

MEET THE MODEL



PHOTOGRAPHY • DAVID BEBEE

Brittany Graul

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

When you begin to interview Brittany Graul, she tries to make you believe there isn't much to talk about. Just a laid-back farm girl going about her business. Easygoing and soft-spoken, yes. Uninteresting, no.

She was Miss Oktoberfest 2011, after all. The 28-year-old Wellesley resident is a personal banking manager at Scotiabank in Kitchener who performs community service and does a little modelling on the side.

"I really enjoy it," she says of the modelling. "It takes me out of my comfort zone."

It's been mostly fashion shows up to this point. The day she posed for Grand was only the second time she had modelled for a photo shoot.

"I was definitely very nervous heading into it," she says, but that's where photographer Alisha Townsend comes in. She has a way of putting people at ease.

Graul was raised on a dairy farm near Milverton — a little place called Brunner — with her parents, two sisters and brother.

As a little girl, she dreamed of becoming Miss America, but those hopes were dashed at an early age. Still, she didn't let being Canadian derail her desire to participate in pageants. She had a successful run on the fair circuit, capturing titles such as Milverton Fair Ambassador, Ambassador of the Fairs at the Canadian National Exhibition in 2007 and Perth County Queen of the Furrow in 2009.

In 2010, she graduated from York University with an honours bachelor of arts degree in political science and law and society.

That same year, she won the Ontario Miss Midwest pageant in Walkerton, which is where she first encountered Donna Schmidt-Kirk, owner and director of Cambridge modelling agency Expressions by DSK.

Schmidt-Kirk was master of ceremonies at the pageant.

Each year, the Miss Midwest Queen chooses



LEFT: Brittany Graul was Miss Oktoberfest at the 2011 Oktoberfest Thanksgiving parade.

BELOW: On a windy day at Whistle Bear Golf Club, it was important to keep our model warm — and protect her hair.

PHOTOGRAPHY • ALISHA TOWNSEND

a charity to benefit from her fundraising during her reign. Graul chose the Canadian National Institute for the Blind to show her appreciation for the help that organization provided to her grandmother as she dealt with a degenerative eye condition.

During that year, Schmidt-Kirk and Graul got to know each other and that led to talk of trying modelling in 2011.


"She is a gem," Schmidt-Kirk wrote in an email. "She has as much beauty inside as outside and is truly a natural."

None of the competitions mentioned are the type of pageants that require contestants to wear bikinis; they are more about community service and being an ambassador. After winning her Milverton title, Graul spent the next five years or so running that fair's ambassador program. Her involvement allowed her to get to know a past president of the fair, who was also a Scotiabank branch manager.

She was hired at the bank in 2011, right before she won the Miss Oktoberfest title.

She says her family used to watch the annual Oktoberfest parade and she would attend various festival events as she got older. She would always see Miss Oktoberfest out in the community and thought it would be an interesting job. Learning the festival is an organization run by hundreds of volunteers sealed the deal. "Getting involved with that was really what appealed to me."

Her involvement with ambassador programs continues, too. She has done quite a bit of judging and speaks at an annual convention that draws fair ambassadors from across the province.

And, still, she finds time for a little modelling work on the side. 

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