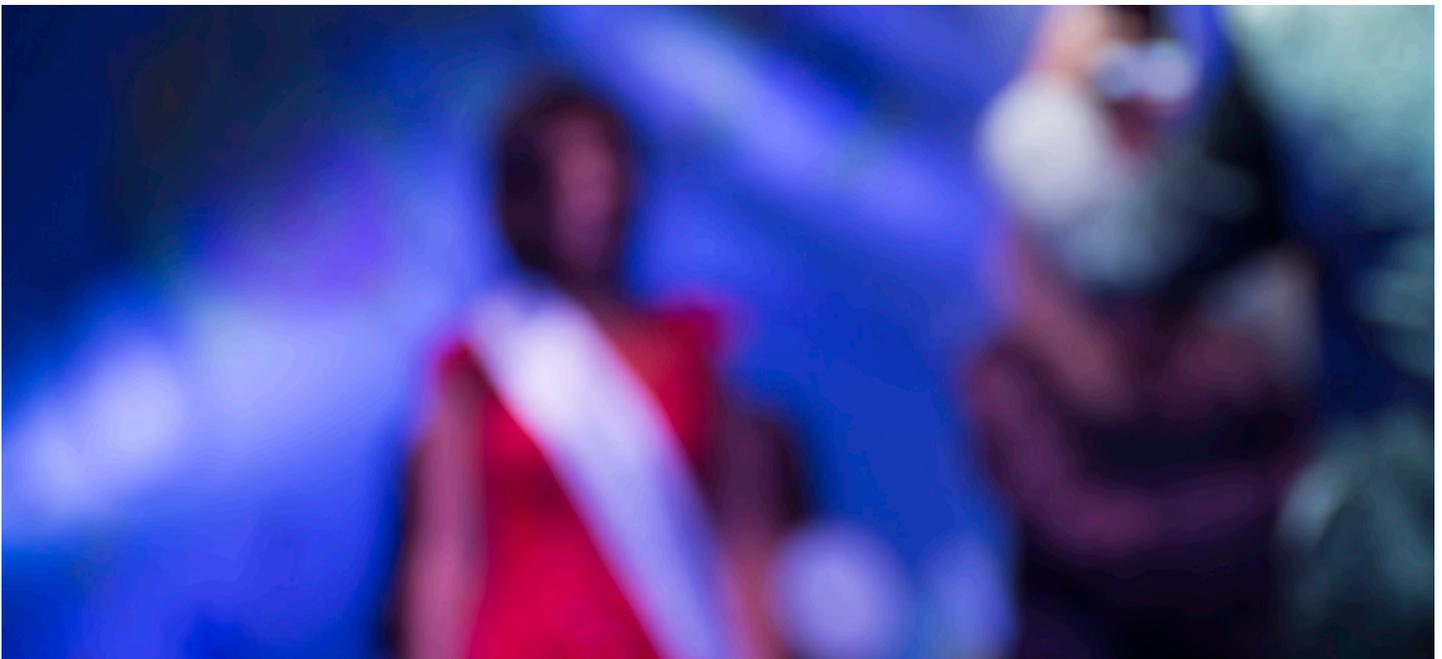




Chief Storyteller

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**Do you consider yourself to be an epic storyteller? If so, why?**

Absolutely! I have always been able to draw people in with my descriptive narratives. As an avid reader, I know what types of stories catch my attention and am able to identify life and business experiences that will translate well through storytelling. Please allow me to elaborate....

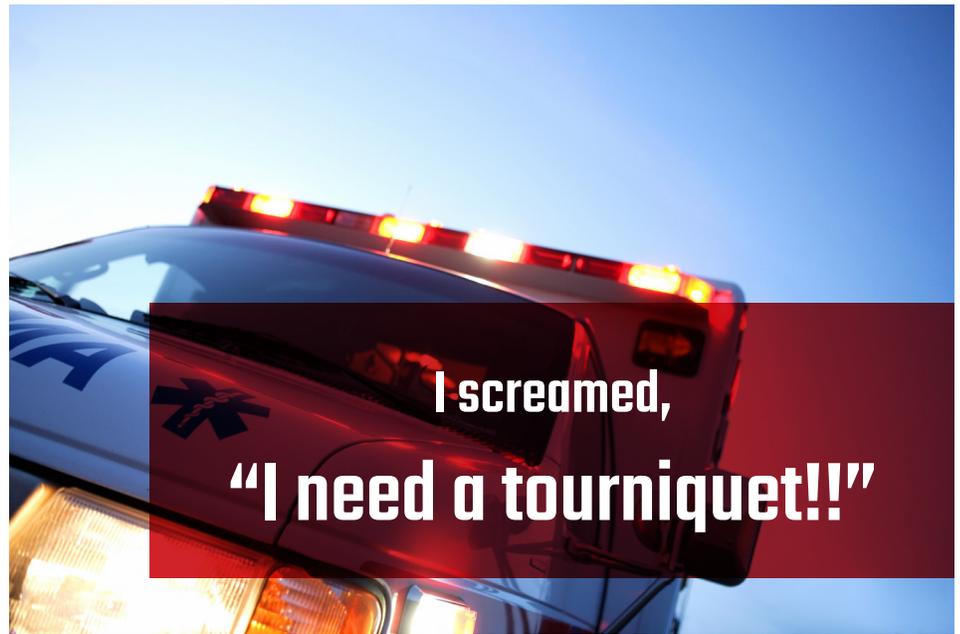
I slit my wrist at the Miss Oklahoma Pageant.

No really. It's true. But it's not what you are thinking. I wasn't in the pageant. I was asked to serve on the selection panel as a judge for the Miss Oklahoma's Outstanding Teen pageant. And now I know you are thinking "Oh, she was a pageant girl growing up," but that's not it either. In fact, I had absolutely zero pageant experience when I was asked to serve. They always have one

community leader "non-pageant" type person on the selection panel to offer a fresh and unjaded perspective. Since I am active in my community and serve at both my local and state RE associations, I fit the bill. So, with very little in the way of expectations, I headed up the turnpike towards Tulsa to PAGEANT WEEK where the Miss Oklahoma and Miss Oklahoma's Outstanding Teen competitions run concurrently. With help from the other (much more experienced)

judges, I settled right into the sequestered existence of a pageant judge. I thought they were joking when they told me that the judges couldn't leave the top floor of the hotel where we were all staying without our handlers in tow. But they were serious. Whenever we did leave the floor, we traveled in a group surrounded by the organization's board members, shielding us from the contestants, their parents and coaches. It was a little strange at first, but once I experienced the hungry stares from the contestants while passing in the common areas, I understood that there was safety in numbers. As the week progressed, I became pretty adept at my role as a judge. Once I figured out what I was doing and how to score the different phases of competition, I loved it! I learned how to tell the difference between the girl wearing the dress and the dress wearing the girl. I quickly recognized when one of the young ladies was just answering the interview questions and when she was nailing it! I watched countless dance routines and singers and was easily able to distinguish who was just good and who was fantastic. I was rubbing elbows with former Miss Americas, and I was thoroughly enjoying being wined and dined by the Miss Oklahoma organization all week. By the time the scores were all tallied and we had crowned the winner, I was trying to figure out how I could make pageant judging a full-time job.

I had such a fantastic time during pageant week that I didn't



I screamed,  
"I need a tourniquet!!"

want it to end. And I certainly didn't want it to end the way that it did. On Sunday morning, after packing up and saying my goodbyes to my fellow judges, the pageant's directors and the newly crowned Miss Oklahoma's Outstanding Teen and I headed down to the lobby to make my first solo trip since checking in. All I had to do was make it to the valet stand, get in my car and drive home. Easy enough, right?

Before I departed the exclusive top floor of the hotel, I was given a six-pack of glass bottles of various flavored soda pop left over from one of the sponsored parties during the week. I thought, "This is great! I can give this soda pop to my son as a 'Mom's been gone all week, but she still loves you' present." So, I start making my way through the lobby that is packed with people checking out. Somehow, I got tripped up on my own feet, and I took a tumble in the lobby. That six-pack of glass soda pop bottles that I was holding onto also took a tumble

and shattered. Being my normal graceful self, I tumbled right on top of them—and slit my wrist—in the lobby of the hotel full of pageant contestants and their parents. I slit my wrist at the Miss Oklahoma pageant. Let that sink in a minute... Have you got the image in your head? Ok, good. Because I need to add something else to the story. I'm also on blood thinners. So, there was blood...lots of blood. In

**"there was blood...  
lots of blood..."**

the lobby of the hotel surrounded by the pageant contestants and their parents, I slit my wrist in the bloodiest fashion at the Miss Oklahoma pageant.

Now, I have never been the most graceful of women. and I'm ok with that. I've learned to fall and get back up pretty quickly and hope that not too many people saw me go down. But this fall...oh, this fall was one for the books. As I was

trying to get myself back up on my feet, I brought my arm up for balance and blood shot across the lobby and began pouring down my arm. When I saw the gaping cut up and down in the center of my wrist, my first thought was “Good God!

That’s how you slit your wrist if you really mean to do it,” and then, I screamed, “I need a tourniquet!!”

Laying there on the cold tile floor of that crowded hotel lobby, I saw many faces flash before me. I saw the horrified faces of the contestants who I just been judging and the faces of their parents who were probably wishing I would just bleed out and die right there for ruining their daughter’s chances at the crown. Just kidding...they didn’t want me to die! Well, not all of them anyways. I saw the faces of two hotel security guards

## “Quite possibly a beauty queen saved my life”

sent to secure the scene until the paramedics could arrive. One of those poor guys was having trouble with all of that blood, and I don’t know who had grown paler in the face, me or him. I was pretty sure he was going to pass out and the paramedics would have to tend to him. I saw the sweet face of one of the Miss Oklahoma contestants, who luckily for me was first aid trained, when she realized that the woozy security guard had no idea how to apply a tourniquet to stop the torrent of blood pouring from my wrist. She stepped in,

took charge and got the wound properly addressed. Quite possibly a beauty queen saved my life. The paramedics arrived and loaded me up. I gave my best pageant wave from the stretcher, as I was wheeled out of the hotel and into the ambulance that rushed me right to St. Francis’ Trauma Emergency Center. There, X-rays revealed some glass inside my wound that was too deep for the ER doctors to reach. Because I’m on blood thinners, surgery was delayed a few days until it was safe to operate. So now, I am going to have this scar on the inside of my left wrist from the time that I slit my wrist at the Miss Oklahoma pageant.

A scar is only as good as the story that goes along with it. And this is one hell of a good story.

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### What elements do you believe make a great story? For example, authenticity, real-life experiences, living in the moment.

A good story teller has just a few seconds to grab the listener’s attention and to gain their trust. Expressive use of facial movement, eye contact, hand gestures, proper emphasis and illustrative wording can usually keep an audience captivated. Honest, real-life experiences told descriptively with humor and a dash of danger or intrigue make for the best story telling experiences.

### How has storytelling benefited you, your business, or your association?

For several years, I served on the Board of Directors for a local Oklahoma City women’s volunteer and fundraising organization. We held an annual leadership development retreat, and one year I was tasked with developing the ice-breaker for the event. I created an exercise that I called “No One Is Perfect” where we went around the room, and each person identified a scar on themselves that had an interesting origin and then told the story. It was a good way to get people talking and to learn a little something about each other that we might not have otherwise known. I co-chaired my local RE association’s leadership development program for two years and started off the first meeting of the year with a round of “No One Is Perfect.” It was a good way to introduce ourselves, and get comfortable with each other, while sharing something personal. Laughter and empathy can be good ingredients to start off effective team building. Of course, shortly after my pageant accident I realized that my unfortunately located scar would make for the best ice breaker story ever.