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Homecoming court election closes, results to be announced



The 2016 Homecoming Queen, Jesse Anne Rogers ('17), crowned by reigning 2015 Queen Merideth Byl ('16). Photo by Megan Hartman.

By Jenna Shackelford

Homecoming is an exciting time of year for all Gardner-Webb students, but for the Homecoming Queen nominees, it isn't just exciting—it's an honor.

Four senior girls were nominated and are awaiting the results of the election that will be announced tomorrow during tomorrow's football game.

Emma Shappley was nominated by two students, her roommate, Hannah Ray, and her friend, Haley Grace Lowman, both of who are also in the running for Homecoming Queen.



Shapple is excited about her nomination. “I love Homecoming and I love Gardner-Webb,” Shapple said. “I’m super honored that people nominated me and actually voted for me because it’s just a huge honor to be able to represent Gardner-Webb because it’s my favorite place in the world.”

Hailing from Mississippi, Shapple is a long way from her home and her family, but is thankful that she could find a close community in the Gardner-Webb student body. “When I came here, I loved the atmosphere. I loved the family feel. I felt at home. Ultimately, though, I felt that the Lord was telling me to come here,” Shapple said.

Shapple is the coordinator of Campus Ministries and participates in the Religious Studies Association. She also may be a familiar face to some students through her job in Undergraduate Admissions. She currently works the front desk, and gave tours to prospective students over the summer.

Shapple is double-majoring in Missions and Public Relations, and could see herself working in the media, doing something in the “sports world.” “I have a really big heart for athletes,” Shapple explained. “I just love people, and I love building relationships, and I love Jesus. I just want all of those things to come together somehow.”

Unlike Shapple, Hannah Ray doesn’t know who nominated her. “I asked my roommate and she didn’t and I asked two of my other friends and they didn’t even know how to nominate anyone. I was really surprised. I didn’t know who nominated me.”

Initially, the list of students who were nominated for homecoming court was much longer, but it was narrowed down after a vote by the senior class. When Ray saw her name still in the running for Queen, she was honored. “I was so humbled. There were a lot of awesome people on that list. It was just such an honor. It was so sweet.”

Ray is involved with Campus Ministries United and Alpha Chi, and is on the board for Sigma Tau Delta, the English honor society. She also works in the Writing Center.

Ray loves the community at Gardner-Webb, and appreciates how everyone encourages each other. “I wanted to go to a school with a really good English program, and Gardner-Webb has a phenomenal English program,” Ray says, explaining how she chose the school. “Your professors are going to have you over for dinner and be your friends. The people you were in ministry with would be like your family. People here are rooting for you.”



After interning for a newspaper over the summer in High Point, North Carolina, where she wrote features and human interest stories, Ray has realized how much she loves hearing other people’s stories. “I’d love to do that in some capacity either for ministry or non-profit work. I love linguistics, so my dream job would be to work for Wycliffe [Global Alliance] or Compassion [International] and tell the stories of the people who work in the field every day,” Ray explained.

Ray says that coming to Gardner-Webb was a great decision. “We have a lot of good eggs here. Over time, I’ve realized that people make the place. This one has a lot of gems in it. We really care about each other.”

Samantha Harrell doesn’t know who nominated her. “I asked my boyfriend and my [softball] teammates, and they all said they didn’t, and I think they’re being honest,” Harrell said. “I just got the email and I was like, ‘Oh, okay! That was really nice. I was just honored that someone wanted to nominate me.’”



Harrell is on the softball team and she is part of Sigma Zeta, mathematics and science honor society, and Gamma Sigma, the chemistry honor society. She also attends a Bible study that is run by Hope Community Church.

Harrell is majoring in chemistry, but enjoys biology as well. “I was actually going to minor in biology, too, but I didn’t have the right prerequisites. I actually got accepted into pharmacy school a few weeks ago, at Campbell University.”

Softball brought Harrell to Gardner-Webb initially, but she enjoys the small-town feel. “I’m from a small town. My high school was small. I just love the small atmosphere; it’s what I’m used to,” Harrell said. “I have family in Spartanburg,

too, so that’s really nice.”

Like the other young women nominated for Homecoming Queen, Harrell is thankful for her friendships. "I love my friends, and my boyfriend. They're some of the best people I've ever met. We'll definitely be friends forever."

Haley Grace Lowman came to Gardner-Webb every year when she was in high school for a choral clinic.



"Then, in my senior year of high school, I came here for a cheerleading competition and saw the cheerleaders that host the competition," said Lowman. "I always said I wanted to go to Gardner-Webb because of choral clinic, but then I talked to the cheerleaders and the cheerleading coach and they were really sweet."

She won the Fellows scholarship, and took it as the "Lord's sign to be here."

Lowman was nominated by her roommate. "Kieran [Garvey] let it slip that she nominated me when I let it slip that I nominated her, actually," she laughed. Since Lowman enjoyed running for homecoming court in high school, she decided it would be fun to do again. "I love getting dressed up and I love representing people, so it was really an honor to be nominated," Lowman said.

Lowman is a cheerleader now, and participates in the Student North Carolina Association of Educators (SNCAE). She is also a small group leader for the women's ministry on campus. "I have 8 or 9 girls in my group and I absolutely adore them!" Lowman said.

"I up and left my small town and I found a new one," Lowman said. "I fit right in here. The classes are great, but the people are great, too. They're the reason I thrive here."

Lowman has said since she was in kindergarten that she wanted to be a teacher, and while she was at a camp in Florida during high school, she felt called to be an educator. She plans to teach when she graduates and then to see what kinds of ministry opportunities come up.

The results of the Homecoming Queen election will be announced at halftime during the football game vs. Shorter University which begins at 1:30 p.m. Saturday.