

# EQUESTRIAN™ CONNECT



Barbara Phillips & Simone Coxe

## SPEED ENTRIES AT THEIR BEST

**N**ever underestimate the power or determination of ladies, especially when they have a vision in mind. Simone Coxe and Barbara Phillips are a thriving example of what women can do when they set their mind to making life a little easier. Their new business is called Equestrian Connect and is streamlining the process of horse show entries. For the horse business, it's fortunate they found a project inside the hunter-jumper industry.

When new ideas come along the best and most successful ones are most often centered on a need, a "void" that needs filling. Find a way to meet that need and a good idea becomes a project, which becomes a successful endeavor. Still in its infancy, at less than a year old, Equestrian Connect is one of those ideas that fill that void.

For as long as trainers and riders can remember, entries have been a cumbersome part of the showing process.

Entry forms are different at just about every show, exact information is not always immediately accessible and errors are made that confuse everyone from the horse show office to the USEF who keeps track of things.

"Our concept was creating a program that would make the entry process more efficient," says Barbara. "We really wanted to make our lives easier with our own horses and that translates to all exhibitors, so we went to work on a way to help. At the same time the online process is also complimentary to helping make the world a little more "green" since it involves no paper and travels through the internet. Instead of snail mail or fax, both of which involve paper, Equestrian Connect uses an online process which means less trees cut down."

Simone speaks up, "Prior to actually getting to the show, Equestrian Connect makes the data entry process quite simple as all the pertinent information is stored

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on its site. Accurate addresses, ages, correct spelling, and mostly, USEF/USHJA member numbers to make the show office reporting process easier. Convenience is a word everyone likes and that is what we strive for.”

When asked what their most difficult hurdle was in starting the business, they both laugh and have the same answer. “The hardest part was Thermal last year when we very first introduced it. Walking up to people with our brochure and introducing ourselves to riders we had not met yet was daunting for us. The product was easy to talk about, but they wanted to know who we were. It was tough, and at times quite fun, talking about two amateur ladies who were going to change the show world in some way. I think we stammered a bit, but talking about the entry process was something everyone wanted to discuss.”

“We thought we had come up with an idea that was good only for exhibitors so we were surprised by management’s enthusiastic reaction. The secretaries in the offices were the most excited about it when we talked with them. The thought of making entries accurate and complete every time would make their work easier and more efficient.”

“There have been a lot of surprises along the way,” said Simone. “For an idea of something so simple we were taken completely off guard by the complexity of creating it. As we moved along the process, some glaring problems of entries we did not know about jumped right out at us and

continually presented something new for consideration. It’s a good thing we have a great web tech that has helped us and always kept his sense of humor.”

Geared and set up with the west coast as a testing ground, the east coast has gotten involved in a big way. “The east coast has surprised us,” said Barbara. “While we are working away introducing it to the west coast shows we are familiar with, the east coast caught wind of it and we started to get several calls and emails a day from that direction. We have been pleased to see it expand, sort of by its own success. It’s also interesting to us to find that the entry process is different on both coasts, but also how very much the same. We did not necessarily envision it going national so quickly, but we are excited and pleased that we actually have created something universally good for the sport. We have our running shoes on so we can keep up!”

“The best received part of the program, after the accuracy and ease of the actual entry, is the alerts we send out reminding people that closing dates are coming and entries are due. When a show comes on board we automatically send out detailed alerts about deadlines and upcoming dates.”

The two ladies together are an interesting combination of friends and co-owners. They laugh in sync, they get serious in the blink of an eye, their excitement is contagious and their commitment to change the show world in such a small-huge-small way is astounding.

Where there is a need, there is a solution. Where there is a will, there is a way. And where these ladies are, their change is the way simplicity comes to the show world. ♦

Barbara Phillips at Thermal

