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Miss Maryland goes to bat for autism

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When Miss Maryland walks across the stage in the Miss America pageant in January in Las Vegas, one [Frederick](#) County grandfather's heart will be swollen with pride.

Brooke Poklemba's mother, Cheri Gaver Poklemba, grew up in [Middletown](#), and her maternal grandfather, Stanley V. Gaver, still lives in [Frederick](#).

On Aug. 28, Poklemba, 24, will be able to visit her Pap-Pap and others when she throws the first pitch at a [Frederick](#) Keys game.

Her appearance will mark the culmination of a fundraising effort on behalf of the Children's Miracle Network. Half the proceeds from ticket sales she makes for that game will benefit the charity.

The visit next week will be Poklemba's second to Harry Grove Stadium while involved with this year's pageant. In June, she appeared at the ballfield and sang the National Anthem.



Courtesy Photo

Miss Maryland Brooke Poklemba's roots run deep in Frederick County. Her mother grew up in Middletown and her grandfather lives in Frederick.

Singing is a passion of Poklemba's. Although she sings all genres of music, country is her favorite.

She won the Miss Maryland talent competition performing Martina McBride's "Broken Wing."

Poklemba is equally passionate about working with children.

A certified applied behavioral therapist at the Schafer Center for Early Intervention in Reisterstown, Poklemba's platform during her Miss Maryland campaign is autism awareness, the importance of early intervention.

This year, she will be working with two national organizations, Autism Speaks and Pathfinders for Autism.

"I like working with kids," Poklemba said. "Being able to help them is so fulfilling, and they are just so adorable."

Poklemba said the weeks following the Miss Maryland pageant in June were booked solid with appearances.

"I didn't sleep for three weeks straight," she said.

Then it was time to return to work full-time.

"It's been pretty crazy, but I'm doing what I love to be doing," she said.

"I've been making it work," she said, a feat that requires some creative scheduling.

"I've got a whole year of making appearances ahead of me, but that's OK," she said. "The more busy I am, the more I get done."



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