



# TAMI'S BIG DREAM

Miss Wolverhampton Curve is now vying for the crown in a national plus-size beauty pageant, as **Heather Broome** reports



**S**he used to be a svelte size 10, but aspiring model Tami Varden says she feels much happier in her own skin now that she has a fuller figure.

And after being named Miss Wolverhampton Curve 2017, Tami now has her sights set on the national plus-size beauty title.

The 20-year-old administration worker from Wednesfield is going for Miss British Beauty Curve, with the winner to be crowned at a contest on August 5 at the Hazlitt Theatre in Maidstone, Kent.

Before clinching the Wolverhampton title, Tami had entered a beauty pageant that was not aimed at plus-size women.

She finished in second place, and that gave her the inspiration to look out for more beauty contests.

Although she's barely a size 14, Tami is just 4ft 11in tall, making her appear more curvy.

"I used to be a size 10 and now I'm a 12-14 I am a lot more confident than I was before, she says.

"I am a lot fitter now, I've got a personal trainer and I feel so much healthier. I go to the gym five times a week, it's hard work but I love it, I am addicted.

"I love my figure more now than when I was a size 10, and on social media I try to get the message across to fuller-figured girls that it's okay.

"As long as you are comfortable in your own skin and happy about the way you look, whether you're a size 6 or a 20, it's absolutely fine, it doesn't matter. You shouldn't ever listen to negative comments."

**CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE:**

Tami Varden at her home in Wednesfield; the aspiring model is vying for Miss British Beauty Curve; with boyfriend Luke Smith; Tami sporting her favourite outfit.

**PREVIOUS PAGE:**

Tami has already been crowned Miss Wolverhampton Curve 2017.

It's sound advice from the former Pool Hayes Academy pupil, who has more than 2,200 followers on her Instagram page @tamivardenx.

"Ninety per cent of people are positive and I find it quite humbling that I am getting messages from women and girls telling me that I am an inspiration," she says.

"I am trying to give other girls that confidence that I feel in myself.

"It's beautiful and uplifting how women that are strangers are complimenting me and I love to compliment women back.

"I think empowering women is a beautiful thing and we should all stick together and lift each other up."

So, who are her role models?

Tami says she's inspired by American model Ashley Graham and Australian actress Rebel Wilson of *Bridesmaids* and *Pitch Perfect* fame – both fuller-figured ladies.

Now her dream is to carve out a career in modelling – and she's already doing promotional work for a number of fashion retailers.

**LUCKY**

"I am sponsored by online fashion outlets such as *Inthestyleuk.com*, *Workyourcurves*, *Ooh La La boutique*, *Love Aluna*, as well as many others," she says. "I'm very lucky to have these sponsors as I don't have to do much shopping of my own as the clothes they send me are gorgeous!

"They approached me to do that, it's something that I fell in love with doing. You get free clothes, it's every girl's dream come true.

"If I do ever online shop for myself my favourite place is *Misspam* which is another online outlet. I love them because they are so quick with keeping up-to-date with new fashions.

"I love to be as up-to-date as possible, I feel it's an important aspect of my image. Although they don't do a plus-size range and some clothing only goes up to a 12. I can only order clothing that is a 14 so I do struggle with them sometimes.

"I love to shop at *Boohoo*, *Inthestyleuk.com* and *New Look*. They all have the plus-size ranges which are amazing."





## 'I THINK EMPOWERING WOMEN IS A BEAUTIFUL THING AND WE SHOULD ALL STICK TOGETHER AND LIFT EACH OTHER UP.'

Tami works as a business administrator for her family's firm, Varlowe Industrial Services in Wednesfield, and is currently learning accounts. She lives with her parents and 20-year-old boyfriend Luke Smith, whom she met through a shared passion for fast cars and going to shows.

The pair have been together for two years and were recently shortlisted for an ITV2 reality couples show.

It's clear that Tami has a fantastic support network, helping her confidence to grow.

"I love the support I get from my family and Luke's family, they are amazingly supportive of what I do and are always asking me what new exciting things I'm getting up to," she says.

"Mum and Dad love it and get involved and help me out. My mum helps me pick out my outfits, they're just really proud that I am doing something with my life."

Of course, beauty pageants will always attract controversy – and some might say they are sexist or objectify women.

What would Tami say in response to that?

"I think people are entitled to their own opinion, I'm not one to get into confrontations about opinions on matters in the world.

"Everybody could say that anything is sexist and in my opinion that is not achieving anything at all other than conflict.

"So I believe if it's making people happy and building people's confidence, whether it's men or women, just let them get on with it! It's making the world a happier place and that's great, isn't it?"