

# MEET THE MODEL

## Vanessa Buttinger

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

The opportunity to become Miss Oktoberfest came along at a good time for Vanessa Buttinger.

She likes to keep busy so when one thing ends, she looks to fill the void.

After she graduated last April from the Lazaridis School of Business and Economics at Wilfrid Laurier University, the hole in her schedule had to be filled. Sure, she had her new job in sales with Shopify Plus, the e-commerce company in Waterloo's old Seagram Distillery building, but her studies, duties as president of the Lazaridis Students' Society, and being a member of Laurier's competitive cheerleading team were gone.

So, in August, when it was time for Miss Oktoberfest hopefuls to submit their applications, the timing was ideal.

Shopify Plus had arrived on the local tech scene in 2014, and sponsoring one of its employees to go after a high-profile position, with a giant annual festival, was a good way to get its name out in the community.

Another good fit is that Buttinger is comfortable being the public face of a large organization. As the elected president of the Lazaridis Students' Society in her fourth year of university, she represented almost 6,000 students. It was a big job, she says, and on her resume it holds a special place as a source of pride.

That position opened the door to many opportunities, just as her role with Oktoberfest is doing. She says she's always been a fan of the festival and has volunteered in past years, which is a family trait. To volunteer you need to be 19, but her exposure began at an earlier age as her dad, Paul, is a past president and continues to be involved.

"I've wanted to be Miss Oktoberfest since I was eight years old," she says, sitting for an interview in the comfortable lobby of



The multi-talented Vanessa Buttinger as president of the Lazaridis Students' Society (left), as a member of Laurier's competitive cheerleading team (centre), and with the prime minister in her role as Miss Oktoberfest.

the clubhouse at Whistle Bear Golf Club, following Grand's fashion photo shoot.

She says she has watched past title holders in action and sees it as a great opportunity to give back to the community.

The quest to be crowned is more of an extensive job interview process, as opposed to a pageant.

"If this was a beauty contest I never would have run," she says.

She says being Miss Oktoberfest embodies much more than physical appearance, with responsibilities that include a lot of public speaking and appearances that require an average of about 10 hours a week.

Plus, she's not really the beauty pageant type, she says. While modelling for Grand was fun, it was the first time she had been in that environment.

This past fall there were 11 contestants in the running for Miss Oktoberfest. Along with functions, such as visiting the Waterloo Region Food Bank, and being on the radio, they had five interviews, conducted by the 12 judges who had split into smaller groups.

All of these experiences were valuable. "Even if you don't win you gain a lot," including 10 new friends, she said.

On the evening of Sept. 30 at Bingemans, it was a nervous moment with all 11 on stage waiting to hear whose name would be called. In a room with about 400 people watching, they announced second runner-up, then first runner-up, then – finally – Vanessa.

Buttinger says she didn't expect to win. That seems to work for her as she didn't expect to be elected president at Laurier, either.

Now 23 and living in Waterloo, Buttinger was born and raised in Kitchener. She has a brother, Dennis, two years her junior, and her mom is Lorraine.

Vanessa has always been athletic. In high school, it was curling, hockey, field hockey and track and field – with competitive cheerleading outside of school hours. She is an alumnus of Great White Cheer Sport Sharks.

The word "competitive" is one she stresses when talking about cheerleading.

The image of cheerleaders, all pompoms and 'Rah, rah, rah,' does not match up with the high-energy acrobatics of Buttinger's recent past. Catching someone you've just helped hurl into the air, then turning around and doing a flip, was more her speed. Not a pompom in sight.

"I don't think people recognize the strength that is required to compete in that sport," she said.

It provided a nice outlet for her during university, too. In her three years with Laurier's competitive cheer team, the Golden Hawks were national champs twice.

These days, without cheer sport, she's taken up running to fill the void.

In her sales job with Shopify Plus, she is the first and constant point of contact with customers.

After spending a big chunk of her day playing the role of our model, she headed home to prepare to make phone calls to prospective clients in Australia at a time when it would be morning there.

It seems the global economy also helps to keep her busy. 

MILESTONE

*Profile*

## REAL WOMEN... FITTING REAL WOMEN

Owner Janice Welch finds it difficult to believe that she has been supporting the women in KW for ten years! As an independent store, she finds it inspiring to follow her customers' lives and life events. "I feel blessed to have a true connection with my customers," Janice states. "I have seen many ladies grow in confidence from their very first fitting and know we have changed their lives completely. I've been there as young ladies matured into women; fitted them with wedding undergarments and honeymoon attire; and helped them with maternity products while they awaited their precious babies." Janice also enjoys coaxing mature ladies out of their comfort zones to try something super sexy and supportive to give them the confidence they need and to perhaps unleash their inner vixen.

Just for You Fine Lingerie is "a must-visit destination" for ladies worldwide who travel and work abroad.

Janice notes the past ten years have also held many challenges. Mere weeks before her initial opening, she was faced with the reality of limited inventory, having lost most of it when a tanker from France sank. With desire and determination, Janice vowed to see her dream through it all, including the 2008 recession and most recently LRT construction in UpTown Waterloo. Whatever she has faced, Janice notes that her clients have been loyal, and for this she is truly grateful. "Winning the Reader's Choice Award 8 years in a row is truly a mark of what we offer," Janice notes. "I do believe dreams come true. Have a great work ethic, be willing to put the hours in and love what you do and you will achieve your goals!" Cheers to the next ten!

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# Cosy *by the fire*

**STYLING AND  
PHOTOGRAPHY  
BY ALISHA TOWNSEND**

**Model** • Vanessa Buttinger,  
Miss Oktoberfest

**Hair and makeup** • Victoria  
Elizabeth of Romeo Salon  
Spa in Cambridge

**Location** • Whistle Bear Golf  
Club in Cambridge

Faux-fur vest,  
New Line, \$69;  
blouse, Royal Estetica,  
\$59.99;  
distressed jeans,  
Pink Violet, \$79;  
knit scarf, \$29.

WHERE TO GET IT: PAGE 125



## COMFORT PLUS STYLE

**ABOVE:** Loose-knit sweater, Ava, \$49; cargo pants, M' Jeans, \$69; rabbit-fur knit scarf, \$79; fringed over-the-shoulder bag, \$49.

**RIGHT:** Three-quarter-sleeve blouse, \$365; faux-fur vest, \$895; pocket trouser pants, \$445, all by Airfield. Leather belt, Brave, \$78. (Shoes and sunglasses: model's own.)

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## FUZZY FASHIONS

**ABOVE:** Cigar jacket, Airfield, \$795; wide-neck top with sequin accent, Basler, \$215; pocket trouser pants, Airfield, \$475.

**LEFT:** V-neck circle, Heather, \$225; pocket harem pants, Heather, \$235; shag wrap, Dylan, \$75; necklace, \$28.

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Waterfall pullover sweater with fringe detail, Free People, \$198; ribbed tank, Free People, \$30; distressed boyfriend jeans, OneX Oneteaspoon, \$138. Charm-chain necklace, \$12 (pendants sold separately); chain necklace, \$10; wooden bead necklace (also shown as bracelet), \$12 each; mirror sunglasses, \$12. Leather booties, Bed Stu, \$260; fringed leather purse, Bed Stu, \$220.

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