

# Egg Harbor Township's Schoeffel reflects on year as Miss New Jersey

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Egg Harbor Township native Kaitlyn Schoeffel will always remember the moment it hit her that she had been crowned Miss New Jersey.

Hours after she won the competition, Schoeffel got a police escort back to the Forum Motor Inn, where all the contestants were staying. The Ocean City Music Pier had cleared out, and all the stores on the Boardwalk had been shut down. While walking down the ramp to leave the Boardwalk, Schoeffel looked over and saw her silhouette projected on the side of a building.

On her head was the crown she had worked 10 years to win.

“It was the first time I saw the Miss New Jersey crown on my head,” said Schoeffel, 24. “I will always and forever remember that snapshot of a moment.”

The Egg Harbor Township High School graduate would go on to finish third in the Miss America Competition in September, making her just the seventh Miss New Jersey to finish in the top three and the first in the top 10 since Jill Horner in 2001.

On Wednesday, Schoeffel stood outside the Music Pier looking at the beach, reflecting on her year as Miss New Jersey, which will come to an end in June.

Since Miss America, Schoeffel has traveled the state making appearances, reading to children and raising money for her platform, Operation Empowerment.

She also had to deal with the fallout from the Miss America email scandal, which led to the resignation of the organization’s CEO Sam Haskell, Chief Operating Officer Josh Randle and most members of the board of trustees.

Schoeffel said she thinks the organization will ultimately benefit from the bad press.

“It’s going to make the organization more progressive and relatable,” she said. “I think there are good changes to come.”

In two months, the appearances will stop and Schoeffel will be left with memories of a year when her dreams came true.

Former Miss New Jerseys and Miss Americas have consistently said it can be tough to figure out what comes next after their reign is over.

Schoeffel doesn’t want to make that decision until after she takes off the crown. But her plans include getting a master’s degree with the \$30,000 in scholarship money she won from her involvement in Miss America.

“I think I need to reinvent myself,” Schoeffel said. “I’ve been doing the same thing for the last 10 years, so I’m looking for a new opportunity.”

Whatever she decides to do, the residents of her hometown will be proud of her, Mayor James “Sonny” McCullough said.

“I think she has represented Egg Harbor Township fabulously,” McCullough said. “She helped with a bunch of fundraisers, and we couldn’t be any prouder of her.”

But before she leaves, she will host a large fund-raiser April 28 at Fernwood Avenue Middle School starring magician Wayne Hoffman, who has performed on “America’s Got Talent” and in several shows in Atlantic City.

All the proceeds will go to scholarships for her platform. Those scholarships will help pay for a child's dance, voice or any other type of fine arts lesson, she said.

Hoffman, who normally charges \$15,000 per show, will be doing it for free. Tickets can be purchased at [waynehoffman.com](http://waynehoffman.com).

"It's the biggest fundraiser I've had this whole year," Schoeffel said. "It's going to be a great show."