

Olsen's new gigs

Now that her NMP role is coming to an end, Eunice Olsen is focusing on expanding her acting, hosting and music career

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From beauty queen to politician and now, poster girl for instant coffee. Eunice Olsen's life post-parliament, after it was announced last month that she is not seeking another term as Nominated Member of Parliament (NMP), is looking perky.

The Miss Singapore Universe 2000 was last week named the face of Nescafe Gold's new advertisement campaign.

Besides the java gig, the brainy beauty's cup is overflowing on the work-front when it comes to the small screen. Already, she has a supporting role in the Channel 5 English drama *Red Thread*, where she plays a sex siren.

And she is also the co-host of *Duke*, a new men's lifestyle programme on StarHub cable channel AXN.

The roles mark a step up from earlier, forgettable forays into the entertainment scene where she co-hosted a game show and an arts programme.

Being an NMP has certainly helped catapult her into the limelight. But if you ask her, her turning point came after being crowned Miss Singapore Universe and competing in the Miss World competition in Cyprus. The 31-year-old Eurasian declares: "That was when I decided that I really wanted to get involved with community work and work my career around it."

Indeed, through her political work she achieved that, while also managing to be a volunteer, a musician, actress, host and model.

Notably however, she is the only Miss Singapore Universe who has been able to keep her name in the spotlight. The rest of her beauty queen counterparts have simply faded away.

Her multiple roles have now caught the eye of advertisers, resulting in the Nescafe Gold promotion. She was named its first brand ambassador because of her multifaceted roles in society and her "ability to juggle five different things and do it competently", said Nestle Singapore managing director Suresh Narayanan.

The nationwide campaign kicked off with a media event at FairPrice Xtra at Ang Mo Kio Hub last Wednesday. It takes the form of life-size posters at MRT stations, bus stops and supermarkets.

She steps down as NMP in July.

On why she will not be standing for a third term, she says: "After doing two terms, I should let new people in and allow new perspectives to come aboard."

But leaving after four years of Parliament service will be hard, she says, as she managed to learn and work with many different Volunteer Welfare Organisations (VWOs) during her term.

She says: "The NMP platform is a fantastic one to raise issues as I had the opportunity to voice the concerns of the people that I worked with on the ground."

As an NMP, she brought up issues such as national service deferments for sportsmen and musicians. She also championed more help for abused foreign workers and during a debate about the upcoming Integrated Resorts, called for gambling counselling services to help fight social problems of compulsive gambling.

Her proudest moment as NMP was the subtitled of TV news in 2006, she says.

A newbie among veteran politicians during her first budget in 2005, she raised the issue of including subtitles for local TV news bulletins after volunteers of the Singapore Association for the Deaf (SADeaf)

told her it would help the deaf understand the news.

When MediaCorp finally implemented it, she said "that was when she truly felt the power of the Parliament platform". She adds: "You realise you are part of the process where change takes place."

Her senior and mentor, Ang Mo Kio GRC MP Inderjit Singh, wishes that she would stay on for a third term. He was one of those who urged her to submit her name for NMP five years ago after noticing her extensive community work.

He does tell LifeStyle, however: "I was worried at first that she would not be able to deliver her points of view in Parliament because she was so young."

His fears proved groundless, as she spoke up in Parliament, adding to debate about issues such as the GST hike, for example.

Now, though, her focus is on developing her lacklustre entertainment career, especially hosting and acting.

She also wants to develop herself as a musician and plans to release a rhythm 'n' blues and electro dance-infused album in February next year.

Community work, though, will always be her passion and something that she will continue to do, she says. She plans to work with Andrew and Grace Home, which takes in troubled teenage girls.

One thing is for sure: Do not expect this good-looker to start posing in slimming ads or appear half naked on the cover of lad magazines now that she has left the decorum of the House.

Asked if she is worried about being forgotten and not taken seriously, she says it does not matter: "I just want to be able to be an instrument to raise awareness about my causes and that people take the work that I do seriously."

"The NMP platform is a fantastic one to raise issues as I had the opportunity to voice the concerns of the people that I worked with on the ground"

EUNICE OLSEN, on her stint as a Nominated Member of Parliament

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