

Meet the 2004 NCF Queen Finalists



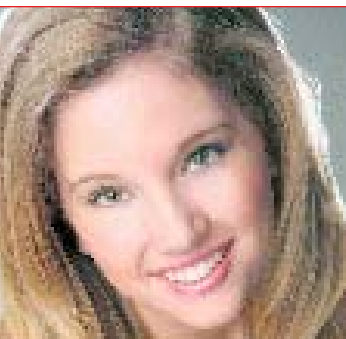
Sarah Adams, 24, of Owosso, graduated from Owosso High School in 1998. She earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan in 2001 and is pursuing a master's degree in administration from Central Michigan University.



Carrie Gregory, 21, from Traverse City, completed home school in 2001. She studies history and religion at Hillsdale College.



Alison Hurlow, 20, from Berrien Springs, graduated from Andrews Academy in Berrien Springs in 2002. She is pursuing a degree in business and marketing from Andrews University.



Brandi McClain, 22, of Grayling, graduated from Grayling High School in 2000. She earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan in 2004 and studies family law at the Thomas M. Cooley Law School.



Margaret Schneider, 21, of Traverse City, graduated from West Senior High School in 2001. She studies music and psychology at the University of Michigan.

The five finalists and National Cherry Queen are attired in the latest fashions by Younker's.

Current National Cherry Queen looks back

BY FORREST KARBOWSKI
Record-Eagle Staff Writer

TRAVERSE CITY— Kelly Plucinski's experience as National Cherry Queen has left her speechless.

"I don't think words can describe it," she said. "You are a completely different person afterwards, it changes you for the better."

In her term as National Cherry Queen, Plucinski has traveled the country to promote cherries, emceeing events and answering questions about cherries at horticultural events. One of the points she emphasized was the health benefits that can be derived from cherries.

She said her favorite location was the Grapevine Festival in Grapevine, Texas.

"They had just made the Top 100 Festivals, and they had never had a queen visit their town," she said. "The people were so welcoming— Southern hospitality is not just a stereotype."

After her reign, Plucinski plans to move to California in December with some friends to pursue an acting career.

But she said her heart will always remain in Traverse City.

"The cherry industry has really become my passion," she said. "Even when passing on the crown, I will try to find ways to thank the community." The Queen's Coronation Ball — a swing style event — will take place at the Grand Traverse Resort & Spa on Friday, July 9 at 7 p.m.

Plucinski also said that she appreciates the opportunities her queen experience has opened up for her, both career-wise and personally. The travel



Record-Eagle file photo/John L. Russell

As 2003-04's National Cherry Queen, Kelly Plucinski traveled the nation promoting cherries. She hopes to pursue an acting career after she passes on the crown.

opportunities allowed her to meet many people — prospective employers, even— whom she may not have otherwise known.

"This is one of the best programs of its kind," she said. "It has helped a lot of young women realize the potential within themselves."

Plucinski will pass on the tiara at the end of the festival week, an action that she said leaves her with mixed feelings.

"Even though it will be

bittersweet, I am very excited for a new girl to continue the legacy," she said. "And this year, I can relax and enjoy Cherry Festival without the judging!"

The National Cherry Queen receives an \$8,000 scholarship to the college or university of her choice. The scholarship is underwritten in part by Huntington Bank.