

The fountain of youth

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62-year-old
will share
secrets
to looking
younger

At age 62, Wendy Hill is the picture of youth. With dark hair cascading down her shoulders and few, if any visible wrinkles, Hill is often asked, "What is your secret?"

The former Carlsbad resident will answer that question and give hints about aging with grace during her workshop, 10 Secrets for a Lifetime of Youthful Beauty, at 10 a.m. Saturday in Encinitas. In addition to talking about her healthy, youthful lifestyle, Hill put it on display Sunday at the Ms. Senior California pageant.

Similar to Hill, contestants in the Ms. Senior competition stray from the typical image of gray-haired grannies rocking the afternoon away while they knit and sip tea. Anything but the stereotypical granny, the contestants are lively, elegant and youthful.

"It's exciting to think about the possibility (of winning)," Hill said during an interview Thursday.

Hill, who won Ms. Senior Orange County this year, was one of 16 finalists competing for the title of Ms. Senior California Sunday in Westminster.

Women ages 60 and older are eligible to compete in Ms. Senior pageants around the state, any of which can qualify them for competition in Ms. Senior California. Winners of the California competition move on to compete for the title of Ms. Senior America.

Hill did not bring home the title, but enjoyed her experience.

A marriage and family therapist who practiced in Carlsbad for 10 years before moving her office to Encinitas, Hill promotes self-confidence and happiness in her work, and reflects both in her personal life and through the pageants.

Relatively new to pageant competition, Hill was turned on to the events circuit while developing her voice.

"After I reached the age of 47, I decided to learn to sing, and I could not sing a note," Hill said, laughing.

But she persevered and was soon singing in competitions around San Diego County and entering her first pageant.

Hill sees the pageants as a chance to spread the word about her life's work.

"I believe that everybody has a purpose and not everybody knows it, and it's not always easy to find. . . . So my professional life has been about helping people find what that is," Hill said.

To those who know her, Hill's foray into pageants is natural.

"At first I was surprised, but then when I thought about it, I really am not," said Rosie Masula, of Carlsbad, who met Hill eight years ago. "She is physically a beautiful woman and she has many talents, but she's also an incredible human being."

For Cyndie deNeve, of Escondido, Hill is an inspiration.

"She continues to pursue her dreams, our beauty and our youth is stress and no matter what the odds," said de Neve, Hill's spokeswoman, in an e-mail. "And she encourages others to pursue their dreams as well."

Similar to other pageants, the Ms. Senior competitions are based on an evening gown competition, personal interview, talent and "philosophy on life" statement. "The only thing that (Ms. Senior) doesn't have that Miss America has is the bathing suit (competition) and thank goodness," Hill said.

It does not hurt that Hill looks 20 years shy of her true age.

"Of course it helps to be in shape and be attractive," Hill said.

Staying young is easy, Hill said, if you remember to follow certain guidelines in your life.

For example, she recommends maintaining self-confidence.

"A woman who is confident in herself is going to take care of herself," Hill said. "The No. 1 drain on our health and on our beauty and our youth is stress and if we have self-confidence and recognize unhealthy...toxic stress, we can put boundaries in our relationship. We can balance it. We can make it so our lives are healthy."



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