

Teen girl from effective pro-Bush ad to attend inauguration; [FINAL Edition]

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Abstract (Document Summary)

[Ashley Faulkner] was the focus of "Ashley's Story," a pro-[Bush] campaign ad that aired nearly 30,000 times in the month before the election Nov. 2.

In the Faulkner family's own words, it told how Ashley had lost her mother, Wendy, in the Sept. 11 terror attacks. When President Bush learned of this at a Lebanon, Ohio, campaign rally, he gave her a spontaneous, emotional hug. Her father snapped a photo that became the centerpiece of the ad many observers deemed the most moving of the campaign.

The trip by Ashley, now 16, her father, [Lynn Faulkner], and her adult sister Loren will be paid for by Progress for America, the conservative group that aired the ad. The family leaves today to attend the swearing-in, the parade and the Patriot Ball, which is for Ohio residents.

Full Text (456 words)

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Washington

WASHINGTON -- It's only fitting that Mason, Ohio, teenager Ashley Faulkner will get a chance to see President Bush's inauguration firsthand this week.

After all, her ad helped make it happen.

Ashley Faulkner was the focus of "Ashley's Story," a pro-Bush campaign ad that aired nearly 30,000 times in the month before the election Nov. 2.

In the Faulkner family's own words, it told how Ashley had lost her mother, Wendy, in the Sept. 11 terror attacks. When President Bush learned of this at a Lebanon, Ohio, campaign rally, he gave her a spontaneous, emotional hug. Her father snapped a photo that became the centerpiece of the ad many observers deemed the most moving of the campaign.

"He's the most powerful man in the world," Ashley said in the ad, "and all he wants to do is make sure I'm safe, that I'm OK."

The trip by Ashley, now 16, her father, Lynn, and her adult sister Loren will be paid for by Progress for America, the conservative group that aired the ad. The family leaves today to attend the swearing-in, the parade and the Patriot Ball, which is for Ohio residents.

"She thinks it's kind of neat," Lynn Faulkner said. "Obviously, this is something we've never done before. . . . We're kind of thrilled."

He said he and his daughters will be a few "of a gazillion people" who will watch President Bush take the oath of office for his second term.

But there are not many who can claim their ad made a difference in some of the hardest-fought states in last year's election.

The Progress for America Voter Fund spent \$17 million to air the ad in nine battleground states, including Ohio. It was the single largest buy for a commercial in October.

"We said, 'It might come down to one commercial,' and it may well have," Advertising Age wrote about "Ashley's Story" in a post-election roundup.

Liberal-leaning Salon.com called the ad the most widely seen and effective campaign commercial: "In a campaign known for its negative tone . . . the commercial, with its heartfelt 9/11 connection, turned out to be an exception: a memorable, motivating, feel-good ad."

"It was a very powerful ad. It had a big emotional wallop," Brown University campaign ad expert Darrell West said. "When you have an ordinary person who has suffered making the case, it's more credible than a politician saying the same thing."

Lynn Faulkner, who runs a foundation for orphaned children, said Ashley "is glad she helped other people see what she saw."

[Illustration]

PHOTO, B/W, Family photo by Lynn Faulkner via AP; Caption: Ashley's Story": This image was used in an ad before the election.

Credit: Gannett News Service

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