

# Mrs. Wisconsin is a 'Beacon of Hope' for Veterans

**Kim Galske enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1995, and since then she has assisted fellow veterans in a variety of roles, including as a beauty pageant winner**

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Kim Galske has taken the values instilled in her as a Marine and transferred them to the pageant stage. From the moment she donned the crown as Mrs. Wisconsin, it became the “veterans” crown.



*Kim Galske is a Marine Corps veteran who served from 1996-2001. She was named Mrs. Wisconsin in 2019 and has used that platform to champion veteran causes in the state. Photos courtesy of Kim Galske.*

“It is a beacon of hope for veterans who don’t have a voice, the ones who didn’t come home,” said Galske, who served in the Marine Corps from 1996 to 2001 and earned the Mrs. Wisconsin title in 2019.

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She said she uses the crown not only to make veterans aware of Salute the Troops Wisconsin, where she is the executive director, but for “every other veteran organization” and non-veteran groups that want to be involved in the military community.

### **Becoming Mrs. Wisconsin**

About six years ago, Galske said, she was asked to be a sponsor for the Miss Wisconsin pageant, where she met “some really amazing young women” who volunteered in their communities.

Those interactions prompted Galske to question how she herself was contributing. Then she discovered the Mrs. United States Pageant, a division of the United States National Pageants for married women 21 years old or older.

In 2018, Galske earned the distinction of Mrs. Fond Du Lac County and was a runner-up for the state title. Over the course of the following year, Galske worked hard to “make a bigger impact” in her hometown.

“The U.S. pageant system stands for being the light,” Galske said. “So be the light in your community. Be the light in the groups you’re a part of.”

The following year, Galske competed against eight women and took the crown.

“[The Marine Corps] prepared me for so many things I never would have expected my life to have been,” Galske said.

### **From the Marines to Civilian Life**

Galske joined the Marine Corps in 1995. She grew up in southern Arizona and did not have a “strong core” for a family. The Marine Corps Reserves Center in Tucson, Ariz., was located across the street from her middle school.

From the experience of seeing Marines on a regular basis, Galske said, she wanted to have a family like the Marine Corps.

“I knew that at 14 years old, I was going to join the Marines,” said Galske, who served on active duty at Camp Pendleton in California from 1996-2001.

Currently a religious affairs specialist in the Wisconsin National Guard, Galske said that in her transition back to civilian life, she held more than a dozen jobs between 2001 and 2008 and moved to “many different states.” By 2008, Galske said, she was homeless with a 6-year-old child.

A friend in Wisconsin helped her find resources to get “back on her feet.” She then secured a

job, a vehicle and housing and went on to manage an investment company and would later transition to entrepreneurship.

“I really had to try to figure out life again,” Galske said.

During that time, she said, she vowed to help veterans if she ever had the opportunity to do so.

“I didn’t know what that looked like at the time, I was just trying to survive,” Galske said. “It took about five years before I could finally move forward in helping other people.”

In 2017, Galske became Salute the Troop’s executive director. She said her experience as a veteran — not just a Marine — has helped her in that role.

“It’s not about you,” Galske said. “They teach you selflessness the moment you walk in the door. As vets, no matter who we are, we want to help.”

In her work at Salute the Troops, she has connected with Gordon Shultz, past commander at VFW Post 9202 in Germantown, Wis. He has become a “dear friend,” according to Galske, and has helped her meet Korean War and Vietnam War veterans.

Her personal experiences from the Marine Corps have helped her connect with other vets, including those with combat experience.

“I have definitely seen things, too, as an MP in the Marine Corps that are traumatic, just as they have injuries, [whether that be] psychological or physical,” Galske said.