



# Ohio Adjutant General's Department

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## Ohio Guardmember to compete for Miss Ohio USA<sup>®</sup>

COLUMBUS, Ohio—An Ohio Army National Guardmember from Cleveland is in the running to become the 2009 Miss Ohio USA<sup>®</sup>.

2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Elena Gonzalez will compete for the title against more than 50 contestants from throughout the state during a Nov. 20-22 competition at The Vern Riffe Center for the Arts on the Shawnee State University campus in Portsmouth, Ohio. The winner will go on to represent Ohio in the 2009 Miss USA<sup>®</sup> competition April 19 at the Planet Hollywood Resort & Casino in Las Vegas.

Gonzalez, a native of Euclid, near Cleveland, won the opportunity to represent Ohio after winning the title of Miss Euclid USA<sup>®</sup> in July 2008. The competition marked the second such contest for the 23-year-old medical platoon leader and logistic operations officer for the Cleveland-based 237<sup>th</sup> Brigade Support Battalion. Gonzalez entered her first pageant when she competed for Miss Teen Ohio USA as a high school student in 2003.

A December 2007 graduate of The University of Toledo with a Bachelor of Science degree in biology, Gonzalez enjoyed a full scholarship through the Army ROTC program. She said the military has helped her prepare for the competitions in several ways.

“It’s pushed me to do things that I never would have done in my civilian life, like rappelling or obstacle courses,” Gonzalez said. “It’s definitely been a confidence builder.”

Although Soldiering and competing in pageants might seem an odd mix, Gonzalez said she likes to push the envelope and do the unexpected.

“I like to break stereotypes. You can paint your nails and put on make up and still be a Soldier,” she said. “It has nothing to do with the internal drive for success. The military is just another avenue for success.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: The Ohio National Guard Public Affairs Office at 614-336-7000 or CPT Marina Rafferty at (614)551-9938. Please visit our public website for more information about the Ohio National Guard at <http://ong.ohio.gov>.

Photo Caption:

2nd Lt. Elena Gonzalez, a medical platoon leader and logistics management officer with the 237th Brigade Support Battalion, 37th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, works at her Green Road Armory in Cleveland Nov. 14. Gonzalez is a contestant and is scheduled compete for the Miss Ohio USA<sup>®</sup> title Nov. 21-22 at The Vern Riffe Center for the Arts on the Shawnee State University campus in Portsmouth, Ohio. (US Army photo by SSG Cindy Harper) (Released)