What the Equine Industry Means to Me

By Kirsten Nickles

*2015 Buckeye Classic $1,000 Scholarship Winner*

To me, the equine industry is a passion, a love, and a future career. I have had horses my whole life and I cannot imagine my world without them. They have taught me patience, perseverance, and created life long friendships. I was introduced to the quarter horse circuit when I was 12 years old. Throughout the last nine years, I have held positions in NOQHYA as director and president, been on the NOQHYA Congress team, and on the OQHA Youth World Team. The equine industry has taken me across the country and taught me life long skills that can never be replaced. I have met some of the most wonderful, hardworking people that have shown me all different views of the equine industry such as breeding, racing, showing, and having horses for their own fun. I love the equine industry because it is not just limited to showing. There are hundreds of ways you can enjoy a horse. I have found this fascinating and therefore that is why I want to create my career in the equine world.

Beginning in the quarter horse industry, I started attending NOQHYA meetings to get better acquainted with the other youth members. The meetings were often ill attended and very short. The more involved I got over the years, the more I wanted to change that. Once I became president, I worked hard to get youth members to come to the meetings and make them fun as well as make everyone feel like they were welcome. Being involved in NOQHYA as well as OQHYA put me in positions that made me grow as a person and as a leader. My leadership, organization, and social skills became dramatically better throughout the years of presentations, meetings, and fundraisers. If it weren't for horses and the experiences they have provided me with, I would never have been involved in these wonderful associations. Thanks to the people that helped me along the way and the other youth that I worked with, I am able to now handle tough class schedules, manage my time, and have interviews with confidence and poise.

I strongly believe that I am the person I am today because of the equine industry and all it has to offer. It goes farther than just competing at the Congress, or traveling across the country to shows. It has given me tools that I can use for the rest of my life whether I am at the horse show, or at a job interview. I am extremely passionate specifically about quarter horses and will continue to be for the rest of my life. It has created bonds with people that I will treasure forever, and has instilled in me the desire to attend vet school and specialize in equine. I want my career to be in the equine industry so that I can give back to the industry.

Therefore, the equine industry has been a large part of my life growing up and I would not change it for the world. Horses have provided me with more than winning a class or qualifying for the youth world show, they have provided me with leadership skills, communication skills, and social skills which will help me to live up to my future potential, whatever that may be.