

So, How Was Your Year?

submitted by Gary Slate, Vice President of Central Region, New York State Horse Council

December is the month that the media often use to remind us of the newsworthy events that played out over the year. What celebrities died, what events grabbed our attention for a few days, and what mix of good and bad made the year memorable or one to be forgotten? Did the pandemic stop us in our tracks or did we find ways to “work around it”? I want to believe that the members of New York State Horse Council and horse owners in general struggled and prevailed during another challenging year.

There were shows for many different disciplines around the state. Karen Lassell, Vice President of Northern Region, managed to revive a defunct open show of English/Western classes on Memorial Day Weekend. Three driving shows had sponsorship by Horse Council: Lorenzo in July; Obstacle Competition by Western NY Competitive Carriage Association (per Joanne Frechette, Director Southern Tier); and Genesee Valley Riding and Driving Show (per Danny Harter, Director Finger Lakes). The 52nd Annual NYSHC Fall Pleasure ride at Madison County Fairgrounds was held October 8-11, (with about half of the usual numbers) managed by Horse Council President Sue Knauer and Paula Chiazza. Some of the usual series of independent horse shows continued as usual, such as the hunter jumper series here in Central New York managed by Kathy Zimmer. Some shows actually seemed to be well attended due to competitors anxious to escape the pandemic mandated isolation.

The New York State Fair 2021 will be remembered as the year when there were no horses except for the Draft Horse Show September 1-5. While the fair ran for 18 days, the crowds were spread out, and the Coliseum was not as packed during the draft classes as in years past. Yet the classes were full, and the people who came to watch saw the usual great show.

As the year draws to a close, the Horse Council (and our friends in Farm Bureau) are concerned with the proposed raise in rental rates for the Coliseum and other buildings at the New York State Fairgrounds. Jim Mather, President of New York State Horse Breeders Association, and other representatives of agriculture who host shows at the fairgrounds, have met with representatives of NYS Agriculture and Markets, who set the rates. My wife and I contacted our state representatives William Magnarelli and John Manion (and heard back!). We suggest all people who show and/or watch classes at the fairgrounds contact your own representatives. Names and contacts can be found at nyassembly.gov and nysenate.gov, “Find your representative”. As always, be polite, state your specific interest, and ask for their help. My area of Syracuse and Onondaga County is advertising themselves as a tourist destination for the entire state. We were recently told that the Region 16 Arabian Horse Show, usually seen here at the fairgrounds, has been moved to the state of Virginia, due to a doubling of rental rate. Jim Mather tells us that in a couple of meetings with Agriculture and Markets, rates have been reduced somewhat, but talks are ongoing.

So this year has been good and bad for many of us. We still look forward to a better year coming, but the Covid infection in our area is far too high, considering all the ways that we could reduce and eliminate this once and for all. However, it is not too late to start working on things that will make this year and next year better. Write a letter to your state representatives. Get your shots and booster. Clean your tack and start filling out a new calendar with events for you and your horse in the upcoming months. And don't forget to renew your membership to the New York State Horse Council. (nyshc.org) With more members we can do more for you!