

Miss Star of Hope

BRITTANY



Brittany DeStefano as a dancer was extraordinarily talented. She had incredible stage presence and anyone who watched her perform had little doubt that she would be a success. As a Miss Starbound Title Winner and proud supporter of *Dancing Today for Tomorrow's Cure* since its inception, she has been a part of the Starbound family. She was suddenly taken from us at the tender age of fifteen on August 10th, 2004. Brittany has held a special place in all of our hearts and her loss is one that is felt by many at our event. It is in her honor that today we will crown our Miss Star of Hope.

Though we will never be able to recapture the person that Brittany truly was or emulate the way in which she approached her dancing, we can keep her memory alive and inspire other artists to perform in the capacity that she did. The Miss Star of Hope title was inspired by Brittany's passion and dedication to her art, her pride in her Miss Starbound title and her favorite color- pink. Her ability to captivate an audience had little to do with her stunning technique and physical beauty. It was her energy, her spirit and her love for dance that radiated on stage during her performances. Judging for the Miss Star of Hope category will be based on more than just talent. It is based on a performer who shows joy and passion on stage through a strong stage presence. These were the defining characteristics of Brittany's dancing, and what will set this title category apart from any other.

In the spirit of all we are here to accomplish in support of the fight against cancer, we must not overlook the fact that our true heroes today are the performers on stage. At a young age, they have recognized a way to utilize their talents to support a worthwhile cause. They are performing today to give back, not to simply win a competition; and this is the essence of *Dancing Today for Tomorrow's Cure*. We are all here today with a greater purpose and we are determined to make a difference.

The definition of dance... to move one's feet or body, or both, rhythmically in a pattern of steps; to leap, skip, as from excitement or emotion; move nimbly or quickly: to dance with joy.

To dance with joy - what a perfect description of Brittany DeStefano. Whether she was rehearsing in the studio or performing on stage, she always danced with such joy and passion. It truly was her first love. Brittany was an extremely talented and hard-working dancer; however, just like any dancer she had her strengths and weaknesses, but any weaknesses were overlooked because she danced with such love and passion the minute she gracefully walked on stage and hit her first pose. She would feel the warm lights above her, take three deep breaths, and off she danced.

July of 2002 we were a couple of miles away at Atlantic City High School and Brittany competed and won the Miss Teen Starbound title. If you look in your program, you can see a picture that was taken right after that awards ceremony with her mother Donna. It was one of her goals for finals, she worked so hard for it and she achieved it. She wore that crown and sash with such pride and when we returned from finals, it was proudly displayed in her bedroom. And that sash and crown are still with her...

On behalf of myself and the DeStefano family I would like to extend our heartfelt thanks and gratitude on continuing the Miss Star of Hope in Brittany's memory to Sandy and her Starbound team. To the teachers and the students who participated in this morning's Miss Star of Hope Competition, thank you! It is so amazing to see how many of you are here today to compete in memory of someone so dear to our heart to celebrate her first love....Dance.

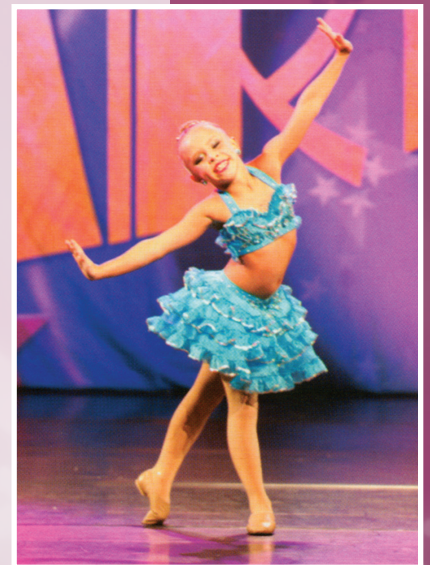
Last but not least, I would like to share a quote that I found from an unknown author that embodies the Miss Star of Hope Competition and the legacy of Brittany DeStefano:

Great dancers aren't great because of their technique; they are great because of their passion.

Miss Star of Hope

BREANNA

Breanna Vergara was born on April 5th, 2003 to Jesus and Claudia Vergara. She was raised in a loving home and a close family environment in Miami Lakes, Florida, along with her younger sister Gabriella. Since birth, “Bre-Bre” irradiated a happy spirit. Always smiling and making friends with everyone, it was clear that upon meeting this child so full of life, one immediately felt her positive energy. Breanna’s piercing bright blue eyes and her “coast to coast” smile were mesmerizing. At the very young age of 2, Bre-Bre showed an evident love for dance as she had a natural attraction to music and movement. At the age of 3, Breanna started training in dance. Quickly, her interest developed into a deep passion for a craft that would later make up a large part of what Breanna dedicated her life to. She earned her 1st solo at the age of 5 and from there on out, she perfected each one of her solos year after year. Mastering all techniques impeccably including ballet, jazz, contemporary, lyrical, hip-hop, and ballroom, there was no challenge too great in the dance world that Bre did not willingly accept. With the utmost love and support of her parents, Breanna began to push her talents to the next level, competing in dance both on a regional and a national level. Her accolades speak for themselves. Bringing home the highest score of “Platinum” for her solos, “Title” soloist at a national level, and placing top 10 in nearly every competition she danced at, Breanna was a powerhouse dancer. She lit up the stage captivating all audiences that had the pleasure to watch her dance both on a local and national level. Bre-Bre always gave her all both in class and onstage and lived a life centered around her love for dance. Yet Bre-Bre’s biggest passion for life stretched beyond that of the stage. In school, Bre was well known not only for her talents in dance, but her incredible ability to multi task and be a part of school clubs and functions. In 2014, Breanna was awarded the American Legion Award at her school, PSN elementary; an award given to only to 1 male and female student in the 5th grade for demonstrating strong qualities of character and good citizenship. In addition to all of her responsibilities and extracurricular activities, Bre was also Student Council President, Safety Patrol Captain, and Book Club President. Breanna clearly left her mark as leader wherever she went touching lives throughout her journey.



Other than Breanna’s trophies and awards, her heart and willingness to give was the biggest and best of any performance she had ever completed. She was a friend to all and accepted everyone for who they were, loving them unconditionally and always supporting them when it was their time to shine. This is what made Breanna the incredible soul that she was and the person we remember today and always. She inspired many to reach for the stars with a smile, to follow their passion despite the hardships that may come with it, and to enjoy each and every day to the fullest. That was and will forever be Breanna’s legacy. Bre-Bre unexpectedly passed on December 9th, 2014 while doing what she lived and loved to do most; dance. Her passing left the Vergara family shattered and an entire community in disbelief. With the outpouring of love, support, and amazing stories of “Bre-Bre’s” impact on hundreds of people both far and near, the Breanna Vergara foundation was established.