For Immediate Release

North American International keeps draft horses relevant for recreation

Becky Nguyen, Writer

LOUISVILLE, KY – November 15, 2014 – The Draft Horse Show took place in Freedom Hall on a cold, crisp Saturday morning. They took to the Coliseum, pulling wagons around a prescribed course. They were decorated with braided hair and colorful accents.

Gentle giants shared the spotlight with their petite relatives, the Haflinger, and the Cowboy Mounted Shooting, alternately. Spectators and horse-lovers gathered to enjoy all three events together.

Caryn Westmeier, a Louisville native, has attended the NAILE for 40 years. This time, she brought her show dog, a two-year-old border collie named Chester, to condition him to shoot-out noises. Westmeier, a fan of draft horses, has worked with elephants and has an admiration for large animals. Her favorite type of draft horse is the Percheron.

The draft horse holds the title for the world’s largest horse breed. They were traditionally bred to do heavy labor such as plowing and other farm tasks. However, trucks and tractors have eliminated the need for these animals. Today, draft horses are widely used as show animals, because of their majestic but gentle manner.

Rhoda Bayles from Gibson City, IL, rode her cousin’s 6-year-old Clydesdale, an iconic breed type featured in Budweiser commercials. They won the Pleasure Driving class in the Draft Horse Show the day prior. Despite showing horses at the NAILE since 1991, Bayles said riding into Freedom Hall gives her a pure adrenaline rush every time.

“They get excited,” said Bayles. “When we practice at home, we don’t braid their hair. So they know what they’re getting into.”

Bayles’s sister owns Bayles Belgians, who also made appearances in the show. They usually show their horses from June to November. During the winter months, Bayles lightheartedly said, “We let them be horses.” Some participate in holiday parades.

Crystal and Lamar Mitchell, owners of Southern View Farm, brought six of the eight draft horses from their farm in Shelbyville, TN. The couple has been showing for 10 years, purely because of their love for draft horses. Crystal praised them for their gentle nature and also mentioned their fun personalities which were showcased throughout the show.

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