

2005 National Cherry Festival Queen Finalists



Courtney Fountain, 21, of Traverse City, graduate of TC West. She studies biological sciences at Michigan State.



Janna Klein, 22, of Conklin, graduate of Kenowa Hills. She is studying interior design at Kendall.



Rachel Pahssen, 20, of Traverse City, graduate of TC St. Francis. She studies education at Michigan State.



Elizabeth Rountree, 22, of Williamsburg, graduate of Kalkaska High. She studies English at University of MI.



Julie Teich, 22, of Owosso, graduate of Owosso High. She is studying special education from Saginaw Valley.

Maggie Schneider makes most of time as National Cherry Queen

BY LINDSAY VANHULLE
Record-Eagle staff writer

Her reign as National Cherry Queen is almost over, but Maggie Schneider says the fact she won the title last July hasn't even hit her yet.

"All the festival people call me Queen Maggie, and it still sounds so weird to me," said Schneider, 22, of Traverse City. "It's not quite as special if you're used to it, and so it's, 'Yeah, I guess I am.'"

Even though she's excited for a new queen to be crowned, Schneider said she's sad to see her year end.

"I feel like I lost two months out of my year," she said, referring to the November car accident that left her seriously injured and hospitalized for nearly two months.

As a result of her injuries, Schneider was unable to travel outside the state — including to Pasadena, Calif., for the Rose Bowl — but said it gave her more of an opportunity to make appearances locally.

"I was home, so I went to a bunch of elementary schools," said Schneider, who was a Cherry Festival princess for Willow Hill Elementary in Traverse City when she was in first grade.

Schneider thanked the students for get-well cards they had sent while she was in the hospital, and reminded them of the importance of wearing their seatbelts.

"If nothing else, it gives me a chance to do that," she said.

Most queens don't go into as many elementary schools as Schneider has, said Sherri VanDyke, director of queen's activities for the National Cherry Festival.

"She was telling me that she visited one



Maggie Schneider became National Cherry Queen last summer.

grade school and talked about Cherry Festival and stuff like that, and a month later she was at the mall at the food court and a little boy was pulling on his mom and said, 'That's the Cherry Queen,'" VanDyke said. "That just meant so much to her that he would remember."

Schneider said she only missed two events while recovering, and said she was touched when Cherry Festival officials told her she was irreplaceable.

"I was convinced that they were going to call my first runner-up," she said. "But they told me they picked me because I interviewed well and connected well with the public."

There was never any thought to replace her, VanDyke said.

"My philosophy is, they're applying for a job," VanDyke said. "She got the job as being queen and that's why we keep her. There would be no way I would ever take that title away from her."

Meeting the Cherry Queen when she was a festival princess first sparked interest in becoming queen, Schneider said. During last year's run, she said her initial goal was just to make the group of five finalists — not actually become the winner.

"Not because I didn't think I was capable, but because it was so distant," she said. "Those kinds of things just don't happen to me. I don't want to say I didn't expect it, because I thought I did really well, but the other girls were phenomenal."

Being queen really has impacted her life, Schneider said.

"When you're crowned Cherry Queen, you're still in such shock and panic that you don't know what to do," she said. "You do become a lot stronger, I think. A lot more independent."

During her year as queen, Schneider has traveled to different festivals around the state, spoken at a Traverse City medical convention and represented the cherry industry at Agriculture Day in Lansing in May.

"I was announced on the Senate floor, which was really cool," Schneider said. "We gave out 50 cherry pies in two-and-a-half

hours. It was unbelievable."

As for the five girls who will serve as her court, Schneider said she hopes they all enjoy themselves as much as she did during last year's festival.

"They get to go through everything I went through last year, and I just get to have fun," she said. "I don't want them to walk away from it if they don't get it and say it was a bad experience. I hope they all have fun."

Queen Coronation

National Cherry Queen Maggie Schneider will host five finalists during the National Cherry Festival, July 2-9. The selection of the new National Cherry Queen will take place Friday, July 8, at the Grand Traverse Resort and Spa, with the crowning and scholarship presentation, underwritten in part by Huntington Bank.

Friday night's coronation ball is hosted by the Grand Traverse Resort and Spa. The dinner event will start at 7 p.m. with dinner and dancing. Tickets are available by calling (231) 947-4230.

The queen and her court will also play a part in presenting at the Festival's Royale Pageant of Fashion Show, sponsored by Park Place Hotel. "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend" is the theme of the fashion extravaganza on Wednesday, July 6, at the historic Park Place Hotel. Among the modeling participants, look for Queen Maggie and her court of five finalists, who will be attired in the latest fashions by Younkers, at Festival events all week long.