


A royal return

Created on Thursday, 21 August 2014 01:00 | Written by Kate Hoots | 

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West Linn High School's Emma Waibel, 2014 Rose Festival Queen, prepares for her senior year of high school



Photo Credit: PAMPLIN MEDIA GROUP: VERN UYETAKE - As another school year approaches, 2014 Rose Festival Queen Emma Waibel is hoping to squeeze the fun out of her senior year at West Linn High School.

When Emma Waibel's name was announced as the 2014 Rose Festival Queen June 7, she and the other princesses holding hands onstage didn't react the way they had planned.

"We planned a little dance sequence we'd do when the queen was announced," she said. "When they said my name, no one did it. They all rushed to hug me."

The spontaneous change in plans threw Waibel.

"I didn't recognize my name," she said. "There was a pause, because we said we'd do that dance."

Those moments on stage were the thing she most had been looking forward to as a Rose Festival princess. Seeing the princesses standing together, awaiting the announcement of the queen, is her favorite part of the annual Portland event, she said.

Becoming queen requires a yearlong commitment to the Rose Festival, on top of about a month spent traveling the state as a Rose Festival princess this past May.

Her role on the court caused Waibel to miss the last month of her junior year at West Linn High School. Rose Festival princesses commit to traveling five days a week. Waibel had planned to return to WLHS for one day every week, but that plan also changed.

"We were supposed to have every Sunday and Monday off," Waibel said. "We ended up with, I think, one Monday off."

Although she was disappointed to miss out on visiting her school, Waibel took the princess schedule in stride.

"The school is a huge part of my life. I was really looking forward to coming back. You get a little bit disconnected, which is ironic, because I'm representing my community," she said. "There was no lasting harm. It's a month out of your life and you're just go, go, go. But you get to do things you never dreamed of doing."

Her favorite experiences as a princess ran the gamut from the exotic to the relatively mundane. She received a behind-the-scenes tour at the Oregon Zoo, where she had a chance to pet the penguins. She also returned to the primary school she attended, Stafford, and visited the classroom of her former third-grade teacher to speak to his current students.



Photo Credit: PAMPLIN MEDIA GROUP: VERN UYETAKE - Though the busiest part of her schedule as queen is over, Waibel still expects to participate in two events every month.

Her duties will be ongoing throughout the 2014-15 school year, although the time commitment is much reduced now. The queen will preside over a couple of knighting ceremonies for newly inducted Royal Rosarians, and Waibel expects to participate in about two other events every month, she said.

She is already looking forward to meeting the 2015 princesses, although that is months away.

"I'm hoping to travel with the girls some," she said. "I'd like to be present with the girls and get to know them. I'd love to serve as a mentor. I'm going to do the best I can."

She is also making plans for a busy senior year at WLHS. She will be the associated student body's vice president, oversee the student store and head the spirit committee. The project closest to her heart, though, is the Sparrow project she led last year and will lead again this year. In 2013-14, the high school "adopted" Benny Hartley, a special needs boy undergoing treatment for leukemia. Working with a nonprofit organization, Sparrow Clubs USA, West Linn students dedicated hours of volunteer service to earn financial donations for Benny's family.

"It was a really good addition to our school year, another form of community involvement," Waibel said.

No matter what project she is describing, from her involvement with ASB to her term as Rose Festival Queen, serving as a role model is a common theme.

"I've always looked up to the older kids on ASB," she said. "I hope to be a leader to my school. I would love to be involved with the younger kids."

During the Rose Festival's Starlight Parade, she made a point of seeking out West Linn's Old Time Fair princesses, who participated in the parade with a float of their own. Waibel was a West Linn princess as an eighth-grader, and she vividly recalls meeting the Rose Festival court at that time.

"It was so fun," she recalled. That's why she made a point, this year, of seeking out West Linn's princesses during the Starlight Parade.

She is hopeful that other young women from West Linn will be inspired by her success on the Rose Court.

"I've opened this door for people from the metro area to feel comfortable and to apply," she said. "It's something to be a trailblazer."

Being a Rose Festival princess wasn't all that different, she said, from being West Linn royalty.

"It's almost the same thing. You just blow it up on a larger scale," she said. "You add on a month's time commitment, a bigger parade, a bigger fair. It was fun getting to see both sides of it. Both perspectives are really cool."

Her Rose Festival experience has left her with a new set of friends, indelible memories and a new wardrobe.

"We leave with basically a full closet of clothes," she said. "I would never have bought myself a skirt suit. And now I have one."

Waibel made fast friends with a group of four princesses from the court. The group of five still get together. She also made professional connections — an internship, a mentor — that will help her think ahead to college and beyond.

"They work hard to set you up for the business world," she said.

With September and the start of school right around the corner, she is looking forward to returning to West Linn High School.

"I'm going to seriously squeeze the fun out of my senior year," she said. "I want to be fully present in each moment this year."



Photo Credit: PAMPLIN MEDIA GROUP: VERN UYETAKE - Waibel is already looking forward to meeting the 2015 Rose Festival princesses, and hopes to travel with them as a mentor.