

One moment can change a day and sometimes a lifetime. And last July, when I was crowned the 2016 Miss Lake County Fair Queen, that moment changed my life.

From that crowning moment came a very busy, but exciting fair week which was shared with my energetic Junior Miss, Brighton and my Little Miss, Darby. And what a great week we had --- from the Crazy Cow Relay (with one certain Junior Miss team winning it!) to the pie eating contest , milking goats, greeting fair goers, awarding ribbons, and, of course, to our unforgettable entrance at the Demolition Derby.

Because of all the great memories Brighton, Darby and I made, it was certainly sad to see the fair come to a close. However, my journey was only beginning as I had the opportunity to travel over 2,000 miles across the state of Illinois to more county fairs and our two state fairs.

First, I traveled to the 2016 Illinois State Fair in Springfield, where I participated in County Fair Day. There, I met over 70 county fair queens from across the state and the Illinois Director of Agriculture, Raymond Poe. I then traveled to the 2016 DuQuoin State Fair, where I participated in their Southern Hospitality Day, spoke again with Raymond Poe, and assisted with awards at their harness races - a grand tradition at DuQuoin. My next destination took me to Atwood, Illinois where I had the honor to spend a weekend on the Schable Farm during their harvest season, where I rode alongside Bill Schable in his combine that gathered up the corn, and in the semis that took this harvest to the grain elevators for sale to market. Then it was November, and I traveled to Ottawa, Illinois for the 2016 Northern Zone Meeting. Finally, January arrived and with it the 107th Annual Meeting of the Illinois Association of Agricultural Fairs and the 58th Miss Illinois County Fair Queen Pageant at the Crown Plaza Hotel in Springfield. It was an exciting week.

Now this year wouldn't have been the same without help from some very important people, whom I would like to thank.

First, my thanks to the Lake County Fair board for all of their support and commitment to the fair and to this pageant. I think this is the best county fair in the world, and it is because of the men and women of our fair board and all that they do. I would also like to thank Alyce Brownlee, who continues to keep this pageant the great fair tradition that it is, and for all of her help. I would also like to thank the Callaway and Leetch families, and finally, my parents.

This fair holds a very special place in my heart and always will, because I've grown up here. From winning my first 4-H best of show ribbon, to riding a sheep, and watching my first demolition derby and motocross, the Lake County Fair is home to many of my most cherished memories. So thank you for a year that has given me even more great fair memories, and know that it has been a tremendous honor and privilege to serve as your 2016 Miss Lake County Fair Queen.

With love,

Charlotte Roberts