

Education Matters
Advocacy Matters
Support Matters

OAC MEMBERS
MATTER

HOW THE SIGNS LED ME, **MISS SPIRIT OF INDIANA,** TO THE OAC



This is where I found my voice and a new platform centered on helping those like her.

My platform became Obesity: Let's CHANGE the Stigma ”

I believe that every day in your life, there are signs. These signs can be affirmations or signals for danger. Some may say that I just overthink everything. And yes, that may be partially true. But for me, I feel comfort in finding help or advice in life. The hardest part is finding the help when you need it most, and sadly, some may never find it at all.

That is how it went for my aunt Jody. She was a beautiful soul who was eager to help others at the drop of a hat. As irony would have it, she was the one who really needed the help. Jody was affected by obesity, and the complications that came with the disease are what ultimately took her life. My freshman year of college would be forever changed with the news of her passing. She was only 43 years old, and the news didn't seem real. Her passing would prove to be a major turning point in my life.



Pictured: Lyndsea Burke with her class

Depression overtook me after Jody's passing, and other issues slowly made life difficult. I noticed my own weight gain first, which only brought my mental state lower. I was constantly reminded of my weight gain because of the activities I was involved in. I was a college athlete and played softball at Hanover College. It was even harder to deal with my appearance as a contestant in the Miss America Organization.

While pageantry often has a negative connotation for most people, it has treated me oppositely. It was a way to have a special bond with Jody. Every time I put on that evening gown or performed my talent, I was brought back to the girls' weekends with Jody and my mother. I was three years old playing "beauty shop," meaning Jody would do my hair and makeup as we watched any and every televised pageant.

That is where OUR dream began. Jody told me, "That will be you someday, representing Indiana." As I got older, I learned more about how these amazing women were more than just "princesses." I became fascinated with the platform requirement for many pageants and the opportunities to give back to the community. These were the reasons I kept competing, but I was not channeling my energy into the most important and rewarding aspect of our dream – service.

Instead, I was depressed and bitter about never getting to say goodbye to Jody, but then the signs hit me like a brick wall. I will always believe that God had an intervention with me and reminded me that Jody would not have wanted me to live that way. She would have wanted to see me thrive and work to live out our dream together. We were going to pick up the pieces, take control of my health and get the help I needed. This is where I found my voice and a new platform centered on helping those like her.

OAC Membership Application

Why Join the OAC? The OAC is a more than 58,000 member-strong 501(c)(3) National non-profit organization dedicated to giving a voice to the individual affected by the disease of obesity and helping individuals along their journey toward better health through education, advocacy and support. Our core focuses are to raise awareness and improve access to the prevention and treatment of obesity, provide evidence-based education on obesity and its treatments, fight to eliminate weight bias and discrimination, elevate the conversation of weight and its impact on health and offer a community of support for the individual affected.

1. OAC Membership Categories *(select one)*

- Individual Membership: \$10/year
- Institutional Membership: \$500/year
- Chairman's Council Membership: \$1000+/year

Are you joining for the first time, or are you renewing your OAC Membership?

- I am joining for the first time *(never been an OAC member)*.
- I am renewing my membership *(have joined the OAC in the past)*.

2. Donation Add-on

Add-on Donation: Make a General Donation

Make a tax-deductible donation to the OAC when joining as a member. Your donation helps the OAC's educational and advocacy efforts.

- \$5
- \$10
- \$25
- \$50
- \$100
- Other _____

3. Membership/Donation Add-on Totals:

Membership Fee: +\$ _____

Donation Add-on *(optional)*: +\$ _____

TOTAL PAYMENT: \$ _____

Payment Information

- Check (payable to the OAC) for \$ _____
- Credit card for my TOTAL, including add-ons, of \$ _____
 - Discover® Credit Card Number: _____
 - MasterCard® Expiration Date: _____
 - Visa® Billing Zip Code: _____
 - Amex® CV Code: _____

Contact Information

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
 Phone: _____ Email: _____

JOIN ONLINE! To join the OAC online, please visit www.ObesityAction.org and click on the "Get Involved" tab.

Mail: OAC
 4511 North Himes Ave. Ste. 250
 Tampa, FL 33614

Fax: (813) 873-7838



Lyndsea Burke

“ Together, the OAC and I are working to let others know their options and resources for help on their journey toward better health. ”

My platform became Obesity: Let's CHANGE the Stigma. The focus is on Creating Hope AND Generating Encouragement. I don't want to think about the weight bias and stigma that Jody faced, but it was often a reality for her. I saw people judge her for the way she looked. They did not know that she had gone to doctors to try to get help, but the solutions were not easy.

They did not know that she worked in an adult day care for individuals with disabilities and had custody of an amazing woman with Down Syndrome. Everyone was so fixated on her outward appearance but did not consider the type of person she was. That is why I used the signs given to me to create a message of positivity, and educate others that hurtful words do not encourage others to get healthy. Instead, those who are affected by obesity need to have a support system that lets them know we are here to cheer them on during their journey toward better health.

This is where the Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) came into my life. After finding my purpose, I wanted to share my message with as many people as possible. I started searching for organizations with a similar mindset and focus as I had. It did not take me long to see the tremendous impact the OAC is making for those affected by obesity. When I saw their movement of ending obesity stigma, I knew this was a community that I needed to be part of. I became a member.

However, I wanted to be more involved than that. After being crowned Miss Spirit of Indiana within the Miss America Organization this past March, everything finally came together. I contacted the OAC because I knew that we could work well together and that I could help further their mission.

Together, the OAC and I are working to let others know their options and resources for help on their journey toward better health.

I've attended numerous speaking events, volunteered my time with the Indiana Medical Weight Loss Center and shared Jody's story. I am also an art teacher who is dedicated to spreading the word about healthy living and obesity stigma to my students. I truly believe that today's youth are tomorrow's leaders, and that is why I work to provide them with tools to be successful in all aspects of their lives. After a lot of trials, the signs have all lined up to give me the best opportunity to help others with an amazing community of people in the OAC. The way I see it, the hardships all came with the biggest reward of helping others every day.

About the Author:

Lyndsea Burke is the reigning Miss Spirit of Indiana 2017, and has been involved with the OAC for the last three years advocating for her platform "Obesity: Let's CHANGE the Stigma". She is currently an art teacher in a small Indiana public school, and in her spare time, she loves to sing and coach/mentor local youth sports.



ABOUT THE OBESITY ACTION COALITION (OAC)

The Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) is a National non-profit organization dedicated to giving a voice to individuals affected by obesity and helping them along their journey toward better health. Our core focuses are to elevate the conversation of weight and its impact on health, improve access to obesity care, provide science-based education on obesity and its treatments, and fight to eliminate weight bias and discrimination.



VIBRANT COMMUNITY



NATIONAL AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS



ANNUAL CONVENTION



ADVOCACY



PUBLIC EDUCATION

LEARN, CONNECT, ENGAGE

The OAC knows that the journey with weight can be challenging but we also know that great things happen when we learn, connect and engage. That is why the OAC Community exists. Our Community is designed to provide quality education, ongoing support programs, an opportunity to connect, and a place to take action on important issues.

Through the OAC Community, you can get access to:

- Weight & Health Education • Community Blogs
 - Community Discussion Forum
 - Ongoing Support • Meaningful Connections
- AND MUCH MORE**



JOIN TODAY: GO TO OBESITYACTION.ORG/JOIN

info@obesityaction.org

(800) 717-3117 | (813) 872-7835 | Fax: (813) 873-7838



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