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EPISODE NAME: Highlights of the 2012 “Horsin’ Around” Equine Variety Show

Today on Across the Fence we're horsing around with the state's largest event that combines education and entertainment. We'll see and hear a popular variety show that showcases different breeds, disciplines and styles of riding. Good afternoon and thanks for joining us; I am Judy Simpson.

The ever-growing Everything Equine event is coming up next weekend, April 28th and April 29 at the Champlain Valley Exposition in Essex Junction. The weekend draws thousands of new and longtime horse lovers. One of the features of the weekend is the equine variety show called “Horsin’ Around” on Saturday night featuring edu-tainment. With me is one of the founders of Everything Equine and a frequent contributor to Across the Fence, Betsy Greene. Betsy is the equine specialist and a professor at the university's Department of Animal Science. It's great to see you again. Remind me how many years have we been talking about Everything Equine because this started out as something unusual and it's really taken off.

Betsy.: This is the ninth year. It's been a long time, and next year it will be a decade old. It's been great.

Judy.: Are you surprised at how successful it has been?

Betsy.: I know that there are so many horse owners, lovers, riders and everything around the state even if they don't always show their face when it comes time to be counted they come out of the woodwork for an event like this.

Judy.: Education and entertainment is what you call edu-tainment.

Betsy.: I love it -- I didn't make up that term but I heard it and thought that so great because you have education entertainment. If you can learn while you're having fun or vice versa what's better than that?

Judy.: Exactly. Tell me a little bit about this particular program?

Betsy.: Horsin’ Around on Saturday night at times has been Horsin’ Around on Sunday afternoon, but this year it's Saturday night has been a great show because it provides an
opportunity for mostly Vermonters to demonstrate disciplines breeds styles a variety of competition and it's an audience favorite because they get a chance to watch this but they also see Vermonters and some of the profits from that go to support Vermont horse organizations. This year it's Chittenden County Farm Bureau because we've done a horse farm of distinction program. First year was a pilot year and we had two farms that were awarded that and we will be continuing that. The funds for this that we earn support the program. Goes back supporting the horse council for several years in the past in the programs that they do.

Judy.: This isn’t included at Everything Equine but as a separate event, then because you need a ticket.

Betsy.: Yes this is a separate event and again like I said profits go to support other equine activities in the state. Its fun it's a great time and a lot of times the people that love horses but haven't been involved, come and learn about different breeds and things like that.

Judy.: How unique is this to have an event like this that has all the different elements as far as different disciplines under one roof.

Betsy.: Well we actually modeled after Equine Affairs: Fantasia we're not the first certainly and we won't be a last but it’s great to have this many different things. When you look at the different breeds that we show and demonstrate many people say they're from Vermont? I had no idea that we had that here, so there is exposing farms and horse owners and things to the public and vice versa.

Judy.: You brought along a variety of clips that we can highlight and talk about. Tell me about the first segment.

Betsy.: We have different breeds these guys the first few that you see are from breed row. That something that we’ve done in the last few years because folks said they wanted more hands-on with the horses. You come sit, watching and learning, but people want to have their hands on a horse so here we have one of Morgan's from the Morgan Horse Farm as well and those folks come show their stuff but several of them were there the whole weekend where people could come in, talk to the owners of the animals often pet the animals and learn about what those people do with those horses are and see a lot of different breeds and we will have that again this year. This year it will actually be inside. The UVM drill team is always fun; we are working with them to get that going. We will see more drill teams in another clip.

Judy.: That's not easy to.

Betsy.: No it's not at all. Of course Stephanie Lockhart with her colonial horses there, she's done a lot. That’s Oscar, or the horse that played ‘Hidalgo’ in the background there. Her daughter owns him now. They said it wasn’t Oscar ‘winning’ but more Oscar ‘the grouch,’ as far as his name. These folks are from Steeple Ridge and that was of course the little riders jumping fences is always fun. That was one of the headliners doing the instruction last year. It's great because she was one of our winners of the horse farm of distinction in the initial year Mindy Hinsdale and her farm in Charlotte. It’s really cool to have all these pieces come together.

Judy.: It's nice because their local and people can say I saw you at Horsin’ Around and maybe you want to check out the farm.
Betsy.: Oh yeah, and when they're there they can talk whether its boots or otherwise can talk to the folks and find out what and where and it gives people a chance to have that exposure to different things without having to go from farm to farm. They can get a feel for what they’re looking for and what that might get.

Judy.: There's also something called cowboy dressage? Which is popular.

Betsy.: Yes, and in this next clip of course we had David Davis who is coming back for a second year. He is showing that --

Judy.: He's a showman let's just say that.

Betsy.: You think? How about our electric horseman there?

Judy.: That's amazing.

Betsy.: Those horses actually do reigning, but his joke was talking about the pivot foot because usually it's a hind foot that the reigning horse pivots around, but the footing that we have all around is not great for reigning, so he said OK I'm going to do some different things; I’ll make the front foot my pivot foot. And he is showing some small circles and this and that. There he’s doing a little bit of spinning, and you can see that right hind is a pivot foot. Then he took Pastor and Apostle, his two horses and is showing what you can do and how you can train a horse without being on them. Let's see; can you do this?

Judy.: Well he can train horses without being on them.

Betsy.: You can't do your mini around in front of you other?

Judy.: No it usually ends badly.

Betsy.: It's really cool because everyone thinks you have to have all these cues touching them and yet as you watch him he's giving cues but the horse in front is doing the same thing with just two long ones. He's asking them to do that and both horses are doing it. I can't do that.

Judy.: That's incredible.

Betsy.: Of course it’s also good horsemanship, and he has force free training and that's what he was highlighting this past year and the educational part. He of course did some tricks because he is the ultimate ham and showman. It's also funny because when you don't have full control of the horse they don’t always quite listen. He’s telling him to get up there and bow and he had a little issue with that. Here's your next trick. We'll have him teach you to do that as well. The thing he’s saying is you can do all this stuff no matter what. Then he gets on and does flying real changes on these horses and you can do the cowboy dressage. It was really interesting and of course the funny part is he has a ball. I think I mentioned I went to school with him 100 years ago in Morehead Kentucky and he hasn't changed and I don't think he's aged; I’ve aged quite a bit.
Judy.: I think it's really amazing if anyone has tried working with a horse how difficult it is to get that high confidence and trust between not only the rider and the horse but of the two horses together. For most of us it would be a recipe for disaster.

Betsy.: You think about how much somebody works just to do a trick like standing on their horse how about cantering on two?

Judy.: Right even just general riding to be able to communicate and not have things go wrong or to be able to react when they do go wrong.

Betsy.: Of course with the crowd the horses don't always act as they do a home because all the sudden things are scarier.

Judy.: I saw him with UVM students and their drill team but there's also a bigger drill team that people love to watch.

Betsy.: Oh yes we have Pond Hill Drill Team out of Castleton here they are in the clip doing this. They bring 16 horses out of the 25 and the only reason for that is because the arena is too small.

Judy.: And yet they can still accomplish all of this in a small space.

Betsy.: Oh yes there always a crowd favorite. Of course they have everything from rodeos to competitions to trail riding and all that at their farm all year round but when they come up here it's always fun always exciting and wild.

Judy.: And these guys are fun to ride.

Betsy.: Yet their little bit different breeds then you see at Pond Hill. Those little guys are tolting around and of course you remember if you've ever seen these on TV when they're showing off the drill team of course they can do a high speed tol in our small arena but when they're doing it they're holding up a beer and they don't spill it because they're flying but do not spill a drop. A little bit of western show type with the Morgan here. Interesting to show all the different styles and of course you saw the Morgan in the earlier clip doing a show saddle seat type. Just very very different.

Judy.: Same breed but different discipline.

Betsy.: Yes absolutely and there all here and Vermont.

Judy.: That's amazing to see all this under one roof. That's fantastic.

Betsy.: A little more; and I guarantee it's not as easy as it looks to have cantering inside a circle of horses.

Judy.: Easy to lose your spot I would imagine.
Betsy.: Actually a lot of times it's the riders that have to get past their mental block of I am going to run into that horse. It takes amazing amount of work to get there. Here you have 32 minds and they all have to be on the same page.

Judy.: Good luck with that; that's incredible. If you just joining us I'm visiting with Dr. Betsy Greene who's the equine specialist with UVM Extension and one of the organizers of Everything Equine that features the Horsin’ Around variety show which we have been talking about. As we mentioned earlier, it does require a separate ticket.

Betsy.: Yes and those are available at Champlain Valley Expo and you'll see that information at the end.

Judy.: You mentioned supporting Vermont farms and we saw video clips that you're providing great exposure and opportunities for local equestrians and barns.

Betsy.: Yes we have folks that have different breeds varieties and disciplines that showcase them every year at Everything Equine but this year it's great because we're actually going to have you eventing with three key people from Vermont that are at the top of the competition level and they will be on the Horsin’ Around show to do some things – well two out of the three will be.

Judy.: So you're planning to do something extreme for Sunday morning the 29th?

Betsy.: Yes; the Northwestern Riding and Driving Club will be doing an Everything Equine extreme trail challenge. This is going to be an obstacle course for the horse and rider. They have a specified number and order of obstacles that they have to go through and they get points for doing it they get points for style or maybe not in style.

Judy.: Staying on.

Betsy.: It's actually a money competition.

Judy.: Really; I think you brought some pictures too, that we can take a look at.

Betsy.: Yes absolutely.

Judy.: Is this for people who have to register for this?

Betsy.: Yes the folks who have to register like just Joe Sprano there. You notice anything on that?

Judy.: Yes there's no bridle.

Betsy.: In this event they will have bridles but Joe has actually been doing this for years and years and he's going to do an educational seminar on Saturday morning on how to get started in doing this. If you have an interest and it looks exciting and you want to try it with your horse come out and watch that because you won't be competing but some of the students will be. This one obviously is an obstacle. Must be to get all 4 feet is my guess. And to drag a barrel which probably has rocks in it too so it makes noise. Just imagine a typical horse doing that. Could you get your horse to walk through that?
Judy.: Not without a bucket of grain.

Betsy.: While you're on him, you need a carrot in front with a stick.

Judy.: It's a whole scene I am telling ya.

Betsy.: It's something that always is fun to watch. They had to send an applications and videos.

Judy.: Do you know how many people are going to be competing?

Betsy.: There are at least 15.

Judy.: Really that's amazing.

Betsy.: Like I said there's money - they get prizes for the top three places. They will be judged and it's always fun to watch.

Judy.: Yes we've been talking about the Horsin' Around event on Saturday night an equine variety show that starts at 6:30 pm April 28th at the Champlain Valley Expo in Essex Junction. You can find out more details on the Champlain Valley Expo website cvexpo.org or you can call (802) 878-5545. Betsy you'll be back with us next week to talk more about Everything Equine.

Betsy.: Yes it will be great and you can find the schedule online for the first time ever if you go to that website.

Judy.: Excellent; great.

Betsy.: And see it now instead of when you get to the show.

Judy.: Excellent thanks Betsy. We will see you again next time on Across the Fence. I am Judy Simpson.

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