

2016 AHA Convention Report

I would like to thank MAHA and Region 10 for giving me the opportunity to serve as a delegate for the Arabian Horse Association's 2016 Convention. Representing MAHA membership at the AHA Convention was certainly one of the highlights of my year.

A first timer

There aren't many horse-related things I get to say are new to me after having spent more than 30 years in the business. But, attending convention and voting on resolutions is one of them.

Of the 20+ delegates who attended on behalf of Region 10 clubs, three had never attended convention as a delegate before, and two had never attended an AHA convention at all before. I would encourage each Region 10 club to enlist newcomers to your boards and committees, and invite them to attend convention as a delegate. Welcoming the next generation of Arabian horse enthusiasts and leadership is a clear path to growth and innovation.

It was great to get to know fellow AHA members more outside of the show ring (and without a horse in tow).

When I asked my Facebook connections to give me tips for navigating my first convention, one of my very long-time friends and Region 10 members gave this advice:

“Vote on behalf of the horses!”

-Rachael Jurek

Even though I have working western blood running through my veins, I felt it was important to attend other committee meetings and learn about the issues and resolutions across the industry because I was there representing members of the MAHA club and not my own personal interests.

- Shoeing resolution: One would be hard pressed to deliver a Convention Report without bringing up this key topic. While hotly debated, the work around this resolution is a defining moment for our industry and association. Kudos to everyone for collaborating on a compromise that is for the greater good.
- Adult Membership Dues Adjustment resolution: Only two AHA delegates outside of the committee and a Regional Director attended the committee meeting. Even one of the committee members remarked that there must be a hot topic/meeting going on at the same time since there were so few in attendance. The resolution passed in the committee meeting and on the floor, and will be implemented in April. Fees will increase to \$50 for a one-year membership and \$135 for a three-year membership. The need to raise dues is to keep up with raising costs.

- Change in Revocation and Delegate Requirement resolution is indicative of the changing environment and industry. It's becoming apparent to many that this is the new normal and our regulations and rules should reflect that. As an industry, and for those who make their livelihood off of it, we need to continue to look at ways to not only hold the line in terms of registrations, members, and interest, but it's also important to look for ways to grow strategically in this new normal.
- Leveling Modification rule showcases a model of implementing a program that has grown and with it, modifications needed to be made.

Equally extraordinary moments of my first convention came by way of less conventional situations than committee meetings and official ballot casting. I found Thursday's lunch speaker, Dr. Kris Hiney, Assistant Professor, Equine Extension Specialist, Oklahoma State University to be on-point, just as I did Saturday's Keynote Speaker, Patti Colbert. And both topics were one-in-the-same. In order to survive as an industry and as a breed, there is a need to engage the public in a much different way than we currently do as a whole. The world has changed. Times have changed. We must adapt to survive. Or, not and continue to shrink in size.

Convention closed with the induction of a new AHA president, Nancy Harvey, and election of the vice president, Deborah Johnson. I'd like to recognize these two and outgoing president, Cynthia Richardson. This is a powerhouse of female leadership—and I am proud to be a member of such a progressive association. From hearing from Cynthia at Thursday's session that AHA has broken even in March 2016—two years ahead of schedule and the first time in nearly a decade—to asking Cynthia and fellow committee members follow-up questions in the Budget and Finance Committee meeting and hearing about her fiscal responsibility. I am excited for the future and where these “roll-up-your sleeves” leaders will take us.

Our region

Region 10 certainly had one of the largest contingents of delegates and guests at Convention. Through this experience, I have learned that it's important that every local club member be offered the chance to attend such an event, and take an active involvement in resolutions, rule making, and local club programs. Get involved.

It is truly an honor and privilege to be able to serve our Arabian horse community and members of the Minnesota Arabian Horse Association as a delegate.

Respectfully submitted,
Brook Matthiesen