

*Three families share why it's important for the elders in the family to share their love of the American Quarter Horse with the youngsters.*

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**By Megan Arszman**

# GRAND *Generations*

*“What children need most are the essentials that grandparents provide in abundance. They give unconditional love, kindness, patience, humor, comfort and lessons in life. And, most importantly, cookies.”*

**– Rudy Giuliani**

THESE DAYS IT'S NOT UNCOMMON TO SEE A GRANDMOTHER watching her grandchild while her daughter goes to work – “Grannie Nannies,” they’re called. More and more families are living together with multiple generations under one roof or at least spending a lot of time together.

Such is the case with families showing in the AQHA arena – Select exhibitors are fostering a love for horses in their grandchildren and encouraging them to show in AQHA's youth division. Some share their horses, and others just help the grandkids with support and love, as is the case with three AQHA families who are seeing success inside and outside the arena, thanks to a grandparent's love and a grandchild's energy and willingness to want to do what “Grammie” and “PopPop” are doing.





Ken Cochran and granddaughter Victoria Cochran with Envy Dot Com

BECKY NEWELL

**Grandparents: Ken and Sandy Cochran**  
**Grandchildren: Victoria Cochran and Shaylee Kay Cochran**

KEN COCHRAN GREW UP RIDING HORSES FOR FUN, AND WHEN he met and married his wife, Sandy, 50 years ago, he fulfilled her lifelong dream of owning a horse because he knew how special the bond was.

“Horses have just been in our blood and we’ve always enjoyed them,” he says.

Their sons grew up riding horses, as well, but they never were interested in showing. But that didn’t stop them from sharing their parents’ love of the American Quarter Horse with their children.

Ken, an AQHA ring steward and director emeritus from Sandy, Utah, thought it was important that his grandchildren be involved with horses because he felt that it would give them a path to bettering their lives.

“I feel like kids nowadays need something with discipline, to get them involved, to keep them busy and off the streets, and help bring out the best in them, whatever that might be,” he says.

It wasn’t hard to convince his oldest grandchild, Victoria, to get on board. Victoria was active in AQHYA, attending the Youth Excellence Seminar, participating on the board of directors for the Utah Quarter Horse Youth Association on top of her studies and showing. The horses haven’t just been a way for Victoria to spend her spare time, they have been a way for her to improve her quality of life and be normal.

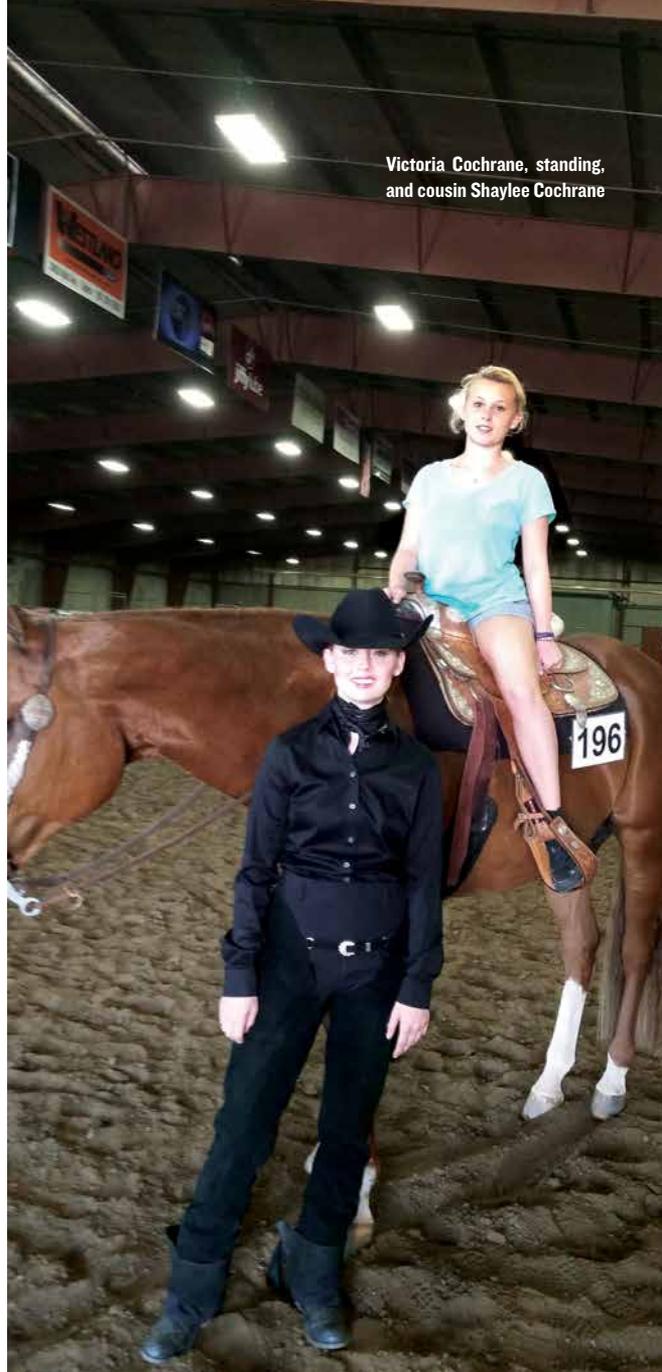
Victoria has a neurologic disorder that causes her to shake a lot. Despite being dyslexic and having issues putting together sentences when speaking, she’s brilliant and creative.

“Victoria has special needs, but we actually call them ‘special abilities,’ because she never gives up,” explains Ken.

She started riding when she was 2 and still shows, even competing at the Level 1 Championships in 2015 and ’16.

“It’s been fun having my grandparents with me and showing me how much fun they have when they show horses,” Victoria says. “I’m following in their footsteps when it comes to showing, and I love it.”

Victoria’s mom, Susie, has seen a big difference in Victoria when it comes to how she is at the barn, and she thanks Ken and Sandy for sharing their passion with Victoria.



Victoria Cochran, standing, and cousin Shaylee Cochran

COURTESY OF THE COCHRAN FAMILY

“Between the knowledge that her grandparents have shared and taught her, embracing her passion for the horses and showing, it’s really helped level the playing field for Victoria (when it comes to shows and her disability),” Susie says. “They’ve been instrumental in her development and strengths ... it’s a blessing and we’re very grateful.”

Victoria has been riding Envy Dot Com for the past couple of years, and their bond can be seen by everyone around them.

“The horse just loves her, and you know she loves him,” Ken says.

Another of Ken’s granddaughters, Shaylee, is also an accomplished rider who divides her time between cheerleading competitions and showing Quarter Horses with her grandparents.

“It’s meant everything to me and it’s been so much fun,” Shaylee says. “The people at the shows make me feel like I’m a champion, even if I don’t win my class.”



Tailyr Gromelski and  
Skys Lady In Blue

BECKY NEWELL

**Grandparent: CeCe Campbell**

**Grandchild: Tailyr Gromelski**

FOR CECE CAMPBELL, A LIFE WITH THE AMERICAN QUARTER HORSE was everything she had ever wanted for her and her family.

"I had a life membership very early on because I knew I was going to be involved with Quarter Horses my whole life," she says.

The usual path of a career and family put a pause on CeCe's activity in the show ring, but it never stalled her passion for continuing to be part of the community. Throughout the break from the show ring, she passed her love to her daughter, Karrie, who rode throughout her childhood.

"We didn't have a lot of time or money, at the time, to really show Quarter Horses. I didn't show from the time she was 8 until after she graduated from high school," CeCe says. "I wanted it to be her experience."

After Karrie grew up and started a life of her own, CeCe and her husband purchased a ranch in San Miguel, California, and CeCe retired from working in the marketing and creative field and decided it was her time to shine in the show arena once again. CeCe purchased a hunt seat horse, Skys Lady In Blue, and started back on the path of show circuits and rejoining her Quarter Horse family.

Then CeCe acquired a new title as "Grandma." Tailyr was born in 2005 and all CeCe could think about was passing down her love of horses to her granddaughter. But then Karrie and her husband had to move to Washington, taking Tailyr with them.

"I was just devastated," recalls CeCe. "I just thought, 'this was it.' She had to learn to ride where she was, and I wouldn't be able to play a part of it. I wasn't sure if she'd have a desire to ride."

But CeCe's concerns were short-lived. When Tailyr was 18 months old, she came with her parents to visit the ranch and CeCe immediately put her on a horse. The bond was instantaneous, and it was already apparent that she was a natural.

"There were no fearful moments, or tears," says the proud grandmother. "She just sat back and rode the horse."

By the time Tailyr was 4, she was going to pony camps and learning to ride from her grandma when she visited California. When CeCe qualified for the AQHA Select World Championship Show, she flew her daughter and granddaughter to the show in Amarillo to be with her.

"I just want to include my family in my journey, and include them in the parts that are special to me, and showing AQHA has been," CeCe says. "Maybe that's where she got hooked (on showing)."

The Campbells took an older ranch horse to Washington for Tailyr so she could ride more regularly. CeCe flies her granddaughter to the horse shows, where she shows the same mare in the Level 1 youth classes.

"I help my granddaughter get ready for her classes and remember her pattern, and she'll do the same for me – asking if I remember my pattern," CeCe says.

Now Karrie has adopted a second daughter, Sydney, and neither CeCe nor Tailyr, can wait to share the love of the Quarter Horse with Sydney.

"Karrie takes her out in her backpack to watch Tailyr ride horses every day, and Tailyr has said she can't wait to help Sydney start to ride," CeCe says. "The horses have brought our family a lot of joy and closeness. It's a lifestyle and a way of living. I want my granddaughters to learn that it's a way of giving back because you learn how to take care of animals because they take care of you. It's not about winning a prize."



Tailyr and Grandma CeCe Campbell can't wait to get Tailyr's little sister, Sydney, on a horse.

CECE CAMPBELL



Monica Hamm, Vern Habighorst and Kaylee Hamm

COURTESY OF THE HABIGHORST FAMILY

**Grandparents: Vern and Rita Habighorst  
Grandchildren: Monica and Kaylee Hamm**

FOR THE HAMM/HABIGHORST FAMILIES, THE QUARTER HORSE industry is a livelihood and a family. As owners of Blue Ribbon Custom Tack in Phoenix, they've been in business of outfitting the Quarter Horse arena for more than 30 years.

It was actually Vern who got Rita into the horses – he was raised on a Northern Minnesota farm with horses and Rita was a self-proclaimed city girl from Minneapolis. When they moved to a farm in Arizona, Vern got into showing halter horses on the AQHA circuit.

Their son, Jeff, followed in their footsteps, competing as a youth, even working with legendary trainers Doug Lily and Dale Livingston, and hanging out his own shingle before coming to work at Blue Ribbon. Daughter Wendy Hamm also rode but took more to helping in the saddlery business.

When Vern purchased a halter horse by the name of Kid By Design, AQHA Professional Horseman Ted Turner Jr. asked him whether his oldest granddaughter was interested in showing. Wendy's daughter, Monica, was 9 when she started showing halter, competing at the Built Ford Tough AQHYA World Championship Show every year.

Since then, Monica's younger sister, Kaylee, has started showing. The two have amassed many youth championships, with each showing five horses at the 2015 Ford Youth World. The family travels across the country, showing and outfitting customers with their saddles.

"We've developed an extremely close relationship with our granddaughters," Rita says. "It's been a really great time over the years and we're really close – they're almost like our children."

Kaylee agrees with her grandmother,



COURTESY OF THE HABIGHORST FAMILY

Sisters Monica and Kaylee Hamm are competitive, but in the end, they're happy regardless of who brings home the trophy.

saying showing horses with her grandparents has strengthened the family connection and she appreciates being able to make all these memories at a young age.

"I love being around my grandma and grandpa at the shows," she says.

"They're like our second parents," Monica says. "I don't think I'd be the outgoing, go-getter type of person I am today if it wasn't for my grandparents."

With the two sisters being close in age and competing in the halter pen, you'd think there'd be some sort of sibling rivalry.

"We try to give them each horses we think are equal between the two of them, which is difficult sometimes because you don't know how the judge is going to go. But it's worked out well," Rita explains.

Rita does recall one instance of sibling rivalry at the 2015 Ford Youth World. Between the two girls, they showed 10 horses and brought home 10 trophies, but Monica had won four world championships going into the last class. Before entering the pen, Kaylee playfully told her grandma that she was "going to beat" Monica this time.

"So there's competitiveness sometimes ... but they don't show it much."

"I never go into a class saying, 'I'm going to beat you,' because that's not how we were raised," Monica says. "We're going into the ring together, and whether she wins or I win, it's going home to our family, and that's all that matters. We aim to do our best when we're in there, and that's what counts."

"It's not just the shows and winning championships," Kaylee adds. "My best memories would be hanging out at the barn with my trainer, grandparents and my sister just laughing about different things and having a good time."

"I'm very blessed to have this opportunity to be a grandchild of someone in this industry. Not many people can say they have three generations of family that live and show on the AQHA circuit like we do," Monica says. 🐾

*Megan Arszman is a special contributor to the Journal and a former AQHA Media intern. To comment on this article, email [aqhajrnl@aqha.org](mailto:aqhajrnl@aqha.org).*