



## Young Professionals at Stock Show

The *Junior Apprenticeship Committee* (JAC) is the newest of National Western's Horse Show Youth Programs. Debuting in 2021, this program involves young professionals in the Stock Show by giving them a unique opportunity to be a part of the leadership team by shadowing the staff and committees for a 19-month term.

Our first JAC member is Abigail Johnston from Utah. Abigail grew up around horses and really became involved in the industry when she went to work for High Point Clydesdales. This job gave her the ability to travel and learn about showing Clydesdales, both in halter and driving classes. She quickly fell in love with showing, which has been very impactful on her life.

One of the many shows the High Point team travels to is the NWSS Draft Horse Show. It was through this involvement she learned about the newly created JAC opportunity. She decided to apply, hoping to gain a different perspective of something she loved, grow her skills and learn about the management side of the horse show industry. She found she has been able to combine her passion for showing with being a part of the execution side that makes the shows come together.

As a part of the JAC, Abigail is involved in what happens behind the scenes at the show. Her term covers two of the January shows, during which she spends a few days shadowing her choice of show staff and learning more about their role. During the off season, she attends meetings of the various committees including the Horse Advisory Committee and the Horse Executive Committee. She claims this has been an amazing opportunity to see the process of idea generation, the steps to turn those ideas into reality and then be executed at the next show. With that knowledge, Abigail reflects back on how the committee must have discussed and come up with the idea for the JAC. The effort she has seen them pour into other discussions proved to her how important this program is to the committee, who all truly enjoy sharing their knowledge with younger generations.

The most powerful thing she has taken from the committee meetings she has attended thus far is the importance of respecting diverse viewpoints. The Horse Executive Committee is made up of members that come from different backgrounds, including trainers, veterinarians, ranchers, executives and more. Each brings different ideas and perspectives that form into beneficial decisions for the Horse Show and for NWSS as a whole. Abigail says this taught her not to be afraid of gathering multiple opinions to help you make better decisions.

Although the program is a 19-month commitment, Abigail says it fits well into her busy schedule. She is easily able to balance her full-time job and other activities. She makes sure she is prepared for the Horse Executive Committee meetings and reviews the material afterwards. She remarks the process is like planning time for homework after a class, but of course the work is tons more fun! She especially enjoys attending the meetings, saying "when it comes time to go to Denver for a meeting, that's all I want to do."

To learn more about the Junior Apprenticeship Committee and apply, visit <https://nationalwestern.com/junior-apprentice-committee-application/>

Story by Bailey Burke, NWSS Intern

