

AUDREY GUTRIDGE AWARD

Nealia McCracken

Editor's Note: Announcer Peter Fenton read the following speech Thursday Aug. 25, 2016 at the World's Championship Horse Show.

From an early age Nealia was raised in the horse industry first in her home state of Missouri and later in Illinois. After more than 11 years as an owner-trainer-rider showing her Saddlebreds by herself she turned professional in 1985 and opened North Wind Stables in Illinois. She also stood a stallion for several years until his passing in the early 1990s. Her business is now in its 31st year and located in Blairstown, New Jersey.

Over the years Nealia has trained many riders and horses to world's, national and state championships in equitation, pleasure, performance and driving. She is known as one of the most successful trainers in western style American Saddlebreds. Nealia has also trained and put in the ring several hackney ponies over the years and has several UPHA National and National Championships to her name. Nealia has spent the majority of her time in the barn and show ring with amateur riders. Her passion is to teach good horsemanship and pass on the love of horses to her riders.

In late 2005 Nealia decided to give back to the horses and donated her one day off a week to attend the horse auctions in eastern Pennsylvania. She teamed up with Patricia Johnson, also of Blairstown, NJ and Christy Parker of Georgia to develop Saddlebred Rescue Inc., a nonprofit organization, that saves ASB's from slaughter and places these horses back into the system mostly as lesson horses, but also as companion animals. To date the organization has saved and placed over 1,000 horses and this year the rescue is celebrating its 10th anniversary.

The glue that has held North Wind Stables together and allowed many of Nealia's visions to come true has been her family. Her children, step-children and even her husband have all been active supporters and participants in the Saddlebred world and all have been in the show ring over the years. Her daughter Jessica, son Jason, and stepdaughter Erin have become accomplished horsemen and are all now professionals working in the industry. Nealia is also proud that the few assistant trainers she had at North Wind most if not all have gone on to open their own barns. Nealia donates much of her time to promote the breed on a national and regional basis. She wants to make sure that she can do all she can to leave the industry in the good hands of its younger trainers and instructors.

Nealia is a regular speaker at national and regional conferences, has written articles for horse publications and has been an active clinician. She is a long-time advocate of the American Saddlebred and has volunteered her time at horse expos, parades and other events. She has been an advisor on several boards both in the Midwest and now in the Mid Atlantic region. She has been a key speaker at ASHA and UPHA conferences as well as local state charter club functions.



Son Jason Mohlback (l), daughter Jessica Moctezuma and her fiancé Richmond DeHart, daughter Erin McCracken and husband Mark McCracken joined presenters Paul and Sally Jo Briney (far rt) in center ring for the presentation to Nealia McCracken (3rd from right).

Over the past several years Nealis has helped organize the first ever UPHA Saddlebred Promotion booth at the Kentucky State Fair. One of her ideas had always been to

do tours through the barns and provide education about the show industry to the fair people. The tours have had great success.