

Jessica Watson begins her reign as Miss Acton Fall Fair 2011

Surprise, happiness and then near-tears – that's how Acton's Jessica Watson, 16, reacted when she was named Miss Acton Fall Fair at the annual pageant on Friday night at the Fair. Watson led a field of five contestants including first runner-up Stephanie Kroezen – whose fellow contestants awarded her the Margaret Hall Memorial Award for congeniality – second runner-up Sarah Cunningham, Katie Patchett and Hope Muldoon.

A streamlined format – no entertainment, and no bussing the girls back and forth to Knox Church to change outfits – made for a tighter, shorter show which allowed the younger kids to stay and watch the crowning at the 48th edition of the pageant.

And just who is the new Miss Acton? Watson is a Grade 12 student in the International Baccalaureate program at Georgetown High School. With an older brother and sister in university, Watson lives with her parents in Acton and works at Andrew's Scenic Acres. Her interests include modelling, theatre, music, reading and art. She is the manager of the Georgetown senior

boys' football team, and Music Council President. Watson plans to study at the Juilliard School of the Arts.

In her prepared speech, Watson said she never really paid attention to where her food came from, or what sorts of pesticides were used on it. "To me, food was food; as long as it ended up in my stomach, nothing else was overly important. And then last year, it came time for me to get a summer job, so I started working at Andrew's. And I realized that I really knew nothing about the industry," Watson said, adding that changed quickly with an Internet search that helped her realize the importance of agriculture and farm land.

"We've all heard of the proposal to put a four lane highway through the rural area just outside of Georgetown South. Last year, it would have been something I considered completely irrelevant to my life, but now I understand that the highway would have an impact on me, specifically," Watson said, adding by gaining knowledge into agriculture, she gained knowledge on her community, and her own health.

Miss Acton first



Jessica Watson - Frances Niblock photo

runner-up Stephanie Kroezen, 22, is a Christ the King graduate who earned a Musical Theatre Diploma from the Randolph Academy for the Performing Arts. She is a music lover, a member of the Acton Citizens Band, and works at the Olde Hide House and Kuyvenhoven Greenhouses.

In her prepared speech, Kroezen said Acton is not just a place to live; it is a home where you know your neighbours and feel safe. "Acton makes you feel that people care about you and what you are doing," Kroezen said, adding that Acton "has a

Europe. Cunningham was a long-time member of the Acton Figure Skating Club.

In her prepared speech, Cunningham said she loved how the Fair brings the community together with something for everyone, from the rides to the food to the Homecrafts, and she urged everyone to have a good time at the Fair. "For as long as I can remember, I dreamt about being in the Miss Acton pageant...and I would be honoured to represent the town of Acton and the Acton Agricultural Society," Cunningham said.

For the retiring Miss Acton, Robin Dercatch, the past year was an "amazing experience" that was fun, a learning time and an opportunity to meet new people and have new experiences, including being named Miss Congeniality at the CNE Ambassadors of the Fair competition last month – the first Acton contestant to win a title at the CNE in 45 years.

On Sunday morning as Watson, Kroezen and

Cunningham helped cut the ribbon to begin the Acton Terry Fox Run, Watson said she was surprised to have been so busy since her crowning on Friday night. "At first, I kind of just figured there'd be events throughout the year – I knew we'd walk around the Fair – but I didn't expect all the attention from the vendors and little kids, especially little girls who see me and say, 'oh, look. It's the princess,'" Watson said.

"I think the next year is going to be a lot of fun and I'm going to learn a lot – I think it's going to be a good learning experience for me," Watson said, adding she's looking forward to meeting a lot of new people.

Miss Acton pageant organizer Natalie Tuitman, Miss Acton 1996, said she was thrilled with a calibre of contestants. Looking back, Tuitman said being Miss Acton developed her "sense of hometown pride" and that's part of the theme with each of the contestants.

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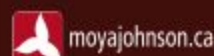
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