

2014 Arabian Horse Association Annual Convention: Connect Collaborate Create

Connect was the theme for the 2014 Arabian Horse Association Convention held at the Denver Tech Center in Aurora, Colorado. The theme of Connect- Collaborate-Create will continue for the 2015 and 2016 Conventions which will also be in Denver. It was a great chance to connect with people from all over the United States and Canada who love the Arabian Horse. It was a very positive atmosphere with everyone wanting the best for our breed. I was impressed with how so many from diverse backgrounds and geography can work together, respecting each other's opinions and be willing to compromise when necessary. It was the most positive convention I have attended.

Cynthia Richardson, President, kicked off the General Session giving an upbeat presentation to the 263 delegates (63% of those eligible to attend). She updated the progress on building renovations which included upgrading heating and air conditioning, fixing the roof and lighting. The staff is in the process of finalizing the Procedure and Policy Manual as well as developing a Strategic Plan. In regard to shows, AHA is looking at the scoring system, sweepstakes, and leveling system. The score card will remain but looking at improvements. Sweepstakes is solvent but needed to be revised to stay so. The point system for local shows is gone and more money has been added to Regional Shows and less to National Shows. With the addition of the leveling system riders will be grouped based on points earned, not age. Cynthia also stressed the importance of working with USEF. This year USEF gave a \$11,000 grant based in part on membership. She stressed the importance of putting down Arabian as first choice when signing up for USEF not a discipline as AHA gets a \$1.00 for each member from USEF.

Treasurer Bob Nash reported it has been a great two years. Cash flow, and working capital are in the positive. The W/C and Interfund is in deficit but is close to being in positive. Even with registrations flat and membership declining AHA is \$65,000+ above budget. All National shows exceeded revenue expectations or broke even. AHA fiscal year is April to March and Nash forecast AHA will be in the positive.

Most of the time delegates attended committee meetings which ran from 8:00 am to sometimes late in evening. There are 20+ committees who met at least twice. They discussed committee work plus all resolutions referred to them. Thanks to discussions and votes at these meetings, there was little debate in the Friday General Sessions so resolutions were all voted on with exception of one tabled until Saturday. There were 30 resolutions at the start but six were withdrawn, 23 were approved and one disapproved. Mary's report will give more details on the resolution.

Besides the General Sessions I attended Working Western, Amateur, Equine Stress, Professional Horsemen's committee meetings as well as the Arabian Professional and Amateur Horseman's Association meeting, the Plenary Session and the Judges and Stewards Commissioner Q&A Forum. Also, Kathy, Mary and I attended the Region Ten caucus.

Judges and Stewards Commissioner Stan Morey's presentation was very informative. He discussed the shoeing issues with show horses. He said no one has been able to tell us what weight is abusive so more information is needed. His office developed a survey for farriers to fill out on shoes lost in arena but few responded. AHA did initiate a program where shoes were randomly checked in some Nationals preliminary classes. He said this year at US Nationals few shoes were lost in classes. There were 327 competitions and his office received only two official complaints. Of the 65 show evaluations received only 20 had negative complaints and he called and resolved those issues. At the judging/stewards school the stress is on teaching to the positive, rewarding excellence and not killing someone for making a mistake. Stan also explained the halter scoring problem at this US Nationals which was a malfunction of the computer technology not a judging issue. They are looking at how to improve computer software for use at shows.

Some key issues other than resolutions discussed at committee meetings I attended were: leveling and effect on shows, AOTR/D/H being open to two non-related persons, number of classes horses go in per show, liability issues, and how to promote Arabians to public.

Some others who spoke at General Session were Glenn Petty, AHA CEO; Scott Trees, photographer; Holly Schnader, AHYA President; Mary Trowbridge, Horsemen's Distress Fund; Nancy Harvey, Arabian Foundation Report; Julian McPeak, Marketing and Promotions; and Cheryl Hansen, Convention Planning. There was a video shown by Racing Commission.

At the convention \$21,700 was raised for Horsemen's Distress Fund. Region 10 donated \$1,000 for Doug Peterson and Todd Olsen who both have severe medical issues. Since its inception in 2004 it has raised \$1.5 million.

Sweepstake Commission report addressed the issue of declining numbers but emphasizing program was solvent. Other breed organizations' programs are also having financial problems. The commission has changed the Sweepstakes program payouts by dropping local show points as it was not paying for itself, mares now eligible to be nominated and can use foreign bred stallions, and finally at Nationals yearling classes will be for Sweepstakes only colts/fillies/geldings.

Scott Trees had a very enlightening presentation with some of his beautiful photographs. He stressed the need to reach out to the 90% of Arabian owners who do not show. He feels the industry as a whole has been losing sight of the horse. We should be stressing the versatility of the Arabian and how much fun you can have with them. He said the public impression of Arabians is "Pretty but expensive and can't do anything with them". We need to change that and market them for their versatility, being a family horse, companion and a positive for bringing up kids.

The convention will be in Denver for the next two years but AHA is encouraging Regions to sponsor 2018 convention.

I thank you for helping with the finances and allowing me to represent the club as a delegate.

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