

Leaps & Bounds

The Atlantic Reined Cow Horse Association pulled in new members and continued to promote the cow horse discipline on the East Coast.

By Hannah Harrel

The cow horse industry has a rich history on the West Coast. The vaquero influence is strong throughout the discipline, and for many years, most of the National Reined Cow Horse Association's (NRCHA) premier events were held out west. However, the organization has been seeking national involvement from members in every part of the country, and with the Snaffle Bit Futurity's move to Fort Worth, Texas, the sport is seeing more and more participation from those further east.

Every year, the NRCHA honors one affiliate association that has gone above and beyond to make sure the cow horse discipline gets the recognition it deserves on a local level. The Atlantic Reined Cow Horse Association (ARCHA) was named the organization's 2017 Affiliate of the Year for their hard work and dedication.

"[The Affiliate of the Year] is chosen by our affiliate committee, and they look at a number of criteria," said NRCHA Executive Director Jay Winborn. "Obviously, participation and growth are a big part of that, but it's not always determined by who has the biggest club, so to speak. It's more along the lines of who has demonstrated forging ahead for the year. [The] Atlantic [Reined Cow Horse Association] has taken quite a few steps to move forward this year, and we were very pleased with the progress they made."

Frank Prisco, who serves as president for the ARCHA, said the organization's growth was what set them apart from other candidates, such as the Panhandle Reined Cow Horse Association, which was named the runner-up for 2017. In addition, the ARCHA's special events to promote the sport helped them earn this prestigious award, Prisco said.

"We had a tremendous amount of growth," he explained. "The board members have all

Kristin Pitzer



Thanks to their dedication at growing the reined cow horse sport on the East Coast, the Atlantic Reined Cow Horse Association received the NRCHA's 2017 Affiliate of the Year Award.

been working really hard to promote cow horse in the area and grow the organization.

"We did a lot of special events last year. We did a fundraiser for the Kansas wildfire victims, and we did a couple of clinics. We also changed venues, which was kind of huge for us. We moved our shows to Dillsburg, Pennsylvania, and grabbed some new membership there."

Growing the ARCHA has admittedly been somewhat difficult because of the group's location. The East Coast is dominated by other disciplines, so pulling in membership to cow horse organizations is no easy feat. Other factors also affect participation, but the association has found a way to make it all work in the long run.

"Our demographics make it a little more difficult for us," Prisco explained. "Our accessibility to cattle is a little more difficult. To get people to cross over from other disciplines is more difficult.

"Out west, you have a lot of cutting orga-

nizations and reining organizations. There are very few cutting and reining organizations around here, so we tend to pull from other disciplines. They see it and they want to come out and try it. We had a couple people cross over from the Standardbred organization and a lot of Western pleasure people have transitioned into it, so it's been exciting, but it's not an easy task."

The ARCHA received a \$1,500 check for being named the 2017 Affiliate of the Year, and they already have plans to use the funds to help grow the association even more by hosting a rookie clinic for those wanting to get involved with and learn more about reined cow horse competition. Open riders planned to volunteer their time to teach those who were interested in joining the innovative green program that has been set up by the group.

"It's an honor to receive an award like this with all the big affiliates countrywide," Prisco said, thanking Winborn and the rest of the NRCHA for their support over the years. "Our board of directors and club members have been working really hard to keep this going and to grow it, so it's nice to be recognized for it. We also won in 2015, so it's neat to build an organization in an area that's pretty tough to build it."

"Essentially, our affiliates are our field offices of sorts," Winborn added about the importance of recognizing the NRCHA's partners. "There are a lot of people that don't get the opportunity to come to premier events for various reasons, but they are still able to participate in the reined cow horse. Our goal is to grow them up through the ranks and eventually have them show up at our premier events. We want as many people as possible competing in this great sport, and our affiliates make that available on a local level." ★