

APHA CONVENTION REPORT 2015

respectfully submitted by Linda Vance

This year's APHA Convention was one of the most upbeat and positive ones we have had in a few years. Although, as anyone who attended will attest to, it is still a challenge at times for us as we adapt to a once-a-year process rather than the two meetings we had previously operated under for many years. APHA Staff managed to squeeze as much business, educational opportunities and fun as the Directors could handle into a 3-1/2 day time frame! The only little glitch that APHA was not able to put a positive spin on was the weather which was highly unusual for Texas, cold and snowing! One of the highlights was a golf tournament fundraiser for the APHA Foundation which was a smashing success even in 30 degree weather as they raised \$8,000 for scholarships!

In the first meeting I attended, the Chairs and Vice Chairs met with the Executive Committee and our Executive Director. Rule change proposals regarding governance issues were presented by the Task Force and discussed as to the clarity and flexibility the changes can afford us. Regional Clubs will now have a section in the Rule Book rather than be included with the By-Laws Section. We learned that a working group has been formed to take a look at the Zone Structure as it is currently set up and determine if changes need to be made. There was also a discussion on the lack of participation in certain geographical areas and it was noted that we currently have 14 areas without representation (7 domestic and 7 International), and how we can increase participation from these areas.

During the General Membership Meeting, we heard an update from The American Horse Council on legislative issues facing the horse industry in many areas including some legislation passed that is retroactive to 1/1/2014 regarding horses as a business write off. There are also some possible bills going forward to allow volunteer maintenance with upkeep of trails, as well a equestrian safety helmet law is being looked at aimed at the manufacturers of the helmets rather than the organizations or associations utilizing them for safety purposes. Welfare issues are always a hot topic with horses and there is a newly proposed bill geared towards the soreing utilized by the TWH breed. There is work being done on a program through the Unwanted Horse Coalition to geld stallions, and they are working to develop a Equine Rapid Response System to identify and educate about health issues and spreading of diseases. As well, they is a new program called Time to Ride that was formed in 2012 and this year will have \$70,000 going out to entities to promote new comers to the horse industry. Be sure to check the American Horse Council website to keep up on any of these issues that may effect you and your horses.

As our Executive Director, Billy Smith, gave us his update, it was like taking a step back to 2010 when I accepted the President's office for APHA and gave my speech, as the key words were all about Teamwork and optimism for this Convention. Staying true to our mission statement in all areas will continue to allow us to go forward in these very trying economic times. APHA has weathered a huge storm brought on by the economic downturn for quite a few years now and has come through it much stronger, tougher and capable of adapting. If we keep the best interest of the horse at the core of everything we do, it will help make not only APHA and our regional clubs stronger, it will help make the industry stronger. The Regional Club Committee has developed some new tools to help clubs recruit, retain and reward members. Educational opportunities for Directors at this year's Convention are all about helping them to become more effective leaders, which will in turn help grow the Breed. For the first time since 2006, new memberships are up; and some of the big factors are better benefits, aggressive renewal initiatives and our new Chrome magazine.

Also for the first time in a number of years, APHA's budgeted finances are in the black. Operating revenue had a increase and operating expenses are down giving us a \$99,384 revenue over expenses for the year. We are focusing on increasing memberships and increased efficiencies. "Bad economic times reveal weaknesses rather than create them" ; and APHA is addressing our weaknesses with strong leadership that works towards a common goal. APHA today is financially the strongest equine affiliation. Breed registries are not growing at this time; and if you are not growing, you are dying. Double registered horses are the

hottest commodity in the horses world today. A Paint in every barn is our goal! APHA's market share had been as high as 28% back in 2000 and a low of 13.94% in 2011 with 2013's number back up to 14.59%. We need to create an environment that is welcoming to all disciplines and we need to partner with other associations to draw folks in who are already committed to horses as it is easier to attract them then a non-horse person!

Six Goals for APHA are: develop clarity in governance rules, focus on education throughout the entire organization, strengthen Regional Club structure and purpose, broaden the Association's appeal to a wider array of folks interested in horses, expand or reconfigure services to industry professionals-non competitors and first-timers, uphold our Western values and heritage.

APHA's efforts to improve judging through training seems to be working as folks are less negative about them. 1/3 of our Directors have opted out of APHA electronic communications! APHA will be launching at the end of the year a web-based and social media training called "The Game Plan" depicting what the judges are being trained on and are looking for in the show arena. This will help broaden APHA appeal through existing tools – please read and share the info from the website and Facebook page widely. We will be expanding services through our Professional Horsemen and utilizing the Western lifestyle to attract new members. There is a need for more race bred horses to supply the demands of speed horses for APHA competitors. If you have any horse-related legislation issues in your State, please make Billy Smith, our ED aware so we can determine if APHA can lend assistance.

Meredith Milton, AjPHA President's service project, titled "Youth Today – Leaders Tomorrow", is designed to expand leadership and sportsmanship concepts, as she attempts to raise \$25,000 to fully fund an APHA scholarship for Sportsmanship at the Youth World Show. This scholarship will be called the "Robin Hanna Sportsmanship Award" in honor of a dear horse friend of hers.

At the Board of Directors Meeting we found out that this Convention was one of the largest we have ever had – 107 people were present and 97 were Directors! Financials were presented by Reggie Parr of Parr and Associates and he informed us that we will be moving to a modified cash basis form of accounting and our financial statements will look somewhat different in the future due to this. This new format is easier to compile and read and more transparent while still meeting all of the requirements of the laws. Financials show an increase in revenues and investment income in 2014 over 2013; our net assets have decreased mostly due to depreciation of fixed assets and we remain financially strong with a 8:1 ratio of assets to liabilities. 2014 World Show, sponsorships and General Store revenues are all up. 2014 Youth World Show actually came in at a less of a loss than was anticipated and budgeted.

From the Committees: **Amateur** – Rules passed and defeated presented. Expressed concerns on 3-year terms for Directors. Discussed opportunities for the program structure. **Breed Integrity and Registration** - Breeder's Trust changes are needed to keep the program viable. Committee will work with Long Range Planning on 3 proposals currently being discussed. **General Show & Contest** – Rules passed and defeated. Looked at developing eligibility for Regional Championship Show Program with awards sponsored by APHA. Year End Awards task force recommended eliminating World Show Points but no action was taken at this time. Discussion on show approval rules and how to improve process as well as how to increase participation. **International** – 4 German members were in attendance at this years Convention. There was much discussion on issues relative to showing Internationally and differences in some of the rules. Made a recommendation to alternate Distinguished Service Awards with every other year recognizing an International member. **Judges** – This committee has a very progressive but fair membership who remain objective in their assessments and are seeking accountability. 16 judges retired, 3 passed away; all judges were reviewed. Judge applicants were reviewed and invitations to our Judges Academy to be held in April will be sent out. Discussion was held on changing the Judges recognition award program to make it more meaningful, also discussed was the possibility of adding Judges' bios to the website and/or Paint Horse Journal.

Long Range Planning – lengthy discussion on Performance Halter and the possible rewards and

repercussions, looked at a rule proposal for all Paint Breds to be in the regular registry with or w/o color (no action taken), discussed proposals on how to bring the Breeder's Trust Program back into a more viable position relative to point values with a possible cap on points, also discussed the effect of PORs on smaller shows and the impact on exhibitors. **Professional Horsemen** – looked at governance issues and had no added input, looked at a new upcoming interactive website with educational areas to help exhibitors better understand what the judges are looking for, also suggested that Professional Horsemen volunteer as clinicians at events to expose participants to APHA. Made recommendation to institute a Professional Horseman of the Year Awards program. **Racing** - discussed strategic planning and options to get racing into new areas as well as awards and recognition programs. **Recreational Riding** – Ride America update, new promotions for 2015 were rolled out and will be fully described on the web site. Upcoming activities and relative legislation were discussed and it was recommended that regional clubs initiate a trail-related service project. 2015 will be the 20th Anniversary of the annual Fort Rob trial ride sponsored by APHA. **Regional Clubs** – discussed the governance proposals especially the ability of the President to appoint Directors, reviewed the VR3 presentation, discussed incorporating the goals of the Membership Committee as it has been discontinued, reviewed the website and the Source Book. Discussed gathering best practices from clubs and then compiling a presentation to assist clubs who are struggling or just want new ideas to try. **Rules** – discussed governance issues in depth, reviewed the emergency status of the proposed split of the Ranch Horse classes into individual classes, discussed need for a “fast track” process for proposals such as the ranch horse one that are being worked on but are not totally ready by the submission deadline but are ready in plenty of time for publication prior to Convention, looking to draft a rule proposal on Regional Club Officers having a membership requirement. **Youth** – rules passed and defeated, discussed the Youth Championship Shows held in 2014, convention educational opportunities for developing leadership in addition the By-Laws were discussed. **Membership** – overall membership is above the 50,000 mark again, initiatives were discussed and the committee members agreed to dissolve while dispensing their responsibilities to other committees. **Foundation** – Board Elections were held. The Hall of Fame selection criteria was discussed and they will attempt to make the process more transparent. \$8,000 taken in from the Golf Tournament, largest donation ever received to date from Jerry Baker in memory of his wife in the amount of \$168,000, also received \$25,000 from the Edith Winter Grace Charitable Trust for 2014.

There were again some wonderful educational opportunities at this Convention. We had a fantastic presentation by David Lands of the Virginia Paint Horse Club on the VR3 program (volunteer recruitment, retention and recognition) which was videotaped and will also be available on a power point presentation for those who are interested in utilizing this tool. We also had a presentation of The Game Plan on the Ranch Horse Riding, Showmanship and Trail classes which goes over in depth details on how the class is judged and scored. This series is a very valuable tool for any serious show competitor. We also had another inspirational/educational presentation by Rick Rigsby on Shared Leadership: Working Together and once again, his style of presentation makes it very easy to understand the points he wants to make. If you ever have an opportunity to hear him speak, don't miss it as he is a powerfully funny speaker who interacts with his audience.

Next order of business was to vote on rules that passed to the floor out of committees. All proposals that made it out of committees were passed into effect. For a complete listing, please see the APHA website; and remember that these rules go into effect January 1, 2016; with the exception of the 4 ranch horse events which are now individual classes and are going into effect in May 2015.

Newly elected officers for 2015 are President, Ron Shelly; Pres. Elect, Susie Shaw; Vice Pres., George Ready; Sr Committee member, Craig Wood; 5th Committee member, Mike Short; 6th Committee member, Casey West. Incoming President, Ron Shelly spoke about our heritage and how our guiding principles need to be built around our color and versatility.

Again, thanks for the opportunity to serve the State of WA and the Pacific Northwest for the past 21 years as your National Director. I welcome any questions you may have, please feel free to contact me.