship opportunities, connecting with a nationwide network of women, developing their self-confidence, and participating in our Life Skills Workshops that prepare them for a successful future. National sponsors include Barbara Barrington Jones Family Foundation, Mobile County, City of Mobile, Alabama Power Foundation, Master Boat Builders, Gant Travel Management, Regions Financial Corporation, John Cauley Jeweler, Jostens and Alabama Media Group.

For more information about Distinguished Young Women, contact Carly Bragg, National Headquarters Marketing and Communications Director, at 251-438-3621 or carly@distinguishedyw.org or visit www.DistinguishedYW.org