

Since 1948, Maryland Yacht Club has held celebrations to determine and celebrate the crowning of a new Queen of the Chesapeake. This tradition has continued for many years and has impacted the lives of countless young ladies. The year-long preparation for this very event allows a group of some of the brightest young women to grow as individuals, building their character and confidence in themselves, as well as allowing each girl to build life-long friendships. Each young woman on stage had the incredible support of all the other girls and this wonderful community on the bay.

This year, I, Courtney Reed, was given the absolute honor of accepting the title of Queen of the Chesapeake from past Queen Caitlin Campbell from 2010. Caitlin has been an enormous support to me during my time as princess, and has encouraged all the girls, including myself, to appreciate one another for our own unique personalities and gifts as individuals. Her friendship will always be unparalleled and her leadership will serve as an inspiration for all the girls.

The day of the pageant was beautiful, but the girls each shown bright in comparison through their own personalities and strengths during the questions and the time spent waiting for the results. The bonds we formed through the year held strong through all the stress, and I know that every girl watching from stage was silently praying and applauding her friend's courage to stand in front of everyone as she answered the challenging questions the judges had to ask. I have never had such an amazing experience as waiting for the final results and holding the hands of my friends and sisters.

The first runner up was Sara Soistman from Eastern Yacht Club, followed by Kristy Woods from Sue Haven Yacht Club, and Lara Prettyman from Miles River Yacht Club. Also, Erin Chase from Baltimore Yacht Club earned the title of 'Miss Congeniality,' a title the girls all vote on. Each of the girls showed all of her brilliant qualities on the stage, and each was a winner for her courage, intelligence, and character. It is an honor for me to be chosen as the guide and leader for such an amazing group of young ladies, and I can only hope that, as Queen, I can give these young ladies as much pride as they have given me in calling them my close friends and sisters.

As the 64<sup>th</sup> Queen of the Chesapeake, I hope to continue improving the bay and creating a wonderful environment for all the people who enjoy this wonderful gift. I am looking forward to an incredible year, and I hope that I will make the community that has supported me proud, while encouraging all the girls to keep true to themselves and embrace their individuality and beauty.

I look forward to seeing everyone out on the bay and continuing to build the relationships I have created this past year. Thank you for all of your love and support.

- Courtney Reed