

# Local equestrians earn recognition at major events

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**PHOTO: RIDING HIGH:** Riders from Amy Hanssen Training Center brought home ribbons from the American Quarter Horse Congress in Ohio. From left are Madeline Keyes, AmyHanssen-Keyes and Virginia Beaton.

Amy Hanssen Training Center is an equestrian center in Middleport. Owner Amy Hanssen, an AQHA professional horseman, has traveled to many horse shows with her lineup of students through the 2012 season. The year was filled with many awards, but the greatest sense of accomplishment came at the year's end.

Many of the riders finished their season with the American Quarter Horse Congress, a horse show held in Columbus, Ohio. It is the largest single breed show in the world. More than 17,000 entries were made, and exhibitors come from all over the U.S. and Canada to compete. Students from the training center competed at various levels and categories.

Madeline Keyes of Middleport was awarded a championship title for the National Snaffle Bit Association Youth Working Hunter, 13 and under. She was also the Reserve Champion in the American Quarter Horse Association Youth Working Hunter, 13 and under. She came home with a third-place in Youth Equitation Over Fences, 13 and under, a 14th place in Youth Hunter Hack, 13 and under; and a seventh place in the NSBA Youth Hunter Hack, 13 and under.

In the Novice group division, she was 11th in the Equitation Over Fences and a finalist in the Hunter Hack.

"All I wanted was to do my best ... well, maybe I also wanted just one ribbon. But this many ribbons were more than I ever imagined. My horse got extra treats at the show," Madeline said.

Catherine Fike of Lockport was another student at the training center who was able to pin some medallions on her own to the awards curtain at this year's show. She and her horse placed 11th in the Novice Youth Hunter Hack, and 14th in the Novice Youth Working Hunter.

Hanssen herself had a horse competing at the Quarter Horse Congress. Fellow professional horsemen David Connors of New Jersey and Virginia Beaton of Middleport exhibited the horse to numerous victories. The horse earned two Reserved Champion titles. One in Green Working Hunter and the other in Junior Hunter Hack. He also placed third in both the junior and progressive Working Hunter classes.

"This has been one of the most exciting years ever. The show season began in the spring of 2012 and the horses and students showed early success. We are conscious of how lucky we are to have such great horses. We decided to work extra hard this year, and step up our game in hopes of reaching those lifelong goals," Hanssen said.

And the winning hasn't stopped yet. Hanssen and Beaton decided this was the year they would make the long haul to Oklahoma City to compete in the AQHA World Championship Show. Horses from all over the world come to this invitation-only event. A predetermined number of points earns riders an invitation.

When Hanssen's young horse qualified in his first weekend of showing this spring, she and Beaton knew he was worth making the trip for. This was the first time they ever made the trip with a horse.

The horse, named Only Skys Escape, shown by Beaton, placed eighth in Progressive Working Hunter, sixth in junior Working Hunter, and fifth in junior Hunting Hack. And in all three classes, they were the winners of the intermediate championship.

"This was a long and exciting journey to go through the whole year. I am so lucky to be a part of this horse's story. Amy has been my mentor since I was just a kid, and she still continues to push me to be better every day through her support. I am a very lucky person," Beaton said.

Beaton works at the training center as the farm manager, assistant trainer and exhibitor.

Both Hanssen's and Keyes's horses are also ranked very high in the national standings for AQHA in their respected specialty events. As of Dec. 1, Only Skys Escape is first in three events, third in another. Keyes is holding the Justin Rookie of the Year title for New York state, and is second nationally. She is also leading for several intermediate high point titles. Amy Hanssen Training Center offers riding lessons and horse training for all levels of experience. For more information, go to [www.amyhanssenhorses.com](http://www.amyhanssenhorses.com).