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Ontario?s new Queen of the Furrow named

In a celebratory evening that saw the top competitive plowmen awards handed out, it was also the night when the new Ontario Queen of the Furrow was crowned?and it was local representative Melissa (Mel) Karpenko who was named to the unique honour.

A graduate of the University of Guelph with a Human Kinetics degree, she has worked with Corteva Agriscience and BASF Canada and is currently in her final year at Western University in the nursing program. She plans to work locally as a Registered Nurse upon graduation. Karpenko was raised in Caledon and currently lives on dairy goat farm in Dufferin County.

First runner up for the Ontario Queen of the Furrow at the International Plowing Match (IPM) was Jacquelyn Easson of Haldimand-Ontario, with Annie Watson of Elgin named as second-runner up.

Karpenko was also named Miss Friendship by her fellow competitors and placed second in the plowing competition, while Watson took top spot in the plowing competition with Easson placing third.

Rounding out the top five in the plowing competition were Shayna Morphy of Wellington, fourth; and Lambton County's Morgan Rombouts placing fifth.

Other representatives in the competition included Hanna van Stuyvenberg of Bruce County, Meghan McLeod of Durham, Abby Reed of Hastings, Elizabeth Dowdall of Lanark, Regan Carkner representing Leeds, Rhianna Gallagher of Ottawa-Carleton and Janet Bruce of Oxford Blenheim.

The evening is also a wonderful chance for many former Ontario Queen of the Furrows to return for the crowning and re-connect with the close-knit plowing community.

Former Ontario Queen of the Furrow Lynne (Stewart) Moore, crowned at the 1977 IPM, then known as the International Plowing Match and Farm Machinery Show in Frontenac County made a brand-new, first-time special presentation to Karpenko, in honour and tribute to Spencer and Kay Wilson of Norval. Spencer was

Moore's plow coach and Kay invaluable support throughout her time as a Queen of the Furrow for Halton

County, which is where the Wilson's were from. In fact it was an address to the Ontario Plowmen's Association (OPA) convention in 1959 by Kay that inspired the formation of the Ontario Queen of the Furrow competition and all these many years later, the program continues.

But for former Ontario Queen of the Furrow Elisabeth Barker MacMillan, it was a particularly special reunion. Barker was crowned 60 years ago at the plowing trifecta?an IPM, a Canadian Plowing Match and a World Plowing Match?held on the Highway 10 Caledon farm of Conn Smythe in 1963, just 25 minutes south of this year's match. Travelling all the way from Nova Scotia with her son for this year's match, she said she didn't want to miss this anniversary moment. ?It chased us out of the Maritimes,? said MacMillan, referring to post-tropical storm Lee which has left a trail of distruction on Canada's east coast.

As the evening wound up Karpenko expressed her gratitude to the many people who have provided help, assistance and support during the past year, describing the experience of representing the IPM host county as ?memorable?.

?(It) allowed me so many additional opportunities to promote the tradition of plowing and the value of the agriculture industry. Above all, I thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to meet so many new people, each sharing their stories of past matches, the brotherhood and camaraderie that is interwoven within the tradition of plowing,? she said.

Karpenko will now spend the next year travelling the province acting as an ambassador for Ontario Agriculture and the OPA?the

parent host of the IPM?and attending events to promote next year's IPM being held in Lindsay, Kawartha Lakes from Tuesday, October 1 through Saturday, October 5, 2024.