

Rhonda Kieklak Sweeps Awards At State Pageant

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— "I assure you that every chance I get, I will help Pennsylvania to appreciate dairy farmers more," Rhonda Joy Kieklak promised the crowd attending the 39th Pennsylvania Dairy Princess Coronation.

It was no idle promise from the 17-year-old, who hugs her dad every day and tells him that she's glad to be a dairy farmer's daughter. She'd like to see a Farmer's Appreciation Day proclaimed for what she calls the unsung heroes — dairy farmers.

Her dad, Richard, missed the opportunity of seeing his daughter sweep awards in every category at the pageant competition held in Harrisburg last Saturday.

"Dad hasn't had a vacation in 21 years. He's a very dedicated farmer," Rhonda said of her dad's hesitation to travel from the family farm in Erie County to Harrisburg.

Perhaps it is his dedication that Rhonda has learned to emulate.

"Whatever Rhonda does, she throws her whole self into it and does well," said her mother Robin.

She certainly did well during the two-day competition among 34 county dairy princesses vying for the state title. Rhonda took trophies in presentation, speech, and scrapbook categories, and was voted Miss Congeniality by fellow contestants for being the friendliest and most outgoing.

Rhonda will be assisted in state promotional duties by First Alternate Heather Oberholtzer, daughter of Clair and LaVerne Oberholtzer from Lancaster County, and Second Alternate Yvonne Peterman, daughter of Kendall and Cheryl Peterman from Lycoming County.

A panel of four judges selected seven finalists from the 34 contestants on stage. In addition to Rhonda, Heather, and Yvonne, the other four finalists were Melanie Snyder representing Clarion-Venango counties; Beth Marshall, representing Beaver-Lawrence Coun-

ties; Jodi Lynn Colton, Bradford County; and Tracy Post, Crawford County.

To determine poise and the ability to speak fluently while under pressure, the seven finalists were asked an impromptu question before the 400 people in the audience. The question asked by master of ceremonies Grover Gouker was, "What was the best advice you ever received and who gave it to you?"

Rhonda said that the best advice she ever received was from her parents and that is to follow in God's footsteps. "If you follow God and keep your head, you can accomplish anything," she said.

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Newly crowned Rhonda Joy Kieklak waves to the crowd as she takes the traditional walk down the runway at the 39th Pennsylvania Dairy Princess Coronation.



The lights dim and music gathers momentum as waiters march the full length of the banquet room to serve pitchers of milk to the more than 400 guests attending the pageant.



The seven finalists selected from 33 county dairy princesses are from left, Lancaster County Dairy Princess Heather Oberholtzer, Crawford County Dairy Princess Tracy Lynn Post, Bradford County Dairy Princess Jodi Lynn Colton, Pennsylvania and Erie County Dairy Princess Rhonda Kieklak, Lycoming County Dairy Princess Yvonne Peterman, Clarion-Venango Dairy Princess Melanie Kay Snyder, and Beaver-Lawrence Dairy Princess Beth Marshall.



Pennsylvania Dairy Princess Rhonda Joy Kieklak with First Alternate Heather Oberholtzer of Lancaster County, left, and Second Alternate Yvonne Peterman of Lycoming County, right, are eager to promote the dairy industry across the state.

HOMESTEAD NOTES



Eager to someday wear the crown, 3-year-old Lynne ran up to congratulate the new state princess. Her mother, Tammy Cree Christopher, was the state dairy princess in 1983.