

AHA ANNUAL CONVENTION 2014

It will be a challenge to condense the information that was presented at the past AHA convention in Denver, Colorado. With over 400 people in attendance, there is always a meeting to attend, a speaker to listen to or people wanting to talk about the Arabian horse. They all of have a purpose and a reason to be there and they are all keen on the direction of the industry.

AHA President Cynthia Richardson opened Convention on a positive note. She delivered a passionate speech to attendees encouraging them to "Connect, Collaborate and Create." The President talked about the multiple small business transactions AHA does on a day-to-day basis making operating as a business a challenge. Small amounts of revenue, managing building assets and investments are part of the tasks she has experienced. She has been active addressing concerns at Youth, Canadian, Sport Horse, and US Nationals as well as Endurance Riding and Racing.

President Richardson is proud of the Youth Programs promoting great lifestyle for our children. Outreach and the popular TAIL programs are making strong appearance throughout North America. President Richardson spoke proudly of her attendance at the US Nationals. She was present for the Exhibitors, Arabian Professional Horseman's Association and Halter meetings. One of her highlights during the show was the dark night. The Arabian Horse Community gathered for an evening to raise money for The Arabian Horse Distress Fund. She and many others witnessed the generosity of the Arabian people as they auctioned off teams for the pro-am western class. This special evening raised \$200,000.00 for the Distress Fund.

All in all the Presidents message delivered on Thursday, November 20th set the tone for many of the speeches at convention. The treasurer's report on appears promising, as AHA seems to be coming in on their forecasted budget. Executives speaking on Thursday were encouraging. A strong feeling of unity and camaraderie amongst the group was delivered.

I attended the APHA meeting and listened to discussion on resolutions. The select rider entering into Amateur classes at a national level was discussed. Ultimately the rule was withdrawn from our final plenary session. As many of our resolutions this years were of house keeping nature they were not elaborated on in the meeting.

Other conversations that were noteworthy for me included the concerns for the health of horses at Youth Nationals. Weather this year was extremely hot and there were problems with the health of some horses. Comments were addressed more from a management point, whether or not horses were fed and medicated correctly. Concerns for over showing horses were addressed.

Conversation around shoes lost at US Nationals surfaced. The variety of arena footing makes it a challenge for our performance horses particularly in the English division. In the end, discussions were directed to the horsemen who should be aware of what their horses are capable of handling in that particular environment. Horsemen need to be knowledgeable and then shoe their horses accordingly.

Show Commissioner Stan Morey headed question and answer period. Morey is involved with many aspects in AHA including the National horse shows and the EPRB (Ethical Practice and Review Board). He also is active in the Judges and Stewards Committee working closely with the Judges and Exhibitors School and Seminar. He is adamant about upholding a high standard of ethics within our industry. Stan Morey is very approachable and handles many difficult situations well.

Several good messages were delivered.

Ethics statement:

- You either have them or you don't with consistency or unbiased.
- Respect for the sport!
- It is the qualities of frankness, courage, and sincerity that mark the good sportsman in competition and in private life.

- Judging is about rewarding excellence and all those characteristics that the process may entail.

Show Commissioner Morey travels many places to ensure strong ethical practices are upheld. He indicated there were 327 horse show competitions this year. The Judges and Exhibitors School and Seminar will be held December 4-9, 2015 Scottsdale, Arizona. "How to become an informed exhibitor. Do you want to become a judge? " Anyone may attend this educational seminar. Reminders that shows and events are governed by the following: USEF Rulebook, EC Rulebook, AHA Handbook, NRHA Rulebook and NRCHA Rulebook. If you are unable to attend and wish to source information in your discipline, find out what you need to know via these resources. All are available on line.

On Friday, November 22 the afternoon included Regional Level Volunteer Service Awards and elections for officials within AHA. By 4:00 pm we had completed voting on the resolutions. I believe a record was set for completion of a plenary session.

Well-rested attendees arrived at 9:00am at the Rocky Mountain Event Center in the hotel for the final day of Convention.

Keynote speaker Scott Trees walked us through an entertaining recap of his life history. Scott Trees is a world-renowned photographer who has a marvelous sense of humor. He is one generation removed from having seen grandparents drive horse drawn carriages to church, which means he has a few grey hairs. With over 40 years experience with show photography he recapped the 70's, 80's, 90's up to present with amazing photography and stories. He is passionate about the Arabian horse but not just from the horse show perspective. He believes that caring for animals give children foundation for life. Scott Trees is a marvelous spokesperson and ambassador for our breed.

Gary Millar is the Chairperson for Marketing and Development. He delivered a fabulous speech to all in attendance on the final day of convention.

"LIFE LOOKS DIFFERENT WITH AN ARABIAN HORSE!"

The Marketing and Development Board committee is filled with enthusiasm. There have been efforts all over Canada and US to promote the Arabian horse through OUTREACH programs. We have heard of the TAIL program, which involves students from schools attending horse shows and visiting farms. Show committees are seeking out volunteers from Junior Leagues to help assist at showcasing Arabian horses outside of horse shows. Social media is playing a large part in attracting general public. Interactive radio talk shows and development of websites such as "The Horse Show App" are all mediums to help get people involved with the Arabian horse.

AHA new websites is working towards completion. Their estimated completion date is May of 2015.

"LIFE LOOKS DIFFERENT WITH AN ARABIAN HORSE.' There is currently a contest for Arabian people to submit a video from a "Go-Pro" camera to CONTESTS@arabianhorse.com. Submissions are welcome.

Gary stated 'the real essence of the challenge is for each person sitting here, to make it a practice to talk positively once a week about your Arabian horse.'

AHA Convention ended with a banquet honoring those clubs and individuals who had gone above and beyond throughout the year. Congratulations to all.

I thank the Aurora Arabian Horse Association for allowing me to attend as a delegate. The information available to one at the AHA convention is unbelievable. This is an event that is open to the all members of AHA and is well worth attending. There are professional people, breeders, exhibitors, judges, stewards, and trainers from all different disciplines who participate. They are there to listen to people talk about the Arabian horse. People are friendly and passionate about the industry. I am proud of Region 17, the Aurora Arabian Horse Association, and to be a Canadian in the Arabian horse world.

Although there is a lot of serious business conducted, there are many friends and fellow horsemen that attend the convention.

If an opportunity arises and you can attend the AHA convention I highly recommend you make the time. There is a world of Arabian horse people out there that wants to share their enthusiasm with you.

Carla Jackson