

**Name:** Talia Hill  
**Local Title:** Miss Roy

### Love For Our Elders

We have all felt the impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic. We spent weeks or even months in self isolation, and spent time away from those we love most. While we sacrificed during the pandemic, the world's older population has been particularly marginalized. In 2020, 7.7 million community-dwelling adults age 65 and older in the United States were socially isolated, and 1.3 million were severely socially isolated, and unable to see families and their support systems. I have seen firsthand the emotional, physical and mental toll many senior citizens have experienced during the pandemic and in their daily lives.

Older adults are faced with many challenges, many are diagnosed with chronic illnesses which may include arthritis, diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and dementia. According to the CDC, eighty percent have at least one chronic condition. The National Institute of Mental Health has linked chronic illness to depression and other mental health challenges. Senior citizens before COVID-19 were at predisposition to poor mental health. With a year of isolation and a year with precautions and weeks in and out of quarantine, the effects are staggering; 43% of Americans age 60 and older report feeling lonely. It is imperative that we, as a community, focus on those who have given so much to us. As Miss Utah I am prepared to lead that charge and support senior citizens in my community, state and country.

"Love For Our Elders" is a non-profit organization created by Jacob Cramer who has a passion for youth building relationships with senior citizens. The organization's purpose is to connect young people with those aging in their community by writing letters. Their motto is "We're fighting loneliness with love, one letter at a time." These letters benefit both groups. I chose this organization because it hits close to home. I am able to live my Social Impact Initiative every day as I care for the aging generation in an assisted living center as a CNA. I have the opportunity to care for some of the most inspiring people. One resident encouraged me to never stop learning, he was 94 and always had a book in his hand. Other residents have impressed me with all they have accomplished in their lives. Because of them and the joy I feel when serving them, I have discovered a career in geriatric nursing.

As Miss Roy I have been able to visit local schools and hold letter writing sessions where the students wrote letters to older adults in the community. Being able to deliver these letters will forever be some of my most cherished moments. I will never forget the look on one man's face as his eyes focused on my crown, he was bed bound and the majority of his visitors were staff members. He was so grateful to have someone to sit by him, hold his hand and listen. I have been able to help students set up their own service opportunities in local care facilities after having a positive experience writing letters. Being able to step outside of myself and build these relationships has given my life so much meaning and purpose. I am confident this is a benefit that transcends generation gaps. I look forward to continuing helping others build these relationships as Miss Utah.

The Miss America organization embodies service and allows women like me to make an extraordinary impact on the community, state, and country. I know as Miss Utah, my Social Impact Initiative "Love For Our Elders," will result in meaningful relationships and happier lives for all generations.

 3/24/2022  
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Signature/Date