

# How To Create A Successful Expo Appearance

By Gail Aumiller, MAFA Vice-President, and Jason Tice, FHANA Executive Director

Dawson Smith, riding Majestic Ster Friesian's Jillis mare, Ester H, is led by his mother, Karen. Photo credit: Barbara Auchter Photography



## Does your club attend Expositions?

Are you looking for a way to create a different experience for Friesian enthusiasts? Gail Aumiller and the members of the Mid-Atlantic Friesian Association have created such a memorable experience at the various expos they attend, we thought they should share it with the FHANA membership to help spice up your next expo.

FHANA and MAFA members hosted the Friesian booth at the Harrisburg, PA, 11th Annual Horse World Expo, on February 21-24, 2013. Preparations for this event started the previous year when we contacted the host for their vendor forms and FHANA with a request for them to sponsor us in Breeder's Row. FHANA generously pays for the 10 feet x 10 feet vendor space where we set up the traveling FHANA informational booth, and an adjoining stall, where we display a Friesian horse for the public to ooh and aah over. FHANA budgets to participate in a number of Horse Expos annually. Representing FHANA, members attend Equine Affaires, Horse World Expos, the Sacramento Horse Expo, and the Mid-West Horse Fair events, just to name a few. If you have a horse fair or expo in your area, please contact FHANA to discuss your participation. Over the years I've lost track of the number of times I have heard comments about this being the first time a Friesian was seen in person and that was certainly true for me, because I saw my first Friesian, Thor, at the Timonium expo in the 1990's.

For many years, MAFA, The Mid-Atlantic Friesian Association, has hosted FHANA's booth at horse expos in VA, MD, and PA. For the past four years I have been personally involved with our Friesian presence at the Harrisburg, PA, Horse World Expo and have been so very proud of the spectacular job FHANA and MAFA members have done to promote our breed here in central Pennsylvania. Julio and Jessica Mendoza were the first MAFA members to





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venture into the Mid-Atlantic expo venues with Friesians, not only paving the way for the rest of us, but also taking us under their wing, helping us to learn the ropes.

If you want to have FHANA's support and financial backing to attend an expo, you will need to complete the new 'Application for FHANA Exhibitor Kit/Show Sponsorship Form', preferably a year in advance. By getting FHANA involved, you also will get brochures, pamphlets, and even magazines to share with the public. FHANA has created an Exhibitor Kit request form to help better prepare for events. This form will need to be filled



out for each and every event that FHANA attends. This will help us to better prepare the booth, materials and supplies for each event. This form can also be used if you would like FHANA to sponsor a show or class. When the venue's exhibitor registration forms are available, they will need to be completed and also sent on to FHANA. Normally this information is available six months before the event. Please send the registration forms to FHANA as soon as they are available.

My philosophy is the more Friesians we bring, the better, so I send numerous MAFA member participation recruiting emails. Once all the paperwork is completed, before we even get to the expo, time is spent creating a catchy musical score for our Parade of Breeds, and writing the perfect script to show case each of our horses and riders.

After we arrive at the venue and get the horses unloaded and comfortably into their stalls, we turn our attention to setting up the FHANA booth in breed row. I am always amazed at the compactness and ease with which FHANA's booth can be set up and that the two large traveling storage cases were designed to become a display stand! We also bring along a couple of tablecloths, a 6 foot folding table and 4 chairs, and in addition to decorating with photos and posters, we always tape a plastic

Top: Julio Mendoza's riding Kari Mackiewicz's Tsjerk star stallion, Maurus Sport, in their musical freestyle. Photo credit: Barbara Auchter Photography

Middle: Dreams Come True Farm's 4 year-old Teade filly, Fancee, is ridden by Cynthia Brumbaugh. Photo credit: Barbara Auchter Photography

Below: Doug Smith riding his Anton star mare, Bellatrix fan Leandra. Photo credit: Barbara Auchter Photography







sheet protector to the stall door, where cards containing the horse's name, sex, sire, date-of-birth, owner, city, and state can be slid when that horse is in the public display stall. FHANA will also supply you with various videos to be played during your weekend if there is a TV available. This certainly helps to catch the wayward eye. At the booth we display a sign with the Friesian Parade of Breed times, their Equi-tainment performance times, and days and times they will appear in clinics, so the

public can plan to see a Friesian in action. We set a step in front of the public stall for small children to step up onto, so as to get a better view of the horse inside and often help take a family photograph with a Friesian in the background. All of us who take horses to the expo bring friends to help man the FHANA booth. This year, in addition to booth help from MAFA members who brought horses, Mary Smith, Gloria Sipe, Jodi Van Sprang, Doug and Karen Smith, Julio and Jessica Mendoza, Jessica Gabler, myself, Sarah Small (PA) helped with the booth along with Barbara Auchter (VA) who also photographed our horses.

Because the Parade of Breeds is to be an educational demonstration highlighting the Friesian breed, politics are set aside and we do not exclude participants because they are neither FHANA nor MAFA members. Two years ago, one of our Parade of Breeds demos featured 18 Friesians in the arena at one time! What have made our performances in Harrisburg so outstanding are our cooperation, cohesiveness, and camaraderie, with everyone working to make each other shine. We try to include everything and everyone in our Parade of Breeds presentation, so each person in the audience has someone or something in our group they can relate to. We have covered the gamut of the sexes (stallions, mares, geldings, fillies, and colts), of the disciplines (trail, dressage, western, saddle seat, hunt seat, and driving), of the specialty classes (musical ridden freestyles, lead line, costume, long lining, tricks), and of participant chronological ages (children,

teenagers, young adults, middle aged, and senior citizens).

Discipline diversity of the Friesian breed has always been our Parade of Breeds presentation theme. In 2013 our Parade of Breeds dressage rider was Doug Smith on Bellatrix; Justin Mendoza and Dawson Smith shared lead line rides on Esther with Karen Smith walking along side; western trail was represented by Jessica Gabler on 3 year-old Hercules, who appeared in his third PA expo and under saddle for the first time; Jodi Van Sprang rode Majestic Ster Friesian's stallion, Paul, in period costume; Mary Smith, a new Friesian owner and MAFA member, rode Mandara quadrille; Gloria Sipe, a Harrisburg resident, and Octavia appeared in glitzy western show apparel and tack; saddle seat rider Cyndi Brumbaugh rode Dreams Come True Farm's Fancee; and Gail Aumiller drove Sjaantje



**Top:** Groom Angie Van Sprang rides with Gail Aumiller, driving her Tsjerk star mare, Sjaantje Sport. Photo credit: Barbara Auchter Photography

**Middle:** Gloria Sipe riding her Jorrit mare, Octavia von Rey. Photo credit: Barbara Auchter Photography

**Below:** Jodi Van Sprang riding Majestic Ster Friesians' Feike star stallion, Paul of RF. Photo credit: Barbara Auchter Photography







## The Friesian

Sport hitched to a presentation carriage with Jodi's daughter, Angie, riding as groom for the weekend performances and Jessie Gabler as navigator in the derby races. Our daily Parade of Breeds grand finale was Julio Mendoza's ridden musical freestyle, Kari Mackiewicz's stallion, Maurus Sport.

When we enter the arena for the Parade of Breeds exhibition we trot a few laps to music, the announcer reads our breed characteristics and historical information, then we continue along the rail at a walk. Eventually, individually, we move into the center of the arena to give a brief cameo performance with an accompanying script describing our horse and explaining our turnout. Here is one of the 2013 solo scripts: 'Please welcome the magnificent 2005 Star stallion, 'Paul of RF'. Representing Majestic Star Friesians in Grantville, Pennsylvania, Paul is owned and loved by the Smith family. With his luxurious looks, excellent conformation, and abundant flowing hair, Paul is the epitome of the Friesian breed and is ridden today in period costume by Harrisburg's Jodi Van Sprang, owner and trainer of "Ride With Expression."

Participating at the PA Horse World Expo has become a trifecta win for MAFA members. Those of us, who take horses, do so not just to educate the equine community about our Friesians, but also for the well being of our horses and the opportunity for us to become better horsemen. We look forward to being inside in a heated environment in the middle of winter for 5 days, so we can give our horses much needed baths and get in 5 consecutive days of good exercise! But the icing on the cake is being able to get ourselves and our horses into many of the clinics as demonstration riders and horses, giving us the chance to learn from world class trainers, and the audiences another opportunity to see Friesian horses and witness their trainability.

We also make it enjoyable for our horses, taking them for exercising walks up and down the aisles through the barn area, and making sure there is an abundance of apples, carrots, bananas, and mints for their enjoyment. One special thing I do is hide an apple, carrot, or banana in Sjaantje's stall after it has been picked up in the morning, and again after bedding

her down for the night. It's always gone when the stall gets done again.

As soon as I see the schedule of clinicians, their clinics, and events, I study them to see which are suitable for our Friesians, owners, and riders. Then I contact the expo management and the clinicians with a request to be considered for inclusion in their session, making sure to tell them that the horse would be a Friesian and that local horse participation in clinics is a crowd pleaser. Sometimes these arrangements are not finalized until we get to the venue and have time to talk in person to the clinicians; sometimes opportunities materialize on the spot, which is how I ended up in Equi-tainment's Derby Race this year.

Typical of past years, in 2013 our Friesians appeared throughout this event. This year MAFA member Jodi Van Sprang



made her debut as a clinician and three of our Friesians and members rode in her 'Preparing for Your 1st Dressage Show' session: Mary Smith, Gloria Sipe, and Doug Smith. Jodi also participated in each of Clay Maier's two long-lining clinics with Sjaantje, my mare, and Mandara, Mary Smith's mare. Doug Smith and his mare, Bellatrix, rode in Robert Dover's dressage clinic, and I drove my mare, Sjaantje, in Curt Pierce's advanced cones and obstacles clinic. Julio Mendoza exhibited stallions Ivan and Maurus in daily dressage freestyles, as well

as in several acts Friday and Saturday night in Theatre Equus, a scripted and choreographed entertaining equine revue. This year's very popular Equi-tainment, a daily hour of equine entertainment, featured Julio riding Ivan in a musical freestyle and myself and Sjaantje, joining three Fjords in a Derby Race through a driving obstacle. I didn't have the right carriage, and my horse wasn't the fastest, but she certainly was the prettiest, and we had so much fun! I had never been in an arena in front of a crowd that roared, cheered, and applauded my performance. By the last day Sjaantje no longer felt she needed to nervously dance and pop up from the deafening noise of the crowd's approval.

I would caution not doing the same presentation year after year, because many of the public attendees come every year just



to see Friesians and deserve a new exhibition. Yes, I have been driving Sjaantje in the Parade of Breeds for the past 4 years, but each year we have stepped up our carriage presentation by using different vehicles and wearing a different hat and jacket each day. A nice touch for your Parade of Breeds turnout is adding a championship or a blue ribbon to your turnout, because that makes your presentation pop. Neck ribbons work very well and other style ribbons can be worn on the bridle or the rider's boot. For carriages, they can be attached to the rein rail. This past year, during one of our four Parade of Breeds, I heard an excited young boy say, "Look Mommy, at all the ribbons that horse won." My smile got even bigger!

MAFA takes its Friesian message to the stable area, too, being friendly, offering others help, and sharing stories and equipment, as well as encouraging other expo participants and workers to come meet our horses. We also share our horses, so it is not unusual for us to arrange for other exhibitors to take their



first ride on a Friesian or for us to ride a different breed horse. I clearly remember one year Julio trying side saddle riding on a Tennessee walker and then his taking a ride on a draft horse. Definitely entertaining!

While at the Expo, there's certainly not time to go out to eat, and I don't even like to leave the stable or booth area to eat in the vendor area, so I take a bit of extra effort and organize daily meals for everyone in our group to enjoy. Each of us contributes items to the 'kitchen' and shares in the smorgasbord of food we serve. We bring donuts, drinks, snacks, fruit and vegetables and have a hot dish each day. This past year Doug Smith cooked up his delicious pulled pork for bar-b-que sandwiches and Gloria Sipe made her Pennsylvania Dutch chicken potpie. I was tickled that Clay Maier had remembered how good my chuck wagon beans were from the previous year, when he asked if I would be serving them again this year! I certainly did, making a double batch, and have to remember that in 2014 it needs to be a triple batch!

Expect to put in long days at an expo and allow for a move in, training, bathing, and desensitization day. Get your horses out into the arena, so they get comfortable with those surroundings. I grab my Parelli carrot stick and tack, and I hand walk my horse around the exhibition arena, allowing her to stop and touch 'spooky' things, and if we have a melt down, working



**Top:** Gail Aumiller driving her Tsjerk star mare, Sjaantje Sport, to a Kuhnle Presentation Carriage. Photo credit: Barbara Auchter Photography

**Left:** Mary Smith riding her Teade mare, Mandara ISF. Photo credit: Barbara Auchter Photography

**Opposite Page:** Jessica Gabler riding her 3 year-old Erik gelding, Hercules DCTF. Photo credit: Barbara Auchter Photography

her through it, being cognizant and respectful that there could be other horses and riders nearby. Later we tack up and ride, again with the purpose of becoming comfortable in the arena. At Harrisburg we must have our booth manned from noon to 8 pm on Thursday; 10 am to 8 pm Friday; 9 am to 8 pm Saturday, and 9 am to 5 pm on Sunday. When you figure in your barn chores, twelve-hour days are the norm, and if you catch the Theatre Equus evening performance, it becomes a wonderful fifteen-hour day filled with equestrian activities!

The 2013 Harrisburg expo featured nearly 400 vendors, so shopping is something that must be worked into our busy schedule. After completely missing out on shopping one year, I learned to do it at the end of set up day or the morning that the expo opens at noon. You have the pick of merchandise and no crowds to slow you down.

By the end of Harrisburg expo, both horses and owners are completely exhausted, but elated with the many opportunities to share our beloved Friesians with the rest of the equestrian community. I know I smile all the way home thinking about my excellent adventures! Mary Smith said, "Not only am I brand new to the Friesian world, this was my first ever EXPO experience. The other MAFA people in our group were very supportive. I was amazed at how popular the breed is. The booth was always busy and there were always loud cheers and banks of photo flashes going off during the Parade of Breeds."

One last thing - don't forget to document your FHANA Chapter member participants, horses, dates, and events they appear in, so when November (a new due date for 2013) comes around and those Chapter of the Year forms are due, you have all that information handy.

