



Grace has reached the semi-finals of Miss England Photo: [Anna Fowler](#)

Dance grad dreams of Miss England victory

Idha Toft Valeur

A KU dance graduate made it through to the semi-final heat of Miss England, after entering the competition for fun.

Grace Smithen is representing Kingston, her home since she began her course at the University, in the semi-final of Miss England.

The 25-year-old hopes to use the Miss England platform to promote the need for increased arts funding. If she wins she plans to use the £100,000 prize money to open her own dance school for children.

Grace said: "It's always been a dream of mine to open up a dance school and if I got through then I would use both the publicity and the prize money to help funding in the arts community."

The graduate, who is pursuing her career in dance while working closely with KU as a fundraising co-ordinator, did not expect to get as far in the competition as she has.

"I saw the advertisement a few months ago and thought, why not? I was shocked when I got through to the semi-final heat, but I am determined to give the competition everything I've

got," said the dancer.

"I think the competition is a fantastic opportunity. I have experience with both modelling and fundraising, and thought the competition would really let me display my skill set.

"I really want to use the competition to raise awareness of the need for funding in the arts community. As a dancer, this is a cause very close to my heart."

Grace is aiming to raise awareness and promote the need for arts funding and she aspires to be a role model for children wanting to pursue a career in the arts.

Miss England is the only competition in the UK where the winner will be entered into the Miss World competition which will be held in Washington DC.

Grace will also fundraise for the Miss World charity, Beauty with a Purpose.

Beauty with a Purpose's sole aim is to offer aid to humanitarian projects across the world, and Grace will be hosting several events to fundraise for the charity.

"I am extremely excited and feel



The dancer Photo: [Anna Fowler](#)

privileged to be raising money for the Miss England charity, Beauty with a Purpose. I feel extremely proud to be in a competition that made this charity possible," said Grace.

Voting for the finalists in the second semi-final heat ends on November 30, and if Grace makes it through she will be going to Kelham Hall, Nottinghamshire for the semi-final on June 4, 2017.

Follow Grace's progress through her Facebook page. **Vote by texting MISS SEMI05 TO 63333.**

KU student's bid to save cousin from killer tumour

Oda Ottesen

A KU student from Somalia is fundraising online to save her 13-year-old cousin's life, after a "gruesome" tumour growing on his face and neck has left him barely able to move.

Due to the limited treatment options available in the Somali capital Mogadishu, Ali Abdi Omar needs a medical visa in order to get treated abroad, and his family fears his time is running out.

"He used to be an active child who played football with his friends and spent a lot of time outside," said his cousin Samira Barkhadle, who studies biomedical science at Kingston University.

"Now he is in a lot of pain. He says that it's difficult to even move around."

The local hospital believes Ali suffers from lymphoma.

However, they have recommended that his parents seek out treatment in a "more developed country" for a more accurate diagnosis and safer treatment options.

The symptoms have progressed since the middle of 2014, and at this stage the tumour has grown so big and



Ali Abdi Omar Photo: [Cabdimalik Muse Coldoon](#)

"unsightly" he has had to put his education at the local mosque on hold.

"I cry everytime I notice the other children talking about me or looking at me," Ali said.

"To me, it's worse than the physical pain I'm feeling."

Samira said she first heard about Ali's diagnosis a month ago, and felt right away that she had to do something to help.

As her cousin is from a nomadic



Samira Barkhadle

Photo: [Dino Groshell](#)

family his parents have moved around all his life, and they earn just enough money to get by.

Even though Samira has grown up in London, Ali was still family to her, and she knew his parents were struggling to get money.

"[His family] were really shocked by the response," Samira said.

"People have given their money to a kid they don't know which is really amazing to me. It's touching."

After seeing how difficult it is to get treatment in his home country, Ali now dreams of becoming a doctor so that he can help others in the future.

He said he once heard his parents say that if there were doctors nearby, he could have been treated, and wants to make a difference if he ever gets the chance.

The family's safest and most affordable option is a hospital in India. However, acquiring a medical visa has proved difficult and expensive.

Samira's Gofundme page has raised just over £2,500 so far, but the family needs more to pay for the medical fees, travel and accommodation near the Indian hospital.

"A lot of my friends and family have donated as much as they could afford," Samira said.

"But honestly I'm just as grateful if people share it.

"I'm just hoping that he will get the treatment soon, because he is so young and he needs to carry on with his life."

To make a donation to help fund his lifesaving treatment, visit Samira's Gofundme page on gofundme.com/alismedicalfees.

Petition to stop shops opening on Boxing day

Lucy Hutchon

TWO PETITIONS created to stop shops opening on Boxing day, have gathered more than 350,000 signatures.

Both petitions have now been given to parliament to make a decision.

Students across the country are being forced to work late into the night on Christmas Eve and early hours of Boxing Day.

KU student Rosie Whooley said: "In my company, we have to stay until 9/10pm on Christmas Eve to get ready for Boxing Day sales. That means we don't actually get to celebrate Christmas Eve or have time to be excited for Christmas because we're working."

Many students have part time jobs to help fund university.

Ian Lapworth, creator of the Change petition, said: "In the last week alone, it's attracted more than 122,000 new signatures. Way beyond what I expected when I first created it.

"I'm saying that retailers don't need to make money on Boxing Day, and consumers don't need to spend money on Boxing Day."

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