

BIOGRAPHY OF ALLISON THOMAS – FHANA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

While I have owned Friesians for 17 years now, my love of the breed goes back much further than that. Since the first time I met a Friesian horse, I was hooked. And while it took me a lot of work and a lot of pain, many years of studying and meeting people and wishing for it to happen, nearly a decade after the time I saw that first beautiful, kind, unforgettable black horse, my Friesian came home to me.

Her name was Shera, and she was a 15 year old first premium Star mare. She was the foundation of my breeding program, and her presense is still felt in it today. The mare pictured with me in this biography is Shera's daughter, and that mare's daughter will turn 4 and go to her adult inspection in 2021. The multiple generations of Friesians that I have bred and raised over the last 17 years have taught me more than I could have imagined back when I was still reading and dreaming about them. And those many years of experience and knowledge are just a part of what I offer to the FHANA membership as a member of the Board of Directors.



Since 2013, I have been actively serving on FHANA committees. I first joined the IT Committee, putting to work my past training as a computer programmer and data communications specialist to help with the redesign of the FHANA website. I was also an active member of the Chapter Committee, the Education/Health Committee and the Marketing Committee. As part of the Marketing Committee, I was a member of a group of extremely talented and dedicated people who helped to make the current FHANA booth a reality. We also worked on updates of the FHANA brochures, and a new system of FHANA event sponsorships to work on drawing in more new members to the breed and the association. For the Education Committee I wrote numerous articles for The Friesian magazine and also suggested and helped to organize informational webinars to serve the membership.

In 2018, I was elected to the FHANA Board of Directors, and in my position as a Board member I have both Chaired and been the Board Liaison for even more committees. I was part of the Committee who planned and executed the FHANA 35th Anniversary event in Ponoka, Alberta in 2019. This event was extremely successful in promoting the KFPS Friesian to longtime lovers of the breed and new enthusiasts alike, drawing in attendees from all over the world.

When I first joined the Board, I advocated for and achieved the formation of FHANA's Breeding Committee. Since then, I have chaired the Committee for 2 years, then passed on the Chairperson role and am now serving as the Board Liaison for it. This Committee has produced articles for The Friesian on all manner of breeding related subjects, from determining breeding goals in your breeding program to how to photograph your Friesian for sale. We have produced short videos for the FHANA Youtube channel as well as hosted webinars on breeding techniques and challenges. We have also helped many new and existing breeders with questions and concerns. Currently, we are working on ways to provide more detailed information on approved stallions and their offspring to our members, as well as working on a program to acknowledge the breeders who have positively impacted the KFPS Friesian in North America.

Other things I have helped to accomplish while on the FHANA Board of Directors are to implement a more clear and fair grievance process, to adjudicate numerous complaints, and to champion Bylaw changes that have helped to ensure that the FHANA Board is more transparent and accessible to members. For the year 2020, I have served as the Secretary of the Board, producing meeting minutes of the Board meetings that keep the membership included and informed.

As a FHANA Board of Directors member, I have spent the last 3 years fighting for the membership, for the Friesian breed, and for FHANA. I believe that this Board has accomplished a great deal despite some very trying times in the world. If I am re-elected to the Board, I will continue to work for the FHANA membership to the best of my abilities. My goal is to continue to provide all FHANA members with a voice, and to let all members know that they are being heard by their organization.

2020 BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION QUESTIONS:

- Please describe your credentials which would help you to be an effective FHANA board member. Explain how these credentials have aided your past participation in FHANA and its related organizations (committees and chapters) and events.

Friesians have been my passion for most of my life. I have been studying and involved with the Friesian breed since 1999, and have owned Friesians since 2003. I am a small breeder and have participated for many years in local events to promote the Friesian breed to the public. Outside of Friesians, I have a background in computers, which has led to my involvement with the FHANA IT Committee. I also have leadership and communication training that has aided me on numerous other FHANA committees, such as the Marketing Committee and the Education Committee. I have used this training for the past 3 years on the FHANA Board of Directors, and the combination of my training, my experience with Friesians, and my experience on the FHANA Board of Directors will help me continue to serve the membership on the FHANA Board.

- Describe three initiatives you would like to see FHANA accomplish during your term? Describe how you would recommend they be accomplished?

While two of the initiatives I most wanted to see before joining the Board have now come to fruition – the FHANA Breeding Committee and the FHANA Mentorship Program – there are still many more things I would like to be a part of making happen.

Breeder's Recognition Program – this initiative would recognize the longtime dedicated breeders who have made a positive impact on the Friesian breed within North America. It is an initiative that is currently being worked on by the Breeding Committee. Accomplishing this initiative will require the seeking of funding and possibly sponsorships, but is well within sight to be accomplished in 2021.

FHANA Logo Redesign – The current FHANA logo has served us well for many years, but it is past due for a revamp. FHANA is in need of a logo that captures the majesty of our breed, is recognizable, and will function in a variety of print and embroidered/clothing forms. I believe this can be accomplished by a dedicated committee working to come up with this new logo. It can then be used across the variety of existing print and digital media that FHANA produces, and can be incorporated into a wider branding scheme to help promote FHANA and the Friesian breed.

Increased Social Media Presence – This has been discussed numerous times over the years, but pursuing it has stagnated. I would implement a dedicated subcommittee of the Marketing Committee to managing FHANA's social media presence. This would go beyond Facebook and the posting of YouTube videos that is currently handled by the FHANA office. It would include Twitter, Instagram, and other platforms. Regular promotional and educational material would be posted and boosted in order to promote FHANA and the Friesian breed to people who have not been exposed to either. Funding for the promotion of these videos would come from advertising space and sponsored commercials within the larger FHANA airtime.

- What current membership benefits do you feel need to be improved, and what could be added to make FHANA more attractive to past members, existing members, or new members?

I believe that the current board has taken the initiative to make FHANA membership more attractive in a number of ways, such as adding the Sport membership category, increasing the awards and recognition for both Sport and Recreational use, and making FHANA articles available to all members on the website. I think a key way to further attract and keep membership that should be implemented is to make membership available via monthly or quarterly payments. This would relieve the stress for many members who find paying the annual fee difficult at a particularly expensive time of year.

- In your opinion, what are the most important issues facing FHANA going forward, and how would you address these issues as a Board member?

One extremely important issue facing FHANA currently is the need to stay strong and united while the KFPS and the KFPS Member Council work through the issues happening in the Netherlands in regards to stallion approval and judging. This is a time of change for the KFPS, and it is an opportunity for FHANA to have our concerns on the process heard and addressed.

Another issue at the forefront right now is Covid-19. For the duration of 2020, the current FHANA Board has acted decisively and proactively to ensure that our members and staff are protected. We have also worked to ensure that despite a year that was outside of anything we could have predicted, that the budget stayed balanced. Lastly, we have worked to bring to the membership alternative ways to show off their horses outside of the traditional shows and inspections. These are all initiatives that we must continue into the new year and for the foreseeable future, to ensure that the FHANA membership was new and unique ways to promote their horses, their farms and themselves during this trying and unpredictable time.