

## Out at beauty contest

By Phillip Zonkel, Staff Writer

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LONG BEACH - Jenelle Evyn Hutcherson isn't the typical beauty pageant contestant.

Her hair is spiked and colored teal, and her nose is pierced. She has a few tattoos, including red lips on her neck and "What Comes Around Goes Around" on her forearm.

The 25-year-old hair stylist and Long Beach resident also is setting a record - next month Hutcherson will be the first out lesbian to compete in the Miss Long Beach pageant, which started in 1950.

Hutcherson says she entered the pageant to motivate people to re-evaluate their definitions of beauty and to represent the diversity of Long Beach women.

She won't be wearing an evening gown and heels; Hutcherson is designing and sewing her own tuxedo.

Her escort for the evening will be her mother, Yvonne Mydland, who lives in Bakersfield.

"It's another way to make a statement" Hutcherson said during an interview earlier last week at the Ocean Boulevard condo she shares with her girlfriend, Masa Zokaei, 29.

"It's another way to make gay kids realize

parents can support their gay kids, or an adult can see a parent supporting her gay child," she said. "It's a good message."

Hutcherson says she entered the pageant after being encouraged last October by pageant director Justin Rudd, a client of hers.

Rudd was discussing the pageant with Hutcherson, who asked if she could volunteer backstage as a hairstylist. Rudd went a step further and suggested she enter as a contestant.

Hutcherson told Rudd she wouldn't wear a dress and heels, but she would don a tuxedo.

Rudd loved the idea and changed the evening gown category to formal attire, he said.

Earlier this year, Hutcherson agreed to compete for the 2011 title of Miss Long Beach.



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"It has never been listed in the rules that you have to be heterosexual to enter," Rudd said. "Her sexual orientation has nothing to do with her scoring."

Hutcherson moved to Long



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Beach three years ago after growing up in Bakersfield. Her mom is Catholic, and her Southern Baptist father, James Lee, died when she was 10 years old.

A tomboy most of her life and bullied in high school, Hutcherson was a senior when she came out to her mom, she said.

Shortly thereafter, Hutcherson attended counseling sessions at two Bakersfield churches, where she was told to stop being a lesbian.

The sessions, which lasted a few months, didn't help, Hutcherson said.

"It took me down the wrong road," she said. "But it helped me figure out who I wasn't and helped me develop a sense of self."

Eventually, Hutcherson's mom suggested talking with a different counselor, a gay man, who helped the teenager cope with her identity, Hutcherson said.

"I was a churchgoing person and thought she needed to talk to someone, but I could see it wasn't helping her," Mydland said. (Jenelle's sexual orientation) "is a part of who she is. It wasn't a thought, like she enjoyed wearing certain clothes.

"If Jenelle had had an outlet of someone to talk with earlier, it would have helped her," Mydland said.

Back at the condo, Hutcherson is busy sewing and hemming the black slacks on her custom-made tuxedo.

Her jacket is going to be double-breasted and "elegant with a metallic and punk-rock edge."

Her shirt and tie are going to be shades of purple, which also are going to coordinate with her mom's purple knee-length dress.

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Hutcherson also is designing and making her own two-piece swimsuit, she said. It's going to feature Dr. Seuss-inspired board shorts with red and white stripes. The top is going to be a short tank top, she said.

Hutcherson knows her fashion choices might be unorthodox for a beauty pageant contestant, but she wouldn't have it any other way, she said.

"I'm breaking the mold," Hutcherson said.

The event takes place Nov. 13 at The Grand Long Beach Event Center, 4101 E. Willow St.

Tickets, which range from \$20 to \$550, will go on sale Sunday via [www.misslongbeach.com](http://www.misslongbeach.com).

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Follow Phillip Zonkel's coverage of the LGBT community on his Out in the 562 Blog at [www.presstelegram.com](http://www.presstelegram.com) and his Twitter feed at [twitter.com/outinthe562](https://twitter.com/outinthe562)

### The Miss Long Beach pageant

Jenelle Evyn Hutcherson will be competing with 11 other confirmed contestants.

Contestants are ranked by a panel of three judges in three categories: formal attire, swim wear and individual interviews. Finalists also will be judged by an on-stage interview.

The winner garners a crown, banner and photo shoot with Justin Rudd. She also receives a \$1,500 appearance contract with Rudd's Community Action Team. She is

required to participate or volunteer at 30 of Rudd's events and receives \$50 for each appearance.

Entry to the pageant is open until Nov. 13, the day of the event. For more information, see [www.misslongbeach.com](http://www.misslongbeach.com).

A contestant must live, work or attend school in Long Beach.

A contestant can enter one of four age categories.

Registration is \$100 through Sunday and then increases until the day of the event.

### Want to go?

**What:** Miss Long Beach pageant

**Where:** The Grand Long Beach Event Center, 4101 E. Willow St.

**When:** 6 p.m. Nov. 13

**Admission:** \$20-\$550. Tickets will go on sale Oct. 30.



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