

# SUGAR LAND'S Pageant Princess

JAYLA MCDONALD REIGNS SUPREME ON TLC'S TODDLERS AND TIARAS SHOW

WRITTEN BY TONYA ELLIS | SELECT PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRYSHELLE SPURGEON

Ask 6-year-old Jayla McDonald what she wants to be when she grows up, and she'll tell you many things: "A nurse, a mommy, a teacher, an artist, a dress designer..." The Sugar Land cutie can cross TV star off her list, because she's already got that covered. This past spring, Jayla was featured on The Learning Channel's (TLC) reality show *Toddlers and Tiaras*. She wowed the judges, winning all seven events in her age category. Jayla earned the highest overall score out of 72 contestants. She was crowned Ultimate Grand Supreme and awarded a \$1,000 cash prize.

"It feels super, super, super!" she exclaims. Her mom Jamesia McDonald adds, "I've never seen her perform like that, ever. She definitely wanted to win."

## A FAMILY AFFAIR

Family members from as far away as Louisiana and Mississippi came to the pageant in Plano to cheer little Jayla on. She didn't disappoint her fans, scoring first in talent and outfit of choice, as well as being named most beautiful, best personality, and best dressed, among other categories.

Preparing for pageants become a bonding time for the youngster and her mom, a former beauty queen herself. "She's loves doing it," says Jamesia. "She's always going, 'When's our next competition?'"

Jayla's been competing in pageants since she was 18 months old. "I probably have 50 or 60 crowns," she says. How many more does she want to win? Jayla answers, "5,000!" She

competes in an average of two pageants a month around the state. On school holidays, she may travel to an out-of-state competition. Jayla does well in school and enjoys cheering for the New Territory Knights football team when she's not competing in pageants.

## TODDLERS AND TIARAS

An area pageant director recommended Jayla for the *Toddlers and Tiaras* TV show when the producers asked for top competitors to profile, recalls Jamesia. They sent producers an audition video along with their responses to a preliminary set of questions. Within a week, they learned that Jayla had been selected for the show. A week later, film crews visited their house. "It was awesome," shares Jayla. "They interviewed me and my mom. They even filmed me tap dancing."

Even though her all-time favorite TV show is *My Babysitter's a Vampire* on the Disney Channel, Jayla enjoys watching *Toddlers and Tiaras* with her mom each week. "She couldn't wait for the TV crew to come," recalls Jamesia. The actual show featuring Jayla will air


Aug. 15, and Jamesia plans on hosting a viewing party with family and friends to celebrate.

## NATURAL TALENT

Shows like *Toddlers and Tiaras* sometimes show moms forcing kids to practice for hours a day or spending thousands of dollars on costumes and props. That's not the



Jayla McDonald recently wowed the judges on TLC's *Toddlers and Tiaras*, winning all seven events in her category.



Jayla's mom Jamesia says her daughter is a natural at pageants and enjoys every minute of it

"It has helped build her character. She's outspoken, not shy at all, and very confident. I don't see any ending point. She'll do it until she says she doesn't want to do it anymore."

— Jamesia McDonald, Jayla's mom

case with Jayla. "We don't spend hours in front of a mirror preparing," says Jamesia. "She's really a natural; it doesn't take much."

Kymerli Browder, Jayla's pageant coach and a fifth-generation beauty pageant queen, agrees. "The thing that helps Jayla stand out is her high energy and willingness to learn new things," Browder shares. "She's very easy to work with. It's not very common that you see a 6-year-old that has the talent that she has."

Jamesia says she keeps costs low by having her sister sew Jayla's costumes and enlisting the help of Browder, who is a licensed cosmetologist, for her hair and makeup. "It's really about the personality of the child, not about how much you put into the clothes," explains Jamesia. "We'll take a \$20 Wal-Mart outfit and add accessories and embellishments. Our talent coach has a really good imagination about putting things together."

### LIFE LESSONS

Jayla wins many of the events she enters, but she has fun even if she doesn't place. "It's a lesson to be learned," Jamesia shares. "It's a competition. Not everyone is going to be a winner. I'm never upset with her or mad at her that she doesn't win. It's about having fun."

When Jayla is not on the stage at pageants, she can be found playing and having fun with the other contestants. "Usually when we're at the competition, she's playing hand games with the other girls and just being a little girl," says Jamesia. "When it's her turn, she really doesn't get nervous. If she forgets her routine, she ad-libs."

Jamesia says she will allow Jayla to compete in pageants as long as she's interested. "It has helped build her character," Jamesia shares. "She's outspoken, not shy at all, and very confident. I don't see any ending point. She'll do it until she says she doesn't want to do it anymore." **SLM**

*TONYA ELLIS enjoys feature writing and spending time with her family.*

Don't miss local contestant **Jayla McDonald** as she makes her TV premier on **TLC's *Toddlers and Tiaras*** on Aug. 15. To learn more, visit [tlc.howstuffworks.com/tv/toddlers-tiaras](http://tlc.howstuffworks.com/tv/toddlers-tiaras).



The 6000 sq. ft. studio is open in Greatwood!

Now registering for Fall Classes  
Hurry in before they're all filled up!

**DANCE**  
DU COEUR  
SUGAR LAND DANCE STUDIO

Give her the chance to be everything she wants to be.

[SugarLandDance.com](http://SugarLandDance.com) 281.565.0005 **Let her shine.**

[SugarLandDance.com](http://SugarLandDance.com) 281.565.0005  
Connect with us on [www.facebook.com/dance.ducoeur](http://www.facebook.com/dance.ducoeur)

