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OF HEALTH AND HOMES Disease triggers altruism Miss York County helps lupus charity and Habitat for Humanity.

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GWEN NEWMAN For the Daily Record/ Sunday New

Miss York County has the beauty and brains that come with the title. She also has lupus, a chronic autoimmune disorder that she's lived with since age 13.

Now 21, Wilson said the disease that often affects the skin, joints and internal organs hasn't held her back. It motivates her. It has shaped her pageant platform, channeled her creative energies and defined her career choice.

As Miss York County, Wilson champions both the Harrisburg chapter of the Lupus Foundation of America and the York chapter of Habitat for Humanity.

She makes regular guest appearances for both organizations, attending special events and serving as a spokeswoman to help raise public awareness and appreciation.

One represents a part of her; the other symbolizes what's close to her. Wilson became active with the campus chapter of Habitat for Humanity while attending Penn State. The campus group was so engaged that it raised more than \$40,000 - enough to construct a building and, in the process, impart building skills that Wilson says she's sure to put to later use.

On Saturday, Wilson was on hand for York Habitat's Fourth Annual 5K Run/Walk and one mile fun run in Dover. Because of her illness, Wilson didn't run in the fundraising event, but she attended to show her support.

This fall, Wilson will enter the University of Virginia to study medicine and pursue her growing interest in the field of rheumatology.

"It isn't life-threatening, but an everyday challenge," she said of lupus, which is often accompanied by chronic inflammation and arthritis-like symptoms.

"I couldn't do as much in high school. It kind of forces you to grow up faster and to place emphasis on other sorts of things."

As a teen, Wilson had to curtail certain activities. She couldn't maintain the higher energy levels or later curfews of healthier friends. Because she is photosensitive and more susceptible to sunburn, she also didn't head to the beach with her graduating class. She did pursue ballet and the violin.

Wilson is a 2003 graduate of Dallastown Area High School and graduated in December 2006 from Penn State University's Schreyer Honors College with a

bachelor's degree in biochemistry and molecular biology.

"I have some limitations," she said, "but it's also inspired me to go to medical school. It's definitely given me a purpose in life and a passion for medicine."

PIC: DAILY RECORD / SUNDAY NEWS - KRISTIN MURPHY Miss White Rose City Carmen Bloom, 18, of Reading, left; Linda Wilson of York Township; and Miss York County Christina Wilson, 21, of York Township react after Wilson accidentally 'speared' Bloom with her crown as the two girls leaned in to look at a photo on a camera outside a Habitat for Humanity house in Dover after York Habitat's fourth annual 5K Race on Saturday. PIC: DAILY RECORD / SUNDAY NEWS - KRISTIN MURPHY Miss York County Christina Wilson and Miss White Rose City Carmen Bloom cheer on runners at the start of York Habitat's fourth annual 5K Race on Saturday.

PIC: DAILY RECORD / SUNDAY NEWS - KRISTIN MURPHY Miss York County Christina Wilson and Miss White Rose City Carmen Bloom pose for the camera Saturday.

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