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Nicole Clemson, Luzerne County Fair Queen, was named 2009 Pennsylvania Fair Queen at the 97th Pennsylvania State Association of County Fairs and Pennsylvania State Showmen's Association annual joint convention.



Nicole Clemson is named 2009 Pennsylvania Fair queen

She's the best in the state



PHOTOS COURTESY OF PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Pennsylvania Executive Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Russell Redding, left, and Senator Mike Waugh congratulate Nicole Clemson, the 2009 Pennsylvania Fair Queen.

By REBECCA BRIA
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A Dallas girl is the first Luzerne County Fair Queen ever to be named the Pennsylvania State Fair Queen. Seventeen-year-old Nicole Clemson was crowned the 2009 Pennsylvania State Fair Queen on Jan. 24 in front of 1,100 spectators following a three-day competition. The event was held in conjunction with the 97th Pennsylvania State Association of County Fairs and Pennsylvania State Showmen's Association annual joint convention in Harrisburg.

The Dallas High School senior captured the title of 2008 Luzerne County Fair Queen last September and was entered into the state fair queen competition.

"I was actually blown away; I couldn't even believe it," Clemson said of her state win. "We all had contestant numbers pinned on our right hip and I had to look down and make sure it was my number that was called. All the other 52 girls on stage were just as deserving as I was."

The contestants prepared a three to five minute speech highlighting the activities at her county or community fair and a written essay about the fair's personal significance in her life.

ON THE WEB

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In her essay, Clemson discussed a new program called Ag for Kids that was created at the Luzerne County Fair last year. The program provides education and fun for children and allows them to perform some of the chores of a farmer.

Each queen also participated in an interview with three judges. Clemson was asked many questions from the most important thing she does outside of school - community service - to the ideal characteristic in the man she hopes to marry one day - someone who puts others before themselves and cares about the community.

The queens were evaluated on their public speaking skills and knowledge of the agricultural industry, as well as on their poise and personal presentation in an evening gown competition.

Five finalists, including Clemson, were chosen and asked an impromptu question regarding what they learned at the convention and how they will use it. Each contestant had six seconds to answer. Clemson explained the colors in a pinwheel are significant of her experiences and that she can't wait to help people create their own pinwheels and memories.

Members of the Luzerne County Fair Board, about 20 people, all attended the convention in support of Clemson. The board may have even been good luck.

"My contestant number was 32 and my fair board, their (main hospitality room) room number ended in 32 so we thought it was ironic that both numbers ended up being the same," Clemson said.

Now that Clemson is the state fair queen, she will be responsible for attending as many of the 117 county and agricultural fairs in the state as possible. She will also be present at the Pennsylvania Farm Show and the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's Farm City Day, a program that provides agricultural resources to schools to raise awareness of the importance of agriculture.

Clemson's first event as state fair queen was on Tuesday when she met with state and local dignitaries at Cornucopia, a day to promote agriculture, in Harrisburg.

"I'm so excited," Clemson said prior to the event. "I think it's going to be an amazing opportunity and I hope I can represent Pennsylvania as best as I can and promote agriculture and tourism as Pennsylvania's No. 1 industry."

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CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK/ FOR THE DALLAS POST

Recently inducted into the PA Voter Hall of Fame for having voted consecutively in every November election for the past 50 years, Virginia 'Jeannie' Clark reflects on her record.

50-year voting records cited

By REBECCA BRIA
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One hundred twenty-five Wyoming County residents were recently inducted into the Pennsylvania Voter Hall of Fame.

The inductees were honored for their achievements in December at the Wyoming County Courthouse.

"The commissioners had a little reception with light snacks and they presented each one of them with their certificate," said Florence Ball, director of elections and voter registration in Wyoming County.

Ball says she went through the voting records herself in 2008 and determined there were 125 new people, 10 of whom were deceased, eligible for the Voter Hall of Fame. Prior to 2008, no one in the county had been inducted since 1996.

The Pennsylvania Voter Hall of Fame was created to acknowledge and honor state residents who have voted consecutively in every November election for 50 or more years. The Hall of Fame is administered by the Department of State's Election Bureau.

According to the Pennsylvania Department of State's Web site, there is only one person from Luzerne County, Tom Clemens, who is a member of the Voter Hall of Fame. There are 197 Wyoming County residents who belong to the Voter Hall of Fame.

Virginia "Jeannie" Clark, of Beaumont, was one of 125 Wyoming County residents inducted into the Pennsylvania Voter Hall of Fame on Oct. 31, 2008.

Clark, who never tells anyone her age, says she did not know she had been voting for 50 years.

"I never paid no attention to it," she said. "I just thought it was my duty to go vote. If I didn't vote, I had no say in anything. And I married into a family that all voted. You had to vote."

A registered Republican, Clark started voting at age 21 and has continued ever since, casting her vote at the old Beaumont School. She also served as an elections committee person in Monroe Township for 20 years.

"That's one of the privileges we have," Clark said of voting. "I think everybody should get out and vote and then they don't have nothing to yell about. It's just like driving on the road. You don't own that road; it's a privilege to drive on it."

At age 11, Clark began working on the Hildebrandt Farm. She dropped out of high school at 16 and went to work in local factories. Later, she rented and ran Jean's Diner at the Route 6 Tunkhannock Truck Stop for eight years.

Clark's deceased husband, Nile, was an active voter and her children, Nile Lee Clark, with whom she resides, and Vivian Clark, of Beaumont, also vote regularly.

Getting to know God better

By REBECCA BRIA
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ON THE WEB

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Taylor Hodle hopes she'll get to know God better over the next four months.

The young woman is one of nine young people - six boys and three girls - preparing for confirmation at the Shavertown United Methodist Church. The teenagers will be confirmed into the United Methodist religion during services at the church on May 31, Pentecost Sunday, the day the Holy Spirit descended to Earth.

The Rev. Lynn Snyder, pastor of Shavertown United Methodist Church, says although confirmation does not have to take place on Pentecost Sunday, she chose that day because in confirmation, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is invoked to provide the confirmand with the power to live in the United Methodist faith.

"It was Tertullian who said, 'Christians are made, not born,'" Snyder said. "Following Jesus is not something that comes naturally, and not without time and training. Confirmation is a historic means of making Christians."

The youth who will receive confir-

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CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK/ FOR THE DALLAS POST

Members of the Hodle family, of Dallas, share French fries prior to attending the first confirmation class at Shavertown United Methodist Church. From left, are Rick, Taylor and Karen Hodle.

